

Zera Shimshon

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Chapter X: Mikeitz (Gen. 41:1–44:17)

Essay 6. Pharaoh's dreams and selection of Joseph

פְּסוּק "וַיִּיקֶן פַּרְעֹה וַהֲגֵה חֲלוֹם: וַיְהִי בַבֶּקֶר וַתִּפְעַם רוּחוֹ". קֹשֶׁה דְּמִיד פְּשָׁה קִיץ מְשַׁנְתּוֹ הִנֵּה לוֹ לְהִתְפַּעֵם רוּחוֹ בּוֹ, וַהֲגֵה לוֹ לְכַתּוּב, "וַתִּפְעַם רוּחוֹ וַיְהִי בַבֶּקֶר וַיִּשְׁלַח וַיִּקְרָא" וְכוּ'. וְעוֹד לָמָּה הוֹצֵרָה לְזֶמֶר בְּפַעַם הַזֹּאת, "וַיִּיקֶן פַּרְעֹה". בְּשִׁלְמָא בְּפַעַם אַחֲרַת אֵיצְטְרִיד כְּדֵי לְזַמֵּר "וַיִּישָׁן וַיִּחַלֵּם שְׁנַיִת". וְעוֹד מֵהוּ "וַהֲגֵה חֲלוֹם".

Scripture tells us that Pharaoh dreamed of cows. Then he awoke. Then he fell asleep and dreamed a second time, about ears of corn. "And the thin ears swallowed up the seven solid and full ears; **Then Pharaoh awoke: it was a dream! It was in the 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."¹ **A difficulty is that immediately when he awoke from his sleep** in the middle of the night, **his spirit should have been disturbed,** rather than only becoming agitated in the morning. **And so it should have been written: "His spirit was agitated, and it was in the morning, and he sent for all the magician-priests of Egypt . . ."**

Also, why was it necessary to say at this time, after the second dream, **"then Pharaoh awoke"**? Why not just say that when the morning arrived, he became agitated?

Granted, another time, i.e., after the first dream, **it was necessary** to say that he awoke, **in order to say that he, "he fell asleep and dreamed a second time."**²

Also, what is the meaning of this, "it was a dream?" We are told that he was dreaming, so why repeat this after he awoke?

וַיִּשְׁלַח לְזַמֵּר דְּאִיתָא בְּבִרְכּוֹת פֶּרֶק ט', שְׁלוֹשָׁה חֲלוֹמוֹת מִתְקִימִין, חֲלוֹם שְׁנִשְׁנָה, וְחֲלוֹם שֶׁל שְׁתַּרְיִת, וְחֲלוֹם שֶׁחֵלֵם לוֹ חֲבִירוֹ. וְזֶה שְׁאָמַר הַכְּתוּב "וַיִּיקֶן פַּרְעֹה" וַהֲבִין בְּדַעְתּוֹ שֶׁהִנֵּה חֲלוֹם שְׁנִשְׁנָה, וְזֶהוּ, "וַהֲגֵה חֲלוֹם", וְעוֹד רָאָה שֶׁהִנֵּה חֲלוֹם שֶׁל שְׁתַּרְיִת זֶהוּ, "וַיְהִי בַבֶּקֶר", לְכּוֹ, "וַתִּפְעַם רוּחוֹ". אֵלָּא דְּקֹשֶׁה לָּמָּה לֹא הִנֵּה מִתְיַשָּׁב בְּפִתְרוֹן הַפּוֹתְרִים, וְלָמָּה כָּל כֵּךְ נִפְעַם בְּרוּחוֹ. וּמֵהוּ לְשׁוֹן, "וַאֲיִרְפוּתָם אוֹתָם לְפַרְעֹה", וּפִירוּשׁ רַש"י יָדוּעַ.

It can be said that, as it is written in tractate Berachot, chapter 9, "Three dreams are fulfilled: a dream that is repeated [twice in one night], a dream of the morning [i.e., that occurs just before the morning], and a dream that one's fellow dreamed about him."³

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¹ Gen. 41:7–8.

² Gen. 41:5.

³ Berachot 55b: "Rabbi Yochanan also said: Three dreams are fulfilled: A dream of the morning, a dream that one's fellow dreamed about him, and a dream that is interpreted within a dream. And some say that a dream that is repeated [a few times is also fulfilled]."

