

# COUNSEL OF HASHEM

*by Shlomo Katz*

## Parshas Vayeishev

## Counsel of Hashem

Sponsored in honor of  
Aharon Goodman's 25 years of Federal employment  
by his mother and his siblings  
Tzirel, Debbie, Aviva and Sholom  
and their families

Shlomo and Sharona Katz  
in honor of the birth of Moshe Natan Broder,  
grandson to Alan and Fran Broder

Today's Learning:  
Me'ilah 1:3-4  
O.C. 249:3-250:1  
Daf Yomi (Bavli): Kiddushin 73  
Daf Yomi (Yerushalmi): Gittin 10

King Shlomo writes in Mishlei (19:21), "Many thoughts are in man's heart, but the counsel of Hashem - only it will prevail." Rabbeinu Yonah z"l (Spain; 1180-1263) writes: The prior verse states, "Hear counsel and accept discipline in order that you grow wise in your later days." The reason that a person grows wise from seeking the advice of others is that, when it comes to making personal decisions, a person, no matter how wise he is, is biased by his own desires. Thus, one should seek the counsel of someone who is unbiased. Nevertheless, our verse reminds us, even though you should ask others for advice, your trust should be in G-d alone, for "many thoughts are in man's heart, but the counsel of Hashem - only it will prevail."

Alternatively, our verse can be seen as a recurring theme in our parashah. As the parashah begins, Yaakov believes that, after overcoming Lavan and Esav, he can finally settle down. But G-d has other plans. "Many thoughts are in man's heart, but the counsel of Hashem - only it will prevail." As the

parashah continues, Yosef's brothers sell him into slavery in order to be rid of his dreams forever. But G-d has other plans. "Many thoughts are in man's heart, but the counsel of Hashem - only it will prevail." We then read of Yehuda's attempts to marry his sons to Tamar, followed by his attempt to be rid of her by sending her to her father's home. Again, G-d has other plans. "Many thoughts are in man's heart, but the counsel of Hashem - only it will prevail." (Drashot U'perushei Rabbeinu Yonah Al Ha'Torah)

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"They sat to eat food; they raised their eyes and they saw, behold! -- a caravan of Ishmaelites was coming from Gilad . . . Yehuda said to his brothers, 'What gain will there be if we kill our brother and cover up his blood? Come, let us sell him to the Ishmaelites . . .'

"Midianite men, traders, passed by; they drew Yosef up and lifted him out of the pit and sold Yosef to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver." (37:25-28)

Who drew Yosef up from the pit and sold him? Rashi z"l writes that Yaakov's sons drew Yosef from the pit and sold him to the Ishmaelites. The Ishmaelites then sold Yosef to the Midianites, who in turn sold him to the Egyptians.

R' Shmuel ben Meir z"l (Rashbam; Rashi's grandson and disciple; died 1174) explains the verse differently. He writes: The Brothers were eating at some distance from the pit where Yosef was in order not to appear insensitive, and they watched the approach of the Ishmaelites. In the meantime, the Midianites took Yosef out of the pit and sold him to the Ishmaelites. Nevertheless, the Torah attributes the sale to Yosef's brothers because their actions caused it.

Alternatively, writes Rashbam, Yosef's brothers asked the Midianites to take Yosef out of the pit

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Targum Yonatan ben Uziel, the Aramaic translation dating to the times of the Mishnah, states: "They sold Yosef to Arabs for twenty pieces of silver and bought shoes with the money." Similarly, we read in this week's haftarah (Amos 2:6), "So said Hashem, 'For three rebellious sins of Israel -- but should I not exact retribution for the fourth -- for their having sold a righteous man for silver, and a destitute one for the sake of a pair of shoes?'"

R' Shlomo Wolbe z"l (died 2005) notes that the Torah does not criticize the Brothers for their hostile attitude toward Yosef. After all, they considered Yosef to be a rodef / pursuer in that they believed Yosef wanted Yaakov to disown the Brothers of their spiritual inheritance as Avraham had disowned Yishmael and Yitzchak had done to Esav.

In contrast, the Torah does criticize the Brothers for selling Yosef. Why? Targum Yonatan is teaching

it was because they bought shoes. They derived personal benefit from the deed, thus demonstrating that their motives were not as pure as they themselves believed. (Shiurei Chumash Mi'pi Maran Ha'mashgiach R' Shlomo Wolbe)

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"His master perceived that Hashem was with him . . ." (39:3)

Rashi z"l explains that the Name of G-d was constantly on Yosef's lips.

