

**Potomac Torah Study Center**

Vol. 10 #10, December 23, 2022; 29 Kislev 5783; Miketz, Shabbat Hanukkah 5783  
Rosh Hodesh Tevet is 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 more than 50 years ago and was our family Rebbe and close friend until his untimely death.**

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

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Most years, we read Miketz during Hanukkah. The calendar obviously works out for the Torah cycle to reach Miketz right around the winter solstice – but do the messages of Hanukkah and Miketz reinforce each other? A video by Rabbi David Fohrman and CEO Immanuel Shalev of AlephBeta.org, **Joseph, Egypt, And The Healing Of A Family: Does Joseph Ever Truly Forgive His Brothers?**, helps one answer this question. Rabbi Yehoshua Singer's Dvar Torah (below), which he wrote before reading my message, reinforces and elaborates on much of what I write.

Rabbi Fohrman and Shalev compare the order and subject of events, and repetition of key words, in two stories in Bereishis. This comparison shows that the meeting and reconciliation of Yosef and his brothers repeats Yaakov's departure from Lavan a generation earlier. In both cases, a key individual chases after a family after they depart. In both cases, a key individual accuses someone of stealing valuable property (Lavan's terafim and Yosef's cup) that he uses for divination. In both cases, the key individual searches the other family's possessions, starting from the oldest family member to the youngest, and in both cases, the person with the missing item is the youngest member of the family.

As Rabbi Fohrman and Shalev observe, the parallel is between Lavan and Yosef – not what we would expect, because Lavan is the “bad guy,” and Yosef is the “good guy.” The authors observe that relationships are complex, and almost no one is all good or all bad. Yosef sets up a deceptive plot for the brothers to teach them a moral relationship. The brothers must go through this experience to appreciate at a deep, emotional level, how Yosef feels being sent away from the family thirteen years earlier. Yosef sets up the brothers to test whether they have done teshuvah and whether, faced with the same situation (a son of Rachel being grossly favored compared to all the other sons), they will leave Benyamin in prison or do their best to save him. Once Yehuda asks that the Egyptian viceroy take him as a prisoner rather than Benyamin, because their elderly father will not survive losing his favorite son, Yosef realizes that the brothers' teshuvah is complete.

Lavan's deception is his way of life – cheating any and all, including his own daughters. Yosef's deception, in contrast, is a test of the brothers' character, and the test is a way to reconcile with his brothers without focusing blame on any of them. Yosef understands that if he reveals his identity to his brothers up front, the brothers' guilt will prevent them from repairing the family relationship. Once the brothers prove that they have performed teshuvah and will give up their freedom to save Benyamin and their father, they can unite as a family.

The brothers are the only generation in Sefer Bereishis in which no one receives a direct message from Hashem. In short, there is no prophesy. Yosef, who has Hashem in his conversation all the time, never receives a direct message from God. How does he hear God's voice? As Rabbi Fohrman explains and as I have discussed in previous messages (such as in past years), Paro's dreams closely follow Yosef's experience when his brothers throw him in a pit when he is seventeen years old. The difference is that Paro's dreams follow the story in reverse. The key event is the repeated sevens – two groups of seven cows and two groups of seven bundles of wheat. The only thing in his family history with repeated sevens is the number of years that Yaakov works to earn Rachel and Leah as his wives. Yosef thus figures out that the repeated sevens means seven years. He can figure out the rest of the dreams easily once he has this key.

Hanukkah and Purim are the first significant events in Jewish history that take place when B'Nai Yisrael has no prophesy. While the last prophets are still alive at the time of the Purim story, the prophets apparently are not active outside the land of Israel – certainly not in Persia. The historical events leading to Hanukkah take place after the end of prophesy. The question for Jews during these times is whether God will continue to protect the Jews after the end of prophesy. The key Jews during the events that lead to Purim and Hanukkah are Mordechai, Esther, and Mattityahu and his sons. Mordechai and Mattityahu are traditional Orthodox Jews who, like Yosef, see Hashem's hand in events of their times – even without direct prophesy. One subject of Miketz – certainly an important story of Yosef – is the weak or disadvantaged winning over the strong (ten half brothers versus one, and a slave or prisoner versus the Egyptian police and Paro). As we read in Al HaNisim (the additional prayer for Hanukkah), we thank Hashem for enabling the weak to win over the strong. Another key parallel is that both Miketz and Hanukkah demonstrate that God can send us messages – even ones that are easy to understand – without speaking to us directly.

I suspect that Chazal want the Hanukkah story to coincide with our reading about Yosef, because both stories reinforce the message that God is with us and helping us even when we have no direct connection through prophesy. One of our tasks in building a relationship with Hashem is to discern how God listens and responds to us, even without doing so overtly. My beloved Rebbe, Rabbi Leonard Cahan, z"l, taught me many years ago that a Jew must open his eyes, observe the world, and see the hand of Hashem. Several times what I thought were disappointments turned out to be unexpected changes in my life that proved to be for the best. Rabbi Fohrman calls such events Hashem poking us with favorable opportunities. One way of relating to God is to follow His mitzvot and to pray (ideally with a minyan). Another way, also very important, is to be open to let in pokes or messages that Hashem sends to us. No one is likely to understand or follow every poke, but hopefully one can be open to some of them – unexpected blessings for our lives. May we help our children and grandchildren to open themselves to these messages.

Shabbat Shalom, Hanukkah Samaich, and Hodesh Tov,

Hannah and Alan

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

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**Please daven for a Refuah Shleimah for Yehoshua Mayer HaLevi ben Nechama Zelda, Yoram Ben Shoshana, Yonatan Ophir ben Ilana, Leib Dovid ben Etel, Asher Shlomo ben Ettie, Avraham ben Gavriela, Mordechai ben Chaya, Hershel Tzvi ben Chana, Uzi Yehuda ben Mirda Behla, David Moshe ben Raizel; Zvi ben Sara Chaya, Eliav Yerachmiel ben Sara Dina, Reuven ben Masha, Meir ben Sara, Oscar ben Simcha; Sharon bat Sarah, Noa Shachar bat Avigael, Kayla bat Ester, and Malka bat Simcha, who need our prayers.** Please contact me for any additions or subtractions. Thank you.

Shabbat Shalom, Hanukkah Samaich, and Hodesh Tov,

Hannah & Alan

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### **Dvar Torah: Miketz: Just Say No** by Rabbi Dovid Green © 2002

The Torah places a great deal of emphasis on self-control. "Who is mighty? He who conquers his inclinations." as the verse states (Proverbs 15) "greater is the one who is slow to anger than a mighty warrior, and (greater is) one who rules his spirit than a conqueror of a city." (Chapters of the Fathers, Chap. 4).

The Yalkut Lekach Tov quotes Rabbi Meir Rubman in his work Zichron Meir in his relating this to Yosef in this week's parsha. He notes that we see from the aforementioned that greater strength is required to rule over oneself than that required to conquer a city. One's inclination to wrongdoing (each on one's own level) is so strong that one cannot defeat it without great strength and strategy.

With whom do we see this greatness? We find it with Yosef. When Yosef's brothers came to Egypt the Torah states "and he recognized them." Immediately afterward in the next verse the Torah repeats "and Yosef recognized his brothers." (Genesis 42:7-8) The repetition is meant to convey something extra to us. That is, that Yosef recognized them as brothers, and felt brotherly toward them, as Rashi explains.

This is proven by the statement that Yosef made when he named his son Menashe. "For G-d has made me forget all of my troubles, and even my father's house." (Genesis 41:50) How can Yosef forget his father's house, and how would he know he has forgotten his father's house? Obviously that is not the plain meaning. Rather, the meaning is that Yosef has forgiven his brothers for their having sold him.

Yosef understood that his dreams had to be fulfilled, that he rule over his brothers, and that he had to hide his identity from them. This took great control on the part of Yosef as he really wanted to reveal himself to them.

The message is that Yosef used self-control in order to do G-d's will – the right thing. Self-control is basic Judaism. We learn it from Yosef.

This point may seem trivial, but in today's world the trend seems to be to continually add to the list of things one no longer needs to say no to. Self-control seems prudish and somewhat out-dated, but it is really revolutionary and innovative.

If I may add my own two cents, I would even say that emotional happiness is tied in with self-control, because when people give in to themselves, and they violate the convictions of their souls, it brings them sadness.

Self-control is a key to happiness and greatness. This is one of the great lessons which Yosef continues to impart to his generations, and it is ever so relevant.

Good Shabbos!

<https://torah.org/torah-portion/dvartorah-5761-mikeitz/>

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## **God's Hand and Our Responsibility**

By Rabbi Dov Linzer, Rosh HaYeshiva, Yeshivat Chovevei Torah © 2009, 2020

The story of Yosef and his brothers continues in Mikeitz when Yosef is taken from the dungeon and raised to be the viceroy of Egypt. It is then that his dreams begin to become reality, as his brothers come to Egypt and bow down to Yosef, eventually bringing their youngest brother, Binyamin, with them. It is at this stage in the narrative that Ramban (on Gen. 42:9) asks a penetrating question – how is it that Yosef, now the viceroy of Egypt, did not attempt at any time in the last 9 years to send a message to his father that he was still alive? While many creative answers have been given to this question, Ramban gives the most obvious – Yosef, when he rose to power, saw that the dreams had a chance of materializing, and believed that they could only be actualized if he did not inform his father of his whereabouts. He thus chose to remain silent and to wait for his father and brothers to come to Egypt and bow down to him, so that his dreams, and God's will, could be fulfilled.

This interpretation is, I believe, the key to understanding Yosef's character. Yosef saw himself merely as a vessel of God's will – it was through Yosef that God worked in the world. On the one hand, this can be a position of humility, because such a person takes no personal credit for his accomplishments: *"And Yosef said to Pharaoh: Not !! God will see to the welfare of Pharaoh."* (Gen. 41:16). And, indeed, according to the Chazal, Yosef is the "tzaddik," the one always talking about and thinking about God, always crediting God for his successes: *"And his master saw that God was with him – that is, the name of Heaven was constantly in his mouth"* (Rashi, 39:3).

This trait, however, is not all good. It can, at times, lead to arrogance, and almost certainly leads to an overlooking of real, human concerns. Consider Yosef's response to the baker and the wine steward. *"And Yosef said: Behold to God is interpretations. Tell your dreams to me."* (Gen. 40:8). That is to say – *"I can't take credit, it isn't I who will interpret, it is God. But tell me – because I am God's conduit and God will speak through me."*

Now, it is possible that Yosef did not believe that God worked only through him. Someone with this outlook on life – a deeply religious person – will see God working through all people. And, in fact, when, after Yaakov's death, the brothers express their fears that Yosef will now take revenge on them, he responds to them, "*Do not fear, for am I in God's stead? You planned to do evil to me. God intended it for good – to bring about as this present day – to sustain a large nation.*" (Gen. 50:19-20). That is – God was working through you as well. I do not hold you personally responsible for your actions – it was all God's work.

If Yosef believed that God is working through every one and directing all actions, then arrogance would not be the issue. Personal responsibility would be. If God is always working through a person, then can someone ever be fully responsible for his or her actions? Of course it is possible to believe both that God works through a person and that a person has full freedom of choice and is fully responsible for his actions. "*All is foreseen and freedom to choose is given.*" (Pirkei Avot). However, a heightened sense of the former often leads to a diminished sense of the latter. The brothers had done evil to Yosef. Such an act was not to be dismissed because God had manipulated events to come out for the best. It should have been forgiven because they were contrite and had repented. Teshuva, taking responsibility for one's actions, both past and future, is the corrective to evil or sinful actions which one did and is responsible for. The corrective is not – as Yosef would have it – a dismissal of one's responsibility because of a belief that it was God's will. The other side of not taking credit for one's positive accomplishments is not taking responsibility for one's wrongdoings either.

If personal responsibility can be dismissed after the fact, then it can also be downplayed prior to the fact, when one is choosing a course of action. If it was God's will that the dreams be fulfilled, then that is what must happen, even if it means that Yaakov will continue to suffer for untold years. If, as many commentators understand, Yosef manipulated the brothers to bring down Binyamin and then accused him of robbery to see if the brothers had changed and if they would stand up to protect his brother, then that was justified in Yosef's mind as well. Such an outcome – forcing the brothers to be better than they had been – would clearly be in keeping with God's will, and Yosef could and must act to bring this about. The fact that it involved deceit and trickery, not to mention the anguish of his brothers, was not a matter of concern, since it was God's will that was being followed.

Seeing God's hand in everything is truly the sign of a tzaddik. But, as the entire halakhic system teaches us, true righteousness combines this religious perspective with a deep and profound recognition of our responsibility for our own actions, good or bad. And it teaches us that even when we are working to achieve God's plan in the world – to the best that we can understand or have a glimpse of that plan – that we cannot let such an end justify a means that involve the hurting or causing suffering of others.

Halakha, if it teaches anything, teaches that each action matters in the here and now. It teaches that each action must be judged for its rightness on its own terms, and an aveira, a sin, cannot be justified or dismissed because of some lofty goal that is motivating it. Halakha does not speak the language of the tzaddik – of the person who is always thinking about God and who sees God acting through him. It speaks the language of the concrete realities of this world, of the nuts and bolts of day-to-day existence, and it never lets us forget that every action that we do matters – it matters to God, it matters to us, it matters to other people. And that a life that is not only religious, but that is halakhically religious, is a life that sees God in the world and in us, but that never lets us forget that we are responsible for our actions, and we are responsible for how our actions impact upon others.

<https://library.yct Torah.org/2009/12/gods-hand-and-our-responsibility/>

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## **Beware Your Dreams: They May Just Come True**

by Rabbi Herzl Hefter \*

The conclusion of the book of *Bereishit* talks to its earliest beginnings. The particular story of Yosef and his maturation encapsulates the universal meta-narrative of the book of *Bereishit* as a whole; the position of humans in creation vis a vis God and vis a vis each other.

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Yosef's dreams come true at the end of *Bereishit* but not in any way he expected or wanted. Yosef has two dreams which attest to his superiority over his brothers which he naively shares with them. Naiveté is the only plausible explanation for Yosef's behavior; he is coddled and loved by his father and the son of the true beloved wife. Yosef has inherited his

mother's beauty along with her unconscious sense of entitlement. It was naiveté that blinded Yosef to the destructive impact of his foolish behavior upon his brothers.

Yosef's transformation from a naïve and unreflective boy to a mature and sensitive man is the story of these last chapters of the Book of *Bereishit*. Crucial steps of Yosef's developmental process can be captured at moments which characterize Yosef's level of self-identification with God. There are three such moments.

1. When the baker and the wine steward of Pharaoh approach Yosef with their dreams, Yosef responds with these words:

*Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell your dreams to **me**.* (40:8)

"Interpretations belong to God," but tell **ME**?? Yosef sees himself as representing God to the ministers of Pharaoh. These words are audacious and presumptuous. In truth they even seem impious. These words may not be a product of conscious hubris, yet they do indicate a deep seated sense of self that has expanded beyond healthy proportions. The arrogance of Yosef's response is made clearer by juxtaposing it with his more refined response to Pharaoh after two additional years in the Pit.

2. *And Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, "**It is not in me**: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace."* (41:16)

It is not I at all, Yosef is quick to point out to Pharaoh; the wisdom is God's and I am a mere instrument. The two additional years in the Pit have taught Yosef a painful lesson in humility.

The third instance requires a close reading of Yosef's original dreams. In the first dream, the sheaves of the brothers bow down to the sheaf of Yosef (37:7). They do not bow down to Yosef himself but rather to a representation of him. The second dream has the sun, the moon and eleven stars bowing down to Yosef **himself** (37:9). This nuance is fundamental. When the brothers bow down to Yosef the first time (42:6), they bow down to him as the dictator of Egypt. There is no acknowledgement, of course, of Yosef **qua Yosef** and his mastery or superiority over them. This is the fulfillment of the first dream in which the brothers prostrate themselves before a representation of Yosef – not Yosef himself. This fulfillment of the first dream by itself is hollow. It actually means nothing if the brothers bow down to Yosef when they are unaware of his true identity.

It is the fulfillment of the second dream, in which the brothers knowingly bow down to Yosef, thereby acknowledging his mastery, which Yosef most desires. When this dream finally is fulfilled it is the last thing that Yosef wants.

*<sup>16</sup> And they sent a messenger unto Joseph, saying, "Thy father did command before he died, saying, <sup>17</sup> 'So shall ye say unto Joseph, "Forgive, I pray thee now, the trespass of thy brethren and their sin, for they did unto thee evil.'" And now, we pray thee, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of thy father." And Joseph wept when they spoke unto him. <sup>18</sup> And his brethren also went and fell down before his face, and they said, "Behold, we are thy servants." (50:16-18)*

Finally the brothers prostrate themselves before him consciously; they know before whom they are bowing and in doing so acknowledge his mastery over them. This should be the grandest moment in Yosef's suffering-filled life, yet he meets this moment with tears of pain. This moment provides the third instance of the level Yosef's self-identification with God.

3. *And Joseph said unto them, "Fear not; for **am I in the place of God?**"*

Those words, **Hatahat Elohim ani**, capture the development and maturation of Yosef; his religious and human evolution is intertwined. As a naïve youth, Yosef's dreams tell us that he was seeking dominance over his brothers and desired their fear and respect, the fear and respect due him as a divine child. At the end, Yosef the mature man wants only to be reconciled with his brothers and integrated into his family; he desires only their love and brotherhood. When he looks back he sees the foolishness of his youth – how could he ever have thought himself as deserving divine adulation? "**Am I in the place of God?**"

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The evolution of Yosef as an individual symbolizes the universal odyssey upon which humanity embarks at the outset of the creation story. In the summary words of Yosef to the book of *Bereishit*, “**Am I in the place of God?**” there is an echo of its opening chapters,

*“<sup>4</sup> And the serpent said unto the woman, “Ye shall not surely die; <sup>5</sup> for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and **ye shall be as God**, knowing good and evil.” (3:4-5)*

Yosef’s words should be read as a response to the serpent. The serpent’s temptation to humankind is **to be as God** through possession of the secret knowledge which grants the power to dominate and exploit. Yosef has been there, been there in his family relations and his relationship with Egypt. His response rings clear; **am I in the place of God?** Individuals and societies, just as Yosef, must grapple with and respond to the challenge and the temptation of being created in the image of God. What shall we choose; the path of domination and exploitation or that of interdependence and brotherhood?

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

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## Pharaoh's Wisdom: Thoughts for Parashat Mikkets

by Rabbi Marc D. Angel \*

*“And Pharaoh said to his servants, can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom is the spirit of God? And Pharaoh said to Joseph, since God has shown you all this, there is none so discreet and wise as you are: you will be over my house, and according to your word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than you.” (Bereishith 41: 38-40)*

Pharaoh had dreams that troubled him. He obviously ascribed special meaning to them. He asked his wise men to interpret the dreams, and they must have offered their suggestions. But Pharaoh was not satisfied. He felt a persistent foreboding.

His butler told Pharaoh of Joseph, a Hebrew slave who was currently in prison. When Joseph was brought to Pharaoh, the monarch said that he heard that Joseph can interpret dreams. Joseph demurred: no, he could not interpret dreams, only God could do that. Pharaoh must have been surprised by this answer. Who was Joseph’s God? Why did that God have such power? Why weren’t the Egyptian gods able to interpret dreams? In spite of likely misgivings, Pharaoh related his dreams, and Joseph offered the interpretation as well as a plan of action for Egypt.

Pharaoh immediately sensed that Joseph’s interpretation was correct. He was so impressed that he appointed Joseph to be second in power over Egypt. Moreover, Pharaoh acknowledged that God — Joseph’s God — had endowed Joseph with the wisdom to understand the dreams and to offer a constructive way forward.

Why was Pharaoh so impressed with Joseph? Why didn’t he take the interpretation under advisement, discuss it with his wise men? Why didn’t he return Joseph to prison? Why was he so impetuous as to raise the Hebrew slave to become his top official?

Pharaoh was a great leader! He was remarkably perceptive.

Psychologists remind us that dreams are often a product of our inner thoughts and concerns. Pharaoh was worried about the wellbeing of his people. He knew that economic circumstances vacillate. In his dreams he had forebodings of economic distress for his land. The dreams were really not so mysterious. When lean cows swallow fat cows and when thin sheaves swallow fat sheaves, these would seem to be omens of upcoming disaster.

Pharaoh’s dreams haunted him so he asked his wise men to offer their interpretations. Whatever they told him did not make sense to him. He knew in his mind — and in his dreams — that huge problems loomed for his country. He was looking for confirmation of his insight and for a plan to deal with the upcoming challenges.

Pharaoh's greatness was not simply in his insightful analysis, but in his willingness to seek advice even from a lowly Hebrew prisoner. Joseph came before Pharaoh without any credentials. He was not a professional wise man, diplomat, or celebrity. Moreover, Joseph claimed to rely on his God, not the gods of the Egyptians.

Pharaoh might have expected Joseph to use the occasion to offer words of flattery and to plead for freedom. But Joseph was humble, unpretentious...authentic. Pharaoh instantly knew he was in the presence of an unusual human being. When he heard Joseph's interpretation of the dreams, Pharaoh was confirmed in his own understanding of the situation. When Joseph not only interpreted the dreams but offered a plan of action, Pharaoh sensed that Joseph was someone to be trusted.

It must have astonished Pharaoh's wise men and advisers that Pharaoh immediately appointed Joseph to a position above them. However, it was astute of Pharaoh to appoint a lowly outsider to manage the coming years of abundance and famine. If Joseph's interpretation and plan failed, he could be blamed and sent back to prison. If Joseph's interpretation and plan succeeded, all Egypt would benefit in spite of the unhappiness of Pharaoh's advisers.

Pharaoh was a great leader. His concerns for his people extended even into his dreams. His search for truth went beyond his professional advisers. His humility enabled him to listen to and grant power to a Hebrew slave.

The great neurologist, Dr. Oliver Sacks, pointed out the psychological barriers that prevent people from thinking "out of the box." It is natural to resist new ideas from untested individuals. It is natural to listen to one's closest friends and advisers. But greatness entails the ability to break through the barriers and to think clearly for oneself. Dr. Sacks referred to the need for "spaciousness of mind," the receptivity to new ideas and unexpected insights. (*The River of Consciousness*, p. 205).

