

Potomac Torah Study Center
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NOTE: Devrei Torah presented weekly in Loving Memory of Rabbi Leonard S. Cahan z"l, Rabbi Emeritus of Congregation Har Shalom, who started me on my road to learning almost 50 years ago and was our family Rebbe and close friend until his recent untimely death.

Devrei Torah are now Available for Download (normally by noon on Fridays) from www.PotomacTorah.org. Thanks to Bill Landau for hosting the Devrei Torah.

Yosef found himself at age seventeen pulled out of a pit and sold into slavery in Egypt. When Yosef was thirty, Paro learned that he could interpret dreams and had him brought to interpret his troubling dreams. Last year I discussed Rabbi David Fohrman's brilliant analysis of how the events in Paro's dreams followed events in Yosef's life, but in reverse, so Yosef had hints that enabled him to interpret Paro's dreams.

My close friend, Rabbi Jonathan Grossman, elaborated on Rabbi Fohrman's analysis to show how Paro's dream enabled him to understand his own dreams of thirteen years earlier (the dreams that upset his brothers and father). Egypt was an agrarian society, and the people were vegetarians. Yosef's family raised cattle and ate meat. Why, then, did Yosef dream of sheaves of wheat while Paro dreamed of cows coming out of the river and emaciated cows eating fat cows? (What cows have ever been carnivores?) Rabbi Grossman suggests that Yosef's childhood dream was a prediction that he would control wheat (food, in a vegetarian economy) some time in the future, and Paro's dream about cows contained a special message for Yosef.

Rabbi Fohrman explains that the key to understanding Paro's dream was that cows represented years – seven years of plenty followed by seven years of famine. Paro used words that only appear elsewhere in the Torah to describe Leah and Rachel to describe the two sets of seven cows. Yosef understood that Paro's description of the cows referred to his mother and aunt, that his father worked seven years for Leah and then seven years for Rachel, and that was the only context about his mother and aunt that fit the numbers seven and seven. With the key that cows equal years, Yosef could understand and translate Paro's dream.

Rabbi Grossman extended this analysis. He observed that Yosef's dream of the sun, moon, and eleven stars bowing could mean the same thing. Thirteen lights in the sky could represent thirteen years. Thus, Yosef's childhood dream meant that thirteen years later, all the wheat would be bowing to him – that is, he would be in charge of all the wheat (food). Under this interpretation, the dream was not about ruling over his brothers but about his future role helping Paro save his family and others from a severe, long duration famine.

The riddles over dreams is only one significant issue in Miketz. By the time Yosef's family comes to Egypt, Yosef is forty years old. Since he left at age seventeen, he has not seen his father for twenty-three years. Even if Yaakov believed that Yosef was dead, why did Yosef never try to contact his father, especially during the ten years when he was the second most powerful person in Egypt? Rabbi Yitz Etshalom suggests that Yosef could have thought that the pattern of only one son being chosen to carry on God's promise to Avraham and Yitzhak would continue for his generation. (See his Dvar Torah attached to the E-mail version of this package.) Yosef may have thought that the children of Rachel, Bilhah, and Zilpah would not be part of this promise and that only Leah's sons were still under consideration. When Yosef saw all of his brothers except Benyamin, he had to re-think the evidence. The sons of the handmaids were still part of the family. From talking to the brothers, he learned that Benyamin was also in the favored group. Yosef sets up his elaborate plan to force the brothers to bring Benyamin so he could see whether the brothers had done teshuvah. He dotes on Benyamin with much greater gifts than to the other brothers and then sets him up with the phony "theft" of his silver goblet to see whether the brothers would let Benyamin suffer (go to jail) as they had let Yosef be punished twenty-three years earlier.

The tensions among family members, a frequent theme throughout Sefer Bereishis, continues throughout the stories of Yosef and his brothers. Even when Yosef identifies himself to his brothers and does everything he can to show that he has forgiven them for events from years earlier, the brothers never completely trust Yosef. Family issues continue throughout Jewish history. For just one example, Korach's jealousy of his first cousins, Moshe and Aharon, leads him to revolt and cause a plague that costs many lives.

In reading about Yosef, one can focus on riddles (such as how Yosef figured out the meanings of dreams) or more important issues – such as what we should learn from Yosef's struggles to help us in our own lives. My beloved Rebbe, Rabbi Leonard Cahan, z"l, always found a way to include lessons for today in his Torah discussions, even when his primary focus was on explaining some of the many levels in a parsha. Since I have my own siblings and step-siblings, two sons, and four grandsons, I often find myself dealing with issues involving broader family relations. Yosef's life and lessons are a great resource for dealing with my own family issues.

Shabbat Shalom,

Hannah & Alan

Special Tribute on the Shloshim for Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks:

[https://www.ou.org/sackstribute/?utm_source=SilverpopMailing&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=shsh%20Vayishlach%205781%20\(1\)&utm_content=&spMailingID=32834163&spUserID=MjM4NTAwNTc5OTQS1&spJobID=1843157910&spReportId=MTg0MzE1NzkxMAS2](https://www.ou.org/sackstribute/?utm_source=SilverpopMailing&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=shsh%20Vayishlach%205781%20(1)&utm_content=&spMailingID=32834163&spUserID=MjM4NTAwNTc5OTQS1&spJobID=1843157910&spReportId=MTg0MzE1NzkxMAS2)

Much of the inspiration for my weekly Dvar Torah message comes from the insights of Rabbi David Fohrman and his team of scholars at www.alephbeta.org. Please join me in supporting this wonderful organization, which has increased its scholarly work during the pandemic, despite many of its supporters having to cut back on their donations.

Please daven for a Refuah Shlemah for Nossan ben Pessel, Hershel Tzvi ben Chana, Eli ben Hanina, Yoram HaKohen ben Shoshana, Gedalya ben Sarah, Mordechai ben Chaya, Baruch Yitzhak ben Perl, David Leib HaKohen ben Sheina Reizel, Zev ben Sara Chaya, Uzi Yehuda ben Mirda Behla, HaRav Dovid Meir ben Chaya Tzippa; Eliav Yerachmiel ben Sara Dina, Amoz ben Tziviah, Reuven ben Masha, Moshe David ben Hannah, Meir ben Sara, Yitzhok Tzvi ben Yehudit Miriam, Yaakov Naphtali ben Michal Leah, Ramesh bat Heshmat, Rivka Chaya bat Leah, Zissel Bat Mazal, Chana Bracha bas Rochel Leah, Leah Fruma bat Musa Devorah, Hinda Behla bat Chaya Leah, Nechama bas Tikva Rachel, Miriam Chava bat Yachid, and Ruth bat Sarah, all of whom greatly need our prayers.

Hannah & Alan

Drasha: Miketz: Associated Press
by Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky © 2000

[Please remember Mordechai ben Chaya for a Mishebarach!]

In what is perhaps the greatest and the most radical transformation in history, Yoseph is extracted from his dungeon-like jail cell where he languished as an accused felon, denounced as a disloyal slave and a back-stabbing ingrate and elevated into one of the most powerful leaders in ancient history.

How did it all happen? It began one night when Pharaoh dreamt two successive, strange dreams. In each, puny and undernourished organisms, in one-dream bovines, in another ears on stalks, literally devoured well-fed and succulent counterparts in their respective species. What intensified the mystery, was that no apparent change occurred to either the cows or the ears. They remained just as emaciated as they were at the beginning of the episode.

Despite their presumed ability to ponder the unknown and interpret the unexplainable mysteries of life, Pharaoh's sorcerers were dumfounded. It took the prodding of Pharaoh's disgraced butler to haul Yoseph from prison and present him before Pharaoh as the one man who was a true dream-interpreter with the veracity of his predictions proven by the butler's very presence.

And so Yoseph was brought in front of Pharaoh and with G-d's help, Yoseph enlightened him, interpreting the succulent stalks and cows as representing seven years of plenty, followed by seven ensuing years of drought, gloom and famine which would consume the bounty. Pharaoh liked his explanations and made Yoseph the viceroy saying, "Since G-d has informed you of all this, there can be no one so discerning and wise as you. You shall be in charge of my palace; by your command shall all my people be sustained; only by the throne shall I outrank you" (Genesis 41:39-40). In addition, he followed Yoseph's ensuing plan of action, in preparation for the boom and the bust.

The Torah tells us that the predictions came true. It relates the story through Egyptian eyes. It tells of their reaction to plenty and to shortage. It tells how they stored the grain in the years of plenty in preparation for the lean years.

But look at the way the tale is related: Contrast the description of the good and the bad years. First the plenty: "The earth produced during the seven years of abundance by the handfuls" (ibid v. 47). The Torah then tells us how the Egyptians gathered grain and stored it in preparation for the ensuing famine. Then it tells us how the good times came to a halt: "The seven years of abundance that came to pass in the land of Egypt ended." Then the bad news: "And the seven years of famine began approaching just as Yoseph had said" (ibid v. 53-54).

Note it does not say the good years came "just as Yoseph said," Yoseph's predictions are only associated with disaster. Why?

The late physicist, Albert Einstein delivered a discourse on his theory of relativity at the prestigious Sorbonne. After reviewing his theory and its ramifications on the physics theory in particular and the future of civilization, he ended his speech, "If my theory is proven correct, the French will say I am a citizen of the world and the Germans will say I am a German. If I am wrong, the French will say I am a German and the Germans will say I am a Jew."

Rabbi Reines, the Lida Rav, commented how even in the ancient story of plenty and famine, the Torah relates it through the eyes of those who have experienced it. When it came to the good years, well, they just came. When the suffering began, however, it was "just as the Jew said."

The years of plenty came and went unassociated with the man who foretold its arrival. However when the famine came the suffering and the misery came exactly as the Hebrew slave had predicted. Funny isn't it, how only the famine came just as the Jew predicted, but the years of plenty were only associated by an accident of nature.

How often do we hear the news of criminal suspects described in the vaguest terms, obscuring their ethnicity, skin color, or national origin? Yet when it comes to a man who professes to observe the Torah, or even hails from a lineage of those who did, we hear the word Jew associated with the purported act. Though the philosophy of Judaism transcends any physical characteristics, and yet for some odd reason it becomes so distinguishable when associated with the specificity

of bad news. Whether it is the fall of the economy or the inclement weather, there will always, someone, somewhere who will link it to the Jew. Somehow, the faith of the solitary nation plays out in more than their prayers. But that day will pass, when the light unto the nations illuminates their attitude and there will be something more to bad news, than Jews.

Good Shabbos!

Miketz: COVID and Clothing

by Rabbi Dov Linzer, Rosh HaYeshiva, Yeshivat Chovevei Torah © 2020

Our clothes are closely connected to our body and our identity. They have the power to disguise who we are, represent who we are, and even shape who we are.

Clothing plays an important role in this week's parsha and in the prior ones as well. When Yosef goes to greet his brothers, they strip him of his cloak of many colors, throwing him naked into the pit. He is being stripped of his identity, left naked, without anything to indicate his origins. He is being told – you are not one of us, we do not recognize you.

The brothers then take Yosef's cloak back to Yaakov, asking him to identify it as belonging to Yosef. The cloak here is not only proof of what happened to Yosef, it represents Yosef. It is his son's dead, bloodied body that is being brought before him to recognize, bury, and mourn over. Clothing here is a representation of us and our identity.

What happened to Yaakov was payback for what Yaakov himself did earlier to his brother with the aid of a piece of clothing. Yaakov dresses himself in Esav's garments, misrepresenting himself to his father, so that he may appear to be Esav and receive the blessing. In this story, the clothes are being worn falsely, and what would have been a representation of who we are is now a misrepresentation; a disguise and a deceit.

If old clothing represents our identity, and another's clothing disguises it, then new clothing can shape and redefine it. Pharaoh calls for Yosef to appear before him, and Yosef is taken from the dungeon, bathed, given new clothes, and presented to Pharaoh. Those who come before Pharaoh must look appropriate and cannot be dressed like a slave, so clothing here is, initially, just a proper way of presenting oneself to the outside world. But it becomes something more. In the act of making Yosef the viceroy, Pharaoh "arrayed him in vestures of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck." (Gen. 41:42). And with these new clothes comes a new name: "And Pharaoh called Joseph's name Zaphenath-paneah." (v. 45). Yosef is no longer the "נָעַר עָבֹרִי – a Hebrew lad" as he was earlier (v. 12). He is now an Egyptian, with an Egyptian name.

By wearing the royal clothes, Yosef was not reflecting his existing identity, he was embracing a new one. There are times when this type of change could be for the worst. Yosef could have totally abandoned his roots and become a full Egyptian. But there are many times where it could be for the better. Wearing these new clothes made it possible for a different side of Yosef to come out, one that we had not seen before – not the boyish dreamer always looking for approval, but the strong, wise and powerful man, with the strength to stand up to and lead others. This other side was always in him; it was just able to come out when he wore his new clothes not as a disguise, but as a way of embracing his new identity.

Sometimes this might start out as aspirational before it becomes real. We can imagine that Yosef's transformation did not happen overnight. He might have worn these clothes when they were still a little too big for him. But over time he grew into them and they wound up fitting perfectly.

Social scientists have a term for the way clothing can shape our identity and self-perception; the term is "enclothed cognition." Enclothed cognition is the idea that our clothing impacts not only the way others see us, but the way we see ourselves. In a 2012 experiment performed by Hajo Adam and Adam D. Galinsky, people wearing lab coats consistently scored higher on an experimental task than those wearing their regular clothing. When we look at the lab coat that we are wearing, it makes us – perhaps totally on a subconscious level – feel and think a certain way about ourselves. It brings out a part of us that may not always be expressed – a disposition of professionalism and attention to detail, say – and it gets our minds working in a different way. We begin to express the role and identity that is communicated to us through our clothing.

Most of us don't want to be the same person at all times. We want to be relaxed and fun at home, competitive and athletic when playing sports, and professional and respectful when at work. Our clothes help us do this. They allow us to be different expressions of ourselves.

Now, in the COVID era, we don't have as much of those opportunities as we used to. For those working from home, like myself, we find ourselves in pretty much the same clothing all the time. Never fully relaxed, never fully professional. We are often wearing more or less the same thing all the time. Before COVID, I would wear a button-down shirt and slacks at home, and a suit and tie at the yeshiva. Now, I am dressed pretty much the same way all the time – slacks and a button-down shirt, with a tie thrown in every now and then. We've gone from a world in which we could embrace different parts of our identity at different times and in different settings, to one in which everything is a mish-mash all the time. There is no longer Yom Tov and the weekday – it's always Hol HaMoed! And I miss the way it used to be. I miss being able to fully bring out my rabbinic self while at yeshiva and wearing a suit, and my family-oriented self when at home and wearing slacks. Right now, I'm always a little of each, but never full one or the other. And I can only assume that I am not alone in this feeling.

G-d willing, the vaccine will be distributed and prove to be effective, and we will start to move back into society as it was. There is a lot to look forward to, things much more significant than the clothes that we will be wearing. But one of the things I believe many will be glad to see return is the opportunity to wear different clothes at different times, to bring out and express different parts of who we are.

The parsha ends with Yosef giving Binyamin five changes of clothing. Five changes of clothing is more than what one needs to make sure that he is wearing laundered clothes. Five changes of clothing allows us to wear different types of clothes as the situation warrants. It allows us to highlight and express that part of ourselves that we most want to be bringing forth at that time.

Many of us probably have five suits or sets of work and dress clothes in our closets that haven't been worn in close to a year. May we soon have an opportunity to wear them, so that we can once again give fuller expression to those different parts of who we are and who we want to be.

Shabbat Shalom!

Mikeitz: Your Snapshot Moment -- Chanuka Reflections

by Rabbi Mordechai Rhine* © 2020 Teach 613

The Jews living in the time of Chanuka experienced many miracles. They experienced an astounding victory over the Syrian Greeks, a world power which dominated country after country with their army and their culture. This victory involved a complex series of unpredicted victories in successful underground attacks, battles, and political upheavals. The Jews also experienced the miracle of the Menorah, where an untainted cruse of oil was lit, and lasted for eight days until new oil was available.

Interestingly, in the description of the holiday we find two differing perspectives as to which miracle should be emphasized. In Al Hanisim (recited in Shemoneh Esrei and in Birchas Hamazon) the emphasis is on the victory in battle. Only brief mention is made of the miracle of the Menorah. "And they lit lights in the courtyard." In contrast, when the Talmud (Shabbos 21b) describes the holiday and its commemoration, the description is all about the miracle of the Menorah. Regarding the battles, the Talmud simply states, "When the Jews were victorious..." What is the meaning behind these two differing perspectives of emphasis?

The commentaries suggest that the words of Rashi are the key to understanding the difference. Rashi comments that the Talmud was not intending to give a full synopsis of the history of Chanuka. Rather, the Talmud was endeavoring to explain, "Regarding which miracle did the Jews legislate the holiday of Chanuka." In other words, the greatest miracles of Chanuka may indeed have been the battles, as described in Al Hanisim. But the miracle that the Jews chose to use as the snapshot moment to commemorate was the miracle of the Menorah.

When we consider the duress that the Jews were under from the Syrian Greeks, it is indeed probable that the greater miracle was the victory in battle. If the Jews had won the battles and not had the miracle of the Menorah, they would have

rebuilt Jewish life as best they could, even without the miracle of the Menorah. Conversely, if they had been granted the miracle of the Menorah; but had not been granted victory over the Syrian Greeks to be able to restore Jewish life and observance, then the miracle of the Menorah would be hollow. It could be argued therefore that the miracle of the Menorah is secondary to the miracle of the battle.

Yet, when the Jews wished to commemorate the holiday, they chose to commemorate the miracle of the Menorah. They saw that moment of lighting the Menorah as the snapshot moment which captured everything that had happened. The Menorah represented Torah and Jewish continuity. Kindling it represented Jewish fortitude and the miraculous Divine blessing that is ours when we try our best. Perhaps they did not want to commemorate the battles-- as necessary as they were to defend the Jewish people-- because they did not want swords, army uniforms, and physical prowess to be touted as the hero-perspective of the Jewish people. As necessary as these may be, the snapshot moment that captures Jewish life values is lighting the Menorah.

Each of us, in our own lives, does many things towards our life goals. Like the Jews of old reflecting on the miracles of Chanuka, we can recognize which behaviors and activities are simply necessary, and which are snapshot moments of all that we represent. A person may go grocery shopping, pay bills, and take out the garbage, all for furthering a higher purpose. Indeed, each is noteworthy, and the lofty goals we have would not be safely reached without these activities. Yet, there are other moments in our lives that are snapshots in time and truly define who we are. Perhaps the moments when a woman lights the Shabbos candles and prays for the future of her family. Perhaps the moments of Kiddush when a father recites the statements declaring creation with a purpose, as the children watch and absorb the message, ready to live it in their own lives, and transmit the treasured "secret" of Shabbos to their children. Perhaps it is the moment that a woman takes Challah, with her daughter watching attentively, declaring that our physical sustenance can also be sanctified. Perhaps it is the sight of a father hovering over his volume of Talmud, learning and absorbing its eternal message.

The Jews of the time of Chanuka recognized the many miracles that brought them to the moment of victory and religious freedom; but they chose to commemorate the miraculous series of events with a snapshot moment that would capture the motivation and purpose of the victory: Kindling holy lights in an expression of continuity.

We all have moments that truly define who we are and how we would like to be remembered. These are our snapshot moments. What are yours?

With heartfelt blessings for a wonderful Shabbos,

* Rav of Southeast Hebrew Congregation, White Oak (Silver Spring), MD and Director of Teach 613.

Two Pharaohs, Two Modes of Leadership: Thoughts for Parashat Mikkets

By Rabbi Marc D. Angel*

Pharaoh was a powerful ruler, assumed by his people to have divine qualities. Pharaoh was surrounded by a group of wise advisers, among the greatest sages of Egypt.

But an amazing thing happened. Pharaoh had dreams that neither he nor his wise advisers could decipher. The butler, who once had a dream correctly interpreted by Joseph, informed Pharaoh that there was a Hebrew slave in prison who might be helpful. Pharaoh summoned Joseph, related his dreams, and listened to Joseph's interpretation. Joseph not only deciphered the dreams, but gave advice on how to deal with the forthcoming years of surplus followed by years of famine.

Pharaoh responded in a profoundly wise and unexpected manner: "And Pharaoh said to his servants: Can we find such a one as this, a man in whom the spirit of God is?" Pharaoh immediately elevated this Hebrew slave into high office, second only to Pharaoh himself.

This response by Pharaoh is worthy of careful attention. Many leaders go to great lengths to demonstrate their infallibility. They don't like to appear incompetent. They surround themselves with the best available talent so that they can be sure always to come up with the right decisions. Their egos prevent them from admitting weakness, ignorance, or incompetence.

Yet, here was the powerful Pharaoh who listened to the advice of a Hebrew slave, and delegated tremendous powers to this unlikely person who wasn't even an Egyptian. Pharaoh was wise enough to realize that Joseph had not only interpreted the dreams but had offered a practical plan of action. Pharaoh did not stand on ceremony. He could have had Joseph cast back into prison, but he did not do that. He was not embarrassed to let the public know that he had needed—and accepted—the advice of a lowly slave.

Because Pharaoh did not allow his ego to get in the way, he was able to make an intelligent decision that ultimately proved highly successful for Egypt. Not only was long term famine averted, but the power of Pharaoh's own central government was enormously strengthened.

Bravo Pharaoh!

But the Torah later informs us of another Pharaoh “who knew not Joseph.” This new Pharaoh, wishing to expand his power, enslaved the Israelites. When Moses confronted him with the demand from God that the Israelites should be freed, this Pharaoh arrogantly responded: “Who is this God that I should listen to Him?”

This Pharaoh was drunk with his own power. He could not admit personal mistakes. Even after confronted with one plague after another, he maintained a hard heart. He would not give in to Moses...or to God. Pharaoh's own advisers realized that the situation was out of control and that it would be best to liberate the slaves. But Pharaoh was adamant. He allowed his egotism to cloud his ability to think clearly.

As a result of this Pharaoh's unwillingness to admit error, his people suffered ten horrible plagues causing massive damage to the crops, the animals, and the people themselves. Ultimately, the slaves went free in spite of Pharaoh. But Pharaoh's ego still pressed him to have his troops pursue the Israelites. The result: the Egyptian chariots and horsemen were drowned in the sea.

Shame on this Pharaoh!

There is much to be learned from the approaches of the two Pharaohs.

The first Pharaoh exemplified intelligent leadership and responsible behavior. His goal was not to protect his delicate ego, and not to prove how wise he and his advisers were. His goal was to address a problem in the way that would yield best results for his people. Because of his clear-headedness, Egypt prospered as never before.

The second Pharaoh exemplified leadership tainted by egotism, allowing emotion to prevail over reason. His goal was to demonstrate his power, to lash out at those who questioned his judgment, to push aside advice of his own advisers. He was not thinking of the long term welfare of his people; he was concerned more with showing how strong he was. Because of his egotism, Egypt suffered terrible catastrophes.

When leaders of societies and communities follow the wisdom of the first Pharaoh, the people are well served. When leaders of societies and communities succumb to the egotism of the second Pharaoh, disaster is sure to follow...not only for the people, but for the leaders themselves.

* Jewishideas.org. <https://www.jewishideas.org/two-pharaohs-two-modes-leadership-thoughts-parashat-mikkets> **The Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals has experienced a significant drop in donations during the pandemic. The Institute needs our help to maintain and strengthen our Institute. Each gift, large or small, is a vote for an intellectually vibrant, compassionate, inclusive Orthodox Judaism. You may contribute on our website jewishideas.org or you may send your check to Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals, 2 West 70th Street, New York, NY 10023. Ed.: Please join me in helping the Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals at this time.**

A Letter to My Brother in the Maghreb

By Dr. Meir Buzaglo *

Many years have passed since we were last in touch, but I have nevertheless never forgotten you. How could I? Seeing as my mother and father, my brothers and my sisters always remind me of you—in the way they talk and dress, in their generosity.

One cannot simply just erase hundreds of years.

I'm writing to you because I'm worried.

The world about us is rapidly changing. There are many cases of people taking decisions for others, not always with a humane approach, and rarely out of love for Man or God. Even as I write, the image rises before my eyes—boarding the boat in Casablanca, dressed in my best clothes, six years old—my family and I returning to what we then called Palestine. A very dramatic event that defies description, the realization of a dream, coming home after hundreds of years. Not because this home was in any way luxurious, and not because Morocco was foreign to us. Our parents decided to go to Jerusalem, not to Canada and not to France. We returned to the home we had left thousands of years ago, yet somehow it was here that our Moroccan identity stood out. At first it was hard. Mother wanted to return immediately, to get back to her Arab friends, but with time she got used to it; she learned Hebrew and was adored by all the residents of the housing project where we lived, Jews from all ends of the world.

And, to be sure, the songs, the music, the accent—they've all remained with us. Years later, I returned to Morocco for a visit with my wife, a Lithuanian immigrant, to Casablanca, where my family's roots are. I was stunned by the depth of my emotions. We will never forget the goodness; we will always recall the life we shared. It wasn't always idyllic, but then again, is there any place that is always idyllic?! And nevertheless, I am a zealous defender of the Maghreb; I listen to stories of the great rabbis of Morocco, about the life we shared in the Atlas Mountains.

Not only I, but my children as well, have a deep affection for Morocco—despite their having been born in Jerusalem and not knowing a word of Arabic.

Why haven't I written before? I'm not sure, but I do know why I'm writing you now. The world about us is going crazy. The Middle East, Iraq, Syria, Libya—but it doesn't stop there. Egypt is in an upheaval, and stormy clouds cover France and England. Racism and cruelty are rearing their ugly heads. And I ask, haven't we, Jews and Arabs, originating in the Maghreb, a role to play? I mean those among us who are friends, those of us who know about living a shared life? There are problems, to be sure. Who can remain apathetic, faced with the depths of suffering of Gaza's residents? And who can remain apathetic to the thousands of missiles fired on Sderot's residents? The suffering of Jews and Arabs cries out.

Let's leave it to God to find who is to blame; our concern is about healing and about prevention.

Today, it seems, we are far from any solution. There were periods of progress in the Israel-Palestine arena, yet these were stopped short with the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and bitter intifadas. Iranian Shi'ite fanaticism is now penetrating a conflict that initially was about land; Hezbollah is taking advantage of Palestinian suffering to promote Iranian expansion; and Islamic State is charging onward in a rampage of destruction. Not only are we not making any progress but the conditions necessary to overcome these problems drift farther out of reach with every passing moment. The name of Lord is being invoked in vain by those seeking destruction rather than prayer.

This is when I remember Morocco.

Despite the fact that my home is in Israel, it seems inconceivable that life in Morocco was just a coincidence. And I ask the Muslim Moroccans, was it just a coincidence that you hosted us for hundreds of years? Were not the lives of my fathers and forefathers in Morocco God's will? A history that can be linked to the present? A ray of light in this period when darkness is closing in on us? Only God knows. And nevertheless, we are obliged to try to begin thinking in exceptional ways. As I sit here and write, I hear of similar interest in the Maghreb, in France and in Israel as well. And I do not speak in Israel as a private individual.

There is a cultural ferment about Moroccan Jews in Israel the likes of which we have never seen before. It is apparent in piyyut and music, certainly, as well as in film, theater, and literature. This is not about people who, as I was, were born in Morocco but about Israeli-born young people who seek to give Morocco and Arab culture a place in their lives. This is a significant resource in a region that speaks only in the language of destruction.

Haven't we, as children of the Maghreb and Andalusia (who once raised the world to the lofty heights of philosophy, literature, science, and art, to a shared life of tolerance and shared faith) a human mission of the first order? Do we dare turn our backs on this mission and let others who have less understanding than we decree our fates here?

Should this be the case, a covenant is called for. Let's leave agreements to states, and contracts, too. We are talking about an oath; an oath of lovers of the Lord and His children against those who sell their souls to suffering, destruction and ruin. Let us take this oath as we see before our eyes the lives shared by our mothers and fathers, the simple values of beauty and kindness that so characterize us of the Maghreb.

I have a modest contribution to make, together with my friends in the Tikun Movement, which I lead.

We plan to hold meetings in Jerusalem with artists, academics, and young people who can teach us about this friendship. This involves only an incubator, for now. And I thank our Muslim friends who have consented to join us. We need all the blessings we can get in order to succeed. I need your blessing.

* Professor of Philosophy, Hebrew University. He is one of the founders of the Tikkun Movement, which works for joint life of Jews and Arabs in Israel. This article originally appeared in the Jerusalem Post, December 2, 2014.. Reprinted in honor of the historic restoration of diplomatic relations between Morocco and Israel, Hanukkah 5781.

* Jewishideas.org. <https://www.jewishideas.org/article/letter-my-brother-maghreb-0>

Parshas Mikeitz – The Wise Risk

by Rabbi Yehoshua Singer*

There is a surprising scene in the beginning of this week's parsha. When Yosef is brought before Pharaoh and asked to interpret Pharaoh's dreams, Yosef seems to take a shocking liberty by going beyond the interpretation to offer advice, as well. Yosef was at this point an incarcerated slave from a foreign country. He was standing before one of the most powerful kings of his day. Why did Yosef think it appropriate, and moreover, how did he find the audacity to offer advice to Pharaoh?

The Ramban explains that Yosef was taking a very calculated risk. He was aware that this was not what he had been asked for. Yet, he was also aware that there may be a golden opportunity here. He had impressed Pharaoh greatly by interpreting dreams which no one else in Egypt could interpret. If he coherently explained the need to stockpile wheat now and the importance of hiring a wise and understanding man to oversee the process, there was a real chance he would be chosen for that position. (As we know, indeed they did.) If Yosef remained silent, he would more likely end up back in the dungeon he had been in. Yosef decided to risk it.

The Ramban concludes by stating that this decision Yosef made is an illustration of the statement of King Solomon that *נִכְמֵד עִינֵי בַּרְאָשָׁו* – A wise man has his eyes in his head (Koheles 2:14). A wise man is one who has his eyes open to see what is coming down the road and prepares accordingly. Yosef here was displaying his great wisdom in seeing that an opportunity had arisen to leave the dungeon. He was able to recognize it, says the Ramab"n, because he had this attitude of being aware of what was going to happen.

This last statement of the Ramab"n is rather difficult to understand. Yosef had been held in a dungeon for over a decade. He suddenly finds himself being rushed out of the pit and hurriedly washed, cleaned and dressed to be brought before Pharaoh, the most powerful man in the country. Why does it take a high level of wisdom to be looking ahead and searching for an opportunity to leave the dungeon? Wouldn't anyone in Yosef's position find themselves searching every detail of every moment for a way to stay out of the dungeon?

A concept we heard often in Yeshiva, is the importance of recognizing life in real time – the "traffic of life". Very often in life, we can know the proper way to handle a given situation but continue to mess it up when the situation arises. We don't do this because we don't care, but simply because we were not ready and didn't realize what was happening in time. It is only when we have practiced that knowledge regularly and inculcated that attitude within ourselves that we can expect to handle the situation properly in real time.

Just as when learning to drive a car the traffic surrounding the car is overwhelming. One feels as though they cannot possibly keep track of all that one has to do, while being aware of all the surrounding cars and where they are going. As time proceeds, though, and with practice we find that we make all those calculations instantly and without any conscious thought, sometimes even driving great distances almost unaware of what we are doing. It is the same with handling all

complex situations in life. When we are told of a situation, we know what to do. The difficulty is processing all that is happening around us in real time, and recognizing the situation for what it is.

For Yosef to be searching for opportunities was obvious. What stood out about Yosef was how adept he was at recognizing what opportunities lay before him. As Yosef is carefully explaining Pharoah's dream, even before he finishes his explanation, he is recognizing the opportunity. As he finishes his speech, he is already incorporating his advice into his response. He was clearly practiced and seasoned in the art of looking ahead in life. Being adept at handling any difficult situation can only come through hard work and ongoing practice. Just like driving, we need to practice and try again and again. Only then can we succeed in real time.

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Dvar Torah for Miketz and Channukah: Happy Chanukkah

by Rabbi Moshe Rube*

We're reaching the grand finale of this light-filled holiday and so now would be the appropriate time to ask a most pertinent question.

Latkes or Hamentashen?

Would you rather a savory, fried, potato and onion mixture? Or a sugar-filled, oven baked, triangular pastry?

It may depend on whether you're a person who thrives under freedom or under structure.

Latkes are pretty strict on their ingredients. While you can throw in a few creative spices, you have to have a potato as your main ingredient to be considered a latke. Even trying to vary it up with sweet potatoes can get tricky as sweet potatoes contain an enzyme called amylase that converts a majority of its starch (the component that hydrates and gelatinizes to form a crispy crust) into sugar. That's why you'll find most recipes for sweet potato latkes still include regular potatoes (which don't have as much amylase) so it can still maintain a good crunch.

For Hamentashen, however, the recipe bespeaks simplicity and infinite malleability. Make dough. Put food in dough. Shape dough into triangle and bake. You could put fruit, chocolate, meats or whatever you want inside.

Some people thrive under more options while some tend to freeze in those situations and prefer less choice. Which one are you?

Or it may depend on whether you're more of a homebody or an extrovert. A Latke tends to hide itself under a layer of brown crust. You know what's there but you're not sure about the proportions of potato to onion, how much oil was used, or if the host snuck in any secret ingredients. Latkes keep to themselves just like the mitzvah of Channukah which centers on lighting candles in the privacy of your own home.

But Hamentashen show what they have front and center. You see immediately whether it hosts raspberry jam, chocolate, or (Heaven forbid) poppy seed. Like the Purim mitzvot where we're called to read the megillah publicly and share gifts with our friends, the hamentashen bursts through its doors and says "Here I am!"

Some people derive strength from looking inward and trying to tap into the spiritual power of their own soul while some derive greater joy from venturing out in public and being with the multitudes. Which one can you relate to better?

But if you're still unsure which one to choose, let's add one more distinction.

Do you derive strength from ideals or nitty-gritty reality? Are you more of a dreamer or a pragmatist?

We always need a little bit of both. If you could only dream, then bringing that dream to reality would be too much of a disappointing bore to get beyond the beginning. But if we could only be pragmatic, we'd be too cynical to ever have a single idea of consequence.

A Latke may have established ingredients but its shape is amorphous. It usually ends up being some sort of a circle with bits of fried (hopefully not burnt) potato jetting out at uneven angles. The texture is usually an amalgamation of crunch and mush and we never quite know where the different flavors in the mixture begin and end. Like an idyllic fantasy or a dancing flame that glides and jumps everywhere, it is the food of dreams. The word Channukah itself means to rededicate or to start anew as the Maccabees did with the inspiration of the out-of-this-world Channukah miracle. Our celebrations on this holiday point more to the ideals that won rather than the military strategies used.

