

Parshah Miketz

- Parshat Miketz is the tenth parshat in the Torah. The text of this parshat is Genesis 41:1-44:17.
- We begin reading “And it came to pass at the end of two full years, that Pharaoh dreamed: and, behold, he stood by the river.” The parshat is named miketz after the first distinct word of this parshat which means “and it came to pass”
- This parshat can be broken into the following segments: Pharaoh’s dreams; Joseph’s plan; Time of famine; First trip to Egypt; Return home to Canaan; Second trip to Egypt; and, Return trip to Canaan.
- Pharaoh’s dreams: Two years after the butler was restored to his place in Pharaoh’s household Pharaoh had a dream. In his dream he saw seven well-fed healthy cows come to the river and feed on reed-grass. Behind them came seven malnourished cows that ate up the well-fed cows. Pharaoh awoke from the dream and fell back to sleep only to dream a second dream. In this dream he seven healthy ears of grain upon one stock and springing up after them were seven lean ears of grain blasted by the east wind. The seven thin ears of grain ate the seven healthy ears of grain and Pharaoh awoke.
- In the morning Pharaoh was troubled by these dreams. He called together all his magicians and wise men to tell them the dreams but none of them could interpret the dreams. The chief butler told the story of how he and the baker both had dreams in prison. There was a young Hebrew servant in prison also who interpreted the dreams for them and his interpretations came true. Pharaoh called for Joseph to be brought before him. After Joseph was made presentable he came before Pharaoh who requested Joseph to interpret his dreams. Joseph responded that it is not he but God who would give Pharaoh the answer. Accepting this answer, Pharaoh told Joseph his dreams. Joseph told Pharaoh “The dream of Pharaoh is one; what God is about to do He has declared unto Pharaoh.” The seven healthy cows and seven healthy ears of grain represented seven good years. The seven ill-fed cows and seven lean ears of grain represented seven years of famine. “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.”
- Joseph’s plan: Joseph then presented a plan to Pharaoh. Joseph told Pharaoh to take a man “discreet and wise” and place him over the land of Egypt who would appoint overseers over the land. A fifth part of the land of Egypt would be taken up during the seven years of plenty. All the food of these seven years would be gathered and stored under the hand of Pharaoh for the food in the cities. This plan pleased Pharaoh and his servants. “And Pharaoh said unto his servants: ‘Can we find such a one as this, a man in whom the spirit of God is?’” Pharaoh said to Joseph that because God has shown all this to him that Joseph is a discreet and wise man. Joseph was set over Pharaoh’s house and everyone in the land must adhere to Joseph’s words – only Pharaoh would be superior to Joseph. “And Pharaoh said unto Joseph: ‘See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt.’” Pharaoh gave Joseph his signet ring and dressed him in fine clothes. Joseph was

sent out across Egypt and declarations to Pharaoh's commands were sent out across the entirety of Egypt. "And Pharaoh said unto Joseph: 'I am Pharaoh, and without you shall no man lift up his hand or his foot in all the land of Egypt.' And Pharaoh called Joseph's name Zaphenath-paneah; and he gave him to wife Asenath the daughter of Poti-phaera priest of On. And Joseph went out over the land of Egypt."

- Time of famine: Joseph was 30-years-old when he interpreted Pharaoh's dreams. Joseph went throughout Egypt and during the seven years of plenty he brought in great heaps of food into the stores of Egypt.
- "And unto Joseph were born two sons before the year of famine came, whom Asenath the daughter of Poti-phaera priest of On bore unto him. And Joseph called the name of the first-born Manasseh: 'for God has made me forget all my toil, and all my father's house.' And the name of the second he called Ephraim: 'for God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction.'"
- The seven years of plenty came to an end and a famine descended upon all the lands except Egypt which had prepared for the coming famine. When Egyptians became famished they cried out to Pharaoh. Pharaoh told them to go to Joseph for food and do as he says. When the famine was upon the land of Egypt Joseph opened up the storehouses and sold grain to the Egyptians. People from the surrounding lands also came to Egypt to purchase grain.
- First trip to Egypt: Jacob heard that there was grain in the land of Egypt and sent his ten sons to Egypt to purchase grain for the household. Jacob did not send Benjamin with his brothers in case harm would befall him. The ten brothers came to Egypt and bowed before Joseph. Joseph recognized his brothers but they did not recognize him. He spoke roughly with his brothers and inquired where they had come from and what they were doing in Egypt. The brothers responded that they had come from Canaan to buy food. Joseph acted harshly accusing them of spying on Egypt to "see the nakedness of the land." The brothers denied the charge insisting that they were upright men. Joseph however accused them again of being spies. The brothers insisted that they were the sons of one man from Canaan whose youngest brother was yet with their father and they had lost another brother. Joseph again accuses them of spying.
- Joseph declared that the brothers would not be able to return to Canaan unless their youngest brother first comes to Egypt. Joseph told them that one of them would be sent to bring back their youngest brother in order to prove that they are not spies. Thereupon Joseph put them in prison for three days. On the third day Joseph declared to them that one must stay behind in prison while the others carried grain back to their families. They shall then return with their youngest brother in order to prove that they were not spies. The brothers declared that they were being punished for treating Joseph as they had instead of taking care of him as a fellow brother. Reuben spoke up admonishing them for he told them not to harm Joseph but now his blood must be avenged. An interpreter stood between the brothers and Joseph and they did not know that Joseph understood what they were saying. He turned away from them and wept. When Joseph returned to the brothers he spoke to them and then had Simeon bound before their eyes. Joseph then commanded that each man's sack be filled with grain and their money restored to them – concealed in the sacks – and they were to be given provisions for the journey home.

