

Why did Pharaoh elevate a Hebrew slave to viceroy?
 In "Dreams of Pharaoh"

ESTD 1997

Dedicated to Scriptural and Rabbinic Verification of Authentic Jewish Beliefs and Practices

JewishTimes

Volume VI, No. 9...Dec. 22, 2006

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Weekly Parsha

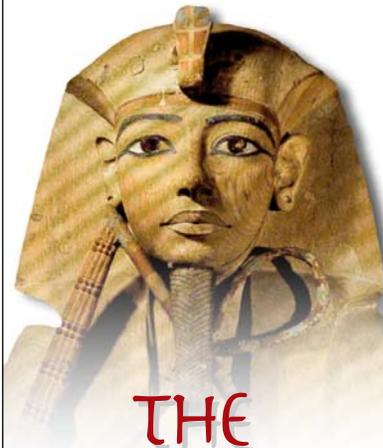
Miketz

RABBI BERNARD FOX

"And it was at the end of two years and Paroh had a dream. And he was standing by the river:" (Beresheit 41:1)

As the parasha opens Yosef is still in prison. Two years previously he had successfully interpreted the dream of Paroh's butler. Yosef had correctly

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THE DREAMS OF PHARAOH

RABBI ISRAEL CHAIT

Transcribed by students

In the beginning of the book of Exodus Chapter 1 Verse 8 it states, "A new king arose on Egypt that did not know Joseph." There is an argument amongst the Rabbis. Rav says it was literally a new king. Shmuel says it was not a new king but rather the same Pharaoh, who acted as though he did not know Joseph and made new decrees against the Jews. The position of Shmuel seems difficult. A simple reading of the text would indicate it was merely a new king. Why did Shmuel feel compelled to understand the meaning of the verse to such a strained interpretation? This

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CHANNUKAH &

Hallel

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

As Maimonides teaches, human perfection takes on many forms, including perfection of the body and perfection of wealth. But the greatest perfection, which is also the objective of mitzvahs, is intellectual perfection. This perfection must culminate in our action, and not simply remain cerebral. Only when we act upon our knowledge, are we truly convinced in our beliefs, and then, truly perfected. One who cannot give charity for example, but "accepts" that virtue as a good, is still lacking in his conviction. He must possess an emotion that opposes his giving, or he has yet to fully grasp all positive elements of charity. God designed man in a manner wherein complete conviction necessitates action. It is impossible that someone fully convinced in any belief, will not express that belief in action, unless he possesses an emotional block, or is uncertain of the value of his beliefs. But when a value of something is clear, and a person has no opposing emotions, he will act on that value.

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Weekly Parsha

JewishTimes

Weekly Journal on Jewish Thought



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predicted that the butler would be released from prison and restored to his position serving Paroh. He had asked the butler to intercede, on his behalf, with Paroh. But the butler had forgotten Yosef and had not brought his case to Paroh's attention. Now, Paroh has a dream. He is troubled by this vision and seeks an interpretation. The butler is reminded of his own premonitory dream and Yosef's accurate interpretation. He tells Paroh of his experience and Yosef is brought to Paroh.

Yosef provides Paroh with an insightful and exact explanation of the dream. This episode results in Yosef's redemption and immediate appointment as Paroh's foremost minister.

The Chumash emphasizes the passage of two years from Yosef's interpretation of the butler's dream and this episode. Rashi maintains that this two-year delay in Yosef's rescue was a punishment. According to this interpretation it seems that Yosef was overconfident. He felt that through the relationship he had forged with the butler he had secured his own rescue. Hashem undermined Yosef's plan and caused the butler to forget Yosef. The Almighty taught Yosef that even the best plan can be ineffectual. We can have no security without the help of the Almighty.[1]

Rabbaynu Avraham ben HaRambam offers another explanation for the two-year hiatus. He argues that Yosef's redemption and appointment to a high position was made possible as a result of this delay. If the butler had immediately approached Paroh and pleaded Yosef's innocence, what would have been the outcome? At best, the butler would have convinced Paroh that Yosef had been unjustly imprisoned. This may have resulted in the restoration of Yosef's freedom. However, Yosef would have lost the opportunity to meet Paroh and make a personal impression. Instead, the butler completely forgot Yosef. On the occasion of Paroh's dream the butler suddenly remembers Yosef and his unpaid debt to this Hebrew. He encourages Paroh to seek Yosef's help. Yosef meets with Paroh personally and impresses the ruler. As a result, Yosef becomes the virtual king of Egypt. From this perspective the two-year delay was not a punishment. It was a blessing.[2]

