

# OHRNET

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## PARSHA INSIGHTS

by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

### Miketz

#### Scharfer!

*“Now let Pharaoh seek out a wise and discerning man...” (41:33)*

**Y**erushalmis are noted for being *scharfers*, meaning that they have quick and incisive minds.

Last Erev Rosh Hashana I was leaving the mikveh through the turnstile, and just as soon as I got to the other side I realized that I had left my *tzizit* in the changing room and to get back inside was going to cost me another twenty shekels. While I was thinking about what to do, a skinny Yerushalmi was just about to enter the turnstile. I explained to him what had happened and asked if I could squeeze through together with him. “Sure!” he replied. As we were going round the turnstile I said to him, “It’s lucky you’re thin.” He said, “No, it’s because you don’t have your *tzizis* on!”

*“Now let Pharaoh seek out a wise and discerning man...”*

Seeing as Yosef had been brought to Pharaoh to interpret his dream, why was Yosef giving Pharaoh advice on how to run the country?

The Mishna says that “On Pesach the world is judged regarding the produce of the field.” Pharaoh’s dream happened on the night of Rosh Hashana, as it says, “On Rosh Hashana, Yosef got out of prison.”

Ostensibly we could ask: If G-d wanted to reveal to Pharaoh that years of famine were approaching, why wasn’t his dream on the first night of Pesach, the time of judgment for the produce of the land?

*“Now let Pharaoh seek out a wise and discerning man...”*

This is the subtext of this verse: If you ask why should Pharaoh have a dream “Now” about good and bad sheaves of wheat, a subject relevant to Pesach, the answer is: “Let Pharaoh seek out a wise and discerning man and set him over the land of Egypt.” This is because Rosh Hashana is certainly the time for dreams about the fate of man, as taught in Mishna Rosh Hashana: “On Rosh Hashana all those who come to the world pass before Him like sheep.”

*Scharf!*

- Source Kehilas Moshe in Mayana shel Torah

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# PARSHA INSIGHTS

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by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

## Vayigash

### It's Nothing, Really!

*"I am Yosef. Is my father still alive?" (45:3)*

**H**ow many times when you apologize to someone do you hear, *"It's nothing, really! Why are you making such a big deal out of it? What did you do, after all? Forget it! It's really nothing."*

Now, for some people, saying "It's nothing" is a genuine expression of forgiveness. It *really* is nothing to them. However, sometimes what people really mean is, "It's nothing, *really!*!" Meaning, "You must be joking! I don't even want to hear your voice. I just want to see you squirm around in front of me. I'm not letting you off the hook for anything. Apologize away. It's nothing really!"

A person who refuses to accept an honest apology can make himself guiltier than the "guilty party". Just as Judaism prescribes the appropriate behavior for one who needs to apologize, so too there is a correct way to behave towards someone seeking forgiveness. Indeed, someone who turns a plea for forgiveness into an opportunity for vengeance, however subtle it might be, may end up committing a graver sin than the original transgression.

Picture Yosef's brothers standing in front of him, the utter humiliation and guilt of facing their young brother whom they had wronged so terribly. Now they were facing a king who had the power of life and death over them. How did Yosef react in this situation? Human nature would suggest that Yosef would have at least laid out in some detail all the hardship and suffering they had caused him. However, what we read in the Torah sounds more like an extended "Thank You" note than a reproach.

*"And now, be not distressed, nor reproach yourselves for it was to be a provider that G-d sent me ahead of you. Thus G-d has sent me ahead of you, to ensure your survival in the land and to sustain you. It is not you who sent me here, but G-d."*

The Torah teaches us that, as important as it is to say "I'm sorry," it's equally important to know how to say "I forgive you" in a way that genuinely comforts the offender.

- *Source: Da'at Torah*

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# TALMUD TIPS

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by Rabbi Moshe Newman

## Miketz: Menachot 100-110

### The Nightly Crown of Torah

*Rabbi Yochanan said, “These are Torah scholars, who immerse themselves in Torah study at night. The verse teaches that it is considered as if they were performing sacrificial service in the Beit Hamikdash.”*

The statement on our *daf* appears to be an astounding manner of exposition by Rabbi Yochanan of the following verse in Tehillim (134:1): “A song of ascents. Behold, bless G-d, all servants of G-d who stand in the house of G-d *at nights*.”

However, this verse seems to be clearly speaking about the *kohanim*, who are the ones charged with performing the sacrificial service in the Beit Hamikdash. So where do we see that the verse is teaching of the greatness of Torah scholars who study at night? The *gemara* points us in the correct direction when it asks, “What is the purpose of “at nights” in this verse?”

The Maharsha explains that, although Rabbi Yochanan’s teaching is certainly not the straightforward meaning of the verse (i.e. the *pshat*), the final word in the verse – *ba’leilot* – at nights – is a hint that there is an additional teaching that is hinted to in this verse. Since the main sacrificial service that took place in the Beit Hamikdash took place during the daytime, “at nights” seems incongruous. Therefore, the Mahrsha explains that the verse is also referring to Torah scholars, since, in general, people are busy during the day with their livelihoods, and have free time to be immersed in Torah only at night. Torah scholars who serve G-d with their Torah study at night, says Rabbi Yochanan, “are considered as if they were performing sacrificial service in the Beit Hamikdash.”

Without downplaying the importance of Torah study during the day as well, we find in the words of the Rambam that that the night is an especially fortuitous time for Torah study. He writes in the Laws of Talmud Torah (3:13): “Although it is a mitzvah to learn Torah day and night, one acquires *most* of his wisdom from learning at *night*. Therefore, if one wishes to gain the crown of Torah, he must be careful with all of his nights, and not waste any of them in sleeping, eating, drinking, talking or similar activities.”

Although the Rambam may just be “playing-up” the importance of the available time at night for Torah study, as the Maharsha explained, a careful reading of his words seem to indicate a different emphasis on nightly Torah study. The Rambam seems to indicate that the nature of the night as a time for immersion in Torah study is one that holds *special* significance. The night is beyond merely being just another stretch of time on the clock. It is *especially* suited to Torah study due to a reason the Rambam does not seem to reveal in natural terms. Over the years I have spoken to more than one great Torah scholar who has described the special nature of nocturnal Torah study with super-superlatives, even going so far to say that hidden paths of wisdom open during Torah study at night. It’s more than just a “quiet time” or “free time” according to the Rambam. It’s an auspicious time for one who desires to earn the crown of Torah.

