

Toras Aish

Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

CHIEF RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS

Covenant & Conversation

Joseph is now the ruler of Egypt. The famine he predicted has come to pass. It extends beyond Egypt to the land of Canaan. Seeking to buy food, Joseph's brothers make the journey to Egypt. They arrive at the palace of the man in charge of grain distribution: "Now Joseph was governor of all Egypt, and it was he who sold the corn to all the people of the land. Joseph's brothers came and bowed to the ground before him. Joseph recognized his brothers as soon as he saw them, but he behaved like a stranger and spoke harshly to them... Joseph recognized his brothers, but they did not recognize him." (42:6-8)

We owe to Robert Alter the idea of a type-scene, a drama enacted several times with variations; and these are particularly in evidence in the book of Bereishit. There is no universal rule as to how to decode the significance of a type-scene. One example is boy-meets-girl-at-well, an encounter that takes places three times, between Abraham's servant and Rebekah, Jacob and Rachel, and Moses and the daughters of Jethro. Here, the setting is probably not significant (wells are where strangers met in those days, like the water-dispenser in an office). What we must attend to in these three episodes is their variations: Rebekah's activism, Jacob's show of strength, Moses' passion for justice. How people act toward strangers at a well is, in other words, a test of their character. In some cases, however, a type-scene seems to indicate a recurring theme. That is the case here. If we are to understand what is at stake in the meeting between Joseph and his brothers, we have to set it aside three other episodes, all of which occur in Bereishit.

The first takes place in Isaac's tent. The patriarch is old and blind. He tells his elder son to go out into the field, trap an animal and prepare a meal so that he can bless him. Surprisingly soon, Isaac hears someone enter. "Who are you?" he asks. "I am Esau, your elder son," the voice replies. Isaac is not convinced. "Come close and let me feel you, my son. Are you really Esau or not?" He reaches out and feels the rough texture of the skins covering his arms. Still unsure, he asks again, "But are you really my son Esau?" The other replies, "I am." So Isaac blesses him: "Ah, the smell of my son is like the smell of a field

blessed by G-d." But it is not Esau. It is Jacob in disguise.

Scene two: Jacob has fled to his uncle Laban's house. Arriving, he meets and falls in love with Rachel, and offers to work for her father for seven years in order to marry her. The time passes quickly: the years "seemed like a few days because he loved her." The wedding day approaches. Laban makes a feast. The bride enters her tent. Late at night, Jacob follows her. Now at last he has married his beloved Rachel. When morning comes, he discovers that he has been the victim of a deception. It is not Rachel. It is Leah in disguise.

Scene three: Judah has married a Canaanite girl and is now the father of three sons. The first marries a local girl, Tamar, but dies mysteriously young, leaving his wife a childless widow. Following a pre-Mosaic version of the law of levirate marriage, Judah marries his second son to Tamar so that she can have a child "to keep his brother's name alive." He is loathe to have a son that will, in effect, belong to his late brother so he "spilled his seed," and for this he too died young. Judah is reluctant to give Tamar his third son, so she is left an agunah, "chained," bound to someone she is prevented from marrying, and unable to marry anyone else.

The years pass. Judah's own wife dies. Returning home from sheep-shearing, he sees a veiled prostitute by the side of the road. He asks her to sleep with him, promising, by way of payment, a kid from the flock. She asks him for his "seal and its cord and his staff" as security. The next day he sends a friend to deliver the kid, but the woman has disappeared. The locals deny all knowledge of her. Three months later, Judah hears that his daughter-in-law Tamar has become pregnant. He is incensed. Bound to his youngest son, she was not allowed to have a relationship with anyone else. She must have been guilty of adultery. "Bring her out so that she may be burnt," he says. She is brought to be killed, but she asks one favour. She tells one of the people to take to Judah the seal and cord and staff. "The father of my child," she says, "is the man to whom these things belong." Immediately, Judah understands. Tamar, unable to marry yet honour-bound to have a child to perpetuate the memory of her first husband, has tricked her father-in-law into performing the duty he should have allowed his youngest son to do. "She is more righteous than I," Judah admits. He thought he had slept with a prostitute. But it was Tamar in disguise.

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That is the context against which the meeting between Joseph and his brothers must be understood. The man the brothers bow down to bears no resemblance to a Hebrew shepherd. He speaks Egyptian. He is dressed in an Egyptian ruler's robes. He wears Pharaoh's signet ring and the gold chain of authority. They think they are in the presence of an Egyptian prince, but it is Joseph- their brother-in-disguise.

