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The Lesson of Ki Im Zechartani – So That You Will Remember Me Parshas Vayeishev

Posted on December 19, 2024 (5785) By Rabbi Yissocher Frand | Series:
Rav Frand | Level: Intermediate

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Series on the weekly portion: ##1316 – Endangering Oneself to Perform The Mitzvah of Kibbud Av. Good Shabbos!

Among Rav Akiva Eiger's world-renowned Talmudic and Halachic lomdus questions are two questions on Chumash in this week's parsha.

Yosef is languishing away in prison. The sar haofim (baker) and the sar hamashkim (wine butler) each have dreams. They tell their dreams to Yosef, who provides them with the correct interpretations. The reason the sar hamashkim was thrown into prison was that he had unwittingly served Pharaoh a cup of wine into which a fly had fallen. Yosef interpreted his dream, saying "...In another three days, Pharaoh will count you and will restore you to your post and you will place Pharaoh's cup in his hand as was the former practice when you were his cupbearer (k'mishpat ha'rishon asher mashkehu)." (Bereshis 40:13).

Rav Akiva Eiger asks why Yosef needs to emphasize "as was the former practice when you were his cupbearer?"

In other words, imagine if the Secretary of the Treasury is fired. One night he has a dream. A dream interpreter says, "Guess what? You are going to be the Secretary of the Treasury again." Does the dream interpreter need to state the job description of the Secretary of Treasury? There is no need to describe the role of Secretary of the Treasury!

Why would it not have been sufficient for Yosef to just tell the sar hamashkim that Pharaoh will give him back his job? Period. Why does Yosef need to go on to say "And you will place Pharaoh's cup in his hand, just like you did originally?"

Rav Akiva Eiger asks a second question about the words "ki im zechartani..." (at which time, if you would think of me...) Yosef's intention is surely to say "And by the way, remember me." How should that be expressed? Yosef should have just said "u'zechartani" (and remember me).

The expression "ki im zechartani" is peculiar. It almost seems to say "SO THAT you can remember me."

Rav Akiva Eiger answers beautifully: If Yosef would have just told the sar hamashkim that he will get his job back, the sar hamashkim would have been a nervous wreck. He would be petrified that the same thing might happen again. If it happened to him once that a fly fell into the wine, what is to prevent that from happening again? He would be thinking to himself, "The next time if there is a fly in the wine, I will not be merely given a jail sentence. I will lose my head!"

The sar hamashkim would be so jittery about carrying out his duties that the wine would be spilled all over Pharaoh's lap! He would be a nervous wreck! So, Yosef told him that he does not need to worry at all. I want to tell you that you did nothing wrong. It was not your fault. Every time you served Pharaoh a goblet, you checked to make sure there was not a fly in there. Do you know why this happened? It happened because it was the hand of G-d. It happened because the Ribono shel Olam wants you to remember me – "ki im zechartani."

Therefore, not only are you going to get your job back, but "you will place Pharaoh's cup into his hand" – ka'mishpat harishon – JUST LIKE YOU USED TO. You used to be calm, cool, and collected when you served Pharaoh his wine, and that is how you will be once again. You will go back to your sar hamashkim role and perform it well because the only reason Hashem made the fly go into Pharaoh's cup is so that you will be able to remember me and get me out of here.

I recently heard an incident involving the same type of "ki im zechartani." Last Shabbos was the "The President's Conference of Torah U'Messorah" in Florida. The event was attended by presidents of institutions – movers and shakers of Klal Yisrael. There were speeches that encouraged lay leaders to get involved in supporting large mosdos. One of the speakers was Gary Turgow from Detroit, Michigan. He is involved in many different organizations, is a premier askan (communal leader) and is a very successful businessman.

He spoke at the conference and told of two amazing incidents involving hashgacha pratis:

He is on the Board of Directors of Blue Cross – Blue Shield of Michigan. He was attending a meeting of the organization at which he was planning to announce his resignation. (He had been there for several years; he felt that he had done whatever he could do, and he had other obligations.) He was sitting on the dais next to a woman who was the head of Blue Cross – Blue Shield of Michigan. While sitting there, he received a text message that someone in NYU needed an emergency life-or-death operation. However, Blue Cross – Blue Shield had not yet signed off on the operation, which needed to happen now or never.

They asked Gary Turgow if he had any connections with Blue Cross – Blue Shield that can help with the emergency situation. He took his cell phone and showed it to the woman sitting next to him and within five minutes, the operation was approved by Blue Cross – Blue Shield. Gary Turgow told the Torah U'Messorah convention: "Guess what? I did not resign my post on the board of Blue Cross – Blue Shield."

This is literally an incident of ki im zechartani. Why did the Ribono shel Olam put Gary Turgow on that board for who knows how many years? Mr. Turgow said that he felt like it was abas kol coming down from heaven telling him, "You need to be on the board of Blue Cross – Blue Shield. You have been placed in that position in order to help with this life-saving incident."

The second incident he mentioned was the following:

Mr. Turgow was the president of a bank, a major financial institution in Detroit. He received a call from a Jew who started chastising him: "I don't know how you, as a Jew, can be president of this bank. They are a bunch of wicked people." Mr. Turgow asked, "What is the problem?" The caller explained that his wife died and he fell behind on his mortgage payments. The bank sent him a letter that they were foreclosing on his property. The man only had \$5,000 left on his mortgage and the house was worth several

hundred thousand dollars. He was seven months behind on his monthly payments toward this \$5000 and now the bank was foreclosing!
“How could you be president of such a bank? They are such wicked people!” Mr. Turgow promised to look into the matter. He looked into it and found out that the facts were as the caller explained but in truth, his bank had sold the mortgage to another bank and the other bank saw that they could make a killing on this foreclosure. Mr. Turgow personally paid off the fellow’s mortgage and the man was able to stay in his house.
However, Mr. Turgow was surprised that he did not hear anything back from this fellow. The bank president thought to himself, I saved this person’s house, and he did not even thank me for it! However, several months later, this fellow died and it was revealed in his will that he left the entire house to Gary Turgow with the instructions to give the proceeds from the sale of the house to any charity of his choice.

Again – ki im zechartani: That is why Gary Turgow merited to be the bank president.

For most of us, such “ki im zechartani” moments do not happen so dramatically. But “heavenly voices” reach out to all of us and force us to ask “Why did the Ribono shel Olam put me here? Why is this in my lap?” That is the lesson of “ki im zechartani”.

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

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The Greatest Threat Americans Face By Rabbi Efreim Goldberg

December 19, 2024 | י"ח כסלו ה' אלפים תשפ"ה

Ask Americans what the greatest threat we face is and you will get a range of answers. Some will say it is global warming and climate change. Others think it is the issue of illegal immigration and unsecured borders. Still others say it is the threat of terrorism or a nuclear war. The truth is it is none of the above.

Our greatest threat is extinction. The National Center for Health Statistics reported the total fertility rate in the United States was 1.62 in 2023. That’s the lowest rate ever recorded in the United States and well below the rate needed to maintain a growing population. Recently, the EU reported another declining birth rate, their lowest in 60 years. Many developed countries’ birth rates are below the rate needed to maintain and grow the population. Projections suggest that by century’s end, a shocking 93% of countries, including the UK and the US, will confront underpopulation given the present trajectory. The statistics seems clear - extreme birth rate collapse is the biggest danger to human civilization by far.

The Jewish people are doing our part with a birth rate of 1.7 overall, an average of 3.3 for Orthodox Jews, 1.4 for non-Orthodox Jews, and 6.6 for “Ultra-Orthodox” Jews. Israel’s birth rate remains the highest among countries in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and is the forum’s only member state reproducing above replacement rate. The Talmud (Shabbos 31a) reports that each of us will be asked a series of questions by the heavenly court at the end of our lives. One of them is Asakta b’pirya v’rivya, did you occupy yourself with populating the world? The Maharsha points out that we will not be asked whether we fulfilled the mitzvah to have children, because that is beyond our control. We will be asked, asakta, were you oseik, did you take responsibility for continuity, did you contribute to creating a better future, irrespective of whether you had children. The Chochmas Shlomo, Rav Shlomo Kluger, rules that one can fulfill the mitzvah of pru u’rvu, to have children, by caring for children, even if not biologically their own. (It goes without saying that we daven daily that all who want children and who are waiting should be blessed with healthy children who give them nachas.)

One can have no biological children but still be the proud progenitor of generations by living for and being dedicated towards the future. And one

can have a large biological family but be entirely consumed with themselves and their own pleasure, indifferent and apathetic to creating continuity and to the next generation.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe and Rebbetzin had no biological children, but they were the parents and grandparents of generations, of worlds of spiritual heirs. Two weeks ago, over 6,500 rabbis who each see and feel the rebbe as a father gathered for the annual Kinus Hashluchim.

As an American, the birth rate collapse is a genuine concern but as a Torah Jew, what it reflects about our society is even more concerning. The world around us is increasingly more concerned with the here and now, with pleasure, comfort, and convenience rather than in the effort, sacrifice, faith, hope, and optimism it takes to bring and raise children in this world. Is it any surprise that we are suffering from a population threat when many states have laws that require insurance companies to cover birth control while simultaneously refusing to cover fertility treatments such as IVF, leaving many couples with the burden of exorbitant expenses when trying to have a child privately?

