

DIFFERENT MISSIONS IN LIFE REQUIRE DIFFERENT TECHNIQUES OF LIVING

by Rabbi Yissocher Frand

Parshas Miketz

Different Missions In Life Require Different Techniques of Living

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape # 749, Solomonic Wisdom. Good Shabbos!

As Yosef predicted to Pharaoh, a terrible famine gripped the entire land. People from everywhere descended upon Egypt to buy the food that Yosef had wisely stored away during the years of plenty. Yaakov too saw that soon he would need to send his sons down to Egypt to acquire food for the family.

The pasuk says [Chapter 42 Verse 1]: "And Yaakov saw that there were provisions in Egypt and he told his sons "lamah tisra-u" [why do you make yourselves conspicuous]?" The interpretation of the words "lamah tisra-u" is not immediately obvious. Rashi says he asked them "Why are you conspicuously showing off in front of the children of Eisav and Yishmael that you still have food? For at that time, Rashi says, they still had food.

The Ramban questions Rashi's comment: The descendants of Eisav and Yishmael did not live in the land of Canaan! They had their own places where they lived. So where, he asks, was this contact between the children of Yaakov and their cousins, the descendants of Eisav and Yishmael, supposedly taking place? The Ramban notes that it is perhaps more logical to interpret the instruction "Lo tisra-u" in regards to not showing off in front of the local Canaanite inhabitants.

However, the Ramban suggests -- in defense of Rashi's interpretation -- that perhaps the sons of Eisav and Yishmael had to travel from their own countries down to Egypt to get provisions from Yosef and they passed through the Land of Canaan en route. Yaakov told his sons not to give the impression to their cousins that they had plenty of food and were not suffering along with them during the famine. If they would see that Yaakov and his family had food they might invite themselves in to dine with them. Yaakov did not want the sons of Eisav and Yishmael coming into his house to share meals with his family.

The description that the Ramban paints of Yaakov as a person who would warn his children to fake poverty so that their cousins would not come looking for a meal -- does not sound like a grandson of Avraham Avinu. Avraham had four entrances to his house so that all wayfarers could drop in any time for a meal. Would we expect Avraham's grandson to pull down the shades so that their own cousins will not know that they are home? How are we to understand this Ramban?

Rav Simcha Zissel Brody gives a very interesting interpretation, which teaches an important lesson. Rav Simcha Zissel says that everyone needs to know his own particular mission in life. One person's mission is not necessarily that of another. Avraham Avinu's mission was to introduce the concept of monotheism to the world. To accomplish this, Avraham felt the proper approach to have an effect on the people of the world was to bring them into his house and let them sit down at his table. Avraham would then feed them, talk with them and win them over to the concept of monotheism. Avraham knew that in order to fulfill his mission, he would need to have a lot of dregs of society at his table -- pagans, idol worshippers, people who had less than sterling character. However, that was his mission in life. He welcomed the challenge, and felt confident that he could handle it.

Yaakov Avinu was also a person who performed acts of hospitality and kindness (a baal chessed), but his primary mission was something else. His mission was to raise 12 sons to be the future progenitors of Klal Yisrael. In raising those children, Yaakov recognized that he needed to protect them from the horrible and decadent influences of outside society. In order to accomplish his own mission, Yaakov did not want the sons of Yishmael and of Eisav sitting at his table. That would have had a terribly adverse impact on his children. It could undermine his life's mission.

'There were noble acts that were appropriate and meritorious for my grandfather, but for me, because of my different mission in life "I cannot do these things now.'" This is a novel idea, which has practical applications.

The Mesilas Yeshtarim's opening line is that "a person must know what his duties are in his world. (mah chovoso b'olamo)". The Mesilas Yeshtarim does not make it an absolute statement (what the duties of man are in this world), but a subjective one (what his duties are in his world).

Avraham's mission was "bring as many people under the fold as possible". Yaakov's mission was "bring up 12 righteous children". That which Avraham needed to do to accomplish his mission would not necessarily work for Yaakov and indeed might be counter-act his mission. Yaakov felt that he could not have his own cousins dine at his table, lest they become a bad influence on his children.

Rav Simcha Zissel continues by stating a further novelty. Rav Simcha Zissel asks why it was that Avraham did not father Yitzchak until he was 100 years old and Sarah did not have a baby until she was 90 years old. Rav Simcha Zissel answers that if Yitzchak had been born when his parents were younger, they would not have been able to host half the world at their table. If they needed to concern themselves with raising a young son in a wholesome atmosphere, they would have had to be very particular about whom they invited into their tents. Once Yitzchak was born, indeed

Avraham's priorities changed and he now had to protect his son. Once Avraham became a father, Rav Simcha Zissel implies, his table was perhaps less open to outsiders and outside influences. G-d did not allow him to have a son until after he first accomplished his life's mission with the rest of society.

Why Wait Until Parshas VaYigash To Cite A Pasuk Linked With Bedikas Chometz?

Yosef deliberately planted the royal goblet in the bag of Binyomin. The brothers protested their innocence and they readily allowed themselves and their baggage to be searched to prove that the missing vessel was not in their possession. The Torah tells us "He searched (vayechapes); he began with the oldest and ended with the youngest; and the goblet was found in Binyamin's saddlebag." [Bereishis 44:12]

The Talmud in Pessachim [7b] teaches that this pasuk is one of the sources from which we learn that the search for Chametz on the eve of the 14th of Nissan must be by candlelight. The Gemara connects several repeated words in diverse pasukim throughout the Torah to link the word "vayechapes" [and he searched] with the word "metziah" [he found] and "neiros" [candles] and "ner" [candle] to make this roundabout determination. The essence of the derivation is based on our pasuk containing the word "vayechapes" [and he looked] and the word "vaYimatze" [and he found] and this is linked to the words "lo Yimatze" in connection with Chametz.

However, the question may be asked, if the Gemarah seeks a pasuk which contains both the word "vayechapes" as well as "vaYimatze" to make this derivation, why wait until Parshas Miketz to find such a pasuk? An earlier pasuk in Parshas Vayetzei contains these same two words [Bereishis 31:35]. When Lavan was searching for his stolen teraphim, the pasuk says, "Vayechapes v'lo matzah" [he looked but he did not find]. This is an earlier and more direct connection between the two words the Gemara seeking to make the derivation to candles and searching for chametz. Why wait until Parshas Miketz?

The Cherbiner Rav gives a beautiful answer. The Magen Avraham rules that a person should put out pieces of bread before the search for Chametz begins in order so that the search will not be completely futile and therefore so that the bracha [blessing] over the search not be in vain. There are those who question this (universal) practice, because it emerges that people are not really looking for "lost chametz." They are merely looking for the 10 pieces that were hidden away for that purpose. How, they ask, is this considered "finding chametz"? People merely collect the pieces, which they knew were placed in pre-designated locations throughout the house!

The Cherbiner Rav says beautifully that this is the reason why the Torah brings the pasuk by Yosef's servants. It says they "sought" and they "found". Even though they knew the exact location of the goblet and they were just going through the motions of looking for it, nevertheless the Torah uses the words "vayechapes" and "vaYimatz". We consider merely going through the motions of searching a real search and a real finding, even though we know the location all along. So too it is by

chametz!

However, Lavan really did not know where the Teraphim were hidden. He was really looking for them. Had the Gemara brought this earlier pasuk, we would not have known the added chiddush [novelty] that even a "bedikah" with foreknowledge of the outcome is still considered a valid search. That is why the Gemara used the word from our parsha.

This write-up was adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tape series on the weekly Torah portion. The complete list of halachic topics covered in this series for Parshas Miketz are provided below:

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