- *Menachot 110a*

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# TALMUD TIPS

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by Rabbi Moshe Newman

## Vayigash: Chullin 2-8

### Choose Life!

*Rabbi Chanina said, "A person doesn't experience a blow to his finger unless it is decreed from Above."*

There is a well-known saying that "G-d runs the world". Our Sages teach that "Everything is in the Hands of Heaven except for cold and hot (i.e., a person has the choice whether or not to dress warmly in the winter and whether or not to stay outside in the sun too long in the summer.)" They also teach, "Everything is in the Hands of Heaven except for the fear (i.e., awe) of Heaven."

Much of what happens is beyond our control. But it is a fundamental Torah principle that we all possess "free will" – the ability to choose between good and bad, right and wrong, moral and immoral.

The Torah says that "the inclination in man's heart is evil from his youth." (Genesis 8:21) The

Talmud explains "youth" here to mean from the time of birth. However, this evil inclination is external; it is not intrinsic to a person's pure soul. Our pure soul is given to us even earlier, at the time of conception.

So, Judaism sees man as basically good, created in G-d's image, but with temptation towards evil. While the evil inclination is strong, Judaism believes that a person can choose to overcome it. This is the concept of free choice, which is basically the purpose of our existence: To choose good over evil.

- *Chullin 7b*

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# PARSHA Q & A

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## Miketz

1. "These are the offspring of Yaakov: Yosef...." Give three reasons why Yosef is considered Yaakov's main offspring.
2. What was praiseworthy about the fact that Yosef's brothers did not speak to him in a friendly manner?
3. How do we see from Yosef's dream about the sun, moon and stars that all dreams contain some untrue element?
4. Who brought Yosef down to Egypt?
5. Where was Reuven when Yosef was sold?
6. In addition to the brothers, who else knew that Yosef was alive?
7. Why didn't G-d reveal prophetically to Yaakov that Yosef was alive?
8. For how long did Yaakov mourn the loss of Yosef?
9. Verse 37:35 states "his father wept." To whom does this refer?
10. Who was Tamar's father?
11. In what merit did Tamar deserve to have kings as her descendants?
12. Why is the word "hand" mentioned four times in connection to the birth of Zerach?
13. Why does the Torah relate the incident with Potiphar's wife immediately after the incident of Yehuda and Tamar?
14. How did Potiphar "see" that G-d was with Yosef?
15. Who in this week's Parsha pretended to be sick?
16. Why were the butler and the baker imprisoned?
17. For how long were the butler and the baker in prison?
18. How did the baker know that Yosef had correctly interpreted the butler's dream?
19. What prompted the butler and baker to tell Yosef their dreams?
20. How was Yosef punished for asking the butler for help?

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## Answers

*All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary, unless otherwise stated.*

1. 37:2 - (a) Yosef was the son of Rachel, Yaakov's primary wife. (b) Yosef looked like Yaakov. (c) All that befell Yaakov befell Yosef.
2. 37:4 - They did not act hypocritically.
3. 37:10 - The moon represented Rachel. Since she had already died, it was impossible for that element of the dream to come true.
4. 37:28 - A caravan of Midianites.
5. 37:29 - He was attending to Yaakov.
6. 37:33 - Yitzchak.
7. 37:33 - Because the brothers had issued a ban against revealing the truth to Yaakov, and G-d, so to speak, abided by their ban.
8. 37:34 - Twenty-two years.
9. 37:35 - Yitzchak, who wept because of Yaakov's suffering.
10. 38:24 - Shem.
11. 38:26 - In the merit of her modesty.
12. 38:30 - To allude to his descendent, Achan, who sinned with his hand by taking four things from the spoils of Jericho.
13. 39:1 - To teach us that just as Tamar acted with pure motives, so did Potiphar's wife.
14. 39:3 - Yosef mentioned G-d's name frequently in his speech.
15. 39:11 - Potiphar's wife.
16. 40:1 - The butler was imprisoned because a fly was found in the king's goblet, and the baker was imprisoned because a pebble was found in the king's bread.
17. 40:4 - Twelve months.
18. 40:5 - The baker dreamed the interpretation of the butler's dream.
19. 40:6 - Yosef asked them why they looked troubled.
20. 40:23 - He remained in prison an additional two years.

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# PARSHA Q & A

## Vayigash

1. What threatening words did Yehuda say to Yosef?
2. Why did Yehuda say his missing brother died?
3. Why was Yehuda the one to plead for Binyamin?
4. What do we learn from Yosef telling his brothers, "Go up to my father"?
5. What two things did the brothers see that helped prove that he was really Yosef?
6. Why did Binyamin weep on Yosef's neck?
7. Why did Yosef send old wine to Yaakov?
8. What did Yosef mean when he said, "Don't dispute on the way"?
9. What happened to Yaakov when he realized Yosef was alive?
10. Why did G-d tell Yaakov, "Don't fear going down to Egypt"?
11. "I will bring you up" from Egypt. To what did this allude?
12. What happened to the property that Yaakov acquired in Padan Aram?
13. Who was the mother of Shaul ben HaCanaanit?
14. When listing Yaakov's children, the verse refers to Rachel as "Rachel, wife of Yaakov." Leah, Bilhah and Zilpah are not referred to as Yaakov's wives. Why?
15. Yosef harnessed his own chariot instead of letting a servant do it. Why?
16. Why were shepherds abhorrent to the Egyptians?
17. Why did Yosef pick the weakest brothers to stand before Pharaoh?
18. What blessing did Yaakov give Pharaoh when he left his presence?
19. Yosef resettled the land of Egypt, moving the people from city to city. What were his two motives for this?
20. Whose fields were not bought by Yosef?

