



טעמו וראו

A taste of the
Rebbe's teachings

Vayigash



Who Taught Joseph Tolerance?

Joseph is remembered for his good-heartedness. He supported his entire family during the famine. He also looked after the entire Egypt, the most depraved civilization of the time, and even supported their priests, the greatest symbol of their decadence.

Joseph lived in a very unforgiving world. People weren't as tolerant of other nations and other religions like today. Even the forefathers, who preached G-d's word to the world, preferred to be shepherds, where they wouldn't be forced to engage with the basest elements of idol-worshipping society. Yet Joseph was fully immersed in their world, and in fact, he was personally responsible for the survival of the very society he despised. Who taught him to be so forgiving?

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Part 1 - Joseph's Kindness

Source 1

Genesis 47:11-12



And Joseph settled his father and his brothers and gave them an estate in the best part of the land, in the Rameses region, as Pharaoh had commanded. Joseph provided all the needs of his father, his brothers, and all his father's family, down to the very youngest.¹

חומש בראשית, פרק מ"ז, פסוקים י"א - י"ב

יֵא וַיּוֹשֶׁב יוֹסֵף אֶת־אָבִיו וְאֶת־
אָחָיו וַיִּתֵּן לָהֶם אַחְזָה בְּאֶרֶץ
מִצְרַיִם בְּמִיטֵב הָאֶרֶץ בְּאֶרֶץ
רַעְמְסֵס כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה פַּרְעֹה: יב
וַיַּכְלִיל יוֹסֵף אֶת־אָבִיו וְאֶת־אָחָיו
וְאֶת־כָּל־בֵּית אָבִיו לָחֶם לְפִי הַטָּף:

Source 2

Genesis 47:22



The only land he did not buy up was that of the kohanim, since the kohanim had an allotment from Pharaoh. They ate the allotment that Pharaoh gave them and did not have to sell their lands.

חומש בראשית, פרק מ"ז, פסוק כ"ב

כב רק אֲדָמַת הַכֹּהֲנִים לֹא קָנָה כִּי
חֶק לְכֹהֲנִים מֵאֵת פַּרְעֹה וְאָכְלוּ
אֶת־חֶקֶם אֲשֶׁר נָתַן לָהֶם פַּרְעֹה
עַל־כֵּן לֹא מָכְרוּ אֶת־אֲדָמָתָם:

Rashi on the verse:

The kohanim: Meaning the priests. The word kohen always refers to a servant of a deity, except those that refer to high rank, as in “Kohen Midian”—the chief of Midian, or “Kohen On”—the chief of On.

The kohanim had an allotment: An allotted portion of bread per day.

רש"י על הפסוק

הכהנים: הכוּמָרִים, כָּל לְשׁוֹן
כֹּהֵן מְשֻׁרֵת לְאֱלֹהוֹת הוּא,
חוּץ מֵאוֹתָן שֶׁהֵם לְשׁוֹן גְּדֻלָּה,
כְּמוֹ כֹּהֵן מִדְיָן, כֹּהֵן אוֹן:

חֶק לְכֹהֲנִים: חֶק כֶּךָ וְכֶךָ לָחֶם
לְיוֹם:

1) literally: bread according to their children.

The Sicha, Part 1

Why Was Joseph Compassionate?



The third portion of Parshat V'zot Habracha recounts the blessing of Moses to the tribe of Joseph: “And of Joseph he said: His land shall be blessed by G-d, with the sweetness of the heaven’s dew, and with the waters that lie below.” One of the unique elements of this blessing is that it incorporates a mention of heaven—representing spirituality—along with a mention of “below,” representing a lower, material reality.

This blessing clearly suites Joseph, just as earlier in the Torah, when Jacob blessed his twelve sons, the Torah says that each blessing suited the unique spiritual character of the son; “He blessed them each according to their blessing.” Why did it suite Joseph? Because on one hand, he sustained and supported Jacob and all his children. When they were in Canaan, Jacob heard that food was available in Egypt and sent his sons to procure provisions for the family, and later, when the entire family came down to Egypt, he continued to support them, as the Torah says, “Joseph provided all the needs of his father, his brothers, and all his father’s family...” This sustenance is represented in the word “heaven,” the spiritual element of his blessing.

At the same time, Joseph was the primary provider for the entire Egypt. Egyptian society was considered the most deprived of its time. Torah calls it, “the nakedness of the land.” They were the polar opposite of Joseph, who is called “Joseph the Righteous” for ‘protecting his covenant.’¹ Nonetheless, Joseph sustained Egypt as well. He even supported the priests of Egypt and made an effort to maintain their dignity (they were not asked to sell their land), notwithstanding the fact that they represented everything Joseph despised. This is represented in the “below” in Joseph’s blessing.

