

INSIGHTS

Into The Weekly Parsha

בס"ד

DECEMBER 21, 2024

This week's Insights is dedicated in memory of Feige bas Meyer, Mrs. Fay Holzman. "May her Neshama have an Aliya!"

VOLUME 15, ISSUE 9

20 KISLEV

Based on the Torah of our Rosh HaYeshiva HaRav Yochanan Zweig

PARSHAS VAYEISHEV

For The Love of God

And they sent the Kesones Pasim (Yosef's coat), and they brought it to their father; and said, this have we found; do you recognize whether or not it is your son's coat? And he (Yaakov) recognized it and said, it is my son's coat; an evil beast has devoured him; Yosef is without doubt torn in pieces (37:32-33).

The brothers of Yosef, having sold him into slavery, devise a ruse to mislead their father and explain Yosef's "disappearance." They stripped him of the unique coat gifted to him by his father and dipped it into the blood of a male goat (which, according to Rashi 37:31, is similar to human blood). Yaakov recognizes the bloody coat and comes to the (mistaken) conclusion that Yosef has been attacked by a wild animal.

Rashi (37:33) informs us that Yaakov unknowingly made a prophetic statement. The "wild animal" that Yaakov assumes attacked his son actually refers to the wife of Potiphar who would later in the *parsha* (39:7-16) actually "attack" Yosef; literally grabbing him in an attempt to force him to be with her. Potiphar's wife is thus referred to as a "wild animal."

Yet, paradoxically, Rashi (39:1) explains that the Torah juxtaposes the story of Potiphar's wife with that of Tamar (the righteous daughter-in-law of Yehuda who deceives him into impregnating her) to teach us that both of these women acted *l'shem shomayim* – "for the sake of heaven." In other words, both righteous Tamar and the wife of Potiphar were trying to do the right thing for the sake of Hashem. If this is true, how can Potiphar's wife be called a wild animal?

Understanding why we do what we do – the motivations behind our actions – is a very complicated process. By way of example: Korach, who created a painful rift in Bnei Yisroel by contesting Moshe's authority, could have easily deluded

himself to believe that he was acting for the sake of Hashem. After all he had a multitude of "complaints" against Moshe and Aharon. In fact, Chazal teach us that Korach was a great man; he must have at least convinced *himself* that his cause was just. However, the Mishna uses Korach as the quintessential example of an argument that is not "for the sake of heaven." Rashi explains that Korach lacked self-understanding because he was driven not by the worthiness of his cause, but rather by jealousy.

But still, Chazal certify that Potiphar's wife **did in fact** "act for the sake of heaven." How is it possible to act with the right intention and yet still do the wrong thing? The Torah is teaching us an incredible life lesson, one that should reverberate in our mind whenever we are trying to figure out what is the right thing to do.

In every relationship, there comes a time when we want to do something for our beloved, even if we are unsure whether it's something they desire. We are so convinced that it is good for them that we neglect the essential foundation of the relationship – respect. In other words, if I do something with the right intention but against the wishes of the person I am supposedly doing it for, I may love them but I don't respect them. Real love is built first and foremost on respect; otherwise the love is unbalanced and self-centered.

Potiphar's wife was trying to do something for Hashem, but she neglected to ask the most important question; is this what



Miami Edition

Hashem really wants? Am I supposed to act in an adulterous manner and force Yosef into doing something that he feels is wrong? If she had honestly asked herself those questions she would have known that while her intentions were proper, the act was absolutely wrong and abusive. She is therefore likened to a "wild animal."

Analogous to this are the movements that decided to "improve" on the traditional Halachic Judaism. Without a doubt, when they decided to bring "innovation" to the synagogue, like incorporating music into the service, encouraging families to sit together, moving the service to Sunday, and permitting driving to shul on Shabbos, their intentions were, undoubtedly, "for the sake of heaven." Clearly, they felt that their "innovations" would enhance the synagogue experience and attendance.

