

Kehillah #50



THE PERTINENT PARASHA

Finding Hashem in the Pause

Rabbi Yehoshua Pfeffer | Rav of Kehillat Ohr Chadash, Ramot, Jerusalem

The life of Yosef is different from that of his fathers. His forebears received instruction from Hashem by direct communication. Hashem reassured them that He would be with them. He directed them. He appeared to them, directly or through angelic revelations, to guide them.

This was not the case for Yosef. Yosef, whose character dominates the last *parashiyos* of *Bereishis*, does not receive any direct instruction or communication from Hashem. No angel appears to guide him, no divine voice descends to instruct him. He works alone.

This special nature of Yosef's life is emphasized at the beginning of *Miketz*. At the end of the previous *parasha*, Yosef seeks to escape unjust imprisonment by sending word to Pharaoh via the royal cupbearer. Yet these efforts fail to bear fruit: the cupbearer forgets Yosef and no word is passed on.

Thus finishes *Parashas Vayeishev*.

We end with a pause. *Parashas Miketz*, however, delivers a twist.

Two years later, when Pharaoh is distressed by dreams nobody can interpret, the initial effort finally pays off. The chief cupbearer remembers Yosef. He is drawn out from prison, presented before Pharaoh, and asked to present his interpretation. The rest, in the most literal sense, is history.

What message does this winding and suspenseful story deliver?

Yosef's tale teaches us how we operate in the absence of explicit divine instruction and guidance. Yosef is plunged into darkness, both literally and figuratively. He is in the

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THE PERTINENT PARASHA



pit, stuck in Egyptian imprisonment where death is always just around the corner. And he is bereft of divine guidance, left to his own devices.

**We can and need to do our best.
Yet we must always leave space
for divine guidance.**

Under such circumstances, Yosef devises a scheme: he will be saved from prison by means of the cupbearer. This is what we do in the dark – we seek a way out. In the absence of direct divine instruction, we employ human initiative. Yet this is not all we do. We also rely on divine guidance that remains with us even when we can't see it.

This is the significance of the pause between *Vayeishev* and *Miketz*. Hashem is in the pause.

Chazal criticize Yosef for attempting to escape the pit. Clearly, this critique cannot be directed against the attempt per se; there is no sin in making a scheme. Yet *Chazal* discerned an overconfidence in Yosef, as though he could wield control over history. He could not. And we cannot.

We can and need to do our best.

Yet we must always leave space for divine guidance. Two years later, when Hashem decided the time was ripe, Yosef's plans bore fruit. Upon coming out, his first words to Pharaoh confirmed that despite human inventiveness, all things depend on Hashem: "It is God who will respond with Pharaoh's welfare" (*Bereishis* 41:16).

Yosef had internalized the lesson.

Years later, we encounter the same lesson in the miracle of Chanuka. The Chashmona'im are a prime example of human initiative in the dark. When they began their campaign, they could not know how things would work out. They pinned their hopes on Hashem. Ultimately, He delivered, but not without a significant pause – it took three years of fighting before they were able to cleanse the Mikdash.

Perhaps this "pause" is expressed in the words *ve'achar ken* of the *Al Hanissim* prayer. It happened "later" – when Hashem decided. His presence was confirmed in the miracle of the oil.

Such is the case even today. Our task is to make plans, personally or nationally. Yet we need to make space for Hashem. The realization of our plans depends on Him, and often things do not work out quite as we envisage.

We need to find Hashem in the pause.



Hashkafically Speaking

Say Baruch Hashem

Rabbi Yaacov Haber – Rav of Kehillas Shivtei Yeshurun, Ramat Beit Shemesh

Sometimes saying *baruch Hashem* isn't easy. "If one digs deep into their soul to find blessing and then articulates that blessing in the form of praise to G-d, then the presence of G-d, the *Shechina*, will immediately rest on that individual and whatever they pray for at that moment will be heard" (Arizal).

