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Rav Soloveitchik ZTL Notes (Volume 3)

Notice These are unapproved unedited notes [of R.Y.?] of classes given by Rav Soloveitchik. We do not know who wrote the notes. However we offer this to the world that maybe someone can get some use out of these notes. A member of the family has looked at the notes and said that look like the real thing. (Rav Soloveitchik did NOT write these notes.) [Thanks to David Isaac for typing these notes]

Lecture delivered by Rabbi Soloveitchik on Saturday night, January 6, 1979. "Insights" Basically, I want to talk about Joseph and his brothers: to understand the story well, you have to read between the lines. I want to speak of three insights.

(1) I try to answer one question halachically. When the brothers come to Mitzraim for the first time to buy food and presented themselves before Joseph, were accused of espionage and denied the charges, Judah's name is not mentioned. No matter where you look, he isn't mentioned. We find in the conversation between the brothers and the Viceroy the word, "Vayomru" — (and they said) but it doesn't mention "Who said." "Vayomru" is mentioned in fact several times but not specifically who.

Where does Yehudah appear? In his debate with Jacob (where he appeals to his father to let them go a second time to buy food and to take along their youngest brother Benjamin as requested by the Viceroy). At first, it is Reuven - the oldest brother who intervenes right away and is rejected by the father. Much later, it is Yehuda. Scripture tells us there was no food and then Yehuda repeated basically what his brother spoke before him. Suddenly, he emerges from the shadows to the forefront. Apparently, his appeal was irresistible and was accepted. He could have said it before the food was consumed but waited till the point of starvation. When they come to Joseph's house Yehuda again disappears in the background. When they were caught with the silver chalice in Benjamin's possession, again, Yehuda is not mentioned. The turning point is where Yehuda is singled out in a solemn manner. Yehuda took over the leadership. The fact that Joseph couldn't contain himself any longer is due to Yehuda's appeal. Yehuda takes over when the situation becomes grave. Thus, it was grave when the food became low. Before the goblet was found they thought it was a joke on the part of Joseph. When the goblet was found however, disaster threatened. Yehuda takes over in the time of crisis. Technically, Reuven's power still had not been removed till Jacob's blessings in Sedra "Vaychi". Yehuda takes over in the time of despair. "Chazal" (Sages) says, "Reuven bchor shota" - Reuven is a fool for he speaks of "Jacob killing his children if he fails to return Benjamin - Aren't his children Jacob's also? Yehuda however, wins over with his oration. When Yehuda takes over, the mission will be implemented. The reason is: Yehuda will be Melech. From him will arise the kingship.

I want to quote Rambam about the mission of a king. If a "novi" - prophet appoints a king, even if not from the house of David, and he follows the

right path, he will be accepted. His ability must be to fight a war. He should think of one objective - to raise the standard - to establish justice, to break the arms of the wicked and to engage in a holy war because the whole purpose of appointing a king is to implement justice, to march ahead of the armies and to emerge victorious over our enemies. The job of the king is two-fold: to enforce justice and fight the war. The word war, however, has to be interpreted. The word milchama (war) by Rambam is in a much wider sense than the literal meaning.

I would say, "milchama" means time of crisis — military, economic, or spiritual. When there is a war it is a critical time. When times are normal there is no need for such unity. In times of war, we need unified, collected leadership. He is responsible for the well-being of the people and their continued existence. Secondly, the king is responsible for the principles of justice. The courts were composed of three, twenty three, or seventy one justices — and found in all the cities. But the king is necessary when justice is being trampled in time of crisis and is in danger of disappearing. When the principles of justice are being desecrated, where the people make mockery, the Bes Din (court) is not sufficient. For example, the Hashmonayim lived in critical times. They fought against the "mishyavnim" — the revisionists in combat and the power was seized by Yehuda Hamaccabee. He had the courage and ability of a king. These are the two objectives which a Melech should pursue: general crises and justice.

When the brothers first come to Joseph and he accused them of espionage, they thought he was irritated but not critical. After all, he acted like a gentleman, was handsome and in general conducted himself exemplarily. When they finished the food, Yehuda smelled danger. His conscience was affected. "I must come forward at once, it is a crisis!" Later, he withdraws because again there is no crisis. He becomes humble, modest, withdrawn. When he comes before Joseph, they exchange gifts etc. Again he withdraws and his name is not mentioned. When the goblet is discovered and they tear their clothes in despair, now he must emerge. It is a critical time. They all come to Joseph's house and Joseph understands very well that he'll have to deal with them, but he thought it would be collective bargaining. However, "Vayigash Yehuda" — Yehuda stepped forth. Joseph had an intuitive feeling that he'll have to fight with Yehuda and this he'd want to avert. Of course, they were aroused by the initial charge of espionage for it is wrong to be suspicious. But this was a conspiracy. "This Egyptian is out to destroy the house of Jacob." After all, many nationalities came to Egypt and Joseph didn't receive them personally. Here he singles out the house of Jacob. He is a fiend interested in destroying the house of Jacob and he will go on provoking and provoking. The possibility that the house of Jacob will be destroyed aroused the "Lion of Judah". It is time for the King Yehuda to come forth. Medrash says that the "Shvotim" (tribes) were not involved at all. It is a confrontation of 2 kings. The Torah characterizes Yehuda as a "lion". Often, the lion sleeps and is unaware of what is happening outside. This "lion" slept when Joseph was sold. In time, when courageous action was desired the "lion" aroused to defend the principles of justice and to defend Jacob's house.

