

DIVREI TORAH FROM INTERNET
ON PARSHAS VAYEISHEV - 5756

(c/o CShulman@paulweiss.com)

From: "Ohr Somayach <ohr@jer1.co.il>"
To: CSHULMAN, " " Highlights of the Torah weekly
port...
Date: 12/9/95 4:08pm
Subject: Torah Weekly - Vayeshev

* TORAH WEEKLY *

Highlights of the Weekly Torah Portion
with "Sing, My Soul!" thoughts on Shabbos Zemiros
Parshas Vayeshev
For the week ending 23 Kislev 5756
15 & 16 December 1995

Summary

Yaakov Avinu settles in the land of Canaan. His favorite son, Yosef, brings him critical reports about his brothers. Yaakov makes for Yosef a fine tunic of multi-colored woolen strips. Yosef exacerbates his brothers' hatred by recounting prophetic dreams -- of sheaves of wheat bowing to his sheaf, and of the sun and the moon and the stars bowing down to him -- signifying that all his family will appoint him king. The brothers indict Yosef and resolve to execute him. When Yosef comes to Shechem, the brothers relent and decide, at Reuven's instigation, to throw him into a pit instead. Yehuda persuades the brothers to take Yosef out of the pit and sell him to a caravan of passing Yishmaelims. When Reuven returns to find the pit empty, he rends his clothes in anguish. The brothers soak Yosef's tunic in goat's blood and show it to their father Yaakov, who assumes that Yosef has been devoured by wild animals -- Yaakov is inconsolable. Meanwhile, in Egypt, Yosef has been sold to Potiphar, Pharaoh's Chamberlain of the Butchers. In the Parsha's sub-plot, Yehuda's son Er dies as punishment for preventing his wife Tamar from becoming pregnant because he feared that she would lose her beauty after childbirth. Onan, Yehuda's second son, then weds Tamar by levirate marriage. He too is punished in similar circumstances to his brother. When Yehuda's wife dies, Tamar resolves to have children through Yehuda as this union will found the Davidic line, culminating in the Mashiach. Meanwhile, Yosef rises to power in the house of his Egyptian master. His extreme beauty attracts the unwanted advances of his master's wife. Enraged by his rejection of her, she slanders Yosef, falsely accusing him of attempting to seduce her, and he is imprisoned. While in jail, Yosef successfully predicts the outcome of the dream of Pharaoh's wine steward, who is re-instated; and that of Pharaoh's baker, who is hanged. In spite of his promise, the wine steward forgets to help Yosef after he is released, and Yosef languishes in jail.

Commentaries

SINGING IN THE RAIN

"And Yaakov sat..." (37:1)

Once, there was an old lady sipping her coffee in the restaurant of a theater long after the curtain had gone up on the first act of the play.

B'S'D' The waiter asked her curiously why she hadn't taken her seat. She replied to him. "Oh no -- it's much too crowded and noisy in there now. Once they all come out -- that's when I go in. Then I can have as many seats to myself as I like!"

We tend to think that the purpose of life is those endless sunny summer days; days when you can't see a cloud and everything in life seems perfect. And when the rain falls into our lives -- as it does to us all -- well, that's something to be endured until the clouds clear. We put up with hardship, thinking that it's just a painful intermission, and when it ends, we will get back to the `real purpose of life'.

The reverse is really the case. Life is all about the rain and the storms and our striving to overcome them. For in this way, we elevate ourselves spiritually and fulfill the purpose that we were sent down here for. Those sunny days are so we can gather our strength, and thus derive the maximum from facing life's challenges.

Yaakov Avinu wanted to live in peace and tranquility. Hashem said "Is it not enough for the righteous that they have their reward in the world-to-come -- they also want to live in this world in serenity?" And Yaakov desired serenity not to idle away his hours, but so that he could have the peace of mind to devote himself to spiritual pursuits. Nevertheless it was considered improper for him to place his focus on serenity, for in life "the play's the thing" -- not the intermission.
(Based on R' Yerucham Lebovitz zt"l)

Lights! Camera! Action!

"These are the generations of Yaakov, Yosef..." (37:2)

This week's Parsha is like a film-script for the entire future history of the Jewish People: Yosef (the Jewish people), the most beloved son of his father (Hashem), is compelled to leave his father and his land (the exile of the Jewish People throughout the world). He is sent to another land, under the control of a decadent nation. And they try, by all methods, to wipe him out. However, this has the reverse effect, and he rises to the pinnacle of society and success. He becomes the provider, the archetypal entrepreneur, sustaining the nations through times of famine, and eventually his brothers come and bow down in front of him, for they have caused him so much pain and affliction. Thus it will be in the future -- in the final scene -- when Hashem is revealed to the whole world, all will see that it was precisely the trials of the Jewish People that has propelled their ascent.

(Based on the Chafetz Chaim zt"l)

Living Waters

"And they cast him (Yosef) into a the pit. And the pit was empty -- without water" (37:24)

"It was empty of water -- but it did contain snakes and scorpions" (Rashi)
The Torah is compared to water. Wherever there is no Torah -- the snakes and scorpions of the evil impulse will rule unhindered, because Torah is the only defense against a person's negative impulses.

(Adapted from Avnei Ezel in Mayana shel Torah)

Haftorah: Amos 2:1-3:8

Top of the class

"Only you have I loved of all the families of the earth, therefore, I will recall upon you all your iniquities..." (3:2)

Take a slow-witted student, devoid of promise and talent. A teacher won't punish him for his under-achieving, for punishment will serve no purpose.

Such a student is just not capable of improving his performance. But when a bright scholar, who is both talented and knowledgeable, fails to reach his potential or fools around in class, he's going to get what's coming to him! "Only you have I loved of all the families of the earth" -- I know you and I know your talents and abilities, therefore if you fail to listen to My voice -- "I will recall upon you all your iniquities" -- not out of vengeance, but because you have the ability to be "top of the class".

Sing, My Soul!
Insights into the Zemiros sung at the Shabbos table
throughout the generations.

Mizmor L'David - "A Psalm of David..."

V'shavti b'vais Hashem l'orech yamim
"And I shall dwell in the House of Hashem for the length of days"

When Rabbi Yochanan, the foremost sage in Eretz Yisrael, heard that there were Jews in Babylon who had reached an old age he expressed amazement: "In order that you increase the days of your lives and those of your children in the land" is the Torah's promise of a reward for fulfilling the commands of Hashem but this promise of longevity is limited to the land -- Eretz Yisrael and not anywhere else? When he was told that these Jews were consistent in attending morning and evening services in their local synagogues he realized that it was this merit which achieved long life for them even outside Eretz Yisrael. If "I shall dwell in the House of Hashem" then my reward will be "the length of days."

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To: CSHULMAN
Date: 12/10/95 9:37pm
Subject: Torah Studies-Vayeishev/Chanukah

B"H
Torah Studies
Adaptation of Likutei Sichos
by
Rabbi Dr. Jonathan Sacks
Chief Rabbi of Great Britain

Based on the teachings and talks of the Lubavitcher Rebbe
Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson on the weekly Torah Portion

Vayeshev

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VAYESHEV

Vayeshev, and the following Sidra of Mikketz, have a common theme: Dreams. In Vayeshev we are told of Joseph's dreams, and in Mikketz, about the dreams of Pharaoh.

Both dreamt twice, and in each case the dreams shared a single meaning, conveyed in different symbols.

What was the significant difference between Joseph's and Pharaoh's dreams? Why did they dream twice? And what is the implication of their detailed symbolism? The answers are given in terms of the Jew's contemporary search for a path to G-d.

TWO DREAMERS AND FOUR DREAMS

In the beginning of this week's Sidra we are told about Joseph's two dreams. Both had the same meaning: That Joseph would rule over his brothers and that they would pay homage to him. The second dream merely added that the "sun and the moon" - Jacob and Bilhah would be included in this homage.

There is a striking parallel between this and next week's Sidra (Miketz) which relates the two dreams of Pharaoh, which also shared a single meaning. But in Pharaoh's case the Torah states a reason why there should have been two dreams: "Because the thing is established by G-d, and G-d will shortly bring it to pass."

Of Joseph's dreams, no explanation is given of their repetition, and indeed the additional information that the second conveys could have been hinted at in the first.

We are thus forced to conclude that Joseph's two dreams, alike though they are in their meaning, are allusions to two different things.

What are these two things? And, since the actions of the Fathers are both a sign and a lesson to their descendants, what are their implications for us?

(Joseph's actions are included in the works of the Fathers, since he brought Jacob's work into fruition in the world as hinted to in the verse: "These are the generations of Jacob: Joseph. . .")

The Sheaves and the Stars

Joseph's two dreams have the following difference.

The first concerns things of the earth: "And behold, we were binding sheaves in the midst of a field." But the second is about the heavens: "The sun and the moon and eleven stars."

Both of Pharaoh's dreams, however, had an earthly symbolism regressing in fact from the domain of living things (the seven cows) to that of plants (the seven ears of corn). For Pharaoh had no link with the realm of heaven. And whereas his dreams represent a regression, Joseph's display an ascent in holiness.

This distinction between Joseph and Pharaoh exemplifies one of the unique characteristics of the Jew, that he is simultaneously involved in both the material and spiritual, this world and the next.

As the previous Lubavitcher Rebbe said when he was arrested in Russia in 1927 and one of his interrogators threatened him with a revolver: "Men who have many gods and one world are frightened by a revolver; a man who has one G-d and two worlds has nothing to fear."

These two worlds are not separate in time - a this-worldly present and an other-worldly future. The Jew is instead bound to a higher spiritual reality even in the midst of this world. He stands on a "ladder" set on the earth whose top reaches to heaven" and moves in his service from the mundane ("earth") to the most exalted spirituality ("heaven"), always ascending.

TWO WORLDS WITHIN ONE WORLD

The Torah is precise, and every detail contains a lesson which has a bearing on the conduct of our life.

The implication of the fact that Joseph's dreams were about two worlds (earth and heaven) and yet had a single meaning, is that the Jew must fuse his dual involvement, with the material and the spiritual, into one. Not only must there be no tension between his two worlds, but the material must contribute to his spiritual life until it is itself spiritualized.

The idea that physical acts like eating and drinking are directed towards G-d, is a natural one to every Jew.