This explains why: Before we begin to pray in the morning we say over fifteen blessings. We praise G-d for our sight, our clothing, our status in life, and almost every aspect of living that most people take for granted. Immediately following these blessings the *Shechina* rests upon us. We take advantage of the moment and say *Yehi Ratzon*, a heartfelt appeal to G-d asking Him to make our day pleasant, safe, and full of love and good health.

We begin the *Amida*, the silent prayer in which we speak directly to G-d, by praising Him for His greatness, strength, and awesomeness. We express our thanks to Him for His kindness in this life and in the afterlife. We marvel at how He heals, gives support, and frees the confined. Immediately following these blessings, we once again take advantage of the *Shechina's* presence and as we continue the

Shemoneh Esrei we ask G-d to tend to all of our needs for that day and for life.

On each festival we recite the *Hallel*, six psalms of praise especially formulated for holiday celebration. We take advantage of the *Shechina's* presence and immediately follow these praises with *Ana Hashem*, an impassioned plea to G-d to save us and grant us success.

Before we begin to pray in the morning we say over fifteen blessings. Immediately following these blessings the *Shechina* rests upon us.

The Torah records that Yosef was successful in Egypt. The Talmud explains that this was because no matter what the situation, Yosef had the name of G-d on the tip of his tongue. He would always say "*baruch Hashem*." Even though his life seemed to travel in the opposite direction of happiness and success, he still always found





Hashkafically Speaking

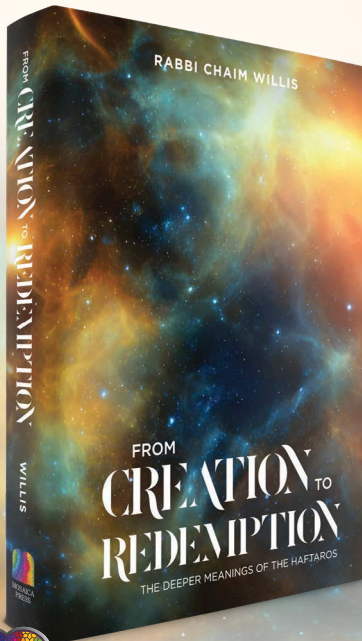


something to praise G-d about. This caused the *Shechina* to rest upon him. His prayers were heard and he was successful.

As the Chanuka miracles occurred, the Jewish people were absolutely taken with Hashem's love for and care of Jerusalem and our people. They spontaneously sang praises to Hashem. The rabbinic leaders captured the moment to create a holiday dedicated to the praise of Hashem. Because of this praise, the lights of the Temple miraculously burned, testifying to the fact that the *Shechina* once again rested

upon the Beis Hamikdash. The Jewish people prayed to Hashem, and the Beis Hamikdash outlasted the Assyrian Greeks by two hundred years.

Sometimes saying *baruch Hashem* isn't easy. Discovering the blessings in our life can be a true spiritual challenge. However, if we can dig deep enough to appreciate new blessings in our life each day and sing them out in praise to Hashem, we too can have the *Shechina* rest upon us. May all our prayers be answered.



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The Emotional Aspect of Honoring Parents

Rabbi Asher Meir | Torah and Policy Researcher

Throughout *sefer Bereishis*, we find that Yosef is very devoted to his father Yaakov. He responds with alacrity to his father's request that he check up on his brothers, even though he knows there is risk involved (as Rashi points out on *Bereishis* 37:13). One of the first things he asks the brothers about on their second visit is the state of their father (43:27). He sends generous gifts to Canaan for him (45:23). And when Yaakov is near death, he calls for Yosef and Yosef rushes to meet him and fulfill his wishes (*Bereishis* 47).

Even so, we find some indications of deficiency in Yosef's devotion to Yaakov. His dream of the sun and the moon bowing seems to imply that he envisions Yaakov bowing down to him, something which elicits his father's rebuke (37:10). The Ramban (on *Bereishis* 42:9) wonders at the fact that Yosef never sought to communicate with his father, to reassure him, or to seek his aid. The Ramban explains that Yosef thought that remaining incommunicado seemed the best way of realizing the dream, but prioritizing his preoccupation with the dream over his connection with his father could itself be questioned.