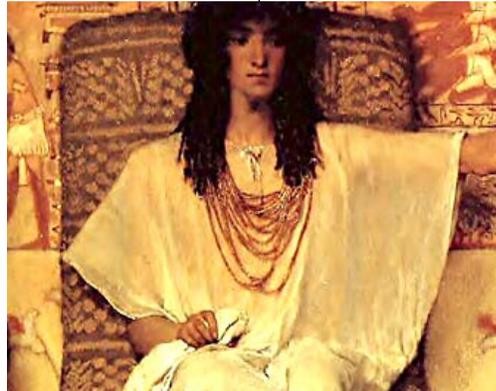
“And Yosef answered Paroh saying, “It is not me. The Lord will answer concerning Paroh's fortune.” (Beresheit 41:16)

Yosef is called upon to interpret Paroh's dream. Yosef begins with a disclaimer. He explains that it is not within his power to determine the interpretation of Paroh's vision. Only the Almighty can provide an

explanation of the dream.

Rashi and many other commentaries seem to see in Yosef's words an expression of humility. Yosef realized that he was not capable of explaining Paroh's dream through some personal power of insight. He was the vehicle of the Almighty. Any interpretation that would be forthcoming will be a message provided by Hashem. Furthermore, Yosef did not want to glorify himself or mislead Paroh. He wanted Paroh to realize that it was not he, Yosef, providing the explanation. The answer would come from Hashem.[3]

Other commentaries, including Gershonides, interpret Yosef's disclaimer in a different manner. Yosef had not yet heard Paroh's dream. He could not know the message he would provide Paroh. Perhaps, the dream would contain the good tidings. It was also possible that the dream would be a message of disaster. Yosef wanted Paroh to know that he was only the messenger of the Almighty. Yosef could not determine the nature of the message. Paroh should not be angry with Yosef, if he was displeased with the interpretation.



It is also possible that Yosef had another concern. The Egyptians were primitive and superstitious. In some primitive cultures it was apparently believed that the interpreter exercised some influence over the message contained in a dream. Yosef knew that if Paroh held this belief, a great danger existed. An interpretation of ill tidings

would be blamed upon Yosef. Yosef wanted to address this issue from the onset. He told Paroh that the interpreter did not influence the meaning of the dream. The dream had an objective meaning. The role of the interpreter was merely to unravel the meaning.[4]

“And Paroh gave Yosef the name Tzaphnat Paaneach. And he gave him Asenat, the daughter of Poti-Phera, the priest of Ohn, as a wife. And Yosef went forth to oversee Egypt.” (Beresheit 41:45)

Yosef interprets Paroh's dreams. The dreams foretell that Egypt will experience seven years of bountiful harvests. These will be followed by seven years of scarcity. The dreams imply a response. Paroh should collect the excess harvest from the first seven years and create a ready store for use during the years of scarcity. Paroh is impressed with Yosef's interpretation of his dreams. He appoints Yosef as his minister. He places him in charge of the preparations suggested by the dreams. He changes Yosef's name and he gives Yosef a wife.

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(Miketz continued from page 2)

Weekly Parsha

Our pasuk describes this wife as Asenat, the daughter of Poti-Phera. Our Sages comment that this Poti-Phera was Potiphar.[5] Potiphar was Yosef's former master. He purchased Yosef from the traders that had brought him to Egypt.

It seems strange that Paroh would suggest that Yosef marry the daughter of Potiphar. In order to understand the odd nature of this choice, we must review a previous incident. Yosef was Potiphar's servant. Potiphar placed Yosef in charge of his entire estate. Yosef served Potiphar loyally. Potiphar's wife was infatuated with Yosef and repeatedly attempted to seduce him. Yosef resisted these advances. Eventually, Potiphar's wife succeeded entrapping Yosef in a compromising situation. She maneuvered Yosef into a situation in which they were alone. Again, she attempted to seduce Yosef. He rebuffed her advances. However, she grabbed Yosef's cloak. Yosef freed himself and fled. He left his garment in the hands of Potiphar's wife. She claimed that Yosef had attempted to seduce her. She offered, as proof of her accusation, Yosef's garment. Potiphar reacted by removing Yosef from his household and placing him in prison.[6]

It is odd that Paroh would chose, as Yosef's wife, Potiphar's daughter. This was the one family in Egypt that most resented Yosef.

