

# Shavua Tov

## Weekly Parsha

A Rood Awakening! Torah Commentary  
By Glenn McWilliams

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Torah Portion: *Miketz*

מִקֵּץ

“At the end”

**Two full years passed. Then Pharaoh had a dream. He was standing near the Nile,**

**Vayehi mikets shnatayim yamim uPar'oh cholem vehineh omed al-haYe'or**

Scripture for study:

*Bereshit (Genesis) 41:1 - 44:17*

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The saga of Joseph and his brothers continues in this week's portion. But before we begin, let us just briefly review the heart of last week's message. One of the most important messages in last week's portion was the fact that YHWH ELOHIM was the prime force behind all that was happening to Joseph as well as to his brothers. In many respects the story of Joseph and his brothers begins not with Joseph or even Jacob, but with Abraham. Here we must recall the prophecy given to Abraham at the time of the cutting of the covenant of the pieces.

*“And He said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance. And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age. But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.” (Genesis 15:13-16)*

Here we witness the prophetic foreshadowing of everything that is about to happen to the sons of Jacob. To this prophecy we should also add the prophetic dreams of Joseph, which he received before any of the events foretold had taken place.

*“And he said unto them, Hear, I pray you, this dream which I have dreamed: For, behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and, lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright; and, behold, your sheaves stood around about, and made obeisance to my sheaf.” (Genesis 37:6-7)*

*“And he dreamed yet another dream, and told it his brethren, and said, Behold, I have dreamed a dream more; and, behold, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me.” (Genesis 37:9)*

Joseph’s father and brothers clearly understood the meaning of these dreams and interpreted them for us. But they still expressed a sense of disbelief and surprise when the events of our portion and the fulfillment of these prophetic dreams and visions began to unfold. We should take careful note of this phenomenon. Even though the sons of Jacob knew of the prophecy given to their great grandfather Abraham, and in spite of the fact that they had heard Joseph’s dreams with their own ears, they still could not imagine that the events prophesied were being fulfilled in their own lives and lifetime. Clearly knowing the final destination and knowing the journey to get there are two very different things. It is like a child who envisions himself standing on the Olympic platform receiving his gold medal, but never imagines the work, sacrifice, commitment, time, and effort that goes into achieving such a goal. So it is with the sons of Jacob as well. They knew the content of the dreams and prophecies, but could not imagine how their lives would be utilized in the fulfillment of these promised events.

Joseph understood that the Holy One had a purpose for his life, and that ultimately his brothers would bow before him. But little did Joseph understand that his path to such prominence would first lead him through some very troublesome times. While understanding that he had been chosen by his father, and by Elohim, Joseph never expected to be used by Elohim in such a magnanimous way.

The same may be said of Joseph’s brothers. While his brothers understood that they were indeed a part of a chosen people, they neither realized what the outcome of such an election would mean for their lives, nor how their actions would ultimately lead to the fulfillment of these dreams and prophecies. While the brothers schemed and acted to prevent the fulfillment of what they perceived to be Joseph’s self-promoting ambitions of establishing a tyrannical reign over his family, they instead helped to set the stage for the Holy One to bring about all that He had earlier promised to Abraham. The nearsightedness of Joseph and his brothers prevented them from being able to see the larger prophetic picture. While not so clear to Joseph and his brothers, it was very apparent to everyone around them that YHWH ELOHIM was indeed working out His prophesied plan just as He had planned it. That He would do so using the weakness of Joseph and his brothers, as well as the strength of the idolatrous nations surrounding them, demonstrates the sovereignty of the Holy One of Israel. What is also apparent in our previous portion is the fact that everyone but Joseph and his brothers recognized the hand of YHWH ELOHIM upon Joseph and his circumstances.

*“And YHWH was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian. And his master saw that YHWH was with him, and that YHWH made all that he did to prosper in his hand. And it came to pass from the time that he had made him overseer in his house, and over all that he had, that YHWH blessed the Egyptian’s house for Joseph’s sake; and the blessing of YHWH was upon all that he had in the house, and in the field.” (Genesis 39:2-3, 5)*

*“But YHWH was with Joseph, and shewed him mercy, and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison. And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph’s hand all the prisoners that were in the prison; and whatsoever they did there he was the doer of it. The keeper of the prison looked not to any thing that was under his hand; because YHWH was with him, and that which he did, YHWH made it to prosper.” (Genesis 39:21-23)*

Eventually Joseph likewise realized that the Holy One was with him. Joseph began to distinguish himself by his boldness in proclaiming the sovereignty of the one true Elohim in a land of great immorality and idolatry. When confronted with the advances of his master’s wife, Joseph retorted,

*“There is none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee, because thou art his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against Elohim?” (Genesis 39:9)*

When Joseph encountered the dejected spirits of his fellow prisoners, he inquired about their sad disposition and responded with a declaration of faith.

