**[The Gift of Loneliness – Parshat Mikeitz](https://www.torahofawakening.com/weekly-torah/parshat-mikeitz)**

Rabbi Barukh told a parable about one who comes to a strange land; he doesn’t speak the language and doesn’t know the customs. He feels deep loneliness. Then, he meets another stranger, and the two of them become close friends, because they are both strangers together in this alien land.

That stranger is you, and the other stranger is God…

It sometimes happens that we come to feel alone, alienated, disconnected, and we then seek connection through fulfilment of our cravings. And while it is true that God hides within all forms and all beings, this is especially true of our cravings. We think we need this or that experience, we feel we need some validation, some comfort, or whatever, but in fact what we really need is only God.

Of course, we are never separate from God, for there is nothing in our experience in this moment that is not God; and yet, we can become disconnected – meaning, consciousness becomes disconnected from itself, which really means disconnection from the Divine, from the “Is-ness” of this moment…

וַיַּכֵּ֥ר יוֹסֵ֖ף אֶת־אֶחָ֑יו וְהֵ֖ם לֹ֥א הִכִּרֻֽהוּ׃
For though Joseph recognized his brothers, they did not recognize him.

Joseph’s brothers had sold him into slavery out of jealousy and hatred, but unbeknownst to them, Joseph has risen from slave to the rank of Pharaoh’s right-hand man. Now there is a famine in the land and Joseph’s brothers come before him to plead him for provisions. Joseph recognizes his brothers who had done evil to him, but they don’t recognize him; all they see is a potential savior who has the food they need.

In the same way, we may seek fulfillment in something or someone – we may “descend into Egypt” to find what we think we need, but beneath the surface, the thing we seek is our own “brother” we “sold into slavery.”

Meaning, at some point in our past, we may have disowned some aspect of our experience. We may have done something we’re ashamed of, or suffered some guilt or trauma, and the energy we unconsciously expend keeping this aspect of ourselves in exile creates a deep sense of lack, of un-fulfillment.

What is the solution?

וַיְהִ֕י מִקֵּ֖ץ שְׁנָתַ֣יִם יָמִ֑ים
And it was MiKeitz – at the end – of two years, days…

The word for “year” – shanah – also means “change.”  Shanatayim שְׁנָתַ֣יִם – means “two years” or, translated interpretively, “the duality of change.” This is the duality of our present moment experience, on one hand, and what we seek to experience, on the other.

This word מִקֵּ֖ץ mi***keitz***, is similar to the word used for Pharaoh’s awakening from his dream: וַיִּיקַ֖ץ פַּרְעֹֽה vayi***katz*** Paroh. To transcend the duality of time, the duality of present experience in relation to that which we crave, we must awaken from the dream of separation and reconnect with our own exiled consciousness, and hence with the Divine.

How to do it?

Look beneath the disguise – bring awareness deep into the craving itself, into the feeling of alienation, into the loneliness itself – embrace it – be the Presence with the pain. Stop seeking – the Divine you seek is here with you, hidden within your pain, if you would stop and make friends with the present moment. The pain is only a form of consciousness; be willing to feel it, and the form will relax back into its true nature. Then, consciousness can reunite with consciousness – the Divine within you can reunite with Itself, and in this realization of Divine Oneness there is a Supreme Aloneness, but not loneliness. This Aloneness is fullness, wholeness, connectedness.

There is a hint of this in the miracle of Hanukkah. Just as the single days worth of oil miraculously burns for eight days, so too if we bring the awareness that we have “today” – meaning right now – to whatever feeling of lack we may have, that feeling of lack can miraculously open into the brightness of the Eternal Present; stay with it and see!

**More on Parshat Mikeitz...**

I[**t's Beyond Me! Parshat Mikeitz**](https://www.torahofawakening.com/weekly-torah/its-beyond-me-parshat-mikeitz)

This past Shabbat I was at a meal where some friends were lamenting the expectation that their kids had to receive presents on Hanukkah. One young woman from Israel said that when she was growing up, there were no presents, but they would play games instead. This seems to be an old custom, because there’s a story of Rabbi Moshe of Sasov, that once during Hanukkah he came into the beit midrash to find some of his student playing checkers.