In order to understand Paroh's decision, we must answer another question. Yosef was accused of attempting to seduce or rape Potiphar's wife. It is odd that Potiphar placed Yosef in prison. Yosef was a servant. His master had treated him benevolently. An attempt by Yosef to seduce or rape Potiphar's wife represented an unimaginable sin against his master. We would expect Potiphar to demand Yosef's execution. Why did he merely remand Yosef to prison?

Sforno explains that Potiphar trusted Yosef. He did not believe that Yosef would attempt to seduce or rape his wife. Instead, Potiphar suspected his wife of fabricating Yosef's crime. However, he was confronted with a dilemma. He could not disregard his wife's public accusations. This would discredit her and shame her and his family. He could not execute Yosef. This would be an inexcusable injustice. Therefore, he spared Yosef's life and instead, placed him in prison.[7]

Now, we can understand Paroh's decision. Paroh wished to appoint Yosef as his minister. However, he faced a problem. How could he appoint a convicted criminal to a high ministerial position? He needed to clear Yosef's name. Paroh knew that Potiphar, himself, doubted Yosef's guilt. This provided Paroh with the opportunity to clear Yosef's name. He gave Potiphar's daughter to Yosef as a wife. This marriage communicated a message. Even Potiphar acknowledged Yosef's innocence. The proof was his willingness to allow his daughter to marry Yosef. With this marriage, Yosef was vindicated and fit to serve as Paroh's minister.

"Yosef saw his brothers and he recognized them. He disguised himself and spoke to them harshly, and he said to them, "From where have you come?" And they said, "From the land of Canaan, to purchase food." Yosef recognized his brothers, but they did not recognize him." (Beresheit 42:7-8)

Yosef was personally responsible for the distribution of all provisions in Egypt when his brothers came to Egypt to purchase food. Yosef immediately recognized them and disguised his behavior so that they would not realize that he was their brother. His subterfuge was successful and he was not found out.

Rashi explains that Yosef was much younger than his brothers. When they had parted he did not yet have a full beard, whereas his brothers were mature adults. When the brothers arrived in Egypt, they were confronted with a bearded minister. They did not recognize their younger brother.[8]

Radak provides an alternative explanation for the brothers' failure to recognize Yosef. Strong psychological forces prevented the brothers from realizing that they stood before Yosef. The brothers had sold Yosef, and assumed that he was either dead or a lowly slave. They never doubted the effectiveness of their plan. Although they repented for the evil of their actions, they assumed that their destruction of Yosef had been complete. Radak explains that at this initial meeting the brothers observed a resemblance between the minister and their lost brother. However, they immediately rejected the implications of this observation. They just could not envision Yosef in a position of power and rulership. This prejudice provided Yosef with the opportunity to effectively disguise himself.[9]

On a deeper level, it should be noted that the original reason for the brothers' resentment of Yosef was because they perceived within him a boastful

attitude. They could not accept that Yosef could be superior, or had a right to exercise control over them. Dominated by these feelings, they were now unable to recognize Yosef in the very relationship that they dreaded.

The Radak further explains that Yosef went to great lengths to assure that he would be reunited with his brothers. As senior minister in Egypt he was not obligated to personally distribute provisions. He assumed this responsibility because he wanted to personally meet every individual requesting food. He knew that as the famine continued, his brothers would eventually be forced to travel to Egypt to seek provisions. Through personally distributing these supplies, he would be assured of meeting his family.[10] ■

[1] Rabbaynu Shlomo ben Yitzchak (Rashi), Commentary on Sefer Beresheit 40:23.

[2] Rabbaynu Avraham ben HaRambam, Commentary on Sefer Beresheit 40:15.

[3] Rabbaynu Shlomo ben Yitzchak (Rashi), Commentary on Sefer Beresheit 41:17.

[4] Rabbaynu Levi ben Gershon (Ralbag / Gershonides), Commentary on Sefer Beresheit, (Mosad HaRav Kook, 1994), p 229.

[5] Rabbaynu Shlomo ben Yitzchak (Rashi), Commentary on Sefer Beresheit 41:45.

[6] Sefer Beresheit 39:1-20.

[7] Rabbaynu Ovadia Sforno, Commentary on Sefer Beresheit, 39:19.

[8] Rabbaynu Shlomo ben Yitzchak (Rashi), Commentary on Sefer Beresheit 42:8.

[9] Rabbaynu David Kimchi (Radak), Commentary on Sefer Beresheit 42:7.

[10] Rabbaynu David Kimchi (Radak), Commentary on Sefer Beresheit 42:6.

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Chanukah & Hallel

Since the greatest perfection is intellectual perfection, that which brings us closer to understanding God and His will, our performance of mitzvahs is sorely lacking if we do not know why we perform a given command.

