



Parashat Miketz



English version

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DOOMED TO ORDINARINESS

The same changes that even the greatest Tzaddikim cannot achieve during the moments of Neilah on Yom Kippur, any simple Jew can achieve with the power of a prayer and a tear that he sheds next to the candles of the eighth day of Chanukah. (Rebbe from Ruzhin. One of the greatest Hassidic Rebbes of all time.)

What? How does that make sense?? What is the power of the candles? And what is there in this time of the year that gives even a simple Jew the power to achieve more than what the greatest men of our people can achieve?

Adam Harishon saw that the days (of the winter months of his first year) were getting shorter and shorter. And he said, "Woe is to me! Maybe because I sinned, the world will become dark for me and return to emptiness and nothingness!? Maybe this is what G-d meant when He said that death will be my punishment from Heaven?!" He spent eight days in fasting and prayer... Once he realized that this was just the month of Tevet, and he saw how the days started getting longer again, he said, "This (seasonal change) is the way of the world". He went and made eight days of holiday. The next year, he made both series of eight days into holidays. He made these days holy days, for Hashem's sake, while the gentiles make these days (of cold and lack of sunlight) holidays for their religions (Avodah Zarah 8a).

One second. This means that Chanukkah is a holiday that Adam Harishon kept?!! What are we supposed to learn from Adam's Chanukkah?

Adam thought that his sin was going to destroy G-d's world. He fasted and prayed, **and then realized that he had no control over the world.** He realized

that a person is just a cog in G-d's huge machinery of all time. This is the way Hashem wanted His world to be, to have seasons. To have some sort of death, whether the death of mankind, or the death of winter. *G-d created death and called it טוב מאוד, very good (Bereshit Rabbah 9;5).*

There is a divine plan, and we are all part of it. Even the sins that we have committed are sins that G-d was well aware that we would commit. מביט לסוף דבר בקדמותו (Adon Olam) - It is up to us, though, to recognize that our past is part of our destiny, our unique story of bringing out G-dliness in the World in our own way. Similar to a flame. A flame needs something to burn for its combustion. So too, sometimes we need to go through difficulties, through failure, through some sort of ordinary life, in order for something extraordinary to shine.

This is the concept of the Minhag of the Dreidel game, where, in contrast to the Grogger - noisemaker - of Purim held from underneath, you need to spin the Dreidel from above. To show that the miracle of Hannukah was a manifestation of the One Above spinning our world, our life, our destiny. The Jews could not get together and pray to G-d to annul the Greek decrees, for they were hiding in caves. But G-d, on His own, even without our prayers, spun the events and brought about our miracles. We are puppets in His divine plan, or better yet, we are all just dreidels being spun by G-d, for 120 years.

Let us take Reuven's life-story, for example. His story was one of the saddest stories of Tanach. We know of only four episodes of his life, and in all four, he tried to be a good, responsible firstborn,

but all his efforts resulted in somewhat of a whiplash. He was born as Firstborn, but Yaakov felt that he had really intended that night of his wedding to be with Rachel, so Firstborn rights of double inheritance portion go to Yosef, instead. Reuven saw that his mother really wanted as many children as possible, and when he saw the mandrakes in the field, the flowers known to be auspicious in enabling one to have children, he brought them home to his mother, Leah. This brought about some sort of dispute between his mother and his aunt. When Rachel saw what Reuven brought home, she asked her sister Leah for them, and Leah said to her, *Is it not enough that you take my husband from me, you also want to take my son's mandrakes?*

After Rachel died, Yaakov placed his bed next to that of Bilhah, Rachel's maidservant. Reuven could not see what he saw as something shaming his mother, Leah. *How could Rachel's maidservant have precedence over my mother Leah?* When Reuven moved the beds around, the Torah intentionally uses exaggerated terms, to stress the severity of meddling with one's father's personal matters. "And Reuven slept with his father's maidservant." And, on his deathbed, his father rebuked him for tampering with the placement of his couch.

