

בס"ז

THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

Week of

Parshas Mikeitz

2 Teves, 5777 – December 31, 2016

Compiled from the works of
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The Lubavitcher Rebbe

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An Outline of the Rebbe's Explanation of Rashi

Parshas Mikeitz

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Rashi in His Own Words

בראשית מ"א, ח': ויהי בבקר ותפצם רוחו וישלח ויקרא את־חֲרָטְמֵי מִצְרַיִם ואת־פְּלִי־חֲכָמֶיהָ ויסֹפֵר פְּרַעְזָה לָהֶם אֶת־חֲלָמוֹ
ואי־פִתַּר אֹתָם לַפְּרַעְזָה:

Bereishis 41:8: Now it came to pass in the morning that his (Paroh's) spirit was troubled. He sent and called all the magicians and sages of Egypt. Paroh related his dream to all of them, but no one interpreted them for him.

A Brief Synopsis

This week's Torah portion, Mikeitz, begins with two dreams which Paroh had. He first dreamt of seven fat cows which arose from the Nile, followed by seven emaciated ones. The thin cows then consumed the robust ones. He then had a second dream, wherein seven healthy ears of grain were eaten by seven thin and parched ears. In the morning, none of Paroh's wise men were capable of interpreting the dreams to his satisfaction.

Paroh repeated his dreams to Yosef. Yosef told Paroh that both dreams conveyed the same message. Egypt would enjoy seven years of plenty. This would be followed by seven years of famine. Yosef proposed a plan to store the excess grain of the years of plenty, in order for it to serve during the years of famine. Paroh was impressed by Yosef's wisdom. In fact, he was so impressed that he appointed him viceroy of Egypt.

Rashi explains everything which the beginning student needs to know in order to understand Peshat. There is a very obvious question here which begs to be asked. Yosef's explanation seems obvious. Why couldn't the professional fortune tellers and dream interpreters explain the dream as Yosef did? Why was Paroh so impressed with Yosef? Finally, why did Yosef conclude by offering Paroh advice? He was only asked to interpret the dreams.

The explanation is clear from the first dream. Paroh saw the seven fat cows, which symbolized seven years of bounty, standing together with the seven emaciated cows. Since each represented a different year, a different time, how could they all be standing together? The explanation is found in Yosef's advice. During the years of plenty they would begin to experience the years of famine, because they would be preparing for them. During the years of famine they would also experience the years of plenty, because they would be living from that which had been put away.

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Rashi's Explanation

This explanation of Rashi is different than most. Usually, the Rebbe explains something which Rashi *does* explain on the Parshah. Here, however, our difficulty is in understanding something which Rashi does not explain. Rashi explains everything that the beginning student needs in order to understand Peshat. This is actually clear, from the instances in the Torah that Rashi writes "I don't know." This is despite the fact every such instance is interpreted by other commentaries. They weren't "smarter" than Rashi. What Rashi meant by "I don't know," is that he doesn't know an explanation according to Peshat. Other commentators explain the same thing according to other approaches of understanding Torah. However, if we encounter a difficulty upon which Rashi does not comment, it must mean one of two things. Either in reality it is not a question, or Rashi explained it earlier. We shall see as the Rebbe's explanation unfolds what the seeming difficulty is, and what the explanation is.

Difficulties in Understanding Rashi

This week's Torah portion, Mikeitz, begins with two dreams which Paroh had¹. He first dreamed of seven fat cows which came up from the Nile River. They were followed by seven lean cows, which stood beside the first group of seven cows. The seven fat cows were then swallowed up by the seven lean ones. He then awoke. After falling back asleep, he dreamt of seven fat ears of grain which grew from one stalk. Seven lean ears of grain grew after them, and swallowed the first seven.

We are told that neither he, nor any of the dream interpreters or fortune tellers in Egypt could understand what the dreams meant. This caused Paroh great distress. Finally, Yosef was brought out of prison in order to interpret Paroh's dreams. Yosef explained to Paroh that both dreams were actually one. The seven fat cows and fat stalks represented seven years of plenty. The fact that they were followed by seven scrawny cows and stalks, meant that the seven years of plenty would be followed by seven years of famine. In fact, the famine would be so great that the years of plenty would be totally forgotten. That is the meaning of the second groups of seven swallowing the first. Yosef went on to say that Paroh should appoint someone to be in charge of the land of Egypt. Throughout the seven years of plenty, this person should be in charge of seeing to it that food should be saved from all over Egypt throughout the seven years of plenty. Paroh and his servants were all thrilled with this interpretation. In fact, Paroh was so impressed by Yosef's brilliance, that he appointed him in charge.