This is the meaning of what is written, “then Pharaoh awoke,” meaning that in his opinion it was a repeated dream.

This is the meaning of “it was a dream,” that he understood that as a repeated dream, it was destined to come true.

Also, he saw that it was a dream of the morning, and this is the meaning of “**and it was in the morning,**” and he realized that there were two of the signs that indicated a true dream. **Therefore, “his spirit was agitated.”**

Rather, it is difficult to understand why he wasn’t settled by the interpretation of the interpreters, and why his spirit was so agitated. Also, what is the meaning of the language, “but none could interpret them for Pharaoh”? The interpretation of Rashi is known, that: “There were those who interpreted them, but not for Pharaoh, so their words did not enter his ears, and he was not satisfied with their interpretation. They said, ‘You will have seven daughters and bury seven daughters.’”⁴ I.e., their interpretation related to a private matter regarding Pharaoh’s family, rather than to a public matter that would be relevant to him as a ruler.

וְנִשׁ לֹמֵר וְשִׁפְרָעָה כְּשִׁרְאָה שֶׁהָיוּ בּוֹ שְׁתֵּי סִימָנִים מֵאוֹתָן חֲלוּמוֹת הַמִּתְקַיִּימִים, חֲשַׁב בְּדַעְתּוֹ בְּנִדְאֵי יְהִיָּה כְּאֵן גַּם הַסִּימָן הַשְּׁלִישִׁי, דָּאֵי לָאוּ הֲכִי קָשָׁה לְמָה בָּאוּ בְּחֵלוֹם זֶה שְׁתֵּי סִימָנִים הֲלֵא בְּסִימָן אֶחָד סָגִי. וְעַל כֵּן לֹא הָיָה מִתְיַשֵּׁב בְּדַעְתּוֹ שֶׁחֵלוֹם זֶה נֶאֱמַר עָלָיו כְּפִתְרוֹן הַפּוֹתָרִים שֶׁבַע בָּנוֹת וְכוּ', מִפְּנֵי שֶׁהַסִּימָן הַשְּׁלִישִׁי שֶׁל הַחֲלוּמוֹת הַמִּתְקַיִּימִים צָרִיךְ שֶׁאֶחָד יִחְלוֹם עַל חֲבִירוֹ. וְלִכֵּן לֹא הָיָה לוֹ קוֹרֵת רוּחַ בְּפִתְרוֹנָם, שֶׁהָיָה רוּחָהּ שֶׁפִּתְרוֹן הַחֲלוֹם יְהִיָּה דְּנִקְאָ עַל אִישׁ אַחֵר. וְכִשְׁפָּתַר לוֹ יוֹסֵף שֶׁהַחֲלוֹם הוּא עַל כָּל הָעוֹלָם עוֹד אָמַר לוֹ, "וְעַתָּה יִרְאֵה פְרָעָה אִישׁ נְבוֹן וְחָכָם וְיִשִּׁיתָהוּ" וְכוּ', שֶׁנִּדְאֵי הַחֲלוֹם הַזֶּה נֶאֱמַר עָלָיו.

It can be said that when Pharaoh saw that two signs from the dreams that are fulfilled were present, he thought in his mind that there must surely be the third sign as well. If not, it would be difficult to understand why the dream came with two signs; one sign should have been sufficient. Thus, if it was so important that the dream be recognized as true that he be given two of the signs, then why not also a third sign?

Therefore, Pharaoh’s mind wasn’t settled on the interpretation of the interpreters, “You will have seven daughters and bury seven daughters,” because the third sign of fulfilled dreams requires that one dreams on behalf of another, not about himself and his offspring. Therefore, his mind wasn’t settled by their interpretation, as he wanted the dream to be interpreted as applying to another. When Joseph interpreted this dream on behalf of the entire world, he also said to him, “Accordingly, let Pharaoh look for someone who’s discerning and wise, whom you can set over the land of Egypt,”⁵ for certainly this dream was said about him, Joseph. It was at that point that Pharaoh also recognized that the dream contained the third sign of fulfilled dreams, that the dream had been about another.

⁴ Rashi on Gen. 41:8 (derived from Gen. Rabbah 89:6).

⁵ Gen. 41:33.

