



"Written By A Multifaceted Student Body, Whose Ambition is to Enrich Your Study of the Parsha"

PARSHAT MIKEITZ

~ כ"ז כסלו תשע"א ~

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ROYALTY: THE RIGHT OF REUVEN OR YEHUDA?

MRS. ORA LEE KANNER

Both Reuven and Yehuda were guilty of heinous crimes and both repented. Why then was Yehuda the heir to *malchut* (royalty) and not Reuven, the elder of the two?

In order to elucidate this phenomenon, the Torah purposely records two occasions wherein Reuven is pitted against Yehuda, insinuating a contrast that prompts an analysis of the two characters.

In *Parshat Vayeishev*, both Reuven and Yehuda offer pleas to spare Yoseph from murder. Reuven begs his brothers, "Let us not kill a soul", "*lo nakenu nafesh*," whereas Yehuda pleads, "Let us not kill him as he is our brother," "*Ma betza kee naharog et acheenu*."

In *Parshat Miketz*, once again the two plead with Yaakov to allow them to return to Egypt with Binyamin. To convince Yaakov of their absolute commitment to ensuring the safety of Binyamin, each offers a loss to themselves that they believe would commensurate with, or be greater than the loss that Yaakov would endure if anything happened to Binyamin.

Reuven begins with an offer to Yaakov of "two for one," to subject himself to the loss of two of his children, if anything happens to one of Yaakov's children. He views the loss of Binyamin as the loss of a soul, for which he is willing to pay double.

Yehuda offers to suffer the loss of his relationship with his father, as he recognizes that the pain of losing Binyamin is that of losing his irreplaceable relationship with his son.

In both instances, Reuven assessed people as independent precious souls. Yehuda saw in people, not only their individual worth, but the inestimable value of their familial relationship.

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EVERYONE LOVES THE UNDERDOG

SHALVA GINSPARG ('11)

In *Parshat Mikeitz*, Pharaoh is confronted with two dreams- one in which seven lean cows consume seven fat cows, and the other in which seven thin stalks of grain swallow seven healthy stalks. The Torah explains that after envisioning these discomfiting dreams Pharaoh's "spirit was agitated"— agitation most probably caused by his advisors' failure to provide a satisfactory interpretation of the dreams. Granted, the Egyptians may have been superstitious, but Pharaoh's bitter angst over his "un-interpreted" dreams seems unwarranted. What was it about these specific dreams that perturbed Pharaoh so greatly?

Rabbi Frand, quoting Rav Shimon Schwab, suggests that these dreams represent something of much more significance to Pharaoh than simply the trivial stories that lie at the surface. In actuality, Pharaoh is terribly unsettled because the underlying message of these dreams – "the triumph of the weak over the mighty" -stands as the antithesis to his interpretation of the world. As a dictator, Pharaoh believes that power grants him the right to enforce his rule on the subjects of Egypt. Yet, his dreams depict a situation in which such an entitlement does not exist. Pharaoh is so flabbergasted by his dreams because he perceives them to be signs from Heaven that his kingship is based on a faulty premise and will no longer continue to be secured despite his inarguable strength.

It is no coincidence, says Rav Schwab, that *Parshat Mikeitz* always falls out on Chanukah. The emphasis of this holiday is the commemoration of the miraculous victory of the few Maccabees over the many Greeks. The Chanukah story, much like Pharaoh's dreams, highlights Hashem's ability to transcend the laws of nature. Physical strength and social power are no match against His will. Hashem's underdog always comes out on top.

Source: <http://www.torah.org/learning/ravfrand/5763/mikeitz.html>

"I WARNED YOU..."

MATTHEW SILKIN ('14)

When you were younger, you probably encountered a situation similar to the following: your friend is playing with someone else's belongings and ends up losing them. Now, he warns you not to spill his secret – that he lost another child's toys – out of fear of getting in trouble. You, being the responsible kid, tell on him anyway. When your friend finds out that you ratted him out, he turns to you and yells, "Why did you tell on me? Now not only will I be in trouble for using his things without asking, but I'm also going to be punished for losing his toys!"

