

Introductory Study for Parsha #10: Miketz¹

Torah: Genesis 41:1 - 44:17

Haftarah: I Kings 3:15 - 4:1

B'rit Chadasha: I Corinthians 1:1-2:5



The Holy One has showed Pharaoh what He is about to do.

[Genesis 41:25]

This Week's Amidah Prayer Focus is Petition # 7, *Kabatz* [Ingathering]

Vayehi miketz sh'natayim yamim – And it came to pass at the end of two years of days...
uPhar'oh cholem - then Pharaoh dreamed Genesis 44:1a.

There is a season of great climate volatility sending shock waves of high-tension throughout the raging nations – and don't look now, but a Hebrew named Yosef just could be at the epicenter of it! The world is shaking. The balance of power is shifting. Fear is rampant. Blame is being placed on the 'usual suspects'. What exactly is happening? Well, our ecosystem is either *coming apart at the seams* or *self-correcting according to a Divine Plan*. I'll go with the latter assessment, how about you? For the Holy One has declared:

*Once more I will shake the heavens and earth, the sea and dry land;
and I will shake all nations, and they will come to the Desire of All Nations,
and I will fill this temple with glory, says the Holy One of hosts.*

[Haggai 2:6-7]

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The intense season of shaking the earth and its inhabitants are about to experience will be inaugurated by an unlikely lightning rod of revelation – a pagan king having a *stunning tandem of darkness-infused climate-change obsession dreams*.

Who Is That Stepping Forth From the Dream-Like Shadows?

Miketz constitutes the second parsha in a four-part unit of Torah that I call ‘*the Chronicles of the Shadow of Mashiach*’. This unit is always read around *Chanukah*. When we read the narratives of this tetrad, our eyes start out being fixated upon the frame of a man we know as Yosef; but inevitably our spirits begin to catch glimpses of someone else standing in the shadows – someone who looks a whole lot like the promised ‘seed of woman’ who will crush the head of the serpent even as the serpent is striking and bruising his heel. With the Psalmist may we all cry out: ***I will praise You, O Holy One my God, with all my heart, and I will glorify Your name forevermore.*** Psalm 86:12a.

The ‘*Shadow of Mashiach*’ saga is the vehicle through which the Writer of Torah explains how the Covenant people came to leave the patriarchal pasturelands in Israel and wind up in the throes of an exile that would eventually morph into a captivity – and position them to participate in the greatest story of deliverance in the history of the world. At another level the tetrad reveals to us how sons of the Covenant in the latter days will foolishly think we can carry on life-as-usual in lands of exile in the face of the clear Divine call to ***‘come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues.*** Revelation 18:4; see also 2 Corinthians 6:16-18. As it was with our forefathers, so *it is with us*. As the Holy One told Avram:

***Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers
in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years.
And then the nation whom they serve I will judge;
afterward they shall come out with a great rekush [i.e. harvest, acquired substance]
[Genesis 15:13-14]***

These Words of the Creator set in motion a prophetic cycle that is destined to keep repeating itself every few hundred years, until the ultimate season of fulfillment that leads us into the earthly reign of Mashiach. Ah, but right now we are reading about Ya’akov’s 11th son, Yosef. Or *are we?*

Mah Yosef? [Who is Yosef?]: A Life Begun – and Lived - in the Shadow of “Another Son”

When Yosef was born his mother chose a name meaning ‘*He will add*’. Even as he was being born, you see, she was praying the prayer ***May the Holy One add to me another son.*** To make sense of the stories that deal with Yosef’s life and life experiences the first thing one must understand is that he is, exactly as his mother

declared, a ‘prototype’ son. Yosef is never – can never be - ‘*just Yosef*’. He is always a promise of – and always somehow connected to - *another son*. Thus while Yosef turns out to be a very special lad in his own right, his *primary function* is to serve as an *illustration of* and a *down payment on* the ‘another son’ for which Rachel prayed. But *who then is the ‘another son’ that Yosef prefigures?* As many writers have pointed out, the ‘another son’ to come of whom Yosef serves as an *illustration* and functions as a *down payment* is none other than Mashiach Himself.