But a hamentashen displays exact definition. Whatever ingredients you have, the mathematical shape of three lines and three points all show evidence of planning and organization. As its take its journey through your mouth, you know exactly where the flavor of the pastry begins and ends and when you have hit the filling. No one can get lost eating a hamentashen. Like Mordechai and Esther who employed the natural powers of political machination and cunning strategies, the hamentashen is the food of well-defined plans and conclusions.

So which food do you prefer? Are you more of an idealist or a pragmatist? Do you more relate to God as a miracle worker or someone who gives you strength to work in this pointy world?

I suppose the best would be some combination of the two. But I have never seen a recipe for a combination of the hamentashen and latke like the "Latketashen" or the "Haman'ke". The person who can do that successfully will earn the moniker of the most well-balanced person alive.

Happy Channukah and Shabbat Shalom!

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Rav Kook Torah Miketz: Joseph and Judah (II)

The strife among Jacob's sons centered on two conflicting viewpoints vis a vis the sanctity of the Jewish people. Judah felt that we need to act according to the current reality and that, given the present situation, the Jewish people need to maintain a separate existence from other nations in order to safeguard their unique heritage. Joseph, on the other hand, believed that we should focus on the final goal. We need to take into account the hidden potential of the future era, when "nations will walk by your light" (Isaiah 60:3). Thus, according to Joseph, even nowadays we are responsible for the spiritual elevation of all peoples.

So which outlook is correct — Judah's pragmatic nationalism or Joseph's visionary universalism?

The Present versus the Future

The dispute between Judah and Joseph is in fact a reflection of a fundamental split in the world. The rift between the present reality and the future potential is rooted in the very foundations of the universe. On the second day of Creation, God formed the rakia, the firmament separating the waters below from the waters above (Gen. 1:7; see Chagigah 15a). This separation signifies a rupture between the present (as represented by the 'lower waters' of this world) and the future (the 'higher waters' of the heavens). The inability to reveal the future potential in the present is a fundamental defect of our world; unlike the other days of Creation, the Torah does not describe the second day, when this breach occurred, as being 'good.'

Joseph and the Letter Hey

According to the Midrash (Sotah 36b), the angel Gabriel taught Joseph seventy languages. Gabriel also added the Hebrew letter hey from God's Name to Joseph's name, calling him 'Yehosef' (Ps. 81:6). What is the significance of this extra letter?

The Sages wrote that God created this world with the letter hey, and the World to Come with the letter yud (Breishit Rabbah 12:9). In Joseph's view, each nation is measured according to its future spiritual potential, according to how it will fit in the final plan of kiddush ha-Shem, the sanctification of God's Name and revelation of His rule in the world. The

particular role of each nation is indicated by its unique language. Without the letter hey, however, Joseph could not properly grasp the language of each nation, i.e., he could not ascertain the nature of their role in the future world. With the addition of the letter hey to his name — the letter used to create this world — Joseph gained the ability to understand the universe as it exists now. Joseph was then able to comprehend the languages of all peoples and assess their spiritual potential.

Joseph was able to discern the world's potential for kiddush ha-Shem with the help of a single letter. He used the hey, a letter which is closed from three sides, as this future potential is currently almost completely hidden. Judah, on the other hand, looked at the world's spiritual state as it is revealed now.

“Joseph, who sanctified God’s Name in private, merited one letter of God’s Name. Judah, who sanctified God’s Name in public, merited that his entire name was called after God’s Name”
(Sotah 36b).

Two Types of Tzaddikim

According to the Zohar, Benjamin complemented his brother Joseph. ‘Rachel gave birth to two tzaddikim, Joseph and Benjamin. Joseph was a “higher tzaddik”, while his brother Benjamin was a “lower tzaddik” (Vayetzei 153b). What are these two types of saintly tzaddikim ?

The “higher tzaddik” is a conduit for the shefa (the Divine influence), drawing it down from above, while the “lower tzaddik” passes the shefa to the physical world below. Benjamin’s role, as the “lower tzaddik,” was to imbue our world with holiness. His whole life, Benjamin was concerned that the Temple should be built in the portion of Eretz Yisrael that his tribe would inherit. Why was that so vital to Benjamin?

The Temple is “a house of prayer for all peoples,” allowing all to share in its holiness. ‘Had the nations known how important the Temple was for them, they would have surrounded it with forts in order to guard over it’ (Tanhuma Bamidbar 3). The Temple has a fundamental role in Joseph’s universal outlook.

The Monarchy and the Temple

The dialectic between Judah and Joseph finds expression in two institutions: the monarchy and the Temple. The monarchy, whose role was to protect the national sanctity of the Jewish people, was established in Judah’s inheritance, in Hebron and Jerusalem. The Temple, whose role was to elevate all of humanity, was built on Benjamin’s land. Yet the Temple was partially located on a strip of land that extends from Judah’s portion into Benjamin’s portion. This strip represents the synthesis of Judah and Joseph, the integration of the national and universal viewpoints.

Mikeitz, the name of the Torah reading, means “at the end.” The Midrash Tanchuma explains that God established an end for all things. Just as Joseph’s imprisonment ended in Mikeitz, so too, the conflict between Judah and Joseph will be resolved after a constructive period of development and change. The fundamental dissonance in the world will be repaired, and the rift between the present and the potential, between the lower and higher waters of creation, will be healed.

(Sapphire from the Land of Israel. Adapted from Shemuot HaRe’iyah 10, Miketz 5690 (1929).)

Jews and Economics (Mikketz 5778)

By Lord Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, z”l, Former Chief Rabbi of the U.K.*

We know that Jews have won a disproportionate number of Nobel Prizes: over twenty per cent of them from a group that represents 0.2 per cent of the world population, an over-representation of 100 to one. But the most striking disproportion is in the field of economics. The first Nobel Prize in economics was awarded in 1969. The most recent winner, in 2017, was Richard Thaler. In total there have been 79 laureates, of whom 29 were Jews; that is, over 36 per cent.

Among famous Jewish economists, one of the first was David Ricardo, inventor of the theory of comparative advantage, which Paul Samuelson called the only true and non-obvious theory in the social sciences. Then there was John von

Neumann, inventor of Game Theory (creatively enlarged by Nobel Prize winner Robert Aumann). Milton Friedman developed monetary economics, Kenneth Arrow welfare economics, and Joe Stiglitz and Jeffrey Sachs, development economics. Daniel Kahneman and the late Amos Tversky created the field of behavioural economics. Gary Becker applied economic analysis to other areas of decision making, as did Richard Posner to the interplay of economics and law. To these we must add outstanding figures in economic and financial policy: Larry Summers, Alan Greenspan, Sir James Wolfensohn, Janet Yellen, Stanley Fischer and others too numerous to mention.

It began with Joseph who, in this week's parsha, became the world's first economist. Interpreting Pharaoh's dreams, he develops a theory of trade cycles – seven fat years followed by seven lean years – a cycle that still seems approximately to hold. Joseph also intuited that when a head of state dreams about cows and ears of corn, he is probably unconsciously thinking about macro-economics. The disturbing nature of the dreams suggested that God was sending an advance warning of a "black swan,"[1] a rare phenomenon for which conventional economics is unprepared.

So, having diagnosed the problem, he immediately proceeds to a solution: use the good years to build up resources for the lean times, a sound instance of long-term economic planning:

Let Pharaoh appoint commissioners over the land to take a fifth of the harvest of Egypt during the seven years of abundance. They should collect all the food of these good years that are coming and store up the grain under the authority of Pharaoh, to be kept in the cities for food. This food should be held in reserve for the country, to be used during the seven years of famine that will come upon Egypt, so that the country may not be ruined by the famine." (Gen. 41:34-36).

This turned out to be life-saving advice. His later economic policies, narrated in Vayigash (Gen. 47:11-26), are more questionable. When the people ran out of money during the lean years, Joseph told them to trade their livestock. When this too ran out, he arranged for them to sell their land to Pharaoh with the sole exception of the land belonging to the priests. The Egyptians were now, in essence, Pharaoh's serfs, paying him a tax of 20 per cent of their produce each year.

This nationalisation of livestock, labour and land meant that power was now concentrated in the hands of Pharaoh, and the people themselves reduced to serfdom. Both of these developments would eventually be used against Joseph's own people, when a new Pharaoh arose and enslaved the Israelites. It cannot be by accident that the Torah twice uses about the Egyptians the same phrase it will later use about the Israelites: avadim le-Pharo: they have become "Pharaoh's slaves" (Gen. 47:19, 25). There is already here a hint that too much economic power in the hands of the state leads to what Friedrich Hayek called "the road to serfdom"[2] and the eclipse of liberty.

So a reasonable case could be made that Joseph was the first economist. But why the predominance of Jews in economics in the modern age? I do not want to argue that Jews created capitalism. They didn't. Max Weber famously argued that it was the Protestant (primarily Calvinist) ethic that shaped "the spirit of capitalism." [3] Rodney Stark argued that it was the Catholic Church that did so, prior to the Reformation.[4] The author of the first great text of market economics, Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations* (1776), was a leading member of the Scottish Enlightenment whose religious views hovered between conventional Christianity and Deism. Those who have claimed a special kinship between Jews and capitalism – most notably Karl Marx and Werner Sombart – tended to like neither Jews nor capitalism.

Clearly, though, there is a strong affinity between the market economy and what is broadly known as the Judeo-Christian ethic, because it was only in such cultures that it emerged. China, for example, led the West in almost every aspect of technology until the seventeenth century, yet it failed to generate science, a free economy or an industrial revolution, and fell far behind until recent times. What was it about biblical values that proved so fruitful for economic thought, institutions and growth?

The Harvard historian and economist David Landes offered insight in his magisterial work *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations*.[5] First is the biblical insistence on property rights. He quotes Moses' words during the Korach revolt: "I have not taken one ass from them, nor have I wronged any one of them" (Num. 16:15). Likewise, the prophet Samuel rhetorically asks the people who have come asking for a king: "Whose ox have I taken, or whose ass have I taken?" (1 Sam. 12:3). Landes says that these remarks set the Israelites apart from any other culture of the time. Elsewhere, the king's right to appropriate other people's property was taken for granted.[6] John Locke saw that private property rights are an essential element of a free society.

A second feature was Judaism's respect for the dignity of labour. God saved Noah from the flood, but Noah had to build the ark. Third was the Judaic sense of linear time: time not as a series of cycles in which everything eventually returns to the way it was, but rather as an arena of change, development and progress. We are so familiar with these ideas – they form the bedrock of Western culture – that we are not always aware that they are not human universals. Jonathan Haidt calls them WEIRD: that is, they belong to societies that are Western, Educated, Industrialised, Rich and Democratic.[7]

To my mind, the most decisive single factor – the great break of Judaism from the ancient world of magic, mystery and myth – was the de-consecration of nature that followed from the fact that God created nature by an act of will, and by making us in His image, gave us too the creative power of will. That meant that for Jews, holiness lies not in the way the world is but in the way it ought to be. Poverty, disease, famine, injustice, and the exploitation of the powerless by the powerful are not the will of God. They may be part of human nature, but we have the power to rise above nature. God wants us not to accept but to heal, to cure, to prevent. So Jews have tended to become, out of all proportion to their numbers, lawyers fighting injustice, doctors fighting disease, teachers fighting ignorance, economists fighting poverty and (especially in modern Israel) agricultural technologists finding new ways to grow food in environments where it has never grown before.

All of this is brilliantly portrayed in this week's parsha. First Joseph diagnoses the problem. There will be a famine lasting seven years. It is what he does next that is world-changing. He sees this not as a fate to be endured but as a problem to be solved. Then, without fuss, he solves it, saving a whole region from death by starvation.

What can be changed need not be endured. Human suffering is not a fate to be borne, but a challenge to be overcome. This is Joseph's life-changing idea. What can be healed is not holy. God does not want us to accept poverty and pain but to cure them.

FOOTNOTES:

[1] Nassim Nicholas Taleb, *The Black Swan: the impact of the highly improbable*, London, Allen Lane, 2011.

[2] Friedrich Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom*, Chicago, 1946.

[3] Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, London, 1930.

[4] Rodney Stark, *The Victory of Reason: how Christianity led to freedom, capitalism and Western success*, Random House, 2007.

[5] David Landes, *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations*, Little, Brown, 1998, 45-59.

[6] To be sure, a king of Israel was entitled to appropriate land for national necessities, but not for private gain. Hence Elijah's denunciation of Ahab's seizure of Navot's vineyard (1 Kings 21). For a fine account of the halakhic and conceptual issues involved, see *Din melekh be-Yisrael* in *Kol Kitvei Maharatz Chajes*, Jerusalem, 1958, vol. 1, 43-49.

[7] Jonathan Haidt, *The Righteous Mind: why good people are divided by politics and religion*, London, Penguin, 2013.

* Note: because Likutei Torah and the Internet Parsha Sheet, both attached by E-mail, normally include the two most recent Devrei Torah by Rabbi Sacks, I have selected an earlier Dvar. See <https://rabbisacks.org/jews-economics-mikketz-5778-2/>

Why Joseph Framed Benjamin

By Menachem Feldman *

The terrible famine brought ten of Jacob's sons before the viceroy of Egypt to purchase bread. The viceroy, who, unbeknownst to them, was their brother Joseph whom they sold as a slave, accused them of being spies and demanded that they bring their brother Benjamin to Egypt. Before Joseph revealed his identity to his brothers, he framed Benjamin by planting his silver goblet in Benjamin's bag and charging Benjamin with theft. Judah stood up for Benjamin, requesting

that he himself be punished instead of Benjamin. Joseph then revealed his identity to his brothers, and the extended family was reunited with Joseph in Egypt.

The conventional understanding is that the entire plot of Joseph and his brothers serves to explain how the Jewish people came to live in Egypt and how they eventually became enslaved to the Egyptians. The Kabbalistic reading is precisely the opposite. Every step that Joseph took was, in reality, paving the way, not for the eventual enslavement, but rather for the spiritual fortification of the Jews in exile, which would ultimately lead to the redemption.

From the mystical perspective, in order for their descendants to survive the harsh exile, Joseph's brothers, who were the heads of the tribes of Israel, had to experience the oppression and accusations of the Egyptian monarch, who was, in truth, their brother in disguise. When the Jewish people, like their ancestors before them, would feel subjected to the Egyptian monarch, they would remember the story of Joseph and realize that there was a deeper reality in play. The oppressive monarch was in reality their "brother," who would ultimately bring benefit to them. The exile was a process that would refine them and lead them to great material and spiritual wealth.

In addition to physical subjugation, exile also has a spiritual dimension. When we are in exile, we are not in our natural environment. We are living a life that is not consistent with our inner core. Our natural, inherent awareness of G d and connection to the spirituality of our inner soul is compromised, as our emotions and aspirations are directed exclusively to our physical survival.

Joseph empowered the Jewish people to overcome the spiritual numbness that is exile.

The Torah describes how Joseph had Benjamin framed:

*Then he commanded the overseer of his house, saying, "Fill the men's sacks with food, as much as they can carry, and put each man's money into the mouth of his sack. And my goblet, the silver goblet, put into the mouth of the sack of the youngest, and his purchase money." And he did according to Joseph's word, which he had spoken.*¹

According to the mystics, the silver goblet represents passionate love and joy. The Hebrew word for silver (*kesef*) is the same word that means "yearning" and "longing." The goblet contains wine, which, as the verse says, brings joy to the heart of man.²

Joseph's planting the goblet in Benjamin's sack empowers us to realize that hidden within us is a "goblet of wine," the capacity to have a loving, joyful relationship with G d. Joseph reminds us that we can dispel the darkness of exile by searching for the hidden reservoirs of positive emotions planted within us. When we discover the goblet and taste the wine, the spiritual exile dissolves, paving the way for the physical redemption as well.³

FOOTNOTES:

1. Genesis 44:1-2.
2. Psalms 104:15.
3. Adapted from Or HaTorah, Bereishit VI, p. 2206.

* Director, Lifelong Learning Program, Chabad of Greenwich, CT. © Chabad 2020.

What Goes Around Comes Around (Till You Make It Stop)

By Hanna Perlberger *

Sitting on the steps of the Montgomery County courthouse appeared to be a homeless man. My husband is a lawyer, and as he passed by this man on his way into the building, the man called out, "Hey, rabbi! Give me a blessing."

How did he know my husband is Jewish? A hat covered his yarmulke. Besides sporting a neatly trimmed beard, what were the markers?

You can bet that people who wear suits, carry briefcases and move through courthouses with confidence and determination are attorneys. So what was with the rabbi thing? And while it's true that my husband just so happens to teach Torah, how did this stranger discern that?

Was this a smart entrepreneurial strategy on the part of the homeless man? After all, he certainly got my husband's attention. On the other hand, could this man have been a messenger from G d?

After my husband related this incident to me, he seemed to have second thoughts about the encounter—or at least it was still nagging at the corners of his mind. After all, my husband has traversed those courthouse steps thousands of times. Why was that man there that day, saying those words?

My husband is pulled between how he makes a living and how he makes life meaningful. Was he supposed to have engaged that man in conversation? Or do something in particular? Did he miss an opportunity? Or was the window still open?

"Don't worry!" I reassured him. "If this were an opportunity you missed but are meant to have, it will come around again."

It may not be that homeless guy or even any homeless guy. Lessons come in all shapes and sizes. Just be on the lookout to encounter the Divine when you least expect it.

A Disempowering Tale

You have probably heard some version of this story: A guy was rushing for his meeting with a tzaddik. On the way, someone calls out to him to help make a minyan, and the man says sorry, he's in a hurry. But when he finally gets to the tzaddik, the tzaddik informs him that the whole purpose of his life was to have been in that very minyan he passed by.

I dread those stories ... when someone doesn't realize the import of a particular situation, makes a mistake, and is told that his or her mission or purpose for said incarnation was to do that one thing. Yes, I understand that in our rush to something that we think is essential, we should not pass up the smaller opportunity or some act that we feel is inconsequential, and that in the eyes of heaven was really the grand gesture. I get it. But really, how many times do we blow it? And then what?

I hope life is more complicated than that, and that we can always learn from mistakes and failures, fix what we can and choose to grow. Isn't that what G d wants? While we may fail any given test, surely, the Teacher doesn't give up on educating the student and will continue to throw make-up quizzes our way.

When Opportunity Does, in Fact, Strike Twice

In Mikeitz, the epic blockbuster narratives center on Joseph's dreams, his becoming the Viceroy of Egypt, and the famous encounter between Joseph and his brothers.

The less obvious storyline is what happens when the brothers return from Egypt without their brother, Shimon, who was held captive by Joseph (who had not yet revealed his identity) as collateral for the brothers to return to Egypt with their youngest brother, Benjamin.

Upon hearing that the Viceroy of Egypt was demanding Benjamin's appearance, it seems as if Jacob might refuse, even if that meant Shimon would remain a captive in Egypt. Here we go with the same family dynamic all over again. Once again, Jacob was making it very clear who was the favored son. Benjamin was his youngest, the brother of Joseph, and the only remaining son of his beloved wife, Rachel.

Years ago, this family drama resulted in the brothers selling Joseph. This time around, with similar emotions in play, Yehuda did not allow jealousy and sibling rivalry to drive a poor choice. Instead, Yehuda took the opportunity to create a new dynamic by stepping up to take sole and personal responsibility to ensure Benjamin's safe return, even if he had to stand against the very might of Egypt itself.

Souls in Training

We all make mistakes, but the point is not to keep making the same ones. There is an axiom: "What you resist persists." The lessons are out there and will hopefully keep showing up until we get the message. This is a good thing—to be able to own our stuff, see a new truth and make a choice for a change.

If you believe, as I do, that the failure to do a specific act does not negate the entire purpose of your existence, then you should also realize that when you do step up to the plate and hit that cosmic homerun, you are not home free either.

What do you get when you pass a test? If you are expecting a parade in your honor or balloons falling from the sky, you will be sorely disappointed. It's unlikely that you will even be acknowledged or thanked. Furthermore, you may not even know you were being tested (much less aced it).

So what do you get when you pass a test? The ability, the potential, and a higher capacity to pass another one. And then another one. And that is, I would argue, the reason why you are here.

Transformation can happen in an instant. It's a pivotal moment of clarity that moves us from doing the same thing and responding in the same way to a new perspective. When we seize the opportunity to turn our axis in a different direction, we move along a new trajectory. When we respond to the same triggers with a new response, we can transform the past, and write a positive ending to a tired old story.

* Author, attorney, spiritual teacher, and coach. © Chabad 2020

Manasseh and Ephraim An Insight from the Rebbe *

In life, we must employ two paradoxical approaches with regard to the world at large: On the one hand, we must be constantly vigilant against alien influences; on the other hand, we must engage the mundaneness of the world in order to influence it positively.

Influencing our environment is obviously more important than merely maintaining our values. Temporally, however, the latter must precede the former, since if we forget our roots we will no longer have anything to contribute.

The two sons of Joseph, born and raised in Egypt, personified these two aspects of exilic life. Manasseh, so named by Joseph "in order not to forget his family and heritage," personifies our need to resist assimilation. Ephraim, so named "because G-d has made me fruitful in the land of my suffering," demonstrates our purpose in the "land of suffering": to be fruitful there and influence it positively.

Chronologically, therefore, Manasseh preceded Ephraim—he was the firstborn.

According to Rabbi Dovber of Mezeritch, Ephraim represents consistently saintly individuals while Manasseh represents penitents. Each group is inspired by their pasts, but in different ways:

Ephraim...G-d has made me fruitful: The consistently saintly are inspired by the fact that G-d has made them fruitful in the past because of their good deeds. Their past experience spurs them on to continued good. This is like a person, who, after traveling some distance to reach a certain city, is advised by others to give up the trip. The traveler will reply, "I have come so far; how can I give up in the middle?"

Manasseh... G-d has made me forget: Penitents recall the fact that they have in the past forgotten G-d, and are thereby fired with a greater yearning for closeness with G-d.

-- * From the Kehot Chumash

Rabbi Yosef B. Friedman
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Covenant and Conversation

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, z"l

Three Approaches to Dreams

In one of the greatest transformations in all literature, Joseph moves in a single bound from prisoner to Prime Minister. What was it about Joseph – a complete outsider to Egyptian culture, a “Hebrew,” a man who had been languishing in jail on a false charge of attempted rape – that marked him out as a leader of the greatest empire of the ancient world?

Joseph had three gifts that many have in isolation but few in combination. The first is that he dreamed dreams. Initially we do not know whether his two adolescent dreams – of his brothers’ sheaves bowing down to his, and of the sun, moon and eleven stars bowing down to him – are a genuine presentiment of future greatness, or merely the overactive imagination of a spoiled child with delusions of grandeur.

Only in this week’s parsha of Miketz do we discover a vital piece of information that has been withheld from us until now. Joseph says to Pharaoh, who has also had two dreams: “The reason the dream was given to Pharaoh in two forms is that the matter has been firmly decided by God, and God will do it soon” (Gen. 41:32). Only in retrospect do we realise that Joseph’s double dream was a sign that this, too, was no mere imagining. Joseph really was destined to be a leader to whom his family would bow down.

Second, like Sigmund Freud many centuries years later, Joseph had a gift for interpreting the dreams of others. He did so for the butler and baker in prison and, in this week’s parsha, for Pharaoh. His interpretations were neither magical nor miraculous. In the case of the butler and baker he remembered that in three days’ time it would be Pharaoh’s birthday (Gen. 40:20). It was the custom of rulers to make a feast on their birthday and decide the fate of certain individuals. (In Britain, the Queen’s birthday honours continue this tradition.) It was reasonable therefore to assume that the butler’s and baker’s dreams related to this event and their unconscious hopes and fears.[1]

In the case of Pharaoh’s dreams, Joseph may have known ancient Egyptian traditions about seven-year famines. Nahum Sarna quotes an Egyptian text from the reign of King Djoser (ca. twenty-eighth century BCE):

I was in distress on the Great Throne, and those who are in the palace were in heart’s affliction from a very great evil, since the Nile had not come in my time for a space of seven years. Grain was scant, fruits were dried up, and everything which they eat was short.[2]

Joseph’s most impressive achievement, though, was his third gift, the ability to implement dreams, solving the problem of which they were an early warning. No sooner had he told of a seven-year famine then he continued, without pause, to provide a solution:

“Now let Pharaoh look for a discerning and wise man and put him in charge of the land of Egypt. Let Pharaoh appoint commissioners over the land to take a fifth of the harvest of Egypt during the seven years of abundance. They should collect all the food of these good years that are coming and store up the grain under the authority of Pharaoh, to be kept in the cities for food. This food should be held in reserve for the country, to be used during the seven years of famine that will come upon Egypt, so that the country may not be ruined by the famine.” (Gen. 41:33-36)

We have seen Joseph the brilliant administrator before, both in Potiphar’s house and in the prison. It was this gift, demonstrated at precisely the right time, that led to his appointment as Viceroy of Egypt.

From Joseph, therefore, we learn three principles. The first is: dream dreams. Never be afraid to let your imagination soar. When people come to me for advice about leadership, I tell them to give themselves the time and space and imagination to dream. In dreams we discover our passion, and following our passion is the best way to live a rewarding life. [3]

Dreaming is often thought to be impractical. Not so; it is one of the most practical things we can do. There are people who spend months planning a holiday but do not give even a day to planning their life. They let themselves be carried by the winds of chance and circumstance. That is a mistake. The Sages said, “Wherever [in the Torah] we find the word *vayehi*, ‘And it came to pass,’ it is always the prelude to tragedy.”[4] A *vayehi* life is one in which we passively let things happen. A *yehi* (“Let there be”) life is one in which we make things happen, and it is our dreams that give us direction.

Theodor Herzl, to whom more than any other person we owe the existence of the State of Israel, used to say, “If you will it, it is no dream.” I once heard a wonderful story from Eli Wiesel. There was a time when Sigmund Freud and Theodor Herzl lived in the same district of Vienna. “Fortunately,” he said, “they never met. Can you imagine what would have happened had they met? Herzl would have said: ‘I have a dream of a Jewish state.’ Freud would have replied: ‘Tell me, Herr Herzl, how long have you been having this dream? Lie down on my couch, and I will psychoanalyse you.’ Herzl would have been cured of his dreams and today there would be no Jewish state.” Thankfully, the Jewish people have never been cured of their dreams.

The second principle is that leaders interpret other people’s dreams. They articulate the inchoate. They find a way of expressing the hopes and fears of a generation. Martin Luther King Jr.’s “I have a dream” speech was about taking the hopes of Black Americans and giving them wings. It was not Joseph’s dreams that made him a leader; it was Pharaoh’s. Our own dreams give us direction; it is other people’s dreams that give us opportunity.

The third principle is: find a way to implement dreams. First see the problem, then find a way of solving it. The Kotzker Rebbe once drew attention to a difficulty in Rashi’s writing. Rashi (Ex. 18:1) says that Yitro was given the name *Yeter* (meaning, “he added”) because “he added a passage to the Torah beginning [with the words], ‘Choose from among the people ...’” (Ex. 18:21). This occurred when Yitro saw Moses leading alone and told him that what he was doing was not good: he would wear himself and the people to exhaustion. Therefore he should choose good people and delegate much of the burden of leadership to them.

The Kotzker pointed out that the passage that Yitro added to the Torah did not actually begin, “Choose from among the people.” It began several verses earlier when he said, “What you are doing is not good.” (Ex. 18:17) The answer the Kotzker gave was simple. Saying “What you are doing is not good” is not an addition to the Torah – it is merely stating a problem. The addition consisted in the solution: delegating.

Good leaders either are, or surround themselves with, problem-solvers. It is easy to

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see when things are going wrong. What makes a leader is the ability to find a way of putting them right. Joseph's genius lay not in predicting seven years of plenty followed by seven years of famine, but in devising a system of storage that would ensure food supplies in the lean and hungry years.

Dream dreams; understand and articulate the dreams of others; and find ways of turning a dream into a reality – these three gifts are leadership, the Joseph way.

[1] Ibn Ezra 40:12 and Bechor Shor 40:12 both make this suggestion.

[2] Nahum Sarna, *Understanding Genesis*, New York, Schocken, 1966, 219.

[3] One of the classic texts on this subject is Ken Robinson, *The Element: How Finding Your Passion Changes Everything* (New York: Penguin Books, 2009).

[4] Megillah 10b.

Shabbat Shalom: Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

"The Lord shall broaden and beautify Japheth, and he [or perhaps He] shall dwell in the tents of Shem" (Genesis 9:27) Why is there no clear religious prohibition against the study of Greek wisdom and intellectual involvement in philosophy, mathematics, the sciences, secular music, art, literature and theater? Why was no prohibition made against the study of all the expressions of Greek culture that we know as Hellenism?

Hanukah does not merely celebrate our military victory over an enemy who wished to remove political independence from Judea. Our main celebration is the lighting of the menorah, the stylized "tree of life" This ceremony makes the statement that "the candle is commandment, and Torah is our light" (Proverbs 6:23). In other words, it is God's will and His miracles – as in the small cruse of oil only sufficient to last for one day, but which lasted for eight – and not human reason that must direct human affairs and activities.

According to this view, the Haredim are right, at least as far as banning university is concerned. This is precisely the meaning of the Biblical verse as they read it, "The Lord may broaden and glorify Yafet [Greece and Greek wisdom], but only He [the Lord, without Greek wisdom] may dwell in the tent or Shem".

There is one Talmudic passage (B.T. Baba Kama 82b) that seemingly prohibits the study of Greek wisdom. It cites an internecine battle between two brothers, Hyrcanus and Aristobulus, descendants of the Hasmonean dynasty (the instigators of the Judean victory over the Jewish Hellenists and the Greek-Syrians at Hanukah). An elderly man knowledgeable in Greek wisdom urged Aristobulus (whose army was outside of the walls of Jerusalem) to hoist a pig instead of a bullock over the ramparts, thus preventing and even desecrating the daily Temple sacrifice

which continued to be offered by Hyrcanus from within Jerusalem.

The actions of this devotee of Greek wisdom who wished to destroy our Hebrew civilization led to a devastating earthquake in the land of Israel. "From that day onwards" ruled the Sages, "Cursed be the individual who raises pigs and cursed be the father who teaches his child Greek wisdom." The prohibition seems to be absolute. So our legal codes forbid us from raising pigs – or even benefitting in any way from pigs or pig skins.

However, as far as Greek wisdom is concerned, the story is strangely different. The Talmud praises the Greek language and deems "Greek wisdom" a skill necessary for international political discourse (*ibid* 83a). In fact, a parallel account at the end of Tractate Sota defines "Greek wisdom" in the context of the prohibition as a "special language of nuance and riddle" used for espionage. This is how Maimonides (Commentary on last Mishnah in Sota) understood the Talmudic decree, adding that "Greek wisdom" has since disappeared from use, and hence the prohibition no longer has practical application.

How can we understand this refusal to ban Greek wisdom? It is particularly strange since the Books of Maccabees demonstrate that the battles commemorated by Hanukah were waged by religious Hasmoneans, who rebelled against the elite ruling priesthood, which had been captivated by the "modern" Hellenistic culture and its philosophy, esthetics and hedonism.

I believe it is because Judaism always valued wisdom – philosophy and science – and appreciated art and music. Witness the Books of Proverbs, Job and Ecclesiastes, which are even part of our sacred canon. The artist-architect of the Desert Sanctuary, Bezalel has a name which means "in the shadow of God"; music abounded in the Holy Temple: King Solomon was highly praised for his worldly wisdom. The Talmud praises science, maintaining that those who are capable of studying it and do not do so "are making themselves blind to God's handiwork" (B.T. Shabbat 75a). Maimonides places philosophy and science under the rubric of gemara, insisting that these disciplines must be a necessary part of the curriculum in an Academy of Talmudic studies, as part of the commandment to strive to know God.

The Rashba (Rav Shlomo ben Adrat, Spain d.1310) wrote three responsa in which he banned the study of philosophy, but only for those under the age of 25 (Responsa 415,416,417), and Rav Moshe Isserles and the Vilna Gaon (*Yoreh Deah* 346,4; *Biyur HaGra* 18) both allow the study of science and philosophy. Although the Vilna Gaon is cited (*Yoreh Deah* 179) as saying that the "accursed philosophy turned Maimonides astray," one of the Vilna Gaon's best students, Rav Menashe

Likutei Torah

from Ilia, wrote that, "these words never emanated from the Gaon's pen nor from his sacred mouth".

Indeed the Vilna Gaon is quoted by Rabbi Barukh Shik of Shklov: "To the extent that a person lacks knowledge of wisdom, he will also lack one hundred measures of the wisdom of Torah, since Torah and wisdom are bound up together." As a result of the importance that our Tradition gave to the wisdom of philosophy and science, it would have been inconceivable for the Sages to ban Greek wisdom. Hence, an alternate interpretation of the opening verse quoted above would serve as an introduction to this commentary, "The Lord shall broaden and beautify Yaphet (Greece), and he (Yaphet) shall dwell in the tents of Shem." "The beauty of Yaphet must adorn the tents of Shem". (*Gen* 9:27, *Gen Rabbah* ad loc.). Torah must be wed to university study.

The Person in the Parsha **Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb**

Two Kinds of People

"There are two kinds of people." I am sure that you all have heard one variation or another of that theme. We seem to have a well-ingrained habit of dividing people into two categories. For example, we say that there are those for whom the cup is half-full, while others for whom the cup is half-empty. There are two types of people: some are optimists, and others are pessimists.

There are other dichotomies that we utilize. We distinguish between those individuals who are rational, guided by their heads, and those who are emotional, who follow their hearts. There are men and women of reason, and there are men and women of feeling.

The British political philosopher, Sir Isaiah Berlin, wrote an entire book about such a dichotomy. He entitled it, *The Hedgehog and the Fox*. He bases this title on a remark made by one of the ancient Greek philosophers: "The fox knows many things, but the hedgehog knows one big thing." The fox has many little tricks up his sleeve, by which he can evade his pursuers. But the hedgehog has but one defense and, by the use of his prickly quills, can successfully defend himself against his enemies.

Sir Isaiah applies this distinction to the field of literature; specifically to the great Russian novelists such as Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, and Turgenev. Some excel at portraying details, while others are masters of depicting grand themes. If we transfer Sir Isaiah's approach from literature to, say, medicine, we can certainly easily distinguish between the specialists and the generalists.

Personally, I believe that such dichotomies are simplistic, failing to take the complexity of human beings into account. Few of us are so rigidly one-dimensional. Most of us fluctuate

between optimism and pessimism. We occasionally rely upon our reason, but in other circumstances become quite emotional. We shift our focus from fine details to the overall picture and back again.

