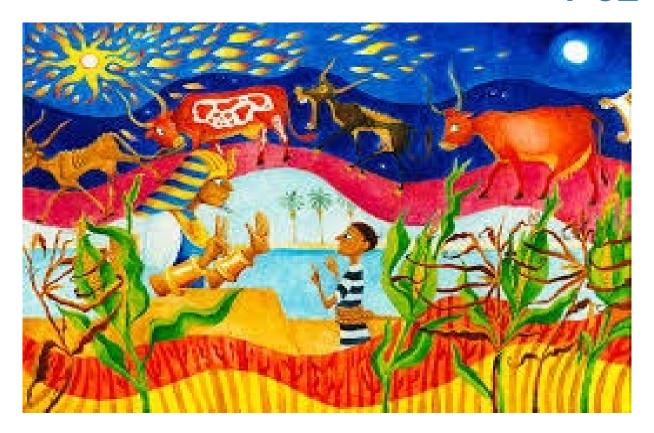
בס"ד



Parashat Miketz

מתוך "ליקוטי שמואל"

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The Meaning of Yosef's Gratitude: "I Have Forgotten All About My Father's House"

Parshas <u>Miketz</u> Rabbi Yissocher Frand

The *pesukim* in Parshas Miketz say, "Now to Yosef were born two sons... Yosef called the name of the firstborn Menashe, for 'G-d has made me forget all my hardship and all my father's house.' And the

name of the second he called Ephraim, for 'G-d has made me fruitful in the land of my suffering." (Bereshis 41:50-52). The name Ephraim is readily understandable. Ephraim was called by that name because Yosef was showing his gratitude to the *Ribono shel Olam* that he merited having two children in the Land of Egypt, which was otherwise a terrible place for him. The name Menashe is a little more difficult to understand: "For the *Ribono shel Olam* made me forget all that I went through and my father's house" (according to the translation of Targum Onkelus).

Many commentaries, including Rav Shimshon Raphael Hirsch, ask the obvious question: Why is Yosef proud of the fact that he forgot his father's home? When someone is asked "why do you do such and such?" – the typical answer is "because that was the practice in my father's house." So much of our traditions are based on what we saw in our parents' and grandparents' homes! These commentaries reject the idea that Yosef is thankful that Hashem made him forget what he saw in his father's house. I saw two interpretations that address this question – one in a sefer called Revid Yosef, and another from Rav Yisrael Salanter. The interpretations are similar, but different.

The Revid Yosef says as follows: When Yosef says "kol beis avl" he is not referring to the practices of Yaakov Avinu. Yosef was not talking about whether Yaakov Avinu made kiddush sitting or standing. He was not talking about the practice of Yaakov Avinu on Motzai Shabbos Chanukah, whether Yaakov made havdalah first or lit Chanukah candles first. He was not talking about such practices. What was Yosef talking about? In today's terminology, Yosef had experienced trauma. He suffered trauma when his brothers wanted to kill him and almost did. Unfortunately, we hear all too often in our society that children suffer trauma at home. Whether

it is abuse or other environmental issues in their parents' home, trauma can leave a terrible impression on a person. It can permanently saddle him with psychological baggage. People sometimes need to spend years in therapy, costing thousands of dollars, to deal with childhood trauma.

According to the Revid Yosef, Yosef Hatzaddik is proclaiming that Hashem did him a great favor by granting him amnesia regarding the trauma he experienced in his father's home. He was able to put all those painful experiences behind him without being scarred for life by them. It was as if Hashem pressed the delete button on that part of his brain, and he did not remember it anymore. Therefore, he did not have the baggage, and therefore, he did not bear a grudge.

We see this all too often. A person goes through life angry with something or someone and can't function normally. Anger is like a monkey on a person's back. The psychological and emotional baggage can be debilitating. Yosef expressed gratitude that he was spared these memories: *ki nasahni Elokim es kol amalee v'es kol beis avi*.

Rav Yisrael Salanter says almost the same thing, but with one significant difference. He writes that Yosef expressed gratitude that he was able to **make himself forget** what his brothers did to him. Yosef is thanking Hashem for giving him the strength to work on himself and be able to erase these painful memories from his memory bank. It was not a gift from Hashem that he was struck with amnesia and forgot the whole thing. No! "I worked on myself and I was successful in causing myself to forget it!"

