

Torah Tidbits

ISSUE 1639

DEC. 13TH 2025
כ"ג כסלו תשפ"ו

פרשת וישב
PARSHAT VAYEISHEV

SHABBAT MEVARCHIM

נ
ישראל



Pardon Me
Rabbi Baruch Taub
Page 82



**Listening Between
the Questions** Page 70
Rebbetzin Dr. Adina Shmidman

OU Israel
wishes you
Chanukah
Sameach!

ויחלם יוסף חלום בראשית ל"ז:ה'

YERUSHALAYIM SHABBAT VAYEISHEV ZMANIM

CANDLES 4:00 PM • HAVDALA 5:17 PM • RABBEINU TAM 5:53 PM



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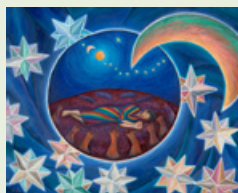
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To read **Rabbi Yeres's** article for this week
see: TorahTidbits.com > **Individual Articles**



COVER IMAGE by Libi Weiss

I live in Maaleh Adumim and made Aliya in 2012 with 5 kids baruch Hashem. We had two more sabras baruch Hashem and I'm trying to make time to paint!



We continue to pray for the last of the kedoshim to return from Gaza



IMPORTANT REMINDERS



We light the first Chanukah candle on Sunday night December 14th
For a review of the Halachot of Chanukah see pages 58-63



Rosh Chodesh Tevet is on Shabbat Dec. 20th and Sunday Dec. 21st

מולד חודש טבת יהיה בליל שבת בשעה 22, דקות 10 חלקים
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CANDLE LIGHTING AND HAVDALA TIMES



OTHER Z'MANIM



JERUSALEM

**Ranges 11 days Wednesday - Shabbat
December 10-20 / 20-30 Kislev**

Earliest Tallit and Tefillin	5:33-5:39
Sunrise	6:28-6:34
Sof Zman Kriat Shema	9:00-9:05
Magen Avraham	8:21-8:26
Sof Zman Tefila	9:50-9:56
(According to the Gra and Baal HaTanya)	
Chatzot (Halachic Noon)	11:31-11:36
Mincha Gedola (Earliest Mincha)	12:01-12:06
Plag Mincha	3:32-3:35
Sunset (Including Elevation)	4:39-4:43



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	Vayeishev		Mikeitz	
	Candles	Havdala	Candles	Havdala
Yerushalayim/Maale Adumim	4:00	5:17	4:02	5:19
Aza Area (Netivot, Sderot et al)	4:19	5:19	4:21	5:22
Beit Shemesh/RBS	4:18	5:17	4:01	5:20
Gush Etzion	4:16	5:17	4:19	5:20
Raanana/Tel Mond/Herzliya/K.Saba	4:16	5:17	4:18	5:20
Modiin/Chashmonaim	4:16	5:17	4:19	5:20
Netanya	4:16	5:17	4:18	5:20
Be'er Sheva	4:19	5:19	4:21	5:22
Rehovot	4:17	5:18	4:19	5:21
Petach Tikva	4:00	5:17	4:02	5:20
Ginot Shomron	4:15	5:16	4:18	5:20
Haifa / Zichron	4:04	5:15	4:06	5:18
Gush Shiloh	4:15	5:16	4:17	5:18
Tel Aviv / Givat Shmuel	4:17	5:18	4:19	5:20
Givat Ze'ev	4:20	5:17	4:22	5:19
Chevron / Kiryat Arba	4:17	5:17	4:19	5:20
Ashkelon	4:18	5:19	4:21	5:22
Yad Binyamin	4:17	5:18	4:20	5:21
Tzfat / Bikat HaYarden	4:06	5:13	4:08	5:16
Golan	4:12	5:13	4:14	5:16
Nahariya/Maalot	4:12	5:15	4:15	5:17
Afula	4:13	5:15	4:16	5:17

Rabbeinu Tam (Jerusalem): Vayeishev - 5:53 PM • Mikeitz - 5:56 PM

All Times According to MyZmanim (20 mins before Sunset in most Cities;
40 mins in Yerushalayim and Petach Tikva; 30 mins in Tzfat and Haifa)

Daf Yomi: Zevachim 90



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DEAR TORAH TIDBITS FAMILY

RABBI AVI BERMAN
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There are certain common Hebrew words and phrases that no matter where you are in the world, you can hear Jews using them. Everywhere you go, you can expect to hear words like “*shalom*,” “*boker tov*,” and “*betach*.” One particular word stands out to me as a fascinating one. “*Halevai*.” *Halevai* means something like, “I wish!” or, “If only...” It represents a sense of hope, a sense of striving, a sense of a belief that a greater day can come. That optimism, that belief and wish for what could be, is so, so important. Young children often dream so big. Whether as a parent, a teacher, or a friend, God forbid that we should throw their dreams away and tell them that they are not to be. If they are motivated, and strive, they will succeed in what they put their mind to, as long as we are there to support them in their growth.



At OU Israel, we see this all the time in our programs for teens. Whether in NCSY, The Pearl and Harold Jacobs Zula Outreach Center or our OU Israel Teen Centers, those running these programs want to help every one of our *chanichim* achieve their goals and aspirations. On the other hand, a good educator doesn't let a student bite off more than they can chew, and get hurt in the process. The key is understanding their talents and capabilities, and helping them achieve fulfillment where they can be their best self.

When we look at this week's parsha, we see a fascinating example of this. Yosef HaTzaddik has dreams. Dreams of bundles of wheat and of the sun, moon, and eleven stars all bowing down to one in the middle - him. He tells the brothers and he tells his father, Yaakov, who responds in quite a peculiar way: (Bereshit 37:10-11) “And his father reprimanded him, and said to him: ‘What is this dream that you have dreamed? Shall I and thy mother and your brothers indeed come to bow down to you upon the earth?’ His brothers were jealous, but his father kept the matter in mind.”

Which is it? Did Yaakov believe these dreams were nonsense, or did he “keep the matter in mind”? The answer is that to be a good parent, a good teacher, a good aunt, uncle, grandparent, we need to do a little of both. It is not good for us to hear a young child say “I want to be king” and say, “Of course! And you will be!”, no matter the kid and no matter their capabilities. Good

parenting and good teaching is to follow the potential of the child and understand where they stand now, with a belief that their potential will allow them to grow in amazing ways in the future, according to their talents, skills, and dispositions. Yosef's dreams were not feasible where Yosef was now, seventeen years old and still in many ways immature. But Yaakov also saw his potential and kept it in mind.

Also, think about Yosef's siblings' perspective here. When Yosef shares these dreams, what message are his brothers receiving? They're hearing: "I'm going to be everything, and you're going to be nothing. You're going to bow down to me." And suddenly, their own dreams feel crushed. Where are they supposed to place their hopes? What are they supposed to strive for in life? Yaakov recognizes this tension. He sees one child dreaming in a way that comes at the expense of his siblings, that minimizes them in order for Yosef to achieve greatness.

Yaakov's response is a message to all of us. The level of achievement we encourage in our children and students must be rooted in understanding the nefesh - the soul - of each and every one of them. It must be holistic, taking into account their own abilities as well as that of their friends and communities.

I am currently in Miami, Florida and spent an incredible and inspiring Shabbat by Rabbi Donald Bixon at his shul, Beth Israel. During this past week here in Florida, I had the opportunity to speak with teenagers in Miami Beach and I shared with them the following idea. Last week's parsha tells us that the Sar of Eisav changed Yaakov's name to Yisrael. Yet throughout the Torah, we continue to see him called both Yaakov and Yisrael. Many

commentaries discuss what these names represent and when each is used. What I explained to those teenagers - and what we emphasize with all our teens, whether in our OU Israel Teen Centers, in NCSY, The Zula, or in any of our programs throughout Israel - is that they should strive for greatness, because they can be great at what is perfect for them. The name Yaakov comes from the word "*ekev*" - heel - suggesting one who follows. This is not a very high goal.

But Yisrael, on the other hand, comes from "*sar*" - a minister, an important person - a much higher status. The name connotes "*yashar el*," - directly to God, a close connection with HaKadosh Baruch Hu. The Zohar teaches that Klal Yisrael has moments when we are Yaakov, when we are in a position of following rather than leading, of a *galut* mentality, yet other times we must be *sarim*, we must pick ourselves up, stand strong, and fight our enemies, in a *geulah* mentality - very much like what we've been witnessing over the past two-plus years. Today, to the world, we have shown ourselves to be Yisrael.

I spoke about the programs we run in Israel to these teens in Miami Beach. I told them that the teens we work with have been convinced by their upbringing not to strive higher and reach their potential. But with the most incredible advisors working with these teenagers, getting them to dream - that they can be something in the army, stand out in Sherut Leumi, that they can lead, that they can meet their future business partners and university colleagues - then they can break out of the cycle of poverty, break out of low socioeconomic communities, and achieve greatness for themselves, for their families, and for the future families they will build.

They learn not to be an *ekev*, a heel, a follower, but to be Yisrael, a striver.

I spoke to those teenagers in Florida about standing up strong and proud, understanding that we're Jews and that we have a responsibility. We've seen so many teenagers grow up in Jewish communities around the world, come to Israel to learn Torah, serve in the IDF, become proud members of the community, and show their communities what they've successfully achieved - the respect they can bring their communities, the respect they can bring Klal Yisrael, the respect they can bring their parents and their families.

This understanding is a big element of recognizing that the Sar of Eisav did not expect Yaakov to struggle with him the whole night, *ad alot hashachar*. He expected to beat him quickly, that Yaakov would give up easily. But when he saw that Yaakov could overcome, that he could stand strong and not let him go until he gave him a *beracha*, he realized that Yaakov was no longer in the position of Yaakov, but in the position of Yisrael.

Yosef's dreams are really all of our dreams. We want HaKadosh Baruch Hu to guide us, to give us what we need, and we want to be able to trust Him while putting in all our *hishtadlut*. Yosef could have gone to the house of Potiphar and failed miserably. He could have sat in jail depressed all day. But instead, no matter where he was, he tried to be the best Yosef he could possibly be. When you work hard at being the best you that you can be - that's what changes who we are, what we will be, and what we'll be able to change in this world.

I take great pride in visiting our OU Teen Centers, as I did last week in Ariel. This Teen Center has recently been refurbished through

the generous donations of very holy Jews, as well as with the help from the municipality. Having the alumni there stand up in front of the mayor, the deputy mayors, OU Israel Director of Programs Chaim Pelzner, in front of Yaden Cohen who manages our Teen Center branch in Ariel, watching these former teens at risk stand up with such pride and talk about what they've achieved, going to the IDF, becoming advisors themselves to teens - that gave me such incredible *nachat*. It's absolutely remarkable seeing their tremendous success. It's all thanks to the wonderful staff working in Ariel and all the other Teen Centers across the country, making sure that each and every one of our *chanichim* in these branches are achieving greatness.

So many donors, past and future, keep this dream going. Whether you sent 180 shekels or \$100,000, you're part of this success. The advisors get tremendous strength from you. Because of these donations, they see that they are not alone, but hundreds and thousands of people are supporting them and caring to see them succeed.

We're extremely thankful to the OU for the support they give us from the revenue from OU Kosher and more, which, *baruch Hashem*, covers the overhead for all of OU Israel. But we assure you that the donations you send are going directly toward these teens and toward the activities we're doing with these communities throughout Israel. So I encourage you once again, as we think of the holiday of Chanukah that's about to begin, and the light we're able to bring our community and ourselves through *pirsumei nisa*, let us also show some light toward these teens who really need us.

B'eizat Hashem, let's make sure we allow

our teenagers to dream, and allow ourselves to dream. Through the support we give them, the love we give them, and the advisors dedicating their days and lives, we will b'eizat Hashem enable each and every teenager to reach their full potential and be true leaders of Klal Yisrael.

Wishing you all an uplifting and inspiring Shabbat,



Rabbi Avi Berman

Executive Director, OU Israel

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RABBI MOSHE HAUER ZT"L

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A Chanukah Message: When Intellect Lacks Character

From the archives: This article, published on December 7, 2023, was written a few days after Rabbi Hauer testified to congress on the state of antisemitism on college campuses. Here he demonstrates the root of higher education's failure in the story of Chanukah.

On August 31, 1837, Ralph Waldo Emerson gave an epic address at Harvard University in which he said, “character is higher than intellect.” Those five words should guide the presidents of Harvard, Penn, and MIT and their colleagues as they attempt to dig themselves out from their shameless and disastrous testimony to Congress and find the path forward

for American “higher” education.

Decades before the current tsunami of university antisemitism, Harvard professor Dr. Robert Coles used Emerson’s phrase to diagnose the problem he was already observing in universities. “Institutions originally founded to teach their students how to become good and decent, as well as broadly and deeply literate, may abandon the first mission to concentrate on a driven, narrow book learning—a course of study in no way intent on making a connection between ideas and theories on one hand and, on the other, our lives as we actually live them.”

