

# REALLY FOR THE SAKE OF HEAVEN? / DON'T BE CONSPICUOUS / FINDING MAKES IT A SEARCH

by Rabbi Yissocher Frand

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: #1012 – Preparing for Shabbos - Thursday or Friday? And other Issues. Good Shabbos!

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## The Litmus Test of Really Having Intentions for the Sake of Heaven

The pasuk says, "And he (Pharaoh) gave him (Yosef) Asnas daughter of Potiphera, the Priest of On" [Bereshis 41:45]. This is an interesting *shidduch*. Chazal say that this Asnas was really the daughter of the wife of Potiphar, who tried to seduce the righteous Yosef in last week's parsha. They say that Potiphar's wife's actions were actually "for the sake of Heaven" (*l'shem Shamayim niskavnah*). Her attempt to seduce Yosef was more than just an act of lust. She saw, through her astrologers, that she was somehow destined to produce a descendant through Yosef. She assumed it meant that she would be the mother of that descendant, and therefore tried to bring that scenario to fruition. She did not realize that the descendants she was to have with Yosef were not through her, but rather through her daughter. That was her mistake, but her intention was "for the sake of Heaven."

Chazal also use this expression of "intending for the sake of Heaven" by Tamar, in last week's parsha. The Torah says that Tamar disguised herself, and was thus able to have children from Yehudah, giving birth to Peretz and Zerach. Chazal say that her intentions were *l'shem Shamayim*. She knew of the concept of *Yibum*, requiring someone from Yehudah's family to bear a child with her. Yehudah was apparently not willing to let his third son serve in this role, so she took the initiative on her own, and disguised herself in such a way that Yehudah fathered her children without even realizing what he was doing.

Thus, we see two Biblical examples of apparently unseemly acts of seduction which Chazal attribute to "motives for the sake of Heaven." Yet these two incidents produced very different results. Potiphar's wife, after she was not successful in seducing Yosef, slandered him and caused him to spend years in jail. Tamar, on the other hand, did not resort to such tactics.

There is an important lesson here. The biggest litmus test as to whether a person is **really** acting "*l'shem Shamayim*" is at what point the person will stop if they see their plans are not going well. Many times in life, we run into obstacles. Sometimes we say, "Listen, this is *l'shem shamayim*. This must happen. I am doing G-d's work." As a result, we justify doing whatever needs to be done in order to accomplish our goals. We are going to do it -- come what may.

Chazal here are trying to point out that if someone is doing something *l'shem Shamayim*, there comes a point at which he needs to say to himself, "if the *Ribono Shel Olam* wants this to happen, He is going to get it done, but I am only allowed to do what is permissible by law." Tamar reached an obstacle. She was successful in engaging with Yehudah and becoming pregnant; but there came a point in time where they thought she was unfaithful, and they were taking her out to be burned. At that point, she had to make a decision: Should I let myself be killed, and let my having a descendant with Yehudah go down the drain, or should I humiliate Yehudah publicly, thereby sparing myself, and salvaging the plan's coming to fruition?

She acted based on halachic principle: It is preferable to allow oneself to be thrown into a fire rather than to cause public embarrassment to one's fellow man [Sotah 10b]. What's going to be with G-d's Plan? What is going to be with my obligation to take part in the *mitzvah* of *Yibum* [Levirate marriage]? The answer is that G-d will take care of these matters if He wants it to happen; if not through my plan, then in some other way. I am not allowed to go beyond a certain point in acting *l'shem Shamayim*.

Concerning how "*l'shem Shamayim*" someone is, the proof is in the pudding. Someone who is truly *l'shem Shamayim* is prepared to say, when necessary, that *Shamayim* [Heaven] will take care of it without my intervention, if that is truly what Heaven wants.

When Potiphar's wife saw that she was not successful -- that this "engagement" with Yosef was not going to take place -- if she was 100% acting for the Sake of Heaven -- she should have said, "It is not happening? Okay, so it will not happen in the way I expected; it will have to happen some other way." The fact that she did not stop at that point, but rather began her libelous slander campaign against Yosef, shows us -- retroactively -- that her actions were not fully for the Sake of Heaven. She may have convinced herself that she was acting for altruistic motives, but the end of the story sheds light on the beginning (*hochiach sofo al techilaso*).

It is a well-known story that the Yeshiva of Volozhin eventually shut down because the *Roshei Yeshiva* made a decision that they were not going to let the Russian government interfere with the curriculum of the Yeshiva. But what is going to be with the Torah? The *Roshei Yeshiva* made their decision based on their firm conviction of what was right. The Almighty has kept Torah alive all these millennia; He will somehow or other continue to keep Torah alive. That does not give us permission to go ahead and abrogate what we hold the *halacha* to be.

