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**Rabbi Yosef Viener Discusses the Challenges and Rewards Of Doing Chesed for Others**

**By Daniel Keren**



The second speaker at the Thanksgiving Day Hakhel Yarchei Kallah was Rabbi Yosef Viener, mora d’asra of K’hal Sha’ar Hashomayim in Monsey who spoke on the topic of “Limitations on Chesed…Are They Taking Advantage of Me?”

Rabbi Viener quoted the Midrash Rabba on the verse at the beginning of Sefer Bereishis (1:1) – “Beraishis Bara…In the beginning G-d created.” Why did Hakodesh Barcuh Hu create the world?

This Midrash quotes a conversation between the melachim (the angels) and Hakodesh Baruch Hu. They asked “Why are You creating mankind? They are going to cause terrible damage. The world you have created now is beautiful with such graces as attractive flowers and birds.”

Hakodesh Baruch Hu answered with a parable of a king who creates a beautiful palace and its furnishings. But if there are no guests, what is the purpose?

Likewise Hakodesh Baruch Hu wanted to create a world with people who would have the possibility to try and emulate the chesed of Hakodesh Baruch Hu by striving to be a giver and not just be a taker.

**Everyone Has the Ability Regardless of Money to be a Giver**

This doesn’t depend upon how much money you have. Everyone has the possibility to be a giver. Rav Eliyahu Dessler says our purpose is to emulate Hakodesh Baruch Hu because it is not possible for a human to give Him anything.

The reason people get angry is that they think others don’t properly appreciate them and are not serving them as they should. Aren’t you my spouse or aren’t you my parent? Why aren’t you giving me what I want?

From the time that we are young we are trained to desire things that are free. “Why,” Rabbi Viener asked, “is that bad? You are not stealing.”

Rav Dessler counters that deep down this desire for free things cripples our mission to emulate Hakodesh Baruch Hu by striving to be a nosen (giver) instead of being a lokeach (taker.)

Someone in business has to ask himself honestly if the product that he is selling is something that the buyer really needs. And is the price fair? If so, then the business man can feel secure that in his transactions he is truly a nosen and is emulating Hakodesh Baruch Hu.

**Calculating if You Are Giving Too Much to Another is a Mistake**

With regards to relationships, we should not waste time wondering if “I am giving that person too much and not getting back enough in return.” If a person is expecting even just 10% or 15% more than he is giving to a spouse for example, this a very bad mistake.

In the first year of marriage, one has a special obligation to make happy one’s spouse by giving and giving. When one emulates Hakodesh Baruch Hu by giving to others, he is guaranteed spiritual bliss in both this and the next worlds.

We learn from Avraham Avinu (Abraham the Patriarch) who on the third day from his bris (circumcision) was recuperating in his tent. Hakodesh Baruch Hu made it so hot that nobody would want to be out traveling and therefore bother Avrohom who wanted to do hospitality in order to bring others closer to a correct belief in Hashem.

However Avrohom wasn’t satisfied with this legitimate excuse for not looking out to find people for whom he could offer hachnosis orchim (hospitality). This was because his essence was to emulate Hakodesh Baruch Hu and be a nosen. Ironically, the individuals that Hashem allowed him to see and offer chesed to were not even people who could benefit from his kindness. They were angels who have no need to eat food and only pretended to eat what Avrohom offered them.

Rabbi Viener asked, “What if you help someone else and they don’t thank you properly or maybe even ignore your chesed or perhaps even repays you back by insulting you?” This a great opportunity to be a noser, one who emulates Hakodesh Baruch Hu in such challenging situations. He should understand that his sechar (reward) is thus even greater.

**Jewish Community Comes Together in Aftermath of Anti-Semitic Rampage in Jersey City**

**By Mordechai Lightstone**



**An anti-Semitic gunman, center right, shoots at a kosher grocery store in Jersey City, N.J.**

The diverse Jersey City community came together in shared grief and resolve as the killers in the Dec. 10 rampage at a kosher grocery store were identified as members of an anti-Semitic group, who specifically targeted the grocery and the Jewish people they would find inside.

