

**Potomac Torah Study Center**

Vol. 11 #10, December 15-16, 2023; 3-4 Tevet 5784; Miketz  
Note: Fast of Asarah B'Tevet is next Friday, December 22

**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 more than 50 years ago and was our family Rebbe and close friend until his untimely death.**

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**Devrei Torah are now Available for Download (normally by noon on Fridays) from [www.PotomacTorah.org](http://www.PotomacTorah.org). Thanks to Bill Landau for hosting the Devrei Torah archives.**

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**Hersh ben Perel Chana, cousin of very close friends of ours, has been confirmed as one of approximately 240 initial hostages to Hamas in Gaza. The Wall St. Journal featured Hersh and his family in a front page article on October 16. Chabad, OU, and many synagogues recommend psalms (Tehillim) to recite daily for the safety of our people. May our people in Israel wipe out the evil of Hamas, protect us from violence by anti-Semites around the world, and restore peace for our people quickly and successfully – with the help of Hashem.**

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**Aviv Atzili, his wife, two children, and nephew were among the initial hostages from Kibbutz Nir Oz, abducted on October 7. Earlier this month, Liat (originally feared dead) and the three children have been released, but Aviv ben Telma is still a hostage. We continue to pray for Aviv's speedy release and give thanks for the release of the rest of his family.**

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**What happens when Jews have no other country to welcome them in case of attacks from an Anti-Semitic country? Study the story of Greek Jews under Nazi attack during World War II. Dr. Michael Matsas has spent much of his adult lifetime documenting this story. For the horrifying story, go to <https://illusionofsafetygreece.com/> and read his absorbing story. For a more complete presentation, read *The Illusion of Safety: The Story of the Greek Jews During the Second World War*, available from [amazon.com](http://amazon.com). Greece during World War II is one example of why we Jews and the world need a safe Israel.**

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One theme that appears throughout the story of Yosef in Egypt is anti-Semitism under Paro. Although Paro recognized that Yosef was the most brilliant and capable person in Egypt, the Egyptians would not mix socially with Yosef and his family. To protect the family, Yosef arranged for his family to live in Goshen, a territory well suited to grazing cattle and separate from the areas where Egyptians lived. Even while Yosef was the most powerful leader in Egypt other than Paro, the Egyptians would not permit Yosef (let alone any other Jew) to eat at the same table with them. (Egyptians were vegetarians, and Jews ate cows and sheep – both Egyptian gods – so the Jewish diet disgusted the Egyptians.) Yosef could not even leave Egypt to attend his father's funeral without asking permission from Paro – and he had to go through

members of Paro's household before he could even gain permission to speak to Paro and ask for permission to bury his father. In Sefer Shemot, we shall see that Egyptian anti-Semitism becomes even stronger.

Anti-Semitism has exploded again in recent years, and especially since the Hamas massacre on October 7. Miketz seems an appropriate time to consider the explosion of anti-Semitism recently. Rabbi Avi Weiss discusses the duplicity of university presidents who would not permit discussions attacking other minority groups but permit calls for violence against Jews and Israel as long as those advocating such violence do not engage in direct physical attacks. Rabbi Weiss recommends that the proper way for Jews to deal with this anti-Semitism is to become better Jews – wear kippot, wear Jewish t-shirts and other clothing, and openly practice our religion. Author Bari Weiss discusses twenty years of woke policies at universities, cultural institutions, and professional schools – all creating an atmosphere of activist leftist hate that seeks to prevent any discussion of opposing views. Nathan Lewin, probably the leading constitutional law scholar and attorney of our generation, reviews Supreme Court decisions over the past couple of decades. Lewin demonstrates that not one Supreme Court justice agrees with the assumption of the presidents of the University of Pennsylvania, MIT, and Harvard universities (in their statements to Congress) that the First Amendment protects hate speech in public forums unless the speech leads directly to hate violence.

As Bari Weiss and many others have observed, university professors and school teachers have greatly reduced the percentage of conservative and open minded professors and teachers in universities and schools over the past few decades. Those who wish to speak in favor of Israel or conservative political views often cannot find public forums, especially at universities, to express their views. A recent poll of college age individuals who self identify as pro-Hamas and anti-Israel in the current conflict demonstrates that many of the pro-Hamas students cannot even identify the river or sea in the expression, "From the River to the sea." Many of them cannot correctly identify leading Arab or Israeli leaders (such as whether Arafat was pro-Palestinian or Israeli). This sort of evidence suggests that more factual knowledge and less shouting could lead to better informed positions on the conflict between Hamas and Israel.

During Hanukkah, we thank Hashem for protecting us during dangerous times, even when He operates behind the scenes. During the time of the Maccabees, prophecy had ended. Jews of that time wondered whether God would continue to protect the Jews even when we had no prophet and no direct contact with God. The Maccabeus brothers trusted in Hashem and did their part to work with God to stop the Greeks, Seleucid-Syrians, and Hellenized Jews, remove pagan influences from the Temple, and re-establish proper sacrifices. The victory of the Orthodox Jews over the Hellenized Jews and strong foreign countries was a miracle that Jews have always considered a sign of God working behind the scenes to save our people.

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. The history of anti-Semitism provides numerous lessons for today, as we can see from the explosion of hate in our world, especially in the past two months.

Shabbat Shalom,

Hannah and Alan

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**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](http://www.alephbeta.org). Please join me in supporting this wonderful organization, which has increased its scholarly work during and since the pandemic, despite many of its supporters having to cut back on their donations.**

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**Please daven for a Refuah Shlema for Hersh ben Perel Chana (Hersh Polin, hostage to terrorists in Gaza); Eliezer Tzvi ben Etta (Givati infantry brigade, lead IDF force in Gaza); Aviv ben Telma (hostage in Gaza); Hershel Tzvi ben Chana, Reuven ben Basha Chaya Zlata Lana, Yoram Ben Shoshana, Leib**

**Dovid ben Etel, Asher Shlomo ben Ettie, Avraham ben Gavriela, Mordechai ben Chaya, Uzi Yehuda ben Mirda Behla, David Moshe ben Raizel; Zvi ben Sara Chaya, Eliav Yerachmiel ben Sara Dina, Reuven ben Masha, Meir ben Sara, Oscar ben Simcha; Rena bat Ilsa, Leah bas Gussie Tovah, Riva Golda bat Leah, Sarah Feige bat Chaya, Sharon bat Sarah, Noa Shachar bat Avigael, Kayla bat Ester, and Malka bat Simcha, and all our fellow Jews in danger in and near Israel.** Please contact me for any additions or subtractions. Thank you.

Shabbat Shalom

Hannah & Alan

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### **Miketz: A Tale of Two Pharoahs**

By Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky © 2002

Did you ever hear of a split personality? Well if there ever was one, Pharaoh, or at least the ruling culture of the land of Mitzrayim, which we commonly refer to as ancient Egypt, surely epitomizes a Jekyl Hyde persona: alternating between a gracious host (who is willing to cede all his power to the whimsical machinations of a felon) and a cold-hearted despot (who years later ignores the rational arguments of two dynamic leaders).

Think about it. In this week's portion Pharaoh dreams twice. The dreams vary in their characters although their theme is constant; lean animal, emaciated stalks that devour succulent and luscious ones.

Perturbed, Pharaoh summons his advisors but their interpretations of the returning nightmare are at best weak.

Suddenly a wine butler who, two years prior, was sitting days from death in jail comes up with a cockamamie notion about a Hebrew slave lad, who was incarcerated for an attempted attack on the wife of a distinguished noble. The slave had interpreted dreams while in the belly of the beast and his interpretations proved accurate.

Pharaoh must have been desperate. After all, why in the world would he listen to the advise of a former prisoner to free a current one?

What happens after Yoseph's response is even more astounding. Pharaoh, in a lightning-like decision, transforms the young slave-prisoner-Hebrew into second in command, noting that Yoseph "*shall be in charge of my palace and by your command shall all my people be sustained; only by the throne shall I outrank you.*" (Genesis 41:40)

Years later Pharaoh drives Moshe and Ahron, scions of nobility, brilliant scholars, and leaders of a legitimate nation, out of his palace, refusing to have a rational discussion with them! Whether it was the Pharaoh of Yoseph's times or literally a new Pharaoh, how could the culture breed a king who was ready to give away the palace to a former slave but not yield infinitesimally to two noble princes!

This one came years back via e-mail.

**Two (I deleted out the ethnicity) women were sitting together in the park.**

**The first lady asks, "So nu, how are the children?"**

**The second one responds, "My daughter is terrific. She is married to the most wonderful man. She never has to cook, he always takes her out. She never has to clean, he got her a housekeeper. She never has to work, he's got such a good job. She never has to worry about the children, he got her a nanny."**

**The first woman continues to ask, “And how is your son these days?” Now the second one grimaces. “Just awful. He is married to such a witch of a woman. She makes him take her out to dinner every night, and she never cooks a dish. She made him get her a housekeeper, Heaven forbid she should vacuum a carpet! He has to work like a dog because she won’t get a job and she never takes care of their children, because she made him get her a nanny!”**

Rav Dovid Povarski, Rosh Yeshiva of Ponevez of blessed memory, explains that Pharaoh is no different from many of us. When you are promised salvation or a chance to beat impending doom and be the one who will emerge on top of the market, your selfishness cedes to the one who will make life more comfortable for you. You will praise him and exalt him. However, when good fortune and comfort comes with a price tag and you are told that you have to give up something or work harder in order to maintain your lifestyle or desires, then the advice is derided and scorned.

Pharaoh was excited to have someone else plan the salvation of his kingdom and increase his wealth. He thus honored Yoseph royally. However, when Moshe and Ahron advised him how to save his throne, by freeing the Jews and perhaps having his own nation work harder, then he derided the Jewish leaders and drove them from his palace.

When the advice brings easy honor, fame, and fortune we all praise he who bears it. When hard work and sacrifice is the price to pay, we cannot bear to hear it.

Good Shabbos,

<https://torah.org/torah-portion/drasha-5762-miketz/>

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### **Trivial Torah? “Abrek”-ing Development**

by Rabbi Haggai Resnikoff \*

*He had him ride in the chariot of his second-in-command, and they cried before him, “Abrek!”...  
(Bereshit 41:43)*

What do you do with a word from the Torah that nobody precisely understands? Torah is the word of God, so it stands to reason that we should make every effort. An early midrash (Sifrei Devarim 48) says:

*“It is not empty for you” (Devarim 32:47), that part, that you say is empty, it is your life!” This is echoed in the talmudic rendition (Talmud Yerushalmi Peah 1:1, p. 15b): “It is not empty for you,’ and if it is empty, that’s from you because you didn’t labor to understand the Torah. ‘For it is your life,’ when is the Torah your life? When you labor in it.” No part of the Torah is insignificant, and if it seems insignificant, that’s only because you haven’t spent enough time unraveling it.”*

But what about a mysterious word that evades our every effort to discover its definition? The word, “Abrek!” that is shouted before Joseph’s chariot appears nowhere else in the Torah and has confounded scholars going back to the Talmudic era. What’s more, sharp words are exchanged regarding how we should determine the meaning. The Midrash (Sifrei Devarim 1) says:

*R. Yehudah expounded “and they called before him ”Abrek.”: This is Joseph, who was a father (“av”) in wisdom and young (“rach”) in years — whereupon R. Yossi b. Dormaskith said to him: Yehudah... why do you distort the verses for us? I testify by heaven and earth that “avrech” signifies (bending of) the knees (“birkayim”) for everyone came and went by his command as it says, “and he set him over all the land of Egypt.”*

R. Yehuda's approach looks like typical midrashic word-play. What reason could R. Yosi b. Dormaskith have for accusing him of distorting the verse? I suggest that since the precise meaning of Abrek is not sufficiently clear, R. Yosi b. Dormaskith feels threatened by the immediate jump to word play. Before you start with midrash, he might argue, you need to have a solid basis in the simple meaning of the word.

Yet R. Yosi b. Dormaskith's more "rigorous" definition, based, it appears, on context alone, is not standard in the sages either. Targum Onkelos, roughly contemporaneous with the Sifrei above, translates *Abrek* as: "*this is the father of the king.*" This may be based on context. Joseph, in his communication with Jacob (Bereshit 45:8), reports that God has made him אב the "*father of Pharaoh.*" There may also be an attempted etymology here from the combination of the Hebrew "אָב," 'father' and the Greek "rex," king. The Gemara (B"B 4a) also reflects this translation. Interestingly, the Palestinian Targumim give both "*father of the king*" and "*father in wisdom and few in years*" a combination of Targum Onkelos and R. Yehudah from the Sifrei.

Modern scholarship largely accepts that "*Abrek*" is based on the Akkadian abbarakku, the chief steward of a private or royal household (same in Assyrian). However, numerous Egyptian etymologies have been suggested as well: b-r-k, 'attention'; a-bor-k, 'prostrate yourself'; aprek, 'head bowed'; ap-rex-u, 'head of the wise'; ab(u)-rek, 'your command is our desire'; or even ab-rek, 'rejoice!' Neither Talmudic sages nor modern scholarship even consider the "obvious" connection to ברכם, 'knees' proposed by R. Yosi b. Dormaskith.

Where does this leave us? I offer two comments. First, the accusation of twisting or distorting texts may be tempting, especially when we believe that we have a more rigorous approach. It is important for even the most rigorous among us, to recall that even "obvious" solutions can sometimes be wrong, and remember to treat with generosity interpretations with which we disagree.

Second, let us recall that no part of the Torah is insignificant. The cryptic word "*Abrek*" seems to challenge that. Isn't it sufficient to know that people ran ahead of Joseph's chariot crying something? Is it so crucial that we know what they cried? Rav Sampson Rafael Hirsch offers (Bereshit 41:41-43):

*Before an egyptian majesty one did not proclaim ברכו "on your knees," but אברך, "I – i.e. The majesty who is appearing amongst the people – command that ye kneel." To a true king only spontaneous show of respect is an honour. To the dictator-king voluntary show of respect is too plebeian and not servile enough.*

Rav Hirsch points to a difference between true kingship, i.e. that of God, and the kingship of a "dictator-king." The true King gives people the freedom to choose respectful and reverent reactions to God's presence while the dictator king commands it. Not only does this teach us about God, it supplies a model for our own leadership.

Note, however, that Rav Hirsch has chosen to interpret "*Abrek!*" as related to knees, the interpretation to which neither the Talmud, Targumim, nor modern scholarship gave any credence! Considering, however, that the story of Joseph is full of riddles, dreams, and hidden meanings, I wonder if the truest interpretation is not the one that adds the most meaning to our lives. What would R. Yosi b. Dormaskith say about that?

\* Dean and Rebbe, Yeshivat Chovevei Torah, Bronx, New York.

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## Fighting antisemitism on our campuses

by Rav Avi Weiss \* for NY Daily News

Imagine if the presidents of Harvard, Penn, and MIT were asked in a congressional hearing, "Would you consider a call for genocide against Blacks or Asians or Latinos to run counter to your university's code of conduct? Would you consider a call for genocide against the LGBTQ community to run counter to your university's code of conduct?"

The answer, of course, would be an unequivocal yes. If these universities micromanage — police, even — the improper use of students' preferred pronouns, they will undoubtedly go to all ends, as they should, to forcefully confront calls for violence by such unabashed haters.

Then why, when asked the very same question about Jews during a congressional hearing last week, did they resort to the feeble refrain, 'It depends'? It was profoundly disappointing to see the presidents of these universities evade directly answering whether calls for genocide against Jews violate their university policies by arguing that it depends on whether it leads to violence, whether the threat is against a specific Jew, or on the context.

While Penn's president, Liz Magill, has now resigned, the problem remains. Don't these leaders realize that words make a difference? Words can lead to fatal deeds. Smart and ethical leaders stop hate at its inception rather than wait for it to harm, injure, and kill.

And of course, calling for genocide against any group is a call to kill every person in that group. All Jews are explicitly endangered.

When threats against Jews are not denounced as antisemitic, but threats against others are properly deemed as racist and bigoted — that's a double standard. Viewing Jews differently than others is antisemitism.

So why did these presidents dismally fail in their responses about Jews? it is critical to trace whether their respective schools are funded or seek to be funded by antisemitic, terror-supporting countries. Qatar, for example, has given at least \$4.7 billion dollars to American universities since 2001.

Another contributing factor relates to the various ideologies and academic frameworks that have permeated campuses in recent decades — intersectionality, "decolonization," two of the most odious canards.

Whatever the reasons may be, one thing is certain: Presidents of universities are supposed to serve as model leaders, chosen because of their achievements and leadership qualities. A hallmark of any true leader is the ability to stand up for what is right with conviction, and fortitude, especially when the choice is difficult. History has taught us, however, that the intelligentsia can be void of moral conscience and flaccid in standing up against the voices of those who support anti-human rights positions.

It's easy to accept money, especially massive sums of money, from wherever it comes. But it is the courageous thing, to know when to say no. Just as philanthropists develop an "ethics of giving," meaning cultivating a sense of when, where, and how much to give, so, too, should there be an "ethics of receiving." Universities would never accept money from violent thugs, from sexual offenders or murderers; and they should similarly reject contributions from sources that support terror — the murder of Americans and Israelis and innocent people all over the world.

When presidents do not set the correct example for their students, tragically, the forces of evil triumph. The prophet Isaiah states that young people are the ones who lead the way. And so, today, what is vitally necessary are Jewish students and non-Jewish students of moral conscience who are not afraid to speak truth to power — much like the brave Jewish students who spoke on the Hill last week. If students cower to fear and run from the challenge of standing up to antisemitism, they hand victory to the enemy.

Now is the time for all students on campus, not only Jews, to wear skullcaps, to wear Star of David necklaces, to light Chanukah candles and hang Israeli flags in the windows of their dorm rooms for all to see. Now is the time for them to send a powerful message to their university leaders, that racism, bigotry, and antisemitism are two sides of the same coin.

As these people of good will of all faith traditions oppose bigotry and antisemitism they will be educating all Americans — starting with university presidents who have shirked their responsibilities by shamefully condoning antisemitism — that what they are fighting for is, in fact, the ultimate message of American freedom and democracy.

\* Founding President of Yeshivat Chovevei Torah and founding Rabbi of the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale (the Bayit), both in Bronx, New York.

<https://yctorah.org/2023/12/fighting-antisemitism-on-our-campuses/> Original, published December 12, 2023, available at <https://www.nydailynews.com/2023/12/11/fighting-antisemitism-on-our-campuses/> On line access to the original requires a subscription to the Daily News.

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## **Explaining the First Amendment to university presidents**

by Nathan Lewin \*

(December 7, 2023 / JNS)

In the wake of the astounding testimony before Congress by the presidents of Harvard University, the University of Pennsylvania and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, three important questions must be asked:

### **1) Why are the presidents of leading American universities abysmally ignorant of Supreme Court rulings on the limits of protected speech under the First Amendment?**

The presidents claimed in their testimony that anti-Israel and antisemitic “protesters” on their campuses are only exercising their constitutionally protected right to free speech when they call for an “intifada” and chant Hamas’s battle cry “from the river to the sea, Palestine will be free” — both clear calls for violence against Israelis and Jews.

Harvard’s president Claudine Gay repeatedly declared that her university will act only “when speech crosses into conduct.” She might be surprised to learn that not a single Supreme Court justice agrees with her.

Indeed, it is unlikely that the three presidents have bothered to read the most recent definition of First Amendment speech guarantees as expressed by all nine Supreme Court Justices, albeit in various opinions. Not one of the justices believes that threats and incitement have blanket constitutional protection and cannot be punished unless they “cross into conduct.”

On June 27, the Supreme Court decided a case titled *Counterman v. Colorado*, which dealt with harassment on the social media site Facebook. The case generated much discussion precisely because it dealt with the issue of what limits can be placed on speech protections. All of the justices agreed that the Bill of Rights does not guarantee any right to send threats over social media. Nor did they hold that the First Amendment entitles a speaker to say anything so long as it does not “cross into conduct.” The justices differed only over how relevant the speaker’s intention might be to the question of criminal penalties.

A majority of the Court, speaking through Justice Elena Kagan, said that expressing a threat would be a crime if the speaker uttered it with “reckless disregard” for how it would be understood by a listener. Four justices differed only in part. All the justices agreed that freedom of speech does not protect a speaker who makes a threat with reckless disregard for the listener’s fear of violence.

The campus protesters in question are obviously guilty of “reckless disregard” for the fears of their Jewish fellow students. Under the most recent Supreme Court rulings, they can be charged with crimes and punished accordingly. That the presidents of Harvard, MIT and Penn are ignorant of this is shocking.

### **2) Why are major donors to these universities only terminating future grants rather than demanding that billions of dollars in past donations be refunded?**

Benefactors who have given huge donations to Harvard and other universities with enormous endowments have announced publicly that they will not continue to contribute to these institutions because they promote and fail to control antisemitism.

It is possible that this may influence the public declarations of university administrators who are unhappy that the flow of funds has been interrupted. But given the vast resources of these institutions and the contributions likely to come from antisemitic and anti-Israel sources, it will only have a modest impact.

A far more powerful response would be for major donors to file lawsuits seeking to recover the billions of dollars they have donated in the past. They could do so on the grounds that these donations were secured by false representations that claimed the universities were providing proper meaningful education to their students.

For example, Harvard's original charter of 1650 stated that its students will be taught "knowledge and godlynes." Contributors have now discovered that Harvard does not abide by this charter. Instead, it egregiously violates it by nurturing hate and violence against Jews. As such, donors are legally entitled to recover the funds they were convinced by Harvard's false representations to provide.

### **3) Why are no federal grand juries investigating the probable violations of American anti-terrorist laws committed by the organizers of and participants in pro-Hamas public protests?**

In 1996, Congress enacted the "Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act" (18 U.S.C. 2339B), which makes it a criminal offense to provide "material support to foreign terrorist organizations." Violating this law can be punished with a long prison sentence.

The Supreme Court, with Chief Justice John Roberts writing for a six-person majority, upheld the law in 2010 and rejected claims that its restriction of "material support" for terrorism violated First Amendment rights of free speech and free association (*Holder v. Humanitarian Law Project*, 561 U.S. 1 (2010)).

Advocating for a terrorist organization and supporting its activities, even if they constitute otherwise lawful protest, violates this provision of the Federal Criminal Code. Organized protests supporting Hamas accompanied by costly printed signs, customized uniforms and caps, and Palestinian flags, assuredly qualify as "material support" for Hamas.

Why has the Department of Justice under Attorney General Merrick Garland, a descendant of Holocaust survivors, failed to initiate a federal investigation into these probable violations of America's anti-terrorism laws? Why has no U.S. attorney impaneled a federal grand jury and subpoenaed witnesses?

These are just some of the questions that an American lawyer must ask in these turbulent times.

\* Nathan Lewin is a Washington, D.C., attorney with a Supreme Court practice who has taught at leading national law schools including Harvard, Columbia, Georgetown and the University of Chicago.

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<https://www.jns.org/explaining-the-first-amendment-to-university-presidents/>

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## End DEI

by Bari Weiss \* (November 9, 2023)

*[Editor's note: While not a Dvar Torah, this opinion piece fits in with material above relating to Miketz and anti-Semitism during the period when our ancestors lived in Egypt.]*

Twenty years ago, when I was a college student, I started writing about a then-nameless, niche ideology that seemed to contradict everything I had been taught since I was a child.

