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from: Rabbi Yissocher Frand <[ryfrand@torah.org](mailto:ryfrand@torah.org)>  
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Conspicuous / Finding Makes it a Search

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: #1012 – Preparing for Shabbos – Thursday or Friday? And other Issues. Good Shabbos!

#### The Litmus Test of Really Having Intentions for the Sake of Heaven

The pasuk says, "And he (Pharaoh) gave him (Yosef) Asnas daughter of Potiphara, the Priest of On" [Bereshis 41:45]. This is an interesting shidduch. Chazal say that this Asnas was really the daughter of the wife of Potiphar, who tried to seduce the righteous Yosef in last week's parsha. They say that Potiphar's wife's actions were actually "for the sake of Heaven" (l'shem Shamayim niskavnah). Her attempt to seduce Yosef was more than just an act of lust. She saw, through her astrologers, that she was somehow destined to produce a descendant through Yosef. She assumed it meant that she would be the mother of that descendant, and therefore tried to bring that scenario to fruition. She did not realize that the descendants she was to have with Yosef were not through her, but rather through her daughter. That was her mistake, but her intention was "for the sake of Heaven."

Chazal also use this expression of "intending for the sake of Heaven" by Tamar, in last week's parsha. The Torah says that Tamar disguised herself, and was thus able to have children from Yehudah, giving birth to Peretz and Zerach. Chazal say that her intentions were l'shem Shamayim. She knew of the concept of Yibum, requiring someone from Yehudah's family to bear a child with her. Yehudah was apparently not willing to let his third son serve in this role, so she took the initiative on her own, and disguised herself in such a way that Yehudah fathered her children without even realizing what he was doing.

Thus, we see two Biblical examples of apparently unseemly acts of seduction which Chazal attribute to "motives for the sake of Heaven." Yet these two

incidents produced very different results. Potiphar's wife, after she was not successful in seducing Yosef, slandered him and caused him to spend years in jail. Tamar, on the other hand, did not resort to such tactics.

There is an important lesson here. The biggest litmus test as to whether a person is really acting "l'shem Shamayim" is at what point the person will stop if they see their plans are not going well. Many times in life, we run into obstacles. Sometimes we say, "Listen, this is l'shem shamayim. This must happen. I am doing G-d's work." As a result, we justify doing whatever needs to be done in order to accomplish our goals. We are going to do it — come what may.

Chazal here are trying to point out that if someone is doing something l'shem Shamayim, there comes a point at which he needs to say to himself, "if the Ribono Shel Olam wants this to happen, He is going to get it done, but I am only allowed to do what is permissible by law." Tamar reached an obstacle. She was successful in engaging with Yehudah and becoming pregnant; but there came a point in time where they thought she was unfaithful, and they were taking her out to be burned. At that point, she had to make a decision: Should I let myself be killed, and let my having a descendant with Yehudah go down the drain, or should I humiliate Yehudah publicly, thereby sparing myself, and salvaging the plan's coming to fruition?

She acted based on halachic principle: It is preferable to allow oneself to be thrown into a fire rather than to cause public embarrassment to one's fellow man [Sotah 10b]. What's going to be with G-d's Plan? What is going to be with my obligation to take part in the mitzvah of Yibum [Levirate marriage]?

The answer is that G-d will take care of these matters if He wants it to happen; if not through my plan, then in some other way. I am not allowed to go beyond a certain point in acting l'shem Shamayim.

Concerning how "l'shem Shamayim" someone is, the proof is in the pudding. Someone who is truly l'shem Shamayim is prepared to say, when necessary, that Shamayim [Heaven] will take care of it without my intervention, if that is truly what Heaven wants.

When Potiphar's wife saw that she was not successful — that this "engagement" with Yosef was not going to take place — if she was 100% acting for the Sake of Heaven — she should have said, "It is not happening?"

Okay, so it will not happen in the way I expected; it will have to happen some other way." The fact that she did not stop at that point, but rather began her libelous slander campaign against Yosef, shows us — retroactively — that her actions were not fully for the Sake of Heaven. She may have convinced herself that she was acting for altruistic motives, but the end of the story sheds light on the beginning (hochiach sofo al techilaso).

It is a well-known story that the Yeshiva of Volozhin eventually shut down because the Roshei Yeshiva made a decision that they were not going to let the Russian government interfere with the curriculum of the Yeshiva. But what is going to be with the Torah? The Roshei Yeshiva made their decision based on their firm conviction of what was right. The Almighty has kept Torah alive all these millennia; He will somehow or other continue to keep Torah alive. That does not give us permission to go ahead and abrogate what we hold the halacha to be.

They shut down the Yeshiva. Why? Because if you are truly in it l'shem Shamayim, you say to yourself, "the Ribono shel Olam will make it happen somehow, somewhere, some way." When someone starts acting for himself, for his own personal agenda, for his honor rather than His honor, he is taking the law into his own hands, and can no longer claim that his actions are "for the Sake of Heaven."

#### Why Show Yourself as Being Satiated?

The pasuk says, "Yaakov saw that there was grain in Egypt; so Yaakov said to his sons, 'Why make yourselves conspicuous?'" [Bereshis 42:1]. Rashi here makes an interesting comment: "Why show yourselves before the descendants of Yishmael and Eisav as being satiated (for at that time Yaakov's family still had grain)."

This is an amazing Rashi. Although a famine was raging in the land, for some reason Yaakov and his family still had food. However, Yaakov was planning for the future. He heard that food was readily available in Egypt and he advised his sons to go down to Egypt, stand in line with the others, and procure food for the family for the time in the future when their current supply would run out. Rashi explains that the reason he did this was because he did not want to give the appearance that they were wealthier than the other nations.

Giving such an impression accomplishes nothing except to incur the wrath and the jealousy of the nations of the world. It was worth it to Yaakov to send virtually his entire family down to Egypt — a journey fraught with danger — to wait in “food lines” with people from all over the middle east, for the sole purpose of not allowing the Bnei Eisav and Bnei Yishmael to say “Hey, look at those Jews. They are sitting pretty on fleshpots of meat while we go hungry.”

The Gemara, in fact, teaches [Ta’anis 10b], “If a certain city declares a fast day (e.g., because of a local traumatic situation) and a person visits that city, and the city that he comes from has not declared the day to be a fast day — he nevertheless must fast along with the people of the city he is visiting. The Gemara even says that if he eats by mistake (thereby accidentally “breaking his fast”) he should still not publicly show himself enjoying his food (when he continues to eat the rest of the day — which under those circumstances is permitted, strictly speaking). The Gemara cites as proof for this Halacha the teaching Rashi quotes here in Miketz — that Yaakov commanded his sons not to appear satiated in the eyes of Bnei Yishmael and Bnei Eisav when the latter were suffering from the prevailing food shortages.

When you possess something that your neighbor does not possess, do not flaunt it. Do not provoke his jealousy. This applies even with respect to showing off in front of one’s fellow Jew — how much more so should it not be done in front of the nations of the world!

The Kli Yakar expands on this idea. He says it twice — here, in the same pasuk that Rashi comments upon — and again in Parshas Devorim. Do not show off your wealth in front of the Bnei Eisav. He writes that those with intelligence will understand that this (advice of Yaakov to his sons) is wise instruction to all future generations as well, regarding how the Jews in Exile should conduct themselves vis-à-vis the gentile nations.

I recently received a sefer containing Rav Pam’s teachings on the weekly parsha. On Parshas Miketz, Rav Pam cites an interesting idea. We light Chanukah candles and put them in the front window — *pirumei nisa* [publicizing the miracle] — which is an integral part of the mitzvah. Obviously, it is necessary to part the curtains or the shades (otherwise, the menorah would be a fire hazard). However, he advises, as soon as the candles go out — pull down the shades and pull closed the curtains! There is no mitzvah for the goyim to see that the Jew has a chandelier in his living room that can light up Yankee stadium! There is no mitzvah for them to see all that silver or the marble floors or the granite counter tops. There is no mitzvah to flaunt our wealth before the eyes of the nations of the world. That is what this teaching of Chazal is instructing us.

Some *kehillos* have learned this lesson; but in most of our communities, we unfortunately have not yet learned it. Non-Jews look at us all the time, and know very well what we have and how we live. Yaakov instructs the Children of Israel — for all future generations as well — “Do not act conspicuously!”

#### Cracow Watchmakers can Teach Us More than Just the Correct Time

At the end of the parsha, the Torah says that Yosef had the royal goblet implanted in Binyomin’s saddlebag. When the guards came chasing after the brothers, lo and behold, they found the “stolen goods” in the saddlebag of Binyomin. The pasuk says, “They began searching with the oldest and completed the search with the youngest” [Bereshis 42:12]. Even though Yosef knew the exact location of his goblet, since he had ordered it implanted there, nevertheless, he instructed his officers to conduct the search

in a way that they would search everyone’s bag, and they would not discover the “robber” until the end of the process. It was all part of his fictional charade.

The Chebiner Rav ,zt”l, relates that he once heard the following insight from a watchmaker in Cracow:

The halacha is that by *bedikas chametz* there is a *minhag* to put out ten pieces of bread, search the house, and in the process collect the ten pieces. Why do we do that? We are afraid that if we did not hide the pieces of chametz in advance, we might not find anything, and we would thereby have made a blessing in vain. The Ramoh writes in *Shulchan Aruch* that technically this is not necessary. As long as the person searched, even if he did not find any chametz, the blessing is not in vain. Be that as it may, the prevalent custom in Jewish homes is to put out ten pieces of bread, collect them during the search, and burn these ten pieces the next morning.

For many people, unfortunately, this has become somewhat of a charade. Meaning — someone’s wife or children dutifully put out the pieces of bread, and it becomes a “treasure hunt” game. The whole thing takes fifteen or twenty minutes, *v’nomar Amen!* Some people object — we are not really searching for chametz mistakenly left in our domain over the past twelve months, as is the intent of this rabbinic ritual. We seem to be merely playing a game to find the ten pieces our wives or children have hidden throughout the house just moments earlier. What kind of “searching” is that? It is a joke! Every year she puts them in the same place. We have been doing this for thirty years. Every year, I find the wrapped up piece of cracker in the same drawer! What kind of search is this?

The watchmaker in Cracow told the Chebiner Rav the following insight: At the beginning of Tractate Pesachim, the Mishna says, “On the light of (i.e., the night falling at the start of) the fourteenth (of Nissan) we search for chametz by candlelight.” The Talmud [Pesachim 7b] derives the source of this practice (to search by candlelight) by a series of *Gezeirah Shavahs* (common words used in various contexts): *Metziah* [find] from *metziah*, then *metziah* from *chipus* [search], then one *chipus* from another *chipus*, then *chipus* from *neiros* [candles] and finally *neiros* from *ner* [candle]. The first in this string of complicated word associations is the pasuk, “Chametz shall not be found (*lo yimatze*) in your homes.” The Gemara then links that pasuk with our pasuk in Parshas Miketz: “And he searched (*va’ye’chapes*) beginning with the eldest and finishing with the youngest and he found it (*va’yi’matze*).” The Gemara then continues to elaborate on the various other *pesukim* involved in this extended *Gezeirah Shavah*.

