

Nature in the Parasha

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Parashat Miketz – The Menorah Shaped Sheaves

“Pharaoh awoke He fell asleep and dreamed a second time seven sheaves of grain, healthy and good, grew on a single stalk” (*Bereishit* 41:5).

It is not by chance that we read about Pharaoh’s dreams during the Shabbat of Chanukah. There is an internal connection between the sheaves in Pharaoh’s dream and the Menorah. The words *בְּקִנְיָה אֶחָד*/*bekane echad* – on a single stalk or branch are only mentioned twice in the entire Tanach. In our Torah portion and in the description of the Menorah: “Three cups made like almond-blossoms in one branch (*בְּקִנְיָה אֶחָד*/*bekane echad*) a knop and a flower; and three cups made like almond-blossoms in the other branch, a knop and a flower. So for the six branches going out of the candlestick” (*Shemot* 37:19). This teaches us that the sheaves in Pharaoh’s dream and the Menorah are interconnected. The Menorah represents the light of Torah, whereas the sheaves represent sustenance. Both of these are interdependent as it states, “If there is no flour there is no Torah, without Torah there is no flour” (*Pirkei Avot* 3:17). Without Torah scholars, there would be no sustenance in the world (*Chatam Sofer, Bereishit* 41:5).

The numerical value of the word *קִנְיָה/kane* (155) is the same as that of *יוֹסֵף/Yosef* (156) when you count the word itself as one. Yosef, who is the *tzaddik* that upholds the world, was able to unify Torah – the spiritual realm, with sustenance – the physical realm. He represents the kind of Jew who has the ability to truly learn Torah while also being involved in the physical world and making a decent living. Whereas Pharaoh dreamed only of the physical reality (cows and grain), Yosef’s dream included both the physical earthly and the heavenly spiritual realm (sheaves, and sun, moon and stars). Both of Yosef’s dreams conveyed the same message. This teaches us that Yosef had mastered to unify the earthly and heavenly realm. Not only did his work in the physical world not distract him from his spiritual Torah, his physical work itself was transformed to become heavenly Torah. For Pharaoh, in contrast, there was only one world – the world of cows and grain (2001 Chabad of California/www.LAchumash.org).

The Sheaves & the Chanukah Connection

Only the healthy and good sheaves grew on one stalk to teach us that health and satiation is light to the world (*Ba'al Haturim, Bereishit* 41:5). Does this mean that poor and hungry people bring darkness into the world? This doesn’t seem to make sense since many of our holy Rabbis and Rebbetzins are known to live in great poverty. The truth is that these holy *tzaddikim* (righteous people) always felt satisfied, in spite of lacking material comforts. “Who is rich? The person who is happy with his portion” (*Pirkei Avot* 4:1). When we keep ourselves healthy and happy with our portion no matter its size, then we bring light to the world. The Maccabees found only one small jug of pure oil. They could have dismissed it saying, “This is nothing, it is not enough for what we need.”



Instead, they appreciated the little that they had, and Hashem expanded it to become the greatest light for all future generations. We, attract abundance to ourselves, when we look at the good that we have and thank Hashem for it like the simpleton in the famous Rebbi Nachman story: “*The Sophisticated and the Simpleton*.” On the other hand, if people who struggle financially look outside of themselves to see the greener grasses of others, then their sheaves grow even thinner. By comparing themselves to others, emphasizing the negative and indulging in their jealousies, they keep bringing darkness to themselves and the world. When we develop our awareness of how “everything emanates from **אֶחָד** /*kane echad*” – one unified source, then we can accept our lot in life and rejoice. Chanukah is a time of bringing light to the world of darkness by appreciating our lot.

The Seven Sheaves, the Menorah and the Quill of Torah

Rabbi Natan of Breslau explains that Pharaoh’s two dreams allude to the destruction of our two Temples. The second dream about the seven sheaves, which refers to the destruction of the Second Temple, includes an allusion to the rectification of our current exile. The centerpiece of the dream: the **קַנֵּה** /*kane*, which we have translated as ‘stalk’ and ‘branch’ can also refer to the quill with which the Oral Torah was written. It was only due to the destruction of the Second Temple and the subsequent scattering of the exiles, it became permitted to write down the Oral Torah, in order to save it from getting lost. The rectification for exile is specifically through writing holy books – an endless amount of books. This is the aspect of the six branches of the Menorah, which correspond to the Six Orders of the Mishnah. “They all aluminate the face of the Menorah” (*Bamidbar* 8:2), which is the seventh light – the aspect of Shabbat. The knobs, flowers and almond blossomed cups, which decorated the Menorah correspond to the amazing *chidushim* (new Torah insights). The knobs and flowers represent the different ways of expressing the light of the Torah in each of these holy books. The world needs several different amazing shades of Torah insight in order to reach and appeal to different kinds of personalities according to their place, time-period and background (*Likutei Halachot, Orach Chayim, Hilchot Rosh Chodesh* 6).

According to the Vilna Gaon there are seven kinds of wisdom in the world corresponding to the seven branches of the Menorah. Perhaps the flowers, knobs and cups which together amount to 49, represent the branching out of the seven wisdoms in the world. During Chanukah, we were able to retain the inner light of our Torah while simultaneously gaining the vessels – ways of expression, language, music, art, science etc., which the Greeks mastered. Perhaps we may venture to say that just as the lights of the Menorah represents the light of the Torah, the flowers, knobs and cups represent the vessels of expression. In order to spread the light of the Torah we need to write good and beautiful books that appeal to different kinds of people, books that will reach out to even those who are far away from the Torah path, and help light their path of return back home.