Rav Yisrael Salanter teaches that Yosef is demonstrating that a person is in fact, capable of ridding himself of traumatic experiences – with *s'yata D'shmaya* (Divine assistance) – by his own

efforts. It is humanly possible. The question is, how does a person do that? What is the key?

I want to explain this with an incident I read in a sefer called Me'Orei Ohr.

There was a woman who went to an Arachim Seminar. She was sitting there listening to the lectures. After one lecture, she went up to the speaker and told him the following: "I am 30 years old and I am not married. I have not been able to go out for the last 10 years. Why? It is because at 20 I was engaged to someone to be married, and a week before the wedding, the *chosson broke* our *shidduch* and left me high and dry. I can't get over that. It scarred me for life to the extent that even 10 years later, I still cannot get over it." This woman added, "Not only did he break the wedding, but I called up the catering hall, and they told me that he had already cancelled the wedding two weeks prior to when he told me he was breaking off the engagement!" This whole experience so devastated her that she was incapable of even going out on a date.

The speaker told her: You are not telling the story correctly. The real story is the great **favor** that Hashem did for you by saving you from marriage to such a despicable person! You are the luckiest girl in the world. Imagine what it would be like to be married to such an unethical and horrible person. That is how you need to perceive this whole incident in your mind.

That "reframing" of this trauma gave her a whole new perspective. The worst thing imaginable did not happen to her, but rather, *Hashem*, in His mercy, saved her from a fate that would have been far worse.

This is the key to how Yosef Hatzadik did it, as well. Yosef Hatzadik told his brothers, "You planned this matter to be something bad for me, *Elokim* planned it to be something good for me." (Bereshis

50:20) Not only did *Hashem's* plan save me, it also saved my family and the entire world from starvation. "Look at what the *Ribono shel Olam* did! He put it in your heads that I was a *rodef*. You sold me down to Mitzrayim. We know what happened after that. The rest is history." Yosef was able to reframe the "bad event" into a "favorable event."

This is what Rav Yisrael Salanter means when he says that Yosef was able to **make himself forget** the trauma of the life in his father's house. He was able to find a silver lining in what seemed to be a horrible cloud. This is not the easiest thing in the world to do, but it is sometimes the key to how we need to look at things – to try to see how what we perceive as "bad" is really "good." Admittedly, this is difficult, but it is a far better way than living life with a monkey on your back.

Shabbos Candles and Chanukah Candles – Polar Opposite Messages

The Gemara says (Shabbos 23b) that "someone who is meticulous in the candle (*ha'ragil b'ner*) will have sons who are Torah scholars." Rashi interprets the term "*ha'ragil b'ner*" as referring to someone diligent when it comes to the *mitzvos of* Shabbos candles and Chanukah candles.

There are no "magic formulas" or "silver bullets" in Yiddishkeit. However, Chazal are teaching us here that there is something about *ner Shabbos* and *ner Chanukah* that makes it likely that a person who raises children in such a home will have children who are *talmidei chachomim*. What is the message that Chazal are trying to teach us? What is the message of *ner*

Chanukah and ner Shabbos?

Ner Shabbos and *ner Chanukah* have polar opposite symbolisms. *Ner Shabbos* is all about shalom *bayis*. It is

an **internally** focused mitzvah– how to maintain peace and tranquility in a person's home. *Ner Chanukah* has a totally different message. *Ner Chanukah* is about *pirsumei nissa*, which is an **external** broadcast. It is about having an effect, not inside the four walls of my house, but outside the four walls of my house. If that is the case, perhaps *Chazal* are teaching us the following message: The key to a person having "good children" is by combining *ner Shabbos and ner Chanukah*.

It is not uncommon to have someone who *klapei chutz* (on the outside) is the nicest person in the world, the type of person who will give you the shirt off his back. He is always ready to help. A wonderful person! But sometimes the greatest people "*b'chutz'* (outside) are not the greatest people "*b'fnim'* (inside). When they get into the confines of their own home, Mr. Nice Guy turns into Mr. Tyrant or Mr. Temper or Mr. My-Way-Or-the-Highway! Such a fellow excels in *ner Chanukah*. Vis a vis *pirsumei nisa* – projecting outward – he is great. But as far as *ner Shabbos, k'lapei pnim*, the internal harmony at home leaves a lot to be desired.

