

הַתּוֹרָה  
הַשְּׁבִיעִית

# פרשת מקץ Parshat Miketz

## אשרינו Ashreinu

ENHANCING YOUR STUDY OF THE WEEKLY TORAH PORTION



### LET GO AND LET GOD

MRS. AMY HOROWITZ

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ABBY ROSENTHAL (23')

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SHOSHANA STADLAN (22')

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BENNY FRANK (21')

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NAOMI REICHENBERG (22')

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Parshat Miketz tells the story of Yosef's brothers' initial trip down to Egypt to acquire food, including their encounter with the intimidating Egyptian viceroy who is none other than Yosef himself! The brothers return

home from this trip rife with anxiety over the "viceroy's" request that they return to Egypt with their youngest brother Binyamin. This poses what feels like an insurmountable challenge to the brothers; they are fully aware that Yaakov will not easily part with his youngest son, his only remaining connection to his beloved wife Rachel.

Yaakov's sons tell him what happened in Egypt. They hesitatingly reveal to him that they will need to return to Egypt, this time with Binyamin. Yaakov refuses. Reuven tries again, putting his own children on the line as insurance of Binyamin's safety. Yaakov refuses. Time passes and

once again the food runs out. Yaakov asks his sons to make another trip to Egypt for more food. Yehuda speaks harshly to his father saying, "you know the deal. We'll only go if we can take Binyamin with us. No Binyamin, no food."

At this point in the story, the Torah switches from calling their father Yaakov to calling him Yisrael. This might not seem so strange at first glance, because the pesukim have gone back and forth between the names Yaakov and Yisrael ever since his name changed a few parshiyot ago. His name change wasn't permanent, like Avraham's or Yehoshua's; rather, there are times and circumstances in which he's called Yaakov, and other times and circumstances in which he's called Yisrael.

One well-known and beautiful explanation for this discrepancy is that the Torah uses the name Yisrael whenever the context is an event or action that will have an impact on the future Am Yisrael. Sometimes Yaakov is just a husband, a son, a father, but other times he is the patriarch of the nation that will one day bear his name, Yisrael. When we come across a pasuk that refers to Yaakov as Yisrael, we know that we are reading something pivotal to the story of our people. Perhaps that is the simple significance of Yaa-

kov being called Yisrael mid-way through our parsha.

However, R' Shimshon Raphael Hirsch points out (Bereishit 43:6) that there is something else going on here. In contrast to earlier parshiyot, where both names appear interspersed throughout the pesukim, in our parsha, the Torah is calling Yaakov by the name Yisrael for the first time since losing Yosef 22 years earlier. In his grief over the loss of this favorite son, Yaakov feels himself faltering, "limping behind...being dragged along" by the events of his life. During this entire time period, the name Yaakov is most appropriate as it represents Yaakov's feeling that he is the victim of his circumstances instead of the master of them.

R' Hirsch explains that something changes halfway through our story. In calling him Yisrael, the Torah is telling us that his mindset shifted. Yaakov, who was uncertain about whether or not to send Binyamin to Egypt, morphs into Yisrael as soon as he realizes that he is no longer in doubt. Yaakov didn't know what to do, but Yisrael is 100% sure. He must of course send Binyamin. His children's lives hang in the balance!

What prompts this shift in perspective? What turns Yaakov back into Yisrael after 22 years? R' Hirsch suggests that it is Yaakov's realization that he has done everything in his own human power to direct the outcome of his family's safety. Feeling like a victim of the events of his life, Yaakov scrambled for control, trying everything in his power to protect his family. Yisrael realizes that there's nothing more he can do. Time to "let go and let God".

This is what it means to be a "Yisrael", to be Jewish, to embrace the philosophy that is so fundamental to our faith. A Yisrael puts in his *hishtadlut*, doing everything he can to earn his success...and then he steps back and realizes that the rest is in God's hands. In the words of R' Hirsch: "just there where it is beyond man's own power to direct matters, God's Direction begins for him." We do everything we can to direct the events of our lives, and then we place our trust in Hashem that whatever happens is supposed to happen, is part of God's plan.

As the holiday of Chanukah comes to a close, let's remember that sometimes in order to see and experience Hashem's miracles in our own lives, we need to step back and make room to let Him in. After doing everything we can, we have to trust that God will do the rest and that we will feel the miracle of Hashem's *hashgacha pratit*. That is the power of Am YISRAEL!

