

In this week's *Parashah*, we read about the disagreement between Yosef and his brothers. R' Mordechai Greenberg *shlita* (former *Rosh Ha'yeshiva* of Yeshivat Kerem B'Yavneh) writes: One who reads this episode might think that it is the cause of *Bnei Yisrael's* enslavement in Egypt. In reality, however, the exile was already foretold to Avraham in *Parashat Lech Lecha*. Here we see how *Hashem* uses man's choices to bring about the fulfillment of His plan.

R' Greenberg continues: Sometimes we have trying experiences that we cannot understand, and we realize later that those very events contained the seeds of our salvation. We read (*Zechariah* 14:9), "On that day, *Hashem* will be One and His Name [will be] One." The *Gemara* (*Pesachim* 50a) asks: Is He not One now? The *Gemara* answers: Presently, we say the blessing, "Who is Good and does good," on good tidings, and the blessing, "The Judge of truth," on bad tidings. In the future, we will say the blessing "Who is Good and does good" on bad tidings also. [Until here from the *Gemara*.] R' Greenberg asks: Will there be bad tidings in *Olam Ha'ba*? Rather, the *Gemara* means that we will look back at what we previously viewed as bad tidings and, with hindsight, we will recite, "Who is Good and does good." We will see that *Hashem* was "One" all along.

We read that Yaakov said to his sons (*Bereishit* 43:6), "Why did you treat me badly by telling the man [Yosef] that you have another brother?" According to *Midrash Rabbah*, *Hashem* rebuked Yaakov for this: "I am occupied with establishing your son as ruler of Egypt, and you say, 'Why did you treat me badly?'" - **Continued in box inside -**

Shabbat

R' Lior Engelman *shlita* (*Rosh Kollel* in Kfar Saba, Israel) writes: *Shabbat* is a mystery. *Hashem* Himself described *Shabbat* to Moshe in this way, saying (*Shabbat* 10b): "I have a fine gift in the place where I hide My treasures, and its name is "*Shabbat*.'" *Hashem* added, "Go and tell *Bnei Yisrael* about it." *Hashem* wants us to know that we stand before a great mystery when we encounter *Shabbat*.

R' Engelman continues: Any attempt to explain *Shabbat* in rational terms or to ascribe some sociological or ethical purpose to it is doomed to failure. True, the Torah says (*Shmot* 23:12), "[For] six days you shall accomplish your activities, and on the seventh day you shall desist, so that your ox and donkey may be content and your maidservant's son and the sojourner may be refreshed"--implying that the purpose of *Shabbat* is to allow everyone a day of rest. If that were really the case, however, why not allow each person to choose his or her own preferred day?

Furthermore, writes R' Engelman, when we study the 39 *Melachot* / the categories of activities that are prohibited on *Shabbat*, we discover that many of them are not particularly strenuous. On the other hand, if a person wants to tire himself out by marching up and down the street the entire *Shabbat* day, he would be permitted to do so. In short, it does not seem that "rest" in the usual sense is the purpose of *Shabbat*. Rather, whether something is a *Melachah* depends on whether that activity was performed in the *Mishkan* / Tabernacle.

The first nation known to have objected to *Shabbat* observance was the Greeks, as related in *Megillat Antiochus*. This is not surprising, R' Engelman notes, since the Greeks prided themselves on looking at the world through the lens of reason. Not only could they find no rational reason for *Shabbat*, they likely reasoned that its observance damaged the economy. And do not tell them that *Shabbat* increases productivity by letting the workforce rest, for that goal would not justify shutting down the entire economy at one time! Moreover, it actually is forbidden by *Halachah* for a person to rest on *Shabbat* with the intention of preparing himself for the week ahead.

Rather, as noted, *Shabbat* is ultimately a mystery. Through learning about it, one can, however, peel away some of the layers that hide it.

(*Neshamah Yeteirah* p.19)

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“Yosef dreamt a dream which he told to his brothers, and they hated him even more.” (37:5)

Why did Yosef tell his brothers his dream? Couldn't he have foreseen the consequences?

R' Aharon Yehuda Leib Steinman z"l (1914-2017; *Rosh Yeshiva* in Bnei Brak, Israel) answers: Clearly this was part of the Divine plan. Our Sages say, “Dreams follow their interpretation,” *i.e.*, that the interpretation given to a dream impacts whether and how it will come true. Here, *Hashem* wanted Yosef's brothers to hear his dream and declare (37:8), “Would you then reign over us?!”

