

Stollen Moments – Miketz – December 16, 2023

PARASHA SUMMARY FROM WWW. REFORMJUDAISM.ORG

- Joseph interprets Pharaoh's two dreams and predicts seven years of prosperity followed by seven years of famine. (41:1-32)
- Pharaoh places Joseph in charge of food collection and distribution. (41:37-49)
- Joseph marries Asenath, and they have two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. (41:50-52)
- When Joseph's brothers come to Egypt to buy food during the famine, Joseph accuses them of spying. He holds Simeon hostage while the rest of the brothers return to Canaan to retrieve Benjamin for him. (42:3-42:38)
- The brothers return to Egypt with Benjamin and for more food. Joseph continues the test, this time falsely accusing Benjamin of stealing and declaring that Benjamin must remain his slave. (43:1-44:17)

Genesis 41

After two years' time, Pharaoh dreamed that he was standing by the Nile, when out of the Nile there came up seven cows, handsome and sturdy, and they grazed in the reed grass. But presently, seven other cows came up from the Nile close behind them, ugly and gaunt, and stood beside the cows on the bank of the Nile; and the ugly gaunt cows ate up the seven handsome sturdy cows.

And Pharaoh awoke. He fell asleep and dreamed a second time: Seven ears of grain, solid and healthy, grew on a single stalk. But close behind them sprouted seven ears, thin and scorched by the east wind. And the thin ears swallowed up the seven solid and full ears. Then Pharaoh awoke: it was a dream!

Next morning, his spirit was agitated, and he sent for all the magician-priests of Egypt, and all its sages; and Pharaoh told them his dreams, but none could interpret them for Pharaoh. The chief cupbearer then spoke up and said to Pharaoh, "I must make mention today of my offenses. Once Pharaoh was angry with his servants, and placed me in custody in the house of the prefect, together with the chief baker. We had dreams the same night, he and I, each of us a dream with a meaning of its own.

A Hebrew youth was there with us, a servant of the prefect; and when we told him our dreams, he interpreted them for us, telling each of the meaning of his dream. And as he interpreted for us, so it came to pass: I was restored to my post, and the other was impaled." Thereupon Pharaoh sent for Joseph, and he was rushed from the dungeon. He had his hair cut and changed his clothes, and he appeared before Pharaoh. And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I have had a dream, but no one can interpret it. Now I have heard it said of you that for you to hear a dream is to tell its meaning."

Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, "Not I! God will see to Pharaoh's welfare." Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "In my dream, I was standing on the bank of the Nile, when out of the Nile came up seven sturdy and well-formed cows and grazed in the reed grass. Presently there followed them seven other cows, scrawny, ill-formed, and emaciated—never had I seen their likes for ugliness in all the land of Egypt! And the seven lean and ugly cows ate up the first seven cows, the sturdy ones; but when they had consumed them, one could not tell that they had consumed them, for they looked just as bad as before. And I awoke.

In my other dream, I saw seven ears of grain, full and healthy, growing on a single stalk; but right behind them sprouted seven ears, shriveled, thin, and scorched by the east wind. And the thin ears swallowed the seven healthy ears. I have told my magician-priests, but none has an explanation for me.” And Joseph said to Pharaoh, “Pharaoh’s dreams are one and the same: Pharaoh has been told what God is about to do.

The seven healthy cows are seven years, and the seven healthy ears are seven years; it is the same dream. The seven lean and ugly cows that followed are seven years, as are also the seven empty ears scorched by the east wind; they are seven years of famine. It is just as I have told Pharaoh: Pharaoh has been shown what God is about to do. Immediately ahead are seven years of great abundance in all the land of Egypt. After them will come seven years of famine, and all the abundance in the land of Egypt will be forgotten. As the land is ravaged by famine, no trace of the abundance will be left in the land because of the famine thereafter, for it will be very severe. As for Pharaoh having had the same dream twice, it means that the matter has been determined by God, and that God will soon carry it out.