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## Answers

*All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary, unless otherwise stated.*

1. 44:18 - He threatened that Yosef would be stricken with leprosy, like Pharaoh when he took Sarah from Avraham. Alternatively, Yehuda threatened to kill Yosef and Pharaoh.
2. 44:20 - Yehuda feared that if he said his missing brother was alive, Yosef would demand to see him.
3. 44:32 - He was the one who took "soul" responsibility for him.
4. 45:9 - We learn that *Eretz Yisrael* is higher than all other lands.
5. 45:12 - He was circumcised like they were, and he spoke *lashon hakodesh*.
6. 45:14 - Binyamin wept for the destruction of *Mishkan Shilo* built in Yosef's territory.
7. 45:23 - Elderly people appreciate old wine.
8. 45:24 - He warned that if they engage in halachic disputes, they might not be alert to possible travel dangers.
9. 45:27 - His *ruach hakodesh* (prophetic spirit) returned.
10. 46:3 - Because Yaakov was grieved to leave *Eretz Canaan*.
11. 46:4 - That Yaakov would be buried in *Eretz Canaan*.
12. 46:6 - He traded it for Esav's portion in the Cave of Machpelah.
13. 46:10 - *Dina bat Yaakov*.
14. 46:19 - Rachel was regarded as the mainstay of the family.
15. 46:29 - Yosef wanted to hasten to honor his father.
16. 46:34 - Because the Egyptians worshipped sheep.
17. 47:2 - So Pharaoh wouldn't see their strength and draft them.
18. 47:10 - That the waters of the Nile should rise to greet Pharaoh.
19. 47:21 - In order to remind them that they no longer owned the land, and to help his family by removing the stigma of being strangers.
20. 47:22 - The Egyptian priests.

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## PARSHA OVERVIEW

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### Miketz

It is two years later. Pharaoh has a dream. He is unsatisfied with all attempts to interpret it. Pharaoh's wine chamberlain remembers that Yosef accurately interpreted his dream while in prison. Yosef is released from prison and brought before Pharaoh. He interprets that soon will begin seven years of abundance followed by seven years of severe famine. He tells Pharaoh to appoint a wise person to store grain in preparation for the famine. Pharaoh appoints him as viceroy to oversee the project. Pharaoh gives Yosef an Egyptian name, Tsafnat Panayach, and selects Osnat, Yosef's ex-master's daughter, as Yosef's wife. Egypt becomes the granary of the world. Yosef has two sons, Menashe and Ephraim. Yaakov sends his sons to Egypt to buy food. The brothers come before Yosef and bow to him. Yosef recognizes them but they do not recognize him. Mindful of his dreams, Yosef plays the part of an Egyptian overlord and acts harshly, accusing them of being spies.

Yosef sells them food, but keeps Shimon hostage until they bring their brother Binyamin to him as proof of their honesty. Yosef commands his servants to replace the purchase-money in their sacks. On the return journey, they discover the money and their hearts sink. They return to Yaakov and retell everything. Yaakov refuses to let Binyamin go to Egypt, but when the famine grows unbearable, he accedes. Yehuda guarantees Binyamin's safety, and the brothers go to Egypt. Yosef welcomes the brothers lavishly as honored guests. When he sees Binyamin he rushes from the room and weeps. Yosef instructs his servants to replace the money in the sacks, and to put his goblet inside Binyamin's sack. When the goblet is discovered, Yosef demands Binyamin become his slave as punishment. Yehuda interposes and offers himself instead, but Yosef refuses.

### Vayigash

With the discovery of the goblet in Binyamin's sack, the brothers are confused. Yehuda alone steps forward and eloquently but firmly petitions Yosef for Binyamin's release, offering himself instead. As a result of this act of total selflessness, Yosef finally has irrefutable proof that his brothers are different people from the ones who cast him into the pit, and so he now reveals to them that he is none other than their brother. The brothers shrink from him in shame, but Yosef consoles them, telling them that everything has been part of G-d's plan. He sends them back to their father Yaakov with a message to come and reside in the land of Goshen. At first, Yaakov cannot accept the news, but when he recognizes hidden signs in the message which positively identify the sender as his son Yosef, his spirit is revived. Yaakov together with all his family and possessions sets out for Goshen. G-d communicates with Yaakov in a vision at night. He tells him not to fear going down to Egypt and its negative spiritual consequences,

because it is there that G-d will establish the Jewish People as a great nation, even though they will be dwelling in a land steeped in immorality and corruption. The Torah lists Yaakov's offspring and hints to the birth of Yocheved, who will be the mother of Moshe Rabbeinu. Seventy souls in total descend into Egypt, where Yosef is reunited with his father after 22 years of separation. He embraces his father and weeps, overflowing with joy. Yosef secures the settlement of his family in Goshen. Yosef takes his father Yaakov and five of the least threatening of his brothers to be presented to Pharaoh, and Yaakov blesses Pharaoh. Yosef instructs that, in return for grain, all the people of Egypt must give everything to Pharaoh, including themselves as his slaves. Yosef then redistributes the population, except for the Egyptian priests who are directly supported by a stipend from Pharaoh. The Children of Israel become settled, and their numbers multiply greatly.

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# ASK!

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By Rabbi Yirmiyahu Ullman

## Revolt or Renaissance

From: Pam

Dear Rabbi,

Why is the Hasmonean uprising against the Greeks viewed as a spiritual uprising rather than a military and political revolt of the oppressed against a foreign intruder?

Dear Pam,

The revolt of the Hasmoneans against the Greeks was not a typical revolt of the oppressed against their oppressor. This is because the Jews could have achieved full national freedom under Greek dominion, since the Greeks did not intend to *physically* enslave the Jews. Rather, their oppression resulted from resisting the Greek attempt to “liberate” them from what they viewed as the “oppression” of the Torah.

Other peoples living under Greek dominion willingly accepted Greek culture, beliefs, and wisdom. Even many Jews were enchanted by the intellectual and aesthetic lures of ancient Greece. And as with the other peoples under their dominion, the Greeks did not intend to physically destroy the Jews, but only wanted Israel to replace their beliefs with faith in human strength, aesthetics and intellect. The central beliefs of Judaism – existence of a G-d who created, communicates with, commands, and demands of Man specific beliefs and observances – were to be nullified and uprooted from the Jewish heart, mind, and soul.

The Hasmonean *kohanim*, who led the committed and devout of Israel, considered the Greek world view as the most revolting form of paganism. All idolatry is an abomination, but when Man becomes an idol, the damage and crime is much worse. While belief in idols of wood and stone is misleading, it nevertheless causes little actual

harm. But when humans are deified, and ultimate faith is placed in the superiority of Man’s tastes, talents, strengths, prowess, reason, and intellect, he is then capable of limitless license and destruction.

