

**LIGHT
FROM
THE
FUTURE
PARSHAS MIKETZ**

BY

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LIGHT FROM THE FUTURE – PARSHAS MIKETZ

LIGHT FROM THE FUTURE ESSAYS ON PARSHAS MIKETZ

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LIGHT FROM THE FUTURE – PARSHAS MIKETZ

Dedicated to the Lubavitcher Rebbe, who, more than any Jewish leader, has prepared us for Moshiach and the imminent Redemption

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INTRODUCTION

The following collection of essays on *parshas Miketz* was taken from the weekly Torah messages that I have been sending to hundreds of individuals over the past 23 years.

These messages were written in the spirit of the talks of the Lubavitcher Rebbe. Several of them are actually based on or adaptations of his essays and discourses on the parsha.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe declared that we are living in unique times. He applied the words of the Midrash to our day:

“The time of your Redemption has arrived.”

The Rebbe stated further that the straightforward way for us to bring about the actual Redemption is by learning what the Torah says about Moshiach and Redemption. While learning Torah in general has the capacity to change our mindset, learning about Moshiach and Redemption has the capacity to alter of exile-constrained way of thinking and cultivating a liberating manner of thinking.

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In this spirit, each one of these messages concludes with an application of the Torah lesson of that week to our understanding of Moshiach and Redemption, as well as to help us prepare for the coming of Moshiach and the imminent Redemption.

The very name of this Parsha, Miketz alludes to the end of days, the term used to describe the Messianic Age.

It is my fervent hope that these essays will contribute to the process of changing our *Galus/exile* mindset into a Moshiach mindset, which is effected by the study of these themes in Torah.. And may this effort contribute to the imminent Redemption through our righteous Moshiach. Amen.

ESSAY ONE

STANDING ON THE RIVER

Joseph exposed the truth about many of the world's isms that claim altruism and purport to raise us to higher levels.

In truth the people behind these isms stand on their own gods and use them as a means to serve their own selfish interests.

Joseph's entry onto the scene of leadership—that eventually led to the creation of a Jewish nation—was, in effect, highlighted by his denunciation of all forms of man-made idol worship.

ESSAY ONE

STANDING ON THE RIVER

Pharaoh's Dreams

Pharaoh has a dream about seven lean cows that swallow seven fat cows followed by another dream of seven healthy ears of grain that are swallowed by seven meager ears of grain. Pharaoh, disturbed by the ominous nature of these twin dreams ultimately depends on Joseph to decipher them.

Joseph interprets the seven lean cows and thin ears of grain swallowing up the fat cows and healthy ears of grain as a prediction of a terrible famine that will last seven years and will swallow up the memory of the seven years of plenty that will immediately precede the famine.

Since these dreams were responsible for Joseph's ascension to power, his reunion with his brothers and father and the subsequent Egyptian exile that led to the forging of a Jewish people who would be liberated and receive the Torah at Sinai it is reasonable to conclude that these

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dreams contain a message for us as Jews in terms of our role in the world.

The Discrepancy

The following is one insight based on a discrepancy in the way dream is described in the Torah and the way Pharaoh recounts it to Joseph. Our Sages point out that it was a deliberate attempt by Pharaoh to hide a certain detail.

The parsha begins with:

“Pharaoh was dreaming, and behold he was standing **on** the Nile.”

The Hebrew can be rendered as “he was standing **by** the Nile, but the literal meaning of the word “*al*” is “on.”

Yet when he recounts the dream to Joseph he alters that detail and states instead, “In my dream, behold, I was standing on the **bank** of the Nile.”

Our Sages point out that Pharaoh did indeed imagine himself standing on the Nile in his dream. However, he was embarrassed to tell Joseph that part because the Nile was an Egyptian deity. Everything they had could be traced back to the Nile. Egypt’s entire economy was based on the Nile. It would have been the height of irreverence to imply that he was dreaming of how he stood on his god! He therefore edited that part out of his report of the dream.

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The Midrash points out that Joseph knew the truth about the dream and indeed reminded Pharaoh that he had misrepresented the facts of his dream. The Midrash cites Psalm 81 as the source of Joseph's remarks to him:

“He ordained it as a testimony for Joseph when he went over the land of Egypt: I heard a language that I did not know.”

The Hebrew word for language “*s’fas*” also carries the meaning of “[river] bank.” Joseph, the Midrash explains, was actually saying to Pharaoh: “I heard not the word “bank.” Joseph was in effect rebuking Pharaoh for adding the word “bank” in his description of where he was standing in relation to the Nile.

Pharaoh Exposed!

Why was it so important for Joseph to expose Pharaoh's lie?

The Egyptian worship of the Nile, like all pagan deities are diametrically opposite the belief we have in one G-d. The difference is not just a quantitative one; they believe in multiple gods, we believe in one. That difference suggests another major difference. Their notion of a god as a source of worship is in actuality a way of worshipping one's own interests.

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Judaism believes that G-d created us in His image. That means that G-d gave us intelligence and the ability to choose between right and wrong. Pagan worship of multiple gods is a belief that gods are created in the image of man. And since man is multifaceted and gravitates from one extreme to another, their belief in a man-made deity also manifests itself in the belief in multiple gods, each with a different character to mirror human characteristics. And just as human traits comprise the entire spectrum ranging from good to evil, moral to immoral; their gods likewise possess all of the human traits.

Standing on his god

This is what Pharaoh's standing on the Nile symbolizes: While the Nile was his god, he stood on it. He considered himself superior to his god because in reality it, just like all other pagan gods—was his own creation. And while Pharaoh was loathe to admit that his faith was not ennobling but rather degrading, Joseph was committed to exposing the truth about the relationship between Pharaoh and his gods: "What is this about the "river-bank" that you said you saw?"

There is another interesting parallel to the imagery of Pharaoh standing "on the Nile-on his god" that also relates to another Pharaoh. In fact it is in the narrative of

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Pharaoh's daughter saving Moses from the Nile. The Torah describes how she went to bathe "on the Nile." Contrast that with the way the Torah describes the location of her maidens: "on the **side** of the Nile." While she was standing above the Nile, they were standing alongside it.

Rashi tells us that her bathing in the Nile was actually a ritual designed to cleanse herself from her father's idolatry. How apt then is the description of her bathing on the Nile, for that was her way of demonstrating that the Nile was a man-made creation. This was her introduction to the saving of Moses, which led to the ultimate liberation of the Jewish people from Egyptian bondage and idol worship.

The Truth about Isms

By reminding Pharaoh of the insulting image of him standing on his G-d, Joseph was attempting to expose the truth about many of the world's isms that claim altruism and purport to raise us to higher levels. In truth the people behind these isms stand on their own gods and use them as a means to serve their own selfish interests. Joseph's entry onto the scene of leadership—that eventually led to the creation of a Jewish nation—was, in effect, highlighted by his denunciation of all forms of man-made idol worship. The same declaration was made once more soon after Moses' birth by Pharaoh's own daughter.

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And throughout history we were given these stark reminders about the depravity of those who worship other gods, be they crude idols made of wood and stone or sophisticated philosophies. The common denominator is that they are all projections of man's own base instincts onto a deity that provides them with license to continue on that path without guilt.

Chanukah a Reminder of the Bankruptcy of Paganism

A dramatic reminder of the moral bankruptcy of pagan ideology is the story of Chanukah, the Holiday that coincides with this week's Torah reading.

The Syrian Greeks who oppressed the Jews in the time of Chanukah were believers in Greek Mythology with their pantheon of deities. With all their sophistication, they were among the worst idol worshippers, who glorified their own vices and turned them into gods.

When we were victorious over them during this Holiday it was a victory over the true understanding of a G-d who transcends us and has created us to follow His example, rather than creating pagan gods who follow our example.

It is no wonder that our Sages describe the darkness that existed at the beginning of creation as a reference to ancient Greece. And when G-d said "Let there be light" He

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was referring to the light of Chanukah that banished that darkness.

It is no coincidence that Joseph—whose name means to increase—is associated with the lighting of the Menorah. The Mitzvah requires that we increase the light each and every night.

In light of the foregoing analysis of Joseph exposure of Pharaoh the connection becomes clearer. Joseph was determined to expose the fallacy of the pagan mindset. Similarly, the light of the Chanukah Menorah is designed to dispel the darkness that comes from the ancient Greek's glorification of their gods, including their glorification of philosophy, art and sports. And while Judaism has nothing against these disciplines, it recognizes them as tools for us to become better human beings, not objects of worship and glorification.

All of exile has been likened by our Sages to the darkness of night. This is partly because we do not see the reality of G-d. And frequently we try to mold our notion of G-d into our own image. And while we are reluctant to admit that our lives are about self-worship, that is often the reality. The light of Chanukah—which our Sages tell us—is a taste of the light of Moshiach helps to dispel that darkness, by exposing the Pharaoh's of the world and how they really stand on their own gods.

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Each night of Chanukah, when we kindle the added light, it brings us one step closer to Moshiach when G-d's light will rid the world of all these alien gods, and the entire world will recognize that G-d is one and His name is one.

ESSAY TWO

A DREAM COME TRUE

The aspiration that Jews had — and continue to have — for thousands of years, to realize the final and complete Redemption at the hands of Moshiach, fits into the category of a genuine dream that will be realized.

This dream possesses all the characteristics of a realistic dream:

It is about ushering a world of light. It is a selfless dream about having a world where others will not suffer. It is a dream that carries the seeds of its own actualization by acting now in a kind and holy way.

ESSAY TWO

A DREAM COME TRUE

Prescient Dreams

Dream interpretation has been the subject of much discussion and debate. The Jewish position about dreams is discussed at length by our Sages.

The Talmud describes two types of dreams. The first is a dream that is devoid of any meaning and substance. The other type of dream, however, is the prescient one; one that is revealed to the person as a prophecy.

This week's Parsha discusses the latter form of a dream. Pharaoh, the mighty ruler of Egypt, has two dreams in one night. The first was a scene of seven fat cows that were swallowed up by seven lean cows. After they were swallowed, the lean cows remained lean. The second dream was about how seven full stalks of grain were swallowed up by seven meager stalks of grain that were left unchanged. Pharaoh's dream was interpreted by Joseph as a prediction that there will be seven years of plenty followed by seven years of famine.

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How does one know if a dream has any meaning?

The Talmud quotes R. Yochanan who said:

“The following three dreams come true: a morning dream, a dream that his friend dreamt about him and a dream that was interpreted while dreaming. Some add a repetitive dream. “

What is the significance of these three (four) characteristics?

Four Characteristics of a Prophetic Dreams

An evening dream is one that follows a long day filled with all sorts of thoughts, words and actions that obscure the radiance of the soul. Chassidic literature, thus, explains that the dream is the soul's therapeutic way of purging itself from the dark influences from the world around. The crazy scenes that appear in dreams are simply the accumulation of the dust and static that the soul must get rid of in order for it to shine brightly.

A morning dream, by contrast, is a dream that occurs after the soul has already been cleansed and is at its full capacity to be receptive to the spiritual frequencies that bombard the world at all times, but do not get through because of the obstructions.

Our souls are likened to flames. But, the preoccupation

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with alien ideologies and selfish lifestyles do not allow the soul to be fully expressive and to shine brightly. This is what the holiday of Chanukah is all about. By lighting the Chanukah lights, we allow our souls to shine brightly.

The second sign that a dream has meaning for you is when someone else dreams about you. In a meaningless dream, everything revolves around the dreamer. This type of dream highlights our egocentric nature. Only a dream that is about someone else possesses the ring of truth. Only the person whose thoughts are preoccupied with others, have dreams that are meaningful and Divinely inspired.

The third characteristic of a “real” dream is when a dream carries within it its own interpretation. A dream, by definition, is not reality. For a dream to connect to the real world it must possess the seeds for its own implementation.

The fourth characteristic is when a dream repeats itself. When a person is in a dream state, they cannot focus on one thought. No sooner do they entertain one thought, they get bored with it and are compelled to consider a totally different one. Only a dream that is repeated has the ring of truth, because Divine reality is not compromised by repetitiveness.

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Dreams and Aspirations

Every one of us has dreams and aspirations. To gauge which dream is rooted in self-indulgent fantasy and which dreams are Divinely inspired that one should take seriously and follow, we must follow the four conditions. Only those dreams and aspirations that relate to the “morning,” i.e., light and reflect positive thinking, are real dreams. Only dreams that are not egocentric are connected to the Divine. And only those goals that one does not allow to remain in the realm of theory but finds the way to implement them is a real dream. And finally, only when one does not get bored of the dream, but persists until it is realized, that is a sign of its veracity and Divine nature.

The aspiration that Jews had — and continue to have — for thousands of years, to realize the final and complete Redemption at the hands of Moshiach, fits into the category of a genuine dream that will be realized. This dream possesses all four characteristics. It is about ushering a world of light. It is a selfless dream about having a world where others will not suffer. It is a dream that carries the seeds of its own actualization by acting now in a kind and holy way. It is a dream that notwithstanding the many disappointments we had throughout history, we never gave up hope and we will not give up hope until the light of Chanukah, the light of our souls, will shine brightly all the time.

ESSAY THREE

THE END

By Joseph rising to power and providing for the needs of the world, Joseph endeavored to sow the spiritual seeds that would give the entire world its ability to rise above all constraints and obstacles and remove all traces of spiritual hunger.

ESSAY THREE

THE END

The End of Days

The name of this week's Torah portion - Miketz - is translated as "the end." It appears in the context of Joseph spending two years in prison, at the end of which, Pharaoh had his dream: "and it came to pass at the end of two years that Pharaoh had a dream that he was standing on the bank of the river."

It is axiomatic that there are no accidents or coincidences in this world and certainly not within the precincts of the Torah. That the entire Torah portion that deals with Joseph's rise to power as the leader of Egypt, is called "the end," is instructive.

This term - "the end" - is found in biblical literature at the end of the book of Daniel; a book that deals extensively with the future of the world. The final period that follows all of the travail that goes along with life the way we know it, is referred to there as "*ketz hayamin*," - the end of days."

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Hence the term “the end” is a reference to the period known as the messianic age or the era of Redemption.

We may now ask, what is the connection between Joseph's rise to power, that came as a result of his successful interpretation of Pharaoh's dream, and the “end of days?”

The answer lies in a better understanding of the significance of Joseph becoming the leader of Egypt and the provider of food for the entire world.

Joseph's Uniqueness: Quantum Leap

Joseph's very name expresses his uniqueness. The root of the word Joseph is to increase. Simply stated it means that one should always grow and never remain fixed on one level.

On a deeper level, the term increase implies a quantum leap. While most people can be satisfied with an incremental measure of growth, a Joseph personality is one whose growth must be exponential.

Joseph's Brothers' Philosophy

We can now perhaps appreciate why Joseph and his brothers could not see eye to eye. Joseph's brothers, our Sages tell us, were not petty, jealous and violent people.

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Rather, they were holy people consumed with intolerance for those who would violate that which they would perceive as the “G-dly norm.” While they certainly believed in and endeavored to grow, their notion of growth was normative and calculated. To them, Joseph's unconventional approach was inconsistent with the G-dly system of order.

In the end, it was Joseph's approach that was validated. Judaism, while it respects the norm and convention, asks of us to sometimes rise above that norm and to make quantum leaps.

By Joseph rising to power and providing for the needs of the world, Joseph endeavored to sow the spiritual seeds that would give the entire world its ability to rise above all constraints and obstacles and remove all traces of spiritual hunger.

