



Parshas Miketz & Chanukah 2021, live to thrive!

This week's Parsha Perspective is in loving memory of Edward Ben Efraim, Shlomo Ben Edward, and Yirachmiel Daniel Ben Gedalia. May their souls be uplifted and their memories a blessing.

Our Parsha begins with Pharaoh having two bizarre dreams that no one but Yosef could interpret. He first dreamt of seven fat cows being swallowed up by seven skinny 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 is brought to Pharaoh and interprets the dreams to mean that there will be seven years of plenty followed by seven years of hunger and starvation. He advised Pharaoh to store food and grain during years of plenty to sustain them during the famine.

Pharaoh agrees and appoints Yosef as the governor of Egypt, giving 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 wealthiest people in history.

However, a question comes to mind: When the famine struck the land of Cana'an and food became scarce, Ya'akov gathered his sons. He told them (43:2), *"I hear there is food in Egypt. Go down and buy food so we may live and not die."* But why does Ya'akov add by saying both *"we may live and not die"*? Either of the words explain what he means; what is the purpose of mentioning both?!

The Sforno (*Rav Ovadiah Sforno, an Italian commentator and doctor from the early 1500s*) gives a simple answer. He explains that Ya'akov was instructing his children to buy whatever type of food at whatever amount so they could survive. They should buy as much as possible whether the food is high or low quality. Because the objective is to live through years of hunger and famine.

However, the Ohr Hachaim Hakadosh (*Rav Chaim Ibn Attar, a Moroccan commentator and kabbalist*) gives a deeper and more profound explanation. He writes that Ya'akov told his children "*so we may live and not die*" **because he wanted to thrive and not just survive.** Even though there was famine throughout the world, Ya'akov wished to prosper and flourish.

Ever since Ya'akov had his name changed to Yisroel, which means minister/prince of G-d, his outlook on life was transformed. He was determined to live like his grandfather, Avraham Avinu, who lived with energy, passion, and intention. Although there was a lack of food, Ya'akov still looked for ways to improve and advance his goals.

The Ohr Hachaim's profound lesson is the message of Chanukah. Darkness must not become our norm despite the days getting shorter and the nights growing longer. **Rather, we light an additional candle each night to provide more light and dispel the darkness.**

In our daily life, it is imperative to understand that we are not created to stay stagnant but rather to grow and improve continually. To become better and develop our unique identity each day. This mentality gives us hope when times are bleak and the confidence to achieve the improbable.

Like we say in V'al Hanissim, "*You delivered the mighty into the hands of the weak. The many into the hands of the few. The impure into the hands of the pure. The wicked into the hands of the righteous. The sinners into the hands of those who occupy themselves with Your Torah.*"

“We thrive not when we’ve done it all, but when we still have more to do.”

Have a meaningful Chanukah!
Rabbi Sholom Yemini