The two attackers, a man and a woman, who stormed the JC Kosher Supermarket in Jersey City—killing three people, including two members of the local Jewish community, and a police officer—were said to be affiliated with the “Black Hebrew Israelites,” and one had previously posted anti-Semitic and anti-police writings online.



**Moshe Deutsch, Hy”d and Leah Minda Ferencz, Hy”d**

Security footage shows the killers bypassing other people as they made their way to the kosher store and opened fire. An eyewitness who was in the store [told Chabad.org](http://www.chabad.org/news) of a hailstorm of bullets shattering the glass windows before the attackers entered. A note with religious writings was found in the U-Haul the killers drove to the scene. Investigators also found a live pipe bomb inside the vehicle.

[Tuesday’s attack](https://www.chabad.org/news/article_cdo/aid/4578495/jewish/Six-Dead-at-Kosher-Store-Shooters-Targeted-the-Location-Says-Jersey-City-Mayor.htm), which took the lives of Leah Minda Ferencz, 33, who owned the store with her husband, Moshe Dovid Ferencz; Moshe Deutsch, 24; Douglas Rodríguez, a native of Ecuador and a store employee; and Det. Joseph Seals, a married father of five and 15-year police veteran, has shaken the residents of Jersey City. Moshe Deutsch would visit the grocery whenever he was in the area. Leah Minda Ferencz was his mother’s first cousin.

Rabbi Moshe Schapiro, who directs Chabad of Hoboken and Jersey City with his wife, Shaindel, was at the Jersey City Medical Center visiting Chaim Deutsch, who was injured in the attack, and consoling community members gathered there. Deutsch had witnessed the murder of his cousin, Moshe Deutsch, and was struck multiple times before slipping out the back door of the store. Together, they reflected on the resilience of Jewish faith in the face of even the worst adversity and belief in the world’s Creator.



**Det. Joseph Seals, a married father of five and 15-year police veteran, was killed in the line of duty.**

Schapiro, who moved to Hoboken a week after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks in 2001, told Chabad.org: “If we are to uproot this scourge of evil and transform our world into a place of goodness and kindness, then we must nurture in our society an appreciation, from the youngest age, that we are each personally accountable for our moral conduct to our all-knowing and benevolent Creator, who also created every one of our fellow human beings in His image.”

**A Small but Growing Community**

In recent years, approximately 100 Chassidic families, priced out of Williamsburg and other Brooklyn neighborhoods, have settled in Jersey City. The JC Kosher Supermarket at 223 Martin Luther King Drive, with a small, yet visible synagogue next door and a Chassidic school with some 40 children above, have served as a hub and the heart of the small but growing community. In addition to the growing Chassidic community, Jersey City has also seen an influx of young Jews of all backgrounds drawn by the easy commute to work in New York and New Jersey’s commercial and business centers.

Schapiro notes that “the direct targeting of visibly Jewish people,” has set a community that notes itself with warm relations with their neighbors “on edge.”

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**Douglas Rodriguez, an employee at JC Kosher**

**Supermarket was killed in the attack. (Photo: Gofundme.com)**

According to Schapiro, the burgeoning community has added to the vibrant tapestry of Jewish life in the area. “I regularly attend weekday prayer services at the synagogue, and often stop at the JC Kosher Supermarket for a quick bite and a warm conversation with the staff.”

[A fund has been established](https://www.chabad.org/article.asp?AID=4579669) in memory of the victims to “support, uplift and comfort,” the victims and their families.

*Reprinted from the December 11, 2019 dispatch of Chabad.Org News.*

**As Rockets Rain Down on Our Brothers and Sisters in Eretz Yisroel (Part 3)**

**By** [**Rabbi Moshe Meir Weiss**](https://www.jewishpress.com/author/rabbi-moshe-meir-weiss/)



The past two weeks, we’ve been reflecting upon the terrible rocket attacks against Eretz Yisroel. This week, I’d like to zoom in on two more important points. First, how these terrible occurrences are a clear fulfillment of prophecy and second, what we could do besides prayer to halt such terrorist activity.

