



Parshas Miketz

For the week ending 4 Teves 5757
13 & 14 December 1996

Overview

It is two years later. Pharaoh has two ominous and enigmatic dreams. He is not satisfied with any of the interpretations that are offered to explain them. Pharaoh's wine chamberlain belatedly remembers that Yosef accurately interpreted his dream while they were imprisoned together, and Yosef is immediately released. Yosef interprets that within a short time there will be seven years of unusual abundance, followed by seven years of extraordinarily severe famine. Yosef suggests to Pharaoh that he appoint a wise and discerning man to harness the years of plenty in preparation for the years of famine. Pharaoh, recognizing the spirit of G-d in Yosef, appoints him as viceroy to oversee the entire project. Pharaoh gives Yosef an Egyptian name, Tsafnas Panayach, and selects Osnas, Yosef's ex-master's daughter, as Yosef's wife. As a result of Yosef's plan, Egypt becomes the granary of the world during the famine. Yosef has two sons, Menashe and Ephraim. Yaakov, hearing that there is food in Egypt, sends his sons to buy provisions. In Egypt, the brothers come before Yosef and bow down before him, fulfilling his prophecy. Yosef recognizes them immediately, but they do not recognize him in his new incarnation as viceroy of Egypt. Mindful of his prophetic dreams, Yosef plays the part of an Egyptian overlord and acts towards them harshly, accusing them of being foreign spies. After interrogating them, Yosef sells them food, but keeps Shimon hostage until they bring their youngest brother Binyamin to him as a proof of their honesty. Yosef commands his servants to place the purchase-money on top of the food in each of their sacks. On the return journey, when feeding their donkeys, they discover the money and their hearts sink. They return to their father Yaakov and retell everything that has happened. At first Yaakov refuses to let Binyamin go down to Egypt, but when the famine grows unbearably harsh, he accedes. Yehuda guarantees Binyamin's safety, and the brothers including Binyamin return to Egypt. After inquiring about his father's welfare, Yosef welcomes the brothers lavishly as honored guests. However, when he sees Binyamin he can barely control his emotions and rushes from the room and weeps. Yosef secretly instructs his servants to again replace the money in the sacks, and in addition, to put his goblet inside Binyamin's sack. When the goblet is discovered, Yosef demands that Binyamin become his slave as a punishment. Yehuda, remembering his promise to his father, interposes and offers himself instead, but Yosef refuses.

Insights

WINDOW SERENADE

“Since G-d has made all this known to you (Yosef), there is none more discerning nor wise than you.” (41:39)

Once, there were two rich men who lived next door to each other. A dispute arose between them. They each claimed that a certain harp player had come to play outside his window and in his honor.

In view of their wealth, and the seriousness with which they both took themselves, they brought their case before the great rabbi, the Noda B'Yehuda. They both apportioned a large sum to be given to the rabbi for judging the case. The rabbi said to them: “It is clear to me that the harp player came to play in the honor of *neither* of you; rather it was in my honor he came, seeing as I am receiving such a large sum for judging this case!”

Thus it was with Pharaoh. When Pharaoh heard Yosef telling him that he should appoint a wise and discerning man, he remarked that his dream had not been, as he had thought, in his honor; neither was it so that they would not be devastated by famine, as the Egyptians had thought. The purpose of Pharaoh's dream was none other than that Yosef be raised to the pinnacle of power, and “since G-d had made all this known to you, there is none more discerning nor wise than you...”

(Shaar Bas Rabim in Iturei Torah)

THE EXQUISITE BALANCE

“And they called out before him ‘Avreich’” (41:43)

What is peace? Peace is the uniting of opposites. “He who makes peace in His High Places.” In “His High Places” there is an angel of fire and an angel of water. Opposites. Water extinguishes fire. However Hashem makes peace between fire and water and unites them in unity.

That quality, that quantity of uniting opposites is the quality of Yosef Hatzadik. For Yosef unites the two opposites — Kindness and Judgment.

Yosef personifies ‘bringing close with the right hand’ — the hand of Kindness, and ‘pushing away with the left’ — the hand of Judgment. The exquisite balance. On the one hand, there is Yosef who dominates and rules in judgment. On the other, there is Yosef who feeds the world.

That quality of peace is implicit in his name “Avreich.” A father — ‘Av’ — in wisdom, and soft — ‘rach’ — in youthful years.

Two world views — the expansive and the constrictive. The expansive view is the view of Kindness. Kindness by its nature wants to expand, to increase, to give, to broaden and increase, to spread out. That's the quality of ‘Av’ — the father, of the wisdom of years.

And on the other hand ‘rach’ — ‘soft in years;’ the aspect of constriction, of limited vision, the mark of youth and impetuosity which doesn't see past tomorrow. “We want the world and we want it now!” Judgment which brooks no contradiction.

Kindness and Judgment. Fire and Water. Yosef Hatzadik. The essence of Peace. (Adapted from Rabbi R.D.S. in Iturei Torah)

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EFFECTING CAUSE

“It happened at the end of two years to the day; Pharaoh dreamed...” (41:1)

Cause and effect are frequently mistaken for each other.

