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JOSEPH, PHARAOH AND MOSES

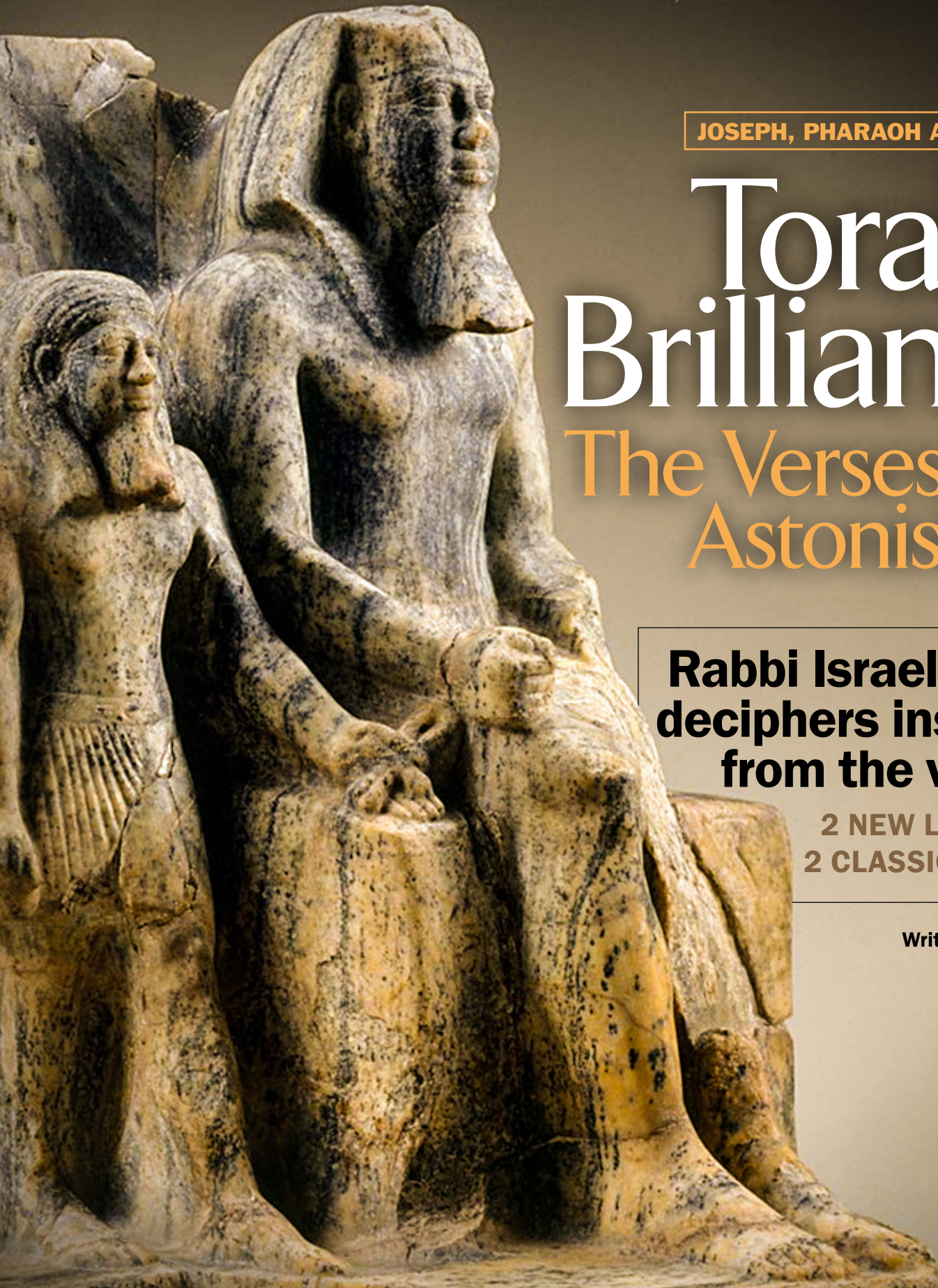
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WISDOM

RABBI ISRAEL CHAIT

Wisdom: No Place for Emotions

Excerpt from the Pirkei Avos 4:1 Lecture (1990s) — Transcribed by a student

Rabbeinu Yona says that knowledge of God is impossible without the desire for wisdom: "And even from the one who only knows one thing does he learn; and then his path becomes successful and he will become enlightened." Knowledge of metaphysics is attained only when man searches earnestly according to a divine intuition, and that road is only accessible by one who has no emotional barriers: a total chocham. If one is not guided by a search for truth, then his modus operandi must be guided by something else and not by wisdom. He is guided by his emotions and [therefore] his picture of reality [his sense of value and purpose]—which everyone must have—must be a distorted view, thereby distorting his perception of God. The only person with a true picture of reality is one who follows his intellect and foregoes all emotional values.

