



8 years of Points to Ponder on Parashas Vayeishev/Shabbos Chanukah

In memory of

Yakov Menachem Mendel ben Chaim Yashya

&

Shlomo Zalman Ben Yitzchak

**וַיֵּ֣שֶׁב יַֽעֲקֹ֔ב Yaakov settled (Sat?) (37:1) - Rashi** explains that when Yaakov wanted to settle and live without distress, he was beset with the troubles of Yosef. **Rav Wolbe ztl**. explains in the name of **Rav Yerucham Levovitz ztl** that no one finds a recliner in a factory. Since everyone is working in the factory, there is no time to sit and relax. Similarly, we are not to amble in this world, we are to save tranquility for the world to come. In Torah study too, it seems that throughout Jewish history, the times of greatest challenge were also the times of great growth in spiritual levels.

**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.

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.

 **וישב יעקב בארץ מגורי אביו  Yaakov settle in the land of his forefathers (37:1)** **–  Rashi** notes the contrast between Eisav’s history marked in a short form with those of Yaakov whose travels and travails ae spelled in painstaking detail. **Rav Shaul Yisraeli ztl**. explains that Eisav’s rise was quick. Immediately after his meeting with Yaakov, he begins to develop his nation. Yaakov needs further development and learns the lessons of internal jealousy, of famine and of Egyptian politics and ultimately of slavery in order to emerge as a vibrant nation. To become a simple and evil nation takes no real effort. To emerge as Israel  -- whether as a nation or even as a nation on our land – needs tests and retests so that we can be a nation under Hashem indivisible.

**וישב יעקב בארץ מגורי אביו  Yaakov settled in the land of his father’s sojourns in the land of Canaan (37:1) – Rashi** notes that Yaakov sought to dwell in peace. Why was this such a great sin that required the wrath of Yosef’s sale  to be upon him? **Rav Noach Weinberg ztl**. cited a Tachchuma (Vayigash 9) that explains that Yaakov thought that he needed to go through Sheol – Geheinom since his tradition that he would go straight to Olam HaBa if his sons remained alive during his lifetime and now that was lost. In essence, Yaakov wanted to fulfill his life’s mission. He thought he had done so with the birth of Binyamin but quickly learned that his life’s mission was not full until there was Tikkun for the world of idolatry surrounding him. (See the **Beis HaLevi** later who makes the same point of Yaakov’s fear when he discusses the issue of Yaakov’s mourning and refusal to accept the consolation over Yosef)

**וישב יעקב בארץ מגורי אביו  VaYeishev Yaakov (37:1)** - **Rashi** notes that Yaakov wanted to sit B’Shalva – that’s why the trouble started with Yosef. **Rav Moshe Feinstein ztl**.  noted that the Shalva he sought was from Chinuch – assuming that his children had all been brought up ok and now he was ready for a break. Hashem told him that there is no break from child rearing.

**וישב יעקב בארץ מגורי אביו  VaYeishev Yaakov (37:1) – Rashi** notes that Yaakov wished to rest in peace and thus received the anger of Yosef. Why is it such a sin of Yaakov to desire to sit in peace? **Rav Shlomo Zalman Lipshitz ztl.** , the Chemdas Shlomo, explains based on the Sefer Chovos HaLevavos that if we rely on Hashem then we will discover that the challenges of Olam HaZeh are small. Yaakov’s desire for serenity now was an indication that he was overwhelmed here too.  (Sefer Shalal Lo Yechsa story with **Rav Tzvi Pesach Frank** about the **Beis HaLevi** and the man who needed to make Kiddush and eat to hear good news about daughter’s labor – based on V’Hisanag Al Hashem V’Hu Yeeten Mishalos Leebecha.

**וישב יעקב בארץ מגורי אביו  And Yaakov settled in the land of his forefathers (37:1) – Rashi** famously notes that Yaakov sought to live in serenity and that is why the episode of the selling of Yosef happened. Why was it so terrible that Yaakov sought to have a bit of comfort if he merely wanted to study Torah? **Rav Shimon Schwab ztl.** explains that each of the Avos lived a life of Kriya B’Shem Hashem. Each, saw as his personal responsibility, the chance to give everyone in the world the opportunity to recognize Hashem and His sovereignty in the world. Once Yaakov came back to the land of Yitzchak, he sought to exempt himself of this responsibility and focus on himself and his family. Therefore the Yosef episode happened in order to give him yet another vista to declare Hashem’s oneness in the world.

