

Toras Aish

Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS Z"L

Covenant & Conversation

After twenty-two years and many twists and turns, Joseph and his brothers finally meet. We sense the drama of the moment. The last time they had been together, the brothers planned to kill Joseph and eventually sold him as a slave. One of the reasons they did so is that they were angry at his reports about his dreams; he had twice dreamed that his brothers would bow down to him. To them that sounded like hubris, excessive confidence, and conceit.

Hubris is usually punished by nemesis and so it was in Joseph's case. Far from being a ruler, his brothers turned him into a slave. Now, unexpectedly, in this week's parsha, the dreams become reality. The brothers do bow down to him, "their faces to the ground" (Gen. 42:6). It may feel as though the story has reached its end. Instead it turns out to be only the beginning of another story altogether, a tale of sin, repentance and forgiveness. Biblical stories tend to defy narrative conventions.

The reason, though, that the story does not end with the brothers' meeting is that only one person present at the scene, Joseph himself, knows that it is a reunion.

"As soon as Joseph saw his brothers, he recognised them, but he pretended to be a stranger and spoke harshly to them ... Joseph recognised his brothers, but they did not recognise him" (Gen. 42:7-8).

There were many reasons they did not recognise him. Many years had passed. They did not know he was in Egypt. They believed he was still a slave, whereas this man was a viceroy. Besides which, he looked like an Egyptian, spoke Egyptian, and had an Egyptian name, Tsofnat Paaneach. Most importantly, though, he was wearing the uniform of an Egyptian of high rank. That had been the sign of Joseph's elevation at the hand of Pharaoh when he interpreted his dreams:

So Pharaoh said to Joseph, 'I hereby put you in charge of the whole land of Egypt.' Then Pharaoh took his signet ring from his finger and put it on Joseph's finger. He dressed him in robes of fine linen and put a gold chain round



his neck. He made him ride in a chariot as his second-in-command, and people shouted before him, "Make way." Thus he put him in charge of the whole land of Egypt. (Gen. 41:41-43)

We know from Egyptian wall paintings and from archaeological discoveries like Tutankhamen's tomb, how stylised and elaborate were Egyptian robes of office. Different ranks wore different clothes. Early Pharaohs had two headdresses, a white one to mark the fact that they were kings of upper Egypt, and a red one to signal that they were kings of lower Egypt. Like all uniforms, clothes told a story, or as we say nowadays, "made a statement." They proclaimed a person's status. Someone dressed like this Egyptian before whom the brothers had just bowed could not possibly be their long-lost brother Joseph. Except that he was.

This seems like a minor matter. I want in this essay to argue the opposite. It turns out to be a very major matter indeed. The first thing we need to note is that the Torah as a whole, and Genesis in particular, has a way of focusing our attention on a major theme: it presents us with recurring episodes. Robert Alter calls them "type scenes."¹ There is, for example, the theme of sibling rivalry that appears four times in Genesis: Cain and Abel, Isaac and Ishmael, Jacob and Esau and Joseph and his brothers. There is the theme that occurs three times of the patriarch forced to leave home because of famine, and then realising that he will have to ask his wife to pretend she is his sister for fear that he will be murdered. And there is the theme of finding-future-wife-at-well, which also occurs three times: Rebecca, Rachel and (early in the book of Exodus) Jethro's daughter Zipporah.

The encounter between Joseph and his brothers is the fifth in a series of stories in which clothes play a key role. The first is Jacob who dresses in Esau's clothes while bringing his father a meal so that he can take his brother's blessing in disguise. Second is Joseph's finely embroidered robe or "coat of many colours," which the brothers bring back to their father stained in blood, saying that a wild animal must have seized him. Third is the story of Tamar taking off her widow's dress, covering herself with a veil, and making herself look as if she were a prostitute. Fourth is the robe Joseph leaves in the hands of Potiphar's

¹ Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, New York, Basic Books, 1981, 55-78.

wife while escaping her attempt to seduce him. The fifth is the one in today's parsha in which Pharaoh dresses Joseph as a high-ranking Egyptian, with clothes of linen, a gold chain, and the royal signet ring.

What all five cases have in common is that they facilitate deception. In each case, they bring about a situation in which things are not as they seem. Jacob wears Esau's clothes because he is worried that his blind father will feel him and realise that the smooth skin does not belong to Esau but to his younger brother. In the end it is not only the texture but also the smell of the clothes that deceives Isaac: "Ah, the smell of my son is like the smell of a field the Lord has blessed" (Gen. 27:27).

