

TORAH

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TORAH

CHUMASH BEREISHIT

The Book of Genesis

Parshat Vayeishev

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*With an Interpolated English Translation
and Commentary Based on the Works of
The Lubavitcher Rebbe*

THE TORAH - CHUMASH BEREISHIT

WITH AN INTERPOLATED ENGLISH TRANSLATION
AND COMMENTARY BASED ON THE WORKS OF
THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

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Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson*

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Vayeishev

Overview

The picture presented to us at the opening of *parashat Vayeishev* is one of almost idyllic perfection: Jacob's family is complete, his children are all loyal to his ideals, he has amassed great wealth, he has returned to the patriarchal seat in the Holy Land, and he has assumed the mantle of leadership. Moreover, he has solidly established his reputation by physically and spiritually overcoming three adversaries—Laban, Esau, and Shechem—and he is both esteemed and feared by the surrounding population. It would seem that all that now remains for him to do is to continue raising and guiding his family until it grows large and viable enough to constitute a people ready to receive the Torah. Even the name of the *parashah*, *Vayeishev*, which means “he dwelt,” evokes an image of pastoral serenity.

After all the suffering he underwent, Jacob thanked God for this respite and asked Him to grant him continued tranquility. Clearly, he reasoned, he could fulfill his Divine mission better if unburdened by enemies and other worries. Thus, Jacob asked God for tranquility for the same reason that we long for the messianic future: in order to be free of all the impediments to fulfilling God's will in the fullest way possible. And indeed, God approved of Jacob's desire and granted his petition, at least to a certain extent: He allowed him to enjoy relative peace and comfort for a full nine years after arriving in Hebron.

But, as we immediately discover, there was a pernicious sibling rivalry brewing beneath the tranquil surface, which, when it emerged, would threaten to destroy the family and dash any hopes that this brotherhood would ever become the bearers of the patriarchs' vision. First, Joseph was sold into slavery by his brothers; then Judah parted company with them to form an alliance outside the family. Jacob himself remained inconsolable over the loss of Joseph. It would seem, then, that the rest of the *parashah*—that is, all but its first verse—reflects anything but the tranquility implied in its name.

To understand this seeming contradiction, let us recall that Jacob knew that fulfilling the Divine mission of making the world into God's home was dependent upon his overcoming the metaphysical power of Esau,¹ and that Joseph embodied the spiritual qualities that would facilitate that achievement.² Jacob therefore saw Joseph as his natural successor. Thus, although the last six *parashiot* of the Torah are devoted to Jacob, the last

1. As explained in the Overview to *parashat Vayishlach*. 2. 30:25, above.

four of these six detail how Joseph fulfilled his father's expectations of him, providing the leadership needed by the next generation.

However, whereas Jacob chose to focus on Joseph's inner spiritual qualities, Joseph's brothers could not but notice that he was given to worrisome behavior, evincing arrogance and conceit that was alarmingly reminiscent of Esau's! The fact that their father openly treated him as their superior, apparently overlooking his shortcomings, only reinforced their association between him and Esau: after all, Esau's father Isaac was also deceived into thinking that his favored son was the rightful heir despite his outward behavior.

The brothers therefore concluded that just as there were children in the first two generations of Abraham's family who, for the good of the cause, had to be cut off, so, too, was it proving to be with the third generation. Rather than being the antidote to Esau, Joseph himself was the new Esau, and had to be eliminated.³

Once Joseph's brothers were unequivocally convinced that he was unfit to rule, Divine Providence had to arrange for them to be convinced otherwise, and so began the protracted saga of Joseph's odyssey in Egypt.

The catalyst who unwittingly changed the course of events at this turning point was Jacob's fourth son, Judah, who stepped forth to convince his brothers to sell Joseph to a passing caravan rather than kill him. Judah thus turned a situation that threatened to be the certain end of everything into a new beginning, setting in motion the process that would ultimately lead to the brothers' reunion and reconciliation with Joseph, his subsequent rightful assumption of the family leadership, and the fulfillment of Jacob's desire to serve God in peace and tranquility.

This explains why the Torah interrupts the narrative of Joseph with an interlude describing Judah's extra-familial business alliance. Through this alliance he fathered Peretz, the ancestor of King David,⁴ who was, in turn, the ancestor of the Messiah. Judah thus emerges as the catalyst not only of the redemption of Jacob's family but also of the ultimate redemption of the entire Jewish people and of humanity in general.

In asking God for the tranquility necessary to better fulfill his Divine mission, Jacob was simply asking for what he had earned by having passed his tests with Laban, Esau, and Shechem, and as we said, God granted him this tranquility for a time. But afterward, God wanted to grant Jacob an even more-profound tranquility, enabling him to fulfill his Divine mission in an even more profound way. This tranquility would transcend that which he had earned by virtue of his own efforts, and would be a foretaste of the messianic era. In order to earn this level of peace and contentment, Jacob had to pass a test the likes of which he had never before faced.

The common denominator of his prior tests was that each was a struggle with some form of evil. Such tests may indeed be difficult, but at least they give us the satisfaction of knowing that we are accomplishing something tangible by passing them. In contrast, the test of seemingly meaningless suffering offers no such satisfaction. It was precisely to this sort of test that God now subjected Jacob, in the form of the ordeal of losing Joseph and enduring prolonged, debilitating doubt over the fate of his life's work. By enduring this suffering, Jacob was refined to the point that he later became (in *parashat Vayechi*) a fitting recipient of God's gift of infinitely profound peace and contentment.

3. *Sefer HaLikutim and Likutei Torah (Arizal), Vayeishev.* 4. Ruth 4:18-22.

OVERVIEW OF VAYEISHEV

The first lesson, then, that we can take from this *parashah* is to be aware that the hand of Divine Providence is always orchestrating events, albeit sometimes behind the scenes. No matter how hopeless our situation may seem, the solution may be just around the corner, and the mechanism of redemption might well already have been set in motion.

Secondly, we see how important it is to look beyond the vicissitudes of the present and yearn for the Redemption, just as we find Jacob doing at the opening of this *parashah*. It is instructive to note that God did not seek to take Jacob on the path that would lead to true, messianic tranquility until he specifically requested it. Furthermore, it was his longing for the messianic redemption that set in motion the entire process that would eventually lead to precisely that Redemption.⁵

Astute observers may respectfully submit at this point that they would rather forego the reward of true peace and contentment if the price to be paid is prolonged, senseless suffering akin to Jacob's. But inasmuch as we have already suffered so much throughout history, particularly in recent years, it is clear that we have already undergone sufficient refinement to merit the final Redemption without having to be subjected to any further suffering. All that remains is for us to entreat God sincerely and assertively, and He will surely respond.⁶

5. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 35, pp. 161-162. 6. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 15, pp. 310-317, vol. 30, pp. 176-183; *Sefer HaSichot 5751*, vol. 1, pp. 179-187.

ONKELOS
37:1 ויטיב יעקב בארע תותבות
אבוהי בארעא דכנען:

37:1 וַיֵּשֶׁב יַעֲקֹב בְּאֶרֶץ מִנְחֵי אָבִיו בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנַעַן:

RASHI

המרגלית, ומשמצאה הוא משליך את הצרורות מידו ונוטל המרגלית. דבר אחר: 'וישב יעקב', הפשתני הזה נכנסו גמליו טעונים פשתן, הפחמי תמה: אנה יכנס כל הפשתן הזה? היה פקח אחד משיב לו: ניצוץ אחד יוצא ממפוח שלך ששורף את כלו. כך יעקב ראה כל האלופים הכתובים למעלה, תמה ואמר: מי יכול לכבש את כלו? מה כתיב למטה: 'אלה תלדות יעקב יוסף', וכתוב: 'והיה בית יעקב אש ובית יוסף להבה ובית עשו לקש', נצוץ יוצא מיוסף שמכלה ושורף את כלם:

1 וַיֵּשֶׁב יַעֲקֹב וְגו'. אחר שכתב לך ישובי עשו ותולדותיו בדרך קצרה, שלא היו ראויים וחשובים לפרש היאך נתישבו וסדר מלחמותיהם איך הורישו את החזרי, פרש לך ישובי יעקב ותולדותיו בדרך ארכה, כל גלגולי סבתם, לפי שהם חשובים לפני המקום להאריך בהם. וכן אתה מוצא בעשרה דורות שמאדם ועד נח, פלוני הוליד פלוני, וכשבא לנח האריך בו. וכן בעשרה דורות שמנח ועד אברהם קצר בהם, ומשהגיע אצל אברהם האריך בו. משל למרגלית שגפלה בין החול, אדם ממשמש בחול וכוברו בכברה עד שמוצא את

1. פסוק ב. 2. עובדיה א, יח.

law's households;¹² both emigrated to Egypt; both mitigated the effect of famine;¹³ both made their families promise to re-locate their remains to the Land of Israel; both were embalmed; and the remains of both were indeed brought to burial in the Land of Israel.¹⁴

Thus encouraged, Jacob thought that he would be able to live out the rest of his years peacefully in his homeland. But this yearning for comfort was premature; God reminded him that we must face the challenges that accompany our Divine calling all our lives, and that quiescent tranquility awaits us only in the afterlife.¹⁵

In the year 2214, Leah died, at age 43.

A CLOSER LOOK

[1] Joseph disagreed with Leah's sons concerning their family's legal status vis-à-vis the commandments. Leah's sons argued that because God had promised to make their family into the Jewish people, they could already conduct themselves as full-fledged Jews. Joseph argued that since the Torah had not yet been formally given, they still held the legal status of non-Jews,¹⁶ who are only obligated to fulfill the seven Noahide laws.¹⁷ They could voluntarily undertake to observe the commandments as Jews, but only as a stringency, and never as a leniency.

One instance in which the Torah's law for non-Jews is more stringent than its law for Jews is with regard to flesh cut off a living animal. A Jew is required to slaughter an animal in accordance with specific ritual guidelines (*shechitah*) before eating it,¹⁸ but

once the animal has been slaughtered in this way, it is considered dead, and meat can be cut off it even if the carcass is still moving (although it must not be actually eaten until the carcass has stopped moving¹⁹). A non-Jew, on the other hand, is not required to ritually slaughter the animal, but because of this, he is not allowed to consider the animal dead until it has stopped moving completely; before this, he may not cut off any meat from its carcass.²⁰

Joseph observed Leah's sons cutting meat off an animal they had ritually slaughtered while its carcass was still moving (eating such meat is considered healthful²¹). Since he considered them bound by the more stringent Noahide law, he reported to his father that they had transgressed the Torah's prohibition against eating flesh cut from a living animal.

12. Jacob: above, 30:27; Joseph: below, 39:5. 13. Jacob: below, 47:10; Joseph: below, 41:33-36. 14. *Bereishit Rabbah* 84:6. 15. Rashi on v. 2, below. 16. *Parashat Derachim*, beginning. 17. See on Exodus 19:5. 18. Deuteronomy 12:21-22. 19. Leviticus 19:26; *Sanhedrin* 63a. 20. *Chulin* 33a. 21. *Ibid.*

Joseph's Dreams

Having concluded its history of Isaac and Esau, the Torah resumes its history of Jacob and his family.

37:1 As we saw above,¹ in the year 2208 **Jacob settled** safely in Hebron, **the region where his father had lived, in Canaan**. But, seeing the rapid expansion of Esau's family, he wondered how God's promise that his descendants would overcome Esau's² could possibly come true. In response, God assured him, as he himself had already sensed,³ that the spiritual power manifest in his son Joseph would enable his descendants to overcome Esau's.

Jacob understood why Joseph should be his spiritual "extension" — the one whose spiritual characteristics were necessary to complete Jacob's mission. Jacob had worked for Laban only in order to marry Rachel and father children by her, and so his whole essence was focused on this goal. In contrast, his marriages to Leah and the handmaids, and the children produced by these unions, were only a means to this end. Jacob therefore considered Joseph his successor and the next leader of the family.

At the same time, Jacob appreciated the value of his other sons' spiritual characteristics and realized that the son who best epitomized their approach would also play a leadership role in the nascent Jewish people. Although they were all righteous, Jacob felt that Reuben's behavior after Rachel's death and Simeon and Levi's behavior in Shechem indicated that they were not fit for leadership.⁴ The next oldest after these three was Judah, so Jacob singled him out as the leader of the other brothers, beside Joseph. In recognition of this status, Jacob had Judah wear a special, additional cloak.⁵

Further evidence that Joseph was Jacob's main spiritual heir was the physical resemblance between them. As Joseph's life progressed, the uncanny resemblance between him and his father was reflected in the similarity between their lives: Both were born circumcised; both were born to mothers who had been barren for a long period of time; both of their mothers had had hard labor when they were born; both of their mothers had only two children; both were hated by their brothers; both their brothers plotted to kill them; both were shepherds; both experienced open confrontations with the power of evil — Jacob with Esau's guardian angel and Joseph with his own evil inclination in the incident with Potiphar's wife;⁶ both suffered as a result of theft — Jacob by having to restore whatever was stolen from Laban's flocks⁷ and Joseph by being "stolen" by his brothers;⁸ both were blessed with ten blessings;⁹ both emigrated from the Land of Israel to a foreign land, married there, and had children there; both were escorted by angels;¹⁰ both were promoted in status by means of a dream;¹¹ both brought blessing to their fathers-in-

1. 35:27. 2. Above, 27:29. 3. See above, 30:25. 4. See below, 49:3-12. 5. Below, 38:18; *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 15, p. 333. 6. Below, 39:7-11. 7. Above, 31:39. 8. Below, 40:15. 9. Jacob: above, 27:28 ff; Joseph: Deuteronomy 33:13 ff. 10. Jacob: above, 28:12 and 32:2; Joseph: below, v. 15. 11. Jacob: above, 28:12; Joseph: below, v. 5-11 and 40:5-41:45.

ONKELOS

2 אֵלַי תּוֹלְדוֹת יַעֲקֹב יוֹסֵף בַּר שִׁבְעַ עֶשְׂרִי שְׁנֵי הָיָה רְעִי עִם אָחוּהִי בַעֲנָא וְהוּא מְרַבִּי עִם בְּנֵי בְלָהָה וְעִם בְּנֵי זִלְפָּה נְשֵׁי אָבוּהִי וְאִתִּי יוֹסֵף יָת דְּבַהוֹן בִּישָׂא לֹת אָבוּהוּן: 3 וְיִשְׂרָאֵל רְחִים יָת יוֹסֵף מִכָּל בְּנוֹהִי אַרְי בַּר חֲכִים הוּא לֵה וְעַבְד לֵה כְתוּבָא דְפָסִי:

2 אֵלֶּה | תּוֹלְדוֹת יַעֲקֹב יוֹסֵף בֶּן־שִׁבְעַ־עֶשְׂרֵה שָׁנָה הָיָה רְעֵה אֶת־אָחִיו בְּצֵאָן וְהוּא נֶעַר אֶת־בְּנֵי בְלָהָה וְאֶת־בְּנֵי זִלְפָּה נְשֵׁי אָבִיו וַיְבֵא יוֹסֵף אֶת־דְּבַתָּם רְעֵה אֶל־אֲבִיהֶם: 3 וַיִּשְׂרָאֵל אָהֵב אֶת־יוֹסֵף מִכָּל־בְּנָיו כִּי־בֶן־זִקְנִים הוּא לּוֹ וַעֲשֵׂה לּוֹ כְּתַנְתַּת פָּסִים:

RASHI

שְׁהָיו אָחִיו מְבוּיָן אִתּוֹן וְהוּא מְקַרְבֵּן: אֵת דְּבַתָּם רְעֵה. כָּל רְעֵה שְׁהָיָה רוּאָה בְּאָחִיו בְּנֵי לֵאָה, הָיָה מְגִיד לְאָבִיו, שְׁהָיו אוֹכְלִין אֶבְרָ מִן הַחֵי, וּמוֹלְלִין בְּכַנֵּי הַשְּׁפָחוֹת לְקָרוֹתָן עֲבָדִים, וְחַשׂוּדִים עַל הָעֲרִיּוֹת. וּבִשְׁלֹשָׁתָן לְקָה: עַל אֶבְרָ מִן הַחֵי — "וַיִּשְׁחָטוּ שְׁעִיר עֲזִים" בְּמִכְרִיתוֹ, וְלֹא אֶכְלוּהוּ חֵי. וְעַל דְּבָהּ שְׁסַפֵּר עֲלֵיהֶם שְׁקוּרִין לְאָחִיהֶם עֲבָדִים — "לְעַבְד נִמְכַר יוֹסֵף". וְעַל הָעֲרִיּוֹת שְׁסַפֵּר עֲלֵיהֶם — "וַתִּשָּׂא אִשֶׁת אֲדֹנָיו" וְגו': דְּבַתָּם. כָּל לְשׁוֹן דְּבָהּ פְּרִלִידִי"ץ בְּלַעֲזָה. כָּל מַה שְׁהָיָה יָכוֹל לְדַבֵּר בְּהֶם רְעֵה הָיָה מְסַפֵּר: דְּבָהּ. לְשׁוֹן "דּוֹבֵב שְׁפָתַי יִשְׁנִים": 3 כֵּן זִקְנִים. שְׁנוֹלֵד לּוֹ לַעֲת זִקְנָתוֹ. וְאַנְקְלוֹס תְּרַגְּם: "בַּר חֲכִים הוּא לֵה", כָּל מַה שְׁלָמֵד מִשֶּׁם וְעַבְרָ, מְסַר לּוֹ. דְּבַר אַחֵר: שְׁהָיָה זִיו אֶקוּנִין שְׁלוֹ דּוּמָה לּוֹ: פָּסִים. לְשׁוֹן כְּלֵי מִילַת, כְּמוֹ: "כְּרַפֵּס וְתַכְלַת", וְכְמוֹ: "כְּתַנְתַּת פָּסִים" דְּתַמֵּר וְאַמְנוֹן. וּמְדַרְשׁ אֲגָדָה: עַל שֵׁם צְרוּתִיו, שְׁנִמְכַר לְפוֹטִיפַר, וְלְסוּחָרִים, וְלִישְׁמַעְאֵלִים, וְלִמְדִינִים:

2 אֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדוֹת יַעֲקֹב. אֵלֶּה שֶׁל תּוֹלְדוֹת יַעֲקֹב, אֵלֶּה יִשׁוּבֵיהֶם וְגִלְגּוּלֵיהֶם עַד שֶׁבָּאוּ לְכָלֵל יִשׁוּב, סִבָּה רֵאשׁוּנָה — "יוֹסֵף בֶּן שִׁבְעַ עֶשְׂרֵה" וְגו', עַל יְדֵי זֶה נִתְגַּלְגַּלוּ וַיִּרְדּוּ לְמִצְרַיִם, זֶה אַחַר פְּשׁוּטוֹ שֶׁל מְקַרָא לְהִיּוֹת דְּבַר דְּבוּר עַל אֲפָנָיו. וּמְדַרְשׁ אֲגָדָה: דּוּרְשׁ: תִּלְתֵּה הַכְּתוּב תּוֹלְדוֹת יַעֲקֹב בְּיוֹסֵף, מִפְּנֵי כְּמָה דְּבָרִים: אַחַת, שֶׁכָּל עֲצָמוֹ שֶׁל יַעֲקֹב לֹא עַבְד אֶצֶל לָבֵן אֶלָּא בְּרַחֵל. וְשְׁהָיָה זִיו אֶקוּנִין שֶׁל יוֹסֵף דּוּמָה לּוֹ, וְכָל מַה שֶׁאַרְע לְיַעֲקֹב אֲרַע לְיוֹסֵף: זֶה נִשְׁטַם וְזֶה נִשְׁטַם, זֶה אָחִיו מְבַקֵּשׁ לְהַרְגוֹ וְזֶה אָחִיו מְבַקֵּשׁ לְהַרְגוֹ, וְכֵן הִרְבָּה בְּבְרָאשִׁית רְבָה. וְעוֹד נִדְרַשׁ בּוֹ: "וַיִּשָּׁב", בְּקִשׁ יַעֲקֹב לִישֵׁב בְּשִׁלְוָה, קִפְץ עֲלָיו רְגוּז שֶׁל יוֹסֵף. צְדִיקִים מְבַקְשִׁים לִישֵׁב בְּשִׁלְוָה, אוֹמֵר הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא: לֹא דִין לְצְדִיקִים מַה שְּׁמַתְקֵן לָהֶם לְעוֹלָם הַבָּא, אֶלָּא שֶׁמְבַקְשִׁים לִישֵׁב בְּשִׁלְוָה בְּעוֹלָם הַהַיְוָה: וְהוּא נֶעַר. שְׁהָיָה עוֹשֶׂה מַעֲשֵׂה נְעוּרֹת, מְתַקֵּן בְּשַׁעְרוֹ, מְמַשְׁמֵשׁ בְּעֵינָיו, כְּדִי שְׁהָיָה נִרְאָה יָפֵה: אֵת בְּנֵי בְלָהָה. כְּלוּמַר, וְרָגִיל אֶצֶל בְּנֵי בְלָהָה, לְפִי

3. בראשית רבה פד, ו. 4. שם. 5. פסוק לא. 6. תהלים קה, יז. 7. בראשית לט, ז. 8. דבָּהּ, רְכִילוֹת. 9. שִׁיר הַשִּׁירִים ז, י. 10. אֶסְתֵּר א, ו. 11. שְׁמוּאֵל ב, ג. יח. 12. בראשית רבה פד, ח.

CHASIDIC INSIGHTS

3 Joseph...was his most studious son, who absorbed all Israel had learned from Shem and Ever and had in turn taught him...Israel made him a fine woolen robe: By filling him with knowledge of the Torah, Jacob immunized Joseph against all of the trials he would eventually face. As Rashi comments,³⁰ the word for "fine

woolen" (*pasim*), describing Joseph's robe, is an acronym for these trials—Potiphar, Sochrim (merchants), Ishmaelites, and Midianites. Allegorically, then, Jacob cloaked Joseph in a "robe" of Torah knowledge that protected him from his trials.³¹

INNER DIMENSIONS

[2] The following is...the descendants of Jacob... Joseph was 17: Joseph embodied the *sefirah* of *yesod*, whose function is to facilitate transmission.

In the intellectual realm, for example, *yesod* refers to the ability to articulate wisdom and pass it on to a recipient. Although the wise understand certain concepts perfectly well in their own minds, they don't necessarily have the words to articulate these concepts to others of lesser intellectual capac-

ity. Without *yesod*, the wisdom of the wise remains locked within their own minds.

Yesod serves the emotions in a similar way. For example, the emotion of kindness is, in and of itself, entirely abstract, lacking any plan of how to act kindly to someone. *Yesod* is the conduit that enables the transmission of abstract kindness to the recipient.

Hence, Joseph, as the embodiment of *yesod*, "was

30. Citing *Bereishit Rabbah* 84:8. 31. *Sefer HaSichot* 5752, vol. 1, pp. 203-204 and note 116. See on 39:1, below, s.v. "The Saga," end.

2 The following narrative—which continues until the end of the Torah—is the chronicle of **the descendants of Jacob**,²² how they came to live in Egypt, eventually receive the Torah, and return to settle in the Land of Israel:

It began in the year 2216, when **Joseph was 17 years old and was pasturing the flocks with his brothers**. On the one hand, although he was already seventeen, **he acted like a conceited, immature young boy**, fixing up his hair and grooming his eyelashes. On the other hand, he was very sensitive; he noted how Leah's sons shunned Bilhah's and Zilpah's sons because their mothers had been handmaids; for this reason, he spent time **with the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah** to cheer them up and affirm their full status as **his father's wives**. Because of the deepening enmity between him and the sons of Leah, **Joseph brought their father evil reports about** any unseemly conduct he found in **them**. In particular, he incriminated them with transgressing the Torah's prohibition against eating flesh torn from a living animal, unfairly denigrating the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, and conducting their business interactions with women²³ without proper, modest restraint.

3 Israel loved Joseph more than any of his other sons, because he was his most studious son, who absorbed all Israel had learned from Shem and Ever and had in turn taught him. Joseph's studiousness was reminiscent of Israel's own studiousness as a youth, and thus **Israel also loved Joseph more than any of his other sons because** of this resemblance, which was also reflected in the fact that Joseph **resembled him** physically. As a sign of this affection, Israel **made him a fine woolen robe**. This robe aroused the jealousy of Joseph's brothers, and was therefore the indirect cause of all his impending misfortunes.

✧ A CLOSER LOOK ✧

[2] He incriminated them with transgressing the Torah's prohibition against eating flesh torn from a living animal: Joseph disagreed with Leah's sons over their family's legal status vis-à-vis God's commandments. Leah's sons argued that because God had promised to make their family into the Jewish people, they could already conduct themselves as full-fledged Jews. Joseph argued that since the Torah had not yet been formally given, they still had the legal status of non-Jews, who are obligated to fulfill the seven Noahide laws.²⁴ They could voluntarily undertake to observe the commandments as Jews, but only as a stringency, and never as a leniency.

One instance in which the Torah's Noahide law is more stringent than its Jewish law is that with regard to flesh cut off a living animal. A Jew is required to slaughter an animal according to specific

ritual guidelines (*shechitah*) before eating it,²⁵ but once the animal has been slaughtered in this way, it is considered dead, and meat can be cut off it even if the carcass is still moving (although it must not be actually eaten until the carcass has stopped moving²⁶). A non-Jew, on the other hand, is not required to slaughter the animal in any specific way, but because of this, he is not allowed to consider the animal dead until it has stopped moving completely; before this, he may not cut off any meat from it.²⁷

Joseph observed Leah's sons cutting meat off a carcass they had ritually slaughtered while the carcass was still moving (such meat is considered healthful²⁸). Since he considered them bound by the more stringent Noahide law, reported to his father that they had transgressed the Torah's prohibition against eating flesh cut from a living animal.²⁹

22. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 5, p. 116, note 31. 23. Mizrahi. 24. See on Exodus 19:5. 25. Deuteronomy 12:21-22. 26. Leviticus 19:26; *Sanhedrin* 63a. 27. *Chulin* 33a. 28. *Ibid.* 29. *Parashat Derachim*, beginning.

ONKELOS

4 וְחָזוּ אַחֻזֵי אָרִי יְתֵה רַחִים אַבְוֹהוֹן מִכָּל אַחֻזֵי וְסָנוּ יְתֵה וְלֹא צָבָן לְמַלְלָא עֲמֵה לְשָׁלֵם: 5 וְחָלֵם יוֹסֵף חֲלֵמָא וְחָזֵי לְאַחֻזֵי וְאוֹסִיפוֹ עוֹד סָנוּ יְתֵה: 6 וְאָמַר לְהוּן שְׁמַעוּ כַעֲן חֲלֵמָא הָדִין דֵּי חֲלֵמִית: 7 וְהָא אֲנָחְנָא מְאָסְרִין אֶסְרִין בְּגוֹ חֲקֵלָא וְהָא קָמַת אֶסְרֵתִי וְאָף אֲוֹדְקַת וְהָא מְסַתְחָרִין אֶסְרֵתְכוֹן וְסַגְדִין לְאַסְרֵתִי: 8 וְאָמְרוּ לֵה אַחֻזֵי הַמְלִיכוֹ אֶת מְדַמֵּי לְמַמְלַךְ עֲלֵנָא אוֹ שְׁלִטָן אֶת סְבִיר לְמַשְׁלַת בְּנָא וְאוֹסִיפוֹ עוֹד סָנוּ יְתֵה עַל חֲלֵמוֹהִי וְעַל פִּתְגָמוֹהִי: 9 וְחָלֵם עוֹד חֲלֵמָא אֲחֻזֵי וְאֶשְׁתַּעֵי יְתֵה לְאַחֻזֵי וְאָמַר הָא חֲלֵמִית חֲלֵמָא עוֹד וְהָא שְׁמַשְׁא וְסִיחָרָא וְחַד עֶשֶׂר בּוֹכְבֵי אֶסְרֵתִי לִי:

4 וַיֵּרְאוּ אָחָיו כִּי־אָתּוּ אָהָב אֲבֵיהֶם מִכָּל־אָחָיו וַיִּשְׁנֹאוּ אֹתוֹ וְלֹא יָכְלוּ דַבְּרוּ לְשָׁלֵם: 5 וַיַּחְלֵם יוֹסֵף חֲלוֹם וַיֵּגֶד לְאָחָיו וַיֹּסִפוּ עוֹד שִׁנְאָא אֹתוֹ: 6 וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵיהֶם שְׁמַעוּ־נָא הַחֲלוֹם הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר חֲלַמְתִּי: 7 וְהִנֵּה אֲנַחְנוּ מֵאֲלֵמִים אֲלֵמִים בְּתוֹךְ הַשָּׂדֶה וְהִנֵּה קָמָה אֲלֵמֹתִי וְגַם־נִצְצָה וְהִנֵּה תִסְבְּינָה אֲלֵמֹתֵיכֶם וְתִשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ לְאֲלֵמֹתִי: 8 וַיֹּאמְרוּ לוֹ אָחָיו הַמְלֶךְ הַמְּלֶךְ עָלֵינוּ אִם־מְשׁוֹל תִּמְשָׁל בָּנוּ וַיֹּסִפוּ עוֹד שִׁנְאָא אֹתוֹ עַל־חֲלֵמֹתָיו וְעַל־דְּבָרָיו: 9 וַיַּחְלֵם עוֹד חֲלוֹם אַחֵר וַיֹּסִפֶּר אֹתוֹ לְאָחָיו וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה חֲלַמְתִּי חֲלוֹם עוֹד וְהִנֵּה הַשָּׁמֶשׁ וְהַיָּרֵחַ וְאַחַד עֶשֶׂר כּוֹכָבִים מִשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ לִי:

RASHI

נוטל ומכריו: קמה אלמותי. נוקפה: וגם נצבה. לעמוד על עמדה בקיפה: 8 ועל דבריו. על דבתם רעה שהיה מביא לאביהם:

4 ולא יכלו דברו לשלם. מתוך גנותם למדנו שבחם. שלא דברו אחת בפה ואחת בלב: דברו. לדבר עמו: 7 מאלמים אלמים. כתר גומו: "מאסרין אסרין", עמרון וכו': "נושא אלמתי", וכמוהו בלשון משנה: "והאלמות 13. תהלים קכו, ו. 14. בבא מציעא כב, א.

CHASIDIC INSIGHTS

7-9 **There we were, binding sheaves in the midst of the field... I had another dream...the sun, the moon and eleven stars prostrating themselves to me:** Joseph's two dreams seem to convey the same idea. The only critical difference between the two dreams was that Jacob and Bilhah appeared in the second but not in the first. If so, the first dream seems unnecessary. True, Pharaoh also had two basically identical dreams, but in his case the repetition indicated that their fulfillment would be swift in coming.³⁷ Joseph's dreams, in contrast, were not fulfilled until many years later.

In fact, however, Joseph's two dreams symbolize two distinct stages in the relationship between each generation and its leaders.

Sheaves of grain are made up of individual stalks, which grow discretely from one another, each in its own groove. Binding them into sheaves symbolizes the soul's task in this world. The soul originates in the heavenly spheres, where God's oneness—the fact that He is the only true existence—is apparent. But then the soul descends into "the midst of the field," i.e., the physical world, the realm of Esau, who is called "man of the field."³⁸ This world is one of multiplicity, where the concealment of God's oneness allows for the illu-

sion of separateness from Him. The Divine soul must vest itself in a body and animating soul, which possess a false sense of independence from God and are oblivious to the Divine soul's connection to God.

The Divine soul's first task is to subdue the animating soul's egotism and sense of separateness from God. It must then "gather up" all of the animating soul's "stalks," its various capacities and talents, and "bind them into a sheaf," i.e., unite them in the work of holiness. Once we have become a "sheaf," we must seek guidance and inspiration from "Joseph," the spiritual head of the generation.

Eventually, the soul reaches an even higher level, symbolized by Joseph's second dream. In this dream, the soul has is no longer out in the field, dealing with stalks of separateness. Even while garbed in an earthly body, it has transcended earthly consciousness; it has returned to its original heavenly consciousness and is now likened to a celestial being, a "star." Yet even on this level, we should not rely on our own achievements for inspiration; this will only lead to stagnation and complacency. Rather, we must still continue to turn to "Joseph" to receive insight and inspiration.³⁹

37. Below, 41:32. 38. Above, 25:27. 39. Likutei Sichot, vol. 3, pp. 805-810. See also Hitva'aduyot 5744, vol. 2, p. 715; Likutei Sichot, vol. 15, p. 345, sub-note *.

4 His brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, so they hated him, and, being honest men who could not act duplicitously, could not speak with him peaceably.

5 Then Joseph had a dream and told it to his brothers, and because of this dream, they hated him even more.

6 He said to them, "Please listen to this dream I had.

7 There we were, binding sheaves in the midst of the field, when my sheaf stood up and remained upright. Then your sheaves formed a circle around my sheaf and prostrated themselves before it."

8 His brothers said to him, "Would you really seek to reign over us? Would you really seek to rule over us?" They now understood that his slandering them to their father was not just idle talk but part of his scheme to gain power over them. Thus, **they now hated him even more, because his dreams proved that his talk was insinuating and because his talk proved that he took his dreams seriously.**

9 He had another dream and told it to his brothers. He said, "Look, I had another dream, and there were the sun, the moon, and eleven stars prostrating themselves before me." This dream indicated that Joseph saw himself asserting himself not only over his brothers, but over his parents as well.

INNER DIMENSIONS

[continued...] the one who sold produce to all the people of the area,"³² which can also be translated as "was the one who provided (or rationed) produce for all the people of the land." Allegorically, this means that *yesod* is the conduit of all "produce" from the higher worlds to the lower worlds.

As we have seen,³³ Jacob's thrust was to extend Divine consciousness into the material realm. Yet, like the other patriarchs, Jacob operated within the sublime consciousness of *Atzilut*. He did not truly descend into the consciousness of the lower worlds. It was Joseph who descended into the consciousness of the worlds below *Atzilut* in order to carry on Jacob's legacy—his "descendants"—and bring it to the next level. This is the allegorical meaning of the phrase *the descendants of Jacob...Joseph*.

Jacob's descent to Charan thus differed significantly from Joseph's descent in several ways: (a) Joseph became a *servant* in Egypt, whereas Jacob served only as an *employee* of Laban; (b) Joseph worked for complete strangers, whereas Jacob worked for a relative; and (c) Joseph's work required him to be immersed in the mundane affairs of Egypt, whereas Jacob worked as shepherd, detached from society.³⁴

Yesod operates as a funnel because of its generosity of spirit and goodness. The numerical value of the word for "good" (*tov*) is 17. Thus, the phrase "Joseph was seventeen" allegorically means that he was the embodiment of goodness and generosity, the trademark of *yesod*.³⁵

INNER DIMENSIONS

[4] **So they hated him:** Clothing, as opposed to food, serves us from the outside; we do not internalize it. Metaphorically, then, clothing represents spirituality that remains transcendent from us because of its inherent loftiness (*makif*).

The fact that Jacob gave Joseph a "robe" means that

he imparted to him insights of such transcendence that they cannot be internalized. Of all the brothers, only Joseph was spiritually advanced enough to receive such lofty insights; his brothers were therefore jealous of him. This spiritual jealousy devolved into petty jealousy, which led to their hatred of Joseph.³⁶

32. 42:6. 33. Above on 29:18. 34. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 25, pp. 255-256. 35. *Ma'amarei Admur Ha'Emtza'i, Bereishit*, pp. 291-294. 36. *Torat Chaim, Bereishit* 94b [235b].

ONKELOS

10 וְאִשְׁפָּר אֶל-אָבִיו וְאֶל-אֶחָיו וַיַּגְעֵר-בּוֹ אָבִיו וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ
 מַה הַחֲלוּם הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר חָלַמְתָּ הֲבֹא נְבוּאָה אֵנִי וְאִמְנָה
 וְאֶחָיִד לְהִשְׁתַּחֲוֹת לְךָ אַרְצָה: 11 וַיִּקְנְאוּ-בּוֹ אֶחָיו וְאָבִיו
 שָׁמַר אֶת-הַדָּבָר:
 12 שְׁנֵי 12 וַיִּלְכוּ אֶחָיו לְרַעוֹת אֶת-צֹאן אֲבֵיהֶם בְּשֶׁכֶם:
 13 וַיֹּאמֶר יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל-יֹסֵף הֲלוֹא אֶחָיִד רַעִים בְּשֶׁכֶם
 לָכֵה וְאֶשְׁלַחְךָ אֵלֵיהֶם וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ הֲנִנִּי:
 אָנָּה:

10 וְאִשְׁפָּר אֶל-אָבִיו וְאֶל-אֶחָיו וַיַּגְעֵר-בּוֹ אָבִיו וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ
 מַה הַחֲלוּם הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר חָלַמְתָּ הֲבֹא נְבוּאָה אֵנִי וְאִמְנָה
 וְאֶחָיִד לְהִשְׁתַּחֲוֹת לְךָ אַרְצָה: 11 וַיִּקְנְאוּ-בּוֹ אֶחָיו וְאָבִיו
 שָׁמַר אֶת-הַדָּבָר:
 12 שְׁנֵי 12 וַיִּלְכוּ אֶחָיו לְרַעוֹת אֶת-צֹאן אֲבֵיהֶם בְּשֶׁכֶם:
 13 וַיֹּאמֶר יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל-יֹסֵף הֲלוֹא אֶחָיִד רַעִים בְּשֶׁכֶם
 לָכֵה וְאֶשְׁלַחְךָ אֵלֵיהֶם וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ הֲנִנִּי:

RASHI

וַיִּקְנְאוּהוּ, לְכַךְ אָמַר לוֹ: "הֲבֹא נְבוּאָה" וְגו', בְּשֵׁם שְׂאֵי
 אֶפְשָׁר בְּאִמְנָה, כִּי הִשְׁאָר הוּא כְּטַל: 11 שָׁמַר אֶת הַדָּבָר.
 הֵיחָד מִמֵּתִין וּמִצִּפָּה מֵתִי יְבוּא, וְכַן: "שָׁמַר אֲמִנִים",
 וְכַן: "לֹא תִשְׁמַר עַל חֲטָאתֶיךָ", לֹא תִמְתֵּן: 12 לְרַעוֹת
 אֶת צֹאן. נִקְוֵד עַל "אֶת", שֶׁלֹּא הִלְכוּ אֶלָּא לְרַעוֹת אֶת
 עֲצָמוֹן: 13 הֲנִנִּי. לְשׁוֹן עֲגוּה וּוְרִיזוֹת, נִדְרָדוּ לְמִצְעוֹת
 אָבִיו, וְאִם עַל פִּי שְׂהִיָּה יוֹדַע בְּאֶחָיו שֶׁשׁוֹנְאִין אוֹתוֹ:

10 וַיִּסְפָּר אֶל אָבִיו וְאֶל אֶחָיו. לְאַחַר שִׁסְפָּר אוֹתוֹ
 לְאֶחָיו, חוֹר וְסִפְרוּ לְאָבִיו בְּפָנֵיהֶם: וַיַּגְעֵר בּוֹ. לְפִי שְׂהִיָּה
 מֵטִיל שְׁנֵאָה עָלָיו: הֲבֹא נְבוּאָה. וְהִלֵּא אִמְנָה כִּכְר מִתְּהִיָּה?
 וְהוּא לֹא הִיָּה יוֹדַע שֶׁהַדְּבָרִים מְגִיעִין לְבַלְהָה, שֶׁגִּדְלָחוּ
 כְּאִמּוֹ. וְרִבּוּתֵינּוּ¹⁵ לְמִדּוּ מִכְּאֵן, שְׂאִין חֲלוּם בְּלֹא דְבָרִים
 בְּטַלִּים, וַיַּעֲקֹב נִתְּבָן לְהוֹצִיא הַדָּבָר מִלֵּב בְּנִי, שֶׁלֹּא
 15. בְּרִכּוֹת נה, א-ב. 16. יִשְׁעִיה כו, ב. 17. אִיּוֹב יד, טו.

CHASIDIC INSIGHTS

13 Your brothers are pasturing in Shechem. Come, I will send you to check up on them: Why would Jacob, who loved Joseph more than all of his children, send him alone to his brothers who hated him? The *Zohar*⁴⁵ explains that because the brothers were completely righteous, Jacob did not believe they would harm Joseph, and indeed, he was correct. Despite their hatred, they would not have sold Joseph; rather, it was God who prodded the brothers to sell him, so as to begin the fulfillment of His covenant with Abraham.

The Midrash states that a literal fulfillment of this covenant would have meant that Jacob and his family would have been taken down in chains. Instead, God sent Joseph down to Egypt first, thereby ensuring that Jacob and his family would go down to Egypt in a respectable way, by the invitation of Pharaoh.⁴⁶

There was a further reason why God wanted Joseph to descend to Egypt specifically in the way he did: By casting Joseph into the pit and then selling him as a master sells his slave, the brothers took "possession" of Joseph. Once he became the "property" of the brothers, he could not subsequently be "acquired" by Egypt. Even after the brothers sold Joseph, their original "possession" of him remained primary. Consequently, when the Jewish people later followed Joseph to Egypt, they never became completely subjugated to Egypt, as other slaves did. On the contrary, Egypt was legally enslaved to the Jewish people! When Joseph became officially responsible for the welfare of Egypt, this in effect made all its citizens his property.⁴⁷ Thus, as heirs of the tribes, who "owned" Joseph, the Jewish people owned all that

Joseph owned, including the Egyptians.⁴⁸

To imbue Joseph's sale with this immunizing effect, God arranged for it to occur in the presence of ten of Joseph's brothers,⁴⁹ who constituted a quorum of ten, a "congregation," which elicits the Divine presence.⁵⁰ Because the Divine presence attended the sale, it was infused with an energy that transcends the finite world, therefore enabling Joseph (and later, the Jewish people) to transcend Egypt and the spiritual darkness of their exile.

Accordingly, when Joseph finally revealed himself to his brothers, he said, "It is not you who sent me here but God, and he made me a father to Pharaoh...."⁵¹ Joseph meant that the spiritual power invested in him through his sale, which protected him from subjugation to Egypt, came not from the tribes themselves, but from "God"—i.e., from the Divine power that was channeled through the brothers' quorum.

Joseph's experience vividly demonstrates that everything that happens to us is orchestrated by God for our benefit.⁵² As in the case of Joseph, his humiliating sale as a slave in the end worked to his favor.

It is therefore foolish and unproductive to become angry at the messengers of ostensible harm, who, though guilty for their evil act, could not do anything to us that God did not so will. Joseph thus repaid his brothers' evil with kindness,⁵³ even continuing to love them despite their hatred.⁵⁴

45. 1:184a. 46. *Bereishit Rabbah* 86:2. 47. See below, 41:55. 48. *Zohar*, *ibid.*, as explained by *Or HaChamah* and *Mikdash Melech ad loc.* 49. See below, on v. 28. 50. *Sanhedrin* 39a. 51. 45:8, below. 52. *Berachot* 60b, end; *Igeret HaKodesh* 25. 53. See *Midrash Tehilim* 80:2; *Zohar* 1:201ab. 54. See *Tanya*, chapter 12, end. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 20, pp. 187-191.

10 **He re-told the dream to his father in his brothers' presence.** Israel understood this dream to be a prophecy that his hopes that Joseph would eventually lead his brothers would come true. He understood the details of the sun and moon, symbolizing himself and Rachel, to be unfulfilled⁴⁰ elements that form part of every dream, since he had no aspiration to himself bow down to Joseph and Rachel was already dead. (In fact, however, only the former detail never came true, for although Israel did later bow down to Joseph,⁴¹ he never went so far as to prostrate himself before him. In contrast, Bilhah, who was Joseph's surrogate mother after Rachel died, did eventually prostrate herself before Joseph.⁴² Israel knew that Bilhah could be considered Joseph's mother—certainly for allegorical purposes—but did not think that she would be symbolized as the moon relative to his sun.) At the same time, Israel saw that the other brothers were not yet ready to accept Joseph's leadership over them. Joseph's **father** therefore **chided him** for arousing their hatred against them by telling them the dream. Seeking to allay Joseph's brothers' hatred, Israel **said** to Joseph in their presence, **"What nonsense is this dream that you had! Will I, your mother, and your brothers indeed come and prostrate ourselves on the ground before you?!** Your mother has been dead for years! Just as this detail of your dream cannot come true, neither can other details in it." Israel did not specify which details he was referring to, for, as above, he fully expected his other sons to one day prostrate themselves before Joseph; in his mind he was referring to his prostrating himself before Joseph, while intending that his other sons understand his words to refer to the dream in its entirety. Joseph's brothers were not aware that every dream contains elements that do not come true, so that could not dismiss Israel's attempt at pacifying them on these grounds.⁴³

11 However, Israel's attempt to mitigate his other sons' hatred did not succeed; Joseph's **brothers** remained **jealous of him. But his father waited expectantly for the matter** to take place as Joseph had dreamed it.

The Sale of Joseph

- ◆ *Second Reading* 12 **His brothers left**, ostensibly **to pasture their father's flocks in Shechem**, but in reality they sought to be alone in order to privately discuss what course of action to take.

13 Israel sensed that Joseph's brothers had absented themselves in order to scheme how best to vent their jealousy and hatred upon him. However, he also sensed that somehow the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham in the Covenant between the Halves⁴⁴—that his progeny would be slaves in a foreign land—would unfold through this turn of events. So **Israel said to Joseph, "Now your brothers are pasturing in Shechem. Come, I will send you to check up on them."**

Joseph also knew that his brothers were probably scheming against him. Nonetheless, in deference to his father's will, **he replied to him, "Here I am, ready to do your bidding."**

40. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 10, p. 116, note 11. 41. Below, 47:31. 42. Below, 50:18. 43. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 35, pp. 156-162. 44. Above, 15:7-21.

ONKELOS

14 וַיֹּאמֶר לֵה אֹל כַּעַן חַוֵּי יֵת שְׁלֹם אַחִירָה וְיֵת שְׁלֹם עֲנָא וְאַתִּיבְנֵי פִתְגָמָא וְשִׁלְחָה מִמִּישַׁר חֲבֵרוֹן וְאַתָּא לְשִׁכְמָה: 15 וְאַשְׁכַּחַה גְבֵרָא וְהָא תַעֲי בַחֲקָלָא וְשִׁאֲלָה גְבֵרָא לְמִימַר מָא אַתְּ בְּעֵי: 16 וַיֹּאמֶר יֵת אַחִי אֲנָא בְּעֵי חַוֵּי כַּעַן לִי הֵיכָא אֲנֹן רַעֲן: 17 וַיֹּאמֶר גְבֵרָא נְטִלוּ מִכָּא אַרְי שְׁמַעִית דְּאַמְרִין נִיזִיל לְדוֹתָן וְאַוֹל יוֹסֵף בְּתֵר אַחוּהֵי וְאַשְׁכַּחְנוּן בְּדוֹתָן: 18 וְחֻזּוּ יֵתָה מִרְחִיק וְעַד לָא קָרִיב לְוַתְהוֹן וְחֻשִׁיבוּ עֲלוּהֵי לְמַקְטִלָּה:

14 וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ לְדַנְא רְאָה אֶת־שְׁלוֹם אַחִירָה וְאֶת־שְׁלוֹם הַצֵּאֵן וְהַשְׁבֵּנִי דְבַר וַיִּשְׁלַחְהוּ מֵעַמְּק חֲבֵרוֹן וַיָּבֵא שְׁכַמָּה: 15 וַיִּמְצְאוּהוּ אִישׁ וְהִנֵּה תַעֲהָ בַשָּׂדֶה וַיִּשְׁאַלְהוּ הָאִישׁ לֵאמֹר מַה־תִּבְקֶשׁ: 16 וַיֹּאמֶר אֶת־אֲחִי אֲנֹכִי מִבְּקֶשׁ הַגִּידֶה־נָּא לִּי אֵיפֹה הֵם רַעִים: 17 וַיֹּאמֶר הָאִישׁ נָסְעוּ מִזֶּה כִּי שָׁמַעְתִּי אֲמָרִים נִלְכָּה דִתִּינָה וַיִּלְךְ יוֹסֵף אַחֵר אֲחָיו וַיִּמְצְאוּם בְּדוֹתָן: 18 וַיִּרְאוּ אֹתוֹ מִרְחֹק וּבְטָרֶם יִקְרַב אֲלֵיהֶם וַיִּתְנַבְּלוּ אֹתוֹ לְהַמִּיתוֹ:

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שְׁכַמָּה: 15 וַיִּמְצְאוּהוּ אִישׁ. זֶה גְבֵרֵיאֵל, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: "וְהָאִישׁ גְּבֵרֵיאֵל": 17 נָסְעוּ מִזֶּה. הִסִּיעוּ עֲצָמָן מִן הָאֲחוּהָ: נִלְכָּה דִתִּינָה. לְבַקֵּשׁ לָךְ נְכֵלֵי דְתוֹת שְׁיִמִּיתוּךָ בָּהֶם. וּלְפִי פְשׁוּטוֹ: שֵׁם מְקוֹם הוּא. וְאִין מְקָרָא יוֹצֵא מִיַּדִּי פְשׁוּטוֹ: 18 וַיִּתְנַבְּלוּ. נִתְמַלְאוּ נְכֵלִים וְעָרְמוּמִיּוּת: אֹתוֹ. כְּמוֹ "אֹתוֹ" "עֲמוֹ", כְּלוּמֵר, אֵלָיו:

14 מֵעַמְּק חֲבֵרוֹן. וְהֵלֵא חֲבֵרוֹן בְּהַר, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: "וַיַּעֲלוּ בְּגִבַּב וַיָּבֵא עַד חֲבֵרוֹן" אֵלָא, מַעֲצָה עֲמוּקָה שֶׁל אוֹתוֹ צְדִיק הַקְּבוּר חֲבֵרוֹן, לְקַיֵּם מַה שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר לְאַבְרָהָם בֵּין הַבְּתָרִים: "כִּי גַר יִהְיֶה זְרַעְךָ": וַיָּבֵא שְׁכַמָּה. מְקוֹם מוֹכֵן לְפָרַעְנוּת, שֶׁם קָלְקְלוּ הַשְּׁבָטִים, שֶׁם עֲנּוּ אֶת דִּינָה, שֶׁם נִחְלְקָה מַלְכוּת בֵּית דָּוִד, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: "וַיִּלְךְ רַחֲבָעַם 18. בַּמְדַּבֵּר יג, כב. 19. בְּרֵאשִׁית טו, יג. 20. דְּבַחֵיב י, א. 21. זְנִיאל ט, כא.