וְה֣וּא נַ֗עַר **And he was a Nar with the sons of Bilha and Zilpa (37:2)** – How are we to explain and understand the intent of Yosef described here as Naar? **Rav Noach Weinberg ztl.** compared the word to Yehoshua, who despite being 56 at the time of the giving of the Torah, is also referred to as a Naar. How could that be? Yalkut Shimoni (Pinchas 776) explains that he is called a Naar because people assumed that since he cleaned up after Shiur he was merely the maintenance man with nothing more to contribute. But they were wrong. Like the person in the expensive art gallery who immediately rushes to repair a deluge when a pipe bursts, who is clearly the owner (for everyone else runs away – not toward – the break), the one who cares for something goes out of his way to take care of it. Yehoshua when it came to Torah and Yosef when it came to his brothers was willing to realize that there is no job too small or undignified, for him to undertake.

 **ויבא יוסף את דבתם רעה**   **Yosef brought their slander to their father (37:2)** – **Sforno** notes that this is the reason for גלות בית שני  in that it caused שנאת חינם. **Rav Gifter ztl**. added that this teaches us a valuable lesson about families in the Jewish nation. From the time that Yaakov completed his family, they set the tone for the future nation. This is also why when there is a challenge in the family, (ומכה אביו ואמו) we treat it severely because it is a challenge to the order and structure of the nation.

כִּֽי־בֶן־זְקֻנִ֥ים ה֖וּא ל֑וֹ **Because he was the Ben Zekunim (37:3) – Rashi** offers three interpretations for the word Zekunim – born when Yaakov was old, learned from the father or – as noted in Targum Yonasan – his face looked like that of Yaakov’s. **Rav Aizik Ausband Shlita** explains that that the different interpretations are actually the same. When a Talmid truly immerses himself in the world of Toras Rabbo, he begins to look, act and even become an extension of the Rebbe.

 **וַיַּֽחֲלֹ֤ם יוֹסֵף֙ חֲל֔וֹם Yosef dreamed a dream (37:5)** - It seems as if dreams are quite important to this week’s leining. The Talmud (Berachos 14a) notes that one who sleeps for 7 days and has no dream is called evil. Why is s/he evil? **Rav Elyashiv ztl** explains that one who does not dream has no thought and has no future.

 **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.

וַיַּֽחֲלֹ֥ם עוֹד֙ חֲל֣וֹם אַחֵ֔ר  **And he dreamed another dream  (37:9) – Rav Aharon Soloveitchik  ztl.** explained that the brothers were upset with Yosef because he added a dream to the dream of his father. The second dream – the one about material success, was not part of the family tradition. However, the truth of the matter was that Yaakov Avinu’s dream really consisted of two parts: the ladder in Yaakov’s dream was standing on the earth and its top reached into the heavens. Yosef broke his father’s dream into its two component parts, but in truth both parts were already contained within Yaakov’s dream. **Rav Schachter  Shlita**added that while starting with the overtly expressed ideas of the tradition, there are also implicit ideas that Rebbeim also convey that the second generation might need to state  overtly. This was the case with Rabbi Eliezer HaGadol who at the same time never said anything he did not hear from his teachers but also offered original ideas that were not heard since the days of Maamad Har Sinai. It was also seemingly true of the adherents to the Brisker method who both were strong to the Halacha and yet Rav Solovetichik ztl. was able to develop ideas in philosophy and Aggada as well. The halacha guides us as to how to act, while the agada guides us as to how to think. In every generation we have to present our age-old Torah traditions in a language that will be understood by the masses.

וַיּוֹסִ֤פוּ עוֹד֙ שְׂנֹ֣א אֹת֔וֹ **And they hated him** (37:5-11) – The claims of Yosef’s brothers against Yosef are based on deep Halachic foundations. Still, the Torah seems to categorize the differences in simple terms of “hate” and “jealousy.” Why would the Torah imply that the tribes would alter Jewish destiny over a simple spat? **Rav Shmuel Rozovsky ztl.** explains that Hashem is the one who checks the insides and outsides of every person. He is able to inspect what is at the core of people’s choices in life. From the heavenly perspective, the emotions played a not-insignificant role in the decision making of the brothers. Therefore the emotions get top billing from Hashem in the Torah.