It is possible I would not have perceived the nature of this ideology — or rather I would have been able to avoid seeing its true nature — had I not been a Jew. But I was. I am. And in noticing the way I had been written out of the equation, I started to notice that it wasn't just me, but that the whole system rested on an illusion.

What I saw was a worldview that replaced basic ideas of good and evil with a new rubric: the powerless (good) and the powerful (bad). It replaced lots of things. Color blindness with race obsession. Ideas with identity. Debate with denunciation. Persuasion with public shaming. The rule of law with the fury of the mob.

People were to be given authority in this new order not in recognition of their gifts, hard work, accomplishments, or contributions to society, but in inverse proportion to the disadvantages their group had suffered, as defined by radical ideologues. According to them, as James Kirchick concisely put it: "Muslim > gay, black > female, and everybody > the Jews."

I was an undergraduate back then, but you didn't need a PhD to see where this could go. And so I watched, in horror, sounding alarms as loudly as I could.

I was told by most Jewish leaders that, yes, it wasn't great, but not to be so hysterical. Campuses were always hotbeds of radicalism, they said. This ideology, they promised, would surely dissipate as young people made their way in the world.

It did not.

Over the past two decades I saw this inverted worldview swallow all of the crucial sense-making institutions of American life. It started with the universities. Then it moved on to cultural institutions — including some I knew well, like The New York Times — as well as every major museum, philanthropy, and media company. Then on to our medical schools and our law schools. It's taken root at nearly every major corporation. It's inside our high schools and even our elementary schools. The takeover is so comprehensive that it's now almost hard to notice it — because it is everywhere.

Including in the Jewish community.

Some of the most important Jewish communal organizations transformed themselves in order to prop up this ideology. Or at the very least, they contorted themselves to signal that they could be good allies in the fight for equal rights — even as those rights are no longer presumed inalienable or equal and are handed out rather than protected.

For Jews there are obvious and glaring dangers in a worldview that measures fairness by equality of outcome rather than opportunity. If underrepresentation is the inevitable outcome of systemic bias, then overrepresentation — and Jews are two percent of the American population — suggests not talent or hard work, but unearned privilege. This conspiratorial conclusion is not that far removed from the hateful portrait of a small group of Jews divvying up the ill-gotten spoils of an exploited world.

It isn't only Jews who suffer from the suggestion that merit and excellence are dirty words. It is strivers of every race, ethnicity, and class. That is why Asian American success, for example, is suspicious. The percentages are off. The scores are too high. Who did you steal all that success from?

Of course, this new ideology doesn't come right out and say all that. It doesn't even like to be named. Some call it wokeness or anti-racism or progressivism or safetyism or Critical Social Justice or identity Marxism. But whatever term you use, what's clear is that it has gained power in a conceptual instrument called "diversity, equity, and inclusion," or DEI.

In theory, all three of these words represent noble causes. They are, in fact, all causes to which American Jews in particular have long been devoted, both individually and collectively. But in reality, these words are now metaphors for an ideological movement bent on recategorizing every American not as an individual, but as an avatar of an identity group, his or her behavior prejudged accordingly, setting all of us up in a kind of zero-sum game.

We have been seeing for several years now the damage this ideology has done: DEI, and its cadres of enforcers, undermine the central missions of the institutions that adopt it. But nothing has made the dangers of DEI clearer than what's happening these days on our college campuses — the places where our future leaders are nurtured.

It is there that professors are compelled to pledge fidelity to DEI in order to get hired, promoted, or tenured. (For more on this, please read John Sailer's Free Press piece: *How DEI Is Supplanting Truth as the Mission of American Universities*.) And it is there that the hideousness of this worldview has been on full display over the past few weeks: we see students and professors immersed not in facts, knowledge, and history, but in a dehumanizing ideology that has led them to celebrate or justify terrorism.

Jews, who understand that being made in the image of God bestows inviolate sanctity on every human life, must not stand by as that principle, so central to the promise of this country and its hard-won freedoms, is erased.

What we must do is reverse this.

The answer is not for the Jewish community to plead its cause before the intersectional coalition or beg for a higher ranking in the new ladder of victimhood. That is a losing strategy — not just for Jewish dignity, but for the values we hold as Jews and as Americans.

The Jewish commitment to justice — and the Jewish American community's powerful and historic opposition to racism — is a source of tremendous pride. That should never waver. Nor should our commitment to stand by our friends, especially when they need our support as we now need theirs.

But DEI is not about the words it uses as camouflage. DEI is about arrogating power.

And the movement that is gathering all this power does not like America or liberalism. It does not believe that America is a good country — at least no better than China or Iran. It calls itself progressive, but it does not believe in progress; it is explicitly anti-growth. It claims to promote "equity," but its answer to the challenge of teaching math or reading to disadvantaged children is to eliminate math and reading tests. It demonizes hard work, merit, family, and the dignity of the individual.

An ideology that pathologizes these fundamental human virtues is one that seeks to undermine what makes America exceptional.

It is time to end DEI for good. No more standing by as people are encouraged to segregate themselves. No more forced declarations that you will prioritize identity over excellence. No more compelled speech. No more going along with little lies for the sake of being polite.

The Jewish people have outlived every single regime and ideology that has sought our elimination. We will persist, one way or another. But DEI is undermining America, and that for which it stands—including the principles that have made it a place of unparalleled opportunity, safety, and freedom for so many. Fighting it is the least we owe this country.

\* Bari Weiss is the founder and Editor of The Free Press, thefp.com, an on line publication. She is also author of *How to Fight Anti-Semitism* (2019) and was formerly op-ed editor and writer for the Wall Street Journal and an editor and writer for the New York Times.

[https://www.thefp.com/p/end-dei-woke-capture?utm\\_campaign=post&utm\\_medium=web](https://www.thefp.com/p/end-dei-woke-capture?utm_campaign=post&utm_medium=web)

## Good Times, Difficult Times: Thoughts for Parash Mikkets

By Rabbi Marc D. Angel \*

Pharaoh's dreams foretold seven years of plenty followed by seven years of famine. While the story relates to a situation in ancient Egypt, it also alludes to a more universal phenomenon. Societies are subject to wide fluctuations. Sometimes things go very well, and sometimes things are terrible. Wisdom teaches — as Joseph taught — that the resources of times of plenty need to be drawn upon in times of famine. When life is challenging and difficult, we need to draw on the strengths and courage of our past successes to give us the wherewithal to cope and to succeed.

Currently, Israel is in the midst of a war with Hamas. All of us are deeply concerned with the situation there, with growing anti-Jewish manifestations throughout the diaspora, and with so many other troubling issues. But we maintain hope for a better future. Below are some thoughts as we face a turbulent world.

The philosopher, Soren Kierkegaard, once observed: *"There are two ways to be fooled. One is to believe what is not true. The other is to refuse to believe what is true."*

In the current war between Israel and Hamas, we have witnessed ugly bursts of anti-Jewish and anti-Israel hatred. Virulent pro-Hamas demonstrators believe what is not true and seek to foist their untrue views on others. They accuse Israel of "genocide," an egregious lie. Genocide is the deliberate killing of a large number of people from a particular national or ethnic group with the aim of destroying that group. Israel has no intention of wiping out all Palestinians and in fact does everything possible to avoid harming civilians. Israel is at war with Hamas (a war that Hamas started) and seeks to defeat its sworn enemies. The only talk of "genocide" in the Middle East emerges not from Israel but from Iran, Hamas and their supporters. They unabashedly call for the annihilation of Israel. They proudly proclaim their goal to establish Palestine *"from the river to the sea,"* i.e. to entirely wipe out Israel.

Much of the anti-Israel venom arises from people who believe what is not true. But it also emerges from those who refuse to believe what is true.

Israel is the homeland of the Jewish People since biblical times. After many centuries of exile, the Jewish People was successful in returning to its land and establishing a vibrant, modern country. It sought peace, it seeks peace, and will always strive for peace among all its neighbors.

The Muslim Ottoman Empire controlled the land of Israel from the 16th to early 20th century. During all those years, no one called for or created a Palestinian State with Jerusalem as its Capitol. From 1948 to 1967, Jordan controlled the West Bank and Egypt controlled Gaza. During that entire period few, if any, called for the establishment of a Palestinian State in those territories. Only after Israel took control of these areas in 1967 did a growing chorus of voices call for a Palestinian State *"from the river to the sea."* Those who march for Hamas refuse to believe what is true: that the Palestinians never had a State in the land of Israel, and that Israel has a historic, legal and moral right to its own land.

When hatred prevails, dialogue and mutual respect become increasingly unlikely. The result is continued hatred, continued violence, continued suffering. The conflict between Israel and the Palestinians need not be seen as a zero sum game, where only one party may win. It can be — and should be — framed as a win-win opportunity where both sides can gain peace and prosperity for their people. **The real enemy is hatred. Until that hatred can be uprooted, people will**

**continue to believe what is not true; and refuse to believe what is true. The result is more hatred, violence, and suffering. [emphasis added]**

In 1939, when Rabbi Benzion Uziel became Sephardic Chief Rabbi of Israel, he delivered his inaugural address in Hebrew and then added words in Arabic. He appealed to the Arab community:

*"We reach our hands out to you in peace, pure and trustworthy....Make peace with us and we will make peace with you. Together all of us will benefit from the blessing of God on His land; with quiet and peace, with love and fellowship, with goodwill and pure heart we will find the way of peace."*

Rabbi Uziel's offer and challenge remain our hope for the future of Israel, the Palestinians, and all the Middle East.

\* Founder and Director, Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals. Please share this Angel for Shabbat column with your family and friends, and please visit our website [jewishideas.org](http://jewishideas.org) for many articles that foster an intellectually vibrant, compassionate and inclusive Orthodox Judaism.

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### **Identity Crisis...and Resolution: Thoughts on Parashat Mikkets**

By Rabbi Marc D. Angel \*

Joseph had a serious identity crisis. He knew he was born and raised as a Hebrew. Yet, he lived as an Egyptian. He took an Egyptian name and an Egyptian wife. He was a high official in the Egyptian government and comported himself as a full-fledged Egyptian. He did his best to forget his Hebrew roots.

And then his brothers appeared before him, seeking food to sustain their families in Canaan. Joseph was conflicted. Should he remain an Egyptian, a stranger to his brothers? Or should he rejoin his family and return to his family traditions? His stalling tactics reflected inner uncertainty about his own future direction in life. He was not sure how to react to his brothers, so he devised ways of putting them off but still keeping them within range.

Joseph is a classic example of the “assimilated Jew” — a person who is alienated from Jewishness but knows that Jewishness is a deep part of one’s basic identity. Should he/she maintain the veneer of non-Jewishness; or should one reclaim the Jewishness at the root of one’s soul?

In his short story, “The Purloined Letter,” Edgar Allan Poe describes a search for a stolen letter. The police conducted painstaking investigations but were unable to find the missing document. A top detective was brought in and he found the letter right away! He realized that the thief could only have eluded the police by a clever stratagem — leaving the letter in an obvious place. In fact, the letter was always in plain sight on the thief’s desk. The detective informed the police: “*Perhaps it is the simplicity of the thing which puts you at fault.*”

It sometimes happens that we search for things, not realizing that they are in the most obvious place. On a philosophic level, many Jews search for meaning in life without realizing that the answer is in plain sight — in their own Jewish tradition.

One of the challenges of modernity is that we are presented with many choices and alternatives. We are free to choose among innumerable lifestyles. Yet, the more choices we have, the more confused we may become. Having many options does not necessarily provide us with more happiness.

Thoughtful observers of our society believe that many moderns suffer from a kind of spiritual homelessness. People have been cut free from their spiritual moorings. We have an increase in breakdowns of families, a loss of genuine love and intimacy, a feeling of rootlessness and meaninglessness.

The great 20th century German-Jewish philosopher, Franz Rosenzweig, had been so alienated from Judaism that he contemplated converting to Christianity. As a last farewell to his Judaism, he attended a synagogue on the eve of Yom Kippur, and experienced the prayers of the pious congregants. Somehow, he was swept into the spirit of prayer. He decided once and for all to remain Jewish, and to deepen his knowledge and observance of Judaism. In a letter written in 1920 to a former professor of his, Rosenzweig said that in 1913 he had felt lost and uprooted. But when he began digging into his own Jewish tradition, his life became infused with meaning and happiness. Judaism had become the center of his existence; its treasures were *"my most precious possessions, things inherited not borrowed! By owning them and ruling over them, I had gained something entirely new, namely the right to live — and even to have talents; for now it was I who had the talents, not they who had me."*

By finding his own deepest inner meaning in his Jewish heritage, Rosenzweig actually had rediscovered himself. He won the freedom to confront the world from the depth of his own being, rather than as an artificial person whose content was entirely borrowed from the cultures and civilizations of others.

It is liberating to feel at home with one's self and one's heritage. Our forefather Joseph realized this when he ultimately decided to reconnect with his brothers. Franz Rosenzweig realized it when he faced his profoundest spiritual crisis. All of us can experience this inner liberation in our own way, in our own time.

The treasures of Jewish wisdom and spirituality are readily available, within plain sight. They are precious possessions that we have inherited, not borrowed. They are keys that unlock our inner freedom and genuine identity.

\* Founder and Director, Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals.

<https://www.jewishideas.org/identity-crisisand-resolution-thoughts-parashat-mikkets>

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### **Miketz: Brotherly Unity**

By Rabbi Mordechai Rhine \*

Our father Yakov was tasked with an awesome mission. He was to create the Jewish family.

The family of Israel is remarkable. On the one hand it requires that there be room for individualism and creativity. On the other hand, it operates within a certain construct for it to remain one people. This was the task and the balance that Yakov, and by extension his sons, the Shevatim, were tasked with.

It took decades for Yosef to find his place among the brothers. Yosef's dreams indicating leadership, and his differences of opinion regarding certain Halachic rulings, caused a rift in the Jewish family. Yosef did not see himself as challenging the brotherhood. In fact, when he was sent on his fateful mission that would get him sold into slavery, he declares quite plainly, *"I seek my brothers."* (Bireishis 37:16) This statement is not just Yosef's statement in a physical way. It was

Yosef's attitude, insisting that he was not challenging the brotherhood as he strove to develop his unique identity and destiny.

The brothers, however, saw Yosef as having ideas and aspirations that were beyond the pale. They saw Yosef as trying to disenfranchise them from the Jewish family, much as Yishmoel and Esav dropped out. They saw his perceived destiny as a lord over them very differently than Yosef intended it. They saw him as threatening the Jewish family and they therefore acted against him accordingly. As the angel that met Yosef expressed it, *"They have travelled away,"* from brotherhood with you. )See Rashi 37:17(

In this week's Parsha, the brothers begin to recognize that they had acted harshly. When they realized the mess they were in with the viceroy and how it would affect Binyomin, they exclaimed, *"Indeed we are wrong regarding our brother. He pleaded with us, and we did not hear."* )42:21( They realize that somehow an accommodation or understanding could have been reached in which Yosef was not regarded as threatening the Jewish family through his unique qualities and destiny.

The Torah, in Parshas Re'eh, expresses the balance that would be needed to create and maintain the Jewish family. *"You are children of Hashem; do not form cliques,"* that distance you from one another. )Devarim 14:1( On the one hand we are like children. Each child is different. Even identical twins, joined both in nurture and nature, will have individuality. Indeed, the Jewish family would have Yissachar and Zevulun, the scholar and the businessman. The Jewish family would have Levi working in the Beis Hamikdash and Gad in charge of the defense ministry. All of them were engaged as children are, in the family business.

On the other hand, the Torah prohibits us from someone having such individualism that they begin forming a separatist band, a clique apart from the people. In fact, if the Sanhedrin ruled in a certain way and a Zakein Mamreh, a scholar of note, would intentionally challenge them by ruling against them in a practical way, he would be severely censured. )Devarim 17:12( Our mandate is one of great balance: to keep the family together as one even as we encourage and nurture individuality and creativity.

The brothers and Yosef struggled mightily to create the model by which the Jewish people would operate. Years later, the Talmud would become a remarkable expression of success in this regard. The scholars of the Talmud built palaces of logic and scholarship through disagreements. The scholars came from all walks of life. There was Rabbi Yochanan and Reish Lakish, Rav and Shmuel, Abaye and Rova, just to name a few. They disagreed mightily as to how Torah law should be applied. They reined in differing opinions respectfully but firmly according to the rules of practical Halacha. In doing so they respected the person who espoused the opposing view. They even enshrined the opposing view in the Mishna and Talmud as a treasured perspective. Yet, they still provided clear guidance to the people by ruling like one view, peacefully and with the greatest respect.

Similarly, about a thousand years after the Talmud was codified, Rabbi Yosef Kairo and Rabbi Moshe Isserles collaborated in providing the Jewish people with the Shulchan Aruch, a system of laws and study that provided for both Ashkenazic and Sephardic Jews. On the one hand we are like children, each unique, growing up in different countries with different scholars providing guidance, each as appropriate to his locale and community. On the other hand, we are all part of one family. We do not respect a separatist attitude. Novel innovations are subject to peer review. There is individualism and creativity, but it occurs as part of a greater whole.

The task of Yakov and the Shevatim was a great one. Towering personalities needed to blossom in their own individual way, as part of a brotherhood, a family, and a nation. That balance has been our goal throughout history. Sometimes the balance of brotherhood and family is elusive; sometimes we achieve it in the most cherished ways. The words of the Shevatim stated to Yosef can be our guide: *"All of us are children of one man,"* Yisroel, the father of the Jewish people. )Bireishis 42:11 and Rashi 42:3(

With best wishes for a wonderful Shabbos!

\* Rabbi Mordechai Rhine is a certified mediator and coach with Rabbinic experience of more than 20 years. Based in Maryland, he provides services internationally via Zoom. He is the Director of TEACH613: Building Torah Communities, One family at a Time, and the founder of CARE Mediation, focused on Marriage/ Shalom Bayis and personal coaching. To reach Rabbi Rhine, his websites are [www.care-mediation.com](http://www.care-mediation.com) and [www.teach613.org](http://www.teach613.org); his email is [RMRhine@gmail.com](mailto:RMRhine@gmail.com). For information or to join any Torah613 classes, contact Rabbi Rhine.

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## **Mikeitz -- Audacious Audition**

by Rabbi Yehoshua Singer \* © 2023

Parshas Mikeitz is usually read on Shabbos Chanukah, and there are many connections with Chanukah found in this parsha. Perhaps one connection could be Yosef's miraculous salvation. On Chanukah we were under the Syrian Greek oppression. The Maccabees miraculously won their freedom and gained a certain level of independence under the Syrian Greek empire. Yosef's slavery in Egypt had gone from bad to worse when he was thrown in the royal dungeons for a crime that never occurred. One morning, he saw miraculous salvation when Pharaoh's officers came charging in, hurriedly washed and cleaned him and suddenly brought him before Pharaoh. In the span of a few hours, he went from being locked in the dungeon to being the second in command of one of the most powerful kingdoms in the world.

One of the most basic elements of Torah Judaism is that we do not rely on miracles and are responsible to put in the necessary human efforts to achieve the results we want. We see this in the story of Chanukah when the Maccabees stepped forward and began the fight to overthrow the Syrian Greek oppressors. Despite the challenges, they took action to achieve their freedom. So, too, when they regained the Beis Hamikdash and wanted to light the Menorah, they searched high and low for pure oil. They did not expect oil to miraculously appear. The miracle of the oil only took place after they had done all that was humanly possible.

We find this concept even more clearly in the story of Yosef. When Yosef was brought before Pharaoh, he must have realized that G-d was orchestrating something significant. He had been in a dungeon for ten years without seeing the light of day. Without warning, he now finds himself in audience with one of the most powerful men in the entire world. If this alone was not enough, the Egyptians were anti-Semitic and deeply despised the Hebrew people. )See Ramban Bereishis 41:38( Clearly G-d was orchestrating events in Yosef's favor.

Yet, the Ramban tells us that Yosef seemingly ignored this clear miracle unfolding before his eyes. As he is interpreting the dreams to Pharaoh, he makes a very daring move. After explaining the dreams' message, Yosef -- the Hebrew slave from the royal dungeons -- has the audacity to offer advice to the royal court. He tells Pharaoh that he must appoint a wise and understanding individual to oversee the food collection and storage, and to appoint many officers under this individual. Why does Yosef consider it appropriate to tell Pharaoh how to go about preparing for the upcoming famine?

The Ramban )Bereishis 41:33( explains that Yosef was taking this risk in the hope that they would choose him for the position. Yosef was a uniquely wise and understanding individual. If he could manage to show some of the depth of his wisdom and his unique ability to oversee the collection and storage, perhaps they would consider him. He realized that this moment was his chance. Once the interpretation was done, the advisors and ministers would step in and discuss the matter. No one would care to hear Yosef's thoughts on the matter. He, therefore, seized the opportunity and spoke up while he still had the floor.

Yosef had seen G-d's Providence throughout his experience in Egypt. When he was a slave under Potifar, he was soon placed as the head of all of Potifar's staff. When he was thrown in jail, he again soon found himself running the prison. He now finds himself in the impossible reality of being a convicted slave speaking directly to Pharaoh. Yet, Yosef understood that we must still take action ourselves, even as the miracle is unfolding.

G-d obviously does not need us to do anything. He made the world, recreates it at every moment, and could recreate it

however He wants. He created us for our own sake and creates an incomplete world to give us the opportunity to partner with him in moving His world forward. Every opportunity is also a responsibility. We must always do our part to move life forward. Even when miracles are unfolding around us.

\* Savannah Kollel; Congregation B'nai Brith Jacob, Savannah, GA. Until recently, Rabbi, Am HaTorah Congregation, Bethesda, MD. Rabbi Singer will become Rosh Kollel next year.

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## Mitetz

by Rabbi Herzl Heftner \*

]Rabbi Heftner did not send a new Dvar Torah for Miketz. Watch this space for further insights from Rabbi Heftner in future weeks.[

\* Founder and dean of the Har'el Beit Midrash in Jerusalem. Rabbi Heftner is a graduate of Yeshiva University and was ordained at Yeshivat Har Etzion. For more of his writings, see [www.har-el.org](http://www.har-el.org). To support the Beit Midrash, as we do, send donations to America Friends of Beit Midrash Har'el, 66 Cherry Lane, Teaneck, NJ 07666.

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## Miketz

By R. Haim Ovadia

]I do not have a new Dvar Torah from Rabbi Ovadia. Watch this space for his insights on most weeks.[

\* Torah VeAhava. Rabbi, Beth Sholom Sephardic Minyan (Potomac, MD) and faculty member, AJRCA non-denominational rabbinical school. **New: Many of Rabbi Ovadia's Devrei Torah are now available on Sefaria: <https://www.sefaria.org/profile/haim-ovadia?tab=sheets>**. The Sefaria article includes Hebrew text, which I must delete because of issues changing software formats.

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## Miketz: Unity Among All Jews

by Rabbi Moshe Rube\*

A man once walked into synagogue on Chanukah and saw everybody lighting the menorah. He asked what this all meant. The Rabbi told him how the Jews had fought against the Greeks after a period of religious persecution and how they struggled to gain independence and self-determination.

After hearing of all the troubles of the Jews during this time, the man's face fell and he started crying and praying and wished everyone in the synagogue well.

The following year, this man returned and once again saw the menorah being lit. He asked what this all meant and the Rabbi retold him the story. After hearing it again, the man burst out laughing. The Rabbi, a little confused, asked him what was so funny. The man responded, "Well after all that happened last year, you'd think the Jews would have learned their lesson and avoided such persecution by the Greeks. Instead, they got themselves into the same fix again."

