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Toras Aish

Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS ZT"L

Covenant & Conversation

Joseph is now the ruler of Egypt. The famine he predicted has come to pass. It extends beyond Egypt to the land of Canaan. Seeking to buy food, Joseph's brothers make the journey to Egypt. They arrive at the palace of the man in charge of grain distribution: "Now Joseph was governor of all Egypt, and it was he who sold the corn to all the people of the land. Joseph's brothers came and bowed to the ground before him. Joseph recognized his brothers as soon as he saw them, but he behaved like a stranger and spoke harshly to them... Joseph recognized his brothers, but they did not recognize him." (42:6-8)

We owe to Robert Alter the idea of a type-scene, a drama enacted several times with variations; and these are particularly in evidence in the book of Bereishit. There is no universal rule as to how to decode the significance of a type-scene. One example is boy-meets-girl-at-well, an encounter that takes places three times, between Abraham's servant and Rebekah, Jacob and Rachel, and Moses and the daughters of Jethro. Here, the setting is probably not significant (wells are where strangers met in those days, like the water-dispenser in an office). What we must attend to in these three episodes is their variations: Rebekah's activism, Jacob's show of strength, Moses' passion for justice. How people act toward strangers at a well is, in other words, a test of their character. In some cases, however, a type-scene seems to indicate a recurring theme. That is the case here. If we are to understand what is at stake in the meeting between Joseph and his brothers, we have to set it aside three other episodes, all of which occur in Bereishit.

The first takes place in Isaac's tent. The patriarch is old and blind. He tells his elder son to go out into the field, trap an animal and prepare a meal so that he can bless him. Surprisingly soon, Isaac hears someone enter. "Who are you?" he asks. "I am Esau, your elder son," the voice replies. Isaac is not convinced. "Come close and let me feel you, my son. Are you really Esau or not?" He reaches out and feels the rough texture of the skins covering his arms. Still unsure, he asks again, "But are you really my son Esau?" The other replies, "I am." So Isaac blesses him: "Ah, the smell of my son is like the smell of a field blessed by God." But it is not Esau. It is Jacob in disguise.

Scene two: Jacob has fled to his uncle Laban's house. Arriving, he meets and falls in love with Rachel, and offers to work for her father for seven years in order to marry her. The time passes quickly: the years "seemed like a few days because he loved her." The wedding day approaches. Laban makes a feast. The bride enters her tent. Late at night, Jacob follows her. Now at last he has married his beloved Rachel. When morning comes, he discovers that he has been the victim of a deception. It is not Rachel. It is Leah in disguise.

Scene three: Judah has married a Canaanite girl and is now the father of three sons. The first marries a local girl, Tamar, but dies mysteriously young, leaving his wife a childless widow. Following a pre-Mosaic version of the law of levirate marriage, Judah marries his second son to Tamar so that she can have a child "to keep his brother's name alive." He is loathe to have a son that will, in effect, belong to his late brother so he "spilled his seed," and for this he too died young. Judah is reluctant to give Tamar his third son, so she is left an agunah, "chained," bound to someone she is prevented from marrying, and unable to marry anyone else.

The years pass. Judah's own wife dies. Returning home from sheep-shearing, he sees a veiled prostitute by the side of the road. He asks her to sleep with him, promising, by way of payment, a kid from the flock. She asks him for his "seal and its cord and his staff" as security. The next day he sends a friend to deliver the kid, but the woman has disappeared. The locals deny all knowledge of her. Three months later, Judah hears that his daughter-in-law Tamar has become pregnant. He is incensed. Bound to his youngest son, she was not allowed to have a relationship with anyone else. She must have been guilty of adultery. "Bring her out so that she may be burnt," he says. She is brought to be killed, but she asks one favour. She tells one of the people to take to Judah the seal and cord and staff. "The father of my child," she says, "is the man to whom these things belong." Immediately, Judah understands. Tamar, unable to marry yet honour-bound to have a child to perpetuate the memory of her first husband, has tricked her father-in-law into performing the duty he should have allowed his youngest son to do. "She is more righteous than I," Judah admits. He thought he had slept with a prostitute. But it was Tamar in disguise.