וַיְקַנְאוּ־ב֖וֹ אֶחָ֑יו **The brothers were jealous of him (37:11 ) –** The concept of jealousy only enters the brothers’ minds after the SECOND dream. Why were they jealous after THAT dream and not the earlier one? **Rav Soloveitchik ztl.** explains that the earlier dream was one about economics. The second dream was Yosef’s declaration of Memshala – of his lordship over the other brothers. Jewish psychology asks the question “why do we need leaders.” Yosef was charismatic – he charmed everyone who met him – Potiphar, Sar HaTabachim, etc. But there are a lot of leaders who have different levels of charisma – while Rabbi Akiva brought out the masses charismatically for a higher purpose, Korach also used his charisma to shape and lead – but he was the center and he was using the charisma to lead the people by lording over the people.

וַיֹּ֥אמֶר ל֖וֹ הִנֵּֽנִי **And he said here I am (37:13)** – Rashi notes that this highlights his humility and Zrizus.  **Harav Koppelman of Lucerne ztl**. Pointed out that the recitation of Heneni prior to knowing the details of the mission is a display of Bittul and dedication to the mission of one’s friend or Hashem.

לֶךְ־נָ֨א רְאֵ֜ה אֶת־שְׁל֤וֹם אַחֶ֨יךָ֙ וְאֶת־שְׁל֣וֹם הַצֹּ֔אן **Go to seek the welfare of your brothers and bring back word to me (37:14)** – Normally we assume that one heading to perform a Mitzva shall have no harm befall him. It is the reason why Yaakov told Yosef to come back too. Why then, was Yosef able to be victimized so tragically in the context of fulfilling the Mitzva of Kibbud Av? The **Beis HaLevi** explains that when Yosef did not find his brothers in Shechem, and chose to deviate from his father’s command to bring the message back – by going to Dosan, he was not fulfilling Kibbud Av and was able to be victimized by the misfortune.

וַיִּמְצָאֵ֣הוּ אִ֔ישׁ וְהִנֵּ֥ה תֹעֶ֖ה בַּשָּׂדֶ֑ה **And a man found him and behold he was lost in the field (37:15) – Rav Shmuel Brazil Shlita**noted that Yosef was lost in finding his mission in life. For as long as one has not reached his potential in the world – repairing the torn fabric that he uniquely is supposed to repair, then he is a To’eh. For each of us needs to reveal the emet of ourselves. This only comes when the Ish asks himself “Mah Tivakesh” wherein h asks himself what do YOU uniquely seek out as a chance to do. This is the obligation every Jew must ask himself daily.

 **וימצאהו** **איש  A man found him (37:15) – Rashi** tells us that this man was the מלאך גבריאל. Yet in last week’s Parsha the מלאך  was the שרו של עשו. How could it be that the same word – איש is used for both and how are we to know when we want to highlight which one? **The Sanzer Rav ztl.** explained that when he comes to engage in a  חסד he must be a מלאך של חסד  but when he comes to fight, he is the מלאך של עשו.

 **וישמע ראובן ויצילהו** **מידם  And Reuven heard and he declared that we will not destroy the life(37:21)**  – The Midrash notes that had Reuven known what the Torah would have recorded about him, he would have carried Yosef home with him. **Rav Yaakov Kamenetzky ztl**. noted that Reuven did not know the depth of the Mitzva he was doing or its reward. Had he known the seriousness of his action he would have gone even further to save Yosef. Rav Yaakov adds that we also often do not appreciate the value of our good deeds when we do them. It is reminiscent of**Rav Kook ztl’s** comment  that we state אלקי עד שלא נוצרתי איני כדאי. We have a responsibility to store up our actions and see value in them even before their value becomes overtly apparent.

וַיֹּ֨אמֶר אֲלֵהֶ֣ם | רְאוּבֵן֘ אַל־תִּשְׁפְּכוּ־דָם֒ **Reuven told them do not spill his blood throw him into this pit (37:22) – Rashi** cites a Midrash that notes that Reuven understood that as firstborn, he would be blamed harder if anything happened to Yosef. Thus, the Torah tells us that Reuven’s intent here was  to save Yosef. **Rav Pam ztl.** added that just as in a family it is the older and presumably wiser child who is held to a higher responsibility for the raising of the younger ones, it is also the wiser and more educated in a community that must raise the younger less experienced ones. There is a tragedy when those blessed with an appreciation for Torah do not take responsibility for others whose awareness is less apparent.