While the above text is meant in good humour, there's no denying the Jewish year takes on a circular quality. Every year we light the menorah, eat our donuts and remember our ancestral Maccabean exploits. It's always the same, but it's also not the same. Each year we direct our intentions towards something different. Every year something new arises which requires us to delve deep into ourselves to find some light to shine. Some years are more challenging than others, but after 2000 years, we Jews have become quite adept at finding the light.

Let that be the blessing to Noah Lipchin this week as we celebrate his Bar Mitzvah. That no matter where you go, Noah, may you always find and shine your light. You've already shown yourself to be a capable, funny and intelligent young man, and we know you have a bright future ahead of you. You come from a wonderful family who have, through their own example, nurtured you into who you are today. May you use all that you have been given and have learned from your family, and community, to shine your unique light over this weekend and beyond.

Shabbat Shalom,

Rabbi Rube

\* Senior Rabbi of Auckland Hebrew Congregation, Remuera )Auckland(, New Zealand. Formerly Rabbi, Congregation Knesseth Israel )Birmingham, AL(.

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### Rav Kook Torah Miketz: Interpreting Dreams

The Sages made a remarkable claim regarding dreams and their interpretation: "*Dreams are fulfilled according to the interpretation*" )Berachot 55b(. The interpreter has a key function in the realization of a dream: his analysis can determine how the dream will come to pass.

The Talmud *substantiated this statement with the words of the chief wine-butler*: "Just as he interpreted, so ]my dream[ came to be" )Gen. 41:13(.

Do dreams foretell the future? Does the interpreter really have the power to determine the meaning of a dream and alter the future accordingly?

#### **The Purpose of Dreams**

Clearly, not all of our dreams are prophetic. Originally, in humanity's pristine state, every dream was a true dream. But with the fall of Adam, mankind left the path of integrity. Our minds became filled with wanton desires and pointless thoughts, and our dreams became more chaff than truth.

Why did God give us the ability to dream? A true dream is a wake-up call, warning us to correct our life's direction. Our eyes are opened to a vivid vision of our future, should we not take heed to mend our ways.

To properly understand the function of dreams, we must first delve into the inner workings of divine providence in the world. How are we punished or rewarded in accordance to our actions?

The Zohar )Bo 33a( gives the following explanation for the mechanics of providence. The soul has an inner quality that naturally brings about those situations and events that correspond to our moral level. Should we change our ways, this inner quality will reflect that change, and will lead us towards a different set of circumstances.

Dreams are part of this system of providence. They are one of the methods utilized by the soul's inner quality to bring about the appropriate outcome.

#### **The Function of the Interpreter**

But the true power of a dream is only realized once it has been interpreted. The interpretation intensifies the dream's impact. As the Sages taught, "*A dream not interpreted is like a letter left unread*" )Berachot 55b(. When a dream is

explained, its images become more intense and vivid. The impact on the soul is stronger, and the dreamer is more primed for the consequential outcome.

Of course, the interpreter must be insightful and perceptive. He needs to penetrate the inner message of the dream and detect the potential influences of the soul's inner qualities that are reflected in the dream.

### **Multiple Messages**

All souls contain a mixture of good and bad traits. A dream is the nascent development of the soul's hidden traits, as they are beginning to be realized. A single dream may contain multiple meanings, since it reflects contradictory qualities within the soul.

When the interpreter gives a positive interpretation to a dream, he helps develop and realize positive traits hidden in the soul of the dreamer. A negative interpretation, on the other hand, will promote negative traits. As the Zohar (Miketz 199b) admonishes:

*"A good dream should be kept in mind and not forgotten, so that it will be fulfilled.... Therefore Joseph mentioned his dream [to his family], so that it would come to pass. He would always anticipate its fulfillment."*

It is even possible to interpret multiple aspects of a dream, all of which are potentially true. Even if they are contradictory, all may still be realized. Rabbi Bena'a related that, in his days, there were 24 dream-interpreters in Jerusalem. "Once I had a dream," he said, "and I went to all of them. No two interpretations were the same, but they all came to pass" (Berachot 55b).

### **Dreams of the Nation**

These concepts are also valid on the national level. Deliverance of the Jewish people often takes place through the medium of dreams. Both Joseph and Daniel achieved power and influence through the dreams of gentile rulers. The Jewish people have a hidden inner potential for greatness and leadership. As long as this quality is unrealized, it naturally tries to bring about its own fulfillment — sometimes, by way of dreams.

When a person is brought before the Heavenly court, he is questioned, "Did you yearn for redemption?" (Shabbat 31a). Why is this important?

By anticipating and praying for the redemption, we help develop the inner quality of the nation's soul, thus furthering its advance and the actualization of its destined mission.

(Gold from the Land of Israel. Adapted from Midbar Shur, pp. 222- 227.)

<https://www.ravkooktorah.org/MIKETZ63.htm>

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### **Joseph and the Risks of Power 5780**

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

Mikketz represents the most sudden and radical transformation in the Torah. Joseph, in a single day, moves from zero to hero, from forgotten, languishing prisoner to viceroy of Egypt, the most powerful man in the land, in control of the nation's economy.

Until now, Joseph has rarely been the author of events. He has been the done to rather than the doer; passive rather than

active; object rather than subject. First his father, then his brothers, then the Midianites and Ishmaelites, then Potiphar and his wife, then the prison warden, have all directed his life. Among the most important things in that life had been dreams, but dreams are things that happened to you, not things you choose.

What is decisive is the way last week's parsha ends. Having given a favourable interpretation to the dream of the chief butler, predicting that he would be restored to office, and realising that he would soon be in a position to have Joseph's case re-examined and Joseph himself set free, the butler "*did not remember Joseph, and forgot him.*" Joseph's most determined attempt to change the direction of fate comes to nothing. Despite being centre-stage for much of the time, Joseph was not in control.

Suddenly this changes, totally and definitively. Joseph has been asked to interpret Pharaoh's dreams. But he does far more than that. First he interprets the dreams. Second, he maps that onto reality. These were not just dreams. They are about the Egyptian economy in the course of the next 14 years. And they are about to become true now. Then, having made this prediction, he diagnoses the problem. The people will starve during the seven years of famine. Next, with a stroke of sheer genius, he solves the problem. Store a fifth of the produce during the years of plenty, and it will then be available to stave off starvation during the lean years.

Margaret Thatcher was reported as having said, of another Jewish adviser, Lord )David( Young, "*Other people bring me problems, David brings me solutions.*"<sup>1</sup>] That was magnificently true in the case of Joseph, and we have no difficulty understanding the response of the Egyptian court: "*The plan seemed good to Pharaoh and to all his officials. So Pharaoh asked them, 'Can we find anyone like this man, one in whom is the spirit of God?'*" )Gen. 41:37-38(

At the age of 30, Joseph is the most powerful man in the region, and his administrative competence is total. He travels round the country, arranges for collection of the grain, and ensures that it is stored safely. There is so much that, in the Torah's words, he stops keeping records because it is beyond measure. When the years of plenty are over, his position becomes even more powerful. Everyone turns to him for food. Pharaoh himself commands the people, "*Go to Joseph and do what he tells you.*"

So far, so good. And at this point the narrative shifts from Joseph, viceroy of Egypt, controller of its economy, to Joseph, son of Jacob, and his relationship with the brothers who, 22 years earlier, had sold him as a slave. It is this story that will dominate the next few chapters, rising to a climax in Judah's speech at the beginning of the next parsha.

One effect of this is that it tends to move Joseph's political and administrative activity into the background. But if we read it carefully – not just how it begins, but how it continues – we discover something quite disturbing. The story is taken up in next week's parsha in chapter 47. It describes an extraordinary sequence of events.

It begins when the Egyptians have used up all their money buying grain. They come to Joseph asking for food, telling him they will die without it, and he replies by telling them he will sell it to them in exchange for ownership of their livestock. They willingly do so: they bring their horses, donkeys, sheep and cattle. The next year he sells them grain in exchange for their land. The result of these transactions is that within a short period of time – seemingly a mere three years – he has transferred to Pharaoh's ownership all the money, livestock and private land, with the exception of the land of the Priests, which he allowed them to retain.

Not only this, but the Torah tells us that Joseph "*removed the population town by town, from one end of Egypt's border to the other*" )Gen. 47:21( – a policy of enforced resettlement that would eventually be used against Israel by the Assyrians.

The question is: was Joseph right to do this? Seemingly, he did it of his own accord. He was not asked to do so by Pharaoh. The result, however, of all these policies is that unprecedented wealth and power were now concentrated in Pharaoh's hand – power that would eventually be used against the Israelites. More seriously, twice we encounter the phrase *avadim le-Faro*, "*slaves to Pharaoh*" – one of the key phrases in the Exodus account and in the answer to the questions of the child in the Seder service )Gen. 47:19, 25(. With this difference: that it was said, not by the Israelites, but by the Egyptians.

During the famine itself, the Egyptians say to Joseph (in next week's parsha), "Buy us and our land in exchange for food, and we with our land will be slaves to Pharaoh... Thus Joseph acquired all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh, for every Egyptian sold their field...and the land became Pharaoh's." (Gen. 47:19-20).

This entire passage, which begins in our parsha and continues into next week's, raises a most serious question. We tend to assume that the enslavement of the Israelites in Egypt was a consequence of, and punishment for, the brothers selling Joseph as a slave. But Joseph himself turned the Egyptians into a nation of slaves. What is more, he created the highly centralised power that would eventually be used against his people.

Aaron Wildavsky in his book about Joseph, *Assimilation versus Separation*, says that Joseph "left the system into which he was elevated less humane than it was by making Pharaoh more powerful than he had been." [2] Leon Kass, in *The Beginning of Wisdom*, says about Joseph's decision to make the people pay for food in the years of famine (food that they themselves had handed over during the years of plenty): "Joseph is saving life by making Pharaoh rich and, soon, all-powerful. While we may applaud Joseph's forethought, we are rightly made uneasy by this man who profits from exercising his god-like power over life and death." [3]

It may be that the Torah intends no criticism of Joseph whatsoever. He was acting loyally to Pharaoh and judiciously to Egypt as a whole. Or it may be that there is an implied criticism of his character. As a child, he dreamt of power; as an adult he exercised it; but Judaism is critical of power and those who seek it. Another possibility: the Torah is warning us of the hazards and obscurities of politics. A policy that seems wise in one generation discloses itself as dangerous in the next. Or perhaps Leon Kass is right when he says, "Joseph's sagacity is technical and managerial, not moral and political. He is long on forethought and planning but short on understanding the souls of men." [4]

What this entire passage represents is the first intrusion of politics into the life of the family of the covenant. From the beginning of Exodus to the end of Deuteronomy, politics will dominate the narrative. But this is our first introduction to it: Joseph's appointment to a key position in the Egyptian court. And what it is telling us is the sheer ambiguity of power. On the one hand, you cannot create or sustain a society without it. On the other hand, it almost cries out to be abused. Power is dangerous, even when used with the best of intentions by the best of people. Joseph acted to strengthen the hand of a Pharaoh who had been generous to him, and would be likewise to the rest of his family. He could not have foreseen what that same power might make possible in the hands of a "new Pharaoh who knew not Joseph."

Tradition called Joseph ha-tzaddik, the righteous. At the same time, the Talmud says that he died before his brothers, "because he assumed airs of authority." [5] Even a tzaddik with the best of intentions, when he or she enters politics and assumes airs of authority, can make mistakes.

I believe the great challenge of politics is to keep policies humane and that politicians remain humble, so that power, always so dangerous, is not used for harm. That is an ongoing challenge, and tests even the best.

#### FOOTNOTES:

[1] In actual fact, the accurate quote was: "other people come to me with their problems. David comes to me with his achievements." But in journalistic retellings it has been modified to give context. See Financial Times, 24 November 2010.

[2] Aaron Wildavsky, *Assimilation versus Separation*, Transaction, 2002, 143.

[3] Leon Kass, *The Beginning of Wisdom*, Free Press, 2003, 571.

[4] Ibid., 633-34.

[5] Brachot 55a.

### **Around the Sabbath Table:**

- ]1[ What do you understand to be the agenda behind Joseph's leadership decisions?
- ]2[ Do you think Joseph was cruel?
- ]3[ What is the lesson to be learned here? Did Joseph have an opportunity to learn it in his lifetime?

<https://www.rabbisacks.org/covenant-conversation/mikketz/joseph-and-the-risks-of-power/>

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### **Life Lessons From the Parshah - Miketz Ephraim and Menasseh, Survive and Thrive**

By Yehoshua B. Gordon \* © Chabad 2023

I once encountered an extraordinary man in a hotel where I was staying as part of a Passover program. As I strolled through the grand hotel lobby, I noticed an elderly gentleman with a flowing white beard wearing full Chassidic garb.

I greeted him with the traditional “*Good Yom Tov!*” and in Yiddish I asked him how he was doing. He returned the greeting, and when I asked him where he was from, he told me he was from Williamsburg. Clearly, he was not talking about Williamsburg, Penn., but the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn, N.Y. Learning that I was from Encino, Calif., he remarked, “*You look like you are a Chabadnik!*” I proudly confirmed, “*Yes, I am; I'm proud to be a disciple of the Rebbe and his emissary in the San Fernando Valley in California.*”

“*Then I would like to tell you a story about the Previous Rebbe,*” he said, smiling, referring to the Rebbe’s father-in-law, the Sixth Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn.

“*Before the Holocaust,*” he explained, “*I had a very large family. I lost my entire family to the Nazi killing machine. I survived, but I came out all alone. I was a young, broken man, lost and alone.*”

“*I heard that there was a very great rebbe, the Lubavitcher Rebbe, and that people would go to him and receive his blessing. So, I arranged to see the Rebbe and planned to ask for his blessing.*”

“*I entered the Rebbe's study, and the Rebbe asked me where I was from.*”

Pausing, the man explained, “*You need to understand that when the Previous Rebbe arrived in the United States in 1940, he was not physically healthy. He had suffered illness, and he didn't speak very clearly. The Rebbe had a gabbai — an attendant and secretary — who was with him and would translate for him. I think his name was —*”

That's when I interjected and said, “*Rabbi Simpson! My grandfather!*”

The Rebbe's attendant was Rabbi Eliyahu Simpson, my maternal grandfather. So it was actually my grandfather who asked this man the Rebbe's question, “*Where are you from?*”

“*I'm from Satmar,*” he replied.

“*What do you need?*” asked the Rebbe, “*What kind of blessing are you looking for?*”

“*Mishpacha,*” I answered, “*Family. I want to be able to rebuild my devastated family. I lost everyone, and I want to be able to rebuild.*”

*“The Rebbe gave me a tremendous blessing, telling me that I would merit to build a large family, loyal to the tenets of Judaism.”*

“That’s my experience with your Rebbe and your grandfather,” he said.

“Nu,” I asked him, “what came of the Rebbe’s blessing?”

“Thank G d,” he exclaimed, beaming, “I have over 130 descendants!”

## **A Family in Egypt**

The portion of Miketz continues with the riveting story of Joseph, but gives us just a few words about his descendants.

After telling us how Joseph went from jailhouse to palace, the Torah mentions that Pharaoh gave Joseph a wife, Asenath, and they had two sons together: Menasseh and Ephraim.

This story is astounding. Joseph undergoes a transformation from slave to king — the quintessential rags to riches — all within 13 short years! The fact that the Torah includes seemingly unrelated information about Joseph’s children suggests its significance and urges deeper exploration.

What do we know about these children? They were undoubtedly special, as demonstrated by their relationship with their grandfather, Jacob, after he arrived in Egypt. Jacob formed a profound bond with them, meeting daily to study Torah together. He considered them like his own children, telling Joseph, “... your two sons ... they are mine. *Ephraim and Manasseh shall be mine like Reuben and Simeon.*”<sup>1</sup> For this reason, Manasseh and Ephraim are counted in place of Joseph among the 12 Tribes.<sup>2</sup>

While there are many commentaries that discuss the names Manasseh and Ephraim and the significance they embody, I would like to focus on a teaching from the Rebbe.

## **Celebrating Survival**

As discussed in my column on the parshah of Vayeshev, Joseph’s traumatic story — being despised by his brothers, sold as a slave, hounded by Potiphar’s wife, and locked away for 12 years — could have understandably led him to a life of depression and dysfunction. Instead, he responded to his trials with unwavering positivity. Throughout his ordeal, he constantly says, “*Baruch Hashem – thank G d! This is from G d! It’s all from G d! G d has helped me!*”

Remarkably, Joseph emerges from this prolonged period of turmoil unscathed. Rather than wallowing in self-pity, he rises to become a king in Egypt. Which begs the question: How can a person maintain such resilience?

The answer lies in the strength and resilience derived from G d. Joseph not only knew this truth, but lived by it, firmly believing that there are no accidents, only a Divine plan.

This understanding is reflected in the name Joseph gave his eldest son, Manasseh, which means “*G d has caused me to forget all my toil and all my father’s house.*”<sup>3</sup> It doesn’t mean Joseph completely erased the memories of his experiences, but that G d allowed him to set aside all his troubles and all his suffering.

Consider how many incredible stories of strength and resilience came out of the Holocaust. Despite facing unimaginable horrors, many survivors managed not only to function daily, but also to become extraordinary individuals.

Joseph embodies this idea. Despite the challenges, he declares, “*Thank G d, I survived. G d allowed me to set aside and overcome my trauma.*” To commemorate this survival, he named his son Manasseh.

## Moving Beyond Survival

The Rebbe, however, emphasizes that mere survival is insufficient. We must not only survive; we must thrive!

Many Holocaust survivors, after overcoming their trauma, immediately married and brought new children into the world. They started businesses and established communities. For many, if not most, it took years before they could talk about their experiences. But they thrived.

Joseph recognized this truth, which is why he named his second son Ephraim, meaning "*G d has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction.*"<sup>4</sup> Said Joseph, "*Not only did I survive – Manasseh – but I thrived – Ephraim. Not only did I survive my trauma, but I am at the top of my game. I am as productive as I could be and then some! I didn't just survive and find a nice nine-to-five job; I became the king! I run the country!*"<sup>5</sup>

Looking ahead to the portion of Vayechi, Jacob blesses his grandsons, Manasseh and Ephraim, with the words, "*May the angel who redeemed me from all harm bless the youths, and may they be called by my name and the name of my fathers, Abraham and Isaac, and may they multiply abundantly like fish, in the midst of the land.*"<sup>5</sup>

Before bestowing the blessing, Jacob placed his hands on his grandsons' heads in a peculiar manner, crisscrossing them. He placed his stronger and more dynamic right hand – the hand of blessing – on the head of Ephraim, the younger son, and his left hand on Manasseh. Why? Because Jacob agreed with Joseph: survival is important, but for a Jew, thriving — symbolized by Ephraim — is paramount.

This reinforces the Rebbe's message: while surviving our trials and tribulations is important, it is not enough. We must thrive. We must grow. This is a key takeaway from the Joseph story that we must strive to incorporate into our daily lives.

Wishing everyone a happy Chanukah. Let's get out there and thrive!

### FOOTNOTES:

1. Genesis 48:5.
2. There are still a total of 12 tribes, since Levi, who had no portion of the Land, is not counted among them.
3. Genesis 41:51.
4. Genesis 41:52.
5. Genesis 48:16.

\* Rabbi Yehoshua Gordon directed Chabad of the Valley in Tarzana, CA until his passing in 2016. Adapted by Rabbi Mottel Friedman from classes and sermons delivered by Rabbi Joshua B. Gordon in Encino, CA. "Life Lessons from the Parshah" is a project of the Rabbi Joshua B. Gordon Living Legacy Fund.

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### Miketz: Unrecognizable Transformation

by Rabbi Moshe Wisnefsky \*

*Joseph recognized his brothers, but they did not recognize him. )Gen. 42:8(*

The Torah previously noted that G-d granted Joseph success when he was the servant of Potiphar. But the additional Joseph's brothers did not believe that it is possible to be immersed in the material, mundane world without being affected by it. This is why they, like the patriarchs before them, chose to be shepherds: shepherds spend most of their time far from the fast-paced bustle of urban society and can devote most of their time to calm contemplation of spiritual matters.

Thus, Joseph's brothers could not even remotely imagine that the person standing before them, the viceroy of this vast commercial and pagan empire, might be their brother – whom they knew, despite all the faults that they suspected him of having, to be spiritual in outlook and righteous in behavior.

Joseph's greater Divine consciousness, however, enabled him to remain loyal to his ideals while involved in the mundane world.

Similarly, by following Joseph's example – summoning the Divine consciousness necessary to withstand the tests of secular society – we can transform ourselves “unrecognizably,” into versions of ourselves that we could previously not have imagined.

— from *Daily Wisdom 3*

**May G-d grant a swift, miraculous and complete victory over our enemies.**

Gut Shabbos and a bright and joyous Chanukah,

Rabbi Yosef B. Friedman  
Kehot Publication Society

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#### Covenant and Conversation

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, z"l

#### To Wait Without Despair

Something extraordinary happens between the previous parsha and this one. It is almost as if the pause of a week between them were itself part of the story.

Recall last week's parsha about the childhood of Joseph, focusing not on what happened but on who made it happen. Throughout the entire rollercoaster ride of Joseph's early life he is described as passive, not active; the done-to, not the doer; the object, not the subject, of verbs.

It was his father who loved him and gave him the richly embroidered cloak. It was his brothers who envied and hated him. He had dreams, but we do not dream because we want to but because, in some mysterious way still not yet fully understood, they come unbidden into our sleeping mind.

His brothers, tending their flocks far from home, plotted to kill him. They threw him into a pit. He was sold as a slave. In Potiphar's house he rose to a position of seniority, but the text goes out of its way to say that this was not because of Joseph himself, but because of God: God was with Joseph, and he became a successful man. He lived in the house of his Egyptian master. His master saw that God was with him, and that God granted him success in all that he did. Gen. 39:2-3

Potiphar's wife tried to seduce him, and failed, but here too, Joseph was passive, not active. He did not seek her, she sought him. Eventually, "she caught him by his cloak, saying, 'Lie with me!' But he left his garment in her hand, and fled and ran outside" (Gen. 39:12). Using the garment as evidence, she had him imprisoned on a totally false charge. There was nothing Joseph could do to establish his innocence.

In prison, again he became a leader, a manager, but again the Torah goes out of its way to attribute this not to Joseph but to Divine intervention: God was with Joseph and showed him kindness, granting him favour in the sight of the prison warden... Whatever was done there, God was the one who did it. The prison warden paid no heed to anything that was in Joseph's care, because God was with him; and whatever he did, God made it prosper. Gen. 39:21-23

Then Joseph met Pharaoh's chief butler and baker. They had dreams, and Joseph interpreted them, but insisted that it is not he but God who was doing so: "Joseph said to them, 'Interpretations belong to God. Tell me your dreams.'" Gen. 40:8

There is nothing like this anywhere else in Tanach. Whatever happened to Joseph was the result of someone else's deed: those of his father, his brothers, his master's wife, the prison warden, or God Himself. Joseph was the ball thrown by hands other than his own.

