

Potomac Torah Study Center

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Note: Hanukkah; Rosh Hodesh Tevet Shabbat and Sunday

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

Devrei Torah are now Available for Download (normally by noon on Fridays) from www.PotomacTorah.org. Thanks to Bill Landau for hosting the Devrei Torah. New: a limited number of copies of the first attachment will now be available at Beth Sholom on the Shabbas table and in the hallway in the back of Epstein.

Lisa and Gary Rosen proudly dedicate the Devrei Torah this Shabbat in honor of the engagement of their son Jonah to Shoshana Ciment, daughter of Adina and Avi Ciment of Hollywood, FL

Remember to start saying V'tain tal u'matar l'vracha at Maariv on Motzi Shabbat.

Mikeitz is so closely linked to Hanukkah that the regular Haftorah for this parsha, while extremely well known, is the least read regular Haftorah for any parsha. Rather, most frequently we read the Haftorah from Behaalotecha on Shabbat Hanukkah (or the first Shabbat, should there be two during the holiday). Hanukkah comes at the end of Kislev and beginning of Tevet, during a period when we have the longest nights and shortest hours of daylight of the year. As Mikeitz opens, Yosef has been in prison for close to ten years, certainly a dark period of his life – but events are shortly to change for him.

The only generation in the Torah with no direct communication from God is that of Yosef and his brothers – yet Yosef has Hashem in his mind and in every topic of his conversation. In my message last year, I discussed Rabbi David Fohrman's insights about how God sent messages to Yosef – for example, by sending Paro dreams that only Yosef would understand and be able to interpret (because the dreams closely followed events in Yosef's life that he could easily understand).

Hanukkah is the most recent holiday added to the cycle of Jewish holidays, and Rabbi Fohrman observes that it has much in common with the first Jewish holiday, Pesach. Chazal focus on the miracle of pure oil for the re-dedication of the Temple, enough only for one day, lasting for eight days (until more Kosher oil could be prepared). The oil provides a fire, but the fire does not consume the oil for eight days. This miracle has a parallel in the miracle of the burning bush, the event that Moshe observed when God selected him to be His representative to Paro to free the Jews from slavery in Egypt. As Rabbi Fohrman observes, the fire in the burning bush was an other-worldly flame, because it burned without using any fuel from our world. Only a very special person could look at the fire, realize that it was burning without consuming the bush, and trust his insight to realize that it was a miracle.

We observe Hanukkah by lighting candles and by adding Al HaNisim to the Modem – a special paragraph thanking God for the miracles of the weak defeating the strong and of the oil continuing to burn without using up the oil. The Modim is our prayer of thanking God, and in this prayer, we add additional thanks both for God saving us and for enabling us to want to show even more appreciation to God.

In Mikeitz, when Paro's servants and later Paro himself praise Yosef for being able to interpret dreams, Yosef responds that only God can interpret dreams, and Yosef is only repeating what God tells him. As we do in the Modim and in Al HaNisim, Yosef thanks God for everything that comes to him.

Mikeitz and Hanukkah have messages for us today. When we pray to God, does He hear and respond to us? We should learn from Yosef. As my beloved Rebbe, Rabbi Leonard Cahan, z"l, told me many years ago, look to the world, look to the patterns in our lives. For a personal example, when I was looking for a research job in Washington many years ago, the only position that really interested me was with a research part of the Labor Department. The Labor Department, however, had a hiring freeze, so finally the research office could not hire me. Of all the places I interviewed, the Federal Trade Commission impressed me the most. I called, and the FTC hiring official asked if I was really interested since my research for the previous five years was entirely in labor. I said that I would promise to stay for two years before considering any other position. On that basis, the FTC hired me. I soon realized that going to the FTC was the best professional decision I had ever made, and I stayed for nearly forty years. Much later, I realized that closing the door to the Labor Department and leading me to the FTC was a message from Hashem – an unexpected message for my own good. This is the type of message that God sends to us now, not the way that He gave messages to Avraham, but the way He gave messages to Yosef.

This year I have been focusing on lessons in the Torah about legacy. Lisa and Gary Rosen have been creating a legacy in their family with their household based on the highest levels of Jewish values and practices. Their legacy continues as they sponsor the Devrei Torah this Shabbat in honor of the engagement of their son Jonah to Shoshana Ciment, daughter of Adina and Avi Ciment. On a sad note, our community mourns the loss last Shabbat of David Kenton, a brilliant mathematician and programmer who was the lead developer of PubMed, the depository for all medical related research world wide. A loyal member of Congregation Har Shalom, David was a Torah scholar who taught more than a thousand students in Montgomery County to read Torah and Haftorah. For more about David Kenton, read the next article below. Shabbat Shalom, Hanukkah Samaich, and Hodesh Tov.

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

Please daven for a Refuah Shlemah for Yehoshua Mayer HaLevi ben Nechama Zelda, Leib Dovid ben Etel, Mordechai ben Chaya, Hershel Tzvi ben Chana, Uzi Yehuda ben Mirda Behla, Dovid Meir ben Chaya Tzippa; Zvi ben Sara Chaya, Eliav Yerachmiel ben Sara Dina, Reuven ben Masha, Meir ben Sara, Oscar ben Simcha, Noa Shachar bat Avigael, Kayla bat Ester, Ramesh bat Heshmat, and Regina bat Simcha, who need our prayers. I have removed a number of names that have been on the list for a long time. Please contact me for any additions or subtractions. Thank you.

Shabbat Shalom; Hanukkah Samaich,

Hannah & Alan

David Leib HaKohen Kenton, z"l, a Special Legacy

Our cherished friend David Kenton passed away last Friday evening after fighting stage four lung cancer for nearly five years. We knew David, his wife Hedda, and their daughters Lisa, Joselyn, and Julie, for at least forty years. During that time, I never saw evidence that David smoked. The diagnosis of lung cancer five years ago came as a complete shock to all who knew him. His brave fight for life during this period inspired us all.

A big man, David was well in excess of six feet tall, solidly built, and imposing – yet friendly and outgoing. He and Hedda had the kind of love for each other, and their daughters (and families), that inspire everyone else. Although David showed

plenty of anger at politicians he did not respect, and at actions of some Jewish figures whom he accused of acting inappropriately, he never showed any anger or upset at any member of his family.

David Kenton's primary role at his beloved Har Shalom Congregation in Potomac, MD was as a model of the best Torah reader one could ever meet. Torah, Haftorah, regular and special trop – David knew them all and taught them to anyone who asked. My sons David and Evan – and I – were among the more than a thousand students of his over forty years. David taught bar and bat mitzvah students at synagogues all over Montgomery County, and he taught many Jews who already knew Torah and Haftorah trop the special tropes for other occasions – High Holy Day, Yom Tov, and Eicha tropes. (His favorite was Eicha, which he considered best fit the emotions of the occasion.)

David Kenton and I were regulars at a traditional monthly Shabbat morning minyan at Har Shalom (for several years) and at a Shabbat Mincha/Maariv minyan that continued for thirty years, until the pandemic ended it. These lay-led services, which David led as prayer leader much more often than anyone else, included a lay led Dvar Torah. I presented the Dvar Torah on many of these occasions, and I knew that my most challenging comments would always come from David Kenton. My approach is always highly traditional, grounded as much as possible in chazal and Orthodox commentaries. David approached Torah analysis as a modern man who viewed the figures in the Torah by modern values. For example, David always criticized Yosef for forcing the Egyptians to pay for food during the famine and thereby soon becoming slaves to Paro. He could not understand praising Yosef for turning citizens into slaves, even though he saved their lives by doing so, and even when I used economic analysis to explain how this form of enclosure (similar to the one in England a few centuries ago) would greatly increase productivity and result in much greater agricultural output.

The incident in the Torah that angered David the most was the Akeidah. How could a father even consider sacrificing a child? Taking Yitzhak to sacrifice violated every principle of the Jewish God. David argued that God wanted Avraham to argue back with God, the way he had over destroying Sodom and Amorah, rather than taking Yitzhak to be sacrificed. He added that Avraham and Yitzhak never again lived together, and neither spoke to each other after the Akeidah. (I responded to these challenges based on the analysis of traditional Orthodox scholars in my message on Vayeira a few weeks ago.) No matter how heated our disagreement, David always ended by thanking me and assuring me that he respected my knowledge and analysis, even when he vigorously disagreed with me. This attitude is a mark of a true scholar.

David Kenton proudly served America in Vietnam, and he innovated in establishing systems to catalog and retrieve medical literature. For approximately twenty-five years, David directed Med-Line, the first modern, computerized catalog of medical literature. Later, when a new system with superior features was being organized, David copied the entire library of Med-Line and gave it to Pub-Med to take over the catalog. He directed the development of Pub-Med and traveled all over the world to install the system and teach libraries in numerous countries how to use it. Physicians and researchers all over the world use Pub-Med to keep up on the latest research and standards of care for any subject in medicine. My wife used Pub-Med to search for evidence when researching trademark applications for the US Patent and Trademark Office. Our son Evan, a leading nephrologist, uses Pub-Med regularly to keep up on latest findings in medical subjects and to verify issues in standards of care. David Kenton served humanity in science as well as he served Hashem in Torah.

During a season when I have been focusing on messages in the Torah concerning legacy, David Kenton is a model of how a Jew can establish a world class legacy.

Drasha: Miketz: What You See & What You Get

By Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky © 1996

[Please remember Mordechai ben Chaya for a Mishebarach!]

Almost every year on the week of Chanukah, Parshas Miketz is read. It contains the story of Yoseph, the viceroy of Egypt, who greet his brothers and accuses them of spying,. This story is read annually on Chanukah. There must be a connection between the story of Miketz and the Chanukah story. What is it?

This week the Torah relates how a famine plagued the entire Middle East. Yaakov's children elected to go to the only country that was spared from hunger, Egypt. Through the brilliant vision, organization, and planning of a young Hebrew

slave known to Egyptians as Tzafnat Paneach, that country fed both itself and the world. The brothers were ushered into the prodigal viceroy's chambers. He acted towards them like a total meshuganah. He accused them of a heinous plot to spy on Egypt. He incarcerated Shimon, and forced them to bring their youngest brother, the orphaned child of an aged father, to him. Yoseph surely wanted to teach a lesson to the brothers who sold him. But if Yoseph wanted to castigate or punish his brothers for selling him, why didn't he do so openly and directly? Why the senseless charade?

Chanukah is symbolized by the Menorah. It represents a miracle. A small amount of oil, enough for one day, lasted for eight. But there were greater miracles. A small army of Kohanim, priests who were previously involved in only spirituality and had very little experience in battle, defeated the Greek army. Why don't we make a parade or a feast to celebrate a major victory? Why is the main commemoration over a little oil?

In a small village lived a poor groom. Unable to afford a proper tailor to make a wedding suit, he brought material to a second-rate one. The poor boy was shocked to see the results.

"But this sleeve is six inches too short," he cried. "So pull in your arm," smiled the tailor. "But the other sleeve is a half a foot too long!" "So extend it," beamed the so-called craftsmen. "And the pants," screamed the groom, "the left leg is twisted!" "Oh that's nothing. Just hop down the aisle with your knee slightly bent!"

At the wedding, the assembled reeled in horror as the poor groom hobbled down to the canopy in the poor excuse for a suit. "What a grotesquely disfigured young man," gasped one guest. "Oy! Ah rachmunis (pity) on his poor bride," sighed another. The spectators looked once again at the pathetic sight and noticed how well the suit appeared to fit. In unison they all exclaimed. "But his tailor — what an extraordinary genius!"

My grandfather, Reb Yaakov Kamenetzky of blessed memory, explained to me that Yoseph had a very important message to send his brothers.

"More than a decade ago you sat in judgment. You thought you made a brilliant decision and were smarter than anyone else, including your father. You decided to sell me as a slave. Now you meet the most brilliant saviour of the generation, the man who saved the world from starvation, and he is acting like a paranoid maniac. He is accusing you of something that is so hallucinatory that you think he is a madman. Is it not possible to think that perhaps you also made a gross error in judgment? Is it not possible that you saw a situation in a twisted light? Is it the boy or is it the suit that is actually grotesque?"

Yoseph showed his brothers that even the best and brightest can misinterpret any situation.

Chanukah delivers a very similar message. The sages were not interested in commemorating a battlefield victory. They had a more powerful message for us. Nothing in this world can be judged at face value. A bit of oil that decidedly can only last one day — may last much longer. They want us to remember that outward appearances, as the opinions of pundits, have no bearing on reality. When that message is understood, it is easy to understand that a small army of Kohanim (priests) can topple a mighty force. We can understand that what we view as weak may be strong and what we thought was insufficient is actually plenty. And that a little bit of oil, like a pesky younger brother, both of whom you thought would not amount to anything, can really light the way.

Good Shabbos and a Freilichin Chanukah!

<https://torah.org/torah-portion/drasha-5756-miketz/>

Dream the Impossible Dream

by Rabbi Dov Linzer, Rosh HaYeshiva, Yeshivat Chovevei Torah © 2021

Dreams are a significant part of the lives of both Jacob and Joseph.

Jacob dreams of a ladder that is anchored in the ground and goes up to heaven while the angels rise and descend on it. He also dreams in Laban's house of an angel who tells him to return to the land of Canaan.

While dreams appear at key moments in Jacob's life, they are particularly dominant in the life of Joseph. They are the source of his travails and the catalyst for his success. Dreams propel his entire life forward, from beginning to middle to end.

As a young man, Joseph dreams of the stars and of the sheaves. These dreams create such enmity from his brothers that they seize him, cast him into a pit, and sell him into slavery in Egypt.

Once there, he interprets the dreams of the baker and of the wine steward, which have the eventual effect of freeing him from prison and bringing him to the attention of Pharaoh. The climax of this narrative of dreams is the double-dream of Pharaoh, which foretells what will happen in Egypt in the coming year and which catapults Joseph to a position of tremendous prestige and power.

In all these stories, dreams serve as messages from God, as ways in which God communicates with mortals. Indeed, later in the Torah we read that God speaks to the prophets through dreams: "If there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make myself known unto him in a vision; in a dream will I speak unto him" (Num. 12:6).

If we perceive our dreams as coming from God, they can be a powerful way in which God can be present in our lives. But taking that approach also contains within it a danger. It can give us license to act in certain questionable ways because, to quote the Blues Brothers, we believe that "We are on a mission from God." Because Joseph believes that God has shown him in his dreams that his brothers will bow down to him, he feels justified in acting in ways that raise serious ethical questions in order to make these dreams come true.

Most of us nowadays do not think this way. For us, dreams are not from God. They are a natural functioning of our brain, a surfacing of our conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions, which allow us to build memory, process emotions, and do mental housekeeping.

Perhaps surprisingly, the Gemara is aware of this more real-world interpretation. In an extended passage dealing with dreams (Berakhot 55a), the Gemara states that what we see in our dreams is a function of what we were thinking about and feeling during the day. At the same time, it also embraces the Biblical and metaphysical perspective, stating that dreams are 1/60th of prophecy. The Gemara then articulates a provocative third approach: that dreams will come true, but they will do so according to how they are interpreted.

These three approaches operate together. Our dreams are no longer of the Biblical sort. We live in a time when there is no prophecy. God's involvement in the world is different than it was in Biblical times. Our dreams are merely a by-product of what we have been thinking during the day.

But God is not absent from this experience. We were created in God's image, and that yearning soul that strives for the full realization of its potential is the divine within us that surfaces in our dreams. What we aspire for, what we envision as our possible future, what we dream for when we are awake — that is the 1/60th of prophecy that speaks to us in our dreams when we sleep.

That doesn't mean that these dreams will become real. It is we who must provide the other 59 parts of this equation. A dream follows its interpretation. If we see and experience it as nothing other than an artifact of our subconscious, then that is all that it will be. If, however, we see it as a vision of a possible future, then we can help it come true.

This is not always a good thing. When our fears and anxieties surface in our dreams, they can take hold of us. We can find ourselves, on a subconscious level at least, feeding into these anxieties and enabling them to be actualized. This prophecy may become self-fulfilling, and not for the better.

The same can be true in the reverse. Dreams that speak to us about our yearnings and aspirations can serve as prods to push us to achieve what is possible, even if those dreams appear distant and out of reach. As we know, visualization is a powerful tool that can help a person achieve any goal.

If we give our dreams the interpretation of a possible future, we can make them 1/60th of prophecy. We can partner with God in making our dreams come true.

Shabbat Shalom.

Patience Please, Miracles in Progress

by Rabbi Mordechai Rhine * © 2021

The story of Yosef is full of ups and downs. In his family, he rises from being the youngest among his brothers to becoming the cherished one, beloved to his father. From that status he is thrown into a pit and sold as a slave. From his status as slave, he ascends to the trusted manager of a very grand household. In that place of prestige, he is challenged, and is thrown into prison. From that prison he is drawn to become the viceroy of the country, and possibly the most powerful (and benevolent) person of the generation.

Even after the entire story is laid out before us and reviewed year after year, we might still not understand why certain difficult things had to happen to Yosef. But what is clear is that Hashem had a wondrous plan for Yosef. Every step of the way was orchestrated to challenge Yosef to fulfill his mission in the world and to enable him to arrive at wondrous blessing and success.

This lesson is not just theoretical and theological. This is the lesson of Hashgacha Pratis, personal Divine planning and intervention, which exists for each of us in our personal lives.

Interestingly, when Yosef was in prison, and interpreted the butler's dream favorably, Yosef did something for which he is faulted. Yosef asked the butler that when he is released from prison and restored to his ministry post in the palace, he should try to intercede with the king to have Yosef released. Rashi tells us that for putting his faith in the butler (described as "Rahav"- the haughty one) Yosef was punished to endure another two years in prison.

Many commentaries wonder and explore what Yosef did wrong. Aren't we expected to make Hishtadlus (diligent efforts) to succeed? Aren't we expected to put our best effort forward when we are in a difficult situation?

The commentaries explain that we are certainly obligated to recognize the talents and opportunities that Hashem gives us and utilize them to the best of our ability. A person would be quite foolish to sit at a banquet full of food and say, "I have faith that Hashem will provide," and refuse to use his hands to obtain the food that Hashem did provide, and use his mouth to chew and swallow the food. If a person were to sit in faith doing nothing, foolishly waiting for Hashem to provide, he would indeed go hungry.

In fact, sometimes the Hishtadlus that is expected of us is challenging, and meant to stretch us in the journey of life, to grow in our experiences. We do not have the liberty of guising idleness, sluggishness, or laziness, under the righteous banner of faith. Nevertheless, there are times that a behavior might be more an act of desperation than one of legitimate Hishtadlus and an expression of our personal growth in the journey of life. Acts of desperation should be avoided. Legitimate Hishtadlus is when we progress with effort through the journey of life that Hashem has prescribed for us.

Sometimes it is difficult to recognize the difference between desperation and legitimate effort in our life journey. In such cases consulting a mentor can be helpful. When faced with a financial crisis, is buying a lottery ticket a legitimate act of Hishtadlus and growth, or is that an act of desperation? Conversely, can one avoid making a difficult phone call claiming that if it is meant to be it will happen anyway, or is that an expression of shirking responsibility masquerading as faith and piety?

Yosef was punished because he did an act which (perhaps because of his advanced spiritual level) was considered an act of desperation. The butler is described as "Rahav" the haughty one. As the Kilei Yakar explains, the nature of such people is that when they ascend to greatness they look down at those who are lower than them. Hashem would indeed cause the butler to speak favorably about Yosef two years later, despite the butler's nature. But Yosef was apparently expected by Heaven to simply be kindly, and not ask for anything from such a person. To ask, in such a case-- at least for Yosef-- was considered a slip in the direction of desperation.

It may be hard for us to tune in to such a Rahav personality. We are schooled in the concept of "servant leadership"; where the more powerful a person is, the more obligated he is to help others. The Talmud tells us that Rabbi honored

wealthy people. One explanation is because he saw a wealthy person as a walking mitzva machine, a person with the opportunity to do so much good. It may be difficult to envision the corrupt nature of the butler and realize that it was to be expected that when he was released from prison he would feel no gratitude or sympathy towards Yosef. This goes against the principle teachings of Torah to treat others kindly as we recall that we were once downtrodden slaves in Mitzrayim. Our attitude is, as Rabbi A.J. Twerski so eloquently stated, "When you fall, definitely pick yourself up. But as you do pick yourself up, think about who you can now help better because of your experience."

The task of a Jew is to strive to maintain equanimity throughout the journey of life. We are always in Hashem's loving hands. There are many ups and downs in the journey of life, all of them are tailor made to assist us in our journey.

I recall, many years ago, how I suffered what seemed to be a very big setback. I felt feelings of anger and resentment surfacing. But even as I experienced those feelings, a confident feeling welled up within me and said, "One day you will be embarrassed of how resentful you are feeling now." Each up and each down is personally orchestrated by Hashem Himself, who lovingly holds our hand as we proceed with confidence on our personal journey of life.

With best wishes for a happy Chanuka and a wonderful Shabbos!

Resisting Religious Corruption: Thoughts for Shabbat Hanukkah

By Rabbi Marc D. Angel *

After their glorious victory and rededication of the Temple, the Hasmoneans established the holiday of Hanukkah to be celebrated by Jews for all future generations. The festival of lights is an occasion for thanksgiving to God, celebration of Jewish pride, remembrance of the importance of religious freedom.

It wasn't too long, though, before this great spiritual and military victory lost its luster. The Hasmoneans – a priestly family – set themselves up as kings. Once they centralized so much power in themselves, corruption soon set in. Their "kings" became ruthless despots; the high priesthood became a political prize going to the highest bidder. Although the original spirit of Hanukkah managed to survive, the actual state of Jewish religion and spirituality was severely compromised under Hasmonean rule.

There is an ongoing lesson in this story. When authority is centralized in a few hands, this often results in corruption and spiritual deterioration. The few in power become arrogant and greedy. They feel that they can do what they want, and force others to comply. They come to think that they are above the law.

This lesson applies not merely to the world of politics, but to the world of religion. It is especially poisonous when religious and political power become intertwined. How painful it is to read of the ugly political maneuvering of "religious" parties in Israel. How frustrating it is to read of "religious" authorities – who are quick to assert their own power and who delegitimize others – who betray the ideas and ideals of Torah through their perverse, illegal and immoral behavior. How unfortunate it is that the Orthodox "rabbinic establishment" in Israel and the diaspora is viewed by so many as being insensitive, obscurantist and even hypocritical and dishonest.

The lesson of Hanukkah is that religion and spirituality need to rise above petty politics. The light of Torah is not spread through arrogant, self-righteous authoritarianism; it is not spread by those who usurp power and who think they are above the law. As the prophet Zechariah taught: "Not by might, nor by power, but by My spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts."

We need to re-focus on the spirit and righteousness of Torah, on the light of Torah that enhances life and reflects love and compassion to all. We need to resist religious coercion and authoritarianism, and to understand that the power of Torah is in its wisdom and mitzvot. As we conclude the observance of Hanukkah, let us remember that true religion is not found among those who seek might and power; but in those who sincerely seek the Spirit of the Lord. Let us be sure that we are among the latter.

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

<https://www.jewishideas.org/resisting-religious-corruption-thoughts-shabbat-hanukkah>

*** The Angel for Shabbat column is a service of the Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals, fostering an intellectually vibrant, compassionate and inclusive Orthodox Judaism. Please join our growing family of members by joining online at www.jewishideas.org

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When Wickedness Poses as Righteousness: Blog by Rabbi Marc D. Angel

By Rabbi Marc D. Angel *

U.S. Supreme Court Justice Robert Jackson took leave from the Court to serve as the U.S.'s chief prosecutor at the Nuremberg trials of Nazi war criminals. He wrote that "the most odious of all oppressions are those which mask as justice." He sharply criticized the role of judges and legal systems to legitimize tyranny and oppression.

Judge Jackson understood that the atrocities of the Nazis were all purported to be "legal". Laws were passed depriving Jews of all rights. Laws were passed to round up, imprison, and murder Jews. All those who participated in these heinous actions were following the law of the land!

The problem, though, was that the law itself was starkly immoral; the government that promulgated murderous laws was itself evil; the "legal system" which allowed such "laws" to be passed and implemented was the epitome of injustice, cruelty, and wickedness. Moral people should have denounced such "laws" and should have resisted the "legal system." If enough good people had risen against the tyrannical laws and the murderous Nazi regime, millions of lives would have been saved.

In our times, we also witness tendencies to legitimize wicked and immoral behavior by means of declaring such evil to be "legal". The United Nations is perhaps the world's most nefarious example of this tendency. The UN routinely passes resolutions condemning Israel--not because these condemnations relate to moral and sound judgment, but because a malicious cabal of Israel-hating nations muster the majority to pass anti-Israel resolutions. There isn't even the faintest element of fairness to these resolutions, not the slightest effort to understand Israel's position, not a word of condemnation of groups and nations who attack Israel in every way they can. The UN espouses resolutions and policies that are dressed in the garb of "international law" when in fact these resolutions and policies are classic examples of immorality, injustice and corruption of the value of law.

It's not just the UN that tends to cloak immorality in the dress of justice. There are groups of anti-Israel and anti-Semitic people who seek to undermine Israel; they insidiously pose as being interested in human rights, as guardians of international law. Yet, they operate with malice toward Israel and perpetrate the vilest propaganda against her; they support boycotts of Israel; they constantly rebuke Israel for any real or imagined shortcoming. For these people, justice is not just at all; rather they pervert justice to further their own unjust and immoral goals.

Many seemingly good-hearted people get swept up in the "politically correct" anti-Israel bashing. They are gullible in the extreme, and don't have the time or moral courage to try to find out actual facts. These people will condemn Israel for causing pain to Arabs in Gaza, but will never raise a word of protest when thousands of missiles are fired into Israel from Gaza. They will condemn Israel's intransigence, but will never call to account Arab and Muslim leaders who unashamedly call for the destruction of Israel. Thinking that they are standing for "human rights" and for "international law", these people are in fact accomplices in immorally seeking to deprive Jews of their rights. They foster "laws" and "resolutions" and "policies" that are in essence criminal, unjust, immoral.

In Psalm 81, we read: "lo yihye bekha el zar," let there be no strange god among you. The Talmud (Shabbat 105b) offers a more literal and more profound interpretation of this phrase--you shall not have within yourself a strange god. According

to this interpretation, the verse is not warning us against worshiping external idols. Rather, it is telling us to look within ourselves for strange gods, for evil inclinations, for false divinities. It is demanding that we introspect, that we maintain truth, that we reject the false gods that mislead us into false beliefs and corrupt behaviors.

This is a message of utmost importance for all people. None of us should allow “false gods” to fester within us, to blind our eyes to our moral responsibilities. All humans must strive to root out the evil inclination that leads to discriminatory attitudes, to corrupt laws and resolutions, to following along with the “politically correct” but morally bankrupt anti-Israel chorus. We must remember the words of Justice Jackson that “the most odious of all oppressions are those which mask as justice.”

Hanukkah reminds us that the Jewish People have long faced enemies of all kinds...but that we have been able to prevail! With the help of the Almighty, and with our own personal commitment, we will continue to bring light, love and kindness to our world..

<https://www.jewishideas.org/blog/when-wickedness-poses-righteousness-blog-rabbi-marc-d-angel>

Mikeitz - Chanukah – The Miracle of the Moment

by Rabbi Yehoshua Singer * © 2021

The Parsha begins by telling us that two years after Yosef interpreted the dreams of Pharaoh's head butler and baker, Pharaoh himself had dreams. The Torah relates how these dreams ultimately led to Yosef's redemption from freedom, when the head butler recalls how Yosef had interpreted these dreams.

