

וַיְהִי הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ לָבוֹא וַתִּרְדְּמָה נֶפֶלָה עַל־אַבְרָם וְהָנָה אִימָה חֲשִׁכָה גְדֹלָה נִפְלֹת עָלָיו:  
 וַיֹּאמֶר לְאַבְרָם יְדַע תֵּדַע כִּי־גֵר אֶהְיֶה זָרְעֲךָ בְּאֶרֶץ לֹא לָהֶם וַעֲבָדוּם וְעָנּוּ אֹתָם  
 אַרְבַּע מֵאוֹת שָׁנָה

As the sun was about to set, a deep sleep fell upon Abram, and a great dark dread descended upon him. And He said to Abram, “Know well that your seed shall be strangers in a land not theirs, and they shall be enslaved and afflicted four hundred years. (Genesis 15:13)

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### **A Brief Synopsis of Parashah Mikketz, Genesis 41:1-44:17**

- Joseph recognizes that Pharaoh’s two dreams are singular, and predicts seven years of prosperity followed by seven years of famine. He provides a solution to the impending tragedy (Gen. 41:1-36).
- Pharaoh elevates Joseph to vice-regent, and places him in charge of food collection & distribution. He is married to clerical royalty and has two children during the years of plenty. He was 17 years old when sold into slavery, is now 39 years old and at the top of his game, but the names Manasseh and Ephraim signal his internal ambivalence. (41:37-57).
- Joseph’s 10 brothers come to Egypt to buy food. He accuses them of being spies. They are imprisoned for 3 days after which Joseph holds Simeon hostage while the rest of the brothers return to Canaan. Reuben attributes their desperate situation to their former crime. Joseph overhears, and his heart breaks open. However, contrition is not the same as transformative repentance, and the ruse continues - they must return with Benjamin. Back in Canaan, they relate (in part) what happened (42:3-38).
- The 11 brothers return to Egypt after provisions are depleted and Judah has vouchsafed Benjamin’s safe return. Joseph asks about

Jacob's welfare. Upon seeing his younger brother and blessing him, Joseph's heart breaks open for the 2nd time, but he continues his measure-for-measure cat and mouse game. Benjamin is falsely accused of stealing and must remain in Egypt as Joseph's slave (43:1-44:17). Judah approaches and says, "What shall we say to my lord? What shall we speak and how shall we prove ourselves right? God has found out your servants' crime. " (Gen. 44:16) וַיֹּאמֶר הַיְהוּדִי הַמֵּה־נֹאמֵר לְאֲדֹנָי מִה־נִּדְבָר וּמִה־נִּצְטַדֵּק הָאֱלֹהִים מִצָּא אֶת־עֵינָיו עֲבָדֶיךָ הַנֶּנֶזְוּ עֲבָדִים לְאֲדֹנָי גַּם־אֲנִי־חָנוּ גַּם אֲשֶׁר־נִמְצָא הַגִּבִּיעַ בְּיָדִי:

The parashah concludes on an ominous and ironic note, duplicating the betrayal of a brother (now Benjamin, an innocent) and forcing the brothers' return to Jacob without the 2nd of his beloved sons.

"The parashah ends mid-action, leaving us to wonder: Will Joseph really enslave Benjamin? How will the brothers respond? Will Joseph reveal his true identity? What is his 'true' identity? Perhaps the Rabbis broke off the story here to suggest that our choices are moment-to-moment decisions, the path never certain until the time comes to act. This cliffhanger ending is also a signal of hope, because teshuvah is always open to us."

*The Torah: A Women's Commentary*, ed. T.C. Eskenazi & A.L. Weiss

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According to Jewish mystics, Joseph was the paradigm of virtue and righteousness, the personification of tzaddik yesod olam (foundation of the world), a man of such holiness that his merit sustains the entire world.

