

A Taste of Text: Source based learning for Shabbat

This weekly sheet is brought to you by Rabbi Dr. Moshe Freedman of Northwood United Synagogue in conjunction with Shapell's/Darché Noam

PARSHAT MIKETZ

DVAR TORAH: YEHUDAH'S RETURN

In last week's parshah, the Torah opens the episode of Yehudah's marriage using a negative sounding verb: וירד יהודה מאת אחיו, Yehudah went down from his brothers. Thus, says Rashi, the Torah writes between the lines that, after the selling of Yosef, not only did Yehudah move away from the rest of the family, his status also dropped. He had been a leader and the brothers deposed him when they saw their father Yaakov's distress. "You told us to sell him," they said. "Had you told us to return him to his father we would have listened to you."

According to the Kli Yakar, not only was Yehudah "deposed" by the brothers, but he wanted to separate from them as well – Yehudah went down from his brothers. Rav Moshe Tzvi Neriah, of blessed memory, in Ner Lamaor, elaborates: They claimed that as leader he should have directed them to return Yosef, but, his counter-claim was that they did not look to him as a leader when they condemned Yosef to death. They didn't consult with him. Only later during their meal were they responsive to his suggestion to minimize the damage and sell Yosef into slavery. The brothers, though, suspected he knew they were right but wasn't willing to admit it.

We are therefore surprised in this week's parshah to see Yehudah together with the rest of the family and take a central leadership role in Miketz, Vayigash, and Vayechi. How and when and why did that happen?

The transition, says Rav Neriah, took place through two words: צדקה ממני – "She (Tamar) is right. (The pregnancy) is from me." When Yehudah publically admitted Tamar's innocence, taking responsibility for both his action (Tamar's pregnancy) and inaction (not giving over his son Shelah to Tamar like he was supposed to), he revealed two of the characters of great leaders: responsibility and integrity. He admits the truth even when it is uncomfortable, and he takes responsibility.

With those two words, any doubts the brothers might have voiced about Yehudah's appropriateness as a leader were silenced.

He is now able to emerge as one of the heroic leaders of the book of Bereishit. He takes responsibility for Binyamin, enabling Yaakov to send the brothers back to Egypt for food. He takes spiritual responsibility for Binyamin's seizure: "God has found the sin of your servants" (Bereishit 44:16). It is his speech that forces Yosef to reveal himself to the brothers, leading to the reunity of Bnei Yisrael. And it is he Yaakov sends ahead to prepare the way – along with Yosef – for the Egyptian exile (Bereishit 46:28).

It is Yehudah who is blessed by Yaakov with eternal leadership of the Jewish people: "The staff of leadership will not leave the tribe of Yehudah" (Bereishit 49:10). Yehudah becomes the ancestor of the Mashiach through Peretz, one of the twins whose birth was enabled by those two words – צדקה ממני – by not executing Tamar, their pregnant mother. Their descendant, משיח בן דוד, is the ultimate leader, God's messenger to restore unity to the people of Israel, and to guide all of Israel and all of the world to serve Hashem together – speedily in our days.

SOURCE GUIDE: HOLY CHUTZPAH

This source guide is based on a passage in the Shem Mishmuel about Chanukah (Miketz 5674). He begins by trying to understand the reason behind one of the well-known teachings about Chanukah:

<p>1. Shem Mishmuel Miketz 5674 Wicks and oils that the Sages said we do not light with on Shabbat can be used to light Chanukah candles. The mystics said that this refers to souls that are not able to be elevated even on Shabbat. They nevertheless have the ability to be elevated on Chanukah.</p>	<p>שם משמואל מקץ תרע"ד פתילות ושמנים שאמרו חכמים אין מדליקין בהם בשבת מדליקין בהם בחנוכה. ודורשי רשימות אמרו שקאי על הנפשות שאין להם עלי' ותיקון בשבת יש להם עלי' ותיקון בחנוכה.</p>
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This idea appears in the Meor Einayim (Parshat Miketz, Drush LeChanukah).

