



DAVID. ZERUBABEL. MACABEES.

*Each desired to establish the Temple,
but it took place only through God's intervention.
What is this theme and message?*

*Dedicated to Scriptural and Rabbinic Verification
of Authentic Jewish Beliefs and Practices*

5757
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Weekly Parsha

Vayeshev

RABBI BERNIE FOX

Yaakov's hope of achieving happiness in this world

These are the chronicles of Yaakov. Yosef was seventeen years old. As a lad, he would tend the

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Weekly Parsha

Judah

Profile in
JEWISH LEADERSHIP

RABBI DR. DARRELL GINSBERG

"Let him who elevates himself above humanity...say if he pleases, 'I will not compromise', but let no one who is under the frailties of our common nature disdain compromise."

These are the famous words uttered by Henry Clay, known as the "Great Compromiser." One of the most adept politicians in American history, Clay was renowned for his ability to unite opposing factions and bring about what would be considered a palatable resolution. These qualities would seem to be ideal for any leader, especially in this era of political correctness – but are these qualities necessary in a Jewish leader as well? In this week's parsha, the spotlight shines for the first time on Judah, the leader amongst his brothers, from whom the lineage of Jewish kings would emerge. Judah exhibits a natural ability to forge compromise

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Holidays

TEMPLE & CHANUKA

Three Stories - One Message

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flocks with his brothers, the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, his father's wives. And Yosef brought to his father bad reports about them. (Beresheit 37:2)

The pasuk introduces the beginnings of the conflict between Yosef and his brothers. Eventually, this strife ends with the brothers selling Yosef into servitude in Egypt. In his commentary on our passage, Rashi quotes the comments of our Sages. The Sages explain that Yaakov wished to live in peace. However, he was confronted with the troubles surrounding Yosef. The righteous seek peace in this world. Hashem responds, "Is it not enough that the righteous receive the reward that awaits them in the World-to-Come! They should not expect peace in this world!"[1]

Basically, the Sages are explaining that Yaakov expected to secure a peaceful life in this world. He did not succeed. He returned to the land of his forefathers and there he encountered the greatest tragedy of his life. He lost his beloved son, Yosef. However, Yaakov had no right to expect a peaceful life. The reward for the righteous is not received in this world. The reward is enjoyed in the World-to-Come.

These comments, quoted by Rashi, are very difficult to understand. Let us consider a few of the problems. First, Yaakov did not live a peaceful life to this point. He was born into a conflict with his older brother Esav. He fled to Lavan's home. There, he was treated unfairly. He returned home. Again, he was threatened by Esav. After surviving this confrontation, his daughter Dinah, was taken by Shechem and abused. These events should have taught Yaakov that our lives in this world are precarious! Why did he now expect to find peace?

There is an additional problem. Hashem responds to Yaakov. He asserts that the righteous cannot expect peace in this world. Why is this the case? Why must the righteous wait for the World-to-Come in order to receive their reward? Why do they not receive their reward also in this world?

Let us begin with this second question. Why could Yaakov not find peace and happiness in this world? Yosef's delivery into bondage served a purpose. Yosef himself recognized this objective. He realized that this tragedy was the first step in his

ascension to power in Egypt. His authority enabled him to save Bnai Yisrael from famine.[2]

Our Sages explain that Yosef's bondage in Egypt served another purpose. Hashem had told Avraham that his descendants would be strangers in an alien land.[3] Yosef's banishment was the beginning of the exile of Bnai Yisrael. In short, the selling of Yosef into bondage was a part of a larger plan. This overall plan was essential to Bnai Yisrael's future. Hashem's love for His nation dictated that this plan be executed. Yaakov's suffering was an unfortunate outcome of this plan.

We can now answer our second question. Why is the reward for the righteous reserved for the World-to-Come? The events of this world are guided by a Divine plan. This plan is designed to produce the greatest good. However, at times a



byproduct of the plan is the suffering of the righteous. Yaakov's experience is a perfect example of this scenario. In order to preserve the Jewish nation and fulfill Avraham's prophecy, Yosef was exiled to Egypt. These were important elements of Hashem's design. An unfortunate byproduct of Yosef's exile was Yaakov's suffering. As a result of this consideration, the righteous cannot be certain of receiving their reward in this world. However, they are assured of recompense in the World-to-Come.

We can now answer our first question. Why did Yaakov believe that his suffering would now end? It seems that Yaakov had some understanding of his previous suffering. His conflict with Esav served an important purpose. He secured Esav's birthright and the blessing of his father, Yitzchak. Our Sages explain that the abduction of Dinah was a punishment for Yaakov. He had refused to consider her marriage to Esav. As a result, she was taken by Shechem.[4] It is possible that Yaakov also saw his experiences with Lavan as a personal challenge and impetus for growth. However, Yaakov now sought a life of peace. He did not see any reason for continued suffering. He had resolved his conflict with Esav. He had achieved a remarkable level of personal perfection. He felt his struggles and tests were over. Hashem responded that the righteous cannot be assured of peace in this life. Only the reward of the World-to-Come is certain.

