

**Rabbi Elchanan Shoff**  
PARSHAS VAYIGASH

***Please my master, [may] your servant now say something in the ears of my master (Gen. 43:20).*** The word “please” used in this context is **כי**, which can also mean “in me”. Based on this, Rabbi Pinchas ben Filta (in *Bris Shalom, Parshas Vayigash* p. 218) explains that Yehuda meant to tell the viceroy that “in me is my master”, meaning that embedded in my name is the name of my Master—Hashem. He explains that all four letters of the Hashem’s four-letter name appear in order in Yehuda’s name (**יהודה**), and, in fact the letter *dalet* was only added to Yehuda’s name so that it can be pronounced (because otherwise his name would be the same thing as the Ineffable Name of Hashem). Because Yehuda was about to reveal this deep secret about the connection between his name and Hashem’s name, Yehuda requested that he be able to say these words “in the ears” of the viceroy, i.e. in a whisper so that nobody else would hear it. This explanation is later cited by Rabbi Moshe Teitelbaum (in *Yismach Moshe*) and by many other commentators.

***And his soul is tied to his soul (Gen. 44:30).*** The *Baal HaTurim* writes that the word “is tied” appears twice in Tanach: Once here, and once in Prov. 22:15, “stupidity is tied to the heart of a lad”. This alludes to the fact that Yehuda argued that even if Binyamin actually did steal the viceroy’s goblet, he would only have done so out of stupidity (as opposed to malice). Alternatively, Yehuda argued that because Binyamin was still a lad, his soul is still tied to the soul of his father who has yet to finish educating him, so he should not be held responsible. My Rebbi, Rabbi Aharon Kaufman, explains that we see from this *Baal HaTurim* that the proper way to educate children is to “tie” his soul to that of his parents and teachers. Only by doing so, can the student learn how to grow, and without this approach, a student will never break free from the shackles of the stupidity of youth. In a similar vein, Rabbi Moshe Don Kestenbaum writes in *The Heart of Parenting* that sometimes when a father plays with his son, he has actually achieved more than a father who studies Torah with his son. This is because if he studies Torah with his son, it could be that the son is not actually interested in learning then and by forcing him to learn, the father is actually pushing his son away from learning Torah. But when a father plays with his son, he is effectively strengthen the bond between themselves, which is an all-around positive development.

***And now allow your servant [i.e. myself] to sit in instead of the lad as a slave to my master (Gen. 44:33).*** Rabbi Nota Greenblatt of Memphis Tennessee writes in his work *Krayach Sadeh*, that Yehuda’s offer to take Binyamin’s place as the viceroy’s slave foreshadows a later connection between the tribes of Yehuda and Binyamin who were neighbors in the Holy Land, and indeed partners (as the Holy Temple was in the tribal territory of both

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Yehuda and Binyamin). Moreover, when Yeravam led the Ten Tribes in a rebellion against the Davidic Kingdom, the only tribe who remained loyal to Yehuda was the Tribe of Binyamin. In fact, the prophet Achiyah HaShiloni calls the union of Yehuda-Binyamin “one tribe” (I Kgs. 11:13).