Soon, in Sefer Shemos, we will read how Moshe Rabbeinu was commanded to make the boards of the Mishkan out of shittim wood. Rashi says that the wood used for the Mishkan came from special trees that Yaakov Avinu planted in Egypt. Just prior to his death, he instructed his children to remove these trees and take the wood with them when they left Mitzrayim. Where did Yaakov get the wood? The Midrash on Vayigash tells us that on his way down to Egypt, Yaakov stopped in Beer Sheva and he gathered cedar wood that his Zayda, Avraham, had planted there years earlier. This wasn’t ordinary wood from ordinary trees. This was intergenerational. It represented and reflected the effort, sacrifice, forethought, and investment of earlier generations.

Are you planting the trees that your great-grandchildren will be nourished by and will build their religious lives from? Do you prioritize building the future over indulging in the pleasure of the present? Is Jewish continuity a concern for you and what are you doing to educate, enrich, empower, and inspire future generations?

Chanukah begins this week and ironically, though it is not even a Biblical holiday, it is perhaps the most observed Jewish holiday, including by those who would not define themselves as observant. Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch writes that the root of the word Chanukah is chinuch because at its core, the battle against the Hellenists was about the continuity of Jewish identity and who would define our future..

A couple of years ago, Yeshivas Rav Yitzchak Elchanon (RIETS/YU) celebrated the 50th anniversary of Rav Hershel Schachter Shlita serving as Rosh Yeshiva. In an interview, he was asked: “What are you most proud of accomplishing in these 50 years?” Rav Schachter responded: “Over this 50-year period I am most proud of raising together with my eishes chayil a wonderful family. To me, that comes way before anything else I accomplished.”

What is your greatest source of pride? How do you define success? Do your calendar and credit card statements reflect a commitment to the future or the present, to others or to yourself, to ensuring our continuity or to prioritizing the here and now?

This Chanukah, let’s touch our candle to others to pay the flame forward, to make our Menorah shine with the light that illuminates the world.

YUTORAH IN PRINT • Vayeishev 5785

Rabbi Moshe Taragin

The complex story of Yosef and his brothers is a study in sibling rivalry, simmering family tensions, and fractured relationships. It showcases the toxic effects of unresolved conflict, favoritism, and jealousy, which slowly erode the family’s unity. This tragic chapter in our history is a powerful reminder of how destructive unchecked jealousy and a lack of communication can be to a family.

However, this saga is also a story of two specific brothers-Yosef and Yehuda- who emerge as the dominant contenders for leadership of our nascent nation. Over the next few parshiyot, these two figures will wrestle

with one another for the mantle of leadership. In the climactic moment of this entire epic, Yehuda directly challenges Yosef, demanding freedom for his brothers.

Long term, each of these two strong personalities is destined to establish a branch of Jewish monarchy. Numerous monarchs will emerge from Yosef's descendants, while the primary royal lineage of our nation will trace back to the house of Yehuda.

Surprisingly, the arcs of these two brothers are quite bizarre. Yosef is despised by his brothers, hijacked from his father, sold into slavery multiple times, and is ultimately incarcerated in a dungeon. Not exactly the storyline you would expect for someone destined for leadership.

Yehuda's arc is equally unconventional and unsettling. He takes a foreign wife with whom he bears three children. Two of them pass away prematurely, and afterwards, Yehuda ignores his widowed daughter-in-law. Ultimately, he mistakenly has relations with her, which results in her becoming pregnant with twin boys. She is nearly executed for her perceived crimes until Yehuda comes clean and confesses to being the father.

These are very strange accounts for individuals who will eventually lead our nation. Evidently, these future leaders must confront real-life challenges, and the trials and scandals they endure along the walk of life will teach them hard lessons of leadership.

In Your Dreams

Yosef is a dynamic personality with natural charisma. He possesses striking looks, flashy clothing, and effortlessly attracts everyone within his radius. He is a man of grand vision, dreaming of glory and greatness. Convinced that his dreams will serve the greater good and shape Jewish history, he speaks about them openly, hoping to influence and persuade others of his innate talent and potential.

What he fails to realize is that leadership is not about materializing your own dreams or imposing your will and vision upon others. Leadership isn't about influencing others to adopt your ideals, but about helping others reach and attain their own hopes and dreams.

At the beginning of Parshat Vayeishev, he dreams of himself at the center. By the end of the parsha, he becomes part of other people's dreams. Only after being thrown into prison, does he learn the art of listening to others' dreams and of helping them make sense of their own personal aspirations and desires. In that dark and dank prison he finally becomes part of someone else's story.

Hard Times

In prison, he also realizes that not everyone has the luxury of dreaming about their future success. Yosef's dreams are grandiose and atmospheric. He witnesses his family collecting the grain and cashing in on their material success, while he stands in the middle.

He also dreams of planets orbiting in the heavens, envisioning his own meteoric power and influence. His dreams inhabit a rarefied, higher plane, far removed from the drudgery and monotony of everyday life. His dreams are rooted in success, power, and the pursuit of greatness.

In prison, he meets people who have fallen on hard times, who have been given a rough turn in life and feel stuck in the mud. The two prisoners are former members of the royal court who have fallen from grace, and are grappling with the sting of being cast out and forgotten.

The prisoners Yosef meets don't dream of stars or material abundance but just of finding some purpose in life, a way to redeem themselves from emptiness. Not everyone's life is rosy and cheery. People suffer hardships and setbacks as they navigate an unforgiving world. Until Yosef learns to listen to other people's dreams, he cannot be a leader. Likewise, until he realizes how hard some people have it, he cannot be a leader.

Leadership has nothing to do with influence or popularity. Just because you speak into a microphone doesn't make you a leader. In the world of social media, it is relatively easy for people to grab megaphones and self-deputize as "pretend leaders". Leadership resides in the quiet empathy that flows from understanding the struggles of others and the courage to embrace dreams that are not your own.

Do you uplift the dreams and aspirations of others, or do you merely leverage their attention to serve your own ambitions? This is the hard lesson which Yosef must learn in prison before he can become a "leader".

Spare Parts

Yehuda must learn different lessons. Devoid of dreams himself, he has no need to learn the art of nurturing the dreams of others. Instead, he must recognize that people are fragile, marked by both moments of strength and episodes of vulnerability. Even saints sin, and everyone has a dark side to them. Human beings mustn't be held to impossibly high standards – even great people will have their moments of weakness.

Yehuda can only learn this lesson by experiencing his own moral hiccups. Though he becomes ensnared in an unseemly tale, he redeems himself by taking full responsibility for his missteps, despite the personal dishonor it brings. He learns that leadership consists in tolerating others and their imperfections rather than holding them to impossible standards.

Had he learned this lesson earlier, perhaps he would have been more magnanimous toward Yosef. He would have appreciated the sincerity of Yosef's aspirations, even while realizing how toxic and dangerous runaway ambition can be. Likewise, had he appreciated human fragility, Yehuda would have better understood the pain and anguish of his daughter-in-law, who was twice widowed, rather than blaming her or casting her as a black widow.

Leadership means tolerating others' failures, exhibiting patience when people stumble and trusting in their ability to recover. Yehuda must visit his own inner darkness to understand the darkness that resides within every human soul. Truth and Reckoning Yehuda must also confront the painful lesson of honesty, even when it comes at a personal cost. Trust is the cornerstone of all relationships and the foundation of leadership. Without being trustworthy and holding to a personal code of honor, a person has no right to influence or affect the lives of others. People follow those who embody integrity and possess moral compass.

Yehuda exemplifies this honesty and integrity when he chooses to shame himself rather than let an innocent woman carry their dark secret to her grave. In doing so, he earns the trust of everyone around him. They place their confidence in him to navigate the difficult crises ahead. Ya'akov will trust him to travel with Binyamin to free Shimon from prison, and the brothers will trust him to serve as their representative in prosecuting for their collective freedom. Without unwavering honesty and a life grounded in integrity, one forfeits the right to lead.

