

SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE

MIKESS

DECEMBER 20, 2014

28 KISLEV 5775

Rosh Hodesh Tevet will be celebrated on Monday & Tuesday, Dec. 22 & 23.

DEDICATIONS: In memory of Rachel Bat Victoria – 2 Tevet

SEPHARDIC CONGREGATION OF LONG BEACH

Candle lighting Friday evening 4:12 p.m. Mincha at 4:12

SHABBAT: Perasha class with Rabbi David at 8:30AM this week

The Power of Memory

Shaharit - Hashem Melech at 9:00 AM - Please say Shema at home by 8:48AM

**Kiddush this week is sponsored by
The Mizrahi and Yusupov families in celebration of Hanukah –
Kiddush before 11:52 Hasot**

**Please sponsor a Kiddush or Seudah Shelishi or breakfast in memory or in honor of a loved one
Early Mincha after Kiddush - Amidah after 12:15**

Shabbat Morning Children's Program 10:30 - 11:30

Ages 0-5 - in the Playroom/ Girls Ages 6-12 - In the Upstairs Library / Treats, Games, Stories, Prayers and Fun!

Children's afternoon program with the Bach at the Bach 3:30 PM

Ladies Class at the Lembergers at 4:00

Return for Arbit at 5:30 and then following ARBIT

THERE IS NO Krav Maga SUNDAY because of Hanukah

WEEKDAY TEFILLA SCHEDULE

Shaharit Sunday 8:00AM, Mon and Thurs at 6:55, Tues, Weds and Fri at 7:00

WEEKDAY TORAH CLASS SCHEDULE - Thursday Nights 8:30-9:30 Virtual* Class facilitated by Rabbi Yosef Colish.

Practical Laws of Shabbat for Sephardim

SAVE THE DATE!

Movie night will be on January 10th at Lido Synagogue.

We will be seeing BRURIAH, an Israeli movie about a modern Orthodox woman whose life and fate are intimately connected with the legendary Bruria

**WHY NOT GIVE THE SYNAGOGUE A GIFT THE HANUKAH?
SYNAGOGUE MEMBERSHIP MAKES THE PERFECT HANUKAH PRESENT!**

Although we have one of the lowest membership costs of any Synagogue in the New York region, and although we serve almost 200 families, only about 25% pay membership. The Synagogue needs your support. We want to remind people of the option of becoming a member.

Dues paid this month are completely tax deductible in 2014.

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**Daily Minyan Mon – Thurs at 979 Third Avenue,
 17th Floor, Artistic Frame at 4PM – Please join us!
 212-289-2100 – Mincha and Arbit – Give us 22
 minutes and we'll give you the World To Come!**

Editors Notes

On the eve of Passover, when we search the home for hametz or leaven, we do so by the light of a single candle. The rabbis teach us that we are forbidden from using a torch and we must use a candle because the candle can be held in front of us close to the eyes and allows us to search within corners, holes, cracks and crevices. The candle allows us to get closer and see beyond the surface.

This week's portion of Miketz very often coincides with Hanukkah. We read this week as we note in our summary, that Joseph is appointed viceroy over Egypt, and puts into effect the plan that he had outlined to Pharaoh to save Egypt by preserving the grain from the seven years of plenty. Once the years of famine begin, and the only food available is in Egypt, Jacob sends his sons down to Egypt to purchase grain. Joseph is on the lookout for them and when they arrive, he has them brought to him. He accuses them of treachery and imprisons them for three days.

Moses accuses his brothers of being spies. He uses the words, "meraglim achem" – "you are spies". It seems an outlandish accusation. We know that in the future Moses would send men to scout – latur - the land. Instead of touring and seeing the positive, they act as meraglim, looking for the shortcomings. One representative for each tribe. Commenting on the verse "And Joseph said to them, 'You are spies...'" our sages said that Joseph was hinting to his brothers that they would [be reincarnated and] spy out the land of Israel.

In our class this week we suggested that Joseph was warning his brothers. He is telling them that they were unwilling to look beyond the surface when it came to passing judgment on him. They were judging a book by its cover. They searched only for shortcomings. He is warning that in their failure they would be given an opportunity to return again and face what in reality is the same test. In the future they would return, each as a leader and representative of their tribe. Would they fail again? Would they be

unable to see beyond the surface? Would they see only shortcomings?