In last week’s first installment of the *Chronicles of the Shadow of Mashiach* the narrative started off focusing upon the special giftings the Holy One invested in Yosef, upon the special relationship the lad had with his father, and about the two prophetic dreams he had at age 17. We then learned how Yosef came to be hated and envied, misunderstood and rejected, by his own flesh and blood. We read in shock as his elder brothers attacked him, stripped him of the garment that represented his special position of favor with his father, and threw him into a pit. We were then appalled to read how he was pulled from the pit and sold as a slave to descendants of Yish’mael. His older brothers then deceived his father, Ya’akov, into believing he had been killed by wild animals. We read how he was sold at a slave market to a high-ranking official in the Egyptian government named Potifar. We learned how a group of gentiles came highly to highly value the very life his brothers had despised. We saw Yosef thrown into an underground dungeon for a crime he did not, and would never, commit. We saw how, even in prison, he excelled, and cared about, and ministered to, others.

The Prophetic Connection ***Between the Chanukah Story and the Yosef Narrative***

The sages arranged it so that sons and daughters of the Covenants would always study the story of Yosef and his brothers at the *Chanukah* season. This was not by chance. They saw a connection between the two narratives. And so, I propose, should we.

What does the Yosef narrative have to do with the festival of *Chanukah*? We all know that Chanukah revolves around the retaking, cleansing, and ceremonial rededication of the Temple in c. 164 BCE by the faithful remnant of the Hebrew people. It is all about zeal for the Holy One, for the Covenants He has instituted, and for the purity of the earthly Temple in which the Holy One has consented for His Presence, His Majesty, His Holiness, His Mercy, and His Forgiveness to manifest. When we begin to look a little deeper at the books of the Maccabees we find that *the reason the Covenants had to be restored to first place and the Temple retaken, cleansed and rededicated* was because a group of faithless Hebrews-by-lineage had surrendered their souls to the assimilation seduction strategies of the

predominant secular culture of the day - *i.e.* the *culture of Arrogant Pseudo-Intellect*, known in that day as ‘Hellenism’. This was, of course, the same poison root out of which most of modern secular Western Culture – especially its toxic narcissism, lude entertainment, voyeuristic sexual expression, and general focus on ideologies, abstract concepts, and theories over people - developed.

Introducing the Five Ubiquitous Seduction Traps of Pagan Culture

The pagan cultures around us – those who choose to live as strangers to the Avrahamic Covenant, often lure us into darkness and captivity with one of the following ‘seduction traps’:

1. *Obsession with the Human Mind [thought, opinion, science, medicine, political theory, ideology], human lusts and emotions, and the Human Body in general [appearance, beauty (or lack thereof), size, shape, fashion, musculature, agility, strength, sexuality, and athletic/artistic functionality];*
2. *Fascination with the Illusion of Human Intelligence, ‘Progress’, ‘Illumination’, and Achievement;*
3. *Bombardment with the Visual and Auditory Stimulation of the Ampitheatre [i.e. the ‘entertainment’ agenda];*
4. *The Divisive, Pseudo-Intellectual Snobbery of*
 - a. *the Forum [i.e. public discussion/debate over abstract concepts (like social justice, morality, fairness, equality, equity, etc.), over theories, theological, scientific, and medical ‘truths’, over government policies, and over public dialogue/commentary on current events] and*
 - b. *the University [i.e. the public education/propaganda-instillation system, with its flesh- and pseudo-intellect-obsession and its consequent strong anti-God, anti-holiness, anti-Torah, and anti-humility bias];*
 - c. *the institutions of organized science, medicine, & religion; and*
5. *Voracious appetite for the tamei [unclean, fragmenting, destructive] realm, represented by the flesh of swine [pigs, bacon, pork, lard], and by the bottom-feeders of the oceans, lakes & rivers [lobster, shrimp/prawns, scallops, clams, catfish, etc.].*

Losing sight of the majesty and goodness of our King, of the beauty and stimulating depth of the Covenant Lifestyle, and of the privilege of constant access to our King’s Manifest Presence and Forgiveness, shortsighted men and women tend to get obsessed with the ‘good’ and the ‘evil’ that they perceive that men around them, or they themselves, have done, can do, are doing, and/or might do. They start to live life primarily in their own heads. They tell themselves that they are ‘seekers of truth’, ‘informed people’, and ‘critical thinkers’; but what they actually become are brainwashed drones, unable to think for themselves, who merely vomit the talking points drilled into their heads in the echo chambers of

whatever ideology, philosophy, political, economic, scientific or social justice theory/ popular movement feeds their egos and their sense of importance and therefore has come to own them lock, stock, and barrel. Television screens, smart phone apps, theatre stages, radio dials, and social media feeds become the temples of their gods.

