

OHRNET

SHABBAT PARSHAT MIKEITZ - CHANUKAH · 28 KISLEV 5768 · DEC. 8, 2007 · VOL. 15 NO. 10

PARSHA INSIGHTS

THE ENDS OF DARKNESS

"And Pharaoh awoke..." (41:4)

Last week, after I awoke from my somewhat protracted *Shabbos schluf* (sleep), my wife asked me, "Did you sleep well?"

"I don't know, I replied, "I was asleep at the time."

Sleep is a strange thing.

Sleep is the chief nurturer in life's feast, and yet when we experience that pleasure we are totally unconscious.

The word in Hebrew "to awake" is *lehakitz*, which is an active verb. Awaking is not merely the end of sleep; it is an action. *Lehakitz* is connected to the word *kotz*, which means "to be surfeited with a glut of overabundance". In other words, during sleep, the mind retreats to some still unexplored territory, allowing the body to suckle like a baby from the breast of sleep. When the body has feasted its fill, the mind shakes the body away from the breast and we awake, or better, we *awaken* ourselves.

The word that begins this week's Torah portion, *Miketz*, means "at the end of". The word *miketz* is strikingly similar to *lehakitz*; for when time of sleep comes to an end, we awaken.

The Midrash understands that *Miketz* refers to a verse in *Iyov*, "He sets a limit to the darkness, and He investigates the end of everything." (*Bereshit Rabba*)

It's not by coincidence that *Miketz* is always read on Shabbat Chanukah. The lights of Chanukah celebrate

the end of the darkness.

There are many darknesses that fill the world, but none is more insidious than the one that professes to be the light.

That is the darkness of Greece.

We live in a world more Greek than the Greeks, a world where appearance is all important, where form has replaced content; a world where our first reaction to something new is, "What does it look like?" rather than "What does it teach me?"

G-d has placed an end to the darkness; it cannot overstep its boundary. The light breaks through, not because it defeats the darkness, but because darkness has its end, it fades and vanishes. The light is not new. It has been there since the beginning of the world. It is only hidden by the darkness.

When G-d finally returns us from the depths of our last captivity — we will be like sleepwalkers, dreamers wrenched from the mind-masks of a Brave New World; our minds, glutted with the false dreams of the Cola Empire finally surfacing from a two thousand year slumber.

Then we will understand the ends of darkness; then we will rub our eyes, squinting from the light that always was.

Source: Rabbi Shimshon Rafael Hirsch and others

חג חנוכה שמח
Happy Chanukah

OHRNET magazine is published by OHR SOMAYACH Tanenbaum College

POB 18103, Jerusalem 91180, Israel • Tel: +972-2-581-0315 • Email: info@ohr.edu • www.ohr.edu

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PARSHA OVERVIEW

It is two years later. Pharaoh has a dream. He is unsatisfied with all attempts to interpret it. Pharaoh's wine chamberlain remembers that Yosef accurately interpreted his dream while in prison. Yosef is released from prison and brought before Pharaoh. He interprets that soon will begin seven years of abundance followed by seven years of severe famine. He tells Pharaoh to appoint a wise person to store grain in preparation for the famine. Pharaoh appoints him as viceroy to oversee the project. Pharaoh gives Yosef an Egyptian name, Tsafnat Panayach, and selects Osnat, Yosef's ex-master's daughter, as Yosef's wife. Egypt becomes the granary of the world. Yosef has two sons, Menashe and Ephraim. Yaakov sends his sons to Egypt to buy food. The brothers come before Yosef and bow to him. Yosef recognizes them but they do not recognize him. Mindful of his dreams, Yosef plays the part of an Egyptian

overlord and acts harshly, accusing them of being spies. Yosef sells them food, but keeps Shimon hostage until they bring their brother Binyamin to him as proof of their honesty. Yosef commands his servants to replace the purchase-money in their sacks. On the return journey, they discover the money and their hearts sink. They return to Yaakov and retell everything. Yaakov refuses to let Binyamin go to Egypt, but when the famine grows unbearable, he accedes. Yehuda guarantees Binyamin's safety, and the brothers go to Egypt. Yosef welcomes the brothers lavishly as honored guests. When he sees Binyamin he rushes from the room and weeps. Yosef instructs his servants to replace the money in the sacks, and to put his goblet inside Binyamin's sack. When the goblet is discovered, Yosef demands Binyamin become his slave as punishment. Yehuda interposes and offers himself instead, but Yosef refuses.