Yosef and Yehuda each embark on their own personal odyssey toward leadership. Yosef learns to shift the focus from his own dreams to the aspirations of others. Along his journey, he also discovers that life is not always bright and carefree, and he learns to empathize with the struggles of ordinary people, who face hardship, disillusionment, and displacement. Along his own journey to leadership, Yehuda learns that human beings are naturally imperfect, and therefore people shouldn't be harshly judged for their flaws and limitations. Additionally, he realizes that without honesty and integrity, he should not be taking decisions on behalf of others.

from: Ira Zlotowitz <Iraz@klalgovoah.org>

date: Dec 19, 2024, 7:00 PM

subject: **Tidbits Klal Gavoah in memory of Rav Meir Zlotowitz zt"l**

Parashas Vayeishev 5785

December 21st • 20 Kislev 5785

On Wednesday, Erev Chanukah, Tachanun is omitted at Mincha. Tachanun and Lamnatzei'ach are omitted throughout Chanukah, as well as Kel Erech Apayim before Kerias Hatorah, and the Yehi Ratzons that follow. Fasting and hespeidim are generally prohibited. Al Hanisim is said in Shemoneh Esrei and Bircas Hamazon. The omission of Al Hanisim does not need to be corrected. However, if one remembers before completing Bircas Hamazon he may recite the compensatory Harachaman at the end of Bircas Hamazon, followed by Bimei Mattisyahu. Similarly, one can add the compensatory Harachaman at the end of Elokai Netzor, followed by Bimei Mattisyahu

Each day of Chanukah, the complete Hallel is recited during Shacharis. The Kerias Hatorah of each day of Chanukah corresponds to the day of the bringing of the Korbanos Ha'nesiim. Some congregations recite Mizmor Shir (Psalm 30) after the Shir Shel Yom. A woman should recite Hallel. The Achronim agree that there is a mitzvah to gather at a meal and give thanks to Hashem; through this we publicize the Chanukah miracles. Singing and saying words of praise to Hashem renders the meal a Seudas Mitzvah. There is a minhag to eat dairy foods in commemoration of Yehudis's defeat of the enemy general by feeding him dairy items. The practice of eating latkes, doughnuts and fried foods commemorates the miracle involving oil (Rabbeinu Maimon, Ibn Ezra).

There is a praiseworthy minhag of giving gifts to the melamdin of one's children (R' C. Palaggi zt"l). This sets an example of hakaras hatov for your child and displays the importance of their chinuch. A gift accompanied by warm words of thanks is a tremendous source of chizuk for our Rebbeim and teachers.

Daf Yomi - Shabbos: Bavli: Sanhedrin 4 • Yerushalmi: Shabbos 25 • Mishnah Yomis: Sanhedrin 1:5-6 • Oraysa: Next week is Beitza 32b-34b. Make sure to call your parents, in-laws, grandparents and Rabbi to wish them a good Shabbos. If you didn't speak to your kids today, make sure to connect with them as well!

Chanukah begins on Wednesday evening, December 25th. Shabbos Chanukah, as well as Shabbos Mevorchim Chodesh Teves, is next Shabbos Parashas Miketz, December 28th.

The fast of Asarah B'Teves is on Friday, January 10th. VAYEISHEV: Yosef, the favorite son, is gifted the kesones pasim shirt • Yosef's dreams • The brothers plan to kill Yosef • Reuven persuades them to put him in a pit instead • While Reuven is away, Yosef is sold to Egypt-descending merchants • Yehuda and Tamar • Tamar bears Yehuda twins, Peretz and Zerach • Yosef is sold to Potiphar and rises to become his trusted advisor • Potiphar's wife tempts Yosef, Yosef resists ("Vayima'ein!") • Yosef is wrongfully accused and imprisoned • Yosef is given responsibilities in the prison • Yosef correctly interprets the dreams of the wine steward and the baker • Yosef is forgotten and remains in prison.

Haftarah: The Navi Amos (2:6-3:8) warns that although Hashem may have mercy for three sins, there is a fourth sin which will bring about certain Divine wrath. The Pirkei D'Rabi Eliezer says that this fourth sin is related to the brothers' selling of Yosef. As even if it was necessary for Yosef to be distanced, using the profits to purchase shoes demonstrated a level of indignity and insensitivity.

Parashas Vayeishev: 112 Pesukim • No Mitzvos listed
"וְיִגְמְלוּהֶם וְשִׂאִים נִכְאֹת וְצָרִי וְלֹט" "And their camels bearing spices, balsam and lotus" (Bereishis 37:25)

Rashi explains that the Yishme'alim would generally transport goods that had a foul-smelling odor. However, when Yosef was sold and transported to Mitzrayim, he merited that the caravan in which he was transported was carrying goods with a pleasant aroma. But what is the significance of this small 'comfort' when one is being carted off to servitude?

The Telzer approach, attributed to Rav Mottel Pogremonski zt"l, explains this with a parable. Both a surgeon and a murderer bring a knife to the skin. Yet the distinction between the one that seeks to heal and the one that seeks to injure is observed in the surgeon's meticulousness and delicate approach. Although Yosef was being cast away, it was ultimately for the later good; a "Refuah Kodem L'makkah". This small detail of the pleasant aroma despite the circumstances demonstrates that the master plan was perfect and meticulous.

In a similar vein, Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz explains that this pleasant aroma was Hashem's message to Yosef that He is with him in his suffering. On Chanukah we recognize and express our gratitude for the miracles performed. Along with the great miracles of the times of the Chashmonaim, we also need to recognize the many smaller miracles that take place in our times and get a good 'scents' of all the everyday blessings in our lives. Please reach out to us with any thoughts or comments at: klalgovoah.org

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Hallel Revisited - Hallel

There are numerous opinions in the Gemara, in Maseches P'sachim, as to who authored these chapters of T'hilim (113-118), which comprise what we refer to as "Hallel." It has been suggested that there is really no dispute in the Gemara. The basic framework was established by the early Prophets and later enhanced by successive generations. Eventually, David HaMelech organized these chapters into the final form we have today in T'hilim (T'shuvah MeiAhavah, Vol. II, responsa 264).

ה'הללוּ-יְהוָה, הַלְלוּ עַבְדֵי ה', הַלְלוּ אֶת שֵׁם ה' (All of klal Yisrael) praise Hashem (that is, the Name that signifies that He created the worlds with a yud and a hei). Praise (Him) especially, you servants of Hashem (who went out of Mitzrayim and saw this clearly, (and) praise the full Name of Hashem [הו"י] since you witnessed Its greatness by the Makos in Mitzrayim. [Pathway to Prayer Siddur, by Rabbi Mayer Birnbaum]

Avdei Hashem refers to all of B'nei Yisrael. Midrash Shocher Tov relates that the B'nei Yisrael sang Hallel after the last plague. Pharaoh was awakened by cries of all the Egyptian homes whose first-borns were dying. He pleaded with Moshe and Aharon to leave immediately! They replied that he would have to issue an official proclamation of emancipation in order for the plague to end. Pharaoh responded by shouting: "In the past you were my slaves, but now you are free men! You are on your own, you are servants of G-d, so you must give praise, you servants of Hashem!"

מְעַתָּה וְעַד עוֹלָם הַמְבָרָךְ, יְהִי שֵׁם ה' מְבָרָךְ. Blessed be the Name of Hashem, from this time and forever.

We express our desire and tefilah to see the entire world recognize that Hashem is the source of blessing now and forever.

מִמְנוּחַ שֶׁמֶשׁ עַד מְבוֹאוֹ, מְהֵלֵל שֵׁם ה' High above all nations is Hashem, above the heavens is His glory. הַמְשַׁפִּילִי לְרֵאשִׁית הַשָּׁמַיִם וּבְאֶרֶץ עֲלִיָּה-יִגְדֹל הַמַּגְבִּיהִי Who is like Hashem, our G-d, Who is enthroned on high – yet deigns to look upon the heaven and the earth?

These three p'sukim convey the vast difference in how we relate to Hashem vs. how the nations of the world relate. "High above all nations is Hashem." To the nations of the world, Hashem is only exalted way up high, and it is beneath Him to have anything to do with this world. However, to us, He is "Elokeinu" – our G-d – Hashem is "הַמְשַׁפִּילִי לְרֵאשִׁית הַשָּׁמַיִם וּבְאֶרֶץ עֲלִיָּה-יִגְדֹל"–[He] deigns to look upon the heaven and the earth." To Hashem, heaven and earth are equal. He has to lower Himself either way. We understand that Hashem is involved in every detail of our lives, both nationally and individually.

T'hilim 99:2 states: "ה' בְּצִיּוֹן גְּדוֹל, וְרָם הוּא עַל כָּל הָעַמִּים" For us ("Zion"), Hashem is Gadol, like a tower (migdol) which has its feet on the ground, but the top of the ladder is in the highest place of the Universe. Hashem is most exalted beyond our comprehension. At the same time, He controls and guides every detail in our lives. To the nations, He is "רָם-רָם." Just exalted way above, without any connection to this world.

Hallel Revisited - Hallel 2 מְקִימֵי מַעַפְרָן, מְאַשְׁפֵת רִים אֲבִיוֹן He (looks even to the lowest and) raises up the extremely poor from the dust, (and) He lifts up the destitute from the garbage dumps. עִם נְדִיבֵי עַמּוֹ, עִם נְדִיבֵי עַמּוֹ (Not only does He lift them up from their low state, but He raises them) to seat them with nobles, (even) with nobles of His people. מוֹשִׁיבֵי עֶקְרַת הַבַּיִת, אִם-מוֹשִׁיבֵי עֶקְרַת הַבַּיִת, אִם-מוֹשִׁיבֵי עֶקְרַת הַבַּיִת He causes the barren woman of the house to sit as a joyous mother of children (raising her children in the house); praise Hashem

(for all these wonders that show that He is involved even in this lowly world!)