The Chebiner Rav explains that we learn the definition of searching from the search of the brother’s sacks conducted by Yosef’s officers, beginning with Reuven and ending with Binyomin. We see that regarding such a search, the Torah uses the words “*va’yimatze*” — and he found! Wait! Yosef knew where the goblet was the whole time? This was just a charade! It was one big act! We clearly see that when a search leads to a find, we call it a search, even if it was all a charade, and the searcher knew all along exactly where he was going to find the item for which he was “searching.”

The Chebiner Rav used to brag that even a simple watchmaker in Cracow had great insight into the great nuances that can be learned from every pasuk in Chumash.

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**Weekly Parsha MIKETZ**  
**Rabbi Wein's Weekly Blog**

The entire narrative of the story of Joseph and his brothers, as he sent off the Jewish people to Egyptian society, slavery and ultimate redemption, is meant to illustrate to us the guiding hand of Providence in human affairs.

There is no question that all of the participants in this dramatic narrative acted according to their own wishes and wisdom. Yet the confluence of all of these conflicting personalities and ambitions leads to the desired end of the fulfillment of the prophecy and promise of God to Abraham about the future fate of the Jewish people.

This principle, that man proposes but God disposes is one of the basic beliefs of Judaism and is vindicated, for good or for better, throughout the history of the Jewish people and humankind generally. All of the twists and turns of daily and national life, the seemingly random and inexplicable events that assault us on a regular basis, somehow have a purpose and a goal. They help us arrive at the situation and circumstance that God's destiny has provided for us.

The difficulty in all of this is that very rarely is this pattern revealed or are we aware of it. The Lord told Moses that 'you will see my back, not my face.' We see things much more clearly in retrospect than in the ability to judge present events and somehow predict the future.

All of the dreams of Joseph will be fulfilled but no one could have imagined at the onset of the story how they could have been fulfilled and under what circumstances, of both tragedy and triumph, they would come to be the reality of the narrative of the story of Joseph and his brothers.

Of all of the brothers, Joseph seems to be the one that is most aware that he and they are merely instruments in God's plan. The rabbis teach us that Joseph was distinguished by the fact that the name of God never left his lips and that he always attributed events to divine providence and God's will.

That is why Joseph is seen as the main antagonist to Eisav, for Eisav always attributed events to random chance and to human action and power. We will see later that this was also the main contest between Pharaoh and Moshe.

Pharaoh continually maintained that the troubles of the Egyptians were coincidence and that all of the blows that he sustained were due to circumstance and nature. Even when his wise men stated that the finger of God was pointing at him, he refused to admit that it was the divine presence that was driving Egypt to destruction.

We also live in a world where many see the events that surround us as being mere happenstance, random events engendered by human beings. However, Judaism knows better and teaches better and we are therefore confident that all of the processes ordained for us millennia ago will yet be completely fulfilled. There is a divine hand that guides the affairs of mankind.

Shabbat shalom  
Rabbi Berel Wein

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From the teachings of the Rosh Yeshiva  
**Rav Shlomo Aviner**

**Ha-Rav Aharon Yehudah Leib Shteinman ztz"l : The Great and Normal Gaon**

In the year 5674, the world shook and the great soul of Ha-Rav Aharon Yehudah Leib Shteinman ztz"l, Gaon, Tzadik, Lamdan and ascetic, entered the world. In addition to these traits, he had yet another rare and cherished quality: normalcy. There is a small group of Gedolei Yisrael who stand firm against all of the winds which try to move them rightward and leftward. They are strong and steadfast, they do not compromise nor do they go to extremes. Rather, they are moderate. A Gadol such as this receives the rare blessing of ZN"L - May the memory of the NORMAL be remembered for the blessing.

This was Rav Shteinman, who ascended on high at the amazing age of 104. Through his rulings and teachings, one sees over and over again how Rav Shteinman was a normal leader and Posek, and a person guided by common sense. The great Poskim explain that when one is asked a question, he must first use his intellect. The Torah was not given to the stupid but rather to the wise. If he cannot answer the question through his intellect, then he uses the Torah, which is beyond intellect (Shut Chavatzet Ha-Sharon 2:28. Shut Minchat Yitzchat 9:150).

This was Rav Shteinman in all areas.

He expressed surprise that people travel great distances to receive a blessing from a Rabbi instead of running to Shul to receive Birkat Cohanim, a blessing from Hashem (Be-Orchotecha Lamdeni p. 38).

It once happened that a Yeshiva student, who for a few years did not merit having children, asked Rav Shteinman: Is it worthwhile to move, since changing one's place can change one's luck? Rav Shteinman responded harshly: There is no such thing! Is the apartment guilty that you have not merited having children!? There is no reason to move (Segulot Raboteinu pp. 121-122. And see Rambam, Hilchot Teshuvah 2:4).

When the three teens were kidnapped in Israel, and the security forces assumed that they were located in the area of Hevron, one Rav used the Goral Ha-Gra (literally, the lottery of the Vilna Gaon - a method of opening the Tanach, and locating verses which answer particular questions), and the result was the verse: "And when he came to Lechim the Philistines shouted against him, and the Spirit of Hashem came mightily upon him" (Shoftim 15:14). This Rav explained that the Philistines captured Shimshon, and bound his hands, and he succeeded to remove the ropes, and this hinted that the teens would be released. Furthermore, he claimed that we learn from this verse where the teens are located, in the area of Hevron, since those who understand say that Lechi is in the area of Hevron. In response, someone approached Ha-Rav Chaim Kanievski and suggested the Goral Ha-Gra to answer the question of the location of the three teens. He said: "For this, one needs Ruach Ha-Kodesh, go to the Rosh Ha-Yeshiva", i.e. Ha-Rav Shteinman. When they turned to him, he said: "Do I have Ruach Ha-Kodesh"?! And he added: "If so, why are there Agunot?! They should use the Goral Ha-Gra...".

And from where did Rav Shteinman receive his moderation and normalcy? His parents were residents of the city of Brisk, neighbors of Ha-Rav Mi-Brisk, Ha-Griz Soloveitchik. His father served as a teacher, Shamash of the Shul and supervisor of the Eruv. There was an Eruv in the city of Brisk and the entire community carried on Shabbat but the Rav of the city, Ha-Rav Chaim Soloveitchik, the father of Ha-Griz, and the Dayan, Ha-Rav Simchah Zelig, were strict not to carry (Shut Mishneh Halachot 15:130). And when Ha-Rav Yosef Soloveitchik visited Brisk in his youth, he went to check the Eruv on Erev Shabbat with Ha-Rav Simchah Zelig (Nefesh Ha-Rav p. 170). While the Rabbis were strict not to carry, they did not force it upon the community, and ensured a way for them to carry. One can see the traditions that Rav Shteinman received from Torat Brisk in the book "A'aleh Be-Tamar - Brisk".

Rav Shteinman was educated in Brisk and was known as a prodigy. At the age of 20, he began to learn with great intensity, and continued in this way for the last 80 years. When he received a draft notice from the Polish army,

he immigrated to Switzerland, learned in Yeshiva there and became a Ra"m in the Yeshiva. During the Second World War, he was taken to a work camp and forced to pave roads. Following an illness, he was released and was able to make Aliyah with his wife. He then learned in a Yeshiva in Petach Tikvah. Rav Shteinman became very close with the Chazon Ish. The traditions that he received from him may be seen in the book "A'aleh Be-Tamar – Chazon Ish".

Rav Shteinman stood firmly and with moderation on these two pillars, Ha-Rav Mi-Brisk and the Chazon Ish.

At a cornerstone laying of a Yeshiva which was transplanted to Eretz Yisrael from Europe, Ha-Rav Yechezkel Avramsky praised the work of Ha-Rav Mi-Ponevitch, Ha-Rav Yosef Shlomo Kahaneman, who established the Ponevitch Yeshiva in Eretz Yisrael, and said that our Sages already stated: "In the future, the Shuls and Yeshiva of Babylonian will be established in Eretz Yisrael (Megillah 29a. Pininim Mi-Shulchan Gevoha - Bereshit, p. 135. And see at length regarding this saying in Shut Eretz Yisrael pp. 240-252).

Rav Shteinman was truly one of the foundations of the transfer of Torah from Europe to Eretz Yisrael. He was appointed by Ha-Rav Mi-Ponevitch to head the Yeshiva Ketana of Ponevitch and its Kollel.

He established other Kollelim and with great self sacrifice delivered Shiurim in many different venues in Gemara, Halachah, Shulchan Aruch, Mishnah Berurah, Musar, the book Derech Hashem of the Ramchal and in the books Nefesh Ha-Chaim and Ruach Chaim of Reb Chaim of Volozhin.

His entire Torah learning was built upon his humility.

He published some 30 Sefarim including Ayelet Ha-Shachar on the Torah and on the Gemara, as well as many Sifrei Musar.

After the passing of Ha-Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv, Ha-Rav Shteinman was considered by most to be the supreme spiritual authority for the Litvishe Yeshiva world. While Rav Elyashiv essentially dealt with Halachic rulings, Rav Shteinman dealt with every issue in the world.

He directed political parties, the Charedi educational system, Va'ad Ha-Yeshivot, Tzedakah organizations, Teshuvah organizations, Family Purity organizations, Badatz She'erit Yisrael and a newspaper. He traveled outside of Israel various times in order to strengthen the communities there and raise money for Yeshivot and the different organizations. He ruled that the newspaper should only wage war against opinions which were contrary to the Torah and not against individuals. He was involved in every area of life.

It once happened that a young Rabbi, lacking in Torah knowledge, wanted to disagree with Rav Shteinman. Based on lack of knowledge, he could not disagree based on sources, so he claimed that Rav Shteinman was detached from reality, but he proved that he himself was the detached one...

Regarding problems in the State of Israel, Rav Shteinman held that one should not wage war but established institutions to teach Torah and deal with Kiruv.

Regarding drafting Yeshiva students, he opposed the language of "Be killed and do not transgress" but expressed his view in a more gentle and normal manner, stating that they should not be disturbed from their Torah learning. He also said that someone who is not learning Torah should serve in the army or learn a trade. Only after a law was passed that if a specific number of students from the Ultra-Orthodox world did serve in the army, there would be criminal sanctions against one who refused to do so, did he say with great sorrow: this is a horrible Chilul Hashem of uprooting the Torah. He sat and cried with intense pain that the State of Israel declared that learning Torah could be considered a crime.

Rav Shteinman also counseled people in matters of family life and education.

One can also see his normalcy in his attributing family and educational problems largely to people's arrogance.

