



## The Test of Yosef: Aveirah Leshem Shamayim

By Dani Sturm, 12th Grade

In the beginning of Parshas Vayeishev, we find Yaakov's reaction to Yosef's dream. The dream consisted of the sun, moon, and eleven stars bowing down to Yosef. Yaakov Avinu made light of the dream so that all of the other Shevatim wouldn't be jealous and angry with Yosef. There is one obvious problem with this dream. It would be impossible for Rachel to represent the moon since she had already passed away. Yaakov believed that the dream would come true except for this one detail. Yaakov explained this mistake by saying that some dreams aren't completely correct. However, Rashi says that Yaakov is the one who made the mistake of not realizing that the moon really represented Bilhah, Yosef's stepmother, because Chazal tell us that one who raises an orphan is considered as if they had given birth to that child. Therefore, Yaakov Avinu's explanation of the moon being a mistake is very difficult to understand.

Many years later, when Yosef was in Mitzrayim, Yosef overcame the temptation of being with Potifar's wife. This test was critical for Bnei Yisroel's ability to maintain a level of Kedusha in Mitzrayim. Chazal reveal that because of Yosef's self-control, all the men of Bnei Yisroel retained a certain level of holiness during the years spent as slaves in Mitzrayim.

Rashi gives an additional thought into this story of Yosef. Rashi explains that Potifar's wife's desire to be with Yosef was actually L'shem Shamayim. Po-

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## Midah K'neged Midah

By Moshe Crane, 11th Grade

“Yaakov rented his garments and placed sackcloth on his loins. He mourned his son for many days.” (Genesis 37:34)

Rashi comments on the selective word choice of “Many days”. He says, that there were 22 years from the time Yosef left Yaakov until Yaakov went down to Egypt and saw Yosef again. These 22 years correspond to the 22 years that Yaakov did not fulfill the mitzvah of kibud av v'em. Rashi then points out that Yaakov also had remained away from his parents for 22 years, when he fled to Lavan's house. In other words, just like Yaakov caused distress to Yitzchak and Rivka with his absence, so to Yaakov is punished with losing Yosef for a corresponding amount of 22 years.

But, why did the pasuk have to include "many days"? One could have made the calculation and figured out that Yaakov was not reunited with Yosef for 22 years? Rashi comes to teach us that the addition of "many days" were specifically included to draw our attention. The "many days" were meant to spark a contrast in our mind with the similar case, but opposite word choice. When Yaakov was fleeing from Eisav, his mother told him to flee to Lavan, her brother, for a "few days"(Genesis 27:44). And Yaakov himself felt the years he worked for Lavan were just

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### Torah Teasers

By Rabbi Moshe Erlbaum, 9th Grade Rebbe

### Parshat Vayeshev Questions

1. Aside from the *kutonet* (tunic) that Yaakov made for Yosef, where else in the Torah is a *kutonet* fashioned? Who in Nach wore a *kutonet passim*?
2. In this parsha, the brothers took Yosef out of a *bor* (pit). Where else is Yosef taken out of a *bor*?
3. Where in this parsha do people handle a goat? (2 answers)
4. Where in this parsha is bread mentioned? (2 answers)
5. Which two different times in this parsha is clothing removed from the same person?
6. In this parsha, in what context does someone tear his clothing? (2 answers) Where else in the book of Genesis do people tear their clothing?