It is fascinating to find such dichotomies in our traditional Jewish sources. Perhaps the most famous of them relates to two schools of thought that pervade Talmudic literature: Hillel and Shammai and their respective schools. These two great sages debate each other on hundreds of subjects, ranging from the question of whether it would have been better that man had never been created to laws regarding the fine points of ritual purity. They each prescribed different sequences for the blessings which constitute the Havdalah service, and they even differed as to the precise wording of some of those blessings.

Many scholars have assumed that fundamentally, different philosophies of life were at the root of their disagreements. One attempt to identify such an underlying rationale was made by a sage of the last generation, Rabbi Solomon Joseph Zevin, who fortunately escaped the prisons of the Soviet Union and lived to teach and write in Jerusalem.

Rabbi Zevin believed that all of Hillel and Shammai's differences of opinion could be reduced to one basic difference between them. Shammai, he argued, held the future potential of a situation to be more critical than the actual current situation. Shammai was concerned with probable future consequences; Hillel, with present realities.

Hillel, felt that the actual situation with which a person is confronted takes precedence over considerations of what might happen in the future. Rav Zevin's dichotomy puts Shammai's priority on potential eventualities against Hillel's belief that actual present circumstances took priority.

Their contrasting approaches to religious life is exemplified in the well-known story of the aspiring convert to Judaism who approached first Shammai and then Hillel with the request that they teach him the entire Torah while standing on one foot. Shammai angrily rejected him, while Hillel welcomed him, famously declaring that the essence of the Torah could indeed be taught while standing on one foot: "Do not do unto others what is hateful to you." Hillel then went on to advise him that the rest of the Torah was just commentary that he could study independently.

Following Rav Zevin's approach, when Shammai was confronted with the bizarre request of the convert, he suspected, with good cause, that this man would not be a good candidate or a lasting conversion—sooner or later, he would revert to his pagan ways. Characteristically, Shammai considered potential.

But Hillel was not troubled by what the potential future might hold in store. Here was a man who wished to convert. That was all that mattered. The actuality of the present moment prevailed.

With another of their many debates, we finally come to this week's special Shabbat, the Shabbat of Hanukkah.

Hillel ruled that one begins the holiday by lighting just one candle and then increases the number of candles day by day. Shammai ruled in the opposite manner, beginning with eight candles and then gradually decreasing the number of candles night after night.

We are all so accustomed to lighting one candle of the menorah on the first night and then adding an additional candle for each successive night that many of us are unaware that this procedure follows Hillel's opinion. Shammai insisted that things should be done differently. He and his entire school lit eight candles on the first night and proceeded to light in descending order, from eight down to one.

Applying Rav Zevin's analysis can gain a fresh understanding of the candle lighting ceremony of Hanukkah. For Shammai, the miracle was powerful at that specific time in history when it occurred. But, concerned as he was about the potential future, he was convinced that, with time, the memory of that miracle would fade and its lessons would be forgotten.

Hillel had a different view. We can return, he asserted, to the moment in history when the miracle occurred. At first, on day one, the phenomenon was almost insignificant. But as each day passed and the oil of the Temple's menorah continued to burn, the wonder grew and grew. That was the nature of the situation at that moment in time, the awe increasing gradually day after day.

Hillel had an additional insight. Always holding the present moment in focus, he realized that that bygone moment did not have to disappear over time. It could be preserved. It could forever be experienced in all of its wonder.

The victory of more than 2,000 years ago remains ever present, right up to this very year. Memories need not fade. Such is the nature of the Jewish historical memory: events can be relived.

Hillel's teaching about the primacy of the present moment and our ability to perennially relive that moment lies at the core of the Hanukkah holiday. This teaching is encapsulated in the words of the blessing we recite just as we light the menorah:

Likutei Torah

"Blessed are You, Lord our God... who performed miracles for our ancestors in those days, and at this time."

Torah.Org: Rabbi Yissocher Frand

Why Do We Need a Word Count at the End of Parshas Miketz?

The number of pesukim in each weekly parsha is recorded at the end of virtually every parsha. The end of Miketz, as is typical, contains the notation that the parsha contains 146 pesukim. However, it is very atypical that following this notation there is a further notation that the parsha contains 2,025 words. This is the only parsha that contains a word count as well as a pasuk count. What is the significance of this?

I heard a beautiful interpretation in the name of the Vilna Gaon. The pasuk says in Parshas Miketz, "And he (Pharaoh) had him (Yosef) ride in his second chariot, and they proclaimed before him, 'Avrech!' And he appointed him over all the land of Egypt." [Bereishis 41:43]. There is a dispute in the Sifrei as to the meaning of the term 'Avrech'. One opinion says it is a condensation of two words: Av (father) in wisdom and Rach (soft; tender) in years. Yosef was all of 30 years old. He was running Egypt. He was very wise while still being a young man. That is why young Kollel students in Eretz Yisrael today are given the title Avreichim. It means the same thing – they are young in years but wise beyond their age. The other opinion in Sifrei is that Avrech comes from the root word berech meaning 'knee'. Whenever Yosef would appear, his assistants would announce to everyone 'Avrech' – bend down (as a show of honor to the ruler).

The Gaon explains that a derivative of this dispute in terms of the meaning of 'Avrech' is whether the term is a single word (as would be the case if it comes from berech) or two words (a combination of Av and Rach). The Gaon says that the notation at the end of the parsha tells us that there are 2025 words in the parsha, which only works out if one counts AvRech as two words, indicating that we rule in accordance with the opinion that AvRech is a term connoting the two aspects of 'Av' (maturity in wisdom) and 'Rach' (youthfulness).

Things Are Not Always as They Appear

One of the very perplexing things in this parsha is the fact that Yosef appears to be taking revenge against his brothers. He is playing games with them. He torments them. He knows who they are and puts them through a long charade, accusing them of being spies and accusing Binyomin of being a thief. It goes back and forth like that. What is Yosef doing? We are speaking about 'Yosef haTzaddik' (the 'Righteous one.')

The Ramban asks a question that bothers everyone. Yosef was now second in command in Egypt. He certainly could have sent some kind of message to his father and told him, 'I am alive. Come down and see me.' Even if he

has a grudge against his brothers and wants to torment and torture them, but why was he apparently so callous regarding the emotions of his father? Why didn't he send Yaakov Avinu a message that he was alive and well?

The Ramban provides a whole approach to answer this question. He says the reason Yosef did not do this is because he was trying to bring his dreams to fruition. Yosef had two dreams. First, he dreamt that the eleven brothers would bow down to him. Then he had a second dream that his father would also bow down to him. The Ramban writes that Yosef had to see the fulfillment of those dreams. Therefore, when the ten brothers came down and bowed down to him, the first dream remained unfulfilled. For that reason, he demanded that all eleven brothers come down. When the brothers came down with Binyamin and bowed before him, the first dream was now fulfilled in totality. However, the second dream was not yet fulfilled. That is why he hatched this plan. It was not that he intended to seek revenge or torture the brothers, but the dreams had to be fulfilled!

Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky, in his sefer *Emes L'Yaakov*, writes the words, "and I am like dust under the soles of his feet" (in comparison to the Ramban, one of the great early commentaries) "but", he goes on, "I do not understand what the Ramban is saying." He asks: What kind of mitzvah is it to see that a person's dreams become fulfilled? That is no justification to put his brothers and father through the wringer, to play this cat and mouse game with them, just to ensure that his personal dreams from decades ago come to fruition!

Rav Yaakov goes on to give his own explanation for Yosef's behavior. His explanation is that Yosef had to teach the brothers a lesson. The lesson, succinctly stated, is that things are not always as they appear, and that it is possible to jump to wrong conclusions. This is exactly what the brothers did. They falsely suspected their innocent sibling (choshed b'Kshirim). That is what Yosef was trying to accomplish here. The brothers knew that they were not spies. They knew Yosef was a smart fellow. How could he make such a gross error and accuse them of being spies?

They did not learn the lesson the first time. Rav Yaakov points out that when they found the goblet in the sack of Binyomin, they accused him and said (Rashi brings this surprising Medrash) "You are a thief, the son of a thief (referring to the fact that his mother Rachel stole the 'Terafim' from her father Lavan)." This was despite the fact that they were accusing Binyomin—whom they knew to be a Tzadik (righteous individual).

There are some people that we all trust implicitly, such that come what may we know that they would never do such a thing. "Ay"—the 'evidence'? There must be an explanation! But they did not do that. In spite of the fact

that Binyomin was a Tzadik, they said "You're a Ganav (thief)!" Despite the fact that they knew Yosef was a Tzadik, they said "You're a Rodef (have intent to murder)!"

"I am going to show you" says Yosef, "that if people jump to conclusions—they look merely at the 'evidence'—they can make serious mistakes." That is why he had to put them through these trials and tribulations—so that they would finally see what they did wrong.

When Yosef says the words "I am Yosef—is my father still alive?" they were not able to respond to him "for they feared his presence." The Midrash says that this was musar (rebuke, reprimand or chastisement) to them, for which they had no response. What was the musar? "We were wrong." That is the biggest musar! It is the hardest fact to face. They now realized that for twenty years they were making a mistake, they were living a lie. There is no greater musar than this.

That is the lesson he wanted to teach them: Things are not always as they appear.

I heard an incident from Rabbi Isaac Bernstein, who links this Biblical event with a beautiful story involving the Ponnevizer Rav (Rav Yosef Shlomo Kahaneman 1888-1969) and Reb Aryeh Levin (1885-1969). The Ponnevizer Rav called a meeting with all the great men of Eretz Yisrael over the dire financial straits of the Yeshivos in the Holy Land. Reb Aryeh Levin was in attendance at this meeting. In the middle of the meeting, before they came to any type of conclusion, Reb Aryeh Levin excused himself. He said, "I have an important errand that I have to take care of. I need to leave." And he left in the middle of the meeting. Once Reb Aryeh left, the whole meeting dissipated. It fell apart because they were not going to come to any conclusion without him. There was no point in having further discussion about any major decisions, because no one wanted to undertake a major initiative without Reb Aryeh's concurrence.

After the meeting broke up, the Ponnevizer Rav starts walking to wherever he had to go. He passed by a florist shop, and who should he see there in the florist shop? It is none other than Reb Aryeh Levin. Rav Kahaneman went into the florist shop and said to Reb Aryeh, "Excuse me, but this was the important errand that you had to take care of that caused you to break up our meeting? Just so you could buy someone flowers!?"

Reb Aryeh responded that he was not in the store to buy flowers. He was there instead to buy a potted plant. Okay. So???

Reb Aryeh told him that he had a friend who was deathly ill who was in a sanatorium. (According to another version of the story the person had leprosy.) He had a disease that was deemed in those days to be so contagious that anything the person owned or brought with him into this facility had to be burned after the person died—his clothes, his bed sheets, his possessions, everything had to be burned. This

Likutei Torah

man was now near death. It bothered the friend that they were going to burn his Tefillin.

Reb Aryeh Levin went to the florist and bought a potted plant. He was going to dig out the dirt that came with the plant and put the Tefillin under the plant in the dirt, since the hospital staff was of the opinion that a living organism was not affected by this illness—so he would be able to remove the plant (under which the Tefillin were buried) from the facility. He would thus be able to make the deathly ill person feel at ease that his Tefillin would not be burnt, because they would be removed along with the plant by Reb Aryeh after the person died. This Jew would be able to go to his grave knowing "My Tefillin were not destroyed!"

The Ponnevizer Rav apologized to Reb Aryeh and begged his forgiveness for being "Choshed b'Kshirim" (suspecting him unjustly).

A person can appear to be as guilty as anything. The stolen goblet can be in his sack of wheat. Someone can excuse himself from an important meeting to go to a florist, but things are not always as they appear. That is why Yosef felt he had to put his brothers through such an ordeal—to teach them that lesson

Dvar Torah

Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis

I've got a riddle for you: Which date in the Hebrew calendar is sometimes a festival and sometimes an ordinary day? Yes! There is one date on which sometimes we say Hallel and sometimes we say Tachnun.

The answer is the third of Tevet which will fall on this coming Tuesday. You see, it all depends on how many days of Rosh Chodesh there are at the beginning of the month of Tevet—and of course, Rosh Chodesh Tevet always falls right in the middle of Chanukah. If there are two days of Rosh Chodesh, as is the case this year, (and therefore there will also be a thirtieth of Kislev) the third of Tevet will fall after Chanukah and is, therefore, an ordinary day. Next year, and on other similar years, the month of Kislev will have twenty-nine days. There will be one day missing and consequently the third of Tevet will be the last day of Chanukah. So if you have your birthday on the third of Tevet, sometimes your birthday is associated with an incredible festival, and sometimes it is a day that is pretty ordinary.

This is absolutely fascinating, especially as the 8th day of Chanukah in our tradition has a special name. It is considered to be the ultimate day of the entire festival. It is called 'Zot Chanukah'. It is taken from our Torah reading for the festival of Chanukah—from the Parsha of Nasso in the book of Bamidbar. On each day of the festival, we read about the contributions that the heads of the tribes brought. And then on the eighth day the Torah says 'Zot Chanukat HaMizbe'ach'—'this is the dedication of the alter'—the summation of all the contributions. And that is why that eighth

day is called Zot Chanukah as if to suggest that this is the essence of the festival – this is the day on which our celebration reaches its greatest height.

Of course, we can understand this in the context of the famous debate between Beit Hillel and Beit Shammai. Beit Shammai (Mesechet Shabbat) taught that on the first night of Chanukah we light eight candles, then seven, then six, all the way down to one on the concluding night. But Beit Hillel, whose view we follow to this day, taught “ma’alin bakodesh” on each day of the festival we do more than what we did on the previous day, going from one on the first night to eight on the concluding night. And that is the lesson for us. We should raise the bar of our aspirations to achieve more than what we have previously attained, so we end on a high! Isn’t it amazing – sometimes the third of Tevet is the ultimate day of a festival and sometimes it is pretty ordinary.

But actually I believe that that is not really the case. Because in terms of programming we know that the events we hold are important, not primarily for what we do upon them but for the follow up that they inspire. If Chanukah was only an eight day wonder – well it is brilliant while it lasts but what does it do for us the rest of the year? The message of Chanukah is that throughout our lives we need to raise that bar even higher and therefore the third of Tevet is a most significant date in our calendar. It is on that day that we strive to achieve even more than what we performed during the festival. That is the greatest sign of the success of Chanukah. The third of Tevet is never an ordinary day. It is either a festival or perhaps something even more important than that.

OTS Dvar Torah - Rabbi Shlomo Wallfish

Lessons on Leadership

Parashat Miketz begins at the climax of a story in which Joseph is the protagonist. Though he had experienced rises and falls all along his journey, and though even more serious challenges still awaited him, as we’ll read later in this Parasha and in subsequent parshiyot, the most powerful turn of events occurs at the very beginning of our Parasha, when, within a very short time, he goes from filthy prisoner to the head of state of one of the largest empires of his day.

Beyond the external circumstances and divine providence, it would be interesting to explore the changes Joseph was experiencing within. This was a process that expressed his maturity and development over the years.

Even as a youth, Joseph was rather impressive. He had aspired to lead and stand out. His father, Jacob, had apparently wanted to cultivate these character traits, but Joseph’s brothers become intensely antagonistic toward him due to his childish demeanor. This happens all too often. As it was, the feeling that Joseph was favored above them all didn’t sit well with them, and we mustn’t forget that

in Abraham’s family, only one son inherited his father’s spiritual and material wealth, while the rest would need to find their way around in foreign lands (and besides, the heir would almost never be the eldest son). Joseph makes almost every possible mistake, and this exacerbates the enmity his brothers felt toward him. Naturally, this could never justify the horrible thing they did to him, but our story focuses on Joseph, who hadn’t done enough to dispel the negative sentiments his brothers had for him.

Once Joseph reaches Egypt, he comes into his own. His talents quickly come into play, and Potiphar trusts him with everything. We should note that Joseph was very loyal to his master, and that his behavior wasn’t the main reason he experienced another fall from grace, when he was thrown into the dungeon, but he seemed to have made several more mistakes on the way, which helped lead him to this miserable state. The text reads: “He left all that he had in Joseph’s hands and, with him there, he paid attention to nothing save the food that he ate.” (Genesis 39:6). Interestingly, by becoming the de facto head of the household, he brings about his own downfall, which explains to him who is really in charge of the show. Once again, for Joseph, this was the reason he remained loyal to his master, the reason he wouldn’t betray him:

But he refused. He said to his master’s wife, “Look, with me here, my master gives no thought to anything in this house, and all that he owns he has placed in my hands. He yields no more authority in this house than I, and he has withheld nothing from me except yourself, since you are his wife. How then could I do this most wicked thing, and sin before God?” (ibid., 8-9).

Yet since his leadership lacks boundaries, he once again ended up in dire straits. Unlike his first slip-up as a youth, Joseph was now mature enough to channel his leadership skills to a more productive end, and gain the trust and positive impression of those with whom he came into contact. However, he still had quite a bit to learn about setting boundaries between his job and his personal life.

The third and most important stage of his life arrives when he meets Pharaoh. On the one hand, Joseph’s leadership skills and sharp and coherent thinking lead to impressive results. Joseph is able to take advantage of opportunities, and he manages to transition from inmate to royal advisor within minutes. On the other hand, he entered Pharaoh’s court with a great deal of humility. He reiterates that Pharaoh is the one who decides, that he would find the “man of discernment and wisdom” and that he would instruct that man as necessary. Joseph doesn’t even recommend himself for the job – he simply allows Pharaoh to select him. Pharaoh understands this on his own, and he emphasizes, several times, that even though Joseph was, in practice, in charge

Likutei Torah

of Egypt’s state affairs, as Pharaoh, he would keep a close eye on what was happening: “You shall be in charge of my court, and by your command shall all my people be directed; only with respect to the throne shall I be superior to you...” (ibid. 41:40), and “Pharaoh said to Joseph, ‘I am Pharaoh; yet without you, no one shall lift up hand or foot in all the land of Egypt...’” (ibid., vs. 44).

Apparently, this wasn’t just a rhetorical trick meant to persuade all those present that Joseph didn’t pose any threat to their leadership, but rather that he was acting in their benefit, without any ulterior motives. Joseph truly seems to have undergone an intrinsic transformation. He learns to channel his unique leadership skills so that they produce helpful and positive results, while remaining highly modest and attentive.

This process will grow even more intense during the heated encounter between Joseph and his brothers. In that setting, Joseph wanted to take his brothers through this important process, during which they would need to fight for their little brother and take care of him, however, Joseph would now do so with a level of intrinsic attentiveness and tenderness we haven’t seen in him until now – he weeps privately, behind closed doors, and he releases heart-wrenching wails in full view of the royal court. This is made possible because he now sees his brothers in a new light.

Hanukah, which we recently celebrated, is about the import process of maturation that the people of Israel undergo during the middle of the Second Temple period. The leadership abilities displayed by Mattathias, Judah, Jonathan and Simeon, of the Hasmonean clan, combined military and political skills. They managed to lead the Jewish people down a winding path that culminated in the establishment of an independent kingdom – the first since the destruction of the First Temple. Then, too, the process was long and exhausting, and included many mistakes. One of their best qualities was their ability to be attentive to the people’s spirits and strengths, and the Hasmoneans were only able to make their most significant achievements when the masses flocked behind their charismatic leaders.

On a spiritual level, the age of the Hasmoneans is a significant milestone in the development of the Torah and its inculcation within the Jewish people. The shift between the Written Torah and the Oral Torah skips several stages, and essentially, the first use of the traditional exegetical approach toward the Torah that we are, more or less, familiar with today, was rooted in that period.

Let us pray, particularly these days, when “there is no king in Israel”, that our leadership will be able to lead from a position of humility and attentiveness. May it learn the proper way,

6

the way of ebbs and flows, from Joseph and the Hasmoneans.

Torah.Org Dvar Torah by Rabbi Label Lam

A Point Small and Pure

..And [we thank You] for the miracles, for the redemption, for the mighty deeds, for the saving acts, and for the wonders which You have wrought for our ancestors in those days, at this time—

In the days of Matityahu, the son of Yochanan the High Priest, the Hasmonean and his sons, when the wicked Hellenic government rose up against Your people Israel to make them forget Your Torah and violate the decrees of Your will. But You, in Your abounding mercies, stood by them in the time of their distress. You waged their battles, defended their rights, and avenged the wrong done to them. You delivered the mighty into the hands of the weak, the many into the hands of the few, the impure into the hands of the pure, the wicked into the hands of the righteous, and the wanton sinners into the hands of those who occupy themselves with Your Torah. You made a great and holy name for Yourself in Your world, and affected a great deliverance and redemption for Your people Israel to this very day. Then Your children entered the shrine of Your House, cleansed Your Temple, purified Your Sanctuary, kindled lights in Your holy courtyards, and instituted these eight days of Chanukah to give thanks and praise to Your great Name. – Al HaNissim

One small but powerful point jumps out from this additional prayer that we recite multiple times daily during the eight days of Chanukah. It's so small, in fact, that it might be easy to miss it. That's the point! It's small! That's why it's so powerful and that's why it's easy to overlook it. Enough with the riddles! By now you must have guessed.

The entire accomplishment of Chanukah is the work of the weak, the small, the pure, and the righteous. Reb Yisrael Salanter ztl., the father of the Mussar movement described the human condition like this: "A man is a drop of intellect in a sea of instinct!" There are so many sights and sounds competing for our mental attention at any given moment. Many of those images and much of the alluring sirens around nowadays are cleverly designed to hold us hypnotically in a mental lock, and keep us addicted.

How does one survive B'Zman HaZeh and remain decent?! It's not an insane question. It may be the only sane question we should be asking.

This is very much the battle of the Jews with the Syrian Greek culture which offered an intellectually competitive culture. They were less interested in forcing Jews to bow to idols as the Babylonians, and they were not intent

on destroying every Jew, like Haman, but rather they wanted to seduce the Jewish intellect. At this they were largely successful to the extent that the holiness of the Jewish People was at the point of extinction.

What's the answer?! What's the optimal response? The Sages say, "A little light chases away a lot of darkness!" Our counter to the culture is to sweep away the darkness by lighting a small but holy light. The Chovos HaLevavos writes profoundly at the very end of the chapter dealing with Singular Devotion to G-d, "The little and the pure is the majority!"

In our own lives, what will have been our greatest accomplishment is that small act done with purity, as opposed to the voluminous deeds done with ulterior or inferior motives. Purity of intent amplifies the value of a small action, like a single clear diamond is superior to a box filled with shiny sequins.

Chanukah is a new beginning. We start with a single holy light that is lit just for a Mitzvah and not for personal use. Then it gradually grows and grows night after night until it matures at eight, which in symbolic language equals eternity. After that, like the rocket ship that has left the earth's gravity, "Lech Lecha M'Artzechah" – Leave your earthiness – as Avraham was told, we are now going forever. We can launch our new lives with a Torah thought!

That's our response to the darkness, to gradually expand the circumference of light and feed the drop of holy intellect until it lights up the world. While we have the world in mind, we must always start with a point small and the pure.

Dvar Torah based on Growth Through Torah by Rabbi Zelig Pliskin

Pharaoh likes Joseph's interpretation of his dream and then appoints him to be in charge of Egypt's economy. The Torah states: "And Pharaoh said to Joseph, 'after the Almighty has informed you of all this, there is no one who is as understanding and wise as you' " (Gen. 41:39). How could Pharaoh trust Joseph whose resume listed his last two positions as "convict" and "slave"?

Rabbi Chaim Shmulevitz, the late head of the Mir Yeshiva, explained that Pharaoh saw Joseph's extreme honesty when Joseph began by saying that he had no power to interpret dreams on his own; that it was entirely a gift from the Almighty. Joseph did not want to take credit even for a moment. This total honesty in one minor point showed that Joseph could be completely trusted.

Note that Pharaoh saw one minor positive point in Joseph's character and extrapolated it to a larger scale. This should be our model in viewing people. Keep finding minor strengths

Likutei Torah

and good qualities in others and then give the person positive feedback. This can help someone build a positive self-image. The more a person sees himself as having positive attributes, the more motivated he will be to utilize those strengths for further growth.

Many people have a tendency to notice minor faults and weaknesses in others and then keep telling them that they have major character problems. More can be accomplished to help people by focusing on the positive than harping on the negative ... especially if they have low self-esteem.



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Text & Texture - <http://text.recarabbis.org> -
Of Miketz, Menorahs, and Majesty

By Daniel Z. Feldman

Halakhic Inquiries Regarding Yosef's Behavior

The release of Yosef from prison, a moment of great drama and emotion, has also been the subject of halakhic inquiry. Some rishonim note, in light of the fact that his release took place on Rosh HaShanah[1] [1], it is surprising that Yosef shaved at that time[2] [2]. Rashi comments that the shaving was done because of kevod ha-malkhut; nonetheless, working under the assumption that the Avot (and, apparently Yosef included) observed the entire Torah before it was given, it would be expected that he would refrain from shaving on Rosh Hashanah. This question prompted an extensive literature in later generations, analyzing the halakhic considerations from every angle - is shaving a violation mi-d'orayta of Hilkhot Yom Tov; perhaps the action is to be considered a melakhah she'einh tzrichah ligufah; can it be excused under his unique circumstances; what role does kevod ha-malkhut play in the question; perhaps the situation is considered pikuach nefesh; perhaps it is relevant that Yosef was presumably shaved by someone else, etc.[3] [3]

Kevod Ha-Malchut

The Chatam Sofer, for one, seemed bothered by the very question itself[4] [4]. The notion of the Avot keeping the Torah, he argued, was a fine and important idea, but not an actual obligation. Kevod Ha-Malkhut, by contrast, is a genuine din, one that had to be observed even before the giving of the Torah, by force of law. Thus, kevod ha-malkhut, which was commanded, certainly overrides Yom Tov, which was "eino metzuveh vi-oseh".

The Chatam Sofer's comment is itself difficult to understand. Kevod ha-malchut is also a law of the Torah, derived from pesukim[5] [5]. By what

logic is this law separated from the other mitzvot of the Torah, which he deems voluntary in the Pre-Sinaitic era, while this one is not?

In considering the obligation of kevod ha-malkhut, R. Simcha Zissel Broide, the late Rosh Yeshivah of the Chevron Yeshivah, posits[6] [6] a number of theories explaining its importance. Among the five points that he makes is what he considers a fundamental principle of the human personality: It is crucial for one's spiritual development that he possesses the ability to appreciate great things. One who is jaded and cynical, who views all things with disinterest, is unable to attain any kind of meaningful spiritual maturity. Thus, it is critical to hone one's awareness of the extraordinary, and the attitude one brings toward royalty is certainly reflective of this vital attribute. It is interesting to note that there is another (seasonally appropriate) comment of the Chatam Sofer that is also somewhat surprising. We are in the midst of celebrating Chanukah. We generally assume that Chanukah and Purim, clearly post-Biblical in origin, are observed as chiyuvim mi-de-rabanan.[7] [7] Nonetheless, maintains the Chatam Sofer[8] [8], if one would let the occasions of Chanukah or Purim pass by without any acknowledgement, this would be the wrong thing on a level mi-d'orayta.

Appreciating Greatness and Majesty

Perhaps the common element between the two statements of the Chatam Sofer – his comment regarding Yosef, and his assertion regarding Chanukah – is the fundamental necessity of cultivating an appreciation for greatness and majesty. One who is unreceptive to the miraculous and the majestic is incapable of approaching the Torah with any potential for success. If one is unmoved by the extraordinary, then the greatest gift of all eternity can fail to move and inspire; not for any internal deficiency in the item, but because of the closed "eye of the beholder".

This issue is indicated as well by the comments of the Ramban on the pasuk[9] [9] following the giving of the aseret ha-dibrot, when Moshe tells the Jewish people not to be afraid, because G-d has come "ba-avur nasot etchem". The Ramban understands this in the sense of nisayon, to test the Jewish people, to see if they are capable of feeling an appreciation for the awe-inspiring display that accompanied Matan Torah.

As R. Yitzchak Hutner explains,[10] [10] this "test" was a crucial part of the process of the bestowing of the Torah upon the Jewish people. If the Jews failed to be moved by such a display, then they cannot fulfill their roles as the guardians of the Torah; they will be unreceptive to the infinite treasures of its content, and thus immune to its influence.

In this sense, R. Hutner notes the Maharal of Prague's interpretation of the Talmud's statement that the churban ha-bayit took place because the Jews failed to recite Birkhot HaTorah.[11] [11] This passage has long challenged commentators, both because of the apparently disproportional nature of the punishment, and the well-known fact that the Jews of that era were guilty of several other egregious offenses. The Maharal explained[12] [12] that the Talmud is not claiming that the lack of Birkhot HaTorah is the punishable offense; indeed, the churban was provoked by the other offenses committed at that time. Rather, the Talmud's question was this: since we know that the Jews of that time were involved in the study of Torah, how is it also possible that they were guilty of such transgressions? Should not their Talmud Torah have influenced them toward a more righteous path?

To this, explains the Talmud, it is commented that the Jews of that time did not recite a berakhah on the Torah. They were not awestruck by the experience; they were not moved by the privilege to express gratitude to He who bestowed this great gift. If that was their attitude, they were not in a position to be influenced by the Torah's content.

The Chatam Sofer is reminding us, in his two comments, that no relationship with Torah can be complete without a sense of the majestic and the miraculous. Before the giving of the Torah, the avot were not technically obligated in mitzvot; but if they were lacking an awe of majesty, they would not have been the avot. Before the events of Chanukah, there was no obligation to light candles or recite hallel; but in the generations after, one who can casually fail to do so is shown to be flawed in his relationship with Torah at a fundamental level. The convergence of Miketz and Chanukah

provides us with a reminder that allowing the magnificent to become mundane is a danger to the very definition of the Jewish personality.

[1] [13] Rosh HaShanah 10b [2] [14] Bereishit 41:14

[3] [15] See, for example, R. Asher Weiss, *Minchat Asher al ha-Torah*, Bereishit #56.

[4] [16] See his chiddushim to Bereishit. It should be noted that there are several editions of the chiddushim of the Chatam Sofer to the Torah, under the titles *Torat Moshe*, *Torat Moshe HaShalem*, *Chiddushei Chatam Sofer*, *Mei-Otzrot HaChatam Sofer*, etc. In many of those editions, the Chatam Sofer does deal with the question more directly. The comment mentioned here can be found in the edition printed in R. Yehudah Horowitz's *Gilyonei Mahari al Sefer Chatam Sofer al ha-Torah*.

[5] [17] Possible sources include Bereishit 48:2 (see Rashi) or Shemot 6:13 (see *Mechilta*, Bo, ch. 13).

[6] [18] Sam Derekh, Bereishit, II, pp. 117.

[7] [19] Setting aside, for a moment, the possibility that the mitzvot of Purim, as *divrei Kabbalah*, might have *di-orayta* status.

[8] [20] Responsa Chatam Sofer, *Orach Chayim*, 208.

[9] [21] Shemot 20:16

[10] [22] *Pachad Yitzchak*, *Shavuot* #8.

[11] [23] *Bava Metzia* 85b

[12] [24] *Hakdamah to Tiferet Yisrael*.

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Shiur HaRav Soloveichik ZT"ל on Parshas Miketz 12/9/75

The Rav discussed the story of Yosef and his brothers, who upon arriving in Egypt to purchase food are recognized by Yosef. The Torah, several verses later, repeats this notion again saying that Yosef recognized his brothers though they did not recognize him.

The Ibn Ezra says that the first recognition refers to all his brothers in general. The second recognition refers to his recognizing each one individually. After speaking with them he was able to tell them apart but they were not able to recognize him.

The Ramban says that Yosef would have had difficulty recognizing all his brothers as such, for some of them were about the same age as he was at the time of his sale into slavery and after all these years would have matured physically just like he did. Yet after conversing with them all he began to realize that these were his brothers. He recognized the older brothers and was able to realize that the other, less familiar people were the other brothers even though he did not recognize them immediately. The Ramban also says that Yosef recognized on his own that his brothers would eventually need to come to Egypt, yet they never thought, nor could they recognize, the possibility that the brother they sold into slavery might be elevated to the level of prime minister.

Rashi brings a Midrash that Yosef behaved with mercy towards his brothers even though they did not show him kindness when he was at their mercy. Even though Midah Kneged Midah would demand that Yosef should have treated them badly, he did not. The term recognized refers to how Yosef acted towards his brothers. He recognized them by acting kindly towards them even though they did not act the same towards him.

The Rav added an explanation along the lines of what Rashi said.

Ramban says that Yosef knew that the Hashgacha was served by Yosef being in Egypt. Yosef never informed his father that he was alive even after he was elevated to prime minister. He knew that there was a greater purpose for his being sent to Egypt.

What was Yosef's purpose in talking harshly to his brothers? Why cause so much aggravation to his father and brothers? Yosef knew that the Hashgacha was unfolding events in a specific way that showed a definite purpose. He did not want to inform Yaakov that he was alive because he saw the need to allow the Hashgacha to unfold on its own. What did Yosef want to accomplish in talking to his brothers? The Rav explained that Yosef wanted to see if his brothers had repented for what they had done to him. He wanted

to see if Yehuda who was the one who suggested selling him into slavery would fight to protect his brother Binyamin. Yehuda was guilty in the sale of Yosef, after Yehuda was willing to stand up for Binyamin Yosef realized that this was no longer the same Yehuda who sold him into slavery. Had they not been willing to lay down their own lives to save Binyamin, the entire Jewish history would have unfolded differently. Therefore the Torah says that Yosef recognized his brothers but they did not recognize him. Yosef recognized that the divine plan was unfolding, but his brothers did not.

