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**Why Judah Lost His Cool**

**By Rabbi** [**Aharon Loschak**](https://www.chabad.org/search/keyword_cdo/kid/23628/jewish/Loschak-Aharon.htm)

***Diplomacy is great, but sometimes you gotta throw down the gauntlet***



 What’s the difference between the way your three-year-old asks for ice cream and the way you ask your boss for a raise?

 Well, your toddler will probably demand, kick, and scream for his or her two scoops of frozen, sugary joy. You, however, will hopefully employ a nifty little tool called “diplomacy” or “negotiation.” No kicking and screaming, just calm reasoning, with arguments that make your boss feel so good, he or she is unable to refuse your request.

 This tool is one we employ all the time as we navigate life, from big items like negotiating a raise to smaller interactions like trying to convince your spouse to join you hiking, or getting your kid to do her homework. There’s almost always a level of negotiation at play.



 And more often than not, we try to play nice. Sure, you’ll always encounter that one coworker or friend who’s demanding and overly dramatic, but it’s probably safe to say most of us prefer diplomacy. Only after multiple failed attempts do we start banging our fists on the table.

 Well, I’m here to tell you that sometimes, that’s not going to cut it. When it comes to certain things in life, you’d better be throwing fire from the get-go.

**Judah Confronts Joseph**

 My cue is from a dramatic confrontation described in this week’s parshah. After the years-long saga between Joseph and his brothers, things have come to a head. Joseph has orchestrated a cunning plan to ensnare his youngest brother Benjamin, and Judah is beside himself. Having promised his father that he would take responsibility for Benjamin at all costs, the prospect of this Egyptian prince nabbing his little brother has Judah incensed to his very core.

 And so we read, “And Judah confronted Joseph... ‘let now your servant speak something into my lord's ears, and let not your wrath be kindled against your servant.’”1

 Judah isn’t making nice here. He’s not some well-dressed bureaucrat coolly negotiating a peace treaty in a gilded hall. Not at all. He’s brash, confrontational, and downright reckless, so much so that he has to throw in the caveat, “Hey, you’re not going to like what I’m about to say, so try not to get too upset with me.”

Why? Why does Judah immediately resort to tough negotiating tactics? Why is he shouting and making a scene before even trying some good old diplomacy?

**When It Matters**

 The answer is really quite simple: when it truly matters, there’s no time for diplomacy.

 If someone cuts your finger, you yelp in pain. It’s a natural, visceral reaction. There’s nothing you can do about it. No one would dream of saying, “Excuse me, you just cut my finger, can you try not to do that next time?” That’s preposterous. If you’re in acute pain, everything inside you tells you to kick and scream.

 Because it matters.

 Judah’s confrontation teaches us an important lesson: there are things that matter, and for those things, we can’t waste any time or give way to some sort of moral equivalency until we make it right.

 If you really care for something, if it really bothers you and shakes a value you hold dear, you bet you’ll be pounding your fist on the table and demanding change.

 For Judah, it was his brother Benjamin, more specifically, the specter of his abandonment to Egyptian incarceration. Judah knew full well that were his brother to fall into the clutches of this barbaric and depraved culture, it would spell the end of his glorious upbringing, a death knell to the Abrahamic values inculcated in him with sweat, blood, and tears.

 Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had spent years defying the entire world to introduce monotheism. They suffered bitterly for it, and their entire lives were dedicated to the cause. To lose even one child of their majestic dynasty would be a travesty!

 For Judah, it was unfathomable. To lose a Jewish child to the cesspool of Egypt? Absolutely not!2

 A fire ignited within him, an urgent drive that granted neither time nor space to negotiate. So he summoned his inner ninja and did the unthinkable: he confronted the prince of Egypt himself and demanded the release of the Jewish boy. There was nothing to discuss—it simply had to happen!3

**What Matters to You?**

 There’s hardly a person walking this planet who doesn’t hold something so close to his or her heart that they’re willing to throw in a Molotov cocktail and see the whole thing blow up rather than give in. It may be a conviction, a value, a person, or all of the above, but should you seek to hack away at it, they will leave no room for negotiation, no time to play nice, and immediately, forcefully, and viscerally push back.