Four scenes, four disguises, four failures to see behind the mask. What do they have in common? Something very striking indeed. It is only by not being recognized that Jacob, Leah, Tamar and Joseph can be recognized, in the sense of attended, taken seriously, heeded. Isaac loves Esau, not Jacob. He loves Rachel, not Leah. Judah thinks of his youngest son, not the plight of Tamar. Joseph is hated by his brothers. Only when they appear as something or someone other than they are can they achieve what they seek-for Jacob, his father's blessing; for Leah, a husband; for Tamar, a son; for Joseph, the non-hostile attention of his brothers. The plight of these four individuals is summed up in a single poignant phrase: "Joseph recognized his brothers, but they did not recognize him."

Do the disguises work? In the short term, yes; but in the long term, not necessarily. Jacob suffers greatly for having taken Esau's blessing. Leah, though she marries Jacob, never wins his love. Tamar had a child (in fact, twins) but Judah "was not intimate with her anymore." Joseph-well, his brothers no longer hated him but they feared him. Even after his assurances that he bore them no grudge, they still thought he would take revenge on them after their father died. What we achieve in disguise is never the love we sought.

But something else happens. Jacob, Leah, Tamar and Joseph discover that, though they may never win the affection of those from whom they seek it, G-d is with them; and that, ultimately, is enough. A disguise is an act of hiding-from others, and perhaps from oneself. From G-d, however, we cannot, nor do we need to, hide. He hears our cry. He answers our unspoken prayer. He heeds the unheeded and brings them comfort. In the aftermath of the four episodes, there is no healing of relationship but there is a mending of identity. That is what makes them, not secular narratives but deeply religious chronicles of psychological growth and maturation. What they tell us

is simple and profound: those who stand before G-d need no disguises to achieve self-worth when standing before mankind. © 2012 Chief Rabbi Lord J. Sacks and *torah.org*

RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

The Festival of Hanukkah celebrates two momentous and fateful victories of Judea over Greco-Syria in the second century before the Common Era, during the period of the Second Temple. Greco-Syria was one of three heirs to the political and cultural hegemony of Alexander the Great, a masterful military tactician whose goal was to spread Hellenistic culture throughout the "Fertile Crescent." Despite the brevity of his life, he succeeded to an amazing extent - and miraculously, he allowed the State of Judea to maintain her municipal and religious independence.

Jewish lore records that when Alexander the Great entered the gates of Jerusalem, the High Priest, Shimon the Righteous came out to greet him. The mighty conqueror bowed before the High Priest, exclaiming that before every battle, in his dreams, he received a blessing for victory from the High Priest. Hence, Judea received a special dispensation, and that year every male baby born was named Alexander (Yoma 69a).

About 150 years later, prior to the victory of Hanukkah, the situation changed drastically. Greco-Syria and Greco-Egypt were struggling for control over the Alexandrian empire, and the High Priests of Judea were becoming more and more enamored of the popular Hellenistic culture, replete with Olympic athletic games dedicated to the idolatrous gods of Mt. Olympus and hedonistic orgies. The High Priest Menelaus wished to turn Judea into a Greek City State, bringing the idolatrous activities right into the heart of Jerusalem.

A civil war ensued, with the religious Hasmoneans rebelling valiantly against the establishment Hellenist - assimilationists. When the Hasmoneans appeared close to victory, the Hellenist rulers called Greco-Syria for help, agreeing that once the rebellion was quelled, Judea would become a satrap of Syria. Hence the Hasmoneans were battling for both the political and religious independence of Judea. Their military victory secured their political independence; the rededication of the Holy Temples' Menorah - symbolizing the "candles of commandment and the light of Torah" (Proverbs 6: 23) - expressed the renewed religious commitment of the newly formed revolutionary leadership.

But if our kindling of the Hanukkah Menorah represents the victory of Torah Hebraism over Assimilationist Hellenism, why does the Talmud ordain the essential lighting of the Hannukah Menorah to take place in the Jewish home, "each person must light in his/her home" (B.T. Shabbat 21b) - in the home and not

in the Synagogue? The sages called the Synagogue "a miniature Holy Temple", so would it not be more a more appropriate location for our Hanukkah celebrations?

I discovered the answer to my query in a beautiful city in Portugal. Among its many institutions, Ohr Torah Stone has the Joseph and Gwendolyn Straus Rabbinical Seminary which trains rabbis and sends them to Jewish communities all over the world. Our rabbis in Portugal began asking many questions about the Marranos, or Crypto-Jews, who are quite numerous there. These are the descendants of Jews who were forced to convert to Christianity during the times of the Catholic Inquisition. Now they wish to return to their Jewish faith. What is their status? Do they require formal conversion?

