

November 30, 2013

MIKETZ (At the end of)

In last week's *parashah*, Joseph was unjustly thrown into jail by his boss, Potiphar. He was in prison for quite a while until the cup bearer remembered that there was someone who knew how to interpret dreams. Joseph got it exactly right when he told the Pharaoh the meaning of his two dreams. The first dream was about the seven thin cows swallowing up the seven fat cows. The second dream was of the seven withered heads of grain swallowing the seven healthy heads of grain. Most of us have read this story before so we know that the seven fat cows and the seven healthy heads of grain represent seven years of good crops, and that the seven thin cows and the seven withered heads of grain represent the seven years of famine that would overtake Egypt. But after Joseph gave his interpretation, he added, "Then all of the abundance of Egypt will be forgotten." How is that possible? Egypt was, after all, a great and powerful nation. But then again, we all fall on hard times. When disaster strikes, does that mean we forget all the good parts of our lives?

When Super storm Sandy was about to hit the Northeast, there were lots of dire predictions and warnings. One of those warnings was from a man whom few of us know about. His name is Ray Leonard, and he had ridden out a similar storm in a fishing boat ten years earlier. Several years later, his story was made into a movie called "The Perfect Storm." Since he had lived through such a violent and relentless storm, like the one New York was expecting, reporters sought his advice.

Mr. Leonard said, "If this does hit, you're going to lose all those little things you've spent the last twenty years feeling good about." People lost cars, homes, and all of those little things. All they had was the clothes on their backs. In essence, this is the same message that Joseph told to Pharaoh - materialism is so temporary, so fleeting, so breakable. The *haftarah* reading describes the articles that King Solomon had made for the Temple. When the Temple was destroyed in A.D. 70, these material things were lost. In the B'rit Chadasha reading, people were mocking Yeshua as He was hanging on the execution stake. He lost everything but His faith. Material things may be perishable, and abundance may be fleeting, but non-material items like love, kindness, and faith - those prove to be invincible, stormproof, and life-giving.

The television commercial asks, "What's in your wallet?" When we are given the choice, do we focus on material possessions or do we focus on those intangible gifts whose value will never depreciate nor disappear? Not a sermon, just a thought.

Hebrew reading      Genesis 41:29-30

English reading      Genesis 41:27-30

Haftarah reading      1 King 7:48-50

B'rit Chadasha      Matthew 27:41-46