“Accordingly, let Pharaoh find someone who’s discerning and wise, whom you can set over the land of Egypt. And let Pharaoh take steps to appoint overseers over the land, and organize the land of Egypt in the seven years of plenty. Let all the food of these good years that are coming be gathered, and let the grain be collected under Pharaoh’s authority as food to be stored in the cities. Let that food be a reserve for the land for the seven years of famine which will come upon the land of Egypt, so that the land may not perish in the famine.” The plan pleased Pharaoh and all his courtiers.

And Pharaoh said to his courtiers, “Could we find another like him—a man with the divine spirit?” So Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Since God has made all this known to you, there is none so discerning and wise as you. You shall be in charge of my court, and by your command shall all my people be directed; only with respect to the throne shall I be superior to you.” Pharaoh further said to Joseph, “See, I put you in charge of all the land of Egypt.” And removing his signet ring from his hand, Pharaoh put it on Joseph’s hand; and he had him dressed in robes of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck.

He had him ride in the chariot of his second-in-command, and they cried before him, “Abrek!” Thus he placed him over all the land of Egypt. Pharaoh said to Joseph, “I am Pharaoh; yet without you, no one shall lift up hand or foot in all the land of Egypt.” Pharaoh then gave Joseph the name Zaphenath-paneah; and he gave him for a wife Asenath daughter of Poti-phaera, priest of On. Thus Joseph emerged in charge of the land of Egypt.— Joseph was thirty years old when he entered the service of Pharaoh king of Egypt.—Leaving Pharaoh’s presence, Joseph traveled through all the land of Egypt.

During the seven years of plenty, the land produced in abundance. And he 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. So Joseph collected produce in very large quantity, like the sands of the sea, until he ceased to measure it, for it could not be measured.

Before the years of famine came, Joseph became the father of two sons, whom Asenath daughter of Poti-phaera, priest of On, bore to him. Joseph named the first-born Manasseh, meaning, “God has made me forget completely my hardship and my parental home.” And the second he named Ephraim, meaning, “God has made me fertile in the land of my affliction.” The seven years of abundance that the land of Egypt enjoyed came to an end, and the seven years of famine set in, just as Joseph had foretold. There was famine in all lands, but throughout the land of Egypt there was bread.

And when all the land of Egypt felt the hunger, the people cried out to Pharaoh for bread; and Pharaoh said to all the Egyptians, “Go to Joseph; whatever he tells you, you shall do.”— Accordingly, when the famine became severe in the land of Egypt, Joseph laid open all that was within, and rationed out grain to the Egyptians. The famine, however, spread over the whole world.

So all the world came to Joseph in Egypt to procure rations, for the famine had become severe throughout the world.

Berakhot 55a:15

An uninterpreted dream is like an unread letter.

Rashbam on Genesis 41:4:1

(1) ויקץ פרעה, ויישן (מיד) ויחלום (1) normally when a person has dreamt a dream and has woken up going to sleep again thereafter, any dream during the second sleep will focus on another subject. As a result, he is not even aware yet that that he had completed his first sleep and had become wholly awake. Pharaoh, on the other hand, was immediately fully awake, even before going back to sleep and having another dream. Only after his second awakening did he realise that the whole vivid pictures he had seen while asleep were not reality but were a dream. (verse 7)

Manasseh and Ephraim

וַיִּקְרָא יוֹסֵף אֶת־שֵׁם הַבְּכוֹר מְנַשֶּׁה כִּי־נִשְׁכַּח אֶת־כָּל־עֲמָלִי וְאֶת כָּל־בֵּית אָבִי:

Joseph named the first-born Manasseh, meaning, “God has made me forget completely my hardship and my parental home.”

וְאֶת שֵׁם הַשֵּׁנִי קָרָא אֶפְרַיִם כִּי־הִפְרִינִי אֱלֹהִים בְּאֶרֶץ עֲנִי:

And the second he named Ephraim, meaning, “God has made me fertile in the land of my affliction.”