

# Heads Up

PARSHA INSIGHTS - MIKAITZ (5760)

## OY VAY!

“It is a tradition in our hands from the *Anshai Knesses Hagdola* [Men of the Great Assembly]: Any place that the word ‘*vayehi*’ [‘and it came to pass’] is stated, it is a term which denotes anguish” (*Gemara Megilla* 10B). It is known that the word “*vayehi*” contains within it a smaller word that can mean pain and suffering - “*vay*”, like: *Oy, vay!* [Woe to me!] (In eleventh grade, I heard an extensive *shiur* [Torah class] on this topic by Rabbi Leibel Reznick.)

Is it possible that this *Gemara Megilla* can be applied to our *parsha* [Torah portion], since it begins with the word “*vayehi*?” The *Or Hachaim* proves that there is a connection. First of all, Paroh’s dreams, the first issue in the *parsha*, are a sort of catalyst for Jewish persecution. How so?

Once Yosef successfully interpreted Paroh’s dreams regarding the years of plenty and famine (41:37 etc.), he was promoted to viceroy of Egypt. (He then set out to insure that his own dreams of thirteen years ago would be fulfilled. Remember, Yosef had been sold at age seventeen (beginning of *Vayaishev*), and he was thirty when he rose to greatness (41:46). At seventeen, he had dreamt of rulership, that his brothers would prostrate themselves to him. He held that these dreams were prophetic visions, and it was his job to help them come true. (For evidence to this, see the *Pirush Harosh* on *Vayaishev* 37:8, plus other commentaries. These ambitions had nothing to do with haughtiness. Consequently, Yosef did what was in his power to make sure ALL his brothers came to Egypt to buy food and bow down to him.) Soon after, the entire family of Yaacov was forced to settle in Egypt because of the famine; Yaacov lived there for the last seventeen years of his life. All this is discussed in the remaining *parshiyos* [Torah portions] of *Sefer Beraishis* [the Book of Genesis]. The point is that **the successful interpretation of Paroh’s dreams, predicting a major famine, helped bring about *Bnai Yisroel*’s [the Children of Israel]’s move to Egypt and eventual enslavement there.** Thus, the *parsha* begins with “*vayehi*”, since Paroh’s dreams are actually the beginning of *Golus Mitzraim* [Egyptian exile].

Although the exile had already been decreed many years before (see *Parshas Lech L’cha*), it was never clearly stated that it would be in Egypt, the “iron furnace”. Since it now became evident WHERE the persecution would take place (as explained in the preceding paragraph), the word for suffering, “*vayehi*”, is appropriate. Furthermore, see the *Gemara Shabbos* 10B. A person should never give preferential treatment to any of his children. Due to a measure of fine wool (for the special garment) Yaacov gave Yosef more than his other sons, his brothers were intolerant of him, and this ultimately led our fathers down to Egyptian bondage. *Tosfos* clarifies: even without Yaacov presenting the coat of colors to Yosef, the exile would have occurred. However, the friction between the brothers, leading to Yosef’s sale to Egypt, likely increased the measure of suffering we experienced there.

Another reason our *parsha* begins with “*vayehi*”, a language of pain, is that Paroh’s dream foretold of hunger and drought. Even though the Egyptians were extremely corrupt and wicked, and they deserved the famine, neighboring regions were affected as well. Hashem “experiences suffering” along with His creatures when they go through difficult ordeals.

Other explanations are given for the term “*vayehi*”. The two we have mentioned indicate that times were beginning to get rough. The *Golus Mitzraim* was about to start, and years of famine would also commence after seven abundant years. Look further in the *Or Hachaim*, and you will see a third interpretation.

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