

# Zera Shimshon

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## Chapter X: Mikeitz (Gen. 41:1–44:17)

### Essay 4. “Two years of days”

**פסוק** "ויהי מקץ שנתים ימים" איתא במדרש רבה על ידי שאמר לשר המשקים "כי אם-זכרתני . . . והזפרתני" ניתוספו לו שתי שנים עכ"ל.

Regarding the verse, “At the end of two years of days, Pharaoh dreamed that he was standing by the Nile,”<sup>1</sup> **it is brought in Midrash Gen. Rabbah 89:2: It was because [Joseph] said to the chief cupbearer, “But remember me when all is well with you again, and do me the kindness of remembering me to Pharaoh, so as to free me from this place,”<sup>2</sup> that two years were added to [his time in prison]. “Yet the chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph; he forgot him.”<sup>3</sup>**

הטעם למה שתי שנים נוקא, יובן לעניות דעתי במה שנודע פי הזכירה באה משתי שמות הו"ה ואה"ה במילוי ע"ב קס"א שהם בגימטריא זכו"ר. והשקחה באה מאחוריים של שתי מילויים אלו שהם בגימטריא תשפ"ה. וכשתדקדק היטב תמצא שבשתי שנים יש תש"ל ימים, שהרי ימות הסמה שס"ה, והם בגימטריא תשפ"ח עם שני ימים יתירים דהיינו הכולל של שתי שמות אלו.

**The reason why specifically two years, will be understood, in my poor opinion, with what is known to Kabbalists,<sup>4</sup> that the “remembrance,”** i.e., referring to the two mentions of that word by Joseph to the chief cupbearer, **comes from the two names of G-d: *havaya*,** i.e., the Tetragrammaton, **and “I will be.”<sup>5</sup>** When they are spelled fully with *yods* using the *Otiot Milui* method [י"ו"ו ה"י] and [י"ו"ד ה"י], they reach the Gematria values respectively of **72** and **161**, which together add up to 233, which is the Gematria of the word “*zachor*” [“remembrance”].

**The “forgetfulness” comes from the “back end” of these full spellings.** The first name is rendered in this method as [י"ו"ד, י"ו"ד ה"י, י"ו"ד ה"י וי"ו, י"ו"ד ה"י וי"ו ה"י] which has the Gematria of 184, and the second name is rendered as [אל"ף, אל"ף ה"י, אל"ף ה"י י"ו"ד, אל"ף ה"י וי"ו ה"י] which has

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<sup>1</sup> Gen. 41:1.

<sup>2</sup> Gen. 40:14.

<sup>3</sup> Gen. 40:23.

<sup>4</sup> Chaim Vital, *Sha'ar Ruach haKodesh*, gate 7.

<sup>5</sup> Ex. 3:14, “I will be what I will be.”

the Gematria of 544. These add up to 728, which is the Gematria of the word **“tishkach”** [“you will forget”].

**When you check carefully, you will find that two years are 730 days, for the solar year is 365 days, and this is the Gematria of “tishkach,” i.e., 728, with two additional days, which is the number of words of these two names, the Tetragrammaton and “I will be.”**

וְלָכֵן יוֹסֵף שָׁתְלָה הַזְכִּירָה בְּשֵׁר הַמִּשְׁקִים וְלֹא תָלָה בְּהַקֵּב"ה גִּיתָן לוֹ הַשְׂכָּחָה דְּהִיָּנוּ פֶל בּוּ יָמִים כְּמוֹ שְׁעוּלִים שְׁתִּי שְׁמוֹת אֵלוֹ, וְהָכִי דִּיִּיק הַכְּתוּב לֹמֵר "וַיְהִי מִקֵּץ" דְּמִקֵּץ" עִם ג' אוֹתִיּוֹתָיו הוּא בְּגִימָטְרִיָּא זָכוּ"ר. כְּלוּמֵר שָׂאֵם לֹא הָיָה תוֹלָה בְּטַחוּנֵנוּ בְּשֵׁר הַמִּשְׁקִים הָיָה הַקֵּב"ה זֹכֵר מִמֶּנּוּ כְּמוֹ שְׁרוּמֵז מִקֵּץ, וְלִפִּי שְׁתְּלָה בְּטַחוּנֵנוּ בְּכִשְׁר נָדָם גִּיתוּסְפוּ לוֹ שְׁנַתִּים יָמִים.

