



Many people believe in Pharaoh's astrologers' powers and magical abilities. But what did Pharaoh himself find most impressive? Joseph's intelligence, his interpretations, and reason convinced Pharaoh that wisdom - not false mysticism - affords real understanding. Pharaoh, his astrologers and even Joseph had no powers. Pharaoh attests to this via his promotion of Joseph. Torah teaches truth: Man has no powers. God alone controls all.

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Pharaoh's Wisdom

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

In Genesis, 41:45, we find that after Pharaoh sees the undeniable brilliance of Joseph, Pharaoh selects Joseph to be his second in command over Egypt. The passage states three ideas, 1) Pharaoh changes Joseph's name to Zaphnas Paneach, 2) he gave Asnas, the daughter of Poti-Phera (now subtly referred to as Priest of Ohn) to Joseph as his wife, and 3) Joseph goes out on Egypt (to rule).

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The Dreams of Pharaoh

RABBI ISRAEL CHAIT

Transcribed by students

In the beginning of the book of Exodus Chapter 1 Verse 8 it states that "A new king arose on Egypt that did not know Joseph." There is an argument amongst the Rabbis. Rav says it was literally a new king. Shmuel says it was not a new king but rather the same Pharaoh, who acted as though he did not know Joseph and made new decrees against the Jews. The position of Shmuel seems difficult. A simple reading of the text would indicate it was merely a new king. Why did Shmuel feel compelled to twist the meaning of the verse to such a strained interpretation. This explanation seems to stretch the simple meaning of the verse. It is obvious that Shmuel detected something in Pharaoh's personality that indicates that he pretended as though he did not know Joseph.

In order to properly analyze the personality of Pharaoh and his relationship with Joseph, we must examine Pharaoh's dream and how Joseph's interpretation led to his ascendancy to power. The dreams of Pharaoh can help us examine his personality. There are two causes of dreams. One is a dream of divine origin, a prophetic vision. Another cause, is the person's wishes or the thoughts of his unconscious. Pharaoh had two dreams. By analyzing and contrasting both dreams we should be able to

Ancient bust of Ramses;
Pharaoh of Joseph's era?

determine the portion of the dream which is prophetic and the part which is an expression of his personality. The aspect of his dreams which are duplicative are obviously of divine origin. However, if we examine the portions of one dream which are not common to the other, said portion is not prophetic. It would understandably be an expression of Pharaoh's unconscious.

By analyzing the dreams we note one striking difference with respect to the dreams concerning the cows. Pharaoh sees himself as part of that dream. Genesis Chapter 41 Verse 1 states at the end thereof "...and behold I was standing above the river." Another unique aspect of this dream is that it states the origin of the cows. The cows were coming up out of the river. However, the dream of the bundles of wheat does not

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The Dreams of Pharaoh

RABBI ISRAEL CHAIT

Transcribed by students



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state their origin. We must understand why does Pharaoh include himself in the first dream and why does he envision the cows appearing from out of the river.

Another clue to Pharaoh's personality would be an analysis of his actions. Upon Joseph's interpretation of the dreams Pharaoh's response seems overwhelming. He immediately appoints a despicable "Jewish lad, a slave" as his Viceroy, the second most powerful position in Egypt. He dresses Joseph in ornate clothing and extends him a regal coronation. Furthermore, when his subjects come to ask his advice when they were starving, he replies go to Joseph and whatever he tells you to do, abide by. It would seem rather unlikely that Pharaoh was willing to relinquish all control and credit and suddenly bestow it upon Joseph. His response besides being overwhelming seems incongruous to Shmuel's interpretation of his later actions. At this juncture he seems to be a righteous individual capable of appreciating and recognizing the good of Joseph. However, later after Joseph's death, there is a complete transformation of his personality and he denies Joseph's existence and in fact, acts ruthless to his people.

An understanding of the extraneous portion of his dreams can give us an insight into his personality and can demonstrate why seemingly incompatible actions are actually consistent with his character.

In his first dream the cows arose from the river. The Hebrew term for river that the Torah uses is *ye'or*. Rashi explains that this term is used because it is referring to the Nile. The Nile was the source of sustenance for the land of Egypt. Egypt is a dry climate and the Nile overflows and sustains all irrigation in Egypt. The Nile thus represents

the source for the fulfillment of the Egyptians basic needs. However, in Pharaoh's dream he was standing *al ha'ye'or* above the Nile. This signifies that Pharaoh felt that he was above the Nile. In his own mind he was more powerful than the powers of nature. Pharaoh considered himself a G-d. In fact, the Medrash tells us, that he even emptied his bowels without anyone knowing. He professed to be above the laws of nature. Thus, the most threatening occurrence to Pharaoh would be if he were not in total control. It would shatter his self image as a G-d. Thus, the occurrence of a drought was a fearful event to Pharaoh. The Torah tells us *va'tepa'em rucho*; his spirit was troubled. Unconsciously, he feared losing control. That is why in the dream he envisioned the cows coming out of the river. He feared a natural event that would be beyond his control. He thus sensed that Joseph's interpretation was accurate. He therefore had to come to grips with the possibility of losing control. However, Joseph presented him with the ability to maintain control. He realized that through Joseph he would be able to retain control and keep intact his image as a G-d. However, in order for him to view his reliance on Joseph as a situation akin to being in control, he was coerced into viewing Joseph as an extension of himself. Psychologically there was total identification with Joseph. Therefore, his response to Joseph was overwhelming. The deification of Joseph was not an abnormal response, but on the contrary it was necessitated by his identification with Joseph. It was an expression of his vision of Joseph as his alter-ego. This relationship reinforced his view that he was the most powerful force in the world. Therefore, when people asked him what to do, he quite naturally responded, whatever

