

Parsha Plug: Parshat Mikeitz and Chanukah

Bereshit 41:46-57, 42:1	בראשית לח:א-יא
<p>46 Yosef was thirty years old when he stood before Paro the king of Egypt, and Yosef went out from before Paro and passed through the entire land of Egypt. 47 And in the seven years of plenty, [the inhabitants of] the land gathered [food] by handfuls. 48 And he collected all the food of the seven years that was in the land of Egypt, and he placed food in the cities, the food of the field surrounding the city, he put within it. 49 And Yosef gathered grain like the sand of the sea, in great abundance, until [one] stopped counting, because there was no number. 50 And to Yosef were born two sons before the year of the famine set in, whom Osnat the daughter of Poti Phera, the governor of On, bore to him. 51 And Yosef named the firstborn Menashe, for "God has caused me to forget all my toil and all my father's house." 52 And the second one he named Ephraim, for "God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction." 53 And the seven years of plenty that were in the land of Egypt were finished. 54 And the seven years of famine began, as Yosef had said, and there was famine in all the lands, but throughout the land of Egypt there was bread. 55 When the entire land of Egypt hungered, the people cried out to Paro for bread, but Paro said to all the Egyptians, "Go to Yosef; what he tells you, do." 56 Now the famine spread over all the face of the land, and Yosef opened all the storehouses in which there was grain, and he sold it to the Egyptians, and the famine intensified in the land of Egypt. 57 And all the inhabitants of the land came to Egypt to Yosef to purchase, for the famine had intensified in the entire land. 1 Yaakov saw that there was grain being sold in Egypt; so Yaakov said to his sons, "Why do you appear satiated?"</p>	<p>מו ויוסף בן-שלושים שנה בעמדו לפני פרעה מלך מצרים ויצא יוסף מלפני פרעה ויעבר בְּכָל־אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם: מִזֹּתַעַשׂ הָאָרֶץ בְּשִׁבְעֵ שָׁנֵי הַשְּׁבַע לְקַמְצִים: מִזֶּה וַיִּקְבֹּץ אֶת־כָּל־אֶתְּכָל שְׁנֵי שָׁנָיִם אֲשֶׁר הָיוּ בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם וַיִּתְּנָא כָּל בְּעָרִים אֶ כָּל שְׂדֵה־הָעִיר אֲשֶׁר סְבִיבֶיהָ נָתַן בְּתוֹכָהּ: מִטּוֹ וַיִּצְבֹּר יוֹסֵף כָּר פָּחוּל הַיָּם הַרְבֵּה מְאֹד עַד כִּי־חָדַל לִסְפֹּר כִּי־אֵין מִסְפָּר: ג וּלְיוֹסֵף יָלְדוּ שְׁנֵי בָנִים בְּטָרַם תְּבוֹא שְׁנַת הָרֵעֵב אֲשֶׁר לְדַהֲלוֹ אֶסְנַת בַּת־פְּרוּטִי פָּרַע כָּתָן אֶת־נָא וַיִּקְרָא יוֹסֵף אֶת־שֵׁם הַבְּכוֹר מְנַשֶּׁה כִּי־נִשְׁכַּח אֱלֹקִים אֶת־כָּל־עֲמָלִי וְאֶת כָּל־בְּיַת אָבִי: גב וְאֵת שֵׁם הַשֵּׁנִי קָרָא אֶפְרַיִם כִּי־הִפְרִנִי אֱלֹקִים בְּאֶרֶץ עֲנִי: גג וַתִּכְלֶינָה שְׁבַע שָׁנֵי הַשְּׁבַע אֲשֶׁר הָיָה בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם: גד וַתַּחֲלִינָה שְׁבַע שָׁנֵי הָרֵעֵב לְבוֹא פֶּאֶשׁוֹר אָמַר יוֹסֵף וַיְהִי רֵעֵב בְּכָל־הָאֲרָצוֹת וּבְכָל־אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם הָיָה לָהֶם: גה וַתִּרְעֵב כָּל־אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם וַיִּצְעַק הָעָם אֶל־פְּרַעֲה לְלַחֵם וַיֹּאמֶר פְּרַעֲה לְכָל־מִצְרַיִם לְכוּ אֶל־יוֹסֵף אֲשֶׁר־יֹאמַר לָכֶם תַּעֲשׂוּ: נו וְהָרֵעֵב הָיָה עַל כָּל־פְּנֵי הָאָרֶץ וַיִּפְתַּח יוֹסֵף אֶת־כָּל־אֲשֶׁר בָּהֶם וַיִּשְׁבֹּר לְמִצְרַיִם וַיַּחֲזֹק הָרֵעֵב בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם: נז וְכָל־הָאָרֶץ בָּאוּ מִצְרַיִמָּה לְשָׁבֹר אֶל־יוֹסֵף כִּי־יַחֲזֹק הָרֵעֵב בְּכָל־הָאָרֶץ: א וַיֵּרָא יַעֲקֹב כִּי לֹשֶׁבֶר בַּמִּצְרַיִם וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב לְבָנָיו לָמָּה תִּתְרָאוּ:</p>