Some who are drawn into the darkness of one or more of these seduction traps become hedonistic epicureans and connoisseurs; others become anorexics, bulimics, and slaves to the latest ‘cleanse’ fad. They tend to let their flesh urges, appetites, drives and aspiration pine and lust after the sleight-of-hand offered by the hawkers and illusion masters of pagan culture. They become obsessed with the ‘*ideal*’ human body shape the Greek culture elevated the development of the human body to its maximal level of attractiveness and performance to a form of self-worship. They become enamored by a lifestyle built around the *Gymnasium*. This obsession with the ‘body beautiful’ constitutes *assimilation seduction trap #1*. Some become boozers and users; others become tee-totaling crusaders. Some binge on the flesh of the swine and of the ocean’s bottom feeders; others binge on thinking about their own, or someone else’s, or EVERYBODY’S - sexuality. Some pick up and run with the latest diet plan or ‘health’ and ‘exercise’ program.

A second step of seduction from the Torah lifestyle is the *allure of human achievement*. This can take multiple forms, but usually the first is in the area of athletic or military achievement. On the athletic side, the Greek culture designed the Olympics to sell this seduction to the world. On the military side, the Greeks developed mythological war heroes like Hercules, Jason, and Perseus – and inspired legendary characters like Heracles, Agamemnon, Odysseus, Hector of Troy, and Achilles, as well as very real conquerors like Alexander the Great. Eventually, the allure of human achievement spread to other fields – art, academia, philosophy, innovation, music, literature, political theory, ‘medicine’, rhetoric, etc. The key to the allure of human achievement is competition and creating a hunger for ‘self-actualization’. This allure is *assimilation seduction trap #2*. Some who fall into this trap Some scream self-righteously about the necessity for freedom, equality, diversity, and ‘social justice’; others shout just as self-righteously about the need for ‘patriotism’, ‘civic responsibility’, ‘moral excellence’, and social conformity. Some want to retain, and just incrementally reform, the *status quo*; others insist that violent revolution is the only way to move forward.

The next phase of seduction offered by pagan cultures is an entertainment-based lifestyle – a lifestyle of thrill seeking that turns the Hebraic worldview described the Torah, the Prophets, and the Sacred Writings on its head. The entertainment seduction focuses all attention on what stirs up men’s emotions and sentiments and

fleshly appetites instead of on the deep mystery of Who the Holy One is and what He calls forth from and concerning His People. The crown jewel of this seduction in ancient Greece was the *Amphitheater*. Today it is the movie theatre, the concert hall, the television, and the internet. The visual and auditory stimulation of these entertainment industry icons is assimilation seduction trap #3. The prophets of this trap are the media, and the priests are the politicians the media want people to love. The highly effective means of mind-control these prophets and priests employ to control their minions and whip up ethnic, economic, and ideological jealousy, fear, and hate are the propaganda platforms that they falsely label as ‘news’ programs, so-called ‘talk’ shows, ‘gotcha’ sound bites, carefully edited videos, skillfully twisted narratives, tweet rants, memes, and GIFs. Same old Serpent speak; new technology. Some who fall into this assimilation traps become couch potatoes and/or information/education addicts; others become sports and entertainment junkies, streaming video drones, and/or social media trolls.

Another effective form of seduction offered by pagan cultures is *the Intellectual Snobbery of the Forum and University*. Man was created to meditate upon, commune with, walk alongside, and serve the Creator. Our calling is to delight ourselves in meditating upon the Torah and to co-labor with Him in His Grand Plan of Redemption. But our pagan neighbors prefer to spend their time down debating ideology and politics down at the Forum and climbing ivory towers of snobbery at the University. They exhaust their passion and their energies studying and arguing over things from the *chol* [i.e. common, profane, human reasoning obsessed] realm - things like political theory, philosophy, morality, and what they define loosely as ‘social justice’ and the ‘healing arts’. The arrogance, cynicism and intellectual detachment that always attaches to these focuses join together to constitute assimilation seduction trap #4. Some who get caught up in this trap rally under the banner of ‘liberalism’; others prefer to wave the flag they call ‘conservatism’. Some can’t stop calling others ‘racists’, ‘fascists’, ‘misogynists’, and/or beneficiaries of this or that ethnic or economic ‘privilege’; others can’t stop calling the first group ‘idiots’ and ‘snowflakes’. Some become – or accuse others of being – greedy, materialist capitalists; others become, or accuse others of being, ‘elitists’, ‘anarchists’, and ‘communists’.

