

B'S'D'

To: Parsha@YahooGroups.com  
From: crshulman@aol.com

## INTERNET PARSHA SHEET ON VAYESHEV - 5762

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Mazal tov to Rabbi Eli Shulman on the birth of a baby girl Tamar Lifsha.

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From: <sbeshansky@idbny.com> Please be mispallel for CHANA BAS NAOMI who has been paralyzed from the waist down due to a drive by shooting in Kfar Darom

From: SF45678@aol.com The Chief Rabbi of France fell suddenly seriously ill yesterday and remains in serious condition. He is a tremendous tsaddik and has done an enormous amount for Eretz Yisrael. Please say tehillim for YOSSEF CHAIM BEN SIMHA. I received a reliable message that his name now includes "Chaim". <http://www.viejuive.com/>

From: Yaelle Metzman <joelle.metzman@csfb.com> My sister from France asked me to forward this message: Please read Tehillim for a Refouah Shelemah, for Laurent Blum, a friend from France, who sustained head injuries in last Saturday's suicide attack in Jerusalem. His Hebrew name is now: CHAIM (just added) DAN BEN CHAYA He just came out of a coma and will be undergoing a risky and unpredictable surgery in the head.

From: silvers@netvision.net.il To: Prayers-InjuredVAT@yahoogroups.com ... I have the names of four youths who were lightly injured in the bombings on Saturday night, Dec. 1st. BARUCH YEHUDA ZEEV BEN CHAYA AVIHU BEN ESTHER YOSEF BEN YOCHAVED DOVID GABAI BEN LULA There are all in Hadassah Hospital, Mt. Scopus and imagine they will be going home by next week. I have the name of three American students who are here on a one year program and were also injured in the Saturday night bombings. I have no idea what their status is. YEHUDIT ARIELLA BAT CHANA PEREL TEMIMA FAYGA BAT NAOMI DINA YITZCHAK ALEXANDER BEN ZAHAVA

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From: RABBI YISSOCHER FRAND <ryfrand@torah.org>  
"RavFrand" List - Rabbi Frand on Parshas VaYeishev -  
The Test You Face May Be Your Own

Yosef was confronted by the test of Potiphar's wife. Potiphar had taken Yosef in and appointed him in charge of the entire house. Later, Potiphar's wife tried to seduce Yosef. She persisted day after day. Yosef told her that it was simply improper. It would be a terrible crime for Yosef to do anything with her, in light of all that her husband had done for him. "There is no one in the house who is greater than me, he did not refuse me anything - except for you since you are his wife - how then could I do this great act of wickedness; and I would thereby be sinning against G-d" [Bereshis 39:9].

Rav Gifter (1916-2001) asked an interesting question. Yosef enumerated all the reasons why it would be inappropriate for him to commit this act. However, why didn't Yosef tell her why it would be inappropriate for HER to commit the act? He should have told her that she would be betraying her husband, who was so kind and good to HER. He should have told her "You are a married woman - Noachides are prohibited from adultery!" Why did Yosef only focus on why HE should not perform this sin?

Rav Gifter answered that when Yosef felt the severity of this test, he sensed that the reason why he was facing this particular situation was due to a shortcoming in his own personality. He felt that in spite of her obligations, it was basically his fault and his test. He felt that had he maintained the level of purity and sanctity that was appropriate for him

as the favorite son of his elderly father, Yaakov, he would have never faced such a situation.

Yosef thought to himself, "I got into this situation as a result of failing to do everything properly. I apparently made mistakes." When a person finds himself in such a situation, it is usually not because 'all of a sudden' the situation evolved. The situation usually has a history. Apparently he did not enact all the proper boundaries and separations and fences much earlier in the developing scenario to preempt such a situation from ever occurring.

These situations do not develop in 5 minutes. They develop over the course of weeks, months and years. Therefore, ultimately, Yosef felt that it was his test and his problem. Consequently, he had to convince himself that HE (not she) was the one who could not proceed, for all the reasons enumerated.

This concept contains a significant lesson. Sometimes people are faced with situations that test their spirituality. There are all kinds of excuses for succumbing to these situations. There are many people to blame for these tempting situations. Perhaps spouses sometimes share some blame for the temptations that a person confronts when tempted by infidelity. But ultimately a person must know and realize that it is HIS test and HIS responsibility.

Yes, maybe it is not completely his fault. Maybe if things had developed differently or if some people were more understanding and more helpful, he would not be in this mess. Yes, there may be contributory negligence. But this is not a lawsuit. This is a test. Ultimately, we have to deal with our tests ourselves. Ultimately we must not shift the blame. We must ask ourselves "How can I do this great evil act?" If one succumbs, it will be his fault alone. He will be held fully accountable and will have to pay the price.

Transcribed by David Twersky; Seattle, WA  
DavidATwersky@aol.com Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman; Baltimore, MD dhoffman@torah.org These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape # 308, Secular Studies. Tapes or 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 <http://www.yadyechiel.org/> for further information. RavFrand, Copyright 1 2001 by Rabbi Yissocher Frand and Torah.org. Torah.org: The Judaism Site <http://www.torah.org/>

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From "Benjamin G. Kelsen, Esq." <benish@att.net>  
HAGAON HARAV SHLOMO ELIMELECH DRILLMAN, zt"l  
11/16/96 It is interesting to note that in every place in the Torah that the name of Binyomin is mentioned the name is written in what is referred to as the 'chasair' or 'abridged' form, with only one 'yud', except for the passuk telling us of the birth of Yaakov's youngest son. This is a fascinating point because of all of the events in the life of Binyomin this was perhaps the most distressing due to the intense difficulty that his mother Rachel had in bearing him and her ultimate demise due to complications from child birth. Why is it this episode that the Torah chose to use the full and unabridged form of Binyomin's name?

Rachel knew and understood that she would not be the one to raise her second son, to nurture and train him in the way that Sarah and Rivkah had been able to raise their children. It was for this reason that Rachel called her son 'Ben Oni.' It has been suggested that 'ben oni' was not meant to suggest that Binyomin was the source of Rachel's hardships, rather that he was the fruit of the trials that she faced.

Yaakov himself vetoes his wife's choice and names their son Binyomin "son if my right hand". It is in this verse, the initial naming of the last of the Shivtei Koh that spells out the name in unabridged form. What was Yaakov teaching and imparting through this naming of his son?

In essence Yaakov Avinu was trying to teach Binyomin that it was not the son's fault that Rachel died during childbirth. However, on a deeper level, Yaakov was trying to relate the idea that even in times of great difficulty, when success and triumph seem to be the most distant

or even impossible to achieve, a person must strive to reach that goal.

It was precisely for this reason that the Beis HaMikdash was located within the borders of Shevet Binyomin's territory. How So? Because Binyomin, the only one of the family of Yaakov not yet alive during the family's reunion with Eisav, did not bow to Eisav at their meeting. Binyomin did not suggest that Eisav was worthy of greater respect than Yaakov or that Eisav had the potential to destroy the line of Yaakov at the beginning of Parshas Vayislach. The 'son of my right hand', the right being considered in rabbinical literature as the stronger of the two hands, is meant to show that we must utilize our internal strength when faced with adversity.

It is no coincidence therefore, according to Chazal, that Binyomin is among those who lived their entire lives free of sin and only died because of the HKB" H's imposing His decree of mortality against humanity following the sin of Adom HaRishon.