<p>2. Shem Mishmuel Miketz 5674 One can suggest a reason for this: Whereas it is well known that the Shabbat a person merits corresponds to the amount of preparation done during the days of the week, as our Sages hinted, "One who troubles himself on Erev Shabbat (preparing for Shabbat on Friday) will eat on Shabbat" (Avodah Zarah 3a), [this is not the case for Chanukah].</p>	<p>שם משמואל מקץ תרע"ד יש לומר הטעם, היות ידוע שאדם זוכה לשבת לפי מסת הכנתו בימות החול כמו שרמזו ז"ל (ע"ז ג'). מי שטרה בע"ש יאכל בשבת.</p>
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The Exile of Yavan

He goes on to explain why these souls can be elevated on Chanukah even though they cannot on Shabbat. He opens by explaining the special character of the Greeks, according to the book of Daniel, and how we were victorious over them.

<p>3. Shem Mishmuel Miketz 5674 For the key character trait of the Greeks was brazenness. This is how Daniel saw them, as a leopard, characterized by brazenness. This is as our Sages said, "Be as brazen as a leopard" (Avot 5:20).</p>	<p>שם משמואל מקץ תרע"ד והנה מדת היונים היא עזות כמו שראה דניאל מלכות יון בדמות נמר שיש בו מדת העזות, כמו שאמרו ז"ל (אבות פ"ה) הוי עז כנמר.</p>
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Here is that reference to Daniel's vision:

<p>4. Daniel 7:3,6 3) And four huge beasts were coming up out of the sea, each one different from the other ... 6) After this, I saw, and behold another one, like a leopard, and it had four wings of a bird on its back, and the beast had four heads, and dominion was given it.</p>	<p>דניאל ז:ג, ו ג) וארבע חיות רברבן סלקן מן ימא שנין דא מן דא ... ו) באתר דנה חנה הנית וארו אחרו כנמר ולה גפין ארבע די עוף על גביה א} גבהא {ארבעה ראשין לחיותא ושלטן יהיב לה:.</p>
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Brashness, brazenness – chutzpah – is usually considered negative:

<p>5. Pirkei Avot 5:20 Yehudah son of Teima says ... The brazen: to Gehinnom, and the bashful: to the Garden of Eden.</p>	<p>משנה אבות ה:כ יהודה בן תימא אומר ... עז פנים לגיהנם, ובשט פנים לגן עדן.</p>
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<p>6. Nedarim 20 We learn in a Baraita: “So that His fear should be upon your face” (Shemot 20:17) – this refers to bashfulness. “So that you should not sin” – this teaches us that bashfulness leads to fear of sin. Based on this they said, “A good sign about a person is that he is bashful.” Others say that any man who gets embarrassed does not sin easily. And one who has no shame – it is certain that his ancestors did not stand on Mount Sinai.</p>	<p>נדריים כ. תניא: “בעבור תהיה יראתו על פניכם” – זו בושה. “לבלתי תחטאו” – מלמד שהבושה מביאה לידי יראת חטא. מיכן אמרו סימן יפה באדם שהוא ביישן. אחרים אומרים כל אדם המתבייש לא במהרה הוא חוטא, ומי שאין לו בושת פנים בידוע שלא עמדו אבותיו על הר סיני.</p>
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We also pray every day (at the close of the morning blessings):

<p>7. Siddur – Morning Blessings May it be Your will, Hashem our God and the God of our fathers that you save us today and every day from brazen people and from brazenness ...</p>	<p>סידור – ברכות השחר יהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלקינו ואלקי אבותינו שתצילנו היום ובכל יום מעזי פנים ומעזות פנים...</p>
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<p>8. Shem Mishmuel Miketz 5674 They (the Greeks) introduced the trait of chutzpah and brazenness into Israel.</p>	<p>שם משמואל מקץ תרע"ד והם הכניסו מדת החוצפה והעזות בישראל.</p>
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This describes the inner side of the Greek exile (and might specifically refer to the audacity of the Mityavnim, the Hellenized Jews).

Victory Over Yavan

<p>9. Shem Mishmuel Miketz 5674 When the Kingdom of the Chashmonaim were victorious and overcame the Greeks, the Chashmonaim “took from them” their brazenness for kedushah, for holiness.</p>	<p>שם משמואל מקץ תרע"ד וכשגברו מלכות בית חשמונאי ונצחו לקחו מהם מדת העזות להקדושה.</p>
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It was the Chashmonaim’s brazenness – taking on the powerful Greek army, “the few against the many, the weak against the mighty” – that led them to victory (drashah by Harav Kalman Shapira, שליט"א). Their victory enabled us to use brazenness for holiness, to be as strong as a leopard for the service of God.

