

Toras Aish

Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS Z"L

Covenant & Conversation

Rabbi Sacks zt"l had prepared a full year of Covenant & Conversation for 5781, based on his book Lessons in Leadership. The Office of Rabbi Sacks will carry on distributing these essays each week, so people from all over the world can continue to learn and be inspired by his Torah.

In one of the greatest transformations in all literature, Joseph moves in a single bound from prisoner to Prime Minister. What was it about Joseph -- a complete outsider to Egyptian culture, a "Hebrew," a man who had been languishing in jail on a false charge of attempted rape -- that marked him out as a leader of the greatest empire of the ancient world?

Joseph had three gifts that many have in isolation but few in combination. The first is that he dreamed dreams. Initially we do not know whether his two adolescent dreams -- of his brothers' sheaves bowing down to his, and of the sun, moon and eleven stars bowing down to him -- are a genuine presentiment of future greatness, or merely the overactive imagination of a spoiled child with delusions of grandeur.

Only in this week's parsha of Miketz do we discover a vital piece of information that has been withheld from us until now. Joseph says to Pharaoh, who has also had two dreams: "The reason the dream was given to Pharaoh in two forms is that the matter has been firmly decided by God, and God will do it soon" (Gen. 41:32). Only in retrospect do we realise that Joseph's double dream was a sign that this, too, was no mere imagining. Joseph really was destined to be a leader to whom his family would bow down.

Second, like Sigmund Freud many centuries later, Joseph had a gift for interpreting the dreams of others. He did so for the butler and baker in prison and, in this week's parsha, for Pharaoh. His interpretations were neither magical nor miraculous. In the case of the butler and baker he remembered that in three days' time it would be Pharaoh's birthday (Gen. 40:20). It was the custom of rulers to make a feast on their birthday and decide the fate of certain individuals. (In Britain, the Queen's birthday honours continue this tradition.) It was reasonable therefore to assume that the butler's and baker's dreams related to this event and their unconscious hopes and fears. (Ibn Ezra 40:12

and Bechor Shor 40:12 both make this suggestion.)

In the case of Pharaoh's dreams, Joseph may have known ancient Egyptian traditions about seven-year famines. Nahum Sarna quotes an Egyptian text from the reign of King Djoser (ca. twenty-eighth century BCE):

"I was in distress on the Great Throne, and those who are in the palace were in heart's affliction from a very great evil, since the Nile had not come in my time for a space of seven years. Grain was scant, fruits were dried up, and everything which they eat was short." (Understanding Genesis, pg. 219)

Joseph's most impressive achievement, though, was his third gift, the ability to implement dreams, solving the problem of which they were an early warning. No sooner had he told of a seven-year famine than he continued, without pause, to provide a solution: "Now let Pharaoh look for a discerning and wise man and put him in charge of the land of Egypt. Let Pharaoh appoint commissioners over the land to take a fifth of the harvest of Egypt during the seven years of abundance. They should collect all the food of these good years that are coming and store up the grain under the authority of Pharaoh, to be kept in the cities for food. This food should be held in reserve for the country, to be used during the seven years of famine that will come upon Egypt, so that the country may not be ruined by the famine." (Gen. 41:33-36)

We have seen Joseph the brilliant administrator before, both in Potiphar's house and in the prison. It was this gift, demonstrated at precisely the right time, that led to his appointment as Viceroy of Egypt.

From Joseph, therefore, we learn three principles. The first is: dream dreams. Never be afraid to let your imagination soar. When people come to me for advice about leadership, I tell them to give themselves the time and space and imagination to dream. In dreams we discover our passion, and following our passion is the best way to live a rewarding life. (One of the classic texts on this subject is Ken Robinson, *The Element: How Finding Your Passion Changes Everything*.)

Dreaming is often thought to be impractical. Not so; it is one of the most practical things we can do. There are people who spend months planning a holiday but do not give even a day to planning their life. They let themselves be carried by the winds of chance and circumstance. That is a mistake. The Sages said,

"Wherever [in the Torah] we find the word vayehi, 'And it came to pass,' it is always the prelude to tragedy." (Megillah 10b) A vayehi life is one in which we passively let things happen. A yehi ("Let there be") life is one in which we make things happen, and it is our dreams that give us direction.

Theodor Herzl, to whom more than any other person we owe the existence of the State of Israel, used to say, "If you will it, it is no dream." I once heard a wonderful story from Eli Wiesel. There was a time when Sigmund Freud and Theodor Herzl lived in the same district of Vienna. "Fortunately," he said, "they never met. Can you imagine what would have happened had they met? Herzl would have said: 'I have a dream of a Jewish state.' Freud would have replied: 'Tell me, Herr Herzl, how long have you been having this dream? Lie down on my couch, and I will psychoanalyse you.' Herzl would have been cured of his dreams and today there would be no Jewish state." Thankfully, the Jewish people have never been cured of their dreams.

