



Parashat Vayakhel



English version

THINKING about ME.org

THE POWER TO IGNORE

מתוקה שנת העֵבֶד אִם-מְעֻט וְאִם-רַבָּה הַרְבֵּה יֹאכֵל וְהַשְׂבֵעַ לְעֹשֶׂיִר אֵינְנוּ מִגִּיחַ לוֹ לִישׁוֹן: *The sleep of a laboring man is sweet, whether he eat little or much; but the satiety of the rich will not let him sleep.* A poor man does not lose any sleep over his lot of poverty. It is the wealth of the rich that does not allow him to sleep. (Kohelet 5, 11)

Rachel, the wife of R' Akiva, gave up all of her father's wealth and support to be married to Akiva, the shepherd. Her father, Kalba Sabua, excommunicated them. They were so poor, they slept on hay in a barn.

Eliyahu Hanavi came to their humble abode, in the form of a poor man asking them to give him a few stalks of hay on which they slept. The "poor man" claimed that he needed it to place it under his child that was just born to him. R' Akiva told his wife - You see! There are people who don't even have a stalk of hay! (Nedarim 50) When someone asks you for tzedakah, it is a message to you from Heaven, a reminder how much worse off things could have been. There will always be people who have more than you. And there will always be people who have less than you.

The Orchot Tzaddikim lists four elements to happiness, Emunah, Bitachon, Contentment and Common Sense. We all want to be happy, and we know that contentment is the key. So, why can't we just turn on the contentment switch and stay happy? Why can't we just focus on the part of the cup that is half full and ignore the part that is half empty? Why can't we ignore those who have more

and focus on those who have less? Why can't we stay grateful for what we have, and not be ungrateful for what we don't?

Contentment is not a switch. It is a lifelong battle. It is part of your lifelong mission. Your struggle to be content with what Hashem gives you is not just *your* struggle for happiness. It is the story of Purim and of all humanity –back to Adam Harishon.

The Talmud in Chullin 139b asks, *המזן מן התורה מנין? Where is Haman hinted to in the Torah? המזן העץ? Hamin Haetz-* When G-d asked Adam, *Have you eaten from the tree I forbade you to eat?* What is the Talmud teaching us by connecting Purim to the Forbidden fruit?

Amazing. Adam had the whole world, except one tree. Had he been happy with that, had he lived within his means, he would have lived forever. If the Jews would have only heeded Mordechai's plea, not to enjoy Achashverosh's party, the decree of annihilation would never have been signed in Heaven.

Lack of contentment is what brought Haman's demise. Haman had everyone's respect, except for that of one old rabbi. And still *יְכַל־יָהּ אֵינְנוּ שׁוֹהָ לִי וְכָל-יָהּ אֵינְנוּ שׁוֹהָ לִי: בְּכָל-יְעַת אֲשֶׁר אֶנִּי רֹאֶה אֶת-מֶרְדֵּכַי הַיְהוּדִי יוֹשֵׁב בְּשַׁעַר הַמְּלָךְ: And all of this is worthless to me whenever I see Mordechai the Jew sitting at the Palace Gate.* Haman - why can't you just ignore Mordechai? Everyone is bowing down to you, and you are not happy, because of one Jew?

Haman - there is a great tee-shirt that says, "I wish I had the power to ignore you, like you ignore me." You'd still be around, if you had lived by this tee-shirt! It is amazing! The greatest pain a person brings on himself can result from something as innocent as not being able to ignore the one person who is not nice to you. The one person who has more than you. The one upsetting comment said to you. Sometimes, all we need in life in order to be happy, for relationships to work out, for a person to stop himself from saying something foolish is the power to ignore. But, Haman could not access this power.

This is our life story, as well. If we can live within our means, we can merit longevity. רקב עצמות קנאה. *Jealousy rots the bones.* And so many people suffer, feeling they have nothing, because they don't have what they want. Because they don't have the power to ignore.

