

Toras Aish

Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS

Covenant & Conversation

In his 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." (Hilkhos Teshuvah 3:4) 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 between 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 him more" than his other sons, 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 many-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 that dreamer!" they said to

each other. "Come now, let's kill him and throw him into one of these cisterns and say that a wild animal devoured him. Then we'll see what comes of his dreams."

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, "And Reuben heard and saved him [Joseph] from them."

We know this cannot be true because of what happens next. Reuben, realizing that he is only one against many, devises a stratagem. He says, "Let us not kill him. Let us throw him alive into one of the cisterns 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, "And Reuben heard and saved him from them" it is using the principle that "G-d accounts a good intention as a deed." (Tosefta, Peah 1:4) 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: "If only Reuben had known that the Holy One blessed be He, would write about him, 'And Reuben heard and saved him from them,' he would have lifted Joseph bodily onto his shoulders and taken him back to his father." (Tanhuma, Vayeshev, 13) 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

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המקום ינחם אתכם בתוך שאר אבלי ציון וירושלים



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made viceroy of Egypt. He would not have brought his family to stay there.

To be sure, G-d had already told Abraham many years earlier, "Know for certain that for four hundred years your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own and that they will be enslaved and mistreated there" (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. (Stephen Carter, *Civility*, New York: Basic Books, 1999, 61-75) 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 jelly 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 colour-blind. 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 "hessed -- the doing of acts of kindness -- which is in turn derived from the understanding that human beings are made in the image of G-d."

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

"To this day", he adds, "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. (Mishnah, Sanhedrin 4:5; original manuscript text) 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 G-d's partners in the work of redemption, bringing the world that is, a little closer to the world that ought to be.

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RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

"**S**he is more righteous than I" (Genesis 38:26)
The biblical drama of the peregrinations of

Jacob ended with the patriarch's return to his father's house and homeland in last week's reading of *Vayishlah*, and now with the reading of *Vayeshev* the riveting story of Joseph begins. Just as Jacob's exilic wanderings open with his dream of a ladder connecting heaven and earth, so do Joseph's wanderings begin with his dreams of the brothers' sheaves of grain bowing down to his sheaf and then of the sun, moon and eleven stars bowing down to Joseph.

The Joseph story continues at a fast pace, with

the brothers' jealousy (a jealousy unto death) resulting in the sale of Joseph into Egyptian servitude and leading to the brothers' deception of their father Jacob, making him think that a savage beast had devoured his favorite son and heir apparent (Gen. 37:1-36).

The biblical account skips a chapter, however, before telling us of Joseph's adventures in Egypt; we must wait for that until Chapter 39, after which we remain with Joseph until his death at the end of the Book of Genesis. Chapter 38—a clear interruption of the Joseph story line—provides a fascinating interlude dealing with brother Judah, his three sons, and daughter-in-law Tamar, who enters into an act of deceptive harlotry with her father-in-law because she felt herself thwarted from her anticipated levirate marriage with Judah's third son, Shelah.

But why does this story—replete with sex, intrigue and moral outrage against the wrong party—find its place in the midst of the Joseph story? Let the Bible first finish with Joseph, and then bring in this tale of Judah, perhaps even as important background for the Messianic legacy he is to receive from Jacob on his death bed (Gen. 49:8-10).

And this leads to a second question. Apparently, Messianism is an important factor here, since Judah is the tribe-producer of the Messiah, scion of the Davidic dynasty who will bring the ultimate peace and the ingathering of all the nations.

Perez, the Jacob-like character who pushes ahead and breaks out his elder twin Zerah's initial lead, to emerge first, is the seventh-generation grandfather of Boaz, in turn great-grandfather of King David (Ruth 4:18-22). But why choose a forbidden sexual act of immorality, a father-in-law (Judah) with his daughter-in-law (Tamar), and an act of harlotry at that, which adds even further transgression, as the union which will ultimately produce the Messiah? Ought the Messiah not emerge from a much purer act of sexual love within the context of marriage in accordance with Moses and Israel? The entire Book of Genesis after the choosing of Abraham is concerned first and foremost with who will receive the legacy of the firstborn, which son will be the torchbearer to pass down the baton of Messianism: the responsibility of bringing to the world peace and redemption by teaching compassionate righteousness and moral justice, to the next generation. Our portion Vayeshev begins with Joseph, seemingly the choice of his father Jacob, who gave him the striped tunic of many colors.