ובנה יתורץ מה ענין הנה לו ליוסף לומר, "ועתה" וכו' וכי יועץ למלך נתנוהו, וגם מה שאמר לו פרעה, "אחרי" וכו' "איך-נבון" וכו', קשה דמתחלה הנה לו לבדוק אותו אם הנה נבון וחקם או לא ולא למסמך אגיסא. אלא כה רצה לומר אחרי שלבדך הודיע האל פתרון החלום, נדאי שהחלום נאמר עליך ואתה תהנה אותו נבון וחקם שאמרתי שיעליו נאמר החלום.

In this way, we'll explain what right Joseph had to say, "Accordingly, let Pharaoh look for someone who's discerning and wise," for had he been appointed as an advisor to the king?

Also, regarding what Pharaoh said to him, "After G-d has informed you of all this, there is no one as discerning and wise as you,"⁶ there is a difficulty, for initially, Pharaoh should have checked if Joseph was discerning and wise or not, and not to have "relied upon a miracle,"⁷ of a miraculous interpretation of dreams as proving that Joseph was discerning and wise.

Rather, what [Pharaoh] wanted to say was: Since G-d has informed you alone of the interpretation of the dream, it is clear that the dream is about you, and you are the discerning and wise man כה spoken of by the dream.

ועוד יש לומר שכה היתה פוננת יוסף, עכשיו שראית שהחלום שלך בא מהקב"ה, ולא הנה פח בסרטומים לפתור אותו לפי שהם תלויים במזל כנ"ל בסמוך, ואדרבה הוצרך שגם הפתרון יבא מהקב"ה, אם כן אם תהנה מקיד על התבואה איזה אדם שתלוי במזל, הלא בשבע שני רעב שפל מבטי השמים וכסיליהם הם משפיעים חורבן ושמוון בעולם, גם התבואה הגנוזה תרקב ותפסד לפי המזל ונמצא שאתה משחית העולם. והקב"ה הראה לך החלום אדרבא כדי שיתקיים העולם הפך גזירת המזל, אלא כה יש לך לעשות להפקיד על התבואה מי שיהנה נבון ואחר כה חכם, שהוא סימן שאינו תלוי במזל כמו שפירשנו בסמוך לעיל. ואז יועיל לך ולמלכותך ולכל העולם. ומיד אמר לו פרעה, "אחרי הודיע" וכו'.

Additionally, it can be said that this was Joseph's intention: Now you have seen that your dream came from the Holy One, Blessed be He, and that the magicians could not interpret it because they are dependent on fate, as mentioned earlier, in Essay 5. Furthermore, the solution itself must come from the Holy One, Blessed be He. If so, if you appoint over the grain someone who depends on fate, isn't it so that during the seven years of famine, when the views of Heaven and their constellations influence destruction and desolation in the world, even the stored grain will spoil and be lost according to fate, and you will destroy the world.

But the Holy One, Blessed be He, showed you the dream in order for the world to be preserved, contrary to the decree of fate. Therefore, you must appoint someone who is understanding, and later becomes wise, which is a sign that he does not depend on fate, as we explained above, in the adjacent section, essay 5. Then, this will benefit you, and your kingdom, and the entire world. Immediately, Pharaoh said to him, "After G-d has informed you of all this, there is no one as discerning and wise as you."

⁶ Gen. 41:39.

⁷ Pesachim 64b.

אי נמי יש לומר מפני שפרעה חלם שהוא הנה "עמד על-היאר", וקרעב והשובע דהיינו הטובות וקרעות היו באות מן היאר, בשביל זה אמר שצריך שפרעה ימנה על מצרים איש נבון וחסם כנ"ל ויהיה על היאר, ונהו, "גרא פרעה", אותיות יאר, דאיתא במדרש רבה "ניהי מקץ", זה שאמר הכתוב "פי בא החלום ברב ענין", אמר פרעה מי מתקיים על מי, אני על אלהי, או אלהי עלי, אמר לו אתה על אלהיך, הדא הוא דכתיב "והנה עמד על-היאר" שיהרשעים מתקיימים על אלהיהם עכ"ל.

Alternatively, it can be said that Pharaoh dreamt that he was “standing over the river,”⁸ i.e., the Nile, and that famine and plenty, that is, good and bad, were coming from the river, as critical to Egypt’s prosperity. That is why [Joseph] said that Pharaoh should appoint an understanding and wise man over Egypt, as mentioned above, not someone influenced by fate, so that he should be in charge of the river. This is the meaning of “let Pharaoh look for someone,” where the word “look” [גרא] has the letters of “river” [יאר], i.e., find someone to rule over the river.