That is the context against which the meeting

between Joseph and his brothers must be understood. The man the brothers bow down to bears no resemblance to a Hebrew shepherd. He speaks Egyptian. He is dressed in an Egyptian ruler's robes. He wears Pharaoh's signet ring and the gold chain of authority. They think they are in the presence of an Egyptian prince, but it is Joseph- their brother-in disguise.

Four scenes, four disguises, four failures to see behind the mask. What do they have in common? Something very striking indeed. It is only by not being recognized that Jacob, Leah, Tamar and Joseph can be recognized, in the sense of attended, taken seriously, heeded. Isaac loves Esau, not Jacob. He loves Rachel, not Leah. Judah thinks of his youngest son, not the plight of Tamar. Joseph is hated by his brothers. Only when they appear as something or someone other than they are can they achieve what they seek-for Jacob, his father's blessing; for Leah, a husband; for Tamar, a son; for Joseph, the non-hostile attention of his brothers. The plight of these four individuals is summed up in a single poignant phrase: "Joseph recognized his brothers, but they did not recognize him."

Do the disguises work? In the short term, yes; but in the long term, not necessarily. Jacob suffers greatly for having taken Esau's blessing. Leah, though she marries Jacob, never wins his love. Tamar had a child (in fact, twins) but Judah "was not intimate with her anymore." Joseph-well, his brothers no longer hated him but they feared him. Even after his assurances that he bore them no grudge, they still thought he would take revenge on them after their father died. What we achieve in disguise is never the love we sought.

But something else happens. Jacob, Leah, Tamar and Joseph discover that, though they may never win the affection of those from whom they seek it, God is with them; and that, ultimately, is enough. A disguise is an act of hiding-from others, and perhaps from oneself. From God, however, we cannot, nor do we need to, hide. He hears our cry. He answers our unspoken prayer. He heeds the unheeded and brings them comfort. In the aftermath of the four episodes, there is no healing of relationship but there is a mending of identity. That is what makes them, not secular narratives but deeply religious chronicles of psychological growth and maturation. What they tell us is simple and profound: those who stand before God need no disguises to achieve self-worth when standing before mankind. *Covenant and Conversation is kindly sponsored by the Schimmel Family in loving memory of Harry (Chaim) Schimmel zt"l*

RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

"And Joseph knew his brethren, but they knew him not. But he behaved like a stranger and spoke harshly to them. And Joseph remembered the dreams which he dreamed of, and said unto them, You are spies, to see the nakedness of the land you have come." (Genesis 42:8–9) In the Torah portion of Miketz, the drama of Joseph and his brothers takes on new dimensions. From a situation in which Joseph is the hunted and the brothers are the hunters, we move into the very opposite. Joseph becomes the hunter and the brothers the hunted, although they don't understand why! But we also realize that until now the text has been silent about Joseph's relationship to his past. This forces us to query how Joseph can spend twenty-two years of his life in a foreign country like Egypt without ever looking over his shoulder to find out how his family in Canaan is faring. When he sat in Egyptian prisons it was impossible to communicate, but what about the years when he ruled as the Grand Vizier of a great empire? Could he not have sent servants, carrier pigeons, messages on papyrus? Even if he had no desire ever to see his brothers again, should his aged father who loved him so much have been made to suffer for their sins?

Nahmanides tells us that Egypt is only a six-day journey from Hebron but '…even if it was a year's journey, he should have notified him' (Gen. 42:9). The longer Joseph is silent, the longer Jacob is deprived of his beloved son, the greater our question on Joseph's character.

Nahmanides explains that Joseph was prevented from contacting his father because he was driven by his dreams, and guided by their inevitable course. It was his intention to wait until all elements of his dream – the sun, moon and eleven stars, symbolic of his father, mother and eleven brothers bowing down to him – came together in Egypt, when and where the details could be fulfilled exactly. The dreams controlled Joseph. Emotions could not outweigh what he believed was destiny. Therefore, sending word home before the famine would force his entire family to go down to Egypt and would have negated the possibility of his dreams being fulfilled (Nahmanides on Gen. 42:9).