But Joseph doesn't dream of uniting heaven and earth, G-d and world; he dreams of mastery over his brothers, domination on land and in sky, and in his two dreams G-d and Israel do not appear even once! And moreover gathering sheaves of grain, agriculture, was not the pursuit of the family of Abraham in the Promised Land of Canaan; it was the activity discovered in Egypt, a far more sophisticated and

corrupt culture than existed in the Land of Israel. Joseph hankered after the fleshpots of Egypt, not the piety of "Palestine"; Joseph—at least at this point in his life—did not seem worthy of the legacy of the firstborn.

And so the Bible offers another option for the bearer of the familial blessing. You will remember that it was Judah who cleverly saved Joseph's life from death by starvation and scorpions in the pit by offering the brothers financial gain by selling their sibling into Egypt (Gen. 37:26, 27). At this point he marries a Canaanite woman with whom he has three sons; the eldest, Er, he marries off to Tamar. Er dies early, and Tamar is given in levirate marriage to Onan, Er's brother. Levirate marriage enables the brother to grant his hapless sibling a child and heir (even though he is dead) by impregnating—and taking responsibility for—his widow.

Since the child born to Tamar would be considered Er's and not Onan's, Onan refused to give his seed to Tamar. Onan too dies young as a Divine punishment for neglecting his responsibility to his elder sibling.

Shelah is left; Judah is frightened to give Tamar as wife to another of his sons lest that son also die.

Tamar poses as a harlot, seduces Judah, and becomes pregnant with his seed. So Perez and ultimately Boaz and King David will ultimately be born.

Joseph attempts to escape his Abrahamic destiny by looking towards Egypt and its naturalism for his future. Judah likewise seems uninterested in guaranteeing Abrahamic fulfillment. Tamar is desperate to carry Judah's seed and continue the road to redemption. Judah also publicly admits his transgression with Tamar, praising her for being more interested in the Jewish future—by taking responsibility for past generations—than he was. Repentance, responsibility to past and commitment to future are the skill that Messianism is made of. Hence the story of Judah at this junction is a prefiguration of why it is eventually Judah and not Joseph who gives over the familial baton. ©2015 *Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin*

RABBI BEREL WEIN

Wein Online

Our father Yaakov finally makes it home to the Land of Israel, the land promised by G-d to his ancestors...that their descendants would inherit and dwell therein. Rashi, according to rabbinic tradition, portrays our great patriarch as somehow viewing his return to the Land of Israel as being the final chapter in his difficult and turbulent life.

The Land of Israel, so to speak, is perceived by him to be a place where serenity and quiet retirement can be achieved. However, as he will find out in the tragic events that will unfold regarding Yosef and his brothers, dwelling in the Land of Israel is certainly no guarantee of peace and quiet. It is a place of challenge

and constant demands, and of personal and national difficulties and struggles.

It never was meant to be viewed as a giant retirement community for the Jewish people. Even though the Torah will refer to it as being a place of "rest and inheritance" it was always intended to be a place of accomplishment and progress, of holiness and service.

To achieve holiness and to be of true service to G-d and human beings requires constant effort and sacrifice. It is not an easy road to traverse. Yaakov saw the Land of Israel as a place of refuge, serenity and quietude. The Lord apparently did not agree with that assessment.

The Jewish people will have to be formed into a nation, with the Land of Israel being viewed as its home base. Nation-building is never an easy task and the symbol of the difficulty of this task in Jewish life will be the return of the Jewish people to their ancient and rightful homeland, the Land of Israel.

Currently, part of the difficulty with regard to the attitude of many Jews towards the state of Israel, with all of its imperfections and difficulties, is due to the misreading of the promise inherent in the creation of a Jewish national entity in the Land of Israel.

Many saw it as somehow being the solution to all Jewish problems, a place that would somehow guarantee eternal happiness. Political Zionism taught that the creation of such a state would reduce anti-Semitism throughout the world. If anything, the Jewish state and its mere existence have exacerbated this scourge of anti-Semitism. It now disguises itself as anti-Israel but all of us know what is really meant.

The return of the Jewish people in our time to their ancestral homeland has not brought about the creation of utopia. Rather it has placed before us a great number of challenges – financial, familial, and spiritual – and many difficult dilemmas.

