

Believing, Speaking, and Acting according to our Faith

In this week's reading from [Parashat Miketz](#) (*Shemot / Genesis 41:1-44:17*) the Lord God begins to fulfil His plan for Joseph. We learn that Pharaoh has two dreams which tell of the future, there will be both prosperity and drought (*41:1-13*). Pharaoh's servant remembers a time when he was saved from death where Joseph interpreted his dreams, and so Pharaoh calls for Joseph and asks him to interpret his dreams. Joseph says that only God can provide an answer of Shalom (שְׁלוֹם, peace) and then he proceeds to interpret Pharaoh's dream (*41:16-38*). The king of Egypt saw that the Spirit of the Lord God was with Joseph, and so he places all the power of Egypt into his hands (*41:39-46*). The Torah narrative then goes on to describe the seven years of plenty and Joseph stores away the grain (*41:46-53*). Then we are told of the seven years of famine and everyone buys food from Joseph (*41:54-42:6*) including his brothers. The Scriptures say that Joseph recognizes his brothers and tests them, accusing them of being spies (*42:7-15*) to test their hearts. He places some of them in jail for 3 days. This week's Parashah ends with the brothers returning to Egypt with Benjamin their brother. Joseph acts as a deceiver and tricks his brothers placing his silver cup in Benjamin's sack of grain (*44:1-17*) and accuses them of being thieves and spies. Why do you think Joseph is acting as the accuser against his brothers within the context of this week's Torah Portion?

Reading through the narrative in the story of Joseph from Parashat Miketz, the Lord had a plan for Joseph's life, which was to save many lives from the famine of the land. During Joseph's captivity, he undoubtedly spent a lot of time in prayer. We are also told that His brothers prayed the Lord would help them but concluded that it was because of their brother's life that they are receiving this punishment (justice). In all the time Joseph spent in prison, he remained faithful to the Lord God in heaven which is indicated by his statement to pharaoh, טַז וַיַּעַן יוֹסֵף אֶת-פַּרְעֹה, *41:16 Joseph then answered Pharaoh, saying, 'It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer.'* (NASB) Joseph

ספר בראשית פרק מב Bereshit / Genesis 42:6-11

ט וַיְדַבֵּר שָׂר הַמִּשְׁקִים אֶת-
פַּרְעֹה לֵאמֹר אֶת-חֲטָאֵי אֲנִי
מִזְכִּיר הַיּוֹם: י פַּרְעֹה קָצַף
עַל-עַבְדָּיו וַיִּתֵּן אֹתִי בְּמִשְׁמַר
בֵּית שָׂר הַטַּבָּחִים אֹתִי וְאֶת
שָׂר הָאֲפִים: יא וַנִּחְלְמָה
חֲלוֹם בְּלַיְלָה אֶחָד אֲנִי וְהוּא
אִישׁ כִּפְתָרוֹן חֲלָמוֹ חֲלָמְנוּ:
יב וְיָשָׁם אִתָּנוּ נֶעֱרַב עַבְרִי
עֶבֶד לְשָׂר הַטַּבָּחִים וְנִסְפָּר-
לוֹ וַיִּפְתֹּר-לָנוּ אֶת-חֲלָמֵתֵינוּ
אִישׁ כִּפְתָּלוֹ פִּתְרָ: יג וַיְהִי
כִּאֲשֶׁר פִּתַּר-לָנוּ כֵּן הָיָה אֹתִי
הַשִּׁיב עַל-כִּנִּי וְאֹתוֹ תָּלָה: יד
וַיִּשְׁלַח פַּרְעֹה וַיִּקְרָא אֶת-יוֹסֵף
וַיְרִיעָהוּ מִן-הַבּוֹר וַיִּגְלַח וַיִּסַּח-
לָף שְׂמֹלֹתָיו וַיָּבֵא אֶל-פַּרְעֹה:
[שְׁנִי] טו וַיֹּאמֶר פַּרְעֹה אֶל-
יוֹסֵף חֲלוֹם חֲלָמָתִי וּפְתָר אֵין
אֹתוֹ וְאֲנִי שָׁמַעְתִּי עֲלֶיךָ לֵאמֹר
תִּשְׁמַע חֲלוֹם לִפְתֹּר אֹתוֹ: טז
וַיַּעַן יוֹסֵף אֶת-פַּרְעֹה לֵאמֹר
בְּלִעְדֵי אֱלֹהִים יַעֲנֶה אֶת-שְׁלוֹם
פַּרְעֹה:

41:9 Then the chief cupbearer spoke to Pharaoh, saying, 'I would make mention today of my own offenses. 41:10 'Pharaoh was furious with his servants, and he put me in confinement in the house of the captain of the bodyguard, both me and the chief baker. 41:11 'We had a dream on the same night, he and I; each of us dreamed according to the interpretation of his own dream. 41:12 'Now a Hebrew youth was with us there, a servant of the captain of the bodyguard, and we related them to him, and he interpreted our dreams for us. To each one he interpreted according to his own dream. 41:13 'And just as he interpreted for us, so it happened; he restored me in my office, but he hanged him.' 41:14 Then Pharaoh sent and called for Joseph, and they hurriedly brought him out of the dungeon; and when he had shaved himself and changed his clothes, he came to Pharaoh. 41:15 Pharaoh said to Joseph, 'I have had a dream, but no one can interpret it; and I have heard it said about you, that when you hear a dream you can interpret it.' 41:16 Joseph then answered Pharaoh, saying, 'It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer.' (NASB)

טז וַיַּעַן יוֹסֵף אֶת-פַּרְעֹה לֵאמֹר בְּלִעְדֵי אֱלֹהִים יַעֲנֶה אֶת-שְׁלוֹם פַּרְעֹה: 41:16 Joseph then answered Pharaoh, saying, 'It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer.' (NASB) He uses the words בְּלִעְדֵי אֱלֹהִים יַעֲנֶה, beginning with the word בְּלִעְדֵי which is a preposition, in the construct form, meaning "apart from, except, without, besides." Prepositions are the words that indicate location. Usually, prepositions show location in the physical world. Notice how Joseph uses the

preposition בְּלִעְדֵי to indicate the position or location of God (Elohim) in this physical world with regard to the dreams of Pharaoh. Notice how Joseph places the Lord God first, as the One who is able to interpret as opposed to the chief cupbearer's claims that it is Joseph who interprets. Note also that this is within the context of what Pharaoh stated, טו וַיֹּאמֶר, פְּרֹעָה אֶל-יוֹסֵף חֲלוֹם חֲלַמְתִּי וּפְתָר אֵין אֶתּוֹ וְאֲנִי שָׁמַעְתִּי עָלֶיךָ לֵאמֹר תִּשְׁמַע חֲלוֹם: *Pharaoh said to Joseph, 'I have had a dream, but no one can interpret it; and I have heard it said about you, that when you hear a dream you can interpret it.'* (NASB) He says, וּפְתָר אֵין אֶתּוֹ “*there is none who is able*” to interpret his dreams. The point of Joseph's words are that there in fact really is One who is able to interpret his dreams, the Lord God in heaven. Sforno has the following to say concerning these Scripture verses.

Sforno on Genesis 41:16:1:

בלעדי. *Even though you have said וּפְתָר אֵין אֶתּוֹ, that there is no one who knows how to interpret it, as if I were the only exception who possesses the necessary wisdom, I am convinced that there is certainly someone beside me who knows the answer.* (בלעדי אע"פ שאמרת ופותר אין אותו כאלו) :
 אני יחיד בזאת החכמה אני חושב שיש בלי ספק פותר בלעדי:

Sforno points out that Pharaoh is looking for someone else to interpret the dreams and Joseph directs Pharaoh's attention to the Lord God in heaven.

Sforno on Genesis 41:16:1-2:

בלעדי. *Even though you have said וּפְתָר אֵין אֶתּוֹ, that there is no one who knows how to interpret it, as if I were the only exception who possesses the necessary wisdom, I am convinced that there is certainly someone beside me who knows the answer.* אלוקים יענה, *G'd will provide the answer, i.e. whatever I will interpret has been revealed to me by G'd.* (בלעדי אע"פ שאמרת ופותר אין אותו כאלו אני יחיד) :
 בזאת החכמה אני חושב שיש בלי ספק פותר בלעדי: **אלהים יענה** יעשה שאענה בפתרוני. את שלום פרעה. דבר שיהי' שלום פרעה (שהחלומות הולכים אחר הפה):

Joseph expressed his faith in the Lord God, and what is interesting is how it appears the Lord had given Joseph the interpretation immediately. There was no need to tarry for a little to wait on word from the Lord. The Spirit of God had given him the interpretation as Pharaoh had related the dreams to him.

