

Divine Planning

Mikeitz 5782/2021

The famous Yiddish saying, *Der mentsh trakht un got lakht*. Man plans and God laughs¹ conjures up a maniacal God tipping over the carefully crafted chess board, mid game. However, what I posit is that planning requires a deep collaboration with the divine in order to see plans fulfilled.

In this week's Parasha we see Joseph interpret the dreams of Pharaoh and develop a set of plans on how the Egyptians could be saved from the impending seven years of famine². In both the interpretation and in the planning there was divine understanding, *ruach hakodesh*.

We learn that Pharaoh and his entire court was pleased with the plans – the Seforno and Rabeinu Bachya say that it was not just his basic advice, but his plans for execution that were so pleasing^{3&4}.

The Radak dives into what made Joseph stand out. He came with authority – having already accurately interpreted the dream of the cup-bearer. He claimed that the implementation needed to occur immediately because the fulfillment of the dreams was happening in the present. And that the plan was pragmatic⁵.

In the book of Proverbs we learn that victory comes with much planning⁶. We often think about the creation of the world as being ex-nihilo – that it just appeared, however many of our commentaries describe the level of planning that God undertook to get to the point where He would be pleased with the outcome. So too, God implores with us, to think things through, to plan accordingly.

Joseph sets the plan up, and it pleases Pharaoh. He comes with authority, clarity, and immediacy – and the plan is put into action.

But where is the divine collaboration?

Rabbi Eliezer Melamed explores the idea of the central pillars of Judaism – that humanity is imbued with free will, and that divine providence is a central actor within the ebbs and flow of the world⁷. When someone is planning, one cannot think that they have all the answers, and that everything will go according to his or her plan, when you accept that God is also involved, you have a much greater sense of the importance of being agile, making tweaks, and sometimes disregarding a plan altogether.

Joseph's pleasing Pharaoh and the court was not because they saw a capable individual in front of them – rather they saw someone who was in step with God, who was agile, who realised that he didn't have all the answers.

When we plan – we don't need to think God laughs – rather we need to embrace the duality of human free will, and divine providence, to develop plans that can meet the challenges of both the physical and spiritual worlds!

All citations can be found in **A New Page of Talmud**