From the Hasidic master, **Aryeh Leib Alter, the Sefat Emet**, late 19th C. His commentary on 37:4:

וַיִּרְאוּ אֹחָיו כִּי־אֵתּוֹ אָהַב אֲבֵיהֶם מִכָּל־אָחָיו וַיִּשְׂנְאוּ אֹתוֹ וְלֹא יָכְלוּ דַבְּרוּ לְשָׁלָם

And when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of his brothers, they hated him so that they could not speak a friendly word to him. (Gen. 37:4)

“The verse doesn’t mention that Joseph’s brothers hated him because of his talebearing. In fact, it seems likely that Jacob did not tell them of the bad reports Joseph brought about them. Rather, it seems that the reason the Torah tells us that “Joseph brought ill reports about them to their father (vs. 2) is to establish a reason why Joseph had to be sold to Egypt....The meaning is thus: The task of the tsaddik is to raise up before God the good deeds of Israel. But Joseph was not yet sufficiently whole until after his trial; only then is he called Joseph the tsaddik, bringing up only the good deeds. *The Language of Truth*, trans. Arthur Green

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### **RAMBAM Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, Repentance 2:1**

אִי זֶה הֵיא תְּשׁוּבָה גְּמוּרָה. זֶה שֶׁבָּא לְיָדוֹ דְּבַר שְׁעֵבֵר בּוֹ וְאֶפְשָׁר בְּיָדוֹ לַעֲשׂוֹתוֹ וּפְרָשׁ וְלֹא עָשָׂה מִפְּנֵי הַתְּשׁוּבָה. לֹא מִיִּרְאָה וְלֹא מִכְּשָׁלוֹן כֹּחַ. כִּי צַד. הֵרִי שֶׁבָּא עַל אִשָּׁה בְּעֵבֶרָה וְלֹא אַחַר זְמַן נִתְיַחַד עִמָּה וְהוּא עוֹמֵד בְּאַהֲבָתוֹ בָּהּ וּבְכֹחַ גּוּפוֹ וּבְמַדִּינָה שְׁעֵבֵר בָּהּ וּפְרָשׁ וְלֹא עָבַר זֶהוּ בְּעַל תְּשׁוּבָה גְּמוּרָה.

What is complete repentance? He who once more had in it in his power to repeat a violation, but separated himself therefrom, and did not do it because of repentance, not out of fear or lack of strength. For example? One who knew a woman sinfully, and after a process of time he met her again privately, and he still loving her as theretofore, and he being in a state of potency, and the meeting is in the same land where the sin was first committed, if he parted without sinning, he has attained complete repentance.

herefrom that if he remembered his Creator and did repent ere he died, he was forgiven. Sefaria translation

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What is it to be really 'seen' - known and appreciated for who you are?

From the beginning of Genesis, when G/d's inquires of Adam and Eve:

אֵיכָּה - Ayekah - where are you? - they are self-consciously aware of themselves and hide.

There are many examples in Genesis of being in disguise, frequently using clothing as a means of evasion. Our text plays on this irony using the key verbal root N-C-R

וַיֹּסֶף הוּא הַשְּׁלִיט עַל-הָאָרֶץ הוּא הַמְּשֻׁבֵּר לְכָל-עַם הָאָרֶץ וַיִּבְאוּ אֹחֵי יוֹסֵף וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ-לוֹ אַפַּיִם אֲרָצָה:

וַיֵּרָא יוֹסֵף אֶת-אֹחָיו וַיִּכְרָם וַיִּתְנַכֵּר אֲלֵיהֶם וַיְדַבֵּר אֲתָם קָשׁוֹת וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם מַאֲיֵן בָּאתֶם וַיֹּאמְרוּ מֵאָרֶץ כְּנָעַן לְשִׁבְר־אֶכְל:

וַיִּכַּר יוֹסֵף אֶת-אֹחָיו וְהֵם לֹא הִכְרָהוּ:

וַיִּזְכֹּר יוֹסֵף אֶת הַחֲלֻמוֹת אֲשֶׁר חָלַם לָהֶם וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם מִרְגְּלִים אַתֶּם לִרְאוֹת אֶת-עֵרְוַת הָאָרֶץ בָּאתֶם

As for Joseph, he was the regent of the land, he was the provider to all the people of the land. And Joseph's brothers came and bowed down to him, their faces to the ground. **And Joseph saw his brothers and recognized them, and he played the stranger to them and spoke harshly to them,** and said to them, "Where have you come from?" And they said, "From the land of Canaan, to buy food." **And Joseph recognized his brothers but they did not recognize him.** And Joseph remembered the dreams he had dreamed about them, and he said to them, "You are spies! To see the land's nakedness you have come." (Gen. 42:5-9)

## Radak on Genesis 42:7:1

וּיְכִירָם... וּיְכִירָם, our sages explain that the fact that Joseph had left home when he did not have a beard yet, whereas his brothers already had beards accounts for the fact that whereas they did not recognise him, he recognised them. (quoted by Rashi) It is possible that they would have recognised him in spite of his having grown a beard if they had not seen the man confronting them dressed in the uniform of the highest ranking nobles of the land. They could not imagine that this man could be Joseph even if there had been points of resemblance. The idea that someone who had been sold into slavery had risen to such power was too mind-boggling for them.

