

Toras Aish

Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS

Covenant & Conversation

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

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

It began with Joseph who, in this week's parsha, became the world's first economist. Interpreting Pharaoh's dreams, he develops a theory of trade cycles -- seven fat years followed by seven lean years -- a cycle that still seems approximately to hold. Joseph also intuited that when a head of state dreams about cows and ears of corn, he is probably unconsciously thinking about macro-economics. The disturbing nature of the dreams suggested that God was sending an advance warning of a "black swan," a rare phenomenon for which conventional economics is unprepared. (Nassim Nicholas Taleb, *The Black Swan*, London, Allen Lane, 2011)

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

Let Pharaoh appoint commissioners over the

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

This turned out to be life-saving advice. His later economic policies, narrated in Vayigash (Gen. 47:11-26), are more questionable. When the people ran out of money during the lean years, Joseph told them to trade their livestock. When this too ran out, he arranged for them to sell their land to Pharaoh with the sole exception of the land belonging to the priests. The Egyptians were now, in essence, Pharaoh's serfs, paying him a tax of 20 per cent of their produce each year.

This nationalisation of livestock, labour and land meant that power was now concentrated in the hands of Pharaoh, and the people themselves reduced to serfdom. Both of these developments would eventually be used against Joseph's own people, when a new Pharaoh arose and enslaved the Israelites. It cannot be by accident that the Torah twice uses about the Egyptians the same phrase it will later use about the Israelites: *avadim le-Pharo*: they have become "Pharaoh's slaves" (Gen. 47:19, 25). There is already here a hint that too much economic power in the hands of the state leads to what Friedrich Hayek called "the road to serfdom" and the eclipse of liberty. (*The Road to Serfdom*, Chicago, 1946)

So a reasonable case could be made that Joseph was the first economist. But why the predominance of Jews in economics in the modern age? I do not want to argue that Jews created capitalism. They didn't. Max Weber famously argued that it was the Protestant (primarily Calvinist) ethic that shaped "the spirit of capitalism." (*The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, London, 1930) Rodney Stark argued that it was the Catholic Church that did



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so, prior to the Reformation. (The Victory of Reason, Random House, 2007) The author of the first great text of market economics, Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations* (1776), was a leading member of the Scottish Enlightenment whose religious views hovered between conventional Christianity and Deism. Those who have claimed a special kinship between Jews and capitalism -- most notably Karl Marx and Werner Sombart -- tended to like neither Jews nor capitalism.

Clearly, though, there is a strong affinity between the market economy and what is broadly known as the Judeo-Christian ethic, because it was only in such cultures that it emerged. China, for example, led the West in almost every aspect of technology until the seventeenth century, yet it failed to generate science, a free economy or an industrial revolution, and fell far behind until recent times. What was it about biblical values that proved so fruitful for economic thought, institutions and growth?

The Harvard historian and economist David Landes offered insight in his magisterial work *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations*. (Little, Brown, 1998, 45-59) First is the biblical insistence on property rights. He quotes Moses' words during the Korach revolt: "I have not taken one ass from them, nor have I wronged any one of them" (Num. 16:15). Likewise, the prophet Samuel rhetorically asks the people who have come asking for a king: "Whose ox have I taken, or whose ass have I taken?" (1 Sam. 12:3). Landes says that these remarks set the Israelites apart from any other culture of the time. Elsewhere, the king's right to appropriate other people's property was taken for granted. John Locke saw that private property rights are an essential element of a free society.

(To be sure, a king of Israel was entitled to appropriate land for national necessities, but not for private gain. Hence Elijah's denunciation of Ahab's seizure of Navot's vineyard (1 Kings 21). For a fine account of the halakhic and conceptual issues involved, see *Din melekh be-Yisrael* in *Kol Kitvei Maharatz Chajes*, Jerusalem, 1958, vol. 1, 43-49.)

