

OHRNET

SHABBAT PARSHAT VAYESHEV • 16 KISLEV 5783 DECEMBER 17 2022 • VOL 30 NO.7

PARSHA INSIGHTS

by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

Whetting or Jading the Appetite?

“...Hashem blessed the Egyptian’s house on Yosef’s account, so that the blessing was in whatever he owned...”
(39:5)

In 2010, Warren Buffett and Bill Gates launched the Giving Pledge. It has approximately 81 billionaire signers so far, each of whom have pledged to give away at least half of their wealth. Last July, Gates himself said he planned to give away ‘virtually all’ his \$113 billion.

What makes a fabulously wealthy guy like Gates want to give away all his money? Hashem created man with two desires: a physical desire and a spiritual desire. And physical desire just goes so far. You can only sleep in one super-duper king-size bed at a time. You can only swim in a one swimming pool filled with pink champagne at a time. Physical pleasure has its limits (and may require more than Alka-Seltzer when those limits are exceeded).

On the other hand, spiritual pleasures, even

in this world, have no limits. The more money you have, the more pleasure you have when you give it away. As it says in Kohelet, “And also the soul will not be filled.”

Rashi, in defining the Shabbat experience, says in Mesechet Beitza, “He eats a lot is and is not disgusted.” Shabbat is a magic machine that converts the physical into the spiritual. Shlomo Hamelech said, “The one who loves money will not be satiated by money.” But he also says, “The one who loves Torah will not be satiated by Torah.” Physical pleasures leave you feeling empty as soon as they finish, and so you want more and more and more. Even though spiritual pleasures leave you full, but, just like Shabbat, you can consume more and more and more of them. The appetite is whetted, not jaded.

Q & A

Questions

1. *These are the offspring of Yaakov: Yosef....*" Give three reasons why Yosef is considered Yaakov's main offspring.
2. What was praiseworthy about the fact that Yosef's brothers did not speak to him in a friendly manner?
3. How do we see from Yosef's dream about the sun, moon and stars that all dreams contain some untrue element?
4. Who brought Yosef down to Egypt?
5. Where was Reuven when Yosef was sold?
6. In addition to the brothers, who else knew that Yosef was alive?
7. Why didn't G-d reveal prophetically to Yaakov that Yosef was alive?
8. For how long did Yaakov mourn the loss of Yosef?
9. Verse 37:35 states "his father wept." To whom does this refer?
10. Who was Tamar's father?
11. In what merit did Tamar deserve to have kings as her descendants?
12. Why is the word "*hand*" mentioned four times in connection to the birth of Zerach?
13. Why does the Torah relate the incident with Potiphar's wife immediately after the incident of Yehuda and Tamar?
14. How did Potiphar "see" that G-d was with Yosef?
15. Who in this week's Parsha pretended to be sick?
16. Why were the butler and the baker imprisoned?
17. For how long were the butler and the baker in prison?
18. How did the baker know that Yosef had correctly interpreted the butler's dream?
19. What prompted the butler and baker to tell Yosef their dreams?
20. How was Yosef punished for asking the butler for help?

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary, unless otherwise stated.

Answers

1. 37:2 - (a) Yosef was the son of Rachel, Yaakov's primary wife. (b) Yosef looked like Yaakov. (c) All that befell Yaakov befell Yosef.
2. 37:4 - They did not act hypocritically.
3. 37:10 - The moon represented Rachel. Since she had already died, it was impossible for that element of the dream to come true.
4. 37:28 - A caravan of Midianites.
5. 37:29 - He was attending to Yaakov.
6. 37:33 - Yitzchak.
7. 37:33 - Because the brothers had issued a ban against revealing the truth to Yaakov, and G-d, so to speak, abided by their ban.
8. 37:34 - Twenty-two years.
9. 37:35 - Yitzchak, who wept because of Yaakov's suffering.
10. 38:24 - Shem.
11. 38:26 - In the merit of her modesty.
12. 38:30 - To allude to his descendent, Achan, who sinned with his hand by taking four things from the spoils of Jericho.
13. 39:1 - To teach us that just as Tamar acted with pure motives, so did Potiphar's wife.
14. 39:3 - Yosef mentioned G-d's name frequently in his speech.
15. 39:11 - Potiphar's wife.
16. 40:1 - The butler was imprisoned because a fly was found in the king's goblet, and the baker was imprisoned because a pebble was found in the king's bread.
17. 40:4 - Twelve months.
18. 40:5 - The baker dreamed the interpretation of the butler's dream.
19. 40:6 - Yosef asked them why they looked troubled.
20. 40:23 - He remained in prison an additional two years.

