THE WEISS EDITION

מקץ

Mikeitz

Living the Dream

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Teshuvah: Accepting Personal Responsibility

Light points

FROM THE TEACHINGS OF
THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE ON THE
WEEKLY TORAH PORTION

Lightpoints

לזכרון ולעילוי נשמת

הרה"ח הרה"ת הרה"ג ישעיהו זושא

ב"ר אברהם דוד ע"ה ווילהעלם

נלב"ע ביום ד' שבט התשפ"ב

תנצב"ה

מקץ
Mikeitz

41:1 | מא:א

וַיְהִי מִקֵּץ שְׁנָתַיִם יָמִים וּפַרְעֹה חֹלֵם

At the end of two years, it came to pass
that Pharaoh was dreaming...

Living the Dream

The Egyptian exile came about through a series of dreams. Yosef's brothers hated him because of his dreams, ultimately selling him as a slave. After changing hands several times, Yosef wound up in Egypt, where he was eventually jailed. In jail he earned fame as a dream interpreter, and his interpretation of Pharaoh's dreams landed him the second most powerful position in the country—viceroy. As a result, Yosef's family decided to temporarily settle near him in Egypt, a move that resulted in some 200 years of Egyptian subjugation and oppression.

The significant role dreams played in bringing about the Egyptian exile is explained in chassidic teaching[1] as an allusion to the spiritual reality of *galus*, exile.[2] And in light of the Arizal's teaching that every subsequent exile is rooted in the original Egyptian exile,[3] it follows that the dreamlike reality that characterized the Egyptian exile defines our current exile too.

In dreams, blatant contradictions seem plausible. The subject of a dream might reflect our conscious reality, but the context is often entirely unrealistic. Similarly, the conditions of *galus* cause our lives to abound with spiritual contradictions. We might experience selfless love of G-d while praying, yet simultaneously lust for things that are prohibited by the Torah.

But we must not be discouraged by the contradictions that plague our spiritual lives in *galus*, because the dreamlike nature of exile that allows us to increase our devotion to G-d despite our internal flaws also brings about another similarity between *galus* and dreams. Just as we are forced awake from our dreams when we are surrounded by bright light, by abundantly adding in the light of Torah and mitzvos we will ultimately force ourselves awake from the dream of *galus* to the bright world of Moshiach.

—Likkutei Sichos, vol. 1, pp. 85–88

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1. Torah Ohr, Vayeishev 28c.

2. See Tehillim 126:1: "We have been like dreamers."

3. Likkutei Torah, Ki Seitzei.

42:1 | מב:א

וַיַּרְא יַעֲקֹב כִּי יֶשׁ שֶׁבֶר בְּמִצְרָיִם
וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב לְבָנָיו לָמָּה תִתְרָאוּ

Yaakov saw that there was grain being sold in Egypt. Yaakov said to his sons, "Why should you purport [to be content]?"

Got Faith, Won't Travel

When hunger descended upon the land of Canaan, Yaakov encouraged his sons to travel to Egypt to buy grain. According to Rashi, they still had some food, but Yaakov said to his sons, "Why should you show yourselves before the sons of Yishmael and Eisav as though you are sated?"

Why was Yaakov concerned about the resentment of the sons of Yishmael and Eisav, who lived some distance away, and not the envy of his immediate neighbors?

Yaakov's concern was not simply about envy. (And rightfully so, as he and his family did not actually have a long-term supply of food, and their supplies did eventually become depleted.[4]) Rather, he was concerned about certain accusations and criticisms that would come specifically from the children of Yishmael and Eisav.

Despite their limited supply of food, Yaakov's sons were entirely content, as though they had all the grain that they would ever need. They were confident that G-d would provide for their needs without requiring them to relocate, or even to travel to Egypt to buy food.

4. See Bereishis 43:2.

But Yaakov was concerned that such behavior might draw unwanted attention from the sons of Yishmael and Eisav. There had been other famines in the land of Canaan that had forced Avraham and Yitzchak to move—Avraham to Egypt, and Yitzchak to Gerar. Yaakov worried that the sons of Yishmael and Eisav would ask, "Do the sons of Yaakov think that they are more worthy than our common grandparents, the saintly Avraham and Yitzchak, and that G-d will provide for them without requiring them to relocate?"

In truth, Avraham and Yitzchak had not moved solely because of the famine; other factors had also motivated them to migrate.[5] Yaakov, however, knew that the children of Yishmael and Eisav might not be aware of those reasons, so he instructed his sons to travel to Egypt to restock their provisions the natural way, so as not to draw attention from their "cousins" and put their earnestness in question.

If not for this concern, Yaakov would have agreed to remain in Canaan, confident that G-d would provide for them miraculously.

—Likkutei Sichos, vol. 30, pp. 190–194

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5. See Rashi, Bereishis 12:10.

42:1 | מב:א

וַיַּרְא יַעֲקֹב כִּי יֶשׁ שֶׁבֶר בְּמִצְרָיִם
וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב לְבָנָיו לָמָּה תִתְרָאוּ׃

Yaakov saw that there was grain being
sold in Egypt, so Yaakov said to his sons,
"Why should you purport [to be content]?"