For it is brought in Midrash Rabbah, on the verse, “It was at the end of two full years that Pharaoh dreamed”: This is what Scripture says: “And the dream comes with much concern,”⁹ i.e., someone’s worries during the day will influence his dreams at night. Pharaoh said: Who watches over whom; is it I over my god [the Nile River], or my god over me? [G-d] said to him, you are watching over your god. This is [the meaning] of what is written, “It was at the end of two full years that Pharaoh dreamed, and behold, he was standing over the river,” that the wicked watch over their god.¹⁰

וקשאמר לו יוסף שהפתרון החלום הוא שיבואו שבע שנים שובע, שבע שנים רעב, רצה לומר שנהו מה שגזר אלוה. אמנם לפי מה שראה פרעה על היאר, דהיינו הוא על אלוהו, על כן צריך לבטל גזירת האלוה שגזר שיהיו שבע שנים רעב, ולשמור אוכל בכל עיר ועיר כדי שיהיה גדול פח פרעה, ושפיר שיהיה זה לפתרון החלום.

When Joseph told [Pharaoh] that the interpretation of the dream was that there would be seven years of plenty, followed by seven years of famine, he meant that this was what G-d had decreed. However, considering that Pharaoh saw himself standing over the river, meaning he was watching over his god, the Nile, therefore it was necessary to cancel the divine decree that was decreed, that there would be seven years of famine. He placed Joseph in charge, and he instructed to guard the food in every city in order that Pharaoh’s power would be great, to cancel the decree of the famine.

It’s fine that this advice of Joseph is connected to the interpretation of the dream. That is, the dream showed Pharaoh standing over the river, and the interpretation was that Pharaoh could overturn the decree through his actions. His action of selecting Joseph to rule in his stead was the correct solution to countering the decree of famine.

⁸ Gen. 41:1.

⁹ Eccl. 5:2.

¹⁰ Gen. Rabbah 69:3, 89:3; Eccl. Rabbah 5:2.

ועוד יש לומר ולפרש הפסוקים "אחרי הודיע" וכו' "אתה תהיה על-ביתי" וכו', שענינו הוא כה, אחרי ש"איו-נבון וחקם כמוד: אתה תהיה" וכו' דוקא "ועל-פיה" וכו' "רק הפסא" וכו', דבפרק קמא דמועד קטן (דף ו') בענין בית הפרס שנתרשה אמר אביי: שמע מינה האי צורבא מרבנן דיתבי במתא, כל מילי דמתא עליה רמא ע"כ. ואמר פרעה ליוסף מאחר ש"הודיע אלהים אותך" וכו' ולא לאחרים, שמע מינה שאמה יותר חכם מכולם, ואם אתה יותר חכם ונבון מכולם תהיה אתה בצורבא מרבנן וכו', ולכן "אתה תהיה" וכו' כלומר עניני הבית, "ועל-פיה ישק" כתרגומו "יתון", אמנם הדברים שמגיעים למלה, "רק הפסא אגדל ממך".

Also, it worthwhile to discuss and explain the verses, “So Pharaoh said to Joseph, ‘Since G-d 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.’”¹¹ The matter is like this: since there is “none so discerning and wise as you, you shall be in charge,” especially “by your command shall all my people be directed; only with respect to the throne shall I be superior to you.”

In the 1st chapter of tractate of Moed Katan (page 6a), on the matter of a grave that was plowed, and there is a question as to whether trees can be planted there or not, Abaye said: Learn from this that when there is a Torah scholar in the city, all affairs of the city are thrust upon him. Pharaoh said to Joseph, after “G-d has made all this known to you,” and not to others, we hear from this that you are wiser than everyone, and if you are wiser and more discerning than everyone, you will be considered “a Torah scholar.”¹² Therefore, “you shall be in charge of my court,” as if to say the matters of the house, “and by your command shall all my people be directed,” according to the Targum, “shall . . . be directed” [ישק] is translated as “shall be fed” [יתון], however regarding matters reaching the king, “only with respect to the throne shall I be superior to you.”

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¹¹ Gen. 41:39–40.

¹² Berachot 47b; Shabbat 23b.