*“And he asked Pharaoh’s officers that were with him in the ward of his lord’s house, saying, Wherefore look ye so sadly to day? And they said unto him, We have dreamed a dream, and there is no interpreter of it. And Joseph said unto them, Do not interpretations belong to Elohim?” (Genesis 40:7-8)*

In the trying conditions of rejection, separation, enslavement, and imprisonment, Joseph eventually learned to simply serve YHWH ELOHIM wherever he was. To surrender peacefully to the perfect and often unrecognized will of the Holy One is not always easy. Believing that all the events surrounding you are within the perfect will of the Creator and have purpose and meaning in a larger prophetic picture is indeed a step of faith for anyone. As the continuing saga of Joseph and his brothers unfolds, this is clearly the message that the Torah teaches.

Our portion begins this week with yet another dream in need of interpretation. Pharaoh is twice awakened by disturbing images in his dreams.

*“Pharaoh dreamed: and, behold, there came up out of the river seven well favored kine and fatfleshed; and they fed in a meadow. And, behold, seven other kine came up after them out of the river, ill favored and leanfleshed; and stood by the other kine upon the brink of the river. And the ill favored and leanfleshed kine did eat up the seven well favored and fat kine. So Pharaoh awoke. And he slept and dreamed the second time: and, behold, seven ears of corn came up upon one stalk, rank and good. And, behold, seven thin ears and blasted with the east wind sprung up after them. And the seven thin ears devoured the seven rank and full ears. And Pharaoh awoke, and, behold, it was a dream.” (Genesis 41:1-7)*

So real were these events that Pharaoh was surprised to realize that they were in fact just a dream. But the effect of this dream upon his spirit was troubling. Pharaoh sought relief in understanding. Realizing that many of the images in his dream were religious in nature,<sup>1</sup>

Pharaoh called upon those of his court best suited for interpreting such symbols - the magicians, priests and wise men. Pharaoh demanded an answer, but none was forthcoming. The sages state that the magicians and wise men of Egypt offered Pharaoh various interpretations of his dreams, but none brought him comfort.

*"R. Joshua of Siknin said in R. Levi's name: There were indeed interpreters of the dream, but their interpretations were unacceptable to him. E.g. the seven good cows mean that thou wilt beget seven daughters; the seven ill favored cows that thou wilt bury seven daughters. The seven full ears of corn that thou wilt conquer seven provinces; the seven thin ears that seven provinces will revolt against thee. Thus it is written, A scorner seeketh wisdom, and findeth it not (Prov. XIV: 6), which applies to Pharaoh's magicians."*<sup>2</sup>

It should not surprise us that the magicians and heathen wise men could not give true interpretations, for Joseph has already declared that interpretations belong to Elohim. While the Holy One can and does use the heathen to fulfill His plans, we should not expect the priests of false religions to truly understand the works and wonders of YHWH ELOHIM. If they truly understood the ways of YHWH, they would no longer be worshipping their false elohim. So it was that the magicians of Egypt sought not the truth of the Holy One, but only to assuage and appease the wrath of Pharaoh who was known to cast his servants into prison, or even execute them, for failing to serve him faithfully.

When he saw that Pharaoh was not comforted by the interpretations of the magicians and wise men, the chief cup-bearer remembered Joseph, the Hebrew prisoner who interpreted his dream correctly while yet in prison.

*"Then spake the chief butler unto Pharaoh, saying, I do remember my faults this day: Pharaoh was wroth with his servants, and put me in ward in the captain of the guard's house, both me and the chief baker: And we dreamed a dream in one night, I and he; we dreamed each man according to the interpretation of his dream. And there was there with us a young man, an Hebrew, servant to the captain of the guard; and we told him, and he interpreted to us our dreams; to each man according to his dream he did interpret. And it came to pass, as he interpreted to us, so it was; me he restored unto mine office, and him he hanged." (Genesis 41:9-13)*

There are some who feel that the butler is confessing his sin of forgetting to remember Joseph, thus breaking his promise to Joseph. But I disagree with such an interpretation. After interpreting the butler's dream and assuring him that he would be restored to Pharaoh's court, Joseph did indeed ask the butler to remember him to Pharaoh.