Yehuda appears courageous twice: — once in the affair with Tamar when she returned his goods for identification (when he accused her of harlotry and sentenced her to death. He could have remained silent but chose to forego his honor and publicly admitted his guilt). Secondly, was his defense of Benjamin. Yehuda was successful on both occasions. Why was he tested twice? Because there are two problems! Does he have power as an individual? Does he have power as a leader? Some people can only do one. Some have leadership but as an individual (over their own conscience) they have no power. Here he was tested on both levels. It was not easy to lower himself for an unknown girl. The second time he called the Viceroy of Egypt a liar.

Insight #2

There is another problem which is bothersome. When Yehuda came over to Joseph and wanted to engage in an argument what was the substance of his argument? He told him a story which Joseph knew very well. Basically,

it seems strange to think that Joseph would change his position and let Benjamin go free. He merely told Joseph all which he already previously knew. He didn't argue; he merely related a story. Therefore, what is the idea? I believe that Yehuda told Joseph something new — something he didn't know! It is like a lawyer telling a judge that which he already knows. Yet, he must have told him something which caused Joseph to break down and reveal his identity. Why did Joseph torture his brothers — charge them with espionage? I believe that Joseph pursued a double objective. First, Joseph wanted to make up his mind, "should I be loving and forgiving or should I be vindictive? Shall I be a brother or an Egyptian tyrant? The answer is: "It depends on them! Are they the wild Bedouins who sold me or have they grown up? Has the morality of Abraham taken hold of them? Are they or aren't they 'B'alay T'shuvah' (repentant)? Have they changed in the course of time?"

Judah's appearance changed his mind. He remembered Judah on that awesome day when he sold him. How Jacob would suffer to such a message. He had no compassion for his father's feelings. Now we are told by medrash that Judah grasped the columns of the palace and shook them. He was ready to give his life. The one who repents is willing to give his life. I believe that Judah felt, Joseph will give in if he repeats the story. Here Judah shows his feeling for his father.

Deep down in his heart, Joseph wanted something which no one could give him. Joseph dreamt twice! Once he dreamt of the surrounding sheaves and the prostration of the sheaves. This was fulfilled! When the brother's came and bowed there was no doubt about the reality in such a fantastic manner. His ego was satisfied. His brothers are beggars and prostrate themselves. Was the second dream a reality or is it a vision waiting to be recognized. Joseph wanted not only that the sheaves should prostrate themselves but also the celestial bodies! He was mainly interested in the second dream. This is related to the spiritual leadership which the "shvotim" (tribes) will prove. He wanted "malchus" (kingship) not in Egypt but in the Eternal City — the "Messiah". He wanted all to prostrate themselves and recognize that from him will the Messiah issue forth.

In order to have all this he had to have one condition. When Joseph beheld the second vision, this is the one which he revealed to Jacob. Jacob declared, "Do you expect me to bow to you?" Jacob is the sun! In order to recognize fulfillment of the second condition, Jacob must bow. Jacob had the key - the control. Jacob will never accept and Joseph can never lay claim to "malchus". His problem was, "How can he make Jacob prostrate himself?" Thus, he contrived the following plan. He will contain or retain Benjamin — fully knowing that Jacob will not remain in Canaan if Benjamin doesn't return. He will come to Egypt, bow just once to the "Egyptian Viceroy" as a matter of protocol and the "malchus" will come to him. Judah did not understand all this but he felt that the strange Egyptian leader had an interest in making Jacob leave Canaan and come to Egypt. "Jacob will come without knowing the identity." Should he know, he surely will not bow and Joseph cannot take over "malchus".

What did Judah tell Joseph? "You are making a mistake. Jacob will never come. You cannot achieve your objective. If you keep Benjamin, Jacob will die but not in Mitzraim. You have lost your game! You'll never force Jacob to come!" "This is when Joseph broke down and realized that "Hasheocha" (providence) has different plans. Now he no longer could control his emotions!