The State of Israel has not turned out to be the supreme retirement home that we envisioned while living in the Diaspora. Instead, it is a real place with real problems because it contains real people. It is engaged in constructing a real society that will embody the holiness of Jewish tradition and the practicality of the world in which we live. If we view it correctly and resolve not to see it through falsely nostalgic eyes, we will prosper as did our father Yaakov long ago. ©2015 Rabbi Berel Wein - Jewish historian, author and international lecturer offers a complete selection of CDs, audio tapes, video tapes, DVDs, and books on Jewish history at www.rabbiwein.com. For more information on these and other products visit www.rabbiwein.com

RABBI DOV KRAMER

Taking a Closer Look

Throughout Jewish history, our nation has been plagued with a lack of unity. The term "Jew" itself

embodies this, as it comes from the word "Yehudi," which literally means someone from the Tribe of Yehuda. However, after Israel split into two kingdoms (northern and southern), it was used to refer to those in the southern kingdom of Yehuda, and when the northern kingdom of Yisroel (usually associated with Yosef's son, Efrayim) was exiled, and the only known Children of Israel were those in the south, "Yehudi," or "Jew," became a way to identify an "Israelite." Although the differences that exist in contemporary Jewish society cannot all be traced to the differences between Yosef and his brothers, taking a closer look at how their differences developed (and could have possibly been avoided) may help us understand how we can deal with ours.

"And Yosef brought their evil speech to their father" (Beraishis 37:2). One of the primary causes of the poor relationship between Yosef and his brothers was his telling their father about the things they did that he thought were inappropriate. Rashi, based on Chazal, tells us that Yosef suspected his brothers of eating the meat of an animal before it had been slaughtered, referring to the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah as servants, and of having improper relationships. Numerous commentators explain the actions of Yosef's brothers to be based on their following the laws as they applied to Jews, even if the same actions would be forbidden for non-Jews (see <http://tinyurl.com/hxe3s34>). For example, a live calf found inside a properly slaughtered cow technically does not need to be slaughtered. Just as any other "limb" of the slaughtered mother can be eaten without any further "slaughtering," so can this calf be eaten without first being slaughtered (or killed by another method). [In order to avoid others seeing an "unslaughtered" animal being eaten without realizing that this animal is considered a limb of an already slaughtered animal, we slaughter it anyway.] Such an animal can only be eaten because it is considered to have already undergone "shechita," ritual slaughter; since the concept of "shechita" only applies to Jews, for non-Jews it is not considered a limb of its mother, and eating any part of this animal before it was dead is forbidden (it's one of the seven Noachide laws, "eiver min ha'chai"). Since the brothers considered themselves full Jews, they thought they could eat such meat, while Yosef thought they shouldn't.

Given this difference of opinion, what should Yosef have done? Was he wrong for bringing it to their father's attention, hoping that Yaakov would get them to do the right thing? Let's put aside the brothers' reaction to Yosef telling on them (perhaps had they not let this affect their reaction to his dreams, their relationship could have been repaired, or wouldn't have spiraled so far out of control). Yosef saw his brothers doing things he thought were inappropriate, and pointing this out to them didn't get them to change their ways. Should he have let them continue to do things he thought were

wrong? Is Yosef partially to blame for the enmity his brothers felt towards him because he tattled on them?

"Do not respond to a disagreement to dissuade" (Shemos 23:2). The above translation is mine; other translators, as well as the commentators, give numerous other possible ways of understanding the message the Torah is trying to convey with these words. These multiple messages are not mutually exclusive, and, as always, the depth of the Torah's divine words are designed to teach us many different things simultaneously. I would like to focus on the explanation of one of the commentators, the Chizkuni.

The Chizkuni explains these words to be directed towards an experienced, smart judge, who finds himself in a situation where his fellow judges are about to rule erroneously (Jewish courts have a minimum of three judges sitting on any case; some situations call for a court of 23 judges, and if necessary, there can be as many as 71 judges hearing a case). "Even if you consider yourself to be very sharp, [as you are] able to show a reason why the verdict should be different, and your colleagues aren't as sharp as you [as they are unable] to plumb the depths of the judgment, the verse is admonishing you not to respond with that reason to dissuade them." In other words, even if you think you are right and they are wrong, don't go overboard trying to convince them that they are wrong; let it go and allow them to be wrong. The Chizkuni doesn't mean that we should keep any dissenting opinion to ourselves, or that we shouldn't try to convince others that they are mistaken. (Unkoles actually explains the verse to mean that we should not withhold an opinion.) Rather, the Chizkuni is referring to insisting that your reasoning is correct even after it was rejected by the majority. This is evident from the continuation of his thought; after quoting the rest of the verse ("you shall follow the majority"), the Chizkuni says, "rather, you must [allow] the verdict to be handed down (lit. completed) based on [the opinion of] the majority." It is continuing to argue the point after it was already made and (incorrectly) dismissed, trying to make it again when the others are ready to make their final decision, that the Chizkuni says is going too far. According to this Rishon (early commentator), there is a Biblical mandate to back off and allow others to be wrong, even if/when you are sure that you are right.