***And Yosef could not withhold himself [before] all those who attended to him, and he announced ‘remove all men from upon me’ and no man stood with him when Yosef revealed himself to his brothers (Gen. 45:1).*** Rabbi Shimon Sofer, the Rav of Krakow and son of the *Chasam Sofer* writes in his work *Michtav Sofer (Drush #6)* that a person is supposed to mimic the ways of Hashem in such a way that their trait of *gevurah* (“strength”) mimics Hashem's. He gives time to the wicked instead of punishing them immediately (*Yoma 69a*). The human trait of *gevurah* is defined by the Mishnah (*Avos 4.1*) “Who is strong? He who conquers his [Evil] Inclination.” To this effect, the Torah gives us certain commandments aimed at helping us break our Evil Inclination, such as the prohibitions against revenge and bearing a grudge, or the commandment to help one’s enemy carry a heavy load. When a person does something kind for somebody who wronged him, he is exercising self-control, and he is truly called a “strong” person. This understanding of the trait of *gevurah* sheds light on the role of the angel Gavriel, whose very name is derived from the word *gevurah*. In the context of Yosef, Gavriel appears at Dosan as the person who originally guided Yosef to finding his brothers at Shechem. Hashem specifically sent Gavriel for this mission in order to help Yosef work on his trait of *gevurah*/self-control, as Yosef was expected to find his brothers and send them sincere greetings from their father, even though his brothers hated him. Fast forward twenty-two years later, one might have expected that when Yosef would finally reveal himself to his brothers, Gavriel would again make an appearance to help Yosef control himself from taking revenge against his brothers. Yet, the Torah stresses “and no man stood with him...”, the word *man* (מֵאִישׁ) is an actually appellation sometimes applied to the angel Gavriel. Here, the Torah stresses that at this juncture, Gavriel’s presence was not needed to help Yosef control himself. By this time, Yosef had already perfected his trait of *gevurah* and could now control himself on his own.<sup>1</sup>

***I am Yosef that you sold... (Gen. 45:4).*** The *Sfas Emes* (Year 1883) explains that the word “that” (כִּי) can exegetically be understood as approval for the his brother’s actions. When

<sup>1</sup> This is similar to what we wrote in parshas miketz citing the Meor Vashamesh that the reason behind Yosef naming his son Menashe that he no longer needed to remember the image of his father in order to save himself from sin, but could control himself even without that assistance.

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Moshe broke the Tablets at Mount Sinai, Hashem told him to prepare a new set of Tablets upon which he should inscribe whatever was written on the Tablets “that you broke” ( **אשר** ( **שברת** ). The Talmud (*Yevamos* 62a) explains that the word **אשר** in that context means **”אשר כחך** (literally, “May your strength be straightened”, colloquially, “shkoiyach”)—a sign of approval for Moshe’s actions. Here too, when Yosef used the word **אשר**, he meant to thank his brothers for having sold him, thus giving his approval to their actions. The same explanation is also offered by Rabbi Avraham Shmuel Binyamin Sofer (another son of the *Chasam Sofer*), author of *Ksav Sofer*.<sup>2</sup>

***And you will settle in the Land of Goshen (Gen. 45:10).*** It says in *Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer* that when Pharaoh abducted Sarah in order to marry her, he gave her the land of Goshen as her dowry, and from then on, the *kedushah* remained in Goshen in her merit.

***And you shall tell my father [about] all my glory in Egypt (Gen. 45:13).*** *Sefer Chassidim* (§323) writes: “It is better to interact with an ignoramus who is generous with his money in business, than to interact with a *Talmid Chacham* who is stingy and particular with his money”. Based on this, Rabbi Chaim Palagi (*Pnei Chaim* to Vayigash, p. 87) explains that when Chamor tried to convince the inhabitants of Shechem to circumcise themselves so that they can intermingle with the family of Yaakov, he said, “These people are full [of goodwill] with us, and they will settle then land and trade in it, and the land—behold—it is ‘wide-handed’” (Gen. 34:21). Rashi explains that the land is “wide-handed” means that it is comparable to a generous man who holds out the width of his hand to give to others. In other words, Chamor argued that the family of Yaakov are generous people whom it is worthwhile for them to befriend. Similarly, Rabbi Chaim Palagi explains that Yosef wanted his brothers to convey to their father that Yosef was a generous person whose resources mirrored that of the king, and he was willing to give away whatever anybody asked for. Yosef stressed “in Egypt” as if to say that even though the Egyptians in general were stingy people—as the root of **מצרים** is “narrow” (**צרי**) and a stingy person is referred to as somebody with “narrow eyes” (**צר עין**)—Yosef was still generous. The purpose of relaying

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<sup>2</sup> I once heard from R. Shmuel Brazil shlita, that the initials of the Ten Plagues in Egypt (**לצ"ך עד"ש באח"ב**) = 501) equals the *gematria* as the word “that” (**אשר** = 501). Perhaps, this hints to the idea that Yosef’s approval of his brother’s actions was because he saw that they will eventually bring about the realization of the Ten Plagues (which had been inscribed on Moshe’s staff since time immemorial) and the redemption with that very staff, by means of those 10 great revelations.