 **לְמַ֗עַן הַצִּ֤יל אֹתוֹ֙ מִיָּדָ֔ם לַֽהֲשִׁיב֖וֹ אֶל־אָבִֽיו: To save him in order to return him to his father (37:22)** – The **Midrash** comments that if Reuven would only have known that the Torah was going to write about his attempt to save Yosef, he would have carried him on his shoulders. Why is it ok to do things only for the accolades? **Rav Schachter Shlita** explained to us that publicity for a Mitzva is laudable in so far as it encourages others to do so as well. The **Rashba** notes that one may highlight his donations and his Tzedaka in order to encourage others to give as well. This is different from someone’s Middas Chassidus (chumros?) where it is not advisable to highlight. Rav Schachter would often point out that Rav Yehoshua ben Levi was asked if the rainbow was seen during his lifetime. He answered in the affirmative and was downgraded by the malachim as a result. But, note Chazal, he was being humble and in truth was allowed to do so because it was a discussion of his own piety – not a Mitzva.

לְמַ֗עַן הַצִּ֤יל אֹתוֹ֙ מִיָּדָ֔ם לַֽהֲשִׁיב֖וֹ אֶל־אָבִֽיו: **In order to save him from their hands and return him to their father (37:22) – Rashi** explains that Reuven had an internal dialogue with himself explaining why he should save Yosef – because of the fact that he was the oldest and therefore most responsible. Why did he not note the obvious – that he should save Yosef because it was the right thing to do? **Rav Mordechai Eliyahu ztl**. explains that if Reuven had offered to save Yosef for the real reason – that it was the “right thing,” then the Yetzer HaRa would have trapped him and attempted to break him in the process. He therefore convinced himself of the secondary reason and used it to fight off hiss Yetzer HaRa.

וְהַבּ֣וֹר רֵ֔ק אֵ֥ין בּ֖וֹ מָֽיִם **And the pit was empty, it had no water (37:24)** – The midrash comments that the pit of Yaakov was empty since the children of Yaakov did not study Torah.  **Rav Chaim Yaakov Goldvicht ztl.** pointed out that the Midrash is highlighting a critical idea. When someone does not study Torah sufficiently, that individual does not value the purpose of life. For if s/he did , s/he would be dedicated to furthering himself or herself. Accordingly, it is not wise to travel with such a person as it could be dangerous to travel with someone who does not value life himself. S/he is quick to choose death since s/he has already selected it insofar as his own life itself goes.  Yosef’s brothers were quick to choose death, says Rav Goldvicht due to their lack of complete Torah study which would have strengthened the value of life in their eyes and minds.

מַה־בֶּ֗צַע כִּ֤י נַֽהֲרֹג֙ אֶת־אָחִ֔ינוּ וְכִסִּ֖ינוּ אֶת־דָּמֽוֹ **Yehuda said “What value does it make if we kill our brother and cover his blood (37:26)**– If the Shevatim had determined that Yosef was deserving of the death penalty, how could Yehuda renege on the verdict**? Rav Nosson Tzvi Wachtfogel ztl**. explained that Yehuda was the Melech of the people, and the melech has the heart of the people in his mind. If he sensed the heart of Yosef, then he must have erred in his verdict and sought to set it aside. This idea is based on the fact that the verdict presupposed that Yosef was not one of the Shevatim. Yet, if Yehuda felt that tug of brotherhood to him, his legitimacy as a member of Klal Yisrael was open to debate and the verdict needed to be set aside and explored.

 **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.

**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

**וַֽיְהִי֙ בָּעֵ֣ת הַהִ֔וא וַיֵּ֥רֶד יְהוּדָ֖ה מֵאֵ֣ת אֶחָ֑יו At that time Yehuda went down from his brothers (38:1)** - **Rashi** explains that this section was put here because when the brothers saw their father’s distress they lowered Yehuda from his  glory. Why did they lower HIM? At least he saved Yosef’s life? Why shift their own guilt onto him? **Rav Baruch Mordechai Ezrachi Shlita** explained that that when one is a leader, it is his or her obligation to lead to the best of his direction. If Yehuda had the ability to convince the others not to sell Yosef and rather to save him but he did not, then he did not deserve to be the one who was the leader.

