



The Marcos and Adina Katz YUTORAH IN PRINT

Vayeshev 5781

What's The Use?

Rabbi Dr. Norman Lamm z"l (Originally delivered December 7, 1963)

For eight days, beginning later this week, we shall be lighting the Hanukkah candles and, after reciting the blessings, shall read the *Ha-nerot halalu*, a brief excerpt from the Talmud, *Masekhet Soferim*. In the course of this passage, which explains the reason for the observance of Hanukkah, we shall add the following well-known words: *ha-nerot halalu kodesh hem, v'ei lanu reshut le'hishtamesh bah'em, ela lirotam bilvad*, these candles are holy, and we are not permitted to make use of them, only to gaze at them. This refers to the law that Hanukkah candles, unlike Shabbat candles, may not be used for profane purposes; for instance, we may not use them to illuminate the house. (That is why we always provide an extra candle, the *shammash*, so that if all other lights are extinguished it will not be these Hanukkah candles alone that will provide the illumination for members of the household.) For the candles are holy, and what is holy may not be used, only gazed at and contemplated.

There is something quite remarkable about this idea that what is holy may not be "used" for any other purpose, no matter how worthy, that there are certain things that are valuable in and of themselves even if they serve no other function. It is, let us readily confess, a fairly un-modern and un-American idea. The ideal American is tough-minded and eminently practical, and his guiding philosophy is pragmatism or instrumentalism: ideas are meaningful only if they work. Things have to work, wheels have to turn, projects must be completed, one must lead to another, things must get done. The most modern of modern questions is, "of what use is it?" And when the true modern wants to express despair and hopelessness, he says, "What's the use!"--as if that which has no use is as good as dead, utterly worthless.

Our Hanukkah lights, then, take exception to that rule. They have no use--we may not use them--for they are holy.

The inventiveness of the practical man and the ambition of the pragmatist all must stop at the Menorah: here he may only gaze at the lights, contemplate what they represent, and consider them an end in themselves. He may not exploit them for his own use.

What a sorely needed corrective they offer for our over-managed, over-efficient, over-driven, over-anxious lives! They remind us that what we are, and not only what we do, is important; that not how much we make, but of what we make of ourselves is what really counts. They challenge us to measure a work of art not by how much of a return a wise investment in it will bring in ten years, but by its inner esthetic worth; to judge a course of study not by how it will advance your child's career, but rather how it will mold his very being, refine his character, enforce his sense of purpose, and expand his intellectual horizons. As one who teaches in a college I am sometimes appalled by the cold, calculating, business-like attitude that young men--who should be flushed with idealism--bring to their studies. Talmud?--how will it help me become a doctor? Philosophy?--what will it do for my career as a lawyer? Poetry?--all poets starve so it's not for me! Hanukkah reminds us that there are certain areas of life that *ein lanu reshut lehishtamesh bahem*, that may not be exploited, where the pragmatic test may not be applied. *Hanerot halalu kodesh hem*--that which is holy, like that which is beautiful and that which is true, is an end in itself; it serves no other purpose. In fact, all other things are for the purpose of discovering it. That is what our Tradition means by Torah *lishmah*--the study of Torah only for the sake of Torah, not for the purpose of becoming a Rabbi or a teacher, or achieving a reputation, or any other practical reason. Just Torah for Torah's sake--like the Hanukkah lights.

That is why the authentic Jewish tradition does not agree with Philo's analysis of Shabbat. For Philo, the Sabbath rest

is an opportunity to refresh one's self in preparation for another week's activity; the Shabbat was made for the rest of the work-week. Our siddur, however, disagrees. The more genuine Jewish view is that the rest of the week was made for Shabbat: *ata kidashta et yom ha-shevi' lishmekha, takhlit maaseh shamayim va-aretz*, God sanctified the seventh day as the purpose for which heaven and earth were created! Shabbat is the purpose (*takhlit*) of the other days, and not the other way around.

The same holds true for Prayer. It is true that we begin the enterprise of prayer because we feel certain needs which no one but God can satisfy, and so we pray in order that these needs be met. But that is only the beginning. The object of prayer is to forget myself and my needs, to gain a new perspective on life, to appreciate how trivial most of my concerns really are, to see myself from God's perspective. In real tefillah man is overcome by the presence of God that he forgets himself and what he wants. That is why truly pious Jews are never really concerned about the "efficiency of prayer"; prayer is not something they want to use, it is an end in its own right. They are not so much concerned that God should be an *oneh tefillah*, One who answers prayers, as a *shomeia tefillah*, that He should hear them.

But the most important lesson of *ein lanu reshut lehishtamesh bahem* concerns: people, human beings. Human life, like the Hanukkah lights, may be enjoyed, but not used; explored, but not exploited. Man was created in God's image; he is at least as holy, as much an end in himself, as Hanukkah candles. *Ein lanu rehsut lehishtamesh bahem*--we must never manipulate another person for ulterior motives. A human being too must be approached *lishmah*.

When the brothers, in this week's Sidra, cast Joseph into the pit and contemplate destroying him, it is Judah who saves him. Yet the Talmud (San. 6b) is severe with anyone who praises Judah. Why? Because Judah's reason for selling rather than killing Joseph was, *mah betza ki naharog et ahinu*, of what profit, what use will it be to kill him? If we sell him, we will at least receive something in return for him. It is true that this strategy saved the life of Joseph. But it revealed a decadent attitude: brothers may be used, exploited, reduced to mere means by which to aggrandize myself. The words *Mah betza*, "of what use is it," reveal a criterion which is destructive of all human values. *Mah betza* ignores value in favor of price; it is what leads people to sell their own brothers down the river.