Then, for essentially the first time in the whole story, Joseph decided to take fate into his own hands. Knowing that the chief butler was about to be restored to his position, he asked him to bring his case to the attention of Pharaoh: "Remember me when it is well with you; please do me the kindness to make mention of me to Pharaoh, and so get me out of this place. For indeed I was stolen out of the land of the Hebrews; and here also I have done nothing that they should have put me into prison." Gen. 39:14-15

A double injustice had been done, and Joseph saw this as his one chance of regaining his freedom. But the end of the parsha delivers a devastating blow: The chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph, and forgot him. Gen. 39:23

The anticlimax is intense, emphasised by the double verb, "did not remember" and "forgot." We sense Joseph waiting day after day for news. None comes. His last, best hope has gone. He will never go free. Or so it seems.

To understand the power of this anticlimax, we must remember that only since the invention of printing and the availability of books have we been able to tell what happens next merely by turning a page. For many centuries, there were no printed books. People knew the biblical story primarily by listening to it week by week. Those who were hearing the story for the first time had to wait a week to discover what Joseph's fate would be.

The parsha break is thus a kind of real-life equivalent to the delay Joseph experienced in prison, which, as this parsha begins by telling us, took "two whole years." It was then that Pharaoh had two dreams that no one in the court could interpret, prompting the chief butler to remember the man he had met in prison. Joseph was brought to Pharaoh, and within hours was transformed from zero to hero: from prisoner-without-hope to viceroy of the greatest empire of the ancient world.

Why this extraordinary chain of events? It is telling us something important, but what?

Surely this: God answers our prayers, but often not when we thought or how we thought. Joseph sought to get out of prison, and he did get out of prison. But not immediately, and not because the butler kept his promise.

The story is telling us something fundamental about the relationship between our dreams and our achievements. Joseph was the great dreamer of the Torah, and his dreams for the most part came true. But not in a way he or anyone else could have anticipated. At the end of the previous parsha – with Joseph still in prison – it seemed as if those dreams had ended in ignominious failure. We have to wait for a week, as he had to wait for two years, before discovering that it was not so.

There is no achievement without effort. That is the first principle. God saved Noah from the Flood, but first Noah had to build the Ark. God promised Abraham the land, but first he had to buy the Cave of Machpelah in which to bury Sarah. God promised the Israelites the land, but they had to fight the battles. Joseph became a leader, as he dreamed he would. But first he had to hone his practical and administrative skills, first in Potiphar's house, then in prison. Even when God assures us that something will happen, it will not happen without our effort. A Divine promise is not a substitute for human responsibility. To the contrary, it is a call to responsibility.

But effort alone is not enough. We need siyata diShemaya, "the help of Heaven." We need the humility to acknowledge that we are dependent on forces not under our control. No one in Genesis invoked God more often than Joseph. As Rashi says, "God's Name was constantly in his mouth."<sup>[1]</sup> He credited God for each of his successes. He recognised that without God he could not have done what he did. Out of that humility came patience.

Those who have achieved great things have often had this unusual combination of characteristics. On the one hand they work hard. They labour, they practise, they strive. On the other, they know that it will not be their hand alone that writes the script. It is not our efforts alone that decide the outcome. So we pray, and God answers our prayers – but not

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always when or how we expected. (And of course, sometimes the answer is 'No'.)

The Talmud (Niddah 70b) says it simply. It asks: What should you do to become rich? It answers: Work hard and behave honestly. But, says the Talmud, many have tried this and did not become rich. Back comes the answer: You must pray to God from whom all wealth comes. In which case, asks the Talmud, why work hard? Because, answers the Talmud: The one without the other is insufficient. We need both: human effort and Divine favour. We have to be, in a certain sense, patient and impatient – impatient with ourselves but patient in waiting for God to bless our endeavours.

The week-long delay between Joseph's failed attempt to get out of prison and his eventual success is there to teach us this delicate balance. If we work hard enough, God grants us success – not when we want but, rather, when the time is right.

[1] See Rashi's commentary on Genesis 39:3

### **Shabbat Shalom: Rabbi Shlomo Riskin** **The Ability to Listen to Dreams of Others as Well as to Our Own**

"And Pharaoh said to Joseph, I had a dream last night, and no one is able to interpret it..." [Genesis 41:15] There is an unusual symmetry in the portion of Miketz as well as in Vayeshev, both of which deal almost exclusively with the rise and fall – Vayeshev – and fall and rise – Miketz – of Joseph.

Vayeshev begins with an introduction to Joseph. Not only is he talented, brilliant and handsome, but he is the beloved son of the beloved wife, Rachel. As the apple of his father's eye, physically as well as spiritually, he can do no wrong. Little wonder that his father adores him and adorns him with the much-prized cloak of many colors.

Yet, by the end of the portion, Joseph is in prison. It is the final degradation in a series of degradations that began shortly after earning the hatred of his brothers for his loose tongue and provocative dreams as a result of which he was cast into a pit and sold into slavery in Egypt.

Miketz finds Joseph still in prison, but almost immediately we witness his miraculous rise and emergence as a world leader. The former seventeen-year-old dreamer becomes Grand Vizier (second only to the Pharaoh) and Secretary of Treasury, Labor and Agriculture all rolled into one. Pharaoh may be the symbolic head of Egypt, the god of the Egyptian 'pantheon', but because of his total trust in Joseph, the son of Jacob now effectively rules the land, a prime minister without the possibility of anyone casting a no-confidence vote against him.

Rabbi Isaac Bernstein ingeniously suggests the method behind the symmetry. The favored and beloved Joseph is doomed to begin his

downward descent because, although he dreams grand dreams, he is totally self-absorbed; his sole interest lies in communicating his dreams of self-aggrandizement to others. By the beginning of Miketz, Joseph is listening to the dreams of others and using them to help the others. Once one begins listening to other people's dreams one is ready to ascend upwards and achieve true leadership.

I would develop this idea further by suggesting that the real key to Joseph's interpretation lies in his newfound ability to carefully listen. Remember that the prophet Elijah receives a vision from the Almighty at the end of his life teaching him that the Divine Presence is to be found in a small silent voice, Kol demama daka. How can a voice be silent? The adviser's voice must be silent in order to listen very carefully to the words of the supplicant. Proper advice which has God's own stamp of approval can only emerge from careful listening to and empathizing with the individual who speaks out of desperation and travail. Only when one understands what the questioner really wants, can one offer him/her proper advice. Prophecy is based in no small measure upon one's ability to listen.

When the wine steward revealed his dream – and dreams are always a key to the hidden and often subconscious thoughts and aspirations of the dreamer – of 'squeezing grapes into Pharaoh's cup, and then placing the cup in Pharaoh's hand' [Gen. 40:11], it became clear to Joseph that the wine steward only wanted to continue to serve his master, that he had no trace of a guilty conscience, and so he would be found innocent and returned to service.

The chief baker's dream, on the other hand, is very different. He dreams of birds snatching the loaves of bread from the basket on his head. The birds, or nature, are 'out to get him' – and usually people who suffer from paranoia have reason to feel guilty. Joseph listened well and surmised that the chief baker was indeed guilty and so would be hanged within three days.

Similar was the case of Pharaoh's dream. Joseph understood that Pharaoh's chief concern was the economic well-being of Egypt, and this subject had to be the point of a dream which repeated itself so often to the man most responsible for Egypt's well being. And if Pharaoh was frightened of economic disaster – by the way, a cyclical occurrence in Egypt which Joseph was certainly aware of – the best way for Joseph to overcome that concern was to present a plan of prevention:

'Now therefore let Pharaoh seek out a man understanding and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt in the seven years of plenty. And let them store up all the food of those good years that come, and pile up corn under the hand of Pharaoh...that the land shall not be cut off through the famine.' And the thing was

**Likutei Torah**  
good in the eyes of Pharaoh....' [Gen. 41:33–37]

The Joseph of Miketz did not shout his dreams to others whom he saw as his servants; he rather listened carefully to the dreams of others, and was ready to be of service to them wherever possible. Only this changed Joseph could be expected to rise and remain on top.

The content of Joseph's earlier dreams is also an important piece in understanding his downward turn. Joseph's dream is predicated to a certain degree upon his father Jacob's dream, the dream of '...a ladder standing on the ground, its top reached up toward heaven...God's angels were going up and down on it...'. Joseph, too, dreams of the two elements in his father's dream, the earth and the heavens. His first dream is of the earth – stalks of wheat – and his second dream is of the heavens – sun, moon and stars.

But there are two major differences between the dreams of father and son. Jacob's dream is one: he yearns to connect heaven and earth. Joseph has two separate dreams. In Jacob's dreams, God and the angels are at its center; in Joseph's dream he himself is at the center, with the eleven stalks of wheat and eleven stars, sun and moon bowing down to him. God is absent from Joseph's subconscious; he, Joseph, wishes dominion on earth and even in the heavenly cosmos.

But as the Joseph stories develop, a much chastened Joseph, as well as his repentant brothers, learn invaluable lessons. The brothers learn that they should have tried to teach – not tear away – their errant and supercilious brother. Joseph learns that his abilities of economic and administrative leadership must serve the higher power of God and Torah. Joseph's dreams are realized in Egypt – when his family must bow to him as Grand Vizier of Egypt.

But in the greater dream of Israel, the vision of the Covenant between the Pieces and the ultimate goal of world peace and redemption, Joseph will serve Judah, the guardian of tradition and Torah. Jacob only gives Joseph the 'blessing' of a double portion; the 'birthright' of spiritual leadership and direction is granted to Judah [Gen. 49:8–10]. When Joseph truly understands his proper position, he is able to rise above his fall into the pit and take his place as the heir to the blessing.

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### **Torah.Org: Rabbi Yissocher Frand** **The Sar HaMashkim's Reward for Confessing**

Pharaoh had troubling dreams. None of his sorcerers or dream interpreters could satisfactorily explain them. Finally, the Sar HaMashkim (wine butler), who had been released from prison a couple of years prior, popped up and told Pharaoh "Es chata'ai ani mazkir hayom" ("I remember my iniquity this day...") He related the story of how he and the

royal baker had been thrown into prison, and how they each had dreams that were interpreted by a Hebrew lad in prison. Yosef's interpretations came true 100%. Pharaoh summoned Yosef from prison and gave him a shot at interpreting the dreams.

The precise translation of the words “Es chata’ai ani mazkir hayom” is actually not “I remember my iniquity this day” because the word chata’ai is plural! The correct translation is: I remember my iniquities today. Now, according to the well known Medrash, this Sar HaMashkim had but a single aveira (sin) – namely serving to Pharaoh a wine goblet, into which a fly had fallen. What then is the implication of the plural chata’ai?

The Alshich shares a very interesting idea: This Sar HaMashkim, as despicable of a character as he may have been, will go down in history as having a tremendous zechus (merit) – because of him, Yosef was released from prison. People received great reward for a lot less throughout Tanach. We have a principle that zechus comes to those who merit it (Megalgelim zechus al yedei zakai). What prior zechus allowed the Sar HaMashkim to gain the additional zechus of being the one to free Yosef from prison?

The Alschich quotes the Riva that the “two aveiros” mentioned by the Sar HaMashkim were (1) the incident of the fly falling into the royal goblet and (2) that it took two years for him to remember the fact that Yosef asked him to mention his plight to Pharaoh. The Alshich writes it was for the sense of guilt that he felt for his negligence in not mentioning Yosef to Pharaoh for two years after his own release that the Sar HaMashkim was rewarded by being able to be the enabler for Yosef getting out of prison.

The pasuk in Mishlei states: “He who covers his sins will not succeed, but one who confesses and abandons them will receive mercy (from Hashem).” (Mishlei 28:13) The Sar HaMashkim was rewarded for his sense of submission and his confession to Pharaoh of this dual negligence, and in that zechus, he was the enabler who was able to cause Yosef to be released from prison.

**Getting Their Money Back: Yosef's Brothers Tremble Rather Than Celebrate**  
Yosef tells his ten brothers, “I want to see this younger brother that you say you have.” He sends them back to Canaan with food, but holds Shimon as a hostage. He also returns the money that they had paid for their food. They notice the returned money when they are already on the road back to Canaan. “They trembled greatly and each said to one another, ‘What is this that Elokim has done to us?’” (Bereshis 28:28).

Why did they tremble? The sefer Darash Mordechai suggests that they trembled because this was not their money. Possessing money that they did not come by honestly sent fear

into their hearts. They did not look at this as a bonanza. They were so upset to have ill-gotten gains in their possession that it caused them to tremble.

The Darash Mordechai cites an interesting story illustrating how throughout the generations Gedolei Yisrael were so particular to not take anything that did not belong to them:

Rav Aharon Kotler, zt”l, besides all that he did for Yeshivos and so forth, was the driving force in the early years behind Chinuch Atzmai. He went to meetings and spoke on behalf of Chinuch Atzmai. In appreciation, Chinuch Atzmai, bought Rav Aharon Kotler a new Kapata, so that he should have a presentable Kapata that befit his station when he went to these fundraising affairs.

In fact, Rav Aharon Kotler also needed a new Kapata because he was busy raising money for Lakewood, and he was not about to spend money on himself for a new Kapata!

Rav Aharon went to a parlor meeting on behalf of Chinuch Atzmai with a driver named Rav Yitzchak Zalasnik. Rav Aharon finished the parlor meeting and said “Now we need to go to a chasanah.” Rav Aharon told Rav Yitzchak Zalasnik, “Take me home. I need to change.” His driver could not understand why the Rosh Yeshiva needed to change: “Why can’t we go straight to the chasanah?”

Rav Aharon explained, “Chinuch Atzmai bought me that Kapata for the purposes of Chinuch Atzmai. I can’t use it for my own purposes.” He therefore wanted to go home, put away the brand new Chinuch Atzmai frock, and put on his own.

The Darash Mordechai asks a question on this story: Rav Aharon Kotler is a Gaon Olam. He could say sevarahs that could split hairs. Could he not have figured out a justification whereby he could assume that Chinuch Atzmai gave him the Kapata lock stock and barrel – not just for their purposes? Why didn’t he think like that? He was a smart enough man. Couldn’t he have figured that out?

The answer is that his zehirus (meticulousness) regarding handling other people’s money was such that he could not even figure out that this would be an acceptable use of this gift. He was a Gaon Olam, but regarding using charity funds, he was a tamim. He had such an innocence and such a purity that he could not contemplate any justification for using the frock for a personal event.

This too is why the brothers trembled when they found money in their sacks, thinking that it was not really their money.

There is a parenthetical story that makes mention of Rav Aharon Kotler’s frayed Kapata: During World War II, while Italy was occupied by the Nazis, there was a group of

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Yeshiva bochrim who were held in prison there. This was literally a situation of pikuach nefoshos. Askanim who were trying to find a way to smuggle them out of Italy consulted with people in the know, and were told that the only way to handle this was through the Mafia. The Mafia had connections in Italy that could accomplish things that others could not.

Rav Moshe Sherer of Agudas Israel went with Rav Aharon Kotler to speak to Joe Bonanno, head of one of the big crime families in New York. Rav Aharon asked this Mafia Chief to do something on behalf of these imprisoned Yeshiva bochrim. When Joe Bonanno saw Rav Aharon Kotler, he was a bit turned off because the sleeves on Rav Aharon’s Kapato were frayed. Joe Bonanno was wearing an Italian suit, which in those days probably cost \$100, which was a lot of money! He saw this “head Rabbi of America” walking around with a torn frock, and he was not at all impressed.

To make a long story short, he asked Rav Aharon for a Bracha. Rav Aharon gave him a Bracha. What kind of Bracha does you give to such a murderer/gangster? Rav Aharon gave him a Bracha that he should die a peaceful death in his own bed. And that is what happened. He was never gunned down.

There is a sequel to this story. Some twenty years later, a stretch limo pulled up to the Lakewood Yeshiva. They were looking for Rabbi Kotler. Rav Aharon Kotler was no longer alive. But they came to the Yeshiva and said they wanted to see Rabbi Kotler. They took them into Rav Shneur Kotler. It was the son of Joe Bonanno. He wanted the same Bracha that his father was given. Rav Shneur told them “That is a blessing that only my father could give. I am not able to give such a blessing.”

### Dvar Torah: Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis

Who has been the most arrogant person who has ever lived? A candidate for this dubious title would certainly be Pharaoh, King of Egypt.

Parshat Mikeitz commences with the words, “Vayehi mikeitz shnatayim yamim uPharoh choleim, vehinei hu omed al hayaor,” – “And after two years had passed, Pharaoh had a dream and behold, he was standing over the river.” (Bereishit 41:1)

The Egyptians deified the river Nile, because they depended on its waters for their very lives. Pharaoh was ‘omed al hayaor,’ – he stood over the river, indicating that he saw himself as the ultimate, supremely powerful ‘god of gods’.

Rav Zalman Sorotzkin, in his sefer Oznaim laTorah, points out that this explains why the Egyptian sages interpreted Pharaoh’s dreams as being connected with Pharaoh’s own self – his self-importance, his personal life, his personal future, etc. But they were wrong.

Joseph stepped forwards and he gave what Pharaoh knew to be the true interpretation because Joseph saw in Pharaoh not just somebody who was living for himself. A true and great leader is somebody who is concerned about his people and about the entire world. Therefore Joseph's interpretation related to all of Egypt and all of Humankind at the time.

Pharaoh liked Joseph's interpretations and in turn he lived up to the aspirations for his kingship, and as a result he entrusted Joseph with the responsibility to guarantee that Egypt and the world would be prepared for those seven years of famine.

Rav Sorotzkin adds a further word. The Torah tells us, "uPharoah omed al hayaor," in the present tense, that is, not "Pharaoh stood over the river," but "Pharaoh is standing over the river," indicating that Pharaoh, King of Egypt would not be the only ruler who would be in power for his own sake.

Unfortunately and tragically, there are some Pharaoh-styled rulers who exist to this day – rulers of nations, who are only concerned about their own grandeur, about their own power, about their own control; rulers who are willing, at the expense of their people, to engage in dangerous pursuits; willing to sacrifice the lives of tens of thousands of their people, just to guarantee that they will have more power on earth.

Joseph's timeless message for us is that a great leader uses their seat of power not for their own sake, but for the sake of all others.

### Ohr Torah Stone Dvar Torah

**"I myself will guarantee his safety; from my hand you shall require him."**

### Rabbi Uriya and Shima Dvir

In parshat Miketz we find one of the most difficult and appalling stories in the lives of our Patriarchs and their families.

Yosef is finally released from the Egyptian prison where he had been imprisoned following a great many trials and tribulations which had begun when he was sold to the Ishmaelites by his own brothers. In merit of the fact that he was able to decipher Pharaoh's dreams and propose a brilliant economic strategy – the first ever five-year economic plan, which ultimately saves Egypt from famine – he is taken out of prison and becomes second-in-command to the king of Egypt.

Meanwhile, in the Land of Canaan, Yaakov and his sons experience hard years of famine and are desperate for bread. Yaakov sends his sons to Egypt to buy some food, and they find themselves standing before the great official responsible for all of Egypt's food. This person is none other than their brother Yosef, whom they don't recognize.

Much ink has been spilled on how Yosef tests his brothers by accusing them of being spies, incarcerating Shimon and demanding of them to bring their youngest brother from Canaan on their next trip down to Egypt if they wish to ever see their brother Shimon again. Yosef does not stop there, and secretly puts the money with which they paid for their food into their sacks of grain. When the brothers discover their money has been returned to them, they feel extremely anxious, and are worried they might be accused of thievery. The brothers return to Yaakov their father with the food they had just bought in Egypt, and relate all that had transpired, including the incarceration of Shimon and the ruler's demand that they bring Binyamin with them on their next trip down to Egypt.

Yaakov is stupefied at the turn of events, and his response attests to the great tension that prevails between him and his sons: "And Yaakov their father said unto them: 'Me have you bereaved of my children: Yosef is not, and Shimon is not, and you will take Binyamin away; upon me are all these things come'" (Bereishit 42:36).

Rashi explains that the words "Me have you bereaved" teach us that he suspected they might have killed him or sold him, as they had done to Yosef. It seems that Yaakov suspected the brothers of being involved in Yosef's death, perhaps even killing him with their own hands, or selling him. Hence, he is unwilling to let them take Binyamin, lest they hurt him or take bad care of him.

Two brothers confront Yaakov, and offer to take charge of Shimon's "rescue mission" in addition to taking responsibility for Binyamin. In fact, it is the same two brothers who attempted to "rescue" Yosef when the other brothers wished to kill him who step forward now: Reuven and Yehuda.

Reuven, who had initially suggested to the brothers to throw Yosef into the pit instead of killing him, with the aim of ultimately saving him, is now willing to take Binyamin under his protection in order to save his brother Shimon: "And Reuven spoke unto his father, saying: 'Thou shalt slay my two sons, if I bring him not to thee; deliver him into my hand, and I will bring him back to thee'" (Bereishit 42:37). Reuven is willing for Yaakov to kill his own two sons should anything happen to Binyamin.

We will get back to Yaakov's response to this proposal a little later.

Yehuda – who had also devised a plan to save Yosef, suggesting to the brothers to remove Yosef from the pit and sell him to the Ishmaelites instead of leaving him to die – is also willing to hold himself accountable to Yaakov for bringing Binyamin back safely, and all for the purpose of saving Shimon. "And Yehuda said unto Yisrael his father: 'Send the lad with me, and we will arise and go, that we

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may live, and not die, both we, and thou, and also our little ones. I myself will guarantee his safety; from my hand you shall require him, if I bring him not unto thee, and set him before thee, then let me bear the blame forever" (ibid. 43:8-9).

Unlike Reuven, Yehuda does not offer his sons as pledge, but holds himself accountable. In other words, should anything happen to Binyamin, God forbid, Yaakov would hold Yehuda to his word. Yehuda speaks with great decisiveness to his father, and goes so far as to say: "For except we had lingered, surely we had now returned a second time" (ibid. 43:10).

This is Yaakov's response to Reuven: "And he said: 'My son shall not go down with you; for his brother is dead, and he only is left; if harm befall him by the way in which you go, then will you bring down my grey hairs with sorrow to the grave'" (Bereishit 42:38).

Yaakov's response to Yehuda is different: "And their father Yisrael said unto them: 'If it be so now, do this: take of the choice fruits of the land in your vessels... take also your brother, and arise, go again unto the man. And God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may release unto you your other brother and Binyamin. And as for me, if I be bereaved of my children, I am bereaved'" (ibid. 43:11-14).

Why does Yaakov refuse Reuven's offer, and yet accepts Yehuda's?

Firstly, it's all in the timing. Reuven makes his offer at a time of great anger: How could it be that the brothers, who went down to Egypt to buy food, have come back without Shimon?! And now they want to take Binyamin as well?! Yaakov's anger rings loud and clear in verse 37, so much so that he refuses Reuven's offer.

In contrast, Yehuda makes his proposal at a different time – "And it came to pass, when they had eaten up the corn which they had brought out of Egypt, that their father said unto them: 'Go again, buy us a little food'" (ibid. 43:2). Now Yaakov is desperate. The food the brothers had bought on their first trip down to Egypt is now finished. The only option that remains is to go back to Egypt. Yehuda seizes the moment and makes his proposal. Yaakov cannot but give his consent.

Secondly, it's all about understanding what Yaakov really wants. Reuven is willing to sacrifice his two sons, if anything happens to Binyamin. He seems to believe that in such case, Yaakov would surely want to avenge Reuven for the two sons lost to him [Yaakov], and for whom Reuven is accountable.