The second principle is that leaders interpret other people's dreams. They articulate the inchoate. They find a way of expressing the hopes and fears of a generation. Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I have a dream" speech was about taking the hopes of Black Americans and giving them wings. It was not Joseph's dreams that made him a leader; it was Pharaoh's. Our own dreams give us direction; it is other people's dreams that give us opportunity.

The third principle is: find a way to implement dreams. First see the problem, then find a way of solving it. The Kotzker Rebbe once drew attention to a difficulty in Rashi's writing. Rashi (Ex. 18:1) says that Yitro was given the name Yeter (meaning, "he added") because "he added a passage to the Torah beginning [with the words], "Choose from among the people..." (Ex. 18:21). This occurred when Yitro saw Moses leading alone and told him that what he was doing was not good: he would wear himself and the people to exhaustion. Therefore he should choose good people and delegate much of the burden of leadership to them.

The Kotzker pointed out that the passage that Yitro added to the Torah did not actually begin, "Choose from among the people." It began several verses earlier when he said, "What you are doing is not good." (Ex. 18:17) The answer the Kotzker gave was simple. Saying "What you are doing is not good" is not an addition to the Torah -- it is merely stating a problem. The addition consisted in the solution: delegating.

Good leaders either are, or surround themselves with, problem-solvers. It is easy to see when things are going wrong. What makes a leader is the ability to find a way of putting them right. Joseph's genius lay not in predicting seven years of plenty followed by seven years of famine, but in devising a

system of storage that would ensure food supplies in the lean and hungry years.

Dream dreams; understand and articulate the dreams of others; and find ways of turning a dream into a reality -- these three gifts are leadership, the Joseph way. *Covenant and Conversation 5780 is kindly supported by the Maurice Wohl Charitable Foundation in memory of Maurice and Vivienne Wohl z"l* ©2020 Rabbi Lord J. Sacks z"l and rabbisacks.org

RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

"The Lord shall broaden and beautify Japheth, and he [or perhaps He] shall dwell in the tents of Shem" (Genesis 9:27) Why is there no clear religious prohibition against the study of Greek wisdom and intellectual involvement in philosophy, mathematics, the sciences, secular music, art, literature and theater? Why was no prohibition made against the study of all the expressions of Greek culture that we know as Hellenism?

Hanukah does not merely celebrate our military victory over an enemy who wished to remove political independence from Judea. Our main celebration is the lighting of the menorah, the stylized "tree of life" This ceremony makes the statement that "the candle is commandment, and Torah is our light" (Proverbs 6:23). In other words, it is God's will and His miracles – as in the small cruse of oil only sufficient to last for one day, but which lasted for eight – and not human reason that must direct human affairs and activities.

According to this view, the Haredim are right, at least as far as banning university is concerned. This is precisely the meaning of the Biblical verse as they read it, "The Lord may broaden and glorify Yafet [Greece and Greek wisdom], but only He [the Lord, without Greek wisdom] may dwell in the tent of Shem".

There is one Talmudic passage (B.T. Baba Kama 82b) that seemingly prohibits the study of Greek wisdom. It cites an internecine battle between two brothers, Hyrcanus and Aristobulus, descendants of the Hasmonean dynasty (the instigators of the Judean victory over the Jewish Hellenists and the Greek-Syrians at Hanukah). An elderly man knowledgeable in Greek wisdom urged Aristobulus (whose army was outside of the walls of Jerusalem) to hoist a pig instead of a bullock over the ramparts, thus preventing and even desecrating the daily Temple sacrifice which continued to be offered by Hyrcanus from within Jerusalem.

The actions of this devotee of Greek wisdom who wished to destroy our Hebrew civilization led to a devastating earthquake in the land of Israel. "From that day onwards" ruled the Sages, "Cursed be the individual who raises pigs and cursed be the father who teaches his child Greek wisdom." The prohibition seems to be absolute. So our legal codes forbid us

from raising pigs – or even benefitting in any way from pigs or pig skins.

However, as far as Greek wisdom is concerned, the story is strangely different. The Talmud praises the Greek language and deems “Greek wisdom” a skill necessary for international political discourse (ibid 83a). In fact, a parallel account at the end of Tractate Sota defines “Greek wisdom” in the context of the prohibition as a “special language of nuance and riddle” used for espionage. This is how Maimonides (Commentary on last Mishnah in Sota) understood the Talmudic decree, adding that “Greek wisdom” has since disappeared from use, and hence the prohibition no longer has practical application.

