

ספר מי השילוח - חלק ראשון - פרשת וישב

## Mei Hashiloach Vol I. Genesis - *B'reishith* - *Vayeshev*

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### FEAR -vs- LOVE

The first Izbicy Torah this week discusses at length the tensions in Jacob's family over the roles of Joseph and Judah. The struggle between the two tribes is not a war for leadership over the Jewish People; it is a fundamental argument about two things. First, how responsible is every person for his or her actions, and to what degree does a person need to ensure that nothing untoward results from their choices? Second, what role should Jews play in the world at large, should we isolate and insulate ourselves against the world and turn inwards to focus on God at the center?

Jacob had spent many years in Lavan's house in Mesopotamia, interacting with Aramean and other cultures. It was a painful experience, one he only endured because of family commitments; he had promised to serve Lavan in exchange for marrying his daughters.

Once Jacob returned to the holy land his impulse was to turn inward. He understood that the best path for a Jew is to retract his presence, withdrawing from the outside world. So the Sidra begins by telling us that Jacob settled in the land of his father's sojourn; his father was Isaac, whose inward-looking philosophy has already been discussed in previous Sidras.

\*\*\*\*\* Mei Hashiloach Text \*\*\*\*\*

### **Jacob settled in the country of his father's sojourn, in the Land of Canaan.**

וישב יעקב הארץ מגורי אביו בארץ כנען,

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But Jacob's fundamental thesis is wrong, not because there is a flaw in the logic - it is much easier to be Jewish and lead a Jewish lifestyle if you don't have to interact with the gentile world all the time - but because it is God's will that our relationship remains one of constant friction with the outside world.

Jacob's thinking is that to live in fear of God, in fear of doing something wrong and causing harm, is the highest spiritual level one can reach. And the best way of achieving it is to stay away from the opportunity to do wrong. Jacob had keenly experienced how easily and swiftly situations get out of hand in the world 'outside'. When Lavan had accused him of stealing his fetishes, Jacob had responded, "Whosoever you find among my household who stole anything of yours should die." Rachel, of course, had stolen the fetishes for reasons not completely clear, but she died soon after. That was just one example of how Jacob saw the world; as a minefield. A person's innocent actions or even something said in good faith, can have unimaginably painful consequences.

So Jacob settles in his father's place. The word מגורי *Megurey* - can be translated to mean Fear, as well as Sojourn. Jacob tries to settle into his father's place of fear - Fear of God. The Izbicy quotes a verse from Jeremiah, as though to castigate Jacob for his lack of faith. According to the Mei Hashiloach, Jacob needs to relax and leave things to God. He needs to

stop worrying so much about controlling the outcomes and consequences of actions taken. God has ways and means of making things come out right in the end. Jacob should have more faith and less need to control.

\*\*\*\*\* Mei Hashiloach Text \*\*\*\*\*

There are two verses which apply to this situation; the first reads, 'Therefore fear thou not, O my servant Jacob, says the Lord; neither be dismayed, O Israel: for, lo, I will save you from afar, and your seed from the land of their captivity. And Jacob shall return, and shall be at rest, and be quiet, and none shall make him afraid.' (Jer. 30:10)

זש"ה, ואתה אל תירא עבדי יעקב נאם יהו"ה ואל תחת ישראל כי הנני מושיעך מרחוק ואת זרעך מארץ שבים ושב יעקב ושקט ושאנן ואין מחריד. [ירמי' ל', י']

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Here the Izbicy breaks off from the quoted verse to insert another verse from the Prophet Joel about dreaming, because it has bearing on everything that happens this week's Sidra. Dreams are like a thread running through Jacob's personal narrative, beginning with the ladder-dream on his journey to Haran. Now Joseph begins to dream, and dreams become integral to *his* narrative, too; it is only natural, therefore, for Jacob to favor Joseph. But God has other plans. Dreams and prophecy are God-given. And, as the prophet Joel promises, dreaming will one day become a natural gift to all Jews with a propensity for it. For the time being, though, dreams may sometimes just be dreams, brain activity during sleep indicative of nothing more important than an unconscious sorting of sensory impressions received during the previous waking period.

\*\*\*\*\* Mei Hashiloach Text \*\*\*\*\*

The second verse reads, 'Then afterward I will pour out My spirit upon all mankind. Your sons and daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions.' (Joel 3:1)

והי' אחרי כן אשפוך את רוחי כו'. זקניכם חלומות יחלומו ובחוריכם חזיונות יחזו [יואל ג', א']

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After quoting the verse suggesting that dreams come directly from God, the rebbe makes a point of refuting the implications of the quote. This Sidra drags Jacob and his family kicking and screaming, so to speak, into the real world and down to Egypt. This is not the World to Come, this is the here and now, where dreams are not necessarily prophecy, and prophecies don't necessarily come true. The way we think the world ought to operate does not

fit with reality. Where we would prefer to see divine intervention, we find human fantasy, and where we expect free will, we find divine providence at work.

\*\*\*\*\* Mei Hashiloach Text \*\*\*\*\*

Upon observing the world one might expect to find that the actions people take are their own choice, while thoughts and musings come from God.

In these chapters of the Torah God shows us, however, that all physical actions come from God, while thoughts are subject to free will. It is about the actions a person takes as *a matter of choice*, that the Talmud says 'Everything is in the hands of heaven.' (Berachoth 33b)

Fulfilling commandments or transgressing against them happens at the will of God, but sometimes responsibility is attributed to the individual who performed the deed. As we find in the story of Judah and Tamar where he is quoted in the text saying, 'She is more righteous than I.' The Talmud says that a voice came out from heaven saying, 'From me. These things came, in secret, from Me.' (Sotah 10b)

היינו כל מעשים הנעשים בעולם נראים למעשה בשר ודם אך מהרהור והמחשבה נראים שהם מעשה הש"י, ובאלו הפרשיות מלמד אותנו הש"י אשר המעשים הם מיד הש"י והמחשבות הם מצד האדם וכל המעשים שיעשה האדם דבר רשות על זה נאמר כי הכל בידי שמים. ומעשה המצות או היפך הם ביד הש"י ורק לפעמים יתלה אותם באדם, וכמו שמצינו על מעשה יהודה העיד הש"י צדקה ממני,

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The Izbicy's opening salvo is that human acts are not necessarily freely chosen, and this is made clear from the aftermath of the drama with Judah and Tamar. As she was taken out to be put to death, she sent the pledge of seal and fringes Judah had left with her, saying, 'I am pregnant by the man to whom these belong.' Judah acknowledged her, saying, 'She is more righteous than I,' which the Talmud says was actually two statements. One, Judah saying 'She is more righteous than ..' The word *ממני Mimeni* 'From Me,' was said by God, and the entire episode had been arranged by God in order to give birth to the Lights of the Messiah.

Next we deal with the dream/prophecies of Joseph. Here the Izbicy matter-of-factly quotes a Talmudic opinion that all dreams contain elements of unheeded daytime thoughts; that dreams are not prophecies at all, merely reflections of observations, desires and fixations.

\*\*\*\*\* Mei Hashiloach Text \*\*\*\*\*

About the dreams of Joseph it was said they were just the residue of daydreams. (Berachoth 55b) Which is exactly how his brothers responded

when Joseph described his dreams to them.

ועל החלומות של יוסף הצדיק נאמר שהם מהרהורא דיומא, כי באמת כן השיבו אותו השבטים כאשר סיפר להם החלום,

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Jacob had received God's blessing in the ladder-dream on his way to Haran. This dream became the pivotal Torah text for all his descendents, until they arrived at Sinai and received the Ten Commandments. The dream was studied, examined and mined for insights over hundreds of years. For generations we used the dream's imagery to define who we were.

We can only begin to imagine what an affront it was to his brothers, when Joseph reported having dreams in which they bowed down to him, conveying his conviction that the dreams were prophecies like their father's ladder-dream.

\*\*\*\*\* Mei Hashiloach Text \*\*\*\*\*

After Jacob had his dream he began learning it like Torah, delving into the depths of it to find the profound message for each of the tribes. They, his children, also learned it like Torah, finding novelty and freshness in the teaching every time. For there is unfathomable profundity of Torah in that dream. So, when Joseph said, 'I too dream marvelous dreams like father's,' they told him he was merely projecting his unspoken desires to rule over them.