The Eighth Day of Chanukah

This is ultimately the lesson of Chanukah with its practice of constantly adding on a new candle each night. The eighth night, however, is referred to as “Zos Chanukah-This is Chanukah.” Why is the last day more expressive of Chanukah than all the others?

It is because the increase from seven to eight is a qualitative measure of growth. As an essay on last week's

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Parsha, eight is the number that symbolizes rising above the natural cycle represented by the number seven. This quantum jump - the Joseph leap - is what provides us with the ability to change the world and to bring about *Ketz Hayamin*-The End of Days the way we know them.

As Jews we don't believe in the destructive end of the world; we do believe in a positive transformation that will take place. It is the era when Joseph's model of meteoric rise above all the constraints - from spending two years in prison etc. - will become the norm for the whole world.

Our way of preparing for this “end experience” is by following the message of Joseph and Chanukah. The end!

ESSAY FOUR

THE END (2)

Our Sages also inform us that even after the “End of Days,” in the Messianic Age, when all other Holidays will no longer be significant, Chanukah will still stand out as a great Holiday.

ESSAY FOUR

THE END (2)

Sowing the Seeds

The entire saga of Joseph and his brothers—recounted in this week’s parsha— led to the Jewish nation’s stay in Egypt that ultimately resulted in their enslavement and subsequent exodus. If one is to view the story that unfolds in this light—that it represents the seeds that were sown for the eventual Exodus of the Jews from Egypt and all subsequent events such as the giving of the Torah at Sinai, the conquest of Israel etc.—we can appreciate the name of this week’s *parsha*—*Miketz*.

Literally, the word means “at the end.” And it is a reference to the end of the two years Joseph languished in prison after interpreting the dream of the Pharaoh’s butler.

On a deeper plane, however, it has been pointed out that the term *Miketz*—“at the end” alludes to the very end, the Exodus from Egypt and the ultimate end, the Messianic Age.

At first glance, this explanation appears far-fetched. What is

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the connection between the end of Joseph's two years in prison, followed by Pharaoh's dreams that Joseph interpreted, and the Exodus from Egypt and the future Redemption?

In light of the statement made at the beginning of this essay, however, one can readily see the connection: Joseph's freedom and his success at interpreting Pharaoh's dream, led to his meteoric rise to power and his ability to bring his father Jacob and all his progeny to Egypt, the end result of which was the Egyptian bondage and the Exodus. Hence the seeds of Redemption were already sown in the beginning of this week's parsha. And since, our Sages tell us, the Exodus from Egypt was the paradigm for all future periods of Redemption, it follows that the word "*Miketz*-in the end" and the ensuing narrative represented the potential for all future periods of liberation.

Pharaoh's Dream and the Exodus

There is still a need to explain the conceptual relationship between Joseph interpreting Pharaoh's dream and the Exodus that resulted from it many years later.

A dream is a world in which reality is obscured. A dream has therefore been employed in Biblical and Talmudic literature as a metaphor for the phenomenon of exile, where the reality of G-d's existence is anything.

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A dream is also a mindset that allows for one to be in two worlds simultaneously. Likewise, exile is a state of mind that allows for inconsistencies.

If dreams are a metaphor for the exile phenomenon, Pharaoh's dream represented exile at its worst. The fat cows or stalks are devoured by the meager ones. This is a metaphor for the way the inferior ideas dominate the more spiritual and lofty ones, so much so that one does not even recognize the existence of the latter; just as in Pharaoh's dream, one could not tell that there were ever fat cows or stalks. This is exile at its lowest point.

And as we read in the Torah, none of Pharaoh's advisors could interpret his dream. In context this alludes to the fact that the predictions for disaster and hopelessness were so dire, no one could imagine that G-d could ever bring such darkness or that if He did, that there would ever be a way out of it.

Novel Method of Dream Interpretation

Only Joseph was able to view the dream in a completely different light. Joseph, notwithstanding the negative way he interpreted the dream—as a prediction that there would be seven years of utter famine that would make everyone forget the seven years of plenty—Joseph proceeded with a plan that reversed everything. Moreover, not only did his

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plan—of storing grain—save Egypt, it actually transformed Egypt into the most vibrant economy of the entire world, because everyone had to come to Egypt to purchase grain, as is recounted in the Torah.

This “Joseph” way of interpreting the dream, is indeed the seed that leads to “*Miketz*—the end.” When one releases the “Joseph” of their soul out of their own internal prison and allows it to do what he does best—interpret dreams, i.e. break out of the constraints of exile—one can then transform even the darkest period of exile into “the end”—the ultimate and final Redemption.

Right and Left

Chanukah always coincides with the parsha of *Miketz*. And Chanukah’s message is indeed similar. The light of Chanukah must be lit after dark. The significance of this law is that the entire objective of Chanukah lights is to illuminate the **darkness** of the world.

Indeed, the word “*shnasayim*—two years” that appears in this *parsha*’s first verse after the word *Miketz*—the end—is an acronym that alludes to Chanukah: “*Shemnoeh neiros tadlik, yemin mezuzah*—light eight candles; on the right is the Mezuzah.” This is a reference to the practice of placing the Menorah on the left side of the door opposite the Mezuzah.

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But, the deeper connection is that while the Mezuzah is a force that strengthens the “right”—the forces of goodness that are referred to symbolically, in rabbinic literature, as being on the right—the Chanukah light is what takes the “left”—symbolic of the negative forces—and transforms them into positive. And all this follows the word *Miketz*—the end.

Which leads us to another hint: Our Sages also inform us that even after the “end of days,” in the Messianic Age, when all other Holidays will no longer be significant, Chanukah will still stand out as a great Holiday. Thus, the allusion to Chanukah follows the word “the end” to indicate that even after the end of days, Chanukah will still shine brightly

ESSAY FIVE

TWO DREAMS ARE BETTER THAN ONE

When we review the behavior of the Maccabees we see how their action was brazen.

There was no logical basis for them to start a rebellion against overwhelming odds.

It made no sense for them to defy the Syrian-Greek government that exercised total sovereignty over little Israel. It was unmitigated chutzpah on the part of the Maccabees to resist Greek culture that brought the world into a new era of enlightenment; particularly when most Jews at that time did in fact assimilate into Greek culture.

The zealous heroes of Chanukah defied their King Antiochus, Greek culture and the majority of Jewish leadership.

They pushed every logical rule aside and they put their own lives in grave danger to restore the purity of Jewish faith and practice to their people.

ESSAY FIVE

TWO DREAMS ARE BETTER THAN ONE

Why Two Dreams

This week's parsha commences with the two dreams Pharaoh had. In the first he sees seven lean cows swallowing seven fat cows, and the seven lean cows do not change. In the second dream he sees seven healthy stalks of grain swallowed up by seven meager stalks, and they too do not change.

Joseph is summoned, and he interprets the two dreams as one:

There will be seven years of plenty followed by seven years of famine that will “swallow up,” i.e., make the people forget the years of plenty.

Why did G-d have to show Pharaoh this message through two dreams, when in essence both dreams conveyed the same message?

This question, Joseph himself asked, and readily answered:

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“And as for the repetition of the dream to Pharaoh, this is because the matter is ready before G-d, and G-d is quickly going to carry it out.”

In other words, by repeating the dream to Pharaoh, G-d was trying to convey to him the urgency of the matter, so that he can take preventative action.

And thus Joseph, in the very next verse offers some unsolicited advice as to how to deal with the impending crises.

Who asked Joseph for his Advice?

Commentators raise the question: Why did Joseph volunteer his suggestions to Pharaoh without being asked by Pharaoh? Wasn't that chutzpah on Joseph's part?

One simple answer to this question is that Joseph was convinced that the repetition of the dream was G-d's way of saying, “you must find a solution now; there is no time to waste.” Hence, Joseph responded by giving immediate advice. Even if it were brazen for Joseph to volunteer this information before being asked, Joseph had no alternative. To save the world from the famine, he had to act, even if it meant overriding the king's protocol.

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Brazen!

Many have sought to find a connection between this week's Torah portion — always read during Chanukah — and the Festival of Chanukah itself.

In light of the above analysis of Joseph defying protocol to advise Pharaoh about the famine, we can see a clear link to the actions of the heroes of Chanukah, and a lesson for our times.

When we review the behavior of the Maccabees we see how their action was brazen. There was no logical basis for them to start a rebellion against overwhelming odds. It made no sense for them to defy the Syrian-Greek government that exercised total sovereignty over little Israel. It was unmitigated chutzpah on the part of the Maccabees to resist Greek culture that brought the world into a new era of enlightenment; particularly when most Jews at that time did in fact assimilate into Greek culture.

In short, the zealous heroes of Chanukah defied their King Antiochus, Greek culture and the majority of Jewish leadership. They pushed every logical rule aside and they put their own lives in grave danger to restore the purity of Jewish faith and practice to their people. Where did they get the inspiration to do this?

Jewish mystical thought teaches us that each and every one of us possesses a spark of pure holiness that when allowed

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to surface it can overcome every obstacle. The discovery of the lone cruse of uncontaminated oil sheds light (pun intended) on the way the Maccabees were able to fight their enemies. This pristine core of our souls—that is usually covered up and concealed, symbolized by the sealed cruse of untouched oil—was unleashed by the Maccabees. And it was with this energy that they were able to surmount all obstacles.

But, the question still remains. What ignited their spark at that time more than at other times in Jewish history?

And the answer lies in the story of Joseph. When he saw the “handwriting on the wall” expressed through the repetition of Pharaoh’s dream, he realized the imminence of the disastrous famine. And in times of crises, the inner core of our soul can no longer be comfortable hiding in the tranquil shadows of logic and respect for etiquette and protocol.

Similarly, the Maccabees, realized if they do not stand up against their enemies and struggle for the integrity of the soul of Israel, a catastrophe of untold proportions would ensue for the Jewish people.

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We have Been Living the Double Dream

We are living in such times. Our generation has also been subjected to a “double dream” or two manifestations of the exile in which we live. We have seen the ugly head of repression and persecution on the one hand, and the enticing winds of modernity and assimilation on the other hand.

And more recently, we have seen how the whole world has “ganged up” against Israel, threatening its very existence and the lives of all its inhabitants. The leader of Iran—a potential and likely possessor of Nuclear weapons and the desire to use them—calls for “wiping Israel off the map,” even as he denies the Holocaust. And the world responds pathetically.

To be sure, people of faith know that, in the end, we will prevail. We will have a new Holiday to celebrate the coming of Moshiach and the end to all this nonsense. In addition, we have been told that Moshiach’s coming is imminent, and all the signs mentioned in Biblical and Talmudic texts portending his coming have materialized. But, Judaism teaches us that Messianism is not about sitting back to watch the drama unfold. It is all about activating the pure cruse of oil of our souls (identified in Kabbalah as the Moshiach of our souls), to stand up

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against all the forces that threaten the integrity of the Jewish people and Judaism.

The miracle of Chanukah teaches us that the fact that people so inspired are just a minority is immaterial.

And the story of Joseph and the Maccabees also instructs us as to the need for action in the face of an impending threat, even if it goes against protocol and defies logic and societal norms.

The result of these efforts will be nothing less than the ushering in of the Age of Redemption, when we will celebrate Chanukah with renewed vigor and inspiration.

ESSAY SIX

PHARAOH'S MENORAH

The main objection of the Syrian Greeks to Judaism was not its culture and literature, but the underlying premise that it all stemmed from one G-d.

And while they defiled other parts of the Temple, the greatest emphasis was placed on preventing the use of the Menorah, which symbolizes unity within the multiplicity.

Where did this Greek mindset begin? Its roots can be traced back to Pharaoh's dream, as our Sages tell us that all subsequent exiles were modeled after the Egyptian exile.

ESSAY SIX

PHARAOH'S MENORAH

The Connection between Chanukah and Miketz

Chanukah occurs at a time in the year when we read the Torah portion of Miketz. *Shaloh*—a 17th century authoritative work on Jewish Law and Kabbalah—states that there is always a connection between a particular Torah portion and any holiday that it intersects.

The following is offered in this spirit of many commentators who have searched for and found associations between this week's parsha—Miketz—and the Festival of Chanukah.

One does not have to look too far for a connection. At the beginning of the parsha, the Torah describes Pharaoh's dreams in which he sees **seven** cows and **seven** ears of grain. The miracle of Chanukah, we all know, derives from the miracle that occurred in the Temple where the **seven**-branched Menorah was lit—and lasted miraculously for eight days— with the lone cruse of oil that they found.

This association appears to be a very superficial one. The

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only connection seems to be the emphasis on the number seven.

The Menorah and Stalks

However, when we probe further the plot thickens. In describing the seven ears of grain the Torah states: “Seven healthy and good ears of grain were growing on one stalk.” The Hebrew phrase for “one stalk” - *b’kanah ha’echad* can be found in one other place in the Five Books of Moses, in Exodus (37:19) in reference to the Menorah in the Temple!

What is the significance of this term “on one stalk” in reference to the Menorah?

The seven branches of the Menorah were all connected to the central branch. [Incidentally, the Hebrew word for branch *kanah* (stalk) implies that they were not semi-circles but straight lines, as Rashi and Maimonides explain. The semi-circle depiction of the Menorah originates in the Arch of Titus. That rendition of the Menorah is completely at odds with the way the Menorah is described in the Torah and Talmudic literature.)

Multiple Approaches

This suggests a powerful and vital lesson. Each branch of the Menorah is said to express a different approach to

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serving G-d. Kabbalah teaches us that the soul comprises seven emotional traits, so that there are seven possible emotional approaches one can take in illuminating the world with the G-dly light.

However, all of these branches were connected to the central “stalk.” All of the divisions cannot reflect multiplicity in G-d; they must all be expressive of the one G-d and one Torah that may manifest itself in seven ways.

Two Practical Lessons

Two practical lessons emerge from this fact:

First, when are our differences legitimate?

Only when the differences are limited to the diverse human emotions.

However, for these emotions to be legitimate they must all be rooted in the foundations of Judaism that revolve around the unity of G-d. If one's Judaism were to stray from its basic principles then, the Menorah would not be acceptable for use in the Temple of G-d.

Second, notwithstanding the differences that exist within our community, there must be a sense of a deeper spiritual unity that belies our divisions.

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The Core of the Struggle with the Syrian Greeks

This unity was at the core of the Syrian-Greek struggle with Judaism. Their worldview was one of inherent division.

Their main objection to Judaism was not its culture and literature, but the underlying premise that it all stemmed from one G-d. And while they defiled other parts of the Temple, the greatest emphasis was placed on preventing the use of the Menorah. Perhaps it was the message of unity that they could not tolerate.

Where did this Greek mindset begin? Its roots can be traced back to Pharaoh's dream, as our Sages tell us that all subsequent exiles were modeled after the Egyptian exile.

Pharaoh's Dreams: The Root of the Greek Mindset

Pharaoh's dreams—the way a Pharaoh looks at the world—were thus symbols of the exile that was about to begin and all subsequent exiles.

In his dream he sees a unified world-view represented by the seven ears as they grow on one stalk. Yet, seven thin ears swallow up the seven healthy ones, leaving no trace of the original seven. Note that in the description of the seven thin ears of grain it does not mention that they all grow on one stalk. This is because in Pharaoh's scheme spiritual unity is a flaw and pagan multiplicity is a virtue. A later

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Pharaoh therefore declares “I don’t know G-d.”

