

A LESSON FROM THE PARASHA

A Testament to Forgetting

GUEST CONTRIBUTOR
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Yosef named the firstborn Menashe—
 “Because G-d has made me forget all
 of *amali*, my toil, and all of my father’s
 house.” (41:51)

At face value, Menashe’s name implies that
 without Hashem’s help, Yosef would have
 drowned in overwhelming depression. His
 own siblings had ripped him away from his
 father’s embrace and sold him to slavery.
 Only Hashem’s grace had allowed him to
 put this out of his mind and recover.

But the Midrash says Yosef had also forgotten
 something else.

“Yaakov arrived in Shalem.” (33:18) Said
 Rabbi Yochanan: *Shalem*, complete in
 his Torah learning. However, Yosef
 forgot [his learning], as it’s said, “G-d
 has made me forget all of *amali*, my
 toil...” Elsewhere (*Mishlei* 16:26) it says,
 “A man’s *amel*, labor, toils for him.”
 (*Bereishis Rabbah* 79:5)

That verse, and the word *amel*, are associated
 with learning Torah.

Rav Yitzchak bar Avudimi said, “A man’s
amel, labor, toils for him.’ When a man
 labors in Torah in one area, the Torah toils
 for him in another.” (Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 99b)

Why would Yosef be grateful that he’d
 forgotten his learning? (Had he, in fact,
 forgotten his learning?)

Rabbi Shimon Schwab, ז”ל, in *Ma’ayan Beis
 haSho’eiva*, finds an answer in the Talmud
 (*Bava Metzi’a* 85a), which talks about
 someone else who *wanted* to forget his Torah
 learning, believe it or not: Rabbi Zeira, who
 left Babylonia to study in Israel. He fasted
 100 days, in the hope that Hashem would
 help him forget his Babylonian Torah.

The Talmud explains (*Sanhedrin* 24a) that

Israeli learning and Babylonian learning
 were different. It likens Israeli scholars to
 olive oil; they were cordial in their study,
 and they would fatten each other with Torah.
 Babylonians, on the other hand, were bitter
 like olives. Rashi explains that they were
 unpleasant to each other as they learned, so
 their understanding was uncertain.

There are two ways that someone can relate
 to people who disagree with him. When a
 scholar hears an opposing argument, he
 may be willing to hear his counterpart
 out, consider his reasoning, and come to a
 rational conclusion; even if he doesn’t end
 up changing his mind, his understanding of
 his own position will now be much richer
 and well-grounded. On the other hand, a
 scholar may be completely uninterested in
 debate, to the point that he considers anyone
 who argues with him to be unreasonable—or
 worse.

This was the difference between Israeli
 students and Babylonians. This was why
 Rabbi Zeira fasted and prayed to forget
 the learning—the *approach* to, the *labor* of,
 learning—of his origins.

Yosef and his brothers had suffered from
 this “Babylonian Complex,” too. Each had
 considered the other to be dangerously
 misguided and beyond accommodation.
 Yosef had therefore made incriminations to
 their father. Yosef’s brothers had ousted him
 and torn their family apart.

Only after “forgetting” this approach was
 Yosef able to move on—to realize that his
 brothers had meant well and forgive them,
 and then to experience the miracle of a new
 understanding, like the learning of Israel.

This was something worth remembering,
 enshrined forever in the name of his
 firstborn son. 🕍

THE RABBI WAS ASKED ON THE PARASHA

THIS WEEK WITH
 RABBI DOVID SPETNER

This week’s *parasha*:

Q) The source of Menashe’s name
 is given by the *passuk* as thanks
 to Hashem that He had caused
 Yosef to forget his hardship and his
 family. I get the hardship part, but
 the family too? Why are we trying
 to forget our family? Didn’t the
 memory of his father prevent him
 from sinning?

A) The Alshich addresses this and
 also other questions often asked,
 which are, why didn’t Yosef let
 his father know he was alive, and
 how could Yosef cause his father
 so much pain. He writes that Yosef
 knew he was the means through
 which the Jewish people were
 destined to be exiled to Egypt. As
 such, he realized that were he to
 get in touch with his father, Yaakov
 would redeem him or bring him
 home. This took great fortitude
 and he thanked Hashem for
 helping him in this by allowing him
 to forget his home and family to
 some degree and focus exclusively
 on his relationship with Hashem.

Last week’s *parasha*:

Q) Whether a person has children
 or not and the lifespan of a person
 are in G-d’s hands. It sounds like

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THE RABBI WAS ASKED ON THE PARASHA

CONTINUED

Yaakov understood that his reward in the world to come was dependent on things out of his control, like if he would have twelve sons alive when he dies. How do we understand that?

