



8 years of Points to Ponder on

Parashas Meikeitz/Shabbos Chanukah

**וַיְהִ֕י מִקֵּ֖ץ שְׁנָתַ֣יִם יָמִ֑ים And it was at the end of two years (41:1)** – The commentaries cite the Midrash which notes that Yosef was given two extra years for asking the Sar HaMashkim to remember him. The question of why this was wrong needs to be asked. After all, do we not consider Histadlus important? **The Chazon Ish** (Emunah U’Bitachon 2:6) notes that a man of Bitachon applies Histadlus when it will work. Yosef knew that the Mitzriyim were a narcissistic and selfish people and it was unlikely—almost impossible to expect one of them to remember him. Thus, the request of Yosef (TWICE!) was an act of desperation. It was for this, that he received the second year. The man of Bitachon does what makes sense.

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**וַיְהִ֕י מִקֵּ֖ץ שְׁנָתַ֣יִם יָמִ֑ים Mekeitz  (41:1**) -  **Rav Berel Wein Shlita** points out that the word keitz denotes an end usually to an era. However, he adds, implicit in the use of the word Keitz is the understanding that nothing is forever – nor is anything certain to man – since it all relies on the hand of Hashem. Here Yosef was in the depths of despair and in a moment had the entire social structure of Egypt turned upside down with him at the top. (Think also of Cheeshav Es HaKeitz). Things can turn around in a moment for the Jew – and we long for that turnaround to be L’Tov.

**וַיְהִ֕י מִקֵּ֖ץ שְׁנָתַ֣יִם יָמִ֑ים** **And it was at the of 2 years (41:1) – The Midrash Rabba** comments that that Mekeitz is a reference to the fact that Hashem puts an end to the darkness for once the time was complete, Pharaoh dreamed a dream. **Rav Elyashiv ztl**. explained that Yosef thought that the time had passed. After all, Pharaoh underwent 2 birthdays and nothing. He thought that the butler would have saved him and for naught. Still, at the time that a person least expects it, the result can be fast – Vayirutzuhu min Habor for when the time comes, Hashem does not delay even a moment.

**וַיְהִ֕י מִקֵּ֖ץ שְׁנָתַ֣יִם יָמִ֑ים At the end of 2 years (41:1) - Rashi** had explained that the delay of Yosef’s release from prison was 2 years because he placed his trust in Sar HaMashkim. **Rav Schachter** Shlita asked how this was possible if the dreams only happened 2 years later? Rav Schachter answered that the  **Midrash** explains Pharaoh had the same dream for two years before the שר המשקים got involved. The fact that he delayed so long / didn’t remember that Yosef interpreted dreams was an עונש מן השמים.

**וּפַרְעֹ֣ה חֹלֵ֔ם And Pharaoh dreamed (41:1) – Rav Shlomo Heiman ztl.** noted that there are many in the Torah who dream. However, while the others dream dreams of destiny, Pharaoh dreams of cows. This is a fulfillment of the Chazal that dreams come from Hirhurei HaLev. Yosef’s lev was built on the notion that he must be the master over creation.

**והנה עמד על היאור And behold he was standing on the Nile (41:1**) – The **Midrash** quotes Rav Yochanan who contrasts the fact that Pharaoh was standing on top of the Nile which was his god with Yaakov who dreamed and Hashem was on top of him. In explaining the Midrash, **Rav Simcha Wasserman ztl.** explained that רשעים seek to make their gods comply with their intentions. We are different. We insist on complying with what Hashem expects of us.

**וּפַרְעֹ֣ה חֹלֵ֔ם And Pharaoh dreamed and he was standing on the Yioar (41:1) - Rav Meir Shapiro ztl. Lubiner Rav** pointed out that in a person's inner thoughts we see what he truly thinks about (see similar thought from previous years from **Rav Shlomo Heiman ztl**). Here too, we see Pharaoh's Gaava. In his dream he thinks he is so great that he is greater than the god of Egypt. However, when he considers the fact that he has to say that to other people, he tones it down and tells them that he was on the Yioar's bank.

**וַיְהִ֤י בַבֹּ֨קֶר֙ וַתִּפָּ֣עֶם רוּח֔וֹ In the morning Pharaoh was distressed (41:8) - Rav Shimon Schwab ztl.** notes that when we learn this section of the Torah without context, we wonder why Pharaoh didn’t just shake off a bad dream? Why did he let it affect him the way that he did? Rav Schwab explains that in the normal course of events -- the strong defeat the weak. As the leader of the strongest nation at the time, any dream that upset this prevailing philosophy was a cause for alarm for he was clearly underprepared for some sort of rebellion or attack. Thus, he called the leadership together in order to go over the context and make sure that the nation was safe. He adds that it is no surprise that Mekeitz is always read when we highlight Gibborim B’Yad Chalashim.