The people of ancient Egypt were fortunate to have a ruler such as Pharaoh. All nations – all communities – could benefit from leaders who share Pharaoh's wisdom, intellectual openness, "spaciousness of mind."

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

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<https://www.jewishideas.org/article/pharaohs-wisdom-thoughts-parashat-mikkets>

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## **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.

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

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## Hebraism and Hellenism

By Rabbi Marc D. Angel \*

*"May God enlarge Yefet, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem"* Bereishith 9:27.

In rabbinic tradition, Yefet and Shem — two sons of Noah — represent different civilizations. Yefet is identified with Greek culture, while Shem is identified with Jewish tradition. Yefet — whose name connects to the Hebrew word for beauty — symbolizes the Greek stress on aesthetics and philosophy. Shem symbolizes the life of religious belief and observance.

Over the course of the centuries, the civilizations of Yefet and Shem have had mixed relationships. The Hanukkah story reminds us of the antagonism between Hellenism and Judaism. Yet, the impact of Greek thought on Judaism has been profound, and especially so since the time of Moses Maimonides in the 12th century.

The great 19th century English literary figure, Matthew Arnold, wrote a chapter in his book *Culture and Anarchy*, which he entitled "Hebraism and Hellenism." In a stereotypical manner, he averred that Hebraism stands for "strictness of conscience," while Hellenism fosters "spontaneity of consciousness." "The uppermost idea with Hellenism is to see things as they really are; the uppermost idea with Hebraism is conduct and obedience." He goes on to assert that "as Hellenism speaks of thinking clearly, seeing things in their essence and beauty, as a grand and precious feat for man to achieve, so Hebraism speaks of becoming conscious of sin, of wakening to a sense of sin...." Arnold acknowledges that Hebraism i.e. obedience is 75% of life, and is responsible for maintaining a properly behaving society. And yet, he presents Hellenism as the 25% of life that actually involves clear thinking, appreciation of beauty, and freedom of imagination.

As religious Jews, we must ask ourselves: is our religious life mainly concerned with obedience? Does Arnold's notion of Hebraism ring true to how we actually live our lives? Don't we also have inquiring minds, aesthetic values, and spontaneity of consciousness? Is it fair — or even religiously healthy — for Hebraism to be isolated from the worldview of Hellenism?

To some, it does appear that Judaism can be reduced to obedience. The great Hebrew poet, Chaim Nachman Bialik, lamented the negative turn in the religious life of his day in Eastern Europe: "Halakha has an angry face...Strict, severe,



hard as steel — strict justice...[it] sets forth its ruling and leaves no room for differentiation: Its yes is Yes, its no is No...fossilized piety, obligation, enslavement... (quoted by Zvi Zohar, *Rabbinic Creativity in the Modern Middle East*, pp. 4-5). This critique is not entirely irrelevant even today in some circles.

On the other hand, there are those who are so enchanted with the worldview of Hellenism that they downplay the role of obedience (i.e. mitzvot) in Judaism. Yet, without the firm foundation of religious observance, Judaism can evaporate into religious-sounding platitudes. Without the commitment to daily religious observance, Judaism gradually fades away with the passing of generations.

The Talmud (Megillah 9b) cites an interpretation of the verse: May God enlarge Yefet and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem. "Said Rav Hiyya bar Abba: Yefet's beauty belongs in the tents of Shem." I believe that Rav Hiyya's statement provides a healthy view of Judaism. While firmly based in Torah and mitzvot, it welcomes the beauty of Yefet into its tent.

Hebraism and Hellenism are not antithetical to each other. On the contrary, both worldviews need each other! Human beings need the spirituality and orderliness of Hebraism, as well as the intellectual freedom and love of beauty of Hellenism.

Our home base as Jews is Torah and mitzvot. But for us to flourish fully in our humanity, we invite the beauty of Yefet into our home. We not only foster a "strictness of conscience," but also a "spontaneity of consciousness." Our goal is "to see things in their essence and beauty" while staying faithful to our spiritual natures.

It is a vast overstatement to restrict Hebraism to obedience, just as it is an extreme exaggeration to assert that Hellenism has a monopoly on seeing things as they really are. We gain as Jews — and as human beings — when we give due respect to a harmonious blend of the teachings of Yefet in the tents of Shem.

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

<https://www.jewishideas.org/hebraism-and-hellenism>

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## **The Charge of Chanuka** by Rabbi Mordechai Rhine \*

The famine was worldwide. Yakov and his family were also affected. They wished they could go to Mitzrayim and buy food as they had done once before. But the viceroy (Yosef) had declared that they may not return without their youngest brother, Binyomin.

Yakov did not want to let Binyomin go. Rochel, Yakov's beloved wife, had passed away and of the two sons that she had, Yosef had disappeared; Binyomin was all that he had left. Yakov feared the dangers of travel would take Binyomin too. He was reluctant to let Binyomin go, until Yehuda stepped forward and took responsibility.

Yehudah declared, "I will be the 'Orev.' I will take responsibility for Binyomin's safe return."

The concept of Orev is a remarkable one. A person who is not legally responsible for something can obligate himself and become the responsible party. For example, a person who cosigns on a loan, taking responsibility in case the borrower defaults, is called an "Orev." The Orev doesn't start out as the responsible party. He is not the one getting the money of the loan. Yet, a person can take on responsibility even when he is not obligated to.

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Many years later, upon the inauguration of the Mishkan, dedication offerings were brought by all the Shevatim (tribes) except for Levi. Aharon was troubled that neither he, nor anyone from his Shevet, was authorized to bring a dedication offering like the other Shevatim. Hashem consoled him and said, "Yours is greater than the dedication offerings of the other tribes. You get to light the Menorah."

The Ramban commentary wonders how the Mitzvah of the Menorah consoled Aharon, and why was the consolation related to the Menorah and not to any of the other acts of service in the Mishkan? The Ramban suggests that the response of consolation, "The Menorah," is not (merely) referring to the particular act of service of lighting the Menorah.

Rather it refers to the story of Chanuka, a rededication of the Mishkan which would happen years later and would be symbolized by the Menorah. “Certainly, the dedications of the Shevatim at the time of the Mishkan are treasured,” Hashem told Aharon. “But your Shevet — through the Maccabees who stood up for Torah many generations later — will merit leading a dedication of the Beis Hamikdash that is even greater.”

The dedication service of the Shevatim at the time of the Mishkan is certainly precious. But in a certain way, it is limited in its greatness. It followed a routine, a rhythm of responsibility. Each prince brought his dedication when it was his turn. What is extraordinary about the Maccabees is that they were not responsible to stand up against the Syrian-Greek oppression any more than any Jew or Jewish family was obligated to stand up for Torah. But while others suffered in silence or succumbed to the oppression, the Maccabees accepted to be the Orev, to be the responsible party and lead the battle for freedom to observe Torah.

There are times in life that we notice communal issues that need to be dealt with, but since they are not our issues personally, we may feel that we can ignore them. However, once we resolve to emulate Yehuda and the Maccabees — to be an Orev and take responsibility — we can step forward to address the problem, and with Hashem’s help, succeed.

A Rebbe of mine shared that when he was in twelfth grade and ready to graduate high school, the principal called him into the office and asked him, “So, Leibel, how did we do with your education?” The response he gave to the principal was, “Lousy.”

The principal, perhaps expecting that response, said, “Well then, I challenge you Leibel to enter the field of Jewish education and do better.”

Which Rebbe did. He accepted the call to be an Orev, to take responsibility for something that he could have ignored. He could have said, “Let it be someone else’s problem.” Instead, he became a world class Rebbe inspiring hundreds of students.

Interestingly, in the Mitzva of Parah Aduma (the red cow) there is disagreement of how old the cow must be. One opinion states that it must be an age that was not yet old enough to have a child. When Moshe heard prophetically that there would be such an opinion among the Talmudic sages, he declared, “May it be Your will Hashem that the one who says that ruling should be one of my descendants.”

Why was Moshe so excited by the view that the cow must be one that could not have children?

Rav Moshe Shternbuch explains that the Parah Aduma on one level represents atonement for the Eigel (the golden calf). If the Parah Aduma is of childbearing age, then the symbolism is that the mother is cleaning up for her child’s mess. This is reasonable. But if the Parah Aduma is not of childbearing age then the symbolism is that of someone cleaning up after someone else’s child, after a mess that they are not responsible for. This is extraordinary. This is being an Orev. It is a quality that Moshe practiced and valued so deeply that he yearned that the scholar who ruled that way should be one of his descendants.

It is good citizenship to live up to one’s own responsibilities. But the legacy of Yehuda, Moshe, and the charge of Chanuka is to take upon ourselves to participate in solutions even if we are not the direct responsible party any more than anyone else. It is that quality that enabled the Jewish family to move forward and discover Yosef. It is that quality that empowered the Maccabees to stand up for Torah and rededicate the Beis Hamikdash and Jewish life. It is that quality that enables us to experience the precious light of the Menorah in every generation.

With best wishes for a wonderful Shabbos!

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

## Parshas Mikeitz – Audacious Audition

by Rabbi Yehoshua Singer\*

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

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

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

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

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

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

G-d obviously does not need us to do anything. He made the world, recreates it at every moment, and could recreate it however He wants. He created us for our own sake and creates an incomplete world to give us the opportunity to partner with him in moving His world forward. Every opportunity is also a responsibility. We must always do our part to move life forward. Even when miracles are unfolding around us.

\* Rabbi, Am HaTorah Congregation, Bethesda, MD.

# **Yosef: The Ultimate Sales Pitch**

## **Reading Between the Lines in Miketz**

By Rabbi Haim Ovadia \*

### **Questions for discussion:**

1. In verse 41:14 we read that Yosef “shaved and changed clothes.” Whose initiative was it? Can it be proven from the grammar?
2. How does Pharaoh echo Yosef’s language?
3. How are Yaakov and Pharaoh similar in their treatment of Yosef?
4. Why did Yosef create local and not regional granaries?
5. Why did the people turn first to Pharaoh and not to Yosef?

### **MIKETZ**

Two years after Yosef correctly interpreted the dreams of the royal cupbearer and baker, Pharaoh had two disturbing dreams. He summoned all his advisors and sages but none of them provided a satisfying interpretation. The cupbearer, seeing an opportunity for reward, broke the silence regarding his criminal past and told Pharaoh of Yosef, describing him unflatteringly as a Hebrew lad, a slave of the chief executioner. By framing the information in that manner, the cupbearer hoped to be the true hero of the day and cast Yosef as nothing more than a vehicle for divine knowledge, to be used and cast aside... our story starts here:

Genesis 41:

14: Pharaoh sent personal messengers to call Yosef. They came to the pit and rushed him out, but Yosef, who has already been betrayed three times by his brothers, Potiphar’s wife, and the cupbearer, knew that from now on he is on his own. He knew that if he appears in front of Pharaoh dressed in rags, the cupbearer’s scheme to cast him aside will succeed, since the king will not want that moment, in which he was saved by an imprisoned slave, to be remembered. Yosef therefore made the messengers, and all of the royal court, wait while he shaved and changed his clothes. Not only he had to look sharp and presentable to the king but stripping himself of prison garb to wear decent clothes was his own closure for the time when his brothers stripped him of the garment which was the symbol of his father’s love.

15: Pharaoh said to Yosef, I had a dream, but no one can offer me an interpretation. Now there is a rumor, which may not be true, that you hear a dream and are able to interpret it. 16: Yosef, sensing Pharaoh’s unease in requesting his help, and the cautious phrasing of the request, and knowing that this is his only chance to redeem himself and realize his dreams, answers with a subliminal message: I am not needed here, since God Himself is taking care of Pharaoh’s well-being. After Yosef neutralized the unease of the king’s reliance on a lowly slave, Pharaoh tells him his dreams... [verses 17-24]

25: Yosef told Pharaoh; your two dreams are one. God has foretold Pharaoh what He is about to do. 26: Yosef merges the two dreams to explain that the seven good cows are seven years and the seven good stalks are seven years, they are one dream. 27: And the seven thin, bad cows which rose after them are seven years, and the seven empty, wind-beaten stalks. They will be seven years of famine. 28: This proves my point in my words to Pharaoh. God, who is concerned about Pharaoh, is showing Pharaoh what He is about to do. After establishing the idea of a close relationship between God and Pharaoh, and framing himself as a tool in God’s hands, Yosef continues to offer unsolicited advice. But he wisely phrases it as a prediction, more than advice:

33: I assume that Pharaoh will now look for an intelligent and wise man, to be appointed over the Land of Egypt. 34: Pharaoh will surely appoint officials over the land, and he himself will secure provisions for Egypt during the seven years of abundance. 35: Those officials could gather all the excessive of the seven good years, which will come soon. They will guard the wheat under the supreme rule of Pharaoh. Food for the cities, the power centers of the kingdom, and thus will protect both the cities and the stability of Pharaoh's empire. 36: That food will serve as a reserve for the land during the seven years of famine which will befall Egypt and so the land will not be annihilated by the famine.

37: The presentation was well received by Pharaoh, and his servants had to follow suit. 38: Pharaoh understood very well Yosef's subliminal message. In a system full of power players and cronies, Yosef positioned himself as the best candidate for the job of top administrator. He demonstrated his intelligence and his ability to make long term plans, but at the same time hinted that he will never take credit for his actions and will always project the image of a tool in the hands of God, who is concerned with Pharaoh's well-being. Yosef was suggesting being the perfect employee, who takes care of everything but lets his boss take credit for it. He also insinuated that Pharaoh has nothing to lose since he could always blame Yosef, the lowly slave, for possible failures.

38: Pharaoh answers, echoing Yosef's priming, of course we will have to search for a candidate, but we surely will not be able to find someone like that man, a man imbued with the spirit of God, my friend and protector. 39: Turning to Yosef, Pharaoh says, now that God [my friend, protector etc. etc. etc.] has informed you all of that, there is none intelligent and wise such as you, and God knew that I will choose someone intelligent and wise. 40: You will be in charge of my palace and the sustenance for the people will be decreed by you, but remember, I sit on the throne and I am the king.

41: Pharaoh told Yosef, see, I have appointed you ruler of Egypt. 42: Pharaoh removed his seal-ring off his hand and put it on Yosef's hand. He then personally dressed him with fine linen garments and put a golden choker on his neck. 43: He made Yosef ride in the chariot of the second-in-command which so far has been idling as the position was unmanned. As he traveled the streets, announcers called people to bow down before him and show that he is the ruler of Egypt. 44: Pharaoh told Yosef, I am Pharaoh, but without you no one can raise as much as a foot or arm in all of the land of Egypt. In using the word בלעדי – without you, Pharaoh echoed Yosef's first word to him – בלעדי, without me. Pharaoh thus tells Yosef that he recognized his willingness to serve obediently and selflessly under the king and that this loyalty is now rewarded.

45: Pharaoh, who started taking Yaakov's place and becoming Yosef's new father figure by dressing him with precious garments and favoring him over all his other servants, completed his role as an adoptive father by naming Yosef Zafanat Paanea'h and creating for him a new family. That family is Asenat, the daughter of Potifera', the priest of On. Yosef now got out to Egypt as a ruler. This coming out is in sharp contrast to his previous ones, the time he went out of his father's house to be kidnapped, the time he came out of the pit to be sold to into slavery, the time he ran out of Potiphar's house to be accused and imprisoned later, and the time he came out of prison uncertain of his future. This time he was free and independent, no longer trapped in a pit or threatened by others' jealousy. 46: Yosef was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh. He left Pharaoh's palace and traveled through Egypt, knowing that a good administrator must be hands-on, gathering data and talking to people in the field. 47: All the crops produced in the land during the seven years of abundant were consumed sparingly.

48: Yosef gathered all that was possible to spare during those seven years in Egypt, and he stored it in the cities. Yosef avoided the pitfall of communism, in which the equal distribution of resources stifles productivity and ambition, Yosef created local storage facilities. He conveyed the message that each city will rely on its local supplies, and so encouraged the citizens and farmers to save as much food as possible. 49: Yosef gathered grains as the sand on the shore. He stopped counting because it was impossible to count. 50: Two sons were born to Yosef before the first year of famine arrived, they were born to him by Asenat, the daughter of Potifera', the priest of On. 51: When Yosef's first son was born, his longing for his family and his deep pain for their betrayal came out. He called his son Menashe, saying, God has paid me for all my toil and for all the suffering I had at my father's house. 52: He called the second one Ephraim, saying, God has made me fertile in the land of my misery.

53: The seven years of abundance in the land of Egypt have ended. 54: The seven years of famine started coming as Yosef said. There was famine in all the lands, but in the land of Egypt there was bread. The Torah replaces the terms "food" and "grains," used before, with the word "bread." This is because bread for the Egyptians was associated with the temple service and so the presence of bread represented God's concern with them. 55: Yosef, however, did not start distribution right away, because he wanted to cement his position as indispensable. He waited for people to run out of

provisions and clamor for food, but even at that point he did not open the granaries. Rather, he directed people to Pharaoh. He did so to ostensibly show that he is subservient to the king, but also to make Pharaoh realize what it means to deal with hungry mobs at the palace's doors [cakes, anyone?]. And indeed, Pharaoh had to reiterate his reliance on Yosef. He told the people of Egypt, go to Yosef, and do whatever Yosef tells you.

With that last statement, and with it the final and unshakeable installment of Yosef as Egypt's viceroy, the stage was set for the arrival of his brothers and the eventual family reunion.

Shabbat Shalom.

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

**NOTE: Because of issues switching software, unfortunately the endnotes for Rabbi Ovadia's Dvar Torah appear at the end of this attachment rather than at the end of his Dvar Torah.**

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## What's in a Name?

By Rabbi Joel Dinin \*

I have many names; Joel, rabbi, daddy, sweetie, "Hey you get out of my way" — But which one of these is my real name? The simple answer is — all of them, but how can that be true? A name is NOT who we are, it's what we do in our connections with other people. But there's more to names than just describing a single experience, it also indicates the ongoing way we interact with people, our relationship to them.

I was born with one name, to honor both God and my family, but in my life, I have gained new names, some for better, some for worse, some have gone and some remain. But the names only matter between me and the people I relate to.

In our parsha, Mikeitz, with God's help Yosef is able to use his gift to interpret Paroh's dreams, anticipating a famine. He is made 2nd in command over all of Egypt, a kind of vizier, similar to Mordechai in the story of Esther. Like Mordechai, Yosef is paraded through the streets to celebrate his new status. And with this new promotion comes a new name!

*And Paroh called Yosef's name, Žafenat-pa neah; and he gave him to wife Asenat the daughter of Poti-fera priest of On. And Yosef went out over all the land of Mizrayim. Breishit 41:45*

But what on earth does this name mean? It doesn't sound like Hebrew and there's no clear meaning in Egyptian or any known language of the time.

The 2nd c. *Targum Onkelos*, Rashi, and the Israel Institute of Biblical Studies all agree that, if the word IS of Hebrew origin, which it could be, then the meaning is some variation of "one who solves mysteries or uncovers hidden things." In context that makes perfect sense for a man who can interpret dreams, a prized skill in ancient times.

Despite the fact that in ancient times and even today, new positions are often given fancy titles, why would Paroh give Yosef such a distinct name and, as the verse goes on to say, an Egyptian wife!

In 2013, Rabbi Ephraim Buchwald, the founder of the National Jewish Outreach Program, asked this same question! Rabbi Buchwald brings the full gamut of rabbinic interpretations about Yosef's name, from the linguistic to the mystic, but the simplest answer he gives, the one that makes the most sense in the context of the narrative, the p'shat if you will, of Tzafenat Paneach, he says...

*"...It seems reasonable to conclude that Pharaoh was concerned about a Jewish man serving as the single most powerful figure, aside from Par'oh, in the land of Egypt. It is highly likely that Pharaoh gave Joseph an Egyptian name as well as an Egyptian wife in order to make him more acceptable to the Egyptian people..."*

The essential point is that while he was born as Yosef, and never lost that name, to the Egyptians, he had to be Tzafenat Paneach.

God too has many names. Why? Because God relates to us and interacts with us in many ways, sometimes with justice, other times with compassion and mercy, but always God is one. Rabbi Buchwald continues...

*"...The many names of Joseph reflect his process of growth and transformation. His special gift of experiencing and understanding dreams undergoes a metamorphosis; once perceived negatively as 'that dreamer,' he is ultimately exalted by Pharaoh as 'the revealer of the hidden'..."*

What names do you carry with you and how do they reflect the kind of person you are and how others see you?

*The crown, the reputation, of a good name is, as Pirkei Avot 4:13 suggests, a value above everything else.*

Shabbat Shalom & Chanuka Sameakh

\* Rabbi, Lake Park Synagogue, Milwaukee, Semikha from Yeshivat Chovevei Torah )2015(.

<https://library.yct Torah.org/2022/12/whats-in-a-name-2/>

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## **Shavuon: Summer Edition**

By Rabbi Moshe Rube \*

I need to let everyone know that the coolest thing in the history of Judaism happened this past Friday in Auckland, New Zealand. Something that surpasses the miracle of the Channukah lights, the ten plagues, and the splitting of the sea.

We all saw Ian and the Year 8 kids do a Haka in Hebrew in praise of Kadimah at the end of year ceremony.

It was absolutely positively mesmerizing to see Jewish kids sing and dance in a way that I've never seen before. As they did the traditional moves of chest beating, sticking their tongues out and controlled vocal shouts, I couldn't help but think, "this must be how the little band of Maccabees defeated the mighty Greek army." If I saw that on a battlefield, I'd lay my armor down and go home because I know those guys weren't bluffing. If the Israeli army would do that in Gaza, I bet Hamas would just say, "ok guys, you win."

So to see this happen in 2022 signifies for me that Jewry continues to inhabit a stage where we're going back to our warrior roots as exhibited by the Maccabees. Some Jews will be dragged into this kicking and screaming as they hold on to the mentality of, "No! the only way to be Jewish is to sit in a padded chair and read Talmud all day and all night! Anything other than that is a mere supplement and an outlet so we can get back to sitting in our padded chairs and reading Talmud all day and night." Rav Abraham Kook called this an exilic mentality that must be abandoned in favor of all of us using our body-capabilities to further our mission. He even compared the strength exercises the IDF did to the Psalms of King David.