A second feature was Judaism's respect for the dignity of labour. God saved Noah from the flood, but Noah had to build the ark. Third was the Judaic sense of linear time: time not as a series of cycles in which

everything eventually returns to the way it was, but rather as an arena of change, development and progress. We are so familiar with these ideas -- they form the bedrock of Western culture -- that we are not always aware that they are not human universals. Jonathan Haidt calls them WEIRD: that is, they belong to societies that are Western, Educated, Industrialised, Rich and Democratic. (The Righteous Mind, London, Penguin, 2013)

To my mind, the most decisive single factor -- the great break of Judaism from the ancient world of magic, mystery and myth -- was the de-consecration of nature that followed from the fact that God created nature by an act of will, and by making us in His image, gave us too the creative power of will. That meant that for Jews, holiness lies not in the way the world is but in the way it ought to be. Poverty, disease, famine, injustice, and the exploitation of the powerless by the powerful are not the will of God. They may be part of human nature, but we have the power to rise above nature. God wants us not to accept but to heal, to cure, to prevent. So Jews have tended to become, out of all proportion to their numbers, lawyers fighting injustice, doctors fighting disease, teachers fighting ignorance, economists fighting poverty and (especially in modern Israel) agricultural technologists finding new ways to grow food in environments where it has never grown before.

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

What can be changed need not be endured. Human suffering is not a fate to be borne, but a challenge to be overcome. This is Joseph's life-changing idea. What can be healed is not holy. God does not want us to accept poverty and pain but to cure them. *Covenant and Conversation 5778 is kindly supported by the Maurice Wohl Charitable Foundation in memory of Maurice and Vivienne Wohl z"l* ©2017 Rabbi Lord J. Sacks and rabbisacks.org

RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

"**A**nd from the last remnant of the oil flasks, a miracle was wrought for the Jewish People, and the Sages established eight days for song and jubilation" ["Ma'oz Tzur" Hanukkah hymn].

What is the most worrisome threat facing the Jewish People today? The threat from a nuclear-armed Iran and its terrorist proxy organization, Hezbollah, on Israel's borders? Or is it perhaps epidemic levels of estrangement from traditional Jewish life, leading to sky-high assimilation and intermarriage rates in the

diaspora? Both certainly have the capacity to inflict significant damage to our long-term future. Let us search for an answer to this perplexing dilemma by pondering the miraculous victory of Hanukkah, and the lessons it conveys.

Jewish history doesn't repeat itself, but it rhymes, to paraphrase the famous aphorism attributed (incorrectly) to Mark Twain. Indeed, we see in the Maccabee rebellion more than 2,000 years ago similar, though not identical, themes. That rebellion had two components: One, an internal struggle against a Hellenized Jewish leadership that desired to transform Judea into a Greek city-state, trading in the one God of Israel for the pantheon on Mount Olympus. And two, an external battle against Greek-Syrian domination over the struggling Judaeon state.

There is a fascinating halakhic detail concerning the proper location of the menorah (or "hanukkiah", as it is known in modern Hebrew) that puts our issue into sharp focus.

Being mindful of the fact that the purpose of lighting Hanukkah candles is "pirsumei nissa", publicizing the miracle of the holiday, the Talmud rules regarding the ideal location of the hanukkiah that "it is a mitzvah to place the Hanukkah light by the door of one's home on the outside." This will ensure optimal viewing by a maximum audience, thereby fulfilling "pirsumei nissa" in the best fashion.

The Talmud then acknowledges that logistics may render this impossible for some, so it adds, "If one dwells on an upper floor, he should place it at the window nearest the street."

However, our Sages conclude, the rules change in a time of danger, in which case "it is sufficient to place it on the table" (Talmud, Shabbat 21b). In his halakhic compendium "Arukh HaShulhan", Rabbi Yechiel Michel Epstein (1829-1908) points out even though the public will not see the Hanukkah light, there is no problem, since the mitzvah of publicizing the miracle in our times is directed toward the members of the household (Orah Hayyim, 671:5).

In contrast, "Har Tzvi", the responsa of former Chief Rabbi of Jerusalem Rav Tzvi Pesach Frank (1873-1960), states that the custom in Jerusalem (and indeed the custom of most families in Israel) is to light the hanukkiah outside the front door. Can these two starkly differing opinions be reconciled?

We can explain this by noting that Hanukkah fundamentally celebrates a victory over both aforementioned threats to Jewish survival. The latter threat was an enemy from within, the threat of assimilation at the hands of Jewish Hellenists so desperate to become Greeks that they went through surgical procedures to erase the signs of circumcision.