כי יעקב אבינו ע"ה כאשר חלם לו החלום בהליכתו ללבן התחיל לעיין בו ולמד את עומק הנמצא בו לכל השבטים, והם למדו אותו ונתחדש להם בו בכל פעם ד"ת חדשים כי כמה עמקות ד"ת נמצא בהחלום הזה. וכאשר אמר להם יוסף הצדיק כי גם לו חלמו חלומות כאלה יקרים, השיבו לו המלוך תמלוך עלינו

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The largest problem the tribes had with Joseph's interpretation of his own dream, was his self-comparison with their father. As was taught in Vayetze, Jacob saw God *Nitzav* - Erect over him. This was interpreted to mean that even in his sleep, in profoundest unconsciousness Jacob remains connected to God. The choice of the word *נצב* *Nitzav* - Erect, hinted at permanence, that Jacob has intrinsic holiness put there by God, not requiring Jacob's input or effort to maintain it. Joseph's brothers were convinced that he did not share these special gifts and qualities with Jacob. Joseph knew they were wrong.

\*\*\*\*\* Mei Hashiloach Text \*\*\*\*\*

'How can you compare yourself to our father Jacob? He spends every minute of his day and night in Fear and Worship of God. That's why he has prophetic dreams at night. He's connected to God even when asleep. You, Joseph, are nowhere near such a lofty level. All your dreams are merely projections of your daydreams; your daydreams are of dominion over us, and glory for yourself - it's no wonder you dream of it all night

long.’

כי איך תדמה לאבינו הלא אבינו הוא כל היום ביראה ודבוק בהש"י ולכך מראה לו הש"י חלומות אף בשינה כי גם אז הוא דבוק בהש"י, אבל אתה אינך במדריגה הזאת וכל חלומותיך המה מהרהורא דיומא שאתה רוצה בגדולה ובהתנשאות ולכך יחלים לך חלומות כאלה

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The Izbicy explains; there are two outstanding features in Jacob's path to worship God. One is an awareness of the totality of God's supervision of the world. Unlike pagans who believe that certain gods are interested in certain events and pay attention to particular individuals, Jacob subscribed to the totalitarian, Jewish conviction that One God watches over the leaf falling silently in the forest, over blind organisms feeding at volcanic vents on the ocean floors, over snowflakes amid avalanches and grains amid sandstorms, as well as watching over saints, sinners and everyone else.

Jacob didn't just think it or believe it, he lived it. His life reflected his convictions and it was clear to anyone watching him that Jacob was aware of God all the time.

The second aspect of Jacob's worshipful path was his humility. Jacob knew quite well who he was and what his value was in the eyes of God. God had told him clearly in the dream that we studied in Vayetze,

He dreamt! He saw a ladder standing on the ground whose head reached the heaven. God's angels were ascending and descending on it. And there was the LORD, standing above it and telling Jacob, "I am the LORD God of your grandfather Abraham. I'm Isaac's God, too. I'm giving you and your descendants the ground on which you're sleeping. Your descendants are going to become like the dust of the earth and spread out to the west, east, north, and south. All the families of the earth will be blessed through you and your descendants. Now behold! I'm here with you, and I'm going to be watching over you wherever you go. I'm going to bring you back to this land, because I won't ever leave you until I've accomplished what I've promised about you." (Gen 28:12-15)

But knowing who you are and what you're worth is no barrier to humility. Jacob, says the Izbicy, did not feel superior to a single living creature, because he understood that his value in God's eyes was a matter of grace, a divine construct, and not something he had earned or deserved. Jacob did not for a single moment delude himself that he was special because of some quality he possessed. That's what annoyed the brothers so much about Joseph's approach. He insisted on his superiority as a given, because he too worshiped God in fear and humility. Joseph's brothers found his opinions offensive in the extreme, both for its implication that he was superior to them, and his odious self-comparison with his father.

How dared Joseph try and assume the mantle of leadership, elevating himself above Judah, the natural leader in the family? How dared Joseph insist he was a God fearing man, always aware, forever connected to God in the present moment, when he was so oblivious to his own faults? How could he, with a straight face, claim to be as humble as their father Jacob, when his dreams were all about dominion over his brothers?

\*\*\*\*\* Mei Hashiloach Text \*\*\*\*\*

There are no higher spiritual ideals than fear of God and humility. Jacob's spiritual path was woven of these two characteristics. He was perpetually aware that God is in charge of everything, as the verse says, 'From His throne's place He oversees all the inhabitants of earth.' (Ps. 33:14) And as it is written, 'Indeed, He never rests or sleeps, Guardian of Israel.' (ibid. 121:4)

Jacob's humility was very pronounced, too. In his entire life he never felt superior to any creature. He personified the verse, 'For that which befalls the sons of men befalls beasts; the same thing befalls them: as the one dies, so dies the other; yea, they have all one breath; for a man is nothing above a beast: for all is vanity.' (Eccl. 3:19)

The Hebrew word אין *Ayin* - Nothing suggests that in fact there is nothing between the man and the animal. It is only God who distinguishes among them, no person can prove the intrinsic worthiness of human over beast, it doesn't exist.

כי אין לך גדולה ממדות יראה וענוה, ויעקב אבינו הי' תמיד עבודתו בזה, יראה היינו שהש"י משגיח על הכל כדכתיב ממכון שבתו השגיח ולא ינום, וענוה היינו שאינו מתגאה על שום ברי' כי מותר האדם מן הבהמה אין, לשון אין היינו אף שבאמת מצד הש"י יש חילוק אך מצד האדם אין לברר.

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Returning to the original quote with which the Sidra opens, the rebbe underscores the two important features of Jacob's attempt to dwell serenely in the land. Jacob sought to deflect any trials and tribulations that might be imminent by living in fear and humility.

\*\*\*\*\* Mei Hashiloach Text \*\*\*\*\*

This is the meaning of the verse, Jacob dwelt in the country of his father's sojourn. The Hebrew for sojourn uses the root *Magor* - suggesting awe and fear, while the Land of 'Canaan' contains the word *Chnia* - suggesting humility.

וזה וישב יעקב בארץ מגורי אביו היינו יראה ובארץ כנען הוא ענוה,

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The Mei Hashiloach here paraphrases the Midrash quoted by Rashi, (ibid.) 'Jacob sought to dwell in serenity, what happened to him? The exhausting saga of Joseph is what befell him.' Izbicy sees Jacob's chosen spiritual path Jacob as a deliberate attempt to carve out a chunk of serenity. By focusing on Fear of God and Humility Jacob was trying to isolate, insulate and protect himself from making mistakes that might precipitate a crisis.

\*\*\*\*\* Mei Hashiloach Text \*\*\*\*\*

Jacob wished to live in serenity. The type of serenity Jacob desired is acquired when someone frees himself from having to enter grey spiritual areas, acting in ways that have unpredictable outcomes or doing anything bad. When someone tries to ensure that nothing they do will ever transgress the will of God, they are trying to live in serenity.

ובקש לישב בשלוחה, זאת השלוחה היינו, כי כשאדם מנהיג א"ע להסתלק מכל ספק ולשמור מכל מעשה רע אז הוא בשלוחה,

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Now we learn why the chapter opened with the quote from Jeremiah. The rebbe examines each phrase in the verse on its own, showing how it applies. But first, we are told, living in fear is not the chosen path of Judaism, even if it guarantees a blameless existence. It is still not what God wants from us.

Better to live in love and make mistakes than live in fear and die sin-free.

\*\*\*\*\* Mei Hashiloach Text \*\*\*\*\*

God told Jacob that as long as a person lives in a physical body any attempt to live so carefully and circumspectly - to maintain such levels of fear and humility - is impossible and pointless. God wants people to act, because in this world we have to live in love, and commit to actions whose outcome is not predictable. That's why it is only for the future that the prophet Jeremiah promises: 'Jacob shall return, and shall be at rest, and be quiet, and none shall make him afraid, etc.' As we read above.

The first phrase says **Jacob will return**. The Hebrew word *Shav* - Return suggests pleasure, as in the verse 'He restores my soul...' (Psalm 23:3) suggesting the pleasure which comes of serenity and Torah.

וע"ז אמר לו הש"י כי בעוד האדם בגוף אין באפשר להתנהג בכ"כ שמירה ויראה וענוה כי הש"י חפץ במעשים של האדם כי בעוה"ז צריך להתנהג באהבה, ומעשה שאינה מבוררת כ"כ, וע"ז נאמר לעתיד ושב יעקב. לשון נפשי ישוב בתענוג ממחשבות ד"ת,

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The rebbe does not translate the verse *V'Shav Yaakov* ושב יעקב to mean that Jacob will return to his land, but that his soul will be restored to him through the sheer pleasure of learning Torah. It is an indirect quote from the Midrash Tehillim on Psalm 23. 'He restores my soul with Torah, as it is written, 'God's Torah is perfect, it restores the soul.' (ibid. 19:8) Through Jeremiah God tells Jacob that in the future any damage done to his soul by its sojourn in the outside world will be healed through the power of the Torah's restorative properties.

