

OHRNET

THE OHR SOMAYACH TORAH MAGAZINE ON THE INTERNET

PARSHA INSIGHTS

TIME FLIES

“Yosef, at the age of seventeen ... but he was a youth.” (37:2)

Have you noticed that the older you get, the quicker everything seems to go? Birthdays seem about nine months apart. Pesach gets closer to Succos every year. It seems as though our perception of the passage of time is proportional to the span of our years.

When you're young, a day seems forever, and a week is beyond measurement. It's difficult to tell children to be patient because for them time has an entirely different reality. How many times do we buy the kids a present and say “Wait till we get home before you open it!” When we get home we find the wrapping is all over the back of the car.

Rashi comments on the above verse that being “a youth” means that Yosef would “fix his hair.” Can it be that Yosef the Tzadik was so vain? Or is Rashi hinting to something deeper?

A king is obliged to have a haircut every day, in keeping with the dignity of his station in life. Yosef knew through prophecy that he would one day be a king, and in the impatience of youth, he couldn't wait for the prophecy to come true, so he “fixed his hair,” trying, as it were, to hurry that moment closer by going through the motions of kingship.

Ironically, when he eventually becomes a king in Egypt, it is not he who gives himself a haircut, but others.

As much as we may try to force events in our impetuosity, to every thing there is a time and a place and a season under Heaven.

WHEN HALF OF TWO IS ZERO

Yosef said to the Chamberlain of the Cupbearers: “If only you would think of me... and you will do me a kindness, if you please, and mention me to Pharaoh, then you would get me out of this building.” (40:14)

Every Rosh Hashana, all those who have come to this world pass before the King of Kings like sheep. One at a time, we are judged. The entire following year is decided at that moment.

If everything is decided on Rosh

“The more righteous a person is, the greater is his obligation to conceal his righteousness.”

Hashana and sealed on Yom Kippur, why should I bother to go out to work? If everything's decided anyway, why don't I just stay in bed and eat chocolates, and let my pay check arrive in the mail?

Even though all our needs are met miraculously, Hashem requires that we make an effort, that we do *hishtadlus*. The essential reason is so that we may cover up the miracle of G-d's providing for us. By making an effort,

we make it *look* like our livelihood is a result of natural forces.

We must never think that this effort has any connection with the results it seems to bring. If I get to work a little earlier and the sales figures show an increase, I shouldn't let myself think that my early mornings were the cause. Rather, everything at every moment is sent to me from Heaven.

But how much effort is called *hishtadlus* and how much betrays a lack of faith?

Yosef asked the Chamberlain of the Cupbearers twice to intercede on his behalf to Pharaoh. By his lack of trust in Hashem by asking the Chamberlain twice, Yosef languished in jail for two further years.

Rabbi Chaim Brisker once asked Rabbi Shimon Shkop how long Yosef would have been kept in prison if he had only asked the Chamberlain *once* to help secure his release.

Rabbi Shimon replied that had Yosef only asked once, he would have only spent one year in prison.

Rabbi Chaim disagreed. “He wouldn't have had to spend any more time in prison at all. To try to secure his release by asking once is considered to be *hishtadlus* — the human effort that Hashem expects of each of us. To ask twice showed a lack of trust in Hashem. So it would have been two years or nothing.”

SPEAKING BETWEEN THE LINES

“...and Yosef would bring evil reports about them (his brothers) to their father.” (37:2)

Next to Everest, even K2 pales by comparison.

How could it be that Yosef

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, moon and stars bowing to him — signifying that all his family will appoint him king. The brothers indict Yosef and resolve to execute him. When Yosef comes to Shechem, the brothers relent and decide, at Reuven's instigation, to throw him into a pit instead. 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 a wild animal. Yaakov is inconsolable. Meanwhile, in Egypt, Yosef has been sold to Potiphar,

Pharaoh's Chamberlain of the Butchers. In the Parsha's subplot, 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 re-instated; 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.

HAFTORAH: AMOS 2:6-3:8

COSMIC CONSEQUENCES

"Only you have I loved of all the families of the earth, therefore will I recall upon you all your iniquities." (3:2)

Take two students. One talented and full of promise, the other slow-witted and delin-

quent. You catch them both cheating in exams. Which of the two is liable to get the greater punishment?

Even though other nations have certainly deserved punishment more, the Jewish people have suffered Hashem's punishment more than any other people.

Privilege has no meaning without responsibility.

The Jewish People are supposed to be the "star pupil" in life's classroom.

For their sake, the world was created. They have been chosen to be a sign to all peoples. Israel is the heart-beat of the world, and therefore, necessarily, its responsibility is greater.

