

# Toras Aish

## Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

**RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS**

### Covenant & Conversation

**M**iketz represents the most sudden and radical transformation in the Torah. Joseph, in a single day, moves from zero to hero, from forgotten, languishing prisoner to viceroy of Egypt, the most powerful man in the land, in control of the nation's economy.

Until now, Joseph has rarely been the author of events. He has been the done to rather than the doer; passive rather than active; object rather than subject. First his father, then his brothers, then the Midianites and Ishmaelites, then Potiphar and his wife, then the prison warden, have all directed his life. Among the most important things in that life had been dreams, but dreams are things that happened to you, not things you choose.

What is decisive is the way last week's parsha ends. Having given a favourable interpretation to the dream of the chief butler, predicting that he would be restored to office, and realising that he would soon be in a position to have Joseph's case re-examined and Joseph himself set free, the butler "did not remember Joseph, and forgot him." Joseph's most determined attempt to change the direction of fate comes to nothing. Despite being centre-stage for much of the time, Joseph was not in control.

Suddenly this changes, totally and definitively. Joseph has been asked to interpret Pharaoh's dreams. But he does far more than that. First he interprets the dreams. Second, he maps that onto reality. These were not just dreams. They are about the Egyptian economy in the course of the next 14 years. And they are about to become true now.

Then, having made this prediction, he diagnoses the problem. The people will starve during the seven years of famine. Next, with a stroke of sheer genius, he solves the problem. Store a fifth of the produce during the years of plenty, and it will then be available to stave off starvation during the lean years.



Margaret Thatcher was reported as having said, of another Jewish adviser, Lord (David)

Young, "Other people bring me problems, David brings me solutions."<sup>1</sup> That was magnificently true in the case of Joseph, and we have no difficulty understanding the response of the Egyptian court: "The plan seemed good to Pharaoh and to all his officials. So Pharaoh asked them, 'Can we find anyone like this man, one in whom is the spirit of God?'" (Gen. 41:37-38)

At the age of 30, Joseph is the most powerful man in the region, and his administrative competence is total. He travels round the country, arranges for collection of the grain, and ensures that it is stored safely. There is so much that, in the Torah's words, he stops keeping records because it is beyond measure. When the years of plenty are over, his position becomes even more powerful. Everyone turns to him for food. Pharaoh himself commands the people, "Go to Joseph and do what he tells you."

So far, so good. And at this point the narrative shifts from Joseph, viceroy of Egypt, controller of its economy, to Joseph, son of Jacob, and his relationship with the brothers who, 22 years earlier, had sold him as a slave. It is this story that will dominate the next few chapters, rising to a climax in Judah's speech at the beginning of the next parsha.

One effect of this is that it tends to move Joseph's political and administrative activity into the background. But if we read it carefully – not just how it begins, but how it continues – we discover something quite disturbing. The story is taken up in next week's parsha in chapter 47. It describes an extraordinary sequence of events.

It begins when the Egyptians have used up all their money buying grain. They come to Joseph asking for food, telling him they will die without it, and he replies by telling them he will sell it to them in exchange for ownership of their livestock. They willingly do so: they bring their horses, donkeys, sheep and cattle. The next year he sells them grain in exchange for their land. The result of these transactions is that within a short period of time – seemingly a mere three years – he has transferred to Pharaoh's ownership all the money, livestock and private land, with the exception of the land of the Priests, which he allowed them to retain.

<sup>1</sup> In actual fact, the accurate quote was: "other people come to me with their problems. David comes to me with his achievements." But in journalistic retellings it has been modified to give context. See Financial Times, 24 November 2010.

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Not only this, but the Torah tells us that Joseph “removed the population town by town, from one end of Egypt’s border to the other” (Gen. 47:21) – a policy of enforced resettlement that would eventually be used against Israel by the Assyrians.

The question is: was Joseph right to do this? Seemingly, he did it of his own accord. He was not asked to do so by Pharaoh. The result, however, of all these policies is that unprecedented wealth and power were now concentrated in Pharaoh’s hand – power that would eventually be used against the Israelites. More seriously, twice we encounter the phrase *avadim le-Faro*, “slaves to Pharaoh” – one of the key phrases in the Exodus account and in the answer to the questions of the child in the Seder service (Gen. 47:19, 25). With this difference: that it was said, not by the Israelites, but by the Egyptians.