 For Judah, it was the value of a Jewish education. To watch Benjamin fall prey to Egyptian depravity was unthinkable.

 The Jewish people have carried this value for millennia, withstanding tremendous odds to ensure that our heritage can be transmitted to every Jewish child. When anyone dared challenge that value—through oppression, assimilation, or simple apathy—our ancestors immediately and forcefully pushed back, casting diplomacy aside for what was *really*important.

 Such was the value of Judah and the collective Jewish parent thereafter.

What is it for you?

**FOOTNOTES**

[1.](https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/4980529/jewish/Why-Judah-Lost-His-Cool.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22footnoteRef1a4980529) [Genesis 44:18](https://www.chabad.org/8239#v18).

[2.](https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/4980529/jewish/Why-Judah-Lost-His-Cool.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22footnoteRef2a4980529) This sheds light on a curious part of Judah’s behavior: Just two verses prior ([Genesis 44:16)](https://www.chabad.org/8239#v16), Judah suggests that *all* the brothers become indentured to Egypt. He only gets worked up after Joseph declines and counters that he will only take Benjamin. Why? Previously, it was on Judah’s terms, part of what he saw as a G‑dly plan, and as such, there was no risk to the collective family’s Jewish upbringing. By contrast, for Benjamin to be left alone as a prisoner on Joseph’s terms posed a great moral risk, one which Judah was not willing to take.

*Reprinted from the Parashat Vayigash 5781 email of Chabad.Org Magazine*

**Rabbi Berel Wein on**

**Parshat Vayigash 5781**

 The brothers and Joseph finally meet each other head-on, without pretense and subterfuge. When Joseph reveals himself to the brothers, the veil of secrecy, role-playing, distrust, and enmity is ripped away. The dreams that apparently were the cause of this gripping family drama now reappear in their stark and simple meaning.

 The sheaves of grain are the brothers and the constellation of stars in heaven are to be taken literally as the brothers bowing down to Joseph. It is noteworthy that the brothers never asked why Joseph is entitled to such respect and discipline from them. They apparently never search out the merit or qualities that have made Joseph their ruler.

 There are many commentators who believe that Joseph never recounted to them the story of his life with Potiphar and how he had risen to such glory and power. For the brothers, as perhaps for Joseph himself, it was sufficient that the dreams had meaning and had come true. All the rest of the story became almost incidental and unimportant. It was the dreams that were the central issue, and when proven to be accurate and effective, that was all that really mattered.

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**Rabbi Berel Wein**

 No longer would the brothers, or their descendants, mock dreams, or dreamers. In effect, they now realize that somehow the dreamers were more practical than the pragmatic people of the world. Certainly, as part of Jewish life was to be concerned, it would only survive and prosper based on dreams and not based on data.

 When Joseph reveals himself to his brothers, they are naturally shocked by the turn of events. Until now, they had always believed that they were within their rights, and that the actions that they had taken against Joseph were not only justified, but necessary. They saw him as a mortal threat to their very survival and to the necessary nation-building process that would create the Jewish people.

**In Just a Moment Everything Changed**

 Then, in a moment, this entire understanding and assessment of the situation with Joseph was turned on its head. This occurred because they had refused to give credit or to display confidence in the dreams that Joseph had related to them. It is, thus, superfluous to state that the Jewish people have survived only based on dreams.

 The return of our people to the land of Israel in our time is perhaps the greatest of dreams. We are taught in the book of Psalms that the return to Zion must be viewed as a dream, for based on pragmatism alone it could never have happened.

 The same thing is true regarding the revival of Torah in Jewish society in our time. Only dreamers could imagine, that at some level, the long-standing tides of ignorance and hostility towards Judaism and Jewish values could be checked. The great Ponovizher Rav summed up the situation succinctly when he told me: “I sleep little, but I dream all the time.”

*Reprinted from the website of Rabbiwein.com*

**The Secret of Jacob’s Determining if His Son Joseph Was Truly Still Alive**

**From the Talks of the Lubavitcher Rebbe**

**Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, Zt”l**



 In this week's Torah portion, Vayigash, Joseph's brothers return to Jacob and bring him the wonderful news that his son is still alive. "Joseph is yet alive, and is ruler over all the land of Egypt." Jacob, however, could not believe it was true until "he saw the wagons which Joseph had sent to carry him." Only then was he convinced, "and the spirit of Jacob their father was revived."

