

Miketz and Chanuka 5773

Parashat Miketz and Chanuka 5773

Dual dreams played a very important role in the life of Yosef. His dual dreams of wielding domination and power, the dual dreams of Paro's Minister of the Wineries and Minister of the Bakeries, and Paro's dual dream of the emaciated cows consuming the corpulent cows and the skeletal wheat stalks devouring the full ones.

Similarly, dual signs from HaShem were shown to Yosef at critical moments in his life, as follows.

The brothers arrived in Egypt and, in keeping with Yosef's command that the border police bring to him all arrivals from Eretz Canaan, the brothers find themselves accused by Paro's viceroy of being spies for a foreign country.

It was Yosef's original intention to severely punish the brothers, but something happened in the incidents recorded in the parasha to change Yosef's mind from punishing the brothers to exalting them and caring for their welfare.

In this week's parasha, Yosef reaches the pinnacle of his career. He is the viceroy of Egypt. No one raises a hand in the land without the authority of Yosef.

When reviewing the life of this man, one cannot but wonder from where he received the spiritual strength to endure all that happened to him.

Yosef, 17 years old, was orphaned from his beloved mother Rachel, rejected by his brothers with only his father Ya'akov and younger brother Binyamin to bring him comfort and solace.

The brothers go to Shechem with the family herd and Yosef is sent to see how they are faring. When he draws close, the brothers rip off his many-colored cloak and throw Yosef into a

pit swarming with snakes and scorpions. And the brothers sit down to eat bread, as the Torah states, while the young helpless Yosef calls out for help.

He is sold into slavery then put to the test with Potifar's wife and thrown into prison for many years.

At any point in his early life, Yosef could easily have concluded that HaShem had abandoned him, if not for one subtle, elusive seemingly insignificant incident.

When Yosef was in the pit, a caravan of Yishmaelim approached. This was a caravan on its regular route from Gilad to Egypt with its usual cargo of kerosene. Upon Yehuda's suggestion, Yosef is taken out from the pit and sold to the Yishmaelim, to be resold as a slave in Egypt.

The Torah takes the trouble to inform us that on this particular run, the caravan was not carrying kerosene, but three very pleasant smelling spices **nechot, tzarie and lot**.

Rashi explains that HaShem created a mixup in Gilad, and the kerosene was replaced with the spices so that the tzaddik Yosef would not be troubled by the foul smell of the fuel.

How bizarre! 17 years old, betrayed by his brothers, shackled to a camel to be sold as a slave in Egypt, and the Torah informs us that HaShem wanted to placate him with pleasant smelling spices!

For the answer, visit the famed Louvre Museum in Paris. As you walk through the great art galleries, you will see among the other paintings one of a smiling young woman. How much would you pay for the painting and its handsome frame? 1,000 Shekels or 10,000?

But as you approach the picture you will see in the lower right corner a scribbled signature – Leonardo Da Vinci. Behold, this is the magnificent Mona Lisa, worth tens of

million of dollars. What elevated the portrait to such a huge figure is no more than a scribbled signature on the side which has no aesthetic value, but it informs the viewer that it is the handiwork of one of the world's greatest artists.

Yosef's situation was miserable. His present state is bleak. His future even darker. But within the darkness of his suffering he saw the signature – the sweet smelling spices instead of the foul smelling kerosene. This was HaShem's signature signaling to Yosef that HaShem was protecting him.

In this week's parasha Miketz, Yosef sits on the throne as the second most powerful man in the superpower of the time – Egypt. Lying prostrate before him are his ten brothers whom he recognizes; but they do not recognize him, just as Yosef saw in his dream 20 years previously. Yosef now embarks on the systematic plan he has worked out over the years to inflict psychological torment on those who inflicted him with such mental anguish and physical pain.

Yosef sends them back to their father's home with the directive that they must bring their youngest brother, Binyamin to him.

Ya'akov is extremely distraught with the tide of events which began as a simple errand to purchase food and has reached a stage where he must send away the last living memory of his beloved wife Rachel. When the brothers prepare to return to Egypt together with Binyamin, father Ya'akov gives them gifts for the viceroy, who has been so cruel to his sons.

The gifts include the spices – **nachot, tzarie and lot**, the very same spices which the caravan taking Yosef into slavery was transporting.

The plot thickens as the brothers, together with Binyamin, stand before the viceroy and present him with the gifts from Eretz Yisrael. Yosef opens the package and senses the unique spices. Then suddenly the years fade away and he sees himself

again chained to the camel, with the sun intensely beating down on him, and once again smells the unique mix of these three spices. At that moment Yosef realizes that all that was done to him by his brothers was part of HaShem's master plan, as told to grandfather Avraham, that his descendants will be enslaved 400 years in a foreign land and then return to Eretz Yisrael.