Based on Reb Chaim of Volozhin (Igrot p. 102), Rav Shteinman said that one who does not agree to a Shidduch based on religious background violates the prohibition of being arrogant. There was once a Shidduch with a young woman whose brothers went off the path. The young man came to

ask Rav Shteinman about this issue, since the Gemara in Baba Batra (110a) says that if one is interested in marrying a woman he should check her brothers, since children are similar to their mother's brothers. Rav Shteinman said that this applies when people live in a small village, and thus in a closed environment. If children go off the path there, it is on account of the parents. But everything is open in our days. The parents can provide a completely proper education and the child can still go off the path (see further in Re'im Ahuvim p. 183). And he told men who were about to marry that a happy marriage is based on three things: giving in, giving in and giving in, since the root of all inter-personal problems is egoism, i.e. arrogance (Adnei Ha-Bayit, p. 149). Furthermore, someone once came to him and asked if they are obligated to clean for Chametz in the cracks between the tiles on the floor. He answered wisely: Yes, and since it is so severe a matter, don't rely on your wife, but rather check them yourself... Regarding education, he instructed that one not learn secular studies, since the essence is fear of Hashem and learning Torah. He taught that Yeshiva students should not be involved in politics and should refrain from luxuries. He rejected punishing children, and expelling or not accepting weak students. It once happened that there were parents who wanted to register their child to learn in a Talmud Torah, but the parents of current student did not want the child to be accepted because his parents were religious but not Frum. The administrators asked Rav Shteinman if they should accept him, since he could negatively influence the other children. He yelled that anyone who does not want to accept him suffers from arrogance!! Arrogance!! Arrogance!! And he added that he learned in the Talmud Torah in Brisk with the sons of the Brisker Rav and all sorts of other children. It happens in every Talmud Torah that there are children who go off the path. During his entire life, Rav Shteinman worked on being humble and battled against being arrogant. Therefore when extremists disparaged him, he was one of the Gedolei Yisrael who was "one who is disgraced and does not disgrace, he hears [others recounting] his shame and does not answer, he serves Hashem from love and happily accepts afflictions" (Shabbat 88b). As we mentioned, under certain circumstances, Rav Shteinman did not oppose certain Charedim from serving in the Charedi units in Tzahal. Extremists therefore graffitied on a wall: "Shteinman = Kook", comparing him to Maran Ha-Rav Kook. Ha-Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv once walked past this graffiti and thought it was meant as a compliment and said: Ha-Rav Shteinman is certainly a great Gadol, but not on the same level as Ha-Rav Kook... (see our eulogy on Rav Elyashiv for his relationship with Maran Ha-Rav Kook). Rav Shteinman was once told that some people were distributing fliers against him. He said: If I knew who was doing this, I would need to pay him, since at my age I don't have the strength for ascetic practices and fasts... The source for his words is found in the book "Sha'arei Kedushah" of Ha-Rav Chaim Vital that if a person knew how much insults help to atone for his sins, he would pursue them!

And above all, it is possible to see Rav Shteinman's normalcy and humility in his simplicity. He was always frugal. At his wedding, he only invited 15 guests since it was paid for by Tzedakah. He also returned money that was given to him at his wedding. He did not eat hot food or sweets, but rather simple food. He lived in a two and a half room apartment that was never renovated. He had simple beds, and his chairs were made from orange crates, lacking a place to rest your back. Ha-Rav Elyashiv had an equally simple and sparse apartment. Rav Shteinman would meet Gedolei Yisrael and leaders of the country in a little room. Someone once said in the name of the Chazon Ish that a house such as this is not respectful. It is a Chilul Hashem. Rav Shteinman responded: On the contrary, the more it is beautiful, the more of a Chilul Hashem it is.

It is told that a wealthy businessman once visited the Chafetz Chaim. He was astounded by the lack of furniture in the Chafetz Chaim's home. Unable to contain himself, he asked, "Where is your furniture"? The Chafetz Chaim responded by asking him where was his furniture. The man, a bit surprised

by the question, explained that he was only passing through. The Chafetz Chaim said that in this world, he too, was only passing through. We merited an immense Torah scholar, who worked on remaining humble his entire life and fought against arrogance, in both the spiritual and physical realm. May his soul be bound up with the bonds of the living with all of the Tzadikim and Geonim.

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### **The Intellectual Struggle Hidden in Hanukkah's Best-Known Song**

The Maccabean revolt wasn't just about independence. It was a culture war between those who embraced "Greek wisdom" and those who believed in transcendent, divine knowledge.

OBSERVATION - LEWIS GLINERT DEC. 14 2017

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What have they done to my song? The medieval Ashkenazi maestro who penned the poem we now call Maoz Tsur (in English, "Rock of Ages") might well have asked this question. True, Mordechai—his name is encoded in the first five stanzas—is a mysterious figure; one can only surmise that he lived in Central Europe near the end of the 12th century. But the lyrics of his celebrated song should leave us in no doubt: were he transported to a modern-day menorah lighting, he would be dumbfounded to hear that we have made Maoz Tsur into a song for Hanukkah—and, to boot, one commonly sung to a German melody more suggestive of Rhenish good cheer than of his simultaneously witty and very serious sweep through Jewish history and destiny.

True, Maoz Tsur is hardly the only work of Jewish poetry or prayer to find itself reinvented—its context, its melody, or even its lyrics subtly or not so subtly changed. The prayer book is full of examples. Think of Aleinu: once a unique centerpiece of the High Holy Days, a solemn proclamation of God's sovereignty, now serving as a rapidly recited conclusion to daily prayers. Or Adon Olam, originally a sublime medieval meditation upon retiring to sleep, today a jaunty finale to the Shabbat service. Hasidic rebbes have gone still farther, lifting Viennese waltzes for the L'khah Dodi hymn welcoming the Sabbath or belting out Napoleon's March at the end of Yom Kippur. Still, however you sing Maoz Tsur on Hanukkah this year, pondering the words can inject new and surprising meaning into the holiday, and particularly if you venture beyond the first stanza to explore all six. Yes, all six. Most Jews today know only the first stanza, and some prayer books include only five, the sixth having long been censored (or self-censored) for its content. To complicate matters more, the popular English version of the first stanza, while fitting the tune perfectly, captures almost none of its meaning, except perhaps for the word "rock." Here is my far more literal rendition:

Fortress, my rock of deliverance, it is seemly to give You praise.  
Set firm my house of prayer and there we will offer thanksgiving.  
When You [God] slaughter the baying foe,  
I will complete with hymns of praise the inauguration of [hanukkat] the altar.  
The one clue here that this could be a Hanukkah song is the use of the word meaning inauguration or dedication, from which the holiday's name derives. And the connection is not merely linguistic: any Jewish schoolchild knows that 2,000-plus years ago, the Maccabee army wrested control of the Jerusalem Temple from Gentile forces and re-dedicated the holy altar. But here's a question: might this verse possibly refer not to the Maccabee re-dedication but to the initial dedication of the altar in the First or Second Temple or, even likelier, the dedication of the altar in the Temple to be built in some future time after the longed-for arrival of the messiah?

For an answer to that question, it would help first to sketch the contents of the succeeding four stanzas, which retell all of ancient Jewish history in four acts. Here's an outline:

Stanza 2: Egyptian enslavement and the Exodus

Stanza 3: the Jews in their land, including a recitation of their failings, their exile following the destruction of the First Temple, and their return in the time of Ezra

Stanza 4: the story of Purim in ancient Persia

Stanza 5: the Hanukkah story

Running through it all is a theme, indeed the overarching theme, of Jewish history as portrayed in the Hebrew Bible: crisis and suffering, followed by divine deliverance.

It's a simple paradigm, but one told by the author of Maoz Tsur in a complex and thought-provoking way, and with a rare mastery of the resources of Hebrew wordplay that no translation can easily capture. Let's content ourselves with the fourth through sixth stanzas.

The fourth recounts the ancient story told in the book of Esther that is read on the holiday of Purim:

The Agagite, son of Hamdata [i.e., Haman], sought to cut the towering cypress down,

But it was a snare to him, and his supremacy crumbled.

You raised the Benjamite's [Mordechai's] head, erased the enemy's name,  
And his many sons and goods You hanged from the tree.

Here the author treats us to a mix of the sublime and the comic. Haman, the careerist social climber, worms his way into the king's good graces and then seeks to fell the unyielding Mordechai, who is a member of the tribe of Benjamin, likened in the Midrash to a slender cypress tree (b'rosh). But it is Mordechai's head (rosh)—the head he stubbornly refuses to lower before Haman—that comes out ahead, while the Agagite's pride traps him in a hole before he, his sons, and his worldly goods are hanged on the tree he'd picked out as a gallows for Mordechai.

The blunt imagery serves to fold this tale of dramatic reversal into four neat lines. In telling it, the poet plays a few verbal and phonetic tricks on villainous Haman, whom he dubs the "son of Hamdata." To appreciate the jab, one needs to know that strange-sounding Persian monikers ending in –ata are a famous part of the Purim fun: the names of four of Haman's ten sons, Parshandata, Aspata, Aridata, and Vayzata are declaimed in one breath during the public reading of the book of Esther at precisely the point in the text when they are strung up.

Another and more profound tease is the poet's introduction of the word nihyatah, a derivative form of the verb to be, here appearing in the past tense:

But it was (nihyatah) a snare for him, and his supremacy crumbled.

No doubt the poet knew (as do I, thanks to my biblical concordance) that nihyatah appears only nine times in the Tanakh, each time announcing a calamity. But nihyatah also sets up an internal rhyme to the "son of Hamdata" in the previous verse—a rhyme that goes on echoing down the line in ga'avato and nishbatah, and more faintly in the –ta endings that follow: niseta "You raised," maḥita "You erased," and triumphantly, talita "You hanged." To get the full effect, here's the stanza in transliteration:

K'rot komat b'rosh bikesh, Agagi ben Hamdata  
V'nihyatah lo l'fakh ulmokesh, v'ga'avato nishbata.  
Rosh y'mini niseta; v'oyev sh'mo maḥita  
Rov banav v'kinyanav al ha-ets talita.

All of this goes to show that a little humor has long been the yeast in Jewish thought and life—if only as a divinely sanctioned way of coping with God's perplexing ways.

The climax of the poem, at least now that it has become a Hanukkah song, occurs in the fifth stanza, which tells the story of the Maccabean revolt:

The Greeks massed against me/ then, in the days of the Hasmoneans,  
And breaking through the walls of my towers,/ they defiled all the oils.  
But from an extra jug a miracle/ was produced for the roses [i.e., the Jews],

And the sons of understanding established/ eight days of song and rejoicing. To anyone familiar with the basic outline of the Hanukkah story, these lyrics are unsurprising, but between the lines the author has hidden another story. This one concerns the intellectual struggle between Hellenism and Judaism, a struggle still going strong today. As in all of the stanzas, a single end-rhyme, -nim in this case, joins each of the four verses. But beyond this basic rhyme, we may note a particular phonetic resemblance between the words Hashmanim (Hasmoneans) and ha-sh'manim (the oils), echoed a little more faintly in the shoshanim (roses) of the third line. Another variation of the same sound—sh'monah (eight)—appears at the end of the first half of the last line.

Using the same technique he employed in the fourth stanza, the poet then creates a series of secondary rhymes and consonances that echo the primary rhyme. Here, the dominant sound is n. Look at the transliteration:

Y'vanim nikb'tsu alay./ azay biymey Hashmanim  
Ufar'tsu homot migdalay/ v'tim'u kol ha-sh'manim.  
Uminotar kankanim,/ na'aseh nes la-shoshanim,  
B'ney vinah, y'mey sh'monah/ kav'u shir unranim.

