



From the desk of
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Office of the Rabbinate of Elad, Rosh HaAyin and Herzelia

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TORAT

Parashat Vayeshev

HAMELECH

Seeds of Jealousy

In Parashat Vayeshev, we meet up with the nasty trait of jealousy. Yaakov Avinu returned to settle in the land of Canaan after twenty years in the house of Lavan and two years on the road. Baruch Hashem, he had married and begot thirteen children, twelve boys and one girl. Now he wished to raise them properly.

Yaakov loved all of his sons, but one of them was really his pride and joy. To Yosef he taught all of that which he had learned in Yeshivat Shem V'Ever. His other sons spent time with him, but Yosef most of all. Their relationship really developed. Yaakov wanted to give Yosef something special. He gave him a special garment, a *ketonet pasim*. This was given only to Yosef, not to his brothers. When the brothers saw this public display of unique affection, they could not find it in themselves to exhibit brotherly love. Compounded with Yosef's reporting of their "misdeeds" and of his dreams for royalty and dominion, the brothers became jealous of the role Yosef was assuming.

Branches of Jealousy

Far be it from us to think that we can discuss faults of such saintly individuals as the Holy Shevatim. Nonetheless, if the Torah uses terminology such as "sinah" (hatred) and "kinah" (jealousy) and continues to tell how they planned to put Yosef to death and instead settled on selling him to travelling salesmen, we are obviously to learn a lesson of the far-reaching results of misplaced jealousy and baseless hatred. Indeed, in the eyes of our Sages, this

hatred and jealousy was the cause of the descent to slavery in Egypt and, later on in our history, the cause for the untimely, painful deaths of the ten Martyrs.

Fruits of Jealousy

In Pirkei Avot, Rabbi Eliezer Hakapar teaches that jealousy, passion and the pursuit of honor drive a person out of this world. Rambam explains that these character traits are inconsistent with Torah truths and prevent a person from achieving proper understanding and positive qualities.

Rabbi Chayim Vital (Sha'arei Kedushah II:4) states that a jealous person is challenging Hashem's judgment calls. He decides for himself that Hashem unjustly apportioned goodness to His beings. Reb Chayim draws our attention to those of earlier generation who stumbled in this area. Take a look at Kayin, for example, who was on such a high spiritual level that he spoke directly with the Almighty. What made him lose his greatness and stoop to the worst of sins? Jealousy!

The ten shevatim, as mentioned, went to exile in Egypt due to their jealousy. Yeravam ben Nevat, an outstanding Torah scholar, lost it all due to his jealousy of Dovid Hamelech and his dynasty. King Shaul was so pure he did not know of sin. Nonetheless, he heard cheerleaders singing praises of Dovid ben Yishai making him out to be a more successful warrior than himself. This aroused within him jealousy, edging him to put an end to his competition. As a result, Shaul invested much time and energy of his entire army to pursue the innocent and righteous Dovid. In the end, due to this, Shaul is held responsible for the premature death of a city full of Kohanim, of



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Shaul's three sons, and of Shaul himself. All because he could not bear to hear someone else being praised more than himself.

In Shir Hashirim (8:6), King Shlomo teaches that jealousy is as harsh as death. Just as everyone does whatever he can to avoid dying, so too, a person ought to flee from this negative character trait.

Moshe's Last Struggle

On Moshe Rabbeinu's final day, he went to Yehoshua bin Nun's home and told him to come with him to the Ohel Moed. Moshe walked on Yehoshua's left side, as a talmid does. When they arrived at the Ohel Moed, a cloud descended and stood between Moshe and Yehoshua. Yehoshua received a message from Heaven while Moshe heard nothing.

The cloud departed and Moshe inquired, "Nu, what did Hashem tell you?"

Yehoshua humbly replied, "When the Shechinah spoke to you, did I know what was said?"

At that point, Moshe exclaimed, "Better 100 deaths and not a single pang of jealousy!"

[It could be that Moshe felt that he was being challenged in the realm of jealousy and he begged for Divine assistance to be spared from the clutches of that evil trait.]

Rotten Bones

Shlomo Hamelech teaches (Kohelet 4:4): I saw all toil and all perfection of deed; it is all a result of jealousy. Eben Ezra expounds: Most people work very hard just to outdo or at least catch up with their peers, in mundane pursuits such as clothing,

living quarters, wisdom, popularity, and manner of dining.

A person must be honest with himself and examine his motives, and weed out all traces of jealousy.

In Mishlei (14:30), Shlomo teaches: Jealousy makes bones rot.

Rav Nachman had workers do some digging in his yard. Unknowingly, they came upon the grave of Rav Acha bar Oshia, a man who never was plagued with jealousy. Rav Nachman asked Rav Acha how his body had remained intact. Rav Acha responded that those who were not jealous do not rot.

News Flash: Kislev 5782

Over the ages, we have records of deceased who did not rot. Here is a fresh one: Just recently, Jewish bodies were brought from Morocco to Eretz Yisrael. These were people who had been some of the first Corona victims, almost two years ago. They had made arrangements in their lifetimes to be buried in Eretz Yisrael, but due to Corona regulations, it was not feasible at the time.

Instead they had been buried in Morocco in plastic coffins, waiting to be transported to Eretz Yisrael when the authorities would let. Well, just recently, permission was granted. Those who dealt with the transport and re-burial reported that many of the bodies had remained intact. They appeared to be sleeping. Apparently, these were not very jealous people.

Jealousy Gets You Nowhere... or Worse!