On the other hand, it is perhaps a little less common scenario for a person to be wonderful only at home. He is a true Ben Torah, meticulous in his mitzvah observance. But when he goes out into the larger world, he sort of changes his uniform. He does not want to act like that. Whether it is peer pressure from others who don't act like that, or perhaps fear of being accused of being a "frummy," he changes his act. On the outside he is a different person than on the inside. His shalom bayis, represented by ner Shabbos, is perfect; but his ner Chanukah – what he broadcasts to the outside world – is something else.

If children do not see consistency in their parents, they pick it up right away. If the great person on the outside is a terrible father or a terrible husband on the inside, children see the contradiction. On the other hand, if they see how the parent acts on the outside with his friends and they see that the parent is a different person inside, they get that as well. They don't need to be teenagers or adults to see these contradictions. They pick up on it very early in life.

Children cannot tolerate inconsistency and hypocrisy. That is what Chazal are trying to teach us. Someone who is meticulous about both Shabbos candles and Chanukah candles has the same care and concern about his actions within the home and outside the home. Such consistent behavior is a *segulah* (fortuitous omen) for children who will be Torah scholars. Of course, there are no guarantees in life, but when parents are consistent role models – both inside and outside the home – this greatly increases the chances that the children will wish to follow in their parents' footsteps.

Let us pray that Hashem should grant all of us children who see consistency in us both *m'ba'chutz* as well as *m'bi'fnim,* and who are or become *talmidei chachomim*. This will be the biggest Chanukah present for all of us.

It's Not the Lottery Number — It's the Man

Parshas <u>Miketz</u> Rabbi Yissocher Frand

The *pasuk* says in Parshas Miketz "And Yehudah said, 'What can we say to my master, what words can we speak and how can we justify ourselves. The L-rd has found the sin of your servants (*haElokim matza es avon avadecha*)" (Bereshis 44:16). When the brothers are "caught with the goods", even though we know the viceroy's goblet was planted in Biynamin's baggage, Yehudah

"confessed" and said "Elokim matza es avon avadechd" – the Ribono shel Olam is behind this for we have sinned before Him.

This seems like a strange reaction for Yehudah to respond to Yosef. Remember, they are working under the assumption that Yosef is an Egyptian. Not only is he an Egyptian, but he is a dictator. From what they can tell, he is a dictator without compassion. Imagine, for instance, that you are brought in front of Vladimir Putin and the Russian Government has some kind of claim against you. Say Putin accuses you of being a thief, a spy, and of committing all kinds of capital crimes. What do you say to Vladimir Putin? Would you say "HaElokim matza es avon avadecha? Chatasi, aveesi, pa'shati! I have done something against the Master of the Universe!"

Putin would say, "Who is the Master of the Universe?" I don't think Putin believes in a G-d. The brothers assumed they were dealing with an Egyptian idolater. "Elokim" has no currency with him. Is this not a strange thing to say to him – Ha'Elokim matza es avon avadecha? This is not his language. It is one thing to get caught doing something wrong in a Yeshiva, and the when Mashgiach calls you in for a dressing down, you say "Ha'Elokim matza es avon avadecha." That has currency with the Mashgiach. It would not have currency with Putin, and it would not have currency with Yosef in his role as the Viceroy of Egypt. That is one observation I would like to put on the table.

The other observation is that I think that the contrast between Yehudah's remarks to Yosef here at the end of Parshas Miketz and his remarks a few *pesukim* later at the beginning of Parshas Vayigash is noteworthy. There, in Vayigash, Yehudah very much changes his tune. In fact, Rashi there says that from the fact that Yehudah had to preface his remarks with the words *VAI Yeechar Apcha b'Avdecha* (...And don't get angry at your servant...),

we see that Yehuda spoke harshly to Yosef. He is no longer contrite in speaking before the Viceroy, nor does he take responsibility for having done something against the *Ribono shel Olam*. At that point in time, Yehuda knows what happened. He realizes that the goblet was planted in Binyamin's suitcase and that they are being framed. Obviously, he must have respect for the Egyptian monarch, but he is letting Yosef have it! What happened between the end of Parshas Miketz and the beginning of Parshas Vayigash? What brought Yehudah from a state of admission and contrition to now telling Yosef in effect – You are the crook here!?

I saw an explanation regarding this switch in tone in the *sefer Nachalas* Eliezer from Rav Eliezer Kahan, who was a Mashgiach in Gateshead. There is a theme that runs throughout the whole story of Yosef and his brothers.