Joseph says do. It bolstered his image of being in control. Joseph's actions were merely expressions of his own power. Pharaoh and Joseph together, in his mind were one entity.

We can now understand Shmuel's explanation. After Joseph's death, Pharaoh because of his psychological make-up faced a terrible problem. Narcissism the love of oneself, was a key characteristic of Pharaoh's personality. A narcissistic individual's psychic energies are directed towards the love of the self. However, when a person like Pharaoh, strongly identifies with another individual and views him as his alter-ego, that other person becomes a source of his narcissistic psychic energy. Therefore, upon Joseph's death, the excess psychic energy could no longer be channeled towards his alter-ego. He began to confront the same emotions that he previously experienced. He felt threatened by the fact that he was really not in control. However, he could not use the defense mechanism of identification but instead resorted to denial. He was unable to confront the fact that Joseph really allowed him to retain control. Therefore, psychologically, in order to function without feeling threatened, he had to act as though he did not know Joseph. Any remembrance of Joseph or acknowledging Joseph's value was painful to his self image of being all powerful. Accordingly, not only did he have to act as though he did not know Joseph, but that denial coerced him to act in the opposite fashion. His remembrance of Joseph was so painful, it served as the source for his oppression towards Joseph's people, the children of Israel. Therefore Shmuel stated, a new king is only viewed as new, in terms of his actions. However an analysis of Pharaoh's personality indicates that on the contrary, it was the same Pharaoh. That is why the Torah specifically articulates that the new king did not know Joseph. If he was truly a new king the statement would be redundant. The Torah is really offering us an insight into his nature.

An example of this type of psychological mechanism is evident in Christianity. The Christian hates the Jew for ostensibly killing his G-d. However, this is indicative of a psychological defense mechanism. The Christian can not admit that we gave them their G-d, since Jesus was Jewish.

Jacob upon meeting Pharaoh was keenly aware of Pharaoh's true nature. His response to Pharaoh's inquiry with respect to his age seems rather lengthy and irrelevant. Genesis Chapter 49 at Verse 9, "And Jacob said to Pharaoh, the days of the years of my sojourning are 130, few and bad were the years of my life and I have not reached the days of the years of the lives of my fathers, in the days of their sojourns." Nachmanides questions this rather lengthy response. However, based upon our insight into Pharaoh's personality, it is understandable. A person who perceives himself as all powerful and G-d like, feels threatened by someone who possess something that is desirable, which he does not have. Jacob realized that Pharaoh had such a personality. He sensed that Pharaoh, when questioning his age, noted he was an elder and was asking more out of a sense of envy rather than curiosity. He sensed that he possessed something that Pharaoh desired. Accordingly, Jacob who was old, at a time when people were not living so long, responded based upon this perception. He stated that he was not so old, and that he did not have a good life nor live as long as my fathers. He attempted to dispel any envy that Pharaoh may have had. He did not want to entice Pharaoh's anger by giving him any cause for jealousy. Therefore, his lengthy response was appropriate and warranted considering the circumstances.

It also explains the blessing that Jacob bestowed upon Pharaoh. Rashi tells us that he blessed him that the Nile should rise to greet him whenever he approaches it. Jacob was aware of Pharaoh's personality. This blessing Pharaoh truly cherished. It represented that even the most powerful phenomenon of nature would be subordinate to his control. ■

Pharaoh's Wisdom

□ **RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM**

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We have a mesora - a tradition - that when one pasuk (passage) contains many points, they must all be related, as they have been decided by G-d to be placed in a single verse.

We then have the following questions:

1) What is the connection between all the points in this passage. 2) Why give the daughter of Poti-Phera? Didn't his wife accuse Joseph of attempted rape? Wasn't there a better choice of a mate if he must have a wife? 3) Why is Poti-Phera suddenly referred to as a "priest"? 4) What does Joseph "going out on Egypt" have to do with anything? With a little consideration, the answers leap from this passage.

Pharaoh was in his position - not without intelligence. Upon summoning Joseph from prison to interpret his dreams, Pharaoh was cognizant of the future political problems faced with elevating an imprisoned Jew to viceroy status. More to the point, Pharaoh was elevating one accused of rape. This would not wash well with his subjects, or his country. How would Pharaoh deal with this?