They shut down the Yeshiva. Why? Because if you are truly in it *l'shem Shamayim*, you say to

yourself, "the *Ribono shel Olam* will make it happen somehow, somewhere, some way." When someone starts acting for himself, for his own personal agenda, for **his** honor rather than **His** honor, he is taking the law into his own hands, and can no longer claim that his actions are "for the Sake of Heaven."

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## Why Show Yourself as Being Satiated?

The *pasuk* says, "Yaakov saw that there was grain in Egypt; so Yaakov said to his sons, 'Why make yourselves conspicuous?' [Bereshis 42:1]. Rashi here makes an interesting comment: "Why show yourselves before the descendants of Yishmael and Eisav as being satiated (for at that time Yaakov's family still had grain)."

This is an amazing Rashi. Although a famine was raging in the land, for some reason Yaakov and his family still had food. However, Yaakov was planning for the future. He heard that food was readily available in Egypt and he advised his sons to go down to Egypt, stand in line with the others, and procure food for the family for the time in the future when their current supply would run out. Rashi explains that the reason he did this was because he did not want to give the appearance that they were wealthier than the other nations.

Giving such an impression accomplishes nothing except to incur the wrath and the jealousy of the nations of the world. It was worth it to Yaakov to send virtually his entire family down to Egypt -- a journey fraught with danger -- to wait in "food lines" with people from all over the middle east, for the sole purpose of not allowing the *Bnei Eisav* and *Bnei Yishmael* to say "Hey, look at those Jews. They are sitting pretty on fleshpots of meat while we go hungry."

The Gemara, in fact, teaches [Ta'anis 10b], "If a certain city declares a fast day (e.g., because of a local traumatic situation) and a person visits that city, and the city that he comes from has not declared the day to be a fast day -- he nevertheless must fast along with the people of the city he is visiting. The Gemara even says that if he eats by mistake (thereby accidentally "breaking his fast") he should still not publicly show himself enjoying his food (when he continues to eat the rest of the day -- which under those circumstances is permitted, strictly speaking). The Gemara cites as proof for this Halacha the teaching Rashi quotes here in Miketz -- that Yaakov commanded his sons not to appear satiated in the eyes of Bnei Yishmael and Bnei Eisav when the latter were suffering from the prevailing food shortages.

When you possess something that your neighbor does not possess, do not flaunt it. Do not provoke his jealousy. This applies even with respect to showing off in front of one's fellow Jew -- how much more so should it not be done in front of the nations of the world!

The Kli Yakar expands on this idea. He says it twice -- here, in the same *pasuk* that Rashi comments

upon -- and again in Parshas Devorim. Do not show off your wealth in front of the Bnei Eisav. He writes that those with intelligence will understand that this (advice of Yaakov to his sons) is wise instruction to all future generations as well, regarding how the Jews in Exile should conduct themselves vis-à-vis the gentile nations.

I recently received a sefer containing Rav Pam's teachings on the weekly parsha. On Parshas Miketz, Rav Pam cites an interesting idea. We light Chanukah candles and put them in the front window -- *pirsumei nisa* [publicizing the miracle] -- which is an integral part of the *mitzvah*. Obviously, it is necessary to part the curtains or the shades (otherwise, the menorah would be a fire hazard). However, he advises, as soon as the candles go out -- pull down the shades and pull closed the curtains! There is no *mitzvah* for the *goyim* to see that the Jew has a chandelier in his living room that can light up Yankee stadium! There is no *mitzvah* for them to see all that silver or the marble floors or the granite counter tops. There is no *mitzvah* to flaunt our wealth before the eyes of the nations of the world. That is what this teaching of Chazal is instructing us.

Some *kehillos* have learned this lesson; but in most of our communities, we unfortunately have not yet learned it. Non-Jews look at us all the time, and know very well what we have and how we live. Yaakov instructs the Children of Israel -- for all future generations as well -- "Do not act conspicuously!"

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## Cracow Watchmakers can Teach Us More than Just the Correct Time

At the end of the parsha, the Torah says that Yosef had the royal goblet implanted in Binyomin's saddlebag. When the guards came chasing after the brothers, lo and behold, they found the "stolen goods" in the saddlebag of Binyomin. The *pasuk* says, "They began searching with the oldest and completed the search with the youngest" [Bereshis 42:12]. Even though Yosef knew the exact location of his goblet, since he had ordered it implanted there, nevertheless, he instructed his officers to conduct the search in a way that they would search everyone's bag, and they would not discover the "robber" until the end of the process. It was all part of his fictional charade.