Finally, instead of rejoicing in and humbly accepting the privilege of interacting with the Creator of the Universe in the sacred courts of the *Beit Ha-Mikdash*, the pagans love to drink, snort, inhale, and inject – intoxicants, take medications, and to partake of all the things the Holy One calls ‘unclean’. The pagans love their swine flesh, their bottom feeders, and their garbage eaters – and they are incensed that we do not love them too. They try to make it seem to us that we are missing something by not indulging in them the way they do. They blame our God for

suggesting that perhaps these things were not designed to be ‘food’ for mankind. So they mock, they ridicule – and ultimately, if we let them, they will always try to force their swine’s flesh obsession upon us and our children at the point of the sword. This is assimilation seduction trap #5.

Those who succumb to these assimilation seduction traps become very vocally anti-Covenant. Feeling nothing but contempt for those who cling to the Ways, Judgments and Laws of the Holy One, to the great co-laboring mission spelled out in the Covenants, and to the sanctity of the Holy Temple, they always look for a chance to sell out their fellow Hebrews for a few foreign coins. In the days of the Maccabees, they willingly handed Jerusalem – including, of course, its crown jewels, the Holy Temple and the Torah - into the hands of the gentiles to pillage and desecrate in every disgusting way imaginable.

But wait! What does all this have to do with Yosef, and what his brothers did to him? Look closer. In prophetic imagery, Yosef, the specially favored *son of his father*, is comparable to *the City of Jerusalem*, the specially favored *place of the Holy One*. Likewise, the special garment Ya’akov gave to Yosef is comparable to the Temple, with its gold, silver, and bronze adornments, its finely crafted blue, purple, crimson and white linen cloths, and its intricate artwork.

Moreover, the incredible gifting and blessing on the life of Yosef can be compared to the Holy One’s gift of the *Sh’kinah* – the manifest Presence of the Holy One – to the Temple.

The brothers who hated Yosef because he was specially beloved of his father, and who therefore defiled him, stripped him of his garment, threw him in a pit with scorpions and serpents, and sold him into slavery can be compared to *the actions of corrupted Hellenistic priests like Jason and Menelaus*, who chose the religion, philosophy, and ways of foreigners over the ways of the Holy One, and who, for bribes, turned over the Temple to foreigners who desecrated it, stripped it of its finery, and put it to profane use in the service of gentile kings.

So, we see that the *Chanukah* story and the Yosef narrative are actually *one tale*, much as we discover that the two dreams of Pharaoh were actually ‘one dream’. When we remember that all that is written of Yosef is prophetic of yet ‘another son’, we also begin to see that not only the wonderful reconciliation of Yosef and his brothers about which we will read next week in *Vayigash*, but also the events we celebrate every year at *Chanukah*, will be gloriously repeated in the fullness of time. May it happen quickly, in our day.

The Meaning of the Name ‘Miketz’

In order to get a feel for what the second parsha in the Yosef Chronicles tetralogy holds in store for us let's start by taking a look at the meaning of the name of the parsha - *Miketz*. *Miketz* mean is usually translated, as above, *at the end*. In Hebrew thought however *miketz* can mean either "at the end" or "at the beginning" - or both. For in Hebrew thought every ending is *a new beginning*, and every beginning is *an ending to that which went before*. It all depends upon one's perspective, doesn't it?

So as we contemplate what we will be studying this week it behooves us to ask two questions: *what is it that is ending, and what is it that is beginning?*

Of what are we 'at the end'?

As this parsha begins we find ourselves *at the end* of several things. The 'breaking point' is nearing for both Yosef's 13-year *period of slavery* and his *season of imprisonment for a crime he did not commit* - i.e. the attempted rape of Potifar's wife. After the opening aliyah of this parsha however Yosef will never again in his life be either a *slave* or a *prisoner*. More importantly as this parsha opens we find ourselves perched right on the brink of *the end of the era of the patriarchs' sojourn in the land of Israel* — that very special period which began with Avram's arrival in the promised land in Genesis 12:5 will officially end with the final God-encounter of Ya'akov's life, as recorded in Genesis 45:28.

Of what are we 'at the beginning'?

As the curtain of parsha *Miketz* opens we simultaneously find ourselves *at the beginning* of several things as well. We are at the beginning of *a special 14-year period during which the Holy One will dramatically redistribute the world's food supplies*. There will be 7 years of supernatural abundance in Egypt. There will follow, throughout the known world of the day, 7 years of horrible, devastating famine. During that latter 7-year period of trouble everyone in the known world will have to turn to the storehouses of Egypt for sustenance. Economic and climatic conditions will make Egypt the economic power of the world. We also find ourselves at the beginning of *the long period of enslavement/captivity which the Holy One prophesied to Avraham* long ago would take place and set the stage for the greatest deliverance the world had ever seen². Furthermore we find ourselves at the beginning of *a new generation of leaders of the Holy One's covenant people* - with the birth of Yosef's sons *Menashe* and *Efrayim* [which our parsha reports], and the birth of three sons to Levi [which our parsha will not report], one of whom - *K'hat* - will be the ancestor of *Moshe* (Moses) and *Aharon* (Aaron), the ones who will eventually be used by the Holy One to lead us out of the very period of captivity that is just now beginning.