Rash"i at the end of last week's parsha explains that these two years which had passed were very significant. Yosef was originally supposed to be freed from prison and installed as viceroy of Egypt immediately after Pharaoh's head butler was freed and reinstated in his position. However, when Yosef interpreted the head butler's dream, Yosef asked the head butler to inform Pharaoh of his plight and his innocence and to try to intercede on his behalf. This request was considered to be a violation of Yosef's faith in G-d. For turning to the head butler for help, rather than relying on G-d, Yosef was punished with an extra two years in prison. That is why our parsha opens with the phrase “And it was at the end of two years.”

Many commentaries struggle to understand why Yosef's request was considered to be a violation of faith in G-d. One of the most basic elements of the Torah's guidelines for faith in G-d is that we must recognize that G-d has placed in a physical world of cause and effect, and if we don't activate the causes, G-d will not bring about the effect. If we do not work, we cannot expect to find money in our bank account. If we do not eat, we cannot expect to be healthy and nourished. Yosef at this point had been living in a high level prison for a decade. He had no contact with the outside world and no means to plead his case. He finds himself face to face with an individual who is regularly at the king's side. Why is it wrong for him to utilize the opportunity and ask the head butler to intercede on his behalf? Aren't we supposed to put in the effort?

Rabbeinu Bechaye in his introduction to this week's parsha presents a novel approach to this question. He explains that as we grow and develop our faith and trust goes through several stages. In our infancy, our hope is focused exclusively on our mother's milk. As we grow, we begin to see our mother as our source of nourishment, especially as we begin eating other foods. Then, we begin to understand the concept of money, and realize that our sustenance comes through the breadwinner. As we grow older, we begin to rely on our own abilities and our own income. It is at this point, when we are naturally brought to recognize G-d's involvement in our lives and to rely on Him. As we see those human abilities to provide an income have limits, and that everyone needs factors outside of their control to succeed, we begin to rely on G-d and to turn to Him to help us with those factors beyond our control. We can then take our faith to the next level and realize that it is G-d who provides the factors within our control, as well, and that He is truly the source of all that we have.

He then adds that there is one more level of faith in G-d, above and beyond the recognition of G-d's involvement and control in every element of our lives. He describes this level of faith based on the words of Shlomo Hamelech: “Trust to Hashem with all of your heart.” (Mishlei 3:5) We are told not to trust “in” Hashem, but rather to trust “to” Hashem. This means that we need to actively direct our faith and trust solely to G-d. He explains that once a person reaches the ultimate understanding of G-d's love and care for us, he comes to a point where he wants to rely on G-d alone and does not want to risk any possible thoughts of other sources of help. At this point, a person understands how our faith is part of

our relationship with G-d and daily interaction with G-d, and therefore seeks to preserve and maintain that faith at all costs.

At this final stage, a powerful change begins in a person's heart, as a person begins to view his entire life's circumstance from a new perspective. Once he recognizes that G-d is intimately involved in all that we do and that every time we experience that sense of reliance on G-d we are entering into our relationship with G-d, a person views their entire life as living within G-d's embrace. Whatever situation such a person finds himself in, he knows that it was chosen by G-d specifically for him and prepared for him with love. Through this understanding, he begins not only to rely on G-d, but to also accept what G-d has provided to him.

This new perspective also brings about a subtle change in a person's conduct. Normally, as we go through life, we have our own goals and dreams of what we think is important for us. When we find ourselves in situations which don't match our dreams and goals, we seek ways and means to alter our circumstances. We try to create new opportunities for ourselves and may begin to work a second job or attend a night school to learn a new career or some other means of creating new opportunities. For most of us, this is considered appropriate and responsible conduct. It is our way of accepting the reality of the world G-d has created for us and living in it according to His will.

For a person with this higher level of faith, it is not that simple. When he finds himself in a different situation than he may have wanted, he sees that situation as a gift from G-d. He understands fully that G-d can arrange his life however G-d wants, and that G-d has chosen this environment. He feels that every situation in his life is a direct gift from G-d, and he cherishes it as G-d's personal embrace. From this lofty level of reliance on G-d, were he to seek to create ways of changing his life's circumstances, he would be saying to himself that he is not happy with what G-d has given him. He would be telling himself that if only I could change this detail or that detail about my life, then I would be better off and have the best life. Yet, he does not believe this to be true. He truly feels that G-d is providing him with the best life for him.

Rabbeinu Bechaye explains that this was Yosef's error. Yosef had reached this high level of the ultimate faith in G-d. Whether or not he understood it, he truly felt that every circumstance he experienced was a personal gift from G-d. While his life was far from what he expected as he was growing up in his father's house, he believed deeply with every fiber of his being that G-d was arranging the best life possible for him. Yet, when he asked the head butler to intercede on his behalf, he was allowing himself to think "I could do better for myself, if I would just change a few things about my life." This was Yosef's error.

The Beis Yosef famously proposes that Chanukah should only be a seven day holiday. Since we had enough oil to burn for the first night, the miracle only began when the flame continued burning after the oil should have run out. The Alter of Kelm, Rabbi Simcha Zissel Ziv, answers that the first night of Chanukah is highlighting what the true message of Chanukah is. The miracle of the oil served to remind us that Hashem is always with us and watching over us. They had been fighting against the mighty Syrian-Greek army for three years and had finally reclaimed the Beis Hamikdash from the Hellenists. Prophecy had ended two centuries before, and they did not live with miracles as they had during the first Beis Hemikdash. When the oil miraculously burned for eight days, this served as a concrete confirmation that all that we had experienced was indeed the Hand of G-d. This is why we celebrate the first night along with the other seven. We are celebrating the miracle of nature itself and striving to recognize that G-d is with us in all that we do.

We all have real struggles we are dealing with in life. We are not expected to be on Yosef's lofty level of faith in G-d. As such, G-d wants us to be honest with Him and with ourselves and to seek the means to better our lives and improve our circumstances. At the same time, though, we can take strength and encouragement from Yosef. While we are working to improve our circumstances, we can understand that G-d has chosen these circumstances for us. Chanukah is a wonderful opportunity to give ourselves strength, as we stop and recognize the message of the candles – that nature itself is a miracle. No matter what our hopes may be for tomorrow, we find ourselves where we are today because G-d has chosen it for us personally out of His never ending love for us. May we merit to feel the embrace of Chanukah, and to experience the miracles of nature.

* Rabbi, Am HaTorah Congregation, Bethesda, MD.

Relight

By Rabbi Moshe Rube *

The Hasmonean dynasty ended about 200 years after the Channukah story, when two Hasmonean brothers, Aristobulus and Hyrkanus, fought a civil war over who would be in control. The Romans were eventually able to play off this weakness, and eventually Israel became a protectorate of Rome. The Talmud tells us that the whole family was eventually killed, the last one jumping to her death with her last words being, "All who claim to be from Chashmonai are lying for the last one is about to die."

I invite you to look at the historical record and do your own research on the ups and downs of the Hasmonean dynasty. The events of Channukah, both the story and what happened after, are far more nuanced and interesting than, "They tried to kill us. We won. Let's eat."

For our purposes here, let us think about how it affects our outlook to know that the Jewish independence established by Channukah did not last and had a tragic ending. Can we find light in this hindsight?

Let's first wonder how our ancestors experienced the Channukah holiday during those first 200 years. No doubt it was a holiday of triumph. The light signifies how we won the war and declared our independence. We light in our homes to show our spirit can never be extinguished.

But how did our ancestors celebrate the Channukah right after Israel came under Roman dominion? Could they really celebrate a holiday of triumph when they were back under foreign rule?

Of course they could. And they did. They kept celebrating Channukah even when the Romans destroyed the Temple and kicked us out of our land. All through our wanderings and exiles throughout the world, our forefathers and foremothers celebrated this holiday.

But why? If Channukah was born in triumph, how could it be celebrated when Jews had forfeited that victory?

Again, how Jews experienced themselves and Channukah is another matter that requires us to look at the research and writings of history. But for us, I think we can safely conclude that Channukah must have been more than just a victory party. Who celebrates a victory after losing the next time? Would anyone still celebrate the Tide's national championship if they don't win again the next year?

So what is Channukah aside from a victory party?

Let's look at two unique aspects of Channukah that may give us a clue.

1) Channukah was a rededication not a dedication

The Jews at the time of Channukah did not build the Temple anew, but repaired it. The Al Hanissim prayer details how after the war, "the Jews came into the Temple, cleaned it up, purified the Sanctuary, and lit the Menorah." This idea of Channukah being a rebirth rather than a start of something new was a central aspect of the Channukah experience since its inception.

1) Channukah is the only holiday where a Rosh Chodesh (New Moon) holiday passes through the middle.

On the first days of Channukah we see the moon declining. This Shabbat, it will disappear, and we should see it again on the final days of Channukah. The Jewish calendar and our calculations of the months run chiefly by the sighting of the moon. Hashem gave us this as our first communal mitzvah. Woven into the Jewish experience since our creation was this idea of rebirth. The Jewish people go by the moon. The sun is always visible, but the moon is dynamic in how we see it. On Channukah we experience this moon-rebirth with the rededication/rebirth of the Temple. This fact that ties Channukah to our national identity as a people with the power to renew itself could not have been lost on our ancestors.

So Channukah was not and is not just a victory party. It must have been and still is a party of rebirth. If the holiday was just about celebrating the fact that we have light, it would have gone out when the Hasmoneans fell – i.e., when the light went out.

But Channukah is a holiday of rebirth. Even when the world is dark and the Jews in exile, we can and did celebrate Channukah because no matter what, we always recognize that the light can and will renew. This is an eternal element of the Jewish people expressed in the new moon, in Channukah, and continues to be expressed today (especially in the modern State of Israel) regardless of whatever became of the Hasmoneans.

We don't light Channukah candles. We relight them.

Shabbat Shalom, Chodesh Tov and Channukah Sameach!

* Rabbi, Knesseth Israel Congregation, Birmingham, AL.

Rav Kook Torah Chanukah: The Beauty of Greece

After the Flood, Noah blessed his son Yefeth:

“May God expand Yefeth, and may he dwell in the tents of Shem.” (Gen. 9:27)

What does this blessing mean? Why should Yefeth live in Shem's tents?

The Sages noted that Yefeth was the ancestor of ancient Greece. As such, Yefeth's blessing relates to the special accomplishments of the Greeks, especially in the realm of the arts and aesthetics (the name 'Yefeth' is related to the Hebrew word yofi, meaning 'beauty'). As the Talmud states in Megillah 9b: “May the beauty of Yefeth reside in the tents of Shem.”

The blessing links Yefeth and Shem together through the cultures of their descendants, Greece and Israel. Yet the relationship between these two nations was never simple. We know from the story of Chanukah that these two civilizations clashed violently during the Second Temple period. How then can the beauty of Greek culture reside harmoniously in the tents of Israel?

Studying Greek Wisdom

On the one hand, the Sages placed no explicit prohibition against studying Greek philosophy. They were content to give general guidance, such as Rabbi Yishmael's instruction to his nephew: “Find an hour that is neither day nor night, and study Greek wisdom at that time” (Menachot 99b).

Regarding the education of youth, however, the Sages were more circumspect. They feared that the outward appeal and beauty of Greek wisdom would lure the next generation away from their fathers' faith. Thus they forcefully declared: “Cursed be the one who teaches his son Greek wisdom” (Baba Kama 82b).

The language of this decree specifically forbids teaching Greek wisdom. In other words, it is permitted to study it, but not to teach it. Young students must first acquire a solid basis in Torah, and only then will they be able to discern the difference between the Torah of Israel and the philosophy of Greece.

Style versus Content

We find that the Talmud makes a second distinction regarding Greek culture. “Greek language is one thing, but Greek wisdom is another” (Baba Kama 83a). The intent of this statement is to differentiate between style and content.

Greek wisdom, as a philosophy and an outlook on life, profoundly detracts from the sacred and defiles the holy. The Greek language, on the other hand, poses no challenge of ideas and beliefs. Greek is a rich and sophisticated language,

and is an appropriate vehicle through which to express our thoughts and ideas. The external language does not influence or harm the inner content.

We have no need to borrow from the content of foreign cultures when our own traditions are so rich and stimulating, ennobling both the individual and society as a whole. But we may adopt from other peoples that which adds external beauty and elegance. Even after the culture clash with Hellenism, the Sages still taught that it is fitting to adopt stylistic enhancements — “May the beauty of Yefeth reside in the tents of Shem.”

This approach is not limited to ancient Greece, but is true for all foreign cultures. It is not inappropriate for us to utilize the innovations and talents of other nations. After all, the focus of the Jewish people is primarily on inner matters, on ethical and spiritual advancement.

Even for the construction of the holy Temple, we find that King Solomon turned to Hiram, the king of Tyre, for his workers' expertise in cutting down and preparing the wood, “for we have none among us who knows how to hew timber like the Zidonians” (I Kings 5:20). Solomon used artisans from other nations to chop the wood and quarry the large stones for the Temple. But after these external preparations, it was the Jewish people who secured the Sanctuary's inner holiness. (Sapphire from the Land of Israel. Adapted from Mo'adei HaRe'iyah, pp. 182-184.)

<http://www.ravkooktorah.org/NOAH65.htm>

Miketz (5767) – Disguise

By Lord Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, Former UK Chief Rabbi,*

Joseph is now the ruler of Egypt. The famine he predicted has come to pass. It extends beyond Egypt to the land of Canaan. Seeking to buy food, Joseph's brothers make the journey to Egypt. They arrive at the palace of the man in charge of grain distribution:

Now Joseph was governor of all Egypt, and it was he who sold the corn to all the people of the land. Joseph's brothers came and bowed to the ground before him. Joseph recognized his brothers as soon as he saw them, but he behaved like a stranger and spoke harshly to them . . . Joseph recognized his brothers, but they did not recognize him. (42: 6-8)

We owe to Robert Alter the idea of a type-scene, a drama enacted several times with variations; and these are particularly in evidence in the book of Bereishith. There is no universal rule as to how to decode the significance of a type-scene. One example is boy-meets-girl-at-well, an encounter that takes places three times, between Abraham's servant and Rebekah, Jacob and Rachel, and Moses and the daughters of Jethro. Here, the setting is probably not significant (wells are where strangers met in those days, like the water-dispenser in a New York office). What we must attend to in these three episodes is their variations: Rebekah's activism, Jacob's show of strength, Moses' passion for justice. How people act toward strangers at a well is, in other words, a test of their character. In some cases, however, a type-scene seems to indicate a recurring theme. That is the case here. If we are to understand what is at stake in the meeting between Joseph and his brothers, we have to set it aside three other episodes, all of which occur in Bereishith.

The first takes place in Isaac's tent. The patriarch is old and blind. He tells his elder son to go out into the field, trap an animal and prepare a meal so that he can bless him. Surprisingly soon, Isaac hears someone enter. “Who are you?” he asks. “I am Esau, your elder son,” the voice replies. Isaac is not convinced. “Come close and let me feel you, my son. Are you really Esau or not?” He reaches out and feels the rough texture of the skins covering his arms. Still unsure, he asks again, “But are you really my son Esau?” The other replies, “I am.” So Isaac blesses him: “Ah, the smell of my son is like the smell of a field blessed by G-d.” But it is not Esau. It is Jacob in disguise.

Scene two: Jacob has fled to his uncle Laban's house. Arriving, he meets and falls in love with Rachel, and offers to work for her father for seven years in order to marry her. The time passes quickly: the years “seemed like a few days because he loved her.” The wedding day approaches. Laban makes a feast. The bride enters her tent. Late at night, Jacob follows her. Now at last he has married his beloved Rachel. When morning comes, he discovers that he has been the victim of a deception. It is not Rachel. It is Leah in disguise.

Scene three: Judah has married a Canaanite girl and is now the father of three sons. The first marries a local girl, Tamar, but dies mysteriously young, leaving his wife a childless widow. Following a pre-Mosaic version of the law of levirate marriage, Judah marries his second son to Tamar so that she can have a child “to keep his brother’s name alive.” He is loathe to have a son that will, in effect, belong to his late brother so he “spilled his seed,” and for this he too died young. Judah is reluctant to give Tamar his third son, so she is left an *agunah*, “chained,” bound to someone she is prevented from marrying, and unable to marry anyone else.

The years pass. Judah’s own wife dies. Returning home from sheep-shearing, he sees a veiled prostitute by the side of the road. He asks her to sleep with him, promising, by way of payment, a kid from the flock. She asks him for his “seal and its cord and his staff” as security. The next day he sends a friend to deliver the kid, but the woman has disappeared. The locals deny all knowledge of her. Three months later, Judah hears that his daughter-in-law Tamar has become pregnant. He is incensed. Bound to his youngest son, she was not allowed to have a relationship with anyone else. She must have been guilty of adultery. “Bring her out so that she may be burnt,” he says. She is brought to be killed, but she asks one favour. She tells one of the people to take to Judah the seal and cord and staff. “The father of my child,” she says, “is the man to whom these things belong.” Immediately, Judah understands. Tamar, unable to marry yet honour-bound to have a child to perpetuate the memory of her first husband, has tricked her father-in-law into performing the duty he should have allowed his youngest son to do. “She is more righteous than I,” Judah admits. He thought he had slept with a prostitute. But it was Tamar in disguise.

That is the context against which the meeting between Joseph and his brothers must be understood. The man the brothers bow down to bears no resemblance to a Hebrew shepherd. He speaks Egyptian. He is dressed in an Egyptian ruler’s robes. He wears Pharaoh’s signet ring and the gold chain of authority. They think they are in the presence of an Egyptian prince, but it is Joseph – their brother – in disguise.

Four scenes, four disguises, four failures to see behind the mask. What do they have in common? Something very striking indeed. It is only by not being recognized that Jacob, Leah, Tamar and Joseph can be recognized, in the sense of attended, taken seriously, heeded. Isaac loves Esau, not Jacob. He loves Rachel, not Leah. Judah thinks of his youngest son, not the plight of Tamar. Joseph is hated by his brothers. Only when they appear as something or someone other than they are can they achieve what they seek – for Jacob, his father’s blessing; for Leah, a husband; for Tamar, a son; for Joseph, the non-hostile attention of his brothers. The plight of these four individuals is summed up in a single poignant phrase: “Joseph recognized his brothers, but they did not recognize him.”

Do the disguises work? In the short term, yes; but in the long term, not necessarily. Jacob suffers greatly for having taken Esau’s blessing. Leah, though she marries Jacob, never wins his love. Tamar had a child (in fact, twins) but Judah “was not intimate with her any more.” Joseph – well, his brothers no longer hated him but they feared him. Even after his assurances that he bore them no grudge, they still thought he would take revenge on them after their father died. What we achieve in disguise is never the love we sought.

But something else happens. Jacob, Leah, Tamar and Joseph discover that, though they may never win the affection of those from whom they seek it, G-d is with them; and that, ultimately, is enough. A disguise is an act of hiding – from others, and perhaps from oneself. From G-d, however, we cannot, nor do we need to, hide. He hears our cry. He answers our unspoken prayer. He heeds the unheeded and brings them comfort. In the aftermath of the four episodes, there is no healing of relationship but there is a mending of identity. That is what makes them, not secular narratives but deeply religious chronicles of psychological growth and maturation. What they tell us is simple and profound: those who stand before G-d need no disguises to achieve self-worth when standing before mankind.

* Note: because Likutei Torah and the Internet Parsha Sheet, both attached by E-mail, normally include the two most recent Devrei Torah by Rabbi Sacks, I have selected an earlier Dvar.

<https://rabbisacks.org/covenant-conversation-5767-miketz/>

It's About Time: An Essay on Miketz

By Adin Even-Israel (Steinsaltz) * © Chabad 2021

Timing

Parshat Vayeishev concludes with a puzzling statement: “Yet the chief butler did not remember Joseph; he forgot him.”¹ How can this be? A person’s memory can be good or bad, but it seems unlikely that a person like Joseph and an experience such as the one the chief butler had in prison could have been forgotten so quickly. What happened to the chief butler? Why did he have to wait until – as Parshat Mikeitz begins – “the end of two full years”?²

On the simplest level, even if the chief butler had wanted to take action on Joseph’s behalf, the right opportunity to do so would have been elusive. It takes time for such an opportunity to present itself, for the king to seek the butler’s counsel. In the meantime, it is not necessarily surprising that the butler forgot about the matter.

Nechemiah 2 relates a story about another butler – Nechemiah himself – who finds himself in a similar situation. Nechemiah had heard long before that Jerusalem lay in ruins, and while he wants to do something to help improve the situation, it is not within his power to do so. Nechemiah does not turn to the king and request to be sent to Jerusalem, because such a blunt request made at the wrong time may not only be rejected, but may jeopardize his relationship with the king as well. As in the case of Pharaoh’s butler, the problem is one of timing. There, too, the moment arrives when “I did not meet with disfavor before him”³ – the king is in a good mood; he is amenable to conversation – and it is then that Nechemiah can make the offer, with the chance that it will actually be accepted.

What underlies these two stories is that things can take time to crystallize, to unfold. The essence of the matter is that everything that occurs has a predestined time, a particular point when it is supposed to happen. This notion, found both in Rashi and in the Midrash, is an important key to understanding how things develop, not only in Tanach but in other areas as well.

Thus, the moment of “at the end of two full years” depends on two factors: when one would expect an event to occur based on the natural development of things, and when the event is destined to occur. The first factor refers to the complex and multifaceted process of causality; every event has a unique way of unfolding, a system characterized by cause and effect. The second factor represents a different kind of reckoning, which likewise plays a role in determining the nature of events. We are speaking of the intent of an event, its inner purpose. These two factors do not contradict each other but work in tandem.

In Joseph’s case, it took two years and an opportunity until the chief butler opened his mouth. In the grand scheme, all the chief butler must do is open his mouth in order to get the process of Joseph’s rise to greatness underway. The chief butler certainly did not intend for Joseph to reach the high station that he eventually achieved; that was not the intention of anyone who was involved in the story. Yet the butler’s words to Pharaoh suddenly give Joseph an opportunity to get out of prison and begin advancing to a higher status.

This is where the chief butler’s role in Joseph’s ascension comes to an end. From this point on, the story can progress in many different ways. After Joseph interprets his dream, Pharaoh could have easily said to him, “You are the best dream interpreter that I have, and as a reward I am entering you into the ranks of the magicians.” In order for the narrative to avoid the random whims of causality, to move further on its destined course, it needs a push in the right direction.

From the standpoint of inner causality, Joseph’s departure from prison occurred at a predetermined date and time. When this moment arrives, all sorts of things begin to transpire that cause this departure to actually come about. “At the end (miketz) of two full years” – the event that propels Joseph at the age of thirty to the height of his greatness is his “fixed time” (ketz), which is independent of the series of events that preceded it. It was just as likely for Joseph to have fallen into a pit before meeting with his brothers. In that scenario, he would have stood there screaming until those same Midianites would have found him and brought him to Egypt, and he would have come to “the end of two full years” via a different route.

In order to reach this ketz, events are pushed forward so as to occur at a certain, designated time: “And it came to pass at the end of two full years that Pharaoh dreamed.” The time assigned for this event to occur has come. Pharaoh experiences his dream, and a process begins to unfold.

“Let me know, O God, my end”

Within time, there are often markers or signs that point to events that must occur. This is true in the life of the individual, and it is true as well in the life of a community or a nation: Events occur in a certain preordained order. These markers are the fixed times at which each event must come about. That is to say, there is a course of events that advances with the assistance of a variety of mechanisms, a series of causes and effects that operate on one side of causality. Then, a heavenly decree determines the exact moment that the event must come into effect, and with that, it occurs.

The verse, “Let me know, O God, my end, and the measure of my days, what it is,”⁴ speaks of a predetermined measure to a person’s life. Our sages, both in the Talmud and in the Midrash, deal extensively with this subject. The basic assumption is that there is a *ketz* to every person’s life, even if certain events or deeds can change its precise duration, shortening or lengthening it. Even when Maimonides⁵ discusses the relationship between the events that a person experiences and his predetermined *ketz*, it is clear that some kind of *ketz* exists for every person. There is a *ketz* for a person’s greatness, a *ketz* for his death, and a *ketz* for every other significant lifetime event. As a rule, we are not privy to these fixed times. A person may sense that a significant event is approaching, but even then he does not truly know when it will transpire.

One aspect of fixed times is that even when we know when an event will occur, we cannot always be certain. The Talmud tells of various cases where, because of a person’s behavior, a certain number of years was added or subtracted from their predetermined allotment of years. For example, several years were added to the life of Benjamin the Righteous because he supported a poor woman.⁶ Similarly, Rabbi Akiva’s daughter was destined to die at her wedding, but as a result of a charitable deed that she performed, she was allowed to live beyond her wedding day.⁷

Apparently, no *ketz* remains absolutely fixed to its exact date, irrespective of other factors. Even when a fixed date for a particular event is decreed from on high, as we find in various prophecies, these dates can shift as well. For the individual as well, there are dynamic factors in life that can alter his fate in one way or another. This idea is found frequently in Tanach, as it says of the redemption, “In its time, I will hasten it.”⁸ We see from this example that even when an event is assigned a specific time, like the redemption, it is always possible for this time to be moved forward.

In the same vein, the *ketz* of the Exodus from Egypt and the *ketz* of the Babylonian exile were not fixed absolutely. It says in Jeremiah⁹ that the Babylonian exile must last seventy years. But in reality, attempts to establish an accurate chronology seem to indicate that fewer than seventy years transpired between the destruction of the First Temple and the construction of the Second Temple. Our sages¹⁰ offer three possible explanations in an attempt to reconcile the number found in Jeremiah with the actual chronology. Whatever the case may be, it seems clear that the length of the exile did not necessarily amount to the seemingly preordained seventy years.

The *ketz* of the Egyptian exile also seems to change. The Torah says, “They will serve them, and they will oppress them – four hundred years.”¹¹ For this exile as well, it must be that “In its time, I will hasten it” applies. When the words of the Covenant between the Pieces are compared to the time the People of Israel actually spent in Egypt, it turns out that the Egyptian exile lasted for less than half of the period that it was supposed to last. In order to reconcile this reality with the verse, our sages¹² derive from the beginning of the verse – “your offspring will be a stranger” – that the years are counted not from the time of the Covenant between the Pieces, but from the birth of Isaac. Even then, when the two chronologies do match up approximately, it is a difficult interpretation to accept.

Each of these is an example of a *ketz* that, despite its fixed nature, also included ups and downs.

Whenever we speak of designated times for redemption, it should be understood that while the time exists, it does not necessarily hinge on a specific date. There are many historical examples of this. Even Maimonides, who was certainly not the type to engage in calculations of the time of redemption, records one *ketz*. In his Epistle to Yemen, he writes that although we know that our sages have said, and for good reason, “May those who calculate the end come to grief,”¹³ a tradition has been passed down to him from his ancestors as to when the time of redemption will be. He says that the redemption will occur in approximately four hundred years, a prospect that displeases Maimonides, as it means that he and his contemporaries will not live to see it.

How events unfold

Just as there are junctions in the road, there are also junctures in time. In order to reach one's destination, it may be that one must pass a particular junction. However, there is not always only one way to reach that junction; it may be that one can reach it in several different ways. Similarly, one ultimately arrives at a predestined juncture in time, but what exactly will happen at that time and, more significantly, which developments will lead to that juncture, is yet undetermined.

When Jacob blesses his sons before his death and speaks with them about "what will befall you in the end of days,"¹⁴ this is the kind of statement that, whether in its plain or its midrashic sense, certainly does not refer to a specific predetermined date. Nevertheless, Jacob is clearly speaking about specific events that are destined to occur and which will arrive, sooner or later, at their appropriate times. His blessing includes a prophecy about the Kingdom of Judah and a prophecy about Samson. The two events are not of the same era and do not refer to the same ketz. However, in both cases it is understood that before the final ketz arrives, a series of events have to occur, though not necessarily all at the same time or in a specific way. Samson's exploits are bound to occur as a result of Jacob's blessing; but at least some of the developments of Samson's narrative appear to be the results of his own, frequently misguided freedom of choice.

