

INSIGHTS from the SEDRA

Insights from the Sedra is a project of the Scholar's Kollel of Great Neck. It aims to provide several questions and answers about the Sedra, culled from various commentaries, including the following: Baal Haturim, Darash Moshe, Vedibarta Bam by Rabbi Moshe Bogomilsky, Torah Treasures by Dov Furer, Wellsprings of Torah by Alexander Friedman, and Kol Dodi by Rabbi Dovid Feinstein, Great Torah Lights by Rabbi Yitzchak Meir Goodman, Something To Say by Rabbi Dovid Goldwasser, The Vilna Gaon, Growth Through Torah by Zelig Pliskin and The Call of the Torah.

ויהי מקץ שנתיים ימים

“And it came to pass at the end of two full years.” (41:1)

Parshat Mikeitz is always read during *Chanukah*. What connection does the *parsha* have to *Chanukah*? *Pharaoh's* dream about the very lean cows eating the fat and healthy cows and the seven lean ears of corn swallowing the seven healthy ears of corn was to him an impossible outcome. How could anything weak overpower something stronger? In the days of *Mattisyahu* and his sons, *Bnei Yisrael* were the weak ones and only with the help of Hashem were they able to overpower the much stronger Syrian-Greek army. (ימ"צ)

ויקרא לפניו אברך

“They proclaimed before: Avrech!” (41:43)

Rashi in *Bava Batra* (4a) asks what did *Pharaoh* mean by referring to *Yosef* as an *Avreich*? *Avreich* is an affectionate title given to one who is *young* in years, but *old* in wisdom. We call *Kollel* members by this name, since they devote their time to discerning Hashem's will, and disseminating it to others. (*V'shinantam L'vanecha*)

ויתן לו את אסנת בת פוטי פרע

“And he gave him Asnat the daughter of Potiphera as a wife...” (41:45)

Potiphera is the same person know as *Potifar* (37:36), the master whom *Yosef* worked for when he was sold in *Mitzrayim*. *Yosef* was accused by *Potifar's* wife of assaulting her. By *Potifar* allowing *Yosef* to marry his daughter it showed the Egyptians that the charges against *Yosef* were false. Had they been true, *Potifar* would never let his daughter marry *Yosef*. (*Alshich*)

ויקרא את שם הבכור מנשה כי נשני אלקים את כל עמלי ואת כל בית אבי ואת שם השני קרא אפרים כי הפרני אלקים בארץ עניי

“And Yosef named the firstborn Menashe, for G-d had made me forget all my toil and all my father's house.’ And the second one he named Ephraim, for G-d has made me fruitful in the land of my anguish.” (41:51:52)

Apparently, *Yosef* went through two stages after rising to power. Bitterly remembering his brothers' cruelty, he initially chose to forget his family and his unhappy past. But this was only a phase. By the time his second son was born, and his first flush of exaltation had passed, he reacted as the *tzaddik* he always was, longing for his saintly father and holy community and recognizing Egypt as a land of anguish, despite his prominence. (*Growth Through Torah*)

ויאמר הנה שמעתי כי יש שבר במצרים רדו שמה ושברו לנו משם ונחיה ולא נמות

“I have heard there are provisions in Egypt. Go down there and supply us from there and let us love and not die...” (42:2)

Yaakov could just have easily had said, “Go to Egypt” instead of “Go down.” But the word *רדו* has a special meaning since its *gematria* is 210. *Yaakov* was indicating that from the time that he emigrated to Egypt until *Yetziat Mitzrayim*, there would be 210 years and Hashem’s promise to *Avraham* would be fulfilled. (Zohar)

ויקרא יוסף את שם הבכור מנשה כי נשני אלקים את כל עמלי ואת כל בית אבי

“And Yosef called the name of the first-born Menashe, ‘for G-d has made me forget all my toil, and all my father’s house.’” (45:51)

QUESTION: Why was *Yosef* grateful for forgetting his father’s house?

ANSWER: A visitor once entered a presumably kosher restaurant. Unimpressed with the religiosity of the personnel, he began to inquire about the *kashrut* standards. The proprietor confidently pointed to a picture on the wall, of a Jew with a long beard and *peiyot*. He said to the visitor: “You see that man up there? He was my father!” The visitor replied: “If you were hanging on the wall, and your father was behind the counter, I would not ask any questions. But since your father is hanging on the wall, and you are behind the counter, I have good reason to question the *kashrut*.” There are many whose only attachment to *Yiddishkeit* is through nostalgia. They remember their mother’s candle lighting, they recall their father’s long beard and *peiyot*, and they reminisce about their parents’ *Shabbat* table. They proudly tell their children about it, but unfortunately, they do not emulate or practice this way of life.

Living among the Egyptians, *Yosef* was in danger of becoming totally assimilated and adapting to the social life of the upper class. Fortunately, he remained tenacious in his Torah observance. Thus, it was unnecessary for him to nostalgically tell his children about his parents’ observance. He conducted his home life in exactly the same way as his father had done and was able to “forget” his father’s house and show his family his own home as a living example.

(Rav Tzvi Kaplan)

Chanukah Torah

The *Gemara* (*Ketubot* 111b) states that anyone who basks in the light of Torah, the light of Torah will provide him life. *Torah She’bichtav* is called “*da’at*” as it says in *Devarim* (33:2), *אש מימנו אש* – *from His right hand He presented the fiery Torah to them.* *Torah She’ba’al Peh* is called “*ohr*” as it says in *Mishlei* (6:23), *ותורה אור*. *Torah She’ba’al Peh* illuminates the *Torah She’bichtav*. One who learns the written Torah with the Oral Torah is one who is living in the dark. The *gematria* of *דת* and *אור* is equal to the *gematria* of *תורה*. Torah is comprised of both components – *Torah She’bichtav* and *Torah She’ba’al Peh*. (Ben Yehoyada)

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