Joseph’s Transformation of Pharaoh’s Dreams

Joseph, however, takes the negativity of Pharaoh’s dream and converts it into a positive message. The challenge of living in a divided world is to ultimately restore that diversity into a state of unity. Joseph was able to take the seven years of plenty—represented by the seven healthy and unified ears of grain— and use it to eliminate the effects of the seven years of famine—represented by the seven thin and disconnected ears of grain.

Joseph’s actions then provided future generations of Jews with the ability to rededicate the Menorah of Judaism with its message of G-dly light and unity.

The message of Chanukah is as relevant today as it was then. The light of Chanukah should inspire us to leave the Galut mentality of division and separation and embrace the theology of G-dly unity—the underlying belief in Moshiach at which time the prophet declared: “G-d will be one and His name will be one.”.

ESSAY SEVEN

“I HAVE A DREAM”

Lest we think that the process of Redemption will negate everything we stood for in the days of exile, this week's Torah portion informs us that the contrary is true.

The dream/exile itself contains the solution. Within the chaotic state of affairs that characterize a dream and the period of exile, there is a powerful hidden energy that only a dream/exile can contain.

Within the confusion of exile there are the Mitzvos we do, the Torah we study, the families we raise, the jobs we have, that are themselves the building blocks of the Redemption.

ESSAY SEVEN

“I HAVE A DREAM”

Was Joseph Presumptuous?

Joseph was cruelly thrown into prison, where he interprets the dreams of the king's baker and butler. Having helped the butler, who was to be restored to his position, Joseph asked him to mention his plight to Pharaoh.

This week's Torah portion entitled Miketz (the end) begins with Pharaoh's twin dreams in which he sees meager cows and stalks swallowing up fat cows and stalks, and their meager appearance does not change.

When Pharaoh could not find a sensible interpretation for his dreams, his butler told him of Joseph's dream interpreting ability. Joseph was promptly brought before Pharaoh and interpreted his dream as a reference to seven years of plenty that will be followed by seven years of famine. These years of famine, Joseph informed Pharaoh, will be so harsh that the people will forget the seven years of plenty.

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After successfully interpreting the dream, Joseph then proceeds to advise Pharaoh what to do to avert the catastrophe. During the seven years of plenty the people should store food for the seven years of famine.

Commentators raise the question as to why Joseph volunteered advice to Pharaoh. After all, Pharaoh had just asked him to interpret his dream. Wasn't it presumptuous for Joseph to offer unsolicited advice?

Standing Together

The Rebbe explains that Pharaoh's dream itself contained the solution to the problem. When Pharaoh saw the seven fat cows and seven lean cows they were standing together on the river bank. This suggested that the seven good years and seven lean years would somehow occur at the same time. How could that be? How could we have seven fat years and seven lean years simultaneously?

Joseph, therefore, proposed an ingenious solution. By preparing for the seven lean years during the seven fat years, it would be considered as if both periods coincided. After all, the food for the seven lean years was being stored during the seven years of plenty. And during the seven years of famine they were nourished by the food that grew and was stored during the seven fat years.

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We can now appreciate why Pharaoh was so impressed with Joseph. It was not only his ability to interpret the dream that impressed him; it was his ability to see the solution to the problem predicted by the dream, contained within the dream itself.

Finding the Solution in the Problem of Exile

The lesson for our times is obvious.

Our Sages liken the exile to a dream because of the confusion and contradiction that are inherent in a dream. Exile is a time when – as in a dream state – our thinking processes are clouded. Redemption is therefore appropriately compared to the process of awakening.

But, lest we think that the process of Redemption will negate everything we stood for in the days of exile, this week's Torah portion informs us that the contrary is true. The dream/exile itself contains the solution. Within the chaotic state of affairs that characterize a dream and the period of exile, there is a powerful hidden energy that only a dream/exile can contain. Within the confusion of exile there are the Mitzvos we do, the Torah we study, the families we raise, the jobs we have, that are themselves the building blocks of the Redemption.

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Rather than negating the exile, Redemption will enable us to finally access and fully appreciate the hidden potential we now possess.

Indeed, the Hebrew word for Redemption, Geulah, contains the very same letters as the Hebrew word for exile, Golah. The only difference is that Geulah has an extra letter aleph that stands for G-d the master of the universe.

As we stand on the threshold of the new age of Redemption, we should savor every moment of accomplishment in our present state of exile. For it is the hidden energy that we now possess that will become manifest in the near future. The more we tap into the hidden spirituality contained within us and our environment now, the quicker we will hasten the Redemption and the deeper our understanding of it will be.

ESSAY EIGHT

ARE YOU PREPARED?

We must constantly be thinking of the goal, of preparing ourselves for the future Redemption.

On the other hand, we must not let our yearning for the future impede our ability to do our job while we are still here in the last moments of exile.

Every day must be filled with the study of Torah and fulfillment of the Mitzvos.

While we are here in exile our mission is to make wherever we are an extension of the Holy Land of Israel and every moment a Shabbos moment.

ESSAY EIGHT

ARE YOU PREPARED?

Joseph's Shabbos Table

Joseph is now the Viceroy of Egypt. His dream that one day his brothers will bow down to him has come true. Joseph is now in a position to torment them by accusing them of being spies and threatening that if they do not bring their/his brother Benjamin they will not be able to return and that Shimon, who had been detained by Joseph, would remain a prisoner.

When they finally do return with Benjamin, Joseph prepares a meal for them. In his instructions to the supervisor of his house he tells them to “slaughter an animal and to prepare.”

In this verse it does not really say what Joseph asked the supervisor to prepare. It is assumed that he meant that he should prepare a full meal, but the Torah does not explicitly state what he wanted his servant to prepare.

According to the Midrash the term “preparation” is a code word for the preparations that we make for the Shabbos.

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Since we cannot prepare our foods on the Shabbos itself we are compelled to make all of the preparations before the onset of the holy day.

The Midrash suggests that Joseph observed the Shabbos and therefore made sure that his supervisor would have everything prepared for the festive Shabbos meal that he would share with his brothers.

The Day and Meal of Unity

One can derive from this interpretation an immediate lesson:

The meal that Joseph had with his brothers was a prelude to Joseph's final reconciliation with his brothers. First it was this meal where he sets them up for the ensuing accusation that Benjamin stole his magic goblet. This eventually led to Judah's bold defense for his brother at which point Joseph broke down and divulged his identity to them, a confession which led to all the brothers' reunification as a family.

Second, and more importantly, as the commentator Sforno and others maintain, this meal, in which he gave Benjamin five times the amount he gave the other brothers, was the final test to see if his brothers might still harbor any feelings of jealousy to one of them. When the brothers

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exhibited no jealousy for his preferential treatment of Benjamin Joseph knew that they had erased all of their negative feelings towards him as well. They were now, therefore, ready for the unification process.

In effect, this Shabbos meal can be characterized as the meal of unification where previous jealousies and grudges dissolved.

This is a direct lesson to us about the power of the Shabbos to unify us. Shabbos is referred to in the Zohar as a day of unification in every sense of the word. It is the day, the Zohar says, in which “all realms of anger and severe forces flee from her and vanish.” The spiritual aura of the Shabbos is so powerful that on Shabbos, and specifically during the Shabbos meals, all of the external factors that divide us fall to the wayside and, in their place our inherent spiritual unity deriving from the common source of our souls is on display.

The Eternal Shabbos

The Shabbos meal that we enjoy today is also a metaphor for the ultimate Shabbos of existence, the Messianic Age, when the unity will become permanent. There will be a total rapprochement between all of the different factions of the Jewish community. Indeed, there will also be peace between Israel and all of the nations of the world who, in

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the words of the Prophet, will serve G-d with “one consent.” The catalyst for this is the preparations we are making now for the future Shabbos. This is alluded to in the words “and to prepare.” It does not say what they were to prepare for because in this undefined silence it is subtly alluding to the ultimate preparatory phase of history which is now.

Why did They Drink?

We can now answer the question commentators ask about the Torah’s description of that meal. “They drank and became drunk with him.” Rashi comments that from the day they sold Joseph neither Joseph nor his brothers drank any wine. This was the first time they had done so since then. Commentators ask why the brothers, who did not realize that they were sitting at the table with Joseph, would drink wine?

In light of the foregoing characterization of that meal as a Shabbos meal we can understand that it was the very aura of Shabbos that inspired them to elicit their deepest feelings of love and unity. Wine, our Sages tell us, reveals our secrets. Their physical drinking of wine was an expression of their spiritual feelings that were finally becoming aroused. These newly exposed feelings engendered a profound and unprecedented sense of unity

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among the brothers. Their spiritual drinking of the wine made them feel at peace with themselves and with each other to the point that they now felt comfortable enough to again drink wine.

Preparing for the Shabbos: Two Schools of Thought

The Talmud records a dispute between the Sages Shammai and Hillel with regard to the preparations for the Shabbos. Shammai would purchase food on Sunday and select the finest for Shabbos. On Monday he would find something of higher quality and designate that for Shabbos and eat what he had prepared on Sunday. He would repeat this every day, so that whatever he ate during the week was, in effect, a result of his preparation for the Shabbos. In the words of the Talmud, “All his life he ate for the honor of Shabbos.”

Hillel, by contrast, would do everything for the sake of Heaven. He would say, “Blessed is G-d day by day.” He would trust that he would find the best food right before Shabbos.”

The two Sages’ approach to Shabbos reflects two ways of understanding our role in preparing for both the weekly Shabbos and the ultimate Shabbos, the Era of Redemption.

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Shammai's approach is to focus on the goal all the time. Whatever we do any day of the week has to be connected to Shabbos. Shammai is obsessed with the spiritually intoxicating day of Shabbos that is a taste of the future. Hillel, by contrast, lives one day at a time. While Hillel also thought of the Shabbos everyday of the week his focus was on living each day to the fullest. When people are so preoccupied with preparing for a future event they can forget about the daily obligations they have as Jews. And it is precisely when we make the most of each day of the week that we are best prepared for the ultimate Shabbos.

Both approaches are correct.

On the one hand, we must constantly be thinking of the goal, of preparing ourselves for the future Redemption. Particularly now as we get closer to that time everything we do must be permeated with the sense that now is the precisely the time for the preparation of Shabbos.

On the other hand, we must not let our yearning for the future impede our ability to do our job while we are still here in the last moments of exile. Every day must be filled with the study of Torah and fulfillment of the Mitzvos. While we are here in exile our mission is to make wherever we are an extension of the Holy Land of Israel and every moment a Shabbos moment. This we do even as we prepare for the imminent arrival of Moshiach who will

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transport us into a new era, a Shabbos Era, and bring us back to the Land of Israel in both the literal and spiritual sense.

ESSAY NINE

CHANUKAH IN EGYPT?

We must yearn for the future when G-d's light, the infinite G-dly light created on the first day of creation that enables us to see from one end of the world to the other, will be revealed.

This primordial light is recaptured with the Chanukah lights that we light at present, but which will be fully revealed in the future.

Our prayers have to be directed to G-d to make this time become a reality. All of our thoughts have to revolve around Moshiach and Redemption.

ESSAY NINE

CHANUKAH IN EGYPT?

Joseph and his Brothers Enjoy a Chanukah Banquet!

Joseph confusingly invites his brothers to a feast after he had accused them of being spies.

For this banquet he ordered that they slaughter meat and prepare it for them.

It is interesting, as many commentators have pointed out, that the words which contain Joseph's order to his supervisors to "slaughter an animal and prepare" contain the letters that, when rearranged, spell "Chanukah!"

What connection is there between the preparations for the Shabbos feast and Chanukah, a Holiday which would only take place over a thousand years later?

School of Shammai and Hillel: Two Approaches to Shabbos and Chanukah

A connection can be found in light of the analysis of the two approaches of Shammai and Hillel and what can be

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understood as a parallel dispute between Shammai's and Hillel's students.

Concerning the Chanukah lights there is a dispute between the School of Shammai and School of Hillel. The School of Shammai maintains that we should light eight lights the first night, seven the second night, and so on, in declining order. The School of Hillel maintains that we start with one light the first night and continue in ascending order.

In the preceding essay we cited the different approaches Shammai and Hillel had to Shabbos preparations.

Shammai would purchase food on Sunday and select the finest for Shabbos. On Monday he would find something of higher quality and designate that for Shabbos and eat what he had prepared on Sunday. He would repeat this every day, so that whatever he ate during the week was, in effect, a result of his preparation for the Shabbos. In the words of the Talmud, "All his life he ate for the honor of Shabbos."

Hillel, by contrast, would do everything for the sake of Heaven. He would say, "Blessed is G-d day by day." He would trust that he would find the best food right before Shabbos."

It maybe suggested that the School of Shammai, following the teaching of their mentor Shammai, were obsessed with Shabbos preparations. The School of Shammai therefore put their emphasis on the first day of Chanukah. On the

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first day of Chanukah they saw into the future that there would be an eight day miracle; so they were obsessed with those eight days. On the second night they saw seven days of miracles so they “lived” with those seven days, and so on.

The School of Hillel, as did their mentor Hillel, directed their energies to living each day to its fullest, knowing that such an outlook will ultimately lead to the future. The School of Hillel therefore required the lighting of one light the first night. On the first day there was one miracle, and it was that miracle that had to be celebrated and internalized.

Incorporating Both Approaches

Today, as we stand on the threshold of the future Redemption we have to incorporate both approaches.

To be sure, we must follow the Halacha and light in accordance with the School of Hillel until the time of Redemption when, according to the teachings of the Ari, we will follow the School of Shammai. But, nonetheless, emotionally and spiritually we must integrate these two approaches.

On the one hand, we must yearn for the future when G-d's light, the infinite G-dly light created on the first day of creation that enables us to see from one end of the world

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to the other, will be revealed. This primordial light is recaptured with the Chanukah lights that we light at present, but which will be fully revealed in the future at which time we will have all eight lights burning brightly, the number eight representing the most transcendent light. Our prayers have to be directed to G-d to make this time become a reality. All of our thoughts have to revolve around Moshiach and Redemption.

We must also, simultaneously, follow the approach of Hillel and the School of Hillel and focus our attention of living every day that we are still in exile to the fullest, utilizing every opportunity to make our lives today as radiant as they can be. Even if it means just lighting one humble candle, it can be the one candle that will banish the darkness of exile entirely and permanently. We cannot allow our obsession with the future deter us from action today. In this period of transition we have to combine the two opposite mindsets of obsession with the future even as we are totally involved in the present.

ESSAY TEN

WAKE UP AND OPEN YOUR EYES!

We are living in the most opportune time for the Jewish people.

The Jewish people enjoy as much freedom as they have today in virtually every country in the world.

Even the “Evil Empire,” the former Soviet Union, has disappeared.

We have witnessed unprecedented miracles of Biblical proportions in the last few decades, particularly in the Land of Israel.

But, as long as we haven’t eradicated every trace of evil our work is still not finished.

ESSAY TEN

WAKE UP AND OPEN YOUR EYES!

The Ray of Hope

In parshas Miketz, the Torah records a turning point in the saga of Joseph and his brothers. In last week's parsha, Joseph languishes in prison, falsely charged with attempting to violate his master Potiphar's wife. Joseph shows concern for the downcast mood of the king's butler and baker, his fellow inmates, and successfully interprets their dreams.

The parsha ends with Joseph asking the butler to mention his name to Pharaoh so that he could be released. However, the parsha ends: "And the butler did not remember Joseph and he forgot him". Hence the preceding parsha ends on a rather pessimistic note. Joseph is left languishing in prison, his one hope for release dashed.

