

OHRNET

THE OHR SOMAYACH TORAH MAGAZINE ON THE INTERNET

PARSHA INSIGHTS

DIFFERENCE & DEFERENCE

“And Yisrael loved Yosef more than all his sons...” (37:3)

Once there was a Jew who was shipwrecked on a desert island. After many years, he was finally rescued by a passing ship. Before he left the island, he insisted on showing his rescuers the three synagogues that he had built

“Three synagogues?” asked the captain of the ship. “Why does a cast-away on a deserted island need three synagogues?”

The Jew replied “In this one I daven (pray) *Shacharis* — the morning prayer. And in this one I daven *Mincha* — the afternoon prayer. And this one, I wouldn’t be seen dead in!”

At the beginning of time, the six days of Creation were like nomads all traveling in different directions. Each was separate from the other. Removed and divided. Solitary. Like parts of a body floating, disjointed and disparate.

With the advent of the first Shabbos of Creation all the parts of Creation were unified. Shabbos breathed a soul into them all. From then on, all parts of Creation sensed the power of the force that unified them.

The same was true of the Tribes of Israel. Each brother regarded himself as a separate entity, a complete unit by himself. No two people think exactly alike. And certainly no two Jews! However, this isn’t because of an intellectual lacking, rather our disparity is a hallmark of the reverse. Not even the greatest of our enemies have accused us of being a stupid people. Rootless cosmopolitans, yes. Communists, Capitalists, Bohemians, Conservatives. Everything but stupid.

The division of the tribes was a mirror of the uniqueness of the Jewish soul and its individuality.

Yosef was Shabbos to the tribes.

He represented the power to bring all the Jewish People together — just as Shabbos brings all the days of the week together under its sway.

However, when the brothers started to hate him, he was no longer able to unify them. Their divisiveness deepened, until they sold Yosef into slavery, at which point they decided



“The division of the tribes was a mirror of the uniqueness of the Jewish soul and its individuality.”

that each should go his own way.

For the more a person identifies himself with the group, the stronger the group is, and the less he identifies, the weaker it becomes, until it must eventually disintegrate. Thus, with the selling of Yosef, the power of unity was exiled to Egypt and necessarily the tribes divided one from the other.

• Adapted from *Shem MiShmuel*

VIRTUALLY REAL

“In another three days, Pharaoh will lift your head from you, and hang you on a tree, and birds will eat your flesh.” (40:19)

What did Yosef see in the baker’s dream that led him to conclude that the baker would be hanged?

There once was an open-air computer-art exhibition which took as its

theme “Ultra-Realism.” Some of the paintings were so life-like as to be almost frightening. However, there was one painting by a famous artist that was so life-like that it almost took the ‘virtual’ out of ‘virtual reality’!

The painting depicted a man holding a bowl of fruit. Such was the verisimilitude of this work, that birds in the park *actually descended and tried to peck at the fruit and eat it*. The artist was furious and demanded that plate glass be installed in front of his masterpiece.

A national newspaper reported the story, and a bright spark in the circulation department suggested that the newspaper run a competition, giving a hefty prize to anyone who could spot a flaw in the painting’s virtual reality.

A lady from Leeds wrote into the paper: “I must admit that the pieces of fruit in the bowl are indeed palpably real. However, the man holding the bowl has not been so fortunate. He certainly lacks the breath of life. For if it were not so, surely, the birds would have never descended to attack the fruit in the first place. They would have been far too fearful of the man!”

Some days later, the lady from Leeds was happy to receive a hefty check in the post.

When the baker described to Yosef that in his dream the birds descended and ate bread from the baskets on his head, Yosef realized that no bird will approach a *living* man in this way.

Thus, he deduced that the man on whose head these baskets rested was as good as dead — not even a living scarecrow.

