

# THE GREATER DRAMA

*by Rabbi Berel Wein*

Yaakov and Yosef, the two main protagonists of the narrative in this final section of the book of Bereshith, are both blindsided by the events that befall them. After years of exile and turmoil, incessant danger and inherent loneliness, Yaakov attempts to settle down to an apparent tranquil retirement.

He is not looking for new worlds to conquer, nor is he intending to be active or aggressive in further building and expanding his nascent national entity, the people of Israel. Yet all of his hopes will be dashed by the events surrounding the enmity of the brothers to Yaakov's visibly favorite son, Yosef.

In his love for Yosef, Yaakov remains unaware of the storm brewing within his own house and family. The trauma of Yosef's sudden disappearance will haunt Yaakov for the ensuing decades. In an unforeseen instant, Yaakov's entire life and seeming accomplishments are turned upside down and he is depicted as being powerless to do anything. Yosef is also apparently blissfully unaware of the consequences of his behavior towards his brothers.

He cannot imagine that his brothers would take violent and drastic action against him. He does not assess correctly how threatened they feel by his behavior, his dreams and his indiscretions towards them. Therefore, he accepts the mission that his father has proposed for him, to find his brothers and report back regarding their welfare and activities. There is no adequate way to describe his shock and amazement at being stripped and thrown into the pit and at finally being sold into slavery by his own brothers. None of this was ever imaginable to him.

Though all of the participants in this drama are to be held accountable for their actions, there is no doubt that there is an unseen hand that is guiding the events and directing them towards a certain goal. The realization of this will come only at the end of the drama when Yosef and his brothers reconcile and embrace one another. Only then will Yaakov also recognize that this is the opening act of the fulfillment of the prophecy made to his grandfather Avraham regarding the exile, servitude and redemption of the people of Israel.

Only at the end of the drama does Yosef understand the full import of his dreams and visions. It is as the holy poet phrased it: "Only at the end of events, does one understand and contemplate correctly the original thought and plan." Though we are all held responsible for all of our actions and we possess complete freedom of choice regarding those actions, nevertheless it would be impossible for us to ignore the fact that our generation is part of an era where an unseen hand somehow is

guiding events towards a certain purpose and fixed goal.

We may be involved in our mundane lives, in elections and disputes, minor victories and great tensions, but we should notice that we are also part of a great drama and historical process that is unfolding with almost irresistible force. I think that this is the most important lesson for us to ponder as we study the Torah reading of this week.

Shabbat shalom

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