



Yeshivat Ma'alot

Parashat Va'yigash

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ישיבת מעלות

פרשת ויגש

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Mashiach ben Yosef- Our National Campaign

This week's parasha, Parashat Va'yigash, opens with the final confrontation between Yehuda and Yosef. A quick overview: Yosef has his goblet secretly placed in Binyamin's sack, and as the brothers leave Egypt he has them stopped and accuses Binyamin of stealing. When caught red handed Binyamin is sentenced to prison and the other brothers are released to return to Ya'akov Avinu. This week's parasha begins with Yehuda's plea to Yosef to return Binyamin to their elderly father. Chazal in Bereshit Rabbah¹ learn that Yosef and Yehuda are each kings. This, metaphorically speaking, means that each one represents a different form of leadership within Am Yisrael. This is also the basis of the well known idea of Mashiach ben Yosef and Mashiach ben David, the messiah which is the descendant of Yosef and the messiah from the House of David (who is a descendant of Yehuda).

Mashiach ben Yosef represents the actual building of the kingdom of Yisrael, the active, productive aspects of building a nation. Mashiach ben David is the embodiment of the spiritual and Godly aspects of the nation. It gives content to the structure built by Mashiach ben Yosef. The obvious question is- who are these people? Harav Kook zt"l explains that they are not individuals but rather different eras in history and different groups within Klal Yisrael. These different groups and eras which help to build the future malchut, kingdom, of Yisrael also represent the two different Mashiachs.

Mashiach ben David is for the most part understandable- bringing about the Final Redemption by spreading Torah and Godliness throughout the world. Yet what is Mashiach ben Yosef? How is he represented in our world today? Harav Kook zt"l² explains that Mashiach ben Yosef is embodied in the settling of Eretz Yisrael and the establishment of a sovereign Jewish state. Chazal explain that Mashiach ben Yosef will be killed and in his place will rule Mashiach ben David. According to Harav Kook, building a Jewish kingdom rooted in holiness, whose goals are to disseminate Hashem's light in the world, cannot be done if rooted in the mundane. Therefore it seems that in order to build such a building, the unholy structures, the everyday leadership would need to be potentially uprooted. It is clear that such a thing would be painfully difficult for Klal Yisrael. All the energy, hope, and sacrifice that were made

¹ Bereshit Rabbah 93, 2

² Mamarei Hare'iyah p.98

for the secular state would need to be shattered in order to build a State rooted in holiness. Such a thing is needless to say extremely complicated.

Reb Hillel Shiklover, one of the students of the saintly Vilna Gaon expounds on the concept of Mashiach ben Yosef³. He quotes the Vilna Gaon saying that it is not necessarily true that Mashiach ben Yosef will be killed. It is all up to Am Yisrael. Through Torah and Mitzvot, it is possible to prevent his death. So too, it is not necessary that the secular government will be uprooted, but rather Am Yisrael can fill it with holy and Godly content. The current difficulties that Klal Yisrael is going through makes it seem as though the dreams of Zionism are far from what they used to be. The ideals which the founders of our State gave their lives for seem far removed from the reality in which we are living today. Not only that, but it seems that there is no one to throw us a life vest and save us from the torrential waters. Mashiach ben Yosef is in apparent danger.

But there is still hope! Through action, Torah and Tefilah, the situation can still be rescued. Action: We must strengthen Am Yisrael in Eretz Yisrael, whether it is in the big cities, the small towns, or the settlements of Yehuda and Shomron. We must take charge and be proactive, explaining to others that the only true source of protection and hope that Am Yisrael has is Hashem, the eternal Guardian of Israel. Torah: The Vilna Gaon spoke many times about the connection between Mashiach ben Yosef and razei torah, the deeper aspects of Torah. Harav Kook also addressed many times that we must return to the "soul of the Torah", the deeper facets which serve as the backbone to the revealed sides of the Torah. Tefilah: The Vilna Gaon compiled a special tefilah for Mashiach ben Yosef⁴. In addition in our personal lives we must learn, pray, and say Tehillim for the wellbeing and salvation of Mashiach ben Yosef.

In addition to these solutions, it must be clear to us what the most effective way is to relay our message. Although campaigns, protests, and rallies are all ways of expressing ourselves we must know that the bulk of our success, the root of our achievement is in the spiritual- we can only put our faith in Hashem. It is our mission to create a population who understands that taking action is part of the process of Geulah, who sees Hashem's hand within all that unfolds in Medinat Yisrael and within the world in general. Such a population will lead the way to show Am Yisrael that Medinat Yisrael is the beginning and foundation of the Geulah and through this Mashiach ben Yosef will be saved.

³ Kol Hator, Chapter 1, p.466 (publication of Harav Kasher)

⁴ Kol Hator p. 530