This week's parsha begins on a positive note; a ray of hope. Pharaoh has a troubling dream and the butler finally mentions his experience with Joseph, who proved to be an able dream interpreter. Joseph is liberated, impresses Pharaoh with his dream interpretation prowess and

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particularly with his advice how to forestall the impending disaster of seven years of famine. Pharaoh appoints Joseph the Viceroy of Egypt, he meets his brothers and, in the next parsha, reconciles with them. The entire family moves to Egypt for what turns out to be the beginning of the first Golus/exile, the forerunner and paradigm of all subsequent periods of exile

When we survey the entire episode, it becomes clear that the linchpin of Joseph's triumph and the subsequent exile begins with Pharaoh's dream.

“Doesn't Everyone Dream?”

The Midrash, in its inimitable style, asks a question on the opening words of the Parsha which states: “And Pharaoh has a dream”: “Doesn't everyone dream?” And the Midrash answers: “The dream of a king is a dream of the entire world.”

What is the meaning of the Midrash's question, “doesn't everyone dream?” Of course everyone dreams, but the story here is about Pharaoh's specific dream. The Torah does not say that only Pharaoh dreamed. What else should the Torah have written?

The Midrash's question appears to focus on the fact that the Torah employs the present tense in describing

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Pharaoh's dream: "And Pharaoh has a dream" or, more precisely "And Pharaoh dreams," rather than "and Pharaoh dreamed." The implication here is that Pharaoh's dreaming abilities were a unique phenomenon. The Midrash therefore asks: "Doesn't everyone dream?" What was so unusual about Pharaoh's dream?

The Midrash's answer is that, indeed, a king's dream is different because his dream affects the world. When a king dreams it is a heavenly message that G-d chooses to transmit and channel to the entire world through the leaders of their respective countries.

Pharaoh a Metaphor

One could find a deeper understanding of this Midrashic question and answer that is based on the Zohar's commentary that Pharaoh is also a metaphor for the Supreme King of Kings, A-mighty G-d.

As strange as it may sound, we find that even G-d is described in the Torah as being in a sleeping mode and dream state. Of course, we cannot attribute any physical properties to G-d. Nevertheless, the Torah employs the metaphor of sleep to describe the manner in which G-d is revealed or concealed. When G-d, the life force of the universe, is concealed, it is analogous to one who is asleep. Sleep is defined as a state of being where the soul is

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partially removed from the body, leaving the body with only a trace of the soul's full capacity. It is a state where the soul does not fully express itself.

The result of sleeping is dreaming. When one's soul is concealed he or she is out of touch with reality. A dream state is one in which reality is exchanged for fantasy and fantasy for reality. When our souls are actively involved in animating us we know who, where and wherefore we are.

When it is said that G-d is "asleep" it means that G-d conceals His presence. As a result, the world loses its sense of reality.

Here the Torah states "Pharaoh dreams." The world is going through a state of G-dly concealment and the paradoxical state of Golus/exile, in which opposites can co-exist, ensues. The mystical literature of Judaism explains that Golus prompts the generation of the most sublime G-dly energies, but they manifest themselves in the opposite mode of exile. Redemption thus means that we are able to access these Divine energies.

This prompts the question: Doesn't everyone dream? G-d is not the only one whose energy is obscured. Every person experiences occasions when his or her energy is stifled; when they are in a sleep and dream state. What is so unique about the King who is in a dream state?

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The answer is that when the King is in a dream state the entire world is affected. When we experience our own state of sleep, it is localized and doesn't suggest that the world is in a state of Golus. The difference between G-d in a dream state and the individual is that the former affects everyone while the latter is limited to the individual.

Are we In Golus?

The above distinction between two forms of exile—collective and individualistic—applies, specifically, to the present.

On the one hand, we are living in the most opportune time for the Jewish people. There was never a time in all of our national existence—from the days of King Solomon onward—when the Jewish people, as a people, enjoy as much freedom as they have today in virtually every country in the world. Even the “Evil Empire,” the former Soviet Union, has disappeared and been replaced with a regime that affords Jews unprecedented opportunities to live and thrive as Jews. It is something which people could only have imagined in their wildest dreams. Yet that became the reality.

In addition, we have witnessed incredible and unprecedented miracles of Biblical proportions in the last few decades, particularly in the Land of Israel.

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Unprecedented numbers of Jews are discovering their roots and dedicating themselves to Torah study and Mitzvah observance.

Never before have so many thousands of Torah classes and lectures been made available to so many millions of Jews via the various media that modern technology has given us.

Celestial Napping

If the exile is likened to a dream, and that G-d appears to us to be in a “sleep state”, then we are now witnessing the transition described in the Biblical verse; from: “Awaken, why do you sleep O G-d” to: “and G-d awakened from His sleep.”

In the Megillah, when King Achashveirosh couldn't sleep at night, our Sages explained metaphorically, it was a reference to G-d “awakening” as it were and breaking out of the dream state of Golus and enabling the miracle of Purim.

We are indeed living in Messianic times, when unprecedented positive things are happening before our eyes. We are witnessing a waking up from the general dream state the world has been in since the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash. This is the dream of a King and

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conversely the awakening of a King; it affects the entire world.

But there is still another side of the story. There are still negative things. Evil has not been eradicated. Assimilation is rampant in the Jewish community. Anti-Semitism is still alive, and the land of Israel is still surrounded by enemies who pray for its destruction. But most troubling perhaps, is that there are individuals who are so entrenched in the exile mentality, they “insist” on seeing only the dark side of things. These are lingering symptoms of exile that remind us there are still sleepers in a dream state who resist the emerging energies of Redemption.

However, there is a fundamental difference between these two dream states:

The first is the dream of a King. It is a sign that there is a significant disconnect between G-d and the world. The world is then in a coma, out of which only extraordinary measures can succeed in rousing it.

When the G-dly energy that gives life to the world is no longer withdrawn, the world will awaken and begin to pulsate with a new life. Miracles and cataclysmic changes will become so common that one will hardly even notice them anymore. We have already tasted that phase of awakening from the dream of Golus.

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In this first stage of getting out of Golus, G-d removes the veil that He spread over the world, which obscured the world's vision and feeling of G-d's presence and prompted all of the negative events that are a consequence of the Divine state of sleep and dreaming.

But that is only a first—although major—step. The next crucial step—the mission of our “liberated” generation—is to awaken ourselves as individuals to the new realities. In the historic words of the Rebbe we have to “open our eyes!”

The Rebbe stated that the Jewish people collectively—the Jewish people as one people throughout history—are essentially a healthy people. All the elements that are associated with the Messianic Age are already here. And while we each have flaws and Golus-tainted moments, our general health is good. Our task now as individuals is to awaken from the bitter dream of Golus by living a more vibrant and positive Jewish life. To paraphrase a well-known cliché: “It is not enough to get us out of Golus; we must also get the Golus out of us.”

ESSAY ELEVEN

TEN TO DISCOVER THE ONE

On the surface there is nothing more reprehensible than exile.

But when we dig deeper and excavate until we reach its inner core, there is a hidden energy that can only be accessed in exile.

It is the very force that empowers us to thrive in exile and ultimately be liberated from it.

The way we bring an end to the undesirable external aspects of exile is to search for and discover its hidden inner essence.

ESSAY ELEVEN

TEN TO DISCOVER THE ONE

A Minyan

One of Judaism's most celebrated institutions is the *minyan*. It is the quorum of 10 adult Jewish men needed to say certain prayers; specifically, the prayers that involve the sanctification of G-d, such as the *kaddish*, *kedushah* and the repetition of the *amidah*. A *minyan* is also necessary for the public reading of the Torah.

Praying with a *minyan* significantly enhances the spiritual power of each of its constituent member's prayers. The Talmud also states that G-d does not despise the prayer of the many. According to the Talmud, one who prays with a quorum contributes to the Redemption of G-d and his children from exile.

What is the source of the number 10 with respect to a *minyan*?

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Two Sources

There are actually two biblical sources cited by the Jerusalem Talmud.

The first source, mentioned also in the Babylonian Talmud, is the spy narrative in parsha *Shelach*. Ten of the 12 spies Moses sent to scout the land of Cana'an returned with a slanderous report about the Promised Land. These 10 spies are referred to in the Torah as an *eidah*-congregation. Hence, we know that the minimum number of people needed to form a congregation is 10 adult men.

The second source (cited only in the Jerusalem Talmud) derives the requirement of 10 for a *minyan* from this week's parsha. Ten of Jacob's 12 sons entered Egypt to purchase food during the famine predicted by Joseph that had spread to the land of Cana'an as well. Jacob's 10 sons are referred to as the "Children of Israel" in this verse. The same expression "Children of Israel" is employed with regard to the commandment to sanctify G-d: "I should be sanctified among the Children of Israel..." This parallel usage of the term Children of Israel is intended to convey the message that a quorum of 10 men is necessary to engage in activities during which G-d's name is sanctified, such as prayer.

We have thus two sources for the *minyan* imperative of 10 men: the evil congregation of 10 spies who rebelled against

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G-d and the Land of Israel, or the 10 sons of Jacob who sold Joseph into slavery.

Our task today is to understand the conceptual and didactic differences between these two sources, and why we must have them both.

A Minyan of Sinners?!

To answer these questions, another question must be answered: how the Torah could base the congregational requirement of 10 men to sanctify G-d's name on the 10 spies who rebelled against G-d?

The Rebbe (*Likkutei Sichos* volume 33) cites this anomaly as proof that the spies were motivated by spiritual considerations. They felt that the ideal spiritual state was to be found in the serene environment of the desert, where all their physical needs were met by G-d. These spies lived in a blissfully spiritual world and wanted nothing less than the continuation of this kind of life for all of Israel. They feared that entering the land of Israel would force them to relinquish their souls' spiritual quest.

Now, to be sure, their actions were inconsistent with G-d's will, and for which transgression they were duly punished. Nevertheless, their revolt did not stem from the standard ego-driven form of rebelliousness that characterizes other

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rebels discussed in the Torah. Their disobedience was rooted in a positive, albeit misdirected, spiritual quest. Hence, the source of the law concerning the spiritual institution of the *minyan* can justifiably be derived from the highly spiritually charged group of spies.

Based on this analysis, the foregoing question as to why the Jerusalem Talmud was not content with that source alone and sought additional biblical substantiation for the *minyan* from the 10 sons of Jacob, comes into sharper focus.

Entering the Four Exiles

The verse in this week's parsha from which the requirement of 10 ten men to form a *minyan* is derived, reads as follows:

“So the Children of Israel came to buy grain among the visitors, for the land of Canaan was in a state of famine.”

Commentators observe that the Hebrew word for “came,” [*ha'ba'im*] is an acronym for the four primary exiles of the Jewish nation: the letter *beis* stands for Bavel-the Babylonian exile; the *aleph* is the initial of edom-the roman exile; the *yud* represents Yavan-the Greek exile, and the *mem* corresponds to Madai-the Mede or Persian exile.

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In the light of this insight, the verse can be retranslated, allegorically, as:

“So the Children of Israel came to buy grain in the midst of the four exiles, for the land of Cana’an was in a state of famine.”

This reading suggests that the reason we left the promised land of Israel, originally known as Cana’an, was to find nourishment in exile.

Spiritual Nourishment in Exile

How can it be that we should seek our spiritual nourishment in exile? Isn’t exile, by definition, a state of alienation from G-d and his teachings? Isn’t exile the very antithesis of holiness and spiritual growth? Doesn’t exile foster desensitization and famine of the spirit? Yet doesn’t the verse imply that the 10 sons of Jacob looked for their spiritual fix in exile?

The answer lies in the word “*toch*-in the midst” which means that while on the surface there is nothing more reprehensible than exile, but when we dig deeper and excavate until we reach its inner core, there is a hidden energy that can only be accessed in exile, and, indeed, it is the very force that empowers us to thrive in exile and ultimately be liberated from it.

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In other words, the way we bring an end to the undesirable external aspects of exile is to search for and discover its hidden inner essence.

In the *at bash* code (where the first letter of the alphabet—the *aleph*—is exchanged for the last letter—the *tav*; the second letter—the *beis* for the second last—the *shin* etc.), the word *toch*-midst is transformed into the word *aleph*, which alludes to the master of the world. The inner essence of exile, hidden in code, is the *aleph*.

When we mine the inner force of exile—the *aleph*—and reveal its spiritual truth, we release a mighty force of Redemption.

In the words of the Rebbe: exile-*Golah* and Redemption-*Geulah* share the same letters. The sole difference between them is the *aleph* that transforms *Golah* into *Geulah*.

When we are able to reveal exile's true inner vitality, we receive the spiritual nourishment we need not only to survive but thrive within the exile,—as did the Jews initially in Egypt—but also bring an end to its external, negative character and reveal the *Geulah*.

Two Functions of the *Minyan*

We can now understand the difference between the two sources that show us the need for 10 men in a *minyan*.

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The source that derives it from the 10 spies focuses us on the quest for greater spirituality, which is a necessary ingredient in prayer. During prayer we have to escape and transcend the material world to such an extent that we must force ourselves to “return” below to engage and ultimately transform the world into a land of Israel; a land that cultivates and engenders a desire to conform to G-d’s will. To accomplish that, we must have the inspiration of prayer where we rise above and are temporarily withdrawn from the physical world.

The institution of the *minyan* is a crucial factor to facilitate our spiritual experience of prayer. When 10 Jews gather together, they generate a spiritual force that is infinitely more potent than the sum total of the spiritual energies possessed and generated by each individual.

It Takes a Community

However, the second source, that which derives the requirement of 10 men from the 10 sons of Jacob who entered Egypt highlights a completely different function of the *minyan*.

When a Jew is a prisoner of exile and tries to discover its inner dynamic only to be blocked from penetrating the thick cover, the way to accomplish that feat is to join forces

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with nine other Jews; one needs the assistance of the *minyan*.

This concept was alluded to in an earlier section of the Torah. When Jacob came to the well near Lavan's home and saw the shepherds sitting, idle he asked why they were not off feeding and herding their sheep. They responded that they could not remove the heavy stone which covered the well on their own so they were waiting for all the other shepherds to assist them in that task. Only Jacob was able to do move the boulder singlehandedly.

This incident can be understood metaphorically. We, as individuals, cannot remove the stones or impediments blocking the wells of our souls. To gain access to those refreshing spiritual waters, we need the assistance of the community. The *minyan* is a micro version of the entire Jewish community, with whose help we can remove any obstacle. It is only when we view ourselves strictly as individuals that we find our paths blocked with insurmountable barriers.

Jacob, and Jacob-like individuals such as the Rebbe, can move the rock singlehandedly because their souls are comprised of the souls of all the members of the community. They are not merely individuals; they personify the community, to which they selflessly devote their lives. Everyone else needs the power of the *minyan* to reveal the

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aleph, embedded within exile, that empowers us to achieve *Geulah*.

Learning with a *Minyan*

In addition to praying with a *minyan*, the Rebbe emphasized that we must also learn Torah—particularly, the parts of Torah that deal with Redemption and Moshiach—with a quorum of 10. The combined strength of the *minyan* enhances the learning experience and helps us remove the stone blocking the emergence of the *aleph*, which we will use to transform *Golah* into *Geulah*.

ESSAY TWELVE

DREAM OR REALITY?

The goal of Chanukah lights is to so inundate the “outside” with G-dly light that the perfunctory nature of our spiritual lives ceases to be so and we begin to thrive and savor every bit of our Mitzvos.

We take nothing for granted and we do not get bored with the repetition of our mitzvah activities.

Every mitzvah is fresh and exciting.

ESSAY TWELVE

DREAM OR REALITY?