**Therefore Joseph, who relied for “remembrance” upon the chief cupbearer and who didn’t rely upon the Holy One, Blessed be He, was instead given “forgetfulness” on the part of the cupbearer, which is the number of days that add up to these two names.**

**Thus, Scripture is precise to say, “At the end of two years of days,” for *miketz* [מִקֵּץ] [“at the end of”] has the Gematria of 230, and with the three letters of מִקֵּץ adds up to 233, which is the Gematria of the word “zachor” [remembrance].**

**That is as if to say that if [Joseph] hadn’t placed his security upon the chief cupbearer, then the Holy One, Blessed be He, would have remembered him, as the word *miketz* hints. But because he placed his security upon flesh and blood instead of upon G-d,<sup>6</sup> two years of days were added for him to sit in prison.**

וְדִיִּיק הַכְּתוּב לֹמֵר "יָמִים", שְׁלִפִּי הַפֶּשֶׁט שְׁנַתִּים סָגִי, וּמֵהוּ "יָמִים". לְרִמּוּז לְגוּ לְמָה שְׁנַתִּים דְּנִקְא לְפִי שְׁחֻשְׁבוֹן הַיָּמִים הֵם כְּנִגְדַּת הַחֻטָּא שְׁחֻטָּא יוֹסֵף. וְכַבּוּד מוֹרְנוּ וְנִרְבְּנוּ הָרַב רַבִּי מוֹרֵי דְדוּד פְּנִצִּי זצ"ל רַב מְלַמֵּד מִנְטוּבָה יָגוּ עָלֵינוּ אֱלֹהִים כְּשִׁשְׁמַע זֶה אָמַר כְּפִתוֹר וְפָרַח.

**Scripture is precise to say “two years of days,” for according to the plain meaning, saying “two years” would have been sufficient. So what is the meaning of the added word “days”? It is to hint to us why specifically two years, because of the counting of days, i.e., 730, which correspond to the sin with which Joseph sinned, i.e., 728 for *tishkach*, plus another 2 for the two names of G-d, as discussed above, because Joseph asked the cupbearer to remember him. Our honorable teacher and rabbi, my rabbi, my teacher, David Fintzi,<sup>7</sup> of blessed memory, rabbi and teacher of Mantua, G-d will guard over him, when he heard this, said, “a knob and flower,” a Biblical term<sup>8</sup> that is now used in literature to indicate delight.**

<sup>6</sup> Jer. 17:5: “Thus said the L-rd: ‘Cursed is he who trusts in man, who makes mere flesh his strength, and turns his thoughts from the L-rd.’”

<sup>7</sup> David Fintzi was the son-in-law of Moshe Chaim Luzzatto (“Ramchal”).

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Ex. 25:33, 37:19.

ואף לשון הזוהר מסייענו דקאמר, אַתּר דאית ביה נשיו קם קמיה, כיון דאמר "ולא־זכר שר־המשקים" מהו "ונישכחהו", אלא ונישכחהו אַתּר דאית ביה שכחה עכ"ל. וה' נראנו מתורתו נפלאות.

### Even the language of the Zohar assists us, saying:

Therefore, **the place of forgetfulness rose before him**. As it says, “Yet the chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph; he forgot him.” **Since it said “the chief butler did not remember [him],” what is [the meaning of the apparently redundant] “he forgot him”?** Rather, **“he forgot him” indicates the place in which there is forgetfulness**, which is the end on the side of darkness. What are the two years? The step of forgetfulness returned after that time to the step in which there is remembrance.