A) I would suggest that losing his son would not be a cause for him to go to *gehinnom*, but rather an indication that Yaacov must have indeed sinned in the past. 🤖

Something always bugged you about the upcoming parasha (or last week's)? Ask! If you would like to submit a question on the parasha, please email it to parasha@cincykollel.org. Questions will be selected to address at the discretion of the Rabbi who is answering that week. Questions may be edited for brevity/clarity.



Chanukah
Mystery
Drive

A SHINING EXAMPLE

Yosef and Moshe had been living with partisans in the forest for several months now—ever since they had fled their town during a roundup. The only things left of their previous existence were the *tefillin* bags they carried with them. These were the only things they managed to take with them. The men around them were very coarse and ill-mannered and, beyond the significance of the *tefillin* alone, they felt that it provided a reminder to their calling to a higher purpose in life and that they should not begin to slip into the behavior of those around them. Early every morning they would put on their *tefillin* before the others were awake and, thankfully, no one ever bothered them about it. One morning they had woken early and were preparing to don their *tefillin* when they heard the sound of footsteps in the forest. Hastily waking and warning their compatriots, everyone began to flee out of fear that they had been found. After running several miles, they stopped, feeling that by now they had evaded anyone following them. While catching their breath, Yosef and Moshe suddenly realized something. Their *tefillin*! Their precious *tefillin* had been left behind! Looking at each other they knew they had to go back. Telling the other men what they were going to do, their mission was greeted by derision. “Are you out of your mind?” “We are not

A BA’AL HATURIM FOR YOU

The name given to Yosef by Pharaoh was *Tzafnas Pane’ach*. *Ba’al Haturim* brings an acronym that is hinted to in this name. It is *Tzaddik Pitpet Nefesh Taava, Potifar Ina Nafsho Chinam*. This means, “the righteous one fought his soul’s desire”—referring to his remaining firm against the advancements of Potifar’s wife, and “Potifar caused his soul to suffer without reason”—referring to his being thrown into prison. 🤖

Yaakov ben Asher, known as the *Ba’al Haturim*, was a scholar and biblical commentator who lived most of his life in Spain from approximately 1275 to approximately 1340. His classic commentary is printed in many editions of the *Chumash*.

waiting for you to come back before we leave!” they were told. They might lose their group forever! Still, they were not deterred and turned to go back. They ran the miles back to where they had started that morning and, Baruch Hashem, the *tefillin* were still there! Now turning to go back the other way, they raced back even faster. The thought of the group moving on without them now struck a chill through their insides. When they got close, they listened for any sounds. There were none. Creeping up to where they had left the others, they suddenly came upon one in a prone position with blood soaking his garments. He had been shot! Looking around they saw more and more of their group, all dead! They must have been found here! Yosef and Moshe began to cry, overwhelmed by how the *mitzvah* of *tefillin* had saved their lives! 🤖

THE FALSE MESSIAHS OF JEWISH HISTORY

RABBI NOSSON WIGGINS

ABRAHAM ABULAFIA (PART II)

Abulafia, inspired by his prophetic visions, sets out to Rome to meet Pope Nicholas III in what was purported to be the final battle between Yaakov and Eisav. Pope Nicholas III was well-informed of Abulafia’s motives, so prior to Abulafia’s arrival in Rome, Pope Nicholas set out for his retreat residence—a spectacular castle in Soriano nel Cimino, just north of Rome. The Pope left clear orders to arrest and execute Abulafia immediately upon his entrance to Rome. As Abulafia reached the city he was detained by the Pope’s security forces. While Abulafia sat in a prison cell in Rome, news of Pope Nicholas III’s sudden death spread around the capital city. Convinced that the Pope’s untimely death was tied to Abulafia’s arrest, the prison warden set Abulafia free.

Back in the free world, Abraham Abulafia attempted to resume his Messianic activities. But by this point the rabbis of Spain had already taken action. The undisputed leader of Spanish Jewry, Rabbi Shlomo ben Avraham Aderet (known by the acronym *Rashba*), had already penned a powerful letter which spoke of Abulafia’s fraudulence. Copies of letter were quickly dispatched from Rabbi Shlomo’s home in Barcelona to dozens of communities across western and central Europe, which brought an abrupt end to Abulafia’s efforts. Abulafia seems to have vanished into thin air, never to be seen or heard of again, thus ending yet another dreadful episode of Messianic fraud. 🤖