Assimilation, the phenomenon of taking on the total identity of a host culture, from language to values to religion, had penetrated even the most sacrosanct

chambers of the Jewish nation, the Holy Temple itself. A Jew named Menelaus, an extreme Hellenist who had plundered the gold vessels of the Temple, even bribed Greek-Syrian King Antiochus to become High Priest over Judea.

The rebellion of the Maccabees thus represented a double victory; a miracle that had to be publicized in the Temple as well as at home, for the outside world as well as within our own families!

I would go a step further and say that in fact, Arukh HaShulhan and Har Zvi are not disagreeing as much as placing emphasis on different aspects of the same truth. Namely, only if we succeed within our own families to inculcate the faith in our unique Jewish destiny do we have a chance to succeed in a military and ideological battle with the other nations of the world.

We must understand that being a light unto the nations and being a light unto one's family is not a contradictory proposition. If we can convey this vital message to Jews who currently relate to Hanukkah as not much more than a Jewish parallel to another winter holiday, we will have discovered not only a means of stemming estrangement from Jewish life, but also a source for a resurgence of pride in our own traditions and mission to the world. This would indeed be an authentic Hanukkah victory in our generation. ©2017 Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin



RABBI BEREL WEIN

Wein Online

The astounding and amazing story of Yosef continues in this week's parsha. Through a series of inexplicable events, Yosef finds himself raised from being a kidnapped victim and slave who was thrust into prison and doomed to oblivion, to becoming the chief minister of the Pharaoh and the Egyptian Empire. Yosef takes all of this in stride and certainly sees it as being part of a series of events that had to happen since they were divinely ordained and predicted to him in his youthful dreams.

One who expects miracles to happen apparently is not overly impressed when they actually do occur. Yosef's inner voice had long ago told him that he was destined for power and greatness and so the unusual events that befall him are unable to destabilize him. He somehow knows that he will be a ruler of men and the leader of his brothers.

There are many instances in human and Jewish history where people, early on in their lives, realize they were born to greatness and enormous potential achievement. The prophet Yirmiyahu is told in his initial vision of prophecy that he was already ordained, in his mother's womb, to become the prophet

of Israel. All men may be created equal but we are well aware that not everyone comes into this world with equal talents and opportunities.

Achieving greatness is not preordained, though the circumstances that may allow one to rise to greatness apparently are. The dreams that guided Yosef in his youth and that brought him to initial travail and later to unbelievable triumph told him of opportunity but provided no guarantee of fulfillment. Only Yosef himself, through his own actions and ingenuity, could bring the promise of those dreams to fruition.

So, too, is it with all of us. One of the central issues and questions of life deals with the fulfillment of one's potential and the positive exploitation of the circumstances of life that are dealt to us. Yosef's words to the butler/officer of Pharaoh while in prison -- "I was stolen from the land of the Hebrews and I have done nothing wrong here and now I find myself imprisoned" -- is not to be read as being solely a lament over the circumstances of life that have overtaken him. Rather, it was a statement of fact upon which Yosef built his hopes for the future. He implored the butler/officer of Pharaoh to remember him to the king and set him free.

Yosef sees in this seemingly chance encounter in prison with the butler/officer, the opportunity to pursue his goal and rise to greatness. Yosef will not squander that opportunity nor will he wallow in despair or rail against the fate that has treated him so cruelly. He will not allow events and circumstances to deter him from the realization and actualization of his dreams and visions.

Rather, he will attempt to use and exploit all of those circumstances to make his dreams reality and to achieve the greatness that he believes he is entitled to and has been promised to him. This lesson of human fortitude has guided the Jewish people throughout the long night of our exile and dispersion. We are currently faced with difficult circumstances and troublesome events. We should, somehow, attempt to turn them to our advantage and realize our age-old dream of Zion and Jerusalem. ©2017 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

RAB SHLOMO WOLBE ZT"L

Bais HaMussar

When Rav Wolbe was learning in the Mirrer Yeshiva in Europe, the Polish government banned shechita. A short while before the ban went into effect, the Mashgiach, Rav Yeruchom Levovitz, delivered a discourse regarding the current events. He mentioned that if a person is not willing to be moser nefesh for mitzvos, then he might very well lose the ability to perform them. He asserted that

because they were not moser nefesh for the mitzva of shechita, they were facing the possibility of losing the ability to perform it at all.

