

*Shiur L'Yom Shishi*¹

[Friday's Study]

READINGS: **Torah Miketz:** **Genesis 43:1 - 44:17**
 Haftarah: **II Chronicles 6:12 - 7:4**
 B'rit Chadasha: **I Corinthians 2:4-5**

How can we speak? And how can we justify ourselves?

[Genesis 44:16]

Today's Meditation is Psalm 75:1-3, 9-10;

This Week's Amidah Prayer Focus is Petition # 7, *Kabatz* [Ingathering]

V'ha-ra'av kaved b'aretz – And the famine was kaved [KJV heavy] on the land. Genesis 43:1.

Breaking news: The uneasy *status quo* men have come to accept as 'the norm' is dissolving before our eyes. Drought, Famine, pestilence, war, and climatological disasters have teamed up to make all continents *groan* under the burden of historic 'hard times'. The skies over some regions produce way too little precipitation; the clouds over other regions dump way too much. The stock tanks and irrigation canals have dried up in places where they are usually full – and raging floodwaters are wreaking havoc on places that are usually high and dry. The topsoil has hardened –, crusted over, cracked open – or washed away. Dust storms have people, livestock, and pollinators scurrying for shelter in some places; typhoons and tornados have them running for their lives in others. People of all ages, ethnicities, tribes, and tongues are leaving ancestral homes by the droves and ranging far and wide doing whatever it takes to get their most basic needs met. Seed will not – or cannot - sprout. Grain will not – or cannot - grow. Fruit will not set. Pasturage is disappearing. Fodder supplies are rapidly running out. Gardens are failing. Herds are thinning. Livestock is languishing. Hyperinflation has set in, causing prices for everything to go through the roof. Governments are collapsing. Economic systems are teetering. Institutions are crumbling. Disorientation and confusion run rampant. Nerves are frazzled. Tensions are running high. Emotions are very, very raw. Crime is escalating. Violence is rampaging. The sick and the elderly suffer – and die. Panic is spreading. Foundations are being shaken; pillars are turning to dust. Ideologues rant, rage, and incite their minions to riot. Politicians blame everyone and everything but themselves. Welcome to the prophetic season of *ha-ra'av* – *i.e.* the gnawing, unquenchable hunger.

Drastic Times; Drastic Measures

The opening verses of today's aliyah present *ra'av* [*i.e.* famine] to our minds and

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senses as a stark reality. A season of actual, observable climate change is definitely an attention getter. High prices and supply chain failures cause panic. Social and political unrest cause mass migrations. The threat of worldwide economic collapse hangs over people of all nations, tribes, ideologies, religions, and tongues. Torah expresses all this in just a few words: *v'ha-ra'av kaved b'aretz* – i.e. “The famine was heavy² on the land”. And it was not just that the famine was *kaved* somewhere; it was *kaved* everywhere. It was not just *kaved* in Damascus, or Gerar, or Tyre, or Sidon, or Babylon, or Thebes – it was also *kaved* at Hebron, and Be'er Sheva, and Sh'chem. *Ra'av* was not just making life for pagans hard – it was ravaging the land of milk and honey as well. As painful as it is to know that *someone else's* babies are crying and dying somewhere far away – it is even worse when it is *your* babies who are crying and dying with bloated bellies. Precious vessels of the Holy One – the hope of the world for the next generation - crying, starving³, and dying⁴ slowly and painfully, right before our eyes? These things should not be!

Fear not, little flock! Stay calm, and stay on task! The Holy One knows what He is doing. He is just shaking things up in order to inaugurate the next phase of His Grand Plan – the Plan to both redeem mankind as a species, bloodline by bloodline and household by household, from its own folly and restore the ecosystem of Creation to its original, intended Edenic state of beauty, fruitfulness, and shalom. He is just doing what He does – using the weak to shame the strong and the foolish to shame the wise. He has every catalyst of change on a short leash.

But She's So ... HEAVY!

Torah describes the famine of *Ya'akov's* trouble as being *kaved*. English translators tend to translate this Hebrew adjective as ‘heavy’. *Kaved*, however, means something more along the lines of ‘*weighted down with spiritual gravitas to the point that it is atmosphere shifting, status quo dismantling, and shock, awe, fear, and teshuvah-inspiring*’. As a result of this famine, neither the world nor the people in it would ever – will ever - can ever - be the same. This famine literally changed everything for the inhabitants of earth. An event following the same pattern, bearing remarkably similar characteristics, will usher in the ‘latter days’, the ‘great tribulation’, and ultimately Mashiach’s Millennial Reign.

² The word our English Bibles translate as ‘severe’, or ‘sore’ [KJV], is *kaved, kaf, veit, dalet*, Strong’s Hebrew word #3515, in the sense of heavy, weighty, onerous, impressive, and awe-inspiring.

³ The process of starvation is as follows: initially the human body responds to food deprivation by processing stored fat. When the body’s fat reserves are depleted, the body turns to its own proteins as the major energy source. Muscles, the largest source of protein in the body, are rapidly depleted, sapping the body of strength and energy. One’s hair changes color or begins to fall out. One’s skin dries out and begins to flake off. The abdomen and lower limbs begin to swell. With the weakening of the body comes apathy, listlessness, withdrawal, and increased susceptibility to infectious disease.

⁴ Few people die directly from starvation because, in their weakened state, they usually contract and succumb to some pathogen-borne disease first.

Meanwhile, back in Kena'an, Ya'akov was indeed troubled – both of body and of spirit. He had not lacked sustenance since he cut covenant with the Creator of the Universe at Beit-El. **Genesis 28:20-21**. Thus far, the God of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Ya'akov had fulfilled all His promises. Was the faithfulness of the Holy One to the Avrahamic Covenant now to be called into question? May it never be! And yet ... what are was the grandson of Avraham and the son of Yitzchak – the appointed torch bearer of the Covenant in his generation - to make of and do in response to what he saw happening in '*news reel time*'?

Ya'akov was a dutiful patriarch. He was not about to let his family starve. He was not willing to sit idly by and watch. He sensed that he should do something to engage his family in the grand Plan - else everyone dependent upon him, not to mention the hope and blessing that Avrahamic Covenant promised to all nations [see **Genesis 12:2-3**; and **Genesis 28:14**] would fail of its essential purpose. He raised himself up out of his barrage of bereavements. He shook off the pain, the trauma – and the disabling limp he had obtained wrestling with an angel. He determined that as long as there was breath in his lungs the Avrahamic Covenant was not about to crash and burn – at least on his watch.

***Famines, Like Pestilences, Wars, Earthquakes, Fires, Storms,
and Volcanoes, and Other 'Pressure-Release' Mechanisms, Challenge
People to the Core of Who They Are and What They Prioritize***

What does a *famine consist of*? Most of us in the 21st Century – especially in Western cultures - do not have the slightest clue ... yet. So let me introduce the concept of *ha-ra'av*⁵ – i.e. *famine* - to you as gently as I know how. *Ra'av* – a famine - means *the cupboard is bare* day after day, week after week, month after month, and year after year. *Ra'av* means *the marketplace is empty*. It means every *shuk* is closed. *Ra'av* means there is no fruit, no vegetables, and no grain, oil, or wine. *Ra'av* means there is *no grass in the fields for the animals*, hence the udders of the ewes and nannies dry up. *Ra'av* means *animals – and their owners – slowly starve to death*, or become so weak that *diseases run rampant* and steal away the breath of life before the hunger can. Famine and pestilence, you see, are *twin brothers*. Those of us who live in America – which up to this point in history is perhaps the most pleasant land of exile ever - hardly know the meaning of the word “famine”. We know a little about famine's milder, gentler cousin *drought*, of course – but except for seeing pictures of starving children from other continents broadcast by aid agencies seeking donations we have no concept of *what famine is*. Much less what it does to species' of plant and animal life, to people, to families, to communities, to nations, to economies, to continents, and to the planet in

⁵ *Ra'av* is *resh, ayin, veit*. It is pronounced 'av'.

general. So, to understand the situation about which we study today let us look into this phenomenon our Bible calls ‘famine’ a little deeper.

Wrapping Our Minds Around the Idea of ‘Famine’

The English word ‘famine’ is defined as *a severe shortage of food [as through crop failure] resulting in widespread hunger, starvation, and death*. Those are some strong words. But words can never tell the story. Famine is not, you see, a *concept*; famine is a *malevolent force*. The Hebrew word ra’av connotes a *gnawing hunger* brought on by *a sustained season of deprivation*. It implies *the absence of any prospect of having anything whatever to eat*. It does not necessarily mean poverty – *for one can have all the gold in the world, and if there is no food to purchase with it, he will still go hungry*. A father cannot eat silver. A mother cannot nourish herself with gold. A child cannot survive on currency.

