

SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE

SHABBAT MIKESS

Haftarah: Zechariah 2:14-4:7

DECEMBER 24, 2011 28 KISLEV 5772

Rosh Hodesh Tebet will be celebrated on Monday & Tuesday, Dec. 27 & 28.

DEDICATIONS: Refuah Shelemah for Yosef Mordechai ben Rut

Daily Minyan – 59th Street and Third Avenue - 4PM Monday thru Thursday – 20 minutes Mincha and Arbit – Please join us, we could use your support. Artistic, 979 Third Ave, #1705 between 58th and 59th – More information ... call Rabbi Danny Greenwald 212-289-2100

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A friend in London writes: I don't know if you were ever in central London, but there is only one kosher restaurant here. A few months ago some friends and I decided to do something about it, employed a chef, took a shop and opened a new place 'Deli West One'. It is in the West End, close to Oxford Street. It has b"n been very well received.

It is a London Bet Din licensed New York Deli with home cured corned beef, pastrami, turkey, etc and other deli items like soups and salads. I see a lot of visitors from the NY community over here, so please pass the word so they will know there's somewhere to eat. We are open motsei shabbat and Sunday to Thursday 11.30 to 11.00. Our website is www.thedelilondon.com

Editors Notes

Last week we quoted the opening words of the portion "*Vayeshev Yaakov*" with Rashi's comment, "that Yaakov wished to dwell in calmness and tranquillity". I had some cute responses to what I wrote. One reader sent an image of himself on a hammock on a beach in the Caribbean on Friday morning reading the newsletter, with the simple message, "Now this is tranquillity! Wish you could be here Dave, Shabbat Shalom!".

Now it would have been nice to spend a couple of weeks hiding out on a warm beach with my wife and my books ... but that was not going to be ... especially this week.

The second part of Rashi's comments continue, "*Tzaddikim* want a peaceful life? Is the good that awaits them in the World to Come not sufficient, that they desire calmness and tranquillity in this world?" Although far from a Saddik, I should have paid better attention to the second part of what Rashi quoted.

My sweet father in law had trouble breathing Shabbat evening so it was off to St Francis Hospital. He went from the emergency room to being admitted and the ensuing five days were a mental and emotional roller coaster for my poor wife and the family. B"H with the help and constant support of my dear friend who is really like a brother to me, Meyer Abittan who is Chief of Interventional Cardiology and his team at St. Francis, Jerry came home late last night newly improved.

But that started a whirlwind week Saturday night. After leaving the emergency room I got a couple of hours sleep and was off to Manhattan where my son Moses and thirteen more of his colleagues in the Yeshiva Boys Choir were scheduled to perform on the CBS morning show. This repeated itself the next night and

early morning where they were scheduled to be on FOX's morning show. It was a pleasure to see these kids and the Kiddush Hashem they brought. The show's anchors, producers, directors, set people and writers were all so impressed with their tremendous midot. And countless people saw them sing their Chanukah song with a tune so catchy kids all over were singing it in the days that followed. If you google "Youtube, Yeshiva Boys Choir" and add Chanukah, CBS or Fox, you can see the original music video with close to 100,000 hits already as well as the CBS (click the 4:55 version) and Fox performances.

It seemed every moment of the week was taken. With Chantelle in the hospital, I became Mr Mom with the help of Aryana. I still had my classes combined with the hysteria at work in the week before the mass Exodus from New York. It seemed that every client from hotel to residential all needed their furniture this week!

And the craziness continued. One competitor shut down operations abruptly on Monday and we were meeting with some of their clients who were left with product on order. Then Wednesday, word had it that two other competitors were either closing or vastly reducing operations and a fourth was calling me daily in hopes we would take over their company.

Appreciating the hard work these people had done; the investment, sweat equity and effort they put in, I felt terrible for them. We really got to the point where we felt there is something for everyone and to see people at a time where the norm has become to work twice as hard for half as much throw in the towel saddened me. With so many people struggling today for whom struggling was inconceivable a few short years ago, how can one enjoy the misfortune of others, even a competitor? These were the seven lean years from Pharaoh's dream. Hopefully they quickly end as Pharaoh's seven years became two.

With so much happening, I hoped to catch up on Thursday with everything I had been unable to get to. Thursday is typically my "make up day" where I put in 12-16 hours, sleep in the city and hope to figuratively clear my desk, so I am comfortable getting our early for Shabbat on Friday. Then I got a call Wednesday evening. A man from the Synagogue passed away. The Niftar who only came to the Bet Keneset on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur specifically asked if I would officiate at the funeral. The family echoed the request and I was torn.

Whenever I hear of someone passing I have such a tremendous appreciation for the community where in these cases everything is handled. I am in awe of great men such as Rabbi Shelomo Lankry (who as a dear friend of Rabbi Abittan was the first to insist I at least try to fill Rabbi Abittan's shoes as the Rabbi in the Synagogue telling me he KNEW that this is what the Rabbi wanted) Mickey Kairey and the late Marvin Azrak.

