

yechida's reflections

Posted by yechidah - 29 Jun 2009 19:47

(any questions , insights & suggestions about this thread,feel free to email me at taryaga@gmail.com)

There are many reasons we need to be where we are and who we are,most are unknown.Why do we even have to be in a situation or have in our soul so much darkness and a pull toward self-destructing negative behaviors?

I saw once an amazing thought in a sefer.Moshe Rabeinu came from a union that after the Torah was given would have deemed him a mamzer(parents being an aunt & nephew).He could not boast of his lineage.This is one reason that let him be the greatest Anov that ever lived.

We who have to deal with the stuff that's in us that we would rather not have in the first place-this pain and shame over the course of time -makes us realize that even when we b'ezras Hashem pull out of the addictions-we will never look at another Yid that is struggling with this in a negative way

We catch a Yid looking where he shouldn't be looking and our hearts are full of compassion.We will daven for him,treat him with respect,gently try to get him out of it.We would never disgrace him-not even in our hearts-because we were there.We know what it's like.In our eyes he is a potential tzaddik.

This is surely one reason Hashem gave us this urge towards baseness with all it's shades of ugliness.Yes you are special-like every Yid is-but never ever judge harshly My son or daughter that is struggling-because I love him or her - he or she is part of Klall Yisroel.Just as indispensable as you are.

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Re: yechida's reflections

Posted by yechidah - 17 Nov 2019 15:23

Here is a great dvar torah from jbuff.com on the power of giving & also on the concept that true love comes after marriage-not before (even if it may “feel” that way)

After the near sacrifice of Yitzchok (Isaac), Avraham realizes it is time for Yitzchok to get married.

From the sequence of events which lead up to the marriage of Yitzchok, we can glean many valuable insights into the ideas of love and marriage.

Avraham instructed his servant, Eliezer, to find a wife for Yitzchok (Eliezer, besides being a trusted aide to Avraham, was also a tremendously pious and perceptive person; finding a spouse in such a fashion is certainly not a recommended procedure for this generation). How would Eliezer know who would be a fitting bride for Yitzchok? Let us look to the narrative of the Torah: “She (Rivka, also known as Rebecca) said, ‘drink my lord’, and quickly she lowered her jug to her hand and gave him a drink. When she had finished giving him drink, she said, ‘I will draw water even for your camels until they have finished drinking.’ Later, Rivka tells Eliezer: “Even straw and feed is plentiful with us as well as a place to lodge” (Gen. Ch. 24). Rivka was a young girl, and as we know, camels are extremely thirsty animals. This, obviously, was very strenuous work, especially for a stranger! Yet Rivka does this work happily. **This shows she has a very giving nature.**

When Yitzchok is introduced to his future wife, the Torah tells us the sequence of events: “And Yitzchok brought her (Rivka) into the tent of Sarah his mother; he married Rivka, she became his wife, and he loved her” (Gen. Ch. 24 V.67). The sequence of events is seemingly out of order. **Shouldn’t Yitzchok have loved Rivka before he married her?**

Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler has a classic piece in his seminal work “Strive for Truth”. He explains that “the world is comprised of givers and takers.” It is of utmost importance, and in reality it is the key to our happiness, both with in our relationship with our spouses, family, friends and with G-d, to strive to be givers. **Being a giver is the antithesis of being selfish.**

Logically it would seem that a person loves someone because of what he could **get** from him. In reality, the exact opposite is the truth. Think of the relationship between a parent and a child. What does a child, certainly in the first couple of years of life, give a parent? Yet which normal parent does not have boundless love for his child?

It is giving that develops and increases love. In modern society, pop culture and movies often portray people as “falling in love” within the first few times they meet. This is obviously false and should more appropriately be proclaimed as “falling in lust”. One of the main reasons for the tragically high divorce rate is that people don’t understand that relationships take work, and above all giving leads to love, not vice versa.

This is how Yitzchok was able to marry Rivka, because he knew she was a giver. And through understanding the principle of giving, we see why only after he married her, and would have the opportunity to give to her, would he love her. Let us all undertake to work on being givers and to improve our relationships with our loved ones and with God

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Re: yechida's reflections

Posted by yechidah - 22 Nov 2019 01:14

From the website www.meaningfullife.com

50 reasons why your life matters

It happens to the best of us: Sometimes it seems like our lives don't matter. Whether you are in the [depths of depression](#) or have survived an [assault on who you are](#), or even if you are just having a really bad day, sometimes it seems like, "My life doesn't matter." ***However: That thought is wrong. Your life does matter.***

A spiritual truth: If you are alive, your life matters. Here are 50 reasons why:

50. [The world would be different if you were not born.](#)

49. [You have a unique role to play in the grand scheme of things.](#)

48. You have a contribution to make to the world, even if you're not sure what it is.

47. You were chosen to be born and to live in this world.

46. The small things you do have a bigger positive effect than you know.

45. You have said and will say again kind words that made somebody's day.

44. You might save someone's life one day.

43. You might have already saved someone's life without even knowing it.

42. You have many things to accomplish.

41. You'd be missed by others if you weren't around, even if you don't think so.

40. There are things you've learned that you need to teach.

39. Nobody can look out at life with exactly the same eyes as you do.

38. [You have the ability to choose](#), and that is a gift.