3rd Insight

"Vayigash alov Yehuda" (And Yehuda drew near to him). It should have said, "Vayigash Yehuda el Yosef". This would have been perfectly acceptable Hebrew grammar. What is the difference semantically? In order to understand "alov", we must study the end of Sedra "mikeitz" to find out to whom. The brothers didn't understand the Egyptian. They really didn't believe he was an Egyptian. "What could we really have said about him had we been exposed to him? Was he brutal, capricious? He never engaged anyone else in conversation — the thousands who came to buy. The others bought, they loaded - they departed. Here he asked them all sorts of

personal questions. Also they couldn't understand Shimon's treatment. Having seen him arrested and bound before their very eyes when they first departed from home, yet when they returned and Shimon was released and was questioned, "How were you treated?," he answered "Better than ever!" When they come to Joseph's house, they were wined and dined and exchanged gifts. It was strange!

Even after the charge against Benjamin they were not brought to jail or to the executioner, but to his own house. It was customary even at the time of accusation to throw all into jail. Here the text reads, "Cholilah" (far be it from me to take you all as slaves). In that era, a Yehuda rebuttal against Pharaoh (as he did) would have led to the gallows. Therefore, "alov" is Joseph — the cryptical figure; on one hand an Egyptian — on the other hand, a different kind of person. Even the word, "Baso" (his house) had the opulence of a king but the reminiscence of the quality of their own home. Even when they were apprehended they were not assaulted and he didn't shout. He used the language of Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov. It is more of a complaint, not the language of a despot. Joseph was still the cryptical, mysterious figure which no one could describe. He was the man of their family!

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Brisk on Chumash Insights on the Parashah from Brisk to Jerusalem
By Rabbi Asher Bergman
Parshas Mikeitz

And he gathered them together under guard for three days. Yosef said to them on the third day . . . "One of your brothers will be imprisoned under guard, and [the rest of] you go and bring provisions." (Mikeitz 42:17-19).

Why did Yosef have to hold all the brothers under guard for three days before deciding to keep only one brother while allowing the rest to go? he could have offered this compromise immediately!

The brothers agreed to Yosef's plan to hold one of them under guard, because they knew that otherwise they would never be permitted to bring provisions back to their families. But there is a Mishnah (Terumos 8:12) that states, "If idolaters tell a group of women, 'Hand over one of your number for us to defile, and if you don't we will defile all of you,' better they should defile all the women than that one single Jewish woman should be given over willingly to them." The Talmud Yerushalmi (quoted by the Rash) extends this law to a case where idolaters ask a group of people to hand over one person to be executed, or else they will all be killed. No Jewish life may be willingly sacrificed, even if this ultimately costs the lives of many more people.

Thus, if Yosef had made his offer of keeping one of the brother's hostage at the outset, the offer would have had to be refused. The brothers would have been obligated to stay together rather than abandon one of their number to an uncertain fate at the hands of the Egyptian authorities. Therefore, Yosef incarcerated all the brother at first, and afterwards released all but one. This way the brothers were not required to hand over anyone, for Shimon was already imprisoned.

-- **Brisker Rav**

RABBI ELI BARUCH SHULMAN

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Shiur Text: Parshas Mikeitz 5764

I wonder if you ever realized that bumper stickers played an important role in the story of הנוכה.

In Israel you can identify someone's politics immediately by their bumper sticker: שלום לך חבר, אין ערבים אין פיגועים, חברון שלנו etc.

We tend to think of bumper stickers as a modern invention but it seems there was an ancient equivalent:

Midrash זה גלות יון, שהשיכו עיניהם של ישראל בגזירותיהם, שהיתה אומרת ... - ליישראל כתבו על קרן השור שאין לכם חלק באלוקי ישראל.

Why קרן השור?

Many explanations have been offered but perhaps the simplest is that an ox was the ancient equivalent of a car. No one had a car, of course, and few people had even horses, but in an agricultural society almost everyone had an ox. So if you wanted to put up a bumper sticker where would you do it? On the ox!

Basically - writing קרן השור that על קרן חלק כו 'אין לנו חלק כו' was sort of like sporting a bumper sticker - דרוס כל דוס.

The Midrash offers an additional explanation of why this bumper sticker - אין לנו חלק באלוקי ישראל - was to be placed על קרן השור. It was to arouse the memory of the העגל החדש.

I believe that the Midrash is saying something important - but it needs to be fleshed out.

Where does Jewish identity begin? Where is the fountainhead of Jewish nationhood? הר סיני. That was the formative experience of ישראל, and the definitive experience - it defines what it means to be a Jew.

רס"ג - אין אומתנו אלא בתורתה.

The traditional understanding of Jewish identity begins with הר סיני. To the extent that we connect to הר סיני, to the extent that our behavior and beliefs are rooted in הר סיני, to that extent we are connected to the root of Jewish identity, and to that extent our behavior is authentically Jewish.

