

**Yad Avraham Institute**  
**WEEKLY TORAH COMMENTARY SERIES**  
*Parshas Mikeitz*

**Happy Chanukah**

December 10, 2004

**Presented By: Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky, *Shlita***

---

<b><i>Inside This Week's Edition</i></b>	<b><u>Page</u></b>
<b><i>1. The Basis for Yosef's Unusual Ascent to Power</i></b>	<b>2</b>
<b><i>2. Joy/Contentment</i></b>	<b>3</b>
<b><i>3. Maximizing On One's Focus</i></b>	<b>3</b>
<b><i>4. Torah Has the Power to Penetrate the Jew</i></b>	<b>4</b>
<b><i>5. The Impact of One's Expression</i></b>	<b>5</b>

***Last Week's Edition:***

Admission is Rooted in Truth  
 The Exceptional Dimension of a Mitzvah  
 The Far Reaching Ramifications of Love  
 Reading Life's Events  
 Avraham's Role in the Development of the Jewish People

**About the Yad Avraham Institute**

The Yad Avraham is a Torah learning institute located in midtown Manhattan. Classes are offered every day during the week starting at 5:50am and throughout the day. Classes in Chumash, Halacha, Hashkofa, Gemara, and general topics are well attended by businessmen, professionals, and students. The Yad Avraham invites you to participate in our extensive offerings of classes and events.

If you would like to receive this Weekly Torah Commentary Series by email

Please call 212-371-9555 or email:

[info@yadavraham.org](mailto:info@yadavraham.org)

**TUNE IN TO OUR LIVE VIDEO BROADCAST OF CLASSES**

[www.yadavraham.org](http://www.yadavraham.org)

Yad Avraham Institute  
New York  
December 10, 2004

B"H

## Parshas Mikeitz

Presented by

Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky, *Shlita*  
Dean

### 1. The Basis for Yosef's Unusual Ascent to Power

After Yosef had interpreted the dreams of Pharaoh, he was appointed to be the Viceroy of Egypt. The Torah states, **"Then Pharaoh said to Yosef, 'See! I have placed you in charge of all the land of Egypt.' And Pharaoh removed his ring from his hand and put it on Yosef's hand. He then had him dressed in garments of fine linen and he placed a gold chain upon his neck. He also had him ride in his second royal chariot..."** Yosef was vested with the power of the monarch of Egypt with the exception of the throne, which was exclusively Pharaoh's. When the Torah describes the transfer of power it mentions in detail the various vestments/regal garments that were meant to be worn by Yosef. What is the significance of this delineation?

The Midrash explains, "When Pharaoh removed his ring and gave it to Yosef, it was something that he deserved. Through the mouth of Yosef the nation will kiss..." Meaning, anything that transpired in Egypt was only through the dictate which emanated from his mouth because it was not contaminated/violated by sin. The Midrash continues, "The neck that was not involved in sin shall be adorned with a gold necklace. The hands of Yosef which did not come in contact with sin shall be adorned with the ring. The body that did not become contaminated by sin shall wear linen vestments. The legs that did not become involved with sin shall be transported by the royal chariot. The mind that did not contemplate sin will be identified with wisdom..."

It is interesting to note that when the wife of Potiphar attempted to seduce Yosef, the Torah tells us that he fled from her presence. Sforno explains that Yosef had realized that had he remained any longer in her presence he would have been overtaken by his evil inclination and would not be able to extricate himself. Yosef had not

intended to be brought to that state. Because Yosef never contemplated sin he merited a unique level of wisdom.

The Gemara in Tractate Yomah states, "The storage location for Torah is one's *yiras shamayim* (fear of G'd)." As it is stated in the verse, "The fear of G'd is its (Torah) storage location." Reb Chaim of Volozhin z'tl explains the Gemara with an allegory. If one wished to give a large amount of wheat as a gift to another, the recipient would need to have a sufficient amount of storage space to accommodate that gift. If he does not have adequate capacity to store and preserve the wheat, regardless of his ability to give, the benefactor will withhold the gift because it will be ultimately scattered and trampled/wasted in a public setting. Similarly, it is the one who has the fear of G'd who has the capacity to appreciate the Torah and its sanctity and thus will have the proper reverence for it. The only mind that can comprehend and attain the special level of wisdom contained in the Torah is one that has *yiras shamayim*. Thus, Yosef, who never considered engaging with his mistress, merited having a unique level of wisdom that transcended the limitation of human intellect. As the verse states, Pharaoh said – **"...a man in whom is the spirit of G'd..."**