CHASIDIC INSIGHTS

18 They conspired against him to put him to death: According to many commentators, the brothers felt that the Torah’s laws required them to kill Joseph.⁶¹ The Biblical commentator Rabbi Ovadiah Seforno, for example, writes that the brothers thought Joseph wanted to cause Jacob to curse them or cause God to punish them so that they would die and he alone would carry

on Jacob’s dynasty. They therefore considered him a mortal threat and believed they were required to destroy him before he destroyed them.⁶² Yet, although the brothers studied the Torah and tried to live by it, in this case, they applied its teachings erroneously. This was they studied the Torah without proper humility—at least by the standards of their

A CLOSER LOOK

[continued...] obey his father if he would not be able fulfill his father’s mission by doing so?

Rabbi Yosef Chaviva (author of *Nimukei Yosef*) states that “a prominent person, who is pious and God-fearing, who sees that his generation regularly flouts a particular precept, is allowed to sanctify the Name and sacrifice his life to fulfill that precept, even if it is a minor one, so that the people will learn from his example.”⁶³ In such a case, the purpose of martyrdom is not for the performance of that particular commandment at that particular time, but for the lesson that it will teach others.

Joseph found himself in just such a situation. He saw that his brothers regularly flouted the commandment to honor one’s father: Simeon and

Levi embarrassed their father with their actions in Shechem, Reuben interfered with his father’s personal matters, and the brothers dishonored their father by questioning his love for Joseph.

Joseph therefore felt that he should risk his life to honor his father—even though he would most likely be unable to fulfill the actual errand his father had sent him on—thereby teaching his brothers the importance of this commandment.

As it turned out, Joseph’s act did end up underscoring the extent of the obligation to honor one’s parents: His ill-fated mission led to his separation from his father for twenty-two years, which was a punishment for Jacob’s failure to honor his parents during the years Jacob was in Charan.⁶⁴

61. See Overview. 62. See also *Or HaChaim*, et al. 63. *Nimukei Yosef* on *Sanhedrin* 72b [18a in the commentary of Rabbi Yitzchak Alfasi], cited in *Kesef Mishneh* on *Mishneh Torah*, *ibid.*, 5:4, et al. 64. Below, v. 34. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 35, pp. 169-172.

14 Israel then said to him, “Please go and see how your brothers and the flocks are faring, and bring me back a report.” He thus sent him to embark on the journey that would fulfill the profound, prophetic vision of Abraham, who was interred in Hebron. Joseph arrived in Shechem, the scene of three historical events that reflected the corrective suffering he was soon to experience for having accused his brothers of improper behavior.⁵⁵ Specifically, it was in Shechem that his brothers began plotting to kill him, corresponding to how he accused them of eating flesh torn from living animals; it was in Shechem that Dinah had been raped,⁵⁶ corresponding to how he accused them of immodesty; it would be in Shechem that the majority of the Jewish people would in the future disrespectfully secede from the Davidic monarchy,⁵⁷ corresponding to how he accused them of showing disrespect to their other brothers.⁵⁸

15 The angel Gabriel, appearing the guise of a man, found him wandering in the fields. The “man” questioned him, saying, “What are you looking for?”

16 He replied, “It is my brothers that I am looking for. Please tell me where they are pasturing.”

17 The man answered, “You refer to them as brothers, but they have clearly distanced themselves from such brotherly sentiments, for I heard them say, ‘Let us go to Dotan [“legalities”],’ and—in consonance with the meaning of this place’s name—they were seeking some legal pretext to kill you!” Despite this warning, Joseph remained true to his father’s mission,⁵⁹ followed his brothers, and found them in Dotan (see Figure 44).

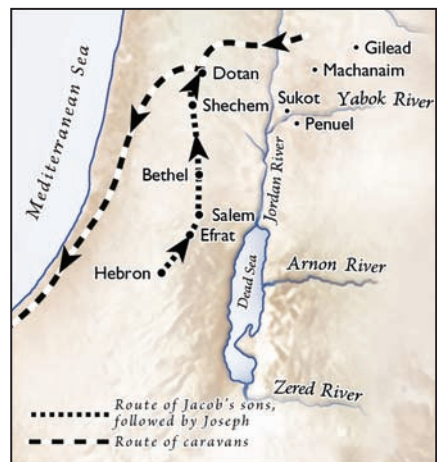


Figure 44: Joseph Looks for his Brothers.

18 They saw him from afar, and before he reached them, they conspired against him to put him to death.

∞ A CLOSER LOOK ∞

[17] The man answered, “...they were seeking some legal pretext to kill you!” Despite this warning, Joseph...followed his brothers: This follows the interpretation of Rashi. Nachmanides, however, takes issue with this interpretation, stating that Joseph would certainly not have followed his brothers if he knew they were planning to kill him. Nachmanides therefore states that the angel only alluded to the brothers’ malicious intentions and that Joseph did not perceive the hidden meaning of his words. This debate between Rashi and Nachmanides can be explained as hinging upon the question of

whether martyrdom is permitted for the sake of precepts other than the three cardinal sins (idolatry, murder, and adultery).⁶⁰ Rashi evidently considers it permitted and praiseworthy, explaining that Joseph risked his life in order to honor his parents. Nachmanides evidently considers it forbidden, therefore maintaining that Joseph was not aware of the danger.

Even so, Rashi’s view remains problematic: Jacob had asked Joseph to bring back tidings from the brothers, which Joseph would be unable to do if he were killed. Why, then, would he risk his life to

55. Above, v. 2. 56. Above, 33:17-34:31. 57. 1 Kings 12:1-24. 58. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 15, pp. 318-323. 59. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 35, pp. 169-172. 60. See *Mishneh Torah*, *Yesodei HaTorah* 5:1, and *Kesef Mishneh ad loc.*, et al.

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19 ויאמרו גבר לאחיהי הא מרי חלמיא דיכי אתי: 20 וכען אתו ונקטלנה ונרמינה בחד מן גביא ונימר חיותא בשתא אכלתה ונחוי מא יחי בסוף חלמוהי: 21 ושמע ראובן ושיבבה מידהון ויאמר לא נקטלנה נפש: 22 ויאמר להון ראובן לא תישדון דמא רמו ותה לגבא הדין די במדברא וידא לא תושטון בה גדיל לשיבבא ותה מידהון לאתבותה לות אבוהי: 23 והנה כד אתא יוסף לות אחיהי ויאשלוו ית יוסף ית בתונה ית בתונא דפסי די עלוהי: 24 ונסבוהי ורמו ותה לגבא ונגבא ריקן לית בה מיא:

19 ויאמרו איש אל-אחיו הנה בעל החלמות הלזה בא: 20 ועתה | לבו ונהרגהו ונשלוהו באחד הברות ואמרנו חיה רעה אכלתהו ונראה מה יהיו חלמתיו: 21 וישמע ראובן ויצלהו מידם ויאמר לא נכנו נפש: 22 ויאמר אליהם | ראובן אל-תשפכודם השליכו אותו אל-הבור הזה אשר במדבר ויד אל-תשלוהו בו למען הציל אותו מידם להשיבו אל-אביו:

שלישי 23 ויהי באשר-בא יוסף אל-אחיו ויפשימו את-יוסף את-כתנתו את-כתנת הפסים אשר עליו: 24 ויקחהו וישלכו אותו הברה והבור רק אין בו מים:

— RASHI —

שלא אמר זאת אלא להציל אותו, שיבא הוא ויעלנו משם, אמר: אני בכור וגדול שבבלין, לא יתלה הסרחון אלא בי: 23 את כתנתו. זה חלוק: את כתנת הפסים. הוא שהוסיף לו אביו יותר על אקויו: 24 והבור רק אין בו מים. ממשמע שנאמר: "והבור רק", איני יודע שאין בו מים? מה תלמוד לומר: "אין בו מים", מים אין בו, אבל נחשים ועקרבים יש בו: 25 ארחת. כתרגומו:

20 ונראה מה יהיו חלמתיו. אמר רבי יצחק: מקרא זה אומר דרשני, רוח הקדש אומרת כן. הם אומרים נהרגהו, והכתוב מסים: "ונראה מה יהיו חלמתיו", נראה דבר מי יקום, או שלכם או שלי. ואי אפשר שיאמרו הם "ונראה מה יהיו חלמתיו", שמכיון שיהרגהו בטלו חלומותיו: 21 לא נכנו נפש. מכת נפש זו היא מיתה: 22 למען הציל אותו. רוח הקדש מעידה על ראובן,

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[continued...] whereas snakes and scorpions, who are subject to God's will, would not kill Joseph if he was guiltless.⁷²

True, everything that happens is ultimately Divine providence,⁷³ so if God really did not want Joseph to be killed, He would somehow prevent the brothers from killing him. But Reuben knew that when a person is in danger and only a miracle can save him, the Heavenly Court bases their decision as to whether is to be saved on his accrued merits. The greater the danger, the greater the miracle required; the greater the miracle required, the more merits required to deserve it. Since Joseph was in more danger in his brother's hands than he would be in the pit, Reuben reasoned his chances were better there.⁷⁴

Even if we grant that there is a possibility that a person can survive being cast into a pit of snakes and scorpions, the probability of this occurring is

so small that it is negligible. For that reason, Jewish law permits a woman to remarry if reliable witnesses testify that her husband fell into such a pit, even though they did not actually see him dead.

However, probability is admitted as a legal determinant only in the Torah's Jewish law, not in Noahide law. Therefore, since Joseph had the legal status of a non-Jew — as did all his family before the Torah was formally given — the minuteness of the probability of his survival did not legally negate its possibility. It was still possible that he could survive, and Reuben therefore knew that Joseph at least had a chance in the pit.

Thus, at least in this instance, Reuben assented to Joseph's position in his argument with Leah's sons⁷⁵ — that Jacob's clan had the legal status of non-Jews until the Torah was formally given at Mount Sinai.⁷⁶

72. Or HaChaim. 73. Igeret HaKodesh 25. See below, on 39:7. 74. Igrat Kodesh, vol. 9, pp. 214-215 (#2832). 75. See above on v. 2. 76. Likutei Sichot, vol. 3, pp. 838-839.

19 Simeon said to his brother Levi,⁶⁵ “Look, here comes that dreamer!

20 So now let us go and kill him and throw him into one of the pits, and we shall say, ‘A wild beast devoured him.’ ” But God said, “You would have done better to confront your father with your grievances rather than to presumptuously take matters into your own hands. **We shall see which succeeds:** your plans or Joseph’s dreams, which accord with My will!”

21 Reuben heard his brothers’ plan and realized that if they killed Joseph, he, as the firstborn, would be held responsible. He therefore **rescued him from their hands**, as follows: **He said, “Let us not strike him mortally!** Are we so sure he deserves to die? Perhaps we are wrong, or perhaps he has some other merit that outweighs any capital offense he is guilty of. If such is the case and we kill him, we will be guilty of murder!”

In deference to his status as the firstborn, Simeon and Levi acceded to him, but they asked what they should do instead about Joseph’s arrogance.

22 Reuben then said to them, as a compromise, **“Do not shed blood directly. Throw him into this pit here in the desert, so he will surely die, but do not lay a hand on him!”** In truth, Reuben suggested this course of action **in order to rescue him from their hands and bring him back** later, when they were not around, **to his father**. Reuben hoped that after this attempt on Joseph’s life, Jacob would take matters into his own hands and resolve the conflict.

◆ *Third Reading* 23 So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his shirt and of the fine woolen robe that he was wearing.

24 They took him, and Simeon⁶⁶ threw him into the pit. The pit was empty in that there was no water in it, but there were snakes and scorpions in it. Even though this normally spells certain death,⁶⁷ Reuben reasoned that Joseph’s chances were better with the snakes and scorpions, which do not possess free choice and therefore would not be able to kill him if he did not deserve it. And indeed, the snakes and scorpions did not harm Joseph. Still, Joseph pleaded with them to remove him from the pit, but they ignored his pleas.⁶⁸

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righteousness.⁶⁹ This prevented them from truly connecting with the Author of the Torah and absorbing its wisdom.

Water is a metaphor for the humility required in studying the Torah. As the Talmud states, the Torah is compared to water because “just as water seeks its lowest level, so does the Torah only endure within one who is

humble.”⁷⁰ The brothers were lacking this “water” and therefore misinterpreted the Torah.

Their lack of humility is alluded to in the verse regarding the pit into which they threw Joseph: “The pit was empty in that there was no water in it.” The pit alludes to the brothers, who were empty of the “water”-aspect of the Torah.⁷¹

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[24] Reuben reasoned that Joseph’s chances were better with the snakes and scorpions: Reuben knew that God grants a certain degree of autonomy

to human beings, allowing them to act in opposition to His will. Thus, Reuben reasoned, he and his brothers could well kill Joseph unjustifiably,

65. Rashi on 49:5, below 66. Rashi on 42:21, below. 67. *Yevamot* 121a. 68. Below, 42:21. 69. See *Berachot* 34b, beginning. 70. *Ta’anit* 7a. 71. See *Bereishit Rabbah* 84:16. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 15, pp. 324-328.

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25 וְאֶסְחָרוּ לְמִיכַל לְחַמָּא וְזָקְפוּ עֵינֵיהוֹן וְחוּז וְהָא שְׁרֵית עֲרַבְאֵי אֲתֵינָא מִגְּלָעַד וְגַמְלִיהוֹן טַעֲיִנִין שְׁעָף וְקִטְף וְלִטּוּם אֲזִלִין לְאַחְתָּא לְמַצְרַיִם: 26 וְאָמַר יְהוּדָה לְאַחֻדָּהי מָא מְמוֹן מִתְהַנִּי לְנָא אַרִי נְקִטְל יֵת אַחֻזָּא וְנִכְסֵי עַל דְּמָה: 27 אַתּוּ וְנִזְבַּנְנָה לְעֲרַבְאֵי וִידָנָא לֹא תְהִי בְּהָ אַרִי אַחֻזָּא בְּסָרְנָא הוּא וְקִבִּילוּ מִנָּה אַחֻדָּהי: 28 וְעֲבָרוּ גְבֵרֵי מִדְּנֵאֵי תַגְרֵי וְגִידוּ וְאֶסְקִי יֵת יוֹסֵף מִן גְּבָא וְזַבִּינוּ יֵת יוֹסֵף לְעֲרַבְאֵי בְּעֶשְׂרִין כֶּסֶף וְאִתִּיאֵוּ יֵת יוֹסֵף לְמַצְרַיִם: 29 וְתָב רָאוּבֵן לְגִבְאָא וְהָא לִית יוֹסֵף בְּגִבְאָא וְבוּעַ יֵת לְבוּשׁוֹהִי: 30 וְתָב לֹות אַחֻדָּהי וְאָמַר עוֹלִימָא לִיתוּדָהי וְאָנָּא לְאָן אָנָּא אֲתֵי:

25 וַיֵּשְׁבוּ לְאַכְל־לֶחֶם וַיִּשְׂאוּ עֵינֵיהֶם וַיֵּרְאוּ וְהִנֵּה אַרְחַת וַיִּשְׁמְעוּ אֲלֵיהֶם בָּאָה מִגְּלָעַד וּגְמֻלֵיהֶם נִשְׂאִים נִכְאֹת וַצְרֵי וְלֹט הוֹלְכִים לְהוֹרִיד מִצְרַיִמָּה: 26 וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוּדָה אֶל־אָחִיו מִדֵּ־פָצַע כִּי נִהְרַג אֶת־אָחִינוּ וְכִסִּינוּ אֶת־דָּמֹו: 27 לָכֵן וְנִמְכַרְנוּ לַיִּשְׁמְעֵאֵלִים וַיְדַנּוּ אֶל־תְּהֵי־בֹו כִּי־אָחִינוּ בְּשָׂרְנוּ הוּא וַיִּשְׁמְעוּ אָחִיו: 28 וַיַּעֲבְרוּ אַנְשִׁים מִדְּיָנִים סַחְרִים וַיִּמְשְׁכוּ וַיַּעֲלוּ אֶת־יוֹסֵף מִן־הַבּוֹר וַיִּמְכְּרוּ אֶת־יוֹסֵף לַיִּשְׁמְעֵאֵלִים בְּעֶשְׂרִים כֶּסֶף וַיָּבִיאוּ אֶת־יוֹסֵף מִצְרַיִמָּה: 29 וַיֵּשֶׁב רָאוּבֵן אֶל־הַבּוֹר וְהִנֵּה אֵין־יוֹסֵף בַּבּוֹר וַיִּקְרַע אֶת־בְּגָדָיו: 30 וַיֵּשֶׁב אֶל־אָחִיו וַיֹּאמֶר הֲיִלֵּד אֵינָנוּ וְאֵנִי אָנָּה אֵנִי־בָּא:

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אָבִיו²⁶, "נַעֲשֶׂה וְנִשְׁמַע"²⁷, מִתְרַגֵּם: "נִקְבַּל". וְכָל שְׂהוּא שְׂמִיעַת הָאָזְן, כְּגוֹן: "וַיִּשְׁמְעוּ אֶת קוֹל ד' אֱלֹהִים מִתְהַלֵּף בְּגוֹן"²⁸, "וְרַבְקָה שִׁמְעַת"²⁹, "וַיִּשְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל"³⁰, "שְׂמַעְתִּי אֶת תְּלוּנֹת"³¹, בְּלֵן מִתְרַגֵּם: "וּשְׁמַעוּ", "וּשְׁמַעַת", "וּשְׁמַעוּ", "שְׂמִיעַ קְדָמִי": 28 וַיַּעֲבְרוּ אַנְשִׁים מִדְּיָנִים. זוּ הִיא שְׂרִיה אַרְחַת, וְהוֹדִיעָךְ הַכְּתוּב שֶׁנִּמְכַּר פְּעָמִים הַרְבֵּה: וַיִּמְשְׁכוּ. בְּנֵי יַעֲקֹב אֶת יוֹסֵף מִן הַבּוֹר, וַיִּמְכְּרוּהוּ לַיִּשְׁמְעֵאֵלִים, וְהִישְׁמְעֵאֵלִים לְמִדְּיָנִים, וְהַמְדִּינִים לְמַצְרַיִם: 29 וַיֵּשֶׁב רָאוּבֵן. וּבְמִכְרֹתוֹ לֹא הָיָה שָׂם, שְׂהִיגֵעַ יוֹמוֹ לִילְף וּלְשַׁמֵּשׂ אֶת אָבִיו. דְּבַר אַחֵר: עֶסְק הָיָה כְּשֶׁקוֹן וּבְתַעֲנִיתוֹ, עַל שֶׁבִלְבָּל יְצוּעֵי אָבִיו: 30 אָנָּה אֵנִי בָּא. אָנָּה אֶבְרַח מַצְעָרוֹ שֶׁל אָבָּא:

"שְׂרֵית", עַל שֶׁם הוֹלְכֵי אֶרֶץ: וּגְמֻלֵיהֶם נִשְׂאִים וְגו'. לָמָּה פָּרַסְתָּ הַכְּתוּב אֶת מִשְׁאֵם? לְהוֹדִיעַ מִתֵּן שְׂכָרְךָ שֶׁל צְדִיקִים, שְׂאִין דְּרָכְךָ שֶׁל עֲרַבִּים לְשֹׂאת אֶלָּא נִפְטָ וְעִטְרֹן שְׂרִיחֹן רַע, וְלָזֶה נִזְדַּמְנוּ בְּשָׂמִים, שֶׁלֹּא יִזַּק מִרִיחַ רַע: נִכְאֹת. כָּל כְּנוּסֵי בְּשָׂמִים הַרְבֵּה קָרוּי "נִכְאֹת", וְכֵן: "וַיִּרְאֵם אֶת כָּל בֵּית נִכְתוּד", מִרְקַחַת בְּשָׂמִיו. וְאֶנְקִלוֹס תְּרַגְּמוֹ לְשׁוֹן שְׂעוּדָה: וַצְרֵי. שְׂרַף הַנוֹטֵף מִעֲצֵי הַקֶּטֶף, וְהוּא "נָטֵף" הַנִּמְנָה עִם סַמְנֵי הַקֶּטֶרֶת²³: וְלֹט. "לוֹטִיתָא" שְׂמוֹ בְּלִשׁוֹן מִשְׁנָה²⁴. וּרְבוּתֵינוּ פְּרִשׁוּהוּ שְׂרֵשׁ עֵשֶׂב וְשְׂמוֹ אֶשְׁטְרוֹלוּזִיא"ה, בְּמִסְכַּת נִדְהָ²⁵: 26 מִה בָּצַעַ. מִה מְמוֹן, כְּתַרְגוּמוֹ: וְכִסִּינוּ אֶת דָּמוֹ. וְנַעֲלִים אֶת מִיתָתוֹ: 27 וַיִּשְׁמְעוּ. "וְקִבִּילוּ מִנָּה", וְכָל שְׂמִיעָה שְׂהִיא קְבֻלַּת דְּבָרִים, כְּגוֹן זֶה, וְכְגוֹן: "וַיִּשְׁמַע יַעֲקֹב אֶל

22. מלכיס"ב כ, יג. 23. שמות ל, לד. 24. שביעית ז, ו. 25. ח, א. 26. בראשית כח, ז. 27. שמות כד, ז. 28. בראשית ג, ח. 29. בראשית כז, ה. 30. בראשית לח, כב. 31. שמות טז, יב.

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mandment to redeem our firstborn, who similarly “belong” to God until redeemed. The message of the commandment is that in fact everything we have belongs to God,⁸⁶ just as Joseph “belonged” to his brothers, to the realm of holiness.

In contrast, the sale’s effect on the brothers was the spiritual blemish caused by their hatred and jealousy. To rectify this blemish we were given the commandment of the half shekel, which was used to pay for communal sacrifices, and therefore underscored the power of community.

The half shekel thereby rectifies the external narrative

of Joseph’s sale, a tale of sinful hate, by revealing its inner narrative, the tale of Joseph’s integrity being preserved the power of community: As we have seen,⁸⁷ it was the power of “community”—the quorum of ten brothers during the sale—that imbued the sale with Godly transcendence, thereby enabling Joseph to remain transcendent from Egypt.