 Rashi, the foremost Torah commentator, explains that the wagons, "agalot" in Hebrew, were a special sign from Joseph to Jacob. The last time Joseph and his father learned Torah together, 22 years before, they had studied the portion of the "egla arufa" -- the calf that is beheaded to atone for a murder whose perpetrator is unknown.

 When Jacob saw the "agalot" he understood the allusion, and was thus convinced that Joseph was indeed alive.

**A Problematical Explanation**

 Nonetheless, this explanation is problematical. Surely Jacob did not suspect his sons of telling a falsehood; why then did he not immediately believe them when they stated that "Joseph is yet alive"?

 Did Jacob truly think that they had been fooled by an Egyptian stranger, who had somehow tricked them into believing that he was their long-lost brother?

 The answer is simple. To a tzadik, a truly righteous person such as Jacob, "life" is not a matter of the physical body but of the soul. When the brothers told him that Joseph was not only alive but "the ruler over all the land of Egypt," he could not believe that his son had been able to maintain his spirituality and continue to live as a Jew in such abject circumstances.

 After all, Joseph was completely alone for so many years, in the most corrupt and abominable civilization in the ancient world. Not only was he surrounded by the lowest class of people, the brothers had stated that Joseph was their leader! How then could he "live"--truly "live," the spiritual life of a Jew?

**The Comforting Realization**

 When, however, Jacob was given the sign of the "agalot" and understood that Joseph had not forgotten his Torah learning, he realized that his son was on the same high spiritual plane as before his descent to Egypt.

 Joseph had managed to remain a tzadik, despite his degraded surroundings. Only then was Jacob convinced that his son still "lived," and "the spirit of Jacob their father was revived."

*Reprinted from the Parshat Vayigash 5756 edition of the L’Chaim Weekly, a publication of the Lubavitch Youth Organization. Adapted from the works of the Lubavitcher Rebbe.*

**Parshas VaYigash**

**Locking in the Moment**

**By Rabbi Bentzion Shafier**

**Founder of TheSmuz.com**



 “*And Yosef hitched up his wagon and went up to greet his father, Yisroel, towards Goshen, and he appeared before him, and he fell on his neck and he wept, and he fell on his neck more*.” — Bereishis 46:29

**A Most Joyous Reunion**

 Yosef was the most beloved of Yaakov’s sons. All of the Torah that he learned, he taught to Yosef. In Yosef, Yaakov saw brilliant intelligence and wisdom, In Yosef, he saw all of the attributes of his beloved Rochel — the kindness, the beauty, and the leadership qualities needed to head a nation. In Yosef, he recognized all of his own life events playing out in parallel.

 When Yaakov gave the kisones pasim (the coat of many colors) to Yosef, it was a symbol that established Yosef as the leader of the brothers. To Yaakov, Yosef represented the greatest of the Shvatim (tribes)and the future of the Jewish nation.

 When the brothers came back with the report that Yosef was murdered, Yaakov was inconsolable. The tragedy was so profound that none of his children and none of the dignitaries who came to visit could comfort him. For years, the intensity of mourning didn’t leave Yaakov. His beloved son was gone.

 Finally after twenty-two painful years, father and son were reunited. The joy and emotion of the moment is difficult to imagine — deep yearnings of the heart finally realized. Yosef was so moved that he kissed his father, and then hugged him and cried, not just with tears, but with profuse crying that it seemed as if it were without stop. However, Rashi notes that Yaakov did not kiss Yosef, nor was he crying. He was reciting the Shema.

 This appears as a rather odd activity. Of all times, why did Yaakov see fit to read the Shema right then?

**Yaakov Was Locking in the Emotion**

 It would seem the answer to this question is that Yaakov felt such intense emotions at that moment — possibly more intense joy than he had ever experienced — that he wanted to capitalize on those feelings. He didn’t want them to simply pass; he wanted lock them in, to put them into concrete form so that they would become eternal.

