

The Narrow Bridge

גשר צר מאוד

PARSHA PERSPECTIVES

Short Divrei Torah on Parshas Mikeitz

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רפואה שלמה פעסל בת גאלדא / לזכות חילינו

NEUTRALIZING EVIL

Lubavitcher Rebbe

"And it came to the end of two years and Pharaoh was dreaming..." (41:1)

Yaakov was the central spiritual figure of his generation, and Yosef was the one who was able to channel Yaakov's spiritual energy into the world. Therefore, the spiritual dimension of everyone's life took its cue from Yosef's. Since Yosef learned of his future through dreams, Pharaoh also learned about the future of his land through dreams.

The same is true in every generation. The spiritual dimension of the world at large takes its cue from the world's collective "Yosef" - the Jewish people. Even forces that oppose G-dliness derive power from us, either by capitalizing on the negative energy produced by our misdeeds or by challenging us to tap potentials that would otherwise remain dormant.

When we encounter evil, we are apt to assume that it possesses its own power, and therefore be intimidated by it, or even seduced by it. Instead, we should recognize that evil is nothing more than a reflection of our own shortcomings or simply a challenge designed to elicit our dormant spiritual powers. It will then neither intimidate nor tantalize us.

By rectifying our own shortcomings and rising to life's challenges, we cut off evil's supply of power, thereby bringing spiritual sustenance to the entire world. (Likutei Sichot, vol. 3, pp. 819-820) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisniewsky

FROM DAYS TO YEARS

Rebbe Nachman

"And it came to the end of two years and Pharaoh was dreaming..." (41:1)

Shenatayim yamim (two years) literally means "two years of days." When a person is searching for G-d, each day is as valuable as a year. (See Likutey Moharan II, 2:6)

BRINGING MASHIACH

Shinover Rebbe

"And it came to the end of two years and Pharaoh was dreaming..." (41:1)

Mikeitz ("in the end") refers to the days that call for Mashiach.

Mashiach would not come unless we would give from our hearts. This means that we would be concerned for the welfare of others and not only for ourselves.

PROTECTED WEALTH

Reb Noson of Breslov

"And it came to the end of two years and Pharaoh was dreaming..." (41:1)

Pharaoh dreamt about seven fat cows that were swallowed up by seven scrawny cows. Pharaoh represents one who has great wealth yet always craves more, as if he is always hungry. His name, Pharaoh (פרעה), resembles Peiraon (פרעון, repayment). Pharaoh always must make payments, whether he is buying material goods for his comfort or paying off his debts.

Yosef, the tzaddik, advises him to "tax" the bounty at twenty percent. In other words, Yosef advises the wealthy to "tax their wealth" by giving to charity, an act that will protect their wealth. (Likutey Halakhot II, p. 79a)

WHERE CREDIT IS DUE

Rabbi Moshe Schochet

"And it came to the end of two years and Pharaoh was dreaming..." (41:1)

The Medrash tells us that the beginning of the pasuk refers to the two additional years when Yosef languished in jail, which were coming to an end. Why does the Torah introduce the parsha with these words? We already know that Yosef was still in jail based on the conclusion of last week's parshah. The Torah should have simply begun with Pharaoh having dreams...

TEACHINGS OF THE TZADDIK

Reb Noson of Breslov

“Behold! Seven cows, beautiful of appearance and of healthy flesh, emerged from the river and grazed in the marshland.” (41:2)

The seven healthy cows represent the tzaddikim. They are called “healthy” because “A tzaddik eats to satisfy his soul” (Proverbs 13:25). By acquiring and disseminating faith, the tzaddik teaches other people how to satisfy their souls. Later, Yosef told Pharaoh, “Ration the produce of Egypt” (Bereishis 41:34). Vechimeish (וְחִמֵּשׁ, ration) is similar to Chameish (חֲמִשָּׁה, five), which represents the Five Books of the Torah. The rations of one's spiritual food are the Torah. The tzaddik shows us how to store up spiritual energy for the lean years. (Likutey Halakhot V, p. 50a)

The seven healthy cows in Pharaoh's dream represent prayer, as in “Seven times a day I have praised You” (Tehillim 119:164). The seven scrawny cows represent the thoughts that overcome a person during his prayers, causing him to think that his prayers are worthless. The person then strengthens himself and begins to pray another time, but again evil thoughts rise up and disturb his prayers.

Pharaoh found the solution to his dream by relying on Yosef, the tzaddik. Yosef teaches us to grab hold of the good when it is present and store it up, so that we can face the hardships that come later. (Likutey Halakhot III, p. 20a-40)

STORING UP GOODNESS

Rabbi Chaim Kramer

“Behold! Seven cows, beautiful of appearance and of healthy flesh, emerged from the river and grazed in the marshland.” (41:2)

The parshah begins with Pharaoh's dream. What was that dream? He saw seven fat cows and seven ripe stalks; then came seven lean cows and seven dried-up stalks. He saw that the lean cows and dried-up stalks swallowed the fat cows and consumed the ripe stalks. That was his dream.

Reb Noson explains that this is the dream of the evil person, Pharaoh. Many times, we find blessing in our lives (seven indicating many times). We are happy, we are content, we are upbeat in our outlook on life.

Along comes Pharaoh. Along come challenges, frustrations, difficulties. We become despondent, angered, and frustrated, to the point that everything seems lost. So much so that we completely forget we did have good times! Times that are “swallowed up” by the challenges we face. This is Pharaoh's dream: to make us forget that there were good times. To conceal the fact that there are always ups and downs in life. He wants us to never remember that there was, is, and will be good times.

The Beis HaLevi explains based on a mashal. Imagine someone were to purchase something that subsequently went up in value, and it caused him or her to become prosperous. Most people would naturally attribute the affluence to the buyer's decision to acquire the item. The Beis HaLevi suggests that, in reality, the person was successful not because of any efforts on his or her part, rather solely because Hashem decided that he or she should be successful. In order to ensure that the person became wealthy, Hashem made sure that whatever he or she invested in resulted in wealth.

The same is true with the story of Yosef. Had the Torah begun with Pharaoh's dream, one would think that the reason that Yosef was released from prison was because Pharaoh had a dream. However, the Torah begins by telling us that Yosef was still in jail and Hashem intended to free Yosef. How was Hashem going to liberate Yosef? Hashem orchestrated that Pharaoh would have dreams that needed to be interpreted by Yosef. As a result, Yosef would be freed from incarceration. This is the reason why the Torah begins with Yosef remaining in jail. The Torah's mention of Yosef in jail sets the stage for Hashem's plan of causing Pharaoh to have dreams.

