

Miketz - Rabbi Lerner - December 9, 2012

The Rise of Yosef

Pharaoh at the beginning of this parsha experiences his dreams and no one in his palace is able to interpret the dreams to his satisfaction. The Sar Hamashkim at this point remembers Yosef and relates to Pharaoh his own experience and how Yosef had interpreted his dream successfully. Yosef is taken out of prison and relates to Pharaoh the meaning of his dreams; and the interpretation appeared correct to Pharaoh.

41:37-8: *The matter appeared good in Pharaoh's eyes and in the eyes of all his servants. Pharaoh said to his servants, "Could we find another like him, a man in whom is the spirit of God?"* **Abarbanel**: How is it that Pharaoh was convinced that what Yosef told him was truly the correct interpretation of the dreams? Most meforshim say it just rang true and made sense. The Abarbanel says that there is a whole science of how dreams like this, which are really prophecy, can be recognized as something true. How was it that Pharaoh believed this Jewish slave and raised him to a high power to rule under him over all of Egypt? He was sure the other interpretations did not make sense - none gave him satisfactory interpretations. The truth is that when one has a real dream from God, he gets to see the matter in a very clear way; he sees it with a special clarity, thus realizing that this is a message from on high. But then the powers of one's own imagination take over and exaggerate it and cloud the picture by associating it with other connections and associations. So while he got the accurate picture of the dream initially, it then became grayed and blurry instead of black and white. He is confused. That is why when you have this type of dream and then wake up, it frequently says the word **Vatipa'eym** - he was agitated. That is what is also said with Nevuchadnezar's dream and Daniel. Why was he agitated? Because he knew what the real meaning was, what the powerful message was, but now he got confused because of all of the associations that came in and camouflaged it; he could not get back to the real essence of it. But at the beginning he knew exactly what the dream meant in a very clear way. Because he had this deeper recognition of what the truth was, any interpretation that was off did not resonate with him; that is why none of the charatumim satisfied him with their interpretations. When he heard Yosef's interpretation, he knew that this was it - he was 100% convinced it was accurate, and that is why he promoted Yosef. It was not just an intuition - he knew Yosef was able to receive the exact interpretation. That is why Pharaoh said "can we find a man like this who has a Divine spirit" - it wasn't just an intuitive guess. This is why in the next pasuk, 41:39, *Pharaoh says to Yosef "Since God has informed you of all this, there can be no one so discerning and wise as you."* There is no one who can read between the lines and connect to Hashem like you.

Why does Pharaoh has to say these words to his servants in 41:39, *can we find someone like this who has the spirit of God?* Does he have to sell them on the amazing wisdom of Yosef? He is the ruler and can do anything he wants. Why is he so concerned about what his subjects think? **Rashi**: he is a Jew and a slave. **Ramban**: because he is a Jew; there was a rule that they hated the Jews because they were spiritually contaminated; that is why the Egyptians could not eat with them; Yosef carries on with this before he reveals himself to his brothers as well - he dined with them alone, without any Egyptians present. Even after all the esteem given to Yosef, the Egyptians do not eat with him.

What a Jew touches is considered Tamei - they won't associate with them. So Pharaoh knew that he would be doing something revolutionary by appointing him to a position of such high power. He therefore has to do a sales job beforehand. He has to convince them of it, that there is no one who comes close to him; when they acknowledge this, that is when Pharaoh says that God chose Yosef specifically to transmit the message; at that point he was so convincing, that it was as if the dream had been actualized already. They believed that it was 100% true.

41:40: *You shall be in charge of my palace and by your command shall all my people be sustained; only by the throne shall I outrank you.* **Rashi:** Yishak means physically sustained with food, as Unkelos says; just as Eliezer is referred to as Ben Meshke for Avraham - he was the manager of Avraham's huge holdings. **Rashbam:** Yishak means that he will be in control of all weaponry to take on enemies; as in Neshek, arms; by your mouth will all of my people be armed. You will be in charge not just of economics, but also defense. Yosef will be appointed to several ministries. Why was it necessary to appoint him as a defense minister? Some meforshim say it was necessary based on Yosef's prediction of seven years of tremendous surplus, and with Yosef's wisdom they will be wise knowing what is ahead, and they will store and conserve food, while all of the surrounding nations will not save anything; and during the second seven years, when they have nothing, the other nations will go to war to obtain food. They had to be prepared to preserve their wealth against the other nations; they had to be armed. **Netziv:** One of the things Yosef will tell them that they will be taxing the people, taking an enormous amount of grain for the national reserve in epic proportions; the only way they can collect this is by calling out the army to help gather and enforce the taxed grain; he created a national emergency to haul off all of the grain and he needed a whole infrastructure to collect the grain.