 He wanted to take that extreme sense of joy and completion that he felt and use it to reach a new level. With the high that he experienced, he proclaimed HASHEM’s sovereignty of all. “You, the Master of the universe, have brought my son back to me.” He recognized HASHEM with an unparalleled sense of appreciation and proclaimed the majesty of HASHEM with a level of complete clarity that he may well never had reached before.

 This wasn’t the first time that Yaakov said Shema

 Obviously, this wasn’t the first time that Yaakov read Shema. He had accepted HASHEM’s dominion on a daily basis for decades and decades. But this was a new level of understanding that he was only able to obtain through these powerful emotions.

**Emotions Wax and Wane**

 This concept has great relevance to us. In the course of our lives, we experience highs and lows, times of great joy and times of deep sorrow, times of excitement and enthusiasm, and times of boredom and listlessness. There are times when we are passionate and fervent, and there are times when we are apathetic. None of these states remains for long. Like waves of an ocean, they come, they go, and when they are gone, we remain the same as before – unchanged.

Emotions are tools for growth

 The ability to **capture the moment**, to convert it into something permanent, is one of the keys to growth. If a person has a dramatic realization, if an event occurs that is the undeniable result of HASHEM’s direct involvement in his life, there is a sense of appreciation of recognition. But that feeling will pass. That sense of clarity will leave.

 Sometimes we are so moved by a sudden turn in circumstances that we say, “It is hashgacha!” (Divine intervention) But obvious as it may be at the moment, ten minutes later that sense of clarity is gone. The only way to prevent that it from passing is to put that emotion into action, to take that understanding and make it permanent.

**Thank You HASHEM**

 Sometimes even the most elementary action can have a profound effect, something as simple as saying thank you. If a person says the words, “HASHEM, I recognize that these events were not by chance. I see that it is You Who orchestrates this world and I thank you,” this statement can take a fleeting recognition and make it lasting. Even though the concept was already clear, going through the process can have a dramatic effect on whether this understanding actually remains and changes my perception.

**On the Good and on the Bad**

 On the opposite side of the spectrum are painful experiences — loneliness, suffering losses, failing in business. Nobody wishes for them and nobody wants them. However, when experiencing them, a person does have a very different perspective on themselves and on life. Gone is the feeling of independence, gone is the illusion of infallibility, and gone is the aura of superiority. In that sense, these are peak moments, moments of extraordinary clarity.

 Ironically, the pain will pass and be forgotten. The question is: will the gain pass with it as well? If a person doesn’t take concrete steps to make that vision permanent, it too will pass and become just part of a distant memory.

 When a person reaches a new level of understanding, that experience can be an event of life that happens and passes. But with one small step, it can become a permanent part of the person.

 By training ourselves to lock in these peak moments, we can take life experiences, moments of unique lucidity, and make them part of ourselves. Often, all it takes is a simple conscious action, a decision, or a small change to make lofty concepts and emotional highs permanent — changing who I am forever.

***Reprinted from the website of Theshmuz.com.***

**You are Not Alone in**

**Fighting the Yetzer Hara**

**By Rabbi Moshe Meir Weiss**



 Our last few parshios have been dealing primarily with the great personality of Yosef. He is one of the few people in the history of the Jewish people who has earned for himself the title of HaTzaddik, the righteous one. He achieved this accolade because, with superhuman effort, he managed to avoid the multiple seductions of the wife of Potifar.

 Rashi informs us that when her feminine wiles became acutely overpowering, Yosef saw a vision of his father Yaakov and that fortified him from Potifar’s wife’s brazen advance. The obvious question is, if we were about to sin and Hashem sent us at that critical moment a vision of a great tzaddik, we would also probably desist. If Yosef was given such Divine assistance, why was his action considered so admirable?

**Two Important Approaches**

 I would like to share with you two important approaches to this problem. The first is that Yosef is credited for training himself to conjure up the image of his great father whenever he was sorely tempted to sin. It is for this strategic spiritual warfare against the Evil Inclination that Yosef is found to be so noble.

