

# MIKEITZ



10th of 54 sedras;  
10th of 12 in B'reishit

Written on 254.6 lines, ranks 6th

Mikeitz is a one Parsha P'tucha (open)  
(the longest parsha in the whole Torah)  
Contrast this parsha's 2022 words with  
the shortest parshiyot with 2 words

146 p'sukim - rank: 8th (5th in B'reishit)  
tied with B'reishit (the sedra)

2022 words - ranks 3rd (2nd)

7914 letters - ranks 2nd (first)

Mikeitz's p'sukim are unusually long for  
a big sedra. That's why it is so high in  
the rankings for words and letters. On  
the other hand, with no parsha breaks,  
the "number of lines rank" drops a bit.

## MITZVOT

No mitzvot are counted from Mikeitz  
One of 17 sedras without mitzvot.



[P> X:Y (Z)] and [S> X:Y (Z)] indicate  
start of a parsha p'tucha or s'tuma. X:Y  
is Perek:Pasuk of the beginning of the  
parsha; (Z) is the number of p'sukim in  
the parsha.

## Kohen - First Aliya 14 p'sukim - 41:1-14

[P> 41:1 (146)] Two years have passed  
since Yosef had asked the wine  
steward to put in the good word for  
him to Par'o. Extra years of languish-  
ing in prison, for putting too much  
faith in a human at the expense of  
complete faith in G-d (and possibly  
creating a Chilul HaShem in Yosef's  
case, because of who he was and the  
specific circumstances being what they  
were).

**Let's clarify...** In "normal" circum-  
stances, a person in Yosef's situation  
should take steps to get himself out of  
prison by asking the wine steward (or  
whomever) to help. But in this case, we  
can see that the Sar HaMashkim spoke  
condescendingly about Yosef, calling  
him a NAAR IVRI and a slave. This  
probably means that he relished the  
idea that the "Jew boy" relied on him to  
get out of jail. This, after Yosef's giving  
G-d credit for the dream interpretation.  
We can imagine that in Yosef's partic-  
ular situation, his asking the Sar  
HaMashkim for help would not be the  
right way to go.

Par'o has two dreams - 7 emaciated  
cows consuming 7 fat cows without  
showing the effect of their "meals",  
and 7 scorched ears of grain consum-  
ing 7 fat, good ears. These dreams  
upset him very much. He summons his  
counselors who fail to ease his mood  
with their unsatisfactory interpreta-  
tions.

The wine steward finally remembers Yosef and approaches Par'o with his story. "With us there was this Jewish kid..." Par'o orders Yosef's removal from prison and Yosef is prepared to meet Par'o.

**SDT** Rashi points out (actually, he curses) that wicked people, even when they are acknowledging good that was done for them, will belittle those to whom they owe a debt of gratitude. The Wine Steward refers to Yosef as a NA'AR (connotation of a fool), IVRI (a foreigner who doesn't belong amongst us), EVED (a slave unworthy of leadership).

**SDT** There is a Tradition that Yosef was "remembered" on Rosh HaShana and removed from prison to the palace of the king. What happened to Yosef was part of the Divine Plan for enslavement and subsequent redemption of Bnei Yisrael. Perhaps, this gives Rosh HaShana one of its claims to be called ZEICHER LITZI'AT MITZRAYIM, commemorative of the Exodus, as we say in Kiddush. (Also, the Plagues began on Rosh HaShana, and actual slavery ended then).

**SDT** When Yosef was brought before Par'o, the Torah tells us that he shaved. Rashi says that it was a sign of respect to royalty. Some say that Yosef was a NAZIR, and he did not drink wine or cut his hair. Nonetheless, he shaved for Par'o.

## Levi - Second Aliya 24 p'sukim - 41:15-38

Par'o tells Yosef about his dreams (making some significant changes which Yosef corrects, thus indicating to Par'o the Divine origin of Yosef's dream interpretations). Yosef tells Par'o that his two dreams are in fact a single message from G-d of His intention to bring seven years of plenty which will be followed by seven years of devastating famine. The years of plenty will not even be remembered (unless measures are taken to properly prepare for the famine). The doubling of the dream indicates that the events are soon to occur. Yosef suggests what to do during the years of plenty to prepare for the famine. Par'o is highly impressed by the godly person, Yosef.