The Chebiner Rav ,zt"l, relates that he once heard the following insight from a watchmaker in Cracow:

The halacha is that by *bedikas chametz* there is a minhag to put out ten pieces of bread, search the house, and in the process collect the ten pieces. Why do we do that? We are afraid that if we did not hide the pieces of *chametz* in advance, we might not find anything, and we would thereby have made a blessing in vain. The *Ramah* writes in Shulchan Aruch that technically this is not necessary. As long as the person searched, even if he did not find any *chametz*, the blessing is not in vain. Be that as it may, the prevalent custom in Jewish homes is to put out ten pieces of bread, collect them

during the search, and burn these ten pieces the next morning.

For many people, unfortunately, this has become somewhat of a charade. Meaning -- someone's wife or children dutifully put out the pieces of bread, and it becomes a "treasure hunt" game. The whole thing takes fifteen or twenty minutes, *v'nomar Amen!* Some people object -- we are not really searching for *chametz* mistakenly left in our domain over the past twelve months, as is the intent of this rabbinic ritual. We seem to be merely playing a game to find the ten pieces our wives or children have hidden throughout the house just moments earlier. What kind of "searching" is that? It is a joke! Every year she puts them in the same place. We have been doing this for thirty years. Every year, I find the wrapped up piece of cracker in the same drawer! What kind of search is this?

The watchmaker in Cracow told the Chebiner Rav the following insight: At the beginning of Tractate Pesachim, the Mishna says, "On the light of (i.e., the night falling at the start of) the fourteenth (of Nissan) we search for *chametz* by candlelight." The Talmud [Peschim 7b] derives the source of this practice (to search by candlelight) by a series of *Gezerah Shavahs* (common words used in various contexts): *Metziah* [find] from *metziah*, then *metziah* from *chipus* [search], then one *chipus* from another *chipus*, then *chipus* from *neiros* [candles] and finally *neiros* from *ner* [candle]. The first in this string of complicated word associations is the *pasuk*, "*Chametz shall not be found (lo yimatze) in your homes.*" The Gemara then links that *pasuk* with our *pasuk* in Parshas Miketz: "And he searched (*va'ye'chapes*) beginning with the eldest and finishing with the youngest and he found it (*va'yi'matze*)." The Gemara then continues to elaborate on the various other *pesukim* involved in this extended *Gezeirah Shavah*.

The Chebiner Rav explains that we learn the definition of **searching** from the search of the brother's sacks conducted by Yosef's officers, beginning with Reuven and ending with Binyomin. We see that regarding such a search, the Torah uses the words "*va'yimatze*" -- and he found! Wait! Yosef knew where the goblet was the whole time? This was just a charade! It was one big act! We clearly see that when a **search** leads to a **find**, we call it a **search**, even if it was all a charade, and the searcher knew all along exactly where he was going to find the item for which he was "searching."

The Chebiner Rav used to brag that even a simple watchmaker in Cracow had great insight into the great nuances that can be learned from every *pasuk* in Chumash.

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- # 035 - Chanukah Issues
- # 077 - Prohibitions During Times of Crises
- # 126 - Dreams in Halacha and Hashkafa
- # 173 - Dreams in Halacha II
- # 219 - Chanukah Issues II
- # 263 - Women and Chanukah Candle Lighting
- # 309 - "Lo Sechanaim" Giving Gifts to Non-Jews
- # 353 - Chanukah and Hiddur Mitzvah
- # 397 - Lighting Neiros in Shul; Other Chanukah Issues
- # 441 - Taanis Chalom
- # 485 - Miracle Products and Other Chanukah Issues
- # 529 - Ner Chanukah: Where, When, and Other Issues
- # 573 - The Silver Menorah and Other Chanukah Issues
- # 617 - The Bad Dream
- # 661 - Davening for the Welfare of the Government
- # 705 - Chanukah Candles, Hotels and Chashunas
- # 749 - Solomonic Wisdom
- # 793 - Oops! 3 Candles on the 2nd Night
- # 837 - Hairbrushes on Shabbos - Permitted or Not Permitted
- # 881 - The T'reifa Chicken Scandal
- # 925 - Kavod Malchus - How Far Can You Go?
- # 968 - The Minyan: Must Everyone Be In The Same Room?
- #1012 - Preparing for Shabbos - Thursday or Friday? And other Issues
- #1056 - Oops! I Made A Bracha On The Shammash
- #1099 - Havdalah or Ner Chanukah - Which Comes First? And Other Issues
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