This concept is not limited to judges trying to decide a court case; it applies to any group decision. If the majority of a committee, or board of trustees, sees things one way, no matter how wrong that decision may be, the minority must allow the majority to make it. Putting aside the possibility that the majority may actually be right, more damage is usually done by continuing to disagree than is done by reaching a wrong decision. I would extend this concept to individuals as well. Just as G-d doesn't step in, on the spot, to correct every wrong (or prevent it from

happening), letting people learn from their mistakes (and hopefully grow out of them instead), we should emulate G-d and allow others to be wrong without constantly insisting that they change their perspective. (This gets a bit complex if the mistake adversely affects others; until it becomes counterproductive, we can't allow others to be wronged, only that others can be wrong.) When someone says or does something that is incorrect, a polite conversation can (and perhaps should) take place, and as many reasons for the other perspective as there are can be calmly presented. However, as soon as there is resistance, we must move on, allowing others to remain mistaken until they are ready to consider another perspective. Whether the issue is what Nusach to daven, which days to say (or skip) Tachanun, the importance of a Jewish government in the Holy Land (even if it's secular), how much divine insight Chazal had, if G-d could have used evolution when creating the world, Torah Umadda (or "im derech erez") vs. Torah only, or one of many other issues that divide us, if we don't allow others to be wrong, we will never be able to move past the things that divide us and recognize how many more things there are that we share.

Yosef may have been sure that his brothers shouldn't do anything that wasn't permissible for non-Jews. Nevertheless, his relationship with them might have been very different had he just allowed them to make that mistake rather than doing whatever he could to try to prevent them from continuing to make it. This doesn't excuse the harshness with which his brothers responded; hopefully we can learn from the mistakes they made that divided them, and overcome any differences we still have today. ©2010 Rabbi D. Kramer

RABBI AVI WEISS

Shabbat Forshpeis

After Joseph's two dreams his siblings are naturally upset – believing that Joseph had aspirations to control them. The rage turns into jealousy when Jacob seems to give credence to Joseph's dreams. (Genesis 37:11)

In response, Joseph's brothers set out to Shechem. This is where, just a few years earlier, two of them killed all of the male inhabitants for the rape of Dinah, their sister. (Genesis 34) According to the Midrash, the brothers again go to Shechem to decide how to, once again, take retribution, this time against Joseph. (Rashi, Genesis 37:12)

This is where Jacob sends Joseph to seek out to his brothers' welfare. (Genesis 37:13) Sforino, the 15th century Italian commentator, explains that, although Jacob could have sent a servant to find out if his sons were well, he purposefully sent Joseph in the hope that he would be able to make peace with them.

This begs the question: With the brothers' enmity towards Joseph so great, wasn't Jacob, who

knew of the previous incident in Shechem, placing Joseph in danger?

Indeed, it can be suggested that Joseph felt that his father had set him up. Note that Joseph doesn't contact his father even after becoming second to the King of Egypt. Joseph may have felt that he was being cast aside, just like those who came before him. [Esau was cast aside by Isaac, and Ishmael by Abraham.]

Yet, Joseph, in his feelings of being set up, could have misread his father. Jacob may have sent Joseph to his brothers because of what occurred to him (Jacob) in his younger years. After Jacob took the blessings from his brother Esau, he is advised by his mother to flee to avoid Esau's wrath. (Genesis 27:43-46) In the end, the advice has devastating results as Jacob does not see his family for twenty-two years.

As he has now grown older, Jacob doesn't want to make the same mistake. And so, when Jacob's sons feud, he adopts a plan—one that is the direct opposite of what was suggested to him when he was younger. Rather than have Joseph separate from his brothers, he sends Joseph to his siblings in the hope that they will reconcile.