Perhaps that test is our eternal test. Do we judge a book by its cover? Do we fail to see beyond the surface?

Hanukkah is the last of the established holidays. It was established as we were ending the period of Greek dominance and beginning the two millennia of galut Edom or the period of our Roman exile. It occurs as Hashem goes into hiding behind a screen. It coincides with the end of the period of prophecy and the end of open miracles. It's as if Hashem begins a period of hiding, yet hiding in plain sight, and he gives us a tool to find him. That tool is the candle.

There are no miracles anymore, yet there are countless miracles every day. Hashem is hiding yet he is there for us every moment of every day. We just need to open our eyes. We need to use the candle to search the cracks and crevices. We need to discover that which is hiding in plain sight. One day's oil lasts eight days. A small army defeats a greater force. These are not miracles relegated to history; these are miracles that occur and reoccur every day. A nation surrounded by 360 million enemies thrives while those enemies sink further into a hideous pit each day. An army defeats surrounding armies in 6 days. A kollel rabbi stretches his funds to support his family against all odds. The sun rises and sets. Let's use the Hanukkah candles to look for the good. Let's use the Hanukkah candles and peer beyond the surface. Let's use the Hanukkah candles and experience the miracles of life.

Shabbat Shalom and Happy Hanukkah

David Bibi

Summary of The Weekly Torah Reading:

1st Aliya: The year is 2229 and Yoseph has been in prison for 12 years. Pharaoh has two similar dreams and demands their interpretation. The wine steward remembers Yoseph and his gift for dream interpretation, and Yoseph is rushed into Pharaoh's presence.

2nd Aliya: Yoseph interprets Pharaoh's dream and suggests to him how to best administrate the seven years of plenty and the seven years of famine. (The extent of Yoseph's brilliance will first be revealed in next week's Parsha.)

3rd Aliya: Yoseph is appointed viceroy over Egypt, and puts into effect the plan that he had outlined to Pharaoh. He marries the daughter of Potiphar (the daughter of Dina) and has two sons, Menashe and Ephrayim.

4th Aliya: The seven years of famine begin, and the only food available is in Mitzrayim. Yoseph, unrecognized by his brothers, recognizes them when they come to buy food. He accuses them of treachery and imprisons them for three days.

5th Aliya: Yoseph demands that Binyamin be brought to Egypt and keeps Shimon as a hostage. The brothers relate their adventure to Yakov who refuses to send Binyamin. The increasing famine forces Yakov to concede to Yehuda's guarantee that Binyamin will be safe, and the brothers return to Egypt.

6th Aliya: The brothers are reunited with Shimon and invited to eat at the table of Yoseph. All appears to be forgiven and Yoseph sees Binyamin for the first time in 22 years.

7th Aliya: Yoseph hatches his final plot against his brothers. His famed chalice is planted in the Binyamin's saddlebag forcing the brothers to return to Mitzrayim and a confrontation with Yoseph. The year is 2238.

Zechariah 2:14 - This week's Haftorah relates to the theme of Shabbos Chanukah. At the end of the Babylonian exile, 9 years before the story of Purim (3390-371 b.c.e), 40,000 Jews, lead by Zerubavel and Yehoshua the Kohen Gadol, returned to Israel. They began to rebuild the Bais Hamikdash, but Cyrus withdrew his permission and the construction was halted. Following the story of Purim and a prophecy from Chagay, the rebuilding resumed 18 years later (3408-353).

This week's Haftorah is the prophecy of Zechariah which preceded the inauguration of the second Bais Hamikdash. It describes the status of the Kohen Gadol and the people as seemingly unfit to carry out the service. Hashem (G-d) relates to Zechariah that in fact, Yehoshua and the nation are ready to resume full service in the Bais Hamikdash. The prophecy includes a vision of the Menorah with a continuous supply of olive oil, reminiscent of the miracle of Chanukah.

EXCERPTS FROM THE JERSEY SHORE TORAH BULLETIN

"Whoever fulfills the misvah of kindling Hanukah lights on a regular basis will be blessed with sons who are learned in Torah." (Talmud Babli Shababt 23b)

This statement presents obvious problems. Firstly, why should the performance of this particular misvah be recompensed with the reward of learned children? What is the connection between the two? Secondly, in view of the fact that kindling Hanukah lights is practiced in thousands of Jewish homes, every household should be bursting with Talmidei Hachamim, which, alas, is not the case?