There is a story about the Rebbe, Rabbi Shmuel, that when his two sons were children they were discussing the special virtues of the Jew, and to demonstrate his point he asked their servant:

"Bentzion - have you eaten?"
The servant replied: "Yes."
"Did you eat well?"
"I am satisfied, thank G-d."
"Why did you eat?"

"In order to live."
"Why do you live?"
"To be a Jew and to do what G-d wishes."
As he said this, the servant sighed.

Later, the Rebbe told his children:

"You see, a Jew by his nature eats to live, and lives to be a Jew and to do what G-d has told him; and still he sighs that he has not yet reached the ultimate truth."

Since the Jew has a spiritual intention in every physical act, the acts themselves are spiritualized. In the words of the Baal Shem Tov: "Where a man's desires are - there he is."

The Meaning of the Sheaves

This, then, is the significance of the fact that Joseph had two dreams.

What is the meaning of the detailed content of each?

The first begins, "We were binding sheaves in the midst of a field." It begins, in other words, with work, an activity wholly absent from the dreams of Pharaoh. In the domain of unholiness, work (i.e., avodah, the effort involved in the service of G-d) may be absent, as we find it written: "We ate in Egypt free" (i.e., without the effort of the Mitzvot). But the rewards of holiness (the emanations of the Divine) come only through effort. And so the Jew's ascent on the ladder from earth to heaven must - from the very beginning - involve the work of dedicating his physical actions to holiness.

The nature of this work - as in Joseph's dream - is binding sheaves.

We are born into a world of concealment which is like a field, in which things and people, like stalks of corn, grow apart, living separately, in and for themselves. In man we call this orientation towards the self, the "animal soul," which creates diversity and separateness. And the Jew must go beyond it, binding like sheaves the many facets of his being into the unified service of G-d, a service which transcends self and separation.

In the dream, the sheaves, after they were bound, bowed down to Joseph's sheaf. And so, for us, the next stage in service must be "bowing down," the submission to what is higher than us. Jews form a unity, as if they were the limbs of one body. And just as a body is coordinated only when its muscles act in response to the nervous system of the brain, so the spiritual health of the collective body of Jews is dependent on their responsiveness to their "head" - the spiritual leader of the generation. It is he who instructs it so that its individual members act in harmony towards their proper goal.

Indeed, inwardly this submission precedes the act of unifying one's existence in the service of G-d. The capacity to effect this "binding together" derives from the inner submission to the spiritual leader of the generation. But the outward manifestation of this service follows the order of Joseph's dream: First the "binding," and then the submission.

THE MEANING OF THE STARS

But this is at the level of Joseph's first dream. Service at this level is still confined to the "earth" - the limits of physical existence. And it remains for the Jew to transcend these constraints, in the act of teshuvah ("repentance," or more correctly, "return").

The real process of teshuvah comes when "the spirit returns to G-d who gave it"; that is, when the soul of the Jew regains its pristine state, as it was prior to its embodiment. This does not mean that soul and body should - G-d forbid - become separate or that bodily existence should be denied, but that the body should cease to conceal the light of the soul. This is the ultimate purpose of the descent of the soul into the body within a physical existence - that without denying or standing aloof from this mode of existence - the soul should retain its unmediated closeness to G-d.

This is the meaning of Joseph's second dream. It speaks of the Jew who has already passed beyond the service which is confined to "earth." He has left the world of "separation" - the state where things are seen to exist in and for themselves - and no longer needs to "bind" together the schismatic elements of his being. His service is now wholly at the level of "heaven," the path of return to the pristine state of the soul.

But the act of submission to the "head" of the collective body of the Jewish people is repeated in this dream (where the sun, moon and eleven stars bow down). This clearly implies that this inward attitude of reference is not restricted to the Jew who is still working "in the field," but extends to the Jew who has already, as it were, reached the heavens.

Certainly he no longer needs guidance to avoid the concealments and distortions that the physical life may bring to one's spiritual sight. But even at this level, he must still act in harmony with other Jews in collective response to their spiritual leader.

THE RUNGS OF THE LADDER TO HEAVEN

This, then, is the path mapped out for every Jew by the dreams of Joseph.

First there is the "work in the field," the effort (avodah) to unify a world of separate existences and divided selves, within the service of G-d ("binding sheaves"). And though the Jewish people are called "the sons of kings," or even simply "kings," this does not imply that this effort can be dispensed with. For the rewards of holiness must be worked for in this world. And they are rewards which it is beyond our power to anticipate: They will be "found" - that is, they will be unexpected.

We read: "If a man says to you, I have labored and have not found (a reward), do not believe him. If he says, I have not labored, but still I have found, do not believe him. But if he says, I have labored and I have found - believe him."

Secondly, at all levels of service there must be submission to the "head" of the "body" of the Jewish people. And then, as we are told in the Pirkei Avot, when "your will is nullified (in the face of His will)" it will follow that "He will nullify the will of others in the

face of your will."

In other words, the concealments of this world of plurality and disunity ("others") will lose their power, and we will be open to the flow of revelation and spiritual life that is the life of Joseph and of righteousness.

(Source: Likkutei Sichot, Vol. III pp. 805-10)

From: "Jeffrey Gross <75310.3454@compuserve.com>"
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Weekl...
Date: 12/12/95 10:18pm
Subject: Parshas Vayeshev

SELECTED HALACHOS RELATING TO PARSHAS VAYESHEV

By Rabbi Doniel Neustadt

A discussion of Halachic topics related to the Parsha of the week. For final rulings, consult your Rav.

... Yosef would not listen to her to lie beside her, to be with her (39:10). Yosef refused to remain alone with her (Rashbam, Sfurmo).

Yichud With A Married Woman

QUESTION: Is Yichud (being alone) permitted with a married woman whose husband is out of the house but in town?

DISCUSSION: The prohibition of Yichud does not apply to a married woman whose husband is in town. The Rishonim differ in their reasoning for this exemption. Rashi(1) explains that the unexpected appearance of the husband at any time is enough to deter any illicit behavior. However, Rambam(2) explains that the nature of a woman is such that the mere presence of her husband in the same city - even without the possibility of his unexpected appearance - is a sufficient deterrent to illicit behavior. The Halacha L'maase in the following scenarios depends (mostly) on whether we follow Rashi's or the Rambam's explanation:

If a woman leaves her house and her husband does not know where she might be, according to Rashi's explanation, Yichud would be prohibited(3). According to the Rambam, however, there would be no prohibition of Yichud.

Although there are Poskim(4) who rule stringently in this case, there are many Poskim who tend to be lenient(5). Some Poskim rule that one should only be lenient in a Sh'eas H'adchak, a

time of great necessity(6).

Another issue which depends on the rationale behind this Halacha is the question of what is considered "the same town". Many people live in large cities and the husband may be on the other side of town, a trip which could take an hour or two. Following Rashi's reasoning, Yichud would be prohibited, since the husband is not likely to walk in at any given moment. According to the Rambam, however, the wife's nature is to fear her husband as long as he is in town, regardless of the distances involved, and thus Yichud would be permitted.

There is much disagreement among the Poskim on this point. Some(7) are lenient. In their view the size of the city is not a factor. Chazon Ish, for example ruled that the entire metropolitan area of Tel-Aviv is "one city". Other Poskim(8) include even the neighboring cities of Ramat Gan and Petach Tikvah as part of Tel-Aviv, since they are near each other and one can walk from one to the next on Shabbos.

There are, however, other Poskim who are more stringent on this subject. Rav Moshe Feinstein(9) rules that a husband who must attend to matters on the other side of town is not considered as if he were in the same city. This is especially so, says Rav Moshe, if he is employed by others and is normally required to remain at his workplace during the workday. If however, he is self employed and may come and go as he pleases, even though he generally does not come home at that time, Yichud is permitted.

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FOOTNOTES:

- 1 Kiddushin 81:1
- 2 Isurei Biah 22:12, according to the interpretation of most commentaries.
- 3 If, however, she is in a place which she frequents, we assume that the husband would be permitted - Igros Moshe EH 4:61-21.
- 4 Chochmas Adam 126:6; Pischei Teshuva EH 22:6.
- 5 Chida, Chazon Ish & Dovev Meishorim quoted in D'var Halacha 7:2.
- 6 Igros Moshe EH 4:61-21. See also Tzitz Eliezer 6:40-6.
- 7 Eizer Mekudosh 22:5; Chazon Ish quoted in Dvar Halacha 7:21
- 8 Harav S.Z. Auerbach quoted in Nishmas Avrohom EH 22:9
- 9 Igros Moshe EH 4:61-7,21. See also ibid regarding a husband who is incarcerated.

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This edition is dedicated to the memory of Rabbi E Nemeth of Highgate

Vayeishev - Judah the King by Rabbi Z M Salasnik, Bushey Synagogue

*** [listowner's comment - in case you were wondering - my brother]

Who is the ideal leader? A good person who has never sinned? Not necessarily. The Talmud relates that only 'Four died through the serpent's machinations (and not on account of their own sins): - Benjamin son of Jacob, Amram father of Moses, Jesse father of David and Caleb son of David'.

(Shabbat 55b) Benjamin was the most perfect and sinless of Jacob's sons but never featured as a leader. The son, accepted as a leader both by his brothers and their father, was Judah.

Yet, when we find her, and Yichud is less than ideal person. He saved Joseph from death, but the reason he advanced was mercenary - there was no gain in his murder. Instead, he recommended a profitable way of disposing of his brother - selling him to the Ishmaelites. (I have followed Rashi's interpretation on Ch. 37 v. 26. Other commentators interpret Judah's words more altruistically).

According to the plain text of the Torah, though not of the commentators, he married a Canaanite girl (Ch. 38 v. 2), when both Abraham and Isaac had been anxious that their children did not marry Canaanites.

For understandable reasons, he was economical with the truth in telling his widowed daughter-in-law, Tamar, to wait until Shelah was older before they married. His real intention, according to Rashi, was that Tamar and Shelah should not marry for fear that he, like his elder brothers, would die after marrying her. (Ch. 38 v.11)

He was prepared to spend a night with a woman whom he assumed to be a prostitute (Ch. 38 vv.15-16). While his action can be defended, since such relationships were not forbidden before the Torah was given, rabbinic opinion is that the Patriarchs - Judah's own most immediate male ancestors - had observed the Torah voluntarily, even though it had not yet been given. Where Judah's forbears were meticulous to behave beyond what G-d expected of them, Judah himself did not aspire to anything approaching their spiritual and moral commitment.