This may be a stretch on my part, but it's quite possible that the author has combined his sound-play with a bit of mystical numerology. In indigenous Hebrew numerals, the number 50 is denoted by the letter nun. The Talmud (Nedarim 38a) records that 50 gates of understanding (binah) were created in the world, and all but one were granted to Moses. From this perspective, the revolt of the Maccabees against Greek rule wasn't just about religious freedom or political independence from pagans. It was a fight between those Jews who accepted the Hellenic claim to intellectual superiority—to a human-oriented knowledge of science, mathematics, and philosophy that surpassed the intellectual achievements of all other cultures—and those who, while placing a high value on human reason and possibly even admiring Greek intellectual achievement, insisted on the existence of a fiftieth level: transcendent, divine knowledge beyond human comprehension.

The culture war that loomed behind the Maccabean revolt came down to a dispute about the existence of this “fiftieth gate of understanding.” Learned medieval readers would have made the connection.

Now let's turn to the sixth and final stanza. Like the first, it is not historical but meta-historical:

Bare Your holy arm; hasten the day of deliverance;  
Wreak vengeance on the foul regime for Your servants' sakes.  
It has been so very long; the cruel times seem endless.

Hurl Red Nemesis [Rome] into hell, and raise up the Seven Shepherds.  
Again like the first stanza, this one doesn't contain a single verb in the past tense. Instead, both stanzas enter a plea for the coming of a future redemption. The word admon, which I've translated as Red Nemesis, is a direct reference to Edomites, literally the descendants of Jacob's brother Esau and figuratively a shorthand both for Rome and for Christian Europe (hence the need for the stanza to be censored). The “seven shepherds” alludes to an end-of-days prophecy in the book of Micah (chapter 5), the shepherds being traditionally identified with the great leaders of ancient Israel (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Aaron, and David).

Thus, as much as the author of Maoz Tsur draws on the Jewish past, he first and last has his eyes on the future, on the messianic deliverance of the Jewish nation from its foes. To return to the first stanza:

When You [God] slaughter the baying foe,  
I will complete with songs of praise the inauguration of the altar.  
In traditional Jewish thought, the future is as much a part of divine history as is the past. It is underwritten by God, leading inexorably, albeit tortuously, toward the final triumph of good over evil when the Jewish people—and people from the ends of the earth—will gather in Jerusalem for the dedication of a global holy altar in the Third Temple. The Hanukkah that the poet Mordechai has in mind is about much more than the triumph of the Maccabees in “our” Hanukkah. While the holiday's prayers and the lights of the menorah explicitly commemorate miracles past, the Hanukkah narrative

depicted in the fifth stanza is just one phase—better, one stage—in Jewish history, and surely not the last.

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### The Stuff of Dreams

By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

Question #1: Which approach is best?

“I had a bad dream. Should I fast, go to the nearest Sefardi shul and pray while the kohanim are duchening, or perform the hatovas chalom ceremony?”

Question #2: Fast again?

“I was told that if someone fasts for a bad dream, he is supposed to fast again. Why?”

Question #3: Strange dreamer

“I often have strange dreams. Should I be concerned?”

Answer

This week's parsha begins with the famous story of Pharaoh's dreams, certainly providing an opportunity to discuss the many passages of Gemara relating to dreams. Before we discuss these Talmudic passages, let me explain some of the ideas mentioned in the opening questions. The Gemara mentions three different solutions to guarantee that disturbing dreams have pleasant results. The first is to daven while the kohanim bless the people, the second is a procedure called hatovas chalom – literally, rectifying the dream, and the third is to fast on the day that the person wakes up with the disturbing dream. We will cite these three approaches in the course of this article.

The first question we need to address is whether one should place any weight at all on dreams. In the following passage, the Gemara itself implies that one should not: Rav Shmuel bar Nachmeini said, quoting Rav Yonasan, “You dream at night what you think about during the daytime” (Brachos 55b). As proof, the Gemara notes that people do not dream of palm trees made of gold or of elephants climbing through the eyes of needles. Since no one thinks about these things during the day, one does not dream about them at night.

In this context, the Gemara shares the following anecdote: The emperor of Rome, in the midst of one of his wars with the Persians, asked Rabbi Yehoshua what he would dream about the coming night. Undaunted, Rabbi Yehoshua answered him, “You will dream that the Persians will be serving you as their king” (Brachos 55b). We can all guess what the emperor dreamed the following night. We call this the power of suggestion. Thus, the Gemara's view is that dreams should not be relied upon. A corollary of this idea is that one need not take action when one wakes with a disturbing dream. Following this approach, the Gemara quotes the prophet Zechariah (10:2), who stated, “Dreamers speak falsehood.”

Prophetic dreams

On the other hand, both Tanach and the writings of Chazal contain numerous instances wherein dreams are taken very seriously. Let us begin with Chumash. Aside from the dreams of the officers of Pharaoh discussed in last week's parsha, and those of Pharaoh himself this week, we have Yaakov's dream at the beginning of parshas Vayeitzei, and those of Yosef at the beginning of parshas Vayeishev. Furthermore, in Bamidbar (12:6), Hashem tells Miriam and Aharon, regarding most prophets, “In a dream, I speak to him.” Obviously, these dreams are prophetic.

Also in Nach, we have numerous examples of prophecy occurring through dreams. In the second perek of Daniel, we are told about Nevuchadnetzar's terrifying and forgotten dream; he tests Daniel by demanding that the latter discover and reveal it – and the dream is fulfilled. Again, we have the pasuk (Shmuel I, 28:6) which says, “And Shaul asked of Hashem, and Hashem did not answer him, not with dreams, nor with the Urim, nor with prophets.” Thus, we see that Shaul's dreams included communication from Hashem.

In this context, the Gemara reports that dreams are one-sixtieth of prophecy (Brachos 57b). This expression means that although many aspects of a dream are fictitious or represent one's imagination, there is a kernel of prophecy in the dream.

Moreover, an extensive discussion in the Gemara (Brachos 55b-57b) mentions numerous lessons and messages, both positive and negative, that can be derived from dreams.

The Gemara even tells us how to guarantee a good result from a dream. It states that the spoken interpretation of a dream determines its outcome (Brachos 55b), and implies that one can even pay the interpreter of the dream in order to gain a favorable consequence (Brachos 55b). This means that if someone has a dream, he can hire someone to provide a favorable interpretation, which will indeed come true as fulfillment of the dream.

In this context, Rav Binah said that in his day, there were 24 dream interpreters in Yerushalayim. “Once I had a dream, and I went to all of them and received 24 different

interpretations – and all 24 interpretations happened!” According to the Maharsha, this means that all 24 approaches lay within the dream, and therefore they were all true. The Gemara also states that one could wait up to 22 years for a good dream to be fulfilled (Brachos 55b). The proof is from Yosef, since what he dreamed when he was 17 was not fulfilled until his brothers came down to Egypt, 22 years later.

#### Meaningless parts

Although the main part of the dream might be prophetic, the Gemara concludes that just as all grain includes chaff, every dream includes meaningless parts (Nedorim 8a and Brachos 55a).

#### Dreams to motivate teshuvah

Rav Huna said that a good man never has a good dream, and a bad man never has a bad one (Brachos 55b). Rashi explains that the good person is motivated by a bad dream to do teshuvah, whereas with a good dream the bad person receives his reward in this world for the mitzvos he performed. The specific examples cited are Dovid Hamelech, who never had a good dream, and Achitofel, who never had a bad one.

#### Worrisome dreams

In a deep medical-psychological evaluation, the Gemara notes that a bad dream is worse for the body than receiving a brutal physical beating, because the worry about what the bad dream means harms a person in a much greater way than being beaten (Brachos 55a). This helps us understand our previous comment about dreams being used to encourage a person to do teshuvah.

#### Selective interpretation

A different passage of Gemara (Sanhedrin 30a) relates an event and the resultant halachic ruling. A person knew that his father had hidden money but didn't know where his now-deceased father had placed it. A “baal hachalom” – apparently someone who either could have a prophetic dream or had the ability to interpret one – told him where the money was located, how much was there, and also that the money had the sanctity of maaser sheini, which may be used only to purchase food that must be eaten in Yerushalayim. The Gemara concludes that the heir is permitted to ignore the statement that the money is maaser sheini, notwithstanding the fact that the very same interpreter successfully located the money and named the sum! This Gemara is quoted as the final halacha by the authorities (Rif and Rosh, ad locum; Rambam, Hilchos Ma'aser Sheini 6:6). The words of the Gemara are “divrei chalomos einan ma'alim v'ainan moridin – dreams are meaningless and neither help nor hinder” (Sanhedrin 30a).

The Gemara reports that when the amora Shmuel had a bad dream, he would quote the above-referenced verse of Zechariah that dreams lie; yet, when he had a good dream, he would refer to Chumash as proof that this was a good indication. The Gemara notes that these two statements of Shmuel appear contradictory, to which the Gemara responds that it depends whether the dream was conveyed by an angel or by a demon (sheid). A dream conveyed by an angel is considered a form of prophecy, whereas one from a demon or other questionable source should be ignored. Many halachic authorities explain that when one cannot attribute the dream to an angel, this is the same as blaming it on a demon, and one may ignore the dream (see, for example, Shu"t Tashbeitz, vol. II, #128; Aruch Hashulchan, Orach Chayim 220:1).

#### Later dream interpretation

The Jewish literature and history involved in dream interpretation did not end with the closure of the Gemara. Some rishonim discuss other specific events that were governed by dreams, as in the following story: Some people were building a wooden coffin for a meis, and someone wanted to take a piece of leftover wood and make a harp out of it. This individual was warned by the others not to do so, but he disregarded them. The meis for whom the coffin was made came in a dream and warned him that if he persisted in making the harp, he would be punished. He ignored this admonition and made the harp. He then had another dream, in which the meis told him that if he does not break the harp, he will be in danger. This was also ignored, and the man got sick. When he became very ill, his son took the harp and broke it on the grave of that particular meis, leaving the pieces on top of the grave. After this, his father recovered (Sefer Chassidim #727).

#### Which dreams?

So far, we see that dreams can foretell the truth, at least in part, and can also be used to encourage someone to do teshuvah. On the other hand, we have statements in the Gemara implying that dreams can be ignored. Is there a dispute in the Gemara as to whether dreams should be interpreted or not? The Gemara's presentation does not imply this.

Rather, the Gemara and its commentaries suggest that there are different types of dreams, some of which are simply a reflection of what one experienced during the previous day, and others that are, indeed, prophetic or potentially prophetic.

#### I had a dream

As I mentioned above, the Gemara has many discussions about dreams, and also provides advice on how to counteract the harm foretold by disturbing ones. The Gemara teaches that if someone had a dream that disturbed him in a major way, he should

perform the procedure called hatovas chalom in the presence of three people. The hatovah is performed by asking three friends to recite together a series of statements and pesukim. The Mishnah Berurah (220:3) comments that it is a mitzvah to be one of these three people, as they give confidence to the discouraged person to move on in life. The Gemara presents the structure of hatovas chalom: It should include three verses of Tanach that mention “reversal” (meaning that they will “reverse,” or annul, the message of the dream), three that mention redemption, and three that mention peace. The Gemara proceeds to enumerate which pesukim to use (Brachos 55b). (The text of hatovas chalom is printed in many siddurim.)