Abarbanel paints Joseph differently, saying that it was impossible for him to contact his father until he was convinced that his brothers had truly repented; otherwise the joyous news that Joseph was still alive would have also meant a father facing ten lying brothers who now would be forced to reveal their role in the murderous deception amidst all sorts of recriminations. From this perspective everything Joseph does while concealing his identity is intended to increase the brothers' awareness, reliving what they inflicted upon him. Since he was thrown into a pit, he puts them in a pit. Then he tells them to return home without Shimon whom he keeps in prison as a hostage until Benjamin will be brought to Egypt. This should make them realize that for the second time in their lives they are returning with a brother missing – and Shimon had been the primary instigator against Joseph. And indeed they declare, "We deserve to be punished

because of what we did to our brother. We saw him pleading with us, but we would not listen…." (Gen 42:21).

It is only after Joseph treats Benjamin with favoritism, and then condemns him to imprisonment as a thief – and Judah offers himself and all the brothers in Benjamin's stead – that Joseph realizes the depth of his brothers' repentance. After all, Benjamin is also a son of Rachel, a favorite of Jacob – and this could have been a marvelous opportunity to be rid of him as they had gotten rid of Joseph. If the brothers are now willing to offer themselves as slaves so that their father will not have to suffer further grief at the loss of Benjamin, they apparently really have changed and repented for their sale of Joseph!

A third way to understand why Joseph didn't get in touch with his family is the simplest in terms of the plain meaning of the text. What happened to Joseph in Egypt was a natural result of remembrances of past resentments, a man who was almost murdered by his own brothers, whom he never suspected bore him such evil designs. Until he had been cast into the pit, Joseph was basically an innocent child, basking in the love of his father with no comprehension as to how much his brothers hated him. He was so beloved that he took that love for granted; he naïvely and unselfconsciously believed it was shared by everyone in his family.

Only someone with absolutely no guile could have advertised his supercilious dreams of mastery over his brothers to those very same brothers. But in the harsh reflection of the fact that his brothers were willing to leave him to die in a provision-less pit, the venom of their hatred was clear. And in addition to condemning his brothers, he lays a good part of the blame upon the frail shoulders of his father, who should have realized where his unbridled favoritism would lead. The coat of beautiful colors was the first thing the brothers tore off him, eventually turning it into a blood-soaked rag. In the pit, Joseph comes to realize that the ingredients of excessive love can be transformed into a poisonous potion and that his father had totally mismanaged the family dynamic. One might even justify Joseph's uttering in the pit: 'I hate my father's house. I will never communicate with my father or my brothers again.'

Joseph's subsequent behavior in Egypt would indicate that he really tried to escape his father's house, severing all ties to the past. The Midrash teaches that there are three reasons why the Jews didn't assimilate in Egypt: They didn't change their names, their clothes, or their language.' If the Midrash is an indication of how to protect oneself against assimilation, Joseph, who changed all three, left himself completely open. The first step begins after his success in interpreting Pharaoh's dreams. In reward, Joseph is appointed Grand Vizier, and the text is explicit about his change of garb; "[Pharaoh] had him dressed in the finest linen garments; and placed a gold chain around his neck…" (Gen. 41:42).

The second change is a new name which Pharaoh gives him, Tzofnat Paneach, from all textual indication, an Egyptian name. With this new name, he marries Asnat, the daughter of the priest of On, hardly a fitting match for Jacob's beloved son and Abraham's great-grandson.

When the first child of Tzofnat and Asnat is born, the name given to the boy, Menasheh, seems to hammer in the nail of farewell to Joseph's former life. "God has allowed me to forget my troubles and my father's house" (Gen. 41:51), the verb nasheh meaning forgetting.

And although the Jewish slaves in Egypt may not have changed their language, Joseph obviously did. Amongst themselves, his brothers speak Hebrew; "…They knew not that Joseph understood them, for the interpreter was between them" (Gen. 42:23) testifies the biblical text. Given such changes, one may very well conclude that the Grand Vizier and Joseph, the son of Jacob, had drifted worlds away from each other. To be sure, in his moral life, Joseph certainly remains true to the teachings of his father and grandfather. He demonstrates almost superhuman piety in rejecting the advances of Mrs. Potiphar – being unable to display faithlessness to his generous employer and still unwilling to 'sin against God' (Gen. 39:9). And indeed, he turns to God constantly, stressing that whatever he accomplishes is actually due to the Almighty.