We can find a source for this profound concept in the era of the Chanukah miracle. The Bach explains the sequence of events culminating in Chazal's institution of the Yom Tov of Chanukah. The Jewish Nation was living in Eretz Yisrael with the Bais Hamiskdosh, yet, their avodas Hashem was weakening and Jews were assimilating into the Greek culture. Consequently, Hashem orchestrated the Greek oppression which included decrees forbidding Torah learning and the performance of certain mitzvos.

The Jewish People weren't moser nefesh for the mitzvos, so they simply lost the ability to perform them.

Once the Jews, led by the Chashmonaim, demonstrated their mesirus nefesh on behalf of the Torah, their salvation was not long in coming. A handful of fighters defeated the mighty Greek army. Thereafter, they found a single jug of spiritually pure oil which miraculously burned for eight days. These miracles were the impetus for establishing the Yom Tov of Chanukah; the focus of which is thanking and praising Hashem for His infinite kindness.

Rav Wolbe (AleI Shur vol. II p. 455) writes that the cycle is clear. Lack of mesirus nefesh for mitzvos caused the Jewish People to lose the mitzvos. When they proved their willingness to sacrifice for the mitzvos, Hashem responded in kind and enabled them to perform the mitzvos in a miraculous manner. And two thousand years later, Rav Yeruchom Levovitz exhorted his disciples to prevent this type of dangerous cycle from occurring.

How can we implement the lesson of Chanukah during these auspicious days? One way to accomplish this is by deciding to sacrifice a habit for the sake of Hashem. A possible means of achieving this goal might be by following the guidance of the first Mishna in Pirkei Avos, which in accordance with the explanations discussed the past few weeks, seems clear that it is an introduction to all the proverbs that are to follow.

As you embark on your journey through Avos, bear in mind that you have a responsibility and obligation to transmit to the next generation all knowledge that you will cull from these pearls of wisdom. Work through each idea slowly; be patient with yourself and proceed with small steps.

Realize that rectifying your behavior isn't merely a personal responsibility. Through your conduct you teach those around you; and your actions have the potential to bring people closer to Hashem and His Torah.

Additionally, before actively working on improving, ensure that you are not consciously putting yourself into any spiritual trying situations. In order to proceed forward, one must first erect fences and set

boundaries to prevent himself from falling backwards. The word nefesh describes one's desires (See Rashi to Bereishis 23:8). Giving up one's desires and comfortable habits for the sake of growing in avodas Hashem is mesirus nefesh. Take one of the topics discussed over the past weeks and answer the questions provided at the end of the dvar Torah. Then exert yourself to make a positive change in that area -- even if just for the eight days of Chanukah. It's a worthwhile endeavor since Hashem responds with miracles for those who are moser nefesh! ©2017 Rav S. Wolbe, zt"l and AishDas Society



RABBI AVI WEISS

Shabbat Forshpeis

When Yosef (Joseph) is appointed second to the king by Pharaoh he is given an Egyptian name. In the words of the Torah; "and Pharaoh called Yosef - Tzafnat Paneach." (Genesis 41: 45) The Torah then tags on an additional statement: "and Yosef went out over the land of Egypt." If Yosef was given a new name why does the Torah not use that name when describing his going out to rule Egypt?

Perhaps the answer lies in evaluating Maimonides' position that the person who sanctified God's name most in the world (Kiddush Hashem) was Yosef. (Laws of the Fundamentals of Torah 5:10) This is strange, because after all, sanctifying God is commonly associated with dying for God. Why did Maimonides not pick any of the myriad of Jews who gave their lives for the Almighty to embody this most important principle? Why pick Yosef who did not die for God?

Rav Ahron Soloveitchik offers an interesting insight. He argues that for Maimonides the greatest sanctification of God is not dying for Him but living for God.

In many ways dying for a cause is easier than living for one. Dying takes a moment and is often associated with great honor. Living for God requires an every day and every moment commitment. Doing the small things that often go unnoticed is the true test of Kiddush Hashem.

Note Maimonides formulation of the laws of Kiddush Hashem. What is Kiddush Hashem, he asks? Rather than list the times that one should die for God, Maimonides first lists those times when one should transgress the law rather than die. Only after explaining when life overrides the law, does Maimonides mention the few times when dying for God is mandated. (Laws of the Fundamentals of Torah 5:1,2) Rav Ahron concludes that living for God is mentioned first, as it is paramount.

No wonder Yosef is the model of Kiddush Hashem. True, he did not die for God. Still, although

the only Jew living in Egypt he lived every moment for God -- never forsaking his Jewish identity. In the most difficult of times he did not assimilate, he did not forget who he was. This is Kiddush Hashem par excellence.

Our original question is now answered: Pharaoh's intent in giving Yosef an Egyptian name may have been to encourage him to lose his identity. The Torah, however, is quick to point out that Yosef went out over the land of Egypt to underscore that Yosef remained Yosef. He was not swept away by Pharaoh's thinking; he remained true to his Jewish identity.

An important message for Jews living in the modern world. When engaging modernity and gleaning from worldly wisdom and becoming involved in tikkun olam we dare not forget our roots, our names, our responsibility to see the world from the prism of Torah. A good starting point in keeping our roots is to retain our Hebrew names. Names reveal a great deal about character, about who we are. Like Yosef who despite Pharaoh's efforts to rename him, to redirect him, remained the same Yosef. ©2017 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

ENCYCLOPEDIA TALMUDIT

Chanukah

*Translated for the Encyclopedia Talmudit
by Rabbi Mordechai Weiss*

Outside of Israel in the Diaspora we celebrate two days of Holiday ("Chag") during the three major festivals of Pesach, Shavuot and Succot. In ancient times the new month was proclaimed by the Beit Din in Jerusalem. Messages were then sent to all the surrounding communities and also the communities outside Israel. Because of the time factor in reaching these communities in time for the Chag, those living outside Israel celebrated two days of Chag. Though today we have a calendar, we still maintain this tradition in the Diaspora.

However with reference to the holiday of Chanukah we only have eight days and we don't add any additional days. Some believe that the reason for this is that we only add additional days on holidays that are dictated by the Torah ("Deorayta"), not those that are dictated by the Rabbis (as Chanukah).

Others state that the number eight has special significance, since one of the evil decrees against the Jews was to obliterate the Mitzva of Circumcision which is on the eighth day, and also the holiday of Succot is eight days as well.

A famous question is posed by the "Beit Yoseph": Why should Chanukah be celebrated for eight days since they found enough oil to last for one day? The first day therefore would not be a miracle and hence we should celebrate Chanukah for only seven

days?

Perhaps we can answer this question by citing the controversy between the school of Shammai ("Beit Shammai") and the school of Hillel ("Beit Hillel") as to the exact way the Menorah should be lit on Chanukah. "Beit Shammai" state that on the first night we light eight candles and each succeeding night we decrease this number by one until the last day when we have only one candle lit. "Beit Hillel" on the other hand state that every day we add a candle until the eighth day when all candles are lit (this is the tradition that we follow).

It would therefore follow, that if we only celebrated seven days of Chanukah then on the fourth day there would be no discernable difference between "Beit Hillel" and "Beit Shammai" (since both would light four candles). The same would be true if we would add a day (as we do on regular holidays) and celebrate nine days, for then the fifth night there would be no difference. Hence we insist of having exactly eight days of Chanukah. ©2016 Rabbi M. Weiss and Encyclopedia Talmudit

RABBI DAVID S. LEVIN

Significance of Dreams

In Parashat Mikeitz we find the culmination of a series of dreams that appear in Yosef's life. Last week we saw that Yosef had two dreams which demonstrated his leadership and caused dissent among the brothers. We also saw the two dreams of the wine steward and the baker which demonstrated Yosef's ability as an interpreter of dreams. This week we encounter the dreams of Par'oh and the interpretations of those dreams by Yosef. The subject of dreams and their interpretations fills many a daf in the Talmud. We are not only speaking of the dreams in this parasha and the last, but of the dreams of Yaakov, Avraham, tannaim and amoraim, the writers of the Talmud, as well. But for our purposes we will only deal with the dreams of Yosef and those who approach Yosef for interpretation. We must first realize that not all dreams lend themselves to interpretation. Those dreams are not really carrying an important message from Hashem. One could be certain that the Avos, the forefathers, and those around them all dreamed dreams that were unimportant, too. But the Torah does not record those dreams. Obviously, the dreams that we encounter in the Torah are significant.

There are three things that are relevant to every important dream: (1) the actual content and wording of the dream, (2) the interpretation of the dream and the wording of that interpretation, and (3) who actually does the interpreting. Each factor is very important. Pharaoh uses wording in his retelling of the dreams which is not found in the original dream as recorded by the Torah. The interpretation of Yosef's first dream was done by the brothers and they forced

into their interpretation their own bias of Yosef as a ruler from the K'tonet passim.

HaRav Shimshon Raphael Hirsch speaks of the difficulties in interpreting dreams and in judging whether that interpretation is correct. HaRav Hirsch says, "If one thinks that through dreams or other symbolic signs that the One who sends the dream to the mind of a person wishes thereby to tell him something, the kind of symbol in the dream must be of such a nature that the receiver of it can explain it to himself; it must be clear and apparent." This is why the baker dreams of baked goods and the wine steward dreams of grapes and cups. Hashem speaks to a person in a language that he can understand. HaRav Hirsch continues his explanation. "...We can see here how Hashem speaks in pictures, and can learn from it how the explanation of His pictures must always be sought in the simplest and most apparent meanings, must never read into them but always out of them...." The interpretation must be so clear from the content itself that it is the only interpretation because it comes naturally from the matter itself. This helps us understand why the brothers' erred. They did not allow the dream to speak for itself.

The two dreams of Par'oh are puzzling in a different way than the dreams mentioned in last week's parasha. We are told each of his dreams twice; once when he dreams them and once when he tells them to Yosef for interpretation. Our Rabbis have expounded on the differences between the actual dreams and the dreams as retold. But for us this is somewhat unnecessary. Yosef is not privy to the original dream. He must interpret only what Par'oh tells him. Par'oh stresses the two extremes of the fat and the lean. He also stresses the fact that he has never seen cows so thin. In Par'oh's second dream, his emphasis in retelling the story is the fullness of the good grain and the weakness of the poor grain. Yosef again lets the dream speak for itself. The seven years of plenty are surely plenty and the seven years of famine are worse than anything that Egypt has ever seen. Since the cows and the grain represent the fleshpots of Egypt and the granaries that fed the entire world at a time of famine, Par'oh was keenly aware of the importance of both. By letting the dream speak for itself, Yosef was able to give Par'oh an interpretation that was in his "language."

It is interesting to note that much of what we have discussed could just as easily been written about a good psychologist or family counselor. He must listen carefully and allow the patient's words to guide the interpretation which he gives to any ideas which are presented. Just as the language of a dream changes once the dreamer states the dream in his own words with his own emphasis, so a person's perspective in any situation changes how the facts of any incident or feeling is perceived. In truth there is no reality other

than one's perception of that reality. We each interpret reality based on our own perceptions just as two people experiencing the same basic dream will understand the dream differently. If we look at the dream of the Wine Steward and the Baker, it was basically the same dream and could have resulted in the same interpretation. But the wine steward and the baker had different perceptions of their own guilt. This led to the words they used to describe the dream to Yosef and led him to the different conclusions about their fates. Yosef listened to their words and distinguished between their perceptions.

We have seen that the art of interpreting dreams is more like the art of listening carefully and attentively to the words of the dreamer. But this is really an effective way of dealing with everything that a person says. If we can learn to listen more closely to the words of our friends, our acquaintances, our spouses and families, we will be able to interpret their needs and help them in a way that they will appreciate. We must try to see the "facts" in light of each person's perception. Where a conflict arises between two people, we must help each to see the perception of the other party. Often both people have the same goal but have difficulty comprehending the other's point of view. This requires us to increase our sensitivity and open our minds to the perceptions of others. We must strive for that sensitivity. May Hashem grant us the wisdom, the care, and the patience which we each need so that we can be a source of help and comfort to all around us. ©2017 Rabbi D.S. Levin

RABBI KALMAN PACKOUZ

Shabbat Shalom Weekly

The Torah states: "And Pharaoh sent and he called Yosef (Joseph), and they ran with him from the prison." (Genesis: 41:14). What lesson is the Torah teaching us about life?