37. You can rectify mistakes by approaching the same situations in better ways in the future.

36. You can inspire someone who feels broken.

35. You can experience the satisfaction of doing something difficult.

34. The soul that lives in your body is yours and only yours, and was put in your body for a reason.

33. Your body is a channel for your soul.

32. Your potential for growth is unlimited.

31. People might have told you that you are worthless, but they are wrong.

30. Every morning is an opportunity to renew your connection to your soul.

29. Every night is an opportunity to take stock of the day and plan for a better tomorrow.

28. Your cells are constantly regenerating, which means that at the cellular level you are always changing and progressing.

27. Everything you see in the world has a lesson to teach you.

26. Every day that you are alive you are acquiring experience and knowledge.

25. [Using your money for charitable purposes makes your work and money meaningful](#).

24. You have the ability to use your resources to produce more than is given to you.

23. You can set an example of gracious conduct.

22. The soul inside you never grows weary; it allows you to continue on even when you are physically and emotionally tired.

21. The real you is the inner you, and when you are living with the real you, your life takes on greater meaning.

20. Every year on your birthday, the special energy invested in you at birth is present.

19. Pain you experience can be transformed into growth.

18. Ambition and creativity are lifelong journeys, so your life matters regardless of your age.

17. Every stage of life has its inherent strengths. The stage of life you are in right now is

meaningful even if it feels like a slump.

16. You are a partner in the creation of the world. You co-create reality with the Universe.

15. You have the power to shape your future.

14. The good things you do today have perpetual effects.

13. [Your joy has a cosmic impact.](#)

12. There is a part of you that has never been wounded — and can never be wounded.

11. Some of the little things you do in life are more important than the big things.

10. The journey of your life is more important than your material accomplishments.

9. You might not think you are a leader, but everyone has the ability to influence another person positively.

8. You are a link in a long historical chain.

7. You can recognize the extraordinary within the ordinary.

6. Your life is a miracle, an actual miracle.

5. You are inherently good. Your inner self is inherently good. Every person has an inherently beautiful inner self.

4. Your life matters because you yearn for something better.

3. Your life matters because you care enough to regret your mistakes.

2. Regardless of how lonely you feel, [you are never alone.](#)

1. Your life matters because birth is God saying, ["You matter."](#)

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Re: yechida's reflections

Posted by yechidah - 24 Nov 2019 00:45

Torah.org dvar torah -Toldos **on NOT GIVING UP**

Yitzhak's servants dug in the valley, and found there a well of springing water" Beresheet 26:19

The events surrounding the sale of the birthright of the seed of Abraham and the dramatic intrigue of the "theft" of the blessings of Yitzhak are interrupted by seemingly mundane, unimportant details of disputes between the servants of Yitzhak and the subjects of Abimelekh over digging of wells. The commentators, realizing that every detail included by Hashem in His Holy Torah is of utmost importance for eternity, explain the wells to relate to future events in the history of our people, especially the Temple periods. The strange names of the wells reveal insights as to the causes of the destruction of the Batay Mikdash our holy Temples.

There is also a timeless, ethical lesson for all. One should always fight adversity and persist to complete a worthwhile task. If Yitzhak Abinu a'h dug a well but failed to find water, he dug elsewhere until he succeeded. If enemies disputed his rights to the water, he went to another site and dug there. Eventually, he found water that no one disputed and he called the well Rehovot -wide space. This is the way a person should approach adversity whether in material projects or spiritual pursuits. Should one have difficulty in one's initial efforts to learn Torah, one should not despair because at the end of the day success is imminent. [Hafetz Hayim]

A story is told about Rabbi Levi Yitzhak of Berdichov a'h who was on a mission to raise funds to pay the ransom for some Jews who had been abducted. After traveling to many towns and villages he was yet unsuccessful in collecting the required funds. He began to doubt his decision to take on this effort. "Perhaps I was wrong to accept this responsibility. I have not raised the money and I have lost weeks of time that I could have spent learning in the bet midrash [study hall]."

One day Rabbi Levi Yitzhak was witness to the arrest of a Jewish thief by the authorities. After giving him a good beating the authorities locked him up in the local jail.

"You should learn a lesson from this and never attempt robbery again," advised Rabbi Levi Yitzhak.

"No way" replied the thief, "If I failed today that doesn't mean I won't succeed the next time."

"If a criminal does not give up in his wicked pursuits how much more so must I persist in order to achieve Torah goals. **If I don't succeed today — that doesn't mean I will not win tomorrow," said the great sage to himself.**

In 1979, about three years after I had returned to my study of Torah on a daily basis, Rabbi Noah Weinberg, Shlit"a, the Rosh Yeshivah of Aish Hatorah in Yerushalayim came to visit our small synagogue on the New Jersey shore. During seudah shelisheet [the 3rd Shabbat meal] I strategically sat next to the Rav. "I have been trying to learn Gemara [Talmud] with one of the young Rabbis in our Kollel", I related to him, "Yet every time I prepare it seems like I just don't get it right. I think it just might not be for me."

“Don’t give up, ” he advised, “Just keep on trying and one day you will begin to understand.”