I visited Portugal to meet these "Crypto-Jewish" communities in order to assess how to enable them to re-unite with their Jewish heritage.

Rabbi Elisha Sales, the rabbi sent by Shavei Yisrael (an organization dedicated to finding "lost Jews") to minister to the Marrano communities in the towns and villages outside of Lisbon, introduced me to people all of whom shared a burning desire to emerge from their repressed underground of furtive whispers into Jewish pride and observance.

He took me to the magnificent new Synagogue in Belmonte where I joined 70-80 Crypto-Jews who gathered for the weekday evening prayer. Every word was recited aloud by each participant. The Cantor, a fifteen year old student of the Rabbi, led us all in the spirited singing.

They explained that four families went underground in 1492. For 500 years, their descendants married one another while keeping Judaism secretly. They rebuilt the synagogue; and now at least 120 come to shul every Friday night and Sabbath day!

At the entrance way to the sanctuary is the following inscription in Hebrew: "Here in this place, the chain of our tradition has not been severed...."

As a result of government decrees, the Jewish residents of this village, like other Jews throughout Spain and Portugal, were forced to publicly deny their Jewish religion. But they maintained their Judaism in their homes. Here the candle of Jewish light was never extinguished. For a period of 500 years, from 1492 (when the one synagogue in Belmonte was destroyed) until 2002 (when it was reopened), in the homes of this village the Jewish commandments were secretly performed, the tradition was transmitted from parent to child, in hushed tones, the Sabbath was sanctified in hiding while Sunday was celebrated before the eyes of the neighbors. They made blessings over the hallah and the wine and mumbled words of Hebrew prayers in the darkness. Here the Jewish soul was never lost. Here the Jewish soul remains forever.... From the midst of the past will rise the future. From the bleak darkness of the Middle Ages shall emerge the light of this Synagogue."

Hanukkah celebrates the eternal Jewish spirit in the face of assimilation. Belmonte proves that it is the Jewish home which preserves the Jewish spirit - even in the total absence of a synagogue! © 2012 *Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin*

RABBI BEREL WEIN

Wein Online

Timing is everything. This is true in financial matters, personal choices, national decisions, as well as in historical events. Nevertheless, we are able to see that the present is not necessarily the past and that options and opinions that are currently relevant and popular once held no sway. Our ancestors the Hasmoneans engaged in the same type of struggles, physical as well as spiritual, that challenge us today.

Surrounded by enemies meant to destroy the Jewish state and faith, and beset by a substantial amount of internal enemies willing to become Greeks, the Hasmoneans fought both enemies strongly and successfully. But they were fortunate that in the second century before the Common Era there were no NGOs, EUs, no media bias and a plethora of do-gooders.

The Hasmoneans would undoubtedly have been accused of war crimes, aggression, and of becoming occupiers of the land that in truth belonged to them. However, their timing was impeccable. By current day standards, there could never be a Chanuka holiday. This is not to say that hypocrisy and double dealing did not exist in the days of the Hasmoneans. Human nature has not changed significantly since Adam and Eve were driven from the Garden of Eden.

However, with the development of civilization, technology and the wide dissemination of information - both true and false- we must agree that the implementation of hypocrisy and false and unfair judgment has reached a new high in our time. And unfortunately, our small state and great people are the primary victims of this new, exalted perfidy.

Perhaps the Rabbis of Old, when establishing the holiday of Chanuka, realized that there would rise a later generation, Jewish and non-Jewish, that would not be proud of the courage and fortitude of the Hasmoneans. There would arise a generation that would have preferred that the Hasmoneans engage the Greeks rather than defeat them in battle. Perhaps this is why the Rabbis chose to emphasize the miracle of the light of the oil lamp as the basic theme and commandment of Chanuka.

It is hard to find fault with a small flame that somehow burned miraculously for eight days when it had only sufficient fuel for one day. This miracle of the small flame came to justify the entire epic of the Hasmonean struggle against the Greeks and against the Hellenists. If the Hasmoneans were in fact wrong in conducting their struggle against the Greeks in a

forceful fashion, then the Lord would not have provided the miracle of the flame.

The rededication of the Temple and its purification from pagan defilement was again another indication of the correct struggle of the Hasmoneans, of their tactics, and behavior. The preservation of the Jewish people and of Torah values within that people is the ultimate strategic goal of our nation since the time of Abraham. This goal has not changed in our time and, in fact, all current events have brought it into sharper focus. This is the central issue which dwarfs all others in Jewish society and worldview.