This past week we have been reciting Hallel each morning. Do we know why we recite it? Do we understand its distinction over other praises or blessings? For now, I would like to address Hallel's primary elements, since there is much text to the Hallel, and much discussed in the Talmud, and the discussion could become lengthy. As always, our questions are the paths to answers, so let's commence with some basic ones:

1) What does "Hallel" mean? It means "praise". But that title seems highly generic: are we not praising, based on some 'specific' reason? 2) What Torah source obligates our recital? Meaning, is there any "textual basis" from which Hallel is derived? We learn that the blessings surrounding the Shema are derived from a verse in Psalms, and the Shema itself is derived from Torah verses. This applies to all commands: each is derived from some verse in the Written Law. Surprisingly, the Prophets who instituted Hallel offer no verse! 3) What are the main ideas within the text of Hallel? 4) Maimonides' formulation catches our attention. Typically, for each law or holiday, Maimonides wrote a separate "section" of laws, titling them by name. For example, he formulated the "Laws of Passover", the "Laws of Stealing", the "Laws of Idolatry", and so on. But when it came to Hallel, he did not formulate an independent section titled "Laws of Hallel". But instead, he subsumed it under the "Laws of Channukah". Why is Hallel not its own, independent section, and why is it subsumed under Channukah, and not some other section? 5) Furthermore, when Maimonides introduces his Laws of Channukah, he discusses the history of Channukah, stating that the Rabbis instituted it as "a day of gladness and praise and that we light lights". Now, instead of continuing with his formulation of "how" and "who" lights, he interrupts his discussion midstream, making a lengthy "detour" to all the laws of Hallel...in the very same chapter! How do we understand this interruption, as well as his formulation as, "a day of gladness and praise and that we light lights"? 6) Why does Hallel commence, conclude, and reiterate many times ("Ki L'Olam Chasdo") the idea that God's praises and kindness are "eternal"?

Praise

I would like to suggest an answer to the first question: why is the title of the Hallel simply that, "Hallel", or "praise"? We must first define what



praise is. Praise is the human response to that which man deems important. Most important, is God: the Cause of all existences and benevolence towards man. Naming this praise as simply "praise", we underscore the epitome of praise: the Source of all goodness, be it the good He caused by creating us and His goodness in providing for all our needs; or be it our daily needs, or salvation from mishap. Thus, when we refer to this praise as simply "Hallel", we say in other words that God is deserving of praise, over all else. He epitomizes our reason for praise. Therefore, "praise" or "Hallel" is synonymous with the true Recipient of praise. Similarly, we need not qualify the term "judge", by adding that it refers to "one who seeks truth". For that is the very definition of judge. So too, "praise" needs no qualification, if we understand that all praise – by definition – must be directed to He who is most fitting to receive praise. Since God created everything, any praise we direct to anything but God, is a denial of the fact that God created all else. If we praise man, we elevate man above God, and in fact, we distort the very idea of what praise is. Therefore, "Hallel" by definition refers to praise of God. Nothing more need be added.

Hallel's Content & Source

The Talmud states that Hallel contains five fundamentals: the Exodus, the splitting of the Red Sea, the giving of the Torah, Resurrection, and

Messiah. These fundamentals form the historical and future events wherein God transformed our affairs from negative to positive (Exodus, Red Sea), and where He bestowed upon us His goodness (Torah, Resurrection and Messiah). These two categories form all the good God performs for man. We recite Hallel on days, which commemorate His providence in these two categories. Therefore, we did not originally recite Hallel on the New Month, for the new moon is a natural event, and not Divine providence.

Hallel may therefore be defined as a "response" to God's intervention. Talmud Pesachim 117a cites the very first case of Hallel: the Az Yashir sung by Moses and the Jews upon their deliverance from the Egyptians on their exit from the Red Sea. This brings us to our second question, "What Torah source obligates our recital?"

The Talmud's omission of a verse from which we derive Hallel, is a lesson in itself. This teaches that no verse is necessary. Or rather, praise of God in its perfect form, is not "compulsory", but it is natural. When man receives a good from God, as we have throughout time, our nature is to be overjoyed, and to respond. The best embodiment of praise is when man functions based purely on his design, without any obligation. Therefore, I believe this explains why the Talmud cites "cases" of when the Jews praised God, instead of citing a "verse". A verse implies "obligation", which is the antithesis of what praise is, in its primary form. Therefore, the Talmud cites correct human behavior alone in response to God's kind acts to teach the lesson of Hallel, and mentions no verse.