### Answers

1. *Kutonet* is one of the garments of the *kohen* priest (Exodus 28:4). Tamar, the daughter of King David, wore a *kutonet passim* (2-Shmuel 13:19).
2. When Yosef is needed to interpret the dreams of Pharaoh, he is taken out of a *bor* - pit or dungeon (Genesis 41:14).
3. The brothers slaughter a goat into which they dip Yosef's tunic (Genesis 37:31). Yehudah sends a goat to Tamar as payment (Genesis 38:20).
4. After the brothers throw Yosef into the pit, they sit down to eat bread (Genesis 37:25). The Torah states that Potiphar entrusted Yosef with all that was in his household - "except for the bread which he eats" (Genesis 39:6, where Rashi explains that "bread" refers to Potiphar's wife).
5. The brothers remove Yosef's tunic (Genesis 37:23). Potiphar's wife pulls off Yosef's garment when she wishes to lie with him (Genesis 39:12).
6. Reuven tears his clothing when discovering that Yosef is no longer in the pit (Genesis 37:29). Yaakov tears his clothing when he thinks that Yosef was killed (Genesis 37:34). All the brothers tear their clothing when a goblet is found in the sack of Benjamin (Genesis 44:13).



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**First Aliyah:** Yaakov and his family settle in Canaan. Yaakov favored Yosef and he made for him a special coat. Yosef's brothers were jealous so when Yosef told his brothers the two dreams — one of stalks in the field and one of the stars in the sky — in which they bowed down to him, their jealousy increased.

**Second Aliyah:** Yaakov sent Yosef to check on his brothers and the flocks they were shepherding. When Yosef's brothers saw him approaching they plotted to kill him. Reuven tried to save Yosef by suggesting they throw him into a pit instead. Unbeknownst to his brothers, Reuven planned to later rescue Yosef and take him out of the pit.

**Third Aliyah:** The Shevatim followed Reuven's plan, stripping Yosef of his coat and throwing him in a pit. Yehudah then advised his brothers to sell Yosef to travelers. Yosef was then sold as a slave from the travelers to Potiphar, Pharaoh's chief butcher. Back in Canaan the brothers deceived their father by dipping Yosef's robe in blood and showing it to him, which made it seem that Yosef was killed by a beast.

**Fourth Aliyah:** Meanwhile, Yehudah married and had three sons: Er, Onan, and Shelah. After marrying a woman named Tamar, Er soon died. Yehudah then gave her Onan to be her new husband, but he had the same fate as his brother. Yehudah then hesitated to give Shelah to marry Tamar but Tamar was adamant about marrying into this family. After Yehudah's wife died he embarked on a business trip. Tamar dressed herself like a prostitute and sat by the side of the road. Yehudah, not recognizing her, was intimate with her and she became pregnant. A few months later, when her pregnancy became evident, Yehudah ordered her executed for harlotry. When she was about to be killed she showed Yehudah some of his belongings he had left by her as collateral. Yehudah then admitted that he was the father, Tamar was spared, and she gave birth to twin sons, Zerach and Peretz.

**Fifth Aliyah:** In Egypt Yosef had become quite successful. G-d was with him. Because of Yosef's success, Potiphar put Yosef in charge of his entire household.

**Sixth Aliyah:** Yosef was exceedingly handsome and Potiphar's wife was attracted to him. After trying to make advances on Yosef, which he resisted, she libelously told her husband that Yosef was making advances on her. Potiphar had Yosef thrown in prison. Hashem was still with Yosef and Yosef was put in charge of all the prisoners.

**Seventh Aliyah:** Two of Pharaoh's officers, his butler and baker, angered the king and were put in prison. One night, they both had odd dreams, and Yosef interpreted them. Yosef told the butler that he'd soon be released and restored to Pharaoh's service. The baker was told by Yosef that he would soon be hung. Yosef pleaded with the butler to mention him to Pharaoh, and ask for his release. Yosef's interpretations came true three days later and the butler was released, but he forgot about Yosef.