Is that why we eat latkes and donuts on Channukah? To give us the tens of thousands of calories we need so we can be ready to battle?

Is that the secret of the fire on Channukah? Learning Talmud is great, but nothing can match the pure fire in your belly when you go into battle or do a Haka.

Now I must admit that I've never done a Haka. Nor have I entered into battle except for paintball or capture the flag. So I will be using the energy of latkes and donuts on walks, gym work, and carrying the 3 Torahs we take out on Shabbat this week.

As for the fire in my belly, the community Channukah event in the netball center gave me more than enough as I met, sang and danced with all the people who came out.



And I'm sure that all of us will find our own way to give of our fire throughout the year. Maybe we won't be battling a Greek army, but there must be something in your life that you'd enjoy putting some fire or some latke-donut energy in.

I'm sure you'll find it. If the Kadimah kids can, so can we.

Shabbat Shalom and Channukah Sameach!

\* Rabbi Rube recently moved from Alabama to Auckland, NZ, where he is Senior Rabbi of Auckland Hebrew Congregation

[Note: Thursday this week was the first day of summer in the Southern Hemisphere.] Auckland Hebrew Congregation is moving to a new building and will be closed for the move. I anticipate that Rabbi Rube will resume his Devrei Torah on January 23, 2023.

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## **Rav Kook Torah**

### **Chanukah: Flickering Lights in Dark Times**

#### **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(.

[https://www.ravkooktorah.org/CHANUKAH\\_67.htm](https://www.ravkooktorah.org/CHANUKAH_67.htm)

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## **Jews and Economics )Miketz 5778(**

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

We know that Jews have won a disproportionate number of Nobel Prizes: over twenty per cent of them from a group that represents 0.2 per cent of the world population, an over-representation of 100 to one. But the most striking disproportion is in the field of economics. The first Nobel Prize in economics was awarded in 1969. The most recent winner, in 2017, was Richard Thaler. In total there have been 79 laureates, of whom 29 were Jews; that is, over 36 per cent. ]*Ed. Note*: of the 13 additional Nobel Prize winners in economics since 2017, I suspect that 6 of them are Jewish.]

Among famous Jewish economists, one of the first was David Ricardo, inventor of the theory of comparative advantage,

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

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

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

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

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

This nationalisation of livestock, labour and land meant that power was now concentrated in the hands of Pharaoh, and the people themselves reduced to serfdom. Both of these developments would eventually be used against Joseph's own people, when a new Pharaoh arose and enslaved the Israelites. It cannot be by accident that the Torah twice uses about the Egyptians the same phrase it will later use about the Israelites: *avadim le-Pharo*: they have become “Pharaoh's slaves” )Gen. 47:19, 25(. There is already here a hint that too much economic power in the hands of the state leads to what Friedrich Hayek called “*the road to serfdom*”]2[ and the eclipse of liberty. ]Ed. Note: combining small plots into larger ones, the result of Yosef's policy, is equivalent to the enclosure movement in England – a policy that enabled economies of scale and much greater productivity in agriculture. I doubt that enclosures would have made much difference in productivity in a more primitive economy such as ancient Egypt.[

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

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

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

appropriate other people's property was taken for granted.]6[ John Locke saw that private property rights are an essential element of a free society. ]Ed. Note: Halacha would consider violating private property to be theft – and private property is an important basis of capitalism – see Milton Friedman, *Capitalism and Freedom*.]

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

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

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

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

#### FOOTNOTES:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**LIFE-CHANGING IDEA #10:** What can be healed is not holy. God does not want us to accept poverty and pain but to cure them.

<https://www.rabbisacks.org/covenant-conversation/mikketz/jews-economics/> 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. Since my profession was economics, I could not resist adding a few thoughts in brackets. Rabbi Lord Sacks was a brilliant and highly educated economist, as many of his writings demonstrate.

## Why Joseph Changed His Clothing

By Aharon Loschak\* © Chabad 2022

Two young yeshivah students stood in the middle of Times Square on a Friday afternoon, armed with a pair of tefillin. They sought Jewish passersby and offered them the opportunity to do the mitzvah of tefillin if they had not yet done so.

After some time had passed, a gentleman approached them and asked, “I don’t understand! How can you stand here, right underneath the very un-Jewish advertisement on the billboard up there?!”

“What advertisement?” the two yeshivah students asked. As the gentleman pointed to the offensive material, the boys reacted, “Oh, wow, we didn’t notice that!”

### Joseph Changes His Clothes

Our parshah picks up two years after the conclusion of the last, where we left Joseph languishing in prison. The narrative shifts to Pharaoh, who’s having terrible dreams and is befuddled as to their meaning. Word gets around the palace that Pharaoh is looking for a good interpreter, and it is then that the butler remembers Joseph.

He reports to Pharaoh about the remarkably gifted young man in prison, and Joseph is hastily summoned to appear before the king:

*So Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they rushed him from the dungeon, and he was shorn and changed his clothes, and he [then] came to Pharaoh.<sup>1</sup>*

Now, if you’re bringing a prisoner fresh out of his cell to appear before the king, he obviously needs to be freshened up out of basic respect for the monarch. As such, Joseph’s haircut and change of clothes seem to be exceedingly banal and routine details. Why, then, does the Torah go out of its way to highlight them?

### Of Shepherds and Kings

There’s much significance to both details, but we’re going to focus on the change of clothing.<sup>2</sup>

Chassidic thought spends a lot of time examining the protagonists in the Bible, unpacking their specific themes and messages. Joseph and his brother make for a particularly instructive character study, as they couldn’t be more different.

Think about it: All eleven brothers shared the same occupation: shepherding. When they finally arrived in Egypt after the drama with Joseph had fully unfolded, they presented themselves to Pharaoh as “*Your servants are shepherds, both we and our forefathers.*”<sup>3</sup> Shepherding was the legacy of the Jacobite family.

Joseph took a radically different career path. Wrested from the place of his youth at a very young age, he was forced into Egypt with little choice for anything, let alone the option to take up shepherding. Despite the odds, Joseph rose through the ranks and eventually landed the top position in the country, effectively becoming king of Egypt.

Eleven brothers as shepherds, and one practically a king!  
Now, what’s the core difference between these two career paths?

Well, shepherds are naturally a secluded bunch. Constantly grazing their herds, they are away from urbanity and humanity, in tune with the song of nature instead. It’s the perfect job for the spiritual seeker, affording the shepherd the chance to wander deep into nature and connect with G d among the sweeping breezes of the meadows.

Looking at it that way, it only makes sense that Jacob’s sons were shepherds. As the holy and G dly scions of a spiritual legacy, they sought out a profession suitable to that tradition.

By contrast, Joseph was in the thick of things, right there in the epicenter of urban life. In spiritual terms, the Egyptian throne and everything that comes along with it was the last place to seek G dliness.

Yet Joseph remained steadfast, maintaining his commitment to the religion of his youth and the G d of his forefathers.

But how? What was his secret?

### **Joseph, the Man with Many Suits**

Joseph's secret was his ability to "change clothes."

Clothing is not you; it's something you put on in the morning and take off at night, changing at will and according to circumstance.

Joseph understood that who he really was had nothing to do with where he was, what he did, or with whom he associated. He was Jacob's son, a servant of G d, and a deeply committed Jew. That would never change. Everything else was simply a suit he put on in the morning for work and took off at night when the day was done. The entire time he wore those clothes, he understood that they didn't define him; he remained entirely above them.

Such was the power of Joseph's soul and the strength of his commitment. Even while sitting on the Egyptian throne, he could put on one set of clothes and quickly switch it out for another if needed — for all of it had nothing to do with who he really was.

The Torah makes a point of telling us that at the pivotal moment when Joseph emerges from incarceration to begin his journey to the throne, what did he do? He changed his clothes. For that was his strength.

### **Are You Becoming Your Clothing?**

We would do well to learn from Joseph. Life demands all types of situations, and most of us don't have the luxury of being shepherds. Our lives inevitably look much more like Joseph's than that of his 11 brothers.

Truth is, in today's day and age, there's really no such thing as "shepherd life." You can be secluded on an island, but as long as you have Wifi, you're in the world as much as anyone else. It's right there in your pocket. Even in the thickest rainforest or remote mountaintop, with the inundation of everyday life crashing on you in the hotel at night, you may as well be sitting on the Egyptian throne, or in Times Square.

We're all Joseph today. And the only way we can be successful in holding on to our values, the morals and religious convictions we hold dear, is by mastering this ability to change clothes.

Ask yourself, who is the real you? Who am I really? What do I truly believe? Once you've identified that, make sure that wherever you go, whatever you do, whomever you associate with, if it isn't in line with your values, then "change your clothes." Remain distinct, and remind yourself this isn't really you. You are something else, an internal fortress that's only wearing a costume right now.

If that device in your pocket becomes part of who you are, then the clothing has morphed into skin. If it's something you simply use at convenience, and you're easily able to put it away )think Shabbat(, or remain impervious to its influence, then great. You've mastered the clothing trick. Your soul is attached to her Creator, and you're journeying through this earth simply to find G dliness everywhere.

And then, you, too, can stand in Times Square and not notice anything.<sup>4</sup>

#### **FOOTNOTES:**

1. Genesis 41:14.
2. See the source of this essay )footnote 4( for more detail on the significance of the haircut.
3. Genesis 47:3.
4. This essay is based on *Likutei Sichot* 35, pp. 176-180.

\* Writer, editor, and rabbi from Brooklyn, NY.

## **Mikeitz: Of Dreams and Purpose**

by Rabbi Moshe Wisniefsky \*

### **Progression vs. Regression**

*Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I had a dream, but no one can interpret it, and I have heard about you that you can understand a dream and interpret it." )Gen.41:15(*

Joseph's and Pharaoh's dreams constitute a study in contrasts. Joseph dreamed about inheriting the leadership of Jacob's family so he could further G-d's purpose to sanctify the world by transforming it into His true home. Pharaoh, in contrast, dreamed about the material welfare of the pagan empire of Egypt. Furthermore, Joseph dreamed first about earthly sheaves and then about the heavenly hosts, a progression from the earthly to the heavenly. Pharaoh dreamed first about cows and then about sheaves, a regression from a higher form of life to a lower one.

The ascent of holiness vs. the descent of unholiness expressed in Joseph and Pharaoh's dreams reflected the truth that holiness possesses intrinsic existence – it exists for its own sake and therefore is permanent – whereas unholiness is a temporary phenomenon, existing only to challenge holiness.

Although it may sometimes seem to us that unholiness has the upper hand, we must realize that, on the contrary, this is only in order to pave the way for a subsequent increase of holiness in the world.

– From Kehot's Daily Wisdom #3

Gut Shabbos,  
Rabbi Yosef B. Friedman  
Kehot Publication Society

\* A Chasidic insight that Rabbi Wisniefsky selected for the parsha.

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My son sent me an amusing piece that is amusing enough to earn a rerun. *Here is what he wrote: Below is one of a series of fake letters written by a comedienne on her Facebook account, imagining what it would be like if the USA had a religious Jewish majority and a small Christian minority. She flips the narrative extremely well, and I thought you would enjoy reading it. She actually has a lot of these for different holidays. Also, I recommend checking the "jingle bells" Youtube link provided below.* The piece in question follows:

Dear Teachers,

As some of you may know, if you have any students in your class who identify as Christian, they may ask to be excused from school to observe the Christian holiday of "Christmas," more popularly referred to as Yom Christmas or Nittel.

The date of Yom Christmas is set according to Pope Gregory's calendar, so the holiday moves around on the normal calendar. This year, Yom Christmas falls on Rosh Chodesh Tevet. Although it will also be Chanukah, Christians do not observe Hanukkah. Christians light candles only if they have a five-candle Advent Menorah with the fifth candle for Yom Christmas. This candle is lit without a bracha.

It is a common misconception to think of Yom Christmas as a "Christian Hanukkah," but the holidays are not related, even though Yom Christmas sometimes falls during Chanuka. Nor is it an observance of Rosh Chodesh.

The holiday lasts only one day, even outside Medinat Vatican.

Students in your classes may express that they feel sorry for the Christian students who have only one day of holiday, and no candles. You may explain to them that Christian students have their own holiday traditions, some even with candles of



their own, and that in their way they enjoy their holiday just as much as we enjoy Chanukkah.

Most people assume that Yom Saint Francis Ha'Kadosh is the most important Christian holiday, falling as it does during the holiday season. But Yom Christmas is also widely observed in the Christian world, and it has many fascinating and colorful customs.

Observance of Yom Christmas begins on Erev Christmas. This may seem like an obvious point to make, but since the Christian day typically starts in the middle of the night, the time holidays begin is not always obvious.

Christians typically attend their Christian shuls for a special maariv service at the beginning of the chag. Most Christians do not attend shul on the morning of Yom Christmas, even though it is an important yom tov to them. Many Protestant Christian shuls do not even host Christian shacharit davening for this day, even if it falls on First Day )as it does this year(, which is the Christian Shabbat.

Most students love sharing their culture. Your Christian students would probably love explaining the significance of all of their colorful holiday minhagim to your class. Perhaps you could ask Christian students to explain the major mitzvot of Yom Christmas!

Yom Christmas commemorates the birth of the Christian prophet Yeshu. You may notice depictions of the baby prophet in an animal trough. The story of the prophet's barnyard birth to an unwed mother is considered religiously significant for Christians and the holiday is widely celebrated by both religious and secular Christians.

Out of politeness for their sincerely held beliefs, please refrain from asking Christian students to explain how the prophet's unwed mother became pregnant.

If you happen to live near a Christian shul, you may notice a sukkah housing some people and animals. This isn't actually a sukkah but a depiction of Yeshu's birth scene. The depiction may feature a rendition of the baby prophet, his mother and her fiancé, some farm animals, and several richly-clad Wise Guys bringing gifts.

The birth scene is sometimes depicted in the form of a drama, with actors and real animals. You should refrain from petting the animals, as it is not a petting zoo.

In modern times, Yom Christmas incorporates many religious rituals that were appropriated from Yule, which is the Celtic pagan celebration of the winter solstice. One Pagan-derived custom is to bring greenery, including entire cut trees, inside the home. Frum Christian families may insist on a real tree for halachic reasons, but many secular Christian families use an artificial tree because natural ones are so expensive and hard to find, given the minimal demand.

Your Christian students may love sharing with the class how their family goes about choosing a kosher tree, and the bracha they say upon sacrificing the conifer.

Christaica shops and specialty Christian grocery markets sell decorations for the trees, but thrifty Christian families know it's easier to buy sukkah lights and ornaments on clearance after Sukkot!

Some students have a minhag of wearing garish sweaters to school in the days leading up to Yom Christmas. Please DO comment on the ugliness of the sweater. They believe the uglier the sweater is, the better.

Most of these holiday sweaters will probably be yellow & white — the colors of Christianity and every single one of their chagim — but others might have pictures of Saint Nikolas Ha'Kadosh )"Santa"( surrounded by deer or polar bears because they believe he lives in the Arctic Circle.

Recall that Yom Saint Nikolas Ha'Kadosh was last week, as part of the Christian Holiday Season.  
<https://www.facebook.com/JewWhoHasItAll/posts/188261753782816>

Some students might ask to hear JingleBells. This is the anthem of "Christmas." It is acceptable to play the song once during snack time if requested by a student. Here is a link to the song, in case of a request:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GobTfAF8rJw...>

There are several other traditional songs for Yom #Christmas but most are religious and therefore not suitable for use in public school.

You may also remind Christian students that we already celebrated their chag of Yom Saint Francis Ha'Kadosh months ago during the holiday season, and it is unreasonable to be expected to recognize every single minority holiday in public schools.

Since Yom Christmas falls on a weekend this year and lasts only one day, Christian students should not need to miss any school. Students who feel they need to miss class for their observance should bring a letter from their Christian rabbi.

Melacha is not prohibited on Yom Christmas nor on other Christian holidays, so if you notice your Christian friend )if you have one( posting pictures to Facefeer over their yom tov, please do not assume they are mechalel yom tov.

The traditional greeting for Yom Christmas is "Merry Christmas." If you forget, a simple chag sameach is never wrong.

Thank you, as always, for all your hard work!

Shavua tov!

Yael Cohen

*JEd.*: According to the Internet. Yom Christmas this year will be on Sunday, Rosh Hodesh Tevet, corresponding to December 25.[]

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## Chanukah: Theological Trauma and Recovery

Rabbi Herzl Hefter

*Our Rabbis taught: When Adam saw the day getting gradually shorter, he said, 'Woe is me, perhaps because I have sinned, the world around me is being darkened and returning to its state of chaos and confusion; this then is the kind of death to which I have been sentenced from Heaven!' So he began keeping an eight days' fast. But as he observed the winter solstice and noted the day getting increasingly longer, he said, 'This is the world's course', and he set forth to keep an eight days' festivity. In the following year he appointed both as festivals. (Avodah Zara 8a)*

This quote from the Talmud is baffling. We have here a clear reference (an eight day festival around the winter solstice) to Chanukah which is lacking all the familiar aspects of the holiday. There is no mention of the Maccabees, the military victory or the miracle of the oil burning for eight days; only a mythical tale of Adam after his expulsion from Eden. This source begs us to employ a different (and broader) theological and historical perspective in order to understand Chanukah.

It goes without saying that the destruction of the first Temple was a national trauma. Aside from the loss of many lives as well as political independence, there was what could be called "theological shock".

Prior to the destruction of the Temple, such a calamity could not even be imagined. When Yirmiyahu, the prophet of doom, warned the children of Israel of the impending disaster, he was met with cries of, "The Holy Sanctuary, the Holy Sanctuary" (Jer. 7:4). The people's reaction reflects the idolatrous mindset of the ancient world, according to which the destruction of a religious shrine meant that the particular god had been defeated. Since our God is the Omnipotent, the flawed reasoning went, Yirmiyahu speaks heresy.

'How could our all-powerful God be vanquished?' This pride and false security resulted in total despair when the Destruction finally came. This is the "theological shock" which was still reverberating at the time of the first Chanukah.

The destruction was interpreted by some to mean that the covenant between God and Israel was irrevocably annulled. (This is in fact the claim of traditional Christianity after the destruction of the second Temple.)

This sentiment continued to grow when the Second Temple did not meet expectations (See Ezra 3:12). The growing sense of despair is evidenced by the phenomenon of the Hellenizers who wished to shed their Jewish identity and melt into the universalist culture of the Greeks. In a sense, the days of the Jews after the destruction of the First Temple were dark and getting darker. This is analogous to the state of Adam after his expulsion from Eden. His improper interpretation of reality led him to despair.

It is precisely at the darkest time, one could say the winter of despair, that God shined the light of hope upon Adam and the Children of Israel.

This could have been a good conclusion to this dvar Torah, but before that I wish to turn our attention to the end of the *beraita*. When the days begin to get longer, Adam says, "this is the world's course". If that is so, that the elongation of the daylight hours is merely natural phenomenon, why thank God and create a festival? His reaction should have been something like this, "How foolish have I been! I thought that God was punishing me and in actuality it was only the natural cycle of the year!"

Adam's reaction is very telling of how we understand Chanukah in particular and how we find God in the world in general. Strictly speaking there was a rational explanation for the lengthening of the days in mid-winter as well as the courageous victory of the few very motivated over the many. (The Greeks defeated the Trojans and the North Vietnamese defeated the Americans). It is a matter of interpretation and a function of refined sensibility to see the hand of heaven in the mythical (in the case of Adam) and historical events.

On Chanukah, then there is a two-fold celebration. We celebrate the ray of light with which God illuminated the darkness and we celebrate our ability and the ability of our ancestors to see that light and thus enable it to shine on for millennia. Chanuka sameach.



# Likutei Divrei Torah

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## Covenant and Conversation Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, z"l

### Joseph and the Risks of Power

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

Until now, Joseph has rarely been the author of events. He has been the done to rather than the doer; passive rather than active; object rather than subject. First his father, then his brothers, then the Midianites and Ishmaelites, then Potiphar and his wife, then the prison warden, have all directed his life. Among the most important things in that life had been dreams, but dreams are things that happened to you, not things you choose.

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

Suddenly this changes, totally and definitively. Joseph has been asked to interpret Pharaoh's dreams. But he does far more than that. First he interprets the dreams. Second, he maps that onto reality. These were not just dreams. They are about the Egyptian economy in the course of the next 14 years. And they are about to become true now.

Then, having made this prediction, he diagnoses the problem. The people will starve during the seven years of famine. Next, with a stroke of sheer genius, he solves the problem. Store a fifth of the produce during the years of plenty, and it will then be available to stave off starvation during the lean years.

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

At the age of 30, Joseph is the most powerful man in the region, and his administrative

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

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

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

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

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

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

difference: that it was said, not by the Israelites, but by the Egyptians.

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

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

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

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

What this entire passage represents is the first intrusion of politics into the life of the family of the covenant. From the beginning of Exodus to the end of Deuteronomy, politics will

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

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

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

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

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

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

[4] *Ibid.*, 633-34.

[5] Brachot 55a.

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### **Shabbat Shalom: Rabbi Shlomo Riskin**

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"The Lord shall broaden and beautify Yefet, and he (or perhaps "He") shall dwell in the Tents of Shem" (Genesis 9:27).

The Chanukah struggle was between two powerful ideologies, Judaism vs. Hellenism, Jerusalem vs. Athens, a band of Maccabee traditionalist rebels who waged war (at first a Civil War against the leadership-establishment High Priest Menelaus and then against a broader contingent which included Greek-Syria) to prevent the Holy City Jerusalem from becoming a Greek city-state (polis), hosting idolatrous Olympic games as well as Dionysian, orgiastic celebrations.

But the roots and results of Hellenism were much more profound than their mythological idols and hedonistic orgies. Yavan, (Ion, Greece), son of Yefet and grandson of Noah, bequeathed to world history the philosophy of Plato and Aristotle, the dramatic literature of Sophocles and Euripides, the mathematics of Euclid and Pythagoras, the sculpture of Praxiteles, the epic poetry of Homer. If indeed Western Civilization is the result of the two great cultures of Greco-Rome and Judeo-Christianity, and if our Bible is the fount of ethical wisdom and humane morality, then it

was Greece who pioneered structured philosophic discourse, mathematics as the language of science, and the esthetics of art, music and drama, which are all so significant in the modern world.