This idea is highlighted even further in the ensuing pesukim. After Yosef concluded interpreting Pharaoh's dreams, he offered a strategy of how to navigate the years of plenty in order to ensure the survival of Egypt along with the surrounding countries. Yosef seemed to imply that he should be the one to oversee the plan. Rav Yisrael Meir Druck (Eish Tamid) wonders why Yosef wasn't hesitant to nominate himself for this position? After all, the last time he tried to get a job by requesting that the sar hamashkim, the royal butler, mention his name to Pharaoh, he was punished with an additional two years of imprisonment for lacking emunah in Hashem and placing his faith in the sar hamashkim.

Rav Druck explains that there is one basic difference between these two instances. Prior to Pharaoh sharing his dreams with Yosef, Pharaoh attempted to praise Yosef by sharing that he heard that Yosef had successfully interpreted dreams in the past. Yosef deflected the credit and instead highlighted that his successes were solely due to what Hashem allowed him to understand and interpret. Instead of simply taking matters into his own hands as if he was in charge, in the way that he did two years earlier, Yosef made clear to Pharaoh (and himself) Who was really in charge. Once Yosef gave credit where credit was due, he was then comfortable putting forth his own efforts on behalf of himself.

We often find ourselves attempting to balance our faith in Hashem with our requirement to exert maximum energy towards achieving our personal and professional goals. The Torah is teaching us that while we are certainly obligated to put in hishtadlus - effort, to realize our ambitions, we must first ensure that our hard work is predicated on the recognition that Hashem is in charge. With this approach, we, like Yosef, will be able to reach our full potential with Hashem's unwavering support.

The solution to Pharaoh's dream is Yosef, who advises, "Store from your good times and remember to keep them foremost in your mind. Then, when the difficult moments arrive, you will remember that there was good, and it will pass." How? Because you've stored in your mind that there was good and there will be good times to come.

The powers of Pharaoh, of evil, want a person to linger in despair with no hope of ever seeing good. "Swallowed up," as it were. On the other hand, Yosef, the tzaddik, encourages people to believe that good does exist and that we can emerge from the lean times into salvation.

UNASSUMING TACTICS

Sefas Emes

"...and the [lean] cows ate up the seven well-favored and fat ones." (41:3-4)

Interpreting the "lean cows" as an allegorical representation of the evil inclination, on this passage the Sages base their statement that when the evil inclination comes to a person it acts like a transient at first, then like a guest and finally like a master, ruling over the person and the person's household.

The seven lean cows behaved toward the seven well-favored cows in the same manner as the evil inclination acts when it confronts a person. At first, they "came up after them," slowly and inconspicuously. Then they "stood by" them like guests in their pasture, and finally, they swallowed them up altogether.

IT TAKES HARD WORK

Lubavitcher Rebbe

"Pharaoh awoke and perceived that [what he had seen] was a dream." (41:7)

The content of Pharaoh's dreams differed profoundly from that of Yosef's. Pharaoh dreamed of animals and produce but not of work. Yosef's dreams, in contrast, began with the image of work - the brothers gathering sheaves in the field.

This reflects the difference between how G-d provides sustenance for holy and less holy people. G-d sustains holy people directly, in deserved reward for their earnest work in aligning themselves with His will. In contrast, less holy people balk at the idea of self-discipline and work; G-d therefore only sustains them because He has to in order for them to continue to exist. Moreover, sustenance received without effort is flawed goodness, since human nature is such that we do not truly appreciate something gained without effort.

Similarly, when we are tempted to think that we can get by without hard work, we must realize that such notions stem from our less holy side. Likewise, anything we receive "for free" is either flawed or will not endure. (Likutei Sichot, vol. 3, pp. 805-810, 820-822) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisnefsky

BEYOND NATURE

Rabbi Dovid Hoffman

"And he called all the wizards of Egypt and all its wise men. And Pharaoh related the dream to them, but none could interpret them for Pharaoh." (41:8)

Rashi writes: "They interpreted the dreams, but it did not enter into Pharaoh's ears and he did not have relief from their interpretation. They said, 'You will father seven daughters, you will bury seven daughters.'" Why was it so hard for the Egyptian wise men to come up with a proper interpretation? In hindsight, Yosef's explanation seems so logical compared to what they dreamed up!

Rav Yechezkel Abramsky zt'l denotes a fundamental distinction between the way the Egyptians and Yosef interpreted dreams. The Egyptians looked at the world in definite terms of physicality and nature. Their interpretations had to make sense in their small-minded and terrestrial brains, and everything had to conform to the laws of nature. Thus, they babbled on with meaningless expositions, just as long as they fit into their way of thinking. Yosef, on the other hand, looked at the world through a Divine prism; he was blessed with the ability to see things exactly the way Hashem created them.

Nature is constant, but Hashem maintains the power to go beyond the natural and employ the supernatural when He sees fit. Thus, Yosef said to Pharaoh, "The L-rd will answer for Pharaoh's benefit" (41:16). The words are not my words, and the meaning is not from me; it is from Hashem! In order to arrive at the truth, it is not in the ability of a human mind to understand the world if not for the Almighty guiding and explaining it all to him.

In fact, on Chanukah we recognize this concept in the words of Al Hanissim: "You have delivered the strong at the hands of the weak; many at the hands of the few." The Greeks, much like the Egyptians, lived by the rules of nature. But Hashem rescued the Jewish nation in a supernatural fashion, unrestrained by earthly limits, for He loves His people and will do anything to protect and secure them.

FINDING THE "SWALLOWED" GOOD

Reb Noson of Breslov

"...but none could interpret them for Pharaoh." (41:8)

Only Yosef was able to interpret Pharaoh's dream correctly. Good and evil (the healthy cows and the scrawny cows) always exist in the world, and it appears that evil always conquers the good. But the tzaddik, who is able to overcome evil, can show that there is good even within evil, even if the good has been "swallowed up" by the evil. Later, Yosef advises the Egyptians to put away food to tide them over during the forthcoming years of famine. In this way, he taught others to take advantage of the good days and good times and store up one's good deeds in this world. Then, even in the bad days, in times of evil, one will have good to fall back on.

IN A BLINK OF AN EYE

Rabbi Dovid Hoffman

“Then Pharaoh sent and called Yosef, and they brought him hastily out of the dungeon...” (41:14)

Yosef was languishing in prison for years at the mercy of his captors. He thought that by asking the wine steward to mention him to Pharaoh it might hasten his release. To his dismay, not only did it not hasten his release, but it prolonged his agony. However, at the very moment that Hashem decided that Yosef should go free, he was rushed out of jail with an urgency that sharply contrasted with the humdrum daily existence that was his constant companion in the depths of the Egyptian dungeon.

The Chofetz Chaim zt'l remarks that this is the way Hashem brings about redemption. The moment it is meant to take place, not a split second is lost. This, says the Chafetz Chaim, is the way the Final Redemption will come as well. When the time is right, we will all be rushed to greet Mashiach and our lives will suddenly and without warning be radically changed.

