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JEPQueens@gmail.com

by Rabbi Yaakov Finestone

THE ANSWER TO "WHY" WILL SOON BE UNDERSTOOD

PARSHAS VAYESHEV

In 1942, in the early morning of erev Rosh Hashana, a large group of Danish Jews gathered in the shul to recite slichos. The chief rabbi announced that instead of saying slichos, they had to go into hiding and arrange passage from Denmark to Sweden. The rabbi had received a secret tip that the Nazis were planning on rounding-up the Danish Jews the night of Rosh Hashana. A few families planned with a Danish fisherman to take them on the six-hour journey to safety. There was always a risk that the Nazis would catch them, but they felt that they had no choice. It was a moonless night and their boat rocked violently from the stormy winds and rain. Finally, they arrived a few hundred feet from the Swedish coast where they dropped anchor. The plan was for the Swedish Coast Guard to notice them and send a boat to rescue them. Suddenly, from the coast, they saw searchlights scanning the water. The Jewish families were hopeful that they would soon be saved. However, the searchlights kept missing their boat. The Jews prayed to Hashem to allow the searchlights to find them. However, the searchlights missed them. They realized that they would have to wait until morning to be saved. In the morning, they realized that something was desperately wrong. Apparently, because of the storm, their boat landed back in Danish and not Swedish waters. The searchlights that were trying to find them were from the Nazis who were looking for escaped Jews. Because the searchlights missed seeing them, they were able to reverse their trip and were saved. (In the Spirit of the Maggid by Rabbi Paysach Krohn)

It is interesting that the **Chofetz Chaim** zt"l, **Rabbi Avraham Pam** zt"l and **Rabbi Yissachor Frand** all discuss the same theme in this week's parsha. There were some unusual events that transpired in the parsha. In addition, some very smart and very righteous individuals acted in ways that seemed contrary to the proper course of action. Our forefather Yaakov gave his son, Yosef, a multi-colored coat. Didn't he realize that doing so could cause sibling jealousy? [There are many commentaries that explain the reason why Yaakov did this.] In fact, the **Talmud** (Shabbos 10B) learns from Yaakov's actions that we should never give one child preferential treatment over the others. The gift of the fine wool coat that Yaakov gave to Yosef, above and beyond that which he gave to the rest of his sons, caused jealousy. That

*"He [Yaakov] sent [Yosef] from the depths of Chevron, and he came to Shechem."
(37:14)*

action started a series of events which led to Yosef being sold as a slave! It almost led to Yosef's death! As the situation unfolded further, it resulted in the Jewish people descending to Egypt.

Furthermore, since Yosef knew that his brothers hated him, why did he tell them about his two dreams which seemed to indicate that he would rule over them? And, since Yaakov was aware that the other brothers felt negatively towards Yosef, why did he send Yosef to see how they and their sheep were doing?

The answer to how such great people can make such "mistakes" can be found in the words of the pasuk, "He [Yaakov] sent [Yosef] from the depths of Chevron...." (37:14). **Rashi** asks, that Chevron was situated on a mountain so why does the pasuk say that Yaakov sent Yosef from the valley (deep part) of

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Chevron? **Rashi** answers that it was referring to the profound counsel of our forefather Avraham who is buried in Chevron. Hashem caused Yaakov to send Yosef so that Hashem could fulfill what He had told Avraham would happen. His children would be strangers in a strange land. The other “strange” events, the so called “mistakes”, that occurred were also orchestrated by the guiding hand of Hashem.

We see from this the idea of *hashgachah peratis*, Divine providence. We see how Hashem manipulated events to bring His master plan to fruition. Yosef having been sold as a slave to one of Pharaoh’s ministers, led directly to Yosef’s rise to power as a ruler of Egypt. Even when Yosef was in prison, Hashem orchestrated that Pharaoh’s wine steward and baker were put into the prison at the same time as Yosef. That was to set in motion the events which led to Yosef becoming the second in command to Pharaoh. Then, when Hashem caused there to be a famine in all the surrounding lands, Yosef was in position to sustain his entire family who eventually joined him in Egypt. All the great people were puppets and Hashem was the Puppeteer. Yaakov and his family lived comfortably in Eretz Yisroel. It was necessary that he and his family be enslaved in Egypt for hundreds of years. All these events occurred to facilitate the goal of Yaakov and his entire family going to Egypt.

The **Rokeach**, a Tosafist and Kabbalist, writes that this parsha has a total of 112 psukim and Tehillim chapter 92, *Mizmor Shir Leyom HaShabbos*, contains 112 words. What is the connection between these two? **Rav Mattisyahu Solomon** gives a beautiful explanation. We know that the Book of Bereishis is the blueprint of Jewish history. There is the concept of

maaseh avos siman labanim, that the actions of our forefathers foreshadow events that will befall the Jewish People. Parshas Vayeshev illustrates that Hashem runs the world, down to the most minute details. Hashem showed Adam HaRishon all the future events that would occur to the Jewish People. After seeing how Hashem would bring His master plan to fruition, Adam HaRishon was moved to say this chapter of **Tehillim** that includes the words, “O Hashem, how great are your deeds! Your thoughts are very profound.” (92:6)

We have various questions. There are numerous world events that cause us to wonder why Hashem allowed them to happen. All of this will only be properly understood when Hashem brings Moshiach to redeem us.

A person may be in a distressing situation, never realizing that this will ultimately bring him great benefit and joy. When the kingship of Hashem will be revealed to the world, we will see, with perfect clarity, how all our trials and tribulations were necessary steps in our rise to greatness. “And in that day, you shall say, O Hashem, I will praise You: Although You were angry with me, Your anger is turned away, and You do comfort me.” **There will come a time when we will praise Hashem for all our suffering. At that time, we will understand that it was our path to salvation and success** (Isaiah 12:1)

(Based on Rabbi Frand on the Parashah 3; Chofetz Chaim on the Torah, Talelei Oros by Rabbi Yissachar Dov Rubin, Messages from Rabbi Pam by Rabbi Sholom Smith)

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