 However, this begs another question. Why didn’t Yosef train himself to conjure up the thought of Hashem instead of his father? After all, this is why the Kitzur Shulchan Orech starts its compendium with the mandate, “Shivisi Hashem l’negdi somid – I will place Hashem before me at all times (so that I won’t sin).” There is after all a positive commandment, “Es Hashem Elokecha tirah – You should fear Hashem your G-d,” and the Ramban explains that every time we refrain from doing a sin because we are thinking of Hashem, we fulfil this mitzvah. I believe the answer is that it is simply easier to bring to the mind an image of a tzaddik that one has seen, than the abstract notion that Hashem is watching. And, we find a Mishnaic basis for utilizing a tzaddik in this fashion for it says in the fourth perek of Pirkei Avos [Mishna 12], “U’mora raboch k’mora Shamayim – Let the fear of your rebbe be like the fear of Heaven.”

**Yosef’s Technique to Battle the Yeitzer Hara**

 So, Yosef accustomed himself that, whenever things got challenging, he was bring to his mind the visage of his father and that would arrest the Yeitzer Hara that was plaguing him.

 The other approach is that Yosef indeed was given the vision of his father from Heaven. But, this was only after he exhausted all of his human efforts. When those weren’t enough, Hashem stepped-in and gave him Divine assistance. This help is available to all of us as we are taught, “Haba l’ta-eir, misayan oso – One who comes to act purely, Hashem will help him.”

 We are also taught the “B’Derech she’adom rotzeh le’leches, molichim oso – In the way a person wants to go, Hashem leads him.” This is a very fundamental lesson of Yiddishkeit. Sometimes a person thinks with dismay that he simply does not have what it takes to overcome a certain spiritual challenge.

 Perhaps it might be getting up early to go to minyan, not screaming in the home, or not watching a certain movie (or any movie depending on where you are holding). His assessment of his personal threshold of resistance might be accurate. But he or she is not taking into account the Divine assistance. Adding that to the equation changes the whole computation.

**A Beautiful Mashal (Parable) to Explain the Concept**

 I saw a beautiful mashal, parable, to illustrate this idea. A king built a tower with 150 stories. He challenged his 150 nobles: Whoever could reach the top floor in an hour will be rewarded with phenomenal riches. All 150 nobles started running up the steps. When they reached the 10th floor after about 15 minutes, 50 with exhaustion considered it hopeless and gave up. At the 20th floor another 50, mentally doing the arithmetic in their minds, also gave up in frustration. At the 70th floor, with 15 minutes to spare, another 40 dropped-off in defeat. Now, only 10 were left. When these 10 reached the 75th floor, with only 8 minutes to go, all except for one quit.

 This last devoted servant of the king reasoned to himself that if the king told me to do it, it must be that I can do it and so he plowed ahead. He got to the 80th floor with only a minute to spare and there he saw a door to an elevator with one button – going non-stop to the 150th floor. We must know that when we do all that we can, Hashem will lovingly do the rest and take us to many spiritual victories. In the merit of battling the Yeitzer Hara, the perennial fight of life, may Hashem bless us with long life, good health, and everything wonderful.

*Reprinted from the December 15, 2020 email of The Jewish Vues.*

**Rabbi Yisroel Reisman Discusses the Worst**

**Shidduch in History**

**By Daniel Keren**



 More than a thousand men and women [in Brooklyn and around the world) took advantage of a day off from work because of last month’s legal holiday to participate both live and from a live streaming on Torahanytime.com and Chazak of the Flatbush Hakhel Thanksgiving Day Yarchei Kallah Event that was held at the Agudath Israel of Madison in Flatbush.

 Hakhel, a Flatbush-based organization has for more than 15 years organized free legal day Yarchei Kallah Events with both halachic and hashkafah shiurim (lectures) to promote a greater appreciation in our community of Torah-true values.

 The Hakhel Yarchei began with a shiur by Rabbi Yisroel Reisman, mora d’asra of the host shul on the topic of “Atalya Makes Trouble” from Divrei Hayamim Beis (the Second Book of Chronicles.)

 Who was Atalya? Rabbi Reisman said she was a main character in the world’s worst shidduch in history. Among all of the melachim (kings) of Bais Malchus Dovid (the Royal House of Dovid,) seven of the rulers have been judged to have been tsaddikim (righteous).

 One of those righteous kings was Asa Hamelech who ruled the Kingdom of Yehudah for 41 years. He was successful in everything he attempted to achieve with but one exception. That was to create a harmonious relationship with the Jewish Kingdom of Israel, the breakaway nation of the Ten Tribes that bolted from the House of David during the early reign of Shlomo Hamelech (King Solomon’s) son Rechavam.