Moses' blessing leaves a similar impression: To reach the ketz, certain events must occur, but each of these necessary events can come about in very different ways.

There is a tradition that every year that is predicted to be the ketz, the year of the redemption, is a dangerous and problematic year. Such a year can truly be the time that the Messiah is destined to arrive, but this is not guaranteed to be true. Hence, it is a time that is marked by anxiety, when we are especially encouraged to engage in Torah study and good deeds. Maimonides' tradition, for example, was based on the verse, "In this (hazot) year of jubilee you shall return each man to his ancestral heritage,"¹⁵ where the numerical value of the word "hazot" alludes to the year 5408. In precisely that year there were major pogroms against the Jews of Poland, Ukraine, and Lithuania, known as the Chmielnicki Massacres.

The times of the ketz are sensitive periods for the Jewish people. Just as the physical world contains plateaus and mountains, the same is true in the realm of time. When one walks on flat land, it may seem that all is well, but when one encounters a mountain, it is impossible to ignore it, even if it can ultimately be overcome – and the same can be said of the events in the life of a person or in the history of a nation. Occasionally, we encounter signs that indicate that, as we proclaim in the Musaf service on Rosh Hashana, "today the world is pregnant." This "pregnancy" can result in the birth of a Jacob, but it can also result in the birth of an Esau. Whatever the nature of this momentous "birth" – whether it heralds salvation and consolation or, Heaven forbid, the opposite – it is always a time of upheaval.

The ketz of the Messiah is a time of tremendous change throughout the world. Hence, any potential preordained time for this is a significant point, a deep fissure in the sequence of time, foreshadowing that certain important events are about to happen. How they will happen and what their nature will be apparently depends on other factors.

Our sages say that the Messiah may come in stillness and quiet, but may also come in storm and tempest.¹⁶ Here, too, the destination is known, but the way there is not set. If one follows the good and straight path, he will not have to experience tribulations; but if he does not follow the proper path, God will appoint over him "a king whose decrees are as harsh as Haman's." When the time of the redemption comes, the world will undergo change. If one allows the change to come quietly, it will be quiet; if not, its arrival will be accompanied by loud noise and great anger.

According to our sages, "It would have been fitting for Jacob our patriarch to go down to Egypt in iron chains, only that his merit saved him,¹⁷ and God brought it about that he traveled to Egypt of his own volition. The People of Israel had to end up in Egypt; they could not escape this fate. But the route to Egypt was never set in stone: If not for Jacob's merit, he and his family could have been brought there against their will. In the end, though the final destination remained the same – enslavement in Egypt – Jacob was able to improve his lot for the duration of the journey.

"And it came to pass, at the end of two full years" signals that the time has come for something to occur. The "how" of the matter is trivial – Pharaoh has a dream, the chief butler happens to be present, other events align, and ultimately, they all cross the threshold simultaneously, reaching their ketz at precisely the right time.

FOOTNOTES:

1. Gen. 40:23.

2. 41:1.

3. Neh. 2:1; see Ibn Ezra.
4. Ps. 39:5.
5. Igrot HaRambam i, 264–272.
6. Bava Basra 11a.
7. Shabbat 156b. From this incident, our sages learned the precept that “charity saves from death.”
8. Is. 60:22.
9. Jer. 25:11–12.
10. Megillah 11b.
11. Gen. 15:13.
12. Tanchuma, Shemot 4.
13. Sanhedrin 97b.
14. Gen. 49:1.
15. Lev. 25:13.
16. Sanhedrin 97b.
17. Shabbat 89b.

* Rabbi Adin Even-Israel (Steinsaltz) (1937-2020) was internationally regarded as one of the leading rabbis of this century. The author of many books, he was best known for his monumental translation of and commentary on the Talmud.

https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/4962579/jewish/Its-About-Time.htm

Chanukah and Mikeitz: All for the Children
An Insight on Chanukah from the Rebbe
by Rabbi Yosef Y. Alperowitz * © Chabad 2021

Focusing on the Education of Our Children

Chanukah is a festival that celebrates the miracle of the recapture and rededication of the Holy Temple by a family of righteous Priests — the Chashmonaim. Chanukah means dedication or consecration, which is what the Priests did after gaining entry to the Temple, cleansing it and restoring the daily services.

The word "Chanukah" is also related to the word "chinuch," which means “education.” Chanukah is a time to focus on the Jewish educational needs of our children. We should provide them with a holy environment—similar to a Holy Temple, purified and sanctified by the Chashmonaim. This will help our children become true G-d-serving Jews.

Another lesson to be learned from Chanukah: When the Chashmonaim entered the Temple, they found only one cruze of pure olive oil bearing the seal of the High Priest, with which they kindled the Menorah. A miracle occurred and the oil — which contained only one day's supply — lasted for eight days, until they were able to produce new oil.

According to Jewish law, the Chashmonaim were permitted to light the Menorah with impure oil. However, they did not want to compromise their observance of mitzvot. They would accept nothing but the best, and they wanted a Holy Temple

where everything was pure. Similarly, we should make every effort to provide our children an education of complete, uncompromised Judaism.

As an incentive for the children, it is customary to give them Chanukah gelt or gifts on Chanukah.

* — from *Pearls for the Shabbos Table*

Gut Shabbos,

Rabbi Yosef B. Friedman
Kehot Publication Society
291 Kingston Ave., Brooklyn, NY 11213

1. Mishneh Torah, Teshuvah 3:4; Sichot Kodesh 5734, vol. 1, pp. 208–213.

https://www.chabad.org/dailystudy/dailywisdom_cdo/aid/2942279/jewish/Shabbat-The-Power-of-the-Deed.htm

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Covenant and Conversation

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, z"l

The Festival of Lights That Signifies an Inextinguishable Faith

What I find fascinating about Chanukah, the Jewish festival of lights we celebrate at this time of the year, is the way its story was transformed by time.

It began as the simple story of a military victory, the success of Judah the Maccabee and his followers as they fought for religious freedom against the repressive rule of the Syrian-Greek emperor Antiochus IV. Antiochus, who modestly called himself Epiphanes, "God made manifest", had resolved forcibly to hellenise the Jews.

He had a statue of Zeus erected in the precincts of the temple in Jerusalem, ordered sacrifices to be made to pagan gods, and banned Jewish rites on pain of death. The Maccabees fought back and within three years had reconquered Jerusalem and rededicated the Temple. That is how the story is told in the first and second books of Maccabees.

However, things did not go smoothly thereafter. The new Jewish monarchy known as the Hasmonian kings themselves became hellenised. They also incurred the wrath of the people by breaking one of the principles of Judaism: the separation between religion and political power. They became not just kings but also high priests, something earlier monarchs had never done.

Even militarily, the victory over the Greeks proved to be only a temporary respite. Within a century Pompey invaded Jerusalem and Israel came under Roman rule. Then came the disastrous rebellion against Rome (66-73), as a result of which Israel was defeated and the Temple destroyed. The work of the Maccabees now lay in ruins.

Some rabbis at the time believed that the festival of Chanukah should be abolished. Why celebrate a freedom that had been lost? Others disagreed, and their view prevailed. Freedom may have been lost but not hope.

That was when another story came to the fore, about how the Maccabees, in purifying the Temple, found a single cruse of oil, its seal still intact, from which they relit the Menorah, the great candelabrum in the Temple. Miraculously the light lasted eight days and that became the central narrative of Chanukah. It became a festival of light within the Jewish home symbolising a faith that could not be extinguished. Its message was captured in a phrase from the prophet Zekhariah: "Not by

might nor by power but by My spirit, says the Lord Almighty."

I have often wondered whether that is not the human story, not just the Jewish one. We celebrate military victories. We tell stories about the heroes of the past. We commemorate those who gave their lives in defence of freedom. That is as it should be. Yet the real victories that determine the fate of nations are not so much military as cultural, moral and spiritual.

In Rome the Arch of Titus was erected by Titus's brother Domitian to commemorate the victorious Roman siege of Jerusalem in the year 70. It shows Roman soldiers carrying away the spoils of war, most famously the seven-branched Menorah. Rome won that military conflict. Yet its civilisation declined and fell, while Jews and Judaism survived.

They did so not least because of Chanukah itself. That simple act of families coming together to light the lights, tell the story and sing the songs, proved more powerful than armies and longer-lived than empires. What endured was not the historical narrative as told in the books of Maccabees but the simpler, stronger story that spoke of a single cruse of oil that survived the wreckage and desecration, and the light it shed that kept on burning.

Something in the human spirit survives even the worst of tragedies, allowing us to rebuild shattered lives, broken institutions and injured nations. That to me is the Jewish story. Jews survived all the defeats, expulsions, persecutions and pogroms, even the Holocaust itself, because they never gave up the faith that one day they would be free to live as Jews without fear. Whenever I visit a Jewish school today I see on the smiling faces of the children the ever-renewed power of that faith whose symbol is Chanukah and its light of inextinguishable hope.

(First published in The Times, December 2012)

Shabbat Shalom: Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

As children, we learn that Chanukah is about the victory of the Judeans over the Greek-Syrians; Jews over Gentiles. We know from the Books of the Maccabees and the Second Commonwealth historian Josephus, however, that the struggle began as a civil war, a battle between brothers waged in order to determine the future direction of the Jewish people. Hellenistic Jews fought Torah-based Jews; assimilationist Jews fought traditionalist Jews; would-be Greeks fought old fashioned, committed Jews.

But after the traditionalists won, they did not banish Greek culture, never to allow it a foothold in the sacred portals of Judea. Not only have thousands of Greek words (and via those words, Greek concepts) entered the Talmud and Midrash, but Greek philosophy, science and aesthetics have found a place in the corpus of Jewish literature, especially through great commentators and codifiers such as Maimonides. A brief comment in the Midrash Shabar should mute the idea that Judea rejected Hellas:

The Midrash breaks the word "Zion" (Israel) into its two components. The first letter, the tzaddik, represents the holy, righteous Jews, while the last three letters yud, vav, nun spell out "Yavan", the Hebrew word for Greece. We're being told that at the very heart of everything revered in Judaism – Zion – there must be the beauty of Greece. The question is to what extent?

The Talmud cites the verse, "May God expand Japheth and may he (Japheth) dwell in the tents of Shem" (Genesis 9: 27) as proof that the Torah was not to be translated into any language except Greek (Babylonia Talmud Megillah 9b). The verse is Noah's blessing to Japheth and Shem for their modest behavior after he was shamed by their brother Ham. The Talmud's reading of the verse turns Japheth and Shem into symbols. Japheth is the forerunner of Greece and Shem; the progenitor of Israel. The expansion of Japheth is the beautiful Greek language "which shall dwell in the tents of Shem," when the Torah is translated into Greek. The Midrash adds: "Let the beauty of Japheth be incorporated into the tents of Shem" which has come to mean the ability to extract the positive aspects of Greek culture and synthesize them with our eternal Torah.

Fascinatingly, the Festival of Chanukah always coincides with Torah portions recording the struggle between Joseph and his brothers. A parallel can be drawn between Joseph's struggle and traditional Judea's struggle with Hellenism.

Joseph's roots were nomadic. His ancestors were shepherds. Pastoral life, as we know, allows the soul to soar; a shepherd has the leisure to compose music and poetry, as well as to meditate on the Torah and communicate with the Divine.

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But even in the pastures, Joseph was dreaming of a new world. His dreams were focused on agriculture – the Egyptian occupation which came after shepherding. What upsets the brothers is not just an event in a dream (their sheaves bowing to his), but the very fact that sheaves feature at all. Sheaves represent not only agriculture, but also modernism – a break with tradition.

Joseph's second dream is about the sun, moon and stars. Again, it isn't so much the events of the dream that disturbs, but its universalistic elements. The brothers could even have understood a dream of the cosmos with God at the center, like Jacob's early dream of the ladder. But here, Joseph himself is at the center like the Greek message: "Man is the measure of all things"; man, and not God. Moreover, the Bible says Joseph gloried in his physical appearance, his being of beautiful form and fair visage – "yafeh" (beautiful) like "Japheth," Greece (Genesis 39: 6). And as Heinrich Heine said, "For the Greeks, beauty is truth; for the Hebrews, truth is beauty".

Everyone loves Joseph – handsome, clever, urbane, the perfect guest, dazzling you with his knowledge of languages, including the language of dreams. Joseph is the cosmopolitan Grand Vizier of Egypt, the universalist. Joseph is more Yavanlike than Shemlike, more similar to Greek-Hellenism than to Abrahamic-Hebraism.

Hence the tensions between Joseph and his brothers are not unlike the tensions between Hellenism and Hebraism. But Joseph matures and by the time he stands before Pharaoh, he does see God at the center: "Not I, but rather God will interpret the dreams to the satisfaction of Pharaoh." (Genesis 41: 15)

And Judah will remind Joseph of the centrality of his family and ancestral home, establishing the first house of study (yeshiva) in Goshen, Egypt (Genesis 49: 22 and Rashi ad loc). Judah, symbolizing Torah and repentance, will receive the spiritual birthright (Genesis 49: 10), and Joseph will receive the blessings of material prosperity (Genesis 49: 22). The two will join together for the glory of Zion and Israel.

The Person in the Parsha
Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb

An End to Darkness

Since my early childhood, I've associated the day after Chanukah with sad feelings, feelings of loss. After all, for eight consecutive days, we celebrated with hallel v'hodaah, with praise and thanksgiving, with special foods and songs, and gifts.

We lit candles every night, culminating in the night before last when we lit eight candles. Then, suddenly, abruptly, we cease all celebration—no more candles!

I recall the first time I was conscious of these sad post-Chanukah emotions. I was five years old, old enough to have heard the Chanukah story and to have learned Chanukah songs. My uncle Yossel, one of my father's younger brothers, had just returned from serving in the United States Army during World War II. He returned with military souvenirs, including helmets and flags. To me, he was more than just a war hero. He was the embodiment of Judah the Maccabee.

It was a special holiday for our family, and we celebrated accordingly. I had my own little menorah and still remember my mother's words of caution as I lit the last candle on the eighth night.

But the next night, I felt deprived and experienced what I now realize was a sense of anti-climactic loss.

I remember another Chanukah, about ten years later, in my early teenage years. Earlier that year, just before Rosh Hashanah, I had been contacted by a rabbi in another neighborhood, who was assembling a small group of selected yeshiva high school students to join him in a special "club for spiritual advancement." That rabbi, now long gone, eventually became, and remains, quite famous and influential. I refer to the late Rabbi Avigdor Miller, whom I consider one of my first mentors.

There were about ten or twelve young boys in the group, and we would assemble in his synagogue, the Young Israel of Rugby in Brooklyn, once every three weeks. We would briefly study a classic work of Jewish ethics, or mussar, and were given an assignment designed to foster our spiritual development. We returned three weeks later to report about our progress.

Several weeks before Chanukah, we were introduced to what is now referred to as "mindfulness meditation." We were asked to spend some time in front of the lit menorah, gazing at the candles and monitoring the thoughts that came to mind and the emotions we were feeling.

On the "ninth day," we were to sit before the unlit menorah and again reflect upon our thoughts and feelings while sitting in utter darkness.

That experience made a lifelong impression upon me, and I well recall that cold winter evening, sitting in the darkness, and sobbing in sadness.

Fast forward some thirty years to Chanukah 1984, when my wife's late uncle came to visit the city of Baltimore, where we were his hosts. My wife's uncle was a Hasidic Rebbe, the Moditzer Rebbe, Rabbi Shmuel Eliyahu Taub, of blessed memory, who had settled in Israel before the Holocaust.

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That Chanukah, he was visiting the United States and spent the seventh and eighth day of Chanukah in our home. There, throngs of local Jews came to consult him and heard his inspiring words of Torah and charming melodies.

He departed on the morning of the "ninth day," which was sad in itself.

Sadder, however, was the fact that soon after he returned to Israel, on the fourth day of Iyar, not long after Passover, he passed away. My wife and I were never to see him again.

And so, from a very personal perspective, you can understand the sadness that I associate with the day after Chanukah.

This year, however, the day after Chanukah falls on a Shabbat, this Shabbat. This is a special blessing for me, and for all who feel somewhat let down after the Chanukah holiday. The Shabbat day thankfully dispels whatever sadness we might otherwise be feeling.

Upon further reflection, it dawned upon me that it is not only the Shabbat itself that dispels the "darkness" that we feel post-Chanukah. Rather, dispelling darkness is the very theme of this week's Torah portion.

Last week's parsha, Parshat Vayeshev, ended on a very dark note. Joseph was interred in a deep and dark dungeon. His desperate, and only, hope was that his once fellow prisoner, Pharaoh's chief cupbearer, would remember his plea: "But think of me when all is well with you again, and do me the kindness of mentioning me to Pharaoh, so as to free me from this place." (Genesis 40:14)

But the discouraging final verse of last week's Torah reading still rings in our ears: "Yet the chief cupbearer did not think of Joseph; he forgot him!" (ibid. verse 23)

This week, our parsha begins with the very next verse: "At the end, Miketz, of two years' time, Pharaoh dreamed..." We gradually come to know the details of Pharaoh's dreams. We become aware that they dramatically lead not only to Joseph's freedom from the dungeon, but to his elevation to the position of viceroy, the second most powerful man in all of Egypt.

The word ketz means "the end." Thus, the Midrash links our verse to the words of Job: "Ketz sum lachoshech, He sets an end to darkness; to every limit that man probes, to rocks in deepest darkness." (Job 28:3)

The Midrash continues, "The Almighty assigns limits to times of darkness," to which the commentaries suggest that even times of darkness have a purpose. Thus, Joseph's imprisonment, dark as it was, was the setting for his encounter with the royal cupbearer, which eventually led not only to his freedom

but to his rise to power. We can begin to understand the purpose of darkness only when the darkness is finally lifted.

I hasten to add that this lesson is intrinsic to the very procedure of Chanukah candle lighting. We follow the custom of the great Hillel. His custom was opposed to that of Shammai, whose school kindled eight lights on the first night of the holiday, and then kindled one less light each night until they were left with but one candle on the final night. With one candle left, there is nowhere to go except to zero. Hillel on the other hand began with but one candle and increased the number of candles each night until there were eight. He was, as the Talmud puts it, *mosif v'holech*, always increasing the number of candles, always increasing the amount of light.

His lesson is clear. When one encounters the darkness of the ninth day, he must continue to increase the amount of light. He must, figuratively of course, light a "ninth candle." He dare not succumb to darkness or despair. He must continue on the path of *mosif v'holech*, constantly moving forward.

Ketz sum lachoshech. An end to darkness. An apt prayer for our current circumstances.

Torah.Org: Rabbi Yissocher Frand

The Name Menashe Expresses Gratitude for Being Able to Forget

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

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

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

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

I saw an interpretation in the name of a Sefer Beis Pinchas (I believe this was Rav Pinchas Shapiro of Koretz): If I say something that

makes you feel bad – if I insult you, I humiliate you – there is a little clock that starts ticking. The longer you are hurting, the longer the clock ticks, the more I am going to be held accountable for it. If you take the matter home and tell your wife, she will become upset, for days, for weeks, maybe even for years. Unfortunately, when the person who originally inflicted the pain goes up to the Yeshiva shel Ma'alah, he will need to not only account for the initial infliction, but also for all the subsequent pain that he caused. It is an ongoing insult that keeps on hurting—perhaps in growing magnitude—as time goes on.

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

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

Yosef wanted his pain to end so that his brothers would be spared excessive punishment. The Ribono shel Olam did him a tremendous favor and helped him forget all the suffering his brothers inflicted upon him in the house of his father. Consequently, since Yosef's suffering came to an end, the brothers would ultimately pay less of a price and ultimately we will need to pay less of a price. This all came about "ki neeshani Elokim es beis avi." Yosef is not saying that he forgot the integrity of the house of his father or the

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spirituality of the house of his father, the Torah of his father, the middos of his father, or the tzidkus of his father. For sure, that was not the case. He was merely talking about the suffering and the trauma he experienced there at the hand of his brothers. He forgot about that and went on with his life. Therefore, there would be an earlier end to the pain they would need to suffer for their cruelty to Yosef. This was such a great kindness on the part of the Almighty that it even preceded Yosef's expression of gratitude that "G-d made me fruitful in the land of my suffering."

The Name Ephraim Comes from the Word Efer (Ashes)

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

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

Rav Aharon Yehudah Leib Shteinman [1914-2017] said that there was another reason why Yosef desired to remember the "ashes" of Avraham and the "ashes" of Yitzchak. Yosef HaTzadik quickly went from being a prisoner in a dungeon to being the second most powerful man in Egypt. For all intents and purposes, he was the second most powerful man in the world. We know what happens to people when they have such a quick rise in prominence—it often goes to their head! They become different people. We see this all too often.

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

Dvar Torah: Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis

What is the best way to share? In last week's Parsha of Vayeishev, and at the beginning of this week's Parsha of Mikeitz, we have three pairs of dreams.

In the very first one, Joseph, reveals his two dreams to his brothers. He does so in order to show them how superior he is over them. They certainly got the message and as a result they engaged in an act of attempted fratricide.

At the end of Parshat Vayeishev, with the second pair of dreams, Joseph correctly interprets the dreams of Pharaoh's butler and baker. He asks the butler, "When you emerge alive from this dungeon, please tell Pharaoh all about me – save me from my fate!"

At the beginning of Parshat Mikeitz Joseph interprets Pharaoh's two dreams and as a result he is elevated out of the dungeon to become only second to Pharaoh in Egypt. How did Pharaoh know that Joseph was someone who's word he could rely on?

This was the first occasion on which Joseph was involved in interpreting dreams and sharing their valuable messages unconditionally. On the previous occasions, he had always had a personal agenda. However on this occasion when Pharaoh quizzed Joseph, Joseph said,

"It's Hashem Who is correctly interpreting your dreams."

He showed that he was a person of integrity and sincerity. There was no agenda. He didn't want to receive anything in return. He was sharing out of concern, empathy and consideration.

That is what impressed Pharaoh. That is what told him that Joseph was a person whose word he could rely on

So the message for us is that when we have something to share – it could be something physical, it could be the gift of knowledge – if we have an agenda, we don't stand to benefit from what we are doing. But when we share for the sake of others and do so unconditionally, that is when we stand to receive the most.

Rabbi Dr. Nachum Amsel Encyclopedia of Jewish Values*

Miketz- the Parsha, Chanukah and Miracles

Shabbat Chanukah can occur on Shabbat Parashat Vayeishev, Shabbat Parashat Miketz, or both. This year Chanukah is Shabbat Parashat Miketz but there is a direct connection between Chanukah and last week's Parasha.

Central to the Mitzvah-commandment of lighting the Chanukah candles is "publicizing

the miracle." This is so crucial that Shulchan Aruch rules (Orach Chaim 678:1) if a poor person has money for a Chanukah candle or money for wine, Challah or a Havdalah candle, Chanukah candles take precedence because of the need to publicize the miracle of Chanukah. Similarly, if a Jew cannot publicize the miracle, even to his own family (i.e. a Jew comes home very late on Chanukah while everyone else in the home is sleeping and no one is around outside when he or she wants to light the Menorah), then according to many Rabbinic authorities, the Jew lights without a blessing (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 591:7) because is the essence of the Mitzvah – publicizing the miracle. But where do we learn the same concept in last week's Parsha? The Talmud (Shabbat 22a) quotes a verse from our Parsha: "The pit was empty. It contained no water." The Gemara asks: since we know that there are no extra words in the Torah, we already know from "the pit was empty" that "there was no water". Why add these extra words? The answer is that these extra words teach us that while, indeed, was no water in the pit to harm Joseph, there were snakes and scorpions in the pit. Why didn't these harm Joseph? Because God created a supernatural miracle to protect Joseph from these creatures who naturally harm humans. Thus, the extra words in the Parsha "there was no water" comes to publicly acknowledge the miracle created by Hashem to help Joseph escaping the danger posed by the snakes and scorpion. Thus, the Torah publicizes this miracle, just as we publicize the miracle on Chanukah.

What is even more fascinating is that we can surmise this connection of Chanukah to the Parsha by the Rabbis themselves. We know that there are only two holidays in the Jewish calendar that have no special Talmudic tractate dedicated to them: Shavuot and Chanukah. While we might understand the reason for Shavuot (only one day from the Torah and no special Mitzvot), the question of why no Chanukah tractate has bothered commentaries for centuries (this is not the place for that discussion). However, all the laws and customs of Chanukah are discussed in the tractate of Shabbat in three folios, from Shabbat 21a-24a. Within these pages, only Chanukah is discussed, except for one three-line exposition of text: our very text of "the pit was empty. It contained no water". Why are only these three lines intentionally put in the middle of the Talmudic Chanukah discussion? We can deduce that the rabbis intentionally did this and put these lines specifically here, to call our attention that both publicized miracles, the essence of the Chanukah Mitzvah.

Is there a connection between the two miracles of chanukah?

All other Jewish holidays celebrate one and only one miracle. Only Chanukah celebrates both the natural miracle and victory of the war, and supernatural miracle of the burning of the oil for 8 days. We usually assume the ideas behind these two miracles teach us different

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lessons. But is there indeed a connection between these two miracles?

To answer this question, we need to ask additional questions from the text of *Al Hanisim* Tefillah that we recite both on Chanukah and Purim. When it comes to the words recited on Purim, they are far more direct and clearer. Haman tried to annihilate the Jewish people, and then God foiled his plan and killed him. On Chanukah, however, the Greek plan was to "make them forget their Torah" and assimilate the Jews – a spiritual rather than physical destruction. In describing the victory of the Jews on Chanukah, some of the phrases do not make logical sense. We understand the (natural) miracle in giving over "the strong into the hands of the weak" and the "many into the hands of the few." But then the text continues with other phrases that state that the miracle was also giving "the impure into the hands of the pure" and "the wicked into the hands of the righteous." Why is this miraculous? Where does it say that the wicked are naturally supposed to defeat the righteous, or that the impure usually defeat the pure, and that when the opposite occurs we view it as "out of the ordinary" (like the many into the hands of the few)? What are the Rabbis trying to tell us?

Rabbi Zev Leff has discussed all these questions ("Festivals of Life," Targum Press, 2009, Rabbi Zev Leff, pages 114-121). He points out that at that time in history, Greece, in addition to representing the philosophy that was spreading throughout its conquered territories, was also the economic superpower of the world. Like the capitalism of today in many countries, Greek values were very shallow and external, and everything revolved around "the sale." At the end of the day, people were judged by how much profit they made and how many sales they rang up, not by the quality of life. Thus, the symbol for Greece was that of quantity, symbolized by the Hebrew name for Greece, *Yavan*, written with three parallel lines, one small (*Yud*), one medium (*Vav*) and one long (*Final Nun*). These thin lines are the three basic sizes used in every business as part of all sales – small, medium, and large, and the line represents the smallest amount of quality, just a thin line. In addition, the word *Yavan* is the Hebrew word for beauty (*Noi*) spelled backwards, because the Greek definition of beauty was the opposite of the Jewish and Torah view of beauty. This was also the philosophy of the Greek approach to war. Just as in business, they believed that superior numbers create the ultimate value, and the greatest quantity can defeat anyone and any country.