Additionally, the half shekel symbolized that individually we are all “half,” i.e., incomplete, and that we can only become whole by uniting with others. This sentiment encourages unity and love among our people and therefore undoes the sin of selling Joseph, which was caused by hatred and jealousy.⁸⁸

86. See *Sefer HaChinuch, mitzvah 18*. 87. Above, on v. 13. 88. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 20, pp. 185-190.

25 The brothers then **sat down to a meal**. Reuben did not join them, for it was his custom to fast periodically as part of his repentance for having meddled in his father's private affairs,⁷⁷ and it just so happened that he was fasting that day. While they were eating, he left for Hebron, for it was his turn to attend to Jacob and he was confident that Joseph was safe.⁷⁸

As the brothers were in the midst of their meal, **they raised their eyes and saw that there was a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from the direction of Gilead. Their camels were carrying spices, stacte, and lotus, on their way to take them down to Egypt**. Even though the Ishmaelites typically traded in kerosene and tar, which have a foul smell, Divine providence arranged that this caravan carry fragrant spices in order to not subject Joseph to unnecessary suffering when he would be in their company.

26 **Judah said to his brothers**—in particular addressing Simeon and Levi, who had been eager to kill Joseph—**“What is to be gained if we kill our brother and then have to conceal our responsibility for his death from our father?**

27 **Come, let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, but let our hand not strike him, for he is our brother, our own flesh.” His brothers heeded him.**

28 In the meantime, a caravan of **Midianite merchants also passed by**. The brothers **hauled Joseph up from the pit and sold Joseph to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver**. The Ishmaelites in turn sold Joseph to the Midianites, **and they brought Joseph to Egypt**.

29 The next day, Reuben returned. **When Reuben went back to the pit and saw that Joseph was not in the pit, he rent his clothes.**

30 **He returned to his brothers and said, “The boy is gone! And I—where can I go to avoid witnessing our father's grief? He will certainly hold me responsible for his disappearance.”**

∞ CHASIDIC INSIGHTS ∞

28 **The brothers...sold Joseph...for twenty pieces of silver:** The Talmud understands these pieces to be coins valued at five *gerah*; twenty such coins thus equal 100 *gerah*, which is the equivalent of five shekels. Because the brothers sold Joseph, Rachel's firstborn, the Jewish people would in the future be commanded to redeem each of their firstborn.⁷⁹ And since they sold him for five shekels, their firstborn would have to be redeemed for the same price.⁸⁰

Additionally, says the Talmud, if we divide the 20 coins by the ten brothers involved in the sale, each brother contributed two coins, which is equal to ten *gerah* or half a shekel. The Jewish people were therefore required to donate a half shekel every year to the Temple⁸¹ as atonement for the sale of Joseph.⁸²

(In fact, since Benjamin, Joseph, and Reuben did not participate in the sale, that leaves only nine brothers. However, Reuben can be counted as one of the participants even though he was not present, since the brothers assumed he would agree to the sale and therefore

left him his share of two silver pieces⁸³—although he may very well not have taken them. Alternatively, Joseph can be considered the tenth party to the sale, since he provoked the brothers' hatred, which led them to sell him.⁸⁴)

These two commandments—redemption of the firstborn and the half *shekel*—correspond to the twin effects of Joseph's sale, on him and on his brothers. Redeeming the firstborn commemorates what occurred to Joseph. It is therefore costs five shekels, corresponding to the five shekels for which *he* was sold. The commandment of the half shekel, in contrast, atones for the sin of the brothers. It therefore costs a half shekel, corresponding to the half shekel each of *them* received for the sale.

The sale's effect on Joseph was ultimately positive. As we have seen,⁸⁵ becoming the “property” of his brothers in the Holy Land prevented him from becoming the “property” of Egypt, which in turn enabled all the Jews to spiritually transcend Egyptian sovereignty.

Corresponding to this aspect of the sale is the com-

77. 35:22, above. 78. Rashi on v. 29, below. 79. Exodus 13:2. 80. Numbers 18:16. 81. See Exodus 30:11-16. 82. Y. *Shekalim* 2:3; *Bereishit Rabbah* 84:18, et al. 83. See *Yefeh Toar* on *Bereishit Rabbah* 84:18. 84. *Tekalin Chadatin* on Y. *Shekalim* 2:3. 85. Above, on v. 13.

ONKELOS

31 ונסיבו ית כתונא דיוסף ונכיסו צפיר בר עזי וטבלו ית כתונא בךמא: 32 ושלחו ית כתונא ונאמרו דא אשכחנא אשתמודע כען הכתונא דברך היא אם לא: 33 ואשתמודעה ואמר כתונא דברי חיותא בשתא אכלתה מקטל קטיל יוסף: 34 ובזע יעקב לבושוהי ואסר שקא בחרצה ואתאבל על ברה יומין סגיאין: 35 וקמו כל בנדיה וכל בנתיה לנחמותה וסריב לקבלא תנחומין ואמר ארי איחות לות ברי כד אבילא לשאול ובכא יתה אבדי:

31 ויקחו את־כתנת יוסף וישחטו שעיר עזים ויטבילו את־הכתנת בדם: 32 וישלחו את־כתנת הפסים ויביאו אל־אביהם ויאמרו זאת מצאנו הכר־נא הכתנת בנדך הוא אם־לא: 33 ויפירה ויאמר כתנת בני חיה רעה אכלתהו טרף טרף יוסף: 34 ויקרע יעקב שמלתיו וישם שק במתניו ויתאבל על־בנו ימים רבים: 35 ויקמו כל־בניו וכל־בנותיו לנחמו וימאן להתנחם ויאמר כִּי־ארד אל־בני אבל שאלה ויבך אתו אביו:

RASHI

בבית אל. וזהו שאמר ללכו³⁰. "זה לי עשרים שנה בביתך", לי הן, עלי הן וסופי ללקות בנגדן: 35 וכל בנותיו. רבי יהודה אומר: אהיות תאומות נולדו עם כל שבט ושבט, ונשאום. רבי נחמיה אומר: בנעניות היו, אלא מהו "וכל בנותיו", כלותיו, שאין אדם נמנע מלקרוא לחתנו בנו, ולכלתו בתו: וימאן להתנחם. אין אדם מקבל תנחומין על החי וסבור שמת, שעל המת נגזרה גזרה שישתפח מן הלב ולא על החי: ארד אל בני. כמו: "על בני", והרבה "אל" משמשין בלשון "על": "אל שאול ואל בית הדמים"³¹, "אל הלך ארון האלהים ואל חמיה ואישה"³²: אבל שאלה. כפשוטו, לשון קבר הוא, באבלי אקבר, ולא אתנחם כל ימי ומדרשו³³: גיהנם, סימן זה היה מסור בידי מפי הגבורה, אם לא ימות אחד מבני בחי, מבטח אני שאיני רואה גיהנם: ויבך אתו אביו. יצחק היה בוכה מפני צרתו של יעקב, אבל לא היה מתאבל, שהיה יודע שהוא חי:

31 שעיר עזים. דמו דומה לשל אדם: הכתנת. זה שמה. וכשהיא דבוקה לתבה אחרת, כגון: "כתנת יוסף"³², "כתנת פסים"³³, "כתנת בר"³⁴, נקוד "כתנת": 33 ויאמר כתנת בני. היא זו: חיה רעה אכלתהו. נצנצה בו רוח הקדש, סופו שתתגרה בו אשת פוטיפר. ולמה לא גלה לו הקדוש ברוך הוא? לפי שהחרימו וקללו את כל מי שיגלה, ושתפו להקדוש ברוך הוא עמהם. אבל יצחק היה יודע שהוא חי, אמר: היאך אגלה, והקדוש ברוך הוא אינו רוצה לגלות לו: 34 ימים רבים. עשרים ושתים שנה, משפרש ממנו עד שירד יעקב למצרים, שנאמר³⁵: "יוסף בן שבע עשרה שנה" וגו', וכן שלשים שנה היה בעמדו לפני פרעה, ושבע שני השבע, ושנתים הרעב בשבא יעקב למצרים, הרי עשרים ושתים שנה, כנגד עשרים ושתים שנה שלא קים יעקב כבוד אב ואם, עשרים שנה שהיה בבית לכו, ושתי שנים בדרך בשובו מבית לכו, שנה וחצי בסכות, וששה חדשים

32. פסוק לא. 33. פסוק ג. 34. ויקרא טו, ד. 35. פסוק ב. 36. בראשית לא, מא. 37. שמואלב כא, א. 38. שמואלא ד, כא. 39. תנחומא ויגש ט.

A CLOSER LOOK

[34] God arranged for Jacob to atone for not having honored his parents: Although the patriarchs kept all the commandments of the Torah, they were only required to keep the seven Noahide laws, which do not include the obligation to honor one's parents. Why, then, was Jacob held accountable for failing to honor his parents?

One of the seven Noahide commandments is the obligation to establish courts. According to Nachmanides,⁹³ this commandment is not limited to the narrow definition of simply establishing courts to enforce the other six commandments. Rather, it means that Noahides are obligated to adjudicate all

matters that pertain to social justice and the peaceful coexistence of humankind.

As such, honoring parents is a subcategory of the obligation to establish courts, since it is a fundamental human obligation, integral to maintaining social order. Furthermore, as the Talmud states, honoring our parents is akin to returning a loan, since we thereby repay them for all the struggles they endured while raising us.⁹⁴ Jacob was therefore punished for failing to fully honor and care for his parents, because this duty was included in the Noahide laws.⁹⁵

93. In his commentary on 34:13 above. Cf. Mishneh Torah, Melachim 9:14. 94. Y. Peah 1:1. 95. Likutei Sichot, vol. 5, pp. 153-161.

31 They took Joseph's robe, slaughtered a young goat, and dipped the robe in the blood. Since the blood of young goats is similar in color to human blood, in doing so, they hoped to make their father think that Joseph had been killed and devoured by some wild animal.

The brothers realized that in time, one or more of them might come to regret their actions and be moved to tell Jacob the truth, and that this would discredit the others (who had not yet regretted or summoned the courage to act on their regret) in Jacob's estimation. In order to prevent this, they made a pact among themselves not to reveal the truth to their father until they all agreed that it was time to do so. Furthermore, in order to prevent any of them from convincing the others to reveal the truth to Jacob before they all would agree to do so, they further agreed to wait for a sign from God that this time had come.⁸⁹

32 The brothers were reluctant to show Jacob the coat themselves. They sent off the fine woolen robe via an emissary and it was brought to their father. They said, via their emissary, "We found this; please identify it. Is it your son's robe or not?"

33 He recognized it and said, "It is my son's robe! A wild beast has devoured him! Joseph has been torn to pieces!" With these words, he unwittingly prophesied that Joseph would be attacked by a "wild beast" of a person, as indeed occurred when the wife of the person to whom he was eventually sold attempted to seduce him.⁹⁰

34 Jacob rent his clothes, put on sackcloth around his waist as a symbol of mourning, **and mourned for his son unabatedly for many days**, i.e., for the next twenty-two years (2216-2238). In this way, God arranged for Jacob to atone for the twenty-two years in which he did not honor his own parents by attending to their needs while he was away from them in Laban's household and tarried on his return journey (2185-2207).

35 All his sons and daughters attempted to console him, but he refused to be comforted, saying, "No, I will never be comforted; I will go down to the grave in mourning for my son." And indeed, Jacob's grief did not abate with time, as is usually the case, because God made it part of human nature for people to eventually stop grieving over their dead relatives—but Joseph was not dead. "Furthermore," Jacob said, "now that **my son** has died, I know that when I die, **I will descend to Purgatory**, for God informed me that if none of my sons die during my lifetime, that will be a sign for me that I have fulfilled my purpose in life by fathering the chosen family, and thus I will not need to undergo any purification in Purgatory. For this I also mourn." Since a sad or troubled person cannot experience Divine inspiration, Jacob had no Divine inspiration during the twenty-two years he mourned for Joseph.⁹¹ Inwardly, Jacob suspected Judah of killing Joseph.⁹²

Although the brothers did not tell their grandfather Isaac that they in fact had sold Joseph, he understood prophetically that his grandson was still alive. Seeing that God had not told Jacob that Joseph was still alive, Isaac understood that He did not want him to know, so he did not tell him, either. Nonetheless, witnessing his son's suffering, Jacob's **father Isaac wept for him.**

⁸⁹. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 10, pp. 129-135. ⁹⁰. Below, 39:7-20. ⁹¹. Rashi on 45:27 and 46:30 below. ⁹². Rashi on 49:9, below.

ONKELOS

36 ומדינאי זבינו יתה למצרים
לפוטפר רבא דפרעה רב קטוליא:
38:1 והוה בעדנא והיא ונחת
יהודה מלות אחוהי וקטא עד
גברא עדלמאָה ושמה חירה:
2 וחזא תמן יהודה בת גבר תגרא
ושמה שוע ונסבה ועל לותה:
3 ועדיאת וילידת בר וקרא ית
שמה ער: 4 ועדיאת עוד וילידת
בר וקרת ית שמה אונן: 5 ואסיפת
עוד וילידת בר וקרת ית שמה
שלה והוה בכויב כד ילידת יתה:
6 וגסיב יהודה אתתא לער בכרה
ושמה תמר: 7 והוה ער בכרא
דיהודה ביש קדם יי ואמיתה יי:
8 ואמר יהודה לאונן עול לות
אתת אחור ויבם יתה ואקים ורעא
לאחור: 9 וידע אונן ארי לא על
שמה מתקרי ורעא והוה כד עליל
לות אתת אחוהי ומחביל ארחה
על ארעא בדיל דלא לקניא
ורעא לאחוהי:

36 והמדנים מכרו אתו אלמצרים לפוטפר סרים
פרעה שר המבחים: פ
רביעי 38:1 ויהי בעת ההוא וירד יהודה מאת אחיו ויט
עד איש עדלמי ושמו חירה: 2 ויראשם יהודה בת
איש בנעני ושמו שוע ויקחה ויבא אליה: 3 ותהר ותלד
בן ויקרא את שמו ער: 4 ותהר עוד ותלד בן ותקרא
את שמו אונן: 5 ותסף עוד ותלד בן ותקרא את שמו
שלה והיה בכויב בלדתה אתו: 6 ויקח יהודה אשה
לער בכורו ושמה תמר: 7 ויהי ער בכור יהודה רע
בעיני יהוה וימתהו יהוה: 8 ויאמר יהודה לאונן בא
אל אשת אחיד ויבם אתה והקם רע לאחיד: 9 וידע
אונן כי לא לו יהיה הורע והיה אם בא אל אשת אחיו
ושחת ארצה לבלתי נתן זרע לאחיו:

RASHI

לא יכזבו מימיו⁴¹, דאם לא כן, מה בא להודיענו?
ובבראשית רבה⁴² ראיתי: "ותקרא שמו שלה" וגו'
— פסקת: 7 רע בעיני ה'. ברעתו של אונן, משחית
ורעו, שנאמר באונן⁴³: "וימת גם אתו", כמיתתו של ער
מיתתו של אונן. ולמה היה ער משחית ורעו? כדי שלא
תתעבר ויכחיש ויפיה: 8 והקם זרע. הבן יקרא על שם
המת: 9 ושחת ארצה. דש מבפנים וזורה מבחוץ:

36 הטבחים. שוחטי בהמות המלך: 1 ויהי בעת
ההוא. למה נסמכה פרשה זו לבאן, והפסיק בפרשתו
של יוסף? ללמד, שהורידוהו אחיו מגדלתו כשראו
בצרת אביהם, אמרו: אתה אמרת למכרו, אלו אמרת
להשיבו היינו שומעים לך: ויט. מאת אחיו: עד איש
עדלמי. נשתתף עמו: 2 בנעני. "תגרא": 5 והיה
בכויב. שם המקום. ואומר אני, על שם שפסקה מלדת
נקרא "כויב", לשון "היו תהיה לי כמו אכזב"⁴⁰, "אשר

40. ירמיה טו, יח. 41. ישעיה נח, יא. 42. פה, ד. 43. פסוק י.

sible, even though it had not yet been formally given.⁹⁹ The Torah's law of levirate marriage¹⁰⁰ obligates a man whose married brother dies childless to marry his widow. Judah therefore said to Onan, "Marry and cohabit with your brother's wife and thus fulfill the duty of the brother of a deceased husband to her." In addition, Judah told Onan, "In this way you will produce offspring for your brother, for you will name your first child after him," even though the Torah does not stipulate doing so as part of the institution of levirate marriage.

9 Onan knew that the offspring would not be considered his, so when he cohabited with his late brother's wife, he, too, let his seed go to waste on the ground, so as not to produce offspring for his brother.

99. Likutei Sichot, vol. 35, pp. 183-184. Above, on 37:2. 100. Deuteronomy 25:5-10.

36 Meanwhile, the Medanites (i.e., Midianites⁹⁶) had sold Joseph to the government of Egypt, specifically, to Potiphar, a courtier of Pharaoh and chief of his butchers (see Figure 45).

Judah and Tamar

- ◆ *Fourth Reading* 38:1 Seeing their father's inconsolable grief, the brothers turned on Judah. They told him, "We went along with your idea to sell him. Had you suggested that we return him to our father, we would have also listened to you." At their insistence, **Judah stepped down from his position of leadership over his brothers at that time.**⁹⁷ He **moved away from them and entered into a business partnership with a man from Adulam by the name of Chirah** (see Figure 46).

2 Soon thereafter, **Judah saw the daughter of a certain renowned**⁹⁸ **merchant there named Shua; he married her and cohabited with her.**

3 **She conceived and gave birth to a son, and Judah named him Er.**

4 **She again conceived and gave birth to another son, and she named him Onan.**

5 **Once more she gave birth to a son, and she named him Sheilah. When she gave birth to this child, Judah was in a place that would later be called Keziv** ["ceasing"]. From then on, his wife ceased bearing him children; for this reason, the place he was when their last child was born became known as Keziv.

6 In the year 2224, **Judah took a wife for Er his firstborn, and her name was Tamar.** Tamar was the daughter of Shem, who had died 66 years prior to this; thus she was at least 67 years old at this time.

7 Despite her age, Tamar was still very beautiful. Afraid that bearing children would mar her beauty, Er interrupted his marital relations with her, spilling his seed. Since deliberately wasting seed contravenes God's commandment to be fruitful and multiply and is considered tantamount to murder, **Er, Judah's firstborn, was evil in God's eyes and liable to the death penalty.** He did not regret his act, so **God therefore made him die.**

8 Like the rest of his family, Judah endeavored to keep the Torah whenever pos-



Figure 45: Joseph is Brought to Egypt.



Figure 46: Judah Leaves his Brothers.

96. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 10, p. 123, note 9. 97. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 10, p. 124, note 17. 98. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 5, p. 269, note 34.

ONKELOS

10 ובאיש קדם יי די עבד ואמית
 אף יתה: 11 ואמר יהודה לתמר
 בלתי תיבי ארמלא בית אבייך
 עד דירבי שלה ברי ארי אמר
 דלמא ימות אף הוא באחודי
 ואזלת תמר ויתיבת בית אבויא:
 12 וסגיא יומיא ומיתת בת שוע
 אתת יהודה ואתנחם יהודה וסליק
 על גזוי ענה הוא וחירה רחמה
 עדלמאה לתמנת: 13 ואתחוא
 לתמר למימר הא חמוייך סליק
 לתמנת למגו ענה: 14 ואעדיא
 לבושי ארמלותה מנה ואתכסיא
 בעיפא ואתקנת ויתיבת בפרשות
 עינין די על אורח תמנת ארי חות
 ארי רבא שלה והיא לא אתיהיבת
 לה לאנתו: 15 וחואה יהודה
 וחשבה כנפקת ברא ארי כסיא
 אפאה:

10 וירע בעיני יהודה אשר עשה וימת גס-אתו: 11 ויאמר
 יהודה לתמר בלתי תיבי ארמלא בית-אביך עד-יגדל
 שלה בני כי אמר פן-ימות גס-הוא באחיו ותלך תמר
 ותשב בית אביה: 12 וירבו הימים ותמת בת-שוע
 אשת-יהודה וינחם יהודה ויעל על-גזוי צאנו הוא
 וחירה רעהו העדלמי תמנתה: 13 ויגד לתמר לאמר
 הנה חמייך עלה תמנתה לגו צאנו: 14 ותסר בגדי
 אלמנותה מעליה ותכס בצעיף ותתעלף ותשב בפתח
 עינים אשר על-דרך תמנתה כי ראתה כי-גדל שלה
 והוא לא-נתנה לו לאשה: 15 ויראה יהודה ויחשבה
 לזונה כי כסתה פניה:

RASHI

בפתח עינים. בפתחת עינים, בפרשת דרכים שעל
 דרך תמנתה. ורבותינו⁴⁵ דרשו: בפתחו של אברהם
 אבינו, שכל עינים מצפות לראותו: כי ראתה כי גדל
 שלה וגו'. לפיכך הפקירה עצמה אצל יהודה, שהיתה
 מתאוה להעמיד ממנו בנים: 15 ויחשבה לזונה. לפי
 שיושבת בפרשת דרכים: כי כסתה פניה. ולא יכל
 לראותה ולהכירה. ומדרש רבותינו⁴⁶: "כי כסתה פניה",
 כשהיתה בבית חמיה היתה צנועה, לפיכך לא חשדה:

11 כי אמר וגו'. כלומר, דוחה היה אותה בקש, שלא
 היה בדעתו להשיאה לו: כי אמר פן ימות. מחוקת
 היא זו שזמרתו אנשיה: 12 ויעל על גזוי צאנו. ויעל
 תמנתה לעמוד על גזוי צאנו: 13 עלה תמנתה.
 ובשמשון הוא אמר⁴⁷: "וירד שמשון וגו' תמנתה",
 בשפוע הרהר היתה יושבת, עולין לה מכאן ויורדין לה
 מכאן: 14 ותתעלף. כסתה פניה, שלא יכיר בה: ותשב

44. שופטים יד, א. 45. סוטה י, א. 46. סוטה י, ב.

CHASIDIC INSIGHTS

15-16 When Judah saw her, he took her for a prosti-
 tute...He turned aside to her: The Midrash describes
 the incident of Judah and Tamar as follows: "[The
 progenitor of] the tribes were busy with the sale of
 Joseph; Joseph was busy mourning over his separation
 from his father; Reuben was busy with his penitence;

Jacob was busy mourning over Joseph; Judah was busy
 getting married—and God was busy creating the light
 of the Messiah."¹⁰⁶ Since Joseph was descending to
 Egypt, beginning the process of exile, God wanted to
 preempt the exile with the potential for redemption, to
 "prepare the cure prior to the onset of the illness."

A CLOSER LOOK

[11] He presumed that something about Tamar
 had caused her husbands...to die prematurely: Ju-
 dah made his presumption about Tamar after only
 two of her husbands had died. In contrast, the Torah
 rules that is an ox presumed to gore chronically and
 its owner completely liable for its actions only after
 it has gored three times.¹⁰⁷ Why the difference?

In Judah's case, the danger that Tamar presumably
 posed was not contingent upon anything she might

do or not do. Simply marrying her was presumed
 to be the cause of her first two husbands' deaths.
 In contrast, although we can similarly deduce that
 an ox that has gored twice is liable to gore again,
 nevertheless, its subsequent goring will not happen
 by itself; the ox has to choose to gore. Therefore, the
 Torah requires a third episode to create a legally
 binding presumption.¹⁰⁸

106. Bereishit Rabbah 85:1. 107. See Yevamot 64b. 108. Likutei Sichot, vol. 5, pp. 220-222. Cf. Yevamot 64b and commentaries of Rab-
 beinu Asher and Nimukei Yosef, ad loc.; Responsa Tzemach Tzedek, Yoreh Deah 3:7.

10 Although his motivation was different than his brother's, his act was identical, so **what Onan did was likewise evil in the eyes of God.** Since he, too, did not regret his act, God **made him, too, die.**

11 In further accordance with levirate law, the next in line to marry Tamar would have been Sheilah, Judah's third son. But instead of having her marry Sheilah, **Judah said to his daughter-in-law Tamar, "Remain a widow in your father's house for another year, until my son Sheilah grows up."** In truth, however, Judah really had no intention of letting Sheilah marry her, **for he thought, "If her marries her, he, too, might die like his brothers did."** Since Judah did not know why his first two sons had died within a year of marrying Tamar, he presumed that something about Tamar had caused her husbands—and would cause any future husbands of hers—to die prematurely. Although this presumption of mortal danger was legally sufficient to absolve Sheilah of any levirate duty to marry her,¹⁰¹ Judah did not have her released from this pledge. In order to keep her from marrying other men, something that could possibly endanger their lives, he felt it would be preferable to keep her thinking that she was still promised to Sheilah.¹⁰²

So Tamar went to live in her father's house—i.e., her family's house, for her father had died many years ago¹⁰³—while she waited for Sheilah to come of age.