\*\*\*\*\* Mei Hashiloach Text \*\*\*\*\*

The next phrase promises, **and shall be at rest**, Suggesting suggests the Sabbath, as in the verse, ‘Strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, and foreigners shall be your plowmen and your vine-dressers.’ (Isa. 60:31)

ושקט היינו מדרגת שבת ועמדו זרים ורעו צאנכם,

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As was taught in the first Mei Hashiloach in *Toldoth*, Shabbes is a metaphor for a certain type of dream. The Talmud says, Raban Gamliel sat and taught, ‘In the future the Land of Israel will produce loaves of bread and ready-to-wear clothing.’ (Shabbat 30b). In Izbicy this Talmudic teaching was understood as the ‘interpretation’ of the dream of Shabbes in this world. For in *this* world, Shabbes is replete with restrictions and prohibitions; with 39 forbidden classes of labour, primarily concerned with the production of food and secondarily with the manufacture of clothing. Thus it is only proper that the interpretation of that dream should manifest as loaves of bread growing on trees, and designer clothing sprouting overnight like mushrooms on the the field. The world-to-come is the Great Shabbes. But instead of it being even more restrictive than Shabbes in this world, it will be a world in which no work is necessary at all, because everything will be taken care of.

Isaiah’s prophecy of the stranger taking care of your business for you, is mirrored in Jeremiah’s prophecy of ‘And Jacob shall return and be at rest.’ The rest, like the return, is not merely a temporary respite, but a radical new way of being taken care of.

\*\*\*\*\* Mei Hashiloach Text \*\*\*\*\*

**and be quiet**: suggests peace of mind, without having to worry about conflicts and incidents.

ושאנן היינו במחשבה מבלי לירא ממלחמות ומאורעות,

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The first promise of return was a promise to be restored in spirit. The second was a promise concerning the body, to be relieved of pressure. This third is a promise of peace of mind, not to be afflicted by one’s own thoughts, not to have to live with anxiety or fear of change.

The fourth promise gets to the inner truth according to Izbicy. What happens in the unconscious? What if we are full of unconscious heretical thoughts; what if deep down inside us there is a monster hiding? But God has already promised Jacob, ‘I am with you.’ Because, as was said earlier, in Jacob’s ladder-dream God is already standing erect over him before He says anything, indicating that Jacob is always connected, even in his unconscious.

\*\*\*\*\* Mei Hashiloach Text \*\*\*\*\*

**and none shall make him afraid**: suggests that even in sleep he will be connected to God, he will not have to be afraid of being distanced or rejected by God.



ואין מחריד היינו אף בשינה יהי' דבוק בהש"י ולא ירא פן הוא ח"ו נסוג מהש"י,

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The rebbe has explained Jeremiah's prophecy; a.) In the future we will live in a world where those things we have lost or damaged can be repaired through the sheer pleasure of reattaching ourselves to the source, to the Torah and our latent spirituality. b) In the future we will live in a world where our needs are taken care of through God's providence and management, without our needing to worry. c.) In the future we will live without fear of the conflict and strife which inevitably results from commerce and intercourse with the world at large. d.) In the future it will become clear that we are always connected to God, even in our unconscious, even while in a deep sleep.

We cannot live this way in the present, though. We are not even permitted to seek such guarded certainty and cloistered safety while in this world. We are born to live in the world full of doubt, troubled by our propensity for self-delusion and self-contradiction, forever afraid of losing the thread of our narrative and blundering off the path of life.

But Joseph not only tried to live this way, he was convinced that we ought all to live like him. That's why he talked about us to our father, Jacob. Not out of spite or the desire to bring our failings to light, but because Joseph thought the way of Israel, the Jewish way of worship is to stand firmly upon the paths of Fear and Humility, without deviating.

His brothers thought otherwise.

\*\*\*\*\* Mei Hashiloach Text \*\*\*\*\*

This then was the contention of the tribes with respect to Joseph.

וזה הי' טענות השבטים על יוסף הצדיק,

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The Izbicy refers to a Midrashic wordplay on a phrase in the text. The verse says that Jacob loved Joseph because he was *בן זקונים* *Ben Zekunim* - a child of his old age. The Midrash parses the word *Zekunim* and finds it constructed of two words *Ziv Iconin*. *Ziv* is a Hebrew word meaning brilliance or radiance. *Icon* is a familiar Greek word meaning an image or picture of a face. That Joseph had Jacob's face.

\*\*\*\*\* Mei Hashiloach Text \*\*\*\*\*

It was how Joseph was living his own life - following his father's pattern - conducting himself in the path of severest rectitude; This is why the Midrash says that the radiance of Joseph's features compared to his father's. (Gen. Rabbah 84:8) Because he was imitating his father's qualities; living in fear and humility so that he, too, might be able to enjoy the serenity of a life lived without doubts.

כי גם הוא הי' מתנהג א"ע במדות היראה וע"ז נאמר במדרש שהי' זיו איקונין דומה לו

והיינו שהעמיק עצמו לב' מדות הללו יראה וענוה כדי שילך בטח,

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Next, the rebbe explains the word בן Ben in the phrase *Ben Zekunim*. בן Ben means son. Joseph is just copying his father, Jacob, the way Jacob copied his his father, Isaac.

\*\*\*\*\* Mei Hashiloach Text \*\*\*\*\*

That's why the text tells us he was a *Ben Zekunim* - child of his old age. It's actually a reference to Isaac, Joseph's *Zaken* - Elder. Joseph was his grandfather's child, because his grandfather Isaac's chief characteristic was *Gevurah* - Fear.

ולזה נאמר עליו כי בן זקונים הוא לו היינו כמו שיעקב אבינו התנהג עצמו במדת יצחק אבינו היינו יראה גם הוא התנהג עצמו בהמדה הזאת,

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Finally, the rebbe emphasizes that Joseph was just as humble as Jacob, for just as Jacob never held himself superior to any living creature, so Joseph never considered himself to be better than others. This is where his brothers were so mistaken in him. They thought he was full of pride and feelings of entitlement, putting on a show of piety, pretending to be like their father.

\*\*\*\*\* Mei Hashiloach Text \*\*\*\*\*

In his humility he resembled his father Jacob.

ובענוה כמו אביו,

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There is a price to pay for living a life of strict inflexibility, even when it is a wholly spiritual life. Because Joseph insisted he knew what was best for everyone; how every member of the family ought to be conducting himself, God dealt with Joseph measure for measure, demanding a far higher code of conduct from him than from anyone else.

Joseph passed all his tests and proved himself pure of heart and deed. He was a truly God=fearing man of the profoundest humility. Great men, kings of Israel were descended from Joseph. But the Kingdom of Israel did not last, could not last forever. As a construct, Forever is not something Joseph can build, because eternity only exists at God's hand and that is being held by Judah.

When Jeroboam, Joseph's descendent and pretender to the throne of Israel, sought to overthrow the Davidic line, God told him:

'However, as for you, I will take you, and you will rule over all that your heart desires; you will be king over Israel. If you do whatever I command you and walk in My ways and do what is right in My eyes by keeping My statutes and commands, as David my servant did, I will be with you. I will build you a dynasty as enduring as the one I built for

David and will give Israel to you. I will humble David's descendants because of this, but not forever.'

Solomon tried to kill Jeroboam, but Jeroboam fled to Egypt, to Shishak the king, and stayed there until Solomon's death. (I Kings 11:37-40)

There is a flaw in Joseph's line which is not immediately apparent, but cannot avoid acting itself out in the long run. The effort to maintain such exacting standards requires a level of rigidity and inflexibility which eventually causes its own breakdown. Anything which cannot last forever, won't.

Only God can build something to last forever, but there is no room for God to do any building in Joseph's scheme of things, for it is incumbent on the individual to do all his own building. That's what Joseph's path implies: self-made sainthood.

\*\*\*\*\* Mei Hashiloach Text \*\*\*\*\*

This explains why God is so demanding of Joseph, because Joseph demanded perfection of himself and others. So God judged him down to a hair's breadth. For even though perpetual Fear of God and Humility are desirable and noble qualities, they imply a lack of faith in God's essential goodness. One has also to show some trust in God's benign conduct of our affairs.

If we rely solely on our own meticulousness and attention to detail, we can never create something that endures forever. Because, even though Joseph, with his self discipline, succeeded in creating something great, (all the kings of the Kingdom of Israel descended from Joseph are called great, as we learn in the Midrash; 'Only great men wear sackcloth as we see from King Jehoram who wore sackcloth') nevertheless, the verse says about Joseph's line that; 'It will not be forever.' (I Kings 11:39)

Eternity is not their lot or portion. Anything which lasts forever belongs solely to the Tribe of Judah. For though Joseph established his dominion through the six thousand years - by his own unimpeachable behavior - eternity is still not his. Those things which are eternal, belong exclusively to the Tribe of Judah.