*"But think on me when it shall be well with thee, and shew kindness, I pray thee, unto me, and make mention of me unto Pharaoh, and bring me out of this house." (Genesis 40:14)*

But nowhere does the Torah give us the butler's response to Joseph. Nowhere does the Torah record the butler making a promise to his newfound prison buddy Joseph to either get him out

of prison or to remember him at all. And so it is that last week's portion ended with the cold words,

*"Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgot him." (Genesis 40:23)*

By remembering his fault, the butler is not referring to Joseph, but to whatever infraction or offense it was that caused Pharaoh to cast him into prison to begin with. Here we may draw a comparison between our tradition of blowing a ram's horn on Yom Teruah and Yom Kippur in hopes of reminding YHWH of the faithfulness of Abraham and Isaac, while at the same time avoiding the blowing of a cow's horn for fear of reminding Elohim of the sinful incident of the golden calf. Likewise the *Cohen Gadol*<sup>3</sup> does not wear the golden garments into the Holy of Holies on Yom Kippur for fear of reminding Elohim of Aaron's part in the golden calf incident. So it is in our portion that the butler made a calculated risk by mentioning his previous indiscretion, in the hope that the positive information which he offered would offset the negative memory of his past shortcomings. Thus the butler was not confessing any offense toward Joseph, but was vaunting himself before Pharaoh by intimating that it was at great risk to himself that he was sharing this possibly useful information.

We should note that while the chief butler remembered Joseph to Pharaoh, it was two years after Joseph interpreted his dream. We should also note that the butler spoke of Joseph in disparaging terms, emphasizing that he was "a youth," "a prisoner," "a servant," and "a Hebrew." All of this seems to belie the idea that Pharaoh's cup-bearer had suddenly come under great moral conviction and now sought to repent and right the wrong he had done to Joseph. It seems more likely that the butler was serving his own ambitions in Pharaoh's court. Even if this is so, it does not negate the reality that he was a part of YHWH ELOHIM'S plan to fulfill the promises made to Abraham. It was indeed through this very forgetful butler that Joseph was placed once more in the right place at the right time. With the hope of finding the understanding that would bring comfort to his troubled soul, Pharaoh called for Joseph to be brought forth from the prison.

Here I wish to take a brief side trip from our current path. We should take careful note of the use of clothing in the life and story of Joseph. In many ways the story of Joseph begins with his father bestowing upon him a very special garment of privilege,<sup>4</sup> which is stripped from him by his own brothers.<sup>5</sup> Joseph arrives in Egypt in the garments of a slave, but is again clothed in honor and privilege as he is set over Potiphar's household. But these garments are also stripped from him by Potiphar's lustful wife. Finally he is clothed in the humble garments of a prisoner, yet these too are stripped from him that he be clothed with appropriate attire to appear before Pharaoh. Finally we see the story come full circle when Pharaoh bestows upon Joseph a garment or vesture of fine linen, denoting honor and privilege. I believe that there are several lessons in this exchange of clothing. First, let us see in this change of garments a shadow picture of the Messiah. Living in the honor, glory, and privilege of Elohim, the Messiah forsakes this position and dons the garments of a servant. Even in his servanthood Yeshua is clothed in dignity, honor, and respect. But even this is ultimately stripped from him by his brothers<sup>6</sup> and an unfaithful bride,<sup>7</sup> only to be restored to him again as he is elevated over his brothers by the Father. The Apostle Shaul writes,

*“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Messiah Yeshua: Who, being in the form of Elohim, thought it not robbery to be equal with Elohim: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore Elohim also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Yeshua every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things in earth, and things under the earth; And every tongue confess that Yeshua Messiah is Adonai, to the glory of Elohim the Father.” (Philippians 2:5-11)*

This same imagery may be applied to mankind as well, for we were once clothed in the light and glory of the image of Elohim. But sin caused us to be clothed in the garments of a slave.<sup>8</sup> Now in Messiah we seek to put off these old garments,<sup>9</sup> and once again be clothed in the garments of light and glory befitting the bride of YHWH.<sup>10</sup> I am sure that there are many more applications to be found in this imagery, but let us return now to the original course of our study.

