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פרשת ויגש תשפ״ז

The Prism of ישראל Towards בינה

Dovid Kopel

The Missing Seventieth

There is a fascinating difficulty in פרשת ויגש, one that appears at first to be a simple matter of arithmetic. As יעקב and his family descend into מצרים (*Egypt*), the Torah carefully identifies the individuals who belong to his household. It gives their names, divides them according to the אמהות (*matriarchs*), records separate subtotals, and finally concludes:

> כָּל הַנֶּפֶשׁ לְבֵית יַעֲקֹב הַבָּאָה מִצְרַיְמָה שִׁבְעִים. (בראשית מו:כז)

All the souls of the house of Yaakov who came to Egypt were seventy.

Yet when we count the descendants explicitly named, excluding ער ואונן, whom the Torah tells us had already died, we find only sixty-nine.

The difficulty first appears in the subtotal of לאה. The Torah closes her family with the words כל נפש בניו ובנותיו שלשים ושלש: all the souls of his sons and his daughters, thirty-three. Yet only thirty-two qualifying individuals are named, and among the daughters only דינה. The other three groups agree precisely with their stated totals: sixteen for זלפה, fourteen for רחל, and seven for בלהה. Thirty-two plus sixteen plus fourteen plus seven yields sixty-nine.

The gap appears a second time at the very end, in two adjacent פסוקים (*verses*). First the Torah counts those who came with יעקב:

> כָּל הַנֶּפֶשׁ הַבָּאָה לְיַעֲקֹב מִצְרַיְמָה יֹצְאֵי יְרֵכוֹ ... כָּל נֶפֶשׁ שִׁשִּׁים וָשֵׁשׁ. (בראשית מו:כו)

All the souls who came with Yaakov to Egypt, who issued from his loins ... all the souls were sixty-six.

Then it adds יוסף and his two sons, already in מצרים, and declares the total for בית יעקב: seventy. Sixty-six and three make sixty-nine. The Torah says seventy.

Why is the Torah so meticulous with its enumeration, only to leave us one person short in the final count?

The ראי״ש[1] notes a convention of לשון המקרא (*the language of Scripture*) by which a count one short of a complete ten may nevertheless be expressed as the next ten, as with forty מלקות (*lashes*) and the fifty days of ספירת העומר (*counting the Omer*). This is a legitimate explanation of numerical language. But it does not fit here, and I should add that it strongly does not resonate with me. I didn't ask my Rebbe, but I can hear his agreement on that as well. The Torah is not speaking casually about an approximate population. It is deliberately enumerating individuals, recording

who belongs to whom, and even mentioning two deceased sons so we will not mistakenly include them.

Nor is the seventieth missing for lack of candidates. Some count יעקב himself. A מדרש[2] suggests יוכבד, the daughter of לוי, born as the family entered מצרים, and another opinion there counts the שכינה (*Divine Presence*) that went down with them. The אבן עזרא[3] rejects the יוכבד answer sharply: had so remarkable a birth occurred, he argues, the Torah would have said so.

Each of these supplies a number. None yet explains why the Torah would arrange its count so that a careful reader stumbles.

If the Torah had given only the names, we could have counted. If it had given only the total, we could have accepted it. But the Torah gives us both, and the two do not agree.

Perhaps the question is not merely, Who is the missing seventieth? Rather, why does the Torah insist upon giving us both the individuals and the whole, and why does the whole exceed the individuals?

✦

The Mission to Seek שלום

The story of יוסף opened with a family that could not speak. The Torah says of the brothers:

> וַיִּרְאוּ אֶחָיו כִּי אֹתוֹ אָהַב אֲבִיהֶם מִכָּל אֶחָיו וַיִּשְׂנְאוּ אֹתוֹ וְלֹא יָכְלוּ דַּבְּרוֹ לְשָׁלֹם. (בראשית לז:ד)

His brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, and they hated him and could not speak to him peacefully.

They did not merely fail to speak peacefully; they could not. רש״י notes the honesty in it: they did not speak peace outwardly while harboring hatred within. Yet this was a profound rupture in the very family from which כלל ישראל (*the Jewish people*) would emerge.

And יעקב sends יוסף to recover exactly what was missing:

> לֶךְ נָא רְאֵה אֶת שְׁלוֹם אַחֶיךָ וְאֶת שְׁלוֹם הַצֹּאן וְהָשִׁבֵנִי דָּבָר. (בראשית לז:יד)

Go now and see how your brothers and the flock are faring, and bring me back word.

When a stranger finds him wandering in the field, יוסף says simply, את אחי אנכי מבקש: I am seeking my brothers.

The mission ends in the בור (*the pit*) and the sale. The only report that reaches יעקב is a bloodied כתונת (*the tunic*). We saw in וישב how that כתונת carried the transformation of יוסף. Here we need only the mission that never returned.

✦

Recognition and ערבות

When the brothers stand before the ruler of מצרים, it is יוסף who recognizes them, while they do not recognize him:

> וַיַּכֵּר יוֹסֵף אֶת אֶחָיו וְהֵם לֹא הִכִּרֻהוּ. (בראשית מב:ח)
>
> *Yosef recognized his brothers, but they did not recognize him.*

And he remembers the dreams he had dreamed about them. The dreams have come true, but not as the claim to supremacy the brothers once heard in them. The one they rejected now provides their לחם (*bread*). The path by which יוסף brings them to the next moment was our question in מקץ. What matters here is where it leads.