Reuven saved Yosef from being killed by the Tribes. He threw him into the pit so that they would not make a hasty decision (See Seforno). But, when he came back to the pit with a rope to rescue Yosef, Yosef was not there. The brothers wanted to kill Yosef when Reuven was absent. But Yehuda got them to sell Yosef as a slave, instead. In the blessings of Yaakov on his last day, Yaakov said that for Yehuda's having saved Yosef's life, royalty would go to Yehuda - עֲלֵיתָּ . מְטָרָה בְּנֵי עֲלֵיתָּ . *Reuven would need to lose out on royalty.*

The Maharshal explains why. Reuven was not only concerned with saving his brother Yosef for Yosef's sake. He was worried, because he would not know how to come back home to his father Yaakov, not having taken responsibility for his brother Yosef. וַיֹּאמֶר תִּלְדוּ אֶיְלֹהֵי וְאֶנִּי אֲנִי אֲנִי . Royalty cannot be given to someone who has side-agendas (Siftei Hachamim). And then, in this

week's Parasha, when the Tribes needed to persuade Yaakov to let them take Binyamin down to Egypt, Reuven offers to take responsibility for Binyamin. *If I do not bring back Binyamin, two of my sons will die.* Yaakov refuses Reuven's proposal chastising him, *Foolish Firstborn!!! Your sons are only your sons, and not also my sons?!* (Rashi)

As much as Reuven tried to be a responsible firstborn, he was doomed to be ordinary. But, hidden in his ordinariness, G-d had a much bigger plan that He was spinning.

הַדְּוָדָאִים וְתַנּוּרֵיהֶם וְעַל-פֶּתְחֵינוּ כָּל-מְגִלִּים הַדָּשִׁים גַּם-יִשְׁנִים לָךְ *The Mandrakes gave their scent, and on our doorways, all types of delights - new ones and also old ones, My beloved, I have stored away for you* (Shir Hashirim 7). The Midrash tells us on this passuk of Shir Hashirim, *To whom do the "mandrakes" refer? This is Reuven, who saved Yosef. "And on our doorways - all types of delights" - This is the candle of Chanukah. What is the connection?*

The Rebbe from Liska explains this Midrash, in line with the teachings of the Alshich... The Tribes suspected Yosef of being a Rasha, and they felt that it was a Mitzvah to kill him. Reuven saved Yosef, because he felt that from Heaven, he had a part in the birth of Yosef, because it was the mandrakes that he brought home to his mother Leah, that brought about Rachel giving birth to Yosef. He felt that it was not for nothing that he had this feeling, this emotion, that he was a part of Yosef's existence. And he felt that this was from Heaven that he was to be there at just the right moment to discourage his brothers from killing Yosef. On Chanukah, each person needs to understand which direction he needs to take in life, according to how he or she is guided from Heaven. Those things that seem to be unplanned and unexpected in life, the miracles that are from Heaven, your past, are G-d guiding you, to your mission in life. Your Tefikid. (Mishneh Sachir. Killed in Aushwitz) This is the continuation of the Passuk... *New ones and also old ones, My beloved, I stored for you.*

Everything that we went through and go through is the fuel that needs to be combusted in order for our light to shine. Once we understand that we are

ordinary puppets in a divine script, we won't be so ordinary anymore, and our deepest prayers will be answered.

THE BELIEF OF A DEAD MAN

Beliefs are powerful. A fellow walked into the office of the psychiatrist, looking healthy, successful, but concerned. After an hour of therapy, the psychologist could not figure out what was bothering the person. "What is it that you are concerned about?" "Dr., it is strange, but I believe that I am dead. Do not let out my haunting secret to anyone, for they will think that I am retarded, or something."

The psych. asked the "dead" fellow. "Do dead people bleed?" The fellow responded, "Of course not! They are dead!" With that, the psych. smiled, and pulled out a long sharp needle from his desk drawer. He walked over to the fellow, pricked his finger, and let out some blood. The man stared at his bleeding finger in shock, turning white. He gulped, and said, in somewhat of a whisper, "My goodness! Dead people bleed! Dead people bleed!"

In coaching I know that when I found the belief, I found the problem. But I can't change it by pricking a finger, or some other quick fix, for the negative and mistaken belief the client has built up and repeated to himself again and again is too powerful. When the subconscious has resistance, you can't go against it. Still, with silk gloves, or rather silk questions, you can alter it, if you are persistent.

The greatest thing that we can do to help ourselves and others is by changing a negative, discouraging or ineffective belief that governs us. Successful people, in any area of life, have the successful beliefs about that field. From stopping smoking (see Alan Carr's book) to becoming a genius (register to my Effective Learning Course). Making a harmonious home, effectively parenting a wayward teen, or functioning as a good negotiator, knowing how to keep one's cool in heated situations - all boil down to adopting effective beliefs of those who succeed in these areas, and disregarding the ineffective beliefs that bring us to where we do not want to be. For example, a person who is successful in keeping his cool in heated

situations has two core beliefs. The method that is widely used for helping people to get over their lifelong angers is The Four Questions. The originator of this method stated, at the end of her book, that the two core beliefs behind the method are, 1 - G-d is everything, 2 - G-d is good. We Jews recite those beliefs twice daily, *ואתה מושל בכל* and *טוב ה' לכל*. Still, even though we Jews know it, we still get angry. Why? Because, in that minute, we were not living with those beliefs. For just a moment, we thought that *אני מושל בכל*, *I am running everything*. Or, I know better than G-d what's best for me. Or, He does not care about what's best for me.