In the previous segment, we discussed the primary difference between other nations and us, as described in p'sukim 4-6. We believe that Hashem is not just exalted above and higher than all, but rather we also believe and know that He has designed our lives precisely in every detail and is intimately involved in every aspect continuously. Our belief in hashgachah pratis is what sets us apart from the rest of the world and is the component of emunah that the Rosh calls the "y'sod (foundation) of the entire Torah."

The Malbim explains the rest of the p'sukim in this chapter as advancing this crucial point further.

Hashem's involvement in our lives is not just for great people. It is for all of us and even for the lowest of people. Hashem raises up the extremely poor from the dust and even the lower destitute people from the garbage dumps. He doesn't just raise them up a notch, but rather, He raises them up to join the most noble of His people. Hashem also causes barren women to become joyous mothers. We praise Hashem for being involved in every aspect, even in this lowly world.

Up to now, we discussed the difference between our emunah and that of the nations of the world who believe in G-d. We believe that Hashem is not just exalted above, higher than all, but rather that He has designed our lives precisely in every detail and is intimately involved in every aspect continuously. Our belief in hashgachah pratis is what sets us apart from the rest of the world and is the component of emunah that the Rosh calls the "y'sod (foundation) of the entire Torah."

How can we train ourselves and our children to be more aware of Hashem's continuous involvement in our lives? In 1984, HaRav Moshe Feinstein and HaRav Yaakov Kamenetsky wrote a joint open letter to all the Jewish people. The following is an excerpt (the original was in Hebrew):

Every understanding heart understands how great the urgency is, in these times, to embed the emunah of hashgachah pratis (Divine Providence) in the hearts of each and every one, and especially the younger ones, because it is the "stake" that everything hangs on... It is a good practice to strengthen this emunah by writing down the Divine Providence we see in our own lives daily."

I know of someone who made this a family project for their grandchildren, with monetary rewards. They bought journals or diaries for those who preferred to write; but what seems to work better for younger children, and many times even for older ones, is a simple digital recorder (under \$20 on Amazon). Even children aged seven and eight were excited to embark on the program and are daily becoming more aware of Hashem in their lives.

I know of others who routinely share their daily or weekly stories with their families. Every situation is different, and we must think about what would work within our own inner circles or even for ourselves.

It's nice to read and listen to other people's stories through the many books and shiurim that are available. There is even a phone line, which anyone can call into, that is dedicated to sharing hashgachah pratis stories.

However, other people's amazing stories will not make even a fraction of the lasting impact that awareness of our own "small" day-to-day observances will make. It is exciting and invigorating to see Hashem in our lives every day. The more we seek, the more we will be shown.

ה' שְׁמֵרְךָ, ה' צִלְקֶךָ עַל-יְדֵי יְמִינְךָ Hashem is your Guardian; Hashem is your protective Shade at your right hand. [T'hilim 121:5]

Hashem is like a shadow. He responds to our initiative. The more we seek His Presence in our lives, the more He shows us. If we put up one finger, we see one finger in our shadow. If we put up five, we see five.

HaRav Avigdor Miller would point out that while affixing a mezuzah is a great mitzvah, how many mezuzos can we affix? Emunah is a constant mitzvah. Every second we spend on seeking, recording, journaling is a mitzvah of the highest caliber.

Many put great effort into buying a beautiful esrog, spending many hours to find the perfect esrog. That is a beautiful "hiddur mitzvah" – a beautification

of the mitzvah. Shouldn't we, all the more so, put much greater effort into the foundation of the entire Torah, the stake that everything hangs on?

<https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/haftarat-parshat-vayeishev-rewriting-our-prophetic-story/>

Haftarat Parshat Vayeishev: Rewriting Our Prophetic Story **Rabbi Kenneth Brander**

Dec 16, 2024, 3:34 PM

In the background of the current conflict looms a deeper crisis that threatens the very fabric of our society. Even before the current war, one in five Israelis was already living below the poverty line. Those numbers have only increased as small business owners have been displaced or mobilized and tourism has been decimated.

Add to that a growing societal rift, as certain segments of the population shoulder the entire burden of the fighting while others do all in their power to desist, causing more polarization among the citizens and the political camps. But this isn't just a contemporary scene – it's actually a rerun of the prophecy of Amos, one of Israel's earliest prophets, which makes up this week's haftarah. Amos decried a society in which the wealthy systematically exploited the poor and internal divisions threatened to tear a community apart. Thousands of years later, has nothing changed?

In order to reflect on this perennial crisis, let us reflect on the general purpose of the haftarah and why it was established.

Rabbi David Abudraham, a 14th century Spanish Jewish communal leader and expert on liturgy, in his magnum opus, Sefer Abudraham, writes about the institution of the haftarah:

And after [completing] and wrapping the Torah scroll, we read the haftarah; which needs to be connected to the [Torah] portion of the day. And why do we read from the Prophets? Because of the legislation imposed upon the Jewish people forbidding them from reading from the Torah... (Laws of Shabbat, Shacharit).

Rabbi Yoel Sirkes, one of the great 17th century Talmudic scholars in his commentary on the Shulchan Arukh known as the Bach, (an acronym for Bayit Chadash), concurs with the opinion found in the Sefer Abudraham. Rabbi Yom Tov Lipmann Heller, in his 17th century commentary on the Mishnah, the Tosafot Yom Tov, further develops this idea, suggesting that the particular persecution causing the introduction of the haftarah happened during the historical period of the Chanukah miracle.

When the Greek Emperor Antiochus IV Epiphanes prohibited reading from the Torah, the Rabbis instituted that sections from the Prophets be read focusing on a theme similar to the Torah portion:

The reason for the haftarah ...that Antiochus king of Greece legislated that the Torah should not be read in public. What did the Jews do? They chose a section from the Prophets that was thematically similar to the Torah portion of the week. Even though this [anti-semitic] legislation has been annulled, the custom [of reading from the Prophets] was not discarded (Megillah 3:4). For this reason, haftarot are intended to leave us hopeful, with each haftarah complete with verses of redemption. It is also why the brachot of the haftarah focus on redemption. Therefore, haftarot, even those with harsh or mournful messages like that read on Tisha b'Av, always contain a positive, optimistic note.

It is against this backdrop that we approach the haftarah for Parshat Vayeishev. The Rav (Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik), in an address delivered in 1980, noted the unusual character of this haftarah, which has no encouraging end to contrast with its dreary opening. Rabbi Soloveitchik writes, "The final words of each haftarah express the idea that no matter how dismal our present situation, Israel can look ahead to a bright future. [...] This haftarah is the one exception." (Divrei Hashkafa, 30-34).

Amos, one of the earliest prophets, does not mince words in calling out the thievery and corruption that has overtaken the kingdom of Israel, with the wealthy extorting money from the impoverished. "The idea expressed here," Rav Soloveitchik states of this choice of haftarah, "is that the community that acts corruptly is fit for punishment and censure" (ibid.). The opening line of the prophecy, which speaks of "the sale of the righteous for money,"

(Amos 2:6) was read by our Sages as a reference to the sale of Yosef which appears in our parsha (Pirkei d'Rabi Eliezer #37). Rabbi Soloveitchik suggests that even when the Sages read Amos' words in reference to Yosef, they don't mean to deny the literal meaning of the verse. On the contrary, they are coming to highlight a crucial idea: that national corruption is not merely a passing phase in our history. The forms of contempt for one another, and for principles of justice, that repeatedly lead to violence between us have a deeply embedded history, signaling a great need for reflection and change.

As far back as we can trace, to the brothers who would go on to produce the tribes of Israel, there has been internal strife producing baseless hatred, theft and corruption, bringing about our own doom and destruction.

This is not a reason to lose hope; and it is surely not a reason to continue with our same comfortable patterns. We must take control, and take chances, much in the way the Maccabees did by lighting the tiny amount of oil they found, and as our modern Maccabees do today, willingly sacrificing all on the battlefield and the home front to ensure that the light in our skies isn't coming from missiles but from the energy of a purposeful society.

In "those times", it was the right thing to do, no matter how improbable it seemed that the oil would last even one night. And in "our time", it has helped guarantee our immortality as a nation. With God's help we should all make increased efforts to love our neighbors, serve those in need and act with humility. Only that will help us begin to heal our rifts.

from: TorahWeb <torahweb@torahweb.org>

date: Dec 19, 2024, 7:22 PM

Rabbi Eliakim Koenigsberg
The Divine Conductor

The parshiyos of Vayeishev and Mikeitz are always read around the time of Chanukah. What is the connection between these parshiyos and the miracle of Chanukah?

One of the distinguishing features of Yosef throughout his experiences in Mitzrayim is his fervent belief in hashgacha pratit (Divine Providence). The pasuk describes that when Yosef is successful in Potiphar's home, "His master saw that Hashem was with him, and that Hashem brought him success in all his endeavors" (Vayeishev 39:3). How did his master know that Hashem was the source of his accomplishments? Rashi explains that G-d's name was constantly on Yosef's lips - sheim shamayim shagur b'fiv. Therefore, when Yosef was successful, Potiphar naturally attributed that success to the G-d that Yosef always mentioned.