Famine is to a people group what metastatic⁶ cancer is to the human body - a malevolent force that seems to *come from nowhere, spread like wildfire quickly, and destroy everything it touches*. The first victims of famine are always *the poor* and *the weak*. But in time famine always proves to be an equal opportunity destroyer. If a famine lasts long enough the mansions of the strongest, the richest, the most powerful, will collapse under its power just as thoroughly as will the tents and tenements of the poor and outcast. Famine causes people to forget the niceties of life and go into a *survival mode*. It makes people *get desperate* – and *get real*. It ultimately humbles even the strongest of men – and drives them back to the point of total reliance upon the Holy One and His Grand Redemptive and Restorative Plan.

Déjà vu

This is by no means the first time one of our blessed patriarchs has experienced famine in the blessed land. For our ancestors coming face-to-face with famine seems to be a sort of *Divine rite of passage* - something each generation must face before stepping into the fullness of the blessing the Holy One has promised. Famine has become somewhat of a ‘first trial by fire’ for partners in the Covenant. The Holy One knows that if we don’t learn to lean on Him, hold on to our *shalom* and passion for His Ways, and let Him guide us step-by-step through times of lack and great distress – we most definitely not lean on Him, keep our *shalom*, maintain passion for His Ways, or let Him guide us through times of prosperity and relative calm very well either.

⁶ Doctors use the term *metastatic* to describe cancer that spreads to other organs or to lymph nodes other than those near the primary tumor. When cancer is metastatic, cancer cells break away from the primary tumor and travel through the bloodstream or lymphatic system to form tumors in other parts of the body.

For instance, when the Holy One first called Avram to *lech lecha* [go out for yourself] ‘to a land I will show you’ – *i.e.* the land of Kena’an – the Kena’an that the Holy One led and showed Avram and Sarai was in the very throes of famine. Avram and Sarai arrived, took a quick look around at their new home, and headed off to – where else – Egypt, where there always seemed to be food. They might well have said they were leaving the land *nichyeh v’lo namut* [so that we may live, and not die.]

A generation later when Yitzchak was just beginning to carry the torch of the Holy One’s covenant the Holy One struck the land of Kena’an with a *second famine*. In the midst of this famine Yitzchak sojourned in the land of the Ph’lishtim at Gerar and somehow prospered. By Divine blessing Yitzchak was able to reap a hundredfold in grain in the midst of the famine when no one else’s crops would grow. Now another patriarchal generation is in place. It is *Ya’akov/Yisrael’s turn* to experience and deal with *ha-ra’av*. Will the crops grow for him like they did for Yitzchak? No, Dear Reader, the Holy One has *other plans*. He will *not* let Ya’akov’s crops grow. Ya’akov’s experience with famine is destined to turn out much more like Avram and Sarai’s experience. This famine is designed to reposition Ya’akov and his entire family – and indeed representatives of many nations - in the land of Egypt. And, even more than that, it is choreographed to presage the cataclysmic events that will lead to a great reconciliation, restoration, and redemption, and usher in the Messianic Kingdom, in the ‘end of days’.

Taking a Closer Look at the Challenge

Please note that the problem faced by our ancestors in connection with the famine in question was not what you might think. The Holy One had made sure that there was, notwithstanding the famine, an abundant supply of food available for Ya’akov and his sons. The Holy One had in fact richly provided food enough for the entire world through the wisdom He imparted to Yosef. Seven years’ worth of plenty were therefore now stored up in the storehouses of Egypt. All the food that was necessary was available. It was there for the taking. All a man needed to get what he needed from the storehouses of Egypt was *a little silver*. And as we learned yesterday, our ancestors still had plenty of silver with which to buy grain. So what was our ancestors’ problem? The problem was letting go. Everyone involved was having trouble letting something go. For the ten older brothers what they needed to let go of was their unconfessed sin and guilt related to their heinous act of selling Yosef the dreamer into slavery and then deceiving their father to believe wild animals had killed him. For them the problem was letting go of pride and vanity and self-righteousness. For Ya’akov on the other hand the problem was letting go of a son who had – in his grief over Rachel and over Yosef - come to mean more to him than the Holy One did. Binyamin had become the personification of Ya’akov’s pain. Ya’akov had allowed the companionship of Binyamin to become

more of an idol to him than Yitzchak's companionship had been to Avraham just prior to the Moriyah experience. Ya'akov was going to have to let Benyamin go. And for better or for worse the heaviness of the famine upon the land is about to make that happen. So ... welcome to Ya'akov's latest *Mount Moriyah Moment*.