However, this is a strange notion, as expressed by Rashi on verse 38: "My son shall not come down with you – he [Yaakov] did not accept Reuven's words. He [Yaakov] said: What a foolish firstborn is this one, who offers to kill his two sons! Are not his sons my sons?" It

goes without saying that Yaakov does not wish for his two grandsons to die! Such a preposterous suggestion can only be made by a fool, as explained by Rashi.

In contrast, Yehuda shows a profound understanding of his father's mindset at this difficult time. Yaakov has no thoughts of revenge, God forbid, but looks for true accountability. Taking responsibility means bearing the consequences of one's actions. Yaakov is looking for a "responsible adult"; one who will make sure all his sons come back safely; one who would bear the sole responsibility, should anything happen. Moreover, this accountable person would also have to live with the success or the failure of the mission at hand for the remainder of his days, because his father will hold him accountable forever.

We left on our shlichut with the aim of helping Am Yisrael, as we had so often been taught in the Straus-Amiel Emissary Program. Often times, when one embarks on emissary work, one feels like Reuven – in the sense that one gives one's all without thinking of the repercussions or the price one might have to pay for certain sacrifices.

Yaakov teaches us that Yehuda's way is better. When one embarks on a mission, the guiding principle must be – "I myself will guarantee his safety; from my hand you shall require him". In other words, of course one must set forth with great energy. However, one must also keep in mind that any emissary work must be carried out with a sense of personal responsibility for the community. One must tread cautiously, making sure no collateral damage is caused to anyone through any action of mine. It means that I am fully accountable. I take responsibility. "I myself will guarantee his safety."

#### Dvar Torah: TorahWeb.Org

#### Rabbi Mordechai Willig

#### What is in a Name?

I. Yosef called his second son Efrayim, "for Hashem has made me fruitful in the land of my suffering" (Bereishis 41:52). According to the simple understanding of the passuk, the root of the name Efrayim - אֶפְרַיִם is pri - פרי, fruit. The Da'as Z'keinim gives a radically different explanation of the name, and says that Efrayim is named after his ancestors Avraham and Yitzchak who are referred to as, "ash – אָפָר". Avraham said, "I am but dust and ash" (Bereishis 18:27), and Hashem sees Yitzchak before Him as if his ashes are on the altar (Rashi Vayikra 26:42), and Efrayim is the plural of eifer, meaning two sets of ashes. Therefore, all of Yisroel, all of whom are descended from Avraham and Yitzchak, are called Efrayim as it is said, "Efrayim, my favorite son" (Yirmiyahu 31:19).

How can this understanding of Efrayim as a plural form of eifer - ashes, be reconciled with the Torah's explicit explanation of Efrayim's name as indicating that Yosef was fruitful,

having been blessed with children, as in the mitzvah of "pru u'rvu - be fruitful and multiply" (1:28)?

Perhaps the answer lies in how the mitzvah of pru u'rvu was redefined for Am Yisroel, beginning with Avraham Avinu. Hashem loved Avraham because he commands his children to keep the way of Hashem (18:19). This includes the paternal obligations of mila, pidyon haben, teaching the child Torah and a trade, and marrying him off so that the generations continue in the way of Hashem (Kiddushin 29a). Furthermore, if his children are not observant, he may not have fulfilled pru u'rvu (Mishna Berura 574:12).

We can now reconcile the seemingly unrelated translations of Efrayim. The literal understanding, recorded in the Torah, is "Hashem has made me fruitful". However, in order to properly fulfill the mandate of being fruitful, pru u'rvu, the children must follow in the way of their ancestors. Therefore, the Da'as Z'keinim links Efrayim to eifer - ashes, a reference to Abraham and Yitzchak. Only by Yosef's sons following in their ways, a particularly difficult challenge in the isolation of the land of his suffering, would his being fruitful constitute a blessing. Thus, the name Efrayim representing the successful transmission of a Torah life to future generations, is an appropriate appellation for all of Am Yisroel.

II. Yosef called his firstborn Menashe, "for Hashem has made me forget all my hardship and all my father's house" (41:51). The K'sav V'hakabala asks: how could Yosef Hatzadik have forgotten his father's house? Wasn't the image of his father (Rashi 39:11) still uppermost in his mind? Why did Yosef not tell his beloved father that he was alive and well, appointed over all the land of Egypt (41:43)?

The answer is that Yosef did not forget his father for even one moment. Moreover, he bemoaned his father's pain over their separation much more than his own. However, his great righteousness prevented him from honoring his father. Hashem decreed in his prophetic dream that his father and brothers would bow down to him (Bereshis 37:7-10, see Rashi). Heavenly decree prevented him from informing his father. He had to overcome his great desire to gladden his father's broken heart, so that the Divine will be fulfilled in its time.

To do Hashem's bidding, he had to distance the thought of honoring his father from his mind. He therefore called his son Menashe, i.e. Hashem enabled me to not think every moment about my father. He was able to put it out of his mind, the equivalent of forgetting. He thanked Hashem, by calling his son Menashe, for this ability. Thus, the name implies great honor toward his father, not the reverse, because only by Hashem's intervention was he able to contain his great love and respect for his father in order to carry out Hashem's plan.

III. Yaakov blessed his grandsons Efrayim and Menashe, and added, "May my name be

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declared upon them and the names of my fathers, Avraham and Yitzchak" (48:16). The Seforim explains that Yaakov prayed that they be tzaddikim worthy of being called proper descendants of their illustrious ancestors. A more literal interpretation is based on the aforementioned comments of the Da'as Z'keinim and the K'sav V'hakabala. The names of Avraham and Yitzchak are called upon Efrayim which refers to their ashes. And the name of Yaakov himself is alluded to in the name Menashe, which recalls the great love and respect that Yosef had for Yaakov.

The text of Yaakov's beracha is used by fathers to bless their children and grandchildren to this very day. We pray that they keep the way of Hashem and be worthy descendants of our forefathers. We often give them the actual names of our forefathers or names which refer to previous generations, as Yosef did.

We utilize the beracha given to Efrayim and Menashe in particular. Just as they were not influenced negatively by their surroundings in Egypt, we bless our progeny that they, too, will not be led astray by the prevailing culture of their time and place.

On Chanukah we celebrate our ability to resist the Hellenization which swept the world and, sadly, corrupted large segments of the Jewish nation; only the fierce dedication of the Chashmonaim saved them from acculturation and assimilation. Only by replicating the countercultural exclamation of "Mi lashem elai" can we overcome the powerful pull of the host culture which is in precipitous decline. May we, like Yosef, Efrayim, and Menashe, withstand the onslaught of the contemporary Greek-like immorality which surrounds us by clinging to the pure Torah values and precepts represented by the Chanukah menorah.

#### Rabbi Hershel Schachter War and Geulah

Rav Kook would sometimes speak about aschalta d'geulah. Several rabbonim from Hungary would attack him in their essays in the Hebrew newspapers, arguing that this notion doesn't make sense - either you have geulah or you don't have geulah - why did Rav Kook invent a new concept of aschalta d'geulah. The truth of the matter is that the expression "aschalta d'geulah" appears in the gemarah. The gemarah states that milchomos (wars) are an aschalta d'geulah. The Chasam Sofer wrote in his diary that there was a period of time that the city Pressburg was under siege in the middle of a war. The war had nothing to do with the Jews or with Eretz Yisroel, and nevertheless the Chasam Sofer understood the gemarah as saying that all wars in the world are aschalta d'geulah. He considered this idea as a halachic concept and said and wrote that one is not permitted to daven that the war should end because you are, in effect, slowing down the process of the geulah. One might have thought that only a navi or one who has ruach ha'kodesh could determine that any given situation is an aschalta d'geulah but the Chasam Sofer did not require such a condition.

Many years later during World War I a suggestion was made that the rabbonim should be

gozer a ta'anis and everyone should daven that the war should end. The Minchas Elozer (Munkatcher Rebbe) dedicated a teshuva to this issue and gave two reasons why he was opposed to the idea: first, it only makes sense to declare a ta'anis tzibbur if there is a reasonable possibility that the tzibbur will do teshuva, and at that time that seemed highly unlikely. Second, he quoted from the Chasam Sofer's diary that all wars in the world are aschalta d'geulah and it is highly improper to slow down the process of geulah.

Rashi, in his commentary on the gemarah, does not seem to agree with the position of the Chasam Sofer. Rashi understood that a war regarding who is the ba'al ha'bayis of Eretz Yisroel which the Jews win would be considered an aschalta d'geulah. In order to determine what should be considered an aschalta d'geulah, we have to first establish what the definition of geulah is. The Ramban writes in his introduction to Sefer Shemos that Sefer Bereishis is all about the three beginnings: the beginning of the world, the beginning of mankind, and the beginning of the Jewish nation. By the end of Chumash Bereishis we have been introduced to the avos (Avrohom, Yitzchok, and Yaakov) and the twelve shevatim. Sefer Shemos then focuses on the first galus of the Jewish people, and the geulah therefrom. Then the Ramban raises an objection to this characterization: the Jewish people don't return back to Eretz Yisroel until after the death of Moshe Rabbeinu when they crossed over the Yarden river under the leadership of Yehoshua bin Nun; not only does the story of the Jewish people entering Eretz Yisroel not appear in Sefer Shemos, it does not appear in the Chumash at all! How can we describe the theme of Sefer Shemos by stating that it deals with the first galus and the geulah therefrom if the returning to Eretz Yisroel only takes place in Sefer Yehoshua? The Ramban explains that the main tragedy in galus Mitzrayim was not so much that the Jews were in chutz la'aretz but rather that they did not have any hashra'as haShechinah. During the lifetime of Avraham, Yitzchok and Yaakov the medrash states that the avos were like the merkava; they had a hashra'as haShechinah. By the time we get to the end of Sefer Shemos, we have read the four parshiyos of Teruma, Tezaveh, Vayakhel and Pekudei which all deal with the construction of the Mishkan, and the hashra'as haShechinah in the Mishkan is considered the geulah. It would appear that the Ramban understood that when the gemarah says that the first geulah took place in Nissan and the geulah asida will also take place in the month of Nissan, the first geulah being referred to is not Yetzias Mitzrayim, rather it is hakomas ha'Mishkan. During the first twelve days in the month of Nissan, the nesi'im of the twelve shevatim brought special korbanos for the purpose of chanukas ha'Mishkan, and in the end of Sefer Yechezkel we read that when the third Beis Hamikdash will be built we will bring special korbanos for a period of six and a half months, starting from Rosh Chodesh Nissan and continuing until after Sukkos.

When Medinas Yisroel was established in 1948, the Chazon Ish had already moved to Eretz Yisroel. In the biographies of the Chazon Ish it is quoted that he said at that time that this is the end of the galus but we still have not experienced the

geulah. Many thought that this was some type of double talk. My impression is that the Chazon Ish is using the concepts that the Ramban developed: since you have a Jewish government controlling Eretz Yisroel all the Jews from all over the world were welcomed to come to Eretz Yisroel and that was considered the end of the galus. But one only has a geulah when you have a hashra'as haShechinah with a Beis Hamikdash.

Once we define geulah as binyan Beis Hamikdash, then aschalta d'geulah would refer to some other events that are going to lead up to the building of the Beis Hamikdash. The gemarah in Sanhedrin (20), quoted by the Rambam in the beginning of Hilchos Melachim, states that there are three mitzvos that have to be fulfilled in a specific order: establishing a Jewish government controlling all of Eretz Yisroel, wiping out the nation of Amalek, and building a beis ha'bechira (a.k.a. the Beis Hamikdash).

During the period of the second Beis Hamikdash, the chachomim added on many yomim tovim d'rabbonon that revolved about major donations to improving the structure of the Beis Hamikdash, the hakovas ha'korbonos, and the institutions of kehunah gedolah and sanhedrin, both of which are connected to the Beis Hamikdash. All of these yomim tovim are listed off in Megilas Taanis. Rashi in his commentary on the gemarah explains that this sefer was known as a megillah because it was already written down before the mishna and the gemarah were permitted to be written down. The gemarah in Rosh Hashanah states that it is not proper to establish a yom tov after the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash because it does not conform to the definition of Megilas Taanis. The commentaries on the gemarah therefore raise the issue: how did Chazal have the right in the first place to establish the yom tov of Purim? According to the gemarah's tradition, the story of Purim took place towards the end of the seventy years of galus Bavel when there was no Beis Hamikdash at all. According to the Pri Chodosh, establishing a yom tov that has nothing to do with the Beis Hamikdash would be a violation of bal tosif!

The Nesivos, in his commentary on Megilas Esther, suggests that the chachomim in that generation felt that on the occasion of neis Purim this was an aschalta d'geulah, i.e. that this would certainly lead to the building of the second Beis Hamikdash. Why so? He explains that Haman is described in the Book of Esther as an Amoleiki and when Haman and his whole crew were put to death, that was mechiyas Amalek, which is step #2 of the mitzvos that lead to the building of the Beis Hamikdash. Like the Chasam Sofer, the Nesivos also assumed that aschalta d'geulah is a halachic concept that carries with it halachic consequences.

Soon after hakomas ha'medinah the German government offered reparations money to the State of Israel. At that time, many members of the knesset felt it to be unethical to accept such money because that would imply that the slaughter of the millions of Jews will all be forgiven by this payment. At that time, Rav Soloveitchik spoke for the Mizrachi in New York and brought out two points: 1. he would tend to agree with that position that we have no right to imply that all is forgiven, and 2. he heard from

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his father that any nation that adopts as a policy to wipe out the entire Jewish people has the status of Amalek and as such it should not be permissible to take the money from the German government; just as Shmuel Ha'navi instructed Shaul Ha'melech that he must not take anything from Amalek, so too throughout the generations one is not permitted to take anything from Amalek even if, for example, it is only a fraction of the money that the Nazis stole from the Jewish people. At that time, some of the relatives of Rav Soloveitchik who lived in Eretz Yisroel let it be known that they did not agree with Rav Soloveitchik. They pointed out that the Rambam in Moreh Nevuchim seems to assume that only those that are biological descendants, ben achar ben, from the original Amaleikim have the status of Amalek. When this position was publicized, some talmidei chachomim in America pointed out that Rav Yisroel Gustman had mentioned a conversation that he had with Rav Chaim Ozer in the middle of the Second World War. Rav Gustman asked Rav Chaim Ozer what the halachic status of the Nazis is, and Rav Chaim Ozer responded, that he would tend to agree with the other gedolim in that generation that the Nazis should probably be considered like Amalek.

In Parshas Beha'uloscho, the Torah instructs us that when there is a war in Eretz Yisroel we had a mitzvah to blow chatzotzros. The Rambam in the beginning of Hilchos Ta'aniyos understands that to mean that there is a special mitzvah lizok u'lihor'a, i.e. to offer special tefillos on the occasion. The Chasam Sofer in his diary wrote that during that war that he experienced in Presburg, they recited Avinu Malkeinu every day. Even on Chanukah, when we don't say Tachanun, we still ought to recite Avinu Malkeinu. On Rosh Hashanah we don't say Tachanun but we do say Avinu Malkeinu. Most probably the correct time to say Avinu Malkeinu after Shacharis should be right after chazoras ha'shatz and before Hallel. A talmid chochom from Lakewood pointed out that in the Siddur Otzer Hatfilos right before Avinu Malkeinu, appears an explanatory paragraph quoting several acharonim who point out that the entire Avinu Malkeinu is based on the nineteen berachos of the weekday shemone esrei. Let us all continue to offer our tefillos that Hakadosh Boruch Hu fulfill his promise that he will wipe out Amalek and that He strengthen the hands of Tzahal that they should be able to fulfill the mitzvah of wiping out Amalek and that this war should lead to the final geulah.



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**Rabbi Benjamin Yudin**

**The High Cost of Free Speech**

In Parshas Miketz (41:51) we are taught that Yosef called the name of his firstborn Menashe because "Hashem has made me forget all my hardships and all my father's household." The first explanation for the name is most understandable. Yosef, who encountered many challenging episodes, trials, and tribulations, gives thanks to Hashem for enabling him to forget and create a family after all his setbacks. The second reason, however, is most difficult to understand. What does it mean that Yosef gives thanks to Hashem for enabling him to forget his father's home? It is clear from the way our sages understand the text that Yosef never forgot his father, his household, and his roots.

In Parshas Vayeishev (39:11), when Yosef overcomes his natural temptation and flees from the advances of his master's wife, Rashi cites the Medrash Tanchuma which states that it was the vision of his father, Yaakov, that enabled Yosef to avoid sin. This shows that Yaakov still played a major role in his life. Similarly, in Parshas Vayigash (45:27), we are taught that when "Yaakov sees the agalos (wagons) that Yosef has sent to transport him to Egypt, the spirit of Yaakov was revived." The Rabbis understand that the wagons represent either the six covered wagons that the twelve princes of Israel donated to transport the Mishkan, as found in Bamidbar (6:3), or to remind Yaakov of the last Torah topic that they studied together, namely the laws of eglah arufah, the incident of a murdered body found in Israel. Regardless, it shows that Yosef did not forget the Torah he learned in Yaakov's house, even after twenty-two years of separation. So, how are we to understand the name Menashe to mean that Hashem helped Yosef forget his father's home?

I'd like to share an explanation given by Reb Simcha Zisel Brody zt"l, Rosh Yeshiva Yeshivas Chevron. He cites the Gemara (Bava Metzia 85a), which teaches that when Reb Zeira, who studied in Babylonia, decided to move and study in Eretz Yisrael under Reb Yochanan, he fasted one hundred times to "forget" the Torah of Bavel, thereby enabling him to more easily absorb the

Torah of Eretz Yisrael. He did not literally forget the Babylonian Talmud, rather he was eager to absorb the new approach to talmud Torah in Eretz Yisrael. Unlike the Babylonian Talmud, which is replete with arguments between the Rabbis, the Jerusalem Talmud is significantly more devoid of friction between the scholars and more straightforward in the implementation and explanation of Jewish law. Reb Zeira demonstrated the ability to adapt from one community to another.

At the end of Parshas Toldos (28:2), Yitzchak instructs Yaakov to leave the land of Israel and marry one of his cousins, the daughters of his uncle Lavan. Rashi on the closing verse in Toldos provides an extensive commentary that proves that between Yaakov's leaving home and arriving at his uncle's home, there was a fourteen-year gap. The Rabbis attribute these fourteen years to Yaakov's having gone to study Torah at the Yeshiva of Shem and Aver. Why was this detour necessary? Reb Yaakov Kaminetzky zt"l (in Emes L'Yaakov) teaches that while Yaakov studied much Torah with his father, that was Torah appropriate for the Land of Israel. Now that Yaakov was going to chutz la'aretz, he needed to study Torah that could be maintained in different surroundings and challenges - the Torah of galus. It is this knowledge that our Rabbis teach us that Yaakov taught his son Yosef. Indeed, this is why Yosef calls his son Menashe as he was thanking Hashem for helping him "forget" the manner of observance in Eretz Yisrael and helping him adapt to his new challenges and surroundings.

As Yosef adapted and forgot his previous lifestyle, it behooves us to unfortunately take a new look and reexamine what has been, for many, a normative behavioral pattern for almost a hundred years. I am referring to the mode whereby many Jewish, and even Torah-observant, families enroll their college-aged students in universities after high school. There, they receive higher education that enables them to advance both individually and to enrich society. The presence of nearby Chabad, Hillel, and shiurim on many campuses has helped sustain and maintain a positive Jewish identification for numerous Jewish students throughout the country.

Since October 7th, there has been an immediate unleashing of anti-Israel and anti-Semitic pronouncements throughout much of the civilized world, especially on college campuses. What perhaps was always there but beneath the surface has now come out of the woodwork, making Jewish students who have loyalty and devotion to Israel feel either threatened or uncomfortable in their academic surroundings. Even worse, a great percentage of Jewish students who are themselves uneducated about the history of Israel, its value for human life, and its humanitarian gestures of urging civilians to leave Gaza and avoid being caught up in the military conflict, are subject to propaganda found both unfortunately in the classroom and in student activities on campus.

We have to learn from Yosef that what worked before might not work in the future. Jewish parents must come to realize the high cost of free speech. They must be informed that there are valid Jewish alternatives to the present challenging secular college campuses, where, in the name of free speech, a great disconnect can be created between our promising Jewish student population and our proud Jewish heritage. What is at stake on secular college campuses today is nothing less than the essence of our identity as the People of the Book, risking the loss of a generation's connection to the profound and timeless wisdom that our sacred texts and traditions offer.

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<https://www.jewishpress.com/indepth/opinions/poison-ivy-too-smart-for-their-own-good/2023/12/14/>

**Poison Ivy: Too Smart for Their Own Good?**

**By Rabbi Moshe Taragin**

December 14, 2023

"Knowledge can easily blur true and falsehood. Accuracy lies in the subtleties of wisdom" (Sefat Emmet, Chanukah). Throughout Mishlei, Shlomo Hamelech explores the relationship between knowledge and morality. Much of the sefer presumes that knowledge and wisdom expand moral reasoning.

Ideally, education does expose us to larger universal truths, extending our horizons beyond our personal and narrow experiences. Any encounter with broader truths decentralizes self-interest and should enhance ethical sensitivity. Additionally, education highlights the complexity of the human condition, hopefully sensitizing us to the experiences and needs of others. Shlomo Hamelech wasn't the only thinker to assume that expanded knowledge heightens moral conscience. Socrates asserted that "virtue is knowledge," assuming that immoral behavior was purely a result of ignorance. Enlightenment thinkers of the 17th and 18th centuries such as Locke and Rousseau were optimistic that widespread education would yield a more civil and humane society. Knowledge, many asserted, was a portal to moral behavior and reasoning.

The shocking events of the past two months have debunked these assumptions. Our just war to defeat pure evil and to defend the world against moral collapse has elicited a vicious wave of enraged antisemitism. Astonishingly, college campuses across the United States have become podiums for hatred and for the support of rape, murder, torture, and dismemberment of human beings. They have also become launching pads for violence against Jews.

University administrations sat by idly, as their students, presumably exposed to the best and finest of Western education, rioted for murder and, in some instances, expressed their verbal hatred through acts of physical violence. To make matters worse, several Ivy League college presidents were summoned by the U.S. Congress to explain their inaction and their implicit support for demonstrations of hate. Their moral hedging and their embarrassing attempts to "contextualize" violence and bigotry was shameful. It provided a wake-up call for those who had previously revered these colleges as "prestigious" institutions of higher learning. Though several of these administrators walked back their heinous comments, their retractions seemed little more than lame apologies meant to save their cozy appointments rather than heartfelt admissions of moral dysfunction. Some of the moral confusion on campuses is just simple, old-fashioned, Jew hatred. Opportunistic antisemites always wait in the wings, eagerly joining whatever group or movement preaches antisemitism. The particular narrative of antisemitism makes no difference, as long as Jews are vilified for fabricated crimes, and hatred is provoked. Hitler built his initial base of support by rallying student groups across Germany to loathsome antisemitism. History repeats itself.

Furthermore, some of the Israel-bashing and Jew-threatening is feeble herd mentality. Social media favors the most vocal shouters and the most aggressive posters. Many protesters against Israel are pitiable stooges, completely ignorant of even the basic details of this war, and are blindly parroting irrelevant slogans, completely unrelated to the complex war we are carefully navigating. Beware of the herd.