Consider how this pernicious *mah betza* doctrine, "what's the use" policy, destroys family integrity. If people may be used, then parents too are but means to be exploited by ambitious children. Then parents become not the cornerstones of our lives, to be honored and cherished, but stepping-stones to our happiness, to be stepped on and taken advantage of in order to get what we can out of them. Parents who are over-permissive with children, who ply them with too much cash and with cars when they are still very young, destroy themselves as parents. They teach their children that parents were created for the pleasure and use of children, and have no meaning and significance as individuals without always giving and providing.

Do you remember when grandfather or grandmother was a permanent feature in every Jewish home? No one ever wondered--least of all the old folk themselves--of what use are they now that they do not work and earn a living and cannot get about. No one ever asked *mah betza*--of what use are they. Instead: *ein lanu reshut lehishtamesh bahem, ela lirotam bilvad*, we dare not consider the question of "what's the use", for merely to see them, to have their company, to enjoy their presence--that is enough.

That holds true as much and more so for husband-wife relations. A *mah betza* standard makes a true, happy relationship impossible. For then a wife considers a husband as nothing more than a way to earn a living and achieve status, and a man takes his wife as but an opportunity to satisfy his lust or advance his career. Then a spouse is not a help-meet, but a "help me." *Ein lanu reshut lehishtamesh bahem*.

Children also can be used by parents, even without parents realizing it. If *mah betza*, then a father will see in his son nothing more than an extension of himself, and attempt to carry out through his son's life whatever ambition of himself, and attempt to carry out through his son's life whatever ambitions he originally had for himself but were frustrated. He doesn't care whether the child is capable of it or likes it or is happy with it; a son or a daughter is, consciously or not, used and exploited. A mother may follow the same policy and often use a child as the object of unexpressed emotions properly directed elsewhere. In such cases, a child is not cherished and loved for what he or she is, but for what they can do for the parents happiness.

In Psalm 127 there is a remarkable statement concerning children: *ke'hitzim be'yad gibbor ken bnei ha-ne'urim*, "as

arrows in the hands of a mighty man, so are the children of one's youth." What a strange simile! How, indeed, are children like arrows?

A weapon has one of two purposes. When it is borne by a weak, diffident man, then the weapon has a vital function. He aims it at others to scare them off or to eliminate them, or he bears it in order to reassure himself that he is not totally helpless. He needs the arrows or the sword or the rifle, and uses it both militarily and psychologically. However, if a man is strong, powerful, unafraid, and respected, then he does not need the weapon in order to defend himself or to frighten others. He is confident of his own strength and position. He bears the weapons only as an ornament, as a badge. He shines it and polishes it and sharpens it, not as a weapon of death and hostility but as a symbol of position and serenity. The arrows of a weak man are used and exploited; they reveal his inner shortcomings. The same arrows in the hands of a *gibbor*, a mighty man, are cherished as ornaments; they reflect his inner tranquility and confidence.

So it is with children. A weak, insecure, immature man will use his children like arrows: attack others through them, employ them as pawns in his never-ending battles with society or wife or family, use them as pointed expressions of his own dreams that failed. A powerful man does not need to use his children. Like a *gibbor* carrying his arrows with dignity and honor, he treats his children not like tools but like objects of love and adoration. He regards them not as extensions of himself, but as *nahalat ha-Shem*, as a gift from God which he loves and tries to develop with

wisdom. He respects them, and wants them to fulfill their, not his, dreams and ambitions. "As arrows in the hands of a mighty man, so are the children of one's youth!" *Hanerot halalu kodesh hem, v'ein lanu reshut lehishtamesh bahem.*

These young lights are holy; they must not be exploited for our own use.

Never before was this sublime message of Hanukkah as necessary as it is today. Our mad, rushing, mechanized, automated world is one in which man has become depersonalized and dehumanized; he is manipulated by ad-men, exploited by politicians, used by employers and employees and colleagues. Our world is one in which man has more and more become a "thing," a means to other ends. Not character but productivity has become the standard by which men are judged.

Let us, therefore, to protect our humanity, to keep intact our dignity as children of God, learn that lesson: *hanerot halalu kodesh hem*, that which is truly enlightening in the world is holy; and the human personality or soul is the most divine light of all--*ner ha-Shem nishmat ha-adam*--and is therefore sacred. *V'ein lanu reshut lehishtamesh bahem, ela lirotam bilvad*, and that which is holy may not be used profanely, only seen and appreciated and revered.

Let us learn this and we will have reversed the tendency towards de-humanization, and contributed mightily towards reaffirming man's worth, his value, his dignity.

"For not my might nor by power, but My spirit, said the Lord of Hosts."

Read more at www.yu.edu/about/lamm-heritage.