However, the name of God the text chooses is Elokim, the universal presence of the universe, while the four-letter personal and more nationalistic (Abrahamic) name is deliberately avoided. Joseph remains moral and may even privately have conducted himself in accordance with his childhood rituals. However, certainly from the public perspective, he willfully turned himself into a consummate Egyptian. And I would certainly maintain that he has no desire to contact the family which caused him such pain and suffering, especially his father, who must ultimately assume responsibility, albeit inadvertent, for the sibling enmity. And indeed it would seem that Joseph had succeeded in erasing his childhood years and settling in quite well in the assimilating environment of Egypt – until his brothers' arrival to purchase food.

Their arrival brings back a flood of thoughts, memories and emotions which Joseph had desperately tried to repress. First we see his anger. He treats his brothers with understandable hatred and punishes them by taking his revenge and casting them into a dungeon similar to the one they had cast him into. But that night he cannot sleep, his mind overactive with pining for his full brother Benjamin, who had been too young to join his half-brothers in their crime against Joseph. Joseph aches to see this pure and whole brother from his same mother – and so sends the brothers (sans Shimon) back with the mission to return with Benjamin.

Joseph's ruse with the silver goblet plan may very well have been to keep Benjamin at his side, thereby holding on to a part of the past he now realizes he has deeply missed, while rejecting the rest. But when Judah evokes the image of an old grieving father whose life will be reduced to a pathetic waste if word reaches him that Benjamin has become a slave in Egypt, Joseph, the Grand Vizier breaks down.

Perhaps as Judah speaks, Joseph poignantly remembers Shabbat moments inside his father's tent, whose simple beauty far eclipses the rowdy Egyptian debaucheries. Perhaps, he conjures the wisdom of Jewish teachings he heard as a child at his father's knee. The mature Joseph finally understands that although his father may have 'set up' the family dysfunction, it was not because he loved Joseph too little, but rather because he loved Joseph too much. And if Jacob's love had been the first step causing Joseph's alienation from the family, it was that same love which had given him the ego strength to always land on his feet and eventually return to his father's and brothers' embrace. In effect, according to this interpretation Joseph was our first ba'al teshuva (penitent). The Joseph stories – and the book of Genesis – conclude, "And Joseph dwelled in Egypt, he and his father's house" (Gen. 50:22) – he and his father's household, he and his father's lifestyle from their common home in the land of Canaan. He even recognizes the centrality of the land of Israel, telling them with his dying breath that God will surely remember them and take them to the land He promised their fathers, adjuring them at that time "to bring up my bones from this place [Egypt] with you" (Gen. 50:22).

From this perspective, Joseph teaches that no matter how far one wanders, one always returns in some fashion to 'beit Abba,' one's earliest memories and one's original traditions. This is especially true if those formative years were filled with parental love. *The above article appears in Rabbi Riskin's book Bereishit: Confronting Life, Love and Family, part of his Torah Lights series of commentaries on the weekly parsha, published by Maggid and available for purchase at bit.ly/RiskinBereshit.*

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.

RABBI BEREL WEIN ZT"L

Wein Online

Yosef's dramatic ascent to power in Egypt is recorded for us in this week's parsha. What is noteworthy is that Yosef does not appear to be at all surprised or amazed by the sudden turn of events in his fortunes. A person who lives by dreams is never surprised when the dream turns into reality.

Yosef always expected his dreams to come true in this world. So did his father Yaakov. And in truth so did the brothers and that is why he discomfited them so deeply. Had they felt the dreams of Yosef to be utter nonsense they would not have reacted as strongly when he related the dreams to them. They were threatened not because the dreams were nothing but rather because they were something.

Their apparent blindness and stubbornness, at not recognizing Yosef standing before them, stemmed from their necessity to deny the validity of his dreams. When Yosef will reveal himself to his brothers they will instinctively believe him because of the stock they subconsciously placed in his dreams all along.

Practical people are afraid of dreamers not because of the dreamer's impracticality but because the dreamer may turn out to be right after all. This has been proven time and again in Jewish history. The holiday of Chanukah, that we are currently celebrating, proves the dreams of the Maccabees overcame the practicalities of the Hellenist Jews who chose to survive by becoming more Greek than Jewish.