However, there are much deeper roots to this appalling academic moral freefall. This intellectual tragedy occurring within these "beacons of enlightened thinking" exposes serious shortfalls within Western culture and showcases implicit dangers of higher education. If knowledgeable professors and cultured students are being duped into morally humiliating and venomous opinions, there is something structurally flawed about our culture. Evidently, some people are too smart for their own good.

#### Over-Sophistication

Our world is complex and human experience is multi-layered. Education trains us to be analytical – to evaluate information, consider multiple perspectives, and make informed decisions. Through analysis we probe beyond surface-level understanding, challenge preconceived notions, and embrace complexity. When we look at the world through a periscope, we miss much of its sweep and texture. Education and analysis enable us to see the world large and whole, rather than narrow and simplistically.

However, the methodology of analysis also blurs moral clarity. As we delve into the intricacies of intellectual analysis, we inadvertently lose sight of simple truths which anchor moral behavior. Though many moral issues do

contain complexity, there are many black and white moral situations which demand clear-cut and unqualified moral certainty.

For this reason, common or uneducated people often possess stronger moral conviction than those who are educated. Ordinary people are often more attuned to inner and untainted moral instincts than sophisticates, who ignore intuitive moral reasoning in their endless search for convoluted moral formulas.

The Torah introduces Yaakov as a simple man who dwelled within tents, while tending to his sheep. Though Yaakov's life would soon turn complicated, he enjoyed a simple youth, insulated from the duplicity of this world and its complex moral predicaments. Similar to Yaakov, many of our greatest leaders, from Moshe Rabeinu to Dovid Hamelech, to many nevi'im such as Amos, began their moral journeys as simple shepherds, far removed from cosmopolitan sophistication. Their pure and noble upbringing provided an ingrained and indissoluble moral backbone.

Moshe the shepherd flees Egypt as a fugitive from the law. Though it is in his best interest to remain incognito, he cannot ignore the young girls he witnesses being harassed at the watering hole. Ignoring any "context" of this harassment, and despite his desire for confidentiality, he rallies to their defense.

My revered rebbe, Rav Aharon Lichtenstein, modeled an uncanny combination of intellectual sophistication and steadfast moral clarity. His lectures were both intellectually scintillating and panoramic. He would discuss a single issue for hours, carefully and delicately unfolding concealed layers of meaning. He taught us to see the world as nuanced rather than binary. Yet, he also displayed clear moral thinking and frequently expressed moral outrage against injustice. His analytic talents didn't obfuscate his moral courage.

This past month has taught us a harsh lesson: knowledge doesn't automatically translate into moral integrity. Perhaps we should examine who we admire and which institutions we consider prestigious. Sharp-witted professors may impress us with their brilliance, but may miserably fail the morality litmus test. Maybe we should pay more respect to those who display moral courage and clear-headed moral principles. Maybe they are more prestigious.

#### Intellectual Arrogance

There may be a more sinister factor causing this despicable moral dysfunction. Acquisition of knowledge can often cause intellectual snobbery. People who amass knowledge often feel superior to those who are less educated. Education provides cultural and social opportunities, including better jobs and social networks. These socio-economic privileges often create a superiority complex. Though intellectual elitism has always existed, in the past it was partially justified given a world of mass illiteracy, when the non-educated had absolutely no access to knowledge. In the modern era of widespread literacy information is accessible to most of the population, who are more than capable of ethical reasoning without benefitting from enlightened moral theories of superior intellects.

In the United States Ivy League colleges have become a cultural icon. As they are vital for professional advancement, they have become objects of prestige and even cultural idolization. Parents are willing to pay sizable fees to facilitate their children's acceptance, and there have been numerous high-profile scandals in which illegal bribes opened the doors to otherwise unsuitable students. Given the absence of an actual aristocracy in the United States, Ivy League professors and students are sometimes viewed as pseudo-aristocracy which often breeds smug arrogance within their inner circles.

It is fair to wonder whether their repulsive moral equivocation stems from a false superiority complex. Why is our moral reality so obvious to everyone but not to them? Could it be that they perceive themselves as possessing a higher and more sophisticated moral logic and better tools for moral calculations? Is their moral confusion a byproduct of their intellectual arrogance?

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from: **Rabbi Yissacher Frand** <ryfrand@torah.org> reply-to: do-not-reply@torah.org to: ravfrand@torah.org date: Dec 14, 2023, 3:59 PM subject: Rav Frand - Pharaoh's Advisors Bought Into Yosef's Interpretation Based on a False Assumption

### **Parshas Miketz Pharaoh's Advisors Bought Into Yosef's Interpretation Based on a False Assumption**

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissacher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Series on the weekly portion: #1273 – Chanukah Lights Motzei Shabbos: How Early? Havdala Before or After Chanukah Lights? Good Shabbos!

After Pharaoh's advisors failed to satisfactorily interpret his dreams, Yosef was brought out of the dungeon and in front of Pharaoh. Yosef not only interprets the dream, but he also offers a plan how to mitigate the situation that the dream portends. Egypt must save up during the good years to prepare for the bad years, and a wise and discerning individual must be placed in charge of implementing this plan.

The pasuk says "And the matter found favor in the eyes of Pharaoh and in the eyes of all his servants." (Bereshis 41:37). Consider the following two scenarios:

Scenario #1: A high-powered law firm is considering a tough case. All the partners are in the conference room trying to figure out what is the best legal approach to the case. They can't figure out a good plan. Suddenly, the guy from the mail room walks into the conference room and hears the issue that the lawyers are discussing and makes a suggestion. The entire legal team of \$650-an-hour lawyers unanimously say "You know what? This kid knows what he is talking about!"

Scenario #2: A group of medical specialists are trying to diagnose a patient and determine a course of treatment for a particularly mysterious illness. They don't know what to do. Suddenly, an orderly who is merely trained to assist patients' daily living activities walks in and suggests a plan for how to treat this patient. All the doctors are blown away by the suggestion, and they tell the orderly, "You know what? You may only have a grade school education, but you are right!"

The chances of either of these scenarios actually occurring is between zero and none. "I, the \$650 an hour lawyer, should listen to this little kid from the mail room?" or "I, the great physician, am going to listen to an orderly?" People's egos won't let that happen. And yet the Torah says "The matter found favor in Pharaoh's eyes, and in the eyes of all his servants!"

Pharaoh's advisors said "This guy is right!" How did that happen? Yosef was a slave who spent the last who knows how many years in prison. Go to the detention center downtown. Yosef should have had as much credibility as any of those prisoners.

Yosef was aware of this challenge. Yosef knew that if he merely suggested an interpretation, no one would believe him. That is why Yosef added the other detail that the solution to this problem is "to get a wise and discerning individual and to give him the authority to implement this plan and to thereby become the viceroy to Pharaoh, the second most important person in the land of Egypt." Every single advisor thought, "Who is this wise and discerning individual? Who is Pharaoh going to appoint?" Each advisor assumed that he would be chosen as the one. Consequently, they all agreed to Yosef's plan.

The story was similar a thousand years later with Haman. "... And the king said to him, 'What shall be done to the man whom the king wishes his welfare?' And Haman said to himself 'Who does the king wish to honor more than me?' (Esther 6:6)

That is why Yosef not only explained the dream, but also suggested a solution for it. Who asked Yosef to advise Pharaoh? Yosef was asked to interpret Pharaoh's dream, not tell Pharaoh what to do! The answer is that Yosef knew what he was up against. He understood that all of Pharaoh's advisors were going to belittle his interpretations and reject anything he told Pharaoh. But once the advisors heard that this interpretation created an

opportunity to be appointed CEO, every advisor thought to himself "Aha! I am CEO material!"

### **Mixing Up Cause and Effect in World Events**

The parsha begins with the words "And it was at the conclusion of two years, Pharaoh dreamt..." (Bereshis 41:1) The Medrash on these words references the pasuk in Iyov (28:3) "Ketz sam l'choshech" (He set an end to the darkness...) and states that "Hashem set an end to Yosef's imprisonment, determining ahead of time how long he would need to remain in prison. Once the end arrived, Pharaoh immediately had his dream."

There is a very important vort from the Beis HaLevi, which is an important insight into how to understand life, and how to understand current events and history.

For instance, if a person has property or merchandise to sell and he sells it and makes a windfall profit, how do we look at that? We say, because he had this merchandise or this property and he sold it, that is why he made money. We view the "cause" as the merchandise and the "effect" as the profit. The Beis HaLevi says that is not how it works. Those labels need to be reversed. The Ribono shel Olam decided that this person will make X amount during this year. It is because it has been determined in Heaven that he will make X amount this year that he got a hold of the merchandise and was able to sell it at the windfall profit.

This is like the old issue of 'what comes first, the chicken or the egg?' In Rabbinic terminology, we need to know what is the "Seebah" (cause) and what is the "Mesovev" (effect). Many times in life, we confuse cause and effect. By the story of Yosef and Pharaoh, someone could say "Pharaoh had a dream. He had no one to interpret it. Yosef was a great interpreter of dreams. Therefore, he summoned Yosef to the palace. That is why Yosef got out of prison!" We see Pharaoh's dream as being the cause and Yosef's freedom being the effect.

The Medrash views the matter differently. Ketz sam l'choshech (An end was set for the darkness). Yosef needs to get out of prison because he was in there for X amount of time, per Heavenly decree. He won't stay there a minute longer. ("And they hurried him out of the pit." (Bereshis 41:14)) Yosef needs to get out. (This is the cause). Therefore, what needs to happen? "And Pharaoh dreamt." (This is the effect.)

I saw the following interesting incident brought in the name of Rav Yaakov Galinsky, who was the great Maggid of Yerushalayim (1920-2014): Rav Galinsky's mother wrote for a newspaper known as Tag Blatt ("The Daily Page") in Poland, which was published by Agudas Yisrael. There were women there who spoke Polish and understood Polish but could not read Polish. This was not uncommon. There are people who are illiterate even though they can understand and speak a particular language. Especially in Poland in those days, women did not go to school so they did not learn to read. Yet, these women wanted to know the news. What did they do? Every night, they gathered in Mrs. Galinsky's house and she read the Polish paper to them. This is how they got their news. They understood Polish and Mrs. Galinsky not only understood Polish, she could read it and write it as well. One night, a certain woman came into the Galinsky home earlier than usual. While Mrs. Galinsky was peeling potatoes in the kitchen, the women picked up the newspaper and gave out a shout. She ran into the kitchen. "Devorah!", she shouted, "A boat sank in the ocean and you are here in the kitchen peeling potatoes?" (The picture was a picture of a new ship that set sail from England. It was such big news that it made the front page of the Tag Blatt.) Mrs. Galinsky did not know what this woman was talking about. She came into the front room and saw that this woman (who could not read Polish) was holding the paper upside down. Held upside down, it looked from the picture like the boat sank into the water. Mrs. Galinsky showed her the proper way to hold the paper. There was no tragedy of a boat sinking.

Rav Yaakov Galinsky drew a homiletic lesson from this story to understanding world events. He said that we often read the paper upside down! We look at world events and we say "Aha, because of 'X', that is why Y happened." We believe that X is the cause and Y is the effect. But so many times in life, what we see as the cause is really the effect and vice versa.

This is especially true because we know that everything in the world happens because of the Jewish people (“HaKol bishvil Yisrael”) (Medrash Tanchuma Shoftim Siman 9). When there are wars or political turmoil in the world, wait to see what happens. Everything is for the sake of Israel. We look at these events backwards and say because of “X” that is why “Y” happens. We need to approach the matter with wisdom. We need to know how to read the newspaper. We need to read it right side up.e HeH

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### Rav Soloveitchik on Miketz: The Faith of Forgiveness

**Rabbi Aaron Goldscheider** (Excerpted from Torah United, Teachings on The Weekly Parashah From Rav Avraham Yitzchak Hakohen Kook, Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, and The Chassidic Masters (Ktav, 2023)

Almost two decades after the brothers sold their despised sibling to passing peddlers, they now face him once more, and this time he has the upper hand. A world run by God is indeed a small world after all. In the meantime, Yosef has become unrecognizable—his beard has grown out, he is decked in royal finery, and he speaks through an interpreter—so the brothers do not identify him as Yosef. He, however, recognizes his flesh and blood immediately. Why, though, does the Torah state twice, in two consecutive verses, that Yosef recognizes them? “Yosef saw his brothers and recognized them... Yosef recognized his brothers...” (Genesis 42:7-8). In the thinking of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, initially Yosef recognizes them as the brothers of his haunted past, who betrayed him and caused him untold pain and suffering. Resentful, “he made himself a stranger to them and spoke to them harshly” (Genesis 42:7). But then Yosef looks at his brothers again, this time more closely:

Studying their faces, however, he discovered a change. Levi and Shimon’s faces softened; they did not reflect the same ferocity. They had a different look; the steely gray eyes turned blue, dreamy. Yehudah’s face had matured; there was firmness and determination in his features. The brothers looked depressed, as if they lacked inner peace, as if some grisly fear haunted them. They came with a contrite heart.

In the Rav’s vivid portrayal, Yosef beholds the brothers as they are now, and not as they are etched horribly into his memory. He comes to truly recognize the ten men before him, to see in their countenances and deportment that they, too, have changed in the intervening years and are not who they once were. He allows himself to form new impressions, and he relents. A Change of Heart According to the late Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, this episode is “the first recorded act of forgiveness in literature.”<sup>3</sup> But how does Yosef have any room for clemency given what he has gone through at his brothers’ hands? Surprisingly, Yosef himself later indicates that this was no interpersonal character trait, but one between man and God. Later, Yosef encourages his brothers with the following explanation:

“Now, do not be sad, and let it not distress you... because God sent me before you. [...] God sent me before you [...] you did not send me here but God did.” (Genesis 45:5-8)

He reconfirms this after Yaakov’s death, when the brothers were concerned that only their father’s presence kept Yosef’s hatred at bay:“

Have no fear. Am I in place of God? You plotted to harm me, but God intended it for good, to accomplish what is now being done, sustaining a

great people. So, have no fear; I will provide for you and your young ones.” He reassured them and spoke kindly to them. (Genesis 50:19-21) As Yosef reflects on his own life experiences, he sees the providential hand of God behind even the most agonizing of moments. Yosef is committed to reframing everything he has endured, thereby mitigating the guilt of his brothers.

Yosef teaches us a profound lesson about human relationships. Forgiveness may be based on faith that people can change, but it is also based on faith that God is at work behind the scenes. If one is absolutely convinced that there are invisible strings above pulling on human beings, it becomes almost an absurdity to lay blame at the puppet’s feet.

His Mother’s Son

Eventually, the brothers return to Canaan with the astonishing news that Yosef is alive and more than well in Egypt. The brothers exclaim to Yaakov, “‘Yosef is still alive and he rules over the entire land of Egypt!’ His heart stopped and he did not believe them” (Genesis 45:26). On the face of it, “his heart stopped” means Yaakov was so overwhelmed by the astonishing news that he fainted. But the Rav perceives more than immediately meets the eye. Needless to say, Yaakov is ecstatic to learn that his beloved son is alive. But immediately another thought flashes through his mind: Has he kept the faith of his father? 9 YUTORAH IN PRINT • Miketz 5784 Download thousands of audio shiurim and articles at [www.yutorah.org](http://www.yutorah.org) and forefathers? Could the second-in-command “over the entire land of Egypt” be the same Yosef with whom he learned and to whom he transmitted Avraham’s way of life? When the Torah says “his heart stopped,” it captures a moment of trepidation. Yaakov cannot help but wonder, “My son is physically alive, but is he spiritually sound?”

Only after the brothers relay to him “all the words of Yosef that he spoke to them” does it say that “the spirit of Yaakov, their father, revived” (Genesis 45:27). What were these becalming “words”? The Rav believes they were Yosef’s words of conciliation and recognition that the sale was part of God’s plan. Yaakov was reassured—only a descendant of Avraham who had maintained his faith and emulated his forbear’s compassion could have genuinely declared his own enslavement and near murder as water under the bridge.

The Rav adds that Yosef had a more immediate role model for kindness in general and for reconciliation with older siblings in particular. His mother Rachel, in an almost superhuman act of kindness, allowed her older sister Leah to take her place under the bridal canopy with Yaakov. Her sensitivity to Leah’s needs and personal sacrifice for her, coming perhaps at the expense of her own happiness in life, surely helped mold Yosef’s compassion. “Only a superhuman, only the son of Rachel could do it.”

Yosef offering his hand in peace to brothers who had acted so cruelly to him is an astounding gesture of love and tenderness in the history of the first family of Israel. Yosef’s act of appeasement exemplified a trait that he absorbed from his ancestors. However, it can be said that Yosef raised the bar even higher, by extending extraordinary mercy and love to those who were unquestionably guilty, in order to achieve unity and lasting peace within the family.

The Saintliness of Compassion

Yosef’s compassion and desire to reconcile with his brothers prompted the Talmudic Sages to refer to him as “Yosef the Tzadik.” The Rav adds that because Yosef did not display vindictiveness towards his brothers, Moshe, in the blessings he conferred before his death, bestowed upon the tribe of Yosef the title of saintliness by calling it “the Nazirite of his brothers” (יְנִזְרֵעַ בָּנָיו).

Yosef’s saintly attribute can still be found in this world, even in modern times. Once there was a young man in Keneses Yisrael, the yeshiva headed by the illustrious master of Musar, the Alter of Slabodka (Rabbi Nosson Tzvi Finkel).

He was known in his yeshiva as an outstanding, budding Torah scholar, and was soon to be married to a young lady from a prominent family. A fellow student, caught in the grip of jealousy, began spreading false rumors to hurt

the intended chatan's image. The parents of the kallah understandably became concerned and called off the nuptials. This sent the young man in a downward spiral, ending with his conscription in the Czar's Army. Years later, the Alter received a letter of apology from the slanderer. He did not have the courage to approach his victim directly and asked the Alter to intervene. The Alter had misgivings but had an exploratory conversation anyway. It became clear that the innocent victim bore no grudge and completely and absolutely forgave his oppressor. He told the astonished Alter, "I forgive fully. This was from God, and whatever God does is for good." Whereupon the Alter called him "a true tzadik," and set him as an example for his peers.

#### Exploring the Rav's Insight

Yosef's faith that everything is in God's all-capable hands enabled him to forgive, but not quite to forget. According to the Midrash, when he traveled with his brothers to Chevron to bury Yaakov, he detoured back to the pit, the scene of the terrible crime, on the way back. He peered down into the cistern and declared, "Blessed be the Omnipresent who worked a miracle for me in this place" 10. (בָּרוּךְ הוּא קָדוֹם בְּאַתָּה לְיִגְעַשׂ בְּאַתָּה קָדוֹם בְּאַתָּה שְׁלָמָה) Yosef had reframed the event within the framework of God's plan, which only becomes evident in hindsight, such that it was completely transformed for him intellectually and psychologically.

We learn from Yosef that the key to forgiveness is working on our faith in divine providence. The classic work of exposition of the 613 commandments, Sefer ha-Chinuch, states that the key to following the Torah's commandments not to hold a grudge nor to take revenge requires internalizing that everything that happens, good or ill, is God's handiwork.<sup>11</sup> When an individual adopts this perspective, feelings of animosity are seen to be out of place, and anger against those who have hurt us subsides.<sup>12</sup> This acts as more than preventative medicine empowering us to not violate the Torah's commandments. Even if he forgave the human agents of God's plan, Yosef had every reason to wallow in self-pity. Instead, he maintained his dignity, worked hard, and came out on top, with more than a little help from God. God had put him into the pit, but He also raised him to the second highest position in mighty Egypt. The faith of forgiveness can be the elixir of life.

[1] Rashbam ad loc.[2] Chumash Mesoras Harav, 1:312.[3] Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, "What It Takes to Forgive (Vayechi 5778)," <https://rabbisacks.org/takes-forgive-vayechi-5778/> (accessed ...March 31, 2021).[4] Chumash Mesoras Harav, 1:336.[5] Ibid., 1:333. See Rashi on Genesis 29:25.[6] Holzer, The Rav Thinking Aloud: Bereishis, 402.[7] See, e.g., Yoma 35b.[8] Chumash Mesoras Harav, 1:333. Yaakov himself had already used this expression (see Genesis 49:26), but its repetition extended it to the entire tribe.[9] Tovolski, Ke-Tzet ha-Shemesh, 188.[10] Midrash Tanchuma, Vayechi, §17.[11] Sefer ha-Chinuch, §§241–242.[12] This does not mean that we must be dismissive of emotions such as anger or grief; in fact, we learn from our Matriarch Sarah that they can be directed at God. See the Chassidut Dvar Torah for Parashat Chayei Sarah.

<https://www.jewishpress.com/judaism/parsha/inconspicuous-in-exile/2023/12/14/>

#### Rav Dovid Feinstein ZT"ל on the Parsha Presented by Raphael Grunfeld

Yosef was meant to be freed from jail immediately after he interpreted the dreams of Pharaoh's butler and baker. But he was kept in jail for another two years because he relied on the butler to plead his case to Pharaoh to release him from jail, when he should have relied on G-d alone (Rashi to Bereishis 40:23).

What was Yosef's sin that deserved this punishment? Is it not a rule that: Ein somchim al ha'nes, one should not rely on miracles? Rather, one should try one's best to solve the situation on one's own and only when one has exhausted one's human capacities will G-d take over?

We see the principle of ein somchim al ha'nes many times in the Torah. It was not the ark on which Noach toiled for 120 days that saved him. The

gushing waters rendered him powerless to close its doors. It took G-d's direct intervention to achieve that, "Vayisgor Hasehm ba'ado – and G-d shut the door for him" (7:16). If it required G-d's direct intervention to save Noach anyway, why did G-d task him with the huge undertaking of building the ark?

When the daughter of Pharaoh discovered Moshe hidden in the river, she stretched out her hand as far as she was physically able to retrieve him, but still he remained out of reach. The Talmud tells us (Sotah 12b) that at that point, G-d miraculously extended her arm further to enable her to draw him from the water. And why was it necessary to equip the shulchan, the table in the sanctuary with kesavos, which were hollow, golden canes designed to allow air to circulate freely between Lechem Hapanim (the twelve loaves of bread) so that they would not become stale? Didn't they miraculously remain warm and fresh from Shabbat to Shabbat anyway without human intervention (Menachos 96b)?

The answer to all of these questions is that G-d will only step in with miracles when one has done all that is humanly possible to help oneself. So what did Yosef do wrong?

The answer is that the rule of ein somchim al ha'nes applies only when there is no miracle already in progress at the time of danger. But where it is clear that G-d is already busy working a miracle on one's behalf, it is presumptuous to believe that G-d needs our help and cannot go it alone. In this case, miracles were already unfolding before Yosef's eyes. Although he was not a dream interpreter, he saw that G-d intervened and enabled him to correctly interpret the dreams of the butler and baker, when none of the professional dream interpreters could do so, (40:8). If you see G-d's hand already at work, step out of the way and let Him finish the job.

Pharaoh dreams that "vehineh omed al haye'or – he was standing on the river" (41:1). Before his dreams, Pharaoh considered himself to be a god who walked on water. He boasted that the Nile, the nerve center of Egypt's economy, belonged to him and that he had created it, "Li ye'ori ve'anu asitini – the river is mine and I made it," (Yechezkel 29:3). But he woke up from his dreams feeling vulnerable. Although his regular dream interpreters told him that the dreams meant that he would have seven daughters and would bury seven daughters, the Torah tells us that this interpretation that focused on his personal life did not satisfy him in his role as Pharaoh, the monarch of Egypt.