Veyehi ka'asher kilu l'echol et-ha-shever asher hevi'u mi-Mitzrayim
It happened, when they had eaten up the grain that they had brought out of Mitzrayim,

vayomer aleihem avihem shuvu shivru-lanu me'at-ochel
their father said to them, "Go again, buy us a little⁷ more food."
[Genesis 43:2]

The brothers all feared this day. The last place in the world they wanted to go was Mitzrayim. The last face in the world they wanted to see was that of Egypt's food czar, Tzafenat Paneach. They knew they had no real choice but to go. But they also knew that if they were going to live through it – much less return to their families – they were going to have to take Binyamin with them. That was the 'proof of life' evidence of good faith that *Tzafenat Paneach* had demanded of them. But who among the nine has the courage to broach this touchy subject with Ya'akov? I imagine the brothers looked at one another, to see who would take the initiative. Eight of them quickly looked away. One was left to deliver what I have come to call the *Binyamin Ultimatum*.

The Binyamin Ultimatum

Y'hudah stepped up to speak the words that everyone knew had to be said, but that no one else dared to speak. Before heading off to Egypt and facing the man of fierce countenance again he wanted to make sure that Ya'akov understood what going to *buy a little more food* was going to mean. Y'hudah reminded his father that the viceroy of Egypt had said: ***Lo-tir'u fanai bilti achichem itchem*** – *i.e. do not come before me unless your brother is with you. Genesis 43:3.*

Y'hudah was not being disrespectful. He was initiating an *essential discussion*. So Ya'akov gestured for Y'hudah to continue. He did – with words the patriarch most definitely did not want to hear:

Im-yeshcha meshalei'ach et-achinu itanu
If you will send our brother with us,

nerdah v'nishberah lecha ochel
we will go down and buy you food,

V'im eyncha meshalei'ach lo nered
but if you will not send him, we will not go down,

ki-ha-ish amar eleinu
for the man told us,

⁷ The Hebrew word our English Bibles translate as 'little' in this verse is Strong's Hebrew word #4592.

lo-tir'u fanai bilti achichem itchem

'You shall not see my face unless your brother is with you.'

[Genesis 43:4]

It was an ultimatum: either *Binyamin goes*, or *none of us go*. Yehudah and the others had too much skin in the game – wives, sons, and daughters, as well as their own lives, were at risk. The Binyamin Ultimatum was not negotiable. Alas, the man-made darkness in Ya'akov's soul was too great for him to be able to let go of either Binyamin or his grief quite yet. In anger he lashed out at Y'hudah, saying:

L'mah ha-re'otem li

'Why did you do such a terrible thing to me,

l'hagid la'ish ha-od lachem ach

telling the man that you had another brother?'

Ah, yes, there it is - the infamous unanswerable 'why did you' question⁸. People who are wounded, angry, and bitter throw this question around the way the soldiers of an invading army throw live grenades – and usually with similar effects. The 'why did you' question – often followed by its sister question 'how could you'? – is a sure sign that the conversation is about to turn ugly. And so it was in this instance. For Torah tells us:

Vayomeiru sha'ol sha'al-ha-ish

And they replied, "We simply answered the man's questions.

ha-yodoa neda ki yomar horidu et-achichem

How were we to know that he would demand that we bring our brother there?'"

When the 'why did you' question leads to the 'How was I/were we to know?' response, well ... the conversation is pretty much over Beloved. Problem solving has pretty much been thrown under the bus. Nothing is going to change for the better, and everyone is just going to walk away offended, scarred and hurting.

I call this kind of toxic approach to communication the *accusation-justification off-ramp from the problem-solving process*. Through this kind of Serpentine method of communication - which is so horribly unproductive because it *focuses solely on rehashing the offenses and reopening the wounds of the past*, rather than what needs to be done in the present and the future, no problems are ever solved, no offenses are ever resolved, and no obstacles are ever dissolved.

And so the brothers continue to feel unloved and condemned by their father. And

⁸ The kind of 'why did you' question the author is referring to is the exact kind found in this particular context – where the purpose of the speaker is not to obtain information or instruction, but simply to release toxic emotion. There are proper contexts for a 'why did you' question, obviously. For instance, if an apprentice while watching his master to a task asks his master 'why did you [do that particular task that way?]', what the apprentice is seeking is instruction, not an emotional release.

Ya'akov continues to serve a wicked taskmaster in his private prison of grief. The unhealthy codependency between Ya'akov and Binyamin continues to grow. And Sh'mon continues to sit in *Mitzrayim* waiting for his long-lost brothers to come and redeem him.

Sh'mon is waiting for a *ga'al* – a *kinsman redeemer*. Alas, it looks like he will have to wait a little longer. Meanwhile, the bellies of the sons of Y'hudah, and Yissakhar, and Reuven, and Levi, and the others - great grandsons and granddaughters of Avraham – continue to bloat, and the sounds and stench of starvation continue to pierce the *façade* of *shalom* that lies over Ya'akov's camp.