Similarly, as taught by a wise Rabbi, we include in the blessings over circumcision the words, "To enter into the covenant of Abraham our father". This is problematic, since our obligation stems not from a pre-Torah figure as Abraham, but as the Rabbis teach, "Once the Torah was given, Jewish law was renewed". Thus, our obligation of circumcision is not a carryover from Abraham, but truly, a totally new law. Therefore we wonder why we mention Abraham in our blessings today. The answer given by this Rabbi, if I recall correctly, is that we wish to enunciate the "most favorable form" of circumcision; that performed by Abraham, whose perfection was not due to a Torah, which was not yet given (Pesachim 118a). Abraham's perfection was based purely on his natural function as an intelligent being, since he possessed no Torah. Another similar case is the dispute over whether the first of the Ten Commandments – "I am God" – is even a commandment at all! One Rabbi, I believe Rav Hai Gaon, opined that this cannot be a command,

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Chanukah & Hallel

for knowledge of God is “obvious”. His intent is that a command to “Know God” would undermine the very “obvious” nature that God must exist, since the world cannot create itself.

In a few cases, the absence of any derivative verse or command is the very lesson. In connection with knowing God, a “command” undermines the very nature of God – that He is obvious. Any command to “Know Him” belittles how obvious He is. Therefore, a command is absent. Regarding circumcision, we retain a reference to Abraham. Since he embodied perfection par excellence, and this is the very goal of circumcision, we make reference to him. And in connection with Hallel, again we find no verse, since a verse, which equates with compulsion negates the primary idea of praising God: a “natural” response.

Dependent Phenomenon

This idea explains why Maimonides does not have a separate section on Hallel, but subsumes it under another area. He means to teach that Hallel is not an “independent” phenomenon but a “response” to something else. The nature of Hallel is a “reaction”, and placing it within his Laws of Channukah, Maimonides embodies Hallel’s “dependent” nature: it is “attached” to, or “depends” on something else. It is a response.

Perhaps Maimonides includes Hallel in Channukah, and not elsewhere, due to the unusual definition of Channukah. As Maimonides stated so articulately, the Rabbis of that generation instituted Channukah as “a day of gladness and praise and that we light lights”. A “day” of gladness and praise. Meaning, the very entity of “day” was given a status as a “day of praise”, a day of Hallel. Channukah, over all other days, possesses a unique definition where it is a “day of praise”. Sabbath is a “day of sanctifying God’s name” and rest. Other holidays are days of “awe”, “pleasure”, and so on. But Channukah alone is designated as a “day of praise”. Therefore it is most fitting that Maimonides places the ‘dependent’ Hallel, in the Laws of Channukah. Hallel is thereby displayed as a “dependent” phenomenon.

This also explains why Maimonides interrupts his introduction to the laws concerning the Channukah lights, with his laws of Hallel. It is because of his formulation: “a day of gladness and praise and that we light lights”. Lights come last, since Hallel is primary. Hallel is what defines the day of Channukah, not the candles. His formulation bears out this idea. And this makes sense. For “lights”, is performed by us on behalf of the observer. But since the Talmud teaches we are to be more concerned with our own perfection over



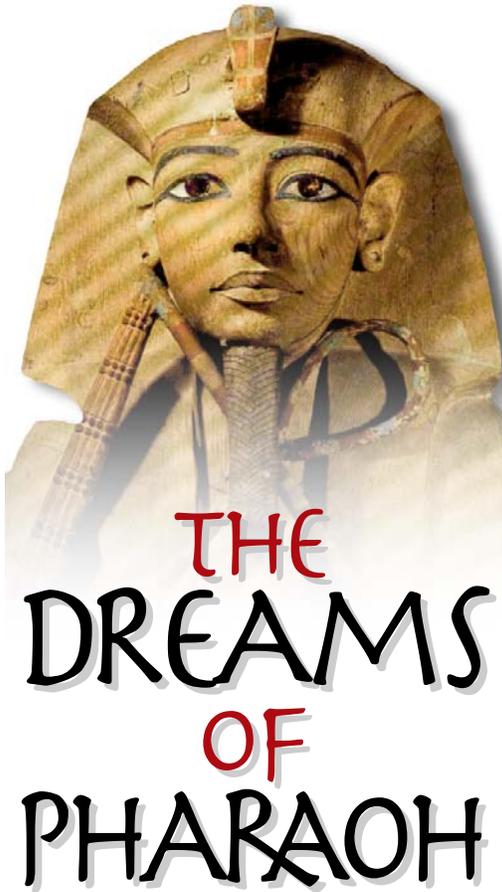
others, (Moade Katan 9a) our Hallel is more primary. Additionally, Hallel permeates the entire “day” of Channukah, whereas lights are a discrete, momentary activity. The lights do not define Channukah, as much as Hallel. Maimonides is correct to break off his discussion of the lights, with a full account of the laws of Hallel.