There were always, of course, lapsed Jews, Jews who found the yoke of Torah and מצוות burdensome and rejected them; but it was traditionally understood that such a person had left his Judaism behind. However, while we associate הר סיני with the giving of the Torah, there was another, very different event that also took place at הר סיני - the העגל החדש. And so the very fountainhead of our national existence was sullied by that first terrible foray into עבודה זרה. זה"ל express this so strongly: עלובה כלה שנתה תוךהפחה.

And one of the terrible repercussions of the העגל החדש is that it opened up the possibility - the temptation - to define Jewish existence and Jewish identity in a new way - in terms, not of תורה, not of אלוקי ישראל, but of עבודה זרה.

And that temptation was very real. At the time of the split into מלכות יהודה and מלכות ישראל, one in אל and one in דן. No accident that he chose זהב. עגלי זהב. Jews had always been tempted by local ע"ז. He was creating a Jewish state, whose identity, however, would not be connected with the worship of ירושלים. And so he needed a Jewish ע"ז, a way to define Jewish identity without recourse to the בית המקדש and what it represents.

Strange as it seems to us, for עגל הזהב and his people the ע"ז was a Jewish symbol. It was their own ע"ז, forged in the very first moments of Jewish nationhood.

הר סיני defined Jewish identity as it had always been defined - in terms of הר סיני; but he stood that definition on its head, by making the critical moment of הר סיני אלוקי ישראל, rather, the העגל החדש, and the denial of קבלת התורה הר סיני.

And that is what the יונים wanted as well. I spoke last week about the fact that the Greeks were allied with a large part of Jews who wanted to ape Greek culture and Greek religion. These were not individual renegade Jews, but a party, a faction - a fifth column - within the body of the Jewish people who wanted to define Jewish identity in a new way. A way that would not encumber them with the moral and religious strictures that made it difficult for them to embrace Greek culture. They didn't want to merely walk away from Judaism - they wanted to redefine Judaism, to turn it against itself, so that Judaism would now mean: אין לנו חלק באלוקי ישראל, a denial of everything that we had accepted at הר סיני.

And the Midrash expresses that desire by saying that they sought to write those words על קרן השור - to follow in the footsteps of נבט and redefine Judaism, by rooting it - not in the תורה, but in the העגל החדש; to make the העגל החדש the defining moment in Jewish history.

הנוכה. And that was the enemy and the threat that we defeated on הנוכה.

This temptation - to redefine the meaning of Judaism so that it no longer includes קבלת התורה - is one of the central themes of modern Jewish history since the emancipation.

What was Reform Judaism if not such a redefinition? There had always been Jews who walked away from observance, but Reform Judaism's platform was to define Judaism itself in terms that would not include Torah and מצוות or, indeed, anything except a vague ethical commitment. That is the modern equivalent of writing על קרן השור that אין לנו חלק באלוקי ישראל.

But the arena where this struggle over the definition of Judaism, of what it means to be Jewish, has been most bitterly fought, is within the Zionist movement.

Since the second Zionist Congress in 1898 - where a large religious delegation was dismayed by the declared goal of many secular delegates of de-rabinizing the communities of Europe - there has been a struggle for the soul of the Zionist movement, between those who saw its mission as the fulfillment of the age-old yearning of the Jewish people to return to their homeland, and those who saw it as a movement to redefine Judaism in a new and radical way - in wholly nationalistic terms, without reference to אלוקי ישראל.

In the early days of the ישוב Eliezer ben Yehudah wrote an article in which he proclaimed: We have turned our back on Jewish history; and that is our pride and glory, that we have rejected everything that Judaism has hitherto represented. That article elicited an anguished and bitter response by R' Kook, who argued that the return to ארץ ישראל is meaningful only if it is a return to our roots, and not a rejection of them.

And this same struggle continues today. We here in America hear only its occasional echo, as when an Israeli MK travelled to Europe a few weeks ago and declared, to a European audience, that Orthodox Jews are racists, and are taught racism in their schools; or when Yossi Beilin recently published a book in which he wrote that the great enemy of Israel is not the Arabs but Judaism itself. But in Israel it is an everyday reality, a protracted struggle for the soul of the nation. And it is our struggle too, and it is important that we not be indifferent to it.

It is the age old struggle between the מכבים and the Hellenists, between those who raised the banner of מי לה' אלי, and those who raised the banner of אין לנו חלק באלוקי ישראל. It is the struggle over whether the defining moment of Jewish history was קבלת התורה, or the העגל החדש. It is the struggle that we fought and won on הנוכה, and which, בס"ד, we shall win again.

From **Rabbi Yissocher Frand** [ryfrand@torah.org] Sent: Friday, December 30, 2005 12:08 AM To: ravfrand@torah.org Subject: Rabbi Frand on Parshas Miketz

An Explanation of Yosef's Gratitude For Forgetting His Father's House

In this week's parsha, the Torah says that Yosef named his eldest son Menashe "for G-d has made me forget all my hardship and all my father's household" [Bereshis 41:52]. This is a strange name to call one's son.