**וַיֵּ֥רֶד יְהוּדָ֖ה מֵאֵ֣ת אֶחָ֑יו Yehuda went down from his brothers (38:1)** – The midrash explains that the brothers excommunicated Yehuda when they reconsidered that his advice was not correct**. Rav Benny Lau Shlita** explains that the entire Perek demonstrates Yehudah’s slide in life at this moment – first hanging out with the bad crowd – the Canaanim, then intermarrying with a Canaanite women – the very women that his grandparents saw as Raot and then engaging in a lifestyle that had values that passed through to the children including Onanism.  Rav Benny suggests that his freefall life finally stops when Tamar asks him “Haker na” (38:25). Rav Benny  parallels the situation based on Rav Yehuda HaLevi’s piyut in response to Christianity’s claim of rejection of the Jew  recited at a Bris when the poet declares Haker Na – that like Tamar, being taken to the fiery furnace, throughout history we too have always had the signs that we stand up for that which is just and right and as Yehudah returns to his leadership position, we ask Hashem to do the same…

**וַיֵּ֥רֶד יְהוּדָ֖ה מֵאֵ֣ת אֶחָ֑יו At that time, Yehuda was lowered by his brothers (38:1) – Rashi** explains that the brothers lowered his status when they saw the pain that Yaakov was in**. Rav Moshe Tzvi  Neriah ztl.** notes that Yehudah get lowered but ultimately in Mekeitz and Vayigash, is the leader of the brothers. When does he regain his royal status? **Kli Yakar** suggests that it was Yehuda who broke the ties noting that the brothers had chosen to kill Yosef without checking with him as king first. They thought he was merely wimping out by selling Yosef and didn’t want to admit it. **Rav Neriah  ztl**. adds that after the Tamar episode where, even faced with personal embarrassment, Yehuda is not afraid to admit, the brothers saw the strength of Yehuda, they took him back – not only as equal but as leader. Yehuda runs with that and not only stands up for himself, in Vayigash he is prepared to step forward to lead his nation.

 **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.

בְּיַד֙ רֵעֵ֣הוּ הָֽעֲדֻלָּמִ֔י **Through his friend the Adulami (38:20) – Rav Yissochar Frand Shlita** noted that the greatest of friends is the one you can confide that your greatest failures and they will stand by you and not diminish you for it. This is the Beracha of Reyim Ahuvim in marriage – to know that no matter what you think, the partner has your back because s/he can see the bigger picture.

הַכֶּר־נָ֔א **And she said recognize these now (38:25**) – Tamar knew that if her plan failed she would be faced with a death penalty of burning. Still, she stayed true to the principle that it is better for someone to be cast into a fiery furnace and not embarrass his fellow man (Sotah 10b). **Rav Nosson Tzvi Wachtfogel ztl.** explained that she demonstrated the quality we call strength (Chizzuk). The Avos had that kind of strength. Nothing could stop them from following their will. They did whatever had to be done and withstood any challenge that came along the way. That is why, Tamar, who also withstood any obstacles, is rewarded with the Davidic line for this is the epitome of leadership.

 הַכֶּר־נָ֔א לְמִ֞י הַֽחֹתֶ֧מֶת וְהַפְּתִילִ֛ים וְהַמַּטֶּ֖ה הָאֵֽלֶּה  **Recognize to the one who owns these things am I bearing a child** (38:25) – The commentaries abound as to why Tamar waited so long to identify her liaison with Yehuda. Why did she not tell him right away that she was pregnant and with HIS child? **Rav Moshe Wolfson  Shlita** explains that when a person is given an initial moment, his first instinct is often guided by the Yetzer Hara which has a head start in developing into human instinct. Man’s first thought is to protect his own reputation right away. Having time for Yishuv HaDaas brings about better results as the person has a chance to consider his responsibilities – not only his reputation.