Pharaoh was preoccupied with affairs of state, not with personal matters. He was worried that if the economy of Egypt would fail, he would be ousted from power. So when he repeated his dream anxiously to Yosef, he spoke like a vulnerable human being, "hineni omed al sfas haye'or – I stood on the bank of the river" 41:17). Now pharaoh is standing on the edge like everyone else, in need and worried for his physical survival. He no longer walks on water.

When, two years later, the butler finally remembers Yosef, Pharaoh sends for him urgently and he is released from jail. Clearly, time is of the essence when Pharaoh is in distress. Yet, Yosef does not go to see him right away. He only does so after taking a haircut and changing his clothes (41:14). Why make the mighty king of Egypt wait when there is in an emergency?

Rashi tells us that Yosef did so out of respect for royalty. We are cautioned "Heve mispalal beshloma shel malchus she'ilmaleh mora'ah, ish es re'ehu chayim belo'o – pray for the welfare of the government because if people do not fear it, they would eat each other alive." Although Yosef might be delayed for a while, it would be disrespectful to show up in prison clothes and with unkempt hair. Besides, that first impression would remain forever and Yosef would never be taken seriously as the viceroy of Egypt.

Before Yosef is officially appointed as viceroy to the king, he is told that he should get married. His job requires focus and dedication. He cannot be distracted with bachelor pursuits, kol she'ein lo isha shorui belo choma, a person who is without a wife is unprotected from sin (Yevamos 62b).

During the years of famine Yosef's wife Osnat bore him two children. Yosef calls the firstborn child Menashe, "ki nashani elokim es kol amali ve'es kol

beis avi – because G-d has made me forget all my hardship and all my father's house" (41:51).

We know Yosef never forgot his father. Even though he no longer lived next to him, his father was an ever-present influence wherever he went and whatever he did. Yosef was able to resist succumbing to the seductive overtures of Potiphar's wife because the image of his father came between him and his desire.

So what is Yosef saying? He is not saying he forgot his father, he is saying he forgot his father's household and the sibling jealousy that was part of it. Yosef had a frenetic job to do. He was running from pillar to post trying to save the greatest world economy from imminent disaster. He simply did not have the time to dwell on petty brotherly rivalry. In the end he was thankful to his brothers for selling him into slavery because it helped him save his entire family from hunger and, as he later says, "ki lemichyah shelachani elokim lifneichem – for G-d sent me before you to keep you alive" (45:5). It seems that many family disputes would be resolved if people just focused on making money themselves instead living off other people's money.

Yaakov sees that there is famine in Canaan but there are stockpiles of food in Egypt. Even though Yaakov and his family had sufficient food at that time and did not require the assistance of Egypt, his non-Jewish neighbors did. And so Yaakov ordered his sons to join the crowd that was going down to Egypt in search of food. He said to his sons "Lamah tisrau" (42:1), why would you risk the envy of your neighbors by appearing to have enough food when they are starving. We know that ma'aseh avos siman lebonim, the purpose of many of the patriarchs actions was to teach their future generations how to conduct themselves in the diaspora. If you are blessed with wealth, keep a low profile and don't be conspicuous.

Yosef recognizes his brothers but he hides his identity from them. When he sees them, the first thing that comes to mind is the dreams he had about them. "Vayizkor Yosef et hachlomos asher chalam lahem" (42:9). He had dreamt that he was binding sheaves of corn with his brothers and his sheaves stood upright and his brothers' sheaves stood round about and bowed down to his sheaves. This dream had nothing to do with Yosef wanting to rule over his brothers. The Torah does not say "asher chalam aleihem," that he was dreaming about ruling over them, but that his dreams were "lahem," for his brothers' benefit. He dreamt about providing food for his brothers in times of need. And now this dream had come true. So why did he not identify himself there and then? Why did continue to remain anonymous? Because he also had another dream of eleven stars bowing down to him and this dream included Bejamin. He wanted that dream to come true as well and so he devised a strategy to bring Benjamin down to Egypt too.

Yosef, like his father before him (See Rashi to 7:11) knew the significance of these dreams and that they were destined to come true. But he also knew that they could not be realized before Yaakov had lived for 22 years separated from Yosef. This, we are told is what Yaakov had to endure for staying away from his father Yitzchak for 22 years. Yosef met his brothers in the twenty-first year and he knew that there was one year to go before he could reveal his identity and be reunited with his father. So he kept up the pretense for another year. But it pained him to make his brothers suffer even though they made him suffer in the past.

The Torah conveys to us Yosef's suffering in causing his brothers pain. It uses the words "Vayisov me'aleihem vayevch" (42:24). Chazal tell us that the letters "Vay" convey distress. Vay sav, Yosef was distressed for his father, sav, the old man who had to suffer another year of separation from his son. Vay kaf-beis, woe unto the 22 years that Yaakov had to suffer.

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## 5784 - The Year of the Rare Haftarah

by Rabbi Yehuda Spitz

Our current year, 5784, is a rare one indeed. It is classified as (me'uberet - leap year) in our calendars. This abbreviation is referring to Rosh Hashanah falling out on Shabbos (zayin), both months of Cheshvan and Kislev being

chosheir (ches; 29-day months instead of 30; these are the only months that can switch off in our set calendar),[i] and Pesach falling out on Tuesday (gimmel). Although technically not the rarest of years, out of the 14 possibilities in Tur's 247-year calendar cycle,[ii] this year type occurs on average 14 times out of 247, or only once in about 18 years (5.8% of the time).[iii] The reasons and rules governing the whys and whens this transpires are too complicated for this discussion; suffice to say that when the Mishnah Berurah discusses these issues he writes "ain kam makom l'ha'arich," that this is not the place to expound in detail,[iv] which is certainly good enough for this author.

However, that is not why I am referring to our year as rare. Rather, it is because in this special year, not just one, but three out of the six rarest haftaros will be leined. The next time this will occur is in another seventeen years, in 5801/2040.[v] But first, a bit of background is in order.

### Haftarah History

According to the Abudraham and Tosafos Yom Tov, the haftaros were established when the wicked Antiochus IV (infamous from the Chanukah miracle) outlawed public reading of the Torah. The Chachamim of the time therefore established the custom of reading a topic from the Nevi'im similar to what was supposed to be read from the Torah.[vi] Even after the decree was nullified, and even prior to the Gemara's printing, this became minhag Yisrael.

Most haftaros share some similarity with at least one concept presented in the Torah reading. The Gemara Megillah (29b-31a) discusses the proper haftarah readings for the various holidays throughout the year, which are rather related to the holiday and generally trump a weekly haftarah. But it is not just Yomim Tovim that may "knock off" a regular haftarah, but special Shabbosos, and usually, even if Rosh Chodesh falls out on Sunday.[vii] Hence, practically speaking, there are several haftaros that almost never get a chance to be leined publicly. But, as mentioned previously, this year, three out of the six rarest haftaros will be leined. Let's discuss when and why.

### Haftaras Parashas Mikeitz

This year, as the eight-day chag of Chanukah started on a Friday, it ends on a Friday as well – right before Parashas Mikeitz. This affords us a rare opportunity to read Mikeitz's actual haftarah; as the vast majority of the time Mikeitz is Shabbos Chanukah, which causes its haftarah to be pre-empted for one of the special Shabbos Chanukah haftaros.[viii]

This haftarah, "Vayikatz Shlomo," discussing the wisdom of Shlomo HaMelech – ordering to cut the disputed baby in half in order to determine his real mother, was last publicly read three years ago in 5781, and before that twenty years prior back in 5761.[ix] This is actually the second rarest haftarah Ashkenazim read – just 24 times over the Tur's entire 247-year cycle,[x] and averages once in ten years. Essentially, the only time this haftarah can be leined is when Chanukah starts on a Friday and hence ends directly before Shabbos Mikeitz. The next time this haftarah is slated to be read is in another 17 years in 5801/2040.

### Haftaras Parashas Tazria

The second of our rare haftaros leined this year is that of Parashas Tazria, "V'ish ba." [xi] Although statistically speaking, it is on average read every 6 years (16.32% of the time), nevertheless, it practically has not been leined in 21 years – since 5763/2003. There are several reasons for this. When the Parshiyos of Tazria and Metzora are read together (which they are in a standard year; they are only leined separately in a leap year), only the haftarah of the latter Parashah is read.[xii] This means it is only possible for Tazria's haftarah to be read in a leap year. Moreover, Tazria can also be Parashas HaChodesh, which would also trump its leining.[xiii] That, plus the preponderance of Shabbos Rosh Chodesh or Rosh Chodesh falling on Sunday, both of which would preclude it from being leined, make this year's Tazria's stand-alone haftarah quite a rare read, indeed.[xiv]

### Rarest of All

However, the piece de resistance is that the hands-down rarest haftarah for Ashkenazic Jewry will actually be read this year. I am referring to the haftarah of Parashas Kedoshim, "Hasishpot." [xv] It is read on average only

once in seventeen years, only 5.8% of the time. The last times it was leined was in 5733/1973 and then in 5757/1997, twenty-seven years ago. There are even times when “Hasishpot” goes forty-four years in between leinings.[xvi] The next several times it will be leined are in another 17 years, in 5801/2041, and following in another 27 years, in 5828/2068. As noted by Rav Moshe Feinstein, practically speaking, “Hasishpot” can only be leined in a *ל"ט* me’uberes year, and its reading is considered so rare, that it is as if it is ‘*k’maat hu ne’elam mi’stam adam*, almost hidden from the average person’s conscience.’[xvii]

#### Why So Rare?

Now that we established the ‘what,’ we can address the ‘why’. As mentioned previously, generally speaking, whenever there is a double parashah, the haftarah of the second parashah is read, as that is the Torah reading that we just concluded.

Yet, when it comes to the parshiyos of Acharei Mos and Kedoshim, it seems that it is not so simple. Although the Shulchan Aruch does not mention any difference between these and other double parshiyos, the Rema, the great codifier of Ashkenazic psak, (citing precedent from the Sefer Haminhagim and the Mordechai), rules that the haftarah of the first parashah, Acharei Mos, is the proper one to read.

#### Acharei Exclusion

The reason for the uncharacteristic change is that the haftarah of Parshas Kedoshim, ‘Hasishpot,’ from sefer Yechezkel, includes what is known as ‘*To’avas Yerushalayim*,’ referring to a revealing prophecy of the woeful spiritual state and the terrible happenings that will occur to the inhabitants of Eretz Yisrael for not following the word of G-d. The Gemara in Megillah (25b) relates a story of Rabbi Eliezer and one who read such a haftarah, who was subsequently found to have his own family’s indiscretions exposed. Ultimately though, the Gemara concludes that that haftarah can indeed be read, and even translated.[xviii]

#### Hazardous Haftarah?

Despite that, all the same, it seems that we are being taught that whenever possible, we should try to avoid having to read this condemning passage as the haftarah. Additionally, the content of Acharei Mos’s haftarah, ‘*Halo K’Bnei Kushiyim*’ (from Amos in Trei Asar Ch. 9) has similar content to Parshas Kedoshim as well. Therefore, the Rema rules that when the Torah reading is the double parshiyos of Acharei Mos and Kedoshim, and as opposed to every other double parashah, the haftarah of Acharei Mos is read instead of Kedoshim’s.

Although the Levush vigorously argued against switching the haftaros, positing that it is a printing mistake in the earlier authorities to suggest such a switch,[xix] nevertheless, the Rema’s rule is followed by virtually all later Poskim and Ashkenazic Kehillos.[xx]

However, it must be noted that this switch was not accepted by Sefardic authorities and when Acharei Mos and Kedoshim are combined, they do indeed read Kedoshim’s haftarah, ‘Hasishpot.’[xxi]

#### Acharei or Kedoshim?

But there is more to the story and a fascinating dichotomy. As mentioned previously, often special haftaros push off the regular one. For example, the Gemara states that whenever Rosh Chodesh falls out on Shabbos, a special haftarah is read: ‘*Hashamayim Kisi*,’ as it mentions both the inyanim of Shabbos and Rosh Chodesh.[xxii] If Rosh Chodesh falls out on Sunday, then on the preceding Shabbos, the haftarah of ‘*Machar Chodesh*’ is read, as it mentions the following day being Rosh Chodesh. This is the codified halacha as well, barring specific exceptions.[xxiii]

Rav Akiva Eiger, adding a wrinkle, writes that when Parshas Acharei Mos falls out on Erev Rosh Chodesh and its haftarah gets pushed off for ‘*Machar Chodesh*,’ then the proper haftarah for Parshas Kedoshim the next week is... Acharei Mos’s haftarah, and not Kedoshim’s![xxiv] Rav Eiger’s reasoning is since we find precedent by a double parashah that we actively try not to read Kedoshim’s haftarah due to its explicit content, the same should apply for any other time Acharei Mos’s haftarah was not read, for whatever reason -

that it should trump and therefore replace (and displace) Kedoshim’s haftarah!

Although not universally accepted,[xxv] Rav Akiva Eiger’s rule is cited as the halachah by the Mishnah Berurah, and the proper Ashkenazic minhag by the Kaf Hachaim.[xxvi] The Chazon Ish, as well as Rav Moshe Feinstein, and Rav Chaim Kanievsky,[xxvii] all ruled this way as well. That is why in years when Acharei Mos is Shabbos Hagadol and its usual haftarah is not read, but rather replaced by the special haftarah for Shabbos Hagadol, many shuls read Acharei Mos’s haftarah on Parshas Kedoshim, instead of Kedoshim’s usual one. In other words, if either of the two parshiyos requires a special haftarah, Kedoshim’s “Hasishpot” is not leined at all, but rather Acharei Mos’ “Halo” is read on the other Shabbos.

So, practically speaking, unless a very specific year such as ours, the common Ashkenazic minhag is to almost never lein “Hasishpot.” But this year, for the first time in twenty-seven years, there is no special haftarah available to trump either of the two haftaros. And hence, the rarest of haftaros for Ashkenazim, “Hasishpot,” will actually, finally be leined.[xxviii] Never Read

However, there is an alternate, albeit not the common custom - an old Yerushalmi minhag - not to ever read the haftarah of Kedoshim. Even in a year such as ours, when the Parshiyos are separate, Acharei Mos’s haftarah, “Halo,” is instead read two weeks in a row.[xxix] [xxx] This minhag is claimed to be dated to the esteemed Rav of Yerushalayim of the late 1800s and early 1900s, Rav Shmuel Salant (to 5662/1902),[xxx] with precedent cited for reading the same haftarah two weeks in row from the rare occurrence of Purim Meshulash in Yerushalayim.[xxxii]

However, as noted, this is not the common minhag, and actually Kedoshim’s haftarah, “Hisishpot,” the actual rarest haftarah read for most of Ashkenazic Jewry, is indeed slated to be read by the majority of Klal Yisrael this year – the first time since 5757/1997.[xxxiii]

Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch famously wrote that “the Jew’s catechism is his calendar.”[xxxiv] It is this author’s wish that by showcasing the uniqueness of our calendar year and its rare haftaros, this article will help raise appreciation of them and our calendarical customs.

This author wishes to thank R’ Yosef Yehuda Weber, author of ‘*Understanding the Jewish Calendar*,’ for originally ‘tipping me off’ as to the rare haftaros being leined this year, as well as for being a fount of calendarical knowledge.

Rabbi Yehuda Spitz, author of M’Shulchan Yehuda on Inyanei Halacha and ‘*Insights Into Halacha*,’ serves as the Sho’el U’Meishiv and Rosh Chabura of the Ohr Lagolah Halacha Kollel at Yeshivas Ohr Somayach in Yerushalayim.

For any questions, comments or for the full *Mareh Mekomos* / sources, please e-mail the author: [yspitz@ohr.edu](mailto:yspitz@ohr.edu).

Rabbi Spitz’s recent English halacha sefer, “*Insights Into Halacha - Food: A Halachic Analysis*,” (Mosaica/Feldheim) has more than 500 pages and features over 30 comprehensive chapters discussing a myriad of halachic issues relating to food, in an engaging manner. It is now available online.. Footnotes at [https://ohr.edu/this\\_week/insights\\_into\\_halacha/11470](https://ohr.edu/this_week/insights_into_halacha/11470)

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Rabbi Reisman – Parshas Mikeitz 5784

1 – Topic – A Beautiful Thought Regarding the 70 Leshonos.

As we are on the Yom Shevii Shel Chanukah approaching quickly Shabbos Parshas Mikeitz, in an unusual year where Shabbos Parshas Mikeitz is not Shabbos Chanukah it is actually the day after Chanukah. If there is an Isru Chag Chanukah then that is what it is. Let’s say a Vort on Parshas Mikeitz and then we will see if we can have a thought that is Nogea more to today. Beginning with Parshas Mikeitz. The Gemara says in Sotah 36b (10 lines from the bottom) **בשעה שאמר לו פרעה ל יוסף ובלעדי לך ירדים איש את זיו**. At the

time that Pharaoh said to Yosef that you would be a leader over Mitzrayim. (אָמַרְתָּ אֶצְתָּגָנִי פְּרָעָה) there was a complaint from the officers of Pharaoh, (כְּהַא יָדַע בְּשָׁבָעִים לְשׁוֹן). You want Yosef to be the viceroy over Mitzrayim, he has to know 70 languages. (כְּאֵגְבָּרִיאֵל וּלְיִמְדֹו שְׁבָעִים לְשׁוֹן). Gavriel came to teach him the 70 languages. (לֹא הָוָה קָגָמָר). It didn't work. (הַסּוֹרֵף לוֹא אָחָת). The Gemara says that a letter of G-d's name was added to Yosef's name, (וְלֹא) and presto he was able to understand (שְׁנָאָמַר עֲדוֹת בִּיהוָה שְׁמוֹ). His name became Yosef (בְּצָאתָו עַל אֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם). At the time that he went out to Mitzrayim. So we are told that Yosef learned the 70 languages as we know, and for that to happen HKB" H added an Os.

The question of course is that learning 70 languages in one day is a miracle. It is a Chiddush that Yosef didn't know and that an Os of the Sheim Hashem had to be added? To learn 70 languages in a lifetime is a challenge, 70 languages in one shot? What was it that originally they thought that Kavayochel G-d said that we will teach him and then He said we have to add an Os. What changed exactly? It needs an explanation.

The Maharsha on that Gemara asks another Kasha. In the same Gemara in Sotah it says a different reason why a letter was added to his name. It says, (הַסּוֹרֵף עַלְיוֹן אָחָת שְׁמֵם בְּסִתְרֵה הַסּוֹרֵף שְׁמֵם שֶׁל הַקָּבָ"ה). Because Yosef was Mikadeish Sheim Shamayim B'seiser, meaning that he resisted the temptation of Eishes Potiphar, nobody knew about it but B'seiser it was a Kiddush Hashem, so Hashem added the Hei. So the Gemara says Freigt the Maharsha a different reason for the Hei to be added.

In order to explain this I saw in the Sefer Ivrah D'dasha Gevaldig. He says the following. He quotes the Chiddushei Harim. The Chiddushei Harim says the language of every nation reflects the personality of that nation. It reflects the essence of that nation. The Chiddushei Harim says it is specifically talking about the language Tzar'fasi, the French language. The French as you know are more into so to speak, culturally more attached to certain what we consider to be improper behavior between the genders, and it is a Lashon Meguna. Therefore, that is reflected in the language of French. The Chiddushei Harim says that the reason Rashi sticks some French words in his Pirush on Chumash B'laz, to somehow to pull the language to Kedusha. I don't know how that works, I have no clue, but one thing that he is saying is that the language has something to do with the people.

Of course with this we can understand that Pharaoh who was able to learn 69 languages, he was not able to grasp Lashon Kodesh. If he already learned 69 languages he couldn't learn one more? No. The essence of Lashon Kodesh is Kedusha, and therefore, he was not able to grasp the language. That is how it is explained that in today's modern Hebrew, Ivrit strays from true Lashon Kodesh in many ways because it is not so simple to just be able to grasp the Heilige Lashon of Lashon Kodesh.

The Chasam Sofer writes that when Klal Yisrael came back in the Bayis Sheini, they spoke Aramis. The Chasam Sofer wondered and said he sees people from other nations go to other countries and the Spanish are still speaking Spanish, why couldn't the Jews after 70 years speak Lashon Kodesh? He says the same idea. The idea that the language has to do with the essence of the people. To the degree that Lashon Kodesh has to do with Kedusha we are missing Kedusha, then it is hard to grasp Lashon Kodesh.

Yosef was not able to grasp the 70 Leshonos. Why? If Gavriel is the teacher apparently Gavriel felt confident that he could do it. The answer is it was not because there was something missing in the teacher/student relationship. Yosef had the intellect to grasp the 70 languages. But he was so Kadosh that his mouth only spoke Lashon Kodesh. To start mixing into other languages and other values, it didn't work for Yosef.

However, the Gemara is telling us that in the Zechus that he was Mikadeish Sheim Shamayim B'seiser, Yosef was private, alone, away from the Jewish people and stayed faithful to Torah Hakedosha, that gave him the power, that gave him the ability to withstand the Nisyonus of the nations of the world. Allowed him to absorb the language of the 69 Leshonos without having a Yerida, without him falling in his level. So that, it is true that the Hei was added because of the Mikadeish Sheim Shamayim. V'ha Gufa, that is the reason that he was able to absorb the 69 Leshonos and he really should have

been majorly influenced by it and his Neshama shouldn't take it. But because he had this protection from the influence of the Umos Ha'olam he was able to take it.

<https://www.jewishpress.com/judaism/parsha/a-dream-come-true/2023/12/14/>

### A Dream Come True

**By Rabbi Dovid Goldwasser** - 3 Tevet 5784 – December 14, 2023 0

“The Royal Butler spoke up before Pharaoh, “My transgressions I do mention today” (Bereishis 41:9)

HaGaon R' Dovid Feinstein asks: Why did the Royal Butler feel it was necessary to open the conversation by talking about his transgressions? He could have merely said, as he did when he continued, “Pharaoh had become angry at his servant and placed me in prison ...”

The truth is that the Royal Butler had forgotten Yosef because he never thought that he had sinned against Pharaoh. He had no doubt that he had been imprisoned in error, and Pharaoh would certainly free him. He therefore didn't believe that he owed Yosef anything just because he had interpreted his dream favorably. He was convinced that Pharaoh would have freed him anyway, having nothing to do with Yosef's interpretation. Accordingly, he put Yosef out of his mind. However, now that he heard that Pharaoh's dream needed interpretation, he reconsidered the possibility that his dream may have also needed interpretation and perhaps, in fact, he had sinned by serving Pharaoh with a cup of wine that had a fly in it. He therefore said, “My transgression I do mention,” i.e. I finally understand that I did sin, and I was no less guilty than the Royal Baker. It is only because of the favorable interpretation that Yosef gave that I merited to be freed from prison and restored to my former position. Since I didn't appreciate the good turn Yosef had done for me, I forgot about him.

When Yosef interpreted the dreams, he understood that the dreams of the butler and the baker had been solely for his own benefit. He saw that one of them would be freed in order to be indebted to Yosef for the positive interpretation, thereby facilitating Yosef's release from prison to do his mission in life. It was for that reason that Yosef interpreted the first dream favorably, not because the butler's transgression was any less severe than the baker's.

The Royal Butler realized that there was a higher power here than Yosef and Pharaoh. He noted, “and just as he had interpreted, so it was,” despite the fact that the transgression of the two – the butler and the baker – were the same.