Joseph's Liberation

This week's parsha picks up where last week's ends. Joseph has been wrongly accused of trying to attack the wife of his master, Potiphar, who has him incarcerated. In prison he successfully interprets the dreams of Pharaoh's butler and baker. Joseph implores the butler—whose dream he interpreted favorably that he would be freed and reinstated—to repay his kindness with kindness and mention him to Pharaoh that he too should be released. The Torah portion concludes with the words: “but, the butler did not remember Joseph. And he forget him.” As a result Joseph languished in prison for another two years.

At this point this week's parsha, Miketz, begins:

“At the end of two years, it happened that Pharaoh was dreaming...”

The Torah then proceeds to recount how Pharaoh could not find anyone who could interpret his dreams and, it was

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only then that, the butler mentioned Joseph's name and talent of dream interpretation to Pharaoh.

All this led to Joseph's liberation, and ultimately his rise to the office of viceroy of Egypt.

Every story in the Torah has multiple layers of meaning.

On the simplest level, Joseph's two years of additional incarceration was a result of an ungrateful butler. Joseph had shown so much kindness and sensitivity to a depressed fellow inmate. Yet he did not reciprocate this kindness.

On a deeper level, we are told by the famous medieval Jewish philosopher and moralist, Rabeinu Bachaye ibn Pakuda that Joseph was "punished" for putting his trust on the butler and not on G-d.

Sleeping was the Crime

One can offer another interpretation, that can also shed light on the first two, based on the Chassidic work *Bas Ayin* who retranslates one of the key words in the opening of this parsha.

The Hebrew word for "two years" is *shnasayim*, the root of which is related to the word "sleep" in Hebrew.

Joseph's extra two years in prison was a consequence of sleep in the figurative sense of the word. When a person is

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asleep they are not aware of the reality of the world. Instead they enter into a dream state. In addition to the distortion of reality that occurs during sleep, a person who sleeps is less sensitive to the things around them. They don't see, hear, taste, smell or feel as they would when they are awake. Sleep, by altering our sense of reality, desensitizes us to everything.

Our soul, when it is awake, functions the way it should. It sees G-dliness in everything. It hears the echo of Sinai. It smells the fragrance of paradise. It enjoys the taste of Torah, and is in touch and in harmony with other people.

When, however, the soul is in a state of sleep and cannot express itself, it can be said that it is in a virtual prison. It is held captive by the physical body and the animal soul that does not permit it to shine brightly. The soul loses its sense of reality and sensitivity.

When Joseph “loses” his sense of who is the source of his salvation and he relies on the butler to mention him to Pharaoh as his source of salvation, Joseph has essentially sentenced himself to an additional two years of prison. Relative to the sublime level of Joseph's soul, his reliance on the butler put him in a state of sleep, which is synonymous with prison. Thus, the word for “two years” in Hebrew is related to the word sleep.

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And when Joseph, the most righteous and spiritually potent individual is in the sleep mode, albeit in a very subtle fashion, it causes others to be less sensitive than they would have been otherwise. The butler, thus, totally forgets Joseph. It was not, as it would seem, a punishment for Joseph having relied on him instead of G-d, but rather a consequence and a ripple effect of the *tzadik* “falling asleep” on his level. All souls are connected. And when a “head” soul is asleep, so are the lower souls. When Joseph sleeps the butler totally forgets who helped him.

But these two years finally came to an end. Joseph was now spiritually free from the metaphoric prison in which his soul was temporarily held hostage, and now the butler finally wakes up from his state of lethargy and insensitivity and remembers Joseph. This awakening had far reaching consequences. Initially it led to Joseph’s liberation from physical prison, his precise interpretation of Pharaoh’s dream that saved Egypt and the rest of the world from a devastating famine, his promotion to the office of viceroy of Egypt and ultimately to the rapprochement of Joseph with his brothers and the reunion with his father Jacob.

Connected to Chanukah

The Chassidic work, *Bas Ayin* cited above connects the theme of sleep hinted in the word “*shnasayim*” in the

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beginning of the parsha with the festival of Chanukah that always coincides with this parsha.

The Talmud requires that the Chanukah menorah that we lit at night to last until the “legs of the Tarmudites cease.” The simple meaning of this is that the Tarmudites, who were an ethnic group that would stay late outside, were the last people to be present in the street. That represents the deadline for the lighting of the Chanukah menorah since its objective is to publicize the miracle to those who might be passing by in the street.

Bas Ayin, however, renders this requirement (“legs of the Tarmudites cease”) in a rather novel and spiritual way. The word *Tarmud*, can also be rearranged slightly to read *tardema*, which means slumber. The word for feet in Hebrew is *regel*, which can also be translated as that which is regular, habitual, perfunctory, performed by rote. The goal of Chanukah lights is to so inundate the “outside” with G-dly light that the perfunctory nature of our spiritual lives ceases to be so and we begin to thrive and savor every bit of our Mitzvos. We take nothing for granted and we do not get bored with the repetition of our mitzvah activities. Every mitzvah is fresh and exciting.

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One of the casualties of being in exile is that we lose the sense of excitement in the good that we do, and even if we persist in doing Mitzvos they become mechanical, performed by rote, all this is attributed to the fact that in exile we lose the sensitivity of our soul, because our souls are in prison. Our soul is asleep (*Tarmud-tardema*) and we are therefore in a dream state where reality of the soul is distant. To paraphrase the psalmist, “we have eyes but don’t see, we have ears but don’t hear etc.”

The objective of the Chanukah lights then is to get rid of the habitual and perfunctory nature of our Mitzvos by awakening our soul through the powerful light of Chanukah. In spiritual terms this means that Chanukah provides us with the ability awaken our souls and sharpen our sensitivity, because the Chanukah lights represent the light of Moshiach and Redemption that takes us out of exile in the physical as well as spiritual sense.

Returning to the Parsha.

The parsha opens with “at the end of two years, it happened that Pharaoh was dreaming...” this can now be reinterpreted to read:

When it comes to the end of exile, which is defined as a state of sleep and slumber, Pharaoh—who symbolizes the force of exile—was dreaming. Instead of Joseph (and the

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Joseph in us) thinking that exile is the natural state of affairs and Redemption is but a fantasy or dream, it is now Pharaoh/exile that becomes the dreamer and the dream. It is exile that is not reality.

Reality is the light of Chanukah and Moshiach. Reality is all that is good and G-dly.

Reality is the light of Torah and Mitzvos.

Reality is universal peace and harmony.

Reality is the rebuilt holy Temple in Jerusalem and the return of all Jews from geographic and spiritual alienation. Exile, with all of its suffering, darkness, famine, strife and war will soon be no more than a fading dream because the light of Moshiach and Redemption will prevail, and the light of our souls will no longer be held hostage by any external or internal force.

ESSAY THIRTEEN

FREE AT LAST AND THE LAST DAY OF CHANUKAH

Joseph's name implies three dimensions of increasing::

The first is not staying in one place.

The second is that one must create a process that has the potential to give birth to something new, ad infinitum.

The third represents the capacity to transform an
“outsider” into an “insider.”

ESSAY THIRTEEN

FREE AT LAST AND THE LAST DAY OF CHANUKAH

Acquiring Another Son

This Shabbos, we celebrate the second Shabbos of Chanukah, something that occurs infrequently. This is also the last day of Chanukah and the Shabbos that features the Torah reading of Miketz that refers to the “end” of the two year period Joseph had to languish in prison before he was freed and subsequently rose to the position of viceroy of Egypt.

The Ba'al Shem Tov taught us that there are no coincidences. Certainly the fact that the “end” of Chanukah is also the day that we focus on the theme of “end” in relation to Joseph’s stay in prison is fortuitous.

To better appreciate the connection between Joseph and the festival of Chanukah it is important to examine the very name Joseph. He was so named because his mother prayed that G-d would give her another son (literally: “may G-d increase for me another son.”).

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Upon deeper analysis of the original Hebrew text, the word Joseph in Hebrew suggests three points:

The first is the idea of increasing; not staying in one place.

The second idea is that the one's increase must be a procreative one, i.e., one must create a process that has the potential to give birth to something new, ad infinitum.

The third idea conveyed by the Hebrew original (which can be rendered alternatively as: “may G-d add another to me that he may be a son.”) Is that Joseph represents the capacity to transform “another”, i.e., an outsider, into a child, the consummate insider.

This, in essence, is what Chanukah is all about. We add on new light every night. We cannot be content with our original level of light.

But the true definition of adding on is that it carries within it the potential for further growth that will never cease. Indeed, the Midrash states that the light of the menorah will always be around. Nachmanides explains that the Midrash refers to the light of Chanukah.

But, the idea of increase represented by the name Joseph is such that it can even take the people and energies that are “outside” and convert them into “insiders.”

In an essay on last week's Parsha we discussed how Chanukah light can eliminate the spirit of rebelliousness

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that exists in the marketplace. What we are discussing now goes even beyond that. Not only do we eliminate these rebels and their rebelliousness, but, moreover, Chanukah light enables us to take these extremely distant “outside” influences (“marketplace”) and transform them into “insiders—the “other” becomes a child.

Last Day: Infinite Light Revealed

This aspect of Chanukah comes to fruition specifically on the last and eight day of Chanukah. Eight, is the number of transcendence, and it represents the infinite power of the G-dly light that shines on Chanukah that never ends and that can even transform the darkness into light.

We can now appreciate the connection between the last day of Chanukah with the weekly parsha that is called “Miketz-the end.” This portion discusses how Joseph was finally free. He was now able to utilize his G-d given spiritual power to increase his light. And as a result, by his prophetic vision and skill at dream interpretation, Joseph converted the impending catastrophe of seven years of famine into life for all of Egypt and other parts of the world, and paved the way for the reunion with his brothers and his father Jacob.

The name “Miketz-the end” is also an allusion to the biblical concept of the “end of days,” or the messianic era.

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At that time, we will see the realization of the Joseph ideal of continual growth and increase of G-dly light to the point that even the negative forces of our world will be converted into good. Of course, there are certain forms and aspects of evil that are not salvageable. They will cease to exist. But all other aspects of evil will undergo complete transformation in the “end of days.”

ESSAY FOURTEEN

SPIN YOUR DREAMS

**The way one interprets the dream is the way it
materializes.**

**By Joseph giving a positive “spin” to the butler’s dream, it
actually became a positive reality.**

**Hence Joseph was actually the one who reinstated the
butler by providing him with a positive interpretation of
his dream.**

ESSAY FOURTEEN

SPIN YOUR DREAMS

Who Reinstated Him?

Pharaoh had a dream that nobody could interpret. The king's butler remembered that Joseph had accurately interpreted his dream and informs Pharaoh that there was a young, former Hebrew slave who was adept at interpreting dreams.

In his description of Joseph's ability to interpret dreams the butler says: "and it came to pass, as he had interpreted the dream so did it happen; he reinstated by him."

Rashi observes that this is one of the places where the Torah does not mention who the actor is, but relies on our understanding of the obvious, that it was Pharaoh who reinstated him, since he was the only one who was empowered to do it.

Ksav Sofer, a nineteenth century biblical commentary, suggests an alternate understanding of who it was that reinstated the butler. It was Joseph! Joseph is the one who is mentioned in the beginning of the verse "and it came to

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pass that as he had interpreted the dream so did it happen.” It follows then that the end of the verse, “I was reinstated by him,” naturally refers to Joseph as well.

The obvious problem with this interpretation is that how could the Torah possibly attribute the butler’s reinstatement to Joseph and not to Pharaoh. All Joseph did was to inform the distressed butler that his dream augured well for him. And it did. But Joseph seemingly had no say in his reinstatement.

Ksav Sofer addresses this problem and explains that, in fact, as the Talmud states, the way one interprets the dream is the way it materializes. By Joseph giving a positive “spin” to the butler’s dream, it actually became a positive reality. Hence Joseph was actually the one who reinstated the butler by providing him with a positive interpretation of his dream.

The Anatomy of Dreams

To better understand the dynamics of how dream interpretation works a brief introduction about dreams is in order.

There are several types of dreams.

Most dreams are merely a confusing rehashing of the thoughts of the past day. These dreams that usually occur

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at the beginning of the night are designed to purge the soul from the negative static that attaches itself to the soul and prevents it from spiritual rejuvenation.

Some dreams, however, are prophetic, revealing hidden messages that are embedded in our consciousness.

However, in most cases these dream messages are not etched in stone. They merely represent a potential for certain events to follow. The dream contains within it the potential for good or for the opposite. If one ascribes a positive meaning to the dream, the positive energy actually unleashes the positive potential of that dream, and vice versa.

Perhaps it can be compared to the stem cells that can be developed into diverse organs. This, of course, depends on how they are treated.

When Joseph gave the butler a favorable interpretation, he was in fact, projecting positive energy that helped the butler realize his own positive potential. When Pharaoh reviewed the butler's crime and sentence he saw the butler in a new and positive light, and he therefore pardoned him.

Why Not Give Positive Interpretation for the Baker?

At this point the question can be raised why Joseph did not offer a positive interpretation for the baker's dream.

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Wouldn't that have projected positive energy and brought about a positive outcome for the baker as well?

The answer lies in the different nature of the crimes these two ministers of the king were guilty of:

The butler served the king wine which had a fly in it. The baker served the king bread with a stone lodged in it. As commentators explain, finding a fly in the wine was pardonable; finding a stone in the bread was not.

What conceptually is the difference between wine and bread and how do they apply to us?

Wine is a delicacy and a luxury. Bread is a necessity.

When we stand before our heavenly king, the A-mighty, though we may be deficient in the things that can be considered spiritual luxuries (the wine), as long as our basic attachment to G-d (the bread) is intact, there is hope that the basic goodness will assert itself and will allow the Joseph's of the world (the kind and positive people) to project positive energies at us that will allow our inner goodness to prevail.

When, however, our basic bond with G-d is lacking, and instead of the life sustaining bread, we offer him a lifeless stone, even Joseph's positive energy could not help. Joseph's positive spin was a reaction to the positive energy he

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encountered in the butler. Unfortunately, the baker did not exude the same positive force.

We are the Josephs

As was discussed in previous messages, we are living in unique times. Because we are so close to the ultimate age of goodness, humanity experiences two contradictory phenomena.

We are witness to unprecedented positive energy as well as unparalleled negativity. The positive energy comes from the accumulation of goodness over the ages that was suppressed, but is beginning to burst through the seams of the elements that contain it. The evil, by contrast, is unleashing all of its power because it knows its life is soon coming to an end.

We are now the Joseph's of the world. It is our duty, now more than ever, to look for the positive energy in others and reflect that energy back at them.

This too is the lesson of Chanukah. Every night we light an additional candle. In the words of the Talmud, we are called upon to “continually increase.” The Hebrew word for increase in this text is “*mosaif*,” which is similar to Joseph, which also means “he will increase.”

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By increasing the light each night we are projecting and generating more and more positive energy, which in turn, activates the internal goodness within us. It creates an exciting vicious cycle that will soon “explode” into a world of perpetual light and goodness.

Happy Chanukah!

ESSAY FIFTEEN

**THE TWELVE SEVEN SONS OF
JACOB AND THE SEVEN
BRANCHES OF THE
MENORAH**

Joseph was attempting to light the souls of his brothers.
By exposing them to their ordeal he was removing the crust
that dimmed the spark of goodness and holiness that they
all possessed in ample measure.

ESSAY FIFTEEN

THE TWELVE SEVEN SONS OF JACOB AND THE SEVEN BRANCHES OF THE MENORAH

Joseph's Demand

This week's parsha always coincides with Chanukah. Torah logic thus dictates that there is a close connection between the two.