**וַיְהִ֤י בַבֹּ֨קֶר֙ וַתִּפָּ֣עֶם רוּח֔וֹ  In the morning he was distressed (41:8) – Rav Dovid Povarsky ztl.** compared Yosef to Pharaoh. When Pharaoh dreams, he is out of sorts and demands that the rest of the country be so as well until he was calmed. Yosef, on the other hand, has the calm despite the chaos around him. The critical takeaway, he says, is that one must not allow his physical or emotional sense to overtake his spiritual calm and the ability to properly serve Hashem.

**ואני שמעתי עליך לאמר תשמע חלום לפתר אותו I heard about you that you can interpret dreams (41:15**) – Why did he not let Yosef know that it was the שר המשקים who told him? **Chasam Sofer** notes that it was because of the non-mention of שר המשקים that brought גלות not גאולה for the world. But since when is a non-Jew obligated to state things in the name of those who professed them? **Rav Chaim Kanievsky Shlita** answered that even a Non-Jew has an obligation to engage in Chessed. We see this from Eisav whose actions on the day his father died are identified by Tosafos (Bava Basra 16b) as anti-Chessed.

**וְעַתָּה֙ יֵרֶ֣א פַרְעֹ֔ה אִ֖ישׁ נָב֣וֹן וְחָכָ֑ם And now Pharaoh should seek out a wise person (41:33)** - If Hashem had also given Yosef the dream interpretation and the advice, certainly Pharaoh would listen to his advice! What else would he do? **Rav Pam ztl**. explained that Yosef was giving advice for people beyond just the immediate crisis. He was telling people not to waste the “good years” the times we are young -- when we can grab an “Amen” or a “Daf.” We need to grab and appreciate it!

**הֲנִמְצָ֣א כָזֶ֔ה אִ֕ישׁ אֲשֶׁ֛ר ר֥וּח**ַ **Can there be one found like him, a man with the spirit of Hashem? (41:38)** -  Wisdom, energy and wit are all job qualifications for the position of viceroy – spirit of Hashem is not. Why does Pharaoh care about it? **Rav Baruch Mordechai Ezrachi Shlita** points out that Yosef did not simply do his job. He was asked to provide interpretation of a dream. Yet, due to something special inside of him, he reaches beyond himself and offers advice. Rav Ezrachi explains that only one with the spirit of Hashem – the spirit that says to “be Meitiv” looks at a situation and offers advice on top of the mission that s/he is assigned. It was this extra piece that is invaluable for the success of any project and its leader, and it was this that Pharaoh seized upon.

**אַֽחֲרֵ֨י הוֹדִ֧יעַ אֱלֹהִ֛ים אֽוֹתְךָ֖ אֶת־כָּל־זֹ֑את אֵֽין־נָב֥וֹן וְחָכָ֖ם כָּמֽוֹךָ: Since God has informed you of all this, there can be no one so discerning and wise as you (41:39**) - Why weren’t Pharaoh’s magicians able to interpret the dream? Why was the fact that Yosef knew how to interpret the dream deemed to indicate that there was no one as discerning and wise as him, and that he was fit to be king? **Rav Moshe Stav Shlita**explained that in the dreams recounted in the parsha, Pharaoh dreamed on a personal level, but also on the level of a king, such that he saw reality through a more universal lens. Usually, Pharaoh dreamed as an individual, and his magicians – who knew him, his personality, his way of thinking, his aspirations, and the longings during the day that affected his dreams at night – interpreted his dreams in a manner that calmed him. But this time, the dream was different. It was on a higher level, deriving from the place where “the heart of kings is in the hand of Hashem.” The dream therefore bothered him, and the chartumim could not understand what he had experienced. As a result, they were not able to provide an explanation that satisfied him. Yosef’s wisdom was not reflected in the fact that he explained the details, but rather in that he experienced the dream from the perspective of Pharaoh. He interpreted the dream in a manner that was psychologically satisfying to Pharaoh. Wisdom and discernment do not simply entail knowledge of details and the ability to draw conclusions, but also the ability to grasp the larger picture. This is the level of perfection of the power of imagination. Many people think that imagination is delusion, but this is a mistake. The power of imagination is the power to paint an accurate picture of reality based on the overall impression of the facts.

