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BS"D

## INTERNET PARSHA SHEET ON MIKEITZ - 5781

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**Of Miketz, Menorahs, and Majesty**  
**By Daniel Z. Feldman**

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

**Kevod Ha-Malchut**

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

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

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

In considering the obligation of kevod ha-malkhut, R. Simcha Zissel Broide, the late Rosh Yeshivah of the Chevron Yeshivah, posits[6] [6] a number of theories explaining its importance. Among the five points that he makes is what he considers a fundamental principle of the human personality: It is crucial for one's spiritual development that he possess the ability to appreciate great things. One who is jaded and cynical, who views all things with disinterest, is unable to attain any kind of meaningful spiritual maturity. Thus, it is critical to hone one's awareness of the extraordinary, and the attitude one brings toward royalty is certainly reflective of this vital attribute.

It is interesting to note that there is another (seasonally appropriate) comment of the Chatam Sofer that is also somewhat surprising. We are in the midst of celebrating Chanukah. We generally assume that Chanukah and Purim, clearly post-Biblical in origin, are observed as chiyuvim mi-de-rabanan.[7] [7] Nonetheless, maintains the Chatam Sofer[8] [8], if one would let the occasions of Chanukah or Purim pass by without any acknowledgement, this would be the wrong thing on a level mi-d'orayta.

**Appreciating Greatness and Majesty**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

[9] [21] *Shemot* 20:16

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

to see if Yehuda who was the one who suggested selling him into slavery would fight to protect his brother Binyamin. Yehuda was guilty in the sale of Yosef. After Yehuda was willing to stand up for Binyamin Yosef realized that this was no longer the same Yehuda who sold him into slavery. Had they not been willing to lay down their own lives to save Binyamin, the entire Jewish history would have unfolded differently. Therefore the Torah says that Yosef recognized his brothers but they did not recognize him. Yosef recognized that the divine plan was unfolding, but his brothers did not. The Rav asked why the Torah states so many times that Yosef remembered his brothers and the dreams that he told to them. Why not say that Yosef remembered what his brothers did to him: he remembered that they sold him into slavery! Why did he have to say that they were spies who had discovered the weak parts of the land? The Rav explained that Yosef had doubts up till this point as to what was the purpose of his being sold into slavery in Egypt. He wanted to determine if indeed the arrival of the brothers in Egypt and the fulfillment of the dreams that he had many years before were all part of the master plan of Hashem for the Jewish People. Was he the messenger of Hashem who was to play a role in the destiny of the Jewish people, and were his dreams a part of that role, or were he and his dreams insignificant in the context of Jewish destiny. Yosef recalled his dreams and realized that they were important and that he was meant to play a central role. What did his dreams indicate? They told him that he was the messenger of Hashgacha Hashem. The dreams indicated that he, Yosef, would be the leader. But beyond that he had another mission. He would blaze the trail that the Jewish people would follow during their exile and for their eventual redemption. Yosef was an integral part of the process of exile and redemption in that he showed that it was possible to remain faithful to the principles of Avraham Avinu while trapped within even the mightiest empire. It was possible to rise to the level of viceroy of Egypt, and still be faithful to the beliefs of Yaakov. As the midrash says (brought down by Rashi) on the verse *Pi Hamedaber Alaychem* that Yosef was speaking to them in *Lashon Hakodesh*. In fact, this was the greatest miracle of the sojourn in Egypt. Reuven VShimon Nichnasu Reuven VShimon Yatzu, they entered and left Egypt with the same convictions and were not changed by Egyptian society. Yosef was required to be the leader in order that he might set an example of how to survive in a foreign land and remain true to the *Bris Avraham*. When Yosef saw his brothers, he remembered them and the dreams he told them. He recognized that the Hashgacha appointed him as leader and as such he had to make sure that they would be ready for the difficult exile period that awaited them. He had to determine if they were still the same divided group that sold him into slavery years before. It was the dreams that gave him the right to test and even torment his brothers in order to find out. The dreams said that he was the leader. As the leader he had a right to use whatever means at his disposal to accomplish his task. The Midrash says that Hashem told Moshe that he had to take a stick and hit the people over the head to get them to listen to him. Even though Moshe was the most humble of men, a leader must often put aside his humility, even inflict pain if necessary, when called upon to act decisively. The Torah mentions that Yosef remembered his dreams at the point where he met his brothers in order to indicate that the message of the dreams, that he was to be the leader, were his sanction to act harshly with them, as he did in the following chapters. The Torah says that *Bnay Yaakov* were among the multitudes that came to purchase food from Egypt. They had a very simple intention in coming: to purchase food. They did not realize that their trip was another step in the process of their eventual exile and subjugation in a foreign land as foretold in the *Bris Bayn Habesarim* as well as the ultimate redemption from there. The Hashgacha was that the *Bnay Yaakov* should arrive in Egypt in stages, first 1 (Yosef) followed by 10 others, followed by the last brother and eventually to be followed by the rest of the house of Yaakov. The Torah says that Yosef was the overseer of all of Egypt and that he was the supplier of food overall. Why mention this in connection with the arrival of the brothers and Yosef's recollection of his dreams? Why are we interested that Yosef was the mainstay of the Egyptian economic

