

## **The matter appeared good in Pharaoh's eyes. (41:37)**

Pharaoh accepted Yosef's interpretation of his dreams. It is not as if Pharaoh did not have his own wise men who were quite articulate in interpreting Pharaoh's dreams. He heard what they had to say, but it was not to his liking. The dreams were not speaking to him personally. After all, he was a king, an individual responsible for an entire country. Instead, Pharaoh was enamored with Yosef's interpretation. A clever king understands that the vision which he sees is not personal. It must embrace an entire country and must influence the lives of his subjects. Yosef told Pharaoh that he was fortunate to be privy to Hashem's plans for the future. They were being revealed to him, so that he could make provisions for the future. The wise man is one who sees the unfolding of G-d's purpose in the general scheme of things and shapes his life accordingly and must influence the lives of his subjects. Yosef told Pharaoh that he was fortunate to be privy to Hashem's plans for the future. They were being revealed to him, so that he could make provisions for the future. The wise man is one who sees the unfolding of G-d's purpose in the general scheme of things and shapes his life accordingly.

Furthermore, Yosef interpreted Pharaoh's dreams with a sense of foresight concerning the future. Pharaoh dreamt of seven well-fed cows, followed by seven lean cows, who quickly swallowed up their predecessors. Then he dreamt again, a similar dream, but with different players. Seven full ears of corn were being devoured by seven withered ones. Pharaoh's advisors saw seven daughters to be born to Pharaoh, but these daughters would die. His advisors, like so many people, thought in terms of the past, with no message for the future. That was the thinking in the decadent Egyptian society of the time: live and die and be forgotten; no legacy for the future – no thoughts about tomorrow.

Yosef was a Jew. We do not live in the past. We never forget the past, but we always think of the future. In his wisdom, Yosef taught Pharaoh a new way to view life, a rich, new philosophy, a philosophy which thinks of – and prepares for – the future. He understood the importance of not ignoring any opportunity to prepare during the good years for the lean years that are certain to come. He emphasized that tomorrow must go hand in hand with yesterday. Do not live in the past; take the past with you as you look toward the future. You will not survive tomorrow unless you prepare for it today.

"Today" is the link between "yesterday" and "tomorrow." Today determines whether there will be a tomorrow. Today must carry over from yesterday, or we will have no tomorrow. Of the three Avos, Patriarchs, Yitzchak Avinu is described as the one who represents and exemplifies the *middah*, attribute, of *gevurah*, strength: not Avraham Avinu, who was the founder of the Jewish faith; nor Yaakov Avinu, who triumphed in his battle against Eisav and Eisav's angel. It is Yitzchak, who succumbed to Eisav's guile and was "deceived" by Yaakov (who came in dressed as Eisav). Yitzchak is portrayed as holy, the *Olah Temimah*, perfect sacrifice, but not as strong. Yet, he symbolizes *gevurah*. Why? *Dayan Moshe Swift, zl*, explains that, in a chain, the middle link must be strongest, because it holds together the first and last, the front and back. Yitzchak was able to

accept the *Mesorah*, Tradition, from Avraham and transmit it to Yaakov. He succeeded in imbuing his son, Yaakov, with the *emunah tehorah*, pure faith, of his father, Avraham. This took enormous strength.

Hillel and Shammai debated concerning the lighting of the *Chanukah menorah*. We decide the *halachah* like Hillel, who says that we kindle one light on the first night and then recite the blessing. On the second night, we kindle two candles, one for today and one for yesterday. On day three, we light three candles, two for the days gone by and one for today. We progressively increase the candles by working our way backwards, today, yesterday, the day before, *k'neged yamim ha'yotzim*, corresponding to the days "gone by." This is because we cannot make a blessing for today unless yesterday accompanies it. There is no Judaism for the Jew unless he considers the past.

Why did Hashem have to create a miracle whereby the oil from the past continued to burn? He could have sent down fresh oil from Heaven or new olive oil from the earth. Such a miracle would probably have had more impact. Why use an old flask of oil that would only suffice for one day? The lesson is obvious (I think): Better one drop of the good "old" oil than all of the new. New does not always last; the old lasts. Indeed, it is still here. *Chanukah's* message is to seek out the old, keep it, learn from it, and build upon its "shoulders."

There were those, however, who refused to light the "old" *menorah*. They sought a new *menorah*. They slowly extinguished the light of the *menorah* of the past, replacing it with a new, more modern *menorah* – one that sadly has been unable to withstand the winds of change, ignorance and neglect. Yosef insisted on keeping yesterday's light burning. Allow it to inspire you as you transmit its glow to your children. Then your children will follow you by carrying on the flame and passing it to their children – until we are able to greet *Moshiach Tzidkeinu* with it.