Joseph's stained robe was produced by the brothers to conceal the fact that they were responsible for Joseph's disappearance. Jacob "recognised it and said, "It is my son's robe! A wild animal has devoured him. Joseph has surely been torn to pieces" (Gen. 37:33).

Tamar's façade as a veiled prostitute was intended to deceive Judah into sleeping with her since she wanted to have a child to "raise up the name" of her dead husband Er. Potiphar's wife used the evidence of Joseph's torn robe to substantiate her claim that he had tried to rape her, a crime of which he was wholly innocent. Lastly, Joseph used the fact that his brothers did not recognise him to set in motion a series of staged events to test whether they were still capable of selling a brother as a slave or whether they had changed.

So the five stories about garments tell a single story: things are not necessarily as they seem. Appearances deceive. It is therefore with a frisson of discovery that we realise that the Hebrew word for garment, *b-g-d*, is also the Hebrew word for "betrayal," as in the confession formula, *Ashamnu, bagadnu*, "We have been guilty, we have betrayed."

Is this a mere literary conceit, a way of linking a series of otherwise unconnected stories? Or is there something more fundamental at stake?

It was the nineteenth century Jewish historian Heinrich Graetz who pointed out a fundamental difference between other ancient cultures and Judaism:

"The pagan perceives the Divine in nature through the medium of the eye, and he becomes conscious of it as something to be looked at. On the other hand, to the Jew who conceives God as being outside of nature and prior to it, the Divine manifests itself through the will and through the medium of the ear . . . The pagan beholds his god, the Jew hears Him; that is, apprehends His will."²

In the twentieth century, literary theorist Erich Auerbach contrasted the literary style of Homer with

that of the Hebrew Bible.³ In Homer's prose we see the play of light on surfaces. The *Odyssey* and *The Iliad* are full of visual descriptions. By contrast, biblical narrative has very few such descriptions. We do not know how tall Abraham was, the colour of Miriam's hair, or anything about Moses' appearance. Visual details are minimal, and are present only when necessary to understand what follows. We are told for example that Joseph was good-looking (Gen. 39:6) only to explain why Potiphar's wife desired him.

The key to the five stories occurs later on in Tanach, in the biblical account of Israel's first two Kings. Saul looked like royalty. He was "head and shoulders above" everyone else (1 Sam. 9:2). He was tall. He had presence. He had the bearing of a King. But he lacked self-confidence. He followed the people rather than leading them. Samuel had to rebuke him with the words, "You may be small in your own eyes but you are Head of the Tribes of Israel." Appearance and reality were opposites. Saul had physical but not moral stature.

The contrast with David was total. When God told Samuel to go to the family of Yishai to find Israel's next King, no one even thought of David, the youngest and shortest of the family. Samuel's first instinct was to choose Eliav who, like Saul, looked the part. But God told him, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance but the Lord looks at the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7).

Only when we have read all these stories are we able to return to the first story of all in which clothes play a part: the story of Adam and Eve and the forbidden fruit, after eating which they see they are naked. They are ashamed and they make clothes for themselves. That is a story for another occasion but its theme should now be clear. It is about eyes and ears, seeing and listening. Adam and Eve's sin had little to do with fruit, or sex, and everything to do with the fact that they let what they saw override what they had heard.

"Joseph recognised his brothers, but they did not recognise him."

The reason they did not recognise him is that, from the start, they allowed their feelings to be guided by what they saw, the "coat of many colours" that inflamed their envy of their younger brother. Judge by appearances and you will miss the deeper truth about situations and people. You will even miss God Himself, for God cannot be seen, only heard. That is why the primary imperative in Judaism is *Shema Yisrael*, "Listen, O Israel," and why, when we say the first line of the *Shema*, we place our hand over our eyes so that we cannot see.

² Heinrich Graetz, *The Structure of Jewish History, and other essays*, New York, Ktav Publishing House, 1975, 68.

³ Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1957, 3-23.