The righteous Yosef tried to and was able to keep within him all the atmosphere and holiness that he received in his father's home. What then does it mean that he gratefully called his son Menashe for, among other reasons, the fact that G-d helped him "forget his father's house"?

On the surface, this seems analogous to a son who drifts away and winds up thousands of miles from the traditions of his religious father's house, who then gives up Yiddishkeit and finally gives his son a Christian name, rejoicing in the fact that he was able to successfully separate himself from his Jewish background. Heaven forbid that this could be Yosef's intention here! On the contrary, we know that Yosef dearly held on to what his father taught him.

I saw a very interesting and poignant insight from Rav Elya Meir Bloch: The house of Pharaoh and the Land of Egypt was not by any stretch of the imagination similar to the atmosphere which Yosef knew in the Land of

Canaan. A person might be tempted to say to himself: "That which I have here is nothing. There is no spirituality here. A life of holiness here is impossible!"

A person can become so distressed and distraught at the spiritual loss he has suffered by a change in geographic location that he can give up all hope: "Why go on?"

Yosef expressed gratitude that the Almighty helped him put aside his own pre-conceived notion of what a "Jewish house" should be like so that he would be able to function as a Jew even in Egypt.

Rav Elya Meir writes that G-d's allowing one to "forget one's father's house" is a Divine Kindness that allowed Yosef to maintain his spirituality in Egypt without succumbing to depression and defeatism at having been plucked away from his father's household. "And so too," he poignantly continues, "do we feel in our current situation." This insight was penned by the Telshe Rosh Yeshiva in 1943.

Any person who lived in Lita (pre-WWII Lithuania), the bastion of Torah learning and the home of many famous pre-war Yeshivas in Europe, and then found himself "stuck" in Cleveland Ohio in 1943 would have a tendency to ask: "This is Torah learning? This is a Yeshiva? This is how Yom Tov is celebrated?" The normal reaction would be: "This is nothing!"

Several times, I heard Rav Gifter discuss Lita and how things were in the original "Telshe". He would break out crying each time he described the appreciation for learning and the spiritual exuberance that existed there.

Two things can happen when contemplating such a contrast. One might be tempted to say: "Let's throw in the towel. This is a joke. This is not a Yeshiva. This is not learning. This is nothing. Let's give up!" Alternatively, a person can say "That was Lita, but this is America. If we are ever going to make something out of this country, we are going to need to start over. It is not going to be the same. It is going to be different, but we just need to keep on plugging away."

Every single one of the heads of the transplanted Lithuanian Yeshivas who restarted in American had to take this latter attitude. The same is true for all the other people who came over from Europe and wanted to preserve their Torah way of life – be it the Chasidic Rebbeim from Hungary or the Germans from Frankfort.

Rav Moshe Feinstein, who was stuck on the Lower East Side in the first part of the twentieth century, must have thought back to how it was in Lubaan, when people were posing to him Shaylahs of great sophistication and complexity. Here in the United States he had to worry about people keeping Shabbos and eating kosher.

When Rav Ruderman came to Baltimore, people had no appreciation for the concept of a Yeshiva. They were against the founding of a Yeshiva in Baltimore. He could have asked himself "I need this? I remember Slabodka. I remember Kovna. What do I have over here? Nothing!"

The same is true for all the Roshei Yeshivos. But they kept the flame burning. The reason why they were able to do this is because they were successful in utilizing the blessing that Yosef alludes to: "G-d allowed me to forget my father's house." They were successful in removing Lita from the forefront of their minds and putting it in the back of their minds. They were able to say "Yes, that was Lita, but this is America." Like Yosef the righteous, they were able to make peace with the present time and place where fate placed them and to build from the reality of "what is" rather than just bemoan the gap of the present from "what had been".

We Should Not Assume What Happens Is Necessarily 'Bad'

The pasuk says, "Why have you done evil to me?" (lamah ha'reioseim li) [Bereshis 43:6]. The Medrash says (according to the textual reading of the Yefei Toar on this Medrash) that this is the only instance in the entire dialog between Yaakov and his sons regarding Yosef, where the comment of Yaakov was not true in at least some sense.

Although Yaakov makes many suppositions in his dialog with his sons that appear to not be accurate [e.g. – "Yosef has been torn" (tarof taraf Yosef); "a wild beast ate him" (chaya ra-ah acalashu)], at some level they

may be interpreted as true statements.

For example "Yosef has been torn" may be interpreted as Yosef was ripped away from his father by his brothers. Likewise the statement "a wild beast ate him" may refer metaphorically to the wife of Potiphar, etc.

There is only one comment that our Patriarch Yaakov made in the whole dialog with his sons that was not true (I'batalah) – namely the statement "why did you do evil to me?" The Medrash comments: "G-d says 'I am busy making his son the ruler in Egypt and he complains about his grief and trouble.'"