To be sure, there is a fundamental tension between the two world-views of Judaism and Hellenism. Whereas for us the God of love, compassion and truth stands at the center of the Universe; the human being created in the Divine image, must strive for morality and sanctity, for Athens the human being, embodiment of perfection, is "the measure of all things." The gods are created in his image, and he must strive to be brave, courageous and contemplative.

On Chanukah, the two ideologies clashed and we emerged triumphant; but is there room for a synthesis, even dialectic, between the two? Can the soul of Jerusalem be garbed in the cloak of Athens much like Mother Rebecca linked the voice of Jacob to the external trappings of Esau?

Our question depends on how we read the verse cited in the introduction to this article. One approach is, "The Lord shall broaden and beautify Yefet, and he (Yefet, the glories of Greek culture) shall dwell in the tents of Shem," in sacred synthesis or dialectic.

Another approach dictates that we must guard against the anthropocentric and hedonistic Yefet who will try to shatter and overwhelm the fundamentally frail boundaries and ramparts of Shem – "The Lord shall broaden and beautify Yefet, but He, God, can only dwell in the tents of Shem" (Rashi, ad loc Gen. 9:27)!?

I believe the answer to our query is to be found in a fascinating incident recorded in the Talmud (B.T. Bava Kamma 82b). Two brothers; descendants of the Hasmonean dynasty were fighting one another in a civil war, not long after the victory of the Maccabees. One brother and his troops were positioned within the Holy City of Jerusalem, and the other with the help of Roman legions were camped outside the city walls. Despite their conflict, they continued to cooperate on one project. Every day, coins were sent over the wall in a basket by one brother and animals were purchased and hoisted over the wall by the other, so that the daily sacrificial offerings of the Temple would not be interrupted.

Using what the Talmud calls the language of "Greek wisdom", an elderly man from inside the city suggested to the enemy on the outside that as long as the sacrificial rite continued unabated, the brother on the outside would never conquer Jerusalem. The next day, when the coins for the purchase of sacrifices arrived, instead of sending bullocks for the sacrifices, they hoisted a pig, and when the pig's hoofs touched the ramparts of Jerusalem, the Holy City was convulsed with an earthquake. The

## **Likutei Torah**

story concludes, "The Sages then decreed, "Cursed be the individual who raises pigs, and cursed be the father who teaches his son Greek wisdom.""

After the Chanukah experience and its aftershocks, one would have thought that Greek wisdom – Greek philosophy, Greek literature and Greek art, if not Greek science and Greek mathematics – would have been banned as a result of this Talmudic decree. But this was not the case. The Talmud goes on (B.T. Bava Kamma 83a) to praise the Greek language and interprets "Greek wisdom" as a skill necessary for international political discourse.

In fact, a parallel account at the end of Babylonian Tractate Sotah defines "Greek wisdom" as a special language of nuance and riddle used by politicians especially for the purpose of espionage, which is how Maimonides understands the Talmudic decree. He adds that there is no contemporary application to the ban, since that particular language has completely disappeared from usage.

Even later responsa (see for example Rivash, Rav Yitzhak bar Sheshet, Responsum 45) agrees with Maimonides' interpretation of "Greek wisdom" in the context of the ban. To be sure, he argues that philosophical tracts committed to the extirpation of Jewish theological principles are to be avoided, and even suggests that Maimonides and Gersonides may have been led astray by Greek philosophy; nevertheless, normative Judaism never codified a prohibition of studying Greek wisdom.

Apparently despite the danger, the Jewish ideal remains incorporating the "beauty of Yefet within the tents of Shem."

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### **The Person in the Parsha**

#### **Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersch Weinreb**

#### **Joseph, Chanukah, and Wisdom**

Wisdom is the rarest of all important human qualities. Observers of the contemporary state of affairs often remark that wisdom, which is especially necessary in this day and age, is now particularly lacking.

Yet, at the same time, we are told that there is an age in life when most of us finally do obtain wisdom. Erik Erikson, the famous psychologist and thinker, believes that the course of the lifespan is marked by a series of developmental stages. At each stage of life, we master different developmental tasks. In late middle age, about age sixty, one begins to achieve wisdom. Erikson's book, *Childhood and Society*, devotes an entire chapter to defining wisdom and to detailing the process by which one achieves it, or fails to achieve it.

What is wisdom from a Jewish perspective? And what does wisdom have to do with this week's Chanukah theme?

The search for wisdom is a frequent biblical theme. King Solomon was once assured by the Almighty that he would be granted the fulfillment of one wish. He wished for wisdom, obtained it, and is therefore termed in our tradition the wisest of all men.

Reading this story of Solomon and other sacred texts leads to the conclusion that there are at least two components to wisdom. There is a knowledge base; mastery of the facts and its data. There is also, however, the essential ability to select from this database those bits of knowledge which apply to the situation at hand.

There is the mastery of material, and there is the ability to advance that material and make it relevant.

One of the early 20th century masterpieces in the field of Jewish ethics is a book by Rabbi Joseph Hurvitz of Novardok, entitled *Madregas Ha'Adam* (Man's Stature). Torah wisdom is one of Rabbi Joseph's themes. He insists that mastery of the corpus of Jewish law in and of itself does not constitute wisdom. Knowledge in "matters of the world" is also necessary; abstract knowledge must be interrelated with concrete reality.

The symbol of the Chanukah festival is, of course, the Menorah. The original Menorah in the holy Temple was situated in the southern end of the inner Temple shrine and consisted of seven branches.

The Menorah symbolizes the light of wisdom, and its seven branches, the seven classical areas of wisdom, which include not only knowledge of the divine, but also mathematics and music.

Combining the wisdom symbolized by the Menorah with Rabbi Joseph's insights, we begin to appreciate the complexity of the concept of wisdom. It encompasses theoretical and practical knowledge, and it involves the seven major areas of human inquiry.

It is in this week's Torah portion, Miketz, we encounter the first man to be known as wise, to be recognized as a fount of wisdom. That man is the biblical Joseph, and it is the Pharaoh of Egypt who calls him wise.

You know the story. The Pharaoh has his dreams, Joseph interprets them and suggests a plan of action. Pharaoh is pleased by the plan and says to his courtiers, "Could we find another like him, a man in whom is the Spirit of God?" And he continues and says to Joseph, "Since God has made all this known to you, there is none so discerning and wise as you".

The Pharaoh recognizes that wisdom is not only mastery of facts and the ability to apply them; it is more than familiarity with the seven branches of worldly wisdom, and it is even more than life experience. Besides all that, it is a gift of God.

I have had the good fortune of meeting several wise people in my life, and I am sure that most of you have as well. Whenever I have met such people, I have been struck by how their words seemed to come from a higher place. Their insights reflect that they have access to a source beyond my ken.

This was Pharaoh's experience when he heard Joseph's interpretation. He realized that no course of study – no training, no mastery of expertise – was sufficient to account for the good counsel that he was hearing. He knew that the man in front of him was blessed with the Spirit of God.

There is no better time than this Shabbat, as we celebrate Shabbat Chanukah and read the story of Joseph, to reflect upon the quality of human wisdom and to fully appreciate this lesson: Whatever else wisdom comprises, it has one indispensable ingredient. It is ultimately the inspiration of the One Above.

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#### **Torah.Org: Rabbi Yissocher Frand**

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**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 Biynamin'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

## **Likutei Torah**

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 avodecha. 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 Pashas 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.

## Likutei Torah

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.

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### Ohr Torah Stone Dvar Torah

#### The Two Pits That Transformed Yosef Yoav Weinstock

Yoav Weinstock More than anything else, the biblical figure of Yosef is associated with the pit. There are two pits, two abysses, if you will, one more disheartening than the other.

The Torah elaborates on the first pit: the encounter between the brothers and Yosef, the brothers' deliberations, and even Yosef's cries from inside the pit[1]. After his brothers throw him into the pit, Yosef arrives in Egypt, where, so we are told, the Lord blesses him and makes all "his endeavors to prosper." [2] This holds true for Yosef's dealings in Potiphar's house[3], and in the prison[4] as well. During his time in prison, we also learn of his ability to interpret dreams.

Nevertheless, Yosef is forgotten by the Chief of the Butlers and the Chief of the Bakers, and remains another two full years in prison. Rashi explains this additional prison time by with reference to Yosef's placing his trust in the hands of the Chief of Butlers and the Chief of Bakers, in the hope that they be the ones who get him out of "the pit". [5] When Yosef ultimately leaves the prison-pit, we meet an entirely different Yosef: Yosef makes no utterance to Pharaoh without mentioning the name of God. "And Yosef answered Pharaoh, saying: It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh an answer of peace." [6]

The word *bila'dai* ("it is not me") contains a profound meaning. The exegetes have offered different interpretations for this word, but all have one thing in common – Yosef makes a distinction between his ability to interpret dreams and his own personality and strengths. In other words, I am not a source of wisdom, nor do I have control over wisdom, or as Rabeinu Bahya puts it: "The power of wisdom and insight is not my own, it is external to me." [7] This very notion reaches a climax in the final verses of Yosef's confession, when he says to his brothers: "And now be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that you sold me hither; for God did send me before you to preserve life. So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God; and He hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and ruler over all the land of Egypt." [8]

Yosef experiences the Divine blessing in his lifetime hands-on. In his early days he is blessed with the ability to dream dreams, and later on he is blessed with the talent of knowing how to interpret them. How is Yosef the youth different from Yosef who emerges from the pit?

Yosef the youngster is a man who dreams, and it appears that he is hated for relating his dreams. [9] His brothers' hatred does not only stem from the dreams' content, but the very act of relating them. The brothers' hatred, as expressed in the verses, appears before we are told of the actual content of the dreams. This fact led the exegetes [10] to explain that Yosef, through his arrogant behavior, ignited their hatred.

In his exegesis, Ha'amek Davar, the Netziv uses harsh language pertaining to Yosef: "It is well known that dreams must only be told to

one beloved... but he approached them and related his dreams, creating the impressions that they are beloved to him. However, this is hypocrisy and flattery and is unacceptable..."

In comparison to the brothers, who are candid and sincere, [11] Yosef does not appear to be forthright with his feelings. A moment before the climax of the saga called "The Sale of Yosef" and the brothers' hostile action, we are exposed to Yaakov's criticism of Yosef: "And he told it to his father, and to his brethren; and his father rebuked him, and said unto him: 'What is this dream that thou hast dreamed? Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down to thee to the earth?'"

Some exegetes see Yaakov's rebuke as a tactical one, with the aim of mitigating the brothers' hatred. [12] But others take Yaakov's words as real criticism, expressing Yaakov's pain at Yosef's arrogance. This is expressed well by the Ramban [13]: "...in order to rebuke him for his arrogance of heart that led him to dream such a dream. He wished to say to him – this is but mere arrogance and folly that have made you think of such things..." Not even once in this entire episode, is the name of God mentioned by Yosef, and the saga ends with his being sold and taken to Egypt.

So, what ultimately transforms Yosef?

The two pits.

The first pit was the one into which Yosef was thrown by his brothers, and the second is the prison-pit from which Yosef is taken out and brought before Pharaoh, stripped of everything he has ever had. Yosef, who started out as a talented and beloved youth, is thrown into a pit, far away from his father's home, without any family, without dreams, disconnected from everything he had known. In its profound sensitivity, the Zohar describes Yosef in the Egyptian prison-pit as one who "was in great sadness, a sadness of spirit and a sadness of heart, when he was a prisoner." [14] Nonetheless, from this very sadness and the time spent in the pit, a new Yosef emerges: "And they brought him hastily out of the pit" – he emerged from this pit and cleansed himself in the pure water of a well." [15]

The greatest transformation in Yosef was the fact that he stripped himself of all ownership of the talent with which he was blessed, as put so well by Rabeinu Bahya, and as mentioned above: "The power of wisdom and insight is not my own, it is external to me." [16] In his youth, the blessing took on the shape of arrogance, but in Egypt it turned into success. Both of these layers were trapped in what is called ego – the sense of having personal ownership of one's talents and blessings. The pit stands for this state of stagnancy – being stuck in oneself. There is nothing outside the pit and there is no getting out. It was Yosef's emerging from the pit that served as an opening through which he could come out of

## Likutei Torah

his own self, thus giving him the opportunity to relate to the blessing bestowed upon him as a Divine abundance flowing through him, rather than a blessing owned by him. Only once he achieves this perception can he become the bestower-of-abundance and provide food during the famine.

We, too, have little blessings in our lives: one person is able to make others happy; another has a bodily talent or a mental capability; a third has monetary abundance. Each and every one of our blessings may lead us either to feeling a sense of ownership, or else to achieving success. Yosef teaches us an important lesson on how to perceive the blessings in our lives: "*bila'dai*" – nothing really belongs to us. It was given to us so that we might do good with it in the world; and become a channel of blessing that spreads God's abundance in this world.

[1] As is mentioned in our portion during the discussion of the brothers among themselves, oblivious to the fact that somebody was listening in on their conversation (Bereshit 42, 21): "...when he besought us and we would not hear." [2] Yosef is the only figure in the Bible of whom it is said that he was *matzliach* (prosperous, successful).

[3] Bereshit 39, 2-3: "And the Lord was with Yosef, and he was a prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian. And his master saw that the Lord was with him, and that the Lord made all that he did to prosper in his hand."

[4] Bereshit 39, 21-23: "But the Lord was with Yosef, and showed kindness unto him, and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison. And the keeper of the prison committed to Yosef's hand all the prisoners that were in the prison; and whatsoever they did there, he was the doer of it. The keeper of the prison looked not to anything that was under his hand, because the Lord was with him; and that which he did, the Lord made it to prosper."

[5] Rashi on Bereshit 40, 23: "Because Yosef placed his trust in him [Chief of Butlers], hoping he would remember him, he was forced to remain prisoner for an additional two years. As is written (Psalms 40, 5) – 'Happy is the man that hath made the Lord his trust, and hath not turned unto the arrogant, nor unto such as fall away treacherously', and did not trust the Egyptians who are called treacherous (Isaiah 30, 7)."

[6] Bereshit 41, 16, and the same holds true for the following verses. See also Bereshit 40, verses 28 and 32, and how Pharaoh responds in verse 38.

[8] Bereshit 45, 5-8

[9] Bereshit 2-11: "These are the generations of Yaakov. Yosef, being seventeen years old... and Yosef brought evil report of them unto their father... And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him. And Yosef dreamed a dream, and he told it to his brethren; and they hated him yet the more. And his brethren said to him: 'Shalt thou indeed reign over us? or shalt thou indeed have dominion over us?' And they hated him yet the more for his dreams, and for his words... And his brethren envied him; but his father kept the saying in mind."

[10] The Ramban on verse 8 writes as follows: "Also because of the arrogant manner in which he told them the story – 'Hear, I pray you, this dream which I have dreamed.' Similarly, Rabeinu Bahya on verse 1: "...Yosef sinned because he was the cause of his brothers' sin. After all, he was the reason for their sinning in that he wished to domineer over his brothers, who were both older and

more respected than he, and would provoke their anger and condescend them with his dreams.”

[11] Rashi on Bereshit 37, 4: “...and could not speak peaceably unto him” – by mentioning their disgrace, one also hears their praise – their hearts and lips were equal, there was no hypocrisy.”

[12] For example Rashi on verse 10: “...Yaakov wished to remove this matter from the brothers’ hearts so that they stop being jealous of him...”

[13] The Ramban on Bereshit 37, 10.

[14] The Zohar on Bereshit, page 194a, translated from Aramaic.

[15] Ibid.: translated from Aramaic.

[16] Rabeinu Bahya on Bereshit 41, 16.

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### **The Proper Approach to Analysis**

#### **Rabbi Hershel Schachter**

The Gemarah distinguishes between the Greek language and the Greek philosophy. The Greek language was considered very eloquent and, based on a possuk in Chumash, the chachomim permitted a sefer Torah to be written in Greek. However, the chachomim frowned upon chochma Yevonis. The Gemarah has a comment that Olam Hazei is compared to night time. The Mesilas Yesharim explains this Gemarah by pointing out that in the dark of the night people can make two types of mistakes. Sometimes they can see a human being from a distance and think mistakenly that it is a lamppost; and sometimes they can see a lamppost from a distance and think that it is a human being. Similarly in this world, it is sometimes very difficult to distinguish between right and wrong. Sometimes we will be facing a mitzvah and think that it is an aveira and sometimes the reverse. Dovid Ha'melech says in Tehillim that the words of the Torah are compared to a candle and a torch in that they give illumination. The Midrash explains that when one begins to learn, the Torah only illuminates like a candle but the more one learns, the gates of learning open up before him, one thing leads to another, until all of the gates will open up and the Torah will illuminate like a torch. Knowledge is compared to a light that illuminates the darkness. We daven to Hashem every day v'hoer eininu b'sorosecha, i.e. that we should succeed in Torah learning to illuminate our lives. When the possuk says in Parshas Bereishis that there was darkness all over the world, the Midrash has a comment that this is referring to the Greek philosophy. The Gemarah has a famous statement that there is much chochma to be found amongst all of the nations of the world but not Torah. Torah means knowledge that guides us to know the difference between right and wrong, between mitzvah and aveira.

It is said over in the name of Rav Chaim Soloveitchik that in addition to the thirteen principles that guide us in deriving halochos by reading in between the lines in the chumash, there is a fourteenth middah, namely sevara (logical analysis). However, it is also recorded in the name of Rav Chaim Soloveitchik that he instructed his sons that they should not dare to suggest a sevara in

learning before they complete all of Talmud Bavli with Rashi. Each discipline has its own self-contained logic. One cannot impose outside sevaras onto the Gemarah. The sevaras have to flow from within the sugya.

The Gemarah tells us that Avraham Avinu volunteered to observe all of the mitzvos on his own even though he was never commanded to do so. The midrash elaborates on this idea and says that Avraham Avinu was able to understand on his own, intuitively, what the mitzvos were. Where did this intuition come from? It is traditionally understood based on the midrashim in Parshas Bereishis which state that when Hashem created the world He looked into the Torah first and created the world accordingly. So in a certain sense, the Torah was the blueprint of the world, and therefore if one looks at the world he should be able to figure out what the blueprint was.

However, when looking at the world one has to take the correct approach to understanding it. The Greek philosophers did not believe in experimentation, since they felt that manual labor is only for slaves and free men should always be involved in thinking only. Instead of collecting the data from experimentation, they would philosophize about everything, even physical phenomena. But one cannot impose outside sevaras on science, and therefore this approach led them to incorrect understandings.

It is well known that Rav Chaim Soloveitchik developed a new analytic approach to Gemarah study. It is well known that in order to answer many apparent contradictions in the Gemarah Rav Chaim would explain that the two Gemarot that seem to be contradictory are dealing with two different halochos. Many students of Gemarah today imitate this style of Rav Chaim even when there are no contradictory passages in the Gemarah and they always will be splitting hairs in distinguishing between two dinim that seem to be identical. The Malbim in his commentary in Parshas Mitzor points out that Pharaoh had two different dreams and all of his advisors and scholars were explaining to him that the two dreams were "tzvei dinim" and contained two unrelated messages about the future. Yosef came and explained to Pharaoh that even though they were two different dreams, they actually comprised one big dream with one overall interpretation. Logical sevaras are certainly valuable but they all have to flow from within the sugya and not to be imposed from without.

#### **Rabbi Hershel Schachter**

#### **When One Can Make Up For Forgetting**

If one forgets to say Retzei or Yaaleh Veyavoh in the third beracha of Birkas Hamazon, there is a special text of the beracha which should be recited provided one has not yet begun the fourth beracha. If one has forgotten Yaaleh Veyavoh in the beracha of Retzei in the Shemone Esrei and reminds himself before beginning the next beracha of Modim, there

## **Likutei Torah**

was a big dispute among the Baalei haTosafos what to do. Rabbeinu Elchonon was of the opinion that in davening the din should be the same as in benching, that as long one has not yet begun the next beracha, one can recite Yaaleh Veyavoh. Initially the father of Rabbeinu Elchonon, the Ri Hazokein, disagreed with his son for various reasons and felt that it is improper to recite Yaaleh Veyavoh in between Retzei and Modim. But at some later time, the Ri was davening in Paris next to his uncle, Rabbeinu Tam, on Rosh Chodesh, and he overheard Rabbeinu Tam failed to mention Yaaleh Veyavoh in Retzei and insert it before Modim. From that time on, the Ri followed the view of his son, Rabbeinu Elchonon. The Vilna Gaon, in his commentary on Shulchan Aruch, has adopted the initial position of the Ri, but the generally accepted view is like the Rabbeinu Tam and the Rabbeinu Elchonon.

What if one forgot to say Al Hanissim in the beracha of Modim and reminds himself before starting the concluding beracha of Sim Shalom? Should the din of Al Hanissim be the same as Yaaleh Veyavoh? Or, if one forgot mashiv haruach umorid hageshem in the middle of the second beracha of the Shemone Esrei, would it make sense to insert that line before Ata Kodosh? Rav Soloveitchik pointed out that there is a major distinction between mashiv haruach and Al Hanissim on the one hand, as opposed to Yaaleh Veyavoh on the other hand. Mashiv haruach and Al Hanissim were initially instituted by the Chachomim as part of a long sentence in the middle of a beracha. The commentaries on Shulchan Aruch point out that the correct text both in Shemone Esrei and in benching should really be : Val Hanissim. We thank Hakodosh Boruch Hu for a number of things and then additionally say Val Hanissim, i.e. we thank Him for the miracles as well. (It would appear from the Rambam that on Chanukah and Purim we add Val Hanissim into the Shemone Esrei right after the words "erev veboker vezohoroyim" so that it flows to the end of the long paragraph; it does not really make sense to first say "hatov ki lo cholu rachamecha...", which is really summing everything up previously mentioned, and only afterwards to add on Val Hanissim.) But Yaaleh Veyavoh, both in Shemone Esrei and in benching, as well as Rzei in benching, are not added as an elaboration and a elongation of the paragraph. They are actually an inserted self-contained and independent paragraph in the middle of the beracha. So, although the common practice is like the Rabbeinu Tam and the Rabbeinu Elchonon that Yaaleh Veyavoh can be recited in between Retzei and Modim, this should not really be so with respect to mashiv haruach or Al Hanissim, since these were initially instituted as an integral part of the beracha.

