



GEULAS YISRAEL

RABBI MOSHE TARAGIN

RAM YESHIVAT HAR ETZION

MAGGID SHIUR ALL PARSHA AND ALL DAF, OU.ORG

Late in Life, the Journey Still Calls

The reunion of Ya'akov and Yosef is one of the most dramatic and heart-stirring moments in Sefer Bereishit. It captures the ache of long separation—twenty years shaped by fraternal jealousy, years that will not return.

The pain deepened with uncertainty. Ya'akov lived for two decades somewhere between hope and fear, unsure whether his son still lived and, if he did, what his life had become. Yosef too may have wondered whether his father had played a role in his disappearance. Ya'akov had sent him toward Shechem knowing the brothers' hostility, and Yosef could not be sure what that decision meant.

The years apart were marked by uncertainty on both sides. Ya'akov did not know his son's fate, and Yosef did not fully know his father's intent.

Armed with the news that Yosef was alive, Ya'akov begins the journey to Egypt to see the son he has not seen in decades. Yosef prepares for the meeting from the other direction. Though surrounded by attendants, he personally harnesses his own chariot and rides out to greet his aging father, refusing to let intermediaries stand between them.

When they finally meet, they fall into one another's arms. It is a quiet meeting after years apart—a mixture of relief, gratitude, and the simple recognition that their lives can now continue together.

Chazal observe that this welcoming delegation for Ya'akov did not consist merely of Yosef and his household. Word spread quickly through Egypt that the father of the man who had saved the empire from starvation was approaching. Witnessing Yosef's enthusiasm, the Egyptians streamed out in droves to greet Ya'akov. He was received as a national hero—a fitting honor for a man who had endured so much fracture and turmoil across a long and battered life.

REUNIONS

The Midrash Tanchuma (Vayigash 7) draws a striking parallel between Ya'akov and of all people...Yitro. Just as Yitro traveled to the wilderness of Sinai to meet Moshe and was welcomed with honor, so did Ya'akov journey to Egypt and receive a celebratory welcome.

The similarities run deep. In each scene, an older man suddenly learns of a world-re-shaping event he had never imagined. Ya'akov discovers that Yosef lives. Yitro "hears" of Yetziat Mitzrayim and the splitting of the Yam



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Suf. Each revelation is powerful enough to summon an aging patriarch into a long and arduous journey.

In both instances the journey helps repair a fractured family. Ya'akov's household, strained by rivalry and jealousy, now begins to come together as the unified clan he had long hoped for. His arrival signals that long-awaited cohesion.

Likewise, Moshe's wife and children had been left behind in Midyan during the dangerous confrontation with Pharaoh; it was simply too perilous for them to remain in the line of fire. Only after Am Yisrael escapes Mitzrayim and marches toward Sinai can Yitro return with Moshe's family—restoring wholeness to a home that had been scattered.

CLOSURE FOR THE RESTLESS

Beyond the technical parallels between their arrivals, the storylines of Ya'akov and Yitro share a similar human arc. Both men carry long histories of struggle and restlessness, and in each case the public welcome they receive serves as a fitting closure—an earned moment of recognition after a lifetime of turbulence. Ya'akov endures an ongoing series of trials—from Esav's hostility to Lavan's deceit, to the mysterious nighttime battle. He faces the crisis of Dina. Most painful of all, he confronts the rivalry among his sons that ends with Yosef's disappearance. His arrival in Egypt, met with honor, offers a settled conclusion to a life marked by endurance and faith. It grants him recognition and a degree of tranquility after years of difficulty.

Yitro's hardships are less explicit in the Torah, but Chazal help fill in the picture. A priest with persistent intellectual curiosity, he sought religious truth across cultures. That search left him marginalized—perhaps explaining why his daughters were mistreated by local

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shepherds. In time he discovers the Ribbono shel Olam, and his journey to Sinai—likely to witness Matan Torah—brings a measure of completion to a life spent searching. Standing at the edge of Sinai becomes a fitting outcome for a man who resisted the pagan world around him.