The Jewish view has always been the opposite. Judaism believes in quality over quantity, whether in prayer (Berachot 5b, Rema on Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 295:2, Mishna Berurah on Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 1, No. 12) or any other aspect of Jewish life, even in war. This was also played out in the physical battle between the Greeks and Jews, then, and

remains the battle between the Israelis and Arabs today – quantity vs. quality: The Arabs have many more soldiers and weapons, but the Israeli advantage lies in the inherent quality or values of its soldiers, which is vastly superior to that of their Arab counterparts. This idea, then, explains the words of the *Al Hanisim* prayer. The Jews defeated the Greeks because of their quality because they were pure as opposed to the Greeks' impurity, and righteous vs. evil. This was the source of the strength which helped them overcome the enemy that vastly outnumbered them, and this power remains the Jewish advantage today. This concept of Judaism, that quality is more important than quantity and that superior quality will win out in the end, is also the idea behind the supernatural miracle of the oil. The physical quantity of that oil was only supposed to last for one day, but the spiritual quality of the oil overcame the insufficient quantity and made it last for a full eight days. Thus, the message of both miracles of Chanukah is clear: Jewish survival depends on the quality of the life and values of the Jews, not the quantity of riches or even the quantity of commandments observed. God desires the quality, represented by the heart of the Jew (**Sanhedrin 106b**).

***This column has been adapted from a series of volumes written by Rabbi Dr. Nachum Amsel "The Encyclopedia of Jewish Values" available from Urim and Amazon. For the full article or to review all the footnotes in the original, contact the author at nachum@jewishdestiny.com**

OU Dvar Torah

The Kohen Quality in Every Jew: Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook zt"l on Chanukah Rabbi Aaron Goldscheider

In only a few short lines the Talmud tells the remarkable story of Chanukah. We know it well: A single jug of oil with the seal of the Kohen Gadol, the High Priest, was found and used for lighting the Menorah. Oil that should have lasted for a single day miraculously lasted for eight (Talmud Shabbat 21).

Rabbi Abraham Kook zt"l taught that behind the basic facts of the story lies a deeper and more profound lesson (Ain Aya, Shabbat Vol. 1, p.65).

Oil is the inner part of the olive, its essence. When the Greeks entered the Temple and destroyed hundreds of flasks of oil, this attack represented only one aspect of their vicious assault. The Greeks most destructive assault was on the inner essence of the Jewish people. They began to defile and corrupt the very character and constitution of the Jew. As time went on, the Greeks aggressively attempted to quash the Jewish nation's unique personality.

But there is something wondrous about the nature of the Jewish nation, says Rabbi Kook. We are a nation of priests – Mamlechet Kohanim (Exodus 19:6). Every single Jew is called a 'kohen', a priest. Every Jew has a

'kohen quality'; an inner longing to live a life of holiness, sanctity and closeness to the Creator. This is the symbol of the little jug of oil sealed with the stamp of the High Priest. The deepest part of the Jew is his/her neshama; the heart of the Jew is always attached to the Divine.

Rabbi Kook uniquely taught that this remarkable idea is demonstrated in a Torah law. In the category of halacha that relate to the giving of tithes, we find that generally such donations were given to the Kohen and to the Levite. And yet there is one tithe, known as 'maaser sheni', which is not given to the Kohen. Rather, this tithe is designated for every Israelite. Every person in Israel would take a portion of their fruits and vegetables to Jerusalem and eat it in the holy city. At that moment each individual truly sensed his/her inner "kohen quality." By eating holy tithes in a sacred setting, the Jew is likened to a Kohen.

Despite how things may appear on the outside there remains a 'pure jug of oil' on the inside. The Jewish soul simply cannot be corrupted; stored carefully away in each of us is a purity that remains untouched and unblemished. This beautiful perspective sheds light on Rabbi Kook's capacity to see the good in every Jew and his steadfast conviction that every Jew longs for holiness. This viewpoint when taken to heart is transformative. It sensitizes us to judge others not based on exteriors, rather to look for the depth in every person. It also affects the way in which we think of ourselves and our relationship to our Creator.

One of Rabbi Kook's inspirational role models was the Rebbe of the Hasidic dynasty of Ger, Reb Yehuda Aryeh Leib Alter (1847-1905). Rabbi Kook could often be seen on Shabbat clutching in his arms one particular book, the Sfat Emet, the Rebbe of Ger's insights on the weekly parsha.

In a passage from this book, the Sfat Emet asks: how could the Torah demand love of God from every Jew (Ve'ani Tefilla p.123)? Love is not something that can be dictated – either you love something or you don't. The Rebbe suggested that the answer to this question can be found within the question itself – the love of God is embedded within the soul of every Jew. It is not something that needs to be acquired, rather it is something that resides within each of us and merely needs to be cultivated and developed.

The flames of the menorah remind us of our inner holiness. Every person is a light.

Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook expressed this celebrated perspective with these poetic words: Everyone must know
That deep within burns a candle.
No one's candle is like someone else's;
No one lacks a personal candle.

We all must know

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That it is our task to reveal our light to the world,
To ignite it until it is a great flame
And to illuminate the universe.

Ohr Torah Stone Dvar Torah

Finding God in the Yosef Narrative

by Gabrielle Berger

Sometimes I find myself a little jealous of our forefathers and their almost casual relationship with God. Sefer Bereishit seems to be full of conversations they have with Hashem, ranging from Avraham pleading with God to reconsider destroying Sodom (perek 18) or God informing Yaakov of his new name (perek 35). However, from the beginning of the Yosef story in perek 37 until Yaakov and his family travel down to Egypt in perek 46, these divine encounters that we have come to expect are noticeably absent. Direct conversations with God have vanished. Why? What role does God play in the Yosef narrative?

Upon close examination, it emerges that although direct conversations with God are lacking in the Yosef story, God plays a critical part in more subtle ways. Three sets of dreams shape and move the narrative forward. Yosef's pair of dreams plant the seeds for the brothers' plot to kill him. The dreams of the butler and the baker ultimately lead the butler to recommend Yosef to Pharaoh when Pharaoh himself has his own pair of dreams. Subsequently, Pharaoh's dreams result in Yosef's high-level appointment over Egypt. In his commentary to 37:6, Rav Shimshon Rafael Hirsch notes that while Chazal in Masechet Brachot attempt to determine whether or not there is significance to dreams, it is, nevertheless, apparent that God is maneuvering to plant thoughts in people's minds and to set in motion a series of events.

God's subtlety does not end there. In perek 37, the "man" that Yosef meets in Shechem who directs him to his angry and jealous brothers in Dotan is identified by Rashi (37:15) as the angel Gavriel. The actual sale of Yosef, full of confusing and contradictory information about who actually executed the sale, could be understood as purposefully ambiguous, aimed at hinting to the reader the real purveyor of Yosef's sale: God. All of the characters who play a role in the sale are merely puppets in God's plan to fulfill the promise to Avraham at brit bein ha-betarim and begin the descent of the Jewish nation to Egypt.[1] Hashem's name is not mentioned once in perek 37, but Hashem's fingerprints are on each twist of the plot.

At the beginning of perek 39, when Yosef is sold to Potifar, we are suddenly hit with an onslaught of Hashem's name- five times in four pesukim- all part of detailing God's aid to Yosef in gaining favor in the eyes of his master Potifar. Once Yosef secures a high position within the household, however, God's name is mentioned differently: it is invoked almost

exclusively by Yosef himself, who always seems to have God's name on his lips. A similar pattern emerges when Yosef is sent to jail. We are told that Hashem is with Yosef and helps him to gain favor in the eyes of the chief jailer. Again, once Yosef is promoted, he constantly mentions Hashem's name, a theme that continues when Yosef is brought before Pharaoh and again when he finally encounters his brothers. Whether by affirming that he fears God, giving credit to God for his ability to interpret dreams, or assuaging the guilt of the brothers by assuring them that the sale was all God's plan, Yosef makes clear that he approaches life through the lens of a true servant of Hashem.

Interestingly, for the most part, other people in the narrative who also invoke Hashem's name seem to do so because of Yosef's influence. After Yosef declares that Hashem is the true source of dream interpretations, Pharaoh himself acknowledges that Yosef possesses "ruach Elokim," "the spirit of God" (40:38). The man in charge of Yosef's household casually mentions God's name to the brothers (43:23) within a normal conversation. Finally, Yehuda, when defending his brother Binyamin, states "Ha-Elokim matza et avon avadecha," "God has uncovered the crime of your servants" (44:16), comfortable mentioning God's name in the presence of Yosef. Perhaps Yosef, by constantly mentioning Hashem's name, helps people to themselves more clearly see Hashem's hand in their lives.

Now we can return to our question: Why is there a different method of communication and portrayal of Hashem in the Yosef narrative? Perhaps, the less obvious role of Hashem here is representative of what galut, exile, will be like. Yosef's behavior sets a model for what we, as ovdei Hashem, servants of Hashem, should strive for as we struggle to live and grow in a non-ideal world. When Yosef is at his low points, either as a new servant in Potifar's household or as an inmate in jail, Hashem is more obviously active, helping to raise Yosef's esteem in the eyes of his masters. But once Yosef is in a position where he has a voice, he can take charge in publicizing Hashem's name.

It is worth noting that Yosef is not a navi, a prophet. Hashem does not send him direct messages nor is he told the future. Yosef is simply referred to as a tzadik, a righteous person, someone who is perpetually looking for Hashem's Hand in his life- something that we are all capable of, if we make a choice to do so.

Parashat Miketz is almost always read on Shabbat Chanukah. Yosef's penchant for crediting God clarifies the connection between the parsha and Chanukah, the holiday of *pirsumei nisa*, publicizing the miracle: Hashem is always present behind the scenes. The question is how do we respond? Do we fail to notice those moments of the Hand of the God

in our lives, or do we choose to recognize it, share it, and publicize it as Yosef did?

[1] See "An Equivocal Reading of the Sale of Joseph" in *Literary Interpretations of Biblical Narratives*, Volume II by Edward L. Greenstein

Dvar Torah: TorahWeb.Org

Rabbi Michael Rosensweig Neirot Chanukah: A Priceless, Indispensable Mitzvah

In the substantive conclusion of his presentation of Chanukah (the remaining two halachot discuss the priority of this mitzvah vis-a-vis other mitzvot - kiddush and ner Shabbat), Rambam (Hilchot Chanukah 4:12) underscores its singular character. He atypically reflects upon the particularly endearing quality of *hadlakat nerot* - "mitzvah chavivah he ad meod", he identifies again (see earlier- 3:3!) the primary themes this mitzvah embodies - *pirsum ha-nes*, *shevach Hashem*, *hodaah* - and he emphatically counsels that one must be exceedingly careful and scrupulous about its implementation - "*vetzarich adam lehizaher bo*". Given his typically terse, economical, and efficient style, this formulation already commands attention. However, remarkably, Rambam concludes this already densely packed halachah with an apparently original and innovative ruling that even significant economic hardship must be endured - an impoverished individual should sell his clothing - in order to participate in this mitzvah. Rambam's unsourced confident assertion triggered intense speculation about the basis for his conclusion. Indeed, a whole literature was spawned dedicated to solving the riddle, to identify Rambam's source.

Magid Mishneh posits that the theme of *pirsum ha-nes* alone justifies this exacting standard. He notes that the poor who are sustained by *tzedakah* are required to acquire the four *kosot* on the seder night (Pesachim 99b) based on this principle (Pesachim 112a), and that Rambam derived his Chanukah *pesak* from this precedent. However, it should be noted (see also *sefer Likutim* in Frankel Rambam, ad loc) that while Rambam (Hilchot Chametz 7:7) justifies financing the four *kosot* from *tzedakah* funds (see also Hilchot Matnot Aniyim 7:6), he requires far greater personal sacrifices - personal debt, selling critical assets etc. - for *neirot Chanukah*! [The Gera, Orach Chaim 671:2, was sensitive to this discrepancy and equates Rambam's Chanukah standards with the four *kosot* standards articulated by Rashbam (Pesachim 99b), notwithstanding their omission in Hilchot Chametz. Undoubtedly, this difficulty impelled him to propose an alternative or perhaps additional source. Regarding the relative standards of these two mitzvot, see also Beer Heiteiv and Olat Yehudah ad loc.]. It is unlikely that the derivation can exceed the demands of the precedent. Rambam's position remains an enigma.

The Gaon of Vilna (671:2) suggests that Rambam may have understood (based on

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Pesachim 112a) that a modicum of *oneg-seudat Shabbat* requires excessive sacrifices of an *ani*. Since, the Talmud establishes (Shabbat 23b) and the Rambam (Chanukah 4:13) codifies that Chanukah takes financial priority over *kiddush ha-yom*, the combination of sources implicitly justifies equal or greater hardship to accomplish the mitzvah of *neirot*. This fascinating suggestion, however, is far from compelling. It would have required that Rambam flip the order of the two halachot (4:12,13) in his organized Chanukah presentation. Moreover, a close examination of Rambam's position (Hilchot Shabbat 30:7,9) does not support the conclusion that even minimal *seudat Shabbat* standards triggers this level of obligation. [It seems clear from his presentation, that his comprehension of the Pesachim 112a text vis a vis a minimum *oneg Shabbat* differs from that of the Gera.] Rambam (Hilchot Shabbat ch. 29) is completely silent about the need for such an intensive effort to acquire wine for *kiddush ha-yom*. [See Hilchot Shabbat 5:1 in connection with *ner Shabbat*. Only in this context does the Rambam emphasize personal sacrifice of the poor, and even here it falls short of his *neirot Chanukah* requirements! Either way, based on Hilchot Chanukah 4:14, the actual last halachah in Hilchot Chanukah, *ner Shabbat* could not constitute a decisive source for *neirot Chanukah*! The only comparable formulation is Hilchot Shekalim 1:1, addressing an economic mitzvah obligation.]

Other *mefarshim* (see, for example, *Sefer Likutim* on Hilchot Chanukah 4:12, *Einayim la-mishpat*, on Megillah 27b citing *Tziyunei Maharan*) posit a more direct link to the relative status of *kiddush*. They invoke the passage in Megillah (27b) that records approvingly that R. Zakai's mother sold her personal clothing to finance *kiddush* on *shabbat*. They, too, contend that since *neirot Chanukah* is more pressing than *kiddush ha-yom*, as previously noted, *neirot Chanukah* demands no less. In addition to the aforementioned reservations, we note that the story is not formulated as a halachic norm, but as an example of exemplary conduct that accounts for the longevity of admirable *ovdei Hashem*. While, as noted by some *mefarshim*, Rif (Alfasi, Megillah 9a) cites this account, he doesn't codify it. Rambam omits it completely.

While the Rambam's position may have been informed by one or a combination of these or other even more oblique sources and precedents, none are sufficiently compelling to definitively prove this innovative stance. His confident posture indicates that his conclusion is deeply rooted in his comprehensive understanding of the laws, history, and especially the spiritual significance of Chanukah. The Rambam begins Hilchot Chanukah (3:1-2) with an extensive, expansive catalogue of the challenges to Jewish physical and spiritual survival. He draws upon non-halachic sources and *mesorah* to portray the gravity of the threat of spiritual extinction. The

triple (and likely their interrelation and integration into mitzvah hadalakat nerot itself) foundational themes that he twice identifies (3:3, 4:12) establish that Chanukah does not merely celebrate a joyous miracle-military or mitzvah-specific, but that it encapsulates broader core principles of Torah life, including the special reciprocal bond between Hashem and Am Yisrael, and the indispensable need for mitzvot and talmud Torah as foundations for spiritual growth and a meaningful existence, and as Divine-guided outlets for personal spirituality.

The incomparable phenomenon of the mehadrim - three levels in the performance of this single rabbinic mitzvah - conveys an enthusiastic, passionate, maximalist posture not merely about nerot Chanukah, but about the very concept of mitzvot, jeopardized by the crisis and redeemed in the miracle of pach hashemen. It is not surprising that Rambam is compelled to revisit the themes of the mitzvah as he concludes Hilchot Chanukah, as he contemplates based upon examining the full scope of its laws and history its wider significance as "chavivah ad meod". Precisely in this context, he adds, certainly based upon related if inexact precedents but at least equally rooted in his own profound halachic conviction about the precise nature of this mitzvah and celebration, that it defies the normal canons of personal sacrifice, that it is priceless and indispensable. The source may remain elusive, but the conviction is unequivocal. [Had the Rambam formulated this conclusion as "yireh li", it would have reinforced this analysis. At the same time, he rarely uses this phrase even when his conclusions lack an unequivocal explicit source and evidently reflect his broader global understanding and analysis.]

Previously (Neirot Chanukah: A Cherished Expression of Ahavat and Kidush Hashem), we have speculated that Rambam's ruling may reflect his understanding that this mitzvah constitutes a kiyum in ahavat Hashem which is governed by the principle of "u-bekol meodecha". In addition, we may note that by employing the term "le-hizaher bah", typically associated with a lav (that generally are not subject to economic exemptions), Rambam underscores that nerot Chanukah is more than a prominent mitzvah; it is an opportunity that reflects our fidelity to these core principles and that perhaps also tests our commitment to the very broad notion of mitzvot. Chazal (Pirkei de-R. Eliezer ch. 28) declare: "ba'ah yavan ve-hechesichah et Yisrael mi-kol mitzvot she-betorah". The perfect redress of that calamity, the revival of "ner mitzvah ve-Torah ohr" was ambitiously embodied by the miraculous enabling of mitzvah nerot Chanukah. Rambam (3:1) begins his analysis of Chanukah by characterizing the spiritual climate as "bitlu datam, ve-lo hinichu otam la'asok ba-Torah u-ba-mitzvot". Hence, economic distress, typically a justification to abstain from mitzvah performance, does not qualify as a

mitigating or extenuating factor in this singular mitzvah chavivah. [The exact parameters of economic exemption in esin is a complex topic that requires independent treatment. There is significant debate about the principle of "al yevazvez yoter mei-chomesh, as well as the precise relationship between esin and lavin. I hope to address this elsewhere. The precedent that nerot Chanukah defy the typical norms of economic commitment for mitzvot may also be evident with respect to mehadrim. While the gemara Bava Kamma seems to establish a ceiling of shelish (1/3) for hidur mitzvah, this is clearly inapplicable to nerot Chanukah. See Griz, Hilchot Chanukah, and other achronim who discuss this issue. It is intriguing to consider whether the Rambam may have also factored this into his thinking. The relationship between 1/3 (beyond basic value) for hidur, 1/5 (of worth) for mitzvot, what justifies tzedakah support, what demands begging, or selling of assets needs further clarification regarding nerot Chanukah as well as generally. It is beyond the scope of this essay.]

Rambam's compelling ruling, was uniformly embraced by later poskim, despite the obscurity of his source. Indeed, the Shulchan Aruch invokes this pesak (671:1) to initiate his discussion and set the tone for hadlakat neirot Chanukah. Rambam's important conclusion (in both of its meanings) became the Shulchan Aruch's introduction, establishing the priceless and indispensable status of nerot Chanukah.

Torah.Org Dvar Torah by Rabbi Label Lam

With a Little Bit of Light

A little bit of light pushes away a lot of darkness. – Sefer Tzeda L'Derech The power of a light bit of light is really remarkable. One can curse the darkness endlessly and attempt to chase it with the biggest and most effective broom and the room will remain as dark as ever. Light a small light and watch the darkness retreat at the speed of 186,000 miles per second. Wow!

Here is a small "Chanukah" story, I do believe, because it's a miraculous tale about the impact of a little light. Thinking that miracles only happened in the deep past, "B'Yamim HaHeim", is somewhat akin to searching for signers of intelligent life in outer space. Miracles are happening all the time, "B'Zman HaZeh", and we are surrounded by evidence of intelligent life.

There was a fellow named Anthony Flew. He was an Englishman and a world renowned scholar. The subject matter he specialized in was atheism. He was for all practical purposes, he was the Gadol HaDor in denying HASHEM. He was already in his later years, past eighty and something remarkable happened. He received a visit from Dr. Gerald Schroeder, a Jewish Orthodox scientist with a degree from MIT, and another scientist, a religious gentile. They unpacked for Anthony

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Flew the intricacies, the depth, and the stunning profundities of the mechanical dynamics of DNA.

Anthony Flew became convinced that this could not have happened by accident and must be the product of an intelligent designer. Already in his eighties, he reversed course and became a believer in HASHEM. I have a book by him on my shelf entitled, "There is (the word "NO" is crossed out and replace with the letter "A") A G-d" It's one of most stunning reversals in intellectual history.

This bold admission puts a highlight on something that is well known but sits quietly in our conscious like the paint on our walls at home. Not only are we surrounded by intelligent life but we are made up of and built from superior intelligence. DNA is the stuff that spells out who we are.

The Beis Yosef asked a famous question and offered many answers. Why is Chanukah celebrated for 8 days when there was sufficient oil for one day? Even if that oil burned miraculously for 8 days, still it was on a net miracle of 7 days. The Alter from Kelm, Simcha Zissel Ziv explained that oil burning, that seemingly natural event is also miraculous. The definition of nature is repeating miracles. If it happens often enough and predictably so then we relegate to nature. If it happens only once in history we call it a miracle. It's no mistake that the numerical value of the Hebrew word for natural world, "HaTeva" (86) equals the name for HASHEM as He is manifest in the material world, ELOCHIM, (also 86).

So we have discovered intelligent- beyond genius life in our midst and perhaps most miraculous is that a human being has been furnished with the free will to deny and defy his creator. However, if he is armed with enough intellectual honesty then even the darkest of darknesses can be chased away with a little bit of light.

The Lamm Heritage Archives

"What's The Use?" A Hanukkah Thought Rabbi Norman Lamm, z"l

For eight days, beginning later this week, we shall be lighting the Hanukkah candles and, after reciting the blessings, shall read the Hanerot halalu, a brief excerpt from the Talmud, Masekhet Soferim. In the course of this passage, which explains the reason for the observance of Hanukkah, we shall add the following well-known words: ha-nerot halalu kodesh hem, v'einlanu reshut le'hishtamesh bah'em, ela lirotam bilvad, these candles are holy, and we are not permitted to make use of them, only to gaze at them. This refers to the law that Hanukkah candles, unlike Shabbat candles, may not be used for profane purposes; for instance, we may not use them to illuminate the house. (That is why we always provide an extra candle, the shammash, so that

if all other lights are extinguished it will not be these Hanukkah candles alone that will provide the illumination for members of the household.) For the candles are holy, and what is holy may not be used, only gazed at and contemplated.

There is something quite remarkable about this idea that what is holy may not be "used" for any other purpose, no matter how worthy, that there are certain things that are valuable in and of themselves even if they serve no other function. It is, let us readily confess, a fairly un-modern and un-American idea. The ideal American is tough-minded and eminently practical, and his guiding philosophy is pragmatism or instrumentalism: ideas are meaningful only if they work. Things have to work, wheels have to turn, projects must be completed, one must lead to another, things must get done.

The most modern of modern questions is, "of what use is it?" And when the true modern wants to express despair and hopelessness, he says, "What's the use!"--as if that which has no use is as good as dead, utterly worthless. Our Hanukkah lights, then, take exception to that rule. They have no use--we may not use them--for they are holy. The inventiveness of the practical man and the ambition of the pragmatist all must stop at the Menorah: here he may only gaze at the lights, contemplate what they represent, and consider them an end in themselves. He may not exploit them for his own use.

What a sorely needed corrective they offer for our over-managed, over-efficient, over-driven, over-anxious lives! They remind us that what we are, and not only what we do, is important; that not how much we make, but of what we make of ourselves is what really counts. They challenge us to measure a work of art not by how much of a return a wise investment in it will bring in ten years, but by its inner esthetic worth; to judge a course of study not by how it will advance your child's career, but rather how it will mold his very being, refine his character, enforce his sense of purpose, and expand his intellectual horizons. As one who teaches in a college I am sometimes appalled by the cold, calculating, business-like attitude that young men--who should be flushed with idealism--bring to their studies. Talmud?--how will it help me become a doctor? Philosophy?--what will it do for my career as a lawyer? Poetry?--all poets starve so it's not forme! Hanukkah reminds us that there are certain areas of life that ein lanu reshut lehishtamesh bahem, that may not be exploited, where the pragmatic test may not be applied. Hanerot halalu kodesh hem --that which is holy, like that which is beautiful and that which is true, is an end in itself; it serves no other purpose. In fact, all other things are for the purpose of discovering it.

Yeshivat Har Etzion: Virtual Bet Midrash

God and Man According to Judaism and Hellenism: Harav Aharon Lichtenstein

A proper analysis of the relationship between our world and that of Hellenism requires the type of thorough survey which lies outside the scope of this shiur. I don't know whether I even possess the tools to do justice to such a task, but it certainly cannot be done within the confines of a brief lecture. I intend to limit myself to pointing out some general ideas on this issue.

It is only natural that, starting from childhood, we carry with us cultural baggage (obviously with profound historical roots) which portrays the Greeks as cruel enemies, forces of darkness who came to destroy our world. As a result, this culture is usually drawn in broad, ugly strokes, identifying Greek culture in general with a crude type of idolatry. As a result of this approach, our work is made somewhat easier: in contradistinction to this world of statues and gods stands our true faith. Needless to say, this approach engenders a certain measure of disdain for Greek culture and philosophy.

The disadvantage of such an approach is in fact twofold. Firstly, it does not enable us to get to the crux of the issue and prevents us from understanding the full significance of the conflict between the two cultures in a profound way. Turning the opponent into a "straw man" makes it easier for us to deal with him, but the real battle - in terms of faith and belief, philosophy and culture - is never addressed.

In addition, the diminution of Greek culture and turning it into something childish cuts us off, to some degree, from a culture which does, after all, represent one of the cornerstones of the civilized world, whose influences are felt on many different levels. In the ancient world, Greece represented the dominant culture. Without doubt its contribution to humanity was great, not only in practical matters but also culturally and spiritually. This was a culture which even the great names among the Rishonim could appreciate. Rambam regarded Aristotle as a "half-prophet," and other Rishonim, too, benefited from Greek culture and valued it. Thus, erecting a wall between us and this culture can lead to us voluntarily cutting ourselves off from its considerable wealth.

Thus, on the one hand, it is appropriate to recognize the values espoused by Greek culture, some of which we can agree with. On the other hand, we need to pinpoint where we stand in conflict with this culture - because the conflict is no less heated today that it was in the days of the Chashmonaim.

As a point of departure, I have chosen one specific subject. This aspect - one of the most central ones - in the debate between our world and that of the Greeks can be highlighted by comparing the character of Iyov (Job) with, lehavdil, that of Prometheus (as portrayed both in mythology and in literatures, and especially in Aeschylus' work, Prometheus Bound).

The myth of Prometheus presents him as a bold individual who went up to heaven and stole fire from the gods in order to bring it down to mankind. For this he was punished by Zeus, who chained him to a rock for the rest of his life. While chained to the rock he sings and declares his objection to the actions of the gods, thus expressing his sovereignty and independence. This presents a certain similarity to Iyov (a comparison already dealt with by many) from two points of view: firstly, as regards the subject - a person who is controlled by a higher force, and secondly - from the point of view of the book's structure. Sefer Iyov is quite unique among the books of Tanakh in terms of its outstanding dramatic structure. It contains almost a classic Greek

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drama: each "character" expresses himself in turn: "monologue," "response," etc.

At the same time, along with the parallels, there is a clear and sharp contrast. The difference expresses itself in the way in which the dialogue is conducted, and in the description of the hero. Aeschylus, with his keen sense of justice, rails against a situation in which a person who has performed a great favor to humanity is punished although he has committed no wrong. There is conflict here between power and justice. The tragedy is that although these two values should work together in harmony, they are in fact in conflict here and ultimately it is power which prevails.

Justice nevertheless survives. Reading the play we sense, in Pascal's famous words, that "Man stands facing a universe which tramples and crushes him, but ultimately man is victorious because he knows that he is being crushed." The human consciousness may actually be crushed, but justice and morality abide with it, and they are preferable to power and might.

Prometheus represents the tragic situation in which a man suffers despite his innocence. At the same time, there certainly exists a possibility that some day Prometheus may succeed in freeing himself of his chains, as presented in Shelley's play of the early 19th century - "Prometheus Unbound."