Starting with biblical prophecy, Hagar was told she would give birth to a son and to a nation that would be pere adam, a wild uncontrollable people, which is a perfect description of the Arab situation. The Torah says, “Yado bakol… – Their hand will be upon everyone…” and indeed ISIS and many other Arabic cells wreak havoc and terrorism all over the world. The Torah then continues, “…V’yad kol bo – …And everyone’s hand will need him,” and as we see the global economy turns thirstily to Arabian oil.

In the nevuah of Bilaam, he prophesizes in Parshas Balak, “Mi yichyeh misumo Ei-l – Who could “live” from the nation that has Ei-l in its name?” This is a clear prophecy that Yishmael (the only nation besides Yisroel that has Ei-l embedded in its name) would harass our lives and make them miserable. In Tehillim [120:5] it says, “Oyah li ki garti meshech shachanti im ahalei Kedar? Rabas shachna lah nafshi im sonei shalom – Woe is me as I dwell in Israel with my neighbor in the tents of Arabia. How I have to dwell with those that hate peace.” If only the world leaders would listen to the prophecy of King David, that peace treaties will never be sustainable with a people who innately hate peace.

In juxtaposition to this verse, Dovid HaMelech says [120:3], “Mah yitein l’cha u’mah yoseif lach lashon re’miyah – What can I give you and what can I add to you, O deceitful tongue.” The Metzudas Dovid, one of the premier commentaries on Novi, explains that Dovid HaMelech put this verse in proximity to the posuk describing our hateful Arabian neighbors to inform us that it is the sin of lashon hara, sinful gossip that intensifies the rabid terrorism.

We therefore must know that when we avoid talking poorly about other people, whether at our Shabbos table, in the coffee room at the office, or when we are schmoozing with a spouse, we are helping our brethren in Eretz Yisroel.

There is another way we can be of great assistance to them. The Torah tells us that when Hagar married Avram, and became immediately pregnant, “Va’teikal gvirta b’eineha – her [Hagar’s] mistress [Sarah] became light in her eyes.” In reaction to this, the Torah informs us, “Vataneha Sarah – Sarah afflicted Hagar.” Reb Aryeh Levine, zt”l, zy”a, explains that Sarah didn’t actually treat Hagar any differently; rather, the change was in Hagar herself.

When she viewed Sarah with respect, the duties that she did for her were considered to her an honor. Now, however, as Hagar viewed Sarah in a new light, the same duties felt like an affliction.

The Ramban however says Sarah actually did some type of affliction to Hagar and he makes a very drastic statement. “Chatah Sarah Imenu b’inu’i hazeh – Sarah our Mother sinned by afflicting Hagar. V’gam Avraham b’hanicho la’asos kein shelo machah – As did also Avraham for not protesting about such behavior.” Ramban then concludes with a truly shocking declaration: Because of this affliction, Hagar was given a child whose descendants would afflict the children of Avraham and Sarah will all kinds of oppression throughout the ages.

We need to analyze this. Why would Ramban speak negatively about our Holy ancestors? We can only surmise that Ramban wanted to clue us in with vital information: That if we are careful not to cause the people around us affliction, we can fix this mistake of our holy ancestors (similar to how we stay up the entire night on Shavuos to atone for the fact that our ancestors overslept on the morning of the giving of the Torah) and halt the terrorism of the Arabs.

When we make a conscious effort not to scream in our homes, when we put a stop to verbal abuse even when we are frustrated or in a foul mood, when we are careful not to vent our frustration on our children, we are going a long way to helping put a stop to mid-eastern terrorism.

May it be the will of Hashem that He should hear our tefilos and see our efforts of avoiding lashon hara and creating more serenity in our homes and in that merit may there be shalom al Yisroel, and may we have good health, long life, and everything wonderful.

