Points to Ponder

Vayeishev 5779

**וַיֵּ֣שֶׁב יַֽעֲקֹ֔ב Yaakov settled (37:1) – Rashi** famously notes that Yaakov wanted to settle in serenity and therefore he was beset with the Yosef experience. What was so wrong with Yaakov’s request so as to punish him with such a serious consequence? **Rav Chaim Shmuellevitz ztl.** explains that challenges are the fertile ground for growth. Asking not to have them is akin to asking to stop growing spiritually. This, Hashem could not allow.

**וַיַּֽחֲלֹ֤ם יוֹסֵף֙ חֲל֔וֹם וַיַּגֵּ֖ד לְאֶחָ֑יו Yosef dreamed a dream and shared it with his brothers (37:5)** – Did Yosef actually think that his dreams were going to bring him closer to the brothers? Why did he share them if he realized that they would be jealous of him? **Rav Yosef Bloch ztl.** cites a Midrash that utilizes this story to teach us that we should not scorn the Novi in the future who carries a different type of message that is not deemed pleasant by the receivers of the words. Rav Bloch adds that Yosef’s intent was to say that if he, the youngest of them, is being set up to be the leader then something is wrong with the others and they should improve to fix it. Yaakov scorned him because he felt that the others couldn’t hear the words but the words themselves? These he saved for he knew that they were true.

**מַה־בֶּ֗צַע כִּ֤י נַֽהֲרֹג֙ אֶת־אָחִ֔ינוּ What is the purpose in killing our brother (37:26) – Rashi** ( Sotah 13b) notes that although Yehudah began the process of saving Yosef’s life, he did not finish it. Hashem punished him and he lost both his wife and 2 of his sons. Why was the punishment in his tragic loss of his wife and children? **Rav Gedaliah Eiseman ztl. (Mashgiach Kol Torah)** explains that Sheleimus in a person exists when he is married with children. Since, in a certain sense, Yehuda did not do a complete Hatzalah – it appeared that he did not see completing the task as crucial. Hashem responded in kind by not finding his life’s completeness as crucial either.

**וַיַּרְא־שָׁ֧ם יְהוּדָ֛ה בַּת־אִ֥ישׁ כְּנַֽעֲנִ֖י Yehudah saw the daughter of a Cananite man THERE (38:2)** – Why does the Possuk highlight that he saw her THERE. Where else was he to find her? **Rav Avigdor Nebenzahl Shlita** explains that the Torah wants us to know that even when Yehuda was down on his luck, having lost the esteem of his brothers and moving out away from them, Hashem was already planning for his future – and the Davidic line. Hashem twisted this entire story into the timeline he did in order to create the future line of Moshiach wih the life-experience he wanted that line to have. Rav Nebenzahl adds that this is why making Shidduchim occupies so much of Hashem’s time – he needs to create the experience not only wherein the people meet but also under what circumstances their meeting brings out marriage.

**כי ה' אתו His master saw that Hashem was with Yosef (39:3**) – How did he know that Hashem was with Yosef in everything he did? **Rashi** notes that Yosef utilized Hashem’s name in everything he did**. Rav Meir Twerski Shlita** added that the awareness that we have of our obligation to sanctify Hashem’s name everywhere we go can also help us not succumb to life’s challenges in business and other things.

**עַ֚ל שַׂ֣ר הַמַּשְׁקִ֔ים וְעַ֖ל שַׂ֥ר הָֽאוֹפִֽים: Sar HaMashkim and Sar HaOfim (40:2)** – What was the error of the 2 men that got them thrown into prison? This is especially difficult if we assume that it was one of each of their staff members that had actually committed the crime. Why punish the head of the office for the sins of the underling? **Rav Nissan Alpert ztl.** notes that their primary sin was the fact that they assumed an administrative role and did not actually do their jobs. Their prison sentences came about as a result of that failure to be “hands on” when dealing with the king. In the Sar HaMashkim’s dream it became evident that he had become repentant for this transgression and therefore in his entire dream, he is the one who prepares Pharaoh’s cup from beginning to end. On the other hand, Sar HaOfim doesn’t get the message and remains a bystander in his life’s story. Thus, he loses his life. Unfortunately, the Sar HaMashkim returns to his previous state as soon as he regains his position. Hence the Torah reminds us that in the end the Sar HaMashkim actively forgets Yosef.

**כִּ֧י אִם־זְכַרְתַּ֣נִי אִתְּךָ֗ Please remember me with you (40:14)** – The Midrash comments that Yosef should have possessed the Middas HaBitachon to trust in Hashem and not in Sar HaMashkim. The Midrash suggests Yosef was wrong here. However the Midrash opens this section with the Possuk Baruch HaGever Asher Yivtach BaHashem. But Yosef seems castigated for his LACK of Bitachon. How do we explain? **Rav Schachter Shlita** would often cite the **Beis HaLevi** who suggests that for Yosef, on his Madreiga, he should have not needed to be Mishtadel the way he was. Rav Schachter added that for someone else this would have been a Mitzva. However, figuring out whether to be Mishtadel and what Madreiga you are on is a tough question that is difficult to assess. Still, even in Hishtadlus one needs to remember that it is all from Hashem.

**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.