His words of encouragement gave me the impetus to keep on trying. Now, over twenty years later, I proudly can say learning Torah is my greatest joy in life –a pursuit that was successful due to persistence. If at first you don’t succeed –try –try again!

Shabbat Shalom

Raymond J Beyda

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Re: yechida's reflections

Posted by yechidah - 01 Dec 2019 00:32

A short insight from torah.org on not flaunting & averting jealousy

You shouldn’t whine about getting a 99 on the final instead of a 100 in front of students who got 50’s and 60’s.”

“Let them study harder, and besides, who tells them to be jealous.”

“And Rochel saw that she was not having any children... And Rochel envied her sister (who had a few children).” (Biraishis 30:1)

Of course, jealousy is not good (right now, I will just say, see the Messillas Yeshorim / The Path of the Just or the Orchos Tzaddikim /The Way of the Righteous for ideas of how to not feel jealousy), but it **IS** a “normal” human trait.

Therefore, we should always be sensitive to others’ feelings and not cause them to feel jealous.

(I’m not saying to earn less money or have lower grades or not to try having wonderful children, but not everything must be flaunted.)

Always try making others feel good !!

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Re: yechida's reflections

Posted by yechidah - 07 Dec 2019 23:49

Torah.org dvar torah on the value of time (Raymond Bayda)

Yaakob was left alone and a man wrestled with him until the break of dawn" Beresheet 32:25

Yaakob Abinu a'h survived his encounter with Laban only to face his wicked brother Esav. Since the animosity that Esav felt had not subsided in the 20 years since Yaakob fled to Haran to marry and build a family, Yaakob prepared for war. Prayer, strategy and bribery were the three elements of his defense. Firstly, he prayed to Hashem to protect him as He had promised on Har Hamoriah the night Yaakob slept there and dreamt his "ladder dream". He then split his camp into two so that should Esav encounter one camp the other could flee to safety and insure the survival of the Jewish people. Lastly, he sent to his brother an entourage bearing gifts of cattle and valuables in order to bribe his brother and to get him to forgive and forget.

Under the cover of dark Yaakob ferried his family and possessions across a river called Nahal Yabok, in order to place a body of water between his camp and his brother's soldiers. After completing the transfer, Yaakob went back across and was left alone on Esav's side of the river. Rashi cites the Talmud's interpretation. Yaakob had forgotten some small earthenware jugs and risked his life to go back into danger to retrieve them. The Sages comment: "From here we learn "to the righteous, their money is dearer to them than their bodies." **Since the honest person struggles to earn every penny without deception the money that he earns is dear to him.**

Of course, our Rabbis are not suggesting that one risk one's life for even significant amounts of material wealth. **Their intent is that to the righteous, the spiritual use of honestly earned money has a value that should not be treated with indifference.**

Rabbi Avigdor Miller zt'l wrote that every moment of life is a precious opportunity for spiritual achievement and therefore, a person should be very particular about the use of every minute of time. One, he proposed, should minimize the amount of time spent on acquisition of the things of this world. The Hafetz Hayim said, **"Many feel time is money when**

in fact money is time.” If a person squanders materialistic possessions, one will then be forced to expend more precious time from his or her life to acquire more to sustain them self.

Rav Hasda was a wealthy sage in the times of the Gemara. When he would walk through an area where there were thorn bushes, he would lift his robes exposing his legs to the painful scratches and cuts of the thorns rather than allow his robe to become damaged. If he was rich why would he subject himself to pain rather than let the garment rip? He too realized that this would cost him TIME — the time it would take to earn the money to buy another robe. He chose to suffer physical pain rather than lose a moment latent with potential for spiritual growth. [Baba Kamma 91B]

There is a remez — a hint — to this attitude in the message that Yaakob Abinu sent to Esav. He enumerated the wealth he had earned while in the employ of his father-in-law Laban —“Vayehi lee shor, v’hamor...” [“I have acquired oxen and donkeys...”]. The Gemara explains that the word “Vayehi” indicates sorrow [M[Megillah 10B]Yaakob was hinting to Esav —The wealth I have accumulated causes me sorrow when I think of the time I had to invest in order to get it.” **His preference was for spiritual achievement not material success.**

We too must learn from our Patriarchs and Sages. Everyone was created with a mission. The goal is to create a beautiful abode for eternity in the World to Come. **The most important tool we were blessed with to perfect our eternal home — is TIME. Every moment in this world is an opportunity to earn untold spiritual wealth for one’s future.** The righteous knew that one must survive and support themselves while here in this world — but they felt sorrow over every moment they had to waste in the pursuit of survival. One should take this lesson and make it one’s credo — “No price can be set on my possessions — they cost me time to acquire.” Keep what you have. Preserve your time wisely. You will become rich — forever!

Shabbat Shalom

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Re: yechida's reflections

Posted by yechidah - 09 Dec 2019 00:00

powerful poem on self worth

The Power Of Self Worth

Love yourself and see your beauty
before others take a glance,
let your light shine always don't wait for a second chance.

You only have today
who you are can change tomorrow,
go the extra mile forget
about life's sorrow.

The things you work the hardest for
have a pay off in the end
learn first to love yourself,
because then and only then.