Rabbi Eli Mansour noted that remarkably, Rabbi Lankry and

Mickey Kairey are the happiest people he knows (and I would say the same for Marvin z'sl), and yet they spend a good deal of their day involved with the *hesed shel emet* (proper Jewish burials).

With all this on my mind, eating very late and an early morning meeting, I had a wiggly dream (is wiggly a real word or some form of community slang?) that spooked the heck out of me and said I would do it.

Within the community a funeral has a simple and repeated process. Every funeral is more or less the same from where they take place to how things are handled to the trip to Staten Island. Whether very wealthy, poor or somewhere in between it makes little difference. People know that someone is handling everything, they have to make few if any decisions, where they should sit, who should speak, who goes to the cemetery, how they get to the cemetery (all things we would rather not know). Not so out on the Island where we have quite a few three day Jewish families. These are people who made it possible for us to have a Synagogue with their commitment in time and money and we must have hakarat hatov for all they did. But Jews who are not observant can really throw you through a few hoops. Try explaining no eulogies on Chanukah and the myriad other details and laws that we take for granted and that their relatives who are even less committed find so strange. With the help of Sam Shetrit, my partner in these endeavours, we insisted, we explained and we modified. Ida (our Rebetzin, Rabbi Abittan's wife) told us that the Rabbi would have been very proud. Yes, mother, I really do need to hear that every time I do something big!

So we are leaving the cemetery and I learn that my wife needs to stay at the hospital because of complications. I'll need to take Moses to an interview for high school that afternoon. It will be impossible to get to the city and back so I rush to pray Mincha, then home, log onto my computer and at least clear my email and task log.

We get to the high school where I sit with the secular studies dean while Moses is being tested in Gemarah – Talmud by one of the Judaic Study principals. We play Jewish geography and the number of people we share as friends is amazing. He talks to me about the school and realizing there are others waiting I suggest we end the meeting but can talk later. He takes me to the Rosh Yeshiva. I see Moses who is relishing the fact that the Rabbis in the Judaic studies office are treating him as a celebrity. They have all seen him on YouTube or TV and their kids play the YBC videos again and again. One Rabbi asks Moses to take a picture with him so he can show his kids that he really was with Moses! As he walks through the school, people are asking him, "Are you the kid in the YBC videos; are you Moses?" It couldn't have been better orchestrated even if it was some pre-planned recruitment plan.

Earlier this week we had a bit of related comic relief. A girl called asking for Moses. I thought it was a friend of my youngest daughter Mariyah asking Moses for help. We took a number and it turned out to be a young lady who was a fan of YBC and wanted Moses to give her a pitgam from one of his songs for her year book. Moses quoted a statement of Rabbi Akiba and she asked where it was from. Moses pulled out a Pirkei Avot, and gave her the details. She was so happy, but Moses

nonchalantly what school she went to, asked if she needed anything else and said bye. Wow!

Well from the interview I rushed Moses back to school for a Hanukah Haggigah, spoke with some of the rabbis and ran off to visit with the family of the Niftar and pay a condolence call. I discussed the halachot of aveylut and the concept of doing misvot to raise the soul of the departed with the two children of the man who passed away. He was almost 97. They asked me to explain all this to the entire family of children, grandchildren, great grandchildren, inlaws and friends. I took this as a kiruv opportunity and encourage them to do some misvah each day in memory of the man who did so much for them. And we had a bit of a class for a while.

From there I ran back to get Moses. Went home had some dinner. And by now it was pretty late. Chantelle finally got back at 2AM. Her dad was home and well. We spoke for the next hour as we had little time prior during the week. At 3 Aryana walked in and had some thoughts on the Perasha she wanted to share with the night owl (my wife) who is usually baking Challah at that hour. They called Mikhayla in Israel who was on her way to Tiberius. And I got my one sleep cycle of 90 minutes before making my way to the city.

I wrote this on the way in. And now I am supposed to write an article? Joseph and his brothers? I don't think so! But there are lots of greta divrei Torah below. How I look forward to Shabbat! Thanks to Allen and Shoshana Pilevsky for having us as guests (even though their built in sofa never got delivered ... but that's another story).

So to Shabbat and maybe a trip to a warm beach very soon !!!