וע"ז דקדוק עמו הש"י ג"כ עד כחוט השערה כי אף שהמדות הללו טובים, מ"מ צריך האדם לבטוח בה' ג"כ כי הנעשה מצד האדם אינו בנין עדי עד כי אף שיוסף פעל בשמירתו, מאד אשר ממנו יצאו כל מלכי ישראל הנקראים גדולים כדאיתא במדרש שק נהוג בבני אדם גדולים שהרי יהורם לבש שק, אך נאמר עליהם אך לא כל הימים, היינו כי בנין עדי עד אינו שייך לחלקם רק לחלק יהודה כי אף שעל כל הששת אלפים שנה פעל בצדקו שיעמוד בעולם. אך בנין עדי עד זה שייך ליהודה.

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Now we come to the details of the schism in Jacob's family, to the struggle among his children. Judah is the unchallenged leader among the brothers. But Joseph cannot understand this. How can Judah's path of worship be the chosen way, when Jacob and by extension Joseph are far, far more particular and careful about their behaviors? 'Why does everything Judah touches turn to gold, while I struggle endlessly to make anything come out right?'

\*\*\*\*\* Mei Hashiloach Text \*\*\*\*\*

Joseph constantly resented Judah's success, always complaining, 'Why does God favor and prosper Judah's path, making everything he does succeed, while with me, Joseph, God is so extremely particular and exacting, down to a hair's breadth?'

ויוסף הצדיק הי' תמיד בתרעומות מדוע כל מעשה יהודה אחי אשר עושה ה' מצליח בידו,  
ועמי הקב"ה מדקדק עד השערה

\*\*\*\*\*

The way the Izbicy interprets the narrative of this Sidra: the sale of Joseph into Egypt, his seduction by Potiphar's wife, the end to his incarceration which came about through the dreams brought to him for interpretation by Pharaoh's butler and baker, are all part of one lesson. Every event unfolds in precise order to enlighten Joseph, to show him the flaws in his thinking and the price of his choices.

The same is true for Judah, as later Mei Hashiloach teachings in this Sidra will show.

From the moment the Sidra opens with the statement that Jacob sought to occupy the same space that his father occupied, the die is cast for the drama to unfold. Joseph is Jacob's son, following in his footsteps. He will have to learn the same lessons.

Joseph learned from the characters he met in prison and the dreams he interpreted for them that he must not judge Judah so quickly. He could see now, that the chief butler was innocent, because despite all his attempts to protect the wine, the fly still flew into Pharaoh's cup.

\*\*\*\*\* Mei Hashiloach Text \*\*\*\*\*

So, through the metaphor of the two separate dreams, of Pharaoh's ministers the baker and butler, God showed Joseph what his mistake was. Every king has a chief baker and a chief butler, through their dreams God taught Joseph to appreciate the difference between the two ministers.

It is only fair that the butler not be punished should a fly be found in the king's goblet. Who can guard against a fly dropping into wine of its own accord? A fly is a living thing with a life and volition of its own, no one can ever ensure against an insect flying into a goblet. And who knows, perhaps the fly only landed the moment after he put the goblet into Pharaoh's hand?

והראה לו הש"י דוגמא במעשה דשר המשקים והאופים היינו לכל מלך יש שני שרים שר

המשקה ושר האופה ובאמת לשר המשקה מהראוי לבל להעניש אותו אם ימצא זכוב  
בכוסו כי מה הי' יכול לעשות כי הזכוב היא בעל חי ואי אפשר להשמר ממנה פן בעת נתנו  
הכוס על כף המלך אז פרחה לתוך הכוס,

\*\*\*\*\*

What Joseph was about to discover in being freed from prison in Egypt, was that his role in the grand scheme of things would be the conduit through which all abundance flows into the world. He represents the Sefirah of *Yesod* - Fundament.

\*\*\*\*\* Mei Hashiloach Text \*\*\*\*\*

Not so the chief baker. If there is a stone in the loaf of bread, he has no one to blame but himself. Stones are not living things with lives and volition of their own; they don't just make their way into the flour. The baker should have been careful to sieve it more thoroughly.

אבל שר האופים, לאשר בפת הנמצא בה צרור הלא עליו האשם כי הצרור אינו בע"ח ויוכל  
להשמר מזה,

\*\*\*\*\*

We each have a role to play in the grand scheme of things. There is no one-size-fits-all spiritual path, no right and wrong ways to worship as a Jew. The twelve tribes each have a distinct place in Jewish history, where each has its moment of ascendance and importance.

But only Joseph stands against Esau across time and space. When the Church or Mosque put forward their saints, claiming 'We are the inheritors by default of God's covenant with Abraham Isaac and Jacob! Look, God, how the Jews have forfeited their birthright through their abandonment of the Torah, through their sins. *We are the real Israel.*' Joseph steps forward saying, 'Examine my record, if you please. See if I have ever strayed from the straight and narrow path. Show me, if you can, one single sin I have ever committed to justify your claims...'

\*\*\*\*\* Mei Hashiloach Text \*\*\*\*\*

God showed Joseph that he corresponds to the chief baker. As the nemesis of Esau, his job is to ensure the very highest standards of purity and clarity, so that Esau should never be able to point and say that there is no one on Jacobs's side who is pure, unsullied and sin-free. Joseph is always there to prove Esau wrong. As it is written, 'The house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame, and the house of Esau stubble; they shall burn them and consume them, and there shall be no survivor for the house of Esau, for the LORD has spoken.' (Oba.1:18)

God gave Joseph the strength to overcome any and all temptations, therefore if any fault were found in him, he himself would be to blame and

no one else.

לזאת הראה לו הש"י כי יוסף הוא נגד שר האופים כי אותו העמיד הש"י על מקום בהיר ונקי נגד עשו בכדי שלא יהי' לעשו שום מקום טענה העמיד את יוסף נגדו מנוקה מכל כמ"ש ובית יוסף להבה ונתן בו כח כדי שיוכל להתגבר על כל תאותו ולכן אם נמצא בו איזה דבר מחוץ, לפשע יחשב לו

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The Mei Hashiloach takes this thought one step further. While Joseph was mostly successful in fighting his temptation with Potiphar's wife, he was not completely successful for he did have sinful thoughts and intentions. Now, by all accounts, Joseph should have received his just deserts, and since he had such high expectations of others, it was only fit and meet that he should be judged with the same harsh measure.

However God has mercy on Joseph, and the chief baker gets put to death in his place. Joseph gets to learn a vicarious lesson.

\*\*\*\*\* Mei Hashiloach Text \*\*\*\*\*

It was only out of God's love for Joseph that the baker was placed as a substitute for him, as it is written, 'And I put a man in your place.' (Isa. 43:4) This is how God hinted to Joseph how to interpret his situation.

אך מאהבת הש"י ליוסף נתן אדם תחתיתו ונהרג שר האופים כמ"ש ואתן אדם תחתיו, ומזה הבין הדבר,

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Every king needs a court jester, someone to take the pratfalls, and for whom every banana peel is an open invitation to slip and fall. The rebbe quotes from the Zohar describing King David as God's jester. We read in Psalms how David reacted when the prophet Nathan came to rebuke him for sleeping with Bat Sheva.

To the Director: A Psalm of David, when the prophet Nathan came to him, after he had gone in to Batsheba. Have mercy, God, according to Your gracious love, according to Your unlimited compassion, erase my transgressions. Wash me of my iniquity, cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgression; my sin remains continuously before me. Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done what was evil in Your sight. So that You be just in Your sentence, and proven in Your judgment.' (Psa. 51:1-5)

As we see, David confesses unequivocally to the sin, begs for forgiveness and cleansing. He then adds two phrases which turn everything upside down. The first says, 'I have done what was evil in Your sight,' as though it were not really a sin by worldly standards, just in the eyes of God who knows the truth.

The Zohar explains it thus: the sword whereby Uriah, Batsheva's husband was put to death was shaped like a dragon. Apparently the Ammonites used that sword to execute Hebrew prisoners. The sword itself was an idolatrous artifact, and feeding it, so to speak, with Jewish blood was part of the worship of that particular deity. So in arranging for Uriah to be put to death by the Ammonites, David had inadvertently empowered the pagan dragon-god. At

this, God took serious offence, a detail quite unknown to anyone else in David's court. Hence the phrase, 'I have done what was evil in Your sight,' and no one else's.

The next clever phrase is the last sentence, 'So that You be just in Your sentence, and clear in Your judgment.' King David hints to God that he knows what just happened. He had seen the banana peel, in front of the open manhole on top of the ladder with the bucket of whitewash and the whoopy-cushion, he'd seen it all clearly from the distance, knew what was coming and understood precisely what was required of him. This is how the Zohar explains the intricacies of the in-joke.

