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BS"D

## INTERNET PARSHA SHEET ON MIKETZ - CHANUKA - 5780

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date: Dec 25, 2019, 11:50 AM  
subject: Rav Frand - Why is Chanukah Hardly Mentioned in the Mishna and Talmud?  
These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: #1099 – Havdalah or Ner Chanukah – Which Comes First? And Other Issues. Good Shabbos!

### Why Do We Need a Word Count at the End of Parshas Miketz?

The number of pesukim in each weekly parsha is recorded at the end of virtually every parsha. The end of Miketz, as is typical, contains the notation that the parsha contains 146 pesukim. However, it is very atypical that following this notation there is a further notation that the parsha contains 2,025 words. This is the only parsha that contains a word count as well as a pasuk count. What is the significance of this?

I heard a beautiful interpretation in the name of the Vilna Gaon. The pasuk says in Parshas Miketz, "And he (Pharaoh) had him (Yosef) ride in his second chariot, and they proclaimed before him, 'Avrech!' And he appointed him over all the land of Egypt." [Bereshis 41:43]. There is a dispute in the Sifrei as to the meaning of the term 'Avrech'. One opinion says it is a condensation of two words: Av (father) in wisdom and Rach (soft; tender) in years. Yosef was all of 30 years old. He was running Egypt. He was very wise while still being a young man. That is why young Kollel students in Eretz Yisrael today are given the title Avreichim. It means the same thing – they are young in years but wise beyond their age. The other opinion in Sifrei is that Avrech comes from the root word berech meaning 'knee'. Whenever Yosef would appear, his assistants would announce to everyone

'Avrech' – bend down (as a show of honor to the ruler).

The Gaon explains that a derivative of this dispute in terms of the meaning of 'Avrech' is whether the term is a single word (as would be the case if it comes from berech) or two words (a combination of Av and Rach). The Gaon says that the notation at the end of the parsha tells us that there are 2025 words in the parsha, which only works out if one counts AvRech as two words, indicating that we rule in accordance with the opinion that AvRech is a term connoting the two aspects of 'Av' (maturity in wisdom) and 'Rach' (youthfulness).

### Things Are Not Always as They Appear

One of the very perplexing things in this parsha is the fact that Yosef appears to be taking revenge against his brothers. He is playing games with them. He torments them. He knows who they are and puts them through a long charade, accusing them of being spies and accusing Binyomin of being a thief. It goes back and forth like that. What is Yosef doing? We are speaking about 'Yosef haTzaddik' (the 'Righteous one.')

The Ramban asks a question that bothers everyone. Yosef was now second in command in Egypt. He certainly could have sent some kind of message to his father and told him, 'I am alive. Come down and see me.' Even if he has a grudge against his brothers and wants to torment and torture them, but why was he apparently so callous regarding the emotions of his father? Why didn't he send Yaakov Avinu a message that he was alive and well?

The Ramban provides a whole approach to answer this question. He says the reason Yosef did not do this is because he was trying to bring his dreams to fruition. Yosef had two dreams. First, he dreamt that the eleven brothers would bow down to him. Then he had a second dream that his father would also bow down to him. The Ramban writes that Yosef had to see the fulfillment of those dreams. Therefore, when the ten brothers came down and bowed down to him, the first dream remained unfulfilled. For that reason, he demanded that all eleven brothers come down. When the brothers came down with Binyamin and bowed before him, the first dream was now fulfilled in totality. However, the second dream was not yet fulfilled. That is why he hatched this plan. It was not that he intended to seek revenge or torture the brothers, but the dreams had to be fulfilled!

Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky, in his sefer Emes L'Yaakov, writes the words, "and I am like dust under the soles of his feet" (in comparison to the Ramban, one of the great early commentaries) "but", he goes on, "I do not understand what the Ramban is saying." He asks: What kind of mitzvah is it to see that a person's dreams become fulfilled? That is no justification to put his brothers and father through the wringer, to play this cat and mouse game with them, just to ensure that his personal dreams from decades ago come to fruition!

Rav Yaakov goes on to give his own explanation for Yosef's behavior. His explanation is that Yosef had to teach the brothers a lesson. The lesson, succinctly stated, is that things are not always as they appear, and that it is possible to jump to wrong conclusions. This is exactly what the brothers did. They falsely suspected their innocent sibling (choshed b'Ksherim). That is what Yosef was trying to accomplish here. The brothers knew that they were not spies. They knew Yosef was a smart fellow. How could he make such a gross error and accuse them of being spies?

They did not learn the lesson the first time. Rav Yaakov points out that when they found the goblet in the sack of Binyomin, they accused him and said (Rashi brings this surprising Medrash) "You are a thief, the son of a thief (referring to the fact that his mother Rachel stole the 'Terafim' from her father Lavan)." This was despite the fact that they were accusing Binyomin—whom they knew to be a Tzadik (righteous individual).

There are some people that we all trust implicitly, such that come what may we know that they would never do such a thing. "Ay" – the 'evidence'? There must be an explanation! But they did not do that. In spite of the fact that Binyomin was a Tzadik, they said "You're a Ganav (thief)!" Despite the fact that they knew Yosef was a Tzadik, they said "You're a Rodef (have

intent to murder)!”

“I am going to show you” says Yosef, “that if people jump to conclusions—they look merely at the ‘evidence’—they can make serious mistakes.” That is why he had to put them through these trials and tribulations—so that they would finally see what they did wrong.

When Yosef says the words “I am Yosef—is my father still alive?” they were not able to respond to him “for they feared his presence.” The Midrash says that this was musar (rebuke, reprimand or chastisement) to them, for which they had no response. What was the musar? “We were wrong.” That is the biggest musar! It is the hardest fact to face. They now realized that for twenty years they were making a mistake, they were living a lie. There is no greater musar than this.

That is the lesson he wanted to teach them: Things are not always as they appear.

I heard an incident from Rabbi Isaac Bernstein, who links this Biblical event with a beautiful story involving the Ponnevizer Rav (Rav Yosef Shlomo Kahaneman 1888-1969) and Reb Aryeh Levin (1885-1969). The Ponnevizer Rav called a meeting with all the great men of Eretz Yisrael over the dire financial straits of the Yeshivos in the Holy Land. Reb Aryeh Levin was in attendance at this meeting. In the middle of the meeting, before they came to any type of conclusion, Reb Aryeh Levin excused himself. He said, “I have an important errand that I have to take care of. I need to leave.” And he left in the middle of the meeting. Once Reb Aryeh left, the whole meeting dissipated. It fell apart because they were not going to come to any conclusion without him. There was no point in having further discussion about any major decisions, because no one wanted to undertake a major initiative without Reb Aryeh’s concurrence.

After the meeting broke up, the Ponnevizer Rav starts walking to wherever he had to go. He passed by a florist shop, and who should he see there in the florist shop? It is none other than Reb Aryeh Levin. Rav Kahaneman went into the florist shop and said to Reb Aryeh, “Excuse me, but this was the important errand that you had to take care of that caused you to break up our meeting? Just so you could buy someone flowers!?”

Reb Aryeh responded that he was not in the store to buy flowers. He was there instead to buy a potted plant. Okay. So???

Reb Aryeh told him that he had a friend who was deathly ill who was in a sanatorium. (According to another version of the story the person had leprosy.) He had a disease that was deemed in those days to be so contagious that anything the person owned or brought with him into this facility had to be burned after the person died—his clothes, his bed sheets, his possessions, everything had to be burned. This man was now near death. It bothered the friend that they were going to burn his Tefillin.

Reb Aryeh Levin went to the florist and bought a potted plant. He was going to dig out the dirt that came with the plant and put the Tefillin under the plant in the dirt, since the hospital staff was of the opinion that a living organism was not affected by this illness—so he would be able to remove the plant (under which the Tefillin were buried) from the facility. He would thus be able to make the deathly ill person feel at ease that his Tefillin would not be burnt, because they would be removed along with the plant by Reb Aryeh after the person died. This Jew would be able to go to his grave knowing “My Tefillin were not destroyed!”

The Ponnvizher Rav apologized to Reb Aryeh and begged his forgiveness for being “Choshed b’Ksherim” (suspecting him unjustly).

A person can appear to be as guilty as anything. The stolen goblet can be in his sack of wheat. Someone can excuse himself from an important meeting to go to a florist, but things are not always as they appear. That is why Yosef felt he had to put his brothers through such an ordeal—to teach them that lesson.

### **Chanukah Is Not Just “Them Against Us”**

Many people ask the following question: Chanukah is an eight-day holiday. There are dozens and dozens of laws in Hilchos Chanukah in Shulchan

Aruch. The holiday is packed with halachik detail. And yet in the entire Talmud there are barely two and a half folio (blatt or two-sided pages, primarily in Tractate Shabbos) which mention the holiday of Chanukah and its laws. Other than as very peripheral references, it is not mentioned in the Mishna. There is no Mishna and no Masechta (Tractate of Talmud) that deals specifically with Chanukah.

Purim—also a Rabbinic holiday—is all of one day, and it gets its own Masechta (Megilla) but Chanukah, which is eight days, gets just two and a half blatt as incidental mention in a Masechta dealing with another topic. Why is Chanukah not mentioned in the Mishna?

The Chasam Sofer says something that you need to be the Chasam Sofer to say. He writes that Rabbi Yehuda HaNassi, who was the editor of the Mishna was a descendant of the Davidic Dynasty. The Chashmonean heroes of the Chanukah story, despite the fact that they were righteous individuals, did something that was forbidden. They took the position of Melech (King). Kohanim are not allowed to be Melachim. Yaakov’s blessing to Yehudah was “The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet...” [Bereshis 49:10]. The Chashmonaim, who were descendants of the Tribe of Levi, were in violation of this law when they usurped the monarchy for their own family. Consequently, Rabbeinu HaKodosh, the editor of the Mishna, did not want to give Chanukah the same prominence as Purim, because of this spiritual error that the Chashmonaim made.

I heard a different explanation as to why Chanukah is not mentioned in the Mishna, in the name of Rav Yoshe Ber Soloveitchik (1903-1993). The Gemara [Moed Katan 26a] says that if someone sees a Sefer Torah being burnt, he needs to tear Kriyah (rip his clothing in a sign of mourning) twice—once for the parchment and once for the writing. The Gemara cites a pasuk [Yirmiyahu 36:27] to prove this point.

Rav Soloveitchik asks that the Gemara in Avodah Zarah [18a] seems to say the opposite. The Gemara in Avodah Zarah mentions that the Romans took out Rav Chanina ben Tradyon and burned him at the stake. They wrapped him in a Sefer Torah and lit it. As the fire was burning, Rav Chanina’s students asked him, “Rebbi, what do you see?” He responded, “I see the parchment is burning but the letters are flying away.”

Rav Soloveitchik raised the apparent contradiction: From Moed Katan 26a it appears that the letters burn, and a person needs to tear Kriyah over them; yet from Avodah Zarah 18a it appears that the letters fly away unharmed. Rav Soloveitchik resolves the contradiction by explaining that there is a difference between the case where the letters are burnt by a Jew and where they are burnt by others.

