

Parashat Miketz, 5781, 2020:

Now It Came to Pass in the Morning

Rabbi David Etengoff

Dedicated to the sacred memories of my mother, Miriam Tovah bat Aharon Hakohen, father-in-law, Levi ben Yitzhak, sister-in-law, Ruchama Rivka Sondra bat Yechezkel, sister, Shulamit bat Menachem, Chana bat Shmuel, Yehonatan Binyamin ben Mordechai Meir Halevi, Shoshana Elka bat Avraham, Tikvah bat Rivka Perel, Peretz ben Chaim, Chaya Sarah bat Reb Yechezkel Shraga, Shmuel Yosef ben Reuven, the *Kedoshim* of Har Nof, Pittsburgh, and Jersey City, and the *refuah shlaimah* of Mordechai HaLevi ben Miriam Tovah, Moshe ben Itta Golda, Yocheved Dafneh bat Dinah Zehavah, Reuven Shmuel ben Leah, and the health and safety of our brothers and sisters in Israel and around the world.

Our *parasha* contains a dramatic *pasuk* that relates Pharaoh's reaction to his dreams concerning cows and grain, wherein the sickly and lean devoured the healthy and robust ones:

Va'ye'hi ba'boker — Now it came to pass in the morning — that his spirit was troubled; so he sent and called all the necromancers of Egypt and all its sages, and Pharaoh related to them his dream, but no one interpreted them for Pharaoh. (*Sefer Bereishit* 41:8, this and all Tanach and Rashi translations, *The Judaica Press Complete Tanach*, underlining my own)

It is immediately apparent why Pharaoh's spirit was troubled and why he had a passionate desire to understand these frightening dreams, as they seem to portend some indeterminate disaster. Try as they might, the “necromancers of Egypt and all its sages” were unable to interpret their monarch's dreams in a convincing manner. Rashi (1040-1105) explicates this idea in the following fashion: “They did interpret them, but not for Pharaoh, for their voice did not reach his ears, and he had no satisfaction from their interpretation...” The failure of the Egyptian necromancers and sages set the stage for Yosef's release from prison, his prescient interpretation of the dreams and subsequent elevation to the lofty role of *mishneh l'melech* (second-in-command) of Egypt, our people's exile in Egypt and the exodus therefrom, and the receiving of the Torah at Mount Sinai.

There are two other instances of *va'ye'hi ba'boker* in *Chamishah Chumshei Torah* that foreshadow a fundamental change for an individual or the entire Jewish people. The first of these is found in Parashat Vayatzte in connection with the undesired marriage triangle of Ya'akov, Leah, and Rachel: "*Va'ye'hi ba'boker*, and behold she was Leah! So he [Ya'akov] said to Laban: 'What is this that you have done to me? Did I not work with you for Rachel? Why have you deceived me?'" (*Sefer Bereishit* 29:25) How could this have happened? How was Ya'akov so radically misled on his longed-for wedding night? As always, we turn to Rashi, who shares with us the "story behind the story:"

And it came to pass in the morning, and behold she was Leah: But at night, she was not Leah, because Ya'akov had given signs to Rachel, but when she saw that they were bringing Leah, she (Rachel) said, "Now, my sister will be put to shame. So she readily transmitted those signs to her." [Based upon *Talmud Bavli Megillah*, 13b]

This narrative is one of the greatest examples of self-sacrifice that appears in Tanach. Rachel longed to share her wedding joy with her husband. Yet, she heroically determined that Leah's potential embarrassment took priority over her personal needs and feelings. As such, she selflessly gave Ya'akov to Leah in order to guard her sister's honor and dignity. Leah, in turn, went on to become the mother of 10 of the *shivtei kah* (the Tribes of Israel), changing Jewish history forevermore.

The second occurrence of *va'ye'hi ba'boker* is found in *Sefer Bamidbar*, in the narrative concerning Balak and Bilam. Balak was the King of Moav, who both hated and feared the Jewish people. He hired Bilam, the world's greatest sorcerer, to curse our nation and halt our seemingly inexorable rise to glory. Little did Balak know, and even less could he understand, that our people's grandeur was a direct result of G-d's desire to have His

divine plan fulfilled. He, therefore, was convinced Bilam could effectively curse our nation and bring us to our knees. In fact, Balak was so focused upon the destruction of *klal Yisrael* that he refused to listen to Bilam's multiple protestations that he could only say and do what G-d allowed him:

Balak said to Bilam, "Did I not send to you to call for you? Why did you not come to me? Am I indeed incapable of honoring you?" Bilam said to Balak, "Behold I have come to you, do I have any power to say anything? The word G-d puts into my mouth-that I will speak." ... *Va'ye'hi ba'boker* that Balak took Bilam and led him up to Bamot Ba'al, and from there he saw part of the people. (*Sefer Bamidbar* 22:37-38, 41)

Like other absolute rulers, Balak expected his evil desires to be fulfilled. Instead, what began with *va'ye'hi ba'boker*, eventuated in Bilam's unparalleled blessing to the Jewish people:

How can I curse whom G-d has not cursed, and how can I invoke wrath if the L-rd has not been angered? For from their beginning, I see them as mountain peaks, and I behold them as hills; it is a nation that will dwell alone and will not be reckoned among the nations. Who counted the dust of Ya'akov or the number of a fourth of [or, of the seed of] Israel? May my soul die the death of the upright and let my end be like his." (*Sefer Bamidbar* 23:8-10)

Bilam's *bracha* that we will ever be "a nation that will dwell alone, and will not be reckoned among the nation," is one of the major reasons we continue to thrive. Despite all odds, *am Yisrael chai* — the Jewish people live, a testament to our unique relationship with the Almighty.

May the time come soon and in our day when we once again hear, "*va'ye'hi ba'boker*," and may it signal the coming of *Mashiach Tzidkanu* (the Righteous Messiah), the rebuilding of the *Beit HaMikdash* and the ultimate redemption of the Jewish people. *V'chane yihi ratzon*.

Shabbat Shalom and may Hashem in His infinite mercy remove the *magafah* from *klal*

Yisrael and from all the nations of the world.

Past *drashot* may be found at my blog-website: <http://reparashathashavuah.org>
They may also be found on <http://www.yutorah.org> using the search criteria Etengoff and the *parasha's* name.

The email list, *b'chasdei Hashem*, has expanded to hundreds of people. I am always happy to add more members to the list. If you have family or friends you would like to have added, please do not hesitate to contact me via email <mailto:rdb718@gmail.com>.

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