David said, 'I did what was evil in Your sight, because when I committed my sin I did it knowing full well I was in your sight, that Your eyes were watching me. I merely pretended that You could not see me sinning, so that You would be "justified in Your sentence, and proven in Your judgment," to ensure that I have not a leg to stand on in my own defense.'

Come and see, when an artisan opens his mouth to speak he inevitably ends up talking about his own craft. David was the King's jester, and even though he was in mourning, when in the King's presence, he fell back on his jesting arts to amuse the King.

He said,

'Master of the universe, did I not challenge You to test me and prove me true or false?

And did You not answer my challenge saying, "David, you will not be able to withstand the test?"

And have I not, by sinning so spectacularly, just proved You one hundred percent justified in your words, O Lord?

For had I not sinned, my word would prove true and Yours, not so much. So obviously, the only reason I sinned was to prove to the whole world that You are right in every sentence you utter.

Hence the verse, "So that You are justified in Your sentence, and proven in Your judgment."

As you can see, no sooner was David back in the King's presence, that he reverted to his jesting craft, and made jokes to amuse the King, despite his grief. (Zohar Vol. II 107a)

I guess you had to be there.

\*\*\*\*\* Mei Hashiloach Text \*\*\*\*\*

Judah corresponds to the chief butler. [His descendent] King David was known as the Royal Entertainer. In the Temple at Jerusalem, whenever there were libations of wine poured on the altar, the offering was accompanied by the singing of Psalms composed by King David.

ויהודה הוא נגד שר המשקה כי דהע"ה נקרא בדחנא דמלכא (זוהר ב' ק"ז.). ועל ניסך היין  
נשמעין שירי דוד,

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The Izbicy has a radical perspective on Jewish history in general, and the Tribe of Judah in particular. Sin is not always what it seems, and virtue not always the choice quality it is

touted. Being available to God is a thousand times more precious than being right. Allowing oneself to be vanquished, to appear a buffoon or villain in order to make God look good, is infinitely more precious than looking virtuous. While Joseph is indeed a saintly man, and his chosen path to worship God a worthy one, Judah's blundering is much more useful in promoting whatever agenda God has in mind for the world. Joseph is a foil against Esau - a very valuable, albeit seldom-used piece in the game of cosmic chess, a doomsday weapon against any threat of Jewish annihilation coming from Amalek, Still it is Judah who advances the game and moves it forward to its conclusion. Joseph is a tactic, Judah the strategy.

\*\*\*\*\* Mei Hashiloach Text \*\*\*\*\*

The truth is that in the story of Judah finding Tamar by the roadside and having sexual relations with her thinking her a prostitute, as with all the stories concerning the Tribe of Judah, They had no free will. God gave them such powerful desires it was utterly impossible for them to avoid acting out on them. As the Midrash describes it, the Angel of Lust came and forced Judah. (Gen. Rabba 85:8) He was not to blame for being unable to control his own lust.

That's what it is to be the Royal Jester; it means allowing oneself to be vanquished by God. As David said, 'In order that You are justified in Your sentence, and proven in Your judgment.' (Ps. 51:6)

About which the Talmud says, King David said to God, 'Who looks better being justified, me or You?' (Sanhedrin 107a)

ובאמת ליהודה במעשה דתמר וכן בכל המעשים משבט יהודה הדומין לזה נתן בהם הש"י כח התאוה כ"כ עד שלא הי' באפשרותם להתגבר וכמו שמבואר שמלאך הממונה על התאוה הכריחו, ולכן לא עליו האשם במה שלא הי' יכול להתגבר על יצרו וזה פירוש בדחנא דמלכא היינו שמניח את עצמו להנצח מהש"י כמו שאמר דוד המלך ע"ה [סנהדרין ק"ז]. למען תצדק בדבריך למי נאה שיוצדק אני או אתה.

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Each of the Twelve Tribes of Israel has its own specific and distinct character. Joseph's sons, Menasseh and Ephraim are the two tribes comprising Beit Joseph - the House of Joseph. Historically the tribe of Ephraim was also a leader among the Jewish People. Moses' successor Joshua was of the Tribe of Ephraim, as was King Jeroboam who led the split of the two kingdoms, Israel and Judah. In temperament they are very similar to their ancestor Joseph, setting high standards for themselves and expecting others to live up to them as well. It was because Jeroboam was so holy and guarded in his sexuality, besides his overwhelming scholarship (the Talmud says that in terms of his learning he could put the whole of the Sanhedrin in his pocket) that he simply dismissed the Kingdom of Judah as a lightweight enterprise unworthy of the mantle of leadership. As a descendant of Joseph, he thought he knew how Judaism ought to be practised in real life and how its affairs of state should be conducted.

It was an unmitigated disaster.



Ephraim and Joseph could generally could always point the accusing finger at Judah and blame it for all ills, because Judah was lax, easygoing and soft while Ephraim was strict, provident and blameless.

\*\*\*\*\* Mei Hashiloach Text \*\*\*\*\*

This is the meaning of the verse, ‘Ephraim will not envy Judah, nor will Judah besiege Ephraim.’ (Isa. 11:13)

The fact is that these two tribes are constantly at odds with one another. Because the Life Force flowing through Ephraim from God makes him go straight to the point of law, relevant to every act, without deviation. That’s why, when the Torah warns the Jewish people not to stray from the path of Torah, it uses the warning ‘Seek God and live, lest the House of Joseph sweep like a fire.’ (Amos 5:6) It’s a warning to Israel to be careful not to provoke the House of Joseph into confrontation.

וזה שנאמר [ישעיה י"א ינ"ג] אפרים לא יקנא את יהודה ויהודה לא יצור את אפרים, כי באמת אלו השני שבטים הם תמיד מתנגדים לזה לזה, כי ענין החיים שנתן הקב"ה בשבט אפרים הוא להבינו תמיד בכל דבר מעשה על הדין וההלכה מבלי לזוז ממנו ולכן כשהכתוב מזהיר את ישראל לבלתי יחטאו מטרת התורה אז יאמר [עמוס ה'ו'] פן תצלה כאש בית יוסף היינו שתראו כי לא יהי' מתנגד למעשיכם,

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This Torah ends with a quick reminder of what it is that makes the Tribe of Judah so special.

The best way illustration is an example of how Judah learns and applies the Torah itself. The Torah we live by has hundreds and thousands of rules, general rules called *Klallim* כללים and specific details called *Pratim* פרטים. But Judah is never satisfied with simply repeating the Torah as it was written yesterday in a book, or taught by a rabbi, be he ever so learned. Rules and details that were perfectly lucid and applicable yesterday may not apply this morning. How do I know what God wants of me today unless I ask God directly, to show me what His will is this instant? How can a teaching from yesterday satisfy today’s quandaries? What use is yesterday’s kiss, today?

Now one might argue that a judge approaching his caseload with an attitude like Judah’s, can expect a backlog of unfinished cases to build up quickly. If law were to be a search for the truth, no case would ever be closed or decided.

But surely, I hear someone arguing, if the Torah is the word of God, and the word of God is the truth then the Torah we already have should establish the truth of every situation, every time, without waiting for word from heaven with a daily update on the Will of God?

Well, yes, and then again, no. It depends on what tribe you belong to. Because if you are of the Tribe of Judah, you can well expect to find daily updates of divine will sitting in your in-tray each morning.

While Ephraim relies on the Law to pass Judgment, Judah relies on his judgment to pass laws.

\*\*\*\*\* Mei Hashiloach Text \*\*\*\*\*

Now the life force of Judah consists of constantly looking towards God, to find the depths of meaning in every act; not to focus so much on how the law is shaped by precedent, but looking to God in every act to see God's will.

Judah always asks to be shown the underlying truth, because it is always possible that while something may be true, it isn't true truth.

For example, Torah law establishes a rule, which came into being because plaintiffs and defendants tend to follow certain patterns in their arguments. But because the rules are so rigidly applied, they may be forced onto people in situations where they ought not, because sometimes people break the rules and don't follow patterns the law expects them to. They lie where the law predicts they will tell the truth, and vice versa. Sometimes even the truth is untrue, as we find in the Talmud (Nedarim 25a), in the story of the canes belonging to Rava. (There was a man who lent money to his friend. The matter came before Rava, who said to the borrower 'Pay back your loan.' He replied, 'I paid him.' Rava said, 'If so, then take an oath that you paid your debt.' The man went and took a walking cane, and put the money inside the cane. Leaning on the cane he walked into the courtroom to take his oath. He said to the lender, 'Here, hold my stick a moment.' They brought him a Torah Scroll upon which he swore that all monies he had borrowed had been paid back into the hands of the lender. Now, the lender became so angry upon hearing the false oath that he broke the cane in his hands and all the money spilled on the floor, and it was found that the man had sworn truly after all.) And so it is with all things.