The Gemara in Maseches Moed Katan, which rules that one must tear Kriyah twice—once for the parchment and once for the letters – is speaking of a case when Yehoyakim son of Yoshiyahu burned a Sefer Torah [Yirmiyahu 36:27]. The Torah was given to the Jewish nation, and along with the positive comes a negative: a Jew can defile a Sefer Torah. A Jew can destroy even the Kedusha (sanctity) of a Sefer Torah because, since it was given to us, a Jew has a relationship to its Kedusha. He can defile it or even destroy it. The Gemara in Avodah Zarah with Chanina ben Tradyon, however, is speaking of a case where the Romans burned a Sefer Torah. Romans do not have the ability to tamper with the Kedusha of a Sefer Torah. The Letters of the Torah escape their defilement.

Rav Soloveitchik explains that this was the difference between Rome and Greece. The dominant theme of Rome – of Tisha B’Av and of the Destruction of the Temple – is Churban (destruction). The dominant theme of Chanuka is Tumah (defilement). The distinction is the same. Others can destroy but cannot defile the Torah. They cannot burn or affect the Kedusha of the Torah. Ay, Yavan (the Greeks)? The answer, says Rav Yoshe Ber, is that with Yavan, something else happened. Chanukah is not merely about Yavan (the Greeks) but it is about the MisYavanim (the Jews who adapted and wanted to become like the Greeks). The MisYavanim became Greek-Jews or Jewish-Greeks. Therefore, they, because they were Jewish, they had the power to defile (be m’Tameh) the Torah itself.

In the time of Churban HaBayis (Destruction of the Temple), Rabbi Chanina ben Tradyon saw the "letters flying" away because the Romans had no relationship to the Kedusha of the Torah. However, by Yavan, there were also Jews (who have a connection to Kedusha of the Torah) involved, and they have the power to even defile the letters.

Therefore, Rav Soloveitchik says, Chanukah is not given the prominence in the Mishna and Talmud that other Jewish holidays are given, because it is a shame for us. This was not a simple matter of "Them against Us." This was a matter of "Us against Us." It was a culture war. It was a fight amongst the Jews themselves. Therefore, to go ahead and give it the prominence that a Haman gets for trying to destroy the Jews (from which they emerged victorious) is inappropriate. The story of Haman and his attempt to wipe out the Jews—that gets more prominence. Chanukah, on the other hand, which speaks of a sordid incident in the history of Klal Yisrael, does not receive the same prominence that other Yomim Tovim receive. Better to keep the details of the story out of the Oral Law.

A Happy Chanukah to everyone!

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Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman; Baltimore, MD [dhoffman@torah.org](mailto:dhoffman@torah.org) This week's write-up is adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissochar Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Series on the weekly Torah portion. ... A complete catalog 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](mailto:tapes@yadyechiel.org) or visit <http://www.yadyechiel.org/> for further information.

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date: Dec 25, 2019, 3:00 AM

subject: [**Rav Kook Torah**] Mikeitz: Waiting for the Dream

Mikeitz: Waiting for the Dream

Rav Kook Torah

It took a long time, but Joseph's dreams eventually came to pass.

How long did it take? Joseph became viceroy of Egypt at age thirty, and nine years later (after seven years of plenty and two years of famine), his brothers came to buy food. So Joseph's dreams that his brothers would one day bow down before him and recognize his greatness were fulfilled when he was 39 years old. Since he had dreamt those dreams of future greatness at age 17, we see that his dreams took 22 years to come true!

"Rabbi Levy taught: One should wait as long as 22 years for a good dream to come true. This we learn from Joseph." (Berachot 54a)

What is special about the number 22? In what way is it connected to the fulfillment of dreams?

Twenty-Two Elements of Language

Rav Kook noted that the Hebrew alphabet contains 22 letters. Through myriad combinations and permutations of these 22 letters, we are able to express all of our thoughts and ideas. If we were to lack even one letter, however, we would be unable to formulate certain words and ideas.

The ancient mystical work Sefer Yetzirah offers an intriguing insight into the functioning of the universe. Just as hundreds of thousands of words are formed from a small set of letters, so too, the vast array of forces that govern our world are in fact the result of a relatively small number of fundamental causes.

If 22 letters are needed to express any idea, then 22 years are needed for the universe's elemental forces to bring about any desired effect. Thus it is reasonable that we should allow a dream as long as 22 years to be realized.

Rabbi Levy is also teaching a second lesson: nothing is completely without value. One should not be hasty to disregard a dream. In every vision, there

resides some element of truth, some grain of wisdom. It may take 22 years to be revealed, or perhaps its potential may never be realized in our world; but it always contains some kernel of truth.

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### Language of Tomorrow

by **Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein** [South Africa]

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

One of our great sages, known as the Maharsha, says the word Hanukkah comes from the Hebrew word which means to dedicate, and refers to the dedication of the new altar, which was built after the Maccabees recaptured the Temple. The story of Hanukkah is set during the time of the mighty Greek empire, which had invaded the land of Israel and imposed not just political dominion over the Jewish people, but cultural and ideological hegemony too. In seeking to impose Hellenistic values and philosophy, and supplant Torah values and a Jewish way of life, the Greeks outlawed the performance of many crucial mitzvot, including Shabbos and circumcision - in an attempt to subvert the entire Jewish value system. Their campaign is captured in the siddur, in a special paragraph we say during Hanukkah: "The Greek kingdom rose up against Your people Israel to make them forget Your Torah and to remove them from the statutes of Your will."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

And the light and energy of Hanukkah is there for us to draw on in our personal lives. Each one of us goes through times when we start to lose our way, when we feel flat and uninspired, and disconnected from the light of Torah. Contained in Hanukkah is the power to bounce back, to refresh and reinvigorate ourselves, and our connection to God and His Torah.

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

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

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

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

It happened then and it can happen now.

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Miketz: Lessons of NonLiteral Onkelos

by R. Gidon Rothstein

Yosef, a Prophet?

Yosef impresses Par'oh with his interpretation of the dreams. To explain to his advisers his decision to elevate Yosef to second in command, Par'oh points out (41:38) there's no one else in the kingdom asher ruah Elokim bo, literally who has the spirit of Gd in him.

Onkelos writes di ruah nevua min kodam Hashem bei, who has in him a prophetic spirit from Hashem. ArtScroll finds Onkelos' idea of prophecy in Yosef in verse 16, where Yosef says bil'adai, the dream interpretation does not come from me, it comes from Hashem. To ArtScroll, Onkelos thought Yosef was telling Par'oh he would understand the dream by nevua, prophecy.

Yet in verse 39, as Par'oh assigns Yosef his new position, he tells Yosef ein navon ve-hakham kamokha, words Onkelos renders sakhletan ve-hakim, discerning and wise. Par'oh seems to be saying Yosef figured out the dream intellectually, not prophetically. ArtScroll does cite the Gri"z, who said Par'oh referred to wisdom and discernment because they are prerequisites for prophecy. It seems odd to me, however, for Par'oh to focus on wisdom and discernment if the prophecy was what caught his attention. More important, Yosef never says it was a prophecy.

To me, I wonder whether Onkelos extends the idea of nevu'a to include remarkable intellectual achievements (or, at least, to think Biblical characters would). To Par'oh (and maybe to Rivka, as we saw in Toledot, when she told Ya'akov she had been told prophetically no punishment would come his way for taking the blessings from Esav), someone with Yosef's insight counted as a sort of prophecy, regardless of whether his experience involved direct communication from Hashem or angel.

A Tosafot in Yevamot claims Eliyahu could have decided to offer sacrifices on Mount Carmel as an hora'at sha'a, a temporary abrogation of the Torah for a higher purpose, even on his own intellectual account. While we know the Sanhedrin has the power to issue such rulings, and prophets can do so based on a prophecy, Tosafot seems to see the prophet's level as also giving him the intellectual insight to do the same, on his own account.

Maybe Onkelos, too, thought it not incorrect for Par'oh to speak of a certain kind of purely intellectual experience as a prophecy.

Focused on the People

As Yosef implemented his plan, the Torah tells us the land during the seven years of plenty was likmatzim, made grain by the handfuls. Onkelos instead writes u-knashu dayrai ar'a...ibura le-otazrin, the inhabitants of the land gathered the grain into storehouses.

He may have been bothered by the anthropomorphism of speaking of land as "making" grain, as I believe we have seen enough to think Onkelos resisted attributing acts to inanimate objects. Without the land as an actor, the idea of handfuls became less than fully sensible, so he switched it to what the people would have done. It also fits somewhat better with the coming verses, where Yosef is described as doing exactly that, gathering the grain into cities for storage.

Neutralizing a Metaphor

On their second trip to Egypt, the brothers are brought to Yosef's house to dine, events they at first take with suspicion. In 43:18, they worry they have been brought there le-hitgollel alenu u-le-hitnapel alenu, translated in various ways, usually along the lines of "to overpower us and take us as slaves." Onkelos has u-le-istakafa, which ArtScroll tells us means to bring a libelous charge. Rashi thinks the Hebrew parallel would be le-hit'olel, and that Onkelos strayed from the literal meaning, I assume because Rashi thought Onkelos did not see meaning in the idea of the Egyptians falling or crashing onto Ya'akov's sons, considering they already had them in their hands or custody. Ramban thinks Onkelos' word in fact offers a plausible

literal translation, with le-hitnapel from a root he relates to nfl, to not exist, as the charges here did not really exist.

Everyone seems to agree Onkelos was not willing to follow the literal meaning of le-hitnapel, to fall down on us. To me, it's an example of Onkelos presenting metaphors in a way more literal minded people could understand, straying from literal interpretation to do so.

#### Jews Ate Sheep

The brothers finally eat with Yosef, he at a table of his own, his Egyptian advisers at a table of their own, and the brothers at one of their own because, 43:32 tells us, to'evah hi le-Mitzrayim, the Egyptians found it to be an abomination to eat with Hebrews. Onkelos adds a reason, arei be'ira de-Mitzraei dahalin lei ivraei akhlin, the Jews ate the animals the Egyptians worshipped.

Rashi explains the verse simply, the Egyptians found it abominable to eat with Hebrews, says Onkelos gave a reason and does not share the reason. We all know Rashi is not afraid of Midrashic readings, not afraid to flesh out implications of the text. I wonder whether here, he felt Onkelos inserted an idea without backing in the text, found that a step too far.

Especially because the idea was a part of my education for as long as I can remember, I think it's valuable to see it was Onkelos who put it out there, without obvious evidence in the text.

#### Yosef Was a Sorcerer?

Yosef's adviser and Yosef himself, 44:5 and 15, reproach the brothers for the theft of Yosef's goblet, they speak of his divination powers, nahesh yehahesh, surely divines matters (such as who stole the goblet.) Onkelos writes, badka mavdik, surely investigates, turning the nihush, the sorcery, into an intellectual effort, an ability to suss out the truth of the theft. Rashi agrees, says mi-da'at u-mi-svara, from his knowledge and his logic.

