

# Parsha Pearls

FROM THE WORDS OF THE GEDOLIM

Mikeitz 5769

**And it came to pass at the end of two years, that Pharaoh was dreaming, and behold he stood by the Nile. (41:1)**

Rashi at the end of Vayeishev says that Yosef had to sit in jail for an extra two years as punishment for asking the cupbearer to speak to Pharaoh on his behalf. Why was it wrong of him to make this effort? Don't we all make efforts to earn a living, while at the same time believing that our success is up to Hashem?

The Shlah (Torah Shebichsav, Maamar Tzon Yosef) writes at length about the dispute between Yosef and his brothers. How could it be, he asks, that the brothers, who were all righteous and were greater than angels, wanted to kill Yosef Hatzaddik? He explains that Yosef and his brothers all agreed that the royal family would be descended from Yehuda, but in order for the Egyptian exile to end and Yehuda to take power, Yosef had to rule during the exile. Yosef's rule subdued the Angel of Egypt and enabled the Israelites to escape from Egyptian slavery. After the Exodus from Egypt, the primacy of Yehuda was established – the Tribe of Yehuda traveled first in the desert, and in Eretz Yisroel the dynasty of David emerged from Yehuda.

The future redemption, says the Shlah, will follow a similar pattern. It will begin with a moshiach from the tribe of Yosef, who will reign not as part of a permanent dynasty but as a preparation for the moshiach from the dynasty of David.

Yosef understood all of this. But his brothers, when they saw Yosef planning to be king over them, thought that he wanted permanent royalty for himself and was thus challenging the Davidic dynasty, a capital crime.

When Yosef revealed himself to his brothers, he finally explained to them the entire picture. He said, "G-d sent me before you to allow you to remain alive in the land, and to give you life for a great escape" (45:7). Yosef was assuring them that he did not see his rulership as a permanent thing, a goal unto itself, but rather a preparation for the Exodus and eventual monarchy of the tribe of Yehuda.

Since Yosef's rise to power was a preparation for the redemption, it was subject to the oath against forcing the end, which forbids making any efforts on our own. Unlike making a living and healing, redemption is an area where all human effort is forbidden. That is why Yosef was punished so severely for enlisting the help of the cupbearer. His rise to power – and with it the entire redemption – was postponed.

One might ask: Don't we see that Yosef made his own efforts to become a ruler? After interpreting Pharaoh's dream, he offered unsolicited advice on how to avoid starvation during the famine, thus earning Pharaoh's admiration and his appointment as ruler.

But the truth is that Yosef did not give the advice on his own initiative. One may not offer advice to a wicked man. Chazal say (Bava Basra 4a) that Daniel was punished for giving advice to Nevuchadnetzar (Daniel 4:24). Rather, Yosef's advice was actually part of his interpretation of the dream.

When Pharaoh related his dream to Yosef, he said, “And [the seven fat cows] came into [the seven thin cows], and it was not recognizable that they came into them, and their appearance was as bad as before” (41:21). This detail of the dream was not mentioned by the Torah earlier (v. 4). The reason is that there is a rule that every dream must have some meaningless element (Rashi on 37:10). In Pharaoh’s dream, the meaningless element was that the thin cows looked thin even after they had swallowed up the fat cows – which would have meant that in the years of famine, people would starve to death and the years of plenty would give them no benefit. Had Yosef not given his advice to store up grain, this would have come true, the dream would have had no meaningless element, and thus Yosef’s interpretation would have been wrong. In order to interpret the dream correctly, Yosef had to prevent the fulfillment of this verse by giving advice. Since this was the meaningless element of the dream, it was not mentioned by the Torah earlier in v. 4.

Thus, Yosef’s rise to power was completely an act of Hashem – Pharaoh’s dream was from Hashem, the interpretation was placed in Yosef’s mind by Hashem, and the advice he gave Pharaoh was part of that interpretation. The only time he tried to take action on his own was when he asked the cupbearer for help, and for that he was punished.

Today there is a school of Zionist thought that says that Zionism is the preparation for the coming of moshiach, fulfilling the function of moshiach ben yosef. It is true that the Shlah says that the future redemption will be preceded by a ruler from the tribe of Yosef, but as we have seen here, this moshiach ben yosef is part of the process of redemption, and therefore no human effort is permitted to place him in power. The punishment for any such effort is that the redemption is postponed – just as it was in Yosef’s case.

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