How great is the disparity between this description and the one we find in Sefer Iyov! The question of the relationship between power and justice runs through Sefer Iyov, too. According to certain opinions among Chazal, sharp criticism is leveled against Iyov's stand. At the conclusion of the first chapter of Bava Batra (15b), very serious accusations are raised against his blasphemy and cursing. At the same time, these opinions must be seen within a broader context: Iyov knows his place in relation to the Holy One. It never enters his mind that he is engaging in battle against an "equal opponent" with a chance of emerging victorious. Within the very depths of his being he may await Elihu's response, but he is conscious throughout of the fact that the Power concerned is not within his understanding.

Even nearer to the end of the Sefer, God does not provide a real answer to the questions which Iyov raises. The essence of the Divine response is "Lav ba'al devarim didi at," Iyov is not a legitimate claimant of God: "Where were you when I laid the earth's foundations? Speak if you have understanding. Do you know who fixed its dimensions, or who measured it with a line?" (Iyov 38:4-5). In other words, we are talking about a different dimension of reality. It is as if God is telling him, "You don't know, you don't understand. After all is said and done, you are a mortal, and are not capable of debating with Me." The very most a human being can say, in fear and trembling, is: "You will be in the right, O Lord, if I make claim against You, yet I shall [nevertheless] present charges against You" (Yirmiyahu 12:1). In short, Iyov is not - and does not perceive himself as - an equal opponent or partner for discussion with God.

Two fundamental principles are involved here. One pertains to the relationship between God and man, the other to the nature of the reality in which man lives. With regard to the first point, in the Greek perception there is no fundamental difference between man and his gods. The gods may perhaps be wiser, stronger and richer, but the difference is not a qualitative one. From this point of view, it is the humanistic outlook of Greek culture which represents both its greatness and its weakness.

Other religions which had preceded it had not perceived the gods as being in any way on a par with man. They perceived their gods as being hostile to

man, laying in wait for him and threatening him. Their gods were depicted in grotesque form (as we see from their sculptures) as something inhuman and completely dissimilar from man. These philosophies highlighted the fear and terror which characterize man's relationship with his gods.

The world of the Greeks, on the other hand, displayed a considerable rapprochement between the transcendent world and that of mortals. The fear and terror which had surrounded the gods in other cultures diminished, to a large degree, and in its place came a closeness between man and his gods. Thus the Greeks largely succeeded in overcoming much of the primitive instinctual fear of the gods, attaining a position of relative peace of mind and equilibrium, a belief based on logic rather than primitive fear. Obviously, what we describe here refers to a long process. Anyone examining early Greek culture can see that it was much closer to the general pagan world. F. M. Cornford's book, "From Religion to Philosophy," which deals with the transition from Homer to Aristotle, describes both periods.

As mentioned above, this progression represented a great achievement. The Greeks perceived their existence in the world as being under the aegis of forces which could be understood and which one could deal with. This perception allowed for some of the self-assurance characterizing Greek culture, which was so distant from the primitive feelings of other pagan cultures which preceded it.

Indeed, this very point is the source of the main weakness inherent in Greek culture, when viewed from a religious standpoint. Toynbee was correct when he wrote, in his book about Greek culture, that the cardinal sin of Greek culture - from the Christian point of view - was its humanism. On one hand, this was an achievement: a culture with a profoundly humanistic basis. They held man in high esteem and viewed the world through human lenses. On the other hand, the achievement in no way diminished the problematic nature of this philosophy. Together with abandoning all the primitive feelings of fear associated with paganism, the transition to Greek humanism also did irreparable harm to the concept of holiness.

The sense of awe - not the primitive fear of the early pagans, but true religious fear, the awe associated with "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts," the God on High - this diminished and disappeared. When we see gods as humans (only slightly more sophisticated, perhaps) or as philosophical abstractions, then there is no longer any room for a sense of fear, awe or majesty.

This leads to the obliteration in Greek culture of a category which is fundamental to us: commandments. In our world, man sees himself first and foremost as someone who is commanded, as the bearer of a Divine mission, as carrying upon his shoulders a task which must be fulfilled. This conception is generally lacking in the classical Greek world of Plato and Aristotle. There certainly exists a type of religious consciousness, but religion is perceived as the aspiration to realize certain ideals rather than as obeying commands. This point is discussed by Rabbi Yehuda HaLevi in his "Kuzari," when he compares "the God of Abraham" to "the god of Aristotle." The distinction involves more than merely the extent of the distance between God and His followers, with "the god of Aristotle" depicted as an abstract entity with whom man can have no dialogue. There is also the question of the relationship between them: are we talking about a power to which I aspire and which I would like to reach, or is it a power with which I have some contact as a commanded servant?

As mentioned above, together with the question of the relationship between man and God there is also the question of whether man is a legitimate claimant on God or not, i.e., man's ability to comprehend events. God tells Iyov: You don't know, you'll never understand; you are simply not My "ba'al devarim" (claimant). Your lack of understanding is not the REASON for your not being My "ba'al devarim," but rather the RESULT: since you are not My "ba'al devarim," therefore you will never be able to understand. You are composed of a different substance; the infinite gap between God and man cannot be bridged. "To whom will you compare Me, that I will be similar? says the Holy One" (Yishayahu 40:25). There is no common basis. The chasm is complete. "Creator" and "creation" inhabit two completely separate worlds, and man must recognize this and accept the yoke of Divine Kingship with humility and submission.

The Greeks did not perceive things thus. They saw themselves as existing on the same plane as the higher powers, and even as "understanding" them. This "understanding" comes to expression not only in man's rational capacity (described by Rambam at the beginning of Moreh Nevukhim as part of "the image of God" in which he is created), but also in man's ability to control everything. If one can understand, one can control; and this applied not just to their perception of the gods but of the world as well. The dominant approach in Greek culture drastically diminished their sense of mystery; they saw the world as comprehensible. (Obviously, we cannot generalize - as E.M. Dodds explains in his book, "The Greeks and the Irrational.")

Two assumptions are intertwined here: A) the world - both physical and Divine - functions in a rational manner and has a logical internal structure; B) this structure may be understood by mortals.

Both points involve a certain degree of innovation. On one hand, this represents a contribution by Greek culture; on the other hand, from our point of view, this contains part of its failure. The belief that the world functions in a logical and orderly way is, after all, only a belief. Pragmatic experience does not always bear this out - certainly not at the stage at which science found itself in the pre-Greek era. An observer recognizes that there are indeed many things in the universe which appear to function according to a certain order, but at the same time no small number of phenomena seem to be devoid of any order whatsoever. The sun shines every day. This is not so with regard to wind or rain. Hence this represents a certain belief which the Greeks bequeathed to general culture. Pindar, a Greek poet of the fifth century BCE, largely reflects this perception in his statement, "Law is everything."

This concept makes life in this world easier - living in a reality which functions according to laws and an order is much easier than living in a reality which changes arbitrarily. A person who lives in a country governed by law knows, more or less, how he has to behave and what is expected of him. Whitehead addressed this contribution by the Greeks in the first chapter of his famous work, "Science and the Modern World," in which he describes the belief held by the Greeks - and which was later reinforced by Einstein's experiments - that there is indeed order to the world. This represents a scientific breakthrough: the issue was no longer one of recognizing a specific phenomenon, but rather recognition of the systematic nature of the way in which the world works.

At the same time, Greek culture also held the belief that not only is the universe orderly and organized, but that man is able to plumb its depths and understand it. This was a great incentive for scientific activity (which the Greeks albeit did not

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fully exploit), but at the same time clearly collides with the message arising from God's response to Iyov: "Where were you when the world was founded?" The philosophy which expresses itself in the final chapters of Sefer Iyov and in other sources is that we are not able to fully understand God, Who is revealed to us "in a thick cloud." Even Divine Revelation itself is cloaked in mystery, and contains dimensions which man is incapable of comprehending. To the extent that this feeling existed in Greek culture, it was perceived as a problem which needed to be overcome. The Greeks did not see this situation as a given but rather as a question which should - and could - be solved.

The Greek term for the universe is "cosmos," meaning "order" (from the same root as the word "cosmetic"). According to their view, the world is "ordered" and its order can be distinguished. Various tools exist to help us distinguish order in the world, including both logic and art. Art - according to Aristotle - is meant to be mimesis, a description and imitation of what exists in the world; in other words, not just the description of a certain specific person, or ox, or whatever, but a description of the universal, ideal man or ox. This process assists us in identifying the lawfulness at work in the world.

The most outstanding features of all Greek art are balance and order - not superficial order, but profound order. Proportion and harmony form part of the classical perception. The American philosopher Santayana once defined the classical approach to art as follows: "depth in the clear and fullness in the concise."

This "clarity" is vastly different from both modern art, on one hand, and romantic art on the other. The latter sees itself as extending in all directions, while classical art embodies proportion and control - balance within fixed limits. The desire to bring things within recognized limits is based on the perception that one is able to grasp both the upper and lower worlds. They sought both to comprehend the cosmos and to create within it. The Greek conception of art thus reflects their desire to assert man's control over the universe and to order it according to human standards.

The Greek attitude to history, on one hand, and to the individual, on the other, also expresses the same conception of the structure and orderliness of the world. Fundamentally, Greek culture does not focus on the historical dimension of existence. Many have written that according to our world view - which also influenced Christianity - history is a central, vital factor. This finds expression both in two ways: 1) our emphasis of historical roots - the exodus from Egypt, the revelation at Sinai, etc.; 2) our viewing human existence within a historical framework with a beginning and an end, its boundaries dictated to a large extent from Above.

In the world of the Greeks, there is much greater emphasis on lawfulness which finds expression in the world; this law has no "beginning" and "end." There is no logic dictating that a certain law comes into being at a certain point in time and concludes at another. A view of nature as a phenomenon which functions according to fixed laws leads to the conclusion that there really are very few "new" things in history. "That which was, shall be." The law is the true and basic reality, and it makes no difference whether we are speaking of Pindar's perception, mentioned above, or that of Pythagoras, which pertains to the world of numbers, or of Plato's ideals whose reflections appear in the world. In all of these approaches the transient "existing" reality is of completely secondary importance. The true reality is that which is expressed in laws, and it is instantiated in our visible reality. In this kind of approach, it is much easier to understand the laws than it is to

understand history itself. Once one understands the essence of Plato's ideal horse then one understands the nature of every horse in the world, and there is no need to go and look at each one of them.

This entails a certain disdain displayed towards history, in contrast to our world view, and concurrently a certain disdain for individuality. Regarding the latter, one of the most outstanding examples of the chasm between our world and the Greek world view is our attitude towards the virtue of kindness, *chesed*. The world of the Greeks is overflowing with admiration for the virtue of truth and adherence to it. The virtue of kindness, on the other hand, is almost completely absent. Both Greek drama and Greek ethics contain almost nothing about kindness. It finds no real expression in those values which Plato - and Cicero, in his footsteps - so admired. No special consideration is expressed for the weak or for those who are different in some way - when all is said and done, they do not embody the ideal image depicted in the law! Moreover, the concern for and interest in the individual is very weak. The most important thing is the general process, the ideal image and its realization in reality, rather than some specific individual.

The inclusion of the virtue of kindness in Western culture is attributable not to the Greeks but rather to Christianity (which adopted this idea from Judaism). In Matthew Arnold's celebrated 19th-century work, "Culture and Anarchy," there is a chapter on "Hebraism and Hellenism." I believe that Arnold failed to understand fully the Jewish outlook, and his attitude towards Hebraism reflects primarily his view of the evangelical sect of Lutheran Protestants; nevertheless, his description of the general outlines certainly does have some basis. Arnold contrasted Hellenism, characterized by logic and balance with Hebraism, characterized by passion (often joined with impetuosity) and the will to build, to act and to change. He sees the Greek world as one which sought primarily to understand; to the extent that it was creative, even this creativity was directed to a single purpose - comprehension. The issue of "perfecting the world" (*tikkun olam*) was not the focus of Greek consciousness. The focus was the individual man's effort to understand and to try to live an ordered and reflective life. In the absence of the historical dimension, according to which history moves "towards something," why should one labor to achieve perfection of the world? This view, reflecting less esteem for the individual, leaves one bereft of a consciousness of a mission to perfect the world, and the scope of a person's aspirations becomes necessarily limited. The prophetic dimension - even relating to false prophets - is not characteristic of the Greek perception. In none of the great creative works of classical Greece - from Aeschylus to Aristotle - are these voices dominant. There are, of course, individuals with vision - Plato is without doubt one of the greatest spirits of the Western world - but this is "vision with insight," not prophetic or messianic vision. In contrast to the dispassionate Hellenistic attitude, Arnold sees the Jewish view as yearning for deep feeling and striving for justice.

This is connected to our recognition of the dimension of mystery and the unfathomable difference between us and God. It is from here that we derive the feeling of a "God who is hiding" and of ourselves having to be commanded, where sometimes even the command itself is not completely comprehensible to us. This consciousness is what convinces us that we must conduct ourselves as "messengers of the Holy One," even without understanding everything.

Returning to the second expression of the Greek penchant for order, Greek culture contributed greatly

to the world by introducing an analytic dimension into history. Before the Greeks, no one had any idea of what history was. There were "storytellers," but that was all. This characterized the early historiography of the Greeks as well. Herodotus, at the beginning of the sixth century BCE, told stories - some more reliable, others less so. Thucydides, who was the first to write a real history book, aimed at analyzing processes and events. He wrote that his purpose was not to describe the Peloponnesian war between Sparta and Athens but rather to provide an analysis of the might possessed by man, and of the types of opposition between states. In other words, it was neither the Spartans who interested him nor the Athenians, but rather the phenomenon *qua* phenomenon. He focused on the law which is concealed behind human action, and examined it against the background of a specific war. This war was to serve as a platform for philosophical debate and for the attempt to understand the relations between states at all times. We must admit that this represented an enormous contribution to historical research. However, when these laws are all that man reveals after examining history, then it has led him nowhere. This view gave rise to the Stoic approach, which held that phenomena repeat themselves in the world according to a certain pattern and regularity. This approach is understandable and logical, but does not lead its adherents towards "something."

Here we discover a huge chasm between our world view and that of the Greeks: not just a different world view, but a completely different feeling which perhaps has a certain philosophical expression. The issue is an existential one; it is something which flows in one's blood and lives in one's soul. The basic feeling which characterizes Greek culture is that of ordered existence and life in an organized world in which, if a person lives as he should, with total control, he will lead an exemplary, proper and cultured existence, with all its attendant advantages and limitations. You are not in a primitive framework, but at the same time you do not aspire to the heavens, since there really is no "heaven." There is nothing that is fundamentally different from you toward which you should aspire. There is no climax towards which history is moving. And there is no feeling of a "burning mission," of something which needs to be worked on and perfected. There is no expectation of salvation since there is no salvation. Matters simply unfold and will continue to unfold.

There can be no doubt that Greek culture contains great achievements and much content from which to draw, on several levels. The main problem of this culture (and I refer here, obviously, only to its positive manifestations) is therefore not what it contains so much as what it lacks. In the absence of certain things, even the "good" parts become problematic. They lack that feeling of mystery which arises from a perception of man's place vis-a-vis the Holy One.

The above represents just a few ideas, some of which can be further qualified. I believe that they are useful as general outlines - no more than that - both from the descriptive aspect and from the point of view of the message which they teach us.

(This shiur was delivered on the first day of Chanuka, 5748 [1987]. This summary has not been reviewed by Rav Lichtenstein.) Summarized by Aviad Hacohen. Translated by Kaeren Fish and Ronnie Ziegler



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BS"D

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From: **Ira Zlotowitz** <iraz@klalgovoah.org>

Date: Thu, Dec 2, 2021 at 6:48 PM

Subject: **Tidbits for Parashas Miketz • Shabbos Chanukah**

Tidbits - The sorts of tidbits my father, **R' MEIR ZLOTOWITZ ZT"l** made sure his family was up to date on.

Parashas Miketz • Shabbos Rosh Chodesh & Chanukah

• Friday, December 3rd • 29 Kislev 5782

On Erev Shabbos Chanukah, many Daven Mincha early in order for Mincha to precede the lighting of the Menorah (to avoid the appearance of a Tartei d'Sasrei - an inherent contradiction - of lighting Shabbos' Menorah lights and then Davening Friday's Mincha). Menorah lighting may not occur before Plag Hamincha (approximately 1 hour before Shekiah), and should be performed immediately before lighting Shabbos candles. **The Menorah must contain enough oil to burn until a half hour after Tzeis** (approximately 1 hour and 45 minutes after Candle Lighting; note that many shorter 'colored candles' do not meet this criteria).

ROSH CHODESH TEVES IS SHABBOS AND SUNDAY. Remember to include Yaaleh Veyavo along with v'Al HaNisim.

Shabbos morning following Hallel, **three Sifrei Torah are taken out.**

Parashas Miketz is Leined in six Aliyos (with Shishi continuing to the end of the Parasha). The Kriah of Rosh Chodesh (Bamidbar 28:9-15) is Leined from the second Sefer as the seventh Aliya. The Kriah of Chanukah (Bamidbar 7:42-47) is Leined as Maftir from the third Sefer. The Haftarah of Chanukah follows. Av Harachamim is omitted. Ata Yatzarta is said in Musaf Shemoneh Esrei. Borchy Nafshi is added at the end of Davening (some add Psalm 30 as well). Tzidkas'cha is omitted at Mincha.

On Motzaei Shabbos, one should return home without delay and light as soon as possible. There are differing Minhagim regarding which should come first, Havdalah or Menorah lighting. If one is away for Shabbos Chanukah, it may be preferable to light Menorah at one's host on Motzaei

Shabbos before departing, especially if one will be returning home late. Consult your Rav.

On Sunday, the second day of Rosh Chodesh Teves, full Hallel is recited. Kerias Hatorah includes two Sifrei Torah, from the first Sefer the Keriah of Rosh Chodesh is Leined in three Aliyos (the first two Aliyos are Leined together), followed by the Chanukah Aliyah from the second Sefer. Mussaf of Rosh Chodesh follows. Davening ends with Borchy Nafshi after the Yom; some congregations say Mizmor Shir (Psalm 30) as well. 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 during Bi'ur Chametz.

THIS MOTZAEI SHABBOS, DECEMBER 4TH AT MAARIV, WE BEGIN SAYING V'SAIN TAL U'MATAR IN BAREICH ALEINU. If one forgets V'sain Tal U'matar, he can make it up by saying it in Shema Koleinu. However, once past Shema Koleinu, one must go back to Bareich Aleinu. If one has already finished Shemoneh Esrei, he must repeat the Tefillah. If one is unsure what he said, until 30 days have passed, we assume that he did not say V'sain Tal U'matar. However, one who says 90 times (ideally 101 times) "V'es Kol... V'sein Tal U'matar" may thereafter be halachically presumed to have said it properly and thus will need not repeat if unsure.

There is a praiseworthy Minhag to give gifts to our children's Melamdin (R' C. Palaggi zt"l). This sets an example of Hakaras Hatov for your child and displays the importance of Chinuch. A gift accompanied with warm words of thanks is a tremendous source of Chizuk for our Rebbeim and teachers. The first opportunity for Kiddush Levana is Tuesday night, December 7th. The final opportunity is Motzaei Shabbos, December 18th at 12:40am. Daf Yomi: Shabbos is Taanis 22.

ASARA B'TEVES IS IN ONE WEEK FROM TUESDAY, ON TUESDAY, DECEMBER 14TH.

Miketz: Pharaoh's dreams • Sar Hamashkim refers Yosef to Pharaoh • Yosef interprets Pharaoh's dreams as predicting 7 years of plenty and 7 years of hunger • Yosef is appointed over Mitzrayim • Yosef marries Osnas • Menashe and Ephraim are born • The famine begins • Yaakov sends the brothers to Mitzrayim • Yosef accuses the brothers of spying • Yosef commands them to bring Binyamin • Yosef has their payments returned to their sacks; the brothers fear this is a ploy • 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 abundance • Binyamin is framed for stealing the goblet and they are returned to Mitzrayim

Parashas Miketz: 146 Pesukim

"Vayehi Miketz Shenayim Yamim u'Pharaoh Choleim"

"And it was at the end of the two years and Pharaoh dreamt" (Bereishis 41:01)

The Pasuk seems to indicate that the culmination of the two extra years of Yosef's imprisonment resulted in Pharaoh's dreams. How so? The Chofetz Chaim explains with a parable of a man who questions a train conductor extensively about train schedules and operations, believing that the conductor's recognizable presence and actions aboard the train show him to be the boss. While in reality, the commands and directives come from higher up and the conductors are merely following orders. Pharaoh's dream occurred at this time not coincidentally, but only because the One Above destined this to be the time and the mechanism for Yosef to be released. The Ramban famously writes at the end of Parashas Bo that great miracles, such as Chanukah, occur to awaken one to recognize even the smaller

miracles and Hashem's hand in running our lives. Chanukah is utilized to thank Hashem for the great spiritual salvation He granted in those days. We must always seek to recognize the daily miracles we experience and pray for salvations we need from Him, as only the One Above can deliver

from: OU Kosher <noreply@ounetwork.org>

date: Dec 1, 2021, 8:02 AM

subject: **Halacha Yomis - V'sain Tal Umatar**

[by Rabbi Yaakov Luban and Rabbi Eli Gersten]

The Gerald & Karin Feldhamer OU Kosher Halacha Yomis

This column is dedicated in memory of: Rav Chaim Yisroel ben Reb Dov HaLevi Belsky, zt'l

Senior OU Kosher Halachic Consultant from 1987-2016

Q. This Motzei Shabbos, December 4th, we begin reciting V'sain Tal Umatar in the Shmoneh Esrei of Maariv. What happens if one forgot to say V'sain Tal Umatar and what is the halacha if one is uncertain?

A. If a person said "v'sain bracha" instead of "v'sain tal umatar livracha" and he realized his error after ending Shmoneh Esrei, the entire Shmoneh Esrei must be repeated.

If the error was caught while in the middle of Shmoneh Esrei, corrective action may be taken by inserting the phrase of v'sain tal umatar livracha in the bracha of Shema Koleinu, before the words "Ki ata shomeiya". However, if the bracha of Shema Koleinu was already completed, the individual must return to the beginning of the bracha of Bareich Aleinu and use the proper phrase of v'sain tal umatar.

What if a person does not remember if he said v'sain bracha or v'sain tal umatar? Since he has no recollection, we assume the bracha was recited without thought, out of habit, in the manner that he was accustomed to saying it. Halacha assumes that habits of davening are established with thirty days of repetition. As such, up until thirty days from December 5th, it can be assumed that the wrong phrase (v'sain bracha) was used, and Shmoneh Esrei must be repeated. After thirty days have elapsed, when in doubt, Shmoneh Esrei need not be repeated. It can be assumed that v'sain tal umatar was said out of habit and second nature.

The Mishna Berura (114:38) qualifies this last halacha and says that if the person intended to say "v'sain tal umatar" in Shmoneh Esrei, and later in the day he cannot remember what he said, he need not repeat Shmoneh Esrei. This is because it can be assumed that he recited the bracha properly, since that was his intent. The fact that he cannot remember is inconsequential because people do not typically remember such details after a significant amount of time has passed. Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, zt'l (Shmiras Shabbos Kehilchoso 57:17) notes that each person's memory span is different. For someone whose memory is poor, the last halacha would apply even if one cannot remember soon after reciting Shmoneh Esrei.

from: **Rabbi Yissocher Frand** <ryfrand@torah.org>

reply-to: do-not-reply@torah.org

to: ravfrand@torah.org

date: Dec 2, 2021, 4:34 PM

subject: Rav Frand - It's Not the Lottery Number -- It's the Man

Rabbi Yissocher Frand - Parshas Miketz

It Is Not the Number That Wins the Lottery – It Is the Man That Wins the Lottery

The pasuk says in Parshas Miketz "And Yehudah said, 'What can we say to my master, what words can we speak and how can we justify ourselves. The L-rd has found the sin of your servants (HaElokim matza es avon avadecha)" (Bereshis 44:16). When the brothers are "caught with the goods", even though we know the viceroy's goblet was planted in Binyamin's baggage, Yehudah "confessed" and said "Elokim matza es avon avadecha" – the Ribono shel Olam is behind this for we have sinned before Him. This seems like a strange reaction for Yehudah to respond to Yosef. Remember, they are working under the assumption that Yosef is an Egyptian. Not only is he an Egyptian, he is a dictator. From what they can

tell, he is a dictator without compassion. Imagine, for instance, that you are brought in front of Vladimir Putin and the Russian Government has some kind of claim against you. Say Putin accuses you of being a thief, a spy, and of committing all kinds of capital crimes. What do you say to Vladimir Putin? Would you say "HaElokim matza es avon avadecha? Chatasi, aveesi, pa'shati! I have done something against the Master of the Universe!" Putin would say, "Who is the Master of the Universe?" I don't think Putin believes in a G-d. The brothers assumed they were dealing with an Egyptian idolater. "Elokim" has no currency with him. Is this not a strange thing to say to him – Ha'Elokim matza es avon avadecha? This is not his language. It is one thing to get caught doing something wrong in a Yeshiva, and the when Mashgiach calls you in for a dressing down, you say "Ha'Elokim matza es avon avadecha." That has currency with the Mashgiach. It would not have currency with Putin and it would not have currency with Yosef in his role as the Viceroy of Egypt. That is one observation I would like to put on the table.

The other observation is that I think that the contrast between Yehudah's remarks to Yosef here at the end of Parshas Miketz and his remarks a few pesukim later at the beginning of Parshas Vayigash is noteworthy. There, in Vayigash, Yehudah very much changes his tune. In fact, Rashi there says that from the fact that Yehudah had to preface his remarks with the words v'Al Yeechar Apcha b'Avdecha (...And don't get angry at your servant...), we see that Yehuda spoke harshly to Yosef. He is no longer contrite in speaking before the Viceroy, nor does he take responsibility for having done something against the Ribono shel Olam. At that point in time, Yehuda knows what happened. He realizes that the goblet was planted in Binyamin's suitcase and that they are being framed. Obviously, he must have respect for the Egyptian monarch, but he is letting Yosef have it!

What happened between the end of Parshas Miketz and the beginning of Parshas Vayigash? What brought Yehudah from a state of admission and contrition to now telling Yosef in effect – You are the crook here!?

I saw an explanation regarding this switch in tone in the sefer Nachalas Eliezer from Rav Eliezer Kahan, who was a Mashgiach in Gateshead. There is a theme occurring that runs throughout the whole story of Yosef and his brothers.

Rav Yisrael Salanter mentions a principle: There is something called the Sibah (Cause) and something called the MeSovev (effect). Many times in life, people are blinded as to what really is the cause of something. If a secular person were to look at the situation over here and see that Yosef is in fact framing them, he would say that the reason behind this is because Yosef sees them as potential slaves or as wealthy people, from whom he can eventually obtain a large ransom. Therefore, this is happening to them because Yosef has some ulterior motive to try to get something out of them. Yosef is framing them.

That, however, is not the real reason this is happening. This is merely the MeSovev – the effect. The cause of why this is happening is that the Ribono shel Olam is angry and upset at the brothers. At the end of Parshas Miketz, Yehudah is acknowledging the Sibah – the Cause. The "Cause" goes back years and years. Elokim matzah es avon avadecha – He found the sin we committed against our brother.

That is WHY it is happening. Now, how does it manifest itself? We have this fellow in Egypt who is a tyrannical dictator who is bringing this all about at this particular time and is framing us.

The religious Jew, the honest Jew, the one who looks at life as "The Ribono shel Olam runs the world" is looking at it as HaElokim matzah es avon avadecha. Whenever something upsetting happens to a person – if he gets into an accident, if he loses his job, if he doesn't get a promotion, whatever it may be – a person needs to have the perspective that "HaElokim matzah es avon avadecha." This is the Sibah.

