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Straightening Out Jumbled Priorities

Rabbi Dr. Norman Lamm z"l (Originally delivered December 7, 1974)

In the whole sordid story of the selling of Joseph, it is the oldest brother, Reuben, who comes out better than all the others. *“And Reuben heard, and delivered him out of their hand, and said, ‘let us not take his life.’ And Reuben said unto them, ‘shed not blood; cast him into this pit that is in this wilderness, but lay not hands upon him’ — that he might deliver him out of their hand, to restore him to his father”* (Gen. 37:21, 22).

Yet, Reuben’s plan comes to naught. At the crucial moment, Reuben fails. When he is most needed, he is not there. For by the time he has returned to the pit in order to release Joseph, the brothers had already sold him into slavery. *“And Reuben returned unto the pit, and behold, Joseph was not in the pit; and he rent his clothes, and he returned to his bretheren, and said, ‘the child is not there; and as for me, whther shall I go?’”* (Gen. 37:29, 30).

Where was Reuben? Why wasn’t he there in time avoid the tragedy? The Rabbis give a number of answers, one of them somewhat surprising;

עסוק היה בשקו ותעניתו על שבלבל יצועי אביו.

Reuben was preoccupied with doing penance because of his previous sin of “changing the bed of his father” -- in taking up the cudgels for his mother Leah, he offended his father Jacob by removing Jacob’s bed from Bilhah’s tent, into Leah’s tent. He meant to establish his mother’s primacy as chief wife over her co-wives. But in so doing, he deeply hurt Jacob. Reuben was seized by remorse and contrition. He was so engrossed in his own spiritual rehabilitation -- that he missed the opportunity to save Joseph.

Reuben meant well, but it came out all wrong. His priorities were jumbled. He failed to appreciate that life and survival come first, and only then can one attend to his own spiritual growth and religious development. *Pikuah*

nefesh (saving a life) precedes *teshuvah* (repentance).

At the recent National Convention of the UOJCA, which was attended by myself and a number of leading members of The Jewish Center, the focus of debate was the problem whether or not the UOJCA should secede from the Synagogue Council of America, in which are represented both the rabbinic and lay organizations of Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform groups. The point of view that I advocated was that we should stay in. But the secessionists too had a point, and they pressed their argument vigorously. Fortunately, the Convention decided that now is not the time for divisiveness and factionalism. In order to avoid an open battle, it was decided to postpone the issue for three months. But the sentiment of the majority was clear. It was for staying in, not pulling out.

When all the House of Israel is threatened, you do not go off in a corner yourself. When everyone else seems to be against you, you do not divide yourself against yourself. When Jews are in danger of being sold out; when supposed friends and allies and brothers stand by impassively; when the P.L.O. is acknowledged as a legitimate group in international forums -- this is not a time to go away and brood over the spiritual problems על שבלבל יצועי אביו, worrying lest innocent Jews will confuse Conservative and Reform for Orthodox and vice versa.

In Israel too the same principle of priorities must hold. Now is not the time for political bickering and interparty sniping. Now is not the time to insist upon the purity of the principles of each individual group. Now is the time for all factions to work together, and to postpone individual self-assertion and ideological pursuits. Would that the government be broadened to include all groups in a national coalition!

The same message is subtly woven into the very structure of our Hanukhah prayer, the על הניסים. We say that in the days of Mattathias, when the evil Greek-Syrian government oppressed Israel, על להשכיחם תורתך ולהעבירם על, חוקי רצונך, *to cause them to forget the Torah and to violate the commandments*, the Lord miraculously saved us. We would expect that our song of praise would indicate immediately that the Lord came to our rescue by allowing us to study the Torah and observe the mitzvot. The rational assumption is -- an immediate resumption of spiritual and religious activity. Instead, we read a rather long passage:

וְאַתָּה בְּרַחֲמֶיךָ הַרְבִּים עָמַדְתָּ לָהֶם בְּעֵת צָרָתָם רַבָּתָּ אֶת רִיבָם דִּנְתָּ אֶת דֵּינָם נִקְמָתָ אֶת נִקְמָתָם מִסֵּרְתָּ גְבוּרִים בְּיַד חֲלָשִׁים וְרַבִּים בְּיַד מְעַטִּים ... וְלַעֲמֹד יִשְׂרָאֵל עֲשִׂיתָ תְּשׁוּעָה גְדוֹלָה וּפְרָקוֹן כְּהַיּוֹם הַזֶּה.
“*And You, in Your great compassion, stood by them in the time of their woe, You fought their battles and championed them in judgment and avenged them. You delivered the strong into the hands of the weak, the many into the hands of the few... And for Your people Israel did you perform a great salvation and redemption on this day.*”

And only then do we read:

וְאַחַר כֵּן בָּאוּ בְנֵיךָ לְדָבִיר בֵּיתְךָ וּפָנּוּ אֶת הַיְכָלְךָ וְטָהְרוּ אֶת-מִקְדָּשְׁךָ וְהִדְלִיקוּ נְרוֹת בְּחִצְרוֹת קִדְשֶׁךָ וּקְבַעוּ שְׁמוֹנֵת יָמֵי חֲנֻכָּה אֵלַי
“*And afterwards Your children came into Your holy house, and cleaned Your sanctuary, and purified Your Temple, and kindled lights in your sacred court, and established these eight days of Hanukhah...*”

What this prayer is telling us by its very construction is that before all else, the very first item on the national agenda is survival against the common foe. The Greeks must be repulsed, their armies scattered, and military triumph assured.

Only then, ואחר כך, *afterwards* — will they attend to the fulfillment of their ideological commitments, to “cleaning house” internally.

If this is true of principles, especially of religious principles, how much more so is it true of purely personal concerns, of luxuries and convenience and comforts! All these must take a back seat to our central and foremost concern: the survival of the people of Israel, which in our days is to such a great extent contingent upon the survival of the State of Israel. We therefore expect that all members of The Jewish Center, without any single exception, will subordinate their personal needs and considerations to support Israel בעת צרתם, in their time of woe, in greater measure than ever before.

Yet, this principle of ואחר כך, “*afterwards*” — that first must come the fact of survival and only then can we attend to the quality of that survival and the purity of Jewish existence -- holds true only where indulgence in one’s own ideals may jeopardize kelal Yisrael, the totality of Israel.

It is an institutional, not a personal priority. The priority of the question of life-and-death is valid only in the area of organizational activity, in the arena of practical undertakings.

Each man for himself must realize at the very outset that without *emunah* (faith), without the Holy One, all is lost. Fundamentally, our struggle for survival itself begins with and is contingent upon an act of will and faith. The taking up of arms — ריבם דנת את דינם נקמת את נקמתם — must be undergirded by a pervasive awareness that the battle is ורשעים ביד צדיקים וידיים ביד עוסקי תורתך, *the evil in the hands of the righteous, the wicked in the hands of students of Torah*. It is not only a military battle of unequal odds, גבורים ביד חלשים, but also one of moral confrontation.