ISRAEL Forever

DREAMS OF LEADERS

Pharaoh, king of Egypt, had a dream. He dreamed of fat and thin cows and fat and thin ears of corn. His wise men, professional interpreters of dreams, came up with explanations such as seven daughters being born to the king and then dying. Pharaoh rejected all such interpretations until a young Hebrew convict named Yosef solved the mystery.

What was wrong with the many interpretations of the king's wise men?

They interpreted the dreams as relating to the king's personal fate and not to that of the nation he ruled. Only

Yosef offered an interpretation relating to the king's responsibility to save his nation from eventual famine.

The lesson to be learned from this week's Torah portion account of the dream of a leader is that every true leader must put the interest of his people above his own and that when he is blessed with a prophetic dream it is a Heavenly message to care for them.

The dream – and aspiration – of a true leader must be the well-being of the people he serves. Only such leadership can bring to fulfillment the dream of a secure Israel forever.

LOVE OF THE LAND - THE WISDOM

Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and Eretz Yisrael

TOMB OF THE MACCABEES

Although there is no firm evidence that the heroes of the Chanukah miracle Jews are now celebrating are buried in Modi'in, the site east of Lod and Ben Shemen near the new city of Modi'in is visited by many Jews who consider it to be the resting place of the Maccabees.



Eshtori ha-Parchi identified Tzova, west of Jerusalem, as the Maccabean Modi'in, while other travelers named different sites. During the last century researchers have leaned towards the above-mentioned site near the Arab village of Mideah where visitors go to identify with the Chanukah heroes.

PARSHA Q&A ?

1. What did the fat cows being eaten symbolize?
2. How did Pharaoh's recollection of his dream differ from Nevuchadnetzar's recollection of his dream?
3. What was significant about the fact that Pharaoh dreamed repeatedly?
4. What does "Tsafnat Panayach" mean?
5. What happened to the Egyptians' grain that was stored in anticipation of the famine?
6. What did Yosef require the Egyptians to do before he would sell them grain?
7. Did Yaakov and his family still have food when he sent his sons to Egypt? If yes, why did he send them?
8. What prophetic significance lay in Yaakov's choice of the word "redu" — "descend" (and not "lechu" — "go")?
9. Why does the verse say "Yosef's brothers" went down to Egypt (and not "Yaakov's sons")?
10. When did Yosef know that his dreams were being fulfilled?
11. Under what pretext did Yosef accuse his brothers of being spies?
12. Why did the brothers enter the city through different gates?
13. Who was the interpreter between Yosef and his brothers?
14. Why did Yosef specifically choose Shimon to put in prison?
15. How does the verse indicate that Shimon was released from prison after his brothers left?
16. What was Yaakov implying when he said to his sons: "I am the one whom you bereaved."?
17. How did Reuven try to persuade Yaakov to send Binyamin to Egypt?
18. How long did it take for Yaakov and family to eat all the food that the brothers brought back from Egypt? Give the answer in terms of travel time.
19. How much more money did the brothers bring on their second journey than they brought on the first journey? Why?
20. How did the brothers defend themselves against the accusation of theft?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this Week's Questions!

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary unless otherwise stated.