There is an impressive list of parallels between the story in this sedra and Megilat Esther. Specifically, in Par'o's treatment of Yosef and Achashveirosh's instructions to Haman about how to parade Mordechai through the street. E.g. the king gives a special ring to Yosef/Mordechai. Special garments for the parade. Proclaiming before him... The textual similarities are extensive and startling.

## Shlishi - Third Aliya 14 p'sukim - 41:39-52

Par'o, convinced that Yosef is the wisest person around, appoints him as viceroy over all of Egypt. Par'o gives

Yosef his royal ring and special garments (**again garments!**) and parades Yosef through the streets so that the Egyptians will know of the authority that the king has given to Yosef. Yosef is given A-s'nat as a wife. (Some say that she was Deena's daughter - raised in the house of Potifar.) At age 30, Yosef is master over Egypt. A-s'nat bears Yosef two sons, before the years of the famine - Menashe and Efrayim.

Note that Par'o acknowledges that G-d is the source of Yosef's wisdom. Apparently, not all Egyptian rulers had the disdain for the G-d of Israel that a successor of this Par'o had years later. We can say that the 'new king arose who did not know Yosef', chose not to know G-d either. This phenomenon seems to be repeated in Jewish History. Of relevance to the Chanuka story is the positive attitude towards G-d and the People of Israel of Alexander the Great compared with some of his successors.

## R'vi'i - Fourth Aliya 23 p'sukim - 41:53-42:18

The seven years of plenty end and the famine begins. All neighboring countries are devastated by the famine, but Egypt has prepared well. Yosef manages the distribution (and sale) of food supplies and amasses great wealth for Par'o.

Meanwhile, Yaakov, aware that there is food in Egypt, sends "the brothers" (but not Binyamin) to buy provisions.

**SDT** The Torah says that Yaakov SAW that there was plenty... Rashi asks: What is the meaning of SAW; would not HEARD be more accurate? (before CNN and FOX) Rashi answers that Yaakov SAW in a prophetic-like vision that there was plenty in Egypt. Rashi adds that this was not full, clear prophecy, as Yaakov still did not SEE that Yosef was on the scene. A prophet sees only what G-d wants him to see, and understands only that part of a vision that he does see.

**SDT** The Gemara in Taanit says that Yaakov was still well-supplied with food at this stage in the famine. Yet he sent them to Egypt, rather than inflame the jealousy of others. When others have not, don't flaunt what you have.

Yosef sees his brothers, recognizes them, (they do not recognize him,) and remembers his dreams. He treats them harshly and accuses them of being spies. They deny the charges and tell Yosef of their family history and honorable intentions.

**SDT** Rashi says that the brothers (unknowingly) uttered a prophetic statement saying "WE are all the sons of one man." Consciously, they were talking about themselves. But the statement is very true when Yosef is included - We are ALL...

Yosef proposes a test of their sincerity - they must bring their younger brother down to him. He locks them up for three days to "think things over".

The Baal HaTurim points out that the phrase VAYISHTACHAVU LO, and they (the brothers) bowed to him (Yosef) has the same numeric value (772) as B'CHAN NIT-KAYEIM HACHALOM, with this, the dream (Yosef's) was actualized. TT adds that VAYIT-NAKEIR ALEIHEM, And he (Yosef) acted like a stranger to them (the brothers), is also 772. Part of what Yosef did to complete the Divine plan expressed by his dreams, was to hold back in revealing himself for a while. SHEVA SHANIM, seven years, a significant feature of this episode, is also 772.