The Danger of Settling Down

Rabbi Sammy Bergman

Our parshah begins "And Yaakov settled in the land in which his father lived, the land of Canaan." (Bereishit 37:1). After a long period of wandering distinguished by struggles with his brother Esav, his father-in-law Lavan, and the abduction of his daughter Dinah, Yaakov Avinu finally settled down. Given everything he had endured, we could easily identify with Yaakov's desire to live in peace and serenity. However, the Sages criticize Yaakov strongly for his aspirations:

Rabbi Acha said: When the righteous settle in tranquility and desire to settle in tranquility in this world, Satan comes and incites. He says, "What is prepared for them in the next

world isn't enough for them, such that they seek to settle in tranquility in this world?!" Know that this is so, for since our father Yaakov sought to settle in tranquility in this world, the trouble of Yosef attached itself to him. (Bereishit Rabbah 84:3)

This midrash labels Yaakov's desire to "settle in tranquility" as a moral error which subjected Yaakov to the "trouble of Yosef". However, the Satan's indictment of Yaakov seems unfair. Why shouldn't Yaakov, or "the righteous", seek a life of equanimity? Certainly, Yaakov had no plans to waste his time in endless relaxation! Presumably, he wanted to live out his days in Israel serving Hashem without distraction. Why was this wish worthy of punishment?

Rabbi Yitzchak Arama (Akeidat Yitzchak 30:1) and Rabbi Shmuel Bornsztain (Shem MiShemuel Vayeshev 8) both argue that the key to understanding Yaakov's mistake lies in the words of the Satan's accusation. In the eyes of this midrash, Yaakov sought "what was prepared for him in the next world". Yaakov felt that after enduring so many challenges he had completely purified both his body and soul. Therefore, he deserved a life of spiritual bliss akin to the eternal joy the righteous experience in the next world. However, Yaakov perceived the nature of the human experience in this world incorrectly. As the Mishnah says: This world is comparable to an entryway, in front of the next world. (Avot 4:17)

Based on their understanding of his mistake, the Akeidat Yitzchak and the Shem MiShemuel view the "trouble of Yosef" as a message to Yaakov about the reality of life. Hashem showed Yaakov that for as long as he lived, he would have to grapple with challenges. His very presence in the world meant that he had not fully reached his potential.

The approach of the Shem MiShemuel and Akeidat Yitzchak provides a profound insight about our experience in this world. However, the assertion that Yaakov wanted the experience of the next world seems unjustified. One could interpret Yaakov's desire to "settle in tranquility" as an appreciation of newfound peace after overcoming many difficult challenges. Should we fault Yaakov for not wanting

any more trials and tribulations?

Perhaps, we could suggest an alternative approach based on Yaakov's progression throughout his life. The Torah describes Yaakov in his youth as "a simple man who dwelled in tents." (Bereishit 25:27) Rabbi David Kimchi (ibid.) explains that Yaakov was an honest, sincere person whose sole desire was to pursue wisdom. However, in his encounters with Esav and Lavan, Yaakov was forced to "leave his tent" and to learn how to grapple with challenging personalities. Yaakov cultivated the ability to face any opposition and rise above any challenge.

Nevertheless, Yaakov ultimately took a step back. After returning to Israel, Yaakov decided to "settle" and revert to his natural, unassuming self. He sought to return to "the tents" to devote his time toward the pursuit of wisdom. However, Yaakov's plan failed because he had reached a different stage in his life. He was the father of twelve sons who had bitter rivalries with each other. Yaakov needed to play an active role in making peace between the brothers and responding to Yosef's behaviour. But, because he sought to "settle in tranquility", "the trouble of Yosef attached itself to him."

We all appreciate peace and tranquility. However, we must acknowledge that life presents us with challenges which force us to leave our comfort zones and develop our spiritual personas.

No Mere Sibling Rivalry

Rabbi Dr. Dvir Ginsberg

At the beginning of the Torah portion of Vayeshev, one can sense the tranquillity achieved by Jacob, as he settled down to focus on raising his children and building the future Jewish nation. While Jacob had been victorious against those trying to destroy him from outside his family, a new threat, so to speak, was rising from within. Jacob is described as giving Joseph a favored status in comparison to his brothers. A familial tension takes root, as the brothers are displeased with the favoritism exhibited towards Joseph. Amid these simmering tensions, Joseph reports to his brothers about a dream (Bereishit 37:7):

"Behold, we were binding sheaves in the midst of the field, and behold, my sheaf arose and also stood upright, and behold, your sheaves encircled [it] and prostrated themselves to my sheaf."

Upon hearing this dream, the brothers respond with a forceful rebuke (ibid 8):

"So his brothers said to him, 'Will you reign (hamaloch) over us, or will you govern (timshol) us?' And they continued further to hate him on account of his dreams and on account of his words."

It is fairly clear that Joseph's recounting of this dream did nothing to ameliorate the situation. The simple interpretation of the verse would point to the brothers resenting the idea of being subject to Joseph's rule. If this were the case, only one reference to rulership would have been sufficient. Why do they mention both "melech" and "moshel"? The commentators appear to take two different paths in attempting to resolve this potential superfluity. The first approach, offered by such commentators as Onkelos and Ramban, stick to the simple reading of the verse. Subjects bow out of respect to both a king (melech) and an authority (shilton).

How, then, does this answer the question? Why isn't the mention of one sufficient? This leads to the second approach, offered by such commentators as Ibn Ezra and Malbim. The brothers were paying close attention to Joseph's dream and noted an apparent contradiction. A melech is someone who the people willingly desire as ruler (although they might be debatable today). On the other hand, the moshel forcefully acquires power and extends his rule over the people. A moshel could never be the same as a melech. This is a clear contradiction in Joseph's dream, thereby subjecting him to further hatred from the brothers. This approach certainly offers a different angle on the above verse. The brothers' analysis of the dream content and subsequent spotting of this inconsistency would fit naturally in a lecture on Talmud. However, there must be a deeper idea here. What does this apparent contradiction reveal about Joseph? Did this analysis really justify their harsh reaction?