Shabbat Shalom
David Bibi

SOME HALACHOT OF CHANUKAH – FRIDAY AND SATURDAY NIGHT

There is a disagreement among the Rishonim as to the order of lighting Shabbat and Chanukah candles on Erev Shabbat Chanukah. The Ba'al Halachot Gedolot (commonly referred to as The "Behag") is of the opinion that Shabbat candles must be lit before Chanukah candles because women customarily accept upon themselves the sanctity of Shabbat by lighting the Shabbat candles and were they to light Shabbat candles first, they would then be unable to light Chanukah candles thereafter. Clearly then, Chanukah candles must be lit first. This opinion is quoted by the Tur. Although we have a rule that the more common of two Mitzvot must be performed first, for instance in Kiddush of Friday night the "Ha'Gefen" blessing precedes the blessing of "Mekadesh Ha'Shabbat" because it is more common (as explained in the Gemara in Berachot 51b), so too, in our case, Shabbat candles are lit more often than Chanukah candles; would it not follow that Shabbat candles be lit first? Rather, according to this opinion since it would not be possible to light Chanukah candles after Shabbat candles, the Chanukah candles must indeed be lit first.

However, the Ramban and the Rashba disagree with the Behag's opinion, and they hold that lighting Shabbat candles in no way constitutes an acceptance of Shabbat, and since this woman, and everyone else for that matter, has in mind to light Chanukah candles after lighting

the Shabbat candles, according to all opinions she has not yet accepted Shabbat. Thus, they have ruled that one should first light Shabbat candles and only then light Chanukah candles, based on the rule of performing the more frequent Mitzvah first.

Halachically speaking, the ruling on this matter follows Maran HaShulchan Aruch that a woman's lighting of Shabbat candles does not constitute an acceptance of the sanctity of Shabbat, especially if she has in mind to perform work afterwards, for instance lighting Chanukah candles and the like, in which case she certainly has not yet accepted Shabbat. This applies all the more so regarding the husband of this woman, who is usually the one to light the Chanukah candles, that he has not accepted Shabbat on the basis of his wife's lighting of the Shabbat candles. It would then seem that the Halacha should follow the ruling of the Ramban that Shabbat candles should indeed be lit first.

However, the Radbaz writes that even though we hold that one does not accept Shabbat by lighting Shabbat candles, since there is a dispute amongst the Rishonim regarding this matter, plus the Mitzvah of lighting Chanukah is more beloved, it is therefore proper to light Chanukah candles first, even against the rule of the more common Mitzvah coming first. Similarly, Maran HaBet Yosef writes that even according to the opinion of the Ramban and the Rashba that Shabbat candles should be lit before Chanukah candles, one may still light whichever one he chooses first. Thus, it is preferable to light Chanukah candles before Shabbat candles in accordance with the opinion of the Ba'al Halachot Gedolot, as Maran rules

in Shulchan Aruch and is further explained in Chazon Ovadia on the Halachot of Chanukah.

On Motza'ei Shabbat Chanukah, in the synagogue the Chanukah candles are lit first and only following that is Havdala made, in order to delay the departure of Shabbat as much as possible. Although the one lighting the Chanukah candles removes the sanctity of Shabbat from himself, nevertheless, the rest of the members of the congregation who have not yet lit still remain in the sanctity of Shabbat. Also, the Chanukah candles are lit first in order to publicize the miracle, for if Havdala were to be made first, most of the congregation would have gone home before Chanukah candle lighting.

When one returns home from synagogue, since the act of lighting a fire will in any case remove the sanctity of Shabbat, he should first make Havdala and only then light Chanukah candles, for the more frequent Mitzvah should be performed first.

Those who follow the righteous custom not to do work on Motza'ei Shabbat until nightfall according to the opinion of Rabbeinu Tam should also abstain from lighting the Chanukah candles on Motza'ei Shabbat Chanukah until nightfall according to Rabbeinu Tam, for this is not merely "another good custom"; rather, it is correct and proper for everyone to follow the opinion of Rabbeinu Tam in this matter, especially since this is the opinion of Maran HaShulchan Aruch as well.

One may not recite the blessing of "Boreh Me'orei Ha'esh" on the Chanukah candles (for instance in the synagogue where Chanukah candles are lit before Havdala, or if a person mistakenly lit the Chanukah candles at home

before Havdala) for one may not recite this blessing until he benefits from the flame, and it is forbidden to benefit from the light of the Chanukah candles. However, one may recite this blessing on the "Shamash" (additional) candle, for one is permitted to benefit from the Shamash.

Maran Harav Ovadia Yosef Shlit"a writes that one does not fulfill his obligation by lighting electric Chanukah lights, since an electric Menorah contains neither oil or wicks and the miracle that occurred in the Menorah of the Holy Temple was in the oil which lasted for eight days. Therefore, even though one may light Chanukah candles filled with kerosene or paraffin oil, this is because they are somewhat similar to olive oil, unlike electricity which is in no way similar to olive oil. This is in addition to other reasons to prohibit lighting electric Chanukah candles. Maran Harav Ovadia Yosef Shlit"a writes, however, that if one is in a situation where he cannot light Chanukah candles with either oil or wax candles, he may in fact light an electric Menorah without reciting a blessing. Additionally, the electric Menorah must be laid in a place where it is not usually placed the rest of the year for it to be noticeable that these are Chanukah candles.

