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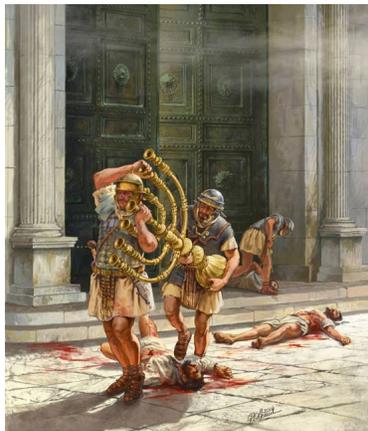
Stories with a Twist [9]

"Woe, Woe That I Angered My Creator!

(A Hanukkah Story)

(Insights into Genesis Rabbah 65:22)

(Revised on December 2018)



Background to Our Story

The Temple's Menorah (Exodus 25: 31-36)

31. And you shall make a menorah of pure gold. The menorah shall be made of hammered work; its base and its stem, its goblets, its knobs, and its flowers shall [all] be [one piece] with it. **32.** And six branches coming out of its sides: three menorah branches from its one side and three menorah branches from its second side. **33.** Three decorated goblets on one branch, a knob and a flower, and three decorated goblets on one branch, a knob and a flower; so for the six branches that come out of the menorah. **34.** And on [the stem of] the menorah [shall be] four decorated goblets, its knobs and its flowers. **35.** And a knob under the two branches from it, and a knob under the two branches from it, and a knob under the two branches from it; so for the six branches that come out of the menorah. **36.** Their knobs and their branches shall [all] be [one piece] with it; all of it [shall be] one hammered mass of pure gold.

No Outsiders Allowed Near the Temple without a Reason (Numbers 1:51)

51. When the Tabernacle is set to travel, the Levites shall dismantle it; and when the Tabernacle camps, the Levites shall erect it; any outsider [non Levite] who approaches shall be put to death.

The Unique Sanctity of the Heichal (the Holy Chamber within the Temple) and the Prohibition of Entering There at All Times, Even for Kohanim (Leviticus 16:2 & Rashi)

2. And the Lord said to Moses: Speak to your brother Aaron, that he should not come at all times into the Holy within the dividing curtain, in front of the cover that is upon the ark, so that he should not die, for I appear over the ark cover in a cloud.

And the Lord said to Moses: Speak to your brother Aaron, that he should not come [at all times into the Holy] so that he should not die the way his sons died.

— [Torath Kohanim 16:3]

so that he should not die for if he does enter, he will die. — [Torath Kohanim 16:3]

for I appear...in a cloud "For I continuously appear there with My pillar of cloud, and therefore, since My Divine Presence is revealed there, he must be careful not to accustom himself to enter." This is its simple meaning. Our Rabbis, however, interpreted [it as follows]: He shall not come except with the cloud of incense on Yom Kippur. - [Yoma 53a]

Taxes in the Roman Empire

Tax farming was originally a Roman practice whereby the burden of tax collection was removed from the Roman State to private individuals or groups. In essence, these individuals or groups paid the taxes for a certain area and for a certain period of time, and then attempted to cover their outlay by collecting money or saleable goods from the people within that area. The system was set up by Gaius Gracchus in 123 BC primarily to increase the efficiency of tax collection within Rome itself but the system quickly spread to the Provinces.^[2] nh(07)

Within the Roman Empire, these private individuals and groups that collected taxes in lieu of the bid they had paid to the state were known as publicani. The system was widely abused, and reforms were enacted by Augustus and Diocletian.

Tax farming is not identical with privatized tax collection, where private individuals or groups collected taxes and give them to the state in return for a fee. Tax farming is speculative, meaning that the private individual or group must invest their own money initially to pay off the tax debt, against the hope of collecting a larger sum subsequently (hence "farming"). Greater detail is provided by Philo (30 B.C.E.-45 A.D.), who gives voice to the Jewish tradition of hatred for those who placed themselves outside the law and provides a vivid image of why tax collectors were so hated by the provincial population unable to protect itself:

They [Romans] deliberately choose as tax collectors men who are absolutely ruthless and savage, and give them the means of satisfying their greed. These people who are mischief-makers by nature, gain added immunity because of their "superior orders," obsequious in everything where their masters are concerned, leave undone no cruelty of any kind and recognize no equity or gentleness . . . as they collect the taxes they spread confusion and chaos everywhere. They exact money not only from people's property but also from their bodies by means of personal injuries, assault and completely unheard of forms of torture. From: Philo, *De Specialibus Legibus* 2.19 (93-95) (trans. Maxwell-Stuart, supra note 35 at 160).

