PARR 2025 DRASH – VAYECHI
RABBI DAN MOSKOVITZ

Midrash Tanhuma imagines the moment: "When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they grew frightened, 'What if Joseph still bears a grudge against us!" (Genesis 50:15)

What did they see that made them afraid? As they were returning from burying their father, they saw that Joseph turned off the road and went to look at the pit into which his brothers had cast him."

His brothers thought that Joseph was dwelling on the terrible deed they had done to him years before.

What was Joseph thinking as he peered into that fateful hole? In what way did he remember that bleak moment? The midrash answers: "Joseph stood up and prayed, 'Blessed is God who performed a miracle for me in this place!"

The echo of the message of the Hanukah dreidel should be heard for us as well. Sometimes, maybe often times we need physical things to trigger emotional memories.

In retrospect, Joseph is able to piece together the harrowing events of his life into a story that reveals God's intent. "Although you intended me harm," he says, "Elohim Chashavah l'tovah/ God intended it for good, to bring about the present result— L'hachayot Am Rov/ to keep alive many people" (Genesis 50:20).

How many of us have lived through desperate and confusing moments in our lifetime (maybe just this past week?) only to look back years or days later and see within them blessing, or the seeds of who we've become; a step in a journey we could not have predicted?

None of us likes to fall, none of us likes to find ourselves at the bottom of a pit. Victor Frankl wrote, "The meaning of our existence is not invented by ourselves, but rather detected…What matters, therefore, is not the meaning of life in general, but rather the specific meaning of a person's life at a given moment."

I'm so grateful for this conference planned by my best friend Rick Steinberg and its theme so beautifully presented by our scholar Ellen Lewis. "The inner life of a Rabbi". Its been 8 years since if have been to PARR, prior to that, while I lived and worked in LA I think I came every year for close to 20 years.

This place sparks many memories, sweet and sour, joys and oys – but at the core of it all being amongst colleagues reminds me of the rabbi I intended to be, new colleagues and mentors, you're the physical reminder of my spiritual journey is this often sacred, at times exhausting calling. Here in this place, amongst our hevre the intention is only for good and that is a blessing.