

שבת

This week's *Parashah* opens, "It happened at the end of two years to the day--Pharaoh is dreaming that behold!--he is standing over the Nile." Why does the verse say, "at the end of two years," rather than "after two years"? Also, why does the verse say "is dreaming," in present tense? Lastly, what does "behold!" add, compared to saying simply that Pharaoh "was standing over the Nile"?

R' Tuvya Ha'levi z"l (Tzefat, *Eretz Yisrael*; 16th century) writes: Perhaps the phrase "at the end of two years" alludes to the two extra years that Yosef was required to remain in prison because he sought the help of Pharaoh's cupbearer. (See inside.) However, he writes, there is another explanation that will answer all of these questions.

The Egyptians worshiped the Nile because they were confident that it had the power to save them from any famine. The rest of the world needs rain, and G-d can withhold rain when He is angry. The Nile, however, never stops flowing, they reasoned.

The famine that Pharaoh's dream foretold was meant as a wake-up call to the Egyptians. But, the Torah is foretelling, the Egyptians would not get the message. "At the end of two years," i.e., when Yaakov will come to Egypt after two years of famine (see 45:6), Yaakov will bless Pharaoh that the Nile's tide should always rise to meet him (see *Rashi* z"l to 47:10). This will end the famine early. As a result, Pharaoh will still be "dreaming" that, "behold," even then, "he is standing over the Nile" with nothing to fear. (*Chein Tov*)

Shabbat

"*Barchuni l'shalom* / Bless me for peace, angels of peace . . ."
(From the poem *Shalom Aleichem*)

R' Gedaliah Aharon Konig z"l (1921-1980; leader of the *Breslov* community in Tzefat, Israel) writes: Someone asked me how we can request of the angels to bless us, as if it is in their power to do so. Should we not be directing our prayers to G-d alone? The person who asked me this question noted that some people do not recite *Shalom Aleichem* because of this difficulty.

I answered him, R' Konig records, that we have no right to refrain from reciting any of our liturgy just because we do not understand it, after generations of the Jewish People have accepted to recite that liturgy with awe and love for *Hashem*. As R' Nachman of Breslov z"l (1772-1810; Ukraine) wrote: When a person starts to rely on his own intellect and wisdom, he falls into many deep traps and makes many mistakes. The essence of Judaism is to walk in the way of faith, without calculations.

If we start editing our liturgy based on our own understanding, R' Konig continues, where will we draw the line? How many *Mitzvot* and holy customs of our ancestors will we "edit" as well, based on our own understanding? Of course, we should try to understand what we are doing, but we have no right to stop any accepted practice just because we do not understand it.

(Quoted in *Otzrot Geonei Ha'dorot: Shabbat Kodesh* II p.293)

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R' Leib Mintzberg z"l (1943-2018; Yerushalayim and Bet Shemesh, Israel) explains the *Midrash's* indictment of Yosef as follows: *Hashem* created a world in which a person must engage in *Hishtadlut*; not only is it necessary, it is what *Hashem* wants. Just as wheat must be planted, watered, weeded, etc.--it will not grow if one merely has *Bitachon*--and just as food requires cooking and other preparation, so nearly all aspects of life require some effort on a person's part in order for them to succeed.

However, R' Mintzberg continues, the degree of *Hishtadlut* that is appropriate varies from person-to-person and from time-to-time. Everyone is required to examine his own life experience to determine how much *Hishtadlut* is expected of him. When people do that, some will find that nothing comes easily to them--a sign that *Hashem* expects significant *Hishtadlut* on their part. Others will find that they are successful with minimal effort--an indication that significant *Hishtadlut* on their part is wrong; instead they should rely on their *Bitachon*. (Of course, we don't know how *Hashem* determines in which group a person will be.)

We read about Yosef in last week's *Parashah* (39:2-3), "*Hashem* was with Yosef, and he became a successful man . . . whatever he did *Hashem* made succeed through him." We read further (39:23), "Whatever he did *Hashem* made successful." As such, Yosef should have realized that he was a person who should minimize his *Hishtadlut* and have greater *Bitachon*. For Yosef, in his personal circumstances, even the little bit of *Hishtadlut* he did by asking the Egyptian for help was too much. (Ben Melech Al Ha'Torah: Vayeishev)

"Now let Pharaoh seek out a discerning and wise man and set him over the land of Egypt." (41:33)

Why did Yosef believe that it was part of his role as a dream interpreter to offer advice to Pharaoh?