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Therefore, the Sages of that generation decreed that the eight days that begin with the twenty-fifth of Kislev should be days of rejoicing and that the Hallel should be recited. And on these days, on each of the eight nights, we light candles at the doors of the houses in order to demonstrate and reveal the miracle ... (Maimonides, Mishne Torah, Hilchot Chanukah 3:2)

Maimonides explains that the Sages established the celebration of Chanukah and the obligation to light the Chanukah menorah. He explains the reason for the lighting of the menorah. The Chanukah menorah demonstrates and reveals the miracle of Chanukah.

What is the miracle represented by the Chanukah menorah? The Chanukah lights commemorate the miracle of the oil. A small cruse of oil sufficed to fuel the Menorah of the Bait HaMikdash for eight days.

Maimonides writes that we light the Chanukah menorah in order to demonstrate and reveal this miracle. A careful analysis of this statement reveals that Maimonides outlines two objectives to be fulfilled through the Chanukah lights. First, the Chanukah lights demonstrate the miracle that took place in the Temple. Second, the Chanukah lights reveal this miracle.

We can understand the first objective. The Chanukah menorah is a reasonable representation of the Menorah of the Temple. Lighting the Chanukah menorah provides a depiction of the miracle of the Temple Menorah. However, the second objective is not very easily understood. What are we attempting to reveal? Furthermore, how does revealing the miracle differ from demonstrating the wonder?

Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik Zt"l offers a simple but insightful explanation of Maimonides' comments. He explains that the institution of the Chanukah lights serves two purposes. It demonstrates the miracle of the Temple. This objective assumes that the observer is aware of the miracle. Seeing the Chanukah lights reminds the knowledgeable observer of the miracle.

However, the miracle of the Temple Menorah was not widely observed. The Bait HaMikdash is sacred. Access to the Temple is limited. Only a small portion of Bnai Yisrael was permitted to enter the Temple and observe the wonder. The majority of the nation could not observe the miracle. When the Sages established the institution of the Chanukah lights, they wished to reveal the miracle to the entire nation. One of their objectives was to publicize the wonder that took place in the Temple to those who were not permitted to observe the miracle.

Now we can understand Maimonides' comments. The Sages established the obligation to light the Chanukah lights with two objectives. Each objective was directed to a specific group. Some people knew of the miracles. For these individuals, the Chanukah menorah served as a reminder. Others did not know of the miracle. For these people, the Chanukah lights revealed that a miracle had occurred in the Bait HaMikdash.[5] ■

[1] Rabbaynu Shlomo ben Yitzchak (Rashi), Commentary on Sefer Beresheit 37:2.

[2] Sefer Beresheit 45:5-7.

[3] Sefer Beresheit 15:13.

[4] Midrash Rabba, Sefer Beresheit 76:9.

[5] Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, "Notes on Chanukah," Mesora, Adar 5754, p 73.



WHICH DAYS TO CELEBRATE? *the making of* Chanuka

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

What was present in Chanuka, which surpassed the battle at Jericho for example? Or when God stopped the Sun and Moon in Gibeon and Amek Ayalon respectively? All had miracles! Why then was Chanuka established as a holiday, but not Jericho or other events, which included miracles? The answer could be the following: The miracle of the oil was subsequent to the war when we were already victors. All other wars, which contained miracles, had miracles for the sake of winning the war. The Rabbis may have perceived the fact that God enacted a miracle unnecessary for salvation as a Divine indication that Chanuka was different, and worthy of institution as a holiday. (A Rabbi once discussed another difference, that during Chanuka, the Greeks sought to strip us of our Judaism, not so in other wars, where the enemy simply was fighting for land.)

The element of a subsequent miracle (not necessary for salvation) compounded with our salvation from religious oppression (not mere military victory) were recognized by the Rabbis as grounds for instituting Chanuka as a holiday. That special quality of God's salvation from oppression, enabling us to follow the Torah also existed during Purim. Therefore we have only two holidays subsequent to the giving of the Torah; Purim recalls our bodily salvation, whereas Chanuka recalls our religious salvation. ■

between factions, and yet, his initial demonstration of this ability causes his “demotion” by his brothers.

After the completion of Joseph’s sale to the Midianites, the Torah offers the well-known verse (38:1):

“And it was at that time, that Judah, descended from his brothers. He turned away [from them], until [he came to] a man, an Adullamite, whose name was Chirah.”