When בנימין is endangered, will they abandon another son of רחל? It is יהודה, who once proposed the sale, who now approaches and offers himself in his place:

> וְעַתָּה יֵשֶׁב נָא עַבְדְּךָ תַּחַת הַנַּעַר עֶבֶד לַאדֹנִי וְהַנַּעַר יַעַל עִם אֶחָיו. (בראשית מד:לג)
>
> *And now, please let your servant remain in place of the boy as a slave to my lord, and let the boy go up with his brothers.*

The brothers have been given the opportunity to act differently in a situation that recalls the sale. Their relationship to their brother is no longer merely a fact of shared parentage; it now demands sacrifice and ערבות (*mutual responsibility*).

And now the truth can finally be revealed.

The Revelation: אני יוסף

The Torah tells us that יוסף can no longer restrain himself. He orders everyone out of the room. רש״י explains that he does not want the מצריים present when his brothers are shamed. Even before revealing himself, he is concerned with their dignity.

Then he speaks:

> וַיֹּאמֶר יוֹסֵף אֶל אֶחָיו אֲנִי יוֹסֵף הַעוֹד אָבִי חָי וְלֹא יָכְלוּ אֶחָיו לַעֲנוֹת אֹתוֹ כִּי נִבְהֲלוּ מִפָּנָיו. (בראשית מה:ג)
>
> *Yosef said to his brothers: I am Yosef. Is my father still alive? But his brothers could not answer him, for they were dismayed before him.*

With the words אני יוסף, the ruler before them becomes the very brother whom they sold.

But why does he immediately ask העוד אבי חי? Surely he knows that יעקב is alive. יהודה has just spoken at length about their father and the terrible consequences of losing בנימין. Even earlier, in מקץ, he had asked:

> הֲשָׁלוֹם אֲבִיכֶם הַזָּקֵן אֲשֶׁר אֲמַרְתֶּם הַעוֹדֶנּוּ חָי. (בראשית מג:כז)
>
> *Is your aged father well, the one of whom you spoke? Is he still alive?*

And they had answered:

> שָׁלוֹם לְעַבְדְּךָ לְאָבִינוּ עוֹדֶנּוּ חָי. (בראשית מג:כח)
>
> *Your servant our father is well; he is still alive.*

Why ask again?

Perhaps we can suggest something rather simple, yet meaningful. Until this moment, he has been speaking as the משנה למלך. He asks after אביכם, your father, because he cannot reveal that this elderly man is his own father. But now he says אני יוסף, and the very next words are העוד אבי חי.

Previously אביכם. Now אבי.

Perhaps he is no longer asking as the Egyptian ruler. He is asking as a son who, after more than twenty years, can finally speak openly of his father. Now that you know who I am, is my father really alive? Will I actually have the privilege of seeing him again?

The ספורנו[4] understands the question as astonishment that his father could have survived such years of anguish. There is a deeply human dimension to this moment, one that should not be lost amid the discussion of the brothers' wrongdoing.

The כלי יקר[5] adds a very different dimension. He suggests that יוסף may have suspected the brothers had exaggerated their father's condition in their efforts to save בנימין.

But the brothers may have heard the question differently still. To them, the words העוד אבי חי were a תוכחה (*rebuke/curses*). Their entire plea had been that their father could not bear losing בנימין. Yet they themselves had allowed him to believe that יוסף was dead. How could they speak so passionately about their father's suffering now, when they had previously disregarded the suffering they caused him? The emphasis on אבי rather than אביכם could be heard as a painful accusation: you did not act toward him as though he were your father.

Perhaps both understandings belong together. יוסף speaks with a son's longing. The brothers hear the אמת (*truth*) of their past confronting them.

This is the force of what חז״ל (*the Sages*) say in the מדרש:[6]

> אוֹי לָנוּ מִיּוֹם הַדִּין אוֹי לָנוּ מִיּוֹם הַתּוֹכֵחָה.
>
> *Woe to us from the day of judgment; woe to us from the day of rebuke.*

The words need not have been intended as a threat in order to reveal their failure. Once the truth stands before them, they can no longer defend their earlier conduct.

And look carefully at the expression used by the Torah. In וישב, they were unable to speak with יוסף in שלום: ולא יכלו דברו לשלום. Now, standing before the revelation, they are again unable to answer him: ולא יכלו אחיו לענות אותו.

The first inability came from שנאה (*hatred*). The second comes from sheer shock and the recognition of what they had done. But in neither case has דיבור (*speech*) yet been restored.

Then יוסף says:

> גְּשׁוּ נָא אֵלַי וַיִּגָּשׁוּ וַיֹּאמֶר אֲנִי יוֹסֵף אֲחִיכֶם אֲשֶׁר מְכַרְתֶּם אֹתִי מִצְרָיְמָה. (בראשית מה:ד)
>
> *Come near to me, please. And they came near. And he said: I am Yosef your brother, whom you sold into Egypt.*

Why repeat אני יוסף?

The first declaration reveals his identity. The second includes one essential word: אחיכם.

The כלי יקר[7] explains that the brothers may have feared that the omission of אחיכם meant יוסף no longer regarded himself as their brother. He now possesses the authority to punish them. What assurance do they have that he will not take revenge?

So יוסף calls them near and says אני יוסף אחיכם: I remain your brother.

Notice that he does not conceal the wrong they committed: אשר מכרתם אותי מצרימה. The sale remains a sale. He acknowledges it openly. But he will not allow that act to determine the entire future of their relationship.