When the head butler and head baker are troubled by their dreams, Yosef tells them, "Don't interpretations of dreams belong to G-d? Tell me (your dreams) if you please" (Vayeishev 40:8). Similarly, when Pharaoh says to Yosef that he heard Yosef can interpret dreams, Yosef answers, "That is beyond me; it is G-d who will respond with Pharaoh's welfare" (Mikeitz 41:16). Rashi and Sforno explain that Yosef was saying that only Hashem can enable him to interpret Pharaoh's dreams.

Later, when Yosef reveals himself to his brothers, he tells them, "And now, do not be distressed, nor be angry with yourselves, for having sold me here, for it was to be a provider that G-d sent me ahead of you" (Vayigash 45:5). After Yaakov's death, when Yosef's brothers beg his forgiveness for having sold him, Yosef responds once again that they have nothing to fear.

"Although you intended me harm, G-d intended it for good" (Vayechi 50:20). Yosef constantly attributed his success to Hashem, and he realized that all his trials and tribulations were divinely ordained.

This ability to see Hashem's hand in all of life's experiences is something Yosef learned from his father Yaakov. On his journey to Lavan's home, Yaakov asks Hashem to protect him and provide for him (Vayetzvei 28:20). And on his way back to his parents' home, Yaakov tells his family, "Let us go up to Beis-El, and I will make there an altar for G-d who answered me in my time of distress, and was with me on the road that I traveled" (Vayishlach 35:3).

When Yaakov is reunited with Yosef after twenty-two years of separation, the pasuk says that Yosef cried on Yaakov's shoulders, but it does not

mention Yaakov crying (Vayigash 46:29). Chazal comment that Yaakov was instead reciting the shema at that time (see Rashi there). The Maharal (Gur Aryeh there) explains that Yaakov was not reciting the shema to fulfill the mitzvah of kriyas shema, but rather as an expression of love and appreciation toward Hashem for reuniting him with his beloved son.

Yaakov understood that Hashem had orchestrated all his experiences in life - the pleasant ones and the challenging ones. They had all emerged from the same Source - Hashem Elokeinu Hashem echad. Even the difficulties which seemed to emanate from Hashem's middas hadin (attribute of judgement - Elokim) really stemmed from his middas harachamim (attribute of mercy) - Hashem echad. This is a lesson that Yaakov imparted to Yosef, and that is why Yosef constantly expressed his belief that Hashem was in control of all that happened to him.

The miracle of Chanukah involving the jug of oil gave the Jewish people a heightened appreciation for Hashem's involvement in their lives. As the commentators point out (see Penei Yehoshua, Shabbos 21b, among others), since ritually impure oil may be used to light the menorah (tumah hutrah b'tzibbur), the miracle of the jug of oil was not even necessary. But Hashem wanted to show his love for Klal Yisrael, to reinforce their understanding that even when His presence is not readily apparent, He still is watching over them and orchestrating events from behind the scenes.

This message was especially significant for the Jews of that time. After all, one of the decrees the Greeks had issued against the Jews was to forbid them from even mentioning G-d's name (Rosh Hashana 18b). After the Chashmonaim defeated the Greeks, they instituted that people should mention G-d's name even in their legal documents. The Greeks wanted to remove G-d from the public square. Making reference to G-d's name reminds man that ultimately he will be held accountable to a Higher Authority for his actions. Talking about G-d and religion forces man to reassess his sense of priorities; it gives him a different focus in life. The Greeks fought to suppress these values.

After the Greeks were defeated, Chazal wished to reaffirm the importance of recognizing Hashem's presence in this world by instituting that Hashem's name should be mentioned even more frequently than before. Although this enactment was later abolished for certain practical reasons, the intent of the decree remains as relevant as ever, because the more people mention Hashem's name, the more they connect with Him, and the more they appreciate how involved He is in their lives. The miracle of the jug of oil served to further highlight this idea, to remind us that Hashem is still watching over the Jewish people, even in our darkest moments, even when His presence seems hidden.

Chazal say (Shabbos 22a) that the best way to perform the mitzvah of ner Chanukah is to light near the doorway of a home, on the left side of the entrance, so that the mezuzah will be on the right side, and the Chanukah lights will be on the left. The Mishna Berura (671:33) explains that this is to ensure that a person is surrounded by mitzvos on all sides. But perhaps there is a deeper connection between the mezuzah and the Chanukah lights. The Rambam (Hilchos Mezuzah 7:13) writes that the purpose of the mitzvah of mezuzah is to remind a person of Hashem every time he passes his doorstep, and that will keep him focused on the path of Torah and mitzvos. It is not surprising then that Chazal instituted that the Chanukah lights and the mezuzah should be placed on either side of the doorway because both of these mitzvos serve the same purpose, namely, to remind us of Hashem's presence in our lives.

May we merit this Chanukah to see Hashem's light, His love and salvation, for us and the entire Jewish people.

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from: Alan Fisher <afisherads@yahoo.com>

date: Dec 19, 2024, 10:01 PM

subject: Potomac Torah Study Center: Devrei Torah for Shabbat Vayeishev 5785 BSD

I strongly recommend downloading the Internet Parsha Sheet, which normally posts shortly after midnight, from parsha.net. This outstanding compilation includes Devrei Torah from several more outstanding Torah scholars. Alan December 20, 2024

Potomac Torah Study Center

Vol. 12 #9, December 20-21, 2024; 20 Kislev 5785; Vayeishev 5785

Hanukkah starts Wednesday evening

May Hashem protect Israel and Jews everywhere during 5785. May Hashem's protection shine on all of Israel, the IDF, and Jews throughout the world – and may our hostages soon return from captivity. May the stunning collapse of the Assad regime in Syria and the cease fire with Lebanon be the beginning of better news for Israel and Jews in coming days.

In our annual Torah cycle, Vayeishev normally comes shortly before the start of Hanukkah, at the darkest time of the year (earliest sunsets). Vayeishev is the first of four parashot whose primary subject is Yosef and his brothers.

Our Avot all struggle with animosity among their sons – Yishmael and Yitzhak; Esav and Yaakov; and Yosef with his half brothers (sons of Leah). These struggles continue throughout much of Jewish history. Yishmael's descendants become the Arabs; Chazal identify Esav's descendants as Rome (Catholics and later other Christian groups, enemies of B'Nai Yisrael during much of the past two thousand years) After the death of King Solomon, the Jewish nation divides largely between Yehuda (Leah's descendants) and Yisrael (largely Ephraim, descendants of Rachel).

Yaakov contributes significantly to the animosity between the sons of Leah and the sons of Rachel. The Torah makes the story explicit: “eleh toldot Yaakov Yosef” – here are the generations of Yaakov: Yosef. . .” (37:2). The Torah states that it is discussing the significance of Yaakov's children, and then it turns to Yosef (omitting the other dozen children). As soon as Rachel has a baby boy, Yaakov decides that it is time to return to Canaan, something that he does not do when the older children are born (see 30:22-25). Yaakov keeps Yosef at home with him while sending Leah's sons and the sons of the handmaidens out to care for his wealth (flocks). He dotes on Yosef and gives him a special coat of many colors while giving the other brothers one less coat. Yosef acts as if Yosef is his Becor (first born son), even though he has ten older sons and an older daughter. (Binyamin is the only younger child.) The Torah rebukes Yaakov for favoring Yosef by prohibiting a man with two wives, one loved and the other hated, to give the double portion of a first born to the son of a beloved second wife when the first wife has an older first born son (Devarim 21:15). The result of Yaakov favoring Yosef over the other brothers is that they hate Yosef and cannot tolerate even speaking with him in peace. Even after Yosef reconciles with the brothers in Egypt, they never really trust Yosef, and the distrust keeps their descendants apart for hundreds of years.

Rabbi Dr. Katriel (Kenneth) Brander observes that the Haftorah for Vayeishev is the only one that lacks a positive, uplifting conclusion. Rabbi Brander extends the animosity among Yaakov's sons to the cry of Amos against the suffering of the poor in the Jewish society of his time. Rabbi Brander urges all of us to increase our efforts to love our neighbors, share with the needy, and act with humility. We should stop baseless hatred and cherish our fellow Jews. Chazal carry on this theme by deciding to start with one candle the first night and increase by another candle each succeeding night – a message to share the light of Hanukkah with our fellows.

The Los Angeles Free Press ran an article from 1997 by Simon Sebag Montefiore on the question of why Ireland has long been a center for anti-Semitic hatred (The Deep Roots of Irish Antisemitism (December 17, 2024). Montefiore provides several examples to demonstrate that vicious Irish anti-Semitic attacks go back at least to the beginning of the 20th Century. The refusal of the Irish women's basketball team to shake hands with Israeli players last February is not an isolated incident. The recent decision of Israel to close its embassy in Ireland has probably been coming for a very long time. Continued Irish anti-Semitism does not fit in with the spirit of Hanukkah.