As the Hasmoneans saw this defilement take root among their people, branching out more from day-to-day, until the Holy Temple itself became defiled, they viewed war with the Greeks as a matter of spiritual life and death. For the People of Israel is a nation invested with the task of guarding the purity and sanctity of the world, as it is written, “And you shall be unto Me a kingdom of *kohanim* and a holy nation” (Ex. 19:6). Since these two opposing world views could not abide together, the Hasmoneans waged an uprising of sanctity against defilement.

Thus, the uprising was not for military or political independence. Israel could have achieved these goals, as many “forward-thinking” Jews argued, by acquiescing, abandoning their spiritual heritage, aligning with Greek culture and thereby gaining independence within the greater Greek Empire, as did all other nations that fell under Greek dominion. However, those Jews and nations fell with the downfall of Greek debauchery and decay into the darkness of oblivion. Rather, the Hasmoneans and the other loyal Jews who found the G-dless Greek culture revolting, rebelled in order to kindle a renaissance of religious independence. And the spiritual enlightenment of those days, which began as a ray of hope and flamed into a zealous fire, continued to shine brightly through the generations in the Chanuka menorah, illuminating the Jewish heart, mind, and soul till this very day!

- Sources: *The Book of Our Heritage*, p. 295

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# WHAT'S IN A WORD?

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Synonyms in the Hebrew Language  
by Rabbi Reuven Chaim Klein

## SLAUGHTERING AND BUTCHERING

When Yosef commanded his chief of staff to prepare a banquet in honor of his brothers, he said: “Bring the men into the house, and slaughter a slaughtering (*u'tevoach tevach*) and prepare [it], for these men will eat with me in the noon” (Gen. 43:16). We are more familiar with the word *shechita* which means “slaughtering”, yet here the Torah uses the somewhat obscure word *tevicha*. In this essay we will discuss how the words *shechita* and *tevicha* differ from each other, and how they differ from *zevicha* – a third synonym for slaughtering.

There are two more places in the Pentateuch where a cognate of *tevicha* is used. When a thief steals something and is caught, the Torah levies on him a penalty of paying back to the rightful owner twice the value of that which he stole (Ex. 22:3). But, if he stole livestock and then slaughtered or sold it, then he must pay back four (for ovacaprines) or five (for bovines) times the value of the animal (Ex. 21:37). In this context, the word used for “slaughtering” is a cognate of *tevicha*. The next place where such a cognate appears is in Deuteronomy 28, which tells of a series of curses to befall those who fail to keep the Torah and, *inter alia*, reads: “Your ox will be slaughtered (*tavuach*) before your eyes, and you will not eat from it” (Deut. 28:31). Basically, all other instances of *tevicha*-related words in the Bible appear outside of the Pentateuch.

Returning to the synonyms at hand, the Malbim explains how they differ from one another. The term *shechita* refers specifically to the halachic concept of ritual slaughtering, which requires cutting an animal's neck through the esophagus and trachea. In contrast, *zevicha* implies slaughtering an animal for a specific purpose, whether as a ritual sacrifice or as food for a festive gathering. Finally, Malbim argues that the word *tevicha* refers to killing an animal for food in a general way – even outside of the context of ritual slaughtering.

While not offering full definitions for the words we are discussing, Gersonides (to Deut. 12:21) notes that the word *zevicha* does not, *per force*, refer to the same act as

*shechita*. Rather, he explains, *zevicha* can also include *nechira* (“stabbing”), which is a halachically unacceptable way of killing (see Targum pseudo-Jonathan to Num. 22:40). In another context, Gersonides (to Lev. 1:1) writes that *shechita* and *zevicha* are, in fact, synonyms.

Rabbi Shlomo Pappenheim of Breslau (1740-1814), cited by Rabbi Yaakov Tzvi Mecklenburg, offers a slightly different approach. He explains that *shechita* is a general term for any action which causes the death of a living being. What is colloquially called *shechita* (i.e. halachic slaughtering) is included in this term, but is not its full definition. He adduces this view from the fact that the Talmud (*Chullin* 17a) says that for Noahides, “their *nechira* (stabbing) [of an animal] is their ‘*shechita*’”. Moreover, when asking of G-d's forgiveness for the Ten Spies debacle and begging for clemency that He not destroy the Jewish People, Moshe said that if He wipes them out, then the Gentiles will say: “Because G-d lacked the ability to bring this people into the Land... He slaughtered (*vayishachtem*) them in the desert” (Num. 14:16). This does not mean that G-d was going to literally “slaughter” the Jews, but that He was going to somehow bring about their death. These two usages show that the word *shechita* includes other forms of killing, besides the specific way of slaughtering prescribed by Jewish law.

On the other hand, Rabbi Pappenheim explains that the words *zevicha* and *tevicha* refer to types of *shechita*. Those two words focus on the *reason* why someone would want to kill a living animal: *zevicha* refers to killing an animal for the purpose of ritual sacrifice, while *tevicha* refers to killing an animal for regular human consumption. Interestingly, there might be an etymological link between *tevicha* and *zevicha*. Both words differ only in the first letter of their root, but share the letters *BET-CHET* at the end of their roots. The Hebrew word *zevicha* is rendered in Aramaic as *devicha*, with the Hebrew *ZAYIN* morphing into an Aramaic *DALET*. The letter *DALET*, as you may have realized, it sometimes interchangeable with the letter *TET*, turning *devicha* into *tevicha*. It is therefore understandable that when the

Mishnah (*Eduyot* 8:4) declares that liquids in the Temple are ritually pure, there is a point of contention in the Talmud (*Pesachim* 17a) whether this applies to *beit mitbachaya* (the Temple's "slaughter-house") or *beit midbachaya* (the Temple's "sacrifice house").