You'll finally understand
your purpose here on earth,
love yourself and celebrate
the power of self worth.

Written By Kathy J Parenteau

05/23/2014

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Re: yechida's reflections
Posted by yiraishamaim - 09 Dec 2019 03:14

[yechidah wrote on 09 Dec 2019 00:00:](#)

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Written By Kathy J Parenteau

05/23/2014

Beautiful and motivating. Thank you

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Re: yechida's reflections

Posted by yechidah - 15 Dec 2019 01:20

From Torah.org by R Shafier

A most valuable lesson on the mindset amidst suffering & discomfort

The most difficult period in Yosef's life

Yosef was about to begin the most difficult period of his life. His own brothers left him to die in a pit of scorpions. He would soon be sold numerous times as a slave, then he would spend twelve months being hounded by the wife of his master, followed by imprisonment in a dank, dark dungeon where he would not see the light of day for twelve years. Clearly, Yosef was heading for hard times.

Rashi tells us that this *posuk* shows us the great reward that is given to *tzaddikim*. When Yosef was bound and sold as a slave, the wagon that took him down to Egypt was carrying spices that emitted a fragrant smell, as opposed to the normal cargo that gives off an obnoxious odor.

Clearly, HASHEM loved the *tzaddik* and arranged for something out of the ordinary to protect him.

The obvious question on this Rashi is that if the Torah wants us to show the reward for *tzaddikim*, it could have done a much more convincing job by saving Yosef from this entire event. If HASHEM is watching the *tzaddikim*, then why couldn't He just save Yosef from all of the suffering that he was about to endure?

A comfortable pillow in the ambulance

This is comparable to a situation in which a man is in a catastrophic car crash that breaks almost every bone in his body. The Hatzalah crew rushes to the scene, puts him on a stretcher, and as they are speeding to the hospital, his friend riding with him says, **"Look how HASHEM watches over you. They even put a comfortable pillow under your head."** One would have the right to ask, "If HASHEM is concerned with this person's well being, then why didn't He arrange for the drunk driver who hit him to crash into a pole instead of his car? Save him from the ordeal; don't give his broken neck a comfortable pillow to lie on!"

Some life situations are inevitable

The answer to this question seems to be that there are certain situations in life that are **unavoidable, not because HASHEM isn't capable of preventing them**, but quite the opposite, because HASHEM orchestrated them according to the needs of that person or that generation.

Yosef was to be sold as a slave and in that state, brought to Mitzrayim. As the prelude to his future, the future of his family, and the future of the Jewish nation, this was a vital ingredient. Ultimately, for his destiny and for the good of the Jewish nation, this situation needed to happen. It was part of the master plan.

However, even within the difficult times, HASHEM showed loving kindness to Yosef. He had to be sold as a slave, but why should he suffer unnecessarily? The Arabs normally carried petroleum; why should Yosef have to suffer the offensive odor? For that reason, HASHEM arranged something very uncharacteristic: the caravan was carrying perfume and not oil.

All suffering is carefully weighed and measured

There is a great lesson for us to take from this. **In life, we will suffer through many situations, trials and tribulations. Not only are they are part of life, they are needed – for us, for our growth so that we can reach the purpose for which we were put on this planet.** In that sense, they are inevitable, not because HASHEM is uncaring, but because we need them. They are for our good. In the scheme of life, they serve us well, but with them comes some suffering. The amount of suffering that a person experiences on this planet is weighed, measured and administered in exact dosages. The pain is delivered precisely and exactly, not an iota more and not an iota less. We get exactly the measure we need.

Many times it is clear to see that HASHEM is bringing pain, preplanned and preordained, right to my doorstep. But it is hard to see that it is for my good and that HASHEM is doing it out of loving kindness.

Seeing the Kindness in the torture

When I discover the **kindness within the torture**, when I find the “**comfortable pillow in the ambulance**,” this can change my perspective on the entire situation. It reminds me that HASHEM cares for me and has brought about this event for my good. I may not see it as good, I may not understand how it is for my best, but it is clearly orchestrated by HASHEM. **I see that HASHEM has gone out of His way – if it could be – to make part of my situation more comfortable.** This shows me the great love that HASHEM has for me. It allows me to know that **just as the pillow was planned out of love**, so too were the rest of the circumstances. This viewpoint colors the entire situation in a different light, allowing me to understand that it was brought by HASHEM, and despite the pain and suffering, it is something that I need for my good.

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Re: yechida's reflections

Posted by DavidT - 15 Dec 2019 19:59

What is Yissurim Shel Ahavah? It is suffering that God gives to righteous people who use it in order to become more spiritually productive. These are people who will themselves work to keep pace with their Avodas Hashem—Service of God—despite debilitating pain, be it physical, psychological, or both. God gives them this suffering to draw out the righteous new levels of commitment that they themselves might not have tapped into, already having achieved personal greatness.

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Re: yechida's reflections

Posted by yechidah - 21 Dec 2019 23:16

The Sweetest Gift In Life: Peace of Mind

Pharaoh was disturbed that he had no interpretation of his troubling dreams. He heard about a person named Yosef who was a master dream interpreter. Pharaoh was very keen to see Yosef as soon as possible. Pharaoh sent for Yosef and “rushed him from the dungeon”. Yosef took a haircut, changed his clothing, and was brought before Pharaoh [Bereshis 41:14].

