

Vayeishev 5783

Weekly Parsha VAYEISHEV

Rabbi Wein's Weekly Blog

Modern writers and commentators have found the biblical narratives of the book of Bereshith irresistible in their penchant for psychoanalyzing people described in terms of modern understanding and current correctness. In so doing they do a great disservice to Jewish tradition and present a distorted picture of the message that the Bible is attempting to convey.

The narrative regarding Joseph and his brothers has engaged mankind for millennia. In it is represented all of the personality characteristics of nobility, self-justification, blindness and deception throughout history. The narrative stands by itself and needs no "deeper" exposition or analysis. It is what it is and that is how Jewish tradition has always viewed it.

The tendency to "understand" the characters of the people presented in the Torah narrative leads to all sorts of weird ideas that serve to undermine Jewish values and traditions instead of strengthening them. In all of the narratives that appear in this holy book the unseen hand of Heaven, so to speak, is present and active. And that part of the story is not subject to any psychological or personal analysis or perspective.

Rashi points this out in his opening comment to this week's Torah reading. The plan of Yaakov is to enjoy a leisurely retirement in his later stage of life but Heaven interferes as the story of Yosef and his brothers unfolds. No matter how you will analyze the motivations of the characters in this biblical narrative, we still will not know the entire story. It is always the inscrutable hand of Heaven that governs the story and mocks our pretensions.

One of the great differences between the traditional commentators and the more modern versions of this genre is this God factor. Midrash, Talmud, and the great medieval and later commentators that created the framework for understanding the narrative of the Torah, also delved deeply into the personalities and motives of the people represented in the Torah. They were always careful not only to include but also to emphasize that ultimately it was the will of Heaven that was guiding events towards Divine purposes.

The Bible is not a psychodrama or rebuke of history and psychology. It is a book of fire and holiness and one has to be careful in handling it. But modern commentators – even those who are observant and

scholarly – many times insert currently faddish values and interpretations into its eternal words. Keeping this in mind in dealing with the great narrative regarding Joseph and his brothers, one of the key narratives in the entire Torah, we should do so with caution and tradition.

To do otherwise, is a great disservice to the text of the story itself and to the value system that Jewish tradition has assigned to it. The dispute between Joseph and his brothers has heavenly and historic consequences and still hovers over Jewish life today. To treat it as a matter of sibling rivalry is a misunderstanding of the entire purpose of the Torah narrative.

Shabbat shalom

Rabbi Berel Wein

VAYESHEV - How to Change the World

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

In his Hilchot Teshuvah (Laws of Repentance), Moses Maimonides makes one of the most empowering statements in religious literature. Having explained that we, and the world, are judged by the majority of our deeds, he continues:

Therefore we should see ourselves throughout the year as if our deeds and those of the world are evenly poised between good and bad, so that our next act may change both the balance of our lives and that of the world.[1]

We can make a difference, and it is potentially immense. That should be our mindset, always.

Few statements are more at odds with the way the world seems to us most of the time. Each of us knows that there is only one of us, and that there are seven billion others in the world today. What conceivable difference can we make? We are no more than a wave in the ocean, a grain of sand on the seashore, dust on the surface of infinity. Is it conceivable that with one act we could change the trajectory of our life, let alone that of humanity as a whole? Our parsha tells us that yes, it is.

As the story of Jacob's children unfolds, there is a rapid rise of tension among his children that threatens to spill over into violence. Joseph, eleventh of the twelve, is Jacob's favourite son. He was, says the Torah, the child of Jacob's old age. More significantly, he was the first child of Jacob's beloved wife Rachel. Jacob "loved Joseph more than all his

other sons” (Gen. 37:3), and they knew it and resented it. They were jealous of their father’s love. They were provoked by Joseph’s dreams of greatness. The sight of the multi-coloured robe Jacob had given him as a token of his love provoked them to anger.

Then came the moment of opportunity. The brothers were away far from home tending the flocks when Joseph appeared in the distance, sent by Jacob to see how they were doing. Their envy and anger reached boiling point, and they resolved to take violent revenge.

“Here comes the dreamer!” they said to one other. “Now let us kill him and throw him into one of the pits – we can say that a wild animal devoured him – then we shall see what comes of his dreams!”

Gen. 37:19–20

Only one of the brothers disagreed: Reuben. He knew that what they were proposing was very wrong, and he protested. At this point the Torah does something extraordinary. It makes a statement that cannot be literally true, and we, reading the story, know this. The text says:

“When Reuben heard this, he saved him [Joseph] from them”

Gen. 37:21

We know this cannot be true because of what happens next. Reuben, realising that he is only one against many, devises a stratagem. He says, Let us not kill him. Let us throw him alive into this pit in the desert, and let him die. That way, we will not be directly guilty of murder. His intention was to come back to the cistern later, when the others were elsewhere, and rescue Joseph. When the Torah says, Reuben heard this and saved him from them, it is using the principle that “God accounts a good intention as a deed.”[2] Reuben wanted to save Joseph and intended to do so, but in fact he failed. The moment passed, and by the time he acted, it was already too late. Returning to the cistern, he found Joseph already gone, sold as a slave.

On this, a Midrash says:

Had Reuben known that the Holy One blessed be He would write about him, “When Reuben heard this, he saved him,” he would have lifted Joseph bodily onto his shoulders and taken him back to his father.[3]

What does this mean?

Consider what would have happened had Reuben actually acted at that moment. Joseph would not have been sold as a slave. He would not have been taken to Egypt. He would not have worked in Potiphar’s house. He would not have attracted Potiphar’s wife.

He would not have been thrown into prison on a false charge. He would not have interpreted the dreams of the butler and baker, nor would he have done the same two years later for Pharaoh. He would not have been made viceroy of Egypt. He would not have brought his family to stay there.

To be sure, God had already told Abraham, many years earlier:

“Know with certainty that your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and there they will be enslaved and oppressed for four hundred years.”

Gen. 15:13

The Israelites would have become slaves, come what may. But at least they would not have had this happen as a result of their own family dysfunctions. An entire chapter of Jewish guilt and shame might have been avoided.

If only Reuben had known what we know. If only he had been able to read the book. But we never can read the book that tells of the long-term consequences of our acts. We never know how much we affect the lives of others.

There is a story I find very moving, about how in 1966 an eleven-year-old African-American boy moved with his family to a hitherto white neighbourhood in Washington.[4] Sitting with his brothers and sisters on the front step of the house, he waited to see how they would be greeted. They were not. Passers-by turned to look at them, but no-one gave them a smile or even a glance of recognition. All the fearful stories he had heard about how whites treated Blacks seemed to be coming true. Years later, writing about those first days in their new home, he says, “I knew we were not welcome here. I knew we would not be liked here. I knew we would have no friends here. I knew we should not have moved here.” As he was thinking those thoughts, a woman passed by on the other side of the road. She turned to the children and with a broad smile said, “Welcome!” Disappearing into the house, she emerged minutes later with a tray laden with drinks and cream cheese and jam sandwiches which she brought over to the children, making them feel at home. That moment – the young man later wrote – changed his life. It gave him a sense of belonging where there was none before. It made him realise, at a time when race relations in the United States were still fraught, that a Black family could feel at home in a white area and that there could be relationships that were colourblind.

Over the years, he learned to admire much about the woman across the street, but it was that first spontaneous act of greeting that became, for him, a definitive memory. It broke down a wall of separation and turned strangers into friends.

The young man, Stephen Carter, eventually became a law professor at Yale and wrote a book about what he learned that day. He called it *Civility*. The name of the woman, he tells us, was Sara Kestenbaum, and she died all too young. He adds that it was no coincidence that she was a religious Jew. “In the Jewish tradition,” he notes, such civility is called “chessed – the doing of acts of kindness – which is in turn derived from the understanding that human beings are made in the image of God.”

“Civility,” he continues, “itself may be seen as part of chessed: it does indeed require kindnesses toward our fellow citizens, including the ones who are strangers, and even when it is hard.”

He adds:

To this day, I can close my eyes and feel on my tongue the smooth, slick sweetness of the cream cheese and jelly sandwiches that I gobbled on that summer afternoon when I discovered how a single act of genuine and unassuming civility can change a life forever.

A single life, says the Mishnah, is like a universe.[5] Change a life, and you begin to change the universe. That is how we make a difference: one life at a time, one day at a time, one act at a time. We never know in advance what effect a single act may have. Sometimes we never know it at all. Sara Kestenbaum, like Reuben, never did have the chance to read the book that told the story of the long-term consequences of that moment. But she acted. She did not hesitate. Neither, said Maimonides, should we. Our next act might tilt the balance of someone else’s life as well as our own.

We are not inconsequential. We can make a difference to our world. When we do so, we become God’s partners in the work of redemption, bringing the world that is a little closer to the world that ought to be.

[1] Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, *Hilchot Teshuva* 3:4.

[2] *Tosefta*, *Pe’ah* 1:4.

[3] *Tanchuma*, *Vayeshev*, p. 13.

[4] Stephen Carter, *Civility* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), pp. 61–75.

[5] *Mishna Sanhedrin* 4:5 (original manuscript text).

Shabbat Shalom: Parshat Vayeshev (Genesis 37:1 – 40:23)

Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

Efrat, Israel – “And there passed by Midianite merchants, and they drew and lifted up Joseph out of the pit, and sold Joseph to the Ishmaelites for twenty shekels of silver, and they brought Joseph down to Egypt” (Genesis 37:28).

Who bears the ultimate responsibility for a criminal act? Is it the person who plans the crime, or the one who pulls the trigger or stabs with the knife? Is it the agency that sets up the act, the terrorist inciters, the mercenary for hire, or even the disinterested parents or apathetic society that nurtured the evil intent leading to the villainous deed?

An ambiguous verse in *Vayeshev* dealing with the sale of Joseph initiates a difference of opinion amongst biblical commentators that have relevance to this important question.