Based on the notion that *tevicha* refers to slaughtering an animal for human consumption, Rabbi Shlomo Aharon Wertheimer (1866-1935) explains why the Torah specifically used that word when referring to the thief's penalty. If the Torah did not use the word *tevicha*, one might have otherwise thought that the penalty only applies to a thief who slaughters the stolen animal for no good reason, or to anger its rightful owner. But if he slaughtered the animal to eat its meat, the thief could excuse his deplorable actions by claiming because that he slaughtered the stolen animal for the purposes of eating it (not to make a profit), and should be exempt for any penalties. For this reason, the Torah uses the word *tevicha* when telling of the thief's penalty; that is, to stress that even though he slaughtered the animal in order to eat from its meat he is still held responsible and the penalties mentioned above are still levied upon him.

Until this point, we have assumed that *tevicha* means "slaughtering". However, Rabbi Wertheimer points to another understanding of that word. He cites Rabbi Yonah ibn Janach (990-1050), who contends that *tevicha* actually means "cooking" (as does the verb *tovech* in Arabic). Accordingly, Ibn Janach understood that Joseph did not tell his chief of staff to "slaughter" meat for his banquet, but to "cook" meat. Nonetheless, Rabbi Wertheimer points out that in many rabbinic sources, *tevicha* certainly refers to "slaughtering", not "cooking". In later times, a person described as a *tabach* was a "butcher" (who cuts up meat that

has already been slaughtered), or a "cook". The Modern Hebrew cognate, *mitbach*, means "kitchen".

The occupations of two people in the Bible are described with *tevicha*-related words: Nebuzaradan, the Babylonian general who destroyed the First Temple in Jerusalem, is described (in II Kings and Jer.) as *rav ha'tabachim* ("chief of *tabachim*"); and Potiphar, the Egyptian courtier to whom Yosef was sold, as *sar ha'tabachim* ("minister of *tabachim*"). Rashi (to Gen. 37:36) explains that Potiphar was in charge of all those who slaughtered the king's animals. However, Ibn Ezra and Nachmanides follow Targum Onkelos in explaining that *sar ha'tabachim* refers to Potiphar's role as Chief Executioner (or at least the Chief Warden of those on death row). This also seems to be the meaning of Nebuzaradan's title. The connection between *tabach* as an executioner and *tabach* as a slaughterer is obvious: an executioner slays people in the same way that a slaughterer slays animals. (Truth be told, Ibn Ezra seems to contradict himself, because elsewhere (to Dan. 2:14) he writes that Potiphar was the Chief Cook at Pharaoh's court, not his Chief Executioner.)

*Disclaimer: No animals were maimed, decapitated, or otherwise harmed in the production of this article.*

- For questions, comments, or to propose ideas for a future article, please contact the author at [rcklein@ohr.edu](mailto:rcklein@ohr.edu)

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## LOVE OF THE LAND

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*Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the people of Israel and Eretz Yisrael*

### Maccabees in Modi'in

The military miracle of Chanuka is always associated with Yehuda the Maccabee, the heroic son of Matityahu, the *Kohen Gadol*, who led the revolt against the Hellenist oppressors.

One explanation for the name Maccabee is that it is an acronym of the Hebrew verse: *Mi chamocha*

*ba'eilim Hashem* – Who is like You among the gods, Hashem!

This was apparently the battle cry of the army led by Yehuda the Maccabee, which put its faith in G-d as the source of their success.

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# LETTER AND SPIRIT

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Insights based on the writings of Rav S.R. Hirsch  
by Rabbi Yosef Herman

## Parshat Miketz Discerning and Wise

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After Yosef interprets Pharaoh's dreams, he advises the king to seek a man who is *navon v'chamam* – discerning and wise – to appoint over Egypt. This discerning and wise viceroy will collect taxes during the years of plenty and stockpile grain to preserve it for the years of famine. As a general rule, *chochmah* (wisdom) precedes *binah* (understanding or discernment). But here the order is reversed. (*Navon* is a conjugate of *binah*.)

A *chacham* is one who takes in all that is in front of him. He recognizes things for what they are and for what they should be. Both of these (the nature of things and their intended purpose) are given; man need not create them. The truest *chacham* is one who learns the nature and the purpose from the One who assigned things this nature and purpose, by the study of Torah.

*Binah* derives from the word *bein*, between. It denotes penetrating insight into things, discernment *between* things. While a mortal cannot penetrate the very essence of things, man can draw logical conclusions and gain further insight. Beyond recognizing things for what they are (*chochmah*), *binah* uses the intellectual capacities of comparison, inference and deduction to gain a more profound understanding.

By its nature, *binah* is a more active art than *chochmah*. If *chochmah* requires receptivity and absorption, *binah* requires independent and creative intellectual thinking. It is striking then, that the function of *chochmah* is expressed most commonly in the active (*kal*) form [*chacham*, a wise man; *chachamti*, I became wise], whereas the *binah* is expressed most commonly in the passive form [*navon*, a discerning man].

Implicit in the grammatical form of these capacities are two important warnings. One may think that acquisition of wisdom requires no effort on the part of the observer. But one who truly wishes to absorb the whole reality of the thing before him must concentrate his mental powers, lest he grasp only the superficial knowledge, or be susceptible to half-truths.

Conversely, the mind's deductive activity is a unique human pleasure, which summons us to be creative and independent. To guard against rash conclusions, this faculty is expressed mostly in the passive form. In drawing conclusions and making inferences, one should keep in mind the two alternatives, and weigh them extensively until the logical conclusion presents itself automatically. Otherwise, his conclusions may be dazzling, his theories brilliant, but at the same time, often false.

Theoretical knowledge – obtained through *binah* – always requires a solid foundation of empirical knowledge – obtained through *chochmah*. This is why, generally, *chochmah* precedes *binah* in the text, just as it must in practice.

Here, however, the empirical facts have already been set forth in detailed clarity. Now, *binah* was needed to develop a plan to cope with the conditions; to establish effective precautionary measures. Once the plan is devised through discernment, wisdom would again be needed to assess the actual conditions in order to implement the plan. Hence, Yosef suggests that Pharaoh seek out a “discerning and wise man,” who turns out to be none other than Yosef himself.

- Sources: Commentary, Bereishet 41:33

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# LETTER AND SPIRIT

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*Insights based on the writings of Rav S.R. Hirsch*  
by Rabbi Yosef Herman

## Parshat Vayigash Divinely Guided Exile

In case we missed the display of Divine providence at work in these chapters, Yosef repeatedly points it out. He tells his brothers not to be troubled by the fact that they sold him, for this was G-d sending him ahead to Egypt in order to preserve the lives of the entire family. Yosef repeats this no less than four times within five verses. The Hand of G-d is so unmistakable that even the one who personally suffered from the unfolding of events takes heed.