On learning that Tamar was pregnant through an act of prostitution, he decided that she should be burnt (commentators differ as to whether this was to be a death penalty or the less serious punishment of branding a harlot ...).

He arrived at a drastic decision without first hearing her defence.

So what made Judah a leader and role model for the Jewish people?

When Tamar asked Judah if he could identify the man who made her pregnant, sending him his own seal, wrap and staff, Judah replied 'Tzadkah mimeni', 'She is more righteous than I am' (38:26).

In other words, she waited to marry Shelah. I, Judah did not keep my word to arrange a marriage between them. She consorted with me to give me descendants (from whom King David and the Messiah will come). My intentions were for personal pleasure alone.

This act of confession impressed G-d and his angels. According to a Midrash, G-d forgave Judah, whereupon the angels pronounced the blessing which later formed part of the Amidah, 'Blessed are you, Lord, who is gracious and forgives repeatedly' (Authorised Daily Prayer Book - Centenary Edition p.79).

The Talmud claims that Judah's confession encouraged Reuben to confess his error/sin and that, the end for both brothers was a place in the World To Come. (Sotah 7b) Judah was also rewarded with kingship, since the principal royal dynasty would be from him.

Judah's own name related to this quality, of confessing when one realises one's own faults. While Leah, his mother, called him Yehudah because Odeh et Hashem 'I praise Hashem', Hoda'ah means confession. Sincere confession is a sign of moral maturity and responsibility. The sinner acknowledges his errors and resolves not to repeat his sin. He becomes a different person. He accepts G-d's law as authoritative and, most important of all, his future behaviour accords with his change of mind.

We do not know of any confession that Judah might have made over the sale of Joseph. While he saved him from death by selling him, it is possible that

had he recommended returning Joseph to their father, the other brothers would have followed his lead. So, Judah was responsible, at least in part, for separating father (Jacob) from son (Joseph) for twenty years, for Jacob's deep grief and for Joseph's suffering.

But, even if he did not confess formally, his behaviour in later years showed contrition. The young man who sold Joseph for silver became the elder brother who offered to be a slave - to surrender freedom, family and fortune - in order that Benjamin can return in freedom. If in his early twenties, he caused his father perpetual grief; in his mid-forties, he was guaranteeing to his father that he would not permit Benjamin to come to grief.

Our role models are many and varied. They include those who always acted correctly, but they also include the Ba'al Teshuvah, the person who acknowledges where he went wrong and uses for good the same traits and qualities he use once for bad.

Such a person was Judah.

Saadia Gaon - continued by Rabbi Yaakov Shemaria, Beth Hamidrash Hagadol,
Leeds

Lasting Contributions

The Gaon pioneered not only in philosophy, but in all areas of medieval Jewish science, he was one of the founders of medieval Jewish philology. At the age of 20 he completed his first work, the Hebrew dictionary and rhyming lexicon Agron and wrote the Book of Language, which established the principles of Hebrew grammar. He translated the Bible into Arabic and wrote alongside his translation a commentary that explained difficult words, as well as giving historical, religious and philosophical insights of the text. He was a fine Talmudist and his interpretations and halachic rulings had far reaching implications.

At the tender age of 23, Rav Saadia waged an intellectual war against the Karaites. His polemical treatise Refutation of Anan, which exposed the faults and flaws of Karaism, contributed to their diminishing influence.

Saadia's Philosophy of Judaism

Saadia was the first thinker to present a rationally oriented philosophy of Judaism. When Saadia, "the father of Jewish philosophy" taught and wrote in Egypt and Babylonia more than a millennium ago, he confronted challenges facing Judaism not unlike those we encounter today. Many young people of his time were attracted to Greek philosophy in Arabic garb. They abandoned themselves to the secular culture of their time, very much in the same way that many of today's youth are enamoured with secular humanism. It was this intellectual background that the Jews in the tenth century whose spiritual and physical centre of gravity was still in Babylonia (modern Iraq) were torn between loyalty to the traditions of their fathers and lure of religious reforms and a new philosophical system. The religious challenge was posed by the Karaites, a Jewish sect which preached biblical fundamentalism and denied and rejected the authority of the Oral Law. The

philosophical challenge was contained in the ascendancy of Greek philosophy with Arabic overtones which aroused doubts in the hearts of many Jews concerning the religious tenets of Judaism.

Basing his proofs upon the Bible and Talmud, Saadia defended Judaism and conclusively demonstrated that it was also as mature and meaningful as Greek philosophy which had a great appeal to the intellectuals in the tenth century. In defending Jewish beliefs he also considered the difference between Judaism and the religions that stemmed from it, namely Christianity and Islam.

Saadia is best known for his Book of Beliefs and Doctrines, originally written in Arabic; it is a milestone in the history of Jewish philosophy and literature. He wrote it out of his concern for the spiritual flight of many of his contemporaries, and asserted that the teachings and commandments of Judaism are not in conflict with reason and logic, but are actually based on them. He defined faith as the knowledge which results from the contemplation of the discernible and comprehensible. He insisted that as a source of knowledge the authentic tradition of Judaism is as reliable as reason.

THE SECOND BOOK OF SAMUEL

David continued his flight, during which he was cursed and stoned by Shimei, a member of the family of Saul. David chose to ignore Shimei, despite his nephew Abishai's words, because the words could do no harm and besides G-d may have asked him to curse; if it is G-d's choice, there is nothing to be done. Furthermore David had more serious problems with Absalom his own son. Later on Shimei came to seek David's forgiveness (chapter 19); he eventually met his fate at the hands of king Solomon for breaching conditions of residence (1 Kings 2).

Meanwhile Absalom took control of Jerusalem. He turned to Ahitophel for advice, which he gave in two parts; to ravish David's concubines and thus establish his 'kingship', as they were now his. Secondly, to send out troops immediately to attack David. Hushai established his credibility with Absalom; as a former servant of the king, he was now a faithful servant of his son Absalom. He suggested delay by summoning all the tribes, who would then be led by Absalom himself, rather than the 12,000 to be led by Ahitophel. He counselled this to enable him to advise David of the proposed plans of Ahitophel. Hushai's messengers to David were almost caught by Absalom, had it not been for the action of a woman who hid them in a well; this action has some similarities with Rahab and Joshua's spies in Joshua chapter 2. They eventually reached David who crossed over the Jordan. Ahitophel realised that now the rebellion was doomed to failure and he might be regarded as a traitor; to avoid all this he hanged ("strangled" 7:22) himself, having first put his own house in order.

.../to be continued next week

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Date: 12/13/95 2:20am
Subject: Drasha - Vayeishev

Drasha PARSHAS VAYEISHEV PURPOSE OF MISSION

12/15/95 22 Kislev
based on a lecture

Often, it is hard to discern between acts of good intent, and of good intent mired with selfishness. This week we read two similar stories that are actually very different and have very different endings.

Tamar was the wife of Yehudah's son, Er. When he died, Yehudah gave her his next son, Onan. Tamar knew that she was destined to mother the seed of Yehudah, and that seed would eventually father King David. But Onan died too. And Yehudah refused to give her his last son Shailah. The custom in that day was that as long as the widow was not totally relinquished from the deceased's family, she would not be allowed to marry an outsider. Tamar was desperate for Yehudah's seed. She hid her face, dressed as a prostitute, and seduced Yehudah himself. Yehudah, unaware of who his courtesan was, reacted in horror when he was told that Tamar was with child. "Take her and have her put to death," he ruled. Tamar's plans were almost for naught. She would never bear the seed that she envisioned.

The wife of Potiphar also had a vision. She saw in the stars that she and Yoseph would breed greatness. She tried to seduce him. She too wanted to fulfill her vision. But Yoseph refused time and time again. He finally fled together with her visions.

Rav Yeruchom Levovitz asks a powerful question. Both of these women had visions, and though their methodology was unconventional, why is there so much disparity as to their status.? Tamar is viewed as the righteous woman who desperately wanted a child from Yehudah. She is known as the Mother of The Kingdom of David. Yet the wife of Potiphar is treated as an adulterous two-timer who tries to seduce Yoseph and then throws him into jail. In what way is she so different than Tamar?

Rabbi Boruch Ber Lebowitz, Rosh Yeshiva in Kaminetz, Poland, had a difficult time getting his older daughter married off. When an outstanding student of his accepted a marriage proposal, Reb Boruch Ber was overjoyed. He knew this young man to be both a scholar and gentleman. As engagements in those days would endure for quite a long time, he suggested to the young

man to continue his studies, uninterrupted, in a distant city.

One could not imagine the shock Reb Boruch Ber had when two months later a package arrived. In it was the watch and other gifts that Reb Boruch Ber had given the young man on his engagement. An enclosed note tersely stated that for personal reasons the engagement was off. The bride and her parents were both devastated.

A few years later Rabbi Lebowitz called in three of his closest students to a private meeting. "I'd like you to read this letter and tell me if I have infected it with my personal pain," he told them. The students read the letter and stood in awe. A community was seeking a recommendation concerning an applicant for a rabbinical position there. The scholar had learned in Kaminetz and asked Rabbi Lebowitz for a letter of recommendation. The candidate was none other than the formerly engaged student. Rav Lebowitz wrote a beautiful letter, flowing with praise, but was worried that perhaps his personal bitterness may have dulled the response. He called his best students to approve. They knew of the incident and were amazed by the praises Rabbi Lebowitz had written about the young man.

Rav Yeruchom explains: every action has a litmus test that reveals true intentions. Failure. When one fails does one look to heaven and say, "G-d, I tried to do the job my way. I failed. Now it is up to you. "Or does one scream and curse and perhaps even maim and destroy to get his way? Many people begin noble missions, but when they fail, personal vendettas arise.

Tamar failed, and when Yehudah sentenced her for becoming pregnant from out of the family she did not embarrass him by pointing an accusatory finger. She just showed two items he left behind and said, "I am pregnant from the owner of this staff, seal and wrap." Fortunately, Yehudah admitted his folly, and she was spared. Her children were King David's grandparents.