Chazal also seem to criticize Yosef on this score. We find in *Sotah* (13b):

Why was Yosef called "bones" even during his lifetime? [Yosef instructed the brothers to bear his bones to Canaan - *Bereishis* 50:25.] Because he did not protest for the honor of his father, as the brothers [referred to Yaakov as] "your servant our father" (*Bereishis* 43:28, 44:31), and Yosef said nothing in protest.

The Ramban wonders at the fact that Yosef never sought to communicate with his father, to reassure him, or to seek his aid.

The *Iyun* Yosef understands that the Gemara is mainly referring to not the way Yosef describes himself, but rather the fact that Yosef died younger than the other brothers. He points out that honoring parents leads to long life (*Shemos* 20:12; *Devarim* 5:16). He adds that calling someone a "slave" (the same Hebrew word as "servant") is a particularly severe calumny.



MEKOM AVODA



This criticism seems out of place. We could hardly expect Yosef, in character as the Egyptian commissioner, to have protested, "Oh, no, of course your father is not my servant." The Maharal (*Chiddushei Aggados*) suggests that Yosef should at least have been disturbed inwardly by hearing his own father described as his servant

While some may find it impossible to feel the appropriate sentiments toward parents, our tradition makes it clear that the normal and desirable situation is where children cultivate a strong sense of love and attachment to their parents.

or slave. Perhaps he should even have flinched outwardly. Instead, he was impassive. The Maharal adds that that's why he is described as "bone," since bones are hard and unbending.

The Maharal's explanation of this passage highlights an often-neglected aspect of the mitzvah of honoring parents - the emotional aspect. The halachic literature tends to focus mostly on the concrete conduct a child owes

his parents. A well-known *beraisa* (*Kiddushin* 31b) teaches, "The Sages taught: What is meant by awe and honor? Fear includes: Don't stand in his fixed place, or sit in his seat, or contradict him, or choose sides [in his parent's argument]. Honor includes serving food and drink, dressing and covering, and accompanying."

This could be contrasted with the literature on marital obligations, where the emotional side is given more attention. For instance, *Chazal* (*Yevamos* 62b) urge a husband to love his wife as himself.

However, many sources do discuss the sentimental obligations toward parents. *Sefer Chareidim* (positive mitzvot 1:37) cites the *Zohar* (III:281a) which praises someone who loves his parents more than himself. The author writes that we see from this that the mitzvah to honor parents includes loving them. He points out that this is implicit in the idea that the honor of parents is likened to that of Hashem (*Kiddushin* 30b), as the Torah commands us many times to love Hashem. The *Chayei Adam* (1:67a) cites the same source, stating that the obligation to love parents is "obvious."

The Mishna (*Kesubos* 72a; *Shulchan Aruch, Even Ha'ezer* 115:4) mentions that if a wife curses her husband's parents, it is grounds for divorce.





MEKOM AVODA



(Presumably the same is true for the husband's conduct.) Rabbi Menashe Klein (*Mishneh Halachos* XII:116) points out that this halacha is an expression of the same principle we find in the passage in *Sota* regarding Yosef: No person can be expected to be impassive when he hears someone demeaning his parents. (Rabbi Klein cites Rabbeinu Yona's *Iggeres Hateshuva* to the same effect.)

The practical obligations to parents are subject to the unique circumstances of the relationship between the child and the parents; there are often instances where

other family obligations must take precedence (*Kiddushin* 30b; *Shulchan Aruch* 240:17). But the ideal is that the child fulfills all of them. The emotional demands are no different, and while there are some people who may find it impossible to fully feel the appropriate sentiments toward parents, nevertheless, our tradition makes it clear that the normal and desirable situation is one where children cultivate a strong sense of love and attachment to their parents, to the extent that they can't help flinching when hearing expressions of disrespect toward them.