When they saw their rebbe, they were embarrassed and started putting the game away.

“No, keep on playing!” said Reb Moshe. “You know, you can learn three important things from the game of checkers: first, you can only make one move at once. Second, you can only go forward and not backward. And lastly, when you get to the last row, you can move in any direction you want…”

In order to accomplish anything, you need a plan; you need to envision the end result and imagine all the different steps you must take to get you there. But, in any given moment, you can only do the step you’re on. This is obvious, and yet because we have the power to envision our next steps, the mind tends to dwell in the imagination of the future. The present is often approached merely as a stepping stone toward something else, and this creates a feeling of separation from this moment, a disconnect from Reality. This in turn can produce the unconscious belief that wholeness is somehow not present, that fulfillment lies somewhere in the future.

The remedy is, remember: “You can only make one move at once.”

Bringing attention to the “move” we are now making liberates consciousness from its imprisonment in the world of thought and its imagined future, allowing the realization: thisis Reality, this moment is complete, the Divine is Present.

But what if, when we really connect with the move we are now making, thoughts of regret arise about the past, pulling us into a painful dwelling on what could have been?

Remember: “You can only go forward and not backward.”

Accepting the past and moving on doesn’t mean you have to somehow push away the feelings of regret; that would just be more rejection of the present! Instead, acceptwhatever thoughts and feelings arise, and let them dissolve of their own accord. Everything that arises is part of the complete texture of the present – don’t resist.

And in this act of coming to this moment without resistance, there can be the realization that, in fact, you have arrived – there is nowhere else to go, because you’re always Right Here!

Then, you can “move in any direction you want” – you can think about the future or the past and not get caught by them, because they all arise in the open space of the Present – the Eternal Now has come to the foreground.

This quality of freedom is embodied by Yosef. Pharaoh asks him to interpret his disturbing dream, but Yosef says, Biladai, Elokim Ya’aneh – It is beyond me, but the Divine will answer!

This short phrase contains a code for this teaching:

Biladai – It is beyond me: There is only the task of this moment; whatever will be will be.

Elokim  – the Divine: We cannot go back and change the past; whatever has been is the “Divine Will” – meaning, it already is. The only right relationship we can have with the past is total surrender.

Ya’aneh –(the Divine) will answer: In Presence and Surrender, there arises a natural and unforced trust in the way everything is unfolding; all “answers” to the mind’s questions will be revealed in time. At this point, there need not be any strained effort in “trying to be present” or in “letting go of the past” because the movements of the mind are no longer charged, no longer motivated by grabbing after fulfillment. The Divine is ever-present as the fundamental Beingness that underlies all being…

[**The Dream is Over – Parshat Mikeitz**](https://www.torahofawakening.com/weekly-torah/the-dream-is-over-parshat-mikeitz)

​When Joseph advised Pharaoh to put someone in charge of amassing grain during the years of plenty in preparation for the years of famine, Pharaoh replied:

“Akharei hodia Elohim otkha et kol zot, ayn avon v’hakham kamokha – Since the Divine has revealed to you all of this, there can be no one as understanding and wise as you.”

The words for “understanding and wise” are avon v’hakham, which are forms of the two root attributes of consciousness on the Tree of Life, Hokhmah and Bina – Wisdom and Understanding. Bina, Understanding, refers to the function of thought: the capacity to create images of reality in one’s mind, then manipulate the images so as to comprehend and predict things that wouldn’t otherwise be apparent in one’s immediate, present moment experience.

For example, if my refrigerator is full in my immediate experience, I can nevertheless predict that in the future it will be empty, and that I will starve unless I go out and buy some more food. The empty refrigerator is a thought, a mental image, but it allows me to navigate the objective world. That’s Binah –Understanding.

Hokhmah, on the other hand, is the awareness from which thought arises. Awareness is the space of consciousness within which the perception of what’s happening in the present arises – in this case, the perception of a full refrigerator, along with the arising of the thought that soon it will be empty. Awareness perceives, “there’s the refrigerator, and there’s the thought about the empty refrigerator in the future.” So, awareness is “above” or “transcendent” of thought.

