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Parashat VaYechi **14 Tevet 5783 – January 6, 2023**

The parashah begins with the words, “And Ya’akov lived in the land of Egypt...” Why does the Torah start this parashah off with the word “VaYechi (and he lived)”, asks the Sfat Emet (Rabi Yehudah Aryeh Leib Alter 1847-1905). He answers his question by bringing forward the root word of VaYechi. The root being “Chaim” which means “truly living”, living connected to HaShem.

We must follow up with another question. How is it possible for Ya’akov to experience “true living”, spiritual growth, and vibrancy in a place of polytheism and debauchery like Egypt? Again, the Sfat Emet comes with an answer that applies to all generations. The lives of our Patriarchs provided a lesson for us, and our descendants, to emulate in how we live.

Ya’akov Avinu was able to “truly live” and flourish spiritually in Egypt because he had the quality of truthfulness. Ya’akov’s grandfather, Avraham, had the trait of loving-kindness. Ya’akov’s father, Yitzchak, had the trait of strength (discipline). Due to Ya’akov’s quality of truth, he could not be coerced into the falsehoods of Egypt. Egypt was the scientific center of the world, but Ya’akov would not be seduced away from the truth of G-d and that it is G-d Who is in charge. Ya’akov’s life is, in a sense, reborn in Egypt for he is reunited with Yosef. This reunification causes Ya’akov to “truly live”, filled with joy and blessing his sons with a future.

Good Shabbos! Shabbat Shalom!

Rabbi Nathan W. Langer

