

D'var Torah for Miketz

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In Parshat Miketz, Yosef is still in prison. Egypt is about to experience 7 years of plenty and 7 years of famine, but before that, Pharaoh has two dreams with two parts in each. I would like to focus on the first part of the first dream.

"וַהֲנִיחַ מִן־הַיַּאֲרֵן עֶלְתָּ שִׁבְעַת פָּרוֹת יְפֹת מְרֻאָה וּבְרִיאֹת בְּשָׂר וַתִּרְעֶינָה בְּאֶחָד:"

“And behold, from the Nile were coming up seven cows, of handsome appearance and robust flesh, and they pastured in the marshland.”

Rashi wonders why the Torah describes the cows as both having handsome appearance and robust flesh. Isn't that really the same thing? Here is Rashi's answer.

"יפות מראה: סימן הוא לימי שובע, שהבריות נראות יפות זו לזו, שאין עין בריה צרה בחברתה:"

“of handsome appearance: This was a symbol of the days of plenty, when creatures appear handsome to one another, for no one envies his fellow.”

Rashi answers that “of handsome appearance” tells us something more than “robust flesh”. It means that the cows appeared handsome to one another. Each one looked admiringly at the other without jealousy since they all had the best possible appearance. There is no room for jealousy if everyone has the best that can be. The dream means that the seven years of plenty would be years of amazing abundance.

I was wondering whether people could ever be like that. We don't all have the same talents and possessions. Is there any way that we could not be jealous of others? I think there is a way. It is for each person to only pay attention to what he has and not what she doesn't have. This idea is found in Mishna Pirkei Avot. Perek 4 Mishna 1 says:

"איזהו עשיר? השמח בחלקו."

“Who is rich? One who is satisfied with his lot.”

This means that if we concentrate on what we do have and not on what we don't have, and if we choose to appreciate what we have, we will feel like rich people and probably not be as jealous of those that have more.

For example, if your friend has the newest computer, you could think, “*It's not fair*”, and get upset. Instead, you could think “*I have a computer that works for what I need, and it doesn't have a virus!*”

If your friend has 20 of something and you only have 10, you could think, “*That's not fair! Why does he have more?*”, and you'd be jealous and sad. Instead, think, “*Maybe he has more but I still have a lot!*”, and be much happier!

This positive attitude works also in cases where jealousy wouldn't be a problem, but disappointment might be. If it's rainy outside for part of the day, you might think, “*I can't go outside for half the day!*” and be miserable. Or you could think, “*I am able to go outside for half the day! What a blessing!*”, and be happy.

Although we are not like the seven cows that had everything, we can still be satisfied and feel like rich people by concentrating on what we have and being grateful for it.