Before proceeding, it is critical to point out that there are two types of dreams found in Tanach. The first type is prophetic in nature, involving a message from God to (often) be delivered to the intended recipients. The second is psychological in nature, possibly revealing insights into the individual's personality. As we know from the outset, the relationship between the brothers and Joseph was fractious at best. The brothers saw character defects in Joseph, and the idea of Jacob's love for Joseph being so strong was a source of serious concern. When Joseph approaches them with his dream, the brothers react forcefully due to their assessment of who Joseph was at the time. Joseph clearly saw himself as being superior to his brothers; yet there was nothing in Joseph that lent itself to such self-assessment. The dream was clearly psychological in origin. While Ramban and Onkelos do not provide much detail, we can surmise that there is a difference between Joseph seeing himself as king or as an authority figure. An authority figure might be someone whose status is derived from within a specific group. For example, the kohanim (priests) would choose as the kohengadol (the High Priest) the best of the group. The brothers could not fathom how Joseph would ever be capable of receiving that much respect. To be a king is to be separate from the group, a leader of people. There are unique traits required to be such an individual. In the eyes of the brothers, Joseph did not exhibit any of these. Thus, this approach focuses more on how outlandish it was to suppose Joseph could

every have the stature described in his dream. Turning to the second approach, the emphasis lies with the apparent contradiction in Joseph's presentation of the dream. This "flaw" meant the brothers could immediately classify this dream as psychological in origin. A prophetic dream would never contain a contradiction, and the brothers immediately were able to undermine Joseph's credibility. However, this might not have been enough to elicit the strong feelings they had towards Joseph, as described in the second half of the verse. Non-prophetic dreams can sometimes offer insights into the personality of the dreamer. In this instance, the contradiction brought to light, from the perspective of the brothers, some serious issues with Joseph's character. They saw Joseph desiring to become the ruler satisfying of some dangerous emotional cravings. On the one hand, Joseph wanted to be elevated by his brothers to this top position. The tremendous ego gratification he would receive in his promotion was one drive in his dream. On the other hand, Joseph's expression of moshel meant he also wanted to exercise control over his brothers. That feeling of immense power over his brothers would epitomize Joseph's megalomania. Thus, the brothers see in the dream not just a contradiction; they see a person extremely flawed, and thus undeserving of this level of attention by Jacob. This second approach, then, serves to highlight some of the apparent flaws noted by the brothers.

It is interesting that the Torah never records a response by Joseph to this vitriol. There is no question Joseph had tremendous potential, and he would exhibit these traits of leadership in due time. However, at this point in his life, Joseph had not engaged in any degree of introspection. The lack of a recorded response may point to Joseph acknowledging, to some degree, the criticism of his brothers. Regardless, this apparent redundancy in the above-mentioned verse helps shed light on the mindset of the brothers during this tragic time in the burgeoning history of the Jewish nation. Rather than view this as sibling rivalry, the Torah is attempting to cast the criticism as the brothers attempt to ensure that the future of the Jewish nation was not in the hands of Joseph. While the ensuing narrative demonstrates questionable actions on the part of the brothers, one should not seem them as simply blindly hating Joseph. With the Jewish nation on the line, the brothers recognized that Joseph was just not the right person as their future leader.

Influence Techniques

Rabbi Dr. Mordechai Schiffman

When Yosef's brothers decide they are going to kill him and throw him into a pit, Reuven realizes that he needs to intervene to save Yosef's life. While Reuven's explicit intention is to return Yosef to Yaakov, he is caught in a predicament. What can he say or do that will convince the brothers not to kill Yosef? Their decision seems unanimous and definitive. The Midrash states that if Reuven would have known that his decision would be recorded for history, he would have picked Yosef up on his shoulders and escorted him back to his father. But is this realistic? Would the brothers have allowed Reuven to just walk away with Yosef after they have condemned him to death?

Dr. Robert Cialdini is known for his research on influence and persuasion. He spent three years as an "undercover" researcher training at used car dealerships, telemarketing firms, and fund-raising organizations in order to observe, analyze, and categorize principles of effective persuasion. If we analyze how Reuven influenced and persuaded his brothers in this crucial moment, we will uncover several strategies that Dr. Cialdini outlines in his research.

In the introduction to his bestselling book "Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion," Dr. Cialdini writes that the first and foremost principle of persuasion is tapping into the other person's self-interest by convincing others that their decision will turn out best for them. It is so fundamental and obvious, he writes, that he doesn't even count it as one of his six principles of influence. This, Rabbeinu Bechaye argues, is Reuven's strategy in convincing his brothers not to kill Yosef. He doesn't just say "let's not hit him" because that would leave open the possibility that Reuven was motivated by his own feelings of empathy and self-interest. Rather, he adds the word "nefesh," in order to emphasize that the goal is to avoid killing Yosef for the brothers' own sake: in order that they don't become murderers.