The focus of many of the commentaries on this verse lies in the experience of “descending”. Rashi explains (ibid):

“Why is this narrative [of Judah] placed here, thereby interrupting the narrative of Joseph? This is to teach that his brothers demoted him from his important position. When they saw the anguish of their father they said, ‘You advised us to sell him. Had you advised us to return him we would have listened to you.’”

What exactly was Judah’s plan?

Looking back at the story of Joseph’s sale, we see that the brothers were initially intent on killing Joseph. Reuven intervenes, giving Joseph a temporary reprieve. At this point, the brothers remain undecided about how to proceed. Noting the approach of some Ishmaelite travelling merchants, Judah suggests a solution (ibid 37: 26-27):

“Judah said to his brothers, ‘What will we gain if we kill our brother and cover up his blood?’

Come let us sell him to the Yishmaelites, and let our hands not be upon him; for he is our brother, our own flesh.” His brothers listened [to him.]”

This plan seems to be the perfect compromise. On the one hand, the brothers rid themselves of Joseph. On the other, Joseph avoids death at their hands. And yet, the brothers view Judah’s solution as a fiasco, resulting in Judah’s exile from his family. Where did he go wrong?

There is one other question that needs to be raised. Obviously, the story of Judah’s exile and the resulting episode with Tamar was not simply a diversion from the Joseph storyline. Instead, we see from the events surrounding Judah, his sons and Tamar, an evolving personality. The crux of the story involves Judah’s preventing his third son, Shelah, from marrying Tamar. Tamar, through her intimate encounter with Judah, and later bringing to light certain evidence, is able to expose his irrational attachment to his son as the reason for his refusal to allow the marriage to take place. The culmination is Judah’s declaration of “tzadka mimeni” – “she is more righteous than I” (ibid 38:26) – his admission of Tamar’s greatness. Studying this story, one can see how this helped correct his personal flaw regarding his attachment to his son. What about the flaw surrounding his leadership qualities?



The Torah is showing us that leaders make their decisions based on one of two motivators. Some leaders act on the basis of creating consensus, trying to please as many of his constituents as possible to ensure that he remains popular and loved. No doubt, while this type of leader may be partially motivated by a notion of offering proper representation of his followers, for the most part, ego and self-image are prime factors in how his decisions are made. He cannot stand to lose the admiration of his followers, and so, regardless of the virtue of his decrees or insights, he always gives the people what they want. But there is another type of leader – the one that acts in accordance with truth, and in doing so, sets the appropriate standard for his followers. He might not be the most loved or the most popular, though he is generally respected. But this leader is guided by a true analysis of the correct remedy for the situation. He is guided by justice rather than expedience and is capable of ignoring the possible immediate negative image his decisions may elicit. There are times, of course, when that which is right and consensus overlaps. However, the desire for consensus is merely a byproduct – the essential drive is only to act in line with that which is true and proper.

This differentiation helps bring to light the progression of Judah’s leadership.

As mentioned above, our first glimpse into the evolution of Judah’s leadership capabilities takes place with the sale of Joseph. Judah’s logic was impeccable. He procured a solution that should have brought about satisfaction in the eyes of his brothers, while keeping Joseph alive, a classic win-win. But was it correct? Judah had the opportunity to reverse what had happened. Joseph had already been taken from the brink of death and Judah had the opportunity to bring him to safety. Yet Judah’s suggestion demonstrated a greater concern for keeping others satisfied than for doing what was right. Rashi is telling us that though the

brothers should have been appeased, they understood the nature of Judah’s decision, that he let his position as leader, and the value he placed on it, take precedence over what he knew to be correct. He did not want to disappoint them—they wanted to be rid of Joseph and he wanted them appeased. But in compromising his position, the brothers saw that he was unfit for leadership, that he had the opportunity to lead them to the correct path and he shied away, and so he was kicked off his perch.

How was this flaw rectified? Admitting that Tamar was correct was obviously of great benefit. However, would that alone solve the problem? The Ramban (ibid 18), among other commentaries, writes that Judah was recognized as the judge, officer, ruler and overall leader of his new community. Of what importance, though, is it to know Judah’s role as leader in his new environment? When the truth came out about Tamar, Judah pronounced the judgment that she was to die, as she acted in a denigrating manner to someone of his status (the merits of the decision to subject Tamar to death is taken up by various commentaries). The Ramban explains that the local populace came before Judah, ready to act based on his judgment. The evidence was clear, the decision made, she was sentenced to death. With the new evidence exposed, Judah faced a pivotal moment in his evolution as leader. Judah could have found a face-saving solution. He could have commuted her death sentence, while keeping the rationale quiet. He certainly could have used mercy, taking on the personae of a benevolent leader, and use the sympathy of the masses to gain their support. There was no need to declare publicly “tzadka mimeni, an admission of his error. A leader confessing his mistake publicly is something that can adversely affect his status and may appear weak in the eyes of his people. Yet Judah, at that moment, was more interested in making sure that the people understood Tamar’s brilliance. What we see, then, is a leader whose sole motivation is the truth, a reflection of God’s justice.