As a Rabbi taught, when Moses said the Jews exited the Red Sea, seeing the dead Egyptians’ on the shore, they experienced such a level of profundity of God’s revelation, that they all burst forth with a song of praise. “What a maidservant saw at the Red Sea, Ezekiel ben Buzi did not see all his days”. Man’s apprehension of God’s revelation reached an extreme zenith at that moment. That Rabbi added, “The verse in Az Yashir which emphasizes the objective of the Sea’s splitting was ‘This is my God and I will adorn Him’.” The Rabbi explained that God imbued in those Jews a deep realization and appreciation for God. Simple maidservants experience a far greater revelation of God than great prophets. Perhaps this event surpasses all others, as the miracle of the sea splitting combined with the death of our enemies overwhelmed us with both an intelligent comprehension of God’s might, and our complete salvation and release from the Egyptians through

God’s justice. This pre-Torah, natural human response is the primary example of what praise is, and is therefore not structured as a Torah command, but as an event.

Finally, if that which we praise is temporary, its value is severely mitigated. But God is eternal, and this is what defines His greatness. He preceded all and controls all. Only that which is the First, is responsible for everything else. Additionally, God’s perfection is not subject to change, so His goodness is eternal. Therefore, we commence and conclude, and intersperse this eternal nature of God’s goodness in Hallel. The Kedusha also concludes with this idea, “God will reign forever, the God of Zion for all generations, Halleluyah”. God’s eternal nature is a primary concept, and deserving of our reiteration numerous times daily.

Hallel may then be defined as the proper human-nature response to He who eternally bestows good on man. As we light the Candles this final night of Channukah, and as we recite the Hallel on Shabbos, try to sense the true appreciation we must have for God’s providence over our nation; review in your minds and hearts all our fortunate, great events, and all the good God has bestowed, and will bestow upon us. Happy Channukah! ■



THE DREAMS OF PHARAOH

RABBI ISRAEL CHAIT

Transcribed by students

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explanation seems to stretch the simple meaning of the verse. It is obvious that Shmuel detected something in Pharaoh's personality that indicates that he pretended as though he did not know Joseph.

In order to properly analyze the personality of Pharaoh and his relationship with Joseph, we must examine Pharaoh's dream and how Joseph's interpretation led to his ascendancy to power. The dreams of Pharaoh can help us examine his personality. There are two causes of dreams. One is a dream of divine origin, a prophetic vision. Another cause is the person's wishes or the thoughts of his unconscious. Pharaoh had two dreams. By analyzing and contrasting both dreams we should be able to determine the portion of the dream, which is prophetic, and the part, which is an expression of his personality. The aspects of his dreams, which are duplicative, are obviously of

divine origin. However, if we examine the portions of one dream, which are not common to the other, said portion is not prophetic. It would understandably be an expression of Pharaoh's unconscious.

By analyzing the dreams we note one striking difference with respect to the dreams concerning the cows. Pharaoh sees himself as part of that dream. Genesis Chapter 41 Verse 1 states at the end thereof "...and behold I was standing above the river." Another unique aspect of this dream is that it states the origin of the cows. The cows were coming up out of the river. However, the dream of the bundles of wheat does not state their origin. We must understand; why does Pharaoh include himself in the first dream, and why does he envision the cows appearing from out of the river?

Another clue to Pharaoh's personality would be an analysis of his actions. Upon Joseph's interpretation of the dreams, Pharaoh's response seems overwhelming. He immediately appoints a despicable "Jewish lad, a slave" as his viceroy, the second most powerful position in Egypt. He dresses Joseph in ornate clothing and extends him a regal coronation. Furthermore, when his subjects come to ask his advice when they were starving, he replies "go to Joseph and whatever he tells you to do, abide by it". It would seem rather unlikely that Pharaoh was willing to relinquish all control and credit, and suddenly bestow it upon Joseph. His response, besides being overwhelming, seems incongruous to Shmuel's interpretation of his later actions. At this juncture he seems to be a righteous individual capable of appreciating and recognizing the good of Joseph. However, later, after Joseph's death, there is a complete transformation of his personality and he denies Joseph's existence and in fact, acts ruthlessly to his people the Jews.