During the famine itself, the Egyptians say to Joseph (in next week’s parsha), “Buy us and our land in exchange for food, and we with our land will be slaves to Pharaoh... Thus Joseph acquired all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh, for every Egyptian sold their field...and the land became Pharaoh’s.” (Gen. 47:19-20).

This entire passage, which begins in our parsha and continues into next week’s, raises a most serious question. We tend to assume that the enslavement of the Israelites in Egypt was a consequence of, and punishment for, the brothers selling Joseph as a slave. But Joseph himself turned the Egyptians into a nation of slaves. What is more, he created the highly centralised power that would eventually be used against his people.

Aaron Wildavsky in his book about Joseph, *Assimilation versus Separation*, says that Joseph “left the system into which he was elevated less humane than it was by making Pharaoh more powerful than he had been.”<sup>2</sup> Leon Kass, in *The Beginning of Wisdom*, says about Joseph’s decision to make the people pay for food in the years of famine (food that they themselves had handed over during the years of plenty): “Joseph is saving life by making Pharaoh rich and, soon, all-powerful. While we may applaud

<sup>2</sup> Aaron Wildavsky, *Assimilation versus Separation*, Transaction, 2002, 143.

Joseph’s forethought, we are rightly made uneasy by this man who profits from exercising his god-like power over life and death.”<sup>3</sup>

It may be that the Torah intends no criticism of Joseph whatsoever. He was acting loyally to Pharaoh and judiciously to Egypt as a whole. Or it may be that there is an implied criticism of his character. As a child, he dreamt of power; as an adult he exercised it; but Judaism is critical of power and those who seek it. Another possibility: the Torah is warning us of the hazards and obscurities of politics. A policy that seems wise in one generation discloses itself as dangerous in the next. Or perhaps Leon Kass is right when he says, “Joseph’s sagacity is technical and managerial, not moral and political. He is long on forethought and planning but short on understanding the souls of men.”<sup>4</sup>

What this entire passage represents is the first intrusion of politics into the life of the family of the covenant. From the beginning of Exodus to the end of Deuteronomy, politics will dominate the narrative. But this is our first introduction to it: Joseph’s appointment to a key position in the Egyptian court. And what it is telling us is the sheer ambiguity of power. On the one hand, you cannot create or sustain a society without it. On the other hand, it almost cries out to be abused. Power is dangerous, even when used with the best of intentions by the best of people. Joseph acted to strengthen the hand of a Pharaoh who had been generous to him, and would be likewise to the rest of his family. He could not have foreseen what that same power might make possible in the hands of a “new Pharaoh who knew not Joseph.”

Tradition called Joseph *ha-tzaddik*, the righteous. At the same time, the Talmud says that he died before his brothers, “because he assumed airs of authority.”<sup>5</sup> Even a *tzaddik* with the best of intentions, when he or she enters politics and assumes airs of authority, can make mistakes.

I believe the great challenge of politics is to keep policies humane and that politicians remain humble, so that power, always so dangerous, is not used for harm. That is an ongoing challenge, and tests even the best. *Covenant and Conversation 5780 is kindly supported by the Maurice Wohl Charitable Foundation in memory of Maurice and Vivienne Wohl z”l © 2019 Rabbi Lord J. Sacks and rabbisacks.org*

**RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN**

## Shabbat Shalom

**Y**osef was served by himself and the brothers by themselves... the brothers were seated before Joseph (with Yehuda at head of

<sup>3</sup> Leon Kass, *The Beginning of Wisdom*, Free Press, 2003, 571.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 633-34.

<sup>5</sup> *Brachot* 55a.

table)... they drank with him and became intoxicated.” (Gen 43:32) "And Joseph's brothers came and bowed down before him, with their faces to the ground... And Joseph remembered the dreams that he had dreamt about them and he said to them, 'you are spies.'" (Genesis 42:6, 9)

One of the most fascinating aspects of the portions we are reading is the extent to which our towering personalities are driven, even obsessed by their dreams. To what extent is it the dream, and not the individual's merits and actions, which determines the recipient of the familial leadership legacy? We shall investigate these issues, but first let me explore the dreams of Joseph, the most prolific biblical dreamer.

Joseph's dreams invited envy – and even hatred unto death – in the hearts of his brothers. Why? Certainly sibling rivalry is a most observable phenomenon, but, it is difficult to understand the intense venom felt amongst the great grandchildren of Abraham, the future Twelve Tribes of Israel, towards this most beloved son of their father.