When the Jewish people sin, they blemish the whole creation, and therefore they are judged more exactly — because, even though their small infractions may seem insignificant, the consequences are cosmic.

• *Mayana shel Torah*

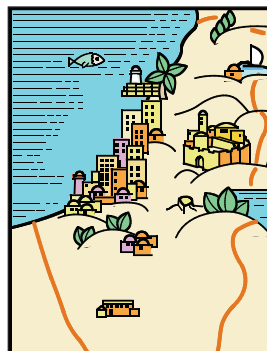
LOVE OF THE LAND

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

FIRST IN CREATION, FIRST IN IMPORTANCE

Eretz Yisrael was created first and afterwards the rest of the world, as the passage states (*Mishlei* 8:26): "Before He made Eretz (land) and Chutzos (outlying areas)."

The term "Eretz" applies to Eretz Yisrael which was the main purpose of creation and therefore created first. All the other lands are



considered secondary in importance as they were in the sequence of creation and are therefore referred to as "Chutzos."

Even today we refer to the land we love simply as "Eretz" while the rest of the world is "Chutz," outlying areas of secondary importance.

• *Ta'anis 10a*

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General Editor:
Rabbi Moshe Newman
Editorial & Web Advisor:
Rabbi Reuven Lauffer
Associate Editors:
Rabbi Mordechai Becher,
Rabbi Reuven Subar
Contributing Writers:
Weekly Daf, Love of the Land:
Rav Mendel Weinbach
Insights, Overview, Haftorah:
Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

Web Production: **Lev Seltzer**
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This issue is dedicated in the memory of
REBBETZIN ESTHER GOLDA NUSBAUM O.B.M.

לעיני
הרבנית אסתר גאלדא נוסבאום
בת ר' ישראל אייזיק הבהן ז"ל מבית קפולן
נלבית ב"ט בסלו 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. What was praiseworthy about the fact that Yosef’s brothers did not speak to him in a friendly manner?
3. How do we see from Yosef’s dream about the sun, moon and stars that all dreams contain some untrue element?
4. Who brought Yosef down to Egypt?
5. Where was Reuven when Yosef was sold?
6. In addition to the brothers, who else knew that Yosef was alive?
7. Why didn’t Hashem reveal prophetically to Yaakov that Yosef was alive?
8. For how long did Yaakov mourn the loss of Yosef?
9. Verse 37:35 states “his father wept.” To whom does this refer?
10. Who was Tamar’s father?
11. In what merit did Tamar deserve to have kings as her descendants?
12. Why is the word “hand” mentioned four times in connection to the birth of Zerach?
13. Why does the Torah relate the incident with Potiphar’s wife immediately after the incident of Yehuda and Tamar?
14. How did Potiphar “see” that Hashem was with Yosef?
15. Who in this week’s Parsha pretended to be sick?
16. Why were the butler and the baker imprisoned?
17. For how long were the butler and the baker in prison?
18. How did the baker know that Yosef had correctly interpreted the butler’s dream?
19. What promoted the butler and baker to tell Yosef their dreams?
20. How was Yosef punished for asking the butler for help?

BONUS QUESTION?

“...They put him in jail, the place where the royal prisoners were imprisoned.” (39:20)

Yosef, a Hebrew slave on the lowest rung of Egyptian society, was accused of a capital crime. Why, then, was he given special privileges? Why was he put in the special jail with the royal prisoners?”

answer on page six

I DIDN'T KNOW THAT!

“And Behold! — we were in the field... And Behold! — my bundle arose ... And Behold! — your bundles surrounded and bowed to my bundle.” (37:7)

When a dream is very clear and the dreamer feels he is actually awake, then the dream is a Heavenly vision. But a dream accompanied by confusion and a sense of non-reality indicates that the dream is a figment of the dreamer’s imagination. That’s why Yosef said “**And Behold!**” to describe each aspect of his dream: He wanted his brothers to know that each detail of his dream was crystal-clear in his mind, indicating that it was a prophetic vision.

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

WEEKLY DAF

SHABBOS 16 - 22

CANDLE, CANDLE, BURNING BRIGHT

The *Mishna* of “*Bameh madlikin*,” with its laws concerning the fuels and wicks which may be used for Shabbos lights, is familiar to anyone who prays in a synagogue (*Nusach Ashkenaz*) on Shabbos eve. But there is one detail in that *Mishna* which is less familiar as the center of the halachic dispute.

Beeswax, says the *Mishna*, cannot be used for fuel. The *gemara* stresses that this disqualification does not extend to the use of wax as a wick. Beeswax candles in which the wick is surrounded by wax, says Rashi, are acceptable for use and were commonly used in his time. Tosefos, however, cites the opinion of the Sages of Naravonne that such candles cannot be used since the wax is still serving as fuel. The majority view is reflected in the authoritative ruling of the *Shulchan Aruch* (*Orach Chaim* 264:7) that beeswax candles may be used.