The Rav asked why the Torah states so many times that Yosef remembered his brothers and the dreams that he told to them. Why not say that Yosef remembered what his brothers did to him: he remembered that they sold him into slavery! Why did he have to say that they were spies who had discovered the weak parts of the land? The Rav explained that Yosef had doubts up till this point as to what was the purpose of his being sold into slavery in Egypt. He wanted to determine if indeed the arrival of the brothers in Egypt and the fulfillment of the dreams that he had many years before were all part of the master plan of Hashem for the Jewish People. Was he the messenger of Hashem who was to play a role in the destiny of the Jewish people, and were his dreams a part of that role, or were he and his dreams insignificant in the context of Jewish destiny. Yosef recalled his dreams and realized that they were important and that he was meant to play a central role. What did his dreams indicate? They told him that he was the messenger of Hashgacha Hashem. The dreams indicated that he, Yosef, would be the leader. But beyond that he had another mission. He would blaze the trail that the Jewish people would follow during their exile and for their eventual redemption. Yosef was an integral part of the process of exile and redemption in that he showed that it was possible to remain faithful to the principles of Avraham Avinu while trapped within even the mightiest empire. It was possible to rise to the level of viceroy of Egypt, and still be faithful to the beliefs of Yaakov. As the midrash says (brought down by Rashi) on the verse *Pi Hamedaber Alaychem* that Yosef was speaking to them in *Lashon Hakodesh*. In fact, this was the greatest miracle of the sojourn in Egypt, *Reuven VShimon Nichnasu Reuven VShimon Yatzu*, they entered and left Egypt with the same convictions and were not changed by Egyptian society. Yosef was required to be the leader in order that he might set an example of how to survive in a foreign land and remain true to the *Bris Avraham*. When Yosef saw his brothers, he remembered them and the dreams he told them. He recognized that the Hashgacha appointed him as leader and as such he had to make sure that they would be ready for the difficult exile period that awaited them. He had to determine if they were still the same divided group that sold him into slavery years before. It was the dreams that gave him the right to test and even torment his brothers in order to find out. The dreams said that he was the leader. As the leader he had a right to use whatever means at his disposal to accomplish his task. The Midrash says that Hashem told Moshe that he had to take a stick and hit the people over the head to get them to listen to him. Even though Moshe was the most humble of men, a leader must often put aside his humility, even inflict pain if necessary, when called upon to act decisively. The Torah mentions that Yosef remembered his dreams at the point where he met his brothers in order to indicate that the message of the dreams, that he was to be the leader, were his sanction to act harshly with them, as he did in the following chapters. The Torah says that *Bnay Yaakov* were among the multitudes that came to purchase food from Egypt. They had a very simple intention in coming: to purchase food. They did not realize that their trip was another step in the process of their eventual exile and subjugation in a foreign land as foretold in the *Bris Bayn Habesarim* as well as the ultimate redemption from there. The Hashgacha was that the *Bnay Yaakov* should arrive in Egypt in stages, first 1 (Yosef) followed by 10 others, followed by the last brother and eventually to be followed by the rest of the house of Yaakov. The Torah says that Yosef was the overseer of all of Egypt and that he was the supplier of food overall. Why mention this in connection with the arrival of the brothers and Yosef's recollection of his dreams? Why are we interested that Yosef was the mainstay of the Egyptian economic

system? Because it was necessary to get the brothers to come down to Egypt to prove that the entire plan of his leadership was foretold in his dreams and to fulfill them. The brothers had to come down to Egypt and bow before Yosef to fulfill his first dream. The Torah says that Yosef recognized his brothers but they did not recognize him. This implied a simple recognition of them as his brothers, the same brothers who had sold him into slavery years before. He asked them why they came to Egypt and they replied that they had come to purchase food. Yosef knew that thousands of people were arriving daily in Egypt to purchase food, many from Canaan as well. Their reason for coming should have been obvious, why ask them? Because Yosef recognized something that they did not: that the real reason they had come was to begin serving the exile period that was foretold in the Bris Bayn Habesarim. The Torah tells us again that Yosef recognized his brothers but they did not recognize him. His brothers thought that they had come down to Egypt simply to purchase food. Yosef recognized that they had come to begin their exile in Egypt. At that point he recalled his dreams and he realized that the divine plan was playing itself out and that he would be the leader. However he needed to see if they were capable of withstanding the difficult period that awaited them. People who were willing to sell their own brother for 20 shekalim would not last long in a difficult exile. They had to show that they were Shvtei Kah, above all others. As a leader, he had a right to test them to verify that they were ready for their ordeal. He had to wait to see if Yehuda, the one who agitated to sell him, had changed and would be willing to fight for his sibling, Binyamin, in order to verify this changeover. When Yosef saw that they had indeed changed and were ready, he could no longer control himself and he revealed himself to his brothers. The Rav asked what was the reason for the Jews having to undergo an exile of 400 years? Why was such a difficult price exacted in order to get the ultimate rewards of the Torah and Eretz Yisrael? The Rav explained that the Zohar comments on the verse of Arami Oved Avi... Vayhi Sham L'Goy Gadol. Had the Jews not undergone the exile in Egypt, they might have become a nation, but would never had become a great nation. After all, there were 70 nations already that Hashem could have selected from if all He desired was a regular nation. The Zohar brings the verse of Shoshana Bayn Hachochim, a rose among the thorns as being representative of Bnay Yisrael and their exile in Egypt. The beauty of the rose is magnified by the fact that it is surrounded by such a harsh environment. Bnay Yisrael had to be among the trees and wilderness of Egypt in order to reach fulfillment as the great nation. The Rav cited the attribute of Chesed as an example. There are many details to the Mitzva of charity that must be followed in order to fulfill the Mitzvah correctly. The importance of Chesed is underscored in Masechet Kallah where we find that when Rabban Yochanan Ben Zakai passed by the ruins of the Beis Hamikdash area his students began to cry over the desolation. Rabban Yochanan consoled them saying that while the Bays Hamikdash stood, the Avoda took precedence over acts of kindness. Times of destruction and holocaust present many more opportunities to perform acts of charity and chesed. In a way, acts of Chesed are more important than Binyan Hamikdash. This fundamental tenet of Judaism has remained with us throughout the ages and can be seen even today as Jews donate in disproportionate numbers and amounts relative to the rest of the population, to charitable causes of all kinds. When the Jews left Egypt, Hashem commanded them to refrain from actions they might have seen or learned of Egypt. It was important for the Jew to be in Egypt in order to learn useful things and modes of conduct that would serve them well as the Chosen Nation. Yosef recognized this and set the stage for the exile period and the redemption that followed it. This summary is Copyright 1996 by Dr. Israel Rivkin and Josh Rapps, Edison, N.J. Permission to reprint and distribute, with this notice, is hereby granted. These summaries are based on notes taken by Dr. Rivkin at the weekly Moriah Shiur given by Moraynu V'Rabbeinu Harav Yosef Dov Halevi Soloveichik ZTL over many years.

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Covenant and Conversation from Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks Z'L

Three Approaches to Dreams by Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks In one of the greatest transformations in all literature, Joseph moves in a single bound from prisoner to Prime Minister. What was it about Joseph – a complete outsider to Egyptian culture, a “Hebrew,” a man who had been languishing in jail on a false charge of attempted rape – that marked him out as a leader of the greatest empire of the ancient world?

Joseph had three gifts that many have in isolation but few in combination. The first is that he dreamed dreams. Initially we do not know whether his two adolescent dreams – of his brothers’ sheaves bowing down to his, and of the sun, moon and eleven stars bowing down to him – are a genuine presentiment of future greatness, or merely the overactive imagination of a spoiled child with delusions of grandeur.

Only in this week’s parsha of Mikketz do we discover a vital piece of information that has been withheld from us until now. Joseph says to Pharaoh, who has also had two dreams: “The reason the dream was given to Pharaoh in two forms is that the matter has been firmly decided by God, and God will do it soon” (Gen. 41:32). Only in retrospect do we realise that Joseph’s double dream was a sign that this too was no mere imagining. Joseph really was destined to be a leader to whom his family would bow down.

Second, like Sigmund Freud many centuries years later, Joseph had a gift for interpreting the dreams of others. He did so for the butler and baker in prison and, in this week’s parsha, for Pharaoh. His interpretations were neither magical nor miraculous. In the case of the butler and baker he remembered that in three days’ time it would be Pharaoh’s birthday (Gen. 40:20). It was the custom of rulers to make a feast on their birthday and decide the fate of certain individuals (in Britain, the Queen’s birthday honours continue this tradition). It was reasonable therefore to assume that the butler’s and baker’s dreams related to this event and their unconscious hopes and fears.¹

In the case of Pharaoh’s dreams, Joseph may have known ancient Egyptian traditions about seven-year famines. Nahum Sarna quotes an Egyptian text from the reign of King Djoser (ca. twenty-eighth century BCE):

I was in distress on the Great Throne, and those who are in the palace were in heart’s affliction from a very great evil, since the Nile had not come in my time for a space of seven years. Grain was scant, fruits were dried up, and everything which they eat was short.²

Joseph’s most impressive achievement, though, was his third gift, the ability to implement dreams, solving the problem of which they were an early warning. No sooner had he told of a seven-year famine then he continued, without pause, to provide a solution:

“Now let Pharaoh look for a discerning and wise man and put him in charge of the land of Egypt. Let Pharaoh appoint commissioners over the land to take a fifth of the harvest of Egypt during the seven years of abundance. They should collect all the food of these good years that are coming and store up the grain under the authority of Pharaoh, to be kept in the cities for food. This food should be held in reserve for the country, to be used during the seven years of famine that will come upon Egypt, so that the country may not be ruined by the famine.” (Gen. 41:33-36)

We have seen Joseph the brilliant administrator before, both in Potiphar’s house and in the prison. It was this gift, demonstrated at precisely the right time, that led to his appointment as Viceroy of Egypt.

From Joseph, therefore, we learn three principles. The first is: dream dreams. Never be afraid to let your imagination soar. When people come to me for advice about leadership, I tell them to give themselves the time and space and imagination to dream. In dreams we discover our passion, and following our passion is the best way to live a rewarding life.³

Dreaming is often thought to be impractical. Not so; it is one of the most practical things we can do. There are people who spend months planning a holiday but not even a day planning a life. They let themselves be carried by

the winds of chance and circumstance. That is a mistake. The Sages said, "Wherever [in the Torah] we find the word *vayehi*, 'And it came to pass,' it is always the prelude to tragedy."⁴ A *vayehi* life is one in which we passively let things happen. A *yehi* ("Let there be") life is one in which we make things happen, and it is our dreams that give us direction.

Theodor Herzl, to whom more than any other person we owe the existence of the state of Israel, used to say, "If you will it, it is no dream." I once heard a wonderful story from Eli Wiesel. There was a time when Sigmund Freud and Theodore Herzl lived in the same district of Vienna. "Fortunately," he said, "they never met. Can you imagine what would have happened had they met? Theodore Herzl would have said: 'I have a dream of a Jewish state.' Freud would have replied: 'Tell me, Herr Herzl, how long have you been having this dream? Lie down on my couch, and I will psychoanalyse you.' Herzl would have been cured of his dreams and today there would be no Jewish state." Fortunately, the Jewish people have never been cured of their dreams.

The second principle is that leaders interpret other people's dreams. They articulate the inchoate. They find a way of expressing the hopes and fears of a generation. Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I have a dream" speech was about taking the hopes of Black Americans and giving them wings. It was not Joseph's dreams that made him a leader; it was Pharaoh's. Our own dreams give us direction; it is other people's dreams that give us opportunity.

The third principle is: find a way to implement dreams. First see the problem, then find a way of solving it. The Kotzker Rebbe once drew attention to a difficulty in Rashi's writing. Rashi (Ex. 18:1) says that Yitro was given the name *Yeter* (meaning, "he added") because "he added a passage to the Torah beginning [with the words], 'Choose from among the people ...'" (Ex. 18:21). This occurred when Yitro saw Moses leading alone and told him that what he was doing was not good: he would wear himself and the people to exhaustion. Therefore he should choose good people and delegate much of the burden of leadership to them.

The Kotzker pointed out that the passage that Yitro added to the Torah did not begin, "Choose from among the people." It began several verses earlier when he said, "What you are doing is not good." (Ex. 18:17) The answer the Kotzker gave was simple. Saying "What you are doing is not good" is not an addition to the Torah – it is merely stating a problem. The addition consisted in the solution: delegating.

Good leaders either are, or surround themselves with, problem-solvers. It is easy to see when things are going wrong. What makes a leader is the ability to find a way of putting them right. Joseph's genius lay not in predicting seven years of plenty followed by seven years of famine, but in devising a system of storage that would ensure food supplies in the lean and hungry years.

Dream dreams; understand and articulate the dreams of others; and find ways of turning a dream into a reality – these three gifts are leadership, the Joseph way.

QUESTIONS (AROUND THE SHABBAT TABLE) Dream dreams: How big are the ideas you dream up for your life? Understand the dreams of others: Do you ever listen to other people's aspirations, and help them to visualise them more clearly? Find ways of transforming them: How can you turn these dreams into realities? **NOTES**

Ibn Ezra 40:12 and Bechor Shor 40:12 both make this suggestion. Nahum Sarna, *Understanding Genesis*, New York, Schocken, 1966, 219. One of the classic texts on this subject is Ken Robinson, *The Element: How Finding Your Passion Changes Everything* (New York: Penguin Books, 2009). Megillah 10b.

from: **Rabbi Berel Wein** <genesis@torah.org> reply-to: do-not-reply@torah.org to: rabbiwein@torah.org date: Dec 18, 2020, 12:17 AM subject: Rabbi Wein - Twists and Turns

Dedicated to the speedy recovery of Mordechai ben Chaya
Parshas Miketz Twists and Turns

The dreams of Joseph are actualized in this week's Torah reading. Miracles, though hidden, are somewhat natural events, and in this instance occur to facilitate this realization of the dreams of Joseph.

We all dream, but not all dreams are miraculous per se. The great Pharaoh of Egypt also had dreams. The fact that he dreamt of fat cows and lean cows is also understandable, for that was the nature of the society that he governed at that time. It was, in the main, a purely agricultural society, dependent upon animal power to produce food and sustenance. It is also not surprising that he dreamt of sheaves of grain, both full and empty.

But Pharaoh is disturbed by the fact that these dreams repeat themselves, and as Midrash teaches us, these dreams have an unusual and perplexing conclusion to them. In effect, the little destroyed the big, the weak destroy the mighty and the few triumph over the many. These conclusions were in direct opposition to the beliefs and experiences of Pharaoh. When he awoke in the morning and remembered his dreams, he was sorely troubled that they did not conform to any of his previous experiences.

It is this part of the story, the fact that the dreams were the opposite of what they had experienced previously, that sets the stage for the miraculous deliverance of Joseph and his unbelievable rise to power and fame. Thus, we see how miracles are formed by seemingly natural events, with just a little twist to those events that facilitate and hasten the arrival of the miracle.

One of the more amazing insights into this dramatic turn of events is that it seems that Joseph is not at all surprised by his being taken out of the dungeon and placed upon one of the thrones of the ancient Egyptian Empire. Simply being released from prison after having the aristocracy of Egypt against him, one would think this would have been a sufficient miracle for this lonely, defenseless Jew accused of a serious crime. Yet, from the way that Joseph immediately gets to work to store food before the famine, it seems that he knew that he was destined to be part of history. It was as if he almost expected to be appointed as the ruler of Egypt, second only to the Pharaoh.

In the house of Jacob, as in the houses of Isaac and Abraham, miracles were part of everyday life. They were expected to happen because our ancestors lived in a world of the spirit, where the presence of Heaven always felt real. Joseph had no doubt that he would be saved, and that his dreams of greatness and accomplishment were not made of imaginary straw. He only did not know how this would come about and how the dreams would be actualized. He had intended to be helped by the butler of Pharaoh, but that was not the track that the Lord had ordained for Joseph. In this week's Torah reading, the real story unfolds with all the necessary twists and turns that make up human life.

Shabbat shalom
Rabbi Berel Wein

yhe intparsha@jer1.co.il 1996 Parashat Miketz
Yeshivat Har Etzion Israel Koschitzky Virtual Beit Midrash
Parashat Miketz -- Why Didn't Joseph Contact His Father?
Adapted by Zvi Shimon

This shiur is dedicated l'zecher nishmat Yehuda ben Harav Yosef Dov, by his son Asher Reimer.

The following is an abridgement of articles written by Rabbi Yoel Bin Nun, a teacher in the Herzog Teachers' College affiliated with Yeshivat Har Etzion, and Rabbi Yaakov Medan, a teacher in the yeshiva, which originally appeared in Hebrew in *Megadim* 1.

Ramban poses a difficult question, one which continues to puzzle whoever studies the book of Genesis: "How is it that Joseph, after living many years in Egypt, having attained a high and influential position in the house of an important Egyptian official, did not send his father even one message to inform him (that he was alive) and comfort him? Egypt is only six days' travel from Hebron, and respect for his father would have justified even a

year's journey! (It would) have been a grave sin to torment his father by leaving him in mourning and bereavement for himself and for Shim'on; even if he wanted to hurt his brothers a little, how could he not feel pity for his aged father (Ramban to Gen. 42:9)?" Abarbanel poses the same question, but more bluntly: "Why did Joseph hide his identity from his brothers and speak harshly to them? It is criminal to be as vengeful and recriminating as a serpent!... How is it that as his brothers were starving and far from home, having left their families and small children and, above all, his aged, worried and suffering father waiting for them, did he not show compassion, but rather intensified the anguish by arresting Shim'on?" (chap. 4, question 4)

1) RAV YOEL BIN NUN'S SOLUTION: The usual solution, advanced by the Ramban that Yosef was trying to fulfill the dreams, is rejected by R. Bin Nun, chiefly because it doesn't address, in his opinion, the moral question. How could Yosef have left his father in torment, only to bring his dreams to fruition? Our entire outlook on this story changes, however, if we accept the fact that Joseph did not know that his brothers had fooled his father with the coat, the blood, and the lie that Joseph had been devoured by wild animals. Such thoughts never occurred to him! Hence it was Joseph who spent thirteen years of slavery in Egypt and, the following years of greatness wondering: "Where is my father? Why has no one come to look for me?" All the factors are now reversed, when seen from Joseph's point of view. Egypt is, after all, close to Canaan, and Jacob was a rich, important and influential man, with international familial and political connections. The Midianites or Ishmaelites who brought Joseph to Egypt were his cousins; is it possible that no one from that caravan could be located in all those years? We know that Jacob does not search for his son, as he thinks Joseph is dead, but Joseph has no way of knowing this. Joseph's wonder at his father's silence is joined by a terrible sense of anxiety which grows stronger over the years, as seasons and years pass by and no one comes. Joseph's anguish centers on his father: the voice inside him asking "where is my father?" is joined by another harsh voice: "Why did my father send me to my brothers that day?" He concludes that his brothers must have succeeded in convincing Jacob, and he has been disowned. Years later, when Joseph rides in the viceroy's chariot, when he shaves his beard and stands before Pharaoh, it is clear to him that God must have decreed that his life would be lived separately from his family's. He gives expression to this feeling in the name he gives his eldest son, born of an Egyptian wife:

...he called him Menashe, because God has made me forget (nashani) all my labor and my father's house (41:51). To forget his father's house! Joseph's entire world is built on the misconception that his father has renounced him, while Jacob's world is destroyed by the misconception that Joseph is dead. Joseph's world is shaken when his brothers stand before him, not knowing who he is, and bow down to him. At that moment, he must question this new reality ("he remembers the dreams he dreamt about them") and is thrown back into the past. Stalling for time, he begins a line of inquiry and action which is geared to one end: to find out why his father had rejected him, if at all. He plots to keep Benjamin, so that his maternal brother can tell him all that has transpired. This was Joseph's plan to find out what had happened and how to deal with it. Judah's response was an attempt to obtain Benjamin's release by appealing for mercy for his aged father. In so doing, he tells Joseph totally unintentionally exactly what he wanted so desperately to hear, thereby freeing him and eventually Jacob, from their mutual errors. "Your servant our father said to us: 'You know that my wife bore me two sons. One has left me; I said he was devoured and I have not seen him since. (If) you take this son too and tragedy befalls him you will bring my old age down to She'ol in agony'" (44:24-30). Joseph needs to hear no more. He finally realizes the naked truth: No one has cut him off at all! He has not been forgotten! Joseph could no longer restrain himself before all who were standing before him, and cried: 'Have every one leave me!... and he cried out loud... and he told his brothers: I am Joseph: Is my father still alive? (45:1-3) Does he live? Is he yet my father, who loves me and has not forgotten me? Is it possible?

Each of the players in our scene had a plan, and pursued that plan. But the plan which was finally revealed was a higher plan, geared at bringing Jacob's family to Egypt and creating the Jewish people.

2) RAV YAAKOV MEDAN'S CRITIQUE OF RAV BIN NUN'S SOLUTION This thesis of Joseph's suspicion towards his father is untenable. Joseph knew that he was, after all, his father's favorite son and that his father had made him the striped coat. He also knew that his father had loved Rachel most of all his wives. Above all, would a man like Jacob behave deceitfully, sending Joseph to his brothers on the false pretext of ascertaining their well being, intending in fact that they sell him as a slave? Is there a son who would suspect his father of such a deed? This assumption is totally unrealistic. It also remains unclear why Joseph, surprised that his father did not seek him out, came to harbor the kind of suspicions attributed to him by R. Bin Nun. How could he be certain that his father knew of the sale, but refrained from searching for him? Why did it not occur to him that his father regarded him as dead? To this day, a person who disappears without a trace is presumed dead. Why should we assume that Joseph did not believe that the brothers were lying to his father? It was precisely because the brothers did not habitually report their actions to their father that Joseph found it necessary to tell his father all their misdeeds (37:2). In addition, R. Bin Nun claims that Joseph's stubborn silence was broken upon hearing Judah say "he was surely devoured and I have not seen him since (44:28)." Joseph realized at this point that his father had not deserted him. However according to the simplest reading of the text, Joseph's resistance broke down when Judah offered himself as a slave instead of Benjamin: Therefore please let your servant remain as a slave to my lord instead of the boy, and let the boy go back with his brothers. For how can I go back to my father unless the boy is with me? Let me not see to the sorrow that would overcome my father! ...Joseph could no longer control himself (44:32-45:1). R. Bin Nun claims that Joseph's feelings of rejection by his family are the foundation for the naming of his first born "Menashe," meaning "God has made me forget my hardship and my father's home" (nashani made me forget). In my opinion, the meaning of the verse is different. "My hardship" (amali) is to be understood as follows (see Ibn Ezra Genesis 6:13): "God has made me forget completely my hardship and the HARDSHIP of my parental home." Joseph does not offer thanks to God for having made him forget his parental home, but rather offers thanks for enabling him to forget his tribulations (his labors) in his father's house. It is only after Joseph rises to the throne that he is able to make sense of his suffering in the two previous episodes, in prison ("amali") and in his father's house (beit avi). 3) RAV MEDAN'S SOLUTION: "THE PATH OF REPENTANCE" Abarbanel offers the following explanation for Joseph's not contacting his father while in Egypt: "Even after Joseph tested his brothers by accusing them of espionage, he was still not certain whether they loved Benjamin or whether they still hated Rachel's children, so he focused on Benjamin to see whether they would try to save him." (chap. 42, quest. 4, 6) Joseph's behavior is part of an overall scheme to test the brothers and provide them with an opportunity to fully repent for selling him into slavery. The sin of Joseph's brothers is one of the more serious sins related in the book of Genesis. Both the Torah (Exodus 21:17, 20:13; see Rashi ibid; Deut. 24:7) and the Prophets (Joel 4, Amos 2:6-10 and many others) equate this sin of selling a free man into bondage with the gravest of sins. The penitence of Joseph's brothers is not an incidental event appearing as part of another story, but a major theme of the narrative. Reuven and Judah were vying for the family leadership, Jacob having effectively ceased playing the leadership role (see for example 34:5, 34:13-14, 35:22, 43:5). After Shim'on and Levi are excluded from the race for leadership, the struggle continues between Reuven and Judah. It finds expression in their argument as to Joseph's fate (37:22-26, 27), in the recognition of the sin of his sale (42:22 contra 44:16), in the assumption of responsibility for Benjamin in Egypt (42:37 contra 43:8-9) and in additional verses in the Torah. Reuven and Judah were each engaged in a process of penitence for similar sins, Reuven for having slept with his father's wife (as appears

from the simple textual reading), Judah for having lain, albeit unknowingly, with his son's wife. It would seem clear that their individual repentance is also part of the leadership struggle. At first glance there seems to be no connection between Reuven's sin with his father's wife or Judah's sin with his son's wife and the selling of Joseph. This, however is misleading. According to the simple reading of the text, Reuven's intention was to inherit his father's leadership in his lifetime, like Absalom who slept with David's concubine. His attempt to rescue Joseph and his dreams of royalty (37:20) is part of his repentance for his sin with Bilhah. The proximity of the story of Judah and Tamar to the selling of Joseph indicates a connection as well. The chain of disasters that strike Judah, the loss of his wife and two sons, is apparently a punishment for selling Joseph. Reuven later advances the strange suggestion that Jacob kill his two sons, should he fail to return Benjamin from Egypt (42:37). It would seem that he was influenced by the punishment Judah had received for selling Joseph the death of his two sons. This terrible punishment for a terrible sin is branded into Reuven's consciousness. Reuven is ready to receive the same punishment if he deserts Benjamin in Egypt. Initially, Judah did not imagine that his sons died due to his sin, saying "Tamar's fate is that her husbands will die (Yevamot 34 and Genesis 38:11)." Finally, Judah realizes that Tamar was in the right and he admits "she is more righteous than I.(38:26)" Only at this stage did he realize that she was not destined to have her husbands die but rather that it was his destiny to lose his sons. The sin was his. From this recognition he rebuilds his shattered home. The process of repentance accompanies the brothers wherever they go. When the Egyptian viceroy commands them to bring Benjamin, the second son of Rachel's, the brothers are immediately reminded of the sale of Joseph. The two contenders Reuven and Judah respond in character. Reuven sees only the punishment for the crime, and he does not suggest any means of rectification. And Reuven answered them: 'Did I not tell you, do not sin against the child, and you did not listen; now his blood is being avenged.' (Gee. 42:22) Judah acknowledges his sin, but also suggests a positive path of repentance for the evil done. He is not satisfied with sackcloth and fasting, which are merely expressions of mourning and acceptance of the verdict. And they tore their clothesAnd Judah said, 'What shall we say to my lord? What shall we speak? Or how shall we clear ourselves? God has divulged the sin of your servants; we have become my lord's slaves' (44:13 17). And further on, Let your servant stay instead of the boy as a slave to my lord and let the boy go up with his brothers (44:33). From Judah's speech it is apparent that he did not confess to stealing the cup. He considered the whole episode of the stolen goblet as a fabrication. Otherwise there is no sense in telling us of Benjamin's journey to Egypt, or his suggesting that he replace Benjamin. This is how Rashi and other commentators interpret Judah's words. His words, "God has revealed the SIN of your servants," undoubtedly relate to the selling of Joseph. Similarly, Judah's words to his father, "If I bring him not to you and set him before you, then I shall have SINNED to you forever" (43:9), indicate his understanding of the connection between Joseph's being brought down to Egypt and Benjamin being brought down to Egypt. Benjamin's abandonment in Egypt would be a continuation of his grievous sin of selling Joseph. What sin is there and why should he be punished if Benjamin is forcibly taken? We must therefore see the necessity of bringing Benjamin down to Egypt as a consequence of the sin. For Judah, protecting Benjamin at all cost is the atonement demanded for the selling of Joseph. In offering their respective propositions, Reuven and Judah remain faithful to their personalities: Reuven through acceptance of the punishment, and Judah through confrontation with the sin itself. Our assumption is that Joseph too was plagued by his brother's sin and, consequently, with the future of the house of Israel, no less than with his own fate. From the time he was sold, he had begun to rebuild not only his own life, but his family's unity. This unification was not to be forced upon his brothers, but rather achieved by willingness and love. Joseph desired a unification born of his brother's regretting their sin, a product of wholehearted repentance. Joseph believed

in his own ability to initiate such a process or at least to test its existence.

Joseph had commanded his brothers to bring Benjamin to Egypt. When the brothers actually brought Benjamin to Egypt, despite the danger, in order to redeem Shim'on and to buy food (in a way similar to how Joseph was sold "for shoes"), Joseph, who was unaware of Judah's assumption of guardianship and its importance, presumably saw the brothers' action as yet another failure to meet the test and challenge that he had set before them.

Joseph cries three times. The first two times are inner, bound by self restraint. The third time he breaks down totally and cries, openly and without control. R. Bin Nun ignores the obvious connection between three instances. A) The brothers are subjected to an intensive interrogation during three days of imprisonment, inducing them to repent for their sin and accept the punishment and suffering, with Reuven in the lead (42:21,22). We have previously defined this kind of repentance as "Reuven's repentance," a repentance which involves submission and acceptance of the verdict, but lacks a program for improvement and change. Joseph is prepared to accept his brothers' confession and their submission. He witnesses the newly reestablished connection of the ten brothers to the sons of Rachel, and he cries (42:24). But this is not sufficient for him. He requires a fuller, deeper repentance. B) Joseph expected that the brothers would return to him empty handed, placing themselves in danger by explaining to him that they had decided not to endanger Benjamin for the sake of Shim'on and were willing to suffer the shame of hunger. This is what would have happened, had Jacob had his way. Thus Joseph was disappointed when it became clear to him that the brothers had brought Benjamin in order to redeem Shim'on, despite the danger to their youngest brother. Joseph is unaware of Judah's assumption of responsibility for Benjamin. His mercy is aroused when he realizes that his younger brother's fate is to be no better than his. Joseph views Benjamin's being brought to Egypt as a reoccurrence of his own sale. True, in this case it is brought on by hunger and circumstances and is not the outcome of jealousy or hatred. Nonetheless, this was not the total repentance that was expected in the wake of the confessions he had heard from the brothers and Reuven in Egypt. The verse tells us that Joseph feels compassion towards Benjamin, and weeps in private. Joseph believes that Judah, the man who proposed his sale, had prevailed over Reuven, the man who tried to save him. This is the only possible explanation of Joseph's crying over Benjamin, his tears being tears of mercy for him and not tears of happiness at the event of their meeting. Why else, should the exiled, beloved brother, who had spent a third of his life in prison, have pitied his thirty year old brother, who had remained with his father and raised a large family? C) Joseph decided to test his brothers once more. This time, however, the test would be more difficult. He makes his brothers jealous of Benjamin in the same way as they had once been jealous of him. He displays more outward affection for Benjamin than for them and increases his portion five times over as well as giving him a striped coat (and five other garments, 43:34). He also attempts to arouse the brothers' hatred towards Benjamin, for having stolen his goblet, an act which reimplicated them for the crime of espionage. Joseph's aim is to test their reaction to the prospect of Benjamin's permanent enslavement in Egypt. The brothers rent their garments (parallel to Joseph's coat 37:23). Judah says, "God has found the iniquity of your servants," and then offers himself into permanent slavery as atonement for his lifelong sin towards his father. At this point, Joseph is convinced of their total repentance. Judah's act combines two kinds of repentance. The first form of repentance is that required by the early mystics, (foremost, Rabbi Eliezer of Worms, author of the Sefer Rokeach), whereby penance must counterbalance the crime. Judah, in a torn garment as a permanent slave in Egypt, is in the exact position he had placed Joseph. Secondly, we have the repentance as defined by the Rambam (Law of Repentance 2:1):what is complete repentance? When a person is confronted with the opportunity to repeat his sin but restrains himself because of repentance, and not because of fear or weakness. Judah now is prepared to give his life to save Benjamin. Joseph comes to realize his mistake in crying for pity over Benjamin. He

understands that Benjamin's being brought down to Egypt was not the result of the brother's disdain for Benjamin but rather the result of Judah's becoming Benjamin's guarantor. Judah's repentance, including his attempt to amend the past, is a continuation and completion of Reuven's atonement. His weeping for the third time is a continuation of his weeping the first time, when Reuven submitted. When the repentance is complete Joseph is no longer capable of restraining himself, and he weeps openly. At this stage the brother's repentance for selling Joseph into slavery is complete and Joseph can reveal himself to them. 4)RAV BIN NUN RESPONDS After carefully reading Rabbi Medan's detailed arguments, I nevertheless maintain that my presentation of the events is the correct one. There is clearly a process of repentance and rectification on the part of Joseph's brothers, and this is our guide to understanding the affair. But all this is God's plan. All Medan's evidence proving a process of teshuva and restoration is correct; but there is no reason to credit Joseph with this. The challenge of repentance offered the brothers regarding Benjamin is a challenge issuing from God. Joseph was forever acting according to natural, human considerations. It should be noted that Rabbi Medan gives an extremely contrived interpretation of the verse "for God has forced me to forget all my tribulations and my father's house." The verse seemingly coheres with my explanation. He also totally ignores Judah's words, "You have known that my wife bore me two, one departed from me and I said he was surely devoured."

fw from hamelaket@gmail.com from: **Rabbi Chanan Morrison** <chanan@ravkooktorah.org> to: rav-kook-list@googlegroups.com subject: **[Rav Kook Torah]** Rav Kook Torah Mikeitz: Joseph and the Evil Eye
Rabbi Yochanan, the third century scholar, had an unusual custom. He would sometimes sit down outside the town mikveh (ritual bath). This way, he explained, the Jewish women will see me as they leave the bath and will have children as beautiful as me. Rabbi Yochanan's colleagues asked him: Are you not afraid of the Evil Eye? "I am descended from Joseph," he replied, "and the Evil Eye had no power over him." (Berachot 20a) Apart from the issue of Rabbi Yochanan's beauty, this story raises some interesting questions. What is the Evil Eye? Is it just a primitive superstition? And why was Joseph, more than any other Biblical figure, immune from it? The Talmud explains that Joseph merited protection from the Evil Eye since "his eye did not wish to benefit from that which did not belong to him." Despite Mrs. Potiphar's attempts to seduce him, Joseph remained faithful to God and his employer. Truly an act of great moral integrity - but what does this have to do with the Evil Eye? Rav Kook explained that the Evil Eye is an example of how one soul may affect another through unseen connections between them. We are all influenced by our environment. Living among the refined and the righteous has a strong positive effect, while living among the crass and the corrupt has a negative one. The Evil Eye is simply the venomous impact from malignant feelings of jealousy and envy of those around us. A person who has hardened his inner resolve and does not allow himself to be misled from the correct path, despite outside pressures - such a person has built a 'firewall' protecting his soul from external influences. The Biblical hero who most prominently demonstrated this strength of character and refusal to be led astray is Joseph. Seventeen years old, young and handsome, estranged from the protective framework of his family and culture, a slave propositioned by a powerful and attractive woman, Joseph nevertheless beat the odds and remained faithful to his ideals. Joseph determined that he would not be swayed by his surroundings, no matter how persuasive. Through his heroic stance, Joseph merited that the Evil Eye would have no power over him and his descendants. (Gold from the Land of Israel (now available in paperback), pp. 86-87. Adapted from Ein Eyah vol. I, p. 102)

From: Rabbi Mordechai Kornfeld kornfeld@netmedia.net.il 1996
parasha page@jer1.co.il" Miketz 5757

"King Solomon's wisdom"

The Weekly Internet P A R A S H A P A G E

by Mordechai Kornfeld of Har Nof, Jerusalem (kornfeld@jer1.co.il)²

This week's Parasha Page has been dedicated by my uncle Tuli Bodner, in memory of his father, Reb Menachem Mendel ben Zvi whose Yahrzeit is 29 Kislev.²

PARASHAT MIKETZ 5757 KING SOLOMON'S JUSTICE KING SOLOMON AND THE BABY

The Haftorah of Parashat Miketz is somewhat "deprived." Since our practice is to prefer the Haftorah of the holiday to the Haftorah of the Parasha, the Haftorah designated for Parashat Miketz is almost never read..

