

D'RASH - VAYESHEV Dec 13, 2014

This week's *parashah* - *VaYeshev* - is a transitional point in the biblical narrative. We are moving into a new section of *Breisheet* which will be devoted to Joseph and his brothers. The history of Joseph can be read on three levels. If we read the story of Joseph as literature, we see quite a drama that is filled with hatred, envy, violence, and deception. This is a fascinating story of a doting father, a pampered son, jealous brothers, a conniving wife, and an international food crisis. If you probe a little deeper, you find a story abounding with profound theological implications. The hand of HaShem is evident in every scene, ruling and overruling the decisions that people made. Of course, in the end, God has the final word and the dreams He gave to Joseph become a reality. On the third level, we see Joseph as one of the richest illustrations of Yeshua to be found anywhere in the Old Testament. It turns out that Joseph the Servant becomes Joseph the Savior.

But my focus today is deception. We have heard the old saying - "Oh what tangled webs we weave when we practice to deceive." The first deception is when Joseph was thrown into the dry cistern by his brothers. The original plan was to kill Joseph and say that a wild animal had devoured him. Instead, the brothers killed an animal and dipped Joseph's robe in the blood. The impact of this deception was devastating. When his dad was presented with Joseph's blood-stained robe, he tore his clothes and mourned the loss of his favorite son. He had been deceived. As the story progresses, Joseph is given a job working for the Egyptian official, Potiphar. He trusted Joseph so much that he put him in charge of his entire household. HaShem was with him, and everything was going great for Joseph until the next deception when Potiphar's wife accused Joseph of, shall we say, inappropriate behavior. Potiphar was deceived, and since Joseph did not have a "get out of jail free" card, he spent time behind bars. The consequences of this deception could have been terrible, but once again, HaShem was with Joseph and he found favor with the warden. In the next *parashah*, Joseph deceives his brothers, but I'll leave that for someone else.

Although Satan is a liar and deceiver, we know that our God is a God of truth. In the *haftarah* reading for today, we learn that because He is the God of truth, He also reveals His plans to His servants, the prophets. The *B'rit Chadashah* reading suggested by David Stern in the Complete Jewish Bible recounts the story of Joseph briefly, emphasizing that HaShem was with Joseph and gave him the wisdom to become a powerful man in Egypt. He was a man with a plan, and it saved multitudes. When people practice deception, the truth eventually comes to the surface, and someone gets hurt. The Gospel of John tells us that Satan is a liar and the father of lies. The ramifications of deception can be far-reaching and the cause of anguish and pain. So, do we follow the father of lies or the God of truth? Just a thought.

Hebrew                      Genesis 37:34-35

English                      Genesis 37:31-35

Haftarah                    Amos 3:1-8

B'rit Chadashah        Acts 7:9-10