Appearances deceive. Clothes betray. Deeper understanding, whether of God or of human beings, cannot come from appearances. In order to choose between right and wrong, between good and bad – in order to live the moral life – we must make sure not only to look, but also to listen. *Covenant and Conversation 5775 is kindly supported by the Maurice Wohl Charitable Foundation in memory of Maurice and Vivienne Wohl z"l ©5775 Rabbi Lord J. Sacks z"l and rabbisacks.org*

RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

As children, we learn that Chanukah is about the victory of the Judeans over the Greek-Syrians; Jews over Gentiles. We know from the Books of the Maccabees and the Second Commonwealth historian Josephus, however, that the struggle began as a civil war, a battle between brothers waged in order to determine the future direction of the Jewish people. Hellenistic Jews fought Torah-based Jews; assimilationist Jews fought traditionalist Jews; would-be Greeks fought old fashioned, committed Jews.

But after the traditionalists won, they did not banish Greek culture, never to allow it a foothold in the sacred portals of Judea. Not only have thousands of Greek words (and via those words, Greek concepts) entered the Talmud and Midrash, but Greek philosophy, science and aesthetics have found a place in the corpus of Jewish literature, especially through great commentators and codifiers such as Maimonides. A brief comment in the Midrash Shabar should mute the idea that Judea rejected Hellas:

The Midrash breaks the word "Zion" (Israel) into its two components. The first letter, the tzaddik, represents the holy, righteous Jews, while the last three letters yud, vav, nun spell out "Yavan", the Hebrew word for Greece. We're being told that at the very heart of everything revered in Judaism – Zion – there must be the beauty of Greece. The question is to what extent?

The Talmud cites the verse, "May God expand Japheth and may he (Japheth) dwell in the tents of Shem" (Genesis 9: 27) as proof that the Torah was not to be translated into any language except Greek (Babylonia Talmud Megillah 9b). The verse is Noah's blessing to Japheth and Shem for their modest behavior after he was shamed by their brother Ham. The Talmud's reading of the verse turns Japheth and Shem into symbols. Japheth is the forerunner of Greece and Shem; the progenitor of Israel. The expansion of Japheth is the beautiful Greek language "which shall dwell in the tents of Shem," when the Torah is translated into Greek. The Midrash adds: "Let the beauty of Japheth be incorporated into the tents of Shem" which has come to mean the ability to extract the positive aspects of Greek culture and synthesize

them with our eternal Torah.

Fascinatingly, the Festival of Chanukah always coincides with Torah portions recording the struggle between Joseph and his brothers. A parallel can be drawn between Joseph's struggle and traditional Judea's struggle with Hellenism.

Joseph's roots were nomadic. His ancestors were shepherds. Pastoral life, as we know, allows the soul to soar; a shepherd has the leisure to compose music and poetry, as well as to meditate on the Torah and communicate with the Divine.

But even in the pastures, Joseph was dreaming of a new world. His dreams were focused on agriculture – the Egyptian occupation which came after shepherding. What upsets the brothers is not just an event in a dream (their sheaves bowing to his), but the very fact that sheaves feature at all. Sheaves represent not only agriculture, but also modernism – a break with tradition.

Joseph's second dream is about the sun, moon and stars. Again, it isn't so much the events of the dream that disturbs, but its universalistic elements. The brothers could even have understood a dream of the cosmos with God at the center, like Jacob's early dream of the ladder. But here, Joseph himself is at the center like the Greek message: "Man is the measure of all things"; man, and not God. Moreover, the Bible says Joseph gloried in his physical appearance, his being of beautiful form and fair visage – "yafeh" (beautiful) like "Japheth," Greece (Genesis 39: 6). And as Heinrich Heine said, "For the Greeks, beauty is truth; for the Hebrews, truth is beauty".

Everyone loves Joseph – handsome, clever, urbane, the perfect guest, dazzling you with his knowledge of languages, including the language of dreams. Joseph is the cosmopolitan Grand Vizier of Egypt, the universalist. Joseph is more Yavanlike than Shemlike, more similar to Greek-Hellenism than to Abraham-Hebraism.