Let’s consider this scene of *déjà vu*. We know that Isaac was actually blind when he planned to give the blessings to his favored son, Esau, who turned out to be Jacob because of Rebecca’s planned deception. Now, we find Jacob is equally blind in his relationships with his own sons, for “Israel [Jacob] loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age, and he made him a coat of many colors’ [Gen. 37:3]. This infuriated his brothers. ‘And when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably to him’ [Gen. 37:4]. The Talmud declares:

“A parent must never favor one child among the others; because of a piece of material worth two selahs [the coat of many colors] that Jacob gave to Joseph more than his other children, his brothers became jealous of him and the matter degenerated until our forefathers were forced to descend to Egypt.” (B.T. *Shabbat* 10b)

Apparently, our Sages felt that Jacob bore ‘ministerial responsibility’ for the tragedy of the brothers, although his sin was certainly inadvertent. Jacob suffers grievously for his mistake in family management, believing for twenty-two years that his beloved son is dead. But nevertheless, he certainly is not the main culprit.

Joseph doesn’t do anything to assuage his brothers’ feelings: he recounts his dreams that flaunt his superiority and eventual domination over the other family members (Genesis 37:5–11). Then, in a fateful

move, the still unaware (blind) Jacob sends Joseph to Shekhem to see “whether all is well with his brothers, and well with the flock” (Genesis 37:14). Sighting Joseph from a distance and clearly aggrieved by their father’s favoritism, Joseph’s brothers conspire in their hearts to kill him. They tear off his coat of many colors and cast him into a pit.

Shortly afterwards, the brothers spy an approaching caravan, prompting Judah to suggest that since killing isn’t profitable, they should rather sell Joseph to the Ishmaelite caravan and tell their father he was devoured by a wild beast.

Undoubtedly, the moment Joseph is sold into slavery is one of the turning points in the Torah. It is considered the most heinous crime of the biblical period – the sin of sibling hatred foreshadowing the Jewish divisiveness that led to the destruction of the Second Holy Temple and its aftermath of tragic exile and persecution.

However, when we examine the verse recording the sale of Joseph, it’s hard to figure out who it was that actually sold the hapless brother, the Ishmaelites, the Midianites or the brothers who initiated the plan (Genesis 37:27,28).

Joseph himself initially considers the brothers responsible, as he said when he first reveals his true self to them, “I am Joseph your brother whom you sold to Egypt.” (Genesis 45:4)

However, the Rashbam maintains that since the brothers were not the ones who actually pulled Joseph out of the pit to sell him, they could not be considered as the only guilty party; but they must still share responsibility for the events that unfolded as a result of the sale. Their initial act of casting their brother into the pit was done with murder in their hearts. Rashbam casts guilt upon everyone who shares in unleashing the forces of evil, even those whose hands remain clean – while others do the actual dirty work.

I share the view of Rashbam. One must do something – not merely think something – in order to be responsible, but the one who sets the ultimate crime in motion by his action, even though he might not have perpetrated the act of the sale itself, must nevertheless certainly take responsibility. Hateful intentions alone cannot create culpability, but placing an individual in a vulnerable position – like casting him into the pit – inciting others to participate in that hatred as well as actively aiding and abetting the perpetrators of the crime, certainly makes one a partner in crime who must assume a share of the guilt.

But there is a twist in this portion, and Joseph engages in a little historical revisionism. A much wiser and more mature Joseph was Grand Vizier of Egypt twenty-two year later; he looks upon this incident from the perspective of Jewish history, sub specie aeternitatis, under an Eternal gaze. From his vantage point, when he stands as Master rather than hapless victims, he continues, “But now do not be sad, and let there not be reproach in your eyes because you sold me here; it was in order that you [all] might live that God sent me [to Egypt] before you...to ensure your survival in the land and to sustain you [for a momentous deliverance]. And now, it was not you who sent me here but God...” (Genesis 45:5–8).

Hence Joseph may very well be holding the brothers responsible for the sale even though it may have been the Midianites who actually committed the transaction – not only because it was the brothers who began the process which led to the sale, but mostly because he wishes to involve them in redemption. For Joseph, the act that began as a crime concluded – owing to divine guidance and Joseph’s own quick-wittedness – as the salvation of the family of Israel. Joseph is anxious to restore family unity – and thus to look upon the sale from a divine perspective, which turned a tragic family transgression into a truly mighty salvation! Shabbat Shalom!

<https://www.theyeshiva.net/jewish/944/essay-vayeishev-CHANUKAH-have-we-betrayed-our-g-d-has-g-d-betrayed-us?print=1>

Have We Betrayed G-d? A Chanukah Drama Rabbi YY Jacobson

December 11, 2012 | 27 Kislev 5773

Dedicated by Kenya Washington for blessed memories of my Mother-Pearl Agnes Washington

Class Summary:

Have We Betrayed Our G-d? Has G-d Betrayed Us? - A Yud-Tes Kislev and Chanukah Drama

The Judah-Tamar Drama

It is a fascinating story: (1) Judah has three sons, Er, Onan and Shalah. His oldest son, Er, married a woman named Tamar, but died prematurely, without children. His bereft father, Judah, suggested to his second son, Onan: "Consort with your brother's wife and enter into levirate marriage with her, and establish offspring for your brother."

Here, we are introduced, for the first time, to the concept of levirate marriages, discussed later in the book of Deuteronomy: "When brothers live together,

and one of them dies childless, the wife of the deceased man shall not marry outside to a strange man; her brother-in-law shall come to her, and take her to himself as a wife, and perform a levirate marriage. The first-born son whom she bears will then perpetuate the name of the dead brother so that his name will not be obliterated from Israel."

One of the great biblical commentators, Nachmanides, writes that this mitzvah embodies "one of the great mysteries of the Torah" and that even before the Torah was given, people knew of the spiritual benefits of a levirate marriage. The biblical commentators explain that the child born of the union between the brother of the dead man and his former wife -- both of whom are intimately connected with the deceased man -- is considered the spiritual son of the deceased. Moreover, the Kabbalists suggest that the first-born child of the levirate marriage is a reincarnation of the soul of its other's first husband, bringing the deceased man, as it were, back to life.

So Judah suggested to his second son Onan to marry his brother's widow and perpetuate the legacy of the deceased brother.

Now, Judah's second son also died prematurely without having any children. Judah refused to allow her to marry his third son, Shalah. Which put her in an impossible situation: she could not go out and marry anyone else, because she was bound to Shalah, but her father-in-law would not allow her to marry Shalah.

Now, during those early times prior to the giving of the Torah, Nachmanides explains other relatives, in addition to brothers, used to carry out this obligation of levirate marriages. Thus, following the death of both of Tamar's husbands, she went and lured her former father-in-law, Judah, into a relationship with her that impregnated her. As a guarantee that he would pay her for the relationship, Judah gave Tamar his seal, cord (2), and staff.

"Some three months passed," the Torah relates (3), "and Judah was told, 'Your daughter-in-law Tamar has committed harlotry, and moreover, she has become pregnant by harlotry.'"

"Take her out and have her burned," said Judah.

"When she was being taken out, she sent word to her father-in-law, saying, 'I am pregnant by the man who is the owner of these articles. Identify, I beg you, these objects. Who is the owner of this seal, this cord, and this staff?'"

"Judah immediately recognized them, and he said, 'She is right; it is from me [that she has conceived]."

She did it because I did not give her to my son Shelah.'"

A Spiritual Story

It is axiomatic among all of the Jewish biblical commentators that the stories in the Torah are not just tales relating to ancient Jewish history. They also reflect spiritual timeless experiences that take place continually within the human soul. In his commentary on the book of Genesis, Nachmanides wrote: "The Torah discusses the physical reality, but it alludes to the world of the spirit (4)."

What follows, therefore, in this week's essay, is a classical Chassidic interpretation on the episode of Judah and Tamar, treating the story as symbolic of the inner spiritual life of the Jew.

Betrayal and Its Consequences

In the writings of the kabbalah, the name Judah, or Yehudah, containing within it the four letters of the name of Hashem, symbolizes G-d. Tamar, on the other hand, is the Hebrew name for a palm tree, and represents the Jewish people and their bond with G-d (5).

Why? The Talmud explains (6), that "just as the palm tree has but one 'heart,' so too do the Jewish people have only a single heart, devoted completely to their Father in heaven."

(The heart of the date palm is its sap. Unlike the saps of other trees, like the olive or almond tree, the sap of the palm is found only in its trunk, but not in its branches or leaves.

This is the meaning behind the Talmudic statement that the palm tree possesses only a single "heart" (7)).

The intimate union between Tamar and Judah - the Jew and G-d - occurs during the sacred days of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. During those days, G-d, or Judah, exposes Himself to His people, evoking within them a yearning to transcend their ego and self-centered cravings and to become one with G-d.

But then, some time passes, and the spiritual inspiration of the High Holy days wears off. Judah is informed that "Tamar, your Kallah (8), has committed harlotry, and moreover, she has become pregnant by harlotry." The news arrives to G-d that His bride has betrayed Him, substituting him with another partner.

Is this not the story of so many of us? At one point during our lives, we are inspired to transcend our selfish identity and connect to the deeper Divine rhythm of life. Yet, the cunning lore of numerous other gods captivates our imaginations and ambitions and dulls our vision. We substituted the G-d of truth

and transcendence with the ego-god, the power-god, the money-god, the temptation-god, the addiction-god, the manipulation-god, and the god of self-indulgence. What is even sadder for Judah is the news that "Tamar" is so estranged that she became pregnant by harlotry. This symbolizes the stage in life when the Jew rejects the G-d of his forefathers permanently and decides to build his future with superficial sources of gratification.

"Take her out and have her burned," says Judah. The purpose of the Jew is to serve as the spiritual compass of human civilization, to bear witness to the truth of the One G-d, the moral conscience of the world. When the Jew loses sight of the *raison d'être* of his existence when he believes that his salvation lies in the fact that he "was invited to the White House," or that he was praised in an editorial of The New York Times, his existence is useless.

