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SEFER BEREISHIS - THE CHOPP HOLDINGS EDITION

IN HONOR OF OUR DEAR FRIENDS YONI & ROCHELA NEVENANSKY

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Now, you understand right away that something like this, that an *eved* from *Canaan* should somehow become the leader of a nation like *Egypt*, is unimaginable. Even if someone would have told us that *Yosef* was brought out of prison to become the stable boy for Pharaoh we would have said it's impossible. But that he should be appointed vice-regent?! It's even beyond impossible!

A Great American Leader

Suppose that you read somewhere that *Rav Moshe Feinstein* was invited to an emergency meeting in the Oval Office to meet with President *Reagan*. And the President tells him, "Rabbi, I need someone to handle the affairs of this nation. There are a lot of problems today; recession, crime, other things, and I'm too busy. I have to take care of my ranch and I like to go bowling too. I've heard from my people that you're the one for the job. See, I have placed you in charge of all the land of America. Please take over."

The truth is that there would be nothing better for our country. If President *Reagan* would hire *Rav Feinstein*, that would be the most fortunate government; we would be the most fortunate people if we ever had such a thing. And yet, you understand how probable that is. That such a thing should happen would be nothing short of a miracle.

And therefore when it happened to *Yosef*, you understand that although it seems to have happened by visible cause and effect – he made a friend in prison, and then this friend was in the right place at the right time and he remembered *Yosef's* power of interpreting dreams, and so that's how it came about – that chain of cause and effect was actually much more than coincidences.

The Supreme Leader

Of course, if you want to be a little headed man, so you can use your pin-headed brain and say that it just happened that way; and so as you're watching fifteen horses trotting down *Pennsylvania Avenue* pulling *Rav Moshe Feinstein* in a golden carriage with secret service men running alongside the carriage and everybody's shouting, "Hurray! *Avreich* – Bend your knees to the vice-regent," – that's how it happened to *Yosef* after all – so you can be silly and say, "It's nothing! Sometimes things happen that way."

But here, in this place, we're not interested in having pin-heads! We'll leave that for the gentiles and the Jews who want to think like gentiles. The nations of the world believe that the world is chaos; when they worshipped idols so every phenomenon of nature was under the control of a different deity and there was a constant clash between the various forces. And the

same applies to the academicians, the evolutionists of today. They say everything is a result of various causes, random events. That's why, *l'havdil*, if a professor of history in college writes a textbook, so he looks at the events as disjointed things. He'll tell you that the continuity between events is a result of the forces of chance and nature battling each other. "History is random chaos," he'll tell you.

But *l'havdil elef havdolos* the Torah teaches us there's no such thing as random history because Hakodosh Boruch Hu is the One who makes history. The first principle of Torah is *Hashem melech*, which among other things includes the great principle that whatever takes place in this world is done only by Hashem. Hakodosh Boruch Hu is standing behind the curtain wire-pulling, arranging all the events of the world. And not only is He wire-pulling but He's doing it as *Hashem Echad*. It means that not only is He making all of history but it's being done with one plan. Hashem Echad means that there's one plan and One Planmaker pulling the strings. And He's doing it with a perfect *chochma* too, with schemes that are planned to perfection.

"And" Everywhere

And so we understand that this queer phenomenon of Yosef being appointed to such a high position in the government of a world superpower was the result of great plans. It didn't just *happen* at the beginning of our *parsha*. The surprise of *Va'yehi mikeitz* was the climax of many years of preparation.

We note that our *parsha* begins with a *vuv*. It doesn't say, **וַיְהִי מִקֵּץ שְׁנַיִם** – *It was at the end of two years*, but, **וַיְהִי מִקֵּץ שְׁנַיִם** with a 'vuv': "‘And’ it was at the end of two years." The truth is that this is a unique characteristic of the *kisvei hakodesh* in general – almost every story, every narrative after *Bereishis bara Elokim* begins with a 'vuv', with the conjunction 'and.' Everything is "And this happened," "And that happened."