הַכֶּר־נָ֔א לְמִ֞י הַֽחֹתֶ֧מֶת וְהַפְּתִילִ֛ים וְהַמַּטֶּ֖ה הָאֵֽלֶּה **As she was taken out she sent to her father in law saying “I am pregnant to the one who owns these items (38:25) – Rashi** explains that Tamar did not want to embarrass Yehudah publicly. The Gemara determines that it is better to allow oneself to be burned in a furnace and not embarrass a friend. Why didn’t Tamar apply the title of Rodef to Yehuda here and allow his embarrassment to be a solution to her own potential demise? **Rav Zev Wolbe Shlita quotes Rav Shlomo Wolbe ztl** who explains that Tamar was not obligated to give up her life, she decided to do it and it was not halachically a suicide. She did not want to live a life built upon actions created by bad middos. Better to be in the Kivshan than to embarrass someone permanently.

 **צדקה ממני  She is right and it is mine (38:26) – Rashi** quotes that Yehuda noted that Hashem suspended his בחירה in order to get him to serve a prostitute. How are we to understand Hashem’s decision to suspend  בחירה **? Rav Schachter Shlita** would explain to us that the Gemara notes that there are three  for whom Hashem sheds a tear every day. The first two are those who stay in learning and shouldn’t or those who do go into business and shouldn’t and the third are those who are leaders who are too haughty on the Tzibbur. Therefore the Gemara notes that a good leader has skeletons in his background. The Rambam begins Hilchos Ishus by noting that before Matan Torah the idea of prostitution was Halachically ok. However Hashem created the Yehuda episode in order to demonstrate that power can corrupt one’s personal values. This would be an important lesson for Dovid HaMelech and future Jews serving in power positions until today.

**וַיַּ֣רְא אֲדֹנָ֔יו כִּ֥י ה אִתּ֑וֹ His master saw that Hashem was with him (39:3) - Rashi** explains that his master saw that he was always using Hashem’s name in his description of his actions. **Ramban** adds that out of respect for the Tzaddik, Hashem showed that it was the Shechinah and not witchcraft that was guiding his actions. **The Solnimer Rebbe ztl** explained that when one is attached to Hashem, there is always success. The troubles that befall people happen at times when their connection to Hashem is weak.

 **וירא אדוניו כי ה' אתו וכל אשר הוא עושה ה' מצליח בידוAnd his master saw that Hashem was with him and whatever he did Hashem saw to it that he was successful(39:3)**  – How did Potiphar, an idolator, see that whatever Yosef did Hashem saw to his success? **Rav Mayer Twersky Shlita** explained that Yosef had to be constantly crediting a Kiddush  Hashem (בלעדי). Part of the awareness of one’s belief in Hashem becomes apparent when he creates a Kiddush Hashem in business in the same way that he does in his religious activities. The awareness when in these endeavors protects one when he is facing spiritual challenges there too. No one knew this better than Yosef.

**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.

**וְאֵ֨יךְ אֶֽעֱשֶׂ֜ה הָֽרָעָ֤ה הַגְּדֹלָה֙ הַזֹּ֔את וְחָטָ֖אתִי  How can I do such a thing? It will be a sin (39:9) - Rashi** cites the famous Gemara that Yosef saw the image of his father in that moment. The Talmud Yirushalmi adds that he also saw the image of his mother. How could Chazal imagine that he saw his father/ What were the special effects? **Rav Haim Sabato Shlita** suggested that coming from his background, Yosef had never seen his own reflection. It was not the way of the men in Yaakov’s home. However in Potiphar’s wife’s chambers, there were plenty of mirrors and Yosef saw his reflection in them. Not knowing who was reflecting back at him, he thought the reflection he was looking at, was the image of his father. Rav Sabato adds that this Midrash teaches us that if a person sees his parents within the image of himself, then he will transmit the same image to his children and they will not falter quickly or easily.

וַֽיְהִי֙ כְּהַיּ֣וֹם הַזֶּ֔ה וַיָּבֹ֥א הַבַּ֖יְתָה לַֽעֲשׂ֣וֹת מְלַאכְתּ֑וֹ  **And it was on that day that he came to do his work   (39:11)** – The Yalkut Shimoni suggests that the day was Shabbos.  If so, what was the work he was going to do? The Yalkut answers that he was going to study the laws of Shabbos that he learned with his father. In his final public address in 5754, **Rav Shach ztl**  noted that the commitment to Halacha study and practice protected Yosef from outside forces as it provided a link to a past that he believed in . The same must be our mission as well if authentic Judaism is to survive.