ArtScroll suggests neither Rashi nor Onkelos wanted a verse to have Yosef to admit violating the Torah (by practicing sorcery; the Gemara says Avraham kept the Torah, as presumably did all his descendants). Onkelos does have an Aramaic word for sorcery, the same one as in the Torah, lo tenahashun, as he writes to translate the verse where the Torah prohibits it.

I can think of two more possibilities. First, if Onkelos is the kind of rationalist we are finding him to be, he may have avoided giving any impression sorcery works, even if Yosef is toying with the brothers. Second, the comment brings us full circle on Yosef and the metaphysical. We started with Onkelos putting prophecy into Yosef's mouth where the verse did not, now he takes divination away from Yosef where the verse claimed it for him. And I think the truth lies in the middle, Onkelos thought Yosef always used his intellect, not full-on prophecy and certainly not sorcery. Because the comments we saw this week put the focus on the human actor, in gathering the grain, giving a way the Egyptians would take the brothers captive, an explanation for their hatred of eating with Jews, and evaluating Yosef's way of knowing what he did.

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Jewish Identity – Recognizable To All

**Halakhic Positions of Rav Joseph B. Soloveitchik**

**by R. Aharon Ziegler**

In the Bracha of Havdalah, we praise HaShem "Who distinguishes between Kodesh and Chol (holy and secular), between light and darkness, between Israel and the nations". The distinction between light and darkness is an obvious one, clearly for all to perceive. The distinction between Kodesh and Chol (profane), however, is a more subtle one, hidden from the perception of the physical senses. A person needs a special intuition, a spiritual sensitivity, to see with his heart and mind the difference between the sacred and the secular.

After the Bracha mentions the clearest of Havdalot, namely, between light and darkness, and the most hidden, between the holy and profane, the prayer then presents a third Havdala: between Israel and the nations. Should the distinction between Israel and the nations resemble the distinction between light and darkness or should it resemble the distinction between the holy and the profane? Should one act as a Jew only in the recesses of his home, closing the windows and drawing the shades behind him before putting on his yarmulke (kipah) to daven amongst the Egyptians, "Israel was distinct there". This concept is inferred from the pasuk because the Hebrew word for nation is "goy", related to the Hebrew word "geviya". The connection implies that just as every person is unique and every face different, so too the Jewish people stood apart from the other nations around them. However, our Sages were not merely communicating a historical fact, they were relating to us a religious imperative as well; that the distinction of a Jew must be evident for all to see. The Havdalah between Israel and other nations is not meant to be a hidden one but rather one that is apparent and obvious as the distinction between light and darkness. Judaism does not merely require a Jew to perform the Mitzvot; it requires that his Mitzvah observance and Jewish identity be recognizable to all.

(source: Drashot HaRav p.180)

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#### Shimon Hatzadik: The Hero of Chanukah?

**By Yoel Epstein**

At the end of the *tochacha* in *Parshas Bechukosai* (Vayikra 26:44), Hashem proclaims about the Jewish people: "Despite all this, while they will be in the land of their enemies, I will not have been revolted by them nor will I reject them to obliterate them, to annul my covenant with them."

The *Gemara* in *Maseches Megillah* explains that "*lo gialtum* – I will not reject them," is referring to the time of the Greeks, since Hashem made sure that the Jews had proper leaders such as Shimon HaTzadik, Chashmonai and his sons, and Matisyahu and his sons. This *gemara* is puzzling. How do we compare Shimon HaTzadik and the *Chashmonaim*? The *Chashmonaim* fought courageously for *Klal Yisrael*, while all Shimon HaTzadik did was dress in his *bigdai kehuna*, his priestly garments, causing Alexander the great to bow to him (Yoma 69a)?

The *Gemara* in *Yoma* (39a) sheds light on the unique *tzidkus* of Shimon HaTzadik. The *Gemara* tells us that throughout the 40 years that Shimon HaTzadik served as *Kohen Gadol*, many miracles occurred in the *Beis HaMikdash*. The *Ner Maaravi* would stay lit the entire day. On Yom Kippur, the ticket of *Sa'ir LaHashem* always came out in his right hand and the tongue of red wool always turned white after the *Sa'ir LaAzzazel* was dropped to its death. Many other miracles occurred as well.

On the other hand, upon commencement of Shimon's service, many of these miracles ceased to take place. For example, the ticket of *Sa'ir LaHashem* would frequently come out in the left hand, the tongue of wool would not always turn white, and the *Ner HaMaaravi* would sometimes go out. We see that while Shimon was *Kohen Gadol*, everything in the *Beis HaMikdash* worked *lima'alah miderech hatevah* – supernaturally. When his service ended, everything returned to working *al pi derech hatevah* – by natural means. Why was this so?

The second *Mishna* in *Avos* says: "Shimon HaTzadik was among the survivors of the Great Assembly (*Knesses HaGedolah*). He used to say: 'the world depends on three things: on Torah study, on service of God and on good deeds.'"

The language of the *Mishna* is perplexing. The word "*omair*," which the *Mishna* uses to mean "say" (in "he used to say") implies that he was arguing with someone else? With whom was he arguing?

Also, why does the *Mishna* say, "He used to say," instead of saying, "He said"?

Rav Shlomo Brevda writes in his sefer *L'hodos Ul'Hallel* that during the time of Shimon HaTzadik, Greek culture was rapidly spreading. The Greeks

believed that whatever could not be seen does not exist. They thought that the world revolved around natural, tangible things such as strength, beauty and wisdom. The Greeks were beginning to influence the Jews, so Shimon HaTzadik used to say the following speech to anyone who would listen: "The world does not revolve around nature; it revolves around *Torah, Avodah and Gemilus Chasadim*." Since Shimon HaTzadik lived *Lima'alah MiDerech HaTevah*, above the natural order, he performed his Temple Service *Lima'alah MiDerech HaTevah*.

We can now return to our original question. At first, when the Greeks began to spread Hellenistic culture slowly, Shimon HaTzadik fought assimilation by traveling to teach Torah and its *Hashkafah*. After Shimon's death, the Greeks began to force their culture on the Jews, and making speeches was no longer enough. The only way that the *Chashmonaim* could oppose Greek culture was by physically fighting it. It is now clear that Shimon HaTzadik was as important a leader to the Jews as *Chashmonai U'Banav*. In fact, his style of leadership was preferable to theirs; they had to fight as a last resort.

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### **Joseph and the Risks of Power Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks**

Joseph and the Risks of Power

Britain's Former Chief Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks

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

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

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

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

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

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

At the age of 30, Joseph is the most powerful man in the region, and his administrative competence is total. He travels round the country, arranges for collection of the grain, and ensures that it is stored safely. There is so much

that, in the Torah's words, he stops keeping records because it is beyond measure. When the years of plenty are over, his position becomes even more powerful. Everyone turns to him for food. Pharaoh himself commands the people, "Go to Joseph and do what he tells you."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

It may be that the Torah intends no criticism of Joseph whatsoever. He was acting loyally to Pharaoh and judiciously to Egypt as a whole. Or it may be that there is an implied criticism of his character. As a child, he dreamt of power; as an adult he exercised it; but Judaism is critical of power and those who seek it. Another possibility: the Torah is warning us of the hazards and obscurities of politics. A policy that seems wise in one generation discloses



itself as dangerous in the next. Or perhaps Leon Kass is right when he says, "Joseph's sagacity is technical and managerial, not moral and political. He is long on forethought and planning but short on understanding the souls of men." [4]

What this entire passage represents is the first intrusion of politics into the life of the family of the covenant. From the beginning of Exodus to the end of Deuteronomy, politics will dominate the narrative. But this is our first introduction to it: Joseph's appointment to a key position in the Egyptian court. And what it is telling us is the sheer ambiguity of power. On the one hand, you cannot create or sustain a society without it. On the other hand, it almost cries out to be abused. Power is dangerous, even when used with the best of intentions by the best of people. Joseph acted to strengthen the hand of a Pharaoh who had been generous to him, and would be likewise to the rest of his family. He could not have foreseen what that same power might make possible in the hands of a "new Pharaoh who knew not Joseph." Tradition called Joseph ha-tzaddik, the righteous. At the same time, the Talmud says that he died before his brothers, "because he assumed airs of authority." [5] Even a tzaddik with the best of intentions, when he or she enters politics and assumes airs of authority, can make mistakes.

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

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

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

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

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

[5] Brachot 55a.

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### **Parshas Miketz and Shabbos Chanukah**

Zechariah 2:14

This week's haftorah, read in conjunction with Shabbos Chanukah, teaches us a hidden dimension of Hashem's compassionate ways. The prophet Zechariah opens by announcing prophecies of the arrival of Hashem's presence in the near future. He declares in Hashem's name, "Rejoice and be happy daughter of Zion for behold I am coming and I will dwell in your midst," These words refer to the sudden erection of the second Temple after seventy dark years of exile. In truth, early construction began earlier but our Jewish brethren slandered to the Persian government and brought the development to an immediate halt. This led the Jewish people to total despair and to forfeit all hope of experiencing Hashem's return. Suddenly and totally unexpected, the prophet Zechariah announced Hashem's immediate plan to rebuild the Temple.

Zechariah the prophet continues and reveals a private discussion between Hashem and the assigned prosecuting angel. The discussion centered around Yehoshua ben Yehozadak who was designated to serve in the new Temple. Hashem defended Yehoshua and said, "Is he not an ember spared from fire? The prophet Zechariah continues, "And Yehoshua was wearing soiled garments and standing before the angel. And the angel responded, 'Remove the soiled garments from upon Yehoshua...and they placed the turban upon his head.'" (Zechariah 3:4-5) This dialogue reflects that the ordained high priest was seriously faulted for an offense to the priesthood. The Sages explain that Yehoshua was judged for failing to involve himself in his children's choice of marriage. Unfortunately, the Babylonian exile took its toll upon the Jewish nation and corrupted their moral fiber. Their constant exposure to the Babylonians broke down basic barriers and numerous

intermarriages occurred. Yehoshua's offspring s were party to this mind set and married women forbidden to them according to priesthood standards. (Targum and Rashi ad loc)

Their esteemed father, Yehoshua was unsuccessful in influencing them to choose appropriate wives and was now seriously faulted for this. The prosecuting angel protested Yehoshua's priestly status because of his inability to properly preserve it. Hashem defended Yehoshua and argued that he deserved special consideration because he was an ember spared from the fire. Yehoshua received a second chance and immediately resolved to rectify his fault and terminate these inappropriate relationships. Hashem responded to this sincere commitment and restored Yehoshua to his prestigious position.

This incident reveals a unique dimension of Hashem's judgement and compassion. In truth, Yehoshua was at fault for his children's behavior and conceivably should have forfeited his esteemed position. However, Hashem focused on Yehoshua's outstanding merit as an ember spared from the fire. The Sages (Sanhedrin 93a) explain that the wicked Nebuchadnezar tested Yehoshua's faith and merit and casted him into a fiery furnace. Yehoshua was miraculously spared thereby displaying his supreme level of devotion to Hashem. Hashem argued that every fiber of Yehoshua's being was devoted to Hashem and deserved careful consideration. Although Yehoshua was faulted for his children's behavior he received a second chance and regained his status of the High Priest.