- Zohar, parashat Miketz, I:193b

### The L-rd should teach us wonderful things!<sup>9</sup>

ועוד יש לומר שנהגם ששתי שנים הם תש"ל גמים, מכל מקום השכחה של שר המשקים שפא לא היתה אלא כמנגן תשפ"ה, שהרי לא היה לו להזכירו אלא כשיצא הוא מבית האסורים והוא לא יצא אלא ביום השלישי נמצאו שתי גמים חסרים משתי שנים. ולסוף שנתים גמים שאמר יוסף "כי אם-זכרתני . . . והזכרתני", אז חלם פרעה, ואין הכי נמי שהיו שתי שנים שלמות שניתוספו ליוסף מיום שאמר "כי אם" וכו'. אמנם שכחתו של שר המשקים לא היתה אלא כמנגן תשפ"ה. אחרי זה מצאנו בחידושי הרמ"ז שגם הוא פירש לשון הזוהר קרוב לדרך זה אף הוא בסגנון אחר ועיי"ש, ובמה שפוננו לדעתו דעת גדול אשרינו.

**Also, it can be said that even though two years are 730 days, in any case the forgetfulness of the chief cupbearer was only according to the Gematria number of *tishkach* [“you will forget”], i.e., 728. After all, he had no reason to remember [Joseph] until he exited the prison, and he only exited on the third day after Joseph interpreted his dream,<sup>10</sup> and here we find the two days short of two years. I.e., the chief cupbearer remained in prison for two whole days after Joseph interpreted his dream, and then he was released on the third day.**

**It was at the end of the two years that Joseph said, “But remember me when all is well with you again, and do me the kindness of remembering me to Pharaoh, so as to free me from this place,” then Pharaoh dreamed, and it’s indeed so that there were two full years added to Joseph from the day that he said, “But remember me.” Indeed, the forgetfulness of the chief cupbearer was only according to the Gematria number of *tishkach* [“you will forget”], i.e., 728.**

I.e., Joseph sinned by asking the chief cupbearer to remember him. The chief cupbearer remained in prison for an additional two full days after Joseph interpreted his dream, and then was released on the third day. It was only then, when he was freed, that he “forgot” Joseph. Thus, we find that Joseph remained imprisoned two full years, 730 days, after his interpretation of the cupbearer’s dream. Thus, he was freed 728 days after the cupbearer’s release.

<sup>9</sup> The translator is not qualified to explain what Rabbi Nachmani understands here from the *Zohar*.

<sup>10</sup> Gen. 40:13: “In three days Pharaoh will pardon you and restore you to your post; you will place Pharaoh’s cup in his hand, as was your custom formerly when you were his cupbearer.”

After this, we find a Torah novelty of the ReMeZ,<sup>11</sup> that he also interpreted the language of the Zohar similarly to this way, but in a different style, and see there. As to what they intended, in his opinion there is a great deal of approval.

ועוד יש לומר דקרא קאמר "שנתים ימים" לפי ששנות הלכונה הם שנות של י"ב חדשים ולא שנות שלימות, שעדיין חסר מהם אחד עשר יום שיתרים שנות החמה. משום הכי קאמר "שנתים ימים" דהיינו שנים שלימות שס"ה יום.

Furthermore, it can be said that Scripture speaks of “two years of days” as clarification, because otherwise one might think Scripture spoke of lunar years, which are years of 12 lunar months of approximately 29.5 days each. Those are not full solar years, as they still have a deficiency of 11 days from the abundant days of the solar year. Because of this, to avoid the misunderstanding that “two years” meant 24 lunar months, or 708 days. [Scripture] speaks of “two years of days,” which is to clarify that it meant full years of 365 days.

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<sup>11</sup> Rabbi Moses ben Mordechai Zacuto (c. 1625–1697), Kabbalist and poet in Amsterdam and Italy.