



From the desk of
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Parashat Mikeitz

HAMELECH

What Came First?

The parashah opens, "It was at the conclusion of two years (two additional years of Yosef's imprisonment) and Pharaoh dreamt."

The Beit HaLevi makes an amazing observation! How would we word the events of the beginning of the parashah? What was the cause and what was the effect? Surely we would say that due to Pharaoh's dreams, Yosef got out of jail. But the truth is the exact opposite! Because it was time for Yosef to get out of jail, that is why Pharaoh had his dreams!

And this is how it always is! We sometimes think that since A first happened, that is why B happened subsequently. And quite often, it is just the opposite: Since Hashem wanted B to happen, He arranged for A to happen first so that B would naturally follow.

Living With Reality

Those who live with an awareness of Hakadosh Baruch Hu's involvement in our lives, are living with reality. We also see this in our parashah. When the shevatim discover their money in their sacks, they realize that Hashem wants something from them. They don't start blaming Egyptian authorities and the like. They go straight to the Source.

The same is true with Yosef, such as in Parashat Vayigash and Vayechi. How does Yosef react to the fact that his brothers sold him? He sees in it

the *hashgacha* that Hashem sent him ahead so as to provide for his family during the famine.

Let's Do as they Did

We must aim to live as our forefathers lived. If we hear of an auto accident, we are to think what does Hashem want of us? The answer may very well be: Drive safely! But it generally is not our business to start investigating who was at fault.

Similarly, if we hear unfortunate news of someone passing away, a common question is: was he or she ill? Did the medical staff do all they could? Etc. Very often, that is none of our business and will get us nowhere. Shlomo Hamelech teaches that the appropriate reaction is: "Hachai yiten el libo" – the living shall take it to heart. That means to learn to value our days, hours and minutes and make sure to spend them involved in worthy endeavors.

"Who's Fault" – "Doesn't Matter"

We must be extra careful with these ideas these days. That is because we are living in a generation when the media shapes people's attitudes and ways of thinking. They try to attribute every accident to somebody's fault and every illness to a lack of caution or a mistake, every success to somebody's good idea.

If something happens in our home not to our liking, we must not be quick to blame our spouse. Rather we are to ask ourselves: how does Hashem want me to react in this situation? How



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would a great *tsaddik* react? Can I find in myself the strength to hold my tongue and not release words of blame and accusation? Can I muster the strength to lend a helping hand even if I feel that those around me are not doing for me what I would want them to?

Fishel and the Train

Once a villager named Fishel went to the big city. He saw a train for the first time. He was very curious to understand how it worked. So he stood there and watched. He saw a man blow a whistle and waved his hand. The train started to move. The same man waved a red flag. A different train stopped.

Now, Fishel was an expert. He understood it all. Whistles make trains go and flags make them stop! Fishel felt that he was ready to open his own train station back home. No need for drivers or fuel. Just get some whistles and flags.

So it is with many people's outlook on life's events. They see one person on the scene who looks like he's directing traffic. While he may have a small role to play, he certainly is not the brains nor the fuel behind the whole chain of events.

The Dog and the Stick

Sotah (49b) teaches that just before Mashiach arrives the people around will act like dogs. What does that mean? If someone throws a stick at a dog, the dog will go and bite the stick, viewing it as the source of his pain. So too, before Mashiach

comes, many people will misunderstand Heaven-sent messages. They will be given to suffer in some way or another in order to arouse them to repentance. Instead of taking the message, they will attempt to bite the "stick" – to see only the rod of punishment and not relate to the One who holds the rod.

After all is said and done, it is Hashem who appoints political leaders and puts ideas in their minds.

Why Eight?

The Beit Yosef asks: If there was enough oil for one night, why is Chanukah eight days and not seven? There are many answers to this question. One answer given is based upon the Ramban (end of Bo) who says that overt miracles are meant to open our eyes to day-to-day miracles which take place all the time, under nature's cover.

Therefore, if we see a fire burning for much longer than its fuel should have dictated, we are to understand that the very fact that oil burns at all is a miracle of sorts in the sense that it is a clear expression of Hashem's active Will.

This is the first or eighth day of Chanukah: the realization that Nature itself is a miracle.

Vinegar on Fire

Rabbi Hanina ben Dosa noticed that his daughter was sad. He asked, "What's up?"

She said, weeping, "By mistake, I put vinegar into the Shabbat candles instead of oil!"



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Rabbi Hanina was not moved. He simply said, "Whoever told oil to light will tell vinegar to light!"