We learn from this Hashem's appreciation and response to devotion. Yehoshua totally dedicated himself to Hashem's service and thereby earned his privileged status. Yehoshua's devotion brought him into Hashem's inner circle and earned him special appreciation. Hashem views His close ones through the perspective of devotion and affords them special privileges. After proving their total loyalty to Hashem their subsequent service becomes invaluable. Such pious people bring credit to Hashem by their mere existence and will undoubtedly increase this credit a thousand-fold through their continuous service to Hashem. Although they may be imperfect their quality of devotion surpasses all and renders them the most worthy candidates for his service.

This lesson repeated itself in Yehohua's offsprings during the days of Chanukah. In the early years of the second Temple the Jewish people were represented by illustrious high priests such as Ezra Hasofer and Shimon Hatzadik. During that period the Menorah's western lamp burned throughout the day. This constant miracle showed the entire world Hashem's constant presence amongst His people. However, after Shimon's passing this coveted priestly position was periodically neglected. It assumed political status and was obtained, at times, through handsome sums of money. Numerous unworthy individuals served as high priests for brief periods of time. Every year Hashem would display their unworthiness and punish them for entering the Holy of Holies without proper preparation. (Mesichta Yoma 9a) After years of mistreating their Temple privileges Hashem responded to this disgrace and permitted the Greek's to control the Bais Hamikdash. This new development exiled the Jews in their v ery own land and restricting them for sacrificial service. The Chashmonaim, high priests by rite, took charge of the situation and sacrificed their lives to restore this service. They displayed unprecedented levels of devotion and Hashem responded and returned the Temple to them.

The Chashmonaim overstepped their bounds and declared themselves rulers over the entire Jewish nation a position belonging exclusively to the household of Dovid Hamelech. Although this was a serious fault Hashem focused on their display of devotion and granted them the privilege of the priesthood. (Ramban Breishis 49:10) According to some opinions Yanai (Yochanan) Hamelech served as the high priest for eighty years. (Mesichta Brachos 29a ) The Chashmonaim family proved their devotion and deserved to remain in Hashem's inner circle. Their total dedication to Hashem created a relationship of fondness and endearment and establish them the most qualified candidates for his service. (see Malbim, Zechariah 3:7)

The Bach sees this dimension of service as the heart of the Chanuka experience. He explains that the Jewish people became lax in their service in the Temple Bais Hamikdash. This sacred and precious opportunity became a matter of routine and was performed without inner feeling and devotion. Hashem responded and removed their privileges to awaken them to their shortcomings. The Chashmonaim, descendants of Yehoshua and Shimon Hatzadik understood the message and resolved to restore Hashem's glory to His nation. Following the footsteps of their predecessors they totally dedicated themselves to this service and sacrificed their lives on its behalf. Hashem responded to their devotion and led them to a miraculous victory. We kindle our menorah as an expression of our devotion to Hashem's service and resolve to internalize Chanuka's lesson. After sincerely examining our level of service we dedicate heart, mind and soul to Him and apply our Chanuka experience to our service throughout the year. (comment of Bach O.H. 670)

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The Meaning of Yosef's Enstrangement

**Harav Yaakov Medan**

Parshat HaShavua

Yeshivat Har Etzion

This parasha series is dedicated

in memory of Michael Jotkowitz, z"l.

This shiur is in memory of Israel Koschitzky zt"l, whose yearzeit falls on the 19th of Kislev. May the world-wide dissemination of Torah through the VBM be a fitting tribute to a man whose lifetime achievements exemplified the love of Eretz Yisrael and Torat Yisrael.

This shiur is dedicated in memory of Hillel ben Yechiel Reiter z"l, whose Yearzeit will be observed on the 24th of Kislev. May his soul be among the Righteous in Gan Eden.

This shiur is dedicated in memory of Lena (Leah bat Yitzchak) Fuchs z"l, whose yearzeit will be observed on bet Tevet.

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The Meaning of Yosef's Estrangement

By Rav Yaakov Medan

The Ramban (42:9), as well as several other commentators who adopt his approach, discusses Yosef's estrangement from his brothers and the great severity with which he treats them up until their moment when he reveals his identity. This issue leads naturally to another question: why did Yosef not send word to his father, the moment that he rose to his elevated position in Egypt, telling him that he was still alive? Why did he allow his father to suffer such profound anguish and mourning for his son for an additional nine years? Ramban explains:

"The text is telling us that when Yosef saw his brothers bowing down before him, he remembered all the dreams that he had dreamed about them, and knew that not a single one of them had been fulfilled on this occasion. For he knew their interpretation: from the first dream, he knew that all his brothers would bow down to him - 'Behold, we were gathering sheaves,' with 'we' hinting at all eleven of his brothers - and in the second dream both the sun and moon and eleven stars would bow before him.

Since he did not see Binyamin among them, he thought up this plan as a ruse to cause them to bring Binyamin, his brother, to him, in order to fulfill the first dream first.

Therefore, he did not wish to tell them, 'I am Yosef, your brother,' and to say, 'Hurry and bring up my father,' and to send the wagons, as he did after their second encounter, for his father would undoubtedly have come right away. After the first dream was fulfilled, he told them to fulfill the second one.

If this (i.e. bringing about the fulfillment of the dreams) had not been his motivation, Yosef would have committed a very grave sin: to cause his father anguish and to leave him for so many years mourning over Shimon and over him. Even if he wished to cause his brothers some anguish, how could he not have mercy on his grieving father? But in fact he did everything properly, at the proper time, in order to fulfill his dreams, for he knew that they would truly be realized...

I maintain that all of these matters pertaining to Yosef arose from his wisdom in interpreting dreams. For we must ask: after Yosef had been in Egypt for many years, and was the head of the household of a great minister in Egypt, how is it that he did not send a single letter to his father, to tell him [that he was still alive] and to comfort him? For Egypt is approximately a six-day journey from Chevron, but even if the distance would take a year - it would be proper to send word out of honor to his father, who would surely pay a king's ransom to free him.

But [Yosef] saw that [the scene of] his brothers bowing down to him, as well as his father and all his progeny, could never take place in their country; he hoped that it could take place there, in Egypt, when they saw his great success there. And especially after he heard Pharaoh's dream, when it became clear to him that all of them would come there, and all of his dreams would be fulfilled."

Ramban views Yosef's actions and failures in the parasha as the result of a determined effort to bring about the fulfillment of his dreams. In his view, it was not sufficient that ten of his brothers bowed before him; he wanted Yaakov and Binyamin to come and bow too, as foretold in the details of the dream.

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R. Yitzchak Arama, author of the commentary Akeidat Yitzchak, raises the following difficulty:

"The One Who gives dreams will arrange for their fulfillment. Yet we see the great foolishness of a person attempting to bring about the fulfillment of dreams, for they are things that come about without the intention of the dreamers."

What gives a person license to transgress the honoring of his father and the prohibition against revenge and grudge-bearing just in order to realize some dreams?

The Ba'al ha-Akeida and Abarbanel explain that Yosef's estrangement from his brothers arose from his desire to test their relationship towards Binyamin. His aim was to cause his brothers to repent for what they had done to him. He meant to lead them into circumstances that were similar - as far as possible - to those that prevailed at his sale, by demanding of them that they leave Binyamin to his fate as a slave in Egypt. I shall adopt their approach in this shiur, combining it with the Ramban's interpretation above. Nechama Leibowitz explains these approaches in her usual insightful way in her book. I shall explore a different path, particularly in the interpretation of the Ramban, and the reader is left to choose.

A. DREAMS

Our parasha presents three pairs of dreams: the pair dreamed by Yosef, the two dreams of Pharaoh's two servants, and Pharaoh's own pair of dreams. The consistent structure of the dreams would seem to hint at a connection between them.

Let us first address the last two pairs. An obvious question arises from the dreams of Pharaoh's servants, and particularly from the dream of the butler, as to the wisdom involved in their interpretation. Why did these men need Yosef's assistance in understanding their dreams, and why were the butler and Pharaoh so excited about Yosef's interpretations? After all, the butler dreamed about pressing grapes into Pharaoh's goblet and serving it to him, and this is word for word what Yosef told him would happen. The baker's dream is a little less obvious, but the fact that the basket is not offered by his hand to Pharaoh, but rather the birds eat of the baked goods from atop his head, leaves little room for doubt as to the man's fate.

The same would seem to apply to Pharaoh's own dreams. The possible interpretations offered in the Midrash - that he would conquer seven provinces while seven others would rebel, or that seven daughters would be born to him while seven others would die, sound highly unlikely; it is no wonder that Pharaoh rejects them. The seven healthy cows and the seven full ears of wheat upon the banks of the river symbolize very clearly years of plenty, while the thin cows and the blasted ears of wheat unquestionably represent years of famine. Not every dream requires interpretation, and the proof for this lies in Yosef's dreams, whose significance was immediately understood by Yaakov and his sons.

Another question regarding Yosef's interpretation of Pharaoh's dream: After the news of the imminent abundance of food to be followed by the famine, Yosef continues and says:

"Now let Pharaoh seek out a man who is wise and knowing, and give him charge of the land of Egypt. Let Pharaoh act to appoint officers over the land, and to divide the land of Egypt into five parts during the seven years of plenty, so that they will gather all the food of these imminent years of abundance, and collect corn under Pharaoh's hand, to store food in the cities. Then the food will be a store for the land for the seven years of famine that shall be in the land of Egypt, and the land shall not perish from the famine." (41:33-36)

Ramban is astounded: who appointed Yosef as advisor to the king? What has his speech here to do with the interpretation of Pharaoh's dreams?

He answers that the advice that Yosef gives Pharaoh is part of the interpretation. In the dream, the thin cows devour the healthy cows; in the interpretation - the years of famine devour the food from the years of plenty. But Ramban's explanation ignores the clear parallel between Pharaoh's pair of dreams and the two dreams of his servants. There, too, Yosef added details that appear unrelated to the dream:

"But remember me when things will be good for you, and please perform this kindness for me: mention me to Pharaoh and bring me out of this house, for I was kidnapped from the land of the Hebrews, and I have done nothing to cause them to put me in the dungeon." (40:14-15)



What is common to the conclusion of both interpretations is Yosef's concern for his own fate: even in his advice to Pharaoh, we cannot ignore the possibility that in mentioning a "wise and knowing man," Yosef is referring to himself. Moreover, in his words to the butler, too, it appears that Yosef means not only that justice should be sought from Pharaoh because Yosef is innocent - since there is no special reason why Pharaoh, king of the entire land, should take the trouble to get involved in the affairs of a slave who has been imprisoned. It seems, then, that what Yosef was asking from the butler was that he would tell Pharaoh how Yosef interpreted his dreams, so that Pharaoh would appoint him to sit among his chief advisors. For this reason, Yosef explains that he is neither a slave nor a criminal, and that he is worthy - in terms of his status - of such an elevated post.