Hence the tensions between Joseph and his brothers are not unlike the tensions between Hellenism and Hebraism. But Joseph matures and by the time he stands before Pharaoh, he does see God at the center: "Not I, but rather God will interpret the dreams to the satisfaction of Pharaoh." (Genesis 41: 15)

And Judah will remind Joseph of the centrality of his family and ancestral home, establishing the first house of study (yeshiva) in Goshen, Egypt (Genesis 49: 22 and Rashi ad loc). Judah, symbolizing Torah and repentance, will receive the spiritual birthright (Genesis 49: 10), and Joseph will receive the blessings of material prosperity (Genesis 49: 22). The two will join together for the glory of Zion and Israel. ©2021 Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin



RABBI BEREL WEIN

Wein Online

There is a famous statement that reverberates throughout Jewish society over the ages that states: "...what cannot be solved by wisdom, will eventually be solved by the passage of time." It seems that time is never neutral, and that its passage certainly influences decisions and events that take place in human society.

Our rabbis have commented that the miraculous deliverance of Joseph from his prison cell and his rise to power was, to a certain extent, due to the time that had passed, and with the heavenly intervention in human events. It suddenly became the time when Joseph should be set free and achieve greatness and dominion. That is why the Torah reading, with this unbelievable mysterious story, now begins to unfold after time has elapsed and when the correct moment for the divine will to be activated in human affairs.

In dealing with business and commerce, we are all aware of the axiom that "timing is everything." Well, that is not only true in matters of finance and business but it also a basic axiom of life and of human history. What can be accomplished at a certain time becomes impossible to achieve either earlier or later. The examples regarding this truism are various and innumerable. It is the circumstances that the passage of time create that fashions the milieu in which events can take place, and individuals can rise to greatness or be defeated.

The timing of heaven and God's guidance in human affairs is always mysterious, inexplicable, and irrational to us ordinary mortals. However, in retrospect, one sees the perfection involved, and the exquisite nature of the timing that governs human events. King Solomon taught us in Kohelet that there is a time for everything to occur, and that everything has its time.

Among the many fallacies of human thought is the idea that we not only control the occurrence of events, but, somehow, we also have the power to decide when those events should take place. It should be obvious to all that we do not control time. In fact, unfortunately, we allow time to control us, our behavior, our schedules and even our goals. It never enters our minds that somehow time is really beyond the boundaries of our powers of control, and beyond even our most fervent wishes and desires.

In truth, most of our lives are almost predetermined: when we are born, and the circumstances of the present world in which we live. It takes a famine of epic proportions to propel Joseph to greatness, political stature, and governmental power. Heaven will use those times and circumstances to reunite the family of Jacob, and to begin the story of Jewish exile and redemption. Everything that happens

from then on, in the family of Jacob, will be a product of the times and the society in which they find themselves. They will go into exile on schedule and will also be redeemed at the right time. But being human, they will not all be aware of the schedule itself. ©2021 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

ENCYCLOPEDIA TALMUDIT

Chanukah

Translated by Rabbi Mordechai Weiss

Outside of Israel, Shavuot is a two-day *Yom Tov*, and both Pesach and Sukkot begin and end with two days of *Yom Tov* as well. In ancient times, the new month was proclaimed by the *Beit Din* in Jerusalem. Messages were then sent to the surrounding and outlying communities, telling them when the new month began. Because the more distant communities did not receive the message before the start of the holidays, those living outside Israel observed two days of *Yom Tov* due to the uncertainty of the correct date. Although today there is a set calendar, we still maintain this tradition of observing two days in the Diaspora.

Nevertheless, when it comes to Chanukah, everybody celebrates it for eight days, including those in the Diaspora. Some explain that we only add a day to biblical holidays but not to rabbinic ones (such as Chanukah). Others feel that the number eight has special significance vis-a-vis Chanukah. This is either because one of the evil decrees of the Greeks against the Jews banned circumcision, which takes place on the eighth day, or because Chanukah was designed to parallel Sukkot (which at the time of Chanukah's origin was eight days long even in the Diaspora).

We would like to suggest an additional approach. The *Beit Yosef* poses a famous question: Why do we celebrate Chanukah for eight days? Since the Jews found enough oil to last for one day, the miracle lasted for only seven days. One of the answers proposed is that had they celebrated seven days, then on the fourth day it would have been impossible to tell who was following Beit Hillel and who was following Beit Shammai. Beit Shammai says that on the first night we light eight candles, and on each succeeding night we decrease the number by one. On the final day of the holiday, only one candle is lit. In contrast, Beit Hillel maintains that on the first night we light one candle, and on each succeeding night we increase the number by one. Thus on the eighth day, eight candles are lit. (This is the current custom.) It follows, then, that if we celebrated only seven days of Chanukah, on the fourth day there would be no discernible difference between those following Beit Hillel and those following Beit Shammai (as both would light four candles). To avoid

this problem, Chanukah is eight days and not seven. Similarly, if we were to add a day (as we do on other holidays) and celebrate nine days of Chanukah in the Diaspora, this problem would arise on the fifth night. For this reason we do not add a day in the Diaspora, but rather celebrate Chanukah for eight days everywhere. ©2017 Rabbi M. Weiss and *Encyclopedia Talmudit*