Separating oneself from one's emotional attractions is a battle; it is a process most people never identify or undergo. For most people feel that whatever they feel about reality is correct. One's innate feelings of justice, politics, morality, etc., must be abandoned and replaced with following one's mind alone. One must accept that the part of his nature dictating

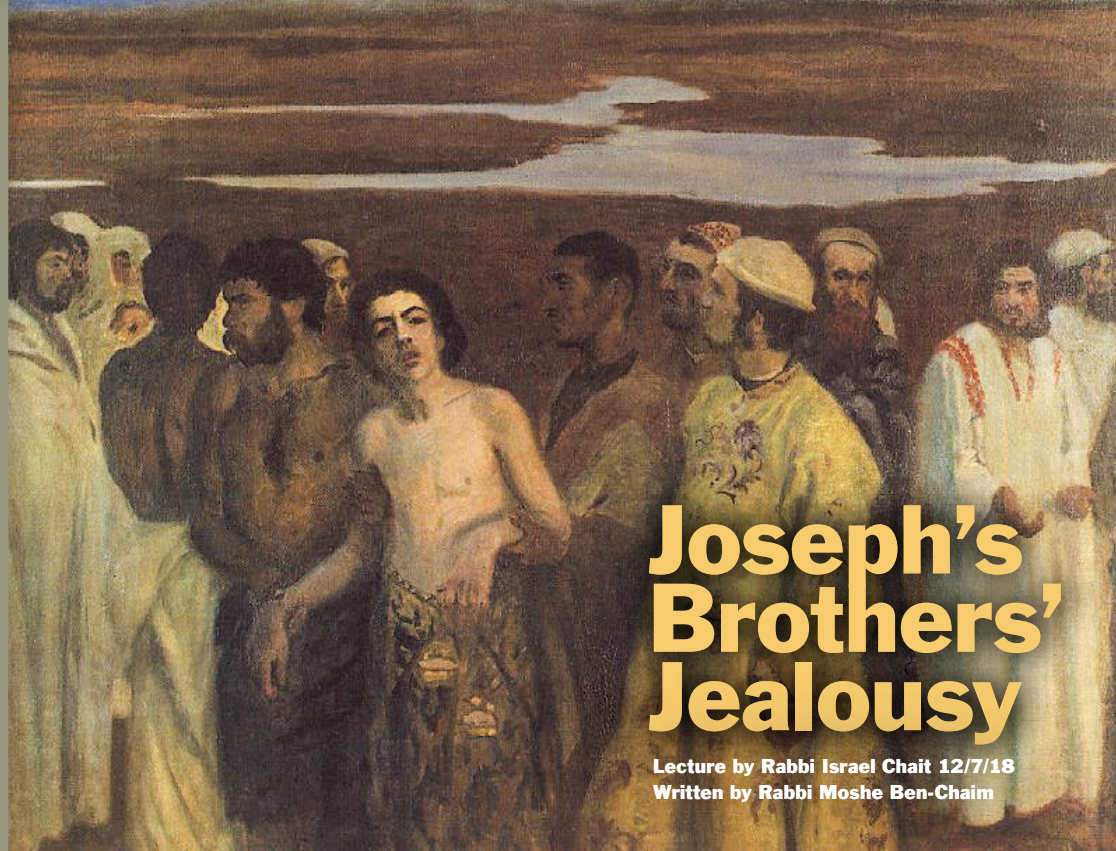
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all these emotional values is not based on reality. He must abandon this part of himself if he is to become a chocham and follow what is real. People say, "What feels good is good"—they follow whatever they feel. People spend their lives repeating this flawed process of chasing their emotional fantasies of pleasure, and when they constantly find that their values do not provide happiness, they continue this same pattern all their lives, instead of questioning their false premises and using wisdom [instead of feelings] to choose a new path. This is the way most people live, but the chocham is the individual who can turn his mind against his feelings [intellectually evaluating them] and create a rift between the two parts of his soul, selecting to follow wisdom and not his feelings. One who cannot follow his mind cannot enter the path toward becoming a talmid chocham.

Moshe did not go out to his brothers and engage in politics until he spent many years in wisdom to perfect his political knowledge: "...He went out to his brothers and witnessed their labors..." (Exod. 2:11). Moshe did not function based on feelings. He first studied justice in abstract thought. Once he understood the principles of justice, only then did he go out to his brothers to apply his knowledge.