Independence from Foreign Aid

When the land of Canaan was struck by famine, Yaakov encouraged his sons to travel to Egypt to buy grain. According to Rashi, he told them, "Why should you show yourselves before the sons of Yishmael and the sons of Eisav as though you are sated?" Rashi's words imply that if not for the resentment of the sons of Yishmael and Eisav, Yaakov's family could have subsisted without purchasing additional grain from Egypt.

Grain, the staple of the human diet, is analogous to wisdom and knowledge. Just as food is absorbed into the bloodstream and becomes one with the body, the wisdom one studies is absorbed by the brain and becomes one with the mind.

Egypt was once the world capital of science and wisdom.[6] (As an indication of this, the wisdom of King Shlomo, the wisest of all men, is lauded as being "even greater than the wisdom of Egypt."[7]) And, corresponding to its role of providing civilization with "intellectual sustenance," Egypt became the world's primary supplier of physical sustenance.

6. See Zohar 1:125a.
7. I Melachim 5:10.

As such, Rashi's implication that Yaakov and his family were not actually dependent on Egypt for their food alludes to the Jewish people's inherent independence from Egypt for their knowledge and wisdom.

Instead, the Jewish people were given the Torah from which to draw their wisdom. Even the knowledge of the sciences that is necessary for comprehension and observance of the Torah is essentially contained within the Torah itself. In addition, where necessary, the Jewish Sages themselves composed scientific works. In the era of the prophets, for example, sages from the tribe of Yissachar wrote texts explaining principles of astronomy and geometry relevant to the workings of the Jewish calendar.[8] This allowed a Jew's knowledge of the sciences to be entirely independent of secular influence.

Alas, due to the travails of exile we must now rely to some degree on secular scholarship for knowledge of the sciences relevant to the Torah. With the coming of Moshiach, however, the Jewish people's intellectual independence from "Egypt" will be restored, and we will once again draw all our wisdom from the Torah alone.

—Likkutei Sichos, vol. 30, pp. 194–197

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8. See Mishneh Torah, Hil. Kiddush Hachodesh 17:24.

42:21-22 | מב:כא-כב

וַיֹּאמְרוּ אִישׁ אֶל אָחִיו אֲבָל אֲשֵׁמִים אֲנַחְנוּ עַל אָחִינוּ
אֲשֶׁר רָאִינוּ צָרַת נַפְשׁוֹ בְּהִתְחַנְּנוֹ אֵלֵינוּ וְלֹא שָׁמָעְנוּ עַל כֵּן
בָּאָה אֵלֵינוּ הַצָּרָה הַזֹּאת: וַיַּעַן רְאוּבֵן אֹתָם לֵאמֹר הֲלוֹא
אָמַרְתִּי אֲלֵיכֶם לֵאמֹר אַל תֶּחֱטְאוּ בַיֶּלֶד וְלֹא שְׁמַעְתֶּם

They said to one another, "Indeed, we are guilty for our brother, that we witnessed the distress of his soul when he begged us, and we did not listen. That is why this trouble has come upon us." Reuven answered them, saying, "Didn't I tell you, saying, 'Do not sin against the lad,' but you did not listen?"

Teshuvah: Accepting Personal Responsibility

In the troubles they encountered in Egypt, the sons of Yaakov perceived a form of Divine retribution for heartlessly selling their brother Yosef into slavery many years earlier. Upon hearing his brothers admit to their guilt, Reuven reminded them that they had been well aware of their actions at the time but had proceeded with Yosef's sale undeterred: "Didn't I tell you, saying, 'Do not sin against the lad,' but you did not listen?"

With his words of rebuke, Reuven was not merely rubbing salt on his brothers' wounds; he was guiding them towards true and complete *teshuvah*, repentance.

Complete *teshuvah* requires that the penitent make a genuine decision to change, to the extent that "[G-d], who knows the hidden, will testify concerning him that he will never re-

turn to this sin again."[9] The penitent must fully acknowledge the inherent wrongfulness of his actions and wholeheartedly commit to permanently avoid such behavior. Conversely, if one's *teshuvah* is motivated by external factors, such as the negative consequences that he is suffering because of his sin, his remorse does not reflect a genuine change of attitude.

In addition, in order to wholeheartedly and unequivocally abandon past behavior, one must take full responsibility for his willful decision to sin. Otherwise, one cannot sincerely commit to refrain from making those decisions again in the future.

Therefore, when the troubles that befell Yosef's brothers in Egypt led them to regret the cruelty they had shown towards him, Reuven told them that such remorse alone was not enough. "You must recognize the inherent evil in the act of selling of Yosef," said Reuven, "which I have stressed to you all along, even before our current situation. Moreover, you must acknowledge that at the time you were fully aware of the wrongfulness of your actions, yet you willfully chose to sell him."

Once the brothers heard and internalized Reuven's words, their *teshuvah* could be complete.

—Likkutei Sichos, vol. 30, pp. 198–202

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9. Mishneh Torah, Hil. Teshuvah 2:2.

לעילוי נשמת

מרת טשארנא גיטל בת ר' יעקב ע"ה

נלב"ע ביום ה' טבת

תנצב"ה

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נדפס ע"י בנה הרה"ת שמואל

וזוגתו מרת מלכה שיחיו סטראל

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