The Truth Emerges

Rabbi Isaac Luryah wrote that "the judgment that began on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur is completed some three months later, during the days of Chanukah." That's why it is at this period of time - three months after the intimate union between Judah and Tamar - that Judah (the metaphor for G-d) is "informed" regarding the spiritual status of Tamar (the Jewish people) and the verdict is issued that Tamar has no future.

"When Tamar was being taken out, she sent word to Judah, saying, 'I am pregnant by the man who is the owner of these articles. Identify, I beg you, these objects. Who is the owner of this seal, cord, and staff?'"

During that fateful time, when the "prosecuting angels" have almost been successful in demonstrating to G-d that the Jewish people are a failed experiment, at that very moment, the Jew sends word to G-d, saying, "I am pregnant by the man who is the owner of these articles!" The information you received that I abandoned you, is a blatant lie! If I have gone astray here and there, it is merely a superficial, temporary phase. Gaze into the deeper layers of my identity and you will discover that I belong to You, that my intimacy is shared only with You, G-d. "I am pregnant from Judah and not from anybody else!" the Jew declares.

"Identity, I beg you, these objects. Who is the owner of this seal, cord, and staff?" For during the festival of Chanukah - when the judgment of Rosh Hashanah is finalized -- the Jew kindles each night a wick, or a

cord, soaked in oil, commemorating the event of the Jews discovering a sealed single cruse of oil after the Greeks had plundered the holy Temple in Jerusalem (9).

The Jew further points to the staff in his arm (10). In order to preserve his faith, he was forced time and time again - for 2000 years - to take the wandering staff in his arm, abandon his home, wealth and security, and seek out new territory where he could continue to live as a Jew.

"Identity, I beg you, these objects. Who is the owner of this seal, cord, and staff?" the Jew asks G-d. "It is to this man that I am pregnant!" Our loyalty and commitment remain eternally to the owner of the "seal" and "cord" of the Chanukah flames; our deepest intimacy is reserved to the owner of the "staff" of Jewish wandering.

Who Is the Traitor?

"Judah immediately recognized the articles, and he said, 'She is right; it is from me that she conceived. She did it because I did not give her to my son Shelah.'"

When G-d observes the burning flames of the Chanukah menorah, He immediately recognizes that indeed, His people have never left Him. True, the Jew does fall prey at times to the dominating external forces of a materialistic and immoral world, yet this enslavement is skin deep. Probe the layers of his or her soul and you will discover an infinite wellspring of spirituality and love.

"If the Jew has, in fact, gone astray here and there, it is my fault," G-d says, not his. "Because I did not give Tamar to my son Shelah." Shelah is the Biblical term used to describe Moshiach (11), the leader who will usher in the final redemption. G-d says that for two millennia I have kept the Jewish nation in a dark and horrific exile where they have been subjected to horrendous pain and savage suffering. Blood, tears, and death have been their tragic fate for twenty centuries, as they

prayed, each day and every moment, for world redemption. But redemption has not come.

How can I expect that a Jew never commits a sin? How can I expect that a Jew never try to cast his luck with the materialistic world about him that seems so appealing when I held back for so long the light of Moshiach?

"It is I, G-d, who is guilty of treason," G-d says. Not the Jew. Tamar is an innocent, beautiful palm tree, which still has only one heart to its Father in heaven.

Cold Soup

Rabbi Manis Friedman once shared the following thought (12):

Three thousand, three hundred and fifteen years ago G-d asked us if we would marry him. We had an extraordinary wedding ceremony, with great special effects--we were wowed. After the wedding, He said, "I have a few things I'd like you to take care of for me so, please... I'll be right back." He hasn't been heard from since. For more than three thousand, three hundred years. He has sent messengers, messages, postcards--you know, writing on the walls... but we haven't heard a word from Him in all this time.

Imagine, a couple gets married, and the man says to his new wife, "Would you make me something to eat, please? I'll be right back." She begins preparing. The guy comes back 3300 years later, walks into the house, up to the table, straight to his favorite chair, sits down, and tastes the soup that is on the table. The soup is cold.

What will his reaction be? If he's a wise man, he won't complain. Rather he'll think it's a miracle that the house is still there, that his table and favorite chair are still there. He'll be delighted to see a bowl of soup at his place. The soup is cold? Well, yes, over 3300 years, soup can get cold.

Now we are expecting Moshiach. If Moshiach comes now and wants to judge, what's he going to find? Cold soup?

He will find an incredibly healthy Jewish people. After 3300 years we are concerned about being Jewish, which means we are concerned about our relationship with G-d.

Yes, if Moshiach comes today, he'll find that our soup is cold. We suffer from separation anxiety. We suffer from a loss of connection to our ancestors. We suffer from a loss of connection even to our immediate family. The soup is cold. The soup is very cold. But whose fault is that? And who gets the credit for the fact that there is soup altogether?

We are a miracle. All we need to do is tap into it. We are the cure. Not only for ourselves, but also for the whole world. So let Moshiach come now and catch us here with our cold soup because we have nothing to be ashamed of. We are truly incredible. When G-d decided to marry us, He knew He was getting a really good deal.

A Jew is a child of G-d. A Jew is a prince. A Jew is the holiest of the holy. A Jew is truly one with G-d. And even when you look at yourself in the mirror and

you feel disloyal, the truth is that your ultimate loyalty remains to G-d, to truth, to holiness, to purity.

Moshiach is ready to come!

(This essay is based on the writings of the Chassidic Masters (13))

1) Genesis, chapter 38. 2) "Pethila" in Hebrew literally means a string or a wick. Judah gave her the string that he used to bind his sheep (Sechel Tov on Genesis 38:18). Many commentators, including Rashi, translate the word to mean a wrap or cloak. 3) Genesis 38:24-26. 4) Commentary on the opening verse of Genesis. 5) See Hoshanos recited on the third day of Sukkot. Psalms 92:13. 6) Sukkah 45b. Megilah 14a 7) Rashi ibid.; cf. Ritva. 8) In Hebrew, "Kalasecha" (Genesis 38:24). This can be translated as "your daughter-in-law," or, literally as your kallah, your bride. 9) Shabbas 21b. 10) The Hebrew term for "the staff," "v'hamateh" has the same numerological value as the word "Hakeli," the vessel, symbolic of the menorah in which we kindle the Chanukah flames. Hence, this verse is alluding to the three components of the Chanukah lights: the menorah, the wick, and the oil - all of which testify to the eternal allegiance of the Jew to G-d. 11) Rashi Genesis 49:10. 12)

http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/2540/jewish/Cold-Soup.htm 13) Bas Ayin Parshas Vayeishev, authored by Chassidic Master of Safed, Rabbi Avraham of Avrutch (1765-1840). He was a disciple of Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Bardeitchev and of Rabbi Nachum and Rabbi Mordechai (Reb Matele) of Chernobyl.

Parshas Vayeishev

Rabbi Yochanan Zweig

This week's Insights is dedicated in memory of Leon Brickman.

Transmitting a Double Legacy

Now Yisroel loved Yosef more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age (ben zekunim); and he made him a kesones passim [...] (37:3).

Rashi (ad loc), based on the Targum and Midrash (Bereishis Rabbah 84:7), explains that ben zekunim refers to the fact that "Yaakov taught Yosef all the Torah he learned in the Yeshiva of Shem and Ever" (the word zekunim being a reference to the two zekanim – elders).

That Yaakov emphasized these teachings to Yosef is somewhat difficult to understand. Maimonides (Hilchos Avodah Zara 1:3) says that while Yaakov

taught all his children, the one he appointed to head his Yeshiva was Levi. In other words, Levi was entrusted with the transmission of all the Torah and its values that began with Avraham. In Parshas Vayigash (46:28), Rashi points out that Yehuda was charged with building the Yeshiva (read “fundraiser”), but Levi was clearly the Rosh HaYeshiva. What then, was Yosef’s role that it necessitated him knowing all the Torah of Shem and Ever? Moreover, what in fact was studied in the Yeshiva of Shem and Ever?

The answer is that the children of Yaakov had two curriculums in their Torah studies. These curriculums were patterned after the two roles of Yaakov Avinu – that of Yaakov and that of Yisroel. In the Yeshiva of Shem and Ever he studied the seven Noachide laws and all their subsets and applications. The seven Noachide laws are for the average non-Jew to know their responsibilities to fulfill in this world. This was a very large body of work to study and took many decades to study and master. As an example; one of the seven Noachide laws is the prohibition on idol worship. In the times of Avraham, the tractate of Avodah Zara (idol worship) had four hundred chapters (Gemara Avodah Zara 14b) while today ours only has five. The second curriculum was that of the 613 mitzvos.

Yaakov had two roles that he fulfilled and they are represented by his two names; Yaakov and Yisroel. Originally, Yitzchak Avinu had envisioned a Jewish nation as a partnership between Eisav and Yaakov – Eisav would handle the physical world and physical needs, including interfacing with the other nations of the world, while Yaakov would be the spiritual source of Torah and Jewish values. This all changed when Yaakov received Eisav’s bracha from Yitzchak. When Eisav’s archangel was defeated and conceded that his birthright entitled him to the brachos, Eisav’s angel gives him his second name – Yisroel.

As Yaakov, he was charged with the transmission of the Torah and the values of Avraham Avinu. This is the very essence of Klal Yisroel and that role was passed on to Levi as Rosh HaYeshiva and final authority on Jewish law and custom. As Yisroel, he represented the leadership of Klal Yisroel as it relates to the other nations of the world; the responsibility to help them recognize Hashem and bring morality and international peace to them. This second role he gave to Yosef, that of international ambassador for the Jewish people. To fill that role Yosef had to be fully

versed in the teachings of Shem and Ever and that is why Yaakov made it the focus of Yosef’s studies.

Becoming Mainstream

These are the generations of Yaakov; Yosef, being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brothers; and the lad was with the sons of Bilhah, and with the sons of Zilpah, his father’s wives (37:2).