Chazal teach us that a person's name has much to do with their personality and character traits. In the case of Binyomin the adding of 'yud' to his name at the time of birth is to teach us that it was the will of HKB" H that history occurred as it did. And what do we make of the Torah's use of the abridged form of Binyomin's name in the rest of the Chumash? We often find that the adding of a 'yud' to a person's name, such as in the case of Yonasan ben Shaul HaMelech, is to signify that HKB" H has a special connection to that person. So too in the case of Binyomin ben Yaakov. However, what do we make of the fact that the clear majority of the time that his name appears, 'Binyomin' is spelled in the abridged manner? Since we know that Binyomin always had a special relationship with the Ribbono shel Olam the lack of the 'yud' cannot mean that their relationship was any less when the name appears abridged. Rather we are to learn and internalize the idea that even when we cannot see Him, even when times are at their most distressing and dark, HKB" H is always with us and we must only find the courage to face the darkness, the trials and tribulations with the knowledge that though the 'yud' may not be written or seen, it really is always there, just as HKB" H is always with us. This is the message of Binyomin's name.

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<http://www.tzemachdavid.org/thepracticaltorah/vayeishev.shtml>

THE PRACTICAL TORAH

BY RABBI MICHAEL TAUBES

Parshas VaYeishev: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF DREAMS

No definitive Halacha LeMa'aseh conclusions should be applied to practical situations based on any of these Shiurim.

After Yosef has a second dream which depicts himself demonstrating superiority over his brothers, Yaakov gets angry at him and challenges the validity of the dream because it included, as apparently was understood and is explained by the Midrash in Bereishis Rabbah (Parshas 84 Siman 10), the fact that his mother Rochel would bow down to him (Bereishis 37:10). This would be, of course, impossible, because Rochel was no longer alive when Yosef had this dream. Rashi (Ibid. s.v. Ha'Bo) says that Yaakov's intent with this criticism of the dream was to convince Yosef's brothers to forget about the whole matter, telling them that just as it was obviously impossible for the part of the dream about Rochel bowing to Yosef to come true, so too the rest of the dream is likewise worthless. In truth, however, it is quite possible for part or even most of a dream to come true, even if some of it does not. In fact, the Gemara in Berachos (55a-55b) derives from this very incident that no dream ever comes true completely; even if part of a dream comes true, there is always some part of it which is meaningless and will not come true.

The implication of this Gemara, though, is that there is significance to what one sees in one's dreams, and at least part of the dream may actually come true. On the other hand, of course, some dreams do not come true at all. Interestingly, the Riva, in his commentary on this Parsha (Bereishis Ibid. Pasuk 5), quotes a view that Yosef actually had a third dream which was not recorded in the Torah; he even suggests what this dream was about, as does the Bartenura, in his commentary on the Torah (Ibid.), who adds that it was not recorded because the brothers were not concerned about it. The Chizkuni, however, in his

commentary on the Parsha (Ibid.), says that this dream was not recorded in the Torah because it did not come true. The question then is, what exactly is the significance, if any, of a dream, according to Chazal, and how seriously should one be concerned about what he sees in his dreams?

There are clearly authorities among Chazal who hold that dreams have no particular significance or validity, that is, they are not indicative of any sign or message being communicated by Hashem which may contain descriptions of future events. The Gemara there in Berachos (Ibid. 55b, and see Ibid. Rashi s.v. Hirhurei) says, for example, that one's dreams at night simply reflect what one has thought about during the day; such a dream obviously does not represent any kind of revelation from Hashem. The Gemara (Ibid.) likewise states that the importance of a dream depends upon how it is interpreted; this too would indicate that the dream alone has no significance. The Tosefta in Ma'aser Sheini (5:6) states clearly and succinctly that dreams have no effect at all, either positive or negative. In commenting on the Gemara in Sanhedrin (30a) where this statement is quoted, the Ran (Chiddushei HaRan to Sanhedrin Ibid. s.v. Bo) writes that even where there are indications that some parts of the dream are true, there is still no Halachic validity to it. The Meiri (Beis HaBechirah Ibid. s.v. Mi) agrees to this point, adding that it is true because even if there are some parts of a dream which represent the truth, there is much nonsense mixed in, and therefore we need not be concerned with it at all.

In the She'iltos of Rav Achai Gaon (Parshas Mikeitz, Sheilta 29), this conclusion that dreams are Halachically irrelevant is reached as well; the Netziv (Ha'Amek Sheilah Ibid. Ot 15) writes that this seems to mean that in all areas of Halacha, one need not be concerned with dreams, although he quotes some who say that only regarding monetary matters are dreams considered irrelevant, while in issues of whether something is permitted or forbidden (Issur V'Heter), we do pay attention to the contents of dreams. The Sdei Chemed (Klalim, Maareches HaDalet Siman 45) discusses this matter at length. The Rambam (Hilchos Maaser Sheini 6:6, Hilchos Zechia U'Matanah 10:7) and the Shulchan Aruch (Choshen Mishpat Siman 255 Sif 9 and Ramo Yoreh Deah Siman 259 Sif 6) rule without making distinctions that the contents of dreams have no particular effect or validity.

On the other hand, there certainly are sources which seem to indicate clearly that dreams do have a certain validity, and one should consequently be concerned with what one sees in one's dream. The Abarbanel, in a lengthy discussion about dreams found in his commentary on the Torah (Beginning of Parshas Mikeitz), notes that elsewhere in the Torah (Bamidbar 12:6), dreaming is compared to receiving a prophecy; the Gemara later in Berachos (57b) indeed states that a dream in a small way is a form of prophecy, while the Midrash in Bereishis Rabbah (Parsha 17 Siman 7) refers to a dream as undeveloped prophecy. The Rambam discusses this relationship between dreams and prophecy at length in his Moreh Nevuchim (Chelek 2, Perakim 36-38, 41-45). The Gemara there in Berachos (Ibid.) as well as on the previous pages (56b-57a) discusses the symbolism of different things that one may see in a dream, and what such a dream indicates for the future of the person who has the dream; an earlier passage in the Gemara there (55b) lists different categories of dreams which come true. The Beis Yosef, in his commentary on the Tur (Orach Chaim Siman 651 s.v. Katav Beis Hillel), quotes a dream by one of the Poskim which confirmed a Halachic requirement; the Taz (Orach Chaim Siman 585 end of Sif Katan 7) likewise cites a dream to explain a certain Halachic issue, as do other Poskim (See Encyclopedia Talmudis, volume 7 "Divrei Chalomos" note 48, 49). The Shiitah Mekubetzes in Bava Metzia (107b s.v. Aval) cites a view that there were Amoraim who relied on dreams for Halachic decisions. Although the Rashba (Sheilos V'Teshuvos Ha'Rashba Chelek 1 Siman 408) writes that the purpose of dreams has not been revealed to us, and although the Shach (Choshen Mishpat Siman 333 Sif Katan 25) as well as the Noda BeYehudah (Sheilos V'Teshuvos Noda BeYehudah Mahadurah Teninah Chelek Yud Siman 30) disregard Halachic decisions rendered in a dream, it appears from the above sources that dreams do have some validity and significance in Halacha, at least

according to some.

