

## **Parshat Miketz: Jewish survival**

Rabbi Dr. Joseph Frager

G-d told Avraham he shall surely become "a great and mighty nation, and in him shall be blessed all the nations of the Earth" (Genesis 18:18).

G-d similarly told Yaakov (Gen.28:14) "And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth and thou shalt spread to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south, And in thee shall be blessed all the families of the earth and in thy seed". In Yosef, these blessings are clearly evident and manifest. Yosef saved the world.

Egypt was the most powerful country at that time with vast reaches and immense control. When Yosef was taken out the dungeon and made viceroy of Egypt he attained the second most powerful position in the world (Miketz 41:40-43). "Thou shalt be over my house according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled only in the throne will I be greater than thou." "And Pharaoh said unto Yosef. See I have set thee over all the land of Egypt." Yosef's rise was prophesied in his dreams, which were maligned by his brothers, but were now clearly coming true.

There is not a note of hesitancy on the part of Yosef of assuming his new position and role because Yosef was a man of faith and knew that his dreams would indeed come true. He saw it all unfolding in front of his very eyes. He does not protest when Pharaoh tells him "since G-d has caused thee to know this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou." He knows fully well his moment has arrived. This is Elokim - "the G-d of Judgement" at work.

He had suffered indescribable torture, torment and abuse but always maintained his faith that one day G-d would rectify all of these injustices and grant him the ultimate justice in making him viceroy of Egypt. Yosef like his father Yaakov met the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune by maintaining his faith despite the adversity and waiting patiently for that day when it all came together. Yosef suffered like his father. They both were separated from their families for many years. Each was in their own prison.

Yaakov was in the confinement of Lavan. Yosef was in the prison of Pharaoh. Each suffered at the hand of their "Brother". Each endured terrible hardships and tribulations. Each had to leave the Land of Israel. In the end both Yaakov and Yosef taught the Jewish People how to survive in the world at large and in Exile. Yosef rose to the number two position in the world despite the difficulties. He never lost sight of who he was and where he came from. He maintained his utter and total belief in G-d in the darkest of times. The story of Yosef is always read during Hanukkah.

No doubt the story inspired the Macabees. The Macabees, like Yosef, remained pure and strong in their faith despite the Greek/Hellenist onslaught. This was a battle not only against the external Greek armies and culture but against the internal battles against the Hellenized Jews. Rabbi Samsom Raphael Hirsch makes the latter very clear in his analysis of the Al HaNissim prayer. He says that the statement, "You delivered...the impure into the hands of the pure, the wicked into the hands of the righteous, and the wanton into the hands of the diligent students of your Torah" does not relate to the Greeks but to the Hellenized Jews. G-d delivered us from the Hellenized Jews as well as the Greeks. This is a very strong opinion, but we can see in the modern era how correct Rabbi Hirsch is. The Macabees learned from Yosef how to rise from humble beginnings to become a dominant power for over a hundred years.

There have been many examples in our exile of the power of a humble Jew rising to greatness. Mordechai became chief adviser to Ahasuerus of Persia. Rabbi Yitzchak Abarbanel became the finance minister of Spain. Eddie Jacobson who fought alongside Harry Truman in World War I and went into partnership with him in the Haberdashery business were loyal friends.

Their friendship brought about the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948. Henry Morgenthau was Secretary of the Treasury under President Franklin Roosevelt. He helped save 200,000 Jews from the Nazis by establishing the War Refugee Board in 1944 which sponsored Raoul Wallenberg.

In the Trump era Ambassador David Friedman, Jason Greenblatt and Jared Kushner helped President Donald Trump **declare Jerusalem the eternal capital of the Jewish People**. Rabbi Bezalel Rudinsky of Monsey, New York says that the reason fathers bless their sons on Friday Night with the phrase, "May G-d make you like Ephraim and Menashe" is that Yosef and his children were able to survive and prosper as Jews in an environment of idolatry and immorality in Egypt.

They remained upright and strong in the face of unrelenting pressure of the exile and a perverse atmosphere. The power of the Jew to withstand the acculturation process, to grow and thrive despite the odds is the lesson of Yosef and his sons for eternity. Shabbat Shalom and happy Hanukkah.