

Parashat Miketz, 5784, 2023:

*Hashem Will Give an Answer*

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ה' יעזור וירחם על אחינו, כל בני ישראל בארץ ישראל ובכל חלקי הארץ

Parashat Vayeshev concludes with the story of Yosef's imprisonment in an Egyptian dungeon as a result of Potiphar's wife's false accusations. While incarcerated, Yosef rises to the top of the prison hierarchy, and analyzes the dreams of two fellow prisoners: Pharaoh's chief baker and chief cupbearer. Drawing on his *ruach hakodesh*, Yosef reveals to the chief cupbearer that he will return to his former position of honor. Yosef then asks him: "But remember me (*zikartani*) when things go well with you, and please do me a favor and mention me (*v'hizkartani*) to Pharaoh, and you will get me out of this house." (*Sefer Bereishit* 40:14, this, and all Bible translations, *The Judaica Press complete Tanach*)

Yosef's strategy seems sound, yet this is how matters actually played out: "[Pharaoh] restored the chief cupbearer to his [position as] cupbearer, and he placed the cup on Pharaoh's palm...But the chief cupbearer did not remember Yosef, and he forgot him." (40:21, 23) When we fast forward to this week's *parasha*, we are informed that Pharaoh had a series of disturbing dreams that Pharaoh's wise men failed to accurately interpret. This glaring issue jogs the chief cupbearer's memory, and he brings news of Yosef's abilities to Pharaoh. Not too surprisingly, the befuddled monarch quickly takes advantage of this new-found opportunity:

So, Pharaoh sent and called Yosef, and they rushed him from the dungeon, and he shaved and changed his clothes, and he came to Pharaoh. And Pharaoh said to Yosef, "I have dreamed a dream, and there is no interpreter for it, but I have heard it said of you [that] you understand a dream, to interpret it." And Yosef replied to Pharaoh, saying, "Not I; the

Almighty will give an answer [that will bring] peace to Pharaoh.” (*Sefer Bereishit* 41:14-16)

To be clear, Yosef was summoned from his dungeon of despair and brought before Pharaoh, the most powerful man on the planet. Almost immediately, Pharaoh told him that he heard he was capable of accurately interpreting dreams. Let us step back for a moment and imagine how many of us would have responded to such a powerful ruler. Assuming that we had Yosef’s talent, most of us probably would have said some variation of the following: “Yes, I can interpret dreams very well. In fact, your majesty, I haven’t been wrong yet! I do have an amazing gift that is now at your service. What did Pharaoh dream? Allow me to interpret the dream’s meaning.”

Yosef, however, chose a very different approach and, in so doing, took the final step toward becoming *Yosef HaTzadik*: “*Bil’adai, Elokim ya’aneh et shalom Pharaoh*” (“It is not through my wisdom [Onkelos] that I shall interpret your dreams, Elokim will provide an answer that will bring peace to Pharaoh”). The singular import of these six Hebrew words cannot be overestimated. They began a chain of events that established Yosef as the key figure who enabled the Jewish people to initially thrive in Egypt, and subsequently survive the Egyptian exile.

Why does the phrase, “*Bil’adai, Elokim ya’aneh et shalom Pharaoh*,” have such marked power? In his *Commentary on the Torah*, the Malbim (Rabbi Meir Leibush ben Yechiel Michel, 1809-1879), suggests this interpretation:

[When Yosef declared this phrase, he was actually telling the king that] the dream was a communication of Divine Providence from Hashem. Moreover, just as Hashem sent you [Pharaoh] this communication to make known to you your peace [that is, your future] ... so, too, will He make known its interpretation to the dream analyst no matter who he may be. In addition, even if the [interpretation] of this [Heavenly] message will not come from me, nonetheless, others will be able to interpret it, for even without me, certainly Elokim,

Himself, will provide an answer to Pharaoh that will bring you peace... (Translation, underlining and brackets my own)

A careful reading of the Malbim's words leads to an inescapable and seemingly counterintuitive conclusion: Yosef achieved his ultimate greatness by removing any thought of self-aggrandizement completely "off the table." Instead, he declared that everything that takes place is solely dependent upon the infinite Almighty, rather than upon any finite individual. This message, especially in our day and age, is one that we surely must ponder.

May we strive to be like *Yosef Hatzadik* and ever recognize that Hashem, not humankind, runs the world. As *Dovid HaMelech* proclaimed so long ago: "*M'ate Hashem hiyitah zot he niflot b'aineynu*—This was from Hashem; it is wondrous in our eyes." (*Sefer Tehillim* 118:23). *V'chane yihi ratzon.*

Shabbat Shalom

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\*\*\* I have posted 164 of Rabbi Soloveitchik's English language audio *shiurim* (MP3 format) spanning the years 1958-1984. Please click on the highlighted link: [The Rav](#)