

Parshas Mikeitz – Two of Us – Shmuel Cohen

ר"ח טבת תשע"ו – 12th December 2015 – שבת פ' מקץ – שבת חנוכה

The Parasha of Miketz opens up with Pharaoh's troubling dreams. Yosef is able to interpret the dreams to Pharaoh's satisfaction, so Yosef is given the position of Egypt's viceroy.

I would like to shine some light on the three pairs of brothers: Yosef and Binyamin, Ephraim and Menasheh and Shimon and Levi.

Two years into the famine after the seven years of plenty, Yosef's ten brothers showed up in Egypt. Yosef saw the brothers coming but he could not see Binyamin. The Torah states that the brothers did not recognise Yosef, but Yosef recognised them. Before he decided if he was going to reveal his true identity, Yosef wanted to ascertain if his father was still alive and was Binyamin still part of the family unit, despite having had his brother Yosef sold?

Before Yosef sent the brothers home after they bought their food supplies, he took Shimon as prisoner so that Levi would eventually demand that the brothers go back to Egypt. They were the two closest brothers in the family and Yosef knew this. As we saw earlier in Parashat Vayishlach, Shimon and Levi were tremendously powerful together, and between them they destroyed Shechem to rescue Dina.

Yosef used Shimon and Levi's close relationship for his plan and therefore instructed his servants to reimburse the money that the brothers had paid. That way, once they arrived home, Levi would make certain that they would all return to Egypt to rescue Shimon and repay the money. When the brothers came back with Binyamin, Yosef was not sure if it was truly Binyamin. The last time Yosef had seen him, Binyamin was only nine years of age and the brothers might have used a slave to impersonate him instead. Before he released them for the second time he put his goblet in Binyamin's sack. Yosef then sent out his son Menasheh to challenge the brothers on the outskirts of Egypt. The brothers responded, "He among your servants with whom it is found shall die". The goblet was found in Binyamin's sack.

Yosef reasoned that if Binyamin was truly who he said he was, then all the brothers would accompany him back to Egypt. If he was not, then the brothers would send him back on his own.

When the brothers stood before Yosef they were told to go home, and as a punishment for Binyamin's crime he was to stay behind and serve as a slave. Yosef did this because he wanted to find out if they treated Binyamin equally to the rest of the brothers, or if they were treating him poorly just as they had treated Bilhah and Zilpah's sons when they were younger. In the following Sedra, Parashat Vayigash, Yehuda pleads with Yosef to be allowed to take Binyamin's place as his slave. Yosef orchestrated all this to be reunited with his full brother Binyamin. At this point he realised that all his brothers were united as one. Yosef was overwhelmed, and with great happiness he revealed himself as their long lost brother.

Because Yehuda was prepared to sacrifice his welfare for the sake of Binyamin's safe return, and because Binyamin was not involved in the sin of the sale of Yosef, they were both worthy of each inheriting half of Yerushalayim.

Yosef named his first son Menasheh to symbolise that he forgot his previous suffering. Although Yosef never verbally forgave his brothers, he did in his heart. This allowed him to move on and become successful, and he called his second son Ephraim to signify this. Yaakov included Yosef's two sons in the twelve tribes as the meaning of their names conveys a powerful message, that in order to be successful one must be willing to break through any setbacks and push forward to build the future.

Menasheh means to forget, and he helped Yosef to forget all of the suffering he had previously endured. Ephraim's name means to increase and be fruitful, and this allowed Yosef to be happy for all the good in his life. This shows Yosef's true character of being able to forgive and forget, and to show compassion to others.

*In loving memory of my mother **Hadassa bat Rachel**, whose 1st yahrzeit is **29th Kislev**.*