On a personal level, every individual is locked up in situations of pain, sadness, or difficulty. There are times that we almost give up hope that the situation can improve and therefore our prayers and relationship with Hashem are stunted, rather than strengthened...

But a Jew should never lose faith. His salvation can come in the blink of an eye. It can happen so suddenly that he won't even know what hit him. As much as we feel that our situation is difficult, we must believe that Hashem can do anything - and do it quickly!

This is what we should learn from Yosef being rushed out of jail. It is also important to realize this on Chanukah, which is a time of great miracles and redemption and is uniquely effective for both collective redemption and personal salvation. May we all be zocheh to our own redemptions, both on a personal and national level, in the blink of an eye.

RELEASING OUR SPARK

Rabbi Alexander Zusia Friedman

“Then Pharaoh sent and called Yosef, and they brought him hastily out of the dungeon...” (41:14)

It is of profound symbolic significance that Yosef was released from prison on Rosh Hashanah. In every Jew there is a spark of honesty and righteousness that is never extinguished. Concerning this the Sages say: “A completely righteous person will never be swallowed up” (Megillah 6), meaning that the evil inclination will never be able to destroy this spark of decency. However, that spark, the “righteous Yosef” within us, is locked up all year long, imprisoned by the body's powers and appetites. Only on Rosh Hashanah, when Jews cast aside their earthly desires and accept the sovereignty of the Kingdom of Heaven, does our spark of righteousness emerge from its prison and stand revealed in all its glory.

DOMINATING MATERIALISM

Lubavitcher Rebbe

“Then Pharaoh sent and called Yosef, and they brought him hastily out of the dungeon...” (41:14)

The Torah speaks of the upper realm, the Divine or spiritual world, and alludes to the lower realm, the materialistic world. The entire parsha speaks about the release of Yosef from prison. The name “Yosef” means “to increase,” namely, the unbounded potential for growth. This growth we find in the soul, “the actual part of G-d from above.” (Tanya, Ch. 2)

The prison in which Yosef was held refers to the body, and to the material existence as a whole. These tend to confine the power of the soul and deny it expression. Although G-d gave us the Torah, the Torah is also affected by the limits of material life, and the G-dly source is not always evident.

The Jew was sent into this world to reveal G-dliness. The material nature of worldly existence may initially restrict the Jewish nature; however, the constraints are temporary.

Just as Yosef became the ruler of Egypt, every Jew should become a source of influence showing how the potential of the soul can overcome complete materialistic dominance.

WHEN THE SKIES DARKEN

Rabbi Efreim Goldberg

“Then Pharaoh sent and called Yosef, and they brought him hastily out of the dungeon...” (41:14)

Parshas Mikeitz continues the story of Yosef, telling of the dramatic reversal of Yosef's fortune. He was languishing in an Egyptian dungeon until he was suddenly brought before Pharaoh, having been recommended to the king by the *שר המשקים* (cupbearer) to interpret the king's unusual dreams. Pharaoh was pleased by Yosef's interpretation, and immediately appointed him viceroy over the kingdom. In an instant, Yosef was lifted from the depths of despair to the heights of royalty.

Rav Yisroel Meir Druck, in *Lahavos Eish*, draws our attention to the vital lesson of emunah that emerges from this episode. Years earlier, Yosef faced an unimaginably difficult test. Working as a slave for Potifar, his master's wife desired a relationship with him, and desperately tried to seduce him. Yosef, a teenage boy far away from home, working as a slave, had nothing to lose by accepting her advances - except, of course, his morality and his spirituality. He heroically refused, resisting her seduction each and every day, until finally he fled, whereupon she falsely accused him of assaulting her. Yosef was then imprisoned. A person in Yosef's position would likely have turned to Hashem and said, “Seriously, Hashem? This is my reward for doing the right thing, for resisting temptation, for overcoming such a difficult test? This is what I get?”

And Yosef was in prison not for just several days, weeks, or even months. He sat languishing in the dungeon for thirteen years. It seemed that he would remain there for the rest of his life - all because he withstood the most difficult test to his religious commitment!

As it turned out, though, this was precisely where Yosef needed to be in order to achieve greatness. It was because he was there in the dungeon that he ended up interpreting the dreams of the *שר האופים* and *שר המשקים*, which led to the *שר המשקים* recommending him to Pharaoh. As a result, he became viceroy of Egypt, saved Egypt and the surrounding countries from starvation during the famine, and was ultimately reunited with his family. If he had not been thrown into prison, he would have remained a slave for Potifar. He would never have risen to royalty, he would have starved during the famine along with the rest of Egypt, and he would never have seen his father or brothers again.

If Yosef had been able to press “fast forward” during his years in the dungeon, he would have realized that he was there for a purpose, that this dark, dreadful period of his life was a necessary step to success and grandeur. The years spent in the dungeon were just a passing phase that brought him to the fulfillment of his mission.

Rav Druck writes that this teaches us about how to approach our own hardships in life. The darkness we endure ultimately leads us to light. If we “freeze frame” our lives, focusing only on the difficulties we now endure, we will fall into despair and feel hopeless and miserable. But we have to trust that if we could “fast forward,” if we could look into the future, we would see that our current travails will bring us to happiness and success.

Nothing happens by chance. Everything in our lives is by design, orchestrated for us by Hashem, for the purpose of fulfilling His plan for us and for the world.

Rav Druck cites in the context the pasuk in Tehillim (147:8), *המכסה שמיים בעבים המכין לארץ מטר* - “He covers the heavens with clouds, He prepares rain for the earth.” The thick storm clouds darken the skies and prevent us from seeing Hashem. The world seems dreary and gloomy. But the dark, ominous clouds bring blessed rainfall that produce food from the ground that sustains us. The dark periods are temporary, and bring us what we need, and to where we need to go.

This is a lesson we learn from the story of Yosef - to believe even when we find ourselves in the “dungeon,” beset by problems and hardships, that our condition is only temporary, and that the darkness of night will ultimately give way to the bright light of daytime.

RECONCILING INCONSISTENCIES

Lubavitcher Rebbe

“Pharaoh said to Yosef, ‘I had a dream, but there is no one who can interpret it.’” (41:15)

The dreams of Yosef and Pharaoh led to the Jewish people's exile in Egypt. Exile was caused by dreams because exile itself is like a dream. In dreams, conflicting and contradictory situations can coexist. Similarly, our behavior in exile seems hypocritical: selflessness and selfishness coexist almost simultaneously.

Living this spiritually inconsistent life is potentially frustrating. We may think that we are being dishonest with ourselves. Considering all our faults, we may feel that our connection to G-d is not real, that our efforts to advance spiritually are ultimately futile.