The State of Israel — its founding and survival these past 26 years — as well as the persistence of Jews for over 2,000 years in enduring the exile, all this is irrational and improbable and unpredictable without the spiritual-historic dimension. There is more than a grain of truth in that famous anecdote about a rabbi who turned to his people during the War of Independence in 1948, after noticing the poverty of Israel’s arms and the multitude of its enemies, and called out, “Jews! Do not rely upon miracles! Recite Psalms!”

To rely on the U.N. or the United States or even one’s own armed forces is to rely naively on miracles. To rely on God, to act with hope and confidence and *emunah* and *bitachon*, is the only sane and rational course. With all prior attention to the exigencies of economics and arms and politics, underneath all and before all else, the issue of success and failure הו, will hang on faith — faith in God, faith in Israel, faith in the justice of our case, faith in ourselves, faith in our future.

A recent issue of the Israeli newspaper Maariv, relates that there was an old Hasid of the Brazlaver group in Jerusalem. He came to Israel, then Palestine, at the end of the 1920’s, when Russia forbade emigration and the English let no one in to the Holy Land. The late Rabbi Elimelech Bar Shaul z”l tells, that he once asked this old Jew how he managed to cross the international borders at such a difficult time in order to get into Palestine. The

Hasid answered, "What kind of question is that? I knew that a Jew must come to the Holy Land, and so I wanted to come, and so I came."

"How about the certificates?"

"Bah, that's nothing. I knew that if I wanted to come, that if I believed that I must come to Eretz Israel, then I will with the help of God reach it. Indeed, I once stole across the border in Syria, but the Englishmen caught me and sent me back."

"And after that you did get a certificate?"

"No, not at all. I knew that something must be wrong with my faith, that I did not believe with my whole heart, and that is why I did not succeed in stealing across the border. So I sat in the Bet Hamidrash and I worked on my faith. Again I tried, and again I was caught. So again I returned to the Bet Hamidrash, to strengthen my faith and my trust. I thought that if I believed with my whole

heart and whole might, that I desired with every bone in my body to reach Eretz Israel, that the Holy One will help me. So I tried a third time, and then I believed as one must believe, and that is why I am here."

As we enter Hanukkah, we reaffirm our priorities- first, we must strengthen our own emunah, our own faith and hope. Second, we must dedicate all our efforts to save kelal Yisrael and the State of Israel. Afterwards, ואחר כך, we must make sure to rid ourselves of the desecration of contemporary Hellenism, of the flippancy to Torah and Halakhah, of the insinuation of assimilation and quasi-assimilation into our religious life. Then must we clean the sanctuaries of Judaism, purify its Temples, kindle lamps in its court-yards and, with the light of God and Torah, illuminate the life of all Jews, and through them become אור לגויים, a light to all the nations.

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The Stranger

Rabbi Joshua (*The Hoffer*) Hoffman z"l

Ya'akov sends Yosef on a mission to seek the welfare of his brothers, who are tending their father's sheep in Shechem. Yosef goes there, but does not find his brothers. An unidentified man finds him straying in the way, and tells him that his brothers left Shechem and went to Dosan. Who was this man? Rashi, citing a midrash, tells us that the man was actually the angel Gavriel. Ostensibly, the midrash tells us that he was an angel in order for us to realize that there was a divine hand behind the events that were unfolding. Why, then, was it necessary to inform us of the angel's name? What difference does it make which angel it was? Obviously, there must be an element in the nature of Gavriel that is important for us to know in understanding the unfolding of the events in the saga of Yosef and his brothers. I believe that the key element here is that of *gevurah*, or perseverance, which is reflected in the name Gavriel which means, literally, '*gevuros kel*,' or the *gevurah* of God. The meaning and importance of this element will become clear as we examine the events of the parsha.

After receiving the man's reply, Yosef heads for Dosan, and when he arrives, his brothers tear off his shirt and throw him into a pit, from which he is sold to passing merchants and taken down to Egypt. Interestingly, there is a midrash which says that the pit they threw Yosef into

was one of the pits that Yitzchok dug without finding water in it. After Yosef is sold, the brothers slaughter a goat, dip Yosef's shirt in its blood, and show it to Ya'akov, who recognizes it as the shirt that he gave to his son. Ya'akov cries over his son, and his family tries to comfort him, but he refuses to accept their words of consolation. Rashi says that Ya'akov could not be consoled because one cannot be consoled for a person who is still alive. Rabbi Menachem Kasher, in his Torah Shleimah, cites a midrash which says that Ya'akov knew through *ruach hakodesh*, or a spirit of divine inspiration, that Yosef was still alive, and goes on to explain the verses in the Torah in a way that conforms with this midrash.

In Egypt, Yosef is sold to Potiphar, who is chamberlain of the butchers of Pharaoh. God is with Yosef and he is successful in his work. Potiphar, seeing this, places him in charge of all the affairs of his house. Eventually, Potiphar's wife becomes enamored of Yosef, who is described by the Torah as being very good-looking, and continually tries to seduce him. One day, when everyone else is gone, Potiphar's wife pursues Yosef in a particularly aggressive way, and Yosef refuses her. The word that the Torah uses to describe Yosef's refusal, *vayema'in*, is, interestingly the same word that is used in describing Yaakov's refusal to be consoled over the disappearance of Yosef. The one

difference, however, is that, unlike the use of the word in regard to Ya'akov, when it is used in regard to Yosef, the long musical note of shalsheles, consisting of a three-fold repetition of the pazer note, is placed above it. This note is used only four times in the Torah, and each time it is used, it is assumed by Biblical commentators to carry a special message. Although we mentioned in the past (in Netvort to parshas Vayeishev, 5759) a number of explanations of the use of the shalsheles in our verse, I would like to focus on an additional one, mentioned in the work Kedushas Levi. Although that work was written by R. Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev, the paragraphs dealing with the various possible meanings of the shalsheles were written by his son, Yisrael. Among the explanations he gives, one is that the shalsheles is an allusion to the three forefathers of the Jewish people, Avrohom, Yitzchok and Ya'akov. Actually, the rabbis tell us that Yosef was able to overcome the temptations of Potiphar's wife by conjuring up the image of his father, Ya'akov. However, I believe that the allusion to all three forefathers points to an element in Yosef's role in the development of the Jewish people, as exemplified by his encounter with Potiphar's wife.