Even the beginning of our *kisvei hakodesh*, the opening of our *sedorim* and *seforim*, begin with *vavs*. 'Veleh shmos b'nei Yisroel, 'Va'yikra Hashem el Moshe. *Bamidbar* starts 'Va'yidabeir. *Sefer Yehoshua* begins with a *vuv*. *Sefer Shoftim* starts 'Va'yehi bime' shfot hashoftim. And *Shmuel Aleph* and *Shmuel Bais* and *Melachim*. On and on it's all *vavs*.

Now, that's something that needs explanation. Because when we tell a story we say, "Once upon a time" – we don't say, "And once upon a time." So what is this anomaly that in the Torah everything is "and," "and," and "and"?

The Meaning of “And”

We must understand that the *vuv* serves a very important purpose; in that one letter lies the great lesson of *emunah*: that nothing in history is disconnected. That's what a *vuv* is, it's a link in the chain. *Vuv* means “and”; “this ‘and’ that” means that ‘this’ is *connected* to ‘that’. The *vuvei ha’amudim* were connectors; a *vuv* connects like a link in a chain. That's why there's always a ‘*vuv*’ in Torah literature.

Whatever happens in this world is part of the great plan of Hakodosh Boruch Hu. All the happenings of history follow a sequence and therefore all of the events from the beginning until the end of time are purposeful and are in harmony with each other. Everything that took place in the past was a preparation for that which will happen in the future and whatever happens in the future is connected to whatever happened in the past. The story of Yosef was the result of a long chain of history, such a thing, for Yosef to rise to power, was years in the making.

Behind The Curtain

Of course Hakodosh Boruch Hu could have snapped His fingers *k'viyachol* and said “Yosef, you just walk out of the prison, right past the guards – they won't see you – and walk into the palace.” If Hashem wanted, Yosef could have just pushed Pharaoh off his throne and sat in his place and finished.

But Hakodosh Boruch Hu doesn't do things that way – He does things in natural ways, with cunning. He's standing behind the curtain manipulating everything in complicated ways, with quirks and tricks and surprises.

Now, there's a reason for that. There's a reason Hakodosh Boruch Hu does everything in such a roundabout way. It's not like someone who wants to scratch his right ear, so he takes his left hand all the way around. No, Hakodosh Boruch Hu has a good reason for doing everything in roundabout ways. *Yosheiv b'seiser Elyon*, Hashem keeps himself hidden for a reason.

Hakodosh Boruch Hu is constantly testing us. He's doing things in a complicated way with concealed manipulation because He wants us to study what happens in the world and to discover His hidden hand behind everything. That's one of the tests of living in this world. Are we going to use our mind's eye to add the *vuv*s? What is the connection between this event and the one that preceded it? What's the connection between this event and the one that follows it?

Studying the Complexities

That's our job in life. You have to be a *doresh*; you have to think into it. That's why Hakodosh Boruch Hu made everything seem natural with a

cause and another cause, one leading to another – so that effort would be required to see the *yad Hashem*, and yet, if the effort is expended, you'll be able to connect the dots. If we'll use our eyes and discover the hand of Hashem in our history – like we're going to do tonight to some extent – then we get reward for that.

It says *הוֹרִיעוּ בְּעַמִּים עַל־לִוְתָיו* – *Make known among the nations His deeds*. It doesn't say “Make known among the nations His *ma'asuv*, His actions.” No; *ma'asuv* is too simple. *Alilosuv* means “His cunning plans, His tricks.” Hakodosh Boruch Hu is doing things with cunning and surprises; with interlinking chains of events, and we're expected to get busy studying this complexity in order to discover the *Hashem Echad* standing behind the scenes pulling the wires. That's one of the important successes of man in this world.

Yosef Knew

Now, we should think for a moment what was going through Yosef's mind as he was riding the King's chariot through the streets of Mitzrayim: I wouldn't deem to tell you that I know exactly what he was thinking but there's no question that among other things it was this: “What is this all about? How did I get here?”