Most candles in our day are no longer made of beeswax (even though some manufacturers sometimes label them as “wax”). The *Mishnah Berurah* (264:23) describes the stearin candles of his day as providing a superior light and perhaps

being preferable even to olive oil. The reason for this is the prohibition, mentioned in an earlier *Mishna* (*Shabbos* 11a), against reading by the light of an oil lamp, for fear that in an effort to improve the lighting the reader may forgetfully tilt the lamp to improve the flow of oil to the wick and be guilty of creating fire on Shabbos. This prohibition, rules the *Mishnah Berurah* (275:4), does not apply to stearin candles which are never adjusted even on weekdays. The paraffin candles widely used today offer the same advantage, but there still are many Jews whose custom is to only use olive oil.

• *Shabbos* 20b

LOOKING HIGH AND LOW

Two statements may sometimes appear side by side in the Talmud even though the only thing connecting them is that they have the same author. This seems to be the case of one statement quoting Rabbi Tanchum regarding how high a Chanukah lamp may be placed above street level and another citing his interpretation of a passage in Chumash (*Bereishis* 37:24) about the pit into which Yosef’s brothers cast him.

A closer look at this second statement may, however, suggest a subtle link

between the subjects of both statements. “The pit was empty, with no water in it,” says the Torah, and Rabbi Tanchum asks why it is necessary to repeat that there was no water in it if we have already been informed that it was empty. His conclusion is that the Torah wishes to stress that the pit was empty only of water but that it was inhabited by snakes and scorpions which miraculously did not harm the righteous Yosef.

“Were his brothers aware of the presence of these deadly creatures?” asks Rambam. If so, they certainly would have been so impressed with this Heavenly sign of Yosef’s righteousness that they would have ceased conspiring against him. His conclusion is that because the brothers were so high above the bottom of the pit where these creatures crept they did not notice them.

Now, suggests one of the commentaries, we may see a link between Rabbi Tanchum’s two statements. The Chanukah lamp, which is supposed to publicize the Chanukah miracle, cannot be noticed by those walking below if it is more than 20 cubits high. Yosef’s brothers, on the other hand, could not notice the dangerous creatures at the bottom of the pit because it was too far below them.

• *Shabbos* 22a

continued from page one

PARSHA INSIGHTS

HaTzadik — Yosef the Righteous — could have spoken evil about his brothers?

When a father looks at his children, and notices that one is exemplary, necessarily this 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 ultimate 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 did-

n’t actually accuse them, then why was he punished?

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

Sources:

- *Time Flies* - Rabbi Shimon Schwab as heard from Rabbi C.Z. Senter
- *Speaking Between The Lines* - Admor R’ Menachem MiAmshinov in *Iturei Torah*

GET CONNECTED

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OVER A BILLION BYTES OF TORAH LITERATURE AND INFORMATION

DE VINE REVELATION

Derek Koss

<djsports@westworld.com> wrote:
Dear Rabbi,
When the flood was over, the first thing Noah did was get drunk. Why? And what was the lesson from that? Noah acted so strangely from his drinking that his behaviors became a moral question. What was G-d saying?

Ira <hisadis@hotmail.com> wrote:
Dear Rabbi,
How did Noah know how to make alcohol? How did he get drunk?

Dear Derek Koss and Ira,

As for Noah knowing how to make wine, there's no reason to think that people didn't know how to make wine before the flood. Noah was 600 years old at the time of the flood, so he had plenty of time to learn what everyone else knew. Besides, grape juice ferments by itself when left to react with the oxygen in the air and it naturally becomes wine.

The Midrash relates that Noah took vine branches into the ark with him. He decided to begin the process of rebuilding the world by planting them. This was his first mistake, for he should have begun planting something more vital for mankind's existence — wheat, for example. One mistake leads to another: He made wine, had a drink, then another and another. Once drunk, he lost his dignity. The message is that the pleasures of the world are available for us, but we must exercise restraint and never lose sight of our role as a holy people.

Sources:

- Bereishis Rabba 36:4
- Midrash Aggada 9:21

SHEVITI

Howard D Feiner,
San Mateo, California

<hdfeiner@ix.netcom.com> wrote:
What is a "sheviti?" What do they say and are there any special things about them?

Dear Howard D Feiner,

A "sheviti" is a written page with the verse "I have placed G-d before me always" and sometimes also Psalm 67 written in the form of a menorah. The Hebrew word *sheviti* means "I have placed." The purpose of the *sheviti* is to arouse a person's awareness of the presence of God and to instill fear of heaven. Many synagogues have such posters on the wall, or in front of the cantor and some place small pages in their prayerbooks. Some authorities are against production of the small *shevitis* since it is very likely that they will be lost, or not treated with the proper respect due to something that contains the name of Hashem.