There is also a beautiful correspondence in the language of approaching. The פרשה (*section*) begins ויגש אליו יהודה, as יהודה approaches prepared to sacrifice his own freedom. Now יוסף says גשו נא אלי (*come near to me*). The physical distance mirrors the distance between them, and the movement toward one another reflects the restoration of אחוה (*brotherhood*).

It is one thing to identify someone as a brother. It is quite another to live as a brother. The second declaration is therefore not a repetition. It reveals what the first could not yet establish.

✦

The Revelation of יסוד: יוסף הצדיק

Here חז״ל add an extraordinary detail. A מדרש,[8] which רש״י brings, says that when יוסף said גשו נא אלי he showed his brothers his ברית מילה (*circumcision*). At one level this supplies a sign of his identity. But perhaps the significance extends well beyond physical identification.

How יוסף became יוסף הצדיק was our subject in וישב. Here one aspect of it matters. In the language of the ספירות (*Divine attributes*), he is associated with יסוד (*foundation / channeling bond*) and with the מדרגה (*level*) of צדיק (*righteous person*). The ברית (*covenant*) is not merely an external mark. It points toward שמירת הברית (*guarding the covenant*), the ability to govern one's כוחות (*capacities*) and preserve קדושה (*holiness*) even under the most difficult circumstances.

The trials of יוסף were real. He was taken from his father's בית (*home*), sold as a slave, tempted by אשת פוטיפר, imprisoned, and finally raised to almost unlimited power in מצרים. Yet he remained יוסף. He had not surrendered his identity or his קדושה.

But a physical ברית alone does not prove the refinement of a person's מידות (*character traits*). The fullness of his מדרגה is revealed in the conduct that accompanies it.

Here stands a man with the power to punish the very brothers who sold him. Instead, he speaks to them gently, brings them near, and assures them that their relationship has not been destroyed.

He can confront them with אמת without seeking retribution.

Perhaps we can suggest that this is a particularly important aspect of יסוד. It is not only preserving one's personal קדושה, but being capable of serving as a channel of השפעה (*influence*) to others. The one who was rejected by his brothers becomes the very one who can sustain them.

And so he tells them:

> כִּי לְמִחְיָה שְׁלָחַנִי אֱלֹקִים לִפְנֵיכֶם. (בראשית מה:ה)

For Hashem sent me before you to preserve life.

And again:

> וְעַתָּה לֹא אַתֶּם שְׁלַחְתֶּם אֹתִי הֵנָּה כִּי הָאֱלֹקִים. (בראשית מה:ח)

And now, it was not you who sent me here, but Hashem.

Certainly, these words do not mean that his brothers were innocent, or that their בחירה (*choice*) has somehow been erased. He has just said אשר מכרתם אותי מצרימה. Rather, he recognizes that הקב״ה has brought the preservation of the family out of events that appeared to threaten its very existence.

The same experiences that once seemed to be isolated disasters now begin to reveal a larger relationship. The sale, the famine, the dreams, and the rise of יוסף to power all belong to a story the brothers had not been able to recognize.

Yet the Torah does not end the reconciliation with an explanation of השגחה (*Divine providence*). Instead, יוסף embraces בנימין, weeps over him, kisses all his brothers, and weeps over them. Only then does the Torah say:

> וְאַחֲרֵי כֵן דִּבְּרוּ אֶחָיו אִתּוֹ. (בראשית מה:טו)

And afterward his brothers spoke with him.

Now they can speak. As רש״י explains, until then they had been ashamed before him.

The Torah has taken us from ולא יכלו דברו לשלום, through ולא יכלו אחיו לענות אותו, to ואחרי כן דברו אחיו אתו. Their relationship was always one of אחוה by birth. What has changed is their ability to live that relationship in speech and in action.

And this is the culmination of the mission that began in וישב, when יעקב sent יוסף to seek the שלום (*peace*) of his brothers and יוסף himself said את אחי אנכי מבקש. It took more than twenty years, and the path led through suffering no one could have imagined. Yet at this moment the brothers can finally speak to one another.

Yet when יעקב sets out to see his son, he must be told not to be afraid.



The Fear at באר שבע

The Torah continues:

> וַיִּסַּע יִשְׂרָאֵל וְכָל אֲשֶׁר לוֹ וַיָּבֹא בְּאֵרָה שָׁבַע וַיִּזְבַּח זְבָחִים לֵאלֹקֵי אָבִיו יִצְחָק. (בראשית מו:א)

Israel journeyed with all that he had and came to Be'er Sheva, and he offered sacrifices to the God of his father Yitzchak.

Then, in a vision of the night:

> וַיֹּאמֶר אָנֹכִי הָאֵ–ל אֱלֹקֵי אָבִיךָ אַל תִּירָא מֵרְדָה מִצְרַיְמָה כִּי לְגוֹי גָּדוֹל אֲשִׂימְךָ שָׁם. אָנֹכִי אֵרֵד עִמְּךָ מִצְרַיְמָה וְאָנֹכִי אַעַלְךָ גַּם עָלֹה. (בראשית מו:ג-ד)

And He said: I am Hashem, the God of your father. Do not fear going down to Egypt, for I will make you into a great nation there. I Myself will go down with you to Egypt, and I Myself will surely bring you up again.

Something has happened between one פסוק and the next. The father who said אלכה ואראנו (*I will go and see him*) stops at באר שבע, offers sacrifices specifically to the God of his father יצחק, and must be told: do not fear going down.

What is he afraid of?

The simplest answer is that of רש״י: he was distressed at having to leave the land.