• Based on Rabbi Meir Shapiro in *Mayana shel Torah*

continued on page four

PARSHA OVERVIEW

Yaakov Avinu settles in the land of Canaan. His favorite son, Yosef, brings him critical reports about his brothers. Yaakov makes for 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, the moon and the stars bowing down 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. Yehuda persuades the brothers to take Yosef out of the pit and sell him to a caravan of passing Yishmaelim. When Reuven returns to find the pit empty, he rends his clothes in anguish. The brothers soak Yosef's tunic in goat's blood and show it to their father Yaakov, who assumes that Yosef has been devoured by wild animals. 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 because he feared that she would lose her beauty. Onan, Yehuda's second son, then weds Tamar by levirate marriage. He too is punished in circumstances similar to those of his brother. 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 of her, she slanders Yosef, falsely accusing him of attempting to seduce her, and he is imprisoned. While in jail, 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 after he is released, and Yosef languishes in jail.

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SING My SOUL INSIGHTS INTO THE SHABBOS ZEMIRO

BARUCH KEIL ELYON

"BLESSED IS G-D..."

*"In all your dwelling places
you shall do no work."*

We are reminded in the Torah (*Vayikra* 23:1) that "It is Shabbos to Hashem in all you dwelling places." This description of Shabbos, observes the *Sfas Emes*,

captures the essential difference between Shabbos and the Festivals. In order to come into contact with the ultimate spirituality of the three festivals, a Jew had to make an *aliya laregel* pilgrimage to the *Beis Hamikdash*. On Shabbos, however, the holiness of the day comes to the Jews in every one of their dwelling places.

This issue is dedicated in the memory of
REBBETZIN ESTHER GOLDA NUSBAUM O.B.M.

לעיני
הרבנית אסתר גאלדא נוסבאום
בת ר' ישראל אייזיק הזקן ז"ל מבית קפלו
נלב"ע כ"ט נסלו תשנ"ה
ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

PARSHA Q&A ?

1. "These are the offspring of Yaakov: Yosef..." Give three reasons why Yosef is considered Yaakov's main offspring.
2. Yaakov rebuked Yosef for telling his brothers the dreams. Why?
3. How do we see from the dream about the sun, moon and stars that all dreams contain some untrue element?
4. How did Reuven plan to save Yosef?
5. What did Ishmaelites usually transport?
6. Who brought Yosef down to Egypt?
7. Where was Reuven when Yosef was sold?
8. In addition to the brothers, who else knew that Yosef was alive?
9. How long did Yaakov mourn the loss of Yosef?
10. Verse 37:35 states "his father wept." To whom does this refer?
11. Who was Tamar's father?
12. Why did Tamar not tell Yehuda that she was pregnant with his child?
13. In what merit did Tamar deserve to have kings as her descendants?
14. Why is the word "hand" mentioned four times in connection to the birth of Zerach?
15. Why does the Torah relate the incident with Potiphar's wife immediately after the incident of Yehuda and Tamar?
16. In what way was Hashem "with" Yosef?
17. Why were the butler and the baker imprisoned?
18. How long were the butler and the baker in prison?
19. How did the baker know that Yosef had correctly interpreted the butler's dream? (40:16)
20. How was Yosef punished for asking the butler for help?

BONUS QUESTION?

"Yehuda said to his brothers, '...We should not kill him, for he is our brother, our flesh.'" (37:26-7) A person is a combination of elements inherited from his mother and his father. According to the Talmud, a person inherits his flesh from his mother and his bones from his father. If so, why did Yehuda refer to Yosef as 'our brother, our flesh?' Since Yehuda and Yosef had the same father, but not the same mother, Yehuda should have referred to Yosef as 'our brother, our bone.'

I DIDN'T KNOW THAT!

"Yosef was seventeen years old... and Yisrael loved Yosef more than all his sons, for he was his 'wisdom son'...." (37:2-3) "Yaakov taught Yosef everything he had learned from Shem and Ever." (Rashi) This hints to the custom to teach a child to read Hebrew when he is three years old. How so? Yaakov studied in the Academy of Shem and Ever for fourteen years. Yaakov taught this wisdom to Yosef by the time Yosef was seventeen. If it took Yaakov fourteen years to teach it, just as it had taken him to learn it, we see that Yaakov began teaching Yosef at age three!

• See Rema, Orach Chaim Yoreh Deah 245:8

HAFTORAH: ZECHARIAH 2:14 - 4:7

SHABBOS CHANUKAH

The festival that we call *Chanukah* is really the *fourth* Chanukah.