The Pri Megadim and the Mishnah Berurah (220:1) comment that the criterion for hatovas chalom is not the nature of the dream but the extent to which the dreamer finds it disturbing. By the way, hatovas chalom may be performed even on Shabbos (Elyah Rabbah; Mishnah Berurah).

We should note that if the dreamer had been fasting the previous day, heard bad news or anything similar, and then had a troubling dream, he should not be concerned about the dream and no hatovas chalom is necessary (Shaar Hatziyun ad locum).

#### Duchening and Dreams

A second suggestion mentioned in the Gemara regarding dreams is that someone who had a dream that requires interpretation and does not know whether the dream bodes well should recite a prayer at the time of duchening (Brachos 55b; Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 130:1). Some authorities prefer that one not recite this prayer while the kohanim are actually reciting the words of the duchening (see Rema, Orach Chayim 128:45; Mishnah Berurah 130:3). For this reason, Ashkenazic practice is that when the kohanim duchen on Yom Tov, they chant a tune prior to the completion of the brocha to give people the opportunity to recite the prayer. This prayer can be recited not only when one is uncertain of the interpretation of the dream, but even when one knows that the dream bodes ill (Mishnah Berurah 130:4).

In chutz la'aretz, where the practice among Ashkenazim is that bircas kohanim is recited only on Yom Tov, the minhag is that everyone recites this tefillah during the duchening on Yom Tov, as it is likely that every person had such a dream since the previous Yom Tov (Mishnah Berurah 130:1).

But since Ashkenazim in chutz la'aretz duchen only on Yomim Tovim, this suggestion does not provide an immediate solution for someone whose bad dream did not schedule itself on the night of Yom Tov. At this point, let us examine one of our opening questions: “I had a bad dream. Should I fast, go to the nearest Sefardi shul and pray while the kohanim are duchening, or perform the hatovas chalom ceremony?”

The basis of the question is that the person is an Ashkenazi in chutz la'aretz, and he does not want to wait until Yom Tov to ameliorate his dream. Thus, he is asking whether he should find a Sefardic shul where the kohanim duchen daily (even in chutz la'aretz) and say his tefillah there. I refer our reader who has this question to his rav or posek for halachic guidance.

#### Fasting

A third suggestion to blunt the potential damage of a disturbing dream is to fast on the day that one wakes up with the dream (Shabbos 11a). This procedure is called taanis chalom. This fast is effective in nullifying any negative outcome foretold by the dream, but only when one fasts the day immediately following the dream. Note that there is no obligation to observe this fast – it is simply a suggestion to countermand whatever bad consequence was warned about in the dream (Mishnah Berurah 220:7).

The Gemara reports that this fast may be observed even on Shabbos, although an individual who does so is then required to fast another day (sometime in the future) for having compromised the sanctity of Shabbos by fasting. Thus, although the taanis chalom, itself, is effective to protect against harm, it is still considered a violation of the sanctity of Shabbos.

We can now address the second of our opening questions: “I was told that if someone fasts for a bad dream, he is supposed to fast again. Why?”

Someone here misunderstood the law. The halacha of fasting a second time is only for someone who fasted a taanis chalom on Shabbos, and now we know the reason for the second fast.

#### In our day

In our day, one should not be overly concerned about dreams, both with regard to fasting and with regard to reciting hatovas chalom. This is because, as we mentioned earlier, most dreams are either a product of things that a person thinks about during the day or are due to overeating or another experience (Aruch Hashulchan, Orach Chayim 220:1, 4). Additionally, one who suffered from some pain or anguish and then had a bad dream need not be concerned, as the dream resulted from his anguish (Sha'ar Hatziyun 220:1).

One of the talmidim of the great mekubal, Rav Yaakov Hillel, told me the following: “Rav Yaakov Hillel told us many times not to pay attention to dreams. He explained that the statements of Chazal explaining the messages of dreams are significant only when they are messages from Above. Our thoughts are polluted by the media, technology, and

extremely unnatural stimuli that bombard us all day. Our dreams reflect what we saw or heard during our waking hours. They might even be triggered by an ad or a newspaper headline we saw in passing. Rav Hillel tells people who come to him with disturbing dreams not to pay attention to or be bothered by them.”

One might ask: If this is so, why do we still recite the prayer while the kohanim duchen? There are several ways to resolve this question, but explaining them properly is beyond the scope of this article.

#### Conclusion

A dream is the first step of any new venture. We see a vision for our lives, our families, our community and the world we live in. We dream about how the world can be improved, and of the contribution that we can make.

In this context, I want to share an anecdote told about the Ponevitzcher Rov standing over the vacant hill and fields that today are the center of the city of Bnei Brak. Upon hearing the Rov’s visions of the future that would be there, someone turned to him and said, “The Rov is dreaming.” The Rov responded, “I may be dreaming, but I am certainly not sleeping!”

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### **Jews and Economics – Rabbi Jonathan Sacks**

#### **Mikketz 5778**

We know that Jews have won a disproportionate number of Nobel Prizes: over twenty per cent of them from a group that represents 0.2 per cent of the world population, an over-representation of 100 to one. But the most striking disproportion is in the field of economics. The first Nobel Prize in economics was awarded in 1969. The most recent winner, in 2017, was Richard Thaler. In total there have been 79 laureates, of whom 29 were Jews; that is, over 36 per cent.

Among famous Jewish economists, one of the first was David Ricardo, inventor of the theory of comparative advantage, which Paul Samuelson called the only true and non-obvious theory in the social sciences. Then there was John von Neumann, inventor of Game Theory (creatively enlarged by Nobel Prize winner Robert Aumann). Milton Friedman developed monetary economics, Kenneth Arrow welfare economics, and Joe Stiglitz and Jeffrey Sachs, development economics. Daniel Kahneman and the late Amos Tversky created the field of behavioural economics. Garry Becker applied economic analysis to other areas of decision making, as did Richard Posner to the interplay of economics and law. To these we must add outstanding figures in economic and financial policy: Larry Summers, Alan Greenspan, Sir James Wolfensohn, Janet Yellen, Stanley Fischer and others too numerous to mention.

It began with Joseph who, in this week’s parsha, became the world’s first economist. Interpreting Pharaoh’s dreams, he develops a theory of trade cycles – seven fat years followed by seven lean years – a cycle that still seems approximately to hold. Joseph also intuited that when a head of state dreams about cows and ears of corn, he is probably unconsciously thinking about macro-economics. The disturbing nature of the dreams suggested that God was sending an advance warning of a “black swan,”[1] a rare phenomenon for which conventional economics is unprepared.

So, having diagnosed the problem, he immediately proceeds to a solution: use the good years to build up resources for the lean times, a sound instance of long-term economic planning:

Let Pharaoh appoint commissioners over the land to take a fifth of the harvest of Egypt during the seven years of abundance. They should collect all the food of these good years that are coming and store up the grain under the authority of Pharaoh, to be kept in the cities for food. This food should be held in reserve for the country, to be used during the seven years of famine that will come upon Egypt, so that the country may not be ruined by the famine.” (Gen. 41:34-36).

This turned out to be life-saving advice. His later economic policies, narrated in Vayigash (Gen. 47:11-26), are more questionable. When the people ran

out of money during the lean years, Joseph told them to trade their livestock. When this too ran out, he arranged for them to sell their land to Pharaoh with the sole exception of the land belonging to the priests. The Egyptians were now, in essence, Pharaoh’s serfs, paying him a tax of 20 per cent of their produce each year.

This nationalisation of livestock, labour and land meant that power was now concentrated in the hands of Pharaoh, and the people themselves reduced to serfdom. Both of these developments would eventually be used against Joseph’s own people, when a new Pharaoh arose and enslaved the Israelites. It cannot be by accident that the Torah twice uses about the Egyptians the same phrase it will later use about the Israelites: *avadim le-Pharo*: they have become “Pharaoh’s slaves” (Gen. 47:19, 25). There is already here a hint that too much economic power in the hands of the state leads to what Friedrich Hayek called “the road to serfdom”[2] and the eclipse of liberty. So a reasonable case could be made that Joseph was the first economist. But why the predominance of Jews in economics in the modern age? I do not want to argue that Jews created capitalism. They didn’t. Max Weber famously argued that it was the Protestant (primarily Calvinist) ethic that shaped “the spirit of capitalism.”[3] Rodney Stark argued that it was the Catholic Church that did so, prior to the Reformation.[4] The author of the first great text of market economics, Adam Smith’s *The Wealth of Nations* (1776), was a leading member of the Scottish Enlightenment whose religious views hovered between conventional Christianity and Deism. Those who have claimed a special kinship between Jews and capitalism – most notably Karl Marx and Werner Sombart – tended to like neither Jews nor capitalism. Clearly, though, there is a strong affinity between the market economy and what is broadly known as the Judeo-Christian ethic, because it was only in such cultures that it emerged. China, for example, led the West in almost every aspect of technology until the seventeenth century, yet it failed to generate science, a free economy or an industrial revolution, and fell far behind until recent times. What was it about biblical values that proved so fruitful for economic thought, institutions and growth?

The Harvard historian and economist David Landes offered insight in his magisterial work *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations*. [5] First is the biblical insistence on property rights. He quotes Moses’ words during the Korach revolt: “I have not taken one ass from them, nor have I wronged any one of them” (Num. 16:15). Likewise, the prophet Samuel rhetorically asks the people who have come asking for a king: “Whose ox have I taken, or whose ass have I taken?” (1 Sam. 12:3). Landes says that these remarks set the Israelites apart from any other culture of the time. Elsewhere, the king’s right to appropriate other people’s property was taken for granted. [6] John Locke saw that private property rights are an essential element of a free society. A second feature was Judaism’s respect for the dignity of labour. God saved Noah from the flood, but Noah had to build the ark. Third was the Judaic sense of linear time: time not as a series of cycles in which everything eventually returns to the way it was, but rather as an arena of change, development and progress. We are so familiar with these ideas – they form the bedrock of Western culture – that we are not always aware that they are not human universals. Jonathan Haidt calls them WEIRD: that is, they belong to societies that are Western, Educated, Industrialised, Rich and Democratic. [7]

To my mind, the most decisive single factor – the great break of Judaism from the ancient world of magic, mystery and myth – was the de-consecration of nature that followed from the fact that God created nature by an act of will, and by making us in His image, gave us too the creative power of will. That meant that for Jews, holiness lies not in the way the world is but in the way it ought to be. Poverty, disease, famine, injustice, and the exploitation of the powerless by the powerful are not the will of God. They may be part of human nature, but we have the power to rise above nature. God wants us not to accept but to heal, to cure, to prevent. So Jews have tended to become, out of all proportion to their numbers, lawyers fighting injustice, doctors fighting disease, teachers fighting ignorance, economists

fighting poverty and (especially in modern Israel) agricultural technologists finding new ways to grow food in environments where it has never grown before.