I believe with the following answer, we unveil insight into Pharaoh's wisdom. Pharaoh attempted to dispel any rumors of Joseph's ill repute by giving him this specific woman for a wife. Who in their right minds would believe that Joseph attempted rape on a woman, the wife of Poti-Phera, and then marries her very daughter? Pharaoh caused Egypt to believe that the rape accusation was not true. Further, Poti-Phera's wife would not accuse Joseph any longer, as any accusation would bring shame to her daughter, and to herself. Additionally to silencing the wife of Poti-Phera, Pharaoh sought to silence Poti-Phera himself. What do people desire more than anything else? More than money? Power. Pharaoh again displayed his cunning by granting a status of priest to Poti-Phera, in exchange for his silence. Finally, Pharaoh's changing of Joseph's name was an attempt to convert his Hebraic, slave reputation into an Egyptian icon. One's name creates a perceived status.

We now see how these ideas are all connected, why G-d desired them to be in one passage, as all elements of this passage aim towards one goal of Pharaoh. But what about "Joseph going out on Egypt"? What is the Torah's lesson by placing it here? I believe it is to show that through all the

attempts of Pharaoh to render Joseph into an acceptable, Egyptian figure by renaming him Zaphnas Paneach, it was useless. Joseph never shed his identity as Joseph the Tzaddik. It was still "Joseph" who went out upon Egypt, and not the fabricated, Egyptian veneer created by Pharaoh.

It is enlightening to see the precision of the Torah - how it is written so sparingly. Just enough information is revealed to suggest the problem, and just enough for the answer. It is brilliant that those very statements which cause the problem, are in fact clues to the answer. □

Joseph's Dream Interpretations

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

In Genesis, 41:1, we read of the dreams of Pharaoh. He saw seven lean cows swallow up seven fat cows, and no enlargement could be seen in those lean cows. After waking and falling asleep a second time, Pharaoh dreams again, of seven full ears of grain being swallowed by seven thin ears, and again, no one could tell that the thin ears swallowed the fat ones.

Pharaoh awoke and called to all his interpreters, but none could offer a pleasing interpretation until Joseph was summoned to interpret.

Joseph told Pharaoh the following (Gen, 45:25): "25: The dream of Pharaoh is one, that which God plans to do has He shown to Pharaoh. 26: The seven good cows represent seven years, and the seven good ears represent seven years, it is one dream. 27: And the seven lean, bad cows that came up after them are seven years and the seven withered ears blown by the wind are seven years of famine. 28: This is the matter which I had told to Pharaoh, what God plans to do He has shown to Pharaoh."

Joseph continues to tell Pharaoh that first, there will be seven years of plenty, followed by seven years of great famine, and the famine will be so severe as to wipe away the memory of the plenty. Joseph explains why the dream was repeated, as God was to enact the plenty and the famine immediately. He then advises Pharaoh to store the plenty in preparation, thereby making Pharaoh in control of all produce.

The questions which arise are as follows: 1) What did Pharaoh see in Joseph's interpretation which satisfied him, as opposed to the Egyptian

interpreters? The interpreters said that Pharaoh will have seven daughters and bury seven daughters. Joseph said the seven represented years of plenty and famine. What is so qualitatively distinct in Joseph's interpretation? 2) In his interpretation, Joseph does not keep to the order of things, as his first actual interpretation is in passage 27, where he commences with mentioning the famine. This takes place after the plenty, so Joseph should have commenced with explaining that the fat cows or ears represented plenty. But he didn't. Why? 3) Very significant is Joseph's statement in passage 28, "This is the matter which I had told to Pharaoh, what God plans to do He has shown to Pharaoh." As if to say, "you see Pharaoh,...I have now proved what I was saying, that this is from God". It seems from this passage that Joseph contented himself that he had successfully proven to Pharaoh - already at this point - that it is God's plan. This would mean that in these words alone Joseph feels he has already convinced Pharaoh that the dreams are from God. My question is, what in his words convinced Joseph that he made his point clear?

A closer look at Joseph's words gives us the answer. Notice that Joseph repeats one element, "it is one dream". This repetition indicates what Joseph is trying to drive home in Pharaoh's mind, and this element is what is not mentioned by Pharaoh's astrologers.

Joseph differed from the astrologers not so much in the dream's content, but in his explanation of the style of the dreams. Joseph showed Pharaoh that his dreams were exact duplicates, a phenomena which does not have its source in human dream dynamics, but rather, something only possible when emanating from a Divine Source - God. Pharaoh was wise enough to see this as true. The proof of this explanation is not only Joseph's repetition, but in the fact that Joseph concluded to Pharaoh midstream in his explanation that this is already proof enough that your dreams are Divine. Joseph said "This is the matter which I had told to Pharaoh". Saying in other words, "you see,...it is true." Joseph went on with the rest of the interpretation, but not as a proof of Divine origin. Joseph was convinced that this element of exact repetition proves that the dreams were from God. He therefore interrupted his interpretation to impress this upon Pharaoh.