And so it did. It lit the whole Shabbat through, all the way until Havdalah!

Rabbi Hanina merited the miracle precisely because he did not view it as such. For him, it was totally natural for any liquid to serve as fuel for fire. Rabbi Hanina was acutely aware that every aspect of nature is a direct expression of Hashem's will.

Say "Thank You"

Every day we pray and thank Hashem for all of the constant miracles and wonders which He is doing for us at all times. We should really stop and think, as we say these words, about some "miracles" which came our way recently, whether they were out of the ordinary or whether they were as plain as can be, everything running so smoothly so that we can continue living and doing what we are supposed to be doing.

Unfortunately, too often, we do not appreciate each functioning organ until that function ceases to function, or malfunctions. Let's try to open our eyes and appreciate what we have, so that we don't have to learn the lesson the hard way.

Never-Ending Purim

Rambam teaches that of all holidays Purim will never cease. Why? Sefer Even Yisroel (by Rabbi Yisroel Brown) explains that other holidays commemorate overt miracles, such as Yetsiat

Mitsrayim, Maamad Har Sinai, Clouds of Glory, etc.

The miracles which took place in the days of Mordechai and Esther were "hidden" miracles. Water did not turn into blood. The sea did not split. Nothing went against the rules of nature. It was just that everything fell into place. Everything worked out. This is the highest level of revealing Hashem's Glory, when you see it through the mask of nature and coincidence.

The Predestined Paper Cut

Rabbi Hanina teaches (Hullin 7b): No one so much as bangs his finger down here in this world unless it has been decreed in the Upper Spheres. Meiri (ad loc) explains: A person should contemplate that every bit of discomfort he experiences is delivered with precision. Quite often it is in response to his deeds. Therefore, when met with difficulties, a person should conduct introspection and attempt to improve his ways.

Peace at Home

Mishlei (11:7) teaches: When Hashem is pleased with the ways of a man, also his enemies come to terms with him. Rabbi Yochanan applies this to shalom bayit. Therefore, if someone senses tension in the home, he should proceed with caution, think about how to rectify his ways and peace will preside.

Chid"ra sees this idea alluded to in Tehillim (38:4): There is no peace in my bones due to my



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עיר התורה שקרובה אליך

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sins. In Breishit (2), one's wife is called his "bones". As such, this pasuk is teaching that lack of shalom bayit is the result of the husband's sins.

Snowed In

Here's a story you don't hear every day. A man contracted a rare disease. Upon arrival at the hospital, it was suggested to operate immediately in order to save his life. The surgery performed was unsuccessful. A second surgery by a better surgeon achieved no better results. It was recommended to travel overseas to be treated by the top specialist. He travelled abroad and had to wait for a day when the specialist could operate. In the meantime, daily medication was administered.

The sick man decided to spend Shabbat with a friend he knew in Chutz La'aretz. He began to make his way there and suddenly, he got caught in a snowstorm. It was wintertime and Shabbat would soon arrive. He asked around for the closest town and once there, asked where a Jew could be found.

An hospitable family took him in for Shabbat. He went to shul. After the prayers, people came over to welcome him and ask questions. He told his story and was directed to one of the congregants who was a heart specialist. After Shabbat, they met and the religious doctor got ahold of the man's medical records. The doctor immediately realized that this poor fellow was the guinea pig for hospital studies, both via operations and new medications. Hashem saved his life with the

snowstorm and Shemirat Shabbat. The next scheduled procedure, said the religious doctor, most probably would have ended his life.

The sick man was transferred to the hospital where the religious doctor worked. After a short time, his life was saved and he returned to Eretz Yisroel.

Here is an example of a person who made plans to visit friends for Shabbat and he was snowed out. The moment he realized that he would not get to his friend's house for Shabbat, he must have felt devastated. But in the aftermath, he understood that Hashem was sending him to health and safety.

This does not mean that we should not make plans. Let's plan and plan, but at the same time, be ready for Hashem to alter our plans, and understand that it is all for the best.

It Was Hashem

Let us learn from all that is going on around us. Let us see Hashem's helpful Hand from behind the scenes. Let us stop pointing fingers and launching accusations, especially at close family members. Let us view every mishap as a wakeup call.

Let us learn from Yosef's attitude, "It was not you who sent me here; it was Hashem."

May Hashem perform for us miracles and wonders as He did in those day at this time.

**Shabbat Shalom,
Mordechai Malka**