The connection between exile and dreams teaches us that although our actions may seem hypocritical at times, we should not become disheartened. We must strive to live as consistently as possible, not giving up because of momentary lapses.

The effects of misdeeds last only until we repair their damage through repentance. The effects of our good deeds, in contrast, last forever. (Likutei Sichot, vol. 1, pp. 85-87) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisnefsky

DREAM BIG

Rabbi Moshe Schochet

“Pharaoh said to Yosef... ‘I have heard it said of you that for you to hear a dream is to tell its meaning.’” (41:15)

“A song of ascents: When Hashem will return the captives of Zion, we will be like dreamers.” (Tehillim 126:1)

The Slonimer Rebbe (Nesivos Shalom) wonders what Dovid HaMelech is referring to when he compares the returners to Yerushalayim to dreamers.

The Slonimer Rebbe answers that the pasuk is referring to Yosef and his dreams, which came to fruition. Yosef understandably had many questions throughout his life as to why he had to endure so many trials and tribulations. Yet, his perspective drastically changed when he became the viceroy of Egypt. It started to become clear that the dreams which he had in his youth were becoming a reality. Upon realizing that it was all the hand of Hashem, and that all of his troubles were for his benefit, the trajectory of his life became crystal clear.

The same will be true when Mashiach redeems us from exile.

As Jews wandering through the galus, we often ask ourselves, “Why us? Why have we needed to persevere through much persecution and oppression? Why have we needed to confront the worst of what man has to offer?” Dovid HaMelech answers that just as Yosef understood his journey in retrospect, once he saw his dreams materialize, we too will be able to appreciate the plan that Hashem had for us and understand how everything that we have had to experience was for our benefit.

Let us dream big so that our dreams of geulah can become a reality as well!

USING OUR TALENTS

Rabbi Dovid Hoffman

“Pharaoh said to Yosef, ‘I had a dream, but there is no one who can interpret it. And I have heard it said of you that for you to hear a dream is to tell its meaning.’” (41:15)

Hashem gave Yosef the great ability to interpret dreams. Interestingly enough, his dreams and his ability to interpret them are both the breaking point in Yosef's relationship with his brothers as well as the skill that propelled him from Pharaoh's dungeon to the throne. Thus, dreams represent both a blessing and a curse to Yosef.

Similarly, the way Yosef dealt with reuniting with his brothers also shows that there are two sides to his story. He was upset for what they did to him, and yet the Torah mentions on more than one occasion that Yosef had to leave the room to weep during his encounters with them.

R' Yoel Pinchasi shlit'a sees from here a tremendous life-lesson. Yosef Hatzaddik was given a talent - not simply as a way to amuse himself, but rather as a way to find himself. His destiny was intertwined in the meandering vagaries of dreams, and wherever those night visions took him, that was his reality. In whatever situation he found himself due to those dreams, that was what he was meant to deal with. Thus, Yosef's gift of interpreting dreams made him rich and powerful, but it was in fact his dreams that alienated him from his family.

Often we find ourselves saddled with our “peckel,” our own unique and custom-tailored circumstance that tends to alternate between honorable success and/or disastrous collapse. How we deal with each individual situation is what we are put here on this world to accomplish. If we simply break down under pressure when things don't go as we think they should, we are not only admitting defeat and failure, but we are actively opposing the very tool that Hashem has given us to turn ourselves around.

Just like Yosef, Hashem has given us all “dreams” - our own personal make-it or break-it tool. Success is ours for the taking!

UNABLE TO COMMUNICATE

Kli Yakar

“[Pharaoh said to Yosef,] ‘And I told it to the magicians, but there was none among them who could declare it to me.’” (41:24)

Why didn't he say, “but there was none among them who could interpret it for me,” as in the original account of Pharaoh's dream where we read (pasuk 8) “but there was none who could interpret them to Pharaoh”?

Because it seemed to Pharaoh that the magicians had arrived at some sort of interpretation that they did not seem inclined to communicate to him. The magicians interpreted Pharaoh's dreams in terms of events in

Pharaoh's personal life rather than in terms of developments in his country. Thus, according to the Midrash, one of them said that Pharaoh would have seven daughters and bury all seven, and another said that seven provinces would rise against him in rebellion. However, they were afraid to reveal these unfavorable interpretations to the king.

Hence, Pharaoh said to Yosef: “But there was none among them who could declare it to me” aloud. They have an interpretation, but they discuss it among themselves in whispers. No one tells me anything.

PREPARING FOR SPIRITUAL FAMINE

Reb Noson of Breslov

“The seven good cows are seven years, and the seven good stalks are seven years. It is one dream.” (41:26)

Both of Pharaoh's dreams involved food (the cows and cornstalks) because a person's rectification and purification come through eating. Yosef advised Pharaoh to set aside “food” (meaning spiritual food - i.e., Torah and prayer) during the good years, whenever the opportunity presented itself, in order to strengthen himself for the difficult times.

Therefore, Yosef said, “G-d has sent me ahead of you to prepare [spiritual] sustenance for you” (Bereishis 45:7) - for the tzaddik teaches us how to apply every effort to remain steadfast during years of famine and exile. (Likutey Halakhot II, p. 132)

FEASTING DURING FAMINE

Lubavitcher Rebbe

“[Yosef told Pharaoh, ‘In the years of famine,] all the abundance in Egypt will be forgotten.’” (41:30)

Metaphorically, the years of abundance in Pharaoh's dreams allude to the years of spiritual abundance that the Jewish people enjoyed when the holy Temples stood; G-d's presence was perceivable in the miracles that occurred in the Temples.

The eras following the destruction of each Temple were spiritual “famines,” when G-dliness became much less perceivable. The ravages of our long exile have made us forget how good it was when the Temples stood and when G-dliness was revealed. But, as Yosef advised, our predecessors did store up “food” by preserving the wisdom and knowledge of the Torah during the “years of plenty.”

This inspiration has sustained us during our exile. As Dovid HaMelech wrote, “[The Torah] is my comfort in my affliction, for Your word has given me life” (Tehillim 119:50). By studying the Torah, we can continue to thrive until the spiritual “famine” ends and G-dliness is once again revealed. (Ohr HaTorah, Bereishis, vol. 5, 975b-976a) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisnefsky

OVERCOMING SADNESS

Reb Noson of Breslov

"Let them collect all the food of those seven good years..." (41:35)

Yosef was successful. He was a happy person. (Bereishis Rabbah 86:4)

Yosef represents holiness, the aspect of joy, life and vitality. In contrast to these states is death, which is experienced in a small way during sleep, as the Midrash states: "Sleep is one-sixtieth of death" (Berachos 57b).

But when Yosef, the tzaddik, sleeps, he rests his mind, keeping it attached to life and joy. Therefore, Yosef merits not only true dreams, but even to understand the dreams of others.

