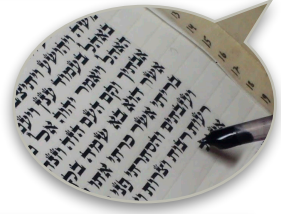




The Collective Conversation

*Weekly Torah Essays from the
Young Israel of Scarsdale Community*



Sefer Bereshit

Parshat Miketz

Tevet 5784 / December 2023

Anachnu Ma'amiminim Bnei Ma'aminim **We are Believers and the Children of Believers**

*By Sharon, David and Amanda Fogel
(A family affair!)*

Miketz begins a full two years after Yosef asks Pharaoh's butler to remember him to Pharaoh so he can be saved from prison. The Midrash in Breishit Rabbah (89-90) states that despite Yosef having full bitachon (trust) in Hashem, he was punished for asking the butler to remember him to Pharaoh. This Midrash reminds me of the parable often told as a joke: God sent a plane, a boat, etc., to save the drowning man, but the man rebuffed them all because he was waiting for divine intervention. On the surface, Yosef shouldn't be punished for trying to help himself. His hishtadlut (effort) to help himself is understandable. Rav Dovid Hofstadter, in his work *Doresh Dovid*, suggests that Yosef's additional 2 years in prison were not punishment, but rather they were part of Hashem's plan, how He wanted circumstances to unfold. Mishlei 1:6-9 states, "A man's heart plans his way, but Hashem prepares his step." Man's actions are but a part of a bigger plan effectuated by Hashem.

Yosef initiates action to effect change, and at the same time, his bitachon in Hashem is evident. As Rabbi Moshe Taragin points out, unlike Emunah (faith), which is unchanging, Bitachon is a policy decision dependent upon the person and the circumstances. Yosef consistently mentions and credits Hashem to others. He does so in response to the advances of Potiphar's wife (39:9); in prison when offering to interpret the dreams of the butler and the baker (*do not interpretations belong to God*, 40:8); when revealing himself to his brothers in next week's parsha (45:5-8); and most significantly when responding to Pharaoh's comment that Yosef can interpret dreams: "*Biladai (not by me), God will provide Pharaoh an answer of peace*" (41:16).

Nechama Leibowitz credits Benno Jacobs as the first to teach that Yosef makes evident Hashem's manifesting divine providence in this world when interpreting Pharaoh's dreams. Yosef mentions Hashem's involvement in stages: as the doer, the shower, the declarer, and the one who brings things to pass (41:25-33). Yosef's interpretation of Pharaoh's dreams rings true to Pharaoh. Pharaoh acknowledges the existence of Hashem, as we see in the following two statements: *Can we find a man who has the spirit of God in him* (41:38) and *For as much as God hath shown thee all this* (41:39). Pharaoh then appoints Yosef his second in command and states: "*Biladecha (without you) no one will raise a hand or foot throughout the land of Egypt.*" The Tur (Rabbi Yaakov ben Rabbeinu Asher) sees the use of the unusual word(s) Biladei/Biladecha in such close proximity to one another in the parsha as a sign of the reward that Hashem granted Yosef — 'middah k'neged middah' — because Yosef humbled himself to ensure that Hashem

was solely credited for the dream interpretation, Hashem elevated Yosef to his position in Egypt.

As Ruthie Schwartz pointed out in her Collective Conversation essay last week, both *Parshat Vayeshev* and *Parshat Miketz* are distinctive in the prominence of dreams and dream interpretations. Masechet Brachot (55a-57b) devotes a chapter to dreams.

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Dreams are serious business. We learn that the way in which a dream may play out is subject to both the interpreter and the interpretation of the dream. It is said that a dream is 1/60th of prophecy. Interestingly it is also said that if a dream is not interpreted, it is like an unopened letter and means nothing. Dreams can be fanciful and full of imagination, and there are those who believe that the deceased can visit us in our dreams. The Talmud provides antidotes, such as fasting and a special ceremony designed to convert bad dreams to good.

In addition to dealing with dreams after they have been dreamt, one can recite Kriat Shemah Al Hamitah, to ward off bad dreams before going to sleep. When the Kohanim Duchan, the congregation quietly recites the “Ribon Olam Chalom Cholamti” prayer, in which we ask that any bad dreams we’ve had be for the good of the individual and also for Am Yisrael. Similarly, many say “gam zu l’tova” (this, too, is for the good) when something negative has occurred in life. These varying recitations vocalize our bitachon in Hashem and our Emunah as Ma’aminim ha’col bidei shamayim (everything is in Hashem’s hands).

Rabbi Jacob Rubenstein, z”l, encouraged us to “make it happen.” Making our national liberation dreams happen will require the synthesis of many interpretations. May our bitachon (Biladei) in Hashem sync with our hishtadlut (Biladecha) to transform the current affairs of the world l’tova (for the better).

May the words in Shir Ha’Maalot (Psalm 126) come to fruition, that as “dreamers we will return to Zion,” and may Hashem “bring joy out of sorrow, laughter out of tears, and good out of evil.” As we recite when concluding the bircat ha’mazon: “Blessed is the man who has bitachon in Hashem, and Hashem will be his support.”

Sharon and **David** Fogel and their daughters, Jill and **Amanda**, moved from Riverdale to the happening YIS community at the turn of the century. They are so proud of the continued growth and happenings in our kehilla.

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