Points to Ponder

Vayeishev 5781

וַ**יֵּ֣שֶׁב יַֽעֲקֹ֔ב Yaakov settled (37:1) - Rashi** cites the Midrash that explains that Yaakov sought to sit in serenity and thus, suffered from the challenge of Yosef. **Rav Daniel Feldman Shlita** explained that in Olam Hazeh there are always going to be politics that will require us to handle and contend with while at the same time, we need to empathize . Bringing these pieces together is not always serene and the pressure is massive. Only in Olam Haba where there are no politics can there be Menucha.

**וַיָּ֤שָׁב רְאוּבֵן֙ אֶל־הַבּ֔וֹר Reuven returned to the pit (37:29)** - What is the connection between  Reuven’s sin and the sale of Yosef? **Rav Schachter Shlita quoted from Rav Soloveitchik ztl** who explained that the sin of the sale of Yosef was that it was done without asking the Gedolei HaDor. From whom did the brothers learn to act in that manner? From Reuven who did not ask his father about the beds before he moved them. Everyone and every Beis Din needs a Rebbe.

**הַכֶּר־נָ֗א Recognize this (37:32**) - The Talmud (Sotah 10b) notes that he used the words הכר נא to inform and he received his knowledge of his own sin with the words  הכר נא. Yaakov tricked Yitzchak with a goat and was tricked by his kids with a goat. While the latter example demonstrates Middah K’Negged Middah, why and how do the words? **Rav Chaim Shmuellevitz ztl** explained that Middah K’Negged Middah isn’t about punishment. It is about awareness. In this case, it was about awareness of the midda of truth.

**וַיִּקְרַ֤ע יַֽעֲקֹב֙ שִׂמְלֹתָ֔יו וַיָּ֥שֶׂם שַׂ֖ק בְּמָתְנָ֑יו Yaakov tore his clothing and placed a sack on his body (37:34)** - The **Malbim** noted that he did booth practices of mourning (tearing Kriya) and Teshuva (Wearing a sackcloth). **Rav Dr. Norman Lamm ztl.** explained that there are 2 ideas here -- parents need to both worry about their kids but also to worry about their spiritual progress --- putting the physical and the spiritual in concert

**וַיַּ֣רְא אֲדֹנָ֔יו כִּ֥י ה אִתּ֑וֹ His master saw that Hashem was with him (39:3)** - How did the master see it? **Rashi** explained that Yosef regularly utilized the name of Hashem in crediting his work. **Rav Meir Twersky Shlita** explained that the obligation to be Mikadeish Shem Shomayim applies in all aspects of life and doing so not only is a Mitzva it saves you from potential pitfalls.

**וַיָּבֹ֥א הַבַּ֖יְתָה לַֽעֲשׂ֣וֹת מְלַאכְתּ֑וֹ To do his work (39:11) - Rashi** explains that Yosef was worn down and was going to give in to Mrs. Potiphar’s advances but he saw the image of his father in the window. What’s up with the window? **Rav Zvi Romm Shlita, Bialostoker Rav** explained that when someone feels a gap (Challal) in his life, it seems as if we want to fill it. However, if we are careful to close the window we will be able to fill it with Kedusha.

**מַדּ֛וּעַ פְּנֵיכֶ֥ם רָעִ֖ים הַיּֽוֹם Why are you faces bad today? (40:7)** - Why did the men hold back from simply talking about their dreams? Why do their appearances make a difference? What does this teach us? **Rav Boruch Mordechai Ezrachi Shlita** explained that before one gets into the nitty gritty of deep spiritual conversation, one should first ask how people are doing and connect to them first.

**Haftarah:**

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.