**The Worst Shidduch in History**

 After the petirah (death) of King Asa, his son Yehoshafat (Jehoshaphat) ascended to the throne of Bais Malchus Dovid in the Kingdom of Yehuda. In his attempt to achieve the goal that eluded his father, Yehoshafat thought to become a mechutan of Achav (King Ahab), husband of Queen Ezevel (Jezebel) by making a match for his son Yehoram with Achav’s daughter Athalyahu. This Rabbi Reisman said would go down as the worst shidduch in the history for the Jewish people.

 Rabbi Reisman noted that this has been the rule and practice of monarchs throughout history. Kingdoms of very competitive nations have frequently thought that royal matrimonial unions would make relations between such nations more harmonious.

 Even more recently, before the outbreak of World War I in 1914, the major European monarchies – Germany, Austria-Hungary, Russia and even Great Britain were all intermarried with each other.

 In another effort to create harmony with the Kingdom of Israel, Yehoshafat made a partnership with Ahaziah (the son and successor to Achav Hamelech) to create a Navy by building ships. in order to travel and import goods from Tarshish. The Navi (Prophet) Eliezer ben Dodavahu of Mareshah prophesized against Yehoshafat and forecast that he would be punished by G-d for having cooperated with the evil King of Israel. Indeed the ships in the combined fleet of Yehuda and Israel were wrecked and did not reach the desired port of Tarshish.

**An Unprecedented Wave of Royal Assasinations**

 With the petirah of Yehoshafat, one of the few righteous kings of Yehuda (the House of David,) the throne passed on to his son Yehoram. Rabbi Reisman noted sadly that an unprecedented and tremendous wave of destructive royal assassinations began that were to seriously weaken Bais Malchus Dovid.

 In order to shore up his power, Yehoram as the new king and the husband of Athalyahu (daughter of Achab and Ezevel) immediately killed off his six brothers, a lesson that unfortunately would not go unnoticed by his wife following his death after a reign of just eight years.

 At the beginning of his rule, Edom rebelled against being a vassal statue to the Kingdom of Yehuda and this was a punishment for Yehoram’s forsaking the ways of Hashem that included he erecting high places of avoda zora (idol) worship in the ways of the breakaway Ten Tribes (Kingdom of Israel). This caused the inhabitants of Yerushalyim and his other subjects in Yehuda to sin. Up until then the subjects of Bais Malchus Dovid had been righteous.

 Hakodesh Baruch Hu gave Yehoram a message (a letter from Eliyahu Hanavi) to repent, warning that if he did not return to the righteous ways of his father (Yehoshafat) and his grandfather (Asa), but continued in the evil ways of the kingdom of the Ten Tribes terrible thing would happen. The letter from the prophet also warned that if Yehoram did not improve his ways he would suffer many intestinal diseases, year after year.

**Continuing to Do that Which**

**Was Evil in the Eyes of Hashen**

 Unfortunately he did not heed the message and eight years later Yehoram died and was succeeded by Ahazia, the offspring of the worst shidduch in Jewish history. Ahazia who like his father continued to that which was evil in the eyes of Hasehm.

 At that time Hashem inspired Yehu, a righteous man in the Kingdom of Israel to wipe out the entire evil House of Achav. And because of the wickedness of Ahazia, King of Yehuda, Hashem inspired him to visit the King of Israel at the exact moment that Yehu was killing of all of the House of Achav. When Yehu discovered Ahazia, he took the opportunity to kill the King of Yehuda, who was in his eyes also a member of the House of Achav since his mother Athalyahu was the daughter of Achav and Ezevel.

 Now if you think things couldn’t get any worse for the House of David and the people of the Kingdom of Yehuda, think again. Athalyahu in an irrational mood decided to respond to the attack on his parent’s house, by pouring her fury against all of the descendants of Malchus Bais Dovid (the royal House of David) by trying to kill them. Unlike Yehu who wiped out the House of Achav violently by the sword, Athalyahu opted to eliminate the entire house of David by poisoning them.