To resolve the apparent contradiction between the views among Chazal about dreams, the Abarbanel in Parshas Mikeitz (Ibid.) suggests that there are different types of dreams, one of which is indeed irrelevant and is the product of something physical or psychological in the person who has the dream. This type of dream indeed has no significance according to Halacha. Another type of dream, however, is one which contains a message from Hashem, to inform a person of something, protect him, or let him know about the future; this type is similar to prophecy, although this too may have some extraneous or nonsensical content. The way to tell the difference between the categories, he suggests, is to examine the orderliness and straightforwardness of the dream, as well as the impact it has on the person having the dream. The Sdei Chemed (Ibid.) quotes a view which suggests that a dream is to be considered significant and valid if it relates to the future, but if it relates to the past, it is meaningless; he says, though, that this does not seem to be a widely accepted opinion.

The Sdei Chemed (Ibid.) adds, however, that although many consider dreams to be meaningless, if a dream signals some kind of trouble or danger, it is of Halachic concern to us. The Gemara in Berachos (55b and see Ibid. Tosafos s.v. Sheva) writes that if one has a dream which makes him sad or perturbed, he should follow a prescribed ritual in the presence of three people, which is called HaTavas Chalom, and is printed in many Siddurim. The details of this are outlined in the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim Siman 220 Sif 1); the Magen Avraham (Ibid. Sif Katan 2) writes that it is preferable to do this the morning after one has had the dream.

The Gemara in Shabbos (11a) indicates that one who has had a bad dream should fast what is called a Taanis Chalom in order to nullify any bad decree against him; he must fast on the day on which he had the dream, even if it is Shabbos. The Rivash (Sheilos V'Teshuvos HaRivash Siman 513) writes that one does not have to fast at all for a bad dream if it does not bother him, because it is not a Mitzvah to fast; the Rashba too (Sheilos V'Teshuvos HaRashba Ibid. Siman 132) writes that one has permission to fast (even on Shabbos) for a bad dream, but it is not obligatory. The Shulchan Aruch (Ibid. Sif 2), however, records the importance of this fast; the Ramo (Ibid.) adds that it must be done on that day, even if it's Shabbos. Elsewhere, the Shulchan Aruch (Ibid. Siman 288 Sif 4) rules that one who does fast a Taanis Chalom on Shabbos must then fast another day as well to compensate for the fact that he fasted on Shabbos. The Shulchan Aruch (Ibid. Sif 5) then adds that some hold that one shouldn't fast at all on Shabbos nowadays, unless one sees certain specific visions in one's dream; the Mishnah Berurah (Ibid. Siman 220 Sif Katan 6) notes that the fasting is of value only if it is accompanied by sincere Teshuvah.

The aforementioned Gemara in Berachos (Ibid.) also refers to specific Tefillos (Adir BaMarom and Ribbono Shel Olam) which one should recite when the Kohanim recite Birkas Kohanim that will nullify the effects of any bad dream which one may not remember. The Shulchan Aruch (Ibid. Siman 130 Sif 1) rules accordingly. The Magen Avraham (Ibid. Sif Katan 1) writes that in Eretz Yisrael, where Kohanim recite daily, one should not recite these Tefillos daily, but rather only if one actually had a dream the previous night. The Mishnah Berurah (Ibid. Sif Katan 1) notes, though, that in our communities, where Kohanim go to Duchan only on Yom Tov, the entire Tzibbur recites these Tefillos, even those who had no dreams the previous night, because it is not possible that one had no dreams since the previous Yom Tov. He adds, though, (Ibid. Sif Katan 4) that on Shabbos, one should not recite these Tefillos during Birkas Kohanim unless he indeed had a bad dream that night.

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From: Ohr Somayach[SMTP:ohr@ohr.edu] Subject: Torah Weekly - Vayeshev  
SILVER LINING  
"...For twenty pieces of silver" (37:28).  
Everybody is entitled to their opinion. But I'm right. Me? I'm not

perfect. I'm just never wrong. It's other people who make mistakes. Me? I'm misunderstood. I'm misled. But wrong? Wrong?! Me?!

One of the most difficult thing in the world is to say, "I was wrong."  
In every generation, the Jewish People perform a ceremony that is an atonement for a mistake which was made over three thousand years ago.

A first-born son has to be "redeemed" from a kohen (a priestly descendent of Aharon). The redemption involves giving the kohen five shekalim the equivalent of twenty silver dinarim.

That is the same amount for which the brothers sold Yosef into slavery.

Of course, we are not in any position to judge the Patriarchs. Nevertheless, the Torah wants to remind each and every one of us that even people as great as the sons of Yaakov the children of Israel were capable of a lack of compassion and baseness when faced with a challenge to their interests.

The brothers acted with the total conviction of the justice of their actions. Not for one second did they consider that they weren't acting out of the highest and most altruistic motivation.

In every generation, we are commanded to remember how big our mistakes can be if we allow personal bias to influence us.

Fine. But how can we not be biased? We're all looking out at the world from behind our own steering wheels. How do we remove ourselves from the selfishness of our own ego-trip down life's superhighway and see things as they really are?

The human character is like a garden. It needs constant attention. Even when everything looks rosy in the garden, if you look carefully, hidden away under the beautiful foliage of a benign bush, a powerful and deadly weed can be starting to stretch its tendrils.

There is only one weed-killer powerful enough to get out the weeds from our character the constant, applied and vigilant study of G-d's Torah.

For no one knows how to deal with the weeds better than the Gardener Himself.

Sources: Talmud, Kidushin 30b; Rabbenu Bachya  
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TorahWeb [from last year]  
RABBI YAAKOV NEUBURGER  
THE LESSON OF THE NESS NIGLA  
"And a man found [Yosef] him and he was wandering in the field and the man asked him, 'what do you seek'(37:15)". At first glance this pasuk seems to add nothing to the narrative. The details of Yosef's search for his brothers are all left to our imagination and are seemingly inconsequential but this one unremarkable event that occurred to the wandering Yosef. The fact that it is singled out signals to Chazal that even if the man appeared as a person, he was no less than the maloch Gavriel on a divine mission. Indeed, the sale of Yosef would have never occurred if not for this one meeting. Perhaps Yosef would have continued to wander and returned home reporting the unsuccessful search for his brothers. Thus this moment teaches us, as the Ramban explains, that Hashem was guiding all the events leading up to the sale of Yosef and that He wanted the Egyptian exile to unfold in this manner. More importantly, it would be a source of instruction and strength for Yosef for years to come. Throughout the many times that Yosef would feel desperate and forsaken by family and by Hashem, he would be able to look back at this moment and be reassured that Hashem's watchful eye was directing his life's course. It was these moments of clarity when Hashem allowed Himself to be revealed that illuminated moments of ambiguity and aloneness, which would have otherwise left room for doubts of Hashem's providence.

This life perspective quite possibly may have been part of the upbringing of Yosef. His father's fight with the maloch [angel], according to Ramban, occurred in order to shape the way that Yakov would view his upcoming meeting with Eisav, much as it should shape

our understanding of the entire parsha as well. If not for the struggle with the maloch one could have easily thought that Eisav came with good intentions, never planning to engage Yaakov in battle. After all, when they meet, Eisav appears to be a benevolent brother having long buried his difficulties with a paranoid younger brother. In the midst of all of this uncertainty comes the fight with the maloch, the moment of clarity that teaches us the true intentions of Eisav and his four hundred men. Once again it is the moment of Hashem's revelation that interprets the series of events that are to follow.