12 **Many days, i.e., a year or so, passed, and Shua's daughter, Judah's wife, died.** (She was still known simply as Shua's daughter—even after marriage—because Shua was such a renowned merchant.¹⁰⁴) **After Judah was consoled, he went up, together with Chirah, his Adulamite friend, to Timnah,** which was situated on the slope of a hill, **to supervise his sheepshearers.**

13 **Tamar was then told as follows, "Your father-in-law is now going up to Timnah to shear his sheep."** Since she was told that he was going *up* to Timnah, she knew which route he would be taking.¹⁰⁵

14 **So she took off her widow's garb, covered herself with a veil, wrapping it also around her face** so he would not recognize her, **and sat at the crossroads on the way up to Timnah.** Abraham had pitched his tent for a while at this crossroads, and for this reason, the place was frequently visited by travelers wishing to honor his memory; Tamar knew that Judah would do the same. **For Tamar strongly desired to bear children descended from Judah, so when she saw that Sheilah had grown up and yet she had not been given to him as a wife,** she contrived to conceive children from Judah himself.

15 **When Judah saw her sitting at the crossroads, he took her for a prostitute. Because she had covered her face,** he did not recognize her. Even though Judah knew that Tamar was anxious to bear his progeny, he did not suspect that this prostitute could be her, **because she always covered her face** when she had visited his house as his daughter-in-law, thus showing herself to be a paragon of modesty and righteousness.

101. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 5, p. 188. 102. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 5, p. 190, note 37. 103. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 5, pp. 191-192. 104. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 5, p. 269, note 34. 105. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 10, pp. 122-125.

ONKELOS

16 וְסָטָא לְתוּמָה לְאַרְחָא וְאָמַר הָבִי כַעַן אֵינְעוּל לְתוּרִי אַרִי לֹא יָדַע אַרִי כַלְתוּהּ הִיא וְאָמַרְתָּ מָא תַתָּן לִי אַרִי תִיעוּל לְתוּתִי: 17 וְאָמַר אָנָּא אֶשְׁלַח גְּדִיא בַר עוּז מִן עֵנָא וְאָמַרְתָּ אִם תַתָּן מִשְׁכּוּנָא עַד דְתִשְׁלַח: 18 וְאָמַר מָא מִשְׁכּוּנָא דִי אַתָּן לִירִי וְאָמַרְתָּ עוֹקְתָרְךָ וְשׁוֹשְׁפָרְךָ וְחוּטְרָךָ דִי בִידְךָ וְיֵהֵב לָהּ וְעַל לְתוּמָה וְעַדִיאת לָהּ: 19 וְקַמְתָּ וְאֹזְלַת וְאֶעֱדִיאת עֵיפָה מְנַחַה וּלְבִישַׁת לְבוּשֵׁי אֶרְמְלוּתָהּ: 20 וְשׁוֹדֵר יְהוּדָה יָת גְּדִיא בַר עוּז בְּיַד רַחֲמָה עַדְלִמָּאָה לְמַסַּב מִשְׁכּוּנָא מִיָּדָא דְאַתְתָּא וְלֹא אֶשְׁכַּחְתָּהּ: 21 וְשִׂאִיל יָת אָנְשֵׁי אַתְרָה לְמִימַר אֵן מְקַדְשָׁתָא הִיא בְּעֵינֵין עַל אַרְחָא וְאָמְרוּ לִית הִכָּא מְקַדְשָׁתָא: 22 וְתַב לֹת יְהוּדָה וְאָמַר לֹא אֶשְׁכַּחְתִּיהָ וְאָף אָנְשֵׁי אַתְרָא אָמְרוּ לִית הִכָּא מְקַדְשָׁתָא: 23 וְאָמַר יְהוּדָה תִּסַּב לָהּ דְלִמָּא נְהִי לְחוּרָה הָא שְׁדִרִית גְּדִיא הָרִין וְאֵת לֹא אֶשְׁכַּחְתָּהּ:

16 וַיֵּט אֵלָיָהּ אֶל־הַדָּרֶךְ וַיֹּאמֶר הִבְהִינָא אָבוֹא אֵלָיִךְ כִּי לֹא יָדַע כִּי כַלְתּוֹ הוּא וַתֹּאמֶר מַה־תַּתְּנֶנִּי לִי כִּי תָבוֹא אֵלָי: 17 וַיֹּאמֶר אֲנֹכִי אֶשְׁלַח גְּדֵי־עֵינִים מִן־הַצָּאן וַתֹּאמֶר אִם־תַּתֶּנּוּ עֶרְבוֹן עַד שְׁלַחְךָ: 18 וַיֹּאמֶר מַה הָעֶרְבוֹן אֲשֶׁר אֶתְּנֶנֶךָ וַתֹּאמֶר חֲתָמְךָ וּפְתִילְךָ וּמַטְּךָ אֲשֶׁר בְּיַדְךָ וַיִּתֶּן־לָהּ וַיָּבֵא אֵלָיָהּ וַתַּהַר לּוֹ: 19 וַתִּקַּם וַתֵּלֶךְ וַתִּסַּר צְעִיפָהּ מִעֵלְיָהּ וַתִּלְבַּשׁ בְּגָדֵי אֶלְמְנוּתָהּ: 20 וַיִּשְׁלַח יְהוּדָה אֶת־גְּדֵי הָעֵינִים בְּיַד רַעְהוּ הָעַדְלָמִי לְקַחַת הָעֶרְבוֹן מִיַּד הָאִשָּׁה וְלֹא מִצָּאָהּ: 21 וַיִּשְׁאֵל אֶת־אֲנָשָׁי מְקוֹמָהּ לֵאמֹר אֵיךָ הִקְדַּשְׁתָּהּ הוּא בְּעֵינֵינוּ עַל־הַדָּרֶךְ וַיֹּאמְרוּ לֹא־הִיְתָה בְּזָה קְדֻשָּׁהּ: 22 וַיֵּשֶׁב אֶל־יְהוּדָה וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא מִצָּאֲתִיָּהּ וְגַם אֲנָשֵׁי הַמָּקוֹם אָמְרוּ לֹא־הִיְתָה בְּזָה קְדֻשָּׁהּ: 23 וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוּדָה תִּקַּח־לָהּ פֶּן נִהְיֶה לְבוֹי הַנֶּחֱה שְׁלַחְתִּי הַגְּדִי הַזֶּה וְאֵתָהּ לֹא מִצָּאֲתָהּ:

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לו. גבורים כיוצא בו, צדיקים כיוצא בו: 21 הקדשה. מקדשת וממנות לונות: 23 תקח לה. יהיה שלה מה שבידה: פן נהיה לבוי. אם תבקשנה עוד, ותפרסם הדבר ויהיה גנאי, כי מה עלי לעשות עוד לאמת דברי: הנה שלחתי הגדי הזה. ולפי שרמה יהודה את אביו בגדי עזים, שהטביל כנתת יוסף בדמו, רמוזה גם אותו בגדי עזים:

16 וַיֵּט אֵלָיָהּ אֶל הַדָּרֶךְ. מדרך שהיה בה, נטה אל הדרך אשר היא בה. ובלשון לעז דישטול"ר: "הבה נא. הכיני עצמך ודעתך לכף. כל לשון "הבה" לשון הזמנה הוא, חוץ ממקום שיש לתרגמו בלשון נתינה, ואף אותן של הזמנה קרובים ללשון נתינה הם: 17 ערבון. משכון: 18 חתמך ופתילך. "עוקתך ושושפך", טבעת שאתה חותם בה ושמתך שאתה מתכסה בה: ויתהר

47. לקטת.

CHASIDIC INSIGHTS

sacrifice and selflessness in our efforts to hasten the dawning of the Messianic age.¹¹⁸

In order to understand why it was necessary for the light of the Messiah to enter the world through such a seemingly scandalous route, we need to recall that God created evil in order for there to be free choice; thus, in order for free choice to exist, the forces of evil and the forces of good have to be perfectly balanced at any given time. (It is for this reason we are taught that the greater a person is—that is, the greater his spiritual potential—the greater is his evil inclination. Were his

spiritual greatness to outweigh his evil inclination, he would have no free choice.)

When the messianic line was about to enter the world, the forces of evil argued that the balance was about to be tipped against them. Therefore, the union that would bear the ancestor of the Messiah had to occur in a way that the forces of evil would consider beneficial to them. Just as in military strategy, an army sometimes feigns retreat in order to draw the enemy into a vulnerable position, the forces of holiness here yielded a seeming victory to the forces of evil in the form of this quasi-sinful act in order to gain the upper hand.¹¹⁹

118. Hitva'aduyot 5714, vol. 1, p. 280. 119. Derech Mitzvotecha 32a-32b; Or HaTorah, Bereishit, vol. 6, pp. 2192-2193.

16 He turned aside to her, going over to the road where she was sitting, and said, "If you consent,¹⁰⁹ please prepare yourself, so that I may cohabit with you," for he did not realize that she was his daughter-in-law. Had he known she was Tamar, he would not have asked her to cohabit with him, since having relations with her was presumed to lead to death (because of what happened to Er and Onan¹¹⁰).¹¹¹

She replied, "What will you give me as payment for cohabiting with you?"

17 He said, "I will send you a kid-goat from the flock," and she replied, "Provided you give me a pledge for security until you send it."

18 He asked, "What pledge shall I give you?" and she answered, "Your signet-ring, your special, additional cloak that is a sign of your special status in your family, and the staff that is in your hand." Tamar specifically requested these three items because she was sure that Judah would try to get them back; she could also later use them to prove his identity.¹¹²

He gave them to her and cohabited with her, and she conceived from him.

19 She arose and left, took off her veil, and once again donned her widow's garb.

20 Judah sent the kid-goat with his friend the Adulamite in order to get the security pledge back from the woman, but he could not find her.

21 He questioned the people of her area, saying, "Where is that prostitute who was at the crossroads by the wayside?"

They replied, "There was no prostitute here."

22 He returned to Judah and said, "I did not find her, and even the local people said, 'There was no prostitute here.' "

23 So Judah said, "Let her keep what I gave her as a pledge, lest we become the subject of public scorn. Look, I did send her this kid-goat, but you did not find her. What more can I do to fulfill my word?" Because Judah had deceived his father about Joseph using a kid-goat, Divine providence arranged that he himself be deceived with a kid-goat.

In this year (2228), Isaac died.¹¹³

✧ CHASIDIC INSIGHTS ✧

Thus, the Midrash continues, although the righteous Judah wanted to continue past Tamar, God sent an angel of lust to steer him to her. The angel said to Judah: "Where are you going? From where will kings arise? From where will the redeemers arise?" He thus turned toward her against his will.¹¹⁴

The Midrash notes the Torah's use of the phrase, "he turned aside (טײ) to her," instead of the more common, "he went (יילך) to her." This same idiom is used to describe how Balaam's donkey "turned aside" off the road, against its will, because an angel blocked its

path.¹¹⁵ The use of this idiom thus clearly implies that Judah "turned aside" to Tamar against his will.¹¹⁶

Posing as a prostitute was similarly out of character for Tamar, for she was a paragon of modesty; indeed, it was in virtue of this quality that God chose her to be the mother of the Davidic dynasty.¹¹⁷ Nevertheless, when she realized that all other options had been closed, she selflessly acted contrary to her nature, for the sake of drawing forth the soul of the Messiah.

Tamar's selflessness underscores the necessity for self-

^{109.} *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 5, p. 185, note 7. ^{110.} Above, v. 11. ^{111.} *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 5, p. 188, note 29. ^{112.} *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 15, pp. 331-334. ^{113.} Above, 35:28. ^{114.} *Bereishit Rabbah* 85:8. ^{115.} Numbers 22:23. ^{116.} *Matnot Kehunah* on *Bereishit Rabbah* 85:8. ^{117.} Below, v. 26.

— ONKELOS —
 24 והנה בתולדות ירחיא ואתחנא ליהודה למימר וניאת תמר בלתיך ואף הא מעדיא לונותא ואמר יהודה אפקוה ותתוקד: 25 היא מתפקא והיא שלחת לחמוקא למימר לגבר די אלין דילה מנה אגא מעדיא ואמרת אשתמודע בען דמן ענקתא ושושפא וחוטרא האלין: 26 ואשתמודע יהודה ואמר זבאה מני מעדיא ארי על פן לא יתבמה לשלה ברי ולא אוסיף עוד למדעה: 27 והנה בעון מילדה והא תימין במעהא:

24 ויהי | כמשלש חדשים ויגד ליהודה לאמר ונתת תמר בלתיך וגם הגה הרה לזנוגים ויאמר יהודה הוציאנה ותשרף: 25 הוא מוצאת והיא שלחה אל-חמיה לאמר לאיש אשר-אלה לו אנכי הרה ותאמר הכר-נא למי החתמת והפתילים והמטה האלה: 26 ויבר יהודה ויאמר צדקה ממיני ביעל-כן לא נתתיה לשלה בני ולא יסף עוד לדעה: 27 והי בעת לדתה והנה תאומים בבטנה:

— RASHI —

בוראך, ואל תאבד שלש נפשות: 26 צדקה. בדבריה: ממוני. היא מעברת. ורבותינו זכרונם לברכה⁵³ דרשו שיצאה בת קול ואמרה: "ממוני" ומאתי יצאו הדברים, לפי שהיתה צנועה בבית חמיה, גורתי שיצאו ממנה מלכים, ומשבט יהודה גורתי להעמיד מלכים בישראל: **כי על פן לא נתתיה.** כי בדין עשתה, על אשר לא נתתיה לשלה בני: **ולא יסף עוד.** יש אומרים: לא הוסיף, ויש אומרים: לא פסק. וחברו גבי אלדד ומידד⁵⁴: "ולא יספו", ומתרגמין: "ולא פסקו": 27 בעת לדתה. וברבקה הוא אומר⁵⁵: "וימלאו ימיה ללדת", להלן למלאים וכאן לחסרים: **והנה תאומים.** מלא, ולהלן⁵⁶: "תומים" חסר, לפי שהאחד רשע, אכל אלו שניהם צדיקים:

24 כמשלש חדשים. רבו של ראשון, ורבו של אחרון, ואמצעי שלם. ולשון "כמשלש חדשים", בהשתלש השנים, כמו: "ומשלח מנות"⁴⁸, "משלוח ידם"⁴⁹. וכן תרגם אנקלוס: "בתולדות ירחיא": **הרה לזנוגים.** שם דבר, מעברת, כמו⁵⁰: "אשה הרה", וכמו⁵¹: "ברה כחמה": **ותשרף.** אמר אפרים מקשאה משום רבי מאיר: בתו של שם היתה, שהוא כהן, לפיכך דונה בשרפה: 25 הוא מוצאת. להשרף: והיא שלחה אל חמיה. לא רצתה להלבין פניו ולומר: ממך אני מעברת, אלא "לאיש אשר אלה לו". אמרה: אם יודה מעצמו — יודה, ואם לאו — ושרפוני ואל אלבין פניו. מכאן אמרו⁵²: נוח לו לאדם שיפלוהו לכבשן האש, ואל ילבין פני חברו ברבים: **הכר נא.** אין "נא" אלא לשון בקשה, הכר נא

48. אסתר ט, כב. 49. ישעיה יא, יד. 50. שמות כא, כב. 51. שיר השירים ו, י. 52. סוטה י, ב. 53. עיין סוטה י, ב. 54. במדבר יא, כה. 55. בראשית כה, כד. 56. שם.

~ A CLOSER LOOK ~

[26] Judah then married her: The announcement that Er and Onan died because of their own sins rid Tamar of the status of a woman who is intrinsically dangerous to marry, thereby allowing Judah to marry her. However, he still could not let Sheilah marry her, since Sheilah had to operate under the presumption that there might be something about his family that caused them to die while married to her, inasmuch as this had happened to his two brothers.¹²⁹

Nonetheless, Tamar was Judah's daughter-in-law,

and the Torah forbids a person to marry his daughter-in-law.¹³⁰ True, the Torah had not yet been officially given, but, as we know, that the patriarchs kept the Torah voluntarily even before it was given, and Jacob's brother presumably did the same when there was no reason not to.¹³¹ In this case, however, it can be argued that for several reasons the prohibition did not apply to Judah and Tamar,¹³² and even had it applied, Judah may have felt it was better to transgress a future law, which he was not obligated to keep, than abandon Tamar.¹³³

129. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 5, p. 189, note 37. 130. Leviticus 20:12. 131. See below, 43:16. 132. See *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 5, pp. 188-189. 133. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 5, p. 187, note 17. See similarly 29:28, above.

24 Some three months went by, and Judah was informed as follows: “Your daughter-in-law Tamar has not married anyone else since her second husband died, but she has been having relations. **She is therefore guilty of licentiousness**, the proof being that **she is even visibly pregnant from it.**”

When humanity collectively forswore licentiousness after the flood, it agreed to punish priests’ daughters who act licentiously with death by burning, echoing the Torah’s decree that a priest’s daughter who commits adultery must die by burning.¹²⁰ Since Tamar was the daughter of Shem,¹²¹ who was a priest,¹²² Judah therefore said, “**Bring her forth and have her burned.**”

25 Tamar was so acutely aware of the gravity of the crime of shaming someone in public that she was ready to be burnt publicly rather than commit it. She therefore let Judah know indirectly that she was pregnant by him. **As she was being brought to be burned, she sent word to her father-in-law as follows: “I am pregnant by a man to whom these belong.” And she added, “Please identify these items: whose signet-ring, cloak, and staff are these? Please acknowledge your God: admit that you are the father and do not cause three innocent lives to be ended—mine and that of the twins in my womb.”**

26 Judah recognized the articles as being his. Even though he had not technically committed any wrongdoing, since prostitution was not forbidden before the Torah was given,¹²³ it was still embarrassing that a member of Jacob’s family had indulged in such a purely carnal union. Nonetheless, he chose to suffer public disgrace rather than let Tamar be killed. **He said, “She is correct; she is pregnant by me. She was justified in contriving to conceive by me, since I did not give her in marriage to my son Sheilah as I had promised I would, and she felt that I was ignoring my duty to ensure that she bear children from my bloodline.**¹²⁴ Furthermore, now that it is clear that she intended only to have relations with me, she cannot be considered guilty of licentiousness, so she is therefore not liable to the death penalty.”¹²⁵ A voice from heaven then announced, “I, God, am responsible for all this. Because Tamar was so exemplarily modest whenever she visited her father-in-law’s house, I ordained that the royal line of Jewish kings be descended from her. I have also ordained that the royal line should be descended from Judah, but when Er and Onan refused to father sons by her, I killed them and arranged for Tamar to conceive by Judah himself.”

Once it was clear that Er and Onan had died because of their own sins rather than because of any fault of Tamar’s, Judah married her, so **he was never again intimate with her** in the same questionable way he had been before.

When Reuben heard about Judah’s confession of his inappropriate behavior, he was inspired to also confess publicly that he had wrongly meddled in his father’s private affairs.¹²⁶

27 As Tamar was giving birth, the midwife saw that **there were twins**, who were both destined to be righteous, **in her womb**. In this merit,¹²⁷ God shortened the length of her pregnancy and she gave birth prematurely, in her seventh month.¹²⁸

^{120.} Leviticus 21:9; *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 5, p. 191. ^{121.} Above, v. 6. ^{122.} Above, 14:18. ^{123.} *Mishneh Torah, Ishut* 1:4. ^{124.} *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 5, p. 191, note 52. ^{125.} *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 5, p. 191. ^{126.} Rashi on Deuteronomy 33:7. ^{127.} *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 30, p. 114. ^{128.} Rashi on 25:24, above.

— ONKELOS —

28 והנה במילדה ויהב ידא ונסיבת חיתא וקטרת על ידה זהו יתא למימר דין נפק קדמא: 29 והנה כד אתיב ידה והא נפק אהויה ואמרת מא תקוף סגי עלך למתקף וקרא שמה פריץ: 30 ובתר כן נפק אהויה די על ידה זהו יתא וקרא שמה זרח: 31 ויוסף אתחת למצרים ונבנה פוטיפר רבא דפרעה רב כטולאי גברא מצראה מיד ערבאי די אהתוהי לתמן:

28 ויהי בלדתה ויתן יד ותקח המילדת ותקשר על־ידו שני לאמר זה יצא ראשונה: 29 ויהי | כמשיב ידו והנה יצא אחיו ותאמר מה־פרצת עליך פריץ ויקרא שמו פריץ: 30 ואחר יצא אחיו אשר על־ידו השני ויקרא שמו זרח: ם

חמישי 1:39 ויוסף הורד מצרימה ויקנהו פוטיפר סרים פרעה שר הטבחים איש מצרי מיד הישמעאלים אשר הורדהו שמה:

— RASHI —

לענין ראשון. אלא שהפסיק בו כדי לסמך וירידתו של יהודה למכירתו של יוסף, לומר לה שבשכילו הורידוהו מגדלתו. ועוד, כדי לסמך מעשה אשתו של פוטיפר למעשה תמר, לומר לה: מה זו לשם שמים אף זו לשם שמים, שראתה באצטרולוגין שלה שעתידה להעמיד בנים ממנו, ואינה יודעת אם ממנה אם מבתה:

28 ויתן יד. הוציא האחד ידו לחוץ, ולאחר שקשרה על ידו השני החזירה: 29 פרצת. חוקת עליך חוק: 30 אשר על ידו השני. ארבע דות כתובות כאן, כנגד ארבע חרמים שמעל עכן שיצא ממנו. ויש אומרים: כנגד ארבע דברים שלקח: אדרת שנער, ושתי חתיכות כסף של מאתים שקלים, ולשון זהב אחד: ויקרא שמו זרח. על שם זריחת מראית השני: 1 ויוסף הורד. חזר

— CHASIDIC INSIGHTS —

time did not have the strength to overpower and contaminate the Jewish people. On the contrary, the Jewish people flourished there and remained separate from the Egyptian culture.¹⁴⁴

Through his holy work, Joseph elevated many of the holy sparks embedded in Egypt. He thereby enabled the Jewish people to complete their task relatively quickly. They remained in Egypt for only 210 years, 190 years less than the full 400 years stipulated in God’s covenant with Abraham. Furthermore, through his holy work, Joseph was able to limit the bitterest form of enslavement to only 86 years.¹⁴⁵

Joseph was unique in his capacity to be involved in mundane life and at the same time maintain his lofty sense of Divine consciousness. Thus, even while Joseph was a slave for Potiphar, engaged in worldly projects, Potiphar was able to see that God was with Joseph, granting him success in all he did. Even in a world where Potiphar was Joseph’s master—an environment of extreme spiritual exile—that very master was able to see that God was with Joseph. The same thing happened when Joseph was in prison.

The Midrash¹⁴⁶ thus relates the word that means “taken

down” (הורד) to the verse that describes both the rule of Solomon and the rule of the Messiah—“He will rule (וירד) from sea to sea.”¹⁴⁷ Since the Midrash relates the very word for “descent” to Joseph’s rule, it follows that his “rule” began in some sense immediately upon his descent, even before he became viceroy of Egypt. Even within his descent to Egypt—as a servant and then as a prisoner—Joseph was able to “rule over” Egypt, i.e., reveal God’s presence within Egypt.

The Midrash thus offers a complementary interpretation of the verse “Joseph had been taken down to Egypt,” namely, that “the Divine presence descended with him.”¹⁴⁸

(Abraham and Sarah’s descent to Egypt had also brought God’s presence there, but in a more general, overall way, rather than in a way that effected real change.¹⁴⁹)

Joseph had been taken “down” not only physically but spiritually as well. He went from the lofty spiritual environment of his father’s home in the Holy Land to hedonistic Egypt. He went from studying the Torah with his father to being a slave for an Egyptian master.

