

# PHARAOH DELIVERS A NOT SO SUBTLE REMINDER: I MADE YOU WHO YOU ARE

*by Rabbi Yissocher Frand*

## Parshas Miketz

### Pharaoh Delivers A Not So Subtle Reminder: I Made You Who You Are

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These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape # 529, Ner Chanukah: Where, When, and Other Issues. Good Shabbos!

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After hearing Yosef's interpretation of his dream, Pharaoh acknowledges: "You are the wisest man in all of Egypt. You shall be over my house and by your command shall all my people be sustained; only the throne shall outrank you." [Bereishis 41:39-40] Then the very next pasuk [verse] says: "Then Pharaoh said to Yosef, "See! I have placed you in charge of all the land of Egypt." [41:41]. What is this pasuk adding? What does it come to teach us?

I saw a very interesting insight from Rav Shalom Schwadron. Normally, even the best of human beings feel the need to remind people of the fact that they have done them a favor. However, the less one reminds a person of a favor he had done for him in the past, the closer he is to being angel-like.

In Sefer Shoftim (Chapter 13 -- the Haftorah of Parshas Nasso) we learn the story of the angel who appeared to Manoach and his wife announcing the birth of their son, Shimson. After the long narration when the angel first came to announce the birth to Mrs. Manoach and then the angel's second appearance to repeat the message to Manoach himself, the Navi writes: "The Angel of Hashem did not continue anymore to appear to Manoach and his wife, then Manoach realized that he was an angel of Hashem." [Shoftim 13:21] That was the proof! Had he been a human being, after Shimshon was born, he would have returned and said "Nu? How is the little boy?" He would

somehow or another try to remind the childless couple of his own role in their present great joy and the "debt they owe him" for the role he played.

The behavior of an angel is the far end of the spectrum. We cannot aspire to be angels. But if we want to know the opposite end of the spectrum, the "zero" on the scale, it is right here in Parshas Miketz: "Then Pharaoh said to Yosef, 'See! I have placed you in charge of all the land of Egypt.'" That is what this pasuk is saying. Without subtleties, without social grace, Pharaoh is clobbering it over his head: "Don't forget: I am the one who made you who you are -- always remember that!"

Even we may never reach the scale of the Angel of G-d, nonetheless, we should not be Pharaohs either! When we do a person a favor -- get him a job, help him find a shidduch, give him a loan - do not go looking for gratitude. It is hard enough to be the recipient of a favor; we should avoid constantly "rubbing it in".

## **A Thought For Chanukah**

When we recount the miracle in the text of "Al HaNissim," we mention the extraordinary, outstanding, victory: "the strong were delivered into the hands of the weak; the many into the hands of the few."

Normally, the many defeat the few and the strong defeat the weak. Here the opposite occurred. That was all part of the miracle.

The rest of the text doesn't seem to be as logically connected to the miracle of the victory: "Impure into the hands of the pure; wicked into the hands of the righteous, and the wanton into diligent students of your Torah." Why is that miraculous? What are the Men of the Great Assembly who enacted this text trying to tell us?

Chazal are trying to explain that the victory of "the strong into the hands of the weak" and "the many into the hands of the few" was achieved through the fact that "the wanton are delivered into the hands of those who are diligent students of your Torah." The bottom line is that when there are people who are sitting and learning, the army can be victorious. Jewish armies do not win out of might or out of strength or out of brains or greater strategy or higher tech weapons. The final word is that the wanton are given over to those who occupy themselves with your Torah.

This is the key to every military victory that Jews will ever win. They will win only and solely because of those who occupy themselves with your Torah. This is the interpretation of the pasuk: "The voice is the voice of Yakov and the hands are the hands of Eisav" [Bereishis 27:22] "If the young students chatter with their voices in Torah, then the Jews will be untouchable and if not, they are vulnerable." [Yalkut Shimoni Parshas Toldos]

This is the story of Jewish military history. The first military battle the Jewish people were engaged in when they first came to Eretz Yisrael was the Battle of Yericho [Jericho]. The night preceding that

battle the Angel of G-d came to Yehoshua bin Nun appearing as a General. A famous Gemara describes the dialog between the two.

The Angel told him that he had neglected to offer the afternoon Tamid offering that evening and now he was neglecting Torah study. Yehoshua asked for which of the two sins, was the angel being sent to rebuke him and was told that it was for the sin of Torah study neglect ('Ata basi' - concerning the current sin I have come). Straightaway: "Yehoshua tarried that night in the midst of the valley (ha-emek)" [Yehoshua 8:13]. Rav Yochanan said this shows that he tarried in the depths (umkah) of halacha. [Megilla 3a-b]

Rav Eliyahu Lopian comments that the Angel apparently came in the wrong disguise. If he was coming to chastise for lack of diligence in Torah study, he should not have come dressed like a four star general. He should have come dressed like a Rosh Yeshiva. Let him come dressed in a Kapota [long jacket worn by Roshei Yeshiva]! Generals do not criticize lack of diligence in Torah study. That is the job of Roshei Yeshiva.

Rav Lopian answers that the general's message was "I want to fight successfully. But in order for me to be a successful general, I need the "troops" to be learning. "If you are not learning, we will not be successful on the battlefield."

At a different point in Jewish history, there was a battle where Sancherev King of Ashur laid siege on Jerusalem. Everyone in Israel thought that it was a lost cause, but in the middle of the night a miraculous thing happened. Without lifting a sword, the entire army of Sancherev was wiped out by an Angel of Hashem. The military victory was achieved without firing a shot. Why?

The Talmud explains [Sanhedrin 94b] that something that was unique about Chizkiyahu's generation. The King had stuck a sword by the entrance of the Beis HaMedrash [Torah Study Hall] and proclaimed: Whoever does not occupy themselves with Torah will be pierced by the sword - Learn or face the sword. They investigated between Dan in the North and Beer Sheva in the South and did not find a single ignoramus. They checked between Givas and Antipras and could not find a boy or girl, man or woman who were not well versed in the (complicated) laws of ritual purity.

When Jews are "holding in learning" to that extent, they do not even have to fight the battles. The "oskei Torasecha" (those who occupy themselves in Torah) carried the day.

That was the miracle of Chanukah. That was the fight of Yehoshua bin Nun in Yericho. That was the fight of Chizkiyahu against Sancheriv. That has been the story of every Jewish military victory from time immemorial.

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