Was Henry Clay a compromiser for poll numbers, or was he guided solely by principles? It is difficult for us to know for sure, especially as he was certainly not guided by the Torah’s principles of morality and justice. The Torah, though, is clearly demonstrating the need for a Jewish leader to operate under one premise – lead in line with truth. He must be able to confront unpopularity and disunity amongst those he leads, as long as he is guided by what is correct. This may seem intuitive to most everyone. Yet in this era of political correctness, which has managed to creep its way into some Jewish leadership, the desire to compromise, to please and appease, has managed to erode away at some of our most important principles. We must turn to the story of Judah to help guide us in the Jewish way to lead. ■

Weekly Parsha



PARSHA

the Selling OF Joseph

RABBI REUVEN MANN

Introduction

The Torah in Genesis Chapter 37 describes in detail the manner in which Joseph was sold into Egyptian bondage by his brothers. After accepting the advice of Reuven not to execute Joseph but to place him in a deep pit they sat down to eat bread. Suddenly a caravan of traders enroute to Egypt appeared on the scene. Judah convinced his brothers to remove Joseph from the pit and instead sell him into slavery. The arguments employed by Judah to achieve his goal warrant careful study.

23. And it came to pass, when Joseph came to his brothers, that they stripped Joseph of his coat, his coat of colors that was on him; 24. And they took him, and threw him into a pit; and the pit was empty, there was no water in it. 25. And they sat down to eat bread; and they lifted up their eyes and looked, and, behold, a company of Ishmaelites came from Gilead with their camels bearing gum, balm and myrrh, going to carry it down to Egypt. 26. And Judah said to his brothers, What gain will there be if we kill our brother, and cover up his blood? 27. Come, and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him; for he is our brother, our own flesh. And his brothers agreed.

The Difficulty of Judah's Statement

The statement of Judah contains two problems: 1) Judah seems to base his argument against killing Joseph on the factor of expediency. It is not profitable to kill him for then we will have to cover his blood i.e. endure the burden of maintaining a cover up. However, after proposing to sell him to the Ishmaelites (verse 27) he offers what seems to be a second reason. For he is our brother our flesh. We may ask: Was the proposal to sell Joseph based on the desire to avoid the practical consequences of hiding a murder, or on the moral prohibition of killing ones brother? These are two entirely distinct ideas and yet Judah utilized both of them. What is the underlying thread that unites these seemingly separate arguments?

2) There is a fundamental problem with Judah's argument about covering the blood. The simple interpretation is that the plan of selling Joseph would remove the need for a cover up. Yet it is clear from the story that such was not the case. After selling Joseph, the brothers dipped the coat in blood and presented it to Jacob, who concluded, a savage beast has devoured him. Thus they were forced to cover up the crime of selling Joseph. It is reasonable to assume that had they adhered to the plan of Reuven and left him to die in the pit they would have followed the identical procedure. In effect, they had to engage in a cover up whether they killed Joseph or sold him. However no one challenged Judah on his argument. It was accepted that his plan removed the need to cover the blood. Yet this is contradicted by the presentation of Josephs bloody garment to Jacob. We must therefore ask: What did Judah really mean when he said, what gain will there be if we kill our brother and cover his blood?

Who is Wise?

Who is Wise? ask the Rabbis one who foresees the future. This common translation is a bit misleading. For man, unless he has prophecy can not foresee the future. The Hebrew term used by the Rabbis in this teaching is Nolad which literally means something, which has come into existence. Thus, the wise person is one who can foresee the outcome of a scenario on the basis of the underlying causes that are already in existence (the Nolad). He can anticipate the inevitable results of his actions because he does not flinch from confronting the consequences that are visible to those who have the courage to discern. The Wise person (Chacham) is not merely one who has intelligence; for many intelligent people walk in blindness. Their intelligence

operates only in areas that are compatible with their feelings. The Chacham bases his entire life on wisdom and subordinates his emotions to the rule of reason. He foresees the outcome because he lives in accordance with the abstract reality though it is not apparent to his senses or pleasing to his feelings. For him the reality that is perceived by the mind is of paramount importance.

Most people err because they operate on the basis of certain false assumptions. This usually happens when they are under the sway of powerful emotions. When a person is in love or under the grip of a compelling fantasy he is convinced that the emotion will stay this way forever and that since it feels so good it is impossible that anything negative can be associated with it. Thus he is unable to anticipate the outcome.