Knowledge must never be divorced from values. The United States is an international leader in science, technology, and medicine, yet we consider our primary contribution to the world the American values of human dignity, justice, and freedom. When we worry about China or Russia winning the race to Mars or to energy independence, it is not only our national pride that is at stake. We are fearful of seeing that powerful knowledge in the wrong hands.

We have that same fear today as we observe the hateful rhetoric and chants filling the classrooms and quads of America’s leading universities. We are horrified by the character and values of those claiming the



OU Israel sends our sincere wishes of nechama to our esteemed Senior Faculty Member Rabbi Dr. Aaron Adler and family on the passing of his beloved mother

Mrs. Sonja Adler a'h

May the entire mishpacha find comfort among all those who mourn for Zion and Yerushalayim

knowledge and pedigree provided by these institutions and we are fearful of what their future as civic, scientific, and political leaders portends for this country.

American Jews have been on the vanguard of fighting for liberal values. Jews will be the last to shut down academic debate or to exclude anyone's perspective from the classroom. Jewish tradition celebrates vigorous intellectual argument as essential to the pursuit of truth, but it insists that knowledge must never be divorced from values. The Talmud (Kiddushin 31b) synthesized these ideals elegantly and practically when it noted that father and son, teacher and student, may argue like enemies in their determined pursuit of truth but will not leave the study hall until their love for each other is made clear. That vision of academic debate bears not the slightest resemblance to the poisonous rhetoric of teachers and students that have made these university environments hostile to Jews. As the prophet Zacharia urged, we must find room in our hearts and minds to love both truth and peace.

This emphasis on the fusion of intellect and character lies at the heart of the story of Chanuka, when the Jewish people encountered the Greeks, a nation similarly preoccupied with the quest for knowledge. Yet the Greek

intellectual pursuits came along with blatantly immoral interests and practices that ultimately led the Jewish people to rebel against them. In one such ugly display, Greek rulers demanded *Prima Nocta*, where every new bride would lie first with the governor. While many Jews of the time were initially taken in by the Greeks' parallel pursuit of knowledge, we were jolted back to reality by their bifurcation of that knowledge from basic morality and values.

The Chanukah candles provide a stark reminder that knowledge alone casts a dark and menacing shadow but when fused with values provides much light. That light can chase away the darkness and confusion currently enveloping our university campuses and their leadership and move them away from their spineless and valueless equivocation to instead guide their institutions to provide a genuinely higher education, staffed and led by men and women who are not just good teachers but good examples, educating their students to be good and decent, and building a future that reflects the prioritization of character over intellect. ■

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DAPHNA MINTZ דפנה

on her 27th yahrzeit

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Benaya: Building Strong Families for the Future

OU Israel's Benaya program supports young couples who grew up in challenging environments and are now committed to building healthy, stable Jewish homes. One or both spouses in each couple is an alumni of The Pearl and Harold Jacobs Zula Outreach Center, the place that gave them mentorship, emotional support, and tools for growth during their teenage years. As they transition into marriage, Benaya continues that support by offering guidance in communication, financial literacy, emotional resilience, and practical skills for marriage and family life. For many couples, Benaya is the first time they experience a supportive community that understands their background and believes in their future and the home that they are building together.

Last week in Yerushalayim, eighteen young couples gathered for the opening session of the new Benaya series. These couples chose to take responsibility for their relationship and the home they are building so they turned to the one place they know that they will be supported and understood. Together they explored financial balance in the household, shared their hopes for the future, and discussed how to bring both spiritual and material abundance into their lives. Yaakov Etzion, a well-known financial coach who has worked with Benaya for three years, gave a powerful and practical workshop that left the couples inspired.

Benaya will accompany these couples for the next year through a full series of workshops and individual meetings, giving them the tools and support they need to build their home with clarity, balance, and resilience.

Each week we will share one of OU Israel's impactful programs helping English speaking olim with their *klita* and impacting Israeli society.



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ALIYA-BY-ALIYA SEDRA SUMMARY

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PARSHAT VAYEISHEV

The story of Yosef beginning in Parshat Vayeishev is of the most beloved stories of the Torah.

Yaakov settles, finally, in the Land of Israel. Yosef is favored. Yosef has 2 dreams. Yaakov sends Yosef to inquire of his brother's welfare. The brothers sell Yosef to merchants traveling to Egypt. Yehuda is confronted by Tamar and accepts responsibility. Yosef achieves great success as a servant to Potiphar. After being framed by Potiphar's wife, Yosef ends up in jail. His success continues in jail. He interprets the dreams of the butler and baker but remains in jail.



1ST ALIYA (37:1-12)

Yaakov settles in the Land of Israel. Yosef, 17, brings negative reports of his brothers to his father. Yaakov loves Yosef. He gives him a special coat, provoking the jealousy of his brothers. Yosef has 2 dreams. The brothers are gathering sheaves of wheat; their sheaves gather around and bow to Yosef's. The sun, moon and 11 stars bow to him. The brothers feel hatred. Yaakov, while criticizing Yosef, takes note of the dreams.

The first verse serves as an introduction. By using 2 different words for settling, the Torah is hinting at a difference. "Yaakov settled in the Land of his father's sojourning." As if to say: Yaakov settled where they sojournd. Avraham described himself as a

"ger v'toshav"; I live here but I am an outsider. Yaakov is doing what Avraham and Yitzchak did not; I am settling where you only sojourned.

I am going to settle here, in my own Land. Avraham was promised the Land of Israel. And that his children would be strangers in a strange land, returning wealthy to Israel. Yaakov figures, "hey, that was me. I was the stranger in a strange land. Long years with Lavan. Returned wealthy. Now on to the next stage of Jewish history: settling and ruling this Land".

The time to settle and eventually rule this Land has arrived. Building a state requires an economic change, from shepherding to farming. A state cannot be built by shepherds: agriculture roots one in the land and can sustain a nation. And rule requires power. That is what my father, Yitzchak blessed me with; agricultural abundance and power. But, as I told Esav, the blessing was a dud, because I never achieved agricultural success, nor power.

When Yosef dreams not of sheep but of bundles of wheat, Yaakov's ears perk up. Why a dream of wheat when we are shepherds? Is this a new world dawning?

And then a dream of power, of the sun, moon and stars. Is this a Divine message, through dreams, that the promise of the Land is about to happen, with agriculture and power facilitating the building of our nation?

Yaakov takes note of these dreams. Because it is the blessing he received from his father.

That contested blessing that he stole from Esav was this very thing; “you will have much grain and wine, nations will serve you, your brothers will bow to you”. Agricultural abundance, power and position in the family. Yaakov must have been shocked that Yosef would have the very dreams that he, Yaakov, had received as a blessing. The sheaves are agricultural abundance, the bowing is power, and the brothers bowing to him is dominance in the family.



2ND ALIYA (37:13-22)

Yaakov sends Yosef to inquire of the welfare of his brothers. A man directs him to Dotan. The brothers plot to kill Yosef and put an end to his dreams. Reuven objects to spilling his blood, suggesting to merely throw him into a pit. He saves Yosef, hoping to return him to his father.

Brothers wanting to kill their brother? This is unprecedented. Well, except for the first brothers in the Torah, Cain and Abel. Oh, and also Esav wanting to kill Yaakov.

And the irony. In the terrible rape of Dinah, after Shimon and Levi killed all the men, the story ended with a rhetorical question: shall our sister be made a harlot? Meaning, siblings stand up for each other. We cannot stand by and see our sister demeaned. Brothers stand up for each other. And then the brothers want to kill Yosef. What happened to brothers standing up for each other? What an irony.



3RD ALIYA (37:23-36)

Yosef is stripped of his coat, thrown in an empty cistern. Merchants appear. Yehuda objects to killing their brother, convincing the others to sell Yosef to these merchants. Yosef is sold to the merchants and brought to Egypt. Reuven finds the cistern empty and rends his garments. Yosef's

coat is dipped in blood, brought to Yaakov. Yaakov rips his clothes and is inconsolable. Yosef ends up in the home of Potiphar.

Yosef dreamed of the sun, moon and stars – as high as you can get – and ends in the pit, as low as you can get. Yaakov, who dreamt of a ladder ascending to the heavens, now says he will “sink to the netherworld in mourning”.

Yaakov deceived Yitzchak who could not see; Yaakov himself was deceived by Lavan in the night when he could not see that it was Leah and not Rachel. And again, Yaakov deceived Yitzchak with goatskin on his arms; Yaakov is deceived by Yosef's coat dipped in goat's blood.

Judgement of the actions of the Avot is rarely stated directly, but rather is communicated by the story. What goes around, comes around. And that is a way of passing judgement; you got what you deserved.



4TH ALIYA (38:1-30)

Yehuda descends. He has 3 sons.

One son marries Tamar and dies, as does the second. He delays the 3rd son from marrying her. Tamar disguises herself. She becomes pregnant from Yehuda. Yehuda orders her to be put to death. She sends his identifying possessions. Yehuda admits. She has twins, Peretz and Zerach.

This story of Yehuda is crucial in his position in the family. Each of those ahead of Yehuda have acted in a way to damage their claim to the position of first-born, the position of the head of the family. Reuven was the first born but lay with his father's wife. Shimon and Levi angered Yaakov by their savage murder of all the men of Shechem. Yehuda is the next in line.

Well, unless Yaakov meant to appoint Yosef as the official first born by giving him

the coat. After all, Yosef is the first born of the favorite wife, Rachel. Are you allowed to subvert the actual first born, of the less favored wife, for the first born of the more favored wife? The Torah will later command explicitly against that.

In a profound story of fault but acceptance of responsibility, here Yehuda corrects his deficiency when he allows Yosef to be thrown in the pit. Yehuda did stand up; let's not kill him, let's sell him. That certainly was better than killing him. But he really should have objected more vociferously and said: "I will not let you harm Yosef. I will return him to Abba."

Here he takes full responsibility. This is a harbinger of the full acceptance of responsibility he will demonstrate later in guaranteeing Binyamin's return to Yaakov. Yehuda earns monarchy not by being perfect but by accepting responsibility, the true example for all leaders; you will err, you will sin, but true leadership is when you accept responsibility not deflecting it.



5TH ALIYA (39:1-6)

Yosef descends to Egypt. G-d is with Yosef and he is successful.

Yosef's owner sees that G-d is with him and that all he does G-d makes successful. G-d blesses the master's home because of Yosef; all that is his in his home and field, G-d blesses. He gives Yosef total control of all that is his.

A little wee aliya of 6 verses. And G-d's name appears 6 times. G-d's name did not appear in the 66 verses until here in the parsha (save for the death of the 2 sons of Yehuda: "they did bad in the eyes of G-d"). This is very similar to the absence of G-d in the beginning of Sefer Shemot until He finally

sees their affliction.

Man does just fine spiraling down all by himself – Yosef at the hands of his brothers, Yehuda with his mishandling of Tamar, the Jews in Egypt at the hands of Paro. When he hits bottom, G-d appears.



6TH ALIYA (39:7-23)

Potiphar's wife propositions Yosef. Yosef resists, for as much as he has complete authority in the home, this would be a sin to G-d. With no one around, she grabs him. He flees, leaving her holding his garment. She frames Yosef as having approached her. Yosef is thrown in jail. G-d is kind to him and the jail keeper puts Yosef in charge. All that he does, G-d makes successful.

Note the parallels: The brothers take Yosef's coat from him; Mrs. Potiphar is holding Yosef's garment. The brothers deceive their father with the coat; Mrs. Potiphar deceives her husband with the coat. Yosef is denied freedom, sold by his brothers as a slave; Yosef is denied freedom, ending up in jail.

From dreaming of the sun, moon and stars, and brothers bowing to him, Yosef has gone down to Egypt, down in status to a slave, and now down yet again to jail.



7TH ALIYA (40:1-23)

The butler and baker of Paro are jailed. Yosef takes care of them. They dream. Yosef asks: tell me the dreams for their explanations are to G-d. The butler saw a fruitful vine, squeezing the grapes into the cup of Paro. Yosef says: you will be restored as butler. And, Yosef adds, remember me when things are good again and tell Paro, for I don't deserve to be here. The baker describes dreaming of bread on his head. Yosef says: you will be hung. The butler is restored. The baker is hung. The butler forgets Yosef.

While the Yosef story moves quickly for us the reader, years have passed. 2 years will pass from the butler being restored until Yosef interprets Paro's dream next week. He was 17 when the brothers sold him. Now he is 28. He will be 30 when he interprets Paro's dreams.

And if Yosef is such a good interpreter of dreams – well, he himself had dreams. What does he make of *his* dreams? He dreamt of the brother's bundles of wheat bowing to him. And of power, all bowing to him. Does he mull over his dreams every once in a while? Every week? Every day? He tells Paro that having 2 dreams implies that they will happen soon. He had 2 dreams. His dreams didn't happen soon. Does he think they will still happen? After all, how soon is soon? A few days? Or 25 years?

