

PARASHAH: Mikketz (At the end)
ADDRESS: B'resheet (Genesis) 41:1-44:17
READING DATE: Shabbat
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(Note: all quotations are taken from the Complete Jewish Bible, translation by David H. Stern, Jewish New Testament Publications, Inc., unless otherwise noted)

Let's begin with the opening blessing for the Torah:

***“Baruch atah YHVH, Eloheynu, Melech ha-‘Olam,
asher bachar banu m’kol ha-amim,
v’natan lanu eht Torah-to.
Baruch atah YHVH, noteyn ha-Torah.
Ameyn.”***

(Blessed are you, O' LORD, our God, King of the Universe,
you have selected us from among all the peoples,
and have given us your Torah.
Blessed are you, LORD, giver of the Torah.
Ameyn.)

“At the end of two years, Pharaoh had a dream.” This is how **Parashat Mikketz** begins, with the dreams of the highest ruler of Egypt. The title mikketz means “at the end.” Dreams play a significant part in the life of our main character Yosef (Joseph). It was his dreams and boyhood naivete that landed him in a dried up well, at the hands of his angry brothers. Moreover, HaShem also enabled him to interpret the dreams of both the chief baker and chief cupbearer, while imprisoned in Egypt. Accordingly, as we begin this week's portion, we now find another dream being examined in Scripture and our man Yosef is about to get caught up right in the middle of these circumstances as well.

This week's haftarah has a significant tie-in to the weekly Torah portion, in that Melekh Shlomo (King Solomon) begins his rule over his father Dah-vid's kingdom with a dream from HaShem (read 1 Kings 3:15-4:1). In our parashah, we are beginning to understand that HaShem is masterfully guiding Yosef into just the right circumstances that will enable him to be a conduit of the wisdom and providence of God. To be sure, everything up to this point has been precisely planned and orchestrated by HaShem. What does that tell us as believers today? When it seems as if nothing can go right—then nothing could be further from the truth! Let's look at some words of assurance in Romans 8:28-39. Because every detail of this wonderful promise is pertinent to our study, I want to quote it at length:

“We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him, who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his

Son, in order that he might be the first-born among many brethren. And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified. What then shall we say to this? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, will he not also give us all things with him? Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies; who is to condemn? Is it Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised from the dead, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us? Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, "For thy sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Based on the context of these verses, there really shouldn't be any doubt as to the reasons why HaShem is orchestrating our circumstances. His Son paid a heavy price for our freedom, and consequently, the Father is seeing to it that we develop properly as righteous sons and daughters, conformed into his image. It is in this way that his love is demonstrated for us: by becoming his chosen vessels; in a similar way, since Yosef was singled out as HaShem's chosen vessel, his circumstances were being orchestrated also.

God Works in Mysterious Ways

Practically one might ask, "Why did HaShem choose to reveal himself to an ungodly ruler such as Pharaoh?" I can't be dogmatic about my answer, for the Torah is silent in the immediate portion, except to say that God wanted Pharaoh to be assured that the matter was fixed (41:32). However, I do believe that the Torah hints at additional possibilities as to why. We know from further reading that this encounter with Yosef and his God leaves the Pharaoh absolutely convinced that HaShem has indeed anointed Yosef (41:37-41). To be sure, the position that Yosef was placed in was no small matter! So why give the dream to Pharaoh? By demonstrating to him personally, the awesome power and wisdom that exclusively lies in his hands, I believe HaShem was giving the Pharaoh and all of Egypt a chance to share in the blessings and provision that belong to those who name the name of the One True God of Heaven.

To strengthen my assumption, we read in Psalms 7:8-10 that HaShem the Righteous judge dispenses his Judgment according to the individual's righteousness. Likewise, he not only establishes these righteous individuals, but he also brings to destruction, the wicked ones. The passage goes on to say that

HaShem tests “hearts and minds” (verse 9b). Since we know that our own righteousness is but filth before our Holy God, we must be found righteous by his provision alone, and by his standards. Pharaoh was an unrighteous ruler, in that, previously, he did not recognize the One True God. History tells us that Egypt had many gods, of which the Nile River was a primary one. His dream takes place on the banks of the Nile.

If HaShem was able to demonstrate his mercy by sending an ungodly ruler a dream that could only be interpreted by a righteous individual—a ruler whom, according to the Torah, did not seek HaShem first, but instead sought the advice of magicians and false diviners—how much more is he willing to reveal himself to those who are genuinely seeking after him? Here's my point: HaShem was also choosing to bless the land of Egypt in correlation to the Pharaoh's decision to recognize that it was indeed the Spirit of HaShem who endowed Yosef with the supernatural ability to interpret dreams. Most assuredly, the land of Egypt enjoyed the blessing and provision of HaShem once Pharaoh promoted Yosef to his position of leadership. You could say that Pharaoh believed in HaShem because of Yosef. After all, our God is not willing that any should perish....

This application also helps to explain why HaShem used the very next Pharaoh to also demonstrate his (God's) nature. This time, as I'm getting ahead of myself, the Pharaoh did not choose to recognize HaShem, so our God decided to use him for a vessel to demonstrate his power in Judgment rather than blessing (read Exodus 1:8-10; 5:1, 2; Romans 9:14-24).