Jews over the ages could have reasonably quit and given up the struggle to survive as Jews countless times. It was always the dreamers that persevered and they have always been proven to be right and practical.

The Torah attributes the success of Yosef to the fact that he remembered his dreams. It is one thing to remember dreams of grandeur when one is poor and imprisoned. Then the dream provides hope and resilience to somehow continue. Yosef's greatness lies in his ability to remember and believe those dreams when he has risen to power. He could easily have ignored his brothers and put all of his past behind him.

He was now a great success so why continue to pursue his dreams. which by so doing could ultimately sorely endanger his position and achievements.

But Yosef doggedly pursues the full realization of his dreams. Many times in life we are frightened of advancing because we think we might risk what we already have. Judaism preaches caution in tactics and how to achieve certain goals, both spiritual and physical. But it never advocates compromising the great Jewish dreams as outlined in our Torah and tradition.

We are bidden to be prudent about life's decisions but the goal of ascending the ladder of Yaakov is never erased from our consciousness. When seeing his brothers before him, Yosef has the choice to leave everything as it is. But he chooses to pursue his dreams to their fateful end. That has become a lesson for all later generations of Jews as well. The full realization of Yosef's dream is the catalyst for reuniting all of Israel as a nation.

RABBI DAVID LEVIN

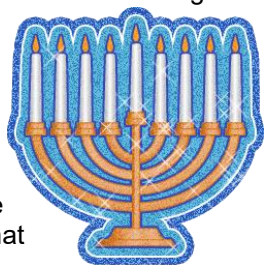
Par'oh's First Dream

At the beginning of this week's parasha, Par'oh is disturbed by two dreams. It is important to note that we are first told that this occurred at the end of two complete years, and we are required to look at last week's parasha to comprehend the necessity of that stated time. Two years prior, we are told that it was Par'oh's birthday, the same day on which he freed and restored the Wine-Steward and hanged the Baker. This is the only time in the Torah where we are told that it was someone's birthday. It appears that the real reason for telling us in Vayeishev that it was Par'oh's birthday was to add to the significance of his dreams exactly two years later in our parasha.

The Torah states: "It happened at the end of two years to the day: Par'oh was dreaming that behold! – he was standing over the 'canal,' when behold! out of the canal there emerged seven cows, of beautiful appearance and robust flesh, and they were grazing in the swamp. Then behold! – seven other cows emerged after them out of the canal – of poor appearance and gaunt flesh; and they stood next to the cows on the bank of the canal. And the cows of poor appearance and gaunt flesh ate the seven cows of beautiful appearance and robust: and Par'oh awoke." There was a second dream involving sheaves of grain that was similar to the first dream, but we will concern ourselves with the first dream alone, even though Yosef interprets the two dreams as one.

HaRav Shamshon Raphael Hirsch explains that the name, Par'oh-Pharaoh, comes from the word "to be free". All Kings of Egypt went by this name, and it was even more significant a title in Egypt than in any other area. "There was no other state where all classes were so bound and unfree as in Egypt. The whole life of everybody there was clamped down and regulated by rules and caste. There was only one person who was free, the one who stood at the head, the King, and even he was only free in a way, for the lives of the Kings too were bound by strict laws of custom and etiquette." This idea and the fact that it was Par'oh's birthday made Par'oh realize that this dream was not a personal dream, but the dream of a nation. Perhaps that is why Par'oh disregarded the interpretations given him by his sorcerers ("you will have seven daughters and then seven daughters will die"). They spoke of personal triumph and disappointment, not something which affected the nation.

HaRav Zalman Sorotzkin points out that the Torah uses the three-letter form for the past tense for dream (chalam) but vowelizes the word in the present tense (choleim). Par'oh was constantly dreaming at night, and this gave him the sense that he was one and there was no second, and the Nile was created for him alone, and he was above it. Par'oh's understanding was that he came before his gods and created them. He believed that he created the gods and they created the people whom he would then subjugate under him. This concept encouraged the sorcerers to create interpretations of the dreams that

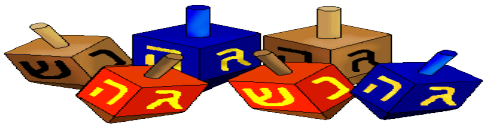


were self-centered, for in their minds, the King was more important than the people who were subjugated.