Rashi explains that he took a haircut and changed his clothing because of ‘kavod malchus’ [giving due honor to the king].

Rashi implies that the haircut and change of clothing was Yosef’s idea. The meaning of the first verb in the pasuk [verse] (va’y’reetzuhu) is THEY took him out (of the dungeon). If the pasuk meant to say and THEY gave him a haircut, it should have continued “vayegalchuhu”. Instead, it says “vayegalach” [and HE took a haircut]. Likewise, it should say “vayachleefu” [and THEY changed his clothes] instead of “vayechalef” [and HE changed his clothes]. The singular subject of the verb regarding taking a haircut and getting a change of clothes indicates that these were all Yosef’s ideas.

Rashi explains that his motivation was ‘kavod malchus’.

Imagine this scene: Yosef is pining away in jail all these years. It is already two years since he asked the wine butler to mention him to Pharaoh. Nothing happened. One day the jailers knock on his door and say “Okay. Pharaoh wants to see you.” Yosef could have been thinking “This is just what I’ve been waiting for. This is my ticket out of jail!”

But when the jailers are rushing him to see the king, he interrupts them and says, “Wait a minute. I need to see a barber.”

They take him to the barber, he gets his haircut and they again start rushing him to the palace. Once more he protests, **“Wait a minute! I need to go shopping. I cannot go before the king in prison garb. This would be disrespectful to the king.”**

What does this say about the peace of mind and serenity of the soul (yishuv ha'daas / menuchas hanefesh) of Yosef?

The demonstration of tranquility continues when Yosef comes before Pharaoh. The king tells him, “I’ve heard you know how to interpret dreams.” Pharaoh is well known to have no patience whatsoever. He does not tolerate incompetence very well (witness the fate of the Baker and the Wine Butler for the most minor of offenses). Pharaoh was a tyrant and a murderer. Today’s tyrants are Cub Scouts compared to Pharaoh. He had no world opinion whatsoever to worry about.

Despite this reputation, Yosef’s first response to Pharaoh is to contradict Pharaoh’s statement and in a self-deprecating fashion, explain that only G-d would be able to give Pharaoh a satisfactory explanation of his dreams. **In effect, he told Pharaoh: “I can’t do a thing to help you on my own. We’ll have to see if G-d will allow me to interpret the dreams for you or not.”**

From where does Yosef get such peace of mind and coolness? **The answer is that Yosef is the quintessential example of a Ba'al Bitachon [a person that is absolutely confident that everything that happens to him is the Hand of G-d].** With such an attitude, one can rest assured that he has nothing to fear. There is no need to rush. There is no need to worry. “My fate is in the Hands of the Master of the Universe.”

The Chovos HaLevovs (Bachye Ibn Pakuda) writes that the main benefit for a Ba'al Bitachon is menuchas hanefesh [peace of mind]. We all know how hard it is to be a Ba'al Bitachon. When one’s financial situation is not going well, when — Heaven forbid — there is illness in the family, it is very difficult to be a Ba'al Bitachon. But it provides a tremendous advantage. The greatest benefit is that there is nothing to worry about. **The true serenity that all of us cherish comes from Trust in the Almighty.**

Rav Matisyahu Solomon asks from where Yosef managed to draw such strength of confidence. Rav Matisyahu Solomon answers by citing the pasuk in Parshas Vayeshev: “And his master saw that Hashem was with him, and whatever he did Hashem made succeed through him.” [Bereshis 39:3] Rashi comments on the words “and he saw that Hashem was with him” (ki

Hashem ito) (based on the Medrash, when explaining how Potiphar was able to discern this about Yosef): **“The Name of Hashem was constantly on his lips” (shagur b’piv). No matter what happened to him, he would always psych himself out and say: “This is what the Almighty wants.”**

This was not just lip service. Yosef said this over and over until it had a profound effect on him and he MEANT it. It is easy to talk a good game. It is another thing to “walk the talk” and live a good game.

If a person talks in those terms enough, eventually he will think in those terms and ultimately if he thinks in those terms, he will come to the level of Bitachon [Trust] in the Almighty through which he will truly achieve a serenity and tranquility that allows him to calmly face all of life’s travails.

One can ultimately stand in front of the most powerful human being in the world and not be fazed in the slightest. He will be in a relaxed state, knowing that the Ribono shel Olam is in charge and His Will will prevail.