# SPARKS OF CHASSIDUS



*With Akiva  
Magder*

As the zman of Chanukah is rapidly approaching, I figured it would be worthwhile to discuss a little bit about the light of the menorah. It is truly fascinating that of all the things that the Chashmonaim could have done, they ran to light the menorah. Why is this? Why didn't they run to the mizbeach and offer up a korban? Furthermore, what is so special about the light of Chanukah that it literally defines the whole holiday? To begin to understand a little bit about Chanukah, we must first understand what the ohr- the light of Chanukah is all about. The Sefarim Hakedoshim point out that on Chanukah we light 36 lights which correspond to the 36 hours the ohr haganuz was in this world. The ohr haganuz is a special light that comes directly from Hashem that was present when Hashem created the world. Hashem saw that this light would be abused by the reshaim, therefore He hid the light, hence the name haganuz, hidden. Where did He hide this light? He hid it in the Torah. The Bnei Yissaschar quotes from Rav Pinchas Koritzer, saying that the 36 lights also correspond to 36 mesechtos in shas. Through understanding these few points we can now address the above questions. Being that the galus of Yavan represents darkness, when the Chashmonaim got to the Beis Hamikdash they lit the Menorah to bring light into the darkness. The menorah also represents Torah shel-baal peh, so the Chashmonaim ran to light the Torah shel-baal peh back on fire. This action demonstrat-

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*(Moah Crane- Continued from page 1)*

a "few days"(Genesis 29:20). These "few days" were paid back as "many days" because Yaakov failed to fulfill the mitzvah of kibud av v'em during those years.

One might wonder how is that a fair punishment. Yaakov was instructed to leave his parents, and they knew exactly where he was. On the other hand, Yaakov did not know that Yosef went down to Egypt, and he did not know if Yosef was even alive! How are those cases even comparable?

By looking closely at the cause behind Yaakov's fleeing we can see how these cases are, in fact, comparable. When Rivka discovered that Yitzchak intended to bless Eisav, she convinced Yaakov to deceive Yitzchak and receive the blessing instead of Eisav. Yaakov was torn between listening to his mother and deceiving his father or not listening to her and not deceiving his father. Yaakov chose to listen to his mother and deceive his father. However, the Gemara in Kiddushin says regarding kibud av v'em that when both our parents command us of different things, both the mother and the child are commanded to honor the father? So in this case Yaakov should have honored his father and not gone through with deceiving Yitzchak? We can use this question to answer our original question, as this is what Rashi means when he says Yaakov did not fulfill the mitzvah of kibud av v'em. Meaning, had Yaakov refused to listen to Rivka, he would have been honoring both of them, since the mother is obligated to honor the child's father.

Had Yaakov done that he never would have had to flee his brother Eisav and stay away from his parents those 22 years. Thus, the Middah K'neged Middah wasn't only that the 22 years of Yosef's absence was for 22 years of Yaakov's absence. There was also a 'deception for deception' aspect. Yaakov had deceived his father and, in turn, his sons deceived him, by letting him think a wild animal had killed Yosef. One cannot escape the consequences of one's actions.



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## *The Significance of Yaakov's Image in the Window*

*By: Zachary Rosenberg, 10th Grade*

In this week's Parsha, Yosef is sent away by his brothers to Egypt. In Egypt, Yosef becomes the overseer of the house of Potiphar. One day, when Yosef and Potiphar's wife were found alone, she tried to seduce Yosef. However, Yosef runs out of the house and resists the temptation to have relations with her.

The Gemara in Mesechet Sotah on Daf 36b states: "at that moment the image of Yaakov came to Yosef through the window and said to him, 'Yosef, your brothers will all have their names written on the stones of the Ephod, and yours among theirs. Do you want to have your name taken off and instead you will be known as someone associated with prostitutes?'"

Yosef, a 17-year-old boy who was separated from his family, was immersed in the culture and sensuality of Egypt. Yosef's Yetzer Hara was so strong and he was so close to committing this sin. How was he able to withstand this temptation and control his urges? How was he saved from almost having his name shamed forever? Yosef was able to overcome his difficulties due to the fear of losing his connection to his father and dishonoring him.

Rav Yaakov Kamenetzky derives an important lesson about parenting from this occurrence. The image of his father was only able to help Yosef because he had a high level of respect for his father and a special relationship with him. That made it impossible for Yosef to commit this sin and let his father down. Children nowadays should also be raised to have a certain respect and prestige for their parents. Parents should uphold a sense of credibility and encourage love and admiration. Children should want to follow in their parents' footsteps and keep the same values as their parents. In this way, we can prevent children from acting in ways that would harm their family's reputation and violate their parents' expectations. In this way, we could be spiritual, free of sin, and closer to Hashem, just like our ancestors were.