² This prophecy is recorded in Genesis 15:13.

What about *you*, Dear Reader? What aspects your present life, what circumstances with which you have grown accustomed, and which of your relationships in which you presently find yourselves are, according to the Divine schedule, *supposed to come to an end this week*? What ‘breaking points’ are you approaching? On the other hand, what *new beginnings* loom before you this week?

Be alert and prayerful. Try to look beyond the traumatic circumstances of the changes that are going on in your world and see the glorious end result. There is, you see, much, much more going on in your life and your relationships than you realize. The Hand of the Holy One is hard at work, molding and shaping your destiny, propelling you toward the next stage in the fulfillment of your Divine purpose in life. Please surrender to that Hand *voluntarily*. And so ... based upon the pattern established for us in the lives of the patriarchs thus far, what kind of changes should we expect this week in ourselves and our world?

A Parsha Miketz Travelogue

This week’s parsha is going to prove to be perhaps the most *surreal* of Torah. It begins appropriately enough with another ‘dream sequence’³. This time however the dreamer just happens to be the most powerful man then living on earth – Pharaoh of Egypt. Let’s take a peek at a travelogue.

Act I:

Pharaoh Has Two Very Troubling Dreams

As the curtain rises on the parsha for this week Ya’akov still thinks Yosef is dead, torn to pieces by a wild animal. Unbeknownst to him, Yosef is very much alive – but remains locked up in the Egyptian prison to which Potifar had assigned him. That situation is about to change dramatically. It all starts when Pharaoh has a very unusual and disturbing set of dreams. These dreams will wind up playing a major role in the plan of the Holy One to bring about immediate and drastic changes not only in Yosef’s life but in the world.

Act II:

Pharaoh Seeks Interpretation of His Dreams From the Members of His Court

After dreaming two disturbing dreams Pharaoh will wake up obsessed with finding out what the dreams mean. He will ask Egypt’s wise men and magicians what they

³ According to Talmudic tradition the dreams of Pharaoh occurred on Rosh HaShanah in 1532 bce. *Rosh HaShanah* 10b ff. If so the Egyptian monarch in question would have been *Amenhotep I*, who ruled Egypt from 1545-1525 bce. The only other likely candidate would be *Ahmose* [Amenhotep I’s father], the first king of the 18th Dynasty, who drove the Hyksos out of Egypt and reigned from 1570 to 1545 BCE.

think his dreams mean. They will have no answers that satisfy him.

Act III:
***Pharaoh's Cupbearer Remembers Yosef,
and Recommends Him to Pharaoh as a Proven Interpreter of Dreams***

Pharaoh's cupbearer will then suddenly remember how two years previously Yosef – the Hebrew slave he met in prison - accurately interpreted his dream.

Act IV:
Yosef Receives and Responds to A Summons to Appear Before Pharaoh

Yosef's will then be hastily brought forth from the prison and escorted to Pharaoh's palace to see what, if anything, he could make of Pharaoh's dreams. Pharaoh will describe his dreams to Yosef, and to his delight Yosef will interpret them with great clarity.

Act V:
Yosef Reveals the Interpretation of Pharaoh's Dreams

Yosef's interpretation of the dreams will be that the Holy One is revealing to Pharaoh what will happen in the next 14 years. For the first seven of that fortnight of years, Yosef will tell Pharaoh, Egypt will produce bumper crops, much more than they would need. Yosef will go on to explain that at the end of that seven-year period of plenty things in Egypt and throughout the world were going to change dramatically. A famine would come upon the earth, would last seven years, and would – unless provision was made during the seven years of plenty – cause widespread disaster.

Act VI:
Yosef Advises Pharaoh on How To Govern Through the Famine

Yosef then goes far beyond what he was called out of prison to do, suggesting to Pharaoh that he should exercise his authority to appoint a wise person to store grain in preparation for the famine.