Let us examine the state of mind of the brothers when they decided to destroy Joseph. These were great men who operated on the basis of wisdom. True, they were mistaken about Joseph but they deliberated in accordance with their understanding and found him guilty. The Torah indicates the psychological serenity of the brothers by recording that they sat down to eat bread (verse 25). The point of conveying this detail is to show that they were not in a state of emotional frenzy when they cast Joseph in the pit. In their own minds they felt confident that they had acted correctly in preventing Joseph from realizing his dreams of grandeur

Judah dissented from the plan they had adopted. He asked: What will we gain if we kill our brother and cover his blood? The key word is kill. Casting him in the pit where he will die naturally instead of directly executing him does not absolve you from murder, he argued. This may not bother you now but one who is wise anticipates all the consequences of his actions, physical and psychological, visible and hidden. At the moment you feel no guilt. You have entirely disassociated yourselves from Joseph and you imagine that you will feel this way forever. However there are psychological and emotional ties which can be suspended but not permanently broken. Thus we will always have to live with the knowledge that we killed our brother and because this is too painful we will have to repress it from our consciousness. Judah was not referring to a physical cover-up of the murder but to a psychological repression of it when he said, what will we gain if we kill our brother and cover his blood? Verses 26 and 27 now flow smoothly. We can now understand the connection between the two elements in the argument of Judah. It is an impractical plan to kill Joseph, he said, for then

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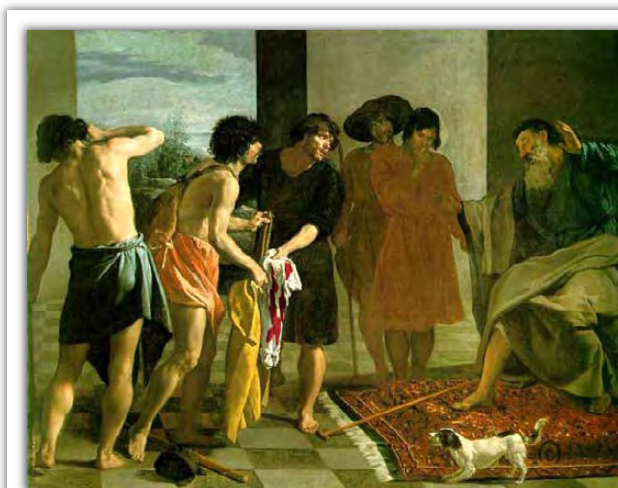
we will have to repress the guilt that will surely emerge to haunt us. Let us, therefore sell him to the Ishmaelites for he is our brother, our flesh. This is the essence of his argument. The psychological ties that bind us can never be broken for he is our brother, our flesh. The words our flesh would, at first sight, seem redundant. Yet, they are necessary for Judah is seeking to convince them that such a powerful identification cannot be broken.

The Lesson of Judah's Argument

Judah's brilliance consisted of his ability to foresee the hidden consequences of a self-defeating course of action. Most of the suffering people experience in the world is self-induced (see Maimonides: Guide for the Perplexed, Part III, Ch.12). A prime cause of sin is the inability of people to look beyond the immediate effects of their action. The anticipation of pleasure paralyzes the mind. Few people have the ability to think beyond the moment of pleasure and contemplate how they will feel on the morning after. Even those who think in terms of consequences usually can only deal with those that are very obvious. If Cain had known that he was destined to cry, my guilt is too great to bear would he have killed his brother?

The Ultimate Consequence

Since man is a complex being no course of action is ever as simple as it appears. Sin carries many dangers, which are not apparent from the vantagepoint of the one who is in a state of lust. The ultimate effect is one that few people ever consider: the loss of ones relationship with God. This was clearly enunciated by Cain when he said: Behold you have expelled me from the face of the earth and from your face and will I be hidden (Gen. 4:14). The relationship will not be the same. And this relationship is mans greatest need. It is the whole point of his existence. Yet no one thinks about it. Every sin puts at risk ones relationship to the Creator. Cain described this truth after the damage was done. The Torah records his lament because we can profit from his mistake. The truly righteous people are not immune from desire. Their uniqueness lies in how they react to temptation. Jewish law trains one not to act instinctively but to subject our desires to the crucible of reason. This is the meaning of the injunction to circumcise ones heart. We are bidden to conquer and subdue the passions and redirect their energies to the service of our Father in Heaven. ■



May a Parent Have Favorites?

RABBI REUVEN MANN

This week's parsha, Vayeshev, contains some of the most significant themes of human life, i.e. parental favoritism, sibling rivalry, attempted murder, enslavement, etc. The most perplexing issue is the depth of the brothers' envy and hatred of their brother Joseph. We can understand why they would resent him but the challenge is to comprehend why they were so upset with him that they were on the verge of killing him. It is clear that Yaakov inadvertently contributed to the problem. He displayed favoritism by making Joseph a special "coat of many colors." The Rabbis derive from this that one should never single out a sibling for special treatment as this will inevitably lead to jealousy and anger. There is an important lesson to be learned here. Parents, grandparents, teachers, Rabbis, etc. must be cognizant of the power of the emotion of jealousy. However, it seems unreasonable to expect anyone to feel the same way about everyone. Are we required to love all our children and grandchildren equally? Must a teacher or Rabbi have the same feelings for all his students and congregants?

