

grandeur had evaporated.³ The dreams served no longer as symbols of domination but of responsibility, and duty. Service not dominion had been granted him. Later, he, the vice-regent of the realm would regard himself as a true servant of his father and brothers, as an instrument of Providence, in saving them:

וַיִּשְׁלַחֵנִי אֱלֹהִים לְפָנֶיכֶם
 לְשׂוּם לְכֶם שְׂאֲרֵית בְּאֶרֶץ
 וּלְהַחְיֹת לְכֶם לְפָלִיטָה גְדֹלָה.

**And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity
 in the earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance.**
 (45, 7)

¹ See Ramban on Num 13, 32, s.v. וַיִּצְיֵאוּ אֶת דַּבַּת הָאָרֶץ

² One of the 32 *middot* or methods of Torah interpretation: "A general statement followed by a narrative, the latter is a particularisation of the former" cited by Rashi on Gen. 2, 8 s.v. *mi-kedem* q.v.

³ Cf. the Psalmist's reading of the Joseph story Ps. 105 vv. 18-19: "the iron entered his soul; until the time his word came true, the word of the Lord refined him." (cd.)

Nehama Leibowitz,

Miketz 1

New Studies in
 Bereshit - Genesis

JOSEPH BRINGS GOD INTO PHARAOH'S LIFE

We have already noted, in the previous sidra, how Joseph proudly proclaims his God, during his sojourn in a foreign country, amidst idolaters. He repels the advances of his master's wife ending with the words:

**How then can I do this great wrong
 and sin against God?** (39, 9)

In similar vein he replies to the imprisoned high officials of Pharaoh's court who are troubled by their dreams:

Do not interpretations belong to God? (40, 8)

They saw no possibility of finding anyone capable of interpreting their dreams in Pharaoh's dungeon. But the Hebrew prisoner replied that interpretations belonged to God and He chose whom He thought fit, to act as a vehicle for interpreting their dreams.

Again Joseph stands before the court of Pharaoh who had freed him from prison, possibly only temporarily, in order to interpret the dreams that had puzzled the magicians of Egypt. Pharaoh says to Joseph:

**I have heard say of thee,
 that thou canst understand a dream to interpret it.** (41, 15)

At this decisive moment in his life, hovering between advancement and reversion to the dungeon, he proudly proclaims the name of his God:

And Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying,
It is not in me:
God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace. (41, 16)

Let us read carefully the first section of Joseph's lengthy answer to Pharaoh in which he interprets the dream:

... what God is about to do He hath declared unto Pharaoh.

... The seven good kine are seven years; and the seven good ears are seven years;
the dream is one

... And the seven lean and illfavoured kine that came up after them are seven years, and also the seven empty ears blasted with the east wind; they shall be years of famine.

... what God is about to do He hath shown unto Pharaoh.

... Behold, there come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt.

... And there shall arise after them seven years of famine; and all the plenty shall be forgotten in the land of Egypt; and the famine shall consume the land.

... And the plenty shall not be known in the land by reason of that famine which followeth; for it shall be very severe.

And for that the dream was doubled unto Pharaoh twice, it is because the thing is established by God and God will shortly bring it to pass.

Now therefore let Pharaoh look for a man discerning and wise... (41, 25-33)

If we follow carefully the structure of his reply, we shall see that it comprises various stages.

First stage: A key to the symbols appearing in the dream, 26-27. The cows=years, the ears of corn=years, the two dreams are one.

Second stage: Explanation of the symbols and the relation between them—plenty and famine following in succession, 29, 31.

Third stage: The rescue proposal of Joseph in detail, following storage by the State of the surplus of the years of plenty with which to maintain the population in the lean years, 33-36.

Here is the speech of Joseph arranged in schematic form:

I. — Verse 25, 26-27

II. — Verse 28, 29-30-31

III. — Verse 32, 33-34-35-36

What function do the verses introducing each stage fulfil? Surely from the point of view of content they add nothing, neither to the explanation of the dream or to the advice how to meet the coming famine. Nevertheless, these three verses repeat something which forms the cornerstone of the whole structure of Joseph's speech to Pharaoh. Joseph in these verses refers to God as the power behind the scenes as the *doer*, the *shower*, the *declarer*, and the *bringer to pass*. The name of God thus occurs in these three verses and is even inserted twice in the last verse against all the rules of syntax, in order to emphasise the central role of Divine Providence.

It is because the thing is established by God
and God will shortly bring it to pass. (41, 32)

Here the pronoun "He" would have sufficed, "and He will shortly..." but Joseph proclaims the omnipotence of God at all times, in the midst of an idolatrous world, emphasising *against Whom* man sins, *Who* interprets dreams, *Who* foretells that which is to come and *Who* brings things to pass.

All this Joseph achieves not by a lecture or a discourse but by the rhetoric device of repetition. In the end, even Pharaoh took the hint and thus he answered:

Can we find such one as this,
a man in whom the spirit of God is? (41, 38)

Instead of approaching Joseph as he did at first, in the light of an "expert" who had been brought out of the dungeon to interpret the royal dream—

I have heard say of thee, that thou canst understand a dream to interpret it—

Pharaoh addresses him as follows:

Forasmuch as God hath shown thee all this... (41, 39)

Pharaoh, king of Egypt defers for the first time to the supreme King of kings.

Questions for Further Study

1. We have emphasised the repeated reference by Joseph to the Deity in chapter 41, verses 25, 28 and 32:
... what God is about to do He hath declared unto Pharaoh
... what God is about to do He hath shown unto Pharaoh
... it is because the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass.
We explained the significance of this repetition. Compare, in the light of this, Exodus 2, 23-25 and Numbers 32, verses 20-28, in particular, where Moses replies to the two and a half tribes. These passages similarly contain an unusual repetition of the name of the Deity. Explain the reason for this in both these passages.
2. Why did not Joseph make mention of the name of God again in his words beginning from verse 32 onwards?

Miketz 2

JOSEPH'S ADVICE

In the previous *Studies* of this sidra we demonstrated how Joseph proudly carried the word of God on his lips amidst Egyptian idolatry. From the moment of his entry into Egypt, during his term of employment in Potiphar's house, till his rise to Pharaoh's court, the name of Heaven accompanied his every utterance.¹

This is particularly evident in his speech to Pharaoh (41, 25-32) in which he invoked the name of God four times and on each occasion in a strategic part of his utterance, whenever he began a new subject:

- (25) What *God* is about to do He hath declared to Pharaoh
(28) ... What *God* is about to do He hath shown to Pharaoh
(32) ... it is because the thing is established by *God* and *God* will shortly bring it to pass

It is obvious that this emphasis is deliberate to show the king of Egypt, his wise men and princes, his people and the whole heathen world who is the Doer, the Declarer, the Shower, and the Bringer to Pass.²

We shall deal this time with that part of his speech containing no mention of the Deity but concerned with the deeds and role of mortal man:

Now, therefore let Pharaoh look for a man discerning and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt. Let Pharaoh do this, and let him appoint overseers over the land and take up the fifth part of the land of Egypt in the seven years of plenty. And let them gather all the food of these good years that come, and lay up corn under the hand