G-d questions Yaakov's characterization of the events as "bad". "I am trying to make your son viceroy in Egypt. I am trying to save the world from starvation. How dare you call it 'evil trouble'?"

The practical lesson of this Medrash is much easier to teach than to absorb. Many events appear to us in this life as being terrible. With the passage of time, however, it becomes clear to us that what we deemed to be terrible, was not terrible at all.

This is one of the most difficult ideas for human beings, who are bound by time and space, to accept. We see things happening at the time when they are unfolding and we cannot imagine that they serve any constructive purpose. However, sometimes, with the passage of time, we see that which we perceived to be a tremendous 'rah' [bad thing] turns out to be a tremendous 'tovah' [favor].

According to the Medrash, this was the essence of the Almighty's chastising Yaakov: "Don't tell Me that what I am doing to you is bad. I am trying to do for you the greatest favor."

Why Stop At The Most Exciting Part?

This idea dovetails with another thought that we have mentioned in the past, but which bears repeating: Parshas Miketz ends at a very dramatic moment. We know that at the very beginning of Parshas Vayigash, Yosef finally reveals himself to his brothers with the words "I am Yosef. Is my father still alive?" [Bereshis 45:3]. This climax of the drama is revealed within the first fifteen or twenty pasukim of next week's parsha.

The question begs to be asked: Why didn't the Torah end Parshas Miketz with this dramatic conclusion of the narration? This is not, Chas V'Sholom, like a serial where we want to keep the audience in suspense: "To be continued, next week..." so that everyone will come back to shul next Shabbos to find out what really happened. This is the Torah!

The lesson is in fact "Wait until next week." There are some things in life that we cannot understand while they are happening. It is impossible to understand certain things in "real time." The only thing that helps us understand some events is patience and the passing of time.

Parshas Miketz ends as it does to remind us that sometimes, in order to see the good of what is in store for us, we must wait a week, a year, or even a lifetime.

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<http://www.chief Rabbi.org/>
Covenant & Conversation
Thoughts on the Weekly Parsha from

Sir Jonathan Sacks

Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the British Commonwealth

[From 2 years ago - 5766]

<http://www.chief Rabbi.org/tt-index.html>

Miketz

Joseph is languishing in prison. Then, at the beginning of this week's sedra, a sequence of events takes place, leading to the most rapid, radical change of fortune in the Bible. Pharaoh has two dreams that trouble his spirit. None of his priestly retinue can decode the dreams in a way that satisfies him. Pharaoh's butler remembers Joseph. Hurriedly he is taken from prison, given a wash and change of clothes, and brought before the ruler.

Not only does he interpret the dreams: he becomes the world's first economist, inventing the theory of trade cycles. The dreams mean seven years of plenty followed by seven of scarcity. Having diagnosed the problem, Joseph proceeds to solve it: store surplus grain in the years of plenty, then use these reserves in the years of famine. Pharaoh invites him to implement the strategy, appointing him second in command in Egypt. Joseph moves from prisoner to Prime Minister in one effortless leap.

That is the narrative on the surface. One apparently insignificant detail, however, stands out. Pharaoh has had not one dream but two: one about cows, the other about ears of grain. Joseph explains that they are the same dream, conveying the same message through different images. Why then were there two? This is his explanation:

That Pharaoh has dreamed this twice means that G-d is firmly resolved on this plan, and very soon He will put it into effect. (Genesis 41:32) At first sight, this looks like just another piece of information. Understood in the full context of the Joseph narrative, however, it changes our entire understanding of events. For it was not Pharaoh alone who had two dreams with the same structure. So too did Joseph at the very beginning of the story: one about sheaves of wheat, the other about the sun, moon and stars.

At that stage we had no idea what the dreams signified. Were they a prophecy, or were they the fevered imagination of an over-indulged, overambitious young man? The tension of the Joseph narrative depends on this ambiguity. Only now, chapters and years later, are we given the vital information that a dream, repeated in different images, is not just a dream. It is a message sent by G-d about a future that will soon come to pass.

Why were we not given this information earlier? It may be that it was only later that G-d disclosed this to Joseph. Or perhaps Joseph has only now come to understand it. Or it may simply be a literary device to create and maintain tension in the unfolding plot. It may, though, signal something altogether deeper about the human condition seen through the eyes of faith.

It is only in retrospect that we understand the story of our life. Later events explain earlier ones. At the time, neither Joseph nor his brothers could know that his dreams were a form of prophecy: that he was indeed destined for greatness and that every misfortune he suffered had a part to play in their coming true. At first reading, the Joseph story reads like a series of random happenings. Only later, looking back, do we see that each event

was part of a precise, providential plan to lead a young man from a family of nomadic shepherds to become second-in-command of Egypt.