Different explanations are given as to why there is no mention of Chanukah or Purim in Al Hamichya. Rav Soloveitchik used to give the following suggestion. Val Hanissim was

initially instituted in benching as an elaboration on the theme of *hodaya*-thankfulness, and as an elongation of the *beracha* and beginning with a *vov*, i.e. *Val Hanissim* (as explained above). But *Al Hamichya* is referred to in the *Gemarah* as *Mei'ein Shalosh*, the abridged form of the three *berachos* of the benching. In the abridged form it is self-understood that one leaves out the elongation of the *beracha*. But mention of *Shabbos*, *Yom Tov*, and *Rosh Chodesh* was always an insert into benching and was never formulated as a longer version of the *beracha*, so therefore, even in the short version, it was required to mention *Shabbos*, *Rosh Chodesh*, and *Yom Tov*.

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### Mizrachi Dvar Torah

Rav Doron Perz

#### Lighting Up the Dark

Chanukah takes places, here in Israel where it was instituted and in the northern hemisphere, in the darkest and longest nights of the year.

We are in the middle of winter, the depths of darkness – in the month of December is the longest night and shortest day. In addition, Chanukah being at the end and beginning of the lunar months of Kislev and Tevet, when there is no moon, they are the longest and darkest nights of the whole year.

Remarkably, in the *Gemara* in *Massechet Avodah Zara*, we are told that after Adam was expelled from the Garden of Eden, it was the winter and the days kept getting shorter and the dark nights getting longer. He prayed and fasted for eight days, concerned about what was happening to the world.

Moreover, our Sages instituted that the miracle of the oil that we recall is a *mitzvah* that we can only fulfil at night and not during the daytime. There is something about the light dispelling the darkness even in the deepest and longest nights and months of the winter. That is when we light up the dark.

This it seems, says the *Maharal*, is the essence of Chanukah. After all, there would never have been a festival about oil which lasted for eight days – there is no such commemoration about a *mitzvah* that they could have done. They could have waited a few more days and had the requisite oil for the *Menorah*.

The festivals of thanksgiving and *Hallel* are about salvation – *Pesach*, *Purim* etc. – therefore, of course, it was the military victory that is celebrated. Indeed, in *Josephus* and the *Book of the Maccabees* there is no mention about the miracle of the oil – it speaks about the eight days of celebration when they consecrated the Temple, just as they had done previously at the time of King Solomon.

If it is about the consecration of the Temple and the military victory, then why is it that the lights are the symbol of Chanukah? Long after

the Temple was destroyed and the Hasmonean dynasty had been decimated two hundred years later, the message which has accompanied us during the 2,000 years of exile until today's times of redemption is that in the darkest times the smallest amount of light can dispel so much darkness. A small amount of oil which should never have lasted so long, lasted for eight days. A tiny family of *Chashmona'im* should not have been able to defeat the Greeks, but they did.

The message for us is no matter how dark and difficult things may seem, with faith in G-d and the belief in the justice of our cause and doing the right thing, even against impossible odds, so little can become so much, darkness can become light and indeed a tiny drop of goodness can illuminate far beyond our wildest dreams.

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### Yeshivat Har Etzion: Virtual Bet Midrash

#### Letting the Light of Torah Shine

Harav Yehuda Amital

It seems that even at the time of the *Chashmonaim*, Torah-faithful Jews were faced with a weighty question: is it worth continuing to illuminate the world and to spread the message of Judaism? The price that the nation paid for its involvement in Greek culture was high – almost unbearably high. But the miracle of the oil was seen and continues to serve as a sort of Divine message that we should continue to be a "light unto the nations" – even if not always in the open and in public, at least the light should be placed at the entrance to the house, and at a time of danger even a light placed on the table inside will suffice.

In our times, we are witness to various attempts on the part of religious Jewry in Israel to influence the secular sector, with the aim of inculcating basic Jewish values. For the past fifty years, religious educators have sought an appropriate avenue of communication with the secular community. One of the most popular solutions is to talk about Judaism in terms of a "cultural heritage," of sociological, national, moral messages, etc., but without basing all of this in faith in God; the religious element is left out.

Indeed, this solution should not be rejected outright. We can certainly derive from the Torah a very rich and wide-ranging "cultural heritage," but we have to know that the price we pay for this approach is high. The "soul" of Judaism is belief in God. All of its power and loftiness are derived from this fundamental faith. When we try to distill national, esthetic and folkloric elements from within Judaism while ignoring its principal theme, we empty it of its content, and ultimately these "secondary" themes, which drew their strength from the power of our faith, are likewise emptied of meaning and lose their value.

Thus we have paid a price for the attempt to follow this educational route. The first price

## Likutei Torah

relates to ourselves: we have accustomed ourselves to using the language more appropriate for an attempt to educate those who are distant from their religious roots. Words such as "God," "Torah," and "mitzvot" have been avoided, while instead we have begun speaking in "cultural" terms – "tradition," "heritage," etc. We also have paid a price from the point of view of our influence externally, in that the secular population that we have tried to educate believes that what it has learned is Judaism in its authentic form.

How may we describe the situation today? There are some groups among the secular population who are "seeking their roots." They recognize the fact that the cultural creation is diluted when it is not anchored in the heritage of the past, in the Torah of Israel. On the other hand, there are other groups that subscribe to an ideal of absolute freedom – meaning, to their understanding, lawlessness: an a priori rejection of any sort of authority or obligation; "Do whatever you feel like doing."

With regard to this latter group we can only hope that with the passage of time they will also come to realize that the absence of a defining framework creates a vacuum. The only language in which we can speak to them at this stage is the familiar language of "personal example." To this end we must build a religious community that excels in three main areas: i. morality; ii. candor; iii. readiness to accept personal responsibility, and avoidance of the "it's not my problem" phenomenon.

May we be inspired by the example of the *Chashmonaim* and keep the pure light of Torah burning for all to see.

*(This sicha was delivered on Chanuka 5753 [1992]. It was summarized by Benny Holzman and translated by Kaeren Fish.)*



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מרת חוה פייגא רחל בת ר' חיים חייקל ע"ה

**CHANUKA** On Erev Shabbos Chanukah, many daven Mincha earlier in the afternoon in order for Mincha to precede the Menorah lighting (this is preferable in order to avoid the appearance of a tartei d'sasrei - an inherent Halachic contradiction - of first lighting Shabbos' Menorah lights and then davening Friday's Mincha.) Menorah lighting may not occur before plag hamincha (approximately one hour before shekiya), and should be performed just before lighting Shabbos candles. The Menorah should contain enough oil (or wax) to burn until a half hour after tzeis hakochavim (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 Al HaNisim. Shabbos morning following Hallel, three Sifrei Torah are taken out. Parashas Miketz is Leined in six Aliyos (the aliyah of shishi continues through shvi'i to the end of the Parashah). The keriah of Rosh Chodesh (Bamidbar 28:9-15) is leined from the second Sefer as the seventh aliyah. The keriah of Chanukah (Bamidbar 7:42-47) is leined as maftir from the third Sefer. The haftarah of Chanukah follows. Av Harachamim is omitted. Atah Yatzarta is said in Mussaf Shemoneh Esrei. Borchy Nafshi is added at the end of davening (some add Psalm 30 for Chanukah). Tzidkas'cha is omitted at Mincha. On Motzaei Shabbos, one should return from Shul without delay and light the Menorah as soon as possible. There are differing, equally valid, minhagim regarding which should come first, Havdalah or Menorah lighting. If one is away for Shabbos Chanukah, it may be preferable to light the Menorah at the home of 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, the full Hallel is recited. Kerias Hatorah includes two Sifrei Torah. From the first sefer, the keriah of Rosh Chodesh (Bamidbar 28:9-15) is leined in three aliyos (instead of four; the usual first two aliyos are combined) from the first Sefer, followed by one aliyah for Chanukah (Bamidbar 7:48-53) from the second sefer Torah. Mussaf of Rosh Chodesh follows. Davening ends with Borchy Nafshi after

the Shir shel Yom (some add 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 before Pesach.

**REMINDERS** There is a praiseworthy minhag of giving gifts to the melamdim of one's children (R' C. Palaggi zt"l). This sets an example of hakaras hatov for children and emphasizes the importance we give to 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 (USA) is Monday night, December 26th. The final opportunity (in case of necessity) is Friday night, January 6th at 10:13 PM. Daf Yomi: Erev Shabbos is Nedarim 59. Daf Yerushalmi: Berachos 40 Mishnah Yomis: Erev Shabbos is Shabbos 12:2-3. Make sure to call your parents, in-laws, grandparents and Rabbi to wish them a good Shabbos. If you didn't speak to your kids today, make sure to do the same!

**NEXT ON THE CALENDAR** - Asarah B'Teves is on Tuesday, January 3rd.

**PARSHA IN A PARAGRAPH** 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 viceroy over Mitzrayim • Yosef marries Osnas • Menashe and Efraim 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 to harm them • Yaakov resists sending Binyamin • The famine worsens • Yehudah accepts responsibility for Binyamin • The brothers set out with gifts and the returned monies • Yosef is overwhelmed upon seeing Binyamin • The brothers are treated royally and sent home with abundance • Binyamin is framed as stealing the goblet and the Shevatim are returned to Mitzrayim.

The keriah for Rosh Chodesh pertains to the korbanos brought on Rosh Chodesh. The keriah of each day of Chanukah corresponds to the Korbanos Ha'nesiim and corresponding day of the Chanukas Hamizbeiach. The haftarah of Chanukah (Zecharia 2:14-4:7) is leined. The haftarah discusses the Chanukas HaMenorah during the Second Beis Hamikdash.

**FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE** “וַיְהִי מִקֵּץ שְׁנָתַיִם יָמִים וּפְרָעָה הָלָם” “And it was at the end of the two years and Pharaoh dreamt” (Bereishis 41:01) The Pasuk notes that Pharaoh's dreams occurred at the end of the two extra years of Yosef's imprisonment. What is the significance of the dreams coinciding with this point of Yosef's imprisonment? 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 the One above, which only He can deliver.

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subject: Rabbi Mordechai Willig - What is in a Name?

### **Rabbi Mordechai Willig What is in a Name? I**

Yosef called his second son Efrayim, "for Hashem has made me fruitful in the land of my suffering" (Bereishis 41:52). According to the simple understanding of the passuk, the root of the name Efrayim - פרי - פרי,

fruit. The Da'as Z'keinim gives a radically different explanation of the name, and says that Efrayim is named after his ancestors Avraham and Yitzchak who are referred to as, "ash – אפר". Avraham said, "I am but dust and ash" (Bereishis 18:27), and Hashem sees Yitzchak before Him as if his ashes are on the altar (Rashi Vayikra 26:42), and Efrayim is the plural of eifer, meaning two sets of ashes. Therefore, all of Yisroel, all of whom are descended from Avraham and Yitzchak, are called Efrayim as it is said, "Efrayim, my favorite son" (Yirmiyahu 31:19).

How can this understanding of Efrayim as a plural form of eifer - ashes, be reconciled with the Torah's explicit explanation of Efrayim's name as indicating that Yosef was fruitful, having been blessed with children, as in the mitzvah of "pru u'rvu - be fruitful and multiply" (1:28)?

Perhaps the answer lies in how the mitzvah of pru u'rvu was redefined for Am Yisroel, beginning with Avraham Avinu. Hashem loved Avraham because he commands his children to keep the way of Hashem (18:19). This includes the paternal obligations of mila, pidyon haben, teaching the child Torah and a trade, and marrying him off so that the generations continue in the way of Hashem (Kiddushin 29a). Furthermore, if his children are not observant, he may not have fulfilled pru u'rvu (Mishna Berura 574:12). We can now reconcile the seemingly unrelated translations of Efrayim. The literal understanding, recorded in the Torah, is "Hashem has made me fruitful". However, in order to properly fulfill the mandate of being fruitful, pru u'rvu, the children must follow in the way of their ancestors. Therefore, the Da'as Z'keinim links Efrayim to eifer - ashes, a reference to Abraham and Yitzchak. Only by Yosef's sons following in their ways, a particularly difficult challenge in the isolation of the land of his suffering, would his being fruitful constitute a blessing. Thus, the name Efrayim representing the successful transmission of a Torah life to future generations, is an appropriate appellation for all of Am Yisroel.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **The Modesty of the Jewish Woman**

#### **Excerpted From a Ma'amar by the Tolna Rebbe Shlita**

[Rav Yitzchak Menachem Weinberg, the Tolner Rebbe of Yerushalayim]

The Gemara (Shabbos 23a) establishes that women are included in the obligation to light Chanukah candles She'af Hein Hayu BiOso Haneis – "because even they were part of that miracle." Rashi offers two interpretations to the phrase She'af Hein Hayu BiOso Haneis. First, he explains that the Greeks' decrees affected both men and women alike, such that both men and women are obligated to light the Chanukah candles to commemorate the miracle which saved us all from Greek oppression. Secondly, Rashi adds, Al Yedei Isha Naaseh Haneis – the miracle transpired through a woman.

Tosfos in Masseches Megilla (4a) cite the Rashbam as advancing this second interpretation mentioned by Rashi. The Gemara applies the concept of She'af Hein Hayu BiOso Haneis to include women in the mitzvos of candle lighting on Chanukah, the Megilla reading on Purim, and the four cups of wine on Pesach. The Rashbam explains that the Chanukah miracle transpired through the heroism of Yehudis; the Purim miracle unfolded through Ester; and the redemption from Egypt was brought about in the merit of the righteous women of that generation. Tosfos question this explanation, however, noting that the Gemara says הן נאשן – "for even they" – implying that the women were secondary, and not the primary figures in the miracles that are celebrated. Therefore, Tosfos prefer the other interpretation – that the women were included in the Greeks' decrees, in Haman's edict, and in the Egyptian bondage.

However, Rashi, as mentioned, brings the Rashbam's interpretation, as do several other Rishonim. How would they respond to Tosfos' challenge based on the Gemara's formulation, She'af Hein Hayu BiOso Haneis?

We might explain that although the miracle occurred primarily through the women, nevertheless, because of their exceptional modesty, they chose to make themselves subordinate to the men, and remained inside the homes without appearing in public to take credit for bringing about the miracle. It was because of the women's conduct that the Gemara writes She'af Hein Hayu BiOso Haneis, emphasizing their exceptional modesty. May Hashem help all parents raise their daughters according to this tradition of modesty and submission, in the spirit of the principle, Kol Kvoda Bat Melech Penima, and receive from them much nachas, Kein Yehi Ratson

from: **The Rabbi Sacks Legacy** <info@rabbisacks.org>

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COVENANT & CONVERSATION

To Wait Without Despair

MIKKETZ



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

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

It was his father who loved him and gave him the richly embroidered cloak. It was his brothers who envied and hated him. He had dreams, but we do not dream because we want to but because, in some mysterious way still not yet fully understood, they come unbidden into our sleeping mind. With thanks to the Schimmel Family for their generous sponsorship of Covenant & Conversation, dedicated in loving memory of Harry (Chaim) Schimmel.

An extraordinary couple who have moved me beyond measure by the example of their lives. "I have loved the Torah of R' Chaim Schimmel ever since I first encountered it. It strives to be not just about truth on the surface but also its connection to a deeper truth beneath. Together with Anna, his remarkable wife of 60 years, they built a life dedicated to love of family, community, and Torah." – Rabbi Sacks

His brothers, tending their flocks far from home, plotted to kill him. They threw him into a pit. He was sold as a slave. In Potiphar's house he rose to a position of seniority, but the text goes out of its way to say that this was not because of Joseph himself, but because of God:

God was with Joseph, and he became a successful man. He lived in the house of his Egyptian master. His master saw that God was with him, and that God granted him success in all that he did.

Gen. 39:2–3 Potiphar's wife tried to seduce him, and failed, but here too, Joseph was passive, not active. He did not seek her, she sought him.

Eventually, "she caught him by his cloak, saying, 'Lie with me'! But he left his garment in her hand, and fled and ran outside" (Gen. 39:12). Using the garment as evidence, she had him imprisoned on a totally false charge. There was nothing Joseph could do to establish his innocence.

In prison, again he became a leader, a manager, but again the Torah goes out of its way to attribute this not to Joseph but to Divine intervention:

God was with Joseph and showed him kindness, granting him favour in the sight of the prison warden... Whatever was done there, God was the one who did it. The prison warden paid no heed to anything that was in Joseph's care, because God was with him; and whatever he did, God made it prosper.

Gen. 39:21–23 Then Joseph met Pharaoh's chief butler and baker. They had dreams, and Joseph interpreted them, but insisted that it is not he but God who was doing so:

"Joseph said to them, 'Interpretations belong to God. Tell me your dreams.'"

Gen. 40:8 There is nothing like this anywhere else in Tanach. Whatever happened to Joseph was the result of someone else's deed: those of his father, his brothers, his master's wife, the prison warden, or God Himself. Joseph was the ball thrown by hands other than his own.

Then, for essentially the first time in the whole story, Joseph decided to take fate into his own hands. Knowing that the chief butler was about to be restored to his position, he asked him to bring his case to the attention of Pharaoh:

"Remember me when it is well with you; please do me the kindness to make mention of me to Pharaoh, and so get me out of this place. For indeed I was stolen out of the land of the Hebrews; and here also I have done nothing that they should have put me into prison."

Gen. 39:14–15 A double injustice had been done, and Joseph saw this as his one chance of regaining his freedom. But the end of the parsha delivers a devastating blow:

The chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph, and forgot him.

Gen. 39:23 The anticlimax is intense, emphasised by the double verb, "did not remember" and "forgot." We sense Joseph waiting day after day for news. None comes. His last, best hope has gone. He will never go free. Or so it seems.

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

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

Why this extraordinary chain of events? It is telling us something important, but what? Surely this: God answers our prayers, but often not when we thought or how we thought. Joseph sought to get out of prison, and he did get out of prison. But not immediately, and not because the butler kept his promise.

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

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

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

Those who have achieved great things have often had this unusual combination of characteristics. On the one hand they work hard. They labour, they practise, they strive. On the other, they know that it will not be their hand alone that writes the script. It is not our efforts alone that decide the outcome. So we pray, and God answers our prayers – but not always when or how we expected. (And of course, sometimes the answer is 'No'.) The Talmud (Niddah 70b) says it simply. It asks: What should you do to become rich? It answers: Work hard and behave honestly. But, says the Talmud, many have tried this and did not become rich. Back comes the answer: You must pray to God from whom all wealth comes. In which case, asks the Talmud, why work hard? Because, answers the Talmud: The one without the other is insufficient. We need both: human effort and Divine favour. We have to be, in a certain sense, patient and impatient – impatient with ourselves but patient in waiting for God to bless our endeavours.

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

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

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### Yosef's Strategy

#### (Adapted from the K'li Yakar)

Yosef's behaviour towards his brothers appears strange, to say the least. He clearly had no intention of harming them, as is evident from the course of events. Why then, did he cause both them and his father so much anguish, by accusing them initially of being spies, and later, of being thieves? The Ramban explains that Yosef's actions were centered around his dreams, which he now took upon himself to implement. The K'li Yakar disagrees however. If G-d wanted the dreams to come true, he points out, then He would see to it that they would, with or without Yosef's assistance, in which case, there was no justification for Yosef to behave the way he did.

\*

The K'li Yakar therefore, based on the Mahari Avuhav, first explains why Yosef declined to reveal his identity (see main article, Parshas Vayeishev), ascribing it to the fact that G-d did not inform Ya'akov that he was alive. And if G-d did not reveal it, it must be Midah ke'Neged Midah for Ya'akov's failure to return home from Lavan, in which case he knew that the knowledge of his identity would have to remain hidden from Ya'akov for exactly twenty-two years, as Chazal have taught. So he would not reveal it either, until those twenty-two years had elapsed.

And as for the pain he caused his brothers by his base accusation, that he did in order to cleanse them for having sold their brother into slavery – the sin was immense, so he undertook to bring about their atonement measure for measure. It seems to me though that, according to Rashi in Ki Seitzei (22:8), who pronounces guilty someone who does not build a parapet round his roof, even though the man deserved to die, one could pose the same question on the K'li Yakar as he himself posed on the Ramban. For it was no more Yosef's business to act as G-d's policeman than it was to implement his dreams.

Be that as it may, he proceeds to elaborate.

\*

Yosef's accusation came to atone for their having suspected him of coming to spy on them, when, twenty-two years earlier, his father sent him to find out how they were. They thought that he had come to discover what mischief they were up to, and to report it to their father Ya'akov. And in keeping with the Pasuk in Yechezkel (22:9), which states that spying often leads to killing, they decided to strike first, as the Pasuk writes in Vayeishev "And they planned to kill him".

The words "And behold your sheaves went round my sheaf", in Yosef's first dream, the K'li Yakar continues, is a reference to the spying that he accused them of at his first confrontation, because it is the way of spies to go round the town to discover its most vulnerable points. A proof for that is the fact that they entered Egypt through ten different gates. And as a result, they were brought before Yosef, before whom they prostrated themselves.

This atoned for the sin of accusing him of coming to spy on them. And then, to atone for throwing him into a pit, he had them cast into jail for three days (and 'jail' is synonymous with a pit, as we see from Yosef, who told the chief butler "because they placed me in a pit"). Moreover, even after he set the other brothers free, he kept Shimon in jail, since he was the one who actually threw him into the pit.

In fact, Yosef's strategy seemed to have worked, since the brothers confessed to their sin, when they exclaimed "But we are guilty for what we did to our brother ...". And they did so following his declaration that he was a G-d-fearing man, a claim they believed, because they saw how, in spite of his accusation, he had treated them fairly and compassionately by sending them home with provisions for their family. This was sufficient to convince them that what was happening to them was by the Divine Hand (Midah ke'Neged Midah), and not the work of a wicked despot.

\*

And as for the libel of the goblet, that Yosef engineered in order to negotiate slavery. Indeed, the brothers did volunteer to become his slaves, and this was

to atone for their having sold him as a slave and after all, they did not succeed, so the mere threat of slavery sufficed.

\*

And when the brothers, following their return journey home, related their experiences in Egypt, Ya'akov used the word "Eifoh" (43:11) which, based on a Pasuk in Yeshayah (27:8) has connotations of 'Midah', and therefore hinted to the Midah ke'Neged Midah with which G-d was dealing with them. Ya'akov himself, who did not know about the sale, may not have realized what he was saying, but as Chazal say on a number of occasions, he prophesied without realizing that he was prophesying.