Another powerful category of influence is when the influencer convinces others that they are alike by

identifying socially as a group with similar interests. Rabbi Yosef Bechor Shor identifies this strategy within Reuven's word-choice. Reuven doesn't speak at them saying "don't hit him," rather, he purposefully includes himself in the group with the intention of increasing his influence by saying, "let us not hit him." Rabbeinu Bechaye suggests this strategy is also apparent in another strategic word-choice. Instead of saying "don't spill his blood," he just says, "don't spill blood." This subtle tactic indicates to the brothers that Reuven identifies with their hatred of Yosef and he is not concerned about Yosef's blood per se. Rather, the argument is not to spill any blood for the sake of not becoming murderers.

Dr. Cialdini writes that there is a single word that will dramatically boost the power of influence: because. In one study by Dr. Ellen Langer, when people making copies at a photocopy machine were asked by a stranger "Excuse me, I have 5 pages, may I use the Xerox machine?" 60 percent of the people complied. When the stranger added "because I am in a rush," 94 percent complied. Even more fascinating, when the stranger just added the obvious explanation of "because I have to make copies," there was still a 93 percent compliance rate. Just by adding a reason, influence is increased. Abarbanel sees this strategy in Reuven's argument as well. At first, all Reuven says is "let's not kill him" (37:21). Apparently, the brothers were not convinced yet, so Reuven adds in the next pasuk, "let's not spill his blood, let's throw him into a pit" (37:22). Abarbanel explains that after the brothers didn't respond to his general statement of "let's not kill him, Reuven now provides the "because." Let's not kill him because it is terrible to spill innocent blood directly.

By analyzing the pesukim in depth, we get a glimpse into the genius of Reuven's strategy to stop his brothers from committing murder. By using the subtle persuasion techniques of self-interest, group identification, and providing an explanation, he is able to diffuse a threatening situation and save Yosef's life.

The Gift of Brotherhood

Mrs. Michal Horowitz

In this week's parsha, Parshas Vayeshev, seventeen year old Yosef, the beloved son of Yaakov Avinu and Rachel Imainu (who died in last week's parsha), begins to dream of greatness. He dreams of his brothers sheaves of wheat in the field bowing down to him and the heavenly bodies bowing to him. When he relates his dreams to his brothers, they are jealous of him, they hate him, and they cannot talk to him b'shalom, in peace.

Between his father's love, his special coat of many colors, and his dreams of grandeur, the brothers have had enough of the favorite son (Bereishis 37).

One day, as they are shepherding their father's flocks, Yosef is sent to check on the welfare of his brothers. As they see him coming from afar, they realize this is their chance to get rid of the hated brother!

Here comes the dreamer, they say to one another! וַעֲתָה לְכוּ וְנַהַרְגֵהוּ, וְנִשְׁלְכֵהוּ בְּאֶחָד הַבְּרוֹת, וְאִמְרֵנוּ, חַיָּה רָעָה אֲכָלְתָהוּ; - And now, let us kill him and cast him into one of the pits and we will say a wild animal ate him! And we will see what will become of his dreams (37:19-20).

After some negotiation with merchants and passing caravans, Yosef is sold and taken to Egypt. Alas, when the brothers come home and show father the torn and blood stained kesones pasim (Yosef's multi-colored coat), he cries and refuses to be comforted.

וַיִּקְמוּ כָל-בָּנָיו וְכָל-בָּנוֹתָיו לְנַחֵמוֹ, וַיִּמָּאן לְהַנְחֵם - And all of his sons and all of his daughters got up to comfort him, and he refused to be comforted; For I will go down in mourning to the grave, over my son! Yaakov declares ((37:35).

The same brothers who hated and were jealous of Yosef, who plotted to kill him and threw him into a pit, stripped him of his special coat, dipped it in goats blood, and sold him on a caravan to Egypt, now got up to comfort father!?! Now, when Yosef was gone, when it was too late!, when they did not know if they would ever see him again - NOW they got up to comfort Yaakov?!

R' Soloveitchik zt'l teaches, "Sometimes a man feels happy when happiness is not justified. This is bad. However, the situation might be reversed. Happiness is justified, warranted, he should enjoy it (what he has) - and he doesn't enjoy it. So what does the Almighty do in such a situation? It applies to mechiras (the sale of) Yosef, it applies to our private lives. What does He do? The

Almighty becomes a pedagogue, a teacher. HaKadosh Baruch Hu likes teaching. One of the attributes of the Almighty is *ha'milamed Torah l'amo Yisrael* (Who teaches Torah to His nation, Israel), to be a melamed (teacher). *Ha'kel ha'Gadol ha'Gibor v'ha'Nora* is not as important as *ha'milamed Torah l'amo Yisrael*. He is a Teacher, He teaches man many things.

"But in absurd situations, like the one I just portrayed to you, when man has everything which should make him happy, everything under the sun, but is still unhappy, reaching out for the impossible, how can G-d instill a little sense in man, that he should realize his mistake? He has a beautiful method: you're not happy with it? Give it back to Me. You're not happy; I'll take it away from you.

"This was the punishment He meted out to the meraglim, the twelve spies whom HKB"H sent to explore Eretz Yisrael, and they brought back the report that they are unhappy with Eretz Yisrael, with the land. You didn't appreciate it? All right. So give it back. So you will die in the midbar (desert) ...

"The sons of Yaakov were unhappy, very unhappy, envious of Yosef with his multicolored shirt. Each one thought, if my father had given me the multicolored shirt... foolish! Nonsensical things! And they appreciated those nonsensical things without appreciating the real happiness of being together, Yaakov and the twelve brothers. So they lost it. They did not appreciate each other, did not bestow love and devotion upon each other, they were hostile to each other, there was a treasure within their reach and they did not appreciate the treasure.