It is often the case that children vow not to make the mistakes of their parents. What is ironic is that even as we try a different path, nothing is a guarantee. Despite Joseph being sent to, rather than from, his brothers, he remains separated from his family for 22 years.

The message: While Jacob should be lauded for trying a new path, it is often the case that no matter what we do or how hard we try, we cannot control everything and, at times "the song remains the same." (aval hamanginah tamid nisheret) ©2015 Hebrew Institute of Riverdale & CJC-AMCHA. Rabbi Avi Weiss is Founder and Dean of Yeshivat Chovevei Torah, the Open Orthodox Rabbinical School, and Senior Rabbi of the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale.

RABBI KALMAN PACKOUZ

Shabbat Shalom Weekly

Rabbi Avraham Pam, of blessed memory asked "What was so special about the miracle of the oil burning for eight days? The Talmud tells us that there were ten miracles that regularly occurred in the Temple (Pirke Avos, Ethics of the Fathers 5:7). None of these are commemorated."

Rabbi Pam cites the halachah (Jewish law) that for communal rituals, the prohibition against tumah (ritual impurity) may be waived. Many commentaries, therefore, ask why was there a need for a miracle at all? It was permissible to light the menorah even with ritually impure oil.

The P'nei Yehoshua answers that precisely because it was permissible to use impure oil that the only purpose of the miracle was to show G-d's intense love for Israel -- especially towards those who had

defected to Hellenism, but returned to Torah observance with the triumph of the Macabees.

This is the message of Joseph and his brothers. Joseph did not simply forgive his brothers and suppress his resentment for their abuse of him. Rather, he loved them and cared for them as if nothing had happened, telling them that he feels toward them as he does to Benjamin, who was not involved in his kidnapping (Rashi, Gen. 45:12).

The celebration of Hanukah is, therefore, more than the commemoration of a miracle. We are to emulate the Divine attributes (Talmud Bavli, Shabbos 133b). Just as when G-d forgives, His love for us is completely restored, so must we be able to restore the love for one another when we mend our differences.

As we watch the Hanukah candles, let us think about the light they represent: the bright light of a love that is completely restored. *Dvar Torah from Twerski on Chumash by Rabbi Abraham J. Twerski, M.D. ©2015 Rabbi K. Packouz & aish.com*

RABBI ELIAKIM KOENIGSBERG

TorahWeb

At the beginning of Parshas Vayeishev, Yosef has two dreams. In the first one, Yosef and his brothers are making bundles in the field when suddenly the bundles of the brothers surround Yosef's bundle and bow down to it. In the second dream, the sun, the moon and the stars all bow down to Yosef.

The Torah tells us that the brothers responded to these two dreams in two very different ways. After hearing the first dream, they hated Yosef even more than before -- "Vayosifu od s'no oso." But after the second dream, it says, "Va'yekan'u vo echav" -- the brothers felt jealous of him. Why the difference? Why did they feel jealousy only after the second dream?

The Beis Halevi explains that Yosef's two dreams focused on two different aspects of Yosef's future domination over his brothers. The first dream was about financial success. In that dream, Yosef saw that he was going to become wealthy and his brothers would be dependent on him for their sustenance. That is why the dream is about bundles of grain which symbolize material prosperity, and the bundles of the brothers are bowing to Yosef's bundle, as if to say that the brothers will be dependent on Yosef, that they will need him financially.

But in the second dream, Yosef sees that he is going to surpass his brothers on a spiritual plane. The sun, the moon and the stars -- all celestial bodies -- symbolize the world of ruchniyus. Yosef was saying that he was going to be the spiritual leader, the carrier of the mesorah, for the entire family.

That is why the brothers were jealous only after the second dream because material success does not elevate a person. It is not intrinsic to the person; rather it is external to him, and as such it is not something to

be jealous of. In the first dream, the brothers were bowing only to Yosef's bundle, not to Yosef himself, because Yosef's wealth was external to him. That is why the brothers did not feel any jealousy toward Yosef. They felt only hatred.

But in the second dream Yosef was talking about spirituality. He was saying that he would be greater than his brothers in his Torah learning, in tzidkus. These are qualities that affect the person himself; they transform him and make him special. That is why in the second dream, the sun, the moon and the stars were bowing to Yosef himself, because that dream was implying that Yosef was going to become a greater person, that he was destined to achieve a higher spiritual level than his brothers. And that is why the brothers were jealous of Yosef because special qualities in ruchniyus are intrinsic to a person. They raise him to a higher level and are something of real value.