The Ohr HaChaim explains that the term, "vay'hi, and it was," can have a negative interpretation as an introduction to a difficult time for the Jewish People. This sequence of events was entirely arranged to begin the exile in Egypt which was predicted at the time of Avraham. The words of the dream also encouraged the negative interpretation that Yosef gave Par'oh. The Kli Yakar points to a discrepancy in the words of the actual dream and Par'oh's statement of the dream when retelling it to Yosef. In the real dream, it states that Par'oh was standing over the "canal," which we know to be the Nile River, a key symbol of Egypt. The Ramban explains that Egypt depended solely on the Nile, which provided them with drinking and irrigation water. It made sense, then, that the Nile should be chosen as the messenger of the years of plenty and the years of famine. When Par'oh retells the dream, he states that he was standing on the banks of the canal. It also states that Par'oh was standing by the good cows when he saw the weak cows come out of the River. The Kli Yakar explains that the days of famine only appeared to be so difficult because they were contrasted with the days of plenty in the minds of the people. Had they not experienced the days of plenty, they would not have felt the anguish of the famine, as it would not have seemed so terrible.

The order of the descriptive words also assisted Yosef in his interpretation of the dreams. In Par'oh's dream, the cows that first emerged from the Nile are described as "of beautiful appearance and robust flesh." Here the emphasis is placed on appearance of beauty before describing health. When the second set of seven cows appeared, they are described as "of poor appearance and gaunt flesh." When Par'oh retold his first dream, the first cows are described as "of robust flesh and beautiful form." The second set of cows is described as "haggard and of very poor form and of emaciated flesh." This change emphasizes that Par'oh was given a message by Hashem with certain facts presented in the order in which Hashem saw their relevance. Witnesses to an event, however, may change the importance of the facts as they see what they perceive to be what is important to them. Often, this is why a person may need someone to help him interpret a dream or event to understand its significance. HaRav Sorotzkin explains that Par'oh first noticed the animals' beauty before noticing their health, like those who first recognize beauty as an object's most important characteristic. After seeing the full dream of the cows and later the full dream of the sheaves of grain, Par'oh subconsciously understood that their beauty was less relevant and their health was the key issue. That is also why, when retelling the story, Par'oh embellished his negative description of the seven poor cows to say that their appearance was very bad and so thin that he had never seen anything like it before.

Par'oh's retelling of the dream to Yosef followed the mistakes of those who failed to explain his dreams properly. There was also the delay caused by the time it took to discover Yosef and to prepare him to come before Par'oh. This delay gave Par'oh the opportunity to reflect on his dreams and readjust his own impressions of the facts. This is also true for us. We often see what we believe to be Hashem's message of an event in Jewish history, yet we later reinterpret that message based on hindsight and an adjustment of our prior emotions. Upon reflection, may we see how well Hashem plans the events of the world to bring benefit to His people.



RABBI JONATHAN GEWIRTZ

Migdal Ohr

"The wine steward spoke to Pharaoh, saying, "My sins I recall today."" (Beraishis 41:9) With Pharaoh's dream wreaking havoc in the royal court, and none of the soothsayers or interpreters able to calm him, the wine steward finally steps up. He makes a declaration before Pharaoh: "I regret having to recall my sins, but when Pharaoh got angry at his servants and put us in jail, there was an Ivri slave boy who interpreted our dreams."

There are a number of unusual things in this verse. First of all, the use of the word "Vayedaber," he spoke, which is harsher than the word "Vayomer," he said. Then the word 'es' Paroh, meaning "with" instead of the word 'el' meaning "to" Pharoah.

And which sins was he recalling? All he said was that Pharaoh got mad, which at this point is almost insulting and a sin in its own right. Some explain the sin he referred to was his failure to step forward immediately, when Pharaoh was in pain, and inform him about Yosef and his ability to interpret dreams.

We'd like to offer an approach based on a Rashi in last week's parsha, Parshas Vayeishev. There, the Masoretic text shows two dots over the letters aleph and taf, making up the word 'es,' when the brothers went to pasture the flocks. Rashi says the dots indicate their main goal was not for the benefit of the sheep, but to indulge themselves.