Pharaoh is forthright in telling Joseph that he had a dream and that there is none to interpret it. Pharaoh also tells Joseph that the reason for his sudden release from the dungeon is because he was informed that Joseph possesses the skill to interpret dreams. If Joseph interprets the dream, it could mean his freedom. If Joseph fails, he could be put back into the dungeon and forgotten. Since Joseph's freedom is contingent upon his skill in interpreting dreams, it would seem wise to agree with the report given to Pharaoh. But this is not Joseph's response. Instead, Joseph answers Pharaoh with great boldness and integrity.

*“And Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, It is not in me: Elohim shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace.” (Genesis 41:16)*

Here Joseph gives credit where credit is due. Joseph is also revealing his own growth. He now realizes that everything that has happened, has happened by the knowledge and providence of the One True Elohim. It is indeed boldness to stand before a man who is thought to be one of many elohim in Egypt, and declare that ONE Elohim is giving the dream and its interpretation, and also has the power to fulfill that dream. Four more times in the course of his conversation with the idol worshipping Pharaoh, Joseph asserts the power and sovereignty of the One True Elohim.

*“And Joseph said unto Pharaoh, The dream of Pharaoh is one: Elohim hath shewed Pharaoh what he is about to do.” (Genesis 41:25)*

*“This is the thing which I have spoken unto Pharaoh: What Elohim is about to do he sheweth unto Pharaoh” (Genesis 41:28)*

*“And for that the dream was doubled unto Pharaoh twice; it is because the thing is established by Elohim, and Elohim will shortly bring it to pass.” (Genesis 41:32)*

Clearly Joseph is speaking by faith. First, let us take note that Joseph attributes the whole dream to Elohim. Thus we see the Holy One speaking through a dream to the heathen. Dreams seem to be the usual manner in which the Creator speaks to those who are not a part of the covenant. The Eternal One appeared to Abimelech, Laban, Joseph's two cell mates, Pharaoh, Balaam and Nebuchadnezzar all by dreams or night visions.<sup>11</sup> Thus we too should clearly see that YHWH ELOHIM can and does speak even through those who are not a part of the covenant.

Second, we should take note of the fact that Elohim is telling Pharaoh what he is going to do so that Pharaoh has time to spare his people from the effects of what is coming. Here we see the Creator extending mercy even unto those who are as yet worshipping idols. Finally, we should notice that Joseph is very clear about the sovereignty of the One True Elohim. While the Holy One does indeed speak to Pharaoh and compassionately inform him of all that He is about to do in order that Pharaoh may respond to it, it is very clear that there is nothing that Pharaoh or any of the elohim of Egypt can do to prevent these events from taking place. Joseph is quite emphatic that the events prophesied in Pharaoh's dream are established and will soon come to pass.

As soon as Joseph is done speaking, Pharaoh responds by appointing Joseph to the position of viceroy over all Egypt.

*“And the thing was good in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of all his servants. And Pharaoh said unto his servants, Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of Elohim is? And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Forasmuch as Elohim hath shewed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art: Thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou.” (Genesis 41:37-40)*

What was it about Joseph that caused Pharaoh to trust his interpretation and to respond so powerfully? I believe that in part it was because Joseph understood what Pharaoh had already suspected; that the dream was really one dream and not two. But more importantly, I believe that Pharaoh was impressed with Joseph's confidence, honesty, boldness, and practicality, both in interpreting the dream, and in giving sound advice to Pharaoh on how to prepare for these most certain events. Here we witness the tremendous growth and maturity of Joseph. When Joseph first dreamed his dreams, he boldly proclaimed them without any understanding of their meaning, how or when they would be implemented, or what impact sharing them would have on others. Now, standing before Pharaoh, with so much hanging in the balance, Joseph boldly proclaims the meaning of the dreams, perceives the impact upon the land and people of Egypt, and gives sound advice as to the solution. It was this boldness and maturity of leadership that caught Pharaoh's attention. We too should learn much from Joseph's actions. All too often we are quick to critically assess a situation and begin commenting before we have evaluated the impact of our words on others, pondered a reasonable solution, or discerned the will of the Holy One in the situation before us.