*(SOG- Continued from page 8)*

were met only with raised eyebrows. Clearly, no one sympathized enough with the urgency of a coachman's apprentice who wished to meet their rabbi. When he finally managed to locate the home, Rabbi Kluger invited him inside. Yosef Dov's thoughts came spilling out, and an excited conversation revolving around a difficult Talmudic topic ensued. Rabbi Kluger soon saw that the young man before him was no simple apprentice, but a brilliant prodigy. He invited Yosef Dov to remain as his guest and also provided him with a fresh change of clothes. On Shabbat, Rabbi Kluger tried to convince his guest to address the crowd of synagogue-goers, but Yosef Dov demurred. He wasn't much of a speaker. Rabbi Kluger, however, insisted, and Yosef Dov acquiesced. His erudite and engaging talk created a favorable impression; a throng lined up to shake his hand in admiration when services were over. One man approached with tears in his eyes and had trouble meeting Yosef Dov's eyes. "Please, forgive me," muttered the wagon driver from Volozhin. "I had no idea who you were, and I request forgiveness for wronging you." "There is no need for forgiveness," said Yosef Dov warmly. "You were right, after all. It's hard to imagine me being a wagon driver!" This story is a perfect fit for this shabbos as we begin the story of Yosef. In a few weeks, Yosef and his brothers will reunite in Mitzraim. Yosef's brothers had no idea who they were dealing with, and as a result, they treated Yosef differently. Similarly, in this story, Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik was just seen as a simple apprentice in the eyes of the wagon driver. From this story we learn that we must treat everybody with respect, especially the people that we don't know yet; we don't always know who we're dealing with.

Adapted from Chabad.org

*(Sparks of Cassidus- Continued from page 4)*

ed that as much as the Greeks tried to diminish the light of the Torah, the Menorah will constantly fight and win the battle. Therefore, when each and every one of us light these 36 lights, we are not just putting fire to a wick, we are truly lighting the choshech, the darkness of yavan and galus. This illumination also brilliantly lights up the 36 mesechtos that are buried inside each person through which one can experience the ohr haganuz. The lighting of the Chanukah candles are vehicles in which we can pull that ohr haganuz out and light up the world. May we use this opportunity to bring light to all and hopefully through the revelation of the ohr haganuz, Hashem will bring the ohr haganuz in its full form, b'meirah v'yameinu!!



## The Extended Mourning

By: Moti Schreck, 9th Grade

The deception has taken place. Yosef's brothers have sold him into slavery and they have brought his special coat to Yaakov, after dipping it in blood. They tell Yaakov- "identify this please, is this your son's coat or not?" Sure enough, Yaakov puts two and two together and comes to the realization Yosef is dead.

The pasuk goes out of its way to describe how Yaakov refused to be consoled no matter what the brothers said. However, we know that normally one should allow himself to be consoled after a certain amount of time. One is not supposed to be in a state of mourning forever. So why did Yaakov refuse to be consoled? The Medrash explains that one will only feel consolation when the person whom they are mourning is truly dead. In Yosef's case, however, he never died. Yaakov still harbored a slight, lingering hope that Yosef could still be alive.

Yet this is still difficult to understand. After all, Yaakov saw the bloody coat with his own eyes and sure enough, Yosef did not return. Yaakov himself said, "a wild beast has devoured him. Yosef has been torn." How is it possible that Yaakov could continue on with some small hope that Yosef is alive with all this evidence and after he himself declared Yosef dead?