## Chamishi 5th Aliya 35 p'sukim - 42:19-43:15

Yosef tells them that one of them shall remain as a hostage (Yosef selects Shimon, so as to split the dangerous team of Shimon and Levi) and the others are to return to Canaan to bring "the little one" down to Egypt. The brothers express sincere remorse for what they had done to Yosef (considering their present predicament as a punishment for that). Reuven says the equivalent of "I told you so". All are unaware that Yosef is listening and understanding their conversation. Yosef goes off on his own and weeps (for what he is putting his brothers through). Yosef commands that their bags be filled with food and that their money be returned to them too.

When each brother opens his sack, he

is frightened to find his money there. They return to Yaakov and report to him what has happened.

Yaakov laments the loss of Yosef and now Shimon and announces that he will not risk losing Binyamin as well. He refuses to permit his sons to return to Egypt, in spite of (or because of) Reuven's ridiculous suggestion that his own sons be put to death if anything happens to Binyamin.

**SDT** The Gemara says that the curse of a wise (righteous?) person, even when made conditional, comes true (in some way or other). Reuven offered that his sons should die if Binyamin is not returned. The offer was refused. And Binyamin did return to his father. Nonetheless, Reuven said what he said. His "two sons" can refer to two infamous descendants of his who DID die - Dan and Aviram. One has to be exceedingly careful of what one says! (Not only did they die in the wake of Korach's rebellion, but even earlier, they are referred to as dead. G-d tells Moshe to return to Egypt because those who were after him had died. Rashi says this means Dan and Aviram, who became poor and were considered as dead - they died twice!)

The famine in Canaan intensifies and Yaakov finally agrees to entrust Binyamin into the hands of Yehuda for the return trip to Egypt. Yaakov gives them twice as much money as they will need and sends gifts of the finest spices to the "Egyptian leader". Yaakov blesses his sons; they return to Egypt

and present themselves to Yosef.

## Shishi - Sixth Aliya 14+22 (36) p'sukim - 43:16-44:17

Note that when 3 Torahs are read, the 6th and 7th Aliya of the weekly sedra are combined into SHISHI, the Shabbat-R"Ch reading in the second Torah is SH'VII, and from the third Torah we read Maftir from Parshat Naso (or Sh'kalim or HaChodesh, as the case may be).

Yosef sees Binyamin and tells his attendant (probably Menashe) to prepare dinner for them all. The brothers fear the summon to Yosef, convinced that it has to do with the returned money from the previous trip. They tell Yosef what had happened in order to forestall his anger. Yosef asks them about their aged father.

The brothers bow to Yosef, thus again fulfilling the essence of his dreams (and this time it includes Binyamin). Yosef sees Binyamin, asks about him and blesses him.

Yosef is having a hard time controlling his emotions. He cries in private again, washes his face and returns to the brothers. At the dinner, he seats his brothers in age order (which alarms them - "How could he know?"). He gives them gifts, more to Binyamin.

Yosef was creating the potential for

jealousy so that the brothers would be put into a similar situation as previously. This sets the stage for "complete" repentance. consciously, subconsciously, divinely guided...?

He next orders that food and their money be put into their respective sacks and that his (Yosef's) special cup be placed among Binyamin's baggage.

He sends the brothers on their way to Canaan, and then sends his "man" after them to accuse them of stealing the cup. The brothers are appalled by the accusation and pledge that if the cup is found with them, the "guilty" party shall be put to death and the others would become slaves to Yosef. Yosef offers to enslave only the guilty one; the others would be free to go. The search reveals that Binyamin has the cup. Yehuda, as spokesman, offers that all should become slaves. Yosef insists that only Binyamin should be; the others should return to their father.

**Deja vu all over again!** Once again, the brothers can go to Yaakov - without one of Rachel's sons and claim extenuating circumstances. And this time, it would be true! Not contrived, as it was with Yosef. This sets the stage for the possibility of real T'shuva. [Rambam, in his Hilchot T'shuva, presents various components of T'shuva. He then introduces the concept of T'shuva G'mura - complete T'shuva, which he says can only be achieved (or at least, recognized) if the same (or very similar) conditions exist as when the original

sins were committed.] Will the brothers see this as an opportunity to save themselves and claim that they were powerless to do anything, or will they stand up to this enigmatic ruler of Egypt and be prepared to fight for Binyamin? And this time, it would be easier to just leave, because they would have done thing wrong.