Back in *Parshat Vayeishev*, the brothers have a diabolical plan to sell Yosef to the Midianites, soak his coat in blood, and bring it back to Yaakov under the guise that an animal tragically attacked and killed Yosef. Now, fourteen years and one parsha later, the brothers are sent by Yosef to bring Binyamin down to Egypt from Canaan to prove that they are not spies. As the brothers gloomily anticipate their fate as inmates, Reuven interrupts and reprimands them saying, "Now look! I told you not to hurt Yosef, and do you see what happens? Hashem is avenging his blood!"

Although Reuven's point is valid, isn't this a bad time to be rebuking the brothers? Shimon is imprisoned, and now they must return to get Binyamin, a request that will certainly break their father's heart. So why is Reuven "salting the wounds" by laying the blame for this catastrophe on the brothers?

In reality, Reuven is not trying to further reprimand the brothers, but is instead giving them constructive criticism. On the surface, he seems to be acting like the young child mentioned above: "Why did you hurt Yosef by taking such drastic measures? Now, not only are we in trouble for selling him, but he's probably dead at this point and it's all your fault!" In actuality, Reuven is relaying the following message: "Now that we see the result of treating one of our brothers with contempt, let us not fight with each other anymore. Who knows what could happen next?"

Reuven teaches us an amazing lesson that criticism and rebuke are completely unrelated. When we give criticism, we are being supportive and sympathetic. When we give rebuke, we are primarily acting out of anger. Whether we are criticizing or rebuking, we must always remember to act with good intent.

THANKING G-D FOR “MISFORTUNE”

ZEVI LITWIN (‘13)

Rabeinu Yonah writes that when one receives rebuke from Hashem, and in turn changes his/her ways, it is important that one not only thank Him for the benefit- the changes that came from the rebuke- but also recognize and appreciate that which preceded the rebuke, for these tribulations triggered the rebuke.

Similarly, in the Midrash Tehillim there is a maxim that states, “If I did not fall, I could not have arisen; if I had not been in darkness, it would not have been light for me.” We do not celebrate our mere salvation; rather, the suffering and deliverance are to be seen as one indivisible unit, and we must recognize G-d’s providential hand in it.

The Sfat Emet explains that the eight days of Chanukah are designated to be days of *hallel ve’hoda’ah* (praise and thanksgiving). *Hallel*, for the salvation; *hoda’ah*, for the battles that preceded the extraordinary victory. Thus, in the prayer *Al Hanisim* that is added to our *davening* during Chanukah, we not only thank G-d for the unbelievable miracles that He performed, but also for the battles that the Jewish people fought.

Our modern day inability to perceive the Divine in our suffering is due to our limited, and almost skewed, outlook on life. In this world we recite both blessings, *Hatov Vehameitiv*, on good fortune and *Dayan Ha’emet* on misfortune. In the World to Come, we will say *Hatov Vehameitiv* on everything. In the next world, when we look back, we will understand that all the misfortunes upon which we made the blessing *Dayan Ha’emet* were really for our benefit.

Reb Shraga Feivel Mendlowitz uses the following *mashal*, allegory, to elaborate on this idea: When a small child draws a person, it is obvious from the start that the circle on top is the face, the line going down is the body, and the other lines are the arms and legs. But, when a master artist paints a picture, he may start off with a stroke of bright red, which, to the untrained eye appears to ruin the canvas. Only when the painting is completed will it be obvious why the stroke of red was needed.

Similarly, Hashem is painting a masterful panorama of history. As the painting begins to form, there are strokes that seem unnecessary or even detrimental, but when it is finished, and we reflect on what was “drawn”, we will see that every stroke was necessary for the perfection of the picture.

With all of this in mind, we may now ask the question, “Why does *Mikeitz* end in the middle of the story, with Binyamin’s fate hanging in the balance, rather than with Yosef revealing himself?” The *Chachamim* who divided the weekly Torah readings intentionally ended *Mikeitz* with a cliff-hanger to teach us that although all that Hashem does is ultimately for the good, sometimes we must wait until “next week’s *sedrah*” to understand how this is so. Similarly, when we encounter challenges in our daily lives we must have the *emunah*, the faith in Hashem, that the eventual outcome will be for our benefit.

Mrs. Kanner continued

While hundreds of Jews were being kept captive in Entebbe, under the whims of ruthless hijackers, the congregants of Rabbi Chaim Shmuelevitz asked him to say a few words to inspire their *davening*. The Rav got up, approached the shtender and began to weep. With tears rolling down his face, he said, I have only this to say to you: *daven* as if each elderly woman is your mother and every elderly man, your father, *daven* as if every woman is your sister and every man is your brother, *daven* as if every child is your son and your daughter.

Why Yehuda?

The King of Israel has to be one who views every member of *Am Yisrael* as his family. Only then could his treatment of them be with the love and concern that is reserved for family. Only then could he *daven* for each individual as his own brother.

“ מדור לדור ”

TORAH FROM OUR ALUMNI

A GUIDE TO INTERPRETING DREAMS

ZEV KILSTEIN ('04)

We all have dreams. Sometimes we're curious to know if there is a message hidden within the dream. Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, is no different.

In *Parshat Mikeitz*, Pharaoh had two dreams. One dream involved cows and the other dream involved grain. Although there are some minor differences between these two dreams, they were essentially the same dream (see commentary of Rabbi Shlomo Ephraim Luntschitz [Prague; 16th century; known commonly as the Kli Yakar] on *perek* 41: *pasuk* 5). Pharaoh (much like us) sought to uncover the message that was hidden somewhere within his dreams. Eventually Yosef was asked to interpret the message these dreams conveyed.

Regarding one aspect of the overall interpretation, Yosef informed Pharaoh that because the dream occurred twice over the course of a single night, it must be that whatever these dreams were prophesising will occur very soon. How exactly did Yosef come to this conclusion? Did he possess a divine interpreting power? What guided him in deciphering the puzzle of Pharaoh's dream?

Rabbi Yosef Dov Soloveitchik (Belarus; 19th century; known commonly as the Beit HaLevi) offers an explanation (on chapter 41: verse 32). The explanation of the Beit HaLevi requires the knowledge of the following two sections of the Talmud.

The first piece of information is from *Masechet Sukkah* (29a). There we are told that a solar eclipse is a sign that something terrible is coming to those who worship idols. Additionally, if the solar eclipse occurs in the morning then it is an indication that whatever terrible things are in store for them are coming soon. If the solar eclipse occurs in the evening, then it is an indication that whatever terrible things are in store for them will be coming later.

Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki (France; 11th century; known commonly as Rashi) explains that this outline given by the Talmud is logical. If the sign comes early in the day then the terrible things will come early in time. If the sign comes late in the day then the terrible things will come late in time. The times simply correspond.

The Beit HaLevi informs us that this logic applies to dreams as well. In other words, if a person dreams at the beginning of the night then it is an indication that the events foretold in the dream will occur soon. If a person dreams at the end of the night, then it is an indication that the events foretold in the dream will come in the distant future.

The second piece of information is from *Masechet Brachot* (55b). There we are informed that some dreams are prophetic, while others are merely triggered by the body's various chemical reactions. How can one tell which dream is of which nature?

When one goes to sleep, his or her digestive system is hard at work. Therefore, at the beginning of the night, the body's various chemical reactions cause an individual to dream. However, if someone has a dream in the morning (just before he or she wakes up), since his or her body is now at rest, a dream that occurs at this time is considered to be of a prophetic nature. Yosef was able to interpret that Pharaoh's dreams were of a prophetic nature and that they foretold an event that would occur soon.

Based on *Masechet Brachot*, Yosef understood that because the dream appeared to Pharaoh (in one form) in the morning, it is considered to be a predictive dream. And based on *Masechet Sukkah*, because this dream of a prophetic nature also appeared to Pharaoh (in another form) at the beginning of the night, it implies that the events of the dream will occur soon. In conclusion, Yosef understood that Pharaoh's dreams were of a prophetic nature and that they foretold of an event that will occur soon.

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