144. See *Vayikra Rabbah* 32:5; *Midrash Lekach Tov*, *Devarim* 26:5. 145. *Shir HaShirim Rabbah* 2:11. Alshich on 45:4, below. *Ma’amarei Admor HaEmtza’i*, *Bereishit*, pp. 299-302; *Or HaTorah*, *Bereishit*, vol. 2, 343b; *Sefer HaMa’amirim* 5654, p. 107; *Sefer HaMa’amirim Melukat*, vol. 5, pp. 259-260. 146. *Bereishit Rabbah* 86:2. 147. Psalms 72:8, Radak and Ibn Ezra et al, *ad loc.* Although Joseph only became ruler of Egypt, he is still considered to have ruled “from sea to sea,” since Egypt at the time dominated all of civilization. 148. *Bereishit Rabbah* 86:2. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 25, pp. 194-198. 149. *Zohar* 1:184a; *Or HaTorah*, *Bereishit*, vol. 2, pp. 679-680.

28 While she was in labor, one of the babies stuck out his hand from the womb. The midwife took a scarlet thread and tied it on his hand to signify, "This one emerged first." The baby then withdrew his hand.

29 But as soon as he withdrew his hand, his brother emerged, and his mother said, "With what vigor have you pushed yourself ahead!" So Judah named him Peretz ["breaking through"]. Since primogeniture is determined by which baby's head emerges first, Peretz was therefore the firstborn.

30 Then his brother, who had the scarlet thread on his hand, emerged, and Judah named him Zerach ["shining"], after the shining scarlet thread. Zerach failed to emerge first and claim primogeniture because in the future, when the Jewish people would conquer the Land of Israel, his descendant Achan¹³⁴ would make prohibited use of the spoils of battle and thereby endanger the success of the Jewish people's entry into the Promised Land.¹³⁵

In the merit of Tamar's righteous intention to bear Judah's children, these sons inherited Judah's strength and righteousness.¹³⁶

Joseph in the House of Potiphar

- ◆ **Fifth Reading 39:1** As mentioned above, **Joseph had been taken down to Egypt, and Potiphar—a courtier of Pharaoh and chief of his butchers, a prominent Egyptian—had bought him from the Midianites,¹³⁷ who had bought him from the Ishmaelites and brought him down there.¹³⁸ Potiphar bought him because he was attracted to his good looks, but God made Potiphar impotent so he could not act on this attraction. From then on, he became known as Potiphera,¹³⁹ phera meaning "mutilated."**

∞ CHASIDIC INSIGHTS ∞

28-30 Judah named him Peretz.... Judah named him Zerach.... Achan: In the Kabbalistic work *Sefer HaBahir*, Zerach ("shining") is associated with the sun, which shines constantly, and Peretz ("breaking through") is associated with the moon, which experiences periods of "brokenness" and rebirth.¹⁴⁰

Metaphorically, the sun represents the completely righteous, whose light shines consistently, without interruption or fluctuation. The moon represents the penitents, who have done wrong but change their ways and return to God. Much like the moon, penitents are in a perpetual process of rise and fall, diminished light and increased light.

Yet because of their challenges, the penitents reach a higher spiritual level and achieve what the consistently righteous cannot.¹⁴¹ Thus, Peretz, who is associated with the moon and is therefore the archetype of repentance, precedes Zerach and is the firstborn, since the accomplishments of the penitents surpass those of the consistently righteous.

The fact that Zerach stretched his hand out first represents the notion that we must aspire to be completely righteous. But because Achan would eventually emerge from him, Zerach needed the revelation of the phenomenon of repentance to precede his own birth, thereby providing Achan the means with which to rectify his misdeed.¹⁴²

1 Joseph had been taken down to Egypt: Egypt was a place where Godliness was drastically concealed. It was therefore unlikely that the Jewish people could survive the Egyptian exile spiritually intact. They would find it nearly impossible to fulfill the purpose of their exile, which was to elevate the sparks of holiness that were embedded within Egypt. And in fact, they were nearly at the point of no return when God saved them from Egypt.¹⁴³

God therefore arranged for Joseph to descend to Egypt first and weaken the evil of Egypt through his rise to greatness there. Because of Joseph's accomplishments, even later generations of Egyptians who lived after his

¹³⁴. Joshua 7:2. ¹³⁵. Joshua 7:21; *Bereishit Rabbah* 85:14. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 30, pp. 184-188. ¹³⁶. Rashi on v. 18, above. ¹³⁷. Above, 37:36. ¹³⁸. Above, 37:28. ¹³⁹. Below, 41:45. ¹⁴⁰. *Sefer HaBahir* 197, cited by Nachmanides and Rabbeinu Bachye. ¹⁴¹. *Berachot* 34b; *Mishneh Torah*, *Teshuvah* 7:4. ¹⁴². *Likutei Sichot* vol. 30, pp. 188-189. ¹⁴³. See on Exodus 12:11.

ONKELOS

2 והיה מִיִּמְרָא דִּי בְּסַעְדָּה דִּיֻּסָּף
וְהָיָה גְבַר מְצַלַח וְהָיָה בְּבֵית
רְבוּנָה מִצְרָאָה: 3 וְהָיָה רְבוּנָה אָרִי
מִיִּמְרָא דִּי בְּסַעְדָּה וְכָל דִּי הוּא
עֲבִיד יִי מְצַלַח בִּידָה: 4 וְאִשְׁבַּח
יֻסָּף רַחֲמִין בְּעִינוּהִי וְשִׁמַּשׁ יְתָה
וּמְנִיָּה עַל בֵּיתָה וְכָל דָּאִית לָהּ
מִסַּר בִּידָה: 5 וְהָיָה מַעֲדָן דְּמִנֵּי
יְתָה בְּבֵיתָה וְעַל כָּל דִּי אִית לָהּ
וּבְרִיךְ יִי יֵת בֵּית מִצְרָאָה בְּדִיל
יֻסָּף וְהוֹת בְּרַכְתָּא דִּי בְּכָל דִּי
אִית לָהּ בְּבֵיתָא וּבְחֻקָּא: 6 וְשִׁבַּק
כָּל דִּי לָהּ בִּידָא דִּיֻּסָּף וְלֹא יָדַע
עֲמָה מִדְּעַם אֲלֵהִין לְחִמָּא דִּי הוּא
אֲכַל וְהָיָה יֻסָּף שְׁפִיר בְּרִינָא וְיֹאֵי
בְחֻזָּא:

2 וְיִהְיֶה יְהוָה אֶת־יֹסֵף וְיִהְיֶה אִישׁ מְצַלֵּיחַ וְיִהְיֶה בְּבֵית אָדֹנָיו
הַמְצַרִּי: 3 וַיֵּרָא אָדֹנָיו כִּי יְהוָה אִתּוֹ וְכָל אֲשֶׁר־הוּא עֹשֶׂה
יְהוָה מְצַלֵּיחַ בְּיָדוֹ: 4 וַיִּמְצָא יֹסֵף חֵן בְּעֵינָיו וַיִּשְׁרֹת אֹתוֹ
וַיַּפְקְדֵהוּ עַל־בֵּיתוֹ וְכָל־יִשְׁרָלוֹ נָתַן בְּיָדוֹ: 5 וְיִהְיֶה מֵאֹ
הַפְּקִיד אֹתוֹ בְּבֵיתוֹ וְעַל כָּל־אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁלֹו וַיְבַרֵךְ יְהוָה
אֶת־בֵּית הַמְצַרִּי בְּגִלְלַל יֹסֵף וְיִהְיֶה בְּרַבַּת יְהוָה בְּכָל־
אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁלֹו בְּבֵית וּבְשָׂדֵה: 6 וַיַּעֲזֹב כָּל־אֲשֶׁר־לוֹ בְּיַד־
יֹסֵף וְלֹא־יָדַע אֹתוֹ מֵאֹמְתָה כִּי אִם־הִלָּחֵם אֲשֶׁר־הוּא
אוֹכֵל וְיִהְיֶה יֹסֵף יִפְהֶ־תָּאֵר וַיִּפָּה מְרָאָה:

RASHI

עֲצֻמוֹ מוֹשֵׁל, הַתְּחִיל אוֹכֵל וְשׁוֹתָהּ וּמְסַלֵּסל בְּשַׁעְרוֹ,
אָמַר הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא: אָבִיר מִתְּאֵבֵל וְאִתְּהָ מְסַלֵּסל
בְּשַׁעְרָהּ, אָנִי מְגַרֵּה בָּךְ אֶת הַדּוֹב. מִיד:

3 כִּי ה' אִתּוֹ. שֵׁם שְׁמַיִם שְׁגוּר בְּפִיו: 4 וְכָל יֵשׁ לוֹ. הָרִי
לְשׁוֹן קֶצֶר, חֶסֶר "אֲשֶׁר": 6 וְלֹא יָדַע אֹתוֹ מֵאֹמְתָה. לֹא
הָיָה נוֹתֵן לְבוֹ לְכָל־עוֹם: כִּי אִם הִלָּחֵם. הִיא אֲשֶׁתוֹ, אֲלֵא
שְׂדֵבֶר בְּלְשׁוֹן נְקִיָּה: וְיִהְיֶה יֹסֵף יִפָּה הָאֵר. בֵּינָן שְׂרָאָה

CHASIDIC INSIGHTS

the solitude of the desert or at least to seek revenge against his oppressors. Yet he did no such thing, remaining instead focused on doing his work faithfully, and thereby sanctifying God's name.¹⁵⁷

How indeed was Joseph, a flesh and blood mortal, capable of such superhuman behavior? By studying Torah. Throughout his years in Egypt he constantly reviewed what he had studied with his father.¹⁵⁸ He was therefore permeated with the spiritual fortitude to overcome every hardship.

Like Joseph, we too must learn to remain focused on our Divine mission—to bring light into the world—despite the disappointments and seeming injustices we often encounter.¹⁵⁹

6 Joseph was well built and of fine appearance: Spiritually, this means that Joseph was perfect and beautiful in his fulfillment of the Torah's commandments. As we have seen,¹⁶⁰ Joseph's Divine mission was to bring others closer to God, to perfect others. He was able to do

so by virtue of his own spiritual perfection.

We, too, are all called upon to engage in the work of Joseph, to bring others closer to God. In order to succeed as Joseph did, we must bear in mind the Talmudic adage, "Adorn yourself and then adorn others."¹⁶¹ Only when we are "well built and of fine appearance" in the spiritual sense are we best suited to influence others.

Of course, this does not mean we should wait until we achieve perfection before reaching out to others; perfection is relative, and compared to those who know less than we, we are "adorned" enough to inspire them. Nevertheless, we must also remember that if we neglect to correct our own flaws, others will take note, and they will then be less inclined to take our words to heart.

We must therefore spare no effort to spiritually "beautify" ourselves, since neglecting to do so is detrimental not only ourselves but to everyone in our potential sphere of influence.¹⁶²

INNER DIMENSIONS

[6] Joseph was well built and of fine appearance: As we have seen,¹⁶³ the attribute of *yesod*, which Joseph personified, does not possess its own, unique content, but rather acts as a funnel, receiving the input of all the attributes above it and transmitting this content to the attribute beneath it, *malchut*. It

blends the content it receives in perfect balance and then transmits this blended and balanced content. Joseph is therefore referred to as being "well built and of fine appearance," since true beauty is the perfectly balanced synthesis of different colors.¹⁶⁴

157. See below on v. 23. 158. See below on 45:27; see Bereishit Rabbah 86:5 and Matnot Kehunah, ad loc., citing Rashi. 159. Sichot Kodesh 5728, vol. 1, pp. 291-293. 160. Above on 30:24. 161. Bava Metzia 107b. 162. Likutei Sichot, vol. 1, p. 79. 163. Above on 37:2. 164. Ma'amarei Admor Ha'Emtza'i, Bereishit, pp. 292-294.

2 **GOD was with Joseph and he became a successful man, and he lived in the house of his Egyptian master.** Nonetheless, he was still a slave, and therefore had no means to let his father know that he was alive.¹⁵⁰

3 Joseph's **master saw that** Joseph was deeply aware of God's presence, always articulating his awareness that **GOD was with him** and granting him success in all he did.¹⁵¹ Potiphera therefore understood **that** it was **GOD** who had **granted** Joseph **success in everything he did.**

4 **Joseph thus gained favor with him and became his attendant.** His master **put him in charge of his household, entrusting all that he owned into his care.**

5 **As soon as he had put him in charge of his household and all that he owned, God blessed the Egyptian's household in Joseph's merit. God's blessing was evident in everything Potiphera had, both in the house and in the field.**

6 **He left everything he had in Joseph's care, and did not concern himself with any of his own affairs other than "the bread he ate"** — a euphemism for his wife. After being in charge of Potiphera's house for ten years, **Joseph** became overly impressed with his own success, started to pay attention to the fact that he was **well-built and of fine appearance**, and began indulging in gourmet food and curling his hair, primping himself even more than he used to when he was a youth.¹⁵² Joseph's regressive narcissism evinced gross insensitivity to the fact that his father was in mourning over having lost him. God therefore set about to correct this flaw by showing Joseph that undue attention to one's looks can invite undesirable attention from others.

✧ CHASIDIC INSIGHTS ✧

Joseph's descent echoes the descent of the soul from the holiness of heaven to the mundaneness of earthly existence. Such a descent constitutes a drastic plunge, even in times of Godly revelation in the world, such as when the Temples stood. It is even more drastic in times of exile, especially in the final days of exile, when the spiritual darkness is greatest.¹⁵³

But the Torah informs us that "Joseph had been taken down to Egypt" also means that "Joseph *ruled* over Egypt" — that through the soul's descent it gains the capacity to immediately become ruler over anything that conceals Godliness.¹⁵⁴

The saga of Joseph's tribulations is the story of the Jew in exile. Joseph was torn away from his family and thrown into an alien world. Although Jacob had also left his family to live in Charan, Joseph's isolation was far more distressing and challenging. Firstly, Jacob was already a mature and wise adult, over the age of forty, when he went to Charan; Joseph, in contrast, was only seventeen years old. Secondly, Jacob was able to establish his own home, separate from Laban, where he could live a Godly life undisturbed. Joseph, in contrast, enjoyed no such luxury. He first lived as a slave

and later as a prisoner. It was only many years after he arrived in Egypt that he married and established his own home.

In addition to his isolation, Joseph was dealt one blow after another. Although one would expect him to be bitter and unenthusiastic about working for Potiphar, Joseph worked diligently for him and brought his master great success. In addition, Joseph was loyal to Potiphar and refused under immense pressure to cohabit with his master's wife. Yet how did Potiphar repay his loyalty? By throwing Joseph in jail.

While in jail, Joseph had to serve the king's condemned servants, the cupbearer and the baker.¹⁵⁵ Although they should have been serving him, since they had sinned against the king and he (supposedly) only against the king's servant, he ended up having to serve them! Furthermore, he knew that they thought of him as an immature child, a lowly slave, and a foreigner.¹⁵⁶ Yet he reached out to help them. And what was his reward? To be immediately forgotten.

One would think that confronted by a world filled with falsehood and bereft of justice and fairness, Joseph would be inclined to escape from the world, to flee to

^{150.} *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 10, p. 129. ^{151.} *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 25, pp. 213-218. ^{152.} Above, 37:2. ^{153.} See *Sotah* 49b. ^{154.} *Sichot Kodesh* 5741, vol. 1, pp. 576-577. ^{155.} V. 40, below. ^{156.} See below, 41:12.

ONKELOS

7 והיה בתר פתגמאי האלין וזקפת אתת רבוניה ית עינהא ליוסף ואמרת שׁכוב עמי: 8 וסריב ואמר לאתת רבוניה הא רבוני לא ידע עמי מא בביתא וכל די אית לה מסר בידי: 9 לית רב בביתא הדין מני ולא מנע מני מדעם אלהין יתיך בדיל דאת אתתה ואיכרין אעביד בשתא רבתא הדיא ואחוב קדם יי: 10 והיה כד מלילת עם יוסף יום יום ולא קבל מנה למשכב לותה למחוי עמה: 11 והיה ביומא הדין ועל לביתא למבדק בכתבי חשבנה ולית אנש מאנשי ביתא תמן בביתא: 12 ואחרתה בלבושה למימר שׁכוב עמי ושקבה ללבושה בידה וערק ונפק לשוקא:

שׁשי 7 ויהי אחר הדברים האלה ותשא אשת־אדניו את־עיניה אל־יוסף ותאמר שכבה עמי: 8 וימאן | ויאמר אל־אשת אדניו הן אדני לא־ידע אתי מה בבית וכל אשר־ישלו נתן בידי: 9 איננו גדול בבית הזה ממני ולא־חשך ממני מאומה כי אם־אותך באשר את־אשתי ואיך אעשה הרעה הגדלה הזאת וחטאתי לאלהים: 10 ויהי כדברך אל־יוסף יום | יום ולא־שמע אליה לשכב אצלה להיות עמה: 11 ויהי כהיום הזה ויבא הביתה לעשות מלאכתו ואין איש מאנשי הבית שם בבית: 12 ותתפשטו בגדרו לאמר שכבה עמי ויעוב בגרו בידה וינס ויצא החוצה:

RASHI

לבית עבודה נרה, אמרה: אין לי יום הגון להזקק ליוסף כהיום הזה. אמרה להם: חולה אני, ואיני יכולה לילף: לעשות מלאכתו. רב ושמואל, חד אמר: מלאכתו ממש, וחד אמר: לעשות צרכיו עמה, אלא שנגראית לו דמות דיוקנו של אביו וכו', כדאיתא במסכת סוטה¹⁷²:

7 ותשא אשת אדניו וגו'. כל מקום שנאמר "אחר" סמוך: 9 וחטאתי לאלהים. בני נח נצטוו על העריות: 10 לשכב אצלה. אפלו בלא תשמיש: להיות עמה. לעולם הבא: 11 ויהי כהיום הזה. כלומר, ויהי כשאר הגיע יום מיוחד, יום צחוק, יום איד שלהם, שהלכו כלם

57. לו. ב.

CHASIDIC INSIGHTS

The pest himself, like all of existence, is rooted ultimately in holiness, and is therefore motivated by a subconscious desire to serve holiness. It is only his conscious, evil self that distorts this desire and expresses it in a form that outwardly opposes holiness.

The same principle is true with regard to all the obstacles we encounter. We should neither be fooled nor discouraged by their antagonistic veneer but rather perceive their essence, i.e., that they are not obstacles to holiness but rather its servants. If we maintain this

attitude, we can reveal the inner, holy essence of the obstacle, thereby removing its façade and enabling it to serve holiness manifestly.¹⁷²

12 Just then he saw a vision of his father's face: As a servant, Joseph's was obviously at the mercy of his master's wife, since she had the ear of her husband. As the Midrash in fact relates, Potiphara's wife had threatened Joseph with all sorts of threats, including death, if he did not acquiesce to her demands.¹⁷³

Since the Torah had not yet been given, Joseph—

INNER DIMENSIONS

[12] He saw a vision of his father's face...he fled, and went outside: Every physical phenomenon is a derivative of a far loftier Godly phenomenon. Thus, physical beauty derives from Divine beauty. Of course, physical beauty cannot compare to Divine beauty, and therefore, when they are contrasted, physical beauty is a veritable nonentity.

When Joseph was confronted by Potiphar's wife's

beauty, he reminded himself of Divine beauty. He thus figuratively "fled and went outside" the physical realm, to a place where physical beauty is a nonentity.

This is alluded to by the fact that he saw a vision of his father's face, since Jacob, as we have seen, embodied the Divine attribute of beauty (*tiferet*).¹⁷⁴

172. Likutei Sichot, vol. 1, pp. 79-81. 173. See Yoma 35b; Bemidbar Rabbah 14:18. 174. Or Torah 52.

◆ *Sixth Reading* 7 So, **immediately after** Joseph began primping himself and God articulated His intention to correct this insensitivity,¹⁶⁵ Joseph's **master's wife cast her eyes on Joseph**. She saw through astrological means that she was destined to be an ancestress of Joseph's progeny. Although she was correct, for Joseph later married her daughter and the children born to them were thus her progeny, she mistakenly assumed that she herself was to be the mother of this progeny, and was anxious to bear the children of such a righteous individual. With these noble intentions,¹⁶⁶ she approached Joseph and said, "Sleep with me."

8 He refused to submit to her overtures and said to his master's wife, "Look, my master does not concern himself with what I do in the house, and all that he owns he has entrusted to my care.

9 There is no one in this house having more authority than I, and he has withheld nothing from me excepting yourself, since you are his wife—so how could I commit such a great wrong as betraying his trust, and at the same time also sin before God? Certainly you know that humanity forswore adultery in the wake of the Flood!"¹⁶⁷

10 Potiphera's wife, however, persisted in trying to seduce Joseph. **But although she spoke to Joseph day after day, he did not listen to her**, not even agreeing to lie next to her without having relations, for he knew that this might lead to having relations with her. This, in turn, would mean that he would have **to be with her** in the afterlife, that is, to be cleansed in Purgatory¹⁶⁸ for having defiled himself by having had relations with her.

11 It happened on a certain idolatrous holiday, when the Egyptians congregated at their temple, that Potiphera's wife realized that there would be no time more auspicious than a day like this to achieve her goal. She excused herself from attending the ceremonies by feigning illness. Joseph, as usual, **came into the house to do his work**, but he was also entertaining thoughts of giving in to her pressure. **None of the members of the household were present in the house** except for her.

12 She caught hold of him by his garment and said, "Sleep with me!" He began to do so, but at the last minute, a vision of his father's face appeared to him. The vision spoke and said, "Joseph, you and your brothers' names are destined to be inscribed on the stones of the high priest's garments!¹⁶⁹ Do you wish to have your name removed from theirs, instead becoming known as the associate of a prostitute?" Hearing this, he stuck his fingers into the ground in order to arrest his passion, and his seed issued miraculously through his fingernails.¹⁷⁰ When he started to flee, she grabbed his garment, and since Egyptian garments were not securely fastened to the body, it slid off him. **He left his garment in her hand and fled, and went outside.**

✪ CHASIDIC INSIGHTS ✪

7 **With these noble intentions:** This incident demonstrates that beneath the surface even of circumstances that seem antagonistic to holiness lies a holy purpose. Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi offers the example of someone trying to bother us when we are immersed in

prayer. In such a case, says Rabbi Shneur Zalman, we should not allow the nuisance to hamper our prayers. On the contrary, we should recognize that God has sent this nuisance as a messenger to stimulate us to pray even harder.¹⁷¹

165. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 35, pp. 163-166. 166. Rashi on v. 1, above. 167. Above, 9:7. 168. Mizrahi. 169. Exodus 28:9-12. 170. Rashi here and on 49:24, below; *Sotah* 36b. 171. *Igeret HaKodesh* 25.