KIBBUD AV VA'EIM OVERRIDES EGO

A second parallel links Ya'akov's arrival with Yitro's. In each scene, a figure of great stature sets aside rank in deference to an elder. Yosef personally prepares his own chariot rather than leaving the task to servants. Chazal describe this unusual impulse as *ahavah mekalkeles et ha-shurah*—love setting protocol aside. Instead of considering questions of status and decorum, Yosef lets years of longing and respect for his father guide him.

Moshe responds in a similar way. On the eve of ascending the mountain for forty days and nights of divine study, he could easily have

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sent others to endure the heat of the desert and greet Yitro. Instead, gratitude moved him. Yitro had given him shelter when he fled Pharaoh's reach, and Moshe felt obligated to show respect in person.

Each story becomes a living illustration of *kibbud av va'eim*. In both scenes, a figure of great authority sets aside public image in service of familial respect. *Kibbud av va'eim* is not mastered by reading Shulchan Aruch alone. Family relationships are layered and emotional, and halachic detail does not ensure thoughtful practice. The mitzvah needs living models. Yosef and Moshe provide them—reminding us not to let status or ego get in the way of simple attention and care for our parents.

HISTORY CALLS

However, Chazal would not link Ya'akov's arrival to Yitro's merely to note technical overlap or shared gestures of *kibbud av va'eim*. By placing Ya'akov alongside Yitro, they draw attention to historical features in *Ya'akov's* story that are harder to notice on their own. The comparison points to themes that stand out more clearly in the account of *Yitro* and helps bring them into focus in *Ya'akov's* journey.

History demanded that both Yitro and Ya'akov undertake difficult journeys late in life. Matan Torah could not unfold while Moshe remained separated from his wife and children. The Torah does not present Moshe—the central

figure at Sinai—as a solitary bachelor; such a portrait would misrepresent a tradition that values marriage and family. That principle had to be visible before revelation could proceed. Sinai had to wait until Yitro restored Moshe's household. Though the desert was no place for an aging man, forces larger than comfort drew him forward. History carried Yitro to Sinai.

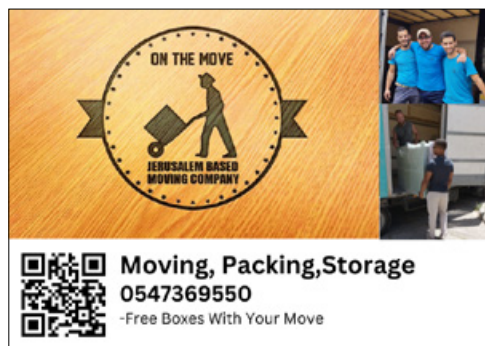
So too, history required Ya'akov's descent to Egypt. The template of Jewish destiny had been set years earlier, when Hashem informed Avraham that his descendants would become strangers in a foreign land, endure persecution, and ultimately be redeemed. Ya'akov knew the prophecy but did not know whether he would live its opening stage. He approached Be'er Sheva with trepidation, unsure whether he should cross into Egypt. In a nighttime vision, Hashem assured him that the Shechinah would accompany him into exile and that the ancient prophecy was now ready to unfold.

Ya'akov's journey becomes the hinge of the next era of Jewish history. It may have run against his desire to remain in the land of his parents, but history pressed him forward. This is the deeper reason to read Ya'akov through the lens of Yitro: both men were drawn by destiny into steps they would not have chosen on their own—steps that moved Jewish history into its next chapter.

NOT FOREVER

There is another layer to the comparison between Ya'akov and Yitro. With Yitro, the Torah makes it clear that he is a guest—honored, but not part of Israel's lasting story. Moshe invites him to stay, yet Yitro eventually returns to Midyan. He stands at the foot of Sinai and witnesses revelation, but he does not join the covenantal future. His time in the camp is brief and purposeful, and then it ends.

So too with Ya'akov. In Be'er Sheva, Hashem



assures him that Egypt will not be permanent, that the Shechinah will accompany him into exile and one day ascend with him in redemption. His descent to a foreign empire is not a change of identity, not an investment in the Egyptian future. It is a temporary sojourn, demanded by history but never mistaken for home.

Yitro and Ya'akov: Reunions, repairs, respect for parents, reluctant journeys; none of it was incidental. Each created the conditions for history to move. Jewish destiny advances when people step forward even when they would rather remain where they are. ■



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