Taking a cue from this, we can explain the use of the word 'es' here (instead of 'el') to indicate that the wine steward was not as interested in easing Pharaoh's mind, as in using this as an opportunity to get ahead in his career. In this light, the rest of it falls into place.

When he spoke up, it was with authority so Pharaoh would heed his words. Couched in false humility, that the recollection of his past slights against

Pharaoh caused him personal mortification and discomfort to Pharaoh, along with the intimation that he was forced to do this unthinkable act out of concern for Pharaoh's present pain, the wine steward speaks.

He downplays Yosef's stature so it seems like this is a last-ditch effort to help the Egyptian monarch, while also whitewashing his own failure to repay kindness with kindness by not remembering Yosef when he himself was freed. He even recalls Pharoah's seemingly baseless anger in a way that sounds genuine but is carefully crafted to make Pharaoh regret having been so hasty in how he treated this clearly loyal servant. For us looking at this piece of theater with the clue from the word 'es,' it's almost laughably transparent.

We now see the self-centeredness of the butler and recognize how crude and base this behavior was. But this is not how a Jew acts. The Macabees fought a war they couldn't win for a cause they couldn't ignore. They were truly concerned with the "honor of the King," Hashem, and could not remain silent. To paraphrase our mother Leah, "See the difference between my children and the children of other nations." They focus on themselves, while we focus on our King.

Thomas Mann was a German writer, known for his novels, essays, short stories, and social commentary. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1929. One day, another writer met him and began fawning over him.

"Oh!" exclaimed the fellow author. "Herr Mann! Compared to your work, my work is nothing. It is mere scratching pen on paper. Compared to your genius I am but a mere hack!" Mann smiled and humbly nodded his appreciation.

When the person walked away, Mann turned to a companion and commented, "He shouldn't make himself so small… he's not that big." © 2025 Rabbi J. Gewirtz & Migdal Ohr

RABBI AVI SHAFRAN

Reflections

A botanist named Joseph Banks who was aboard Captain James Cook's 1770 voyage recorded in his diary that while the 106-foot-long Endeavour sailed along the east coast of Australia, native fishermen totally ignored the large boat, the likes of which they surely had never before seen.

Rashi (Beraishis 42:8) quotes the Gemara that explains the reason Yosef's brothers didn't recognize him when they appeared before him in his role as second in command of Egypt: They had last seen him as a teen and now he was a grown man with a full beard.

But Yosef, the Midrash says, looked just like his father Yaakov, whom the brothers knew as a grown man, if one considerably older than the Yosef facing them. And so, he must have resembled surely bearded Yaakov when his brothers came before him in Egypt.

Perhaps, though, there was another element at play here, too, the sort of cognitive dissonance that might explain the Australian aborigines' lack of reaction to the sudden appearance of the large ship. It has been speculated that they had no model in their imaginations for a vessel like the Endeavour and so their minds blocked out what was before their eyes, rendering it, for all purposes, invisible.

The very last place Yosef's brothers could have imagined him being was on a throne in a powerful country. They had left him in the hands of slave-traders and "knew" that he was, if he was even alive, toiling somewhere as a lowly servant. Might that "knowledge" have been at least part of why his face didn't register with them, why they couldn't see him even as he was right before their eyes?

Even in our times, we see the incredible power of assumptions and preconceptions, how blinding they can be. Even when faced with overwhelming evidence for the truth of something, whether a fair election or the need for a country to destroy an enemy pledged to its destruction, the fact can still remain for millions of people an unthinkable thought, and render what is right in front of them effectively invisible. *© 2025 Rabbi A. Shafran and torah.org*

YESHIVAT HAR ETZION

Virtual Beit Medrash

STUDENT SUMMARIES OF SICHOT OF THE ROSHEI YESHIVA BASED ON A SICHA OF HARAV AHARON LICHTENSTEIN ZT"L
Adapted by Dov Karoll

There are two miraculous events commemorated by Chanuka: ner, the miracle of the oil, and milchama, the military victory. What characterizes each of these miracles?

The miracle of the ner was defined and limited in its scope. It took place in the inner sanctum of the Temple, and was visible to a very limited group of people, namely, the Kohanim performing the Temple service.