But ordinarily, we tend to perceive the present moment as somewhat in the background, while our thoughts about reality tend to dominate in the foreground. Like the cows in our story, the fullness of awareness is “swallowed up” by the neediness of thought, the need to understand and control things. This reinforces an experience of lack, of incompleteness. But when we allow the present to come into the foreground, seeing our thoughts come and go within the open space of the present, then Hokhmah and Binah can function freely, and there is an experiential sense of wholeness, of completeness. That is meditation, or Presence.

Then – hodia Elohim otkha et kol zot – it is revealed that the fullness of experience in this moment, from sensory awareness of the outer world, to the rising and falling of feelings and thoughts, to the open space of consciousness itself, kol zot – all of this is Elohim – One Divine Reality, and there is nothing but Elohim, always and only. Bashamayim mima’al v’al ha’aretz mitakhat – In the heavens above and the earth below, ayn od- there is nothing else.​
Good Shabbos!

[**Only a Dream- Parshat Mikeitz**](https://www.torahofawakening.com/weekly-torah/only-a-dream-parshat-mikeitz)
​
Vay’hi mikeitz sh'natayim yamim ufaro holem-And it was at the end of two years to the day, Pharaoh dreamed…Vayikatz Paro-and Pharaoh awoke…

This week’s reading begins with Pharaoh’s dream:

He is standing by the Nile, when seven beautiful, healthy cows emerge from the water and begin grazing in the marshland. Suddenly, seven more cows emerge, except these ugly and gaunt cows eat up the seven healthy cows. Next, he dreams that seven beautiful, healthy ears of grain get swallowed up by seven thin and scorched ears of grain. Then Pharaoh wakes up, agitated and disturbed.

The name of this parshah is Mikeitz, which means “at the end”- referring to the end of a two-year period after which Pharaoh had the dream. But when Pharaoh awakens from his dream, the same word is used again in a different form- “Vayikatz Paro- Pharaoh awakened.”

Why is the word for “ending” used also for awakening?

For most of us, there’s no awareness of dreaming while we’re dreaming; it’s only in waking up that you realize, “Oh, it was only a dream.” You say, only a dream because it has no external reality; it’s just an experience generated by the mind. Then, when you wake up, you become aware of what’s actually going on around you. Life is real, and unlike the dream, there are real consequences in the world external to your mind.

And yet, there’s an aspect of waking life that’s also like a dream.

Right now, your awareness is perceiving the richness of this moment- the beings around you, the space you’re in, the sense of your body, your feelings and your thoughts. Ordinarily, you perceive some things as external to you, such as these words, and some things as internal to you, such as your thoughts. There are physical things out there, and emotional and mental things in here.

But what many people never notice is that everything in your perception- from the ground under your feet to the clouds in the sky to the feelings in your gut- are all nothing but consciousness, exactly like a dream. Of course there’s also the whole universe out there independent of your consciousness, but your perception of the universe completely arises within your consciousness as part of your consciousness. In other words, everything you perceive is actually you, since ultimately, you are consciousness.

So that means that when you judge people, or complain, or in any way resist the truth of whatever arises in the moment, you’re actually resisting yourself- you’re creating a split within yourself which creates a sense of being not whole, of being incomplete. And that’s the dream- that’s the illusion- you think that you need something out there to change in order to feel whole or complete. Just like the gaunt and hungry cows who eat up the full cows, you’re never satisfied because you’re constantly pulling away from yourself, creating an inner split.

But when you awaken to realize that everything “out there” is always only perceived “in here,” then you can relax and accept everything in your experience as your own being. When you do that, your consciousness that's become split in two can merge back into oneness, bringing that sense of inner duality to an end.

And that’s why the word that’s used here for “awaken” is the word for “ending”- katz- because it’s an end to inner duality. It’s also an end to time, in a sense, because there’s no longer any journey to wholeness or fulfilment; wholeness is simply what you are when you stop pulling yourself apart.