This pattern of interplay between the *ness niglah* [revealed miracle] and the *ness nistar* [hidden miracle] is at the core of the celebration of Chanuka. Here too the war is the classic *ness nistar*, as one could have forever questioned Hashem's involvement in our military success. It should not surprise us that the Macabbeans were venerated for their battlefield skills and their cunning stratagems. "Rabim beyad Meatim" [many given into the hands of the few] could be attributed to the skills of dedicated Macabbeans. However the seemingly unnecessary miracle of the oil was the *ness niglah* to show that all that transpired was miraculous even if slightly hidden.

What is the purpose of a *ness nistar* if one receives the *ness niglah* in a separate context? What are we to learn from the coupling of revelations rather than the more efficient single *ness niglah* necessary to address our needs?

It seems to me that the *ness niglah* reassures and directs us to carefully analyze all of life's events and actively discover Hashem within them. As a result, we proceed to pierce the veil of nature and coincidence, earning the singular privilege of participating in the revealing of Hashem and making His presence all the more palpable for all.

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From: listmaster[SMTP:listmaster@shemayisrael.com] Subject: Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum PARSHAS VAYEISHEV

Yaakov settled in the land of his father's sojournings. (37:1)

Regarding the above pasuk, the Baal HaTurim writes, "This can be compared to one who, upon seeing a band of dogs begin to chase him, intent on attacking him, sits himself down among them; so, too, Yaakov settled among Eisav's descendants." The Gerrer Rebbe, zl, the Imrei Emes, derives from here a significant lesson regarding life and how it should be lived. At times, we are confronted with various trials and tribulations, anxieties and misfortunes. Our first reaction is to run from them and, consequently, allow our mitzvah observance and relationship with the Almighty to wane. This was not Yaakov Avinu's response. He confronted his challenges head-on, not allowing them to affect his spiritual well-being.

Yosef HaTzaddik followed in his father's footsteps. While incarcerated in the miserable Egyptian prison, he did not let depression rule his life. His smile and kind words were a staple for many prisoners. He never forgot Hashem. During his most trying moments he attempted to live his life in an orderly manner, never deviating from his spiritual status-quo.

This is the meaning of the Baal HaTurim's analogy: If a person is confronted by a band of dogs bent on harming him, running away from them will only encourage them to chase after him. The best plan is to remain stationary in order to confront the challenge with determination and fortitude.

Horav Yerucham Levovitz, zl, takes a similar approach towards understanding Yaakov's decision to settle in Eisav's backyard. He uses the following analogy to make his point. Once, an elderly woman was sipping her coffee in the restaurant of a theatre long after the curtain had gone up, signaling the beginning of the first act. The waiter inquired curiously why she had not taken a seat in the theatre. She replied, "I would never go in now. It is much too crowded. I will go in once they all come out. Then I can have as many seats as I want to myself."

This is the folly of life for many of us. We wait for those tranquil moments, those endless summer days: days when the sky is blue and cloudless, the sun is warm and shining, and everything seems to be

perfect. When the rain falls - a temporary situation which we all must endure - we perceive it to be a hardship which we must "weather." We consider it just a painful interlude, assuming that when it is over we will resume with "real" life.

This perspective on life is false. Many fail to realize that life is all about the rain, the storms of thunder and lightning. A part of life is the sickness and anxiety, pain and fear - and our constant striving to overcome these challenges. Only through these tribulations, and our triumph over them, are we able to enhance our spirituality in order to fulfill our purpose on this world. The sunny days are for gathering our strength and conjuring up our courage to be able to derive the most from life's challenges.

True, Yaakov sought tranquility; he desired serenity. He did not seek it, however, for the purpose of leisure to idle away his time. No, Yaakov sought peace of mind so that he could better devote himself to his spiritual pursuits. Nonetheless, Hashem told him that this is not the way for the righteous. They will receive their rest in the World to Come. This world is for action, for challenge. Those who focus on the intermission will quite often miss the show.

She was being taken out, and she sent (word) to her father-in-law, saying, "By the man to whom these belong I am pregnant," and she said, "Recognize, if you please, whose are this signet, this wrap, and this staff." (38:25)

Rashi comments that Tamar did not wish to embarrass Yehudah by saying, "I am pregnant by you." She figured if Yehudah were to decide on his own to confess, then let him admit it. If not, she was prepared to be burned, rather than humiliate him. Chazal derive from here that "it is preferable for a person to throw themselves into a fiery furnace rather than shame their friend in public." Chazal's statement is ambiguous. If they are deriving a halachah, law, it should be an absolute statement to the fact that one must throw himself into a furnace, rather, than saying, "it is preferable to do so."

Horav Leib Chasman, zl, gleans from Chazal's wording that, indeed, it is not a halachah, but only an *eitzah tovah*, good piece of advice. Chazal are teaching us that one should reflect and sensitize himself to the point that he feels the act of murder inherent in humiliating another person. This may be compared to two hot, burning stoves: one large and one small. Certainly, if he is compelled, he will choose to pass through the smaller stove. Likewise, one should view embarrassing someone as being the larger, much hotter stove. Chazal have taught us the sensitivity we must have towards our friend's feelings. It is worse than a fiery stove! Indeed, it constitutes an act of murder.

Horav Sholom Schwadron, zl, supplements this by retelling an incredible incident that occurred with Horav Yehoshua Leib Diskin, zl. As he advanced in age, Rav Yehoshua Leib had a sugar problem. Thus, he was forced to consume much more sugar than usual. Due to his illness, his attendant would bring him a cup of tea with extra sugar, even during his lecture. It once came to the attention of the students that the *rebbeztin* was disconcerted. When they asked her for the source of her distress, she explained that she recently noticed that the salt had mistakenly been placed in the sugar container. Apparently, the attendant who was serving Rav Yehoshua Leib his tea was scooping tablespoons of salt into the tea instead of sugar! Imagine, Rav Yehoshua Leib was swallowing salt, which was noxious and life-threatening for him, rather than embarrassing the attendant for making an error.

When Rav Yehoshua Leib was asked why he risked his health by taking the salt, he responded, "It is preferable to throw oneself into a fiery furnace rather than shame someone in public." This is the meaning of sensitivity for another person.

Horav Schwadron observes that it is not sufficient to simply be aware of the gravity of humiliating another person; one must internalize this knowledge into his psyche to the point that he feels it. When Rav Yehoshua Leib drank the salt, he tasted sugar, because to indicate a bitter taste would be to hurt someone's feelings. This could not be allowed.

Thus, if an individual were to observe a person humiliating another

person in public, it would be tantamount to witnessing an act of murder. He has just seen his friend being flung into a fiery furnace! How could he calmly sit by and watch?

Horav Yisrael Chaim Kaplan, zl, was once seen sitting in the bais hamedrsh, weeping uncontrollably. A student went over and asked, "Rebbe, is something wrong? Why is the rebbe crying?" Rav Yisrael Chaim did not respond; instead, he continued crying. The student waited a few moments, and once again he asked, "Why is the rebbe crying?" Finally, Rav Yisrael Chaim turned to him and said, "Chazal compare humiliating a fellow Jew to murder. Let me ask you; If you were to witness someone in the bais hamedrash going over to another student and stabbing him with a knife, would you not cry? You would be hysterical, would you not? I have just witnessed a similar act of murder. I noticed how one student embarrassed another student. How can I not cry? I witnessed an act of murder!"

This is how our Torah leaders understood the meaning of sensitivity to another person's feelings.