But the fear runs deeper than geography. The sacrifices are brought to the God of יצחק, and יצחק himself had been told never to go down to מצרים. The רמב״ן[9] connects this moment to the גלות (*exile*) foretold to אברהם at the ברית בין הבתרים. Whatever the reunion means for the family, this descent is the beginning of exile.

And notice how Hashem addresses him. He set out as ישראל, and the Torah says Hashem spoke to ישראל. Yet the call itself is יעקב יעקב. At the threshold of גלות, he is called by the name he carried before he became ישראל.

There is a further fear, the one any father of a future nation would carry. He had been promised a nation, and the promise came under a particular name:

> וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ אֱלֹקִים אֲנִי אֵ–ל שַׁדַּי פְּרֵה וּרְבֵה גּוֹי וּקְהַל גּוֹיִם יִהְיֶה מִמֶּךָּ וּמְלָכִים מֵחֲלָצֶיךָ יֵצֵאוּ. (בראשית לה:יא)

And Hashem said to him: I am א-ל שד״י. *Be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a congregation of nations shall come from you, and kings shall issue from your loins.*

That promise was given in the land, at בית אל, on the very day he was named ישראל. Now he is leaving the land. Will the nation still come?

Hashem's answer meets the fear precisely. Not only אל תירא (*do not fear*), but כי לגוי גדול אשימך שם: there, in מצרים itself, you will become a great nation. The ספורנו[10] reads this pointedly. In כנען, the family would have intermarried with its neighbors and dissolved; in מצרים, where the Egyptians kept their distance, a separate people could form.

And then the deepest assurance: אנכי ארד עמך מצרימה. I Myself will go down with you.

The promise is not out of place. It answers the fear that the reunion alone could not answer. The brothers can speak to one another, and the father has his son back. But a family that has only now come together is about to enter גלות, and what will carry it there is not among the members it can list.

Only now does the Torah count them.

✦

The Seventieth

The enumeration opens:

> וְאֵלֶּה שְׁמוֹת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הַבָּאִים מִצְרַיְמָה יַעֲקֹב וּבָנָיו בְּכֹר יַעֲקֹב רְאוּבֵן. (בראשית מו:ח)

These are the names of the children of Israel who came to Egypt: Yaakov and his sons. Yaakov's firstborn was Reuven.

And it closes with a word in the singular: כל הנפש. As חז״ל[11] note, the household of עשו is called נפשות, many souls, while the household of יעקב is one נפש. The כלי יקר[12] connects this singular נפש

with the removal of the jealousy that once divided the brothers. They are many individuals, yet now they can be described as one.

We should be precise about what has changed. The brothers were always brothers, and that bond has now been restored. But the שבטים (*the tribes*) were never yet one people. Twelve men descended from one father are not yet a nation. What forms here, as they recover the ability to speak to one another, is something new.

Now we can return to the count.

The אבן עזרא[13] counts יעקב himself as the seventieth. And the text itself seems to present two distinct counts: one of the descendants, and one that includes יעקב. Sixty-six יוצאי ירכו (*those who issued from his loins*) descend from כנען; three more, יוסף and his two sons, are already in מצרים; and יעקב himself brings the household to seventy.

The sixty-six are הבאה ליעקב, those who came to יעקב, born of him. He cannot be one of his own descendants. But he certainly belongs to בית יעקב. Even the word כל in the concluding count may include the father together with the children, as the אור החיים[14] notes as well. We should not insist that the word כל alone proves the argument, for it occurs elsewhere in the passage. Its significance arises together with the shift in the entire description, from those who came to יעקב to the house of יעקב.

So the final count is not a sum of descendants. It is a house. The descendants come up one short precisely because what makes them a house is not one of them.

And here the other answers of חז״ל find their own places in the text.

The opinion that the שכינה completes the count stands on the promise we have just read: אנכי ארד עמך. The fear at באר שבע was whether the family could survive the descent. The answer is counted into the number itself.

As for יוכבד, the גר״א ז״ל counts her within the seventy, and he does so at the opening of the enumeration, on the count of בני ישראל. She belongs there by birth: the subtotal of לאה speaks of בניו ובנותיו, his sons and his daughters, though only דינה is named among the daughters, and the daughter of לוי completes it. In פרשת בלק he brings both answers side by side: חז״ל, that יוכבד completed the count, and the זוהר, that יעקב himself did.

Perhaps, then, there are two counts here, and two בחינות (*aspects*). The count of בני ישראל is a count of individuals, name by name: a count of the פרט (*the particular*). There the seventieth is יוכבד. The count of בית יעקב is a count of the whole house: a count of the כלל (*the whole*). There the seventieth is יעקב, the one in whom the house is one. The heading of the list does name יעקב, as יעקב ובניו, but as its head, not as one of the names it counts. Each answer completes its own count.

According to חז״ל,[15] she was conceived in כנען and born בין החומות (*between the walls*), as the family entered מצרים. At the very boundary of גלות, a daughter is born who will one day become the mother of משה, of אהרן, and of מרים.

What is striking is not only her future role in גאולה (*redemption*), but the nature of her existence at this threshold. An עובר is already real. It is not merely an imagined possibility. But it has not yet emerged as an independently born individual. We find a related distinction in the סוגיא (*topic*) of

הוכר עוברה (*her pregnancy has become evident*) and דבר שלא בא לעולם (*a thing not yet come into the world*)[16]: something may have begun to exist while still lacking the independent status required for a particular חלות (*legal effect / status*). The comparison is conceptual, not a halachic derivation.