In our own lives, we’ve seen prisoners of conscience who came out of the Soviet Union or who survived Nazi concentration camps. We ask ourselves — how did they have such fortitude? How is it that they were able to survive those horrors without breaking? They had this measure of supreme Bitachon. **It is a very hard level to achieve, but once one has achieved it, he has attained one of the sweetest gifts in life.**

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Re: yechida's reflections

Posted by yechidah - 28 Dec 2019 23:52

From torah org-**battling jealousy** by R Pinchas Winston

“You did not send me here, but God, and He made me a father to Pharaoh, a lord over all his household, and a ruler over the entire land of Egypt.” (Bereishis 45:8)

Parashas Mikeitz is almost always Shabbos Chanukah. It is, by far the parshah that deals with the topic of Hashgochah Pratis—Divine Providence— more than any other. As Yosef tells his brothers in this week’s parshah:

“You did not send me here, but God, and He made me a father to Pharaoh, a lord over all his household, and a ruler over the entire land of Egypt.” (Bereishis 45:8)

Usually it is the other way around. Usually it is the guilt-ridden party that tells the victim, “Look, what happened to you was Hashgochah Pratis. So, if you have a complaint take it up with God! We were just His messengers to carry out His will.” Not this time. This time it was the perpetrators who felt completely guilty for having misjudged and then mistreated their brother, and who did not know how to clear their names. This time it was the victim who tried to lessen the culpability of those against whom others would have no problem taking revenge for their role in one of the worse breaches of family trust.

Nevertheless, the brothers still not get it, as we see at the end of Parashas Vayechi:

Yosef’s brothers saw that their father had died, and they said, “Perhaps Yosef will hate us and return to us all the evil that we did to him.” So they commanded [messengers to go] to Yosef, to say, “Your father commanded [us] before his death, saying, ‘Say to Yosef, “Please forgive your brothers’ transgression and their sin, for they did evil to you. Now please forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of your father.” ‘ ” Yosef wept when they spoke to him. His brothers also wept and fell before him, and they said, “Behold, we are your slaves.” But Yosef said to them, “Don’t be afraid, for am I instead of God? Indeed, you intended evil against me, [but] God designed it for good, in order to bring about what is at present to keep a great populace alive.” (Bereishis 50:15-20)

The brothers, of course, had lied. As Yosef well knew his father would never have said such a thing to his brothers because Yosef knew that his father would never have suspected him of taking revenge. Yosef’s brothers had fabricated the story because they were afraid what Yosef might do to them now that their father was no longer there to stop him.

“But,” Yosef chided them, “if God wants you to suffer for what you did to me, does it make a difference what I feel? And, if God does not want to punish you for your role in my kidnapping, can I harm you anyhow? Wasn’t it you, Yehudah, who not long ago told me:

“What shall we say to my master? What shall we speak, and how shall we exonerate ourselves? God has found your servants’ iniquity, both we and the one in whose possession the goblet has been found.” (Bereishis 44:16)

What was the fundamental difference between Yosef and his brothers, and what does it have to do with the number 11? (The significance of the number 11 is discussed in a separate essay.)

The answer requires a person to understand what it is precisely that Amalek does to spiritually

destroy a person. You can't fix what you don't know broke. Once again the key information is in the Torah itself, elucidated by Rashi.

The Torah says:

And he said, "For there is a hand on the throne of God, [that there shall be] a war for God against Amalek from generation to generation." (Shemos 17:16)

Why is "throne" written Chof-Samech and not Chof-Samech-Aleph? And why is God's Name divided in half? The Holy One, Blessed is He, swears that neither His Name nor His throne will be whole until the name of Amalek is completely eradicated. (Rashi)

Rashi explains the verse rather matter-of-factly. The truth is that this is a very Kabbalistic idea. What does it mean that neither God's throne nor His Name is complete, and how does Amalek affect that?

The Divine Name, of course, to which Rashi refers is, Yud-Heh-Vav-Heh, the Name we are meant to unify by rejoining Yud-Heh and Vav-Heh. In other words, we are supposed to unify the 11, the gematria of Vav-Heh, with the 15, the gematria of of Yud-Heh. Once we do, the World of the Kingdom of Shaddai will have been completely rectified, and Amalek will have been destroyed forever. (The concept of "World of the Kingdom of Shaddai" as mentioned in the prayer "Aleynu" is part of a separate essay.) What does this mean, practically-speaking?

It is easier to see this in action than it is to explain it. After Yosef revealed himself and the brothers made peace, Yosef did something remarkable:

Yosef gave them wagons by Pharaoh's orders, and he gave them provisions for the way. He gave them all, to each one [several] changes of clothing, and to Binyomin he gave 300 [pieces of] silver and five changes of clothing. (Bereishis 45:21-22)

This was remarkable because the Talmud states:

Rava bar Mechasia said in the name of Rav Chama bar Guria, who said it in Rav's name: A man should never treat one son differently from the other children, for on account of the two sela's weight of material which Ya'akov gave Yosef in excess of his other sons, his brothers became jealous of him and the matter resulted in our forefathers going down to Egypt. (Shabbos 10b)

In fact, the Talmud questions Yosef's actions:

Is it possible that this righteous man should fall into the very mistake from which he himself had suffered? (Megillah 16a)

The Talmud answers the question, but rather obscurely, saying that Yosef did it to make a point:

Rebi Binyomin bar Yafes said: “He gave him a hint that a descendant would issue from him who would go forth before a king in five royal garments, as it says, “And Mordechai went forth from the presence of the king in royal apparel of blue, etc.” (Megillas Esther 8:15). (Megillah 16b)

Tell that to Yosef’s brothers who may not have caught the hint, or even believed in it. From their perspective, Binyomin was being favored over them. Though they still may have felt remorse for how they had treated Yosef, they may have wondered if what they had done was the reason why Yosef was now antagonizing them.

