
Divine Planning

Rabbi Alon Meltzer

A New Page of Talmud

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Der mentsh trakht un got lakht. Man plans and God laughs. – **Yiddish Quote**¹ Let all the food of these good years that are coming be gathered, and let the grain be collected under Pharaoh's authority as food to be stored in the cities. Let that food be a reserve for the land for the seven years of famine which will come upon the land of Egypt, so that the land may not perish in the famine.” The plan pleased Pharaoh and all his courtiers.- **Bereshit 41:37**² Joseph's basic advice as well as his outline of how to execute his plan.- **Seforno Bereshit 41:37**³ Pharaoh's servants realised that Joseph's advice to Pharaoh was sound and that the Royal Palace, the wealthy classes as well as the poor in Egypt stood to gain from following Joseph's advice. This is why they concurred and expressed their approval of the plan Joseph had outlined. - **Rabeynu Bacha on Bereshit 41:37**⁴ Pharaoh approved of Joseph's suggestion as did his ministers as they all understood that it was a wise and practical plan. They realised that it was very likely that Joseph's interpretation of the dream was correct. They were furthermore very impressed by the chief of the cup-bearers who had told them how Joseph's interpretation of both his and the chief baker's dreams had come true. Moreover, Joseph had not claimed that the realisation of the dream would be in the distant future, but by seizing on the word twice at the very beginning of Pharaoh's dream and again in verse 29, he had made it plain that these predictions

would come true in short order. – **Radak on Bereshit 41-37**⁵ For want of strategy an army falls, But victory comes with much planning. – **Proverbs 11:14**⁶ The central pillars remain firm: Man, on the one hand, is endowed with freedom of will. Indeed, man's free will is mentioned explicitly in the Torah many times, and no authority dare take issue with it. Rambam, the celebrated author of the Mishneh Torah , goes out of his way to strengthen this fundamental principle. How, he asks, would it be possible to understand the Torah and Prophets, or

The plan pleased Pharaoh
and all his courtiers
*וַיִּשְׁבֶּן דָּבָר בְּשִׁנֵּן פָּרָעָה
וּבְשִׁנֵּן כָּל־עֲבָדָיו*

Bereshit 41:37

prefigured plan in the world, there is also no dispute. Accordingly, we sometimes find a person with very strong impulses who is incapable of being good even when he very much desires to be. It cannot be denied, then, that there exists something of determinism as well. There is an element of freedom and a element of Providence, though the interaction between the two is not always easy for the human mind to grasp. – **Rabbi Eliezer Melamed**⁷

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