Yosef Hatzaddik knew the answer; we see it from his own words: *לֹא הֵנָּה אָתֶם שְׁלַחְתֶּם אֹתִי הֵנָּה לְהַחֲיוֹת לָכֶם* – “You didn't send me to Mitzrayim,” he told his brothers, “It wasn't you. It was Hakodosh Boruch Hu who sent me here, *לְפָלִיטָה גְּדוֹלָה* – in order that our family should survive for a great future” (Vayigash 45:7-8).

Now Yosef didn't merely say this to soothe his brothers so that they shouldn't feel distressed at what they had done, like somebody who in his kindness thinks up some explanation to cover up the misdeeds of his brothers. No! Yosef was saying a Torah truth and he's teaching us a great principle of the *darkei Hashem* in this world. He had made use of the experiences of his life to grow great in the attitude of understanding the interlocking chains of Hashem's history.

Part II. Seeing the Connections

Rescuing Rochel

Now you have to know that *Va'yehi mikeitz* – the dream of the *sar hamashkim* and its connection to Pharaoh's dream and how it led to Yosef in the palace – was not the first *vuv* in Yosef's life. How did the chain start? The *vuv*s began even before Yosef was born. *וַיִּשְׁטֶם עֲשׂוֹ אֶת יַעֲקֹב* – ‘And’

Eisav hated Yaakov.” Ooh wah was that an important link! It was like pressing a button that began the process of Yosef being *moshel b'chol erez Mitzrayim*! Because Yaakov was no longer safe at home he had to run away to Padan Aram – that was one of the most important *vuv*s in the story.

Pay attention to what would have been if Eisav wouldn't have been an angry fellow and Yaakov would have remained in Canaan. He would have remained home and the whole story would have been different. His father Yitzchok would have sent a *shaliach* to bring Yaakov a wife just like his father Avraham had sent Eliezer to bring back a wife for him. The messenger would have come to Padan Aram with camels and gifts and Lavan would have given him his oldest daughter, Leah, and finished. The whole story with Rochel Imeinu wouldn't have happened! She would have been a wallflower in Padan Aram and we would have never heard her name.

But Hakodosh Boruch Hu wanted Yaakov to marry Rochel, so He sent him to Padan Aram. And when he arrived in Padan Aram, what happened? Another *vuv*, “*vayisa einav*” and he encountered Rochel at the well. Hakodosh Boruch Hu was pressing! Hakodosh Boruch Hu was saying, “Leah is not enough! You must marry Rochel! Because from this girl, there's going to be a little boy who one day will be the *moishel b'chol Eretz Mitzrayim*.”

Yosef's Leadership

Why did we need a Yosef ruling in Mitzrayim? Because without that we wouldn't be here today. Our nation would never have been *zocheh* to *matan Torah* if not for that. It was in Mitzrayim, under the leadership of the *mishneh l'melech* Yosef, that we became a nation prepared to receive the Torah.

What did Pharaoh do in our parsha? He made Yosef a dictator! Pay attention to what Pharaoh said. “בְּלִעְרִיהָ לֹא יָרִים אִישׁ אֶת יָדוֹ וְאֶת רַגְלוֹ בְּכָל אֶרֶץ” – Without your permission,” he said to Yosef, “Nobody in my whole country can lift up his hand or his foot!” (Mikeitz 41:44) That's an extremely important *posuk*. It's a pity we learn *chumash* and don't pay attention to what it says there. It means that for eighty years Yosef ruled over Mitzrayim with an iron fist! From age thirty to one hundred and ten! Eighty years! There was no Jewish *melech* who was as long in office as Yosef. And he had such power that nobody could open his mouth against him! Because Pharaoh said, “Open your mouth against Yosef, and I'll take care of you.”

