

Torah Weekly

Of Shepherds and Statesmen

November 28 – December 4, 2021
24 – 30 Kislev, 5782

Torah reading:

- 1: Mikeitz: Genesis 41:1 - 44:17
 - 2: Chanukah - Rosh Chodesh, Numbers 28:9-15
 - 3: Chanukah – Rosh Chodesh, Numbers 7:42-47
- Haftarah: Kings I 3:15 - 4:1

PARSHAT MIKEITZ

Calendars

We have Jewish Calendars. If you would like one, please send us a letter and we will send you one, or ask the Rabbi/Chaplain to contact us.

Family Programs

Do you have family on the outside struggling? Please contact or have them contact our office to learn more about our family programs. You and they are not alone, we are here to help.

Grape Juice & Matzah

We offer free Grape Juice and Matzah for you to be able to make the blessings every Shabbos. Please have your chaplain / Rabbi contact us to enroll (available to all prisons).

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ALEPH INSTITUTE
No One Alone,
No One Forgotten.

This week we read of the dreams of Pharaoh, king of Egypt. When all the king's men and all the king's soothsayers fail in their attempts at dream analysis, the Chief Butler remembers Joseph and how the Hebrew prisoner correctly interpreted his own dreams when they were together in jail. In a flash, young Joseph is hauled out of the dungeon and finds himself standing before the mighty monarch. Pharaoh repeats his two dreams — seven fat cows being devoured by seven lean cows, and seven healthy ears of grain being swallowed by seven withered ears.

Joseph interprets the dreams to Pharaoh's satisfaction. Seven years of plenty will be followed by seven years of famine. His explanation rings true for the king. But Joseph doesn't stop at the interpretation. He goes on to offer some seemingly unsolicited advice to the mighty ruler of the mightiest superpower of the time. "And now Pharaoh should select a person who is understanding and wise, and appoint him over Egypt," continues young Joseph. This man oversee the economic plan for the country — to store grain during the seven good years of plenty that are coming in order to sustain the people during the next seven lean years.

Brilliant. But who asked him for any advice? And where does this young man, who a moment ago was languishing in prison, get the temerity to offer eitzos — unsolicited advice — to none other than the king himself? I know Jews are renowned for their chutzpah, but still! You gave your interpretation, fine and well; but did anybody ask you for solutions?

The Lubavitcher Rebbe explains that the advice was actually part and parcel of the interpretation. Why were there two dreams with essentially the same message? Why were the thin cows standing

next to the fat cows before they swallowed them? Moreover, why did Pharaoh wake up after the first dream, go back to sleep, and only then experience the second dream? According to Joseph all of this was highly pertinent. The dream was repeated because it will happen soon and therefore no time is to be wasted in preparing for the famine. The two sets of cows stood side by side to indicate that there is an important connection between them — that the good years can, in effect, co-exist with the lean years, if their surplus of grain is preserved to sustain the people during the famine. And Pharaoh woke up in between the two dreams because G-d was saying to him, "Wake up before it is too late to save your people!" In other words, the solution was implicit in the dreams. Thus, if Joseph hadn't shared extended his advice to Pharaoh, he would have been derelict in his duty by omitting crucial sections of the dreams' meaning. Offering the advice was not chutzpah at all. Withholding it would have been a job half done.

Pharaoh is so impressed with this explanation that he immediately appoints Joseph as viceroy of Egypt, and the rest, of course, is history.

Long ago the Prophet Amos said, Behold, days are coming, says the L-rd, when I will send a famine in the land; not a famine for bread, nor a thirst for water, but for hearing the words of the L-rd. And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of G-d and they shall not find it. In that day shall the fair virgins and the young men faint from thirst.