RABBI AVI WEISS

Shabbat Forshpeis

When Joseph is appointed second to the king by Pharaoh, he is given an Egyptian name. In the words of the Torah, “and Pharaoh called Joseph Tzafnat Paneach” (Genesis 41: 45). The Torah then adds: “and Joseph went out over the land of Egypt.” If Joseph 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’s position that the example of a person who lives a life of kiddush Hashem (sanctifying God’s name in the world) was Joseph (Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, Laws of the Fundamentals of Torah 5:10). This is strange: 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 Joseph, who did not die for God?

Rabbi Ahron Soloveichik offers an interesting insight. He argues that for Maimonides, the greatest sanctification of God is not dying for but living for God. Living for God is no simple task, as it requires a constant commitment, every day and every moment. Doing the small things that often go unnoticed is the true test of kiddush Hashem.

Note Maimonides’s 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. Living for God is mentioned first, as it is paramount (Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, Laws of the Fundamentals of Torah 5:1, 2).

No wonder, then, that Joseph is the model of kiddush Hashem. True, he did not die for God. Still, although he was 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 or forget who he was. This is kiddush Hashem par excellence.

Our original question is now answered: Pharaoh’s intent in giving Joseph an Egyptian name may have been to encourage him to lose his identity. The Torah, however, is quick to state that Joseph went

out over the land of Egypt to underscore that Joseph remained Joseph. He was not swept away by Pharaoh’s thinking; he remained true to his Jewish identity.

This is an important message for Jews living in the modern world. When engaging with modernity, gleaning from worldly wisdom, and becoming involved in tikkun olam, we dare not forget our roots. A good starting point is to retain our Hebrew names, like Joseph, who – despite Pharaoh’s efforts to rename him, to redirect him – remained the same Joseph. ©2021 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 AVROHOM LEVENTHAL

The King and We

Pirkei D’rebbi Eliezer (16:16) states that תן דומה לילמלך “- a bridegroom is compared to a king. By association, we can say that a bride is compared to a queen.

The explanation is that as the groom and bride wear expensive clothing, are escorted and celebrated upon, they in fact resemble “royalty”. While all of that makes sense there must be something deeper than the externals of the new couple.

The statement of Pirkei D’rebbi Eliezer should have meaning that applies beyond the superficial.

I believe that the deeper lesson comes from the dreams in Parshat Mikeitz.

Paroh’s dreams include 7 healthy and 7 scrawny cows, 7 healthy stalks followed by 7 withered ones. These dreams greatly disturb not only his sleep but his peace of mind.

Paroh turns to his close advisors for an explanation.

They all give interpretations, but none are satisfactory to Paroh. All the narratives involve something personal to or about Paroh. He knew that these could not be the true messages of his dreams.

As the king of Egypt, Paroh understood that everything about him must relate to his people. A true leader is constantly connected to their nation. Yes, they might live in a palace, eat the finest foods and be served all hours of the day. These are the “trappings” of royalty.

The needs of the people are the concern of its monarch. Their welfare and sustenance should be constantly on his or her mind.

Paroh knew that such troubling dreams had to in some way involve the entire nation of Egypt. The advisors gave very plausible explanations that would fit for a “regular” person, not for a king like Paroh.

It was Yosef’s take on the dreams that

impressed Paroh. Those interpretations affected everyone, not just Paroh personally.

A true leader reflects on and is a reflection of their people. A monarch considers their subjects at all times.

One of the most honored pilots in Israeli history was Michel Bacos. Captain Bacos never flew in the IAF, was not an Israeli citizen or even Jewish for that matter. He was the commander of Air France Flight 139 that was hijacked and the subject of the incredible rescue in Entebbe.

After landing in Uganda, the terrorists freed the 148 non-Jewish passengers, and offered to release Bacos and his crew. Captain Bacos told the terrorists that ALL of the passengers were his responsibility and that he wouldn't leave until their safety was guaranteed. Captain Bacos remained with the Jewish passengers and was ultimately rescued. His bravery, courage and leadership were globally recognized.

