**Questions for Understanding and Reflection**

1. How were the readings for last Shabbat fulfilled for you during last week?

This week I maximised my time with a Living Torah to try to bask in the glow of the next world.

1. From all the readings for this Shabbat which verse or verses impressed your heart and fired your imagination?

I was quite impressed with the “circumcision knife” found in our Torah and Nazarean Codicil.

1. What questions were asked of Rashi regarding Gen. 49:1?

**and I will tell you, etc.** – What did he want to tell his sons and why didn’t he tell them?

1. What questions were asked of Rashi regarding Gen. 49:4?

**[You have] the restlessness of water** - What was manifestation of this restlessness?

**you shall not have superiority** – In what way was he denied superiority.

**the restlessness** – What is the meaning of the Hebrew word: פַּחַז?

**for you ascended upon your father’s couch; then you profaned** – What was profaned?

**my bed** – What is the meaning of the Hebrew word: יְצוּעִי?

1. What questions were asked of Rashi regarding Gen. 49:5?

**Simeon and Levi are brothers** – In what manner did they show that they were brothers?

**stolen instruments** - What was stolen and from who did the steal?

**their weapons** – What is the meaning of the Hebrew word: מְכֵרֽתֵיהֶם?

1. What questions were asked of Rashi regarding Gen. 49:6?

**Let my soul not enter their counsel** – To what incident is this referring?

**my honor, you shall not join** – How was this manifested?

**my honor, you shall not join** – How is kvode -כָּבוֹדto be understood given it’s tense?

**their assembly** – Which assembly is this?

**for in their wrath they killed a man** – Who is this man that they killed?

**and with their will they hamstrung a bull** – what was this incident and when did it occur?

1. What questions were asked of Rashi regarding Gen. 49:7?

**Cursed be their wrath for it is mighty** – Why were they cursed in a ‘blessing’?

**I will separate them throughout Jacob** – How were they separated?

1. What questions were asked of Rashi regarding Gen. 49:8?

**Judah, [as for] you, your brothers will acknowledge you** – What was Judah’s reaction to his blessing?

**Your hand will be at the nape of your enemies** – When did this occur?

**your father’s sons** – Why is the focus placed on the father rather than the mother?

1. What questions were asked of Rashi regarding Gen. 50:10?

**the threshing floor of the thorn-bushes** – How is this to be interpreted?

1. What questions were asked of Rashi regarding Gen. 50:15?

**Now Joseph’s brothers saw that their father had died** - What does it mean that they saw?

**Perhaps Joseph will hate us** – What is the meaning of the Hebrew word: לוּ ?

1. What questions were asked of Rashi regarding Gen. 50:23?

**on Joseph’s knees** - How is this to be understood?

1. Please provide a “Peshat” and a “Midrashic” interpretation of Ps. 40:5 (cf. Rashi vs. Targum)?

Pshat: The Jews have betrayed the faith and become apostate. This is treason against HaShem.

Drash: Disobedioent yet still inside the faith and covenant. E.g. they have failed to teach the Gentiles.

1. Please provide a “Peshat” and a “Midrashic” interpretation of Ps. 40:8 (cf. Rashi vs. Targum)?

**Pshat**: The Torah was written for David’s sake. The Torah was written for the sake of the king of Israel and therefore to the body of Mashiach. We are ‘in’ Mashiach, therefore we are a royal household.

**Drash**: When we study this Torah, then we know that we have eternal life. This Torah was written for our sake.

1. According to Psalm 40:8, what is the “Davidic Perspective” as we are confronted with tasks, things and events, before us?

David’s perspective was to keep his eyes on the goal and not the present circumstances.

1. Compare Is. 43:22-24 with Psalm 40:7-8. How can these two passages be reconciled at the Drash level?

A third verse can come and reconcile these two verses: If there is obedience to the Torah, then sacrifices are not necessary. **Psalm 40:9. I desire to do Your will, O God;** **and Your Torah is contained in my deepest self.**

1. In what way is the simile of the mustard seed appropriate for this Sabbath?

This Shabbat is Tu B’Shevat, the new year for the trees, hence we expect to see a tree in our reading. As the mustard seed is hidden when it is planted, just like the fruit is hidden at this time of year when we plan our tithe.

(What is a tree doing in an herb garden? Clearly it belongs as a spice. Just as our hakhamim have no loyalty to the synagogue – so that they can judge fairly, rather their chief loyalty is to the Torah – which defines justice.)

1. Why are the Hakhamim in the simile of the mustard seed compared to it?

They are both hidden (out of the limelight) when they are working and they are both very small and insignificant when compared to Israel and the full grown tree. Further, they both contain all of the memories for the finished product.

1. What Kal VaHomer argument is implicit in the text of Acts 11:1-18?

If at Sinai they received the Nefesh Yehudi after circumcision and immersion, how much more did the Gentiles require circumcision and immersion before they received the nefesh Yehudi.

1. What relationship is there between Rashi’s commentary at Psalm 40:8 and Acts 11:1-18 (cf. the above answer to Q. 18)?

They both speak of being bound to the same covenant (including circumcision and immersion, and agreeing to obey the Torah), first for the Jew then for the Gentile.

1. ‎Taking into consideration all the readings for this Shabbat what is the prophetic statement for this ‎week?‎

Lets all become mustard seeds and cultivate more mustard seeds. We can do much with very little.