Sforno on Genesis 41:16:3:

את שלום פרעה, *I will utter words which will restore Pharaoh's peace of mind, seeing that the realization of matters foretold in a dream is determined largely by the words of the interpreter. (Berachot 55)* (את שלום פרעה דבר שיהיה) (שלום פרעה שהחלומות הולכים אחר הפה ברכות נה, ב

The idea here is that restoring peace of mind to a person is determined by the words of the interpreter, whereby the interpreter is God. Essentially, the words of Joseph are directing us back to the Torah, and to the Scriptures to find peace, truth, and rest for our minds, our hearts, and our souls. Note also h

ow peace of mind comes through prayer, and the trust and hope in the Lord God in heaven and in Yeshua the Messiah. This may be the reason the rabbis refer to the *Talmud Bavli Berachot 55a*, since this section of the Talmud is about prayer.

Talmud Bavli Berachot 55a

Whoever prolongs his prayer and calculates on it will eventually come to pain of heart; as it is said, "Hope deferred maketh the heart sick" (Prov. xiii. 12). And R. Isaac said: Three things cause the sins of a man to be remembered ; viz. [passing under] a wall threatening to fall, calculating on prayer and surrendering one's case against a man to Heaven ! There is no contradiction ; the latter refers to where one calculates [on the prolongation of his prayer], the other to where he does not calculate upon it. So how should one act ? He makes many supplications. "He who prolongs his stay at table" — perhaps a poor man will come and he will give him [some food] ; for it is written,

“The altar of wood three cubits high... and he said unto me, This is the table that is before the Lord” (Ezek. xli. 22). He opens with “altar” and concludes with “table”! R. Johanan and R. Eleazar both say : So long as the Temple was in existence, the altar used to atone for Israel, but now a man’s table atones for him. “He who prolongs his stay in the privy” — is that a virtue? Lo, there is a teaching : Ten things cause a man piles : Eating the leaves of reeds, the leaves of the vine, the sprouts of the vine, the palate of an animal, the backbone of a fish, salted fish which has not been sufficiently cooked, to drink the lees of wine, to wipe oneself [after evacuation] with lime, potters’ clay, or pebbles with which another has wiped himself ; and some add : Also unduly to strain oneself in the privy ! There is no contradiction ; the latter refers to one who stays and strains, the other to one who stays long but does not strain. It is like the incident where a certain matron said to R. Judah b. R. El’ai, “Thy face is like that of pig-rearers and usurers.” He replied, “On my faith! Both [occupations] are forbidden me ; but there are twenty-four privies from my lodging-place to the House of Study, and whenever I go there I test myself in all of them.” Rab Judah also said : Three things shorten a man’s days and years : To be given a Scroll of the Torah from which to read [a portion in the Synagogue] and decline to read; to be handed the cup of benediction to say Grace and decline ; and to give oneself an air of superiority. “To be given a Scroll of the Torah from which to read and decline to read” — for it is written, “For that is thy life and the length of thy days” (Deut. xxx. 20). “To be handed the cup of benediction to say Grace and decline” — for it is written, “I will bless them that bless thee” (Gen. xii. 3). “To give oneself an air of superiority” — for R. Hamma b. R. Hannina said : Why did Joseph die before his brothers? Because he gave himself superior airs. Rab Judah also said in the name of Rab : For three things it is necessary to offer supplication : A good king, a good year, and a good dream. “A good

king” — for it is written, “The king’s heart is in the hand of the Lord as the water-courses” (Prov. xxi. 1). “A good year” — for it is written, “The eyes of the Lord thy God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year” (Deut. xi. 12). “A good dream” — for it is written, “Wherefore cause Thou me to dream and make me to live” (Is. xxxviii. 16). R. Johanan said : There are three things which the Holy One, blessed be He, Himself proclaims, viz. : famine, plenty and a good leader. “Famine” — for it is written, “The Lord hath called for a famine” (II Kings viii. 1). “Plenty” — for it is written, “I will call for the corn and will increase it” (Ezek. xxxvi. 29). “A good leader” — for it is written, “And the Lord spoke unto Moses, saying, See I have called by name Besalel, the son of Uri” etc. (Exod. xxxi. 1 f.).