The Torah makes a remarkable statement here. Until this time Bilhah and Zilpah had been either called “maidservants” or “concubines.” This is the first place they are referred to as the “wives” of Yaakov. The difference is self-evident; a child of a servant is a servant while the child of a wife is considered a full sibling to all the children in the family. In the possuk, the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah are referred to as Yosef’s “brothers.” Clearly, Yosef had elevated the status of the children of Bilhah and Zilpah to brothers (in part by considering their mothers “wives of his father”). This would explain what our rabbis teach – that Yosef was so vexed that his brothers from Leah were calling them “slaves” that he complained to his father (see Rashi ad loc).

Given that Yosef had gone out of his way to validate their lineage, what happens to him later on is seemingly impossible to believe. The Midrash Tanchuma (ad loc) relates that ALL the brothers were unanimous in the decision to put Yosef to death and according to the Yalkut Shimoni (ad loc), when they changed their mind and sold him instead, ALL the brothers took a share of the proceeds from the sale. How is this possible? How could the children of Bilhah and Zilpah turn on the one brother who validated them and elevated them to the status of brother?

Chazal are teaching us a fascinating sociological application of human nature. Even after the children of Bilhah and Zilpah were validated and recognized as equal brothers, they were still constantly looking for further validation and wouldn’t even consider disagreeing with the children of Leah. In other words, an insecure person will always choose to remain part of the mainstream even if it comes at the expense of the person who opened the door for them in the first place. A common refrain from kiruv professionals is that very often the people they have returned to mainstream Orthodox practice refuse to support the very system that enabled them to become religious in the first place because the kiruv organization isn’t “religious enough.” Another example is when families choose schools for their kids based on what

community they want to be identified with as opposed to starting with the question; what school is best for this particular child?

This type of behavior points to a serious deficiency in one's character. Fortunately, the solution is fairly simple. Once a person has grown to a new level, he must not look for validation from the outside. This will only lead a person to make poor decisions because these decisions are made primarily on the criteria of what will give him the greatest validation. Instead, he must begin to appreciate internally who he has become and self-validate himself. Only then will he begin making decisions based on what is the right thing to do.

***Ohr Somayach :: Torah Weekly :: Parsha Insights
For the week ending 17 December 2022 / 23 Kislev
5783***

***Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair -
www.seasonsofthemoon.com***

Parshat Vayeshev

Whetting or Jading the Appetite

"...Hashem blessed the Egyptian's house on Yosef's account, so that the blessing was in whatever he owned..." (39:5)

In 2010, Warren Buffett and Bill Gates launched the Giving Pledge. It has approximately 81 billionaire signers so far, each of whom have pledged to give away at least half of their wealth. Last July, Gates himself said he planned to give away 'virtually all' his \$113 billion.

What makes a fabulously wealthy guy like Gates want to give away all his money? Hashem created man with two desires: a physical desire and a spiritual desire. And physical desire just goes so far. You can only sleep in one super-duper king-size bed at a time. You can only swim in a one swimming pool filled with pink champagne at a time. Physical pleasure has its limits (and may require more than Alka-Seltzer when those limits are exceeded).

On the other hand, spiritual pleasures, even in this world, have no limits. The more money you have, the more pleasure you have when you give it away. As it says in Kohelet, "And also the soul will not be filled." Rashi, in defining the Shabbat experience, says in Mesechet Beitza, "He eats a lot and is and is not disgusted." Shabbat is a magic machine that converts the physical into the spiritual. Shlomo Hamelech said, "The one who loves money will not be satiated by money." But he also says, "The one who loves Torah

will not be satiated by Torah." Physical pleasures leave you feeling empty as soon as they finish, and so you want more and more and more. Even though spiritual pleasures leave you full, but, just like Shabbat, you can consume more and more and more of them. The appetite is whetted, not jaded.

© 1995-2022 Ohr Somayach International

chiefrabbi.org

Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis

Dvar Torah Vayeshev: To be 'shomer mitzvot' does not mean to keep mitzvot!

That is the surprising view of the Or HaChaim Hakadosh. If that's the case, what does being 'shomer mitzvot' mean? The Or HaChaim explains that it means 'to look forward to the performance of mitzvot.' He derives this from a passuk that we're all familiar with from our kiddush on shabbat:

"Veshamru Bnei Yisrael et hashabbat la'asot et hashabbat,"

which we usually translate as,

"and the people of Israel shall keep the shabbat to perform the mitzvot of shabbat."

The Or HaChaim points out that 'la'asot et hashabbat' surely means 'to do shabbat' – to perform the mitzvot of shabbat, which we usually call 'keeping' shabbat, so if that's the case what is 'veshamru b'nei yisroel' – 'and the people of Israel shall keep'?

With regard to shabbat, he explains, it means to look forward to each and every shabbat.

Where does he derive this from?

It's from Parshat Vayeshev. In Parshat Vayeshev, we read about the dreams of Joseph. The reaction of his brothers in Bereishit 37:11 was,

"Vayekanu bo echav," – "His brothers were jealous of him,"

But what was the reaction of his father Yaakov?

"V'aviv shamar et hadavar." – "and his father was shomer this matter,"

meaning Yaakov knew that Joseph's dreams were prophesy and therefore he looked forward to the day when he would see the fulfilment of these dreams, when the rest of the family and all of society would pay homage and respect to Joseph who would be a great ruler.

Shamar therefore means to look forward to, and as a result to be 'shomer mitzvot' means to have a passion for mitzvot. To be 'oseh mitzvot' of course means to fulfil the mitzvot, but from here we learn a very relevant and important lesson for us today. Is it not

only important to technically and practically carry out mitzvot, through which we can tick a box with their fulfilment. If we want to preserve our tradition and guarantee that future generations will be as passionate as we are about mitzvot, we should celebrate them and perform them with hitlahavut, absolute passion. We are so fortunate and privileged through the Torah, to have a code of law and a guide to a fulfilling meaningful and joyous existence. Let us therefore be truly 'shomrei mitzvot' looking forward to the performance with passion of each and every precept that Hashem has gifted us.

Shabbat shalom.

Rabbi Mirvis is the Chief Rabbi of the United Kingdom. He was formerly Chief Rabbi of Ireland.

torahweb.org

Rabbi Zvi Sobolofsky

Behind the Image Of His Father

"The image of his father appeared to him." With these words Chazal encapsulate where Yosef drew his strength from to overcome the temptation of the wife of Potifar. On a basic level we can understand that Yosef was simply reminded by his father's image of the values his father had taught him in his youth. Perhaps there was more than just Yaakov as an individual that strengthened Yosef and enabled him to make the correct decision in whose merit he would eventually be called Yosef Hatzadik.

Yosef had already been separated from his father for some time when the episode of Potifar's wife occurs. During this time Yosef no doubt thought much about his father; he must have replayed in his mind countless times the last moments he had spent with Yaakov. The Torah tells us explicitly where their last meeting occurred. Yaakov sent Yosef from "Emek Chevron" - the Valley of Chevron - to locate his brothers. Chazal noted the significance of Chevron, the burial place of Avraham, being the place where Yaakov and Yosef parted. Undoubtedly the image of his father standing and waving goodbye to him in the shadow of the burial place of his great-grandfather Avraham was etched in Yosef's mind. When the image of his father appeared at the moment of truth, it was not just Yaakov's face that appeared. Yaakov as the grandson of Avraham and all that was represented by that image flashed in front of Yosef's eyes.

Avraham's relationship with Hashem, which encompassed being the forefather of the nation of Hashem and being the recipient of Eretz Yisrael,

would be passed on to his children. The Torah highlights that Avraham's legacy would not go to all his biological descendants, rather only to Yitzchak. "זרעך אחריך" - your descendants that follow you" would carry the legacy, from Avraham to Yitzchak and from Yitzchak to Yaakov. Chazal tell us that part of the covenant with Avraham required his descendants to marry those who would preserve that legacy. As such, great care was necessary to find the proper match for Yitzchak. The daughters of Canaan would not be able to preserve that legacy. Yitzchak had instructed Yaakov not to marry the daughter of Canaan for the same reason.

Yosef's test was specifically in this area of Kedushas Yisrael. Yosef had to choose between committing an act that would be the antithesis of bringing descendants of Avraham into this world and remaining steadfast to the legacy of his forefathers. At that moment, Yaakov's image appeared to him with the background of Chevron to remind him that he too could be a link in this holy chain. However, he could only be so if he preserved that sanctity to enable him to eventually bring his own children into this world with sanctity and purity.

Perhaps Me'oras Hamachpela served as the background for this image of Yaakov for another reason. There are two fundamentally different ways to view death. One's perception of the essence of life will impact one's thoughts about death: if life is all about physical pursuits, death is the absolute end of such an existence; however, one whose life is a spiritual one continues to live on even after his physical demise, since the spirit lives forever. Yaakov standing in front of the burial place of his grandfather symbolized the Torah's concept of life and death. Although Avraham's body was laid to rest, his soul lived on and his spiritual legacy continued to serve as an inspiration to his descendants for eternity. Yaakov had been chosen to continue this legacy. Esav lived for the physical moments, as was evident by his decision to trade the opportunity to be the first born who would continue the heritage of Avraham and Yitzchak. Because of his attitude, Esav could never carry on the spiritual traditions of his father and grandfather. It was Yaakov who dwelled in the tents of Torah who would continue this heritage.

Yosef's moment of challenge required of him to decide what his life was all about. Was life a pursuit of instant gratification and physical pleasure, or was life meant to be the opportunity to perfect oneself

spiritually? To succumb to his temptation would have placed Yosef in the realm of Esav and all those who traded their spiritual treasures for a bowl of soup. It was at this moment that Yaakov appeared to him with Chevron in the background. Upon seeing this image, Yosef remembered the lessons he had learned about what life was really all about.

Yaakov's image appeared to Yosef when he needed it most. Yosef drew the strength and inspiration from the appearance of his father against the background of Chevron to retain his place as a link in the glorious chain that would become Klal Yisroel.