In Sotah (9a), our Sages point out a number of instances of those plagued with this terrible



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affliction – jealousy. They all wanted more... and ended up with much less.

One such example is the *Ishah Sotah*. She set her eyes upon someone other than her husband. What she wanted, she did not get, and what she had in the first place, she lost.

The same could be said of that first serpent in the Garden of Eden. He was meant to be king of the beasts. Instead, he was most accursed. He was meant to walk upright like man, but instead, he had to slither upon the ground. He was meant to eat fine foods like man; instead, dirt became his coarse main course. What triggered his downfall? He saw Adam and Chavah enjoying each other's company. He devised a plan to kill Adam so that he could take Chavah as his mate. Instead, woman and serpent became eternal arch enemies.

Instead of going into all the details of history repeating itself along these lines, we'll just give you some names for you to do your own homework! Look up the sources and see how each one of the following had a certain degree of greatness, but lost it all when he let jealousy to get the better of him! They are: Kayin, Korah, Bilam, Doeg, Ahitophel, Geihazi, Avshalom, Adoniyahu, Uziyah and Haman.

Seventy Wounded Wolves and One Piece of Meat

Rav E. E. Dessler (Michtav M'Eliyohu Vol. I p.1) recounts how he was an eye-witness to a horrifying incident in which an entire pack of hungry wolves set their eyes upon one prey. We will spare you all the details of his gory description. We will skip to the devastating ending, which is quite contrary to "and they all

lived happily ever after." Instead, only one came out alive, and he himself left a trail of blood as he limped away with his measly piece of meat. Was it really worth the fight?

The *Fakir* of Constantinople

Reb Menahem Mendel of Rimanov used to tell over the following story on Seder Night.

Rabbi Yitzhak Nuniss was the advisor of King Constantine. Every day he had an audience with the king. One day he was absent. The curious king went for a stroll and chanced upon a Jew dressed in finery. The king inquired as to the festivities and was informed that the Jewish holiday of Pesach would begin that evening. The king made his way to the Nuniss home and knocked on the door. Rabbi Nuniss was honored by his visit and the king was quite interested to see all of the unusual preparations for the holiday.

That is how the king spent his entire afternoon. As evening set in, and the king still lingered there, Rabbi Nuniss found it appropriate to ask the king if he wished to participate at the Seder. The king was happy to do so. He really enjoyed himself that evening, especially the tasty *matzah*. He asked if he could take some home for his wife and household. The *matzot* on the table had been used up, so Rabbi Nuniss went to get some more.

The king returned home and ordered the table to be set for a special banquet. At the meal, he king announced, "And now, we will partake of a sumptuous food of the Jews, something the likes of which you never before tasted."

Eager to bite in, the assembled partook and were quite disappointed. Their *matzah* was rather



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tasteless. The king had to admit that the *matzah* he had eaten in the Nuniss home was far tastier.

Wishing to seize the moment to put in a bad word for the Jews, the *fakir* (Moslem priest) spoke up. He said, "The Jews smear swine lard upon their *matzah*! The Jew wanted to trick His Majesty and have him transgress the Moslem rule not to ingest swine!"

Infuriated, the king called for the Jew and demanded an explanation. The Jew said, "We also do not eat swine. Please give me three days to come up with an explanation."

That night, Rabbi Nuniss had a dream. A distinguished-looking Jew came and told him to return to the king the very next morning.

Rabbi Nuniss woke up and made his way to the palace. He asked the king, "If swine is indeed forbidden for you Moslems, how did the *fakir* know that the *matzah* tasted like swine? Something is suspicious here! Let us go pay the *fakir* a surprise visit!"

The king agreed, and off they went. They arrived at the *fakir's* house and knocked on the door. When they received no answer, the king turned the knob and walked right in. The room was empty. The king told Rabbi Nuniss, matter-of-factly, "Oh, this is the time of day when the *fakir* goes up to heaven to learn *bechavrusa* with 'the prophet' Mohammed."

Not convinced, Rabbi Nuniss took a look around. On one wall hung a curtain. Rabbi Nuniss approached and moved the curtain aside. This revealed a door. Rabbi Nuniss was convinced, "The *fakir* is here."

He opened the door and they found themselves in a garden. In the middle of the garden was a

small pool of water. They "caught" the *fakir* bowing to one of the symbols of a different religion.

Rabbi Nuniss announced, "The *fakir* is a faker! He's not Moslem! Every day he immerses in this pool as if to achieve atonement for pretending to follow Islam, and then he serves his deity!"

The king immediately ordered the *fakir* to be put to death. That *fakir* was jealous of the attention and affection that the Jew received from the king. The *fakir* had wanted to see the Jew beheaded. Instead, his plot boomeranged upon himself. Had he not started up, it was not yet his time to go.

The Fallacy of Jealousy

So we see that jealousy is not an avenue to stroll down. It is guaranteed not to get you to where you want to go. Great people have stumbled in this area, so it behooves us to beware.

In general, we would do a lot better off focusing on all of the goodness with which we were graced instead of staring at the abyss of the half empty cup above the water line.

Our Sages teach that no man dies with even half of his life's desires fulfilled. Instead of focusing on what you don't have, trying to come to terms with the fact that you have exactly what you need to fulfill your unique mission. That way, you can be truly wealthy, for "Who is a wealthy man? One who is happy with his lot."

At the same time, let us learn from this *parashah* to do our utmost not to arouse jealousy, especially amongst siblings.

Fondly,
Mordechai Malka