Pharaoh's dream foresaw a long famine (i.e., exile), since the scrawny cows swallowed up the healthy cows, decreasing prosperity and leading to sadness and depression. But Yosef, a "man of spirit," was always joyous, and thus was able to bring happiness and overcome the effects of sadness with the idea of stockpiling Egypt's surplus. (Likutey Halakhot II, p. 155a)

WISELY DISCERNING

Rabbi Alexander Zusia Friedman

"Pharaoh told his servants, 'Will we find someone like this, a man in whom there is the spirit of G-d?' Pharaoh then said to Yosef, 'Since G-d has let you know all this, there is no one as discerning and wise as you!'" (41:38-39)

Apparently, even Pharaoh understood that someone who is filled with fear and knowledge of G-d must also be "discerning and wise," and an excellent diplomat.

INCOMPARABLE WISDOM

Baal Shem Tov

"Pharaoh told his servants, 'Will we find someone like this, a man in whom there is the spirit of G-d?'" (41:38)

According to our Sages, Pharaoh declared to his officers, "If we were to go around and seek, would we find anyone like him?" In other words: We may discover other individuals with extraordinary intellectual capabilities, but how would we ever know for certain whether they are like him?

In order to properly evaluate an individual's wisdom and understanding, a person of superior wisdom is required to conduct the testing. The Egyptians recognized that no one in their own ranks of wise men and scholars was greater in wisdom and understanding than Yosef. It would therefore be impossible - even if they were to discover another extremely wise individual - to compare that other genius with Yosef, because they were incapable of conducting a test to compare Yosef with another candidate.

BOUNTIFUL PRAYERS

Rebbe Nachman

"You will be in charge of my house, and all my people will be fed by your command." (41:40)

"House" refers to the fear of G-d (cf. Shabbos 31b). Al pikha (by your command) literally means "in accordance with your mouth" and refers to prayer. "All my people will be fed" indicates great bounty. Thus, when a G-d-fearing person prays, he brings bounty to the world. (See Likutey Moharan I, 102)

LIMITED GREATNESS

Reb Noson of Breslov

"Only by the throne will I outrank you." (41:40)

I will be called the king. (Rashi)

The tzaddik always strives to attain great spiritual heights. However, he must constantly remember that G-d is always greater than he and that there are spiritual realms that are still beyond him.

Thus, "I (G-d) will be called the King" - a person must strive for greatness, but always remember that there is a limit to how far he can go. (Likutey Halakhot II, p. 310)

INTELLIGENT FLEXIBILITY

Reb Noson of Breslov

"He had him ride in his second royal chariot and they called before him, 'Avreikh!' He appointed him over the entire land of Egypt." (41:43)

Avreikh (אברך) is a composite of the words Av (אב, fatherly and wise) and Rakh (רך, young). Though Yosef was young, he was wise. (Rashi)

Rakh also translates as "soft" and "bending." Despite one's level of wisdom and intelligence, he should know how to "bend" before others when implementing his will. Thus, we find that when Dovid HaMelech was anointed, he said, "Today, I am rakh but anointed as king" (II Shmuel 3:39). One must learn to be pliable, as our Sages teach: "Man must always be rakh (flexible) like a reed and not unbending like a cedar tree" (Taanis 20a). (Likutey Halakhot III, p. 76a)

DIVINE CALCULATIONS

Rabbi Dovid Hoffman

"And Pharaoh said to Yosef, 'I am Pharaoh, but without you no man will lift his hand or his foot in the entire land of Egypt.'" (41:44)

There is never any reason to become jealous, even when another person seems to prosper or appears more successful than us. Rav Yaakov Meir Schechter shlit'a points out that every person's life is directed by Hashem, from the root of his soul in the higher worlds down to the

minutest details of this mundane one. All that happens, even the smallest occurrence, is actually part of a larger plan, either as payment for a past deed or compensation toward the future. A person cannot lift a finger in This World without some profound accounting taking place above, specifically related to his life and his actions.

In fact, the Chida, Chacham Rabbeinu Chaim Yosef Dovid Azulai zt'l, derives this fascinating lesson from the name of Pharaoh. When Pharaoh declared, "I am Pharaoh," he was announcing that as Pharaoh, he has the ability to control his destiny and his kingdom. But, explains the Chida, the name "Pharaoh" is also a reference to all of humanity, for a human being is constantly in a state of פרעון - repayment, either over some past debt or toward some future tally.

For instance, a person who is successful in a particular venture may be getting repaid for some good deed he has done or for some pain that he experienced in this life or a previous lifetime. Whereas when the wicked prosper, they are merely awaiting retribution for their misdeeds in the Next World. If they do not repent, they will be appropriately punished.

On the other hand, if a person suffers in life, and especially if he takes pains to fulfil a mitzvah, he will eventually be repaid. Hashem does not withhold His reward from any creature. To Him, everything is just and clear.

Thus, there is simply no reason to be jealous. Whatever happens, including a person's success and abilities, stems from the very root of his soul and is destined specifically for him.

DANCING FOR JOY

Rebbe Nachman

"And Pharaoh said to Yosef, 'I am Pharaoh, but without you no man will lift his hand or his foot in the entire land of Egypt.'" (41:44)

The tzaddik is the heart of the people.

When an individual rejoices in his own heart, it causes him to elevate his hands and feet and dance joyfully.

His joy causes a sympathetic resonance in the tzaddik, the heart of the people. Then the tzaddik makes the people joyous and elevates them. (See Likutey Moharan I, 10:9)

DISCOVERY THROUGH HUMILITY

Sefas Emes

"And Pharaoh called Yosef's name Zaphenath-Paneah, and he gave him as a wife Asenath..." (41:45)

Zaphenath-Paneah - explainer of hidden things. (Rashi)

If zaphenath means "hidden things" and paneah means "explainer," shouldn't the name read Paneah-Zaphenath?

The name is given in what seems the reverse order to show why Yosef was found worthy to be able to discern hidden things; namely, that Yosef was exceedingly humble and kept his deeds of righteousness concealed so that they did not become immodestly conspicuous.

Zaphenath - It is because he conceals (his) deeds of righteousness, Paneah - that he is able to discover and explain hidden things.

HUMBLE HARVESTING

Lubavitcher Rebbe

"And he [Yosef] gathered all the grain of the seven years that the land of Egypt was enjoying, and stored the grain in the cities; he put in each city the grain of the fields around it. (41:48)

In order to preserve the grain that he had gathered, Yosef stored it together with some of the soil in which it had grown (see Rashi).

Spiritually, the "food" that nourishes us is our knowledge of the Torah. Humility is the lowly "soil" that we mix with our knowledge in order to preserve it.