While discussing this explanation with a friend, he quoted verse 41:32 later on, where Joseph said that the doubling of the dreams is to teach Pharaoh that the matter is imminent,

and not as I suggested, that it is to teach a divine pattern normally not seen in dreams. Perhaps this question did not bother me as much as the dreams bothered Pharaoh! But it was a good question. However, I then came across an Ibn Ezra which says the doubling of the dreams teaching imminence, is derived not from the dreams' duplication per se, but from the doubling in "one night". According to Ibn Ezra, had the dreams been identical, but took place on separate nights, we would not learn of the imminence factor. Repeating dreams can take place over time, but Pharaoh's occurred in one night. This taught imminence of the years of plenty and the ensuing famine. But identical dreams are from God according to Joseph. The other idea of imminence is why they both came in one night's sleep, and not over a few nights. This Ibn Ezra allows the original explanation to remain in place. Joseph was in fact stating that the identical nature of the dreams - not the fact of a single night's occurrence - taught the divine aspect.

Ramban, quoting Rabbi Eliezer, says that the one fact, that there were two dreams of cows and grain teaches that the matter was true and fixed. The second fact that both dreams occurred in a single night teaches that it is imminent. Again we see that there is a separate element of two distinct objects, cows and grain. This teaches a separate concept, according to Joseph, that the matter is of divine origin.

We see that Joseph dreamt of the sheaves and stars bowing to him. The wine steward and baker had similar dreams too, and Pharaoh also had two similar dreams. This consistent pattern of duplicating dreams reveals to us that such dreams are divine, and something which Joseph detected in each case, arriving at his determinations in all three instances that each dream was divine.

The reason why Joseph commenced with interpreting the famine aspect first, was that Joseph desired to be freed from prison and avert this catastrophe. His calculation which proved intelligent, was to hit Pharaoh with bad news before the good news, even though this distorted the order. Joseph is known as the chief psychologist in Jewish history, and he knew that people will attach themselves to the first element of news, even if followed by good tidings. By presenting Pharaoh with the stark reality of an utter and imminent famine, Joseph intended to render Pharaoh helpless, and in need of one who could save him - in need of a Joseph. □

Parshas Miketz

RABBI BERNARD FOX

"At the end of two years Pharaoh had a dream: he was standing by the river." (Beresheit 41:1)

This pasuk introduces Pharaoh's fateful dream, which was to serve as the vehicle for Yosef's rescue from prison and his subsequent rise to power in Egypt. It occurred exactly two years after Yosef's inspired interpretation of the dreams of Pharaoh's butler and chief baker. Rashi tells us that Hashem had provided Yosef with an opportunity to be redeemed through the dreams of these two servants of Pharaoh. However, Yosef acted improperly in his reaction to this opportunity, and the Almighty delayed his rescue for an additional two years because of this. What exactly was Yosef's impropriety? Rashi explains that by pleading with the butler to mention his plight to Pharaoh, Yosef was essentially entrusting him with his fate, and he was punished for this misplaced trust. On the surface Rashi's comments are difficult to understand. Yosef was provided with an opportunity to save himself through the assistance of Pharaoh's butler. Through providing the butler with a proper interpretation of his dream, Yosef hoped that he would win the friendship of Pharaoh's servant, and he expected this grateful butler to plead his case before the king. This seems like a completely rational plan. Certainly the Almighty expects each of us to strive to achieve our own well-being. We are not permitted to simply rely upon G-d for miraculous salvation. Where is Yosef's iniquity in attempting to help himself?

While we are required to do everything in our power to help ourselves, we must concurrently recognize that our efforts alone are not sufficient to secure happiness and success. Only if our actions are accompanied by the favor and grace of G-d, will we secure positive results. Yosef apparently believed that through his wisdom alone he would be redeemed. He felt he had devised a brilliant plan through which his individual efforts would secure his freedom. He envisioned the grateful butler returning to Pharaoh, pleading Yosef's case before his master. Pharaoh would investigate the charges against Yosef and recognize his innocence. He would then intervene to correct the injustice that Yosef had experienced. The process would be gradual, but would inevitably culminate in Yosef's freedom. His error was in failing to recognize that, despite the brilliance of his plan, success could not be achieved without the assistance and benevolence of the Creator.

No individual controls his or her environment. We are affected by a multitude of factors, few of which are under our control. The Almighty taught Yosef that he had erred.

He showed Yosef that despite the brilliance of his elaborate plan, salvation was not inevitable. Years passed. During this time, Yosef painfully learned that he could not alone control his fate. Only after Yosef banished this false confidence from his outlook could salvation be attained. Once Yosef had repented, his salvation occurred immediately. Pharaoh became aware of Yosef's talents. There was no gradual process of redemption. Yosef was immediately brought from jail, presented to Pharaoh, and achieved a position of prominence in Egypt.

Our Sages teach that this near-instantaneous transformation, from abject privation to freedom and power, is a hallmark of Divine intervention.

"And it was at the end of two years and Pharaoh had a dream. And he was standing by the river." (Beresheit 41:1)

As the parasha opens, Yosef is still in prison. Two years previously he had successfully interpreted the dream of Pharaoh's butler. Yosef had correctly predicted that the butler would be released from prison and restored to his position serving Pharaoh. He had asked the butler to intercede, on his behalf, with Pharaoh. But the butler had forgotten Yosef and had not brought his case to Pharaoh's attention. Now, Pharaoh has a dream. He is troubled by this vision and seeks an interpretation. The butler is reminded of his own premonitory dream and Yosef's accurate interpretation. He tells Pharaoh of his experience and Yosef is brought to Pharaoh. Yosef provides Pharaoh with an insightful and exact explanation of the dream. This episode results in Yosef's redemption and immediate appointment as Pharaoh's foremost minister.

