Points to Ponder

VaYeishev 5782

**וַיֵּ֣שֶׁב יַֽעֲקֹ֔ב בְּאֶ֖רֶץ מְגוּרֵ֣י אָבִ֑יו In the land where his father lived (37:1)** - Why the unique description of Eretz Yisrael? **Rav Schachter Shlita** explained that Yaakov began with the same mission in life as his father -- being a light onto the nation. However, when Yaakov saw that his family was complete, he realized that he did not need to convert outsiders to his religion (See **Meshech Chochma** who touts this idea). Rav Schachter noted that Yaakov’s new focus was to be that which the **Ramban** noted was to be an Or LGoyim by being a family to look up to.

**הֲל֤וֹא אַחֶ֨יךָ֙ רֹעִ֣ים בִּשְׁכֶ֔ם Shechem (37:13) - Rashi** notes that Shechem is not a good place -- they sold Yosef there, they attacked Dinah in Shechem and that is where the kingdom of the Jewish people split. **Rav Yosef Nechemiah Kornitzer ztl.** notes that the order of the Gemara is out of order. Dinah was attacked before Yosef was sold. Why the switch in order? He answers that in Dinah’s attack, the brothers united. It was only with the selling of Yosef where they were divided that it became apparent that the division was there even in the attack on Dinah which left them open to tragedy in Shechem.

**וַיִּמְצָאֵ֣הוּ אִ֔ישׁ The man (37:15) - Rashi** explains that the man was the angel Gavriel. In Parshas VaYishlach the man was identified as the angel of Eisav. How are we to know which “Ish” is good and which is evil? The **Zanzer Rebbe ztl.** explains that we check into what the Ish is trying to do. When he attempts Chessed he is Gavriel but when he is busy trying to kill you he is likely from a bad source -- the angel of Eisav. We see that the same can be said of evaluating the motives of people and what consumes them too.

**לְמַ֗עַן הַצִּ֤יל אֹתוֹ֙ מִיָּדָ֔ם לַֽהֲשִׁיב֖וֹ אֶל־אָבִֽיו: So that he might save him from his hands  (37:22)** - The Midrash notes that had Reuven known the positive things that would be said about him he would have moved even faster. **Rav Yaakov Kamenetzsky ztl.** adds that the same should be noted about us. We tend to think that our actions are without purpose. But we should know that Eliyahu HaNovi and the Moshiach are involved in the recording of our good deeds and Hashem is signing off on them. The comment is similar to that of **Rav Avraham Yitzchak Kook ztl.** who notes that when we say that “until I was created I was not worthy” refers to the fact that until our proper time in history to exist came we did not deserve to live.

**וַיֵּ֥רֶד יְהוּדָ֖ה מֵאֵ֣ת אֶחָ֑יו At that time Yehuda went down from his brothers (38:1) - Rashi** explains that the brothers held him responsible for the selling of Yosef and the trauma it caused their father. Why did the brothers hold Yehuda responsible and not themselves? They were all culpable in the selling! **Rav Baruch Mordechai Ezrachi Shlita** explains that this is the responsibility that comes along with the power of assuming the mantle of leadership. Clearly, Yehuda had influence over the others. Hence, when they debated killing Yosef, he was able to sway them to merely selling him. However, his influence would have also likely been persuasive enough to let Yosef off the hook. He didn’t go that far. For that reason, he is held more responsible by the brothers for not following through 100%.

**וַיַּֽעֲזֹ֤ב בִּגְדוֹ֙ בְּיָדָ֔הּ וַיָּ֖נָס וַיֵּצֵ֥א הַחֽוּצָה He left his clothes in her hands and he ran outside (39:12)** - Why does the Torah use the double verb וינס and ויצא ? **Sforno** notes that he ran away from her but when he got outside he just kept walking. The Torah wants us to contrast the running away from Avaira from the continued movement beyond. **Rav Dovid Povarsky ztl.** added that when we run away, we still need to have our wits about us and know why and where we are going. When we are running from Avaira, our running is purposeful. Otherwise, it is not a good idea.

**מַדּ֛וּעַ פְּנֵיכֶ֥ם רָעִ֖ים הַיּֽוֹם Why are your faces so sad today? (40:7) -Ramban** states that the reason that Yosef was so assertive was because he had confidence in his ability to interpret correctly. **Rav Henoch Leibowitz ztl.** asked why was Yosef’s self confidence so praiseworthy? We know others who are quite self confident, **Rabbi Dr. Abraham J. Twerski ztl.** explained that there is a difference between confidence and arrogance. One comes from a person knowing his or her talents and strengths and being comfortable with them. The other is actually a lack of self confidence hence the conceit and arrogance.

**HAFTARA**:

**עַל־מִכְרָ֚ם בַּכֶּ֙סֶף֙ צַדִּ֔יק  For they sold a Tzaddik for money (Amos 2:6) – Rav Pinchas Teitz ztl.** utilized this possuk when eulogizing Rav Aharon Kotler ztl. He noted that the Gaon did not falter based on the responsibilities of teaching Torah. Rather it was the crushing need to take care of the financial needs of his students and the Yeshiva and the constant fundraising that it entailed. It was as Chazal said – Al Michram B’Kessef Tzaddik --- his Tzidkus was taken for money.