

DAF TSAFON



21 December 2019
23 Kislev 5780

Shabbat Mevarchim
Parasha Vayeishev
ArtScroll 198 Hertz 141

In our parasha we start the stories of Joseph and his brothers. Joseph is sent by his father to enquire about his brother's welfare. It is this fateful request that will transform Jewish history as Joseph is sent down to Egypt to prepare the way for the arrival of the family. This is the story of the Exodus and Revelation at Sinai. Joseph faithfully follows his father's wishes, but when he arrives in Shechem, the Torah tells us; "And behold a man (ish) found him and he was lost in the field" [Bereishit 37:15]. This was in the days before GPS. There was no address to type in. It was a big country. He tried to find his brothers and became lost. "The man found him and asked 'What are you looking for?'". The Rabbis tell us that the 'Ish' [man] alluded to in the verse was actually the Angel Gabriel. Gabriel literally led Josef by the hand and took him to his appointed place. But before he did this, the Ish asked Yosef "What are you looking for?" (Mah t'vekesh?) When studying a Torah text, one of the methods used is to see if there are any additional words which, on surface, do not add anything to the narrative. Indeed we find an example in our text. The verse should read "Vayishaleyhu haIsh, mah tivakesh?" (and the man asked him 'What are you looking for?'); but in the text we find an additional word "Vayishaleyhu haIsh LEIMOR mah tivakesh?" – and the man asked him saying, What are you looking for?

What does the word LEIMOR mean here? The Kotzker Rebbe answers: Joseph is about to embark on an epic odyssey. In several following parshiyot, Joseph will be kidnapped, sold as a slave, be falsely accused of raping his master's wife, be imprisoned before rising to be viceroy of Egypt. How does a person maintain hope and balance when he must contend with all these events? How does such a person not throw up his hands in despair? How does he remain strong to his Yiddishkeit?

How was Joseph able to stand up to the seduction of Potiphar's wife? What is the secret of his strength? The Kotzker Rebbe answers that the Angel was telling him: "Joseph, I will give you the key. The secret is always to keep your mind on one thing: Mah Tevakesh? [What are you looking for?]. You should constantly keep asking yourself "What is my goal?" When a person is focused on a goal, he can contend with the vagaries that life throws at him. He knows, "I have a mission to accomplish and I will not let anything get in my way." When a person has a clear understanding of "Mah Tevakesh?" then he can be tried with all these tests, all these 'ups', but mostly 'downs' in life and can remain true to his principles because he knows what his goals are.

This is what LEIMOR means here. It does not mean to say it to anyone else, it means keep saying it to yourself! Say it over and over again. Every time you find yourself confronting a test, a challenge, ask "Mah Tevakesh?" [What is my goal?] This prevents you from giving up, it prevents you from being seduced, and it keeps you honest.

Shabbat Shalom

Haftarah

ArtScroll 1142 Hertz 152

INDICTMENT OF ISRAEL

Amos II, 6-III, 8

Having declared that the neighbouring countries of Syria, Philistia, Tyre, Edom, Ammon and Moab would be severely punished for their wickedness, the prophet proceeds to indict the Northern Kingdom for its crimes of injustice, cruelty and immorality. 'They sell the righteous for silver (as Joseph was sold by his brothers) and the needy for (a debt to the value of) a pair of shoes'. Because they were God's chosen people whom He had delivered from Egypt and brought to the Promised Land, they should have set an example and therefore their punishment would be all the more severe. Their doom was inevitable; they had received ample warning from the prophets to whom God reveals His counsel.

מזל טוב

Wedding anniversaries

Erroll and Vivien Dembo

Tom and Judy Fenton

Benjamin and Ellen Goodman

Michael and Margot Hurwitz

Mark and Lisa Krischer

John and Sandra Levenston

Yifat and Yaron Oron

Andrew and Gillian Samuel

Michael and Tracey Weiner

Our congregation acknowledges the following
yahrzeit anniversaries and wishes long life to those
who are commemorating a yahrzeit
during the coming week.

חaims ארוכים

Farcha Agami

Rachel Been

Helen Bernard

Isadore Don

Israel Hoffman

Joan Yvette McGuire

Harry Jeffrey Phillips

Arthur Priester

Sigmund Sperling

grandmother of Mirah Teichtahl

mother of Michael Been

mother of Les Bernard

father of Harold Don

father of Marion Rettie

sister of David Landor

brother of Anthony Phillips

grandfather of Marion Blitz

uncle of Nathan Sperling

מזל טוב

Bar Mitzvah anniversary

Mark Fisher