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>From what we have said above, it turns out that Yosef does not merely solve the straightforward dreams of Pharaoh and his servants. In his words to them, Yosef is actually interpreting his own dreams - about the sheaves bowing down before his sheaf, and the sun, moon and stars bowing before him.

Let me explain my view of the ability to dream and to interpret dreams. Chazal teach that dreams contain one-sixtieth of prophecy. But the dream itself is not prophecy, and the prophet Yirmiyahu draws a clear distinction between the two:

"The prophet who has a dream - let him tell his dream, and one whom My word is with him - let him speak My word faithfully; what is chaff to the wheat, says God. Is not My word like fire, says God, and like a hammer, shattering the rock?" (Yirmiyahu 23:28-29)

At the same time, a dream and its interpretation certainly contain an element of Divine inspiration. The proof: Daniel, who dreams and interprets, is not a prophet, but his Book was included in the Tanakh.

The forefathers were prophets. When Yaakov dreams, this is prophecy, for God speaks to him in his dream. But God never spoke with Yaakov's sons, and they were not prophets. Yosef - whose level is somewhere between that of the forefathers and that of his brothers (since Yosef's sons, like Yaakov's sons, founded tribes) - is not a prophet, but he is certainly the recipient of Divine inspiration.

It seems, then, that Divine inspiration lacks the power to interpret a dream in all its details, and this is not its function. But when Yosef dreams about his brothers' sheaves bowing down to his own, he feels within himself a sense of mission and a consequent grant of authority. He will be responsible for sustaining his brothers; they will recognize his responsibility for them and will acknowledge his authority over them as arising from this responsibility.

Where did this dream come from?

For some time, Yaakov's household had been pervaded with a sense that Yaakov - the patriarch and head of the household - was gradually losing his leadership ability. It is unclear where this feeling began. Perhaps it was his numerous - perhaps too numerous - bowings before Esav; Yaakov may have lost his authority in the eyes of his own household at that time. Faced with the atrocity of Shekhem, he remained silent until his sons returned; they spoke in his place and Shimon and Levi then went out and acted without asking his permission. Reuven, too - in his act concerning Bilha - rebelled against his father's authority, like Avshalom with his father's concubines. In the story of the sale of Yosef and the taking of Binyamin to Egypt, Yehuda leads the family while Yaakov is dragged along, almost unwillingly. Yosef is himself one of the competitors for leadership. He is younger than his brothers and he is their half-brother, hence his leadership over his brothers remains a dream. But the dream is a powerful one, and the fire of its truth burns within him. Yosef believes in it with all his might; he knows that the dream will eventually be fulfilled in reality. His certainty of the truth of his dream, filling all of his being, is the expression of the Divine inspiration that breathes within him.

The dream of the sheaves is related to the family's livelihood, but Yosef dreams not only of sheaves. The dream of the sun, moon and stars bowing to him expresses rulership in the spiritual realm, as well. The sense of mission that fills Yosef is related not only to supporting the family, as Nechama Leibowitz explains, but also to spiritual leadership and spiritual responsibility.

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When Yosef is sold as a slave, his world collapses around him. Certainly his physical world collapses, owing to his humiliation and exile from his father's house and from his land. However, it is important to note that his spiritual world also collapses - for all of his educational efforts, all the criticism that he brought to his father concerning his brothers, have brought disaster instead of blessing. His brothers have sinned, and their crime is unbearable. Perhaps he was mistaken in his dreams; perhaps it is not he who is meant to lead the brothers? Perhaps there is no hope for them, spiritually, following their sin, and they should not be led but rather rejected and banished from the world of sanctity - in which case he too will not be a leader, but rather a fourth founding father of the chosen nation?

If Yosef had some lurking doubt as to having been mistaken in his dreams, his speedy climb up the ladder of success in his master's house comes and confirms his dreams, verifying that he is destined for greatness. God is with him; he senses this. His sense of being the chosen one among the brothers is only strengthened through the test of exile. Yosef develops his budding leadership ability in his management of Potifar's household, but again he is stripped of his garb and cast into a dungeon - this time because of his master's wife. According to Chazal's calculations, Yosef remained in the dungeon, not seeing the light of day, for a full ten years! Throughout his twenties - years that a person usually devotes to molding his personality as an adult and creating a family - Yosef spent in the dungeon of the king's prisoners. Could there be any better reason for despair to consume his heart and his body?

In the situation in which Yosef now found himself, regular dreams of greatness and rulership would dissolve and disappear. But the moment that Yosef hears about two of Pharaoh's servants, both of whom have experienced dreams on the same night, he is immediately reminded of his own dreams. It is clear to him that the dreams of the two men are not God's way of telling them what is destined to happen to them: for what reason would God reveal the future to these two idolators, servants in Pharaoh's kitchen? He understands immediately that these dreams are actually a sign from God to him concerning his own dreams, which are about to begin their fulfillment. And so he addresses the two men resolutely:

"Yosef said to : Do solutions then not belong to God? Tell me, I pray you." (40:8)

As we have said, the crux of the interpretation lies not in the understanding that the royal butler will be restored to his previous position while the royal baker will be punished - for these scenarios are described almost explicitly in the dreams. The crux of the interpretation, to Yosef's view, lies in the continuation:

"But remember me when things are good for you, and do this kindness for me, I pray you: mention me to Pharaoh, and get me out of this house, for I was kidnapped from the land of the Hebrews, nor have I done anything here for which they have put me in the dungeon." (40:14-15)

The butler is convinced by Yosef's simple solution, for two reasons. Firstly, we may assume that the nervousness of the royal servants and their sullen expressions, following their dreams, did not arise from the opaque meaning of the dreams, but rather from the doubt gnawing at them as to whether they were true or just vanity. Yosef, convinced of the truth of his own dreams and certain that it is God Whose hand is now guiding everything that happens to him towards his destined mission, manages to transmit his conviction in his dream to Pharaoh's servants, such that they are likewise convinced of the truth of their dreams. Secondly, the only detail in the butler's dream that is ambiguous is the three branches. There is no hint in the dream that could possibly decipher them as symbolizing three days, three weeks, three years or any other units of time. Yosef declares decisively that the time frame concerns days, just as he will later tell Pharaoh:

"And concerning the fact that Pharaoh's dream occurred twice - [it is] because the thing has been decided by God, and God will soon perform it." (41:32)

His conviction as to the veracity of the dream is also a conviction that God will not tarry; the events will occur in the shortest possible time. Indeed, what he says is what comes about: the three branches are indeed three days, not three years. Likewise Pharaoh's dreams: according to both Chazal and Rashi, the Egyptian sorcerers preferred to propose interpretations that did not reflect the details of the dreams - the birth of seven daughters or the conquest of seven provinces - since these did not require them to note any specific time-frame. They proposed these interpretations because they were not certain of the seriousness of the dream, and hence they could not be certain of any interpretation that might come about.

Yosef's interpretation supplies a precise and immediate date. If Yosef had entertained the slightest doubt, he would not have dared to utter such a decisive interpretation, for which - if proved wrong - he will be executed. His interpretation of Pharaoh's dream, too, contains the dream's true significance - Yosef's advice that he be appointed ruler over Egypt - since it is thus that he now understands his own dreams. Without this profound sense of mission, based on Divine inspiration, Yosef would not dare to interpret his dreams with such unshakable confidence and with such daring. Yosef knew that, as the ruler, he would be responsible for providing sustenance to his brothers during the years of famine, and he saw this as his opportunity to realize the dream of the sheaves. At the same time, he knew that the spiritual mission of molding the future of the Nation of Israel, the nation that would emerge from himself and his brothers, was also part of his responsibility.

What is the spiritual and educational mission that Yosef must mold? This is the subject of section B.

## B. THE WAYS OF REPENTANCE

At the outset, I mentioned that both Abarbanel and the Ba'al ha-Akeida explain Yosef's estrangement from his brothers as arising from his desire to test their repentance for the

sin of having sold him. In this section, I shall adopt this approach, combining it with what we saw above concerning the fundamental perception of the Ramban. I shall divide the discussion of repentance into two sections. In the first, I shall demonstrate that the main theme of the story of Yosef and his brothers is the process of repentance; in the second, I shall depict - in light of this repentance - Yosef's meeting with his brothers in Egypt.

#### THE REPENTANCE OF YEHUDA AND REUVEN

The sin of Yosef's brothers in selling him is not one of the milder misdeeds of Sefer Bereishit. This sin - selling a free man into slavery - is considered in the Torah and Prophets (Shemot 21:16; 20:13; Devarim 27:7; Yoel 4; Amos 2:6-10; and many more) as one of the most severe sins that can be committed. It is comparable to the sin of Kayin and the sins of the generation of the Flood, the generation of the Tower of Bavel, and the people of Sedom. It is only natural that the punishments meted out to Kayin, to the generation of the Flood and to the people of Sedom should be replaced here by the repentance of Yosef's brothers. This repentance is one of the foundations upon which all of Sefer Bereishit rests - together with the punishment of sinners - and it should not be presented as an insignificant detail related only in connection with Yosef's mistake. The story of the brothers' repentance is equal in weight and importance to the story of the Flood and the overturning of Sedom - if not greater than them.

The story of the sale of Yosef begins, according to Chazal (Bereishit Rabba 64, 19) with the description of Reuven dressed in sackcloth and fasting over his sin with Bilha, with God praising him for this repentance. Adjacent to the sale, we read the story of Yehuda and Tamar, with Yehuda ultimately admitting his wrongdoing, and Yaakov praising him for this (Rashi, 49:9).

Reuven and Yehuda are both contenders for the leadership of the family, after Yaakov ceases to function as the leader and after Shimon and Levi are removed from the leadership race. The rivalry between Reuven and Yehuda finds expression in the argument over Yosef's fate (37:22, 26-27), in the recognition of the sin of selling him (42:22 as opposed to 44:16), in assuming responsibility for Binyamin in Egypt (42:37 as opposed to 43:8-55), and in Yaakov's blessings to them, as well as in other places further on in the Torah.

It seems clear that the process of repentance undertaken by Reuven and Yehuda concurrently is part of the rivalry for leadership. This understanding is supported by a comparison between the two sins: Reuven wears sackcloth and fasts over having cohabited with his father's concubine (as the literal text describes it), while Yehuda admits to having cohabited with his son's wife.

At first glance, these two sins appear to have no connection with the sale of Yosef. But upon closer examination, we discover that this is not the case. Chazal, in the midrash quoted above, connect Reuven's sackcloth and fasting with the episode of the sale of Yosef. In the deed concerning Bilha - both according to the literal text, according to which Reuven meant to take over his father's hegemony while he was still alive, and according to the Midrash (Shabbat 55b) - Reuven, the firstborn of the less-loved Leah, meant to emerge the chosen son, rather than Yosef - firstborn of the beloved Rachel. The attempt to save Yosef, with his dreams of rulership (37:20), was part of Reuven's repentance for what he did with Bilha.