The Rabbis framed one of the blessings over the lights of Chanuka as recognizing the events 'bayamim hahem,' in those days' bazman hazeh,' in our time. We always have to look at how past events play themselves out in the current scene. We have to make certain that national errors and wrong policies that were present 'bayamim hahem,' in past times, do not repeat themselves 'bazman hazeh,' in our current time.

And, we also have to be aware that the wisdom, traditions, and good sense of the past not be easily discarded by current fads and transient mores in order to fit ourselves into a perceived modern, politically correct time. This balance between the past and the present, between what was and what is remains the challenge of our generation.

Discarding our past has proven to be spiritually and even physically fatal to millions of Jews over the last centuries. And, ignoring the realities of the present, handicaps us in dealing with the problems and the struggles that we must yet endure. The lights of Chanuka serve to remind us that at one and the same time we live 'bayamim hahem,' in those past days and 'bazman hazeh,' in our current world as well. The flames of Chanuka have survived for almost 23 centuries and remain the inspiration for our faith in our eventual achievement of Jewish sovereignty in our holy land and in the expansion of our spiritual values, Torah knowledge and observance. © 2012 Rabbi Berel Wein - Jewish historian, author and international lecturer offers a complete selection of CDs, audio tapes, video tapes, DVDs, and books on Jewish history at www.rabbiwein.com. For more information on these and other products visit www.rabbiwein.com

YESHIVAT HAR ETZION

Virtual Beit Medrash

STUDENT SUMMARIES OF SICHOT OF THE ROSHEI YESHIVA HARAV YEHUDA AMITAL ZT"L

Translated by Kaeren Fish

During the days of Chanuka, we add into our prayers the words: "Your children came to the Holy of Holies of Your House, and cleared Your Sanctuary, and purified Your Temple, and kindled lights in the courtyards of Your Sanctuary..."

An interesting question arises in the wake of this historical episode: what happened next? What

happened after the purification and rededication of the Temple and the miracle of the cruse of oil that lasted for eight days?

The answer is to be found in Sefer Chashmonaim: "And it was, when the nations around about heard that the altar had been rebuilt and that the Temple had been re-dedicated as before, they were incensed. And they conspired to annihilate the descendants of Yaakov who were in their midst, and began putting Jews to death and killing them... And the nations that were in Gilad were gathered against Israel who were on their border, to wipe them out, and they fled to the fortress of Datima... And they put about a thousand men to death there... They gathered against them from Acre and from Tyre and from Sidon, and the entire Galilee of the gentiles, to wipe us out..." (Chashmonaim 1:5)

The situation, both in Eretz Yisrael and outside of the land, was very difficult. The war continued. Four of Matityahu's sons were killed in battle. It was hard for them to exercise sovereignty.

The reason for this is clear, as we find in the Rambam's ruling that kohanim may not rule as kings. Their "realm" is limited to the priesthood alone. Moreover, there is an established principle: "Anyone who claims, 'I am a descendant of the Chashmonaim,' is known with certainty to be a slave, for none of them remained other than one child, and he perished" (Bava Batra 3b).

Already in the days of Yehuda Maccabee, there were some ugly practices in Eretz Yisrael. Already then, the internicine battles, which ultimately led to the destruction of the Temple, were evident. The clear impression arising from the historical facts that are known to us (including from Greek works dating to this period) is that Am Yisrael had nothing to be proud of during the period following the victory of the Chashmonaim. On the contrary-the great light that came about through the Chashmonaim, which we mention every year at this time, was only temporary. Hence, we must ask, why the great celebration?

The Rambam seems to understand the situation differently. I would like to emphasize his interpretation, with its special significance for our own era: "During the Second Temple Period, when the Greeks ruled, they issued decrees against the Jews, denying their faith, and did not permit them to engage in Torah and the commandments. And they appropriated their money and their daughters, and they entered the Temple and broke in, and defiled the holy things, and caused the Jews great anguish. And they subjected them to harsh oppression, until the G-d of our fathers had mercy on them, and delivered them from their hands, and saved them. And the sons of Chashmonai, the Kohanim Gedolim, prevailed, and killed them, and saved Israel from them, and appointed a king from among the kohanim. And Jewish sovereignty was restored for more than two hundred years, until the

destruction of the Second Temple." (Hilkhos Chanuka 3:1)

The Rambam views the great achievement of the Chashmonaim as the very fact that Jewish sovereignty was restored until the time of the destruction. To his view, Chanuka is celebrated not only to commemorate the miracle concerning the oil, but also to commemorate the appointment of a Jewish king and the restoration of Jewish sovereignty for two more centuries. And this, despite the fact that the Jewish state that was thus established was extremely limited in its independence and its leaders were very far removed from Torah.