King David requested knowledge from anyone he came across. [He did not feel he possessed a monopoly on wisdom.] Rav Moshe Feinstein said that no chocham believes that everyone will follow all his ideas. A great rabbi once gave a lecture where a youngster showed that the rabbi's premise was false. Even the greatest chocham can make an error, one that even a youngster can see. The Rash said that if proof can expose a rishon's ideas as incorrect, we should not rule like him. Rashi admits openly to his mistake; he writes "To'eh hayissi, I made an error" (Chullin 116b). Maimonides conceded to Raavad on a law concerning tzitzis. No man is infallible. Other religions seek absolute security [explaining their fabrication of saints: infallible men] but Judaism has no such value; we follow wisdom and human wisdom is fallible. We have no absolute security. ■



Joseph's Brothers' Jealousy

Lecture by Rabbi Israel Chait 12/7/18
Written by Rabbi Moshe Ben-Chaim

Subsequent to hearing Joseph's dreams of dominion over themselves and their father, the brothers reacted:

"So his brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the matter in mind. And the brothers went to herd their father's sheep in Shechem" (Gen. 37:11,12).

Rashi cites a midrash: "The brothers went to Shechem to shepherd themselves" [not the sheep]. Shepherding refers to addressing the needs of sheep, but here, Rashi teaches they were tending to themselves. What does he mean? Additionally, why did the brothers follow their jealousy with shepherding themselves in Shechem? Why Shechem; why this place?

Jacob then asked Joseph to bring back word of how the brothers were doing in Shechem. Joseph left, but was lost (Ibid. 37:15) until he met a man (Chazal say an "angel": a person instrumental in carrying out God's will). The man said:

"They [your brothers] have gone from here, for I heard them say: 'Let us go to Dothan'" (Ibid 37:17).

Why was Joseph lost or wandering without clear direction? And Rashi again comments: "The brothers went to Dothan to find legal pretext to murder Joseph." Why couldn't they do this in Shechem?

Rashi on Gen. 42:24 and 49:5 states that Shimon and Levi were the instigators against Joseph. A picture starts to emerge providing a profound insight into human nature...

Due to Joseph's dreams, the brothers grew jealous of Joseph. How did they deal with that jealousy? The

Torah says in the next verse that they left to Shechem. Why? They needed to escape from Joseph's and Jacob's presence; for Jacob favored Joseph, and Joseph claimed superiority over the brothers. The brothers went to Shechem to ruminate.

The primary lesson is that the tribes were not average people; they didn't react impetuously to Joseph's claims to fame with a sudden plot to murder him. They first ruminated on the matter. This is Rashi's meaning that they went "to shepherd themselves." They chose Shechem at Shimon and Levi's suggestion, as these two brothers found solace in a location in which they were victors. Shimon and Levi killed all males in Shechem as retribution for raping their sister Dinah. To Shimon and Levi, Shechem represented their righteousness; a place in which they might identify with their previous success, and replenish their dignity that was somewhat vanquished through Joseph's dreams of grandeur. But this did not work; Shechem did not quell their jealousy. Therefore, they needed to leave, for it is human nature that when man fails, he leaves his failures behind and the place of his failure. They went elsewhere, to Dothan. There, the brothers began seeking legal pretext to murder Joseph. The brothers acted in a two-step fashion, not with impetuous rage against Joseph, as average people would act. (We also understand that Joseph was lost, as he knew of his brothers' jealousy and this cause a resistance to confront them. Thus, getting lost was an expression of his conflict to find his brothers.)

The midrash opens up keen insight into the brothers' behavior, and into human psychology in general. It is a marvelous midrash. We learn that the brothers acted with restraint and on a higher level than others might have acted in their situation. ■



PERSPECTIVE

Pharaoh's DREAMS & Joseph's Lesson

Lecture by Rabbi Israel Chait 12/21/18

Written by Rabbi Moshe Ben-Chaim

How did Joseph know that Pharaoh's dreams were prophetic? Maybe they were natural nightmares? Reviewing Joseph's first words to Pharaoh, it is amazing, and interesting. It shows you a truly important idea about life, that perhaps, you would not otherwise know.

"And Pharaoh said to Joseph, 'I had a dream, but no one can interpret it. Now I have heard it said of you that you bear bear a dream to interpret it.'" Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, "It is not I; God will answer Pharaoh's peace" (Gen. 41:15,16).

Pharaoh praised Joseph and built him up. Joseph responded, ascribing all his wisdom to God. It sounds like a false humility. Rashi comments:

"The wisdom to interpret dreams is not my own, but God will answer — He will put in my mouth an answer that will give Pharaoh peace."

On the surface, Joseph appears to be saying the dream is a good one, but how does he know? He had not yet heard the dream. Furthermore, according to Rashi, is it not the height of arrogance to claim knowledge of God's plans?

Pharaoh then retells Joseph his two dreams of the seven healthy and emaciated cows, and the seven healthy and weathered ears of grain, where the latter seven in each dream swallowed the former.

"And Joseph said to Pharaoh, 'Pharaoh's dreams are one; God has told Pharaoh what He is about to do. The seven healthy cows are seven years, and the seven healthy ears are seven years; it is the same dream'" (Ibid. 41:25,26).