Ease or Effort?

Although both Pharaoh and Yosef dreamed about sheaves, Pharaoh dreamed only of the produce, whereas Yosef dreamed of the process and work. “We were binding sheaves in the field...” (*Bereishit* 37:7). Looking for the easy way out to get freebees without putting in effort never really get us anywhere. The desire to get by without hard work stems from our unholy side, where work



and effort is not necessary. Furthermore, we should remember that anything we receive for 'free' will not endure. This is why the miracles of Chanukah didn't just happen by themselves. The Maccabees did go to war and the Kohanim did kindle the small jug of oil, which they found after much effort of digging under the debris of the Greek garbage. This brings home the message that even when things seem hopeless, we need to try our very best, and then Hashem will reward our effort. In our instant-gratification-microwave culture, it is easy to be swayed away to purchase most everything readymade. You can even buy the Chanukah menorah with ready-to-go Chanukah oil candles set up. Yes, we are all very busy; nevertheless, there is something precious about preparing our menorah before candle lighting, by pouring oil into a glass container; cutting the wick to size; inserting it in the oil, and then pronouncing the blessings and doing the lighting. The effort exerted to make things more precious.

Permanent versus Impermanent Existence according to the Level of Holiness

Since holiness possesses intrinsic existence – it exists for its own sake and therefore is permanent – while unholiness is only a temporary phenomenon, existing only to challenge holiness. Therefore, any regression that occurs in holiness is only apparent, paving the way for a subsequent ascent. This explains why the dreams of Yosef occurred as a progression: he first dreamed about earthly sheaves and then about the heavenly hosts. Likewise, in his first dream, individual stalks turned into sheaves that are more valuable. In contrast, the themes of Pharaoh's dreams occurred as a regression – first the higher life form of animal, followed by the lower life form of vegetation – even though temporally, the poor condition of the cows resulted from the poor condition of the grain.

Furthermore, each individual dream was about a regression – from healthy cows and grain to unhealthy – predicting an actual regression from years of plenty to years of famine. We can now understand that the reason for this difference in the dreams of Yosef and Pharaoh is that the nature of the unholy progressively diminish. Only that which is created through effort endures. Therefore, any change that occurs in holiness becomes an addition, a progression (Adapted from *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 3, 805-810, 820,822).

Prophetic Dream Elements

According to Malbim, Pharaoh's second dream was the interpretation of his first dream, as the cows teaches about plowing and sowing, whereas the sheaves indicates the purpose which is harvesting. Pharaoh's dream includes three conditions for true dreams, which are fulfilled:

1. The dream was repeated (the cows and the sheaves)
2. The dream was interpreted within the dream (for the sheaf-dream is the interpretation of the cow-dream).
3. "Pharaoh woke up and behold it was a dream" (*Bereishit* 41:7) – He didn't feel it was a dream until he awoke, because the dream was crystal clear as if he was awake.

Exile, Redemption and the Unified Branches of the Menorah

It is good to dream of a קַנֶּה/*kane* (stalk, branch or reed). Our Rabbis taught: If one sees a reed (קַנֶּה/*kane*) in a dream, he may hope for *chochma* (wisdom), for it states, "Get קַנֶּה/*kane*) *chachmah*"

(*Mishlei* 4:5). If he sees several reeds, he may hope for *binah* (understanding), as it says, "With all your getting (קִינְיָנָה/*kinyanecha*) get (קִנְיָה/*k'ene*) *binah* (Ibid. 7), (*Babylonian Talmud, Berachot* 56b). The word קִנְיָה/*kane* is mentioned twice in Pharaoh's dream, once in describing his dream (*Bereishit* 41:5), and second when he told his dream to Yosef (Ibid. 22). Does this mean that Pharaoh had both wisdom and understanding? No, on the contrary Egypt had lost their wisdom and understanding and especially the connection between them. Yet, Pharaoh's dream alluded to the wisdom and understanding with which Yosef was able to rule over Egypt, for Yosef and קִנְיָה/*kane* shares the same numerical value. Only Yosef understood that these two stalks allude to the unification of *chachma* and *binah*, for in Egypt the connection between *chachma* and *binah* was disconnected as it is in most of the world today. וַיֵּרָא יַעֲקֹב כִּי יֵשׁ שֶׁבֶר בְּמִצְרַיִם. / *V'yera Ya'acov ki yesh shever b'Mitzrayim* – the word *shever* can mean either food or brokenness, thus the verse can be translated as "Ya'acov saw that there was brokenness in Egypt" (*Bereishit* 42:1). The word יֵשׁ/*yesh* – "there is" has the numerical value of 310 2 x 155 the *gematria* of קִנְיָה/*kane*. Since two stalks correspond to both *chachma* and *binah*, this verse alludes to the disconnection (שֶׁבֶר/*shever*) between the wisdom and understanding in Egypt. This alludes to the lack of unity in the world during exile (*Yesharesh Ya'acov*, Egypt). Redemption is a result of the unification between wisdom and understanding, the right and left-brain, the sun and the moon, the masculine and feminine energies. Once we learn to make this integration, which Yosef mastered, then the lights of the branches of the Menorah to its left and right be unified by the בְּקִנְיָה אֶחָד / *bekane echad* – middle branch shining brightly in our eternal Temple.