In our day, there is a growing number of people who value settling the Land of Israel more than they value Jewish sovereignty. I once heard about a conversation between two of the leaders of the struggle against the evacuation of Yamit. One asked the other, "What would you have done if, in 1948, you had been given the choice of remaining in Gush Etzion under Jordanian rule, or leaving in order to live within the sovereign territory of the State of Israel, under Israeli rule?" The other replied, "I would not have achieved such a high level that I could decide to remain; I would have left, to live in the State of Israel." When I heard this I was shocked and saddened. For two thousand years Jews have dreamed of Jewish sovereignty, and now that it finally comes, there is someone who argues that if he was "worthy," if he had achieved a sufficiently "high level," he would choose to remain outside its borders!

I have heard Religious Zionists claim that the State of Israel is merely a means to fulfill the commandment of settling Eretz Yisrael. I was astounded. Religious Zionism means one thing: G-d is bringing Am Yisrael back to their land. What differentiates our path from that of R. Shakh, for example, is the view that Jewish sovereignty is important and significant in and of itself. And this is doubly true after the Holocaust.

What better authority could we seek than the Rambam, who views the fact that Jews achieved some level of independence in their own country as one of the reasons for the holiday of Chanuka? We must guard ourselves against the anti-Zionist trends that are developing specifically within the extreme Zionist Jewish public.

It is true that we have great differences of opinion in many realms within our small sovereign kingdom. Everything that exists in the western world makes its way here very quickly and finds its way onto the streets and into popular culture. The secular public has increasing difficulty with the idea of Jewish sovereignty. We, who recognize the value of Jewish freedom and sovereignty, and who recognize the significance of G-d's compassion towards us, must grant each value its proper weight.

If those two hundred years of Jewish sovereignty give added significance to the miracle of Chanuka, then the ingathering of the exiles, which is taking place before our eyes, is surely of no less significance! (*This sicha was delivered on Chanuka 5744 [1983].*)

RABBI NAFTALI REICH

Legacy

We gaze at the delightful dancing lights as we sit before the menorah and sing the traditional songs associated with the festival. Many observe a special ritual of lingering in the delicate radiance of the menorah lights while reflecting on their sublime message. But what precisely is that message? What insights are the tiny flames meant to trigger?

Perhaps the very word "reflect" serves as a signpost on our journey toward internalizing Chanukah's spiritual treasure. To reflect does not simply mean to contemplate or ponder. It also means to mirror, or to reverberate. When we gaze deep into the menorah lights, what we should see is a genuine reflection of our true selves.

The concept of facing the deeper truth about one's true self comes to the fore in this week's Torah portion, as well. This concept is embedded in two words that are seemingly out of place with the flow of the narrative. Yaakov's sons face Yosef, the Egyptian viceroy, who treats them with unreasonable hostility. He accuses them of being spies and throws them into prison, allowing only one of the brothers to return home and prove their collective innocence by bringing back Binyomin.

Yosef unexpectedly relents a few days later and announces that the brothers can all return home, except for Shimon who will be detained until their return.

The Torah records the brothers' response to Yosef's surprising change of heart and generous gesture, as "Vayaasu kein," and they did so. The verse gives no further explanation about what the brothers actually did. Instead the Torah continues to tell us that the brothers immediately examined their past behavior and severely reproached themselves for not being sensitive to Yosef's distress when they sold him into slavery. They now assumed that their present misfortune was a direct result of their past callous behavior.

The commentaries explain that Vayaasu kein-'they did so' indicates that Yosef's brothers followed Yosef's lead in reevaluating the truth of their own personal conduct.

As viceroy, Yosef ruled Egypt with complete, undisputed authority. He was a powerful unchallenged leader who could do whatever he pleased. From the pedestal of absolute power he decreed that all the brothers would be imprisoned until proven innocent.

Yet, without explanation he backed down. What was behind this sudden reversal?

Great people recognize that everything that transpires in life is a message from Heaven that needs to be carefully appraised. The brothers saw Yosef's about-face as a clear message from Hashem. If the all-powerful viceroy could have a change of heart and mind, they too should reexamine their convictions, especially their firm belief in their innocence.

Even if it involved an ego-bruising realization, it was an exercise they needed to engage in. "Vayaasu kein".... Like Yosef, the brothers pondered their conduct and motives and found them wanting.

