



Carnegie Shul Chatter

December 2, 2021

Happy
Chanukah

Shabbat
Shalom



Light candles 4:35pm Shabbat Services 9:20am

Miketz in a Nutshell

Genesis 41:1–44:17

From Chabad.org

Joseph's imprisonment finally ends when Pharaoh dreams of seven fat cows that are swallowed up by seven lean cows, and of seven fat ears of grain swallowed by seven lean ears. Joseph interprets the dreams to mean that seven years of plenty will be followed by seven years of hunger, and advises Pharaoh to store grain during the plentiful years. Pharaoh appoints Joseph governor of Egypt. Joseph marries Asenath, daughter of Potiphar, and they have two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim.

Wisdom

Rabbi Tzvi Hersh Weinreb, of the Orthodox Union, writes in our feature article this week about the wisdom of Joseph and Solomon.

He also says, "Wisdom is the rarest of all important human qualities."

But what exactly is wisdom?

Shakespeare, in *As You Like It* says, "The fool doth think he is wise, but the wise man knows himself to be a fool." Socrates says, "The only true wisdom is in knowing you know nothing." And Aristotle says, "Knowing yourself is the beginning of all wisdom."

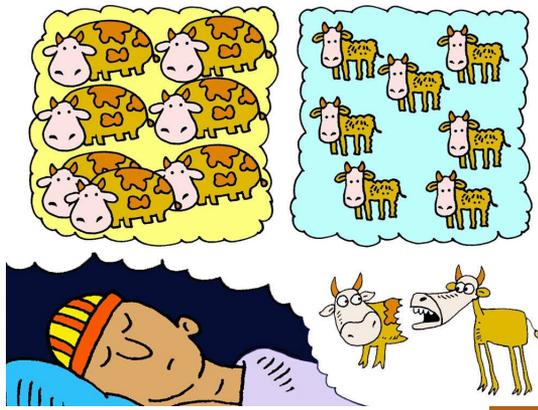
They are all correct. When we are young we often think that we are smarter and wiser than we really are. What fools we are to think we are wise when often we know so little. And usually we are not wise enough to understand how little we know. It is only when we become much older that we have the experience and insight to understand how little we truly know.

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Famine spreads throughout the region, and food can be obtained only in Egypt. Ten of Joseph's brothers come to Egypt to purchase grain; the youngest, Benjamin, stays

home, for Jacob fears for his safety. Joseph recognizes his brothers, but they do not recognize him; he accuses them of being spies, insists that they bring Benjamin to prove that they are who they say they are, and imprisons Simeon as a hostage. Later, they discover that the money they paid for their provisions has been mysteriously returned to them.

Jacob agrees to send Benjamin only after Judah assumes personal and eternal responsibility for him. This time Joseph receives them kindly, releases Simeon, and invites them to an eventful dinner at his home. But then he plants his silver goblet, purportedly imbued with magic powers, in Benjamin's sack. When the brothers set out for home the next morning, they are pursued, searched, and arrested when the goblet is discovered. Joseph offers to set them free and retain only Benjamin as his slave.



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When I began writing the Chatter years ago, I thought I was smart. I thought that I could understand Torah after my first reading of a parashah. How wrong I was.

Every week when I research these Chatters and every week when I attend services and hear Dr. Block's Torah commentaries, I learn things I never knew before. And I am now wise enough to know that I will never have all of the answers, no matter how much I study and how much I learn. There is always someone who knows more than me, and I will always have more to learn.

Am I wise? Well, I don't know if I'm there yet, but I do now know that many times in my life I was truly a fool, so I guess I am making progress, and I hope you are too.



Miketz and Chanukah and Wisdom, the Tie That Binds Them

I really wasn't sure if I should feature another article about Chanukah this week or if I should use an article about the Torah Portion Miketz, but, lo and behold, this article from the Connecticut Jewish Ledger addresses both Chanukah and the parshah. I hope you enjoy it.