When we remember that our dreams reveal our innermost and often subconscious thoughts, fears and ambitions, then we can unravel the code. The classical Jewish dream was that of Joseph's father, Jacob, a ladder connecting Heaven and Earth, ascending and descending angels between the earthly and heavenly domains, with God at the top of the ladder promising Jacob Divine protection. Israel is a special land on Earth which merits God's care from the beginning of year until year end, because the Holy Temple in Jerusalem is slated to become the earthly abode for the Divine Presence. The Holy Land and the Holy Temple express Jacob's dream of uniting Heaven and Earth.

Joseph too dreamed of those same elements, the below and the above, sheaves of wheat and heavenly bodies. But it is important to note that unlike Jacob's dream, in Joseph's dreams, they are not connected. In Joseph's dream, earth has its dream of mastery, and heaven has its independent dream of mastery!

Moreover, Jacob dreams of Divine assurances that he will return safely to Israel, whereas Joseph dreams of agricultural produce, a form of productivity, indeed, an advance in civilization and a profession invented in Egypt, the unwholesome and powerful "gift of the Nile."! Egypt and agriculture are very separate from the heaven and the stars!

Worst of all, while at the center of Jacob's dream stands God, Joseph himself is the center of his own dreams, as he wields mastery over the earthly as well as the spiritual, with both Earth and Heaven bowing down to him! Hence, if the striped, colored cloak expressed the bestowal of the familial leadership upon Joseph, then the brothers were convinced that their father Jacob had made a tragically wrong choice. Joseph was a "megalomaniac" who hankered after

Egypt instead of Israel; narcissistically worshiping himself instead of God. They hated with the righteous hatred of children who see their ancestral religion of compassionate righteousness and moral justice being hijacked in favor of Egyptian wealth and physical productivity.

Just as Esau had been ejected from the family, so too must Joseph be ejected, if the vision of Abraham is to endure and eventually prevail in subsequent generations.

Joseph on the other hand, seems to be blithely unaware of the complex interpretation his brothers give his dreams; he merely sees himself as achieving economic, earthly mastery as well as spiritual, heavenly domination over his siblings, the two areas of control which Jacob had wrested from Isaac: the physical blessings and the spiritual "firstbornship". And it was precisely this faith in the ultimate realization of his two dreams which fortified him to overcome all of the setbacks he suffered after he was sold into Egypt.

Now to return to our portion, When Joseph saw his brothers bowing before him in order to purchase grain (Genesis 42:6), he believed that his first dream of economic and political power had been realized. But what he really desired was the spiritual leadership, the essence of the "firstbornship," the universal assemblage of all the nations under the sovereignty of God, with him – Joseph – being the earthly, He unfortunately never dreamt of Israel as the place from which God's sovereignty would emerge; he was really intoxicated with Egypt!

Hence, when "Joseph remembered his dreams" and prepared for their realization, he said to his brothers "you are spies" and insisted that they return with his beloved full brother, Benjamin. He wrongly calculated that the old father would not send Benjamin alone, but would opt to accompany him. Then Jacob, too, would bow down to the "Grand Vizier" and the second dream too would be realized – in Egypt!

Alas, Jacob does not go down to Egypt at this point, and Joseph never achieves spiritual mastery in Israel. Now Joseph certainly does come a long way in religious development when he understands that it is God and not him or any other human being who rules the world!

You will remember that when Joseph stands before Pharaoh to interpret his dream, he insists that it is not his wisdom, but God who will interpret the dreams for the well-being of Pharaoh. He also comes to recognize the importance of the Land of Israel when, with his very last breath, he asks to be buried there. Nevertheless, Joseph invested most of his most productive years on behalf of Egypt and the Egyptians rather than on behalf of



Israel and the Israelites. And he also enslaved the Egyptians to Pharaoh for economic reasons, which was hardly the legacy of Abraham's "compassionate righteousness." And so despite his positive growth and spiritual development, he is not to receive the spiritual birthright of Israel; only the physical blessing of the Ten Tribes. It is Judah who will receive the ultimate gift of the "ingathering of the nations" in reverence to God and the Holy City of Jerusalem!

Ultimately, it seems that worthiness and not "dreaminess" is the deciding factor for the future Jewish leadership. © 2019 *Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin*

#### **RABBI BEREL WEIN**

### **Wein Online**

**Y**osef'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 dreams turn 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 Yosef discomfited them so deeply. Had they felt the dreams of Yosef to be utter nonsense they would not have reacted as strongly when Yosef related what he had dreamt.