This is the difference between Parshas Miketz and Parshas VaYigash. Parshas Miketz is the gut level reaction of an honest Jew who believes in Hashem. His reaction is immediately "I have done something wrong. G-d is punishing me for my sins." The Ehrliche Yid looks for the Prime Cause – the real Sibah

of why something is happening to him, not the superficial cause for the aggravating situation. The Sibah for everything is the Ribono shel Olam. In Parshas Vayigash, Yehudah deals with the MeSovev – the effect or secondary cause: I know we’ve done something wrong, but wait a minute, Yosef, you are framing us. That is why the tone changes here. But the gut level action – the way a person needs to look at life – is Yehudah’s reaction at the end of Parshas Miketz.

The Torah says that when Pharaoh removed his ring and made Yosef the Viceroy over all of Egypt (Bereshis 41:42), Pharaoh gave Yosef his ring, a chariot, and a gold necklace. Why is Pharaoh doing this to Yosef? Is it a reward for being so smart or so brilliant by coming up with his plan to save Egypt? The Medrash explains that Yosef deserved everything he received from Pharaoh. His mouth that did not kiss in sin (the wife of Potiphar) was rewarded by the statement “Al peecha yeeshak kol ami” (through your mouth all my nation will receive their sustenance) (Bereshis 41:40). His body that did not engage in this sin was rewarded by being clothed in royal clothing (Bereshis 41:42). His neck that did not bow down to the sin was rewarded by a golden necklace being placed upon it (ibid.). His hand that did not participate in touching Potiphar’s wife was rewarded by the King’s ring being placed upon it (ibid.). His feet that did not step forward to do the sin were rewarded by allowing them to ride on the royal chariot (Bereshis 41:43). Etc., etc., etc.

The Medrash is teaching exactly this same idea. At a superficial level, all these things happened to Yosef because Pharaoh wanted to express his pleasure with him. However, at a deeper level, they all happened for a spiritual reason. Each of these rewards was given to him by the Ribono shel Olam. Pharaoh was just the MeSovev. However, the Sibah – the real reason was that his mouth did not sin, his legs did not sin, his hand did not sin, his neck did not sin, etc.

There is a famous story with Rav Yisrael Salanter that brings this concept down to something to which we can all relate. There was a lottery for a lot of money. But it was not like today’s lottery where millions of people buy tickets for a dollar each. Years ago, there was something called the Irish Sweepstakes – which had a very big cash prize, but it cost a lot of money to buy each ticket. There are still a few lotteries like that.

This fellow bought a ticket, paying a lot of money for the ticket, more than he could afford. He was waiting for the drawing. In the meantime, he found himself short on funds for basic daily expenses. He didn’t have money for this, he didn’t have money for that. So he sold his ticket to his friend. Lo and behold – the number hits! His friend won the lottery!

The original purchaser was devastated. He did teshuvah, he studied mussar books, this and that. He went over to Rav Yisrael Salanter and told him what happened to him and why he was so distressed. Rav Yisrael Salanter told him, “Don’t you know it is not the number that wins the lottery – it is the man that wins the lottery.” If you would have kept the ticket, you would not have won, because the Ribono shel Olam does not want you to win. This way, at least you got your money back. Consider yourself lucky! You would have never won! If the Ribono shel Olam does not want a person to win the lottery, he will never win it, no matter what number he has.

Aval Asheimim Anachnu

“The brothers proclaimed one to another ‘We are guilty about our brother, whose suffering we saw when he pleaded to us, and we paid no attention. Therefore, this trouble has come upon us.’” (Bereshis 42:21)

I would like to relate another story, this one involving Rav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld (1848-1932). In 1929, the infamous massacre occurred in Chevron. The Chevron Yeshiva had come from Slabodka in Europe to Chevron. In a premeditated attack, the Arabs attacked the Yeshiva and the Jewish quarter of Chevron and killed 67 students and wounded another 58. (I once met a Jew in Far Rockaway who was a very heavy fellow. During the massacre, he stood at the door of the Yeshiva trying to block the entrance so the marauding Arabs could not enter. All of his fingers were cut off in that incident because the door was slightly open. He survived but he lost his fingers.)

After this incident in August 1929 the survivors of the Yeshiva moved to Jerusalem. That is why the Chevron Yeshiva today is in Yerushalayim. They left Chevron.

After this incident, some people came to Rav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld and asked why this happened to Chevron. They suggested to him “It happened because in Chevron they play soccer on Shabbos.”

Rav Yosef Chaim, who was no softy, got up from his table. He held onto the table and said “Who are these people who play soccer on Shabbos in Chevron? These are people who came from Russia. They were drafted into the Czarist army. They were forced to eat treife. They were forced to be Mechalel Shabbos. They had no connection with their parents. They made Aliyah. They don’t know any better. So they play soccer on Shabbos. Why would you expect them to know any better with that type of background?” He said, “The soccer players are not guilty because they don’t know any better. AVAL ASHEIMIM ANACHNU! (But it is we who are guilty.) It is our fault because we know better and we are not behaving properly. These were the very words uttered by Yosef’s brothers in this week’s parsha – AVAL ASHEIMIM ANACHNU.

The Brisker Rav used the same concept. When Yonah was on the boat in the middle of the terrible storm at sea and the boat was about to go under, the Navi relates that everyone took out their idols and began praying to their idols. Yona said “It is because of me that this great storm has come upon you.” (Yona 1:12).

The Brisker Rav asked – what did Yona mean by this? All the other sailors and passengers were taking out their Avodah Zarah and worshipping their idols, yet Yona, the prophet of G-d was saying “It’s my fault!” How are we to understand this?

The answer is, yes. The Ribono shel Olam holds the people who know better, accountable. I am not suggesting anything about any current event. No one knows why a specific tragedy occurs. But when confronted with such questions, our reaction has to be what Rav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld said back then and what the Brisker Rav said in his time. The answer is AVAL ASHEIMIM ANACHNU. We need to point the finger at ourselves. What exactly we are doing wrong is not for me to say, and I don’t know if it is for anybody to say short of a Navi. But we can say one thing: Don’t blame “them.” Most of “them” don’t know any better. The people who know better are the people that should be held responsible. That is the message of AVAL ASHEIMIM ANACHNU.

A Freileche Chanukah!

Transcribed by David Twersky; Jerusalem DavidATwersky@gmail.com
Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman; Baltimore, MD dhoffman@torah.org
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Torah.org: The Judaism Site Project Genesis, Inc. 2833 Smith Ave., Suite 225
Baltimore, MD 21209 <http://www.torah.org/> learn@torah.org (410) 602-1350

From: Daniel Kaminetsky <danielkam@gmail.com>

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Rav Moshe Tzvi Weinberg Chanukah 5771

These notes are an approximate transcript of a recorded shiur given by Rav Moshe Tzvi Weinberg. The shiur is available on YuTorah.org.

Breaking the Cycle

The gemara describes what happened when the Jews entered the Bais Hamikdash after the Greeks had desecrated it. Gemara says when the Greeks entered the Temple, they contaminated all of the pure oil. And when the Chashmonai family fought back, this minority, small handful of individuals who had the courage to stand up to an army of thousands, many

times their own size, and somehow miraculously win that victory, they found one little jar of oil sealed with the Kohain Gadol's seal. There is an obvious problem here. Rabbi Akiva Eiger cites a Rambam. The Kohain Gadol's job description does not include sealing the jars of the oil. There was a chamber in the Bais Hamikdash with four separate corners and one of those corners was called Lishkas Bais Hashemanya which was the room where they prepared the oil and the Kohain Gadol never stepped foot in there. Certainly didn't have to. So it is unusual that this pach shemen, this miraculous oil that is going to save the day and set the stage for the entire Chanukah story, is sealed with the seal of the Kohain Gadol. Why did Hashem make it that the Chanukah miracle had to come about in this way? What's the message? That the victory over the Greeks had to somehow be presented through the perspective over the Kohain Gadol? Somehow he represents the victory over Yavan. Why? What is it about the Kohain Gadol that alludes to this concept?

The Kohain Gadol would bring a unique Korban every day called the minchas Chevitim. It was a cake offering half brought in the morning and half in the afternoon. What was unusual about the Korban was that when a Kohain first started working in the Bais Hamikdash, when he would be inaugurated into the service, he would bring a Korban, called a Minchas Chinuch, an inauguration cake offering, and its very similar to what the Kohain Gadol brings every day. So what is the idea of the Kohain Gadol bringing this inauguration offering every single day? The Sefas Emes in parshas Tzav explains that Kohain Gadol brings this minchas chevitim every day, which is similar to the inaugural minchas chinuch to convey the message of hischadshus. Freshness. The ability to start over every day. And maintain the intensity and excitement that a person experiences the first time they do something. The average Kohain worked in the Bais Hamikdash for a long time. Perhaps the excitement wore off. What defined the Kohain Gadol, what he represented, was the ability to start over fresh every day. And therefore, it shouldn't surprise us that the first thing that is done in the Bais Hamikdash every morning involved his Korban. There is a whole set of mishnayos, at the end of Seder Kodshim that describe the daily activities of the Kohain. The Rambam says that these are put at the end of Seder Kadshim because its not really halachik discussions. Its more of a story. Where they slept, how they slept (not in beds so as not to oversleep). How they worked in two groups and split up to make sure nothing was missing, everything in place. They meet up at a certain place and confirm that everything is where it needs to be, and then the Mishna says those who prepare the Minchas Chevitin start to boil the water for that Korban. The Gemara asks, isn't the first Korban of the day the Tamid shel shachar? Pasuk calls it haOlah. The Olah. That which kicks off the day. The Gemara says the Kohain is not bringing the Korban yet. Just boiling the water. But how does this answer the question? If the Tamid shel shachar is supposed to be the first thing, it should be the first thing? Why are we starting the minchas chevitin, even just a little? The answer is, this is the whole definition of what a Kohain Gadol is. Represents newness. Represents the starting point of everything. Starts fresh every day as if it is the first day of service in the Bais Hamikdash.

With this insight of what the Kohain Gadol represented, we can perhaps now understand why the miracle of Chanukah had to come about with the oil of the Kohain Gadol. Kohain Gadol represents newness, freshness. The Greeks had caused the Jewish people's attitude toward Torah to become stale, old and complacent. It threatened the existence of Torah itself. The Netziv, Rosh HaYeshiva in Volozhin was once asked the following question: Volozhin was a town where there was so much Torah life, yet the simple townspeople never got turned on to it. Never developed a passion for learning. There was a Yeshiva, arguably the greatest of its time, which was the center of the town life, and yet, people just were not taken by it. How could that be? The Netziv answered by telling a story he once heard from a chazzan. One time on Simchas Torah, it was time for hakafos, and the Chazzan was carrying one of the Torahs and a group of children came running towards the Torah. They were pushing; they each wanted to kiss the

Torah. It was a remarkable sight. Chazzan was proud to see their fervor and enthusiasm. But he noticed one girl on the side. Not only was she not attempting to get near the Torah, but she was telling all the other children to go ahead of her. She had no interest. Other kids were dying for the opportunity to just kiss the Torah. Chazzan was very troubled by this. Went over to this girl. He said, I don't understand. It is Simchas Torah. You don't want to kiss the Torah? Not really. It is not really anything so special.

If I had to kiss the Torah every time I saw it, I would be kissing it all the time. In the morning, at night. He asked her, I am not sure I understand. Who are you? My father is so and so, the Sofer. Then he understood. She was so used to seeing the Torah, that it did not make a roshem on her any more. Doesn't impact her the same way as the other children. How when the Aron opens they come running and jumping. The Netziv said that's what happened to the people of Volozhin. It was a fabulous town of Torah but were so used to it that they lost their passion for Torah. Took it for granted. This is life. There are people who are very committed to Torah. But it had become just the way of the land. This mentality can kill people. In the times of Noach, this killed them. Noach says there is a flood coming. When? 120 years from now. Ok. Shkoyach. Let's talk in 75 years. 80 years. 100 years. And when they saw this old man building his boat, year after year, saying the flood is coming, do teshuva! they were like don't bother us. Even when there were 7 days left. At that point they were completely numb to it. This is how Rav Shalom Schwadron explains this in his sefer. And he says a beaver also gets very set on its path and plows straight ahead. Those who trap beavers, all they have to do is see the line the beaver is going in and set up a trap in its path and it will literally walk right into the trap. Can't think outside of the box. This is danger of person who locks himself into a certain way of thinking. Either because he is just used to something or because the freshness has been lost. This was what the Kohain Gadol represented. Ability to conquer that staleness. Start new every day. A minchas chinuch just like the beginner Kohain. What was remarkable was that during the time of the Chanukah story, this attitude of staleness and lack of freshness in avodas Hashem had reached the highest ranks of society. Can we imagine what it must have been like to be a Kohain in the Bais Hamikdash? Didn't have to work every day. Worked two weeks a year as part of this very large rotation. And during those two weeks you worked maybe one day a week. A little bit more on shalosh regalim. But it's not like every day it was busy in the Bais Hamikdash. It was a unique opportunity. And yet the Bach, the Bayis Chadash, Rav Yoel Sirkis, famous commentator of the Tur, said that Hashem sent the Greeks to stop the Avoda of the Bais Hamikdash because the Jewish people had lost interest in the Avoda. Can we imagine this? Kohanim in the Bais Hamikdash being bored? Is there a more direct opportunity to connect with Hashem than being in the Bais Hamikdash? But it was getting old. So Hashem said fine. You don't appreciate the freshest place in the world, the most exciting place in the world? This is boring to you? I'll take it away from you. As time went on they realized what they lost and it took a few righteous Jews to fight for it and get it back. But the foundation of the Chanukah story is that the atmosphere of the Yevanim was a response to our attitude. We had lost our passion. And until this day, we are still suffering at the hands of Yavan. Yavan, one would think, represents freshness and hischadshus. Renewal. They were very progressive. Medrash calls them chosech but if anything they were the opposite. Took us out of the dark ages. Progressive in science, music and art. Literature. Poetry. All aspects of advanced education, so to speak, has its roots in the world of Yavan. And yet, a lot of that progress hasn't really done much good for us. Because even though the Yevanim were destroyed, Western Culture today is entirely rooted in the Yevani way of thinking. More progressive. Faster and better technology. Has it really brought us hischadshus? Is that really new? We get excited about updating our online farms. Instead of actually getting up early and starting new and going out to the chickens, you can do it all online. Or people updating their Facebook pages and twitter accounts. I moved from my living room to my dining room. Hischadshus! Wow! That's a renewal

that is so stale. Doesn't get you anywhere. All the advances in technology have allowed us to create bigger weapons with which we can destroy ourselves physically and spiritually. Need a flatter screen on the wall? Television wasn't flat enough? This is advancement? This is where we are going? What have these advancements done to shape the way people interact with each other? As much as we are advancing on some levels, much of the advancement really just lead to boredom. An English actor once said "Entertainment is in fact the biggest cause of boredom in the modern world. The more man is entertained, the more bored he grows." That was the world of Yavan. We offer more and more and more. But it becomes an endless cycle. Need to go from one high to the next. Need to get that next excitement. And they presented the Torah as being the opposite. This old book? You are going to tell me it is fresh? Alive? Exciting? Is there anything real in it to offer to the modern man? And yet, the reality was, that it is really the exact opposite. The Torah is life itself, the freshest thing in the world and it just takes our perspective to ensure that we keep it fresh in that way.

The Torah teaches us how to see things in a fresh way. It's the opposite of what people think. People wonder, you are still reading that same book? Can't you find something else? There are new books out on the market. But we go back to the same book. Every Shabbos we gather and re-read the parsha again and we are supposed to read it in a fresh way. Because Torah gives us the ability to see the world in a fresh way. Rav Eliyahu Dischnitzer, a talmid of the Chofetz Chaim, said that the Chofetz Chaim once told him about an irreligious pharmacist that he knew. One time the Chofetz Chaim walked into the pharmacy and gave the man a hug. He said I am jealous of you. Rabbi, you are jealous of me? I am not such a religious man. The Chofetz Chaim said, you have the opportunity every day to dispense medicine to people. You are saving lives. Our sages teach us that if you save one life its like saving the entire world. You have a tremendous opportunity. The pharmacist said I never thought of it that way. And he went on to be chozer beteshuva and Rav Eliyahu Dischnitzer said I believe he is one the lamed vav tzadikim that keeps the world spinning. That's how much he turned his life around. It was a fresh Torah perspective that caused him to realize this. You're not just selling medicine to make a living. You are giving someone life. This is the attitude that Torah helps us to live with. We say in Shema "asher anochi metzavcha hayom". That which I am commanding you today. Says Rashi, Torah should not be like an age old edict. Torah, mitzvos should not be like a "deyotkema yeshanah". An age old edict. That a person can't bear it. It's enough. This doesn't offer me anything. It's old. Get with the times. It should be fresh. Like you are running after it. Torah should be in a constant state of renewal. Rashi uses the lashon of deyotkema and then elaborates: "a command of a king that comes in writing". Why did Rashi choose this word? Deyotkema? It's a Greek word. Rashi davka uses a Greek word to describe what is the opposite of how Torah should be because Torah is exactly the opposite of the Greek mentality. The Greek mentality is something that leads to staleness. Oldness. Something that leads to the Bais Hamikdash being shut down because it's boring. Torah is the opposite. And we see that Rashi explains the word deyotkema as the command of a king that comes in writing. The Yavanim were against Torah She Baal peh. They accepted the concept of Torah Shebichtav. You want to tell me that Hashem came down and gave the Torah, fine. We are willing to work with that. Maybe. But the real fight the Yevanim had was with Torah shebaal peh, which represents man's ability to interact with Hashem and to continue to add on to His word. When a person comes up with an insight into Torah, he is adding to the word of Hashem. That becomes Torah shebaal peh. The Greeks had no issue with the concept that there are 304,805 letters in the Torah. Not to be changed, not to be touched. Fine. We'll accept that. You're going to tell me man has the ability to influence the Divine? So deyotkema he says is a command of a king that comes in writing. The Greeks will accept the written Torah. That doesn't bother them. That doesn't strike them the wrong way. But you want to tell me man has the ability to be mechadesh, to interact with the

Divine? Why do we think they hated the Bais Hamikdash so much? According to the Gemara, the Bais Hamikdash was the meeting point between heaven and earth. Where heaven and earth kiss. Why did they hate that so much? Because again, if you want to tell me there is an abstract gd who created the world but left it to operate al pi teva, by the natural order, the cycles of life, fine. We'll accept that. But you are going tell me that Hashem is going to listen to you and you're going to decide things like Shabbos, Rosh Chodesh, the ability of man to declare when the holidays are [These were the things the Greeks were against]. That's absurd. What right do you have to interact with the Divine? Man is man and gd is gd. That's what they were against and that's what Rashi is hinting to here. Don't let Torah be something like an old Greek edict. Don't let it be something that's just written. Have to allow for man to add to the Torah, continue to interact with the Torah. That's what the Menorah represents. Two things in the Bais Hamikdash that represent Torah. The Luchos, the Aron, which represents Torah shebichtav, the written law, and the Menorah which represents Torah shebaalpeh. The Netziv says that when Moshe got stuck on something, could not figure something out, he would go into the Mishkon and stare at the lights of the Menorah? And that would help him to figure things out. That was the ability for man to keep going with Torah. To on the one hand, take the word of Hashem, but to be able to renew it in our own way. That's why on Chanukah we are constantly being challenged to refresh and renew. First night light one candle. Second night two. Third night three, etc. We even take a test on Chanukah. The lighting of each day sounds exactly the same. We read about the Nesiim. Parshas Naso, perek 7. Over and over. The only things that changes in the Nasi's name. They all brought the same korban. Just list the Nissim and tell us what they brought one time! Why on Chanukah do we read the same set of pesukim again and again? It's a test for man. Can we read the same thing over and over and read it in a fresh way? Can we see it with a fresh perspective? That perek 7 in Bamidbar is one of the longest perakim in the Torah. [might even be the longest]. 89 pesukim. 89 is Gematriya Chanukah. That is essence of Chanukah. Can I do the same thing over and over but still do it in a fresh way? That is what the Jewish experience is supposed to be. Supposed to be a life that offers us something new. I will daven the same thing every day, but in a fresh way. I will keep the same Shabbos every week, but I will do it in a fresh way. I will do chesed every day, but I will try to constantly renew and refresh. This is what the Yevanim tried to conquer.

In Emunas Itecha, Rav Moshe Wolfson brings the Medrash that Yavan is compared to Choshech. The beginning of the Torah describes all the darkness that preceded the world. Torah says the world was Tohu vavohu choshech. Medrash says Choshech corresponds to Yavan. It's funny because we would think they are so bright. So expansive. They are looking to advance the world. And yet Chazal, so many years ago, were ahead of the game and said this is going to bring a lot more choshech than light. On Chanukah, the light of Torah which burned so bright was able to drive out that darkness of Yavan. Therefore we find that on Chanukah we have an expansion of Torah Shebaalpeh perhaps more than any other area. There is a famous question asked by the Rishonim. We should really only light seven nights because there was oil for the first night. We had one pach shemen. There were really only seven nights of miracles. This is a famous question with many, many answers. Can buy an entire sefer of answers to that question. It's one question. Over 500 answers. Why did this question become the focus of so many commentators? There are many other big questions out there in Judaism. But this question became the question. Perhaps the answer is because this is what Chanukah is. It's about chidush. I can look at the same question 500 different ways and there are still people giving new explanations. Rav Wolfson says Choshech is Gematriya chiddush. We know from Newton's law, for every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction. For all the choshech that they are bringing, we have to counter it with newness, chidush. The Gematriyas line up because those are the front lines of the battle. We have to try and constantly renew ourselves and not to slip into that world of complacency.

Bikurim is the ultimate in renewal. Here I am working in my field day in and day out. I am working day in and day out. I finally have my first fruits. You would think that you could say Hashem, the first \$5 that comes in, I'm hanging that up on the wall. And from the rest can take for Tzedaka. What do we do? A remarkable thing. We take our first fruits and say, this is for you Hashem. And every time they come back, we renew our commitment to Hashem. We say, You're in charge here. It's not me. And Bikurim has a strong connection to Chanukah. The Rambam brings lehalacha, one can't bring Bikurim before Shavuos, representing Mattan Torah, Torah Shebichtav, and not after Chanukah. So the end of the renewal process in Chanukah. So the bookends of the Mitzva of renewal, bikurim, are from the starting point of Torah, Shavuos, to Torah shebaalpeh, the renewal, man's ability to carry that Torah further which is symbolized by Chanukah. The idea is that when I bring those first fruits, I stop for a second to acknowledge that Hashem is mechadesh the world every second of every day. With every breath I take, Hashem is pumping new life into me. This is what bikurim represents. What about the Yevanim? Opposite. They say no active force in the world. No gd who is renewing the world. Maybe was a gd who set the world into motion. But once it's in motion, keeps rolling. Everything in natural world is round. Even a Gemara that says there is nothing in the world that is perfectly square. Everything rolls. There is cause and effect. Things just roll. There is a teva. A natural order to things. A very anti-Jewish concept. This was part of where struggle between Greek philosophy and Jewish philosophy come head to head on Chanukah.

R Nachum of Chernobyl, the Chernobyl Rebbe, quotes the Gemara that says one who is diligent with Ner Chanukah will have sons that are Torah scholars. How do we see this? The word Elokim is the same Gematriya as Hateva, the natural order. This is the struggle. Do I see gds hand in everything or do I put gd aside and say, this is natural. This is just how it is. If I do this, this is what's going to happen. That's where the struggle is. The challenge for man in this world is to not lose ourselves in the teva. To not just get swept up by the way of the world. The teva is nothing more than the circle of life that surrounds all of existence. And there is a natural order but it's for us to believe that the circle is being spun by an active Creator, a gd. Who is actively involved. Didn't just set it into motion and allow it to spin. The Jew is the center of creation and the rest of the world is surrounding us, whether it's intentionally to harm us or not, we are surrounded on all sides, we are a small minority, we're that central point and it's our job to not to get lost in that spin. To not just become part of that cycle of life that often leads us to a state of staleness. Our very name Yisrael represents our ability to break out of the cycle, that circle. Yisrael means Yashar Lakeil. Instead of being trapped in that spin, we choose the straight path, break out of that cycle and go straight to Hashem. This is why we say one who is diligent, ragil, in the mitzvos of ner Chanukah will have children that are talmidai chachamim. Ragil means accustomed. If a person wants to break of his regilus, his routine, and start fresh, perfect time to do it is on Chanukah. Way to break cycle and shatter that spin of life is to connect ourselves to Chanukah. Therefore should not surprise us that the very name of the enemy we are going up against, Yavan, is Gematria galgal, circle. This word, galgal is also in the word legalot, gilui, which means revelation. Because they only believe what they see. I see a natural order. I can prove it to you. Show it to you. But not able to look beyond the mask of creation, so to speak, and see that there is a gd behind it.

We know that for havdala we use an avuka, a torch, multiple wicks. In the Olympics, they also use a torch. What is the Olympic symbol? 5 interlocked rings. The modern Olympic movement that we have today was founded by a man named Pierre De Coubertin. Picked that symbol based on an artifact that he found which came from ancient Greece. So it has its roots from a long time ago. The interlocked circles represent being trapped, locked in to the teva, the natural order. That was Yavan. Why 5? We know Chanukah is all about lehodos and lehallel. Praising Hashem. We know there are 10 Sefiros of interaction between Hashem and this world. Chachmah Binah and Daas (chabad) are upper three. And then the 7 lower attributes of Hashem

that we try to mirror. All the sefarim, the Arizal say that Chanukah is a tikun of the midah of Hod. Chesed Gevurah Netzach, Tiferes, hod. 5th one down. Sefarim talk about how Lehodos ulehallel is a tikun for that. That 5th dimension known as hod is very much connected to Chanukah. The antithesis of that is going to be 5 interlocked rings. 5 circles that say the guf is what its all about. Reject gd. Forget about the ability to connect the spiritual and the physical. The guf is the guf and gd is out there. The Bais Hamikdash, the Menorah, Torah shebaalpeh represents that bridge where man and gd can interact. I can elevate the physical. The body doesn't have to be used to only serve itself, as the Olympics would suggest, can use it in a holy and spiritual way.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe, in his Likutei Sichos writes: "In recent years Rambam's handwritten sketch of the Menorah has been discovered. The branches of the Menorah are straight. [as Rashi already said] unlike the popular misconception that the branches are curved as depicted on the arch of Titus. [which has the famous picture of the Keilim being taken from the Bais Hamikdash]." Why was it drawn this way? Incorrectly? "A. Perhaps the artist did not intend to make a precise image. B. Titus may never have discovered the Menora as many of the holy vessels were hidden [Jews put out a fake to protect the real kailim.] C. The artist may have attempted to depict a different candelabra altogether. Whatever the reason may be, the drawing is inaccurate and should not be copied in publications or in Chanukah Menoras." That's why the Chabad Menoras we see on the top of cars have straight arms. Seven branch menorah. Ours have 8. Chabad very makpid about this. On a deeper level, as expressed by one of the Breslov sefarim, Yavan represents that circle, and they believe even the Menorah which represents, renewal, a circle will get stale at some point. Enters into that circle of life, so to speak, that stale, monotonous attitude towards Hashem. We remind ourselves, through the Menorah itself, that we are Yisrael. Yashar Keil. We go straight to Hashem. Interesting to note that the letter for the month of Kislev is samech. Circle. First word of Torah that uses Samech is saviv. The lesson of samech is this concept of the circle. In the month of Kislev we challenge ourselves to break out of that circle and go Yashar Keil. To renew ourselves in the renewal that's true to the Torah.