Torah Portion – Miketz

By Rabbi Tzvi Hersh Weinreb, Executive Vice President Emeritus of the Orthodox Union

Wisdom is the rarest of all important human qualities. Observers of the contemporary state of affairs often remark that wisdom, which is especially necessary in this day and age, is now particularly lacking.

Yet, at the same time, we are told that there is an age in life when most of us finally do obtain wisdom. Erik Erikson, the famous psychologist and thinker, believes that the course of the lifespan is marked by a series of developmental stages. At each stage of life, we master different developmental tasks. In late middle age, about age sixty, one begins to achieve wisdom. Erikson's book, *Childhood and Society*, devotes an entire chapter to defining wisdom and to detailing the process by which one achieves it, or fails to achieve it.



What is wisdom from a Jewish perspective? And what does wisdom have to do with this week's Chanukah theme?

The search for wisdom is a frequent biblical theme. King Solomon was once assured by the Almighty that he would be granted the fulfillment of one wish. He wished for wisdom, obtained it, and is therefore termed in our tradition the wisest of all men.

Reading this story of Solomon and other sacred texts leads to the conclusion that there are at least two components to wisdom. There is a knowledge base; mastery of the facts and its data. There is also, however, the essential ability to select from this database those bits of knowledge which apply to the situation at hand.

There is the mastery of material, and there is the ability to advance that material and make it relevant.

One of the early 20th century masterpieces in the field of Jewish ethics is a book by Rabbi Joseph Hurvitz of Novardok, entitled *Madregas Ha'Adam* (Man's Stature). Torah wisdom is one of Rabbi Joseph's themes. He insists that mastery of the corpus of Jewish law in and of itself does not constitute wisdom. Knowledge in "matters of the world" is also necessary; abstract

knowledge must be interrelated with concrete reality.

The symbol of the Chanukah festival is, of course, the Menorah. The original Menorah in the holy Temple was situated in the southern end of the inner Temple shrine and consisted of seven branches.

The Menorah symbolizes the light of wisdom, and its seven branches, the seven classical areas of wisdom, which include not only knowledge of the divine, but also mathematics and music.



Combining the wisdom symbolized by the Menorah with Rabbi Joseph’s insights, we begin to appreciate the complexity of the concept of wisdom. It encompasses theoretical and practical knowledge, and it involves the seven major areas of human inquiry.

It is in this week’s Torah portion, Miketz, we encounter the first man to be known as wise, to be recognized as a fount of wisdom. That man is the biblical Joseph, and it is the Pharaoh of Egypt who calls him wise.

You know the story. The Pharaoh has his dreams, Joseph interprets them and suggests a plan of action. Pharaoh is pleased by the plan and says to his courtiers, “Could we find another like him, a man in whom is the Spirit of God?” And he continues and says to Joseph, “Since God has made all this known to you, there is none so discerning and wise as you”.

The Pharaoh recognizes that wisdom is not only mastery of facts and the ability to apply them; it is more than familiarity with the seven branches of worldly wisdom, and it is even more than life experience. Besides all that, it is a gift of God.

I have had the good fortune of meeting several wise people in my life, and I am sure that most of you have as well. Whenever I have met such people, I have been struck by how their words seemed to come from a higher place. Their insights reflect that they have access to a source beyond my ken.

This was Pharaoh’s experience when he heard Joseph’s interpretation. He realized that no course of study – no training, no mastery of expertise – was sufficient to account for the good counsel that he was hearing. He knew that the man in front of him was blessed with the Spirit of God.

There is no better time than this Shabbat, as we celebrate the second Shabbat Chanukah and read the story of Joseph, to reflect upon the quality of human wisdom and to fully appreciate this lesson: Whatever else wisdom comprises, it has one indispensable ingredient. It is ultimately the inspiration of the One Above.

Yahrtzeits

This week the Carnegie Shul acknowledge the yahrtzeits of:

Jacob Lobliner

Jean Perlman Celia Liberman

Sarah Rebecca

Alfred Kurlie Miller

Lena Cruso

Betty G. Grinberg

Dora Gorback

Esther Elyanoff

Benjamin Watzman

Joseph Glazer

Harry Harris

May their memories be for a blessing.