There is hardly a story that so cogently demonstrated the workings of Divine providence. At each turn of the story, the unexpected happens – Yosef is spared death in the nick of time; he is sold and exchanged several times until he lands in Egypt; in an unlikely rise to prominence the Hebrew slave is soon in charge of his master's household; in prison he finds favor in the eyes of the prison master and fortuitously interprets the dreams of his fellow prison mates; Yosef is then called to interpret the troubling dreams of Pharaoh and rises to power as the viceroy of Egypt! This, of course, all sets the stage for the prophesied migration of Yaakov's family to Egypt, the land that will host the exile that must precede the birth of a nation mature enough to build a society on Torah law in the Land. Unknowingly and unwillingly, even the wrongdoing of Yosef's brothers is at G-d's bidding, as Yosef assures them, *Do not be sad, and let it not trouble you that you sold me here, for it was to preserve life that G-d sent me before you.* (Ber. 45:5) In this particular story, the threads lie exposed, and reveal to us a pattern of Providence that underlies all events, even when the Hand of G-d remains hidden.

This exile was foretold to Avraham some 215 years earlier when Avraham asked how he could be assured that his children will inherit the Land of Cannan. Had the children of Yaakov stayed in Cannan, they would have merged with the surrounding population. But to establish

their own nation, based on their endemic values and noble mission, they would have to come into the midst of a nation so at odds with their ethos that assimilation would be stunted.

Similarly, the fanaticism that gave rise to the ghettos was an instrument of G-d to keep us far from the sinful culture of the Middle Ages. Indeed, it had the effect of cultivating and preserving a community true to its own values.

Yosef explains that in order for the exile to be effective, one of them had to be sent down to become governor of Egypt. As governor, Yosef moved the people around so that they themselves were strangers in their new destinations. This way, no Egyptian could say to the Jew, "You do not belong here; you were not born in this place!"

Similarly, by the time the Jewish People had begun their great migration into dispersion in European lands, the momentous migration of nations had already created dramatic population shifts such that those lands were populated with foreigners. In this way, the Jews were no more foreigners than the gentiles.

Exile serves the purpose of ennobling the Jewish People in at least these two ways. First, the stark contrast of a society at sharp odds with our values forces us to develop and nurture our own set of values. Second, although we may wish it were otherwise, suffering and anti-Semitism usher brotherhood and cohesiveness among us.

Both the exile of Yaakov's family to Egypt and the final exile of Yaakov's descendents after the destruction of the Second Temple were caused by jealousy and hatred among Jews. The suffering of oppression, then and now, breeds the sense of equality and brotherhood required to uplift the nation to its former glory.

- Sources: Commentary, Bereishet 45:11

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# MEZUZAH MAVEN

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by Rabbi Ze'ev Kraines

## Mezuzah on the Right, Chanuka Candle on the Left

One of my most inspirational memories of Chanuka in Jerusalem is witnessing the golden glow of candle light pouring onto the street, emanating from the doorways of apartment blocks in every neighborhood. My heart would overflow with childhood memories of the pride and wonder I felt as my parents steadied my hand while I lit the multi-colored candles of my very own menorah.

Jerusalem is fairly unique in preserving the original Talmudic custom of lighting at the doorway or gateway leading to the street. As Rambam records:

*Accordingly, the Sages of that generation (i.e. the Chanuka miracle) ordained that these eight days... be days of happiness and praise (of G-d). Candles should be lit in the evening at the entrance to the houses on each and every one of these eight nights to publicize and reveal the miracle.*

For centuries, wary of anti-Semitic incidents, Diaspora Jewry has kindled their candles indoors – some at their inner doorways, some at their windows and some on a table. As the Talmud states, at a time of danger it is acceptable to light on one's table.

What does this have to do with mezuzah? The Talmud states that one should place the mezuzah on the right of the doorway and the menorah on the left. This is a practical instruction but also highly symbolic. Rabbi Yehudah Aryeh Leib Alter (1847-1905), in his classic work *Sefas Emes*, explains that the mezuzah trumpets G-d's open miracles that we experienced at the Exodus from Egypt, which came from His "right hand". As the verse states in

the Song of the Sea, "Your right hand, G-d, is mighty in strength."

In contrast, the miracles of Chanuka were "hidden" miracles: the victory of the Maccabees against an overwhelmingly mighty enemy, though surely miraculous, could be explained away by the skeptic as the Greek Empire's own "Vietnam" lesson, that it is difficult to quell an indigenous uprising. And the miracle of the Temple menorah burning for eight days from a single flask of oil took place in the hidden inner sanctuary of the Beit Hamikdash. Thus, he explains, Chanuka's hidden miracles can be described as coming from the Divine "left" hand. (To be politically correct towards my "lefty" brethren, the "left" hand refers to the weaker hand in Midrashic concept.)

Indeed, the miracles of Chanuka happened at a time of "hiddenness," when Israel was under the heel of foreign powers, and we were not worthy of the open Divine intervention of G-d's "right" hand. And yet, therein lies the comfort and encouragement of the Chanuka candles. As we watch them piercing the darkness at the left of our doorways, we must realize that behind the scenes G-d's hidden "left" hand is orchestrating events even now, just as "in those days, at this time."

And as we turn our heads to the mezuzah at the right of the doorway, we must "rekindle" our steadfast belief that G-d soon will be showing us open miracles from his "right" hand once again, even greater than the splitting of the sea.

- Sources: *Shabbat 22a; Rambam, Hilchot Purim and Chanuka 3:3; Sefas Emes, Bereishet, Chanuka*

Got a mezuzah question or story? Email [rabbi@ohrsandton.com](mailto:rabbi@ohrsandton.com) or submit on my website [mymezuzahstory.com](http://mymezuzahstory.com). Free "Mezuzah Maven" book for every question or story submitted (when published in the near future!)