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this message, of course, was to convince Yaakov Avinu that it is worth his while to relocate to Egypt.

***And they spoke to him all the words that Yosef spoke to them, and he [Yaakov] saw the wagons that Yosef sent to carry him, and the spirit of Yaakov their father was enlivened (Gen. 45:27).*** Rashi explains that Yosef gave them a sign in that the last topic he learned about with his father before their separation was the topic of *Egla Arufah* (the calf whose neck is broken when an unresolved murder is committed outside of a Jewish city. For this reason, explains Rashi, it says that Yosef sent the wagons, not Pharaoh (because the sign is in the wagons whose Hebrew term is a homonym with the Hebrew word for calf). Rabbi Efrayim Lunshitz in *Kli Yakar* cites his other work *Olelos Efraim* (533) where he explains that the when performing the *Egla Arufah* rite, one measures to the closest city in order to determine who is the responsible/guilty party. So too, when Yosef sent Yaakov the wagons, his message to Yaakov was that he should “measure” his own deeds to find out why he deserved to be punished with the disappearance of his beloved son for 22 years. Yaakov took this message to heart, and, after some soul-searching realized that he was punished with the disappearance of his son for 22 years because he left his own father for 22 years. Once Yaakov realized this, the wagons became a sign to him that Yosef was surely alive, because if Yosef was dead, then Yaakov suffering would last more than 22 years, and he knew himself that he did not deserve such a punishment, so it must have been that these wagons proved to him the fact that Yosef was still alive.

***And God said to Yisrael in a nocturnal vision, and He said, ‘Yaakov, Yaakov’ and he [Yisrael/Yaakov] said, ‘Here I am’, and He [God] said, ‘I am the God—the God of your father, do not fear from descending to Egypt, for I will make you a great nation (Gen. 46:2–3).*** When Esav complained about Yaakov getting the blessings from Yitzchak in addition to having swindled him from his firstborn right, Esav said, “Therefore, his name is called Yaakov (יעקב) because he tricked me (ויעקבני) twice” (Gen. 27:36). Rabbi Pinchas HaLevi Horowitz of Frankfurt (*Panim Yafos* to Gen. 32:29) cites the Arizal (*Etz Chaim, Shaar* 32, Ch. 1) that this passage means that when somebody uses the name Yaakov twice, then he has the power to “trick” or “outsmart” the Satan. This is hinted to in the fact that the *gematria* of Yaakov (יעקב = 182) if doubled ( $182 * 2 = 364$ ) equals the same as the *gematria* of The Satan (השטן = 364). In light of this, he explains that when Yaakov was about to descend to Egypt, God spoke to him by first saying “Yaakov Yaakov” in order to neutralize the

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powers of the Satan, and once the Satan was neutralized, Yaakov would have nothing to fear in Egypt.