And so Yosef HaTzaddik, the one whose motto was “*es ha'elokim ani yarei* – I fear only Hashem”, became the leader of the Bnei Yisroel and he

prepared the Am Yisroel for *kabolas haTorah*. By living under Yosef they were prepared to live under the Torah that Hashem gave later. That's the real truth. The story of Yosef is the foundation for *kabolas haTorah*.

He kept a strict eye on them. They were so much afraid of him that every smallest thing that they did was only according to Yosef's wishes. He didn't let them assimilate and he caused them to walk in the right path. His watchful eye trained the people to be *medakdek*, to be careful in the *kutzo shel yud*, in the smallest thing because they knew he would react. He wouldn't tolerate any deviation from what's right. And that's how the family became prepared with the true *middos* of Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov. And therefore now the way was open for the rest of the history of our nation. It was only because Yosef became the *mishneh lamelech* that our people became who we are today.

Born Late

But until Yosef became king there were countless steps! His mother waited many years for him to be born. Yosef was born almost at the last of all the brothers and that was a most important link in the chain leading up to Matan Torah. Hashem was turning the wheels of history then.

If Yosef had been the first one, let's say, if Rochel had given birth before anybody else, so the brothers, when they saw that their father gave Yosef a *ksones pasim*, a special striped expensive garment, they wouldn't be jealous of him. He's the *bechor*, one of the oldest brothers at least. In those days people respected their older brother or their older brothers.

But because he was the youngest, that's the reason it aroused a storm of indignation when their father gave him an especial sign of recognition. The youngest should be made the chief? All the brothers said, "What's taking place here? We are all good boys. Why is he the one that's getting such attention?"

And therefore we understand that the fact that Yosef was born almost the last one was a necessary link in his history. Otherwise nothing would have happened. You can't sell your oldest brother. He would sell them!

Early Death

Another *vuv* was when Rochel passed away, '*va'tamas Rochel*. It's a remarkable thing that Rochel died young; she was a young woman when she passed away. Now, Chazal tell us reasons why it happened but I'll tell you something else too. If Rochel had lived, her Yosef would never have been sold into slavery. Rochel was a wise woman and she knew that the brothers were incensed against Yosef and she would have kept her eye on

him. If Rochel had been around she wouldn't allow Yosef to go look for his brothers near Shechem.

She wouldn't have let him out of her sight and nothing would ever have happened; Yosef would have never been sold. And therefore another *vuv* – Hakodosh Boruch Hu pulled her out of the way.

The Trip to Shechem

Even when he was sent out to Shechem things happened. Do you remember when he was looking for his brothers in Shechem and he couldn't find them? He should have come right back home. "Father, I can't find them."

But there happened to be a man wandering around and this man had information. 'Va'yimtza'eihu ish – 'and' a man found him and the man said, "You can find them over there in Dosan." It's a remarkable story. That man, like an angel, just happened to be there. Another *vuv*!

If that man wasn't around, what could Yosef do? He couldn't find his brothers. He comes home and the whole story is finished. But a man found him and the man gave him information and he went and found his brothers and that's how the whole story was moved along. And so, he landed up in Mitzrayim.

And even if he's going to be sold, why should he end up in Mitzrayim of all places? Caravans go in all directions. He could have been sold to a caravan going to Arabia and gone lost. But because of Hashem's wire-pulling from behind the scenes Yosef was sold to a caravan that went to Mitzrayim. It's a remarkable thing – just the right caravan came along at just the right time.

The Right Caravan

It states that the company of gentiles that took him to Mitzrayim was carrying with them **בְּבִאֵת וּצְרִי וְלֵט** – various kinds of spices. The Torah insists on telling us that this company was transporting fragrant spices. Now why did the Torah tell us what kind of merchandise they were carrying? We're interested only in knowing that they brought Yosef to Mitzrayim to sell him as a slave.

But even the details of the caravan were links in the chain. Yosef was sitting among the merchandise and on all sides there were sacks of various *besamim* and they all smelled good. It took a long time that trip and so Yosef, when he arrived in Mitzrayim, was saturated with the sweet fragrance of spices.