And the same applies to when Ya'akov then instructed them to carry spices down to 'the man', to pacify him. Little did he realize that this was to atone for the brother's sale of Yosef to the Yishme'elim, who were taking spices down to Egypt. And that is why he concluded "And G-d Almighty will give you mercy ...". To be sure, once they had atoned for their sin, G-d's mercy was assured.

Parsha Pearls ... The Partners Dish

"Why do you all look at one another" (42:1).

See Rashi.

The Seforno, who translates the Pasuk as above, explains it with Chazal, who have said that 'a dish belonging to partners is neither hot nor cold', meaning that a job that needs to be done by partners never gets done, since each partner expects the other one to perform it.

And that is precisely what Ya'akov meant when he said to his sons 'Why are you looking at each other (in anticipation)? Get on with it!'

Placing the Blame

"And one (brother) said to the other "The truth of the matter is that we are guilty ... " (42:21).

A group of Avreichem paid R. Yosef Chayim a visit, shortly after the Chevron massacre of 1927. The speech turned to the current sufferings of Jews in general, and the blood that was being spilt in Eretz Yisrael in particular.

One of the Avreichim remarked that this was the result of those lax Jews who played soccer on Shabbos.

R. Yosef Chayim arose from his chair, and as he was wont to do when he got excited, he planted the palms of his two hands firmly on the table, declaring in a voice charged with emotion, that he disagreed with the Avreich.

After all, he explained, who were these 'terrible sinners'? The vast majority of them were discharged soldiers who had fought in the first world war.

Doubtlessly, he said, they had been forced to eat non-Kasher food and to desecrate the Shabbos. And in that situation, he continued, they probably went on to transgress severe sins which time and circumstances brought upon them. Then when they were discharged and returned to their homes in Russia and the Ukraine, they suffered the pogroms initiated by Petlora and his hoodlums, who murdered, with unspeakable cruelty, men women and children. Many of them witnessed first-hand, their own fathers, wearing Tallis and Tefilin, slaughtered before their very eyes.

'Now I ask you', he concluded, 'What do you expect of these people, who went through so much hardship and suffering? Do you really believe that their sins are so terrible that K'lal Yisrael are forced to pay for them?'

'Who then is responsible?' asked the Avreich.

'The truth of the matter is that "we are guilty" ', replied R. Yosef Chayim (mimicking the above Pasuk). 'Nobody forced us to eat T'reifos or to desecrate the Shabbos. Nor were our parents slaughtered before our eyes.

We merited to live in Yerushalayim in a frum environment, and it is therefore from us that the Midas ha'Din makes demands. If we are lax in our observance of Torah and Mitzvos – on our level – then who knows that it is not because of our sins that K'lal Yisrael suffers'.

\*

This was the way of R. Yosef Chayim, to object in no uncertain terms, against those who spoke ill of other Jews. In fact, when someone did so, he would compare it to a son who insulted or even cursed his father. Whoever



would repeat this shameful act to others, would only serve to increase the father's disgrace.

from: Rabbi YY Jacobson <rabiyy@theyeshiva.net> date: Dec 22, 2022, 4:06 PM subject: Why Was Pharaoh Blown Away by Joseph? - Miketz/Chanukah Essay by Rabbi YY

Rabbi YY Jacobson

It is a riveting story. Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, has two dreams, we learn in this week's Torah portion, Miketz.

In the first, Pharaoh sees himself standing over the Nile River, "And, behold, there came up out of the River seven cows, handsome and fat of flesh and they fed in the reed grass. And, behold, seven other cows came up after them out of the River, ugly and lean of flesh and stood by the other cows upon the bank of the River. And the ugly and lean cows ate up the seven handsome and fat cows." [1]

In the second dream, Pharaoh sees seven thin, shriveled ears of grain swallow seven fat ears of grain. None of the wise men of Egypt can offer Pharaoh a satisfactory interpretation of his dreams.

Then, the "young Hebrew slave," [2] Joseph, is summoned from his dungeon to the palace. Joseph interprets the dreams to mean that seven years of plenty, symbolized by the fat cows and fat grain, will be followed by seven years of hunger, reflected by the lean cows and the shriveled ears. The seven years of famine will be so powerful that they will "swallow up" and obliterate any trace of the years of plenty.

Joseph then advises Pharaoh how to deal with the forthcoming crisis [3]: "Now Pharaoh must seek out a man with insight and wisdom and place him in charge of Egypt. A rationing system will have to be set up over Egypt during the seven years of surplus," Joseph explains, "in which grain will be stored for the upcoming years of famine."

Pharaoh is blown away by Joseph's vision. "Can there be another person who has G-d's spirit in him as this man does?" Pharaoh asks his advisors. "There is none as understanding and wise as you," he says to Joseph. "You shall be over my house, and according to your word shall all my people be ruled; only by the throne will I outrank you." Joseph is appointed Prime Minister of Egypt. The rest is history.

#### 4 Questions

The Biblical commentators struggle with four major questions concerning this remarkable story. [4]

A) It is difficult to understand how following his interpretation of the dreams, Joseph proceeded to give Pharaoh advice on how to deal with the impending famine. How is a freshly liberated slave not scared of offering the king of Egypt, the monarch who ruled a superpower, unsolicited advice? Pharaoh summoned Joseph from the dungeon to interpret his dreams, not to become an advisor to the king! Suchchutzpah could have even cost him his life.

B) It is clear from the narrative that Pharaoh was thunderstruck by Joseph's solution to the problem. But one need not be a rocket scientist to suggest that if you have seven years of plenty followed by seven years of famine, you should store food during the time of plenty for the time of hunger. What's the genius in Joseph's advice?

C) Pharaoh also was amazed by Joseph's interpretation of the dreams themselves, which none of his own wise men could conceive. But Joseph's interpretation seems simple and obvious: When are cows fat? When there is lots of food. When are they lean? When there's no food. When is grain fat? When there is a plentiful harvest. When is grain lean? During a time of famine. So why was Pharaoh astonished by Joseph's rendition of his dreams? And why could no one else conceive of the same interpretation?

D) How did Pharaoh confer upon Joseph the highest position in the land not even knowing if his interpretation will materialize? Pharaoh's butler offered the king to invite Joseph to explain his dreams because he saw how on target the interpretation of Joseph was. Why did the Egyptian king immediately appoint Joseph as viceroy without any evidence that this young slave was the right man for the job?

Uniting the Cows

On Shabbos Parshas Miketz, 27 Kislev, 5734, December 22, 1973, the Lubavitcher Rebbe presented the following possible explanation. [5]

The dream experts of Egypt did conceive of Joseph's interpretation to Pharaoh's dreams, that seven years of hunger would follow seven years of plenty. Yet they dismissed this interpretation from their mind because it did not account for one important detail of the dream.

In Pharaoh's first dream, he saw how the seven ugly and lean cows that came up after the seven handsome cows "stood near the other (fat) cows upon the bank of the River." [6] There was a moment during which both sets of cows coexisted simultaneously, and only afterward did the lean cows proceed to swallow the fat cows.

It was this detail of the dream that caused the wise men of Egypt to reject the interpretation that Joseph would later offer to Pharaoh and compelled them to present all types of farfetched explanations. [7]

For how is it possible that plenty and famine should coexist? Either you have fat cows alone or you have lean cows alone, but you can't have them both together! The seven years of famine cannot be present during the seven years of surplus. Either you have lots of food, or you have no food. But you can't be both satiated and hungry at the same time. You can't be wealthy and poor at the same time.

This is where Joseph's brilliance was displayed. When Joseph proceeded to tell Pharaoh how to prepare for the coming famine, he was not offering him unwelcome advice on how to run his country; rather, the advice was part of the interpretation of the dream.

Joseph understood that the coexistence of the two sets of cows in the dream contained the solution to the approaching famine: During the years of plenty Egypt must "live" with the consciousness and awareness of the years of famine as though they were already present. Even while enjoying the abundance of the years of plenty, Egypt must experience in its imagination the reality of the upcoming famine, and each and every day store away food for it. The seven lean cows ought to be very much present and alive in people's minds and in their behaviors during the era of the seven fat cows. Conversely, if this system was implemented in Egypt, then even during the years of famine the nation would continue enjoying the abundance of the years of plenty. The seven fat cows would be very much present and alive even during the era of the seven lean cows.

This is what impressed Pharaoh so deeply about Joseph's interpretation.

To begin with, Pharaoh was struck by Joseph's ingenious accounting for that one detail of the dream that had evaded all the wise men of Egypt.

But what thrilled him even more was Joseph's demonstration that Pharaoh's dreams not only contained a prediction of future events, but also offered instructions on how to deal with those events. The dreams did not only portend problems, but also offered solutions. [8]

Many people can tell you all about the pending problems. Joseph's uniqueness was that within the very dream which predicted the crisis he can perceive the solution.

Do You Need G-d? Do You Have a Real Friend?

The stories of the Torah describe not only physical events that took place at a certain point in history, but also detail metaphysical and timeless tales occurring continuously within the human heart.

The wisdom of Joseph's presentation to Pharaoh becomes strikingly clear when we reflect on the spiritual message behind the story.

All of us experience cycles of plenty and of famine in our lives. There are times when things are going very well: We are healthy, successful, and comfortable. Often during such times, we fail to invest time and energy to cultivate genuine emotional intimacy with our spouse, to develop real relationships with our children, to bond deeply with friends, and to create a sincere bond with G-d. We feel self-sufficient and don't need anybody in our lives.

Yet when a time of famine arrives, when a crisis erupts (heaven forbid) in our lives we suddenly feel the need to reach out beyond ourselves and connect with our loved ones and with G-d.

But we don't know how to. Because when we do not nurture our relationships and our inner vulnerability during our years of plenty, when the years of famine confront us, we lack the tools we desperately need to survive the crisis.

This is the essence of Joseph's wisdom: You must never detach the years of plenty from the years of famine. When you experience plenty, do not let it blind your vision and desensitize you from what is important in life. The priorities you cultivate during your "good times" should be of the kind that will sustain you during your challenging times as well.[9] If you are investing your time and energy in things that will prove futile when the climate of your life changes and will not hold you up when challenges come, you might want to re-examine your present choices. Why wait for the day you will have to say, "If I would have only realized?"

#### A Pot of Margarine

At the conclusion of every 16-hour workday in Bergen-Belsen, the block commander liked to have some fun with his Jews. The meal at the end of the day consisted of old dry bread, filthy watery soup and a pot of something like margarine made from vegetable fat.

The margarine was scooped out of a large tub, and after the meal had been distributed and the tub was empty, the commander allowed the starving prisoners to jump into the empty tub and lick the remaining margarine from the walls of the tub. The sight of starving Jews licking up bits of margarine provided nightly entertainment for the commander and his guards. One prisoner, however, refused to be a part of the commander's show. Though like all the rest he was a withered, starving shadow of a man aged far beyond his years, still, he would never allow himself to scavenge for a lick of margarine.

The other prisoners called him Elijah. In some unspoken way, the others drew strength from Elijah's refusal to join the frenzy. Then, one night, something happened that seemed to shatter whatever spirit remained in the prisoners.

Elijah cracked. All at once he threw himself into the greasy vat and furiously rolled around like a crazed beast. And how the commander howled. It was a deep belly laugh of satanic satisfaction. The last of the Jews had been morally broken.

Later, after the guards left and the Jews were in their barracks, Elijah took off his shirt and began to tear it to shreds. The others looked on in silence. Had Elijah gone mad? He would study the shirt for a moment, carefully looking it over, as if searching for some exact location, and then tear that area into a strip. He looked up. His eyes were on fire.

"Do you know what tonight is? Tonight is the first night of Chanukah."

Elijah studied the shirt again, finding another choice spot to tear. A spot he had purposely saturated with grease from his rolling in the margarine tub. That night Elijah led the others in the lighting of the Chanukah flames. The wicks came from the strips of his shirt, and the bits of margarine Elijah had furiously scavenged was the oil.

Elijah's light continues to shine to this very day. For him, even in a time of famine he was sustained by the faith and a fire of the times of plenty.

[1] Genesis 41: 1-4.

[2] Ibid. 41:12.

[3] Ibid. 41:33-40.

[4] See Ramban, Bechayah, Akeidah, Abarbenel, Ralbag, Alshich, Kli Yakar, Or Hachayim and Maharik—in their commentaries on the story.

[5] Published in Likkutei Sichos vol. 15, pp. 339-347. The Rebbe's explanation follows Rashi's interpretation of the story. See however Ramban to Genesis 41:4, Ralbag and Or Hachaim ibid. 41:33 for an alternative perspective, which would be invalid according to Rashi (Likkutei Sichos ibid. footnote #9).

[6] Genesis 41:3.

[7] See Rashi ibid. 41:8, from Midrash Rabah Genesis 89:6.

[8] There is a problem here. The detail of the cows coexisting at the river was not repeated by Pharaoh when sharing his dreams with Joseph. See Likkutei Sichos ibid. for an explanation. One possible approach is based on

what the Ramban says here, that it is obvious that Pharaoh repeated all the details to Yosef and the Torah does not have to say it, because it is obvious. The Kli Yakar (41,3) says clearly that it was this coexistence which led Yosef to his interpretation, so although the Torah doesn't explicitly mention it in Pharaoh's version of the dreams, Yosef certainly heard it (or sensed it) from him.

But maybe there is something deeper: Perhaps the Torah does not mention it because Pharaoh underscored it, as he could not find meaning in it. This was part of Yosef's brilliance to pick up on it and turn it into a central theme of the dream and the solution to the crisis.

[9] King Solomon in his profound wisdom put it simply: "A friend's love endures for all times" (Proverbs 17:7).

ד"ר Harav Hezkyahu Avrom Broide – Rabbi of "Ganei Ayalon"

(Achisomoch, Lod) Dayan and Rosh Kollel Zichron Kelem

**STOOD BY THEM IN THE TIME OF THEIR DISTRESS** כשעמדה

"מלכות יוון הרשעה על עמך ישראל להשכיחם תורתך ולהעבירם מחוקי רצונך." When the wicked Hellenic government rose up against Your people Israel to make them forget Your Torah and violate the decrees of Your will. "To forget Your Torah," *Toras Hashem*. "The decrees of Your will," *Hashem's will*. But ... "You, in Your abounding mercies, stood by them in the time of their distress, You waged their battles, defended their rights, and avenged the wrong done to them." War for their distress, fight, and revenge!!! The Greek struggle was against *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*, but the struggle of the *Chashmonaim* does not carry that title or proclaim a war for the honor of Heaven and a war for His sake, but a battle for themselves and their image – for their distress, strife and the wrong done to them. The so-called ideological struggle could be seen as a struggle over beliefs and opinions. Greek philosophy versus Jewish values. The Greeks did not fight against life, they did not seek to murder and kill. Their goal was to instill the Greek culture and force it on the Jews as well. They did not seek to destroy the Temple, only to abolish the differences between holy and profane, and between impure and pure. They didn't even spill out the oils used to light the *menorah*, they just defiled them. Something that is not apparent at all from an external view. [היוק שאינו ניכר] Furthermore, It is even permissible according to *halachah* to light the menorah with impure oil. It could have been taken as a situation that could be lived and was survivable. But the Hasmoneans saw this trend as an existential decree. A war against the home.

A threat to their souls and a fight for their lives and they risked their lives in an impossible reality of the few against the many and the weak against the powerful. A war of survival, a war with no other option. A clear and enlightened recognition that harming the observance of the Torah and *mitzvos* is destruction and a decree of death. At this point the miracle happened. From then on it was clear that the victories were supernatural, against all odds. They came about because You "stood up for them, waged, defended and avenged" their battles, rights and revenge. *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* fought for them. The power and abilities of the Hasmoneans were miraculous and wondrous. (Psalms 21:22). הלא משנאד' אשנא, ובתקוממך. O LORD, You know I hate those who hate You, and loathe Your adversaries. I feel a perfect hatred toward them; I count them my enemies." The הגרי"ז הלוי זצ"ל explains, When David Hamelech fought against *Hakadosh Baruch Hu's* enemies he fought against them and hated them with a fundamental hatred. What then is the addition made by the statement, "I count them my enemies"? Isn't it obvious that they are his enemies? The explanation lies in the big difference ... In the beginning they were Your haters and adversaries. This is indeed a reason for the willingness to fight them without compromise. But, from then on, they were my enemies. No more Your haters, but my enemies!!! My trouble, my justice and my personal revenge. "I count them my enemies." In the overwhelming recognition that war against G-d is the war of our personal existence, lies the secret of victory. The lack of this recognition is the cause of failure. When we gain closeness to G-d and a perfect recognition that G-

d, the Torah and Israel are one, we are able to overcome all our archenemies.  
[ג' דרגין אינן]

When Joseph appears before Pharaoh and is asked to solve the dream. "שמעתי עליך לאמור תשמע חלום" Now I have heard it said of you that for you to hear a dream is to tell its meaning." Joseph answers Pharaoh saying, "Not I! God will see to Pharaoh's welfare." Rashi explains: "G-d will put the answer in my mouth"!!! Complete nullification, I am nothing. All my essence and ability is what G-d gives me. "There is no other besides Him." From this the salvation sprouts and the seed of *Klal Yisrael's* salvation is sown in Egypt. The words of Rambam (ט – ז) ומלחמותיהם Once he enters into the bonds of war, he shall lean on the Refuge of Israel and its Savior in times of trouble, and he will know that by the unity of G-d he wages battle and he shall put his soul in His hand and he shall not fear nor be afraid ... And everyone who fights with all his heart, fearlessly, and his intention will only be to sanctify His Name, is guaranteed that he will not be harmed and no evil will come upon him and a secure house will be built for him in *Am Yisrael* and him and his children will merit it forever and in the world to come, as it says, "כי עשה יעשה ה' לאדוני בית נאמן כי מלחמות ה' אדוני נלחם ורעה לא תמצא בך וגו'" והיתה נפש אדוני צרורה בצרור החיים את ה' אלקיך For the L-rd will grant my lord an enduring house, because my lord is fighting the battles of the L-rd, and no wrong is ever to be found in you ... the life of my lord will be bound up in the bundle of life in the care of the L-rd." (שמואל א' כ"ה:כח)

From Parsha@torahinaction.com From the Ha'amek Davar - Miketz - 5783  
**FROM THE HA'AMEK DAVAR – MIKETZ – 5783** Yosef explained to Par'oh that his dreams communicated seven years of plenty to be immediately followed by seven years of famine. Without title, and without pausing for reaction or reply, he switched from interpreter to advisor, counseling him with: And now let Par'oh seek out a man that is discerning and wise, and set him over Egypt... He will prepare Egypt during the seven years of plenty (41:22-23). Par'oh dreamed: the seven thin cows were devouring seven fat cows, and the seven thin ears of corn were devouring the seven full ears of corn. All about cows. All about corn. The Meshech Chochma pays attention to Par'oh's dreams taking the form of such natural phenomena. He cites a story that appears in both the Yerushalmi (Bava Metzia 2:5) and in Bereishit Rabba (33:1) about Alexander the Great's journey to a very distant part of the world where, on arrival, he asked the king to explain how they dispensed justice in his lands. The story runs as follow. The king demonstrated the answer by inviting Alexander the Great to watch him personally judge a case that had just then come before him. There, the purchaser bought an article from a seller that, unknown to either of them, had an extremely valuable gemstone within. The purchaser argued that when he bought the object he did not know that it contained a gemstone, so he believed that it was on him to pay up the huge difference to the seller. The seller, in contrast, responded that he did not know about the gemstone at the time of the sale, so it was the buyer that was lucky, and it was his property. On inquiry, the king found that both the buyer and the seller had children of marriageable age. He therefore recommended that they make a match and the married couple share the gemstone, so that it would happily remain in the hands of both families for future generations. That sounds most reasonable, admirable, and fair. Alexander the Great, however (who as a disciple of Aristotle was probably one of the most sophisticated men of his age), was quite appalled. Had he judged the case, he declared, he would have put both litigants to death and confiscated the gem for the treasury. The king then asked him whether the sun shone in his country and whether there were animals in the country. Yes it did, yes there were, Alexander assured him. Then the king solemnly informed him: "You, G-d, save man and You save the animals" (Tehillim 36:7). For it is solely in the merit of the animals that He saves mankind. That the sun shines, brings rain, and lets the corn grow. For if the animals do not do good, at least they are not corrupt like you and your people who bring unjust suffering on the non-privileged and less fortunate.

The Ha'amek Davar, among other mefarshim, explains that when the Torah brings a repetition of an event (as this one, where it details both Par'oh dreams and the words he subsequently used when telling them to Yosef), it does so for a reason, which is our task to work out. Otherwise "Par'oh told his dreams to Yosef" would be quite enough.

Like the mind-frame of Alexander the Great, Par'oh was corrupt, and Yosef knew that only too well. The fact that Potifar, one of his officers, threw him into the dungeon for no reason: "I did nothing wrong here, yet they put me into the dungeon" (40:15) indicates that his life was worthless, utterly worthless, unless the powers of Egypt actually needed him. He had not been judged or even given a chance to report his version of what happened. For he was worth no more to the ruling powers than the two litigants who, apart from their treasure, were of no value to the ruling powers. Things only changed in Yosef's favor because Par'oh had dreams whose portends deeply disturbed him (41:8). Then Yosef suddenly acquired value because he was the man that might be able to put the mind of the ruling Par'oh at rest. The dreams were about cows, and about corn: "You, G-d, save man and You save the animals" (Tehillim 36:7). For it is solely in the merit of the animals represented by the cows that He saves mankind, and with the rain that makes the corn grow. You, Par'oh are corrupt, and it is on you to ensure that the corruption of your regime does not cause Egypt "to be cut off through starvation" (41:36).