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Taking Interest

Hakaras Hatov and Ribbis

Rabbi Shloimy Muller

Talmid of Rav Pinchas Vind *shlita*, founder of the Beis Horaah L'Inyanei Ribbis

We've just finished the *yom tov* of Chanuka, when we celebrate our salvation from the clutches and influence of the Greeks. As we say in *Al Hanissim*, the essence of these days is praise and gratitude to Hashem - "and they established Chanuka to thank and to praise Your great name." Jews are called *Yehudim*, people who thank Hashem for the ongoing kindnesses that He constantly bestows on them. And this trait of *hakaras hatov* is directed not only to the Almighty; it also extends to every person who helps us.

All this brings us to an important question regarding *ribbis*. We know that a borrower may not repay more than he borrowed. Neither may he do other favors for his lender that he would not otherwise have done.

In fact, he may not even profusely thank the lender. All that is permitted is the general thank-you that the borrower would have offered even had the lender not been able to offer a loan. (Meaning, if the lender had refused to lend the money and the borrower said, "Thanks anyway," or something similar, then we infer that the thank-you is unrelated to the loan he receives; rather, it's his manner

of speaking to thank everyone he comes into contact with and is therefore permitted.)

All this leads to the question, What about the obligation of *hakaras hatov*? One answer is that although it's incumbent on the recipient to be grateful, it's equally incumbent on the lender to lend without remuneration (which includes even verbal praise and thanks). There is basically a clash of values: the borrower wants to thank and reward the lender, but the lender is commanded to lend for free and to help his brother without receiving more in return. Therefore, despite the deep appreciation the borrower should feel within, he must not in any way benefit the lender, which would be a violation of the lender's obligation.

The mitzvah of lending to another Jew is unique in that it must be performed totally for the benefit of the one who needs the loan (without any remuneration). And this mitzvah isn't limited to big-time sums. Every time we lend someone a couple of shekels, or even an egg, we are privileged to help another Jew and to fulfill the *mitzvah min haTorah* of giving a free loan.



PARASHA AND PARNASSAH

How to Walk Away from Chanuka

Rabbi Tzvi Broker – Career Coach and Director of Pilzno Work Inspired

How does a Jew walk away from Chanuka? Let's consider what perhaps the Jews at the time of the Chanuka miracle were doing after experiencing their own salvation – shaving the horns of their oxen?

The Midrash (*Bereishis Rabba* 16:7) tells us that one of the decrees of the Greeks was that the Jews were forced to inscribe on the horns of their oxen the words "We have no portion in the G-d of Israel." This is quite puzzling. We can understand why the Greeks banned the study of Torah and the observance of Shabbos, bris mila, and Rosh Chodesh. But what could have been the motivation behind this seemingly strange decree?

One explanation can be found by delving into the connection between the Chanuka story and Yosef Hatzaddik, who is always the topic of the *parshiyos* of the Shabbosim around Chanuka. Yosef's *midda* was the ability to infuse the physical world with spirituality. Yosef himself was physically beautiful, but his beauty wasn't simply external. Yosef's physical beauty was powered by a life of spirituality and connection to Hashem. Yosef was heavily engaged in the physical world. The Torah's narrative of Yosef describes

him as very much involved in work, commerce, leadership, and management. In *Parashas Vayechi*, one of the descriptions Yaakov gives of Yosef is that of an ox. This explains the motivation behind the Greek's decree that the Jews inscribe the words "We have no portion in the G-d of Israel" specifically on the horns of an ox.

The Greek worldview could tolerate a Torah that was simply an academic pursuit. Yet this could have nothing to do with the way one would conduct one's day-to-day life. The worldview of Yosef, which embodied living in the physical world in a beautiful way while at the same time infusing it with spirituality was the antithesis of what the Greeks stood for and therefore intolerable to them. They sought to express this by having the Jews write, "We have no portion in the G-d of Israel," specifically on the horns of their oxen. This forced the Jews to convey that they were disconnected from the worldview of Yosef, represented by the ox (based on *Sefer Regel Yeshara* and *Inside Chanukah*).

