

SEDRAH SELECTIONS PARSHAS MIKEITZ – CHANUKAH 5775 BS”D

8 QUESTIONS IN HONOUR OF THE EIGHT DAYS OF CHANUKAH ON PARSHAS MIKEITZ – ZVI AKIVA FLEISHER

Ch. 41, v. 34: “Yaa’sseh Pharoh v’yafkeid p’kidim” – Paroh should act and appoint administrators –

- 1) The word “yaa’sseh” seems to be totally superfluous, as the verse could have simply said, “Yafkid Paroh p’kidim,” as we find in Megilas Esther 2:3, “V’yafkeid ha’melech p’kidim.”
- 2) In verse 40 we find Paroh telling Yoseif that although he was now being given a high position, nevertheless, Paroh himself would still be above him. Would any sane person think that by virtue of this appointment Paroh was abdicating his kingship?
- 3) Why was it necessary for Paroh to tell Yoseif that he, Paroh, was giving Yoseif his position (verse 41)? Isn’t this obvious?
- 4) Why mention all the pomp and circumstance of the royal appointment through giving Yoseif a royal signet ring, placing royal garments upon him, placing a gold necklace upon his neck (verse 42), and giving him a royal limousine (verse 43)? Would we think that Yoseif would be the viceroy and be dressed in shmattes and when he needed transportation he would have to hitch a ride? Why not simply state only the information in verse 41, Paroh’s telling Yoseif that he was now the viceroy?
- 5) Rashi on verse 42 says that the handing over of the king’s signet ring was the specific ceremony that indicated that the recipient was second-in-command. Why mention this? Rashi does not do so by Achashveirosh’s doing the same with Homon. What important information would we be lacking if we only thought of this as a gesture of respect, or simply a handing over of some authority?
- 6) In verse 43, as explained by Rashi, we see that Paroh supplied Yoseif with a royal chariot which was specifically a “mirke’ves hamishneh,” second to the king’s, like a Bentley next to a Rolls Royce Silver Cloud, and that Paroh had it travel right next to his. Why mention this at all?
- 7) Again in verse 43, we find that Yoseif was called “avreich.” Rashi brings the opinion of Rabbi Yehudoh in Medrash Agodoh that this is a composite word, “av” and “rach.” “Av” means an elder (in wisdom), while “rach” means tender (young). If Yoseif’s appointment was to be taken seriously by the wide public, shouldn’t only his virtue of being wise be stressed? Why add that he is a youngster, an element that would limit his acceptance in people’s eyes?
- 8) Verse 45 tells us that Paroh gave Yoseif a new name and a wife. Why did Paroh do these two things?

ANSWER:

It is quite possible that Yoseif, with the use of this one phrase, “yaa’sseh Pharoh,” appealed to Paroh in a most ingenious manner, displaying absolute genius in dealing with Paroh’s emotional needs and offering politically sound advice at the same time. Yoseif tells Paroh that a devastating famine is coming in 7 years, so decimating that it would wipe out all vestiges of 7 previous years of abundance, and as mentioned earlier, in much less than 7 years. Whoever would save the day would become the national hero and Paroh would be relegated to obscurity.

This was Yoseif’s intention with the words “yaa’sseh Pharoh.” Make sure that whomever you appoint will not be a threat to your maintaining the country’s leadership. Make sure that the attribution is to you. Yoseif wanted to allude to Paroh to place him in this position but could not do so overtly. After all, there was a law etched in stone that anyone with a jail record could not become a minister. Asking Paroh to break the law was very inadvisable.

However, Paroh himself could break the law (read that as AMEND the law). It was also extremely advantageous to give the position to a foreigner, and a Jew to boot, not a very coveted title among the Egyptians, “v’shom itonu naar IVRI” (41:12), upon which Rashi comments that the wine-butler was very critical of Yoseif by calling him an IVRI. This was the perfect bait, appointing a Jew, a jailbird, a NAAR, a young person. Appointing Yoseif would be the optimum situation for Paroh. Yoseif would be a very capable administrator who would most likely not become the nation’s idol and hero, given his background.

