

In the first half of פרשת מקץ, we have, in exquisite detail, the story of פרעה's dreams. It's repeated again, and יוסף repeats it one more time as he interprets it. The details are פסוק after פסוק after פסוק. And as we know, there are many great הלכות in the תורה that we learn from only רמזים, from a letter here and a letter there. Yet one of the details in this story - what might seem to be one of the least important features - is the number of times the פרעה recounts speaking to יוסף. I count five. I'll read them to you:

1. When they pull יוסף out of the בור, in פסוק טו, it says, ויאמר פרעה אל יוסף חלום חלמתי.
2. פסוק יז: וידבר פרעה אל יוסף בחלמי הנני עמך על שפת הנילוס.
3. After יוסף explains the dream, in פסוק לט: ויאמר פרעה אל יוסף אחרי הודיע אלהים אותך את כל זאת אין נבון וחכם כמוד.
4. פסוק מא: ויאמר פרעה אל יוסף ראה נתתי אתך על כל ארץ מצרים.
5. פסוק מד: ויאמר פרעה אל יוסף אני פרעה ובקעדי לא ירים איש את ידו.

Notice the difference in wording among these five פסוקים. Four out of the five start with ויאמר פרעה, but one of them, number two, starts with וידבר פרעה. We all know that אמירה is a רכה and דיבור is a לשון קשה. Why does פרעה use a לשון of וידבר פרעה?

Let's go back and start from the beginning. פרעה says to יוסף, "I dreamt a dream" (ויאמר פרעה, the first one). He continues, "Nobody can explain it to me, but I heard you can interpret dreams." What does יוסף answer him? ויען יוסף את פרעה לאמר בלעדי אלהים יענה את שלום פרעה. Immediately afterward, פרעה switches to וידבר פרעה. Why does פרעה change from ויאמר to וידבר? Something upset him. What was it?

The תורה points out that פרעה tried to trick יוסף by using a phrase in his description of the dream that wasn't in the original dream. In פסוק יט, he says, והנה שבע פרות אחרות עלות אחריהן דלות ורעות תאמר מאד ורקות. The word דלות wasn't in the original description as the תורה described it. Why would פרעה do that? He's going out of his beanbags trying to get the answer, why is he going out of his way to trick יוסף?

The answer is that יוסף did something which was unconscionable in פרעה's mind and unconscionable in our world today. יוסף said "Hashem is in charge" Nobody wants to hear that. Not one גוי wants to hear that. Unfortunately, many of us don't want to hear it either. But it's the truth: Hashem is in charge. ויען יוסף. אין עוד מלבדו. I don't do anything, it all comes from Hashem, יענה את שלום פרעה. This upset פרעה so much that he switched his language to וידבר, a harsher tone. Once פרעה realized, at the end, that יוסף's interpretation was correct, he returned to ויאמר. (All of the mefarshim ask the question: how did פרעה know that יוסף's interpretation was correct? The easiest explanation is that פרעה had originally dreamt the interpretation and forgotten it, and יוסף simply reminded him. Alternatively, it's just as straightforward to say that פרעה recognized the truth of יוסף's interpretation because it was so obvious, so in tune with what he had seen and experienced in his dream).

In פסוק לט - ויאמר פרעה אל יוסף אחרי הודיע אלהים אותך את כל זאת אין נבון וחכם כמוד: פסוק לט claim - that all interpretations come from Hashem - was correct. This wasn't easy for him, but that is our job: to make a kiddush Hashem, to show the world that everything comes from Hashem. We have to constantly have the שם השם שגור בפינו. That's our job: to make a kiddush Hashem. This one little שינוי in the לשון - how the פסוק changes from ויאמר to וידבר - drives this lesson home. I'm glad I once intuited this idea. It's fascinating to look at these לשונות and see what's right there beneath the surface, hiding, waiting to teach us a tremendous השכל מוסר. Let's take this lesson and use it to become better people.

