

PORTION	DATE	HEB DATE	TORAH	NEVIIM	KETUVIM
Miketz	16 Dec 2017	28 Kislev 5778	Gen. 41:1-44:17	Zech 2:14-4:7	John 10:22-28

Genesis 41:1-44:17

The parashat begins two years later after the release of the Royal Cupbearer – a total of twelve years since Joseph was imprisoned. At this point, Joseph was almost 30 years old, Jacob 120, and Isaac 180. The Sages teach that Isaac died about this time.

This week's parashat as well as last week's parashat talks about dreams. The dreams of Joseph, the dreams of royal servant, the dreams of Pharaoh. Their dreams have significance that have changed the history of Jacob's family. The Talmud, however tells us that we should not pay too much attention to our dreams as it will tell lies. However, the Gemara says some dreams are good. It is important to distinguish the dreams that we have today to the days in the Scripture. Because their spiritual purity was significantly greater than us. That being said, the dreams that we have an hour or two before we wake up has some meanings. For example, if you have same or similar dreams more than once, than it has some significance as it is a sign.

The Scripture tells us that some dreams are prophetic, i.e. Balaam in Numbers 22. Of all prophets, there were 48 prophets, 7 prophetess, and one gentile prophet, only Moses was the greatest of all prophets. It is said that Moses saw all the prophecies of other prophets combined, and more. Moses saw the whole Torah, including the Prophets and the Writings that were written hundreds of years later. All subsequent prophecies were merely an expression of what Moses had already seen. Thus, it is taught that nothing in the Prophets or the Writings are in conflict with Moses' writings, because he saw it all in advance.

The Talmud states that the writings of the prophets will not be necessary in the World to come, because in that day, all people will be mentally, spiritually, and ethically perfect, and all will have the gift of prophecy.

Joseph was 30 years old when he came into power until his death at 110. The Sages teach that Joseph was originally be imprisoned for 10 years, but Hashem added "two full years" for seeking aid from the Royal Cupbearer rather than trusting in Hashem. So, what caused Joseph's release? Is it because of Pharaoh's dreams? Is it because the Cupbearer remembered Joseph? No to all these and more. It was Hashem who decided it was time for Joseph to come out of prison that caused Pharaoh to dream.

This week, we are celebrating Chanukah which is a rabbinic holiday. We light candles for 8 days, a total of 36 candles and 8 *shamash* (the helper – symbolic of Schechinah). It is customary during Shabbat, and other special occasions to light the candles. For example, Shabbat candles are lit for the purpose of *kavod* (honor). A honor to pay tribute to the day to Hashem, and also for the purpose of *oneg* (pleasure), so that we eat our Shabbat meal in the pleasing glow of light and not stumble in the darkness.

The strangest part of Chanukah is that the candle lights are not meant to be used only for gazing at the light and not for any other purpose. The Kabbalah teaches that we should gaze around *nogha* (halo or aura around the rim of the flame) on the eighth day. Sometimes, we have to adjust our eyes to see *nogha*. The women cover their eyes momentarily after lighting the Shabbat candles. When

they remove their hands and open their eyes, their pupils are dilated to absorb more lights around them. It is at this moment for them to see more clearly *nogha* surround the flame.

By looking at the *chasmal* (an inner part of the flame that hugs the wick and consumes the oil) and then at the *aish* (the main body of the flame), we move from physical beings to soul level. We then look from *aish* to *nogha*, we are moving from the soul level to the realm of pure potentiality (spiritual). Thus, when we gaze at the *nogha*, we are looking at the place where miracles are created.

“The soul of man is a lamp of Elohim.” (Prov. 20:27) Our soul has the potential and possibility that is above or beyond our ego. It is the background of our being and the light that masters our thoughts, emotions, and actions. It is something that we possess. It is something that is ours. And yet it is something that does not belong to us. We can also dim the light to cause havoc in this world. The light can be warm and comforting, but it can also be the source for much destruction.

Thirty-six (36) is the mystical and mysterious number. The word “light” appears 36 times in the Tanach. After the incident in the Gan Eden, Hashem asks Adam, “*ayeka?*” (Where are you?) [איכה, 5+20+10+1] Hashem is not asking Adam where he was because Hashem did not know nor asking what he has done. Rather, Hashem is asking, “What have you done with your light?” What is your priority? What is your story? Are you bringing warmth and joy, illuminating and brightening on to this world or are you being destructive?

