



Pardes's Parsha Discussion with Rabbi Alex Israel

TORAH TO DISCUSS WITH TEENS AND ADULTS AROUND YOUR SHABBAT TABLE

Miketz: Stockpile your Blessings!

Pharaoh's Dreams are the stuff of nightmares: Fat healthy cows are swallowed by ghoulish, sickly cows; Nutritious ears of wheat are consumed by sick, withered, blight ridden grain. No wonder that Pharaoh awakes frightened and disturbed.

"We all know the truth – bad times will arrive, sooner or later, in greater or lesser measure. The greeting that is sometimes extended to mourners, "שלא תדעו עוד צער" - "May you know no sorrow!" is an empty phrase; we will all know pain and sorrow! There is no escape from that.



Joseph's advice to the King of Egypt is not merely a specific mode of resolving the famine crisis that struck the Middle East in ancient times, but rather, a worthy approach to grapple with any tragedy that may befall us, whenever it should happen – to try to stockpile the abundance and the plenty. To preserve and store the good for the days in which the bad will come. To charge the batteries of blessing and to fill the storehouses of joy." (Rabbi Ilay Ofran – Rav of Kibbutz Yavne, Clinical Psychologist www.929.org.il/pack/פרשת-מקץ/post/1210)

If I may add one dimension to this idea, I would say that Joseph's genius was indeed the separation of the good cows from the bad cows; the healthy wheat from the battered wheat. This is the key to Pharaoh's dreams, **and also the key to Joseph's life**. Joseph could have allowed his personal good fortune to be swallowed by the bad. He could have let all his personal pain and bitterness eat up all the success and blessing which he had achieved. But Joseph knew to separate the two. He allowed his success and his achievements to overwhelm his personal misfortune. He called his son:

"Manasseh, meaning, "God has made me forget completely my hardship and my parental home." And the second he named Ephraim, meaning, "God has made me fertile in the land of my affliction." (41:51-52)

He left his suffering behind and he moved ahead. Likewise, he told Pharaoh to embrace and store the bounty and plenty before the bad years could consume them, allowing the goodness to overwhelm and heal his misery. If bad times can be anticipated, and if we can count our blessings and the years of good fortune, the good times might offer some perspective and resilience from which to view and to plan for times of hardship.

Please Discuss:

- How is Rabbi Ofran using Pharaoh's dreams as a generic message beyond the episode of Pharaoh? What is the "technique" that Rabbi Ofran identifies in Joseph's analysis of Pharaoh's dreams?
- Have you ever encountered someone who went through a difficult period; of bereavement, violence or illness, and has emerged happy and successful? – What was the secret of their success?
- How can holding onto "bad times" sometimes consume the goodness in our lives?

Shabbat Shalom, and Happy Hanukah!