

This drosha is dedicated to the memory of our dear friend Haim Wolf tz"l, חיים בן זלמן וולף on his 3rd Yahrzeit, כ"ב כסלו . I would like to think that he is with us now listening.

I have called this drosha "Yosef the Shlemazel."

As you know a "Shlemazel" is one who has no luck and a "Shlemiel" is one who is always having accidents. As the old saying goes "The Shlemiel spills the soup on the Shlemazel."

So was Yacov's son, Yosef, a Shlemazel or was he perhaps a "Shmendrik", a stupid person .

Let's examine the facts.

37:2 and Yosef brought evil report of them (his brothers) to their father.

Rashi says that "whatever he was able to speak evil about them, he used to report." Not exactly designed to make his brothers like him.

37:3 Now Israel loved Yosef more than all his children ... and made him a coat of (many) colors.

Now this caused his brothers to hate him and presumably Yosef knew this, so why did he tell them his dreams – which surely would only cause them to hate him more. His father sent him to see his brothers, why didn't he say to his father that he didn't want to go because they hated him and he was afraid something would happen ? As he was coming his brothers decided to kill him.

37:18 and they saw him from far off ... and they conspired (against) him to slay him.

They were going to kill him and then throw him in a pit, but Reuven persuaded them not to kill him, but just throw him in the pit, intending to come back later and take him out of the pit, but what happened ?

37:28 and (there) passed by Midianites ... and they drew ... Yosef out of the pit ... and sold Yosef to the Ishmaelites ... and brought Yosef into Egypt.

Now in Egypt he worked for Potiphar and did very well, but Potiphar's wife wanted him and so

39:11 ... he went into the house to do his work and there was none of the men of the house there within

So why didn't he leave straight away, after all he knew the danger of being alone with Potiphar's wife ?

Eventually things go well for Yosef, he becomes second in line to Paroah, in charge of all his affairs, ruling over the land of Egypt. He has two children, Efraim and Manasheh, whom we mention every Friday as examples of how children should be. He is reconciled with his brothers and brings his father down to Egypt to live with him. Do we now have a happy ending to Yosef's life ?

No – he made his brothers swear an oath to take his bones out Egypt when he dies and take them to Canaan as he did for Yacov, but they didn't – did they forget or what – and only 400 years later did Moshe come and take the bones with him during the Exodus.

Even today, Yosef doesn't seem to have any more luck. His supposed tomb, in Nablus, was ransacked in October 2000, the carved stone covering the grave was destroyed in February 2003. In 2007, it was discovered that the tomb had been vandalized, and filled with burning garbage. In February 2008, vandals set burning tires inside the tomb. As a response, Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas declared the tomb a Muslim holy site, and downplayed reports of joint Israeli-Palestinian cooperation on restoring the tomb.

So what do you think ?

Was Yosef a "Shlemazel" or a "Shmendrik" or both ?