



Wembley Synagogue

מִקֵּץ

Insights from the commentators into the Sedra of Miketz

מִקֵּץ (Miketz) is the only Sidra for which the number of words 2025 is listed (at the end of the Sidra in certain Chumashim). It is suggested that this is so the calendar fixers can verify their work because מִקֵּץ falls most years on Shabbat Chanukah. The word נֵר -Ner (candle / light) = 250 in gematria. Multiply the 8 nights of Chanukah by 250 =2000 and Chanukah starts on 25th Kislev (2000+25=2025). When Shabbat Chanukah does not coincide with Miketz, Chanukah occurs that year immediately before or after Miketz. (Source: Niflaot Hatorah)

וְהִנֵּה שִׁבְעַת שְׂבִילִים עָלוּת בְּקִנְיָה אֶחָד בְּרִיאוֹת וְטֹבוֹת.....צִמְחוֹת אֶחָדִיךְ *Behold, seven ears of corn came up upon one stalk healthy and good, and behold, seven thin ears sprung up after them.* (41:5- 6) The verse states that the seven fat, good ears grew from a single stalk, but does not note that the seven thin, scorched ears also grew from a single stalk. The Kli Yakar explains the difference. The fat ears growing from a single stalk symbolised that the good years would be consecutive, linked as a seven-year time period. However, the seven years of hunger were not consecutive. The first two years of hunger occurred before Yaakov's descent to Egypt. The five remaining years were postponed until after Yaakov's death. Since these seven years did not come as one consecutive period, the seven scorched ears did not sprout from a single stalk. (Source: A Gut Vort)

וַיְהִי בַבֹּקֶר וַתִּפְעֵם רוּחוֹ.....אֵת כָּל חֲרֻטְוֵי מִצְרַיִם וְאֵת כָּל חֲכָמֶיהָ *In the morning he felt agitated, (so he sent for and called) all the sorcerers and wise men of Egypt* (41:8) Rashi comments that the sorcerers did offer Pharaoh several interpretations of his dream, but he rejected all of them. For example, one sorcerer predicted: "seven daughters shall you father, and seven daughters shall you bury." Pharaoh, however, was not satisfied with this interpretation just as he was not satisfied with the others. The Dubno Maggid explains that Pharaoh's sorcerers had the ability to ascertain that his dream was alluding to seven events that would transpire in the future, it did not enable them to discern exactly *which* events were going to transpire. They therefore simply guessed at what those seven events would be. As the verse tells us, none of their interpretations found favour in Pharaoh's eyes. (Source: A Shabbos Vort)

Why were the Egyptian sorcerers unable to interpret Pharaoh's dreams? This is how some of the commentators deal with the question.

Rashi says that they did interpret them, but not satisfactorily for Pharaoh, for their voice did not enter his ears, and he had no satisfaction from their interpretation. They said "you will have seven daughters and you will bury seven daughters."

The *Midrash* quotes the sorcerers as having said to Pharaoh "The seven good cows are seven daughters that will be born to you. The seven ugly cows mean that you will bury seven daughters. The seven good ears of grain are seven countries that you will conquer; the seven bad ears of grain are seven colonies that will rebel against you.

Rabbeinu Bachaye asks how can it be that not one of the Egyptian sorcerers thought of Yosef's strikingly obvious explanation – that seven fat cows and seven good ears of grain represented seven good agricultural years, and the seven thin cows and thin ears of grain represented seven years of famine? This matter, however, was arranged by Hashem so as to bring greatness to Yosef. *Chizkuni* says that the Egyptian sorcerers thought that the two dreams each had their own meanings. Therefore, they were unable to interpret them properly. *Abarbanel* says that the Egyptian sorcerers understood that according to the science of dream interpretation, a dream is never to be taken literally, because the imagination causes events to be expressed in a cryptic fashion. Therefore, they sought for a possible scenario which Pharaoh's dream might hint to for example, seven daughters being born. Yosef knew by Divine inspiration that this case was an exception to the above rule, and Pharaoh's dream was a direct vision of the future which was indeed to be taken literally.