***I will descend with you to Egypt, and arise—I will certainly arise—and Yosef will put his hands on your eyes [when you die] (Gen. 46:4).*** The Talmud (*Brachos* 56b) says that if one sees a camel in his dream, it is a sign that from Above they decreed upon him death, and he was saved from it. To support this assertion, Rabbi Chama bar Rabbi Chaninah cites this verse at hand that Hashem will, metaphorically-speaking, go down to Egypt with Yaakov and later return to the Holy Land with the Jewish People. It says in *Perek Shira* that the song of the camel is the verse: “From the high place, he roars, and from the holy domicile, he gives his voice. Roar—he shall surely roar—over his place of living”. In this passage, we see that the camel represents the “pain” Hashem suffers in the destruction of the Holy Temple, by which His presence is not settled in its proper place. What does all of this mean? The Talmud (*Bechoros* 8b) says that unlike other animals, the posture of a male and female camel during intercourse is back-to-back. What is the significance of this? The great Kabbalist Rabbi Yosef Ergas writes in his *Shomer Emunim (HaKadmon)* that there are three types of interactions/intercourses: face-to-face, face-to-back, and back-to-back. Rabbi Chanoch Zundel of Bialystok (*Knaf Renanim to Perek Shira, Camel*) elaborates on this point, and explains that when we speak of interactions/intercourses this refers to the inflow of divine energies from Above to This World. Just as in the intercourse of This World, there can be no offspring without the interplay between male and female elements, so does the Divine intercourse refer to some combination of male (*rachamim*-mercy) and female (*din*-justice) components. A Rashi (to Gen. 1:1) explains, the Jewish People are the purpose of creation, such that when Hashem “connects” to the Jewish People to give them an influx of influence, He does so in the manner of face-to-face (Deut. 5:4). This is symbolized by the faces of the Cherubim in the Temple who faced each other, just as Hashem and the Jewish People interact face-to-face—but only as long as their relationship with Him is strong, and they act as they are expected to. When Hashem influences other nations of the world, He does not give them their influence straight to their face, but rather “flings” it over His shoulders to show His dissatisfaction with them. In this way, Hashem’s influence over the nations of the world can be characterized as “back-to-face”. This is symbolized by an animal’s manner of intercourse whereby one animal’s face is opposite the other’s back. For this reason, the nations of the world are compared to animals (see Isa. 34:6). However, there is a third way of Hashem interacting with the world, and that is how He influences the Jewish People at times when they are not acting properly. In such times, the Jewish People have figuratively

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“turned their back” on Hashem (see Jer. 2:27), so He too “turns His back” away from them, even when influencing them with His divine energies. This again is symbolized by the Cherubim in the Temple who turn away from one another when the Jews are not acting in accordance with Hashem’s wishes. Nonetheless, this disharmony between Hashem and the Jewish People is not absolute. Even though both turn their backs away from one another, this is comparable to a married couple who get in a fight and are too embarrassed of to look one another in the face, so they refuse to meet face-to-face. But deep down, they are really pained over their fall-out because they actually love each other, and are waiting for the other partner apologize first so that they may return to marital harmony. In short, Hashem’s relationship with the Jewish People can either be considered face-to-face or back-to-back, there is nothing in between. As such, the camel whose manner of intercourse is always back-to-back represents Hashem’s relationship with the Jewish People when in exile, in which He is—so to speak—“pained” over the destruction of the Temple, and hopes that the Jewish People will make some overtures to return to Him. By characterizing the Jews’ relationship with Hashem in their most down-trodden times as back-to-back, we include an expression of hope that they will once again return to the relationship of face-to-face. This too is alluded to in the verse at hand in which Hashem promises to join the Jewish People in their exiles (i.e. feel the pain of the exile in the same way that the Jews feel that pain) and then later come back with the Jewish People to place of redemption. We can add that just as a camel’s nature allows it to stock up on water and sustenance and last a long time without replenishing itself, so do the Jewish People have the wherewithal to last throughout the bitter exiles and continue to live and wait for their return to their land, may it come speedily and in our days.

**Serach (Gen. 46:17).** Rabbi Menachem Azariah of Fano writes (*Meab Kesita* 98) that Serach at this time was seven years old.

**And Chuppim (Gen. 46:21).** The Midrash (*Yalkut Shimoni* 151) says that Binyamin named his son Chuppim (חפּיּים) because, “I walked barefoot (יחף) and mourned over him [Yosef]”. The prophet Amos lambasts the Kingdom of Israel “for their sale of a righteous man for silver, and a destitute for the sake of shoes” (Amos 2:6). When Yosef’s ten brothers sold him, they bought shoes with the profits (see Targum Yonason to Gen. 37:28 and Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer ch. 37). In contrast to his brothers who made a point of wearing shoes in the aftermath of Yosef’s sale, Binyamin actually went around barefoot because he recognized Yosef’s importance and mourned the loss of such a righteous man. Rabbeinu Yoel writes in

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*Rimzei Rabbeinu Yoel* (*Vayigash*, pg. 168) that the name Chuppim (חפּים) alludes to the fifty times that the Exodus is mentioned in the Torah, as it is an acronym for “fifty times the exit from Egypt” appears in the Torah (חמשים פעמים יציאת מצרים בתורה).