This is a truth not about Joseph alone but about us also. We live our lives poised between a known past and an unknown future. Between them lies a present in which we make our choices. We decide between alternatives. Ahead of us are several diverging paths, and it is up to us which we follow. Only looking back does our life take on the character of a story. Only many years later do we realise which choices were fateful, and which irrelevant. Things which seemed small at the time turn out to be decisive. Matters that once seemed important prove in retrospect to have been trivial. Seen from the perspective of the present, a life can appear to be a random sequence of disconnected events. It takes the passage of time for us to be able to look back and see the route we have taken, and the right and wrong turnings on the way.

The novelist Dan Jacobson puts this thought in the mind of the narrator of his novel, *The Confessions of Josef Baisz*:

Told one way, looking forward as it were, and proceeding from one event to the next, my story may seem to be a mere sequence, without design or purpose. Told another way, looking backwards, it can be made to resemble a plot, a plan, a cunningly involuted development leading to a necessary conclusion. Being both narrator and subject, how am I to know which way to look? This is a truth not only about literature but about life. There is an intrinsic connection between time and meaning. The same series of events that once seemed mere happenstance becomes, with hindsight, the unfolding of a script.

This allows us to resolve one of the great paradoxes of the religious life - the seeming contradiction between divine providence and human free will. As Rabbi Akiva put it most famously: "All is foreseen, yet freedom of choice is given."

On the face of it, these two propositions cannot both be true. If G-d knows in advance that we are going to do X, then we are not free not to do it. If, on the other hand, we are genuinely free, then no one can know what we will choose before we choose it.

The paradox arises because of the nature of time. We live in time. G-d lives beyond it. An analogy: imagine going to see a soccer match. While the match is progress, you are on the edge of your seat. You do not know - no one knows - what is going to happen next. Now imagine watching a recording of the same match on television later that night. You know exactly what is going to happen next.

That knowledge does not mean that the players have had their freedom retroactively removed. All it means is that you are now watching the match from a different time perspective. When you were in the stadium, you were watching it in the present. On television you are watching it as an event in the past.

So it is with life itself. As we live it day by day, we choose in the present in order to shape what is for us an unknown, undetermined future. Only looking back are we able to see the consequences of our actions, and realize their part in the unfolding of our autobiography.

It is then, with hindsight, that we begin to see how providence has guided our steps, leading us to where G-d needs us to be. That is one meaning of the phrase spoken by G-d to Moses:

"Then I shall take away My hand, and you will see My back, but My face cannot not be seen." (Exodus 33: 23) Only looking back do we see G-d's providence interwoven with our life, never looking forward ("My face cannot not be seen").

How subtly and deftly this point is made in the story of Joseph - the supreme example of a life in which human action and Divine intervention are inextricably entwined. It is all there in the verse about the doubling of Pharaoh's dream. By delaying this information until later in Joseph's life, the Torah shows us how a later event can force us to re-interpret an earlier one, teaching us the difference between two time perspectives: the present, and the understanding that only hindsight can bring to the past. It does so not by

expounding complex philosophical propositions, but by the art of story-telling - a far simpler and more powerful way of conveying a difficult truth.

These two time perspectives are embodied, in Judaism, in two different literatures. Through halakhah, we learn to make choices in the present. Through aggadah we strive to understand the past. Together, these two ways of thinking constitute the twin hemispheres of the Jewish brain. We are free. But we are also characters in a Divinely scripted drama. We choose, but we are also chosen. The Jewish imagination lives in the tension between these two frames of reference: between freedom and providence, our decisions and G-d's plan.

InnerNet - "Origin of the Name Chanukah" Heritage House
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"ORIGIN OF THE NAME CHANUKAH"

by Rabbi Nosson Scherman

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Why is the most well-know Jewish holiday called "Chanukah?" What is the origin of the name, and what are some of the deeper kabbalistic meanings behind it?

* * *

1) The name Chanukah was given in commemoration of the historical fact that the Jewish fighters rested -- "chanu" (the FIRST THREE LETTERS of the word "Chanukah") -- from their battles against Syrian-Greeks on the 25th of Kislev. 25 is spelled out chof-heh -- the FINAL TWO LETTERS of "Chanukah."

(source: Kol Bo; Abudraham; Tur; Ran)

* * *

2) The Hebrew word "chein" (the FIRST TWO LETTERS of the word "Chanukah") denotes grace. Thus 'Chanukah' could be meant to allude that the Jewish warriors found Divine 'grace' on the 25th of Kislev.

(source: Noam Elimelech)

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3) One of the most direct explanations of the name Chanukah is that it is related to the dedication ("chanukah") of the Altar, [a centerpiece of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem]... We learn in the Talmud (Avodah Zarah 52b) that the Hasmoneans removed and stored away the Altar-stones which the Greeks had polluted with idolatry, and had to build a new Altar. That is why the festival is called 'Chanukah' which means 'dedication.'