We have already mentioned in the laws of lighting Shabbat candles that regarding the blessing of "Boreh Me'orei Ha'esh" on Motza'ei Shabbat, one must specifically use an open flame, as opposed to electric light which is invalid for this blessing. We have also previously mentioned the Halacha regarding lighting electric Shabbat candles

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' 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.

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

"Yosef answered Pharaoh saying, 'It is beyond me. It is Hashem who can restore Pharaoh's peace.'" (Beresheet 41:16) Sir Moshe Montefiore was well respected among the British aristocracy, yet he remained a proudly observant Jew throughout his entire life. He once said that he took his cue from Yosef.

When Pharaoh needed a dream interpreted he called upon

Yosef., saying that he had heard that Yosef was skilled in interpreting dreams. Yosef denied having any expertise. He gave all the credit to Hashem. Yet this denial so impressed Pharaoh, in spite of being the idolator that he was, that he appointed Yosef as his viceroy.

The Jew gains greater respect by acknowledging his beliefs than by hiding them. Rabbi Reuven Semah

Though we Jews are only a small minority of the world's population, we have been assigned the formidable, seemingly impossible task of enlightening the entire world. The sages have given us a hint as to how this is possible. The halachah states that if a person lit the hanukah lights and the lights subsequently went out, he is not obligated to relight it (although it is preferable if possible). The reason is that "hadlakah osah misvah" - the kindling is the essence of the misvah. This symbolizes that we are charged with the responsibility to start the task of enlightening the world; G-d will see to its successful conclusion.

The lesson is that although we must do our share to promote and preserve Torah observance, and to be an example to the world, we need not be concerned if it seems that the task is not being accomplished. If we do our part, Hashem will intervene and He will see to it that the job is completed. Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

FORGET ABOUT IT

BUT ... "But" is a word that usually signals lashon hara – negative forbidden speech. For example, "Jacob is a nice guy, but I suspect his honesty," or "Sarah is a good cook, but I can't stand her taste in clothing." When people speak negatively about others, they attempt to excuse themselves by testifying to the

truth of the negative fact just expressed. After all, can they be blamed for noticing obvious flaws in other people?

On the other hand, when the subject is Yours Truly, the word "but" introduces an excuse for an error in judgment or a personality flaw. "I would have taken care of it, but I did not realize that..." or, "Yes, I did do it, but it was because..."

Complainers are people who see the negative in everyone and everything. Such individuals cannot accept the good in their surroundings because of the overwhelming need to complain about what is not to their satisfaction. Such people would be happy – but!

A happy person spends time explaining rather than complaining. Looking for the good in others and for the best in every situation, the joyful soul does say "but" when justifying the negatives in another: "She would be a better dresser, but her parents have no money and no taste in fashion," or, "He would be a better learner, but he never got the proper tutoring."

Make yourself and others happy. Train yourself to spend time explaining rather than complaining. You can do it if you really try...but maybe you haven't tried as yet! (One Minute With Yourself – Rabbi Raymond Beyda)

RABBI ELI MANSOUR Setting an Example

The Torah in Parashat Miketz tells the story of Yosef's brothers who come to Egypt to purchase grain. Unbeknownst to them, Yosef, whom they had sold as a slave many years earlier, had risen to the position of Egyptian vizier, and when they come before him to purchase grain,

they did not recognize him. Yosef accused them of coming to Egypt as spies, and imprisoned them. Three days later, he released them, and informed them that he had changed his mind. He would keep one brother in prison in Egypt while the others return to Canaan to bring the youngest brother, Binyamin, and this would prove that they are not spies.

When Yosef approached them after the three-day imprisonment to inform them of the change in plans, he first said, "This is what you shall do and thereby live; I am God-fearing" (42:18). Why did Yosef tell the brothers that he is "God fearing"? Rav Shimon Schwab (Germany-New York, 1908-1995) offers a brilliant explanation of Yosef's intent in these words. The defining characteristic of a God-fearing person is his ongoing self-evaluation. Somebody who truly fears God is constantly reexamining his conduct and lifestyle to determine what needs to be corrected or improved. He never feels completely comfortable and at ease with himself; he is always questioning and reexamining so he can continue to grow. This is what Yosef was telling the brothers: "Because I am God-fearing, I reconsidered my decision, and concluded that I should let you free."