Those spices were intended to grab the attention of a certain person. Because now he's put up for sale in the slave market and along comes a man Potiphar and he takes a sniff – he's favorably impressed; a sweet smelling boy, good looking too and so he says, "I'll buy him." Yosef could have been purchased by almost anybody, but it just 'happened' that a man named Potiphar bought him.

The Right Owner

Why didn't somebody else buy him? Why did Hashem want Potiphar to buy him? And the answer is that there was a very important reason. It was because Potiphar had a wife who was a mischievous woman, a woman with a roving eye.

Ah! Now we know why Yosef was sold to Potiphar. Potiphar's wife is a necessary link in the entire story. The wife of Potiphar was a *vuv*, another link in the history of Yosef. Without *eishes* Potiphar, Yosef would have gone lost.

Suppose she minded her own business and she didn't put her eyes on Yosef, nothing would have happened. He would have been nice and quiet, a slave in Potiphar's house for the rest of his life. But "*Vayehi achar hadevarim haeilu*, 'and' after these things the wife of his master lifted up her eyes to Yosef," and the trouble began.

Don't think it was just a case of one silly woman, a wicked woman, who persecuted him and therefore he was thrown into prison. No! Hakadosh Baruch Hu wanted him to go there. And we know what happened and now Yosef finally ends up in a dungeon, in the *beis ha'asirim*.

The Right Prison

Now you have to understand that the future of Yosef depended on what kind of a prison he would end up in. Had he been put in an ordinary prison, the story would have been finished. He would remain there.

But Potiphar put him in the place of *asirei hamelech*. The king's prison. It's a very serious offense trying to start up with the wife of one of the king's officials. If Yosef had been somebody else's slave, he would be put in a little jail someplace but he was put in a prison of important people because he was a slave of Potiphar.

And so *hiktzif Hashem adonim al avadav* – Hashem made the masters angry at their slaves (Megillah 13a). "*Pharaoh katzaf al avadav*, Pharaoh got angry at his servants." If Pharaoh hadn't gotten angry the entire chain would have come to a dead end.

The Right Mood

Let's say the *sar hamashkim* when he was bringing in the wine to Pharaoh on the tray – he was trained for that; he knew every step – but this time something happened and he tripped and a little bit of the wine spilled on Pharaoh's expensive robe.

Now Pharaoh could have remained calm; why not? He could afford the cleaning bill. He didn't have to get angry. But Hashem had plans and therefore He made the master get angry at his servant; Pharaoh flew into a rage and said, "Put these men in prison."

What happened? Where did Pharaoh put them? Not in an ordinary prison. He put these two officers also in the place where *asirei hamelech*, the king's prisoners were jailed – exactly where Yosef was waiting for them. If it hadn't happened that Pharaoh got angry, Yosef would have rotted away in prison.

The Long Chain

But of course, even that was only one *vuv*, one link in the great chain. Suppose the *sar hamashkim* wouldn't have had his dream. Then Yosef would have remained in prison for who knows how long. But the *sar hamashkim* had a dream and Yosef happened to be in the same prison and he interpreted the dream. And when the *sar hamashkim* was freed, and one night Pharaoh had a dream too, so the *sar hamashkim* reminded himself – Hakodosh Boruch Hu reminded him – and suddenly, they came running into the prison, put clean garments on Yosef, gave him a haircut and a bath and suddenly *vaya'amod lifnei Pharaoh*, now Yosef is standing before Pharaoh.

That's how our *parsha* begins. *Va'yehi mikeitz* – the *vuv* in the beginning of our *parsha* is only one small link in the long chain of Yosef's history. And when Yosef was being pulled on the chariot through the streets of Egypt it was the result of a long chain of wondrous events! And Yosef recognized that! That was the greatness of the moment – not to be *mishneh l'melech*, but to retrace the *vavs* and see how it happened.