Is this not a prophecy of our own day and age? Are we not witnessing a hunger for truth and authenticity in a corrupt and plastic world? Do our own young people from America

and even Israel not go wandering across the far corners of the earth desperately seeking spirituality and some deeper meaning to their lives? And what is our response when many of our youngest and brightest get lost in the East? Do we appreciate the tragedy when they despair of finding fulfillment in the faith of their fathers? Do we mimic the Pharaoh and turn over on the other side and go back to sleep even when we seem to be getting heavenly signals and messages that something momentous is about? Or do we seek out the guidance of a "wise and understanding man" who can guide our young people towards the path of what, for them, must be the only truth, the Torah?

In the end, Pharaoh took Joseph's advice, acted responsibly, and spared his nation the famine that engulfed the world. Will we, today, feed our spiritually starved souls and give them the nourishment they crave? Many among us are trying to do just that. I pray we will all join in. *By Rabbi Yossi Goldman*

The 2000 Year Dream

I have healed the sick, flown through thin air, and conversed with dead people—without leaving the comfort of my bedroom! No, this is not an advertisement for a therapeutic pillow-top time machine that flies, but merely a brief synopsis of the dreams I had last week.

All of us dream. Some of the more common dreams include forgetting children in public, appearing naked in public, speaking at large public events, hair falling out, or a combination of the above. To date, I never dreamt that sheaves of wheat bowed to me or that celestial beings prostrated themselves to me. I

have also never dreamt about bulimic bovines or anorexic agriculture. Then again, I am not the biblical Joseph or Pharaoh, the king of Egypt.

When we sleep, our prefrontal cortex lay dormant. This part of the brain facilitates logical and reasoned thinking. Its inactive state causes raw, random and strange thoughts to flow unfiltered into our dreams.

In our dreams, opposites don't attract, they dovetail together. The Talmud writes that the dreamscape is where, "the elephant fits through the eye of the needle." In a dream, the absurd is the acceptable.

Joseph's dreams about his family and himself were a major catalyst to the exile in Egypt. Pharaoh's dreams also played a role in bringing the Jewish people into Egypt. According to Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi, founder of Chabad chassidism, the dreamscape is analogous to exile. This explains why those dreams were a major channel that brought the Jews into Egypt.

Exile, like the dreamscape, is all about the convergence of conflicting ideas. In exile, we feel pulled in divergent directions.

The day started out fabulous, filled with heartfelt prayers and meaningful meditations. But by 10:00 a.m. and that second latte, prayer seemed about as plausible as a ten-day golf excursion in Palm Springs, and so it goes. We become that Talmudic elephant, trying to thrust our head through the eye of the needle of life.

Do not infer that life in exile lacks real substance. This world is real. What then can we learn from all this talk of the dream masquerading as real life?

The world just like the dreamscape is not normal, nor should we approach it that way. Life rarely moves forward in a straight line. In the same vein, we should not feel obliged to follow a logical and direct progression in our spiritual development.

This world also has the same absurd potential as a dream. The juxtaposition of opposites opens the door to fundamental change. We are not locked into a caste system of social hierarchy. We can be movers and shakers, on Main Street, in a pink bathrobe, changing the lives of others and our own. We are not confined to our psychological quirks but can shed them as quickly as I manhandled a gorilla last week. It is all possible. If you can dream it, then you can do it.

By Rabbi Simcha Levenberg

Sunday, November 28, 2021 --- 24 Kislev, 5782

Construction of the Second Temple Resumes (353 BCE)

In the first year of rule of Cyrus, the King of Persia, Jews were given permission to return to Israel and rebuild the Holy Temple. A group of Jews led by Zerubavel set out for Jerusalem and began working on the second Temple. However, the Cutheans falsely accused the Jews of plotting a rebellion against King Cyrus and were successful in halting the construction of the Holy Temple for the remainder of his reign and throughout the reign of Ahasuerus, his successor. Construction resumed in the second year of the reign of Darius, Ahasuerus's son, on the 24th of Kislev.

