

(Dvar Torah continued from front page...)

the two dreams separately. But Pharaoh rejected these interpretations because he had already intuited that the dreams were really the same.

Rashi, summarizing Midrash Rabbah on this verse, says that Pharaoh's magicians interpreted the dreams to be about daughters Pharaoh would father or cities he would build or conquer sometime in the future. But Pharaoh intuited that his dreams were really a message with immediate relevance to him, so these unconvincing interpretations failed to "enter his ears."

But the view I find most compelling is that of Shadal, Shmuel David Luzzatto (Italy 1800-1865) that many interpretations were offered Pharaoh, but none provided any benefit to him or his nation. Shadal says:

*Because that is what Pharaoh desired, that they will understand from his dream the future thing that would befall his nation so that the Egyptians would know it before it happened, because he believed that it was not for nothing the God sent him these dreams...for if you don't say thus, what prevented them from saying to him any interpretation that occurred to them? And based on this it will be understood why Yosef got into giving advice to the king, for what was indeed desired was not to know the future, but to know how to guard against it.*

In other words, Pharaoh wanted more than an interpretation - he wanted a solution. Could this be why the Biblical word for dream "interpretation" (פְּתוּרָה) in modern Hebrew means "solution?" On some basic level, dream interpretation is like solving a riddle or breaking a code. But on a deeper level "solving" the dream means more than just figuring it out - it means figuring out what to do about it to make a different outcome possible.

So I find it remarkable that the Aramaic translation of interpreted dream, "פתר חלום" is "פשר הלמא." Peh Taf Resh (פתר) in Hebrew becomes Peh Shin Resh (פשר) in Aramaic. And Peh Shin Resh has two other meanings besides "interpret." The first is "to melt/thaw" and the other is "to compromise." The connection between the two may be that when something melts, it is now in the middle between cold and hot, neither frozen nor boiling. And when two parties reach a compromise (פשרה) both sides feel "lukewarm" about it. And lastly, פשר is also connected to the word אפשר, which means "possible!"

By reading all of this back into the story, we see that this is about so much more than dream **interpretation**. When we, like Pharaoh, are faced with a troubling vision of the future, the goal is not only to understand it, but also to come to grips with it without being paralyzed. This requires making a **compromise** between idealism and pessimism, between the future we hoped for and the dark truth in front of us. In that space, we may be blessed to find a **solution** that transforms what had appeared to be **frozen** and immutable, and makes possible a different future.

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## TORAH SPARKS

*Parashat Mikkets*

*Shabbat Rosh Hodesh*

*Shabbat Hanukkah*

**December 8, 2018 | 30 Kislev 5779**

Annual | Genesis 41:1-44:17; Numbers 28:9-15 (Etz Hayim p. 250-270; Hertz p. 155-166)  
 Triennial | Genesis 43:16-44:17; Numbers 28:9-15 (Etz Hayim p. 265-270; Hertz p. 163-166)  
 Maftir | Numbers 7:42-47 (Etz Hayim p. 809; Hertz p. 599)  
 Haftarah | Zecharia 2:14-4:7 (Etz Hayim p. 1269-1272; Hertz p. 987-989)

## D'var Torah: Interpretation to Solution

*Rabbi Andy Shapiro Katz, Conservative Yeshiva Director of N.A. Engagement*

*"Pharaoh told them his dreams, but none could interpret them (ואין פותר אותם) for Pharaoh." (Genesis 41:8)*

The rabbinic tradition takes a somewhat skeptical stance toward dreams. Though we are told in Brachot 57b that dreams are 1/60th of prophecy, we read in Brachot 55b that "dreams follow the mouth." What happens depends entirely on how one interprets them. And we read in Brachot 55a that "a dream not interpreted is like a letter not read." As long as it is not interpreted it cannot be fulfilled. So a dream may be 1/60th prophecy, but it is mostly, or even entirely, self-fulfilling.

Given that, it has always bothered me that Pharaoh could not find anyone to interpret his dreams. If all of the dreams' power lays in their interpretation, then why wouldn't his servants, magicians, and advisors have just made something up to give them some positive spin?

It turns out that numerous commentators, similarly bothered, reread the verse to mean that interpretations *were* offered, but Pharaoh found none of them convincing. Sforno suggests that the proffered interpretations mistakenly treated

(Dvar Torah continued on back page...)