They were threatened not because the dreams were nothing, but, rather, because they were something. Their apparent blindness and the stubbornness they displayed by not recognizing Yosef standing before them, stemmed from their necessity to deny the validity of his dreams. When Yosef will eventually reveal himself to his brothers, they will instinctively believe that he is Yosef, because of the stock they subconsciously placed in his dreams all along.

Practical people are afraid of dreamers, not because of the dreamer's ridiculousness, but, rather, 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 that the dreams of the Maccabees overcame the practicalities of the Hellenist Jews, who were willing 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.

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. Those dreams provide hope and provide the necessary resilience to somehow continue. Yosef's greatness lies in his ability to remember and believe those dreams after he has risen to power. He could easily have ignored his brothers and could have put his

past behind him.

He was now a great success. So why continue to pursue his dreams which, by so doing, ultimately could sorely endanger his position and achievements? Nevertheless, 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 when formulating the tactics necessary to achieve certain goals, both spiritually and physically. 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 them and let everything be 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. Only the full realization of Yosef's dream becomes the catalyst for reuniting all of Israel as a nation. © 2019 *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](http://www.rabbiwein.com). For more information on these and other products visit [www.rabbiwein.com](http://www.rabbiwein.com)*

#### **RABBI AVI WEISS**

### **Shabbat Forshpeis**

**I**n this week's portion, Ya'akov (Jacob) hesitates to allow Binyamin (Benjamin) his youngest child, to return with his brothers to Egypt. Reuven, the eldest of the brothers, guarantees he'd bring Binyamin back home—proclaiming, "Let two of my sons be killed if I fail to bring him back to you." (Genesis 42:37) Ya'akov rejects Reuven's offer. In the end, Yehuda (Judah) steps forward and declares, "If I do not bring him (Binyamin) back to you...I will have sinned to you forever." (Genesis 43:9) These words are accepted by Ya'akov.

One wonders, why? Why does Ya'akov embrace the argument of Yehuda and not Reuven?

Ramban notes that Reuven impetuously makes his comment while there is still food left from their trip to Egypt. Yehuda leaves Ya'akov alone waiting until all the food is gone to make his plea. Ramban concludes that only after the food was gone would Ya'akov be ready. This teaches the importance of timing. What we say and what we do may be rejected at one moment, but embraced at the next.

Another suggestion is in order: It can be posited that the greatest consequence of doing wrong is to be constantly wracked by the sin itself. And so, Ya'akov rejects Reuven's argument as he offered a punishment if he fails. Yehuda on the other hand, is saying that his punishment will be his ever-present guilt in having sinned to Ya'akov. In the words of

Benamozegh (19th century, Italy) “sin itself is its own punishment.”

A final thought comes to mind. Reuven’s answer displays the assurance of one absolutely certain of success—so certain he offers the precious lives of two of his sons for punishment. Yehuda, on the other hand, recognizes the precariousness of the mission. He understands that he may not succeed. Hence, he argues, “if I fail, I will forever have sinned to you.” Ya’akov accepts Yehuda’s argument and not Reuven’s, for, often, greatest success goes to one who understands the danger of the situation and realizes the very real possibility of not succeeding.

Notwithstanding his uncertainty, Yehuda has the courage to act. The real test of commitment is becoming involved even when the outcome is unknown. This impresses Ya’akov.

May we all be so courageous, to do, even when unclear about the result. And like Ya’akov, may we trust -- with the help of God -- that all will work out.  
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### RABBI JONATHAN GEWIRTZ

## Migdal Ohr

"**A**nd Pharaoh called Yosef’s name Tzafnas Panai’ach, and gave him Osnas the daughter of Potiphara the Priest of On as a wife and Yosef went out [and ruled] over the land of Egypt.” (Beraishis 41:45) Yosef interpreted Pharaoh’s dreams and displayed such wisdom and humility that Pharaoh had no qualms about immediately appointing him to a high government position. His honesty and integrity, as well as his lack of ambition for honor despite his success, made Yosef the ideal candidate. Pharaoh’s ministers, however, were nervous.

The Midrash tells us that they invoked Egyptian custom that any ruler must know all seventy languages of the world. Pharaoh told them they would test Yosef the next day and that night an angel appeared and taught Yosef all the languages. The next day Pharaoh summoned Yosef and spoke to him in a foreign language. Each time Pharaoh used another language and beckoned Yosef up the steps to the throne. At the seventieth step, Yosef reached Pharaoh and sat down by his feet. The ministers were convinced.