Rabbeinu Bachya on Bereshit 41:56	רבינו בחיי בראשית מא:נו
<p>“And the famine spread over the entire land”: This is a reference to the wealthy people who were struck by the famine no less than the poor. The reason the wealthy are referred to as פני הארץ, is because all the people turn to the wealthy. From here we learn that the first who felt the famine were the wealthy. “The famine remained strong in the land of Egypt”: They were eating, and were not feeling sated.</p>	<p>והרעב היה על כל פני הארץ. אלו העשירים, ונקראו פני הארץ שהכל פונין להם, ומכאן שלא התחיל הרעב אלא בעשירים. ויחזק הרעב בארץ מצרים. שהיו אוכלים ולא היו שבעים.</p>

Radak on Bereshit 41:51	רד"ק בראשית מא:נא

<p>God granted me so much wealth and honor that He enabled me to forget all the problems I had from when I was sold, and also He even made me forget all of my father's household.</p>	<p>כל כך נתן לי ה' עושר וכבוד עד כי השכיחני כל עמלי שהיה לי משנמכרתי וגם כל בית אבי השכיחני.</p>
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<p>Malbim on Bereshit 41:52</p>	<p>מלכים בראשית מא:נב</p>
<p>“And the second son he called Ephraim”: To teach that God made him fertile only in the land of his poverty. For the poverty caused his greatness.</p>	<p>ושם השני קרא אפרים, להורות כי הפרהו ה' רק בארץ עניו, שהעוני גרם את גדולתו:</p>

<p>Kedushat Levi on Bereshit 41:52</p>	<p>קדושת לוי בראשית מא:נב</p>
<p>Regarding Yosef's two sons, Menashe and Ephraim, the former alludes to the suffering of Israel “for God has caused me to forget”, whereas the latter symbolizes goodness, “For God has made me fruitful”. So too in the month of Adar, which corresponds to Yosef, it begins with great suffering with the decree of Achashverosh and Haman, for this is the aspect of Menashe. But afterwards all is flipped from sadness to joy, from darkness to light, for great is the aspect of Ephraim.</p>	<p>ביוסף דהוא ב' שבטים אפרים ומנשה דמנשה רומז על הצרות ישראל על דרך כי נשני אלקים, ואפרים רומז על הטובות על דרך כי הפרני אלקים, כך בחודש אדר דהוא נגד יוסף היה תחלה בחודש הזה צרה גדולה אשר גזר המלך והמן דהוא מבחינת מנשה, אבל אחר כך נהפך הכל מיגון לשמחה מאפילה לאור גדול מבחינת אפרים.</p>

<p>Al HaNisim Excerpt</p>	<p>על הנסים</p>
<p>...In the days of Matisyahu, the son of Yochanan the High Priest, the Hasmonean, and his sons, when the wicked kingdom of Greece rose up against Your people Israel to make them forget Your Torah and to stray from the laws of Your will, You, with great mercy stood by them in the time of their distress. You fought their fight, judged their cause and avenged them with vengeance. You delivered the strong into the hands of the weak, the many into the hands of the few, the impure into the hands of the pure, the wicked into the hands of the righteous and the arrogant into the hands of those engaged with Your Torah...</p>	<p>...בְּיָמֵי מַתִּיתָהוּ בֶן יוֹחָנָן כֹּהֵן גָּדוֹל חֲשֹׁמוֹנָאִי וּבָנָיו. כְּשֶׁעָמְדָה מַלְכוּת יוֹן הַרְשָׁעָה עַל עַמְּךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל לְהַשְׁכִּיחֵם תּוֹרַתְךָ וּלְהַעֲבִירָם מִחֻקֵּי רְצוֹנְךָ: וְאַתָּה בְּרַחֲמֶיךָ הַרְבִּים עָמַדְתָּ לָהֶם בְּעַת צָרָתָם. רַבֵּת אֶת רִיבָם. דָּגַת אֶת דֵּינָם. נִקְמַתְתָּ אֶת נִקְמָתָם. מָסַרְתָּ גְבוּרִים בְּיַד חֲלָשִׁים. וְרַבִּים בְּיַד מְעֻטִּים. וּטְמֵאִים בְּיַד טְהוֹרִים. וְרָשָׁעִים בְּיַד צַדִּיקִים. וְזָדִים בְּיַד עוֹסְקֵי תוֹרַתְךָ...</p>