## J101 Program at Ohr Somayach Jerusalem, 2018

Austin Olzeski, Age: 22, Independence, Kentucky, Regent University, Virginia Beach, VA  
BA in Political Science, 2016, Robertson School of Government,  
Masters Degree in Geopolitics of the Middle East and Islamic Political Philosophy (*pending*)

They say that truth is stranger than fiction. That might be true. I like to say that *Hashgacha Pratis* (Divine Providence) is stranger than fiction. That is certainly true in the case of Austin.

Austin was born to a Jewish mother and Catholic father in Columbus, Ohio, his father's native state. His mother, the daughter of Austrian Jews who were on one of the last boats that took Jews out of Europe before WWII, was born in Brooklyn, but moved to Jacksonville, Florida with her mother as a very small girl. Her mother, Austin's grandmother, was not involved with the tiny Jewish community there and had very little contact with her family in Brooklyn. Austin's mother moved to Ohio and married his father, a Navy veteran and an insurance agent. She never mentioned to Austin and his siblings the fact that she was born to a Jewish family.

Shortly after Austin was born the family moved to Independence, a small town in northern Kentucky, where his father ran an insurance agency and later started his own health care insurance company. Independence, as is true with many small towns in the South and Appalachia, is a stronghold of the Pentecostal Church, one of larger groups in Evangelical Christianity. There are different types of Pentecostal Churches. The extreme ones are the poisonous "snake handlers". Among the more moderate Pentecostal Churches, like the one that Austin and his family belonged to, belief manifests itself by "speaking in tongues," "laying hands on the sick" and "casting out devils."

When they "speak in tongues", the worshiper falls to the ground in a kind of fit and babbles unintelligible words or syllables (glossolalia), which are then "translated" or "interpreted" by the pastor. The pastor himself can be seized

by "the spirit" and babble away, and, then, coming back to his senses will explain his "prophetic experience".



Austin went to a Pentecostal school where "speaking in tongues" was also a common occurrence. In the middle of a math or English class, the teacher would fall down on the ground and babble incoherently, and then after a few minutes would come back to his senses and accuse this boy or that of certain sinful behavior that had been "revealed" to him. Boys would also fall to the ground and speak in tongues and the teacher would translate their words.

When Austin was eight he first met his mother's aunt at his sister's wedding in Columbus. His great-aunt, a European-born religious Jew, lived in Brooklyn, NY. She revealed to Austin that he was Jewish. It made such an impression on him that to this day he remembers her very next words: "Every year at the Passover Seder we say 'Next Year in Jerusalem'. That (hope) is what got our family out of Czarist Russia to Poland, and, after pogroms in Poland, to Austria, and then to America. This is your community. You can accept it or not, but you should know that this is your community."

Thereafter, because of those words, knowing that he was different, he never again felt comfortable in the Pentecostal Church or in his Pentecostal school. Anti-Semitism is also rampant in the small town of Austin's youth. Most everyone there believes that a "Deep State" is running the country and that its manipulators are the Jews. He kept his Jewishness a secret.

After graduation from high school Austin was eager to leave Kentucky. He was the only student in his high school class to do so. He went to Regent University in Virginia Beach,

Virginia. Regent is a Christian school. Pat Robertson, the famous Christian Evangelist is its founder and chancellor. It had some major advantages for Austin. It was a Christian school, and so his family couldn't object to him going there. It was out of state, and so he had freedom from the small town "claustrophobia" he had felt. It wasn't Pentecostal, but followed a more moderate and inclusive Protestant doctrine. He had received AP credits in high school that were accepted at Regent, and it was near a Jewish community. Austin was planning to unearth the meaning of his heritage.

When he was 19 Austin had his first exposure to Judaism at a Chabad House in nearby Norfolk, Virginia. He kept going back and became a regular there. He was also active politically. As a senior in college he was the State Chair of the Virginia Faith and Freedom Coalition – a PAC promoting concern about religious liberty being encroached upon by the Federal Government. In that capacity he was selected to drive the Republican Presidential nominee, Donald J. Trump, around the campus, where he made a major campaign address right before the 2016 election. Austin graduated college in 2016 and was accepted to the

Robertson School of Government at Regent University, where he finished a year of study towards a Master's degree in Geopolitics of the Middle East and Islamic Political Philosophy.

Earlier this year his rabbi suggested that Austin come to Israel on an OU Birthright trip. He didn't need much convincing. He came in May and was very moved. He then signed up for Ohr Somayach's JInternship Program, which he participated in this past summer. Afterwards, Austin was accepted into the J101 Program, a ten-month commitment of full time learning at Ohr Somayach, which began with the Elul term. He hopes to make *aliyah* and eventually complete his master's degree at an Israeli university. As to Austin's experience so far at Ohr Somayach he says, "The classes are great, it's everything I could wish for."

"I love Israel," Austin says. "It's home". Being in front of the Western Wall he felt the awesome responsibility he has as the last Jewish male in his line (as of now), and for fulfilling the hope and prayer of his mother's family of "Next Year in Jerusalem".

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## SEASONS – THEN AND NOW

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*Special Feature for 10<sup>th</sup> Tevet*  
by Rabbi Chaviv Danesh

### Ideas Behind Fast days

**T**he Mishna says that on fast days an elderly, learned man would announce: *My brothers! Regarding the people of Ninveh, it does not say "And G-d saw their sackcloth and their fasts." Rather it says "And G-d saw their deeds, that they returned from their bad ways" (Yonah 3:10), and in the Nevi'im it says "Rip your hearts and not your clothing [and return to G-d]" (Yoel 2:13; see Ta'anit 15a).*

The point of this was to make it clear to the people that G-d is not primarily concerned with their external fasts, but instead with the *teshuva* (repentance) that accompanies them (see Meiri). In this light, the fast is only meant to be an intermediary that helps one achieve *teshuva*.

Similarly, the Rambam writes regarding those fast days that were instituted to commemorate days when tragedies occurred:

*We fast on days of calamities because it arouses our hearts and opens paths to repentance for us. It serves as a reminder of our wicked ways, and that of our ancestors which resemble our present ways, and which thereby brought these calamities upon them and upon us; so that through remembering these things we will return and [fix our ways], as it says, "They will confess their sins and their fathers' sins." (Hilchot Ta'anit 5:1)*

## Day of Reflection

Since fasting is only a preparation for *teshuva*, the commentaries point out that those who spend the day fasting while involving themselves with idle activities have grabbed onto the secondary point of fasting and missed the main and essential part. Fast days are meant to be days of reflection and *teshuva* – and not days when one tries to busy himself with activities to distract himself from fasting (see Mishna Berurah 549:1 in the name of the Chayei Adam).