There’s a hint of this in the opening line as well-

“Vay’hi mikeitz sh'natayim yamim ufaro holem- And it was at the end of two years, to the day…”

The word for “year” is shana, which also means “change” or “time.” “Two years” hints that in order to have time, you need two-ness; you need duality. That's because time and change are based on the perception of before and after. But when you see that reality is not in any way ever separate from your perception, that your memories of the past and projections of the future are all arising in the now, that's the keitz shana- the end of time, the awakening into the Eternal Present.

So on this Shabbat Mikeitz, the “Sabbath of Ending” which is also Shabbos Hanukah, may everything that arises in your perception be fully embraced as the energy of consciousness, burning ever more brightly within your being and expressing itself in love and healing on all levels.

Good Shabbos,
b yosef

 **​**[**Mr. Fimmen- Parshat Mikeitz**](https://www.torahofawakening.com/weekly-torah/mr-fimmen-parshat-mikeitz)

Back in the eighties, Mr. Fimmen was the Vice Principal in my High School. He was known as the disciplinarian. If you did something bad, you got sent to him. I was sent to him as a freshman when I screamed in the hallway after finding out that I got the part of Renfield in the school play, “Dracula.”

When I was a senior, my class put on an original musical in which I impersonated Mr. Fimmen.

In the play, the main character was a “nerd” who was searching to find himself. In one scene, the nerd’s journey takes him into the depths of Hell. We had him walk down off the stage and into the orchestra pit, where I was dressed like Satan. When he asked who I was, I said,

“I have been known by many names- The Trickster, Beelzebub, HaSatan… revealed to the West as… Mr. Fimmen!!”

The audience roared.

I wasn’t sure how Mr. Fimmen was going to take it, but it turned out he loved it. Every time I saw him in the hallway after that, he gave me a satanic look and said, “Do you know my name?”

We became good friends after that. One time, we were having a conversation in his office about religion. He said that just as Judaism is the root of Christianity and Islam, and Hinduism is the root of Buddhism and Jainism, there must be a common root between Judaism and Hinduism.

“That’s what I want to find out about!” he said with a smile.

But when I was about to leave his office, he became concerned about other students finding out that he was friendly. He said, “Remember Brian, not a word about this to the other students. To them, I’m just MR. FIMMEN!!”

It’s true- the other students had no idea who Mr. Fimmen really was. They only saw an image created by their own minds- a “Mr. Fimmen the scary mean guy” narrative. And that’s the way he wanted it.

But sometimes, the mind tells negative stories about people that they wouldn’t want. Some bad experience ferments in the memory and sprouts into an inevitably over-simplified story, and that’s the screen through which you then see things. And sometimes, life itself sinks into a negative frame, and you feel that Reality or God is conspiring against you.

What’s the way out?

To get free of this negativity, the story must come to an end. The whole narrative has to collapse. This week’s reading is called Mikeitz, which means, “At the end”. The parsha begins:

“Vay’hi mikeitz sh’natayim yamim, uparo holeim-

And it happened at the end of two years, to the day, Pharaoh was dreaming…”

The phrase, “Sh’natayim yamim” literally means, “Two years, days”- a strange construction. The first word, “sh’natayim”, is a contraction of two words- “shanah” which means “year” or "change," hinting at the concept of time, and the word “sh’tayim” which means “two”.

“Sh’natayim”, then, could be translated as “the duality of time”. When you add “yamim” which means “days”, the full phrase could be translated:

“The duality of time, the multiplicity of days”.

Time is dependant on duality, on the ability of the mind to compare one thing to another. In the case of time, the mind compares one moment to another. Through the imagination of past and future moments, a sense of time is created.

Once the mind creates a sense of time, we experience life as a “multiplicity of days”. Meaning, we experience life as receding tunnel of yesterdays, and an impending journey of tomorrows.

But this time-based version of life is actually a dream. Just like Pharaoh’s dreams, this version of life is a tapestry of healthy, peaceful moments, alternating with ugly, monstrous moments. And sometimes, the monstrous seem to overtake and swallow up everything that’s good, as happens in Pharaoh’s dream:

“The cows of ugly appearance and gaunt flesh ate up the seven cows of beautiful appearance…”

But, dreams come to an end:

“Vayikatz Paro, v’hinei halom-
And Pharaoh awoke, and behold, it was a dream!”