The word 'Chanukah' means 'dedication.' The first of the three previous dedications was in the desert when Moshe dedicated the *Mishkan* — the Tent of Meeting.

The second was the dedication of the First *Beis Hamikdash* (Holy Temple). The third Chanukah is the subject of our Haftorah. It refers to the times of the Second *Beis Hamikdash* and the inauguration of the Menorah at the time of Yehoshua, the *Kohen Gadol*, and the nation's leader, *Zerubavel*, who is referred to in *Ma'oz Tzur* — the traditional Chanukah song.

MOTHER NATURE'S FATHER

After a small band of Jews had beaten the might of Greece, one small flask of oil for the Menorah was discovered in the Holy Temple — one small flask, un-defiled by the Greeks...

That flask contained enough oil to last just one short day. But it burned and burned for eight days. To com-

memorate that miracle we kindle the lights of Chanukah for eight days.

But if you think about it — really we should only light the lights for seven days, because on that first day the lights burned completely naturally — after all, there was enough oil for one day! So why do we light candles for eight nights, since it seems that one of those nights was no miracle at all?

One answer is that eighth candle is to remind us of a miracle that is constantly with us. The problem is that a lot of the time we don't see it as a miracle at all. We don't call it a miracle. We call it 'Nature.'

In this week's Haftorah, the prophet Zechariah is shown a vision of a Menorah made entirely of gold, complete with a reservoir, tubes to bring it oil, and two olives trees to bear olives. A complete self-supporting system.

The symbolism is that Hashem provides a system which supports us continuously. However, we have to open our eyes to see from where that support is coming.

And that's the reason we light the eighth candle — to celebrate the miraculous in the mundane. To remind ourselves that Mother Nature has a Father.

• Based on the *Beis Yosef* and the *Artscroll/Stone Chumash*

WEEKLY DAF

CHULLIN 103 - 109

WHICH IS WORSE

The importance of washing hands before eating bread is dramatized by our Sages with an account of how the failure of a Jew to observe this mitzva of rabbinic origin led him to violate a much more serious Torah command.

A Jewish innkeeper had a clientele of Jews and non-Jews. When a Jew entered he prepared kosher food for him, and when a non-Jew appeared he served him non-kosher meat. One day a Jew entered and failed to wash for bread. Assuming him to be a non-Jew the innkeeper served him non-kosher meat.

There are two versions in the Talmud as to the nature of this non-kosher meat. One is that it was the meat of a kosher animal whose death was not by *shechita* and was therefore prohibited as *neveilah* (*Devarim* 14:21). Another view is that he was served swine meat.

Rashi points out that the consequence of the Jew's failure to wash his hands was more serious if it was swine meat rather than *neveilah* because in such a case he is guilty of two violations rather than one.

The background for this comment is the *Midrash Toras Kohanim* which Rashi cites in *Parshas Shmini* (*Vayikra* 11:3) on the passage which commands us to eat only those animals which have the proper identifying signs of cud chewing and split hoof. This is the Torah's way of telling us that if we eat the meat of a non-

kosher species we are guilty of violating a positive command to restrict ourselves to kosher ones, in addition to violating the negative command to avoid such animals which appears in the very next passage.

The practical ramification of this observation would be a case where someone's life is in danger and the only food available to save him are *neveilah* and swine. Following the rule stated in *Mesechta Yoma* (83a) that we must try to use the food with the least severe prohibition attached to it, the choice in this case would be the *neveilah* with just a negative command rather than swine meat with its double prohibition.

• *Chullin 106a*

WHICH IS BETTER?

Is someone required to wash his hands before eating bread even if he does not touch the bread but is being fed by someone else?

Before reaching its conclusion that washing is required in such a case as well, the Talmud attempts to prove the opposite from a particular incident.

Rabbi Huna bar Sechora put some meat and bread into the mouth of Rabbi Hamnuna. "If you were not Rabbi Hamnuna (a man of great wisdom – *Rashi*)," he said to him, "I would not feed you this way."

The initial assumption of the Talmud is that Rabbi Hamnuna had not washed his hands before eating, and Rabbi Huna was nevertheless feeding him bread because he knew that Rabbi Hamnuna was extremely careful in his observance of *mitzvos* and could be relied upon not to touch the food placed in his mouth. This would lead to the conclusion that if one is careful not to touch the bread placed in his mouth there is no need to wash.