*Reprinted from the Parshas Chayei Vayeitzei 5780 email of The Jewish Vues.*

**Rav Avigdor Miller on How**

**Important Learning Gemara Is**



**QUESTION:** If the Rav is always telling us that we have to subjugate ourselves to the gedolim who have the da’as Torah that comes from learning, why do we ourselves have to bother learning Gemara in depth and become lamdanim?

**ANSWER:** Listen to me. You know that in order to understand what your doctor is telling you, you must have some minimal level of education. You don’t have to be a big scholar but at least you have to know English. If your doctor is speaking at least a medium level cultured English, you’re going to have to understand what he’s saying.

And therefore when *gedolim* speak to us we must be able to understand, to appreciate what they’re telling us. And if we are not well-versed in Torah learning it becomes meaningless because we are speaking a different language. The *am ha’aretz* does not speak the same language as an *adom gadol* speaks. And that’s a very important *yesod*.

If you haven’t learned *Mesichta Gittin* you really have no idea of the necessity of a *get*. So you’ll say that you know all about it — there’s a civil divorce and there’s a *get*, a Jewish divorce. No, actually it means nothing to you. For you, a Jewish divorce is just another thing, another ceremony. It’s only when you learn *Mesichta Gittin* thatyou internalize that a civil divorce is nothing at all and that without a *get* she is an *eishes ish.* She’s just as married as she was when she stood under the *chuppah*.

Even if she hasn’t seen her husband in forty years she’s still an *eishes ish*and she’s guilty of a capital crime if she goes with another man.

All this, to the *am ha’aretz,* is very vague. He can appreciate it to some extent but if he hasn’t learned, it’s very vague. But when you learn *Mesichta Gittin* it hits you between the eyes.

If you didn’t learn *Mesichta Yevamos* then *chalitzah* is just a ceremony. It’s like saying *Av* *Harachamim* on Shabbos morning – sometimes you skip it.  Without *Mesichta* *Yevamos* it’s all very vague.

There are a lot of people here who did not learn and it’s all a vague thing to them. I remember in my old synagogue, there was a woman whose husband died. This woman was active in the Sisterhood, in the Ladies Auxiliary, and she married her dead husband’s brother. She had children from her first husband and she married her husband’s brother!

And – nothing! Nothing! Now, in a decent organization they would have taken her and dumped her in the street. You can’t marry your dead husband’s brother! If you have children from your first husband then it’s like marrying your own brother. *Kares!* But go and tell this to the *amei ha’aretz*– they can hear it vaguely, yes – but she’s still in the Sisterhood. This means that they are *beheimahs*. They don’t talk the language of Torah.

You have to learn – otherwise the language of the Torah is meaningless to you. You must learn – and you must learn Gemara. Not like one man said to me, “We’re not Gemara buffs.” Gemara buffs?! What?! Like, you don’t collect old coins or you don’t collect stamps you also don’t learn Gemara?! Gemara is not a hobby; it’s our life breath. We learn Gemara because that is the air we breathe.

If you don’t learn Gemara you know what you are? You’re an ox! You’re *mamish* a *beheima*. That’s what you are without Gemara. And don’t tell me about other things you learn, moral teachings, *seforim*.

If you don’t learn Gemara then you and your family are called *beheimahs*. And anyone who marries your daughter it says about him in the Gemara, ארור שוכב עם בהמה. If you marry the daughter of an *am ha’aretz,* it’s like you’re living with a *beheima*. Their wives and daughters are called the wives and daughters of *beheimahs*. It’s important to know that. Jews always knew this! You must breathe Gemara. That’s our life!

So how can a gadol talk to you if you’re still in the stable. You’re eating oats and you’re braying and a gadol will knock on the stable door and say, “Listen to this.” So you bray and he talks. It’s totally different languages. I have experience in this. I’ve spoken to people and they don’t even begin to understand what I’m talking about. It’s only when you’re a lamdan, at least in Gemara, that you’re able to communicate with the gedolim and appreciate and understand what they’re telling you.