**All souls—fourteen. And the sons of Dan—Chushim. (Gen. 46:22–23).** The verse “And the sons of Dan—Chushim” has only three words in it. Rabbeinu Yoel writes in *Rimzei Rabbeinu Yoel* (*Vayigash*, pg. 168 and *Vaychei*, p. 188) that there are fourteen verses in the Torah that have three words, which indicates a connection between the verse about Dan’s son and the preceding verse about fourteen people. Altogether, there are 42 words in three-word verses ( $14 * 3 = 42$ ) which alludes to the special name of Hashem that it comprised of 42 letters. Rabbeinu Yoel also writes that the name Chushim (חשים = 358) in *gematria* equals “snake” (נחש = 358), as Yaakov blessed Dan that he should be like a snake. Chushim and “snake” also equal the *gematria* of the word Moshiach (משיח = 358), as the Messiah is destined to be a descendant of Dan, for Dan is also compared to a lion (Deut 33:22), just like Yehuda is (Gen. 49:9).<sup>3</sup> Rabbeinu Yoel (*Vayechi*, pg. 181) also notes that the first letters of each word in the phrase “Yehuda [is] a lion cub” (גור אריה יהודה = 14) equals the *gematria* of the name of King David (דוד = 14). He also notes that “lion cub” (גור אריה = 425) equals “Messiah, son of David” (משיח בן דוד = 424 + 1) in *gematria*.

**And he sent Yehuda before him to Yosef to ‘teach’ before him to Goshen (Gen. 46:28).** Rashi explains that Yehuda was sent to Goshen before the rest of Yaakov’s family arrived in order to establish a *Beis Talmud* from whence Halachic rulings will be issued. The Klausenberger Rebbe (*Shefa Chaim*, *Vayigash* p. 447) asks why didn’t Yosef understand on his own that they should make sure to establish a *Beis Talmud*, which did Yaakov have to send Yehuda to tell this to Yosef? He explains that before the family of Yaakov immigrated to Egypt, they had lived in the Holy Land—the Land which Hashem constantly takes an active role in administering. In that Land, Yaakov was used to expecting the highest forms of Divine revelation, like his dream with the ladder and other visions in which he saw the angels above. In such a setting, Yaakov was able to sit and toil in the secrets of the Torah because he was able to connect to the Upper Realms. However, now that his family is descending to Egypt, Yaakov realized that he would have to adopt a different approach. In Egypt, there was accumulation of impure energies, and Yaakov realized that it would be

<sup>3</sup> R. Mendel Kasher (*Torah Shleimah*) cites a Midrash which says that the Messiah will be a descendant of Yehudah from his patrilineal line, and a descendant of Dan from his matrilineal line. See also what I wrote in *Paradise* (to *Parshas Vayigash*) where I discuss this at length.

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dangerous to study the deepest secrets of the Torah in Egypt, lest that knowledge spread and perhaps even be translated into “Egyptian” for the benefit of the masses. Because of this, Yaakov Avinu decided that that was the appropriate time to abstain from spreading Torah outside of his circles. Nonetheless, Yosef was not expected to catch wind of this situation, because Yosef was a young lad when Yaakov taught him all the secrets of the Torah (see Onkelos to Gen. 37:3, and *Baal Haturim* to Gen. 37:4), but now that he had matured and was of a more advanced age, it he would be studying even deeper topics (see Chagigah 13a that Rabbi Elazar told his teacher Rabbi Yochanan that he cannot yet study *Maase Merkava* because he is too young), and would need to consult with Yaakov to clarify the deepest Kabbalistic ideas. In order to obviate this possibility, Yaakov sent Yehuda to tell Yosef that they must establish a *Beis Talmud* from whence Halachic rulings will be issues—as if to imply that the finer details of mystical topics will not be discussed there. In this, Yaakov meant to convey to Yosef that he should not publicly engage in the study of the secrets of the Torah, but should simply rely upon whatever information is revealed to him. In Egypt, they should only study the revealed Torah, not the hidden, mystical secrets behind the revealed Torah.