Yosef was too subtle to place the position before Par'oh in such stark terms. He expressed it positively: "And now let Par'oh seek out a man that is discerning and wise, and set him over Egypt... He will prepare Egypt during the seven years of plenty". In doing so, he was asking for a person who was wise, effective, trustful, and honest enough to gather food resources for storage in preparing for famine, and how Egypt might survive through fair allocation of food during those very lean years. That person, explains the Meshech Chochma, would have to be incorruptible, and thus outside Par'oh's ruling circle; someone who would not hoard to provisions to sell at the highest prices to the wealthy leaving the poor to rot. In short, the cows and the corn in Par'oh's dreams hinted that something was rotten in the State: corruption, which could ultimately destroy it during the famine through the complete breakdown in trust between the ruler and those ruled. Only a competent and honest outsider would prevent it. And, as events showed, that was Yosef who, as the story later unfolds, (41:5-57; 47:13-24) established famine relief in Egypt on the basis of trust and integrity, and to whom the people of Egypt declared: "It is you that has kept us alive!" (47:25).

Jacob Solomon

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Thoughts on the Weekly Parshah by **HaRav Eliezer Chrysler**

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Happy Birthday C.B. Vol. 30

**Chanukah Supplement The Hidden Light** (Adapted from the **B'nei Yisaschar**)

The Parshah of the Menorah in Emor (24:1-4) begins with the words "Tzav es B'nei Yisrael", which, the B'nei Yisaschar observes, has the same numerical value as 'bi'Yemei Matisyahu ben Yochanan' (which we say in Birkas ha'Mazon and in the Amidah) plus one. This discrepancy of one ('Aleph' as we will now explain) teaches us he says, that the light that shone during the days of Matisyahu was a derivative of the light that G-d created on the first day of the Creation, and which He subsequently hid. That hidden light, the Zohar explains, was placed in the Torah, and those who study it diligently, benefit from its magical properties. That is why Or and Ner (light and lamp respectively) hint at Torah, which stems from 'Chochmah' (the first of the ten S'firo [after Da'as]). And the reason that the miracle of Chanukah took place with Or and Ner is because it is the Chochmas ha'Torah that the Greeks set out to destroy, and Chochmas ha'Torah is the antithesis of Hellenism (Greek culture), and the symbol of our victory over

the Greeks. Chazal have also said that wherever there is olive oil there is Chochmah (and they derive this from the Pasuk in Shmuel 2, where Yo'av sent to Teko'ah, the prime oil-producing olives area, to fetch a wise woman). The miracle took place with the Menorah, which was placed on the south side of the Azarah, and the Gemara explains in Bava Basra (25b) that someone who wants wisdom, should turn to the south. Interestingly, it is the south that remains bright throughout the year, summer and winter, because that is where the sun (our main source of light) reaches its zenith. With this we can understand the discrepancy of one between 'bi'Yemei Matisyahu ben Yochanan' and "Tzav es B'nei Yisrael". Because, bearing in mind that 'Aleph' represents Chochmah (as in the Pasuk in Iyov "ve'a'alafcha chochmah"), it is 'bi'Yemei Matisyahu ben Yochanan' together with the 'Aleph' (with the illumination of Chochmah that took place at that time) that equals "Tzav es B'nei Yisrael", the Mitzvah of taking pure olive oil and kindling the Menorah.

\*  
And this will help us understand the Gemara in Shabbos (23b) which, in answer to the question 'Where did G-d command us (to kindle the Menorah, as we recite in the B'rachah)?', gives two answers – from "Lo Sasur ..." (Rav Ivya) and from "She'al ovicho ve'yagedcho ..." (Rav Nechemyah). Why, the commentaries ask, does the Gemara pose this question specifically with regard to lighting the Menorah on Chanukah (and not to any other Mitzvah mi'de'Rabbanan)? And what is the bone of contention between the two answers? To answer the two questions, the B'nei Yisaschar first cites the Roke'ach, that the Mitzvah of Chanukah is hinted in Parshas Emor (by way of the juxtaposition of the Parshah of the Menorah beside that of the Yamim-Tovim, and the Mitzvah inherent in the above hint of the equivalent numerical value of "Tzav es B'nei Yisrael", and 'bi'Yemei Matisyahu ben Yochanan'). Only the Gemara was puzzled in that "Tzav es B'nei Yisrael" is missing one, and it is therefore necessary to add the 'Kolel' to make up the numbers. What the Gemara really means to ask therefore, is from where we know that a discrepancy of one is acceptable in Gematriyos? And it is in this regard that the Amora'im argue. Rav Ivya quotes the Pasuk "Lo sasur ...", which continues "mi'kol asher yagidu lecho yomin u's'mol", with reference to Ya'akov's blessing of Yosef's sons, where he switched his right and left hands. Because there he said, "Ephrayim u'Menasheh ki'Reuven ve'Shimon yih'yu li", and the numerical value of "Ephrayim u'Menasheh" is equal to that of "Reuven ve'Shimon"; well almost! It is actually one more, and is therefore the source for the permitted discrepancy of one in Gematriyos. Rav Nechemyah on the other hand, quotes the Pasuk "She'al ovicho ve'yagedcho ...", and this hints at the second explanation, which we discussed earlier. We wrote that the extra one in 'bi'Yemei Matisyahu ben Yochanan', serves as a hint to the Chochmas ha'Torah which the Greeks attempted to abolish, and which Yisrael regained as a result of the extra illumination of light that shone from the hidden light which in turn, derives from 'Chochmah'. Now, in Kabbalah, Chochmah is known as 'Aba' (as well as being called 'Aleph', as we explained earlier). Consequently, the Pasuk "She'al ovicho ...", zekeinecha ve'Yomru lach", refers to 'Aleph' (denoting Chochmah [indeed, even the end of the Pasuk hints to that, for Chazal have said that 'a Zakein' is one who has acquired wisdom]). According to Rav Nechemyah then, an extra number is not generally acceptable in Gematriyos, only here, due to the implication of the 'Aleph'. \*\*

All About Chanukah What Sort of Oil Was It? (Adapted from the Mo'adim ba'Halachah)

R. Chayim Soloveichik asks how the Chashmona'im could have fulfilled their obligation with the self-increasing oil in the Beis-Hamikdash on the subsequent seven nights. The Torah's obligation is to light olive oil, whereas what burned in the Menorah from the second night and onwards was miracle oil (since the olive oil was used up already on the first night). The Mo'adim ba'Halachah cites the Redak in Melachion 2 (4:7), who exempted the miracle oil of Elisha (in the episode of the wife of Ovadyahu) from Ma'asros for exactly the same reason. R. Chayim therefore explains that the miracle of the

Chanukah oil was not a quantitative miracle, but a qualitative one. In other words, there was no visible increase in oil (like there was with Elisha). What happened was that the oil that was already in the lamps simply increased in quality and burned longer. R. Chayim also uses this explanation to answer the Beis-Yosef's Kashya, why we celebrate the first night of Chanukah, seeing as the jar contained sufficient oil to last for one day anyway, so that the miracle only began on the second night? According to his description of the miracle however, the Kashya falls away. Since already on the first night, each lamp contained only sufficient oil to burn for one night. The fact that it did not decrease at the regular rate was already a miracle. And the Mo'adim ba'Halachah uses R. Chayim's explanation to clarify the Machlokes between Beis Shamai, who hold 'Pochsin ve'holchin' (that one kindles eight lights on the first night, seven on the second and so on), and Beis Hillel, who holds 'Mosifin ve'holchin' (one light on the first night, two on the second and so on). If, as R. Chayim maintains, all the oil that was placed in the Menorah on the first night simply increased in quality, then it transpires that potentially, there was sufficient oil in the lamp to burn miraculously for eight days; on the second night, there was sufficient oil for seven days ... , forming the basis of Beis Shamai's opinion. Beis Hillel, on the other hand, do not go after the potential, but after the factual, and factually, one day's miracle took place on the first night, two on the second and three on the third (see also, note 13, p.158 in the Mo'adim ba'Halachah).

\* From One to Eight

In spite of the principle that with few exceptions, we always rule like Beis Hillel, there is a well-known hint that is brought by the commentaries, that the Halachah is like Beis-Hillel with regard to the progression of the Chanukah lights (from one to eight). The hint actually lies in the word 'Chanukah', which is the acronym of 'Ches Neiros, Ve'Halachah Ke'Beis Hillel', whose first letters it spells. The Mo'adim ba'Halachah cites commentaries who use this acronym to answer two famous questions regarding Chanukah: 1) Why Chazal instituted Chanukah for eight days and not seven (see above "What Sort of Oil Was It", paragraphs 4 and 5)? and 2) Why they did not institute a ninth day as S'feika d'Yoma like they did on Pesach, Shavu'os and Succos? Had there been seven days of Chanukah, they explain, then on the fourth day we would kindle four lights, both according to Beis Hillel and according to Beis Shamai, and there would be nothing to demonstrate that the halachah is like Beis Hillel; and the same problem would arise on the fifth day, had they instituted a ninth day. A perhaps not so well-known hint for the same Halachah is presented by the Roke'ach (cited by the B'nei Yisaschar) who observes in Parshas Emor (24:2 and 4), that the Torah first writes "Lcha'alos ner tamid" (singular) and then "Ya'aroeh es ha'neiros" (plural), proving that we kindle one light on the first night, and progress on the second night to two (like Beis Hillel), rather than beginning with eight lights on the first night, and ending with one on the last (like Beis Shamai).

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A Hint for Chanukah in the Torah

The B'nei Yisaschar also cites the Roke'ach with regard to a hint in the Torah for Chanukah, based on Nevuchadnetzar's dream, where he dreamt of an image, part of gold, part of silver and part of copper, and which, according to Daniel's interpretation, referred to Bavel, Madai and Yavan (Greece), respectively. It can hardly be a coincidence therefore, that the last word in Terumah is 'Nechoshes' (copper), which is followed by the Parshah of the Menorah, as the Roke'ach points

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**Yehudah and Tamar: Marriage or Harlotry?**

**by R. Moshe Kurtz**

Lomdus on the Parsha: Vayeishev

Based on the Acclaimed Sefer Chavatzeles HaSharon

Q: Did the relations between Yehudah and Tamar constitute a sin? He inquired of the council of that locale, "Where is the prostitute, the one at

Enaim, by the road?" But they said, "There has been no prostitute here." (Genesis 38:21)

Following the deaths of Er and Onan, Yehudah is reluctant to give his final son, Sheilah, as a husband to Tamar. Rather than wait indefinitely, Tamar takes matters into her own hands by dressing as a prostitute and having relations with Yehudah. There are many questions raised by this narrative - one such question is how could Yehudah, a virtuous son of Yaakov, succumb to soliciting the services of a prostitute?

Besides the potential issues related to the laws of Niddah (being intimate with a woman who has menstruated), there is a more glaring challenge with what transpired. Rambam (Mishneh Torah, Hilchos Ishus 1:4) writes: "When the Torah was given, a harlot became forbidden, as Deuteronomy (23:18) states: "There shall not be a harlot among the children of Israel." Therefore, a person who has relations with a woman for the sake of lust, without kiddushin (betrothal), receives lashes as prescribed by the Torah, because he had relations with a harlot.

Accordingly, any sexual act that is performed outside the context of marriage constitutes a transgression of the law against harlotry. (See, however, Ra'avad ad loc. who qualifies the scope of harlotry; a non-marital sexual act is not ipso facto a violation of this mitzvah.)

While, we may wish to simply answer that this entire episode pre-dates the Torah, and is thus not subject to such strictures, we would still need to resolve the matter according to those who believe that the families of the patriarchs sought to abide by Torah law (see Tosafos, Chullin 91a, s.v. K'Man). In fact, the Talmud (Sotah 10a) informs us that Yehudah even went to far as to vet Tamar prior to engaging with her: Rabbi Shmuel bar Nahmani says: She provided eyes for her statements (i.e., with her words she provided an opening for Judah to solicit her). When Judah solicited her to engage in sexual intercourse with him, he first attempted to verify her status and said to her: Are you perhaps a gentile? She said to him: I am a convert. He asked: Perhaps you are a married woman? She said to him: I am an unmarried woman. He asked: Perhaps your father accepted betrothal for you and you are unaware of it? She said to him: I am an orphan. He asked: Maybe you are impure? She said to him: I am pure.

According to this Talmudic account, Yehudah was clearly concerned for any potential impropriety. It therefore begs the question: Why would Yehudah go so far as to inquire Tamar of her Jewish, marital and purity statuses but neglect to take the prohibition of prostitution into account?

Indeed, earlier commentaries were perplexed by the same question. R. Eliyahu Mizrahi (Sefer HaMizrahi, Gen. 38:15) suggests that in addition to the collateral, Yehudah also provided Tamar with either a document or small sum of money in order to effectuate a halachic betrothal (kiddushin). However, the Maharsha (Sotah 10a) presents two challenges to such an assumption:

(A) If Yehudah truly acted in accordance with the law, then he should have felt no subsequent shame. However, he is clearly attempting to conceal the matter by sending his friend Chirah the Adullamite to retrieve his collateral on his behalf (see Gen. 38:20).

(B) On a more fundamental level, there is a basic principle in the laws of marriage that the betrothal requires the presence of witnesses in order to legally effectuate the marriage. These kind of witnesses are not simply called upon to testify in the event that the marriage needs to be proven, but are actually an indispensable component of the process - *eidei re'iyah l'kiyuma*. A man can hand a ring or document to a woman with the intent to marry her, but absent the witnesses nothing of halachic significance has taken place. Considering Yehudah was acting in a discreet fashion it is doubtful that anyone witnessed their transaction, thus relegating their union to an act of harlotry instead of marital intimacy.

R. Mordechai Carlebach seeks to resolve the second challenge by citing the Rosh (Yevamos 3:7) who posits that a marital document which is written by the groom himself actually does not require any witnesses. This is extrapolated from the well established law that a man who writes his own writ of divorce does not require witnesses to sign on. If we are willing to

accept that Yehudah went so far as to provide Tamar with a marital document, it is also plausible to believe that he wrote it himself, thus not requiring any witnesses.

However, it should be noted that there is a significant school of Medieval scholars who disagree with the Rosh and limit this exception to matters of divorce (see Ritva and Rashba on Yevamos 31b).

A major point of concern with such an answer is that according to Tosafos (Gittin 4a, s.v. D'Kaima) normative halachah deems it insufficient to only have witnesses on the document itself; we require witnesses to observe the handing of the document from the husband to his wife (i.e. *eidei chasimah*). If so, the same standard would be applied to creating a marriage: Thus, while the man's own handwriting might suffice in lieu of the witnesses' writing, it cannot replace the presence of witnesses who are required to observe the handing over of the document.

R. Carlebach makes another attempt to explain how Yehudah effectively betrothed Tamar without witnesses. The Talmud in Kiddushin (65b) derives hermeneutically that the act of betrothal bears legal similarities to monetary transactions. The Gemara informs us that in monetary law, it is sufficient for an individual to declare he owes another party money since "the admission of a litigant is tantamount to one hundred witnesses." Therefore, it stands to reason that if a man declares he is betrothed to a woman it should be a sufficient basis for us to recognize their marital connection. However, the Gemara rejects this suggestion since one can only admit to that which pertains to himself - not to something that is detrimental to another party. Thus, the act of betrothal requires witnesses since it binds this woman exclusively to one man, which is technically to the detriment of all other potential husbands in the world. However, prior to the Torah being given, betrothal did not exclude a woman to other men and thus by Yehudah simply declaring Tamar as his wife would be sufficient to circumvent the sin of harlotry.

In either event, Yehudah clearly felt a degree of shame for what transpired between him and Tamar. As we noted, he even attempted to distance himself by sending his friend to pay his due. Whether or not Yehudah's actions can be justified on a legal level, it is clear that from a broader moral standpoint this form of conduct is anathema.

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Note: This series is not intended to dispense practical halachic conclusions. The Torah presented here is but a small extraction from the breadth of the sefer Chavatzeles HaSharon and is not affiliated with the author in any official capacity. Translations are adapted from Sefaria, Chabad.org, Mechon Mamre, and my own. Contact: [rabbikurtz@cas-stamford.org](mailto:rabbikurtz@cas-stamford.org)

<https://www.jewishpress.com/judaism/parsha/self-defense-2/2022/12/22/>  
**Self-Defense**

**By Rabbi Dovid Goldwasser** - 28 Kislev 5783 – December 22, 2022  
R' Kahana said, R' Nosson ben Minyomi expounded in the name of R' Tanchum: If the Chanukah Menorah is placed higher than twenty cubits it is disqualified, as are a Sukkah and the cross-beam over the entrance of an alley. R' Kahana also said, R' Nosson ben Minyomi expounded in R' Tanchum's name: Why is it written [Bereishis 37:24] 'And the pit was empty, there was no water in it?' From 'and the pit was empty', do I not know that there was no water in it; what then is taught by, 'there was no water in it'? There was no water, yet there were snakes and scorpions in it. The Sifri wonders what the connection between these two statements is. The Pnei HaMenorah offers an interesting insight. According to the Shulchan Aruch, the menorah should be placed outside, in the doorway to the public thoroughfare in order to publicize the miracle of Chanukah. The Rama writes that in our days everyone lights their menorah indoors, and later-day commentaries explain that the primary promulgation of the Chanukah miracle is for the people inside the house.

The Gemara's juxtaposition of the two maxims can be explained on a deeper level as the various references incorporate the ideal of the mitzvah of Ner Chanukah.

The Sukkah represents a sanctuary of divine influence, of inner kedusha and light, with the special guests (ushpizin) who grace its premises. The cross-beam across the top of the alleyway indicates the line of demarcation between the reshus hayachid and the reshus harabim.

The pit that is empty of water refers to a home without Torah, which is compared to water. If a home lacks Torah the void will inevitably be filled with harmful influences and the force of the yetzer hara, e.g. snakes and scorpions.

It could be understood that in the earlier years it was not necessary to tout the miracle of Chanukah within the home. Steeped in Jewish law and tradition, the members of the household were imbued with Torah and Yiras Shamayim. The home was a fortress of faith, like the Sukkah itself. It was, in fact, the masses outside who needed the inspiration of Chanukah.

Our times, however, are different. The home needs protection and light, inspiration and chizuk, to maintain the standards of Torah. The allusion to the cross-beam establishes a spiritual boundary. It establishes the perimeters that will ensure the retention of our true Jewish identity and separate us from assimilation and the harmful influences that abound in the public domain, in the street. The candles of Chanukah guard the house, and illuminate it from within with the light of Torah and kedusha to avert a spiritual void. The Gemara also tells us (ibid.) that the mitzvah of Chanukah lighting is “one light for a man and his household.” Our chachamim tell us that this teaches us that, unlike other mitzvos for the home which can be performed by one household member himself – e.g., the mitzvah of mezuzah or ma’akeh (a guardrail for the roof of the house) – the mitzvah of Ner Chanukah must have the participation and presence of all the members of the household. The Tzemach Dovid suggests that this is because of the special import of this mitzvah. The light of the Chanukah Menorah is symbolic of the flame of Yiddishkeit and alludes to the significance of ensuring that the innate radiant spark of Yiddishkeit is brightly illuminated. Such an undertaking cannot be achieved by proxy; each household member must personally be engaged in the mitzvah.

We pray that the energy and potency of the menorah and its light will protect our homes and inspire us to a higher level of Torah and holiness.

During the Second World War, the Brisker Rav escaped to Kovno, where he sat in his house and learned. R’ Kalmanowitz, who was the rav of the city, heard of his arrival and immediately went to welcome him.

When he knocked on the door, the Rav called out, “Who is it?”

Rav Kalmanowitz responded, “It is the rav of the city, Rav Kalmanowitz.” The Brisker Rav called out that someone should open the door, but it took a very long time because the Brisker Rav had barricaded the door with heavy sacks of grain.

Understanding that they feared war, R’ Kalmanowitz asked, “What is the explanation of this? There is no war in this city!”

The Brisker Rav contended that there was, in fact, an explicit halacha that obligates a person to seal the door even when there is no war. R’ Kalmanowitz replied that he did not recall such a halacha and asked where the halacha was found.

The Brisker Rav showed him the Rambam (Hilchos Dei’os 6:1) which states that if one lives in a place where the inhabitants are evil, he should move to a place where the people are righteous and follow the ways of good. If in all the places with which he is familiar or hears of, the people follow improper paths, or if he is unable to move to a place where the behavior is proper, for whatever reasons, he should remain alone in seclusion. If they are wicked and sinful and do not allow him to reside there unless he mingles with them and follows their bad behavior, he should go out to caves and deserts rather than follow their path.

The Brisker Rav explained: “Here in this city, there are maskilim, there are those who deny Hashem, people with terrible middos who do evil deeds. We need to go to the midbar (desert). But this is a time of war, and we can’t go to the midbar. I am making my house my midbar and therefore it’s difficult to get into the house. It takes one half hour of work to remove the sacks blocking the door because outside there is danger. The children know that we

have no connection to that outside world. We are not connected to anything – not their deeds, not their entertainment, not their education. We have nothing to do with their city.”

Rabbi Dovid Goldwasser, a prominent rav and Torah personality, is a daily radio commentator who has authored over a dozen books, and a renowned speaker recognized for his exceptional ability to captivate and inspire audiences worldwide.

<https://vinnews.com/2022/12/20/a-lost-midrash-and-the-prequel-to-CHANUKAH/>

### **Lost Midrash and the Prequel to Chanukah**

December 20, 2022

**By Rabbi Yair Hoffman for 5tjt.com –**

If we delve into the prehistory of Chanukah, we learn all sorts of interesting new information. When we combine this information with Midrashim – it enhances our understanding even more. Finally, when we unearth lost midrashim and combine it all together – the information can be downright fascinating.

#### **LOST MIDRASHIM**

It is a sad fact that over 90% of our Midrashim have been lost. This is due primarily to the seizure of manuscripts and seforim by the Catholic Church in Europe. How do we know that this is the percentage that was lost? The answer is that it can be culled from a statistical analysis of the sheer numbers of Midrashim quoted in the Drashos of the Rishonim that are simply not there. Nine out of ten times that a Rishon cites a Midrash – it is not to be found.

Below we find a Midrash cited by the Bach that can only be found in Eisenstadt’s Otzar HaMidrashim (p. 93). Boruch Hashem, this one was not lost entirely, but others, unfortunately were.

The Bach writes (Orech Chaim 670:4):

“That evil one [Antiochus] decreed to abolish the Korban Tamid and he further said to them: They have one particular practice in their hands – if you abolish it from their hands, then they will already be lost. Which practice is it? The lighting of the Menorah – as it states, “l’haalos bah ner tamid – to light in it a constant lamp – there is a drasha the entire time that they will light it, they shall be constant – they shall always endure.