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- Return home to Canaan: Joseph's brothers placed the sacks upon their asses and left Egypt. When they had stopped at a resting place one of the brothers opened his sack to give feed to his ass and discovered his money in the sack. He told his brothers what he had found and they became afraid saying, "What is this that God has done unto us?"
- The brothers returned to Canaan and told their father all that had befallen them. The brothers explained that they were spoken to very roughly and accused of being spies. They told Jacob how they defended themselves but one of them had to stay behind in prison and they could not return to Egypt unless Benjamin returned with them. Each one of the brothers emptied their sacks only to have discovered their money. When Jacob and the brothers saw the money they became very afraid. Jacob declared that since Joseph and Simeon were both gone that he would not permit Benjamin to go back to Egypt with his brothers. Reuben stepped forth and told Jacob that if he did not return Benjamin from Egypt then Jacob was free to kill Reuben's two sons. Jacob responded, "My son shall not go down with you; for his brother is dead, and he only is left; if harm befall him by the way in which you go, then will you bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave."
- Second trip to Egypt: The famine was great in Canaan and the grain the brothers brought back was gone. Jacob told his sons to return to Egypt and purchase more grain. The brothers reminded Jacob that they could not return to Egypt unless Benjamin was with them. They pleaded with Jacob to allow them to take Benjamin with them so they could purchase more grain. Israel admonished them for having even spoken of Benjamin to the Egyptians. The brothers responded that the "man asked straightly concerning ourselves, and concerning our kindred" and they responded honestly to his inquiries. Judah rose and told Israel that he would be responsible for Benjamin and his father could require it of him if he did not return Benjamin safely to his father. Judah argued that it is not right to stop them from going to Egypt for the family would starve without the grain. Israel relented telling the brothers to take a gift, double the money, and Benjamin with them to Egypt to purchase more grain. Israel said, "And God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may release unto you your other brother and Benjamin. And as for me, if I be bereaved of my children, I am bereaved." The brothers took the gift, double money, and Benjamin and went to Egypt.
- Upon seeing Benjamin, Joseph ordered that meat be prepared and the brothers would dine with Joseph at noon. The servant obeyed Joseph and brought the brothers into Joseph's home. The brothers became afraid wondering if they were to be kept as bondsmen because of the returned money. The brothers went to the steward of the house and explained the situation with the money the first time they came to Egypt. The steward responded, "Peace be to you, fear not; your God, and the God of your father, has given you treasure in your sacks; I had your money." He then brought Simeon out unto them. The brothers were then ushered into Joseph's home where their feet were washed and food was provided to their asses. The brothers made the gift ready for they heard that they would be eating with Joseph at noon. When Joseph arrived they bowed to him and gave him the gift. Joseph inquired as to the welfare of their father. Upon seeing his brother Benjamin he asked the brothers if he was their youngest brother. Upon hearing the affirmative answer Joseph blessed Benjamin. Joseph began weeping and quickly left the room to weep quietly in another chamber. Joseph washed his face and returned to his brothers. The Egyptians ate separately from the Hebrews for Egyptians would not eat with Hebrews "for that is an abomination unto the Egyptians." The brothers sat in birth-order and portions were given to each of them but Benjamin received five-times the portion of the others. The brothers ate, drank,

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and were merry with Joseph.

- Return trip to Canaan: Joseph commanded that the steward of the house fill the brothers' sacks with as much grain as they could carry and to again conceal their money in the sacks. Joseph also told the steward to place his silver goblet in the sack of Benjamin along with his money.
- In the morning the brothers set out for Canaan. When the brothers had not gone very far Joseph sent his steward after them. The steward was to stop the brothers and ask them why they repaid kindness with evil. When the steward overtook the brothers they said that they had returned the money that was given back to them the first trip and they denied stealing any goblet. They declared that the person whose sack is found to be carrying the goblet would die and the others would become Joseph's bondsmen. The steward declared that he who had the goblet would be the bondsman and the other brothers would be guiltless.
- All the brothers took down their sacks and each was searched from the oldest to the youngest. The goblet was discovered in Benjamin's sack. The brothers rent their clothes and after loading the sacks back on their asses they all returned to the city. Judah and his brothers returned to Joseph's home and bowed down before him. "And Joseph said unto them: 'What deed is this that you have done? Do you not know that such a man as I will indeed divine?'" Judah asked what they should say and how they could prove their innocence. He declared that God is punishing them and they would all be Joseph's bondsmen. Joseph responded that in whose hand was found the goblet would be his bondsman but the others would be released to return to their father.