Now, this poses the question: Who taught Joseph to behave in this manner?

1) I.e., rejecting the advances of Potiphar’s wife.

Part 2 - A Heavenly Example

Source 3

Genesis 2:15-17, 3:6-7



G-d took the man and placed him in the Garden of Eden to work it and to watch it. G-d gave the man a commandment saying, “You may definitely eat from every tree of the garden. But from the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil, do not eat, for on the day you eat from it, you will certainly die.”

The woman saw that the tree was good to eat and desirable to the eyes, and that the tree was attractive as a means to gain intelligence. She took some of its fruit and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, and he ate it. The eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized that they were naked. They sewed together fig leaves, and made themselves loin-cloths.

Source 4

Genesis 3:8-9, 21, 24



They heard G-d’s voice moving about in the garden with the wind of the day. The man and his wife hid themselves from G-d among the trees of the garden. G-d called to the man, and He said, “Where are you?”

Rashi on the verse:

Where are you: He knew where Adam was. It was only to engage in conversation with him, so that he is not frightened to answer if He would have punished him suddenly.

חומש בראשית, פרק ב' פסוקים ט"ו-י"ז, פרק ג' פסוקים ו' - ז'

טו וַיִּקַּח יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים אֶת־
הָאָדָם וַיְנַחֵהוּ בְּגַן־עֵדֶן לְעַבְדָּהּ
וּלְשִׁמְרָהּ: טז וַיִּצַּו יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים
עַל־הָאָדָם לֵאמֹר מִכָּל־עֵץ־הַגָּן
אָכַל תֹּאכַל: יז וַיֹּמַעַץ הַדְּעַת טוֹב
וַרְע לֹא תֹאכַל מִמֶּנּוּ כִּי בְיוֹם
אָכַלְךָ מִמֶּנּוּ מוֹת תָּמוּת:

ו וַתֵּרָא הָאִשָּׁה כִּי טוֹב הָעֵץ
לְמֹאכָל וְכִי תִאֲוָה־הוּא לְעֵינָיִם
וַנְחַמֵּד הָעֵץ לְהִשְׁפִּיל וַתִּקַּח
מִפְּרִיָו וַתֹּאכַל וַתֵּתֶן גַּם־לְאִישָׁהּ
עִמָּהּ וַיֹּאכַל: ז וַתִּפְקַחְנָה עֵינֵי
שְׁנֵיהֶם וַיֵּדְעוּ כִּי עֲרֻמִּם הֵם
וַיִּתְּפְרוּ עֲלֵהּ תְּאֵנָה וַיַּעֲשׂוּ לָהֶם
חִגְרֹת:

חומש בראשית, פרק ג', פסוקים ח'-ט', כ"א, כ"ד

ח וַיִּשְׁמְעוּ אֶת־קוֹל יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים
מִתְהַלֵּךְ בְּגֶן לְרוּחַ הַיּוֹם וַיִּתְחַבְּאוּ
הָאָדָם וְאִשְׁתּוֹ מִפְּנֵי יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים
בְּתוֹךְ עֵץ הַגָּן: ט וַיִּקְרָא יְהוָה
אֱלֹהִים אֶל־הָאָדָם וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ אַיֶּכָּה:

רש"י על הפסוק

איכה: יודע הנה היכן הוא
אלא לפנס עמו בדברים, שלא
יהא נבהל להשיב אם יענישהו
פתאום

Gur Aryeh commentary on Rashi:

To engage him in conversation: Meaning, G-d did so for Adam's benefit. If Adam is not frightened, he might admit that he sinned and then repent.

G-d made leather garments for Adam and his wife and He clothed them... He drove away the man, and stationed the cherubim at the east of Eden, along with the revolving sword blade, to guard the path of the Tree of Life.

גור אריה על פירוש רש"י

אלא לכוּנס עמו בדברים. פירוש שהשם יתברך היה עושה לטובתו, שלא יהיה נבהל להשיב ואולי יאמר 'חטאתי' וישוב בתשובה.