## THE PLAN

ABBY ROSENTHAL (23')

In this week's parsha, Parshat Miketz, the story of Yosef and his brothers continues in Egypt. Yosef's brothers explain to Yosef that one brother, Binyamin, is in Canaan taking care of Yaakov, and one is gone. Yosef says to his brothers,

מְרַגְלִים אַתֶּם לְרִאוֹת אֶת עֲרוֹת הָאָרֶץ בְּאֶתְם

"You are spies who came to seek out the nakedness of the land" (Bereishit 42:9). What was his reason for accusing them of being spies? According to Sforno, Yosef's accusation is based on the fact that they are a big group of ten men, and it is therefore suspicious that they are all going together, presumably to see how much food is in Egypt. Their defense claim is that they are all from one father, and that although there are ten of them, indeed a large number, they are actually brothers from a large family!

Of course, Yosef knows that his brothers aren't spies, however this was Yosef's plan to eventually get Binyamin to come down to Egypt. However, if he went to all this trouble, why didn't he just reveal himself right away, and then Yaakov would come down to Egypt with Binyamin? Yosef is causing his father extra pain by waiting to tell him he's alive! According to the Ramban, Yosef was waiting to fulfill both of his dreams, the first of which represented his brothers bowing down to him, and the second of which represented his brothers and his father bowing down to him. If Yosef revealed himself at this early point, causing Yaakov to come to Egypt so soon, the dreams wouldn't be fulfilled separately and in order.

A lesson we can take away from this story is that with time, Hashem's plan will become clear, but until then we need to have patience in life. The fact that Yosef waited to reveal himself to his brothers after many years shows his patience in everything working out according to plan. So too, in everyday life we should have patience and have faith in Hashem that daily inconveniences or challenges are for the bigger picture! Good Shabbos!

## REAL TESHUVA

SHOSHANA STADLAN (22')

In Parshat Miketz, famine strikes the land of Canaan

and the brothers are sent by Yaakov to buy grain from Egypt. When they arrive at the palace to receive grain, they are accused by Yosef, who they did not know was their brother at this point, of being spies. After his brothers beg and plead with him, Yosef gives them an ultimatum to leave one of their brothers imprisoned while the rest return to Canaan and then bring back Binyamin as proof that they are not spies. After they agree to these terms, the brothers suddenly confess their crimes towards Yosef to one another:

“And they said to one another, “Indeed, we are guilty for our brother, that we witnessed the distress of his soul when he begged us, and we did not listen. That is why this trouble has come upon us” (Bereishit 42:21).

וַיֹּאמְרוּ אִישׁ אֶל אָחִיו אֲבָל אֲנִשְׁמִים אָנַחְנוּ עַל אָחִינוּ אֲשֶׁר רָאִינוּ צָרַת נַפְשׁוֹ בְּהִתְחַנְּנוּ אֵלֵינוּ וְלֹא שָׁמַעְנוּ עַל כֵּן בָּאָה אֵלֵינוּ הַצָּרָה הַזֹּאת

Under these confusing and terrifying circumstances, being falsely accused as spies and having to leave one of your brothers in jail, one would most likely not think of their past sins. They would understandably be focused on the moment. So why did the brothers confess and what can we learn from them?

The Ralbag comments that we learn from this the importance of seeing our punishments from Hashem as just and righteous. There is always a reason behind them. The brothers were able to realize how one of their specific sins directly led to their current turbulent situation. Though in the moment it's often difficult to attribute something that seems so terrible as something that was justified from Hashem, we must try our best to realize it. Unlike Yosef's brothers, we often struggle to pinpoint a specific moment, an action we committed that led to a consequence, but we should all work to introspect and focus on the message that Hashem might be sending us.

But after the brothers supposed repentance, the Torah states:

וַיַּעַן רְאוּבֵן אֶתֶם לֹאֹמַר הֲלוֹא אִמְרַתִּי אֵלֵיכֶם לֵאמֹר אֵל תְּחַטְּאוּ בְּיָלֵד וְלֹא שָׁמַעְתֶּם וְגַם דָּמוֹ הִנֵּה נִדְרָשׁ

“And Reuven answered them, saying, “Didn't I tell you, saying, ‘Do not sin against the child’ but you did not listen? Behold, his blood, too, is being demanded!” (Bereishit 42:22).

Why does Reuven say this? What does this add to the feelings of repentance already expressed by the broth-

ers? If the brothers are truly repenting, why is Reuven restating their misdeeds?

Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, in his sefer *Torat Menachem*, answers that the brother's *teshuva* was not complete, and Reuven was trying to guide them on the right path to true repentance. He writes that the brothers were not doing *teshuva* because they felt guilty and knew that their actions to Yosef were evil. Instead of genuine remorse causing them to repent, the brothers did *teshuva* only because of the dire situation they were in. Reuven was trying to push them in the right direction of a complete *teshuva* by saying, **אֵל תְּחַטְּאוּ בְּיָלֵד**, not to sin **against the boy**. He's reminding them of the true reason why they should repent, which is because of their despicable actions against Yosef, and not because of the circumstances that they found themselves in due to their sin.

In life, it's difficult to admit that we have done something wrong. Commonly, it is only when we find ourselves being punished for our actions that we feel remorse for doing them. But the consequences of our actions simply act as a reminder that we have sinned. Consequences allow us to recognize that we have made a mistake and then feel remorse for that mistake, not for the circumstances that the mistake caused. May we all merit to be like Reuven, and complete the highest form of *teshuva*, recognizing and repenting for the actual sins themselves and not just their consequences.

## PERSPECTIVE

BENNY FRANK (21')

Throughout the story of the Jews in Egypt, there seems to be an interesting dichotomy between the Pharaoh that Yosef deals with and the one that Moshe Rabbeinu deals with. In this week's parsha, Yosef is summoned by Pharaoh to interpret his dreams. Yosef then gives Pharaoh an intricate plan that spans many years, essentially telling Pharaoh exactly what to do in order to attain unparalleled national prosperity. Pharaoh loves the idea, enacts it immediately, makes Yosef his right hand man, and recognizes that Yosef got all of these ideas from Hashem. In contrast, when Moshe comes to Pharaoh in Sefer Shmot, Moshe tells him that he must lose his entire workforce, devastating his nation's economy and wounding his personal pride, in order to avoid punishment from Hashem. Pharaoh in turn refuses to recognize Hashem and does not do as Moshe suggests.

Rabbi Yisrael Ciner in the name of Rabbi Yaakov Nayman points out that this comparison demonstrates what is NOT the Jewish mindset. We believe that everything in our lives, both good and bad, comes from Hashem and we must embrace whatever it is that He has set out for us. The two behaviors of Pharaoh show exactly how not to act. When Yosef offers Pharaoh an easy opportunity for great times, he jumps at it and proclaims his belief in Hashem. But when Moshe comes around with bad news, Pharaoh is so ready to reject Hashem's existence. We as Jews understand that Hashem is like a doctor who prescribes medicine. Sometimes the medicine might taste bad, but we know that it is ultimately for our good. We must always trust that whatever The One Above has done for us, or to us, is for our benefit, especially through these recent tough times. May we merit to recognize that even though we might have real difficulties and problems, these problems come from Hashem and in the end are only meant to help us.

## TWICE AS STRONG

NAOMI REICHENBERG (22')

In Parshat Miketz, the pasuk says, "וַיֵּרָא יוֹסֵף אֶת אָחָיו" "Yosef saw his brothers and he recognized them" (Bereishit 42:7). The very next pasuk says something very similar:

"וַיִּכְר יוֹסֵף אֶת אָחָיו" "And Yosef recognized his brothers" (Bereishit 42:8). What is the significance of repeating this statement? Why would the pesukim need to indicate twice that Yosef did indeed recognize his brothers?

Perhaps the Torah is emphasizing a specific *middah* we can learn from Yosef, the quality of having self control. We know Yosef goes through many trials and tribulations, especially throughout these last two parshiyot. Yosef's brothers betrayed him in the most hurtful and awful way they possibly could. They made it known to him that he was in fact not wanted by them, and not only was he not wanted by them, but they could not even speak to him and ended up selling him into slavery! This is the ultimate betrayal a brother could possibly commit. The Torah is trying to teach us that yes, Yosef recognizes his brothers the first time and is perhaps angry. But what are the pesukim really showing us he recognized? They are showing us that he recognizes them as brothers -- as his brothers that he loves. Despite everything they did to him, he recognizes their inherent goodness and the love that is deep inside, no matter how badly they betrayed him.

The lesson Yosef HaTzaddik teaches us is so valuable. He teaches us how to have self control and to truly be *mevater*, let go, even regarding those we do not believe we are capable of being *mevater* for. IY"H we should all be zoche to embody this amazing *middah* of Yosef HaTzaddik. Shabbat Shalom!

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