<p>10. Pirkei Avot 5:20 Yehudah son of Teima says: Be as brazen as a leopard, as light as an eagle, run like a deer, and be as mighty as a lion to do the will of your Father in Heaven.</p>	<p>משנה אבות ה:כ (כ) ?הי'דה בן תימא אומר, הוי עז פנמר, וקל פנשור, ורץ פצבי, וגבור פארי לעשות רצון אביך שבשמים.</p>
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[See Likutei Moharan (1:147), where Rav Nachman of Breslov, זצ"ל, develops the concept of עזות וקדושה, holy chutzpah.] It is Chanukah’s special connection with holy chutzpah, says the Shem Mishmuel, that enables even the lowest to gain elevation on Chanukah:

<p>11. Shem Mishmuel Miketz 5674 This is why even a person who is not worthy can have the nerve, the brazenness, to approach holiness and believe in himself, that from now on he will hold on to his level and no longer fall. Therefore it is understood why even the souls who, because they are unprepared, cannot be elevated through Shabbat, can still become elevated on Chanukah. That it is the time for even the unprepared to come close.</p>	<p>שם משמואל מקץ תרע"ד והיינו שהאדם אף שאינו כדאי ואינו ראוי ירהיב עוז בנפשו לגשת אל הקודש ולהאמין בעצמו שמעתה יחזיק מעמד ולא יפול עוד בנופלים. וע"כ מובן שהנפשות שאין להם עלי' בשבת מפאת העדר הכנה קודמת, יכולה להיות להם עלי' בחנוכה, שאז הוא זמן התקרבות שלא לפי מסת ההכנה.</p>
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CAUSE AND EFFECT, BY RABBI YITZCHAK HIRSHFELD

At the beginning of Parshat Miketz we read that Pharaoh dreams two strange dreams, and then Yosef is released from prison. It would seem that Pharaoh's dream is the cause, and Yosef's release – the result. The Midrash teaches us that this is not so. It was because the time for the end of Yosef's ordeal had come that Pharaoh dreamt his dreams. God's decree, His Will, is the cause, the means towards the realization of His Will, the result.

Two people run a race and one of them wins. Which one? Clearly, it is the one who ran more swiftly. So what could Kohelet possibly mean when he teaches (Kohelet 9:11), **לֹא לְקַלִּים הַמְרוּץ**, the race is not to the swift? Here, once again, cause and effect are reversed. God wanted him to win the race, so He granted him the gift of swiftness.

The Chashmonaim rose up against their Greek oppressors. Their mesirut nefesh, their dedication and self-sacrifice were instrumental in their victory. Following the above reasoning we should say that because Hashem wanted the Greek exile to end he imbued them with the mesirut nefesh needed to implement His Divine Will. But can we say this? Does this not contradict the principle of free will?

Answers Or Gedalyahu: Yes, we can say it, and no, it does not contradict free will. God decreed the end of darkness and He made His Presence felt in the world so as to afford the Jewish people a sense of spiritual awakening. This was necessary, but by no means sufficient. The Chashmonaim needed to make themselves into kelim, vessels, in which this Divine Presence could rest. These vessels were the product of their self-sacrifice for Torah and the Divine service. Without them, the implementation of the Divine decree would have needed to be postponed until the vessels were prepared.

The darkness of our present exile will also come to an end when God decrees it, but only when we – me, you, our friends and families – will agree to be the Chashmonaim of our day to be those vessels into which Hashem's spirit of awakening and redemption will be poured. It will be through our Torah and our mesirut nefesh that we will witness the miracles, bayamim hamem bazman hazeh.

This issue is dedicated in memory of
Jacob Joshua Shapell
יעקב יהושע בן יצחק ז"ל

*This publication is compiled by the staff and Rabbonim at **Shapells/Yeshivat Darché Noam** for men and **Midreshet Rachel v'Chaya Seminary** for women in Jerusalem. Find out more about the **married couples' programme** and the **Pathways Israel** and **Pathways Plus** programmes offered at www.darchenoam.org +972-2-651-1178, 5 Beit Hakerem Street, Jerusalem.*

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