כא. וַיַּעַשׂ יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים לְאָדָם וּלְאִשְׁתּוֹ כְּתָנוּת עוֹר וַיַּלְבִּשֵׁם:

כד. וַיַּגֵּרֶשׂ אֶת־הָאָדָם וַיִּשְׁכַּן מִקְדָּם לְגוֹעֲזוֹ אֶת־הַכְּרֻבִים וְאֵת לְהִטּוֹת הַחֶרֶב הַמְתַּהַפֶּכֶת לְשֹׁמֵר אֶת־דַּרְכֵי עֵץ הַחַיִּים:

Source 5

Talmud, Tractate Sotah 14a

תלמוד, מסכת סוטה, דף י"ד עמוד א'



And Rabbi Chama son of Rabbi Chanina says: What is the meaning of the verse: "Walk after the L-rd your G-d"? Is it possible to follow the Divine Presence? Doesn't the verse say, "The L-rd your G-d is a devouring fire?"

Rather, one should follow G-d's example. Just as He clothes the naked, as it is written: "G-d made leather garments for Adam and his wife and He clothed them," so too, should you clothe the naked.

ואמר רבי חמא ברבי חנינא מאי דכתיב אחרי ה' אלהיכם תלכו? וכי אפשר לו לאדם להלך אחר שכינה? והלא כבר נאמר כי ה' אלהיך אש אוכלה הוא!

אלא להלך אחר מדותיו של הקב"ה. מה הוא מלביש ערומים, דכתיב: ויעש ה' אלהים לאדם ולאשתו כתנות עור וילבישם, אף אתה הלבש ערומים.

The Sicha, Part 2

God's Tolerance for Adam and Eve



The answer can be found in the teaching of our Sages, “The righteous resemble their Creator.” We find that G-d Himself conducted Himself in the exact same manner. In the Torah portion of Bireishit, we read how “G-d made leather garments for Adam and his wife and He clothed them.” Our Sages note that the Torah practically begins by telling us about G-d’s act of kindness, and explain that we must follow G-d’s lead, “Just as he clothes the naked...you should clothe the naked,” because a person should always seek to emulate G-d’s behavior.

Now, Bireishit describes Adam’s life in the Garden of Eden both before the Sin of the Tree of Knowledge and afterwards—before he was expelled (as the Torah relates later on).

Notably, Adam lived in the Garden of Eden not only before the sin, but even after the sin of partaking of the forbidden fruit. G-d speaks of banishing him only later on, and only later carries out His decision.

It is surprising that he wasn’t immediately expelled; it would have seemed appropriate had he been chased out of the garden as an immediate consequence for partaking of the forbidden fruit.

...This is an important point: Adam transgressed G-d’s will, and the world’s spiritual state severely deteriorated. However, G-d didn’t punish him immediately. Instead, He waited, keeping Adam in the Garden, where he was surrounded by the greatest luxuries the world had to offer [the luxuries that we see as ‘reward’ were just commonplace realities for Adam in the Garden]. Then, G-d began a conversation with him—“Where are you?”—so that he could ‘catch’ himself and bring himself to repent. Moreover, G-d made them clothing and dressed them, which was the first step in helping them correct the mistake of the sin.

Think about it: Despite the terrible sin he just committed, especially taking into account that he was G-d’s personal handiwork, that he was living in the Garden of Eden, and that if he would only contain himself for three hours, he would be permitted to eat of the fruit! Nonetheless, G-d did an act of kindness—he dressed the very individual who had just created the potential of sinning for eternity.

[The Rebbe paused for a moment and commented:] We shouldn't talk negatively about Adam; in fact, there is an argument whether Moshiach will be greater than him or not...

The point is, although punishment is a direct outcome of sin, and therefore—seemingly—it should follow the sin immediately, nevertheless, G-d waits and gives an opening for repentance, because the individual might repent in a manner which not only uproots the sin altogether, but even transforms the sin into a merit, and then, not only won't he be 'banished from the Garden of Eden,' his 'garden' will be enhanced!

Every Person Has Something to Contribute

This occurrence—described in the Torah portion of Bireishit—taught Joseph that regardless of a person's moral or spiritual state, there is always reason to have patience and await a transformation, and this served as a guide for his behavior in Egypt:

Even the priests of the Pharaoh, the greatest symbol of Egypt's depravity—you never know what could become of them. Proof of the matter can be brought from Jethro, who served as a minister to Pharaoh and as a Midianite Priest, and was ultimately the source of an entirely new Torah portion. His Hebrew name, Yitro, means addition, representing his 'addition' to the Torah of Moses. This reflects the Talmud's teaching that penitents have an advantage over those who were born righteous.

...This is also the meaning of Joseph's blessing, "His land shall be blessed by G-d, with the sweetness of the heaven's dew, and with the waters that lie below." Joseph's task is to bring blessing even into the lowest spiritual depths, even to the priests of Egypt, because even they can become holy.

