



## DIVREI MENACHEM

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# Like Father, Like Son

When reading Parshat Vayeshev, we might ask what lay behind Yaakov's favoritism of Yoseph, especially when we consider how much Yaakov suffered from his father's preference for Esav.

Yaakov did not hide his excessive love for Yoseph. On the contrary, he made his favored son a fine coat of many colors that highlighted Yoseph's preeminence over his brothers and ushered in mounting jealousy among the siblings with all its tragic consequences.

The Midrash helps us understand Yaakov: Yoseph was the son of his old age (*Ben Zekunim*) and his beloved Rachel, and his facial features resembled that of his father. Furthermore, Yoseph was an assiduous student who imbibed everything he learned from Shem Ve'Ever.

Moreover, the lives of father and son were very similar: They were both one of two sons of (previously) childless mothers and objects of sibling rivalry and hatred. They both had formative dreams and overcame the challenges of living and marrying outside the Land.

No wonder there was such a strong bond between father and son. However, the Netivot Shalom advocates that the source

of their mutual attachment was primarily metaphysical.

When told of Yoseph's dream that he would bow down to Yoseph, Yaakov "held on to the matter" to be stored in his subconscious for a later event. And when told of Yoseph's demise, Yaakov refused to be comforted; he would yet appear before Yoseph.

The Netivot Shalom proffers that Yaakov's actions towards Yoseph were designed to indicate to his brothers Yoseph's superior *Middah* – the quality of restraint in matters of morality. That attribute would later be manifested in the episode with Potiphar's wife, for which Yoseph earned the accolade of "*Tzaddik Yesod Olam*." This honored title indicates that the entire world receives Hashem's beneficence in Yoseph's merit.

Yaakov believed wrongly – as did Yoseph – that the brothers, with their elevated levels of spiritual consciousness, would catch on to the implied symbolism of the colored coat and the dramatic dreams. They were supposed to divine the material and spiritual benefits that would emerge from Yoseph's unfolding character and destiny.

It was not to be, and both Yaakov and Yoseph paid a heavy price. On the other hand, Hashem orchestrated the predetermined destiny. And we can but pray that as these incidents presaged a Ge'ulah, so will events in our time (also not easily understood) usher in a second miraculous and timely salvation. ■ *Menachem Persoff*