Rabbi Pinchas Roberts explains this Gemara in the name of Rabbi S. Wolbe zt"l. Whenever we consider sending our children to yeshivah for a lengthy period or to join a kollel for advanced study, the problem of earning a living immediately comes to the fore. It is generally accepted that to achieve a degree of Torah scholarship requires years of dedication, and according to the "laws of nature," this would surely jeopardize his prospects of becoming a breadwinner for his family. Torah knowledge does not guarantee an income, and by then, it is too late to train for a worthwhile profession.

It seems an insufferable problem. But only for those people who have never fully absorbed the lesson of Hanukah. In the year 3622, a miracle took place that completely defied natural laws. A small crucible of oil, enough for one day only, burned for eight days until fresh pure oil became available. This wondrous event taught the Jewish people that nature does not hold sway and rule our lives. It is in fact merely the concealed tool of Hashem through which He works His designs with almost endless regularity. Occasionally, however, His Divine control becomes clearly visible in rare flashes which are termed "miracles" – as on Hanukah when "normal" oil burned "abnormally" long. This proved conclusively that nature is but the Hand of Hashem hidden behind the commonplace.

Viewed in this light, the statement רב ליגרה הכונה suggests a new connotation. It does not mean someone who simply kindles the Menorah and nothing more – that in itself will never produce learned offspring. It refers to a person who, when lighting, also contemplates the momentous lesson of that famous crucible of old. He constantly reflects on its message that nature is not a separate entity with authority to dictate our conduct in life and become an obstacle in the pursuit of Torah and misvot. For us, the only power that exists is the Hand of Hashem and if we aim to bring honor to His Name by learning Torah, He will surely bless our efforts with success, even if it goes against the natural trend. This is the

moral of the Hanukah candle and once it is assimilated, we will find the necessary courage to allow and even encourage our children to become Torah scholars without worrying about their source of income. Hashem, Who directs every facet of life will never forsake His devoted servants, when and if they ultimately need to pursue a livelihood. Shabbat Shalom. Rabbi Reuven Semah

One of the most famous questions in Halachic literature involves the lighting of the Hanukah menorah. We all know that we celebrate Hanukah for eight days because the pure oil which the Hashmonaim found when they rededicated the Temple was supposed to last one day, but it lasted eight days. The obvious question is: if so, the miracle was only 7 days since there was enough to last for one day. Why then is the holiday 8 days?

Hundreds of answers have been offered to this question. One interesting one is based on an amazing statement by one of the Rabbis that this flask which was found by the Hashmonaim was put away many years earlier because of something special which happened to it. It seems that the Kohen used to fill up a flask using a ladle and that was enough to fill up the seven lamps of the menorah. One time, the Kohen filled up the flask with the usual amount in the ladle, and he realized that the flask was still not full. He again ladled in more oil and it still wasn't filling up the flask. He did it for a total of eight times, and by then he realized that this is a miraculous flask. He therefore hid it for the future, and this is the one which lit the menorah at Hanukah time for eight days.

We therefore celebrate eight days of Hanukah to commemorate that special miracle that Hashem prepared the cure before we even recognized the ailment. Let us celebrate Hanukah confident in the knowledge that Hashem always prepares the antidote before the illness. Shabbat Shalom and Happy Hanukah. Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

RABBI ELI MANSOUR
Visit DailyHalacha.com, DailyGemara.com,
MishnaBerura.com, LearnTorah.com
Teaching by Example

Parashat Miketz begins by relating the peculiar dreams dreamt by Pharaoh, for which he sought an interpreter. His search for an interpreter led to Yosef's release from prison, and ultimately to his rise to the position of vizier in Egypt.

The Torah tells that in Pharaoh's dreams, he saw himself standing "on the river," referring to the Nile

River. The Sages teach that the Egyptians at the time worshipped the Nile River, as the nation's agriculture depended upon its waters. Each year, the river would overflow and irrigate the country's agricultural lands; if it didn't overflow, Egypt's crops wouldn't grow and a food shortage would ensue. The people therefore came to look to the river as a sort of divine being, to which they prayed as a god.