 Athalyahu’s wicked efforts were almost successful, except for the heroic efforts of Yehosheba, Ahazia’s sister who heroically managed to rescue her nephew the one-year old son of Ahazia – Yehoash. Yehosheba’s nephew was secretly raised in the Holy of Holies in the Beis Hamikdosh by Yehosheba’s husband Yehoiada who was a Kohen (priest) serving in the holy sanctuary.

**A Truly Amazing and Quick**

**Ruination of a Righteous Nation**

 Rabbi Reisman said that what is truly amazing is that a nation that for the most part of 600 years until the reign of Yehoram had been righteously ruled, could within less than a decade be turned upside down for the worse.

 Rabbi Reisman said that Rabbi Isaac Sher, zt”l, the rosh yeshiva of the Slabodka Yeshiva noted that in our Chanukah prayers we thank Hashem for the milchomos (wars). One could understand for thanking Hashem for the miracles and the wonders. But why do we praise Hashem for wars?

 Change desired by Hashem can only be done quickly by milchomas, Rabbi Reisman said. If you look at the major wars of the 20th Century, you will see that they were all the causes of major changes in the world. If you consider the recent history (four years ago) when a most unusual businessman with no prior political history could actually defy the odds and win the most important elected office in the world. Obviously he was an agent of Hashem and he accomplished many good things for the Jews [in particular] and the nation [in general.]

 What was the merit that one baby boy, the only descendant of Bais Malchus Dovid was able to survive the wicked plot of Athalyahu? The answer can be found in Megillas Rus when after Ruth gave birth to a baby boy, all of the women gave brochas (blessings) for the baby to Naomi, the grandmother. Rabbi Reisman said that those sincere brochas were many centuries later mekayim (fulfilled) in h elping to save the life of that one-year-old grandson of Yehoram.

**The Important Less of a**

**Most Miraculous Rescue**

 The important lesson from the miraculous rescue of Yehoash is that one should never dismiss the brocha of a hedyat (a simple Jew). Even the sincere blessing of a non-Jew can be effective.

 Rabbi Reisman said that a certain rabbi would strongly encourage parents to sponsor a Kiddush on Shabbos to celebrate the birth of a girl. Why is this important? Is the food that people eat that important? Rather it is the opportunity that the Kiddush gives to participants to make brochas on the food and to also give blessings to the parents. And the efficacy of these brochas for the future welfare of that baby girl and her descendants should not be ignored.

 How did this happen to Dovid that this [wicked plot of Athalyahu] could happen? The story of Klal Yisroel is a story of miracles. This world (Olam Hazeh) is a gashmius (materialistic) existence that clashes with our desire for a ruchnius [spiritual] existence.

 If you study the history of Bais Malchus Dovid you will see that it is replete with unlikely miracles such as the unlikely union of Yehuda and Tamar, the daughters of Lot and the marriage of Rus and Boaz.

*Reprinted from the December 4, 2020 edition of The Flatbush Jewish Journal.*

**Don’t Make Sodom Beds!**

 Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetzky was once asked by his grandson, Rabbi Yitzchok Shurin, what he should keep in mind when starting a Yeshiva.

 He answered, “Don’t make Sodom beds.” R’ Yaakov explained a Sodom bed refers to the cruel practice of demanding that everyone be of uniform size and cutting off legs or stretching the individual who didn’t conform to the one accepted height. Just as we can’t expect everyone to be a lawyer because not everybody is cut out for it, so too, we can’t expect everyone to follow the same path in spirituality.

 The Pasuk states ,[Shemos 10:2] so that you may relate in the ears of your son. The word Bincha is singular indicating that we need to speak to each child as an individual, the way they are. This is why it says Vehigadeta Levanecha in singular.[Similarly, in the Haggada we say Echad Chacham (one wise son), Echad Rasha (one wicked son)... since we need to view each one as an individual (since really it could have just written the four sons without the word Echad).]

 In Veshinantem Levanecha, you shall teach them thoroughly to your children,[Devarim 6:7] For this reason Yosef says [Breishis 45:3] is my father still alive (and not our father). This can be compared to a puzzle of many pieces. No two pieces are alike and go in the same place. We are compared to a tree— Just as a tree that is forced to grow in a certain way may be a cripple similarly it is with children G-d forbid.

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