ושורש החיים של יהודה הוא להביט תמיד להש"י בכל דבר מעשה אע"פ שרואה האיך הדין נוטה עכ"ז מביט להש"י שיראה לו עומק האמת בהדבר כי יוכל להיות אף שהדין אמת הוא לפי טענות בעלי דינים אך אינו לאמיתו כי פן יטעון אחד טענה שקרית כמו שמצינו [נדרים כ"ה]. בקני' דרבא, [דההוא גברא דהוה מסיק בחבריה זוזי, אתא לקמיה דרבא, א"ל ללוה: זיל פרע לי, א"ל: פרעתך, א"ל רבא: א"כ, זיל אישתבע ליה דפרעתיה. אזל ואיתי קניא ויהיב זוזי בגויה, והוה מסתמיך ואזיל ואתי עליה לבי דינא. אמר ליה למלוה: נקוט האי קניא בידך, נסב ס"ת ואשתבע דפרעיה כל מה דהוה ליה בידיה. ההוא מלוה רגז ותברה לההוא קניא, ואשתפך הנהו זוזי לארעא, ואשתכח דקושטא אישתבע. וכמו כן נמצא בכל ענינים,

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A ritual is only sacred if it stays fresh as a kiss.

\*\*\*\*\* Mei Hashiloach Text \*\*\*\*\*

And this is the source of the life force in the Tribe of Judah, to look always to God in everything and not to act out of precedent, habit or conditioning. So that even though he may have acted a certain way yesterday, nevertheless today he doesn't want to rely on himself, but asks for fresh enlightenment to know the will of God in the present moment.

וזאת הוא שורש החיים של יהודה להביט לה' בכל דבר ולא להתנהג ע"פ מצות אנשים מלומדה אף שעשה אתמול מעשה כזו מ"מ היום אינו רוצה לסמוך על עצמו רק שהש"י יאיר לו מחדש רצונו ית'

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For strife to cease, Ephraim has to be shown Judah's motives. Once he sees that Judah always has God in mind regardless of the course of action he decides on, Ephraim will stop accusing him of wrongdoing. But this is not an insight Ephraim can reach on his own, it's simply too difficult to break with his own patterns of thinking. Our habits, for good and ill, carve such deep tracks in our psyche that only God can help us break out of them.

Judah has no habits to speak of. Everything is always fresh, his is the ultimate beginner's mind where everything is still to be learned with complete newness. Judah is as new to the Torah as the Torah is new to him, that is the ultimate gift of LifeForce: fresh Torah all the time.

\*\*\*\*\* Mei Hashiloach Text \*\*\*\*\*

And this sort of behavior will mean that from time to time, Judah has to act against the law because 'It is a time to do for God,' (Ps. 119:126, see Berachoth 54a). That's why these two tribes are constantly in conflict. But in the future, it is written, 'Ephraim will not envy Judah and Judah will not oppress Ephraim.' Ephraim will no longer rail against Judah for occasionally working outside the boundary of the *Halacha*, and will not be pained by it, because God will show Ephraim how Judah's *Kavanah* - Intent was always for the sake of heaven, and not for his own profit or pleasure. And so, there will be peace among them.

וענין הזה יחייב לפעמים לעשות מעשה נגד ההלכה כי עת לעשות לה' כו' [תהלים קי"ט קכ"ו, עיין ברכות נ"ד]. ולזה אלו השני שבטים מתנגדים זה לזה, ולעתיד נאמר אפרים לא יקנא כו' ויהודה לא יצור כו', היינו שלאפרים לא יהי טענה על יהודה במה שיוצא חוץ להלכה ולא יצר לו מזה כי יראה הש"י לאפרים את כוונת יהודה שהוא מכוון לש"ש ולא להנאת עצמו וממילא יהי שלום ביניהם:

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**Jacob dwelled in the land of his father's sojourn, in the land of Canaan.**

In this chapter we begin the *birurin* – the sorting among the Jewish people themselves. For until now there was Abraham who is rooted in the characteristic of *Ahava* – Love (i.e. *Chesed*), meaning that he sorted all the different kinds of love in the world and purified his own love so that it was not a love for anything in the world but for that which God desires.

וישב יעקב בארץ מגורי אביו בארץ כנען, הנה בזאת הסדרה התחיל לברר הברורין שבין ישראל, דהנה אאע"ה הי' שורשו מדות אהבה היינו שהי' מברר על אהבות שבעולם שלא יאהב שום דבר עוה"ז זולת רצון הש"י,

Isaac was born purified in this characteristic, because he was born of Abraham only after Abraham had already sorted through all the different kinds of love. Isaac's characteristic was to sort through all the different sorts of *Yirah* – Fear (i.e. *Gevurah*) and to purify and to make sure that he has only a true fear of God alone.

ויצחק הי' מברר בזאת המדה כי הוא נולד מא"א, אחר כל הברורים שברר א"ע, ומדתו הי' רק לברר מדות היראה היינו לברר כל היראות שלא יראה משום גוון רק מה' לבדו,

With Jacob, these two characteristics were already well-defined. His whole business, was the characteristic of *Tifferet* -Glory, which is the center column and whose purpose is to put both fear and love in their proper place. Now in the lifetime of Abraham, the true preciousness of the Jewish nation was never revealed and similarly in Isaac's lifetime. And so their lifetimes were spent forging the distinctions between themselves and the nations of the world.

ואצל יעקב אבינו הי' אלו השנים מברורים הטיב, אך כל עסקיו הי' מדות תפארת היינו בריח התכון לסדר היראה למקומה ובעונתה וכן האהבה, והנה בימי אאע"ה לא יצא מפורש עומק יקרת אומה ישראלית וכן בימי יצחק ולכן הי' צריכין להתברר ממדות האומות ולהפריש עצמם מכחם,

Jacob was different. He had the twelve righteous tribes, a matchless group without any desire to stray from God's will. So Jacob's business was *birurin* - to sort them to discover the order of precedence – who is first, and who is last. This process was as challenging for Jacob as the processes of his parents were to them. He thought that Joseph is the chosen, and Joseph thought so too. And these are the very fine distinctions among the Jewish people, as we shall explain.

משא"כ יעקב אבינו ע"ה שהי' לו י"ב שבטי ישורן שכלם מתאימות ואין בהם שום נטוי' מרצון הש"י רק עסקיו הי' בהם עצמם לברר איזה מהם מוקדם ואיזה מהם מאוחר והנה גם מזה סבל יעקב אבינו, כי הי' סבור שיוסף הוא המובחר וגם יוסף סבור כן ואלו הם ברורין דקין בין ישראל עצמם כמו שיתבאר:

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**And Judah said, "What profit is there, in killing our brother?"**

We learn in the Talmud (Sanhedrin 6b), 'Whoever blesses Judah is considered a profiteer/arbitrator.' What this means is as follows: The Talmud says (Nedarim 32b) In the moment when the Evil Desire is in charge there is nobody who can recall the Good Desire.

Because when God is testing a person, he makes him forget the enormity of the prohibition he is about to transgress, and in which God is testing him. And this is what happened here with the tribes, when they wanted to kill Joseph. It completely escaped them, what a horrible transgression they were committing. It was only by using a trick far removed from the Torah way that they were saved from the horrible crime they were about to commit. Because Judah was very wise in the ways of the world, he had developed a trick of testing his own reality.

He said, 'What profit is there if we kill our brother?' Meaning, although we are agreed that Joseph should be killed, still what profit or pleasure will there be in it, will our father love us more if Joseph is gone?

ויאמר יהודה מה בצע כו', איתא בגמ' [סנהדרין ו: ] כל המברך את יהודה נקרא בוצע, הענין בזה דהנה איתא בגמ' [נדרים ל"ב:] בשעתא דיצר הרע לית מאן דמדכר ליצר טוב, והוא כשהש"י חפץ לנסות את האדם אז משכח ממנו כל חומר האיסור מהדבר שרוצה לנסותו בו, וזה ג"כ הי' ענין השבטים כאשר רצו להרגו אז נעלם מהם כל האיסור ורק בעצות זולת ד"ת ניצל מידם וגם הם ניצולו מעון, כי יהודה הי' חכם גדול בחכמות עוה"ז ע"כ זמם עצה ואמר מה בצע פי' אף שהי' נראה לו שמצד הדין מותר להרגו כמו שיתבאר אך מה הנאה יגיע לנו מזה, וכי בשביל זה יאהבנו אבינו ביותר,

Now, immediately, when they agreed among them not to kill Joseph, they were struck with horror at the enormity of the crime they had been about to commit, and how forbidden it was at law to sentence Joseph to death.

