



Parshas Miketz & Chanukah 2023, what our eyes see

The Parsha Perspective is in honor of our homeland, Eretz Yisroel. May G-d protect our brave soldiers as they eradicate our enemies. May G-d save all the hostages in Gaza and return them immediately. May G-d comfort all those who lost family or friends in the horrific attack. May G-d grant a speedy recovery to all those injured in the attack.

The fascinating story of Yosef and his brothers is always read during the holiday of Chanukah, and there is an important reason why! 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 big bundles of grain being swallowed up by seven skinny bundles of grain. In both dreams, neither the cows nor the bundles of grain grew due to devouring the others.

When Pharaoh heard that Yosef could interpret dreams, he commanded that he be taken out of prison and brought before him. Pharaoh then tells Yosef about his two vivid dreams and asks for his interpretation.

Yosef interprets the dreams to mean that there will be seven years of plenty followed by seven years of hunger and starvation. Each dream Yosef tells Pharaoh hints at the magnitude of the plenty but also of the famine. He advised Pharaoh to store food and grain during years of plenty to sustain them during the famine.

Pharaoh agrees and understands that Yosef is a man of G-d and will successfully implement his plan. He appointed Yosef as the viceroy of Egypt and gave him the responsibility of storing food and distributing it when necessary.

The connection between the Chanukah miracles and Yosef's story is unclear. The Torah tells of Yosef's physical beauty more than once; it seems to be the source of some of the issues he faced. From his hair and features that caused his brothers to despise him and Potifar's wife to desire him, his physical beauty seemingly caused some of his challenges.

The Chanukah story is precisely the opposite; the Greeks focused on beautifying and enhancing the physical body, forbidding any Mitzvahs that would harm its attractiveness. From circumcision to intense Torah study, any activities that weaken the physical body were forbidden and prohibited. Yet, Yosef's challenge is the Chanukah story; once he realized the source of his power and strength, he thrived.

Similarly, the Maccabees, led by Matisyahu and his five sons, Yehuda, Eliezer, Shimon, Yochanan, and Yonasan, recognized their source and spirit and waged war against the Greeks. They were the few while the others were many; they were weak while the others were strong, but their spirit and power were far greater. The Maccabee's source of energy and strength is from the King of all kings, the Creator and Master of the universe, our Father in heaven.

Yosef's realization that it is G-d alone that is the source of his success enabled him to forgive his brothers for selling him into slavery. When he finally reveals his identity to his brothers, they were afraid of Yosef's retribution. Instead, Yosef says (45:5-8), *"Now, do not be sad or angry with yourselves because you have sold me, for it was to save lives. It was G-d that has sent me before. It has now been two years that there has been a famine throughout the land, and there are still five more years of famine, whether there will be no planting or yielding."*

G-d has sent me ahead of you to ensure the survival of the world and create a great deliverance and salvation for you. It was not you who sent me, but G-d. He has made me a father to Pharaoh, lord of all his household, and ruler over the whole land of Egypt."

The connection between Yosef's story and the Chanukah miracles is obvious: appearances can deceive because they lack depth, the truth, and the real source of life. Our enduring strength is our ability to look past the physical presence into the resilience and soul embedded in each of us.

When we look past the image our eyes perceive and search for the soul of every person we meet, we continue the Chanukah miracle. We begin to realize the depth of the human experience and thrive despite our challenges. While those seeking to destroy us fade into history, our light will forever shine brightly.

**"The Jewish task is not to fear the real world
but to enter and transform it,
healing some of its wounds
and bringing to places often shrouded in darkness
fragments of Divine light."**

*Have a meaningful Shabbos!
Rabbi Sholom Yemini*