The Chumash emphasizes the passage of two years from Yosef's interpretation of the butler's dream and this episode. Many of the commentaries maintain that this two-year delay in Yosef's rescue was a punishment. Yosef was overconfident. He felt that through the relationship he had forged with the butler he had secured his own rescue. Hashem undermined Yosef's plan and caused the butler to forget Yosef. The Almighty taught Yosef that even the best plan can be ineffectual. We can have no security without the help of the Almighty.

Rabbaynu Avraham ben HaRambam offers another explanation for the two-year hiatus. He argues that Yosef's redemption and appointment to a high position was made possible as a result of this delay. If the butler had immediately approached Pharaoh and pleaded Yosef's innocence, what would have been the outcome? At best, the butler would have convinced Pharaoh that Yosef had been unjustly imprisoned. This may have resulted in the restoration of Yosef's freedom. However, Yosef would have lost the opportunity to meet Pharaoh and make a personal impression. Instead, the butler completely forgot Yosef. On the occasion of

Pharaoh's dream the butler suddenly remembers Yosef and his unpaid debt to this Hebrew. He encourages Pharaoh to seek Yosef's help. Yosef meets with Pharaoh personally and impresses the ruler. As a result, Yosef becomes the virtual king of Egypt. From this perspective the two-year delay was not a punishment. It was a blessing.

"Yosef said to Pharaoh, 'The dream of Pharaoh is one. That which the Almighty is about to do He has told to Pharaoh.'" (Beresheit 41:25)

Pharaoh's dream consisted of two visions. In the first vision seven healthy cows appeared. These were followed by seven emaciated cows that consumed the healthy animals. In the second vision, Pharaoh saw seven ears of well-formed grain. He then saw seven shriveled ears, which then consumed the perfectly formed grain. The key element in Yosef's interpretation of Pharaoh's visions was that they composed a single dream and message. Seven years of abundance would be followed by seven years of famine. Sforno points out that Pharaoh's advisors failed in interpreting the dreams because they did not recognize this interrelationship of the two visions. However, Yosef recognized the element of repetition. He understood that this repetition expressed the urgency of the message.

Yosef provides Pharaoh with the interpretation. In addition, he offers unsolicited advice. He suggests that the Egyptians collect the abundant grain of the seven fertile years. This grain should be stored, to serve and provide sustenance during the years of famine. Yosef interpreted Pharaoh's dream at the king's request. However, it seems presumptuous for Yosef to offer Pharaoh advice for dealing with the approaching famine. Sforno explains that Yosef was not actually providing advice on his own. The advice was contained in the dream. If the Almighty had merely wished to forewarn Pharaoh of the famine, there would be no need to include within the dreams the seven healthy cows and ears of grain. These symbolized the years of fertility. Yosef understood that the Almighty was counseling Pharaoh to prepare during the good years for the troubles destined in the future. Yosef was not offering a personal opinion, but was interpreting the full message of Pharaoh's dream.

Radak maintains that the correct interpretation of the dream was not beyond the wisdom of Pharaoh's counselors. Pharaoh himself characterized the visions as a single dream. Yosef merely recognized the validity of Pharaoh's intuition. It was through G-d's design that Pharaoh's intelligent, well-schooled advisors failed to notice the essential relationship between the visions. Based on the Radak's observation, Pharaoh's motive for appointing Yosef to a position of power is quite understandable. Pharaoh explained to Yosef that he recognized a G-dly power at

work. He understood that some Providential force had blinded his advisors, while simultaneously inspiring Yosef. Pharaoh realized that some Divine force favored Yosef, and he concluded that it was crucial to enlist the support of this providential force through Yosef.

"Yosef saw his brothers, and he recognized them. He disguised himself and spoke to them harshly, and he said to them, 'From where have you come?' And they said, 'From the land of Canaan, to purchase food.' Yosef recognized his brothers, but they did not recognize him." (Beresheit 42:7,42:8)

Yosef was personally responsible for the distribution of all provisions in Egypt when his brothers came to Egypt to purchase food. Yosef immediately recognized them and disguised his behavior so that they would not realize that he was their brother. His subterfuge was successful and he was not found out. Rashi explains that Yosef was much younger than his brothers. When they had parted he did not yet have a full beard, whereas his brothers were mature adults. When the brothers arrived in Egypt, they were confronted with a bearded minister. They did not recognize their younger brother. Radak provides an alternative explanation for the brothers' failure to recognize Yosef. Strong psychological forces prevented the brothers from realizing that they stood before Yosef. The brothers had sold Yosef, and assumed that he was either dead or a lowly slave. They never doubted the effectiveness of their plan. Although they repented for the evil of their actions, they assumed that their destruction of Yosef had been complete. Radak explains that at this initial meeting the brothers observed a resemblance between the minister and their lost brother. However, they immediately rejected the implications of this observation. They just could not envision Yosef in a position of power and rulership. This prejudice provided Yosef with the opportunity to effectively disguise himself. On a deeper level, it should be noted that the original reason for the brothers' resentment of Yosef was because they perceived within him a boastful attitude. They could not accept that Yosef could be superior, or had a right to exercise control over them. Dominated by these feelings, they were now unable to recognize Yosef in the very relationship that they dreaded. The Radak further explains that Yosef went to great lengths to assure that he would be reunited with his brothers. As senior minister in Egypt he was not obligated to personally distribute provisions. He assumed this responsibility because he wanted to personally meet every individual requesting food. He knew that as the famine continued, his brothers would eventually be forced to travel to Egypt to seek provisions. Through personally distributing these supplies, he would be assured of meeting his family. ■