But they forgot the critical question; is this really what Hashem wants? Is this what the synagogue experience was destined to be? Does Hashem want us to violate Shabbos or other Torah laws to improve the synagogue experience? Sadly, had they looked at the question honestly they would have had to answer "no." This lack of vision led to the disappearance of many Jewish communities and to the assimilation of many millions of Jews. We have to always remember that doing something out of love requires us to first ask, "What does our beloved want?"

Earning Entitlements

And he (Yosef) said to them, "Hear this dream which I have dreamed" [...] And his brothers said to him, "Shall you indeed reign over us, shall you indeed have dominion over us?" And they hated him even more for his dreams, and for his words (37:6-8).

The brothers' reaction to Yosef is difficult to understand. Why would their reaction to him be one of hatred? After all, there are only two options: 1) The dreams are true and Yosef will indeed rule over them and they owe him their loyalty and obedience or 2) His "dreams" are the rantings of a delusional person with a megalomaniacal complex and they should be making an appointment for him with the local psychiatrist while feeling sorry for him. In either case, their resentment of him hardly seems to be the appropriate reaction. How are we to understand their resentment?

Dreams are, in fact, a method by which Hashem reveals what events may come to pass. Similar to prophecy, dreams come in a sleep state and can predict the future. The difference between the two is that prophecies, particularly positive ones, will absolutely come to pass. Dreams merely describe a possibility of what **may** happen. The difference

between them is, as Rashi (37:10) points out, "There is no dream without some senseless matters in it." In other words, the way to tell the difference between a dream and a prophecy is that a dream contains something that is certainly not possible to happen.

Yosef presumed the dreams to be an indication of his leadership. Yaakov had already given him a royal tunic and his dreams, in his mind, confirmed that he was going to be their king. He therefore assumed an air of superiority over them. The brothers did in fact understand that the dreams were a portent of what might come to be; but they felt that Yosef had done nothing to deserve a leadership role. In their minds, Yosef had to earn the right to their fealty, and his ascension without any actual merit merely fueled their resentment. While it may be true that some day he could become their leader, they felt he needed to earn the title.

In our society we also make the same mistake. Students are often lauded for achievements earned not by hard work, but rather because they were gifted by Hashem with superior intellect. We often overlook the hardworking student who overcame many obstacles to achieve a high grade yet is all but ignored because his grade was half a point lower than first place. In fact, much of society's obsession with famous "stars" is an idolization of a God-given unique ability (e.g. natural beauty) not personal achievement. This is, obviously, a terrible mistake because it reinforces the artificial perception of what achievement is and also discourages the ethic of striving for personal growth.

The brothers' message to Yosef was that leadership isn't a divine right. While it is true you have to have the innate ability for leadership, it doesn't get bestowed upon you until you earn it.

Introducing Aishel - a Torah campus in the Appalachian Mountains

Looking for a retreat for large family gatherings or family *simchas*? Or perhaps a place to have meaningful "Shabbos of Chizuk" for schools and/or other community programming?

Aishel is only 90 minutes from Baltimore and features:

- Accommodations for up to 250 people with full dining room and an industrial kosher kitchen
- Two Batei Midrashim (complete with Sifrei Torah)
- Indoor heated gymnasium and indoor heated pool
- Outdoor ball fields, basketball courts, tennis courts, and hockey rink
- Outdoor covered pavilion complete with Bluetooth speakers to provide Ruach
- Specially designed smokeless fire pit that is perfect for a Kumsitz

Nearby Attractions:

- Horseback riding (five minutes away)
- Hershey Park (35 minutes away)
- Skiing (45 minutes - Camelback Resort is about 90 minutes away)
- And Much More!

Visit www.AishelPa.com or call our on-site property manager,

Yaakov Gershon Simblit 717-386-8106, for more information.



**4000 Alton Road
Miami Beach, FL 33140**

**To dedicate an issue of Insights please email:
info@talmudicu.edu
or contact us at: (305) 534-7050**



**Scan to subscribe and
receive Insights via email**