It seems that there is nothing all that impressive about Yosef's explanation of Paroh's dream. Actually, it seems to be quite straightforward. Rashi himself comments that the Nile was the source of Egypt's sustenance. He writes at the beginning of our Torah Portion² that "the entire land of Egypt is

1. See Bereishis Chapter 41, beginning with Verse 1.

2. Bereishis 41:1.

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covered with many man-made canals, and the Nile rises in their midst and waters them. This is because it does not usually rain in Egypt as it does in other countries." Since the Nile is the source of Egypt's bounty (or lack thereof), it seems quite clear that seven fat, well fed cows coming out of the Nile would be a sign of seven years of bounty. How much more so is it true of seven healthy, large stalks of grain. The grain is that which the cows ate in order to become large! Since the grain grows once each year, it's only logical that the seven units represent seven years.

Likewise, it is fairly obvious that emaciated cows coming out of the Nile, and seven lean ears of grain symbolize seven years of famine. There does not seem to be anything profound about Yosef's explanation, yet Rashi does not offer any explanation as to why Paroh was so impressed.

Additionally, the magicians, who were professionals, were not able to satisfy Paroh with their interpretation of his dream. Just what was their explanation? Rashi tells us, that they told him³ that "you will father seven daughters, and you will bury seven daughters." Why did they offer an interpretation which is so far removed from the literal meaning of the dream? Rashi quotes this explanation from the Midrash⁴. Yet the Midrash includes other interpretations of the dreams which were offered by the magicians. Why does Rashi only mention this particular one?

Finally, it is also not at all understood according to the simple meaning of the verse why Yosef continued speaking after completing his interpretation of the dreams. He told Paroh⁵ "and⁶ now, let Paroh seek out an understanding and wise man and appoint him over the land of Egypt." He began with the word "and," In other words, it directly followed his interpretation of Paroh's dream. But what followed did not come to explain the dreams. Rather, he offered Paroh advice on how to deal with the situation. He suggested that he place someone in charge, and appoint people to save the grain from the years of plenty, in order to have what to eat in the years of famine. No one asked Yosef for advice. Yet again, Rashi is silent.

There are commentaries that explain why Yosef added these words of advice⁷. He was telling Paroh, that as king of Egypt, G-d revealed to him what would happen for a reason. Hashem was not merely trying to cause him pain. He was giving him a chance to prepare for the years of famine. However, if that was the case, Yosef should have specifically stated as much. From his words it sounds as if this is a part of the explanation of the dream.

3. Bereishis 41:8.

4. See Bereishis Rabbah 89, 6.

5. Bereishis 41:33.

6. The word "and" implies that this was a continuation of his previous words.

7. See the second and third explanation of the Abarbanel on this verse. See also the comments of the Gur Aryeh, the Kli Yakar and the Ohr Hachaim.

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The Explanation

The key to understanding why the beginning student is not bothered by these questions is the one interpretation offered by the magicians which Rashi quotes from the Midrash. He writes that “you will father seven daughters, and you will bury seven daughters.” By only citing that interpretation, Rashi is pointing out the difficulty in explaining Paroh's dream. His dream began⁸ "from the Nile were coming up seven cows, of handsome appearance and robust flesh, and they pastured in the marshland. And behold, seven other cows were coming up after them from the Nile, of ugly appearance and lean of flesh, and they stood beside the cows which were on the Nile bank." In other words, all 14 cows were standing together on the bank of the Nile. Each represented a different year, seven of the years of prosperity, and seven years of poverty. Yet they were all together at the same time. Years, which are a unit of time, are divided into past, present and future. None of these can co-exist. Yet they were all together. That was why the magicians disregarded the obvious.

However, fathering seven daughters and burying seven daughters can take place at the same time. During the time that this story took place, it was common for people to have more than one wife. This was especially true of kings. How much more so was this true of the king of Egypt. Egypt was known as being steeped in immorality. In all likelihood, Paroh had many wives and concubines. It was easy to imagine both fathering and burying at the same time. However, how can we reconcile a year of bounty and one of poverty together?

That explains why Yosef gave Paroh advice. The advice was actually included within his dreams. They would experience the years of bounty together with those of famine. How is this possible? During the years of bounty they would be preparing for the years of famine. By the same token, during the years of famine they would be eating from what they saved during the years of plenty.