The word for “awoke” is “yikatz”- sharing two letters with “mikeitz” which means “at the end”- hinting that “awakening” is the end of something.

What is it the end of?

Let’s look back at the first verse, retranslating it according to the above ideas:

“Vay’hi mikeitz sh’natayim yamim-

Awakening from the duality of time is the end of the multiplicity days…”

To come to the end of time, to awaken, is actually profoundly simple. It can happen at any moment, and yet it can only happen in this moment. It happens when you let go of your grip on narrative and allow this moment to speak for itself.

Is there any greater beauty than the richness of this moment? Is there any greater gift than your consciousness of this miracle?

And in the consciousness of this miracle, is there any room for negative, judgmental thoughts about others?

When you see how your own mind works and get free from its illusions, it also becomes easy to see how others are trapped by their illusions. Then, you don’t get pulled into their drama, no matter how they treat you. Even the nastiest insults will only evoke compassion from your heart. You don’t take it personally, because you can see that they are trapped- they are hurling their negativity toward some idea of you, not the real you.

There is a story that Reb Yitzhak of Vorki had a friend who would always verbally bash Reb Yitzhak’s rebbe, Reb Simha Bunem. This friend would always say terrible things about Reb Simha right in front of Reb Yitzhak, but Reb Yitzhak never said anything about it or got upset in the slightest.

Reb Yitzhak’s hassidim were astonished by this. They asked him how he could possibly allow his friend to speak so harshly about his rebbe and never say a word of defense or reprimand.

“I’ll tell you about something that happened to me,” Reb Yitzhak replied.

“I was once traveling in a certain city when a stranger approached me, looked at me for a moment and exclaimed, ‘that’s him!’ Then a second man did the same thing, and then a third, though I had no idea what they were talking about.

“Before long, a crowd of noisy men and an upset woman surrounded me, showering me with curses and abuses, the gist of which was: ‘You are the man who deserted this woman and left her as an aguna!’”

(In traditional Jewish law, an aguna is a woman who’s husband runs away without granting a legal divorce, thus leaving her unable to remarry.)

“They were so convinced they knew who I was, that no amount of explanation on my part could persuade them that I was not the man they were looking for. In the end, I had to go along with them to the rabbinical court and grant the woman a bill of divorce.

“Now all that time they were busy abusing me, I wasn’t the slightest bit angry at them, because I knew that it wasn’t at me they were directing their complaints and curses. They thought I was her husband. In truth, they couldn't see me at all- they only saw their own story.

“So, too, with my friend who talks bad of my rebbe. I don’t get excited. I know he talks this way only because he doesn’t really know my rebbe. In truth, he talks about a character that lives only in his mind.”

On this Shabbat Mikeitz, the “Sabbath of Ending” which is also Shabbos Hanukah, and Shabbos Rosh Hodesh (new moon), may our inner light ever increase to bring the negative dreams of life to an end, awakening us to the miraculous gift of the true life, just as it is. And, at the same time, may the function of our dreams be fulfilled: To guide us as we navigate this ever changing moment and help us bring more peace, intelligence and relief to this world that so needs it.

Good Shabbos,
brian yosef

[**Holes and Stars- Pars﻿hat Mikeitz, Shabbat Hannukah**](https://www.torahofawakening.com/weekly-torah/holes-and-stars-parshat-mikeitz-shabbat-hannukah)

Here in Oakland, the fleas are like monsters- much bigger than on the east coast. Our cat brings them in, so we have to treat the cat once per month with some anti-flea stuff. To get the flea stuff on him, I have to part the hair on the back of his neck and squirt the stuff as best I can onto his skin. To do that, I first have to pet him, make him feel relaxed, then apply the fluid when he’s not suspecting.

There’s only one problem. When I first got the cat as a kitten, I lived in a bachelor pad with two roommates. The cat got plenty of attention. Since having kids, however, I have to admit that my enthusiasm for taking care of a pet has waned. Two little humans with all their needs, desires and demands are simply enough; I can’t get so excited about taking care of an animal too. Not that I am neglectful or anything- the cat gets fed and taken care of- but I don’t exactly sit around and pet him.