Rabbi Yitzchok Hutner,zt"l, points out that Yosef's death is mentioned both at the very end of the book of Bereishis, which Ramban refers to as the book of the fathers, or patriarchs, as well as at the very beginning of the book of Shemos, which Ramban refers to as the book of the sons, in contrast to the rest of his brothers, whose deaths are recorded only in the beginning of the book of Shemos. This indicates, he says, that Yosef, although he was a son of Ya'akov, and is therefore mentioned in the book of Shemos, together with his brothers, also had a role to play in the formation of the Jewish people, as a sort of appendage to the three patriarchs, and was therefore also included in the book of Bereishis. Avrohom was the first person to become a Jew, thus serving as the 'av hamon goyim', or the father of many nations, implanting within the nation the ability to receive other converts. Yitzchok was the first person to be born a Jew, implanting the principle that someone born of Jewish parents is a Jew. Ya'akov was the first person who did not have any children who were excluded from the Jewish people, thus establishing the principle that once a person is a Jew, he remains a Jew, no matter how far he has strayed from Jewish practice. However, there still remained the possibility for someone who is born as a Jew to marry a woman who is not a Jew,

and, as a result, have children who are not Jewish. It was his role to build up a resistance to this possibility, and instill it within the collective psyche of the Jewish people. This was especially necessary for the impending exile in Egypt, which was a land that was rooted in sexual immorality. Yosef, by resisting the advances of Potiphar's wife, steered the Jewish people against the influence of Egyptian culture in this regard, to the extent that not a single Jewish man consorted with an Egyptian woman in the course of that exile. Where did Yosef draw that strength from? I believe it was from the trait of gevurah, that was developed by Yitzchok.

My teacher, Rav Aharon Soloveichik, zt"l, said that Yitzchok's persistence in digging wells in the land of the Pelishtim reflected the trait of gevurah, which he explained to mean perseverance in the face of adversity. Ya'akov, described by the rabbis as the choicest of the patriarchs, fused within himself the trait of Avrohom, which was chesed, or kindness, and the trait of Yitzchok, which was gevurah. Yosef would need to employ this element of gevurah within his father's spiritual makeup when he went down to Egypt. Perhaps, then, it was into one of these pits that Yosef was thrown by his brothers, as an allusion to the challenge that Yosef would face in Egypt. When Ya'akov refused to be consoled over Yosef's loss, the Torah uses the word 'vayema'in' to describe that refusal. That very word is also used to describe Yosef's refusal to succumb to the advances of Potiphar's wife, with the additional element of the musical note of the shalsheles, alluding to the three patriarchs. Yosef, in using the element of gevurah that Ya'akov adapted from Yitzchok and combined with the element of chesed developed by Avrohom, was thereby adding himself to that chain of tradition, and implanting within his people the ability to persevere against the challenges of immorality they would face in Egypt, as well as in its future exiles. Although resistance to this temptation, and the maintenance of purity in this regard, is referred to in kabbalah as the trait of yesod, or foundation, I would like to suggest that it was the element of gevurah adapted from Ya'akov that enabled Yosef to develop this resistance. For this reason, it was the angel Gavriel, whose name denotes this trait of gevurah, who guided the process of Yosef's descent into Egypt.

When Blessing is Blasphemy

Rabbi Assaf Bednarsh (Transcribed and adapted by a talmid)

In this week's Parsha we read the story about mechiras Yosef, and there is a very interesting drasha where Rav Meir says: *Botzeyya birech, ni'etz Hashem*. Who is this referring to? *Botzeyya—zeh Yehuda*. As the pasuk says: *Mah betza ki naharog es achinu ve-chisinu es damo*. *Mah betza*—it's not worth killing Yosef, and instead, let's sell him to the Yishma'elim. We see that whoever is mevarech es Yehuda is called a *mena'etz*. If you praise Yehuda, then you are saying blasphemy against Hashem. This is a challenging drasha. If you are coming to criticize Yehuda, just say that Yehuda did something wrong. Why focus on the person who is praising Yehuda, as if that's more significant than Yehuda's behavior? And in fact, why **would** someone praise Yehuda, and what's wrong with that?

There are a few different pshatim to answer this. And a very nice one is by Yafeh Mareh, which is quoted by the Maharsha (Sanhedrin, 6). He says: Of course, Yehuda did something wrong. And Yehuda knew he did something wrong. But what might someone say? I know more than Parshas Vayeishev! I know all the way through the end of Sefer Bereishis. Yehuda did this terrible aveira of encouraging his brothers to sell Yosef as a slave, but in the end it was all for the good. Because if not for that, Ya'acov and his whole family would have died from the famine, and that would have been the end of the story. There would be no Shmos, Vayikra, Bamidbar, and Devarim. Therefore, because Yehuda told his brothers to sell him to Mitzraim, it was all bashert—min hashomayim—that Yosef went to Mitzrayim. And we know the whole story—that he became the viceroy of Egypt and thereby he was able to save his family and Klal Yisroel from the seven years of famine. So

it turns out that it was a tremendous mitzva that Yehuda did in that he saved Klal Yisroel by selling his brother as a slave. Therefore, someone might think that Yehuda's action was praiseworthy, as it was part of Hashem's plan to save Klal Yisroel. However, on the contrary, Chazal are telling us here that Hashem runs the world. The result of your actions, that's Hashem's business. You try to do one thing and Hashem will make it turn out however He wants because he has a plan for running the world. And no matter whatever you decide to do, He has His plan of running the world and He is cleverer than you. The fact that Hashem brought about a certain result has nothing to do with our achrayus. It's not our achrayus to achieve the right result and it's not our fault if the wrong result happens. It's our achrayus to do the right actions. It's our achrayus to do mitzvos and avoid aveiros, and to act with good midos, in the here and now. What happens in the end, whether good or bad - that's Hashem's responsibility and not ours. Someone who is mevareich es Yehuda says: We judge the propriety of someone's actions by whether in the end, the result was good or not. That's blasphemy—that's *mena'etz es Hashem*. That is using Hashem's divine providence to justify evil. If someone does something wrong, it's wrong, regardless of a result. Because **our** achrayus in the world is not to worry about what will happen in ten, twenty, thirty years from now. Our achrayus is to just do our best, try to do the mitzvos now, and treat people the right way—however challenging that might be, as it was in this week's Parsha. And we are deserving of brocha if we live up to that. And everything else—that's up to Hashem. Shabbat Shalom.

The Face in the Window

Rabbi Josh Blass

It is a moment that is filled with deep emotional resonance and speaks to the most significant of bonds between fathers and sons. Yosef Hatzaddik returns to the near empty house of Potifar, לעשות מלאכתו - to do his work. This somewhat ambiguous phraseology is understood by some of the Amoraim to connote that Yosef had nefarious thoughts in mind and sought to engage in an inappropriate relationship with the wife of Potifar (Sotah

36b). At some point, Yosef, despite the consequences and great personal sacrifice that would in fact be brought to bear, escaped from the grasp of אשת פוטיפר. Chazal as quoted by Rashi said that the critical moment that allowed for Yosef's decisiveness was של אביו לֹא דְמוּת דְיוֹקְנוֹ שָׁל אָבִיו - the image of his father appeared to him.