Yehudah Arising: “That We May Live and Not Die”

When the babies' cries of hunger reach the point where they cannot be comforted however Y'hudah knows he can wait *no more*. At last this successor to the covenant assumes the role of leadership for which he - along with Yosef - was born. He will not allow Ya'akov's paralysis of fear – a paralysis that he knows he himself helped to bring about - to destroy the family any longer. Y'hudah's response to the crisis is not perfect by any means. He does not, even at this critical moment, own up to or confess to his father either *his own sin* or the *conspiratorial acts of his brothers*. He does not lead the family in repentance, in rededication to worship, or even in prayer. He is not and will never be the priest of the household. In *this moment* - in *this crisis* - however, despite all his imperfections, Y'hudah is the one who steps forward to fill the total leadership vacuum that has existed in the covenant family now for over twenty years. By what *appears* to be default - but is really *Divine calling* as yet unrecognized – Y'hudah finally *takes a step in the direction of becoming the crown prince of the nation* that he was created to be.

The government of Egypt may indeed be upon *Yosef's* shoulder; but the government of the Covenant Community rests from this point forward upon the shoulder of *Y'hudah*. This is *Y'hudah's moment*. He was born for 'such a time as this', and he is *up to the task*. He steps up and tells his father:

Shilchah ha-na'ar iti

Send the boy with me,

v'nakumah v'nelechah

and we will arise and go,

v'nichyeh v'lo namut

so that we may live, and not die,

gam-anachnu gam-atah gam-tapeinu

both we, and you, and also our little ones.

Anochi e'erveinu miyadi tevaksheinu

I will be collateral⁹ for him. From my hand will you require him.

im-lo havi'otiv eleicha v'hitzagtiv l'faneicha

If I don't bring him to you, and set him before you,

v'chatati lecha kol ha-yamim

then let me bear the blame-burden forever.

Stirred by Y'udah's powerful prophetic declaration, Ya'akov – referred to in this particular narrative by the name *Yisrael* – finally surrenders. He relents, lets go of *Binyamin*, and sends the brothers on their way.

As *Binyamin* and the others prepare to leave their wives and children behind, Ya'akov calls them together to impart to them a little of the wisdom he had garnered as *Esav's* brother and as a servant in the house of *Lavan*. He said:

im-ken efo zot asu kechu mizimrat ha-aretz b'chlechem

"If it be so now, do this. Take from the choice fruits of the land in your bags,

v'horidu l'ish minchah me'at

and carry down a present for the man,

tzari ume'at dvash

a little balm¹⁰, a little honey,

nechot v'lot bot'nim ush'kedim

spices and myrrh, nuts, and almonds;

V'chesef mishneh kechu v'yedchem

and take double money in your hand,

v'et ha-kesef ha-moshav b'fi amtechoteichem

with the money that was returned in the mouth of your sacks

tashivu v'yeidchem

carry again in your hand.

ulai mish'geh hu

Perhaps it was an oversight.

V'et-achichem kachu v'kumu shuvu el ha-ish

Take also your brother, and arise, go again to the man.

Why did Ya'akov propose that his sons take to the mysterious Egyptian Viceroy – who, after all, lacked nothing - precious quantities of the few edible things the family had left? Perhaps this was just the same old Ya'akov – the one who had once kept himself and his family alive by sending droves of the livestock and

⁹ The Hebrew word English Bibles translate as 'collateral' [KJV 'surety'] in this verse is Strong's Hebrew word #6148.

¹⁰ Sometimes translated 'balsam', this is the Hebrew word *tzari*, *tzade*, *resh*, *yod*.

goods with which the Holy One had blessed him in Charan as gifts of tribute to Esav. Or *perhaps*, just *perhaps*, there is a subtle prophetic message in the substances Ya'akov selected.

Gifts For The Viceroy Who Holds Sh'mon Captive?

Note for instance that the gifts the brothers were to take with them for the viceroy who appears, to the world, to hold Sh'mon's life and the family's future in his hands, included *tzari* [spices] ... *nechot* [balm] *v'lot* [ingredients for incense and perfume]. Do you remember seeing that combination of things before in Torah's narrative? You should. Those are the exact three things the mysterious group of Yish'maeli traders that appeared at Dotan 22 years ago just in time to purchase and thus preserve from death a young man thrown into a pit by his brothers.