Sponsored in memory of Rabbi Louis Engelberg Mrs. Hannah Engelberg Etzmon and Abigail Rozen and Family

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From: RABBI JONATHAN SCHWARTZ <jschwartz@ymail.yu.edu>  
Subject: Internet Chaburah -- Parshat VaYeshev

Prologue: Peace. It's elusive.

And yet, Yaakov sought it out for his sons. Yaakov asks Yosef to go visit his brothers and to see how they were doing. In the process, he commands Yosef to see "HaShalom Lahem." HaGaon Harav Nissan Alpert notes that the request of Yaakov was extremely poignant considering that Yaakov insisted that one of the brothers stay with him to attend to him (See Rashi, VaYashav Reuven). How and why did Yaakov allow Yosef to leave to visit his other children while leaving him alone?

Sforno suggests that Yaakov was concerned with Yosef's relationship with his brothers. Yosef had clearly damaged the relationship with his brothers by bringing all of his perceived indiscretions on their behalf to his father. It was incumbent upon him to repair the relationship and thus increase the peace. Yaakov recognized the problem and encouraged Yosef to begin the repairs by seeking his brothers' favor. Hence, while not having anyone home to personally deal with him, Yaakov told Yosef to seek the peace and send his regards.

Often a mere "hello" or other words of regards can make a person's day, enhance a relationship and bring warmth into an otherwise chilled relationship. This week's Chaburah examines the Halachic ramifications of saying Shalom when a relationship needs to be chilled. It is entitled:

Send her my regards??

The Gemara (Kiddushin 70b) notes that a man is not allowed to inquire into the health and wellbeing of another man's wife. Rashi explains that the reason is that inquiries like this lead people to be together and increase "Chiba" between them possibly leading to licentiousness. What are the parameters of this Halacha (which appears in Shulchan Aruch Even HaEzer 21:6)? Does this mean that one is not allowed to offer a married woman a "hello How are you?" What about the examples we find in Tanach of angels and Malachim who inquired into the health of married women? Did they too, violate an Issur in the Torah?

Tosafos (Bava Metzia 87a, Kiddushin 70b) extends the prohibition of inquiry into a married woman's well being to include situations where one merely asks her husband to send his regards and well wishes. However, he notes that it is Mutar to ask a husband how his wife is doing. Tosafos thus explains the actions of the Malach who asked Avraham "where is Sarah" and did not send regards. Tosafos feels that until well-wishes are sent there is no violation. This is the position of the Maham Shick (53) as well. However, it should be noted that the Rambam (Issurei Biah 21) does not discuss this case at all.

The Pischei Teshuva (E.H. 21:6) raises a question from Elisha. Elisha inquired into the health and well being of the Shunammite

woman. How was this to be allowed if one is not allowed to inquire into the welfare of a married woman? The Avnei Mishpat (3) explains that in Elisha's case his intent was not to increase Chiba but to inquire as to why the woman's practice had changed now that she was visiting him at an irregular point. The unscheduled visit signaled a problem and Elisha merely inquired into it. This position has Halachic ramifications as to a situation where inquiring into well being will not increase Chiba. Hence, a doctor should be able to ask a patient how she is feeling even if she is a married woman.

Ritva (Kiddushin 70b) offers a totally different understanding of the Sugya. He notes that the prohibition of inquiry is dependent on the person's ability to withstand his Yetzer. If a person will have great desire for a woman merely by inquiring into her well being, then he cannot inquire. However, if he can withstand his Yetzer, the prohibition will not apply. Aruch Hashulchan (21:8) notes that this is not only true in terms of people but in terms of language as well. Rashi's concern was for inquiries that might arouse emotions of Chiba. However, recitation of "good morning" etc. do not arouse these emotions and are Mutar.

Today, people seem to be more Meikil and ask much more of wives' well being. Maharam Shick (Shut, Even HaEzer 53) defended the world's view by citing a Tosafos in Kiddushin (81a) which notes that when one's inquiries are pure and L'Shem Shomayim, there is no problem in Sheilat Shalom. For this reason, even the Machmirim allow one to offer a Beracha and a Tefillah for one's wife who is not well. This is based upon the idea that Berachos do not arouse emotions or show Chiba (See Sreidei Eish II:135).

L'halacha, the Tzitz Eliezer (5:2) notes that so long as the way of the world is to allow conversation and inquiries, it does not arouse emotions and would be Mutar. Thus, one can continue to ask a married woman "how are you" and not worry that he is violating a Halachic principle.

Battala News

Mazal Tov to Yehuda Tuchman upon his recent engagement.

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<http://www.artscroll.com/parashah.html>

Parashah Talk

Parshas Vayeishev

From Windows to the Soul,

by RABBI MICHAEL BERNSTEIN, M.D.

Joseph has two dreams. In the first, he dreams about sheaves of wheat, and he tells his brothers (37:7), "And behold, my sheaf arose and it even stood erect, and behold, your sheaves gathered around and bowed down to my sheaf."

Two things happened with Joseph's sheaf j it arose and it stood erect. This seems to allude to two distinct stages, one in which the sheaf arose but was still somewhat wobbly, and the second when the sheaf found its balance and was able to stand erect. What is the significance of these two stages?

A short while later, Joseph has another dream, and he relates this one as well to his brothers (37:9), "Behold, have had another dream, and behold, the sun, the moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me." Unlike the first dream, this time there is no uncertainty, no hesitation, no need to find balance. Why is this so?

The Beis HaLevi comments that the first dream, which related to things of the earth, suggested that Joseph would have some sort of physical dominion over his brothers. The second dream, of heavenly bodies, predicted Joseph's eventual spiritual elevation and leadership.

This distinction between the first and second dreams may hold the answer to our questions. True to the prediction of the dream, Jacob had designated Joseph to be a leader in his family in the physical realm. But it was a leadership that teetered. His brothers did not want him, and they deposed him. Years later, however, Joseph's leadership in the physical realm reasserted itself in a very real way when he became viceroy of Egypt.

In the spiritual realm, however, Joseph attained leadership only once j after the reunion in Egypt. In the beginning, he never became their spiritual leader, although Jacob would have wanted him to be. Since the brothers did not acknowledge his spiritual superiority, Joseph

was by definition not a leader. There can be no spiritual leader without followers. The dream mentions only one rising in the spiritual realm.

Alternatively, if we were to contend that Joseph did indeed become the spiritual leader of his brothers while still in Hebron, we can offer another explanation for there being only one rising in the spiritual realm. Shortly after he arrived in Egypt, Joseph was put in charge of the entire estate of an important royal minister (39:5). In that position, he would have had ample opportunity to send a message to his father that he was still alive. Joseph declined; he felt the divine hand directing him toward his destiny. He willingly endured twenty-two years of separation and self-imposed silence in order to fulfill God's will for his family. Even in exile, Joseph displayed uninterrupted spiritual leadership.

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From: torahweb@zeus.host4u.net

RABBI YAAKOV HABER -

DEFYING HUMAN NATURE AND DIVINE MIRACLES

[http://www.torahweb.org/torah/2001/parsha/rhab\\_vayeishev.html](http://www.torahweb.org/torah/2001/parsha/rhab_vayeishev.html)

"Vayanas vayeitsei hachutzah" -- "and he fled and went outside"

(39:12). With this terse phrase, the Torah describes Yosef's flight from the enticements of the wife of Potiphar. Although Chazal dispute whether or not Yosef was in any way tempted to sin, in the end, he clearly conquered temptation and fled without any regard for the consequences that might befall him for his courageous stance. As a result of his actions, Yosef is crowned throughout history as "Yosef HaTzaddik" -- "Joseph the Righteous."