Act VII:
Yosef Is Elevated to Pharaoh's Right Hand

Pharaoh will be extremely impressed - not only by Yosef's interpretation of his dreams, but also by Yosef himself. In a move that shocks his nation Pharaoh will immediately elevate Yosef to the position of *viceroys in charge of agriculture* – a kind of 'food-czar' answerable to no one but Pharaoh himself. As good as that sounds, however, things turn out *even better*. Yosef very quickly – and inexplicably – will find himself elevated to Pharaoh's second-in-command. He will thus become *the second most powerful man in the world*. In that capacity he will find himself placed in charge of not only all the food, but also all the internal programs and foreign policies of greatest world power of the day. Now an honorary Egyptian, he will even be given an Egyptian name. From this day

forward, he will be known as *Tzafanat-Paneach*. Talk about your rags to riches story!

Act VIII:

Yosef Is Given a Royal Wife, and Becomes a Father

Pharaoh will even give Yosef a wife – namely, *Asenat*, believed by some commentators to have been the daughter of his former master Potifar. Then Yosef and Asenat will have two sons: *Menashe* and *Efrayim*.

Act IX:

The Seven Years of Plenty Unfold – Yosef’s Harvest Plan Kicks In

The seven years of supernatural abundance about which Yosef prophesied will then come just as he predicted. In accordance with the Divine instructions received via Pharaoh’s dream, Yosef will store up excess grain in preparation for seven years of famine that the Holy One has warned Pharaoh will immediately follow.

Act X:

The Seven-Year Period of Famine Begins

After seven full years of abundant harvest, the great famine of which Yosef prophesied will begin right on schedule. The famine will devastate not only Egypt but all countries around it – including, of course, the land of Kena’an in which Ya’akov and his family reside. The only food to be found for anyone will then be in Egypt, where Yosef has been storing up grain in storehouses.

Act XI:

Ya’akov Sends His Ten Eldest Sons to Egypt to Purchase Grain

As the famine deepens Ya’akov will send his ten eldest sons down to Egypt to buy grain to sustain them. When the brothers arrive in Egypt in search of food they will find themselves having to deal with Pharaoh’s second-in-command. Of course they will have no idea that this person is their long-lost brother Yosef. After all the years and all the changes they do not recognize ‘the dreamer’. Yosef was only 17 the last time they saw him. He is now 30, dresses like as an Egyptian, lives in an Egyptian palace, and is called *Tzafanat-Paneach*. Yosef, however, will recognize his brothers, but he will not say anything. He will be content, for the time being, to leave them in ignorance about his true identity.

Act XII:

Yosef’s Brothers Are Blinded to His True Identity

Without revealing who he is, Yosef will pretend to take a hard line with the delegation from the Hebrews. He will accuse them to their faces of being spies. He will take one of them, *Sh’mon* [known to most English readers by the Anglicized name ‘Simeon’], as a prisoner, holding him hostage while the rest of the brothers are sent

home to fetch their youngest brother and bring him to Yosef as a display of ‘good faith’. Of course, that youngest brother just happens to be Yosef’s only full brother, Binyamin.

Act XIII:

The Brothers Report to Ya’akov of Their Strange Encounter

When the brothers return to Kena’an they will report to their father Ya’akov everything that happened in Egypt. Understandably, already having experienced Dinah’s kidnapping and rape and having lost Yosef to who knows what, when Ya’akov finds that Sh’mon has been abducted he will become far too upset to deal with the prospect of letting Benjamin out of his sight.

Act XIV:

Ya’akov Sends the Brothers – and Binyamin – Back to Egypt to Purchase More Food

As the famine continues however, and the food supplies dwindle again to a point of extreme danger, Ya’akov will finally be forced to agree to let Benjamin go with the brothers to Egypt to try to rescue Sh’mon and acquire more food.

Act XV:

The Brothers Are Invited to Dine at Yosef’s Palace – the Era of Philo-Semitism

When the brothers return to Egypt they will be surprised to find themselves invited to a special dinner at the palace of the man who took Sh’mon prisoner. They will attend the dinner, be reunited with Sh’mon, and get the sense that the favor of Tzafanat-Paneach has finally fallen upon them. But they will be wrong. They will soon find out that it was all a ploy.

Act XVI:

Binyamin is Arrested on Suspicion of Stealing Yosef’s ‘Cup-of-Divination’

The following morning the Hebrew delegation will pack up their camels with grain and depart for Kena’an thinking all is well. Before they reach the Egyptian border however the caravan will be stopped by Egyptian authorities. The stunned sons of the Covenant will find themselves accused of making a mockery of Tzafanat-Paneach’s generous hospitality the night before by stealing from the palace the Egyptian viceroy’s personal silver cup. Despite protestations of innocence, a hurried search will be conducted, and to the horror of the Hebrew brothers the cup will be found in the pack of their youngest brother, Binyamin. Binyamin will then be arrested for the crime and sentenced on the spot to become an Egyptian slave for life.