"When did the brothers realize the beauty and grandeur of being together, of *שָׁרַת אַחִים גַּם-יַחַד* - how pleasant is it when brothers sit together (Tehillim 133:1)? Or the beauty of *achva* (brotherhood)? When they lost Yosef. Suddenly they became aware of how exalted the achva experience is. It is an old shortcoming of man" (The Rav Thinking Aloud on the Parsha, Bamidbar, p.96-98).

The same brothers who hated Yosef when he lived with them, suddenly realized the greatness of brotherhood when Yosef was taken away from them. The moment the caravan disappeared over the horizon, and Yosef along with them, the brothers mourned. Now they got up to comfort father, yet alas, now it was too late...

Behold it is so good and pleasant when brothers dwell together in unity (Tehillim 133:1).

I recently heard a beautiful insight in the name of R' Goldwicht. What is so beautiful and pleasant about brothers dwelling יחד, together? יש חלוקי דעות. Even when brothers have differences of opinions, when they don't always see "eye to eye," when my *mehalach* (path in

life) differs from yours, for often amongst Jews, יש חלוקי דעות - there are differences of opinion ... Yet, even so, שְׁבֹת אָחִים, when those very same brothers can sit together, הִנֵּה, וְיָמָה-נְעִים, behold, it is good and pleasant!

May we always appreciate the Divine blessings while we still have them, may we always have the humility and courage to accept our brothers with their differences, and may we rejoice as we sit, brothers together.

Why the Instigation and Hatred?

Rabbi Avraham Gordimer

And Yisroel said to Yosef, 'Are your brothers not shepherding in Shechem? Go, and I will send you to them.' And he replied, 'Behold, I am here (ready to go).'" (Bereshis 37:13)

As Chazal note, Yosef realized that making this trip to his brothers, without anyone else present, could mean serious trouble for him, but Yosef listened to his father and went to his brothers anyway. "He was alacritous to fulfill his father's instruction, even though he knew that his brothers hated him." (Rashi *ibid.*, from Bereshis Rabbah)

If Yosef was so concerned about friction with his brothers and the potential consequences, why did he reveal his dreams to them, which would assuredly arouse animosity and perhaps lead to hazardous results? Yosef's brothers resented him even before his dreams (Bereshis 37:4), and he saw that they disliked him even more after he told them about his first dream (*ibid.* v. 5); he then proceeded to tell them about his second dream (*ibid.* v. 9-10). Why, if Yosef was concerned about his brothers' animosity and the possible consequences, did he tell them about his dreams, which would assuredly only further inflame the hatred?

By the same token, Yosef was only 17 years old at the time. His brothers, with the exception of Binyomin, were older; they had already established families and were mature adults. Why then did they take Yosef so seriously, to the point of almost killing him and actually selling him as a slave? Most people would dismiss or perhaps be annoyed by a younger brother bragging about his greatness, even if he was favored and he told their father bad things about them. Kids – even older ones – have a knack for tattling on their siblings and irritating them, often in serious ways. Why did Yosef's brothers react so extremely? No one is justifying Yosef's actions or the brothers' reactions, but why did Yosef and his brothers do what they did? Why

did Yosef incite them with his dreams and why didn't they ignore him or respond less severely?

Underlying the clash between Yosef and his brothers was a fundamental dispute as to how the Jewish nation would develop. Yosef perceived from the accounts of his father and grandfather that the development of the B'nei Yisroel was occurring through a selection in each generation of a specific and special person to carry on the Mesorah (Torah tradition) and lead the nation. Yitzchak was selected over Yishmael for this purpose, and Yaakov was selected over Eisav. Yosef, who had received the fullness of his father's Mesorah and was very charismatic, seemed to be the natural one to lead. Although he was a younger brother, so were Yitzchak and Eisav younger brothers, and the fact that Yosef was Yaakov's closest talmid (student) and had received the royal, colorful robe from him, signaled to Yosef that he was the natural successor to Yaakov. Yosef realized that his future assumption of leadership would be quite controversial, but he relied on very good precedent for this, well aware of the controversies between his father and grandfather and their brothers, which were ultimately necessary for his father and grandfather to become the next of the Avos (Patriarchs). Yosef looked back to their situations and felt that he needed to do as he did.

Yosef's brothers were in fundamental disagreement. Unlike the families of Avrohom and Yitzchak, which had a Yishmael and an Eisav, Yaakov's family was comprised of tzaddikim – no bad apples. (V. Rashi on Bereshis 35:22, from Gemara Shabbos.) The brothers were confident that B'nei Yisroel would no longer develop via the selection of the good brother over the bad brother to serve as the next leader, but that B'nei Yisroel would now enter a new phase of expansion, with twelve very decent brothers all cultivating future generations together. The brothers viewed

Yosef's actions to further his plan as placing the future of the entire nation in mortal jeopardy, and they felt that they had no choice but to take harsh action. Again, no one is justifying what happened; however, we must understand the motivations from both sides, which on the surface appear to lack reason.

Who was ultimately correct? It would seem that both sides were correct in their views of the future development of K'lal Yisroel. There was definitely a need for a central leader – who turned out to be Yehudah and his progeny, who later served as kings in the Jewish commonwealth. However, each Shevet had its own unique and vital role as well. The Levi'im and Kohanim had a

Moshiach Momentum

Mrs. Shira Smiles

Parshat Vayeshev is filled with the tragedies and traumas of Yaakov Avinu and his family: The brothers are selling Yosef, Yaakov Avinu, having been shown Yosef's bloody clothing, is inconsolable, and the parsha ends with Yosef Hatzakikin Egypt as a slave in the home of Potiphar. In the midst of all this, the Torah digresses to tell us that Yehudah went down from his brothers, married, and had a family. He then married off a son who subsequently died. He married off the second son in a levirate marriage to his first son's wife, Tamar. When this son also died, Yehudah sent Tamar back to her father's house to await marriage to the youngest son.

After a reasonable time had passed and the third son had not married her, Tamar took matters into her own hands. Disguised and waiting at a crossroads, Tamar meets Yehudah. Yehudah believes her to be a prostitute, has relations with her, and unknowingly impregnates Tamar with twins. When Yehudah realizes he himself is the father, he confesses, saves Tamar from execution, and the twins, Peretz and Zerach are born.

While this entire interlude may indeed be fascinating, what relevance does it have at this particular juncture? The medrash gives us a simple answer which begs further exploration. Everyone in the family seems to be involved in his own personal saga, but Hashem too was busy. In the midst of all this, Hashem was busily compounding the cure for the terrible "diseases" which were to befall Bnei Yisroel. Hashem was laying the plans for the birth of Moshiach who would redeem Bnei Yisroel in the final redemption.

The Ner Uziel explains that Hashem established a

paramount role in the future nation, as did each Shevet in its own singular and special way.

Among the many lessons to be learned, aside from siblings getting along with patience and love and not being favored for any reason, as Chazal expound, is that everyone has his own exceptional and incomparable role in K'lal Yisroel, but that at the same time, specific leaders are needed, and we should accept and certainly not resent this fact. This combination of individualism and central leadership forms the beautiful tapestry of avodas Hashem (service of God) that K'lal Yisroel was charged to become. May we live up to this holy mandate.

fail safe mechanism to save Bnei Yisroel should we sin egregiously. If we do teshuvah, the punishments would be voided, but if we fail to do teshuvah, the fail safe mechanism kicks in to save us. Yosef's going down to Egypt was the beginning of our first exile, and Yehudah's consorting with Tamar sowed the seeds of our final redemption, for from Tamar, through Peretz, King David, and ultimately Moshiach ben David, would descend. While we think we are going about our individual lives, Hashem is weaving the threads together into the tapestry of the history He is creating. Everything we do, writes Rabbi Asher Weiss, is spun by Hashem to be part of this tapestry.

In this context, Rabbi Mintzberg, the Ben Melech, proves that Hashem is always in charge. There are times when His presence is revealed

in the open, supernatural miracles of our history, from our inception with the miraculous conceptions and births of our Patriarchs, to the plagues and redemption from Egypt, to the capture of the Land under Joshua. But the seemingly natural progress of human interaction is also orchestrated by Hakodosh Boruch Hu. That Yitzchak Avinu blessed Yaakov Avinu instead of Esau seems to be the result of Rivkah' Imenu's machinations. Yet Hashem was the real Planner. That Yaakov Avinu married Leah first may have been the result of Lavan's deception, but was nevertheless part of Hashem's plan. It is through Leah that royalty descends, as it does from Ruth, the Moabite convert who happens to wander into the field of Boaz to glean. We act, but we seldom see where the stitches of our actions fall in the complete tapestry.

Nevertheless, the whole episode with Yehudah and Tamar seems somewhat lurid. Why is so much of the Messianic ancestry couched in such seemingly dark backgrounds and times of concealment of God's Presence? Alshich Hakadosh, posits that extremely sacred objects must be hidden in the most mundane and unholy of places to sidetrack the Satan from suspecting their presence. The sparks for Moshiach were first hidden in the seemingly lurid acts of Lot's daughters, then in the episode of Yehudah and Tamar, and finally within Ruth, a Moabite. [This would be similar to hiding valuables in a plain, brown paper bag to thwart thieves. CKS]

Nevertheless, asks the Sifsei Chaim, why do these seeds of redemption need to be planted in the dark times of concealment? When Things appear darkest, writes Rabbi Friedlander citing the Ramchal, that's when Hashem is actually installing the batteries to shine the greatest light. It is by holding on to our faith during these challenges that we earn the light Hashem wishes to shine on us. Without this merit, every one of our misdeeds would be magnified, and the Satan would challenge the flow of goodness. The challenges we face lessen our accountability. The darkness of evening and night must precede the light of morning. Hope, light and redemption must grow from the darkness of despair.

It is brokenness itself that generates rebirth, notes the Netivot Shalom. It is from the rotting seed that the new plant grows, from the seemingly "rotten" seeds that Moshiach will eventually emerge.

It is within this same context that Hashem praises Moshe Rabbenu Rabbenu when he smashed those first luchot. From those broken Tablets and the despair of Bnei Yisroel's emerged the hope that donning sackcloth in teshuvah would bring God's presence back to reside within Bnei Yisroel, continues the Slonimer Rebbe. Despite everything, in deepest despair Bnei Yisroel refused to give up hope.

This indeed was the basis of Yaakov Avinu's refusal to be comforted at the alleged death of Yosef. If he were resigned to Yosef's death, he could be comforted, but deep down, he still held out hope and faith that Yosef Hatzakik was alive.