When Hashem enabled the Jews to enjoy spiritual freedom in the time of Chanuka, the Jews were once again able to embrace living





PARASHA AND PARNASSAH

in the way of Yosef Hatzaddik. This is a takeaway for us as well as we leave Chanuka and step back into our normal routine. The salvation of Chanuka includes rededicating ourselves to following Yosef's pathway of integrating the physical and the spiritual. In the upcoming week, choose to go to work with Yosef as your mentor. Recognize that being involved in work is not "in the way" of our *avodas Hashem* but rather it is the way to our *avodas Hashem*. By doing so, you'll discover

how every calculation made, email written, or business meeting attended can become that much more meaningful.

Rabbi Tzvi Broker is a career coach and runs the Work Inspired Chabura, a learning program for professional men to explore topics in parnassa. A new series - "Work How Hashem Intended" is starting December 24th. Join in person, via Zoom, or get recordings. Contact pilznoworkinspired@gmail.com for more info.



BIOGRAPHY & LEGACY

Rabbi Yitzchak Isaac HaLevi Herzog

Rabbi Dov Loketch – Rabbi of Agudas Yisrael Mogen Avraham, Detroit

Last week we described Rav Herzog's dedication to preserving peace in the midst of controversy while upholding his principles. This week we'll look at the final chapter of his life.

The End of an Era

In 1955, Rav Herzog was elected for his third term as Ashkenazic chief rabbi. His scholarship, graciousness, dignity, and pleasant demeanor made his and his rebbetzin's home on 4 Ibn Ezra Street in the Rechavia neighborhood of Jerusalem a true *bayis vaad lachachamim*, a place where *talmidei chachamim*, rabbanim, and *roshei yeshiva* of different kinds would convene. He also frequently hosted political figures and foreign dignitaries. Even

as his health declined, he worked tirelessly on behalf of Am Yisrael, *Toras Yisrael*, and Eretz Yisrael.

Rav Herzog's life of learning, leadership, and selfless devotion to Klal Yisrael ended on 18 Tammuz/ July 24, 1959, when he was seventy years old.

Rav Herzog presided over one of the most turbulent, dramatic, and transformative periods in Jewish history. Divine providence arranged that at this critical juncture in our



BIOGRAPHY & LEGACY

nation's journey, there would arise a leader with an astoundingly wide range of talents – outstanding Torah scholarship, academic knowledge, proficiency in several languages, eloquence, interpersonal skills, and diplomacy.

Clarity and Uncertainty

In honor of Rav Herzog, who devoted a great deal of time and effort to exploring the *techeiles* dye that was used with tzitzis in ancient times, we present here part of an analysis of the significance of the white and blue tzitzis threads, developed by Rav Soloveitchik at a *sheva berachos* celebration in Boston for the daughter and son-in-law of the Bostoner Rebbe.

The Rav asserted that white connotes clarity and certainty. Even in Modern Hebrew, he observed, the phrase *hadevarim melubanim* (literally, “the matter is white”) is used to mean: “the matter is crystal clear.” The Talmudic term *מחורתא*, a derivative of the Aramaic word for “white” (*חור*), refers to something that is clear, reasonable, and compelling.

Whiteness, then, is a common symbol for that which is clear and evident, and thus represents decisions that we make with complete confidence and without any ambivalence. It refers to those periods in life when the path we need to take is perfectly clear and can be followed without hesitation or concern.

Techeiles, by contrast, connotes the intimidation of uncertainty. *Chazal* (*Menachos* 43b) explain that the color *techeiles* resembles that of the ocean and the heavens, the symbols of the infinity of the universe and our inability to grasp or comprehend its wonders.

On this basis, Rav Soloveitchik explained why it is customary for the bride to give the groom a new tallis before their wedding. As the couple prepares to build their home, they are reminded of the message of the tzitzis – of the duality of life, the pendulum that constantly swings back and forth between clarity and uncertainty.

Many times the path before us is “white” – clear and straightforward. We know precisely what we need to do, and we proceed with confidence and vigor. But there are also periods of *techeiles*, situations which appear to us to be as vague, mysterious, and overwhelming as the sea and the heavens.

Life is a combination of white and *techeiles* – navigating at times with certainty and assurance, and at others with ambivalence and fear.