We can cultivate humility as we amass knowledge of the Torah by recalling that the Torah is the wisdom of the infinite G-d; therefore, no matter how much we learn, we have not even scratched the surface. (Likutei Sichot, vol. 25, pp. 224-226) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisnefsky

PROGRESSING BY REMEMBERING

Lubavitcher Rebbe

"Yosef named his firstborn Menashe... he named his second son Ephraim." (41:51-52)

Living in exile requires us to use two apparently contradictory approaches toward the world at large: On the one hand, we must be constantly on guard against harmful influences; on the other hand, we must engage the outside world in order to influence it positively.

Clearly, influencing our environment is a greater accomplishment than merely maintaining our values. Nonetheless, maintaining our values must be taken care of first, for if we forget our roots we will no longer have anything to contribute to the world.

The two sons of Yosef, born and raised in Egypt, personified these two aspects of life in exile:

Yosef named his firstborn Menashe (meaning "[Exile] causes one to forget") in order not to forget his family and heritage.

Yosef named his second son Ephraim ("he will be fruitful") in order to emphasize that our purpose in the world is to influence it positively. (Likutei Sichot, vol. 15, pp. 432) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisnefsky

FOLLOW THE INSTRUCTIONS

Lubavitcher Rebbe

“Pharaoh said to all Egypt, ‘Go to Yosef; do whatever he tells you.’” (41:55)

Although Yosef succeeded in refining Egypt somewhat by having the Egyptians circumcised, he was acting on his own initiative. Therefore, despite his good intentions, his plan backfired. By becoming more refined, Egypt was made worthier of receiving Divine beneficence, and receiving this beneficence strengthened it. Unfortunately, Egypt was not refined enough to use this power properly, eventually using it instead to persecute the Jewish people. (Pri Eitz Chayim, Sha'ar Chag HaMatzot 7)

Similarly, we too must be careful not to overreach or compromise the Torah's rules in our efforts to do good, because no lasting good can come out of compromising the Torah's laws. The same G-d who created the world gave us the Torah, His Divine instructions for how to live in it. Only by following the Torah's rules will our efforts to help others be crowned with ultimate success. (Likutei Sichot, vol. 1, pp. 98-102) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisniewsky

THERE'S ALWAYS HOPE

Reb Noson of Breslov

“Yaakov saw that there were provisions in Egypt.” (42:1)

The word Shever (שבר, provisions) literally means “break”; it can also be read as Seiver (שבר, hope). Thus, the Midrash states: “Yaakov saw shever - a famine; he saw seiver - the plentitude of their harvest. Yaakov saw shever - Yosef descended to Egypt; he saw seiver - Yosef was the ruler. Yaakov saw shever - the Jews would be enslaved there; he saw seiver - the Jews would be redeemed from there” (Bereishis Rabbah 91:1).

Yaakov, the paradigm of a Jew, understands that there is always hope, that a person must always await salvation. Whenever one feels closed in, embattled from without and troubled from within, he must look inward, at the level he is on at that moment. He will then see that despite the shever, he has seiver, and can draw strength from the knowledge that all will be rectified. (Likutey Halakhot V, p. 143a)

LEADING BY EXAMPLE

Shach al HaTorah

“And Yosef was the governor over the land; it was he who sold grain to all the people of the land.” (42:6)

Although Yosef was governor of Egypt, he did not delegate the distribution of the produce to subordinate officials but supervised all the sales personally. He did this to make sure that no one would be cheated and to provide an example of how to practice the virtue of compassion in order to save people from starvation.

BREAKING MATERIALISM

Reb Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev

“And Yosef was the governor over the land; it was he who sold grain to all the people of the land.” (42:6)

There are “people of G-d” and “people of the land.” The “people of G-d” are the righteous. The “people of the land” are those who are attached to earthliness, and who therefore need to be “broken.”

This idea is alluded to by the term for “who sold grain” (המשביר), which is related to the term “to break” (משבר).

Meaning, Yosef would break the “people of the land,” those who needed to be elevated in order to be called “people of G-d.” Thus, המשביר is rooted in the word שבר, to break them, so that they can be called “people of G-d.”

RULING WITH KINDNESS

Reb Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev

“And Yosef was the governor over the land; it was he who sold grain to all the people of the land.” (42:6)

The righteous Yosef, whose very name (יוסף) now indicates that his only desire was to increase (להוסיף) goodness for the Jewish people, “was the ruler over the land.” He was granted dominion over this world. The same is true for all those who wish to benefit the Jewish people.

Evildoers, by contrast, who desire to worsen the situation of the Jews, and who cringe when they see the Jewish people flourish, forfeit dominion.

SPARING THEM EMBARRASSMENT

Reb Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev

“[Yosef’s brothers] came and bowed down to him with their faces to the ground. And Yosef saw his brothers and he knew them, but he made himself a stranger to them...” (42:6-7)

Defeat usually comes as an immense grief to the loser. Thus, Yosef knew how humiliated his brothers would be if they learned that the lord before whom they were bowing “with their faces to the ground” was Yosef, whom they had ridiculed when he had revealed to them his dream that they would all bow to him someday. Yosef did not make himself known to them immediately in order to spare them this humiliation.

The Torah relates this fact in praise of the righteous Yosef. Someone else in Yosef's position would have taken full advantage of this opportunity to have his revenge, to force his enemy to truly feel his defeat.

Yosef, however, did the opposite. When his brothers bowed to him, he immediately recognized them, but he made himself a stranger in order to spare them the shame of defeat.

HUMBLE BEGINNINGS

Mishmeres Itmar

“And Yosef saw his brothers and he knew them, but he made himself a stranger to them and spoke harshly to them. He said to them, ‘From where do you come?’...They said to him, ‘We are the sons of one man; we are truthful; your servants have never been spies.’” (42:7,10)

Yosef noticed that there was unity among the brothers, but he detected a sense of arrogance and was disappointed. For that he scolded them and asked them why they were so arrogant: “Don't you know where you come from?”

The brothers answered, “We are the sons of one father. That is why we are united, and your servants are not spies but servants of G-d.”

ALL FOR THEIR GOOD

Rabbi Dovid Hoffman

“And Yosef saw his brothers and he knew them, but he made himself a stranger to them and spoke harshly to them...” (42:7)

First, Yosef accuses his brothers of being spies. Then, he allows them to return to their father but not before slipping their money back into their sacks, to make it look as if they hadn't paid for their provisions. Then, when they come back to pay and bring their youngest brother Binyamin to stand before the ruler, Yosef plants his royal goblet in Binyamin's saddlebag and later detains him for “stealing” his precious vessel. Was this a game? Was Yosef purposely teasing his brothers as a means to exact revenge against them for what they had done to him? What, indeed, were Yosef's intentions?