That Pharaoh dreamt of himself standing over the Nile River likely points to the fact that in his unbridled arrogance, he professed a "divine" stature beyond that of the river. He claimed to be a god that exerted control even over the body of water which the Egyptian population worshipped. This is in contrast to Yaakob's dream, in which "God was standing over him" (28:13). Yaakob lived with a keen sense of God's control and authority over him. Thus, while Pharaoh dreamt of standing over the Nile, Yaakob dreamt of God standing over him.

Interestingly enough, when Pharaoh relates his dream to Yosef, he describes the vision a bit differently, telling Yosef that he stood "along the banks of the river" ("Al Sefat Ha'ye'or" – 41:17). According to this version, Pharaoh stood not on the river, but rather next to the river. Some commentators explain that Pharaoh wanted to test Yosef, to see if he would take note of his modifications. However, in light of what we have seen, we might suggest a different explanation – that after meeting Yosef, Pharaoh felt ashamed of the arrogance reflected in his vision.

When Yosef first approached Pharaoh, the king told him, "I heard about you that you can hear a dream and interpret it" (41:15). A person in Yosef's position – a prisoner suddenly given a chance to meet the king – would normally seize the opportunity to impress. We might thus have expected Yosef to say something to the effect of, "Indeed, I am a talented interpreter of dreams." Instead, Yosef said the precise opposite: "It is not me; God shall answer to Pharaoh's satisfaction" (41:16). In characteristic humility, Yosef refused to take credit for his prophetic abilities, and instead attributed all his talents to the Almighty.

It seems that Yosef's remarkable display of humility left a profound impression on Pharaoh. He immediately recognized the vast difference between Yosef – who downplayed his own exceptional gifts – and himself, who was so arrogant that he dreamt of exerting power over the gods. Thus, as he related the dreams to Yosef, he was too ashamed to say that he saw himself standing over the Nile River. Instead, he described himself as standing alongside the river.

The most effective way of influencing another person is through personal example. Preaching and criticism very seldom achieve the desired effect of changing somebody. But when we live by the ideals we seek to instill in others, when we serve as a living example of those values, we leave an impression. Yosef inspired even the stubborn, arrogant Pharaoh – not by offering direct criticism, but simply by conducting himself with humility.

This is a most crucial lesson for parents. Teaching by example is the most effective means of educating our children. When they see our priorities and observe how we speak and conduct ourselves, they take note and learn to do the same. If Yosef was able to influence Pharaoh through personal example, then we are certainly capable of inspiring our children by setting an example of Torah values.

Rabbi Wein

CHESS MASTERS

Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz, the noted educator, author and Talmudist recently wrote a lengthy article in one of the religiously oriented newspapers here in Israel about the problems of curriculum as it currently exists in Israeli Orthodox Jewish schools - and worldwide. He decried what he considered to be the over-emphasis and even exclusivity of the study of Talmud, to the exception of all other areas of Torah scholarship, that exist in our schools.

He compared the study of Talmud to learning how to play chess. Chess in its highest form is a very complicated and exacting mental exercise with relatively simple moves on the chessboard that even young children can master. Yet we all realize that there are relatively few chess masters in the world. Though almost all of us know the simple moves of the game and understand the ultimate purpose of capturing the opponent's king, few of us are really disappointed at not being masters of the game.

Rabbi Steinsaltz maintains that this is a just comparison to the study of Talmud. Everyone can learn the simple rules of that study. But, few can rise to the level of master. And everyone understands that the purpose of the study is not only to grant one familiarity with the Oral Law of Sinai but also to facilitate a soulful and emotional connection with Jewish tradition, Torah values and an intimate connection with one's inner self and its Creator.

Rabbi Steinsaltz agrees that everyone should learn the rudiments of playing chess. But it is impractical to create an educational system geared only for chess masters, who realistically will always be only a small minority of the players. By carrying this analogy over to the world of Jewish education and curriculum, in his view, less stress, time and effort should be devoted to the study of Talmud in Jewish schools at the expense of other necessary subjects of Torah and tradition.