Paroh now had to walk a tightrope, giving Yoseif credence and esteem so that people would listen to his edicts, and at the same time not having him run away with the leadership. This is why Paroh stated unequivocally, “rak haki’sei egdal mi’meko” (verse 40). Make sure you realize that I will always be above you. In the same vein in verse 41 Paroh reiterates, “R’ei nosaTI os’cho al kol eretz Mitzroyim.” Be cognizant of MY appointing you.

This also explains why the Torah mentions in much detail the coronation, and all the royal items given to Yoseif (verse 42). Paroh did all this to show all his people and in particular his ministers, that Yoseif was now second in

command, and not just another appointee. Rashi stresses this as well, saying that handing over the signet ring is the ceremony for installing a SECOND-IN-COMMAND.

In verse 43 we see exactly the same strategy. Yoseif is given a chariot that is one notch below Paroh's and rides next to him, rather than with him in the same chariot, even though this was the coronation parade, again to show that Yoseif is BELOW Paroh. He is called "avreich." Although an elder in wisdom, this must again be tempered with knowing that he is not the top man, hence "rach," tender in years. Lastly, by giving Yoseif a new name and by GIVING him a wife, "va'yi'ten," and Yoseif's not TAKING a wife, Paroh was again publicly wielding his power over Yoseif, one more tactic in "keeping him in his place."

Indeed, Yoseif was very cooperative and it was abundantly clear to all that Paroh was the top man on the totem pole. When the people suffered from the famine they came to Paroh and not to Yoseif (41:55), and only then did Paroh send them to Yoseif. When the people became more and more impoverished and had to sell their belongings, including their land, and finally themselves, it was all sold to Paroh. Yoseif was a loyal trustworthy viceroy, making sure that Paroh was recognized as the leader of the nation (see 47:14,19,20,22-26).

The relationship between Yoseif and Paroh was cordial because Paroh was not threatened by Yoseif and the power that he held, as everyone's perception was that Yoseif was second in command. This held true even during the years when this was greatly challenged, during the famine. It seems that the reality of the situation, at least during the famine, was that Yoseif was truly the leader. There is one place where Yoseif tells his brothers of his high position and describes it as even being above Paroh's. In Breishis 45:8 Yoseif tells his brothers that it was not they who brought him to Egypt, but rather, it was Hashem. "Va'y'si'meini l'ov l'Pharoh ul'odone l'chol beiso umosheil b'chol ho'oretz." The simple translation of "ov" is father. Yoseif was like a guiding father to Paroh, master over his household, and lord over all the land. No doubt this was only for their ears and not for Paroh's. Yoseif likely pointed out that he was in the highest position in the land to assuage his brothers' feelings of guilt. However, he would not lie. We thus see that he was truly the leader of Egypt, even above Paroh, at least during the famine. (Nirreh li)

Ch. 41, v. 1: "Va'y'hi mikeitz shnosayim yomim" – And it was at the end of two years – Yoseif was only supposed to be incarcerated for ten years but his unnecessary effort in trying to be released by asking the wine butler to mention him to Paroh brought Heavenly retribution that he stayed in jail for two more years. Some say that it was two years on account of his two words, "Z'chartani v'hizkartani" in 40:14. Rabbi S. Kivlovitz says that since Yoseif told him that in three days he would be released and reinstated into his previous position Yoseif should not have asked him for help immediately. He could have waited until the third day. Jumping the gun by two days brought about the two years of extended jail stay, "Yom l'shonoh."

Ch. 41, v. 1: "U'Pharoh choleim" – And Paroh is dreaming – Our verse does not say that Paroh the king of Egypt is dreaming. This is because this same river will be influential in his downfall. The first of the plagues struck the river. (Rabbeinu Bachyei)

Ch. 41, v. 1: "V'hinei omeid al ha'y'or" – And behold he stands on the river – The Egyptians deified the river, as it brought them the sorely needed water for drinking and agriculture. Paroh was so haughty that he appointed himself a god and not only that but in his dream he saw himself standing above the river, an indication that when awake he held himself above the god of the Egyptians. (Mei Hashilo'ach Admor of Ishbitz)

Ch. 41, v. 2: "V'hinei min ha'y'or olos sheva poros" – And behold from the river seven cows ascended – "Hinei" connotes a surprising event. Indeed cows ascending from a river is supernatural. Since Paroh is relating his dream and it is known that dreams have all sorts of unreal happenings, what sort of "v'hinei" is this? Paroh is saying that the dream was so real to him that the cows' ascent from a river was startling. (n.l.)

