

WAIT JUST A MOMENT

by Rabbi Pinchas Winston

Yosef wasn't able to restrain himself before those around him. He called out, "Remove every man from around me!" When everyone else had left, Yosef made himself known to his brothers. He cried out loud [and] Egypt and Pharaoh's household heard. Yosef said to his brothers, "I am Yosef, is my father still alive?" (Be-reishis 45:1-3)

THERE ARE MANY stories in which important historic moments have come and gone, basically unnoticed. For example, there is one of a rebi who was teaching his students when, all of a sudden, their rebi told them, "Too bad. Moshiach could have come this moment, but we did not merit it."

Probably the students had no idea what their teacher was talking about at the time. It was probably a day like any other, and the class was also nothing out of the ordinary. So, when the rebi made the statement, they probably wondered to themselves, "Why that moment, what should we have done instead, and how did our rebi know?"

Who knows how many such moments have come and gone like that throughout history? There is one however that we DO know about, and it is in this week's parsha, although many probably don't realize that is what it was. On the contrary, it seems like such a happy moment that came to fruition exactly as intended.

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Finally, at long last, the play was over. The suffering was over, Yosef's, his brother's, and soon their father's as well. After 22 years of separation, a family union was at hand. What had gone wrong was now being made right. It was a dream ending to what had been a nightmare.

Yah? Really? Actually, not, and the verse hints to this. It says:

Yosef wasn't able to restrain himself . . .

as if he was compelled to PREMATURELY reveal himself. Really he had wanted to hold out longer, but his brothers' pathetic situation forced Yosef to spill the beans before . . . Before what?

Personally, the answer to this question changed my life. I first learned of it 30 years ago, at my oldest son's Bris. My Rosh Yeshivah, Rav Noach Weinberg, zt"l, who recited the brochos at the Bris, gave it

over just prior to the Bris. It was part of a short Dvar Torah he gave to put everyone there into the proper mindset.

"What was Yosef waiting for?" Rav Noach asked us. "What was left to be accomplished? Yosef had already brought his brothers to the point of desperation," he explained, "so why hold out any longer?"

No one gave an answer, so the Rosh Yeshivah gave his: "Yosef was waiting for them to say, 'You are Yosef! You have to be! Who else could know what you do about us . . . would ask so many questions about our family . . . would put us through all of this?!' But they just didn't get it, and to avoid all-out war, Yosef had to reveal himself to them instead!"

The answer blew many of us away, as many of our Rosh Yeshivah's insights tended to do, but this one especially. Over the years I not only found great supports for this explanation, but I used it as the basis of some of my most important presentations.

The Rosh Yeshivah explained that saying those words, "You are Yosef," would have fixed everything, and ushered in the Messianic Era. It would have meant that the brothers had expanded their way of thinking in order to see below the surface of people and situations, to know and do what God really wants. It sounds simple, but we still haven't mastered it and this is the reason why we have gone through all we have, and still await Moshiach's arrival.

In fact, this is really what made Chanukah possible. There was a moment in time that the Chashmonaim took advantage of, and they won the war against all the odds as a result. Had they let the moment pass, the situation would only have worsened, and fighting back would have become more than impossible.

But after victory, when the moment came to give the kingship back to Yehudah, they let that one pass. The result was their loss of independence to Rome, and the rest of the torturous history that followed. Had they used the moment properly and restored the Malchus to Yehudah, history would have been different, perhaps even Messianic.

But how is someone supposed to even know when such an epic moment has arrived, and how to respond to it?

You can often sense something is special about a moment, even if you can't figure out what. But, if you stay sensitive, then often you will get a better picture of the opportunity as it reaches its climax. As the Talmud says:

Rebi Abin HaLevi said: If one is pushed off because of the moment, the moment will be pushed off because of them. (Brochos 64)

A person has to respect the moment. Normally moments in life just whiz right past us and go unnoticed, but that's a mistake. If we don't respect time, and appreciate how each moment has its

own potential to allow us to accomplish big things, then when the really big ones come, we won't recognize them either. That is, until after they have passed, and the next moment becomes one of regret.