An understanding of the extraneous portion of his dreams can give us an insight into his personality and can demonstrate why seemingly incompatible actions are actually consistent with his character.

In his first dream the cows arose from the river. The Hebrew term for river that the Torah uses is "ye-or". Rashi explains that this term is used because it is referring to the Nile. The Nile was the source of sustenance for the land of Egypt. Egypt is a dry climate and the Nile overflows and irrigates Egypt. The Nile thus represents the source for the fulfillment of the Egyptians' basic needs. However, in Pharaoh's dream he was standing "al ha ye-or", above the Nile. This signifies that Pharaoh felt that he was 'above' the Nile. In his own mind he was more powerful than the powers of nature. Pharaoh considered himself a god. In fact, the Medrash tells us, that he even emptied his bowels without anyone knowing, so as the feign divinity in front of his people, never needing to

relieve himself. He professed to be above the laws of nature. Thus, the most threatening occurrence to Pharaoh would be if he were not in total control. It would shatter his self image as a god. Thus, the occurrence of a drought was a fearful event to Pharaoh. The Torah tells us "vatepaem rucho", his spirit was troubled. Unconsciously, he feared losing control. That is why in the dream he envisioned the cows coming out of the river. He feared a natural event that would be beyond his control. He thus sensed that Joseph's interpretation was accurate. He therefore had to come to grips with the possibility of losing control. However, Joseph presented him with the ability to maintain control. He realized that through Joseph he would be able to retain control and keep intact his image as a god. However, in order for him to view his reliance on Joseph as a situation akin to being in control, he was coerced into viewing Joseph as an extension of himself. Psychologically there was total identification with Joseph. Therefore, his response to Joseph was overwhelming. The deification of Joseph was not an abnormal response, but on the contrary it was necessitated by his identification with Joseph. It was an expression of his vision of Joseph as his alter ego. This relationship reinstated his threatened view that he was not the most powerful force in the world: with Joseph, he now resumed his self-image as a god. Therefore, when people asked him what to do, he quite naturally responded, "whatever Joseph says, do". It bolstered his image of being in control. Joseph's actions were merely expressions of his own power. Pharaoh and Joseph together, in his mind, were one entity.

We can now understand Shmuel's explanation. After Joseph's death, Pharaoh, because of his psychological make-up, faced a terrible problem. Narcissism, the love of oneself, was a key characteristic of Pharaoh's personality. A narcissistic individual's psychic energies are directed towards the love of the self. However, when a person like Pharaoh, strongly identifies with another individual and views him as his alter-ego, that other person becomes a source of his narcissistic, psychic energy. Therefore, upon Joseph's death, the excess psychic energy could no longer be channeled towards his alter ego. He began to confront the same emotions that he previously experienced. He felt threatened by the fact that he was really not in control. However, he could not use the defense mechanism of identification but instead resorted to denial. He was unable to confront the fact that Joseph really allowed him to retain control. Therefore, psychologically, in order to function without feeling threatened, he had to act as though he did not know Joseph. Any remembrance of Joseph or acknowledging Joseph's value was painful to his self-image of

(continued on next page)

being all-powerful. Accordingly, not only did he have to act as though he did not know Joseph, but that denial coerced him to act in the opposite fashion. His remembrance of Joseph was so painful; it served as the source for his oppression towards Joseph's people, the children of Israel.

Therefore Shmuel stated that "a new king" is only viewed as new, in terms of his actions. However an analysis of Pharaoh's personality indicates that on the contrary, it was the same Pharaoh. That is why the Torah specifically articulates that the new king did not know Joseph. If he were truly a new king the statement would be redundant. The Torah is really offering us an insight into his nature.

An example of this type of psychological mechanism is evident in Christianity. The Christian hates the Jew for ostensibly killing his G-d. However, this is indicative of a psychological defense mechanism. The Christian cannot admit that we gave them their G-d, since Jesus was Jewish.

Jacob upon meeting Pharaoh was keenly aware of Pharaoh's true nature. His response to Pharaoh's inquiry with respect to his age seems rather lengthy and irrelevant. Genesis Chapter 49 at Verse 9, "And Jacob said to Pharaoh, the days of the years of my sojourning are 130, few and bad were the years of my life and I have not reached the days of the years of the lives of my fathers, in the days of their sojourns." Nachmanides questions this rather lengthy response. However, based upon our insight into Pharaoh's personality, it is understandable. A person, who perceives himself as all-powerful and god-like, feels threatened by someone who possesses something that is desirable, which he does not have. Jacob realized that Pharaoh had such a personality. He sensed that Pharaoh, when questioning his age, noted he was an elder and was asking more, out of a sense of envy rather than curiosity. He sensed that he possessed something that Pharaoh desired: old age. Accordingly, Jacob who was old, at a time when people were not living so long, responded based upon this perception. He stated that he was not so old, and that he did not have a good life nor live as long as his fathers. He attempted to dispel any envy that Pharaoh may have had. He did not want to entice Pharaoh's anger by giving him any cause for jealousy. Therefore, his lengthy response was appropriate and warranted, considering the circumstances.