✦

The Women of שד״י

The גר״א ז״ל, commenting on the opening of the enumeration, gathers the three women of the count: שרח and דינה and יוכבד. They are, he says, שד״י[17]. When the גר״א ז״ל gives such a סימן (*indicator*), he is not offering a device for memory. He is telling us that the three belong to that שם. But why should the women of the count belong to the name שד״י?

The name first appears in the Torah when Hashem reveals Himself to אברהם with the ברית מילה: אני א-ל שד״י, together with the promise of increase: וארבה אותך במאד מאד. It is the name under which the nation was promised to יעקב as well, on the day he became ישראל. In the language of the ספירות, it is one of the names of יסוד, and יסוד, as we have seen, is יוסף.

And if we look again at the three women, we find that each of them is bound to יוסף.

Consider first דינה. A מדרש identifies אסנת, the wife of יוסף, as her daughter.[18] If so, מנשה and אפרים, counted among the seventy, are her grandsons. And when יעקב later takes them as his own, he opens with this very name: א-ל שד״י נראה אלי בלוז, and he recalls the promise of increase made to him there.

Then שרח. According to the מדרש, she was the first to tell יעקב that יוסף was alive. Generations later, at the end of the גלות, she alone knew where the Egyptians had sunk his coffin, and she showed it to משה.

And it was the son of יוכבד who carried him out: ויקח משה את עצמות יוסף עמו. The גמרא praises משה for occupying himself with the bones of יוסף while all of ישראל was occupied with the spoils.[19]

Where were those bones brought? To שכם. The גמרא explains: from שכם they stole him, and to שכם we will return what was lost.[20] It is the place where יעקב sent him to seek the שלום of his brothers. And as רש״י notes, it is the place where דינה was violated.

Perhaps this is what the גר״א ז״ל points to: the women of שד״י carry יוסף, and with him the יסוד, from the descent to the return.

There is another dimension to the name as well. שד״י shares its letters with שדה, the field: the קרקע (*soil*) that receives the seed and nurtures it until it emerges. This is the power of the role of the woman. Of the three, שרח and דינה are already born, already פרי. Only יוכבד is still in the field. The one letter the enumeration does not write is the fruit not yet born.

A seed received in the earth does not simply remain as it was. It develops within an environment that sustains it until what was concealed becomes revealed. The future has already begun to develop before it can be seen.

Perhaps we can now see each of the three women in her own place under the name.

The first is דינה, who holds the measure. As רש״י brings, the child לאה carried was to be a son. לאה reasoned that twelve שבטים were destined to come from יעקב: six had already come from her, and four from the שפחות. If this child were a son, רחל would have fewer than a שפחה (*female slave*). She judged herself, prayed, and the child became a girl: דינה, named for the דין (*judgment*) she rendered on herself.

Her concern was proportion. The שפחה is not a rival to her mistress. רחל says of בלהה, ותלד על ברכי ואבנה גם אנכי ממנה: the maid's children are built as the mistress's own. Each שפחה carries a derived form of her mistress's בחינה, and so it must remain proportionate, never overpowering the one from which it derives.

The גר״א ז״ל states it as a כלל, a principle, in the same comment: והכלל כל שפחה היה לה בנים חצי של גבירתה. Every שפחה had half the children of her mistress. Now look at the count. The named descendants of לאה number thirty-two, exactly double the sixteen of זלפה. The fourteen of רחל are exactly double the seven of בלהה. And the thirty-two of לאה include דינה. Without her, the proportion would fail. The daughter born of לאה's דין is the one who holds that measure in the count.

The second is יוכבד, who holds what exceeds the measure. She is the one the enumeration does not write, and once she is counted, the group of לאה stands at thirty-three, beyond the proportion. The גר״א ז״ל, who states the rule of half, is the one who counts her: within his own comment, the rule holds for the written names, and the one he adds exceeds it. A rule his own count exceeds is not a rule of arithmetic; it is a principle of relation. She belongs not to the measure but to the threshold. Born בין החומות at the entrance to גלות, she bore משה at one hundred and thirty, and he led ישראל out at eighty. Her life spans the whole of גלות מצרים, two hundred and ten years.

Nor is it coincidental where this happens. Of the four subtotals, three agree exactly with the names the Torah writes: sixteen for זלפה, fourteen for רחל, seven for בלהה. Only in the house of לאה, the house the כתבי האריז״ל associate with the concealed world, do the count and the visible names part. And the one who completes it is concealed in the most literal sense, still unborn at the moment of the count. Concealed does not mean inaccurate. The thirty-three is exactly true; only part of it cannot yet be seen.

The גר״א ז״ל states the principle outright, as a כלל גדול בתורה: ten are twelve, and seventy are seventy-two, because the two are concealed.[21] He develops it at length, for the nations of the land and for the שבטים themselves. It would seem to me that this must be connected as well to the way the twelve stand within the ten ספירות, for there are no coincidences in his words. But I could not say so on my own, and I have not seen anyone say it.

Clearly this dynamic holds more than we have drawn out here, and the words of the גר״א ז״ל remain somewhat shrouded in mystery. But even what we can see is telling.

And her line remains concealed at every threshold. She is hidden before her own birth. She hides משה at his: ותצפנהו שלשה ירחים (*she hid him for three months*). And at his death, at the border of the land he may not enter, ולא ידע איש את קבורתו עד היום הזה (*no one knows his burial place to this day*). We see that יוכבד and her משה are in fact at the ingress and egress to מצרים.

The third is שרח, who holds the return. Through her, יוסף is brought home. If יוסף is יסוד, and the land is מלכות (*kingship / receptive manifestation*), then what שרח makes possible is the bringing of יסוד into מלכות.

And notice where he is finally laid to rest:

> וְאֶת עַצְמוֹת יוֹסֵף אֲשֶׁר הֶעֱלוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִמִּצְרַיִם קָבְרוּ בִשְׁכֶם בְּחֶלְקַת הַשָּׂדֶה אֲשֶׁר קָנָה יַעֲקֹב מֵאֵת בְּנֵי חֲמוֹר אֲבִי שְׁכֶם בְּמֵאָה קְשִׂיטָה. (יהושע כד:לב)
>
> *And the bones of Yosef, which the children of Israel brought up from Egypt, they buried in Shechem, in the portion of the field that Yaakov had bought from the sons of Chamor, the father of Shechem, for a hundred kesitah.*

In the portion of the field. The יסוד is laid into the land in a שדה, the very field the name שד״י holds within it: a field that יעקב himself bought, in שכם, at the place of דינה's wounding.

The measure, the future, and the return. The three women of שד״י carry the promise from its making to its keeping.

There is more in the count of the גר״א ז״ל. The forty-nine of לאה and זלפה, which he sets against the forty-nine faces of the תורה, reach forty-nine only with יוכבד. Without her, that house holds forty-eight. Her single addition completes two counts at once: the forty-nine of that house, and the seventy of the whole.

Perhaps this is no accident. The house of לאה is rooted in בינה (*understanding*), the concealed world, which is called אמא, the mother. The גמרא in ראש השנה teaches that fifty gates of בינה were created in the world, and all were given to משה but one (until the day of his death).[22] The forty-nine of the house of בינה are completed by the one still concealed, and she is the mother of the man who would attain its forty-nine gates. Even the names of her children, אהרן and משה and מרים, in the order the Torah gives them, begin with the letters of אמם: their mother.

And there is the other סימן in the same comment. The census in פינחס lacks five families found among the seventy: one of שמעון, one of אשר, and three of בנימין, whom the גר״א ז״ל marks גב״ר. He ties the shortfall to the פסוק כי אתם המעט, which חז״ל read as מעט ׳ה, five fewer than seventy, for the census holds only sixty-five families. Three women are marked שד״י on one side; three men are marked גב״ר on the other.

Perhaps here, too, the count is more than arithmetic. The five may be the five books of תורה שבכתב (*the Written Torah*), the זכר (*male*). The women of שד״י are the נקבה, the בחינה of תורה שבעל פה (*the Oral Torah*): the field that receives what is written and brings out what is concealed within it. The count of ישראל, balanced זכר against נקבה, is the shape of the one תורה it carries.

Both יעקב and יוכבד begin with י׳. The father connects the seventy to the source from which they came. The daughter connects them to what will one day emerge from them.

So the answers need not compete. A family becomes a nation through what is not among its listed members: the source from which it comes, the שכינה that goes down with it, and the future already growing within it. The Torah gives us the names, and then a total the names cannot reach, so that whoever counts only people, and nothing else, comes up short.

The shortfall is the point.

✦

The Prism of ישראל: Many Within One

The same comment of the גר״א ז״ל that gives us the women of שד״י closes with this: ושבעים נפש כנגד שבעים פנים ומ״ט של לאה וזלפה כנגד מ״ט פנים. The descendants associated with לאה and זלפה total forty-nine; those associated with רחל and בלהה total twenty-one. Together they comprise seventy.

In פרשת בלק, where he develops the correspondence further,[23] he contrasts the seventy nations, divided from one another and possessing different לשונות, with the families of ישראל, distinct yet united through one לשון (*language*) and one תורה, in what he calls סוד היחוד (*the secret of unity*).

We often invoke שבעים פנים לתורה (*seventy facets to Torah*) to explain how two different legitimate understandings can both possess אמת. One תלמיד חכם (*Torah scholar*) understands a סוגיא one way, another understands it differently, and we seek to understand how both positions can find a place in תורה.

Certainly, this is true. But perhaps we can suggest that there is a deeper direction to the concept.

The seventy פנים do not exist merely as a concession to disagreement. They are intrinsic to the one תורה.

The תורה is not an assortment of separate ideas that human beings must somehow assemble into one whole. Rather, the Divine תורה is already one. Its different פנים are distinct dimensions of the אמת contained within it.

This must not be misunderstood. We cannot impose an interpretation upon a פסוק without regard for its language and declare that it is another legitimate פנים. Nor do differing understandings eliminate the need for halachic הכרעה (*the binding halachic decision*). The תורה itself establishes the authority of that process.

As חז״ל say in עירובין:[24]

> אֵלּוּ וְאֵלּוּ דִּבְרֵי אֱלֹקִים חַיִּים הֵן וַהֲלָכָה כְּבֵית הִלֵּל.
>
> *These and these are the words of the living God, and the* הלכה *follows* בית הלל.

And they explain that בית הלל merited having the הלכה established according to them because they studied the position of בית שמאי along with their own, even presenting the opposing words first.

The גמרא in חגיגה[25] describes the various groups of חכמים (*Sages*), some declaring טמא (*impure*) and others טהור (*pure*), some prohibiting and others permitting. How can a person learn amid these opposing voices? The answer is כולם נתנו מרועה אחד.

The many legitimate פנים come from one רועה (*shepherd*).

Perhaps the answers to the seventieth are themselves an illustration of the seventy פנים. Different approaches reveal distinct dimensions of a single passage without requiring us to pretend that they all make the same claim. Each must be understood on its own terms and grounded in the תורה. But their differences need not diminish the unity of the source from which they arise.

And the comparison with the seventy נפשות is far more exact than it first appears.

The שבטים are distinct. Each possesses his own character, strengths, responsibilities, and place within כלל ישראל. Their differences are not imperfections that must be erased to create unity. They are essential dimensions of the whole.

Yet the שבטים do not become one merely by agreeing to coexist. They belong intrinsically to one ישראל. They are parts of a single Divine purpose.

Just as the seventy פנים belong intrinsically to one תורה, the seventy נפשות belong intrinsically to one ישראל.

This is the idea of a prism, and it runs in both directions. White light passed through a prism separates into its colors. The prism does not invent them; it reveals what the light already contains. And the same colors, standing apart, can be gathered through a prism into a single white light.

The שבטים before ויגש were the colors standing apart: real, distinct, of one source, but not yet one light. What happens in ויגש is the gathering.

Both directions matter. The unity does not eliminate the distinctions. And the distinctions do not contradict the unity. The many colors are real; the light is one. The different שבטים are real; ישראל is one. The different פנים are real; תורה is one.

And here the contrast of the גר״א meets our story. The seventy nations are divided by their לשונות. The brothers, too, had been divided to the point that they could not speak in שלום. The seventy become one נפש precisely when speech is restored: ואחרי כן דברו אחיו אתו.

The Torah does not erase their differences. It forms the relationships through which those differences belong to one people.

Speech carries a further dimension. In the כתבי האריז״ל, the concealed world, עלמא דאתכסיא, is associated with לאה, and the revealed world, עלמא דאתגליא, with רחל. The תיקוני זוהר[26] calls מלכות the mouth: מלכות פה תורה שבעל פה קרינן לה. And רחל is associated with this בחינה of מלכות and of דיבור.

Speech, in this language, is the revealing of what is concealed. Through עמלות בתורה (*toil in Torah*), meanings already contained within the Divine תורה are brought to understanding and expression. תורה שבעל פה does not create another תורה alongside תורה שבכתב; it reveals the depth already within the one תורה.

The Torah calls her, in the enumeration itself, רחל אשת יעקב, and רש״י explains that she was עיקרו של בית (*the mainstay of the house*).

The prism makes something concealed perceptible. The light is already one, but its components can now be seen. So, too, our עמלות does not invent the many פנים of תורה. It reveals dimensions that belong to תורה itself.

✦

The קו Connecting the Points

There is a final observation that may bring the entire מהלך (*line of thought*) together. פרשת ויגש contains ק״ו פסוקים, one hundred and six, the גימטריא (*numerical value*) of קו.

What is a קו? A point possesses its own location and identity. Even a collection of points may not immediately reveal a larger pattern. Only when we recognize the continuity between them do we see a line.

Perhaps this is what ספר בראשית has been doing from its beginning. One generation follows another, each with its own trials and accomplishments. We move from אברהם to יצחק to יעקב. We encounter the twelve שבטים, their distinct characters, their conflicts, and their destinies. The individual points have been laid down, yet the line connecting them is not always apparent.

When יוסף is sold, the family seems to be moving away from its destiny. In ויגש the points do not change. What changes is that their relationship becomes visible, and the brothers recover the speech that was missing when יוסף first went to seek them. The קו does not create the points, nor does it erase them. It reveals the continuity through which distinct points belong to one structure.

This does not mean the work is finished. In ויחי, their father will die, and the brothers will fear that יוסף may finally retaliate. Their anxiety shows that the healing is not effortless. Yet the foundation has been laid, and its strength will now be tested in a world without their father at its center.

The end of ויגש already sets the Egyptians' growing dependence upon פרעה beside the family in גושן. The Egyptians say והיינו עבדים לפרעה (*let us be servants to Pharaoh*), while ישראל takes hold of its place and multiplies:

> וַיֵּשֶׁב יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם בְּאֶרֶץ גֹּשֶׁן וַיֵּאָחֲזוּ בָהּ וַיִּפְרוּ וַיִּרְבּוּ מְאֹד. (בראשית מז:כז)

Israel settled in the land of Egypt, in the land of Goshen; they took holdings in it, and were fruitful and multiplied greatly.

We began with the individual names. We came to the complete בית יעקב. And now the Torah speaks of ישראל as one collective presence, established and multiplying in מצרים. The blessing of פרו ורבו (*be fruitful and multiply*), promised under the name שד״י on the day he became ישראל, has begun to unfold in the very land he feared to enter.

Later, יציאת מצרים (*the Exodus from Egypt*) will bring another extraordinary level of development, and מתן תורה (*the giving of the Torah*) another still. But we must not allow those later milestones to diminish what is accomplished here.

Why does the Torah enumerate sixty-nine names and then conclude with seventy? Why give us both the individuals and the total of the entire household?

Because a nation is not the sum of its members. Each שבט matters; each individual possesses his own identity, and the Torah names every one. But counted alone, they come up short. What makes them one בית is the father from whom they come, the שכינה that goes down with them, and the future still concealed within them. None of these is on the list.

Just as the seventy פנים are intrinsically one תורה, the seventy נפשות are intrinsically one ישראל.