WHAT'S IN A WORD?

by Rabbi Reuven Chaim Klein

The Amazing Multi-Named Joseph

Jacob's penultimate son was born to him by his beloved with Rachel after many years of her going childless. The Bible relates that upon his birth, Rachel exclaimed, "Hashem has gathered up (asaf) my embarrassment," further noting that she called him Yosef, with the wishful prayer "Hashem shall add [yosef] for me another son" (Gen. 30:23-24). But Yosef was not his only name. In one place in the Bible, Joseph is actually referred to as Yehosef (Ps. 81:6), with an additional HEY between the first two letters of Yosef. Moreover, the Bible itself reports that when Joseph took a leadership role in the Egyptian government, people called him Avreich (Gen. 41:43) and the Pharaoh called him Tzafnat Paneach (Gen. 41:45). In this essay, we discuss Joseph's various names, exploring the etymology of each appellation and showing how each name focuses on a specific aspect of the amazing tzaddik.

The name Yosef appears more than 200 times throughout the Bible in reference to Joseph and/or his descendants. By the way, Jacob's son Joseph was not the only person named Yosef in the Bible. There are three more people who bore that name: Yosef, whose son Yigal was the spy from the tribe of Issachar (Num. 13:7); Yosef from the family of Assaf, who was one of the singers in the time of King David (I Chron. 25:9); and Yosef who is listed among the returnees from the Babylonian Exile in the times of Ezra and Nehemiah (Ezra 10:42, Neh. 12:14).

As you may have realized, the name Yosef is derived from the verb yosef ("he shall add"), just like his mother Rachel explained. The early Hebrew lexicographer like Ibn Chayyuj, Ibn Janach, and Radak trace this word to the trilateral root YOD-SAMECH-PEH ("add/extra"). However, Rabbi Shlomo Pappenheim (1740-1814) understands that the letter YOD is not integral to the root, and he sees the core root as the biliteral SAMECH-PEH ("end"). Other words derived from this root include sof ("end," "conclusion"), sayif ("sword," the implement that brings about the end of a person's life), safah ("lip," "edge," "riverbank"), saf ("threshold," the edge of a certain domain), and asifah ("gathering," which alters the boundaries/ends of a set). In something similar to his explanation of this last word, Rabbi Pappenheim writes that hosafah/tosefet ("adding") entails redefining the limits within a certain boundary and extending the "end" to reach somewhere that it had not yet stretched.

The Talmud (Sotah 10b, 36b) teaches that because Joseph sanctified the name of Hashem in private by justly refusing to sin with Potiphar's wife, Joseph merited that an extra letter of Hashem's name (HEY) be added to his own name, thus turning Yosef into Yehosef. Nonetheless, this name was not added to Joseph's name immediately; rather when the arch-angel Gabriel sought to teach Joseph all seventy languages, he added the HEY to Yosef to become Yehosef.

Interestingly, Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev (1740-1810) infers from a piyyut recited at Shacharit on the first day of Rosh HaShanah (Even Choger) that Joseph was already named Yehosef while he was still in his mother's womb, long before he was in Egypt. The Berditchever reconciles these traditions by explaining that a fetus inside its mother's womb is said to study the entire Torah by way of angel (see Niddah 30b), so Joseph already studied all seventy languages via his angelic in-utero tutor (because all seventy languages are subsumed within the wisdom of the Torah); as a result, the name Yehosef already applied to him from then. However, once Joseph was born, he forgot everything he learned in his pre-natal studies. Because of this, Gabriel had to later re-teach Joseph those languages and bring him back to a state of Yehosef, as opposed to Yosef.

According to Maimonides (Laws of Klei HaMikdash 9:9), Joseph was listed among the other tribes on the Shoham Stones (affixed to the Kohen Gadol's shoulders) under the name Yehosef, even though on the Choshen breastplate, his name was spelled Yosef (see Minchat Chinuch, Mitzvah #99).