# D'var Haftarah: Two Side of Hanukkah

*Rabbi Mordechai Silverstein, Conservative Yeshiva Faculty*

Hanukkah is known as a holiday which champions the victory of Judaism's unique particular vision and way of life over the Greeks and their universal vision which sought to eradicate Jewish distinctiveness. The message of the opening prophecy of this week's special haftarah for Shabbat Hanukkah seems at odds with this message: "And many people will join themselves to the Lord on that day [messianic times] and shall be My people and I [God] will dwell in your midst" (2:15) How does this universal vision fit in with Hanukkah's championing of Jewish particularism?

Rabbi Yitzhak Hutner (20<sup>th</sup> century US), Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivat Chaim Berlin and author of the monumental work **Pahad Yitzhak**, attempted to tackle this anomaly to create a spiritual message for Hanukkah: "There are two sides to the relationship between Judaism and Hellenism. On the one hand, darkness over the depths – this refers to Greek Hellenism which sought to bring darkness to the eyes of Israel; on the other hand, [the Sages decreed that] 'the Holy Scriptures cannot be written (translated) into any other language but Greek...There is something beautiful about Greek dwelling together with that which is Jewish. But there is also something unusual about Greek thinking which is the source of this dual [and sometimes problematic] relationship between Judaism and Hellenism'" (adapted from Pahad Yitzhak Hanukkah 4:3)

Hutner posits two divine revelations, one stemming from creation, fixed and universal; and the other, dependent on the Sinai revelation (Torah), which is freedom based and particular. The first, he identifies with Hellenism and the latter, with Torah. These two approaches will always be at odds with each other, with the potential for both positive and negative implications. The former has the potential to flatten or destroy the later or they can work in tandem and complement each other. (Hanukkah 4:4-5)

The message of the haftarah, according to Hutner, stems from this complementary approach where both forms of revelation work together. Then "And many people will join themselves to the Lord on that day [messianic times] and shall be My people and I [God] will dwell in your midst". This explains the permissive attitude toward translating the Tanakh to Greek. (Hanukkah 7:8)

Of course, this makes Hanukkah a celebration of the juggling act which is so much a part of living as a Jew in the world. Just how much and how will we combine these two divine revelations and maintain a sense of who and what we are? This internal and external struggle will always be with us. Time to celebrate the dialectic.

# Parashat Mikkets Self-Study

*Vered Hollander-Goldfarb, Conservative Yeshiva Faculty*

This Parasha is usually read on Chanuka. Joseph is rushed to Pharaoh to interpret his dreams. He helps prepare Egypt for an impending famine and meets his brothers while disguised as an Egyptian. Benjamin eventually comes down to Egypt, and all seems well until Joseph's silver goblet is stolen by... Benjamin?!

- 1) Pharaoh, in his dreams foretelling a 7-year famine in Egypt, dreams about fat and skinny cows (not a compliment for a cow), and full and meager corns of grain (41:1-7). Why do you think that these items show up in his dreams?
- 2) After Joseph solves the dreams with the help of God (as he tells Pharaoh), he is appointed second to the king, receives the royal seal ring and expensive clothing, jewelry, and is driven in the special carriage (41:41-44). Why does Joseph need the ring? Why do you think that the Torah gave a detailed list of the special treatment that Joseph received?
- 3) The widespread famine brings 10 of Joseph's brothers to Egypt to try to buy food. Joseph recognizes them, but they do not recognize him. We are told that upon seeing them, Joseph "remembered the dreams that he dreamt [for] them" (42:6-9). What do you think that he remembered about the dreams? Why do you think that this is stressed at this point?
- 4) The brothers returned home with food but without Simeon who was kept in Egypt until they return with their youngest brother, Benjamin, a thing that Yaakov is vehemently against. When relenting at last, he sends them with gifts for the Egyptian lord: a little of various expensive items (43:11). How does this compare to the gifts that he sent to Esau (32:14-16)? What difference between the recipients of the gifts did Yaakov understand? (This is based on the commentary of Seforno for 43:11.)
- 5) Soon after leaving Joseph's house on the way back home, the brothers are stopped by Joseph's chief servant who accuses them of stealing Joseph's goblet. They all claim innocence and offer to have the thief killed and they will serve as servants if it is true. After the goblet is found, it is Judah who speaks, offering to have all of them remain as servants (44:6-17). What is the difference in the nature of the two offers (not in the content)? Why is Judah speaking in the name of the group? (43:8-9 can help you.)

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