May *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* grant us the strength and fortitude to persevere through the periods of uncertainty that we confront, and to emerge from them with greater *emuna* and greater resolve to serve Him faithfully and to the best of our ability under all circumstances.





How to Fight This War

Rebbetzin Ilana Cowland

Relationships Coach and author of *The Moderately Anxious Everybody*

So back to our story. The Purim and Chanuka wars. It's quite amazing when you break it down. On Chanuka, we experienced an affront to our culture and our values. So a team of weak old men picked up swords. On Purim, when facing annihilation, we fasted and prayed.

We have learned answers to this puzzling enigma. We have been taught that to really, really trust Hashem, we have to show that we leave things to Him. So we put our *hishtadlus* where it seems to be needed the least. Or, you could argue, we had a good look at where we erred – not at our enemy's response – and we took action there. Purim was a threat to our physical existence, but the issue that gave power to our enemy was the assimilation that began when the Jews went to the palace party. So that's what we had to work on.

Are we going to examine the barriers to entry for aliya and solve them? Or are we going to hide for the cover of denial in our cozy Flatbush living rooms?

This is our *mesora*. This is what we have. A counterintuitive strategy. We fight backwards. We identify the problem. We see the type of enemy we are facing, and we retaliate with a strategy that is almost unconnected. What a weird and wonderful approach.

I'll leave the "why" to the rabbis. The question I'm interested in is "how." How do we fight this war on the two fronts that we're facing today in real time – the online and on-campus threat to our values that is rapidly increasing in America and Europe, and the very real and overwhelming war that is happening here in our land? If we are to stick to the formula that resulted in the Purim and Chanuka victories, how do we go about it?

So to our friends abroad: When our





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values are under attack, we have to take action. It doesn't have to be an actual war, but it has to feel like a war. In a war, you must have a strategy that requires an action plan. But first, you have to wake up to the reality of the threat. I know you're comfortable. But that is not the same as being secure. And when the tides are shifting as fast as they are currently, the community has to mobilize.

America, Europe: You have to get real. Wake up. Don't be the Jews in Germany again. We've lost too much. Get your brilliant heads out of the sand. Get your brilliant heads together. Be creative! Are we going to leave our kids to suffer the vitriol of evil antisemitism on campus or are we going to pull funding? Are we going to examine the barriers to entry for aliya and solve them? Or are we going to hide for the cover of denial in our cozy Flatbush living rooms? You have the resources, the minds, the creativity. Build your strategies for your communities. It's time for action. It's war.

And to our communities in Israel: Firstly, wow. The *mesirus nefesh* and the prowess of our military is a miracle. I once asked a commando soldier what he sees more in war, *siyata diShmaya* or military success.

He answered that military success is *siyata diShmaya*. How the mighty Israeli army that we take for granted today was born of some young, determined Holocaust survivors will forever leave me speechless.

There is a mass spiritual awakening in this country, and no one is exempt. Being secular is no excuse. Being frum is no excuse, either.

The war in Israel is the Purim war. A fight for existence. So if we are to believe in our history, it cannot be just a military endeavor. It must be a spiritual awakening. Yes, Israel. Every civilian is a soldier in the spiritual war. My youngest son has spent two months in his school tying tzitzis to meet the demands for the soldiers who don't have tzitzis. The soldiers are the holy boys on the front line. *Frum* or not *frum*, they are in the trenches, and they get it. May Hashem watch over them all. They are holding a gun. They are asking for tzitzis. They get it.

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But the rest of Israel has to take one united step closer to our roots. All of us. There are no exemptions in the Purim war. Every one of us has to wake up. Every one of us has to step up. A small step, maybe, but a step nevertheless. One of my sons took his tefillin with him to a party where they made their way around the crowd for two and a half hours. Boys who haven't laid tefillin in over

ten years stood in line for their turn.

There is a mass spiritual awakening in this country, and no one is exempt. Being secular is no excuse. Being *frum* is no excuse, either. When we are strong spiritually, our enemy weakens physically. And they are starting to weaken. We have to keep going. All of us. Together.

Am Yisrael chai.