Ch. 41, v. 4,5: "Va'yeekatz Paroh, Va'yeeshon va'yachalom sheinis" – And Paroh woke up, And he fell asleep and he dreamed again – Compare Yaakov's waking up (28:12,13), where he was awed, to Paroh's waking up. Notwithstanding his startling dream he immediately fell asleep again. (Rabbi Aharon Hagodol of Karlin)

Ch. 41, v. 45: "Vayiten lo es Osnas" - Approximately 150 years ago, there lived in Vilna the great Torah scholar R' Shmuel Strashon, who wrote the well known commentary, "Chiddushei hoR'shosh" on the Talmud. Because of his meticulous honesty he was entrusted with administrating the Vilner gmach (free loan society). A local merchant once borrowed a few hundred rubles from the gmach to be paid back at a prescribed time. He set aside small amounts to repay his debt, and finally amassed the total amount on the day it was due. The R'shosh had set hours during which he conducted the gmach business. Our merchant had to leave on a business trip on the due date before

the time that the R'shah attended to the gmach. Not wanting to repay the debt upon his return and be late with the payment, he decided that he would enter the Beis Hamedrash where the R'shah was studying. He indeed found the R'shah very deeply engrossed in his Talmudic studies. Trying to keep the disruption to a minimum, he just placed the money into the R'shah's hand and left. The R'shah was almost unaware of what happened and just stuffed the bills between the last page of his gemara and the back cover. The payment did not register in the R'shah's mind. When thirty days beyond the due date came, the gmach office sent out a reminder to the merchant that the payment was overdue. Knowing full well that he had paid, he came to the gmach office and stated his position to the R'shah, reminding him of the circumstances under which the payment had taken place. The R'shah, to whom the whole incident did not register, replied that he was sure that he received no payment. Upon the merchant's insisting otherwise, the R'shah responded that he was not in a position to overlook the matter, as the money was communal property. He warned the merchant that he faced a possible din Torah. Indeed, a short while later there was a din Torah. The issue of an extra repayment of the debt paled in comparison to the bad reputation the merchant developed by standing up against the sterling reputation of the R'shah. People shied away from him and his business plummeted. Even worse was the ridicule that his son received in Yeshiva. It reached a point where he stopped attending, lost interest in studying Torah, and became depressed. One day the R'shah was learning from the gemara in which he had placed the money. Upon finding the money placed behind the last pages of the gemara, he immediately was struck by the realization of what had occurred, and ran to beg for forgiveness from the merchant. He offered to publicize his mistake in shul to the entire community. The merchant responded that it would be of no avail, as people would assume that he was guilty, but that the R'shah made up this story in order to restore the merchant's reputation. Lastly, he said, that nothing could help to reverse the biggest tragedy of all, his son's broken spirit. The R'shah was at a loss. After some contemplation, he said with a smile to the merchant, "I have the solution. Mazel Tov! Your son will become my son-in-law! It will then be abundantly clear to everyone that you are innocent."

How did the R'shah come up with this brilliant idea? Most likely, he learned from our verse. Why did Paroh suddenly become a matchmaker between Yoseif and the daughter of Potiphar, and why would the Torah mention how Yoseif's marriage came about? Yoseif had a marred reputation because of the incident with Potiphar's wife. Since Paroh wanted Yoseif to become viceroy of Egypt, Paroh had to clear Yoseif of any wrongdoing. The only way this could be accomplished was by Yoseif marrying Potiphar's daughter. The public would think that if Yoseif had been guilty, Potiphar would never have him as a son-in-law. Likewise, by taking the merchant's son as his son-in-law, the R'shah undid all the damage that was inadvertently done.