**אַֽחֲרֵ֨י הוֹדִ֧יעַ אֱלֹהִ֛ים אֽוֹתְךָ֖ אֶת־כָּל־זֹ֑את אֵֽין־נָב֥וֹן וְחָכָ֖ם כָּמֽוֹךָ** **After Hashem revealed all of this to you there is none as wise as you (41:39/40) – Rav Schach ztl.** once pointed out that it seemed surreal that Pharaoh’s dreams should occupy such a prominent place in the Torah with such detail. Yet, he added, the same king later turned on the Jewish people and made it as if he had never heard of Yosef. How could that be? He explained that the Torah is teaching us the value of Bechira. Each human has the ability to see the hand of Hashem and to reject it. The choice is ours. A man like Pharaoh can choose to see the hand of Hashem in the words of a prisoner or to reject the wisdom of a viceroy.

**ולבש אותו בגדי שש And he dressed him in linen robes (41:43)** – It is pretty clear that the Torah notes the change of Yosef’s garb not to highlight the miracle about him as much as they were about Hashem. **Rav Amital ztl.** added that Judaism recognizes the importance of physical and material trappings for not only do they provide grandeur for God, but they remind a person that he is created in God's image and must behave in an appropriate manner. Materialism is one of the most easily misused benefits that we have in this world. It can be overused and misused. While assuring that we behave in a respectful and dignified way, we must remember why we need to maintain that dignity and majesty. This is the lesson that Yosef HaTzadik gives us when he says to his brothers, from his seat of grandeur: "את האלקים אני ירא - "I fear God."

**וַיִּקְרָ֨א פַרְעֹ֥ה שֵֽׁם־יוֹסֵף֘ צָֽפְנַ֣ת פַּעְנֵ֒חַ֒  Pharaoh called Yosef Tzofnas Paneiach…and Yosef went out into the land of Egypt (41:45**) – Yosef name is changed but before the end of the Possuk it seems that the name is forgotten? Why? How? **Rav Zaidel Epstein ztl.** explained that the name Tzofnas Paneiach was Pharaoh’s way of reminding Yosef that he, was still the boss and Yosef was now a new man under his spell and rule. Yosef understood that this move was a means of assimilating him into the populance and therefore chose to make sure that when he went out it was as Yosef – maintaining his connection to his father’s house at the core.

**וַיִּקְרָ֨א פַרְעֹ֥ה שֵֽׁם־יוֹסֵף֘ צָֽפְנַ֣ת פַּעְנֵ֒חַ֒ He called Yosef Tzafnas Paneiach (41:45)** - Why did Pharaoh change his name but he remained Yosef? Even in the same Possuk we see that it is Yosef who goes out among the people?! It seems that there is a difference between Yosef and Pharaoh about Yosef. Pharaoh sees him as the unique one who reveals that which is hidden. Yosef argues that he is just the one who expands (Yosef) the reach of Hashem’s goodness within the world.

**כִּֽי־נַשַּׁ֤נִי אֱלֹהִים֙ אֶת־כָּל־עֲמָלִ֔י  For Hashem made me forget (41:51)** – Why is Yosef called a Tzaddik if he was trying to forget his father and his earlier years? **Rav Eliyahu Meir Bloch ztl** explains that there are some people who are so mired in their pasts that they cannot live in the present or prepare for the future. Yosef was not one of those people. He was ready to take his past and utilize the teachings in his present to build the ideal home based on where he was and where he was headed. That is what Tzidkus is about.

**כִּֽי־נַשַּׁ֤נִי אֱלֹהִים֙ אֶת־כָּל־עֲמָלִ֔י  Because Hashem made me forget all my troubles and my father’s house (41:51**) – Why would Yosef praise the ability to forget? **The Netziv** assumes that Yosef would have been overcome with PTSD and would not have been able to accomplish what he accomplished in Mitzrayim without the power to forget. **Rav Moshe Sturnbuch Shlita** offers a different possibility. He suggests that Yosef forgot the message of his father’s house – to be uninterested in the mundane and focus only on the spiritual. If he were never able to forget this message, he too, would not have been able to accomplish. Sometimes, Hashem selects different missions in life for people than the ones they plan for themselves. The ability to switch gears is critical if one is to taste the success of fulfilling the mission Hashem selects for you.

כִּֽי־נַשַּׁ֤נִי אֱלֹקים֙ **For Hashem caused me to forget all my hardships (41:51)** - **Rashi** notes that when Yosef sent word to his father that he was alive, he sent wagons to remind Yaakov that this was the last sugya that they studied together. What did he mean that he forgot? **Rav Wolbe ztl** explained that forgetting in the Torah’s language means forgetting even the slightest amount of Torah. It helps him not only overcome his animalistic aspects of his nature but also the capacity to accomplish that feat.