Later, Joseph tells Pharaoh:

"And as for Pharaoh having had the same dream twice, it means that the matter is imminent by God, and that God will soon carry it out" (Ibid. 41:32).

Thus, Joseph first explains the dreams' repetition with this verse. Meaning, when he told Pharaoh earlier that the "dreams were one," he was not yet explaining the duplication, but a different concept. What was that concept?

Joseph did not know that the dream was prophetic; he hadn't heard it yet. When Joseph said, "God will answer Pharaoh's peace," he was not referring to the interpreta-

tion; he was referring to Pharaoh's state of mind. Pharaoh was suffering; conflict is the worst state of mind. Pharaoh was disturbed for he could not understand the dreams meaning. An ordinary dream will express one's conflict; one can be disturbed regarding an inner conflict of which he is ignorant. Or he can be disturbed because the dream is prophetic and he senses that it is bad, but he doesn't understand it. Either one of these possibilities would disturb Pharaoh. When Rashi says "God will answer — He will put in my mouth an answer that will be for Pharaoh's welfare," he is not referring to the future. Joseph doesn't know the dream is prophetic; he hadn't heard the dream yet. Joseph meant that either way, "I am going to alleviate your disturbed state of mind." If it's a natural dream, the disturbance is an unconscious conflict, and Joseph will help to reveal that conflict and Pharaoh will achieve peace. And if the dream is prophetic and the outcome is hidden from Pharaoh, once Joseph would explain it to Pharaoh, it won't disturb Pharaoh any more, even if it forecasts something bad. Joseph said that either way, he could help remove Pharaoh's suffering. Ignorance traps one's mind; it makes one obsess on a matter. Joseph told Pharaoh he could help remove that ignorance. Understanding the dream alleviates one's mind.

The immediate suffering Pharaoh endured was greater than a bad outcome. The latter is just reality, but the worst thing is the inner struggle. More important than discovering the dream's interpretation, is psychological harmony. Joseph said he will help alleviate this turmoil. "I will make you whole, I will make you at peace with yourself." This is what Joseph meant. The dream could be bad or good; either way, he would alleviate Pharaoh's distraught state. Joseph was not referring to assisting Pharaoh in the future reality [the dreams' meaning]. He was referring to the fact that once the future reality ceases to be hidden from Pharaoh, the suffering will cease. But a prophetic dream disturbs a person, unlike a psychological conflict; it operates in its own orbit. That is, that the bad subject matter is hidden. In prophetic dreams, the event is hidden; but yet, man experiences the affect of the event. This affect—without a realistic cause—disturbs man. He has a disturbing affect, but he does not know why. He keeps trying to reach out to discover the cause. But once the cause is revealed, that pain is gone.

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Let us answer Rashi, which always bothered me: “The wisdom to interpret dreams is not my own, but God will answer — He will put in my mouth an answer that will be for Pharaoh’s welfare.” sounds like false humility. Wouldn’t that make Joseph arrogant, claiming that God puts into his mouth an answer? Even if God had done so before, how can he know that God will do it again? And if Joseph means God always does this for him, is this not the height of arrogance? How does Joseph know for sure that God—from the heavens—will implant in his verbalization an answer? Maybe He won’t.

However, the explanation is that this was a prayer, not foreknowledge, for no man knows God’s thoughts. Joseph said to Pharaoh in other words, “It is my prayer that God puts words in my mouth.” As the Rav said on the words “And God should give dread; V’chane tane pachdicha” (High Holiday prayers), it is a prayer that God “should” give man proper dread of God’s kingship. Joseph said, “I have no special powers, and I can’t guarantee an answer.” Joseph prayed that God “should” give him an answer so Pharaoh would be at peace, not that God “will” do this.

Now we have the question which we started with: How did Joseph know that Pharaoh’s dreams were in fact prophetic?

Dreams are wish fulfillment. Even in a bad dream, in a nightmare, there exists some positive element. It may not be the essence of the dream, which might be very bad, but there exists some good. However, Joseph said, “Pharaoh’s dreams are one.” Now, if with “Pharaoh’s dreams are one” Joseph meant to address the dreams’ repetition, Joseph’s words later would be redundant: “And as for Pharaoh having had the same dream twice, it means that the matter is imminent by God, and that God will soon carry it out” (Ibid. 41:32)? This would be redundant. But the language in 41:32 indicates that Joseph did not yet discuss the repetition of the dreams. In truth, in 41:32, Joseph addresses the repetition for the first time. Thus, “Pharaoh’s dreams are one” stated earlier cannot address the imminent nature of the forecast. It does not mean that there are both: good and bad cows, one good element and one bad. “It’s one dream” means there are no good cows; there is no value in the good cows. The subsequent emaciated cows completely obscured the healthy cows; there was no good in the healthy cows as they were destined to inevitably be swallowed by the famine. The goodness of the healthy cows serves no good element, Pharaoh gains no benefit at all. It’s “one dream” of bad cows completely removing the good of the healthy cows. The dream is not “good cows” separate from “bad cows.” It’s tied together; the good cows are destined to be swallowed-up by the bad cows.

