

A LESSON FROM THE PARASHA

Truth

In this week's *parasha* Yehuda found himself in a difficult predicament. He had sentenced his daughter-in-law to death for adultery and then realized that he was the cause of the problem. However overwhelmingly hard it was, he admitted this clearly and fearlessly. He should have been left in deep shame and should have been demoted from his position as judge. However, Hashem sent a voice from heaven to clarify that Yehuda was not to blame for what had happened. Rather, Hashem himself forced Yehuda into it (see Rashi).

We may ask a simple question. How did Yehuda merit such a spectacular ending to this story? Why did Yehuda deserve to have a voice come from heaven to justify him? Yehuda could have convinced everyone in some other way that what he did was not wrong. Yehuda could have even convinced them that he was fulfilling the mitzvah of *yibbum*, levirate marriage (see Ramban). How did he merit such a miraculous heavenly defense?

R' Yisroel Salanter was once giving a *shiur* to

ASSOCIATE SCHOLAR
 RABBI YITZCHAK ZE'EV HEIGH

great Torah scholars in Vilna. Many sages were highly impressed by his great wisdom and respected him greatly for it. However, others disagreed with him on his position in starting the *mussar* movement. They felt that R' Yisroel was threatening the way Hashem wanted Torah to be learned. They therefore would sometimes send a sharp-minded scholar to try to refute what R' Yisroel was saying. This "refuter" asked many questions which R' Yisroel answered well. This "refuter" then asked a strong question which seemed to disprove the entire idea that R' Yisroel wanted to posit. R' Yisroel thought for a little bit and then gave in, saying "you are right," stepped down from the podium, and walked back to his seat. Later on, R' Yisroel told his students that he could have avoided stepping down. When he heard the question, five answers came to his mind! They all sounded like good answers which would have been accepted by the questioner. However, to himself, they did not ring true. He therefore did not say them.

Admitting to the truth is not always easy, which was clearly the case in Yehuda's situation. However, the *Midrash* (*Yalkut Sh'moni, Parshas Vayeichi*) says that it brings great reward. Yehuda admitted publicly, and through that saved the lives of Tamar and her twin boys, Peretz and Zerach. With this he merited the miraculous salvation of his three descendants, Chananya, Mishael, and Azarya. We see from here how great admitting the truth is.

A strong question can be asked on this *Midrash*. What other choice did Yehuda have other than to admit? If he would have remained silent, he would have let three lives be lost. What was so great about his admission? You can answer simply that even so, it was still very hard. The embarrassment was overwhelming. It could be that Yehuda was rewarded for his great courage in admitting.

Rabbi Leib Chasman gives a nice answer to this question. When a person is in a situation in which it is hard to admit, he often tries to cover up the blame. He might try to fix any

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THE RABBI WAS ASKED ON THE PARASHA

THIS WEEK WITH
RABBI CHAIM HEINEMANN

Q) Why did Yaakov scold Yosef in regard to his dreams? it is only a dream! Isn't a dream out of a dreamer's control?

A) Rashi alludes to this question when he writes that Yaakov did this only to minimize the impact on the brothers and to placate them not to further hate Yosef because of his dreams. Yaakov was saying that it is all a fantasy and should not be taken seriously by the brothers. Just as your mother, Rochel, who is no longer alive, cannot bow down to you, etc.

One can suggest that Yaakov *Avinu* felt that Yosef should not have related his dreams to his brothers and thereby stirring up hatred. It is one thing to have a dream, but quite another to flaunt it and cause animosity.

The Ramban hints to a completely different approach. The *Gemara* (*Brochos 55b*) teaches us that a person dreams about things that he thought about during the day. Yaakov was not scolding for the dream, but for the egotistical thoughts during the daytime which were borne out through the dream.

They say over that the Chofetz Chaim had a dream that he was a wealthy man with a great estate and a lot of money. The next morning, the Chofetz Chaim fasted, making

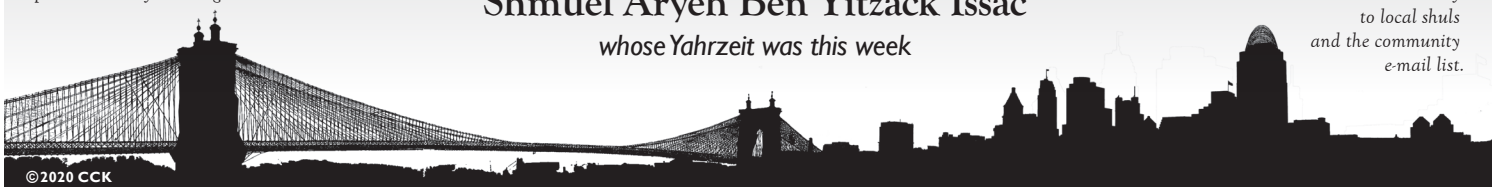
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THE RABBI WAS ASKED ON THE PARASHA

CONTINUED

a *Ta'anis Chalom*. Rabbi Shimon Schwab, zt"l, explained that to the Chofetz Chaim, being wealthy was a "bad dream."