HAFTORAH: AMOS 2:6 -3:8

This week's *haftorah* contains an allusion to the sale of Yosef by his brothers, which was discussed in this week's Torah reading.

Amos opens with a rebuke to the Jewish People. Hashem had been patient with them notwithstanding their transgression of the three cardinal sins — sexual impropriety, idolatry and murder. Their fourth sin, however, crossed the line — the mistreatment of the innocent, widows, orphans and the poor.

Hashem reminds Am Yisrael how He lovingly took them out of Egypt and led them through the desert for forty years and settled them in the Holy Land. There, He bestowed the gift of prophecy on some and inspired others to become Nazirites. Yet the Jewish people did not respond appropriately, giving wine to the Nazirites and instructing the

prophets not to prophesize.

The haftorah ends with an admonition from Hashem, one that also recalls His eternal love for His people: "Hearken to this word which the Lord spoke about you, O children of Israel, concerning the entire nation that I brought up from the land of Egypt. 'Only you did I love above all the families of the earth; therefore, I will visit upon you all your iniquities...'" As opposed to other nations to whom Hashem does not pay close attention, Hashem's love for His nation causes Him to punish them for their misdeeds, to cleanse them and prod them back onto the path of the just. ■



STATS

9th of 54 sedras; 9th of 12 in Bereshit.
Written on 190 lines, ranks 28th.
4 Parshiyot; 3 open, 1 closed.
112 pesukim - ranks 24th.
1558 words - ranks 24th.



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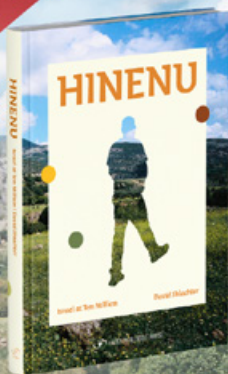
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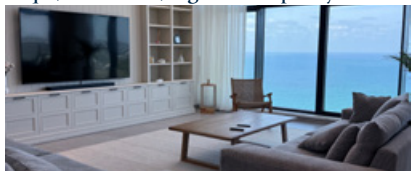
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BY RABBI DR. TZVI HERSH WEINREB
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“No Favorites on Chanukah!”

Envy is surely one of the most insidious of human emotions. It is a self-destructive emotion, because it often leads a person to act against his own best interests, as he attempts to redress the situation that caused him so much envy. It is also damaging to relationships with others and can have disastrous social effects.

Our sages include envy, along with lust and the search for glory, in their list of items that are sure “to drive a person from this world.”

That envy can lead to great national tragedy is one of the lessons of Jewish history. This week’s Torah portion describes the deterioration of a family brought about by the envy that Joseph’s brothers had toward him. This envy led to the hatred which motivated them to sell him into slavery.

Hatred between brothers, and the consequences of this hatred, is sadly at the root of Jewish history. *Sinat chinam*, unwarranted hatred, remains a stubborn problem in the ongoing story of our people.

Interestingly, the Talmud blames Jacob for the brothers’ treacherous deed, and for the future course of the history of his descendants. It comments:

“One should never favor one child over his other children, for it was the mere two shekels worth of silk, which Jacob gave to Joseph over and above that which he gave to

his other children, that caused the brothers to be envious of him, leading eventually to our forefathers’ descent into Egypt.”

The multicolored garment, with which Jacob showed special favor to his son Joseph, provoked the envy of the other brothers, and the rest is Jewish history.

Can we discern any connection between the favoritism demonstrated by Jacob, and condemned by our sages, and the festive holiday of Chanukah?

I think we can, and I share this admittedly novel idea with you, dear reader.

The central *mitzvah* of Chanukah is, of course, the lighting of candles each of the eight nights. Strictly speaking, this *mitzvah* can be fulfilled by the head of the household lighting a single candle on behalf of the entire family—*ner ish u’beito*, a candle for the master of the house on behalf of the entire household.

However, the prevalent custom is that every member of the family, every child, every boarder, and every guest kindles his or her own *menorah*. No favorites here. Everyone gets to light a *menorah*.

Can it be that this custom arose as an antidote to the tendency some parents have to play favorites among their children? Can it be that the central message of Chanukah is that all children have an equal role to play

in this holiday, and, moreover, in the very destiny of the Jewish people?

I have found no source in our literature for this interpretation. But nonetheless, it feels right to me. I personally find it dramatically significant that on the very Sabbath in which we read of how Jacob singled out Joseph from his other children, we also celebrate Chanukah and light candles in a manner in which no one child is singled out as superior, in which all have an equal share.

The lessons of Chanukah are many, and perhaps in future columns I will explore some of them with you.

But here is a novel lesson, and a very important one. Envy can wreak havoc in a family. One way for parents to avoid this poisonous emotion is by treating all their children fairly and equally, and not by playing favorites.

One of the wise sayings of Ben Sira, the Jewish sage whose work did not quite make it into the Bible, but which has much to teach us, is that "envy and wrath shorten life..."

Wise parents will take this lesson to heart and not discriminate among their children. Instead, they will learn the lesson of Chanukah and give all children an equal role in celebrating this beautiful holiday, the "festival of lights."

I would like to take this opportunity to wish everyone a Happy Chanukah! ■

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Yosef HaTzadik?

As a rule, the Torah does not offer biographies. We are given sparse information concerning our Biblical heroes. Hashem only reveals what He feels we need to know.

Yosef, however, is an exception. As his story unfolds, we are granted an unusually clear glimpse into the character of this hero. The picture that emerges, however, is complex and seemingly contradictory.

On the one hand, “handsome of form and handsome of appearance,” Yosef is apparently a personally engaging and naturally successful individual. He clearly knows how “to win friends and influence people”.

As his father’s favorite; as a slave who earns the complete trust of his master; as a prisoner who becomes assistant to the jailkeeper; as an inmate who is summarily snatched from the dungeon for an appearance before Pharaoh, and then is, just as suddenly, appointed the king’s second in command...nothing, not even the most powerful of setbacks, can stop Yosef’s repeated rise to prominence.

Wherever Yosef is placed and whatever situation he finds himself in, he rises to the top.

On the other hand, this highly successful, engaging man is guilty of questionable behavior, specifically towards his own family.

Seemingly oblivious to his brothers’ antagonism, he exacerbates matters by delivering

negative reports concerning their behavior to Yaakov. He then further enrages his siblings by sharing with them, on two separate occasions, the content of dreams that reflect his superiority over them.

When Yosef’s brothers descend into Egypt to procure supplies in the face of famine, Yosef deliberately hides his true identity. He then proceeds to put his brothers through a carefully planned series of painful and frightening experiences. Only when Yehuda rises in defense of his youngest brother, Binyamin, does Yosef finally disclose the truth¹.

Further complicating an already complicated picture, Rabbinic tradition portrays Yosef, both in his early years and later in the house of Potiphar as vain and overly concerned about his appearance. The Midrash also finds Yosef guilty of relying too much upon the actions of man rather than trusting in God.

How then does history judge Yosef? What is the final verdict concerning this most complex and self-contradictory Biblical figure?

From a Rabbinic perspective, the answer is resoundingly clear. In the Talmud, Midrash, and throughout Rabbinic literature, Yosef is afforded a title awarded only to a very select few.

1. The many explanations for Yosef’s behavior at this point in the story do not negate the pain that he clearly causes his brothers.

Yosef is simply "Yosef Hatzadik- Yosef the Righteous."

And we are forced to ask: By what merit does Yosef earn this singular title? Yosef's rejection of Potiphar's wife certainly displayed both courage and moral fiber. Was this one event, however, enough to earn him the title of *Yosef Hatzadik*?

I would suggest that only by viewing Yosef's story as a whole- against the backdrop of one critical phenomenon- can we begin to appreciate the true nature and full extent of his "righteousness."

A momentous yet subtle change takes place in God's relationship with man when Yosef appears on the scene.

Suddenly, God stops talking.

For the first time since His commandment to Avraham launched the opening chapters of Jewish history, God is silent.

God commanded, taught, instructed and reassured Yosef's predecessors- Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov- at critical junctures of their lives. The Patriarchs not only knew of God's existence through firsthand experience; they were also keenly aware of His personal relationship with them.

In stark contrast, when Yosef is violently thrust into the pit by his brothers, the God who reassured his father at Beit El doesn't say a word; When Yosef faces overwhelming challenge in the house of Potiphar, God seems nowhere to be found; When Yosef is thrown into prison, alone and in an alien country, God does not comfort him; And when Yosef has his audience with Pharaoh, God does not tell him what to do or say.

Even Yosef's dreams, and the dreams of others that he interprets, are substantially different from those of his predecessors. At



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no point, in the dreams of the Yosef story, does God appear or even speak. Yosef finds the future hidden within symbolism and riddle, accessible only through analysis and interpretation. Yosef, under the most trying of circumstances, must find his way on his own.

How, then, does Yosef react to God's apparent absence and resounding silence?

The evidence of the text is clear: Astoundingly, Yosef responds to God's silence by deliberately bringing God into the picture over and over again.

When confronted with the attempted seduction by Potiphar's wife, Yosef openly refuses to submit lest he "*sin against God.*"

When approached in jail by the butler and the baker for interpretation of their dreams, Yosef states, "*Do not interpretations belong to God? Please tell them [the dreams] to me.*"

When he stands face to face with the terrifying might of Pharaoh, Yosef responds to the king's request for dream interpretation by declaring, "*That is beyond my reach, God will respond, to grant Pharaoh peace.*" He then repeatedly proceeds to *reference "God"* in his actual interpretation of the king's dreams.

And when his brothers stand trembling before him, he reassures them by insisting, "*And now do not be aggrieved, and do not remonstrate yourselves for having sold me here, for it was to sustain life that God has sent me before you.*" He then, once again, *repeatedly refers to God and God's plan* in subsequent conversations with his father and brothers.

Yosef's words reflect an astounding ability to look back upon the trajectory of his life and to see in it God's guiding hand. From the perspective of *Yosef Hatzadik*, nothing has happened by coincidence. His wrenching

sale into bondage, his lonely years in prison, his rise to power, have all been for a higher purpose. As far as Yosef is concerned, *God has been present, albeit silent, throughout his life.*

We arrive, then, not only at an understanding of Yosef's greatness, but also at an understanding of how that greatness clearly speaks to us. Yosef is a Tzadik because he is the first of our ancestors to maintain his faith while living in a "*non-prophetic era*"- *an era when God is silent.* Yosef is the Biblical figure whose life experience most closely mirrors our own.

Like Yosef, we live in non-prophetic times. Our challenge? To perceive Hashem's presence in our lives and to act upon His will without clear Divine direction. As the upcoming Festival of Chanukah testifies, this challenge is centuries old. We have survived as a people only because heroes like Matityahu saw a path forward and acted on their own, to fulfill God's will. We are here today because they felt Hashem's presence in their lives, even in a time of silence.

From Yosef, to the Chashmonaim, to the soldiers of the IDF, our challenge has been constant. May we, in our own turbulent times, continue to see the Hand of Heaven in our lives. And may we find the wisdom to hear Hashem's voice, even when He is silent. ■

Rabbi Goldin is the author of the OU Press volumes "Unlocking the Torah Text," and "Unlocking the Haggada."

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Refusing Comfort, Keeping Hope

The deception has taken place. Joseph has been sold into slavery. His brothers dip his coat in blood. They bring it back to their father, saying: "Look what we have found. Do you recognise it? Is this your son's robe or not?" Jacob recognises it and replies, "It is my son's robe. A wild beast has devoured him. Joseph has been torn to pieces." We then read:

Jacob tore his clothes, put sackcloth on his loins, and mourned his son for many days. All his sons and daughters tried to comfort him, but he *refused to be comforted* and said, "I will go down to the grave [Sheol] mourning for my son. His father wept for him." (*Gen. 37:34-35*)

There are laws in Judaism about the limits of grief – *shiva*, *sheloshim*, a year. There is no such thing as a bereavement for which grief is endless. The Talmud says that God admonishes one who weeps beyond the appointed time, "You are not more compassionate than I."¹ And yet Jacob refuses to be comforted.

A Midrash gives a remarkable explanation.

"One can be comforted for one who is dead, but not for one who is still living," it says. In other words, Jacob refused to be comforted *because he had not yet given up hope that Joseph was still alive*. That, tragically, is the fate of those who have lost members of their family (the parents of soldiers missing in action, for example) but have as yet no proof that they are dead. They cannot go through the normal stages of mourning because they cannot abandon the possibility that the missing person is still capable of being rescued. Their continuing anguish is a form of loyalty; to give up, to mourn, to be reconciled to loss is a kind of betrayal. In such cases, grief lacks closure. To refuse to be comforted is to refuse to give up hope.

Yet on what basis did Jacob continue to hope? Surely he had recognised Joseph's blood-stained coat – he said explicitly, "It is my son's robe! A wild animal must have eaten him! Yosef has been torn limb from limb!" Do these words not mean that he had accepted that Joseph was dead?