If all that we had at our disposal was the Rashi in front of us, I believe that the sensitive reader would still be moved

by the concept of 'seeing' the likeness of one's father at the most critical moments of one's life. It is an imagery that carries with it enormous emotional and psychological heft. With that said the medrash and the gemarah from which Rashi draws adds in one word that in my estimation even further deepens what I can only imagine Yosef had experienced. That word is בחלון - in the window. Namely that Yosef saw the image of his father at that moment hovering in the window.

What is it about the face of his father specifically in the window that captures my imagination? I can only say what comes up for me and I do so without in any way proscribing these same sentiments to Yosef Hatzaddik. Seeing Yaakov's face in the חלון feels like Yosef looking back. It feels wistful and retrospective. It is Yosef remembering where he came from and what his roots were. It is a reflection on the values from home and upbringing. It is a memory of Yaakov and before him Yitzchak and Avraham on who's collective ideals Yosef was weaned. It is a moment of looking back, clarifying from where he came and realizing with great certainty that any relationship with אשת פוטיפר served as a complete violation of the values upon which he was raised. To me that is the face of Yaakov in the window.

The first time I encountered this addition of the medrash was when I first read Rav Soloveitchik's Ish Halakha written in 1944 three years after his father's passing. The inscription of the book simply stated, 'at that moment the image of his father came to him and appeared before him in the window.' To me this was the Rav writing his first sefer and reflecting on his relationship with his father and on his own place in the lineage of the exalted Soloveitchik family. The window is retrospective.

A colleague whose insight I respect saw the imagery of the window in a way that was almost the diametrical opposite from my own perspective. He believed that the image of the window is that of looking into the future. The צוהר - window in Noah's teiva was a sign of hope that the mabul would in fact come to an end. The mother of Sisera peered out of the window in anticipation of her son's return. The necessity of windows in a shul are in part to connect the shul to Yerushalayim and to the גאולה. Perhaps seeing Yaakov specifically in the חלון is a reminder to Yosef to clearly contemplate the future. What would his role be in the שבטי י-ה if he allowed himself to compromise his values with the wife of Potifar? Where would he stand vis-

vis his father and brothers when ultimately down the road the familial reunion came to pass? This forward-looking image of what Yosef 'saw' at that moment suggested by my colleague is in fact expressed in the above mentioned gemarah in Sotah.

באותה שעה באתה דיוקנו של אביו ונראתה לו בחלון אמר לו יוסף עתידין אחיך שיכתבו על אבני אפוד ואתה ביניהם רצונך שימחה שמך מביניהם ותקרא רועה זונות

What Yaakov somehow communicated to Yosef was the question as to what Yosef wanted his future to look like. Do you want your name removed from the Choshen? Do you want to be known as a friend to women of ill repute? Yaakov's appearance in the חלון, according to this approach represents contemplation of the future and the resolute behavior that that contemplation breeds as opposed to signifying reminiscences of the past. (As a side note I was curious why one person's mind goes to the wistful and retrospective place while another person's thoughts steer them towards something more forward thinking)

Which perspective about the significance of the window is correct? Perhaps both and perhaps neither. Perhaps this is just my mind bringing a certain deeply poetic meaning to something that is far simpler. Maybe Yaakov's face was actually seen in the window, but the window per se doesn't have some extraordinary meaning. Sometimes a window is in fact just a window. Maybe that's why Rashi in Chumash does not quote the line verbatim and doesn't mention the window. Obviously, these are questions that have no answers.

With that said, these two approaches to the nature of the window makes one think about different dimensions of experiencing time. Is there a value of reflecting on the past and thinking about the future? Of course. Ideas such as regret, understanding from where one has come (א טפה), intense cheshbon hanefesh and the like all occupy an important place in the corpus of Jewish learning and in man's consciousness. A person who can figuratively see their parents and grandparents in the window and who can understand their roots and the significance of their mesorah lives a qualitatively different religious existence.

The reverse of that is also true. Chazal champions a person who is רואה את הנולד (has foresight), who understands where the body's ultimate end lies, and who is מצפה לישועה (awaits the days of Redemption). Thoughtful man does not live for this moment alone but is constantly weighing the effects of his behavior and decisions on

the future of his life and the lives of his descendants. In a way we are always looking both backwards and forwards through our own personal windows and portals.

At the same time, ultimately man is charged with living fully in the present moment. It is clear in the writings of the Rambam and others that an overemphasis on regret for past misdeeds can be crippling. We all know people who are so busy speaking about 'the way that things used to be' that they are at constant odds with the current realities of their lives. There are people who, to their detriment, are always peering backwards through the window to a different earlier time and who either can't or won't let the past rest peacefully. The effect is almost always a lack of genuine simcha and contentment.

Similarly, while we value being forward thinking and both reflective and responsible about the future that also comes with its own dangers. Different levels of anxiety, obsessive thinking, the need to control, stinginess, being overly cautious and risk adverse and other behaviors and mindsets are all outgrowths of a person who lives

too much in the future. The person who is continuously peering through the window of tomorrow finds themselves disadvantaged in being able to live simply and joyously in the present moment.

As usual, the Torah, Chazal and the Rishonim say it best. Rashi on the pasuk תמים תהיה אם ה' אלוקיך (Devarim 18:13) says that:

תמים תהיה עם ה' אלהיך. התהלך עמו בתמימות, ותצפה לו, ולא תחקר אחר העתידות, אלא כל מה שביא עליך קבל בתמימות ואז תהיה עמו ולחלקו:

Walk with G-d simply and trust him. Don't obsess over the future. Rather everything that happens to you accept it with faith and simplicity and through this you will be with Him.

Man, perhaps like Yosef Hatzadik looks both backwards and forwards in receiving inspiration, and in shaping our values, identities, and future courses of action. At the same time, we seek the peacefulness of spirit to allow us to live simply and faithfully with HKB'H within the figurative four walls of our own בית.

Servant Leadership: The Lesson of the Dreams

Rabbi Maury Grebenau

Our Haftorah, which is rarely read since it is usually supplanted by the Haftorah for Channukah, tells the story of Shlomo HaMelech's famous case of the two women and the baby. The two women argue over whose baby has lived and Shlomo suggests splitting the baby in half revealing the true mother based on their reactions to this suggestion. In Melachim Alef, this story comes directly after we are told about Shlomo's dream where Hashem offers him anything he wants and Shlomo asks for wisdom and understanding (*lev lishmoah*) to judge the Jewish people properly. Hashem is so impressed with this selfless request that He gives Shlomo much more. The court case follows immediately afterwards, seemingly as a demonstration of this gift to Shlomo that cemented him as a wise king in the eyes of the people (see Rashi Melachim Alef 4:1 & Radak 3:16). Interestingly, the Haftorah begins with the last line of the previous story. "And Solomon awoke, and behold (it was) a dream. And he came to Jerusalem and stood before the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and offered up burnt offerings, and offered peace offerings, and made a feast for all his servants" (Melachim Alef 3:15). Only then does the Haftorah launch into the

episode of Shlomo's judgment of the court case. There is a clear connection between the language of this pasuk and the beginning of the parsha when Paroah awakes from his own dream. However, this doesn't really solve the problem of this odd starting point. If the connection to the Haftorah is the dream then why not have the section before where Shlomo's dream is discussed be the one that is read as the Haftorah, rather than the judgment? What is the purpose of just including this line and then telling the story of the judgment?