Potiphar's wife's vision ended as Yoseph fled. She could have said, "G-d, I tried to fulfill the dream, now it's up to you." (It actually was, as Yoseph married her daughter!) She didn't. She reacted with a vengeance and accused him falsely. Yoseph was sent to prison. Potiphar's wife is forever branded as an evil temptress.

Sometimes the experience of failure destroys the nobility of mission. Only those acts that are bred with purity of purpose remain unscathed. They continue to flourish with honor in the face of adversity. Ultimately, they succeed, and we reap the fruits of that success for many years to come. Good Shabbos (c) 1995 Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

Rabbi Yeruchom Levovitz (1874-1936) was the Mashgiach (Dean of Ethics) of the Mirrer Yeshiva in Poland. Rabbi B. Lebowitz, (1870-1941) a disciple of Rabbi Chaim Soleveitchik, was the Rosh Yeshiva of the Kaminetz Yeshiva in Poland.

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Date: 12/13/95 4:15pm
Subject: Parashat Vayeshev 5756 - "...But the will of Hashem shall prevail"

The Weekly Internet

P * A * R * A * S * H * A - P * A * G * E

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by Mordecai Kornfeld

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We are grateful to Rabbi Samuel B. Press of Beth Abraham Synagogue in Dayton Ohio, for sponsoring this week's Parasha-Page.

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Parashat Vayeshev 5756

...BUT THE WILL OF HASHEM SHALL PREVAIL

Yosef's brothers went to graze their father's sheep in Shechem. [Yakov] said to Yosef, "Aren't your brothers grazing the sheep in Shechem? Come, let me send you to them." Yosef replied, "Here I am, ready to do your will!"
(Bereishit 37:12-13)

The Torah tells us that Yakov sent his son Yosef to bring him tidings of his brothers' welfare. Yosef's brothers were, by that time, extremely jealous of him (see Bereishit 37:11). When the brothers saw Yosef approaching in order to fulfill his father's request, they knew that this was their opportunity. Now they had him all alone, with no one to protect him or to report to their father what became of him. They conspired at first to kill him, but then they modified their plans and sold him as a slave instead. For twenty-two years, Yakov believed that his beloved son, Yosef, was dead. Meanwhile, Yosef slowly rose in rank from slave to custodian, to a member of the king's court. Eventually, he was appointed vizier over all of Egypt... and the rest is history.

When considering the circumstances of Yosef's sale, many people are bothered by a nagging question. Yakov was aware of the tremendous jealousy which Yosef's brothers harbored towards him for reporting their actions to their father in the past (see Rashi, Bereishit 37:10, s.v. "Vayig'ar Bo"). Why did he not foresee that the brothers might take advantage of this opportunity to vent their jealousy? If his ten strong brothers should try to harm him, Yosef would be defenseless! Did Yakov not realize the perils

of sending Yosef alone on this mission?

In fact, there is a principle in Torah law (Mishna Berura 603:4), saying that if one sends a friend on a mission and the friend is killed (in a manner unrelated to the mission) during the course of performing the task, then it is appropriate for the sender to repent for his friend's death. The sender is considered culpable to some extent although he merely sent him on an unrelated mission. Certainly in the case at hand, where Yakov sent his son into a situation that he *knew* to be perilous, Yakov should be held responsible for what befell Yosef! How could Yakov have committed such a grave mistake in judgement?

It is noteworthy that when the news of Yosef's supposed death reached Yakov, Yakov responded by saying, "Now I will certainly go to Gehinnom [= purgatory] in my mourning" (Bereishit 37:35). Yakov should have

simply said, "I will mourn eternally for my son" -- why did he mix in Gehinnom? (See Rashi ad loc., s.v. "Avel She'ola.) Perhaps we may suggest that Yakov was concerned about the very principle mentioned above. He had sent someone on a dangerous mission, and his emissary was (he thought) killed by a wild animal. According to the above principle, Yakov -- the sender -- still bears guilt for the death.

In any event, it remains to be answered; how could Yakov have sent Yosef alone to his brothers when he knew how much they hated him? A closer analysis of the verses may lead us to an answer to this puzzle.

II

As we have seen, the verse tells us that Yosef's brothers were grazing the sheep in *Shechem*. On the other hand, Yakov was living at that time in *Hebron*, not in Shechem (as we find in Bereishit 37:14). Shechem is quite a distance from Hebron -- why would the brothers be grazing the sheep in Shechem, rather than in the area of Hebron where they lived?

The answer to this question may lie in the fact that the Patriarchs, as we are told in many places, were very conscientious about not taking anything that did not belong to them. They were careful to graze their flocks only on property which belonged to them, or in the wilderness (see Rashi to Bereishit 13:7 and 24:10). It is true that Yakov was living in Hebron at the time, but his own grazing land and the wilderness in the area of Hebron may have become depleted. It may be that Yakov was forced to seek

other pastures for his flocks. We know that while Yakov was living in Shechem, he bought the property on which he was encamped (Bereishit 33:19).

If so, perhaps that is why he sent his sons to graze the flocks in Shechem, where he owned private property. He could allow the animals to graze without any fear of committing theft, and his children would have a home nearby (-Yakov's Shechem homestead).

If Yakov owned land in Shechem, he would certainly not have left it unattended when he moved to Hebron. That would have been an invitation to squatters and a waste of productive land. Clearly, he must have left some of his many servants in Shechem to tend to the property. If this was indeed the case, then when the brothers went to graze in Shechem they would have been grazing in the company of Yakov's servants, who would be with them to help with the flocks. Furthermore, the brothers would have necessarily been accompanied by some of the servants wherever they were grazing the sheep. Only the servants who lived there full-time would have been certain which fields either belonged to Yakov or were ownerless, and which fields belonged to someone else.

Now we can understand why Yakov felt safe sending Yosef to Shechem even though the brothers were filled with animosity towards Yosef. Yakov

knew that the brothers would be constantly in the presence of Yakov's servants, who would be able to keep an eye on Yosef. The brothers would be afraid to do anything to Yosef in the presence of their father's servants lest they report the matter back to Yakov.

This may be what Yakov was hinting at when he said, "*Aren't* your brothers grazing in Shechem?" He did not simply state, "Your brothers are grazing in Shechem," but rather he asked rhetorically, "*Aren't* they grazing in Shechem." In other words, "If they were in the open pastures near Hebron, I would be afraid to send you. Were you to find them there, you would be alone with them, and vulnerable. But since they are grazing in Shechem, they are certain to be accompanied by my servants. My servants will be there to watch over you, and your brothers will be afraid to harm you. Therefore I can send you with confidence to Shechem!"

III

What, then, was Yakov's miscalculation? How were the brothers able to corner Yosef when no one else was around?

Rashi tells us (Bereishit 37:12) that the brothers did not go to Shechem only to graze their sheep. They went to "graze themselves" as well -- to eat and drink and enjoy themselves. Thus they did not actually remain with the sheep in Shechem the entire time. In fact, they do not seem to have been with the sheep when Yosef met them. The sheep are not mentioned at all at the time of their meeting. The sheep were presumably left with the servants in Shechem.

When Yakov first sent Yosef on his mission, he told him to check up on "the welfare of his brothers and of the sheep." When Yosef first arrived in Shechem he saw the sheep, but he did not find his brothers. Thus, he felt it necessary to go to look for them. (Although his father had made the introductory remark, "Aren't your brothers grazing in Shechem?" Yosef felt compelled to seek them out even if they had moved from Shechem. A source for this reaction can be found in Gittin 65a, where we are told that if a man tells his friend, "Give this document of divorce to my wife, she can be found in such-and-such a place," the carrier of the document may present the wife with the document *anywhere* that he finds her. The husband only mentioned the location "as a pointer" -- "you'll probably find her here, but you may give her the divorce document elsewhere as well." He did not mean to limit the location of the divorce to that particular place. So too, Yosef felt that his father had mentioned Shechem only as a pointer. Yakov did not mean to limit the search to Shechem alone.)

IV

Yakov may have foreseen such an eventuality, but he did not see it as a cause for concern. Should the brothers not be found together with the sheep, how would Yosef be able to find them? The brothers were not obligated to report their movements to anyone, and they might have gone anywhere at all! It would be impossible for Yosef to locate them, and there would therefore be no cause for concern. Yosef would simply have to wait in Shechem for their return. Therefore Yakov felt safe in sending Yosef to Shechem.

However, as Rashi tells us (Bereishit 37:14), everything which befell Yosef at this point was predestined. Hashem had already decreed that Yosef would be sold to Egypt, in order to pave the way for the Egyptian Exile (Bereishit 15:13).

Yakov had calculated correctly that in the natural course of events the brothers would have been unable to harm Yosef -- either because of the presence of the servants, or because Yosef would be unable to find them. However, when Yosef went looking for his brothers, he *happened* to meet a man in the field. The man told him that he *happened* to overhear the brothers saying that they were going to Dotan (Bereishit 37:15,17). There

was no reason for them to have told this stranger where they were going; he just *happened* to overhear it. As a result of this seemingly chance encounter, Yosef was able to locate his brothers in Dotan. (Rashi, in fact, tells us that the stranger Yosef met was none other than the angel Gavriel. This can either be taken literally, or it can be taken to imply that the man was a tool of Hashem's Providence for bringing about an otherwise unlikely course of events.) Yosef went to Dotan to find his brothers. When he found them, he was all alone -- and that is how he ended up as a slave on a caravan headed towards Egypt.

"A man makes for himself many calculations, but the will of Hashem shall prevail!" (Mishlei 19:21)

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- "RavFrand" List - Rabbi Frand on Parshas Vayeishev -

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tapes on the weekly Torah portion: Tape # 34, Chanukah Licht on Erev Shabbos Good Shabbos!

Parshas Vayeishev:

Medrash Compares Reuven to Flowers; Ner Chanukah to Fruit

In this week's portion, the Torah recounts the infamous incident of the sale of Yosef. The Sages tell us that when the brothers saw Yosef approaching, they convened a Beis Din and concluded that Yosef had the status of a Rodef -- he was trying to endanger their lives -- and therefore, based on Halacha, they determined that Yosef was deserving of death.

The verse continues (37:21-22) "And Reuven heard and he saved him from their hands and he said, 'Let us not smite him mortally ... throw him into this pit ... but don't send forth your hand against him' in order that he (Reuven) might save him and return him to his father." Reuven's plan fell through when he returned to the pit and Yosef was not there, having already been sold.