Michel Bacos realized that being the "Captain" goes far above just flying the plane.

Perhaps this is the deeper reason that a groom and bride are compared to a king and queen. As a couple, they are now responsible not only for their own needs but those of their new spouse. A "kingdom" has been created through this union.

"I" has become "we".

So yes, just as a king and queen have the ornaments of their position, so too do the bride and groom. Much more important than the fancy clothing, entourage and celebrating, however, is the newfound maturity in having to look out for another.

This idea applies far beyond the celebration of the newly married.

Avraham was blessed that **וְהִפְרֵתִי אִתְּךָ בְּמֵאֵד וְיִצְאוּ מִמֶּךָ יְצֵאוּ מַמְלַכְת כְּהֵנִים וְגוֹי קְדוֹשׁ**. I will make you very fruitful and kings will come forth from you.

The Jewish people are called a **ממלכת כהנים וגוי קדוש**. A kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

It would seem that in some ways every member of the Jewish people are compared to royalty, not only a bride and groom.

Being the leader is not manifested by simply wearing a crown or living in the palace.

Our identification as royalty is the innate characteristic of concern for others. Consideration of the needs and feelings of others turn the selfishness of "I" into a world of "we".

לזה – All of Yisrael are guarantors for one another. Each of us can become a king or queen by focusing beyond ourselves and tuning in to the wellbeing of others.

Not everyone has the power, wealth and influence of Paroh. Enacting decrees may be beyond our capabilities.

We do have the potential, however, to make a difference in many ways, for our families, friends and

the community around us.

Shabbat Shalom and Chanukah Sameach!
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RABBI DAVID LEVIN

The Play's the Thing...

We have learned of the brothers' first encounter with Yosef where he accused them of being spies and insisted that they return again with Binyamin or not return at all. Though the famine continued, it was only Yehudah's pledge of protection for Binyamin that swayed Ya'akov and enabled the brothers to return to Egypt with Binyamin for more food. Upon their return to Egypt, the Torah reports an unusual scene that requires attention.

The Torah recounts, "Yosef saw Binyamin with them, and he said to the one in charge of his house, 'Bring the men into the house,' and to have meat slaughtered and to prepare, 'For with me will these men dine at noon.' The man did as Yosef said, and the man brought the men to Yosef's house. And the men became frightened because they were being brought to Yosef's house, and they said, 'Because of the money replaced in our saddlebags earlier are we being brought, to bring a charge against us, and to cast (libel) down upon us, and to take us along, as slaves with our donkeys.' ... And the man brought the men into Yosef's house; he gave water and they washed their feet, and he gave feed to their donkeys. ... Yosef came to the house and they brought him the tribute that was in their hands, into the house, and they prostrated themselves to him toward the ground. He inquired of their welfare, and he said, 'is your aged father of whom you spoke at peace? Is he still alive?' They replied, 'Your servant our father is at peace, he still lives,' and they bowed and prostrated themselves. Then he raised his eyes and saw his brother Binyamin, his mother's son, and he said, 'Is this your youngest brother of whom you spoke to me?' And he said, 'Hashem be gracious to you, my son.'"

The brothers' apprehension upon being brought to the Viceroy's (Yosef's) house was understandable. Although they were reassured by the messenger that the money which they found in their saddlebags when they left Egypt the first time was not owed to the Viceroy, they feared that a libel would be cast on them, and they would be taken as slaves. They were cognizant of the method which Hashem uses to punish people, "midah k'neged midah, the punishment should be the equivalent of the crime". They had sold their brother as a slave, and now they would become slaves. The Or HaChaim explains that their apprehension concerning their donkeys went beyond their concern for themselves. The donkeys represented the means by which food would be taken to their families back in Canaan. If the donkeys were confiscated, their families

would not receive provisions; they would starve and die. They were prepared to become slaves, if necessary, as punishment for what they had done to Yosef, but their families were undeserving of a punishment.