The Chofetz Chaim, Rabbi Yisroel Meir Kagan, points out that when the time came for Joseph's liberation, he wasn't let out of prison slowly. Rather, he was rushed out of his captivity with the greatest of speed. This is the way the Almighty brings about redemption. The moment it is the proper time, not even one second is lost. "This is how it will be with the final redemption," said the Chofetz Chaim. "As soon as the right time comes, we will immediately be delivered from our exile."

Our lesson: In every difficult life situation, realize that in just one moment the entire picture can change. Joseph had no time set for the end of his imprisonment upon which he could count on being set free. His imprisonment and freedom were not ultimately dependent on the whims of his mortal captors. Rather, the Almighty gave him a set time to remain in prison; as soon as the time was reached, Joseph was immediately saved from his plight.

This awareness can give you encouragement in difficult times. Even where you can make no change for improvement and you do not see the situation changing in the future, your liberation can still come in the next moment. Remember: The salvation of the Almighty can come in the twinkling of an eyelash! *Dvar Torah based on Growth Through Torah by Rabbi Zelig Pliskin ©2017 Rabbi K. Packouz*

RABBI ELIAKIM KOENIGSBERG

TorahWeb

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

Finally, after some time, Yaakov relents and he allows them to take Binyamin to Mitzrayim. But he tells them that they have to prepare for their encounter with Yosef. "If it must be so, then do this: Take of the land's glory in your baggage and bring it down to the man as a present -- some spices, some honey, wax, pistachios and almonds. And take with you double the money (maybe food is now more expensive). And the money that was returned to your sacks bring back with you, maybe it was a mistake. And take your brother, and arise, return to the man. And may Hashem grant you mercy before the man that he may release your other brother as well as Binyamin. (Mikeitz, 43:11-13)" Rashi comments that Yaakov, in his last statement, was saying, "If you have prepared properly, then you are ready to go. You are missing nothing except tefillah. I daven that Hashem should grant you success in your mission."

Yaakov Avinu was teaching the shevatim an important lesson. Sometimes people think that tefillah is necessary only when a situation is beyond our control. If someone we know gets sick, G-d forbid, and the doctors are not so hopeful, we daven because we know that only Hashem's mercy can help. If a friend loses his job and his prospects of finding another one are not good, we daven because we feel desperate for him. If our security is threatened and we feel like there is no safe place in the world, we say Tehillim with greater kavanah because we know that only Hakadosh Boruch Hu can protect us.

But
when we take
all of the



... "Anybody got a match?"

necessary steps to prepare for a situation -- we study hard for a test, we spend time and effort putting together a presentation -- we tend to feel that tefillah is not as necessary. After all, we prepared. We feel cautiously confident. We almost expect success because we did the necessary hishtadlus to succeed. Of course, we feel thankful for the G-d given talent that enabled us to prepare properly for the task at hand. But we don't always feel the need for tefillah because we feel ready to go.

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

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

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

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

a bracha after eating because once he is satisfied he is less likely to recognize Hashem's hand in the creation of the food that he ate. That is why the Torah obligates a person to recite Birchas Hamazon only after eating.

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

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

Weekly Dvar

Parshat Miketz tells of the sons of Yaakov traveling to Egypt to buy food and bring it back to their father. Yosef tries to foil their plans by accusing his brothers of being spies because their father wouldn't have to send all 10 sons to get food, and the brothers respond that "we are all sons of one man" (42:11). How does that explain why they were all sent? The suspicion Yosef raises still exists!?

In Majesty of Man, Rabbi Leibowitz explains that when Hillel and Rabbi Akiva emphasized loving our fellow man as ourselves, they were describing fundamental principles of the Torah. As the Ramban explains, although the trip to Egypt was long and dangerous, Yaakov felt that developing the brothers' feeling of unity and brotherhood was worth the risk. This Ahavat Yisrael (love for a fellow Jew) is so critically important that Hillel and Rabbi Akiva stressed it, and Yaakov risked his own sons' safety for it. If we neglect each other's needs in the outside world, in the workplace and at home, we're placing ourselves in danger of losing the comm"unity" we strive to be a part of.

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