

# Parsha Thought

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לזכר נשמת מלכה בת יהושע - משה צבי בן גדליה

לזכר נשמת דוד בן אברהם

## VAYEISHEV

After Yosef revealed his dreams, his brothers were jealous of him. Then, the posuk says, וַיֵּלְכוּ לְרֵעוֹתָם בְּשֶׁחֶם. Now, his brothers went to pasture their father's flock in Shechem. Now, notice that there are two dots on top of the word אֶתְּ. Rashi explains that the Torah is telling us that they didn't go to pasture the sheep, rather they went to pasture themselves, meaning they went to eat, drink and indulge. Now, how do we understand this? The Noam Elimelech, Rav Galinsky amongst others, ask, why are we disparaging the shevatim? How can we say that about the holy shevatim? Shouldn't we be judging favorably? The Noam Elimelech says that the sheep we are referring to are the Jewish people. The shevatim were concerned how the Jewish people would fare in exile. They knew that it would be in their merit that the Jewish people would survive the exile. The meaning of they were pasturing themselves is, that they were working on themselves to be more holy and to perfect themselves to be a merit for the Jewish people in the future. Reb Yonasan Eibeshitz says that Yaakov had wanted Yosef to be the leader of the family; that's why he made him the special tunic. The brothers refused that leadership; that's the meaning of the verse, they went to pasture themselves. They wanted to be their own shepherds without Yosef's leadership.

When Rav Galinsky was in Siberia, he was assigned to clean the prison cells. Most of the cells belonged to Lithuanian prisoners, who were taken captive when Russians invaded Lithuania. They were mostly members of the ruling class, government ministers, military officers and church leaders. One day, two of these prisoners came to Rav Galinsky to adjudicate for them. One of them had served as the head of the Lithuanian parliament. He had a grievance against his friend, the former Minister of Justice. Because of the intense cold of the Siberian tundra, the forced laborers wore several pairs of pants when they went out into the snow. The former head of parliament had woken up that morning to find that all his pants had been stolen except the ones he was wearing. He found out that it was the former Minister of Justice who had taken them. He demanded that the man return what he had stolen, but the minister protested that he didn't have them; he had used them to bribe the chef so that he would get the meat and vegetables from the huge soup pot. To give his pants to the other man wasn't an option because one was tall and wide and the other was short and scrawny. Before Rav Galinsky ruled, he asked the Minister of Justice a question. "You were responsible for enforcing the law in your country, correct?" "Yes", he admitted. "What was the punishment for stealing?" He said, "a fine and incarceration". "It's ironic isn't it that now you're a thief".

Rav Galinsky asked him how many times were the thieves yeshiva students? He couldn't remember any. "Do you know why I asked?" It's because we are different; with you, the authorities force others, the citizens, to keep the law. We enforce the law on ourselves." "My verdict?" I told him he had to give the good soup to the head of the parliament, since the pants used for the bribe belonged to him. Rav Galinsky continued, this is the meaning of going to pasture themselves, a person shouldn't need someone else to force him to do what's right. If we can work on ourselves to reach a level where we don't need a shepherd to force us to do what's right. To reach the goal of doing the right thing on our own. If we have that, then no matter where we find ourselves, we will be able to overcome and do what's right!