"Ohh," thought Yosef as the Egyptians crowded the street to pay homage to the new vice-regent, "now I have the answer. The mystery of all those bumps in the road, all of those seemingly chaotic events – my dreams and my brothers and Potiphar and his wife and the *Sar Hamashkim*, many other things too – all of it is now explained! Everything was Hashem *Echad!*"

Part III. Connections In Our Lives

History Continues

So you'll say "Well, very nice. Yosef Hatzadik! But what's it got to do with us?" The answer is that it has *everything* to do with you! Because the Torah tells us this story of Yosef as an example, as a model for understanding the ways of Hashem in this world; it's meant to remind us of how we should study our own lives with the knowledge that Hashem's chain of history is always operating.

The *vu vachibur* that connects the beginning of history down till today is still working. Hakodosh Boruch Hu is always behind the scenes manipulating. Even the seemingly random events of our lives are connected one to another and have meaning.

מֵהָשֵׁם מְצַעְרֵי גְבֵר בּוֹנֵנוּ – *From Hashem, a man's footsteps are established* (Mishlei 20:24). Hakodosh Boruch Hu is the One who directs your footsteps. Nothing happens in this life unless it's part of the plan of Hakodosh Boruch Hu. Again, *From Hashem a man's footsteps are established, וְאָרָם מֶה יִבִּין דְּרָכּוֹ* – *and a man, how can he understand his path in life?* He thinks he knows because he doesn't take the time to study his life. Nobody can understand his path in life without study because Hakodosh Boruch Hu is manipulating everything with His endless wisdom.

Placed in His Office

Here's a man sitting in a plush office; he comes in the morning and a whole group of secretaries come in loaded down with mail. And the mail has been neatly slit open for him. He sits down and puts his feet up on the table and pulls out from the envelope a big fat check – each envelope is dividends, and big orders, and rental income. Ah! He's a happy man – he's on top of the world.

That man has to remember who established his footsteps. He didn't get there just like that. There were reasons and only a fool thinks that the reasons had anything to do with him. *הָחָם בְּעֵינָיו אִישׁ עָשִׂיר* – *A rich man is wise in his own eyes* (Mishlei 28:11). He knows the reasons why he got there. He knows! "I made this deal and that deal." *A nechtigeh tug!* He doesn't even begin to know! There are people with better heads than him who made better deals. And they're standing now in the Bowery waiting for the free soup kitchen to open up so that they can get breakfast. All Hakodosh Boruch Hu needs is to send one little stroke to this man who thinks he's so smart and now he's standing and his hands shaking; he's shaking with palsy and he's standing in line for a plate of free food.

The Making Of A Gadol

Every man and woman in this world – no matter who you are – must understand that there were hundreds, thousands, of *vavs* in your life that brought you to where you are. If you start looking into the histories of even the *gedolim* up till today – you think the *gedolim* were all born into families where the mothers wore long beards? You would be surprised where they came from! There were many *vavs* that brought them to where they are today.

But it's not only in the lives of some people – a Yosef Hatzadik, a rich man in his office, the *gedolei hatorah* – where everything is done with the utmost profundity; with scheming behind scheming. The history of Yosef serves as a model for *every person's life*. Hakodosh Boruch Hu is *yosheiv b'seiser*, He's sitting in secrecy and He's manipulating all of the affairs of our lives and we're expected to look back and see how one thing is connected with the previous, all the way back to the beginning.

The truth is right now you should look back on your lives and see what happened to you. Hakodosh Boruch Hu did things in your past only that you don't study it. Did you ever take even five minutes to look back on your life and see how Hakodosh Boruch Hu connected the events in your life and brought you to where you are now? You're fifty years old now – did you give even five minutes, even two minutes, for fifty years?! If you did you would see the *yad Hashem* in complicated ways.