*Reprinted from the December 2, 2019 email of Toras Avigdor adapted from Tape #95.*

**The Contrast Between the Two Dreams of Joseph and Pharaoh**

**From the Talks of the Lubavitcher Rebbe**

**Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, Zt”l**



This week's Torah portion, Vayeishev, opens with an account of Joseph's two dreams, the subject of which appear to be identical.

Both dreams -- the first concerning the sheaves and the second concerning the heavenly bodies -- allude to Joseph's eventual rise to power and foretell that his brothers would one day bow down to him.

Next week's Torah portion, Mikeitz, also recounts two dreams -- this time of Pharaoh -- that seem similar in content.

First, Pharaoh dreamt of seven lean cows swallowing seven fat ones; then he dreamt of seven thin ears of corn swallowing seven full ears.

The Torah tells us that Joseph interpreted this repetition as indicating that the events they foretold were indeed imminent and about to take place.

Why didn't Joseph apply this principle in interpreting his own two dreams?

The events that occurred in his second dream could just as easily have been included in the first; as nothing new seems to have been added, one dream could have sufficed.

We must therefore conclude that Joseph had two dreams for another reason, one that teaches us an important lesson we can apply every day.

Although Joseph's first dream dealt with worldly matters (sheaves), his second dream involved heavenly bodies (the sun, moon and stars).

Both of Pharaoh's dreams dealt with worldly affairs, the only difference being that the first dream involved the animal kingdom, while the second dream involved the lower level of vegetative life.

The difference between Joseph's and Pharaoh's dreams demonstrates the essential difference between the Jew and the non-Jew:

The Jew, even while living in the physical world, is intimately connected to both the physical and spiritual realms, whereas the non-Jew has no true attachment to spiritual matters.

Even the order of Joseph's dreams -- the first involving worldly concerns followed by the second dealing with spiritual matters -- indicates the Jew's perpetual strive upward toward G-d.

Both of Pharaoh's dreams concerned worldly matters; furthermore, their shift from the animal to the plant kingdom implies a message of spiritual descent.

Only the Jew is granted the power to link both spiritual and physical realms; indeed, his whole mission in life is to transform the physical into the spiritual through Torah and mitzvot.

Because he lives in a physical world, the Jew must engage in mundane acts such as eating, drinking and sleeping, yet, at the same time, he maintains an essential bond with G-d and with holiness. For the Jew, no contradiction exists between the physical and the spiritual, for he understands that the sole purpose of physical reality is to act as a medium for spirituality.

Not only does the physical world not hamper the Jew's spiritual component, it enables him to attain higher levels of holiness than he could without its assistance.

*Reprinted from the Issue #344 of L’Chaim Weekly (Parashat Vayeishev 5755/1994)*

**Rabbi Berel Wein**

**On Vayeshev**

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In the emotional drama that will consume the balance of the sections of this book of the Torah, we are witness to a very difficult family situation and the dynamic consequences that it creates. The Torah itself testifies to the love and favoritism that Jacob shows towards his son Joseph.

We can well understand this relationship since Joseph strongly resembles his father physically, is extremely talented and precocious, and is the son of Jacob's beloved wife, Rachel. However Jewish tradition raises objections to the overt favoritism shown to Joseph by Jacob when he bestows upon him the special garment that signifies their bond and love for one another.

We can also understand why Joseph himself felt so special, and, in his mind, justified in lording it over his brothers by telling them of his dreams and ambitions. Again, the traditional commentaries to the Torah found fault in his youthful arrogance and lack of judgment.

We can also appreciate how hurt the brothers were by the actions of their father and their brother. They were so hurt that they felt that Joseph was an existential threat to their very survival as a family and future nation.

Here we are faced with a situation where all the leading people involved in the story are both right and wrong at the very same time. We can appreciate the feelings of each of the parties to the story, and yet we are aware of the disaster and trauma that are destined for each of them.

There is an over-arching drama that is being enacted here in the story of Joseph and his brothers. Jewish tradition teaches us that we are all somehow mere actors in the great story of human civilization that is being presented on the stage of the history of the Jewish people.