The late David Daube made a suggestion

1. *Mo'ed Katan* 27b.

that I find convincing.² The words the sons say to Jacob – *haker na*, literally “identify it please” – have a quasi-legal connotation. Daube relates this passage to another, with which it has close linguistic parallels:

If a man gives a donkey, an ox, a sheep, or any other animal to his neighbour for safekeeping, and it dies or is injured or is taken away while no one is looking, the issue between them will be settled by the taking of an oath before the Lord that the neighbour did not lay hands on the other person's property...If it [the animal] was torn to pieces by a wild animal, he shall bring the remains as evidence and he will not be required to pay for the torn animal. (*Exodus 22:10-13*)

The issue at stake is the extent of responsibility borne by a guardian (*shomer*). If the animal is lost through negligence, the guardian is at fault and must make good the loss. If there is no negligence, merely *force majeure*, an unavoidable, unforeseeable accident, the guardian is exempt from blame. One such case is where the loss has been caused by a wild animal. The wording in the law – *toraf yitaref*, “torn to pieces” – exactly parallels Jacob's judgment in the case of Joseph: *toraf Yosef*, “Joseph has been torn to pieces/limb from limb.”

We know that some such law existed prior to the giving of the Torah. Jacob himself says to Laban, whose flocks and herds had been placed in his charge, “I did not bring you animals torn by wild beasts; I bore the loss myself” (Gen. 31:39). This implies that guardians even then were exempt from responsibility for the damage caused by wild animals. We also know that an elder brother

2. David Daube, *Studies in Biblical Law*, Cambridge: University Press, 1947.



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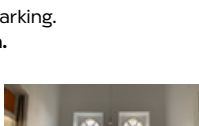
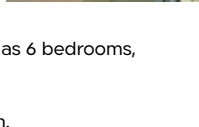
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carried a similar responsibility for the fate of a younger brother placed in his charge, as, for example, when the two were alone together. That is the significance of Cain's denial when confronted by God as to the fate of Abel: "Am I my brother's keeper [*shomer*]?" (Gen. 4:9)

We now understand a series of nuances in the encounter between Jacob and his sons upon their return without Joseph. Normally they would be held responsible for their younger brother's disappearance. To avoid this, as in the case of later biblical law, they "bring the remains as evidence." If those remains show signs of an attack by a wild animal, they must – by virtue of the law then operative – be held innocent. Their request to Jacob, *haker na*, must be construed as a legal request, meaning, "Examine the evidence." Jacob has no alternative but to do so, and by

virtue of what he has seen, to acquit them. A judge, however, may be forced to acquit someone accused of a crime because the evidence is insufficient to justify a conviction, while still retaining lingering private doubts. So Jacob was forced to find his sons innocent, without necessarily trusting what they said. In fact Jacob did not believe it, and his refusal to be comforted shows that he was unconvinced. He continued to hope that Joseph was still alive. That hope was eventually justified: Joseph was still alive, and father and son were ultimately reunited.

The refusal to be comforted sounded more than once in Jewish history. The prophet Jeremiah heard it in a later age:

This is what the Lord says: "A voice is heard in Ramah, Mourning and great weeping, Rachel weeping for her children *Refusing to be comforted*, Because her children are no more." This is what the Lord says: "Restrain your voice from weeping, And your eyes from tears, For your work will be rewarded," says the Lord. "They will return from the land of the enemy. So there is hope for your future," declares the Lord, "Your children will return to their own land." (*Jeremiah 31:15–17*)

Why was Jeremiah sure that Jews would return? Because they refused to be comforted – meaning, they refused to give up hope.

So it was during the Babylonian exile, as articulated in one of the most paradigmatic expressions of the refusal to be comforted:

By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept,
As we remembered Zion... How can we sing the songs of the Lord in a strange land?
If I forget you, O Jerusalem, May my right hand forget [its skill],
May my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth, If I do not remember you,
If I do not consider Jerusalem above my

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highest joy. (Psalms 137:1-6)

It is said that Napoleon, passing a synagogue on the fast day of Tisha b'Av, heard the sounds of lamentation. "What are the Jews crying for?" he asked one of his officers. "For Jerusalem," the soldier replied. "How long ago did they lose it?" "More than 1,700 hundred years." "A people who can mourn for Jerusalem so long, will one day have it restored to them," the emperor is reputed to have replied.

Jews are the people who refused to be comforted because they never gave up hope. Jacob did eventually see Joseph again. Rachel's children did return to the land. Jerusalem is once again the Jewish home. All the evidence may suggest otherwise: it may seem to signify irretrievable loss, a decree of history that cannot be overturned, a fate that must be accepted.

Jews never believed the evidence because they had something else to set against it – a faith, a trust, an unbreakable hope that proved stronger than historical inevitability. It is not too much to say that Jewish survival was sustained in that hope. And that hope came from a simple – or perhaps not so simple – phrase in the life of Jacob. He refused to be comforted. And so – while we live in a world still scarred by violence, poverty and injustice – must we. ■

These weekly teachings from **Rabbi Sacks** **zt"l** are part of his 'Covenant & Conversation' series on the weekly Torah teaching. With thanks to the Schimmel Family for their generous sponsorship, dedicated in loving memory of Harry (Chaim) Schimmel. Visit www.RabbiSacks.org for more.

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The Burden of Leadership

Parashat HaShavua this week is, perhaps, the most painful and troubling one in all of Sefer Breshit. Reading about the dissolution of Ya'akov's family — the sibling rivalries that had the brothers throw Yosef into a pit, which led to his enslavement and to the patriarch's unending grief — is a somber exercise, no matter how many times we revisit the saga.

Interestingly, the departure of Yehuda from his family soon after the sale of Yosef, part of the “unraveling” of the family, was seen by Chazal as a penalty for his failure to prevent the brothers from harming their younger sibling. This well-known statement of Chazal [see Shmot Rabbah 42:3] has always disturbed me. It was Yehudah, after all, who **succeeded** in convincing the brothers **not** to kill Yosef. It was he, therefore, who **saved** the life of Yosef. Why then, would Chazal point to Yehudah as the one who was punished for the brothers'

crime when, in fact, it was he who should have been **rewarded** for his actions??!

In a fascinating analysis of our haftarah [Amos 2:6 – 3:8], Rav Moshe Lichtenstein turns to the opening words of the selection as the key in understanding the ancients' dismay in the behavior of Yehuda. After harshly condemning the sinful ethos and immorality of Israel's neighbors (including the Kingdom of Yehuda), the prophet calls out Shomron for her misdeeds:

“They sell the righteous for silver - and the poor for a pair of shoes. They yearn that the dust of earth be on the head of the poor - and twist the way of the humble”

Rav Lichtenstein sees in the words of Amos that the corruption of the Northern Kingdom was more than immoral acts, but as a reflection of the attitude that was prevalent within the upper class - a depraved attitude toward the oppressed, the indigent and the needy. He sees the arrogance of the leadership and the elitists as more than a lack of regard and derision toward their brethren, but considering them as objects of manipulation. They did not see the general public as equal brothers but as tools to exploit, and means to advance, their own stature within the community.

The message of Amos, therefore, fits well to the sad story of the parasha.

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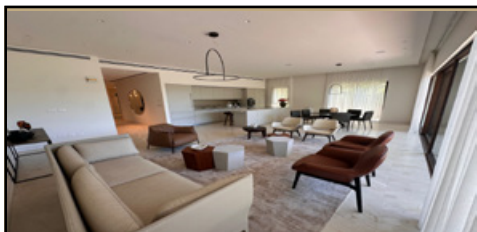
Ya'akov's sons toward Yosef reflected more than those emotions alone-it reflected the self-same lack of regard to their brother... and their father. Their desire to remove their "dreamer of dreams" spoke loudly of their desire to lord over, to control and to elevate themselves in the eyes of others – especially their father.

I would suggest, therefore, that Chazal's focus on Yehuda for his seemingly courageous act, was based upon their view that he was **THE leader** of the clan. His "compromise" to "merely" sell Yosef as a slave was not seen as a heroic act but as confirmation of the brothers' arrogant attitude to exploit Yosef for their own needs: the removal of Ya'akov's "favorite son" would improve their position vis a vis their father and their inheritance. Perhaps Chazal targeted Yehudah due to the rebuke of Amos who focused upon the leadership, the high officers and the influencers who shaped and impacted the very culture of the generation.

That is how they regarded Yehuda.

When Yehuda departed from his family, our Rabbis spoke for the brothers by quoting them as saying: "You told us to sell him! Had you told us to return him back home-we would have listened!!" A strange excuse for those who - themselves - were going to kill Yosef. But our ancient scholars might have well seen in the words of our haftarah the very message Hashem had was conveying to all future generations:

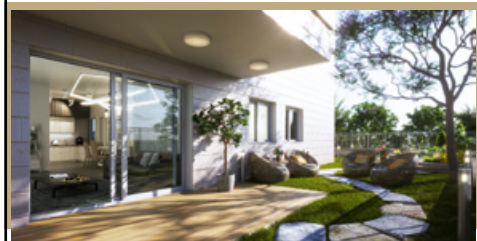
To see all of Israel as brethren, to empathize with the unfortunate....and to ensure that their leaders inspire the same. ■



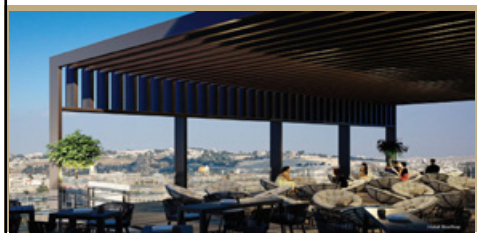
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From Regret to Rebuild

In Parashat Vayeishev, we read of one of the most painful moments in the Torah — the sale of Yosef. Immediately following this story, the Torah tells us that Yehuda left his brothers and found a wife.

The **Midrash** (Bereshit Rabbah 85) offers a fascinating perspective on this moment: "ויהי בעת ההוא" רבי שמואל בר נחמן פתח (ירמיה כט, יא): "כי אנכי ידעתי את המחשבת" – שבטים היו עסוקין במכירתו של יוסף, ויוסף היה עסוק בשקו ובתעניתו, ראובן היה עסוק בשקו ותעניתו, ויעקב היה עסוק בשקו ובתעניתו, ויהודה היה עסוק לקח לו אשה, והקדוש ברוך הוא היה עוסק בורא אורו של מלך המשיח.

"And it came to pass at that time," Rabbi

Shmuel bar Nachman began (Jeremiah 29:11): "For I know the thoughts." The tribes were busy selling Yosef, Yosef was busy with his sackcloth and fasting, Reuven was busy with his sackcloth and fasting, Yaakov was busy with his sackcloth and fasting, Yehuda was busy taking a wife for himself — and the Holy One, blessed be He, was busy creating the light of the King Messiah.

The Midrash paints a scene in which every character is absorbed in response to the tragedy. The brothers are stricken with guilt for selling Yosef. Reuven, who tried to save him, regrets not insisting that they let him go free. Yaakov blames himself for sending Yosef to Shechem. Yosef himself mourns, feeling perhaps that his own behavior provoked his brothers' jealousy.

Yet, in the midst of this national and familial grief, **Yehuda leaves** and gets married. On the surface, this seems disturbing. Did Yehuda not feel remorse? Why does the Midrash contrast his marriage with everyone else's repentance?

The Hemdat Yamim, quoting Rav Simcha Bunim of Peshischa, offers a profound answer. Repentance (*teshuvah*) is not meant to paralyze us in sadness or guilt; it is meant to **inspire renewal and action**. Feelings of regret are only the beginning of *teshuvah*. They must lead to constructive change.

Yehuda, a natural leader, recognized that he had failed to live up to his role. He should have stood up more firmly to save Yosef. Now, instead of remaining trapped in despair,

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Yehuda sought a way forward. His response was not only to repent, but to **rebuild** — to take initiative, to create life, and to ensure that from him would emerge a new generation of leaders who could do better.

The Midrash concludes that God, too, was “busy” — creating the light of Mashiach, who would ultimately come from Yehuda’s lineage. From Yehuda’s willingness to rebuild in the wake of failure came the seed of redemption: *“From Tamar came Oved, the father of Yishai, the father of David.”*

The **Rebbe of Kutzk** adds another dimension: Yehuda’s marriage symbolized a desire to start life anew, to begin again from the very first mitzvah — *pru u’rvu*, “be fruitful and multiply.” After the darkness of the Yosef episode, Yehuda longed to reenter the world of mitzvot, to restart his spiritual life from

the beginning.

The story of Yehuda teaches a powerful truth about the nature of *teshuva*. True repentance is not defined by how long we sit in sorrow, but by how courageously we rise to rebuild.

Yehuda’s greatness lay not in avoiding mistakes — he, like his brothers, failed. His greatness lay in his response: he transformed regret into renewal and guilt into growth. While others mourned what had been lost, Yehuda took the first step toward what could yet be created. From that step — an act of rebuilding when everything seemed broken — came the spark of Mashiach, the eternal light of hope.