Ch. 41, v. 52: "Efrayim" – Although our verse explains the giving of this name, why the double connotation with the "ayim" ending? There is a secondary reason for this name, which contained "eifer," ash, twice, that of Avrohom's saying "V'onochi ofor vo'eifer," and the ashes of Yitzchok that Hashem sees on the altar. (Baa'lei Tosfos)

Ch. 41, v. 56: "Va'yiftach Yoseif es kol asher bohem" – And Yoseif opened all that had in them – Yoseif was the distributor of all the government stored food. Obviously, when people came for food the storage houses had to be open, but what was the point of opening them all? The masses might act with mass hysteria, storming the food warehouses for fear of there not being much stored there. By opening ALL the warehouses the people saw that there was a lot of food stored and they behaved in an orderly manner. (n.l.)

This quieted their hunger somewhat so they managed on less, knowing that much food was available. (Ohr Hachaim Hakodosh)

Ch. 41, v. 57: "V'chol ho'oretz bo'u Mitzraimoh" – And all the land came to Egypt – The intention is that all the inhabitants of the land came to Egypt. (Ibn Ezra on T'hilim 33:8)

Ch. 42, v. 1: "Lomoh tisro'u" – Rashi translates this as "why should you show off." Targum Yonoson ben Uziel says "why should you be afraid." Rabbi Saadiot Gaon says it means "why should you be negligent." Ramban says, "Why are you visible here." Sforono says, "Why should you be looked upon one on the other, waiting for each other to take action."

Ch. 42, v. 7: "Va'y'da'beir itom koshos" – And he spoke to them harshly – The five things Yoseif did to them that caused them suffering correspond to the five things they did wrong to him. Yoseif spoke harshly = they could not speak peacefully, calling them spies, which carries the death penalty = their sending dogs to kill him, throwing them into a jail = his being thrown into a pit, placing their money back into their sacks and their fearing being called thieves = selling Yoseif, demanding that Binyomin be brought, which brought them to fear that he might not be

returned to his father = their bringing a Yoseif's torn bloodied garment to Yaakov and making him believe that Yoseif was dead. This was measure for measure. Yoseif did this to make them suffer so that their punishment from Heaven would be diminished. (Holy Alshich)

Ch. 42, v. 16: "M'raglim a'tem" – You are spies – Yoseif, knowing that they were not spies, seems to be saying an untruth. Yoseif's intention was the acronym "Mi'zera Rochel G'navtem L'orchas Yish'm'eilim M'chartem." (Sheivet Musor)

Ch. 42, v. 21: "Avol asheimim anachnu al ochinu" – In truth we are guilty about our brother – Why didn't they confess about their wrongdoing to their father, keeping him in the dark about what they did with Yoseif? Confessing without being contrite and truly repenting about a wrongdoing is worthless or even worse. As far as selling Yoseif goes they were ready to redeem him at any cost, even so far as going to war. When it came to admitting their wrongdoing of tricking their father as to what they did to Yoseif, there was no resolve to correct this. Confessing and not correcting fooling their father is not valid confession. (Yismach Moshe)

Ch. 42, v. 23: "V'heim lo yodu ki sho'mei'a Yoseif" – And they did not know that Yoseif is hearing – Albeit that a translator was present, so was Yoseif. If so what does it mean that they did not know that Yoseif is hearing? He is hearing, just they believed not understanding. This is indeed the intention of not knowing that he is hearing, not understanding. This is why we make the blessing "Al mikra Megiloh" and not "Al shmias Megiloh." "Shmia" would mean understanding. Some don't understand what the words mean, especially some women. This is not an issue with hearing the sound of a shofar, as there are no words recited, so we have the blessing "Lishmo'a kol shofar." (Avudrohom)

OROH V'SIMCHOH – MESHECH CHOCHMOH ON PARSHAS MI'KEITZ BS"D

Ch. 43, v. 20: "Yorode yoradnu BATCHILOH lishbor ochel" – The MESHECH CHOCHMOH interprets these words of defense as follows: Normally, a wealthy person would not endanger himself to seek food during a famine, as once he is successful in acquiring food there is the risk of being attacked by desperate people. He would rather even pay an exorbitant price for the food to black-market dealers and the like. However, once his funds ebb he is forced to risk life and limb in pursuit of food to keep body and soul together.