R' Alter Yitzchak Weinberger zt'l (Beis Yitzchak) answers based on the Gemara (Eruvin 65b): “With three things is a person's (character) determined; by his cup (intoxication), by his pocket (money dealings), and by his anger (temper).” Being away from his family, Yosef was acutely aware of the reputation that the sons of Yaakov maintained. They were known as people who would sell their own flesh and blood for a few coins just to rid themselves of an adversary. This bothered him and as part of his ultimate revelation as Yosef, viceroy of Egypt, he decided to build up his family name in the process.

Thus, he put their money back into their bags knowing full well that they would make every effort to return it. This would make a great impression on the Egyptians who could not believe that any person would not just simply “take the money and run.” This denotes their “pocket.” Planting the royal goblet was intentional, since this depicted their “cup”; drinking with the ruler without becoming drunk or unruly. The fact that through it all they never lost their temper was an indication of their “anger.”

Yosef's “game” was only a way to repair his family's reputation.

TEACHING MOMENT

Maharam of Amshinov

“Do this, and live, for I fear G-d...” (42:18)

It was not in the nature of Yosef to boast of his being G-d-fearing. However, his intention was to convey this attitude to his brothers, hoping to bring them to repentance. Therefore, he said, “I fear G-d,” and they responded, “Indeed, we are guilty concerning our brother” (Bereishis 42:21).

TAKING PRIDE

Reb Pinchas Horowitz

“Do this, and live, for I fear G-d...” (42:18)

Knowing of his brother's humility, R' Pinchas was astonished that R' Shmelke said that he was proud that he had reached the status of being G-d-fearing. However, we learn from the Torah that one should be proud to be G-d-fearing.

Yosef was proud to proclaim that “I fear G-d.” For the performance of a mitzvah, one needs Divine help, so one cannot be proud because it is not entirely his action. But to attain the status of being G-d-fearing, we are told, “All is in the hands of Heaven except the fear of Heaven.” (Berachos 32b)

Heaven does not help in this instance, for the person must work by himself to attain that level. If he worked and reached that level, he can be proud.

CONSTANT PRESENCE

Radamsker Rebbe

“If you are honest men, let one of your brothers remain imprisoned... and you go bring the provisions for the hunger of your household.” (42:19)

This shows the kindness of the Almighty. He remains and does not depart from His people even if they are on a low level, for He dwells in the inner depths of their hearts.

The Pasuk tells us that wherever we are, the Almighty is in the hidden mode, as it states, “I will hide My face from them” (Devarim 31:17). When you go to the marketplace for your necessities, remember that Hashem is in the inner depths of your heart.

LACKING COMPASSION

Sforno

“We saw [our brother's] anguish when he pleaded with us, but we did not listen.” (42:21)

True, we did not commit a sin by selling Yosef because that was his rightful due, but when he begged us to have compassion on him we should have had mercy on him, and we failed to do so.

COMFORTING OUR SOUL

Lubavitcher Rebbe

"[Yosef's brothers said to one another,] 'We saw [our brother's] anguish when he pleaded with us, but we did not listen.'" (42:21)

During its life in the body, the Divine soul's consciousness is constricted by the body's mundane perspective. The soul's mission in life is to refine both the body and the world at large. Fulfilling this mission enables the soul to ascend in the afterlife to a spiritual level higher than the one on which it existed prior to its life in this world. Consequently, as long as we remain true to the purpose of life, the soul is happy to endure the spiritual "pain" of existing inside a body. When, however, we ignore our Divine mission, the soul suffers needlessly.

Allegorically, our indifference to our soul's pain is comparable to Yosef's brothers ignoring his pleas to rescue him from the pit. Conversely, when we listen to our soul's plea, we alleviate its pain and hasten the advent of the final and ultimate Redemption. (Sefer HaMa'amarim Melukat, vol. 5, pp. 261-262) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisnefsky

MERCY TO THE MERCIFUL

Imrei Shefer

"May G-d Almighty grant you mercy before the man." (43:14)

According to the Sages (Shabbos 151), people who have pity on others will find that Heaven will have pity on them in turn.

Yaakov said to his sons: May G-d put mercy into your hearts so that you may have mercy on others, "before the man," even before G-d will cause the man to have mercy on you. This will ensure the release of your other brother and of Binyamin, for if you yourselves will have mercy on others, you, in turn, will receive mercy from Heaven.

CORRESPONDING JUDGEMENT

Reb Aryeh Leib of Plotzk

"...therefore, has this distress come upon us." (42:22)

This punishment is retaliation in kind. We wanted to murder Yosef because we knew that he would be the ancestor of the sinful Yeravam ben Nevat (King of Israel), and we judged him by his descendants. Now we, too, are being judged by our descendants. Because our descendants will be spies in the wilderness, we are accused of being spies ourselves.

MELODY OF THE LAND

Rebbe Nachman

"Take from the famous products of the Land in your vessels and bring a gift down to the man..." (43:11)

Zimras ha'aretz (famous products of the Land) can also be translated as "melody of the Land." Every place has its own melody. Furthermore, every level of vegetation - each blade of grass - has its own melody which extends its blessing throughout the world. (See Likutey Moharan II, 63)

NATURAL MIRACLES

Lubavitcher Rebbe

"May G-d Almighty grant you mercy before the man." (43:14)

Conventional wisdom has it that prayer is necessary only in desperate situations. Thus, Yaakov's sons assumed that since Yosef was detaining their brother because he suspected them of being thieves or spies, it would be enough to pacify him with a gift.

From Yaakov's words to his children, however, we learn that even when a favorable outcome seems perfectly natural, we should never assume that we can reach it without Divine assistance. We must always pray - and not as a secondary measure, but as the primary measure.

Although we must create natural channels to facilitate G-d's blessings, we should realize that G-d, who is beyond nature, controls every aspect of our lives. When we realize this fully, we will indeed perceive that the "natural" occurrences of our lives are all in fact miracles garbed in nature. (Likutei Sichot, vol. 25, pp. 227-234) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisnefsky

THE INDISPENSABILITY OF TEFILLA

Rabbi Efreim Goldberg

"[After preparing a gift to send to Yosef, Yaakov prayed,] 'May G-d Almighty grant you mercy before the man.'" (43:14)

Yosef's brothers came to Egypt to purchase grain, and they stood before the Egyptian vizier, not realizing that he was in fact Yosef, whom they had sold as a slave many years earlier. Yosef instructed them to return to Canaan and bring back the youngest brother, Binyamin, and he held Shimon prisoner in Egypt to ensure they would return. Yaakov at first refused to allow Binyamin to travel to Egypt, but eventually, when the family ran out of food, he relented. Before the brothers left for Egypt, Yaakov gave them extra money, as well as some small items to bring with them as a gift of appeasement for Yosef. He then offered a prayer Hashem that asking וקל שדי יתן - לכם רחמים לפני האישי: them for should ensure they are treated mercifully by the man in charge (Yosef).

