

המוסד למען קדושת חיי אדם



TORAH READING:

Vayigash: Genesis 44:18 - 47:27

Tevet 7, 5776

December 19, 2015

In this week's Torah portion, Vayigash: Genesis 44:18 - 47:27, Joseph is reunited with his family. His father, Jacob, now known as Israel, brought 70 family members to Egypt, On the way, at the oasis of Be'er Sheva, G-d appears to Jacob. "I am the L-rd, the G-d of your father; fear not to go down to Egypt, for I will there make of you a great nation. I will go down with you into Egypt, and I will also surely bring you up again."

The exile of Jacob's progeny in Egypt proved to be very challenging in many ways. Egypt was a most depraved, pagan society, and the idolatry, child sacrifice, and spiritual darkness of the environment would threaten the Israelites' priorities, judgment and behavior. They were tasked with maintaining a holy presence and an example of godliness in exile.

This is reflective of today's exile of Jews across the globe. Many are far away from a Jewish spiritual center, either psychically or geographically, and vulnerable to secular, irreligious ideas that are contrary to our Jewish faith tradition; yet, legally and socially acceptable. Regarding abortion, child sacrifice in the new millennium, our tradition absolutely forbids it, as written very clearly in the original translation of Genesis IX: 6-7 - Whoso sheddeth man's blood, within man, shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made He man. And you, be fruitful, and multiply; swarm in the earth, and multiply therein.

It was only in exile after the destruction of the first and second temples, and during the dispersion in Europe, that our legal authorities, influenced by local custom and political pressures, abandoned the prohibition against this practice and came up with ever more liberal exceptions. The good news is that in this day of depravity and moral degradation, Jews can once again be the example of godliness and holiness. A powerful way to do this is to sanctify and protect unborn human life, and to start with our own Jewish children in the womb.