But this assumption is rejected and an alternative scenario is suggested. Rabbi Huna would never have fed Rabbi Hamnuna unless he assumed that he had washed. Since he knew, however, that Rabbi Hamnuna was more than careful and was even zealous in his observance of *mitzvos*, he felt he could safely assume that Rabbi Hamnuna had taken the precaution of washing before their encounter.

Rashi comments that the zealousness of taking precautionary measures to avoid getting into problematic situations is a greater virtue than the carefulness demonstrated when faced with such a situation. This is why Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair (*Mesechta Avodah Zarah* 80b), in his ladder of virtues which serves as the outline of Luzzato's classic "*Mesilas Yesharim*," states that "carefulness will bring one to zealousness." • *Chullin 107b*

continued from page one

PARSHA INSIGHTS

SPEAKING BETWEEN THE LINES

"...and Yosef would bring evil reports about them [his brothers] to their father" (37:2)

Can it be that Yosef *HaTzaddik* — the righteous person — could have spoken *lashon hara* (lit. 'evil tongue') about his brothers?

When a father looks at his children and remarks that one is exemplary,

this necessarily forces the other children to conform to that example. And the others will be judged lacking, to the degree that they fall short of their sibling.

"Why can't you be like your brother — now that's the way a person should behave!"

It wasn't that Yosef actually spoke evil about his brothers; rather that his excellence was like a silent accusation against them. For, however elevated the brothers may have been in ulti-

mate terms, comparatively they were not on Yosef's level.

And comparison always makes the lesser seem inadequate.

Next to Everest, even K2 pales.

If this was the case, and Yosef didn't actually accuse them, then why was he punished?

The greater the righteousness of a person, the greater is his obligation to conceal it — even from his father.

• Based on *Admor Rabbi Menachem MiAmshenov in Iturei Torah*

BRING 'EM BACK ALIVE

Sally Barton wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

If the pit that the brothers threw Joseph into was full of snakes and scorpions, so how could Reuven think he was saving Joseph by throwing him into a pit full of snakes and scorpions? Doesn't it say that Reuven was trying to save Joseph and bring him back alive to their father?

Dear Sally Barton,

Yes, Reuven wanted to save Joseph. The Torah describes Reuven's response to his brothers' plan as follows:

And Reuven said to them, "Don't shed blood. Throw him into this pit in the desert, and you won't have to lay your hands upon him." This was in order to save him from their hands and return him to his father ... The pit was empty, there was no water in it. (Genesis 37:22,24)

Rashi comments: "The pit was empty of water, but there were snakes and scorpions in it. (ibid.)"

So how could Reuven hope to save Joseph by throwing him into a snake/scorpion pit? Good question.

The well-known Kabbalistic work, the *Zohar*, poses the exact same question, and answers: "In a place of snakes and scorpions, if a person is righteous G-d will do a miracle for him and he will be saved; however, once a person is in the hands of his enemies there are very few who will be saved."

Snakes and scorpions are 'robots': they are 'programmed' to behave in specific ways. If a person is especially righteous G-d will protect him by 're-programming' the snakes not to bite and the scorpions not to sting.

Humans, on the other hand, have free will; and rarely does G-d interfere with human free will. So sometimes a righteous person is allowed to suffer because G-d doesn't want to hinder free will.

The commentaries maintain that Joseph's brothers decreed a death sen-

tence on him, acting as a legal Jewish court. A number of reasons are offered for this:

- Joseph was guilty of false prophecy in his dreams.
- Joseph's dreams advocated a monarchy, which based on their experience, the brothers felt would be destructive to the spiritual nature of the Jewish people. They had witnessed Nimrod, Avimelech and the Pharaohs — all of them despotic dictators who set themselves up as demigods. The brothers felt that Joseph's dreams advocated a monarchy of that type.

The brothers thought that attempting to kill Joseph held no risk: If he were a true prophet, G-d would protect him, but if they succeeded in killing him, it would be evidence of his evil nature.

Reuven argued that this would prove nothing, since G-d lets human free-will take its course. The brothers accepted this argument and instead threw Joseph in the pit, leaving his fate to Divine Providence.