When we see someone who has been very successful in business, we assume that the cause is his business acumen. The reverse is in fact the truth. Hashem decides how much money this person will have, with the effect that he is given the necessary ability and opportunity to acquire the wealth.

Similarly, Pharaoh's dream did not cause Yosef's release from prison, but rather Hashem decreed that the time had come for Yosef's release with the effect that "Pharaoh dreamed".

(Beis HaLevi)

WATCH YOUR STEP!

“And Pharaoh said to Yosef, ‘Behold — I have placed you over all Egypt.’” (41:41)

The Sforno explains that Pharaoh was cautioning Yosef, as if to say "See and consider well. Make sure that you conduct affairs so that they reach their proper conclusion. For I have placed a great matter in your hands."

Why was it necessary for Pharaoh to caution Yosef in this manner? Pharaoh had already recognized that Yosef was a man of G-d, unparalleled in wisdom and perception. Surely, such a person can be relied upon to do everything necessary to avoid disaster and rescue the world from hunger.

And yet, Pharaoh *did* caution him. It must be then, that even Yosef, a man of G-d, and aware that even the slightest error may bring disaster — even such a man must check his every action to avoid a false move.

Man is crafted from lowly elements. He is hewn from the stuff of physicality. However great his intellect, he is a creature with but a small mind and a limited vision.

Therefore, if he does not constantly analyze his path with constant watchfulness, it is very possible that, although he knows that the future of the world rests on his shoulders, he may slacken in his efforts and fall prey to disaster.

(Adapted from Chidushei HaLev)

Haftorah: 1 Kings 3:15-4:1

ON THE CUTTING EDGE

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.’ ... “Cut the living child in two and give half to one and half to the other.” (3:23-25)

It is usually assumed that King Solomon ordered the baby to be cut in half in order to determine the real mother. In reality, it was already clear to the king who was the true mother from the way the two women had expressed themselves:

The first one started by saying "This is my son who is alive" and only then "and your son is dead;" whereas the second mother commenced her claim by saying "Your son is the dead one" and only afterwards said that "my son is the living one."

The second woman, who was lying, wasn't really interested in getting the living child, for why should she want to expend the considerable effort of raising a child which wasn't really hers. Rather, out of jealousy alone, she wanted to prevent the other woman from keeping the living child.

For that reason her focus was on "Your child is dead," rather than "My son is the living one," since her whole point was to prove the dead child belonged to someone else.

On the other hand, the real mother was only concerned to prove that her child was alive.

From these tell-tale subconscious hints, King Solomon was able to discern the true mother. It was only to prove to the world that his analysis was accurate that he went through the theatrics of calling for the sword to divide the living child, knowing that the real mother would far prefer that the child should live, even if it meant having to give him up.

However Solomon, the wisest of men, had already arrived at the truth of the matter as soon as the two women had opened their mouths.

(Kochav M'Yaakov in Mayana shel Torah)

The reading of the of this week's Haftorah is a rare event in the Jewish Calendar.

The reason: *Parshas Miketz* is nearly always read during Chanukah, and a special Haftorah for Chanukah is read.

For *Parshas Miketz* to fall after Chanukah, three events have to coincide: Rosh Hashana must fall on a Shabbos, and both the months of Cheshvan and Kislev must be 'chasser' (deficient), having only 29 days instead of 30.

Interestingly, it makes no difference whether the year itself is a regular year of 12 months or a leap year of 13 months. There is also no difference between *Eretz Yisrael* and the rest of the world in regard to this occurrence.

The Haftorah itself describes the famous incident where King Solomon discerns the true mother of a baby claimed by two mothers. How ironic that one of the most famous incidents in the Prophets should be the least read of all the Haftorahs!



INSIGHTS INTO THE ZEMIROS
SUNG AT THE SHABBOS TABLE
THROUGHOUT THE GENERATIONS.

SHALOM ALEICHEM - of hkg ouka
"WELCOME..."

Peace unto you *ministering angels*
Come in peace you *angels of peace*

שלום עליכם מלאכי השרת
בואכם לשלום מלאכי השלום

Shalom Aleichem Malachei HaShareis
Bo'achem Leshalom Malachei Hashalom

The switch from greeting our heavenly guests as "ministering angels" to "angels of peace" can be understood against the background of the Sabbath Eve scene described in the Talmud (Shabbos 119b):

"Two angels accompany a man from the synagogue to his home on Sabbath Eve, one good and one evil. If he enters his home and finds the candles lit, the table set and everything arranged in honor of the Sabbath, the good angel blesses him that he should succeed in the same fashion the next Sabbath as well, and the evil angel is compelled to concur with this blessing by saying "Amen"."

The two ministering angels may have opposing missions when they enter the home, but once they see how beautifully the Sabbath is welcomed they bless the host as "angels of peace" harmoniously working together.

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