In "cliffhanger" style, the parsha ends with this question. And the announcer finishes with "Stay tuned to the same station, same time next week, for the answer."

## Sh'VII Seventh Aliya 2nd Torah - 7 p'sukim - Bamidbar 28:9-15

Chapters 28 and 29 in Bamidbar (Parshat Pinchas) deal with the daily and Musaf korbanot in the Mikdash. The two Shabbat p'sukim followed by the five that deal with Rosh Chodesh combined for the Maftir of Shabbat Rosh Chodesh.

Note that when any holiday is on Shabbat, the maftir is only about the Musaf of the holiday, and Shabbat's Musaf is not mentioned. The plain reason is that the two p'sukim about Shabbat Musaf are not continuous with any other Musafim besides that of Rosh Chodesh. And the skipping that would be necessary on any of those other days is not sanctioned. But perhaps, we can see something additional in the Shabbat - Rosh Chodesh situation, namely that Shabbat Rosh Chodesh is

not just Shabbat and Rosh Chodesh that coincide, but it is a fusion of the two days, each of which represents a different facet of K'dushat Z'man - Sanctity of Time.

Shabbat and Rosh Chodesh cover everything. Shabbat is the culmination of the week. It belongs to the week. Its Musaf is an extension of the daily korbanot - two lambs. Rosh Chodesh is the starting point for all the holidays. All holiday exists because the first day of the month of each holiday was sanctified as Rosh Chodesh. No Rosh Chodesh - no holiday in that month.

Rosh Chodesh is linked to the holidays by its Musaf, as Shabbat is linked to the days of the week. Two bulls, one ram, seven lambs plus one sin-offering goat - identical to some of the holidays and similar enough to the rest.

The pasuk that we read twice at the end of the haftara joins Shabbat and Rosh Chodesh in a way that we do not find for any of the holidays: "And it shall come to pass, that every new moon, and every Shabbat, shall all flesh come to worship before me, says HaShem."

Also note that this Maftir yields to Chanuka and became Sh'vii, which became available because Shishi and Sh'vii of Mikeitz combined to Shishi this year.

## Maftir 3rd Torah 6 p'sukim Bamidbar 7:24-29

When Shabbat Chanuka is not the first and last day of Chanuka - in other words, when there is only one Shabbat Chanuka, then Maftir is the 6-pasuk portion of the gifts of the tribal leader of the day to the Dedication of the Mishkan. (The readings for the first and last day include more. When Shabbat is also Rosh Chodesh, the maftir is in the third Torah, but still a 6-pasuk piece.

For day 6 of Chanuka (ours and Chanukat HaMizbei'ach the first time around), the leader of the tribe of Gad offered his gifts. Elyasaf b. D'u'el brought exactly what each of the other Nesi'im brought, but the Torah repeats the details, so that each tribe "has its day", so to speak. Some commentaries describe different significances to the same items, for each tribe, further highlighting the individual natures of the tribes.

## Haftara 21 p'sukim Zacharia 2:14-4:7

The Haftara for Shabbat Chanuka is "borrowed" from B'ha'alot'cha, the Menora being the obvious connection. Chanuka has parallels throughout history.

The opening words of the Haftara are G-d's promise to dwell among us. This is the purpose of having built the

Mishkan and the Beit HaMikdash in the first place, and this is the purpose of rededicating it, as we did on Chanuka.

The Haftara contains the vision of olive oil miraculously flowing into the gold menorah flanked by olive trees. This vision matches so much of the Chanuka story.

It is also the basis of the emblem of the State of Israel. This is particularly significant in light of the meaning of the vision. The message to the king, to Jewish leaders in general, is that our success is not measured by might and power, but rather by the spirit of G-d. This was an important message for the Chashmona'im and it remains a vital message for the leaders of today's Israel.