**למה תתראו Why should you be afraid (42:1)** – **Yalkut Shimoni** comments that Yaakov told his children not to be conspicuous when they went to Egypt for being flashy leads to עין הרע which, as we learn from the first לוחות and from the city of ירושלים, sparks destruction. **Rav Altusky ztl**. asks what the power of the עין הרע here would be? After all, why was Yaakov worried about the עין הרע of idol worshippers when his children were צדיקים? He answers that עין הרע in these cases raises the doubt as to whether a Tzaddik will deserve a special dispensation in a perilous situation. This demonstrates how a person’s feelings – deserved or otherwise – can cause a danger for someone. This is the power of עין הרע.

**לָ֖מָּה תִּתְרָאֽוּ Why should you appear satiated (42:1)** – **The Yalkut Shimoni** notes that Yaakov told his children that they should not be ostentatious or stand out especially in moments of national famine  as it brings on Ayin Hara. **Rav Altusky ztl**. asked what the power of the Ayin Hara was? After all, it does not come from a Talmid Chacham so it is not Tzaddik Gozer? He answers that through Ayin HaRa there is a Kitrug that is unleashed on a person. Left alone, it does not mean much but in context to other occasional failings, it has the power to wreak havoc on a life as the final straw. That is, when a person raises an Ayin Hara, the person is acting in a way that is counter the way that Hashem acts. That’s why it creates the Kitrug despite the source of the Kitrug. **Rav Schachter Shlita** would often mention to us that the demonstrative style is the opposite of Hashem. He is a Keil Mistater and we should be as well. **Rav Pam ztl.** added that this is especially true when we deal with Chanukah – while we light the candles openly, we need not also leave the windows open to the living or dining room long after the candles go out. The opposite message of Chanukah comes through if we do.

**וירדו אחי יוסף עשרה And the brothers of Yosef went down as ten (42:3) – Rashi** comments that it does not say that they were the sons of Yaakov because they had agreed to redeem Yosef for all the money they had and were in agreement on this point. **Rav Shteinman ztl.** asks that later in Rashi we learn that the brothers still did not like him and were split on how to deal with him. Rav Shteinman adds that we see how difficult מידות are. Even when we come to understand that we are wrong and have been, it is still difficult to come to an emotional solution to our conflicts.

**כִּ֣י אָמַ֔ר פֶּן־יִקְרָאֶ֖נּוּ אָסֽוֹן: And Yaakov did not send Binyamin the brother of Yosef because he was afraid that tragedy might befall him (42:4)** – The word Yikraeinu seems to imply that it was pre-ordained. Yet, when Yehuda retells the story to Yosef, he uses the word V’Karahu (42:29) which implies circumstance and coincidence. **Rav Yaakov Galinsky ztl** noted that a Jew has a responsibility to know that nothing in life is circumstance and happenstance. Hence Yaakov told his sons that perhaps it is preordained. However, Yehuda spoke to Tzafnas Paneiach and used the coincidence word because, he assumed that the non-Jew couldn’t fathom something like this being preordained.

**וַיַּכֵּ֥ר יוֹסֵ֖ף אֶת־אֶחָ֑יו וְהֵ֖ם לֹ֥א הִכִּרֻֽהוּ Yosef recognized his brothers but they didn’t recognize him (42:8)-** How could it be that the brothers didn’t recognize Yosef? **Rashi** explains that it was because he now had a beard. **Rav Avraham Rivlin Shlita** explained that Yosef realized that he was sold as a result of his Lashon HaRa and his lording power over his family. However, he learned from the experience and did Teshuva. In essence he become more of a Tzaddik -- hence the “new beard.”

**וַיַּכֵּ֥ר יוֹסֵ֖ף אֶת־אֶחָ֑יו וְהֵ֖ם לֹ֥א הִכִּרֻֽהוּ And Yosef recognized his brothers but they did not recognize him (42:8)** – How could it be that when the leader (Yosef) used Hashem’s name and declared his belief in Hashem, Shechted an animal for them and removed the Gid HaNashe from it, that they did not recognize him? **Rav Avigdor Nebenzahl Shlita** explains that the house of Avraham influenced tens of thousands and it was possible that the viceroy of Egypt was a descendant of one of those who were influenced. It was therefore possible that he was keeping the practice of something he remembered from home but was not connected to it.