**And Yosef tied his chariot... (Gen. 46:29).** Rashi explains that Yosef himself fastened his horses to his chariot in order to show honor to his father. In two other cases, we find that prominent people prepared their own animals for transportation, but Rashi in both places offers a different explanation. When Avraham Avinu prepares his own donkey in order to get to the *Akedah*, Rashi explains that even though he could have had one of his servants do it, Avraham did it himself because his “love” of Hashem blinded him, such that he could not logically think about somebody else doing it for him. Similarly, when Bilaam prepared his own donkey for going to curse the Jews, Rashi explains that his “hatred” of the Jews was so great, that it blinded him in a way that he could not use his common-sense in getting one of his attendants to prepare the animal. Why, in Rashi’s estimation was it only considered an honor to Yakkov for Yosef to prepare his own animal, but not an honor to Hashem for Avraham Aveinu to do so?<sup>4</sup> Perhaps this can be explained by a story told of Rav Tarfon. The Gemara (Kiddushin 31a) tells us that Rav T arfon would bend down to allow his mother to climb on his back to get onto her bed. We learn from this that honoring ones parents is enhanced when someone does something that is otherwise beneath his or her dignity in

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<sup>4</sup> See *Bereshis Rabbah* (54:8) which says about Yosef as well that he prepared his own animal because his love for his father blinded his logic. However, Rashi does not cite this Midrash, preferring instead to cite a *Mechilta* which says it was for his father’s honor.



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service of a parent. Thus, Yosef went out of his way to do a menial task normally reserved for his stable staff in honor of his father. When it comes to traveling to the Akeda, there is no additional mitzvah to do an action beneath ones dignity, and thus the most compelling explanation would be that it was the passion and excitement that came along with his mitzvah opportunity that cause him to act differently.

***And Yisrael said to Yosef, ‘I will die this time, after I have seen your face tha you are still alive’ (Gen. 46:30).*** Rabbi Yosef Teomim, author of the *Pri Megadim* writes in *Sefer HaMaggid* (to *Vayigash* 10) that until Yaakov was reunited with Yosef, he felt like everyday he was dying, but now at this point, he realized that he will only die once, and that will be his final death. This is alluded to in the wording of Gen. 47:28, “And Yaakov lived in Egypt seventeen years, and the days of the years Yaakov’s life where 147 years”. This means that because Yaakov experienced life with Yosef again for those seventeen years in Egypt, he was able to say about the rest of his life that it was called living, not death, so all 147 years of his life are now considered lived.

***And the men are shepherds of sheep, for they have been men of livestock, and they sheep and cattle and whatever they have did they bring (Gen. 46:32).*** Rabbeinu Bechaya explains that they meant to stress that the animals that they are bringing are their own animals, not that they were shepherds hired out to watch other people’s animals. Rather, they were independently wealthy because they were “men of livestock”. Why did Yaakov Avinu’s children specifically chose the shepherding/raising livestock profession and not a different occupation? There are two reasons: Firstly, because it was quite lucrative, as there are different profits which livestock can yield in the form of wool, milk, and offspring. And, because it is a job in which one does not require one to exert so much effort. Secondly, the sons of Yaakov knew that they and their descendants were destined to be exiled to Egypt—a land whose population actually worshipped sheep. For this reason, they chose to work in the field of sheep rearing so that they and their descendants will be so used to dealing with sheep that they would never even **entertain the possibility of worshipping sheep.**

***And Pharaoh said to Yaakov, ‘how many days are the years of your life?’ And Yaakov said to Pharaoh, ‘the days of the years of my dwelling [in This World amount to] one hundred and thirty—insufficient and bas were the days of the years of my life, and they had not reached [the amount of] the days of the years of my forefathers’ lives in the days of their dwelling [in This World] (Gen. 47:8–9).*** Rabbi Yosef Teomim, author