In my opinion the Torah does not demand that we have the identical feelings for all our children, or others over whom we exercise some authority. Such a requirement would be contrary to human nature. Each person has his own preferences and it is inevitable that we will like some people and dislike others. It is entirely possible that one may "dislike" a child, a sibling, a parent, or grandparent. The Torah

points out that Yitzchak loved Eisav but Rivka loved Yaakov. She was suspicious of Eisav's behavior and did not love him. I believe that we are entitled to our feelings and have the right to like those whom we find "likeable" and to not love those whom we regard as disagreeable. Of course one's feelings about others should not be based on arbitrary, superficial criteria but on the real characteristics of the person. Thus I believe that Yaakov was not at fault for "loving Joseph more than all his sons because he was his Ben Zekunim" (which literally means child of old age - but also contains the idea of wisdom). Joseph was the most intellectually gifted of Yaakov's children and he could thus transmit to him the deepest idea of his religious masorah (heritage). The emotional and intellectual bond to Joseph was very powerful and Yaakov could do nothing from preventing the intense feeling of love from emerging. The Torah is not faulting Yaakov for "loving Joseph more than his other children." However, the verse concludes "and he made him a coat of many colors." He is permitted to have a favorite but only if he keeps it to himself and does not display it. The mistake of Yaakov was his failure to be cognizant of the impact that his special treatment of Joseph would have on his siblings. The lesson for us is that we have a right to our feelings but do not have permission to display them in a manner which will cause pain to others and eventually resentment and jealousy of the one that we favor.

Shabbat Shalom ■

TEMPLE & CHANUKA

Three Stories - One Message

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

There are a few instances in Jewish history concerning the building and rededication of the Temple. They include David's desire to build the first Temple; Zerubabel's rebuilding of the second Temple; and the rededication of the Temple during Channukah. There is an underlying theme, which permeates all three cases. Let us review a previous lesson concerning the first Temple.

Samuel II, 7:1-17

[1] And it was as the king dwelled in his house, and God gave him respite from all around, from all of his enemies. [2] And the king said to Nathan the prophet, "See how I dwell and a house of cedar and the ark of God dwells inside of curtains." [3] And Nathan said to the king, "All that is in your heart do, for God is with you."

[4] And it was on that night, and it was that the word of God was to Nathan saying: [5] "Go and say to David saying, 'So says God; Will you indeed build me a house that I will dwell?' [6] For I have not dwelled in a house since the day I took the Children of Israel up from Egypt, and until this day, and I traveled in a tent and a Tabernacle. [7] In all that I traveled, in all the Children of Israel, was the matter ever spoken by Me to even one of the tribes of Israel, of whom I commanded (judges) to herd My people Israel, saying, 'Why have you not built Me a house of cedar?'"

[8] And now, so shall you say to my servant David, 'So says the Lord of Hosts, I have take you from the shepherds' huts, from following after sheep, to become a ruler over my people Israel. [9] And I was with you with all that you went and I cut off all your enemies from before you and I made for you a great name like the name of the

great ones that are in the land. [10] And I shall yet establish a place for My people, for Israel, I shall plant it there and it shall dwell in its place so that it shall be disturbed no more; crooked people shall no longer afflict it as in earlier times. [11] And also from the day that I appointed judges over My people Israel, and I shall give you respite from all your enemies; and God informs you that God will make for you a house. [12] When your days will be complete and you will lie with your fathers and I will establish your seed after you that come from your loins and I shall make his kingdom firm. [13] He shall build a house to My name and I will establish his seat of kingdom eternally. [14] I will be to him a father, and he will be to Me a son so when he sins I will chastise him with the rod of men and with afflictions of human beings. [15] But my kindness will not be removed from him as I removed it from Saul, whom I removed before you. [16] Your dynasty and your kingdom will remain steadfast before for all time; your throne will remain firm forever." [17] In accordance with these words and in accord with this vision, so spoke Nathan to David.

The first thing that strikes me is God's use of a rhetorical question, "Will you indeed build me a house that I will dwell? And again in the next verse, "was the matter ever spoken by Me...why have you not built Me a house of cedar?" This is to say that God denounces David's sentiment. God says that He never requested a house of cedar to replace the Tabernacle, making David's sentiment to build a house to God, somehow a wrong idea. When God uses a rhetorical question, He means to indicate that He never requested this Temple, i.e., it is clearly man's wish "and not Mine". However, God says

David's son Solomon will build that house. So which is it, wrong or right to build a house? One may simply answer that it was David who could not build the house – the Temple – but Solomon could. So the idea of Temple per se is acceptable, but it is with the 'builder' that God takes issue. We must understand why.