1. 41:4 - That all the joy of the plentiful years would be forgotten. (Not that the good years would provide food for the bad years.)
2. 41:8 - Pharaoh remembered the contents of his dream but didn't know its meaning. Nevuchadnetzar forgot even the contents of his dream.
3. 41:32 - It showed that the seven good years would start immediately.
4. 41:45 - He who explains things that are hidden and obscure.
5. 41:55 - It rotted.
6. 41:55 - Become circumcised.
7. 42:1 - Yes, but he sent them because he did not want to cause envy in the eyes of those who did not have food.
8. 42:2 - It hinted to the 210 years that the Jewish people would be in Egypt: The word "redu" has the numerical value of 210.
9. 42:3 - Because they regretted selling Yosef and planned to act as brothers by trying to find him and ransom him at any cost.
10. 42:9 - When his brothers bowed to him.
11. 42:12 - They entered the city through 10 gates rather than through one gate.
12. 42:13 - To search for Yosef throughout the city.
13. 42:23 - His son Menashe.
14. 42:24 - Because he was the one who cast Yosef into the pit and the one who said, "Here comes the dreamer." Alternatively, to separate him from Levi, as together they posed a danger to him.
15. 42:24 - The verse says Shimon was bound "in front of their eyes," implying that he was bound only while in their sight.
16. 42:36 - That he suspected them of having slain or sold Shimon, and that they may have done the same to Yosef.
17. 42:37 - He said, "Kill my two sons if I fail to bring back Binyamin."
18. 43:2,10 - Twice the travel time to and from Egypt.
19. 43:12 - Three times as much, in order to repay the money they found in their sacks and to buy more even if the price had doubled.
20. 44:8 - They said, "We returned the money we found in our sacks; can it be that we would steal?"

- When the court or guardians err in assessing property under their jurisdiction
- The procedure for the court or Sanctuary trustee auctioning property
- Which women are denied payment of *ketubah* and other rights of a wife
- Taking on an obligation to support wife's daughter from a previous marriage
- Self-incrimination in financial matters
- The liability of the guarantor of a loan
- Premarital financial negotiations and the use of a document
- in acquiring a wife
- Who gets custody of the orphaned daughter
- The widow's rights of residence
- The blessing, enrichment and wisdom of the words of the Sages
- The instructions of Rebbie (Rabbi Yehuda HaNassi) before his death and the story of his funeral
- Rebbi Chiya's ingenious dissemination of Torah
- How long does a widow have a right to claim *ketubah* payment
- The danger of graft influencing judges

NO SHAME IN THE NAME

One of the judges in Yerushalayim who was known for the financial penalties he instituted for willful damages was named Chanan ben Avshalom.

The name of this Sage's father is a subject discussed by the commentaries and has ramifications for the use of a biblical name.

Tosefot cites the opinion of Rabbeinu Tam that the father's name was Avshalom and not Avshalom. Since Rabbi Meir states (*Sanhedrin* 103b) that the rebellious son of King David was not admitted to the World to Come, it would be improper to call a Jewish child by the name of such a wicked person. (See *Yoma* 38b)

In *Shulchan Aruch Even Haezer*, however, we do find in the list of masculine names compiled by the commenta-

tor Beit Shmuel for use in divorce documents the name Avshalom. The explanation for this is the *gemara* (*Sotah* 10b) commenting on the eight times the bereaved David referred to Avshalom as his son (*Shmuel* II, 19:1). One opinion is that the first seven times were prayers to raise his sinful son from the seven departments of *Gehinnom* and the eighth prayer was to bring him into the World to Come.

Although Rabbi Meir will abide with the other opinion mentioned there that the eighth prayer was only to rejoin his decapitated head to his body and not to bring him to the World to Come, we have the opinion that David's prayer did rehabilitate him and we need not be shocked if we encounter Jews bearing the name Avshalom.

• *Ketubot* 104b

WHAT THE Sages SAY

"Why is graft forbidden? Once a judge accepts graft he identifies as one with the briber and no one is capable of seeing a fault in himself."

• *The Sage Rava - Ketubot* 105b

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KO-SURE

From: Michael Hartman in NY

Dear Rabbi,

I am sometimes in a situation either socially or at work where I want/have to give/exchange food gifts with non-Jews. Now I realize that they don't have to eat kosher, but am I allowed to give them non-kosher food as a gift? It would seem that I can, since they don't have to keep kosher, but intuitively it doesn't feel right. Please clarify.

Dear Michael,

It's true that the Torah places only a few dietary restrictions on non-Jews and therefore by and large they can eat whatever they want, whenever they want.

Still, this does not mean that we may give them non-kosher food.

The reason is not because by doing so we are causing them to do something wrong. For them, it's "kosher". Rather the problem is regarding the way in which we are using the non-kosher food.

Let me explain.

There are some foods (like leavened goods on Pesach) or food mixtures (such as cooked milk and meat) which are not only forbidden for us to eat, but we may not obtain any benefit from them whatsoever. This would include feeding them to our pets, or selling or even giving them to non-Jews. Even though the recipient is allowed to consume these items, we are not allowed to reap the reward that results from giving to them.