Even though each of the individuals involved in the narrative presented in this week's Torah reading acts on his own, the sum total of their actions will result in the descent of the Jewish people into Egyptian slavery and eventual redemption and the acceptance of the Torah at Sinai.

We recite in our daily prayers that there are many thoughts and intents in the hearts of human beings, but that eventually it is the guidance of Heaven that will prevail. Nowhere is this basic understanding of the pattern of Jewish history more evident than it is in this week's narrative of Joseph and his brothers.

Everyone involved seemingly follows their own individual course of action, but the result is a historic change in the dynamics of the family and the trajectory of Jewish history. Only if we step back and view the entire chain of events in its totality can we begin to see this emerging pattern as the will of Heaven guiding the family of Jacob and the Jewish people.

*Reprinted from this week’s website of Rabbiwein.co*

**Snakes and Scorpions**

**By Rabbi Eli J. Mansour**

The Torah in Parashat Vayesheb tells of the sale of Yosef, which began with the brothers casting Yosef into a pit.  The pit is described by the Torah as, “empty; there was no water in it.”  Rashi, citing the Gemara, notes the seeming redundancy in this Pasuk.  Quite obviously, once we know that the pit was empty, we know that it did not have any water.  Why, then, did the Torah find it necessary to emphasize that the pit had no water?

Rashi briefly explains: “It had no water, but it did have snakes and scorpions.”  Meaning, the pit was not entirely “empty.”  Although it did not have water, it had dangerous snakes and scorpions that could have killed Yosef.

On a symbolic level, Rashi’s brief comment conveys a vitally important message, namely, there is no such thing as a vacuum.  If a pit does not have water, then it becomes filled with snakes and scorpions.

If we do not fill our minds with “water” – the symbol of Torah wisdom – then it becomes filled with “snakes and scorpions” – negative and destructive qualities.  We need to fill ourselves with Torah, as otherwise we are prone to vices and inappropriate conduct.



**Rabbi Eli J. Mansour**

This notion is especially manifest in the area of time.  If we do not fill our time with meaningful pursuits, then it becomes filled with negative behavior.  We do not remain “parve.”  Either we’re engaged in Torah and Misvot, or we are involved in misconduct.  There is no middle ground.  Indeed, crime rates tend to rise in the summer.  When the youngsters are out of school and left without structure and without worthwhile activities to engage in, they resort to mischief.

The Torah’s description of Yosef’s pit is thus also an accurate description of the human being.  We need to fill our lives with Torah and Misvot in order protect ourselves from the “snakes and scorpions” – from the destructive vices that otherwise threaten to overtake us.

*Reprinted from this week’s website of the Edmond J Safra Synagogue of Brooklyn website.*

**The Shmuz onParshas Vayeishev**

# **Asking for Advice**

**By Rabbi Bentzion Shafier**

**Founder of TheShmuz.com**



“These are the offspring of Yaakov: Yosef, at the age of seventeen years, was a shepherd with his brothers by the flock, and he was a youth with the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, his father’s wives; and Yosef would bring evil reports of them to their father.” — Bereishis 37:2

At the age of seventeen, Yosef was wise in the ways of the Torah and in the ways of the world. He was called a “ben zikunim” because even at such a young age, he showed the brilliance of an elderly scholar. He had already absorbed all of the Torah that Yaakov had learned in the many years that he had spent in the yeshivah of Shem.

For that reason, Yaakov chose him to be the leader of the family. The Seforno explains that the coat that Yaakov made for Yosef was intended as a sign that he was in charge. The brothers were to listen to him in matters of the household. They were to follow his direction in matters of business. His was to be the final word. Clearly, Yosef was brilliant.

Yet, the Seforno points out, that despite his brilliance, Yosef did something quite foolish. Whenever he found his brothers doing something wrong, he would immediately report it to his father, and this caused them to resent him. Because Yosef was young, he didn’t focus on what his brothers’ reaction would be. This, explains the Seforno, is why we don’t seek advice from those who are young.