Monday, November 29, 2021 --- 25 Kislev, 5782

Cain Kills Abel (3720 BCE)

The first murder in history occurred on the 25th of Kislev in the year 41 from creation (3720 BCE), when Adam and Eve's eldest son, Cain, killed his younger brother, Abel, as recounted in the 4th chapter of Genesis.

Mishkan completed (1312 BCE)

The vessels, tapestries, wall sections and other components of the Mishkan (the portable sanctuary or "Tabernacle" built under Moses' direction to house the Divine Presence during the Israelites' journeys through the desert) were completed on the 25th of Kislev in the year 2449 from creation (1312 BCE). The Mishkan was not assembled, however, until 3 months later, when, beginning on Adar 25 of that year, it was erected and taken down daily for a 7-day "training" period prior to its dedication on the 1st of Nissan. Our Sages tell us that the day of Kislev 25 was compensated 12 centuries later, when the Maccabees dedicated the Holy Temple on Kislev 25, 3622 (139 BCE -- see below).

Chanukah Miracle (139 BCE)

On the 25th of Kislev in the year 3622 from creation, the Maccabees liberated the Holy Temple in Jerusalem, after defeating the vastly more numerous and powerful armies of the Syrian-Greek king Antiochus IV, who had tried to forcefully uproot the beliefs and practices of Judaism from the people of Israel. The victorious Jews repaired, cleansed, and rededicated the Temple to the service of G-d. But all the Temple's oil had been defiled by the pagan invaders; when the Jews sought to light the Temple's menorah (candelabra), they found only one small cruse of ritually pure olive oil. Miraculously, the one-day supply burned for eight days, until new, pure oil could be obtained. In commemoration, the Sages instituted the 8-day festival of Chanukah, on which lights are kindled nightly to recall and publicize the miracle.

R. Chizkiah Medini (1904)

Kislev 25 is the yahrtzeit (date of passing) of Rabbi Chaim Chizkiah Medini (1832-1904), author of the Halachic encyclopedia Sdei Chemed.

Tuesday, November 30, 2021 --- 26 Kislev, 5782

2nd Day of Chanukah Miracle (139 BCE)

On the 25th of Kislev in the year 3622 from creation, the Maccabees liberated the Holy Temple in Jerusalem, after defeating the vastly more numerous and powerful armies of the Syrian-Greek king Antiochus IV, who had tried to forcefully uproot the beliefs and practices of Judaism from the people of Israel. The victorious Jews repaired, cleansed and rededicated the Temple to the service of G-d. But all the Temple's oil had been defiled by the pagan invaders; when the Jews sought to light the Temple's menorah (candelabra), they found only one small cruse of ritually pure olive oil. Miraculously, the one-day supply burned for eight days, until new, pure oil could be obtained. In commemoration, the Sages instituted the 8-day festival of Chanukah, on which lights are kindled nightly to recall and publicize the miracle.

Raavad's Passing (1198)

Rabbi Avraham ben David of Posquieres (Provence), known by the acronym "Raavad">, wrote the famed *hagaot* critical notations to Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah*. Born approximately 1120, he passed away on the 26th of Kislev of the year 4959 from creation (1198).

Oldest US Synagogue Dedicated (1763)

On this date, the "Touro Synagogue" was dedicated in Newport, Rhode Island. The synagogue, named after Isaac Touro, its first officiating rabbi, is the oldest American synagogue still standing in its original structure.

Wednesday, December 1, 2021 --- 27 Kislev, 5782

2nd liberation of R. Schneur Zalman of Liadi (1800)

Two years after his arrest and liberation in 1798, Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi (founder of Chabad, 1745-1812) was arrested a second time; again, the charges were that his teachings undermined the imperial authority of the Czar. His second incarceration was less severe than the first; yet Chassidim mark the anniversary of his release on the third day of Chanukah with *farbrengens* (Chassidic gatherings) and the study of his teachings. According to other versions of the story, the liberation occurred on the fifth day of Chanukah. Apparently, the liberation happened in two stages.