Thus, there was no good element in Pharaoh’s dreams. Thereby Joseph understood these dreams were prophetic, for they contained no positive element. Telling Pharaoh his dreams were one, Joseph was not explaining the duplication, but that in neither dream was there any positive element. This was not a simple nightmare with deeply rooted conflicts. As there is nothing good in these dreams, they must be prophetic.

Another important point is that primitive man is fatalistic about dreams. He feels that a dream forecasts inevitable doom. Joseph taught Pharaoh a different philosophy; man can act with intellect to avoid a forecast. [And that’s exactly what Joseph did.] Pharaoh always thought that an interpretation is final. Joseph taught Pharaoh that although the interpretation is horrible, you are not bound by it. Free will can override the interpretation [it can manipulate real future factors, and avoid catastrophe. The forecast was true, but depending on man’s response, he can either sit back and tolerate the doom—a primitive attitude—or he can devise a strategy to alter the outcome].

Pharaoh responded to Joseph’s suggestion to appoint a grain keeper: “Can we find another like him, a man in whom is the spirit of God?” (Gen. 41:38). Pharaoh expressed surprise at this new method: matters are not fatalistic; man has free will. A dream is just a revelation; God is informing man what will happen (without man’s intervention), but it does not have to result this way. All depends on man’s free will. Pharaoh meant to say, “We never viewed life this way; we always viewed life/dreams as fatalistic.”

Pharaoh called Joseph a “man”; one not frightened by superstition. Nevertheless, Joseph is not an atheist; “God’s spirit is in him.” An atheist, you can say, is a man.” Putin said, “I can do as I will; there is no divine retribution.” OK, that’s his view. He is a “man.” But he has no “spirit of God.” But Pharaoh said of Joseph that he is a free thinker; he has free will, he does not fear acting, but he also has knowledge of God through his spirit of God. “Can we find another like him, a man in whom is the spirit of God?” Pharaoh was surprised; usually you find a heretic who is a powerful man, or you find a man with the spirit of God in him, but he cannot act. But Joseph possessed both qualities. ■



PARSHA

BURNING BUSH

Dialogue

Lecture by Rabbi Israel Chait (1990s)

Transcribed by Rabbi Moshe Ben-Chaim

Regarding the vision of the burning bush, we see a three-part dialogue between God and Moshe. In the first part, Moshe asks God, “When I tell the Jews that you sent me, they will ask, ‘What is His name?’” God responded, “I will be that I will be; *אחיה אשר אחיה*” which later turns into just “I will be; *אחיה*” (Exod. 3:14).

Moses said to God, “When I come to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is His name?’ what shall I say to them?” And God said to Moses, “I will be that I will be.” He continued, “Thus shall you say to the Israelites, ‘Ehyeh sent me to you.’”

And God said further to Moses, “Thus shall you speak to the Israelites: The Lord, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you: this shall be My name forever, and this My remembrance for all eternity.” (Exod. 3:13-15)

And Moses answered and said, “And they won’t believe me and will not listen to me, and say: The Lord did not appear to you?” The Lord said to him, “What is that in your hand?” And he replied, “A rod.” He said, “Cast it on the ground.” He cast it on the ground and it became a snake; and Moses fled from it. Then the Lord said to Moses, “Put out your hand and grasp it by the tail”—he put out his hand

and seized it, and it became a rod in his hand—that they may believe that the Lord, the God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, did appear to you.”

The Lord said to him further, “Put your hand into your bosom.” He put his hand into his bosom; and when he took it out, his hand was leprous as snow. And He said, “Put your hand back into your bosom.”—He put his hand back into his bosom; and when he took it out of his bosom, it returned the flesh. “And if they do not believe you or pay heed to the voice of the first sign, they will believe the voice of the second sign. And if they are not convinced by both these two signs and still do not heed your voice, take some water from the Nile and pour it on the dry ground, and it will be—the water you take from the Nile—will turn to blood on the dry ground.” (Exod. 4:1-9)

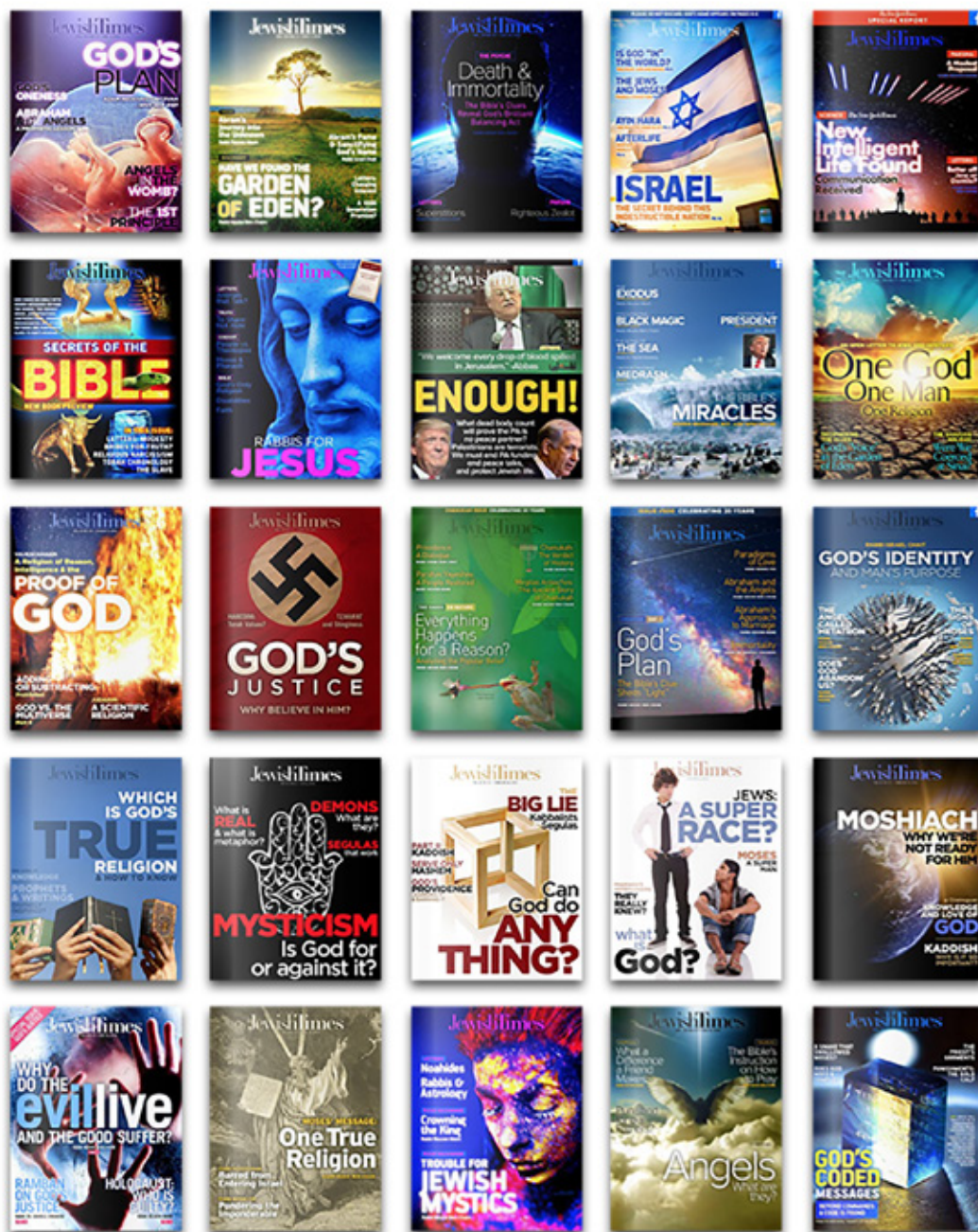
This dialogue is divided into three parts. The first part was Moshe asking God which name to use. God first says, “I will be that I will be,” then God says, “I will be,” and finally God says, “This is My name forever and this is My remembrance [reference] for generations.”

Then God says the second part, telling Moshe how exactly to approach the Jews: “Go and assemble the elders of Israel and say to them, ‘The Lord, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, has appeared to me...’” (Exod. 3:16). God told Moshe to say “pakod pakaditi eschem; I have certainly remembered you.” Moshe replies that the Jews still won’t believe him, so God then provides Moshe with the 3 miracles.

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BURNING BUSH Dialogue

The last part of dialogue is that Moshe simply rejects the mission and finally submits and accepts it.

It is interesting that after the first part, “I will be that I will be,” followed by “Go and assemble the elders,” God tells Moshe to say “pakod pakaditi eschem.” On the words “and they will listen to your voice” (Ibid. 3:18), Rashi says,

Since you use this phrase, the Jews will listen to you, for they have long had this sign as a tradition from Jacob and Joseph that by mention of this phrase their deliverance will be brought about. Jacob said to them “And God will surely visit you” (Exod. 13:19), and Joseph said to them “God will surely visit you” (Gen. 50:24).

