

December 24 2012

MIKETZ

One of the abiding truths of human nature is that we delight in discovering each other's faults and hate to reveal our own shortcomings, even though we know that "to err is human." That's right. There is simply no way for humans to be perfect. We may try, but even the very attempt to embody perfection can lead to the sin of arrogance and false pride.

Most of us concentrate on the miraculous ability of Joseph to interpret dreams, but there is another story in this *parasha*. Let's take a closer look at the cupbearer. After spending time in an Egyptian jail, Pharaoh's cupbearer had a dream that only Joseph could interpret. Joseph told him that his dream was a vision that he would soon be liberated from jail and be restored to his position of prominence at court. All Joseph asked in return was that the cupbearer remember him and put in a good word with the boss. Well, we all know how that worked out.

A bit later, when Pharaoh had a dream that no one could interpret, the cupbearer finally remembered the Hebrew boy in jail, but not right away. The cupbearer then spoke up and said to Pharaoh, "I must make mention today of my offences," and he laid out the story about his dream. In a rare moment of honesty and insight, the cupbearer recognized his own ingratitude – his sin of forgetting his promise to Joseph. Actually, the cupbearer sinned twice: first of all by neglecting his obligation to Joseph, and secondly, by remaining silent when he could help Pharaoh.

Imagine his courage in speaking out to Pharaoh and confessing his shortcomings when he could have remained silent. In speaking out, he took a tremendous risk – the anger of Pharaoh and the scorn of the court. Yet his courageous stand, admitting his own fault publicly, was the necessary first step in correcting his error.

That first step is necessary for every one of us. Covering up our own sins can only perpetuate them. Our salvation lies in honestly admitting our imperfections and then seeking the assistance of HaShem, our families, our friends, and our communities in overcoming those flaws. The path to perfection begins with the admission that we are not perfect.

Gen 41:9-13

1 Kings 3:15

Matthew 27:15-19