וַיִּקְרָא פַרְעֹה שֵׁם יוֹסֵף צְפַנַּת פַּעַנַח *And Pharaoh named Yosef "Tzafnat Pane'ach"* (41:45) Why was Yosef called "Tzafnat Pane'ach?" *Rashi* says Tzafnat Pane'ach means "He who explains hidden things." The word Pane'ach has no parallel in scripture. *Ibn Ezra* says if

this is an Egyptian name then we don't understand it. If it is a translation (of his name into Hebrew), then we don't know Yosef's Egyptian name.

Rashbam says Yosef was given this name because it was the custom in Egypt to give a person a suitable name when he assumed a position of office.

Targum Onkleos understands it as "a man to whom hidden things are revealed."

As for the question why Pharaoh gave Yosef a new name, Rashi again found no need to explain the matter as it is self understood from one of his earlier comments. On the words of the chief butler that, "There was a Hebrew lad with us" (v.12), Rashi comments that the chief butler described him as "a lad", saying to Pharaoh that he was a "fool, unfit for a high position." Therefore, we can understand when Pharaoh discovered that in truth the very opposite was the case, and "there's no one as understanding and wise as you" (v.39), he would have wished to change Yosef's name to reflect the way in which people's perception of Yosef had now been utterly transformed for the good. (Source: Sichos Shabbos Parshas Miketz 5747)

ויליוסף ילד שני בנים בתרם תבוא שנת הרעב - *Two sons were born to Yosef before the year that famine set in (41:50)*

Why does the Torah stress that Menashe and Efrayim were born "before the year of famine set in?"

Rashi says that from here we derive the principle that it is prohibited to conceive children during years of famine. However, Tosafot says that Yocheved was born while entering Egypt (Sotah 12a, Rashi to 46:15). Thus Levi, Yocheved's father appears to have had children in the years of famine. Evidently, we are not speaking here of an actual prohibition which existed in those days, but rather, a personal stringency of Yosef. (Taanit 11a). Mizrachi says that the prohibition of having children during times of famine does not apply to a person who has not yet had both a son and a daughter. Therefore Levi was exempt from this prohibition, as he had not yet had a daughter.

The Ran says that the prohibition of having children during a famine is because it is a time when Jewish people are suffering. When Yaakov and his family entered Egypt they were not suffering since they still had supplies of grain, and they knew that Yosef was not suffering either. Therefore, it was permissible for Levi to have a child. However, Yosef did not know that his family still had sufficient supplies of grain so he was not permitted to have children (Taanit 11a).

The Beit Yosef says that the argument of Mizrachi is difficult to accept for if Levi was permitted to have children during famine, then Yosef too would be permitted for the same reason. Ran's argument is also difficult to accept, for how would the brothers know that "Yosef was not suffering either?" At the literal level, it seems that they did not know whether Yosef was dead or alive at the time when Yocheved was conceived, some seven or nine months before they moved to Egypt. The Beit Yosef says rather it seems that before the giving of the Torah there was no prohibition against having children during times of famine. Yosef merely adopted a personal stringency. (Commentary to the Tur, Orach Chaim Ch. 574- quoted in the Gutnick Chumash)

וַיִּכְרֶם וַיִּתְנַכֵּר אֲלֵיהֶם - *And he recognised them but he acted like a stranger toward them (42:7)*

Why did Yosef conceal his identity from his brothers? The Kedushat Levi sees this as an expression of Yosef's sensitivity toward their feelings. People are rarely good losers. The feeling that one is compelled to be subservient to someone else is a bitter pill to swallow. We dread that such an experience might be witnessed by a close friend or family member. Had the brothers known that Yosef was one to whom they humbly bowed and that he was witnessing the fulfillment of the dream they had scorned, they would have felt deep psychological pain and suffering. In order to save them from such mental anguish, Yosef concealed his identity. A lesser person might have reveled in the sweet revenge and preferred that his "enemy" feel the degradation of downfall to the fullest. Yosef did the opposite. While his brothers had to bow in fulfillment of his dream, there was no need for them to undergo the shame of being defeated. Yosef saved them the pain. (Source: The Torah Treasury)

Shabbat Shalom and Chanukah Sameach!



Shabbat starts 3.39pm



Shabbat ends: 4.49pm

The *Insights into the Sedra* sheet is edited by Chazan Anthony Wolfson

Online at: http://www.wembleysynagogue.org/html/sedra_notes.html