Only on those rare occasions (often at 20 year intervals) that Miketz is read on the Shabbat following Chanukah, do we read Miketz's "true" Haftorah, the story of King Solomon and the stolen baby. Even though we discussed this subject in an earlier issue, it is worthwhile to review the Me'iri's beautiful interpretation of that story on this occasion. In the beginning of the book of Melachim we read that Hashem promised Shlomo at the age of twelve that He would be granted great wisdom - he was to be the wisest man ever to live (Melachim I 3:12). In order to illustrate that the blessing of immeasurable wisdom was indeed fulfilled, the Navi relates the following account of a case that was brought before Shlomo and his wise judgment of the case: At that time two women came to the King and stood before him. One woman said, "My lord: I and this woman dwell in the same house, and I gave birth while with her in the house. On the third day after I gave birth, this woman gave birth as well. We live together; there is no outsider with us in the house; only the two of us were in the house. The son of this woman died that night, because she lay upon him. She arose during the night and took my son from my side while I was asleep, and laid him in her bosom, and her dead son she laid in my bosom. When I got up in the morning to nurse my son, behold, he was dead! But when I observed him (later on) in the morning, I realized that he was not the son to whom I had given birth!" The other woman replied, "It is not so! My son is the live one, and your son is the dead one." But this one said, "It is not so! Your son is the dead one, and my son is the live one!" And they went on speaking before the King. The King said, "This one claims, 'My son is the live one, and your son is the dead one,' and this one claims, 'It is not so! Your son is the dead one, and my son is the living one!'" So the King said, "Get me a sword!" and they brought a sword before the King. The King said, "Cut the living child in two and give half to one and half to the other."

The woman whose son was the live one turned to the King, because her compassion was aroused for her son, and she said, "Please, my lord, give her the living baby, and do not kill it!" But the other one said, "Neither mine nor yours shall he be. Cut!" The King spoke up and said, "Give her [=the first one] the living baby and do not kill it; she is his mother!" (I Melachim 3:16 27)

II THE LIAR'S STRANGE REACTION Upon reading this incident the reader is struck by a very odd development in the story. The woman who was lying was obviously interested in taking the child for herself otherwise the case would never have been brought before the court. But when the real mother offered to let the liar keep the child in order to spare its life, she refused, saying, "Neither mine nor yours shall he be. Cut!" Why did she suddenly lose interest in having the child for herself? Furthermore, although it may be granted that Solomon's wisdom gave him the insight to foresee that one of the women would recoil when she heard of his intention to kill the infant, nevertheless, how could he possibly have known that the other woman would react the way she did - by insisting on complying with the grotesque "compromise?" Surely it was more likely that the second woman would respond, "Yes, I am glad you have finally admitted that the child is mine.. I see that although you are cruel enough to steal my child you are not ruthless enough to see him killed for your lie!" Then what would he have done? A brilliant and original answer to these questions is offered by two commentators from the 13th century: Rav Yehoshua Ibn Shu'ib in his Drasha for Parashat Mishpatim, and Rav Menachem HaMe'iri in his

commentary to Yevamot 17a. (Another Torah sage, the author of Shemen Roke'ach and Sha'ar Hachazakot, arrived at the same explanation independently several centuries later.) In order to understand their answer, an introduction summarizing several of the details of the laws of "Yibum" is called for.

III SOME OF THE LAWS OF YIBUM If there are brothers, and one of them dies without children, the wife of the deceased man may not marry "out," to another man. Her brother in law (that is, her levir, or husband's brother) must marry her and thus perform "Yibum" [=levirate marriage] on her.... If the man does not want to marry her, she shall approach the elders and declare, "My brother in law refuses to establish his brother's name in Israel; he does not consent to perform "Yibum" on me" Then she shall approach him in the presence of the elders and remove his shoe from his foot, and spit in front of him, and proclaim, "Such should be done to a man who would not build up his brother's house!" (Devarim 25:5,7,9) (1) "Yibum," as mentioned above, is only applicable when a man dies childless. "Dying childless" includes cases where a man once had children, but those children were already dead at the time of his own death (Yevamot 87b). (2) If the deceased man has no living children but he does have living grandchildren, he is not considered to be "childless." Therefore, there is no "Yibum" (ibid. 70a). (3) The widow is only bound to marry her husband's *brother*. If the deceased husband does not leave behind a living brother, his wife is free to marry whoever she pleases (ibid. 17b). (4)

If the deceased left behind any offspring at all, there is no "Yibum" even if the offspring is only one day old. Not only that, but even if the offspring is still a fetus at the time of the husband's death, its mother is exempted from being bound to the living brother. This is only true, however, when the offspring is viable. If the fetus is aborted or stillborn, or even if it is born alive but dies or is killed before it has lived for thirty days, it is not considered to have ever been a viable offspring. "Yibum" is therefore required (ibid. 111b; Shabbat 136a). (5) If the brother of the deceased is a minor, the widow is still bound to him. In this case, however, she does not have the option of freeing herself through the "Chalitzah" ceremony, since a minor is not able to perform a "Chalitzah." Instead, she must wait 13 years, until the brother is thirteen years old, in order for him to be able to perform a "Chalitzah." Only then may she remarry (Yevamot 105b). (Even should she want to marry this minor, and have him perform "Yibum," she must wait at least until he is 9 years old Niddah 45a.)

IV THE

WILY YEVAMAH

Let us now return to Shlomo's judgment. The Midrash (Koheleth Rabba 10:16) tells us that the reason both of these women were so desperate to have the living child declared theirs was that they were both potential "Yevamot" [=widows subject to "Yibum"; singular form is "Yevamah"]. Neither of the two had any other offspring. Whoever would be judged to be the childless woman would not only lose the infant, but would also be trapped in the unpleasant status of "Yevamah," being dependent upon her brother in law's good will. There is another Midrash (Yalkut Shimoni 2:175), that asserts that the husbands of the two women were father and son. That is, one woman was the mother in law of the other. The above commentators suggest that these two Midrashim may be complementing each other. The two women—the mother in law and the daughter in law—had just been bereaved of their husbands, and needed a live child to exempt them from the status of "Yevamah." Both gave birth to babies. However, these two babies were still less than thirty days old at the time that one of them died, as the verse indicates. The mother of the dead child would therefore be subject to the laws of "Yibum" (rule #4). This, then, was the motivation of the lying mother to try to kidnap the other woman's child.

Now, if it was the mother in law's child who had died, she would have no reason to try to seize her daughter in law's child. Even though her son (husband of the daughter in law) had passed away *before* her husband had, and therefore *he* would not exempt her from "Yibum" (rule #1), nevertheless, she would be exempt from "Yibum" for another reason. The living child, if he was not her own child, was at least her *son's* child, and a grandchild is enough to exempt one from "Yibum" (rule #2)!

Only the daughter in law would have a motive to lie and to try and claim (falsely) that the child was hers. If it was her baby who had died within 30 days of its birth, leaving her childless, she would indeed be bound to her husband's brother as a "Yevamah" (rule #4). And who would that brother be? None other than the living baby, who was in fact her mother in law's child i.e., her deceased husband's brother! Since her brother in law was a newborn infant, the daughter in law would have to wait thirteen years before this baby would be able to perform Chalitzah on her and free her to marry others (rule #5)! (This baby was the only living brother of her husband. There could not have been any other, older brothers, because, as the Midrash points out, the mother in law was herself a potential "Yevamah." This means that she had no living children except for the baby in question.) The youthful King Shlomo, in his wisdom, realized all of this. He suspected that since the only one with a strong motive to lie was the daughter in law, the child must really belong to the mother in law. In order to confirm this conclusion he ordered that the child be cut in half.. What would that accomplish? If the remaining child were to be killed, this too would free the daughter in law from her "Yevamah" status since the living baby was her only brother in law (rule #3). In fact, killing the child would be an even *better* solution from the daughter in law's perspective. By just kidnapping the child she might convince the court that she was not a "Yevamah." However, she herself would know that the child was not really hers, and that she really was not permitted to remarry, halachically speaking, until Chalitzah was performed. By having the baby killed, though, she would truthfully be released from the bonds of "Yibum!" This is the reason the daughter in law suddenly lost interest in keeping the child when she saw that Shlomo was ready to cut the child in half. This would serve her interests even better than taking the child for herself. "Cut!" she insisted. Shlomo had guessed that this would be the woman's reaction to his suggestion. By tricking her into making such a seemingly ludicrous statement, he revealed her true motives. In this manner, Shlomo demonstrated beyond doubt that the daughter in law was indeed lying!

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Parshas Miketz The Names Menashe and Ephraim

The Name Menashe Expresses Gratitude for Being Able to Forget

There is a pasuk in Parshas Miketz which has always troubled me. Over the years, we have suggested several interpretations to understand this pasuk. "And Yosef called the name of the elder son Menashe, for 'G-d has made me forget all my hardship and all my father's household.' And the name of the second he called Ephraim for 'G-d has made me fruitful in the land of my suffering.'" [Bereshis 41:51-52].

I have always been bothered by the expression "Ki neeshani Elokim es kol amalee v'es kol beis avi". First of all, Yosef never forgot the house of his father. It was his spiritual lifeline. It kept him attached to his values.

Second of all, why wasn't Ephraim the name he gave to his first son and the name Menashe saved for his second son? Shouldn't gratitude to Hashem—G-d has made me fruitful in the land of my suffering—come first?

In fact, the answer to the first question will answer the second one as well. If we can understand the deeper meaning of "Ki neeshani Elokim es kol amalee v'es kol beis avi," we will be able to understand why indeed that concept was so important that it was worthy of being enshrined in the name of his first-born son.

I saw an interpretation in the name of a Sefer Beis Pinchas (I believe this was Rav Pinchas Shapiro of Koretz): If I say something that makes you feel bad – if I insult you, I humiliate you – there is a little clock that starts ticking. The longer you are hurting, the longer the clock ticks, the more I am going to be held accountable for it. If you take the matter home and tell your wife, she will become upset, for days, for weeks, maybe even for years. Unfortunately, when the person who originally inflicted the pain goes up to the Yeshiva shel

Ma'alah, he will need to not only account for the initial infliction, but also for all the subsequent pain that he caused. It is an ongoing insult that keeps on hurting—perhaps in growing magnitude—as time goes on.

That is why, the Beis Pinchas says, if someone does say something hurtful or embarrasses somebody he should try to make amends as soon as possible. The person should ideally apologize immediately because as long as the pain goes on, the original perpetrator is going to need to pay for it. It is like when you get in a cab and the meter is clicking away and you get stuck in a traffic jam in the middle of Manhattan. The car is not going anywhere but you see the meter keeps jumping: 50 cents, 50 cents, 50 cents. A ride that should have cost you \$7.00 is going to cost you \$27.00 – you will need to pay for it at the end because it was ongoing.

Yosef HaTzadik knew that his brothers inflicted great pain on him. The longer that he was in pain, the greater the price they were going to need to pay. And my friends, we are still paying for it. That which happened between the brothers and Yosef—the Meshech Chochmah says—this is the avi avos aveiros sh'bein adam l'chaveiro ('the mother of all interpersonal transgressions'). Every single year, when we do teshuva (repent), we need to do teshuva for the aveira (sin) of the Aigel Hazahav (Golden Calf), which was the ultimate transgression between man and G-d. So too, we need to do teshuva for the aveira of the brothers against Yosef, the ultimate transgression between man and man. This is how the Meshech Chochmah explains the text of the High Holiday liturgy “ki Ata Salechan l'Yisrael (For You are the Forgiver of Israel – for the sins between man and G-d, the classic one being the sin of the Aigel Hazahav) U'Machalan l'Shivtei Yeshurim (and the Pardoner of the Tribes of Yeshurun – for the sins between man and man, the classic one being the sin of the Tribes for selling their brother).

Yosef wanted his pain to end so that his brothers would be spared excessive punishment. The Ribono shel Olam did him a tremendous favor and helped him forget all the suffering his brothers inflicted upon him in the house of his father. Consequently, since Yosef's suffering came to an end, the brothers would ultimately pay less of a price and ultimately we will need to pay less of a price. This all came about “ki neeshani Elokim es beis avi.” Yosef is not saying that he forgot the integrity of the house of his father or the spirituality of the house of his father, the Torah of his father, the middos of his father, or the tzidkus of his father. For sure, that was not the case. He was merely talking about the suffering and the trauma he experienced there at the hand of his brothers. He forgot about that and went on with his life. Therefore, there would be an earlier end to the pain they would need to suffer for their cruelty to Yosef. This was such a great kindness on the part of the Almighty that it even preceded Yosef's expression of gratitude that “G-d made me fruitful in the land of my suffering.”

The Name Ephraim Comes from the Word Efer (Ashes)

The Baalei HaTosofos say the name of Yosef's second son—Ephraim—was based on two of the Avos, Avraham and Yitzchak. The name Ephraim (Aleph Fay Reish Yud Mem) contains the word Efer—ashes. Yosef named his son Ephraim to remind him of the two “ashes”: The “ashes” of Avrohom Avinu who said “I am dust and ashes” [Bereshis 18:27] and the “ashes” of Yitzchak Avinu who was willing to be sacrificed on the mizbeyach. Chazal speak of the “ashes of Yitzchak which remain in place on the altar.” Yosef wished to emphasize that this son, born to him in Egypt, was a descendant of Avraham and Yitzchak.

The Baalei HaTosofos add that it is for this reason that the entire nation of Israel is sometimes called by the name “Ephraim” (as we find in the pasuk “Is Ephraim My favorite son or a delightful child that whenever I speak of him I remember him more and more...” [Yirmiyah 31:19]. Why are Klal Yisrael called Ephraim? It is because we are descendants of Avraham and Yitzchak, and that is where Ephraim comes from.

Rav Aharon Yehudah Leib Shteinman [1914-2017] said that there was another reason why Yosef desired to remember the “ashes” of Avraham and the “ashes” of Yitzchak. Yosef HaTzadik quickly went from being a prisoner in a dungeon to being the second most powerful man in Egypt. For all intents

and purposes, he was the second most powerful man in the world. We know what happens to people when they have such a quick rise in prominence—it often goes to their head! They become different people. We see this all too often.

Yosef wanted a reminder of who he was, and who human beings are. That is why he picked the name Ephraim—reminding him that “I am but dust and ashes.” Man comes from ‘afar’ and to ‘afar’ he returns. This was Yosef's defense mechanism that his quick rise to prominence should not go to his head. Every time he would say the name “Ephraim,” he would be reminded that ‘anochi afar v'efer.’

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dhoffman@torah.org This week's write-up is adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissochar Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Series on the weekly Torah portion. A complete catalogue can be ordered from the Yad Yechiel Institute, PO Box 511, Owings Mills MD 21117-0511. Call (410) 358-0416 or e-mail tapes@yadyechiel.org or visit www.yadyechiel.org/ for further information.

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Ohr Somayach :: Torah Weekly :: Parsha Insights For the week ending 19 December 2020 / 4 Tevet 5781 **Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair** - www.seasonsofthemoon.com Parashat Mikeitz A Candle in the Dark "Yet the chamberlain of the cup bearers did not remember Yosef, but forgot him." (40:23) "Raiders of the Lost Ark" was one of the biggest box-office hits of all-time. As the title suggests, the story centers on the "Lost Ark," which is none other than the Holy Ark that Moshe constructed to house the original Torah and the tablets of the Ten Commandments. During the movie's climax, the villain garbs himself in the vestments of the Kohen Gadol (High Priest) as he battles with the movie's hero, Indiana Jones. Truth, as they say, is stranger than fiction, for there seems to be a fascinating real-life connection between the Jewish People and Indiana Jones! In 1911, Hiram Bingham III discovered the legendary Inca city of Macchu Picchu in Peru. Indiana Jones, the hero of "Raiders of the Lost Ark", was patterned after Hiram Bingham. Hiram had a son called, not very imaginatively, Hiram Bingham IV. A number of years ago, the American Secretary of State Colin Powell gave a posthumous award for "constructive dissent" to Hiram (or Harry) Bingham IV. For more than fifty years the State Department had resisted any attempt to honor Bingham. To them, he was an insubordinate member of the US diplomatic service, a dangerous maverick who was eventually demoted. Yet now, after his death, he has been officially recognized as a hero. In 1939, Bingham was posted to Marseille, France as American Vice-Consul. The USA was then neutral, and, not wishing to annoy Marshal Petain's puppet Vichy regime, Roosevelt's government ordered its representatives in Marseille not to grant visas to any Jews. Bingham decided that this was immoral, and, putting his conscience before his career, did everything in his power to undermine the official US foreign policy. In defiance of his bosses in Washington, he granted more than 2,500 US visas to Jewish and other refugees, including the artists Marc Chagall and Max Ernst, and the family of the writer Thomas Mann. He sheltered Jews in his Marseille home and obtained forged identity papers to help others in their dangerous journeys across Europe. He worked with the French underground to smuggle Jews out of France into Franco's Spain or across the Mediterranean. He even contributed to their expenses out of his own pocket. By 1941, Washington had lost patience with Bingham. He was sent to Argentina. After the war, to the continued annoyance of his superiors, he reported on the movements of Nazi war criminals. Not unsurprisingly, eventually he was forced out of the American diplomatic service completely. Bingham died almost penniless in 1988. Little was known of his extraordinary activities until his son found a series of letters in his father's belongings after his death. Subsequently, many groups and organizations, including the United Nations and the State of Israel, honored Bingham. Bingham is like a candle in the dark. Many are the stories from the Spanish Inquisition onward of Jews who gave away their fortunes to sea captains for the promise of safety, only to find themselves robbed and betrayed by those they trusted. Change the year to 1940 and the same story could be repeated, with equally chilling results, in Nazi Europe. "Yet the Chamberlain of the Cup bearers did not remember Yosef, but forgot him." If the chamberlain "did not remember" Yosef, why did the Torah also write "but forgot him"? Rashi comments that the chamberlain "did not remember" him that same day, and subsequently he also "forgot him." One could perhaps forgive the chamberlain for forgetting Yosef on the day of his release. It is human nature to be so overjoyed at escaping the purgatory of prison that one might forget his benefactor.

However, when the excitement had died down, why didn't the chamberlain keep his promise to Yosef? This classic ingratitude echoes to us down the ages, in Spain, in Europe, in Russia and in Arab lands. When we find a Hiram Bingham, we should proclaim his kindness to the hills. © 2020 Ohr Somayach International

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subject: Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum

Shema Yisrael Torah Network

Peninim on the Torah - Parshas Mikeitz

פרק שבע מזוזת תורה תשפ"א

וקמו שבע שני רעב ואחריו רעב ונשכח כל השבע בארכן מצרם

The seven years of famine will arise after them, and all the abundance in the land of Egypt will be forgotten. (41:30)

When Yosef described the sorry state of affairs during the years of hunger, he said that the hunger would be so devastating that no one would be able to recollect the previous wonderful years of abundance. This was represented by the seven lean cows swallowing up the seven healthy cows in such a manner that the presence of the seven healthy cows would not even be a memory. They would be gone, disappeared, as if they had never existed. *Ramban* suggests that Yosef was alluding to Pharaoh that the years of famine would be no ordinary famine, where one can "put away" some food for a rainy day. No! When the famine arrived it would ravage Egypt, to the extent that no one would have anything. No savings, nothing.

Yosef explained to Pharaoh that the hunger would go against anything the Egyptian culture understood. There would be no such thing as classes of wealthy people who had preserved food for a rainy day. The Egyptians lived for the present. They had great wealth, and they enjoyed it. It never entered their minds that it would all be lost. They lived for the present, not the future. They reveled in their prosperity and enjoyed their abundance without regard for the future. The future did not affect them. Life was all about "now"!

Yosef taught the Egyptians that, in order to survive, they must alter their mindset. The seven years of famine that would follow the seven years of abundance would totally erase any semblance of abundance. If they did not prepare for it, they would all die! This is why Yosef told Pharaoh that it was crucial to appoint someone who neither possessed – nor lived by – the Egyptian conviction. It had to be someone who was: wise, who could see what the future, would bring; a visionary, who understood that the resources that existed in the present must be preserved for the future or there would be no future. A wise person does not squander his wealth and resources in times that are good. He knows that changes occur, at times without warning. Thus, he always sets aside some surplus assets, just in case they are needed. His foolish counterpart lives for the moment, ensconced in the present, while ignoring the future. His future, if it changes negatively, will be very bleak indeed.

The greatest gift is the ability to recognize Heavenly blessing, especially when it is cloaked in the ambiguity of negative circumstances. A wise person understands that he can, and should, learn from everything that happens in his life. Nothing comes from Hashem without purpose. Nothing is happenstance. *Horav Yisrael Belsky*, zl, observes that this is where Yosef demonstrated his wisdom and uncanny ability to glean a lesson for the future from everything that had taken place in his life. As the years of plenty prepared Egypt for its upcoming years of famine and challenge, Yosef's thirteen years of pain and adversity were a vital prelude to his becoming an Egyptian monarch, second only to Pharaoh. His preceding circumstances, which included: his enslavement; the incident with Potifar's wife from whom he barely escaped spiritually unscathed; followed by his subsequent imprisonment, were all part of a Heavenly-mandated prelude to prepare Yosef for his future role as the Egyptian viceroy, the second most powerful person in the world. It was these moments, during which his success in overcoming the challenges allowed him to prepare for the future, crystallizing his unshakeable dedication to the will of Hashem under the most trying circumstances. Yosef understood quite well the meaning of preservation, taking the moments of spiritual abundance and saving them for a time when he would shore up all of his spiritual reserves.

The *Rosh Yeshivah* explains that the ability to employ present resources to prepare them for the future is a combination of Divine and human endeavor. Hashem creates the opportunity by catalyzing events, both positive and negative, which set the stage for some future event. Yosef's suffering, Pharaoh's dream, and the years of plenty, (and we shouldn't ignore the incident between Yosef and his brothers) clearly indicate that we humans have no control over the events which occur in our lives. We are able, however, to take the circumstances and occurrences and utilize the resources that we gained from them, to use them at a later juncture.

The Egyptians thought they were smarter than Yosef. *Chazal* say that the clever Egyptians stored their surplus produce. In the end, it all became infested, compelling

them to go to Yosef and plead for food. It was only Yosef's national grainaries that had no spoilage. When the Egyptians took note of this phenomenon, they began to fear Yosef, thinking that he possessed supernatural powers. According to the *Ramban*, Yosef might have had access to a substance known as *chumtun*, an effective preservative. He could mix a drop of *chumtun* into the grain, and it would be protected from worm infestation.

A Jew also has access to a preservative, a spiritual preservative. In his *Nefesh Ha'Chaim*, *Horav Chaim Volozhiner*, zl, compares a Jew's *yiraas Shomayim*, fear of Heaven, to a spiritual preservative. A person could learn and become erudite; he could perform *mitzvos* and, on the surface, be viewed as an observant scholarly Jew. If he does not, however, "preserve" his learning and *mitzvah* observance with *yiraas Shomayim*, it will decay and putrefy, eventually leaving him nothing more than an empty shell. Learning and *mitzvah* observance are not a way of life. They comprise life itself. In other words, *yiraas Shomayim* preserves life.

יירא יוסף את שם הבכור מונשה כי נשני אלקים את כל עמליך ואת כל בית אביך

Yosef called the name of the firstborn Menashe for, "G-d has made me forget all my hardship and all my father's household." (41:51)

After years of overcoming challenges and adversity, pain and enslavement, Yosef is freed and overnight catapulted to undreamed of leadership, luxury and dignity. He marries and is blessed with his firstborn son whom he names Menashe. He chooses this name because of its relationship with *nashoh*, forget. Thus, Yosef declares: "This name (which implies forgetting) is my declaration of gratitude to Hashem for allowing me to be able to forget my hardship and my father's household (which was, for Yosef, the beginning of his hardship). A cursory reading of the name and its implications leaves the reader perplexed. Is this the way a leader of *Klal Yisrael*, a *tzaddik*, righteous person, speaks? Why would he want to forget his home, and (adding insult to injury) why would he thank Hashem for this opportunity? One would think that Yosef would have focused on the positive, thanking Hashem: for saving him from his brothers' machinations to rid themselves of him; for his liberation from prison; for delivering to him a wonderful, suitable wife; for a son to carry on his legacy. He had so much more for which to thank Hashem. Why focus on the negative, and why praise forgetting his home?

Horav Ben Tzion Bruk, zl, suggests that we can derive much concerning the character and *shleimus ha'nefesh*, perfection of the soul, of Yosef from his naming of Menashe and its underlying reason. Let us begin with imagining the pain Yosef experienced when he was forcibly extricated from his father's home. Each of the homes of the *Avos*, Patriarchs, was a veritable *Mishkan*, Sanctuary (*Ramban*, Preface to *Sefer Shemos*). Furthermore, Yosef's relationship with Yaakov *Avinu* was extraordinary in terms of the spiritual legacy that Yaakov was transmitting to his son, Yosef. To be flung from a spiritual utopia to the cesspool of society, to be forced to live with society's moral profligates, was a major shock for Yosef. Who was responsible for all of Yosef's spiritual and physical trauma, if not his brothers? One would think that Yosef had every reason to want to cause his brothers to suffer as he suffered. He did not. *Ramban* explains that whatever appears to be an act of vengeance (based upon his ill-treatment of his brothers) as Yosef's self-imposed mandate to see the fruition of his dreams. In no way did Yosef bring up the troubles and pain they had caused him when they threw him into a pit filled with poisonous snakes and scorpions, taking him from the pit only to sell him to Yishmaelim, which led to the adversity that accompanied him during the following years of his captivity.

Thus, the *Rosh Yeshivah* explains Yosef's *nashani*, forgetting, as applying to the pain of leaving his father's home. He was able to expunge from his heart any vestige of anger that he might have harbored against his brothers for all of the *tzaros*, troubles, that befell him after he left his father's home. Yosef not only did not forget the home, its sanctity and the spiritual purity that permeated it, but he sorely missed it. Nary a day passed that Yosef did not long for the home of his youth.

How was Yosef able to expunge any ill will against his brothers? He certainly could not be blamed if, in the back of his mind, he harbored a vestige of negativity towards his brothers. He did not become morose, because he trained himself to focus on pleasant distractions that would assuage his feelings of negativity. By diverting his attention from the gloom and doom, he was able to maintain a sense of dignity and grace under

circumstances that would have destroyed a lesser person. Yosef engaged in *gashmias*, physicality, because it made him feel good about himself, thus diverting his emotions from his brothers. When he saw that he had succeeded in purging himself of any negative feelings towards his brothers, he declared, *Nashani*, “I forgot the pain of being turned away from my father’s house.” The only emotional baggage that he still carried with him was missing his home. Hashem allowed him to forget this pain.

Maintaining dignity and grace in the face of challenge and adversity is not a simple feat. It takes enormous courage and self-confidence, but, above all, it requires that a person have strong convictions and pride in his commitment. A Jew must sense that he is part of something much greater than himself, that he is part of *Klal Yisrael*; thus, his purpose in life is to glorify Hashem. He is a member of *ligyono shel Melech*, the legion of the King. This should engender within him a feeling of stateliness, at all times demanding of himself an impressiveness of character and a solemn, lofty bearing.

The biography prefacing the commentary to the *Siddur* of *Horav Shimon Schwab*, zl, contains a well-known story which characterizes the *Rav*’s dignity and grace in the face of adversity. Under the greatest challenge, he never for a moment lost sight of who he was, what he represented, and to Whom he maintained his true allegiance. It was *Shushan Purim* 1936; *Rav Schwab* was then the District Rabbi of Ichenhausen, Bavaria, an ancient *kehillah* in Southern Germany. His position included ministering to the needs of a number of small *kehillos* in the area. The Nazis were growing in power and support, and, as a result, the Jewish communities of Germany did their best to maintain a low profile. The Nazis infiltrated the communities with their own sympathizers who would spy on the Jews and report any infraction – real or imagined – to the authorities. No courts existed at that time. Thus, an “offender” was picked up and most often was never heard from again. The *Rav* was the subject of a libelous accusation that in one of his sermons (*Parashas Ki Sisa*) he had publicly maligned Hitler, y.m.s. He was brought before the Gestapo and called on the carpet to explain his seditious behavior. With dignity and nobility, he looked into the eye of the commandant and said that the claim against him was an outright lie. He had used the German word *vermittler*, which means medium, but sounds like Hitler. He was speaking in regard to the sin of the Golden Calf, whereby the Jews sought an intermediary to replace Moshe *Rabbeinu*. The *Rav* said, “We Jews do not require a *vermittler* to serve Hashem. He is a personal G-d to whom we can speak directly.” It goes without saying that the *Rav*, while maintaining his innocence with aplomb, actually feared for his life.

The commandant listened to his explanation and said he would get back to him concerning the charges. Two months passed before *Rav Schwab* was exonerated. During this time, he slept fitfully, wearing his full rabbinic garb. He did not don his bedclothes for two months because he feared that he would be arrested in the middle of the night (which was common) and dragged to jail or to the woods, to be beaten or shot and left to die. This had already been the fate of others. *Rav Schwab* conjectured that if this were to be his fate, he would confront it with dignity, wearing his rabbinic garb, as befits a Jewish leader. He understood that he represented Judaism, its people and the Creator, our G-d.

אבל אשימים אונחו על אחינו אשר ראיינו צרה נפשו בהתחנוו אלינו ולא שמענו
Indeed, we are guilty concerning our brother inasmuch as we saw his heartfelt anguish when he pleaded with us and we paid no heed. (42:21)

People hardly want to accept the blame for their failings in life, for missed opportunities, misadventures and bad decisions. It is so much more convenient to lay the blame at someone else’s doorstep. It is our parents, spouse, children, principal, friends, teacher, doctor, etc. everyone but ourselves. Veritably, no one can prevent an individual from achieving his goal, other than himself. It is easier, however, to rationalize and find an excuse than to take responsibility. The one who blames others is himself a loser. Successful people take their obligations seriously and accept responsibility for their failures. Then they dig in and start over again. When Yosef’s brothers took notice of their trying circumstances in Egypt, they realized that Hashem was conveying a message to them: “You did something

wrong, and now the time has come to answer for it.” They did not blame anyone but themselves. *Aval asheimim anachnu*, “Indeed, we are guilty.” In his *Haamek Davar*, the *Netziv*, zl, explains: *HeRue l’daas she’heim ikar ha’mesavvim tzarah zu*, “They demonstrated that they were the ones responsible for this trouble.”

Chazal say (*Makkos* 10b) *B’derech she’adam rotzeh leilech molichin oso*; “In the way that man wishes to go, in that way they lead him.” A person decides which path of life he is inclined to take. The angels that are created by man’s deeds will “accompany” him on this path. Thus, he catalyzes the ramifications resulting from his decision. He has no one to blame but himself.

In *Nifle’osecha Asichah*, *Horav Yitzchak Zilberman*, *Shlita*, relates a frightening story which was publicized in the media. I say “frightening,” because it is a story that could happen to anyone. It all depends upon the decisions we make in life. *Jack* (his name) was the consummate businessman. If he had a meeting, its importance notwithstanding, it took priority, and timeliness was essential. He expected that anyone attending a meeting be present on time, regardless of the personal inconvenience. A schedule was to be honored and adhered to. Just as *Jack* demanded of others, he was equally demanding of himself. It was, thus, understandable that when representatives of a large overseas corporation sought to meet with him, he took this meeting seriously. They sought someone who could navigate American bureaucracy, so that they could look forward to building their company in the States. This meeting was very important to *Jack*, because it could very well determine his future trajectory. The meeting was called for 9:00 a.m. Not wanting to take chances, he left his home at 7:00 a.m. in the hope to avoid traffic and arrive early. He planned to stop at a diner and order a cup of coffee. Unfortunately, we all have those days when nothing seems to go right. That day was *Jack*’s day for taking the wrong car, which had no gas, to getting stuck in a traffic jam, to being forced to take a detour in the road due to a broken water main. He was no longer going to be early. He would be lucky to arrive in time for the meeting. The clock was ticking, and 9:00 a.m. loomed larger than ever. At the last detour, his frustration got the better of him. As he was about to go into meltdown mode, he reminded himself of a seldom used shortcut. It was far off the beaten path, but it would allow him to save the day and arrive at his meeting on time.

Jack quickly turned around and went through a series of turns uphill and downhill until he was on the open road again. He had lost so much time. He would have to make it up. Suddenly, he saw people standing on the side of the road. They waved him down: “Please, we have a boy that is the victim of a hit and run driver. The nearest ambulance is thirty minutes out.” The boy was unconscious; he needed a ride to the hospital. *Jack* said, “Listen, there are other drivers on the road. Any minute another driver will pull up. I am late for the most important meeting of my career. I cannot go to the hospital. I am so sorry, but I must go!”

Jack left, and, as soon as he was walking into the elevator of the office building at 8:55, his wife called: “*Jack!* *Jack!* Something terrible has happened. Come home immediately!” “What? What happened that is so important that it cannot wait until after the meeting?” “Our son! Our dear son was riding his bike to school, and he was hit by a hit and run driver! He died at the scene! Do you know what else? A businessman was stopped, and they pleaded with him to transport our son to the hospital, and the cruel man said, ‘I am late for an appointment.’ He could have saved our child, but his appointment was more important than our child!” *Jack fainted*.

We make the bed in which we sleep. We make choices. We decide on our priorities. At whose expense? Even if *Jack* would have won the coveted account – at what price?

ל’יכר נשמה שמעין ב’יהודה

ל’יכר נשות שמעין ב’יהודה
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PARSHAT MIKETZ

Does Yosef have a plan?

He was certainly planning [a way out of jail] when he interpreted the dream of the "sar ha'Mashkim" (see 40:13-15).

He was definitely planning [his own 'political appointment'] when he interpreted Pharaoh's dreams (see 41:33-36!).

Clearly, Yosef was not only a dreamer; he was also a 'master planner'. But what was his plan when he: accused his brothers of being spies, returned their money, and hid his cup in Binyamin's bag, etc.? Was he simply 'teasing' his brothers - in revenge; or did he have a more altruistic motive?

As the Torah never reveals that motive, answering this question requires a lot of detective work.

In the following shiur, we attempt to piece this puzzle together by weaving together some of the theories presented by earlier commentators (then adding a little touch of our own).

INTRODUCTION

Before we begin our study, a point of methodology in regard to what allows us to search for an underlying motive behind Yosef's behavior.

As Chumash is a book of "nevuah" [prophecy], and not simply an historical chronicle, we assume that its stories carry a prophetic message. Certainly, commentators can argue in regard to the precise message that should be derived from each story, and how to arrive [and who can arrive] at any conclusion. Nonetheless, all concur that Chumash should be studied in search for its prophetic lesson(s).

This does not imply that we must assume that every action taken by our forefathers was altruistic. However, it does imply that if the Torah records a certain set of events, that they were written for the purpose that we study its detail in search of a significant message.