ומיד כשהוסכם ביניהם שלא יהרגו אותו ראו חומר האיסור שאסור להרגו מצד הדין ג"כ,

Now, using this trick of taking a reality check in order for a person to protect himself from doing something wrong is forbidden. It is only permitted in very extremely trying times when there is no other recourse. For when a person is supposed to shun evil because it is forbidden, he is not allowed to shun evil because of some reality check that he is taking, only because it is God's commandment. This is the meaning of the phrase in the Talmud, "whoever blesses Judah" meaning that he favors this trick and he tries to do what Judah did. He is considered a profiteer. Because Judah also only did this in exceptionally trying circumstances.

וזאת העצה שע"פ חכמת עולה"ז אסור לאדם שיגן עמה בעדו בכל עת רק בעת הנסיון שאין עצה אחרת, אבל לפרוש מאיסור בעת שזוכר שהדבר אסור. אסור לו לפרוש א"ע ע"פ עצה כזאת רק מחמת פקידתו ית'. וזה פי' הגמ' כל המברך את יהודה היינו שישר הדבר בעיניו לעשות תמיד כן נקרא בוצע כי יהודה ג"כ לא לקח לו עצה הזאת בלתי בשעת הנסיון:

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**'Let us go and sell him to the Ishmaelites.'**

The tribes judged Joseph at the outset as having committed a capital offense so they sentenced him to death, because he brought an evil report about them to their father. And this sin of Joseph's was considered by them to be a cardinal sin, touching the very root of his life, God forbid, because he was attempting to make a split between them and their father. In their eyes, this was considered like making a split in the unity of God and the Shechina, community of Israel. Because Jacob, at that time, was the Tzaddik of Yesod, the foundation of the world upon whom the World depended. He was in God's place in this world, and they – the tribes- were all of them Israel.

לכו ונמכרנו לישמעאלים, להיות כי השבטים דנו אותו תחילה למיתה מחמת שהביא את דבתם רעה אל אביהם והחטא הזה הי' נחשב בעיניהם לחטא בשורש חייו חלילה כי הי' מפריד בינם לבין אביהם והי' נראה בעינם כמפריד היחוד של הקב"ה עם כנסת ישראל, כי יעקב הי' אז הצדיק יסוד עולם שהעולם נשען עליו, והי' במקום הש"י בעוה"ז והם היו כל ישראל,

Because they were all included within the word *Echad* - One, in the Sh'ma Yisrael, since the letter *Aleph* the first letter of the word *Echad* - One in this sentence corresponds to Jacob. The *Chet* (second letter of the word *Echad* - One) corresponds to the eight sons of the chief

wives, and the *Daled* (third letter) corresponds to the four sons of the handmaidens.

כי בתיבת אחד שבשמע ישראל היו כלם נכללים, כי א' הוא נגד יעקב, והח' נגד ח' בני הגבירות, וד' נגד ד' בני השפחות,

And from what they understood, Joseph was trying to split them. It was only Judah in his wisdom, who said that the law is not clear, or perhaps Joseph is even right, and we are wrong. That's why he advised them to sell Joseph, the logic being "let us not do anything with our hands, but let God continue the process of *birurin*, sorting and if Joseph is good in the source of his life-force, then God will surely bring him out of Egypt unscathed and without sin, and nothing will be lost."

וכפי דעתם הי' רצונו להפריד היחוד הלזה, רק יהודה אמר בחכמתו שאין המשפט מבורר כך כי אולי הוא טוב ורק אנו טועין בו, ע"כ יעץ אותם שימכרו אותו, היינו שאנו לא נעשה לו בדינו שום דבר רק הש"י יברר אותו ואם היא טוב בשורשו אז בוודאי גם ממצרים יצילו ה' מכל חטא ולא ידח ממנו נדח,

And that is why, after that, God indeed sorted through Joseph and tested and assayed him in the story of the wife of Potiphar. Because the covenant of the flesh corresponds to the covenant of the tongue, and when he was found to be whole in this aspect, it was discovered that he had proved his wholeness in the other aspect, and so their suspicion that he had spoken evil about them was proved to have been wrong as well.

וע"כ ברר אותו הש"י וצרף אותו ע"י מעשה דאשת פוטיפר כי ברית המילה מכוון כנגד ברית הלשון וכאשר נמצא מבורר בזה, ברר א"ע על מה שחשדו אותו בענין לשון הרע ג"כ שהוא נקי:

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### **Judah went down from among his brothers.**

The reason Judah went to get married at this time in particular is as follows. When he saw Jacob refusing to be comforted after the loss of Joseph, and after it was he, Judah who upon whom the lottery fell to carry the bloodied cloak of Joseph to his father, he was very broken and depressed. He thought to himself, God forbid, that his hope of salvation was gone and so he went to get married, saying to himself, perhaps the children I bear will be better than I and from them something permanent may be built.

וירד יהודה מאת אחיו, טעם הענין למה הלך יהודה לישא אשה בזה הזמן, מפני שראה כי יעקב מיאן להתנחם וביעץ כי עליו נפל הגורל לשאת הכתונת לאביו ונפל דעתו מאד מזה, וחשב כי ח"ו אפס תקוה ממנו והלך לישא אשה שאמר אפשר שיהי' לי בנים טובים אשר מהם יצמח בנין עדי עד,

So, God showed him clearly that if, as he believed, someone truly is, God forbid, beyond salvation, without any Life Force at the source, then even if he bears a hundred children they wont have anymore Life Force than he did. For with God, the conduit through which the Life Force flows, that conduit also has to be alive. Therefore, if it is as you think, then your offspring will have nothing but a temporary life.

ואח"כ הבין לו הקב"ה, אם ח"ו באמת אשר אתה חושב שאין לך תקוה ואין לך חיים בשורש, א"כ אף אם תוליד מאה הלא לא יוכלו להיות בחיים יותר ממך, כי אצל הש"י הצינור ששולח על ידה החיים גם הצינור צריך להיות של החיים, וא"כ כאשר בדעתך, לא יהי' רק חיי שעה אף כל תולדותיך.

It wasn't until he realized this that his son, Shela, was born. He named him Shela, meaning,

A Mistake, because he had been mistaken in the matter. That's why his first two children did not have the Life Force, while Shela did continue living.

ולכן כאשר בא על בירר הדבר נולד לו שלה, וקרא שמו שלה היינו טעות שטעה בדבר ולכן בנים הראשונים לא  
הי' להם חיים ושלה נשאר בחיים:

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### **And Er, Judah's firstborn was evil in God's eyes.**

Rashi (ibid.) explains that Er feared ruining his wife's beauty through pregnancy, and so refrained from making her pregnant. Now, Er's sin sprang, as has been explained, from Jacob's desire to live in serenity, i.e. he wanted to protect himself from entering any areas of doubt. But this is not God's will in this world. That's why God showed him, "Watch and see the offspring of your loins who will also try protecting himself with the *Kavana* - Intention to avoid a situation that may lead to a loss. The only difference being that his is a loss of something physical. Now observe and take note how important this matter is."

ויהי ער בכור יהודה רע בעיני ה', פי' רש"י שהי' מתירא שמא תתעבר ותכחיש יפיה, עניין חטא ער נצמח כמו שנתבאר בקש יעקב לישב בשלוחה היינו להשמר מכל מעשה לבל יכנוס בשום ספק, והנה זאת אין רצון הש"י בעוה"ז, לכן הראה לו הש"י ראה מי שיוצא מיוצאי חלצין שהוא ג"כ ישתמר ממעשה בכונה שלא יבא לידי הפסד רק שהוא בעינינו גופנים וראה והבין ערך דבר בזה,

The truth is that Jacob had the same fault, it was only that in him it concerned his worship of God; a desire to avoid any sort of loss of beauty in his worship. But when a fault like this takes root and develops to become a characteristic it becomes an explicit sin. And so it was with all the the 'thoughts' of the patriarchs. To them it was a very small matter indeed, but afterwards, when God does *Birurin* - Assaying, God may sometimes create something from the thought, a soul or an individual who will act it out to the full potential. And thus, the *Birurin* - Assaying may develop into whatever develops.

כי אצל יעקב הי' נמצא ג"כ חסרון הזה רק חסרונו הי' בעבודת הש"י שהי' משמר עצמו מבלי להכחיש יופי עבודתו, וכאשר יסתעף זה עד הגוף אז הוא חטא מפורש וכן הוא בכל מחשבות האבות שאצלם הי' קטן מאד ואח"כ כאשר יברר הקב"ה ויברא ממחשבה כזאת נפש מיוחדת יתברר מה שיתברר,

The sin of Onan was this. As we learn in the Mishna (Avot 2:1) Rebbe say: What is the proper way a person should choose for himself? Anything that brings glory to the actor, as well as glory from the man.

Glory to the actor, means that the act a person does finds favor in the eyes of all observers.