Yosef had ridden to Egypt with *tzari*, *nechot* *v'lot*. These had been his companions on the journey. Their sweet aroma had permeated his senses. They were the last sensation he had experienced in the land of his fathers. And now he would smell them again. Perhaps, despite what he said at the birth of his second son, he has not forgotten everything he thinks he has.

Ya'akov's First Fatherly Blessing of His Sons

Whatever Ya'akov's reason for making this 'gift' to Pharaoh's second-in-command, his sons complied. And Ya'akov gathered them all around him as they prepared to depart, and not knowing if he would ever see them again, he spoke the following blessing over them:

v'El Shadai yiten lachem rachamim l'fnei ha-ish

May El Shaddai give you favor/mercy in the eyes of the ish,

v'shilach lachem et-achichem acher v'et-Binyamin

that he may release to you your other brother and Binyamin.

And as they walked out of his sight, Ya'akov turned his gaze Heavenward, and uttered the following poignant words of surrender:

v'ani ka'asher shacholti shachalti

And if I am bereaved of my children, I am bereaved.

I believe that is called *surrender*. This is, you see, Ya'akov/Yisrael's 'Mount Moriyah' experience. Look up, Yisrael. *See the ram!* But first, the ascent, the flames ... and the raising of the flint-knife!

The Table is Set For A Prophetic Banquet

At this point the focus of the narrative of Torah shifts back to Egypt, to the house of *Tzafenat Paneach*, formerly known to us as Yosef. The brothers from Kena'an still do not know who he is under that Egyptian disguise. But they know *he is in*

charge and that whether they like it or not *it is to him they must go*.

When the brothers return to Egypt, this time with Binyamin in tow as they had been instructed, they find the attitude of this strange man called *Tzafenat Paneach* toward them has totally changed. They find themselves *invited to a special dinner party* prepared for them at of all places the prime minister's private palace. There they are *reunited with Sh'mon and treated like dear friends*.

This special period of favor was something, I suppose, like Yosef experienced in the house of Potifar before the lady of the house falsely accused him of a crime and had him thrown into prison. Is Yosef taking the brothers making his brothers *re-live, in microcosm, the things he has experienced over the past twenty plus years?* If so, the brothers had better not get too comfortable just yet. If Yosef's history is any indicator this '*Potifar's House*'-like experience is probably not going to end nearly as well as it begins. For the moment however the brothers have every reason to be optimistic. Here is how Torah tells the story:

Vayesh'vu l'fanav ha-bechor kivechorato

When [the brothers] were seated before [Yosef],

V'ha-tza'ir kitze'irato vayitmeihu

they were placed in order of age, from the oldest to the youngest.

ha-anashim ish el-rei'eihu

The brothers looked at each other in amazement.

Vayisa mas'ot me'et panav alehem

[Yosef] sent them portions from his table,

vaterev mas'at Binyamin mimas'ot kulam chamesh yadot

giving Benjamin five times as much as the rest.

vayishtu vayishkeiru imo

They drank with him and became intoxicated.

It never pays for Hebrews to get too cozy with the royalty of foreign nations

Let This Cup Pass From Me ...

Yosef plans one last test for the brothers. Here is how it unfolds:

Vayetzav et-asher al-beyto l'emor

Then Yosef gave his overseer special instructions.

male et-amtechot ha-anashim ochel ka'asher yuchlun set

'Fill the men's packs with as much food as they can carry,' he said.

v'sim kesef-ish befi amtachto

'Place each man's money at the top of his pack.

V'et-gevi'i gevia ha-kesef tasim befi amtachat ha-katon
And my chalice - the silver chalice - place it on top of the youngest one's pack –

v'et kesef shivro
along with the money for his food.'

vaya'as kid'var Yosef asher diber
He did exactly as Yosef instructed him.

The 'Potifar's wife'-type trap is now set. It remains only to be sprung at the appropriate moment. As soon as the brothers get their caravan back to Kena'an underway, thinking everything has turned out wonderfully, *Tzafenat Paneach* sends men to stop them. His instructions are to accuse the brothers of stealing the silver cup from which he drank with them.

The brothers are shocked at. They deny the accusation vehemently. In unison they say to Yosef's servant:

Asher yimatze ito me'avadeicha vamet
If any of us has it in his possession, he will die.

v'gam-anachnu nihyeh l'adoni la'avadim
And the rest will serve you as slaves.'

Hmmmmn. Does that sound a lot like something Ya'akov said to Lavan on the hills of Gilead to anyone besides me? Unlike Ya'akov however these men will come to *regret uttering those words*, Dear Reader. Yosef now has all the cards. He has arranged it such that he knows not only exactly that the silver cup of *Tzafenat Paneach* will be found, but knows exactly *where* it will be found. The cup will be found *in Binyamin's pack*.