The Mitzvah of Remembering

It's a mitzvah too! Rabbeinu Yonah says that. When he describes for us the importance of *mitzvos aseï* he brings an example: זְכוֹרֶת אֶת כָּל הַדֶּרֶךְ – *You should remember the entire journey*. And he calls it a *mitzvah aseï* of the highest degree. No *mitzvah* is small, but among all these great commandments of Hashem, he considers “remembering your journey through life” one of the most important. And to back it up he quotes a *possuk* from Tehillim (107:42): וַיִּתְבוּנְנוּ חֲסִדֵי ה' – *Let them meditate on all the kindnesses of Hashem*. And so we see that it's considered an obligation to look back.

I'll tell you a little story about myself. I was thrown out of the Hebrew school – when I was a little boy I was sent to the Hebrew school, the old time Talmud Torah, and something happened that I was thrown out. All the other boys in the Hebrew school were good boys; they weren't thrown out and all of them graduated at *bar mitzvah* and they succeeded in becoming nothings. Nothing came of them. But because I had some trouble I was thrown out and I had to look for another place. I found a

private Rebbi who wanted to teach me and he made a *mentch* out of me. And finally he sent me to a real *yeshiva*. I look back now and I understand that it was a *vuv* in my life - it was the hand of Hashem that was sending me on to a career of Torah.

Job Seeking

But to study one *vuv* is only scratching the surface of your life. When I was fourteen I wanted to apply for a job in a factory. There was very little money at home and I thought I'd help. So when I saw an ad, "Boys Wanted," I went downtown to the factory to take a job. And as I turned the corner I saw the man come out of the factory, take the "Help Wanted" sign off the door and take it inside. He had hired his last boy just before I came! I wouldn't be sitting here tonight if I had gained that job.

When I was twenty one, I thought, "I'm not a public speaker. I'm a bashful boy; I'm not the type to talk to people in public. I won't be able to get a *rabbanus*. What should I do?" I decided I'll try to become a public school teacher. *An einfal!* I'll teach in the public school. So I went to the Board of Education and I applied. The man sitting at the desk said, "What are you doing now?" I said, "I'm a rabbinical student." He said "Go back to your business; go back." A *goy* told me to go back. I listened to him. *A malach min hashamayim*.

Losing The Job

When I was twenty-four, I was already going out in the world; in those days you were a finished man at twenty four and I wanted to find a job teaching in a *yeshiva*. Now, I had a *rebbe* when I was a young boy and I was his favorite *talmid* and this *rebbe* had now become the head of all the *talmud torahs*. I knew that if I would go to him he'd give me a job for sure.

I sat in the waiting room to interview. There was another person who came there for the same job. I knew him from my days in the *yeshiva*. This person never learned. He played ball at the time. I learned *Tanach* while he played ball. I knew *Tanach* well when I was a boy. I knew *lashon hakodesh* well. This boy didn't know anything. He was a ball player.

He got the job, not I. It was beyond my comprehension! But *boruch Hashem* because of that I went to Slabodka! I look back and I thank Hashem that it turned out that way. *Hakodosh Boruch Hu* rescued me again and again and again. There are more stories, many *vuv*s like that in my life.

What Brings You Here?

And it's by means of these schemes He rescues each one of us. What about you? What happened that you're here tonight? Try to think back

what happened all the way back. Some of you people were in a very alien environment. Or even if you were born in a *frum* family, don't you know how many of your cousins went lost? There are many people sitting here tonight that if they would look back at their history they would see that there were schemes that played out in their lives that saved them. **יפל מצדך אלף וְרַבְבָּה מִמִּצְדְּךָ** – A thousand have fallen on your left side and ten thousand on your right have gone lost. But you persisted.

The fact that you're here tonight instead of being someplace else is due to certain reasons. What's the reason? Things happen in your lives. Don't just say, "Boruch Hashem it worked out," and *pattur* yourself. Oh no! You have to look back step by step and study. Why aren't you in Greenwich village right now? Why aren't you in a basement somewhere in India smoking hashish?

