



פרשת מקץ

This week we will explore Yosef's interactions with his brothers as the Second-in-Command in Egypt.

When the brothers visit Yosef, the Torah tells us the following:

(6) Now Joseph was the vizier of the land; it was he who dispensed rations to all the people of the land. And Joseph's brothers came and bowed low to him, with their faces to the ground. (7) 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." (8) For though Joseph recognized his brothers, they did not recognize him. (9) Recalling the dreams that he had dreamed about them, Joseph said to them, "You are spies, you have come to see the land in its nakedness."

בראשית פרק מב פסוק ו - ט

(ו) וְיוֹסֵף הוּא הַשְּׁלִיט עַל הָאָרֶץ הוּא הַמְּשַׁבֵּיר לְכָל עַם הָאָרֶץ וַיָּבֹאוּ אֲחֵי יוֹסֵף וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲווּ לוֹ אִפְּיָם אָרְצָה:
 (ז) וַיֵּרָא יוֹסֵף אֶת אֲחָיו וַיִּכְרַם וַיִּתְנַכֵּר אֲלֵיהֶם וַיִּדְבֹּר אֲתָם קָשׁוֹת וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם מֵאֵין בָּאתֶם וַיֹּאמְרוּ מִמֶּאֶרֶץ כְּנַעַן לְשִׁבְרֵי אֲכָל:
 (ח) וַיִּכַּר יוֹסֵף אֶת אֲחָיו וְהֵם לֹא הִכְרָהוּ:
 (ט) וַיִּזְכֹּר יוֹסֵף אֶת הַחֲלֻמוֹת אֲשֶׁר חָלַם לָהֶם וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם מְרַגְלִים אַתֶּם לְרֹאוֹת אֶת עֲרוֹת הָאָרֶץ בָּאתֶם:

Note how pasuk 9 mentions that Yosef remembers his dreams after his brothers bowed down to him. **What is the significance?**

There are three different approaches amongst the commentaries. Attempt to discern how each commentator explains the pasuk: *is it a fulfillment of the past, an explanation for his actions, or a guide to Yosef to act in a certain direction?*

(9) Which he had dreamed of them— להם means "about them". He then knew that they (the dreams) were being fulfilled, for they (his brothers) had bowed down to him.

1. רש"י בראשית פרק מב פסוק ט

(ט) אשר חלם להם - עליהם, וידע שנתקיימו, שהרי השתחוו לו:

For the dreams had really concerned the brothers, primarily. He realised now that they had hated him on account of his dreams; this is why when he remembered all that they had done to him instead of repaying them in kind, he only made them extremely uncomfortable for a while.

2. רד"ק בראשית פרק מב פסוק ט

(ט) אשר חלם להם - כי להם היו החלומות וראה עתה פתרונו, והם שגאוהו בעבורם, ובזכרו כל מה שעשו לא גמלם רעה אבל ציערם והקניטם:

In my opinion, it is the opposite (of Rashi's commentary). The dreams reminded him that Binyamin was missing and did not bow down to him. He therefore conceived of a plot in order to bring Binyamin down to fulfill the first dream of the brothers's bundles of wheat (including Binyamin's) bowing down to his bundle of wheat.

3. רמב"ן בראשית פרק מב פסוק ט

ולפי דעתי שהדבר בהפך, כי יאמר הכתוב כי בראות יוסף את אחיו משתחוים לו זכר כל החלומות אשר חלם להם וידע שלא נתקיים אחד מהם בפעם הזאת, כי יודע בפתרונם כי כל אחיו ישתחוו לו בתחילה מן החלום הראשון, והנה אנחנו מאלמים אלומים, כי "אנחנו" ירמוז לכל אחיו אחד עשר, ופעם שנית ישתחוו לו השמש והירח ואחד עשר כוכבים מן החלום השני, וכיון שלא ראה בנימן עמהם חשב זאת התחבולה שיעליל עליהם כדי שיביאו גם בנימין אחיו אליו לקיים החלום הראשון תחילה:

Think: What are the positives and drawbacks of each explanation?

Now, look at the following pasuk and see how Yosef interpreted the meaning of his dream:

(5) Now, do not be distressed or reproach yourselves because you sold me hither; it was to save life that God sent me ahead of you.

בראשית פרק מה פסוק ה

(ה) וְעַתָּה אֵל תַּעֲצְבוּ וְאַל יַחַר בְּעֵינֵיכֶם כִּי מְכַרְתֶּם אֹתִי הִנֵּה כִּי לְמַחְיָה שָׁלַח־נִי אֱלֹקִים לְפָנֵיכֶם:

How can Yosef's own interpretation help us understand his actions in Parashat Mikess?

Rashi interprets the pasuk as meaning Yosef knew his dream finally came true. However he does not explain how this understanding helps drive Yosef to do what he does. Contrast his approach to Rada"k, who explains Yosef's bitterness at being wrongly treated because of the dreams (which were for the brothers to understand their role and not hate Yosef) led him to torture his brothers. Ramban explains that Yosef was given a sign that he had to ensure the fulfillment of the dream and to understand his actions as an attempt to have all 11 brothers bow down to him.

However, Yosef himself understands the dream of wheat as a sign from Hashem to support his family with wheat. He therefore does not attempt to rule over them, but merely provide for them. His interpretation enables the family to live in harmony and turn into Am Yisrael. May we all merit to forgive others just as Yosef forgave his brothers.

Submit your questions or comments to rsetton@allegrafranco.com.