Miketz is about Joseph taunting his brothers who sold him into slavery; subjecting them to some cruel psychological torture. When they come to Egypt to purchase food due to the famine that persisted in their country, he had them rounded up and charged them with espionage.

When they tell him about their family and the lone brother Benjamin who stayed behind, Joseph then demands that he be brought to Egypt to confirm the veracity of the rest of their story. Joseph then arrests them, frees them except for Simon—and sends them on their way only to discover that the money they paid for the grain was mysteriously back in their knapsacks.

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At one point in the narrative, the brothers break down and blame themselves for this terrible ordeal. They exclaimed that it was their lack of sensitivity to their brother Joseph when he pleaded with them not to sell him that is the cause of their present suffering.

What connection is there between Joseph's behavior with the story of Chanukah?

Understanding Joseph's Behavior

To help us understand the connection we must first try to make sense out of Joseph's behavior. It was certainly not motivated by a feeling of revenge. Joseph, in next week's parsha, is so magnanimous that when he finally reveals his identity to his brothers he attempts to impress upon them that there is not even a tinge of animosity to them in his heart; forgives them totally for all that they've done and goes even further. He convinces them that they actually did him, themselves and the entire world a great favor. Their actions resulted in Joseph being in the position to predict the famine and preparing for it so that no one would starve.

How do we reconcile the Joseph of next week's parsha with the Joseph of this week's parsha?

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Testing them with Light

The answer is obvious. Joseph was testing his brothers to see whether they still harbored any trace of the hatred that caused them to sell him. Joseph wanted them to fully atone for their sin of selling him. And perhaps Joseph was personally going through a period of catharsis making sure that he was rid of all feelings of hatred; not only consciously but also subconsciously.

To employ Chanukah terminology, Joseph was attempting to light the souls of his brothers. By exposing them to their ordeal he was removing the crust that dimmed the spark of goodness and holiness that they all possessed in ample measure.

Each and every one of us possesses a Divine soul; a G-dly flame that is the cause of all that we do right.

One of the most misguided expressions that people often use as a way of excusing their lapses is: “I’m human.” Of course we are human and we have flaws. But being human also means searching for the inner divinity that makes it possible for us to surmount the insurmountable and bring light into the dark nooks and crannies of our personalities.

And lighting the menorah in the Temple—the focus of the Chanukah miracle—was intended to help us do that. And since, we are told, there are seven personality types, the menorah therefore consisted of seven branches, so by

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lighting the menorah, each of the seven personality types would be illuminated and their souls will shine brightly.

12 Brothers and Seven Categories

The only problem with the foregoing parallel is that there were twelve brothers while the Temple menorah consisted of only seven lights. How do we reconcile the difference between twelve and eight/seven? How do we fit twelve into seven?

Upon deeper reflection of the way the twelve brothers behaved towards Joseph, we will discover that all of the twelve brothers can be subdivided into seven categories with respect to their feelings towards Joseph and his sale into slavery; the events that led to the eventual bondage in Egypt and the beginning of Jewish history.

Reuven: Light of Compassion

Reuven was the first candle of the menorah.

His soul expressed gentleness and compassion towards his brother and was clearly against the sale; he tried to save Joseph and return him to his father. His intentions were good. But he procrastinated and failed. Reuven therefore represents the flame of good and noble intentions. But his

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flame was dimmed by his procrastination. He was not decisive in saving Joseph.

This can be applied to those of us whose flame of good intentions and noble character must be harnessed to action.

Shimon and Levi: Light of Holy Indignation

Shimon and Levi formed a team that represented the second branch of the menorah.

They were the zealots among the brothers and were the primary conspirators in his sale. Their G-dly flame was their moral outrage at the behavior of the Shechemites who violated their sister Dinah. They also felt that Joseph was behaving improperly and they sought to bring justice to a situation of which they perceived was unjust. Their soul's passion however was tainted by their anger and failure to be more discriminate in the manner that they expressed their outrage.

This too can be applied to all of us who become indignant—and rightfully so—when we see corruption. But we must learn how to channel that anger in ways that will not harm the innocent. Make sure your anger is not based on some personal grudge, and that it is translated into action based on the principles of justice and not on one's subjective feelings and impulses.

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Judah: The Light of Leadership

Judah was the third candle of the Jewish menorah.

He carried the torch of leadership. Judah was decisive and unlike Reuven he did not procrastinate. However, his attempt at saving Joseph was half-baked and misguided. Instead of killing him, Judah proposed to sell him.

In our own lives, there are people who take the initiative but are content with the knowledge that they are doers and not just spectators. They are proud of the way they take the initiative instead of following others. We sometimes overlook whether we are leading others astray rather than guiding them along the right path.

Yissachar and Zebulon: Light of Respect

Yissachar and Zebulon represented the fourth flame of the menorah.

They were the youngest of the six sons that were born to Jacob by his first wife Leah. Our Sages tell us that they were silent when their older brothers conspired against Joseph. Their trait was one of respect for and deference to higher authority. They possessed the Divine trait of respect and reverence. In their case, however, it was misguided. Our Sages tell us that when G-d's name is about to be profaned one does not show respect even to a venerable

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teacher or parent. In this situation their passivity, even though it is motivated by respect for higher authority, was not a virtue.

In our own lives there are many situations where our natural trait to be followers and show respect for our elders and defer to them for their leadership and judgment could be out of order. When we see that a child's life is about to be compromised we dare not be silent and as our Sages say: "in a place where there is no person, you make the effort to be that person."

Dan, Naftali, gad and Asher: The Light of Humility

Dan, Naftali, gad and Asher, the four sons of Jacob's handmaidens represent the fifth candle.

They were victims of their older brothers' prejudice against them. They were viewed as inferior because their mothers were not full-fledged wives of Jacob. Indeed, Joseph befriended them for this reason. In terms of the spiritual dimension of their souls they were crushed spirits and humbled. The Torah teaches us that G-d looks after those who are downtrodden and he dwells amongst the humble and crushed spirits. Their flame was a powerful Divine force, but it was marred by their own indifference to Joseph's suffering. Perhaps they felt that he was patronizing and that they felt their inferior position more keenly. They

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too did nothing to speak up in Joseph's defense. There was little gratitude. Or perhaps they were so absorbed in their own pitiful plight that they could not sympathize with Joseph. Either way, their "human" side got in the way of their "Divine" spark. Their menorah too had to be kindled.

In our own lives there are those whose humility is admirable but when one's suffering makes them less appreciative of the suffering of others, and especially when we fail to be grateful for those who help lift us up, we are in need of kindling our menorah.

Joseph: The Light of Forgiveness

Joseph represents the sixth flame.

Joseph was the devoted child to his father, Joseph was the one who endured such suffering at the hands of his brothers, yet in the end he completely forgave them and acted to them so magnanimously.

In the Zohar, Judaism's principal work on kabbalah, Joseph is viewed as the model of forgiveness and of not to hold a grudge. Joseph was also the glue that ultimately brought the entire family together. Joseph was the one who saw the whole picture and was the bridge between the past, present and future. And above all, Joseph was the one who

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supported and sustained his father and brothers, as well as the rest of Egypt.

But Joseph's nobility of character and phenomenal talent, notwithstanding, Joseph was the one who provoked his brothers and was the cause of all his problems. Joseph therefore was also guilty in his own sale.

Translated into our own lives, the following can be said about the need to kindle the flame of Joseph. When we are successful in helping others, we must see to it that the light that we try to shine on others does not cause us to provoke those very people we are trying to help. We must make sure that the recipients of our kindness and leadership do not feel that we are talking down to them.

Benjamin: The Light of Purity

And then we have the seventh light, the light of Benjamin.

Benjamin was the only brother who was completely guiltless. His flame was not tainted by complicity or indifference. His flame was pure. But even a pure soul needs to increase its light and not be content with the light it already possess—the very lesson of Chanukah.

Thus, the saga of Joseph and his eleven brothers is the story of the lighting of the menorah in the Temple. When the Syrian Greeks took over the lighting of the menorah

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was discontinued. It was no longer able to ignite the souls of all of the seven classes of Jews.

The miracle of Chanukah was one in which we regained our capacity to have our souls on fire and go even beyond that.

We light eight candles on the last night to signify that in the messianic age we will even go beyond the limits of our souls. Eight is the number that signifies going beyond the realm of nature that is associated with the number seven. We will transcend our own souls. And a taste of that self-transcendence we get every Chanukah, particularly the last day of Chanukah when we light all eight lights.

ESSAY SIXTEEN

SING ALONG WITH ISRAEL

Jewish music in general, and the melodies that are associated with prayer and the praises of G-d, in particular, possess an uncanny ability to get us out of our internal exile, that in the aggregate is what prevents the world at large from experiencing the collective Redemption it so eagerly awaits.

ESSAY SIXTEEN

SING ALONG WITH ISRAEL

“Bring Me Benjamin!”

Miketz, this week’s Parsha, describes the fascinating and poignant saga of Joseph and his brothers. The Parsha begins with Joseph’s favorable interpretation of Pharaoh’s dream that predicted seven years of plenty followed by seven years of famine. Joseph is then elevated to the position of virtual leader of Egypt, whose role it was to sustain his entire country and its neighbors with the food he had stored for this very occasion. His brothers, who sold him into slavery to Egypt, are now compelled to purchase grain there.

When Joseph’s brothers arrive in Egypt Joseph apprehends them and accuses them of spying. To prove their innocence, Joseph demanded that they bring their youngest brother Benjamin who stayed home with Jacob. To guarantee that they return with him, Shimon, was kept hostage with Joseph.

Upon their return to Canaan, Jacob initially refuses to send

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Benjamin, but then relents because of their need for food. The Torah then records the following instructions Jacob gave his sons:

“And Israel their father said to them: If it must be so, do this: Take of the land’s glory in your vessels and bring it down to the man as a tribute...”

What was there to Sing about?

One can raise several questions. First, the phrase, “the land’s glory,” is a translation of the Hebrew *Zimras haaretz*, which literally means “the song of the land.” Rashi explains that people sing the praises of the choicest products of the land. The question here is why Jacob couldn’t have said simply, “the choicest products of the land?” Why did he emphasize that people sing about it?

Second, why does the Torah use the name Israel instead of the more common name Jacob? Generally, the name Israel is used when it serves as a paradigm for the People Israel. In truth, everything that happened to any of the Patriarchs must serve as a lesson for all of their children, the People of Israel, particularly, when the Torah actually employs the name Israel for Jacob. What then is the message in this verse?

The answer lies in the use of the same word *zimras* in our

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daily prayers. A substantial part of the morning service is called *Pesukei d'zimra*, which translates literally as Verses of Song. Why do we need to sing these songs in our morning prayers?

We Can't Just Fall out of Bed and Commune with G-d...

Chassidic literature discusses the issue at length. The objective of prayer is to stand before G-d when we recite the *Amidah* (the standing prayer, known also as the *Shemona Esrei* (Eighteen), because of its original eighteen benediction format). At that point we stand face to face before G-d, which allows us to make our requests of Him. Indeed, the Hebrew word for prayer, *Tefilah*, means much more than just prayer. It actually means attachment. At the peak of our prayers, we endeavor to become attached to G-d.

However, one cannot just “fall out of bed” in the morning, so to speak, and commune with G-d. There are many impediments, peripheral and internal that must first be removed. Thus, our prophets and Sages, who were Divinely inspired, composed and collected several preliminary prayers, whose function it is to remove those barriers. One of the first such barrier removals are the *Pesukei d'zimrah*. When a Jew sings praise to G-d, meditating on His greatness and perceiving G-d's presence within nature, this

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cuts away or “prunes” (another translation of the word *zimrah*) the outer obstructions to one’s soul’s ability to relate to its Creator.

Thus, when Jacob (read Israel, the Jewish people) has to confront the barriers to their spiritual growth, particularly, when they are compelled to go into Egypt, the paradigm of all exile conditions, they must therefore be prepared to take the songs of praise, or the “spiritual pruning hooks,” that removes the impediments to their soul’s self-expression.

The Power of Jewish Music

Jewish music in general, and the melodies that are associated with prayer and the praises of G-d, in particular, possess an uncanny ability to get us out of our internal exile, that in the aggregate is what prevents the world at large from experiencing the collective Redemption it so eagerly awaits.

“The song of the Land,” - Jewish music, particularly, when it originates in and is imbued with the holy spirit of the Land of Israel, can uplift us and open up passageways between our unconscious soul and our conscious mind. Melody can also assist us in opening up the obstructions that exist between our minds and our hearts as well as the barriers that do not permit our feelings to materialize into action.

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Jewish music, particularly, music that is driven by a profound feeling of joy, has the capacity to break through all barriers, internal as well as external.

It is no surprise, then, to discover that the word "*Yismach*-he shall rejoice" has the same letters as the word Moshiach. It is the spirit of joy and song that elicits the internal spark of Moshiach within us that will lead us to the coming of Moshiach, who will lead us to the Land of Israel with song and dance.

ESSAY SEVENTEEN

JUDAH AND JUDAH

The name Jew derives from the word Judah.

This implies that every one of us has the responsibility to demonstrate awareness of their uniqueness, their G-d given potential to illuminate the world with light.

Every Jew possesses a spark of Moshiach, which may lie dormant.

As we kindle the Chanukah lights, each and every one of us is capable of igniting that spark, that will illuminate the darkness and evil that plagues the world today.

ESSAY SEVENTEEN

JUDAH AND JUDAH

Joseph and the Maccabees

Chanukah always coincides with this week's Parsha of Miketz. According to R. Isaiah Horowitz, the author of the classic work known by the acronym *Shelah*, one can always find a connection between a Holiday and the weekly Torah portion that is read at that particular time.

What possible connection can there be between the confrontation of Joseph and his brothers in Egypt and the story of the Hasmonean revolt that culminated in the miracle of Chanukah?

One immediate connection comes to mind. Joseph assumed the position of king and exercised this power over his brothers. Likewise the Maccabees assumed leadership of the Jewish people — including the Hellenists, their ideological adversaries — upon their successful ouster of the Syrian-Greek legions from power in Israel.

The parallel is even more striking when we consider the fact that Judah was originally the “king” of his brothers.

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Indeed, it were Judah's descendants — King David and his descendants — who were to be designated as the ultimate leaders of the Jewish people. Yet, Joseph “usurped” that role of kingship and relegated Judah to a secondary position.

Similarly, the Maccabees were actually *Kohanim* (Priests) whose role within the Jewish community should have been reserved for the descendants of King David and Judah. **Judah** the Maccabee took the monarchy from the descendants of **Judah**, the son of Jacob. Maimonides and Nachmanides differ as to whether the Maccabees erred when they arrogated the position of royalty for their priestly family. According to Maimonides, one of the reasons for the celebration of Chanukah was the restoration of the monarchy.

Lost Royalty

This was not the first time that the seat of royalty was taken away from its rightful owner. Once before, in the generation following King Solomon's reign, the prophet Achiyah Of Shilo predicted that the monarchy will be wrested away from Solomon's heirs and a rival monarchy would be established and led by Jeroboam, from the tribe of Ephraim, a descendent of Joseph.

In effect there were three models where Judah's leadership was challenged; either it was taken away from him or his

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tribe, or it was compromised.

What is the significance of this challenge to Judah that is the underlying theme of this week's Parsha as well as of the Chanukah saga, and how does it relate to our lives?