The Torah tells us that Yosef inquired of their welfare as well as the welfare of their father. Our Rabbis question why Yosef first inquired about the brothers and only afterwards asked about their father. The Or HaChaim explains that Yosef understood that one should first ask about those who are in front of you rather than those who are not present. S'forno implies that the question about their welfare uses the word "shalom" which can mean both peace and complete. Yosef's question was more a psychological inquiry: "Have you come to grips with your sin and atoned so that you are once again whole and complete?" HaRav Shamshon Raphael Hirsch says that Yosef's question about his father was also about his wholeness. Yosef wanted to know whether his father was at peace both externally and internally. As the Or HaChaim explains, Yosef's question about his father seems to be doubled; Is Ya'akov at peace and is he still alive? It is possible that Ya'akov had lost the will to live even though he was physically well. That may be the distinction between the two inquiries. Yosef may also have asked about the brothers first because he was fulfilling, at last, the task which Ya'akov had assigned him when he was sent to the brothers before his sale: "Please go and see about the welfare of your brothers and the welfare of the flocks."

Yosef intended to confuse the brothers with his knowledge of them even though he was a "complete stranger." The Torah continues with the narrative after Yosef had to recompose himself after seeing Binyamin: "He (Yosef) washed his face and went out, and restrained himself and said, 'Set out bread.' They (his servants) set for him by himself, and for them by themselves, and for the Egyptians who ate with him by themselves, for the Egyptians could not bear to eat bread with the Hebrews, for it is loathsome to Egyptians. They were seated before him, the firstborn according to his seniority and the youngest according to his youth; the men looked at one another in astonishment." The Me'am Lo'ez tells a Midrash that heightens this confusion. Yosef could have assumed that Yehudah was the eldest because he spoke for the brothers. Instead, he pretended to divine the order with his silver goblet and told the brothers that Reuven was the eldest, but Yehudah would be seated as the leader. He placed Yehudah at the head of the table and told Reuven to sit on his right. Yosef explained that children of the same mother should be together, so he sat Leah's sons together, Bilhah's sons separately, Zilpah's sons separately, and then Binyamin close to him, saying that Binyamin was alone since his mother had died.

Yosef then had his servants serve the meal: "He passed portions from before him to them, and Binyamin's portion was greater than the portions of all of them fivefold." It appears that his intention was to see if the brothers would be jealous of Binyamin as they had of Yosef years before. When there did not appear to be a reaction, he devised a plan that would place Binyamin in jeopardy, and to see if the brothers would defend him with their lives, in contrast with the way that they had treated Yosef. Yosef had his silver goblet placed in Binyamin's knapsack and had the brothers apprehended and declared to be thieves. The original reaction of the brothers was to declare that the person in whose sack the goblet would be found would die, and that all the others would become slaves. This was simply a gesture because the brothers were certain that none had stolen the goblet. When the goblet appeared in Binyamin's sack, Yehudah changed the offer and declared that they would all be slaves. Yosef prepared his final test by saying that all the brothers would be free to leave except Binyamin. We are left with an unfinished story that is concluded in next week's parasha.

Each of Yosef's actions can be questioned. Still, Yosef had only one goal in mind; he wanted to awaken the conscience of each brother and especially the future leader, Yehudah, so that true teshuvah could take place. He wanted to be able to forgive his brothers only after they understood their actions. A complete teshuvah is an integral part of receiving forgiveness. © 2021 Rabbi D. Levin



RABBI JONATHAN GEWIRTZ

Migdal Ohr

"**A**nd it was at the end of two years that Pharaoh was dreaming, and behold he was standing upon the Nile." (Beraishis 41:1) For a relatively straightforward posuk, there's a lot of discussion about the syntax. Right off the bat, Rashi quotes Onkelos that it was "the end of two years," because the word 'kazit' always refers to the end of something. It seems rather obvious; why the need to express it?

Of course, the fact that it said, "at the end of two years" instead of simply, "after two years," is noteworthy and must be considered. Then, we have the unusual terminology of "two years of days." Why mention the word "days"?

From various commentators it is clear that the two years were significant. Chazal tell us that because Yosef asked the Wine Steward to remember him two times, he was liable to remain in jail an additional two years. Perhaps asking once would have been alright, but the second time was too much hishtadlus, too much personal effort instead of relying on Hashem.

Therefore, the Torah tells us that it was two years to the day so we recognize that it was not random, but specific to the message it was conveying to us about the real cause behind every effect. It is not our machinations, but Hashem's doing.