All of this is brilliantly portrayed in this week's parsha. First Joseph diagnoses the problem. There will be a famine lasting seven years. It is what he does next that is world-changing. He sees this not as a fate to be endured but as a problem to be solved. Then, without fuss, he solves it, saving a whole region from death by starvation.

What can be changed need not be endured. Human suffering is not a fate to be borne, but a challenge to be overcome. This is Joseph's life-changing idea. What can be healed is not holy. God does not want us to accept poverty and pain but to cure them.

Shabbat Shalom,

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*njop.org*

*Weekly Wisdom - Mikeitz 5778-2017*

*by Rabbi Ephraim Z. Buchwald*

*"Returning the Stolen Goblet to Joseph"*

In this week's parasha, parashat Mikeitz, the confrontation between Joseph and his brethren reaches its peak when Joseph's steward accuses the brothers of stealing the special cup from which Joseph drinks and with which he regularly divines.

The brothers deny stealing anything from Joseph. In their defense they respond, Genesis 44:8, הן כסף אשר מצאנו בפי אמתה הנינו השיבנו אליך מארץ כנען; "Here, look: the money that we found in the mouth of our sacks we have brought back to you from the land of Canaan. How, then, could we have stolen from your master's house any silver or gold?" The brothers are so certain that no one has stolen anything that they boldly declare, Genesis 44:9, "Anyone among your servants with whom it [the cup] is found shall die, and we also will become slaves to my Lord!" Rashi states that the formulation of the brothers' defense is one of the ten קל וחומר —Kahl Va'chomers, a priori reasoning lines that are stated in the Torah. The brothers argue that if they were honest enough to return the money that they found in their sacks from the previous visit, why would they now steal additional property which is not theirs?

The rabbis in the Talmud, Baba Kama 113b, comment on this by quoting the rabbinic dictum, "Stealing from a Canaanite [gentile] is forbidden, but one may keep the lost object of the Canaanite." Therefore, in the case of Joseph, who the brothers assumed was not Jewish, the money that Joseph's brothers found in their sacks should be considered the lost object of a gentile that need not be returned to the non-Jewish owner. Nevertheless, they returned it, going beyond the letter of the law. How then could they have stolen Joseph's cup, or anything from a gentile, which is strictly forbidden for a Jew? Rabbinic literature contains extensive discussions regarding the status in Jewish law of the non-Jew and non-Jewish property. When are non-Jews and their property treated equal to Jews and their property, and when are they not treated equitably?

The Talmud, in Baba Kama 38a, reports that the Roman government once sent two officials to Israel to study and evaluate the Torah. After the Roman representatives had read it three times, they reported that they found the Torah to be primarily truthful, except for the case of a Jew's ox that gored a gentile's ox, in which case there would be no liability. In the event the situation were reversed and a gentile's ox gores a Jew's ox, compensation would need to be paid.

As the discussion on this case unfolds in the Talmud, the rabbis cite the verse in the Torah, Exodus 21:35, which refers to the case of a man's ox that gores his neighbor's ox and dies. They suggest that the conclusion depends on how one views the word "neighbor." If the word is defined to not include gentiles, then when a Jew's ox gores an ox belonging to a non-Jew, the Jew should not have to pay damages. However, if the word "neighbor" includes non-Jews, then a Jew would be liable for damages. The Jerusalem Talmud in

Baba Kamma 4:3 cites a parallel story in which Rabbi Gamliel forbids the use of an object stolen from a non-Jew, lest it cause G-d's name to be profaned.

To simplify a complicated issue, it is fair to say that in general, the word "neighbor" in the Bible applies only to Jews and not to non-Jews. Much of Jewish law was designed to promote a lifestyle that would keep Jews separate from gentiles in order to prevent Jews from assimilating and behaving in an idolatrous manner. Sharing meals together was prohibited, as was eating non-Jewish food or drinking non-Jewish wine. Jews were not allowed to conduct business with idolaters before gentile holidays, and were prohibited from engaging in partnerships with idolaters.

Many of the medieval commentators, especially those who resided in Christian countries, worked to reapply the laws with respect to gentiles.

An early authority, Rabbeinu Gershon of Mainz declared that non-Jews who do not reside within the land of Israel can not be considered true idolaters. Therefore, Jews could conduct business with them on the gentile holidays. Rabbeinu Tam noted that, since the Christian church no longer sacrificed to the idols, doing business with them was now permitted. He went so far as to say that the oaths of Christians were no longer oaths in the name of the idolatrous gods, but rather oaths in the name of the "Maker of Heaven and Earth."

Later, the 14th century sage, Rabbi Menachem Ha'Meiri, declared that Christians were not idolaters, because he interpreted "idolatry" to mean not in keeping with laws. His conclusion, too, eliminated the legal restrictions against Christians.

Throughout Jewish history, questions arose regarding lost or stolen property of the non-Jews. The general practice is, that Jews who find lost property belonging to a Jew are required to publicize that a lost item had been found in an effort to find the real owner. The argument was that since non-Jews did not expend a similar effort to return the lost property of Jews, Jews were not obligated to make such efforts to return lost items belonging to non-Jews. Despite this dictum, there were, however, many instances in which Jews went beyond the letter of the law, extending kindnesses to non-Jews despite the lack of a legal requirement to do so. So, for instance, even though the Jewish community refused to accept charity from non-Jews, in order to preserve peace, Jews extended charity and provided burial to the poor of other faiths. (Mishnah in Gittin 5:8).

Rabbi Yitzchok Zev Soloveitchik explains that wherever there is a desecration of G-d's name it is forbidden to keep a lost object of a non-Jew and it must be returned. The Jerusalem Talmud, Baba Metzia 2:5, reports the famous story of Rabbi Shimon ben Shetach, who bought a donkey from an Ishmaelite and discovered a precious stone tied to its neck and returned it to the Ishmaelite, who praised the G-d of the Hebrews, thus sanctifying G-d's name. Similarly, when Joseph's brothers returned the lost money, they did it publicly in order to sanctify G-d's name.

It is a well-known dictum, that when a human life is in danger, one may violate the Shabbat. But, there is a great debate over whether this principle applies to non-Jewish lives as well. Some great sages, such as the Chofetz Chaim, opposed the practice on the part of Jewish doctors to tend to the non-Jewish sick on Shabbat. However, Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, a most influential modern Halachic authority, objected to the Chofetz Chaim's conclusion, arguing that if it became known that a Jewish physician refused to treat a non-Jew on Shabbat, while he permitted himself to treat Jews, it would foster much animosity and it would be harmful to the Jewish community.

We see here the evolution of Jewish law, from a time when non-Jewish societies would never come to the aid or benefit of the Jewish people, to a time where there is general reciprocity. Although Jewish reciprocity today is based on the technicality to sanctify G-d's name, the basic implementation of the law for Jew and gentile is the same: If non-Jews return the lost objects of Jews, then Jews must return the lost objects of non-Jews. If non-Jews return what is stolen, then Jews must return what is stolen. In fact, Jews must

always return what is stolen from non-Jews even if the non-Jews do not return what is stolen.

May the positive actions and noble behavior of the Jewish people always serve as a great source of light and enlightenment to all people.

Happy Chanukah!

*May you be blessed.*

*The festival of Chanukah will begin on Tuesday night, December 12, 2017 and continues through Wednesday night, December 20, 2017.*

*Wishing all a very Happy Chanukah.*

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## **Chanukah and Community**

**by Rabbi Gil Student**

### **I. Whose Oil?**

Around 150 years ago, a Warsaw rabbi attempted to introduce a new chumra, a stringency regarding Chanukah lights. The reason for rejecting his proposal offers insight into the nature of family and community.

In his Talmudic commentary Zeikher Yehosef (Warsaw, 1859; Shabbos 20b), Rav Yehosef Zechariah Stern of Shavel records a question sent to him by Rav Binyamin Dov Rabinowitz of Warsaw. Based on biblical wording, the Sages explain that a number of commandments require ownership — you must own the matzah you eat on Pesach to fulfill the mitzvah; you must own the esrog, etc. you take on Sukkos. Rav Rabinowitz asks whether the Sages, when they instituted the mitzvah of Chanukah lights tailored this rabbinic commandment on these biblical obligations? Do you have to own the oil or candles you light for Chanukah?

His sole piece of evidence is the rule of a guest on Chanukah. The Talmud (Shabbos 23a) says that a guest on Chanukah has to pay (at least) a perutah to the host to become a partner in the oil. Authorities disagree whether a guest has the option of lighting his own menorah. ((Mishnah Berurah 677:3 says it is better to light your own menorah. Rav Joseph B. Soloveitchik disagreed. See Rav Hershel Schachter, *Be-Ikvei Ha-Tzon*, p. 120.)) Rav Rabinowitz sees in this rule the implication that you must own the oil in order to fulfill the commandment. If that is the case, he asks, how did Beis Shammai fulfill the mitzvah?

Beis Shammai was of the view that not only must we rest on Shabbos, our utensils must rest, as well. This would rule out automatic timers, refrigerators and even candles. However, Beis Shammai had a solution to these problems — before Shabbos, declare your utensils ownerless (Shabbos 18a-b). If that's the case, asks Rav Rabinowitz, how do Beis Shammai fulfill the mitzvah of Chanukah lights on Shabbos? They light the candles and declare them ownerless before Shabbos. He suggested above that you need to own the candles to fulfill the obligation, for Beis Shammai, when Shabbos starts they do not own the candles.

### **II. The Chanukah Guest**

Rav Stern (Zeikher Yehosef, *ibid.*) replied with a learned analysis of the laws of Chanukah lights, which I will leave for another time. I want to focus on his father-in-law's response. Rav Stern forwarded the exchange to his father-in-law, Rav Mordechai Gimpel Yaffe of Rozhinoy, later of Yahud. Rav Yaffe sent his own response, also published in Zeikher Yehosef. Rav Yaffe questioned the Rav Rabinowitz's basic assumption that you must own the oil of your Chanukah lights. The only evidence for that claim is that a guest has to pay something (just one coin) to become a part-owner of the oil. Rather than reflecting an ownership requirement, it shows the nature of the Chanukah mitzvah.

Unlike most commandments, the rabbinic obligation of Chanukah lights resembles mezuzah, which falls on the home, rather than on the individual (Shabbos 21b). A guest has no home, and might be considered exempt. Rav Yaffe explains that by contributing toward the expense of the oil, the guest

joins the household and can take part in the home's Chanukah lights.

((Similar explanations are offered by Rav Joseph B. Soloveitchik, Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach and Rav Shmuel Kamenetsky. See Rav Hershel Schachter, *ibid.*; Rav Daniel Kleinman, *Kovetz Halakhos*, Chanukah, 11:15 n. 23.))

### **III. The Worth of Family**

There is something surprising about paying to become part of a family. I don't expect my family members to pay me. Quite the opposite — I give to them just like my parents give to me and I pray my children will give to their children. We don't expect payment.