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

from: Aish.com <newsletterserver@aish.com> via em.secureserver.net date: Dec 16, 2020, 4:32 PM subject: Advanced Parsha - Mikeitz

### **Covenant and Conversation from Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks Z"l**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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from: **Rabbi Berel Wein** <genesis@torah.org> reply-to: do-not-reply@torah.org to: rabbiwein@torah.org date: Dec 18, 2020, 12:17 AM subject: Rabbi Wein - Twists and Turns  
Dedicated to the speedy recovery of Mordechai ben Chaya  
Parshas Miketz Twists and Turns

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

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

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

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

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

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

Shabbat shalom  
Rabbi Berel Wein

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

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

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

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

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

1) RAV YOEL BIN NUN'S SOLUTION: The usual solution, advanced by the Ramban that Yosef was trying to fulfill the dreams, is rejected by R. Bin Nun, chiefly because it doesn't address, in his opinion, the moral question. How could Yosef have left his father in torment, only to bring his dreams to fruition? Our entire outlook on this story changes, however, if we accept the fact that Joseph did not know that his brothers had fooled his father with the coat, the blood, and the lie that Joseph had been devoured by wild animals. Such thoughts never occurred to him! Hence it was Joseph who spent thirteen years of slavery in Egypt and, the following years of greatness wondering: "Where is my father? Why has no one come to look for me?" All the factors are now reversed, when seen from Joseph's point of view. Egypt is, after all, close to Canaan, and Jacob was a rich, important and influential man, with international familial and political connections. The Midianites or Ishmaelites who brought Joseph to Egypt were his cousins; is it possible that no one from that caravan could be located in all those years? We know that Jacob does not search for his son, as he thinks Joseph is dead, but Joseph has no way of knowing this. Joseph's wonder at his father's silence is joined by a terrible sense of anxiety which grows stronger over the years, as seasons and years pass by and no one comes. Joseph's anguish centers on his father: the voice inside him asking "where is my father?" is joined by another harsh voice: "Why did my father send me to my brothers that day?" He concludes that his brothers must have succeeded in convincing Jacob, and he has been disowned. Years later, when Joseph rides in the viceroy's chariot, when he shaves his beard and stands before Pharaoh, it is clear to him that God must have decreed that his life would be lived separately from his family's. He gives expression to this feeling in the name he gives his eldest son, born of an Egyptian wife: ...he called him Menashe, because God has made me forget (nashani) all my labor and my father's house (41:51). To forget his father's house! Joseph's entire world is built on the misconception that his father has renounced him, while Jacob's world is destroyed by the misconception that Joseph is dead. Joseph's world is shaken when his brothers stand before him, not knowing who he is, and bow down to him. At that moment, he must question this new reality ("he remembers the dreams he dreamt about them") and is thrown back into the past. Stalling for time, he begins a line of inquiry and action which is geared to one end: to find out why his father had rejected him, if at all. He plots to keep Benjamin, so that his maternal brother can tell him all that has transpired. This was Joseph's plan to find out what had happened and how to deal with it. Judah's response was an attempt to obtain Benjamin's release by appealing for mercy for his aged father. In so doing, he tells Joseph totally unintentionally exactly what he wanted so desperately to hear, thereby freeing him and eventually Jacob, from their mutual errors. "Your servant our father said to us: 'You know that my wife bore me two sons. One has left me; I said he was devoured and I have not seen him since. (If) you take this son too and tragedy befalls him you will bring my old age down to She'ol in agony' " (44:24 30). Joseph needs to hear no more. He finally realizes the naked truth: No one has cut him off at all! He has not been forgotten! Joseph could no longer restrain himself before all who were standing before him, and cried: 'Have every one leave me!'... and he cried out loud... and he told his brothers: I am Joseph: Is my father still alive? (45:1 3) Does he live? Is he yet my father, who loves me and has not forgotten me? Is it possible?