Pharaoh not only elevated Joseph to a position of honor and power, but he also set the stage for the rest of Joseph's family to make their way to Egypt. One detail that we should mention

before we move on in the study is the use of the number seven. There are seven sevens mentioned in the original telling of the details of the dream. These sevens appear in two sets, describing the cows and the ears. There are seven fat cows and seven lean cows in the first part of the dream, and seven plump ears and seven lean ears in the second part. According to E.W. Bullinger and others, seven is the number of spiritual perfection.<sup>12</sup> The number two, on the other hand, speaks of division, such as between the two realms of heaven and earth, between spiritual and natural, etc.<sup>13</sup>

We may conclude from this that the dream of Pharaoh was about spiritual perfection in two realms, or we may say that what was happening on earth was for the sake of heaven. Thus we see that Pharaoh's dream and the events it foretells are not merely random natural occurrences, but have a spiritual significance and purpose. Once again we see that everything that happens does so for some divine purpose. In this case we may see that what shall befall Egypt and the nations is for the sake of sons of Jacob.

We should here note that it is not until the famine begins that the sons of Jacob are first called the sons of Israel. It is the events precipitated by the famine that cause the sons of Jacob to become accountable for their behaviors, repent of their misconduct, and raise themselves up to the level of becoming the children of Israel. Just as the hardship of the pit, slavery, and the prison help Joseph to see the hand of the Holy One in every aspect and event of his life, so too, the trials endured in Egypt would help Joseph's brothers begin to understand their connection to the Holy One of Israel. As the brothers are surprised at every turn by the events that transpire around them in this journey, they too would quickly learn to attribute every action to Elohim.

While the brothers do learn to see the hand of YHWH in the events in their lives, we should note the powerful effect that sin has on one's ability to accept the providence of Elohim. While Joseph's brothers may have originally felt justified in their actions toward Joseph, we now see that in hindsight they begin to understand and even admit to the error of their ways. In last week's portion, we stated that it was possible that the brothers understood Joseph's dreams and brash arrogance as a sign of his ambition to rule over his family as the sons of Esau did. Therefore, in a move to save the family from such a tyrannical rule, the brothers conceived of a means to dispose of Joseph. First they thought to kill Joseph; then Reuben suggested merely dumping him into an empty cistern instead. Judah then suggested selling Joseph to their cousins the Ishmaelites. Notice that their plan continued to soften as time went on. Still, their scheme brought tremendous grief to their father, and shame and guilt upon their own hearts. Now, as YHWH ELOHIM acts to fulfill the promise He made to Abraham, notice how the brothers interpret the events that are happening to them as being punishment for their wickedness.

As Joseph tests them with the accusation of being spies and then imprisons them, the brothers' consciences begin to stir. When Joseph shows extreme compassion on the brothers by allowing all but one of them to return home with food for their family during a time of draught, the brothers' consciences convict them. So the brothers confess.



*“And they said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us.” (Genesis 42:21)*

Notice that the brothers do not confess disposing of their brother, but only not heeding his cries for mercy. We may remember that after they threw Joseph into the well, the Torah tells us that the brothers merely sat down to eat.

*“And they took him, and cast him into a pit: and the pit was empty, there was no water in it. And they sat down to eat bread.” (Genesis 37:24-25)*

Now a total stranger was showing more mercy to their family members than they had shown toward their brother. So these apparent misfortunes convict the brothers of their evildoing. Reuben intensifies the matter even further in his assumption that evil has indeed befallen their brother Joseph because of their coldheartedness.

*“And Reuben answered them, saying, Spake I not unto you, saying, Do not sin against the child; and ye would not hear? Therefore, behold, also his blood is required.” (Genesis 42:22)*

If it is true that all this misfortune has fallen upon the brothers because of their coldhearted treatment of Joseph, then, Reuben questions, how much more will befall them if Joseph has died because of them? Here Reuben recalls Elohim’s words, as spoken to Noah and his sons.

*“And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man’s brother will I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of Elohim made He man.” (Genesis 9:5-6)*

Surely Reuben is looking for things to get much worse because they do not know what became of Joseph. Clearly Reuben fears that if Joseph died, then they, too, can expect to be put to death. Even when apparent blessings, such as their money being returned to their sacks, are experienced, it does not bring them joy, but trepidation.