With this in mind, we begin our study of the famous story of Yosef and his brothers.

WHY YOSEF DOESN'T WRITE HOME

Considering Yosef's very close relationship with his father [recall how the Torah described him as Yaakov's "ben zkunim" - see 37:3], one would have expected that he make every possible attempt to contact his father. Yet, even after his appointment as head servant of the House of Potiphar, and later as the Commissioner of Egypt, (second only to Pharaoh /see 41:44), Yosef makes no effort to inform his father that he is alive and well.

Does Yosef no longer care for his father who loved him so dearly and now grieves for his lost son? Has he wiped his past from his memory?

To answer this question, Ramban (see his commentary to 42:9) suggests that Yosef's actions were motivated by his aspiration to ensure the fulfillment of his dreams. According to Ramban, Yosef understood that his slavery, and his entire predicament in Egypt, was part of a Divine plan to ensure that his childhood dreams would come true. He also understood (for some reason) that for this to happen, he could not contact his family. And when necessary, he would even 'plan ahead' to help his dreams along.

Ramban's interpretation beautifully explains Yosef's first plan [i.e. accusing his brothers as spies] - as its goal was to force the brothers to bring Binyamin, so that ALL the brothers would bow down to him. This would enable the fulfillment of his first dream - of the sheaves bowing down to him in the field. His second plan [i.e. hiding his cup in Binyamin's bag] was to force them to bring his father as well - to fulfill his second dream - i.e. the sun and moon and stars bowing down - while protecting Binyamin in the

interim (from potential injury by his brothers). In this manner, Ramban explains why Yosef did not write home:

"For had it not been for this (need to fulfill his dreams), Yosef would have committed a terrible sin to cause his father such grief and make him spend so many years in sorrow..."

[See Ramban on 42:9, read carefully.]

According to Ramban, the need to fulfill his dreams 'allowed' Yosef to treat his father and brothers in such a cruel manner.

FULFILLING 'DREAMS' OR KEEPING 'HALACHA'?

In case you found something 'bothersome' about Ramban's approach, don't feel bad. Later commentators take issue with this conclusion that it would be permissible to cause other people terrible grief, just to make sure a 'dream comes true'.

[See Nechama Leibowitz on Sefer Breishit who quotes various sources in this regard and deals with this issue in depth.]

This question leads Abravanel to suggest a very different approach. He agrees (like Ramban) that Yosef had a 'master plan', however, he disagrees as to its goal.

Abravanel contends that Yosef's goal was to bring his brothers towards repentance for their terrible deeds. Although he planned to ultimately 'reveal' himself; before doing so, he wanted to make sure that they had first performed proper "teshuva".

Abravanel's approach neatly explains just about all of Yosef's actions - which certainly caused his brothers to repent (see 42:21 & 44:16). However, it is not so clear why the goal of 'helping' his brothers to perform "teshuva" would allow Yosef to cause his father continued grief. [We'll return to this question later in our shiur.]

Furthermore, Abravanel's interpretation only explains Yosef's behavior after his brothers arrived to buy food; but it does not explain why Yosef did not contact his father for some twenty years beforehand!

DREAMS REMEMBERED, OR FORGOTTEN?

One could suggest an approach exactly the opposite of Ramban's - i.e. that Yosef had 'forgotten' his dreams (after he was sold)! It is only after his brothers bowed down some twenty years later (when they came to buy food) - that he suddenly 'remembered' his childhood dreams.

To verify this, simply review 42:9 in its context, noting how it seems to imply that it was at this point when Yosef remembered his dreams, and not earlier! [Note Rashi on 42:9 as well!]

In other words, we posit that Yosef's behavior before his brothers arrived stems from the fact that he had 'given up' on his childhood dreams, while his behavior (and 'master plan') after they arrive stems from his renewed understanding of their significance.

Let's begin by explaining why he didn't contact home, by considering his predicament in Egypt.

In regard to his brothers, why would Yosef want to contact (or ever see) them again? After all, they had thrown him into a pit and then sold him into slavery (or at least he thought they were behind the sale/ see last week's shiur)!

Furthermore, considering how Egyptian society 'looked down' at the "Ivrim" (see 43:32), contacting his brothers could have endangered his reputable position in Egyptian society.

Nonetheless, even though Yosef had ample reason for not contacting his brothers, it remains difficult to understand why he didn't contact his father (and let's not forget his full brother Binyamin). Could it be that his despise for the rest of his family was greater than his love for his father and brother?

One could suggest that by the time that Yosef had reached a position of power, he was quite sure that his father had already died. Recall that Yaakov was about 110 years old when Yosef was sold, so it would only be logical for him to assume that his father had died (or soon would / note 43:7 & 45:3!).

Hence, the slight chance that his father was still alive was simply not worth the price of returning to deal with his brothers. [

YOSEF 'HAD' A DREAM

A more sophisticated approach to explain why Yosef didn't write home, is presented by Rav Yoel Bin Nun [in an article in Megadim Vol. I / a publication of the Herzog Teachers Institute].

In that article, Rav Yoel posits that Yosef had no idea that his father believed he was dead. Quite the opposite - Yosef assumed that his father would find out that he was sold (i.e. someone would 'snitch'), and hence expected that his father would demand that the brothers trace his whereabouts and come to his rescue! After all, the Yishmaelim [distant "mishpacha"] were international traders who traveled quite often between Eretz Canaan and Egypt. Surely, Yosef hoped, his family would come to his rescue.

Recall as well that Yosef was unaware of how the brothers tricked their father to believe he was dead (with the blood-stained coat). Therefore, Yosef assumes is sure that everyone knows that he is alive, and that he was sold as a slave in Egypt. During his first year or so of slavery, he is 'sure' that in a short time, someone in his family will come to his rescue.

However, many months pass and no one shows. Yosef's hopes are replaced with feelings of rejection. After several months (or years), he may have reached the conclusion that his family doesn't want him to return; but there had to have been a reason.

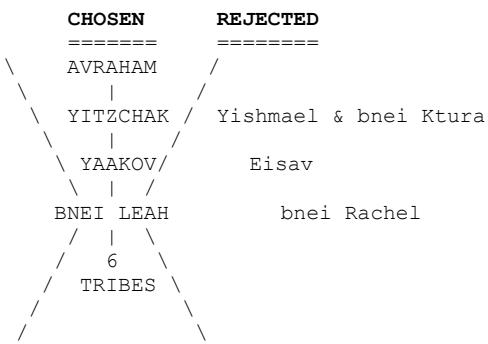
REJECTED FROM THE BECHIRAH PROCESS

Rav Yoel posits that Yosef reaches the conclusion that there must have been some divine decree that he was 'rejected' from the family, i.e. from the entire "bechira" process - in manner similar to the rejection of his Uncle Esav or great Uncle Yishmael. It may have appeared to him that only the children of Leah were chosen, while the children of Rachel were rejected, as reflected in Rachel's premature death, and the fact that she was buried on the 'roadside' (while Leah was later to be buried in the Tomb of the Patriarchs).

His childhood dreams are now forgotten, and reluctantly, he accepted his new fate.

Yosef, convinced that his family has abandoned him, accepts this fate and decides to lead his own life. Just as Esav established himself in Edom, Yosef will make a name for himself in Egypt. He can even bring the name of God into society in his own way, despite not being part of the Chosen Nation.

The following chart reflects what may have been Yosef's perception of the outcome of the "bechira" process (based on this original 'misunderstanding'):



In summary, we posit that Yosef never contacted his family during those twenty years, as he mistakenly assumed that they did not want to contact him, as there had been a divine decision that he was 'rejected' from the 'chosen family'. This tragic misunderstanding can explain why Yosef, even after rising to power, never contacted his father as well.

Now we must consider the second stage, i.e. an explanation for Yosef's behavior after his brothers arrive to buy food.

YOSEF HAS A PLAN

After spending years under the assumption that he has been 'rejected' - everything changes when Yosef sees his brothers among the many who came down to Egypt to buy grain. As they

bow down before him, Yosef suddenly 'remembers' his long forgotten dreams (see 42:9), for they just appeared to come true!

Should Yosef dismiss this as pure coincidence, or should this partial fulfillment of his childhood dreams lead him to reconsider his earlier conclusions?

It is understandable why Yosef doesn't immediately reveal himself. He needs some time. But, if he simply wanted to hide his identity from them, he could have just ignored them. [Surely, Yosef did not entertain every foreigner who came to purchase food.]

But why does Yosef accuse his brothers of being spies? Why does he return their money? Later, when they come back, why does he plant his special cup in Binyamin's bag?

Certainly, we would not expect that Yosef was just 'teasing' his brothers - to 'get back' at them. Rather, it would make more sense to assume that Yosef has a plan - and his actions suggest that he has strategy; but it is not so clear what that master plan is.

In his article, Rav Bin Nun explains Yosef's 'plan' as an attempt to determine what had happened to Binyamin. The fact that Binyamin was not with the brothers the first time they came to Egypt supports his suspicion that Bnei Rachel had been rejected. Therefore, his primary goal is to find out if Binyamin is still alive.

If Binyamin is indeed alive, then Yosef could question him concerning what 'really' happened in the family, and afterward possibly re-unite with his family. On the other hand, if Binyamin never shows (and hence probably not alive), Yosef would remain incognito - preferring never to reunite with his brothers.

[This can explain why Yosef accuses his brothers of being spies. The 'spy accusation' allows Yosef to question them concerning their family roots etc., without raising their suspicion that he may be their brother.]

Although Rav Yoel's explanation flows nicely from the above presentation, it does not explain every detail of Yosef's behavior once Binyamin does arrive. After all, once Binyamin comes, why doesn't Yosef simply take him aside and question him. If Yosef only needs to determine what really happened in the "bechira" process, what point is there in planting his cup in Binyamin's bag?

Surely, one cannot remain oblivious to Yosef's obvious attempt to create a situation that prompts the brothers to repent (as Abravanel explains so beautifully).

On the other hand, one must also explain why Yosef returns their money, and why he seats them in order of their birth, etc. These acts seem to be more of a 'tease' than an impetus for them to do "teshuva" (repentance). What is Yosef's intention in all of this?

Furthermore, if his goal, as Abravanel explains, is only to cause his brothers to repent, then his 'second' plan seems unnecessary - after all, they had already shown remorse for their sin at the first encounter. Recall their initial remorse, that Yosef himself overheard, when they stated:

"Alas we are GUILTY, for we heard his crying out [when he was thrown in the pit], but we did not listen ... therefore this fate has befallen us..." (See 42:21-23)

And if that was not enough, then Yehuda's plea and admission of guilt (see 44:16) certainly would have sufficed.

Finally, even if Abravanel's contention is correct, who gives Yosef the right to 'test' his brothers to see if they have repented? Is Yosef allowed to play God? Is he permitted to tease, trick, and confuse others - in order to awaken their soul? And even if so, does this justify causing his father further aggravation?

PLAYING 'GOD' OR PLAYING 'LEADER'

One could suggest the following explanation for Yosef's behavior (once the brothers arrived) - which is quite similar to Abravanel's approach, but from a very different angle. Let's explain:

Even though Yosef may have forgotten his dreams for some twenty years, when his brothers arrive in Egypt and bow down to him - everything changes! Totally shocked by what happened, it suddenly dawns upon him that his childhood dreams may actually

be coming true after all. Maybe he wasn't rejected? Maybe, his conclusions regarding his family were all wrong?

On the other hand, Binyamin is not with them. But, if Binyamin is still alive and part of the family (as his brothers now claim), then maybe the children of Rachel are indeed included in the "bechira" process!

But now that Yosef had become an 'expert' at dream interpretation, he not only 'remember his dreams', but he now begins to understand their purpose! These dreams were not merely 'predictions' of future events - but rather could serve as guide - to inspire appropriate behavior!

Because of his dreams, Yosef now understands that his 'brothers bowing down' means that he is not only included in the "bechira" process - but he is destined to assume family leadership.

If so what should he do at this point in time?

First, let's explain what he **cannot** do!

Imagine what would have happened had Yosef revealed his identity immediately, as soon as he recognized his brothers! They would have 'melted' on the spot. How could they have faced him, talk to him? The shame of their relationship would have created an eternal barrier. They would never be able to speak to him, let alone work together as a family.

As family 'leader' - Yosef now recognizes his responsibility to keep the 'chosen' family united and cohesive. Yosef's plan is simple - he must plan a strategy that would reunite the family - to bond them in a manner that could continue to achieve together.

Yosef does not need to play GOD, to ensure that his brothers repent - that would be their own responsibility. Yosef, however, does have a new responsibility to play LEADER.

Hence, Yosef conceives a plan that will rehabilitate the family unity - he needs to enable his brothers with a way by which they can 'redeem themselves'! But, to accomplish this, he must put them through a difficult test:

After procuring the minimal information that he needs by his 'spies' accusation (see 42:7-10 AND 43:7!), he decides to create a situation where the brothers must choose if they are willing to forfeit their own freedom - in order to save Binyamin. Should they 'pass this test', it will be much easier for them to work with Yosef in the future.

Indeed, this plan may cause his father a few extra weeks of suffering. But Yosef must restrain his emotions, for he hopes that it will unfold quickly.

[Yosef probably expected that the brothers would bring Binyamin down immediately. He did not expect that Yaakov would be so reluctant to send Binyamin away.]

Therefore, Yosef's keeps Shimon in jail, to ensure that his brothers will bring Binyamin. Once Binyamin will come, Yosef plans the big 'set up' - where he will plant his cup in Binyamin's bag, thus giving a chance for his brothers to 'prove themselves' (as they so well do).

While doing so, Yosef does many other things to make the brothers wonder and think - to shake them up a bit [what we call "cheshbon ha'nefesh"]. But by planting his cup in Binyamin's bag, Yosef provides his brothers with an opportunity to prove to themselves that they have done "teshuvah"! Only after they demonstrate their willingness to give up their own lives for Binyamin, will they be able to face themselves, and Yosef - and unite as a cohesive family - to take on the challenges that lay in the future.

Once Yehuda, on behalf of his brothers, admits their guilt and makes his noble offer to become his servants (instead of Binyamin/ see 44:16 & 44:33-34), that might have been enough - but Yosef may have wanted to 'push' his brothers even a bit farther. But when he hears Yehuda's petition concerning the fate of his father (at the beginning of Parshat Vayigash), Yosef can not hold back any more' - he 'breaks down' and reveals himself.

To support our thesis, note how Yosef (after revealing his identify and his instinctive opening question regarding the health of his father) immediately emphasizes his assurance that he is

not angry with his brothers, and implores them to recognize the Hand of God behind these events.

By doing so, Yosef also alludes to his brothers that they too should look to the future, instead of dwelling on the past (see 45:1-8).

MAASE AVOT SIMAN LA'BANIM

By the end of this entire episode, God had created a situation that would guarantee the physical survival of Am Yisrael during the famine, while setting the stage for their future redemption. Yosef, in the meantime, had created a situation that would keep Am Yisrael united during this formative stage in land of Egypt

Throughout the generations, God oversees our history, while creating opportunities for our redemption. However, as we enjoy His providence, it remains OUR OWN responsibility to make sure that we remain united as our destiny unfolds. Although quite difficult, it remains an eternal challenge for Jewish leadership.

shabbat shalom,
menachem

===== FOR FURTHER IYUN

"SINAT ACHIM" & IDEALISM - a 'mini- shiur'

Can there be any excuse for the brothers conspiring to kill Yosef? How are we to understand the behavior of our ancestors? Is their goal simply to teach us of our 'shameful' heritage, or do they carry a message for future generations?

In the following mini-shiur, we attempts to tackle this difficult question by projecting the "bechira process" - the theme that we have been following in Sefer Breishit - onto the story of Yosef and his brothers.

INTRODUCTION

At first glance, the brothers' hatred of Yosef appears to stem from a petty sibling rivalry. However, when we consider the Torah's story of Yosef's dreams (see 37:2-12), it is possible to arrive at a deeper understanding of their actions. Therefore, we begin our shiur with a quick review of these two dreams:

- (1) "And behold we were gathering sheaves in the field, and my sheaf stood up and remained upright. Your sheaves then gathered around and bowed down to my sheaf" (37:7);
- (2) "... and behold - the sun, the moon, and eleven stars were bowing down to me." (37:9)

One doesn't have to be a prophet to interpret these two dreams. Clearly, they point to Yosef's developing sense of superiority over the entire family. However, these dreams also echo an earlier sibling rivalry in Chumash - that between Yaakov and Eisav! Note the similarity between these dreams and Yitzchak's blessing to Yaakov (i.e. the blessing that he intended to give it to Eisav):

"May God bless you with... an abundance of grain... Be MASTER OVER your brothers, and let your mother's sons BOW DOWN to you." (27:28)

Recall our explanation that this blessing reflected Yitzchak's original understanding that both of his sons were chosen, and hence it became the father's responsibility to appoint a family 'leader'. However, as that story progressed, it became clear to Yitzchak that only Yaakov was chosen. Then, as we advance to the next generation, it appears that ALL of Yaakov's children will be chosen (and not only one). Therefore, it will become necessary for Yaakov to appoint a 'family leader' from among his twelve sons - but it is not yet clear who this 'leader' will be.

With this in mind, it would appear that Yosef's dreams reflect his aspiration to attain this leadership position. [One could also suggest that they may reflect Yosef's understanding that he would be the ONLY 'chosen son,' just as Yaakov himself emerged as Yitzchak's only chosen son!]

This perception is supported not only by Yosef's dreams, but also by several other factors, such as:

- * Yaakov's love and special treatment of Yosef (see 37:3);
- * his "ktonet pasim" (special cloak), a sign of royalty;
- * Yosef is the first son of Rachel, Yaakov's 'primary' wife;
- * Yaakov's silence regarding Yosef's dreams (see 37:11);

ALL IN THE NAME OF GOD

In the brothers' eyes, it becomes rather clear that Yaakov plans to name Yosef (or possibly Yosef and Binyamin, the son's of Rachel) as his exclusive heir(s). Yosef's dreams simply added 'fuel to the flame'!

This background allows us to suggest an ideological basis for the brothers' decision to kill Yosef, as follows:

Had Yosef acted in a more righteous manner, his brothers may have conceded to his destiny as either the 'leader' or the 'chosen' son. However, their perception of Yosef's character troubled them. In their eyes (as the Parshat Vayeshev testifies), Yosef was a slanderer: "And Yosef brought bad reports ('diba'ra'ah') of his brothers to his father." (see 37:2)

The brothers, aware of the challenges facing God's special Nation, recognized the need for exemplary leadership. Could Yosef possibly assume this role? To the brothers, the mere thought of 'Yosef the Slanderer' becoming the leader was horrific. From their perspective, it was simply unthinkable that Yosef could assume the leadership of a nation destined by God to be characterized by "tzedek u'mishpat" (see 18:19). For the sake of "klal Yisrael," they conclude: Yosef must be weeded out!

Hence, the brothers faced a predicament similar to that of Rivka in the previous generation. Just as Rivka had realized that Yitzchak was mistaken in his favoring of Eisav, so too the brothers conclude that Yaakov is mistaken by favoring Yosef.

However, just as Rivka resorted to 'trickery' to ensure that the proper son would be blessed, so too the brothers decide to use 'trickery' to ensure that Yosef would not be appointed their leader. Considering that the entire fate of "Am Yisrael" was at stake, the brothers allow themselves to 'bend the rules' a bit, so as to secure the nation's future.

An ideal opportunity (for the brothers) arises when Yosef arrives at Dotan to visit them. In order to dispose of this menace, they plot first to kill him. Later they opt to sell him - off to a distant land. In either case, their stated goal is to make sure that Yosef is removed from the Divine family (see 37:20 - "v'nireh mah yihyu chalomotav"). Out of respect and concern for their father, lest he fret and worry about his 'missing' son for the rest of his life, they will dip Yosef's coat in blood so that Yaakov will think that he was truly dead. Hopefully, their father will finally realize that Yosef was "nidcheh" (rejected), and now Am Yisrael can continue to develop in the proper fashion.

Thus, based on the theme of Sefer Breishit, the brothers' plot to dispose of Yosef, though inexcusable, is understandable. It is not simply out of petty jealousy that they want to kill Yosef, but rather out of a 'sincere' concern for the future of Am Yisrael.

MAASE AVOT SIMAN LA'BANIM

If our above assumptions are correct, then the story of Yosef and his brothers leaves us with a poignant message. When making important decisions that may affect the future of our communities we must make sure that lofty spiritual goals do not blind us from the most basic principles of moral behavior..

[Based on this discussion, one could suggest that the "piyut" that we recite on Yom Kippur about the Ten Martyrs (who were killed by the Romans during the time of the destruction of the Second Temple and the Bar Kochba revolt) reflects a similar message. In that piyut, Chazal connect those tragedies to the brothers' selling of Yosef. Even though that event had taken place over a thousand years earlier, Chazal consider the behavior of Am Yisrael during that time period similar to that of Yosef and his brothers.

To understand why, recall that Chazal cite "sinat chinam" [petty hatred of one another] as the primary sin of that generation (even though Torah study was at an all time high - see Mesechet Gittin 55b with regard to the story of Kamtza and Bar Kamtza. See also Yoma 9b). Hence, that piyut is making a similar statement, but in a more 'poetic'

manner. The generation of "churban bayit sheni" had repeated the sin of "sinat achim" in a manner similar to Yosef's brothers. Hence they deserved to be punished, as the later generation continues in the same pattern of sin.]

Parshat Miketz: Yehuda

by Rabbi Eitan Mayer

What are the Avot made of? To find out, Hashem tests them: "Sacrifice your son for Me." You and I will probably never face that kind of test. But the sons of Ya'akov face tests like those we may encounter in our own lives. Yosef, for example, isolated from his family and surrounded by an alien culture, struggles to resist the powerful sexual temptation of his boss's wife. Modern working life can certainly present the same challenges. If I may sully this forum by presenting one real-life example, the Wall Street Journal recently reported that a former employee of a major brokerage firm sued the firm for dismissing him; the boss's wife had allegedly been pursuing him with all the eagerness of Mrs. Potifar, and he, unlike Yosef, succumbed, partially in fear of losing his job if he offended her. When the boss found out, things got messy, and the philanderer got the axe.

Yehuda, also separated from his family (voluntarily: "va-ye-red Yehuda me-et ehav"), also faces sexual temptation, in the form of his daughter-in-law, disguised as a woman for hire. How Yehuda handles this challenge and the web of complexities it spawns is one of our topics this week.

Re'uvein, as well, becomes enmeshed in sexual impropriety of some sort, whether he sleeps with one of his father's wives (following the plain sense of the Torah) or merely interferes with the balance of intimacy in Ya'akov's relationship with his wives (following some midrashim). Sexuality, a powerful but often hidden force, is ever-present in human relationships and in the religious context. How the Avot handle these matters illustrates the degree of self-mastery we should aspire to, as well as the path of courageous repentance we must take if we stumble. The Torah hides the Avot's mistakes no more than it hides their heroic resistance to sin, and we are meant to learn from both.

Last week, we focused on Yosef. Our analysis actually extended significantly beyond Parashat VaYeshev and into Parashat Miketz, this week's parasha, as we traced Yosef's replacement of Paro as leader of Egypt and Yosef's personal reformation as a leader and religious-moral figure, climaxing with his standing before Paro and giving Hashem all of the credit for his power to interpret dreams. This week we will take a close look at Yehuda's development as a leader. We will look back at Parashat VaYeshev, where Yehuda first gets serious exposure, and continue into Mikketz, where he begins to take a leadership role within his family. Parashat VaYigash, next week's parasha, presents the clash of these titans, where Yehuda confronts his disguised brother and Yosef, satisfied by his manipulation of his brothers, eventually reveals his identity to them.

PARASHAT MIKKETZ

1. What role does Yehuda play in the sale of Yosef? Rabbi Mayer (Sanhedrin 6b; the coincidence of our names is simply that) sharply criticizes Yehuda for suggesting to his brothers that they sell Yosef instead of leaving him in the pit. Take a careful look at the scene where Yehuda makes this suggestion, and think about whether he deserves this censure. Why or why not?

2. Suddenly, in the midst of the Yosef narrative -- just after Yosef is sold -- the Torah takes a break to talk about Yehuda, his friends, his marriages, his sons, their marriages, the story with Tamar, and so forth -- leaving us hanging, waiting for news of Yosef's adventures in Egypt. **Why is this Yehuda vignette inserted so abruptly into the middle of the dramatic, suspenseful Yosef story?**

3. This must be a familiar question by now, since we have asked it about so many other figures: What are Yehuda's challenges? What lessons does he learn as he develops into a leader, and how does he learn them?

4. What does "Yehuda" mean?

5. How does Yehuda's behavior in Parashat Miketz compare with his previous behavior? What new roles does he now take on? What changes in his relationship with his father?

6. Yehuda and Re'uvein, Ya'akov's eldest son, are leaders, clearly meant to be compared:

* Both become involved in sexual impropriety, as noted above.

* Both suggest alternate ideas when the other brothers suggest killing Yosef.

* Both attempt to take responsibility for Binyamin on his journey to Egypt.

But how are Yehuda and Re'uvein different? How is this reflected later in Ya'akov's blessings to them at the end of his life (Chap. 49)?

PARASHAT MIKKETZ:

We join the brothers at Dotan, a place somewhere in the general vicinity of the family home at Hevron. They are at Dotan pasturing their flocks; Yosef, dispatched by his father, approaches them to observe and report to his father. But he will not see his father for more than twenty years!

RE'UVEIN'S ATTEMPT:

As Yosef approaches, the brothers hatch a scheme to do away with him. Someone (the Torah does not identify him) suggests killing him, but Re'uvein quickly intervenes and suggests that they throw him into a pit instead: why actively murder him when they can just leave him somewhere to die? The Torah tells us that Re'uvein actually plans to rescue Yosef from the pit and return him to his father, but as we know, he never has that opportunity. Still, we have learned something important about Re'uvein: he is a leader. He is not swept along with the crowd's plan to kill Yosef. He feels responsible to make sure that the tense relationship between the brothers does not lead to murder. This fits with his status as the bekhor, the eldest.

Re'uvein also understands that openly challenging his brothers may not work, so he pretends to go along with their intent to murder Yosef as he deflects them from immediate murder. A smart leader knows that he cannot always lead by taking the high moral ground and insisting that the crowd follow him. You can't turn back a lynching mob by preaching; a more subtle approach is necessary. As the Mishna in Pirkei Avot says, "Do not try to appease your friend while he is angry, or comfort him while the body [of a loved one] lies before him . . ." (4:18). There will be other opportunities to teach the brothers how better to handle their anger and jealousy -- right now, Re'uvein must focus on the smartest way to save Yosef's life.

RE'UVEIN IN THE DARK:

Later on, down in Egypt, when the brothers are treated harshly by Yosef (whom they do not recognize), they conclude that they are being punished by Hashem for having ignored Yosef's cries when he begged them for mercy. Re'uvein says to them at that point, "Did I not tell you, saying, 'Do not sin with the boy!' But you did not listen -- and now his blood is being sought (by God)!" (42:22). Strangely, Re'uvein seems convinced that Yosef is dead ("his blood is being sought"). Why is he so sure? And why does he make it sound like the brothers did not heed his advice, when we know that he advised them not to actively kill Yosef, and instead to throw him in a pit -- and that they seem to have listened to him at the time?

We need to look back at the events around the time of the sale of Yosef. Re'uvein suggests throwing Yosef in a pit (37:21-22), and the brothers listen to him. But then Yehuda suggests that they sell Yosef instead. The brothers agree, and Yosef is pulled out of the pit and sold to traders heading for Egypt. Suddenly, it seems, Re'uvein notices that Yosef is gone. He exclaims in surprise, "The boy is gone! What am I going to do?" (37:29-30). Hasn't Re'uvein been paying attention? Doesn't he know that Yosef has been pulled out of the pit by the brothers and sold?

It seems that Re'uvein had been absent when Yehuda suggested selling Yosef, and only returned after he had been sold. At that point, he returned to the pit to save Yosef, as he had planned, and discovered that Yosef was gone! He then returned to the brothers and exclaimed in surprise and dismay that Yosef was gone. He assumed that the brothers had changed their plan and had indeed murdered Yosef and then disposed of him. "What will I do?!" he demands of them mournfully.

Re'uvein, it seems, is never clued in to the fact that Yosef has been sold; later, when the brothers are manipulated by the Egyptian ruler and they conclude that Hashem is punishing them for mistreating Yosef, Re'uvein's admonishment -- "You did not listen [to my advice], and now his blood is being sought (by God)" -- shows that he has never been told the truth! He believes Yosef has been murdered, that the brothers ultimately rejected his warning not to actively spill Yosef's blood, and now "his blood is being sought." But why do the brothers keep Re'uvein in the dark? Why don't they tell him that Yosef was never killed, that they had pulled him from the pit and sold him to traders heading to Egypt?

Perhaps the brothers hide the truth from Re'uvein because when he returned to the pit and did not find Yosef, he came back to the brothers and expressed his horror about Yosef's disappearance. In other words, he revealed to them that he had been planning all along to save Yosef; this is, of course, why he is so horrified by Yosef's disappearance. The brothers realize that they cannot tell Re'uvein what really happened because he is not on their side -- he will simply go and tell Ya'akov that Yosef is not dead so that efforts can be made to find Yosef and buy him out of slavery. The brothers can keep Re'uvein quiet only by letting him think that they changed their minds and decided to kill Yosef after all; he will not tell Ya'akov of the murder because doing so would not save Ya'akov any grief, and, if anything, would only add to it. So Re'uvein now rebukes the brothers for not listening to him and murdering Yosef despite his advice -- "Did I not say to you, saying, 'Do not sin with the boy!' But you did not listen -- and now his *blood* (=murder, which is what he believes occurred, since he and the other brothers still do not recognize Yosef) is being sought (by God)!"

YEHUDA'S IDEA:

The brothers follow Re'uvein's advice and throw Yosef into a pit, then sit down to eat. They notice a caravan of merchants heading for Egypt, and this gives Yehuda an idea:

BERESHIT 37:26 --

Yehuda said to his brothers, "What do we gain by killing our brother and covering up his blood? Let us go and sell him to the Yishma'elim, and let us not set our own hands upon him, for he is our brother, our flesh," and his brothers listened.

Rabbi Mayer [Sanhedrin 6b] is sharply critical of Yehuda for making this suggestion and trying to profit from the sale of his own brother:

Rabbi Meir says: "[The word] 'botze'a' ['profiteer'] is used with regard to Yehuda, as it says: 'Yehuda said to his brothers, 'What profit [betiza] do we get from killing our brother?' Anyone who blesses Yehuda annoys God, as it says, 'Blessing a profiteer [botze'a] annoys God.'"

If we take a careful look at the Torah's report of Yehuda's words, it seems from the beginning of what he says that he does indeed want to sell Yosef in order to make money; merely killing Yosef would get rid of him, but selling him would also make them some cash! But as he continues, it seems clear that Yehuda feels that killing Yosef is *wrong* -- he is "our brother, our flesh." The reason he suggests selling Yosef is because this will accomplish the goal of getting rid of Yosef without necessitating actually killing him. His statement, "What do we gain . . .", does not mean "What \$money\$ do we gain by killing him," but instead means "Why actually kill him (by letting him starve or die of thirst or snakebite in the pit where we left him) -- we need not murder our brother in order to get rid of him; we can sell him instead." Yehuda is saving Yosef's life!

Taken in this way, Yehuda's action reminds us of Re'uvein's -- he is trying to save Yosef by deflecting the brothers from murder. Certainly, this is a praiseworthy accomplishment. But Re'uvein, the Torah tells us, does what he does in order to "return Yosef to his father"; Yehuda, on the other hand, seems to have no such intention, otherwise the Torah would say so, as it does with regard to Re'uvein. Re'uvein seems concerned with two issues:

- 1) Yosef's safety/not committing murder.
- 2) His father's reaction to Yosef's death.

Yehuda seems concerned about only the first of these issues. He is not deterred by the thought of the pain he will cause his father by arranging Yosef's disappearance (and claiming he is dead!). He is unwilling to murder, but quite willing to get rid of the "dreamer" by selling him into Egyptian oblivion. As the story develops, we will see that Yehuda eventually becomes deeply sensitive to Ya'akov's feelings, willing to sacrifice tremendously in order to protect Ya'akov from further pain.

MEASURE FOR MEASURE:

Seforno points out (38:1) that Yehuda is paid back in *spades* for suggesting that Yosef be sold instead of trying (like Re'uvein) to foil the other brothers' plans and return Yosef to his father. Because he does not consider the effect on his father of the disappearance/"death" of Yosef, Ya'akov's favorite son, two of his own sons -- Er and Onan -- die.

Of course, there are independent reasons for the deaths of Er and Onan, Yehuda's sons: the Torah says that Er dies because he is "evil in the eyes of God," while Onan, who marries Tamar, his brother's widow, dies because he refuses to have children with Tamar (and instead "destroys his seed"), knowing that any children he might have with her would be considered (in some way) his brother's children. As we have seen several times, whenever someone suffers a punishment, there should be a reason why that person himself deserves to be punished. And in this case, Er and Onan deserve punishment for their own misdeeds. But Yehuda, their father, also apparently deserves to suffer the death of his children for his insensitivity to Ya'akov's pain in losing Yosef, his child. By the end of this story, however, we will see that this weakness becomes one of Yehuda's greatest strengths.

[The other brothers, of course, may also suffer punishments for their roles in the sale, but we do not hear about them. The Torah focuses on filling in the sketches of the major figures, such as Yehuda, Yosef, and to a lesser extent, Re'uvein.]

After selling Yosef and dipping his royal cloak (see last week's shiur) in blood, the brothers return to Ya'akov, who concludes that Yosef is dead and slips deep into mourning for his son.

YEHUDA AND TAMAR:

The Torah then takes a sudden turn into the private life of Yehuda and spends a whole perek (chapter) in his world:

BERESHIT 38:1-2 --

It happened, at that time, that Yehuda went down from among his brothers and turned to an Adulamite man, whose name was Hira. Yehuda saw there the daughter of a Cana'ani [traveling merchant?] -- see mefarshim] whose name was Shu'a; he took her [married her] and came to her.

Bat Shu'a, as she is later called by the Torah, bears three sons to Yehuda: Er, Onan, and Shayla. Yehuda marries off his son Er to a woman named Tamar; when Er dies, Yehuda marries off Onan, his second son, to Tamar. When Onan dies as well, Yehuda balks at offering his last son to her, fearing that he too will die. Yehuda puts Tamar off by telling her to wait until Shayla grows up.

