

Light Insight

A Timely Disguise

Most people feel a sense of shame and embarrassment when being beaten by an opponent in competitive or social confrontations.

Of the twelve sons of Jacob, Joseph was his father's choice to be the leader. However, when Joseph dreamt prophetically that the others would bow down to him, they feared that he was becoming corrupt and endangering the joint mission of the brothers as the heads of the twelve tribes of Israel. To avert such a tragedy, they sold him into slavery in Egypt.

Joseph, through Divine Providence, became instead the viceroy of all of Egypt. When his brothers later came down to buy food in Egypt and were taken to the palace, it was to him that they would unknowingly present themselves. If Joseph's brothers had known when they were bowing down to the ground that this Egyptian minister was Joseph their brother whom they had disgraced because of his prophetic dreams of that very moment, they would have been overwhelmed by shame. Joseph was in a position to make his brothers feel such an acute sense of mortified disgrace and pain

that there might never have been its equal.

Instead, Joseph mercifully disguised himself so that they would be spared the 'agony of defeat.' The Torah praises Joseph who behaved unlike normal people who would have relished the sweet flavor of revenge at the very least with an "I told you so" to impress upon their adversary the gravity of his mistakes. Joseph, however, did just the opposite. At the very moment when the brothers would have suffered the most (ie. when bowing down to him), he disguised himself to avoid the shame they would surely have felt had he revealed himself at that time.

"Cut the Baby in Two!"

In this week's portion of the Prophets we read the famous incident of King Solomon's deduction of the real mother of the disputed child. Of course, it is generally assumed that King Solomon ordered the baby to be cut in half in order to determine the real mother. In reality, it was already clear to him who the true mother was from the way the two women had expressed themselves.

The first one opened by saying "This is my son who is alive" and afterwards said "and your son is dead," whereas the second com-

menced her claim by saying "Your son is the dead one" and only afterward, "My son is the living one." The second woman, who was lying, didn't really feel driven to 'win' the living child — why should she want to expend the considerable effort of raising a child which was really not hers? Rather, out of jealousy, she wanted to prevent the other woman from keeping the living child. For that reason her focus was "Your child is dead," rather than "My son is the living one." Her whole intention was to prove the dead child belonged to someone else.

The real mother was only concerned to prove that her child was alive. From these tell-tale subconscious hints, King Solomon was able to discern the true mother. It was only to prove to the world that his analysis was accurate that he went through the theatrics of calling for the sword to divide the living child, knowing that the real mother would far prefer that the child should live, even if it meant having to give him up. King Solomon, however, the wisest of men, had already arrived at the truth of the matter as soon as the two women opened their mouths.

The Other SIDE of the Story

GIVING PEOPLE THE BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT

Nabbed at the Notice Board

Being actively involved in a campaign to promote learning the laws of improper speech, I am constantly putting signs up on notice boards in various schools in Jerusalem. One of the most frustrating things about the campaign is that the notices are frequently removed or covered up by other notices and I

always have to make sure that I have a reserve supply of notices.

It is not unusual that when I arrive at a notice board where 2 hours earlier I had put up a sign, I return to find a sign for a computer for sale in place of my sign. My immediate reaction is to rip down the computer sign and put my sign back up — after all, I had my sign up there first.

However I know that perhaps the person selling his computer didn't pull down my sign at all — perhaps someone else did it or the wind blew it off and he just innocently came and found

an empty space on the board. So I leave his sign alone and find somewhere else to put my notice or wait until the board is cleared for the week.

Just recently I caught someone red-handed sticking up a notice on a board obscuring about 6 other notices. "I've caught him," I thought to myself. "I'll tell him what an inconsiderate person he is — taking away the opportunity from 6 other people to have their notices read." Failing to judge him favorably, I let him have it! He replied, "This is not my notice. I just took it down for 2 minutes to photocopy it because I needed some of the information. I am simply putting it back in the same place I found it."

Response Line

Mike wrote:

Just a few questions about the meaning of Chanukah. Who are the Maccabees and what would have happened if the Greeks had won?

Dear Mike,

Chanukah celebrates the victory of Torah over Greek philosophy.

Unlike previous pagan ideas so revolting to Jews, Greek paganism was bound up with beauty, art and philoso-

Jews became "Hellenists."

This may surprise you, but physically speaking the Greeks won. You see, there was a battle and there was a war. The Maccabees won the battle and retook the Temple and the city temporarily, but ultimately they succumbed to Pompeii's conquest 80 years later.

However the miracle of the oil lasting for eight nights inspired us to realize that G-d is with us no matter how bad things get. Without that inspiration

phy. Therefore, it captured the imagination of many Jews. Many

"Greekified," or

the Jewish People might not have been able to survive during future periods of even greater persecution.

Why the Maccabees? Because their father Mattityahu's faith in G-d gave them the courage to stand up against power and corruption for the sake of Jewish ideals. The name Maccabee comes from the Hebrew acronym "*Mi Camocha B'eilim Hashem*" — meaning "*who amongst the mighty is like You, G-d?*" Although the Maccabee's military victory didn't last, nevertheless, the miraculous events of the war and the oil inscribed the message of faith and loyalty indelibly into the Jewish soul.

LOVE of the LAND

Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and the Land of Israel

Stones of Substance

When Rabbi Chanina Hagadol went from Babylon to the Land of Israel there were no signposts or border

guards to indicate that he had reached his destination. But he had his own litmus test. He would pick up stones and feel their weight. As long as the stones were still too light he would cast them aside with a sense of disappointment that he had yet not reached his goal. When he finally picked up some stones of real substance he declared that these were "Land of Israel stones," and he kissed them in fulfillment of King David's words "*Your servants hold dear her stones.*" (*Psalms 102:15*)