**וַיַּכֵּ֥ר יוֹסֵ֖ף אֶת־אֶחָ֑יו וְהֵ֖ם לֹ֥א הִכִּרֻֽהוּ And Yosef recognized his brothers but they did not recognize him (42:8)** – This idea is already stated a few Possukim earlier. Why repeat it? **Rav Dr. Lamm Shlita** explained that the Torah is speaking of a deeper recognition – of their emotional place. Yosef, now viceroy over Egypt, had come a long way from some agonizing points in his life. He was in the pit, all alone, a slave and then prisoner in Egypt and had come from there to be viceroy. But the brothers had come in the opposite direction – they had neglected him and now it looked bleak for them. Yosef knew that their situation was a prelude for salvation for he had been there too. But they did not know him – and that he had been there and spoke not of hope but of experience.

**וַיִּזְכֹּ֣ר יוֹסֵ֔ף אֵ֚ת הַֽחֲלֹמ֔וֹת אֲשֶׁ֥ר חָלַ֖ם לָהֶ֑ם Yosef recalled the dreams (42:9) - Rav Gifter ztl.** noted that until Yosef’s brothers came to him, he had forgotten the dreams. In other words, he did not think that his ascendance to the throne was about himself, it was about the opportunity to help a needy country. But how could he forget a Nevuah? After all, the dreams were a Nevuah? Rav Gifter explains that Yosef thought he had been mistaken about the dreams and the brothers were indeed the correct ones. It was only when he saw them fulfilling the dreams did he begin to reconsider.

**כֻּלָּ֕נוּ בְּנֵ֥י אִֽישׁ־אֶחָ֖ד נָ֑חְנו**ּ **We are all the children of a single man, we are not spies (42:10-12**) – How could Yosef offer an outright lie in order to protect his ruse? **Rav Soloveitchik** ztl once noted that he was not lying. He was speaking on a different plane than the brothers. They were speaking about their present situation. Yosef was speaking about Jewish destiny as foretold by his dreams. He told them that they were the first sentries and that they were going to be the originals of a large nation destined to descend on Egypt whose weaknesses had to be exploited (Ervas Haaretz – a reference to the weakness of Mitzrayim – namely that they were familially corrupt. By knowing this, the Jews would learn to act differently and to stay away from this style).

**וַיִּקַּ֤ח מֵֽאִתָּם֙ אֶת־שִׁמְע֔וֹן וַיֶּֽאֱסֹ֥ר אֹת֖וֹ לְעֵֽינֵיהֶֽם** **And he took Shimon into prison before them (42:24)** – Why did Yosef need to take a captive if he knew the brothers were going to have to come back anyway? **Rav Shlomo of Vilna ztl.** explains that Yosef feared that Yaakov would not send Binyamin down and that the brothers would try to pass an imposter off as their brother. In order to keep his ruse undercover, he took Shimon so that he would be able to ask him if he recognized the person brought down with the brothers in so far as he could not be in on the trick.

**לְהָשִׁ֤יב כַּסְפֵּיהֶם֙ אִ֣ישׁ אֶל־שַׂקּ֔וֹ**  **Yosef commanded to return the money of each man to his sack (42:25)** – Why did Yosef return the money? **The Gerrer Rebbe**explained that the brothers knew that a little bribe went a long way in the corrupt world around them. Unfortunately, that bribe was received and returned suggesting to the brothers that Tzafnas Paneiach was not a regular world leader at that time.  Thus, in his returning the money he was giving them a message that their general plan of engaging corruption was not going to work this time. That is why he returned the money – to tell them he wasn’t for sale. That’s why when the brothers find the money in their sacks that is precisely when they get scared.

**אנכי אערבנו I will be the guarantor (43:9)** – What is the point of a guarantor here? The **Netziv** explains that Yehuda was telling Yaakov that if there is a challenge to the life of Binyamin (for the Satan is out for lives during a Sakana and even a Misa B’yidei Shomayim challenge could trigger a potential for death) I will volunteer my life instead**. Rav Schachter Shlita** often asked us what the argument of Yehuda was. After all, one only goes to the guarantor after the defendant cannot pay. Here, Binyamin would be able to pay, with his life! Rav Schachter Shlita answered that there are three types of ערב identified in the Talmud. The first is a regular ערב – who is approached only after the defendant. The second is an ערב Kablan who can be approached at the same time as the defendant. Neither of these was relevant to the situation that Yaakov would have wanted. It is the third type – that of an ערב שלוף דוץ who can be approached even before the person he is guaranteeing that is the intent of Yehudah here. Ergo, Yehudah’s guarantee would work. This is the reason that we do not cite Yehuda as the source for ערב. His guarantee was for a very unique ערב situation.