וַֽיְהִי֙ כְּהַיּ֣וֹם הַזֶּ֔ה וַיָּבֹ֥א הַבַּ֖יְתָה לַֽעֲשׂ֣וֹת מְלַאכְתּ֑וֹ **And on that day he came to the house to do his work (39:11)**-  Yosef is referred to as “Hatzaddik” because he withstood the temptation of the wife of Potiphar. Rashi notes that he either stayed off the advances of Mrs. Potiphar or that he saw his father’s image which held him back from sinning. Which image did he get**? Rav Schachter Shlita** explained that being Ben Zekunim meant that he was supposed to be the next link in the Mesorah – and if he sins he won’t deserve to be the next link in the Mesorah.  Those who are Mizalzel in the Torah don’t get to be looked up to as part of the Chachmei HaMesorah.

**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.

וַֽיְהִי֙ כְּהַיּ֣וֹם הַזֶּ֔ה וַיָּבֹ֥א הַבַּ֖יְתָה לַֽעֲשׂ֣וֹת מְלַאכְתּ֑וֹ **And it was on that day that he came to the house to do his job and there was no one of the men of the home at home (39:11) – Rashi** notes that Yosef would have given in to the desires of the wife of Potiphar but he saw the image of his father in the reflection and refused her advances**. Rav Chaim Shmuellevitz ztl.** explains that Yosef fought off her advances with the argument that Hashem reveals himself to the Avos unannounced. He might do the same to Yosef. How then, could Yosef give in and appear before Hashem in a Tamai state. It was, explains Rav Chaim, as if Yosef expected that after sin the relationship with Hashem would be the same with a minor problem of Tumas Keri. That is a fallacy. Relationships change when we mess up. If we knew that first, we’d be more careful. At the same time, we cannot allow for one to think that there is no room for restoration and repairing that which has been destroyed.

וַתִּתְפְּשֵׂ֧הוּ בְּבִגְד֛וֹ  **And she grabbed him by the clothes (39:11)** – The commentaries point out that Yosef had a tough time dealing with the temptation of the wife of Potiphar but as the Talmud explains (Sotah 36b), he saw the image of his father in the window. **Rabbi Dr. Benny Lau Shlita** compares that moment to the moment in the Lion King that Simba looks into the ocean and sees his father’s image in the water. He adds that within each and every one of us there is not only ourselves but the culmination of many generations past that invested into us and the future generations that are depending on us to survive.

 **חטאו משקה מצרים והאופה לאדניהם למלך מצרים  The  שר המשקיםand the  שר האופים had sinned to their master the king of Mitzrayim (40:1)**– Both chiefs had erred in that they focused too much on being a chief while being derelict in the duties of the charges under them. What demonstrated to Yosef that their future fates would be and how they would so different? **Rav Nissan Alpert ztl.** suggested that the difference was that in his dream the   שר המשקים took responsibility. Throughout the dream, he was the active one and took care of every aspect of his job personally. The  שר האופים just stood by. However, once furloughed, the  שר המשקים returns to his position of perceived importance as he not only could not remember Yosef – he actively sought to forget the ordeal and Yosef in the process.

 **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.

**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.

**כִּ֧י אִם־זְכַרְתַּ֣נִי אִתְּךָ֗  ִ֧ You should remember me (40:14) – Rashi**notes that that Yosef was punished for 2 extra years of punishment for not demonstrating Bitachon in Hashem to get out. Should we assume that if one takes steps to bring out goals he is wrong? What’s wrong with Hishtadlus? What did Yosef do wrong? **Rav Schachter Shlita** quoted the **Chazon Ish’s** Emunah U’Bitachon that Bitachon means that we believe in Hashgacha Pratis and that nothing happens that is against the will of Hashem. It does not mean that everything will go well. One needs to do Hishtadlus. However, here Yosef relied on a Sar HaMashkim based on Hakaras HaTov that the butler would have for him. Yet that middah of Hakaras HaTov was foreign to Egyptians. Thus, this was unreasonable and he was punished for it. Rav Schachter Shlita added that sometimes not engaging in Hishtadlus is a lack of Bitachon.