But God goes on in verses 8 and 9, describing how He made David king, and how He made his name great like those famous in the land. Why does God mention this here? What does God's elevation of David have to do with His disagreement that David builds a Temple? We also must understand why David must die, and only then his son will build a Temple. Additionally, what purpose is there in the relationship God describes that He will be a "father" to Solomon, and Solomon will be as His "son"? Was this relationship absent with regards to David? If so, why?

God clearly states that He never requested a house. Simultaneously, He says Solomon will build it. Therefore, the house, or Temple, is not an evil...but simply something God "never requested." Therefore, we cannot understand God to be rebuking David, that Temple is an evil. What then is the rebuke, and I do not mean rebuke in the sense that David sinned, as the Talmud states, David did not sin. I mean rebuke, in the sense that David's proposed building cannot take place for good reason, but not that the reason implies sin. So what is this reason that David cannot build the Temple, but Solomon can? Where do we look for the answer? We look right here...God continued with His response to David through Nathan, describing how He made David a king, and made his name great. Think for a moment...what may this have to do with David building the Temple?

The Temple's Purpose

There is a most primary question, which must be asked before answering our other questions: What is the purpose of the Temple? What did David say? He was bothered that God's ark was housed in simple curtains while he dwelled in a strong, cedar wood home. What was his sentiment? His words are, "See how I dwell and a house of cedar and the ark of God dwells inside of curtains." David equates his dwelling with God's dwelling. Here is another clue.

David meant to say that greater honor was due to God, over himself. He wished to give God's ark greater honor than the simple curtain in which is currently dwelled. But for some reason, God did not approve, at least not that 'David' build this Temple. God says, "Will you indeed build me a house that I will dwell? For I have not dwelled in a house since the day I took the Children of Israel up from Egypt..." God's response focuses on the

(continued on next page)

Holidays

concept of “dwelling”. With His rhetorical words, “Will you indeed build me a house that I will dwell?” I believe God is indicating that David’s offer exemplified two errors.

The first error (not sin) is David’s attempt to beautify the ark’s dwelling. God said, “Was the matter ever spoken by Me to even one of the tribes of Israel...why have you not built Me a house of cedar?” Meaning, God never asked for something, so man should not attempt any enhancement. God goes on, reminding David of the real truth, “God does good for man” as he cites how He made David so great. Now, just as God bestowed good on David making him so great, this Temple too is “for man”, not for God. This is precisely why God reminds David of all the good He bestowed on David; to call to David’s mind the real relationship is that God benefits man, and not the reverse. This is the central idea.

While in other areas, the Torah’s injunction “Zek Aylee v’Anvayhu” (“This is my God and I will adorn Him”) allows man to beautify the commands, God’s message here is that one who attempts “enhancement” in relation to Temple alone, is overstepping the line: he misinterprets Temple.

Temple is the one area in Torah where God must initiate change. Perhaps the reason being, that regarding Temple, man may err, feeling he is “offering to God” somehow. Sacrifice, incense and the like are subject to misinterpretation of this kind. However, the opposite is true: Temple is God’s gift to man, not man’s glorification of God. When we glorify God in Temple, it is for our own good that we concentrate on the proper ideals, and we offer God absolutely nothing. However, David’s sentiment was that he should not “dwell” in beautiful cedar wood, while the ark dwells in curtains. He felt that he would be improving the idea of Tabernacle with a Temple, when Temple is in fact for man, and not for God. God reiterates this theme by reminding David that He made David who he is today. It is God who benefited David in the past making him great, and it is God who benefits man in Temple. Perhaps David erred in this matter. We also note that at the very beginning David says to Nathan, “See how I dwell and a house of cedar and the ark of God dwells inside of curtains.” It appears David is unsure about building a Temple, and seeks Nathan’s counsel. This may teach that David was not certain of his idea at the very outset.

Allowing Error to Surface

Perhaps we may go one step further and suggest that this was the precise sentiment God desired to draw out from David into the open, for David to recognize, and come to terms with. Surely Temple is a good, provided God initiates its activities and

enhancements, but God refrained from requesting it of man, until after David had this opportunity to express his thought, and God could respond. Now that David was corrected, Temple may be built, but by David’s son. Why his son? Perhaps, since David had the correct idea that Temple should exist, he would impart this to his son who could build it with the proper ideas. And, there was no longer any need to delay its building.

“Structure for God”: An Oxymoron

But there is a more profound error and lesson here. Improving the Tabernacle into a Temple acceptable to God does not occur structurally alone. Rather, the Temple’s very definition as a ‘good’ depends on it being initiated by God, and not man. What is lacking in Temple when man initiates it, or what is added to Temple when God requests it of man?