**קְח֞וּ מִזִּמְרַ֤ת הָאָ֨רֶץ֙ Take from the praises of the land (43:11)** - What is meant with the word “praises?” **Rav Nachman of Breslov** interprets the possuk literally noting that no two shepherds have the same tune. Each creates his own tune based on his place, his flock and his location. The same was Yaakov’s intent when connecting to the viceroy. He wanted to share his story so that the viceroy not hold him accountable for taking money or stealing the culture. **Sivan Rahav Meir** adds that this is one of the most important lessons of life -- to recognize and appreciate our unique perspective and story and to create the songs for our own families and heritage that will keep future generations connected as well.

**וּטְבֹ֤חַ טֶ֨בַח֙ וְהָכֵ֔ן And prepare the meat (43:16)** – The Talmud (chullin 91) notes that Yosef commanded them to take the Gid HaNasheh out in front of the brothers. Why is the first time that the mitzvah of Gid Hanasheh is mentioned, is it in context of Yosef’s observance?**Rav Shmuel Brazil Shlita** suggests that in the same way that there are 365 Lavin there are 365 solar days and the Zohar notes that the Lav of Tisha B’av is Gid HaNasheh. It follows that Yosef, who is always prepared to handle trouble, no matter what comes his way, is the ideal one to face the Gid HaNashe and to utilize its challenge for his betterment and that of the Jewish people.

**וְאֶת־חֲמֹרֵֽינוּ: And to take us as slaves and our donkeys (43:18)** - With all of the danger that the brothers were facing, why and where do the donkeys come into the conversation? **Rav Mordechai Druk ztl**. notes that in the Gemara we meet people whose donkeys did great things. The donkey of Rav Yosi of Yokeras would not move with money that was not his. Rav Pinchas ben Yair’s donkey didn’t work on Shabbos. You might imagine what the Shevatim’s donkeys should have been all about. Yet, one of them walked off with the Gaviya of Yosef. Why did the donkeys do that? It must be part of some evil plan, they assumed.

**כַּסְפְּכֶ֖ם בָּ֣א אֵלָ֑י Your God and the God of your father gave you a gift in your sacks, your money has already come to me (43:23**) – What is the reason Yosef returned the money to the brothers ? Why does the Torah want us to know about it? **Rav Shimshon Dovid Pinkus ztl**. explains that the whole issue of the return of the money seems not to be connected to causing the brothers any harm. Instead the selling of the food in the time of the famine speaks to business, not to Yosef’s Tzidkus. Once there was no money and Yosef was giving away the food – that showed he was deserving of the title Yosef HaTzaddik.

**הֲשָׁל֛וֹם אֲבִיכֶ֥ם הַזָּקֵ֖ן אֲשֶׁ֣ר אֲמַרְתֶּ֑ם הַֽעוֹדֶ֖נּוּ חָֽי: Is your father well, is he alive (43:27)** - Shouldn’t the order of the questions been reversed? Shouldn’t Yosef have asked first if Yaakov was alive and THEN ask if he was well? **Rav Moshe Feinstein ztl.** explains that Yosef was not asking about Yaakov’s physical state of mind but rather about his outlook on life -- was he well and at peace or did he develop a pessimistic attitude toward humanity and toward the world after losing Yosef or does he still have the vibrance toward the mission as before.

**וַיֹּ֗אמֶר הֲזֶה֙ אֲחִיכֶ֣ם הַקָּטֹ֔ן אֲשֶׁ֥ר אֲמַרְתֶּ֖ם אֵלָ֑י Is this your younger brother (43:29)** – Binyamin is treated like a child in the book of Berashis. This despite the fact that he is the father of 10 children? How do we explain his complacency in his family role? **Rav Avraham Rivlin Shlita** explains that this power of complacency in his silence is part of the regal nature of Binyamin. He is comfortable knowing his secure role in the eyes of Hashem and that things will work out in the way they are supposed to. This style is what defeats Amalek which is designed to create a hullaballoo of fear within the Jewish nation. The calm regal nature of the silence of Binyamin brings a certain calm that gets to his children so that they too, can appropriately prepare in order to handle Amalek in any challenge.

**וַיָּשִׂ֥ימוּ ל֛וֹ לְבַדּ֖וֹ וְלָהֶ֣ם לְבַדָּ֑ם וְלַמִּצְרִ֞ים הָאֹֽכְלִ֤ים אִתּוֹ֙ לְבַדָּ֔ם**  **For the Egyptians would not break bread with him as it was an abomination to the Egyptians (43:32)** – The amazing concept that an Egyptian citizen found it abominable to eat with the viceroy with whom they could get ahead. Why did this not bother Yosef? **Rabbi Dr. Norman Lamm Shlita** once explained that as opposed to the American Jew who would have been miserable about the situation, Yosef did not feel that he was alone when he was not connected to the Egyptian culture or people. Instead, he felt ever more connected to Hashem and it helped him in the trying moments.