The promise of שפה ברורה (*a clear language*), when the nations will one day serve Hashem שכם אחד (*with one accord*), lies in the future.[27] But the first great realization of this principle within the emerging nation takes place here, as the שבטים find their speech and stand together as one people.

The points have been laid down throughout ספר בראשית. In ויגש, the קו connecting them is finally revealed.

The prism gathers the distinct colors. The colors remain part of one light.

And the twelve שבטים, each distinct and essential, stand together as one ישראל.

May we merit to see the many colors of כלל ישראל gathered into one light, speaking to one another in שלום, and may the promise אנכי אעלך גם עלה (*I will surely bring you up again*) be fulfilled speedily in our days.

✦

מראי מקומות

Rounding convention: פסחים פרק י׳ סימן מ׳, פסקי הרא״ש

The candidates for the seventieth: בראשית רבה צ״ד:ט׳

Rejection of יוכבד: אבן עזרא בראשית מ״ו:כ״ג

Astonishment at the father's survival: ספורנו בראשית מ״ה:ג׳

Suspicion of exaggeration: כלי יקר בראשית מ״ה:ג׳

The day of rebuke: בראשית רבה צ״ג:י׳

The word אחיכם: כלי יקר בראשית מ״ה:ד׳

The ברית shown to the brothers: בראשית רבה צ״ג:י׳

The fear of גלות: רמב״ן בראשית מ״ו:א׳

Becoming a nation in מצרים: ספורנו בראשית מ״ו:ג׳

One נפש and many נפשות: ויקרא רבה ד׳:ו׳

The singular נפש and the end of jealousy: כלי יקר בראשית מ״ו:כ״ו

The father completes the count: אבן עזרא בראשית מ״ו:כ״ג

Two מניינים: אור החיים בראשית מ״ו:ח׳

Born between the walls: בבא בתרא קכ״ג ע״ב

The status of an עובר: קידושין ס״ב ע״ב

The three women as שד״י: אדרת אליהו בראשית מ״ו:ח׳ (*manuscript addition*)

אסנת as the daughter of דינה: פרקי דרבי אליעזר פרק ל״ח

The bones and the spoils: סוטה י״ג ע״א

Returned to שכם: סוטה י״ג ע״ב

Ten are twelve: אדרת אליהו דברים ל״ב:ח׳

Fifty gates of בינה: ראש השנה כ״א ע״ב

Seventy פנים and seventy nations: אדרת אליהו במדבר כ״ב:ה׳, מהדורא תליתאה

These and these: עירובין י״ג ע״ב

From one shepherd: חגיגה ג׳ ע״ב

The mouth as פתח אליהו, הקדמה, מלכות: תיקוני זוהר

A clear language: צפניה ג׳:ט׳

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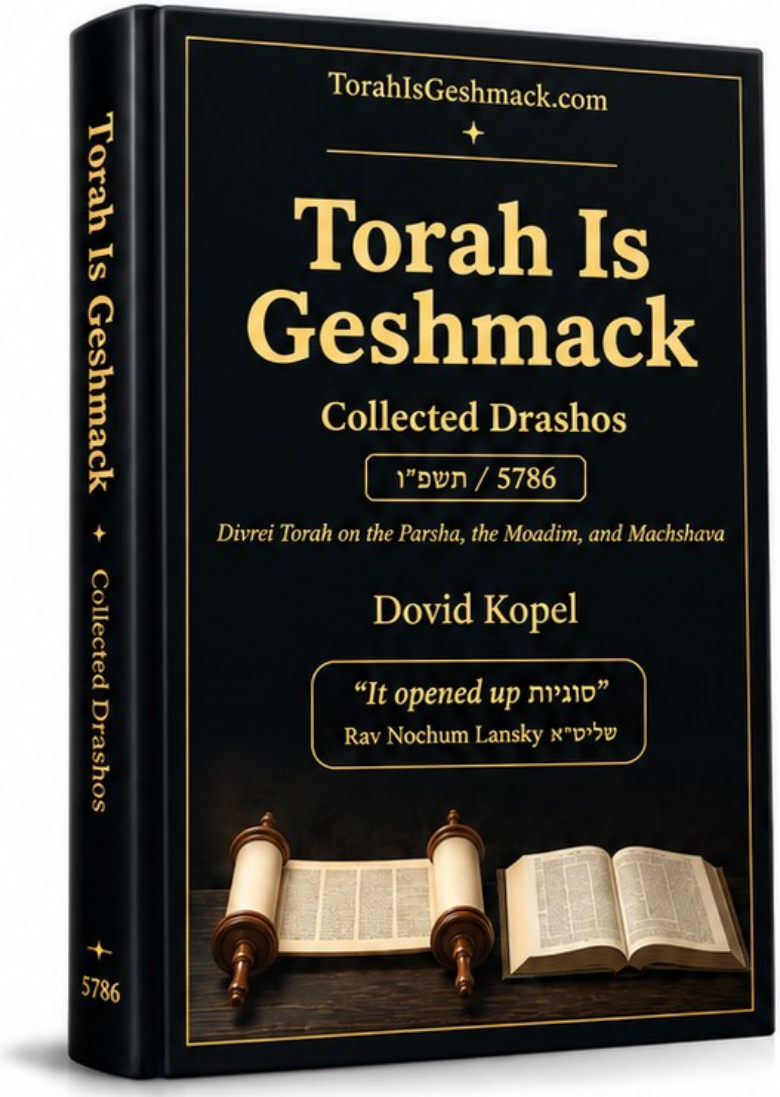
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