However, that was not enough. This posuk tells us what else happened. Pharaoh gave him a special name which referenced Yosef’s ability to discern the truth and decipher secrets. Then he gave Yosef a wife. It was Osnas, daughter of Potiphar, the former employer who had Yosef thrown in prison. [The Midrash tells us that she was his foster daughter, but her mother was Dina, daughter of Yaakov, so she was of Yaakov’s family.]

Why were these important? Because when it comes to leadership, there will always be detractors. In this case, in order to make Yosef less subject to scrutiny and disparaging remarks by the populace, Pharaoh ensured that they had less to talk about. He was a foreigner – but he had an uncanny special ability that Egyptians didn’t. He was a former convict – but by marrying the daughter of the one who accused him it showed there was no truth to the accusation.

By preempting the opposition, Yosef was assured a smoother ascent to power. As one who had a reputation for great knowledge as well as integrity and humility (evidenced by the fact that he didn’t try to take revenge on his former master) the populace was more ready to follow Yosef’s guidance.

The lesson for us to take is that as a people charged with being a “light unto the nations,” we must ensure that they are able to follow our lead. That means maintaining an aura of respectability and integrity. It means being above reproach and not acting questionably.

On Chanuka we light candles commemorating the fact that Hashem miraculously helped us fulfill His mitzvah in the purest and more exalted way possible. This is how we should live all the time, so we may be the light which dispels the darkness of the world.

*Chana Malka Geldzahler was driving on the Garden State Parkway one day when she needed gas. She pulled into the station and the attendant who filled her car was a dwarf, standing just three and a half feet tall. As he began to wash her windows, he stopped suddenly when he saw a picture on her front seat. “Who is this man?” he asked. “I’ve been looking for him for two years!” She told Vinny it was her father who had passed away in a bus accident. He cried.*

*“He used to stop here and come out to talk to me.” He explained that R’ Geldzahler told him that he was an inspiration. “You have every excuse to play the victim,” he’d said to Vinny. “But you get up and come to work each day. You are a giant!” He told Vinny he was going to tell his students about this man. “If he can do it, you can do it.”*

*Vinny told Chana Malka, “Your father was the only person who ever made me feel tall.” © 2019 Rabbi J. Gewirtz and Migdal Ohr*



### ENCYCLOPEDIA TALMUDIT

## Chanukah

*Translated for the Encyclopedia Talmudit  
by Rabbi Mordechai Weiss*

**O**utside 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 LEVIN**

## Overcoming Hatred

In parashat Miketz, we find the brothers of Yosef going to Egypt to buy food for their families. The brothers hoped to also locate their brother Yosef to determine his fate. HaRav Zalman Sorotzkin points out that the brothers were already sorry for having sold Yosef and were starting to do teshuvah. The pasuk says "Yosef's brothers", an indication of their reassessment of their actions. As it happened, they did not have the opportunity to locate Yosef before they

were captured and brought before him. Yosef accuses them of being spies and the brothers understand that they are being punished by Hashem for selling Yosef.

We must ask, what are Yosef's motives in arranging these encounters? Rashi and others imply that Yosef's purpose is to have the dreams totally fulfilled. Yosef believes that the fulfillment of the dreams will help the brothers to do teshuvah. There are several aspects to the dreams which cannot be fulfilled when only ten brothers enter Egypt for the first time. The brothers do not yet realize the extent of Yosef's position. He could be an underling with powers that only covered supplying grain to those who came to buy. They do not yet realize that he is second in power to Pharaoh and can do with them as he wishes. To prove his power, he imprisons them for three days. In addition Yosef demonstrates that he can change any decree he makes, first saying that all but one of the brothers will remain in prison and only one return to their father, and then changing his mind and declaring that all but one will return to their father and only one brother remain in jail. Only a leader would have this kind of power. Once the brothers realize this fact, they will bow down to him with respect and fear of his position.

The second aspect of the dreams that could not yet be fulfilled is the numbers of brothers who bow to him. Binyamin is not present, so only ten brothers could bow at this point. In the second dream, there were eleven stars that bow to him, so Binyamin must also bow. At no time do we find that Yosef is insistent that his father and his "mother" come to Egypt so that they can bow along with the brothers, but one could understand that he does not want to insist that his father come before he realizes that it is Yosef who beckons him. Part of Yosef's plan, then, is to insist that the brothers bring Binyamin back with them to prove their veracity.