Dreams of Yosef & Paroah

If we examine some of the dreams in our parsha (Mikeitz) and last week's parsha (VaYeishev) I think we can suggest an answer to this puzzle. Last week begins with Yosef dreaming about himself lording over the brothers. He shares his dream of the brothers bowing to him with them and, not surprisingly, it is poorly received. Yosef is described as being overly concerned with his looks (Rashi's interpretation of Na'ar – Bereishit 37:2) and preoccupied with gossiping about his brothers. He is not yet ready to be the person he dreams about. Let's fast forward to this week.

This week Paroah has a dream that defies interpretation. Rashi (Bereishit 41:8) explains that explanations were offered, but Paroah did not accept them. This is why the pasuk says that “there was no explanation to Paroah” – explanations were offered, but none that he would accept. The explanations were about him personally and he felt that, as a king, if he was dreaming it must be germane to the entire people. This dream (and attitude) is in significant contrast to Yosef’s dreams. Yosef’s dreams have him at the center. He may be said to be a ruler in the dreams (insofar as others bow to him deferentially) but there isn’t really any leadership. Paroah on the other hand dreams of events that will affect his whole country and, in fact, he isn’t even in the dream.

In our parsha, Yosef has changed from how he was depicted when he had his dreams in last week’s parsha. He is no longer the dreamer focused on self that we met last week. He does not exhibit the immaturity that is described in the beginning of last week’s parsha. Instead of being preoccupied with himself and gossiping about others, he is humble and helpful to others. He deflects Paroah’s praise for his abilities (“*it is G-d who will respond with Paroah’s welfare*” 41:16) and offers advice about the challenging circumstances that are foreseen. Ironically, the dreams of last week that seemed to predict Yosef’s rise to a position of prominence do no such thing (in the short term), while this week’s dreams, that do not even indicate a role for Yosef, propel him to a high position.

Servant Leadership

The message of this contrast in dreams about ruling and leadership seems clear. Leadership that focuses on the other will succeed and leadership that is self-centered will fail. When Yosef expresses his dream and leadership as others serving him it is a sign of his immaturity and it does not end well for him. When Paroah seeks to understand how his dream prepares him to lead his people he finds success. Yosef too has grown into a selfless leader and is now ready for a high position. In 1970, Robert Greenleaf coined the term “servant leadership” in an essay as a way to describe leadership that is focused on those one is leading – the other. It is this type of leadership that is depicted here in Paroah’s dream but not in Yosef’s early dreams. Rabbi

Jonathan Sacks z”l, in his 2017 TED talk, pointed out that, in our modern age, we have become overly focused on the self. Perhaps we are reflecting the behavior of an immature Yosef. We too should strive to grow out of this stage. At the end of this talk, Rabbi Sacks gives a suggestion that we do a “search and replace on the text of our minds” and replace “self” for “other” in popular ideas like self-esteem, self-respect etc. Through this, the hope would be that we could become other-focused, ultimately strengthening ourselves as individuals, peoples and as humanity.

Shlomo’s Dream

I believe the message of the Haftorah is how to use our talents in a way that is other-focused as a lesson in leadership. The message of the Haftorah is that Shlomo’s vision for leadership is other-focused and, as such, prepare him to lead well. The Haftorah records Hashem’s reaction to his choice, a direct and explicit message of approval, meant to illuminate this same implied message in our parshiot.

The choice to only include only the final line of the earlier story and the judgment as the Haftorah instead of the Haftorah featuring the dream itself is also instructive. Perhaps the message is that the realm of intentions is not where other-focused leadership will truly be determined. We can see the true colors of a leader, not in how they intend (or promise) to lead, but in how they utilize their talents and actually lead. Shlomo makes an other-focused, servant-leadership, choice in his dream and is lauded for it by Hashem. However, the spotlight of the Haftorah begins only as the intentions end and the leadership begins. For Shlomo, the spotlight is trained on the case where Shlomo reunites a family and delivers a just verdict. The very fact that King Shlomo is judging a case that may involve two prostitutes¹ is noteworthy. The paradigm for a king of Israel is one who is involved with bringing justice to the people by being involved with them,² true servant leadership.

This message of servant leadership, and focusing on the other, is the message that unites the Haftorah with the dreams in our parshiot. May we merit to take the advice of Rabbi Sacks and redouble our efforts to be other-focused in our lives. Like Shlomo, may we be granted so much to support this worthy goal of focusing on others.

1 See Abarbanel and 2nd explanation of the Ralbag. Even if Zonot is translated as innkeepers in this instance, Shlomo is still involved with the common people in a capacity where he is focused on their needs.

2 See T.B. Bava Metzia 59a where from Dovid’s complaint it seems that he studied Torah with the people. Shlomo does not seem to be the exception in terms of the paradigm for positive leadership.

Double Dipping

Mrs. Michal Horowitz

In this week's parsha, Parshas Vayeishev, the story of Yosef ha'Tzadik, the beloved son of Yaakov Avinu, begins in full force.

After fleeing from a wrathful brother who avowed to kill him (Bereishis 27), to a tumultuous twenty years at the home of his father-in-law Lavan (Ch.29-31), followed by the historic confrontation with Sar Shel Eisav and then Eisav himself (Ch.32-33), followed by the kidnapping and violation of his daughter Dina by Shechem (Ch.34), followed by the birth of Binyanim and the death of his beloved wife, Rachel (Ch.35), Yaakov Avinu settles back into the land of Canaan, where he longs for some peace and quiet (Rashi to 37:2). Alas, tranquility is not to be his as the trouble between Yosef and the brothers is sprung upon him.

As the beloved son, whom Father loved more than all the other brothers, Yosef receives a special tunic from Father (37:3). וַיֵּרְאוּ אֶחָיו כִּי אִתּוֹ אֶהָב אֲבִיהֶם מִכָּל אֶחָיו וַיִּשְׂנְאוּ. וַיֵּרְאוּ אֶחָיו כִּי אִתּוֹ אֶהָב אֲבִיהֶם מִכָּל אֶחָיו וַיִּשְׂנְאוּ. - *When the brothers see that Father loves Yosef from all the brothers, their hatred towards Yosef begins, and they can no longer speak to him in peace* (37:4).

After dreaming of kingship and rulership - narratives which Yosef shares with his brothers - the brothers have had enough of this beloved son and they plot to dispose of him... One day, as the brothers are pasturing the flocks of Yaakov, Yosef is sent to see how his brothers are faring. As they see him coming, they devise a plan. After stripping him of his special tunic, they throw him into a pit filled with snakes and scorpions, from which he is ultimately sold down to Egypt (Ch.39).

