

A PARASHA THOUGHT

“Yosef HaTzadik”

The surname “*HaTzaddik*” conjures up images of a young man, all alone in a strange land, cut off from all that was holy, refusing the wily advances of the cunning mistress of the household.

And yet, the moniker “*HaTzaddik*” was not just applied willy-nilly throughout history to all those that did not succumb to their base urges. After all, we know that Noach was a big tzaddik – from his *keppelle* until his *feeselle*, even! – and it is not necessarily indicative that his righteousness was due to his refusal to engage in that specific immoral behavior.

Moreover, granted, “There are those who acquire their World in but one moment” (Talmud, *Avodah Zarah* 17a), and we surely cannot deny that Yosef saved his World by refusing to succumb with that one, significant instance of ironclad self-control, but is there any common thread that ran throughout his life that we could unspool so as to discover why he is forever stitched together with the title “*HaTzaddik*”?

“And Yosef said to his brothers, ‘Please come close to me,’ and they approached him. And he said, ‘I am Yosef your brother, of whom you sold to Egypt.’” (45:4)

Kli Yakar explains here that Yosef was not just reintroducing himself to his brothers. He was telling them that, since they were about to go into exile, they should follow his lead and be faithful to four principles that he, himself, had been strict about, and in that merit, they would eventually be redeemed.

One of these four rules was to be careful not to slander each other. They learned this particular code from this very moment, when Yosef asked his brothers to approach him in order to prove that he was, indeed, who he claimed to be. He accomplished this lesson by telling them a secret that no one in the world knew but them: namely that it was they who were responsible for his winding up in Egypt! And the

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reason he asked them to approach him closely was so that he could reveal this fact to the brothers sans Binyamin. For if he said it aloud, Binyamin – who was not with them at the time of the sale – would overhear his evidence, thus violating one of the four principles that he was attempting to convey! Indeed, Yosef was careful not to speak *lashon harah* (slander)!

In fact, he was so concerned with his brothers’ honor – they who had plotted to kill him! – that he placed their potential embarrassment, and possibly saved them from Yaakov’s wrath, over the anguish that both he and Yaakov had experienced during their years of separation. Many of the commentators are bothered; granted that it may not have been possible for Yosef to contact his father during his years of enslavement, but how did Yosef justify not contacting his father after becoming the Viceroy of Egypt, and not letting him know that he was alive and well as soon as he could? Certainly, he knew that Yaakov was in unbelievable agony every moment he thought that Yosef was dead!

And yet, as much as Yosef was aware of Yaakov’s anguish, he was also familiar with the adage (Talmud, *Brachos* 43b), “Better to cast oneself into a fiery furnace than to embarrass one’s fellow in public.” Ohr Hachaim (commenting on 45:26) makes this incredibly powerful argument – which will renew our appreciation to the fantastic depths of Yosef’s righteousness – that he literally sacrificed not just Yaakov’s mental well-being (he couldn’t prophesize for 22 years!), but his own for all of those long, dark decades, in sensitivity to his brothers’ probable shame (and possible destruction) before Yaakov! Even more astonishing, Ramban (commenting on verse 27) goes so far as to suggest that Yaakov went to his grave unaware that his sons had sold Yosef!

To take this to the extreme, since the Torah

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THE RABBI WAS ASKED ON THE PARASHA

THIS WEEK WITH
RABBI DOVID SPETNER

Q. In last week’s *parasha* when the brothers were brought into Yosef’s house, they were afraid that they were all being taken captive. They expressed this by saying “and to take us as slaves along with our donkeys.” It seems very strange that they should worry about the disposition of their donkeys when faced with the possibility of a lifetime of slavery. Why did they?

A. The Ramban explains that the brothers were worried that without their donkeys they would have no way of sending food back to their family. During a famine they would inevitably starve to death.

Q. When wagons are sent to carry Yaakov and his family down to Egypt, the idea is introduced by Paraoth. The Torah continues to emphasize that the wagons were sent “by the word of Paraoth.” What is so special about wagons that they need Paraoth’s involvement?