When we stumble, may we remember Yehuda’s example: *Do not remain frozen in regret. Begin again. Create. Build. Act.* ■

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Reuven's Return

After considerable deliberation, Yosef is sold by his brothers to a caravan of Ishmaelite traders. Reuven, however, was not present at the time of the sale as the Torah relates that he returned to the pit where he suggested Yosef be held, in an attempt to save him from being condemned to death. “*Vayashav Reuven el habor ve’hinei ein Yosef babor vayikra et begadav* — And Reuven returned to the pit, and behold, Yosef was no longer there. He rent his garments [in grief].” (*Bereisheet* 37:29) Reuven expresses his distress to his brothers, bemoaning the loss of Yosef. Chazal teach, “*Vayashav Reuven* — and Reuven returned - repented,” this expression indicates that he was returning from repenting for the sin he committed by rearranging Yaakov Avinu’s bed into his mother’s tent.

The Midrash relates, “Hashem proclaimed: “Prior to you [Reuven] a man never sinned before me and then repented, indeed, you were the first to repent.” The Midrash concludes, “Reuven’s descendant, Hoshea, will also be one who will encourage others to do teshuvah, saying, “*Shuvah Yisrael.*”” (*Bereishit Rabbah* 84:18) Obviously we must ask, we know there were others before Reuven, such as Adam and Kayin, who sinned and

did teshuvah. What then is the meaning of the Midrash?

One approach is offered by Rav Yitzchak Meir ben Menachem. Adam and Kayin only engaged in teshuvah after Hashem confronted them with their wrongdoing. Hashem **asked** Adam if he ate from the tree, Hashem **asked** Kayin where his brother was. Hashem opened the conversation to guide them to recognize their error and repent for their sins. Reuven, however, was the first to take initiative toward teshuvah, hence, the language of the Midrash, “*patachta*,” you “opened;” you identified your error and took steps to repair it.

Rav Moshe Feiveitz zt”l in *Siach Moshe* shares a different approach. Reuven genuinely believed that he acted appropriately to protect his mother’s honor. Nevertheless, after further contemplation, he realized his wrongdoing and undertook the process to make amends. Thus, he is described as the first to do teshuvah “before Hashem,” since his repentance was vis a vis his recognition of the rupture in his relationship with Hashem. Reuven is the model of one who objectively examines his deeds and discerns that what appeared to him as outstanding conduct was indeed wanting in the eyes of Hashem.

In *Alei Shur*, Rav Wolbe zt”l explains that since we are created *be’tzeelm Elokim* — in G-d’s image, we are connected to Hashem as a shadow follows the movement of an object. It is only our sins that creates a disruption

in this relationship, like something obstructing the source of light causing a shadow to disappear. Viduy is the process by which we can reconnect and repair our Divine bond. Teshuvah is not a time bound mitzvah; each day we can recreate the closeness between us and Hashem. “*Salachti Ke’devarecha* — I have forgiven according to your word.” When we sincerely ask for forgiveness and say, “*Selach na* — [Hashem] please forgive,” and express the desire for a close relationship, Hashem grants our request.

Reuven is the paradigm of one who engages in honest introspection and does teshuvah without prompting. He is the example for us to increase our self-awareness and continuously examine our ways, working to strengthen and improve our relationship with Hashem. ■



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SIMCHAT SHMUEL

BY RABBI SAM SHOR
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As we look forward with anticipation and prepare for *Chanukah* this coming week, I'd like to reflect upon and offer a new perspective on one of the most familiar concepts associated with *Chanukah*. We are all familiar with the formula proscribed by *halacha* as to how we are to kindle our *Chanukah* lights, by lighting one candle on the first night of *Chanukah*, and adding one candle for each subsequent night, in accordance with the opinion of *Beit Hillel*, that one must always seek to increase and ascend in holiness, rather than decrease—*maalin b'kodesh v'ein moridin*.

The great *Yerushalmi Mekubal*, **Rav Gamliel Rabinovitch shlita**, explains that our practice to increase in holiness by adding one candle each night throughout the entire eight nights of *Chanukah* actually serves as powerful paradigm for the way in which we are meant to grow in our *Avodat Hashem*. *Yiddishkeit* is not an all or nothing enterprise, spiritual growth needs to be incremental, one step at a time, rather than running too fast. Each step we take, must be given the chance to take hold, before we take the next step.

It is interesting to note that there is an alternative version of the story of *Chanukah* which

appears in the early rabbinic/midrashic collection known as the *Pesikta Rabbati*. In this account, upon entering the *Beit Hamikdash*, which was defiled by the Greeks, the *Chashmonaim* find not a small jar of oil, rather ***shmoneh shipudei barzel- eight iron spears***, which they bound together as a makeshift *menora* and lit eight lights within this makeshift *menora*.

In this version of the story, the *Chashmonaim* find the *Beit HaMikdash* in a complete state of impurity, and even the *menora* was either destroyed or rendered impure and unusable. In that challenging moment, rather than despair, they found those eight iron spears, weapons that had been used for destruction and harm, the spoils of war, and bound them together to restore light and holiness within the walls of the *Beit HaMikdash*, and the entire world.

Reb Tzadok HaKohain MiLublin zy'a, points to this *midrash*, and suggests that the eternal message of *Chanukah* is actually quite clear—when there is a will, there always is a way. When we put our minds and hearts to serving *Hashem*, even in seemingly trying times or difficult circumstances, we can often find new strength and discover new opportunities to achieve and bring goodness into the world.

Perhaps this depiction of what transpired when the *Chashmonaim* re-entered the *Beit HaMikdash*, is an even stronger illustration of the *halachic* principle of *maalin bkodesh v'ein moridin*—taking those weapons, those vessels intended to cause harm, and elevating



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those very vessels into something sacred, to become the conduit to restore the lights of holiness both within the *Beit HaMikdash*, and subsequently the light that lives on through each of our *chanukiyot* as well.

Ultimately the *yom tov* of *Chanukah* is meant to inspire each of us to look at the world through the proverbial lens of *maalin b'kodosh vein moridin*- to seek opportunities to transform that which might be mundane or even profane, and elevate those very items and circumstances and make them sacred.

May our *Nerot Chanukah*, inspire each of us to see the great opportunities that exist each and every day to experience growth and transformation, to sanctify the mundane and profane, and may we have the spiritual strength to persevere and rise above any of life's challenges, one step at a time, *maalin bkodesh v'ein moridin....Chanukah Sameach*. ■



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Isaac Babel was a Russian journalist and playwright, acclaimed as the greatest writer of Russian Jewry. Conscripted as a soldier he eventually became a correspondent in the Russian cavalry, and later wrote of the heinous exploits of the violent Cossacks in his book, *Red Cavalry*. Professor Eli Weisel, zy'a, often spoke of Babel's ongoing crisis of identity and seeming appreciation for violence and bloodthirst, and shared a story, related by his *talmid muvhak*, Rav Dr. Ariel Burger:

While traveling across Poland and the Ukraine with the Russian army, Babel's battalion arrived in the shtetl of Chernobyl. While he was far from observance and Jewish values, Babel had somehow not forgotten his holy roots. Upon hearing there was a famous Rabbi in the town, he decided he would go 'set him straight' and tell him that the world

had evolved, that Jewish history was over and religion was no longer relevant.

And so he set out to find Rebbe Shlomo Ben Zion Twersky, zy'a, the Chernobyler Rebbe. The streets were empty, as all the Jews had fled or were hiding from the ruthless Cossacks. When he arrived at the home of the Rebbe, it was eerily quiet. Going from room to room, he found no one. Eventually, Babel reached the study, and to his surprise, there was the Rebbe, sitting peacefully, so completely engrossed in study that he didn't even notice his stare. After a few long minutes, the Rebbe looked up from his sefer. Seeing beneath the surface of Babel's uniform, the Rebbe smiled, and warmly asked, 'My dear Jew, what can I do for you?'

Babel was completely stunned. Overwhelmed by the presence and response of the *tzadik*, the Russian officer forgot what he'd been planning to say. Describing the experience, he wrote '...Suddenly, a cry that was not mine came out of my mouth... perhaps it was my grandfather's; I heard myself say, "Rebbe, bless me with *hislahavus*, please give me fervor!"'

אֵלֶּה הַדּוֹרוֹת יַעֲקֹב יוֹסֵף בֶּן־שִׁבְעֵ-עָשָׂר שָׁנָה
הָיָה רָעָה אֶת־אֶחָיו בְּצֹאן וְהוּא נֶעַר... וַיָּבֹא יוֹסֵף
אֶת־דְּבָרָם רָעָה אֶל־אֲבִיָּהֶם:

These are the generations of Yaakov: when Yosef was seventeen years old, being a shepherd, he was with his brothers with the flocks, and he was a lad... and Yosef brought evil tales about them to their father. (37:2)

Our sedra thus begins by introducing the



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generations of Yaakov, their dwellings and journeys. At the same time, it pinpoints what lies at the root of their wanderings and descent to the depths of Mitzrayim — namely, Yosef's 'disconnect' from his family and community, and his being sold into slavery, exiled when he was a mere seventeen years old.

Regarding the birth of Yosef earlier in *Sefer Bereishis*, Rashi comments on the deep connection between father and son and frames the reason that Yosef is singled out as his father's 'offspring' or 'generations':

וַיְהִי כִּפְאֻשׁ יִלְדָּה רָחֵל אֶת-יוֹסֵף וַיֵּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב אֶל-
לְבָן שְׁלַחֲנִי וְאֶלְכָה אֶל-מְקוֹמִי וְלֵאמֹר:

It came to pass when Rachel had borne Yosef, that Yaakov said to Lavan, "Send me away, and I will go to my place and to my land." (30:25)

On the other hand, Yosef's separation and descent is also the beginning of Am Yisrael's reunion and victorious ascent out of exile. In our sedra, Rashi cites the pasuk in *Sefer Ova-diah* (1:18), וְהָיָה בֵּית יַעֲקֹב אֵשׁ וּבֵית יוֹסֵף לֵהבָהּ וּבֵית, עֵשׂוֹ לֶקֶשׁ, comparing Yosef to a flame emanating from the fire of Yaakov, and likening Eisav — representing the nations that exile us and distance us from our souls' purpose — to stubble and straw. A fire (Yaakov) without a flame (Yosef) does not burn anything (Eisav) at a distance (our lowly exile).

Rashi continues:

אֵשׁ בְּלֹא לֵהבָהּ אֵינוֹ שׁוֹלֵט לְמַרְחֹק, מִשְׁנֹלֵד יוֹסֵף
בֵּטָח יַעֲקֹב בַּהֲקִבָּהּ וְרָצָה לְשׁוֹב:

"A fire without a focused flame is ineffective"; it is only the flame of Yosef which is *Sholeit m'rachok*, capable of controlling and ruling over distances, and this is the flame that will eventually consume 'Eisav'. In the presence of this flame, Yaakov himself is motivated to part with Lavan and return

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As the Sfas Emes explains, the "eish of Yaakov" is a metaphor for the fire of Torah, while the *levhavah*, the flame of Yosef, is the *hislahavus*, the passion and enthusiasm we cultivate in our Torah study and fulfilment of its *mitzvos*.

Sometimes one may feel far removed from mitzvah observance and see ourselves as living in a way which is not ideal. We may

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feel alienated or even exiled from aspects of *Yidishkeit* or communal life, distant from *hislahavus* in Torah study or mitzvot. However, the more removed from someone or something that our soul truly loves and desires, the more we may long for reconnection and reunion. This is the expression of the flame of Yosef, representing the *lehavah* that is *sholeit m'rachok*, that reaches and rules over great distances. No matter how far we may feel, the fire of our Jewish soul continues to burn, and can emanate forth like a flame to consume our exile and illuminate the darkness.

This week we prepare to reveal the powerful flames of Chanukah.

Our Sages explain that the Divine light, the presence of the Shechinah, does not express itself in this world למטה מעשרה, “beneath ten *tefachim* from the ground”, however, on Chanukah, the Divine light does descend below ten *tefachim*, reaching the lowest places and illuminate every forgotten corner and crevice. According to Kabbalistic tradition, the *menorah* is placed below ten *tefachim*, to represent the spiritual poverty and fallen, exiled state of Klal Yisrael at the time of Chanukah. Countless Jews had become Hellenized, assimilating into Greek culture, the Beis haMikdash had been impurified and they even seemed to appreciate that. Indeed, it appeared to them as if Jewish history was over and fiery Torah study and mitzvah observance was no longer relevant.

The miracle of Chanukah touches even those who struggle to find meaning and connection throughout the year feel moved to take part in the *avodah* of Chanukah. The lights of the menorah shine outward with great reach and universal appeal, warming

the souls of those who feel far away, and reuniting them with their soul and family. On Chanukah, no Jew is far, for these flames are *sholeit m'rachok*, illuminating the lowest ‘places’ in our lives, below ten *tefachim*.

