

# THE SWEETEST GIFT IN LIFE: PEACE OF MIND

*by Rabbi Yissocher Frand*

## Parshas Miketz

### The Sweetest Gift In Life: Peace of Mind

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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 #573, The Silver Menorah and Other Chanukah Issues. Good Shabbos!

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Pharaoh was disturbed that he had no interpretation of his troubling dreams. He heard about a person named Yosef who was a master dream interpreter. Pharaoh was very keen to see Yosef as soon as possible. Pharaoh sent for Yosef and "rushed him from the dungeon". Yosef took a haircut, changed his clothing, and was brought before Pharaoh [Bereishis 41:14]. Rashi explains that he took a haircut and changed his clothing because of 'kavod malchus' [giving due honor to the king].

Rashi implies that the haircut and change of clothing was Yosef's idea. The meaning of the first verb in the pasuk [verse] (va'y'reetzuhu) is THEY took him out (of the dungeon). If the pasuk meant to say and THEY gave him a haircut, it should have continued "vayegalchuhu". Instead, it says "vayegalach" [and HE took a haircut]. Likewise, it should say "vayachleefu" [and THEY changed his clothes] instead of "vayechalef" [and HE changed his clothes]. The singular subject of the verb regarding taking a haircut and getting a change of clothes indicates that these were all Yosef's ideas. Rashi explains that his motivation was 'kavod malchus'.

Imagine this scene: Yosef is pining away in jail all these years. It is already two years since he asked the wine butler to mention him to Pharaoh. Nothing happened. One day the jailers knock on his door and say "Okay. Pharaoh wants to see you." Yosef could have been thinking "This is just what I've been waiting for. This is my ticket out of jail!"

But when the jailers are rushing him to see the king, he interrupts them and says, "Wait a minute. I need to see a barber." They take him to the barber, he gets his haircut and they again start rushing him to the palace. Once more he protests, "Wait a minute! I need to go shopping. I cannot go before

the king in prison garb. This would be disrespectful to the king."

What does this say about the peace of mind and serenity of the soul (yishuv ha'daas / menuchas hanefesh) of Yosef?

The demonstration of tranquility continues when Yosef comes before Pharaoh. The king tells him, "I've heard you know how to interpret dreams." Pharaoh is well known to have no patience whatsoever. He does not tolerate incompetence very well (witness the fate of the Baker and the Wine Butler for the most minor of offenses). Pharaoh was a tyrant and a murderer. Today's tyrants are Cub Scouts compared to Pharaoh. He had no world opinion whatsoever to worry about.

Despite this reputation, Yosef's first response to Pharaoh is to contradict Pharaoh's statement and in a self-deprecating fashion, explain that only G-d would be able to give Pharaoh a satisfactory explanation of his dreams. In effect, he told Pharaoh: "I can't do a thing to help you on my own. We'll have to see if G-d will allow me to interpret the dreams for you or not."

From where does Yosef get such peace of mind and coolness? The answer is that Yosef is the quintessential example of a Ba'al Bitachon [a person that is absolutely confident that everything that happens to him is the Hand of G-d]. With such an attitude, one can rest assured that he has nothing to fear. There is no need to rush. There is no need to worry. "My fate is in the Hands of the Master of the Universe."

The Chovos HaLevovs (Bachye Ibn Pakuda) writes that the main benefit for a Ba'al Bitachon is menuchas hanefesh [peace of mind]. We all know how hard it is to be a Ba'al Bitachon. When one's financial situation is not going well, when -- Heaven forbid -- there is illness in the family, it is very difficult to be a Ba'al Bitachon. But it provides a tremendous advantage. The greatest benefit is that there is nothing to worry about. The true serenity that all of us cherish comes from Trust in the Almighty.

Rav Matisyahu Solomon asks from where Yosef managed to draw such strength of confidence. Rav Matisyahu Solomon answers by citing the pasuk in Parshas Vayeshev: "And his master saw that Hashem was with him, and whatever he did Hashem made succeed through him." [Bereishis 39:3] Rashi comments on the words "and he saw that Hashem was with him" (ki Hashem ito) (based on the Medrash, when explaining how Potiphar was able to discern this about Yosef): "The Name of Hashem was constantly on his lips" (shagur b'piv). No matter what happened to him, he would always psych himself out and say: "This is what the Almighty wants."