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of the *Pri Megadim* writes in *Sefer HaMaggid* (to *Vayigash* 12) explains that when Pharaoh saw that the Nile River would rise in Yaakov's honor, he wanted to ascertain how long this benefit to the Egyptians would last, because if Yaakov still had many years left of his life, then Egypt could gain a lot from having the Nile River overflow for so long. In response, Yaakov Avinu answered that although he appeared poor and malnourished, this is not due to his advanced age, but to do "my dwelling" (מגורי), which R. Teomim takes to mean "my fears" (מגורי). To bolster this, he explains that he has not yet even reached the ages of his forefathers (Avraham who died at 175 and Yitzchok, at 180) who lived so long despite their numerous "fears" and distress. Thus, in essence, Yaakov's answer was that he still expects to live quite a few years.

**...except the land of the priests he did not acquire, for it is a right for the priests from Pharaoh (Gen. 47:22).** Targum Yonason adds that another reason why Yosef did not confiscate the property of the priests<sup>5</sup> is that when Potiphar first heard of the accusations against Yosef and wanted to kill him, it was the priests who dissuaded him from doing so. Indeed many other sources (such as *Midrash Aggadab*, *Rosh*, *Panaeach Raza*, *Chizkumi* to Gen. 39:20) all write that Yosef gave the Egyptian priests a reprieve of sorts because they saved him from being killed by Potiphar, by showing that the direction of the tear on Yosef's clothing suggested that he ran away from Mrs. Potiphar, and not vice versa. Other sources, like *Imrei Noam*, explain that they demonstrated Yosef's innocence in a different way: when Mrs. Potiphar claimed that Yosef tried to sleep with her, she took egg white and put it on Yosef's clothing, claiming that was his semen. However, the Egyptian priests caught on to this ruse and said that if they put the it on coals and it would dissipate, that means it is really semen, but if it would harden, then it is really eggs. And lo and behold—they did this

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<sup>5</sup> When the Torah refers to the Egyptian priests, it uses the word *Kohanim*, but when Targum Yonason refers to them, he translates *Kohen* as *Komer*. What does *Komer* refer to? Rabbi Eliyahu HaBachur, writes in his work *Sefer HaTishbi* (s.v. כמר) that the word *komer* refers to something which has been blackened, like the soot of an oven (see Lam. 5:10). This is a term used to mean "priest" because the ancient priests wore black clothes, as they continue to do nowadays. Alternatively, he explains that the word *komer* refers to something locked up and isolated, an apt description of "priests" who tended to be living alone in monasteries rather than living with everybody else. R Hirsch writes that *komer* comes from the word *nichmeru rachamav* which means to arouse feelings of mercy, since their goal was to emotionally appeal to people to convince them to worship false ideas. A kohen however, is meant to appeal to ones intellect. R. Reuven Chaim Klein shared with me that in the papyri of Elephantine, the Jews would refer to Jewish priests as kohanim, and gentile ones as komerim.

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experiment and got an omelet. This version of the story actually appears in Targum Yonason itself earlier (to Gen. 39:14).

***Here is for you seed... (Gen. 47:23).*** The word “here” in this verse is *hey* (הא), pronounced like the name of the letter *hey*. Rabbi Yonason Shteiff (*Amaros, Vayigash* 105) writes that the letter *hey* is enchanted with the ability to give birth to children (see *Zohar* 3:216b, and *Zohar Chadash* to Song of Songs 72b). This idea is alluded to in your verses which associated the letter *hey* with “seed” (i.e. offspring). Indeed, all six mothers of the Jewish People have the letter *hey* in their name (שרה רבקה רחל לאה בלהה זלפה)—with the expectation of Rachel. Because of this, Rachel gave her maidservant Bilhah to Yaakov as a wife, because Rachel reasoned that she cannot birth children because her name does not have a *hey* in it, but that Bilhah has two *heys*, so she can receive one of Bilhah’s two *heys* and merit giving birth through Bilhah.