So that explains the two years and days. What about the word "mikeitz," by which our Parsha is known? Why not just say, "it was after two years"? The answer to that is the same as to our other questions. It's not clear exactly when the two years started, but the end was definitive. At whatever point Hashem determined they would start, whether after the Wine Steward had his dream or after he was feed, the end point was set right then.

This means that the entire time Yosef languished in prison, it was not that Hashem was ignoring him. On the contrary, He'd already started the countdown timer to Yosef's release. There was a purpose to the extra time and he would not stay imprisoned a second longer – or shorter – than he was supposed to. This was all Hashgacha Pratis, Hashem meticulously orchestrating His world and His people.

The Jews rebelled against the Syrian-Greeks and after several grueling years of fighting, they wrested control of Eretz Yisrael. The day established to celebrate this was the 25th of Kislev. Not coincidentally, the 25th place the Jews encamped in the desert was Chashmona, a reference to the Chashmonaim who were the protagonists of the Chanukah story. The 25th word in the Torah is 'ohr,' a reference to the light we celebrate and kindle on this day. Though we couldn't see it, the end of our troubles was established by Hashem from the beginning.

On Chanuka, the lights are turned on and we get a better glimpse of the personal care and attention Hashem gives to us. Though things may seem chaotic, they are anything but. This is the miraculous revelation of the hidden light which should burn brightly within our souls and illuminate our lives the whole year round.

Napoleon Bonaparte, as part of his program to introduce equality of rights in France, attempted to coerce the Jews to intermarry and to generally become more assimilated. When the Chida went to see him, the emperor expressed "surprise" that Jewish prophets throughout history had never foreseen his rise to power in their visions of the future.

The Chida assured him that as everything has a hint in the Torah, there was one for him as well. In fact, the Chida added, we find in the Posuk: Ki lekach tov nasati lachem, (for I have given you a good portion), the words Lekach Tov, translate into French as "Part bon," a clear allusion to the emperor's name.

Napoleon was so delighted to be thus acknowledged that the Chida used the opportunity to add: "However, finding the Emperor's name in this phrase places a responsibility upon him to comply with the second half of the Posuk – Torasi al ta'azovu,

safeguarding the Jew's right and ability to study and observe the Torah". ©2021 Rabbi J. Gewirtz and Migdal Ohr

RABBI SHLOMO RESSLER

Lelamed Weekly Dvar

In this week's Parsha, Miketz, we find Paroh having two dreams that none of his advisors can interpret satisfactorily. Yosef is then introduced, and he tells of the 7 years of plenty that will be followed with the 7 years of hunger. As part of the interpretation of the dreams, Yosef tells Paroh to appoint a man that is 'smart and wise' to overlook the storage of food for the hunger years. Paroh promptly appoints Yosef as that person, reasoning that Yosef has the 'spirit of G-d', and therefore is smart and wise. Paroh then gives Yosef more power than anyone in the entire country. Many of these actions need explanation.... Why would Paroh need a wise man to be in charge of storing food? Wouldn't it be enough to have an efficient person? And if it was important to have a 'smart and wise' person in charge, why did Paroh then choose Yosef because he had a 'spirit of G-d', when it wasn't even the requirement he was looking for? Furthermore, once he did appoint Yosef, why was he so eager to give him so much power?

To answer these questions, we first need to know Rav E. Lopian's insight into the 'smart and wise' requirement. He explains that although any bright person could have arranged for food to be stored, it takes a wise person to plan and implement for the future. It's that extra bit of foresight a wise person has that gives him the added push to do what he knows must be done, although the results are not immediate, or immediately apparent. With this we can now explain what Paroh saw in Yosef... Not only was Yosef wise, but he also had the 'spirit of G-d' -- meaning -- Not only was he wise enough to think of the future, but he had G-d's help in knowing how to do it, which is an even higher level. That's why Paroh was so eager to give him all that power. Paroh himself knew that he didn't have the potential Yosef had, and it was all because Yosef had G-d's guidance. When we follow the guidelines of the Torah, we too show that we're wise enough to not only think of what the Torah wants, but use those actions to save up for our future (in the next world), which takes the spirit of G-d, and even more of a commitment. It's ironic that Paroh is the one that reminds us of how lucky we are to even have the Torah as our guide. We should all be wise enough to 'store' all the Torah study and good deeds we can, and enjoy their reward when it counts -- in the future world. ©2016 Rabbi S. Ressler & LeLamed, Inc.



... "Anybody got a match?"