



Parshas Miketz 2019, behind the looks

This week's Parsha Perspective is in memory of Gita Bas Eliyahu, Yehushua Ben Yitzchak Hacoen, Shlomo Ben Edward & Edward Ben Efraim. May their souls be uplifted and their memories a blessing.

Our Parsha begins with Pharaoh having two very strange dreams that no one but Yosef could not understand or interpret. He first dreamt of seven fat cows being swallowed up by seven lean cows.

He then dreamt of seven bundles of big grain being swallowed up by seven lean bundles of grain. In both dreams, neither the cows nor the bundles of grain grew due to devouring the others.

Yosef interprets the dreams as that there will be seven years of plenty followed by seven years of hunger. He advises Pharaoh to store food and grain during years of plenty to sustain them during years of famine.

Pharaoh agrees and appoints Yosef as the governor of Egypt and gives him the responsibility of ensuring that there is food during the famine.

After seven years of plenty, a famine descended upon the world like no other. But since Hashem gave Yosef the foresight to plan ahead, Egypt had plenty of food. People across the globe came to Egypt to buy food, making Yosef one of the richest people in history.

Like everyone else, Yosef's brothers made the journey down to Egypt to purchase food. When they arrive, they are brought before Yosef on suspicion of espionage.

When they were brought before Yosef, he immediately realized who they were, but they didn't recognize who he was. As the Pasuk says, *“Yosef recognized his brothers, and they did not recognize him,”*

Rashi points out that they did not recognize him because when they sold him, he did not have a beard. Now, twenty-one years later, he is physically changed. He has a beard and is now a grown man, so they do not identify who he is.

But there are stories of people who have not seen each other for more than twenty years and yet instantly recognize each other. So, the physical appearance of Yosef could not have been why the brothers did not recognize Yosef.

Later in the parsha, the brothers discussed why they felt that they were getting punished, especially by a person they did not know. They said, *“we are indeed guilty for our brother, that we witnessed the distress of his soul when he begged us to save him, and we do not listen; that is why this trouble is upon us.”*

But Reuven answered them, *“No, didn't I tell you do not sin against the boy, but you didn't listen and behold now is blood is being avenged.”*

However, a question comes to mind: at first glance, Reuven seems to be saying, *“I told you so, see this what happens when you don't listen to me.”* This is seemingly unnecessary; it just emphasizes a point that doesn't help the situation at hand. It is also immature on the part of Reuven, who is the firstborn, the person who is meant to be a role model for his entire family?

Reuven said such a statement because when he heard them saying *“that they were guilty, that we saw our brother's anguish and he was begging us to let him out, and we didn't listen.”* He realized that his brothers were only remorseful for the cruelty with which they sold Yosef.

But the brothers were not remorseful for the actual kidnapping and sale of Yosef. They still maintained that he deserved it and their action was necessary.

So Reuven told his brothers, *“you guys just don't get it; it's not just because of the cruelty that we are suffering for, but because you actually sold and kidnapped Yosef, and for that G-d is punishing us.”*

The brothers were never fully remorseful for the sin that they committed against Yosef because they viewed Yosef as a vain person who only cared about his appearance. As the Torah repeatedly points out, "*Yosef was a very good-looking person,*" who cared very much about his physical appearance.

The brothers were also jealous of the coat that his father had made for him and of the preferential treatment and love that he was shown by his father.

They decided to hate Yosef because of his external and physical appearance. They hated Yosef not for who he actually was but for whom they saw him, not caring about the real character inside his soul.

This is why the brothers did not recognize Yosef because now they were standing before a person who's gonna save the world. But their whole impression of Yosef was purely physical, which he completely shed away. His brothers never saw him for who he really was, a leader with the potential to save the entire world.

In our daily life, it is essential not to judge anyone or thing by just appearance. You can miss the deeper truths about people, situations, and experiences. **You can even miss G-d Himself**, as G-d cannot be seen or viewed.

He can only be heard, which is why we cover our eyes during the Shema. Since the Shema is one of the most important verses in the Torah, we cover our eyes to remove any pretense of what we think G-d is.

Appearances can deceive. Clothes can betray. But a deeper understanding of G-d or human beings is done by looking past the physical presence.

Past the image we see with our physical eyes and look deeper into the soul of the human being. The soul that G-d put in every single one of us. Because it is where a person's real beauty and character lives.

"It is often when I close my eyes that I see the most."

*Have an inspirational Shabbos,
Rabbi Sholom Yemini*