A Deeper Lesson from Rashi

Paroh's dreams and Yosef's interpretations brought about our exile in Egypt, and our redemption from there. Simply, Yosef interpreted the dreams, and as a result he became the Egyptian viceroy. This ultimately led to Ya'akov and his family moving there. Subsequent events brought about our becoming enslaved in Egypt, which led to our ultimate redemption from there. From this we understand that through the content of the dreams and their interpretation, the concept of exile and redemption are expressed.

Chassidic philosophy⁹ explains the verse¹⁰ "when the Lord returns the returnees to Tzion, we shall be like dreamers." Just as in a dream, one can see two opposites; the same is true of exile. At the time of

8. Bereishis 41:2-3.

9. See Torah Ohr to Parshas Vayaishev, beginning with page 28, c. See also Toras Chaim to Parshas Mikeitz beginning with page 74, b. The same idea is discussed in a number of other sources.

10. Tehillim 126:1.

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prayer, we can feel a complete trust in G-d. However, immediately after praying, one can become overly troubled with financial and business problems. The same was true of Paroh's dreams. They contained two opposites, yet Yosef's interpretation was able to reconcile them. Our job in exile is to reconcile our trust in Hashem with our daily, worldly lives. True trust in G-d does not allow for feeling any financial worries. May we accomplish this job and bring the complete and true redemption now.

(Adapted from a talk given on Shabbos Parshas Mikeitz, 5732 and 5734)

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**IN HONOR OF
Chaim and Aiden Oded שיהיו Morris**

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**DEDICATED BY THEIR PARENTS
Rabbi & Mrs. Menachem M. and Chaya Mushka שיהיו Morris**

* * *

**IN LOVING MEMORY OF
Mr. Sholom Dovid ben Reb Yitzchak Hacoהן ע"ה Mankes**
Passed away on 11 Teves, 5776
May His Soul be bound in the Eternal Bond of Life

*

**IN LOVING MEMORY OF
Mr. Yoel ben Reb Sholom Dovid Hacoהן ע"ה Mankes**
Passed away on 28 Nissan, 5776
May His Soul be bound in the Eternal Bond of Life

*

**IN HONOR OF
Shimshon ben Chassibah ש'י
Yosef Yitzchok ben Sarah ש'י
and Shoshana Devorah Hodya bas Tovah Sarah ש'ת**
For a complete and speedy recovery

*

**DEDICATED BY
Mr. and Mrs. Yonatan Itsik Hacoהן and Shaindel Miriam שיהיו Mankes**

* * *

**IN LOVING MEMORY OF
Dr. Chaim Yitzchok ben Reb Yechiel Moshe ע"ה Handwerger**
Passed away on 25 Adar II, 5776
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* * *

**IN HONOR OF
Yisroel Hacoהן ben Berocho ש'י**
For a complete and speedy recovery

* * *

**IN HONOR OF
Berocho bas Soroh ש'ת**
For a complete and speedy recovery

* * *

**DEDICATED BY
Hatomim Moshe Shlomoh Zohar ש'י Mars**

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MAY HE MERIT TO BE A CHOSSID, A YEREI SHOMAYIM AND A LAMDON

מוקדש לזכות

כ"ק אדמו"ר נשיא דורנו מליובאוויטש

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לזכות

חיילי "צבאות השם" חיים ועדן עודד שיחיו מאריס

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נדפס ע"י הוריהם

הרה"ת ר' מנחם מענדל וזוגתו מרת חי' מושקא שיחיו מאריס

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לעילוי נשמת

ר' שלום דוד בן ר' יצחק הכהן ע"ה מנקס

נפטר ביום י"א טבת ה'תשע"ו

ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.

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לעילוי נשמת

ר' יואל בן ר' שלום דוד הכהן ע"ה מנקס

נפטר ביום כ"ח ניסן ה'תשע"ו

ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.

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לזכות

ר' שמשון בן חסיבה שי'

ר' יוסף יצחק בן שרה שי'

ושושנה דבורה הודי' בת טובה שרה שתחי'

לרפואה שלימה וקרובה

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נדפס ע"י משפחתם

ר' יונתן איציק הכהן

וזוגתו מרת שיינדל מרים שיחיו מנקס

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לעילוי נשמת

ר' חיים יצחק בן ר' יחיאל משה ע"ה האנטווערקער

נפטר ביום כ"ה אדר שני, ה'תשע"ו

ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.

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נדפס ע"י בנו וכלתו

ר' יואב וזוגתו מרת דבורה לאה שיחיו האנטווערקער

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נתרם ע"י

הת' משה שלמה זהר שי' מאריס

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יהי רצון שיזכה להיות חסיד, ירא שמים, ולמדן