The third aspect that must be fulfilled is not in the dreams themselves but instead in the repercussions of those dreams. The brothers committed a horrible sin by kidnapping Yosef and selling him into slavery. We are told that with every punishment given to the Jewish people, there is always a small repayment of the sin of the brothers and of the later sin of the Golden Calf. With that in mind, we can understand that one of Yosef's concerns is that the brothers do teshuvah for abandoning one of their brothers. This requires that Yosef first change his decree that only one brother would return, and secondly that he take Binyamin into presumably permanent custody. This second act is specifically done while their father is not present so that he cannot influence their actions. The brothers must change of their own accord, and since they did not consult their father when they made the decision to abandon Yosef, they must not be able to consult their father now.

HaRav Shimshon Raphael Hirsch discusses a fourth motive for Yosef's actions which to me seems to be the most compelling. The brothers must do teshuvah gemurah (complete repentance) by protecting Binyamin and not abandoning him. But this action might not yet repair the relationship that Yosef has with his brothers. They may still hate him even though they may accept him back as part of the family. They still fear Yosef's future control over them and the possible revenge that he might take on them if he rises to power. We see this when the brothers feel compelled to lie to Yosef after their father dies. They are afraid that Yosef was only civil to them to protect their father from grief but will now carry out thatre venge on them. Yosef wishes to show them that he does not harbor a grudge against their actions but is there to benevolently help them and their families through this famine.

But this benevolence is not so simple. Yosef must know that in his own heart there are feelings of hatred for the way that his brothers disregarded his pleas for mercy from the pit. Yosef knows that it is only natural for him to have these feelings. Even if he acts generously towards his brothers, there may always be this feeling of resentment towards them. Yosef does not want to hate his brothers. He wants to be able to forgive his brothers completely. This forgiveness could only take place if he were to see that his brothers not only do teshuvah but also have a complete change of attitude towards him. This must end the rivalry between Leah's sons and Rachel's sons. Only then could Yosef forgive his brothers completely. As Hirsch says, "This test was necessary for Yosef's feelings, so that, if they withstood it, the last drops of bitterness would be eradicated from his heart." To me this is the most important factor in Yosef's actions.

Hirsch's insight speaks volumes. The hatred that the brothers had for Yosef combined with their actions must have had an effect on Yosef. We are all subject to these feelings of hatred and bitterness caused by the actions of others that have harmed us in some way. Sometimes these actions have caused us irreparable damage. We must come to realize that this hatred harms us much more than the actions did. It is even worse when this hatred builds up between members of a family. We must first try to never develop these feelings, but if they do occur and we do not work to eradicate them, we will cause ourselves even greater damage. Too often families seem to be separated because of the strife caused by an incident that no one even remembers. As we learn from Yosef, it is never too late to change this situation. There are very few things in life that are more important than family. We must take the initiative and not wait for someone else to make the first move. We must demonstrate our willingness to forgive and reunite, and others will eventually follow. May we set forgiveness and reconciliation as a goal for our families and for all Israel.

May we all strive for ahavat chinum, unconditional love, and learn this lesson of forgiveness from Yosef. ©2019 Rabbi D. Levin



### 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*

**T**here 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 menorah, 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 forbid. 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).]*

**ZEV S. ITZKOWITZ**

## Light in the Dark

"**[J]**oseph] left [his brothers] and wept. He returned to them and spoke to them. He took Simeon from them, and bound him before their eyes." (Genesis 42:24)

What did Joseph have in mind by taking a hostage? Taking one of them hostage would insure a speedy return of his brothers (Bechor Shor). In addition, Joseph was giving his brothers a chance to atone for their sin against him. They had all stood by, and watched him imprisoned and sold. Now, they would be forced to watch one of their own being incarcerated (HaKesav VeHaKabbalah).

Why did Joseph prefer to take Simeon prisoner rather than another brother? Actually, Joseph had initially thought to take Reuben as his hostage, for Reuben was the eldest and the leader of his brothers at the time of Joseph's enslavement. It was Reuben, however, who had tried to save him, so in acknowledgement, Joseph detained the next oldest brother, Simeon (Ibn Ezra, Tur). Moreover, Simeon was the ideal brother to set as the example. When Joseph had approached them, Simeon had suggested that they kill Joseph and dip his cloak into blood. In fact, when that suggestion was rejected and it was decided to throw Joseph into a pit for holding, it was Simeon who confined Joseph (Rashi). Furthermore, it was the cooperation of Simeon and Levi that led to the killing of all the males of the city of Shechem. By separating Simeon from Levi, Joseph was preventing another potential murderous collaboration (Rashbam). © 1995 Z.S. Itzkowitz



... "Anybody got a match?"

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