In the book of Maccabee, it mentions Judah who was also called Maccabeus (1Mac 2:4). The Talmud teaches Judah was a part of sect known as *Maccabim* which means *micha mocha ba'alim* (the follower of Hashem). During his period, the Assyrian Greek began to distract Jews from the Torah study to sports. Their purpose was simple and cunning. They would reward any Jews who played “sports.” The people will be so focused on “sports,” they would not have time to study the Word of Hashem. The word “sports” derived from “Sparta” who trained constantly for battle. In other words, the Greeks introduced “sports” because they realized that the best way to destroy the Jews was to take away their spirituality.

Haman, from the book of Esther tried to bring physical death whereas the Greeks were trying to bring spiritual death by insisting on sports. Even though, the Greeks are gone, their legacy still lives on today in sports. An argument can be made that the sports are keeping their children away from the streets. True, sports for health is important. But when we begin to idolize the players, their names, habits, then we know that the Greeks won by redesigning or replacing the word of Hashem with “sports.”

Verses in 15 and 17 of Genesis 41 is very interesting. The Scripture says in English, “And Pharaoh said” in both verses. The verse 15 says in Hebrew ויאמר פרעה (Pha•ro•ah va•yo•mer). In verse 17, it says in Hebrew וידבר פרעה (Pha•ro•ah va•yi•d'var). Why the difference? The answer is in verse 16.

In verse 15, “*vayomer*” is used in terms of kind, nice, and being gentle where as “*vayid'var*” in verse 17 is used in terms of angry, and rough. At first, Pharaoh was being gentle, kind, and talking to Joseph in a nice manner. In verse 16, Joseph said that “only Hashem can interpret dreams.” The Pharaoh was angry because he and his people considers him to be the God. Thus, Pharaoh said in an angry tone.

What is Pharaoh and what is the history of Pharaoh? The book of Jasher (Chapter 14) describes a wise, beautiful, but poor man whose name was Rikayon. He went to Mitzrayim (Egypt) to make money by selling his wisdom to the king. When he learned that the king of Mitzrayim sees the people only once a year, he was dejected and still poor. Then he came up with a scheme. He hired thugs and told the people that the king commanded that the dead cannot be buried until the mourners pay 20 pieces of silver to bury the dead.

The king was angry when the people complained about the tax levied against the dead. Rikayon, being wise, sent gifts and servants to appease the king. The king was amazed and joyous of receiving such presents, he changed Rikayon's name to Pharaoh which means "he exacts a tax from the dead." Rikayon Pharaoh then usurped the government and became the king. The people loved him so much that they decreed that all future kings would be known as Pharaoh.

Now, back to Joseph. The Pharaoh, after hearing the explanation of his dreams in satisfaction, he declared that Joseph be the viceroy of Mitzrayim. Again, the Torah does not hide its meaning but to explain it. The officials of Pharaoh objected to the Pharaoh's decision that Joseph did not know the language of man. There were 70 stairs that lead to the Pharaoh's seat. The Talmud teaches that each step is equivalent of a language of nation. When Joseph could not remember all the languages taught by angel Gabriel, he added first *hei* (ה) of YHVH to Joseph's name becoming Johoseph. This *hei* signifies *binah* (understanding) needed to understand the languages when dealing with 70 other nations that is to present themselves to buy food during the years of famine.

Metaphorically, the famine also represents spiritual famine. Like Joseph, we are called upon to banish the plague of ignorance and sustain the world with the teachings of the Torah. We must be vigilant against harmful influences while we engage it to influence the world in a positive manner.

A year after the famine began, the brothers of Joseph came to Mitzrayim to buy grains. About 21 years later, Joseph now faces his brothers who bowed to him as he dreamt. The Sages teach that the brothers came to the city through 10 different gates, and they began to ask questions about a Hebrew boy who came to them 21 years ago. The brothers eventually were brought in front of Joseph who immediately accuses them of being spies. Joseph knew that his brothers would eventually figure out who he was if the chance was given to them. So, Joseph decided he would not give them such an opportunity and began to attack them with an accusation immediately. This is a military strategy used even today. The brothers were so shocked and surprised by the allegation, they were so busy defending themselves that they forgot to ask about their brothers' whereabouts.