Most other foods do not fit into this category.

Meaning despite the prohibition to eat them, we can still derive benefit from them. For example, even though a Jew may not eat non-kosher meat, he may nevertheless derive benefit from it by feeding it to his pet.

However, even with most of these foods, there is still an extra prohibition against using them for commerce or business. This means that the permission to benefit from them is limited to personal use such as feeding one's pet, for fuel, etc. However, to sell, barter, bargain or exchange these items would fall under the category of commerce and would thus be prohibited.

Based on the Talmudic principle that "a gift is like a sale" since it is being given either in payment for a past favor or in anticipation of a future one, giving a non-kosher food gift is like doing business with a forbidden item and is therefore prohibited.

While there are some fine points and exceptions to this rule, it is best to be on the safe side and to give/exchange only kosher food gifts with your non-Jewish friends and associates.

Nevertheless, there is one common exception to the rule which is worth mentioning. The prohibition against doing business with forbidden items only applies to "pre-meditated" use. But business "by chance" is permitted. Therefore, while one may not purchase non-kosher food with the intention of giving it to a non-Jew, if one received such an item he may turn around and give it to a non-Jew since that is considered only "profiting" by chance.

Sources:

- Rabbi Doniel Yehuda Neustadt, *The Weekly Halachic Discussion, VaYishlach*
- *Yoreh Deah 117:1 and its commentaries*
- *Bava Metzia 16a*

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REPEATING THE SPEECH

Question: In one of your recent issues you discussed the problem of a public speaker disturbed by listeners whispering to each other. My problem is that the frequency of my lectures to various audiences causes me to sometimes worry that someone in the audience has already heard what I have to say on another occasion. What is the right thing to do?

Answer: The founder of the Ponevez Yeshiva in Bnei Brak, Rabbi Yosef Kahaneman, was a world-renowned speaker in addition to being a leading Torah figure. On a lecture tour in the US he delivered a great talk in New York. Since it was so well received he decided to give the same talk a couple of nights later in another city.

As he ascended the podium, however, he noticed that an elderly gentleman sitting in the front row was one of the people he addressed in New York. Afraid of forcing this Jew to hear the same talk once again, the rabbi quickly improvised with a different talk.

At the conclusion of this inspiring talk that gentleman approached him and said:

“Rabbi, that was a great talk but it did not compare to the one you gave in New York. That one was so outstanding that I came all the way here to hear it once again.”

The moral of the story is: Don't worry about repeating the speech. If you can't get over your concern just start off with this story.

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY ---

“WHAT WOULD MAMA HAVE SAID?”

(The following story was sent to us by Ohr Somayach alumnus Rabbi Yitzchak Freeman, a respected London educator now serving as Principal of the Kisharon School.)

This story was told to me by David Goodman, Executive Director of Kisharon and my boss. David is a cousin of Prof. Reuven Feuerstein, the renowned psychologist and originator of the Dynamic Assessment and Instrumental Enrichment approaches to helping people with special educational needs.

Prof. Feuerstein developed his theories and methods out of his post-war work with traumatized and educationally arrested young Holocaust survivors. His successes came to the notice of a wide audience, and in the early '60s the U.S. government commissioned him to roll out his system among the educationally low-achieving and highly segregated Native American Indian population.

In due course, in 1962 Prof. Feuerstein found himself, together with his sister who worked with him, sitting on

a buffalo hide in the tribal Big Chief's wigwam on a major reservation. He and his sister sported elaborate Indian headdresses, as the rituals of a traditional welcome ceremony unfolded before them. Struck by the bizarre, almost surreal absurdity of the occasion for two traditional Orthodox Jews, Prof. Feuerstein turned to his sister, and in their childhood home tongue, Yiddish, said to her, “What would Mama have said if she could see us now?!”

The tribal Big Chief, in full ceremonial dress, leaned across to him. “And what,” he asked in equally fluent Yiddish, “would she say if she knew I understood what you just said?!” Big Chief was none other than a heimishe Yid who, after the horrors of the war, decided to flee the Jewish world for the most outlandish, different and separated culture he could find, and there assimilate and build a new life...

Sadly, the sequel to this story, if there is one, is not known.