This was not just lip service. Yosef said this over and over until it had a profound effect on him and he MEANT it. It is easy to talk a good game. It is another thing to "walk the talk" and live a good game.

If a person talks in those terms enough, eventually he will think in those terms and ultimately if he thinks in those terms, he will come to the level of Bitachon [Trust] in the Almighty through which he will truly achieve a serenity and tranquility that allows him to calmly face all of life's travails.

One can ultimately stand in front of the most powerful human being in the world and not be fazed in the slightest. He will be in a relaxed state, knowing that the Ribono shel Olam is in charge and His Will will prevail.

In our own lives, we've seen prisoners of conscience who came out of the Soviet Union or who survived Nazi concentration camps. We ask ourselves -- how did they have such fortitude? How is it that they were able to survive those horrors without breaking? They had this measure of supreme Bitachon. It is a very hard level to achieve, but once one has achieved it, he has attained one of the sweetest gifts in life.

### **Yosef Protests The Loss of His 'Good Luck Cup'**

At the end of the parsha, Yosef sends his brothers away and instructs his servants to plant his silver goblet in the sack of his youngest brother. He then instructs these servants to pursue the brothers and inquire of them "Why have you returned favor with wickedness? Is it not the one from which my master drinks and with which he regularly divines (nachesh yenachesh bo)? You have done evil in how you acted!" [Bereishis 44:4-5]

The servants were to tell Yosef's brothers that this goblet was not only special for its silver content and monetary value, it was not only their master's favorite drinking cup, but it was the cup he used for his superstitious practices. It is the cup he used to perform sorcery. When he wanted to know how things will go in the future -- will it be a good day or bad day -- the cup would tell him!

Again, when the brothers are brought back before Yosef (not yet realizing that he is their long lost brother), he chastises them: "How could you do this, did you not know that a man such as myself, a person in my position, needs such a cup to practice 'nichush' [superstition]?" [Bereishis 44:15]

What is all this emphasis on 'nichush'? What does it mean that a person in such a position needs 'nichush'?

Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch links the word 'nichush' and the word 'nachash' [serpent]. There is a connection between superstitions and snakes. In the normal course of human events, if one wants to achieve a goal, he needs to go from point A to point B and from point B to point C, and so forth. This is the law of cause and effect. One works, he makes money; one is good, he is rewarded. Most people operate with such a mindset.

One who wants to "beat the system", to achieve a goal without having to go through the normal means of having to achieve that goal must use 'nichush'. 'Nichush' is the approach one takes when he wants to achieve something without having worked for it.

The only animal in creation that doesn't walk a straight line is the snake. Every animal in the world goes straight; the snake slithers. The 'nachash' takes a crooked path. This is what superstition is all about. It is about achieving goals, without having worked for them.

Yosef wanted to convince his brothers that he was an Egyptian. A Jew, one brought up in the House of the L-rd, knows that the only way to achieve goodness in this world is to be good and to act appropriately. Reward will come to those deserving of it.

Egyptians don't think like that. They want to receive the goodness without having to work for it. They want to achieve undeserved goodness. When superstition controls one's life, he is liberated from having to work in order to achieve. If it is "in the cards" or "in the stars" -- according to this philosophy -- one can get things even though he does not deserve them. This allows one to act however he wants.

Yosef -- in trying to disguise himself from his brothers -- tells them, in typical Egyptian philosophy: How does a slave like myself become second in command to Pharaoh? It must be sorcery. It must be my good luck cup! Take away my good luck cup and I am nothing! A person cannot achieve such fame, fortune, and good luck as I did through any other means but sorcery, luck, and superstition.

Such an idea was foreign to Yaakov's children and should be foreign to anyone raised in a home of Jewish values. We believe that one earns reward by deserving reward. There are no superstitious shortcuts to expect or to rely upon.

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This write-up was adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tape series on the weekly Torah portion. The complete list of halachic topics covered in this series for Parshas Miketz are provided below:

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