

In this week's *Parashah*, we read how Yosef's brothers sold him into slavery. The Torah records (37:25), "They raised their eyes and they saw, behold! -- a caravan of Ishmaelites was coming from Gilad, their camels bearing spices, balsam, and lotus -- on their way to bring them down to Egypt." *Rashi z"l* comments: "It is not usual for Arabs to carry anything but kerosene and oil, which are foul smelling. However, in this case, it was specially arranged that they should be carrying fragrant spices so that Yosef should not suffer from a bad odor."

R' Yitzchak Menachem Weinberg *shlita* (*Tolna Rebbe* in Yerushalayim) asks: Yosef was on his way to become a slave in Egypt! Did he really care what the caravan smelled like? It is almost as if G-d was mocking him!

He answers: The Torah is teaching us to pay attention to details. People have a tendency to generalize. When a person is going through a difficult time, he tends not to notice the blessings along the way. The Torah teaches us, however, to give thanks for every blessing, for every good thing, no matter how difficult our lives may be.

The *Tosefta* (a companion work to the *Mishnah*) relates that Rabban Gamliel asked his students what blessing one recites on a drink of water. They replied: "Teach us!" In response, he related how Yosef was carried into slavery amidst sweet smelling spices, as mentioned. The *Tolna Rebbe* explains that Rabban Gamliel was teaching the above lesson: A drink of water may not seem like anything remarkable, but one must give thanks for every blessing. (*Butzina D'Oraita* p.68)

## Shabbat & Chanukah

R' Meshulam Feivish Heller z"l (1740-1795; Zbarazh, Ukraine; *Chassidic Rebbe*) writes: The *Arizal* (R' Yitzchak Luria z"l; 1534-1572) teaches that the spiritual forces that were awakened on key dates in the past are re-awakened when those dates return each year. For instance, *Rosh Hashanah* marks the creation of the world, which *Hashem* ideally wanted to create with *Midat Ha'din* / the Attribute of Justice (see *Rashi* to *Bereishit* 1:1). Therefore, *Rosh Hashanah* is a time of judgment, and one who is sensitive can actually sense the impending judgment at that time of year.

Similarly, a spirit of restfulness descends upon the world on every *Shabbat*. This is what we refer to when we say in the *Shabbat* morning prayers, "He gives an inheritance of contentment to His people, *Yisrael*, in His holiness on the holy *Shabbat*." It could not be any other way, R' Heller writes, for our Sages teach that *Hashem* is recreating the world at every moment. Thus, every *Yom Rishon* / first day of the week is a re-creation of the first *Yom Rishon*, every *Yom Sheni* / second day is a re-creation of the first *Yom Sheni*, and so on, such that every *Shabbat* is a re-creation of the first *Shabbat*.  
(*Yosher Divrei Emet* Nos. 48 & 53)

### A related thought:

R' Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev z"l (1740-1809; *Chassidic Rebbe*) asks: Why did our Sages establish holidays to commemorate certain miracles--for example, the miracles of *Chanukah* and *Purim*--but not others--for example, the defeat of the Canaanite general Sisera in the time of the prophetess Devorah (*Shoftim*, chapters 4-5)?

R' Levi Yitzchak answers: Our Sages sensed that some miracles made lasting spiritual impressions on the world, while others, as important and impressive as they were in the moment, did not make such impressions. Only those whose spiritual "light" returns every year were established as holidays (e.g., *Chanukah* and *Purim*); the others were not.

This, R' Levi Yitzchak explains, is what we mean when we recite the blessing (on *Chanukah* and *Purim*), "Who has wrought miracles for our forefathers, in those days, at this time." The miracles were not only "in those days," they repeat themselves in some form "at this time."

(*Kedushat Levi: Kedushah Rishonah Le'Chanukah*)

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**“Hashem was with Yosef, and he became a successful man, Vy’hi/ and he remained in the house of his Egyptian master.” (39:2)**

The *Gemara (Megillah 10b)* teaches that the word “Vy’hi” introduces a sorrowful event that causes a person to cry “Vy!”--like “Woe!” in English or the Yiddish expression, “Oy vey!” What was the sorrowful event here? asks R’ Peretz Steinberg *shlita* (rabbi in Queen, N.Y.).

R’ Steinberg answers: The sorrowful event was precisely that Yosef “remained in the house of his Egyptian master.” Since “Hashem was with Yosef, and he became a successful man,” imagine what he could have accomplished had he not been a slave in the house of an Egyptian master! So great was the whole world’s loss from Yosef’s being a slave! Surely it is appropriate to cry out, “Vy!” *(Pri Etz Chaim)*

**“She caught hold of him by his garment, [and] he left his garment in her hand, and he fled, and went outside.” (39:12)**

We learn in *Pirkei Avot* (ch.4), “A sin drags another sin in its wake.” The reason for this, explains R’ Menachem Nochum Twersky z”l (1730-1787; *Chernobyler Maggid* and *Chassidic Rebbe*), is that committing a sin surrounds a person with an aura of impurity. So-to-speak, it dresses a person in soiled spiritual garments. The *Yetzer Ha’ra* can, and does, grab hold of those soiled garments and leads the person wearing them to commit another sin.