R' Yeshayah Halevi Horowitz z"l (the Shelah Hakadosh; died 1630) writes: An aspect of implanting within oneself faith in G-d is to always say, even when one plans to take an action in the very near future, "Im yirtzeh Hashem" / "If G-d wills it." This is alluded to in the verse (Mishlei 19:21), "The counsel of Hashem - only 'hee' / it will prevail." "Hee" (heh-yud-aleph) contains the initial letters of "Im yirtzeh Hashem." If one says, "G-d willing," then his (man's) plan will succeed.

R' Horowitz continues: Before one begins a business transaction, he should say, "I place my trust in G-d, and I hope that through this business transaction He will provide my sustenance." After all, G-d does not cause money to rain from the heavens. Rather, the way He sustains us is by sending us business deals from which to profit. If one does make a profit, he must say, "I profited with G-d's help."

Likewise, before a person takes any action he should say, "I am about to take such-and-such action with G-d's permission and for the glory of His Name." (Shnei Luchot Ha'brit: Sha'ar Ha'otiot)

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"In another three days, Pharaoh will lift up your head and will restore you to your post, and you will place Pharaoh's cup in his hand as was the former practice when you were his cupbearer. If only you would think of me with yourself when he benefits you, and you will do me a kindness, if you please, and mention me to Pharaoh, then you would get me out of this building." (40:13-14)

Why did Yosef add the words, "as was the former practice"? Also, what did he mean by the words, "ki im zechartani" (commonly translated, "If only you would think of me"). R' Noach Rabinowitz z"l (Lithuania; late 19th century) explains: If someone was jailed and then obtained an early release without any conditions or restrictions, it typically is because the authorities have discovered that he is innocent and was, in fact, falsely imprisoned. However, if someone really is guilty - as was Pharaoh's butler - and he not only is released from prison but also is returned to his royal post, there must be something going on behind the scene.

This is what Yosef meant: You will regain the same job that you had formerly, even though you deserve to be punished for your crime. Why? Only so that you will remember me. It is for that purpose alone that Hashem is returning you to the palace. (Toldot Noach)

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## This Week in History, Halachah, and Minhag

23 Kislev is the beginning of the last quarter of the month, when some have the custom not to hold weddings (Likkutei Maharich). Some who hold this custom in other months make exceptions in the months of Kislev, Adar, and Elul. (Luach Davar B'ito p.383)

Beginning on this day in 5109 (1348), the supposed confession by a Jew that he had poisoned wells, thus starting the Black Death that killed millions, led to the massacre of large numbers of Jews across Europe. (Luach Davar B'ito p.384)

24 Kislev is the day when the judgments that were sealed on Yom Kippur become final, according to Kabbalists. (Luach Davar B'ito p.385)

It is a proper habit to prepare the candles or oil and wicks before nightfall in anticipation of lighting the Chanukah menorah. This year being the year after the shemittah, one should note that it is a matter of dispute whether one may use oil made from olives of shemittah for the mitzvah of Chanukah. (Halichot Shlomo p.287; Nitei Gavriel 18:13)

On this date, the foundation of the Second Temple began to be laid by the returnees from the Babylonian exile. (Luach Davar B'ito p.384)

25 Kislev 5692 (1931): R' Chaim Hager z"l, the Otinia Rebbe, died shortly after lighting Chanukah candles. This was remarkable because he had often said, "How one can die without having recited the blessing of Shehecheyanu over his good fortune to enter the World-to-Come? I will find a solution." (Luach Davar B'ito p.385)

28 Kislev: The 40 days of the Flood rains ended on this day. However, says the Midrash Tanchuma (Noach 11), for more than 1,200 years afterward, it would always rain for the 40 days ending on this date. When King Shlomo built the Bet Hamikdash, he prayed for these rains to stop falling regularly, and they did. [Although G-d had sworn not to bring another flood, the memory of the flood remained in, and impacted, nature. (Etz Yosef)]

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The editors hope these brief 'snippets' will engender further study and discussion of Torah topics ('lehagdil Torah u'leha'adira'), and your letters are appreciated. Web archives at [Torah.org](https://www.torah.org) start with 5758 (1997) and may be retrieved from the [Hamaayan](#) page.

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