Rashi writes: מעתה אינכם חסרים כלום אלא תפילה הריני - "Now, you are missing nothing besides prayer, so here, I am praying for you." After Yaakov equipped them with money and a gift for Yosef, all that was left to do was to daven that Hashem would take care of them make everything work out.

Rav Yerucham Levovitz writes that we learn from Rashi's comments about the indispensability of tefilla. Of course, we need to exert effort, to put in our hishtadlus, to take all necessary measures to care for ourselves and meet our needs. But once we've put in a reasonable effort, we still need to daven. Without tefilla, our work and effort will not succeed.

I often enlist the analogy of a winning lottery ticket. Even though a person has the winning ticket, he will not receive a penny if he does not present it to the lottery officials. There is something he needs to do to receive the money. The same is true of davening. Hashem is ready to shower us with blessing, but we need to "present the ticket," we need to turn to him in prayer. As hard as we work for what we need and what we want, the beracha will not come without the missing ingredient - tefilla.

PROVIDING ABUNDANCE

Lubavitcher Rebbe

"[Yosef] said to the overseer of his household, 'Have animals slaughtered and prepared, for these men will dine with me.'" (43:16)

Hospitality requires that hosts try their best to care for all their guests' needs. Even if they are not sure that the guests will partake of what is prepared for them, the hosts should nevertheless provide abundantly for them.

Similarly, although living frugally is a value found in the Torah, it is one we should impose on ourselves, not on others. When we think about providing for a poor family, for example, we should not provide them with only their bare necessities, but with enough to allow them to live according to a dignified standard of living. (Sichot Kodesh 5728, vol. 1, p.322) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisnefsky

DESCENDING AND ASCENDING

Lubavitcher Rebbe

"[Yosef's brothers said,] 'We originally came down - yes, we came down - to buy food.'" (43:20)

These two expressions of descent prophetically allude to the two stages of the Jewish people's spiritual descent into Egypt. The Land of Israel is watered by rain, which falls sporadically and inconsistently. Therefore, living in the Land of Israel is conducive to making its inhabitants pray for rain, recognizing that their sustenance depends upon G-d (Bereishis Rabbah 13:9). In contrast, Egypt is watered by the Nile's consistent, annual overflow. Living in Egypt therefore makes its inhabitants more likely to see the forces of nature as their provider, rather than G-d. Thus, leaving the Land of Israel to live in Egypt was Yaakov's family's first spiritual descent. Nonetheless, since Yosef sustained Egypt miraculously - always ascribing his success to G-d - the Divine concealment that characterized Egypt was temporarily lessened during his lifetime.

After Yosef died, Egypt's true character reasserted itself. The Jewish people then underwent a second, further spiritual descent. G-d promised Yaakov that these two descents would be countered by two ascents, saying, "I will... bring you up, yes, bring you up from there" (Bereishis 46:4).

The first ascent occurred with the Exodus from Egypt; the second will occur with the Messianic Redemption. (Likutei Sichot, vol. 6, pp. 28-32; see Torah Ohr 49a) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisnefsky

WEEPING FOR THE GENERATIONS

Tiferes Shlomo

"Yosef hurried because his compassion was deeply moved toward his brother... and he entered his room and wept there... and he controlled himself and said: 'Serve bread.'" (43:30-31)

Yosef symbolizes the righteous of future generations who would be compassionately moved for the Jews because of their long and arduous exile that appears to continue without end.

"And he entered into his room and wept": He forced his way into G-d's secret chambers and wept.

But there he learned that the time had not yet come for redemption, hence "he controlled himself," for he was not permitted to hasten the end of the exile.

"And he said, 'Serve bread'": He prayed that whatever their fate, the Jews might be given bread at least, a modest living, so that they would be able to endure the sufferings of their long exile.

FREED FROM ENVY

Kav Chein

"And portions were taken to [the brothers] from before him, but Binyamin's portion was five times as much as any of theirs. And they drank and were merry with him." (43:34)

From the day they had sold Yosef they had not drunk wine... but on that day they drank wine. (Rashi)

They still did not know that the Egyptian lord before them was their brother Yosef. Therefore, Yosef was still lost to them. Why, then, would they have drunk wine on that day?

They saw that Binyamin had received larger portions of food than they, and yet they were not jealous of him. Hence, they realized that they had rid themselves of the sin of envy (as the verse (Bereishis 37:11) states, "and his brothers envied him..."), which had led them to sell Yosef into slavery, and consequently they felt that they could drink wine again.

IMPLANTING LOVE

Lubavitcher Rebbe

"[Yosef said,] 'Put my goblet - the silver goblet - at the top of the pack of [Binyamin], the youngest one.'" (44:2)

Yosef knew that the Jewish people would be in exile for a long time, and that not all of them would possess the same level of Divine consciousness that enabled him to thrive in Egypt. Yosef therefore sought a way of protecting them from Egyptian depravity, ensuring that they would eventually leave Egypt and receive the Torah. Yosef realized that what they needed was a love for G-d powerful enough to overcome the materialism of Egypt.

Yosef's silver goblet alludes to this love, for the word for "silver" (kesef) is related to the word for "yearning" (kisuf). Yosef further knew that not-yet-fully-righteous people cannot spark such a love by themselves, so he implanted this love in them by "implanting" it within Binyamin. (Likutei Torah 3:90; Ma'amarei Admur HaEmtzai, Bereishis, pp. 291; Ohr HaTorah, Bereishis, vol. 2, 341a; ibid., vol. 6, 1103b) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisnefsky

PURIFYING KINDNESS

Rebbe Nachman

"Morning dawned and the men and their donkeys were sent on their way." (44:3)

"Morning" corresponds to Avraham, who is associated with the sefirah of Chesed (Kindness). With the appearance of Divine kindness, people are able to leave behind their evil traits, evil speech, and base material desires. (See Likutey Moharan I, 38:4)

MESSAGE RECEIVED

Lubavitcher Rebbe

"[Yosef's brothers said,] 'It would be a disgrace for us, your servants, to do such a thing.'" (44:7)

Spiritually sensitive people regard their misdeeds as indications of what aspects of their spiritual life they need to work on. Aware that everything happens by Divine providence, they even regard being falsely accused of doing some misdeed as a Divine sign that there is some flaw in their spiritual life. Thus, the fact that Yosef's brothers were found with something that did not belong to them - even if it was deliberately planted - was meant to inform them that they were spiritually lacking in some way.

We see from this that the true, inner purpose of everything that happens to us is to refocus us properly. By developing our spiritual sensitivity this way, we can hasten the advent of our own redemption, along with the redemption of the whole world. (Likutei Sichot, vol. 15, pp. 359-363) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisnefsky

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