It is impossible that man should suggest a structure, without casting the frailties of humans onto that structure. Meaning, once David suggested making a Temple from a more ‘durable’ cedar and not curtains, for God’s “dwelling”, he was using “human terms” for a building that is exclusively identified with God. This may very well explain why the original Tabernacle had no ceiling, as it is not a “dwelling”, but a location on which to focus on God. This being the case, such a structure would be marred, had it any semblance of a shelter, which a roof indicates by its very definition. God needs no shelter, He needs no roof, and a structure man envisions, even dedicated to God is inherently flawed. Thus, the original Tabernacle could not possibly have a roof; only curtains covered it. Now, David suggests creating a more permanent “building” of cedar? This violated the very concept of the Tabernacle. The Tabernacle was to remind man of ideas about God. Had the Tabernacle a roof, it would convey an incorrect and heretical idea, that God shares the frail, human need for protection from the elements. Thus, Tabernacle can have no roof. Additionally, if man initiates the idea to create a structure to God, this is equal to suggesting a roof be placed on the Tabernacle. For what difference is there, if I place a roof on the Tabernacle, or create a new structure to God with a roof, now replacing the Tabernacle? There is no difference. Therefore, God refused David’s offer to create the Temple. In such a Temple, there would be no way to remove the identity that man conceived it. Thereby, it would eternally reflect man’s concept of a “shelter”, not true ideas.

It is contrary to the true ideas of God that a building is made to Him, as “building” carries with it the notion that it is for man’s purposes; a building is a human structure. However, if God initiates such a structure, as he did with the Tabernacle, then it is

no longer “man’s” idea of building. In that case, it may look like a shelter, but it is more akin to a museum, which contains prized objects, and does not function to provide a haven for inner dwellers. And when God initiates such a structure, man is then building the structure due to a command, and not any other source in him, traceable to the human frailty requiring shelters. Therefore, Solomon was able to build the Temple, as it was now God’s wish, and not David’s.

How does this relate to Channukah and Zerubabel’s construction of the Temple, which we read on Shabbos/Channukah?

David, Zerubabel and Channukah

The prophet Zechariah, the Haftorah of Shabbos/Channukah, concludes with the words “Not by army, and not by strength, but with My spirit...” This refers to Zerubabel’s Temple construction that it would be accomplished, but not through succeeding over the enemies or by human might. Its construction would be achieved by God creating peace under Darius’ reign, and this Divine backdrop would enable Zerubabel’s successful and easy construction.

On Channukah as well, God created the miracle of the oil again as a lesson that God orchestrated those entire events. That rededication was not accomplished by Macabees, but by God’s intervention on behalf of those five sons of Mattisyahu; “and the many [God handed] into the hands of the few”...“the wicked into the hands of the righteous...”

Rededication and building of the Temple require God’s involvement, in order that man’s fame does not overshadow the true purpose of Temple: “knowledge of God”. God’s fame must be the exclusive identity of Temple, and in all three cases, God insured this to be so. God did not allow David to be credited with temple; He did not allow Zerubabel to be credited with it; and God insured that Chanukah’s rededication was accomplished only through His miraculous intervention.

We should come away with a deeper appreciation for the amazing style and the height of Torah precision. In all three cases, the Torah discloses precise wording that uncovers the underlying messages: messages, which lead to truly happy lives, and truly make sense. If we are discerning, and patient in our studies, “the words will speak to us”, as a wise Rabbi once taught.

This is truly the design of the Torah: its messages and lessons run deep, but are available if we approach each area with the appreciation that the words are Divinely written. With careful study under wise Rabbis, we too will see these lessons. ■

Say thank you & help shine the light



As we draw to a close of 2010 celebrating the “festival of lights”, we look back on all we have accomplished these past 12 months. With much toil, endurance and a passion to share new Torah insights with you, we’re about to reach a milestone issue #400, enjoyed mostly by you, our regular readers. Here’s a few more stats from this past year:

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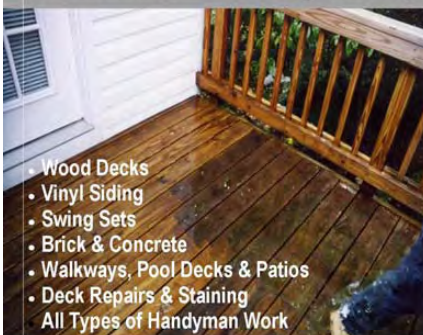


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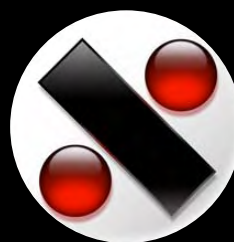
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