Sources:

- Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 1:1
- Ramah, Mishna Berurah ad loc. Paragraph 4

WHAT THE DEAD KNOW

Chava <gordonl@mskcc.org>
wrote:

Dear Rabbi,
What do we believe about the knowledge people who have passed away have of events in this world? My father passed away almost two years ago. My sister just got engaged, baruch Hashem. Does my father have any knowledge of this? I thank you for your time.

Dear Chava,

Yes, the dead can sometimes have awareness of what goes on in

this world. There's actually a custom to try to get engaged and married soon after the passing of a parent in order to bring joy to the deceased parent. So, it's possible that your father knows about your sister's engagement and that it's bringing him joy.

Sources:

- Tractate Berachos 18b

SANHEDRIN OF SEVENTY

Avraham Shimon Becher, age 11,
<becher@netmedia.net.il> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,
The Anshei Knesset Hagedola had 120 judges. I think the Talmud says that you're not meant to have an even numbered *beit din* (rabbinical court) so as to avoid a tied vote. So how could the Anshei Knesset Hagedola have 120 judges?

Dear Avraham Shimon Becher,

The *Anshei Knesset Hagedola* was not a *beit din* for the purpose of judging civil or criminal cases. The maximum *beit din* in that regard was 71 members, like the "*Beit Din Hagadol*" also known as the "*Sanhedrin Gedola*." This number is derived from the verse in the Torah where G-d tells Moshe to gather 70 elders; including Moshe himself there were 71.

Rather, the *Anshei Knesset Hagedola* was a body that issued Rabbinic enactments, compiled parts of the Bible and instituted the blessings and prayers.

Sources:

- Bamidbar 11:16
- Sanhedrin 2a, 3a & 40a
- Megillah 2a
- Bava Basra 15b
- Berachos 33a

THAT'S WHAT WESTERN WALLS ARE MADE OF

Wendy Davis <ddprod@telalink.net> wrote:
What is the Western Wall made of? Were the stones quarried in Israel. Thank you,

New Feature!

PUBLIC DOMAIN

Comments, quibbles and reactions concerning previous "Ask-the-Rabbi" features.

One more suggestion for someone whose name spelled backwards describes them: This was told to me by Malka Mantin. "Moshe" which spelled backwards is "Hashem," and Moshe is described as an "Eved Hashem" — "Servant of G-d."

• Benyomin Wolf, Yeshiva U. <bwolf@ymail.yu.edu>

Dear Wendy Davis,

The Western Wall is made of sandstone which is very common in the central Israel area. It was almost certainly quarried in Israel. First of all, the stone is very common here, and is still quarried and used in building today in Israel. Secondly, some of the stones are incredibly heavy, and would have been extremely difficult to transport. There is one stone that weighs approx. 250 tons!

Some possible answers to the Yiddle Riddle:

Moshe — his name spelled backwards is "Hashem."
Leah — she cried to "HaKel" (Hashem) so that she wouldn't have to marry Esav.

• Mamaleh@aol.com

Re: Minyan Motivation: Another version of the story is that there once was a town with 10 Jewish men, and they always had a *minyan* — however, when the 11th man moved into town, they could never get a *minyan* — each one thought he could stay home because there would be exactly 10 without him.

• Howard Kravitz, Chicago, IL <email@withheld>

YIDDLE RIDDLE

Last week we wrote:

Baruch Sterman <baruch@netmedia.net.il> wrote us with the following riddle:

When one of the Chassidic Rebbes was eight years old he was asked a riddle: "What verse in the Torah has the first three words the same as the last three words?" He replied, "The verse where Moses did not say *emet* (the truth)." What did he mean?

Answer:

In the last verse in *Parshat Shlach*, Moses quotes G-d: "*Ani Hashem Elokaychem ... Ani Hashem Elokaychem*" — "I am the L-rd your G-d who took you out of the land of Egypt to be your G-d, I am the L-rd your G-d." After this verse during the recital of the *Shema*, we immediately add the word "*emet*" — "truth" — as though this word were part of the verse. This, however, is *not* the way the verse appears in the Torah. Therefore, this is the verse in which Moses did not say the word "*emet*," although when we read the verse, we do say "*emet*."

continued from page three

BONUS ANSWER!

Potiphar knew Yosef was righteous and he strongly suspected that his wife was lying. Publicly, however, he needed to pretend that he supported her. Therefore he punished Yosef, but he chose the most lenient punishment possible under the circumstances.

• Ramban

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