Rav Pam, zt"l, gave a different interpretation to the fast. He suggested that the Chofetz Chaim was not fasting because he may have had wealth, as there is nothing wrong with being rich. Rather, since the dream was an indicator that the Chofetz Chaim may have wasted his time during the day with such thoughts, the fast was an act of *teshuvah* (repentance) for wasting time with such ideas. 🙏

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.

A SHINING EXAMPLE

A noted community organizer was approached to raise funds for a poor orphan girl who had recently become engaged. Among the people he approached was the Sadvorer Rav, R' Yisroel Sekula. The Rav gave the man \$800, but requested he come back saying that he would like to contribute more when other funds became available. In the meantime, the man heard that the bride for whom he was raising money had booked one of the more elegant event halls for her wedding. Very upset, the man went to confront the girl. "People are giving their hard-earned money for you to have a wedding and you want to spend it in such a way. I would not make a wedding for my own children in this place!" With that, he gave her the money he had raised so far and informed her he would not be raising any more. A week passed and he received a message to visit the Sadovner Rav. "Where have you been?" asked the Rav. "I wanted to contribute more to your cause." The man explained how he had ended his efforts in that endeavor and told the Rav why, expecting the Rav to agree with his decision. What happened next was not

A BA'AL HATURIM FOR YOU

On the words in the *parasha* where Yehuda saw Tamar and thought her a harlot, the words used by the Torah are "*Vayachsh'veha L'Zona*." *Ba'al HaTurim* brings that the other place in *Tanach* where the word "*L'zona*" is used is in *Yeshaya* (1:21), where the prophet laments "*Aicha Hay'sa L'zona*," "how is it that the city of Jerusalem has become as a harlot." The connection, explains *Ba'al Haturim*, is that just as Tamar at first was held as a disgrace and later was given honor, so too the city of Jerusalem will ultimately be glorified! 🙏

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*.

what he expected. The Rav began talking to him very sternly. "Think about how that girl feels for one second. Her entire life has been one uphill battle. She has no parents, she knows nothing but poverty and deprivation, and finally she is going to be married and you blame her for wanting one night where she doesn't have to play the shleppe?! I know that to you it seems wasteful, but there can be exceptions. Sometimes the right thing is to spend the extra money." The Rav handed the man \$2,000 and told him, "Here is another donation to give her. I hope you reconsider your decision." 🙏

A LESSON FROM THE PARASHA CONTINUED

mistakes without revealing his fault. Yehuda also was tempted to do this in order to protect the honor of Hashem and prevent a *chillul Hashem* (desecration of G-d's name). However, if he would have quietly dismissed Tamar for an undisclosed reason, this would

have left Tamar looking bad. In truth, she did not deserve this, so he declared the truth to all, loud and clear. That is why he was rewarded so greatly; he said the complete and unaltered truth in every and any situation! 🙏

THE FALSE MESSIAHS OF JEWISH HISTORY

RABBI NOSSON WIGGINS

ABRAHAM ABULAFIA (PART I)

The "Golden Era" of Spanish Jewry was tainted by a Messianic episode led by a fellow by the name of Abraham Abulafia of Saragossa (Zaragoza), the capital of the Aragon kingdom in northeast Spain. Born in 1240, Abulafia received a classic Torah education from his father, Shmuel. The young lad progressed in his studies until the age of eighteen, when his father passed away. Subsequently, Abulafia's mind became quite unsettled and after two years, in 1260, he began a soul-searching journey. He first travelled to Greece where he married. After a brief stint in *Eretz Yisrael*, Abulafia returned to Europe and found refuge in Italy. In Italy, after an in-depth study of Rambam's *Moreh Nevuchim*, he became enthralled by the study of *kabbala* and was soon an avid proponent of its study and dissemination. Abulafia immersed himself in the study of *kabbala* until he developed into a respected and noted scholar. Abulafia's popularity grew rapidly and he attracted many students and followers. Additionally, Abulafia, a prolific author and composed many works on a variety of *kabbalistic* subjects. Abulafia was widely known for his development of a radical approach to the interpretation of the saintly names of G-d and their combinations.

Shortly after his infatuation with mysticism began, and after practicing intense abstinence from worldly pleasure, Abraham Abulafia openly declared that he had received prophetic visions from G-d even while conscious. Claiming that he was instructed to reintroduce prophecy to the Jewish nation, Abulafia selected his most prestigious students as the first members of his academy of prophecy. Abulafia then "appointed" himself as Father of the Prophets, which quickly led him to consider himself the Messiah.

In 1280, in preparation for the ultimate redemption which he claimed was looming, Abulafia announced that he had been instructed to travel to Rome to meet with Pope Nicholas III in what would be the final showdown between Yaakov and Eisav. Prior to his departure, Abulafia authored a highly controversial work titled *Sefer Ha-Bris Ha-Chadasha*. 🙏