ONKELOS

13 וַהֲוָה כַּד חָזַת אַרְי שְׂבָקָה לְלִבּוּשָׁה בִּידָה וְעָרַק לְשׂוֹקָא:
 14 וְקָרַת לְאַנְשֵׁי בֵיתָהּ וְאָמְרַת לְהוּן לְמִימַר חֲזוּ אִיתִי לָנָא גְבָרָא עֲבָרָאָה לְחִיָּבָא בְּנָא עַל לִוְתִי לְמַשְׁכַּב עִמִּי וְקָרִית בְּקִלָּא רַבָּא:
 15 וַהֲוָה כַּד שָׁמַע אַרְי אַרְימִית קָלִי וְקָרִית וְשָׂבָקָה לְלִבּוּשָׁה לִוְתִי וְעָרַק וּנְפַק לְשׂוֹקָא: 16 וְאַחַתְתָּהּ לְלִבּוּשָׁה לִוְתָהּ עַד דְּעַל רְבוּנָה לְבֵיתָהּ: 17 וּמְלִילַת עֵמָה כְּפִתְגָמָיָא הָאֵלִין לְמִימַר עַל לִוְתִי עֲבָדָא עֲבָרָאָה דִּי אִיתִיָּתָא לָנָא לְחִיָּבָא בִּי: 18 וַהֲוָה כַּד אַרְימִית קָלִי וְקָרִית וְשָׂבָקָה לְלִבּוּשָׁה לִוְתִי וְעָרַק לְשׂוֹקָא: 19 וַהֲוָה כַּד שָׁמַע רְבוּנָה יְת פִּתְגָמֵי אַתְתָּהּ דִּי מְלִילַת עֵמָה לְמִימַר כְּפִתְגָמָיָא הָאֵלִין עֲבַד לִי עֲבָדָךְ וְתִקְוֵי רְגוּזָה: 20 וְדַבֵּר רְבוּנָה דִּיוֹסֵף יְתָהּ וְיִהְיֶה בְּבֵית אֲסִירֵי אַתְרָא דִּי אֲסִירֵי דְמַלְכָא אֲסִירִין וְהוּהוּ תַמָּן בְּבֵית אֲסִירֵי: 21 וַהֲוָה מִימְרָא דִּי בְּסַעְדָּה דִּיוֹסֵף וּנְגַד לָהּ חֲסָדָא וְיִהְיֶה לְרַחֲמִין בְּעֵינֵי רַב בֵּית אֲסִירֵי: 22 וְיִהְיֶה רַב בֵּית אֲסִירֵי דִּי בִּידָא דִּיוֹסֵף יְת כָּל אֲסִירָיָא דִּי בְּבֵית אֲסִירֵי וְיִת כָּל דִּי עֲבָדִין תַּמָּן בְּמִימְרָה הוּהוּ מִתְעַבְּדִי: 23 לֵית רַב בֵּית אֲסִירֵי חֲזִי יְת כָּל סוּרְחָן בִּידָה בְּדַמִּימְרָא דִּי בְּסַעְדָּה וְדִי הוּא עֲבִיד יְיָ מְצִלָּהּ:

13 וַיְהִי כִּי רָאוּתָהּ כִּי עֹזֵב בְּגָדוֹ בִּידָהּ וַיִּנָּס הַחוּצָה:
 14 וַתִּקְרָא לְאַנְשֵׁי בֵיתָהּ וַתֹּאמֶר לָהֶם לֵאמֹר רְאוּ הֵבִיא לָנוּ אִישׁ עֲבָרִי לְצַחֵק בָּנוּ בָּא אֵלָי לְשֹׁכֵב עִמִּי וְאִקְרָא בְּקוֹל גָּדוֹל: 15 וַיְהִי כִּשְׁמֹעוֹ כִּי־הִרְימֹתִי קוֹלִי וְאִקְרָא וַיַּעֲזֹב בְּגָדוֹ אֶצְלִי וַיִּנָּס הַחוּצָה: 16 וַתִּנַּח בְּגָדוֹ אֶצְלָהּ עַד־בּוֹא אֲדָנָיו אֶל־בֵּיתוֹ: 17 וַתְּדַבֵּר אֵלָיו בְּדִבְרֵים הָאֵלֶּה לֵאמֹר בָּא אֵלָי הָעֶבֶד הָעֲבָרִי אֲשֶׁר־הֵבִאת לָנוּ לְצַחֵק בִּי: 18 וַיְהִי כִּהִרְימִי קוֹלִי וְאִקְרָא וַיַּעֲזֹב בְּגָדוֹ אֶצְלִי וַיִּנָּס הַחוּצָה: 19 וַיְהִי כִּשְׁמֹעַ אֲדָנָיו אֶת־דִּבְרֵי אִשְׁתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר דִּבְרָה אֵלָיו לֵאמֹר בְּדִבְרֵים הָאֵלֶּה עָשָׂה לִי עֲבָדְךָ וַיַּחַר אַפּוֹ: 20 וַיִּקַּח אֲדָנָי יוֹסֵף אֹתוֹ וַיִּתְּנֵהוּ אֶל־בֵּית הַפְּהֵר מְקוֹם אֲשֶׁר־אִסּוּרֵי {אֲשֶׁר־אֲסִירֵי} הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲסוּרִים וַיְהִי־שָׁם בְּבֵית הַפְּהֵר: 21 וַיְהִי יְהוָה אֶת־יוֹסֵף וַיְהִי אֵלָיו חֶסֶד וַיִּתֵּן הָנוּ בְּעֵינָי שֶׁר בֵּית־הַפְּהֵר: 22 וַיִּתֵּן שֶׁר בֵּית־הַפְּהֵר בִּיד־יוֹסֵף אֶת כָּל־הָאֲסוּרִים אֲשֶׁר בְּבֵית הַפְּהֵר וְאֵת כָּל־אֲשֶׁר עֲשִׂים שָׁם הוּא הָיָה עֹשֶׂה: 23 אֵין אִ שֶׁר בֵּית־הַפְּהֵר רָאָה אֶת־כָּל־מְאוּמָה בִּידוֹ בְּאֲשֶׁר יְהוָה אָתוֹ וְאֲשֶׁר־הוּא עֹשֶׂה יְהוָה מְצִלִּית: פ

RASHI

שְׂבָקָה: "כִּדְבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה עָשָׂה לִי עֲבָדְךָ", עֲנִינֵי תִשְׁמִישׁ כְּאֵלֶּה: 21 וַיְהִי אֵלָיו חֶסֶד. שְׂהִיָּה מְקַבֵּל לְכָל רוּאֵי, לְשׁוֹן "כִּפְלָה נָאָה וְחֲסוּדָה" שְׂבַמְשֻׁנָּה: 22 הוּא הָיָה עֹשֶׂה. כְּתַרְגוּמוֹ: "בְּמִימְרָה הוּהוּ מִתְעַבְּדִי": 23 בְּאֲשֶׁר ה' אָתוֹ. בְּשִׁבִיל שְׂה' אָתוֹ:

14 רְאוּ הֵבִיא לָנוּ. הָרִי זֶה לְשׁוֹן קְצָרָה: "הֵבִיא לָנוּ" וְלֹא פִּרַשׁ מִי הֵבִיא, וְעַל בְּעֵלָה אִמְרַת בֶּן: עֲבָרִי. מַעֲבָר הַנְּהַר, מִבְּנֵי עֶבֶר: 16 אֲדָנָיו. שֶׁל יוֹסֵף: 17 בָּא אֵלָי. "לְצַחֵק בִּי, הָעֶבֶד הָעֲבָרִי אֲשֶׁר הֵבִאת לָנוּ": 19 וַיְהִי כִּשְׁמֹעַ אֲדָנָיו וְגו'. בְּשַׁעַת תִּשְׁמִישׁ אִמְרָה לֹא בֶן, וְהוּו

58. כתובות יז, א.

CHASIDIC INSIGHTS

so on. It may even seem that this temporary sin will enable us to better contribute to the cause of goodness in the future!
 In such moments, we must, so to speak, envisage the image of our father Jacob, that is, remember that our actions are not merely the isolated deeds of individuals in isolated times and places. Our deeds have cosmic implications; they can harm or heal the entire world.¹⁸¹

23 God granted him success in whatever he did: The Torah uses the same phrase to describe Joseph's success in the house of Potiphara,¹⁸² but with the addition of the words "[God granted him success] in his hand." These additional words imply that although Joseph's success came from God, the people around him perceived the prosperity he brought about as his own accomplishment and attributed it to his good luck. Con-

181. Hitva'aduyot 5721, vol. 1, pp. 262-265. 182. Above, v. 3.

13 When she saw that he had left his garment in her hand and had fled outside, she realized she could use it to take revenge on him for having rejected her.

14 She called her household servants, who, not being Egyptians, had also not gone to the holiday ceremonies, and said to them as follows, “See! My husband brought us a Hebrew man—a foreigner, from far away and of a different race. No wonder he has no respect for us; he tried to mock us! He came to me to lie with me, but I cried out loudly!

15 So when he heard how I raised my voice and screamed, he left his garment with me and fled, and went outside!”

16 She kept his garment with her until her husband, Joseph’s master, came home,

17 and spoke to him along these lines, saying, “The Hebrew servant that you brought us came to me to mock me by trying to seduce me!

18 Then, when I screamed at the top of my voice, he left his garment with me and fled outside!”

19 At first, Joseph’s master found it hard to believe that he could have done this, and in any case was loath to punish him because he had managed his household so ably and impressively. But later, when his master was engaging in marital relations with his wife and he heard the words that his wife then spoke to him, saying, “Your servant did these kinds of things—that we are doing now—to me,” he was furious.

20 Joseph’s master, who, in addition to being the chief butcher, was also in charge of the royal prison,¹⁷⁵ took hold of him and placed him in the prison where the king’s prisoners were incarcerated, and he remained in that prison. This scandal became the subject of everyone’s gossip.¹⁷⁶

21 God was with Joseph and made him well-liked among the inmates.¹⁷⁷ He also made the warden of the prison favor him.

22 The warden of the prison placed all the prisoners who were in the prison in Joseph’s charge, and whatever was done there was done under Joseph’s direction.

23 The warden of the prison could not find fault in anything that was under Joseph’s charge, for God was with him, and God granted him success in whatever he did.

∞ CHASIDIC INSIGHTS ∞

according to many opinions¹⁷⁸—was not obligated to risk his life to refrain from this sin. This explains why it was only when he saw an image of his father’s face that he understood he was obligated not to resist her temptations. Jacob’s face, we are told, resembled Adam’s face;¹⁷⁹ this was because Jacob finished the process of rectifying Adam’s sin, a process that had been begun by Abraham and Isaac.¹⁸⁰ Knowing this, when he saw Jacob’s face, Joseph was reminded of how our

Divine mission is to rectify Adam’s sin. As such, our individual sins are not only our own affair, for which there might be mitigating rationalizations; they affect the moral balance of all reality.

In our lives, too, we are sometimes confronted with temptation to commit a sin. We might try to convince ourselves that nobody will know about it, that we may be technically justified in giving in, that the sin is only temporary setback and that we can later repent, and

^{175.} 40:3, below. ^{176.} Rashi on 40:1, below. ^{177.} *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 25, pp. 213-218. ^{178.} See *Encyclopedia Talmudit*, s.v. *Ben Noach*. ^{179.} *Bava Batra* 58a. ^{180.} See *Megaleh Amukot* 146 (citing *Kanfei Yonah*); *Zohar* 3:111b.

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40:1 וְהָיָה בְּתֵר פִּתְגָמָא הָאֲלִין סְרַחוּ שְׂקִיא דְּמַלְכָּא דְּמִצְרַיִם וְנִחְתָּמוּא לְרַבְּנָהוֹן לְמַלְכָּא דְּמִצְרַיִם: 2 וְרָגַז פְּרַעֲהַ עַל תְּרִין רַבְּרַבְנָהוֹי עַל רַב שְׂקִי וְעַל רַב נִחְתָּמוֹי: 3 וַיְהִי יְהוָהוֹן בְּמִטְרָא בֵּית רַב קְטוּלִיא לְבֵית אֲסִירֵי אֲתָרָא דִּי יוֹסֵף אֲסִיר תַּמָּן: 4 וּמְנִי רַב קְטוּלִיא יָת יוֹסֵף עֲמַהוֹן וְשְׁמִישׁ יְהוָהוֹן וְהוּוּ יוֹמִין בְּמִטְרָא: 5 וַחֲלָמוּ חֲלָמָא תְּרוּיְהוֹן גְּבַר חֲלָמָה בְּלִילִיא חֵד גְּבַר כְּפוּשְׁרֵן חֲלָמָה שְׂקִיא וְנִחְתָּמוּא דִּי לְמַלְכָּא דְּמִצְרַיִם דִּי אֲסִירִין בְּבֵית אֲסִירֵי: 6 וְאָתָּא לְוַתְּהוֹן יוֹסֵף בְּצַפְרָא וְחֹזָא יְהוָהוֹן וְהָא אֲנָן נְסִיסוֹן: 7 וּשְׂאִיל יָת רַבְּרַבֵּי פְּרַעֲהַ דִּי עֲמַה בְּמִטְרָא בֵּית רַבְּנָה לְמִימְרָא מָא דִּין אֲפִיכוֹן בִּישִׁין יוֹמָא דִּין:

שביעי 40:1 ויהי אחר הדברים האלה חטאו משקה מלך מצרים והאפה לאדניהם למלך מצרים: 2 ויקנף פרעה על שני סריסיו על שר המשקים ועל שר האופים: 3 ויתן אתם במשמר בית שר הטבחים אל בית הסהר מקום אשר יוסף אסור שם: 4 ויפקד שר הטבחים את יוסף אתם וישרת אתם ויהיו ימים במשמר: 5 ויחלמו חלום שניהם איש חלמו בלילה אחד איש כפתרון חלמו המשקה והאפה אשר למלך מצרים אשר אסורים בבית הסהר: 6 ויבא אליהם יוסף בבקר וירא אתם והנם זעפים: 7 וישאל את סריסי פרעה אשר אתו במשמר בית אדניו לאמר מדוע פניכם רעים היום:

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את יוסף. להיות אתם: ויהיו ימים במשמר. שנים עשר חדש: 5 ויחלמו חלום שניהם. ויחלמו שניהם חלום, והו פשוטו. ומדרשו⁶⁰: כל אחד חלם חלום שניהם, שחלם את חלומו ופתרון חברו, והו שנאמר⁶¹: "וירא שר האפים כי טוב פתרו: איש כפתרון חלמו. כל אחד חלם חלום הדומה לפתרון העתיד לבא עליהם: 6 זעפים. עצבים, כמו: "סר וזעף"⁶², "זעף ה' אשא"⁶³.

1 אחר הדברים האלה. לפי שהרגילה אותה ארורה את הצדיק כפי כלם לדבר בו בגנותו, הביא להם הקדוש ברוך הוא סרננם של אלו, שיפנו אליהם ולא אליו, ועוד, שתבוא הרוחה לצדיק על ידיהם: חטאו. זה נמצא זבוב בפלי פוטירין שלו, וזה נמצא צרור בגלוסקין שלו: והאפה. את פת המלך. ואין לשון אפיה אלא בפת. ובלעז פישטו⁶⁴: 4 ויפקד שר הטבחים

59. אופה. 60. בראשית רבה פח, ד. 61. פסוק טו. 62. מלכים א, כ, מג. 63. מיכה ז, ט.

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overcame their spiritual counterparts and elevated the sparks of holiness that resided within them. For example, while in the home of the chief butcher, Joseph overcame passion for physical pleasure and instead transformed it into passionate love for God.

By overcoming these obstacles to spiritual growth, Joseph enabled the Jewish people to do the same, both those who would be enslaved in Egypt and those who would suffer future exiles.¹⁸⁵

6-7 He asked Pharaoh's courtiers...“Why are your faces so downcast today?": Joseph had suffered horrible humiliations—first sold as a slave and then imprisoned for a sin he had not committed. We would expect that he would have become absorbed in his own pain, angry at the world. We would never imagine that he would notice the pain of others, especially that of Pharaoh's courtiers, whose colleague had sent him to prison.

Yet Joseph did not become bitter. He remained sensitive to others and to his Divine mission in life. Not only

did he perceive the anguish of the courtiers, he reached out to help them. It was surely obvious to him why imprisoned ministers would be depressed, and that their depression would deepen with each passing day. Yet he thoughtfully inquired after their wellbeing, even in the slight chance that there was something he could do to help them. To Joseph, the fact that God had orchestrated events in such a manner that he should notice a creature of God in need of help indicated that it was his duty to help that creature.

What was the result of this one, seemingly minor good deed? Joseph became the viceroy of Egypt and gained a position from which he ultimately saved the civilized world from famine.

We see here, once again, the unimaginable results one small deed can engender. Science has recognized that a minor occurrence in one corner of the world can have an enormous effect upon the entire world; the same is true of our spiritual activities and good deeds—one small deed can change the world.¹⁸⁶

185. Torah Or 58b, 71d, 102c; Ma'amarei Admor HaEmtza'i, Bereishit, pp. 489-490. 186. Mishneh Torah, Teshuvah 3:4; Sichot Kodesh 5734, vol. 1, pp. 208-213.

Joseph and Pharaoh's Courtiers

◆ **Seventh Reading 40:1** In addition to causing Joseph to be well-liked among the prison staff and inmates, God also arranged for Egyptian society to be distracted from his defaming involvement with Potiphera's wife by giving them something else to gossip about. Furthermore, this new incident eventually led to Joseph's release from prison and his subsequent rise to greatness. Thus, **soon after** Joseph became the subject of everyone's **conversations**,¹⁸³ **the Egyptian king's cupbearer and baker offended their master, the king of Egypt**. Pharaoh found a fly in his cup and a stone in his bread.

2 Pharaoh was incensed with his two courtiers, the chief cupbearer and the chief baker,

3 and he had them imprisoned in the prison adjoining the house of the chief butcher, which was the same prison in which Joseph was incarcerated.

4 The chief butcher assigned Joseph to be in charge of them and he attended them, and they were in prison for a year.

5 One night, the two of them—the Egyptian king's cupbearer and baker who were confined in the prison—each had a dream that accorded with its true interpretation regarding what would happen to them in the future. Unbeknownst to each other, they each also dreamed the other's dream. But while neither of them understood what their own dreams meant, they did understand the meaning of each other's dreams.

6 When Joseph came to them in the morning, it was clear that they were in a melancholy mood.

7 He asked Pharaoh's courtiers who were with him in custody in his master's house, in these words, "Why are your faces so downcast today?"

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versely, when Joseph was in prison, it was clear to all that Joseph's success was God's doing.

While in Egypt, Joseph endured a number of humiliating experiences. When he first arrived, he was sold as a slave, deprived of his former identity and comforts. This served to evoke within him a sense of servitude and selflessness before God. Since humility makes a person worthy of receiving Divine blessings, Joseph was blessed with uncommon good fortune and an unusual knack for success and prosperity.

Yet, while servants may be bound to their masters, their service still promotes their sense of self, for they are used for productive work. Joseph's humility before God as a servant was thus incomplete. The Godly nature of his success was therefore not apparent, such that Potiphar would have attributed it to Joseph himself—"in his hand." It was only because Joseph constantly attributed his success to God that Potiphar did the same.

Joseph's humiliating experiences reached their ultimate low when he was imprisoned. A prisoner, unlike

a servant, is viewed negatively, as an unwanted burden best kept confined and removed from society. Being a prisoner therefore served to evoke within Joseph a much deeper sense of selflessness and humility. He thereby became worthy to receive Godly blessings of a supra-natural order. It was then that Joseph's very success—independent of his constantly mentioning God—bespoke God's blessing, since it could not be attributed to Joseph's good luck alone.¹⁸⁴

2-3 The chief cupbearer and the chief baker: Allegorically, Egypt and Pharaoh represent the forces that prevent the insight of the mind from affecting the emotions of the heart. When we intellectually perceive Godliness, these forces keep this perception from reaching the heart and creating an emotional response of love and reverence for God. Pharaoh creates this disconnection by means of his three chiefs—the chief butcher, the chief cupbearer, and the chief baker—who represent indulgence in sensual and worldly pleasures, which distract a person from Godliness.

Through his interactions with these three chiefs, Joseph

¹⁸³ *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 35, pp. 163-166. ¹⁸⁴ *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 25, pp. 213-219.

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8 ואמרו לה חלמא חלמנא ופשר לית לה ואמר להון יוסף הלא מן קדם יי פושרן חלמיא אשתענו כען לי: 9 ואשתעי רב שקי ית חלמא ליוסף ואמר לה בחלמי והא גופנא קדמי: 10 ובגופנא תלתא שבשין והיא כד אפרחת אפיקת לבלבין ואניצת נץ בשילו אתבלקא הוו ענבין: 11 וכסא דפרעה בידי וניסיבית ית ענבאי ועצרית יתהון לכסא דפרעה ויהיבת ית כסא על ידא דפרעה: 12 ואמר לה יוסף דין פושרנה תלתא שבשין תלתא יומין אנון: 13 בסוף תלתא יומין ידברנך פרעה ית רישך ויתבנך על שמושך ותמן כסא דפרעה בידיה בהלכתא קדמייתא די הוייתא משקי לה: 14 אלהין תדברנני עמך פד ייטב לך ותעביד כען עמי טיבו ותדבר עלי קדם פרעה ותפקנני מן בית אסיירי הדין: 15 ארי מגנב גניבנא מארע עבראי ואף הכא לא עבדית מדעם ארי שויאו יתי בבית אסיירי: 16 וקווא רב נחתומי ארי אות פשר ואמר ליוסף אף אנא בחלמי והא תלתא סלין דחירו על רישי:

8 ויאמרו אליו חלום חלמנו ופתר אין אתו ויאמר אלהים יוסף הלא לאלהים פתרתם ספרונא לי: 9 ויספר שר המשקים את חלמו ליוסף ויאמר לו בחלומי והנה גפן לפני: 10 ובגפן שלשה שריגם והוא כפרחת עלתה נצה הבשילו אשבלתיה ענבים: 11 וכוס פרעה בידי ואקח את הענבים ואשחט אתם אל-כום פרעה ואתן את-הכוס על-כף פרעה: 12 ויאמר לו יוסף זה פתרונו שלשת השרגים שלשת ימים הם: 13 בעוד שלשת ימים ישא פרעה את-ראשו והשיבך על-פניך ונתת כוס-פרעה בידו כמשפט הראשון אשר הית משקהו: 14 כי אם זכרתני אתך כאשר ייטב לך ועשיתנא עמדי חסד והזכרתני אל-פרעה והוצאתני מן-הבית הזה: 15 כי-גנב גנבתי מארץ העברים וגם-פה לא-עשיתי מאומה כישמו אתי בבור: 16 וירא שרהאפים כי טוב פתר ויאמר אל-יוסף אף-אני בחלומי והנה שלשה סלי חרי על-ראשי:

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ימים. ויש מדרשי אגדה הרבה: 13 ישא פרעה את ראשו. לשון חשבון, כשיפקד שאר עבדיו לשרת לפניו בסעודה, ומנה אותך עמם: פנה. כפיט שלף ומושבקה: 14 כי אם זכרתני אתך. אשר אם זכרתני אתך מאחר שייטב לך כפתרוני: ועשיתנא עמדי חסד. אין "נא" אלא לשון בקשה, הרי אתה עושה עמי חסד: 16 סלי חרי. סלים של נצרים קלופים חורין חורין, ובמקומנו יש הרבה, ודרך מוכרי פת כסינן שקורין אובלידי"ש לתתם באותם סלים:

10 שריגם. זמורות ארבות שקורין וירי"ץ: 64. והיא כפרחת. דומה לפורחת, "והיא כפרחת" — נדמה לי בחלומי כאלו היא פרחת, ואחר הפרח "עלתה נצה", ונעשו סמדר, אישפני"ר בלע"ו, ואחר כך "הבשילו". "והיא כד אפרחת אפיקת לבלבין", עד כאן תרגום של "פרחת". "נץ" גדול מ"פרח", כדכתיב: "ובסר גמל והנה נצה", וכתיב: "ויצא פרח" והדר "וץ ציץ": 11 ואשחט. כתר גומא: "ועצרית". והרבה יש בלשון משנה: 12 שלשת ימים הם. סימן הם לך לשלשת

64. ענף גפן. 65. להני, להתפתח. 66. ישעיה יח, ה. 67. במדבר יז, כג.

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of the Torah.¹⁹³ Thus, the vine and its three branches indicate that we must incorporate the unique and sometimes opposing attributes of kindness, discipline, and Torah study into our lives. Specifically, it is by consulting the Torah that we learn when to employ kindness and when to employ discipline. For example, we might misuse kindness as overindul-

gent self-protection, preventing us from subjecting ourselves to any form of discomfort. In the morning, when it is time to pray or study the Torah, we might insist that we must be kind to ourselves and catch another hour of sleep.

The Torah, however, tells us that we are to reserve such kindness for others. To ourselves, we should gener-

193. Above, on 25:19, 27, et al.

8 They answered him, “We each had a dream, but there is no one to interpret it.”

So Joseph said to them, “Surely interpretations belong to God! Please tell me your dreams.”

9 The cupbearer related his dream to Joseph. He said to him, “In my dream there was a vine before me.

10 And on the vine there were three branches. It seemed to be budding, then it blossomed, and its clusters ripened into grapes.

11 Pharaoh’s cup was in my hand. I took the grapes and squeezed their juice into Pharaoh’s cup; then I placed the cup in Pharaoh’s hand.”

12 Joseph understood that God had arranged for the cupbearer to be imprisoned so that through his release he could petition Pharaoh to release Joseph, as well. Since the cupbearer’s dream clearly indicated that it was time for this to happen, Joseph concluded that the three branches symbolized the shortest possible units of time, i.e., days.¹⁸⁷ Thus, **Joseph said to him, “This is its interpretation: The three branches symbolize three days.**

13 In three days’ time, Pharaoh will take due account of you when he summons all his servants to serve him during his meal and restore you to your position. You will place Pharaoh’s cup in his hand, just as you used to do before you were imprisoned when you served him his drinks.