There is no question that Yosef was making a point to his brothers, but in the larger context of all that had transpired since they first turned against him:

He again dreamed another dream, and he related it to his brothers, and he said, “Behold, I have dreamed another dream, and behold, the sun, the moon, and eleven stars were prostrating themselves to me.” And he told [it] to his father and to his brothers, and his father rebuked him and said to him, “What is this dream that you have dreamed? Will we come I, your mother, and your brothers to prostrate ourselves to you to the ground?” So his brothers envied him . . . (Bereishis 37:9-11)

Thus, the entire episode began with jealousy. Yosef wanted to remind his brothers of this because jealousy is an important trait when it comes to Hashgochah Pratis. This is also what God told Kayin back at the beginning of the history of sibling rivalry:

But to Kayin and to his offering He did not turn, and it annoyed Kayin exceedingly, and his countenance fell. And God said to Kayin, “Why are you annoyed, and why has your countenance fallen? Is it not so that if you improve you will be forgiven? If you do not improve, however, sin is lying at the entrance, and to you is its longing, but you can rule over it.” (Bereishis 4:5-7)

Both Kayin and Hevel had offered sacrifices to God, Hevel from the best of his flock and Kayin from the least. Consequently God acknowledged the sacrifice of Hevel while ignoring that of Kayin, which made Kayin jealous enough of Hevel to want to murder him. So inherent was this in Kayin that his name has letters similar to those of “kinah,” or “jealousy.”

However, God told Kayin, the situation had nothing to do with Hevel. It had to do with Kayin himself and the sacrifice he had brought. Hevel received what he had deserved as a matter of Hashgochah Pratis, and not at any cost to Kayin. **No one can take something away from a person that belongs to the person.** He can only take something away from a person that seemed to have belonged to the person.

This is the deeper meaning of what the rabbis say:

Who is a happy person? One who is happy with his portion. (Pirkei Avos 4:1)

This does not simply mean that if life serves you lemons, make lemonade. It means that the moment a person realizes that everything he has, or does not have, has been Divinely orchestrated. He will accept his portion and stop feeling cheated in life—even when it appears that he is being cheated in life.

Thus the secret to happiness in life is not simply accepting one's portion in life, **but accepting that it is his portion because God has given it . . . and only it.** Even should jealousy drive a person to acquire what his neighbor owns, or worse, steal it, he will never truly own it in the full sense of the term because from God's perspective it is not meant for him. **A person may acquire a lot, but he can only truly own what is meant for him.**

This was what Ya'akov was teaching us through his confrontation with Eisav. In the end, what could have been a full scale war and fight to the death ended up being a discussion about who is going to keep a gift:

Eisav said, "I have plenty, my brother. Keep what is yours."

However, Ya'akov said, "Please, no! If I have found favor in your eyes then take my presents from me, since I have seen your face, which is like seeing the face of [an angel] of God, and you were pleased with me. Please take my offering which was brought to you, for God has favored me, and I have all." (Bereishis 3:1-11)

The rabbis point out the difference in the language that Eisav used to describe his financial position, and that of Ya'akov to describe his:

I have all: All that I need. Eisav, however, spoke haughtily, saying, "I have plenty," [meaning] much more than I need. (Rashi)

Inherent in Eisav's approach to life is jealousy. Eisav, and his descendants, easily become jealous because they live with the belief that a person has what he does because either he gives it to himself, or fate does. From this perspective a "neighbor" can have something you can want for yourself and make you feel as if you're lacking while you do not have it. Everything else that goes wrong in society stems from this corrupted approach to life and Divine Providence.

This is what Amalek knows and uses to his advantage. He uses the fact that God moves property around through people and events to distract people away from the Hashgochah Pratis behind all of it. He does whatever he can to convince people that it is people who wrong people, even against the will of God, so that the victims will blame the perpetrators and overlook the Divine Providence in the events of their lives.

This is the Vav-Heh of God's Name. It represents the part of Hashgochah Pratis that can become vague enough that people can confuse it for the will and actions of men only. Even though Yehudah told Yosef, who he had still thought was the viceroy of Egypt, that God was behind the bizarre turn of events that were ensnaring them, he acted as if Yosef was in control the situation.

Yosef was telling his brothers, through those very events, that his ruse could only be successful if God was the One making it succeed. If they had seen this back at the beginning when he first had his dreams and his father had shown him favoritism, they would never have come to the point that they could sell him into slavery. **Instead of holding Yosef responsible for their troubles they would have turned to God and worked it out.**

"Yes," Yosef told them, "I was able to put you through the ringer and turn your lives upside down. But, at the end of the day, am I in place of God? Obviously not. I would not have had the idea to do what I did had God not arranged it, and I certainly would not have been successful if God had not approved it."

When a person reaches this level of understanding, not just on the level of his mind, but on the level of his heart, he acts with the force of 11 and unifies Vav-Heh with Yud-Heh. And, not only does he project the light of the Menorah to the world, he himself, like Yosef HaTzaddik, becomes a human Ner Shel Chanukah. This is the ultimate accomplishment in life, and rectification of Creation.