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

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

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

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

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

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

From: Rabbi Mordechai Kornfeld [kornfeld@netmedia.net.il](mailto:kornfeld@netmedia.net.il) 1996 parasha page@jer1.co.il" Miketz 5757

"King Solomon's wisdom"

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

by Mordecai Kornfeld of Har Nof, Jerusalem (kornfeld@jer1.co.il) <sup>2</sup>

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

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

The Haftorah of Parashat Miketz is somewhat "deprived." Since our practice is to prefer the Haftorah of the holiday to the Haftorah of the Parasha, the Haftorah designated for Parashat Miketz is almost never read. **Only on those rare occasions (often at 20 year intervals) that Miketz is read on the Shabbat following Chanukah, do we read Miketz's "true" Haftorah, the story of King Solomon and the stolen baby.** Even though we discussed this subject in an earlier issue, it is worthwhile to review the Me'iri's beautiful interpretation of that story on this occasion. In the beginning of the book of Melachim we read that Hashem promised Shlomo at the age of twelve that He would be granted great wisdom - he was to be the wisest man ever to live (Melachim I 3:12). In order to illustrate that the blessing of immeasurable wisdom was indeed fulfilled, the Navi relates the following account of a case that was brought before Shlomo and his wise judgment of the case: At that time two women came to the King and stood before him. One woman said, "My lord: I and this woman dwell in the same house, and I gave birth while with her in the house. On the third day after I gave birth, this woman gave birth as well. We live together; there is no outsider with us in the house; only the two of us were in the house. The son of this woman died that night, because she lay upon him. She arose during the night and took my son from my side while I was asleep, and laid him in her bosom, and her dead son she laid in my bosom. When I got up in the morning to nurse my son, behold, he was dead! But when I observed him (later on) in the morning, I realized that he was not the son to whom I had given birth!" The other woman replied, "It is not so! My son is the live one, and your son is the dead one." But this one said, "It is not so! Your son is the dead one, and my son is the live one!" And they went on speaking before the King. The King said, "This one claims, 'My son is the live one, and your son is the dead one,' and this one claims, 'It is not so! Your son is the dead one, and my son is the living one.'" So the King said, "Get me a sword!" and they brought a sword before the King. The King said, "Cut the living child in two and give half to one and half to the other."

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

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

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

**III SOME OF THE LAWS OF YIBUM** If there are brothers, and one of them dies without children, the wife of the deceased man may not marry "out," to another man. Her brother in law (that is, her levir, or husband's brother) must marry her and thus perform "Yibum" [=levirate marriage] on her.... If the man does not want to marry her, she shall approach the elders and declare, "My brother in law refuses to establish his brother's name in Israel; he does not consent to perform "Yibum" on me" .... Then she shall approach him in the presence of the elders and remove his shoe from his foot, and spit in front of him, and proclaim, "Such should be done to a man who would not build up his brother's house!" (Devarim 25:5,7,9) (1) "Yibum," as mentioned above, is only applicable when a man dies childless. "Dying childless" includes cases where a man once had children, but those children were already dead at the time of his own death (Yevamot 87b). (2) If the deceased man has no living children but he does have living grandchildren, he is not considered to be "childless." Therefore, there is no "Yibum" (ibid. 70a). (3) The widow is only bound to marry her husband's \*brother\*. If the deceased husband does not leave behind a living brother, his wife is free to marry whoever she pleases (ibid. 17b). (4) If the deceased left behind any offspring at all, there is no "Yibum" even if the offspring is only one day old. Not only that, but even if the offspring is still a fetus at the time of the husband's death, its mother is exempted from being bound to the living brother. This is only true, however, when the offspring is viable. If the fetus is aborted or stillborn, or even if it is born alive but dies or is killed before it has lived for thirty days, it is not considered to have ever been a viable offspring. "Yibum" is therefore required (ibid. 111b; Shabbat 136a). (5) If the brother of the deceased is a minor, the widow is still bound to him. In this case, however, she does not have the option of freeing herself through the "Chalitzah" ceremony, since a minor is not able to perform a "Chalitzah." Instead, she must wait 13 years, until the brother is thirteen years old, in order for him to be able to perform a "Chalitzah." Only then may she remarry (Yevamot 105b). (Even should she want to marry this minor, and have him perform "Yibum," she must wait at least until he is 9 years old Niddah 45a.)