*To read the rest of this article, visit us online at: http://ohr.edu/this_week/whats_in_a_word/

COUNTING OUR BLESSINGS

by Rabbi Reuven Lauffer

The Amidah (Part 29) – The Final Paragraph: Personally Speaking

“Prayer is not a miracle. It is a tool, man’s paintbrush in the art of life. Prayer is man’s weapon to defend himself in the struggle of life. It is a reality. A fact of life”

(Rabbi Avraham Chaim Feuer)

“My Hashem, guard my tongue from evil and my lips from speaking deceitfully. To those who curse me, let my soul be silent, and let my soul be like dust to everyone. Open my heart to Your Torah, then my soul will pursue Your commandments. As for all those who design evil against me, speedily nullify their counsel and disrupt their design. Act for Your Name’s sake, act for Your right hand’s sake, act for Your sanctity’s sake, act for Your Torah’s sake. That Your beloved may be given rest, let Your right hand save and respond to me. May the expressions of my mouth and the thoughts of my heart find favor before You, Hashem, my Rock and my Redeemer. He Who makes peace in His heights, may He make peace upon us and upon all Israel. And let us say: Amen.”

This final paragraph begins with the request that Hashem “Guard my tongue from evil – ra’ah – and my lips from speaking deceitfully – mirmah.” What is the difference between ra’ah and mirmah? The Vilna Gaon explains that ra’ah refers to when both the words that are spoken and the intent of these words are evil. Mirmah, on the other hand, is when the words sound innocuous enough but the intent behind them is anything but. According to Rabbi Shimshon Rafael Hirsch, ra’ah is the Yetzer Harah overwhelming a person to the point that he no longer cares that what he is about to do is forbidden. However, mirmah is the way that the Yetzer Harah distorts a person’s perspective to the point that it is not possible to distinguish between that which is good and that which is bad. Within the context of our prayer, Rabbi Shimon Schwab explains that in trying not to speak Lashon Harah, a person may come to speak words of mirmah in order to hide something derogatory that they heard. Therefore, we request from Hashem that He keep us away from such situations so that we won’t have to say anything that is not true.

The concluding paragraph then continues: “To those who curse me, let my soul be silent.” Rabbi Shimon Finkelstein (1861-1947) was recognized as a child prodigy by the greatest scholars in his native Slobodka, Lithuania, and later on in Kovna. When he was in his late twenties, he immigrated to the United States, where he served as a

Rabbi in Baltimore and Cincinnati. In Reishit Bikkurei he writes that our Sages teach (Erchin 15b), “There are three people who are caught up in the web of Lashon Harah: the person who speaks the Lashon Harah, the person who listens to the Lashon Harah, and the subject of the Lashon Harah.” He explains that these three people are alluded to in our prayer: “Guard my tongue from evil” is beseeching Hashem to give me the inner strength not to let me speak Lashon Harah. “And my lips from speaking deceitfully” is asking for help to understand that what I just heard was Lashon Harah and cannot be repeated to anyone else. Finally, “To those who curse me, let my soul be silent” is a plea that even when Lashon Harah is spoken about me, I should be able to keep silent and not respond in kind

So great is the spiritual power generated by someone who does not react to Lashon Harah that the Chofetz Chaim often cites a midrash that says, “For every single moment that a person closes his mouth [and refrains from speaking Lashon Harah], he merits a hidden spiritual light that no angel or earthly creature can fathom!” Why is this reward so enormous? Not giving in to the desire to reciprocate in kind – especially when there may be all kinds of justifications for doing so – is truly one of the most difficult things that a person has to overcome. not giving in to the desire to reciprocate in kind.

To be continued...

PEREK SHIRA: The Song of Existence

by Rabbi Shmuel Kraines

The Song of the Wild Goose

When the wild goose flies over the wilderness and sees Yisrael involved in Torah study it says: “A voice calls in the wilderness, ‘Clear Hashem’s path! Straighten through the plains a pathway for our God.’” (Yeshayahu 40:3)

And on the finding of its sustenance in the wilderness it says: “Cursed is he who trusts upon man. Blessed is he who trusts upon God, and God becomes his reliance.” (Yirmiyahu 17:5 and 7)

The wild goose forages in the wilderness and eats from the hand of its Creator, lacking nothing. Remarkably, it is much larger and better off than its domesticated cousins who are fed and fattened by man – and then consumed.

In this way, the wild goose represents the blessing of a person who trusts in the Almighty and the foolishness of one who relies upon his own efforts and the favors of others. Whoever casts his lot upon Hashem merits to His blessing and protection, which enables him to devote his time to the pursuit of Torah knowledge.