The Talmud (Brachos 55b) states that “all dreams follow the mouth of the interpreter.” The Maharsha elaborates that whatever interpretation is said out loud will come true, because speech empowers the dream. In a similar vein, the Talmud tells us (Megillah 15a) that one should never regard the blessing of an ordinary person lightly. The Rashba points out that the prohibition (Vayikra 19:14) not to curse a deaf person is meant to include all men and women (Mitzvah 317 in the Sefer HaMitzvos) because words have the power to influence certain spiritual aspects of reality.

An extremely ill young man entered the waiting room of the Baba Sali. When the gabbaim saw his state of health, they immediately ushered him to the head of the line and brought him in to Baba Sali. The young man began to cry that he had already visited many doctors who had tried various therapies to heal him, but nothing had helped.

As the tears ran down his face, he begged Baba Sali to help effect his salvation. Baba Sali listened to him intently and then began to pray for him. Baba Sali also cried, and in a broken voice blessed the young man with a refuah shleimah. He gave the man a bottle of water, and instructed him to take a sip from the bottle every night before he went to sleep.

A few nights later, the ill man had a dream, in which Baba Sali appeared to him with a picture of someone in his hand. The tzaddik showed him the picture and said, “This man is a doctor. His name is Dr. Refoel Karso, and he lives in Tel Aviv on this-and-this street. Go to this doctor and ask him to bring you a refuah.”

When the young man awoke in the morning, he remembered his very strange dream of the night before. He called his daughter who lived in Tel Aviv and asked her to please find out if there was a Dr. Karso on the street that Baba Sali had given him.

The daughter immediately confirmed that she, in fact, did know the doctor, but she was curious how her father knew of him. He explained that Baba Sali had come to him in a dream with a picture of the doctor and had told him that Dr. Karso could help him.

The daughter was shocked. She could not understand how her father was able to describe the doctor so accurately, even though he had never personally met him. She ran to the doctor's house and was able to promptly obtain an appointment.

When her father arrived, Dr. Karso gave him a thorough examination, and concluded that he did not agree with the given diagnosis. He prescribed a course of medication and therapy. Within a couple of weeks, the ill man had a refuah shleimah.

The man returned to Netivot and wanted to personally thank Baba Sali for his bracha. The man related what had happened to the family, and the gabbai brought him into Baba Sali's room. As soon as Baba Sali saw him, his face shone, and before the man could say a word, Baba Sali said with a smile, "B'chalom adaber bo – in a dream I will speak to you."

<https://www.israelnationalnews.com/news/381957>

#### **Miketz: Joseph's test**

Joseph created a scene that almost exactly reenacted his own story.

Parshat Shavua

#### **Rabbi Avraham Gordimer**

The central theme of Parshat Miketz is that of Yosef (Joseph) setting the stage for his brothers to do teshuva for having sold him. As God orchestrated the events in order to facilitate this scheme, by causing a famine which necessitated that Yosef's brothers go to Mitzrayim (Egypt) to buy food, and by arranging that Yosef be the one person the brothers needed to meet for this purpose, Yosef sought to place his brothers in a situation almost identical to that of 22 years prior, when they sold him into slavery, resentful of his special status.

In order to recreate this scenario as best as possible, Yosef took his brother Binyamin – who now filled a special role in the life of Yaakov as the son of Rachel who needed to be with Yaakov in order to comfort him for the loss of Rachel and Yosef (c. Rashi on Bereshit/Genesis 44:29) and whose safety could not be risked – and enhanced Binyamin's privileged status even further by seating Binyamin up front with him at the feast with Yosef's family and the brothers, and by providing Binyamin with five times the amount of portions as received by the other brothers. Then, by placing the apparently-favored Binyamin in peril (to become enslaved in Mitzrayim) in the presence of his brothers, just as Yosef himself was in peril with them 22 years ago, Yosef positioned his brothers to either succumb to feelings of envy and enmity and allow Binyamin to suffer a dire fate, or to overcome any feelings of resentment toward Binyamin and jeopardize their own welfare in order to save him and to protect the wellbeing of their father Yaakov.

As the Rambam explains in Hilchot Teshuva (2:1), complete teshuva is attained by being in the same situation as one sinned on a previous occasion and now conquering one's inclination this time in order to do what is right. This was Yosef's goal for his brothers, by creating a scenario very akin to the events leading up to Yosef's sale into slavery. The seemingly-favored younger brother Binyamin was now about to become a lifelong slave in Mitzrayim; would the brothers go along with it or fight it?

The test for the brothers was formidable, for it was designed to evoke potential feelings of bitterness toward another younger brother and son of Rachel, who appeared to have done nothing positive to attain exceptional and protected status. Yet as challenging as this test might have appeared to have been for Yosef's brothers, it was a real challenge for Yosef himself. Let me please explain.

Midrash Ha-Gadol (Mikeitz 16) relates regarding Yosef's initial sighting of Binyamin in Mitzrayim: "When Yosef saw Binyamin, he rejoiced, for he saw in Binyamin the visage of his father". What does this mean? Indeed, all of Yosef's brothers had the DNA of Yaakov Avinu (Jacob our forefather) and they all therefore presumably resembled Yaakov to a certain degree. What was it about Binyamin that embodied the visage of Yaakov more than the other brothers?

As noted above, Binyamin needed to be with Yaakov to provide comfort. Binyamin's prolonged intimate exposure to his father, similar to Yaakov's relationship with Yosef himself decades prior (see second interpretation in Rashi on Bereshit 37:3), caused Binyamin to more robustly internalize and personify Yaakov's character and his essence. (As those who have been privileged to witness the impact of gedolei Torah (the generation's greatest Torah scholars) on their closest talmidim (students) can attest, prolonged periods of being in the intimate presence of one's rebbe rub off and result in these closest talmidim substantially becoming personifications of their rebbe.) In Binyamin did Yosef see a marked reflection of his father's personality, values and mannerisms; this moved Yosef so and filled him with a feeling of joy. This is the meaning of the above statement from Midrash Ha-Gadol.

Although Yosef probably wanted nothing more at this juncture than to reveal his identity and reunite with his father, whose visage and persona he delightfully encountered when seeing Binyamin, Yosef held back, as this would have prevented his scheme for the brothers' teshuva from coming to fruition. The failure of the brothers to do teshuva would have eternal negative ramifications for Klal Yisrael (the Jewish People) and would have doomed the nation's future and resulted in perpetual schism.

Similarly, when Yosef first saw Binyamin in Mitzrayim and blessed him, then rushed out to cry, as Yosef's emotions overcame him (ibid. 43:29-30), Yosef would have loved to embrace Binyamin and reunite with him – yet Yosef refrained from doing so, as it would have hindered the much greater goal that Yosef was hoping would be achieved.

As much as Yosef's brothers were put to a test, so was Yosef put to a test, for he longed and pined to reunite with his father and brothers, but he painfully restrained himself in order to further a strategy that would determine the entire trajectory and future existence of Klal Yisrael.

Yosef's tzidkut (righteousness) was not only reflected in his saintly behavior while in Egyptian captivity and later as the viceroy of Egypt, where he held fast to his heritage under the most challenging of circumstances, in a society that was the antithesis of tahara and kedusha (purity and holiness).

Yosef's tzidkut extended into his plans for the future Jewish nation, as he continued to courageously hold back his desires, passions and emotional needs in pursuit of an infinitely higher goal. Miketz: Joseph's test Joseph created a scene that almost exactly reenacted his own story. Rabbi Avrohom Gordimer Dec 14, 2023, 12:25 PM (GMT+2) Parshat Shavua Joseph Rabbi Avrohom Gordimer Rabbi Avraham Gordimer Rabbi Avraham Gordimer Rabbi Avraham Gordimer

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<https://outorah.org/author/846>

### Sibling Rivalry

#### Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks ztz"l

Listen to these words that are among the most fateful and reverberating in all of Jewish history:

Joseph recognised his brothers, but they did not recognise him. Gen. 42:8  
The Torah is a deep book. We make a great mistake if we think it can be understood on one superficial level.

On the surface, the story is simple. Envious of him, Joseph's brothers initially planned to kill him. Eventually they sell into slavery. He is taken to Egypt. There, through a series of vicissitudes, he rises to become Prime Minister, second only, in rank and power, to Pharaoh.

It is now many years later. His brothers have come to Egypt to buy food. They come before Joseph, but he no longer looks like the man they knew many years before. Then, he was a seventeen-year-old called Joseph. Now he is thirty-nine, an Egyptian ruler called Tzofenat Panach, dressed in official robes with a gold chain around his neck, who speaks Egyptian and uses an interpreter to communicate with these visitors from the land of Canaan. No wonder they did not recognise him, though he recognised them.

But that is only the surface meaning. Deep down the book of Bereishit is exploring the most profound source of conflict in history. Freud thought the great symbol of conflict was Laius and Oedipus, the tension between fathers and sons. Bereishit thinks otherwise. The root of human conflict is sibling rivalry: Cain and Abel, Isaac and Ishmael, Jacob and Esau, and now Joseph and his brothers.

Joseph has the misfortune of being the youngest. He symbolises the Jewish condition. His brothers are older and stronger than he is. They resent his presence. They see him as a troublemaker. The fact that their father loves him only makes them angrier and more resentful. They want to kill him. In the end they get rid of him in a way that allows them to feel a little less guilty. They concoct a story that they tell their father, and they settle down to life again. They can relax. There is no Joseph to disturb their peace anymore. And now they are facing a stranger in a strange land and it simply does not occur to them that this man may be Joseph. As far as they are concerned, there is no Joseph. They don't recognise him now. They never did. They never recognised him as one of them, as their father's child, as their brother with an identity of his own and a right to be himself.

Joseph is the Jewish people throughout history.

Joseph recognised his brothers, but they did not recognise him.

Judaism was the world's first monotheism but not the last. Two others emerged claiming descent, literal or metaphorical, from Abraham, Christianity and Islam. It would be fair to call the relationship between the three Abrahamic monotheisms, one of sibling rivalry. Far from being of mere antiquarian interest, the theme of Bereishit has been the leitmotiv of the better part of the last two thousand years, with the Jewish people cast in the role of Joseph.

There were times – early medieval Spain was one – when Joseph and his brothers lived together in relative harmony, convivencia as they called it. But there were also times – the blood libels, the accusations of poisoning wells or spreading the plague – when they sought to kill him. And others – the expulsions that took place throughout Europe between the English in 1290 and the Spanish in 1492 – when they simply wanted to get rid of him. Let him go and be a slave somewhere else, far from here.

Then came the Holocaust. Then came the State of Israel, the destination of the Jewish journey since the days of Abraham, the homeland of the Jewish people since the days of Joshua. No nation on earth, with the possible exception of the Chinese, has had such a long association with a land. The day the State was born, 14 May 1948, David Ben Gurion, its Prime Minister, sought peace with its neighbours, and Israel has not ceased seeking peace from then until now.

But this is no ordinary conflict. Israel's opponents – Hamas in Gaza, Hezbollah in Lebanon, President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad of Iran, are not engaged in a border dispute, these boundaries or those. They deny, as a

matter of non negotiable religious – not just political – principle, Israel's right to exist within any boundaries whatsoever. There are today 56 Islamic states. But for Israel's neighbours a single Jewish state the size of Wales, is one too many.

Joseph recognised his brothers, but they did not recognise him.

There is no State among the 192 member nations of the United Nations whose very existence is called into question this way. And while we as Jews argue among ourselves as to this policy or that, as if this were remotely relevant to the issue of peace, we fail to focus on the real issue, which is, so long as Joseph's brothers do not recognise his right to be, there can be no peace, merely a series of staging posts on the way to a war that will not end until there is no Jewish state at all.

Until the sibling rivalry is over, until the Jewish people wins the right to be, until people – including we ourselves – realise that the threat Israel faces is ultimate and total, until Iran, Hamas and Hizbollah agree that Jews have a right to their land within any boundaries whatsoever, all other debate is mere distraction.

Previous Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks ztz"l Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks ztz"l was a global religious leader, philosopher, the author of more than 25 books, and the moral voice for our time. Until 1st September 2013 he served as Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth, having held the position for 22 years. To read more from Rabbi Sacks, please visit [www.rabbisacks.org](http://www.rabbisacks.org)

from: **Ira Zlotowitz** <Iraz@klalgovoah.org> date: Dec 14, 2023, 6:59 PM subject: **Tidbits for Parshas Miketz in memory of Rav Meir Zlotowitz ZT"ל**

After Chanukah, used wicks, cups and oil should be disposed of in a respectful manner (i.e. by placing them in a plastic bag before disposing of them). Some have the minhag to burn them on the last day of Chanukah; others do so at Bi'ur Chametz before Pesach.

The first opportunity for Kiddush Levanah is this Motzaei Shabbos Parshas Miketz, December 16th. The final opportunity in the USA is Tuesday, December 26th.

Next Friday, December 22nd is the fast of Asara B'Teves. (This is the only fast day that can fall on Erev Shabbos.) During Chazaras HaShatz of Shacharis, only the Shaliach Tzibbur adds Aneinu. Chazaras HaShatz is followed by Selichos, Avinu Malkeinu, Tachanun, and Krias Hatorah. Mincha includes Krias Hatorah followed by the Haftarah. Those fasting add Aneinu in Shemonah Esrei. Nusach Ashkenaz says Sim Shalom in place of Shalom Rav. The Shaliach Tzibbur adds Aneinu and Bircas Kohanim in Chazaras HaShatz. As it is Erev Shabbos, Avinu Malkeinu and Tachanun are omitted. All the regular Shabbos preparations such as hot showers etc. are permitted. While the fast ends at the regular z'man for a Ta'anis (tzeis hakochavim), one may not eat or drink until after he hears Kiddush.

Daf Yomi - Friday: Bavli: Bava Kamma 43 • Yerushalmi: Shevi'is 69 •

Mishnah Yomis: Yevamos 14:3-4 • Oraysa: Next week is Yoma 41b-43b.

Make sure to call your parents, in-laws, grandparents and Rabbi to wish them a good Shabbos. If you didn't speak to your kids today, make sure to connect with them as well!

Summary

**Miketz:** Pharaoh's dreams • The Sar Hamashkim refers Pharaoh to Yosef • Yosef interprets Pharaoh's dreams as predicting 7 years of plenty and 7 years of hunger • Yosef is appointed viceroy over Mitzrayim • Yosef marries Osnas • Menashe and Efraim are born • The famine begins • Yaakov sends the brothers to Mitzrayim for food • Yosef accuses the brothers of spying • Yosef commands them to bring Binyamin • Yosef has their monies returned to their sacks; the brothers fear this is a ploy to harm them • Yaakov resists sending Binyamin • The famine worsens • Yehudah accepts responsibility for Binyamin • The brothers set out with gifts and the returned monies • Yosef is overwhelmed upon seeing Binyamin • The brothers are treated royally and sent home with abundant provisions • Binyamin is framed as stealing the goblet and the Shevatim are returned to Mitzrayim.

**Haftarah:** The haftarah from Melachim Alef (3:15-4:1) tells the well-known story of Shlomo Hamelech's wise advice to "cut the baby in half". (This haftarah is rarely leined, as usually Parshas Miketz is Shabbos Chanukah.) **וַיַּשְׁלַח פְּרֻשָּׁה וַיָּקָרָא אֶת-יְסָךְ וַיַּרְא בָּבָרָה**

Pharaoh sent and called for Yosef and he was hurried from the pit... (Bereishis 41:14) Yosef was languishing in a pit serving a life sentence. Suddenly he is removed and brought in front of the great Pharaoh himself. Immediately thereafter he is appointed leader over the entire land. The speed in this change of circumstances is incredible. The Seforo expounds on this pasuk and writes this is the manner of Yesuas Hashem, salvation of the Almighty as we find when the Jews left Mitzrayim in such a hurry that their dough did not have time to rise before the moment of freedom arrived. So too will be the final redemption, "Pisom yavo el Heichalo", Suddenly we will enter the Beis Hamikdash. Why is this the manner in which redemption and salvation are introduced, instead of taking place in a more natural and measured way? Rav Yitzchok Feigelstock zt"l explains that generally the world is run with derech hateva, a natural progression of events and the appointment of leaders follows a gradual process whereby the individual climbs the hierarchical ladder. However, in essence, Hashem is not confined to the nature of the world; He can make instant and immediate changes, and does so when carrying out certain salvations.

Mrs. Rochel Zlotowitz a"h sought the counsel of Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l when she felt the shidduch process with her prospective husband R' Meir z"l was going rather quickly. Rav Moshe responded with Chazal's words, "Yesuas Hashem k'Heref Ayin" - salvation from Hashem comes in the blink of an eye, and explained that when events move quickly, one can trust that this is a sign that this salvation is being orchestrated by Hashem.

<https://www.yutorah.org/lectures/1083220>

YU TORAH IN PRINT • Miketz 5784

**Of Miketz, Menorahs and Majesty**

**Rabbi Daniel Z. Feldman**

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, it is surprising that Yosef shaved at that time. Rashi comments that the shaving was done because of kevod ha-malkut; 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'einah tzrichah li-gufah; can it be excused under his unique circumstances; what role does kevod ha-malkut play in the question; perhaps the situation is considered pikuach nefesh; perhaps it is relevant that Yosef was presumably shaved by someone else, etc.

The Chatam Sofer, for one, seemed bothered by the very question itself. The notion of the Avot keeping the Torah, he argued, was a fine and important idea, but not an actual obligation. Kevod Ha-Malkut, 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-malkut, 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-malkut is also a law of the Torah, derived from pesukim. By what logic is this law separated from the other mitzvot of the Torah, that they are voluntary in the Pre-Sinaitic era, and this one is not?

In considering the obligation of kevod ha-malkut, R. Simcha Zissel Broide, the late Rosh Yeshivah of the Chevron Yeshivah, posits 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 posses 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. Nonetheless, maintains the Chatam Sofer, 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.

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 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, 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. 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 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. It can also be added that Yosef, by choosing to focus on honoring the king, was actually going to the essence of Rosh HaShanah, a reasonable approach especially before there was an actual commandment to observe its requirements technically. One of the central themes of Rosh HaShanah is malchiyut, recognizing the majesty of Hashem. One reason that kevod ha-malkhut is such a crucial concept is "Malka d'ara k'ein Malka d'rakia", Earthly royalty is an illustration that allows humanity to picture the true royalty of the King of Kings. Yosef's perceptive prioritization laid the groundwork for much of the spiritual growth that would lie ahead.

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from: Alan Fisher <afisherads@yahoo.com>

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One theme that appears throughout the story of Yosef in Egypt is anti-Semitism under Paro. Although Paro recognized that Yosef was the most brilliant and capable person in Egypt, the Egyptians would not mix socially with Yosef and his family. To protect the family, Yosef arranged for his family to live in Goshen, a territory well suited to grazing cattle and separate from the areas where Egyptians lived. Even while Yosef

was the most powerful leader in Egypt other than Paro, the Egyptians would not permit Yosef (let alone any other Jew) to eat at the same table with them. (Egyptians were vegetarians, and Jews ate cows and sheep – both Egyptian gods – so the Jewish diet disgusted the Egyptians.) Yosef could not even leave Egypt to attend his father's funeral without asking permission from Paro – and he had to go through members of Paro's household before he could even gain permission to speak to Paro and ask for permission to bury his father. In Sefer Shemot, we shall see that Egyptian anti-Semitism becomes even stronger.

Anti-Semitism has exploded again in recent years, and especially since the Hamas massacre on October 7. Miketz seems an appropriate time to consider the explosion of anti-Semitism recently. Rabbi Avi Weiss discusses the duplicity of university presidents who would not permit discussions attacking other minority groups but permit calls for violence against Jews and Israel as long as those advocating such violence do not engage in direct physical attacks. Rabbi Weiss recommends that the proper way for Jews to deal with this anti-Semitism is to become better Jews – wear kippot, wear Jewish t-shirts and other clothing, and openly practice our religion. Author Bari Weiss discusses twenty years of woke policies at universities, cultural institutions, and professional schools – all creating an atmosphere of activist leftist hate that seeks to prevent any discussion of opposing views. Nathan Lewin, probably the leading constitutional law scholar and attorney of our generation, reviews Supreme Court decisions over the past couple of decades. [Nat] Lewin demonstrates that not one Supreme Court justice agrees with the assumption of the presidents of the University of Pennsylvania, MIT, and Harvard universities (in their statements to Congress) that the First Amendment protects hate speech in public forums unless the speech leads directly to hate violence. [https://www.jns.org/explaining-the-first-amendment-to-university-presidents/]

As Bari Weiss and many others have observed, university professors and school teachers have greatly reduced the percentage of conservative and open minded professors and teachers in universities and schools over the past few decades. Those who wish to speak in favor of Israel or conservative political views often cannot find public forums, especially at universities, to express their views. A recent poll of college age individuals who self identify as pro-Hamas and anti-Israel in the current conflict demonstrates that many of the pro-Hamas students cannot even identify the river or sea in the expression, "From the River to the sea." Many of them cannot correctly identify leading Arab or Israeli leaders (such as whether Arafat was pro-Palestinian or Israeli). This sort of evidence suggests that more factual knowledge and less shouting could lead to better informed positions on the conflict between Hamas and Israel.

During Hanukkah, we thank Hashem for protecting us during dangerous times, even when He operates behind the scenes. During the time of the Maccabees, prophecy had ended. Jews of that time wondered whether God would continue to protect the Jews even when we had no prophet and no direct contact with God. The Maccabees brothers trusted in Hashem and did their part to work with God to stop the Greeks, Seleucid-Syrians, and Hellenized Jews, remove pagan influences from the Temple, and re-establish proper sacrifices. The victory of the Orthodox Jews over the Hellenized Jews and strong foreign countries was a miracle that Jews have always considered a sign of God working behind the scenes to save our people.

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. The history of anti-Semitism provides numerous lessons for today, as we can see from the explosion of hate in our world, especially in the past two months.

Shabbat Shalom,

Hannah and Alan

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](http://www.alephbeta.org). Please join me in supporting this wonderful organization, which has increased its scholarly work during and since the pandemic, despite many of its supporters having to cut back on their donations.

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## 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’ane’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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## **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.

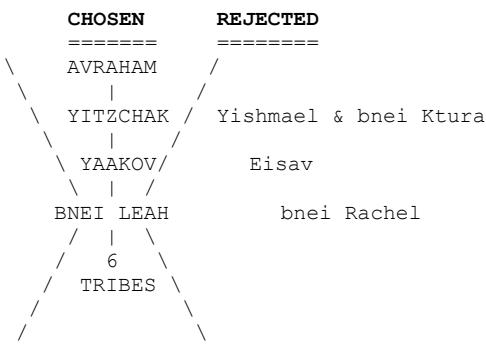
## REJECTED FROM THE BECHIRAH PROCESS

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 parsha, 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 parsha, 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 [betza] 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'uven.]

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

#### DAVID

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1) Has a friend named "Hira."	1) Has a friend named "Hiram."
2) Marries "Bat Shu'a"	2) Marries a woman named "Bat Sheva."
3) Sexual "irregularity."	3) Sexual "irregularity."
4) Unknowingly condemns innocent to death.	4) Unknowingly condemns self to death, while he himself is truly responsible.
5) Commits secret unworthy act.	5) Commits secret unworthy act.
6) Admits publicly.	6) Admits publicly.
7) Sons die to punish faked slaughter of favorite son	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 VaYetzei), 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