

Shabbat Spice

PARSHAT MIKETZ



Laying a Foundation
for Bnei Yisrael
By Avigail Hakimian

This week's Parasha is full of suspense. Yosef is brought before Pharaoh to interpret his dream, and Yosef's brothers are brought before the viceroy of Egypt without knowing that it is actually their brother Yosef. What transpires is important in laying a foundation for Bnei Yisrael.

The Foundation of Humility and Awareness of Hashem

In this Parasha, Yosef faces a big test that has major implications for him and Bnei Yisrael. He is quickly summoned from prison and Pharaoh asks him to interpret his dream. Yosef says, *"That is beyond me, it is Hashem who will respond with Pharaoh's welfare."* (Bereishit 41:16). Yosef could have been arrogant and tried to flaunt his knowledge to curry favor with Pharaoh, but instead, he shows great humility and awareness of Hashem. Yosef comes full circle, from a boy with lofty dreams of greatness and who received preferential treatment from Yaakov Avinu, to someone who shows humility and a deep awareness of Hashem. When Yosef was arrogant, Hashem brought him to his lowest point.

But when he shows humility and awareness of Hashem, he is able to provide a favorable interpretation of Pharaoh's dream and is immediately summoned to be the viceroy in Egypt. Therefore, Yosef lays a foundation of humility and awareness of Hashem for Bnei Yisrael.

In a similar fashion, David Hamelech writes in Sefer Tehillim, *"I have placed Hashem before me always..."* (Tehillim 16:8) alluding to his deep awareness of Hashem's Providence. In Sefer Tehillim, David Hamelech also writes *"And your glory is that you will pass and ride for the sake of truth and righteous humility."* (Tehillim 45:5). And in Tefillat Chana, it is written *"Let not arrogance come out of your mouth."* (Shmuel I 2:3).

The Foundation of Repentance and Brotherhood

When you read the stories of brothers in Sefer Bereishit, it really puts a bad taste in your mouth. Cain kills Abel, Yitzchak had to be separated from Yishmael, Yaakov had to be separated from Esav, and Yosef's brothers end up selling him as a slave. How could the Jewish people endure without a foundation of brotherhood? Is there anything that could be done to repair and make amends for this discord? (Continued...)

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(Continued...)

Yosef's brothers come to Egypt to buy food due to the famine. Yosef, who is now the viceroy of Egypt, recognizes them but does not reveal himself. He labels them as spies. He wants to test them to see if they had changed their ways, and learned to show brotherhood or not. With his great wisdom, Yosef knew that without the foundation of brotherhood, the Jewish people would not endure. Yosef tests them first by giving more lavishly to Binyamin to see if it would arouse their jealousy. Later on, he says that he will keep Binyamin as a slave, to see if they would stand up for him.

During this ordeal, the brothers start on a path towards repentance for what they had done to Yosef. First they wanted to kill him, then they threw him in a pit, and finally they sold him as a slave. Some aspects of repentance that the brothers display once labeled as spies are guilt, remorse, and admitting that they had sinned. As a final act of repentance in the next Parasha, Yehuda saves Binyamin and says that he is willing to stay as a slave instead of his brother Binyamin. Yehuda says, *"Please let your servant remain instead of the youth as a servant to my lord, and let the youth go up with his brothers."* (Bereishit 44:33).

After Yosef hears this, he finally reveals himself. The brothers had come full circle, along with humanity. At one point in Bereishit, Cain says to Hashem, *"Am I my brother's keeper?"* (Bereishit 4:9), but now we had come to a point in which a brother was willing to give his life for his brother. Yosef sees that the brothers had come full circle, and finally a foundation for brotherhood is established for Bnei Yisrael.

Rambam (Maimonides) also writes in his book, Hilchos Teshuva, that by showing brotherhood in trying to save Binyamin, Yehuda had accomplished complete repentance for his sin of selling Yosef. Similarly, Abarbanel writes that in Yosef's eyes, the brothers were now all Ba'alei Teshuva, and therefore he would reveal himself to them and would treat them well.

Through their actions; Yosef, Yehuda and the brothers are able to lay a foundation for Bnei Yisrael: A foundation of humility, awareness of Hashem, repentance, and brotherhood. As Jews, we can count on the fact that we can also arouse Hashem's mercy and the infinite blessings that Hashem has in store for us by living by these foundational principles and passing Hashem's tests.

I wish everyone a Shabbat Shalom and a Chanukah Sameach!

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The Power of Bitachon

By *Levana Liviem*

In this week's Parasha, Parashat Miketz, Pharaoh has a dream involving seven cows and seven ears of grain, which he needs interpreted. Once Pharaoh states that he has had this confusing dream, his butler, who was formerly in jail with Yosef, remembers him and tells Pharaoh about him and his ability to interpret dreams. This, ultimately, brings about Yosef's salvation.

It is said, *"It came to pass at the end of two full years, that Pharaoh was dreaming..."* (Bereishit 41:1). The way this is stated in the Torah makes it seem that Pharaoh did not only have the dream on one night, but rather on each night for the span of two years (as it says, "two full years"). The Or HaChaim comes to say that this is exactly the case, and Pharaoh dreamt of the seven cows and ears of grain every night for two years, but forgot the dream each morning when he woke up. Finally, at the conclusion of these two years, Pharaoh woke up and remembered the dream, which is exactly when Yosef was released from prison. A clear question in this case is: if all it took was for Pharaoh to remember the dream one time...

...Why was it necessary for him to dream about it repeatedly for two years? An answer given is that Hashem had Pharaoh have the same dream each night to give Yosef the opportunity to be released from prison as soon as possible. Hashem was just waiting for Yosef to have enough *bitachon*, trust, and He would then cause Pharaoh to remember the dream, leading to Yosef's immediate freedom from prison. Once Yosef displayed that he had this *bitachon* in Hashem, he was freed.

A valuable lesson we can take away from this is that, at times, having *bitachon* is all it takes for us to get a salvation we may be awaiting. Hashem could just be waiting for us to show that we truly trust Him and His ability to give us that which is purely good and right for us. It's easy, as human beings, to try to rely on our own abilities and to want to keep matters in our own control. But, most often, the key to getting what we need, or any resolution, is to just *"let go and let G-d,"* and simply trust in Him and His capabilities.

May it always be easy for us to trust Hashem, and may we merit to witness the endless goodness and light that He can bring into our lives on this Chanukah and always. Shabbat shalom & Chanukah sameach!

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