The Gemara tells us that if one claims that he has toiled in Torah and has come upon it, he is to be believed. However if one claims not to have toiled in Torah and has come upon it, that person is not to be believed. It is only through the toiling in Torah that one merits its wisdom. G'd only grants one the wisdom of Torah if one demonstrates through his sacrifice and toil his appreciation for the value of Torah. Although one may have the intellect of a genius, he will not be endowed with the wisdom of Torah because he did not value it sufficiently.

Similarly if one's mind is pure and is permeated with spirituality, he will merit a unique level of wisdom,

which emanates from his spirituality. Every level of Yosef's success was rooted in his exceptional spirituality.

## 2. Joy/Contentment

The Torah states, **“Pharaoh was dreaming...The cows of ugly appearance and gaunt flesh ate the seven cows of beautiful appearance and healthy fleshed...”** Rashi explain, “The gaunt-fleshed cows devouring the healthy-fleshed cows symbolizes that the famine will be so severe that the joy of the bounty will be forgotten.” Rashi could have simply said that the famine would be so severe that the bounty will be forgotten. Why does he emphasize that the “joy” (simcha) of the bounty will be forgotten? Evidently remembering the bounty itself is not sufficient to ward off the effects of the famine, rather, one must remember the “joy” of the bounty.

The Mishna in Pirkei Avos states, “Who is the wealthy individual? The one who has joy (sodayach) in his portion/lot.” The Mishna does not state that the wealthy man is one who has “everything” or “enough.” Rather, it is the one who experiences joy/simcha in his portion who is considered wealthy. The only way one can be truly satisfied and content is if one experiences joy/simcha. If simcha is lacking, even if one has everything that he needs, he will feel lacking.

It is interesting to note that when one is in a state of mourning, he is not permitted to engage in Torah study (with the exception of the laws of mourning). The reason for this is based on a verse in Tehillim as King David states, “The dictates of G'd are fair, which brings joy to the heart...” Why did G'd create the Torah in such a way that it innately brings joy when the Jew studies it? Why did the Rabbis, when they authored the text of the blessing of the Torah, choose the words “...G'd, sweeten the words of Your Torah in our mouths and in the mouths of Your people...”?

One could say that in order to encourage people to engage in Torah study, it must be inviting and pleasant. However, based on our understanding of the value of joy/simcha, it is more profound than this. The essence of the life of the Jew is the Torah. Thus, as it is stated in Pirkei Avos (ethics of our fathers) “One's Torah study should be primary and all other endeavors secondary.” Unless one experiences the joy of Torah, which gives one

a sense of purpose and contentment, one would not be able to maintain it as a primary pursuit in his life.

The Torah states **“Let these matters that I command you today be upon your heart.”** Chazal explain that the Torah should be considered new in one's eyes as if it were given **“today”** at Sinai. What is the value of experiencing the Torah as something that retains its newness? One may say that if the Torah is considered “new” then it will be seen as special. This understanding cannot be entertained because this fact is true regarding any endeavor. The Torah would not have needed to use the word “today” to communicate this lesson of value.

The halacha/law dictates that if one experiences a joy that comes only on occasion, he must recite the blessing of “Shehechyanu...” One does not recite this blessing on a daily basis. There is even a halachic (legal) question if a mourner (who is in a state of grieving) is permitted to recite this blessing during his period of mourning because one cannot experience a sufficient level of joy.

The need for the Torah to remain “new” in one's eyes is alluding to the fact that one must experience the joy of Torah. Because the Torah itself is the mainstay of the Jew's life, he must see it as special/new for him to achieve contentment. It is stated in the “Tochachah” in the Book of Devarim that (G'd forbid), the curses will come upon the Jewish people because they did not serve G'd with joy and good-heartedness. Although the Jewish people fulfilled the Torah meticulously, nevertheless, they deserve tragedy because they did so without joy. If the fulfillment of the Torah is lacking in joy, the Jew cannot have a sense of purpose and contentment with G'd. Thus, there is a detachment from the source of all blessing – which is G'd Himself.