*“And he said unto his brethren, My money is restored; and, lo, it is even in my sack: and their heart failed them, and they were afraid, saying one to another, What is this that Elohim hath done unto us?” (Genesis 42:28)*

Such is the nature of sin and guilt. It blinds the eyes and turns the mind contrary to the perfect will of Elohim. Because of sin and guilt, what is intended for blessing is often received as being punishment. So the refiner’s fire and the loving chastisements of YHWH are perceived as wrath instead of love. So it is that as the testing continues, the brothers finally concede defeat and declare,

*“What shall we say unto my lord? What shall we speak? Or how shall we clear ourselves? Elohim hath found out the iniquity of thy servants.” (Genesis 44:16)*

The rabbis have broken this verse down into three sets of three confessions, giving the impression of it being a rather cathartic moment.

*“And Judah and his brethren came... And Judah said: What shall we say unto my lord in respect of the first money; what shall we speak in respect of the second money; how shall we clear ourselves in the matter of the cup. [Again] What shall we say unto the Lord in the matter of Tamar; what shall we speak in the matter of Bilhah; how shall we clear ourselves in the matter of Dinah. Again, what shall we say to our father in Canaan in respect to Joseph; what shall we speak in respect of Simeon; how shall we clear ourselves in respect of Benjamin. Shall we say that we have sinned? Yet it is known and manifest that we have not sinned.”<sup>14</sup>*

While the Midrash ends with a plea of innocence, clearly the Torah indicates that the brothers have indeed admitted their guilt. So the brothers seem to learn that there is no means by which to hide one’s sin from Elohim.

*“... and be sure your sin will find you out” (Numbers 32:23)*

*“He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.” (Proverbs 28:13)*

*“O YHWH, Thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, Thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O YHWH, Thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid Thine hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it. Whither shall I go from Thy spirit? Or whither shall I flee from Thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, Thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from Thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to Thee.” (Psalm 139:1-12)*

Whether the words of this Psalm are comforting or threatening is largely determined by our own conscience and standing before YHWH ELOHIM. So the brothers’ guilt seems to have caught up with them and convicted them before their brother Joseph’s eyes.

But was this the purpose behind Joseph’s behavior? Was Joseph so vindictive that he merely wanted revenge upon his brothers? Was Joseph so sadistic that he enjoyed watching his brothers squirm and beg and plead for his mercy? No! I believe that Joseph saw a much higher purpose in all that was transpiring before him. Joseph clearly understood that the years of plenty and the years of famine were by the hand of Elohim. Joseph also understood that it was by the hand of Elohim that he was elevated from the pit to the palace.<sup>15</sup> The Torah tells us that

when his brothers bowed down to him, he remembered his dream.<sup>16</sup> Thus it is confirmed to Joseph that everything that is happening, is happening as YHWH ELOHIM had planned it.

Still, we may ask why Joseph did not immediately reveal himself to his brothers. Some say that Joseph was afraid of his brothers. According to some, it is for this reason that Joseph separated Simeon from Levi. Rashi teaches that Joseph remembered what happened when Levi and Simeon teamed up and murdered the men of Shechem; thus, fearing for his life, Joseph had Simeon isolated from Levi lest they team up and kill him.<sup>17</sup> Yet others contend that Joseph put his brothers to the test via Benjamin to see if the sons of Leah had changed their attitude toward the sons of Rachael. By blessing Benjamin with five times the blessings of the rest,<sup>18</sup> Joseph would see if his siblings were still a jealous lot. By having Benjamin imprisoned<sup>19</sup> after such a blessing, Joseph would see if his brothers would abandon the son of Rachel as they had abandoned him. While these trials are indeed tailor-made by Joseph for his brothers, there is yet another purpose behind them than simply Joseph's revenge or fear. The only remedy for intentional sin is intentional confession,<sup>20</sup> repentance, and restitution,<sup>21</sup> and then the appropriate sacrifice may be offered. An example of this process is seen in David's own actions, as described in Psalm 51.

David confesses his sins:

*"For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight: that Thou mightest be justified when Thou speakest, and be clear when Thou judgest." (Psalm 51:3-4)*

Then a plea for true repentance:

*"Create in me a clean heart, O Elohim; and renew a right spirit within me." (Psalm 51:10)*

After repentance comes the act of restitution. This comes in the form of restoring those whom he may have led astray by his wrong behaviors and poor testimony.