PARASHA HALACHA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE

Modern-Day Royalty

Josh and Tammy Kruger

The Story

"Amiel! Happy birthday! It's David, calling from America." David sat down on the dining room chair to talk with his cousin who he saw only a few times each year.

"Hey, David! I'm so glad I answered the phone. How're you doing?" asked Amiel.

"I'm good, thanks. How are you celebrating your 11th birthday?"

"I'm gonna have a birthday sleepover

on Motza'ei Shabbos for some friends, but right now we're getting ready to go downtown with the family."

"Downtown? Are you guys doing a birthday activity there?" asked David, wishing that he lived closer to his cousins so that they could celebrate together.

Amiel laughed, "Yah! The Queen is coming to see me to wish me a happy birthday."





PARASHA HALACHA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE

David paused. "Huh? The Queen?"

"I'm just kidding," Amiel giggled. "She's definitely not coming to see me, but the Queen of England is visiting the city for two days. My dad thought it would be cool for us to go downtown where she's staying and try to catch a glimpse of her. You know....so we can say that *beracha*."

David thought for a moment, "Oh, I get it. I've seen that *beracha* in my siddur with all those special *berachos*. I didn't realize people actually say that one. That's kinda cool."

"Mm-hmm," agreed Amiel. "I guess there aren't too many kings and queens nowadays, so it's a pretty unusual *beracha* to be able to say. It's too bad you can't be here to come with us."

"Yes," murmured David. "That would've been nice. I even have a new set of binoculars that would've been useful for seeing the Queen from far. Hey, I have my school trip to Washington, DC, this winter. I wonder if I can say that *beracha* if I see the president."

Discussion

Q: What is the connection between our story and the *parasha*?

A: Yosef is taken out of jail and brought before Pharaoh, the king of Egypt.

Q: Is there really a *beracha* to be said when we see a king or queen? Even if they're not Jewish?

A: The *Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 224:8)* states that if we see a king who is not Jewish, one must recite this *beracha*: *Baruch Atah Hashem Elokeinu Melech ha'olam shenatan mikvodo levasar vadam*. (Blessed are You, Hashem our G-d, who has given from His glory to [humans of] flesh and blood.) In fact, it also says that if you have a chance to run and see a

king, it's a mitzvah to do it!

Q: Don't we all believe that Hashem is the only true King? Why is there a mitzvah to see royalty and say the specific *beracha* when we have so many other prayers and mitzvos that are supposed to remind us that it's *only* Hashem who rules? (The hint to this answer is in the *beracha's* words themselves.)

A: In the *beracha*, we are actually saying that these royal figures are only considered royal and given power *because* Hashem has chosen to give them this status. If Hashem did *not* choose to do so, these figures would be just regular people with no specific power.





PARASHA HALACHA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



Q: If David does see the US president on his school trip, should he say the *beracha*?

A: There are different opinions here. Perhaps he *should not* say it. The idea of a “king” many years ago was that he ruled his whole lifetime and had the power to decide alone what the laws of the land would be. Nowadays, our nation’s leaders rule for four or eight years only and don’t have the power all by themselves to decide the laws. They have to go through their government and judges to make such big decisions. This is why some opinions say that we do *not* say a *beracha* if we see the president or prime minister of a democratic nation (Responsa Teshuvos Vehanhagos 2:139).

However, there are also other *poskim* who say that David *should* say

the *beracha* because the president (and other national leaders) still do make life-death decisions for people around him (*Halacha Berura* 224:14). How? The president can call his people to war when there is an emergency war situation. If he can do this, then soldiers – and often civilians – will have their lives put at risk. This may be comparable to the kings of many years ago who had the power to condemn someone to death. Also, a president can save a life in the situation when he can give a pardon to a prisoner who is supposed to be killed for his bad crimes. In this way, too, the president is showing great power in granting life to this man.

As a compromise, some *poskim* advise saying the *beracha* but without reciting *shem u’malchus* (without the *Hashem Elokeinu Melech ha’olam* section), i.e., *baruch shenatan mikvodo levasar vadam* (*Piskei Teshuvos* 224:6, 7).



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