Alternatively, R' Steinman writes: It is said that if a person could travel to distant stars, his experience would be incomplete until he came home and told someone about it. Perhaps Yosef, too, was so moved by his dream that he needed to tell someone about it. (*Ayelet Ha'shachar*)

“You will place Pharaoh's cup in his hand as was the former practice when you were his cupbearer.” (40:13)

R' Meir Simcha Hakohen (1843-1926; rabbi of Dvinsk, Latvia) writes: Perhaps, when a master is not confident in his servant's loyalty, he will not take a cup that that servant offers him. Instead, he will have the servant pour two cups from the same pitcher and, only after the servant drinks one, will the master drink the other. Not so in your case, Yosef told Pharaoh's cupbearer--you will place the cup directly in Pharaoh's hand and he will trust you. (*Meshech Chochmah*)

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Later, when Yaakov and Yosef are finally reunited (46:29), Yosef cries on Yaakov's shoulder. Yaakov, however, does not cry, because, say our Sages, he was reciting *Shema*. Why was Yaakov reciting *Shema* at that moment? R' Greenberg explains based on the foregoing: When Yaakov saw that Yosef was the ruler of Egypt, yet he remained a committed Jew, he understood his earlier error in complaining, and he acknowledged that *Hashem* is, indeed, One even now, as the first verse of *Shema* says.

R' Greenberg concludes by quoting from an essay that R' Avraham Yitzchak Hakohen Kook z"l (1865-1935; first *Ashkenazic* Chief Rabbi of *Eretz Yisrael*) wrote in 1929 after Arabs massacred 133 of *Eretz Yisrael's* Jews: “Whoever follows developments in the Land can see clearly how every downfall we have experienced leads to even greater growth. We see how, from the darkness, comes great light. This can teach us not to become dispirited, even when the enemy is most frightening. We are confident that from our wounds will emerge a great healing.”

(*Mi'Darchei Ha'Parashah* p.167)

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

Rashi z"l writes: Yaakov wished to live in tranquility, but the trouble in connection with Yosef came upon him suddenly. [Until here from *Rashi*]

R' Shlomo Kluger z"l (1785-1869; rabbi of Brody, Galicia) writes: There is a well-known opinion of the commentaries that the 400 years of exile that were decreed on Avraham's descendants (*Bereishit* 15:13) began from the birth of Yitzchak, which was exactly 400 years before the Exodus. This requires explanation, however, writes R' Kluger--why did Yitzchak and Yaakov themselves not suffer as much as their descendants did in Egypt?

R' Kluger explains: Even when a *Tzaddik* is very wealthy, as the Patriarchs were, he does not derive satisfaction from that fact. Rather, his focus is on the spiritual world, and he views himself as a *Ger* / stranger in the material world. Thus, for Yitzchak and Yaakov, it was suffering enough that they had to live as strangers in the Holy Land, *Eretz Yisrael*.

Not so their descendants! continues R' Kluger. With each passing generation, they became more materialistic, such that living as strangers in *Eretz Yisrael*, or even outside of it, would have been considered a good life, as long as they had their creature comforts. Therefore, they needed to experience greater suffering in order to fulfill the prophecy to Avraham.

In this light we can understand *Rashi's* comment, R' Kluger concludes. When Yaakov felt a desire to live out his life in tranquility, he forgot briefly that he was meant to be in exile. Therefore, he needed to feel some of the pain of exile, so the trouble with Yosef came upon him. (*Chochmat Ha'Torah*)

“Now Yisrael loved Yosef more than all his sons since he was a ‘Ben zekunim’ to him . . .” (37:3)

Rashi offers several interpretations for “*Ben zekunim*,” including: He was the child of Yaakov's old age; alternatively, he was a wise son.

R' Avraham ibn Ezra z"l (1089-1167) writes: Yosef was the son of Yaakov's old age, for Yaakov was 91 years old when Yosef was born.

R' Naftali Hertz Weisel z"l (1725-1805; German banker, and prolific author of works of Torah commentary, Hebrew grammar, and *Mussar*) asks: Yissachar and Zevulun were only a little older than Yosef, so why should Yosef be singled out as the “*Ben zekunim*”? Therefore, *Rashi's* second interpretation, which is based on Onkelos' translation, seems to be more accurate, *i.e.*, Yosef is called Yaakov's “*Ben zekunim*” because he was wise beyond his years--he was a *Ben* / child who was like a *Zaken* / elder. Indeed, this interpretation is suggested by the extra word “*Lo*” / “to him,” meaning that Yosef appeared wise in Yaakov's eyes, R' Weisel adds. [Ed. note: Perhaps this very discussion is what led *Rashi* to offer an alternative interpretation for *Ben zekunim*.]

R' Weisel adds: Yosef's brothers surely recognized his wisdom as well. Otherwise, they would not have taken him seriously and been jealous of him.

(*Imrei Shefer*)