Copyright © 2020 by TorahWeb.org

Rabbi Shmuel Rabinowitz

Parashat Vayeshev – 5783 :: The Cost of an Education Mistake

Two weeks ago, we read about the deceit perpetrated by Laban when he gave Jacob his older daughter Leah instead of the younger one who Jacob loved, Rachel. At the end, Jacob married both Leah and Rachel, but the Torah attests to the fact that he loved Rachel while Leah was hated. Even the fact that Leah bore him six sons and Rachel was infertile did not change the complicated situation. Rachel was, in Jacob's eyes, the main wife, the one he loved wholeheartedly. As long as she hadn't given birth, Jacob could stay disconnected from his family and living in Haran. But once Joseph was born, the son of his beloved wife, Jacob saw it as the right time to return and reunite with his family in the land of Canaan. It seems that Jacob saw Joseph as his first son despite the sons Leah bore before him. It is no wonder that this attitude led to tremendous tension between Leah's sons and Joseph.

Jacob, his wives, and his sons returned to Canaan where Rachel died giving birth to her second son, Benjamin. Later, Jacob favored Joseph and marked him as his successor when he made him a special woolen coat that symbolized Joseph's special status in relation to the other sons. Jacob's treatment of Joseph, along with dreams Joseph dreamed that pointed to his desire to rule the entire family, led his brothers to do a terrible act and they sold Joseph into slavery. Joseph was brought to Egypt and sold into slavery there and later even thrown into an Egyptian prison because of spite. Ultimately, as we will read during these coming weeks, the entire family went down to Egypt. There, after a change in rulers, Jacob's family – which

meanwhile had grown into the Jewish nation – sunk to the status of slaves for many years.

This entire sad story began with Laban's deceit when he married off Leah to Jacob instead of Rachel. But it wasn't only Laban who was guilty. In the Babylonian Talmud, we find sages who point to Jacob's treatment of his sons:

And Rava bar Mehasseya said that Rav Hama bar Gurya said that Rav said: A person should never distinguish one of his sons from among the other sons by giving him preferential treatment. As, due to the weight of two sela of fine wool [meilat] that Jacob gave to Joseph, beyond what he gave the rest of his sons, in making him the striped coat, his brothers became jealous of him and the matter unfolded and our forefathers descended to Egypt. (Tractate Shabbat 10)

Those same sages who taught us to admire the patriarchs of the nation, as people who merited a high spiritual and moral level, did not cover up the failures of these patriarchs. They demanded that we learn the Torah honestly, not being forgiving of mistakes made, even if those mistakes were made by superior people. Jacob, say our sages, should not have given Joseph preferential treatment. It was an education mistake that brought tragedy upon Jacob and upon the entire family. Had he treated all his sons equally, he could have prevented the friction and tension in his family that troubled his life and he would have prevented the suffering of the entire Jewish nation.

True, we are human and not angels. We are very far from Jacob's virtues. And yet, we are called upon to learn also from mistakes. An educational mistake can exact a steep price. Jewish sages direct us to learn from Jacob's mistake and act differently, to try to give each child the treatment he deserves, to let each child feel he is always wanted by his parents, no matter what he does or what happens.

The writer is rabbi of the Western Wall and Holy Sites.

Rav Kook Torah

Vayeishev: The Conflict between Joseph and Judah
Rabbi Chanan Morrison

Having overcome the difficult challenges posed by Esau and Laban, Jacob looked forward to more peaceful times. But intense resentment among his sons shattered these wishful hopes, and led to the sale of his favorite son, Joseph, as a slave in Egypt.

How could the brothers sell Joseph, and even consider killing him? Is it possible that they were motivated by petty jealousy over a colorful coat?

Also, is there a connection between the story of Joseph and the holiday that falls out this time of the year — Chanukah?

Integration versus Separation

The root of the disagreement among the brothers was in fact ideological. There were two schools of thought in Jacob's family, one championed by Joseph, the other by Judah. Joseph stressed the mission of the Jewish people as "a light unto the nations." In order to fulfill this goal, Joseph felt that we must interact with the nations of the world and expose them to the monotheistic teachings of Judaism.

Judah, on the other hand, was concerned about the negative influences when intermingling with pagan cultures. He emphasized the separate sanctity of the Jewish people, "a nation that dwells alone" (Num. 23:9). Judah feared that Joseph's philosophy of openness and integration would endanger the future of the Jewish people. But how to safely neutralize this threat?

Simon and Levy, who had already fought against assimilation when they decimated the city of Shechem for kidnapping Dina, planned to simply kill Joseph. Judah objected, "What profit is there if we kill our brother?" (Gen. 37:26). The true danger is not Joseph, but his school of thought. Let us put his theories to the test. We will sell Joseph to the Ishmaelites, and let him assimilate among the nations. Then all will see where his ideas lead to.

The Tabernacle and the Temple

These conflicting views are reflected by the contrast between the Mishkan (Tabernacle) in Shiloh and the Temple in Jerusalem. In Shiloh, offerings could be eaten outside the walls, as long as the city of Shiloh was in sight. Temple offerings, on the other hand, could only be eaten within the Temple walls. Why this difference?

For Joseph, the primary mission was to publicly demonstrate the sanctity of Israel and educate the nations. Thus, the holiness of the Shiloh Tabernacle — in Joseph's portion — spread beyond its walls. The Temple in Jerusalem, however, was located in the land of Judah and followed his view. It is necessary to build walls and restrict the dissemination of Torah, in order to protect the sanctity of the Jewish people.

The Hellenists versus the Hasmonean Priests

The holiday of Chanukah commemorates a similar struggle, the conflict between those seeking integration with the rest of the world, and those striving to preserve the distinct sanctity of the Jewish people. The Hellenistic Jews demanded adoption of Greek customs, the prevalent culture of the day. They claimed to be following Joseph's path of openness. Their slogan was, "Write on the ox horn that you have no share in the God of Israel" (Vayikra Rabbah 13:5). Why an ox horn? This is an allusion to Joseph, who was compared to a powerful ox (Deut. 33:17).

The Hellenists called for the people to continue in Joseph's path of openness and assimilation.

However, they ignored Joseph's underlying goal, to educate the nations. The Hellenists "broke down the walls of my towers." They breached the walls protecting Jerusalem and the Temple Mount, and allowed the idolatrous nations to defile the holy Temple.

The Hasmonean priests, kohanim from the tribe of Levy, naturally followed the path of Judah and Levy, that of separation. As kohanim, they benefited from the special sanctity of priesthood separating them from the rest of the Jewish people. The ultimate victory for the Hasmoneans was the discovery of a ritually clean jar of oil, with the seal of the High Priest intact. This jar of pure oil was a sign that the inner sanctity of Israel remained undefiled by pagan contact.

In the future, the nations will recognize the necessity for the walls of the House of Jacob that separate the Jewish people from the other nations. The nations will accept upon themselves the mitzvot of the Torah, while the entire Jewish people will be elevated to the level of kohanim. Then the Jewish people will relate to the nations of the world in a fashion analogous to the current connection of kohanim to the rest of the Jewish people.

Gold from the Land of Israel. Adapted from Shemuot HaRe'iyah 10, 5630 (1929).

Copyright © 2022 Rav Kook Torah

Shema Yisrael Torah Network

Peninim on the Torah - Parashas Vayeishev

פרשת וישב תשפ"ג

והנה אנחנו מאלמים אלמים בתוך השדה והנה קמה אלמתי וגם נצבה

Behold! We were binding sheaves in the middle of the field, when, behold! My sheaf arose and remained standing. (37:7)

The Torah's narrative teaches us how Hashem's ways (of dealing with the world and with us) must be accepted with love. A superficial, cursory perusal of the stories in the Torah will not do anyone justice; the reader is left clueless, and the profundity of the narrative remains concealed and ambiguous. The *Midrash* and *Zohar*, the *Talmud* and its many commentators, offer us powerful insights into the behind the scenes workings of the narrative, their hidden meaning, and the message for the reader. Concerning Yosef *HaTzaddik*, *Chazal* (*Bereishis Rabbah* 84:10) teach, *Kamah alumasi*; my sheaf stood up – "My *alumah*, alternatively – silence, stood for me." An *ileim* is a person who is mute or harnesses his speech to the point that he is virtually mute. Regarding Yosef, *Chazal* are intimating (as explained by *Sefas Emes*) that the quiet acceptance manifest by Rachel *Imeinu* (Yosef's mother) when Leah *Imeinu* replaced her as the bride who would marry Yaakov *Avinu*, gave Yosef the power (ability) to accept the Divine Will.

Until seventeen years of age, everything seemed to be going Yosef's way. Doted on by his father, who not only taught him Torah, but also imbued him with a powerful, life-sustaining perspective on how to live in a morally bankrupt society in a world where the Jew was not recognized, and, in some instances, reviled by many. Such depraved culture and feelings of animus can have a deleterious effect on one's spiritual connection to Hashem. Yaakov precluded this with the life lessons that he imparted.

It all changed when Yosef's brothers, who felt that he was a spiritual threat to them, stripped him of his position and degraded him. During all this, he remained silent, recognizing the hand of Hashem guiding the events surrounding his life. This was followed with the fictitious claim that he had attempted to seduce Potifar's wife. In reality, he had had to muster up every ounce of spiritual strength to ward off her advances. Yet, Yosef remained silent. This was his hallmark – the hallmark of his family – silence, acceptance, because it is the Divine Will.

Yosef remained in spiritual darkness, in a pit filled with the dregs of Egyptian society, the lowest of the low. Yet, he retained his *tzaddik* status, paving the way for the Jewish People to look for and see Hashem's guiding hand during the darkest of times.

Aharon *HaKohen* merited to see his son, Elazar, dressed in the vestments of the *Kohen Gadol*.