We live in a time were undoubtedly its truly difficult to stay fresh in avodas Hshem. The world, to the natural eye, looks very appealing at times. Often what the world has to offer in terms of hischadshus, in what they consider renewal, whether its new methodology or technology in whatever, whatever the world has to offer, as much as we want to take it, we have to guard ourselves and remind ourselves that what we have is truly the newest thing in the world. This is a challenge at the end of days more so than ever before. As the world gets more and more advanced, we have to remind ourselves that the Torah is really where we turn to for renewal. There is a Medrash that highlights this idea. We know that Adam Harishon was the all encompassing man. Every one of our neshamos are connected to Adam Harishon. He is called Ha'adam. The man. All encompassing. All women rooted in Chavah, but in those moments even before there was a Chavah, all men rooted in Ha'adam. If you look at the structure of man, different generations represent different parts of Adam Harishon's body. So there were generations that were the head, so to speak, the leaders of Jewish history. Arms, legs. Our generation is the ikvisa demishicha as there is a tradition that Moshiach is coming by the year 6,000. We are the generation of the footsteps of Moshiach. We correspond to Adam Harishon's heel. The lowest part of man. The Medrash says the heel of Adam Harishon was so magnificent, it could block out the circle of the sun. What this means on a pashut pshat level is unclear, was he physically so big that his heel blocked out the sun, but on a deeper level, the heel of Adam Harishon represents our generation, that has to face the greatest advancements in technology and everything the world has to offer, we have the greatest risk of falling into that cycle, entering into the natural order of the galgal hachamah, the circle of the sun, and yet we are told by our great sages that even the heel has the ability to block out the sun. We take the good, but don't have to enter that world where I need faster and better. Need the newest iphone. Become

addicted to culture of wonderful country we live in. Appreciate it. Are thankful for it and take the good. But have to guard ourselves that we don't fall into the downward spiral, to that spin which is antithesis of what Torah represents.

In Shmuel alef, Davod Hamelech is MIA at the Rosh Chodesh feast and Shaul Hamelech turns to Yehonasan and asks him, “madua lo ba ben yishai gam temol gam hayom el halechem?” Why hasn't ben yishai come today to the bread, the feast? Obviously, there was some tension between family of Shaul and Dovid. But it is brought in one of the Seforim, that this question is actually a question we ask ourselves every day. Why hasn't Moshiach come yet? What are we waiting for? Where is ben yishai? Where is Dovid Hamelech? The malka demashicha? What is taking him so long? The answer is in this pasuk. Why hasn't Moshiach come? Madua lo ba ben yishai? Because gam temol gam hayom. Because yesterday was the same as today. And it's our job to renew, not just ourselves but the entire world, to present to the world a value system that as much as its ancient, is really so fresh and progressive, the most progressive of all.

IYH, we should all strive as Chanukah is here, to break out of that cycle, that spin, of the galgal that Yavan represents and to recommit ourselves, like the pach shemen of the Kohain Gadol that was found with the seal of the Kohain Gaol who represents hischadshus, we should all strive to tap into that and IYH renew ourselves to bring Moshiach bemihairu beyamainu.

https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/2060070/jewish/Why-Is-the-Prayer-for-Rain-Based-on-the-Civil-Calendar.htm

Why Is the Prayer for Rain Based on the Civil Calendar?

The connection between [Night Preceding] Dec. 5 or 6 and Vetein Tal Umatar Livrachah

By Rabbi Yehuda Shurpin

Question: My siddur tells me to start saying the prayer for rain in the Amidah on the night preceding December 5 or 6. Why does it use a secular date rather than a Jewish one?

Answer: That's right. From now until the year 2100, in a regular year we start saying the prayer for rain on the night of December 4, and in the year before a (civil) leap year (2023, 2027, 2031, 2035, 2039), on the night of December 5.

How did this come to be? Let's start at the beginning. As a rule of thumb, Jewish holidays and customs always follow the Jewish calendar, which is linked to the phases of the moon. One exception to this rule is the special prayer requesting rain, which Jews in the Diaspora begin saying on the night preceding December 5 (or 6).

To understand why, let's take a look at the history and significance of this small but important prayer.

Praying for Rain

Jews have been praying for rain for millennia. In the ancient land of Israel, rain was a life-and-death concern. A good rainy season meant a good harvest and ample drinking water, while a drought could be fatal to livestock and cripple the economy.

So when the Men of the Great Assembly set out to codify the prayers, they made sure to add a prayer for rain to the daily Amidah (silent prayer).

In fact, rain appears twice in the Amidah.

It is first mentioned in the second blessing, as one of a string of natural and supernatural wonders that G-d performs. Not least among them is that “He causes the wind to blow and the rain to fall.”

Here we are praising G-d, who brings rain, but we are not actually asking for rain. It is only later, in the blessing requesting a bountiful year, that we ask G-d to “bestow dew and rain for blessing upon the face of the earth . . .”

In both instances, the rain-related phrase is said only during the winter (Israel's rainy season). However, the two prayers follow slightly different schedules. We begin to say “He causes the wind to blow and the rain to fall” on Shemini Atzeret. But, as you point out, we start saying the second prayer, the actual request for rain, only at the beginning of December.

Why the differing start dates? It's an interesting story . . .

In Israel

The Jews of ancient Israel made three pilgrimages to Jerusalem each year, for the holidays of Passover, Shavuot and Sukkot. Now, the official rainy season begins on Shemini Atzeret,¹ when the Jews were about to start their journey back home after the festival of Sukkot. As much as they wanted the rain, they chose to delay their supplications in the interests of a safer and easier trip.

That is how the practice of delaying the prayer for rain began. In Israel, the prayer was begun only 15 days after Shemini Atzeret (the 7th of Cheshvan), allowing enough time for even the Jews living near the Euphrates to return home.² This custom is followed by Jews living in Israel until today.

Outside of Israel, however, a more complicated calculation became necessary.

In the Diaspora

For much of our history, the primary Jewish community in the Diaspora was in Babylonia (modern-day Iraq), where the terrain is on a lower altitude than Israel's, and they do not need rain until much later. Therefore, the sages instituted that Jews living in the Diaspora should start praying for rain only 60 days after the start of the halachic autumn, which is known as tekufat Tishrei.³ (This should not be confused with the autumn equinox, which is usually September 22 or 23.) I will explain soon when exactly that is. Nowadays very few Jews live in Babylonia, and the Jews of North America need rain at a different time than the Jews of Singapore. Nevertheless, we all start asking for rain on the day established for the Jews in Babylonia, regardless of when rains are actually needed in our respective locales.⁴ The Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, Of Blessed Memory, explains that even Jews living in the Southern Hemisphere, where the seasons are reversed, should follow the schedule established for the Jews of Babylonia, because we pray for the needs of the Jewish people as a whole, most of whom reside in the Northern Hemisphere.⁵

Obviously, this does not preclude us from praying for rain at other times. An individual or community that needs rain at a different time may add a personal prayer into the sixteenth blessing of the Amidah, “Shomei'a Tefillah,” where we add our unique requests.⁶

Now Some Math

We now know that the custom of Jews in the Diaspora is to start praying for rain 60 days after the onset of tekufat Tishrei. But when exactly is that?

In the third century, the Talmudic sage Shmuel calculated the length of the solar year as 365 days and 6 hours. Since the year is subdivided into four seasons, or tekufot in Hebrew, it follows that each tekufah is 91 days and 7½ hours ($365.25 \div 4 = 91.3125$).⁷

This calculation happens to correspond with the Julian calendar, which was widely used from the year 45 BCE until the introduction of the Gregorian calendar in 1582 CE.

Based on this, tekufat Tishrei always began on September 24 on the Julian calendar,⁸ and 60 days into tekufat Tishrei was November 22.⁹

Calendar Issues

It eventually became clear that the solar year is actually 11 minutes and 14 seconds shorter than previously calculated, and that the calendar was slowly but surely drifting ahead. In the year 1582, the spring (vernal) equinox—which had been on March 25 at the introduction of the Julian calendar—actually occurred on March 11. This was about 10 days earlier than March 21, which is the day that had been “fixed” as the vernal equinox in the year 325.

To remedy this, Gregory XIII made two changes:

He shifted the calendar back by removing 10 days in October, making October 5 of the year 1582 into October 15. This restored the spring equinox to March 21.

To ensure that the calendar would not shift again, Gregory implemented that every 128 years (or, more roughly, three times every 400 years), one day would be removed from the calendar. (This is because the discrepancy of 11

minutes and 14 seconds accumulates into a whole extra day every 128 years.)

The extra day normally appended to the month of February every four years (causing a leap year)¹⁰ would not be added to all century years, except for those years which are multiples of 400. (Thus, it was not added in the years 1700, 1800 and 1900. However, it was added to the years 1600 and 2000.) If you're still following me, it should be clear that the old calendars (Jewish and Julian) drift away from the new (Gregorian) calendar at a rate of three days every 400 years.

It's important to note that the Jewish sages were well aware that this calculation was not completely accurate. In fact, for most purposes the Jewish calendar follows the more accurate calculations of Rabbi Adda bar Ahavah, who gives the length of the solar year as 365 days, 5 hours, 55 minutes and 25.4 seconds. However, the sages of the Talmud chose to calculate the length of a solar year as 365.25 days for the prayer for rain and for Birchah Hachamah (the blessing of the sun), because it made the calculations much simpler for the average person to perform.¹¹

What to Do?

We know that the prayer for rain should be said 60 days after the beginning of halachic autumn. Since this date is based on the calculation of Shmuel (and the Julian calendar), and not the Gregorian calendar, we now have to translate this date into our Gregorian calendars.

Here's our final calculation: As mentioned earlier, in the Julian calendar, the sixtieth day after the tekufah is November 22. Now, keeping in mind that the Gregorian calendar chopped off 10 days from the Julian calendar, we have to add them back. Thus, the sixtieth day would be—in the year 1582—on December 2.

Additionally, every centurial year (except for the years divisible by 400) the Gregorian calendar loses one day not dropped from the older calendar. Thus, from the year 1700 and onward, the sixtieth day of the tekufah moved one day every 100 years. In 1700 it was on December 3, in 1800 it moved to December 4, and in 1900 to December 5. However, since the year 2000 is divisible by 400, and the Gregorian calendar did not drop the leap day, the day that is considered the sixtieth day of the tekufah did not move, and remains December 5 until the year 2100, in which it will move to December 6.

The reason that we begin saying the prayer on December 6 in the year before a (civil) leap year is that although the Gregorian calendar adds a day to the month of February every four years for a leap year, the extra day has essentially really been accumulated at the start of the winter season. Therefore, every December preceding a leap year, the sixtieth day is adjusted to December 6.

Also bear in mind that since the halachic day starts on the preceding night, we start reciting the prayer for rain during the Maariv Amidah on the night preceding the dates given above.

So, after all that, what you really need to know is that until the year 2100, in a regular year we start saying the prayer for rain on the night of December 4, and in the year before a (civil) leap year, on the night of December 5.¹²

As we begin to recite the prayers for rain this winter, let us have in mind that we are joining Jews all over the world—especially those in our Holy Land, where every drop of water is precious—united in our request for bounty and blessing for all of humanity.

FOOTNOTES

1. The Talmud (Ta'anit 1:1) explains that in truth, even this mention of rain should have theoretically started earlier, at the beginning of the festival of Sukkot. However, it was deemed inappropriate to mention rain during Sukkot, when we are obligated to eat in the sukkah.

2. Ibid. 1:3.

3. Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 117:1.

4. Shulchan Aruch ibid.; Shulchan Aruch ha-Rav 117:2; Responsa of Rabbi Asher bar Yechiel (Rosh) 4:10. See also Shaarei Halachah u-Minhag, vol. 1, pp. 159–163 for an extensive list of halachic authorities who discuss this.

5. See Torat Menachem 5742, vol. 4, p. 2119, and Torat Menachem 5743, vol. 1, p. 387.

6. Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 117:2.

7. See Talmud, Eruvin 56a.

8. Currently October 7 on the Gregorian calendar.

9. See, for example, Beit Yosef to Orach Chaim 117, where Rabbi Yosef Caro, who lived before the introduction of the Gregorian calendar, gives November 22 as the day we start praying for rain.

10. The leap year is in both calendars to compensate for the fact that a solar year is approximately 365.25 days; thus, every four years there is an extra day.

11. For more on the accuracy of the calculations, and the reasons why they chose inexact ones, see But the Sun Is in the Wrong Place!

12. Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 117:1.

A noted scholar and researcher, Rabbi Yehuda Shurpin serves as content editor at Chabad.org, and writes the popular weekly Ask Rabbi Y column. Rabbi Shurpin is the rabbi of the Chabad Shul in St. Louis Park, Minn., where he resides with his wife, Ester, and their children.

Join the Discussion 24 Comments

Dovid Travers Melbourne, AUS December 7, 2020 article misses a central point. The reason this practice is based upon the Julian calendar is because that was the calendar in use when Shmuel instituted his rule and it was still in use when the Shulchan Aruch was published. The Shulchan Aruch was published in 1563, the Gregorian calendar, which is in use today in most countries, was not introduced until 1582. Many countries adopted it later on. For instance Great Britain 1752, Russia 1918 (after the Great October Revolution which now occurs in November!) Had the Gregorian calendar been in use prior to Shulchan Aruch being published it is quite possible that we would follow what is stated there... 60 days after the Tekufah = Autumnal Equinox = 22 Sept +60 = Nov 22. This would make sense. For some reason we use reverse logic and revert to the 'old' Julian calendar. Which by the time of the adoption of the 'new' Gregorian calendar was off by some 10 days! In all likelihood being exact was not important and so we do what we do.

Yehoshua Friedman DN Mizrach Binyamin .. the Mishnah Brurah in the Biur Halacha on Hilchos Rosh Chodesh Siman 427 points out a discrepancy in the Jewish calendar but tells us not to worry because long before it gets to be a practical problem Moshiah will have come and we will be calculating the months by witnessing the new moon as it was originally.

David Travers St Kilda East October 10, 2019 in response to Steve E Abraham I fully concur with this sentiment. The halacha as brought down by Shmuel simply says "60 days after Tekufat Tishrei." Nothing about a specific calendar system. We now have a calendar which no longer allows the equinoxes to drift we should use it and update our system to a more accurate system employed by the rest of the world.

BTW there is nothing specific occurring on the date celestially, it was just an arbitrary date chosen, so what could be so wrong reverting to the original date of 22 November, which would then be fixed and not open to change?

Avraham Rosen Jerusalem December 2, 2013 Many thanks. But why link the change in prayer to the civil rather than (as is done in Israel) the Jewish calendar?

Dovid Travers Melbourne, AUS December 8, 2020 in response to Avraham Rosen: Two separate reasons. In Eretz Yisroel when during Temple times when people made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem (Oleh haregel) though the request for rain was made on Shmini Atzeres, the actual imploring in the ninth brocha of the Amidah was not instituted until the majority of the furthest wayfarers had reached the river Euphrates about a two-week journey, hence recitation commences on 7 Marcheshvan. However, in Bavel (Babylon - Lower Mesopotamia) when the rains were seasonally later this was estimated as being 60 days after the Tekufah = Autumnal Equinox). Thus this is fixed by the seasons, hence the civil or solar calendar. Our Hebrew Moon-based calendar does not follow the seasons but varies over the years. Hence the need for our intercalation process with the solar-based secular calendar. One could ask why 7 Marcheshvan has remained since we no longer have a Temple theoretically the request and the commencement for imploring HKBH for rain could coincide and be on Shmini Atzeres.

from: The **Rabbi Sacks Legacy Trust** <info@rabbisacks.org>
date: Dec 1, 2021, 2:15 PM

Appearance and Reality (Mikketz)

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks Zt"l

After twenty-two years and many twists and turns, Joseph and his brothers finally meet. We sense the drama of the moment. The last time they had been together, the brothers planned to kill Joseph and eventually sold him as a slave. One of the reasons they did so is that they were angry at his reports about his dreams; he had twice dreamed that his brothers would bow down to him. To them that sounded like hubris, excessive confidence, and conceit.

Hubris is usually punished by nemesis and so it was in Joseph's case. Far from being a ruler, his brothers turned him into a slave. Now, unexpectedly, in this week's parsha, the dreams become reality. The brothers do bow down to him, "their faces to the ground" (Gen. 42:6). It may feel as though the story has reached its end. Instead it turns out to be only the beginning of another story altogether, a tale of sin, repentance and forgiveness. Biblical stories tend to defy narrative conventions.

The reason, though, that the story does not end with the brothers' meeting is that only one person present at the scene, Joseph himself, knows that it is a reunion.

"As soon as Joseph saw his brothers, he recognised them, but he pretended to be a stranger and spoke harshly to them . . . Joseph recognised his brothers, but they did not recognise him" (Gen. 42:7-8).

There were many reasons they did not recognise him. Many years had passed. They did not know he was in Egypt. They believed he was still a slave, whereas this man was a viceroy. Besides which, he looked like an Egyptian, spoke Egyptian, and had an Egyptian name, Tsofnat Paaneach. Most importantly, though, he was wearing the uniform of an Egyptian of high rank. That had been the sign of Joseph's elevation at the hand of Pharaoh when he interpreted his dreams:

So Pharaoh said to Joseph, 'I hereby put you in charge of the whole land of Egypt.' Then Pharaoh took his signet ring from his finger and put it on Joseph's finger. He dressed him in robes of fine linen and put a gold chain round his neck. He made him ride in a chariot as his second-in-command, and people shouted before him, "Make way." Thus he put him in charge of the whole land of Egypt. (Gen. 41:41-43)

We know from Egyptian wall paintings and from archaeological discoveries like Tutankhamen's tomb, how stylised and elaborate were Egyptian robes of office. Different ranks wore different clothes. Early Pharaohs had two headdresses, a white one to mark the fact that they were kings of upper Egypt, and a red one to signal that they were kings of lower Egypt. Like all uniforms, clothes told a story, or as we say nowadays, "made a statement." They proclaimed a person's status. Someone dressed like this Egyptian before whom the brothers had just bowed could not possibly be their long-lost brother Joseph. Except that he was.

This seems like a minor matter. I want in this essay to argue the opposite. It turns out to be a very major matter indeed. The first thing we need to note is that the Torah as a whole, and Genesis in particular, has a way of focusing our attention on a major theme: it presents us with recurring episodes. Robert Alter calls them "type scenes."^[1] There is, for example, the theme of sibling rivalry that appears four times in Genesis: Cain and Abel, Isaac and Ishmael, Jacob and Esau and Joseph and his brothers. There is the theme that occurs three times of the patriarch forced to leave home because of famine, and then realising that he will have to ask his wife to pretend she is his sister for fear that he will be murdered. And there is the theme of finding-future-wife-at-well, which also occurs three times: Rebecca, Rachel and (early in the book of Exodus) Jethro's daughter Zipporah.

The encounter between Joseph and his brothers is the fifth in a series of stories in which clothes play a key role. The first is Jacob who dresses in Esau's clothes while bringing his father a meal so that he can take his brother's blessing in disguise. Second is Joseph's finely embroidered robe or "coat of many colours," which the brothers bring back to their father stained in blood, saying that a wild animal must have seized him. Third is the story of Tamar taking off her widow's dress, covering herself with a veil, and making herself look as if she were a prostitute. Fourth is the robe Joseph leaves in the hands of Potiphar's wife while escaping her attempt to seduce him. The fifth is the one in today's parsha in which Pharaoh dresses Joseph as a high-ranking Egyptian, with clothes of linen, a gold chain, and the royal signet ring.

What all five cases have in common is that they facilitate deception. In each case, they bring about a situation in which things are not as they seem. Jacob wears Esau's clothes because he is worried that his blind father will feel him and realise that the smooth skin does not belong to Esau but to his younger

brother. In the end it is not only the texture but also the smell of the clothes that deceives Isaac:

"Ah, the smell of my son is like the smell of a field the Lord has blessed" (Gen. 27:27).

Joseph's stained robe was produced by the brothers to conceal the fact that they were responsible for Joseph's disappearance. Jacob "recognised it and said, "It is my son's robe! A wild animal has devoured him. Joseph has surely been torn to pieces" (Gen. 37:33).

Tamar's façade as a veiled prostitute was intended to deceive Judah into sleeping with her since she wanted to have a child to "raise up the name" of her dead husband Er. Potiphar's wife used the evidence of Joseph's torn robe to substantiate her claim that he had tried to rape her, a crime of which he was wholly innocent. Lastly, Joseph used the fact that his brothers did not recognise him to set in motion a series of staged events to test whether they were still capable of selling a brother as a slave or whether they had changed. So the five stories about garments tell a single story: things are not necessarily as they seem. Appearances deceive. It is therefore with a frisson of discovery that we realise that the Hebrew word for garment, b-g-d, is also the Hebrew word for "betrayal," as in the confession formula, Ashamnu, bagadnu, "We have been guilty, we have betrayed."

Is this a mere literary conceit, a way of linking a series of otherwise unconnected stories? Or is there something more fundamental at stake?

It was the nineteenth century Jewish historian Heinrich Graetz who pointed out a fundamental difference between other ancient cultures and Judaism: "The pagan perceives the Divine in nature through the medium of the eye, and he becomes conscious of it as something to be looked at. On the other hand, to the Jew who conceives God as being outside of nature and prior to it, the Divine manifests itself through the will and through the medium of the ear . . . The pagan beholds his god, the Jew hears Him; that is, apprehends His will."^[2]

In the twentieth century, literary theorist Erich Auerbach contrasted the literary style of Homer with that of the Hebrew Bible.^[3] In Homer's prose we see the play of light on surfaces. The *Odyssey* and the *Iliad* are full of visual descriptions. By contrast, biblical narrative has very few such descriptions. We do not know how tall Abraham was, the colour of Miriam's hair, or anything about Moses' appearance. Visual details are minimal, and are present only when necessary to understand what follows. We are told for example that Joseph was good-looking (Gen. 39:6) only to explain why Potiphar's wife desired him.

The key to the five stories occurs later on in Tanach, in the biblical account of Israel's first two Kings. Saul looked like royalty. He was "head and shoulders above" everyone else (1 Sam. 9:2). He was tall. He had presence. He had the bearing of a King. But he lacked self-confidence. He followed the people rather than leading them. Samuel had to rebuke him with the words, "You may be small in your own eyes but you are Head of the Tribes of Israel." Appearance and reality were opposites. Saul had physical but not moral stature.

The contrast with David was total. When God told Samuel to go to the family of Yishai to find Israel's next King, no one even thought of David, the youngest and shortest of the family. Samuel's first instinct was to choose Eliav who, like Saul, looked the part. But God told him, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance but the Lord looks at the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7).

Only when we have read all these stories are we able to return to the first story of all in which clothes play a part: the story of Adam and Eve and the forbidden fruit, after eating which they see they are naked. They are ashamed and they make clothes for themselves. That is a story for another occasion but its theme should now be clear. It is about eyes and ears, seeing and listening. Adam and Eve's sin had little to do with fruit, or sex, and everything to do with the fact that they let what they saw override what they had heard.

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

The reason they did not recognise him is that, from the start, they allowed their feelings to be guided by what they saw, the “coat of many colours” that inflamed their envy of their younger brother. Judge by appearances and you will miss the deeper truth about situations and people. You will even miss God Himself, for God cannot be seen, only heard. That is why the primary imperative in Judaism is Shema Yisrael, “Listen, O Israel,” and why, when we say the first line of the Shema, we place our hand over our eyes so that we cannot see.

Appearances deceive. Clothes betray. Deeper understanding, whether of God or of human beings, cannot come from appearances. In order to choose between right and wrong, between good and bad – in order to live the moral life – we must make sure not only to look, but also to listen.

from: Esplanade Capital <jeisenstadt@esplanadecap.com>

date: Dec 2, 2021, 11:26 PM

subject: **Rabbi Yisroel Reisman's** Chumash Shiur

Rabbi Reisman – Parshas Mikeitz – Shabbos Chanukah – Shabbos Rosh Chodesh 5782

1 – Topic – A Thought on the Parsha

As we celebrate Chanukah and of course Parshas Mikeitz which after a one year hiatus has once again resumed its place as Shabbos Chanukah. Let me share with you a thought for Parshas Mikeitz and a thought for Chanukah. First we will start with the Parsha.

In the Parsha I had a Kasha and I don't know why it never bothered me before. The Kasha is this. It says when the Shevatim came to Yosef as is found in 43:33 (וַיֵּשְׁבוּ לִפְנֵי-הַכֹּהֵן בְּכִכְרֹתוֹ, וַהֲצַעִיר בְּצַעְרָתוֹ). That Yosef sat them down by age order. It was a Pele in their eyes. How did he know? Rashi says that he pretended to be doing magic. (מכּה בגביע). He would bang on his goblet which he told them he does magic with it and he said (ראובן שמעון לוי) (יהודה יששכר ויובלון, בני אם אחת). That is what he did and in that way he showed them that he is a sorcerer and he is like all the people in Mitzrayim. It bothered me because Kishuf is Assur and the Avos kept all of the Mitzvos in the Torah. He is Over on (Devarim 18:13) (עַם יִרְדָּה אֲלֵרִיד), he is Over on doing Kishuf. Certainly according to the Rambam who holds that all Kishuf is fake the whole thing is a bluff. Certainly he is Over on (תָּמִים תִּהְיֶה, עַם יִרְדָּה אֲלֵרִיד). He is Over on a Mitzvas Asei. He is Over on Vayikra 19:26 (לֹא תִהְיֶה) a Lo Sasei. How could Yosef do it?

I know that you are going to tell me that the Ramban says that in Chutz L'aretz the Avos didn't necessarily keep Kol Hatorah Kulah as Yaakov married sisters. I understand, however, of course they kept Kol Hatorah Kuloh. In Chutz L'aretz if there is a Tzorech, if they had some reason then they didn't but Mistama they kept Kol Hatorah Kulah. It definitely needs a Hesber and it sounds like a great Kasha.

At the end of the Parsha when the Gevia is supposedly stolen from Yosef, and Yosef's servants come and chase after the Shevatim, and they find the Gevia in Binyamin's package. So it is interesting that we find in Chazal that the Shevatim said to him you are a Ganef the son of a Ganef. Your mother stole the Terafim and here you are a Ganef also. It means that they were really Choshed him of doing it. It is a Davar Pele.

It could be that Davka Yosef treated this Gevia as a magical tool and Binyamin was Tak'e the son of Rochel and Rochel Tak'e kept such a Chumra that she stole people's Avodah Zorah to prevent them from doing Avodah Zorah. So it may be that that is why they were Choshed Binyamin not that Stam he was a Ganef, but that he kept his mother's Middah L'sheim Shamayim of stealing people's things that they shouldn't do Aveiros. Maybe that was Yosef's plan. Yosef's plan was to do it. We asked how could he be Over am Aveira without a Tzorech. Maybe he did it for a Tzorech and the whole Tzorech was that when they catch Binyamin it should be at least a little believable that they will come and we will see what will happen. It could be. Who knows? Maybe it was for that reason. I don't know. Ulai.

2 – Topic – A Thought on Chanukah

What is Chanukah all about? As you know, there are two miracles. The miracle of the Pach Shemen and the miracle of the Nitzachin Hamilchama.

We celebrate them. The miracle of the Pach Shemen we commemorate by lighting the Menorah and singing Maoz Tzur, and the miracle of Nitzachin Hamilchama we say Al Hanisim. Those are the two faces to the Pirsumai Nisa of Chanukah.

The Rama in Siman Taf Reish Ayin says that it is a Mitzva L'harbos Seudos K'tzas. It is a Mitzva to add to the Seudos. Why? Because of Chanukas Hamizbai'ach. Because there is a third aspect of Chanukah the Chanukas Hamizbai'ach. Three questions:

1. Where did the Rama get this third reason of Chanukah? We have the Neis of the Pach Shemen and we have the Nitzachin Hamilchama where did he get this third reason about Chanukas Hamizbach?

