

# HOW YOSEF GOT HIS JOB

*by Rabbi Yissocher Frand*

## Parshios Miketz & Chanukah

### How Yosef Got His Job

*Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape #837, Hairbrushes on Shabbos. Good Shabbos!*

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When Yosef interpreted Pharaoh's dream (and gave a solution for the situation foretold therein), the Torah writes: "And the matter was good in Pharaoh's eyes and in the eyes of all of his servants. And Pharaoh said to his servants 'Is there another man to be found (like Yosef) who has the spirit of G-d within him?'" [Bereishis 41:38-39] Pharaoh then went ahead and appointed Yosef as overseer of the massive campaign to collect the food in order to prepare for the years of famine.

In one day, Yosef went from being a common petty prisoner in the dungeon to becoming the second most powerful man in Egypt, arguably the second most powerful man in the world. This is a very unlikely scenario. How does Pharaoh take a person who was in jail yesterday and elevate him in a moment to be the second in command in the Empire? Did he not have other trusted advisors -- a Secretary of Agriculture or a Secretary of Commerce who could have implemented Yosef's suggestions? How does a common criminal suddenly become the "Mishneh L'Melech" ("vice-President")?

I saw an answer given in the name of Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz. As an analogy, let us ask -- why did George W. Bush pick Dick Cheney to become his vice president? The process was that Dick Cheney was the person in charge of finding the right candidate to run on the ticket with Bush for the position of vice president. Lo and behold, Bush picked Cheney himself to be that person. Admittedly, Dick Cheney is a very smart person and he shared Bush's agenda, but Dick Cheney brought to the job something that no other candidate would have brought to the job. It was the most admirable quality a presidential candidate may look for in picking a running mate -- someone who himself does not want to become president!

There have been very caustic comments made about the office of vice president and exactly what

its value is. As George Bush (the first), who held the office of vice president for 8 years before he become president, once explained it in defining the office: "You die, I fly." To go to funerals for a living is not something that most people aspire to. Why then does anyone become vice president? Usually, they become vice president because they want to become president. Anytime a president goes into a second term, this right away causes problems. The vice president does not want to become tarnished by the record of his boss, so during the second term, he needs to start "distancing himself" from the person who gave him his job! This was Al Gore's problem. He did not want to be tainted with Clinton's problem. It is always problematic to take a person who wants to be president as vice president, but most vice presidents do want that top job. Dick Cheney brought that quality to the office -- he did not want to be president.

L'Havdil, Pharaoh saw in Yosef the quality which made him say "This is the man who I want as my vice-president, second in command!" When Pharaoh told Yosef "I've heard that you have this uncanny ability to interpret dreams" Yosef answered "I don't do it by myself, the L-rd will answer the welfare of Pharaoh." [Bereishis 41:16] In other words, he told Pharaoh, "my only power is that sometimes G-d gifts me with the ability to interpret dreams."

Now let us put ourselves in Yosef's shoes. He has just been taken out of prison. He has the opportunity to make a good impression, be released permanently from prison, and even become part of the government. The King gave him a compliment. Any other person would have reacted in a way which would acknowledge the King's description of him as having great talent. "Well, that's what they say sir. I do have this talent. I have done this before..." We would expect self-promotion. But what does Yosef say? "I can do nothing by myself..."

Pharaoh sees in Yosef a selfless, self-effacing individual who has no self-aggrandizing agenda of his own. Seeing this, Pharaoh said, this fellow might have been a prisoner yesterday, but tomorrow he is going to be my viceroy. A person who is so honest, self-effacing, and non-egotistical -- this is the person I trust to be my second in command.

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## The Torah Readings Of Chanukah

In the Torah Reading on Chanukah is from Parshas Nasso - the respective chapters of the offerings of the Nesi'im [Princes] during the 12 days leading up to the dedication of the Mishkan. Our tradition is that they started building the Mishkan on the 11th of Tishrei (immediately after Yom Kippur, the day Moshe descended for the third time from Mt. Sinai, having achieved atonement for the sin of the Golden Calf) and the Mishkan was completed on the 25th of Kislev. The actual inauguration of the Mishkan was put off until the first day of Nisan, which is when the Nesi'im started bringing their offerings. But since the Mishkan was actually completed on the 25th of Kislev, we read the section of the Nesi'im on Chanukah, to link the rededication during the Chanukah period with the original

dedication of the Mishkan in the time of Moshe.

The Medrash points out an anomaly in Halacha that exists here but nowhere else. We never allow a private person's offering (Korban Yachid) to be brought on Shabbos. Only public offerings (Korbanos Tzibbur) are "doche Shabbos" [may be brought on Shabbos]. Nevertheless, the offerings of the Nessiyim, which were private offerings, were brought for 12 consecutive days, which obviously spanned a Shabbos. Specifically, the offerings were started on Sunday and the offering of the Nossi [Prince] of the Shevet [Tribe] of Ephraim was brought on the seventh day, on Shabbos. This was a 'Horaas Sha-ah' -- a special one-time dispensation that a private offering could be brought on Shabbos.

The Chofetz Chaim offers a suggestion to explain this anomaly. The Medrash indicates that when the Nessiyim brought their offerings, every Shevet had in mind what they would be bringing. The first day, Nachshon ben Aminadav of the Shevet of Yehudah brought his offering. The second day was the turn of Nesanel ben Tzuar of the Shevet of Yissachar.

The second person to offer was faced with a dilemma. What should I bring? The first person brought a beautiful offering, but what should I bring? Should I bring the same offering? No! That is not going to be good enough anymore. He was tempted to bring something even more impressive, which would have put pressure on the third Nossi to bring something even more expensive and so on down the line.

It is very easy to fall into the trap of one-ups-man-ship. It is like kiddushim in shul. The first week's sponsor has one potato kugel. The second person to make a Kiddush the following Shabbos has to add kishke to the menu. By the third week they are adding "herring from New York". It quickly becomes a contest of outdoing one's predecessor.

What did Nesanel ben Tzuar decide? He resisted the temptation. He recognized that the purpose of the Mishkan was to bring unity to the Jewish people, not strife and competition. He recognized if they began the inauguration of the Mishkan with competition, there would not be 'achdus' [unity] amongst the Jewish people, there would be dissension. Therefore, he took heroic action and brought exactly the same type of Korban as did Nachshon ben Aminadav, thereby sending a message -- my friends, this is not the time for competition or ones-up-man-ship. His example was followed by the third, fourth, and fifth Nessiyim and so on down the line.

This explains why the Torah, which is so frugal with its words, spends 60 plus pasukim in repetition of that which we already knew. The Torah could have told us in a pasuk or two that they all brought the same offering. Why go through the repetition, over and over again? The Almighty is teaching: "It is so precious and dear to Me that you each brought the same offering and did not play ones-up-man-ship that I will give each Nossi the exact same amount of 'print' in the Torah."

The Chofetz Chaim suggests it could be for this reason -- the Almighty's pleasure at the unity of His children by this non-competitive gesture -- that He made an exception and ruled that 'This private

offering can even negate the laws of Sabbath.'

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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 this Parsha are provided below:

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