Similarly, the story of Tamar is also linked to the sale of Yosef, through the juxtaposition of the two episodes in the text. The chain of tragedies that befall Yehuda - the loss of his wife and two sons - is undoubtedly a punishment for the sale of Yosef. Reuven, who will one day make the peculiar offer of allowing Yaakov to put his (Reuven's) two sons to death if he fails to bring Binyamin back from Egypt (42:37), apparently draws this idea from Yehuda's punishment for the sale of Yosef into Egyptian slavery - the death of his two sons. This terrible punishment for that dreadful sin is engraved deeply in the brothers' consciousness, and Reuven accepts it upon himself if he should abandon Binyamin in Egypt.

But at the beginning of the story, Yehuda never imagines that his sons have died because of his sin. The Midrash describes how Yehuda declares that "is known to be one whose husbands die" (Rashi 38:11). Only after he is forced to recognize her innocence does he admit, "She has been more righteous than I" (38:26). Only then does he realize that it is not she who is responsible for the death of her two successive husbands, but rather Yehuda himself who is responsible for the death of his two sons, for the sin is his. With this admission, he begins rebuilding his shattered household. The process of repentance continues to accompany the brothers later on. The decree by the Egyptian viceroy that Rachel's second son, Binyamin, must be brought to Egypt is an instant reminder to them of the sale of Yosef to Egypt. Once again, the two contenders - Reuven and Yehuda - react, and once again, in a similar way to the previous story. Reuven sees only the punishment for their sin; he makes no attempt to suggest any repair:

"Reuven answered them, saying: Did I not tell you, saying, 'Do not sin against the child' - and you did not listen, and behold, now his blood is required." (42:22)

Yehuda, in contrast, admits the sin, and also proposes a positive path of repentance: a corresponding sacrifice, rather than "sackcloth and fasting" which represent only mourning and acceptance of the Divine decree:

"They tore their garments... Yehuda said: 'What shall we say to my lord; what can we speak and what justification can we offer? God has found the sin of your servants; behold, we are servants to my master...'" (44:13-16).

And later on:

"Now, let your servant remain instead of the boy as a servant to my master; let the boy go up with his brothers." (44:33)

From Yehuda's words, we see that he did not admit to Binyamin having stolen the royal goblet; he treats the story as a plot against them. For if this were not so, there would be no significance to the story of bringing Binyamin down to Egypt, nor to the proposed exchange of Binyamin for Yehuda. This being the case, Yehuda's words, "God has found the sin of your servants," can refer only to the sale of Yosef (and not the "sin" of Binyamin's theft).

#### "I AM YOSEF, YOUR BROTHER"

We have attempted, then, to prove that all of the brothers' actions - and particularly those of the two leaders, Reuven and Yehuda - are influenced and dictated by the sin of selling Yosef and the need to atone for it. Our impression is that the ultimate structure of the family and the fate of the brothers depends on their repentance being accepted.

Yosef knows this, and regards himself as a partner in this process - both because of his close (passive) connection with the sin, and because of his constant feeling, especially because of his dreams, that he is responsible for the future of Yaakov's family.

Perhaps Yosef was troubled by the brothers' terrible sin and the prospects for the future of Yaakov's household no less than he was concerned for his own personal fate. From the time he is sold, he begins to build - along with his own personal life - the process of reunification of the family. It is preferable that this reunification not be forced upon the brothers, but rather that it be brought about through good will and love. If Yosef would send a messenger to his father, letting him know that he was still alive, Yaakov would admittedly have redeemed him from Egypt and restored him to the family as a free person, but he would still be hated by his brothers, the sons of Leah, and there would be no guarantee that they would not make further attempts to rid themselves of him. Yosef did not want such a situation; he wanted a reunification based on the brothers' regret for their sin and arising from their complete repentance.

In my view, Yosef believed in his ability to create such a process - or at least to test whether it existed. When his dreams would be realized, and his brothers would come and bow before him as a lord and ruler, he would have the power to create almost any process he chose; no one could stand against him. Having witnessed his speedy promotion to head of Potifar's household, and later to head of all the prisoners in the jail, he knows that God is with him.

I shall now address the question of how Yosef led the brothers to admit to their sin against him and to repent for it. First, concerning Yosef's priorities, let us address a question raised by many commentators, following the Ramban's line: was it really moral of Yosef to prolong the many years of his father's anguish just in order to cause his brothers to admit to their sin?

In my view, this claim is difficult to understand. Should Yosef then have left his brothers with their sin and perpetuated for all eternity the spiritual division of Yaakov's household, just in order to save Yaakov anguish? Should Yaakov's anguish not be viewed as pain for the purpose of healing? Is it not preferable that Yosef save Yaakov the pain of discovering, at the end of his life, that his children were not what he thought they were? Was R. Eliezer ben Horkenus wrong for going to study Torah against the wishes of his father, instead of plowing his father's field? Was Rachel, the daughter of Kalba Savu'a, wrong for marrying the shepherd Akiva ben Yosef (Ketubot 62b) against the wishes of her father?

#### C. THE PLAN

How did Yosef intend to redirect his brothers from the sinful path of hatred, selling their brother and lying to their father, to the path of repair and repentance?

Before addressing this question, let us first address a puzzling element in the story of the meeting between Yosef and his brothers when the latter come to receive grain. The Torah elaborates at length on how Yosef accuses his brothers of spying and how they attempt to justify themselves and prove that this accusation is unfounded. Could this dialogue actually have taken place in reality as it is described? How could it be that not a single one of the brothers sensed that perhaps this was a pre-planned, staged performance, whose purpose was not to arrest spies?

As mentioned, my assumption is that Yosef began to plan the encounter with his brothers already when he interpreted Pharaoh's dream and understood that, as viceroy, his brothers' sheaves would come to bow before his own sheaf, to eat from his table.

#### INVESTIGATION OF YOSEF'S BROTHERS

Yosef's plan was aimed at saving Egypt during the years of famine, but at the same time he was also planning a way to bring his dreams to realization. The Divine spirit within

him goaded him to plan a way of leading the brothers to correct their ways, and a way of testing whether they had indeed done this.

Yosef knew that sooner or later his brothers would arrive, seeking food, and thus the dream of the sheaves would be fulfilled. The second dream - with the stars bowing before him - would be realized only when he would be able to bring about the hoped-for spiritual process of saving the brothers from the abyss of their sin; only thus would the family be able to be reunited in the proper way (not artificially), so that Yaakov would die knowing that all his children were worthy heirs of his heritage.

Perhaps this is how Yosef prepared his trap. Many citizens must have been questioned during the first few years of the famine, while Yosef was busy nationalizing all property, for fear of an uprising against the regime. It seems that the suspicions were more serious concerning foreigners, who may have arrived in some or other disguise. Perhaps Yaakov's sons - particularly Shimon and Levi - were naturally regarded with caution in foreign lands after what they had cunningly perpetrated in Shekhem. Their entry into Egypt through - according to Chazal - different entry points, was also not counted in their favor as soon as they were identified as brothers. As if this were not enough, the brothers were also found to be expressing particular interest in the fate of a slave who had been brought to Egypt some twenty-two years previously. From the perspective of the Egyptian security services, these men were trying to glean details about the Egyptian viceroy - the king's second-in-command. For this reason, they were clearly suspicious, and there was no difficulty in having them imprisoned without Yosef having to disclose his true intent.

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We may assume that the brothers were separated from one another and placed in different cells, so that their testimonies could be compared against each other. In their interrogation, they were questioned as to every possible aspect concerning their family and their aims. Perhaps they underwent torture and were forced to tell every detail. Because of their inability to coordinate their testimonies, they had no choice but to tell the truth. It quickly became apparent that, in addition to the ten "suspects" that the security services were holding, there were another two suspects that had not yet been caught. The entire security system (directed and staged by Yosef, of course) was put on alert in order to arrest the two missing "prime suspects," whom the brothers were stubbornly protecting, denying that they had come with them to Egypt. In their interrogation, it was discovered that all the brothers gave the same story about Binyamin, but perhaps there were contradictions as to the fate of Yosef. The brothers must certainly have mumbled and stammered, ashamed to admit that they had sold him into slavery. The interrogators noted the discrepancies in the different versions of what they said, and their suspicions deepened. Each of the brothers was taken to his cell and beaten severely, with the demand that he answer the question, "Where is Yosef?" By the time the brothers met again, three days later, they understood very well the reason for the punishment that had befallen them:

"They said to each other: But we are guilty on account of our brother, for we saw his distress when he pleaded to us but we did not listen; therefore this trouble has come upon us." (42:21)

Yosef demonstrates generosity towards them and does not demand that they bring their lost brother. However, he is insistent that they bring the remaining brother - Binyamin - to ensure that there are no other spies roaming around in Egypt.

#### THE PLAN IS UPSET

Yosef's strategy is well-thought out, but it is upset. Yosef is deeply moved by Reuven's words to his brothers:

"Reuven answered them and said: Did I not tell you, saying, 'Do not sin against the boy' - but you did not listen; now behold, his blood is required." (42:22)

When Yosef hears this, his goes off to a quiet corner and WEEPS FOR THE FIRST TIME. But he knows that this is not enough. Reuven's reaction, and the reaction of the rest of the brothers, is an acceptance of their punishment for their sin, but this falls short of representing true 'tikkun' (repair). Yosef leads the brothers into a test concerning Binyamin. In my view, his intention was not to cause Binyamin to be brought to Egypt, but rather the exact opposite! Yosef demonstrates to them, by means of his whole carefully staged performance, that the purpose of bringing Binyamin is so that he can be interrogated in the Egyptian dungeon, on suspicion of spying. It is clear to everyone that if Binyamin is brought to him, it may not be possible to get him out of there and return him to his father. It is for this reason that Yaakov is so reluctant to send Binyamin (who is already past the age of thirty, and is father to ten sons), and it is for this reason that Reuven and Yehuda must offer such great commitments to guard him.

Despite all of this, will the brothers bring Binyamin to Egypt? Yosef expects that the brothers will protect Binyamin and not lead him into the danger awaiting him in Egypt at the hands of the viceroy. He expects that they will prefer to remain hungry in Canaan, even leaving Shimon in the Egyptian jail, so long as Binyamin will not be in danger. Yosef is prepared to regard this as repentance and 'tikkun' for what the brothers had done to him.

Indeed, for a long while the brothers do not return with Binyamin in tow. Perhaps Yosef is already on the point of revealing his identity to Shimon and telling him about the test that he had set up for the brothers. Perhaps he is on the point of sending for his father and brothers, calling them to come and make peace. One could ask: what proof has he as to any 'tikkun' on the part of the brothers? After all, it is quite likely that it is their father who is refusing to allow them to take Binyamin. But Yosef knows well that Yaakov is no longer the real leader of the family. Just as they had deceived him as to the sale of Yosef, so they could find a way to bring Binyamin to Egypt, if they so chose. But then the brothers return, and Binyamin is with them! At first, Yosef believes that they are repeating the sin of his sale; he expresses his disappointment in WEEPING FOR A SECOND TIME:

"Yosef hurried - for his mercy was aroused towards his brother - and he sought to weep; he came into the chamber and wept there." (43:30)

Why was Yosef's mercy aroused towards Binyamin? Binyamin had grown up with his father, had established a large family, and was living well. It was Yosef himself who was deserving of pity: why is he, who was taken from his father's home and thrown into a pit in the valley of Dotan, and then into the dungeon in the house of the captain of the guard, now crying for Binyamin?