Aside from the obvious connection between Chanuka and the original Chanukat HaMizbei'ach of the Mishkan - as in Dedication and Rededication of the Mikdash, there is another, more specific connection, which tightens things up neatly.

It is said that... The original Mishkan was completed and "ready to roll" on the 25th of Kislev, more than 8 months out of Egypt. The dedication was postponed until the first of Nisan, in honor of Yitzchak Avinu, who was born during Nissan. To inaugurate the Mishkan in honor of Yitzchak, is a good choice, because he was actually placed on a Mizbei'ach and was to be offered as an Olah. Yitzchak is like the patron of the

Mikdash.

Over 1100 years later, Kislev 25 finally got its Chanuka. So the Torah reading of Chanuka is particularly appropriate. And there is also a connection to 25 Kislev from the original building of the second Beit HaMikdash. Chanuka is a perfect fit, just where it is in the calendar.

## **PROBING the PROPHETS**

On this Shabbat we are granted the unique opportunity to read from three separate Sifrei Torah as we mark Shabbat, Rosh Chodesh and Chanuka. As such, we read Parashat Hashavua (Miketz) as well as the special Rosh Chodesh reading and a maftir reading for Chanuka. Ordinarily, when Shabbat is also Rosh Chodesh, Shabbat, being the perfect "host", steps aside and allows Rosh Chodesh to take center stage so that we read the haftara that focuses on Rosh Chodesh and not that which connects to the parsha itself. And as whimsical as this explanation is, the true reason for reading the Rosh Chodesh haftara is because the haftarah must connect to the maftir that is read, and on Shabbat Rosh Chodesh we read the maftir detailing the Rosh Chodesh offerings in the Beit HaMikdash. It is for this reason that this Shabbat we read the haftara focusing on Chanuka and not Rosh Chodesh because we read the maftir regarding Chanukat HaMishkan, the dedication of the Mishkan, that connects to the holiday of Chanuka. And that is done because of the well-known principle "tadir vsh'eino tadir-tadir kodeim", when two mitzvot

have to be performed, we perform the more common one (Rosh Chodesh) before the less common (Chanuka).

As for the haftara itself, we have explained in the past that the connection to the chag of Chanuka is found in two themes that the navi strikes in his prophecy. Firstly, there is the vision of the Menora, clearly suggestive of the Chanuka mitzva. Secondly, the symbolism of the Menora is explained to Zecharya at the closing of the haftara and it defines for all the major lesson of Chanuka. Even before the events of Chanuka, Hashem tells the prophet "Lo v'chayil v'lo vchoach - ki im b'ruchi", that Israel's power is found not in her military might but in her spiritual strength. Their faith in the Almighty G-d is what will grant them victory; victory of the few over the many and of the weak over the powerful.

But I would suggest that there is yet another connection to Chanuka, a more subtle connection, perhaps, but one that leaves us with an important message. The navi Zecharya prophesied during the era of Shivat Tziyon, the first wave of Jews who responded to the decree of Cyrus and returned to Yerushalayim under the leadership of Zerubavel. This generation faced many challenges. Perhaps the greatest was the fear of the surrounding nations who threatened the Judean community and even succeeded in delaying the building of Bayit Sheni. In an attempt to repair relations many of the leaders - including the Kohanim - intermarried with the nations that surrounded them. It was a problem so severe that it was solved only a generation later

with the arrival of both Ezra and Nechemiah. The message of the haftara was addressed to Yehoshua, the Kohen Gadol. The navi spoke to a righteous Kohen in a generation of so many assimilated ones, Kohanim who lost their identity and their faith.

The story of Chanuka also tells the story of the return of the kohanim to their proper stature as faith leaders generations after they had abandoned their divine role. It is the story of faithful kohanim, the Chashmonai family, who never lost their identity and who led the opposition to assimilation and Hellenism.

It is the story of Israel back on their land, following their priestly guides, defending their State and fighting for their beliefs.

*Probing the Prophets, weekly insights into the Haftara, is written by Rabbi Nachman (Neil) Winkler, author of Bringing the Prophets to Life (Gefen Publ.)*