*"Then will I teach transgressors Thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto Thee." (Psalm 51:13)*

And finally, the acceptable sacrifice is made.

*"The sacrifices of Elohim are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O Elohim, Thou wilt not despise. Then shalt Thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering: then shall they offer bullocks upon Thine altar." (Psalm 51:17,19)*

What we witness in the carefully laid tests Joseph set before his brothers is the opportunity for each one of them to in some sense recover from their falling. Where once these brothers sought to rid themselves of a son of Rachel, now they seek to ransom the life of a son of Rachel. According to tradition, it was Simeon who threw Joseph into the pit, and he himself spends time

in the pit waiting for his brothers to free him. Judah, who suggested selling Joseph as a slave, now offers his own life in servitude in order to free Benjamin. All in all, the sons of Jacob are given every opportunity by the challenges and testings before them to rise up to a higher spiritual level by acknowledging their wrongs and doing what is right. By the tests that Joseph their brother places before them, the sons of Jacob are given every opportunity to become the children of Israel.

We too should glean from these experiences, and learn to submit to the loving and just providence of the Holy One. Learning to see the Creator's hand and plan in all that is going on in our lives is not always easy. Believing and trusting that everything that comes from the heart of YHWH ELOHIM is loving, good, just, compassionate, and righteous takes a great deal of maturity. But each test, each trial that comes our way, is indeed designed to strengthen us in our faith and love of YHWH ELOHIM. We should also realize that it is often our own sin that causes us to second-guess our faith and our Elohim. It is often our own sin that distorts our understanding, and causes us to see what YHWH intended as blessing as a curse. Surely there will be times when our yetzer hara<sup>22</sup> gets the best of us. Proverbs teaches,

*"For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again." (Proverbs 24:16)*

But let us not be deceived by our sin into thinking that YHWH has changed His nature and now seeks to destroy us. No indeed; all that happens, happens for our good. It is the heart of the Creator to see all men saved. YHWH declared through the prophet,

*"Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith Adonai YHWH: and not that he should return from his ways and live?" (Ezekiel 18:23)*

*"As I live, saith Adonai YHWH, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live." (Ezekiel 33:11)*

And as the Apostle Shaul wrote,

*"For this is good and acceptable in the sight of Elohim our Savior; who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." (1 Timothy 2:3-4)*

Let us be strong in faith. Learn to give thanks in every circumstance. By practicing such acts of faith, you will come to see the hand of YHWH in every aspect and moment of your life. Be resolute in serving Him in the highs and lows of your life. Whether in the pit or in the palace, our joy should be in knowing that YHWH has chosen us to be the bearer of His image and His light wherever we may be or in whatever circumstances we may find ourselves.

SHAVUA TOV !

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<sup>1</sup> Hapi is the god of the Nile River, while Isis and Osiris are depicted as cow and bull gods.

<sup>2</sup> Midrash Rabah Bereshit Vol. 2, Soncino Press, Pg. 823

<sup>3</sup> High Priest

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- <sup>4</sup> Genesis 37:3  
<sup>5</sup> Genesis 37:23  
<sup>6</sup> Matthew 27:28  
<sup>7</sup> The Children of Israel are the Bride of YHWH, married at Mount Sinai.  
<sup>8</sup> John 8:34  
<sup>9</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:1ff; Ephesians 4:22; Colossians 3:8-9; 2 Peter 1:14  
<sup>10</sup> Ephesians 5:27; Revelation 21:2, 9  
<sup>11</sup> Genesis 20:3, 31:24, 40:5, 41:1-7; Numbers 22:8; Daniel 2:3  
<sup>12</sup> Number in Scripture E.W. Bullinger, Kregel Publications, Pg. 158  
<sup>13</sup> Ibid, Pg. 92  
<sup>14</sup> Midrash Rabbah Genesis Vol. 2, Soncino Press, Pg. 855  
<sup>15</sup> Psalm 40:2-3  
<sup>16</sup> Genesis 42:9  
<sup>17</sup> Sapirstein Edition Rashi Bereshit, Mesorah Publications, Pg. 472  
<sup>18</sup> Genesis 43:34  
<sup>19</sup> Genesis 44:17  
<sup>20</sup> Leviticus 5:5 & 6:2-7  
<sup>21</sup> Numbers 5:7  
<sup>22</sup> Man's base, evil nature