Rav Schwab noted that this insight also explains the brothers' reaction to Yosef's new decision. The Torah says, "They did so" (42:20), which, at first glance, means that Yosef's new decision was implemented, and one brother was imprisoned while the others returned to Canaan. However, the Torah explicitly records this happening several verses later, indicating that "They did so" refers to something else. Rav Schwab explained that the phrase "They did so" introduces

what the Torah writes immediately thereafter – that the brothers expressed remorse over the sale of Yosef, and realized that the tribulations they were experiencing in Egypt were a punishment for what they did to their brother. In other words, the brothers learned from Yosef's example. Seeing how Yosef reconsidered his decision out of his fear of God, they, too, "did so" – they followed his example, and they looked back at their past deeds and reexamined their conduct. They were inspired by the Egyptian vizier, who treated them harshly but then reconsidered and changed his mind, and they, too, revisited their decisions of the past. And they realized that they acted wrongly in the way they treated Yosef, and that they were now being punished for their wrongdoing.

One lesson we can learn from this insight is the influential power of setting a personal example. Yosef taught by example the critical lesson of self-examination, and it had a profound impact upon the brothers. If we wish to influence the people around us, especially our children, the most effective way of doing this is by setting a personal example, by modeling the kind of behavior we want others to embrace. It worked for Yosef – and it can work for us, as well.

Rabbi Wein

The word miketz or keitz signifies "end" or "conclusion." It is usually used to denote the end of an era, the defining moment of the passage of time. It also denotes that a great change of circumstances is about to occur. What was before will be no longer. The end of the past will give way to a new reality. In this week's parsha the word introduces us to the radical change in the circumstances of

Yosef – from dungeon inmate to viceroy of Egypt.

In Jewish tradition, the word is employed to describe the end of the period of exile and trials of Israel and the beginning of the longed for redemption and messianic era. Implicit in our understanding of the word as it appears in the Torah and Jewish tradition is the understanding that nothing is certain and what may appear to be long lasting and immovable is always only temporary and given to change.

Only uncertainty is certain in our lives and in all human affairs. There is always an end to the present and a new future, for good or for better, always is present just over the horizon of time. This short Hebrew word mocks all of the predictions of experts in any field of endeavor. All such statements are based upon the known past and present but these come to an eventual end and the future remains as inscrutable as ever. We are experts in hindsight. We rarely achieve meaningful foresight in any field of human endeavor, and in national and personal living.

All of this is true regarding humankind generally. It is doubly true regarding the future of the Jewish people and Israel. Only the diehards stubbornly insist that somehow the path of the Oslo Agreements has not yet come to an end. Only the hardened and Jewishly Torah ignorant secularist believe that somehow theirs is the solution to the "Jewish problem," both internally and externally.

In our generation, the end has come to many ideas, ideologies and circumstances that were supposed to carry on for future centuries. The whole world's economic structure is now threatened by the unthinkable, something that economic experts

told us could never happen and that there never would be an end to consumer and debt driven prosperity.

Hitler's Reich was to have lasted one thousand years and Marx's economic theories were to have produced eternal peace, fairness and a certain and easily predictable future. The world operates as though the word *miketz* is not present in the human lexicon. That is the main tragic error in human society for it allows for faulty planning, a sense of overconfidence, and a pompous certainty of rectitude that is based on the false assumption that circumstances and eras do not change or end.

This week's parsha reiterates this true fact of our existence, uncomfortable as that may be to our psyche. The Midrash introduces its commentary to our parsha with the verse "keitz – an end has the Lord brought to our darkness." May that be the keitz to our era as well

Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky - Parsha Parables

It surely did not work out the way they planned it. Yaakov's sons thought they would go down to Egypt during the world's great famine, buy some food and return home safely. Things could not have turned out more bizarre. Instead of greeting the illustrious tribe warmly, Tzafnas Paneach, the viceroy of Egypt accused them of spying and interrogated them. The brothers did not know that the man acting like the eccentric paranoid was really their brother Yoseph. He accused the 10 brother's of spying, held Shimon in jail and ordered them: "Bring your youngest brother to me so your words will be verified and you will not die" (Genesis 42:19-20). They were stuck. The only way for the brothers to have

Shimon released was to bring the youngest brother, Binyamin, back to Egypt. Binyamin was home because Yaakov feared for him and now they had to bring him to this crazy ruler. It gets worse. On the way home the brothers notice that all their money that they gave to buy food, was right back in their saddlebags. How did it get there? The whole situation was very creepy, if not downright frightening. The Torah tells us, "Their hearts sank, and trembling, they turned to one another, saying, "What is this that God has done to us?" (Genesis 42:28).

Of course they did not realize that in all actuality, it was their brother Yoseph who was testing them. It must have been extremely difficult for Yaakov's children to return to him with the bad news. And indeed, Yaakov is quite upset at them, ""Why have you harmed me, by telling the man that you have another brother?" (Genesis 43:6). The brothers explained that the information was cunningly cajoled from them, and now it was too late. They either would bring Binyamin or they would have to leave Shimon to an unknown fate, and they would soon starve. And so, after what seems to be some finger pointing, they plotted a strategy.