Here is an amazing tool. Take a pen and paper, and write a list of all the things you wish you had. And then, on another piece of paper, write another list, of all the things you already have. Then, honestly, ask yourself; Are you willing to make the tradeoff? Are you willing to give up what you have for what you want? This is the most powerful way to recognize that what you already have is greater than what you want. The way to live this is through אדר- Aleph Dar. When you realize how G-d is literally "pumping you" with goodness, you will be able to ignore the things that G-d tells you, "this tree is not for you".

Ben Zoma teaches in his Mishna of Avot, איזהו עשיר השמח בחלקו. Who is rich? One who is happy with his lot. Why not say, One who is happy with his Parnassah, or happy with what he has? Why the word "lot"?

THE BIRTH OF THINKINGABOUTME.ORG

This time of year is very special for me. It is the time of year that Thinkingaboutme.org was created. It all happened one Friday morning, in the long, double-Adar winter z'man of 2011. After dropping the kids off at school, I sat on my couch, with a pen and paper in hand, and wrote out a plan.

G-d made each human being unique. Each human being is his own Adam Harishon. No two people have the same Tefikid, so no two people have the same looks, personalities, possessions or conditions in life. Whatever you have is all you need and all that is good for you. And this was and is the battle between Esav and Yaakov, for all generations. יש לי or כל. I have all I need, or I have a lot. Accepting G-d's rulership in life is the ability to say, I have ALL that I need. ומלכותו בכל משלה. Esther and Mordechai were able to achieve great things by living this way, by living with the Middah of Malchut. – ומדכי – וּתְלַבֵּשׁ אֶסְתֵּר מַלְכוּת. יצא מלפני המלך בלבוש מלכות. Whatever Esther's lot was, even if she needed to be married to the lowest guy on earth, she totally accepted it. But Haman was the exact opposite - וְכִלְיָהָ אֵינֶנּוּ שְׂגוּהָ לִי - I do not want this "כל"; it is worthless to me, if G-d does not give me everything I *want*. Because Haman does not believe that his life is orchestrated by G-d; he flips the letters of יקוק. Note the last letters of Haman's comment [except vekol], and you will see יקוק, G-d's Name spelled backwards.

This concept is the whole Torah. The Vilna Gaon teaches that the Torah is summarized in the Ten Commandments. And all of the Ten are summed up in the last one: Do not covet. Contentment is a life long struggle. And it is something we all need to pray for. הוא ברחמי יעשה שלום עלינו. May Hashem, in His Mercy, make peace on us. The Chatam Sofer says this is referring to the ability to be content. And when we access this trait of contentment, when we access the power to ignore, then, and only then will there be peace on all of the Nation. ועל כל עמו ישראל.

At the time, I was being taught some self-help concept in Rabbi Geisler's coaching course, from some gentile book. I asked the Rabbi, "Why do we need to learn this stuff from the gentiles? You bring so many self help concepts from Torah sources. Wouldn't it be good enough if one was



able to derive this same self-help concept from Shaar HaT'vunah of the Chafetz Chaim?" He answered me, "100%! If we had learnt Torah and Mussar properly, we would see it directly in the words of the Torah and our Sages! The gentiles have wisdom of self help, on a certain level, based on research of living life in this world. They speak the language that we got used to in Exile. They spelled it out in a way that we can relate to it as tools. But of course, if the self help tool is not found or does not appear to be based on something in Torah or Chazal, either we could not find it, even though it is there somewhere, or it is so simple it does not need to be said, or it is not true! Because the ultimate self help books are the Torah and the wisdom of our Sages." So, I asked him, "Well, in the course, we are getting these tools sourced from the Torah; but what if we had access to self help literature that spelled out these tools to the Torah world, sourcing them in the Torah, so that people who are looking to better their lives, to live like better Jews, could have such knowledge for better living? What if we found, in the Torah, the self help from G-d, and we could spell it out in a way that people can relate to it, so they can see for themselves how the Torah can improve their personal lives?" The Rabbi said, "Yosef, if you can do that, that would be amazing! There is always a deeper truth that the Torah has to offer. If you can write out these concepts, you could change the lives of many, many people." That Friday, Thinkingaboutme.org was born.