Tamar patiently waits as Shayla grows older, but when Yehuda still does not offer his son to her, she takes matters into her own hands. Dressing as a prostitute (in those days, prostitutes covered their faces -- see mefarshim -- so Yehuda does not recognize her as his daughter-in-law), she positions herself on a road she knows is in Yehuda's path. Yehuda eventually arrives, thinks her a prostitute, arranges to leave collateral with her as guarantee for later payment, avails himself of her services, and goes on his way. Later, when he sends a friend to deliver payment, the "prostitute" is nowhere to be found. [I know some may find the term "prostitute" indelicate, but the words used by the Torah here are "zona" and

"kedeisha," translated by the Artscroll Stone Chumash (certainly a modest-minded translation) as "prostitute" and "harlot.")

Three months later, Tamar's pregnancy (the result of her rendezvous with Yehuda) becomes apparent. Yehuda is told of her pregnancy and condemns her to death for adultery (she is technically still "married" to Yehuda's family as the widow of Er and Onan), but when she produces the collateral which is unmistakably his, he admits -- publicly -- that he is the father. Tamar is saved, but everyone finds out that Yehuda was intimate with her thinking she was a prostitute.

What is the lesson of this *very* strange story? Comparing it to a similar story involving a famous direct male-line descendant of Yehuda may illuminate the matter:

NATAN TELLS DAVID HA-MELEKH A STORY:

David, crowned by God, has a friend named Hiram, who is king of a neighboring kingdom (see Shmuel II:5:11 and Melakhim I:5:15); note that the name "Hiram" is curiously similar to the name of Yehuda's friend, "Hira," mentioned above.

One day, David sees a woman named "Bat Sheva" -- a name curiously similar to "Bat Shu'a," the name of Yehuda's wife -- and David desires her and takes her although she is married. David sends her husband Uriah off to the front lines of battle to be killed. But then God sends Natan (the prophet) to David to rebuke him for what he has done. Natan traps David into condemning himself:

SHMUEL II:12 --

God sent Natan to David. He came to him and said to him, "There were two men in a city, one rich and one poor. The rich one had a great number of sheep and cattle, but the poor one had nothing but one little lamb he had bought and kept alive. It grew up with him and his sons together, ate from his bread, drank from his cup, lay in his lap, and was like a daughter to him. A traveler came to [visit] the rich man; [the rich man] pitied his own sheep and cattle too much to make one of them [into a meal] for his visitor, so he took the lamb of the poor man and made it [into a meal] for his guest!"

David became furious at this [rich] man and said to Natan, "By the life of God, the man who did this deserves to die! He shall pay for the lamb four times over, for doing this thing and for not having mercy!"

Natan said to David, "YOU are the [rich] man! So says God, Lord of Yisrael: 'I anointed you king over Yisrael and saved you from Sha'ul. I gave you the house of your master . . . Why have you desecrated the word of God, doing evil in My eyes? You have stricken Uriah the Hiti with a sword and taken his wife as your wife; you killed him with the sword of the children of Ammon . . . You acted in secret, but I will [punish you] before all of Israel, before the sun!'"

David said, "I have sinned to God."

Natan said to David, "God has forgiven you; you will not die. But . . . the son who is born [from your union with Bat Sheva] will die."

OK. Let us now compare these stories:

YEHUDA

- 1) Has a friend named "Hira."
- 2) Marries "Bat Shu'a"
- 3) Sexual "irregularity."
- 4) Unknowingly condemns innocent to death.
- 5) Commits secret unworthy act.
- 6) Admits publicly.
- 7) Sons die to punish faked slaughter of favorite son

DAVID

- 1) Has a friend named "Hiram."
- 2) Marries a woman named "Bat Sheva."
- 3) Sexual "irregularity."
- 4) Unknowingly condemns self to death, while he himself is truly responsible.
- 5) Commits secret unworthy act.
- 6) Admits publicly.
- 7) Son dies to punish slaughter of poor man's only lamb.

Of course, as mentioned, Yehuda is also David's great grandfather!

[Many like to point out that Rav Shmuel b. Nahmeini -- Shabbat 56a -- 'reinterprets' David's actions and claims that he did not actually sin in taking Bat Sheva and having Uriah killed. But if you keep reading the Gemara there, Rav, the Amora, responds that R. Shmuel b. Nahmeini is saying this only because he himself is descended from David! Other views in Hazal go so far as to claim that David not only took a married woman, but that he raped her as well (Ketubot 9a). It is important to keep in mind that there are often multiple opinions on such matters within Hazal, and certainly among later commentators. We attempt in these shiurim to follow "peshat" as closely as possible, as discussed in this forum on several occasions.]

"THE STING":

The central pattern repeated in the stories of both Yehuda and David HaMelekh is the "sting," as it were. In the case of David, the "sting" strategy is clear: Natan is sent by God to arouse David's fury at the "rich man." When his anger is in full bloom, his outrage at the cruel, unfeeling "rich man" at its indignant apex, Natan's mission is to utterly puncture David's righteous anger by telling him that *he* is the "rich man"! This "sting," which draws David in and then makes him the target of his own condemnation, is so psychologically devastating that David Ha-Melekh can respond with only two words: "Hatati LaShem" -- "I have sinned to God." He offers no arguments, excuses, explanations, mitigations -- only a humble, simple admission of guilt before God. Would that we could admit mistakes with such pure contrition!

This admission of sin is the cornerstone of teshuva. This is clear not only from Natan's reaction to David's admission -- that David has been forgiven and will not actually die -- but also from the famous Rambam [Maimonides] in *Hilkhot Teshuva* [Laws of Repentance] (1:1), where the Rambam says that "when a person repents, he must admit the sin . . . admitting the sin is a positive obligation (mitzvah asei)." Many have pointed out that according to the Rambam's formulation, the mitzvah appears to be the *viduy*, the *admission* of sin, not the repentance itself! Recognizing sin and articulating that recognition are not only halakhically necessary for teshuva, but can also be transforming, psychologically and religiously (but perhaps not if performed in robot-like, emotionless vocalization of the "Al het" prayer in the Yom Kippur tefilot or mindless chest-beating in the daily "Selakh lanu").

Most people intuitively understand this halakha of viduy -- just look at how hard it usually is for people to admit they have done something wrong. Once we can admit it (even privately), it's "out there" psychologically, and repentance can move forward.

Yehuda, too, walks into a "sting." After his intimacy with the unknown prostitute (really Tamar), he goes on his way. But when he tries to send payment to her for her service (and collect the important personal collateral he has left with her), she is nowhere to be found. About three months later, Tamar begins to show signs of pregnancy:

BERESHIT 38:24 –

It happened, after about three months, that it was told to Yehuda, saying, "Tamar, your daughter-in-law, has committed adultery, and is also pregnant from adultery!" Yehuda said, "Take her out and let her be burned [to death]!"

Why is Yehuda involved in passing judgment on Tamar? Most of us assume that Yehuda is consulted either because he is a judge or, as some mefarshim (commentators) explain, because the custom was that the husband of an unfaithful woman [in those times, a widow like Tamar was considered betrothed in potential to the remaining brothers of her deceased husband or to the other men of the family, including Yehuda himself] had the prerogative of deciding whether she should live or die.

But there is one other reason that Yehuda must be consulted: the implicit question the people are asking him when they tell him that Tamar is pregnant is, "Could it be that you are responsible for her pregnancy, and therefore she has not committed adultery and does not deserve to die?" Yehuda's response -- "Take her out and let her be burned!" -- is a clear answer in the negative: "I am not responsible for her pregnancy." Like David, he walks into the "sting" by condemning someone to death, where in truth he himself is responsible.

Before long, the condemned Tamar sends Yehuda the message that the owner of the collateral she holds is also the father of the fetus. Yehuda recognizes the collateral as his own belongings, and he must now "eat his words" -- *he* is the guilty party, not Tamar, whom he had just condemned to death. Like David, his words are few, but in them he recognizes that Tamar is innocent of adultery and that she acted justifiably in response to his cruel refusal to marry her to his son.

Implicit also is the admission that he thought she was a prostitute when he was intimate with her, surely a great embarrassment to him. We can only imagine the depth of Yehuda's mortification when he sees the collateral -- his own signet ring, his staff, and his "petil" [whatever that is, which is not clear] -- and realizes that he must either remain silent and watch the innocent Tamar die, or admit to the entire community what he has done. He could remain silent -- perhaps many people would -- but instead he endures the shame of retracting the confident, terse verdict, "Take her out and let her be burned," and announces that she is right and he is wrong.

"YEHUDA": A DOUBLE MEANING:

Yehuda's power of teshuva, his strength of admitting his mistakes, is actually hinted by his name. Back in *Parashat VaYetze*, Yehuda's mother, Le'ah, names him "Yehuda" as an expression of thanks to God: the "yud" and "heh" ["yah"] stand for God, and the "heh," "vav," and "dalet" ["hod"] -- mean "glory" or "thanks/praise"; putting the two together ["yah" + "hod" = "Yehuda"] yields "Glory to God!" or "Thanks to God!"

But "hod" also means "to admit." The word "hoda'a," for example, means both "thanks/praise" and "admission." The word "viduy," the process of admitting sin, comes from the same root, as does the word "Toda," meaning "Thanks!" The reason "hod" includes both glorifying/thanking and admitting is because, in a way, thanking is also admitting that someone has done something for us and that we are beholden (or, vice versa, because admitting something gives glory to the recipient of the admission). This is what we mean in *Shemoneh Esrei* when we say the berakha of "Modim," which also comes from the same root as "Yehuda," "hod," and "viduy." Yehuda, then, means both "Thanks to God" and also "The one who admits [wrongdoing] before God."

This power of Yehuda's, the strength to admit he has done wrong, is later recognized by Ya'akov in his blessing to Yehuda among the blessings he gives to all of his sons in Parashat VaYehi:

BERESHIT 49:8-9 --

"Yehuda, your brothers shall defer to you/praise you ["yodukha"]; your hand is on the scruff of your enemy's neck, and your father's sons shall bow to you. A young lion is Yehuda; from tearing ["teref"], my son, you arose . . ."

"Yodukha" -- "admit [to] you" -- means that the other brothers will admit that he is their leader, and, as Ya'akov goes on to explain, that they will bow to him. Because Yehuda has the power to recognize the truth of his own misdeed and admit it -- even when the truth is deeply embarrassing or uncomfortable -- his brothers will recognize his leadership and "admit" that he is their leader (see Rashbam and Radak, 49:9).

Ya'akov's blessing also hints one other thing: Ya'akov is recognizing that although Yehuda was involved in "teref," "tearing [prey]," he has "arisen" from that event. Remember that when Ya'akov is tricked into believing that Yosef has been killed by a wild animal, he cries out, "tarof taraf Yosef" -- "Yosef has been torn apart!", using the same word -- "teref" -- as he later uses in this berakha. Yehuda was deeply involved in that "teref" -- the plan to sell Yosef was his -- but Ya'akov's blessing at the end of Sefer Bereshit recognizes that Yehuda "arose" after that event. In other words, the "teref" was a low point in Yehuda's career, but he "arose" from that low point to become the leader of all of the brothers.

Now, we move to Parashat Mikketz to see how Yehuda "arose" from the "teref" to assume leadership of the family.

YEHUDA TAKES RESPONSIBILITY:

As the seven years of plenty come to an end and the seven years of famine begin, Egypt and all of its neighbors begin to starve. Yosef responds by opening Egypt's storehouses and selling food to the people, but the neighboring countries, not blessed with a "Yosef" and his divinely inspired prescience, can only turn to Egypt for relief. Included among the seekers of sustenance is Ya'akov's family. All of the brothers go down to Egypt for food except Binyamin, who is kept home by his father. Ya'akov fears that if he lets Binyamin go, he may never see him again (like Yosef).

When the brothers arrive in Egypt and appear before Yosef, he immediately recognizes them and accuses them of spying (recall that his spying on them was one of the reasons the brothers hated Yosef!). Yosef demands that they prove their story is true by bringing their younger brother down to Egypt. When the brothers return to Ya'akov and tell him the story, he refuses to permit Binyamin to go to Egypt, for fear that he will be somehow harmed, as Yosef was.

Re'uvein attempts to change Ya'akov's mind by guaranteeing Binyamin's safety:

BERESHIT 42:37 --

Re'uvein said to his father, saying, "Kill my two sons if I do not bring him [Binyamin] back to you! Give him into my hands, and I will return him to you."

Ya'akov does not accept this offer, and refuses to allow Binyamin to leave. Why?

Some mefarshim (Rashi, Radak, etc.) cite Hazal's explanation: Hazal refer to Re'uvein as a "bekhor shoteh," a "foolish firstborn." Ya'akov does not actually respond to Re'uvein's guarantee, but Hazal say that he is thinking, "You fool! Are your sons not also my GRANDSONS? Your loss would also be my loss!" But the Ramban offers another explanation: Ya'akov does not *trust* Re'uvein because 1) he does not have the respect of the other brothers, as Yehuda does, and 2) Re'uvein has already shown disloyalty to his father by sleeping with Bilha, his father's wife.

We can add that Ya'akov does not trust Re'uvein's guarantee because the guarantee itself shows that his judgment is seriously flawed: how can he guarantee the safety of one person by threatening the safety of two others!? In addition, the extreme consequences Re'uvein agrees to suffer for failing his mission are tremendously overblown -- the death of his two sons! He offers this guarantee to convince Ya'akov how serious he is, but he only succeeds in convincing Ya'akov that he is either unstable or untrustworthy.

Time passes and the family begins to run out of food. Ya'akov commands his sons to return to Egypt for food, but Yehuda patiently responds that they can return to Egypt only with Binyamin. Of course, Ya'akov has not forgotten that this was the condition that the Egyptian ruler had set for their return. But in his great reluctance to send Binyamin with them, he hides for a moment from reality. He knows his sons will remind him of the necessity of taking Binyamin with them, but for Ya'akov, life has become a nightmare, and for a moment, he tries to ignore one particularly unpleasant aspect of it. Ya'akov may also hope to provoke one of his sons to offer a guarantee of safe passage for Binyamin which he can trust more than the guarantee offered by Re'uvein. In this, he succeeds.

Yehuda is the one who reminds Ya'akov of reality, patiently repeating what he knows his father knows: that they must take Binyamin. Ya'akov protests further, and eventually, Yehuda offers Ya'akov a guarantee:

BERESHIT 43:9 --

"I will take responsibility for him -- seek him from my hands. If I do not bring him back to you and stand him before you, I will have sinned to you for all time."

Yehuda offers no fireworks: no "kill my sons" or "cut out my tongue" or anything like that. He simply and reasonably promises to take care of Binyamin: he provides consequences which sound unpleasant enough that Ya'akov believes that Yehuda will make great efforts to avoid failure, but not so unpleasant ("kill my sons") that Ya'akov will either think he is not serious or that his judgment is impaired and that he is incapable of the mission he undertakes.

YEHUDA "BECOMES" YA'AKOV:

Yehuda now begins to take over the role of leadership from his father. He shows leadership in bringing his father back to reality and in taking responsibility for Binyamin. But on a deeper level, he also shows deep concern for Ya'akov's paternal fears and feelings. Instead of guaranteeing Binyamin's safety by putting himself at risk ("I will have sinned to you for all time"), he could easily have said harshly, "Look, we will all die unless you agree to let Binyamin go with us! Don't you realize that we are all now in danger of dying of hunger? How can you talk about what *might* happen to one of your sons when it is clear that unless you let him go with us, *all* of us will die!" Instead, Yehuda puts himself at risk and offers a guarantee -- all in order to ease his father's fears. In next week's parasha, we see that when Yosef insists on imprisoning Binyamin, Yehuda is willing to go to prison for as long as necessary in order to deliver on this commitment -- in order to protect his father from the pain of having Binyamin disappear.

This is not the same Yehuda as the one who suggested selling Yosef to the passing caravan! This is the Yehuda who has "arisen" from the "teref" of Yosef!

Another famous Rambam (based on Yoma 86b):

LAWS OF TESHUVA 2:1 --

"What is COMPLETE TESHUVA? When another opportunity comes to do the same sin, and he is capable of doing it, and he does not do it, because he has repented -- not because of fear or weakness."

In a sense, Yehuda's acquisition of deep sensitivity to Ya'akov's feelings is a process in which he *becomes* Ya'akov himself. Long ago (in Parashat VaYeitzei), Ya'akov took his family and flocks and ran away from Lavan without telling him. Lavan pursued him, and, when he caught up with Ya'akov, accused him of stealing his gods. Ya'akov allowed Lavan to search his belongings, and when Lavan found nothing, Ya'akov became furious:

BERESHIT 31:38-39 --

"It is now twenty years that I have been with you -- your sheep and goats never lost their young ["shikeilu"], and your rams I did not consume. I never brought to you a "tereifa" [torn-up animal] -- I blamed myself for it, and you sought it from my hands, whether stolen from me during day or night."

Let us focus on three elements of Ya'akov's testimony to his great self-sacrifice and honesty as Lavan's shepherd:

- 1) The lack of "shikul" -- "shikul" means, literally, that a parent suffers the death of one of its children. Ya'akov is claiming that none of the sheep ever had its lamb die under his care (except, as he goes on to say, animals attacked by predators ("tereifa").
- 2) He never brought a "tereifa" to Lavan, the owner -- he absorbed the cost himself.
- 3) "Anokhi ahatena" -- "I would blame myself for it", i.e., I considered the loss to be my responsibility, and "mi-yadi tevakshena" -- "you would seek [payment] from my hands."

A careful look at the Ya'akov of VaYeshev and Mikketz shows that he seems to suffer exactly the things from which he protected Lavan and his flocks:

- 1) "Tereifa" is indeed brought to him -- "Tarof taraf Yosef!", he concludes in horror when shown Yosef's bloody cloak.
- 2) He is "shakul" -- when the brothers return from Egypt after their first trip, and Shimon is not with them because Yosef is holding him hostage, Ya'akov complains, "Oti shikaltem!" -- "You have made me 'shakul,' you have made me a parent who has lost his children" -- "Yosef einenu, ve-Shimon einenu, ve-et Binyamin tikahu . . ." -- "Yosef is gone, and Shimon is gone, and [now] you will take Binyamin as well . . ."

But then Yehuda steps in, and by reversing these two tragedies, he rises to greatness and emulates Ya'akov, who so carefully avoided causing "teref" and "shikul" so long ago:

- 1) In his berakha to Yehuda at the end of Sefer Bereishit, Ya'akov himself acknowledges that Yehuda has arisen from the "teref" -- like Ya'akov himself, Yehuda takes responsibility for his brother (and his father's feelings) the second time around;

he now upholds "tereifa lo heiveiti eilekha" -- like Ya'akov, he no longer brings "tereifa" home to show the master. He promises to return Binyamin home safely.

2) Yehuda prevents the "shikul" that Ya'akov fears (the death or disappearance of Binyamin) by guaranteeing Binyamin's safety and offering to be imprisoned instead of Binyamin.

3) When he guarantees Binyamin's safe return to Ya'akov, he uses almost the same words as Ya'akov did when describing how he took personal responsibility for Lavan's sheep!

Yehuda: "Anokhi e'ervenu, mi-yadi te-vakshenu."

Ya'akov: "Anokhi ahatena, mi-yadi te-vakshena."

Additionally, Yehuda promises that if he fails in his mission to return Binyamin, "ve-hatati lekha kol ha-yamim," paralleling Ya'akov's "ahatena" -- both accept blame for failure ["het"] as their personal responsibility.

Next week, as we discuss Yosef's manipulation of the brothers, we will also look at Yehuda's emotional speech to Yosef, which is what finally forces Yosef to reveal himself.

Shabbat shalom

Parshas Miketz: Yosef's Brothers in Egypt

By Rabbi Yitzchak Etshalom

I.

The story of the encounter between Yoseph and his brothers in Egypt is well-known; however, a closer look at the text reveals some seemingly strange behavior on the part of the brothers. I would like to begin by posing two questions. Through a careful look at some of the events which led up to the stand of the brothers in Yoseph's quarters, not only will we answer these questions – but we will gain a clearer understanding of the debate between Yoseph and his brothers.

QUESTION #1: WHY DID ALL TEN BROTHERS GO DOWN?

In B'resheet (Genesis) 42:1-3, we are told: When Ya'akov learned that there was grain in Egypt, he said to his sons, "Why do you keep looking at one another? I have heard," he said, "that there is grain in Egypt; go down and buy grain for us there, that we may live and not die." So ten of Yoseph's brothers went down to buy grain in Egypt. (B'resheet [Genesis] 40:5-8)

Why did Ya'akov send (nearly) all of his sons down to Egypt? From everything we have ever heard about this family – going back to Avraham's first "Aliyah" – it is a wealthy family. This family (Avraham-Yitzchak-Ya'akov-12 sons) has plenty of cattle, sheep – and slaves. Since Ya'akov was concerned that the way to Egypt was dangerous (which is why he didn't send Binyamin – see B'resheet 42:4), why did he send any of his sons? Why not send some of the servants of the household – or, at least, one or two sons with some slaves to carry back the grain?

QUESTION #2: WHY DID THE BROTHERS BRING BINYAMIN BACK?

When Yoseph's brothers came down to Egypt, they were brought to the great viceroy (their brother) – who was reputed to have great powers of clairvoyance. (See B'resheet 44:5,15). The viceroy accused them – three or four times – of being spies (B'resheet 42:9-16). Finally, he agreed to allow them to come back to buy more grain (and to free their brother, Shim'on), only if they would return with the younger brother of whom they spoke. (How the return with Binyamin would prove their honesty is not clear – but that is a matter for another shiur.) [Why Yoseph engaged in this apparently heartless behavior towards his brothers and father is also beyond the scope of this shiur. Rav Yo'el Bin-Nun has written a wonderfully insightful – and hotly debated – article on the subject, which appears in Megadim vol. 1]

The brothers knew that the viceroy was wrong about their being spies! As they averred, time and again, they were only interested in purchasing grain. Since the supposedly clairvoyant viceroy was so "off-base" about their motivations – how would he know if the "Binyamin" they brought back was really a younger brother? Why didn't the brothers find some young man, dress him up like a Canaanite (see Yehoshua Ch. 9) and give him enough information to play the role of Binyamin? The viceroy – whose reputed powers of insight were obviously "smoke and mirrors" – would never know the difference between this "shill" and the real Binyamin! Why put their father through the heartbreak of sending Binyamin – and delay their next trip to the Egyptian grain center – when they could have avoided all of it with this ruse?

II. SH'CHEM AND HEVRON

Before addressing these questions, let's look back at the events at the beginning of Parashat Vayeshev. There are two more questions I would like to ask about the brothers and their associations and location.

At the beginning of the Yoseph story, we are told that Yoseph had a special relationship with the four sons of Ya'akov's concubines. (Remember that Ya'akov's children were born of one of four mothers – Re'uven, Shim'on, Levi, Yehudah, Yissachar and Zevulun shared Leah as a mother; Yoseph and Binyamin were Rachel's sons; Gad and Asher were birthed by Zilpah, Leah's handmaid; Dan and Naphtali were born to Bilhah, Rachel's handmaid.): This is the story of the family of Ya'akov. Yoseph, being seventeen years old, was shepherding the flock with his brothers; he was a helper to the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, his father's wives; and Yoseph brought a bad report of them to their father. (B'resheet 37:2) The third question: Why did Yoseph associate with the sons of the concubines? (Rashi explains that the sons of Leah degraded him and so he built an alliance with the "lesser" sons of Zilpah and Bilhah; see, however, Ramban response ad loc.)

The fourth question is one of location – since Ya'akov lived in and around Hevron (see B'resheet 37:1, 14) – why were his sons shepherding his flock in the vicinity of Sh'chem – approximately 30 miles to the north? (37:12) The mountain range which extends from south of Hevron northwards to Sh'chem includes plenty of good grazing land – why was his flock so far away?

III. A FINAL QUESTION

Although this may seem like a radical departure from the subject – I would like to address a seemingly unrelated question about a verse in D'varim (Deuteronomy). The book of D'varim is presented as Mosheh's farewell address, presented to the B'nei Yisra'el in the plains of Mo'av during the fortieth year after the Exodus. (D'varim 1:1-5). In the second chapter, Mosheh describes the military and political history of the surrounding lands – including that of Se'ir (southwest Jordan):

Moreover, the Horim had formerly inhabited Se'ir, but the descendants of Esav dispossessed them, destroying them and settling in their place, as Yisra'el has done in the land that Hashem gave them as a possession. (D'varim 2:12). It should be clear why this verse challenges our traditional approach to Revelation and to the Mosaic authorship of the Torah. Mosheh

is describing what had happened in Se'ir to the B'nei Yisra'el – and is relying on an event they knew well to illustrate it. How could the Yehoshua-led conquest – which was a year in the future – serve as an illustrative model for them?

Not only do the Bible critics have a field day with this verse. Various traditionally oriented solutions – (e.g. Sforno, Hizkuni) usually associated with the conquest of the lands on the East Bank of the Jordan (which had already happened) – have been proposed; but they are all relatively weak since that land was never considered “THE land”. This is a troubling verse that awaits a comfortable and traditional resolution.

IV. YA'AKOV AND B'NEI LE'AH SETTLE THE LAND

A careful reading of the activities of Ya'akov and his children, beginning after the successful reunion with Esav, reveals that this family had already begun realizing the promise given to their great-grandfather (Avraham), grandfather (Yitzchak) and father. Avraham was promised that his descendants – who would return after four generations – would inherit the Land (B'resheet 15:16). The divine promise to Avraham of the Land was not an immediate gift – rather, it was a commitment that the Land would eventually become the property of his descendants. By virtue of Yitzchak never having left the Land (see B'resheet 26:1-4), God's promise to him was, similarly, one of potential and not to be actualized in his life. (Note that throughout their lifetimes, both Avraham and Yitzchak are considered “sojourners”, “strangers” – and never settle anywhere within the Land. Note especially Avraham's self-description in his negotiations with Ephron – B'resheet 23:4) Ya'akov was given a similar promise on his way out of the Land (B'resheet 28:13) – but from the wording in God's promise to him upon his return (35:12), it seems that the time had come for the promise to be realized. (As I pointed out in a previous shiur in the name of Rav Soloveitchik z"l, **Ya'akov's response to the birth of Yoseph was to ask for a release from Lavan and to return home**. Yoseph is the fourth generation from Avraham and Ya'akov thought that that element of the covenant was ready to “kick in”.)

Excluding Avraham's purchase of a (necessary) burial plot, Ya'akov was the first of our ancestors to actively try to settle the land. Immediately after his successful rapprochement with Esav, he purchased land in Sh'chem (33:19). As a result of the Sh'chem-Dinah episode, Shim'on and Levi, two of B'nei Le'ah, conquered the town of Sh'chem (34:25).

We then come to an anomaly in Chapter 37. When the brothers (how many of them?) debate what to do with Yoseph, Re'uven speaks up and implores them not to kill him (37:22). It is reasonable that Yehudah, who later spoke up about the possible profit to be made from the sale of Yoseph (v. 26), was not present when Re'uven made his plea – else, why didn't Yehudah speak up then? Although the text is not clear about Yehudah's presence, Re'uven certainly “disappeared” while Yoseph was in the pit. (v. 29: “And Re'uven returned to the pit and behold – Yoseph was not in the pit...”) Where did Re'uven go?

In the next chapter, we read about Yehudah's “separate” life away from his brothers. There is a serious chronological problem with this story. If it took place immediately after the sale of Yoseph (which is one way to read 38:1 – see Rashi there), we have seemingly irreconcilable information, as follows:

The text clearly tells us that from the sale of Yoseph until the reunion with his brothers was no more than 22 years. (Yoseph was at least 17 when sold; he was 30 when brought before Phara'oh; there were 7 years of plenty and then, after 2 years of famine, the brothers were reunited.) In Chapter 38, Yehudah began a business relationship with a local K'na'ani man, married a local woman, had three sons with her (and the third son was significantly younger than the second – see 38: 11), the oldest son married Tamar and died, the second son refused to fulfill his obligation to his dead brother and died – and the younger son finally grew up (see 38:14). Tamar had relations with Yehudah and gave birth to Peretz and Zerach. In B'resheet 46:12, we are told that the children of this same Peretz were among the group that came down to Egypt – no more than 22 years after the sale of Yoseph! **It boggles the imagination to suppose that within 22 years, Yehudah would marry and have children, marry those children off – and then have his own children with Tamar within 22 years.** For this reason, Ralbag (among others) concludes that the Yehudah story occurred concurrently with the events in Ch. 37. In other words, while the brothers were still tending their father's flock as young men (early 20's), they (or at least Yehudah) were also entering into independent business relationships.

We know that Shim'on and Levi had already conquered the city of Sh'chem – and that Yehudah's business took him as far north and west as K'ziv (see 38:5; K'ziv is likely near modern day Achziv, near Nahariyah). If Re'uven was able to be away from the brothers (to tend to his own affairs) while they were in Dotan (near Sh'chem) and return to them, he must have also had some land and/or business in the north.

The picture that emerges is quite clear. The children of Le'ah were beginning to settle the Land (in the north). Because of this, they shepherded their father's flock (evidently in rotation) near their own holdings – in Sh'chem. Before going further, we can provide a clear and reasonable explanation to the enigmatic and troubling verse in D'varim (2:12):

Moreover, the Horim had formerly inhabited Se'ir, but the descendants of Esav dispossessed them, destroying them and settling in their place, as Yisra'el has done in the land that Hashem gave them as a possession. (D'varim 2:12). The first conquest of the Land which God gave us was initiated not by Yisra'el the Nation – but by Yisra'el the man (Ya'akov). During the life of Ya'akov, he and his children (B'nei Le'ah) began purchasing and/or conquering land in Eretz K'na'an in order to fulfill the promise given to their family. Mosheh's illustration is indeed one from a familiar past – and is therefore instructive and enlightening.

V. B'NEI ZILPAH AND B'NEI BILHAH

Why, then, is Yoseph described as associating with the children of the concubines? Why aren't they also spreading out, building their families and their estates?

In order to understand this, we have to look at the different visions for the family held by Ya'akov and Yoseph. Ya'akov clearly held that the sons were not to be treated equally or seen as a unit; witness his request to return to K'na'an upon the birth of Yoseph; witness his allowing/encouraging only the children of Le'ah to build their own fortunes and witness the special treatment he accorded to Yoseph and Binyamin.

Ya'akov had every reason to adopt this approach. In his family, only one son (Avraham, Yitzchak, Ya'akov) was the torch-bearer of the tradition, while the other brothers (Nachor, Yishma'el, Esav) were rejected and given other destinies and legacies. Ya'akov reasoned that he would also have to choose one son who would be the next patriarch – and that the other sons would be given separate inheritances. The sons of Le'ah, being the children of a proper wife, were given the opportunity to conquer and settle the Land – as it was promised to their father and his children. The sons of Rachel – who would be the true heirs – would directly inherit Ya'akov's holdings. The children of the concubines, coming from "second-class" wives, would not inherit anything – rather, they would remain workers for the estate of Ya'akov – as he worked for his father-in-law. Ya'akov's vision – based on his family's experience – includes no Am Yisra'el – just B'nei Yisra'el.

This is why Yoseph associated with B'nei Zilpah and B'nei Bilhah; as Ya'akov's workers, they would naturally stay close to home. Yoseph was also close to home as he stood to inherit Ya'akov's holdings.

Yoseph had a different perspective on the destiny of the family. His dream of the sheaves (B'resheet 37:7) carried two messages which were offensive to his brothers – one explicit and the other implicit. Explicitly, the dream indicated that Yoseph would be their ruler. Implicit in this vision is a united family/nation with one king. Following the vision of Ya'akov, there could never be a ruler over the brothers – because they would not comprise a political unit which could be governed. Yoseph's dream implied that they would eventually be united and share a common destiny.

VI. THE BROTHERS IN EGYPT

Returning to our Parashah, let's look at the family's status and fortune. At the beginning of chapter 42, we are told that Ya'akov asked all of his sons (except Binyamin) to go down to Egypt – "that we may live and not die". Clearly, two major changes had taken place as a result of the famine. First of all, the sons had moved back to their father's house (or extended household) – such that he could address them all at one time. Second, they were in danger of starvation. Their fortunes must have been lost (since they were shepherds, it stands to reason that the famine hit them especially hard) causing them to move back to the "empty nest" – and they likely had no slaves left to send! This was the first (of many) cycles of conquest and loss of the Land.

When the brothers came before Yoseph, we are told that:

Although Yoseph had recognized his brothers, they did not recognize him. Yoseph also remembered the dreams that he had dreamed about them. He said to them, "You are spies; you have come to see the nakedness of the land!" (B'resheet 42:8-9). What was it about his dreams that caused him to accuse them of being spies?

When he saw Gad and Asher (Zilpah's sons) standing side by side with Re'uven and Shim'on, he understood that one of two changes had taken place in his family. Either Ya'akov had been persuaded that the Yosephian vision of Am Yisra'el was correct and had unified his sons and convinced them that they had a common destiny – but, if so, where was Binyamin? He reached the only other reasonable conclusion – that they had lost their fortunes and had been drawn back together.

Here is where Yoseph's brilliance and insight came into play. A person who has never known wealth is not enraged and made jealous by exposure to opulence. On the other hand, someone who had wealth and power – and lost it – has great difficulty in accepting the other's fortune with equanimity. He knew that the brothers would feel jealous of his wealth – and that of Egypt – and would at least be contemplating military action, if not as an outright conspiracy, then at least as internal considerations.

When Yoseph accused them of being spies, that charge must have hit a resonant chord inside of their minds and hearts. This Tzaphenat Pa'ané'ach (Yoseph) must really be insightful to read our minds so adroitly! When he then took Shim'on (one of the two "activist" brothers – B'resheet 34:25) from them, they must have been convinced that his "second sight" was legitimate and worthy of consideration. When he demanded that Binyamin be brought down, they had no choice but to fully comply, as this viceroy could see their thoughts, read their minds – and properly identify Binyamin!

Hag Urim Sameach: Happy Hanukkah to all of our Haverim

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PARSHA INSIGHTS

by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

A Candle in the Dark

"Yet the chamberlain of the cup bearers did not remember Yosef, but forgot him." (40:23)

"Raiders of the Lost Ark" was one of the biggest box-office hits of all-time. As the title suggests, the story centers on the "Lost Ark," which is none other than the Holy Ark that Moshe constructed to house the original Torah and the tablets of the Ten Commandments. During the movie's climax, the villain garbs himself in the vestments of the *Kohen Gadol* (High Priest) as he battles with the movie's hero, Indiana Jones.

Truth, as they say, is stranger than fiction, for there seems to be a fascinating real-life connection between the Jewish People and Indiana Jones!

In 1911, Hiram Bingham III discovered the legendary Inca city of Macchu Picchu in Peru. Indiana Jones, the hero of "Raiders of the Lost Ark", was patterned after Hiram Bingham. Hiram had a son called, not very imaginatively, Hiram Bingham IV.