Yaakov tells them : "If so, (that you must go) then do this: take some of the choice products of the land in your vessels, a little balm and a little honey, wax and lotus, pistachios and almonds. And take double the money in your hand[s], and the money that was returned in the mouth of your sacks you shall return in your hand[s], perhaps it was an error" (ibid v. 10-11). Then Yaakov adds a supplication. "And may the Almighty G-d grant you compassion before the man, and he will release to you your other brother and Benjamin, and as for me as I am bereaved, I am

bereaved"(ibid v. 12). The expression, "may the Almighty G-d grant you compassion before the man," struck me. Why not say, "May Hashem have mercy on you as you stand before the man"? Or perhaps say, "May it be the will of Hashem that the man have mercy upon you?" Who cares if the mercy comes when they are actually "before the man" or now, on the way down to him?

The Story: I was once discussing with the menahel (principal) of our Yeshiva, Rabbi Chanina Herzberg a particular student who was having a difficult time. We explored different ways in which to help him and how the school would implement them. Before we ended our conversation, Rabbi Herzberg related a story that happened with him and my grandfather, Rav Yaakov Kamenetzky zt"l. During his first few years as the principal of the yeshiva, my grandfather was actively involved as the Chairman of the Vaad haChinuch, the Board of Education. Rabbi Herzberg would often ask his advice how to deal with difficult situations. He once went together with a rebbe, to seek advice on how to handle a boy who had absolutely incorrigible bad behavior. The boy could not sit still in class and would overtly disrupt every lesson. Rav Yaakov offered them a number of ideas which they received enthusiastically. They thanked the Rosh Yeshiva and prepared to leave with the traditional handshakes and thank-yous. As they stood up the Rosh Yeshiva stopped them. "I'd like to ask you one more question." The educators were a bit surprised. "What could Rav Yaakov have thought of?" Rav Yaakov became very serious as he asked, "Do you daven (pray) for the boy? All the advice is nice, but praying for a student is the first component."

The Message: Perhaps, at least homiletically, when Yaakov said, "And may Almighty G-d grant you compassion before the man," he meant something very deep. I have given you some ideas and strategies how to fall in favor with the man.

I told you to bring gifts and the like. I told you how to talk to him. But there is something that you need to do before the man. Even before you get to the man. Even before you reach the palace and begin to implement "the plan," there is one element you must not forget to seek, "And may Almighty G-d grant you compassion."

Ricky Cohen

There's a whisper that shouts inside of me expressing my most intimate of wants for all the world and me to see

There's a whisper that shouts inside of me that can make the morning - every morning - dance for me and cause the precious hours of my day to run with great joy

There is a whisper that shouts inside of me that will allow peace and contentment that has not been known before nor that may be known otherwise to me

There is a whisper that shouts the loudest inside of me and yet is the most difficult to hear and as the voice of profound simplicity and truth demands the greatest efforts and courage in me

There is a whisper that shouts inside of me that will not stop shouting long after time is gone for me serves as the invitation to the blessing of a heavenly bliss on this earth, beyond it and in the future beyonds of me

So much is shouted as this courageous whisper inside of me yet it has steadfastness that defies all efforts to silence it in me It was breathed by our Creator at the moment of creation into you and into me and is therefore His Being living inside of you and me

I must remove the shouting so I can hear my whisper shouting at me will take me to a place that has never been but is completely familiar to me a place in which to remain and not simply visit for me

There is a whisper that shouts inside of me

The whisper that shouted inside each of the Maccabees and their supporters continues to shout inside each of us. It's an uninterrupted, indefatigable whisper that can be overlooked but never extinguished. It speaks to each individual's pining for personal sacrifice and the embracing of beauty.

There's a famous passage in the Talmud which raises an important question: Why is it, one great sage asks his peers, that there seem to be fewer overt miracles in our time than in previous times? After somewhat of a back and forth, where it's noted that the level of study is possibly greater at that time than in the past, the sages agree that the difference between the times in which they live and the times that preceded them, is the willingness of man to sacrifice himself for something. Mesirut nefesh - the willingness to sacrifice yourself for a cause, issue, or individual in whom you believe, was notably absent from those times. Therefore, this great sage reasoned, the occurrence of overt miracles was constricted. In present times I often think about how the average Israeli 20 year old is irreconcilably different from the average American 20 year old. The first understands

what it means to sacrifice your life for something you believe in. The other - us and our children, haven't yet had that experience and therefore don't have that sensibility. Most of us haven't embraced the possibility of losing everything - and therefore we have less of a sense of the value of everything.

So along comes Hanukah – the holiday of the proclamation of miracles and the investment in the beauty of life. We are commanded to publicly proclaim, for all the world to see, the miracles of those days, and we are commanded to beautify all of the practices related to the holiday.

