

Yeshua did not mince His words with hard to interpret explanations, but directed people on how murder and adultery are much more than just the physical acts. This is why it is absolutely vital that each one of us *sincerely has a genuine fear of the Lord* in order to arrest our thoughts, hold back our tongues, and certainly avoid sinful actions.

The great example of Joseph having had some dreams or words, that solidified his faith in the Holy One, is something that every Believer should seek to obtain and retain during the course of his or her life. **Knowing beyond a shadow of doubt that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is observing each and every thought, word, and deed is something that assuredly engenders a sincere fear of Him.** Whether one receives that assurance from a dream, a vision, a word, or most critically a salvation experience—it is absolutely necessary to walk in a way that truly pleases our Heavenly Father. We have the testimony of Joseph to consider, but what is most crucial is our individual testimony that the fear of the Lord is presently directing our life. For without a genuine fear of the Lord, our ability to understand and apprehend what the Scriptures discuss is severely limited:

“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding” (Proverbs 9:10).

During the course of our lives, may we continually be able to fear the Lord in an even greater manner, as we seek to serve Him and see His Kingdom established!

Mikkeitz At the end “God Honors Faith”

Genesis 41:1-44:17
1 Kings 3:15-4:1

Mikkeitz, which is being considered as the Torah portion for this week, continues the narrative about the life of Joseph in Egypt. Joseph finally realized the manifestation of his dreams about his brothers bowing before him. Since being cast into a pit by his brothers and sold into slavery in Egypt, Joseph had to endure false accusations from Potiphar’s wife, which eventually landed him in an Egyptian jail. Yet, from our previous reading, *V’yeishev* (Genesis 37:1-40:23), Joseph’s faith, in the “word” he discerned from the dreams he had received as a youth, had “tested” him and continued to keep him looking to the Holy One for guidance and comfort (Psalm 105:19).

As this *parashah* unfolds, it is Joseph's God-given ability to interpret dreams that ultimately placed him second to Pharaoh, prior to the Almighty using a regional famine to force the sons of Jacob to travel to Egypt from Canaan in search of food. The underlying irony weaved throughout these circumstances is the apparent lack of faith exhibited by the sons of Jacob, as they encountered their inquisitions before the concealed Joseph. The Psalmist summarized an outline of these events centuries later, as all of these circumstances were designed by the Almighty to eventually teach the brothers wisdom, which culminated in a great trust and faith in Him. They would finally be able to understand that the Lord was ultimately in control of the circumstances of their lives:

“And He called for a famine upon the land; He broke the whole staff of bread. 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. The king sent and released him, the ruler of peoples, and set him free. He made him lord of his house and ruler over all his possessions, to imprison his princes at will, that he might teach his elders wisdom” (Psalm 105:16-22).

In turning to our Torah reading, we are once again reminded of the plight of Joseph, as he languished in the jail reserved for the prisoners of Pharaoh and other high ranking officials. From last week's *parashah*, Joseph's ability to interpret dreams had been recognized by the cupbearer, as Joseph accurately interpreted the fatal dream of the baker and the restorative dream of Pharaoh's wine steward (Genesis 40). However, for two full years, the cupbearer did not honor Joseph's request to plead for his release from the jail (Genesis 40:14). So, we see how *Mikkeitz* opens with Pharaoh's description of a puzzling dream:

“He restored the chief cupbearer to his office, and he put the cup into Pharaoh's hand; but he hanged the chief baker, just as Joseph had interpreted to them. Yet the chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph, but forgot him. Now it happened at the end of two full years that Pharaoh had a dream, and behold, he was standing by the Nile” (Genesis 40:21-41:1).

Dreams received and the God-given ability to interpret dreams were a significant part of Joseph's life, and his specific walk with the Lord. As we later discover (Genesis 41:46), Joseph had spent some thirteen or so years either enslaved or incarcerated in Egypt, and he had not yet realized the dream he had of ruling over his family. Still, when given an opportunity while in jail to interpret the dreams of Pharaoh's baker and cupbearer, he confidently acknowledged his God as the source of dream interpretations (Genesis 40:8).