The military victory, on the other hand, was very broad in its scope, both in terms of the nation and the land. Their victory stretched out across the entire country. Everyone was involved in and affected by the victory.

These two elements reflect different foci for the miracle: the ner focused on the Temple, while the milchama was relevant to the nation as a whole. Despite the apparent disparity between these two elements, there is a strong bond between them.

In one sense, the Temple is the focal point of the nation. This idea is reflected in Shlomo's prayer upon the completion of the first Temple (I Melakhim 8:12-53). This notion is also reflected in the prophecies of Yeshayahu

and Mikha that speak of everyone's eyes being turned to the Temple. The Gemara (Shabbat 22b and Torat Kohanim, Emor 13, cited by Rashi, Vayikra 24:3) speaks of the menora, the candlabra of the Temple, as providing testimony to the world that the Divine Presence resides amongst the Jewish people.

In another sense, "light" emerges and spreads from the Temple. That is, the Temple serves as source of inspiration and instruction for the Jewish people. Correspondingly, the nation is gathered and centered around the Temple. The nation's existence is dependent on its loyalty to the principles of the Temple, to its absolute purity, represented by the strictly pure olive oil ("shemen zayit zakh").

These elements are meant to coexist, and severing them from each other leads to severe problems. Some people are connected to and involved with the Temple, yet are disconnected from, and uninvolved with, the nation. Those who focus on "strictly pure olive oil" sometimes forget about the rest of the nation. Others have the opposite problem: they are disconnected from the Temple and its "strictly pure olive oil."

To a certain degree, these are practical differences: those who work in the Temple tend to be more in touch with the issues there, while those who live far away will tend to be more involved with the issues that relate in an immediate sense to their own existence. The question is to what extent there is also a deeper chasm, on the existential plane and in the world of values. If these gaps exist on the axiological level, there can be a danger for each camp, Heaven forfend. The Temple cannot exist without a nation; conversely, the nation of Israel cannot exist without identification with the Temple and its related codes.

There is only one Chanuka, during which we relate to both of these themes and to their intertwined nature. We need to relate to the entire Jewish community, and formulate one integrated worldview.

The Chashmonaim were devoted to the Temple and the Kehuna, the priesthood, and succeeded in military and diplomatic terms as well. The Ramban (Bereishit 49:10) criticizes the Chashmonaim for taking political control, violating the warning of Yaakov, "Rule shall not stray from Yehuda." Nonetheless, the Chashmonaim took political power, for they saw the existential dangers that could result from a separation between these two elements.

In our time we can speak of similar issues. Let us focus on the Religious Zionist community in Israel. This community has prided itself on attempting to create a single Chanuka, with the "strictly pure olive oil" along with concern for the larger Jewish community, for its physical and spiritual welfare. That is its manifesto and its goal.

What have been its accomplishments? Over the last generation or two, the progress has been significant. The quantity and quality of Torah study in our community has risen significantly, as has the level of religious observance. The situation in this regard is sparkling, relative to what it used to be.

However, I am concerned by signs of a retreat from these accomplishments, by certain negative trends that have emerged in the last five to ten years. One problem is that many Religious Zionists have ceased to act out of concern for spiritual condition of the community -- even of the religious community, and how much more so for that of the non-religious community. Another problem is a weakened sense of loyalty and devotion to traditional learning, to "the disputes of Abbaye and Rava," straying instead in other directions, of unfounded "spirituality" and baseless opinions.

We have a clear responsibility to Chanuka: both to the ner aspect, as well as to the national struggle. We must protect our people against external enemies, as well as against foreign spirits that may not enter through the door, but somehow slip through the window.

We need to exhibit commitment to "strictly pure olive oil" and all that it represents. And we need to strive to contribute to the shaping of the future of the State of Israel, the land of Israel, the nation of Israel, guided by the Torah of Israel, following the spirit of our forefather Israel.

If we succeed at girding our loins for this lofty task, and we are able to care for both the "strictly pure olive oil" and the nation, and achieve their ideal synthesis, then we will create the conditions for tremendous growth. *[This sicha was delivered at the Yeshiva's mesibat Chanuka, on the eighth night of Chanuka, 5762 (2001).]*