2. What is Chanukas Hamizbaiach? Chanukas Hamishkan. Chanukas Habeis Hamikdash. What is Chanukas Hamizbaiach? Chanukas Hamizbaiach is one of the Klei Shareis in the Beis Hamikdash. What is Chanukas Hamizbaiach? (אֵז אֶגְמוֹר בְּשִׁיר מְזֻמֹּר חֲכֵת הַמִּזְבֵּחַ). What is Chanukas Hamizbaiach? It should be Chanukas Hamishkan? What is the Inyan of Chanukas Hamizbaiach?

3. On the 25th of Kisleiv the Chashmonaim did not do a Chanukas Hamizbai'ach. Chanukas Beis Hamikdash perhaps, but not Chanukas Hamizbai'ach. The Gemara says in Maseches Avodah Zorah 52b (ובאו בה) (פריצים וחללה). The Yevonim were Mechaleil. The Baal Hamaor says on this Gemara that they were Mechaleil all of the Keilim of the Beis Hamidash. As a matter of fact the stones of the Mizbai'ach were stored forever in one of the Lishchos of the Beis Hamidash. They had to put together a new Mizbai'ach. The Rambam says that on the 25th of Kisleiv that they were still fighting the war. They won the war that day. There was no Chanukas Hamizbai'ach that day. This whole thing is such a Pele!

To answer it let me tell you something that I heard from Rav Pam.

Rav Pam gave Shiur in Yor'e Dai'a and I attended his Shiur for two years. Rav Pam's Shmuz was his Shmuz and his Shiur was his Shiur. During the Yor'e Dai'a Shiur he did not speak Mussar except for once according to my recollection. Once there were two sentences. We were learning Hilchos Shechita and the Halachos of whether the Shochet makes a Shehecheyanu the first time he Shechts. Rav Pam stopped and looked at us and said when a person gets married why doesn't he make a Shehecheyanu at his Chasunah? He paused for a moment and then he said when a person gets married he doesn't know what it is. It is what you make of it. He doesn't know if it is good. It is what you make of it. Then he went back to learning Yor'e Dai'a. When something happens to a person it is what you make of it.

It reminds me of something that Rav Moshe said. Rav Moshe said that Moshe Rabbeinu had two children the first he named Gershom as it says in 18:3 (גֵרְשָׁם-כִּי אָמַר, גֵּר הָיִיתִי בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם). I was a stranger in a distant land. The second one he named Eliezer (וַיִּצְלַנִי מִקֶּרֶב פָּרְעֹה). That HKB"H saved me from Pharaoh's sword. So Rav Moshe asked the order is backwards. First he was saved from Pharaoh's sword and only subsequently was he a Ger B'erech Rechoka. So the children should have been named Eliezer the Bechor and Gershom the second one?

Rav Moshe answered when a miracle happens to you, is it good or bad? It depends what you make of it, it depends what you do with it. He was saved from Pharaoh's hand and he ran away. If he would have run away and assimilate that would be a terrible thing that happened to him. He ran away (גֵּר הָיִיתִי בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם). I did not assimilate in this strange land. Now you can thank Hashem for saving you because something good came of it.

Ocasionaly I have people who tell me you will never believe what happened to me a mirale and they tell me that they were diagnosed with an illness and it went away, it disappeared. Or something happened and there was a big Tzar in the family and there was a Yeshua. I say to them NU? What is the end of the story? The beginning of the story is that something miraculous happened to you. Nu? What is the end of the story? Tell me what you did with it? You didn't do anything with it so what is the big deal that a miracle happened to you. It is a story. It is only worth something if something good and something positive comes from it.

Back to our Kasha. What happened on Chanukah? Miracles, Nitzachin Hamilchama and the Neis of the Pach Hashemen. Klal Yisrael what are you going to do with it? On that day there was a Chanukas Ha'Beis Hamikdash, of course they came to the Beis Hamikdash. Klal Yisrael what are you going to do with it? Klal Yisrael went (אָן אַגמור קשיר מןמור חגבת המזבח). The Mizbai'ach was Posul and they went and they built a Mizbai'ach, they celebrated a Mizbai'ach, they put into it the Kochos that were befitting. Once that happened then it is worth celebrating. The celebration is not on the miracles alone. It is what happens afterwards. After the miracles take place. What happens next? (אָן אַגמור קשיר מןמור חגבת המזבח). After they did a Chanukas Hamizbai'ach. Now we see from the behavior afterwards. On that day of course they were moved, but subsequently they got to work and did things in a Lechatchila way. Now it is a time to celebrate.

It is an important lesson. Something good happens to you make something of it. Do something with it. Rav Pam used to tell the story of once when he went on vacation in a city in Massachusetts in the summer, and he had a kidney stone or something similar and he had to be helicoptered to a hospital in NYC in order to save his life. After that, he didn't go on vacation again. From then on his vacation was that he would stay at home and sit and learn. He didn't go on vacation again.

Now my lesson is not that you should never go on a vacation again, my lesson is if something happens to you Nu? Where is the rest of the story? The Ribbono Shel Olam did something for you or he did something to you. Nu where is the rest of the story? There has to be a cause and an affect. Chanukah there was a Neis, Klal Yisrael did something. Purim there was a Neis and Kimu V'kiblu Hayehudim so then Leshana Haba they made it a Yom Tov. When the Neis happened they didn't make it a Yom Tov. They waited. What are you going to do with it? Klal Yisrael did something with it. Kimu V'kiblu, so then we are going to make it into a Yom Tov. It is what you do with it. Marriage is what you make of it. Miracles are what you make of it. Nisyonos, illness what do you make of it? Let's make good things out of it.

Wishing everyone a meaningful Chanukah, a wonderful Shabbos and the great joy of celebrating the Am Yisrael that HKB"H watches wherever we are, whenever we are as we resist the Yevonim. Good Shabbos to all!

from: Rabbi Chanan Morrison <chanan@ravkooktorah.org>

date: Nov 29, 2021, 1:07 AM

subject: **Rav Kook on Chanukah:** Flickering Lights in Dark Times

Rav Kook Torah

Chanukah: Flickering Lights in Dark Times

Rabbi Chanan Morrison

Suitable Wicks and Oils

The Mishnah (Shabbat, chapter two) discusses which wicks and oils are suitable for Sabbath lights. Certain materials may not be used for wicks since they make "the flame sputter" and fail to burn evenly; and certain oils may not be used because "they do not flow freely to the wick." With regard to Chanukah, however, the Talmud (Shabbat 21b) rules that these restrictions do not apply. Even wicks and oil that do not burn smoothly may be used for Chanukah lights. Why are all oils permitted for use on Chanukah, even when lit on Friday evening? Why this distinction between Sabbath and Chanukah lights?

The Sages required that Sabbath lights be lit from high-quality oils and wicks in order to prevent situations where one might be tempted to relight or adjust sputtering lights (and thus desecrate the Sabbath). They were more lenient, however, regarding Chanukah, since Chanukah lights need not be re-lit should the flame go out. Also, since it is forbidden to use their light for reading or other purposes, the Sages were less concerned that one would attempt to relight a poorly-lit Chanukah light.

The Lights of Chanukah

Rav Kook explained that the special rules of Chanukah lights reflect the nature of the Maccabean struggle against Greek dominance, in both political and cultural spheres.

The authentic heritage of Israel is Torah. The Torah's eternal wisdom is symbolized by the Sabbath lights — lights that require a pure oil that burns clearly and brightly.

However, there have been many times during their long history when the Jewish people have been attracted to the wisdom and beliefs of other nations. This phenomenon is particularly prevalent when the Jewish people are ruled by other nations or exiled from their land. During these times of national vulnerability, many are drawn to the ideologies of powerful and successful nations, even if these beliefs are not thoroughly considered and may be based only on theories and speculations.

For such times, Divine providence provided the Jewish people with gifted scholars who were able to defend the Torah by utilizing these foreign ideas. One example is Maimonides, who attempted where possible to reconcile Aristotelian philosophy with the Torah.

Short-Lived Flame

However, these foreign philosophies lack the eternal truth of Torah. They are like flickering flames that illuminate only for a short time. After a generation or two, the assumptions upon which these ideas are based are often refuted.

Utilizing foreign philosophies to bolster the Torah may be compared to lighting Chanukah lights with oils that fail to produce a bright and even light. Nonetheless, when these beliefs are popular and widely-held, the generation is strongly drawn to them. If it were not possible to find some measure of agreement with the Torah, many would be tempted to reject the Torah altogether. In order to protect the nation, Divine providence allowed the possibility of aligning these fashionable ideas with the Torah's wisdom. They do not always match neatly with practical mitzvot and Halachic rulings — in the words of the Talmud, "they do not flow freely to the wick" — but with a little effort, they can be made to at least partially correspond.

We should be aware that such philosophies are not eternal truths and we are not responsible for their accuracy. "When their light goes out, they need not be re-lit." Certainly we should not make practical changes to Torah observance based on these ideas — "it is forbidden to make use of its light." They are useful only to put troubled minds to rest, not as a true foundation with practical implications. Thus the special rules of Chanukah lights aptly parallel the Maccabean struggle against the Greeks, at a time when Hellenism and Greek wisdom dominated the world with its new ideas.

Jewish Nationalism

There was a second arena in which the Maccabees contested the Greek empire: the military-political one. Here too, the Hasmonean rule did not follow the eternal path of Israel, which designated the monarchy to the descendants of David for all generations. The throne of David is compared to an eternal flame — "You promised him that his candle will never be extinguished" (from the Sabbath prayers). But the hour was not ripe for a Davidic king, and the temporary rule of the Hasmoneans provided stability and independence for many years.

The Davidic dynasty combined both Torah scholarship and political leadership. David studied Torah assiduously day and night (Berachot 3b), and at the same time was energetic and decisive in establishing a secure reign. Authentic Jewish nationalism must be based on the light of Torah — "From Zion, Torah will come forth" (Isaiah 2:3).

In summary, the laws of Chanukah lights reflect the transient quality of the Hasmonean victory, both spiritually and materially. Spiritually — the accommodation of foreign philosophies that may be partially reconciled with the Torah's teachings, as represented by oils that do not burn well. And materially — a political rule not of the Davidic dynasty. This corresponds to the wicks (the more material side of the lights) that fail to hold a constant flame. These achievements provided light, albeit a weak and unsteady one, for a people lacking true independence. They are only fit for Chanukah lights, commemorating a holiday that was not inscribed for all generations in the Biblical canon (Yoma 29a). Yet even though they are not the ideal, unlike the pure lights of the Sabbath, we need these lights during the precarious times of foreign occupation and exile.

Kodesh Heim

Despite their shortcomings, these transient lights are holy — *kodesh heim*. We should recognize in them the hand of God, that God prepared a path so that those attracted to the prevalent culture should not be lost. And the very fact that foreign ideas may be accommodated within the Torah is an indication that these ideas contain a kernel of eternal truth — a small cruse of pure oil, sealed with the stamp of High Priest.

(Silver from the Land of Israel, pp. 112-115. Adapted from Ein Eyah vol. III on Shabbat 21b (2:5).)

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from: Shema Yisrael Torah Network <shemalist@shemayisrael.com>

to: Torah MiTzion <torah-mitzion@shemayisrael.com>

date: Dec 6, 2012

subject: Torah MiTzion by **Rabbi Ben Zion Sobel**

Chanukah - Self-Sacrifice

The Bach explains that because the Jews, at the time of the Second Temple, were lax in performing the service, therefore Hashem punished them by inspiring the Syrian Greeks to abolish the service completely. When the Maccabees showed self-sacrifice in order to continue the service, Hashem abolished the decree.

The Torah true leaders of Israel, in all generations, exhibit tremendous self-sacrifice for the benefit of the Nation. Therefore, they received *siyata diShemaya* (Heavenly assistance) and they were successful in their endeavors.

In our generation, we were privileged to see the unbelievable self-sacrifice of the Mirrer Rosh Yeshiva, the Tzaddik **HaRav Nosson Tzvi Finkel** ztvl. Although suffering for many years from severe Parkinson's Disease R"l, nevertheless, he never let it prevent him from teaching in yeshiva daily and traveling abroad to raise the tremendous funds necessary to uphold the yeshiva which he had built into the largest in the world; serving over 6,000 students.

But the self-sacrifice in his family did not begin with him.

It is well known that many, if not most, of the greatest Roshei Yeshiva of this generation have their roots in Slabodka. The Alter of Slabodka, HaRav HaTzaddik Reb Nosson Tzvi Finkel ztvl was an expert pedagogue who molded each of his students according to his own strengths and weaknesses. By doing so, he fulfilled the dictate of Shlomo HaMelech, "Chanoch lana'ar al pi darko - Train the child according to his way." The Alter is justly credited with the honor of being the one who provided most of the Torah being taught and learned in the Torah World today, after the Holocaust.

But recently, I achieved a remarkable realization; which most people are not aware of.

Many years ago, I asked my mentor, HaGaon HaRav Ya'akov Kaminetsky zt"l whether an askan (one who is dedicated to helping the Jewish People in the way that he is able) should care for Klal Yisroel even at the expense of his own children. I was sure that he would answer me that the Rambam rules (Hilchos Talmud Torah 1:2) that teaching one's son precedes teaching his grandson, and that teaching his grandson precedes teaching someone else's son. How surprised was I when he told me the following story.

The Alter of Slabodka had several sons (Reb Ya'akov was a student and a ben bayis [a member of the family] of the Alter for 15 years). One of them, Reb Lezer Yudel zt"l, established the yeshiva in Mir. Another one became a railroad engineer! One of the Alter's closest students once asked him, "Rebby, what's the story with that son of yours?" The Alter responded, "Do you see the Yeshiva of Slabodka? Do you see its many talmidim? If I were to think about that son, all this would not exist!"

But the student persisted and asked again, "But what about him?" The Alter answered once more, "Do you see the yeshiva? Do you realize all that will come out of it for the benefit of Klal Yisroel? I tell you again that if I were to concern myself with him, then none of this would ever be."

(I assume that the Alter understood the Rambam to apply only when it is a choice between one's son vs. the individual son of another. But when the choice is either one's son or Klal Yisroel, then Klal Yisroel takes precedence.)

Years later, HaRav Elya Svei z"l was sitting shiv'ah in Eretz Yisroel and was visited by a faculty member of the Jerusalem Mirrer Yeshiva. I repeated the story to them and they both commented, "Oh, yes. That was the son of the Alter who was problematic. Eventually, his father sent him away to America!"

Now that, very unfortunately, we lost the great Rosh Yeshiva of Jerusalem Mir, HaTzaddik Reb Nosson Tzvi Finkel ztvl, we are learning about his fascinating life. We always knew that he was the son-in-law of HaRav Beinisch Finkel zt"l, and that when his father-in-law passed away, he became the head of the yeshiva; as often is the case. But his name was Finkel too; and he bore the name of the Alter of Slabodka! How did this happen?

We were amazed as we read that "Natie" Finkel came from Chicago where he studied in a modern Orthodox co-ed yeshiva, currently known as the Ida Crown Jewish Academy, where he was president of the student council and starting centerfielder for the school's baseball team. He came to visit Israel when he was eighteen, after graduation, and planned on being here for a short time only. However, his great uncle, Reb Lezer Yudel Finkel, the Rosh Yeshiva of the Mir at the time, took him under his wings and steered him towards a life totally dedicated to learning and teaching Torah. Following in the footsteps of his great-grandfather, The Alter of Slabodka, after whom he had been named, he became one of the greatest Roshei Yeshiva in our generation.

I spoke with the family and learned that Reb Nosson Tzvi's grandfather's name was Avraham Shemuel; son of the Alter of Slabodka, who eventually moved to the USA. So, apparently, Hashem saw to it that because the Alter sacrificed his beloved child for the sake of Klal Yisroel, and sent him to the USA; davka (specifically) from there came a child who enlightened the entire Torah World.

Hashgacha Peratis at its best!

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http://shemayisrael.com/mailman/listinfo/torah-mitzion_shemayisrael.com

from: Peninim on the Torah <peninim@hac1.org>

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Shema Yisrael Torah Network

Peninim on the Torah - Parashas Mikeitz

פרשת מקץ תשפ"ב

יהי מקץ שנתים ימים

It happened at the end of two years to the day. (41:1)

Chazal (Midrash Rabbah 89:3) quote a pasuk in Sefer Tehillim (40:5) which they feel relates to Yosef's still being incarcerated two years after the release of the chamberlain: Ashrei ha'gever asher sam Hashem mivtacho; "Praiseworthy is the man who has made Hashem his trust." This alludes to Yosef, who as a result of asking the chamberlain twice to remember him, had two years added to his imprisonment." Chazal's statement begs elucidation. It begins by intimating that Yosef was the exemplar of bitachon, trust, in the Almighty, then concludes that Yosef was punished precisely for relying on the chamberlain. Not only was Yosef not lauded for his bitachon, but two years were added to his sentence, as a consequence of his reliance on mortal assistance. Furthermore, what did he do that was inconsistent with Torah outlook? One should not sit back comfortably and wait for the "cavalry." He must do some sort of hishtadlus, endeavoring, upon which Hashem's blessing will rest. This is precisely what Yosef did.

The simple explanation, upon which the commentators expound, is that it all depends on who is voicing his bitachon. Horav Ezra Barzal, zl, observes that when a person becomes ill, he calls the doctor, who prescribes medicine. Indeed, is this the way a Jew should live? The illness was not generated by the doctor. It came from Hashem. Thus, it would be appropriate that the person pray directly to Hashem. Why go to the doctor? Apparently, this depends on the spiritual level of the sick person. One whose bitachon level is very high should turn to Hashem. Most of us, however, have yet to reach this

pinnacle of spirituality. Therefore, the hishtadlus requisites that apply to us are different. The question is how much hishtadlus is too much? It all depends upon one's level of trust. Clearly, Yosef had achieved an unparalleled degree of bitachon, which demanded that he place his unequivocal trust solely in Hashem.

The Chazon Ish, zl (Emunah u'Bitachon), explains that, indeed, we must all place our trust and faith in Hashem. Hishtadlus, undertaking endeavors, does not conflict with bitachon, but rather, facilitates it. We do not sit back and place our order for Heavenly assistance and wait for it to arrive. The question is what form of hishtadlus does one employ? It must be hishtadlus that, under the right circumstances, can be the vehicle for salvation. For example, grabbing onto a piece of straw, a string – something that cannot possibly be the medium for salvation -- does not only defeat the purpose of hishtadlus – but it is a ludicrous act of hopelessness, which is the opposite of bitachon.

The critique of Yosef was founded in his turning to the chamberlain for help. How can one rely on an Egyptian to support a Jew? Yosef should have known better than to turn to such a person for support. Such action is not hishtadlus – it smacks of yiush, despair. The chamberlain was the wrong address for hishtadlus. One who requires brain surgery does not seek a blacksmith.

Horav Reuven Karlinstein, zl, relates that during his escape from Europe to Eretz Yisrael, the Brisker Rav, zl, refused to eat the food that was served on the ship because of his kashrus concerns. After a few days of travel, one of the sailors on the ship approached the Rav and said, “Kavod haRav, I have a solution for his Honor. We catch the fish daily from the ocean. The Rav can easily check for signs of kashrus (fins and scales). Fish do not require ritual slaughter, so the Rav can eat.”

The Rav listened, then asked, “What about preparation? How will the fish be cooked?” The sailor replied that they had a brand new pot in the ship's galley which had never been used. It was, thus, kosher. The Rav replied, “This might suffice for the young children. It is necessary, however, to have a Jew light the fire; otherwise, it is bishul akum, cooked by a non-Jew, rendering it rabbinically kashrus deficient.” “Rebbe, I am Jewish! I will be happy to light the flame and prepare the fish for his honor.”

“If that is the case,” replied the Rav, “it all makes sense. I would not understand why a gentile would be concerned whether I eat or not. Now that you inform me that you are Jewish, I am able to eat. Thank you for enabling me.”

Yosef HaTzaddik was not in any way deficient in his bitachon. His oversight was in turning to the Egyptian chamberlain as his medium of hishtadlus.

ויאמר פרעה אל יוסף... אין נכון וחכם כמוך אתה תהיה על ביתי ועל פך ישר כל עמי
Pharaoh said to Yosef... “There can be no one so discerning and wise as you. You shall be in charge of my palace, and by your command shall all my people be sustained.” (41:39,40)

In Shemos 1:8, the Torah records, “A new king arose over Egypt who did not know Yosef.” The Talmud (Sotah 11a) contains a debate between Rav and Shmuel concerning the “new” Pharaoh: Was he truly a new monarch who had now ascended to the throne? Or was he the same Pharaoh of Yosef's time who conveniently forgot who it was that had benefited Egypt in their time of national need? If, indeed, it was the same Pharaoh whose benevolence to Yosef now donned a cloak of despotism concerning the Jews, how is it that he was not impacted by the miracles that were wrought when Moshe Rabbeinu and Aharon HaKohen demanded that he set the Jews free? If the original Pharaoh was so dazzled by Yosef following what was one powerful interpretation of his dreams, seeing the extraordinary miracles that accompanied Moshe and Aharon's remonstrance to let Hashem's people go should have bowled him over. This cannot be the same Pharaoh, or did his memory suddenly change with his stripes?

Horav David Povarsky, zl, explains that essentially it is the backdrop of the two encounters which distinguishes the two sides of Pharaoh. When Yosef portended to Pharaoh concerning the events of the next fourteen years, he made no demands of Pharaoh. Indeed, Pharaoh, in all practicality, made a

very judicious move by appointing Yosef as viceroy. It made Pharaoh appear benevolent, and did not endanger his position as ruler of the country. On the contrary, it enhanced his position and made him wealthy beyond his dreams. Furthermore, Pharaoh retained his position while simultaneously adding the services of an astute advisor.

Conversely, Moshe and Aharon sought to transform Egypt's workforce by catalyzing the Jewish slaves release from their bondage. When one is asked – nay, demanded – to free millions of slaves, it becomes quite personal. This would invariably have put a strain on the Egyptians and, by extension, Pharaoh's pocket. Under such conditions, Pharaoh was not going to react positively to Moshe and Aharon – regardless of the convincing powers of their miracles. As long as it cost nothing, Pharaoh had no argument with a newly-freed slave becoming viceroy. When his personal interests were affected, it became an altogether different story.

Horav Reuven Karlinstein, zl, sums this up with an anecdote that leaves us with a true – but bitter – lesson. A man standing on a bridge saw

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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.

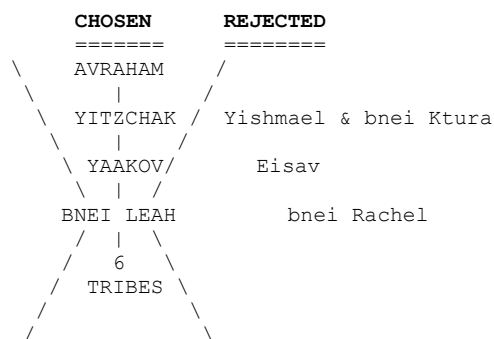
REJECTED FROM THE BECHIRA PROCESS

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 Eisav 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 "teshuvah" (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 identity 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 attempt 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);

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.]

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'

Parshat Miketz: Yehuda

by Rabbi Eitan Mayer

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

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

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

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

PARASHAT MIKKEZ

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'uvin 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'uvin 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'uvin 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'uvin: 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'uvin 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'uvin 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'uvin 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'uvin 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'uvin 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'uvin 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'uvin 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'uvin 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'uvin, 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'uvin'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'uvin 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'uvein.]

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

YEHUDA AND TAMAR:

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

BERESHIT 38:1-2 --

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

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

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

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

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

NATAN TELLS DAVID HA-MELEKH A STORY:

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

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

SHMUEL II:12 --

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

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

Natan said to David, "YOU are the [rich] man! So says God, Lord of Yisrael: 'I anointed you king over Yisrael and saved you from Sha'ul. I gave you the house of your master . . . Why have you desecrated the word of God, doing evil in My eyes? You have stricken Uriah the Hittite 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

- | | |
|---|---|
| 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 Hilkhos 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'uvin attempts to change Ya'akov's mind by guaranteeing Binyamin's safety:

BERESHIT 42:37 --

Re'uvin 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'uvin as a "bekhor shoteh," a "foolish firstborn." Ya'akov does not actually respond to Re'uvin'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'uvin because 1) he does not have the respect of the other brothers, as Yehuda does, and 2) Re'uvin 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'uvin'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'uvin agrees to suffer for failing his mission are tremendously overblown -- the death of his two sons! He offers this guarantee to convince Ya'akov how serious he is, but he only succeeds in convincing Ya'akov that he

is either unstable or untrustworthy.

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

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

BERESHIT 43:9 --

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

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

YEHUDA "BECOMES" YA'AKOV:

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

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

Another famous Rambam (based on Yoma 86b):

LAWS OF TESHUVA 2:1 --

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

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

BERESHIT 31:38-39 --

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

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

1) The lack of "shikul" -- "shikul" means, literally, that a parent suffers the death of one of its children. Ya'akov is claiming that none of the sheep ever had its lamb die under his care (except, as he goes on to say, animals attacked by predators ("tereifa")).

2) He never brought a "tereifa" to Lavan, the owner -- he absorbed the cost himself.

3) "Anokhi ahatena" -- "I would blame myself for it", i.e., I considered the loss to be my responsibility, and "mi-yadi tevakshena" -- "you would seek [payment] from my hands."

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

1) "Tereifa" is indeed brought to him -- "Tarof taraf Yosef!", he concludes in horror when shown Yosef's bloody cloak.

2) He is "shakul" -- when the brothers return from Egypt after their first trip, and Shimon is not with them because Yosef is holding him hostage, Ya'akov complains, "Oti shikaltem!" -- "You have made me 'shakul,' you have made me a parent who has lost his children" -- "Yosef einenu, ve-Shimon einenu, ve-et Binyamin tikahu" -- "Yosef is gone, and Shimon is gone, and [now] you will take Binyamin as well"

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

1) In his berakha to Yehuda at the end of Sefer Bereishit, Ya'akov himself acknowledges that Yehuda has arisen from the "teref" -- like Ya'akov himself, Yehuda takes responsibility for his brother (and his father's feelings) the second time around; he now upholds "tereifa lo heiveiti eilekha" -- like Ya'akov, he no longer brings "tereifa" home to show the master. He promises to return Binyamin home safely.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Shabbat shalom

Parshas Miketz: Yosef's Brothers in Egypt

By Rabbi Yitzchak Etshalom

I.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

II. SH'CHEM AND HEVRON

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

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

The fourth question is one of location – since Ya'akov lived in and around Hevron (see B'resheet 37:1, 14) – why were his

sons shepherding his flock in the vicinity of Sh'chem – approximately 30 miles to the north? (37:12) The mountain range which extends from south of Hevron northwards to Sh'chem includes plenty of good grazing land – why was his flock so far away?

III. A FINAL QUESTION

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

Moreover, the Horim had formerly inhabited Se'ir, but the descendants of Esav dispossessed them, destroying them and settling in their place, as Yisra'el has done in the land that Hashem gave them as a possession. (D'varim 2:12). It should be clear why this verse challenges our traditional approach to Revelation and to the Mosaic authorship of the Torah. Mosheh is describing what had happened in Se'ir to the B'nei Yisra'el – and is relying on an event they knew well to illustrate it. How could the Yehoshua-led conquest – which was a year in the future – serve as an illustrative model for them?

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

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

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

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

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

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

The text clearly tells us that from the sale of Yoseph until the reunion with his brothers was no more than 22 years. (Yoseph was at least 17 when sold; he was 30 when brought before Pharaoh; 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. Moshe'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’re sheet 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’re sheet 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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