And the answer is that Hakadosh Baruch Hu guided your footsteps. You'll find some little quirk in the history of your life that saved you. And then another one and another one. It's all from Hashem! Hakodosh Boruch Hu has tricks, and we're expected to study them as much as possible.

A Great Study

Of course, no matter how much time you devote to the subject it would be merely scratching the surface. You can't expect to understand it fully with the little brain that you possess in this world – you don't have the capacity to fully understand what's going on.

In case your curiosity is aroused and you'd like to get a peek into the secrets of this great wisdom so just wait until your 120 years are up and in the next world there's going to be a big *peirush*, a commentary that will explain everything. Only that it will be a very complicated commentary. It'll be a Rashi, with *Tosfos*, with Maharsha and Maharam and *achronim* on it; it's extremely complicated. But there you'll be able to understand how the whole plan was concocted by a *Borei Olam* in such beautiful manifestations of infinite wisdom. And yet, however much you'll understand then, that's only a reward; the *avodah*, the success that *brings* you that reward is the study you do in this world.

Your Success Forever

It's an important part of your success in this world. The Torah story of Yosef serves as a model for each man's life history because the destiny of every individual is just as complicated and full of endless wisdom as Yosef's was. The history of your life, if you will take the trouble to review and investigate it, will reward you with a great many explanations and secrets, a great understanding of why things happened in a certain way. If

you would study what happened to you from your earliest days until now you would be amazed at the way things turned out according to a certain scheme.

I know it sounds queer to us - who thinks of such things? But now you're learning that this is a requirement of a servant of Hashem. You have to look back and study the ways of Hashem, the schemes underneath the schemes and more schemes underneath those schemes. Just like everything Hashem created has a *chochma she'ein lo keitz*, all the events of your private life are also endlessly intricate.

And if you use your mind along the model we just learned and you look back and review all the *vuvs* in your life, that's one of your great successes in this world. And then, when the time comes and you put on your head the crown of wisdom to which the righteous merit in the next world, part of your eternal reward and happiness will be understanding all these matters in the deepest manner imaginable.

Have A Wonderful Shabbos

LET'S GET PRACTICAL

"From Hashem, a man's footsteps are established."

Everyone's individual life is filled with various events with which Hashem guided his or her life in a certain direction.

Every day this week I will spend one minute thinking back at my own life and finding one key point where Hashem was directing my destiny, and thanking Hashem for guiding me. Each day I will study a different "step" of my life thereby training myself to see and study the steps of my life.

This week's booklet is based on tapes:

109 - In Exile | **210** - Alone In the World | **533** - Chanuka-12; Hashem Guides History | **633** - Purim 17 | **930** - How We Came To Sinai
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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

שאל אביך ויגדך ויקניך ויאמרו לך

Q:

Why didn't Hashem give the Torah to our Avos, Avraham, Yitzchok and Yaakov, instead of waiting till Har Sinai?

A:

And the answer is that the Torah is the Torah of a people, the Torah of a nation. It's not a Torah of an individual family. Only that this great family of the Avos were the foundation – it was their function in life to prepare themselves to be worthy of being the progenitors of a people that would accept the Torah. That was their function. They didn't live for themselves. Like the Rambam says, the main purpose that the Avos had in mind in building a family was this function, to create a nation of servants of Hashem. Day and night the fathers and the mothers of our nation were thinking one thought, one intention, and that was *להעמיד אומה עובדת את השם* – *to raise up a nation that would serve Hashem*. That's the language of the Rambam. So the Torah was to be given to a nation, and the function of the Avos was to prepare for that eventuality.

Now, if the Torah had been given to them and not later, the impact would have been dulled. Its impact would have been deadened if it had been given to a small family. So Hakodosh Boruch Hu waited until we were already a numerous nation. Only then did they assemble together for that spectacular event of Matan Torah, and then, when this great nation accepted the Torah together, it made its most impressive effect.

TAPE # 200 (January 1977)

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Le'iluy Nishmat Avraham ben Chaneana