This idea of the Beis Halevi should give us pause. It challenges us to reevaluate our perspective on life. What gets us excited -- the latest iGadget on the market, a new luxury car, or a novel interpretation of the Ramban on the parsha? Whom do we admire -- the rich and famous, the heroes of the gridiron, or the businessman who finds time to learn in the Beis Medrash at night after putting in a full day at the office and the individual who selflessly gives of himself to do chessed in the community?

Our accomplishments in ruchniyus transform us as human beings. They make us better people. When we see someone who davens with kavanah, someone who has exemplary middos, or someone who cherishes his involvement in Torah and mitzvos, we should feel jealous of him and want to emulate him. Kin'as sofrim tarbeh chochmah. Jealousy can sometimes be a positive character trait, but only when it gets us to run after things of real value. ©2015 Rabbi E. Koenigsberg & The TorahWeb Foundation, Inc.

MACHON ZOMET

Shabbat B'Shabbato

by Yoel Yaacobi, Institute for Torah & the Land

There are three different rules for lands with respect to the date for destroying plants which were not eaten during Shemitta... All the lands are the same for olives and dates." [Mishna Shevi'it 9:2-3]. "Olives may be eaten until the last ones are gone from Tekoa. Rabbi Eliezer Ben Yaacov said, this also applies to Gush Chalav." [Tosefta Shevi'it 7:15].

Even though Shabbat B'Shabbato is edited in Gush Etzion, we prefer to identify Tekoa mentioned above as a town in the Upper Galil and not the city of Amos, at the entrance to the Yehuda Desert. There are several reasons for this choice, but first we will explain the halachic issues that are involved in the above quotes.

It is written, "And the Shabbat of the land will be for you to eat, for you... and for your domesticated animals, and for the wild animals in your land, all the produce will be available to eat." [Vayikra 25:6-7]. From this, the sages learned that the fruits of Shevi'it can be eaten as long as they still exist on the trees. "As long as the wild animals eat from the field you can still feed it to the domesticated animals in your home. When it is no longer available to the wild animals, it must be destroyed for the animals in your home." [Pesachim 52b].

The early commentators give three different explanations for destroying the fruit after a certain date. The first is the approach of the Rambam (based on a text in the Mishna that differs from the one quoted above), who feels that "destruction" means to physically destroy the produce, like chametz on Pesach. The Ramban, on the other hand, feels that "destruction" is a process of relinquishing ownership of the produce, and that the original owners can take possession of the produce again after the process has been completed. The opinion of the Raavad is more complex, and we will not discuss it here. The accepted halachic ruling follows the opinion of the Ramban, which is supported by various sources from the sages.

For most fruits, the land has been divided up into three secondary areas: Yehuda, across the Jordan River, and the Galil. Each species of fruit is checked in the specific areas, so that, for example, if a fruit no longer exists in the fields of Yehuda it must be "destroyed" in Yehuda even if it is still growing in the Galil. However, for olives and dates the halacha is different -- in this case all of Eretz Yisrael is treated as a single land, so that all we need to do is find the last place where there are still olives on the trees in all of Eretz Yisrael. We can assume that this will be an area with a cool climate, such that the fruit ripens slowly, and whose fruit remains on the trees until a relatively late date. The Tosefta gives two possible sites -- Tekoa and Gush Chalav. Tekoa in the Galil has been identified as the "Shema" ruins not far from Miron, which is at a height of 700 meters above sea level. Gush Chalav is not very far from this site, and it is evidently even at a somewhat higher level.

There is a reference to olive oil with respect to Tekoa and Gush Chalav in another source. It is written, "Tekoa is 'alpha' (the top grade) for oil" [Mishna, Menachot 8:3]. That is, the oil produced in Tekoa is the best for use in a Mincha Sacrifice, and certainly for lighting the Menorah in the Temple, for which only the very best oil is suitable (see *ibid* 8:4). The Talmud notes that Yoav Ben Tzruya went to bring a wise woman from Tekoa to convince David to allow Avshalom to return, and it quotes the words of Raban Yochanan, the famous Amora from the Galil, who says that "because of the fact that they are used to using olive oil, they are wise." And immediately after this the

Talmud brings a commentary that Moshe's blessing to Asher, "He dips his foot in oil" [Devarim 33:24], was fully fulfilled in his heritage. It then brings the well-known story about the large amounts of oil that were produced in Gush Chalav, in the area of Asher. From the close proximity of these items, it seems likely that the town Tekoa in this passage is in the heritage of Asher and not in the region of Yehuda.