This is the power of Joseph, about whom it is written, "The generous man is blessed, for he gives of his bread to the poor."

Part 3 - The Lesson

The Sicha, Part 3

Patience for Your Fellow



As in every Torah matter, this story has an eternal lesson. The story of Joseph is relevant (not only to Joseph in his day but also) to every single person, in every place and in every generation—including Simchat Torah 1964 in Brooklyn:

Some people do not have the patience to deal with others. I did everything that was within my power, they say, but didn't manage to make a major impact on the state of Judaism. It would be better if I focus on my own spiritual growth.

Either way, they claim, our Sages declared that one's own life comes first. This is true even concerning people who are considered your spiritual equal; how much more so regarding people who are considered mere "creations" [as the Alter Rebbe points out in Tanya chapter 32], meaning that their only redeeming quality is that G-d created them.

...Today's Torah reading teaches us and empowers us, beginning from the Torah portion of V'zot Habracha with Joseph's blessing, his tolerance and kindness, and continuing with the Torah portion of Bireishit which speaks of G-d's benevolence. When we encounter someone who needs assistance in whatever which way, we must put everything aside and make a difference.

Simchat Torah 5725-1964
Toras Menachem 5725 vol. 1 pg. 138

Source 6

Isaiah 58: 7

ספר ישעיהו, פרק נ"ח, פסוק ז'



... share your bread with the hungry, and take the wretched poor into your home; when you see the naked, clothe him, and do not ignore your own flesh.

הָלוֹא פָּרוֹס לְרֹעֵב לֶחֶמְךָ,
וְעֲנִיִּים מְרוּדִים תְּבִיא בֵּית,
כִּי־תִרְאֶה עָרֹם וְכִסִּיתוּ,
וּמִבְשָׂרְךָ לֹא תִתְעַלֵּם:

A letter to A. David Hillman

מכתב לא' דוד הילמן



In your letter, you request specific instructions. Our Sages have given us a general directive in their commentary on the verse in Isaiah 57 which states, "Share your bread with the hungry, and take the wretched poor into your home; when you see the naked, clothe him." They explain that this refers to a person who is naked of Mitzvot, hungry for Torah, and who lacks the shelter of a House of Prayer. (Obviously, if he doesn't realize that he is lacking, he is even poorer).

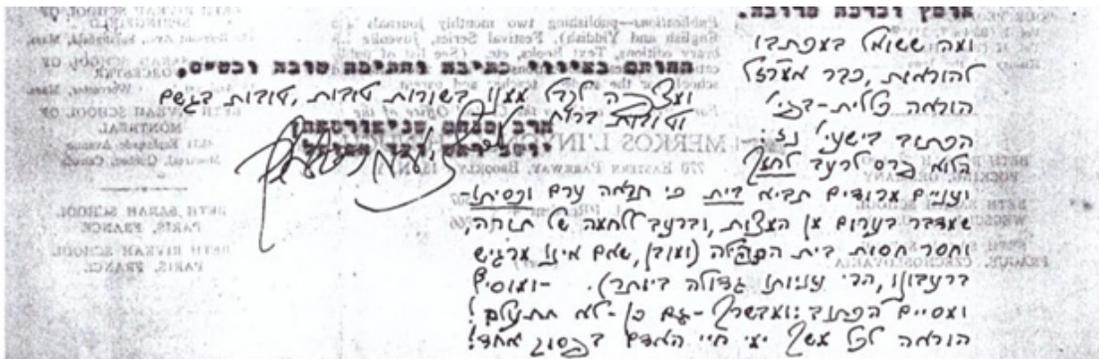
ומה ששואל במכתבו להוראות, כבר אמרז"ל הוראה כללית - בפ"י הכתוב בישע"י נז: הלא פרוס לרעב לחמך ועניימ מרודים תביא בית כי תראה ערום וכסיתו - שמדבר בערום מן המצות, וברעב ללחמה של תורה, וחסר חסות בית התפילה (ומובן, שאם אינו מרגיש ברעבונו, הרי עניותו גדולה ביותר).

And the verse concludes: "Do not ignore your own flesh" either!

- ומוסיף ומסיים הכתוב: ומבשרך - גם כן - לא תתעלם!

This is a lesson of a lifetime in one verse.

הוראה לכל משך ימי חיי האדם בפסוק אחד!



מיזם של "משרד השלוחים"

נוסד בימי השבעה לזכרון ולע"נ הרב גבריאל נח זוזגותו רבקה הי"ד
שלוחי הרבי במומבאי, הודו