Midrash Rabba attributes the miracle of the Splitting of the Red Sea to the merit of Yosef's flight. It bases this connection on the similar phraseology used in both episodes. Concerning Yosef, the Torah states "vayanas"; regarding K'riyas Yam Suf, T'hilim poetically describes: "hayam ra'ah vayanos" -- "the Sea saw and fled (split)" (114:3). What is the inner connection between the miraculous salvation of B'nai Yisrael through the parting of the Sea and the actions of our ancestor Yosef?

Rav C. Y. Goldwicht zt"l, the founding Rosh HaYeshiva of Yeshivat Kerem B'Yavneh, explained the connection as follows. Yosef, 17 years old at the time of the attempted seduction, was at the age of a natural heightened desire. (Indeed, the Midrash comments that a Roman matron, questioning R. Yosef, could not believe that a human being in such a situation would be able to overcome such a great temptation.) Away from the spiritual environment of Ya'akov Avinu's home, surrounded by the alluring Egyptian culture and the promise of advancement in its society which might be open to him if he would cave in to the demands of his master's wife, Yosef was clearly in an extremely tempting predicament. Yet, through depicting the image of his saintly father Ya'akov's image in his mind's eye (see Rashi), he was able to overcome his natural desire. This, in essence, was a victory over the natural, innate tendency of human beings. Consequently, Hashem, midda k'negged midda (measure for measure), changed the natural order of the world where waters flow and do not stand still as walls and forced them to change their nature and part for B'nei Yisrael. Nefesh HaChayim (1:8-9) expounds upon the theme found in T'hilim: "Hashem tzil'cha 'al yad y'minecha" -- "G-d is your shadow on your right hand." Just as a shadow behaves as a mirror-image of the individual, so too Hashem acts toward us as we act toward Him. If we act supernaturally by overcoming desire, Hashem performs supernatural miracles for us.

A similar theme can be found concerning the first of the Avos. Dispelling Avraham Avinu's concern over his lack of children at his advanced age, Hashem takes Avraham outside -- "vayotsei 'oso hachutz (15:5)." Rashi comments that he took him out of the terrestrial atmosphere. Rav Goldwicht explained that this was a demonstration to Avraham that he and his descendants would not be subject to the regular rules of the earth, the rules of nature. Since his descendants would be committed to the Almighty's Torah in a supernatural way, Hashem would protect his children in a like fashion. Similarly, the Talmud in Shabbos (156b) teaches us "ein mazal l'yisrael," Jews are not subject to the influence of the constellations, i.e.

the rules of nature. As a proof to this idea, the G'mara recounts the story of R. Akiva's daughter whom the astrologers predicted would die on her wedding night through the bite of a snake. Upon awakening the morning after the wedding, the kallah noticed that she had inadvertently skewered an asp during the evening which would have obviously killed her had she not done so. After her father questioned her as to what merit saved her, she responded that upon seeing a pauper at her wedding to whom no one attended, she immediately offered him her own portion of food. How is this episode a proof to the premise of "ein mazal l'yisrael?" R. Akiva's daughter was clearly saved in the merit of the mitzva of charity; otherwise, she would have perished by the "laws of nature!" What clearly emerges then is that when and only when K'lal Yisrael act in a manner against their own nature (such as caring for another on the night of one's personal joy), the laws of nature cease to apply to them. (See the G'mara for additional examples.)

The m'sirus nefesh, extreme selflessness, of the Chashmona'im in battling against the Greek attempt to abolish Torah Judaism was a remarkable demonstration of rising beyond normal human limitations. It is not surprising that Yosef, one of our ancestors that implanted this ability within us, seems to be alluded to in the Midrash concerning Chanuka (see Wisdom for a Purpose). K'lal Yisrael and indeed the entire world are under attack by those who would use misguided, corrupted m'sirus nefesh to kill, maim, and injure innocents. As we approach the holiday of m'sirus nefesh, our task is clear: to rise above our apparent limitations to excel in Torah, T'filla and Chessed, transcending our very nature, so that we merit special, miraculous Divine protection that we so sorely need.

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From: Jeffrey Gross[SMTP:jgross@torah.org] Subject: Weekly Halacha - Parshas Vayeshev

By RABBI DONIEL NEUSTADT Rav of Young Israel of Cleveland Heights A discussion of Halachic topics. For final rulings, consult your Rav.

ADOPTION IN HALACHAH

QUESTION: What are the possible halachic problems and solutions regarding adoption?

A. Is it proper?

When the adoption process conforms to halachic guidelines, it is considered to be an extremely noble and rewarding deed. In numerous places in the Talmud, our Sages praise one who raises another person's child as his own(1).

B. Child's origin - Jew or non-Jew?

Both of these choices have their advantages and disadvantages. Theoretically, a Jewish child would be preferable, since it is a great mitzvah to raise a Jewish child who may otherwise not have a Jewish home. In practice, however, it may prove difficult to verify the lineage (yichus) of the child, in which case unforeseen problems may arise regarding the child's future entry into a Jewish marriage. Thus, before adopting a Jewish child, one should thoroughly investigate the child's background to clarify his yichus.

A non-Jewish child, however, has no yichus problem. At the time of adoption the child undergoes conversion, which allows the child to marry any person permitted to wed a convert. The drawback, however, is that the child must(2) be told of his conversion when he or she reaches the age of maturity, thirteen for a boy and twelve for a girl. At that time, the child is given the option to reject the earlier conversion which took place without his consent. Should the child choose to reject his conversion, he would be rendered a non-Jew.

C. How close a relationship?

Adopted children should be told of their origin at the earliest possible time(3). People who choose to hide the origin of their adopted children from them may unwittingly cause grave halachic hardships or complications in the future and it is forbidden to do so(4).

Although in a spiritual sense an adopted child may be considered as one's own child, the poskim stress that this does not apply to physical contact. Yichud (being alone), hugging, kissing, etc., are not permitted as they are with one's natural child. Most poskim strictly

forbid this type of physical contact(5). Yichud with an adopted child may even be more stringent than with a stranger, since it would fall under the category of "libo gas bah"(6). [Note that these halachos apply to foster children and stepchildren as well.]

There is, however, a view(7) that tends to be lenient on this issue. This view holds that when a child is adopted at a young age, we assume that a basic father/daughter or mother/son relationship has developed between them. We do not fear that any illicit relations will take place and hence do not restrict the parents from treating their adopted children as their own. This leniency applies only to children who were adopted before the age when yichud is prohibited, three for a girl and nine for a boy. A couple may not adopt a child of an older age unless they observe all restrictions of yichud and physical contact(8).

Harav M. Feinstein(9) also holds that yichud is permitted with adopted children, but for a different reason. No adoptive father, he suggests, would dare commit an illicit act with his adoptive daughter for fear of being found out by his wife upon her return home. That intimidation factor alone is enough to permit yichud. Consequently, as long as both adoptive parents are alive, married and living together in one home, yichud with a stepchild [in their home] is permitted(10).