**וַיֵּֽשְׁב֣וּ לְפָנָ֔יו הַבְּכֹר֙ כִּבְכֹ֣רָת֔וֹ וְהַצָּעִ֖יר כִּצְעִֽרָת֑וֹ  He seated them the oldest by his oldest place and the youngest based on his age (43:33) – Rashi** explains that he pretended to rely on his cup as a means of magic. Why were the Shevatim so surprised? They had seen such powers in the past? Why be surprised if a cup could simply give an order? **Rav Nosson Tzvi Wachtfogel ztl.** explains that while the powers of Tumah were unleashed by a cup, these powers should have only been able to create disarray – but when it created order that was surprising to the brothers and didn’t make sense to them.

**וישתו וישכרו עמו And they drank and they were merry with him (43:34)** – Why would they have had drinks? They did not know that he was Yosef and until that point in time, **Rashi** notes that they had abstained from alcohol. Why change now? **Rav Moshe Feinstein ztl.** explains that the brothers thought that whatever they went through was part of the Kappara process from Hashem for the selling of Yosef and thus, even before it was over they agreed to drink in order to demonstrate their appreciation to Hashem and faith in Him that salvation was imminent.  **וַיִּשְׁתּ֥וּ וַיִּשְׁכְּר֖וּ עִמּֽוֹ: They drank with him (43:34) – Rashi** adds that until that point they had not had any wine without him. **Rav Eliyahu Lopian ztl.** explains that while the brothers had determined that Yosef was a Rodef who needed to be stopped, they still felt a kinship toward him (think of Yehoshua’s treatment of Achan)and therefore shared in the sorrow of his loss and refused to drink as a result until this day.

**וַיִּשְׁתּ֥וּ וַיִּשְׁכְּר֖וּ עִמּֽוֹ They drank and got drunk with him (43:34) - Rashi** notes that they had not had any wine from the time that Yosef was sold. But if Yosef was wrong and deserved to be sold, why did they mourn? **Rav Eliyahu Lopian ztl** explains that even though someone is determined to be a Rodef whose death is necessary; it does not mean that the people rejoice in the situation. It is similar to the predicament that Bnei Yisrael had with Achan.

**לָ֛מָּה שִׁלַּמְתֶּ֥ם רָעָ֖ה תַּ֥חַת טוֹבָֽה: Why did you repay me with evil in place of my kindness (44:4)**– Yosef’s argument needs explanation. He caught them red-handed in theft. Why does he question their etiquette? **The Alter of Slabodka** explains that Yosef recognized his brothers’ natures. He knew that accusing them of a specific sin that they knew they did not commit would not bother them. However, accusing them of bad middos and especially a lack of Hakaras Hatov would bother them immensely. Thus, he chose the latter approach.

**אֲשֶׁ֨ר יִמָּצֵ֥א אִתּ֛וֹ מֵֽעֲבָדֶ֖יךָ וָמֵ֑ת וְגַם־אֲנַ֕חְנוּ He who has the cup shall not live and we will be servants to the master (44:9)** – The response of the messenger seems contradictory. First he agrees to the terms and then he changes the rules that one he who has the cup will be a slave. How are we to explain? **Rav Yehoshua Leib Kutner ztl.** explains that based on the international law of the time, it is not only the individual but his entire environment that serve for a crime lest they too, be in on a conspiracy. However, once it is clear that the people are not involved, they are released and only the criminals are remanded for trial. That was the answer to the brothers of Yosef – Ata – now it is as you say but in the future this might change as the facts unfold.

**וַיְחַפֵּ֕שׂ בַּגָּד֣וֹל הֵחֵ֔ל וּבַקָּטֹ֖ן כִּלָּ֑ה They checked beginning with the oldest and ending with the Youngest (44:12) - Rav Yehoshua Leib Diskin ztl** quoted a Midrash that stated that the only 2 bags they checked were those of Shimon and Binyamin insofar as the others argued that they had a Chezkas Kashrus since they returned the money sent to them by mistake. Shimon and Binyamin were not given extra money. This, said Rav Yehoshua Leib was the meaning of the Possuk that they started with the oldest (Shimon, of the 2) and ended with the youngest (Binyamin). **Rav Schachter Shlita** would often note that while a novel level of interpretation, he didn’t know where the midrash exists and didn’t think it Peshat in the Possuk.

**Haftarah:**

**(non-Shabbos Chanukah) –**

**שְׁתַּ֛יִם נָשִׁ֥ים זֹנ֖וֹת  2 women Zonos (Melachim Alef 3:16)** - Why did the women go to Shlomo?  **Rav Yaakov Kamenetzsky ztl.** explained that they had already been to Beis Din with no success noting that whomever was most strong would win. The women knew that if this were the Halacha, they might tear the baby to pieces! Thus, they went to Shlomo since a king need not only rule baked on established precedent.