A number of years ago, the American Secretary of State Colin Powell gave a posthumous award for "constructive dissent" to Hiram (or Harry) Bingham IV. For more than fifty years the State Department had resisted any attempt to honor Bingham. To them, he was an insubordinate member of the US diplomatic service, a dangerous maverick who was eventually demoted. Yet now, after his death, he has been officially recognized as a hero.

In 1939, Bingham was posted to Marseille, France as American Vice-Consul. The USA was then neutral,

and, not wishing to annoy Marshal Petain's puppet Vichy regime, Roosevelt's government ordered its representatives in Marseille not to grant visas to any Jews. Bingham decided that this was immoral, and, putting his conscience before his career, did everything in his power to undermine the official US foreign policy.

In defiance of his bosses in Washington, he granted more than 2,500 US visas to Jewish and other refugees, including the artists Marc Chagall and Max Ernst, and the family of the writer Thomas Mann. He sheltered Jews in his Marseille home and obtained forged identity papers to help others in their dangerous journeys across Europe. He worked with the French underground to smuggle Jews out of France into Franco's Spain or across the Mediterranean. He even contributed to their expenses out of his own pocket.

By 1941, Washington had lost patience with Bingham. He was sent to Argentina. After the war, to the continued annoyance of his superiors, he reported on the movements of Nazi war criminals. Not unsurprisingly, eventually he was forced out of the American diplomatic service completely.

Bingham died almost penniless in 1988. Little was known of his extraordinary activities until his son found a series of letters in his father's belongings after his death.

Subsequently, many groups and organizations, including the United Nations and the State of Israel, honored Bingham.

Bingham is like a candle in the dark.

Many are the stories from the Spanish Inquisition onward of Jews who gave away their fortunes to sea captains for the promise of safety, only to find themselves robbed and betrayed by those they trusted. Change the year to 1940 and the same story could be repeated, with equally chilling results, in Nazi Europe.

"Yet the Chamberlain of the Cup bearers did not remember Yosef, but forgot him."

If the chamberlain *"did not remember"* Yosef, why did the Torah also write *"but forgot him?"* Rashi comments

that the chamberlain *"did not remember"* him *that same day*, and subsequently he also *"forgot him."*

One could perhaps forgive the chamberlain for forgetting Yosef on the day of his release. It is human nature to be so overjoyed at escaping the purgatory of prison that one might forget his benefactor. However, when the excitement had died down, why didn't the chamberlain keep his promise to Yosef?

This classic ingratitude echoes to us down the ages, in Spain, in Europe, in Russia and in Arab lands.

When we find a Hiram Bingham, we should proclaim his kindness to the hills.

PARSHA OVERVIEW

It is two years later. Pharaoh has a dream. He is unsatisfied with all attempts to interpret it. Pharaoh's wine chamberlain remembers that Yosef accurately interpreted his dream while in prison. Yosef is released from prison and brought before Pharaoh. He interprets that soon will begin seven years of abundance, followed by seven years of severe famine. He tells Pharaoh to appoint a wise person to store grain in preparation for the famine. Pharaoh appoints him as viceroy to oversee the project. Pharaoh gives Yosef an Egyptian name, Tsafnat Panayach, and selects Osnat, Yosef's ex-master's daughter, as Yosef's wife. Egypt becomes the granary of the world. Yosef has two sons, Menashe and Ephraim.

Yaakov sends his sons to Egypt to buy food. The brothers come before Yosef and bow to him. Yosef recognizes them but they do not recognize him. Mindful of his dreams, Yosef plays the part of an

Egyptian overlord and acts harshly, accusing them of being spies. Yosef sells them food, but keeps Shimon hostage until they bring their brother Binyamin to him as proof of their honesty. Yosef commands his servants to replace the purchase-money in their sacks. On the return journey they discover the money, and their hearts sink. They return to Yaakov and retell everything. Yaakov refuses to let Binyamin go to Egypt, but when the famine grows unbearable he accedes. Yehuda guarantees Binyamin's safety and the brothers go to Egypt. Yosef welcomes the brothers lavishly as honored guests. When he sees Binyamin, he rushes from the room and weeps. Yosef instructs his servants to replace the money in the sacks and to put his goblet inside Binyamin's sack. When the goblet is discovered, Yosef demands Binyamin to be his slave as punishment. Yehuda interposes and offers himself instead, but Yosef refuses.

TALMUD TIPS

by Rabbi Moshe Newman

Pesachim 30-36

“Double Jeopardy” Matzah

The mishna states, “A person fulfills the mitzvah of eating matzah (on the first night of Pesach – Rashi) with matzah made from wheat, barley... and Kohanim fulfill their mitzvah with matzah made from their terumah... but one does not fulfill the mitzvah with tevel (grain from which terumah and ma’aser had not yet been separated and is therefore still forbidden to eat).”

Why does a person not fulfill the mitzvah with a matzah made from grain that is still *tevel*? When learning Rashi in our *sugya* it seems that he offers two completely different reasons. In the *mishna* he explains in one manner, but in the *gemara* he says something different.

What exactly are these two reasons, and why does he write one reason in one place and a different reason in the other place? Both are explanations for the same halacha of why a person does not fulfill the mitzvah of eating matzah if the matzah is made from grain that is *tevel*.

When the *mishna* states that *Kohanim* fulfill the mitzvah with grain that is *terumah*, Rashi explains that this excludes a *Yisrael* from fulfilling the mitzvah with a *terumah matzah*. Why? The Torah states, “You will not eat *chametz* with it (the *Korban Pesach*), for seven days you will eat matzah with it, the bread of affliction – for in haste you went out from the land of Egypt, [and you will do this] in order that you will remember the day when you went out from the land of Egypt all the days of your life.” (*Devarim* 16:3) Rashi quotes the Chazal’s teaching (35b), who note that the beginning of this verse juxtaposes the mitzvah to eat matzah with the prohibition against eating *chametz*. From this we learn, “If the grain is forbidden to eat when it is leaven, *only* due to the prohibition of eating *chametz* on Pesach, it is fit for fulfilling the mitzvah of matzah; which excludes [from the mitzvah of eating matzah] that which is forbidden due to a different prohibition.” Rashi writes this to explain why a *Yisrael* would not fulfill the mitzvah with a *terumah matzah*, and this also serves as the reason why anyone would not fulfill the mitzvah to eat matzah if the matzah is made from *tevel*. This is the reason that Rashi gives in his commentary on the *mishna* (on 35a) for disqualifying matzah made from *tevel*.

In the *gemara*, however (35b), the case of *tevel matzah* being unfit is explained as being an issue of “*tevel d’Rabbanan*,” and is teaching about grain that was not grown directly in the ground, but rather in a pot with perforations. This grain is not considered to be *tevel* according to Torah law, but was decreed to be considered *tevel* by Rabbinic law. Why is it not suitable for the mitzvah of eating matzah? Rashi here explains that eating this matzah would not fulfill the mitzvah since it would be considered a “*mitzvah ha’aba b’aveira*” – literally, a mitzvah that comes with a transgression (i.e. eating grain that is deemed *tevel* according by Rabbinical decree).

A *mitzvah ha'ba b'aveira* is not a mitzvah, as elaborated upon elsewhere in *Shas* (perhaps most notably at the beginning on the third *perek* of *Masechet Succah*).

The commentaries address the need for the two different reasons that Rashi gives for a matzah of *tevel* not being suitable for fulfilling the mitzvah of eating matzah on Pesach. In the *mishna*, the grain of *tevel* is the “normal” case of grain that was grown in the ground. Therefore, it has the *tevel* status of being forbidden to eat according to *Torah law*. And since this prohibition of *tevel* existed even before the grain became chametz, the grain does not acquire an additional prohibition – i.e. that of “not eating chametz on Pesach.” This principle is known as “*ein issur chal al issur*” – a second prohibition cannot be attributed to something that is already prohibited. An example of this rule is Rabbi Simon bar Yochai’s teaching (36a) that “a person who eats neveilah (meat from an animal without kosher shechita) on Yom Kippur is exempt” (from bringing a *chataat* sin offering for eating *b’shogeg* on Yom Kippur – Rashi). Since the neveilah meat was already forbidden by the Torah before Yom Kippur, an additional prohibition is not accrued when eating it on Yom Kippur.

This is why Rashi explains in the *mishna* that the reason for the *tevel* matzah not being suitable is based on the special teaching of Chazal, which they derive from the verse juxtaposing the mitzvah of matzah with the prohibition of chametz (Devarim 16:3). Without the possibility of the matzah bearing a prohibition of chametz, since it is *tevel* and already forbidden by Torah law, it cannot serve as matzah for the mitzvah.

On the other hand, in the *gemara*’s case, where the *tevel* is not a *Torah prohibition* since it grew in a perforated vessel instead of in a field, the Torah prohibition of it being chametz is a real possibility. Therefore, Rashi’s reason in the *mishna* does not apply to this *tevel d’Rabbanan*. So why is it not suitable for the mitzvah of matzah? Because, still being forbidden as *tevel* according to Rabbinic law, eating this *tevel* matzah would be a *mitzvah ha'ba b'aveira* – and not a mitzvah.

In summary, if the grain is already prohibited by Torah law, it cannot be prohibited as chametz as well, and is therefore not fit for the mitzvah of eating matzah. But, if the grain is prohibited “only” by Rabbinic law and not by Torah law, it is still a candidate to be considered banned as chametz according to Torah law, and therefore fit for the mitzvah of eating it as matzah on Pesach if not for the issue of *mitzvah ha'ba b'aveira*. (Maharsha)

• *Pesachim 35a*

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Q & A

MIKEITZ

Questions

1. What did the fat cows being eaten symbolize?
2. How did Pharaoh's recollection of his dream differ from Nevuchadnetzar's recollection of his dream?
3. What was significant about the fact that Pharaoh dreamed repeatedly?
4. What does "Tsafnat Panayach" mean?
5. What happened to the Egyptians' grain that was stored in anticipation of the famine?
6. What did Yosef require the Egyptians to do before he would sell them grain?
7. Did Yaakov and his family still have food when he sent his sons to Egypt? If yes, why did he send them?
8. What prophetic significance lay in Yaakov's choice of the word "redu" – "descend" (and not "lechu" – "go")?
9. Why does the verse say "Yosef's brothers" went down to Egypt (and not "Yaakov's sons")?
10. When did Yosef know that his dreams were being fulfilled?
11. Under what pretext did Yosef accuse his brothers of being spies?
12. Why did the brothers enter the city through different gates?
13. Who was the interpreter between Yosef and his brothers?
14. Why did Yosef specifically choose Shimon to put in prison?
15. How does the verse indicate that Shimon was released from prison after his brothers left?
16. What was Yaakov implying when he said to his sons: "I am the one whom you bereaved"?
17. How did Reuven try to persuade Yaakov to send Binyamin to Egypt?
18. How long did it take for Yaakov and family to eat all the food that the brothers brought back from Egypt? Give the answer in terms of travel time.
19. How much more money did the brothers bring on their second journey than they brought on the first journey? Why?
20. How did the brothers defend themselves against the accusation of theft?

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary, unless otherwise stated.

Answers

1. 41:4 - That all the joy of the plentiful years would be forgotten. (Not that the good years would provide food for the bad years.)
2. 41:8 - Pharaoh remembered the contents of his dream but didn't know its meaning. Nevuchadnetzar forgot even the contents of his dream.
3. 41:32 - It showed that the seven good years would start immediately.
4. 41:45 - He who explains things that are hidden and obscure.
5. 41:55 - It rotted.
6. 41:55 - Become circumcised.
7. 42:1 - Yes, but he sent them because he did not want to cause envy in the eyes of those who did not have food.
8. 42:2 - It hinted to the 210 years that the Jewish people would be in Egypt: The word "redu" has the numerical value of 210.
9. 42:3 - Because they regretted selling Yosef and planned to act as brothers by trying to find him and ransom him at any cost.
10. 42:9 - When his brothers bowed to him.

11. 42:12 - They entered the city through 10 gates rather than through one gate.
12. 42:13 - To search for Yosef throughout the city.
13. 42:23 - His son Menashe.
14. 42:24 - Because he was the one who cast Yosef into the pit and the one who said, "Here comes the dreamer." Alternatively, to separate him from Levi, as together they posed a danger to him.
15. 42:24 - The verse says Shimon was bound "in front of their eyes," implying that he was bound only while in their sight.
16. 42:36 - That he suspected them of having slain or sold Shimon, and that they may have done the same to Yosef.
17. 42:37 - He said, "Kill my two sons if I fail to bring back Binyamin."
18. 43:2,10 - Twice the travel time to and from Egypt.
19. 43:12 - Three times as much, in order to repay the money they found in their sacks and to buy more even if the price had doubled.
20. 44:8 - They said, "We returned the money we found in our sacks; can it be that we would steal?"

WHAT'S IN A WORD?

Synonyms in the Hebrew Language

by Rabbi Reuven Chaim Klein

Miketz: To Be a Wise Guy (Part 2 of 2)

While the previous essay (Part 1) focused on highlighting the difference between *chochmah* and *tevunah/binah*, this week's essay adds the concept of *daat* into the fray and looks at all three terms comparatively. If we were to rank the three Hebrew words for "knowledge," *chochmah* would be placed at the bottom as the most basic form of wisdom. Everyone agrees that *binah* and *daat* denote greater forms of "knowledge" than *chochmah* does (see *Shemot Rabbah* 41:3 and *Rashi* to *Shabbat* 31a), but the exact relationship between *binah* and *daat* is subject to dispute.

The Mishna (*Avot* 3:17) teaches that *daat* depends on *binah*, and, conversely, *binah* depends on *daat*. For the purposes of understanding that Mishna, *Rashi* and Rabbi Ovadia Bartenura (1445-1515) explain that while *binah* refers to the ability to derive a new idea from a previous lesson, *daat* refers to the ability to understand the reasoning behind a given lesson (see also *Rashbatz*). Accordingly, the Mishna means that if one cannot figure out the rationale behind the first lesson, then one cannot extrapolate from that lesson anything further. And, likewise, if one lacks the ability to extrapolate new ideas from a given lesson, then certainly one cannot deduce the rationale for that lesson. At face value, then, it seems that *binah* and *daat* go hand in hand. That said, some sources assert that *daat* is higher than *binah* (see *Maharsha* to *Ketuvot* 5a), while the *Maharal* (in *Chiddushei Aggadot* to *Kiddushin* 30a, *Avodah Zarah* 19b and in *Tiferet Yisrael* ch. 56) teaches that *binah* is higher than *daat*.

The Torah reports that when Betzalel was charged with constructing the Tabernacle, G-d bestowed upon him *chochmah*, *tevunah*, and *daat* (Ex. 31:3). In that context, *Rashi* explains that *chochmah* refers

to wisdom which one hears (i.e. learns) from others, *tevunah* refers to the ability to understand something new based on information he has already acquired, and *daat* refers to receiving knowledge through Holy Inspiration (*Ruach Hakodesh*, i.e. a lower form of prophecy). *Rashi*'s source for the difference between *chochmah* and *tevunah* is a conversation between Rabbi Yosi and Arius (see *Sifrei* to *Deut.* 1:13), and he cites the same explanation elsewhere in his commentaries (see *Rashi* to *Deut.* 1:13 and *Prov.* 1:5, and *Radak* to *I Kings* 3:12).

The Talmud (*Chagigah* 12a) teaches that G-d created the world using ten different qualities, the first three of which are *chochmah*, *tevunah* and *daat*. *Rashi* (there) repeats his approach to the difference between *chochmah* and *tevunah*, but explains *daat* in this context as "reconciliation." Why in this case does *Rashi* define *daat* differently than in the case of Betzalel?

Rabbi Shmuel Yaakov Burnstein (1946-2017) resolves this issue by explaining that, when taken together, both passages teach one lesson. He explains that the term *daat* denotes a form of "connection", thus "knowing" in the Biblical sense is a euphemism for conjugal intimacy (Gen. 4:1) or familial connection (Ruth 2:1). Accordingly, *daat* consists of connecting all the pieces together and coming out with a final resolution in which everything jibes. In this way, *daat* refers to "reconciliation," while at the same time it also denotes knowledge, which one had attained through Divine Inspiration, because that is also a form of connection. Divine Inspiration essentially stems from a person "connecting" himself to G-d, and thereby becoming privy to details that are not visible to the naked eye. Through Divine

Inspiration one can see the bigger picture and have access to all the pieces that need to be reconciled. (See *Nefesh HaChaim* 1:6, who explains that the word *daat* in the term *Eitz HaDaat Tov V'Ra*, “Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil,” refers to the forbidden fruit’s ability to bring about the interconnectivity of good and evil. The Vilna Gaon (to Prov. 2:5) similarly explains that *daat* refers to the dialectic reconciliation of contradictory ideas.)

If *daat* refers to the ability to connect two separate things, then it also presumes the mechanism by which separation can occur. Indeed, the ritual “separation” between the Sabbath and the work-week (*Havdalah*) is recited in the prayer for knowledge, as the Rabbis quipped (Jerusalem Talmud, *Berachot* 5:2): “If there is no *daat*, from where can there be *havdalah* (‘separation’)?”

Rabbi Chaim Friedlander (1923-1986) writes that the “connection” alluded to in *daat* represents the nexus of the intellectual and the emotional. He explains that it refers to “connecting” one’s intellectual knowledge with one’s emotions, thus totally internalizing that which he knows. Rabbi Avraham Bedersi HaPenini (a 13th century scholar) also writes that *daat* is associated with emotions and feelings.

Interestingly, Rabbeinu Yonah (to *Avot* 3:17) writes that *daat* refers to the ability to independently think of new ideas. Perhaps he understands that the “connections” denoted by the term *daat* refer to forging new connections between neurological synapses in the brain, which serve as the biological basis for acquiring new knowledge.

Kabbalists (see *Eitz Chaim*, *Shaar Ha’Amidah* ch. 11) have long noted that these three forms of knowledge (*chochmah*, *binah* and *daat*, often abbreviated as *ChBaD*), correspond to the first three *Sefirot* used to describe the ways we perceive G-d’s influence in the world: *chesed*, *gevurah* and *tiferet*. *Chesed* refers to G-d’s kindness in bestowing upon us an unlimited influx of energy, *gevurah* denotes our perception of Him sometimes limiting His influence in the world based on our actions, and *tiferet* refers to the happy medium achieved

when He creates a balance between *chesed* and *gevurah*.

By this model, *chochmah* refers to receiving knowledge from others, in accordance with what we have seen throughout this study. *Binah*, on the other hand, refers to intuiting knowledge based on what one already knows, with only limited input from outside. *Daat*, then, refers to the balancing act of harmonizing received knowledge with intuited knowledge. It represents the final product that results from taking raw *chochmah* and processing it through *binah*. As Rabbi Shaul Levi Mortera (1596-1660) so succinctly writes, *chochmah* is acquired, *binah* is natural, and *daat* is a synthesis of those two possibilities.

Interestingly, Dr. Michael G. Samet (a brother of Ohr Somayach’s *Mashgiach* Rav Yehuda Samet) told me that he once pointed out to Yale professor Robert J. Sternberg that his Triarchic Theory of Intelligence closely resembles the three types of intelligence we have been discussing, and the latter was quite taken aback by this finding.

In many cases, the Torah refers to all three levels of wisdom/knowledge in tandem (e.g., Ex. 31:3). However, in one particular instance, the absence of *daat* is quite conspicuous. When Moses warns the Jewish People to adhere to the Torah’s laws and precepts, he says: “And you shall guard them and you shall do them, for it is your wisdom (*chochmah*) and your insightfulness (*binah*) in the eyes of the nations, who will hear about all these statutes, and they will say, ‘This great nation is naught but a wise and insightful nation’” (Deut. 4:6). Why does Moses mention *chochmah* and *binah* in this passage, but not *daat*?

Rabbi Yaakov Chaim Sofer accounts for the absence of the word *daat* in this context by submitting that the non-Jews who are not privy to the contours of the Torah cannot achieve the level of wisdom/knowledge known as *daat*. They can reach only the levels of *chochmah* and *binah*, but they are not able to reach *daat*. However, his brother, Rabbi Eliyahu Tzion Sofer, infers that even *binah* cannot be found among the gentiles, as

the Midrash in *Eicha Rabbah* 2:48 teaches: "If somebody tells you there is *chochmah* among the gentiles, believe him," implying that if one said there either is *binah* or *daat* among them, he should not be believed.

Rabbi Y. C. Sofer explains that it is for this reason that when Joseph told Pharaoh to appoint a wise man to oversee storing excess produce for the future years of famine, he said: "And now Pharaoh should see an insightful (*navon*) and wise (*chacham*) man and appoint him over the Land of Egypt" (Gen. 41:33). Indeed, Pharaoh appointed Joseph

to precisely that position, saying to him, "There is none insightful (*navon*) and wise (*chacham*) like you" (Gen. 41:39). In both of these verses, only cognates of *chochmah* and *binah* appear, but *daat* is completely absent. Rabbi Sofer explains that this points to Pharaoh's inability to reach the level known as *daat*. Because *daat* was something beyond Pharaoh's grasp, Joseph left out that word, and, likewise, Pharaoh's detachment from *daat* hindered his ability to see that Joseph was not just a *chacham* and a *navon* but also a *yodea*.

For questions, comments, or to propose ideas for a future article, please contact the author at rcklein@ohr.edu

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by Rabbi Shlomo Simon

An Introduction to "The History of the Teshuva Movement" – a new podcast with Rav Nota Schiller, Rosh HaYeshiva

Ohr Somayach is proud to announce a new series on the Ohr Somayach Podcast Network: "The History of the Baal Teshuva Movement" as told by Rabbi Nota Schiller, founder and Rosh HaYeshiva of Ohr Somayach.

From the Brooklyn streets of Brownsville and East Flatbush in the 1940's, a 10-year-old public school boy immersed in stickball, basketball and with dreams of becoming a shortstop for his beloved Brooklyn Dodgers, enters a fledgling *yeshiva katana* eager for new students. While his generation is leaving Orthodoxy in droves, his loving *rebbeim* ignite a spark within him that grows in intensity as he progresses in his learning at Yeshivas Chaim Berlin under the tutelage of HaRav Yitzchok Hutner, and in Ner Yisroel Yeshiva under his *rebbe*, HaRav Yaakov Weinberg.

After his marriage, the young Rabbi Nota Schiller moves to Eretz Yisrael to continue his learning in Rav Mordechai Elefant's *Itri Yeshiva* in Jerusalem. After an encounter with two secular, very bright young brothers (one a student at Harvard the other at Columbia), who are in Israel for a year on a secular Zionist study

program, he and his *chavrusa*, Rabbi Noach Weinberg, make a decision that will change the history of the Jewish People. They will start a yeshiva for young Jewish men with limited or no background in traditional Jewish learning.

Despite a promising start and the strong encouragement of the *Posek Hador*, HaRav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv - they suffer a number of financial setbacks from a skeptical Orthodox Jewish society that has almost given up hope for a revival of *halachic* Jewry. This forces them to temporarily close. However, after a few years of indefatigable fundraising efforts they manage to convince a few visionary philanthropists to share their dream and initially fund their new enterprise.

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COUNTING OUR BLESSINGS

by Rabbi Reuven Lauffer

COMING BACK TO LIFE EVERY DAY – PART 3

“My G-d, the soul You placed within me is pure. You created it, You fashioned it, You breathed it into me, You safeguard it within me, and eventually You will take it from me, and restore it to me in Time to Come. As long as the soul is within me, I gratefully thank You, Hashem, my G-d and the G-d of my forefathers, Master of all works, L-rd of all souls. Blessed are You, Hashem, Who restores souls to dead bodies.”

If our existence is defined only by our physical surroundings, then the thought of passing away can be truly terrifying. But the continuation of the blessing adds a whole new dimension to our understanding, as well as an intriguing glimpse into one of the most esoteric dimensions of our existence: In the future, G-d will return our souls to our bodies. This is what is known as *Techiat HaMeitim* – the Resurrection of the Dead. There will be a moment when G-d, after having first returned the decomposed body back to its former state, will reintroduce the soul into a renewed and purified body. Although this concept is not one that is easily understood, it is, nevertheless, very uplifting. It teaches us that we need not fear passing from this world. However, this is true only if we remain aware of the fact that there is a new existence awaiting us after our time in this world.

The text of our current blessing informs us that there is an entirely new reality that awaits us once we have lived out our physical lives in this world. It is a spiritual existence that is fashioned from our actions here in the physical realms. Paradoxically, it is our physical and intellectual accomplishments that will serve as the “building blocks” in the spiritual spheres. And it is those achievements that we should be focusing on as we work our way through life in this physical world. As Rabbi Aryeh Leib HaKohen

Heller (1745-1812) writes in the introduction to his brilliantly any erudite work *Shev Shematata*, the World to Come can be achieved only through one thing – Torah. Rabbi Chaim Shmulevitz (1902-1979), the revered head of the illustrious Mir Yeshiva, would point out that a truly spiritual person recognizes that their real place is in the World to Come, and that is why our Sages describe such a person as being a “*Ben Olam Haba*” – “a person of the World to Come.” This phrase is an exact description of who they are.

Towards its end, the blessing teaches us yet another facet of Jewish belief. As the blessing so eloquently states, it is only the fact that our souls reside within us that gives us the wherewithal to be able to acknowledge and appreciate everything that G-d does for us.

And that is truly a cause for celebration! On each new day there is a “Divine deposit.” Our exquisite and flawless soul is returned to us in all its pristine glory. Being grateful and aware of this fact, we celebrate our ability to discern the myriad of spiritual opportunities that lay before us. These are opportunities that will allow us to turn the mundane into something absolutely brilliant, glowing with otherworldly luster, creating the most sublime reality of all – the World to Come.

*Ohr Somayach announces a new booklet on
The Morning Blessings
by Rabbi Reuven Lauffer
www.ohr.edu/morning-blessings*

LETTER AND SPIRIT

Insights based on the writings of Rav S.R. Hirsch by Rabbi Yosef Hershman

Power and Superstition

When the brothers are caught with Yosef's goblet, the messenger relays Yosef's message to them: *Why did you repay good with evil? This is the [goblet] from which my master drinks, and he has a presentiment about it...*" When they are brought back to Yosef, Yosef confronts them with a similar accusation: *What is this deed that you have done? Did you not know that a man like me believes in presentiments?*

Yosef here speaks not as the son of Yaakov, but as an Egyptian lord. It is the sort of behavior that would be expected of an Egyptian nobleman who has experienced a meteoric rise to power. The higher a person's rank, the more marvelous his fortune, the more superstitious he will become, explains Rav Hirsch, citing Napoleon's example.

The word used here for presentiment is *nacheish*. This same word is the subject of a prohibition in Vayikra 19:26: *Do not consult with omens*. Rav Hirsch comments on the linguistic aspect of the root *nachash* in terms of its relation to the root *nachatz*, citing several examples of word pairs where the smooth /sh/ sound denotes a smoothly performed activity, and where the counterpart word with a hard, forced /tz/ sound describes the same activity as it is performed in difficult circumstances. *Nachatz* means to press or urge against impediments, to strive toward a goal, overcoming all the obstacles along the way. *Nachash* means to strive towards a goal without having to overcome the natural intermediate links. Thus, the omen-manipulator seeks to either bring something about or come to know the future without recourse to the natural intermediate links of cause and effect. By seeing meaning in an unrelated

omen he disregards the lack of intermediate links between two remote things.

It is ludicrous to suggest that there exists a causal connection between, for example, a black cat, or a piece of bread that falls and the success or failure of a venture or the good or bad future of a person. Superstition is laughable madness that is counter to all sane thought. It also denies the world order and presents a harmful influence on man's free and moral activity. Man was given the two gifts of Torah and knowledge – goals are to be set by Torah, and intelligence teaches what is possible to do within nature. By resorting to omens, man denies G-d's providence and places human moral action under unfounded foreign influences. Once we believe we can promote our own good fortune by means other than doing what is right and good, and that we have other things to fear besides doing evil, we are in real danger of corrupting our actions.

A superbly successful individual is more prone to superstition because he himself is surprised at his own good fortune. An ordinary person credits himself and natural causes with his success. But when a person reaches the point where he cannot owe his good fortune to his own merit, he can easily come to ascribe to it supernatural causes. Indeed, one should see G-d's beneficence as the source of this success – just as Yosef, when he is not putting on the Egyptian-nobleman show for his brothers – does. ("It is not I! It is G-d..." in Bereishet 41:16.)

- Sources: Commentary Bereishet 44:5; Vayikra 19:26; Collected Writings VIII, p. 42

Ohr Somayach announces a new booklet
Harmony of a Nation – Overcoming Baseless Hatred
by Rabbi Chaviv Danesh https://ohr.edu/Sinat_Chinam.pdf

THE RARE CALENDAR PHENOMENA OF 5781

by Rabbi Yehuda Spitz

(Part 7 of a new mini-series)

5781 is a year that is chock-full of rare calendar phenomena that we will *iyH* be witnessing, or, more accurately, taking an active part in. Let us continue exploring what is in store for us.

Part 6 discussed several “Unknown Days” that annually occur in the month of Iyar, including minor holiday of *Pesach Sheini* and the “Days of *Tefilla*” of *BeHa”B*. But what happens when there is a convergence of *Pesach Sheini* and *BeHa”B*? You see, during this exceptional year, 5781, the third and final day of the Chodesh Iyar *BeHa”B* falls out on *Pesach Sheini*. So what does Klal Yisrael do? Which holiday do we observe? The joyous *Pesach Sheini* or the official fast of *BeHa”B*?

Pesach Sheini vs. *BeHa”B*

As with many topics in halacha or custom, there is no one-size-fits-all answer. There is a debate, seemingly based on *Megillas Taanis*, regarding the teaching (see *Chullin* 129b) that *Pesach Sheini* is a day when one may not eulogize (implying it is a full-fledged holiday), and hence it is certainly a day when one may not fast. Some authorities rule that this is the halacha nowadays. However, others counter that *Megillas Taanis* is no longer considered authoritative or binding (see *Rosh Hashana* 18b), and since *Pesach Sheini* is essentially a make-up holiday for those who were unable to offer the *Korban Pesach* on *Erev Pesach*, it cannot be considered more stringent than *Erev Pesach* itself. And *Erev Pesach* is known for its *Taanis Bechorim*, the Fast of the Firstborn. Therefore, perhaps fasting is not only permitted on *Pesach Sheini*, but is actually mandated when it coincides with *BeHa”B*. So, what do we do?

Although several *Poskim* maintain to fast only until *Chatzot* on that day as a sort of compromise solution, or even not to fast at all and rather push *BeHa”B* observance off until the next day (Tuesday) or several days later to that Thursday, it is feasible that this is only regarding actual fasting – which a significant portion of the public does not currently do anyway. The *Chazon Ish*, who generally holds of no special matters for *Pesach Sheini*, held that one may fast as usual. In fact, in *Orchos Rabbeinu* it cites that this is what he and his brother-in-law, the *Steipler Gaon* did – i.e. reciting *Selichot* and *Tachanun* as usual.

Indeed, there is little mention of this issue in any early source, as it seems that there truly is no real discrepancy. As pointed out by Rav Sroya Debilitzky, *zt”l*, Sefardim generally did not recite *Tachanun* on *Pesach Sheini*, whereas Ashkenazim did, until the ‘not saying’ *minhag* crept out and spread to Ashkenazic circles via *Minhag Eretz Yisrael*. On the other hand, only Ashkenazim classically observed *BeHa”B* fasting and prayers. Hence, in the classic sense, “ne’er the twain” actually met! – and whenever a convergence occurred, Sefardim would observe the ‘no *Tachanun*’ of *Pesach Sheini*, whereas Ashkenazim would keep the *Selichot* of *BeHa”B*.

Yet, now that most of the world does not say *Tachanun* on *Pesach Sheini*, the *minhag* of many is to just do a somewhat abbreviated version of *BeHa”B* *Selichot*, such as other times when *Selichot* and ‘no *Tachanun*’ coincide, for example when a *Bris Milah* occurs on a fast day (as per *Orach Chaim* 131:5). This halachic ruling, to recite *Selichot* (and fast when applicable) when *Pesach Sheini* and *BeHa”B* coincide, was taught by many *Poskim*, including Rav Yaakov Emden, the *Chasam Sofer*, the *Maharam Ash*, the *Maharsham*, and the *Eishel Avraham* (Butchatch) as the proper *minhag*.

Practically speaking, since most shuls in the world (unfortunately) do not “do BeHa”B” nowadays, this debate is essentially a moot point, and *Pesach Sheini* would trump. As Rav Yisroel Reisman wryly remarked in his introduction to the book “*Tachanun*,” non-Jews cannot possibly comprehend the *simcha* and elation (and perhaps sigh of relief) felt when a congregation skips *Tachanun*.

Indeed, there is strong basis for this in our case, as Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach and Rav Yisrael Yaakov Fischer both ruled to skip a whole day of *BeHa”B* for *Pesach Sheini*, following the main Yerushalmi *minhag* per the Tukachinsky *Luach* and the *Aderes* — as apparently this is indeed ‘Old *Minhag Eretz Yisrael*,’ that *Pesach Sheini* entirely trumps and displaces the third and last *BeHa”B* in this instance.

This first seems to be cited in Rav Shalom Schwadron’s *Hagahos* on his grandfather’s *Shu”t Maharsham* (vol. 6:32), who maintains that one should fast when *Pesach Sheini* and *BeHa”B* coincide, arguing on Rav Yosef Shaul Nathanson’s *Yad Shaul V’Yosef Daas*, who held not to fast, with Rav Schwadron adding that *Minhag Yerushalayim*, as cited in the ledger of Rav Shmuel Salant’s *Beis Din* in the Churva Shul in 5663/1903 (a year when *Pesach Sheini* and *BeHa”B* coincided), is specifically not to fast or recite *Selichot* on that day.

Yet, there are those who nowadays argue that the source Rav Schwadron was quoting was recently printed, and it stated that *Pesach Sheini* trumps only that specific day, but *BeHa”B* observance should nonetheless still be kept by pushing it off to that upcoming Thursday, creating a rare *BeHa”H* (Monday, Thursday, Thursday).

There is a recent *sefer* titled *Pischa Zeira* which discusses various subtopics related to *Pesach Sheini*. It devotes an entire chapter to this topic and debate. He posits a possible differentiation.

Regarding a *Bris* on a *Taanis*, it is still a day meant for fasting, and hence *Selichot* are still recited, and just not *Tachanun*. However many hold that *Pesach Sheini*, as it is a minor holiday and mentioned in the Torah, cannot be overruled as a day intended for fasting.

So, we see there is no clear-cut contemporary consensus to the observance of this rare convergence, and each *Kehillah* should — and I’m certain will — follow its own *minhag*. But it is quite fascinating that this “coincidence” will occur in our exceptional year.

To be continued...

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