Moses vs Jesus

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

Reader: I recently read your response in the JewishTimes to a Catholic man on the falsity of x-tianity. I was born and raised Gentile but have been studying Judaism the last 3-4 years. While I believe as the Jews do, that the first century man was not the Messiah, I am also quite interested in understanding Scriptures' beliefs that repudiate this fact.

I'm not sure I understand your argument that "x-tianity demands blind faith." You cite Moses and the Jews as historical fact. From the perspective of the x-tian, isn't Jesus also a historical figure? Wasn't he seen by the masses at the sermon on the mount, and other places? Or am I missing the point...was it more that they view him as performing the miracles instead of G-d through him? Don't Jews deny the history written about this man? Please assist me in being able to defend this argument. I have great desire to clarify for myself the validity of this truth. Sincerely, Janet

Mesora: Janet, you're asking a few questions:

Yes, Jesus was a historical figure, as was Moses. But be clear; the 'existence' of a person has no bearing on 'stories' about either individual. So although we may prove the existence of a person, this in no way validates stories we possess today, describing events regarding that person. I may prove Caesar existed, but this does not mean a story in print describing Caesar as a prophet of God contains truth. (Such claims that one is a prophet of God based on his own word, cannot be disproved historically. Such a claim is a very safe position. They cannot be denied, although they cannot be proven either.)

The reason why Jesus' claims and Christianity's claims about his miracles are not respected, is because there are no elements in those stories which contain scientific proofs. For example, we attest to JFK's assassination in Texas in the early 1960s. We know masses were there, and we know the facts are simple to apprehend, i.e., all people knew who JFK was, and all people know where Texas is, as well as the date.

In order to prove an historical event, the account must contain two elements; 1) The presence of masses, and 2) Clear facts. Masses removes the possibility that a given story was fabricated. Mass conspiracy is against human nature. No group of people can all share equal motivation to lie, thereby perpetuating a fallacy. Motive is a very subjective phenomena. If we ever find a case in history attended by masses, we know there was no fabrication.

But you might ask, "Perhaps we possess a story with masses, and although masses proves there was no purposeful distortion (fabrication) yet, might I still claim that the

attendants of this event erred in their perception? Cannot distortion take place not only willfully through fabrication, but via ignorance of the viewers?"

My response is, this is why we also require "simple phenomena", to disprove any possibility of ignorance. If we demonstrate that a given event contained elements easily apprehended, there is no reason to assume ignorance. Once we demonstrate the story under discussion contained no willful or accidental distortion, the story must be true. There are only these two possibilities why a communicated story can be false; 1) Either it was purposefully fabricated, or 2) it was not clearly communicated.

Going back to our case of JFK, we see there were both, masses and simple phenomena which any individual understands with 100% accuracy. But ask people which angle the bullet entered JFK's head, and now we enter an area where the phenomena is not clearly observable, and we find debate. But on the fact that JFK was shot, and on a certain date and location, there is no debate at all.

Sinai also contains these two elements, 1) There were over 2 million people present, proving there was no fabrication, and 2) the event was easily apprehended: All people know what a mountain is, what fire is, and that they heard words emanating from the fire. Not so regarding Jesus's stories. We find no masses at any of his proposed events of miracles, just a description of smaller groups, wherein lies can take place. We therefore do not accept these stories as truths.

The stories of Jesus' miracles are missing the first - there are no masses, just a proposed small group. But Moses ascending to Mount Sinai, and the Jews hearing intelligent words from the mountain amidst the flames were witnessed by millions.

Based on such credibility, we state with conviction that the event at Mount Sinai must have occurred. Otherwise, history would not be spread in the form of factual events. Christianity is not based on an event where great numbers attested to an event. No religion other than Judaism makes this claim, as no other religion or people witnessed such a miracle en masse.

It is also important to note that there are no alternative histories recorded of the Jews at that time. All Jews today trace back their lineage to that event, without fail. Had Sinai never occurred, it would be impossible for Moses to perpetuate such a lie, making masses believe they were at an event - when they weren't. It is impossible.

Using scientific reasoning, we conclude, the only religion claiming God's validation is Judaism. No other religion contains any proof whatsoever.

Your other question, whether there is a distinction that Jesus's stories make claim to his miracle performances independent of God, may be how Christians view Jesus. But this is of no concern. As we have disproven any such story in general, the details are also disproven.