(source: Maharsha to Shabbos 21b) See also: I Maccabees 4:44-9 and II Maccabees 10:2-4.

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4) The name Chanukah refers also to the dedication of the Second Temple, which occurred on almost the same calendar date (see the Book of Chagga'i 2:18). It is because of this consecration ("chanukah") of the Second Temple that the miracle of the lights that happened in that season -- generations later -- is called Chanukah.

(source: Rabbi Yaakov Emden)

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5) The name also commemorates another dedication ("chanukah") that nearly occurred on a 25th of Kislev, for it was on that date that work was completed on the Tabernacle -- during the 40 years of Jewish wandering in the desert. Although the work was finished in Kislev, the Tabernacle was not dedicated then, for, as the Midrash records, G-d wished to combine the joy of the Tabernacle with Nissan -- the month in which the Patriarch Isaac was born. Thus G-d (so to speak) "repaid the loss" to Kislev, in which the labor was actually completed, with the Chanukah of the Hasmoneans. Furthermore, it is for this reason that the Biblical chapter dealing with the sacrificial offerings brought by the Tribal princes at the dedication of the Tabernacle [Numbers ch. 7], forms the synagogue Torah readings during our 8 days of Chanukah.

(source: Shiblei HaLeket)

* * *

6) Homiletically there is an allusion in the Hebrew name Chanukah to the fact that we conduct ourselves on Chanukah in the manner advocated by the School of Hillel. Hillel holds that we begin on the first night with one light, and add additional lights on each of the subsequent nights. (As opposed to the practice of the School of Shammai, who begin with eight lights and subtract one light on each of the subsequent nights). The initials of Chanukah spell: "Eight Lights, and the Halachah follows the School of Hillel."

(source: Abudraham; Ateres Zekeinim; Pri Megadim)

* * *

7) Kabbalistically, at the time of the lighting of the Chanukah candles, there is a revelation of part of the "Ohr Haganuz," the great light hidden away since the beginning of Creation -- the light of Messiah. And that is why the festival is called Chanukah -- because it is a spiritual preparation ["chinuch"] for our destined Redemption.

(source: Bnai Yisas'char)

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Rabbi Wein - Parshas Miketz Inbox **Rabbi Berel Wein**
Parshat Miketz 5768

Yosef's dramatic ascent to power in Egypt is recorded for us in this week's parsha. What is noteworthy is that Yosef does not appear to be at all surprised or amazed by the sudden turn of events in his fortunes. A person who lives by dreams is never surprised when the dream turns into reality.

Yosef always expected his dreams to come true in this world. So did his father Yaakov. And in truth so did the brothers and that is why he discomfited them so deeply. Had they felt the dreams of Yosef to be utter nonsense they would not have reacted as strongly when he related the dreams to them. They were threatened not because the dreams were nothing but rather because they were something.

Their apparent blindness and stubbornness, at not recognizing Yosef standing before them, stemmed from their necessity to deny the validity of his dreams. When Yosef will reveal himself to his brothers they will instinctively believe him because of the stock they subconsciously placed in his dreams all along.

Practical people are afraid of dreamers not because of the dreamer's impracticality but because the dreamer may turn out to be right after all. This has been proven time and again in Jewish history. The holiday of Chanukah, that we are currently celebrating, proves the dreams of the Maccabees overcame the practicalities of the Hellenist Jews who chose to survive by becoming more Greek than Jewish.

Jews over the ages could have reasonably quit and given up the struggle to survive as Jews countless times. It was always the dreamers that persevered and they have always been proven to be right and practical.

The Torah attributes the success of Yosef to the fact that he remembered his dreams. It is one thing to remember dreams of grandeur when one is poor and imprisoned. Then the dream provides hope and resilience to somehow continue. Yosef's greatness lies in his ability to remember and believe those dreams when he has risen to power. He could easily have ignored his brothers and put all of his past behind him. He was now a great success. So why continue to pursue his dreams, which could ultimately sorely endanger his position and achievements? But Yosef doggedly pursues the full realization of his dreams.

Many times in life we are frightened of advancing because we think we might risk what we already have. Judaism preaches caution in tactics and how to achieve certain goals, both spiritual and physical. But it never

advocates compromising the great Jewish dreams as outlined in our Torah and tradition.

We are bidden to be prudent about life's decisions but the goal of ascending the ladder of Yaakov is never erased from our consciousness. When seeing his brothers before him, Yosef has the choice to leave everything as it is. But he chooses to pursue his dreams to their fateful end. That has become a lesson for all later generations of Jews as well. The full realization of Yosef's dream is the catalyst for reuniting all of Israel as a nation.

Shabat shalom. Chanuka sameach.

Rabbi Berel Wein

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