The parsha will then come to an end with the brothers in an absolute quandary,

totally dependent for their very lives upon the goodwill of a man they know as Tzafanat-Paneach, but who is in reality Yosef – the one they plotted to kill so long ago.

It Is All a Matter of Perspective – Every Ending is Also a New Beginning, and Every New Beginning Also Marks an Ending

What are we to make of these surreal-seeming events? Perhaps, Dear Reader, at the very least we can learn through meditating on the events of *Miketz* to look at difficult situations in our lives from a different perspective. If nothing else, *Miketz* teaches that however bad or hopeless things look in a given situation the entire picture can change in *a moment* - in the virtual *twinkling of an eye*. After all, Yosef's slavery and imprisonment were both seemingly permanent. But all that changed in an instant. Although it appeared that the duration and terms of his imprisonment and his slavery were dependent on the whims of his mortal captors, that proved not to be the case at all. Rather the Almighty had decreed a set time for Yosef to *be in prison*, a set time for him to *be set free*, and a set time for him to *be vindicated, elevated, and brought to his place of highest destiny*.

It is *the stuff dreams are made of* ... for partakers of the blessing of the covenant of the Holy One with Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya'akov, that is.

A Brief Look at Haftarah Miketz

I Kings 3:15 - 4:1

V'yiqtz Sh'lomo – *And then Sh'lomo awoke ...* ***v'hineh Chalom*** - *and behold it had been a dream ...* ***vayavo Yerushalayim*** - *and he went to Jerusalem ...* ***vayamod lifnei aron brit-Adonai*** – *and stood before the ark of the Covenant of the Holy One* **I Kings 3:15a.**

The historical background of the haftarah for *Miketz* is right after Sh'lomo assumed the throne of his father David – around 965 BCE. The assigned haftarah reading begins as Sh'lomo is *awakening from a dream*. Remember, the theme of the season is *the God-inspired dream*.

Sh'lomo's God-inspired dream is much misremembered by theologians. In the course of that dream, Sh'lomo heard the Holy One say to him: ***Ask! What shall I give you?*** Contrary to what most theologians teach what Sh'lomo asked for in response was not wisdom. He instead asked that the Holy One give him a *lev shama* - *i.e.* a *sh'ma*-ing [listening, attentive, hearing, responsive, obeying] heart in order that he might *rule and dispense justice among* the people of Israel. See I Kings 3:5-9. A *sh'ma*-ing heart is far more precious and valuable than wisdom. After all, there are *different kinds of wisdom*. See **James 3:13-18**. And what *seems like wisdom to men* is often not wise at all in the eyes of God. See **I Corinthians 1:22-29, 2:5-7 and 3:19**. Indeed sometimes – as would be the case with Sh'lomo – what passes in

human understanding as wisdom can actually work like serpent venom when injected into a *sh'ma*-ing heart.

The highlight of the *haftarah* reading will be the famous story of King Solomon, a baby, and two female practitioners of the world's 'oldest profession' both claiming to be the baby's mother. Was this the product of *human wisdom* – or it the product a *sh'ma*-ing heart? Consider the two prostitutes who petition Sh'lomo for 'justice'. They are, of course, real people, with a real problem. Understand it. Empathize with it as best you can. Ask the Holy One to give you *love* for both – and for the child over which their dispute arises. Hear their *very real desperation*. Feel their *very real pain*. But do not stop there. Once you have grasped these things, ask the Holy One to *take you further* into the passage. For at least a few moments, this week, as you meditate on this *haftarah*, consider these women also as *prophetic types*. These women are both daughters of harlotry – who or what are they meant to symbolize? These women have both conceived and borne offspring of their illicit alliances – one lifeless and cold, and the other the picture of life. Of whom or of what do the children they have borne speak prophetically? Do these women perhaps symbolize the *two kingdoms* which will come forth out of Israel in the days to come – the nation called Y'hudah, consisting of the descendants of the tribes affiliated with Y'hudah, on the one hand, and the nation of Israel, consisting of the descendants of the tribes affiliated with Yosef's sons, Efrayim and Menashe, on the other hand? Or could these two prostitutes possibly symbolize *the two world religions* that will come forth from the loins of Avraham in the centuries to follow — Christianity and Islam? What does the death of the bereaved prostitute's offspring represent? What does the coveted life and health of the compassionate prostitute's child refer to? Who is the judge who issues a decree that the baby that is full of life and health be pierced by the sword and split between them both? Think on these things, Dear Reader – and marvel at the depth, the breadth, and the height of the redemptive plan of the Holy One for His creation.