This was a miracle: since Moshe *Rabbeinu* removed Aharon's vestments one-by-one, Elazar immediately donned them, despite the fact that Moshe placed Aharon's outer garments onto Elazar first. Why did he merit such a miracle? True, Aharon was a holy man who dedicated his life to the preservation of peaceful co-existence among people. This extraordinary display of *nachas*, however, was unprecedented. I think it was the result of Aharon's silence, *Va'yidom Aharon*; "Aharon was silent" (*Vayikra* 10:13), his acceptance of the Divine decree which claimed the lives of two of his sons. His countenance did not alter one iota as he submitted himself to Hashem. Those few moments of acquiescence earned him a few moments of novel *nachas*.

Everything that happens in our lives constitutes a message from Hashem. At times, our essential response should be passive, as indicated above. During other instances, however, Hashem expects an active response – which might be forthcoming if we would only listen. The following sad story underscores this idea. A rabbi attended the funeral of one of his congregants – a fine man who left behind a son who was a source of *nachas* to him. After the internment, the rabbi returned home with the son, who was not only inconsolable at the service, but his deep melancholy continued in the car. A seasoned rabbi, who had attended his share of funerals and dealt with many a family member, he was somewhat concerned about the intensity of grief the son was expressing. The rabbi asked the son, "Did something unusual happen?"

"Yes. I will never forgive myself," the son began. "Shortly before my father passed away, he became quite ill. As such, he was very anxious to be in touch with me at all times. I assured him that he could call me 24/7, any time of day or night. I would be there to talk to him. My father was very considerate and hardly called. He did not want to bother me. When he took a turn for the worse, however, shortly before he left this world, with his last ounce of strength, he picked up the phone to call me to say goodbye – but my line was busy. I never got to talk to my father! I never said goodbye!"

Very sad, but unfortunately more common than we care to admit. With respect to Hashem, who is our Heavenly Father, He, too, sends us messages, which we either tend to ignore, because our ability to listen is stunted, or our life is busy with something else. The difference between the story and our

relationship with Hashem is: He “lives” forever; we unfortunately, do not. This should serve as a fitting wake-up call.

וילכו אחיו לרעות את צאן אביהם בשכם... ויאמר ישראל אל יוסף... לכה ואשלחך אליהם... ויבא שכמה

Now, his brothers went to pasture their father's flock in Shechem... and Yisrael said to Yosef... “Come, I will send you to them,” and he arrived in Shechem. (37:12,13,14)

Despite the brothers negative association with Shechem, a region where they had killed the male inhabitants of an entire city, they put their trust in Hashem, who caused the pagan residents of the area to fear them. Perhaps they remonstrated to themselves that their actions were not a disgrace. They acted in a manner which they felt was appropriate.

Rashi notes that Shechem was a *makom muchan l'puraniyos*, a place prepared for adversity: there, the tribes acted sinfully; there, the people of Shechem violated Dinah; there, the *malchus Bais David*, kingdom of David *Hamelech*, was divided. *Rashi's* order of events seem to be out of sequence. Dinah's violation occurred before the incident with Yosef. Yet, *Rashi* gives Yosef's incident precedence.

The Torah records Yaakov *Avinu* dispatching Yosef to Shechem as if it were important for him to go there. Why? *Horav Yosef Nechemiah Kornitzer, zl*, explains that Yaakov was quite aware of his sons' animus toward Yosef. Thus, he felt that Yosef's arrival in Shechem might be fraught with danger. On the other hand, he conjectured, the brothers had special feelings concerning Shechem. After all, it was the place where they had been willing to sacrifice their lives on behalf of Dinah, their sister. Yaakov felt that this was a place in which great familial love was demonstrated, where the love of one sibling for another was manifest in a willingness to make the ultimate sacrifice. This is what Yaakov *Avinu* intimated to Yosef, “Your brothers are in Shechem. It is a place where they showed extreme love for a sibling. Surely, their love will overcome whatever negative feelings they have toward you.”

Undoubtedly, Yaakov suffered greatly as a result of Dinah's defilement. His only consolation was that his sons were willing to sacrifice their lives for her. Thus, he no longer viewed the Dinah incident as adverse. Whatever negative feelings he had were mitigated by the love his sons had demonstrated. Once they erred in Shechem and sold Yosef, however, he saw that the love had been short-lived. Therefore, the

Dinah incident reverted back to one of adversity. While, indeed, it occurred before the brothers' debacle in Shechem, it was their current unconscionable collapse which returned it to the fore.

וישמע ראובן ויצלהו מידם

Reuven heard and he rescued him from their hand. (37:21)

Reuven suggested the brothers throw Yosef into a pit, rather than personally execute corporeal punishment against him. [The *Shevatim*, tribes/brothers, convened a *bais din*, judicial court, to determine if Yosef was, in fact, guilty of rendering false testimony against them, or a *rodef*, pursuer, who wanted to do them harm. In any event, they did not make their decision lightly.] It is difficult to understand how Reuven's suggestion that the brothers instead fling Yosef into a pit swarming with dangerous creatures was an act of saving Yosef. Was he not selecting one form of death over another? The *Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh* explains that Reuven's intention to have Yosef placed in a pit with deadly creatures was to save him – if he was worthy. A man has free will, thus enabling him to take someone's life even if the victim had not been Heavenly sentenced to death. Wild animals are Heavenly-controlled. In this regard, they will not harm a human being unless Hashem has sentenced him to death. Thus, *va'yatzleihu mi'yadam*; “He rescued him from their hands,” meaning: he saved him from the hand of a human being, who possesses free choice.

Ohr HaChaim's position vis-à-vis human free will – and its impact on another human being – is novel. Other commentators appear to disagree, maintaining that no human can harm another unless Heaven has specifically decreed it. Veritably, our core beliefs are founded upon the principle of Divine Providence, which teaches that Hashem guides everything in this world. As such, no one can harm his fellow unless Hashem is in agreement.

Horav Chaim Kanievsky, zl, sheds light on the *Ohr HaChaim's* statement. Hashem created the world for the purpose of giving man free-will to choose between good and evil. Thus, when one chooses evil by intending to harm his fellow, to countermand his intention by miraculously saving the victim means going against a principle of Creation. The victim certainly wants to live; the murderer wants to change his status. Who wins out, without negating the assailant's free-will? Such a miracle requires that the

intended victim possess enormous merit, such that it will supersede the aggressor's free-will.

When we have the merit of the victim up against the free-will of the murderer, the victim requires a greater accumulation of merit than he would if he were facing off with deadly creatures, who have no free-will. Reuven conjectured that Yosef was sufficiently righteous to merit being saved from the creatures – but not so when he must contend with the brothers. He was certain that, unless Heaven issued a decree that Yosef should die, he would survive the pit. He was not prepared to assert that Yosef's merits could save him from human hands who possess free-will. Therefore, their decision to kill Yosef was inequitable.

The *Ohr HaChaim's* position that an animal cannot harm a human unless Heaven has so decreed, came into play in his own life. *Horav Chaim Ibn Attar, zl*, the *Ohr HaChaim*, made Torah study his primary vocation. He spent day and night poring over the tomes of *Talmud* and *Shulchan Aruch*. Refusing to be supported by the community, he opted to open a small silver shop and use his extraordinary craftsmanship to fashion beautiful pieces of jewelry and trinkets. His fame spread throughout Morocco. He had one stipulation. He worked until he had sufficient funds with which to support his family. He then shuttered his shop and returned to his Torah study. When the funds ran out, he returned to the shop.

One day, two emissaries from the king of Morocco presented themselves at his shop with a message from the king. He had gold which he wanted him to fashion into a beautiful jewelry piece in honor of his daughter's upcoming wedding. *Rav Chaim* apologized that he could be of no assistance. His shop was closed. He had earned enough money to retire to his beloved Torah study. They looked at him incredulously. How dare he say "no" to the king? He replied that he had priorities, and Torah had supremacy over everything. The two men returned to the king in a state of shock. This had never happened before. No one had ever manifest such audacity. The king was angry to hear of the *Ohr HaChaim's* refusal, but decided to forgo his feelings this one time and give the Jewish silversmith another chance. To his chagrin, the negative response had not changed. "No" remained "no." To defy the king twice was high treason, which warranted the death penalty. Since the silversmith had made a fool of the king, the execution would be especially painful and gruesome. He would

be thrown into a cage with three hungry lions. In short time, he would satisfy their hunger. *Rav Chaim* took the decree with total equanimity, and even refused to share it with his family. He bid them goodbye and said he would return later. He made one request of the soldiers: He would like to take his *Tallis*, *Tefillin* and *Sefer Tehillim* along with him. They scoffed at him, but agreed, knowing that within minutes he would be devoured.

Bedecked in *Tallis* and *tefillin* and reciting *Tehillim* in a loud voice, *Rav Chaim* was led into the cage. A short time passed, and, when the guards heard no screams, they went to see what was occurring. How shocked they were to discover the *Ohr HaChaim* sitting in middle of the cage reciting *Tehillim*. The three lions sat at his feet entranced, listening to his prayers. When the king was informed of the developments, he raged in disbelief. He was going to the lion's den to see with his own two eyes the spectacle that was taking place. At first, he blamed the lion keeper for having fed the lions a large meal. Thus, they were not hungry for human flesh. The lion keeper denied any wrongdoing. To prove his innocence, he hung a piece of meat from a pole which he passed through the bars of the cage. The lions proceeded to devour it fiercely. Clearly, something was special about the holy rabbi. Seeing this entire scene, the king declared, "Now I know that there is a G-d of *Yisrael*!" He had *Rav Chaim* removed from the cage and asked for his forgiveness. As penance, the king showered him with gifts and great honor. When he returned home and his wife asked him about his day, he replied, "*Baruch Hashem*. But I see now that the time has come for us to move to *Eretz Yisrael*. Conditions here do not provide the proper climate for Torah study."

While variations to this story exist, the message remains the same: animals have no power over a human being unless Hashem wills it to be so.