How can we understand this refusal to ban Greek wisdom? It is particularly strange since the Books of Maccabees demonstrate that the battles commemorated by Hanukah were waged by religious Hasmoneans, who rebelled against the elite ruling priesthood, which had been captivated by the “modern” Hellenistic culture and its philosophy, esthetics and hedonism.

I believe it is because Judaism always valued wisdom – philosophy and science – and appreciated art and music. Witness the Books of Proverbs, Job and Ecclesiastes, which are even part of our sacred canon. The artist-architect of the Desert Sanctuary, Bezalel, has a name which means “in the shadow of God”; music abounded in the Holy Temple: King Solomon was highly praised for his worldly wisdom. The Talmud praises science, maintaining that those who are capable of studying it and do not do so “are making themselves blind to God’s handiwork” (B.T. Shabbat 75a). Maimonides places philosophy and science under the rubric of gemara, insisting that these disciplines must be a necessary part of the curriculum in an Academy of Talmudic studies, as part of the commandment to strive to know God.

The Rashba (Rav Shlomo ben Adrat, Spain d.1310) wrote three responsa in which he banned the study of philosophy, but only for those under the age of 25 (Responsa 415,416,417), and Rav Moshe Isserles and the Vilna Gaon (Yoreh Deah 346,4; Biyur HaGra 18) both allow the study of science and philosophy. Although the Vilna Gaon is cited (Yoreh Deah 179) as saying that the “accursed philosophy turned Maimonides astray,” one of the Vilna Gaon’s best students, Rav Menashe from Ilia, wrote that, “these words never emanated from the Gaon’s pen nor from his sacred mouth”.

Indeed the Vilna Gaon is quoted by Rabbi Barukh Shik of Shklov: “To the extent that a person lacks knowledge of wisdom, he will also lack one hundred measures of the wisdom of Torah, since Torah and wisdom are bound up together.” As a result of the importance that our Tradition gave to the wisdom of philosophy and science, it would have been

inconceivable for the Sages to ban Greek wisdom. Hence, an alternate interpretation of the opening verse quoted above would serve as an introduction to this commentary, “The Lord shall broaden and beautify Yaphet (Greece), and he (Yaphet) shall dwell in the tents of Shem.” “The beauty of Yaphet must adorn the tents of Shem”. (Gen 9:27, Gen Rabbah ad loc.). Torah must be wed to university study. ©2020 Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin

RABBI BEREL WEIN

Wein Online

The dreams of Joseph are actualized in this week’s Torah reading. Miracles, though hidden, are somewhat natural events, and in this instance occur to facilitate this realization of the dreams of Joseph.

We all dream, but not all dreams are miraculous per se. The great Pharaoh of Egypt also had dreams. The fact that he dreamt of fat cows and lean cows is also understandable, for that was the nature of the society that he governed at that time. It was, in the main, a purely agricultural society, dependent upon animal power to produce food and sustenance. It is also not surprising that he dreamt of sheaves of grain, both full and empty.

But Pharaoh is disturbed by the fact that these dreams repeat themselves, and as Midrash teaches us, these dreams have an unusual and perplexing conclusion to them. In effect, the little destroyed the big, the weak destroy the mighty and the few triumph over the many. These conclusions were in direct opposition to the beliefs and experiences of Pharaoh. When he awoke in the morning and remembered his dreams, he was sorely troubled that they did not conform to any of his previous experiences.

It is this part of the story, the fact that the dreams were the opposite of what they had experienced previously, that sets the stage for the miraculous deliverance of Joseph and his unbelievable rise to power and fame. Thus, we see how miracles are formed by seemingly natural events, with just a little twist to those events that facilitate and hasten the arrival of the miracle.

One of the more amazing insights into this dramatic turn of events is that it seems that Joseph is not at all surprised by his being taken out of the dungeon and placed upon one of the thrones of the ancient Egyptian Empire. Simply being released from prison after having the aristocracy of Egypt against him, one would think this would have been a sufficient miracle for this lonely, defenseless Jew accused of a serious crime. Yet, from the way that Joseph immediately gets to work to store food before the famine, it seems that he knew that he was destined to be part of history. It was as if he almost expected to be appointed as the ruler of Egypt, second only to the

Pharaoh.