Thus, the wild goose sings of a Heavenly voice that the prophet Yeshayahu heard sounding through the desolate

Zion, calling to clear a path for Hashem and to lead the Jewish exiles back home. This voice is that which emanates from Mount Sinai every day and proclaims, “Woe is man for the disgrace of the Torah!” This voice urges the Jewish people to engage in Torah study so that Hashem can bring the redemption, which will come in the merit of Torah study.

This song is expressed most poignantly when the wild goose sees Torah scholars casting their lot upon Hashem and studying in the wilderness where it lives. This song was surely sung throughout the forty years that the Jewish people lived in the wilderness and engaged in the Torah that they had just received. Nonetheless, this song can also be heard today within the city, when Torah scholars “exile” themselves from the comforts and distractions of their homes to the “wilderness” of the Beis Midrash.

Although our national exile is a devastating punishment, it compels us to rely upon Hashem alone. Ultimately, it is this attachment to Him that will bring us back, against all odds.

Sources: Yaavetz; Knaf Renanim; Alshich; Likutei Amarim; Li Lishua

*In loving memory of Harav Zeev Shlomo ben Zecharia Leib

TALMUD TIPS

by Rabbi Moshe Newman

Nedarim 37-43

Torah is Free

“Just as I, Moshe Rabbeinu, taught you for free, likewise you (teachers of Torah) must likewise teach Torah for free.”

Our gemara derives this from examining a verse in which Moshe tells the people, “And Hashem commanded me at that time to teach you” together with another verse with him saying, “See! I have taught you statutes and judgments as Hashem commanded me.” (Deut. 4:5, 14)

How do we see from here that Moshe was told to teach for free and that likewise all teachers of Torah should teach for free?

After Moshe told the people that he was commanded to teach them Torah, he added the words “as Hashem commanded me.” What exactly was Moshe conveying to the people with this seemingly enigmatic phrase? Logical deduction shows that this can only mean that Moshe was commanded to teach Torah for free. The reasoning: Could it mean that Hashem commanded him to take payment? This is not logical since why should he be forced to require payment? Or it could theoretically mean that Moshe was teaching Torah just as Hashem taught it to him, and they should not doubt his teachings? This is also not logical since the Torah states that Hashem guaranteed that the people would always trust Moshe as their prophet and teacher: “And they will also believe in you (Moshe) forever.” (Ex. 19:9) Therefore, the words “as Hashem commanded me” can only mean a directive to teach Torah for free. (Rabbeinu Nissim; for halachic sources and rulings regarding this topic see Shulchan Aruch Yoreh De’ah 246)

Nedarim 37a

One Who Has Knowledge Has Everything

Abayei said, “We have a tradition from our Forefathers and Rabbis that there is no true poverty except for one who is lacking Torah knowledge.”

This is what was taught by the Sage in Bavel. Our gemara relates that a similar idea was taught in Eretz Yisrael in the following manner: “One who has knowledge has everything; without it, what does he have? Whoever has acquired knowledge, what is he lacking? One who has not acquired knowledge, what has he acquired?” (By the way, it is quite a snappy-sounding statement in Aramaic!)

Our Sages teach that the word “zaken” does not necessarily refer to an elderly person, but is an acronym for a Torah scholar – “zeh kana chochma” – “this person has acquired knowledge.” One might recognize that the words “zeh kana” (this one acquired) can be seen in the word “zaken,” but how do we see that he has specifically acquired “chochma” – Torah wisdom – and that the word zaken therefore refers to a Torah scholar? The answer: The only real acquisition a person has is Torah. Material assets come and go and are external to the person, while Torah is eternally part of the person who ‘acquires’ it. Torah knowledge and wisdom is our only true acquisition. (Rabbi Yaakov Yisrael Kanievsky, “The Steipler Rav”)

Nedarim 41a

PARSHA OVERVIEW

Yaakov settles in the land of Canaan. His favorite son, Yosef, brings him critical reports about his brothers. Yaakov makes Yosef a fine tunic of multi-colored woolen strips. Yosef exacerbates his brothers’ hatred by recounting prophetic dreams of sheaves of wheat bowing to his sheaf, and of the sun, moon and stars bowing to him, signifying that all his family will appoint him king. The brothers indict Yosef and resolve to execute him. When Yosef comes to Shechem, the brothers relent and decide, at Reuven’s instigation, to throw him into a pit instead. Reuven’s intent was to save Yosef. Yehuda persuades the brothers to take Yosef out of the pit and sell him to a caravan of passing Ishmaelites. Reuven returns to find the pit empty and rends his clothes. The brothers soak Yosef’s tunic in goat’s blood and show it to Yaakov, who assumes that Yosef has been devoured by a wild beast. Yaakov is inconsolable. Meanwhile, in Egypt, Yosef has been sold to Potiphar, Pharaoh’s Chamberlain of the Butchers.