**IV THE WILY YEVAHMAH** Let us now return to Shlomo's judgment. The Midrash (Koheleth Rabba 10:16) tells us that the reason both of these women were so desperate to have the living child declared theirs was that they were both potential "Yevamot" [=widows subject to "Yibum"; singular form is "Yevamah"]. Neither of the two had any other offspring. Whoever would be judged to be the childless woman would not only lose the infant, but would also be trapped in the unpleasant status of "Yevamah," being dependent upon her brother in law's good will. There is another Midrash (Yalkut Shimoni 2:175), that asserts that the husbands of the two women were father and son. That is, one woman was the mother in law of the other. The above commentators suggest that these two Midrashim may be complementing each other. The two women the mother in law and the daughter in law had just been bereaved of their husbands, and needed a live child to exempt them from the status of "Yevamah." Both gave birth to babies. However, these two babies were still less than thirty days old at the time that one of them died, as the verse indicates. The mother of the dead child would therefore be subject to the laws of "Yibum" (rule #4). This, then, was the motivation of the lying mother to try to kidnap the other woman's child. Now, if it was the mother in law's child who had died, she would have no reason to try to seize her daughter in law's child. Even though her son (husband of the daughter in law) had passed away \*before\* her husband had, and therefore \*he\* would not exempt her from "Yibum" (rule #1), nevertheless, she would be exempt from "Yibum" for another reason. The living child, if he was not her own child, was at least her \*son's\* child, and a grandchild is enough to exempt one from "Yibum" (rule #2)!

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

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From: **Rabbi Yissocher Frand** <ryfrand@torah.org> reply-to: do-not-reply@torah.org to: ravfrand@torah.org date: Dec 17, 2020, 5:44 PM subject: Rav Frand - The Names Menashe and Ephraim Parshas Miketz The Names Menashe and Ephraim

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Name Ephraim Comes from the Word Efer (Ashes)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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subject: Torah Weekly

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

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

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**Shema Yisrael Torah Network**  
**Peninim on the Torah - Parshas Mikeitz**  
**פרשת מקץ השפ"א**

**יקמו שבע שני רעב ואחריהו ונשכח כל השבע בארץ מצרים**  
**The seven years of famine will arise after them, and all the abundance in the land of Egypt will be forgotten. (41:30)**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**ויקרא יוסף את שם הבכור מנשה כי נשני אלקים את כל עמלי ואת כל בית אבי**  
**Yosef called the name of the firstborn Menashe for, "G-d has made me forget all my hardship and all my father's household." (41:51)**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**אבל אשמים אנחנו על אחינו אשר ראינו צרת נפשו בהתחננו אלינו ולא שמענו**  
**Indeed, we are guilty concerning our brother inasmuch as we saw his heartfelt anguish when he pleaded with us and we paid no heed. (42:21)**

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

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

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

In *Nifle’osecha Asichah, Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita*, relates a frightening story which was publicized in the media. I say “frightening,” because it is a story that could happen to anyone. It all depends upon the decisions we make in life. Jack (his name) was the consummate businessman. If he had a meeting, its importance notwithstanding, it took priority, and timeliness was essential. He expected that anyone attending a meeting be present on time, regardless of the personal inconvenience. A schedule was to be honored and adhered to. Just as Jack demanded of others, he was equally demanding of himself. It was, thus,

understandable that when representatives of a large overseas corporation sought to meet with him, he took this meeting seriously. They sought someone who could navigate American bureaucracy, so that they could look forward to building their company in the States. This meeting was very important to Jack, because it could very well determine his future trajectory.

The meeting was called for 9:00 a.m. Not wanting to take chances, he left his home at 7:00 a.m. in the hope to avoid traffic and arrive early. He planned to stop at a diner and order a cup of coffee. Unfortunately, we all have those days when nothing seems to go right. That day was Jack’s day for taking the wrong car, which had no gas, to getting stuck in a traffic jam, to being forced to take a detour in the road due to a broken water main. He was no longer going to be early. He would be lucky to arrive in time for the meeting. The clock was ticking, and 9:00 a.m. loomed larger than ever. At the last detour, his frustration got the better of him. As he was about to go into meltdown mode, he reminded himself of a seldom used shortcut. It was far off the beaten path, but it would allow him to save the day and arrive at his meeting on time.

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

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

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

*לזכר נשמת שמעון בן יהודה*

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