Rabbi Jonathon Sacks quoted the following explanation. Really, the entire interaction between Yosef's brothers and Yaakov was based on halachic monetary law. Yosef's brothers had a din of a "shomer" (guardian) to Yosef and normally would have been held accountable for Yosef's disappearance. However, the Torah tells us that damage to a shomer's property can happen in a way that the shomer is not responsible. One of these cases listed in the pasuk is if the item was torn up by an animal. Yosef's brothers showed Yaakov the torn up bloody coat to get themselves off the hook. It is for this reason that the brothers phrase their words in a slightly strange wording of "identify this coat". They were telling Yaakov to examine their evidence and identify that Yosef was torn up by an animal, and pasken that they are not responsible for his death. Once Yaakov saw the coat, he needed to pasken that the brothers were patur and declared "tarof

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*(Dani Sturm- Continued from page 1)*

Potifar's wife figured out from the pattern of the stars that she and Yosef were going to have a child together. However, she did not understand if this child would come from her or from her daughter.

Yosef knew that Potifar's wife understood that a great child would come from her family. Now, Yosef's Yetzer Harah was able to present this as a Mitzvah to be with Potifar. Still, the obvious question is, why didn't Potifar's wife just offer her daughter to Yosef? The answer is that she didn't have any children. She only had a step-daughter named Usnas. Usnas was the daughter of Shechem and Dina, and she was brought to Mitzrayim as a baby by a Malach. Since Potifar didn't have children, Usnas was brought up in their home. Had Yosef known that a stepdaughter is considered as a daughter as Chazal say, then this test wouldn't have been so difficult. He would have not had the evil inclination to be with Potifar's wife, and he would've known that her step-daughter is really the one.

Now we can understand why Yaakov didn't realize that Bilhah, the step-mother, was representing the moon. Yaakov was not able to know that a stepmother is considered as a mother, since everything Yaakov knew was taught to Yosef. Had Yaakov knew this, Yosef would have known that the children that he was destined to have would come from Usnas, who was a stepdaughter. This would have weakened the hard test significantly, and Bnei Yisroel would not have gained the tremendous zechus of Yosef Hatzaddik's restraint.

*(Adapted from Rabbi Yehuda Horowitz)*

(10 MH- Continued from page 3)

Rav Chaim Freedlander quotes from the Ponovitch Rav, that the basis is that in the times of Chanukah there was a decree that we couldn't learn Torah. After the war, the children weren't used to learning Torah, so the children were bribed with money and gifts in order to learn. In memory we continue to bribe our children on Chanukah.

• A fifth possible reason is quoted in the sefer Binas Yisrael that suggests that the amount of money you spend on yom tov, is a direct correlation with how much chavivus for that yom tov you have. Chanukah really isn't such an expensive holiday, so in order that it should cost more money, so that we have more chavivus for Chanukah, we have gifts and gelt.

• A sixth possible approach is that it came from the tradition of victory in war. It was traditional that winners of the war would distribute loot among the soldiers and the poor people. Distributing gelt is a way of commemorating the victory of the war.

• A seventh reason is that in the book of the Maccabees, when the Jews finally made peace, Antiochos the second allowed them to mint their own coins. Archaeological discoveries show that these coins had a very low value and had a lily on the back which represented Jerusalem. Rabbi Josh Flug suggests that maybe these coins were distributed to kids in the early years of celebrating Chanukah because it was a way to remember the amazing victory of the war. Maybe this practice of giving coins moved on to giving Chanukah gelt in commemoration of the victory.

• These 7 possibilities explain the reason of giving Chanukah gelt, and some of them explain the reason for giving gifts as well. We generally assume that giving gifts is not chukkas akum and is accepted throughout and makes the kids excited about the yom tov.

(Moti Schreck- Continued from page 6)

toraf Yosef'; that sure enough, Yosef was killed by an animal and the brothers are not accountable. [Interestingly, the pasuk describing the laws of a shomer uses the exact same wording Yaakov used- "tarof yitaref".] However, deep down Yaakov never really believed them and knew all along that it was not a guarantee that Yosef died. His declaration of Yosef's death was merely for halachic purposes. It is for this reason that Yaakov, rightfully so, was never consoled.