A. The Abarbanel suggests that in that time in history, wagons were a very strategic asset and particularly a weapon of war. The king was the

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THE RABBI WAS ASKED ON THE PARASHA

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military leader, and therefore all such systems were under the monarch's direct control. 🤖

Something always bugged you about the upcoming parasha (or last week's)? Ask! Submit a question on the parasha by Monday at noon by emailing 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.



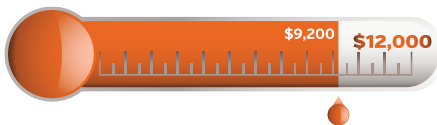
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HAFTORAH HAPPENINGS

RABBI YAAKOV MARCHUK

Parshas Vayigash starts with a showdown between two power houses – Yosef, the viceroy of Egypt, and Yehuda, the progenitor of the Davidic line and the King *Moshiach*. The *Midrash Rabbah* (93:2) says that the other *shevatim* (tribes) asked each other “what are we doing here as these two kings duel it out?” However, in short order these two sides come together when Yosef reveals his true identity.

In the Haftorah we find a similar theme. Hashem tells Yechezkel (37:15) to take a piece of wood and write on it “to Yehuda and his comrades,” and to take another piece and write on it “for Yosef, the wooden tablet of Ephraim and all the children of Israel, his comrades.” Radak explains that when Yerovom from the tribe of Ephraim created his own kingdom, all the tribes joined him except for Binyamin, who remained with Yehuda, creating a split within the Jewish people. However, Hashem foretells that eventually Yosef and Yehuda will join together.

Maharal (*Netzech Yisrael*) writes that the twelve tribes are compared to one person, and each one of these tribes adds a different unique ability, like the different body parts of a person which all have a specific function. Yehuda is the mind of the Jewish while Yosef is the heart. Sifsei Chaim (*Bereishis*, p. 476) writes that the mind is the leader of the body, directing the rest of the body while remaining free of its physical desires. That is the job of the king from the tribe of Yehuda. The heart, however, is a much more delicate organ, one that can lead a person to the greatest sins, as the Torah warns us “Do not stray after your heart.” However, individuals like Yosef were able to purify their hearts to the point where they no longer needed the mind to lead them in their spiritual pursuits. While this may be a higher level, it is not one for the masses. When the tribes split, the entire structure of the Jewish body fractured. There was no longer the direction from the “mind” for the entire Jewish nation, and this resulted in sin and ultimately the exile we find ourselves in. With the coming of *Moshiach*, Hashem tells Yechezkel that He will unite all the Jewish people under one banner and Yehuda will give a clear directive to all the Jewish people. 🤖

A PARASHA THOUGHT

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does not record any interaction between Yosef and Yaakov from the time that they were reunited until just before Yaakov's death, Ohr Hachaim posits that Yosef, who was so close to his father that he was almost considered to be an extension of him, chose to purposely avoid Yaakov until the very last moments of Yaakov's life, so that Yaakov would never find out that it was his own sons who had betrayed Yosef!

Can you imagine the longing which Yosef must have felt to spend as much time as he could with his beloved father during the final years that Yaakov was finally accessible to him, after being so cruelly torn away from him all those many years ago? Tragically, Yosef never again experienced any real time basking and growing in his father's presence, after that fateful day when he was a mere lad of seventeen... 🤖

TRACING OUR MINHAGIM

RABBI MORDECHAI BERINSTEIN

A common practice many have is to drink a shot of whiskey between eating fish and meat at the Shabbos meal. The reason for this may be that the Gemara (*Pesachim 76b*) cautions against consuming fish which had been roasted together with meat, considering it to be a cause of disease. Because of this, the Rama (*YD, I 16:3*) requires one to both eat and drink something between meat and fish. However, the Chachmas Adam omits the requirement to eat, and only records the necessity to drink between meat and fish.

This explains the need to drink between fish and meat, but why whiskey? Rav Nissim Karelitz (*Chut Shani, Shabbos, 4, p. 399*) offers an explanation as being that drinking water after eating fish was also considered to be hazardous (R' Akiva Eiger, *YD, I 16:5*, quoting *Tosfos*). Therefore, the custom developed to specifically drink whiskey after eating fish on Shabbos, because the whiskey's sharpness prevents it from being considered like water. 🤖

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