On fast days one should try to fulfill the three prerequisites of *teshuva*, namely: 1. Verbally confessing one's sins, 2. Regretting ones sins, and 3. Accepting upon oneself not to

repeat them, by coming up with a plan to prevent going back to his old ways. As an aid to accomplish this, the Pele Yoetz says that it is a good idea to occupy oneself with books that bring one to *teshuva* on this day. Based on this idea, Rav Sternbuch says that is important to remember that even those who are exempt from fasting for medical and other reasons are still obligated in the *purpose* of the fast, which is to do *teshuva* (Teshuvot V'Hanhagot vol. 3, 154).

## Teshuva through Fasting

We mentioned above that the point of fasting is to help one do *teshuva*. How does fasting contribute to *teshuva*? There are many verses that point out how satiation leads to overconfidence and independence, which in turn makes it more likely for a person to transgress. As the Torah says: "The people sat to eat and drink, and they got up to revel" (Shemot 32:6), and "Yeshurun (another name for the Jewish People) got fat and kicked (sinned)" (Devarim 32:15). By fasting, a person feels how low he is – that not eating for merely a day weakens him, and thus causes him to humble himself. This character trait of being humble, in turn, helps him stay away from sinning (Reishit Chochma, Shaar HaTeshuvah, perek 4; Tziporen Shamir of the Chida; Pele Yoetz).

Another way that fasting contributes to *teshuva* is by its resemblance to sacrificing a *korban*. Many sins require bringing a *korban* for complete *teshuva*. The Gemara says that just like the fats of the *korbanot* were consumed in the fire after they were slaughtered, so too when a person fasts his body burns fat to make up for the lack of nutrients he is ingesting. G-d considers this as if the person brought a *korban* (Berachot 17a). Based on this idea some have the

custom to learn about *korbanot* on fast days, as it says in Hoeshea 14:3, "Let our lips (our recitation of the verses having to do with *korbanot*) take the place of the bull [offerings]." Here, too, the commentaries point out the importance of *teshuva*, because otherwise, it says in Mishlei 21:27: "The offering of the wicked is an abomination" (see Tziporen Shamir of the Chida and Pele Yoetz "Taanit").

Another way that fasting contributes to *teshuva* is understood based on the Gemara that in order to receive full atonement for some sins, in addition to *teshuva*, one is also required to go through some suffering (Yoma 86a). The distress that one feels on a fast day can help fulfill this requirement and thereby lead to receiving full atonement (see Reishit Chochma, Shaar HaTeshuva, perek 4).

## Getting Angry

The commentaries point out that one must be especially careful not to become angry on these days since one is easily angered when he is hungry. The severity of getting angry, which *Chazal* say is in a way comparable to the sin of worshipping idols, can then outweigh the benefits of fasting (Sefer Hayashar, Sefer Chasidim 617, Reishit Chochma Shaar Hateshuva 4, Pele Yoetz "Taanit").

## Giving Tzedaka

The Gemara says: Mar Zutra says the [main] reward of a fast

is the *tzedaka* that one gives on that day (Berachot 6b). The Maharsha explains this to mean that one should give away the money he saved from refraining from eating and drinking, so that he will not have personal gain even from the money he saved from not eating on that day. According to this, one should give to *tzedaka* at least the price of his daily meals. The Ketav Sofer adds that a person who fasts begins to personally experience hunger and therefore gives *tzedaka* to help the poor, who don't have enough money for food, from also going through this feeling. It is worth adding that, in general, giving *tzedaka* also helps one receive atonement on a fast day, since, where the theme is *teshuva* and atonement, it is proper to give *tzedaka*.

May we all merit making the most of fast days, and thereby merit seeing the day when they will turn to days of rejoicing with the coming of Mashiach speedily in our days.

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# BUSINESS ETHICS

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by Rabbi Ari Wasserman

## Getting Paid for Downtime

### QUESTION

I work for a small Jewish company. Right now my boss is out of town for a week. He just married off his daughter and is staying away through the *Sheva Berachot*.

Meanwhile, many company projects are on hold. I have finished all the tasks previously assigned to me and have asked the VP for new work. But he has none for me. So, I have nothing to do – literally, zero.

According to halachah is there an issue with the money I am being paid for sitting at my desk and not working?

### HALACHIC BACKGROUND

Our Sages teach that an employee who receives work from an employer must carry out the job in keeping with the wishes of the employer. If he fails to do so, he falls in the category of “cursed is the one who does G-d’s work dishonestly.” (*Yirmiyahu 48:10*)

Furthermore, the worker is obliged to be working for the employer’s maximum benefit – not with an eye to his own interests. The Meiri cites the case of a tailor cutting out fabric for a garment, and states that the tailor should be focused on producing the best possible product for the client, not on how to leave the largest possible fabric remnants for his own use.

The Meiri stresses that, above all, a worker must be honest and trustworthy: “All a person has is the good name which he earns through his actions. His deeds testify about him in this world and judge him in the World to Come.” (*Meiri to Bava Kama 119b*)

### RESPONSE

You are to be commended for asking this question. You obviously have your employer’s interests at heart and are doing your utmost to be an honest employee.

But you have nothing to worry about. You are clearly following your employer’s wishes and not slacking off because you feel like it. In addition to having completed the work assigned to you, you have made it clear to the VP that you are ready, willing and able to take on other work, but it is he who has none for you. So, there is no issue regarding your accepting your salary.

There are times when companies face downtime, but it is obviously not to their benefit to dismiss employees when there is no work (unless the employees are specifically hired for seasonal labor). Therefore, most companies factor downtime into the cost of doing business.

As long as you are doing what they request (and right now they simply don’t have any requests), you are totally fine in getting paid.

And since you have “zero” to do, I suggest that you use this free time to study the “*halachot* of the workplace,” which will only serve to make you an even bigger asset to your employer.

*L’iluy nishmas Yehudah ben Shmuel HaKohen Breslauer*

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