After a two year stint continuing to ably serve the chief jailer, another opportunity to seek God for an interpretation of dreams presented itself. This time, the dreams were experienced by the demanding Pharaoh, who reflexively sought an interpretation from his magicians and wise courtiers without any success. Finally as we read, the forgetful cupbearer, possibly seeking favor with Pharaoh after the

failure of the wise companions, remembered the Hebrew youth who had properly interpreted his own dream:

“Now in the morning his spirit was troubled, so he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt, and all its wise men. And Pharaoh told them his dreams, but there was no one who could interpret them to Pharaoh. Then the chief cupbearer spoke to Pharaoh, saying, ‘I would make mention today of my *own* offenses. Pharaoh was furious with his servants, and he put me in confinement in the house of the captain of the bodyguard, *both* me and the chief baker. We had a dream on the same night, he and I; each of us dreamed according to the interpretation of his *own* dream. Now a Hebrew youth *was* with us there, a servant of the captain of the bodyguard, and we related *them* to him, and he interpreted our dreams for us. To each one he interpreted according to his *own* dream. And just as he interpreted for us, so it happened; he restored me in my office, but he hanged him.’ Then Pharaoh sent and called for Joseph, and they hurriedly brought him out of the dungeon; and when he had shaved himself and changed his clothes, he came to Pharaoh. Pharaoh said to Joseph, ‘I have had a dream, but no one can interpret it; and I have heard it said about you, that when you hear a dream you can interpret it.’ Joseph then answered Pharaoh, saying, ‘It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer’” (Genesis 41:8-16).

Once again, without apparent hesitation when asked, Joseph did not take credit for his ability to interpret dreams—but from the onset told Pharaoh that perhaps God would give him the interpretation. Joseph continued to display a consistent reliance upon the God of his fathers, for whatever ability he had been given to interpret dreams. Joseph illustrated the universal principle that *God honors those who honor Him*, as specifically delineated several centuries later to the Prophet Samuel, and eventually affirmed by Yeshua the Messiah to His Disciples:

“Therefore the LORD God of Israel declares, ‘I did indeed say that your house and the house of your father should walk before Me forever’; but now the LORD declares, ‘Far be it from Me—for those who honor Me I will honor, and those who despise Me will be lightly esteemed’” (1 Samuel 2:30).

“If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him” (John 12:26).

For the Lord’s Divine purposes, faithful Joseph found himself in a unique position to interpret some dreams that had confounded the wise officials of Egypt. Upon hearing Pharaoh’s description of the disturbing dreams, Joseph confidently told Pharaoh that his two dreams were from God, and promptly stated a God-revealed interpretation, while offering a practical solution to the impending famine:

“Now Joseph said to Pharaoh, ‘Pharaoh’s dreams are one *and the same*; God has told to Pharaoh what He is about to do. The seven good cows are seven years; and the seven good ears are seven years; the dreams are one *and the same*. The seven

lean and ugly cows that came up after them are seven years, and the seven thin ears scorched by the east wind will be seven years of famine. It is as I have spoken to Pharaoh: God has shown to Pharaoh what He is about to do. Behold, seven years of great abundance are coming in all the land of Egypt; and after them seven years of famine will come, and all the abundance will be forgotten in the land of Egypt, and the famine will ravage the land. So the abundance will be unknown in the land because of that subsequent famine; for it *will be* very severe. Now as for the repeating of the dream to Pharaoh twice, *it means* that the matter is determined by God, and God will quickly bring it about. Now let Pharaoh look for a man discerning and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt. Let Pharaoh take action to appoint overseers in charge of the land, and let him exact a fifth *of the produce* of the land of Egypt in the seven years of abundance. Then let them gather all the food of these good years that are coming, and store up the grain for food in the cities under Pharaoh's authority, and let them guard *it*. Let the food become as a reserve for the land for the seven years of famine which will occur in the land of Egypt, so that the land will not perish during the famine.' Now the proposal seemed good to Pharaoh and to all his servants. Then Pharaoh said to his servants, 'Can we find a man like this, in whom is a divine spirit?' So Pharaoh said to Joseph, 'Since God has informed you of all this, there is no one so discerning and wise as you are. You shall be over my house, and according to your command all my people shall do homage; only in the throne I will be greater than you.' Pharaoh said to Joseph, 'See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt.' Then Pharaoh took off his signet ring from his hand and put it on Joseph's hand, and clothed him in garments of fine linen and put the gold necklace around his neck. He had him ride in his second chariot; and they proclaimed before him, 'Bow the knee!' And he set him over all the land of Egypt. Moreover, Pharaoh said to Joseph, '*Though* I am Pharaoh, yet without your permission no one shall raise his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt'" (Genesis 41:25-44).