 **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.

**הָע֗וֹף אֹכֵ֥ל אֹתָ֛ם מִן־הַסַּ֖ל מֵעַ֥ל רֹאשִֽׁי And on the top of basket the birds were eating the bread (40:17) - Rav Meir Shapiro ztl.** noted that this was the trick that proved to Yosef that he would not survive. In regard to the food, the birds were convinced to try to eat it but the human was so not life-like they didn’t see the risk in trying to eat the bread.

**Haftarah for Parshas VaYeishev:**

 **הפטורה –** What is the connection between the  הפטורה and the Parsha. The simple answer is that the  הפטורה references the idea of selling a Tzaddik for money. **Rav Soloveitchik ztl.** offered a deeper explanation. He opined that the major three episodes of the Parsha – the selling of Yosef, the episode of Yehuda and Tamar and the episode of Yosef in מצרים all stem from the challenge of the internal conflict over the dreamer. On the one hand, dreamers can be dimwitted and their dreams reflective of personal hubris. At the same time, a dream can be a source of inspiration and innovation. The brothers of Yosef had no room for the latter and neither did the people in the time of Amos

**Thus said the Lord: For three transgressions of Israel, for four, I will not Overlook the need for punishment: Because they have sold for silver a ‘Tzaddik’ (a righteous individual), and the poor for a pair of shoes. (Amos 2:6) -  Rabbi Jack Beiler Shlita** noted the title Tzaddik and the assumption that it refers to Yosef as per the midrash identified with the Asarah Harugei Malchus. Rabbi Beiler explains that the title Tzaddik as applied to Yosef is likely based on **Rav Hirsch**’s description in Parshas Noach -- The “Tzaddik” looks at everything objectively, at nothing from the standpoint of his own interest, but everything from the point of view of what is right. It is primarily social justice and hence it is preferably construed with expressions of deeds, e.g., “Peulat Tzaddik” (the act of a Tzaddik); “Aseh Tzedaka” (perform righteousness)… Yosef is granted this title because even as an adolescent, Yosef does not allow his personal desires to cloud his single devotion to Hashem.

**For three transgressions of Israel but for four I will not revoke it (Amos 2:6)** – Interestingly the Novi rebukes the Northern kingdom for its infliction of harm on their fellow members of the community. All the Avairos mentioned are ethical ones. **Amos Hacham** notes that Amos’s message is clear – ethical Jews are righteous if they follow all of Hashem’s words – the Bein Adam L’Makom AND the Bein Adam L’Chaveiro.

For three transgressions of Israel but for 4 I will not pardon them. For selling a righteous man for money and a poor man for shoes (Amos 2:6) – The connection to the Parsha seems to be abundantly clearly related to the sale of Yosef which is described in Piyut as being for a pair of shoes. But Rav Soloveitchik ztl. noted a deeper theme that extended throughout the haftorah which goes on to deplore corruption and exploitation.  Rav Soloveitchik explains that in the same way that Yosef’s brothers tried to stifle his dreams, Amos’s contemporaries tried to stifle his prophesy.  Both point out that stifling is a dangerous process that cannot be easily stopped.

**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.

**And I established from your sons to prophets and from your young men to be Nezirim (Amos 2:11)** – It seems that Nezirus is a primarily a young boys club. The reason, explains **Rav Yaakov Kamenetzky ztl.**, is that drinking and ignoring familial responsibility are part of being young boys. The message of the Sotah and the one who sees it are that drunkedness and casting off family are not ways to proceed in life. In fact, he adds that this is why these sections of the Torah appear where they do, after Bamidbar. The reason is that once Bnei Yisrael establish their encampments and homes, it is the time to strengthen the family bond that makes the nation strong.

 **כִּי אִם־גָּלָ֣ה סוֹד֔וֹ אֶל־עֲבָדָ֖יו הַנְּבִיאִֽים: Only that which he has revealed his secrets to his servants, the prophets (Amos 3:7)** – Why is Hashem only speaking to his servants, the Neviim? **Rav Chaim Ben Senor (author of the Imrei Chein)** explains that the job of a Novi requires him or her to be connected to Hashem all the time. Thus, in the olden days, it was the Novi who was to rebuke the people and get them to act appropriately. For the sake of getting the message across, the Novi was permitted to take his words and apply them to the audience with some degree of style (hence no 2 Neviim offer a Nevuah in the exact words). This is different from the words of the Torah where Moshe needed to pass on the Horaah of Hashem exactly as he received them.

**Haftarah for 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.