Thematically, this seeing/knowing - not seeing/not knowing, comes into prominent play in two prequel stories using the key thematic verb N-C-R.

- 1) When the brothers send Joseph's torn and bloody tunic to Jacob, they cruelly say, "This we found. Recognize, pray, {הִכָּרְנָא} is it your son's tunic or not?" And he recognized it {וַיִּכְיֶרֶה} Gen. 37:32-33
- 2) When Tamar is about to be executed for her adultery (with the uncomprehending Judah) she reveals his paternity: "Recognize, pray, {הִכָּרְנָא} whose are this seal-and-cord and this staff?" And Judah recognized them {וַיִּכְר} and he said, "She is more in the right than I....Gen 38:25-26

After 22 years absent from his birth family, a vizier, family man and master administrator ("And all the earth came to Egypt, to Joseph to get provisions - Gen 41:57"), Joseph recognizes his brothers, and seems to revert to adolescence. Was there a different way in which Joseph may have chosen to test his brothers in order to determine if they had repented? Was anger and recrimination the only appropriate response?

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“There are many reasons to work toward forgiveness, but most experts say the most important is simple: it’s good for us. Forgiveness releases us from forces that weigh us down: feelings of anger, resentment, and powerlessness; fantasies of revenge; and preoccupations with the past. All of these work to displace our energy, energy we need to move into the future. When we allow these feelings and preoccupations to fester, it hurts us. One friend describes the reasons for forgiving as follows: ‘Holding on to resentment is like drinking poison and then waiting for the other person to die.’

Shlomo Carlebach, the charismatic singing rebbe, came to America as a teenager fleeing the Nazis. Before he died, he returned to Austria and Germany to give concerts. Someone asked him: ‘Why are you doing this? Don’t you hate them?’ His answer: ‘If I had two souls, I’d devote one to hating them. But since I have only one, I don’t want to waste it on hating.’”

*Wise Aging, Rabbi Rachel Cowan & Dr. Linda Thal*

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## **Kohlberg’s 6 Stages of Moral Development 1958 - Moral reasoning is motivated by:**

### *Pre-conventional (pre-moral) Stage*

1. Obedience and punishment: “How can I avoid punishment?”
2. Self-interest orientation/peer pressure: “What’s in it for me?”

### *Conventional Stage*

3. Following social norms/good interpersonal relationships & conformity: “I’m a good citizen”
4. Maintaining social order & authority: “I collaborate to maintain law and order”

### *Post-Conventional Stage*

5. Social contract orientation and individual rights -consciousness building: "I disobey wrong rules and act consistently with my own principles. Rules can be changed when necessary"
  6. Universal ethical principles for mutual respect: "I have an obligation to disobey unjust laws and commit myself to follow the ones that are grounded in justice and wellbeing - I answer to an inner conscience"
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### שבת קנג א:ה-ז 153a:5-7

תִּנְנָה הֵתָם, רַבִּי אֱלִיעֶזֶר אוֹמֵר: שׁוּב יוֹם אֶחָד לְפָנַי מִיַּתְּךָ. שְׂאֵלוּ תַלְמִידָיו אֶת רַבִּי אֱלִיעֶזֶר: וְכִי אָדָם יוֹדֵעַ אֵיזְהוּ יוֹם יָמוּת? אָמַר לָהֶן: וְכָל שָׁכֵן, יָשׁוּב הַיּוֹם,

**We learned there** in a mishna.....בְּתַשׁוּבָה. **Rabbi Eliezer says: Repent one day before your death. Rabbi Eliezer's students asked him: But does a person know the day on which he will die? He said to them: All the more so this is a good piece of advice, and one should repent today lest he die tomorrow; and by following this advice one will spend his entire life in a state of repentance**