In regard to the tunic which they divest him of, the pasuk tells us: וַיִּקְחוּ, אֶת-כְּתֹנֶת יוֹסֵף; וַיִּשְׁחֲטוּ שְׂעִיר עִזִּים, וַיִּטְבְּלוּ וַיִּקְחוּ, אֶת-כְּתֹנֶת יוֹסֵף; וַיִּשְׁחֲטוּ שְׂעִיר עִזִּים, וַיִּטְבְּלוּ בְּדָם, and they took Yosef's tunic, and they slaughtered a goat, and they dipped the tunic into the blood (Bereishis 37:31).

R' Shlomo Zalman Bregman shares a beautiful idea regarding the cloak that they dipped in blood. "The Ben Ish Chai (1835 – 1909) notes that there are two key mentions of 'dipping' in the Torah. The first one is in this pasuk, pertaining to the brothers of Yosef and the manner in which they dipped his tunic in blood. The second dipping is to be found in Parshas Bo, regarding the rituals and laws surrounding the Korban Pesach. There, the pasuk says: וַלְקַחְתֶּם אֲגִדַּת אֲזוּב, וּטְבַלְתֶּם בְּדָם אֲשֶׁר-בַּסֶּף, וְהִגַּעְתֶּם אֵל-

הַמִּשְׁקוּף וְאֶל-שְׁתֵּי הַמְּזוּזוֹת, מִן-הַדָּם אֲשֶׁר בַּסֶּף, 'and you shall take a bundle of hyssop and dip it into the blood that is in the basin, and touch the lintel of the two doorposts with some of the blood that is in the basin' (Shemos 12:22).

"Ben Ish Chai says that the practice to dip twice at the Pesach Seder - as referenced in the Mah Nishtanah, 'On all other nights we do not dip even once, but on this night, two times' - is to parallel these two dippings in the Torah.

"The obvious question is: yes, the dipping in regard to the Korban Pesach clearly has to do with the Exodus from Egypt. When Hashem saw (keviyachol) the blood of the Korban Pesach on the lintels and doorposts of the Israelite homes, he passed over these homes, and the inhabitants were spared death during the Plague of the Firstborn. Ultimately, it was this blood of the Korban Pesach that led to our Redemption from Egypt.

"But what does the Pesach Seder have to do with Yosef and the dipping of his tunic in the goat's blood? Why is this dipping - from Parshas Vayeishev - referenced on leil ha'Seder?

"Ben Ish Chai explains as follows: The Jewish people ended up in galus Mitzrayim - referenced by the second dipping - because of the hatred and lashon harah that were part of the story of Yosef and his brothers - referenced by the first dipping. Hence, the events surrounding the tunic being dipped in blood actually served as the catalyst for Yosef being sent down to Egypt, and ultimately, the entire family of Yaakov as well.

"Therefore, if we sincerely mean what we say as we conclude the Seder, 'I'shana ha'bah b'Yerushalayim' - next year may we celebrate in a rebuilt and redeemed Jerusalem - then we must begin by addressing the events and behaviors that led to the first dipping" (Short and Sweet on the Parsha, Feldheim, p.91-92).

If hatred between brothers led to exile - both in our parsha on the familial level, and after the destruction of the Second Temple on the national level (Yoma 9b) - then it is only love between brothers that will reverse the process and lead to our redemption.

After the passing of HaRav Yaakov Edelstein zt'l (Rav of Ramat Ha'Sharon, Israel; brother of Ha'Gaon Ha'Rav Gershon Edelstein shlita) Avi Gruber, the mayor of Ramat HaSharon, reminisced painfully, "His door was always open,

every day and every hour, with a good word and a smile. He never checked to see if there was a kippah on a person's head. He only looked to the heart. You know, we are so used to conflicts between the religious and the nonreligious that we forget it's possible to just respect everyone. Years ago I noticed that on Shabbat the city's residents didn't drive through the street where the Rav's Shul was situated. Let me be clear: there is no penalty or enforcement against driving on Shabbat there, but people preferred to bypass it and not to enter the street of our Rav... In my opinion, that says a lot" (Reaching for Heaven, Artscroll, p.338).

Planting and Building in Chinuch

Rabbi Yossi Goldin

This week's parsha is action packed- particularly when it comes to parenting and sibling/family relationships. But there is one particular part of the parsha that I wanted to focus on- as I believe it has a particularly powerful message for us as parents.

In this weeks parsha, after Yosef is sold by his brothers and arrives in Egypt, he is sold to the house of Potiphar. The Torah describes how Yosef immediately brings blessing to the house of Potiphar, and becomes his trusted servant, soon becoming Potiphar's second in command. However, together with this success comes the ultimate test- as Potiphar's wife attempts to seduce Yosef. The Torah hints to the tremendous challenge that this created for Yosef- to the point that there is an argument in the gemara as to how close Yosef came to succumbing to the temptation. Ultimately, however, Yosef overcame the temptation, and refuses her advances. How was Yosef able to do so? Rashi 39:11 "La'asos" quotes a famous medrash that Yosef was able to overcome her enticement דמות דיוקנו של אביו נראה אליו, "a vision of his father appeared to him", giving him the strength to overcome the temptation.

The medrash and its imagery is fascinating- what exactly does it mean that Yaakov's face appeared to Yosef? Is it meant to be taken literally? Some might suggest that what was happening here was classic "Jewish guilt"- that deep in the back of his mind, Yosef knew that if he committed this immoral act, he wouldn't be able to face his father, or he would simply feel guilty because he would be disappointing his father and his legacy. The problem with this approach is that from the perspective of Yosef, he might not ever see his father again, and his connection to

"Once, someone went over to Rav Edelstein and said to him, 'I want to be great in Torah just like you. What advice can you give me so that I may achieve this?' Rav Edelstein answered, 'To be great in Torah, first you have to love each and every single Jew'" (ibid, p.112).

As we learn the story of Yosef and his brothers, and their descent to Egypt, let us remember the double dippings. It was animosity and divide that led to the Egyptian exile, and that led to our current exile. When we can love each other, despite our differences, then the process will be reversed and redemption will arrive - may it be immediate and in our days.

his family and their legacy wasn't necessarily relevant to him anymore- so why would he feel guilty?

Rather I believe that the imagery of the Midrash is much deeper- and much more fundamental to us as parents. Perhaps we can suggest that Yosef's ability to withstand the temptation wasn't because of a sense of guilt- but rather a deep sense of moral purpose, of right and wrong, that Yaakov had instilled in Yosef. And the greatest test of Yaakov's success as a parent was when Yosef faced a challenge to those values, all alone, in a situation when no one else would know- and he still successfully at overcame the obstacle.