This was the intention of Yaakov with the words "lomoh tisro'u" (42:1), – why should you display and flaunt yourselves as wealthy people, by not descending to Egypt to purchase food, as all our neighbours are doing. They will assume that you are ready to purchase food from local merchants at highly inflated prices.

The brothers of Yoseif told Yoseif's manager that they were wealthy and there is no reason to suspect them of stealing the money out of desperation to have funds available for future purchasing. The proof is that they descended to Egypt BATCHILOH, right when the hunger began, while they still had food and funds available. Therefore they should not be suspect of theft. (The common way to understand BATCHILOH is that they descended in the beginning, referring to their first descent.)

Ch. 43, v. 29: "Elokim yoch'n'cho bni" – Yoseif called Binyomin "my son" as an expression of endearment.

However, the MESHECH CHOCHMOH suggests that Yoseif alluded to the gemara Sanhedrin 69b, which states that in the earlier generations males were capable of reproducing from the age of eight years old. This is derived from verses in the Torah, Yehoshua, and Divrei Ha'yomim regarding Chur, Uri, and B'tzal'eil.

Yoseif was born eight years before Binyomin, as Binyomin was born at the time of reentry to Eretz Yisroel, and Yoseif was born at the end of the second seven years of work for Yaakov's right to marry Rochel. Yaakov worked six more years to amass his herds of sheep and goats and spent two years traveling until he entered Eretz Yisroel, bringing the spread between the two births to eight years. He indicated with the word BNI that he was capable of being Binyomin's father.

The MESHECH CHOCHMOH adds that we can truly appreciate the strength of character of Yoseif to not succumb to the temptation posed by the wife of Potifar when he was 18 years old, in light of his being reproductively matured at the age of 8 years old.

Ch. 44, v. 10: "Y'h'yeh LI o'ved" – By saying LI, Yoseif stated that Binyomin would become his personal slave. The brothers realized that Yoseif's intentions were not noble. If indeed he thought that Binyomin was a common thief he would never use him as his personal slave. This explains why Yehudoh was contrite, saying "Mah nomar ladoni mah

n'da'beir umah nitzadok" (44:16), and did a sudden about-face and was most recalcitrant in the beginning of parshas Va'yigash.

Ch. 44, v.15: "Ki nacheish y'nacheish ish asher komoni" – The MESHECH CHOCHMOH explains the double expression "nacheish y'nacheish." Rashi (Breishis 31:19) explains that Rochel removed her father Lovon's idols to distance him from the sin of idol worship, which is incumbent even upon bnei Noach, as per the gemara Sanhedrin 57b. Yoseif told them that this is not an excuse, as it was obvious that even without the special goblet Yoseif would continue divining, "nacheish y'nacheish," with another object.

CHAMISHOH MI YODEI'A – FIVE QUESTIONS ON THE WEEKLY SEDRAH – PARSHAS MI'KEITZ 5775 – BS"D

1) Ch. 41, v. 4: "Vatochalnoh haporos ro'ose hamar'eh v'dakose habosor eis sheva haporos" – And the poor looking and emaciated cows ate the seven cows – Verses 2 and 3 inform us that Paroh dreamt of 7 robust and 7 emaciated cows. Our verse begins by telling us that the poor looking and emaciated cows swallowed, without repeating their number, assuming that we would understand that it was 7 of the previous verse. Yet the verse goes on to say that they swallowed the SEVEN healthy looking and robust cows. Why repeat the number 7 by the healthy ones and not by the emaciated ones?

2) Ch. 41, v. 7: "V'hi'nei chalome" – And behold a dream – Why wasn't this said at the end of the dream of the cows as well, or at least say "chalomos" here? Why bother saying these words at all?

3) Ch. 41, v. 25: "Higid l'Pharoh" – He related to Paroh – Compare this with verse 28, where it says "heroh es Paroh."

4) Ch. 42, v. 7: "Mei'ayin bo'sem va'yomru mei'eretz K'naan lishbor ochel" – From where have you come and they said from the land Canaan to purchase food – Why did they offer information not requested of them?

5) Ch. 41, v. 56: "Va'yiftach Yoseif es kol asher bo'hem" – And Yoseif opened all that contained in them – Why did Yoseif display all that was in all the storage houses? He dispensed food for two years. Why wasn't it sufficient to open only what was needed on a daily basis?