There is a famous Medrash on the verse in Shir HaShirim (7:14) "The mandrakes (Dudaim) yield fragrance; and at our doorsteps are all precious fruits -- both new and old -- I have stored away for you, my Beloved". The Medrash says the expression "The mandrakes yield fragrance" refers to Reuven who tried to save Yosef from the pit and the expression "at our doorsteps are all precious fruits" refers to Ner Chanukah. In other words, Reuven's act is equated with a pleasant smelling flower and the Ner

Chanukah is equated with delicious fruits.

All the darshanim try to interpret this Medrash. Rav Schwab ZT"L, gives a beautiful interpretation to this Medrash. What is the difference, he asks, between pleasant smelling flowers and delicious tasting fruit? The answer is that a flower may have a beautiful smelling aroma, but it doesn't leave one with anything lasting or permanent. One smells it, enjoys it, and then it is gone. Eating fruit, on the other hand, provides a much more substantial and lasting pleasure. One eats it, tastes it, is provided nourishment and sustenance with it, and it takes away one's hunger.

This is what the Medrash is trying to say -- what Reuven did is like the sweet smelling flower. He had noble intentions and he wanted to do the right thing, but unfortunately he stopped short. What was required was to stand up and take firm action and to directly tell his brothers "We absolutely cannot do this!" But for some reason, he did not have that tremendous moral power necessary to stand up firmly for what is right. Therefore, his act, remains only like a flower that provides a fleeting pleasant smell with no lasting benefit.

However, when people are able to stand up and be moser nefesh, those acts bear lasting fruit. That is what happened at Chanukah time: A small band of people had the strong moral fortitude and strength and mesiras nefesh to stand up against overwhelming odds. The result of that mesiras nefesh was -- fruits on our doorsteps -- something everlasting: A rebirth and a regeneration of the service in the Temple that saved the Jewish people.

Rav Tzadok offers a beautiful insight into the Chasmoneans' mesiras nefesh. He instructs us to examine the names of the heroes of the Chanukah story: Yochanan and Matisyahu. Yochanan means Kah Chanan (G-d gave a present). Matisyahu means Matas Kah (A gift of G-d). People who realize that all they have in this world -- their strengths, their talents, their material possessions -- are merely gifts of G-d, can rise to the occasion and be moser nefesh. Such people realize that all they have are merely Matas Kah -- gifts from G-d -- which must be used for G-d's service. Such recognition generates the mesiras nefesh necessary for producing "lasting fruits".

....

Transcribed by David Twersky; Seattle, Washington twerskyd@scn.org

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Subject: A Byte Of Torah V,IX VaYeishev

---- Editor : Zev S. Itzkowitz ----

"[Potiphar] left all that he had in Joseph's hand.

And he did not know anything [bad].

With the exception of the bread that he did eat..." (Genesis 39:6)

What household practice does this verse describe? The Egyptians could not bring themselves to eat at the same table with any "Ivri" (Gen. 43:32). When a person would become a slave, he would usually adopt the customs of his master. Furthermore, his master would become accustomed to and overlook his

slave's differences. Potiphar, therefore, normally would not have been so careful about eating from Joseph's hand (Shadal). Joseph, however, had not made any attempt to hide the fact that he was an "Ivri". In fact, he was quite proud of it, and would inform this fact to those with whom he came into contact (Rosh). Since Joseph was so public about his ancestry, Potiphar, could not disregard Egyptian customs. Thus, he would not eat from anything Joseph had touched (Ibn Ezra).

Another possibility is that the word "bread" is a euphemism for his master's "wife". Potiphar had given over to Joseph total control of his household, with the one exception, of control over his wife (Rashi). Joseph confirms this, when he tells his master's wife that Potiphar has denied nothing to him but her (cf. 39:9, Sifsei Chachamim).

Alternatively, this verse can be viewed as describing how Joseph dealt with his master's household and possessions. Often when a person is granted such an exalted status, he can be tempted to "skim off the top" and put it aside for himself. Joseph, however, took nothing of his master's possessions for himself, save the food that he would eat (Ramban).

Mussar of the Week

"[Potiphar] placed [Joseph] in charge of his house and all that belonged to him... Joseph was beautifully formed and beautiful in appearance...

After these events, his master's wife cast her eye on Joseph, and said, 'Sleep with me.'

[Joseph] adamantly refused..." (Genesis 39:5-8)

There are three things which tempt a person to sin: wealth and power, personal beauty, and seduction. Joseph was tested with all three. His master gave him control of everything. Joseph was very handsome. His master's wife tried to seduce him. Nonetheless, Joseph resisted the temptation to sin, for he realized that all of his good fortune was from Hashem (Alshich).

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Subject: SICHOT - PARSHAT VA'YESHEV

STUDENT SUMMARIES OF SICHOT DELIVERED BY THE ROSHEI YESHIVA

PARASHAT VAYESHEV
SICHA OF HARAV AHARON LICHTENSTEIN SHLIT"A

A Portrait of Yaakov - In Praise of Self-Restraint

Summarized by Danny Orenbuch

Parashat Vayeshev marks the beginning of a revolution in Sefer Bereishit, a revolution both in Yaakov's personal status and in the status of his family - the fundamental kernel of the Jewish nation. Until now, Sefer Bereishit has recounted inspiring stories - parshiot of ascent and elevation towards the establishment of Am Yisrael. It is true that in these parshiyot we have encountered conflict - between Yitzhak and Yishmael, between Yitzhak and the shepherds - but the avot invariably emerge victorious. Yaakov, too, encounters serious conflict - first with Esav and later with Lavan, with the angel and with the camp of Esav's messengers - but in each case he wins. And now, specifically here, when it seems that everything is coming together - things start falling apart, and as Rashi comments in the name of the midrash: "Yaakov wished to dwell in peace, but Yosef's problems plagued him. Tzaddikim wish to dwell in peace, God says to them: Is that which is set aside for them in Olam Ha-Ba not enough for them, that they also want peace and quiet in this world?!" (37:2)

Indeed, Yaakov's status is undermined at every step of the way. First in dreams, where he becomes a servant prostrating himself before Yosef, and then in the story that the brothers concoct regarding Yosef's violent demise. And later, when they are forced to seek food for a second time in Egypt, the midrash recounts: "Yehuda said to them, 'Wait for the old man until all the bread in the house is gone.'" (Tanchuma 8). This attitude towards Yaakov, calling him "the old man," points to an erosion of his status. All in all, throughout these parshiyot, Yaakov slowly changes from someone who leads into someone who is led. We see no initiative on his part, sometimes even a deafening silence which we find difficult to understand: "But his father kept the matter in mind" (37:11).

Moreover, this descent is a descent of the entire family. If until now the disputes and problems were generated from without, here we are faced with internal, family strife - hatred between brothers, sale into slavery - and Yaakov is unsuccessful in dealing with it. It seems that the entire structure is beginning to crumble and topple...

But it is specifically in Yaakov's descent that we find his greatness. Precisely that deafening silence which we find in these parshiyot is the great message which Yaakov is conveying to us. We have encountered his silence in the past - following the incident of Shimon and Levi. Although Yaakov does convey a reproach ("You have brought trouble on me to make me odious among the inhabitant of the land"), he takes no

action. Yaakov knows that sometimes it is necessary to keep quiet and restrain oneself - because any reaction will cause division and even more serious danger. In the case of Reuven, too ("And it came to pass when Israel dwelt in that land, Reuven went and lay with Bilha, his father's concubine, and Israel heard of it" [35:22]) - Israel hears but does not react. And the midrash there points out Yaakov's wisdom in that he knew that any reaction on his part would cause Reuven to cross over to Esav's camp, and therefore he chose to restrain himself and keep silent. Another example is that of Yosef's dream, in which he reveals his assumption of "royal status", as it were, to his brothers and his father - another seeming slight of Yaakov's honor. He does scold his son, but does nothing beyond that - "but his father kept the matter in mind." Yaakov is aware of the mistake he has made in his sons' upbringing, as even the Rambam writes: A person must never favor one child over the others.

Yaakov, by favoring Yosef, ultimately causes the brotherly hatred and all its consequences. Yaakov is aware of this, and chooses silence and self-restraint - for fear of making things even worse. And indeed it is only through this silence and restraint that the unity of the family is ultimately maintained, and Sefer Bereishit closes on a note of unity between the brothers, presenting a sound beginning for the building of Am Yisrael.

In Yaakov's behavior there is a message for each one of us. Very often it is difficult for a person to control himself and keep silent, whether in education or in any other area. But sometimes an unnecessary word is simply harmful. Therefore sometimes it is important, despite the pain involved, to know how to strangle the shout before it escapes, to understand that silence will contribute more, and that specifically through that restraint it is possible to achieve one's true aims.

(Originally delivered on Shabbat Parashat Vayeshev 5753.
Translated by Kaeren Fish.)

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Subject: Vayeishev

PARSHAS VAYAISHEV

Amos 2:6 - 3:8

This week's haftorah stresses the severity of injustice. The prophet Amos opens by saying, "So says Hashem, 'Regarding the three offenses of the Jewish people (I can be patient) but regarding the fourth I can not refrain from responding over their selling the righteous for money and the pauper in

exchange for shoes. They anxiously await the dirt of the land (to be placed) upon the head of the impoverished..." The prophet admonishes the Jewish people for their insensitivity regarding justice. The judges would accept even nominal sums of money as bribes and would render unfair judgments in exchange for an inexpensive pair of shoes. They discriminated against the poor and even dragged them through the dirt when they refused to comply with the injustice levied against them. Hashem expresses serious disturbance over these crimes and declares them unforgivable.

The Radak magnifies this principle and explains that the three offenses Amos mentioned refer to the three cardinal sins of idolatry, immorality and murder. Hashem says that even the three cardinal offenses are not as severe as acts of injustice. He can be patient when responding even to the cardinal offenses but the injustice to the poor is an unforgivable crime which evokes His immediate response. Rabbeinu Bachya (in his introduction to Parshas Vayeishev) explains the basis for this and reminds us that the poor place their complete trust in Hashem. Their financial resources do not yield any respect or assistance from others and their sole security is Hashem. Therefore, Hashem pledges to come to their defense immediately and responds harshly to any injustice done to them.