And just as this subtle sign from HaShem ushered in Yosef's period of slavery, resulting in his rise to greatness, so too is this a subtle sign ushering in the period of exile and slavery of the Jewish people which will result in the exodus, receiving the Torah, and the rise to greatness as HaShem's chosen people.

The realization by Yosef, and thereafter by his brothers and father Ya'akov, that HaShem was personally directing the affairs of the family and the future Jewish nation was cause for immense exhilaration and the necessity to proclaim this before all the House of Israel for all ages. Yosef performed it by totally forgiving his brothers, and caring for their well-being by providing them with the best that Egypt had to offer.

There is an unnatural duality relating to Chanuka: The military victory of the few and the weaker Jewish army over the then world power of Greece, and the miraculous eight day burning of oil from a single flask which would normally burn for a single night.

The military victory was a miracle but it came at a very, very high price. The war lasted for 25 years, five of them following the miracle of the light in the Bet Hamikdash, in which Jewish cities were destroyed and tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, of Jews were murdered. Nevertheless, our rabbis declared these events to be sacred and decreed it a holiday for all time, in view of the modest omen sent by HaShem in the Bet Hamikdash where a single flask

of oil burned for 8 nights.

If we take the omen shown to Yosef in the form of the three spices nechot, lot and tzori, and the little candle that burned for 8 nights and compare them with the miracles, signs and omens that HaShem sends to us every day of our lives in Eretz Yisrael, it is like the sound of a small leaf dropping on grass in relation to the thunder of a tsunami tidal wave or a near inaudible whisper in relation to a soprano's crystal shattering high C note.

But for someone whose soul is stone deaf and is spiritually brain dead no sign or omen is effective.

Syria is being torn asunder by civil war and the death toll is approaching 50,000. The ethnic war is beginning to spread to Lebanon, and the Shiite Hizbullah is on high alert for fear of a Sunni move. Egypt may be on the verge of a civil war. Tunisia, the hope of the "Arab Spring," has become Islamic and is descending into an abyss of darkness and violence. Libya is no longer a country, but a collection of militias and tribes that battle each other. Iraq is disintegrating. The Kurds from four different countries are getting organized, and Turkey is on the brink of a possible war with Syria and Iran. Saudia, Yemen Bahrain and all the rest are on the verge of disintegration. Is this not a sign from heaven?

Seventy years ago, we Jews waited for the allies to bomb the death camps of Europe, or at least the train tracks to the camps; today the civilized world is waiting for the Jews to bomb the suicidal insane Iranians. Is this not a sign from heaven?

While all this is happening, we in Eretz Yisrael are preparing the groundwork for a future Torah society. Is this not a sign from heaven?

While the United States is tying our hands from making a preemptive military strike on Iran that has sworn to finish

the plans drawn up by the Persian devil called Haman, HaShem is bringing on stage the North Koreans who are building intercontinental ballistic missiles to deliver nuclear weapons to the United States. Is this not a sign from heaven?

While the Europeans are hastily condemning Israel for just thinking of building homes or kindergardens in our Biblical homeland, HaShem is busy bringing daily to their shores hundreds of Moslems who will take away their homes and conquer their cities. Is this not a sign from heaven?

When batei kneset are being established in kibbutzim which were established on ideological lines contrary to the Torah, and there is an ever growing interest in returning to Torah among all segments of our society, and the government pays for tens of thousands of young people to learn Torah; Is this not a sign from heaven?

How sad it is to think of the millions of Jews in the galut who are blind to the Godly omens and signs which make up our lives here in Eretz Yisrael.

On Chanuka we recall the sacrifices made by our ancestors 2500 years ago, to be able to live a full Torah life built around the centrality of the Bet Hamikdash in Yerushalayim. Today, our generation is being called upon to re-establish our lives in Eretz Yisrael after a 2000 year tragic interruption of our religious national life.

Our goal is the creation of a modern day overhauled and rectified version of Chanuka. Not one where an old and modest Bet Mikdash was restored, but a Chanuka where all our enemies will be destroyed, and we will merit to build a Bet Hamikdash which will be the envy of all peoples, who will realize that the Jewish nation is God's chosen people, Eretz Yisrael His chosen land, and Yerushalayim His chosen city.

How fortunate we are to live in Eretz Yisrael. Baruch she'he'chyanu ve'kiy'manu ve'hie'gie'anu lazman hazeh.

Shabbat Shalom and Chanuka samayach

Nachman Kahana

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