Just as Yosef had been falsely charged by Potifar's wife on the evidence of Yosef's garment, so Binyamin is about to be falsely charged on the evidence of *Tzafenat Paneach's* silver cup. Torah tells us:

V'yemaharu vayoridu ish et-amtachto artzah
Each one quickly lowered his pack to the ground,

vayifteichu ish amtachto
and they all opened their packs.

Vayechapes b'gadol hechel uvakaton kilah
[The overseer] inspected each one, from the oldest to the youngest.

vayimatze ha-gavia b'amtachat Binyamin
The chalice was found in Binyamin's pack.

This is exactly the kind of thing Ya'akov feared, and is why he refused for so long to allow Binyamin out of his sight. The brothers know that this is probably *more than their father will be able to bear*. Twenty something years ago they did not

give a second thought to how traumatic the loss of a favored son would be to their father. Twenty something years ago they were selfish, and wanted only to rid themselves of ‘that dreamer’ who spied on them for their father. But that was a lifetime ago. Now they are all *fathers themselves*. They now have an idea what *losing a child* might mean. So this time, when they think of the loss and the pain their father will feel if he loses Binyamin after already having lost Yosef, they *cannot bear to see it*.

Vayikrei'u simlotam vaya'amos

[The brothers] tore their clothes in grief.

ish al-chamoro v'yashuvu ha-irah

Each one reloaded his donkey, and they returned to the city.

Vayomer Y'hudah mah-nomar l'adoni

'What can we say to my lord?' replied Y'hudah.

mah-nedaber umah-nitzadak

'How can we speak? How can we prove our innocence?'

ha-Elohim matza et-avon

God [for the gods] uncovered our old guilt.

avadeicha hineinu avadim l'adoni

Let us be your slaves –

gam-anachnu gam asher-nimtza ha-gavia b'yado

we and the one in whose possession the chalice was found.'

Tzafenat Paneach was not expecting this. This does not sound like the brothers he knew twenty something years ago. He does not know quite how to handle it.

Vayomer chalilah li me'asot zot

'Heaven forbid that I do that!' said [Tzafenat Paneach]

ha-ish asher nimtza ha-gavia b'yado hu yihyeh-li aved

'The one in whose possession the chalice was found shall be my slave.'

v'atem alu l'shalom el-avichem

[The rest of] you can go in peace to your father.'

The rest of you can go *in peace to your father*? Are you kidding, Yosef? That is *not an option* anymore. Unlike the situation twenty something years ago, going *in peace* to their father while their younger brother entered a life of slavery to a cruel taskmaster was simply *not within the realm of possibility*. Times have *changed*. *You* have changed. In response to the ‘fail-safe pressure-release mechanics’ of the Grand Redemptive and Restorative Plan, *Your brothers* have changed. And it is just *not that easy* any more for any of you to *forsake a brother*.

Questions For Today's Study

1. Remember that the name - and theme - of this week's parsha is *Miketz*, meaning "at the end", or "at the conclusion". Remember as well that the events described in this week's parsha are not just historical, but prototypical, pre-saging, and giving warning to the people of the Holy One concerning, events that will occur "at the end", at the conclusion of history. As such, we see the parallel to these events - and the events of next week's parsha - in the prophetic books of the TaNaKh and in the book of Revelation, "at the conclusion" of the B'rit Chadasha.

Finally, remember that the context of these events is the finalization of the *redemptive judgment of the Holy One*, designed to bring his people to repentance, accomplish their redemption, and establish them in righteousness as a kingdom of priests.

[A] Why did Ya'akov finally consent to sending Benjamin to Egypt with his other sons?

[B] Which of Ya'akov's sons spoke to his father on behalf of the brothers?

[C] What seven things did Ya'akov instruct his sons to take with them?

[D] Today we are introduced to a new "character" in the end-time drama - the "steward" in Yosef's house. List the things that the "steward" of Yosef's house does in today's parsha.

[E] For what did the brothers think they were brought into Yosef's house?

[F] What explanation did the "steward" of Yosef's house have concerning the presence of silver in the sacks of Ya'akov's sons?

[G] How did Yosef react to the sight of Benjamin?

[H] What two things besides grain did the steward of Yosef's house put in the sack of Benjamin?

[I] What was the accusation the steward made against the brothers?

[J] What was their response?

[K] When confronted by Yosef, which of the brothers acts as the spokesman?