ANSWERS:

#1

Perhaps this is an allusion to what would happen later. There were 7 years of abundance, and during the second year of famine all remembrance of the abundance was gone (47:18), to the point that all Egyptians sold their fields and themselves to Yoseif. Although Paroh dreamt that there were 7 emaciated cows, indicating that there would be 7 years of famine, but the swallowing of the robust cows, symbolic of the eradication of the abundant years by the famine, was accomplished within 2 years, hence only the mention of "cows" without their number. When mentioning the swallowed healthy cows the number 7 is mentioned to indicate that all 7 years were eradicated. (n.l.)

#2

1) Even Paroh realized that the two dreams were of one nature, hence singular. (Rabbeinu Bachyei)
Saying that this is a dream means that it is extremely removed from reality. Although cows don't swallow one another, and surely not whole, nevertheless, living creatures swallow one another. Stalks of grain don't swallow one another. (Chizkuni)

2) "V'hi'nei chalome" means that there were no more similar dreams. (Bchor Shor)

3) As long as a person is dreaming the situation seems to be real, no matter how farfetched it is from reality. It is only after he woke up that he realized that he was dreaming. (Bchor Shor)

4) As mentioned earlier in the name of the Medrash Hagodol, Paroh dreamt the same dreams for two years, but always forgot them when he woke up. "V'hi'nei chalome" tells us that this time the dream existed, i.e. was remembered, even after he woke up. (Nirreh li)

5) Some commentators say that Paroh's waking up between the dreams was part of the dream; that he woke up and fell asleep again and dreamt again. Thus the one long dream ended when he actually woke up in the morning. (Nirreh li)

#3

The Ohr Hachaim Hakodosh answers this question. Another answer also based on the gemara cited by the Ohr Hachaim Hakodosh (Brochos 55a): The gemara says that there are three decrees that Hashem personally announces. They are an appointment to be a communal leader, a parnas, hunger, and abundance of food. Although the verse in Bmidbar 23:19 says, "Lo ish Keil vicha'zeiv," Hashem is not like man to rescind, this applies to a positive decree, but if He presents a negative decree it may be rescinded by virtue of a merit, repentance, or the like.

Once Hashem has shown Paroh that there would be seven years of abundance, which cannot be rescinded, this is called "higid," irrevocably related. However, in verse 28, relating to the years of famine, which indeed would be cut down from seven to two years, the decree of seven years is only "shown," as it could be changed or amended. Paroh, noting that Yoseif made this change of wording from "higid" to "heroh" assumed that if Yoseif fully understood Hashem's decrees of abundance and famine, he was also aware of the other decree of this triumvirate emanating from Hashem, parnas. This is the intention of his words in verse 39, "Acha'rei hodia Elokim os'cho es kol zose," abundance and famine, you likewise are aware of your becoming the "parnas" of Egypt, "Atoh ti'h'yeh al beisi v'al picho yishak kol ami." (Naftoli Sva Rotzone)

#4

Yoseif only asked them from where they came, so why did they also add the purpose of their trip? Indeed, the Malbim says that these extra words gave Yoseif an excuse to claim that they were spies.

Divrei Yoseif says that in Yoseif's words lie two questions – from where are you, and what brought you here? Had he only wanted to ask the land in which they resided, he would have said "mei'ayin a'tem," not "bo'sem," as we find when Yaakov asked the people of Choron who were standing near the well, "Achai mei'ayin A'TEM" (29:4). "Bo'sem" alludes also to what is the purpose of coming, as we find when the angel asked Hogor, "mei'ayin bos" (16:8). Hogor explained that she ran away from Soroh.

#5

The Ohr Hachaim Hakodosh answers that Yoseif wanted the food to satiate to its maximum. If people thought that they might run out of food very shortly their hunger would not be quenched even when they received a proper amount. By displaying massive amounts of food, a little went a long way.

FEEL FREE TO COPY AND/OR TO DISTRIBUTE. TO SUBSCRIBE FOR WEEKLY EMAIL PLEASE SEND ONE WORD REQUEST – SUBSCRIBE – TO sholom613@rogers.com