ויקרא יעקב שמלתיו... ויתאבל על בנו ימים רבים

Then Yaakov rent his garments... he mourned for his son many days. (37:34)

Rashi explains the term *yamim rabim*, many days: twenty-two years, which lasted from Yosef's sudden departure until Yaakov *Avinu* went down to Egypt. This specific time was by design (as is everything) to coincide with the twenty-two years that Yaakov *Avinu* did not fulfill the *mitzvah* of *Kibbud av v'eim*, honoring his father and mother. Yaakov *Avinu* experienced twenty-two years of agony and mourning

over the painful loss of a son, as *middah k'neged middah*, measure for measure, for his lack of fulfilling the *mitzvah* to honor his parents. At first glance, Yaakov's departure from home by his mother's instruction in order to save his life is a far stretch from Yosef being sold, of which Yaakov was unaware. He thought that he was dead, torn by a wild animal. What is the equity between a passive lack of honor and active grief over the loss of a child?

I think that we may glean from here a powerful lesson which should give us food for thought. We have no idea of the pain experienced by parents when their child acts up and disrespects or ignores them. The pain is tantamount to losing a child! Yaakov's pain at losing Yosef was the penance for the pain his parents sustained when he was gone for twenty-two years. Frightening.

ותסר בגדי אלמנותה מעליה... ותשב בפתח עינים

So, she removed her widow's garb from upon her... and she sat at a crossroads. (38:14)

The term *pesach einayim* literally translated, means "at an entrance of eyes." Here, it is interpreted as *parashas derachim*, crossroads, because it is point where a traveler must open his eyes and decide which road he will take. The *parashas derachim* is called *pesach einayim*, because one cannot continue on the road unless his eyes are open, so that he can determine the best road to take. *Horav Tzvi Hirsch Ferber, zl (Kerem HaTorah)* relates that years earlier (he published his *sefer* in 1914), in such Jewish bastions of Torah and *avodah*, one road existed (which was used by the Jewish residents): It went from one's house to the *shul/bais hamedrash*. A Torah Jew had no other place to visit. He either went to *daven* or to learn.

Times have changed. Society and the new world culture have provided us with competing roads – each vying for us to journey on it. The *bais hamedrash/shul* is no longer our only destination. Thus, it is critical that we travel with our eyes open to see where we are going. This is especially crucial for parents to observe. Just because the father's address is the *shul* is by no means an indication that his son also uses the same address. Heaven help the parent whose perception with regards to his children is myopic, whose eyes are closed to his son's/daughter's destination in life. We are admonished to be *poseach einayim*, open up our eyes, in order to guide our children properly about how to navigate the various roads of life. Otherwise, the journey could take a bad,

dangerous turn. By the time we open up our eyes and adjust our glasses, it might be too late.

Va'ani Tefillah

רצון יראי יעשה – Retzon yirei'av yaaseh. He will do the will of those who fear Him.

During the Gulf War, when anxiety for personal safety was a primary concern, *Horav Chaim Kanievsky, zl*, assured people that they need not worry. He promised that no missile would fall on the city of Bnei Brak, the city of Torah and *chassidus*. He cited the *pasuk* in *Melachim II* 6:17, where Elisha prayed that the fearful eyes of his attendant be opened, so that he could see beyond the natural limitations of this world. Hashem granted the *Navi's* request, and suddenly his attendant saw an army of fiery horses and chariots surrounding Elisha, protecting him from harm. *Rav Chaim* declared, "If only people could see the vast wall of fiery words of Torah surrounding Bnei Brak, they would harbor no fear whatsoever. They would be confident that the *z'chus*, merit, of Torah would protect them from harm. Indeed, no missiles fell on Bnei Brak.

Rav Chaim added that the words/assurances of a *tzaddik* apply not only during his lifetime, but even after his *neshamah*, soul, has left his physical body. Thus, as when the *Chazon Ish* had promised years earlier that no explosion (bombs) would occur in Bnei Brak, this assurance continued to hold in our present. There is nothing to fear. We have the Torah as our protection.

Sponsored לזכר נשמת

ר' נח ב"ר יהודה אריה ז"ל - נפטר כ"ב כסלו תשכ"ו

by his family

*Hebrew Academy of Cleveland, ©All rights reserved
prepared and edited by Rabbi L. Scheinbaum*

**Ohr Somayach :: Talmud Tips :: Nedarim 37-43
For the week ending 17 December 2022 / 23 Kislev
5783**

Rabbi Moshe Newman

Torah is Free - Nedarim 37a

"Just as I, Moshe Rabbeinu, taught you for free, likewise you (teachers of Torah) must likewise teach Torah for free."

Our gemara derives this from examining a verse in which Moshe tells the people, "And Hashem commanded me at that time to teach you" together with another verse with him saying, "See! I have taught you statutes and judgments as Hashem commanded me." (Deut. 4:5, 14)

How do we see from here that Moshe was told to teach for free and that likewise all teachers of Torah should teach for free?

After Moshe told the people that he was commanded to teach them Torah, he added the words “as Hashem commanded me.” What exactly was Moshe conveying to the people with this seemingly enigmatic phrase? Logical deduction shows that this can only mean that Moshe was commanded to teach Torah for free. The reasoning: Could it mean that Hashem commanded him to take payment? This is not logical since why should he be forced to require payment? Or it could theoretically mean that Moshe was teaching Torah just as Hashem taught it to him, and they should not doubt his teachings? This is also not logical since the Torah states that Hashem guaranteed that the people would always trust Moshe as their prophet and teacher: “And they will also believe in you (Moshe) forever.” (Ex. 19:9) Therefore, the words “as Hashem commanded me” can only mean a directive to teach Torah for free. (Rabbeinu Nissim; for halachic sources and rulings regarding this topic see Shulchan Aruch Yoreh De’ah 246)

One Who Has Knowledge Has Everything - Nedarim 41a

Abaye said, “We have a tradition from our Forefathers and Rabbis that there is no true poverty except for one who is lacking Torah knowledge.”

This is what was taught by the Sage in Bavel. Our gemara relates that a similar idea was taught in Eretz Yisrael in the following manner: “One who has knowledge has everything; without it, what does he have? Whoever has acquired knowledge, what is he lacking? One who has not acquired knowledge, what has he acquired?” (By the way, it is quite a snappy-sounding statement in Aramaic!)

Our Sages teach that the word “zaken” does not necessarily refer to an elderly person, but is an acronym for a Torah scholar — “zeh kana chochma” — “this person has acquired knowledge.” One might recognize that the words “zeh kana” (this one acquired) can be seen in the word “zaken,” but how do we see that he has specifically acquired “chochma” — Torah wisdom — and that the word zaken therefore refers to a Torah scholar? The answer: The only real acquisition a person has is Torah. Material assets come and go and are external to the person, while Torah is eternally part of the person who ‘acquires’ it. Torah knowledge and wisdom is our only true

acquisition. (Rabbi Yaakov Yisrael Kanievsky, “The Steipler Rav”)

© 2020 Ohr Somayach International

Some Light Chanukah Questions

Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

Question #1: My sister invited our family for Shabbos Chanukah, and we will be sleeping at her neighbor’s house. Where do we set up the menorahs, particularly since I do not even know the neighbor?

Question #2: My husband has a meeting at work tonight and will not be home until very late. What should we do about kindling Chanukah lights?

Question #3: I will be attending a wedding during Chanukah that requires me to leave my house well before lighting time, and I will not return until very late. Can I kindle at the wedding, just like the lighting that takes place in shul?

Question #4: I will be spending part of Chanukah in a hotel. Where should I kindle my menorah?

SOME BASICS

Each individual has a requirement to light Chanukah lights, or to have an agent kindle the lights for him (see Rambam, Hilchos Chanukah 3:4). In places where the custom is that the entire household lights only one menorah, which is the predominant practice among Sefardim, the person who kindles functions as an agent for the rest of the family and the guests. (However, cf. Minchas Shelomoh 2:58:41 and 42, who understands this halacha differently.) Even in places where the custom is that each individual kindles his own menorah, as is common Ashkenazic practice, married women do not usually light, and most people have the custom that single girls also do not light (see Chasam Sofer, Shabbos 21b s.v. vehamehadrin, Elyah Rabbah 671:3, and Mikra’ei Kodesh #14 who explain reasons for this practice). In these instances, the male head of household kindles on behalf of his wife and daughters. A guest visiting a family for Chanukah can fulfill his or her obligation by contributing a token amount to purchase part of the candles or oil. By doing this, the guest becomes a partner in the Chanukah lights and fulfills his mitzvah when the host kindles them. An alternative way to become a partial owner of the Chanukah lights is for the host to direct the guest to pick up some of the oil or candles and thereby become a partial owner.

EATING IN ONE HOUSE AND SLEEPING IN ANOTHER

If someone is a guest and is eating at one house during Chanukah but sleeping in a different house, where should he light the menorah?

One should kindle where he is eating (Rema, Orach Chayim 677:1). In this situation, the place where one eats his meals is his primary “home.”

Many poskim contend that in Eretz Yisroel, the answer to this question depends on additional factors, including whether anyone else is staying in the house where the guest is sleeping. In their opinion, if no one else is kindling a menorah where the guest is sleeping, he should kindle the menorah there. Otherwise, he should kindle where he is eating.

The reason for this difference is that, in Eretz Yisroel, where the custom is to light outdoors when practical, someone walking through the street expects to find a menorah lit at every house. Thus, there is a responsibility to be certain that a menorah is kindled in every house that is occupied. In chutz la’aretz, since the menorah does not need to be visible outdoors to fulfill the mitzvah, a person walking outside the house and not seeing a lit menorah will simply assume that someone kindled indoors. Therefore, one does not need to make sure that every house has a lit menorah.

Similarly, someone in Eretz Yisroel who is using two houses should light a menorah in each of them, although he should recite only one bracha; in chutz la’aretz he does not need to kindle a menorah in each house.

I can now answer the first question I asked above: If someone will be eating in one house and sleeping in another, where should he kindle the menorah? The answer is that, in chutz la’aretz, he should kindle where he will be eating. In Eretz Yisroel, other factors may be involved, and one should ask a shaylah.

Many poskim contend that a guest who is spending Shabbos at someone else's home and is leaving after Shabbos may kindle the menorah at his host's house on Motza'ei Shabbos (Teshuvos Vehanhagos 1:391). Some poskim suggest that someone who follows this approach should spend some time, preferably a half-hour, appreciating his lights at the host's house before leaving (see Teshuvos Vehanhagos 1:394).

At this point, let us discuss the second of our opening questions: My husband has a meeting at work tonight and will not be home until very late. What should we do about kindling Chanukah lights?

To answer this question, we need to discuss two issues. The first is:

WHEN SHOULD I KINDLE THE MENORAH?

Early poskim dispute concerning when is the optimal time to kindle the Chanukah lights. According to the Gra, the best time is immediately after sunset, whereas most Rishonim rule that it is preferable to kindle at nightfall or shortly before nightfall.

The usually accepted approaches are to kindle sometime after sunset but before it is fully dark. Thus, Rav Moshe Feinstein kindled the menorah ten minutes after sunset, the Chazon Ish lit his menorah twenty minutes after sunset, while others contend that the optimal time to light the menorah is twenty-five minutes after sunset.

UNTIL WHEN MAY I KINDLE THE MENORAH?

At the time of the Gemara, one fulfilled the mitzvah of lighting menorah only if one lit within a half-hour of the earliest time for lighting (Shabbos 21b; Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 672:2). This was because the focus of lighting the menorah was to publicize the miracle to people in the street. Since, in the days of Chazal, the streets were empty shortly after dark, there was no longer any mitzvah of kindling Chanukah lights half an hour later.

Today, the *pirsumei nisa* (publicizing the miracle) is primarily for the members of the household, and therefore many poskim hold that it is not essential to kindle the menorah immediately when it begins to get dark (see Tosafos, Shabbos 21b s.v. *de'ei*). Nevertheless, because this halacha is disputed, one should strive to kindle at the optimal time, which is close to twilight, as we mentioned above. In addition, there is also a halachic problem with working before one performs the mitzvah, similar to other mitzvos, such as *bedikas chometz* or hearing *megillah*, where it is prohibited to work or eat before fulfilling the mitzvah (Shu't Maharshal #85; Mishnah Berurah 672:10; Teshuvos Vehanhagos 1:395:4). Someone who missed lighting menorah at the proper time because of extenuating circumstances should kindle his menorah as soon as his family is assembled at home (Rema Orach Chayim 672:2 and Mishnah Berurah ad loc.).

An alternative method can be followed when a husband is delayed. The husband can arrange to have a member of the household, such as his wife, act as his agent and light at the optimal time (Mishnah Berurah 675:9; Teshuvos Vehanhagos 4:170). If he follows this approach, he does not need to light when he arrives home later, and if he does light, he should not recite the brachos. Alternatively, the wife can light at the proper time for herself, and the husband can light

when he gets home. If one follows the latter approach, the husband and wife are no longer functioning as agents for one another, as they usually do germane to mitzvos such as ner Chanukah and ner Shabbos. Rather, each is fulfilling the mitzvah of ner Chanukah separately.

Whether to follow this approach depends on the sensitivities of the people involved. My Rosh Yeshivah, Rav Y. Ruderman zt"l, frequently lectured us on the importance of being concerned about others' feelings. He often repeated the story of the Chofetz Chayim's rebbe, Rav Nachumke, who waited several hours until his rebbetzin returned home before lighting the Chanukah lights. Therefore, if kindling the menorah early via an agent will create friction between family members, one should wait and kindle at a time that creates more shalom bayis (see Shabbos 23b). It is important to discuss the matter in advance and decide on an approach that keeps everyone happy. At this point, let us examine the third of our opening questions: I will be attending a wedding during Chanukah that requires me to leave my house well before lighting time, and I will not return until very late. Can I kindle at the wedding, just like the lighting that takes place in shul?

Answer: Let us ask this question about the baalei simcha themselves! If a wedding takes place during Chanukah, where should the baalei simcha light the menorah?

I have attended weddings during Chanukah where the baalei simcha brought their menorahs to the hall and kindled them there. However, this seems incorrect, because the baalei simcha are required to kindle Chanukah lights at their own homes (Teshuvos Vehanhagos 1:398). Therefore, they should light the menorah at their homes sometime during the evening. If this is not convenient, they should arrange for someone to act as their agent and kindle their menorah for them at their house (see Mishnah Berurah 677:12). Guests attending the wedding who cannot kindle their menorah at home should also arrange for someone to light their menorah at their house. If they are concerned about leaving unattended lights burning, they should have someone remain with the lights for half an hour, and then the "menorah sitter" may extinguish the lights. If someone wishes to light an additional menorah at the hall without a bracha, in order to make pirsumei nisa, he may do so. However, this lighting does not fulfill the mitzvah (Teshuvos Vehanhagos 1:398).

WHY IS THIS DIFFERENT FROM LIGHTING IN SHUL?

Since one fulfills the mitzvah only by kindling the menorah in or near one's residence, why do we kindle a menorah in shul?

Lighting the Chanukah menorah in shul does not fulfill the mitzvah of kindling Chanukah lights, but is a centuries-old minhag that we perform to make pirsumei nisa.

This practice prompts an interesting question. If lighting a menorah in shul is only a minhag, why do we recite a bracha on it? Do we ever recite brachos on minhagim?

The poskim explain that we recite a bracha because it is an accepted minhag, just as we recite a bracha on Hallel on Rosh Chodesh, even though Chazal did not obligate this recital of Hallel and it, too, is technically a minhag (Shu't Rivash #111; for other reasons see Beis Yosef, Orach Chayim 671, s.v. uma shekasav shemeinichin).

THERE IS A CONCERT IN SCHOOL ON CHANUKAH. SHOULD WE LIGHT THE MENORAH WITH A BRACHA TO PERFORM PIRSUMEI NISA?

Although lighting a menorah at the assembly will also be an act of pirsumei nisa, one fulfills no mitzvah or minhag by doing so. Therefore, one should not recite a bracha on this lighting (Teshuvos Vehanhagos 1:398). **WHY IS THE CONCERT DIFFERENT FROM LIGHTING IN SHUL?**

Lighting in shul is a specific, established minhag. We cannot randomly extend this minhag to another situation and permit reciting a bracha (Teshuvos Vehanhagos 1:398).

LIGHTING IN A HOTEL

And now, let us analyze the last of our opening questions: I will be spending part of Chanukah in a hotel. Where should I kindle my menorah?

Answer: One should light the menorah in one's room (Chovas Hador, Ner Chanukah 2:9; see Shu't Maharsham 4:146, who requires one to kindle Chanukah lights even while riding the train). If there is concern about a fire hazard, one should remain with the menorah until a half-hour after nightfall, or at least for a half-hour after kindling, and then extinguish the lights. On Shabbos, place only enough oil to burn the required amount of time, which is until a half-hour after nightfall.

MENORAH IN THE WINDOW?

May one place the menorah near the window of his hotel room? This depends. If someone will be able to see the lit menorah from outside, then it is preferable to light in a window. If no one will be able to see the menorah from outside, he should simply kindle the menorah on a table in his room.

If a hotel forbids lighting flames in its bedrooms, and one is eating regularly in the hotel's dining room, one may light in the hotel dining room. Although from hotels often set up menorahs in the hotel lobby, many poskim contend that one does not fulfill the mitzvah by placing a menorah there, since one is required to kindle Chanukah lights at one's "home," which is where one regularly eats or sleeps, and not in a lobby. Other poskim are lenient, and contend that the entire hotel lobby is considered one's living area -- just as one's entire house is considered one's living area. Therefore, according to these authorities, one may fulfill the mitzvah by lighting in the hotel lobby.

VISITING DURING CHANUKAH

Where do I light menorah if I visit a friend for Chanukah dinner, but I am not staying overnight?

Many people err and think that one may fulfill the mitzvah by kindling the menorah at someone else's house while visiting. I know of people who invite guests to their house for menorah kindling and dinner. The problem with this is that one is required to kindle Chanukah lights at one's own house. Therefore, the guest must kindle the Chanukah lights at his own house and then go to his friend's house for the festive meal (Taz 677:2; Mishnah Berurah 677:12).

YESHIVAH BACHUR

Where should a bachur in yeshivah kindle his menorah? This is a dispute among contemporary

poskim. Some contend that he should light in the yeshivah dining room, since it is preferable to kindle where one eats, as we mentioned above. Others contend that his dormitory room is considered more his "dwelling" than the dining room, and that he should light there (Shu't Igros Moshe Yoreh Deah III 14:5; Shu't Minchas Yitzchok 7:48; Chovas Hador pg. 106). To resolve this issue, some bachurim have the practice of eating one meal each day of Chanukah in their dormitory room and kindling the menorah there.

What about a yeshivah bachur who spends his entire day in the yeshivah, but sleeps at home?

It is unclear whether his main obligation to light is at home or in yeshivah. Some poskim suggest that he fulfill the mitzvah by relying on the people kindling at each place — his family lighting at his home and his fellow students lighting in the yeshivah.

REWARD FOR LIGHTING NER CHANUKAH

The Gemara teaches that someone who kindles Ner Chanukah will merit having sons who are talmidei chachomim (Shabbos 23b, see Rashi). This is puzzling; since all observant Jews kindle Ner Chanukah, why aren't all our sons talmidei chachomim? The Rishonim explain that this bracha applies only to someone who observes the mitzvah carefully, in all its details (Sod Hadlakas Ner Chanukah, authored by Rabbi Yitzchok, the son of the Raavad). It is, therefore, in our best interest to be thoroughly familiar with all the halachos of kindling the Chanukah lights. May we all be blessed with a happy and healthy Chanukah!!

לע"נ

שרה משה בת ר' יעקב אליעזר ע"ה
ביילא בת (אריה) לייב ע"ה
אנא מלכה בת ישראל ע"ה