The Pirkei D'Reb Eliezer (Chapter 38) sees in the above passages a reference to the infamous sale of Yoseif Hatzaddik by his brothers, the tribes of Israel. Chazal explain that the brothers sold Yoseif for the equivalent of twenty silver dollars and that each brother purchased a pair of shoes with his two silver dollars. According to R' Eliezer, this is the incident that the prophet Amos refers to when reprimanding the Jewish people for selling the righteous for silver and the pauper for shoes. The tribes sold their righteous brother Yoseif for silver coins and purchased shoes with his value. The prophet tells us that this sin was unforgivable and was viewed with greater severity than every cardinal offense. With this, he alludes to the fact that the greatest scholars of Israel, the ten holy martyrs would be brutally murdered in atonement for this sin. Hashem says that the sale of Yoseif, unlike other sins, could never be overlooked and that one day the Jewish nation would severely suffer for this crime. The great Tanaim (Mishnaic authors) would need to suffer inhuman torture and be taken from us in atonement for this sin. No offense of the Jewish people ever evoked a response of harsh judgment in a magnitude such as this. The torturous killing of our ten most righteous leaders remains, in fact, the most tragic personal event in all our Jewish history.

It is important to view this tragic offense and horrifying result in their proper context. The prophet draws our attention to this incident with a very specific focus. It is not the actual sale that arouses the prophet's wrath, rather it is the mannerism of the sale. The prophet refers to the indignity shown to Yoseif during the sale, his exchange for merely a pair of shoes. The S'forno (Breishis 37:18) explains that the actual sale could be justified on the basis of a life-threatening concern. The brothers erroneously viewed Yoseif as plotting against them and feared that he would ultimately lead them into sin and punishment of major dimensions. They sold Yoseif in self defense to protect themselves from any life-threatening situation which could potentially occur. However, the manner of the sale was inexcusable to Hashem. Apparently, in their angry response to what they viewed as a conspiracy the tribes were insensitive to their brother. They intentionally denigrated him and displayed his worthlessness. They purchased

shoes in exchange for their brother and indicated that one who challenges their authority belongs in the ground to be stepped upon. (see Radal on Pirkei D'Eliezer ad loc) This insensitivity for their helpless brother was the factor which was inexcusable. It is for this reason that Hashem responded to this offense and brought the most cruel insensitive death to His most righteous leaders. The ten holy martyrs severely suffered to atone for this insensitivity. The Tzror Hamor (see Seder Hadoros year 3,880) explains that Hashem finally atoned for this cruelty and the Jewish nation was cleared from its earlier erroneous behavior. The black mark was removed from them and the Jewish nation could now be authentically identified as a caring and sensitive people.

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Subject: * PG LifeLine - Vayeishev

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"It is a tree of life to all who cling to it."
D'var Torah and News from Project Genesis - learn@torah.org
Volume III, Number 11 Vayeishev

Please pray for the speedy healing of
Ya'akov Re'uvein Ben Eeta and Chizkiyahu Yonasson Aryeh ben Leah
Esther Miriam Bas Aliza Geula and Nosson ben Pessa Ella

"And Yaakov settled in the dwelling-place of his father, in the land of Kena'an." [37:1]

The Medrash says that Yaakov wanted to settle down, into a "satisfied peace." Anyone who has read through Yaakov's life could understand why this might be so. He grew up with a murderer for a brother, from whom he eventually was forced to flee. He then went to his uncle, Lavan the idol-worshipper, where he worked seven years to get married, only to be tricked into marrying the wrong sister and working seven more years for the younger one. Then he continued to work, until fear for his life caused him to run

away once again. Finally, his wife Rachel died bearing her second child. At this point, we might understand his interest in relaxing with his family!

But the Medrash says that G-d looked at Yaakov, and said, "Is it not enough for the righteous that the World to Come is prepared for them, that they also desire to dwell in satisfaction [in this world]?"

The Chassam Sofer, Rabbi Moshe Sofer, asks a variant of the classic question, "Why do bad things happen to good people?" If G-d is good and beneficent, he asks, then why should it bother Him that a Tzaddik, a righteous person, should have peace?

In order to explain this, the Chassam Sofer analyzes the verse in Psalm 145, "You open up Your hand, and satisfy every living thing with 'Ratzon' [desire]." We usually understand this to mean that G-d gives every living thing according to its needs and wants. The Chasam Sofer offers a new insight.

We know, says the Rabbi, that one who receives everything she wants without limit [and has nothing left to strive for], eventually is disgusted with her very life. It is very important for a person to have wants and desires. In addition, it is obvious that one who feels that he lacks something, and desires it, is a thousand times happier to finally receive it than is one who never desired it or felt the lack in the first place. This, then, is the meaning of satisfying every living thing with "desire" - that with all that G-d gives a person, He ensures that it is with desire - meaning that the recipient still desires other things. Further, G-d gives the desire in the first place, in order that we rejoice when we attain our goals.

So too, says the Chassam Sofer, is it important that the righteous recognize that there is no peace and satisfaction, no completion and no perfection, in this world. If they did not feel a lack in this world, then they could not fully understand or rejoice in the greatness of the World to Come. This is why G-d said, "It is not enough for the righteous that the World to Come is prepared for them; rather, they must desire to dwell in satisfaction!" It was not a rhetorical question, but a statement: because of their very righteousness, they must desire the rest available in the World to Come, meaning that they must see the lack of it in this world. Then, concludes Rabbi Sofer, they will rejoice and celebrate in the great things given to the House of Israel, all of whom have a share in the World to Come!

MAZEL TOV to long-time subscriber Nicolas Rebibo and his wife on the birth of their daughter, Sarah Rina! Nicolas directs the judaisme-I French language mailing list at Jerusalem One, and also recently created Web pages for the French Jewish Community on-line: <http://www.iway.fr/col> . May he and his wife raise their daughter to follow in their path of commitment to G-d, Torah and good deeds, and may they only have more good news to share!

QUOTE OF THE WEEK: "Where I am now, there is little in the way of jewish community for my age group. My connection is the one you see here, and I am grateful and more educated as a result. How much more comfortable could it be to learn torah and judaism than this? Todah Rabah."

Thanks! We're delighted to be here.

Good Shabbos,

R. Yaakov Menken

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF A VISIONARY:
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN
YOSEF, HIS FATHER AND HIS BROTHERS
by Asher Breatross

This Dvar Torah is in memory of my Bobie, Leah Flatt (Leah Bas Reb Meir Dov Hakein ZL) whose Yahrzeit is 22 Kislev. A native of Vilkomir, Lithuania, she grew up surrounded by a close and loving family. Although she was able to emigrate to Canada before the Holocaust she was severely traumatized by the loss of her family in the Shoah. Nevertheless, the manner in which she conducted herself in her daily life served as a source of strength and as an inspiration to her children and grandchildren until the very end of her life.

The beginning of Parshas Vayeshev contains a number of enigmatic issues that merit further investigation. Particularly, we see Yosef emerging as the visionary, in part because of his relationship with his father. The nature of his dreams also merits further investigation and analysis.

The Pasuk notes that Yisrael loved Yosef of all of his sons because he was his "Ben Zekunim". Rashi explains that this means that Yosef was born in Ya'acov's old age. He quotes Onkelos that everything that Ya'acov learnt in the Yeshiva of Shem and Ever he taught to Yosef. A further explanation given by Rashi for this term is that Ya'acov and Yosef looked the same.

The Siftei Chachamim, in explaining Rashi, wonders why Yosef was called "Ben Zekunim". It was really Binyamin who should have been called this since he was born afterwards. He answers that most of Ya'acov's sons were very close in age to each other, as they were born in a six-year period. The only exception was Binyamin who was born a long time afterwards. Since everyone thought that Ya'acov would have no more children after Yosef, that is why he was called the "Ben Zekunim". Once Binyamin was born Yosef was still called the "Ben Zekunim" since people were used to referring to him in that manner.

The Ramban disagrees with Rashi's explanation for all of Ya'acov's sons were born in his old age. Also, Zevulun and Yissachar were only one or two years older than Yosef. Rather, the practice of elders was to select one of their sons to serve them and to attend to them. The father would be dependent on this child and they would be inseparable. This son would be called the "Ben Zekunim" since he served the father in his old age. This is why Yosef was not involved in shepherding. This is also why he had this unique relationship with his father and was taught everything that Ya'acov learnt by Shem and Ever, since they were together so much.

The Kli Yakar notes that "Ben Zekunim" is a description of Yosef's behaviour with respect to Ya'acov. Although Yosef acted a certain way with his brothers, the Bnai Bilha, he acted differently when he was with his father and conducted himself in a manner that was appropriate when in the presence of an older person. This attested to Yosef's wisdom and adaptability. Ya'acov did not know how Yosef acted with his brothers. The reason that Ya'acov transmitted what he learnt in the Yeshiva only to Yosef was that the other brothers were not interested, as opposed to Yosef who was very interested in these teachings. [This could also explain why Yosef was chosen for this role, besides being the eldest son of the favourite wife - AB.] The Kli Yakar also explains that Ya'acov and Yosef's countenances were the same for since Yosef was interested in his father's teachings we say that Chochmas Adam Ta'ir Panav. (Namely, the wisdom a person has lightens his face, namely it affects his physical appearance. For a contemporary example of this concept see Akiva Tatz, "Anatomy of a Search" (Artscroll-Mesorah -1987) at pages 37-38.)

Related to the Torah that Ya'acov transmitted to Yosef, of which Yosef was the sole recipient, this could explain why Yosef is referred to as the Toldos of Ya'acov. In fact we find that when the Torah mentions the Toldos of Moshe and Aharon, only the Toldos of Aharon are mentioned. The reason is that since Moshe taught Aharon's children, it was as if they were his children. Similarly, since Yosef was the recipient of Ya'acov's Torah, it was as if he was the descendent par excellence of Ya'acov.

The Ba'al Haturim observes that "Zekunim" stands for Zeraim (from the

Zayin), Kodashim (from the Kuf), Nashim (from the Nun), Yeshuos (or Nezikin, from the Yud) and Moed (from the Mem). This is obviously what Ya'acov transmitted to Yosef. The Imrei Aharon (cited in the Itturei Torah) says that Taharos is not mentioned because Tahara (purity) does not only require learning but it requires practical exposure.