They then went and made impure all of the oils. When Klal Yisroel returned and did Teshuvah, risking their lives for the Avodah – then Hashem saved them. This happened through the Kohanim – those that served Hashem. And then a miracle happened also with the lamps.”

#### **HIS BROTHER BEFORE HIM**

This author would like to suggest that the Midrash fits quite nicely into some of the historical background of Chanukah. Antiochus’s brother was the Seleucid/Greek ruler who had reigned before him. His name was Seleucus the IV – Philopater.

It seems that Seleucus the IV, actually had much respect for the Beis HaMikdash. He gave gifts to the Beis HaMikdash and initially allowed an exemption of his tax revenue – any Korban brought to the Beis HaMikdash. The sources indicate that it was not just him who esteemed and gave gifts to the Beis HaMikdash – his predecessors did as well.

Eventually, Seleucus IV fell under extraordinary pressure. He had lost a war with Rome and had to pay them war debt. He sent his minister Heliodorus to the Beis HaMikdash to collect money out of its treasury. In the years before the rise of Antiochus Epiphanes IV – the villain of Chanukah, Heliodorus succeeded in getting that money out of the Beis HaMikdash treasury. When he returned from Yerushalayim back to Seleucus IV – Heliodorus assassinated his king!

Heliodorus then took the throne for himself. Seleucus’ son should have been the true heir, but he was being held back as a hostage in Rome. Eventually, Seleucus’s brother, Antiochus Epiphanes, pushed out Heliodorus and took over the Seleucid Greek Empire himself. He implemented the Hellenization process ever further.

By the way, Antiochus' original name was Mithridates. He ruled from 175 BCE to 164 BCE – a total of eleven years.

#### THEY HAD RESPECT

The point is that, initially, his family had some respect for the traditions of the Jewish people – to the point where they themselves gifted items to the Beis HaMikdash and exempted the Korbanos from taxes. The Midrash that tells us how Antiochus was aware of the efficacy of the Korban Tamid as well as the lighting of the Menorah – now further sheds light on the historical context behind the pre-history of Chanukah. We can also see why he may have been especially concerned with Rosh Chodesh, Bris Milah and Shabbos.

The war itself encompassed many miracles of the nature of gibborim b'yad chalashim. When we recite the Al HaNissim let us keep this in mind.

#### THE SEVEN BATTLES

The Chashmonayim first embarked upon a series of guerilla warfare attacks on the Greeks. They then embarked upon a series of seven battles. These battles were:

the Battle of Wadi Haramia (167 BCE) the Battle of Beth Horon (166 BCE) the Battle of Emmaus (166 BCE) the Battle of Beth Zur (164 BCE) the Battle of Beth Zechariah (162 BCE) the Battle of Adasa (161 BCE) the Battle of Elasa (160 BCE). In the Battle of Adasa, General Nicanor was defeated and killed. This day, the 13th of Adar, was declared a special day by Yehudah Maccabee (See Megilas Taanis). Later it was rescinded after the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash.

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from: **Rabbi Berel Wein** <genesis@torah.org> to: rabbiwein@torah.org  
date: Dec 22, 2022, 11:12 AM subject: Rabbi Wein - According to His Plan

**MIKETZ** The entire narrative of the story of Joseph and his brothers, as he sent off the Jewish people to Egyptian society, slavery and ultimate redemption, is meant to illustrate to us the guiding hand of Providence in human affairs. There is no question that all of the participants in this dramatic narrative acted according to their own wishes and wisdom. Yet the confluence of all of these conflicting personalities and ambitions leads to the desired end of the fulfillment of the prophecy and promise of God to Abraham about the future fate of the Jewish people. This principle, that man proposes but God disposes is one of the basic beliefs of Judaism and is vindicated, for good or for better, throughout the history of the Jewish people and humankind generally. All of the twists and turns of daily and national life, the seemingly random and inexplicable events that assault us on a regular basis, somehow have a purpose and a goal. They help us arrive at the situation and circumstance that God's destiny has provided for us. The difficulty in all of this is that very rarely is this pattern revealed or are we aware of it. The Lord told Moses that 'you will see my back, not my face.' We see things much more clearly in retrospect than in the ability to judge present events and somehow predict the future. All of the dreams of Joseph will be fulfilled but no one could have imagined at the onset of the story how they could have been fulfilled and under what circumstances, of both tragedy and triumph, they would come to be the reality of the narrative of the story of Joseph and his brothers. Of all of the brothers, Joseph seems to be the one that is most aware that he and they are merely instruments in God's plan. The rabbis teach us that Joseph was distinguished by the fact that the name of God never left his lips and that he always attributed events to divine providence and God's will. That is why Joseph is seen as the main antagonist to Eisav, for Eisav always attributed events to random chance and to human action and power. We will see later that this was also the main contest between Pharaoh and Moshe. Pharaoh continually maintained that the troubles of the Egyptians were coincidence and that all of the blows that he sustained were due to circumstance and nature. Even when his wise men stated that the finger of God was pointing at him, he refused to admit that it was the divine presence that was driving Egypt to destruction. We also live in a world where many see the events that surround us as being mere happenstance, random events engendered by human beings. However,

Judaism knows better and teaches better and we are therefore confident that all of the processes ordained for us millennia ago will yet be completely fulfilled. There is a divine hand that guides the affairs of mankind. Shabbat shalom Rabbi Berel Wein

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From: **Ohr Somayach** <ohr@ohr.edu> Date: Thu, Dec 22, 2022, 12:40 PM  
Subject: Torah Weekly - Parshat Miketz

Parshat Miketz by **Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair** -  
www.seasonsofthemoon.com

**PARSHA OVERVIEW** It is two years later. Pharaoh has a dream. He is unsatisfied with all attempts to interpret it. Pharaoh's wine chamberlain remembers that Yosef accurately interpreted his dream while in prison. Yosef is released from prison and brought before Pharaoh. He interprets that soon will begin seven years of abundance, followed by seven years of severe famine. He tells Pharaoh to appoint a wise person to store grain in preparation for the famine. Pharaoh appoints him as viceroy to oversee the project. Pharaoh gives Yosef an Egyptian name, Tsafnat Panayach, and selects Osnat, Yosef's ex-master's daughter, as Yosef's wife. Egypt becomes the granary of the world. Yosef has two sons, Menashe and Ephraim. Yaakov sends his sons to Egypt to buy food. The brothers come before Yosef and bow to him. Yosef recognizes them but they do not recognize him. Mindful of his dreams, Yosef plays the part of an Egyptian overlord and acts harshly, accusing them of being spies. Yosef sells them food, but keeps Shimon hostage until they bring their brother Binyamin to him as proof of their honesty. Yosef commands his servants to replace the purchase-money in their sacks. On the return journey they discover the money, and their hearts sink. They return to Yaakov and retell everything. Yaakov refuses to let Binyamin go to Egypt, but when the famine grows unbearable he accedes. Yehuda guarantees Binyamin's safety and the brothers go to Egypt. Yosef welcomes the brothers lavishly as honored guests. When he sees Binyamin, he rushes from the room and weeps. Yosef instructs his servants to replace the money in the sacks and to put his goblet inside Binyamin's sack. When the goblet is discovered, Yosef demands Binyamin to be his slave as punishment. Yehuda interposes and offers himself instead, but Yosef refuses.

#### PARSHA INSIGHTS

##### In The Heart Of The Child

"So Pharaoh sent and summoned Yosef, and they rushed him from the dungeon..." (41:14)

Little children usually find it very difficult to do things by themselves. They need a constant helping hand, constant encouragement. They can be bold, but only when a parent is close by. When out of sight, tears quickly replace bravado until once again they feel the hand that comforts.

As babies, our first faltering steps are greeted by parental glee. Hands reach out to guide our every step. When we stumble, Mom and Dad are always there to stop us from falling.

There comes a day, however, when we stumble, but we find no helping hand. We fall to the ground. Tears fill our eyes and dismay fills our hearts. We look around in amazement. "Where are you? Mommy? Daddy? Are you still there?"

Only from the moment our parents let us fall can we learn to walk by ourselves. Only from the moment that our parents are prepared to let us become adults can we stop being children. If, as parents, we never give our children the possibility of falling down, they will never learn to stand by themselves. Of course, to everything there is a season. Everything has to be in its time. If a child is challenged beyond his capabilities, he may assume that he will never be able to achieve what is being asked of him, and suffer from this negative programming for life.

A challenge in its correct time is always an opportunity to grow, an opportunity to get to know who we really are.

The festival of Chanukah celebrates two events: The defeat of the vast Seleucid Greek army by a handful of Jews, and the miracle of the one flask of pure oil which burned for eight days in the Menorah. If you think about it, our joy at Chanukah should center on the deliverance from our enemies.



However, our main focus seems to be the miracle of the lights. Why should this be so?

Chanukah took place after the last of the Prophets - Chagai, Zecharia and Malachi - had passed from this world. After they passed, Hashem no longer communicated directly with humans. Suddenly, we were like children left alone in the dark. The Parental Hand had gone. With prophecy taken from the world, we would need to grow by ourselves, to become like adults. No longer could we depend on Hashem to reach down to us. Now, we would need to stretch our arms upward to Him. We had been given a chance to grow. To find out who we were. In the darkness of a world without prophecy, we would need to forge our connection with Hashem in the furnace of our own hearts.

But it is difficult. Sometimes we feel "Mommy, Daddy...where are you? Are you still there?" The heart grows a little cold with longing. Sometimes we need a little extra help.

The joy of Chanukah is not so much because we got what we prayed for, that we were delivered from the Greeks, but the fact that G-d let us know that He was still there. He answered our prayers with a miracle. In a world where spiritual decay had tainted the holiest places, a light burst forth in the center of the world to tell us that He was still there. A light that told us that darkness had not extinguished the light. It was only hiding it.

Hashem communicated with us through the darkness of a world without prophecy. He let us know that He was still with us even in the dark. Even though the channel of prophecy had fallen silent, our Father was still there, watching over us.

That little flask of oil would burn and burn. It would burn not just for eight days. It would burn for thousands of years. We would take those lights with us into the long, long night of exile, and we would know by the very fact of our survival against all odds that He was with us even in the darkest of nights. He was always there. He has always been there.

Sometimes it seems that the darkness cannot get any darker.

More Jews observe Chanukah than any other Jewish festival. Those lights did not burn for just eight days. Those little lights have been burning for more than two thousand years. However far someone may be from their Jewish roots, you can still find a Menorah burning in the window. A little spark that lingers on. A holy spark hidden in the heart of a child.

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From: **Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky** <rmk@torah.org> Date: Wed, Dec 21, 2022 at 3:49 PM Subject: Drasha - Mercy Filling To: <drasha@torah.org>

### **Parshas Miketz Mercy Filling**

Parshas Miketz details the continuing saga of Yoseph and his brothers. Yoseph's brothers, forced by the famine that gripped the land of Canaan, travelled to the only country that had food – Egypt. They were placed in front of Yoseph, the Viceroy of Egypt, and he recognized them. They however, did not realize that the Egyptian Viceroy was the brother they had sold some twenty-two years earlier. Yoseph immediately accused them of being spies and when they communicated their familial history to him mentioning that they had left a younger brother behind, Yoseph seized the opportunity. In order to prove their truthfulness, he ordered one of the brothers to be held hostage until the rest of the brothers would return with Binyamin, the youngest sibling.

When the brothers returned home, Yaakov chided them for revealing the whereabouts of Rachel's lone surviving son; he was reluctant to allow them to bring Binyamin to Egypt citing his fears for his son's safety.

But the brothers convinced Yaakov that there was no other option and finally he sent them off with the following blessing: "If it must be so, then do this – Take of the land's glory in your baggage and bring it down to the man as a tribute – a bit of balsam, a bit of honey, wax, lotus, pistachios, and almonds.... Take your brother, and arise, return to the man. And may Almighty G-d give to you mercy in front of the man that he may release to

you your other brother as well as Binyamin. And as for me, as I have been bereaved, so I am bereaved." (Genesis 43:11-14).

The expression, "may Almighty G-d give to you mercy in front of the man" seems strange. Why did Yaakov pray the the Almighty give the brother's mercy? Shouldn't Yaakov have prayed that Hashem give Yoseph the attribute of mercy, saying, "may G-d let the man have mercy upon you." Why is Yaakov asking Hashem to bestow the brothers with mercy instead asking the Almighty to bestow the attribute of mercy upon the antagonistic Viceroy whom they would soon face?

Rav Yoseph Chaim Sonnenfeld would tell the story of the Rav of Shadik, Poland. He was newly appointed when he was warned of a particular Jew who was known as a government informer, who would strong-arm the previous Rabbi and community leaders into giving him high honors in the synagogue and into allowing him to lead the rituals.

The new Rav would stand for none of this. When the man was called for the sixth aliyah the first Shabbos, he began making his way from his seat on the eastern wall of the synagogue to the bimah, when suddenly the new Rabbi began to shout. "Where do you think you are going? You are known as an informant to the government which is of the worst crimes a Jew can commit. How dare you show your face in the synagogue, let alone take a place for an aliyah? Get out of the shul! The man froze in horror. Then, before storming out of the synagogue, he shook his fist at the Rabbi while muttering, "I will teach you all a lesson."

A few months later, the Rav who was also a mohel, was on his way to perform a bris. He was a mile or so outside the city when suddenly a wagon containing the informer overtook his own coach. The informer jumped to the footrest of the wagon, and while the Rabbi's two students recoiled in fear, the man threw himself in front of the Rabbi and began to beg for forgiveness from the entire community.

The Rabbi explained, "Shlomo Hamelech tells us, 'Like a reflection in the water so is the face of man to man'" (Proverbs 27:19). From the moment after I admonished this fellow, all I did was try to find out about his good qualities. Then I concentrated my hardest on creating a deep love for this Jew and that love exuded from my soul. When the alleged informer saw me today, he experienced that love that I had for him and he reciprocated. As he felt the same way about me as I did for him. He understood his terrible misdeeds of his past life and repented with a sincere heart. It is only through that love that he repented and we became endeared to each other.

Rabbi Avraham Chaim of Zlatchov explains: Yaakov explained to his children that in order for the Viceroy to have mercy upon them, they must approach him with mercy as well. Thus he says, "may Almighty G-d give to you mercy in front of the man." Sometimes it is we who must fill our hearts with love in order to get that same love and mercy back in return.

Dedicated by Mr. and Mrs. Ben Heller in loving memory of Sydney Turkel Copyright © 2002 by Rabbi M. Kamenetzky and Project Genesis, Inc. If you enjoy the weekly Drasha, now you can receive the best of Drasha in book form! Purchase Parsha Parables at a very special price! The author is the Dean of the Yeshiva of South Shore.

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from: Aish.com Weekly Torah Portion <newsletterserver@aish.com> date: Dec 21, 2022, 12:10 PM subject: Mikeitz (Genesis 41:1-44:17) **Language of Tomorrow**

### **by South Africa Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein**

A name reveals so much, especially the name of a festival. It captures the essence of the message of the holy days. We're celebrating Hanukkah, and so it is worthwhile to embark on a journey of discovery into understanding the name of this festival. What does 'Hanukkah' actually mean? Why was this name chosen to capture the essence of these holy days? Perhaps, if we understand the origins of the word itself, we can begin to understand the essence of these holy days.

One of our great sages, known as the Maharsha, says the word Hanukkah comes from the Hebrew word which means to dedicate, and refers to the dedication of the new altar, which was built after the Maccabees recaptured



the Temple. The story of Hanukkah is set during the time of the mighty Greek empire, which had invaded the land of Israel and imposed not just political dominion over the Jewish people, but cultural and ideological hegemony too. In seeking to impose Hellenistic values and philosophy, and supplant Torah values and a Jewish way of life, the Greeks outlawed the performance of many crucial mitzvot, including Shabbos and circumcision - in an attempt to subvert the entire Jewish value system. Their campaign is captured in the siddur, in a special paragraph we say during Hanukkah: "The Greek kingdom rose up against Your people Israel to make them forget Your Torah and to remove them from the statutes of Your will."

The epicentre of this ideological battle was the Beit HaMikdash - the Holy Temple. Unlike the Romans, who came after the Greeks, and who actually burnt the Temple to the ground, the Greeks were more intent on transforming the Temple and redirecting it towards their own pagan, polytheistic rites and rituals. They brought idols into its sacred precinct and used the Temple and its facilities for their pagan worship.

And so when the Jewish people, led by the heroic Maccabees, were able to defeat the Greek empire and restore freedom to the land of Israel, through the miracles of God, one of the first things they did was to purify the Temple - as we say in our prayers: "And afterwards Your children came to the Holy of Holies of Your House, cleansed Your Temple and purified Your sanctuary and kindled lights in the courtyards of Your Holy Place, and established these eight days of Hanukkah to express thanks and praise to Your Great Name."

The battle itself was miraculous - an ad hoc collection of a small group of amateur soldiers, militarily defeating the mighty Greek empire. But the defining miracle of Hanukkah is the oil that burned for eight days. When the victorious Maccabees re-entered the temple, they could only find one small jug of oil that had remained sealed up and uncontaminated, and therefore fit to be used for the menorah in the Temple. And although it only contained enough oil to sustain the menorah for one day, it miraculously lasted for eight days, by which time further oil could be procured.

This action of lighting the menorah and dedicating the newly constructed altar served not just to return the Temple to its sacred service - it also symbolised a complete spiritual rededication of Jewish society at large. And so Hanukkah represents rededication after the destruction and a recommitment after a period of spiritual darkness.

This applies no less to today's times. Today, when we celebrate Hanukkah and kindle the lights of our menorah, we are in effect rededicating ourselves to spirituality and living Godly lives. We see this contemporary relevance in the actual words we say at this time; we thank God for the miracles of Hanukkah, "in those days and in this time".

What an interesting phrase, "in those days and in this time". The Ramchal explains that Jewish time is not linear, but cyclical; that every year, when, for example, Pesach comes around, it's not that we are remembering an event that happened in the distant past, but rather we cycle back to re-experience the same spiritual energy, the same primordial energy of freedom that was unleashed in the world at the time of the original Pesach.

And so too with Hanukkah. The Divine light and energy of renewal and rededication, which led to the miraculous events of Hanukkah, returns to the world every year at this time - hence, "in those days and in this time."

Hanukkah has been a beacon of light for the Jewish people throughout the generations. In one historic era after another, we have drawn on its light to rededicate and renew ourselves, to rise up from imposing physical and spiritual challenges and infuse ourselves with renewed inspiration and strength. The remarkable thing about Jewish history is, simply put, that we are still here. We have stood the test of time. No other nation has survived under such difficult circumstances; no other nation has endured such dispersion, with its value system and its identity and its vision for the future intact. The energy of rededication and renewal has powered the Jewish people through history.

And the light and energy of Hanukkah is there for us to draw on in our personal lives. Each one of us goes through times when we start to lose our

way, when we feel flat and uninspired, and disconnected from the light of Torah. Contained in Hanukkah is the power to bounce back, to refresh and reinvigorate ourselves, and our connection to God and His Torah.

The power to "bounce back" is embodied by God Himself. One of the 613 commandments is to "walk in the ways of God". The Talmud explains that one's purpose in life is to emulate God, specifically in terms of His compassion and kindness. Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik expands this definition to include the mitzvah of Creation itself. Just as God created the world, we are also called on to create the world with flourishing families and societies. Rav Soloveitchik refers to a Midrash, which says that before this world was created, there were many other worlds that God created and subsequently destroyed.

Rav Soloveitchik explains that from this Midrash we learn that there is not only a mitzvah to create, but also a mitzvah to recreate after a period of destruction. We "walk in the way of God" and rebuild after setbacks and stumbles. We do so on a personal level and we do so on a national level, drawing on the spirit of Hanukkah. As human beings, we are susceptible to mistakes. But we have the ability to bounce back - to rededicate ourselves to our task, redouble our efforts, renew our lives. This is the message of Hanukkah. It is this spirit of renewal and rededication that has animated so much of Jewish history.

We have seen this particularly in the years since the Holocaust, as the Jewish world, with God's blessings, has renewed and rebuilt itself. There was the miraculous creation of the State of Israel three years after the Holocaust ended, and then the equally miraculous rebuilding of the great citadels of Torah learning - the yeshivot - after they were all but blotted out.

Together, these have led to a rebirth of Jewish life. This is the spirit and the energy of Hanukkah made manifest on a national level, and it is the spirit and energy of Hanukkah that we can apply on a personal level as well - the spirit to renew, to rebuild, to recreate, to start again - just as our ancestors did when they re-entered the Temple, rebuilt the altar, and rekindled the flame of Judaism. "In those days and in this time."

It happened then and it can happen now.

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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.

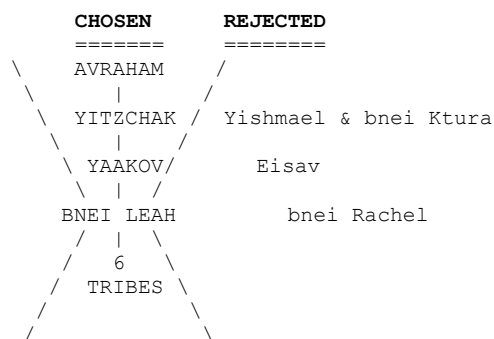
## REJECTED FROM THE BECHIRA PROCESS

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 "teshuva" (repentance). What is Yosef's intention in all of this?

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

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

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

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

## PLAYING 'GOD' OR PLAYING 'LEADER'

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

To support our thesis, note how Yosef (after revealing his 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 Uria the Hiti with a sword and taken his wife as your wife; you killed him with the sword of the children of Ammon . . . You acted in secret, but I will [punish you] before all of Israel, before the sun!'"

David said, "I have sinned to God."

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

OK. Let us now compare these stories:

## YEHUDA

## DAVID

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

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

[Many like to point out that Rav Shmuel b. Nahmeini -- Shabbat 56a -- 'reinterprets' David's actions and claims that he did not actually sin in taking Bat Sheva and having Uria 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’resheet 42:8-9). What was it about his dreams that caused him to accuse them of being spies?

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

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

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

Hag Urim Sameach: Happy Hanukkah to all of our Haverim

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