Judah: Awareness and Gratitude

Judah was so named by his mother because she thanked G-d for having a fourth child. Prophetically, she knew that Jacob would have no more than twelve tribes. Since Jacob had four wives and using simple arithmetic it meant that each wife would bear Jacob three children. When she had her fourth child, she realized that G-d had given her a special gift; that she was unique. For that she was grateful.

Thus, Judah represents the awareness and gratitude that derives from this awareness, that we have been endowed with special gifts; that we are unique. To be aware of one's special qualities and be grateful for them — the definition of the word Judah — is the hallmark of leadership that has forged the Jewish people and has paved the way for their contribution of light to the world. Conversely, to not be aware of one's uniqueness renders one incapable of acting as a shining light to others and denies one their leadership role.

As was mentioned in an essay on last week's Parsha, Judah

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did not initially live up to his potential of leadership when he made an ill-advised compromise to sell Joseph rather than return him to his father.

This stripped Judah, albeit temporarily, from his role as leader of the tribes that was given to Joseph, who did recognize his unique role as the provider of food to the entire world that was engulfed in a terrible famine. Joseph acted temporarily as Judah's replacement to lead his brothers and indeed the entire world.

Many centuries later, when King Solomon failed to realize his G-d given potential to the maximum, he too was stripped of power. Others were given the opportunity to demonstrate true leadership.

And once more, when the descendants of Judah did not rise to the occasion to defend the Jews against the imposition of Greek culture upon them, leadership was temporarily taken away from the tribe of Judah and given to the Hasmonean with Judah the Maccabee at their head, the heroes of that period.

Judah will get it Right!

But, ultimately, we were promised that the tribe of Judah **will** get it right. The Messianic Age will be ushered in by Moshiach, a scion of Judah, King David and Solomon. At

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the appointed time, he will realize his G-d given potential and take the Jews out of exile, and usher in an age that will be characterized by its lack of compromised ideals of peace, truth, holiness and happiness. It will also be an age that will not be plagued by the divisions between brothers. And finally, the Jewish people will be inspired to light up their lives with the light of the Menorah of their souls and this light will extend to the entire world, as the prophet declares, “And nations shall go with your light.”

The name Jew derives from the word Judah. The implication of which is that every one of us has the responsibility to demonstrate awareness of their uniqueness, their G-d given potential to illuminate the world with light. Every Jew possesses a spark of Moshiach, which may lie dormant. But, as we kindle the Chanukah lights, each and every one of us is capable of igniting that spark, that will illuminate the darkness and evil that plagues the world today, particularly in the Land of Israel.

ESSAY EIGHTEEN

DRIVE CAREFULLY

When Jacob heard the conviction and certainty in Yehudah's voice, he detected the spirit of Moshiach and knew that Yehudah would succeed in the immediate task of bringing Benjamin back safely and, in so doing, ensure the final Redemption.

ESSAY EIGHTEEN

DRIVE CAREFULLY

Reluctance to Send Benjamin

Joseph, though sold by his brothers into slavery in Egypt, has risen to the position of Viceroy. The Pharaoh has placed him in charge of feeding the world in a time of devastating famine. Jacob sends all but one of his sons to purchase grain in Egypt. He does not send Benjamin though “because he said, ‘Perhaps a fatal accident will occur to him.’”

When the brothers finally make it to Egypt they are confronted by Joseph, whom they do not recognize as their brother. He feigns hostility, accusing them of being spies. Joseph demands that they bring their youngest brother, Benjamin, back to Egypt with them; otherwise they will no longer be welcome. In addition, he demands their brother Shimon as a hostage.

When Joseph’s brothers returned home, they told Jacob that the viceroy of Egypt required that they bring Benjamin to him. Jacob demurred, saying “You have bereaved me!

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Joseph is gone, and Shimon is gone, and you want to take Benjamin!.. his brother is dead, and he is the only one left. A fatality will occur to him on the way...”.

Finally, when the family has exhausted their food supply, and Yehudah has given his guarantee of Benjamin’s safe return, Jacob relents.

Why was Jacob so concerned about Benjamin’s safety? And why did he finally accede to the demand to send him when Yehudah guaranteed his safety?

Rashi addresses the first question and answers: “From here we deduce that the Satan makes accusations at a time of danger.” Satan represents the destructive forces of evil that prey on us when we are most vulnerable.

However, the question has been raised, why was Jacob concerned only with the danger to Benjamin’s life and not the lives of the other brothers?

One answer is (see Likkutei Sichos volume 5. P. 213ff.) that Rachel passed away and was buried on the road back to the Land of Canaan, and Joseph, likewise, disappeared when Jacob sent him to inquire the peace of his brothers. Jacob was particularly concerned that the Rachel branch of his family was particularly susceptible to the dangers of traveling.

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We may still ask a question: What persuaded Jacob to send Benjamin after Yehudah took full responsibility for his safety? Could the promise of a mere mortal remove one's vulnerability to the perils of the Satan?

Fear of Traveling: Loss of Legacy

One may see Jacob's reluctance to send Benjamin as more than the fear that he could lose another child. Jacob was deeply concerned that Benjamin's loss would mean the loss of his own legacy. This particular fear did not arise with respect to his other children. In addition to the family history of tragedy on the road, to Jacob his son Benjamin represented both the future of the Jewish nation and its shield against the Satanic forces that would repeatedly try to cripple us on our journey.

Only Yehudah was able to convince Jacob that, come what may, nothing dreadful would happen to Benjamin and, by extension, Jacob's legacy.

We must now try to understand what it was that was so unique about Benjamin and how Yehudah was able to assuage his father's concerns.

Jacob stayed in his uncle Laban's house for 20 years. It was only when Joseph was born that Jacob decided to return home. Indeed, our Sages tell us that Jacob was "punished"

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for the 22 years (the 20 he stayed with Laban and the two years of his journey home) during which he did not observe the Mitzvah of honoring his father and mother. Why, indeed, did he wait so long?

Jacob wanted to delay his return as long as possible to avoid reopening the dangerous conflict with his brother Esau. G-d predicted this intense conflict even before Jacob and Esau were born, as the Torah recounted in an earlier parsha.

What power did Jacob have to ultimately prevail over Esau? The answer is provided by our Sages in the Talmud (Bava Basra 123b) and Midrash, cited by Rashi, on why Jacob waited until Joseph was born. He knew that it was Joseph who possessed the power to vanquish Esau. In the prophetic words of Ovadiah: “And the house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame and the house of Esau for stubble.” Fire without a powerful flame does not dominate at a distance. Once Joseph was born, Jacob trusted in G-d and wanted to return home to his parents.

Joseph possessed the unique power to overcome the threat from Esau. Chassidic literature asserts that Joseph’s soul transcended both Jacob and Esau’s souls and was therefore not threatened by Esau’s power, unlike Jacob’s own soul.

When Joseph disappeared, Jacob hoped that his power would be transferred to his younger brother, Benjamin.

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Though not possessing a soul as lofty as that of Joseph, Benjamin would nevertheless share some of his characteristics. In the terminology of Kabbalah, Joseph was the “upper tzadik” and Benjamin the “lower tzadik.” Joseph possessed the ability to transmit this transcendent power down to the lowest of levels; Benjamin was similarly able to transmit his inferior transcendent power in the inverse manner, by elevating and uplifting the lower level.

Jacob’s concern was not just for the present but also for the future. His success as the father of the Jewish nation depended on his ability to remove, repair or sublimate the obstacles on the path to Mount Sinai and from there to the Messianic Age. Without Joseph, Jacob depended on Benjamin’s ability to accomplish the same goal, albeit with less intensity.

Jacob’s reasonable fear was of a mishap that Benjamin might suffer while he was traveling. The danger of losing Benjamin on his trip from Cana’an to Egypt threatened to undermine our journey towards the final Redemption; the path is riddled with obstacles precisely because it’s destination is so critical. In G-d’s system, the greater and the more crucial a goal is the more obstacles will appear on the way towards fulfillment of that goal, necessitating greater persistence and fortitude.

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Yehudah's Guarantee

It was only when Yehudah guaranteed that he would return home with Benjamin that Jacob felt able to send his youngest child off to meet the Egyptian viceroy.

What was it about Yehudah's guarantee that overcame Jacob's apprehension?

Yehudah was to be the progenitor of King David and his dynasty of leadership that would endure until Moshiach. Other kings and leaders were also destined to emerge and provide leadership, for better or worse, for the Jewish people. What is the difference between the Davidic dynasty and the other leaders?

Two Forms of Leadership

There are two forms of leadership; functional and essential, or, extrinsic and intrinsic. Most leaders are created by the people they lead. If a group of people proclaim someone as their leader this individual is thereby empowered to lead and govern. The people's devotion to their leader helps him unleash whatever hidden talents he may have. Those chosen for leadership roles become leaders because they have been anointed by the people and they function as such. But leadership for them is not intrinsic to their existence.

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The kings of the Davidic dynasty, particularly the Moshiach, by contrast possess intrinsic and essential royalty. Their power of leadership transcends that of Joseph, because no obstacle can possibly deter it. While Joseph is likened to a flame which will consume the straw, Yehudah transforms obstacles for good and brings that goodness into the Messianic Age.

This concept of bringing the obstacle into Redemption is illustrated with the following anecdote:

A truck driver was driving along on the freeway. He passed a sign that said "low bridge ahead." Before he knew it, he got stuck under the bridge.

A police car pulled up. The officer got out of his car and walked around to the truck driver, put his hands on his hips and said, "Got stuck, huh?"

The truck driver said, "No officer, I was delivering this bridge and ran out of gas!"

There are two ways we can look at the obstacles we encounter on our way to Geulah-Redemption: The first approach is to view them as an impediment that we must struggle to surmount. We believe we must do something to blow up the bridge or lower the highway. That is how most great leaders deal with obstacles; they try to plow right through them.

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The alternative path is to view the obstacle itself as an important part of our mission. We can and should take it with us on our trip and deliver it into the Messianic Age. A postman cannot wish for there to be no mail to deliver because then he'd be out of a job. Our spiritual job is to deliver the obstacle.

When Jacob heard the conviction and certainty in Yehudah's voice, he detected the spirit of Moshiach and knew that Yehudah would succeed in the immediate task of bringing Benjamin back safely and, in so doing, ensure the final Redemption.

Yehudah (read: Moshiach) would certainly be assisted by Joseph and the other great leaders who have battled all forms of adversity to facilitate our continued survival in exile and pave the way for Redemption. However, only Moshiach can enable us to reach our final destination; he is the only one who can guarantee success and empower us to transform all obstacles into positive forces.

Chanukah Live

This week's parsha is always read during Chanukah and there is a deep connection between the two.

The light of Chanukah, wielded by the holy and courageous Maccabees, was able to destroy the Syrian-Greek obstacle.

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But, alas, it was only a matter of time before the next obstacle appeared. Nachmanides states that when the heroes of Chanukah, notwithstanding their righteousness, failed to install a leader from the House of David, the victory of Chanukah could not last. Chanukah had many of the trappings of the Final Redemption; there was a rededicated Bais Hamikdash-Holy Temple and no subservience by the Jewish people to another nation. The crucial element missing was Moshiach, the leader who possesses intrinsic and essential leadership. The Hasmonean dynasty was eventually destroyed and the Roman hegemony began, leading our people to the present state of exile. If the Maccabees had restored leadership to the descendants of Yehudah and David, the light of Chanukah would have transformed the darkness into light and endured forever.

It is up to our generation to complete the task of bringing on the Redemption by greeting Moshiach in our Chanukah celebration, and “he will redeem us!”

ESSAY NINETEEN

THE DISTANT CLOSENESS OF THE THRESHOLD ERA

Joseph, after careful thought, decides to control his emotions and act the way he was convinced G-d wanted him to.

He would use “tough love” and be harsh to them but not with any feeling of anger or hatred.

Joseph was walking an emotional tightrope, but was able to balance himself by using the intellectual power of his G-dly soul and his prophetic prowess to make the decision.

ESSAY NINETEEN

THE DISTANT CLOSENESS OF THE THRESHOLD ERA

Acted Like a Stranger

Joseph was sold by his brothers into slavery in Egypt. When accused of trying to seduce the wife of his master, Potiphar, Joseph was sentenced to languish in an Egyptian dungeon. Two years after he successfully interpreted the dreams of the king's butler and baker he is summoned to interpret Pharaoh's dream. Joseph interpreted Pharaoh's dream as a prediction of seven years of plenty followed by seven years of famine. Joseph advised Pharaoh to store grain that would save Egypt and the surrounding area. Pharaoh made Joseph his Viceroy. Joseph's brothers arrived in Egypt to purchase grain during the famine. It was the first time in 13 years that Joseph saw them.

This is how the Torah describes their first fateful meeting:

Joseph saw his brothers and he recognized them, but he acted like a stranger toward them and spoke with them harshly.

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Rashi explains that he acted to them as a stranger in order to speak with them harshly.

One could ask why he had to treat them as strangers to speak to them harshly. They were his brothers, who sold him into slavery after attempting to kill him! That was a perfectly valid reason to speak to them harshly.

The classic Talmudic Era translator, Onkelos, usually translates the text of the Torah quite simply and literally. When we consult Onkelos, we discover an even greater difficulty. The word “*vayisnaker*” in the text, is clearly connected to the word stranger. However, rather than offering the literal meaning of *vayisnaker* as “he acted like a stranger,” Onkelos renders it as: “he reflected on how to respond to them.” It is clear that something in this verse compelled him to deviate from his standard approach to translation and provide commentary rather than simply translate the word.

What prompted Onkelos to depart from his usual style of providing a literal translation?

Joseph’s Dilemma

To answer these questions we must try to put ourselves in Joseph’s position. After so many years of travail, Joseph has now come face to face with his brothers. They tried to kill

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him and sold him into slavery, which then degenerated into a harsh prison sentence, as recounted in last week's parsha. Now he was Viceroy of Egypt, with the powers of a king and had them in his hands to treat them as he pleased. They were now at his mercy.

What would our own reactions be at a time like this?

On the one hand, we might feel righteous anger and seek revenge. On the other hand, we may bend over backwards and treat them with love to restore family unity

Joseph found himself in precisely this predicament. Joseph was in the unenviable moral position of having total power over his brothers.

This was his dilemma: Should he use that power to avenge the years of pain and suffering by punishing them severely? Or, perhaps, should he reveal his identity and embrace them with love as he ultimately did. Joseph was surely tempted to end the separation between himself and his brothers and their father. Any other person would have had his head spinning, not knowing how to react.

Joseph did not allow his emotions to sway him. He was convinced that Divine Providence placed him in this position to get his brothers to express sincere regret for selling him as well as causing their father unimaginable grief.

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Joseph carefully weighed the situation. He could not allow himself to react impulsively. Revenge, he surely reasoned, was morally wrong. Likewise, embracing them at that moment was equally wrong. It would deny them the opportunity to rectify their behavior by coming to grips with their terrible crime.

In the end, Joseph, after careful thought, decides to control his emotions and act the way he was convinced G-d wanted him to. He was going to keep up the pretense that he was an Egyptian ruler who was a total stranger to them. He would use “tough love” and be harsh to them but not with any feeling of anger or hatred. Joseph was walking an emotional tightrope, but was able to balance himself by using the intellectual power of his G-dly soul and his prophetic prowess to make the decision.

This approach proved to be the right one. His brothers did express deep remorse for their past sin and even went as far as risking their very lives for their half-brother Benjamin as recounted in next week’s parsha.