Rav Yisrael Salanter mentions a principle: There is something called the *Sibah* (Cause) and something called the *MeSovev* (effect). Many times in life, people are blinded as to what really is the real cause of something. If a secular person were to look at the situation over here and see that Yosef is in fact, framing them, he would say that the reason behind this is that Yosef sees them as potential slaves or as wealthy people, from whom he can eventually obtain a large ransom. Therefore, this is happening to them because Yosef has some ulterior motive to try to get something out of them. Yosef is framing them.

That, however, is not the real reason this is happening. This is merely the *MeSovev* – the effect. The cause of why this is happening is that the *Ribono shel Olam* is angry and upset at the brothers. At the end of Parshas Miketz, Yehudah acknowledges the *Sibah* – the Cause. The "Cause" goes back years and

years. *Elokim matzah es avon avadecha* – He found the sin we committed against our brother.

That is WHY it is happening. Now, how does it manifest itself? We have this fellow in Egypt who is a tyrannical dictator who is bringing this all about at this particular time and is framing us. The religious Jew, the honest Jew, the one who looks at life as "The *Ribono shel Olam* runs the world" is looking at it as *HaElokim matzah es avon avodecha*. Whenever something upsetting happens to a person – if he gets into an accident, if he loses his job, if he doesn't get a promotion, whatever it may be – a person needs to have the perspective that "*HaElokim matzah es avon avadecha*." This is the *Sibah*.

This is the difference between Parshas Miketz and Pashas VaYigash. Parshas Miketz is the gut-level reaction of an honest Jew who believes in Hashem. His reaction is immediately, "I have done something wrong. G-d is punishing me for my sins." The Ehrliche Yid looks for the Prime Cause – the real Sibah of why something is happening to him, not the superficial cause for the aggravating situation. The *Sibah* for everything is the *Ribono shel Olam*. In Parshas Vayigash, Yehudah deals with the *MeSovev* – the effect or secondary cause: I know we've done something wrong, but wait a minute, Yosef, you are framing us. That is why the tone changes here. But the gut level action – the way a person needs to look at life – is Yehudah's reaction at the end of Parshas Miketz. The Torah says that when Pharaoh removed his ring and made Yosef the Viceroy over all of Egypt (Bereshis 41:42), Pharaoh gave Yosef his ring, a chariot, and a gold necklace. Why is Pharaoh doing this to Yosef? Is it a reward for being so smart or so brilliant for coming up with his plan to save Egypt? The Medrash explains that Yosef deserved everything he received from Pharaoh. His mouth that did not kiss in sin (the wife of Potiphar) was rewarded by the

statement "Al peecha yeeshak kol aml" (through your mouth all my nation will receive their sustenance) (Bereshis 41:40). His body that did not engage in this sin was rewarded by being clothed in royal clothing (Bereshis 41:42). His neck that did not bow down to the sin was rewarded by a golden necklace being placed upon it (ibid.). His hand that did not participate in touching Potiphar's wife was rewarded by the King's ring being placed upon it (ibid.). His feet that did not step forward to do the sin were rewarded by allowing them to ride on the royal chariot (Bereshis 41:43). Etc., etc., etc. The Medrash is teaching exactly this same idea. At a superficial level, all these things happened to Yosef because Pharaoh wanted to express his pleasure with him. However, at a deeper level, they all happened for a spiritual reason. Each of these rewards was given to him by the Ribono shel Olam. Pharaoh was just the *MeSovev*. However, the *Sibah* – the real reason was that his mouth did not sin, his legs did not sin, his hand did not sin, his neck did not sin, etc.

There is a famous story with Rav Yisrael Salanter that brings this concept down to something to which we can all relate. There was a lottery for a lot of money. But it was not like today's lottery, where millions of people buy tickets for a dollar each. Years ago, there was something called the Irish Sweepstakes – which had a very big cash prize, but it cost a lot of money to buy each ticket. There are still a few lotteries like that.

This fellow bought a ticket, paying a lot of money for the ticket, more than he could afford. He was waiting for the drawing. In the meantime, he found himself short on funds for basic daily expenses. He didn't have money for this, he didn't have money for that. So he sold his ticket to his friend. Lo and behold – the number hits! His friend won the lottery!

The original purchaser was devastated. He did *teshuvah*, he studied *mussar* books, this and that. He went over to Rav Yisrael Salanter and told him what happened to him and why he was so distressed. Rav Yisrael Salanter told him, "Don't you know it is not the number that wins the lottery – it is the man that wins the lottery." If you had kept the ticket, you would **not** have won, because the *Ribono shel Olam* does not want you to win. This way, at least you got your money back. Consider yourself lucky! You would have never won! If the *Ribono shel Olam* does not want a person to win the lottery, he will never win it, no matter what number he has.