We read (39:6-7), “Yosef was handsome of form and handsome of appearance. After these things, his master’s wife cast her eyes upon Yosef...” *Rashi z”l* explains the juxtaposition of these two verses: “As soon as Yosef saw that he was ruler [over his master’s house], he began to eat and drink and curl his hair. Hashem said to him, ‘Your father is mourning and you curl your hair! I will let a bear loose against you.’ Immediately, his master’s wife cast her eyes upon him.” At a time when Yosef’s father was inconsolable over Yosef’s supposed death, Yosef himself was focused on his own physical beauty! That sin was the “garment” that Potiphar’s wife was able to grab hold of, and which almost caused Yosef to commit a second sin in the wake of the first one.

However, says our verse, Yosef reflected on the fact that Potiphar’s wife had this hold over him, and he repented from his earlier sin, thereby abandoning his “garment” and fleeing to the outside.

This, concludes the *Chernobyler Maggid*, is what defines a *Tzaddik*. Everyone sins from time to time, but a *Tzaddik* repents and abandons his soiled “garments” before they can influence him to commit other sins.

*(Me’or Enayim: Miketz)*

***We wish our readers a happy and “light-filled” Chanukah!***

**“Yaakov settled in the land of his father’s sojournings, in the land of Canaan.” (37:1)**

R’ Shlomo Ephraim of Lunschitz z”l (rabbi of Prague; author of the Torah commentary *Kli Yakar*; died 1619) asks: What is added by the phrase, “in the land of his father’s sojournings”? We know that Yaakov’s father, Yitzchak, lived in the land of Canaan!

He explains: The phrase “Yaakov settled” implies that Yaakov wanted to make himself at home in this world, an implication that is difficult to accept. Indeed, Yaakov had told Esav that he did not want to consider this world his home (see *Bereishit* 33:12-14 and *Rashi* there).

In what sense, then, did “Yaakov settle”? We read (*Tehilim* 61:8), “May he settle forever before G-d.” When one resides in *Eretz Yisrael*, he is “settling” before G-d. Yitzchak Avinu was prohibited to leave *Eretz Yisrael* because he had once been offered as an *Olah* sacrifice (see *Bereishit* 26:2 and *Rashi* there). Even so, Yitzchak was not required to remain within the confines of the future *Bet Hamikdash*; he could travel anywhere in the Holy Land. This teaches, writes R’ Shlomo Ephraim, that one is before G-d not only in the *Bet Hamikdash*, but anywhere in *Eretz Yisrael*.

In this light, R’ Shlomo Ephraim concludes, we can understand our verse, and its seemingly superfluous phrase, as follows: “Yaakov settled” before Hashem. Where? In *Eretz Yisrael*. How do we know that a person is before Hashem there? Because it was “the land of his father’s sojournings,” and Yitzchak, being an *Olah*, was restricted to remaining before Hashem. *(Siftei Da’at)*

**“Yaakov tore his garments and placed sackcloth on his loins; he mourned for his son many days.” (37:34)**

R’ Moshe Rosenstein z”l (1881-1940; *Mashgiach* of the Lomza Yeshiva) writes: “*Aveilut*” / mourning--whether on a personal level or national level--is an *Avodah* / Divine service performed in a person’s heart, digesting that which is bad and bitter and turning it into something good and sweet.

He explains: At first glance, *Aveilut* makes no sense; the past is the past and cannot be undone. Nevertheless, just as our Sages instituted seven days of *Simcha* / joy for a bride and groom, they instituted seven days of *Aveilut* for one whose close relative passed away. These two week-long observances share a common purpose: The *Avodah* of the seven days of *Simcha* is to attain *Emunah* and see Hashem through His kindness. Likewise, the *Avodah* of *Aveilut* is to attain *Emunah* and see Hashem through His Attribute of Justice. Both are *Mitzvot* and, ultimately, both result in the happiness that comes from feeling a relationship with Hashem.

R’ Rosenstein continues: *Aveilut* is not synonymous with sadness, nor is it meant to be pushed away with humor or artificial expressions of happiness. That is a temporary solution at best. Rather, *Aveilut* should be viewed like a fever in the body. A very high fever needs to be treated, but a moderate fever is good for the body; it is part of the immune system’s fight against infection. Likewise, *Aveilut* is designed to fight the depression that could result from a tragic loss, giving the mourner a framework to process his or her loss and attain a state of *Simcha*.

*(Ahavat Meisharim No.41)*