The outbreak of vicious anti-Semitism in the past fourteen months has shocked me, especially since I did not experience any anti-Semitism while

growing up or during my early years as an adult. My brother-in-law, ten years older than me, a tall blond man who does not look Jewish, related many stories to me about his experiences when his associates in school and business made anti-Semitic remarks not realizing that he was Jewish. Hatred goes back at least as far as Sarah and Hagar – and it is always either up front or hidden. It seems no longer to be safe to wear a kippah in my old (almost entirely Jewish) neighborhoods in Los Angeles, in Canada, or in most of Europe. May the day come – in my lifetime if possible – when hatred goes away and we can live in peace again.

I did not appreciate the difficulty of coping with anti-Semitism, as my beloved Rebbe, Leonard Cahan, z"l, did many times during his life and career, until I could see in the past 14 months how ugly it can be. My parents may have tried to spare me this pain years ago, but I have come to realize that we must teach our children and grandchildren about this evil. May the time come when people can learn to live near each other in peace and with respect for all.

Shabbat Shalom.

Hannah and Alan

Much of the inspiration for my weekly Dvar Torah message comes from the insights of Rabbi David Fohrman and his team of scholars at www.alephbeta.org. Please join me in supporting this wonderful organization, which has increased its scholarly work during and since the pandemic, despite many of its supporters having to cut back on their donations. Please daven for a Refuah Shleimah for Moshe Aaron ben Leah Beilah (badly wounded in battle in Gaza but slowly recovering), Ariah Ben Sarah, Hershel Tzvi ben Chana, Reuven ben Basha Chaya Zlata Lana, Yoram Ben Shoshana, Leib Dovid ben Eitel, Avraham ben Gavriela, Mordechai ben Chaya, David Moshe ben Raizel; Zvi ben Sara Chaya, Reuven ben Masha, Meir ben Sara, Oscar ben Simcha; Miriam Bat Leah, Raizel bat Rut; Rena bat Ilsa, Riva Golda bat Leah, Sarah Feige bat Chaya, Sharon bat Sarah, Kayla bat Ester, and Malka bat Simcha, and all our fellow Jews in danger in and near Israel. Please contact me for any additions or subtractions. Thank you.

Shabbat Shalom Hannah & Alan

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from: **Michal Horowitz** <contact@michalhorowitz.com>

date: Dec 19, 2024, 11:01 AM

subject: **Vayeishev 5785: Yosef's Dreams & Longing for Shabbos**

In Parshas Vayeishev, we begin the end of Sefer Bereishis. The last four parshios – Vayeishev, Miketz, Vayigash and Vayechi – relay to us, in great and fascinating details, the life and times of Yosef ha'Tzaddik and his brothers, and Yaakov Avinu's final years. The details are many; the passions are high; the emotions are great; the events are surprising, powerful, evocative, and compelling. There is so much to be learned from Yosef, his brothers, and the family of Yaakov.

In Vayeishev, we learn of:

*Yaakov's special love for Yosef, the kesones pasim he gifts Yosef, Yosef's dreams of field/sheaves and heavens/sun, moon and stars, the brothers hatred and jealousy, the abduction, and ultimately, the sale, of Yosef (Bereishis 37);

*Yehuda and Tamar, the birth of their twins, Peretz and Zerach, and the founding of the dynasty of malchus beis Dovid through the efforts of heroic Tamar, and the humble courage of Yehuda who fathers her twins (Ch.38);

*Yosef in the house of Potiphar, the chief executioner in Egypt, the attempted seduction of Yosef by Eishes Potiphar, Yosef's tremendous spiritual strength to resist her advances, the first blood libel in history when she frames Yosef and accuses him of trying to seduce her, and Potiphar's throwing Yosef into jail as punishment(Ch.39);

*Yosef in jail, where he meets the butler and baker, whose dreams he interprets. The baker – who is jailed for serving Pharaoh bread with a pebble in it – dreams of baskets atop his head filled with bread, and the birds eating from the bread. Yosef correctly predicts that he will be killed. The butler – jailed for serving Pharaoh a glass of wine with a fly in it – dreams of squeezing grapes into Pharaoh's cup and serving Pharaoh wine. Yosef correctly predicts that he will be restored to his post as royal butler for Pharaoh. Yosef asks the butler to remember, and not forget him, when he is released from jail. The parsha ends by telling us that the butler forgot Yosef and did not remember him (Ch.40).

Towards the beginning of the parsha, when Yosef dreams of rulership – with the brothers sheaves bowing down to his sheaf in the field, and the sun, moon and eleven stars of the heavens bowing down to him – he relays the

first dream to his brothers, and the second dream, to his brothers and his father.

The Torah tells us that after he relayed the second dream, the reaction of the family is: *שָׁמַר אֶת-הַדְּבָר; וְאָבְיוּ, וְנִקְנְאוּ-בּוֹ אֶתְיוּ; וְנִקְנְאוּ-בּוֹ אֶתְיוּ; וְנִקְנְאוּ-בּוֹ אֶתְיוּ* – and his brothers were jealous of him and his father guarded the matter (37:11).

What does it mean that his father was *שָׁמַר אֶת-הַדְּבָר*, ‘guarded’ the matter?

Rashi (ibid.) explains that it means that Yaakov was *מִמְתִּין וּמְצַפֶּה מְתִי יָבֵא*, waiting and anticipating for the time when the dream would come true.

Hence, to be *שָׁמַר* means to wait and anticipate.

Interestingly, in a totally unrelated passage in Torah, we are told about the importance of Shabbos to our nation. The pasuk tells us: *וְשָׁמְרוּ בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל, אֶת-הַשַּׁבָּת, לְעֵשׂוֹת אֶת-הַשַּׁבָּת לְדֹרֹתָם, כְּרִית עוֹלָם* – and the Children of Israel guarded the Shabbos, to do the Shabbos for generations, an eternal covenant (Shemos 31:16).

In his lengthy and beautiful commentary to this pasuk, the Ohr Ha’Chaim ha’kadosh presents ten different interpretations of what to be ‘shomer Shabbos’ means. Amongst his many explanations, the Ohr Ha’Chaim teaches that to be a Jew who is shomer Shabbos is to be a Jew who waits and anticipates – all week long – for Shabbos to come. The Ohr Ha’Chaim learns this from our pasuk, regarding Yaakov who was *שָׁמַר אֶת-הַדְּבָר*. He teaches that Shabbos should not be viewed as a *tircha* (a burden) because we are prevented from doing work. Rather, *צָרִיכִין לְשׂוּמָה בּוֹ בְּשִׁלְמוֹת הַרְצוֹן וְהַפֶּן* – one is required to rejoice in Shabbos with a complete desire and will, and to always wait and long for Shabbos, for the day that she will arrive once again.

Just as Yaakov waited and longed for the fulfillment of Yosef’s dreams, so too, we must wait and long all week for Shabbos. As the saying goes, “It’s not that the Jews keep Shabbos, but it is Shabbos that keeps the Jews.” But we learn from here that it is not only on Shabbos that we must enjoy, benefit, and delight in her presence. We must have a “Shabbos mind” all week long, and know that no matter where we are, or what business we are involved in, soon, in a few days, Shabbos will be here to spiritually redeem us once again!

Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik zt”l, the Rav, teaches, “Allow me, please, to make a ‘private confession’ concerning a matter that has caused me much loss of sleep. I am not so very old, yet I remember a time when ninety percent of world Jewry were observant and the secularists were a small minority at the fringes of the camp. I still remember – it was not so long ago – when Jews were still close to G-d and lived in an atmosphere pervaded with holiness. But, today, what do we see? The profane and the secular are in control wherever we turn. Even in those neighborhoods made up predominantly of religious Jews one can no longer talk of the ‘sanctity of the Sabbath day.’ True, there are Jews in America who observe the Sabbath... But, is it not for the Sabbath that my heart aches, it is for the forgotten ‘eve of the Sabbath.’ There are Sabbath-observing Jews in America, but there are not ‘eve-of-the-Sabbath’ Jews who go out to greet the Sabbath with beating hearts and pulsating souls. There are many who observe the precepts with their hands, with their feet and/or with their mouths – but there are few, indeed, who truly know the meaning of service of the heart!” (Soloveitchik on Repentance, p.88).

May we lovingly await and anticipate our weekly Shabbos, which brings us tremendous spiritual gains each and every week, so that even during our mundane weekdays, our minds and hearts are always longing for Shabbos. And in the merit of our shemiras Shabbos, may we very soon – in our day and our time – merit the ultimate redemption, *יָוֵם שְׂכָלוֹ שֶׁבֶת וּמְנוּחָה לְהֵי עוֹלָמִים*, בְּבִרְכַת בְּשׂוּרוֹת טוֹבוֹת וְשֶׁבֶת שְׁלוֹם,
Michal Horowitz

from: **Rabbi Chanan Morrison** <chanan@ravkooktorah.org>

date: Dec 19, 2024, 1:53 AM

Rav Kook on Vayeishev: The Special Teshuvah of Reuben
“Reuben returned to the pit, but Joseph was no longer in the pit. He tore his clothes [in grief].” (Gen. 37:29)

Where was Reuben coming from? Why wasn’t he together with the other brothers?