Try to calm someone down while he is very angry, whispering to him, "Don't worry, don't fret. G-d is everything and G-d is good". Then duck, because he might punch you in the face. At that moment, the belief that governs him is that **he** is running the show, and you are standing in the line of fire of his belief, contradicting it. Our rabbis tell us, *אל תרצה אדם בשעת כעסו* *Don't calm someone when he is angry*, and this is why.

Beliefs come and go, they intensify and shrivel, depending on how much we think about them. The only way we can be of help is if, somehow, we can get a person to change his belief, on his own. When the heavy negative belief softens a little, the negative beliefs can be questioned, and replaced by new, positive ones. And then, hopefully, prepping those beliefs every now and then, until they are second nature. If we would only daven right, we would find that many of the "gem beliefs" of Judaism and of the successful are hidden in the words of the Siddur. Prayer is replete with positive thinking, thankfulness and appreciation for what we do have in life. The *יג עיקרים*, the thirteen Ani Maamins, are the thirteen beliefs of a perfect Jew. By intensifying these beliefs, one can change himself and the world.

Yosef's brothers came down to Egypt with two goals in mind: to buy food and to find Yosef and

bring him home, no matter what the cost. They got to Egypt and they saw their brother, but didn't recognize him. The last time they had seen him was when he was 17, more than twenty years before, when he did not yet have a beard.

The question is obvious. Wouldn't you be able to recognize your brother, even if you had not seen him for twenty years? They were looking for him, and now they were looking right at him! They knew he was going to look a little older, probably with a beard by now. So, how could they have missed him?

The deep answer is that they never used to look at Yosef. They would look at his coat! That is all they remembered about him. His coat. They did not even know how he looked, because that's what jealousy does. It makes you oblivious to your own sibling, because you see only that the sibling has more than you.

The deeper answer is that they believed, with every bone in their body, that Yosef deserved to die for attempting to be Yaakov's only inheritor, cancelling out the other Tribes. They believed that he lied to their father about them, and so he needed to be eliminated! Yaakov did not report to Yitzhak about Esav's bad ways, so why should Yosef tattle on his brothers? The Tribes, holiest of men, would never have done what they did to Yosef had they not believed that he deserved it. After seeing how much pain this caused Yaakov, they needed to bring Yosef back. They believed that he was in the pits of Egypt, for that was where he belonged. They even looked for him in "the clubs of prostitutes", as he was handsome.

When they faced him, they could not believe that his dreams had come true, because they believed he was wrong, wrong, wrong. A belief can be so

strong, that you can look your brother in the face and not recognize him.

When Yosef attempted to change their belief, he knew there would be resistance. He needed to have them question if their actions had been just. He cried about putting his brothers in such pain, in order to do so, but there was no other way. His first question after revealing his identity was, 'Is my father still alive?' *Selling me, may have been correct, but did my father deserve the agony you caused him? You care about him so much in regard to Binyamin and Shimon, but you did not care about him when you sold me!*

And then, Yosef landed the atom bomb on their belief about what they did to him. *G-d sent me. G-d wanted this. You did not do anything. It was all G-d. You thought that you changed my destiny, but this was my destiny.* The ultimate belief of the ultimate Jew is that G-d is the One who writes each and everyone's script.

The Maccabees, a mere thirteen men, stood up against the mightiest army of the world. How? Because of their motto - Maccabee. מִי כַמוֹךְ בְּאֵלִים מַכַּבֵּי stands for, *Who is like You, among the mighty?* They believed that not even tens of thousands of Greek troops, could come anywhere near the might of G-d, and they called out to all who accepted this belief to join their army. They altered the negative belief (Greeks are most powerful) to the effective belief (G-d is most powerful) with a question format, "Who is..." That is the only way you can change a belief. Ask yourself the question each and every day of your life, before, during and after praying, *Do I really believe that G-d is running my show? Do I really believe that He is good, even when it looks otherwise? Do I really believe that what my brother has, and what I don't, is all G-d?*

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