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To:

Busy during hebrew school?



Catch up on all you missed at
Lessons for Life from the
Weekly Torah Portion
with Rabbi Doni Deutsch

Wednesdays, 8:15 pm at the CTN Center

info@torahnetwork.org



Home for the
Wondering Jew.™

Hang in there - Shabbos is coming!

TORAH PORTION: VAYIGASH (GENESIS 44:18 - 47:27)

Please help support CTN and the Shabbat Fax by dedicating an upcoming issue. You can do it in honor or memory of someone dear to you or for a special occasion. The options are limitless ... and the merit is great!

1. **"G-d said to Jacob: Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt ... I will go down with you to Egypt and I will surely bring you up ..."** (46:3-4)

Jacob knows that there are tough times coming. His journey down to Egypt will lead to one of our nation's most difficult periods. The Egyptian exile.

And Jacob receives a promise. That G-d will be with him. And will help his children survive the ordeal that lies ahead.

... There's more to this than just a promise to Jacob. It's also a lesson to us as we go through life and its difficulties.

'I will go down with you ... and I will bring you up from there'

... Not that we can grow despite our challenges.

But that we can grow because of our challenges.

Because as Jewish mystical thought teaches, the difficulties we encounter in life are not there by accident. They're there for a reason.

And the reason is *not* just to make life more difficult.

... But to help us become better.

By giving us opportunities to push ourselves to respond in the best way possible. The way G-d wants us to. And the way that deep down, we want us to.

So next time we are dealing with one of those situations, big or small. Whether we're facing a truly major problem or maybe it's just someone who's being a pain and getting on our nerves.

... It's not always easy to respond in the right way. To do the right thing.

But it helps if we remember what's really going on.

That it's a test. A challenge. And an opportunity to grow.

• **A baby is starting to walk.** And one day, his mother holds out her arms. "Come to Mommy."

He gives her a big smile. He takes a step. And then another.

He's about to fall into his mother's arms. And what does she do?

She moves back a few steps.

He tries to reach her. But he falls. He's frustrated. And he cries.

... What's happening?

It's simple. The mother and the baby have two different agendas.

The baby wants one thing. To reach his mother.

*The mother? She wants him to learn how to walk.
Because she's seen what he can do. And knows that he's ready for more.
... Jewish tradition teaches that life is like that.
As soon as we have taken one step - we are given the challenge for the next.
And that way, we have the opportunity to keep growing.*

**2. Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt... I will make you a great nation there. ”
(46:3)**

Jacob had every reason to be afraid.
His family was unique. Their values. Beliefs. And lifestyle.
And now he has to go down to Egypt. The center of civilization at the time.
... Egyptian culture opposed everything he stood for.
His family would be an unbelievably small minority.
And it seemed so likely that they would be swallowed up by the majority.
Lose their identity. And become just like everybody else.
... But G-d makes him a promise.
They would not only maintain their identity. But they would become a great nation.
It sounds almost absurd.
... But that's exactly what happened.
Jacob comes to Egypt with just seventy people.
And hundreds of years later, they're a nation.
They leave Egypt. Go to Mount Sinai. Receive the Torah.
And begin the process of changing the world.
... It's pretty amazing.
But it's the story of Jewish history. Time and time again.
When it seems almost absurd to believe that we will survive. Let alone thrive.
... But we do.
Because G-d made a promise.

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Shabbat Shalom and best wishes for a joyous and meaningful Chanukah.


Rabbi Moshe Katz


Rabbi Doni Deutsch

Chicago Torah Network <http://torahnetwork.org>
2832 West Touhy Avenue, Chicago, IL 60645
Phone: 773.761.0400 Fax: 773.761.9262 e-mail: info@torahnetwork.org