In the Parsha’s sub-plot, Yehuda’s son Er dies as punishment for preventing his wife Tamar from becoming pregnant. Onan, Yehuda’s second son, then weds Tamar by levirate marriage. He too is punished in similar circumstances. When Yehuda’s wife dies, Tamar resolves to have children through Yehuda, as this union will found the Davidic line culminating in the *Mashiach*.

Meanwhile, Yosef rises to power in the house of his Egyptian master. His extreme beauty attracts the unwanted advances of his master’s wife. Enraged by his rejection, she accuses Yosef of attempting to seduce her, and he is imprisoned. In prison, Yosef successfully predicts the outcome of the dream of Pharaoh’s wine steward, who is reinstated, and the dream of Pharaoh’s baker, who is hanged. In spite of his promise, the wine steward forgets to help Yosef, and Yosef languishes in prison.

Ohrnet Magazine is a weekly Torah magazine published by Ohr Somayach Institutions,
POB 18103, Jerusalem 91180, Israel · Tel +972-2-581-0315 · Email. info@ohr.edu

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LETTER AND SPIRIT

Insights based on the writings of Rav S.R. Hirsch by Rabbi Yosef Herschman

Resolve and Remorse

Reuven's involvement in the events that lead to the sale of Yosef is obscure. His position is clearly not one of unity with the other brothers; it appears as if his presence during those moments before Yosef approached the brothers in Shechem was by chance. In fact, he disappears during the decisive moments of the incident, and it is not clear if, or how, Reuven ever learns of the sale of Yosef.

One thing is clear: Reuven tried to save Yosef. Another thing is also clear: He fell short. When he heard his brothers plotting to kill the approaching 'master of dreams,' he jumps to Yosef's aid. The Torah records: *Reuven heard and rescued him from their hands. He said: We shall not kill him.* But then Reuven suggests throwing him into pit, in what appears to be a bid to *passively* kill him instead of *actively* kill him. But the Torah reveals Reuven's true motive: he did this *in order to rescue him from their hands and to bring him back to his father.*

We are left to wonder why Reuven could not do what he intended. The next we see of Reuven is his "returning" – from where, we do not know – after the brothers lifted Yosef from the pit and sold him as a slave to a caravan of Ishmaelites. Rashi cites the Midrash, explaining that the word "returning" tells us not only *that* he returned, but also what he was doing during his absence. He was "returning" – repenting for his earlier sin of meddling in the placement of his father's bed. A decade earlier, after the death of Rachel, Reuven, motivated by his mother's honor, moved Yaakov's bed from Bilha's tent to his mother Leah's tent. This is the stain on Reuven's past that haunts him throughout his life.

Reuven's expression upon discovering Yosef's absence is striking: *The child [Yosef] is not there, and I – where can I come to?* This could easily be mistranslated as "where can I go?" meaning "where can I flee with my grief?" But this is not what Reuven says. He says there is no place he can *come to* – no place he can *be*. This expresses a deep feeling of shame and remorse, the anticipation of reprimand, whether deserved or undeserved. Reuven says, *there is no place where I could be at rest, where I could hold up my head. Everyone will shun me.*

Rav Hirsch suggests that this may be both his response to the shame of his lack of resolve in saving Yosef and also the reason for the lack of resolve in the first place. Perhaps he could not summon the necessary strength to act because he was troubled by the awareness of his own sin – the awareness of his own weakness robbed him of the strength to take more decisive action. This may be why his immediate reaction to his valiant but insufficient attempt was to repent for his past misdeeds.

Indeed, Reuven teaches a most powerful lesson in human psychology. The burdens of shame and worthlessness are fierce inhibitors. Removing those burdens can give life to new resolve.

- Source: Based on Commentary, Genesis 37:21-22, 30