Self-sacrifice begets a different life. When you've put everything on the line for something, all that you do and achieve resonates intensely inside of you – coloring your world and enabling you to see the overt miracles and those that are subtle. In the absence of the possibility to literally put your life on the line, each person must find something for which he/she is willing to sacrifice his financial, social and personal wellbeing. As you make that sacrifice – you will give to life as never before – and you will find that life will give back to you as never before. And during those in between times, when you're not running at full throttle -sacrificing and building - beautify all that you do as we beautify the candles of Hanukah. Don't simply do deeds in an intentional and focused way – beautify them – making a serious effort, for example, to use a word that pierces the heart of the recipient, a gesture whose warmth and love can be reclaimed vividly, and actions that leave everything in their path changed.

There is a whisper shouting inside of each of us - the whisper of Hanukah. It is the eternal human calling to sacrifice and to beautify. Do so and become Maccabean –

shaping and engaging the miraculousness of each and every day.

**Sir Jonathan Sacks
Chief Rabbi of the United
Hebrew Congregations
of the Commonwealth**

It was Joseph's first real attempt to take his fate into his own hands, and it failed. Or so it seemed.

Consider the story so far, as set out in last week's parsha. Almost everything that happens in Joseph's life falls into two categories. The first are the things done to him. His father loves him more than his other sons. He gives him a richly embroidered cloak.

His brothers are envious and hate him. His father sends him to see how the brothers are faring, attending the flocks far away. He fails to find them and has to rely on a stranger to point him in the right direction. The brothers plot to kill him, and sell him as a slave. He is brought to Egypt. He has acquired as a slave by Potiphar. Potiphar's wife finds him attractive, attempts to seduce him, and having failed, falsely accuses him of rape, as a result of which he is imprisoned.

This is extraordinary. Joseph is the centre of attention whenever, as it were, he is onstage, and yet he is, time and again, the done-to rather than the doer, an object of other people's actions rather than the subject of his own.

The second category is more remarkable still. Joseph does do things. He runs Potiphar's household. He organises a prison. He interprets the steward's and baker's dreams. But, in a unique sequence of descriptions, the Torah explicitly

attributes his actions and their success to God.

Here is Joseph in Potiphar's house: God was with Joseph, and He made him very successful. Soon he was working in his master's own house. His master realized that God was with [Joseph], and that God granted success to everything he did. (39: 2-3).

As soon as [his master] had placed him in charge of his household and possessions, God blessed the Egyptian because of Joseph. God's blessing was in all [the Egyptian] had, both in the house and the field. (39: 5)

Here is Joseph in prison: God was with Joseph, and He showed him kindness, making him find favor with the warden of the dungeon. Soon, the warden had placed all the prisoners in the dungeon under Joseph's charge. [Joseph] took care of everything that had to be done. The warden did not have to look after anything that was under [Joseph's] care. God was with [Joseph], and God granted him success in everything he did. (39: 21-23).

And here is Joseph interpreting dreams: 'Interpretations are God's business,' replied Joseph. 'If you want to, tell me about [your dreams].' (40: 8)

Of no other figure in Tenakh is this said so clearly, consistently and repeatedly. Joseph seems decisive, organised and successful and so he appeared to others. But, says the Torah, it was not him but God who was responsible both for what he did and for its success. Even when he resists the advances of Potiphar's wife, he makes it explicit that it is God who makes what she wants morally impossible: "How could I do such

a great wrong? It would be a sin before God!"(39:9).

The only act clearly attributed to him occurs at the very start of the story, when he brings a "bad report" about his brothers, the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah the handmaids (39:2). This apart, every twist and turn of his constantly changing fate is the result of someone else's act, either that of another human or of God (as for Joseph's dreams – were they a Divine intimation or a product of his own imagination? – that is another story for another time).

That is why we sit up and take notice when, at the end of the previous parsha, Joseph takes destiny into his own hands. Having told the chief steward that in three days he would be pardoned by Pharaoh and restored to his former position, and having no doubt at all that this would happen, he asks him to plead his cause with Pharaoh and secure his freedom: "When things go well for you, just remember that I was with you. Do me a favor and say something about me to Pharaoh. Perhaps you will be able to get me out of this place" (40: 14).

What happens? "The chief steward did not remember Joseph. He forgot about him" (40: 23). The doubling of the verb is powerful. He did not remember. He forgot. The one time Joseph tries to be the author of his own story, he fails. The failure is decisive.

Tradition added one final touch to the drama. It ended the parsha of Vayeshev with those words, leaving us at the point that his hopes are dashed. Will he rise to greatness? Will his dreams come true? The question "What happens next?" is intense, and we have to wait a week to know.