According to Harav Feinstein, it is also permitted to kiss and hug an adopted child, since the kissing and hugging is done as any parent does to his or her child, which is permitted(11). Others allow this only till the age of five or six(12). As we mentioned earlier, most poskim do not agree with this approach altogether. In their opinion, an adopted or a stepchild is just like any other stranger with whom yichud, hugging and kissing etc., are prohibited.

#### D. How is he called to the Torah?

The poskim disagree as to whether an adopted child should be called to the Torah as the son of the adoptive father(13). Harav S.Z. Auerbach(14) rules that if the biological father's name is known, then the child should be called to the Torah by that name. If the biological father's name is not known, then he may be called to the Torah as the son of the adoptive father.

Finally! The Monthly Halachah Discussion, the third volume of The Halachah Discussion series published by Feldheim, is now available at your local Hebrew bookstore.

FOOTNOTES: 1 Harav Y.Y. Kanievsky, among other eminent Torah giants, endorsed the practice for those unable to have children of their own, see Devar Halachah (addendum to fourth edition). See also Chazon Yechezkel (preface to Tosefta Yevamos). R' Shlomo Kluger (Chochmas Shelomo E.H. 1:1) maintains that the mitzvah of procreation can be accomplished through adoption. Most other authorities do not agree with this. 2 Igros Moshe Y.D. 1:161-162; Kisvei Harav Henkin 2:86. 3 Harav Y. Kamenetsky (oral ruling) advised that adopted children be told of their origin before their teenage years. 4 Igros Moshe E.H. 4 642; Kisvei Harav Henkin 2:99; Minchas Yitzchak 4:49; 5:44; 9:140; Otzar ha-Poskim vol. 9, pg. 130; Harav S.Z. Auerbach (quoted in Nishmas Avraham vol. 5, pg. 132). 5 Chazon Ish (quoted in Devar Halachah 7:20); Otzar ha-Poskim. vol. 9, pg. 132 - written responsum from Tchebiner Rav and Harav Y.Y. Kanievsky; Minchas Yitzchak 4:49; 9:140; Shevet ha-Levi 5:205; 6:196; Devar Yehoshua E.H. 3:16; Harav S.Z. Auerbach and Harav S.Y. Elyashiv (quoted in Nishmas Avraham vol. 5, pg. 134. See also Yashiv Moshe pg. 191). 6 Devar Halachah 7:20. 7 Tzitz Eliezer 6:40-21; 7:44, 45. Note that his view is stated as a limud zechus and in order to make it easier for abandoned children to find good, Jewish homes that would adopt them. 8 Tzitz Eliezer, ibid. 9 Igros Moshe E.H. 4:64-2. See also E.H. 4:71 [concerning marrying a woman who has a daughter]. 10 Harav Feinstein also does not limit this leniency, as the Tzitz Eliezer does, to a child who was adopted before the age of three for a girl or nine for a boy. See also Avnei Yashfei 2:89-12. 11 Based on the Shach Y.D. 157:10. 12 Harav S.Z. Auerbach and Harav Y.Y. Neuwirth (quoted in Nishmas Avraham vol. 5, pg. 135). 13 Minchas Yitzchak 4:49; 5:46; 6:151 strictly prohibits this practice, while other contemporary poskim find room for leniency - see Lev Aryeh 1:55 and Nachalas Tzvi pg. 31. 14 Quoted in Nishmas Avraham vol. 5, pg. 136. The same ruling applies to writing the adopted child's name in a kesubah or a get. See, however, Igros Moshe E.H. 1:99.

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From: RABBI MORDECHAI KAMENETZKY rmk@torah.org  
Subject: Drasha -- Parsha Vayeishev -- Tainted Intent

The story of Yoseph's discord with his brothers' waxes as a factual, albeit eternal, analogy to feuding Jews. There are dreams and fantasies, jealousies and misconceptions. Unfortunately, the saga never seems to end, as even today it seems that there are those of our brethren who would sell out their kin - all for the sake of Heaven.

The Torah relates: Yoseph's brothers go to Shechem to tend the flock of their father, Yaakov. Yoseph is sent by Yaakov to find out what they are up to. As he approaches them they declare, "Behold, the dreamer approaches." At first they plot to kill him but Reuvain and Yehuda intervene, one suggesting he be cast into a pit, and the other convincing the brothers to sell him to passing merchants.

Were the plans to rid themselves of their younger sibling premeditated, or was the sale an impromptu action based on sighting Yoseph as he approached them? Let us analyze the story and the commentaries.

Yaakov asked his children to tend his sheep. The verse tells us that, "Now, his brothers went to pasture their father's flock in Shechem." In the Hebrew language, a prefix "es" is often used in conjunction with a noun. Here it is used in conjunction with the word sheep. Es is a word usually placed to allude to something additional. (e.g. the famous command, "In the command, "Honor your father and your mother" the Torah adds an es before the words father and mother, "Honor es your father and es your mother." The extra word es is there to include elder siblings, stepparents and the like, all who must be afforded honor.) In this case the word es in conjunction with the sheep is not only extra, it also has dots above it. Those dots intone, says Rashi, in the name of the Midrash, that the brothers did not set out to tend only the sheep, thus solely for the purpose of honoring their father, rather they were intent on tending to themselves. They were interested in a self-serving outing, one that involved eating and drinking, without the service of their father in mind.

The question is simple. How does the Medrash know that from the extra word es and the dots above it? Maybe the extra word and the dots imply that they had an extra mission to fulfill? Maybe it implies sheep and other cattle, thus the extra es. Where does it imply that they were not fulfilling their fathers' will. rather they were fulfilling their own agenda?

The Gemara (Bava Kama 50a) relates that once there lived a man known as Nechunia the Well Digger. Nechunia selflessly dug wells to provide water for the pilgrims, who traveled to Jerusalem for the three pilgrimage festivals, Pesach, Sukkos and Shavuos.

It happened once that Nechunia's daughter fell into a deep well that he had dug. People ran to the great tzadik, Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa, who was known for his miraculous ability to intercede on behalf of those in distress, and asked him to pray for the child.

It seemed that he was not the least bit concerned. During the first hour he said to them, "Don't worry, she will be all right." An hour later, when there was still no sign of the girl, Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa still seemed unperturbed. "She still is fine," he said.

During the third hour, he told those who had come to him "do not worry, she has come out of the well already." When they asked the girl, "Who brought you up?" she replied, "A ram materialized, and an old man was leading it." After hearing this, the people asked Rabbi Chanina Ben Dosa, "What made you so sure that she would be saved? Are you a prophet?" Rabbi Chanina Ben Dosa replied, "I am not a prophet, nor am I the student of a prophet. But I said to myself, it is impossible that a deep well, one that the tzadik Nechunia the Well Digger took so much pain to dig in order to quench the thirst of travelers, would be a pitfall for one of his children! I felt it would be impossible for his child to be harmed by his good deed. Therefore I knew she would be safe."

The Midrash used simple logic. If the brothers' intent was solely to honor and service their father by tending his sheep, then that mission could never have produced the consequences that brought Yaakov misery for 22 years. How is it possible that an exercise in parental honor would turn into an activity that would cause such parental grief

and anguish? Therefore, those two dots that hover over the extra word contain a powerful message. Tainted acts cause tainted results. If the mission is pure, so are the results, and when we see sullied circumstances then we must assume tainted intent. However, when brothers act out of purity of purpose and with a non-tainted mission, then their intent will only bring honor to Heaven.

Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

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From: Yeshivat Har Etzion Office[SMTP:office@etzion.org.il] To: yhe-sichot@etzion.org.il Subject: SICHOT62 - 09: Chanuka  
THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CHANUKA ACCORDING TO THE MAHARAL  
BASED ON A SHIUR BY HARAV YEHUDA AMITAL  
Translated by Michael Hattin I.

In his work "Ner Mitzva," which purports to deal with Chanuka, the Maharal actually discusses this holiday very little. Rather, the significance of the book lies in the broad perspective which it affords us concerning the holiday, elucidating themes which remain meaningful to us today. The background of his analysis is the midrash regarding the four empires which ruled over the Jewish people (patterned after the vision of the four beasts in the Book of Daniel): Babylonia, Persia, Greece and Rome.

At the heart of this discussion lies the question of the inner meaning of the miracle of Chanuka. The straightforward answer recounts the persecution of the Jewish people at the hands of their Greek overlords, the desecration of the Temple, and God's miraculous intervention. Nevertheless, the essential question remains: in what way did the Jewish people become more enriched as a result of this trial and salvation?

A similar question exists with respect to the exodus from Egypt, from whence God took us out with signs and wonders. It is true that God caused us to descend to Egypt because of our transgressions, but this explanation is certainly insufficient. The sojourn in Egypt, the struggle to be free, and the redemption from there are recalled as essential experiences which shaped and formed the Jewish nation. The Jewish people become a unified whole as a result of having passed through the proverbial crucible of suffering. If, however, we relate to the exodus from Egypt as simply a tale of suffering and redemption, we shall not have understood its profundity.

For this very reason, our sages explained in various midrashim the additional dimension which accrued to the Jewish people as a result of the exodus. The Maharal discusses this same dimension, namely the spiritual enrichment of the Jewish nation, with respect to the salvation brought about by the Maccabees. The struggle with Greece has a particular meaning for us which is expressed in the midrashic reading of the verse (Bereishit 9:27): "Yaft Elokim li-Yefet" - may God beautify Yefet (Greece), "ve-yishkon be-ohalei Shem" - and cause that beauty to rest among the Jews.

Every person contains hidden strengths and weaknesses. All of us pass years of our lives in routine and habit, which are punctuated by periods of challenge. During such testing times, many of one's latent abilities are revealed. When a person faces the danger of death, for instance, hidden reserves of strength come to the fore. Insights and leadership talents are suddenly revealed which are not at all expressed during normal life. There are those who find God precisely at times of struggle, and during trials of faith. This applies to the individual as well as to the nation. One may witness exceptional spiritual strength and courage during the course of a battle waged against persecution and the imposition of alien values and ideas. When salvation does not occur at the end, however, there is a genuine danger that those spiritual gains will be ephemeral. Human beings need time to translate sudden insights and unexpected

abilities into well-paved paths of living, and the repose of salvation affords us this opportunity.

By relating to salvation in this light, we begin to understand how the messianic redemption can only come about after the Jewish people undergo a series of preparatory steps.

The battles of Chanuka are not only great historical events but also important markers in the process of the building of the Jewish nation. They represent additional stages in the realization of our national destiny. According to the Maharal's reading, the building of the Jewish people does not imply the relegation of other nations to the periphery of history, but on the contrary reflects the striving of all of humanity to eventually realize its latent spiritual potential.

This explains the Maharal's fundamental thesis in Ner Mitzva. The world was initially created lacking completion, and must therefore undergo a process to bring it to wholeness. The deficiency of the world finds expression in human history, in the development of four great empires each of which presents a worldview irreconcilable with the notion of God's oneness. A midrash which the Maharal mentions at the beginning of his work amplifies this theme:

"The world was formless and void, and darkness covered the deep waters; and God's spirit hovered over the waters' (Bereishit 1:2). Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish explained that the verse refers to the four empires: 'The world was formless' is a reference to Babylonia... 'Void' refers to Media... 'Darkness' refers to Greece, who darkened the vision of the Jewish people with their decrees... 'The deep waters' refers to Rome, whose eventual downfall is as inscrutable as the deep... 'God's hovering spirit' refers to the spirit of the Messiah." (Bereishit Rabba 2:5)

Thus, the world is initially incomplete and becomes whole only at the time of the King Messiah. Between these two points in time is a lengthy historical process which brings eventual completion to the world. This process, however, involves conflicts between the four empires and the Jewish People. Each one of the four presents a culture, a set of values and a worldview which is antithetical to the desired state of completion. However, out of the struggle between these ideas and the Jewish People, the completed state can emerge.

Thus, the events of Chanuka represent the advancement of the process of completion stemming from the confrontation between Israel and Greece. The Greek empire bequeathed values which transformed humanity, indicating the great spiritual vitality which they possessed. However, their spiritual underpinnings were incomplete, and only through confrontation with the Jewish People could they be integrated into their proper place in the service of God. With the removal of imperfection from the world, as represented by the downfall of the four empires and their flawed spiritual legacy, the world will finally achieve its unity and completion.

## II.

In order to understand the miracle of the cruse of oil, we must consider the historical period in which the events occurred. In particular, we must examine the four empires which the Maharal (following Chazal) saw as focal points for historical development.

Babylonia, the first of the four, represents the power of ruling and the unbridled desire to extend one's rule over all. It is dominion for its own sake. Persia expresses the pursuit of materialism and worldly desire. Greece, in contrast to the first two, represents an intellectual and rational approach in which ideas overpower and conquer. Rome is the conglomeration of the other three, and therefore the struggle with the legacy of that empire is the most difficult.

According to the Maharal, the Greek empire, which fought with its wisdom and ideas, was an outgrowth of Jewish influences. Much of Greek wisdom originated in Judaism and that is why the struggle against Greek cultural domination was particularly difficult. During the Babylonian and Persian periods, Judaism was still insular and had not yet begun to shed its light among the nations of the world. Its struggles with these empires were thus conducted against something external. Later, though, Judaism began to fulfill its purpose of radiating its teachings throughout the world, and the Greek empire grew out of



this backdrop. This is why the struggle against Greece exacted many casualties: many were swayed by the attractions of Hellenism precisely because its philosophy was predicated upon some genuinely enlightened ideas. Many Jews felt that Greek culture was in fact superior to our own and therefore the ideal of spreading the light of Torah was abandoned.

This is the unique meaning of the Chanuka miracle. The emphasis on the single cruse of oil that was sealed by the High Priest represents the remaining pure ideas which were not tainted by Hellenistic thought, and were thus the source of the eventual light which illumined the darkness of the world. A miracle was wrought and the laws of nature were suspended in order to demonstrate that the Jewish approach was both necessary and would eventually triumph. The halakha states that we must light the menorah publicly until the marketplace empties of people ("ad she-tikhleh regel min ha-shuk"). Homiletically, we may interpret that to mean that the light must be kindled until "hergel," namely spiritual rote and the malaise which it breeds, are expelled from the world and the holy light of God's teaching takes its place. This light stems from an inner source which must be nurtured and then can radiate outwards.

At a time of persecution, the halakha maintains, it is sufficient to place the lights on one's table inside the home. Rabbi Zadok of Lublin explained this to mean that at a time of danger when the light cannot brighten the darkness of the world, it must at least brighten the interior of the soul. When the internal spiritual light is kindled and nurtured, it will eventually radiate outwards so that all will realize "that out of Zion shall teaching go forth, and the word of God from Jerusalem."

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