May we allow the flames to summon the parts of us that struggle to embrace our true brilliance. May they awaken our passion for mitzvot and our *hislahavus* for Torah, and may we all be reunited at last in Yerushalayim, and behold the inauguration of the Beis haMikdash and the kindling of the golden menorah in great joy. ■



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Words of Introduction by
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CHANUKAH SECTION *Laws & Review*



SETTING *up the* CHANUKIYA

One should prepare his Chanukiya well in advance of lighting time, so that there will not be a delay in lighting at the proper time. Especially so on Friday because things get hectic as Shabbat approaches. (And especially NOT SO for Motza"Sh lighting - no preparation for lighting after Shabbat may be done on Shabbat).

Some have the custom of setting up their Chanukiya in the morning for the evening (this goes for every day – except Shabbat, of course). This not only serves the practical purpose, as above, but it also commemorates the practice in the

Beit HaMikdash called Hatavat HaNeirot, whereby the Kohen (Gadol) tended the Menora and prepared it in the morning for kindling in late afternoon. Since our lighting on Chanukah directly commemorates the lighting of the Menora in the Beit HaMikdash, this suggestion provides a nice “added touch” to the mitzva and symbolism.

AL HANISIM is added to every Amida and Birkat HaMazon throughout Chanukah. There is no reference to Chanukah in BRACHA MEI'EIN SHALOSH (a.k.a. AL HAMICHYA).

Forgetting AL HANISIM does NOT invalidate either the Amida or Birkat HaMazon.

That means that neither is to be repeated because of the omission.

However, if one realizes the omission before the end of the Amida, AL HANISIM can be said right before YIHU L'RATZON, with the modified introduction, below. In Birkat HaMazon, an omitted AL HANISIM becomes a HARACHAMAN, right before HARACHAMANHU Y'ZAKEINU, as follows (there are variant texts for this)...

הַרְחֵמֵנוּ הוּא יַעֲשֶׂה לָנוּ נִסִּים וְנִפְלְאוֹת בְּשֵׁם
שְׁעֵשִׂית לְאַבוּתֵינוּ בְּנִמִּים הָהֵם בְּזִמְן הַזֶּה, בְּיָמֵי
מִתְתִּיחָו...
...מִתְתִּיחָו...

BRACHOT *before* LIGHTING

Brachot should be recited BEFORE beginning to light the candles. This complies with the general rule for Brachot of Mitzva, that they be recited immediately before performance of the mitzva, if possible. This means, that on the first night, wait until all three brachot are said before lighting the candle. And, even on the eighth night, don't start lighting the candles until you finish both brachot.

(Some hold that this applies to the first b'racha - the mitzva b'racha, but not necessarily to the other b'rachot. Check with your Rav if you are not sure which opinion to follow.)

PLACEMENT *of the* CANDLES

Opinions differ, but a common practice is to place the first candle (or oil cup) in the right side of the Chanukiya. If one lights at

the doorpost, then the first candle should be closest to the doorpost, even if it is the left side of the Chanukiya. From the second night on, the custom (one of the customs) is to place the candles (or all) from right to left, and to light it, left to right.

At the doorpost, one adds it from the doorpost out, and lights it starting with the candle closest to the doorpost.

ESSENCE *and* HIDUR

The essential performance of the mitzva of Chanukah is the lighting of a single candle each night. The custom that we follow of increasing the number of candles each night is a HIDUR MITZVA (enhancement of the mitzva).

It is because the first candle you light fulfills the mitzva, that the b'rachot should be said before any lighting.

One practice that has developed because of the distinction between the first candle and the others, is to begin reciting/singing HANEIROT HALALU after the first candle is lit, while lighting the others. Alternatively, one can wait until the lighting is done to say HANEIROT HALALU. Stick to family practice, unless good reason to switch.

RIGHT *after* LIGHTING

One should not just light the Chanukah candles (and sing Maoz Tzur) and then go on to business as usual, but rather one should look at the candles for a while, ponder G-d's miracles, spend some time with the family talking about the message of Chanukah

and how it relates to our time, play a little dreidel, sing a song or two, have a special Chanukah snack, have some Chanukah fun. And most importantly, the learning of TORAH should be part of lighting. It is recommended to learn some Torah, share a Dvar Torah, have a family shiur... right after candle lighting (or sometime in the evening).

The decrees of the Greeks included a ban on learning Torah. Our celebrating Chanukah marks our freedom from Greek oppression, including the ability to learn Torah in public without fear. So let's do just that!

INDOORS/ OUTDOORS

The original place for lighting and displaying of the Chanukiya was outdoors at the entrance to one's home or courtyard.

Over many generations in exile, where lighting outdoors was inconvenient (weather-wise) to say the least, and often dangerous ("neighbors"), the practice evolved to light indoors.

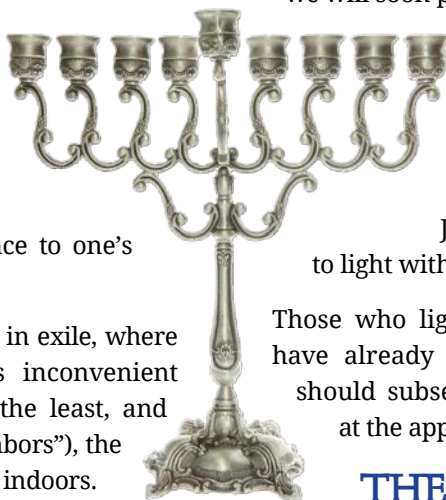
When lighting inside the home – for whatever reason - the one place that the Chanukiya should not be placed is where the Shabbat candles usually are. They need to be in an eye-catching, attention-grabbing location so they can serve their function of Publicizing the Miracles. Many people who have come to Israel, still light inside, at the window, as they had been doing in their countries of origin. Others have gone back

to the original practice of lighting outdoors, which is common in Israel - especially in Jerusalem.

When lighting outdoors, the candles are usually protected from getting blown out by being placed inside a specially made box.

WHEN TO LIGHT Weeknights

There are two opinions as to when is the ideal time to light Chanukah lights during the week (i.e. except for Friday and Motza"Sh, when Shabbat affects the timing, as we will soon present).



Minhag Yerushalayim (which many, but not everyone in Jerusalem follow – and some outside Jerusalem do follow) is to light with the setting of the sun.

Those who light with sunset should have already davened Mincha, and should subsequently daven Maariv at the appropriate time.

THE OTHER OPINION

The "rest of the Jewish world" lights when the "light of the sun has left the sky", i.e.

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UNTIL WHEN?

Candles must burn at least a half hour after **צאת הכוכבים**. This was the original (time of the Gemara) time period after dark that people were still around outdoors and became the definition of the time range for **PIRSUMEI NISA**, publicizing the miracle.

Although in our day, people are out later than this time, the halacha only requires the half hour after stars-out.

However, it is recommended that one use longer candles or more oil to extend this time (somewhat), in recognition of the expansion of the current-day Pirsumei Nisa time-frame. We would further suggest that one's candles should stay lit at least a half hour after the latest stars-out time, namely Rabbeinu Tam time. This is only a recommendation, not in any way meant to be a halachic ruling.

HOW EARLY *can one* LIGHT?

When necessary, one may light as early as **PLAG MINCHA** (1¼ halachic hours before sunset). This is by no means preferable, but if circumstances are such that you have to

light early - leaving town, and the like, then **PLAG** is the earliest.

LIGHTING *for* שבת

It is preferable to daven Mincha before lighting Chanukah candles, but one should not miss out on a minyan to daven before lighting. Chanukah candles should be lit

BEFORE Shabbat candles - even if different people are lighting each. Count on 5-10 minutes before the posted Shabbat lighting time; adjust according to your household's experience.

IN JERUSALEM...

Some follow the practice of delaying Shabbat candle lighting for 20 minutes and lighting Chanukah candles right before Shabbat candles.

For other cities where candle lighting is 30 min. before sunset one should ask his/her local Rav.

HAVDALAH *and* CANDLE LIGHTING

The general practice, when lighting at home, is to say Havdalah before lighting the menorah.

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Chanukah CANDLE LIGHTING

KAVANA: One should have in mind to fulfill the Rabbinic Mitzva (with Torah backing) of **NER CHANUKAH** plus the **HIDUR MITZVA** of the extra candles (each night after the first).

One should acknowledge G-d and thank Him for the Chanukah miracles in particular, and for all His miracles and kindnesses in general.



בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר
קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ לְהַדְלִיק נֵר (שֶׁל)
חֲנֻכָּה.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם שֶׁעָשָׂה
נִסִּים לְאַבֹּתֵינוּ בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם בְּזֶמַן הַזֶּה.

On the first night add:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם שֶׁהַחֲיָנוּ וְקִיָּמָנוּ וְהִגִּיעָנוּ לְזֶמַן
הַזֶּה

הַנִּרְוֹת הִלְלוּ אֶנוּ מַדְלִיקִין, עַל הַנִּסִּים וְעַל הַנִּפְלְאוֹת וְעַל הַתְּשׁוּעוֹת
וְעַל הַמַּלְחָמוֹת, שֶׁעָשִׂיתָ לְאַבֹּתֵינוּ בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם בְּזֶמַן הַזֶּה, עַל יָדֵי
כֹּהֲנֶיךָ הַקְּדוֹשִׁים. וְכָל שְׁמוֹנֵת יָמֵי חֲנֻכָּה, הַנִּרְוֹת הִלְלוּ קִדְּשׁ הוּ, וְאִין
לָנוּ רְשׁוֹת לְהִשְׁתַּמֵּשׁ בָּהֶן, אֶלָּא לְרְאוּתָן בְּלִבָּד, כְּדִי לְהוֹדוֹת וּלְהַלֵּל
לְשִׁמְךָ הַגָּדוֹל, עַל נִסֶּיךָ וְעַל נִפְלְאוֹתֶיךָ וְעַל יְשׁוּעָתֶךָ



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Walking Between Nigleh and Nistar

The miracle of Chanukah is the only miracle we commemorate that occurred after the closing of Tanach. It unfolded in an age devoid of prophecy, when the prophetic era had already ended.

Because the story of Chanukah isn't recorded in Tanach, many of its details remain obscured. The battles are described in several volumes known as the Book of Maccabim, written by various historians, but these works were never canonized by Chazal.

We also have little clarity about how the dates of Chanukah were first determined. The chagim of the Torah are anchored to specific days designated by Hashem.

Purim—established by Esther and Mordechai and later affirmed by the Anshei Knesset Ha-Gedolah—comes with a clear account of how its date was chosen. The celebration was set for the day after the victory. In Shushan, where the battle continued an extra day, the rejoicing was accordingly delayed. We can therefore trace exactly how Purim entered

the calendar and why it is observed on two distinct days.

By contrast, regarding Chanukah, we do not possess the same depth of information. The choice of the twenty-fifth of Kislev is clear: it was the day the Mikdash was purified and the Mizbei'ach rededicated. What is less obvious is not the date itself, but the length of the chag.

EIGHT DAYS: A THOUSAND ANSWERS

In the sixteenth century, the Beit Yosef posed his famous question: Why was Chanukah established as an eight-day festival when the miracle itself spanned only seven? One day's worth of pure oil had been found—sufficient for the first night—and the Menorah would have burned naturally during those initial hours. Only over the next seven days did the oil continue to burn in a miraculous fashion. If the miracle lasted seven days, why was the Yom Tov set for eight?

This question has famously inspired an extraordinary outpouring of answers. In the nineteenth century, a work entitled *Ner L'Meah* was published, gathering one hundred solutions to the Beit Yosef's question. More recently, an expanded collection has appeared, assembling one thousand proposed answers.

Chanukah helped energize the emerging

Mazal Tov to
Rabbi Chanoch & Esti Yeres
and family on the marriage
of their son

world of Torah sheba'al peh, and within that setting the question of an eight-day chag drew considerable attention. The thousand answers that accumulated over time testify to the creative reach of Torah sheba'al peh.

PORTIONS OR REFILLS?

In addressing his own question, the Beit Yosef cites a well-known answer from Rav Aharon HaKohen of Lunel (the thirteenth-century French author of the *Orchot Chayim*). According to his view, the pure oil was divided into eight equal portions, and each night they lit only a small fraction. That small measure burned throughout the entire night. In this scenario, the miracle was experienced on all eight days, as each portion provided light far beyond its natural capacity.

After citing this answer and arguing against it, the Beit Yosef then offers two explanations of his own. In his second approach, he suggests that the oil was entirely consumed each night, and the bays atop the menorah that held the oil were miraculously refilled from above. The miracle was already evident on the first night—once the oil had burned out, they found the container replenished. Since the wonder was revealed immediately, Chazal instituted Chanukah as a full eight-day festival.

IS A “NES” PART OF HALACHA?

This second answer of the Beit Yosef raises an intriguing question. According to the *Orchot Chayim*, the oil had been divided into eight portions. The oil which they lit would have been natural; the miracle would simply be that a small quantity of natural oil burned for an extended time.

