

'THE PLAN'

by Rabbi Yaakov Menken

"And Yosef said to his brothers: 'I am Yosef! Is my father still alive?' And his brothers could not answer him, because they were stunned before him." [45:3]

When we look at the readings of the last two weeks, leading to this one, says Rabbi Asher Rubenstein, we see an underlying theme of these readings: "G-d runs the world." People make plans, but what actually happens is controlled from above.

Why did Yosef's brothers plot to kill him, and then decide to sell him into slavery? "Let's see what becomes of his dreams!" [37:20]

What action set the process in motion -- the process through which the dreams came to reality? Selling Yosef into slavery! They tried to fight the Divine Plan, and instead caused its fulfillment.

Then, when they came down to Egypt during the years of famine, Yosef recognized them -- and saw that they did not recognize him. "And Yosef remembered the dreams which he had dreamed to them, and he said to them 'you are spies, who have come to see the vulnerability of the land!'" [42:9]

Now, why did the dreams cause Yosef to accuse them of spying? Very simple: the dreams told him that all 11 brothers would bow to him -- and Benjamin was not with them. Yosef realized that he should not fight The Plan, but go in accordance with it. And that meant causing Benjamin to come down to Egypt as well.

So he accuses them of spying, and they respond -- no, we are not spies, we are all brothers -- "the youngest brother is with our father today, and one is missing." And Yosef responds, "exactly as I said, you are spies!" And then he gives them an opportunity to prove that they are not: "your youngest brother must come here." Of course, this makes perfect sense. This will prove that they are not spies -- after all, everyone knows that spies don't have little brothers! "If you are Canaanites, one brother will stay in prison here, and you go bring your little brother to me, and prove your words..." [42:19-20] This is exactly what it says!

It is ridiculous -- and the brothers recognize it. They see that this could not be a random event. They recognize that it has something to do with their guilt because of their brother. But they still do not understand why these events are happening...

...until "I AM YOSEF!"

Suddenly, what had been an impenetrable fog is brilliantly clear. Everything that had happened was all part of The Plan. This is what Yosef tells them: "You did not send me here. G-D sent me here! When you thought that you were fighting The Plan, you were fulfilling it!"

In our lives, we so often do not understand The Plan. We don't recognize what is happening, or why. But we need to know Who is ultimately in charge, and recognize that He has our best interests in mind.

There is a terrific story that Rabbi Hanoch Teller recounts in one of his books, about a businessman returning to New York from a trip to Chicago. This person was always very punctual, so he was in the waiting area well in advance of his flight. There was also a Rabbi there, obviously from a school in Israel.

Suddenly the Rabbi jumped to his feet, his face ashen. "What is wrong?" asked the businessman, who we'll call Moshe.

"My case! I've been here fundraising for my yeshiva, and my case has over \$20,000 in it -- and I left it in my room!"

Moshe was very familiar with the city, and knew that if he would help they might be able to pick up the case and get back in time for the flight -- without him, the Rabbi (who had never been to Chicago before) was unlikely to succeed. So, anxious as he was to return to New York on time, he ran out with the Rabbi. "In the merit of this mitzvah I am doing, G-d will help me," he said to himself.

Yet when they grabbed a taxi, zoomed across town, grabbed the case, and raced back to the plane - - they found themselves stopped at the gate. The plane was already pulling away, without them!

Moshe was obviously disappointed -- not simply because he had missed the flight, but because he really thought he would merit HaShem's help. After all, he had left only in order to do a mitzvah.

Before leaving the airport, he stopped to call home. He couldn't get through -- the line was busy. Five minutes later, he finally heard a ring at the other end.

"Honey, I'm so sorry -- I missed the flight, and won't be ho..."

"MOSHE! Moshe, you're ALIVE! The plane... it crashed..."

Good Shabbos,

Rabbi Yaakov Menken