The word 'kein' means authentic and genuine—a state of existence in which the external is a perfect reflection of the internal.

When gazing at the light of the menorah we are looking at a reflection of our inner self and beyond, to our very soul and the G-dliness within us. Removing the obfuscating presence of our ego and negative character traits enables the inner glow of the neshama to radiate through the body and light up its surroundings.

When we gaze at the menorah lights, we are internalizing the message of Chanukah—to bring the awareness of G-d's loving hand directing all aspects of our existence. Hopefully that will lead to take a more inspired role in our daily lives. All too often, we are too invested in our professed opinions and public persona to acknowledge our shortcomings. By letting go of self-justification as did Yosef's brothers, and being emotionally honest with ourselves, we will be connecting to the message of the Chanukah lights, ensuring that they genuinely reflect our deepest self.

When that self is aligned with the awareness of G-d's loving presence in all of life's dimensions, the Chanukah message will burst forth and illuminate all the inner and outer shadows of our existence. © 2012 Rabbi N. Reich and torah.org

RABBI SHLOMO RESSLER

Weekly Dvar

Parshat Miketz tells of the sons of Yaakov traveling to Egypt to buy food and bring it back to their father. Yosef tries to foil their plans by accusing his brothers of being spies because their father wouldn't have to send all 10 sons to get food, and the brothers respond that "we are all sons of one man" (42:11). How does that explain why they were all sent? The suspicion Yosef raises still exists!?

In Majesty of Man, Rabbi Leibowitz explains that when Hillel and Rabbi Akiva emphasized loving our fellow man as ourselves, they were describing fundamental principles of the Torah. As the Ramban explains, although the trip to Egypt was long and dangerous, Yaakov felt that developing the brothers' feeling of unity and brotherhood was worth the risk. This Ahavat Yisrael (love for a fellow Jew) is so critically

important that Hillel and Rabbi Akiva stressed it, and Yaakov risked his own sons' safety for it. If we neglect each other's needs in the outside world, in the workplace and at home, we're placing ourselves in danger of losing the comm"unity" we strive to be a part of. © 2012 Rabbi S. Ressler & LeLamed, Inc.

RABBI YISROEL CINER

Parsha Insights

The parsha begins, "And it was, mekaytz, at the end of two years, and Paroah dreamt". The medrash says, "kaytz, an end limit, was set for the darkness, an end limit was set for Yosef's imprisonment. Once that time was reached, Paroah had his dream." The Beis Halevi explains that the medrash is teaching us a very powerful message in viewing life's events. We would superficially understand the cause and effect of the parsha's events as follows. Paroah's dream, was the cause of Yosef being released from the prison. The same way that we would view a person who made a certain investment. If that investment would prove to be lucrative, we would say that the investment was the cause of his wealth.

The Beis Halevi explains that this medrash is teaching us the correct perspective. There was a set time, two additional years, that Yosef was meant to be in prison. The cause of his release was that time having been reached. This cause triggered that min hashamayim, from the heavens, something had to happen to bring about that release. The result of this cause was Paroah's dream. "An end limit was set for Yosef's imprisonment. Once that time was reached, Paroah had his dream." The dream didn't cause the release. It was rather the release caused the dream. The investment didn't cause the wealth. Min hashamayim the time had come for him to become wealthy. He, therefore, made that investment.

People go through so much anguish in life deeply regretting moves they failed to make. They often think to themselves that had they only made that investment, that decision, that phone call, their lives would have been so different. It is true that one event can have a tremendous influence on our life. However, we must recognize what really determines our fate is not our decisions. Chazal Say "Hakol beyday shamayim chutz mi'yiras shamayim". All is in the hands of heaven besides our spiritual stature. That investment could have greatly altered our financial standing. However, it would not have been the cause of our wealth. It would have been the result of a min hashamayim directive that this it is now in this person's best interest to become wealthy. Although it is beyond us to determine and fully fathom those directives, we do know that those 'little decisions' that we've discussed earlier, do affect those directives. The fact that at times we don't see the good in what's happening, in no way indicates that it isn't really good.

The Chofetz Chaim gives a beautiful mashal to illustrate this point. A person went to a train station for his first time. He heard a whistle blow and saw people hurry to the train. A short while later he heard a second whistle and saw additional people make their way onto the train. At the sound of the third whistle, the train started to roll. He was amazed by the power wielded by this whistle blower and sought him out. When he found him, he started to ask him questions about the running of the station, the scheduling of the trains, etc. The whistle blower gave him a confused look and in broken English (Polish?) told him that he doesn't really know all that much. All of his instructions come from above. All he does is blow the whistle!