We know from the Parsha that as a sign of his esteem Ya'acov presented Yosef with a special garment, the Ketones Pasim. The Kli Yakar explains that after Reuvain disturbed his father's bed the Bechora was taken away from him and it was given to Yosef. [This makes the fact that Reuvain tried to save Yosef from his brothers all the more remarkable. It could be that this was part of the Teshuva process that Reuvain was doing for this sin - AB.] To indicate this status Ya'acov made the Ketones for Yosef. The Avoda was done by a first born who served as a Kohain. Therefore, the Ketones was a type of priestly garment. This interpretation of the Ketones could also provide another interpretation for "Ben Zekunim". Since Yosef received the Bechora it as if he was the eldest of all of the sons. That is why, when the brothers were responding to Yosef's first dream they used a double form of expression in 36:8. A Bechor received a double portion and could exercise the prerogatives of monarchy. The brothers were saying: You in fact are not the Bechor [at least their Bechor since they had different mothers - AB] so do not try to exercise the rights of one.

One explanation of the hatred that the brothers felt for Yosef was that if Ya'acov gave the same treatment to Binyamin they would rationalize it that it was because of their mother. However, since only Yosef was treated in this manner they thought that Ya'acov favoured him because he was bad-mouthing his brothers and at the same time showing his superiority.

Related to this the Abarbanel provides an explanation that ties in with the Torah that Yosef learnt from his father. The brothers were not on Yosef's level, as indicated by the fact that only he had the desire to be taught his father's Torah. It was because that Yosef displayed this intense interest that Ya'acov preferred him. Rather, they thought that Yosef was saying bad things about them and made them look bad. It was likely that they hated him because Ya'acov used to admonish his sons for their behaviour, without mentioning his source of information. The brothers surmised that Yosef, who was somewhat of an outsider, was providing the information to their father. The brothers also hated him for, since he was the firstborn of the favoured wife, he would receive more preferential treatment and they would be relegated to secondary status.

The Abarbanel gives another explanation of the hatred. The brothers saw, regarding the children of Avraham and Yitzchak, that one son was favoured over the other and was designated as the heir, with all the accompanying privileges. The other son had secondary status and was eventually sent away. Due to the treatment that was accorded to Yosef, they feared that they would be accorded the same treatment given to Yishmael, the B'nai Ketura and Esav.

When Yosef told his brothers his dreams it reinforced these fears since the subject matter of the dreams dealt with Yosef's superiority over them.

In connection with the first dream everyone was harvesting grain. It seems strange that Yosef would dream about this type of activity when his brothers were shepherds and not farmers. Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik explains that this subject matter was the nature of the conflict between Yosef and his

brothers. Yosef raised the possibility that there would be great upheavals in their lives that would change their economic activities and would cause them to change their occupations. The family of Ya'acov knew what Avraham had been told at the Bris Bein Hebesarim (in Parshas Lech Lecha), that they would be strangers in a land that was not theirs. Yosef felt that preparations had to be made for this new period, of which no one could foresee its dangers. His brothers did not think so. They felt they could always be shepherds and therefore they ridiculed his vision.

The Me'am Loez sees the first dream as an allusion to the brothers' visits to Egypt. He notes that the Pasuk in 37:6-7 says "Veheenay" three times. This corresponds to the three times that the brothers were in Egypt in connection with the grain that Yosef was dreaming about (and for which they were bowing down to him).

In dealing with the second dream Rav Meshulam Igra notes that it also refers to the moon, which is an allusion to Rachel Imeinu. From here Rashi learns that there is no dream that does not have useless items in it. Two questions can be raised: (1) Just because Yosef's dream had useless items in it, why does it have to mean that this applies to all dreams? (2) Why did Yosef have to mention the moon and thereby cause his father to question the validity of his dream?

The answer is that Yosef told the dream as he saw it for he knew that there was no dream that did not have useless items in it. If he left out the reference to the moon his brothers would have looked for other useless items in the dream. Therefore he told it all and because he left nothing out that is why Chazal say their rule that there is no dream that does not have useless items in it.

Considering the relationship between both dreams the Bais Halevi notes that the first dream showed Yosef's superiority in monetary matters while the second dream dealt with his superiority in spiritual matters, since it was the heavenly bodies that were bowing to him. In the first dream it was only his bundle of wheat that was being bowed down to while in the second dream he was the object of respect. The difference is that it shows that wealth is not a characteristic that is intrinsic in a person but wisdom is. Another difference has to do with the brothers' reaction. In the first dream there was no jealousy because individuals as righteous as the brothers would not envy wealth or material success in this world. They just hated Yosef when he said he would rule over them. In the second dream there was no hate but there was jealousy due to Yosef's attainment of his spiritual level.

The Abarbanel explains the two dreams as follows. As mentioned above the dreams showed Yosef's superiority over his brothers. However, this is presented in two different dimensions. The first dream dealt with the relationship between Yosef and his brothers in Egypt before he revealed himself. The second dream dealt with the situation after the brothers discovered that Yosef was the second in command in Egypt.

Thus, in the first dream Yosef's greatness did not stem from being elevated to that status by his brothers. Rather, he himself rose to power. This is why his bundle of wheat rose up unassisted. The nature of the worship in the first dream was that the brother's bundles did not bow to Yosef but rather to his bundle. This alluded to the fact that they did not know who they were bowing to. The significance of Yosef and his brothers being represented by a bundle of wheat was that the reason they bowed to Yosef

was
that these trips were made for the sake of wheat.

In the second dream, Yosef was bowed down to directly because the brothers knew of his position and accorded him the appropriate respect.

As we saw above, Yosef was a very smart person. He knew his brothers detested him. Nevertheless, despite this relationship, Yosef told his brothers his dreams for even though they hated him the feeling was not mutual. The Abarbanel says that people who are in a close relationship tell each other their dreams for the recipient to interpret them. It is a form of trust for one is revealing his subconscious, his innermost and most intimate thoughts. Yosef loved his brothers and craved their acceptance. This is why he opened up to them, because he wanted them to feel for them the way he felt above them. This is also why Yosef told his father about his brothers for due to the Torah that was imparted to him it motivated him to see himself as having an obligation to better them. Unfortunately, in his desire to achieve these aims, it blinded him from the implications of revealing these dreams, which had an enormous impact on the future development of Klal Yisrael.

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vayeishev

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HaNiftar Me'Chavero
by Rabbi David Pahmer

When Yaakov dispatched Yosef to check on his brothers, the Torah writes, "VaYishlachehu Me'Emek Chevron"- "and he sent him from the valley of Chevron." (Breishit 37:14) In these ostensibly ordinary words the Torah provides the key to unlock a mystery in parashat Vayigash that has long troubled me.

When the brothers discover that the Egyptian viceroy is indeed

their brother Yosef, they return to report to Yaakov. Although Yaakov finds it difficult to believe the brothers, he accepts their story upon seeing the PharaohEs wagons parked outside. Rash"i comments (Breishit 45:27) that sending wagons was a personal message from Yosef to show Yaakov he remembered their last Torah lesson together, namely- eglarufah. YaakovEs spirit was uplifted because Yosef was not only physically alive, but religiously alive as well, remembering the last topic they had learned together. Although the message is certainly a meaningful one, how did Rash"i know that this was the last topic they learned, and even if it was, why did the wagons trigger this association?

Before tackling these questions, we must first understand some details of the mitzva of eglarufah. This refers to the ceremony performed when a person is murdered outside a town, and the identity of the murderer is unknown. After the ceremony, the leaders of the town nearest the victim declare that they are not responsible for this person's death (Devarim 21:6,7). They might have been responsible for the murder had they not arranged proper escort for the stranger on his way out of town. (See Sotah 46b) Thus, we deduce from the laws of eglarufah that one must provide for the traveler even when he is on the road.

Upon this lesson of eglarufah the Kli Yakar (45:27) and the Ba'al HaTurim (37:14) construct an enlightening approach. They explain that the key to our enigma presented above lies in the psukim discussing the last interaction between Yaakov and Yosef. When Yosef departs, the very last detail we are told is, "VaYishlachehu Me'Emek Chevron" - "and he sent him from the Valley of Chevron." The Ba'al HaTurim envisions that Yaakov walked along with Yosef to the valley, and Yosef said to him, "Dad, you don't have to come with me. Why don't you just go back, and I'll go by myself." Yaakov responded, "It's my pleasure to go with you, son, and besides, I am not permitted to send you off alone. In the same way that one is required to make one's guests feel comfortable and secure when in one's home, one must also provide for them in transit. When sending a guest out of town, one must escort him somewhat. This was a hallmark of your grandfather, Avraham (See Sotah 10a, and Rash"i), who learned this practice from the laws regarding eglarufah. That's why, Yosef, I am escorting you here. So take care of yourself, and check on your brothers." From such a dramatization, Rash"i easily saw that Yosef's final lesson from his father was regarding eglarufah.

Moreover, when Yaakov saw the chariots of Pharaoh out the window, and was told that Yosef sent them to bring Yaakov and the family to Egypt, Yaakov knew that Yosef was drawing his cues from their earlier lesson. By sending the luxurious chariots of PharaohEs collection, Yosef was trying to make his guests comfortable even in transit. Where did he pick up such a notion? From the laws of eglarufah! Thus, the enigmatic comments of Rash"i become clear simply from an offhand remark in our parasha, "and he sent him from the Valley of Chevron."

Self-Control and K'dushah
by Rabbi Mordechai Yaacov Summer

When Yosef is sold into slavery, his strength of character becomes evident. His single-minded determination allows him to survive, alone, in the midst of the sexual promiscuity that was prevalent in Mitzrayim. YosefEs behavior remains a model for all Jewish generations.

Consorting with PotipharEs wife would have enhanced YosefEs position in the hierarchy of that princely household. However, at great

risk to his safety, Yosef declines her entreaties for sexual liaisons. Potiphar's wife becomes enraged. How dare this lowly common slave, a foreigner, speak of her husband's trust, and what was that ridiculous nonsense about the demands of the Jewish G-d?