Aval Asheimim Anachnu

"The brothers proclaimed one to another 'We are guilty about our brother, whose suffering we saw when he pleaded to us, and we paid no attention. Therefore, this trouble has come upon us." (Bereshis 42:21)

I would like to relate another story, this one involving Rav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld (1848-1932). In 1929, the infamous massacre occurred in Chevron. The Chevron Yeshiva had come from Slabodka in Europe to Chevron. In a premeditated attack, the Arabs attacked the Yeshiva and the Jewish quarter of Chevron and killed 67 students and wounded another 58. (I once met a Jew in Far Rockaway who was a very heavy fellow. During the massacre, he stood at the door of the Yeshiva trying to block the entrance so the marauding Arabs could not enter. All of his fingers were cut off in that incident because the door was slightly open. He survived, but he lost his fingers.) After this incident in August 1929 the survivors of the Yeshiva moved to Jerusalem. That is why the Chevron Yeshiva today is in Yerushalayim. They left Chevron.

After this incident, some people came

to Rav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld and asked why this happened to Chevron. They suggested to him "It happened because in Chevron they play soccer on Shabbos."

Rav Yosef Chaim, who was no softy, got up from his table. He held onto the table and said, "Who are these people who play soccer on Shabbos in Chevron? These are people who came from Russia. They were drafted into the Czarist army. They were forced to eat *treife*. They were forced to be *Mechalel Shabbos*. They had no connection with their parents. They made Aliyah. They don't know any better. So they play soccer on Shabbos. Why would you expect them to know any better with that type of background?" He said, "The soccer players are not guilty because they don't know any better. *AVAL ASHEIMIM ANACHNU*! (But it is we who are guilty.) It is our fault because we know better and we are not behaving properly. These were the very words uttered by Yosef's brothers in this week's parsha – *AVAL ASHEIMIM ANACHNU*!

The Brisker Rav used the same concept. When Yonah was on the boat in the middle of the terrible storm at sea and the boat was about to go under, the *Navi* relates that everyone took out their idols and began praying to their idols. Yona said, "It is because of me that this great storm has come upon you." (Yona 1:12).

The Brisker Rav asked – what did Yona mean by this? All the other sailors and passengers were taking out their Avodah Zarah and worshipping their idols, yet Yona, the prophet of G-d was saying "It's my fault!" How are we to understand this?

The answer is yes. The *Ribono shel Olam* holds the people who know better accountable. I am not suggesting anything about any current event. No one knows why a specific tragedy occurs. But when confronted with such questions, our reaction has to be what Ray Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld said back then and what the

Brisker Rav said in his time. The answer is AVAL ASHEIMIM *ANANCHNU*. We need to point the finger at ourselves. What exactly we are doing wrong is not for me to say, and I don't know if it is for anybody to say short of a Navi. But we can say one thing: Don't blame "them." Most of "them" don't know any better. The people who know better are the people that should be held responsible. That is the message of AVAL ASHEIMIM ANACHNU. A Freileche Chanukah!

Written by Benjamin A Rose

This week, Yoseph is transformed from a brutalized, libeled, and mocked slave into the Viceroy of Egypt, the world's most powerful nation. In a matter of moments, Yoseph, sold as a Hebrew slave, is elevated by Pharaoh to second-in-command and holds the key to the world's food supply. what happened that led to this rise in power?

Pharaoh dreams a bizarre scene. Seven beautiful fat cows are devoured by thin strange ones. Diseased wheat stalks consume healthy ones. There is no trace of either the fat cows or robust stalks. Pharaoh woke up agitated in a cold sweat. What could it mean?

Not one of Pharaoh's advisers was able to interpret the dreams in a meaningful manner. Pharaoh's butler recalls his own strange dream of two years back. He tells Pharaoh that a Hebrew slave translated it accurately. Perhaps it would be worthwhile to interview him.

Pharaoh released Yoseph from jail and narrated the dream to him. Yoseph, after stating that it is Hashem who interprets all dreams, explained that seven years of famine will ultimately come and devour seven years of plenty that will precede them. The famine will be so powerful that the years of plenty will vanish without a trace. Like the fat cows and healthy stalks that were devoured without a sign, there will be no trace of the good times.