The Text: Genesis Rabbah 65:22

דָּבָר אַחֵר, וַיִּרְחַ אֶת רִישׁ בְּגָדָיו וַיִּבְרַכְהוּ, כְּגוֹן יוֹסֵף מְשִׁיתָא וַיִּקְוֹם אִישׁ צְרוּרוֹת. יוֹסֵף מְשִׁיתָא, בְּשַׁעָה שֶׁבִקְשׂוּ שׂוֹנְאִים לְהַכְנִס לְהַר הַבַּיִת אָמְרוּ יִכְנָס מֵהֶם וּבָהֶם תִּחְלָה, אָמְרִין לִיה עוֹל וּמָה דְאֵת מְפִיק דִּידָהּ, נִכְנָס וְהוֹצִיא מְנוּרָה שֶׁל זָהָב, אָמְרוּ לוֹ אֵין דְּרַכּוֹ שֶׁל הַדְּיוּט לְהַשְׁתַּמֵּשׁ בָּזוּ, אֲלֵא עוֹל זְמַן תִּתְּנִיגוֹת וּמָה דְאֵת מְפִיק דִּידָהּ, וְלֹא קִבֵּל עָלָיו. אָמַר רַבִּי פִּינְחָס נִתְּנוּ לוֹ מְכָס שֶׁלֹּשׁ שָׁנִים, וְלֹא קִבֵּל עָלָיו, אָמַר לֹא דִּי שְׁהַכְעַסְתִּי לְאֱלֹהֵי פַעַם אַחַת אֲלֵא שְׁאַכְעִיסְנוּ פַעַם שְׁנַיָהּ. מָה

עשו לו נתנו אותו בתמור של תרשים וקיו מנסרים בו, הנה מצוה ואומר נוי איי איי שיהכעסתי לבוראי.

Joseph Meshitha: When the enemies desired to enter the Temple mount, they said: 'Let one of them [the Jews] enter first.' Said they to him [Joseph]: 'Enter, and whatever you bring out is yours.' So he went in and brought out a golden lamp. Said they to him: 'It is not fitting for a common person to use this, but go in again and what you bring out will be yours'; he, however, refused. R. Phinehas said: 'They offered him three years' taxes, yet he still refused. 'Is it not enough that I have angered my God once,' he exclaimed, 'that I should anger Him again!' What did they do to him? They put him into a carpenter's vice and sawed him in sunder, while he cried out, 'Woe, woe that I angered my Creator!'

Comprehension and Analysis Questions

? Why did "the enemies" desire to enter the Temple mount?

? Why didn't "the enemies" enter the Temple themselves?

? Why did "the enemies" ask Joseph Meshitah to enter the Temple?

Answer 1 _____

Answer 2 _____

Bonus ? Why did Joseph go in?

? Why did Joseph bring a (the) golden lamp (Menorah Shel Zahav)?

Bonus ? What did "the enemies" mean by "It is not fitting for a common person to use this"?

Bonus ? How did Joseph understand "It is not fitting for a common person to use this"?

? Why did Joseph refuse to enter the Temple a second time?

? Why did "the enemies" offer Joseph three years' taxes?

? Why did "the enemies" put Joseph into a carpenter's vise and saw him in sunder?

Answer 1 _____

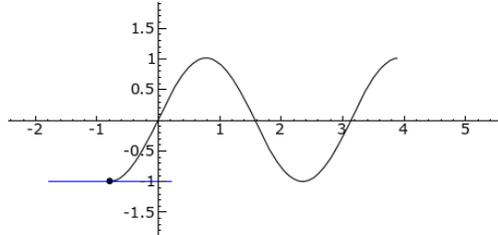
Answer 2 _____

? What was Joseph lamenting at the end of our story?

More Analysis Questions

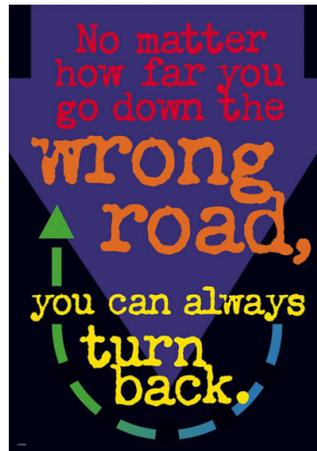
? What is the inflection point in our story? Why?

An Inflection Point is where a curve changes from Concave upward to Concave downward (or vice versa)



“The Twist” – Or the Lessons We Can Learn from the Text

Twist # 1 (This is one of my favorites)



Twist # 2: Have you ever had an inflection point in your life? If so, what was it? What will be the inflection point in your story?