This connection between dreams and redemption reminds me of an idea I recently read. The possuk says; "Shir Hamaalos, bshuv Hashem es shivas Tzion hayinu k'cholmim". This is usually translated, when Hashem will return the remnants of Zion, we 'will be' like dreamers. However, the word "hayinu" is really in the past tense, therefore the proper translation should be; we 'were' like dreamers.

When we dream, everything seems to make perfect sense and be totally logical. Once we awaken and review our dream we then realize that it really made no sense at all. We even can't imagine how at the time of the dream it did make sense! So too, is our current situation. During the pre-redemption stage, during the darkness of this world, things appear to make sense. This person wants to live with alternative lifestyles, it seems almost acceptable to us.

This person's goal in life is to be a millionaire, we find that understandable. This person doesn't think that mitzvos are important, even though we disagree, we can relate to where he is coming from. When the redemption will arrive, we will have true clarity of vision. It is then that we will come to the realization, that all our ideas until now, were like dreams. Our whole environment, it's values, it's priorities, made no sense at all, but at the time it seemed so logical! We look back and can't even imagine how it then made any sense at all.

After interpreting the dream, Yosef tells Paroah that he should now appoint an understanding and wise person to be in charge of the food collection and storage. Rav Eliyohu Lopian, zatza"l explains that it would take an incredible chacham to handle the task. During times of plenty, it's extremely difficult to have a mentality of only eating what's completely necessary and to save every additional morsel. Who is a wise man, one who is "roeh es hanolad" (sees the future). Not that he knows what will be but rather he 'sees' it. Only such a man who sees the future as if it's present, has the ability to prepare Mitzraim for the forthcoming famine years.

In olam hazah, our present physical existence, we are living through years of plenty. During our 120 years of life, we have an immeasurable amount of

opportunities to perform mitzvos and maasim tovim. In this respect, olam habah, the world to come, is a time of famine.

It is well known that the Vilna Gaon was crying at the time of his death. When asked, why he was crying, he explained how painful it was to leave this world of such incredible opportunity. He grabbed hold of his tzitzis and said "In this incredible world, for a few cents one can fulfill this wonderful mizvah of tzitzis, which merits one the level of seeing the face of the Sh'chinah. In the next world, a person is unable to perform a single mitzvah even if he offers all his possessions. How can't one cry when he's about to leave such a place.

Hashem should open our eyes so that we will realize that we are in the storehouse of the king for a limited amount of time. We must be chachamim who see the future, know that our time here is limited and not go through life in a dreamlike state. Recognizing the true causes for all that happens here and making ourselves worthy of being recipients of those blessings.

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RABBI DOV KRAMER

Taking a Closer Look

“The Chashona'im that ruled in the second Temple were extremely pious, and without them the Torah and the mitzvos would have been forgotten. Even so, they were punished greatly [for taking the position of king for themselves despite not being from the Tribe of Yehuda]. For the four pious sons of the elder Chashmonai who ruled one after the other, despite all of their might and success, fell by sword by the hand of their enemies, with the punishment going so far that our sages, of blessed memory, said (Bava Basra 3b) whomever claims to be from the family of the Chashmona'im is a servant, for all of them were cut down (the family did not survive) because of this sin" (Ramban, B'raishis 49:10). Being that there is a prohibition for anyone who is not a descendant of Yehuda to be the king of Israel, how could the Chashmona'im, who fought and risked their lives so that the Jewish people could still keep the Torah, violate one of its prohibitions?

Although we have the benefit of 20/20 hindsight, and of being taught about the mistake made by the Chashmona'im since we were "Tinokos Shel Beis Raban," it would be difficult to attribute this severe error, which brought about such a harsh punishment, to that generation not being as familiar with the prohibition as we are. What were the Chashmona'im thinking when they took on the role of ruler in addition to being the Kohanim G'dolim (High Priests)?