In my view, when Binyamin was brought to Egypt, this signaled to Yosef that Binyamin, too, was still not loved by his half-brothers. He deduces that Binyamin, too, is persecuted and hated. He concludes that the hand of Yehuda - who wanted to sell him - prevailed over the hand of Reuven - who wanted to save him. He has no knowledge of the terrible guarantee that Yehuda supplied in order to take Binyamin.

Nevertheless, Yosef's caution prevents him from drawing conclusions too hastily. He decides to test the brothers once more - through the plot of the goblet. Stealing the goblet used by the ruler for divining would clearly verify the suspicion of spying. He causes Binyamin to be "caught," and has him returned to the viceroy's palace.

This time, Yosef presents the brothers with a more difficult test. He causes the brothers to envy Binyamin, just as they once envied Yosef himself. He demonstrates greater affection for Binyamin than for them, allotting him a five-fold ration (43:34). He even gives them reason to hate Binyamin - "thief of the divining goblet" - for embroiling them once again in the suspicion of espionage. Finally, he tests their reaction to his desire to make Binyamin an eternal slave in Egypt.

The similarity to the story of Yosef's sale is as close as it could possibly be. The brothers tear their garments, just as they once stripped Yosef of his coat, and Yehuda joins Reuven in accepting their punishment:

"Yehuda said: What shall we say to my lord; how shall we speak and how shall we justify ourselves? God has found the sin of your servants; behold, we are slaves to my master - both we and he in whose hands the goblet was found." (49:16)

Even this is not enough - until Yehuda's emotional speech. In this speech, Yosef suddenly learns of Yehuda's guarantee for Binyamin's safety. Suddenly he understands: they have not brought him down to Egypt with a view to abandoning him. Yehuda is prepared to be enslaved for the rest of his life in place of Binyamin. He is ready to give up his life for his half-brother, and to spare his father anguish. He is prepared to accept full justice - measure for measure - for selling Yosef to Egypt, and to become - in place of Yosef and Binyamin - a slave there forever. NOW YOSEF WEEPS FOR THE THIRD TIME. This weeping - the hardest and the longest - is where he reveals his identity to his brothers. Here, finally, it is not only "sheaves" that are bowing before him - men seeking food - but shining stars, brothers who have taken the path of "tikkun."

Translated by Kaeren Fish

This shiur is abridged from the Hebrew original. The full shiur can be accessed in the original at:

<http://www.etzion.org.il/vbm/parsha.php>.

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subject: [Rav Kook Torah] Mikeitz: Waiting for the Dream

#### *Shema Yisrael Torah Network*

#### *Peninim on the Torah - Parshas Mikeitz*

*פרשת מקץ תשפ*

*יעשה פרעה ויפקד פקדים על הרארץ וחמש את ארץ מצרים בשבע שני השבע*

**Let Pharaoh proceed and let him appoint overseers on the land, and he shall prepare the land of Egypt during the seven years of abundance. (41:34)**

Yosef gave Pharaoh sound advice: Prepare during the seven years of abundance for a time in which food would be nothing more than a dream (or a nightmare). We do not focus on the periods of adversity when we are surrounded by plenty. We are unable to imagine what it means to be hungry while we are eating a succulent piece of meat. That is human nature. A *chacham*, wise person, has the vision to transcend his natural proclivity and see another time, another circumstance, when all will not be good, when every morsel of food will be considered a banquet.

The *Baalei mussar*, Ethicists, exhort us to take heed, to derive a powerful lesson from Yosef *HaTzaddik's* advice to Pharaoh. While “today” – when we are young, healthy in body and mind – we can rise from our chair/bed and take on the world physically and spiritually, we should store up our reserves. Who knows when the time will arrive – for some, with age; for others, suddenly, out of the blue – when these gifts which we take for granted will be nothing more than a dream, when even getting up from bed will be a difficult act, when cognitive interaction will be a daily challenge. We must not take any G-d-given moment in our lives for granted. It is a Heavenly gift that, at any moment, can be put on hold, or, *chas v'shalom*, Heaven-forbid, be removed. Seize the moment; seize the opportunity; store up your gifts while you are able. It takes a perceptive person to realize, acknowledge and act. He is acutely aware that the “party” can end at any moment, and it would be prudent to eat while he can. Otherwise, he might be compelled to leave hungry. During periods of abundance, we tend to ignore the little things, the extras on the plate, because we have so much from which to choose. When the waiters are cleaning up the tables, however, we might be in the position to grab whatever is available and savor it. An individual who is in control of his inclinations is the type of person who perceives that the abundance is to be cherished and saved. He stores up whatever is available. Who knows when we will need it? We have no guarantee of tomorrow – period, and we have no assurance that what is here today will still be available tomorrow. Seize the day! Seize the moment: Maximize the moment.

The *Gaon, zl, m'Vilna* writes that when the deceased is being taken from his earthly home to the cemetery for burial, the *neshamah*, soul, endures much pain. It is during those few moments that the stark realization of the truth in its unabashed reality settles in. The deceased yearns just to return for one moment to answer, *Amen! Yehei Shmei Rabba!* Just to smile to someone and make him feel good. Just to recite a *brachah*. Alas, it is too late. It is well-known that shortly before he left this world, the *Gaon* wept because (he said) in this world, for a few pennies, one can purchase a pair of *tzitzis*, which he could wear. The reward is awesome. Once one leaves this temporary domain, however, it is all over. No more deposits. If he has invested wisely, he will enjoy the returns. If he has lived a life full of frivolity, wasting those precious minutes... oh well.

Two incongruous attitudes prevail: “Life is short. Enjoy it while you can.” as opposed to: “Every second counts. Make the most of your life.” We have no dearth of stories which underscore the value of each moment and how it should be spent. One of the most meaningful scenarios, as described by the *Kelemer Maggid* (one of early twentieth century Europe's most inspirational speakers), is presented here with a chilling follow-up.

“A Heavenly voice declares, ‘Hashem has decided to revive the dead for half an hour.’ In other words, every *neshamah*, every loved one, those whom we knew and those who have been long gone, would all become alive for thirty minutes – no more – no less. What do people do upon hearing this startling news? They all run to the cemetery and wait anxiously for their late family members to rise from the grave and greet them.”

The ground rumbles, trembles and begins to erupt, as the deceased rise from their eternal rest for a thirty-minute visit in this world. Everyone expects them to greet their families and talk about how life has been treating the

living; and to ask about new babies, milestone celebrations, etc. But this does not happen. Instead, the deceased make a mad dash to the nearest *shul*, the closest *bais hamedrash*, a *yeshivah*, a *kloiz*, anywhere that they can learn, *daven*, recite *Tehillim*. Others search the streets for opportunities to perform a *chesed*, act of lovingkindness – anything that will earn them eternal reward, anything. Each of them, with absolutely no exceptions, understands that these thirty moments are critical, that this is the only time in which they can accrue merit for *Olam Habba*, the World to Come.

During those precious thirty minutes, every second counts. They watch the clock nervously, realizing that every second is precious. The last thing they want is to return to their graves with little merit. This is the chance of a “lifetime”!

The *Maggid* looked deeply into the eyes of the members of the community who had gathered to hear him speak and said, “*Nu?* What would be so bad if we had more than a half an hour left to live? On the other hand, who is to say that we even have a half an hour? Every moment that is allotted to us by Hashem should be cherished for its value.” I write this *Erev Rosh Hashanah*, after I shared this story with a group of adults. I then posed a question which I am certain from the looks on their faces they had never thought about: “As you all prepare to *daven* on *Rosh Hashanah* for a *shannah tovah*, you ask Hashem for another year of life. Did you ever ask yourself what life means? What do you plan to do with the life Hashem grants you? Do you want another year of fun? Of travel? Of prosperity? Of health? For what? What aspect of life is worthy? How do you measure worthiness? Are you prepared to devote your life to living for Hashem? To ask for life, without being cognizant of the meaning and value of life, has as much meaning as the life that we are praying for. When we realize the true value of life, we will appreciate the gift and we will be effusive in our praise of and, most important, gratitude to Hashem for granting us this gift.

**יִקְרָא יוֹסֵף אֶת שֵׁם הַבְּכוֹר מְנַשֶּׁה כִּי נִשְׁנִי אֶלְקִים אֶת כָּל עֲמָלִי וְאֶת כָּל בַּיִת אָבִי  
Yosef called the name of the firstborn Menashe, for “G-d has made me forget all my hardship and all my father’s household.” (41:51)**

Is it possible that Yosef lauded forgetting his father's home, the home of Yaakov *Avinu*, the *b'chir haAvos*, chosen of the Patriarchs? Certainly not. Yosef *HaTzaddik* would certainly not be so crass as to name his firstborn with a name that indicated the severance of his relationship with the past. *Horav Yisrael Salanter, zl*, explains that Yosef lauded his self-imposed amnesia concerning his brothers' hatred toward him and their consequent selling him to the caravan of Arabs that brought him to Egypt. It was a great challenge to look to the future while ignoring the past. He wanted to remember only Hashem's present kindness to him. This is the meaning behind Menashe's name. Yosef did not simply erase that painful phase of his life; he concretized the severance with the name he gave his son. Indeed, as *Horav Shmuel Yudelevitz, zl, (Meil Shmuel)* adds, even Ephraim's name had an important purpose: to remind Yosef that because of his brothers, he descended to Egypt, where he was “fruitful” (Ephraim – *hifrani*). As a result, he owed them a debt of gratitude. Furthermore, Ephraim's name is even greater, more positive, than that of Menashe, since his name denotes love and gratitude, while Menashe's name eschews enmity toward his brothers.

*Horav Yechezkel Levenstein, zl*, offers an alternative understanding of Yosef's seeking to “forget” his past life at home. As a result of his extraordinarily close relationship with his father, Yaakov *Avinu*, he was afforded an outstanding *chinuch*, Torah education. His father transmitted to him everything that he had learned in the *yeshivah* of Shem and Ever. He was suddenly torn from his father's home, from the idyllic Torah environment to which he had been exposed, and flung into the hedonism and cruelty that defined Egyptian culture (especially in the confines of prison life), where the (spiritual) air that he breathed was the antithesis to what he had experienced at home. Life for him as a Jew, to whom spirituality was everything, began anew. He now found himself without a mentor, without a

guiding spirit to inspire and show him the way. No longer did he have the protective barrier that sheltered him from evil. He now had to serve Hashem on his own (based upon what he had imbibed at home), applying his own acumen, employing his own guidelines and protecting fences and barriers to shelter himself from the moral profligacy which challenged him at every turn. The simple protection to which he had been accustomed at home would not suffice here in Egypt.

When Yosef realized the extraordinary merit that he had which enabled him to withstand the blandishments of Egyptian culture, coupled with the debased environment in the dungeon, he was filled with gratitude to Hashem for allowing him to forget the exemplary lessons that he had learned from his father. Hashem had granted him new strengths, and that carried him through the challenges of Egypt. Otherwise, he would not have survived spiritually with what he had brought with him from home, because it would have been in a constant clash with his newfound challenges.