But in the Beit Yosef's scenario, the entire supply of pure oil was consumed on the first night, and the bowls were then refilled miraculously with supernatural oil. After

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the first night the entire supply of oil was supernatural. Can such oil be used in the performance of a mitzvah?

This question—whether supernatural materials may be used in the performance of a mitzvah—already surfaces among the Rishonim. Tosafot in Menachot (69b) suggest that miraculous challah could, in theory, be used for the Shte HaLechem offering on Shavuot. Yet others argue that the world of halacha is anchored in the natural order and applies only to objects that arise within that framework. Halacha was given to human beings who inhabit the natural world, and items that emerge through miraculous intervention stand outside its domain.

Evidently, however, the Beit Yosef adopted the view that such materials could be used, for he allowed completely supernatural oil—renewed each night to refill empty bowls—to serve as the basis for fulfilling the mitzvah.

REASON OR REVELATION?

This specific question—whether

Mazal Tov to

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and family on the birth of a

great-granddaughter

supernatural materials may be used in the performance of a mitzvah—touches upon a broader discussion: Is halacha shaped by supernatural input?

The famous episode of the Tanur shel Achnai (Bava Metzia 59) highlights the distinction between heavenly signs and the halachic process. The Tannaim debated whether a refurbished oven could become tamei. Most held that it could, while R. Eliezer ben Horkenos remained convinced that it could not. Even when he invoked miraculous signs to support his position, Chazal ruled against him, citing the pasuk in Nitzavim, “Lo ba-shamayim hi”—teaching that halacha is determined through human reasoning, not through supernatural intervention.

To be sure, this was not universally adopted. Some Rishonim issued rulings based not only on their own logic but also on encounters with Eliyahu HaNavi (as noted by the Ra’avad, Hilchot Lulav 8:5) or on dream-responsa, such as those recorded in *She’eilos u’Teshuvos Min HaShamayim*, authored by a French Tosafist in the thirteenth century.

Still, our mesorah generally maintained a division between halacha and the realm of the supernatural.

This distinction mirrors a deeper duality within our tradition. Our Masorah has long recognized two realms: the realm of nigleh, shaped by human reasoning as it attempts to decode the divine will, and the realm of nistar, which speaks to dimensions of reality that lie beyond human analysis. These two realms were preserved as distinct, each contributing something essential to our religious experience.

THE MASORAH OF NIGLEH — RATIONALITY

The world of nigleh and halachic reasoning

gives us a pathway to grasp Hashem’s will. Though monotheism teaches that we cannot comprehend Hashem Himself, we can study and analyze His commands. By employing our intellect—one of the great gifts Hashem has given us—we strive to understand His will and draw nearer to Him.

The realm of nigleh not only granted us access to an otherwise incomprehensible God; it also anchored religious life in the rhythms of daily existence. When religion becomes purely supernatural, it risks drifting away from real experience. Rituals stand apart, confined to isolated moments and to a different sphere of experience, without shaping the flow of everyday life. By establishing a vast halachic world that speaks to every dimension of human experience—and does so through rational categories—the Torah ensures that our religious life, and with it our awareness of Hashem, permeates the ordinary moments of each day.

Finally, the rationalist strain shaped our national experience as well. As a people, we were consistently practical, seeking rational and workable responses to the struggles we faced. We did not retreat into prophecy or supernatural expectation; we confronted reality with resolve and looked for practical solutions.

THE MASORAH OF NISTAR — SUPERNATURALISM

Yet just as the world of nigleh formed the foundation of our Masorah, the realm of nistar also shaped our national identity. At key moments in Jewish history, nistar offered insight and direction, becoming especially influential during three pivotal eras of Jewish history.

In the wake of the destruction of the Second Mikdash and the brutal persecution of our people under Rome, R. Shimon bar Yochai’s

Zohar affirmed our unbreakable bond with Hashem. Even as it seemed that Hashem had departed from Yerushalayim and abandoned His people, the Zohar spoke of a mystical union between Hashem and Israel. The rational world felt dark and desolate, but in the hidden world that union remained whole. In that realm, the marriage was unshaken. The Zohar offered hope and resilience during one of the bleakest chapters of Jewish history.

Fast forward thirteen hundred years. Our people had endured four centuries of hardship—pogroms, Crusader massacres, blood libels, and relentless discrimination throughout Western Europe. This culminated in the Spanish Inquisition at the end of the fifteenth century. The Jewish world was torn apart and scattered across the globe.

In this setting, the Ari HaKadosh articulated central elements of Kabbalah that spoke to a world already broken from the very start of creation. He described a cosmos shaped by *shevirat ha-keilim*, a primordial fracture that set the stage for human experience. He also emphasized that human beings play an active role in repairing this broken reality, and that suffering—tragic as it is—forms part of the process of *tikkun*. This language offered a different way to view a shattered world. It provided meaning and became deeply resonant as our people slowly began to recover from the trauma of three centuries of persecution.

In the eighteenth century, Chassidut drew upon the redemptive elements of Kabbalah and the world of nistar. By then, Jewish exile felt long, dark, and increasingly hopeless. The Jewish world seemed to fray under internal conflict and external pressure, as though we

were drifting farther from redemption rather than moving toward it. Chassidut, by invoking Kabbalah, reminded us that redemption is not measured only by what the eye can discern. Every Jew carries a spark of Hashem within—not merely being created in His image, but bearing His presence. Even those who appeared distant or sinful remained bound to an intimate relationship with Hashem, and that bond enabled them to take part in a hidden yet profoundly redemptive drama.

Our Masorah has always offered both a rational world of nigleh and a non-empirical world of Kabbalah—two distinct lenses through which we view reality. For the most part, the rational lens remained dominant, though different cultures incorporated varying degrees of mystical thought into their religious consciousness. At crucial points in our long exile, the lens of Kabbalah became essential for processing a world that appeared random, irrational, and harshly discriminatory toward our people. ■



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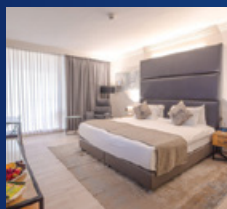
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Listening Between the Questions

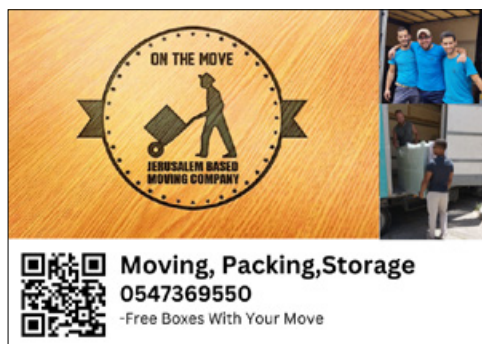
Why does Amos choose to speak not in answers, but in questions? In this week's Haftorah (Amos 3), the Navi doesn't open with accusation or warning. Instead, he presents a cascade of rhetorical questions — each one too obvious to answer, yet impossible to ignore. If two people are walking together, isn't it because they agreed to meet? Does a lion roar when there is no prey? Does a young lion cry out before a successful catch? Does a bird fall into a trap without bait? Does a trap spring up for no reason? When the shofar sounds in a city — can anyone remain calm?

Every question points to the same truth: effects have causes; reality isn't random. A roar means prey. A shaking net means something is caught. A shofar blast means alarm. So too, when the Jewish people experience suffering, it is not arbitrary. There is meaning. There is a message. "Could evil come to a city and Hashem not be behind it?" (3:6) Yet these images are not only about consequence — they are warnings. A roar alerts us to move. A rattling trap signals us to be careful. A shofar awakens us to pay attention.

Amos teaches that Hashem never acts without first calling out to us. He sends

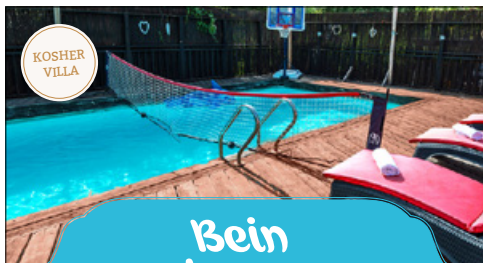
prophets before punishment; signals before consequences; wake-up calls before change. He asks the final question that transforms the listener into a participant: יִרָא אֲדֹנָי שָׁאֵג מִי לֹא יִרָא A lion has roared, who can but fear? My Sovereign G-d has spoken, who can but prophesy? If Hashem's voice is in the moment, how can one remain silent? If the world is shaking, how can we remain unmoved?

Amos turns the questions toward us. Hashem's rhetorical questions are meant to awaken our questions. What are the rumblings in our lives? What shofar blasts are demanding our attention? Which disruptions are not accidents, but invitations? Perhaps that is the deeper message of this chapter: G-d's questions prompt us to question ourselves. Instead of asking, "Why is this happening?" we might ask, "What is Hashem asking of me through this?" This Haftorah reminds us that Hashem's voice is not only in comfort. Sometimes His love arrives as a roar — not to terrify, but to awaken; not to condemn, but to guide us home. ■



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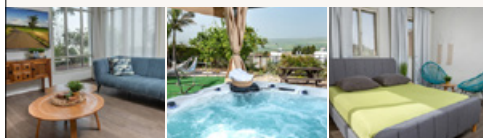
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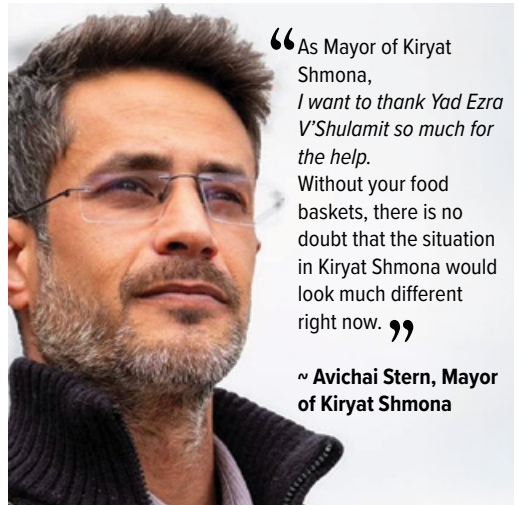
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RABBI AARON GOLDSCHIEDER

EDITOR, TORAH TIDBITS
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Joseph and Chanukah

There is meaning in and symbolism to every detail of the Jewish calendar. Chanukah always falls on the Shabbat when the Torah reading tells the story of Joseph and his brothers.

Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik believed that this bears witness to the fact that there is a link between the events surrounding Joseph's experience and our Chanukah celebration... even today.

The story of Joseph tells of the devastating break-up of the sons of Jacob.

Joseph is hated by his brothers and is ostracized from the rest of his family.

However, ultimately there is a reconciliation. The brothers regret their unfortunate actions. Joseph heroically forgives his siblings. Joseph did not simply forgive them and suppress his

resentment for their abuse of him. Rather, he loved them and cared for them as if nothing had happened, telling them that he feels toward them as he does to Benjamin, who was not involved in the kidnapping (Rashi, Genesis 45:12). The family, the children of Israel are reunited, they are one.

Like the biblical story of Joseph and his brothers the Chanukah story echoes a similar drama. There was a rift within the Jewish people. There was a severe clash of ideas and ideals between two factions. There were the Chashmonaim, those that held fast to Torah law on one side and the 'Hellenists' on the other. This was a dangerous schism which split the Jewish people and threatened our very survival as nation.

Chanukah not only celebrates a military victory and the return to the Temple in Jerusalem. Maybe more important, Chanukah celebrates a fractured people coming together again; a reconciliation and a return to brotherhood.

The Talmud says (Shabbat 22b) that they waited a year until they established Chanukah as a new holiday. "Why?" asked Rabbi Soloveitchik. The Sages waited to see if there was true reconciliation between the Jewish people. It was insufficient just to remove the physical *tumah*, impurity, from the Temple, but the spiritual *tumah*, the 'impurity' of divisiveness and strife had to be removed as well. The nation of Israel had to make peace with one another. And they did.

Chanukah teaches us that making peace is an essential ingredient towards redemption.

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Joseph makes peace with his brothers; the *Chashmonaim* and the Hellenists came together once again and unified our people. This is the great celebration of Chanukah!

Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook, when he was the Chief Rabbi of Palestine had many detractors. His critics slandered him and hung posters criticizing his positions on matters of policy and religious observance. When he walked through the narrow streets of the Holy City, his enemies would even go so far as to empty their chamber pots on him.

It once came to pass that one of Rabbi Kook's most rancorous opponents needed a letter that had to be signed by none other than the Chief Rabbi himself. Too embarrassed to face Rabbi Kook directly, the man sent a messenger in his stead. The messenger went to the Rabbi's office and asked him to write the letter. Rabbi Kook sat down right away and wrote the letter. When he finished he put down his pen and gave the messenger the letter, but almost immediately asked for it back.

Rabbi Kook opened the letter and reread it word for word. He then gave it back to the messenger who left before Rabbi Kook could change his mind again. Rabbi Kook's assistant,



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puzzled by this, asked, "Why did the Rabbi want to see the letter he had just written?"