A Jew must feel privileged and fortunate that G'd has chosen him to be His people – as the blessing that we recite on the Torah states, “Blessed...You have chosen us from all of the nations and have given us His Torah.”

## 3. Maximizing On One's Focus

The Gemara in Tractate Shabbos asks, “What is Chanukah?” The Gemara cites a *beraisa* which states, “On the 25<sup>th</sup> day of the month of Kislev the days of Chanukah begin. One is not permitted to deliver a eulogy and one is not permitted to fast. There are eight days of Chanukah. The Greeks entered into the Sanctuary and contaminated all of the oil contained therein. When the

Chashmonaim gained the upper hand and defeated the Greeks, they found only one vial of pure oil bearing the seal of the High Priest. There was only sufficient oil to burn one day; however, G'd performed a miracle and the oil burned for eight days. The following year, Chanukah was designated as a holiday that is celebrated through praise and thanks to G'd."

When the Gemara answers the question "what is Chanukah?" why does it cite the beginning of the beraisa which states the prohibitions regarding eulogies and fasting? The Gemara should have only cited the beraisa which tells us the extent of the holiday (eight days) and the historical background which recounts how the holiday was established.

The Gemara in Tractate Berachos asks, "What is the basis for reciting a blessing before one partakes of food or drink?" The Gemara responds with the concept of *Kal V'Chomer* (logical deduction – which is one of the 13 methodologies which were ordained to Moshe at Sinai to interpret the Written Law). Just as the Torah obligates one to acknowledge G'd after one is sated after eating, although he is no longer in need, is it not logical to say that one must acknowledge G'd before one partakes of food when he is in a state of hunger (in need)?" The Gemara departs from this line of reasoning and concludes, "The reason one recites a blessing before partaking of food is based on the principle that one who benefits from this world without a blessing is considered as if he had benefited from something that was consecrated." The recitation of the blessing (acknowledging the source of the food item) releases the food from its consecrated state.

Reb Meir Simcha of Dvinsk z'tl points out that the blessing that one recites before eating is only of Rabbinic nature while the blessing after one eats is a Torah dictate. If the obligation of reciting a pre-blessing is derived through the principle of *Kal V'Chomer* (which is a method that was prescribed at Sinai for the interpretation of the Torah) then the pre-blessing should be classified as a Torah obligation and not Rabbinic. Reb Meir Simcha explains that the *Kal V'Chomer* employed to establish the obligation of the pre-blessing has a fallacy in its reasoning.

The reason one recites a blessing after one is sated is because the Torah tells us that one tends to forget G'd when one becomes complacent and secure. When one is in a sated state, such as after eating, he may be negatively impacted with this state of mind. Thus, the Torah requires one to immediately acknowledge that the source of his

satiation is attributed to G'd. However when one is in a state of hunger and is in need, one tends to have greater clarity and recognizes the source of his blessing. He is fully cognizant that he is in need of G'd's kindness. Thus, the Torah does not require one to recite the pre-blessing before eating.

In order for one to be able to recognize and be fully appreciating of G'd, one needs to be focused. Although fasting and saying eulogies are activities of great value, however, because their focus is not on Chanukah they are considered a distraction. For one to give proper praise and thanks to G'd for His exceptional Kindness, one cannot be distracted with anything else regardless of its value. Thus, before discussing the extent of Chanukah and its historical background (which obligates one to give praise and thanks to G'd) the Gemara presents a beraisa that communicates first what one must not do to be distracted.

The Chofetz Chaim z'tl would send his students to surrounding villages in the proximity of Radin (his community) in order to teach them about Judaism. He instructed his students to present and elucidate only one central point/message per Shabbos. If one presents multiple issues, regardless of the ability of the lecturer, one would not sufficiently impact upon the listener because one point will detract from the other. Thus, the Gemara needs to attain the attention of the Jew to fully focus on the event of Chanukah and not be distracted with anything else – regardless of its value.