On the other hand, family is worth more than a small payment of one coin. In general US society, the cost of raising a child is estimated at upwards of \$200,000. That is without considering the additional costs of kosher food, yeshiva tuition and Jewish summer camps. Getting all that for one perutah seems like quite a deal. Maybe to become part of a household, you should pay thousands of dollars.

I believe we can understand this concept better by considering a different law. The Gemara (Pesachim 51a) tells stories about Yehudah and Hillel, the sons of Rabban Gamaliel. One time, they were in Cabul and bathed together. This caused a bit of a scandal because men are not supposed to bathe together. However, these two followed the letter of the law, which permits brothers to bathe together, because we do not suspect brothers of improprieties. Even though they were correct, they should not have acted that way in a place where it is not accepted. Similarly, those two brothers once spent a Shabbos in the town of Beri and walked outside in slippers. Even though this is technically allowed, their action caused a minor scandal because people in Beri did not wear slippers in public on Shabbos. Being part of a community requires accepting limitations. We sacrifice some of our freedom in order to function as a cohesive group. People's judgments and temperaments differ. If we all insist that our opinions win every disagreement, there will never be any agreement. Unity requires a certain degree of conformity, of sacrifice, of willing to go along in order to get along. Otherwise we are a group of selfish individualists who split the minute we disagree.

No one would make this sacrifice, pay the cost of joining a community, if it wasn't worth it. However, the benefits of family, community and society are manifold. Two heads are better than one. A group can accomplish more than an individual, and it provides support to its members in multiple ways.

A guest makes a symbolic sacrifice to join a household. The membership fee, the small effort of paying for some of the oil, shows a desire to join the community of the household. The membership benefit consists of sharing in the Chanukah lights. Even a small, limited membership in a community offers a benefit much greater than the entrance cost. Similarly, most communities and societies offer benefits far greater than the costs of entry. The law of the Chanukah guest reminds us that we must sacrifice a bit of our freedom to join and benefit from society in general.

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#### ***Tefillah - An Essential Ingredient for Success***

#### ***Rabbi Eliakim Koenigsberg***

In Parshas Mikeitz, Yosef accuses his brothers of trying to spy on Mitzrayim. He puts Shimon in jail and demands that the brothers bring Binyamin to Mitzrayim to prove that they are not lying. At first, Yaakov refuses to send Binyamin. So the brothers wait because they cannot return to Mitzrayim without Binyamin.

Finally, after some time, Yaakov relents and he allows them to take Binyamin to Mitzrayim. But he tells them that they have to prepare for their encounter with Yosef. "If it must be so, then do this: Take of the land's glory in your baggage and bring it down to the man as a present - some spices,

some honey, wax, pistachios and almonds. And take with you double the money (maybe food is now more expensive). And the money that was returned to your sacks bring back with you, maybe it was a mistake. And take your brother, and arise, return to the man. And may Hashem grant you mercy before the man that he may release your other brother as well as Binyamin. (Mikeitz, 43:11-13)" Rashi comments that Yaakov, in his last statement, was saying, "If you have prepared properly, then you are ready to go. You are missing nothing except tefillah. I daven that Hashem should grant you success in your mission."

Yaakov Avinu was teaching the shevatim an important lesson. Sometimes people think that tefillah is necessary only when a situation is beyond our control. If someone we know gets sick, G-d forbid, and the doctors are not so hopeful, we daven because we know that only Hashem's mercy can help. If a friend loses his job and his prospects of finding another one are not good, we daven because we feel desperate for him. If our security is threatened and we feel like there is no safe place in the world, we say Tehillim with greater kavanah because we know that only Hakadosh Boruch Hu can protect us. But when we take all of the necessary steps to prepare for a situation - we study hard for a test, we spend time and effort putting together a presentation - we tend to feel that tefillah is not as necessary. After all, we prepared. We feel cautiously confident. We almost expect success because we did the necessary hishtadlus to succeed. Of course, we feel thankful for the G-d given talent that enabled us to prepare properly for the task at hand. But we don't always feel the need for tefillah because we feel ready to go.

That is the sentiment that Yaakov Avinu was trying to counter with his last statement. What Yaakov was telling the shevatim is that of course the first step to achieve success is to prepare properly. That is why he instructs the shevatim to take a present, to bring back the money, and to take Binyamin with them because the first thing one must do is position himself for success. But just because one has all of the ingredients for success does not mean he will be successful. He still needs siyata dishmaya to put all of his talents together - to say the right words, to act in the proper way - so that all of his preparation will lead to success.

Tefillah is so important, not just before and during the period of preparation, but especially when a person steps up to the plate feeling ready for the challenge ahead. At that time, it is so critical to take a step back and daven, to express how much he realizes that without Hakadosh Boruch Hu he would not be able to achieve anything.

What's more, expressing thanks after a successful endeavor is even more important. Once a challenge has passed, a person is more likely to attribute his success to his own abilities and talents. Giving thanks demonstrates that a person recognizes the divine assistance which enabled his accomplishments. The Sefer HaChinuch (#606) explains that this is the purpose of the mitzvah of bikkurim. Once a farmer sees the fruits of his labor, he tends to forget the divine intervention that helped bring him success. The Torah obligates the farmer to offer his first fruits to Hashem and to express his thanks by reading the parsha of bikkurim to help him internalize the important message that Hashem is the source of his bounty.

Similarly, the Torah obligates a person to recite Birchas Hamazon after eating, but it does not require of a person to recite a bracha before eating. That obligation was added later by Chazal. The Gemara (Brachos 35a) initially suggests that there is no need for a Biblical source to recite a bracha rishona because it is a matter of simple logic. If one is obligated to thank Hashem after eating when he is satisfied, then certainly he should be obligated to recite a bracha when he is hungry. But this reasoning is rejected by the Gemara (see Tosafos there, s.v. L'fanav). The conclusion of the Gemara is that it is more incumbent on a person to say a bracha after eating because once he is satisfied he is less likely to recognize Hashem's hand in the creation of the food that he ate. That is why the Torah obligates a person to recite Birchas Hamazon only after eating.

On Chanuka, we celebrate two miracles - the military victory of the Jewish people over the Greeks, and the fact that the lights of the menorah burned for

eight days with only one jug of oil. Yet, the text of Al Hanisim, our expression of hallel v'hoda'ah, focuses exclusively on the military victory. Why not mention the miracle of the jug of oil as well? Perhaps the answer is that Chazal understood that people often fail to recognize the hand of G-d in any historical event which appears to be natural. They do not readily appreciate the divine intervention which made it possible. And even if initially they view the event in the proper perspective, nevertheless with the passage of time, things tend to become less clear. That is why Chazal highlighted the military victory in Al Hanisim to emphasize that we have to express our thanks for the natural miracles of life and of history no less than for the supernatural miracle of the jug of oil.

In the merit of our heartfelt tefillah and profound hoda'ah, may we see the miracles of the final ge'ulah.

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**Rav Kook Torah**

***The Sacred Protects Itself***

Rav Kook made the following comments when speaking at the inaugural ceremony for the Mizrahi Teachers Institute in Jerusalem during Chanukah, 1932:

Why is it that the Menorah we use in our homes for Chanukah must be different than the Menorah in the Temple, bearing eight or nine branches instead of seven?

People think that kodesh and chol — the realms of sacred and secular — are adversaries bat one another. But in truth, there is no conflict between kodesh and chol. Our national life requires that both of these domains be fully developed and channeled toward building the nation. We should aspire to combine them and imbue the secular with holiness.

We strive for kiddush, to sanctify the mundane and extend the influence of kodesh on chol. But we also need havdalah to differentiate between the two realms. Havdalah is necessary to prevent the blurring of the boundaries between the sacred and the secular, to preclude the debasement of kodesh and its misuse for secular purposes.

There exists a perfect kodesh, lofty and sublime. We draw from its essence, from its content, from its living treasure. And we are commanded to protect it from any secular influences that could dullen the rich tapestry of the kodesh.

Thus, Jewish law forbids us to fashion a Menorah similar to the one used in the holy Temple. In this way, the kodesh defends itself from any flow of secular influences that may diminish its value. It is because of this self-protection that the kodesh is able to retain its power to strengthen and vitalize secular frameworks.

Greek thought asserted that there is no holiness in the practical world. The Greek mind could only see in the universe — from the lowest depths to the farthest stars — mundane forces. Knesset Yisrael, however, knows how to join heaven and earth. We know how to unite kodesh and chol, how to sanctify ourselves with that which is permissible, to eat a meal in holiness and purity.

We are able to attain this ideal unification because we maintain the necessary barriers, we know how to distinguish between the sacred and the secular. Eternal Israel is built on these complementary principles of chibur and havdalah, unification and distinction.

Turning to the institute's faculty and students, Rav Kook concluded his address:

In an institution where both sacred subjects and secular disciplines are taught, we must not forget that our ancient battle against Greek culture is not over. If we are careless, the sacred will become profane.

We must remember that we are descendants of those heroes who sacrificed their lives to guard the holy. Like the Temple Menorah, Torah study is the highest level of kodesh. We must be careful that our study of Torah does not degenerate into a study of literature, not even a study of national literature or an ancient science. Torah is the word of the Living God. Our practical activities must be illuminated by the holy light of Torah and its mitzvot. As the psalmist said,

“Your word is a lamp for my feet and a light for my path.” (Psalms 119:5)  
(Adapted from *Mo'adei HaRe'iyah*, pp. 181-182, and *Celebration of the Soul* by Rabbi Pesach Jaffe, pp. 99-100)  
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Parshat Miketz - Chanukah

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There Always Is Hope

by **Shlomo Klapper**

After Israel's famine became too severe for Yaakov's fortitude, the Torah asserts that "VaYar Yaakov Ki Yesh Shever BeMitzrayim," "Yaakov perceived that there were provisions in Egypt," (Bereishit 42:1) and therefore instructs his sons to descend to Egypt to obtain these provisions. Why does the Torah employ the seemingly inaccurate language of "perceived," since confirming Egypt's alleged sustenance requires merely obtaining information and not conjecturing? Additionally, since "VaYar" is utilized only in a sense of seeing literally with one's own eyes, its use here is flummoxing, as Yaakov obviously could not literally witness Egypt's happenings. Ergo, Rashi substitutes "Shever" with "Sheiver," or hope, explicating that Yaakov foresaw that hope resided in Mitzrayim via inadvertent prophecy, but that Yosef's presence there spawned that optimism was concealed. While Peshuto Shel Mikra renders Shever as foodstuffs and the Sages homiletically translate it as hope, what is the two different interpretations' correlation?

Yaakov comprehended Egypt's unique holiness, since Egypt was privileged to ensure the world's survival by meting out food to others. However, Yaakov wondered why such an immoral country deserved to save the world, an opportunity that theoretically should originate only from an exalted person. When Yaakov saw Egypt's "Shever," food, and that the dissolute Egyptians surprisingly allocated it to others, a flicker of "Sheiver," hope, glowed in his mind that perhaps Yosef, his long lost son, was orchestrating this moral effort. Only Yosef, embedded with Jewish morals, could cause such an ethical and decent episode, since Yaakov knew that even when faced with adversity, Jews are an Or LaGoyim, beacons to nations, due to their entrenched morals, honesty, and decency.