In spite of his refusals, Yosef would have succumbed, were it not for the appearance of D'mut D'yukno Shel Aviv, the image of his father. Indeed, the covenant with Hashem was concretized to Yosef, as it is for us, in the personae of fathers and grandfathers adjuring each generation to Sh'mirat Hamitzvot and moral conduct. Yosef's self-restraint is not only the mark of his personal integrity, but also stands as a prototypical example for the behavior of a Jewish leader. When self-control is rooted in loyalty to E' and commitment to His Torah, national as well as personal sanctity are enhanced.

A comment by the Ramba"m in Hilchot Yesodei HaTorah (Perek 5 - Halachah 10) focuses on K'dushah as a function of Torah-mandated morality:

He who desists from a transgression or does a mitzvah not for any worldly reason, not fear nor reward, but only to fulfill God's commandment such as Yosef in his conduct regarding his master's wife, thereby sanctifies the name of God.

Indeed, the clinching argument of Yosef's refusal underscores this point. Yosef claims that if he were to accede, "Ve'chatati Le'Elokim" - "I would sin against G-d."

Fortunately, very few of us will face challenges comparable to those that Yosef overcame. Nevertheless, we must approach the challenges that confront us with the same resolve displayed by Yosef as he confronted the wife of Potiphar. Only then can we become a Mamlechet Kohanim V'Goy Kadosh a legion of priests and a holy nation.

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Shiur HaRav on Parshas Vayeshev/Shabbos Channukah

Shabbos Channukah traditionally falls out on Parshat Miketz. Sometimes there are 2 Shabbosos Channukah with Shabbos Vayeshev being the first and Miketz the second. On rare years Vayeshev alone is Shabbos Channukah. These Parshios have as their central theme the story of the sale of Joseph into slavery in Egypt. The Gemara (Megilla 32a) states that Moshe established that the selection of the Torah reading should be relevant to the particular festivals and occasions that occurred in that time frame. For instance we read about

the laws of Pesach on Pesach, the laws of Sukkos on Sukkos etc. The Gemara applies this principle to Purim as well (Megilla 4a), when we read the story of the battle waged by Joshua against Amalek. It therefore follows that this principle should apply to Channukah as well, since like Purim it is also a Rabbinic ordained Festival. The Rav explored the connection between Channukah and the weekly Torah portions read during this time.

"And he sent him from the Valley of Chevron" (Breishis 37:14). Rashi asks that geographically Chevron is on a mountain and he that this alludes to the "profound counsel of that righteous one who was buried in Chevron", referring to Avraham Avinu and the Bris Bayn Habesarim. The whole purpose of the sale of Joseph was to pave the way for bringing Jacob to Egypt. The Medrash says that had Jacob not gone to Egypt in order to see Joseph he would have been brought down there regardless, in chains if necessary, to fulfill the promise of the Bris Bayn Habesarim.

Jacob was well aware that the brothers hated Joseph, yet he sent him to them anyway. What was the purpose of sending Joseph to his brothers? If they were in need of help, how would Joseph, who was younger than the others, help his strong older brothers? Jacob was acting contrary to reason. This is what our Rabbis meant when they commented, as brought down by Rashi, from the profound counsel of Avraham Avinu. It was the divine will that guided Jacob to act in an irrational manner in order to facilitate the keeping of the promise "For your children shall be strangers in a land that is not their own". On the day that Jacob sent Joseph from his house to seek his brothers, the divine presence was working to unfold Jewish destiny. Our Rabbis said that on that very day Hashem was creating the light of the Melech HaMoshiach (Breishis Rabbah Vayeshev 5:1). On that fateful day that Joseph left his father's house to seek his brothers great drama of the Nation of Israel was initiated that continues to this day and will continue till "the saviors shall mount Mount Esav". On that day the prophecy given to Avraham expanded itself beyond the exile in Egypt, and set in motion the chain of events for all the history that that has befallen, and is yet to befall, the Jewish Nation till the arrival of the Moshiach.

The preoccupation with the Melech Hamoshiach is quite evident in Parshas Vayeshev which relates the story of Judah and Tamar and the birth of their twin sons, from whom the Melech Hamoshiach will descend. In Tehillim (40:8) King David said "Then I said, Behold I have come, with a scroll of a book prescribed for me". Rava said on this verse (Yevamos 77a) that David thought that his was a new story, a new episode in Jewish History. He now realized that his story was begun many years prior, with the salvation of Lot from Sedom with his 2 daughters. The elder of the daughters had a child from Lot, Moav, who's descendant, Ruth, was David's great-grandmother. In other words, the story of Lot in Breishis is critical to the notion of Moshiach Ben David, for without Lot and his daughters King David would not have been born. David was pointing out that he thought that he only now was spoken about, in the book of Samuel. However the seeds were planted years before to assure his arrival, and consequently the arrival of the Moshiach Ben David. It was not only Lot that was saved years before in Sedom, but David as well. Likewise, it was not only Tamar who was spared by Yehuda's admission, but David and the Moshiach Ben David as well.

The story of the sale of Joseph into slavery in Egypt marks the true beginning of the history of B'nei Yisrael. It also sets the stage for the arrival of the Melech Hamoshiach, through the act of Teshuva done by Yehuda in sparing the life of Tamar. This drama continues

to this day and will be complete with the arrival of the Moshiach and the recognition of Hashem as the One Gd.

We can go a step further with this idea. At the end of his life David referred to himself as the "Hukam Awl Moshiach Elokay Yisrael" (Smauel 2: 23v1) on which the Medrash comments that he was the one who established the yoke of repentance (Hukam Awl). David was the personification of Teshuva. He taught the concept of Teshuva to Klal Yisrael. When he admitted to Nathan the prophet that he had sinned and then remained speechless at that moment (according to the Vilna Gaon) he was repentant. He knew that he was wrong and he listened to the prophet even though as king he had the power to ignore him and move him aside. He obtained this repentant spirit from his ancestors. The Mechilta in B'Shalach says that the reason why Yehuda merited royalty was his admission of guilt to Tamar, and his inherent strength of repentance that allowed a man as great as he to openly repent.

Jacob recognized this strength when he blessed Yehuda with "Gur Aryeh Yehuda", that even when you fall down and sin you have the strength to stand up, do Teshuva and rise again.

The entire story of the sale of Joseph can be viewed as a lesson in doing Teshuva. Teshuva is a prerequisite for the ultimate redemption. Yehuda set the example in Parshas Vayeshev when he sinned by saying "Of what benefit would it be for us to kill our brother" and when he finally repented in Parshas Vayigash when he laid down his life to protect Binyamin.

Yehuda was not alone in doing Teshuva when the brothers confronted Joseph in Egypt they admitted their guilt, "Indeed are we guilty" (Breishis 42:21).

The divine plan pre-ordained

these events with Joseph and Tamar to allow Yehuda in particular and the brothers in general, to recognize the power of Teshuva.

This ultimately ensured the Melech Hamoshiach by saving Tamar and his sons. Yehuda's willingness to sacrifice himself in

Parshat Vayigash would not have been possible without the lesson of the importance of Teshuva that was driven home to him by the episode with Tamar in Parshat Vayeshev.

One might ask, why didn't Joseph reveal himself to his brothers immediately after they admitted their guilt and expressed remorse about his forced slavery?

The answer lies in the status of Yehuda and the need for him to act in an appropriately repentant manner. Yehuda was:

1) the leader of the brothers, and the leader is held to a higher standard than the others;

2) the one who suggested they sell Joseph into slavery.

Joseph waited for Yehuda to act out his willingness to offer his life for Binyamin and thus perform a higher level of Teshuva than the others. This was the Teshuva that Yehuda eventually performed in Parshas Vayigash.

It is interesting to note that Joseph also did Teshuva:

"And he entered his room and he wept there" (Breishis 43:30). He realized that he acted improperly towards his brothers, particularly in the way that he was constantly bringing bad reports (Dibasam raah el avihem) about them to Jacob.

According to the Rav, Vayeshev, Miketz and Vayigash are the Parshios that begin the story of the Jewish People, the planting of the seeds that will eventually lead to the coming of Moshiach and the important role played by

Teshuva in these events.

To return to our original question: How are these Parshios connected to Channukah? The Rav explained the linkage in the following way. The central theme of the 3 festivals is to remember our deliverance by the hand of Hashem from slavery in Egypt. Paroh sought the physical destruction of the Jewish nation, he did not persecute them for religious reasons. The same is true of Nebuchadnetzar who wanted to conquer the people and the land and to glorify himself. This can be seen from his treatment of Chananiah, Meshael and Azaryah (who requested and received kosher food from their captors).

Purim also is a holiday

whose theme is deliverance from imminent physical destruction at the hands of our enemies. Channukah had a new dimension;

deliverance of the Jews from religious persecution, from without as well as within. This was the first major incident in Jewish history where the goal was spiritual assimilation of the Jew and not his physical annihilation. There were many hellenizers among the Jews who strongly advocated abandoning Jewish practice and engaging in the hellenistic practices of the Assyrians and Greeks.

Channukah was the first time that Jews died for Kiddush Hashem in response to religious persecution. This is reflected in the Al Hanisim prayer where we say that the goal of the Greeks was to dissuade the Jewish People from keeping their faith in Hashem.

An example of the lengths to which the Greeks went in attempting to dislodge the faith of the Jewish People in Hashem is the story of the nephew of Yossi Ben Yoezer who was cajoled by his Greek friends to steal the Menorah from the Beis Hamikdash. He refused and was murdered by his "friends". The Medrash refers to this story as a play on words in Parshat Toldos where Yitzchak smelled the fragrant odor of Jacob's clothing (Reach Begadav). The Medrash says that the word Begadav should be read Bogdav, those that are traitors to Him. However, even a hellenizer like the nephew of Yossi Be Yoezer had his limits and did Teshuva in his final moments.

The Gemara (Shabbos 22b) states that Channukah was established as a festival and joyous holiday the following year after the conquest over the Assyrians and the miracle of the oil. why did they wait a year before establishing the holiday? The Rav explained that it was insufficient for the people to remove the physical Tumah from the Mikdash that was brought in by the hellenizers. Klal Yisrael also had to do a communal Teshuva for their actions during that period. This Teshuva was led by the Chashmonaim. Channukah was the culmination of their Teshuva efforts and hence a holiday of Teshuva. It shares a common theme, one of Teshuva, with the Parshios of Vayeshev, Miketz and Vayigash.

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