#### ***4. Torah Has the Power to Penetrate the Jew***

Every day during the festival of Chanukah, we insert in the *Amidah (Silent Prayer)* the paragraph of *Al Haneesim* (on the miracles). It recounts how the Greeks oppressed the Jewish people and how ultimately the Jews were able to defeat them, despite the fact that they were few in number. It is stated in the *Al Haneesim*, "...The wicked Greek kingdom rose up against Your people Israel to make them forget Your Torah and compel them to stray from Your Statutes (Chukim)..." The Greeks had decreed that Torah study was a capital crime punishable by death. Seemingly, the Greeks understood that if they prevented the Jewish people from studying Torah they would ultimately stray from the Statutes (Chukim), which are laws that have no rational basis within the human context and are beyond the human intellect. What is the relationship between adhering to the Statutes and Torah

study? If a Statute is a law that has no rational basis, how could Torah study affect one's observance and adherence?

One can be committed to rational laws/Mishpatim purely based on one's humanitarian sentiments. One may give charity generously simply because he relates to the value of the cause or he feels the pain of the needy. Even if the Torah would not have stated the obligation to give charity, that individual would have been fully committed because of his feelings towards his fellow. On the other hand, the adherence to the Statutes (Chukim) is one that is solely based on one's commitment to do the Will of G'd. Dietary laws, the prohibition of combining wool and linen (shatnez), and the laws of the Red Heifer are classical examples of Statutes.

The Gemara in Tractate Kiddushin states, "Great is the study of Torah because it brings to actualization." Is it only that Torah study causes one to be knowledgeable and understanding of the laws so that he should appreciate and observe them – or does it go beyond that? The effect of Torah study has the innate ability to impact on a Jew when it is studied properly, even to value and relate to concepts and laws which are beyond the human intellect. Torah study itself penetrates and affects the spirituality of the Jew causing him to develop a second sense of valuing aspects of the Torah – such as Statutes which are not comprehensible. Therefore when one studies the mitzvos which are rational, the motivating force to perform and actualize them will no longer be based on one's emotion and intellect, but rather, the spirituality of the Jew sensing its value.

The Greeks understood and realized the paramount value of Torah study and its far-reaching ramifications. They wished to negate and purge the Jew of his spirituality. Thus, by decreeing that the Jewish people were not permitted to study Torah, they would ultimately cause them to lose their spiritual sensitivity. Consequently, even when they would perform many of the mitzvos, it would be only for humanitarian reasons and unrelated to G'd.

## 5. *The Impact of One's Expression*

The Torah states, "**Yosef had been brought down to Egypt. Potiphar, a courtier of Pharaoh, the Chamberlain of Butchers, a prominent Egyptian, purchased him...His master perceived that Hashem was with him, and whatever he did Hashem made succeed in his hand.**" Potiphar, the master of Yosef, who

was a pagan, was able to recognize that all of Yosef's success was attributable to his relationship with G'd. Although Yosef was a genius of unique dimension, it was evident to his master that his success was unrelated to his own abilities. How could Potiphar have such a level of clarity that he could trace Yosef's success to G'd?

Rashi cites Chazal who explain, "The basis for Potiphar to be able to recognize that G'd was with Yosef was because the Name of G'd was continuously intermingled with his speech." For example, Yosef would continuously say "Thank G'd", "G'd Willing", "With the Help of G'd" etc. This is similar to when Yaakov, Yosef's father, had brought Yitzchak the game that he had requested. Yaakov responded to his father when asked how he was able to return so quickly with the delicacies that he requested, "G'd brought it to me" rather than "I trapped it." Yaakov and his son Yosef expressed themselves in a manner that attributed everything to G'd. This was not merely a manner of speech but rather their reality. Thus, Potiphar realized that G'd was with Yosef only because of the manner in which Yosef perceived his own existence. He was a continuous beneficiary of G'd's kindness. Although Potiphar did not know G'd, and did not have the capacity to appreciate who this Being is, he recognized His association with Yosef because of Yosef's ongoing cognizance of His Presence. Thus, Yosef's success was attributed to G'd.

If a Jew expresses himself in a manner which indicates that his life and all his experiences are directed by G'd, then when he will succeed it will be attributed to G'd and not to his capability. Thus, a kiddush Hashem (Sanctification of G'd's Name) will be brought about because people will perceive G'd as a Being who has relevance to their own life. Even if one understands that all of his success in life is attributed to G'd, if he does not express it as such, then not only has he forfeited the opportunity to bring about kiddush Hashem, (in a certain regard), he has brought about Chilul Hashem (Desecration of G'd's Name). By not verbally acknowledging G'd, the individual is conveying to all those around him that his successes and failures are unrelated to G'd, but rather to himself.