The Unfolding of God's Plan

So the activities of Yosef continued to reflect the wisdom and anointing of HaShem. His subsequent dealings with his brothers as they come to him to buy supplies during the expected famine years, demonstrates that even the lives of his brothers all revolve around a central purpose: to reveal the providence of the Almighty God, amidst apparent difficulties, and to demonstrate the heart of God as he lovingly cares for even those who seemingly don't deserve his provision. In the case of his brothers, HaShem was bringing them to the place where they would eventually have to come to the conclusion that Yosef was the anointed one among them. They would also come to realize that he was actually singled out to facilitate God's blessings and provision unto the rest of the family, despite his (seeming) position of least importance.

As the events are played out in the lives of this family from the land of Kena'an, collectively they begin to reflect upon the consequences of their less than moral actions. One by one, we see the brothers begin to realize this truth. We first see it in the eldest son Re'uven, as he recalls the mistake in wrongfully treating Yosef at the well (42:22). I'm sure Shim'on also had plenty of time to contemplate their injustice also, as, Yosef decided to imprison him until they returned to Egypt with the youngest son. Finally, once they reach home, Y'hudah steps to the forefront

to assure his father Isra'el that no harm would befall the young lad Binyamin, but that he would indeed see him face to face again.

Trusting HaShem

As I mentioned in last week's parashah, Y'udah would later play an important role in helping to bring about the promises of HaShem, as the forefather of the tribe that would bear his name. This same tribe would give birth to the Messiah Yeshua. We begin to see Y'udah take the responsibility and boldness that would earn him the preeminent blessing in B'reshet 49:8-12. There must have been some amount of supernatural persuasion on the part of Y'udah, for at last Isra'el agrees to go along with the plan.

When the brothers return to Yosef with Binyamin, Yosef treats them all to an afternoon meal. It is here that he once again demonstrates his knowledge of the unknowable by seating them according to age, from firstborn to youngest. I believe by this time Yosef was beginning to comprehend the sovereignty of HaShem for himself, as the past events and dreams of his life are beginning to make some sense. Here were his brothers, seated before him, awaiting his command to either provide for them or destroy them. Truly God was a God of mercy and wisdom, for only HaShem, Yosef might have contemplated, could have orchestrated the fantastic order of events thus far.

This has immediate implications for us today. We have but to place our trust in his invisible hand and watch him bring about the events and circumstances in our lives that are designed to result in blessing and provision. This is a call to action, as the Torah teaches,

“Trust in ADONAI with all of your heart; do not rely on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him; then he will level your paths.” (Proverbs 3:5, 6)

Surely, once we witness with our own eyes, the sovereignty of our LORD, we will praise him all the more. We should begin to actively pursue acknowledging him for his promises of blessing and provision. But let us not forget that he is worthy of our praise, not merely for what he can do, but for who he is—in spite of what he has done! To be sure, this is the attitude of the character in our haftarah also. As he was nearing the conclusion of his long-lived and adventurous life, Melekh Shlomo advised all that would later read his wise sayings to “fear God and keep his mitzvot (commandments).” Shlomo was a man who, shall we say, “experienced it all,” and yet his final contemplation was to fear HaShem.

Concluding Application

Today, we may not directly experience the type of betrayal and rejection that Yosef did, or we may not have the many life experiences that Shlomo did either,

but we do have a Great High Priest that did suffer ultimate rejection from his brothers. To be sure, he was also a king, yet he provided for us the ultimate example of one anointed of God. Yeshua and Yosef are both examples of what HaShem can accomplish when a seemingly insignificant individual is singled out to be the recipient of the supernatural wisdom of the Spirit of the Holy One. Both men were treated unfairly, and yet both men remained humble in the face of adversity. Melekh Shlomo wasn't necessarily mistreated, but instead acted as a repository for the wisdom of HaShem, and yet, he made more than his fair share of mistakes. Yet HaShem did not reject him as his chosen.

Yes, the Torah is a document filled with the lives of imperfect men, trusting in the providence and grace of a perfect God. Yosef once again allows his brothers to make for Kena'an with provisions for their family, but this time, unknown to his brothers, he manipulates a plan to further develop their character. Acting, I believe, under the guidance of HaShem, he singles out Binyamin and places his personal goblet in his pack. Upon learning of the turn of events, the brothers are speechless. This was the moment that Yosef was waiting for, the moment when his brothers finally had come to the place of total desperation, a place of utter helplessness. HaShem had cornered them, Yosef realized, and there was nowhere else to hide.

This is the place where an individual needs to find himself, in order to accept the provision and blessing that HaShem has in store for him. By reaching the end of their rope, so to say, they are faced with the opportunity to fall on the mercy and grace of the One that they figured would be of no significant place in their lives. Someday, according to the book of Zechariah chapter 12, this is the place that the Nation of Isra'el will ultimately have to come to as well, as they face the brother that they forsook almost 2000 years ago.

The closing blessing is as follows:

***“Baruch atah YHVH, Eloheynu, Melech ha-‘Olam,
asher natan lanu Toraht-emet,
v’chay-yeh o’lam nata-b’tochenu.
Baruch atah YHVH, noteyn ha-Torah.
Ameyn.”***

(Blessed are you O' LORD, our God, King of the Universe,
you have given us your Torah of truth,
and have planted everlasting life within our midst.
Blessed are you, LORD, giver of the Torah.
Ameyn.)

“Shabbat Shalom!”

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