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Rab Hisda said : [There is no reality in] any dream without a fast. Rab Hisda also said : An uninterpreted dream is like an unread letter. Rab Hisda also said : Neither a good nor a bad dream is fulfilled in every detail. Rab Hisda also said : A bad dream is preferable to a good dream. Rab Hisda also said : When a dream is bad, the pain it causes is sufficient [to prevent its fulfilment], and when the dream is good, the joy it brings is sufficient. Rab Joseph said : As for a good dream, even in my own case, its cheerfulness frustrates it [so that it is not realised]. Rab Hisda also said : A bad dream is worse than scourging ; as it is said, “God hath so made it that men should fear before Him” (Eccles. iii. 14), and Rabbah b. Bar Hannah said in the name of R. Johanan : This refers to a bad dream. “The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream ; and he that hath My word, let him speak My word faithfully. What hath the straw to do with the wheat ? saith the Lord” (Jer. xxiii. 28). What connection has “straw and wheat” with a dream ? But said R. Johanan in the name of R. Simeon b. Johai : Just as one cannot have wheat without straw, similarly it is impossible for a dream to be without something that is

vain. R. Berekiah said : A dream, though it be fulfilled in part, is never completely realised. Whence is this learnt? From Joseph; for it is written, "And behold the sun and the moon and eleven stars bowed down to me" (Gen. xxxvii. 9);

The question is whether prolonging prayer and calculating the length of the prayer is what matters. According to the Talmud, prolonged and calculated prayer causes a man's sins to be remembered. The concept is within the context of prolonging one's stay at the table of prayer. This is paralleled to the altar and atonement, in the sense that the altar atones, but without the Temple, there is no altar, and when one kneels at the table to pray, he is at an altar. The question is whether staying at the altar, prolonging one's stay, whether that has value. Staying at the altar (prolonging prayer) is compared to Ten things that cause a man to have difficulty in going to the bathroom. We are then told that there are three things that shorten a man's life, being given a Torah scroll and he declines to read the portion in synagogue, to decline the cup of benediction, and to be prideful. Note how these things are connected back to prayer, receiving and believe in God's Word. The Talmud then continues saying three things are necessary to offer prayer, (i) a good king, (ii) a good year, and (iii) a good dream. There is an obvious connection to Parashat Miketz and Pharaoh's dream.

טו וַיֹּאמֶר פַּרְעֹה אֶל-יֹסֵף חֲלוֹם חֲלָמָתִי וּפְתָר אֵין אֵין וְאֲנִי שָׁמַעְתִּי עָלֶיךָ לֵאמֹר תִּשְׁמַע חֲלוֹם לִפְתֹּר אֹתוֹ: טז וַיַּעַן יוֹסֵף:
41:15 *Pharaoh said to Joseph, 'I have had a dream, but no one can interpret it; and I have heard it said about you, that when you hear a dream you can interpret it.'* 41:16 *Joseph then answered Pharaoh, saying, 'It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer.'* (NASB) It is interesting here how Pharaoh had no problem accepting the Lord God as אֱלֹהִים who would be the one to provide the answer (interpretation) for his dreams. All of us have had experiences when it didn't look like our prayers were answered. It is very likely that Joseph experienced this during his time in prison. We are not told whether he prayed, but even in prison the Lord was with him prospering him, etc. Yeshua said in *Matthew 7:7, "Ask, and it shall be given you;*

seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.” When Pharaoh brought Joseph before him, Joseph gave credit to the Lord God in heaven, and we are not told whether he prayed, but the Lord moved immediately and gave him the answer to Pharaoh’s dreams in his spirit. In Joseph’s life, we can see that his faith was active, and that the Lord God was working in his life. Like Joseph, we too are to have an active faith, to be responsible for believing, speaking out, and acting according to our faith.