And that’s the problem: Since I only pet him when I am about to put the flea stuff on him, he knows what’s coming! As soon as I start being nice and try to pet him, he runs away. In order for him to relax when I pet him, petting would have to become an every day thing, not a monthly occurrence.

It’s exactly the same with spiritual practice. If you only do it occasionally when you feel like you need it, it’s not going to do what it has the potential to do- transform you completely. For that, it has to become an every day thing.

There is a spectrum of spiritual intelligence along which the human experience dances. At one extreme, a person is like a “black hole”-never satisfied, always needing to grab more for him/herself. At this extreme, a person lives to “get”. The “black hole” is always restless, always seeking the next experience to feel more complete.

At the other extreme, a person can be like a star- radiant, burning with joy and aliveness, giving of him/herself for its own sake, out of love for giving.

Each person lives somewhere on this spectrum. These two poles are not merely potentials of the human personality; they actually exist at different levels of our being. For example, at the level of the body, we truly are like black holes. Every day we have to take in more food and water. Even more desperate is our need for air. The body is not satisfied with a deep breath for more than a few seconds before it has to take another.

At the level of awareness, however, the opposite is true. The job of awareness is to sense what is, not to prefer one thing over another. If awareness were to have preferences, it wouldn’t work. First we have to perceive whatever is there, then our mind can have preferences about it. Awareness itself is just openness- a boundless field of knowing.

As long as things basically go our way, as long as our needs are pretty much taken care of, it is very easy to live in the dream of the “black hole” without even knowing it. The satisfied person may feel no need for spirituality, because the “black hole within” gets its needs met. But sooner or later, the system shatters. Health fails, loss happens, failure happens, and a person goes into crisis. Like the body gasping for air, the ego can desperately seek a way out of its pain.

So what is the solution? How can we awaken from the dream of ego without having to get shattered?

Parshat Mikeitz begins with the Pharaoh having a disturbing dream. He dreams that seven robust, healthy cows emerge from the Nile, grazing in the marshland. Then, seven sickly emaciated cows emerge and swallow up the seven healthy cows. Furthermore, after the skinny cows eat the fat cows, they are just as skinny as before. He then has a similar dream with ears of grain rather than cows. Pharaoh calls on his necromancers and wise people, but no one can interpret the dream. He then gets a tip that an imprisoned Hebrew named Joseph is a great dream interpreter. Joseph is summoned and interprets the dream for Pharaoh: The seven healthy cows and ears of grain represent seven years of plenty. The seven bad cows and grain represent seven years of famine that will follow the seven years of plenty. Pharaoh is impressed. He elevates Joseph to a royal status and places him in charge of gathering and storing grain for the time of famine. In this way, Egypt is saved and becomes a breadbox for surrounding countries during the time of famine.

The essence of Joseph’s message is to not take for granted the abundance you’ve got. Prepare for famine, because famine is sure to come. Spiritually speaking, this means you need to awaken from the dream of entitlement, from the unconscious belief that your ego will continue to be fed. Make a “crisis” for yourself now. This is actually the job of daily spiritual practice: to shatter the callousness of your ego that takes things for granted and open to the living uncertainty of the present.

How do you do it?

During the seven years of abundance, the people gave Joseph their grain to store away for the years of famine. In the metaphorical sense, Joseph represents the Divine. He interprets dreams on behalf of the Divine. His own dream has the stars, sun and moon bow down to him. His very name, Yosef, means “to increase”, indicating the Source from which all things in the universe come into being.

So, in this sense, the people giving Joseph their grain suggests a profound practice in which we intentionally “give back” everything we have to G-d. This is the purifying fire and water of daily prayer and meditation, stripping away the expectations of ego and “me”, accustoming us to being in the naked present. For a person who lives in the naked present, times of “famine” do not lead to crisis, because that person is not relying on the temporary and transitory. That person is like a star, burning with bliss and truth, giving without ulterior motive.

This Hanukah, as we increase the light each night, may the flames burn away the barriers of the heart, that we may feel ever more clearly: That which we seek is the only thing there is. That which we crave is what we already are. Amein, Hag Samayakh!