

KOL MEVASSER

Rabbi's Message

Both last week and this, we read about some strange behavior on Joseph's part. When his brothers unwittingly stumbled back into his life, one might have expected the parties to recognize one another and begin the process of determining whether their dysfunctional family could ever be healed. However, the fact that they failed to see the young Hebrew boy whom they had betrayed so long ago in the mature Egyptian face before them put Joseph in a position of power where he alone had the ability to disclose this information. Until he decided on the exact right moment, his entire family went through quite a bit of *agmat nefesh* – psychological suffering – as they fell victim to his intricate plotting and schemes.

Why would he do such a thing? What possible goal could he have had in mind that would make it worth the effort of such an elaborate farce? Rabbi Abraham ibn Ezra, the 12th-century Spanish exegete, says that without a valid, pious objective, Joseph “would have transgressed most severely for letting his father wring his hands for so long over the fate of his sons Simeon and Joseph. For even if he might have envisioned a small payback for his brothers' treatment of him, how could he have punished his innocent and elderly father so?!” (ad. loc., Gen. 42:9).

The solution that Ibn Ezra proposes along with several of the medieval Parshanim (commentators) is that Joseph sincerely believed that God set up the situation on purpose, allowing him a personal role in making his dreams come true so as to strengthen his moral fiber. Let us take a moment to see how this intriguing apology stands up to criticism:

In Parashat Vayesheb, Joseph has two dreams. In the first, he and his brothers are bundling grain in the field, when his sheave suddenly stands up tall and the 11 other sheaves bend down and bow to his. In the second, the sun, moon, and 11 stars bow down to Joseph personally. Jacob is not the only one to see the obvious symbolism: the first is a dream in which Joseph's brothers – even the older ones – submit to him, and the second is a dream in which his parents submit as well (poor Rachel had already passed away at Benjamin's birth, but Ibn Ezra sees Bilhah as filling in for the mother in the dream, since it was she who raised Joseph).

Fast-forward to Parashat Mikets, and even though Joseph has everything within his reach, he knows that not even the first dream has come true in reality. His brothers may literally be bowing to him, but without Benjamin it just doesn't make the cut. Were he to reveal himself at that moment, their father would certainly have rushed to Egypt at the first opportunity,

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Parashat Vayigash

Torah: Gen. 44:18–47:27, 106 Pesukim
Hertz 169–177; Stone 250–267
Haftarah: Ezek. 37:15–28
Hertz 178–179; Stone 1144–1145
Tefillot: Mashib Haruah, Birkat Halebanah

KJ Schedule

Ereb Shabbat

Friday, December 18th

Shaharit 6:25 am
Minha..... 4:30 pm
Shabbat Candle Lighting 4:28 pm
Arbit / Kabbalat Shabbat.... 5:00 pm

Yom Shabbat

Saturday, December 19th

Shaharit / Morning Prayer.. 8:30 am
Keri'at HaTorah 10:15 am
Musaf 11:30 am

Minhah..... 4:00 pm
Women's Tehillim 4:00 pm
Se'udah Shelisheet..... 5:00 pm

Arbit 5:20 pm
Habdallah 5:32 pm

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Thank You

Kahal Joseph wishes to thank all who contributed towards KJ's new ovens



- Tooraj Aghalar
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Thank You

Aviva & Ezra Sagi

for sharing your expertise, time and resources to secure these beautiful new ovens for KJ. Thank you for arranging delivery and shepherding them through a challenging installation resulting in such a perfect fit. The ovens are a major upgrade for our kitchens and inshallah may we will always enjoy the delicious food that emerges from them in happiness and health

KJ Schedule (continued)

Weekdays

Sunday, December 20th

Shaharit 7:30 am

Monday, Dec. 21, Wed to Fri, Dec 23 to 25

Shaharit 6:25 am

Asara B'Tebet

10th of Tebet Fast Day

Tuesday, December 22nd

Fast Begins..... 5:35 am

Shaharit 6:15 am

Fast Ends 5:28 pm

Minhah..... 4:15 pm

Ereb Shabbat / Friday, December 25th

Shaharit 6:25 am

Minha..... 4:30 pm

Shabbat Candle Lighting..... 4:31 pm

Arbit / Kabbalat Shabbat..... 5:00 pm

In Memoriam

We remember yahrzeit anniversaries from December 19 to 26, 2015. It is customary to light a memorial candle, donate tzedaka & attend Shabbat services.

