

## Parshat Mikeitz 5778

Yosef's Understanding of the Dreams: In this week's Parsha, Yosef interprets Pharaoh's dreams about the seven cows and the seven sheaves. The Torah does not tell us how Yosef understood the interpretation of the dreams. I'd like to explore an idea of Rabbi Forhman and suggest how Hashem was hinting the interpretation to Yosef.

The key to understanding the dream, is to understand that each cow represents a year – Rashi brings that many of Pharaoh's astrologers offered explanations that each cow, represented a daughter...etc.. but Pharaoh was not satisfied. Once Yosef understood that cows represent years, then it follows very simply that there will seven years of abundance, the healthy cows, which will be "swallowed" by seven years of famine, the thin cows. How did Hashem encode to Yosef this understanding that cows represented years?

If we look at the language which is used to describe the events at the beginning of the Parsha, we encounter a chiasmus, a mirror image pattern of a previous story that indicates a reversal of that story – the sale of Yosef.

Firstly, it is strange that the posuk says "וירוצוהו מן הבור – and they rushed him from the pit." Usually, the Torah refers to the prison as "בית הסוהר"; if so, why specifically here does it call the prison – a pit? It seems to be hinting, that Yosef is being taken out of the pit into which he was originally thrown. The next stage is ויהלפו שמלותיו – they changed Yosef's clothes. This is the reverse of what happens before he was thrown into the pit – whereby the brothers remove the 'kesones hapasim', the special garments, of Yosef. Furthermore, immediately preceding his sale, the Torah describes how Yaakov rejects Yosef's interpretation of his own dreams. Here, once Yosef puts on new clothes, Pharaoh welcomes Yosef saying "תשמע הלום לפתור אותו" – you hear a dream to give its interpretation." This reversal of events already starts hinting to Yosef that some kind of change in fortune, an undoing and reversing of previous events is taking place.

With this in mind, Pharaoh then tells Yosef the dream, in which Yosef will hear further echoes of his life:

והנה מן-הַיָּאָר, עלת שְׁבַע פְּרוֹת, יְפוֹת מְרֵאָה, וּבְרִיאַת בָּשָׂר; וַתִּרְעֶינָה, בְּאֲחוּ

"And behold, from the river, seven beautiful and healthy cows arose, and they grazed in the swamp."

The phrase 'Yefos Mareh - beautiful of appearance', is only used to describe two other people in the Torah; Yosef and his mother, Rochel. Similarly, Rashi translates 'בְּאֲחוּ' as 'in the swamp', however, Onkelos comments that it is related to the word בְּאֲחוּ, with

his brothers. Yosef, hearing these words is reminded of the Posuk that first describes his relationship with his brothers at the very beginning of the story. It says; "הִיָּה רֵיעָה אֵת – אחיו הצאן – he shepherded the sheep with his brothers," using identical language. Yosef hears more about himself. Likewise, the skinny cows are described as רְקוֹת – a homonym for רְכוּת the way that Leah's eyes are described, when contrasting her to Rochel's "yefas mareh". Thus, when the posuk narrates that the cows described like Leah, consumed the cows, representing Rochel, without its effect being noticed in the skinny cows; Yosef hears his own story, that the sons of Leah had devoured the son of Rochel and then covered up his disappearance.

However, it still doesn't explain to us how Yosef was able to use this to interpret the dream. Why were there seven skinny cows - there should be six cows, representing the six sons of Leah, and they should consume just one healthy cow – Yosef?

If one looks at the very posuk in Parshas Vayetzay which describes Rochel as Yefas Mareh and the eyes of Leah as Rakos, the posukim continue by delineating that Yaakov worked for seven years for Rochel and seven years for Leah. Yosef connects the descriptions of the cows to those of his mother and Leah and the seven cows to the years that Yaakov worked for them. Thus, with this in mind, Yosef plugs it back into Pharaoh's dream – that there would be seven years of plenty followed by seven years of famine. Yosef also understands from the dream that by eating the seven beautiful cows, the skinny cows were able to survive. On an immediate, practical level, Yosef advises that Pharaoh should build storehouses so that the food of the years of plenty will enable the Egyptians to withstand the years of famine. On a deeper level, Yosef acknowledges that Hashem has now removed him from the pit, and that his position in Mitzrayim was to enable that the "cows/years of Rochel (i.e. himself) would support the cows/years of Leah". That he Yosef, son of Rochel, would be the מְשִׁבֵּר – the one who would provide for the sons of Leah, during the years of famine. This attitude and understanding is seen once Yosef reveals himself to his brothers and he comforts them and says (45:5) "כִּי לְמַחִיָּה שְׁלַחֲנִי אֱלוֹקִים לְפָנֵיכֶם" – to be a source of life, Hashem sent me before You." Once again, in (50:20) Yosef says: ... וְאַתֶּם חֲשַׁבְתֶּם עָלַי רָעָה, אֱלוֹקִים חֲשַׁבָה לְטוֹבָה – You planned evil against me, Hashem planned it for the good..."

Thus, through the intricate and operative use of language, the Torah describes to us how Yosef was able to view the events occurring to him and use them to help understand the meaning of Pharaoh's dreams.

I'iluy nishmas Ephraim Yitzchok ben Zev zt"l and Yaakov ben Shlomo Zalman zt"l.