

Parashat Miketz **מִקֵּץ**

Torah: Genesis 41:1–44:17

Haftarah: 1 Kings 3:15–4:1

One Man's Guilt

General Overview

In the previous parasha we stressed that the life of Joseph was a life that visibly demonstrated the revelation of the sovereignty of God. Our commentary was designed to bring out that aspect of the Holy One as it was manifested in the narrative.

Exposition

This week's sidra continues that same thought — just as the whole story of Joseph does. However, our perspective in this week's commentary will focus on some of the seemingly little, human things which greatly affect the outcome of the story. As always we need to keep in mind whose hand is guiding men. In light of all this, here is the outline we will be using as we go through this Torah portion:

- I. One Man's Guilt
- II. One Man's Gifting
- III. One Man's Goblet
- IV. One Man's Grief
- V. One Man's Guarantor

In this excerpt from Parashat Miketz, we will focus on section I, One Man's Guilt.

I. One Man's Guilt

He should have felt guilty. Pharaoh's cupbearer, that is. For it was two years since he was released from prison and restored to his lofty position as one of Pharaoh's most trusted aides. Two years ago to the day (41:1), the cupbearer had left his incarceration promising Joseph that he would make it known to Pharaoh that he, Joseph, was the one who interpreted his dream of release and restoration. All during those two years, however, the cupbearer had said nothing about Joseph.

Now it came about that Pharaoh himself was given two dreams. None of his necromancers were able to furnish him with interpretations. Seeing his king in anguish over his dream, the cupbearer finally confesses, "Today I am reminded of my shortcomings" (41:9). In this confession to Pharaoh, the cupbearer at last, remembered to give Joseph the credit for being able to interpret dreams.

If we could have listened to the whole conversation going on in Pharaoh's court, perhaps it would have sounded like this: The cupbearer is pouring out his heart to Pharaoh by saying,

“I have been guilty of two faults,” he confessed: “One that I did not deal kindly with Joseph and mention him to thee; the other, that I saw thee troubled about the interpretation of the dream, yet did not reveal to thee that he knows its interpretation.”¹

Indeed, by his silence the cupbearer was being unfaithful to his promise to Joseph and at the same time he was causing his King unnecessary grief. His guilt caused him to finally break that silence.

A. Confession, Forgiveness, and Restoration

Guilt is a strange thing. It can either be helpful or detrimental, depending on its nature. Justifiable guilt is a feeling given by the Holy One which pricks a man’s conscience, causing him to admit his wrong so that he can be judicially released from its burden and take any necessary steps to make a damaged relationship or situation right.

This kind of guilt is beneficial. Upon confession of the sin or mistake, the person pronounces agreement that a wrong has been committed. He does not hide it, but rather brings it out into the open that it may be properly dealt with.

This concept, in essence, is what 1 John 1:9 teaches about confession. Here, the root of the Greek word translated “confess,” *homologomen*, means literally, “to speak the same thing about our sin [as God does].” What does God think about our sin? He says that He hates it. Sin hinders our relationship with Him, and only works death and not life. Moreover, He also says that we are responsible for our own sin, not that of anyone else.

Yet, God says something additional about our sin. He says that sin can be forgiven. In fact, as believers in Yeshua, we do not have to “beg” God to forgive our sin. Messiah has already paid the penalty for it by His atoning death. We are already “legally” forgiven for that sin. 1 John 1:9 indicates that when we confess, God is “faithful and just to forgive.” This means that as far as eternity is concerned, we are already forgiven. As far as our on-going daily relationship with Him is concerned, He grants immediate forgiveness and restoration because He is “faithful” to keep His promise of atonement. He is “just” because He took the penalty of that sin out on His dear Son.

Furthermore, when a person confesses his sin, it affords the one who was wronged an opportunity to see that there can, indeed, be real justice in God’s kingdom. Hence, he is now free to grant forgiveness to the one who confessed the sin to him. It must be remembered that just as it is incumbent upon the guilty one to confess his sin, it is equally incumbent upon the offended one to grant forgiveness.

After confession and forgiveness, the way is now paved for a relationship to be restored. Not only can the fractured relationship be mended, but also the way is open for an even deeper and closer relationship to grow between the two formerly conflicting or hurting parties.

B. False Guilt

The guilt that people feel, however, is not always from the Lord. Sometimes a person can feel what is sometimes referred to as “false guilt.” This is when a person has guilty feelings that are unjustified. They are derived from his warped

sense of justice, not from any sin that he has committed that warrant such feelings.

Both good, justifiable guilt and false guilt often feel the same and that is why many people get them confused. False guilt is destructive to the person who is experiencing it. It helps no one because it is not based on truth, but rather it is founded on some emotional wounding, perhaps from the person's past.

It is also destructive because it can never be truly relieved. In real guilt, there is relief when sin is confessed. If false guilt is not based on any real sin that the person committed, but just on whatever the person's mind chooses, then he can never really be relieved because there is no sin to confess.

C. The Cupbearer's Guilt

We are not suggesting that the pagan Egyptian cupbearer was experiencing all of the foregoing dynamics of guilt when he made his confession to Pharaoh. What we are suggesting, however, is that it was real guilt that caused him to finally tell Pharaoh about Joseph. In short, God used his guilt for good.

When we sin or truly offend someone, we are often afraid to confess that sin. We are frequently fearful of the possible consequences of our confession. The point made in this parasha is that confession of real sin is always beneficial. Unimaginable good can always come from confessing our wrongdoings to one another just as great good came from the cupbearer finally speaking up.

¹ Bereshit Rabbah 89.6