CHANUKAH IN OPEN SPACES

Italian Chanukah

Nathan Novelli <novelli@up.spin.it>

I'm a student of Chief Rabbi of Trieste, Italy. My Rabbi ask me to send this question: A family want travel in return from USA to Europe in the 8th evening of Chanukah; they have to leave New York at 3:00pm — which is before the time to light. They plan to arrive at home only in the morning of the next day. At home there are nobody to made agent for lighting. What is the correct way for a fulfillment of mizvah? I'm sorry for my terrible english, thankyou for the answer.

Dear Nathan Novelli,

I asked your question to Rabbi Shlomo Fisher, *shlita*. He ruled that in your case there is no obligation to light Chanukah lights.

This can be explained as follows: The Talmud describes the mitzva to light Chanukah lights as "a candle for a person and his home" (Shabbat 21b). The obligation to light Chanukah candles applies only if you are based in a home at the appropriate time for fulfilling the mitzva.

But if you're riding with your family in a car or plane the entire night — and there's nobody residing in your home — you're exempt from lighting Chanukah candles.

In-Tents Chanukah

Alan Shear <alshear@global.co.za>

If a person finds himself camping out in a field during the time of Chanukah with a group of many other people (perhaps 200), and all will be camping outside in tents, what would be the best possible way of fulfilling the mitzva of Chanukah lighting?

Dear Alan Shear,

As we wrote above, someone not based in a home is exempt from the lighting Chanukah candles. A tent is not a home, unless it's big enough to be considered a halachic 'house' (approximately seven feet by seven feet by three feet high).

However, if there are family members who don't go on the camping trip but remain at home, they should light on behalf of their family member who went camping.

YIDDLE RIDDLE

Last Week we asked:

"On one historic Yom Kippur, the entire Jewish people ate and drank and were praised for it by Hashem."

When did this occur?

Answer:

When King Solomon built the Temple, Yom Kippur occurred during its seven Inauguration Days. The Sanhedrin decided that not only must the Inauguration Sacrifices for the Temple be offered, but, moreover, the people must cook, eat, and drink on Yom Kippur or else the happiness of the Inauguration would be incomplete. (See *Mo'ed Katan* 9a.)

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this Week's Questions!

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

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. 37:10 - Because Yosef aroused the hatred of his brothers.
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. 37:22 - He intended to return to the pit and pull Yosef out of it.
5. 37:25 - Tar and Kerosene (*Itran and Nepht*).
6. 37:28 - A caravan of Midianites.
7. 37:29 - He was attending to Yaakov.
8. 37:33 - Yitzchak.
9. 37:34 - Twenty-two years.
10. 37:35 - Yitzchak, who wept because of Yaakov's suffering.
11. 38:24 - Shem.
12. 38:25 - She did not want to embarrass him in public.
13. 38:26 - In the merit of her modesty.
14. 38:30 - To allude to his descendant, Achan, who sinned with his hand by taking four things from the spoils of Jericho.
15. 39:1 - To teach us that just as Tamar acted with pure motives, so did Potiphar's wife.
16. 39:3 - Yosef mentioned Hashem's name frequently in his speech.
17. 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.
18. 40:4 - Twelve months.
19. 40:5 - The baker dreamed the interpretation of the butler's dream.
20. 40:23 - He remained in prison an additional two years.

BONUS ANSWER!

Yosef had two mothers: Rachel and Leah! Originally, Leah conceived Yosef and Rachel conceived Dinah. But Leah saw with Divine inspiration that if she were to bear Yaakov's seventh son, Rachel would bear only one son, and thus be less than even the handmaids, Billah and Zilpah, who had two sons each. Therefore, Leah prayed, and Hashem swapped her fetus with Rachel's. Thus, Leah was in fact one of Yosef's mothers. •Meshech Chochma

RECOMMENDED READING LIST

RAMBAN
 37:2 The Evil Report
 37:10 The Moon
 38:24 Tamar's Punishment

SFORNO
 37:2 The Evil Report
 37:3 Yosef's Coat
 37:18 The Brothers' Concern
 38:1 Yehuda's Punishment
 39:19 Why Yosef was Imprisoned

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