<p>Rambam Hilchot Yom Tov 6:18</p>	<p>רמב"ם הלכות יום טוב ו:יז, יח</p>
<p>How do we have simcha on holidays? (Here we are speaking about Yom Tov, but the definition of simcha for all holidays-- including Chanukah-- is derived. See Rambam Hilchot Megillah and Chanukah 3:3 that Chanukah is a time of simcha and hallel). Children should be given roasted seeds, nuts, and sweets. For women, one should buy attractive clothes and jewelry according to one's financial capacity. Men should eat meat and drink wine, for there is no happiness without partaking of meat, nor is there happiness without partaking of wine. When a</p>	<p>כיצד הקטנים נותן להם קליות ואגוזים ומגדנות, והנשים קונה להן בגדים ותכשיטין נאים כפי ממונו, והאנשים אוכלין בשר ושותין יין שאין שמחה אלא בבשר ואין שמחה אלא ביין, וכשהוא אוכל ושותה חייב להאכיל לגר ליתום ולאלמנה עם</p>

person eats and drinks, he is obligated to feed converts, orphans, widows, and others who are destitute and poor. In contrast, a person who locks the gates of his courtyard and eats and drinks with his children and his wife, without feeding the poor and the embittered, is not rejoicing with a mitzvah, but rather it's the rejoicing of his gut. And with regard to such a person Hoshea 9:4 is applied: "Their sacrifices will be like the bread of mourners, all that partake thereof shall become impure, for they kept their bread for themselves alone." This happiness is a disgrace for them, as in Malachi 2:3: "I will spread dung on your faces, the dung of your festival celebrations."

שאר העניים האמללים, אבל מי שנועל דלתות חצרו ואוכל ושותה הוא ובניו ואשתו ואינו מאכיל ומשקה לעניים ולמרי נפש אין זו שמחת מצוה אלא שמחת כריסו, ועל אלו נאמר זבחיהם כלהם אונים להם, כל אוכליו יטמאו כי להם לנפשם, ושמחה כזו קלון היא להם שנאמר וזריתי פרש על פניכם פרש חגיכם.

Rabbi Aryeh Lebowitz, "Ten Minute Halacha: Chanukah Gelt and Gifts" (yutorah.org)

One of seven possible reasons why the giving of gelt and gifts developed is that there was an idea to give tzedaka to poor children on Chanukah (Magen Avraham 670, Chanukat HaBayit (Machon Nachalat Tzvi p. 71), Rivevot Efraim 1:440:3). The Belzer Rebbe extended that to giving money to all children so as not to embarrass the poor (Chayim Sheyesh Bahem Moedei Hashana, by Rabbi Yitzchak Gross, p. 248).

Magen Avraham: על הפתחים בחנוכה' לסבב העניים להגין הנערים העניים לסבב בחנוכה' על הפתחים, "On Chanukah, we have the practice that poor children go around to the doorsteps."

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, "Jews and Economics" (OU.org)

To my mind, the most decisive single factor – the great break of Judaism from the ancient world of magic, mystery and myth – was the *de-consecration of nature* that followed from the fact that God created nature by an act of will, and by making us in His image, gave us too the creative power of will. That meant that for Jews, holiness lies not in the way the world is but in the way it ought to be. Poverty, disease, famine, injustice, and the exploitation of the powerless by the powerful are not the will of God. They may be part of human nature, but we have the power to rise above nature. God wants us not to accept but to heal, to cure, to prevent. So Jews have tended to become, out of all proportion to their numbers, lawyers fighting injustice, doctors fighting disease, teachers fighting ignorance, economists fighting poverty and (especially in modern Israel) agricultural technologists finding new ways to grow food in environments where it has never grown before. All of this is brilliantly portrayed in this week's parsha. First Joseph diagnoses the problem. There will be a famine lasting seven years. It is what he does next that is world-changing. He sees this not as a fate to be endured but as a problem to be solved. Then, without fuss, he solves it, saving a whole region from death by starvation. What can be changed need not be endured. Human suffering is not a fate to be borne, but a challenge to be overcome. This is Joseph's life-changing idea. What can be healed is not holy. God does not want us to accept poverty and pain but to cure them.