[The intent of using this same phrase is that it will be a fulfillment of the transmission from the patriarchs.] But of course, as the Jews had the transmission of this phrase, anyone can use it! [Therefore, how does this validate Moshe that he was truly sent by God?]

Maimonides says that anyone could make up any name they want. Therefore, what does it prove? Ramban raises the question and gives two answers. He said it was a promise, but I don’t fully understand his answer. He says this promise was that no one will ever falsify a mission from God using this phrase. He says that he found a midrash saying that Rav Chama bar Rav Chanina says that Moshe was torn from his home at the age of 12. For if he would have been raised in his father’s home, and Moshe told his father about the dialogue at the burning bush, they would not believe Moshe, explaining that he received this phrase from his father Amram, who received it from his father Kehuss, who received it from his father Levi, who received it from Joseph. For this reason, Moshe was removed from his home at an early age. The midrash says this explains why, when Moshe spoke to the Jews, “they believed him” (Exod. 4:31).

However, this is not foolproof. Even having left home at age 12, Moshe still could have learned of this phrase. It is a simple phrase, so what is the difficulty in learning it and repeating it?

But I think the explanation is as follows. Yes, it was a sign, but the sign was not merely verbalizing those two words. There is a difference between “pakod pakaditi” and just “pakod.” The single word alone is not the message, rather it is the use of both words as Jacob, who originated this phrase, meant to say:

I do not know when it is going to happen or how it will be brought about, but I know it is God’s trait to redeem you. This knowledge is not given over to man.

The mesora (tradition/transmission) which Jacob had was that it stems from God’s nature that a messiah will come.

What was the first miracle that God gave Moshe? The staff became a snake and Moshe fled from before it. Then Moshe’s hand became leprous. And the third miracle was that the Nile’s water turned into blood. What was the sense of these three miracles? These miracles represented ideas as Moshe came in the name of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This is conveyed by referring to the God who rules nature, the God that distinguishes between the cells in the staff and the cells in a snake. This was Abraham’s lesson, that God is the source of the universe. He is the source of nature, be it biological, such as a snake, or in inanimate, such as the staff.

The second miracle represented the idea of the God who metes out reward and punishment. Chazal say that Moshe deserved to be degraded by contracting leprosy because he said that the Jews would not believe him. The fact that the leprosy was performed on Moshe—and not another person—indicates some criticism of him. The essence of this leprosy was a sign, but a critique was implied. Moshe’s message here was this:

I come to the name of the God who relates to the universe in terms of reward and punishment.

The third sign of the Nile’s water turning into blood rejected the Egyptian deification of their source of sustenance (a common primitive belief). The Nile is under God’s domination: “I will mete out punishments to all the gods of Egypt” (Exod. 12:12). God expressed His will to expose idolatry as false.

The formula for the Egyptian exodus included certain principles which were demonstrated in these three miracles. The first principle is that God controls nature. Leprosy then conveyed God’s reward and punishment. God said to Moshe, “I am God” (Exod. 6:2). Rashi comments that this phrase refers to God Who is trustworthy to pay a good reward, the God of reward and punishment:

Who am faithful to recompense with a full reward those who walk before Me.

This applies to the Egyptians’ receipt of punishment. Had the Egyptians not deserved punishment, there would not have been an exodus. And if the Jews were not deserving of a reward [due to God’s promise to the patriarchs] they would not have been redeemed.

And the third miracle showed the world that God is the creator, the only source of the universe, and that idolatry is false.

Nevertheless, I have spared you for this purpose: in order to show you My power, and in order that My fame may resound throughout the world. (Exod. 9:16)

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BURNING BUSH Dialogue

This is why God allowed Pharaoh to exist.

The Egyptian exodus contained three principles. We know that they were ideas and not just signs as the Torah says, “And if they do not believe you or pay heed to the voice of the first sign, they will believe the voice of the second sign.” Voice refers to the idea of the sign.

God gave Moshe a long formula prior to sending him to Egypt on his mission. First, God told Moshe to use the name “I will be that I will be.” Then God refers to pakod pakaditi. And then there were the 3 miracles.

“I will be that I will be” as an abstract philosophical idea of God; a metaphysical concept. But God concluded with the concept of “This is My name forever and this is My remembrance for all generations.” This means that truthfully, God’s name is “I will be that I will be” but this is not a definition of God. We cannot understand what God is. But this name conveyed an approach to God regarding what we do not know about Him. It refers to God’s greatness and His remoteness from our intellect: “Not as I am written, am I read.” We cannot refer to God by that name ייחוד but we enunciate that name as קדני. And we also do not use either name alone which would imply that we fully grasp what God is, leading us to project some nonsensical idea onto Him. After Moshe explained to the Jews the abstract idea of “I will be that I will be,” he explained that that man cannot enunciate that idea—ייחוד. For by enunciation, man deludes himself that he understands what God is, which is impossible for man to conceive. Thus, when Moshe approached the elders, he taught them concepts.

