

Points to Ponder
Rabbi Dr. Jonathan Schwartz
Meiketz 5778

והנה עמד על היאור And behold he was standing on the Nile (41:1) – The **Midrash** quotes Rav Yochanan who contrasts the fact that Pharaoh was standing on top of the Nile which was his god with Yaakov who dreamed and Hashem was on top of him. In explaining the Midrash, **Rav Simcha Wasserman ztl.** explained that רשעים seek to make their gods comply with their intentions. We are different. We insist on complying with what Hashem expects of us.

ואני שמעתי עליך לאמר תשמע חלום לפתר אותו I heard about you that you can interpret dreams (41:15) – Why did he not let Yosef know that it was the שר המשקים who told him? **Chasam Sofer** notes that it was because of the non-mention of שר המשקים that brought גלות not גאולה for the world. But since when is a non-Jew obligated to state things in the name of those who professed them? **Rav Chaim Kanievsky Shlita** answered that even a Non-Jew has an obligation to engage in Chessed. We see this from Eisav whose actions on the day his father died are identified by Tosafos (Bava Basra 16b) as anti-Chessed.

ושש ולבש אותו בגדי שש And he dressed him in linen robes (41:43) – It is pretty clear that the Torah notes the change of Yosef's garb not to highlight the miracle about him as much as they were about Hashem. **Rav Amital ztl.** added that Judaism recognizes the importance of physical and material trappings for not only do they provide grandeur for God, but they remind a person that he is created in God's image and must behave in an appropriate manner. Materialism is one of the most easily misused benefits that we have in this world. It can be overused and misused. While assuring that we behave in a respectful and dignified way, we must remember why we need to maintain that dignity and majesty. This is the lesson that Yosef HaTzadik gives us when he says to his brothers, from his seat of grandeur: "את האלקים אני ירא" - "I fear God."

Why should you be afraid (42:1) – **Yalkut Shimoni** comments that Yaakov told his children not to be conspicuous when they went to Egypt for being flashy leads to הרע עין which, as we learn from the first לוחות and from the city of ירושלים, sparks destruction. **Rav Altusky ztl.** asks what the power of the הרע עין here would be? After all, why was Yaakov worried about the הרע עין of idol worshippers when his children were צדיקים? He answers that הרע עין in these cases raises the doubt as to whether a Tzaddik will deserve a special dispensation in a perilous situation. This demonstrates how a person's feelings – deserved or otherwise – can cause a danger for someone. This is the power of הרע עין.

And the brothers of Yosef went down as ten (42:3) – **Rashi** comments that it does not say that they were the sons of Yaakov because they had agreed to redeem Yosef for all the money they had and were in agreement on this point. **Rav Shteinman ztl.** asks that later in Rashi we learn that the brothers still did not like him and were split on how to deal with him. Rav Shteinman adds that we see how difficult מידות are. Even when we come to understand that we are wrong and have been, it is still difficult to come to an emotional solution to our conflicts.

I will be the guarantor (43:9) – What is the point of a guarantor here? The **Netziv** explains that Yehuda was telling Yaakov that if there is a challenge to the life of Binyamin (for the Satan is out for lives during a Sakana and even a Misa B'yidei Shomayim challenge could trigger a potential for death) I will volunteer my life instead. **Rav Schachter Shlita** often asked us what the argument of Yehuda was. After all, one only goes to the guarantor after the defendant cannot pay. Here, Binyamin would be able

to pay, with his life! Rav Schachter Shlita answered that there are three types of ערב identified in the Talmud. The first is a regular ערב – who is approached only after the defendant. The second is an ערב Kablan who can be approached at the same time as the defendant. Neither of these was relevant to the situation that Yaakov would have wanted. It is the third type – that of an ערב שלוף דוף who can be approached even before the person he is guaranteeing that is the intent of Yehudah here. Ergo, Yehudah's guarantee would work. This is the reason that we do not cite Yehuda as the source for ערב. His guarantee was for a very unique ערב situation.

עמו וישכרו וישתו And they drank and they were merry with him (43:34) – Why would they have had drinks? They did not know that he was Yosef and until that point in time, **Rashi** notes that they had abstained from alcohol. Why change now? **Rav Moshe Feinstein ztl.** explains that the brothers thought that whatever they went through was part of the Kappara process from Hashem for the selling of Yosef and thus, even before it was over they agreed to drink in order to demonstrate their appreciation to Hashem and faith in Him that salvation was imminent.

Haftorah – ונתתי לך מהלכים בין העומדים האלה And I shall give you opportunities to move between these pillars (Zechariah 3:7) – **Rav Aharon Kotler ztl.** explained that this is a natural phenomenon. If the human being is not constantly moving forward in life, s/he is not stagnating, s/he is MOVING BACKWARDS. The effect is not just felt in the future but in the present. The reason is simple – if one is working to the best of his ability at present and achieves the maximum that s/he can achieve in an area of life, and then Hashem extends the person's capacity so as to extend the person's maximum then the person becomes obligated to work harder to maintain the same station in his spiritual growth. This is the reason that the Avos were always "running" and did not allow themselves to become tired despite their ages. There was always further to grow. Rav Aharon adds that this style is particularly important today where the style toward leisure and easiness makes one susceptible to lowered standards. In Torah life it does not work.