In the house of Jacob, as in the houses of Isaac and Abraham, miracles were part of everyday life. They were expected to happen because our ancestors lived in a world of the spirit, where the presence of Heaven always felt real. Joseph had no doubt that he would be saved, and that his dreams of greatness and accomplishment were not made of imaginary straw. He only did not know how this would come about and how the dreams would be actualized. He had intended to be helped by the butler of Pharaoh, but that was not the track that the Lord had ordained for Joseph. In this week's Torah reading, the real story unfolds with all the necessary twists and turns that make up human life. ©2020 Rabbi Berel Wein - Jewish historian, author and international lecturer offers a complete selection of CDs, audio tapes, video tapes, DVDs, and books on Jewish history at www.rabbiwein.com. For more information on these and other products visit www.rabbiwein.com

RABBI AVI WEISS

Shabbat Forshpeis

We are told that Yosef (Joseph) stands apart from all biblical personalities. He is known as Yosef ha-tzaddik, Joseph the righteous one. What is it about Yosef that makes him uniquely righteous?

It is interesting to recognize that Yosef constantly invokes the name of God. He does so at the three most critical points of his stay in Egypt.

- When Mrs. Potiphar tries to induce Yosef to sin, Yosef refuses, declaring, "how can I sin against God." (Genesis 39:9).

- When in prison the butler and baker state that they dreamed a dream that has not been interpreted. Yosef responds, "do not interpretations belong to God?" (Genesis 40:8).

- When Yosef appears before Pharaoh to interpret the King's dream, Yosef's first words are, "it is not in me [to interpret the dream], God will give Pharaoh an answer of peace." (Genesis 41:16)

In sum: Yosef mentions God's name in the most difficult circumstances; he does so in the most alien of environments, the godless, pagan capital of the world – Egypt.

Nechama Leibowitz notes that Yosef methodically dissects Pharaoh's dream by explaining its symbols, interpreting the dream, and then putting forth a plan of action to rescue Egypt. Interestingly, before each step, Yosef mentions God's name. (Genesis 41:25, 28, 32)

The calling of the name of God, however, is not the unique domain of Yosef. In fact, each of the patriarchs call out in the name of the Lord, yet they are not referred to as tzaddikim.

Perhaps the key difference is that the patriarchs call to God is understandable—as God speaks to each of them. Yosef is unique in that he speaks to God, although God does not speak to him.

Such is the way of a tzaddik.

An important message for all. Too often, our relationship with God is conditional, we call to God, if we hear the Divine call. The true test is to feel God's presence even when God seems to be silent.

A story: a young girl came crying to the Baal Shem Tov. She was playing hide and seek and hid, but no one came looking for her. The Baal Shem Tov comforted her and then said, "now I know how God must feel. There He is, and no one comes looking for Him."

Like the biblical Yosef, may we all continue to seek the Lord in the good times and the bad. ©2020 Hebrew Institute of Riverdale & CJC-AMCHA. Rabbi Avi Weiss is Founder and Dean of Yeshivat Chovevei Torah, the Open Orthodox Rabbinical School, and Senior Rabbi of the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale

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Chanukah

Translated by Rabbi Mordechai Weiss

Outside of Israel, Shavuot is a two-day *Yom Tov*, and both Pesach and Sukkot begin and end with two days of *Yom Tov* as well. In ancient times, the new month was proclaimed by the *Beit Din* in Jerusalem. Messages were then sent to the surrounding and outlying communities, telling them when the new month began. Because the more distant communities did not receive the message before the start of the holidays, those living outside Israel observed two days of *Yom Tov* due to the uncertainty of the correct date. Although today there is a set calendar, we still maintain this tradition of observing two days in the Diaspora.

Nevertheless, when it comes to Chanukah, everybody celebrates it for eight days, including those in the Diaspora. Some explain that we only add a day to biblical holidays but not to rabbinic ones (such as Chanukah). Others feel that the number eight has special significance vis-a-vis Chanukah. This is either because one of the evil decrees of the Greeks against the Jews banned circumcision, which takes place on the eighth day, or because Chanukah was designed to parallel Sukkot (which at the time of Chanukah's origin was eight days long even in the Diaspora).

We would like to suggest an additional approach. The *Beit Yosef* poses a famous question: Why do we celebrate Chanukah for eight days? Since the Jews found enough oil to last for one day, the miracle lasted for only seven days. One of the answers proposed is that had they celebrated seven days, then on the fourth day it would have been impossible to tell who was following Beit Hillel and who was following Beit Shammai. Beit Shammai says that on the first night we light eight candles, and on each succeeding night we decrease the number by one. On the final day of the holiday, only one candle is lit. In contrast, Beit Hillel

maintains that on the first night we light one candle, and on each succeeding night we increase the number by one. Thus on the eighth day, eight candles are lit. (This is the current custom.) It follows, then, that if we celebrated only seven days of Chanukah, on the fourth day there would be no discernible difference between those following Beit Hillel and those following Beit Shammai (as both would light four candles). To avoid this problem, Chanukah is eight days and not seven. Similarly, if we were to add a day (as we do on other holidays) and celebrate nine days of Chanukah in the Diaspora, this problem would arise on the fifth night. For this reason we do not add a day in the Diaspora, but rather celebrate Chanukah for eight days everywhere. ©2017 Rabbi M. Weiss and *Encyclopedia Talmudit*

