

## **Parshas Vayigash – Inspirations from the Haftarah**

**By Rabbi Eliyahu Kirsh**

The Haftarah for Parshas Vayigash is from the sefer of Yechezkel, Chapter 37, 15-28. In order to understand this Haftarah, we have to remember that Yechezkel lived at the time of the Babylonian exile and was among those who were deported to Babylonia before the destruction of the Bais Hamikdash. In this Haftarah, Yechezkel Hanavi is told to take two wooden sticks. On one he was to write 'for Yehudah and Bnai Yisroel his comrades' and on the other he was to write 'For Ephraim and all of Bnai Yisroel his comrades'. Then Yechezkel was to put the two together as one. When people would ask him what he was doing, he was to tell them that he was symbolically bringing together all of the tribes of Am Yisroel as one, signifying Hashem's new message of peace and brotherhood. For the Haftarah continues stating that Hashem will bring all of Am Yisroel together from all around the earth to their homeland. At that time there will no longer be the two kingdoms, Yehudah and Yisroel, as there had been for most of the years of the first Bais Hamikdash, and was a scenario most people in Yechezkel's time had become accustomed to. There will only be one kingdom that will be led by one king, following Hashem's ways. At that time, the Bais Hamikdash will be built and all nations will see that Hashem is the real King of the entire earth.

This Haftarah is a natural continuation of the theme of the Torah reading where we read of all the brothers of Yosef finally reuniting. What is especially moving is that when Yosef and Binyamin, who were full brothers [both sons of Rachel], unite, the Torah tells us that each one fell on the other's neck and cried. Rashi cites the Gemara that Yosef was crying for the Bais Hamikdash in Binyamin's territory that will be destroyed and Binyamin cries for the House of Hashem at Shiloh which was used for a time before the Bais Hamikdash was built but afterwards destroyed. The following question can be asked. The very drama of the story is enough for us to understand why there is so much crying taking place so why does Rashi have to quote for us at this point a midrash involving crying for future houses of Hashem? I heard from my Rosh Yeshiva, Harav Dovid Feinstein, shlita, that at this point of reunion of the brothers they realized what their biggest problem was in achieving unity: *Sinas Chinam*. Baseless hatred was indeed their greatest enemy and obstacle. It was this groundless hatred for Yosef that led to all of the events of the last few Torah readings and it will continue to be a problem as it will lead to all future calamities in our history. Indeed, we are still suffering today from the same exile and destruction that was caused by *sinas chinam*.

What can be done? While we are supposed to feel a sense of ‘tribal loyalty’, [ie Litvish, Chassidish, Sephardi] we are still obliged to remember our greater loyalty to Hashem and his Torah and remember that we are all serving Hashem. As Jews we must all work on ourselves to feel *ahavas* Yisroel for all Jews even those not of our ‘tribe’. While other Torah- committed Jews we come into contact with, may have different outward appearances and minhagim than those we are used to, they are still serving Hashem as much as we are. If we truly do this and change our mindset, we will be worthy of seeing a world of true peace and unity with the Bais Hamikdash rebuilt and Hashem dwelling among us. May we all take these messages from the Torah and Haftarah to heart and be worthy of seeing the fulfillment of these splendid prophecies in the near future.