Using Chazal's play on words, Rabbi Elimelech of Gordzisk sanguinely explicated this Pasuk by changing "Yesh Sheiver BeMitzrayim," "there is hope even in Egypt," to "Yesh Sheiver BeMetzarim," "there is hope even in narrow, astringent straits," teaching that even when spiritual constriction and narrow perspectives constrain a person, he never should disregard the constant silver lining of "Sheiver," hope. As David HaMelech said, "Ashrei SheKeil Yaakov BeEzro Sivro Al Hashem Elokav," "Praiseworthy is one who has the aid of the God of Yaakov, whose hope is in Hashem, his God."

The Meor Einayim alternatively suggests an additional outlook, based on the Midrash that deals with the many other, failed worlds that God destroyed before creating the perfect planet in which we presently reside. Kabbalistic literature refers to the other worlds' annihilations as "the breakage before the Tikkun (perfection)." Yaakov's family's descent to Mitzrayim was the

preliminary "breakage" that led to the formation of the perfect nation – the Bnei Yisrael that left Egypt and received the Torah on Har Sinai. Thus, Egypt's only task was to prepare Bnei Yisrael for Kabbalat HaTorah on Har Sinai. Yaakov saw "Shever," or breakage, in Egypt, but comprehended that his nation's settlement there was a temporary sojourn and was meant to ripen them for spiritual opulence and religious sumptuousness on Har Sinai.

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subject: Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum

**Shema Yisrael Torah Network**

**Peninim on the Torah - Parshas Mikeitz**

**Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum**

**ויאמר פרעה אל יוסף ראה נתתי אתך על כל ארץ מצרים**

**Then Pharaoh said to Yosef. "See! I have placed you in charge of all the land of Egypt." (41:41)**

*Hakoras hatov*, recognizing a favor and paying gratitude, is a defining *middah*, character trait. One who is an ingrate is not a *mentch*, decent human being. Nonetheless, some individuals who, although not by nature ingrates, find themselves hard-pressed to recognize that (a) they owe something to someone, (b) that they have sufficient reason to show their appreciation. In other words, they seek every excuse to justify their lack of gratitude. They owe no one for anything.

We all know people who seek excuses not to show their gratitude. We observe another form of character deficiency. A person helps; he is acting on someone's behalf, be it a job, a marriage partner, or simply an act of lovingkindness. Once he has performed his good deed, he expects constant recognition. "Remember how you got here and who helped you along the way." If, Heaven forbid, a day passes and the beneficiary neglects to pay his respects and laud his benefactor for everything – then he is an ingrate. Yes, there are people like that. They thrive on and need constant recognition.

Indeed, *Horav Sholom Schwadron, zl*, suggests that Pharaoh was like that. He elevated Yosef from slavery to monarchy, which was certainly no simple feat. No one other than Pharaoh (with a "little" manipulation from Hashem) could have achieved this transformation. If so, why does Pharaoh say to Yosef, "See! I have placed you in charge of all the land of Egypt"? A few *pesukim* later, Pharaoh "reminds" Yosef, "I am Pharaoh." Obviously, he is Pharaoh and, undoubtedly, he is the only one who has the power to elevate Yosef. Why does Pharaoh have to issue these "subtle" reminders?

*Rav Sholom* explains that Pharaoh was intimating to Yosef, "Remember who gave you this job. I am not asking for anything from you -- no accolades, no gifts, nothing – but that you remember how you got here and who helped you along the way. Do not ever lose sight of the fact that, regardless of what you have become, I am still Pharaoh. Never forget! I will not!"

Pharaoh represents the classic example of the fellow who simply will not let go. He has benefited others, and, in return, he wants recognition. Indeed, he thrives on recognition. If a day goes by and he does not receive his recognition, he will be hurt and upset.

*Rav Sholom* relates that he heard a similar exposition with regard to the Angel that informed Manoach and his wife that they would soon have a son (Shimshon). At first, Manoach and his wife were uncertain as to the identity of the individual who conveyed the good news to them. Was he a human being or an Angel? The *pasuk* concludes: "The Angel of Hashem did not continue anymore to appear to Manoach and his wife; then Manoach realized that he was an Angel of Hashem" (*Shoftim* 13:21). How did the fact that the Angel did not return serve as an indicator that he was, in fact, an angel?

*Rav Sholom* explains that a human being might not have placed great demands on Manoach and his wife, but recognition is a given. He would like them to talk about him, tell their friends, make a point of coming over to him, so that he could remind them that, if not for "him," they might still be childless. That is human nature. Angels are not that way. Thus, if he did not return, he must have been a supernatural being. One must always show his appreciation by expressing his gratitude. On the other hand, the benefactor should keep it to himself and just feel good that Hashem "allowed" him to be His conduit for helping another Jew.

**ויתן לו את אסנת בת פוטפרע כהן אן לאשה**

**And he gave him Osnas bas Potifar, chief of On, for a wife. (41:45)**

Certain words in the English language are anathema to the Jewish religion. Coincidence, believing that things "happen" without being designated by G-d, is the antithesis of Jewish belief. We could devote books to support the notion of *Hashgachah Pratis*, Divine Providence, but why look anywhere but in our *parsha*? This is, of course,

true throughout the Torah, but the story of Yosef and his brothers and the need to have him descend to Egypt so that they would eventually follow, is a classic example of *Hashgachah*. Yosef's marriage to Osnas is a classic tale of *Hashgachah Pratis* as stated by *Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer*, and cited by *Daas Zekeinim* and *Chezuni*. It is a case of Divine Providence, but, furthermore, it is an example of a powerful message never to give up hope. The little girl that was rejected by her family ended up being the progenitress of two of our greatest *Shevatim*. First, however, let me relate the story.

Shechem violated Dinah, daughter of Yaakov *Avinu*. Dinah conceived and gave birth to a little girl who was shunned by her uncles, since she represented moral violation and a terrible incursion against the Patriarchal family. Yaakov took pity on his granddaughter and gave her an amulet which would protect her. The young girl, who was named Osnas, was eventually sold to (and later adopted by) Potifar, whose wife attempted to seduce Yosef. When she was rejected, Potifar's wife slandered Yosef, who was saved only because Osnas, who knew the truth, defended him to the Egyptian Priests that comprised the court of law. (As a result of being found innocent by them, Yosef later passed the edict that the Egyptian government had no control over priestly land.) When Yosef was elevated to the position of Viceroy, Pharaoh sought a suitable wife for him. Pharaoh figured that, although Yosef's roots (as a Jewish slave) were murky, by having him marry an Egyptian woman, his standing would be elevated in the eyes of the populace.

Because Yosef was quite handsome, Pharaoh had him paraded through Egypt. This brought all of the eligible women out. They all threw something at him in order to get his attention. Osnas did not have anything to throw, other than the amulet that her grandfather had given her. When Yosef retrieved the amulet, he realized that standing before him was a member of his family. The rest is history. What is history? How should one teach history? It is the recognition of the Divine Hand coordinating all events, so that one sees how everything that occurs -- both in the world and in his personal life -- is all a part of Hashem's Divine Plan.

Stories abound which underscore Hashem's Divine Providence over each and every one of us -- personally. One of the more well-known stories (of which there are a number of variations) is Tuvia Ariel's story, "7401." It seemed to him that life was coincidental. Interestingly, the last four digits of his childhood residential phone number were 7401. Likewise, the last four digits of his social security number were also 7401. Years later, when he found himself serving as a volunteer in a *kibbutz*, he met a man, a carpenter by trade, a man who rarely spoke. He was a Holocaust survivor who had escaped Auschwitz. He, too, had a number tattooed on his arm. Yes -- the last four digits on his arm were 7401. When Tuvia inquired concerning the numbers, the carpenter became visibly anxious. He said, "Do not talk about it. I lost my entire family, my father; my mother; there was a brother behind me in line (*selektzia*) and a brother in front of me. I am the only one who survived. Never bring this up to me. I want to forget." Tuvia acquiesced to the carpenter's request, until one day he met someone...

Tuvia is a man of many stories, his own life serving as an agent for *chesed*, for helping others. Indeed, he considers himself to be an agent to make life easier and better for others. While this is true of all of us, most do not think about life in that manner. *Horav Chaim Volozhiner, zl*, writes: "Man is created *l'ho'il l'achrinei*, to help others." Tuvia took his own misfortune and transformed it into an opportunity for helping others, but this story is not about Tuvia.

As a volunteer in the *kibbutz*, he was once operating a large grinding machine, when his leg was caught in the blades. Immediately, he was sucked in. Quick thinking and incredible courage inspired him to self-amputate his leg before his whole body was sucked into the machine. As a result, Tuvia became an amputee with little ability to work at the *kibbutz*. He worked as a taxi driver, picking up tourists at the airport, ferrying them to the main office of the touring agency where he was employed. Due to his limitations, the agency would not use him as a tourist guide. This did not stop Tuvia. He did his job, knowing that wherever he was, whatever he was doing, he was acting as an agent of Hashem in one of His Divine scenarios.

One day he picked up an American tourist. His attire bespoke wealth, his attitude bespoke obnoxious wealth. His manner was crude and disrespectful. Tuvia found it difficult to be his usual friendly self; nonetheless, he acted diplomatically, responding to questions in a respectful manner, saving his usual congenial nature for other tourists. This man was not going to receive the "time of day" from Tuvia unless he asked for it. They were halfway between the airport and the tourist office, when the man yelled, "Stop the car! Pull over!" Obviously, Tuvia's cold, indifferent attitude affected a response from the passenger. Suddenly, someone was not bending over backward to impress him.

The man looked at Tuvia and curtly said, "You think I am a lazy, materialistic, American tourist, who comes to your country to throw his money around? Well, you are wrong. I paid my dues! I suffered plenty!" To prove his statement, he pulled up the sleeve of his shirt and pointed to the tattoo on his arm, "I lost my entire family. I had a brother behind me and a brother in front of me -- all gone."

Tuvia was about to lose it. He saw Hashem's Divine Plan forming before his very eyes. "Was your brother's name Shimon?" he asked, the words shakily coming from his mouth. The man's face went from crimson to white. "I am not taking you to the tourist office. We are making a detour." The man did not complain. Suddenly, the boisterous American became still, as they traveled an hour and a half to the north, to the *kibbutz* where Tuvia had worked ten years earlier.

They arrived, and Tuvia inquired about the whereabouts of the carpenter who had befriended him. He did not even say, "Hello." He just asked, "Was your brother's name Reuven?" Another face turned white. Tuvia returned to the taxi and told the American tourist, "Come. I am taking you to your brother."

He led him to the carpenter's shed and left. He did not want to infringe upon the poignancy of the moment. Two brothers, who had been separated for years, both thinking the other had died, were finally reunited. Tuvia stood by his taxi and wept -- first, tears of sadness, and then tears of joy. Why did he weep? How did he know? When the American tourist showed him his tattooed arm, he noted the last four digits of his number -- 7402.

לזכר נשמת שמעון בן יהודה לייב ז"ל

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