RABBI DAVID LEVIN

A Feast in One Sentence

Torah can yield a wealth of information for discussion. Those p'sukim may appear to simply present background material, facts which may or may not be significant in Sefer Bereishit. The study of Torah challenges us to find the message of these p'sukim as well. We know that every word which Hashem wished to include in the Torah must be there for every word plays a part in the message of the Torah.

One such "insignificant" pasuk occurs in this week's parasha. "And Par'oh called the name of Yosef 'Tzafnat Panei'ach' and he gave him Osnat the daughter of Poti Fera, a priest of On, for a wife, and Yosef went out throughout the Land of Egypt." There appear to be three basic facts of this pasuk: (1) Par'oh gives Yosef a new name, (2) Par'oh gives Yosef a wife, and (3) Yosef goes out to see Egypt. Yosef is never again called Tzafnat Panei'ach and Osnat is never mentioned again either when she gave birth or when she died. In itself, this might not seem so unusual as women's names are often not mentioned in the Torah. Yet here we have a title given to Yosef by Par'oh, and yet Yosef is still called Yosef throughout the Torah. We will deal with the first two of these three basic facts in the pasuk.

HaRav Shamshon Raphael Hirsch explains that Par'oh was greatly impressed by Yosef's ability to explain the significance of his dreams and to propose a solution to the problems that the dreams uncovered. Par'oh sought to place Yosef in charge, but he was aware of dissent among his people should he appoint a Jewish slave to an important post in his monarchy. He chose to give him a special title, not to replace his true name, but to lend meaning to his appointing Yosef over Egypt. Par'oh chose the name Tzafnat Panei'ach which according to Onkeles, who translated the Torah into Aramaic, was "Guvra d'mitamran galyan leih, decipherer of the cryptic" or "he within whom the most

secret things are kept." Par'oh says of Yosef, "a man in whom is the spirit of Elokim...there is no one so discerning and wise as you." Par'oh was aware of the significance of magic and hidden powers to his people. The name that he gave to Yosef implied that Yosef was privy to the most secret of these powers. The Egyptians could accept a Jewish slave ruling them only if his powers were greater than even the greatest of Egyptian sorcerers and magicians.

According to Hirsch, Par'oh was also aware of the importance of marriage for Yosef to an Egyptian woman. "In ancient Egypt, a man without a wife must have been considered only half a man." The added importance of Yosef's position required him to have the compassion for others that can only be found in a marriage. Yosef would be able to demonstrate that even a prince or king could participate in the limitations of the plentiful years, so that the famine would not have as great an impact on Egyptian lives. The people would willingly forego the extras of the years of plenty if they knew that even the wealthy and important people did the same. Par'oh also understood that if Yosef were not tied to the land by a wife from its people, there would be nothing binding him to this country during the years of famine. The Da'at Mikra also explains that this marriage to an Egyptian would provide honor to a foreigner. It would signify friendship similar to a diplomatic wedding between countries.

The Torah now refers to Yosef's former owner, Potifar, as Poti Fera in a feminine form. At the same time, it speaks of Poti Fera as being a priest of On, which is not as he was described earlier, namely, as the Minister of the Butchery or Kitchen. There is some question about whether this new position was a promotion or a demotion of Potifar and whether his "feminine" name was a sign at that time of this lower rank. HaRav Zalman Sorotzkin expresses an opinion which is shared by the Ramban, that the rank of Kitchen Minister had been a disgusting position, since it involved both the slaughter of animals and the care for the prisoners of the king. When Par'oh raised Yosef from the jail he also raised the rank of Potifar to this new, exalted position so that Potifar would not complain that his prisoner had been set free. The reference to Potifar's new "feminine" name was an indication that setting Yosef free also belied Potifar's wife's account of the attack on her. Potifar only imprisoned Yosef to save face but others saw through this ploy and began to refer to him as Poti Fera.