In a providential twist, Pharaoh—who was considered to be *a god* by his subjects—intently listened to the interpretation and advice of Joseph. Contrary to the many societal prejudices toward the Hebrews (Genesis 43:32), Pharaoh concluded that the wise and discerning youth, in whom the “divine spirit” resided, was just the right person to handle the imminent threat to the future of Egypt. Joseph's faith in the Almighty, and his bold declaration that gave honor to God before the imperial Pharaoh, resulted in God honoring Joseph with positional authority within Egypt **second only to the Pharaoh!** This is a most-significant example of what happens when one places faith in God—for all of us to consider—especially in contrast to the seemingly faith-starved brothers who sojourned to Egypt, primarily to seek physical sustenance. Yet, the Almighty also had a plan for the other sons of Jacob. In due time, they would eventually recognize the providential hand of the Lord in their encounters, with an “anonymous” Egyptian

purveyor of grain—their brother Joseph—who remained a faithful servant of the ultimate Provider.

From this point, *Mikkeitz* records how Joseph went about his life, administrating Egypt's food crisis (Genesis 41:47-49), marrying a daughter of an Egyptian priest (Genesis 41:45), and fathering two sons (Genesis 41:50-52).

Dreams Come True

The realization of Joseph's dreams now come center stage, when his brothers have to make their way down into Egypt, in order to buy food to survive. Joseph's brothers did not recognize that they were bowing to the brother they once wanted to kill, but instead, sold into slavery. On the other hand, Joseph recognized his brothers, but rather than revealing himself, he decided that he was in an opportune position to take revenge on his brothers if so inclined.

One can only imagine what must have been going through Joseph's mind and heart as he confronted his needy brothers. If Joseph had been harboring some hatred for his brothers' actions toward him, this would have been the perfect time for him to execute judgment. However, because Joseph was wise, discerning, and in tune with the will of God—he inherently knew because of his faith in the Lord that vengeance was His. The Almighty had already honored Joseph with incredible favor and power before the Egyptians. *What was he to do with these circumstances?* Joseph did, initially, speak to his brothers harshly. However, in the back of his mind he had to remember the dreams about his brothers bowing to him, and so he must have wondered how was he to respond to the event finally taking place. So, rather than take immediate forceful action, Joseph decided to use the occasion to have his brothers experience the fear of death—something he had endured years earlier when these very brothers had threatened to kill him. By accusing his brothers of being spies in Egypt—a capital offense justifying certain execution—Joseph was wisely using these circumstances to teach his brothers some life changing lessons:

“Now Jacob saw that there was grain in Egypt, and Jacob said to his sons, ‘Why are you staring at one another?’ He said, ‘Behold, I have heard that there is grain in Egypt; go down there and buy *some* for us from that place, so that we may live and not die.’ Then ten brothers of Joseph went down to buy grain from Egypt. But Jacob did not send Joseph's brother Benjamin with his brothers, for he said, ‘I am afraid that harm may befall him.’ So the sons of Israel came to buy grain among those who were coming, for the famine was in the land of Canaan *also*. Now Joseph was the ruler over the land; he was the one who sold to all the people of the land. And Joseph's brothers came and bowed down to him with *their* faces to the ground. When Joseph saw his brothers he recognized them, but he disguised himself to them and spoke to them harshly. And he said to them, ‘Where have you come from?’ And they said, ‘From the land of Canaan, to buy food.’ But Joseph had recognized his brothers, although they did not recognize him. Joseph remembered

the dreams which he had about them, and said to them, 'You are spies; you have come to look at the undefended parts of our land.' Then they said to him, 'No, my lord, but your servants have come to buy food. We are all sons of one man; we are honest men, your servants are not spies.' Yet he said to them, 'No, but you have come to look at the undefended parts of our land!' But they said, 'Your servants are twelve brothers *in all*, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan; and behold, the youngest is with our father today, and one is no longer alive.' Joseph said to them, 'It is as I said to you, you are spies; by this you will be tested: by the life of Pharaoh, you shall not go from this place unless your youngest brother comes here! Send one of you that he may get your brother, while you remain confined, that your words may be tested, whether there is truth in you. But if not, by the life of Pharaoh, surely you are spies.' So he put them all together in prison for three days" (Genesis 42:1-17).

In this extraordinary interchange, Joseph had to be struggling with his emotions as he recognized his brothers—while noticing that Benjamin was not among them. But rather than reveal his identity, he put his brothers on the defensive, by claiming that they must be spies searching out the undefended lands of Egypt. The brother's subject-changing retort indicated that their youngest brother Benjamin was alive, remaining in Canaan with his father. In addition, because they did not know the fate of the brother they had sold into slavery, they assumed that he was dead. *Once again, imagine what Joseph must have been thinking when he heard these revelations from his brothers who were passionately attempting to defend themselves.* On the other hand, the emotional tables were being turned on the brothers, as the false allegation that they were spies could result in their execution:

"Now Joseph said to them on the third day, 'Do this and live, for I fear God: if you are honest men, let one of your brothers be confined in your prison; but as for *the rest of you*, go, carry grain for the famine of your households, and bring your youngest brother to me, so your words may be verified, and you will not die.' And they did so. Then they said to one another, 'Truly we are guilty concerning our brother, because we saw the distress of his soul when he pleaded with us, yet we would not listen; therefore this distress has come upon us.' Reuben answered them, saying, 'Did I not tell you, "Do not sin against the boy"; and you would not listen? Now comes the reckoning for his blood.' They did not know, however, that Joseph understood, for there was an interpreter between them. He turned away from them and wept. But when he returned to them and spoke to them, he took Simeon from them and bound him before their eyes" (Genesis 42:18-24).

Initially, Joseph was going to send one brother to retrieve the youngest brother. But after three days of letting the ten brothers stew and ruminate over their predicament in the prison, the Egyptian prince ironically referenced God when he altered his edict. Joseph's comment, that he had a "fear of God," should have been a thought-provoking remark to the brothers—especially since there was a blatant void of references to God on their behalf. Then, in a searching attempt to

comprehend their dilemma, the eldest son Reuben spoke to his brothers *and* directly tied the maltreatment of their brother Joseph to their dire circumstances. Apparently, while in confinement fretting over their personal destiny, the brothers were reminded of their nefarious actions toward Joseph years earlier—and were connecting the two. It appears that the brothers were finally beginning to recognize **the consequences of their actions**. The measured wheels of eternal justice were beginning to turn—as the brothers’ consciences were being stirred—as the deeply buried thoughts of past actions were being considered, given their current life-threatening situation:

For the remainder of our *parashah*, the Lord continued to use the judicious decisions of Joseph regarding his brothers, to painstakingly bring his brothers closer to recognizing His providence. Despite the emotional pain of watching and listening to his brothers discuss private matters among themselves—since unbeknownst to his brothers he understood their language—Joseph ventured forth with his objective to teach his brothers a lesson. If revenge was ever in his mind, the thought of restoring his family eventually overwhelmed him, as he had to turn away in order to weep before ordering the incarceration of Simeon, the secondborn son. Nevertheless, the trials of the brothers were just beginning, as God was using Joseph’s actions to get his brother’s attention. This would ultimately reveal to them that the Holy One was in careful control of the affairs of limited, mortal people.

Motivating Fears

Fear of loss is a prime motivator, especially when one senses life-threatening loss. In the case of Joseph’s brothers on their journey back to Canaan, they had to initially consider the loss of Simeon—but upon discovering their money in their satchels, the fear for their own lives became even more paramount. In their trepidation, they wondered what had been happening to them, an indication that they were beginning to view things with God somehow being involved in their affairs. In fact, given their new predicament that would have turned them from not only being spies but also thieves—they were starting to understand that there were consequences for their sinful actions, whether actual or perceived. *The Lord was definitely using these events to get their collective attention*. But to complicate matters, the brothers were going to have to convey all that had happened during their trip to Egypt to their father Jacob, who continued to grieve over the loss of Joseph years earlier:

“Then Joseph gave orders to fill their bags with grain and to restore every man’s money in his sack, and to give them provisions for the journey. And thus it was done for them. So they loaded their donkeys with their grain and departed from there. As one *of them* opened his sack to give his donkey fodder at the lodging place, he saw his money; and behold, it was in the mouth of his sack. Then he said to his brothers, ‘My money has been returned, and behold, it is even in my sack.’ **And their hearts sank, and they turned trembling to one another,**

saying, ‘What is this that God has done to us?’ When they came to their father Jacob in the land of Canaan, they told him all that had happened to them, saying, ‘The man, the lord of the land, spoke harshly with us, and took us for spies of the country. But we said to him, “We are honest men; we are not spies. We are twelve brothers, sons of our father; one is no longer alive, and the youngest is with our father today in the land of Canaan.” The man, the lord of the land, said to us, ‘By this I will know that you are honest men: leave one of your brothers with me and take *grain* for the famine of your households, and go. But bring your youngest brother to me that I may know that you are not spies, but honest men. I will give your brother to you, and you may trade in the land.’” Now it came about as they were emptying their sacks, that behold, every man’s bundle of money *was* in his sack; and when they and their father saw their bundles of money, they were dismayed. Their father Jacob said to them, ‘You have bereaved me of my children: Joseph is no more, and Simeon is no more, and you would take Benjamin; all these things are against me.’ Then Reuben spoke to his father, saying, ‘You may put my two sons to death if I do not bring him *back* to you; put him in my care, and I will return him to you.’ But Jacob said, ‘My son shall not go down with you; for his brother is dead, and he alone is left. If harm should befall him on the journey you are taking, then you will bring my gray hair down to Sheol in sorrow’” (Genesis 42:25-38).

Now to heap additional worries on Jacob after the loss of Joseph, the news that Simeon was in custody—coupled with the potential loss of Benjamin if the brothers were ever going to extricate Simeon from jail—was too much to bear. In a sign that the brothers were beginning to mature and take responsibility for their actions, Reuben spoke up and offered a rather bizarre hyperbolic prescription to his father Jacob for taking Benjamin to Egypt, in order to secure the release of Simeon. Obviously, the trade of killing two grandsons for a son was beyond the pale, figuratively speaking. Jacob categorically rejected the offer, but reminded his sons that his grief continued for his favored son Joseph. Certainly by this point in the account, all of the brothers were dealing with their consciences over the actions that had been taken years ago—but the recognition that God was involved in these matters, was beginning to seep into their thoughts.

Judah Emerges

There is one thing about God that is consistent: when He has a use for someone in His Kingdom’s work, He never lets up on the crucible of affliction, until His chosen vessel is properly formed for His usage. In the case of the brothers who would father the nation of Israel, the trials with the regional famine in Canaan did not cease, and consequently, they were once again forced by the lack of sustenance to venture back to Egypt in need of food. However, since they knew that the demanding Egyptian viceroy meant what he said about their younger brother, they were forced to compel their father Jacob to allow Benjamin to travel

with them against Jacob's will. To complicate matters, the sons were also concerned that they would be considered thieves, because the money they had originally taken to Egypt the first time was surreptitiously placed back in their sacks.

The fear of retribution by the Egyptians for what appeared to be outright theft was a given. As a result of these challenges, it is interesting to note that the emergence of Judah, as a spokesperson and leader for his generation, commenced in full earnest. Genesis ch. 43 details the second journey to Egypt, and specifically records the dialogue between Judah and Jacob (now referenced as Israel), as the critical need for food for his entire family must have overcome Israel's fear of losing Benjamin to the Egyptians:

"Now the famine was severe in the land. So it came about when they had finished eating the grain which they had brought from Egypt, that their father said to them, 'Go back, buy us a little food.' Judah spoke to him, however, saying, 'The man solemnly warned us, "You shall not see my face unless your brother is with you." If you send our brother with us, we will go down and buy you food. But if you do not send *him*, we will not go down; for the man said to us, "You will not see my face unless your brother is with you."' Then Israel said, 'Why did you treat me so badly by telling the man whether you still had *another* brother?' But they said, 'The man questioned particularly about us and our relatives, saying, "Is your father still alive? Have you *another* brother?" So we answered his questions. Could we possibly know that he would say, "Bring your brother down?"' Judah said to his father Israel, 'Send the lad with me and we will arise and go, that we may live and not die, we as well as you and our little ones. I myself will be surety for him; you may hold me responsible for him. If I do not bring him *back* to you and set him before you, then let me bear the blame before you forever. For if we had not delayed, surely by now we could have returned twice.' Then their father Israel said to them, 'If *it must be* so, then do this: take some of the best products of the land in your bags, and carry down to the man as a present, a little balm and a little honey, aromatic gum and myrrh, pistachio nuts and almonds. Take double *the* money in your hand, and take back in your hand the money that was returned in the mouth of your sacks; perhaps it was a mistake. Take your brother also, and arise, return to the man; and may God Almighty grant you compassion in the sight of the man, so that he will release to you your other brother and Benjamin. And as for me, if I am bereaved of my children, I am bereaved" (Genesis 43:1-14).

The earlier proposal to offer Reuben's two sons had fallen upon deaf ears (Genesis 42:37), so Judah had to reiterate the need to bring Benjamin to Egypt, in order to at least secure an audience with the Egyptian viceroy. Finally, after reviewing what must have been discussed multiple times with Israel, Judah offered to take full responsibility for the safe travels and return of Benjamin to Canaan. In the event that did not occur, then Judah would take the blame permanently. Apparently, whatever was said given the circumstances, Israel conceded to Judah's

request, and Israel advised that the brothers take double the money and a number of local delicacies to perhaps assuage the demands of the Egyptian prince holding Simeon. Finally, the elderly Israel implored God Almighty to have the Egyptian overlord grant compassion on the brothers and release not only Simeon, but allow the safe return of Benjamin.

After all these years detailing the lives of Jacob and his sons, we as readers are finally finding a mention of the Lord by him. This indicates that Jacob/Israel surely called upon the God of his fathers, for help in trying circumstances. But, this was something that was *sorely missing* from his sons' actions recorded. The sons of Jacob/Israel returned to Egypt, and they followed their father's advice:

“So the men took this present, and they took double *the* money in their hand, and Benjamin; then they arose and went down to Egypt and stood before Joseph. When Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said to his house steward, ‘Bring the men into the house, and slay an animal and make ready; for the men are to dine with me at noon.’ So the man did as Joseph said, and brought the men to Joseph's house. Now the men were afraid, because they were brought to Joseph's house; and they said, ‘*It is* because of the money that was returned in our sacks the first time that we are being brought in, that he may seek occasion against us and fall upon us, and take us for slaves with our donkeys.’ So they came near to Joseph's house steward, and spoke to him at the entrance of the house, and said, ‘Oh, my lord, we indeed came down the first time to buy food, and it came about when we came to the lodging place, that we opened our sacks, and behold, each man's money was in the mouth of his sack, our money in full. So we have brought it back in our hand. We have also brought down other money in our hand to buy food; we do not know who put our money in our sacks.’ He said, ‘Be at ease, do not be afraid. Your God and the God of your father has given you treasure in your sacks; I had your money.’ Then he brought Simeon out to them. Then the man brought the men into Joseph's house and gave them water, and they washed their feet; and he gave their donkeys fodder. So they prepared the present for Joseph's coming at noon; for they had heard that they were to eat a meal there. When Joseph came home, they brought into the house to him the present which was in their hand and bowed to the ground before him. Then he asked them about their welfare, and said, ‘Is your old father well, of whom you spoke? Is he still alive?’ They said, ‘Your servant our father is well; he is still alive.’ They bowed down in homage. As he lifted his eyes and saw his brother Benjamin, his mother's son, he said, ‘Is this your youngest brother, of whom you spoke to me?’ And he said, ‘May God be gracious to you, my son.’ Joseph hurried *out* for he was deeply stirred over his brother, and he sought *a place* to weep; and he entered his chamber and wept there. Then he washed his face and came out; and he controlled himself and said, ‘Serve the meal.’ So they served him by himself, and them by themselves, and the Egyptians who ate with him by themselves, because the Egyptians could not eat bread with the Hebrews, for that is loathsome to the Egyptians. Now they were seated before him, the firstborn

according to his birthright and the youngest according to his youth, and the men looked at one another in astonishment. He took portions to them from his own table, but Benjamin's portion was five times as much as any of theirs. So they feasted and drank freely with him” (Genesis 43:15-34).

Here, we see that Joseph was continuing to conceal his identity, as God was continuing to administer life-altering lessons to his brothers through Joseph's decisions. After receiving his brothers as welcomed traders, then releasing Simeon and finding out that his father remained in good health, it is noted that the brothers continued to bow in the presence of Joseph. Their fear of potential conflict remained in their minds.

The most dramatic moment is recorded shortly after Joseph saw his younger brother Benjamin, after years of separation. The long-sought reunion, not yet completed with Joseph revealing his identity, describes the deep emotional aspects of Joseph's character. Within a few minutes of seeing his brother, Joseph had to remove himself from the group and consoled himself after a period of weeping. Joseph has had a significant period of time to dwell on what he was going to do with his brothers if and when they returned to Egypt. Now that Benjamin was with them, there were some hints extended that reveal some distinct preference for the youngest brother. After serving his brothers and giving Benjamin five times the portion of others, the brothers are at apparent ease with the man who had the power to determine their fate.

The Benjamin Test

The final turn of events, which brought the brothers to the point of emotional exhaustion, is captured in the concluding section of *Mikkeitz*. Here, we find that Joseph had one more ruse to play on his brothers—in order to determine if they were truly repentant for the actions they had taken over the years, to lie to their father Jacob/Israel about his being sold into slavery. Joseph knew that his brothers, were very concerned about the welfare of their youngest brother Benjamin. Joseph was aware that his father continued to grieve for not only him, but also feared the loss of Benjamin. Somehow, Joseph knew that testing his brothers with the loss of Benjamin, was just the right move to bring them to their knees before the Lord. So, an opportunity presented itself, with the blame placed on Benjamin for the theft of his cup—as Joseph had his house steward arrange the circumstances:

“Then he commanded his house steward, saying, ‘Fill the men's sacks with food, as much as they can carry, and put each man's money in the mouth of his sack. Put my cup, the silver cup, in the mouth of the sack of the youngest, and his money for the grain.’ And he did as Joseph had told *him*. As soon as it was light, the men were sent away, they with their donkeys. They had *just* gone out of the city, *and* were not far off, when Joseph said to his house steward, ‘Up, follow the men; and when you overtake them, say to them, “Why have you repaid evil for good? Is not this the one from which my lord drinks and which he indeed uses for

divination? You have done wrong in doing this.” So he overtook them and spoke these words to them. They said to him, ‘Why does my lord speak such words as these? Far be it from your servants to do such a thing. Behold, the money which we found in the mouth of our sacks we have brought back to you from the land of Canaan. How then could we steal silver or gold from your lord’s house? With whomever of your servants it is found, let him die, and we also will be my lord’s slaves.’ So he said, ‘Now let it also be according to your words; he with whom it is found shall be my slave, and *the rest of you shall be innocent.*’ Then they hurried, each man lowered his sack to the ground, and each man opened his sack. He searched, beginning with the oldest and ending with the youngest, and the cup was found in Benjamin’s sack. Then they tore their clothes, and when each man loaded his donkey, they returned to the city. When Judah and his brothers came to Joseph’s house, he was still there, and they fell to the ground before him. Joseph said to them, ‘What is this deed that you have done? Do you not know that such a man as I can indeed practice divination?’ **So Judah said, ‘What can we say to my lord? What can we speak? And how can we justify ourselves? God has found out the iniquity of your servants; behold, we are my lord’s slaves, both we and the one in whose possession the cup has been found.’** But he said, ‘Far be it from me to do this. The man in whose possession the cup has been found, he shall be my slave; but as for you, go up in peace to your father’” (Genesis 44:1-17).

When the discovery was made that Benjamin had Joseph’s goblet in his sack, the brothers were mortified—and to display their concern, they tore their garments. Not only were they going to lose the company of Benjamin, but the added worry of reporting this to Jacob/Israel totally overwhelmed them with grief. Judah, who had now become the recognized speaker for the group, confessed before the angry Joseph that they were collectively speechless without any excuses whatsoever. But interestingly in the maturation of Judah, he concluded that God had found out the iniquity of the brothers.

Since the iniquity of the brothers was not thievery—because the purported thefts were not valid—was Judah referring to the act years earlier of selling their brother Joseph into slavery? The guilt and shame of those actions could surely bring forth the punishment that they justifiably deserved. Judah was beside himself, but he had to conclude that God was finally bringing justice to fruition. The added knowledge, that Judah had promised a safe return of Benjamin to his father, had to drive him into despair.

Joseph actually gave Judah and his brothers a little cynical relief, by stating that the only person, who needed to be retained as a slave, was the one who had his goblet. Obviously, because this directed the punishment upon Benjamin, the brothers were overwhelmed with emotions, which led to a resolution that only a Sovereign God could have arranged. *Our Torah portion abruptly ends with no stated solution.*

God Honors Faith

Mikkeitz offers Torah students and readers a contrast to consider, between Joseph and his brothers, as the Holy One used the forced enslavement of Joseph and the excursions of the sons of Jacob into Egypt—to depict how different individuals react to life circumstances. *Behind the scenes, He accomplished His will.* Later, Joseph would be able to tell his brothers, that **“as for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive”** (Genesis 50:20). However, when presented life challenges are witnessed in *Mikkeitz*, we have to let the story build, and steadily crescendo as Joseph will eventually reveal himself to his brothers who sold him away.

As we read and contemplate what has been recorded for our instruction, we can either seek to follow the example of faithful Joseph, who had a genuine fear of the Lord honoring Him throughout his life—*or* follow the complicated examples of his brothers, who through other situations had to painstakingly learn that God was ultimately in control. In the case of Joseph, he was not only honored by his contemporaries, but most importantly is permanently honored by the Holy One as the unique person chosen to save Israel from the regional famine. On the other hand, the brothers were fulfilling their supporting roles as sons of Jacob/Israel, but they are not necessarily all remembered for great feats of trust in God.

In your meditations this week, consider the different choices made by each brother *and* the results of their choices. Hopefully, we will all choose to follow the example of Joseph, who saved Israel. Ultimately, whether millennia ago *or* the decisions we make every day—choices have not only temporal consequences, but eternal ones as well. The ultimate choice we must all make is to acknowledge the Savior of Israel, Yeshua the Messiah, who grants us eternal salvation and cleansing from all sins and faithless acts!

V'yigash He approached “Positioning for Restoration”

Genesis 44:18-47:27
Ezekiel 37:15-28

This week in *V'yigash*, the sons of Jacob/Israel finally experience a restoration of their familial relationship, after years of being estranged from their brother Joseph. For the past two Torah readings (*V'yeishev*: Genesis 37:1-40:23; *Mikkeitz*: Genesis