והנה חטא ער ואונן הי' כפי המבואר במשנה [אבות ב' א'] רבי אומר איזה דרך ישרה שיבור לו האדם כל שהוא תפארת לעושי' ותפארת לו מן האדם, תפארת לעושי' היינו שהמעשה שהאדם עושה תשא חן בעיני בני אדם,

Glory from the man, means that the deed is a good one, down to the deepest depths of the Life Force of the person doing it, fitting to the shape of his manhood. (Because the Hebrew word, *Adam* - Man suggests a much higher level of awareness that simply *Ish* - Person. appendix) And every person has to look at what he does and make sure that both these criteria are met. Now, should a person encounter a situation where it is impossible to fulfil both of these criteria, then we find ourselves in the argument between the Schools of Shamai

and Hillel. (Ketubot 16b)

ותפארת לו מן האדם היינו שיהי' טוב בעומק במעמקי חיים שלו היינו צורת אדם [כי אדם הוא במעלה גדולה יותר מאיש כמבואר בזוה"ק תזריע מ"ח. תשלום] וצריך האדם להביט לכל מעשיו שיהיו מבוררים עפ"י שני אופנים הללו, ואם יארע לפני אדם מעשה שלא תשא את שני הבוררים האלה, בזה היא מחלוקת ב"ש וב"ה במס' כתובות [ט"ז]:

We learned in the Mishna; How does one dance before the bride? Shamaï says: The way she is. Because, according to their theories the main thing is, Glory to the actor. For when he praises the bride for being beautiful (and she isn't) he will lose stature in the eyes of other people for saying something that was not 100% true. And the Torah commands us to distance oneself from untruths.

Hillel says: The bride is beautiful and gracious. For although there is nothing glorious to the actor to be had from untruthfully praising the bride, nevertheless, one doesn't have to pay any attention to it. Because it is Glory from the man.

דתנן רבנן כיצד מרקדין לפני הכלה בש"א כלה כמות שהיא והוא שלפי סברתם העיקר הוא תפארת לעושי' שאם יאמר כלה נאה וחסודה לא יהי' התפארת לעיני בני אדם משום מדבר שקר תרחק, ובה"א כלה נאה וחסודה היינו אף שאין בזה תפארת לעושי', מ"מ אין צריך להשגיח ע"ז מפני שהוא תפארת לו מן האדם

Because the whole man forces him to make that decision, as we explained there. (It is written Proverbs 3, To find favor and agreement in the eyes of God - and only afterwards - in the eyes of man. appendix) When someone buys an article in the marketplace should we praise it to him or should we criticize it for him?

היינו, שכל האדם יכריחו לזה כמו שביארו שמה: [ כמו שכתב (משלי ג') ומצא חן ושכל טוב בעיני אלקים ואח"כ בעיני האדם. תשלום] מי שלקח מקח רע מן השוק ישבחנה בעינו או יגננה בעיניו,

Now, Er was most interested in, Glory from the Man. For this is a well known fact, there can be no birth or creativity unless there is also some concealment and forgetfulness with it. Just as the seed that is planted cannot germinate until it is swallowed by the soul and begins to rot, so, likewise, the drop of Life Force which flows from the mind cannot come to fruition until it condenses and materializes in the sperm of man. For in the moment the *Da'at* - Knowing of the man is disconnected and forgotten.

והנה ער השגיח עיקר על תפארת לו מן האדם כי זאת ידוע, כי כל הולדה לא תבוא רק ע"י הסתרה ושכחה, כמו שהגרעין הנזרע לא יצמיח בלתי אם יכלה בעפר וירקב, וכך הטיפה חיים שיוורד מהמוח לא יוכל לבוא לידי הולדה עד שיתעבה ויתגשם בזרע אנשים, כי בזה הרגע נפסק ונשכח דעת האדם.

And if a person were to remain constantly in his *Da'at* - Knowing before God he would not be able to reach the concealment and forgetting from which birth and creation follow. And so it was with Er, because he was always in the state of Glory from the man, meaning he was always standing in total awareness of God, in crystal clarity, knowing what God wants of him every moment, and he didn't want ever to interfere with this state of awareness. That's the meaning of the explanation that he didn't want to destroy her beauty, Tifferet Israel.

ובאם היה האדם עומד תמיד בדעתו נגד בוראו לא הי' יכול לבוא לידי הסתר ושכחה הזאת שיבא ממנה הולדה, ולכן ער ביעץ שהשגיח רק על תפארת לו מן האדם והיינו שהי' לו שכל בהיר תמיד והי' עומד נוכח הש"י ע"כ לא רצה להכחיש זאת, וזה פי' שלא תכחיש פי' היינו שלא להכחיש תפארת ישראל,

Onan took the second path, for his actions came about because he saw that his father's *Kavana* - Intention in arranging the Levirate marriage was only for him to 'raise-seed' i.e.



preserve the name of his dead brother. He didn't like that at all, for this would do nothing to establish him. It would only benefit his dead brother, not him, and he complained very strongly against it.

ואונן לקח לו דרך השני כי מעשיו היו לפי שראה כוונת אביו שרק יקרא הזרע ע"ש אחיו ע"כ הרע בעיניו שלא יתקן א"ע רק את נפש אחיו והי' לו תרעומות,

And we find this characteristic, even with the greatest and most saintly Tzadikim, and Onan's deeds are known as, Glory to the Actor. And thus it was that in the fixing of their souls required their reincarnation in the twin brother Peretz and Zerach. Peretz is the soul of Er, because Peretz is an expression of power and breakthrough. Because his was the characteristic of Glory from the man, even if it meant that in people's eyes there was no glory in it for him at all, he paid no attention but did what he must.

וזאת הענין נמצא גם בצדיקים גדולים ומעשה אונן נקרא תפארת לעושי', ע"כ הי' תיקון לנשמתם שנולדו אח"כ פרץ וזרח, פרץ הי' נשמת ער כי פרץ הוא לשון תקופות היינו תפארת לו מן האדם היינו אף שהוא הפך מתפארת נגד בני אדם לא ישגיח על זה.

Zerach, on the other hand, is the soul of Onan, and his name (*Zerach* - Shining) suggests that he is glorious in the eyes of other people. And it is concerning these two facts that the Talmud (Makot 23B) interpreting the phrase Judah spoke when it became apparent that the Tamar his daughter-in-law was pregnant with his child. He said: She is more righteous than me. (lit. she is righteous from me) The Talmud says that a voice went out from heaven saying: From Me! These things all happened from Me; My concealed decree. Meaning that although Er and Onan were not worthy in God's eyes, these two who were born of those same souls were indeed worthy. For although history shows that Peretz's descendents did things contrary to the Halacha, as one finds when reading the history of the House of King David, nevertheless, God bears witness that it is a result of his imperative (Psalms 119:126) To do things because It is a time to do for God, they have overturned your Torah - (because it is a time to do for God.)

וזרח הוא נשמת אונן, כי שמו מוכיח עליו שהוא תפארת נגד בני אדם. ועל אלו השנים [מכות כ"ג:] אמר הש"י צדקה ממני. ממני יצאו הדברים כבושים, היינו אף שער ואונן לא היו ראויים בעיניו, אבל אלו השנים שהיו נשמותיהם ישרו לו, כי אף שנראה שפרץ עושה נגד ההלכה כמו שמצינו במלכות בית דוד, על זה מעיד הש"י שהוא מפני [תהילים קי"ט קכ"ו] עת לעשות לה',

And although it may appear, on the surface, that Er's sin is worse than Onan's sin, nevertheless, his soul was the greater soul, in the deepest depths than Onan's soul, for it is from him that the line of King David is born.

ואף שעל המעשה הי' נראה שחטא ער הי' גדול מחטא של אונן מכל מקום נשמתו הי' גדולה בעומק מנשמת אונן כי ממנו נולד מלכות ב"ד,

For all the elements in the building of King David's line are all directed by God through similar architecture. Even though at the time they seem to be like sins. For Judah thought she was a prostitute, her face was covered, meaning that it was all a secret hidden by God, as is explained in the Talmud. (Sotah 10b) From Me! These things all happened from Me; My concealed decree. means that that it is a subdued secret, for it is hidden even from the prophets, how God builds the Kingdom of the House of David.

כי כל הבנינים של מלוכת בית דוד מנהיג הקב"ה ע"י בנינים כאלה אף שבשעת מעשה הי' נראה לו שחטא, כי יהודה חשבה לזונה כי כסתה פניה, היינו שהדבר הי' בסוד מהש"י וכמו שמבואר בגמרא (סוטה י:), ממני יצאו

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הדברים כבושים היינו בסוד כבוש שנעלם אף מנביאים הבנין של מלכות בית דוד.

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