Another Midrash is told about Osnat who became Yosef's wife and the mother of his children. Dinah was Ya'akov's only daughter, and he hid her from Eisav when he returned from Padan Aram. He did not want to give her to Eisav as a wife. This act was punished by Hashem when she was raped and impregnated by Sh'chem. The daughter born from this rape was Osnat. When Dinah gave birth, the brothers

wished to kill the child. Ya'akov sent her away, but not before he made a necklace for the child which was engraved in Hebrew with the words that she was from the seed of Ya'akov. Osnat was brought into the household of Potifar, and he adopted her. When she became older, she had access to the court of Par'oh. There she consulted with the wise men of the court to see if anyone was able to read the inscription on her necklace. She never thought to show it to Yosef whom she knew only as a slave. After he was able to explain Par'oh's dreams, she realized that he was capable of great wisdom and showed him the necklace. He immediately understood its significance and asked Par'oh to give her to him for a wife.

We have clearly seen from this simple sentence that a treasure of information and meaning can be found in every pasuk in the Torah. Each passage can be a full meal for the hungry mind. We are asked not only to taste each word and each phrase but to chew fully on each letter. We see that it is delicious and filling, yet we know that we will be hungry an hour later. We may taste the same words again and again, and each time we are rewarded with new flavors and textures for our minds to devour. Each bite is different, and its variety continues to excite. May we all share in that excitement over each word and each passage of the Torah, constantly viewing the same p'sukim with new and fresh eyes, new and fresh minds.

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RABBI JONATHAN GEWIRTZ

Migdal Ohr

"And it was at the end of two years' time..." (Gen. 41:1) Thrown into jail on trumped-up charges, Yosef finally had an opportunity for release. At the end of last week's parsha, he correctly interpreted the dreams of two high-ranking officials in Pharaoh's court. When he predicted that the royal wine steward would be returned to his post, Yosef asked the grateful man to remember him to Pharaoh and procure his release.

Alas, the last posuk of Vayeishev tells us that the wine steward did not remember the Canaanite lad, and forgot him. Thus, Yosef remained in prison until Pharaoh had his dreams which none could interpret to his satisfaction. Only then did the wine steward recall Yosef and grudgingly inform Pharaoh that perhaps this little boy (who was 30 years old by now) might be able to interpret the dreams.

A quick look at the posuk, though, brings up an obvious question. Why does it have the word 'yamim' in there, which means days, if it already said, 'shnasayim' which means two years? A literal translation might be, "And it was at the end of two years' worth of days." That said, what is the Torah trying to convey here?

The Sifsei Kohain says that the usage here is similar to the expression when Yaakov worked seven

years for Rachel, "and it seemed like days to him." Because Yosef had such strong Bitachon in Hashem, the time flew by and seemed like two days. When one is anxious to get out of a situation time seems to slow, but when he knows he's where he should be, it doesn't bother him because he knows he will not be there one moment longer than he needs to be. Right now, this is the best place for him.

Others, including the Chizkuni, say the word 'yamim' comes to tell us that these were two complete years from the day that the wine steward was freed. It was not a year and a little bit and rounded up for expression, but two full years, down to the day. This is important because it reinforces the fact that Yosef's imprisonment was intentional and with direct Divine supervision. Because it was so specific, it reminds us that Hashem has His plan.

The strength that a person needs to get through a difficult situation can be found in his connection to and trust in Hashem. If he feels that he is a victim of circumstance, or the victim of someone's ill will towards him, he has negated the hashgacha pratis, the specific involvement of Hashem in his life, and he will suffer as a prisoner of his own device. One who understands that Hashem is there with him and put him there for a specific reason, can tolerate and even thrive under adverse conditions.

So how does one build up this trust? 'Shnasayim yamim,' it was two years of days. Taking life as it comes each day and not worrying about that which hasn't happened yet; not imagining the worst and giving in to despair, is the way we get through many of life's most challenging moments. By telling yourself, "I am where Hashem wanted me to be today," you will be able to remain optimistic not only about today, but also about tomorrow; for as many tomorrows as it may be.

One winter day, an old man trudged home from shul. The weather was at near-blizzard conditions and the snow swirled about. A driver passing by recognized the ninety-year-old fellow, and stopped to offer him a lift.

Remarking on the weather, the driver found it hard to believe that ten people managed to make it out on a day of such difficult weather. Incredulously, he asked the older man, "Did you really have a minyan (quorum of ten) today?"

"Almost," replied the old fellow with a cheerful smile. "We were only short... nine men." © 2020 Rabbi J. Gewirtz and Migdal Ohr

RABBI SHLOMO RESSLER

Lelamed Weekly Dvar

When Paroh has two puzzling dreams that neither necromancers nor sages can interpret to his satisfaction, Yosef is summoned from prison to decipher them. Yosef confidently decodes the dreams and their implications and then boldly counsels Paroh

on the necessary actions to prepare for the impending catastrophe (41:33-37). Who asked Yosef for his suggestions, and why did he think it was appropriate to interject his ideas to the ruler of Egypt?

Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky explains that Yosef was someone who invariably sought out opportunities to help. After understanding the meaning behind Paroh's dreams and the abundance and famine that the dreams foreshadowed, Yosef naturally feels compelled to advise Paroh on adequately preparing for the tragedy that is about to befall Egypt. At the risk of appearing brazen and inappropriate, Yosef assumes responsibility for helping Paroh. Perhaps it is this same moxie that convinces Paroh to appoint and ultimately entrust Yosef with his nation's immediate future. Yosef's eagerness to act with such presence of mind and resolve leaves us with the strong message that if G-d blesses us with gifts, we should use those gifts to help others. © 2020 Rabbi S. Ressler and Lelamed, Inc.

SHLOMO KATZ

Hama'yan

At the beginning of this week's Parashah, Pharaoh dreams a dream, and Yosef is called from prison to interpret it. R' Yosef Dov Halevi Soloveitchik z"l (1820-1892; rabbi of Brisk, Belarus; progenitor of the Soloveitchik rabbinical family) notes that Pharaoh added a detail that was not in his dream when he related it to Yosef. Pharaoh said (41:19), "Suddenly, seven other cows emerged after them -- Dalot / scrawny, and of very inferior form, and of emaciated flesh." In reality, the cows he saw in his dream were not "Dalot" (compare verse 3). Pharaoh did this in order to test Yosef.

R' Soloveitchik continues: Yosef recognized that Pharaoh was trying to trick him. But, rather than be upset, he understood that this was orchestrated by Heaven to give him a hint to the meaning of Pharaoh's dream. Pharaoh's advisors had interpreted the seven cows as seven countries, but Yosef realized that the seven cows hinted to the grain harvest, because the word "Dalot," which Pharaoh added to trick him, alludes to grain (see Bava Metzia 59a, commenting on Shoftim 6:6). (R' Soloveitchik notes that Yosef's conversation with the king was not in Hebrew, but, presumably, they used Egyptian words with equivalent meanings.)

R' Soloveitchik concludes: From here, we learn an important lesson about Bitachon / trust in Hashem. The very word that Pharaoh added to his dream in order to trick Yosef was the word that helped Yosef interpret Pharaoh's dream. Likewise, whenever someone tries to harm us, not only must we believe that Hashem is in control, we should believe that what is happening will somehow turn out to be for our own benefit. (Bet Ha'levi)

A similar lesson can be learned from Yosef's story generally. Yosef's brothers sold him into slavery

thinking they were preventing his dreams from coming true. Instead, their very sale facilitated the fulfillment of Yosef's dreams.



"The king said, 'This one claims, "This is my son, who is alive, and your son is the dead one," and this one claims, "It is not so! Your son is the dead one, and my son is the living one".'" (Melachim I 3:23)

R' Shlomo Kluger z"l (1785-1869; rabbi of Brody, Galicia) writes: When King Shlomo repeated the women's claims, he noted that one said, "My son," and then, "Your son," while the other reversed the order. King Shlomo's judgment was not based only on one woman's willingness to cut the baby in half; rather, this, too, was a sign of who was telling the truth.

He explains: It is natural for a mother to recognize her own baby and say, in effect, "This one is mine, so the other must be yours." That is what one of the women said. The other woman, however, said, in effect, "The dead baby is yours, so the living one must be mine." That is not a natural way for a mother to speak.

In addition, R' Kluger writes, the Gemara (Pesachim 3a-3b) teaches that a person's righteousness, and even the purity of his pedigree, can be judged from the refinement of his speech. Thus, King Shlomo judged the woman who mentioned the living child before the dead child to be righteous compared to one who mentioned the dead child first. (Shaima Shlomo)



"The king spoke up and said, 'Give her the living newborn, and do not put it to death--she is his mother'." (Melachim I 3:27)

Rashi quotes the Gemara (Makkot 22b): A Bat Kol / Heavenly voice proclaimed, "She is his mother." [Until here from Rashi]

R' Yaakov Kamenetsky z"l (see above) writes: Apparently, no responsible person would make a definitive statement, "She is his mother," based on circumstantial evidence alone, no matter how compelling. Therefore, our Sages attribute those words to a Heavenly proclamation.