Rabbi Kook answered. "I reread the letter because I wanted to be certain that it did not appear to be written with any lack of enthusiasm and I wanted to make sure that even subconsciously I did not hold back in any way from supporting this person."

The lesson of this story may be best captured in the beloved words of Rabbi Kook himself. He said, "The Temple was destroyed due to senseless hatred, the Temple will therefore be rebuilt with senseless love". ■



Rabbi Goldscheider's most recent OU Press Publication, "Torah United" on the weekly Parsha, can be ordered directly from Rabbi Goldscheider at aarong@ouisrael.org at a special price for Torah Tidbits readers.

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Intention when Tying *Tzitzit*

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Question: I am involved with a branch of the broad efforts to make *tzitzit* for IDF soldiers. We always have people say before tying that they are doing so for the *mitzva* of *tzitzit*. However, we received a *p'sak* that if someone forgets to make the declaration, the *tzitzit* are kosher, because coming to a center for tying *tzitzit* shows it is for the *mitzva*. Once, a man took the *tzitzit* to work on at home and then forgot to make the declaration. Can I assume the *tzitzit* are kosher?

Answer: There are a few halachic questions to deal with, including the extent to which *lishma* (intent for the *mitzva*) is needed. The *gemara* (Menachot 42b) says that the spinning of *tzitzit* strings must be done *lishma*, as the Shulchan Aruch rules (Orach Chayim 11:1). There is a *machloket* whether there is a *lishma* requirement for the attachment/tying of the *tzitzit* strings. The Rambam (Tzitzit 1:12) says that *lishma* is not required for that. He implies (see Beit

Yosef, OC 14) that the proof is from the fact that a *pasuk* is needed to disqualify a non-Jew from attaching them (Menachot 42a), even though generally a non-Jew's action relating to *mitzvot* is not considered *lishma*. The Rosh (Tzitzit 14) rules that the *tzitzit* must also be attached/tied *lishma*. Indeed, intuitively, this would be expected because tying is a more integral part of making the *tzitzit* and maybe even a major part of the *mitzva* (see Tosafot, Yevamot 90b) and should thus definitely require *lishma*. The Rambam may reason that it is not situationally clear that the spinning is for *mitzva* strings, so one needs positive *lishma*, whereas attaching the *tzitzit* to the garment is situationally clear that it is for the *mitzva* (Shut K'tav Sofer, OC 2). The bottom line is unclear. The Shulchan Aruch (OC 14:2) rules that if one attached the *tzitzit* without proper intention, he can rely on the Rambam to wear the garment, but that there is enough doubt about it that he should not recite a *beracha* on the *mitzva*.

Another area of doubt is what is needed to ensure things were done *lishma*. In the context of spinning, the Shulchan Aruch (OC 11:1) requires that one "say in the beginning of the spinning that he is doing it for the purpose of *tzitzit* or that he tell the woman 'spin for me *tzitzit* for a *tallit*.'" The Mishna Berura (ad loc. 4) stresses that this entails explicit speech, not sufficing with clear thought, and

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leaves it as an unsolved question whether, after the fact, if there was correct thought but no statement, the *tzitzit* could be used.

Putting the two matters together, the Be'ur Halacha (to 14:2) says that when there was proper intention without a statement of intent when attaching the *tzitzit*, one can assume the *tzitzit* are valid and make a *beracha* on them. He adds an additional reason for leniency – the standard assumption that the action was done for the *mitzva* is stronger for attaching the *tzitzit* than for spinning the strings. You spoke in your questions of a *p'sak* received, that going to a *tzitzit* making center may be even better than the Be'ur Halacha's case, as the surroundings bolster the logical assumption of *lishma*.

Your question comes down to whether your case is like the Be'ur Halacha's or is even better. It is likely better for the following reason. He received instruction that it should be done *lishma*, which we saw in the Shulchan Aruch (11:1) is equivalent to making the statement yourself. What is not

fully clear is whether the break in time and place between the instruction and the performance breaks the transference of *lishma*. It is very possible that the formal impact of the declaration passed (see Moadim U'zmanim 59), but the logic of it being on one's mind would remain. (If he had started right away and continued at home, it would be somewhat simpler (see Chazon Ish, OC 6:10).).

In short, the *kashrut* of the *tzitzit* stands on very strong ground. It still would be respectful and prudent to inform/ask the people in charge of these operations, who are in touch with the IDF rabbinate, to see if they agree that it meets their standards. ■

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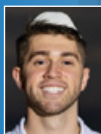
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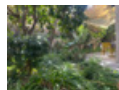
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Pardon Me

Currently, there is considerable conversation about the fact that Prime Minister Netanyahu has officially requested a pardon from President Herzog.

The etymology of the word pardon comes from old French, which itself comes from the late Latin word *paronare* meaning to forgive. The Pardon is an act of forgiveness typically granted by a person in authority. However, there is an entirely different usage of the concept Pardon and Pardon Me as defined by the Oxford Dictionary. “Pardon” or “Pardon Me” is a request to a speaker to repeat something because one did not hear it or understand it. In fact this was the first “Pardon Me” that I came into contact with as a young boy. My mother was a wise woman and taught me that if someone was speaking and I spaced out, didn’t understand what they had to say or just wasn’t listening, “Don’t say what or

what did you say?” Say, “Pardon Me”.

It may be that there are two very different concepts to the meaning of Pardon and Pardon Me. However in reality I believe they converge. **Pardon Me** for not acknowledging your authority and **Pardon Me** for taking for granted what you have to say and for not listening to you. The two Pardon Me’s work in tandem.

So what does this have to do with Hanukkah?

Truth be told there are multiple opportunities for “Pardon Me” moments on Hanukkah. We are referred to in Ma’oz Tzur as Bnei Vinah, people of understanding. There is so much about The Almighty and Hanukkah beneath the surface that we are challenged to uncover. Miraculous messages that may elude us and may require a Pardon Me Moment.

There is for example a unique feature to Hanukkah in contradistinction to all the Yamim Tovim. The original institution of the holiday was to be “Yamim Tovim” with the attendant prohibition of melachah. This was altered by our Rabbis. We do not refer to Hanukkah as Yamim Tovim in Al Hanissim. All of our holidays have mitzvah observances that engage us most of the day. The sukkah and lulav on Sukkot. Matzoh on Pesach are examples. Hanukkah is the only Yom Tov that really has no tangible, constant reminder or observance throughout the eight days. If not for the exception of lighting the Hanukkah candles around half an hour in the evening one might completely miss the message of



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the day. But really that fact actually highlights the essence of the celebration.

Hanukkah is not merely a celebration of the mitzvah of the oil or the miraculous military victory. Hanukkah is about the miracle of a return to *normalcy*. A return to the daily routine of living with Torah, mitzvot and Temple service.

It is clear from the Al Hanissim prayer that **Hanukkah is the Jewish holiday of Thanksgiving** (behalal ubehoda'ah). Saying thank you requires one to be clearly aware of the reason for Thanksgiving.


So "Pardon me" Hakadosh Baruch Hu for not listening carefully. Your love for Am Yisrael has gifted us with an eight day holiday not just about two extraordinary Miracle Moments, but a holiday which highlights the miraculous return to normal Jewish living. Nothing special but everything special.

Requesting a "Pardon" from the Almighty for not appreciating His constant presence. "Pardon Me" for not surrendering to Your love. "Pardon Me" for not listening carefully to the total impact of the *normal* holiday of Hanukkah. Now that is a proper celebration of our Jewish Thanksgiving.

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Noga asks:

Aleeza, I have a dear friend who’s been searching for her soulmate for over ten years. She’s had several relationships that seemed promising, but each time, the man ended it. I’ve stood by her side through it all, but now I feel lost. I don’t know what to say anymore. The usual comforting words feel like clichés, and I can see they don’t reach her heart. How can I really support her now?

Aleeza answers:

You’re not only describing your friend’s pain, you’re describing the ache of loving

someone who’s hurting and feeling helpless to make it better. That’s such a holy place to be in, even though it doesn’t feel that way.

When someone has been waiting for so long, words often lose their meaning. “It will happen,” “You just need faith,” “The right one is coming” these phrases, while true, can land flat when the waiting has stretched for years. Sometimes, the most powerful comfort is presence, not pep talks.

This is how Hashem created the world: there are moments for action, and moments for simply *being*. In this case, your presence, your consistency, your belief in her even when she struggles to believe herself can be the light she needs most. You don’t need to fix her story; you just need to hold space for it.

You might say something gentle, like: “*I can’t imagine how hard this must feel after so many years, but I still believe in your story, and I’m here for you and with you.*” Those words don’t promise a timeline, but they reaffirm love and hope without pressure.

And privately, keep davening for her. Sometimes the best help we can offer is whispered tefillah, asking Hashem to open the gates of

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mercy and timing. We don't know why her yes hasn't arrived yet, but we do know this: *Hashem hasn't forgotten her*. He's weaving something unseen, something that will make sense only when it unfolds.

Every year, every heartbreak is not wasted it's shaping her vessel for the right love. So keep standing by her, gently reminding her (and yourself): *She's not behind. She's exactly where she needs to be*.

May she find the one and may it be this year.

Aleeza ■

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 Yoni thanks Hashem for having
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 his life, to learn of her caring, patience and
 happiness, to overcome her challenges. May
 Tziporah's Neshama be a light onto the world,
 in a time of darkness, and may her Neshama
 shine to Gan Eden. Yoni misses Tziporah with
 tears in his eyes, as Hashem gave him a gift, a
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OWNING ONE'S MISSION AND REMAINING RESILIENT

From the beginning of this parsha, Yosef knew Hashem had given him a mission. He received his prophetic dreams and had no doubt it was his duty to carry them out. However, despite his confidence in his mission, it seems his circumstances were constantly against him. Throughout the parsha, Yosef experiences a pattern of extreme highs and lows. He begins his life as the favored son, and then is thrown into a pit and sold as a slave by his brothers. Afterwards, Yosef's owner, Potifar, takes a liking to him and puts him in charge of his home. Yosef becomes successful, only to then be falsely accused by Potifar's wife of having relations with her. Thus, Yosef is thrown in jail and hits another low point.

One may wonder: how was Yosef able to

withstand these challenges and remain positive? One moment he has it all, and the next moment it is taken away. How did Yosef not complain or feel self-pity during this constant rollercoaster of a life?

Yosef's unwavering resilience stems from his view of life. He believed, at his core, that everything was from Hashem. No matter where he was or what the situation was, he was certain it was part of the plan. This was his momentum. This is what kept him going.

In life, we will experience moments of success and difficulty. Yosef reminds us that these experiences are only a means to an end for the greater picture designed by Hashem. Our job is to own this reality and trust it—to push ourselves to view the back-and-forth as part of our mission from G-d and embrace it with confidence.



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Parashat Vayeishev drops us straight into one of the most dramatic family stories in the Torah. Yosef is Yaakov's favorite son, the brothers are frustrated, and the atmosphere at home is tense. It's not surprising that things fall apart. But the Torah shows us exactly where the breakdown begins.

The pasuk says:

“וְלֹא יָכְלוּ דַבְּרוֹ לְשָׁלוֹם”

“They could not speak to him peacefully.”

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the pit, before the sale—the Torah points to something small. They couldn't even talk to each other with calmness or kindness. That tiny shift, that inability to communicate peacefully, is the first crack in the relationship.

What stands out even more is Yosef's response when everything collapses around him. He ends up far from home, in a strange country, facing betrayal, slavery, and prison. Yet he refuses to let those moments define him. Wherever he is, he chooses honesty, responsibility, and hope. Those quiet choices slowly raise him up until he becomes a leader in Egypt.

There's a message here that feels close to real life. Conflicts rarely explode overnight—they grow when people stop talking, assume the worst, or let small annoyances pile up. And in our own challenges—friendships, family pressure, school stress—it's easy to feel stuck and think the moment we're in is the whole story.

Yosef teaches us that small decisions can shift everything: speaking more gently, choosing kindness even when it's hard, taking one step forward when you feel discouraged.

So the question for this week is:

What small choice can I make in my relationships or challenges that might change the direction of the story?

Because sometimes, just like in Yosef's life, one small step is enough to turn things around. ■




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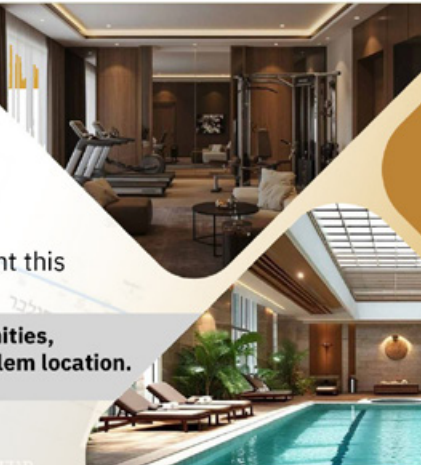
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