Rav Shlomo Wolbe, in his Sefer on Chinuch entitled זריעה ובנין החינוך, talks about two fundamental parallel processes through which parents raise and are mechanech their children- one he calls בנין and the other he calls זריעה. זריעה refers to a process by which we "build" or shape our children into the people we want them to be. Like the process of building a structure, we play a more active role in trying to form who they are and how they should act. If the child acts in a way that runs counter to that vision or veers from the structure that we have in mind, then our job is to shift him "back in line". However, at the same time there is a second parallel process in chinuch called זריעה. Similar to planting a tree, זריעה refers to the process of planting certain values/ideals/principles within our children from an early age, and allow those values to grow and develop organically.

Proper chinuch, explains Rav Wolbe, requires the proper balance between these two parallel processes. We must cultivate within our children, from a young age, the values and ideals that we feel are important- and then give them to space to allow those values to develop organically. At the

same time, we must continue to build our children as well, taking a more active role in shaping them when the situation arises. As Rav Wolbe poignantly explains, if we raise our kids using solely the medium of בנין without the זריעה, we would raise robots who do what we tell them to, without those values becoming a part of who they are. If we use זריעה without בנין, we would raise children who have internalized values, but the values may have veered “out of line”.

As parents, our ultimate goal is to impart our values to our children and instill them in a way that our children share them not because we force them to, but because these values become a part of them. In this way, they will hopefully keep these values even when they are on their own.

Who Was That Man?

Rabbi Jared Anstandig

As Yosef wanders around the city of Shechem looking for his brothers, the Torah tells that an anonymous individual finds him. When asked what he is looking for, Yosef responds that he is looking for his brothers, and he asks this man where they are currently shepherding their sheep. The man responds that the brothers left Shechem and traveled to the city of Dotan. Yosef goes and indeed finds them there. (Bereishit 37:15-17)

While this conversation appears to be minor, when we consider its results, we realize how momentous it really is. Had this man not been there, Yosef likely would have returned home without ever finding his brothers. If so, then the rest of the Torah may never have happened. If Yosef never finds his brothers, he is never sold to Egypt, which means that Yaakov and his sons may never settle in Egypt and the enslavement (and subsequent Exodus) may never happen. Despite its seemingly minor relevance, this is arguably one of the most consequential conversations in the Torah.

Before considering the weight of this dialogue, however, the very surface of this narrative requires explanation. Rabbi Naftali Zvi Yehudah Berlin, known as “Netziv”, in his commentary to the Torah (Bereishit 37:15), asks a basic question: Why does Yosef think that this man knows anything about his brothers? Yosef provides no meaningful description of his brothers, yet still this man knows who and where they are. Netziv offers two options, which are reflected in the opinions of the medieval commentaries that preceded him.

Perhaps we can suggest that this is the true meaning of Yosef seeing the דמות דיוקנו של יעקב. Far from being simple guilt, what Yosef saw in his mind’s eye were the values that his father had instilled within him- and that had become a part of him. These values, which Yaakov had instilled through this combination of זריעה and בנין, empowered Yosef to withstand the incredible temptation, and to live based on the values inculcated within him by his father.

May we merit to successfully integrate both of these methods in our own chinuch- and raise children who live by proper values that have become a part of them- such that they prioritize these values even after they leave our care.

Rashi (Bereishit 37:15) citing a midrash answers that this is no ordinary man. In fact, it is the angel Gavriel. This explains not only how this man knows where the brothers are (since he is a celestial being), but it also explains why Yosef even bothers to ask him where they are in the first place. Commenting on Rashi, Rabbi Eliyahu Mizrachi observes that had Yosef believed this to be a normal man, he would have first asked if the man knew his brothers. Only after an affirmative response, Yosef would have asked if he knew where they were. By only asking “Where are they?” Yosef reveals that he knows this man to be more than an average person. Especially when we consider the historical weight of this conversation, it is understandable that G-d would assign an angel to this task.

Rabbi Avraham Ibn Ezra, in his commentary to the Torah (Bereishit 37:15), disagrees with Rashi. He suggests that this man is just that – a man. The Torah typically highlights interactions with angels, and it makes no mention of anything memorable here. Accordingly, writes Ibn Ezra, this man is a mere mortal. As for Rabbi Mizrachi’s point as to why Yosef immediately asks where they are, Ibn Ezra appends the words, “if you know” to Yosef’s question. Meaning, Yosef indeed only asks the man if he knows where the brothers are. At no point does he assume that the man knows anything more. According to Ibn Ezra there is nothing otherworldly about this anonymous man. If so, it is remarkable that G-d tasks an unwitting passerby with such an impactful role.

Returning to Netziv, he offers both the position of Rashi

and Ibn Ezra and adds yet another layer of understanding to the text. Netziv highlights the story's beginning, "and a man found him" (Bereishit 37:15). He asks why the Torah doesn't phrase this as, "And Yosef found a man," since Yosef is the primary individual here. He answers that the wording teaches that this man was sent by G-d for this historic purpose. Whether an angel or not, this man serves as a Divine emissary. Similarly, Rabbi Avraham ben HaRambam argues (Bereishit 37:15) that though he is

a man of flesh and blood, he has angelic significance as a messenger of G-d.

It is worth mentioning that neither Netziv nor Rabbi Avraham explains whether this man ever realizes his Divinely ordained mission. Perhaps this man never recognized how his conversation with Yosef changed the course of Jewish history. And, just like him, perhaps we don't recognize enough the power we have to impact others around us.

Judah Emerges as the Leader of Israel

Rabbi Ephraim Z. Buchwald

This week's parasha, Vayeishev, represents the opening chapter of one of the great human sagas—the story of Joseph and his brethren. The renowned German novelist, Thomas Mann, devoted two large volumes to this epic narrative.

There are actually two theological objectives to the biblical story of Joseph: One is to fulfill the prediction recorded in the Brit Bain Hab'tarim, the Covenant Between the Pieces, during which G-d tells Abram (his name has not yet been changed to Abraham) in Genesis 15:7-17, *וְעָבְדוּם, וְעָנּוּ, וְיָדַעַתְּ כִּי גֵר יִהְיֶה זְרַעְךָ בְּאֶרֶץ לֹא לָהֶם, וְעָרְבַע מְאוֹת שָׁנָה אֲתָם, אַתָּה יָדָעַתְּ כִּי גֵר יִהְיֶה זְרַעְךָ בְּאֶרֶץ לֹא לָהֶם, וְעָרְבַע מְאוֹת שָׁנָה*, "You shall surely know that your children will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and they will be enslaved and persecuted for 400 years." The prophecy then concludes with G-d assuring Abram that He will also judge the nation of enslavers, and Israel will eventually leave that land [Egypt] as a free people, and with great wealth.

The second objective of the Joseph story is to designate which of the 12 sons of Jacob will emerge as the leader of Israel.