R' Kamenetsky's grandson, R' Yosef Kamenetsky shlita, adds in a footnote: The foregoing is consistent with the elder R' Kamenetsky's understanding of Yosef's motivation for accusing his brothers of being spies, and Binyamin, of being a thief (both in this week's Parashah). Yosef wanted to prove to his brothers that they were wrong to sentence him to death, and later to slavery, based on their belief that he was a threat to them, for appearances can, indeed, be deceiving. [Here, too, while there was sufficient evidence for King Shlomo to decide which claimant would be a better mother to the baby, he did not declare definitively that she was, in fact, the mother.] (Emet L'Yaakov) © 2020 S. Katz and torah.org

RABBI YISSOCHER FRAND

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There is a pasuk in Parshas Miketz which has always troubled me. Over the years, we have suggested several interpretations to understand this pasuk. "And Yosef called the name of the elder son Menashe, for 'G-d has made me forget all my hardship and all my father's household.' And the name of the second he called Ephraim for 'G-d has made me fruitful in the land of my suffering.'" [Bereshis 41:51-52].

I have always been bothered by the expression "Ki neeshani Elokim es kol amalee v'es kol beis avi". First of all, Yosef never forgot the house of his father. It was his spiritual lifeline. It kept him attached to his values.

Second of all, why wasn't Ephraim the name he gave to his first son and the name Menashe saved for his second son? Shouldn't gratitude to Hashem -- G-d has made me fruitful in the land of my suffering -- come first?

In fact, the answer to the first question will answer the second one as well. If we can understand the deeper meaning of "Ki neeshani Elokim es kol amalee v'es kol beis avi," we will be able to understand why indeed that concept was so important that it was worthy of being enshrined in the name of his first-born son.

I saw an interpretation in the name of a Sefer Beis Pinchas (I believe this was Rav Pinchas Shapiro of Koretz): If I say something that makes you feel bad -- if I insult you, I humiliate you -- there is a little clock that starts ticking. The longer you are hurting, the longer the clock ticks, the more I am going to be held accountable for it. If you take the matter home and tell your wife, she will become upset, for days, for weeks, maybe even for years. Unfortunately, when the person who originally inflicted the pain goes up to the Yeshiva shel Ma'alah, he will need to not only account for the initial infliction, but also for all the subsequent pain that he caused. It is an ongoing insult that keeps on hurting -- perhaps in growing magnitude -- as time goes on.

That is why, the Beis Pinchas says, if someone does say something hurtful or embarrasses somebody he should try to make amends as soon as possible. The person should ideally apologize immediately because as long as the pain goes on, the original perpetrator is going to need to pay for it. It is like when you get in a cab and the meter is clicking away and you get stuck in a traffic jam in the middle of Manhattan. The car is not going anywhere but you see the meter keeps jumping: 50 cents, 50 cents, 50 cents. A ride that should have cost you \$7.00 is going to cost you \$27.00 -- you will need to pay for it at the end because it was ongoing.

Yosef HaTzadik knew that his brothers inflicted great pain on him. The longer that he was in pain, the greater the price they were going to need to pay. And my friends, we are still paying for it. That which happened between the brothers and Yosef -- the Meshech Chochmah says -- this is the avi avos aveiros sh'bein adam l'chaveiro ('the mother of all interpersonal transgressions'). Every single year, when we do teshuva (repent), we need to do teshuva for the aveira (sin) of the Aigel Hazahav (Golden Calf), which was the ultimate transgression between man and G-d. So too, we need to do teshuva for the aveira of the brothers against Yosef, the ultimate transgression between man and man. This is how the Meshech Chochmah explains the text of the High Holiday liturgy "ki Ata Salchan l'Yisrael (For You are the Forgiver of Israel -- for the sins between man and G-d, the classic one being the sin of the Aigel Hazahav) U'Machalan l'Shivtei Yeshurim (and the Pardoner of the Tribes of Yeshurun - - for the sins between man and man, the classic one being the sin of the Tribes for selling their brother).

Yosef wanted his pain to end so that his brothers would be spared excessive punishment. The Ribono shel Olam did him a tremendous favor and helped him forget all the suffering his brothers inflicted upon him in the house of his father. Consequently, since Yosef's suffering came to an end, the brothers would ultimately pay less of a price and ultimately we will need to pay less of a price. This all came about "ki neeshani Elokim es beis avi." Yosef is not saying that he forgot the integrity of the house of his father or the spirituality of the house of his father, the Torah of his father, the middos of his father, or the tzidkus of his father. For sure, that was not the case. He was merely talking about the suffering and the trauma he experienced there at the hand of his brothers. He forgot about that and went on with his life. Therefore, there would be an earlier end to the pain they would need to suffer for their cruelty to Yosef. This was such a great kindness on the part of the Almighty that it even preceded Yosef's expression of gratitude that "G-d made me fruitful in the land of my suffering." ©2020 Rabbi Y. Frand & torah.org



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