14 You will then wield some influence at court. I know that since some time may elapse before the opportunity to help me presents itself to you, and your release from prison will be a great upheaval in your life, you might forget about me. **So despite this, keep me in mind, since things will be going well for you, as I have predicted,¹⁸⁸ and please do me the kindness of mentioning me to Pharaoh, and thus you will get me out of this prison-building.**

15 For in fact I was kidnapped from the land of the Hebrews, and here, too, I did nothing to warrant them putting me in the dungeon.”

16 When the chief baker saw that Joseph had interpreted well—for, as stated above,¹⁸⁹ he had dreamed the chief cupbearer’s dream together with its correct interpretation—he said to Joseph, “In my dream, likewise, there were three wicker baskets on my head.

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9 The cupbearer related his dream to Joseph: The courtiers must have known that only the great wizards of Egypt could interpret dreams. Nonetheless, they told their dreams to Joseph, even though they disdainfully viewed him as an immature child, a lowly slave, and a foreigner?¹⁹⁰ More to the point, although Joseph knew what they thought of him, he did not hold it against them, and offered his help generously and sincerely.

Throughout history, we have experienced this same phenomenon. There are always those who disparage us and view us disdainfully, but in the end, they rec-

ognize that we can be of assistance to them. When they ask for our help, we, like Joseph, should be ready to forgive them and help them.¹⁹¹

10 And on the vine there were three branches: The sages offer several interpretations on the symbolism of the vine and its branches; according to one of these, the vine symbolized the Jewish people and the three branches symbolized the three patriarchs.¹⁹²

As we have seen, Abraham personified kindness, Isaac personified discipline, and Jacob personified the study

187. *Hitva'aduyot* 5743, vol. 2, p. 712. 188. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 12, p. 105. 189. v. 5. 190. See below, 41:12. 191. *Sichot Kodesh* 5728, vol. 1, p. 292. 192. *Chulin* 92a.

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17 ובסלא עלאה מכל מיכלא דפרעה עובד נחתום ועופא אכל יתהון מן סלא מעלוי רישי: 18 ואתיב יוסף ואמר דין פושטנה תלתא סלין תלתא יומין אנון: 19 בסוף תלתא יומין יעדי פרעה ית רישך מנף ויצלוב יתך על צליבא ויכול עופא ית בשרך מנף: 20 והיה בימא תליתאה יום בית ולדא דפרעה ועבד משתיא לכל עבדוהי ואדבר ית ריש רב שקי וית ריש רב נחתומי בגו עבדוהי: 21 ואתיב ית רב שקי על שקיותה ויהב פסא על ידא דפרעה: 22 וית רב נחתומי צלב כמא די פשר להון יוסף: 23 ולא דכיר רב שקי ית יוסף ואנשיה:

17 ובסל העליון מכל מאכל פרעה מעשה אפה והעוף אכל אתם מזהסל מעל ראשי: 18 ויען יוסף ויאמר זה פתרון שלשת הסלים שלשת ימים הם: 19 בעוד שלשת ימים ישא פרעה את ראשו מעליד ותלה אותה על עין ואכל העוף את בשרך מעליד: מפטיר 20 ויהי ביום השלישי יום הלדת את פרעה ויעש משתה לכל עבדיו וישא את ראש שר המשקים ואת ראש שר האפים בתוך עבדיו: 21 וישב את שר המשקים על משקהו ויתן הבוס על לב פרעה: 22 ואת שר האפים תלה באשר פתר להם יוסף: 23 ולא זכר שר המשקים את יוסף וישכחהו: פ פ פ

ק"ב פסוקים. יב"ק סימן.

RASHI

כמו: "שאו את ראש", לשון מנן: 23 ולא זכר שר המשקים. בו ביום: וישכחהו. לאחר מכאן. מפני שתלה בו יוסף לזכרו, הזקק להיות אסור שתי שנים, שנאמר: "אשרי הגבר אשר שם ה' מבטחו ולא פנה אל רהבים", ולא בטח על מצרים הקרויים "רהב"⁷³: חסלת פרשת וישב

20 יום הלדת את פרעה. יום לידתו, וקורין לו "יום גינוסיא". ולשון "הלדת", לפי שאין הנלד נולד אלא על ידי אחרים, שהחיה מילדת את האשה, ועל כן החיה נקראת "מילדת", וכן: "ומולדותיך ביום הלדת אותך", וכן: "אחרי הכבס את הנגע", שכבוסו על ידי אחרים: וישא את ראש וגו'. מנאם עם שאר עבדיו, שהיה מונה המשרתים שישרתו לו בסעודתו, וזכר את אלו בתוכם.

68. רקיקים. 69. יחזקאל טו, ד. 70. ויקרא יג, נה. 71. במדבר א, ב. 72. תהלים מ, ה. 73. ישעיה ל, ו.

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work through the cupbearer. He was required to have a higher level of trust in God, relying upon Him directly, entirely, and exclusively.

Jacob, in contrast, was not on the same spiritual level as Joseph, and therefore was correct to have employed natural means—gifts and preparations for war—through which God could protect him from Esau.²⁰¹

And he forgot about him: When young children who are accustomed to being rewarded for good behavior hear the story of Joseph in prison, they assume that Joseph must have been rewarded for helping the courtiers. But instead, they hear that was promptly forgotten! When they ask how this could be, they are told that this is not the end of the story; they will soon hear

how Joseph rose to be viceroy of Egypt. But if this satisfies them, they are told further that in fact, it was not enough of a reward, since it only benefited him personally. Joseph's true reward came when he saved the entire world from hunger.

Similarly, we must learn to consider the greatest reward for our good deeds the positive impact they have on the world. When we have the opportunity to help someone materially, we should do so, for who knows? Perhaps through this we will be able to benefit the whole world materially. Spiritually as well, helping even one individual might in the end "feed" an entire, spiritually starved world with live-saving spiritual sustenance.²⁰²

201. Rabbeinu Bachye; *Sefer HaMa'amarim* 5633, vol. 1, pp. 61 ff; *Sefer HaMa'amarim* 5677, pp. 102 ff; *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 3, pp. 836-837, vol. 26, pp. 99-100. 202. *Sichot Kodesh* 5734, vol. 1, p. 212.

17 In the top basket there were all kinds of baked goods that Pharaoh eats, and birds were eating them from the basket above my head.”

18 Joseph replied as follows, “This is its interpretation: The three baskets symbolize three days.

19 In three days’ time, Pharaoh will decapitate you and hang your corpse on a gallows, and the birds will eat your flesh.”

◆ *Maftir** 20 On the third day, which was Pharaoh’s birthday, he held a feast for all his servants, and counted the chief cupbearer and the chief baker among his servants available to serve him at the feast.

21 He restored the chief cupbearer to his position of serving drinks, and he placed the cup in Pharaoh’s hand.

22 The chief baker, however, he hanged, just as Joseph had interpreted for them.

23 The chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph on that day, and he intentionally forgot about him thereafter.

Joseph was correct in trying to extricate himself from prison, but he erred in thinking that once God had chosen to help him by means of the cupbearer, he was now dependent upon the cupbearer’s advocacy rather than upon God’s mercy. This error in judgment demonstrated that he was not yet ready to ascend to the higher social status for which he was destined. In order to correct this character flaw, God postponed Joseph’s release from prison from three *days* after the dream to three *years* after it. Nonetheless, in order to minimize this correctional period, God counted the three days Joseph would have spent in prison in any case as the first additional year. Beyond this, he had to spend two more full years in prison.¹⁹⁴

The *Haftarah* for *parashat Vayeishev* may be found on p. 355.



— CHASIDIC INSIGHTS —

ally direct our attribute of discipline.¹⁹⁵ On the other hand, there are times when kindness *is* appropriate for ourselves¹⁹⁶ and inappropriate for our dealings with others.¹⁹⁷

To accurately determine whether to use the attribute of Abraham or that of Isaac, we must utilize the attribute of Jacob and consult the Torah.¹⁹⁸

23 Joseph...but he erred in thinking that...he was dependent upon his advocacy rather than upon God’s mercy: This same dynamic holds true during our exile. God sometimes wants us to seek favors of our host na-

tions. Yet, we should not do so with the attitude that our fate is dependent upon their favor. Our fate is in God’s hands, and our faith should be placed only in Him.¹⁹⁹

From a different perspective, Joseph should not have tried to effectuate God’s protection through natural means altogether. Although most of us are required to do live this way,²⁰⁰ certain extremely saintly individuals are meant to receive God’s blessing directly, without recourse to natural means. Joseph was such an individual and was therefore wrong to attempt to

194. *Hitva’aduyot* 5743, vol. 2, pp. 697-698, 711-712. 195. See above, on 7:24 and on 18:19. 196. See on Exodus 23:5. 197. See above on 21:33, s.v. “If you insist....” 198. *Hitva’aduyot* 5712, vol. 1, pp. 213-219. 199. *Hitva’aduyot* 5743, vol. 2, p. 713. 200. *Chovot HaLevavot*, chapter 3, 5th introduction, et al.

*The *maftir* readings for Chanukah are found on pages 373-377.



Vayeishev

הפטרות
Haftarot



Maftir Readings for the First Sabbath of Chanukah

For the 2nd day of Chanukah

Numbers 7:18-23

18 On the second day, the tribe of Reuben, the firstborn, protested and asked that their prince offer at least second. But Moses refused, reminding them that God had told him to have the princes present their offerings in the order of their encampment. Accordingly, the tribe of Issachar offered second, and in this way their excellence in Torah study and their prince's initiative in suggesting these offerings was acknowledged. Thus, **on the second day of Nisan, Netanel the son of Tzu'ar, the prince of Issachar, brought his offering.** 19 He brought his offering of one silver bowl weighing one hundred and thirty

shekels, one silver sprinkling basin weighing seventy shekels according to the holy shekel, both filled with fine flour mixed with olive oil for a voluntary grain-offering, 20 one gold spoon weighing ten shekels filled with incense, 21 the choicest young bull in his herd, the choicest ram in his flock, and the choicest lamb in its first year in his flock for an ascent-offering, 22 one young he-goat for a sin-offering,

23 and for the peace-offering: two oxen, five rams, five he-goats, and five lambs in their first year. This was the offering of Netanel the son of Tzu'ar.

18 בַּיּוֹם הַשֵּׁנִי הִקְרִיב נְתַנְאֵל בֶּן־צִוְעָר נָשִׂיא
יִשְׂשַׁכָּר: 19 הַקֶּרֶב אֶת־קִרְבָּנוּ קִעֲרַת־כֶּסֶף
אֶחָת שְׁלֹשִׁים וּמֵאָה מִשְׁקָלָהּ מִזְרֵק אֶחָד כֶּסֶף
שִׁבְעִים שֶׁקֶל בְּשֶׁקֶל הַקֹּדֶשׁ שְׁנֵיהֶם | מִלְּאִים
סֶלֶת בְּלוּלָה בְּשֶׁמֶן לְמִנְחָה: 20 כֶּף אֶחָת עֲשָׂרָה
זָהָב מִלְּאָה קִמְרָת: 21 פֶּר אֶחָד בֶּן־בָּקָר אֵיל
אֶחָד כֶּבֶשׂ־אֶחָד בֶּן־שָׁנָתוֹ לְעֹלָה: 22 יֶשְׁעִיר־
עִזִּים אֶחָד לְחֻטָּאת: 23 וְלִזְבַּח הַשְּׁלָמִים בָּקָר
שְׁנַיִם אֵילִם חֲמִשָּׁה עֲתֻדִים חֲמִשָּׁה כֶּבֶשִׁים
בְּנֵי־שָׁנָה חֲמִשָּׁה זֶה קִרְבָּן נְתַנְאֵל בֶּן־צִוְעָר: פ

Haftarah for the First Sabbath of Chanukah

Zachariah 2:14-4:7

Chanukah celebrates the triumph of holiness over evil, the weaker and smaller Jewish army over the more powerful and numerous Seleucid forces, enabling the rededication of the defiled second Temple. In the early days of the second Temple, as well, the Jewish people felt overwhelmed by their inability to restore the glory of the first Temple, due to many material and political obstacles. In this *haftarah*, the prophet Zachariah encourages the people to persist in their hope and efforts. Both the events of Chanukah and this *haftarah* encourage us to persist in our efforts, as well, to hasten the messianic Redemption and the rebuilding of the Temple.

14 After they conquered the Babylonians, the Persians gave the Jews permission to rebuild the Temple. But soon after the foundations were laid, the Jews' enemies convinced the Persian government to halt the work. In this connection, the prophet Zechariah recounts how he saw an angel in a prophetic vision, telling him to say to the Jewish people: "Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion, i.e., the Jewish people, for behold!

2:14 רְגִי וְשִׂמְחִי בַת־צִיּוֹן כִּי הִנְנִי־בָא וְשׁוֹכְנֵתִי
בְּתוֹכְךָ יְיָ אֱמִי־יְהוָה: 15 וְנִלְוֹו גּוֹלִים רַבִּים אֵלַי־

In the messianic era, I will come and dwell in your midst,' says God. 15 'Many nations shall join God on that day, and they shall be My people, but I will dwell in your midst.' Then you will know that God of Hosts sent me to you. 16 God shall inherit the territory of Judah as His share on the Holy Land, and He shall again choose to reveal His presence in Jerusalem. 17 Silence all flesh, that is, all nations, from before God, for He is aroused out of His holy habitation." 3:1 God then showed me Joshua, the High Priest, standing before the angel of God. Satan was standing on his right, to accuse him of not educating his sons adequately, because they married gentile women.⁵¹ 2 But God said to Satan: "God shall rebuke you, O Satan; God, who chose to reveal His presence in Jerusalem, shall rebuke you for daring to suggest that Joshua does not deserve his position. Is this one, Joshua, not a brand plucked from fire?" Nebuchadnezzar had cast Joshua into a furnace together with Kings Achav and Tzidkiahu, but Joshua's righteousness protected him and he survived, while they perished.⁵² 3 Nonetheless, Joshua was wearing filthy garments and standing before the angel, indicating that while he himself was indeed righteous, he was guilty of not educating his sons properly. 4 The angel raised his voice and said to those standing before him, "Take the filthy garments off him." That is, let his sons divorce their gentile wives. When they did,⁵³ the angel said to him, "See, I have removed your iniquity from you, and I have clad you with clean garments." 5 I, Zechariah, pleaded for him, and said, "But he is missing the turban! Let them also put a ritually pure turban on his head!" So they put the ritually pure turban on his head. They had clothed him with garments while the angel of God was standing. 6 The angel of God warned Joshua, saying, 7 "So said God of Hosts: 'If you walk in My ways, and if you keep My charge, I will reward you. You, too, shall judge and administer My house, the Temple, and you, too, shall guard My courtyards. When the dead are resurrected, I will resurrect you also. Your sons will be righteous and merit to walk in the afterlife among these angels, who stand in heaven."⁵⁴ 8 Hearken, now, O Joshua the High Priest—you and your companions Chananiah, Mishael, and Azariah,⁵⁵ who sit before you, for they are men worthy of a miracle⁵⁶—for, behold! I will bring forth My servant, Nehemiah, who is the governor of Judah, and is therefore as insignificant as a shoot in the king's eyes. I will increase his prestige so the king will agree to his request to finish rebuilding the Temple.⁵⁷

יְהוָה בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא וְהָיוּ לִי לְעָם וְשִׁכְנֹתַי בְּתוֹכְךָ וַיֵּדְעֶתָ כִּי־יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת שְׁלַחְנִי אֵלֶיךָ: 16 וְנָחַל יְהוָה אֶת־יְהוּדָה חֶלְקוֹ עַל אֲדָמַת הַקִּנְדָּשׁ וּבָחַר עוֹד בִּירוּשָׁלַם: 17 הֵם כָּל־בָּשָׂר מִפְּנֵי יְהוָה כִּי נִגְעוֹר מִמְעוֹן קִדְשׁוֹ: 3:1 וַיִּרְאֵנִי אֶת־יְהוֹשֻׁעַ הַכֹּהֵן הַגָּדוֹל עֹמֵד לִפְנֵי מַלְאָךְ יְהוָה וְהַשָּׁמַן עֹמֵד עַל־יְמִינוֹ לְשִׁטְנוֹ: 2 וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־הַשָּׁמַן יַגֵּד עָר יְהוָה בְּךָ הַשָּׁמַן וַיִּגְעַר יְהוָה בְּךָ הַבַּחֵר בִּירוּשָׁלַם הַלּוֹא זֶה אֹדֵר מִצַּל מֵאִשׁ: 3 וַיְהוֹשֻׁעַ הָיָה לְבָשׁ בְּגָדִים צוּאִים וְעֹמֵד לִפְנֵי הַמַּלְאָךְ: 4 וַיַּעַן וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל־הָעֹמְדִים לְפָנָיו לֵאמֹר הֲסִירוּ הַבְּגָדִים הַצּוּאִים מֵעָלָיו וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו רְאֵה הֲעֵבַרְתִּי מֵעֲלֶיךָ עוֹנֵךְ וְהַלְבַּשׁ אֶתְךָ מִחֻלְצוֹת: 5 וַאֲמַר יִשְׁימוּ צִנּוֹף טְהוֹר עַל־רֹאשׁוֹ וַיִּשְׁימוּ הַצִּנּוֹף הַטָּהוֹר עַל־רֹאשׁוֹ וַיַּלְבִּשׁהוּ בְּגָדִים וּמַלְאָךְ יְהוָה עֹמֵד: 6 וַיַּעַד מַלְאָךְ יְהוָה בִּיהוֹשֻׁעַ לֵאמֹר: 7 כִּדְאֲמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת אִם־בְּדַרְכֵי תֵלֵךְ וְאִם אֶת־מִשְׁמַרְתִּי תִשְׁמֹר וְגַם־אֶתְהַדְרִין אֶת־בֵּיתִי וְגַם תִּשְׁמֹר אֶת־חֻצֵי וַנְּתַתִּי לְךָ מוֹהֲלָכִים בֵּין הָעֹמְדִים הָאֵלֶּה: 8 שְׁמַע־נָא יְהוֹשֻׁעַ הַכֹּהֵן הַגָּדוֹל אֶתְהַ וְרַעֲיָה הַיְשָׁבִים לְפָנֶיךָ כִּי־אֲנִשִּׁי מוֹפֵת הַמָּה כִּי־הִנְנִי מֵבִיא אֶת־עַבְדִּי צְמַח:

51. Ezra 10:18. 52. Jeremiah 29:22; Sanhedrin 93a. 53. Ezra, loc. cit. 54. Angels do not sit. 55. Mentioned in the beginning of the book of Daniel. Their names were changed to Shadrach, Meishach, and Aveid-nego. 56. King Nebuchadnezzar cast them into a furnace when they refused to bow down to an idol, and they miraculously survived (Daniel 3). 57. Nehemiah had gone to Jerusalem when

9 For behold, the stones that I have placed before Joshua as the foundation of the Temple will be added to; God will look with seven eyes at this one collective stone, that is, the foundation will be seven times as big. Behold! I will untie the knots in which our enemies figuratively tied up the Temple, with their plot to thwart its construction,' says God of Hosts, 'and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day. 10 On that day,' says God of Hosts, 'each man shall invite his neighbor to come under his vine and under his fig tree.'" 4:1 Then the angel who spoke with me returned, and he awakened me as a man who wakes up from his sleep. 2 He said to me, "What do you see?" I said, "I saw, and behold, there was a candelabrum all of gold, and there was a large oil-bowl on top of it. There were seven lamps on the candelabrum, and seven sets of seven tubes coming out of the oil-bowl, one set feeding each of the lamps that were on top of it. 3 There were two olive trees near it; one to the right of the bowl, and one to its left." Next to each tree was a golden vat, into which the olives fell, beat themselves, were heated, pressed themselves, and then flowed into the bowl at the top of the candelabrum. 4 So I answered and spoke to the angel who talked with me, saying, "What are these, my lord? Why are the olives picked by themselves, and why does their oil flow into the lamps of the candelabrum by itself?" 5 The angel who spoke with me answered, and he said to me, "Do you not know what these are?" I said, "No, my lord." 6 He answered and spoke to me, saying, "This vision is the word of God to Nehemiah—who is also known as Zerubavel since he was conceived ['sown,' *zeru*] in Babylonia [*Bavel*]
— saying: 'Just as these olives and their oil are not processed by human effort but by themselves, so will you rebuild the Temple not by military force and not by physical strength, but by My spirit,' says God of Hosts. 'I will inspire Darius to command you to rebuild it; he will pay for it and provide all the materials necessary.⁵⁸ 7 Who are you, you who stopped the progress of the work, interposing yourselves like a great mountain? Before Zerubavel you shall sink to a plain! He will bring out the plummet stone of the main architect, who will then use this stone to build the Temple with great beauty and precision. When it is finished, the people will praise this plummet stone by shouting to it, 'Grace! Grace! How graceful and beautiful is the Temple that was made with this stone!' "

9 כִּי הִנֵּה הָאֲבָן אֲשֶׁר נָתַתִּי לְפָנַי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ עַל־
אֲבָן אַחַת שְׁבַעֵה עֵינַיִם הִנְנִי מִפְתִּיחַ פֶּתַח־הַ
נֶאֱמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת וּמִשְׁתֵּי אֶת־עֵזֶן הָאָרֶץ
הָיָא בְיוֹם אַחֵד: 10 בְּיוֹם הַהוּא נֶאֱמַר יְהוָה
צְבָאוֹת תִּקְרְאוּ אִישׁ לְרֵעֵהוּ אֶל־תַּחַת גַּפְנוֹ
וְאֶל־תַּחַת תְּאֵנָה: 4:1 וַיָּשָׁב הַמַּלְאָךְ הַדֹּבֵר
בִּי וַיְעִירֵנִי כְאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר־יְעוֹר מִשְׁנָתוֹ: 2 וַיֹּאמֶר
אֵלַי מָה אַתָּה רֹאֶה וַיֹּאמֶר (וַאֲמַר) רְאִיתִי וְהִ-
נֵה מְנוֹרַת זָהָב כְּלָה וְגִלְגָּה עַל־רֹאשָׁהּ וְשִׁבְעָה
גִּרְתֵּיהָ עָלֶיהָ שְׁבַעֵה וְשִׁבְעָה מוֹצְקוֹת לְגִרְוֹת
אֲשֶׁר עַל־רֹאשָׁהּ: 3 וּשְׁנַיִם וַיְתִים עָלֶיהָ אֶחָד
מִימִין הַגִּלְגָּה וְאֶחָד עַל־שְׂמאלָהּ: 4 וְאָעַן וַאֲמַר
אֶל־הַמַּלְאָךְ הַדֹּבֵר בִּי לֵאמֹר מַה־אֵלֶּה אֵד-
נִי: 5 וַיַּעַן הַמַּלְאָךְ הַדֹּבֵר בִּי וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלַי הֲלוֹא
יָדַעַתְּ מִדַּה־הַמָּה אֵלֶּה וַאֲמַר לֹא אֲדָנִי: 6 וַיַּעַן
וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלַי לֵאמֹר זֶה דְּבַר־יְהוָה אֶל־זֶרְבָבֶל
לֵאמֹר לֹא כְחֵיל וְלֹא כְכֹחַ בִּי אִם־בְּרוּחִי אָמַר
יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת: 7 מִי־אַתָּה הִרְהַגְדוֹל לְפָנַי זָרֵב-
בָּל לְמִישֵׁר וְהוֹצִיא אֶת־הָאֲבָן הָרֹאשָׁה תִּשֵׁר־
אֹתֹת תָּן חֵן לָהּ:

Cyrus announced that the Jews could rebuild the Temple (Ezra 2:2, mentioned as Zerubavel). When this decree was reversed (Ezra 4:21-23), he returned to the Persian capital to try to influence Cyrus to allow the rebuilding to continue. Permission was only granted, however, by Darius, in the second year of his reign (Ezra 4:24), which was also the year of this prophecy (Zechariah 1:1).
58. See Ezra 6:610-.

Dedicated in honor of our children

**Nathan, Yitzchok,
Moshe Lev,
and Gilana**

*May you continue to grow in the ways
of our holy Torah*

Yuri and Deana Pikover