A Peek at the Brit Chadasha Reading for Miketz

I Corinthians 1:1-2:5

Paulos, called to be an ambassador/emissary of Yeshua Ha-Mashiach through the Will of the Holy One, and Sosthenes, our brother, to the kehillah of the Holy One at Corinth I Corinthians 1:1a.

The reading from the B'rit Chadasha that I have selected to correspond to *Miketz* is taken from the first letter written by Shaul to the wild, lawless, flesh-obsessed self-promoting upstarts that had snuck in and corrupted Messiah's young and easily seduced *kehillah* in the blatantly pagan Greek city of Corinth. Those to whom this letter was addressed had all *sh'ma*-ed [*i.e. heard, heeded, and totally changed their lives based upon*] the Messiah's call to return from the various forms of organized

religions of their day back to the Torah-based reality of the covenant the Holy One made with Avraham. Shaul felt the need to address a number of very serious problems that were dragging that Kehillah down. It all started, it seemed, with the seed of jealousy and envy. This led to, divisions, personal disagreements, and controversies about everything from *manner of dress*, to *marriage and sexuality*, to *how breaches of Covenant in the community should be addressed*, to *hyper-spirituality* (esp. ‘gift’, ‘manifestation’, ‘office/title’, and ‘warfare’ obsessions), and to *lovelessness*. Alas, it seems that such fleshly childishness can plague fellowships today just as much as they plagued the family of Ya’akov – Yosef vs. his brothers - and the two prostitutes about which we read in the haftarah.

Shaul is not happy about the ways in which the Corinthians – who have surrendered to fleshly jealousies, petty disputes, hypocrisy, hyper-emotionalism, and lovelessness. He sees their kind of watered-down faith walk as a prototype for the fleshly, self-indulgent, lukewarm, and obsessed over creed and form religious institutions that will proliferate and falsely claim to the ‘Body of Messiah’, in the latter days. From his heart, he writes:

*... I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Messiah Yeshua,
that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you,
but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.*

Then Shaul, ever the stickler for due process, reveals his source of information concerning the controversy that necessitates his letter, and the substance of the evidence he has received:

*For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren,
by those of Chloe's household, that there are contentions among you.
Now I say this, that each of you says, "I am of Shaul,"
or "I am of Apollos," or "I am of Kefa," or "I am of Messiah."
Is Messiah divided? Was Shaul crucified for you?
Or was the mikveh you underwent in the name of Shaul?*

Shaul will then urge the Corinthians - and us - to set our sights far above the petty jealousies and controversies that divide us and to turn our attention to those things that really matter, which compose our destiny:

*... the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of the Holy One.
For what man knows the things of a man
except the spirit of the man which is in him?
Even so no one knows the things of God except the Ruach HaQodesh.
Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from the Holy One,
that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by the Holy One.
These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches
but which the Ruach HaQodesh teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.
But the natural man does not receive the things of the Ruach HaQodesh*

*for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them,
because they are spiritually discerned.
But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one.
For "who has known the mind of the Holy One that he may instruct Him?"
But we have the mind of Mashiach.*

Is all the *squabbling* really worth missing your destiny? Is being declared ‘right’ about some minor doctrinal issue - or ‘winning’ an argument - worth wasting a single moment of our precious ‘*time such as this*’ upon the earth? I don’t think so. I think we can ‘contend for the faith’ just fine without *attacking, accusing, slandering, fussing and fighting with and losing respect for each other.*

*May you, with Yosef, experience the vindication of the Holy One,
And may you find the place in the service of Heaven
For which the Holy One has created you
and given you life at such a time as this.*

The Rabbi's son

Amidah Prayer Focus for the Week

The Seventh Petition: Kabatz- Ingathering

T'kah b'shofar g'dol l'charuteinu

Sound the shofar for great deliverance

v'sah nes l'kabetz galuteinu

Make a miracle, and ingather us from our lands of exile

v'kabetzeinu yachad m'arba kn'fot ha-aretz

ingather us by your Hand from the four corners of the earth

Baruch Atah Adonai

Blessed are You, Oh Holy One,

M'kabetz ni'dchai amo Yisrael

Who gathers the outcasts of His People Israel