

וישב

P³ – Parsha Points to Ponder

Sheet 13a Chapter 39, Pessukim 7 - 16

Possuk 8

וַיִּמָּאֵן

“he refused”

Rabbeinu Bachye comments that the note on this word is the long drawn-out *shalsheles* note. It appears only four times in the Torah, and signifies a delay or reticence. This *shalsheles* tells us that Yosef was reticent to have a relationship with Potphar’s wife. (The **Sefer Toras Chaim** explains that the word ‘*shalsheles*’ means a chain – as though Yosef was chained up, and therefore held back from this *aveirah*.) **Rabbeinu Bachye** writes here that the notes of the Torah are rather like a person’s body language, which can reveal a person’s thoughts and intentions. In a similar way, the musical notes of the Torah give us additional information not revealed in the text.

וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל אִשְׁתּוֹ אֲדֹנָי

“he said to his master’s wife”

The **Ramban** notes that Yosef was under tremendous pressure to accede to her demands – after all, she was “*his master’s wife*”. It is for this reason that the possuk states her position of authority over Yosef, even though it has already been mentioned in the previous possuk.

Possuk 9

וְחָטֵאתִי לְאֱלֹהִים

“I will have sinned against G-d”

The **Chizkuni** explains that Yosef expressed the idea that even if he might succeed in hiding the sin from Man, no one can hide from HaShem.

Possuk 10

לְשָׁכַב אֶצְלָהּ לְהִיּוֹת עִמָּהּ

“to lie beside her, to be with her”

The Gemorah in **Sotah (4b)** explains that the phrase “*to lie beside her*” refers to this world, while the phrase “*to be with her*” refers to the next world. Had Yosef sinned, he would have spent his eternity with her.

Ibn Ezra explains this doubled expression to mean that Yosef would not lie down anywhere near her, nor would he allow himself to be secluded with her, even for a normal conversation.

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Possuk 11

וַיְהִי כְּהַיּוֹם הַזֶּה

“then there was an opportune day”

Rashi explains that Potiphar’s wife seized the opportunity of an idolatrous festival day, when everyone attended the temple to celebrate. She feigned illness and so stayed at home.

The **Chizkuni** explains that on this day the Nile burst its banks and flooded the surrounding area. This was cause for great jubilation, and the royal entourage all went to witness this momentous event.

Ibn Ezra takes the literal translation, *“it was like this day”* to mean that the day on which Potiphar’s wife shamelessly attempted to seduce Yosef *“was like the day”* that she made her earlier initial advances. How can one day resemble the other day? The Ibn Ezra offers a number of possibilities:

#1 – the two days were one week apart, and so were on the same day of the week;

#2 – the two days were one month apart, and so were on the same day of the month;

#3 - two days were one year apart, and so were on the same calendar date.

The **Ibn Ezra** favours this final possibility.

לַעֲשׂוֹת מְלַאכְתּוֹ

“to do his work”

The Gemorah in **Sotah (36b)** brings two opinions as to the meaning of this phrase.

#1 – this phrase is to be understood literally: Yosef was home to do his work. This opinion is expanded by **Targum Onkeles** who elaborates that the work was seeing to Potiphar’s accounts;

#2 – this phrase is to be understood euphemistically: Yosef was home as he was ready to give in to Potiphar’s wife’s advances. He was stopped in his tracks by an image of his father Yaakov, who warned him that if he were to fail this test, his name would be the only name omitted from the stones on the shoulder straps of the Kohen Godol’s Ephod, while the names of all the other tribes would appear there.

Possuk 12

The **Daas Zekeinim miBaalei HaTosfos** enumerate the threats that Potiphar’s wife levelled against Yosef, should he continue to refuse to have a relationship with her. Yosef rebuffed each of these threats with a pertinent quotation from Tehillim chapter 146.

she threatened

“I’ll have you imprisoned”

“I’ll blind you”

“I’ll cripple you”

“I’ll make everyone hate you”

“I’ll sell you to a distant land”

he replied

ה' מַתִּיר אֲסוּרִים

ה' פּוֹקֵחַ עֵוְרִים

ה' זֹקֵף כְּפוּיִם

ה' אֹהֵב צְדִיקִים

ה' שׁוֹמֵר אֶת גְּרָם

“G-d releases those who are bound”

“G-d opens the eyes of the blind”

“G-d straightens those who are bent”

“G-d loves the righteous”

“G-d guards the stranger”

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Sheet 13c Chapter 39, Pessukim 7 - 16

Possuk 12 (continued)

וַיִּנָּס
“*he fled*”

The **Medrash Tanchuma (9)** notes that the Yam Suf split in the merit of Yosef having fled from Potiphar’s wife. In **Tehillim (114:3)** the possuk tells us הַיָּם רָאָה וַיִּנָּס – “*the sea saw, and it fled*” – the sea split (“*fled*”) once it saw how Yosef fled from temptation.

Possuk 14

הֵבִיא לָנוּ אִישׁ עִבְרִי
“*he brought us a Hebrew man...*”

Rashi explains that the “*he*” to whom she referred, was her own husband, Potiphar.

Possuk 15

וַיַּעֲזֹב בְּגָדוֹ אֶצְלוֹ
“*...he left his garment beside me...*”

The **Ramban** notes that in possuk 12, the Torah testifies that he left the garment “*in her hand*”, not “*beside her*” as she now claimed. Potiphar’s wife could not admit this truth, as it would implicate her as having grabbed Yosef by his garment.