It is through the story of Joseph that the promise of exile, enslavement, and persecution comes to fruition. Joseph's dreams create enmity between himself and his brothers. At Judah's suggestion, Joseph is pulled from the pit where he had been thrown by his resentful brothers, and sold to the Ishmaelites. His coat of many colors is dipped into goat's blood and sent to his father, Jacob, to deceive their elderly father into believing that a wild animal had devoured his beloved Joseph. Joseph himself is sold to the Egyptians and, after interpreting Pharaoh's dream, Joseph becomes the second in command of Egypt. During the great famine that strikes, Joseph sells food to his brothers, and eventually relocates Jacob and his entire

family to Goshen, Egypt. Thus, the divinely-ordained process of exile, slavery, and persecution begins.

What does all this have to do with Jewish leadership? In one of the most exalted stories of human literature, the Bible, at the end of Chapter 37 of Genesis, reports that after the brothers saw their father Jacob's inconsolable grief as a result of the loss of his beloved Joseph, they had a falling out with Judah—blaming him for everything, since it was his idea to sell Joseph. (Of course, the brothers themselves were prepared to kill Joseph, but never mind that minor detail!)

In Genesis 38:1, the Bible states that, *וַיִּרֶד יְהוּדָה מֵאֶת אָחָיו*, Judah goes down from his brothers—translate this to mean that Judah has a "falling out" with his brothers, departs from the family homestead and turns to an Adulimite man, whose name is Chira. With his departure, Judah, in effect, renounces his family connections and distances himself as much as possible from his "Jewish" past. He marries a local woman, the daughter of a man named Shua, whose name we never learn. The woman's name is not really important, only the fact she is not an Israelite is relevant.

In rapid succession, Judah's wife gives birth to three sons. Judah names the first child Er, which means "awakening," probably acknowledging the new feeling of independence that Judah has acquired. Judah's wife names the second son "Onan," which means bereft. The name apparently reflects the fact that after the birth of Er, and as a result of Judah's newfound identity, Judah has distanced himself somewhat from his wife. The third son is named Shaila, which means "quiet" or "tranquil." It can also mean to arouse false hopes. By the time Shaila is born, the estrangement has significantly increased. We can be certain that Judah and his wife didn't take birthing classes together. In fact, Judah is away at a place called Keziv (which means

to deceive) when the child is born.

To make certain that his oldest son, Er, would not possibly revert back to his family's Jewish roots, Judah arranges for Er to marry a local woman named Tamar. Er is wicked in G-d's eyes and dies. A levirate marriage is performed which binds Tamar to Judah's oldest surviving son, Onan. But, because Onan knew that any child born would really be considered the child of his deceased brother Er, Onan spills his seed, and also dies. Judah tells Tamar to return to her home and wait for the time when Shaila, his 3rd and youngest son, is old enough to marry her. Of course, Judah really has no intention of allowing Tamar to marry Shaila, because after all, he regards Tamar as the reason for the death of his two older sons.

Meanwhile, Judah's wife, the daughter of Shua, dies. To recover from his grief, Judah goes to Timna for some well-deserved "R and R" with his old buddy, Chira, the Adulamite.

The widowed Tamar realizes that Judah has no intention of ever giving his youngest son, Shaila, to her, so she dresses as a harlot and deceives Judah into having relations with her. Since Judah had no conventional payment with him, Tamar requests foolproof ID in the form of Judah's seal, his cord, and his staff. Judah later sends his friend Chira to deliver the promised goat as payment to the harlot and to retrieve his deposit. (The payment is revealing, because, after all, it was through a goat that the brothers deceived their father, Jacob.) But the harlot is nowhere to be found. Judah, who is afraid of public mortification, determines that it is better for the harlot to keep the items of deposit, rather than create a scene by trying to track her down in order to deliver the goat.

Several months later, after Judah has returned home, he is informed that Tamar, his daughter-in-law, has committed harlotry and is pregnant. Of course, Judah is not aware of the fact that he is the father of her child. And so, Judah instructs his servants to take Tamar out to the stake to be burnt. As Tamar is being led to her death, she sends the items of deposit to Judah, and asks him to identify them, stating that the seal, the cord and the staff belong to the man who had made her pregnant. Since all the evidence is now in Judah's hand, Judah could have easily stonewalled and denied all. Judah could have simply put Tamar to death, and no one would have known of the embarrassing incestuous relationship he had with his own daughter-in-law. Despite the fact that we already know that Judah is terribly sensitive

to public embarrassment, Judah rises to the occasion and pronounces two of the most heroic words in human history, (Genesis 38:26) צְדָקָה מִמֶּנִּי! "She, Tamar, is more righteous than I!" It is my fault, not hers, that this happened, since I did not allow my son, Shaila, to marry Tamar.

The rest, of course, is, as we say, "history." Tamar gives birth to twin boys. The eldest, Peretz, is destined to be the great, great grandfather of King David, and ultimately the progenitor of the Messiah.

As we look back on this moving story, we realize that by acknowledging his guilt Judah becomes history's first Ba'al Teshuva-(penitent). As the story develops further in parashat Vayigash, Judah rises to the occasion once again. He appeals to his father Jacob to allow Benjamin to go to Egypt with him, saying (Genesis 43:9): אֲנִי אֶעְרְבֶנּוּ, מִיָּדִי: תִּבְקָשׁוּנוּ , "I will be a surety for him, you will demand him from my hand. If I fail to bring him back to you, I will be guilty to you for the rest of my life!" It is at that critical moment that Judah introduces into the Jewish lexicon the revolutionary concept of עֲרֵבוּת — "areivut," mutual responsibility. This critical ideal, which Judah introduced to Jewish tradition, was later codified in our Talmud, in Shavuot 39a, as the principle of: כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל עֲרֵבִים זֶה בְּזֶה, which states that every Jew is responsible for one another.

There are those who argue that we, the Jewish people, are called "Jews" in acknowledgment of Judah, who was the first to affirm the primary principle of mutual responsibility. And so, it is Judah who emerges to become the leader of all of Israel.

In his last will and testament to his sons before his death, Jacob cries out, (Genesis 49:10): לֹא יָסוּר שֵׁבֶט מִיְהוּדָה: *the scepter of leadership shall never depart from Judah*, and will always remain with him. Despite the fact that Joseph is traditionally referred to as יוֹסֵף הַצְּדִיק — *Yosef Hatzadik*, "Joseph the Righteous" because of his superhuman resistance to Mrs. Potifar's relentless efforts to seduce him, it is not Joseph, but rather Judah, who emerges as Israel's leader. It is Judah with whom the common folk can identify, whereas, Joseph is far too utopian and much too unrealistic. It is Judah the sinner, the one who falls out and returns to become the Ba'al Teshuvah, the penitent, from whom we can learn. It is he who can serve as the more reasonable and realistic role model for mortals like ourselves, while Joseph is far too perfect.

What a story! Once again, as always, the Bible conveys a most profound and transformational message.