It also explains the blessing that Jacob bestowed upon Pharaoh. Rashi tells us that he blessed him that the Nile should rise to greet him whenever he approaches it. Jacob was aware of Pharaoh's personality. This blessing Pharaoh truly cherished. It represented that even the most powerful phenomenon of nature would be subordinate to his control. ■



PHARAOH'S WISDOM

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

In Genesis, 41:45, we find that after Pharaoh sees the undeniable brilliance of Joseph, Pharaoh selects Joseph to be his second in command over Egypt. The passage states three ideas, 1) Pharaoh changes Joseph's name to Zaphnas Paneach, 2) he gave Asnas, the daughter of Poti-Phera (now subtly referred to as "Priest" of Ohn) to Joseph as his wife, and 3) Joseph goes out on Egypt (to rule).

We have a mesora - a tradition - that when one pasuk (passage) contains many points, they must all be related, as they have been decided by God to be placed in a single verse.

We then have the following questions:

- 1) What is the connection between all the points in this passage?
- 2) Why give Joseph the daughter of Poti-Phera? His wife accused Joseph of attempted rape! Wasn't there a better choice of a mate, if he must have a wife?
- 3) Why is Poti-Phera suddenly referred to as a "priest"?
- 4) What does Joseph "going out on Egypt" have to do with anything?
- 5) Why does Pharaoh change Joseph's name to Zaphnas Paneach?

With a little consideration, the answers leap from this passage.

Pharaoh was in his position - not without intelligence. Upon summoning Joseph from prison to interpret his dreams, Pharaoh was cognizant of the future political problems faced with elevating an imprisoned Jew to viceroy status. More to the point, Pharaoh was appointing one accused of rape. This would not wash well with his subjects, or his country. How would Pharaoh deal with this?

I believe with the following answer, we unveil insight into Pharaoh's wisdom.

Pharaoh attempted to dispel any rumors of

Joseph's ill repute by giving him this specific woman for a wife. Who in their right minds would believe that Joseph attempted rape of a woman, the wife of Poti-Phera, and then marries her very daughter? Pharaoh caused Egypt to believe that the rape accusation was not true. Further, Poti-Phera's wife would no longer accuse Joseph, as any accusation would bring shame to her daughter, and to herself. In addition to silencing the wife of Poti-Phera, Pharaoh sought to silence Poti-Phera himself about Joseph's alleged rape attempt. What do people desire more than anything else? More than money? Power. Pharaoh again displayed his cunning by granting a status of priest to Poti-Phera, in exchange for his silence. At first, Poti-Phera was not referred to in the verses as a "priest". This is changed afterwards to silence him. Finally, Pharaoh's changing of Joseph's name was an attempt to transform his Hebrew slave reputation, into an Egyptian icon. One's name creates a perceived status.

We now see how these ideas are all connected, and why God desired them to be in one passage. All of the elements in this passage aim towards Pharaoh's one goal of denying Joseph's alleged wrongdoings. But what about "Joseph going out on Egypt"? What is the Torah's lesson of placing it here? I believe it is to show that regardless of Pharaoh's success in rendering Joseph into a leader acceptable by the Egyptians, Joseph never shed his identity as "Joseph the Righteous". It was still "Joseph" who went out upon Egypt, and not the fabricated, Egyptian veneer "Zaphnas Paneach" created by Pharaoh.

It is enlightening to see the precision of the Torah - how it is written so sparingly. Just enough information is revealed to suggest the problem, and just enough for the answer. It is brilliant that those very statements, which cause the problem, are in fact, clues to the answer. ■

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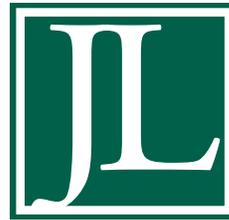


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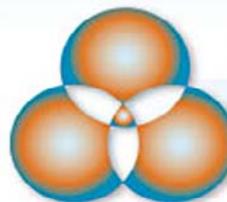
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