Yosef was accused of attempting to rape his master's wife. He was sentenced to ten years in prison because of this accusation. While in prison he quickly rose to become the equivalent of the warden. In the tenth year of his confinement, Yosef was joined by two ministers of Pharaoh's court – the wine steward and the baker. He became their personal valet. The Torah tells us

that Yosef noticed that they were both in a depressed state. As it is stated, **“Yosef saw that that they were aggrieved...he asked, “why do you appear downcast today...they responded, “We dreamt a dream, but there is no interpreter for it.” Yosef responded, “Do not interpretations belong to G’d...”** Yosef offered to interpret their dreams because it is G’d who gives one the ability to decipher dreams. Meaning, G’d will bring clarity to their uncertainty.

When Pharaoh became aware that Yosef was endowed with the ability to interpret dreams, he was immediately summoned and hurried from the prison to be brought before pharaoh. When Pharaoh had said to Yosef, “I understand that you have the ability to interpret dreams,” Yosef’s response was, **“That is beyond me; it is G’d Who will respond with Pharaoh’s welfare.”** Rather than taking the opportunity to impress upon Pharaoh his own ability, he chose to respond that it was G’d’s doing and not his own.

Every day we acknowledge G’d (in the Amidah) that it is He who endows us with understanding and wisdom. We verbally acknowledge in His Presence that everything that we possess and everything that we do are attributed to Him. However, it is very often the case that one does not articulate this fact, although he believes that his success is due to G’d. One must be cognizant to express oneself in a manner that reflects the reality that everything that we have is endowed by G’d. It is only through this manner of expression that we can bring about a recognition that all blessing and success emanates from G’d.

**YAD AVRAHAM DAILY CLASS SCHEDULE**

***Energize your day...  
... with a solid morning of Torah study***

**Monday Through Friday**

5:50- 6:00 am	Chumash with Rashi
6:00- 6:15 am	Mishna
6:15- 6:30 am	Mishna Berurah
6:30- 7:25 am	Halacha
6:30 -6:45 am	Mussar
6:45 -7:25 am	Talmud—Tractate Shabbos
7:25 - 8:20 am	Davening Followed by Breakfast
8:20 - 8:45 am	Mishna
9:00 -10:00 am	Daf Yomi
2:00 pm	Mincha

**Special Weekday Classes**

**Monday**

- 11:15 – 12:15pm **Talmud: Sanhedrin**  
Location: Sunrise Capital 641 Lexington (25<sup>th</sup> FL.)  
Enter on 54<sup>th</sup> Street
- 12:30 – 1:30pm **Talmud: Avodah Zorah**  
Location: Shandholt 488 Madison Avenue  
Between E.51<sup>st</sup> and E.52<sup>st</sup>

**Tuesday**

- 12:15 - 1:15pm **Torah Insight Based on the Parsha**  
Location: Yad Avraham
- 1:30 – 2:30 pm **Talmud: Sanhedrin**  
Location: Sunrise Capital 641 Lexington (25<sup>th</sup> FL.)  
Enter on 54<sup>th</sup> Street

**Wednesday**

- 11:30 – 12:30 pm **Talmud: Sanhedrin**  
Location: Sunrise Capital 641 Lexington (25<sup>th</sup> FL.)  
Enter on 54<sup>th</sup> Street
- 1:00—2:00 pm **Derech Hashem**  
Location: Yad Avraham

**Thursday**

- 10:30 –11:30am **Tehilim with Malbim**  
Location: Yad Avraham
- 12:00 – 1:00 pm **Talmud: Sanhedrin**  
Location: Sunrise Capital 641 Lexington (25<sup>th</sup> FL.)  
Enter on 54<sup>th</sup> Street

**TUNE IN ON THE INTERNET  
FOR LIVE VIDEO BROADCAST OF SELECTED  
CLASSES  
[WWW.YADAVRAHAM.ORG](http://WWW.YADAVRAHAM.ORG)**