What happened next is startling. As if on cue, Yoseph begins to counsel Pharaoh, the ruler of the most powerful nation on earth, exactly how to preempt the imminent disaster. "And now Pharaoh shall appoint a wise and discerning man who will oversee the seven years of plenty." Yoseph then devises a plan to store the bounty of the good years to preserve it for the famine. He also arranges a method of distribution for the population (Genesis 41:33-37). Yoseph is extremely fortunate. Pharaoh picks him as the "wise and discerning man"!

Upon reading this section, one is amazed. Yoseph's interpretations followed rejections of a host of other interpretations, all by advisers who were well acquainted with the king. Yet, Yoseph, a lowly newcomer who had received his first bath and haircut moments earlier, supplements his interpretation by declaring to the King of Egypt exactly how to resolve the ensuing problems. This happened even before the king acknowledged his approval of the dream's interpretations! How dare this slave, released hours ago from prison, add his advice on domestic agricultural policy to the foremost ruler of the world?

Yoseph understood the challenge that lay before him. It would be thoughtless and irresponsible to interpret a dream and walk away. If he had the solution to the problem, it was his duty to suggest it. That was not without risk. Pharaoh might have considered him a yenta. How dare a lowly slave with intuitive powers tell the King of Egypt how to conduct domestic policy! However, Yoseph went beyond his initial calling. He felt that if the whole solution to the problem was in his hands, then withholding it was just as rash as misinterpreting the dream.

The ball was thrown his way, and he knew he had to do more than just catch it. He had to carry it.



Written by Reis Rodriguez

"In a place where there are no men (leaders) make yourself a man (leader)."

(Avot 2:5).

Joseph was imprisoned for 12 years. Last week's parasha ended with the wine-bearer forgetting to mention Joseph's dream-interpretation abilities to Pharoah. In this week's parasha, Pharoah has dreams, and none of the magicians in Egypt could interpret the dreams. Only then, two years after making the promise to Joseph, does the winebearer finally tell Pharoah of his meeting with Joseph. Two years?!?!? When the wine bearer was freed, Joseph probably thought it was his lucky day. Instead, two years pass until Joseph would have his chance to meet Pharoah.

When Joseph meets Pharoah, he not only interprets the dream but offers his recommendation on what action should be taken. Pharoah had no reason to accept Joseph's interpretation, let alone his advice. Why does Pharoah decide to do what Joseph suggests? There was no one else who could offer an interpretation. Not only that, but Joseph seemed to have a good track record for success.

Everything about this whole episode had to happen at the right time. If Joseph was freed right after the wine bearer, he would probably not become the #2 man in Egypt, the leading country in the world at the time. History might not have played out the same. It took two years for his chance to come.

When it came, Joseph made the most of the opportunity. There was no man and he became the man. You can be the leader when there is no leader, but only when the time is right. It doesn't matter how good you are, or what talents you might have if the time is not right. We live in a world where we want it all right NOW! Your time will come. When it does, make sure you really give it all you've got. You too can be freed from your prison and seated on top of the world.

Shabbat Shalom from Jerusalem!

Reis Rodriguez Nadav Simcha



Written by D Fine

On Thursday's shir shel yom, we see an interesting phrase. Yosef reports that 'I didn't know but did hear sfas' ('sfas lo yadati eshma.') what does this mean?

R Elon said that this relates to Pharoah's dream in our sedra. If you look at the description of his dream, it says Pharoah was standing ON the river (41;1), but when he relates his dream to Yosef, Pharoah says that he was on the banks ('sfas') of the river (41;17). Why did Pharoah change the events? Because the river was their god, and for Pharoah to admit that he dreamt and saw himself above (on) the river meant that he saw himself above their god, and that would not make him popular, at the very least. Thus, he was prepared to change the words to 'I was standing BY the river' and reduce the chances of an accurate interpretation, just because of his image. And this is why Yosef remarks 'I did not know sfas but I heard it' – ie, the word sfas (banks of river) that I heard from Pharoah, I didn't know were in his dream; coz they were indeed not in his dream!

The lesson? Be sincere and try and grow, as opposed to fake and pretend to be someone they are not.

Humor

- Which hand is best to light the menorah with? Neither, it's best to light it with a candle.
- How much Hanukkah gelt did the skunk get? One cent.
- What's the best Hanukkah gift for the person who has everything? A burglar alarm.

• Why don't we eat clowns at Hanukkah? Because they taste funny.

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