What Moshe did next was to teach them pakod pakaditi. This was a reference to his mission. Again, this was the principle transmitted from Jacob. I do not know in detail what that principle was, but I can give a general concept.

Why was this entire dialogue necessary? God wanted the Jews to follow Moshe and he was to demonstrate that he was God’s messenger. How did he demonstrate this? Why should the Jews follow Moshe?

Judaism maintains that there is a certain kind of knowledge that is available only to perfected individuals. The elders knew this, which is the meaning of “mesora b’yadam,” they had a transmission. Moshe impressed the elders with

the ideas, with the knowledge of God. It means that the elders saw that Moshe possessed a type of knowledge which is impossible for the ordinary mortal to obtain. That is why Judaism maintains that ultimate knowledge is not simply available to anyone. But it is acquired based on one’s perfection. A person who is imperfect cannot obtain certain knowledge. Achare could not obtain certain knowledge for this reason.

The Jews did not follow Moshe due to the signs. In fact, the signs did not come until later. Furthermore, God was critical of Moshe when he said that they will not believe him. Why was God critical? It was a good argument. But we see from this that had he not said, “they won’t believe in me,” that the original plan was without any signs. God’s original plan was that the Jews follow Moshe as he was a man of knowledge that was unattainable by ordinary people. This is the meaning behind the transmission that the elders had in their hands. The elders had a transmission back to Jacob and when they saw Moshe teach them true ideas about God that they themselves had not fully conceived, they immediately realized such a person must be highly perfected. The elders thought that there is good reason to follow someone on that level and accept his words as truths.

Pakod pakaditi was of that same nature. A person presents himself as a savior for one of two reasons. Either he is following his egomania, or if he is rational, then his claim that he is the savior must be true.

False messiahs possess the desire to be a messiah; they wish to express their fantasy of omnipotence. That is his motivation [to announce oneself as the messiah]. Pakod pakaditi means the exact opposite: “I am nothing and I came simply because of God’s trait that He wants to redeem the Jews at this time.”

Thus, the principle that was transmitted from Jacob and Joseph of Pakod pakaditi was not simply the phrase, which anyone could have enunciated. But this represented the idea that Moshe did not come to the Jews with some egotistical imperfection in his nature, where he desired to be the savior. Rather, the phrase indicated that he was acting according to God’s will. Thus, Moshe was armed with the abstract idea, that being the essence of Judaism:

The foundation of foundations and firmest pillar of all wisdom is, to know that there is a First Being, that He caused all beings to be, and that all beings from heaven and Earth, and from between them, could not exist, were it not for the truth of His Own Being. (Hil. Yesodei HaTorah 1:1)

Thereby, Moshe showed his perfection as he shared certain knowledge unattainable by imperfect people. And he demonstrated that he did not come due to egomaniacal desires for leadership, but only because of God’s trait to save the Jews. That should have been enough. And if the elders were on the highest level, there would be no need to go any further. They would follow Moshe. But Moshe suspected that the Jews were not on the highest level that they would believe him. Moshe felt it was true that the Jews should follow [based on ideas alone] but emotionally, Moshe suspected that they were not on that level [that ideas alone would be sufficient to convince them]. Therefore, Moshe was criticized. There is a principle that one who suspects others without grounds suffers bodily pain, explaining the leprosy.

Nonetheless, God said that he would provide that, with which to satisfy the Jews on an emotional level as well. Of course, that too would still be tied to some idea, but it contained an emotionally satisfying component because it was a miracle. A combination of the signs, and that they demonstrated the 3 themes necessary for the exodus is what ultimately clinched it.

But the reason why Moshe debated God for 7 days before accepting his mission is because a prophet cannot perform his mission unless he understands it. But even after God supplied Moshe with the signs, he still resisted the mission saying that the Jews would not believe him, and for this he was criticized.

God’s original plan did not contain signs. Judaism does not prefer signs and wonders. The Rav said on “And I will descend to save them from the hand of Egypt” (Exod. 3:8) that descending refers to something less preferable. God broke His laws of nature [through the plagues]. And again, Moshe’s mission was to be without signs. He was to communicate God’s nature [as a redeemer] and validate his role as the messiah through knowledge alone. ■



Rabbi Chait,

Your thousands of talmidim and our tens of thousands of talmidim and congregants wish to thank you for a half century of treasured Torah instruction, philosophical and moral marvels, and personal guidance.

You have unveiled countless fundamentals and insightful concepts, you have taught us critical and proper thought, human perfection and the path towards love of the Creator.

Thank you is insufficient, as you have gifted us two worlds. We are so fortunate and could not ask for a better Rav.

We look forward to your future shiurim.

—YOUR TALMIDIM





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