This Seforno is difficult to understand. If Yosef was so brilliant, how is it possible that he overlooked something as elementary as thinking about what his conduct would lead to? Didn’t he recognize that his actions would cause his brothers to hate him?

The answer to this can be best understood with an observation about maturity.

**Understanding the child**

In the past hundred years, psychologists have come to understand that children aren’t simply grown-ups with short bodies. A child’s way of thinking, his frame of mind, and his entire emotional operating system are unlike those of an adult's.

One of the manifestations of an adult’s viewpoint is the ability to see consequences. What will this lead to? How will I feel about this five years from now? How about ten years from now? The more immature the person, the more he lives in the immediate present. To a kid, there is nothing more valuable than that shiny red fire truck with the working siren and whistle.

Ask a five-year-old, “Would you rather have a thousand dollars or the fire truck?”

It’s not even a contest! Many a well-intended grandparent has met with disappointment at his grandchild’s reaction when the child found out that this year’s Chanukah present was an investment in a mutual fund. The child doesn’t care because he isn’t thinking about the future. He lives completely, totally now. Tomorrow is too late, next week will never come, and the summer might as well be a million years away.

As a person matures, he is able to see more into the future. He can see himself in other settings and in different roles. He begins to understand that the very same person who sits here now will one day be responsible for making ends meet. That sense of seeing the future as if it were here now and recognizing emotionally that it really is going to happen is a function of maturity.

Maturity isn’t dependent on intelligence or education. A child prodigy might have a very high IQ and be capable of performing brilliant mental feats, yet still behave like a kid. Maturation is a process, which occurs over time. Like a fine wine that ferments, the human mind acquires a certain ripening with age — a widening of scope. With maturity often comes wisdom.

One of the measures of wisdom is how far into the future a person can see –— not in a clairvoyant, supernatural manner, but as a consequence of insight. If you do this, it will lead to that, which will lead to this, which will lead to that...

The Brisker Rav, R’ Yosef Ber Soloveitchik, was once lamenting the loss of his father, Rav Chaim. “The world doesn’t know what it has lost. My father could see fifty years into the future, and me, I can barely see ten years forward.”

**Yosef was a brilliant… young person**

This seems to be the answer to the question on the Seforno. At seventeen, Yosef was brilliant. But it was the brilliance of youth. The wisdom that comes with age wasn’t yet there. As a result, he did things that lacked foresight. He acted in a manner that was unwise because he wasn’t focused on “what this will lead to.” On an intellectual level he might have been gifted, but he lacked the vision to see the consequences of his ways.

**The concept is illuminating.**

A team of advisors

Throughout history, every king had his counselors, and every emperor had his advisors. To a young person this might seem strange. After all, these were brilliant individuals. Men of the world. Men of knowledge. Why would they need other people? Couldn’t they make up their own minds?

The answer is that they certainly could, but they understood that the issues they were dealing with would shape history and affect the lives of many, many others. They didn’t need help to make a decision; they needed help to make the right decision. And so, they sought out those who were older and wiser for counsel and advice.

This concept is very applicable to us as we make decisions every day — decisions that affect ourselves, decisions that affect the people in our lives. And we have to ask ourselves: Am I any less important than those world leaders? Are the people I deal with any less significant than the people they were concerned about?

If I properly value my family, my community, and myself then it is incumbent upon me to do everything that I can to ensure that I make the right choices. But how? Do I have the wisdom of a sage? Do I have the understanding of a learned man? Assuming that I don’t, I need to have people to guide me, people to direct me.

Chazal tell us, “Make for yourself a Rav (rabbi/mentor).” Far more than a handbook for Jewish law, a Rav is a mentor in life, a leader who provides perspective and priorities, a guide for proper life goals — one who directs you to wise choices that lead to a meaningful life of growth.

*Reprinted from this week’s website on TheShmuz.com This is an excerpt from the [Shmuz on the Parsha book](https://theshmuz.com/product/shmuz-on-the-parsha-book/).*