R' Aharon Friedman *shlita* (*Rosh Yeshiva* of Yeshivat Kerem B'Yavneh in Israel) writes: Perhaps another reason Yosef had to remain in prison for an additional two years is that if he had been released merely because he correctly interpreted the dreams of Pharaoh's baker and cup-bearer, he would have become just one more member of Pharaoh's existing staff of dream interpreters, spending the rest of his life interpreting nonsensical dreams for anyone and everyone in the palace. During those two more years that Yosef sat in prison, he reflected on why he was left to languish there, and he concluded that he was meant to interpret a very important dream and to make a big impression. That is why he offered the suggestion recorded in our verse.

R' Friedman adds: There is a lesson for us in this episode. One can choose, for example, to offer commentary about the economy or society's ills, or one can choose to make a difference. Likewise, a person can be someone who theorizes about the future *Geulah* / redemption, or he can choose to be someone who helps to bring that *Geulah* closer. (Parashat Milchamah)

"It happened at the end of two years to the day . . ." (41:1)

Midrash Rabbah applies to Yosef the verse (*Tehilim* 40:5), "Praiseworthy is the man who has made *Hashem* his trust, and did not turn to the arrogant and to strayers after falsehood." Says the *Midrash*: Because Yosef said, "If only you would think of me . . . and mention me," he had to remain in prison two more years. [Until here from the *Midrash*]

Many commentaries ask: The *Midrash* seems, at first, to be praising Yosef for his *Bitachon* ("Praiseworthy is the man who has made *Hashem* his trust") and it further says that he "did not turn to the arrogant." Then the *Midrash* seems to do an about face and criticize Yosef for turning to Pharaoh's cupbearer for help in getting out of prison.

R' Shlomo Kluger z"l (1785-1869; rabbi of Brody, Galicia) offers a novel explanation (a different novel explanation by R' Kluger was presented last week): Our verses in fact demonstrate Yosef's great trust in *Hashem*. The *Mishnah* (beginning of *Avodah Zarah*) teaches that one must avoid engaging in certain transactions with idol-worshippers within three days before their holidays--including the king's birthday--so that they do not give thanks to their idols. When Yosef interpreted Pharaoh's cupbearer's dream, Yosef was concerned that the Egyptian might give thanks to his idol for the good interpretation he received. Therefore, Yosef said to him: Do not think that the good interpretation of the dream is a reason for you to be thankful. To the contrary, you had that dream and are being released from prison "only [so that] you will think of me . . . and mention me." Yosef was not afraid to tell the cupbearer that the latter was merely a pawn in the process.

Why, then, was Yosef condemned to remain in prison two additional years? Because, though Yosef understood that *Hashem* has many agents and Pharaoh's cupbearer was just a tool, the latter did not share Yosef's complete trust in *Hashem* and he might give thanks to his idol that he was chosen to be the instrument for Yosef's release. For this slight miscalculation, Yosef had to remain in prison another two years.

(*Avodat Avodah*: Introduction)

R' Avraham Yeshayahu Karelitz z"l (1878- 1953; Bnei Brak, Israel; the "*Chazon Ish*") explains the above *Midrash* as follows: On the one hand, Yosef was a person of very strong *Bitachon*. Yosef knew that his release from prison was not dependent on any initiative of his own, but he also knew that the way of the world is that a person must engage in some *Hishtadlut*/making efforts to help himself. Therefore, he asked the cupbearer for help. In this case, that was wrong because the Egyptian--referred to by the *Midrash* as "arrogant" and a "strayer after falsehood"--was not the type of person who would remember to feel gratitude to Yosef and remember to help him. As such, Yosef's request was not proper *Hishtadlut*; it looked like an act of desperation, and that is prohibited. (*Emunah U'bitachon* 2:6)