In his commentary to the *pasuk* in *Shiras Haazinu, Binu shenos dor va'dor*, "Reflect upon the years of each generation" (*Devarim* 32:7), the *Chidushei HaRim* explains that Hashem grants each historical epoch a new outlook, a fresh perspective on the Torah, a new insight that is in tune, coincides, with the spiritual climate of that generation. (It is the same Torah, but He gives the members of each generation insight to adapt the Torah's lessons to that particular juncture in time, with its specific issues. In other words, the generation that preceded the Holocaust was unlike the "baby boomers" that followed.) This idea continues throughout the generations. The *gedolei Yisrael*, spiritual leaders, of each ensuing generation are sensitive to the particular needs and problems that confront the young people of their generation. They bring the Torah to life (they show the young people the length and breadth of the living Torah), interpreting its words in terms of the trends that are presently in vogue, thus satisfying the young people's spiritual yearning. "The years of each generation." Every year, a new energy and vitality to each person's perceptions unfold. The word *shenos* is usually translated as years, but it can also mean *shinui*, change, or *shoneh*, different.

We are living in a generation that we may best describe as transitionary; it is constantly changing in accordance with the whims of its manipulators, who transform chaos into a lifestyle. They answer to no one (not even to themselves), with terms like justice, integrity, spirituality, values and purpose relegated to antiquity. While we can make every attempt to protect our children from the outside world, we would be myopic to think that nothing seeps in. We thus have a moral obligation to do whatever we can to protect our future with a strong present based upon the foundation of the past.

*Horav Yosef Shalom Eliyashiv, zl*, presents a thoughtful and inspiring exposition of a well-known *Chazal*/passage in the *Talmud*, which is certainly worthy of constant review. We are taught that a father must teach his son to swim. The directive seems almost superfluous. What makes swimming so unique that it becomes a father's obligation to teach his son to swim? If it is due to the danger, this danger can be present under other circumstances as well. If it is the benefit, this, too, can be obtained from other sources. What is it about swimming that makes it stand out?

*Rav Eliyashiv* explains that swimming demands active participation. If one were to drop a piece of wood onto the water, it might remain above the surface for some time, but certainly not because it was swimming. It simply floats along until it fills with water and submerges. Furthermore, it follows the current, since it is not active. In order to swim, one must be actively engaged in skillfully counteracting the physics of the water which are pulling him down. If one does not fight the water current, its gravitational pull, he will sink or be pulled away. Swimming entails actively fighting the current.

A Jew must learn to "swim," to actively swim/challenge the currents that threaten to undermine our *Yiddishkeit*. We cannot be passive in today's world, because we will not merely stay afloat – we will sink! Or, be

dragged wherever the prevailing current drags us. To live a Torah-life means to swim against the currents that seek to disenfranchise us from our heritage.

In every generation we must follow the leadership, whom, as the *Gerrer Rebbe* says, are able to reveal the Torah's guidance for that generation. During the Second World War, when the *Gerrer Rebbe*, the *Imrei Emes*, was compelled to leave Poland, he saw that it would be impossible to take all of his manuscripts of the *Chidushei Torah*, original thoughts, that he had written on Torah and *Talmud*. He decided to dig a deep hole in the ground not far from his home and buried them there. He hoped that after the war he would be able to retrieve his *kesavim*, manuscripts. After the war, he sent a number of agents with exact directions to dig up the manuscripts – to no avail. Three times he sent reliable people to do the job, and they returned unsuccessful; they could not locate the spot in which they were buried. He sent one last agent. This time he drew an exact map with perfect measurements. There was no way he would not be able to locate the hiding place. They searched back and forth and were once again unsuccessful. The *Rebbe* decided that it was a Heavenly sign that the novellae that he had taught prior to the war were specific to that period. Now that the war had ended, with a major portion of *Klal Yisrael* brutally murdered, a new understanding and explanation of the Torah was required. New challenges – new Torah directives. His approach had to be altered.

*Parashas Ki Savo* includes within it the ninety-eight maledictions which Moshe *Rabbeinu* issued forth to *Klal Yisrael* prior to their entering into *Eretz Yisrael*. These curses are read quickly and quietly by the *baal korei*, Torah reader, due to the nature of their message. *Chassidic* thought suggests a different approach to these curses, which they feel have serious negative overtones only when viewed externally/superficially. When viewed on a deeper level, however, they are actually unrestricted blessings. Thus, what might be viewed on the surface as negative in nature can be quite positive and a source of consummate blessing to the thinking person.

This metamorphic understanding is reflected in a vignette told concerning *Horav Dov Ber, zl*, the *Mittler/Lubavitcher Rebbe*, son and successor to the *Baal HaTanya*. He once heard the reading of the curses and fainted. He remained ill for weeks. He was a sensitive person whose delicate nature could not tolerate the harshness of the curses and their intended implication for the Jewish People. He was asked why he had this reaction at this time. What about the many times he had heard it read before? He explained that in the past "I heard the reading from my father, and, when he read the *tochachah*, I only heard blessing." Only a holy person of his stature is able to discern the blessing within the *tochachah*, and only one of the *Baal HaTanya's* spiritual status can read it in such a manner that someone like *Rav Dov Ber* would hear blessings. With each ensuing generation we hear less, because we are exposed to more.

אנכי אערבנו מידי תבקשנו... והטאתי לך כל הימים

**I will personally guarantee him; of my own hand you can demand him... and I will have sinned to you for all time. (43:9)**

*Rashi* explains Yehudah's statement: "I will have sinned to you for all time" implies that Yehudah's sin will transcend this world and will be held against him even in *Olam Habba*, the World to Come. This is a powerful commitment on the part of Yehudah. He is willing to accept banishment from both worlds, should he fail to bring Binyamin back to his father. Why was it necessary for Yehudah to make such a strong promise? Yaakov *Avinu* would have believed him even had he not promised to relinquish his *Olam Habba*. *Horav Reuven Karlinstein, zl*, explains that by accepting banishment from both worlds, Yehudah was intimating to Yaakov that absolutely nothing would stand in his way of returning Binyamin. When he is up against the proverbial wall, when he has nowhere to turn, every person pushes harder and is able to surge forward, because everyone has a reservoir of strength which he shores up when necessary. In other words, when all else fails, we still have within us the ability to go on, to continue, to succeed. Yehudah was establishing the barometer, the bar from which to



continue. He set the bar so high, both worlds, that Yaakov was assured of Binyamin's return, because he knew that Yehudah would not leave any stone unturned in his quest to return Binyamin to his father. Whatever we promise to do, whatever limits we set for ourselves: we can do better; we can still go further and do more.

The *Klausenberger Rebbe, zl*, once asked a favor on behalf of Laniado Hospital from a prominent benefactor. This time it was not about money. The hospital needed help, and this individual was in a position to help them. It meant, however, jumping through some major and difficult hoops. The man replied, "I will do whatever I can." The *Rebbe* looked him straight in the eye, and, with a serious expression, asked him, "Do you know what you just implied? Do you have the slightest idea of what you are capable of doing? A person has no idea how much beyond his normal abilities he can actually go. 'I will do whatever I can' is a powerful commitment to do everything relentlessly – even those things that you have no idea you are able to achieve."

The *Rebbe* related that as a young man he was very sickly and weak. In fact, he was unable to even carry his volume of *Talmud*. One of his students carried it for him. He simply did not have the strength. This all changed when the Nazi's deported him to a labor camp where he was relegated to carry fifty-pound boulders on his back up and down a steep hill! How did he do it? The answer is: A person has no idea of what he is able to do, to achieve. He "thinks" that he has limited abilities. He is wrong! When push comes to shove, he has no limitations. Therefore, when one says, "I will do whatever I can," it is a major commitment.

This was Yehudah's assurance to Yaakov. Since he did not want to lose his portion in *Olam Habba*, he would do anything to return Binyamin to his father.

The ability to overcome obstacles emanates from the knowledge that not only is there a purpose, a reason to continue, to live, but that the actual life itself has meaning to it. Despair, *atzvut*, is a non-reaction to suffering. *Aveilus* is mourning with meaning. We know why we mourn. We have a powerful reason for grieving. The eminent psychotherapist and Holocaust survivor, Viktor Frankl, would say that despair is suffering without meaning. Choosing what to do with one's suffering, choosing to continue with life, despite the misery and suffering, is the essential challenge and achievement for human beings. Thus, awareness of the meaning enables one to overcome a painful experience.

As faithful Jews, we are acutely aware that nothing in life "just happens." Everything has its source in Hashem and, thus, has powerful meaning. Knowing that it comes from Hashem should in and of itself suffice for the meaning. Some events, however, require a single thread of meaning, something to allow the participants to understand and to enable them to accept the pain. It then becomes bearable.

In February 1997, two helicopters crashed over Northern *Eretz Yisrael*, tragically taking the lives of 73 young Jewish soldiers. Jews throughout the world mourned this terrible loss. A Jew in South Africa recognized the last name of a fellow Sought African *oleh*, émigré, to *Eretz Yisrael*. A long distance phone call confirmed the worst: his friend's 20 year-old son was on one of the helicopters. The grief-stricken father continued, "I will tell you something else. Apparently, my son's name appeared twice on the manifest containing the names of all of the soldiers who were to be boarding the two helicopters. As a result, the commanding officer, thinking that he had one too many soldiers for the helicopters, ordered one young soldier to return home. The disgruntled soldier was compelled to hitchhike home, unaware how close he had come to being a victim of the crash. So, after all is said and done, my son's death was not entirely in vain. Because of him, the life of another Jew was spared." The father's grief was made bearable with the knowledge that there was meaning to his pain. His son perished – another young man would now live. The father's tears cannot be wiped away. Now, however, they can be consecrated with the realization that

his son's tragic passing was the vehicle for *Kiddush Shem Shomayim*, sanctifying Hashem's Name.

### *Va'ani Tefillah*

ומלפניך מלכנו ריקם אל תשיבנו  
teshivenu. And do not turn us away empty-handed from before You,  
Our King.

It happens. We pray and pray and pray again, yet the response that we receive is not necessarily the one for which we had been hoping. There are times when the answer is "no". Now what? We were hoping to at least leave with some form of assurance. Imagine, going to the doctor and *chas v'shalom* receiving a diagnosis of: "No hope. There is nothing that I can possibly do to help you. It is beyond the scope of modern medicine." We understand that Hashem's reason for His response to our plea goes far beyond anything that we could comprehend, but could we at least have some strand of hope to hold on to? Thus, we ask Hashem that if the answer to our prayer is not in line with what we hope to hear, can He, please, "not send us away empty-handed"? Rejection is a terrible feeling to experience. As long as one has hope, *emunah*, faith and *bitachon*, trust, he has a good feeling within. If he is confronted with down and out rejection, it may be too much to bear. So, please Hashem, give us something to hold on to. Give us hope.

לזכר נשמת

שמעון בן יהודה לייב ז"ל

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