This idea of the din of a shomer even prior to Matan Torah appears in numerous other places as well. Firstly, going all the way back to Cain and Hevel. This concept of the shomer can explain the significance of Cain saying, "Hashomer achi anochi"- "Am I my brother's watchman?". By Yaakov and Lavan as well, we find this concept. Yaakov tells Lavan, "I did not bring you animals torn by beasts. I bore the loss." We see that if the animals were torn by beasts, Yaakov would have not been responsible.

So while Yaakov, from a halachic perspective, was required to accept the evidence, deep down he never believed the brothers and was never comforted until 20 years later when he was reunited with Yosef.

Adapted from Rabbi Jonathan sacks.org

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## STORIES OF GREATNESS

### TOLD OVER BY: HILLEL GOLUBTCHIK

Occupying a seat in the front row of the Etz Chaim Yeshiva in Volozhin attested to rare genius, and young Yosef Dov Soloveitchik (1820-1892) was a perfect example. He spent his days poring through thick volumes, his aptitude for study legendary. He is remembered as the rabbi of Brisk, which remains associated with his unique style of study until this very day. While he had no trouble navigating Talmudic waters, halacha and its real-world ramifications still felt somewhat foreign to him. It was this strong desire to master the practical application of his Talmudic acumen that ultimately pushed him outside the yeshiva walls. Word of Rabbi Shlomo Kluger (1785-1869), a leading halachic authority with a reputation for being unashamedly bold, blunt, and passionate, reached him. Although he lived in Brody, questions from all over Europe streamed his way. Yosef Dov longed to meet him. But a vast distance separated him from his dream. Yosef Dov was in Volozhin, a Belarussian town, and Brody lay down south in Ukraine. He owned nothing but the clothes on his back, and hiring a wagon for such a long trip was a luxury reserved for the wealthy. But at last Yosef Dov formed a plan. Dressed in a peasant's outfit he managed to obtain, he approached the market frequented by coachmen and loudly offered his apprenticeship in exchange for a trip to Brody. One driver agreed to the proposal and immediately began to make good use of his new apprentice. The wagon axles required a fresh layer of grease and the horses needed to be groomed and fed. Everything proved difficult for Yosef Dov, who didn't know the first thing about wagons or horses, and it took repeated attempts before he satisfied the critical eye of his employer. Reeking strongly of horse, with grease-streaked arms, Yosef Dov had lost any

semblance of a yeshiva student. But it was worth it: a merchant soon hired their wagon for a trip to Brody. Hardly able to contain his excitement, Yosef Dov bridled the horses, thinking: "Soon I will meet Rabbi Shlomo Kluger!" From his perch on the wagon, Yosef Dov occupied himself with Talmudic topics, barely paying attention to the rolling landscape. A loud bark pulled him out of his reverie when the driver stopped the wagon and shouted at him to take the reins while he snatched a nap. As the horses trudged along the worn path, his excitement continued to bubble. He could barely focus on the road. He was going to meet with Rabbi Shlomo Kluger! What should they talk about? The possibilities buried in the Talmud and its pages of commentaries stole Yosef Dov's attention rather easily. He no longer felt the pull of the horses nor heard the clapping of hooves. Even as the horses veered off course, Yosef Dov held the reins limply and continued to stare ahead, happily lost in his own head. His turn at navigation came to an abrupt end when the wagon struck a ditch on the side of the road, and the rudely-awakened wagon driver realized why he was unfamiliar with this part of the road to Brody: It wasn't the road to Brody. He began to bellow scathing insults, swinging his fists, and hammering the young man who was still oblivious to the trouble he had caused. "You'll never be a wagon driver!" he shouted as he slapped the young man's hands off the reins. Yosef Dov lowered his head and said nothing. The wagon driver was right. He had neglected his responsibility and disrupted the journey. When Yosef Dov finally disembarked in Brody, parting with a murmured apology, he started asking passersby about the famous rabbi. But his questions (and filthy attire)

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