[L] What response does this spokesman make to the accusations of the accuser?

[M] What do you think it meant (to the brothers) to become Yosef's slave?

2. In today's Haftarah Shlomo prays a prophetic prayer at the dedication of the *Mik'dash* [Temple].

*He stood before the altar of the Holy One
in the presence of all the assembly of Yisra'el, and spread forth his hands*

*and kneeled down on his knees before all the assembly of Yisra'el,
and spread forth his hands toward heaven;
and he said, **O Holy One, the God of Yisra'el, there is no God like you,***

*in heaven, or on eretz;
who keep covenant and lovingkindness with your servants,
who walk before you with all their heart;*

*But will God in very deed dwell with men on the eretz?
behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens can't contain you;
how much less this house which I have built!*

*Yet have you respect to the prayer of your servant,
and to his supplication, O Holy One my God,
to listen to the cry and to the prayer which your servant prays before you;
that your eyes may be open toward this house day and night,
even toward the place whereof you have said
that you would put your Name there;
to listen to the prayer which your servant shall pray toward this place.*

*Listen you to the petitions of your servant, and of your people Yisra'el,
when they shall pray toward this place:
yes, hear from your dwelling-place, even from heaven; and when you hear, forgive.*

*whatever prayer and supplication be made by any man, or by all your people Yisra'el,
who shall know every man his own plague and his own sorrow,
and shall spread forth his hands toward this house:
then hear from heaven, your dwelling-place and forgive,
and render to every man according to all his ways, whose heart you know;
(for you, even you only, know the hearts of the children of men;)
that they may fear you, to walk in your ways,
so long as they live in the land which you gave to our fathers.*

*Moreover concerning the foreigner who is not of your people Yisra'el,
when he shall come from a far country for your great name's sake,
and your mighty hand, and your outstretched arm;
when they shall come and pray toward this house:
then hear from heaven, even from your dwelling-place,
and do according to all that the foreigner calls to you for;
that all the peoples of the eretz may know your name, and fear you,
as does your people Yisra'el, and that they may know
that this house which I have built is called by your Name.*

*Now, my God, let, I beg you, your eyes be open,
and let your ears be attentive, to the prayer that is made in this place.
Now therefore arise, O Holy One my God, into your resting-place,
you, and the ark of your strength:
let your Kohanim, O Holy One my God, be clothed with yeshu`ah,
and let your holy ones rejoice in goodness.*

- [A] In what posture did Shlomo pray this prayer?
- [B] How does Shlomo describe the Holy One as he opens his prayer?
- [C] What promise does Shlomo ask the Holy One to keep/fulfill?
- [D] What does Shlomo ask the Holy One to do concerning the Mik'dash [Temple]?

[E] What does Shlomo ask the Holy One to do when He hears the prayers of His people toward the Temple?

[F] What does Shlomo ask the Holy One to do when He hears the oaths of His people at the altar?

[G] What other situations does Shlomo address in his prayer?

[H] For each of the situations Shlomo addresses, state what he asks The Holy One to do in that situation.

[I] Beginning in verse 41 of chapter 6, Shlomo asks for some very specific manifestations of the Holy One's presence. List the things he asked for in verses 41-42.

[J] What happened when Shlomo finished praying?

[K] What did the people of Israel do and say when this occurred?

3. In today's B'rit Chadasha reading Shaul of Tarsus concludes his description of his approach when he first came to Corinth to tell them that the promised Messiah had come.

*My speech and my preaching were not in persuasive words of human wisdom,
but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power,
that your faith wouldn't stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of the Holy One.*

[A] What two things did Shaul say his "message" and "preaching" did not consist of?

[B] In Strong's, look up the words translated as "message" and "preaching" in verse 4. Write the Greek words and their definitions.

[C] What did Shaul say accompanied his "message" and "preaching"?

[D] What reason does Shaul give for this?

[E] What is to be the basis of our faith - that on which it is grounded?

[F] What is the difference between faith based on the Holy One's power and faith based on men's wisdom?

*May the Holy One's presence illumine your home
as you rededicate your temple to His service.*

The Rabbi's son

Meditation for Today's Study

Psalm 75:1-3, 9-10

*We give thanks to you, O Holy One. We give thanks, for your Name is near.
Men tell about your wondrous works.*

When I choose the appointed time, I will judge blamelessly.

The eretz and all its inhabitants quake. I firmly hold its pillars. Selah.

But I will declare this forever: I will sing praises to the God of Ya`akov.

*I will cut off all the horns of the wicked,
but the horns of the righteous will be lifted up.*