

PORTION	DATE	HEB DATE	TORAH	NEVIIM	KETUVIM
Miketz	8 Dec 2018	30 Kislev 5779	Gen. 41:1-44:17	Zech 2:10-4:7	John 10:22-28

“And it came to be, at the end of two years’ time, that Pharaoh had a dream.” (Gen. 41:1) The Midrash explains this verse by citing from Yyob 28:3, “[Elohim] sets a limit to the darkness, and He investigates the end of everything: the source of gloom, and the shadow of death.” We learn from this verse that Hashem fixed an amount of time for the world, and how many years this world will exist amidst the darkness. Several questions arise: Why did Hashem set “a limit to the darkness”? Why did He create the evil inclination?

The darkness is the source of gloom and the shadow of death. And once the darkness has been removed, there will be no more gloom and the shadow of death in the world. The Midrash explains that the evil inclination was created for the righteous to be rewarded for overcoming their desires. Thus, Hashem set a fixed time of “two years” for Yosef to be in darkness in the prison, and caused Pharaoh to dream that would lead Yosef’s release. The dream was not the cause of Yosef’s release. Instead, it was the predestined time of Yosef’s release was the cause of Pharaoh’s dream. As we learned, this ‘two years’ was for the punishment of placing trust in the Royal Cupbearer rather than Hashem.

Maharazu¹ cites Genesis 40:14, “But remember me when it is well with you, and please show loving-commitment to me. And mention me to Pharaoh, and get me out of this house.” He says that Yosef actually made a third request, “Get me out of this house” in addition to two. He then asks why Yosef was only punished for two, not three?

The Gemara² relates that Yosef’s release from prison took place on Rosh Hashanah. This day is also known as the Day of Remembrance. It is the day on which people are remembered by Hashem and, thus the time for them to request of Him that He remember them for good. Therefore, Yosef’s punishment was that two Rosh Hashanah went by on which Yosef was forgotten, as it were, by Elohim.

The Zohar explains Yyob 8:23 that Satan, the angel of Death is the Left who hovers about the world and incites people to sin. As his intentions are to exterminate and bring extinction to the world as he takes the souls of men and kills them. But, “[Elohim] sets a limit to darkness” which is the end of the Left. Who are the souls of men? They are the one who studies the Torah and cleaves to it. “The source of gloom” is Satan and he places a stumbling block, that is “the shadow of death.”

The Torah is compared to the Tree of Life. When we study the Torah, it strengthens the World to Come. And when the soul leaves this world, grades are prepared for the World to Come. As a tree consists of roots, branches, leaves, husks, and the trunk; the study of Torah strengthens the trunk of the Tree of Life as the trunk holds onto the whole tree. We all come from different background with different experience in life. As such, we all will be graded differently, but we are all graded in the World to Come.

Now, it is normal for a person to ask another for help. We all do it, even Yosef did it. But he was punished for it severely for two years. This appears to be a contradiction to the Torah as says, “YHWH your Elohim does bless you in all your works and in all to which you put your hand.” (Deut. 15:10) The Midrash explains this contradiction.

¹ Rabbi Zev Wolf Einhorn of Horodna

² Rosh Hashanah 10b

There is a Hebrew word '*bitachon*' (בְּטָחוֹן) which means 'security, trust.' In biblical sense, it means 'trust in and reliance on Hashem. It is a sense of optimism and confidence based not on reason or experience, but on *emunah*. Like we are graded in the World to Come, the *bitachon* has its own level of *emunah*. For Yosef, his punishment for seeking minimal help from the Royal Cupbearer was severe because of his high status of 'trust.'