Maharsha (B'rachos 28a) compares the Chashmona'im becoming the rulers with Rabbi Elazar ben Azarya taking over the political leadership

(becoming the Nasi) from Raban Gamliel, as the former was a Kohain and the latter was from the Tribe of Yehuda. How could the sages have appointed a Kohain to a position reserved for a descendant of Yehuda? (Interestingly, the Talmud says that they would have appointed Rabbi Yehoshua if not that it would seem inappropriate since he had been mistreated by Raban Gamliel, even though Rabbi Yehoshua himself was a Levi.) A similar question can be asked about Sha'ul, who was from the Tribe of Binyamin, being anointed as the first king of Israel. Ramban (on B'raishis) says that G-d specifically chose someone who was not from the Tribe of Yehuda, because He was unhappy with the nation's request for a king, and didn't want this king—who only became king because of that request—to come from the Tribe that the ruler was supposed to come from and would always come from. Since the appointment of Sha'ul was only a temporary one, it didn't contradict that status. The same could be applied to Rabbi Elazar ben Azarya; his appointment was never meant to be a permanent one, only a temporary measure until the issues with Raban Gamliel were resolved. Once they were (when he realized he was treating those who disagreed with him too harshly), he was reinstated. Based on this, it would seem that it would not have been a problem if the Chashmona'im had only taken control of the political leadership temporarily, until they cleaned up the mess created by the Hellenistic leaders.

Although Raban Gamliel (after appeasing Rabbi Yehoshua) was restored to his position, Rabbi Elazar ben Azarya retained his new elevated status as well. Rabbi Yitzchok Sorotskin, sh'lita (G'vuras Yitzchok, Chanukah 23; <http://tinyurl.com/dxqknkn>) discusses how Rabbi Elazar ben Azarya could remain Nasi if he wasn't from the Tribe of Yehuda, concluding that there is only an issue if the political leadership rested solely in the hands of someone who was not from the Tribe of Yehuda. Since Rabbi Elazar ben Azarya shared the leadership with Raban Gamliel, the prohibition didn't apply. Ramban says the same thing, suggesting that had Sha'ul not sinned he would have remained king over his own Tribe, or over the Tribes that came from Rachel; this would not be problematic since Dovid would have ruled over the other Tribes. Based on this, not only wasn't it a problem that the kings of the Northern Kingdom descended from Yosef (since the kings of the Southern Kingdom were from Yehuda), but it wouldn't have been a problem for the Chashmona'im to retain their position as rulers had they shared the leadership with someone who was from the Tribe of Yehuda.

Under his entry in Toldos Tanna'im v'Amorai'im for Shimon HaTzadik (<http://tinyurl.com/dx2w6jl>), Rabbi Aharon Hyman brings some strong arguments to support Doros HaRishonim's position that during the period of the Second Temple there were two different positions referred to as the "Kohain Gadol" (High Priest), one was the political leader and the other was

the religious leader. The religious leader served in the Temple, while the political leader answered to the ruler of the empire that controlled the Holy Land. Fearing that a true political leader might eventually rebel, the king of the Persian Empire couched the leadership position of his puppet ruler in the form of being a religious leader, with this position being referred to as the "High Priest." This "system" was continued by the Greeks, including Antiochus, so that there were Kohanim (or primarily Kohanim, as a non-Kohain could "purchase" this leadership position from a greedy ruler) who were the political leaders in Israel, while other Kohanim served in the Temple.

This arrangement explains many things, including how Matisyahu, as well as his father Yochanan, could be referred to as Kohain Gadol while Onias, Jason and Menelaus were taking turns (albeit not cordially) being the High Priest. (Since the latter three were Hellenists, it is likely that their position was referred to in Greek, while the title of the religious leader was referred to in Hebrew.) It also explains how the seal of the Kohain Gadol on the jug of oil found when the Temple was purified had religious significance if the High Priest was a Hellenist; this seal was from the religious leader, the Kohain Gadol, not the political leader, the High Priest. In addition, it explains how everyone knew that some of the Hellenistic High Priests had pillaged the Temple's treasuries in order to pay for their position; the political leader didn't have access to the Temple, and couldn't raid it quietly. More relevant to our discussion, it means that the concept of a Kohain being the political leader was not instituted by the Chashmona'im. Rather, it was the political situation that existed for a very long time, and was only continued by the Chashmona'im when they consolidated the two positions.

Combining these three aspects together, the picture that emerges is not one of power-hungry priests who violated the Biblical prohibition against anyone other than a descendant of Yehuda ruling over Israel. The status quo had been one where Kohanim were the political leaders, and the mess the Hellenistic High Priests had made necessitated taking over that position temporarily in order to clean it up. Had the Chashmona'im relinquished that leadership, or at least shared it with someone from the Tribe of Yehuda after things had been successfully straightened out, there would have been no problem. It was only because they never relinquished their position that they were punished. Rather than Chanukah celebrating a victory (and its associated miracles) that was tainted by an improper power-grab, we are celebrating a wondrous, miraculous victory that saved our religion. The "tainted" part didn't happen until much later, when what should have been a temporary situation was being made permanent. © 2012 Rabbi D. Kramer