The worst that can happen to a Jew is that he loses hope. If you keep believing, there will be some redemption, albeit it may differ from the one you desired. Chanukah especially, but Purim as well, is perhaps the most obvious example of this premise. How could a band of thirteen Jews

go up against the greatest empire of the era, an empire with an army of thousands supported by powerful elephants, the virtual tanks of the time? That band of rebels had to have hope and faith the Redeemer, concealed in His abode on high. Every year, when we remember the feat of that small band of Maccabees in those days, we must renew our hope and strengthen our faith in these times.

Rabbi Schlesinger in Eleh Hadvorim asks an interesting question. Of all the mitzvot, why is it only Chanukah that we are commanded to publicize as miraculous? We generally place the menorah in our windows or doorways so that the light can be seen in the darkness outside. When there is darkness, explains Rav Schlesinger, we must believe in the coming light. In the darkness of our current golus/exile, we must believe in the coming of Moshiach. The medrash alludes to the connection with the origins of Moshiach in this parsha. Moshi"yach is an acronym for madlikim shmonat yemei Chanukah/[We] light [for] the eight days of Chanukah.

This brings us to contemplate a new perspective on the insertion of the Yehudah episode at this juncture. While all the other members of the Israel family were involved in some form of the darkness of mourning, writes Rabbi Scheinerman in Ohel Moshe Rabbenu, it was only Yehudah whom the brothers had pushed down from his position of authority who moved forward with hope and started a new family. That characteristic of hope in the face of despair is a major characteristic of Jews who are known by the name Yehudim/Jewdim.

Yehudah reinforces that impression of his persona when the viceroy of Egypt, Yosef Hatzakikin disguise, accuses Binyamin of having stolen the royal goblet and all seems lost. While the brothers rend their garments, Yehudah steps forth to argue the case before Yosef, hoping for salvation. It is Yehudah's pleas that arouse Yosef's compassion to reveal himself to his brothers. Yehudah always drives forward for future success, looking forward, not constantly looking back to the past in a rear view mirror that would inevitably invite a crash.

Yehudah did not let despair gain complete control over him. When he thought he had lost everything with the grief his advice to sell Yosef Hatzakik generated, he decided to start life anew and serve Hashem with the first mitzvah, with marriage and having children. This was the faith Hashem rewarded by planting the seed of Moshiach through Yehudah.

It is behind the scenes, in concealment, that Hashem moves His plan forward. If the butler forgets about Yosef Hatzakik after being released from prison, Hashem doesn't forget him. In every situation, Hashem still watches and waits for the proper time for salvation. And Rabbi Svei notes that Yosef Hatzakik himself was also waiting. Yosef Hatzakik was waiting for the fulfillment of His dreams. And while Hashem watches and waits, Moshe Rabbenu, saved from the Nile's waters, also waits in the house of Yitro. He is waiting for the prophecies of Miriam to be actualized. He watches to see the message of the burning bush. When Hashem calls out to him, Moshe Rabbenu is ready and immediately responds, "Hineni/here I am."

Tamar also knew her destiny, to be the ancestress of Moshiach. She waited and acted. So did those following in that line, Ruth and King David. Each waited and anticipated the moment they would be called upon to play their role in the panorama of history.

But that mindset doesn't end in Biblical times. Out of the ashes of the Holocaust, Rav Aaron Kotler zt"l, the Satmar Rebbe zt"l and other Rebbeim rebuilt world Judaism and Torah institutions on new shores. They knew they were saved for a purpose. They would not give in to despair; they would build on faith and hope. We need to build on that same faith and hope, and await the coming of Moshiach in great anticipation.

Today, especially during Chanukah, we must ask ourselves what we can do to advance the coming of the Moshiach. We can certainly pray, but is there something I can also do toward that goal?

Rabbi Gladstein quotes the Sefat Emet who notes that Chanukah means inauguration, for it is not the end of a historical era, but the beginning of the era to herald the coming of the Messiah.

And what will that time be like? Rabbi Mintzberg paints a beautiful picture of those times whose hidden light was revealed in that first Chanukah and is hidden every year in our Chanukah candles. That is the perfection of nature itself, as a component of the primal light, concealed since creation. Nature itself will give forth bountiful fruit and harvest without the toil now necessary, Childbirth itself will be eased. In this context, the Maccabees' victory, as was the burning of the oil for eight days, was natural and man made, not miraculous, for it was a pre-vision of the world in the Messianic era.

Time itself takes on a different dimension in the Messianic era, writes Rabbi Wolfson. When the Sages say that the holiday derives its name from the date of the Maccabees' victory, chanu chof heh/[they] rested on the twenty fifth day [of Kislev], they could not mean that all eight days would be represented by the first day. Rather, posits Rabbi Wolfson, they meant that time itself was changed, and a year will be counted as one day. The oil lasting eight days, according to this calculation, was not a miracle, but simply a precursor of what to expect as nature in Messianic times. The Maccabees could see all eight days in one day.

In this long and bitter golus, our homes with our personal menorahs become a personal Beit Hamikdash. Look at the candles and get a glimpse and taste of that future, beautiful era. Each of us has the potential to be a symbolic Eliyahu Hanavi, to hasten and proclaim the coming of Moshiach. We can build toward the future with hope and faith, as did Yehudah, the tribal patriarch for whom our people are named.