

Parshat Vayigash

Summary

- At the end of last week's parsha Yosef demanded that Binyamin remain behind in Egypt as his slave.
- This week's parsha starts with Judah appealing to Yosef to let Binyamin go, as he is the only son left of Rachel.
- Judah then tells Yosef that if he does not return with Binyamin, Jacob will die.
- Judah volunteers to switch places with Binyamin so he could go home.
- After Yosef hears this he tells all of his Egyptian servants to leave. He then confess to his brothers that he is Yosef the brother they sold many years ago.
- Yosef tells them not to feel bad about selling him and to bring Jacob and the whole family down to Egypt.
- The brothers go back to Canaan and tell Jacob that Yosef is alive.
- While Jacob and his family are on their way the chumash names all the 70 people that came down to Egypt.
- Jacob arrives and him and Yosef reunite. Jacobs family now lives in the province of Goshen where they grow to be a large nation.

Commentary

Hirsch (Samson Raphael Hirsch, Germany 1808-1888)

מה מעשיכם – במדינה כמו מצרים, האיש ומשלה ידו אחד הם. ילדים אינם נולדים כבני אדם, אלא כבעלי מלאכה, עובדי אדמה, אנשי צבא וכיוצא בזה. בהתאם לכך, שאלתו הראשונה של פרעה לאחי יוסף הייתה באופן טבעי על משלה ידם.

shepherds, although that profession is not considered in Egypt as the most honourable one. For they were breeders of sheep". Not that they themselves actually shepherded the flocks, that they left to their herdsmen, but they lived from breeding the animals.

V. 33. In a state like Egypt, where caste prevailed and men were completely absorbed into their trade, and men were born as artisans, workers on the land, soldiers, etc. the first question was naturally about their profession. To Pharaoh's question they were unashamedly to acknowledge this unpleasant fact, for the disgust which the Egyptians had for their calling, which they could not disguise, — just as altogether, the dislike of the Jews by the nations — was the first means for the preservation of that race that was destined for an isolated path through the ages. Until the spiritual moral morn dawns for the nations of the world, the barriers that the false conception which they have, have raised against the Jews, have served to protect them from being infected by the barbarism and demoralisation of the people in whose midst they were to have to wander for centuries. That is why, here too, Joseph at once brought to the fore that aspect of his brethren which was unpleasant to the Egyptians with the expressed purpose of obtaining thereby for them, a separated province in which to settle.

I chose this commentary because it shows Yosef's intellectual ability. At first you would think that it is stupid for Yosef to ask his brothers to tell Pharaoh their profession. He knew that they were shepherds and that the Egyptians did not like shepherds. But this Hirsch shows us that even though Yosef knew that the Egyptians would be upset, he still asked his brothers to tell Pharaoh. Yosef understood that once everyone knew that they were shepherds, they would not be welcome to live amongst the Egyptians. This would force the Jews to live separately and they would be able to grow and prosper in the land of Goshen

Art



Artist: Unknown

Source: <https://www.talivirtualmidrash.org.il/search-results/page/2/>

I chose this piece of art for two reasons. One, I like how it is a mosaic and not a painting. Usually in the Parsha presentations, the art is a painting. So I wanted to do something different and chose a mosaic. Second, I like how this painting is straightforward with you. You can clearly see in this mosaic that it is depicting Yosef and Jacobs reunion.



Artist: Unknown

I personally like this painting because it illustrates what I think is one of the most important parts of the parsha. Yosef revealing himself to his brothers. This scene in the parsha in my opinion is the beginning of Bnei Yisrael. If Yosef did not reveal himself then Jacobs family would not have moved to Goshen and have the opportunity to thrive and grow. I believe that this painting shows us that every moment happens for a reason.