What Motivates Us?

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

Reader: Are all actions motivated by an emotion? Most human beings are driven by emotion. They have a feeling, it motivates them into action. However, if free will is utilized, the action is not based on an emotion - it is based on knowledge. But does this knowledge engender an emotion that motivates the action? Or can knowledge alone be a motivator?

Mesora: King David writes: Psalms 8:4,5 - "When I see Your heavens, the works of Your fingers, the moon and stars that You established. What is man that You should be mindful of him, and the son of man the he should be remembered?" 17:4 - "My human deeds accord with the words of my lips." 18:30 - "For with You I smash a troop, with my God I leap a wall." 19:8 - "The Torah of God is perfect, it restores the soul..." (19:9) "The statutes of God are upright, they gladden the heart..." Ibn Ezra comments, "Torah removes doubt from the soul." And also, "...man's wisdom reaches the heights of happiness in the world." 19:11 - "(the judgments of God) are more desirous than gold."

What is the process that man travels, starting from his learning, and culminating in his action? Where do emotions play a role throughout?

Man is designed with a natural curiosity, which we see in its pristine and raw form in children. We naturally desire explanations for the world around us. This yearning for answers is an intellectual endeavor, joined in some way with our emotions. We have such a yearning to learn due to the great amount of energy God instilled in man's design. This energy pushes for satisfaction. We follow the Torah's dictates, and direct our energies towards God's wisdom. We then witness a vast sea of knowledge, which is so deep and satisfying. "When I see Your heavens, the works of Your fingers, the moon and stars that You established. What is man that You should be mindful of him, and the son of man the he should be remembered?" And also, "The statutes of God are upright, they gladden the heart..."

As we search for truth, there is an accompanying, unsettling feeling. We realize we don't have the answers to some problems. It disturbs us. This unsettling feeling is emotional, it motivates and drives our investigations. Together, the intelligence and the emotions compliment man's search for knowledge. Suddenly, we arrive at an explanation for that which troubled us. We feel a delight in the newly learned idea, "Doubts are removed", (Ibn Ezra 19:8 above).

What gives us this emotional happiness, is the appreciation of the brilliance we see intellectually. Man is designed to perceive enjoyment when arriving at wisdom, and this


is not a learned phenomena. What must be learned is the wisdom readily available in the world, not man's happy reaction. If wisdom is learned, man naturally senses a happiness incomparable with anything else, "More desirous than gold". We learn that it is man's wisdom which revels with a joy, "man's wisdom reaches the heights of happiness in the world." The very act of study is the utmost enjoyment, completely satisfying him over all else in the world.

The emotions are in play throughout our studies, and continue in our reaction of discovery. What follows is an enjoyment of our newly learned ideas. The process of learning is a happy one, "The Torah of God is perfect, it restores the soul..."

Now that we have learned new knowledge, we wish to act in accord with this truth, again, a natural phenomena, a behavior that need not be learned, (Psalms 17:4) "My human deeds accord with the words of my lips." Man desires the good for himself - a natural phenomena. There is no breach between King David's knowledge and his actions. His motivation to act is initiated with a discovery of truth, and his emotions follow with a desire to do that which is right in God's eyes. He sees the good for himself in a pure form - God's word is the good for himself. When one sins, again he feels he has found the good, but he is gravely misled. In this case, knowledge plays no role, and man's estimation of the good is based on ignorance, not on intelligence.

So it is our life that we desire the good. Our actions, when following the Torah, commence with knowledge. Our entire study and discovery are accompanied by emotions, and so too are our actions. The Shema Yisrael prayer commences with, "And you shall love God your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might." Rashi comments on "all your heart" as referring to both of our inclinations, the yetzer hatov and the yetzer harah." This means that both, our intelligence and our emotions are to be harnessed in the service of God. The emotions - when guided by reason and wisdom - properly provide us with attachments to correct actions, energy, perseverance, and satisfaction in our studies and in our actions.

Using our knowledge to learn new ideas and abandon fallacy will steer not only our actions, but it also cultivates our trust in God's word, (Psalms 18:30) "For with You I smash a troop, with my God I leap a wall." The commentators say this refers to man's trust in God. Realizing truths, King David not only became convinced of what made sense to do under his own control, but also how God will act.

Desiring the good naturally, and following wisdom, man arrives at a life permeated with intelligent conviction and an emotional desire for his own good actions. Man is also convinced intelligently of God's actions, engendering emotional trust in Him. Trust in God with your entire heart, and do not rely on your own understanding." (Proverbs, 3:5) 

Suffering or Wisdom?

RIVKA OLENICK

When a person suffers any type of misfortune, he/she should use it as a cue to arouse his/her improvement. Chovos HaLavavos Brochos 5a; 7:6. We should each do everything possible to protect ourselves and avoid unnecessary suffering and psychological harm.

