Overview

Yaakov Avinu settles in the land of Canaan. His favorite son, Yosef, brings him critical reports about his brothers. Yaakov makes for Yosef a fine tunic of multi-colored woolen strips. Yosef exacerbrates his brothers' hatred by recounting prophetic dreams — of sheaves of wheat bowing to his sheaf, and of the sun, the moon and the stars bowing down to him — signifying that all his family will appoint him king. The brothers indict Yosef and resolve to execute him. When Yosef comes to Shechem, the brothers relent, and decide, at Reuven's instigation, to throw him into a pit instead. Yehuda persuades the brothers to take Yosef out of the pit and sell him to a caravan of passing Ishmaelites. When Reuven returns to find the pit empty, he rends his clothes in anguish. The brothers soak Yosef's tunic in goat's blood and show it to their father Yaakov, who assumes that Yosef has been devoured by wild animals. Yaakov is inconsolable. Meanwhile, in Egypt, Yosef has been sold to Potiphar, Pharaoh's Chamberlain of the Butchers. In the Parsha's sub-plot, Yehuda's son Er dies as the afternoon prayer. And this one I daven (pray) Shacharis — the morning prayer. And in this one I daven Mincha — the afternoon prayer. And this one, I wouldn't be seen dead in!

Parshas Vayeshev

Insights

DIFFERENCE AND DEFERENCE

"And Yisrael loved Yosef more than all his sons..." (37:3)

Once there was a Jew who was shipwrecked on a desert island. After many years, he was finally rescued by a passing ship. Before he left the island, he insisted on showing his rescuers the three synagogues that he had built.

"Three synagogues" asked the captain of the ship. "Why does a castaway on a deserted island need three synagogues?"

The jew replied "In this one I daven [pray] Shacharis — the morning prayer. And in this one I daven Mincha — the afternoon prayer. And this one, I wouldn't be seen dead in!"

At the beginning of time, the six days of Creation were like nomads all traveling in different directions. Each was separate from the other. Removed and divided. Solitary. Like parts of a body floating, disjointed and disparate.

VIRTUALLY REAL

"Yosef replied [to the baker]... ‘In another three days, Pharaoh will lift your head from you, and hang you on a tree, and birds will eat your flesh.’” (40:19)

What did Yosef see in the baker's dream that led him to conclude that the baker would be hanged?

There once was an open-air computer-art exhibition which took as its theme "Ultra-Realism." Some of the paintings were so life-like as to be almost frightening. However, there was one painting by a famous artist that was so life-like that it almost took the 'virtual' out of 'virtual reality'!

The painting depicted a man holding a bowl of fruit. Such was the verisimilitude of this work, that birds in the park actually descended and tried to peck at the fruit and eat it. The artist was furious and demanded that plate glass be installed in front of him masterpiece.

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Speaking Between The Lines
“...and Yosef would bring evil reports about them [his brothers] to their father” (37:2)
Can it be that Yosef HaTzaddik — the righteous person — could have spoken lashon hara (lit. ‘evil tongue’) about his brothers?

When a father looks at his children and remarks that one is exemplary, this necessarily forces the others children to conform to that example. And the others will be judged lacking, to the degree that they fall short of their sibling.

“Why can’t you be like your brother — now that’s the way a person should behave!”
It wasn’t that Yosef actually spoke evil about his brothers; rather that his excellence was like a silent accusation against them. For, however elevated the brothers may have been in ultimate terms, comparatively they were not on Yosef’s level.

And comparison always makes the lesser seem inadequate.

Next to Everest, even K2 pales.
If this was the case, and Yosef didn’t actually accuse them, then why was he punished?

The greater the righteousness of a person, the greater is his obligation to conceal it — even from his father.

(Based on Admor Rabbi Menachem MiAnshenov in Iturei Torah)

Haftorah for Shabbos Chanukah
Zechariah 2:14-4:7

The festival that we call Chanukah is really the fourth Chanukah.
The word ‘Chanukah’ means ‘dedication.’ The first of the three previous dedications was in the desert when Moshe dedicated the Mishkan — the Tent of Meeting.
The second was the dedication of the First Beis Hamikdash (Holy Temple). The third Chanukah is the subject of our Haftorah. It refers to the times of the Second Beis Hamikdash and the inauguration of the Menorah at the time of Yehoshua, the Kohen Gadol, and the nation’s leader, Zerubavel, who is referred to in Ma’oz Tzur — the traditional Chanukah song.

Mother Nature’s Father

After a small band of Jews had beaten the might of Greece, one small flask of oil for the Menorah was discovered in the Holy Temple — one small flask, un-defiled by the Greeks...
That flask contained enough oil to last just one short day. But it burned and burned for eight days. To commemorate that miracle we kindle the lights of Chanukah for eight days.

INSIGHTS INTO THE ZEMIROS
SUNG AT THE SHABBOS TABLE
THROUGHOUT THE GENERATIONS.

Sing, My Soul!
In all your dwelling places
you shall do no work.

We are reminded in the Torah (Vayikra 23:1) that “It is Shabbos to Hashem in all you dwelling places.”

This description of Shabbos, observes the Sfas Emes, captures the essential difference between Shabbos and the Festivals. In order to come into contact with the ultimate spirituality of the three festivals, a Jew had to make an aliya laregal pilgrimage to the Beis Hamikdash. On Shabbos, however, the holiness of the day comes to the Jews in every one of their dwelling places.

Parshas Vayeshev
For the week ending 26 Kislev 5757, 6 & 7 December 1996

This publication contains words of Torah. Please treat it with due respect. Do not let this land on a garbage heap.