When King Achashverosh was angry with his Queen, Vashti, he consulted with others as to how to punish her. ויאמר המלך לחכמים יודעי העתים *And the king (Achashverosh) said to the wise men, those who know to calculate the times...* The Gemara asks, מאן חכמים? רבנן *Who were these wise men? It was the Rabbis!* (Megillah 12b) The Maharsha asks how the Talmud knows that the wise men being referred to, here, were the Rabbis. Aren't the intelligent gentiles also considered wise? Don't we see that the Torah calls the advisors of Pharaoh "wise" (Shemot 7; 11)? Doesn't the Midrash say, *'if a person tells you there is wisdom amongst the gentiles, believe him'* (M. Eicha 2; 13)? The

Maharsha explains that since it says יודעי העתים, *those who know how to calculate the lunar months*, we learn that Achashverosh was referring to the Jewish Sages.

This is strange. The Talmud said that "the wise" means the Talmid Chacham, even *before* quoting Achashverosh's saying he sought those who could calculate lunar months. Rabbi Y. Galinski has a different answer. He says that the original wise man is the Talmid Chacham. He is "the real McCoy", for the Torah is the origin of all wisdom. Rabbi Galinski says, in the name of the Kadmonim, that all wisdom was once possessed by the Jewish people. When the gentiles ruled over us, we lost some of our wisdom and they received some of our wisdom. When we see what we think is some new wisdom in their books, we are impressed. But that is only a small iota of the wisdom we once had.

The Mishna in Avot teaches, הפך בה והפך בה דכלא *Turn it over and over* (examine the Torah's teachings from every side, from every angle), *for it contains everything* (5; 22). In his introduction to his Sefer on the Torah, the Ramban writes that all wisdom is hidden in the Torah. King Solomon, to whom G-d gave wisdom and scientific knowledge, knew everything from Torah. He wrote the Book of Cures with his knowledge of the secret powers of different herbs. He knew the essence of everything in Creation, from the tallest trees to the lowest blades of grass; he spoke about the essence of the animals, the birds, the fish, etc. (see Melachim 1: 5, 13)

R Galinsky quotes the Vilna Gaon, that the wisdom of the gentiles is only a reflection of a reflection of the wisdom of our Torah. Rabbi Yitzhak Fanger, writes a beautiful story in the prologue to his, FHT-Fanger Healing Technique: Once, an experienced thief set out in the morning, searching for "prey". He noticed a rich man, who purchased a big diamond after having closed a lucrative deal, right in front of the thief's envious eyes. The thief's eyes lit up! The rich man boarded a train to travel home, holding his attaché case in his hand, with the precious diamond hidden within. The thief,

followed the rich man onto the train. The rich man entered a sleeping cabin, to rest during the long ride home. The thief followed him, and sat down nearby. The thief waited patiently for the rich man to fall asleep. Finally, it happened! The rich man dozed off, and the thief quickly opened the attaché case. To his bitter dismay, the diamond wasn't there! Ever so gently, he slid his hand into the man's pockets, but the diamond wasn't anywhere to be found! The thief did not give up. He checked again and again, but to no avail. Dawn broke, and still, he did not have the diamond! Sunrays woke up the rich fellow from his sweet slumber. He turned and noticed the thief sitting next to him, looking very disturbed, and rubbing his tired, red eyes. "Why do you look so disturbed, sir?" The thief answered, "I'll tell you the truth. I have been stalking you from the time you bought the

diamond, for I planned to steal it from you. This is my parnassah; I am a professional thief. But now, I promise you, I give you my honest word, that I won't take it from you. Just please, tell me, where did you hide it? Until now, my pickpocketing efforts have never been fruitless." The rich man answered, "I'll tell you. I noticed that you were stalking me like a shadow, the whole day. I figured that you wanted to steal the diamond. So, when we entered the sleeping cabin, I hid the diamond in your coat pocket."

The nature of man is to look "outside" for solutions, while the real answer exists "inside". The root of all wisdom, the ultimate truth in life, is found in our Torah; it is in our own pockets, if we would only look there. Even the gentiles, even Achashverosh, knew it!

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