This issue has long ago festered in the Jewish educational world. On the one hand, it is obvious that the Jewish world will always need masters – people who are great in Torah knowledge and steeped in Talmudic analysis. Without the great scholars in Torah – and this immediately presupposes mastery of Talmud and its layers of commentary and exposition – the great spiritual world of Judaism, and in fact the continuity of the Jewish people, is placed at risk.

On the other hand, the vast majority of students attending our religious schools today are not going to be masters, at least as far as Talmud is concerned. In fact, many a promising student has been turned off to Judaism itself by the preponderance of Talmud study in the curriculum of the Jewish school that he attended.

The yeshiva world of Eastern Europe – especially in Lithuania in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, was composed of prestigious institutions catering to a very elite and relatively small student body. Before World War II there were probably no more than 3500 students in all of the yeshivot of the Eastern Europe combined. In the Diaspora, in spite of the substantial population of Jews, the number of students in yeshivot then was probably even smaller. The yeshivot were the schools of the masters and not of the ordinary.

All of this changed after World War II. The destruction of Eastern European Jewry and of almost all of its yeshivot created a black hole in the Jewish world. The great men of Torah, the relatively few who somehow survived the Holocaust, now devoted themselves selflessly and almost exclusively to rebuilding the world of intensive and elite Torah study.

They were determined to create new masters, and in order to do so every Jewish student had to at least learn the rudimentary rules and moves of the game. This emphasis slowly but surely came to dominate the curriculum of all Jewish schools, and the goal

remained to produce masters, even at the expense of the ordinary players.

This was especially true when it became clear that in the modern, secular, assimilationist atmosphere, it was almost impossible to remain an observant and believing traditional Jew without a relatively intense education in Talmud. So, as is always the case in life generally and certainly in Jewish life, the issue now becomes a matter of balance.

We cannot educate everyone to become a master. Yet everyone must somehow know the moves of the game and be able to participate. There are now new initiatives and institutions that somehow are trying to square this circle.

The full wonder and breadth of Torah and Judaism should be communicated to the next generation of Jews currently populating our schools. How to accomplish this without an unrealistic overemphasis on the exclusivity of the study of Talmud remains one of the core problems faced by Jewish educators in today's world.

Chief Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks Appearance and Reality

Finally after twenty-two years and many twists and turns, Joseph and his brothers meet. We sense the drama of the moment. The last time they had been together, the brothers planned to kill Joseph and eventually sold him as a slave. One of the reasons they did so is that they were angry at his reports about his dreams. He twice dreamed that his brothers would bow down to him. To them that sounded like hubris, excessive confidence and conceit.

Hubris is usually punished by nemesis and so it was in Joseph's case. Far from being a ruler, his brothers turned him into a slave. That, however, turned out not to be the end of the story but only the beginning. Unexpectedly, now in this week's parsha, the dream has just come true. The brothers do bow down to him, "their faces to the ground" (Gen. 42: 6). Now, we feel, the story has reached its end. Instead it turns out only to be the beginning of another story altogether, about sin, repentance and forgiveness. Biblical stories tend to defy narrative conventions.

The reason, though, that the story does not end with the brothers' meeting is that only one person present at the scene, Joseph himself, knew that it was a meeting. "As soon as Joseph saw his brothers, he recognised them, but he pretended to be a stranger

and spoke harshly to them ... Joseph recognised his brothers, but they did not recognise him."

There were many reasons they did not recognise him. They did not know he was in Egypt. They believed he was still a slave while the man before whom they bowed was a viceroy. Besides which, he looked like an Egyptian, spoke Egyptian and had an Egyptian name, Tsofenat Paneakh. Most importantly, though, he was wearing the uniform of an Egyptian of high rank. That had been the sign of Joseph's elevation at the hand of Pharaoh when he interpreted his dreams:

So Pharaoh said to Joseph, 'I hereby put you in charge of the whole land of Egypt.' Then Pharaoh took his signet ring from his finger and put it on Joseph's finger. He dressed him in robes of fine linen and put a gold chain round his neck. He made him ride in a chariot as his second-in-command, and people shouted before him, 'Make way.' Thus he put him in charge of the whole land of Egypt. (Gen. 41: 41-43)

We know from Egyptian wall paintings and from archeological discoveries like Tutankhamen's tomb, how stylised and elaborate were Egyptian robes of office. Different ranks wore different clothes. Early pharaohs had two headdresses, a white one to mark the fact that they were kings of upper Egypt, and a red one to signal that they were kings of lower Egypt. Like all uniforms, clothes told a story, or as we say nowadays, "made a statement." They proclaimed a person's status. Someone dressed like the Egyptian before whom the brothers had just bowed could not possibly be their long lost brother Joseph. Except that it was.