7 Tebet / Shabbat, December 19th

Eliezer David Levy *Eliezer ben David HaLevy*

8 Tebet / Sunday, December 20th

Rabbi Elias Levi *Eliyahu Hayim ben Shlomo HaLevi*

Abraham Khazoom

Max Nathan *Mordechai ben Rafael Natan*
David Sassoon *Solomon David Sasson ben Shlomo Reuven*

9 Tebet / Monday, December 21st

Eddie Ezra Jacob *Yehezkel ben Yaacov Azoori*

10 Tebet / Tuesday, December 22nd

Shalom Kamara *Shalom ben Menashe*
Hayim Baruch Shalom Mingail *Hayim Baruch ben Shalom*

13 Tebet / Friday, December 25th

Moise Maurice *Abitboul Moshe ben Yonah*
Ester Avrahami *Ester bat Gazala*
Fortuna Sinder *Fortuna bat Suzan*

14 Tebet / Shabbat, December 26th

Joseph Isaac Joseph *Yoseph ben Itzhak*

Refuah Shelemah

Abe Abraham • Moselle Amron
Mordechai Cohen • Esther Duke
Sassoon Ezra • Miriam bat Yetta
Sylvia Cohen • Tilda Levy
Maurice Ovadia • Florice Newberry
Sally Amron

Shabbat Shalom U'Mevurah

Wishing You a Peaceful Shabbat of Blessings

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bringing Benjamin and Bilhah with him and thereby fulfilling the second dream without the first ever having the chance to come true by itself.

Hence, says Ibn Ezra, the whole charade is designed to get both dreams to come true in the order that God caused Joseph to dream them. First, all 11 brothers must bow to Joseph in Egypt together and without their father, and only when this has been accomplished can Jacob and Bilhah be summoned for their bow. This still leaves the incident with Benjamin and the cup, which Ibn Ezra justifies as a test to see whether or not the hatred that the brothers once directed at Joseph would fall to the next closest and youngest brother in the family.

On the more basic, technical-textual level, Ibn Ezra's apology is successful. Not only does it fit with all of Joseph's actions, but we can understand the moments where he loses control a little better: how could he not but show emotion when hearing for the first time that his brothers regretted what they had done to him, a statement that he could not have heard so sincerely if he had revealed his true identity? And how could he not but show emotion when facing the only one of his siblings who was still mourning the loss of a full brother, a meeting that would not have happened in those same emotional circumstances if Benjamin had come directly with his father at the start of the story?

Although this resolves many problems, the one question that Ibn Ezra answers only implicitly is, "why would it be worth going through all that just to have two dreams come true in a specific order?" He leaves it as an assumption, putting it to the reader to figure it out.

In my own analysis, Ibn Ezra is hoping to reinforce the value of religious sincerity in our service of God. It is hard for us to discern Joseph's sincerity in this case because it overlaps with what could easily be understood as his ego or personal ambition. The dreams make him look good, so why wouldn't he want them to come true? But rather, we must interpret Joseph's entire demeanor and behavior regarding his own dreams in light of his humble stance when he interacts with Pharaoh's dreams: "there is no me; only God can settle Pharaoh's mind."

In Ibn Ezra's characterization, Joseph must only glorify God's name by acting faithfully as His agent when called upon; he cannot act for his own base motives no matter how achievable they might be. In Pharaoh's case, Joseph was only called upon to *interpret* the dreams, and his promotion to lord of the land was an incidental outcome of that. However, when the brothers came and failed to recognize Joseph, he felt that God was calling him to get more involved in his dreams' *implementation*.

It is most difficult to act with integrity when

God wants you to do something that makes you accrue status, power, and respect, and perhaps that is the hardest test of all for Joseph. Too humble and he isn't fulfilling God's request, but too egoistic and the whole thing becomes a hollow and meaningless exercise in which everyone loses and Joseph shatters his self-respect. It must have been an impossible situation, and seen in this light, Joseph's success actually speaks volumes about the integrity of his character.

We may not face these exact circumstances because God doesn't summon us in an interactive way. But we all may one day face a situation where the "right thing to do" for others in our lives may also overlap with our own personal benefit in a way that makes for an extremely challenging conflict of interest. May we look to the words and deeds of Joseph in the hopes that our integrity will guide us to a victory in which we emerge with our morality strengthened where it could have been compromised!

Shabbat Shalom

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