Time passes and with the utmost improbability (Pharaoh too has dreams, and none of his magicians or wise men can interpret them – itself odd, since dream interpretation was a specialty of the ancient Egyptians), we learn the answer. “Two full years passed.” Those, the words with which our parsha begins, are the key phrase. What Joseph sought to happen, happened. He did leave the prison. He was set free. But not until two full years had passed.

Between the attempt and the outcome, something intervened. That is the significance of the lapse of time. Joseph planned his release, and he was released, but not because he planned it. His own attempt ended in failure. The steward forgot all about him. But God did not forget about him. God, not Joseph, brought about the sequence of events – specifically Pharaoh’s dreams – that led to his release.

What we want to happen, happens, but not always when we expect, or in the way we expect, or merely because we wanted it to happen. God is the co-author of the script of our life, and sometimes – as here – He reminds us of this by making us wait and taking us by surprise.

That is the paradox of the human condition as understood by Judaism. On the one hand we are free. No religion has so emphatically insisted on human freedom and responsibility. Adam and Eve were free not to sin. Cain was free not to kill Abel. We make excuses for our failures – it wasn’t me; it was someone else’s fault; I couldn’t help it. But these are just that: excuses. It isn’t so. We are free and we do bear responsibility.

Yet, as Hamlet said: “There’s a divinity that shapes our ends, Rough-hew them how we will.” God is intimately involved in our life. Looking back in middle- or old age, we can often discern, dimly through the mist of the past, that a story was taking shape, a destiny slowly emerging, guided in part by events beyond our control. We could not have foreseen that this accident, that illness, this failure, that seemingly chance encounter, years ago, would have led us in this direction. Yet now in retrospect it can seem as if we were a chess piece moved by an invisible hand that knew exactly where it wanted us to be.

It was this view, according to Josephus, that distinguished the Pharisees (the architects of what we call rabbinic Judaism) from the Sadducees and the Essenes. The Sadducees denied fate. They said God does not intervene in our lives. The Essenes attributed all to fate. They believed that everything we do has been predestined by God. The Pharisees believed in both fate and free will. “It was God’s good pleasure that there should be a fusion [of divine providence and human choice] and that the will of man with his virtue and vice should be admitted to the council-chamber of fate” (Antiquities, xviii, 1, 3).

Nowhere is this clearer than in the life of Joseph as told in Bereishit, and nowhere more so than in the sequence of events told at the end of last week’s parsha and the beginning of this. Without Joseph’s acts – his interpretation of the steward’s dream and his plea for freedom – he would not have left prison. But without divine intervention in the form of Pharaoh’s dreams, it would also not have happened.

This is the paradoxical interplay of fate and freewill. As Rabbi Akiva said: “All is foreseen yet freedom of choice is given” (Avot 3:15). Isaac Bashevis Singer put it wittily: “We have to believe in free will: we have no choice.” We and God are co-authors of the human story. Without our efforts we can achieve nothing. But without God’s help we can achieve nothing either. Judaism found a simple way of resolving the paradox. For the bad we do, we take responsibility. For the good we achieve, we thank God. Joseph is our mentor. When he is forced to act harshly he weeps. But when he tells his brothers of his success he attributes it to God. That is how we too should live.

AS HEARD FROM RABBI AVIGDOR MILLER Z'TL

“And as I am (already) bereaved (of my child), (so also) I am bereaved” (43:14)

Jacob thought he was sending Binyamin into a place of peril. Actually, he was sending Binyamin to the place of maximum security, to his loving brother from the same mother, who wielded the greatest power in Egypt. No place in the world was as safe for Binyamin as under the care of Joseph in Egypt.

The entire narrative, among other lessons of Hashem’s providence, demonstrates that those circumstances which seem desperate and hopeless are in reality beneficial.

Joseph’s tribulations were the necessary steps to attaining the highest power and glory, but at least they were afflictions during their time. But the brothers who feared the Egyptian vice-regent and were so frequently in great apprehension of what he might do

to them, were living in the utmost error. For that dreaded Egyptian was no other than their compassionate and righteous brother Joseph.

The lesson is that men fear only imaginary enemies or misfortunes. We must fear Hashem.

And all the circumstances of life are in themselves meaningless except for Hashem's favor or disfavor.

"It is G-d that I fear" (42:18)
 These words of Joseph are also the words of G-d speaking, for this is the truth about Joseph. Similarly, when tempted by Potiphar's wife, Joseph said: "How can I do this great evil, and I should sin against G-d?" (39:9). Similarly, when Pharo requested that his dream be interpreted, Joseph said: "It is not in me; G-d shall give Pharo an answer of peace". (41:16).

Because of his Awareness of G-d, Joseph became the leader of his people for a very long period of 71 years. "Every man who has Fear of G-d, his words are obeyed" (Berachot 6B). All that Joseph did was motivated by Fear of Hashem, and therefore he was made the leader over Egypt and over his family, that his guidance should be motivated by Yirat Shamayim/Fear of Hashem.

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