First we have to make the effort and try to understand what suffering means. When you think of suffering you automatically equate it with fear and you imagine that every terrible situation will confront you. Setback and tragedy are part of life yet the outcome of any setback or tragedy through suffering can prove to be very beneficial for that person. Sooner or later all of us confront, but can hopefully endure our trial of suffering. A person who cannot accept their suffering is very unfortunate because they will have gained nothing, and there is so much to be gained. Chazal say that God created the world and it is good, that only good comes from God and what happens in the world is for the ultimate good. So how should we understand Chazal and internalize these ideas when we are suffering or in the middle of a crisis or personal tragedy? It seems impossible. It isn't impossible, but the approach in understanding suffering should be a philosophical one. By allowing your mind and heart to be open and by exploring and being introspective, your own suffering can open the door to profound joy and believe it or not, may prove to you to be a great blessing.

Many people think that when everything is going great, who needs Torah or God? I'll just get away with going through the motions, so it all looks good and respectable from the outside and I'll just deny the real purpose of my life here on the inside. Except, that when a crisis occurs we can easily feel that we've lost control of our life in the inside and the outside. Many people become

depressed and anxious when they are suffering, they feel lost and can't figure out what to do. They find it hard to focus on anything and they feel alienated from their family, and their friends. This suffering produces tremendous uncertainty, which is scary and they ask: "Why did God let this happen to me?" When suffering entraps you, try to look into your life and examine it closely, looking for what is wrong. Seek and ask for practical guidance and for advice from someone you trust and who is willing to help you feel grounded. Feel positive and optimistic that you are approaching your suffering the right way. If you don't rebel against God because of your suffering, consider that to be a high level and a very good starting point.

How often do we hear of those who turn to alcohol or drugs or anything else that one thinks will relieve one's pain, which is only temporary. Once you start moving in a positive direction, consider acquiring more wisdom and drawing closer to God, meaning closer to the will of God. Make an investment in your peace of mind by investing more time in thought. Don't leave your peace of mind to chance, rather figure out how you can have greater peace of mind to aid you through your suffering and give you strength. Wisdom can significantly help a person understand where they went wrong in their judgement and how they can have more trust in God to endure their suffering. Acceptance is the most difficult part of one's suffering. Once there is some amount of acceptance, a person usually looks towards God and begins to feel hopeful. Strengthen yourself by engaging yourself in thinking about and exploring the concepts and ideas that are based on the foundations and principles of Judaism. Do this by making time to learn and study the great

ideas contained in Pirkei Avos, The 13 Principles of Faith, Psalms, Mishlei, and the Chumash. The list is endless, but first you should make an attempt. Ask someone you know and respect for input and suggestions in what area of Torah would be helpful for you to learn. Maybe think about learning this area of Torah with a friend. This will give you something to look forward to, something your mind will look forward to. Don't waste time at the Shabbos table talking about silly stuff, but use the precious time to direct the conversation to ideas. Yes, a dvar Torah is very nice, but don't just repeat it, analyze it and think about it together with whoever is at the table. Prepare interesting questions. So much time and effort goes into the preparation of the meal, but how much real effort goes into the conversation so that it is beneficial for you and everyone else at the meal? Talking about business is forbidden, yet people feel they have to "catch up" by talking about it. Don't talk business, talk ideas, talk God.

In the meantime, become more introspective about your life even if things are "ok." Maybe things can be a lot better and you can strengthen your spiritual life and be more involved in growth. We shouldn't simply rely on the fact that "everything is in God's hands." Although this is true, one's fear of God - i.e., his or her free will - is not in God's hands. "Hakol b'day shamayim, chutz m'yiras shamayim." "All is in God's hands except the fear of God." We are expected to do as much as we can for ourselves in fulfilling our purpose by using all of our potential in life for real growth, which is in our hands. When we do this we continue to keep ourselves strong so that we can meet the difficult challenges that will find its way into our lives.

Don't rely on anyone else to remove your suffering for you. It is

more beneficial to be introspective and to look within and with the right guidance, face the pain you feel. This will eventually bring about your own peace of mind. Most people's sufferings are based on false illusions or denial. Maimonides states that the majority of man's evils are his own doing. Situations that produce a negative outcome, are mostly caused by faulty thinking. This faulty thinking causes suffering, self-inflicted suffering! "All the days of the unwise are unhappy ones." Chovos HaLavavos 4:5. Often people are fooled into thinking that life means continuous and uninterrupted pleasure and so when reality interrupts, a person feels they are truly suffering. But truthfully they are suffering because they lack the understanding of the purpose of their life. If they understood their purpose there would be no self-inflicted suffering! This is how a wise person thinks about life and the importance of understanding how you should live your life.

So persevere, and ask for God's assistance through honest, meaningful prayer. Don't just mutter the words, petition God and ask for insight and clarity. Think about rearranging your priorities in life and consider setting goals for yourself that are realistic and sincere. Ask yourself: "What do I want out of this short life and what goals should I set for myself so that I have continued growth. How does God fit into my goals?" Suffering is a great teacher. Suffering teaches you the limitations of your power; it reminds you of the frailty of your health, the instability of your possessions, and the inadequacy of your means which have only been lent to you and must be returned as soon as the Owner (God) desires it. Suffering visits you and teaches you the nothingness of your false greatness. It teaches you modesty. From Horeb, Vol. I pg. 36. ▀