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Vayigash: Plant Your Seeds

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The family had been reunited. After more than two decades of separation and heartbreak, Yaakov's family was whole and complete. After settling his family in Goshen, Yosef turned his attention to the affairs of state. He was responsible for sustaining Egypt and the surrounding areas. As the Egyptians ran out of food, they were forced to sell their lands to the government, and in return, they received seed to plant and then divided the proceeds with Pharaoh's treasury.

וַיֹּאמֶר יוֹסֵף אֶל-הָעָם הִן קָנִיתִי אֶתְכֶם הַיּוֹם וְאֶת-אֲדָמַתְכֶם לְפָרֹעַהּ הֲאֵלֶיכֶם זָרַע וְזָרַעְתֶּם אֶת-הָאֲדָמָה
Joseph said to the people, "Behold, I have bought you and your farmland today for Pharaoh. Behold, you have seed, so sow the soil. (Genesis 47:23)

The Lubavitcher Rebbe (Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, 1902-1994) explains that embedded in these words is a profound life lesson.

Hey lachem zera, behold you have seed – Hashem gives us the necessary abilities and strengths to accomplish in life. He provides us with the seeds of wisdom, intuition, vitality, and vigor to be successful in our endeavors and to meet our challenges.

U'zeratem es ha'adam, so sow the soil – But these gifts are only meaningful if you do something with them. The seeds can only germinate and grow if they are put into the soil. The personalistic gifts and abilities we possess are only meaningful if they are utilized in the soil of dynamic activity.

Hashem instills qualities, traits, and gifts within each and every one of us. There are personal gifts we have already discovered and others which are only uncovered in unique circumstances. Times of difficulty and adversity often allow us to discover and access strengths we never knew we possessed. Moments of accomplishment allow us to see who we are capable of becoming and what we are truly capable of achieving. The greatest danger is discovering your gifts, finding your "seeds", and failing to do something with them. Once I discover my *kochos*, my job is to plant them in the soil of dynamic activity. If I have a strength – I need to use it. If I have an ability – I need to plant it. If I discover that I am a very fast runner but never enter a race, the ability is wasted. If I have keen intellect but never use it to problem solve, my gift is for naught. If I possess empathy, compassion, and understanding but don't reach out to the other, what purpose do my gifts serve?

A person may possess the most rare, exquisite, and unique seeds but if he holds them in his hand, admiring how special and wonderful they are, those very same seeds will wither and die. It is only when I take the seeds and plant them in the earth that they can produce something even greater. It is only when I take my strengths and abilities and plant them in the soil of dynamic activities that they can produce something greater as well.