R. Efrem Goldberg

Parsha Notes

Mikeitz-Chanuka

5782

Why do we read Mikeitz during Chanuka?

Beis Yaakov of Izhbitz
The themes are connected.

With Chanuka, it seemed like all hope was lost. Yet they found a vial of oil and their hope was restored and they defeated the enemy against all odds.

With Yosef and brothers as well, he did not give up hope, no matter how long he was alone.

The Midrash discusses how just as Yaakov could not find quiet and tranquility, the Jewish people can also not find any rest or respite.

With the miracle of Chanuka, we were released from the oppression of the Syrian-Greeks. It was considered a form of *galus*, even though we were dwelling in the Land of Israel.

The exile under the Greeks was referred to as לא נחתי, being unable to rest. This connects deeply to the Greek focus on vanity. If we focus on vanity and appearance, we will never rest and will always focus on improving appearances.

We are able to write a Sefer Torah in Greek. Why?

We value beauty (symbolized by Greek), but only as a means, whereas the Greeks saw it as an end in and of itself. The Sochochover Rebbe points out that the verse says: יֶפְתְּ א׳ לְיֶפֶת וְיִשְׁכֹּן בְּאֹהֳלֵי־שֵׁם. The beauty of Greece is only appreciated when it is put to a positive end, of being in the tents of Shem.

Yosef, in his youth, was consumed by beauty and appearances, but develops into appreciating beauty as a means, and not an end.

Notes:

Breishis 41:1
וַיְהִי מִקֵּץ שְׁנָתַיִם יָמִים וּפַרְעֹה חֹלֵם וְהִנֵּה עֹמֵד עַל־הַיְאֹר׃
After two years' time, Pharaoh dreamed that he was standing by the Nile,
What is the significance of these 2 years?
R. Chaim Volkin According to the Midrash, 2 years were from when Yosef asked to be remembered. He was punished due to his lack of faith by being kept in prison another 2 years. However, we are currently discussing Pharaoh's dream, not Yosef's release! If someone has been sentenced to the death penalty, they are considered to be 'walking dead'. Right when Pharaoh had his dream, the catalyst for Yosef's release began.
When we set our mind to something, it is already done.

Notes:

Breishis 41:16
וַיַּ֥עַן יוֹסֵ֖ף אֶת־פַּרְעֹ֑ה לֵאמֹ֗ר בִּלְעָדָ֛י אֱ֖ל֥וֹהִים יַֽעֲנֶ֥ה אֶת־שְׁלֹ֖ם פַּרְעֹֽה׃
Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, “Not I! God will see to Pharaoh’s welfare.”
What can we learn from Yosef?
Alter of Kelm There is so much we can learn from this term בלעדי, ‘not I’. He was so committed to truth that he needed to tell Pharaoh where the dream interpretation abilities came from.
Everything comes from Hashem.

Notes:

Breishis 41:40
אַתָּה֙ תִּהְיֶ֣ה עַל־בֵּיתִ֔י וְעַל־פִּ֥יךָ יִשַּׁ֖ק כָּל־עַמִּ֑י רַ֗ק הַכִּסֵּא֙ אֶגְדַּ֔ל מִמֶּֽךָּ׃
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.”
How was Yosef qualified?
R. Yerucham Levovitz He led his life with good faith and integrity. His whole life, whether that be his attitude to charity and giving, his approach to proper speech and more, was geared toward this task.
Yosef was prepared for this role.

Notes:

Breishis 41:51

וַיִּקְרָא יוֹסֵף אֶת־שֵׁם הַבְּכֹר מְנַשֶּׁה כִּי־נַשַּׁנִי אֱ֜לֹהִ֗ים אֶת־כָּל־עֲמָלִ֤י וְאֵת֙ כָּל־בֵּ֣ית אָבִֽי׃

Joseph named the first-born Manasseh, meaning, “God has made me forget completely my hardship and my parental home.”

How could Yosef have forgotten about his parental home?

R. Yisrael Salanter
Yosef could never have forgotten. Even by naming his son this very name makes him remember.

This is a classic case of selective memory. He is praising Hashem for selective memory.

Hashem Himself is described as having selective memory, in how he recounts the days of the Midbar as perfect.

We can use selective memory for the positive.

Notes:

Breishis 42:7

וַיַּרְא יוֹסֵף אֶת־אֶחָיו וַיַּכִּרֵם וַיִּתְנַכֵּר אֲלֵיהֶם וַיְדַבֵּר אִתָּם קָשׁוֹת וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם מֵאַיִן בָּאתֶם וַיֹּאמְרוּ מֵאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן לִשְׁבָּר־אֹכֶל׃

When Joseph saw his brothers, he recognized them; but he acted like a stranger toward them and spoke harshly to them. He asked them, “Where do you come from?” And they said, “From the land of Canaan, to procure food.”

Why would he make himself into a stranger?

R. Levi Yitzchok of Berditchev

This shows the righteousness of Yosef.

He wanted to spare his brothers pain and devastation, for if he were to reveal himself they would be severely embarrassed.

Yosef was deeply sensitive.

Notes: