

TORAHSCOPE: Mikketz (At the end)

by Mark Huey posted 26 December, 2008 www.outreachisrael.net

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

“Favor and Peace”

“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.’ And 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. And 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 41:39-44).

This week our Torah portion concentrates on the continuing trials and tribulations of Joseph, the dreaming son of Jacob, who was positioned by the Holy One to be the means of deliverance for his family. Throughout this reading, we are informed how God uses dreams and visions to communicate about future events to His people. The passage also illuminates the interactions between Joseph and his siblings with different episodes that reveal how the Lord will use these vivid circumstances to mold the people of Israel into a nation of priests for His own possession.

As you consider the various interactions recorded in this *parashah*, it is apparent that the Almighty is intimately involved in the minutest details of the different exchanges. You realize that Joseph, the principal actor in this familial drama, receives God's favor and peace as a direct result of his pleasing ways. Once again, Torah students are reminded that, like Joseph, if we walk in obedience to God we can also warrant His blessings.

Impetuous Dreamer

As the narrative continues to focus on Joseph, the godly character of the firstborn son of Jacob and Rachel is further revealed. We do, however, remember that as a young man Joseph had some impressive dreams that, when shared with his brothers and parents, did not exactly win him some admirers. In fact, as we learned from the text last week, when he told his brothers about his dream their jealousy and wrath toward him was exacerbated:

“Then Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him even more” (Genesis 37:5).

Now as we continue to learn more and more about Joseph, we should be increasingly convinced that he, through his chronicled actions, in many ways exemplified the type of character that is pleasing to the Holy One. If you recall last week, we discovered that Joseph had a very unique relationship and deep awe with the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This was evidenced when the temptation came to sleep with Potiphar's wife:

“And it came about after these events that his master's wife looked with desire at Joseph, and she said, ‘Lie with me.’ **But he refused** and said to his master's wife, ‘Behold, with me here, my master does not concern himself with anything in the house, and he has put all that he owns in my charge. There is no one greater in this house than I, and he has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. **How then could I do this great evil, and sin against God?**’” (Genesis 39:7-9).

Joseph refused the offer to sleep with Potiphar's wife, and the consequences of her lies ultimately sent him to jail under false pretenses. Here was a “man of God” who did the right thing, and yet suffered the injustice of lies. Most readers at this point in the account begin to marvel at the righteousness of Joseph.

We discover, however, that Joseph is given great favor in the jail and that he is soon given the ability to interpret the dreams of Pharaoh. Of course, as last week's *parashah* comes to a close, we are told that Joseph is forgotten in the bowels of incarceration.

Release from Captivity

As this week's portion begins, in a prophetic picture of the time that Israel will be in relative darkness and hidden, Pharaoh has a dream:

"Now it happened at the end of two full years that Pharaoh had a dream, and behold, he was standing by the Nile" (Genesis 41:1).

The story continues and we again discover that Joseph is totally aware of where his ability to understand or interpret dreams comes from. He confesses two times to Pharaoh to whom all the glory for interpretation should go:

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

"It is as I have spoken to Pharaoh: God has shown to Pharaoh what He is about to do" (Genesis 41:28).

Joseph points Pharaoh to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He does not try to take credit for himself. In response to these declarations, as Joseph gives some sound advice to Pharaoh, he decides to make Joseph his viceroy responsible for implementing the plan of rescue for Egypt, and ultimately much of the known world:

"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. And 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. And 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 may 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'" (Genesis 41:32-40).

We are starting to recognize a pattern. Joseph honors God's word regarding sexual impropriety, and when given the chance, gives God all the credit for not only the dreams, but also the ability to interpret the dreams. Joseph's reward is promotion to the second most powerful man in Egypt. Even Pharaoh recognized that within Joseph was the presence of the "divine spirit." Joseph is receiving the favor of God because he clearly recognized and acknowledged who He was as Creator. Joseph understood that his ability to interpret dreams was from the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Clearly, Joseph had a very intimate relationship with God and it was his desire to give Him all the glory.

Pharaoh's Right Hand Man

We learn that this pattern of Joseph's life did not depart as he wielded the power of influence. As he is given a wife and names his sons, he gave them names with thoughts of God preeminent in his mind:

"And Joseph named the first-born Manasseh, 'For,' he said, 'God has made me forget all my trouble and all my father's household.' And he named the second Ephraim, 'For,' he said, 'God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction'" (Genesis 41:51-52).

Manasseh and Ephraim are both Hebrew names that describe the actions that Joseph attributed to his relationship with God. First, in the name Manasseh (Heb. *Menasheh*, מְנַשֶּׁה) his firstborn son, he gave God credit for allowing him to forget and probably forgive the issues

between him and his siblings. Next, he declared, in the name of Ephraim (Heb. *Efrayim*, אֶפְרַיִם) his second son, that it was God that made him fruitful in the land. Surely one can see that Joseph is cognizant that God is intimately involved in his life. Years later, he confronted his brothers about why they had not brought their youngest brother into Egypt, and made this declaration:

“Do this and live, for I fear God” (Genesis 42:18).

Here is a statement that reflected what was in Joseph’s heart. He had a genuine fear of God. He had not really changed from the young dreamer who had now begun to witness the realization of his dreams. As the Psalmist described it centuries later, two things have happened in his life. **First, he had to witness the personal tests of God before he was able to experience the fulfillment of the word or dreams that he had received:**

“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 105:17-22).

Second, Joseph understood that the **fear of the Lord was truly the beginning of wisdom.** As the circumstances would have it, ultimately it was his position over his brothers that allowed him to **teach them some wisdom about how the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob operates:**

“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all those who do His commandments; His praise endures forever” (Psalm 111:10).

Joseph used his powerful position in Egypt to bring his brothers into a recognition that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is indeed involved in the minutest of details regarding the affairs of humanity.

As the story proceeds, and Joseph taught his brothers great lessons about the benefits of sibling love, Judah emerges as the spokesman and leader of his generation. When the crisis over Benjamin purportedly “stealing” the cup for divination erupted, it is Judah who verbalized the omniscience of God in these circumstances:

“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**” (Genesis 44:16).

It is at this point and in the coming narrative that Judah completely establishes himself as the one brother willing to give his life for his brother Benjamin. This pattern ultimately leads to Judah becoming the forefather of King David and his offspring. Of course, the willingness to offer one’s life for another is ultimately, and most importantly realized, in our Messiah Yeshua who gave His life for all.

At Peace with Your Enemies

We understand from future readings that Joseph is indeed a wise and merciful man, who in spite of his challenges in life, has great peace with those who over the years had done him harm. Whether it was his brothers, Potiphar’s wife, the forgetful cupbearer, or any of the Egyptian officials who might have been jealous of a Hebrew being placed in such a powerful position, the evidence indicates that for the most part, Joseph’s enemies were at peace with him. As you read this account, you are reminded of the proverb that states a very profound principle about how the Lord responds to those whose ways please Him:

“**When a man's ways are pleasing to the LORD, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him**” (Proverbs 16:7).

Is this not what we read has happened to Joseph? Joseph’s obedient ways have pleased the Lord and as a result, the favor of God was bestowed upon him as his enemies were at peace with him.

As we look to the Haftarah portion (1 Kings 3:15-4:1), we are directed to another dreaming man who had great wisdom and **who also was declared pleasing in the sight of the Lord.**

Just before Solomon dealt wisely with the two prostitutes who have lost one son, the testimony of Solomon's dream and request for discernment and the ability to understand justice is recalled:

“And it was pleasing in the sight of the Lord that Solomon had asked this thing. And God said to him, ‘Because you have asked this thing and have not asked for yourself long life, nor have asked riches for yourself, nor have you asked for the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself discernment to understand justice, behold, I have done according to your words. Behold, I have given you a wise and discerning heart, so that there has been no one like you before you, nor shall one like you arise after you. And I have also given you what you have not asked, both riches and honor, so that there will not be any among the kings like you all your days. **And if you walk in My ways, keeping My statutes and commandments, as your father David walked, then I will prolong your days.**’ Then Solomon awoke, and behold, it was a dream” (1 Kings 3:10-15).

Of course, from our knowledge about the history of Solomon's rule, we are reminded that the united nation of Israel was at peace with its enemies. Once again, the pleasing ways of Solomon, at least before he began walking after other idols and gods, allowed the Holy One to keep Solomon and Israel at peace with its national enemies for Solomon's reign.

Conclusion

What is it we can learn from this week's Torah portion that can be directly applied to our own walk with the Messiah? How about the simple axiom that Joseph and Solomon learned as they conducted their lives in accordance with the Word of God? When they lived in a way that pleased the Father, they received His favor and were at peace with their enemies.

Is it possible that God's favor and peace is available to *all* of His children? Most assuredly it is! But God's favor and peace is most likely to descend upon His children when they are obedient to the admonitions of His Word.

If one strays from obedience, as Solomon did later in his life, the consequences of disobedience have devastating results. Instead, one should be encouraged that righteous men like Joseph have been depicted in the Holy Writ. Today, we as Believers studying the Torah of Moses, can identify with a man who had many challenges in his life. In spite of the pain of sibling rejection and being sold into slavery, to the injustice of false accusations that resulted in imprisonment for two years, it is stated that Joseph remained faithful to his God. Somehow through all of the tests and trials, he inherently knew that his relationship with the Creator was most important. He understood what the Apostle Paul, a millennia-and-a-half later, described to the Romans about the sovereignty of God:

“And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28).

Joseph understood God and he loved God. Through it all, he realized that God called him for His purposes, so that at the end of his life, he could make this declaration about what he saw God doing with him through all the circumstances of what he experienced:

“But Joseph said to them, ‘Do not be afraid, for am I in God's place? And 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 50:19-20).

Hopefully, each of us can gain this type of perspective as we work out our own salvation with fear and trembling. Perhaps, when we encounter various tests and trials, we will be able to choose to handle the circumstances of life in an obedient way that pleases the Holy One of Israel. In doing so, then perhaps just like Joseph, we will be able to receive the favor and peace with our enemies that results from walking obediently and faithfully in His ways. May we joyfully give the Father all the praise, honor, and glory that He deserves for His mercy toward us. May the Lord be blessed for His favor and peace!

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