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Re: yechida's reflections

Posted by yechidah - 03 Jan 2020 15:09

Daily Reflections

Jan 1-5

Jan 1

Transforming your inner self

Transforms the World

For individual soul

Is the inner dimension

Of our World

Jan 2

Amazing wonder

How God delights

In us mortals

Serving Him

Jan 3

Intimacy with one's wife/husband

Though only one of many

crucial aspects of marriage

is vitally important

& a great gift

From God

Not to be taken lightly

Jan 4

Let not the Blessings in my life

Cause me to become arrogant

Instead-be grateful

Utilizing this gift properly

Jan 5

May my inner & outer life

Align

In perfect harmony

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Re: yechida's reflections

Posted by yechidah - 05 Jan 2020 00:12

From Torah.org-Rabbi Frand

Parshas Vayechi

Guaranteed Protection from the Evil Eye

In Yaakov's blessing to Yosef, he states: "A son of grace is Yosef, a son of grace to the eye; girls stepped up to gaze." [Bereshis 49:22]. Rashi elaborates on this blessing: Yosef was so handsome that the Egyptian women went to great lengths to get a glimpse of him. Egyptian girls would climb up the walls when he went by, so that they would be able to gaze upon his beauty.

Is this the way we talk about a person known as "Yosef the righteous"? Do we describe him by saying he was "drop-dead gorgeous", that he was "a real knock-out!"? Heaven forbid! The Torah is not discussing a movie-star that women swoon over when they see him approach! What, then, is the meaning of this pasuk?

Rashi adds a further insight into this pasuk: "They also expounded it as referring to the fact that the evil eye will not affect his offspring." The pasuk is not coming to tell us that the praise of Yosef was the fact that he was so handsome that women wanted to gaze upon him. **On the contrary, the point is that despite the fact that everyone wanted to see him, he was given a special blessing that the "evil eye" [ayin hara] not rule over him.** According to this interpretation, the words Alei Ayin in the pasuk are expounded as Olei Ayin, mean they supersede the evil eye and can not be affected by it.

The Talmud [Berachos 20a] states that Rabbi Yochanan used to sit by the ritual immersion pools (mikveh) at night so that when the women would emerge from their immersion, they would see Rabbi Yochanan, who was exceedingly handsome. [This is based on a Kabalistic idea that the child one conceives immediately after immersing in the mikveh will be impacted by the first thing a woman sees following her immersion]. Rabbi Yochanan's colleagues asked him

whether he was not worried about Ayin Hara [the evil eye] to do such a thing (bragging about his beauty, as it were). Rabbi Yochanan responded that he was not worried about Ayin Hara because he was a descendant of Yosef, who was immune from the effects of the evil eye.

The question is why Yosef would be immune from an “ayin hara”? Classically, we would think that he is a prime candidate for being vulnerable to the evil eye (since he is the focus of all the women’s attention).

The Shemen HaTov addresses this question by reference to a Medrash [Bamidbar Rabbah Nasso 14] which discusses a special quality of the Mishkan in Shilo. Normally, sacrificial meats have to be consumed on the premises of the Temple compound. Mishkan Shilo however had the quality that one could consume meat sacrificed there as long as one was within sight of the Mishkan (b’chol haroeh). The Medrash goes on to say that Mishkan Shilo was built within Yosef’s territory in Eretz Yisrael and since Yosef did not let his eyes feast on that which was not his (when tempted by the wife of Potiphar), therefore measure for measure, he was protected from the evil eye and likewise the Mishkan of Shilo’s effect extended to everywhere from where it could be seen.

In other words, the praise of Yosef HaTzadik was that when all the Egyptian women were looking at him, he was not looking at them! He guarded his eyes and therefore he was protected from the evil eye. This is the antidote to Ayin Hara. Everyone in the world is worried about “Ayin Hara”. They are the scariest two words in our vocabulary! But Chazal teach us a way to protect ourselves from it. When we watch our own eyes (from straying), then we will not be affected by the gazing of other people’s eyes either!

This too, perhaps is what Rabbi Yochanan meant in the previously quoted passage from Gemara Berachos. When Rabbi Yochanan said he was a descendant of Yosef he did not necessarily mean that Yosef was his biological ancestor. He meant that he was Yosef’s spiritual disciple. He was not concerned about the evil eye, because he knew that he was not looking at the women when they came out from the Mikveh. For this reason, he could be confident that there was no impropriety on his part and that the evil eye would not affect him either.

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Re: yechida's reflections

Posted by yechidah - 05 Jan 2020 12:57

Jan 6

Please allow me

The wisdom

To know balance

Between healthy self confidence

& unhealthy arrogance

Jan 7

Please Grant me wisdom

To differentiate between

healthy humility

& crushing self-bashing

Jan 8

Please grant me

A healthy mind

Regulating

My emotions

In proper measure

Jan 9

Help me be kind

Even when withholding

Of the flow of expressed love

Needs to take place

Let me do so

With love & compassion

Jan 10

Wish that people

Experience joy

Let their happiness

Be my happiness

Filling me

with their joy

Jan 11

My personal

Sholom Bayis

Not complete

When my nation's

Marriages

Are going through a challenge

For every marriage

Is God's garden

Jan 12

Breathing

The forgotten joy

Of the healthy

Renew

Within ourselves

That joyful reality!!!

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