(Shabbos Chanukah)

In the infamous Haftorah of Shabbos Chanukah, we find Yehoshua Kohein Gadol in unfitting clothes which prevent the image of the Menorah from being experienced until they are removed. Why? **Rav Dr. Benny Lau** **Shlita** explained that Yehoshua’s children were maligned because they had intermarried. He quotes **Rav Uziel ztl**. who noted that while the clothes are changed in the Nevuah, the person is not removed. He interprets that one needs to work hard to keep the kesher with the families. Although not agreed to by all, Rav Uziel encourages the conversion of the non-Jewish spouse so as not to write off lines of the Jewish people.

**וִֽיהוֹשֻׁ֕עַ הָיָ֥ה לָב֖וּשׁ בְּגָדִ֣ים צוֹאִ֑ים And Yehoshua Kohein Gadol was wearing soiled garments (Zechariah 3:3)** – The Nevuah refers to the amount of intermarriage that existed in Yehoshua’s children and in other families at the time of the second Beis Hamikdash. Why the stress on Yehoshua? Why single him out? **Rav Schachter Shlita quoted from Rav Soloveitchik ztl.** that the Kohein Gadol needed to be married if he was to do the Avoda on Yom Hakippurim in order to ask for Kappara for the family on Yom Kippur. If he was blessed with children, they would all be included in the Korban and he needed to make sure that the family contained no mumar (to prevent the issue of Zevach Reshaim Toeiva). Thus, uniquely in his situation he needed to be able to have children who were not Mumarim to destroy his status.

**הָסִ֛ירוּ הַבְּגָדִ֥ים הַצֹּאִ֖ים מֵעָלָ֑יו Remove the soiled clothing from upon him (Zechariyah 3:4)** – Why is Yehoshua wearing soiled clothes in the images of Zechariyah’s prophesy? **Rashi**notes that Yehoshua’s children intermarried and he could have stopped them by voicing his opinion and did not. Accordingly, he is seen as wearing a dirty garment until Ezra’s times when the children divorced themselves from their non-Jewish wives**. Rav Avraham Rivlin Shlita** highlights the importance of getting up and voicing an opinion when one sees a wrongdoing and s/he can impact the situation. Chanukah too, was a time when a group of people said “no!” to wrongdoing and stood up for what was right.

**ונתתי לך מהלכים בין העומדים האלה And I shall give you opportunities to move between these pillars (Zechariah 3:7) – Rav Aharon Kotler ztl.** explained that this is a natural phenomenon. If the human being is not constantly moving forward in life, s/he is not stagnating, s/he is MOVING BACKWARDS. The effect is not just felt in the future but in the present. The reason is simple – if one is working to the best of his ability at present and achieves the maximum that s/he can achieve in an area of life, and then Hashem extends the person’s capacity so as to extend the person’s maximum then the person becomes obligated to work harder to maintain the same station in his spiritual growth. This is the reason that the Avos were always “running” and did not allow themselves to become tired despite their ages. There was always further to grow. Rav Aharon adds that this style is particularly important today where the style toward leisure and easiness makes one susceptible to lowered standards. In Torah life it does not work.

**עַל־אֶ֥בֶן אַחַ֖ת שִׁבְעָ֣ה עֵינָ֑יִם  On one stone there will be seven eyes (Zechariah 3:9)** - Is it permissible to use a Possuk in context that was not the way it was intended? **Rav Schachter Shlita** told the story of the  MaHarival who was blind in one eye and was resting on a stone with 3 of his students. One turned and quoted the fact to the Rebbe that this is a kiyum of Al Even Achas Shiva Einayim. When things are a melitza – there is room to offer a novel example without concern for kefirah.

**לֹ֚א בְחַ֙יִל֙ וְלֹ֣א בְכֹ֔חַ כִּ֣י אִם־בְּרוּחִ֔י  Not through armies and not through might but through my spirit (Zechariah 4:6)** – What did the Nevuah mean? **Rav Schachter Shlita** would often quote the opinion of Rav Chaim that unlike the conquest of Eretz Yisrael which was via conquest (Kibbush), the conquest of Ezra was based on settlement (Chazaka). Kibbush can be lost through the Kibbush of an enemy but Chazaka is forever. This is what Zechariah saw – that the Kiddush of the second Beis HaMikdash was with the spirit of Hashem and His desire to settle his Shechina in Eretz Yisrael. That would remain in effect until Binyan Bayis Shlishi and beyond.