In Genesis 41:8, the Torah says, "That his [Pharaoh] spirit was troubled." The word 'troubled' has been translated from the Hebrew word '*va.ti.pa.em*' (וַתִּפְּעַם). Elsewhere, in Daniel 2:1, it says, "And his [Nebuchadnezzar] spirit was troubled." In this verse, 'troubled' contains addition *tav*, (וַתִּפְּעַם) and it is pronounced as *va.tit.pa.em*. The sages distinguish the difference: Pharaoh knew the dream and he wanted its interpretation from Yosef. Whereas in Daniel, Nebuchadnezzar forgot his dreams (Dan. 2:31-35; 4:7-14) thus did not know its meaning. Therefore, he said "If you do not make known the dream and its interpretation to me." (Dan. 2:5) The sages conclude that in the Book of Daniel, the forgotten dreams and its interpretation caused to elevate four individuals, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. And for Pharaoh's dream, it was only to elevate one person, that is Yosef. Finally, Pharaoh dreamt toward the morning and Nebuchadnezzar dreamt in the beginning of the night and he could not sleep rest of the night because he was agitated.

Rashi explains verse 12, "A youth, a Hebrew, a slave" – The Royal Cupbearer recalled Joseph in the most disparaging terms: "A youth" – ignorant and unfit for distinction; "a Hebrew" – a foreigner who does not even understand our language, "a slave" – and it is written in the laws of Egypt that a slave can neither be ruler nor wear the robes of a noble. The Midrash says that despite the correct interpretation of Yosef for the Royal Cupbearer, he still despised Yosef.

Now, let us discuss about the Pharaoh's dreams. He dreamt of seven good cows coming out of the Nile and seven scrawny cows; seven good corn ears and seven scorched corn years. He calls upon his wise men and "related his dreams." (v. 8) However, the Torah records the Pharaoh's dreams in detail. As we learned, the Torah is very economical, concise, and it does not contain unnecessary words (in Hebrew).

Yosef interprets the Pharaoh's dreams: seven years of plenty and seven years of famine making it total of 14 years. Or is it? The Midrash discusses the dreams in detail. In verse 26, Yosef said, "it is one (*echad*) dream" in regarding seven good cows and seven good ears.

In verse 27, Yosef said, "And the seven lean and ugly cows which came up after them are seven years, and the seven empty heads scorched by the east wind are seven years of scarcity of food." It is easy to conclude the years of famine is seven years. The sages disagree. R' Yehudah said, "fourteen years of famine" for Pharaoh saw seven scrawny cows and seven scorched ears. The Midrash Tanchuma³ says that seven scrawny cows and seven scorched ears meant fourteen years as Yosef did not say, 'it is one dream.' But, when Yosef said, "There shall be "seven" years of famine," he was decreeing that the famine be reduced to one half of what it would have been.

R' Nechemyah said, "twenty-eight years of famine" because Pharaoh saw his dreams and told his dreams to Yosef. Since the Pharaoh saw his dreams and telling of his dreams was the cause for the negative omen they contained to be doubled.

³ Mikeitz Ch. 6

The Rabbis said, “forty-two years of famine” because Pharaoh saw his dreams, told his dreams to Yosef, and he (Yosef) repeated back his dreams. He said that Yosef did not have to repeat back as he relied on Hashem for translation of the dreams, and thus making the famine forty-two years.

When Ya’akov arrived after two years of famine, the famine itself stopped on behalf of Ya’akov. A question is raised, “When did the balance of the years of famine returned?” Hashem’s word is not turned back to its origin unfulfilled. His Words had to go somewhere whether it is good or bad. As previously learned, once Hashem decrees it will be fulfilled as He does not change His mind, but His decrees can be postponed or redirected to elsewhere. Thus, it was fulfilled in Ezekiel 29:12, “I will make the land of Mitzrayim desolate among desolate lands, and its cities will be desolate among destroyed cities for forty years.”

In Genesis 42:2, Ya’akov tells his sons “Go down to [Mitzrayim].” The Hebrew word for “go down” is *redu* (רד) which has a numerical value of 210 (6+4+200). The Torah is already hinting that the Yisraelites will be exiled in Mitzrayim for 210 years.