

FAITH AND DOUBT

Introductory Questions

- א) What are 2 of the biggest questions you have for Hashem in your life?
- ב) What do you think Joseph's biggest questions had for Hashem in his life?
- ג) How do we approach finding answers to our "big" questions?

YAAKOV WON'T BE COMFORTED

לז: לה – ויקמו כל־בניו וכל־בנותיו לנחמו וימאן להתנחם ויאמר כי־ארד אל־בני אבל שאלה ויבך אתו אביו:

- 1) Yaakov refused to be comforted. Why did he refuse to be comforted? Was a "right" to refuse comfort? What in Yaakov's life contributed to his refusal to be comforted at the loss of Joseph?
- 2) See Rabbi Sacks. Although he doesn't specifically speak about Yaakov, how does his insight shed light on Yaakov's predicament?

"Faith is not a form of 'knowing' in the sense in which that word is used in science and philosophy. It is, in the Bible, a mode of listening." (*The Great Partnership* p. 74)

"In Judaism, faith is not acceptance but protest, against the world that is, in the name of the world that is not yet but ought to be. Faith lies not in the answer but the question – and the greater the human being, the more intense the question." (*To Heal a Fractured World* p. 27)

JOSEPH'S REFUSAL

לט: ז-י

ויהי אחר הדברים האלה ותשא אשת־אדניו את־עיניה אל־יוסף ותאמר שכבה עמי:

וימאן ויאמר אל־אשת אדניו הן אדני לא־ידע אתי מה־בבית וכל אשר־יש־לו נתן בנדי:

איננו גדול בבית הזה ממני ולא־חשך ממני מאומה כי אם־אונתך באשר את־אשתו ואיך אעשה הרעה הגדלה הזאת וקטאתי לאלהים:

ויהי כדברה אל־יוסף יום | יום ולא־שמע אליה לשכב אצלה להיות עמה:

- 3) Joseph does not succumb to the advances of אשת פוטיפר. How could he do it?
- 4) Which word in פסוק ח has a special (infrequently used) cantillation note?
- 5) What does this word mean and what does the special note tell us that adds to the word?
- 6) Where else have we seen this word in our parsha?

- 7) How did Joseph refuse אשת פוטיפר?

A: Because not only did he believe in himself, but he knew that his father believed in him!

➔ HOLD ON: How did Joseph even know that Yaakov refused to accept he was gone?

See this powerful quote from Rabbi Soloveitchik about the lessons we learn from our parents, even without them saying them out loud:

"We have two massorot, two traditions ... Father teaches the son the discipline of thought as well as the discipline of action. Father's tradition is an intellectual-moral one... What kind of a Torah does the mother pass on? ...Most of all I learned from [my mother] that Judaism expresses itself not only in formal compliance with the law but also in a living experience. She taught me that there is a flavor, a scent and warmth to the mitzvot. I learned from her the most important thing in life - to feel the presence of the Almighty and the gentle pressure of His hand resting upon my frail shoulders. Without her teachings, which quite often were transmitted to me in silence, I would have grown up a soulless being, dry and insensitive." ("A Tribute to the Rebbitzin of Talne," Tradition 17:2 [Spring 1978], pp. 76-77)

➔ What lessons have you learned from your parents without them needing to tell you?

If Yaakov's belief in Joseph kept him going, then what about us, in whom Hashem places His faith!?

"Creation testifies not merely to God's power but also, as it were, to His belief in mankind. At the heart of religion is not just the faith we have in God. No less significant is the faith God has in us." (*Faith in the Future* p. 73)

Modeh Ani: What does this daily morning prayer mean?

Place the commas within the line and then translate:

מוֹדָה אֲנִי לְפָנֶיךָ מֶלֶךְ חַי וְקַיִם שֶׁהַחַזְרָת בִּי נִשְׁמָתִי בְּחִמְלָה רַבָּה אֱמוּנָתְךָ

- What does רבה אמונתך mean?
- Hashem has great faith in **us**!

8) Thinking Question: Who has believed in you that gave you the confidence to do more than you thought possible?

Check out this Leadership TED Talk by Drew Dudley about the people who believe in us, even if they never told us: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hVCBrkrFrBE>

Who have you not told about their lollipop leadership moment?

Has anyone ever told you about your lollipop leadership moment?

JOSEPH TO PHARAOH

At the start of מקץ, Joseph is taken out of prison and asked to interpret Pharaoh's dreams.

9) What is he telling Pharaoh in לו-לב-לו? How is this part of the interpretation?

וְעַל הַשְּׁנוֹת הַחֲלוֹם אֶל-פְּרַעֲהוּ פְּעַמִּים כִּי-נָכוֹן הַדָּבָר מֵעַם הָאֱלֹהִים וּמִמֶּהָר הָאֱלֹהִים לַעֲשׂוֹתוֹ:

וְעַתָּה יָרָא פְּרַעֲהוּ אִישׁ נָבוֹן וְחָכָם וַיִּשְׁיִתְהוּ עַל-אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם:

וַיַּעַשׂה פְּרַעֲהוּ וַיִּפְקֹד פְּקֻדִים עַל-הָאֶרֶץ וַחֲמִשׁ אֶת-אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם בְּשִׁבְעַת שָׁנֵי הַשָּׁבַע:

וַיִּקְבְּצוּ אֶת-כָּל-אֲכָל הַשָּׁנִים הַטּוֹבוֹת הַבָּאֹת הָאֵלֶּה וַיִּצְבְּרוּ-בָר תַּחַת גַּד-פְּרַעֲהוּ אֲכָל בְּעָרִים וְשָׂמְרוּ:

וְהָיָה הָאֲכָל לְפִקְדוֹן לְאֶרֶץ לְשִׁבְעַת שָׁנֵי הָרָעָב אֲשֶׁר תִּהְיֶינָה בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם וְלֹא-תִכְרַת הָאֶרֶץ בְּרָעָב:

10) Did Pharaoh ask for advice?

11) Where did Joseph get the inspiration for these guidelines? Were they obvious in the storyline of the dream?

- See Rabbi Sacks and Rabbi Soloveitchik for a perspective on how Joseph, and all Jews, see the world:

“Jewish faith is not about believing the world to be other than it is. It is not about ignoring the evil, the darkness and the pain. It is about courage, endurance and the capacity to hold fast to ideals even when they are ignored by others. It is the ability to see the world for what it is and yet still believe that it could be different. It is about not giving up, not letting go.” (*Radical Then, Radical Now* p. 182)

- How do we see this attribute in Joseph throughout his narratives?

Of course, the Jew represents the same ambivalence. He has inherited Joseph's dual nature. On the one hand, we are very practical people; we are skeptics, very critical of things and events. We examine every phenomenon in the light of matter-of fact logic, in terms of possibilities and probabilities. We have a down-to-earth approach, and emotions do not sweep us off our feet.

On the other hand, like Joseph, we are dreamers, prophets, visionaries beholding the whole universe, hoping and believing that, even though it is slow in coming, the great day-"ba-yom ha-hu"-will finally arrive. And for the sake of that wondrous day we have heroically defied the whole world and retained our identity.

The dual nature of the Jew as realist and visionary has been responsible for our survival. Like Joseph, we can dream and be seers while living in a very pragmatic, scientifically oriented world. (Rabbi Soloveitchik, *Vision and Leadership* p.8)

- 12)When in recent history have we seen embody this attribute of “dreamers, prophets, visionaries?”

- 13)What visions do **you** have that seem dream-like?