In addition, in the Talmud Yerushalmi (Shevi'it 9:2) Tekoa is replaced by Miron, which is very close to the Shema ruins (which, as noted above, is thought to be Tekoa in the Galil). They are separated only by the Miron riverbed (near the parking lot at the sharp bend in the road). Pinchas Neeman notes that the Arabic geographer from the thirteenth century, Yakut, mentions the excellent date honey produced in Tekoa in Yehuda, but does not mention any olive orchards nearby.

The study house of Rabban Shimon Bar Yochai was in Tekoa, and that is where Rabbi learned Torah (after the center of Torah learning was moved to the Galil). The grave of Rabban Shimon is indeed very close to Tekoa, and the two sites have a clear view of each other. This seems very appropriate as the site of the study of the secrets of the Torah. Note that in the Shema ruins one can see the graves of Shammai and his wife, and that there are also the remains of a synagogue from the time of the Talmud.

In the end, we have a comment related to the holiday which is fast approaching. Meiri notes that the miracle of the vial of oil which burned for eight days was necessary because it took several days to travel to Tekoa, where there was fresh oil. This statement is of course not true about Tekoa in the area of Yehuda, which is very close to Jerusalem. ©2015 Rabbi A. Bazak and Machon Zomet. Translated by Moshe Goldberg

RAB SHLOMO WOLBE ZT"L

Bais HaMussar

Yosef, a young lad of seventeen, was sold into slavery in Egypt, the most depraved society of the time, and shortly after his arrival he was tested.

His master's wife was bent on seducing him to sin with her, and she even began torturing him to this end. Despite her attempts day in and day out, week after week and month after month, Yosef emerged from the lion's den as righteous as he entered. The Torah relates how Yosef was then thrown into a dungeon and ultimately ended up as the viceroy to the king and the second most powerful person in the world.

Chazal tell us (Bereishis Rabba 90:3) that all the greatness that Yosef attained, really originated from Yosef himself. In other words, his behavior generated a parallel reward. Yosef ensured that his mouth would not kiss in sin, and in turn Pharaoh declared "By the word of your mouth shall all my people be sustained." His body which did not sin was eventually garbed in royal

clothes. His neck which did not bend to commit a sin was adorned with a golden necklace and his hand which did not transgress was bejeweled with Pharaoh's ring.

Rav Wolbe comments (Shiurei Chumash) that it is amazing to see how Hashgacha Pratis responds and relates precisely to each and every detail. This idea also apparent earlier in the parsha when Yosef was sold by his brothers to a group of Arab wayfarers.

The Torah makes a point of mentioning the merchandise carried by the camels in the Arab caravan: "Their camels, bearing spices, balsam and lotus, were on their way to bring them down to Egypt." Rashi explains that although Arabs generally carry foul smelling cargo, Hashem orchestrated that the caravan which carried Yosef would have good smelling spices so that he not suffer from a foul odor on his way down to Mitzrayim. Even the smells we smell are all ordained by Heaven!

The above Chazal gives us much food for thought and things to work on. Firstly, it is clear that every action and nuance has the ability to generate great results.

This knowledge brings with it not only great responsibility but also tremendous opportunity. We should never belittle even the smallest positive deeds because they have the ability to bring much blessing in their wake.

The story is told about the wife of the Vilna Gaon who made a pact with a friend that whoever passes away first will come to the other one in a dream and inform them about what awaits her in the World to Come. The friend passed away first and after a few days she appeared to Vilna Gaon's wife in a dream. "I cannot reveal to you what awaits you" she said, "but I can tell you that for even the smallest mitzvah there is great reward. Do you remember how we collected money for tzedakah and you pointed to a woman for whom we were looking? Well, in Heaven you were given much greater reward for the mitzvah than I was, because of the added effort involved in picking up your hand to point for the sake of tzedakah!"

Additionally, Chazal are conveying to us that all that occurs to a person really originates from the person himself. No matter what happens to a person, the first place for him to turn is inward to discover why he was deserving of that which occurred.

Every piece of jewelry worn by Yosef can be traced back to his behavior in his master's house. Indeed, the search for the treasure chest of answers should begin in one's own backyard!

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