This seems like a minor matter. I want in this essay to argue the opposite. It turns out to be a very major matter indeed. The first thing we need to note is that the Torah as a whole, and Genesis in particular, has a way of focusing our attention on a major theme: it presents us with recurring episodes. Robert Alter calls them "type scenes."^[1] There is, for example, the theme of sibling rivalry that appears four times in Genesis: Cain and Abel, Isaac and Ishmael, Jacob and Esau and Joseph and his brothers. There is the theme that occurs three times of the patriarch forced to leave home because of famine, and then realising that he will have to ask his wife to pretend she is his sister for fear that he will be murdered so that she can be taken into the royal harem. And there is the theme of finding-future-wife-at-well, which also occurs three times: Rebecca, Rachel and Jethro's daughter Zipporah.

The encounter between Joseph and his brothers is the fifth in a series of stories in which clothes play a key role. The first is Jacob who dresses in Esau's clothes while bringing his father a meal so that he can take his brother's blessing. Second is Joseph's finely embroidered robe or "coat of many colours," which the brothers bring back to their father stained in blood, saying that a wild animal must have seized him.

Third is the story of Tamar taking off her widow's dress, covering herself with a veil, and making herself look as if she were a prostitute. Fourth is the robe Joseph leaves in the hands of Potiphar's wife while escaping her attempt to seduce him. The fifth is the one in today's parsha in which Pharaoh dresses Joseph as a high-ranking Egyptian, with clothes of linen, a gold chain and the royal signet ring.

What all five cases have in common is that they facilitate deception. In each case, they bring about a situation in which things are not as they seem. Jacob wears Esau's clothes because he is worried that his blind father will feel him and realise that the smooth skin does not belong to Esau but to his younger brother. In the end it is not only the texture but also the smell of the clothes that deceives Isaac: "Ah, the smell of my son is like the smell of a field the Lord has blessed" (Gen. 27: 27).

Joseph's stained robe was produced by the brothers to disguise the fact that they were responsible for Joseph's disappearance. Jacob "recognized it and said, "It is my son's robe! A wild animal has devoured him. Joseph has surely been torn to pieces." (Gen. 37: 33).

Tamar's appearance dressed as a veiled prostitute was intended to deceive Judah into sleeping with her since she wanted to have a child to "raise up the name" of her dead husband Er. It seems that in the pre-mosaic law of levirate marriage, other close relatives like a father-in-law, not just a brother-in-law, could fulfil the duty. Judah was duly deceived, and only realised what had happened when, three months later, Tamar produced the cord and staff she had taken from him as a pledge.

Potiphar's wife used the evidence of Joseph's robe to substantiate her claim that he had tried to rape her, a crime of which he was wholly innocent.

Lastly, Joseph used the fact that his brothers did not recognise him to set in motion a series of staged events to test whether they were still capable of selling a brother as a slave or whether they had changed.

So the five stories about garments tell a single story: things are not necessarily as they seem.

Appearances deceive. It is therefore with a frisson of discovery that we realise that the Hebrew word for garment, b-g-d, is also the Hebrew word for "betrayal," as in the confession formula, Ashamnu, bagadnu, "We have been guilty, we have betrayed."

Is this a mere literary conceit, a way of linking a series of otherwise unconnected stories? Or is there something more fundamental at stake?

It was the nineteenth century Jewish historian Heinrich Graetz who pointed out a fundamental difference between other ancient cultures and Judaism: "The pagan perceives the Divine in nature through the medium of the eye, and he becomes conscious of it as something to be looked at. On the other hand, to the Jew who conceives God as being outside of nature and prior to it, the Divine manifests itself through the will and through the medium of the ear . . . The pagan beholds his god, the Jew hears Him; that is, apprehends His will." [2]

In the twentieth century, literary theorist Erich Auerbach contrasted the literary style of Homer with that of the Hebrew Bible. [3] In Homer's prose we see the play of light on surfaces. The Odyssey and Iliad are full of visual descriptions. By contrast, biblical narrative has very few such descriptions. We do not know how tall Abraham was, the colour of Isaac's hair, or what Moses looked like. Visual details are minimal, and are present only when necessary to understand what follows. We are told for example that Joseph was good-looking (Gen. 39: 6) only to explain why Potiphar's wife conceived a desire for him.