According to the Midrash, Reuben was “occupied with sackcloth and fasting,” as he repented for changing his father’s sleeping arrangements.

(The word *vayashov* (“he returned”) can also mean “he repented.”)

The Midrash continues: “The Holy One said: No one has ever sinned before Me and repented, but you [Reuben] are the first to repent. As you live, one of your descendants will stand up and be the first to urge repentance. And who was this descendant? Hosea, who called out, “Return, Israel, to the Eternal your God” (Hosea 14:2).”

This Midrash is quite difficult. There were a number of individuals who repented before Reuben’s time, such as Adam and Cain. Also, why does the Midrash state that Hosea was the first to exhort the people to repent? We find that the mitzvah of teshuvah is already mentioned in the Torah (Deut. 30).

It must be that Hosea informed the people regarding some aspect of teshuvah that had not been taught before.

Internal and External Consequences

The impact of sin is in two areas. Sin darkens the soul’s inner holiness. But it also has a negative impact on the world at large. “When the people of Israel do not fulfill God’s Will, it is as if they are weakening the great strength of Heaven” (Eichah Rabbah 1:33).

With teshuvah we repair the soul and restore its original purity. But the damage caused in the world at large — this is only repaired through God’s kindness. “I, yes, I am the One Who erases your transgressions for My sake” (Isaiah 43:25). The corrective power of teshuvah is a joint effort — partly by us, partly by God.

Nonetheless, it is possible for an individual to also repair the external damage. When one’s goal is to elevate all of society, and one’s teshuvah is focused on preventing one’s own mistakes from harming and misleading others — such an individual increases light and holiness in all of creation.

Reuben’s Teshuvah

Reuben attended to both of these aspects in his teshuvah. First he occupied himself in fasting and sackcloth, repairing the damage to his own soul. But his teshuvah did not end there. He then “returned to the pit.” An open pit in the public domain — *bor b’reshut harabim* — is a metaphor for a situation likely to lead to public trouble and suffering.

After repairing his soul, Reuben returned and looked at the pit. He examined the damage that he had caused outside himself, in the public domain. He then worked to rectify his actions so that they would not be a stumbling block for others.¹

That is why the Midrash states that Reuben was the first to “sin before Me and repent.” He was the first to repair not only his soul, but also that which is “before Me,” i.e., everything that God created. In the words of the Midrash, what made Reuben’s teshuvah unique was that he “started with teshuvah.” Reuben aspired to correct the external damage ordinarily repaired by God’s kindness.

Israel Alone

Now we may understand the special level of teshuvah mentioned by the prophet Hosea. In the Torah it says, “You will return to God... and the Eternal your God will accept your repentance” (Deut. 30:2-3). This is the common level of teshuvah. We work to repair the damage in our soul, while God corrects the damage we caused in the world.

Hosea, however, spoke of a higher form of teshuvah. He described a teshuvah like that of Reuben — an attempt to repair all the repercussions of one’s errors. Therefore he called out, “Return, Israel, to the Eternal your God.” Hosea encouraged a complete teshuvah, performed by Israel alone. (Adapted from Midbar Shur, pp. 191-194)

¹ On a simple level, we may explain that Reuben sinned by upsetting the order in his family when he intruded on his father’s private life. He sought to correct this mistake by restoring harmony to the family, through his efforts to protect his brother Joseph.

YUTORAH IN PRINT • Vayeishev 5785

If We Only Knew

Rabbi Assaf Bednarsh

(Transcribed and adapted by a talmid, with the help of internet-based AI tools, from the YUTorah shiur presented at Gruss Kollel in Yerushalayim on November 24, 2021)

In this week's Parsha, we have the story of Mechiras Yosef. And we know that Reuven tried to save Yosef, telling the rest of the brothers to throw him into a pit instead of killing him—va-yishma Reuven, va-yatzilehu mi-yadam, va-yomer, lo nakenu nafesh. There's an interesting midrash on this. Amar Rabbi Yitzchak, ba ha-kasuv lomar, ke-she-adam oseh mitzvah, ya'asena be-lev same'ach. Torah is teaching you that you should do mitzvos wholeheartedly—with simcha. Why? Had Reuven known that Hashem would write in the Torah, Va-yishma Reuven va-yatzilehu mi-yadam, he wouldn't have subtly tried to influence them. He would have put him on his shoulders and danced back to Yaakov. And had Boaz known that Hashem would write about him in Megillat Rus, that he gave the roasted grains to Rus—agalos petumos haya ma'achila—he would have given her filet mignon. And this shows how excited we should be to do mitzvos. Had Reuven and Boaz known their mitzvos would be written in the history books, they would have done them even better. Now, at first glance, this seems like a very strange midrash—should you be excited about mitzvos because you could get praise and fame and fortune? No! It's not proper to do mitzvos she-lo li-shmah, just to go down in the history books and get a lot of praise. We do mitzvos because it's ratzon Hashem and the right thing to do. So, what's the meaning of this enigmatic midrash?

Rav Yosef Yehuda Leib Bloch, the Rosh Yeshiva of Te l zin the early 20th century, says in his Sefer Shiurei Da'as: Of course, the midrash doesn't mean that. That's not why we do mitzvos. But why were their actions written down? Because they changed history. Had Reuven known that saving his brother was not only an expression of mercy and brotherly love, but he was changing the course of his-tory—saving Klal Yisrael—he would have done it with even more hislahavus. Not because he would earn fame or praise, but because he would make a difference for Am Yisrael for thousands of years. Had Boaz known, when he gave this poor lady some extra food, that this little mitzvah would create Davidha-Melech and Moshiach, he would have done so much more. The midrash is not suggesting that these great tzadikim would have acted shelo lishmah. Rather, had they realized that not only were they doing the right thing but also changing history, saving Klal Yisrael in the process, and bringing Geulah, they would have done it with even more excitement. We try to live lishmah because we want to do the right thing. Had Yosef known, when he saw his colleagues in jail frowning one morning and decid-ed to be nice and ask them what was bothering them, that this one small kindness would make him viceroy of Egypt and rescue the world from famine, he would have done that mitzvah with even more hislahavus. If you know that every small mitzvah, every seemingly unimportant thing, could change your entire life, history, all of Klal Yisrael, and bring the whole world to Geulah, how much more would we do it with hislahavus?! And that's the mussar here, that every-thing you do is much more than meets the eye.

The effect of every mitzvah you do could be unfathom-able—you have no idea what you might be accomplishing (and chas ve-shalom, it works in the other direction as well). Think of Chanukah. One pach katan. What a difference it made! Think of that guy in the Beis Ha-Mikdash—before the whole story began—who was in charge of storing the oil. What did he do? Like most people, he could have said, I have a hundred jars of oil here; no need to be so makpid. But instead, he said, I have one jar of oil that came in today; let me make sure it's sealed and put away properly—let me do this mitzvah of shmiras ha-Kodshim properly. Little did he know that this one jar of oil, which seemed so trivial and unimportant, led to the entire Chag of Chanukah. Who knows what effect one action can have?

The midrash continues by talking about the current era, after it is too late to be included in Ta n a c h : Rabbi Kohan ve-Rebbi Yehoshua ve-Rebbi Shimon ve-Rebbi Levi said that le-she-ovar haya adam oseh mitzvah ve-Navi kosvah. In the olden days, the Navi would write your mitzvah in Tanach. And the midrash asks, Ve-achshav, ke-she-adam oseh mitz-vah, mi kosev? But what about nowadays? Who writes it down? And it answers,

Eliyahu u-Melech ha-Moshiach and Hashem signs off on it. But why davka Eliyahu and Moshiach? It's to emphasize the chashivus of our every ac-tion. Who knows if that one action you do, that one correct decision, that one mitzvah you do with extra hislahavus, could bring Eliyahu and Melechha-Moshiach—in ways that we could not have predicted, like our ancestors could not have predicted that va-yitzbat la kali leads to Dovidha-Melech, and va-yatzilehumi-yadam leads to the salvation of Klal Yisrael?!

There's one thing we learn from nearly every story in Tanach. Whether it is chesed like the one done by Reuven and Boaz or any other mitzvah—if you make an extra effort to do every little thing in the best way, if you take advantage of every opportunity that Hashem gives you to do a mitz-vah, you never know what the effect of that action could be. It could lead all the way to the coming of Eliyahu and Melechha-Moshiach.

THE TWO ROLES OF YOSEF

From **the Sefer Novominsk (Rebbe Rav Yaakov Perlow zt"l) on Chumash** by Yechezkel Ostreicher

ViYisrael Ahav es Yosef Mikol Banav Ki ben Zkunim hu lo.

Now Yisrael loved Yosef more than all his sons since he was a child of his old age (Bereishis 37:3).

Targum Onkelos as well as the Midrash explain that Yaakov loved Yosef because the two learned together.

He was the son who was taught all the Torah that Yaakov had learned in the beismidrash of Shem and Eiver.

Interestingly, though, Yosef's status as one of the founding figures of Klal Yisrael is not his role as the wise son of Yaakov who absorbed all that his father taught, but as Yosef HaTzaddik, for overcoming the nisayon with Potiphar's wife.