The Paradox of Relativity

However, while the foregoing approach explains why Joseph had to reflect on the situation, as Onkelos avers, it does not explain how we are to reconcile this interpretation with the simple meaning of the word *vayisnaker*, which means to act

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as a stranger. What connection is there between the interpretation of Onkelos - that he reflected on his course of action - and the literal meaning of the word *vayisnaker* that he acted like a stranger towards them?

The answer to this problem might lie in the paradoxical dynamic that exists in our close relationships that is absent in our interactions with strangers.

When one enjoys a close connection to others, especially if there is a blood relationship, it is virtually impossible to sort out all the relationship issues and deal with them in a rational and dispassionate fashion. The connections and emotions they engender create an atmosphere of murkiness and fog, thus leading to moral confusion and the inability to navigate a proper course of action.

The challenge of “relativity” is reflected in the law disqualifying a relative as a witness. We can easily understand why one is not trusted to testify on behalf of his relative because of his natural bias and his testimony is suspect. But, why can't he testify **against** his relative? What bias can there be in that regard?

The answer to this question is that, on the contrary, the emotional cloud which envelops one when dealing with a relative can cause the witness to testify against him as easily as on his behalf.

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We can now understand why Joseph had to act as if his brothers were strangers. If he had allowed himself to feel his kinship to them, his judgment would have been clouded. It could have swayed him in either of the two directions that his emotions might take him. He might have decided to be harsher than necessary or to drop his disguise and embrace them with love. Both decisions would have proven disastrous because he would have harmed them either way. Joseph had to create an emotional gulf between himself and his brothers so he could rationally make the correct decision.

Thus, Onkelos' interpretation of *vayisnaker*, that he reflected on his course of action, is directly related to the literal translation, "he acted like a stranger." His acting as a stranger facilitated his ability to reflect dispassionately on his course of action.

Love Your Fellow as You Do a Stranger!

With the above analysis we can make some sense of the paradoxical situation of our Jewish world in these last moments of exile, when we are "on the threshold of Redemption" days.

The Ba'al Shem Tov spoke of the need to love a Jew whom we never met. Nine generations of teachings by our Rebbe's since then have firmly instilled this message into the hearts

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and minds of all those who follow the Chassidic path. We have come a long way from the time that senseless hatred prevailed and, as the Talmud declares, brought about the destruction of the Second Temple and the ensuing exile. The thousands of the Rebbe's Shluchim-emissaries that have spread to the most remote places, both geographically and spiritually, to shower their love and attention on all Jews regardless of their level of observance, attest to the barriers that have been removed between Jews of all stripes and colors.

This display of unity and love can be attributed to the interconnected phenomena of nine generations of obsessive focus on Ahavas Yisroel-Love of our fellow Jew, from the Ba'al Shem Tov onward to our Rebbe, as well as the fact that we are on the very threshold of the Final Redemption.

But, paradoxically, it seems that while we have essentially cured the dissonance that comes from distance, our challenge is to remove the cloud that exists within our own family of Jews who are committed to Judaism and its Chassidic illumination. Our challenge is, ironically, to love those close to us as much as we love the stranger.

As noted above, closeness creates its own set of challenges. The closer you are to someone the harder it is to see them for who they really are. The greatest challenge today is thus, arguably, the removal of the barriers between one's

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closest friends, relatives and those with whom we share values.

This phenomenon of blindness caused by closeness can be traced back to the penultimate Plague, darkness, about which the Torah states: “no man can see his brother.” This plague which occurred right before the Redemption from Egypt foreshadowed the darkness that exists right before the onset of the Final Redemption and its generation of the greatest light.

The Second Half of the Month

The Rebbe explained that the period we are in now is like the second half of the month when the moon wanes until it can no longer be visible. The lack of light is actually due to the closeness of the moon to its source, the sun. The closer we are, the more tension and fog there may be.

Our challenge today is to combine the best of both worlds of passionate closeness and dispassionate distance. We must follow Joseph’s example. He helped his brothers by viewing them with clarity as if they were strangers. We too should love those closest to us with the same non-judgmental love we have for Jews whom we may have never met but for whom we are prepared to travel to the ends of the earth to help materially and spiritually.

ESSAY TWENTY

SENSITIVITY AND BEHAVIOR

Even when we must employ harsh measures in disciplining the other, we cannot let that cloud our feelings.

A judge must walk a tight-rope in rendering justice.

On the one hand, he cannot allow his feelings to cloud the need for justice, for he would then be corrupting justice.

On the other hand, the judge cannot allow his sense of justice to suppress his humanity.

A person must be able to feel the other's pain.

ESSAY TWENTY

SENSITIVITY AND BEHAVIOR

The Repentance of Joseph's Brothers

When Joseph, viceroy of Egypt, accuses his brother of spying, takes Shimon hostage and demands that they bring him their youngest brother, Benjamin, the brothers realized that their suffering was retribution for their sin of selling Joseph into slavery.

In their own words:

Indeed, we are guilty concerning our brother inasmuch as we saw his heartfelt anguish when he pleaded with us and we paid no heed.

And as soon as they express their deep remorse for their sin, Reuven, the oldest brother proceeds to rub it in:

Did I not tell you not to commit a sin with the child? You would not listen. Now a (Divine) reckoning is being demanded for his blood.

Two questions arise upon close scrutiny of this exchange between Reuven and his brothers:

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First, the brothers expressed remorse for not paying attention to Joseph's pleas and anguish. Nothing was mentioned about the sin of selling their brother, which would have rated as a major sin even if Joseph had not pleaded with them. Why didn't they confess that they wanted to murder their brother and only then settled for selling him into slavery?

Second, why would Reuven try to add salt to the wound? They already admitted guilt and expressed profound remorse?

One could answer the first question (See the commentator *Or Hachaim*) by answering the second question. What troubled Reuven was that his brothers did not feel guilt for having sold their brother into slavery; a crime in which he was not involved. Reuven thus felt that their repentance was half-baked and castigated them for not listening to him.

This approach, however, begs another question. If they did not suffer remorse for selling their brother it must have been because they felt justified in doing so. As commentators point out, there were several reasons the brothers felt that Joseph deserved the death penalty, including their fear that Joseph was a physical threat to their lives. If so, one may ask, why his pleas and anguish

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changed that fact? If what they did was justified in their minds, why feel guilty about it at all?

The Role of Compassion in Justice

The simple answer conveys a very important lesson in how we mete out justice to another. Even when we must employ harsh measures in disciplining the other, we cannot let that cloud our feelings. A judge must walk a tight-rope in rendering justice. On the one hand, he cannot allow his feelings to cloud the need for justice, for he would then be corrupting justice. On the other hand, the judge cannot allow his sense of justice to suppress his humanity. A person must be able to feel the other's pain.

It is certainly bad enough to be deaf to another's pleas. But it is even more egregious when the deafness is compounded with blindness toward anguish. The brothers' mea culpa therefore included the fact that they “**saw** his heartfelt anguish when he pleaded.” Not only did they hear his cries, they actually saw the anguish on his face and yet they still paid no heed.

This is what troubled them to no end. The brothers were destined to become the progenitors of the Tribes of the Jewish people, about whom it is said that they naturally possess the trait of compassion. Moreover, the Patriarch Jacob, in particular, personified the trait of compassion.

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How then could the brothers have strayed so from that path?

So, while they still did not feel that selling Joseph was wrong, they were guilt-ridden for not harboring even a trace of compassion for him when they heard his cry and saw his anguish.

Reuven Not Satisfied!

Reuven was not satisfied. He felt that their repentance was missing a crucial component. The fact that they, naturally endowed with compassion, were capable of successfully suppressing it was a sign that their entire thought process was flawed and their resultant behavior was nothing short of evil.

To explain: When a person acts contrary to G-d's will, even if it is based on cold logical considerations, it has a deleterious and desensitizing effect on one's emotions. Every violation of G-d's will creates a barrier between the person and his or her soul. Reuven therefore argued to his brothers that they should have listened to him and not sold Joseph into slavery. Their feeling guilty at the lack of compassion, he argued, was insufficient, because it was precipitated by their misguided action. They needed to accept responsibility for their behavior as well.

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If Reuven needed further proof to buttress his case against them it was the fact that Joseph now took Shimon as hostage and not the others. If the crime was only their lack of compassion, Shimon was no more culpable than the other brothers. However, if the crime was the actual sale of Joseph, we can readily understand why Shimon had to bear the brunt because it was he who conceived of the plan to murder Joseph in the first place.

Since we do not find that the brothers took issue with Reuven's rebuke, we can thus conclude that they accepted his criticism and realized that they were guilty on two counts: first, for plotting to kill or sell Joseph; and second, for having felt no compassion for him despite his pleas and anguish.

Two Forms of Teshuvah

From this brief dialogue between Reuven and his brothers two very important lessons emerge:

First, just as Joseph's brothers were grief stricken that they lost their distinctive Jewish compassion, what makes our mistakes more egregious is that they betray our innate power of compassion.

As Maimonides writes, Teshuvah (repentance or return), is not just for wrongdoings. It is also for bad attitudes and

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flawed character traits. Indeed, he writes, those are more difficult to correct for it is easier to modify our behavior than it is to alter our personalities.

Second, and conversely, bad behavior actually causes us to become desensitized; and when we correct our behavior it assists us in personality changes as well.

Twin Lessons for Our Time

As we have stated on countless occasions, we are standing on the cusp of the Final Redemption. In fact, based on what the Rebbe has told us, we have been standing on this threshold for several decades. Human nature doesn't take kindly to stagnation. And history has shown us that in these conditions we lose our enthusiasm in the best case or become jaded and skeptical in the worst case.

When this feeling sets in, we need to be reminded that we cannot allow our brother Joseph, the symbol of all of our people, to remain in captivity, i.e., Galus-exile. To resign ourselves to the prospect that we will have to endure exile for even a short period is a sign that we have become deaf to the pleas of the Josephs who suffer and are blind to all their anguish.

To be sure, overtly or innately, we all believe that G-d will ultimately take us out of exile. But that alone doesn't

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suffice. If we have any degree of sensitivity we cannot tolerate even one day longer in exile. Even the most benign form of exile should be painful to us because of the pain and suffering of so many others, which will cease in the Final Redemption.

Comatose!

In addition to the feeling of intolerance we should have for the continuation of exile because of those who suffer, there is even greater urgency for those who do not appear to be suffering.

Our existence in Galus can be compared to a person who is, G-d forbid, in a coma. While that individual may not be feeling pain, we cannot say that the person is not suffering. There is nothing more disturbing than the fact that he or she is unconscious. Every effort will be made to get the person out of that state.

Our stay in exile is very much a comatose existence. For those aware that they are in a painful Galus it is bad enough. But for those who are not aware of their Galus-compromised state, the situation is even more dire. Although the “patient” himself or herself does not feel the pain, we who realize the serious nature of the illness cannot rest until we get them out of the Galus-coma!

Joseph symbolizes the Jew who has been sold into slavery and whose soul is crying out in deep anguish, pleading with

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G-d and everyone else who will hear to see his or her pain. As Joseph's brothers and sisters, we cannot be callous and remain unmoved by their/our souls' cries.

The second lesson can be derived from Reuven's response to his brothers, as explained above. Reuven asserted that the reason they were so desensitized to their brother's pleas and anguish was because of their desire to kill or sell Joseph. Reuven contended that one cannot separate emotions from behavior. When we behave callously, we lose our emotional sensitivity as well.

Applying this to our feelings towards the continuation of Galus, we cannot expect to be sensitive to the cry of our souls if we don't tend to its needs; living a Torah and Mitzvos governed life, with the focus on action. This is what nurtures the soul and makes us aware of its pain. Without its nourishment, the soul's cries are so weak and the crust of our Animal souls so thick, we cannot hear the soul's muffled cries.

Torah and Mitzvos form a twin force to change the way we feel and think. The Mitzvos we do remove the thick crust that covers our soul and nurtures it, so that it can fully express itself. The Torah we learn alters the way we think about Galus.

With heightened sensitivity to the deplorable nature of Galus, followed by our heartfelt prayers to G-d to signal

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Moshiach that it is time to take us out of exile, we will see the imminent building of the Third, and eternal, Bais Hamikdash and the final true and complete Redemption!

ESSAY TWENTY-ONE

GEULAH WITHIN GALUS

We have been told that we are on the very threshold of Geulah.

And yet, we have seen examples of the process seemingly placed on hold.

We should not be discouraged because it is only a test and we will imminently see how it will turn out to be a mirage and the Geulah will unfold in its full glory.

ESSAY TWENTY-ONE

GEULAH WITHIN GALUS

The two Torah readings associated with Chanukah are Vayeishev and Miketz. As explained in preceding essays there is always a thematic connection between the Torah portion and the Holiday that is in close proximity to it.

Parshas Vayeishev is about the dissonance between Joseph and his brothers. This portended the struggle between the Jewish loyalists and their Hellenists brethren who in the days of Chanukah sought to destroy Judaism, just as his brothers tried to kill Joseph.

This Parsha can be said to highlight the negativity of Galus-exile because exile is characterized as a time when there is division and discord.

Indeed, the parsha ends with the verse:

“And the butler did not remember Joseph, and he forgot him.”

One of the symptoms of exile is forgetfulness; where we forget our Divine Source, we forget the miracles of the

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past, we forget of our kinship to other Jews and Judaism. Galus is a period of alienation from everything outside of ourselves and even alienation from our inner self. Our bodies and its needs cloud the needs of the soul.

The next parsha Miketz picks up with the expression that also signifies a state of Galus. The opening words of the Parsha Miketz are:

“And it came to pass at the end of two years that Pharaoh was dreaming...”

In this verse we can see the beginning of the transition from the state of exile and the seeds of Geulah.

The Talmud and Midrash state that whenever the Torah uses the word *Vayehi*-“And it came to pass” it is a sign of distress. Joseph (read: the Jewish people) are languishing in prison-Galus.

However, this period of exile is coming to an end. This is alluded to in the word Miketz-end, which is the name of this parsha.

The next word *shnasayim*-two is said to be an acronym for the basic law of Chanukah: Shemonah-eight or Smol-On the left, neiros-lights, tadlik-you shall kindle, yemin-on the right, Mezuzah-shall be the Mezuzah.

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This refers to the law that we are to kindle the Chanukah lights on the left side of the entrance to our homes whereas the Mezuzah is paced on the right.

How is the end of the exile manifesting itself?

The Torah says it is due to the light of Chanukah that we kindle for eight days on the left side of our doorways.

The significance of the number eight has been explained in other essays that it represents the light that transcends the natural order which is characterized by the number seven.

Likewise the fact that we place it on the left symbolizes the power of the Chanukah lights to even illuminate and ultimately transform the left, which is the symbol of evil.

The Parsha continues with Joseph successfully interpreting Pharaoh's dreams.

The Rebbe explains that a dream is the symbol of exile where opposites coexist and is not reality. Joseph, however, was able to find the solution to the problem the dreams portended in the dream itself. The Rebbe takes this to mean that Joseph was able to discover the salvation or the power of Geulah within Galus itself.

However, the Parsha ends on a tentative note. Joseph accuses Benjamin with stealing his silver goblet. All of the hints to Redemption seem to be placed on hold. We have to wait for the next parsha to see how the drama unfolds.

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Only there do we see the rapprochement of Joseph and his brothers.

In our own day and age, we have been told that we are on the very threshold of Geulah.

And yet, we have seen examples of the process seemingly placed on hold.

We should not be discouraged because it is only a test and we will imminently see how it will turn out to be a mirage and the Geulah will unfold.