

V'yeishev וַיֵּשֶׁב **He continued living** **“Sovereign Choices”**

Genesis 37:1-40:23
 Amos 2:6-3:8

Sometimes during the course of Torah reflection, the Lord will use whatever the weekly *parashah* is to really force you to consider where you stand before Him. *V'yeishev* is just one of those readings, as the circumstances of life and the choices we have to make are brought right to the surface of our attention. Once again, the lives of our spiritual forbearers epitomize much of the perpetual struggle that humanity has had with its Creator.

In *V'yeishev* we see the emergence of Judah and Joseph, as the leaders of their generation, come to light. How they individually handled personal trials is vividly contrasted. For the Believer writing this reflective commentary, presently immersed in a very difficult trial himself (2003), the timing of this portion for reflection has been critical for making the right choice. The example of the Patriarch Joseph is a particularly encouraging one to emulate.

As Believers in the Messiah of Israel, **who must continue to endure in the Lord**, we are each given daily opportunities to make choices. We have many of the same options given to Judah and Joseph, as (1) we can either choose to follow our carnal inclinations, or (2) we can choose to let God work out all the details. Of course, we know that the former path is the natural way for the world and those who lack the indwelling presence of the Ruach HaKodesh (Holy Spirit). The second path requires faith in a Sovereign Creator, who we trust will work things out according to His perfect plan for our lives.

Years ago, in my early days in the faith, the writings of Paul helped me with some decisions I was making, which could only be prompted and executed by the Spirit of the Most High within me:

“Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual *thoughts* with spiritual *words*. But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no one. For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, THAT HE WILL INSTRUCT HIM [Isaiah 40:13]? But we have the mind of Messiah” (1 Corinthians 2:12-16).

Joseph's Choices

As I look at the life of Joseph, I am reminded that for some reason he made what appeared to be some very spiritual and faithful decisions, as God was preparing him for the saving work he was going to accomplish for his brothers. Why was he able to make such godly choices during his testings with his brothers (Genesis 37:18-36), while employed (Genesis 39:1-18), or incarcerated in the bowels of Egypt (Genesis 39:19-23)? Was it

because of the visions he received as a youth (Genesis 37:1-17)? Without a doubt Joseph's dreams had an impact on his choices (cf. Genesis 40), as the Psalmist further articulates,

“He sent a man before them, Joseph, *who* was sold as a slave. They afflicted his feet with fetters, He himself was laid in irons; until the time that his word came to pass, the word of the LORD tested him” (Psalm 105:17-19).

It appears that from this statement “the word” that Joseph received in his dreams had a powerful impact on his future. In fact, it is evident from his actions and reactions to unprovoked abuse that he was able to choose a path of righteousness. But did you notice the additional mention of the trials or afflictions that he endured? If you look up the Hebrew verb *tzaraf* (תָּרַף), you will find out that “This word describes the purifying process of a refiner, who heats metal, takes away the dross, and is left with a pure substance” (AMG).⁵⁰ You might ask this simple question: Why would God choose to refine Joseph with so many trials over the years until the “word” given to him came about? Perhaps the adage seen in Proverbs 3:12 was at work?

“For whom the LORD loves He reproves, even as a father *corrects* the son in whom he delights” (cf. Hebrews 12:6).

Just as the Psalmist declares, and Proverbs and Hebrews clarify, it is obvious that God loved Joseph and had a redemptive role for him to play during his life. So, a discipline delivered because of love was necessary for Joseph to fulfill his calling. Of course at this point, you almost want to throw your hands up in the air and scream, “Why? Why? Why?” Then you are reminded of this very basic truth:

“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,” declares the LORD. For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts” (Isaiah 55:8-9).

As students and beneficiaries of Torah reflection, we must be reminded that we are the clay and He is the Potter.⁵¹ Let us all humbly admit that we will be works in progress before we are able to see our Lord face-to-face.

The Right Choice

Even though God may be in ultimate control of things, reality demands that we still have to make decisions that will affect our lives, just as Joseph did in his day. If we are aware of the common struggle between our carnal inclinations, and the Spirit that indwells us, then we are in good company. This is something that the saints have always battled. The blessing is that we know we are in the war, and are hopefully making choices which relinquish our will to the will of the Holy One.

Have you ever had an encounter with the Most High? It may have been a dream like Joseph's, a voice from the Heavenly realm, or perhaps even a vision from God. Hopefully, this is a part of your testimony—because if it is, then you have the same opportunity that Joseph had to make the right choices. You can reflect upon whatever your encounter was, and remember that at some point in time, the Creator revealed Himself to you in a very unique way. You can recall that He is ultimately in control of the created order, and that He is going to accomplish His tasks.

⁵⁰ Warren Baker and Eugene Carpenter, eds., *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament* (Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 2003), 970.

⁵¹ Cf. Isaiah 29:16; Romans 9:21.

Knowing these things, what you will learn over time is that if you can choose correctly to submit to His will, making the right spiritual choices, whatever is going on in the circumstances of life will be remedied in a more proficient manner. But if you make a choice based on your carnal proclivities, you may not only impede His speed in rectifying the situation, but you could also become encumbered by the consequences of your preferred, natural choice.

For this seeker, as *V'yeishev's* instruction has come forth, the choice to let the Lord work out the details of my challenges is relatively easy. Of course this requires patience, one of the fruits of the Spirit that often needs to be exercised more frequently (Galatians 5:22-23). In a like manner, you can imagine how Joseph was also called to wait upon the Lord. And from the testimony of this and other passages in the Scriptures, his faith and patience were strong enough to wait for Him to move. It is encouraging to note that this challenge is not unique to Joseph or anyone of us. In fact, James the Just gives us great advice as he begins his epistle:

“Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have *its* perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him” (James 1:2-5).

Endurance can be seen as the result of a faith tempered by time and patience. Look at the results of the trials of life. How do completion and lacking in nothing sound as rewards for making the right choices during times of testing? Consistent study and meditation upon God's Word should equip you with the wisdom you need to make the right choices, and in the Father's wisdom, His sovereign choices will be completed in the right time. Joseph waited and trusted. May we, in like manner, choose to follow his example!

Mikkeitz מִקֵּיץ At the end “To Him Be the Glory”

Genesis 41:1-44:17

1 Kings 3:15-4:1

This week's *parashah* includes a very important verse that should immediately focus our attention on what God was accomplishing through the life of Joseph, when he is asked to interpret the dreams that Pharaoh has been having:

“Joseph then answered Pharaoh, saying, ‘It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer’” (Genesis 41:16).

Mikkeitz allows each of us, once again, to witness the sovereign will of the Creator take its course. The sons of Jacob/Israel are once more called upon to be the principal actors in a real life drama that has been preserved for our instruction. Here, the Holy One displays His omniscient will over the affairs of the world. The Lord has a very special assignment for the people of the covenants, and He guarantees that everything that He desires goes according to His script, by deliberately selecting the cast and arranging the unique circumstances. It is