Perhaps this is because the advantage of being the wise son was not something he had worked on himself; he was merely the recipient of what his father taught him. But when he was all alone, without the support or assistance of his father, and he himself worked to achieve greatness in serving Hashem, he earned his eternal and defining title — tzaddik. This title was given to Yosef when he passed the nisayon placed before him in Mitzrayim, and it is how he is known for all eternity.

Yosef shows us that we too can overcome the challenges we face and live lives of kedushah. By serving as our light in the galus, Yosef rose above the other Shevatim, becoming a quasi-Av, as the pasuk (Tehillim 77:16) says of Bnei Yisrael, bnei Yaakov v'Yosef selah, the sons of Yaakov and Yosef, selah. The Gemara (Sanhedrin 19b) derives from here that Bnei Yisrael are considered the children of Yosef; Yosef serves as a father for us all, guiding us through galus. These two distinct roles of Yosef are highlighted in the difference between Nusach Sefard and Nusach Ashkenaz regarding the order of the Ushpizin. In Nusach Ashkenaz, Yosef comes after Yaakov — in chronological order; in Nusach Sefard he comes between Aharon HaKohen and Dovid HaMelech — in

the order of the Sefiros (spheres of holiness) that each of the Ushpizin exemplifies. Yosef's, Yesod [lit., foundation], representing kedushah, is the sixth, followed by Malchus, that of Dovid HaMelech. Perhaps there is something deeper here as well. Yosef had two qualities: He learned Torah from Yaakov, and he served as a bridge between Yaakov and the rest of the Shevatim. This avodah lasted only as long as Yosef was in his father's home. When he was taken down to Mitzrayim and faced the impurity of that land all alone, he became a tzaddik, the one who illuminates the way for us in galus. Thus, while Nusach Ashkenaz places Yosef as the son of Yaakov, the one who inherited Yaakov's Torah and passed it on to his brothers, Nusach Sefard focuses on the aspect of his being a tzaddik, the one who assists us in our preparation for the arrival of Mashiach ben Dovid.

The coffin holding Yosef's remains was carried through the Midbar as Bnei Yisrael wandered from place to place. Yosef was with them, and the example of his life inspired them to overcome the struggles of galus until they entered Eretz Yisrael. That is why in Nusach Sefard Yosef is placed after Moshe and Aharon: Even with the benefit of the greatness of Moshe and Aharon, Bnei

Yisrael still needed support to guide them into the land of geulah, the land where Dovid's malchus would eventually shine forth.

Shortly before Yaakov passed away, he called for Yosef, and an interesting encounter ensued.

Then Yaakov saw Yosef's sons and he said, "Who are these?" And Yosef said to his father, "They are my sons whom Hashem has given me here." He said, "Bring them to me, if you please, and I will bless them" (Bereishis 48:20).

It seems that something that Yosef said stimulated Yaakov to bless Menashe and Efraim with a special berachah. What was it? One word: נ lit., in this] — in this decadent land, in this seemingly hopeless situation. Yosef was telling his father that these children of his were born in the land of Egypt, far from any connection to ruchniyus, and yet they retained their kedushah. For this they earned a special berachah. The Gemara (Avodah Zarah 17b) says that when someone defeats his yetzer hara he receives extra reward; the berachah of Menashe and Efraim was Yosef's reward for maintaining his kedushah in a land so far removed from anything holy.

The merit and memory of Yosef HaTzaddik empowers us to forge through and gives us the strength to overcome wave after wave of tumah that life in galus sends our way.

Artscroll Shabbos Table

from: **Steinsaltz Center** <steinsaltz@steinsaltz-center.org>

date: Dec 19, 2024, 9:00 PM

subject: 1 Minute on the Parasha with **Rav Adin Steinsaltz z"l**

Parashat Vayeshev

The Struggling Jew

Rashi introduces this week's parasha with the words of the Midrash: Jacob wished to live in tranquility, but then the trouble of Joseph sprang upon him. When the tzaddikim wish to live in peace, The Holy One, Blessed Be He, says, "Is it not enough for the tzaddikim that so much is prepared for them in the next world, that they seek to live in peace in this world?" (Genesis Rabba 84:3)

Despite Jacob's desires for a peaceful existence after enduring many challenges, his life is marked by continual struggles and crises. The paradox highlighted is that while tzaddikim strive for peace of mind, their journeys are often filled with sorrow and grief, suggesting that suffering is not merely a trial but an essential aspect of their spiritual growth. This notion is reinforced by various sources from Jewish tradition that assert the absence of rest for the righteous, indicating that tranquility is not part of their divine reward.

In general, questions are central to Jewish faith. The pursuit of understanding and the growth of faith are deeply intertwined with the arduous, continuous questioning. There is no rest for the weary. However, rather than evading doubts and uncertainties, tzaddikim engage with them, leading to a richer spiritual life.

This ongoing quest for knowledge and clarity challenges the preconceived notion that a life of faith should be devoid of struggles. Instead, it embraces the idea that questioning is vital for personal and spiritual development.

Anguish and inner struggle are par for the course for the faithful.

It has been said that the verse, "Seven times a tzaddik falls and gets up" (Prov. 24:16), is not a description of the tzaddik's failures but of his natural progression. Struggles and questions are part of this journey.

Ultimately, a life of faith and adherence to Torah and mitzvot does not guarantee tranquility but rather offers a structured framework within which individuals can navigate their challenges. Embracing the complexities of their journeys, tzaddikim find not a quiet resolution but an opportunity for deeper engagement with significant questions. The progression they experience is not one of achieving peace but of evolving through their inquiries, leading to higher spiritual truths, leading to deeper questioning.

This perspective redefines tranquility not as an end goal but as a byproduct of meaningful struggle and growth in the pursuit of righteousness.

Questions to Contemplate

How can one reconcile the idea of tranquility and peace in our lives with the endless struggle in pursuit of righteousness?

Morals and Meanings in Vayeshev

From: **Rav Immanuel Bernstein** <ravbernstein@journeysintorah.com>

Thu, Dec 19, 7:00 AM (17 hours ago)

You are Not What you Wheat – Lessons from Yosef's Dreams

The beginning of our parsha describes the two dreams that Yosef dreamt, and which he told to his brothers. It is interesting to note that the reaction of the brothers to each dream, while negative, was not exactly the same:

After Yosef told them the first dream about the sheaves of wheat bowing down to him, the verse states: "And they continued to hate him on account of his dreams." [1] After telling them the second dream with the sun, moon and stars bowing down to him, the verse says: "And his brothers were jealous of him." [2]

Now, hatred and jealousy are both negative reactions, but they are not the same. Why did the first dream provoke feelings of hatred and the second dream jealousy?

In order to answer this question, we must first consider another one. How exactly are the brothers represented in these two dreams?

Anyone who knows the story will tell us that in the first dream they are represented by sheaves of wheat, and in the second dream, by stars.

Actually, that is not entirely correct. It is true that in the second dream Yosef describes his family members as the sun, moon and stars. But in the first dream he says, "Behold we were gathering sheaves of wheat in the field." Thus, it emerges that in the first dream, the brothers were not represented by sheaves of wheat. They were represented by themselves!

What is the meaning of this?

The Beis Halevi [3] explains. Although the two dreams were very similar to each other in substance, i.e., that Yosef would achieve eminence over his brothers; nonetheless, they refer to two different planes. The first dream deals with wheat, and represents their reliance on him for physical sustenance. The second dream talks about stars, i.e., heavenly entities, and represents Yosef's ascendancy over them in spiritual matters.

It is for this reason that the brothers reacted to the first dream not with jealousy, but with hatred. The brothers would never be jealous of someone who had more wheat than them, for that is not something to be jealous over. If anything, it would elicit feelings of dislike within them for someone even bragging about superiority in material matters. The second dream, which related to spiritual attainments, brought out feelings of jealousy from within the brothers, for spiritual matters are worth being jealous about.

This is what lies behind the question as to whether the brothers themselves feature as part of the dream. The second dream had stars in it, which represents the brothers' spiritual attainments. As such, the brothers did not need to feature in the dream separately as themselves, for their spiritual attainments are them! The first dream, by contrast, relating to material acquisitions, had to have the brothers featuring as themselves. There is no way they could be represented by their sheaves, because a person is not a sheaf of wheat!

These, then, are the fundamental lessons to be derived from the dreams:

First, a person should not be jealous over someone else's material possessions, but rather their spiritual attainments. Second, one needs to know what defines him as a person, and how he should define himself. Spiritual attainments are what we are. Physical possessions are what we have.

This idea of what constitutes a person's identity is succinctly phrased in the verse at the end of Koheles: [4] "The sum of the matter, when all has been considered, fear God and keep His commandments, for that is all of man." Koheles is telling us that man's essence is the sum total of his fear of God and performance of mitzvos. All other assets are things that he has, but not what he is.

[1] Bereishis 37:8. [2] Ibid., verse 11. [3] Vayeshev, ibid. [4] 12:13.

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