The key to the five stories occurs later on in Tanakh, in the biblical account of Israel's first two kings. Saul looked like royalty. He was "head and shoulders above" everyone else (1 Sam. 9: 2). He was tall. He had presence. He had the bearing of a king. But he lacked self confidence. He followed the people rather than leading them. Samuel had to rebuke him with the words, "You may be small in your own eyes but you are head of the tribes of Israel." Appearance and reality were opposites. Saul had physical but not moral stature.

The contrast with David was total. When God told Samuel to go to the family of Yishai to find Israel's next king, no one even thought of David, the youngest of the family. Samuel's first instinct was to choose Eliav who, like Saul, looked the part. But God told him, "Do not consider his appearance or his

height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance but the Lord looks at the heart" (1 Samuel 16: 7).

Only when we have read all these stories are we able to return to the first story of all in which clothes play a part: the story of Adam and Eve and the forbidden fruit, after eating which they see they are naked. They are ashamed and they make clothes for themselves. That is a story for another occasion but its theme should now be clear. It is about eyes and ears, seeing and listening. Adam and Eve's sin had little to do with fruit, or sex, and everything to do with the fact that they let what they saw override what they had heard.

"Joseph recognised his brothers, but they did not recognise him." The reason they did not recognise him is that, from the start, they allowed their feelings to be guided by what they saw, the "coat of many colours" that inflamed their envy of their younger brother. Judge by appearances and you will miss the deeper truth about situations and people. You will even miss God Himself, for God cannot be seen, only heard. That is why the primary imperative in Judaism is Shema Yisrael, "Listen, O Israel," and why, when we say the first line of the Shema, we place our hand over our eyes so that we cannot see.

Appearances deceive. Clothes betray. Deep understanding, whether of God or of human beings, needs the ability to listen.

[1] Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, New York, Basic Books, 1981, 55-78.

[2] Heinrich Graetz, *The structure of Jewish history, and other essays*, New York, Ktav Publishing House, 1975, 68.

[3] Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1957, 3-23.

AS HEARD FROM RABBI AVIGDOR MILLER Z'TL

"The cornerstone which was despised by the builders, became the top (exalted) of the edifice" (Tehillim 118:22).

This week we say the complete 'Hallel' for the full eight days of Chanukah. David Hamelech included this principle in the wealth of thoughts of praise, gratitude and excitement found in Hallel.

Yosef Hatzadeek was at the most desperate point in his career. He was sold into slavery, taken to a

foreign land, unjustly accused and thrown into jail for 12 years. "The cornerstone which was despised by the builders." referring to Yosef who was also rejected by his brothers.

Now Pharaoh does something unprecedented, irresponsible and unexpected. He could have just given Yosef a great reward for interpreting the dreams. Pharaoh takes the King's ring off of his finger and puts it on Yosef!! This evokes feelings of wild excitement in us. Yosef is King of Egypt!!

Just like the elation experienced by our Nation at Chanukah when the single flask of oil miraculously stayed lit for 8 days. And also when we saw that suddenly Haman was hanging on the tree and the King's ring was placed on Mordecai's finger. All of these revelations by Hashem are indications that: "Hashem is with His Jewish People."

The next verse of the Hallel reveals the true purpose, that of gaining Emunah. "This (unexpected surprise) is from Hashem, it is (meant to be) a wonder in our eyes." (ibid.188:23) Hashem operates the world utilizing 'surprises' throughout history in order to reveal that it is He who manages the affairs of the world with His Providence.

Some examples are, Yishmael was older but Yitzchak was chosen. Esav was the first born but Yaacob was the chosen one. Yosef was younger and despised by the Brothers yet through it all Yosef was chosen. David was the youngest and his lineage was suspected however he became King David. The Jewish nation is the most despised and very small in numbers yet we are the Chosen of Hashem and will become "the top of the edifice" at the end.

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