In 41:40 Pharaoh placed him in charge of his palace and all of his people. In 41:41 Pharaoh again says that he places him above all of Egypt. In 41:44 Pharaoh says once more that no man may lift up his hand of foot against him in all of Egypt. **Oznavim LaTorah:** this seems to be a redundancy - it is deliberately repeated three times because there are three separate appointments, three separate categories where Yosef will be in charge. The first one was to run the economy - to be the finance minister, to conserve Egypt's wealth during the years of plenty. We see this in the words where he is placed above all, with only Pharaoh's chair above him. The second job was being given reign over the entire land of Egypt - he is given Pharaoh's ring and royal garments, his golden necklace, and a royal chariot - in those days the emperor had two chariots - one for himself, and one for his prime minister who helps run things. He is called Avreich. This second appointment was because the whole world will depend on Egypt, and new laws will be needed to govern the new circumstances - only families can come to buy food, one cannot stockpile - one could not bring two donkeys to carry grain, etc.. All of these were new rules and laws necessary for the new circumstances. So, giving him the ring allowed him to make new rules, just as Haman was given a ring to make new rules. Yosef was given power to enact legislative edicts; Pharaoh had blind faith in Yosef's ability to make whatever laws necessary. The third power was to deal with how people internally might react, as well as outside forces; this was the appointment to the ministry of defense. He would fight off internal and outside forces; he would fend off invasions; he would

have to protect the grain. So Yosef is wearing three different hats in the government - he is a one man show in the Egyptian government.

Rav Alpert quotes a Midrash: Yishak means something else - a kiss. Everything that Yosef came to doing wrong - such as kissing and touching the wife of Potifar - but he managed to overcome, God rewarded him in a Midah Kaneged Midah - the hands that did not do anything wrong were rewarded with the placement of a ring of power. The lips that did not do anything wrong now controlled the entire nation of Israel. His body which could have sinned is now in charge of all of Egypt. The person who has the power of self control is rewarded by God in that he will gain control of others - we see this in a very dramatic way with Yosef, more than anyone else in Tanach. Yosef, who controlled himself, controlled his passion, is given control over the whole ancient world by his control over Egypt.

The one thing that Pharaoh holds off in 41:40 is the throne - *Rak Hakisay Egdal Mimekah* - only by the throne will I outrank you. **Abarbanel**: this is more of a ceremonial thing, as Yosef will have all of the power. Pharaoh will still retain the throne as a figurehead - he acknowledges this to Yosef - he is giving him a blank check, but outwardly he retains the trappings of power. **Meshech Chachmah**: Pharaoh is not so generous; this phrase means that as a result of Yosef, the governance of Pharaoh will be strengthened - Pharaoh will become greater in the eyes of the masses; after all, the dreams were given to Pharaoh. Holding onto the throne is not just ceremonial; because of Yosef's brilliance, Pharaoh's throne will be exalted because of him - Pharaoh will become far more powerful. And we see that Yosef was loyal to this. When Yosef speaks to his brothers, he swears by Pharaoh's life - he is showing tremendous respect to Pharaoh. And at the very end, when people have no food or wealth left during the famine, Yosef nationalizes all of the lands, with Pharaoh owning all of it, not Yosef. This shows the tremendous integrity of Yosef - he takes nothing for himself, even though he could have taken over the land. By the end of the story, Pharaoh owns the entire land. And that is why in the Hagaddah it says we were slaves to Pharaoh, not slaves to the slaves of Pharaoh - everything was owned by Pharaoh. Yosef completely lived up to what Pharaoh arranged with Yosef; Pharaoh still remained in control.

41:45: *Pharaoh called Yosef's name Tzafnas Paney'ach and he gave him Asnas daughter of Poti-fera, chief of Own for a wife. Thus Yosef emerged in charge of the land of Egypt.* **Abarbanel**: Yosef had gained such incredible respect from Pharaoh and from all of the people, with immediate national recognition, he was comfortable anywhere in Egypt - he was recognized and hailed everywhere he went - not just in the palace and capital city where the seat of government was. Yosef the Jew, Yosef the slave, now was recognized by all for his superlative qualities - he was paraded as a national hero everywhere.

What was the name change about? The name means to reveal that which is hidden - Tzafun is hidden and Levateach is to uncover - he was able to interpret the dreams and save Egypt and the entire world. Ramban and Ibn Ezra say that Pharaoh knew Lashon Hakodesh - he knew how to say the name that fit Yosef's native tongue. Later on, Moshe is named by a Hebrew name - some people say she asked Jewish women; but these meforshim say that the royal elite knew Hebrew. **Oznayim LaTorah**: this name was not Hebrew; this name is never again repeated in chumash; this is because it is a goyish name - only one's Hebrew name sticks.