

## 5781 - Genesis 41-44 - Miketz (At the end)

### *Two Keys to Survive and Thrive, Despite Personal Challenges<sup>1</sup>*

*A friend of mine is going through a tough time. She's facing family issues with her grown children, and her financial situation has taken a precarious slide. She's really down; some days, she has a hard time just getting out of bed.*

*I keep telling my friend that she is a rock of stability for her family. She is needed and valued as a great human being. She is special, giving and generous, despite all that she has been through. I tell her that I know she will hold strong and true to herself, despite all those who have wronged her. And somehow, she will get through this and continue thriving.*

In this week's Torah portion, we are given hints on how to survive a trauma. Joseph personifies an individual who endured the most trying circumstances. He was orphaned from his mother at a young age; he was hated by his brothers, who spared killing him but still sold him as a slave at the tender age of seventeen. He spent his formative years as a stranger in a faraway land, accused of crimes he never committed and imprisoned with no hope for any better future. It was decades before he was reconciled with his brothers and reunited with his father.

And yet, despite such adversities, Joseph remained a *tzaddik*—a righteous individual—holding strong to his beliefs and upbringing, his sensitivity and kindness. After he finally married and was appointed viceroy of Egypt, the names that he calls his sons hint at the principles he held on to.

And to Joseph were born two sons before the year of the famine set in, whom Asenath the daughter of Poti Phera, the governor of On, bore to him. And Joseph named the firstborn Menasheh, for “**G-d has caused me to forget all my toil and all my father's house.**” And the second one he named Ephraim, for “G-d has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction.”—GENESIS 41:50-52

Menasheh means “causing to forget.” Joseph acknowledged that by granting him success, G-d caused him to forget his past hardships, which could have led him also to forget his father's house. **He called his son Menasheh, to remind himself never to forget his family, his heritage, and the values of his upbringing** (Likkutei Sichot,<sup>2</sup> vol. 15, p. 433). Every time he called his son, he would remember that no matter where his life's journey had taken him or would eventually take him, he must never forget the core of who he was.

Ephraim, on the other hand, comes from the Hebrew root *peri*, which means “fruitful.” Joseph acknowledged that G-d made him fruitful even in a land of affliction. **The cruel tribulations of our lives can help us to grow and develop.** Through these challenges, we can exploit and nurture deep parts within ourselves that otherwise may have remained dormant. Life sends all of us harsh tests and trials. Joseph teaches us the two essential keys to survive them.

- 1) Never forget who you are. Never forget the power and potency of your soul. Tap into its strength and don't let your circumstances kidnap the core of your true being.
  - 2) No matter the difficulty, realize that even afflictions can eventually bring you to greatness and growth. Find and use your experiences to dig deep into your self to bear fruit—and to become the best person you can be.
1. *Joseph acknowledged that by granting him success, G-d caused him to **forget** his past hardships, which could have led him also to forget his father's house.*

Genesis 41:51 (NIV)

<sup>51</sup>Joseph named his firstborn Manasseh and said, “It is because God has made me forget **all my trouble and all my father's household.**”

- a. Did Joseph actually forget his hardships and his father's household?
  - 1) He *no longer remembered* them, or he was *unable to think of or recall* them?
  - 2) Or perhaps it means that he developed the ability to *disregard, ignore, neglect* or *overlook* them?
- b. The distinction between “forget(ing)” and “learning to live with” or “coming to terms with” trouble or hardship is very important.
  - 1) Pretending that past (or current) trouble and hardship are not issues in one's life does not make them “go away” or easier to deal with—in fact it often makes them more difficult to deal with.
  - 2) Joseph came to appreciate **how God used** the “trouble” and/or “hardship” he faced to facilitate good not only in his life, but in the lives of those he loved and even in the lives of strangers.
    - a) Genesis 50:20  
<sup>20</sup>**You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good** to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.
    - b) Deuteronomy 8:11-20  
<sup>11</sup>Be careful that you do not forget the LORD your God, failing to observe his commands, his laws and his decrees that I am giving you this day. <sup>12</sup>Otherwise, when you eat and are satisfied, when you build fine houses and settle down, <sup>13</sup>and when

1 Chana Weisberg, *Shabbat deLights, Bereishit*, (Chabad.org), pp. 119-121.

2 Likkutei Sichot, literally, “Collected Talks” contains both the scope and the core of the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, and is the most authoritative source-text for Schneerson's way of explaining Judaism.

your herds and flocks grow large and your silver and gold increase and all you have is multiplied, <sup>14</sup>then your heart will become proud and you will forget the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. <sup>15</sup>He led you through the vast and dreadful wilderness, that thirsty and waterless land, with its venomous snakes and scorpions. He brought you water out of hard rock. <sup>16</sup>He gave you manna to eat in the wilderness, something your ancestors had never known, **to humble and test you so that in the end it might go well with you.** <sup>17</sup>You may say to yourself, "My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me." <sup>18</sup>But remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your ancestors, as it is today. <sup>19</sup>If you ever forget the LORD your God and follow other gods and worship and bow down to them, I testify against you today that you will surely be destroyed. <sup>20</sup>Like the nations the LORD destroyed before you, so you will be destroyed for not obeying the LORD your God.

c) Romans 8:18

<sup>18</sup>I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.

d) Romans 8:28

<sup>28</sup>And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

c. *Never forget who you are ...*

1) **"Who am I?" cannot just be a question about worthiness. It can also be a question about identity.**

a) Exodus 3:10-16

<sup>10</sup>So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt." <sup>11</sup>But Moses said to God, **"Who am I?"** ... <sup>12</sup>And God said, "I will be with you. And **this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain.**"

b) 2Samuel 7:18

<sup>18</sup>Then King David went in and sat before the LORD, and he said: **"Who am I, Sovereign LORD, and what is my family, that you have brought me this far?"**

c) Ruth 3:6-11

<sup>6</sup>So (Ruth) went down to the threshing floor and did everything her mother-in-law told her to do. <sup>7</sup>When Boaz had finished eating and drinking and was in good spirits, he went over to lie down at the far end of the grain pile. Ruth approached quietly, uncovered his feet and lay down. <sup>8</sup>In the middle of the night something startled the man; he turned—and there was a woman lying at his feet! <sup>9</sup>**"Who are you?"** he asked. **"I am your servant Ruth," she said. "Spread the corner of your garment over me, since you are a guardian-redeemer of our family."** <sup>10</sup>The LORD bless you, my daughter," he replied. "This kindness is greater than that which you showed earlier: You have not run after the younger men, whether rich or poor. <sup>11</sup>And now, my daughter, don't be afraid. I will do for you all you ask. All the people of my town know that you are a woman of noble character ...

1) Ruth 1:15-18

<sup>15</sup>"Look," said Naomi, "your sister-in-law is going back to her people and her gods. Go back with her." <sup>16</sup>But Ruth replied, "Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you.

**Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God.**

<sup>17</sup>Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the LORD deal with me, be it ever so severely, if even death separates you and me." <sup>18</sup>When Naomi realized that Ruth was determined to go with her, she stopped urging her.

d) Romans 11:17-18

<sup>17</sup>... and you, though a wild olive shoot, have been **grafted in among the others** and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root, <sup>18</sup>do not consider yourself to be superior to those other branches. If you do, consider this: You do not support the root, but the root supports you.

e) Ephesians 2:11-13

<sup>11</sup>Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth ... <sup>12</sup>remember that at that time you were separate from Messiah, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. <sup>13</sup>**But now in Messiah Yeshua you who once were far away have been brought near ...**

1) Isaiah 44:21

<sup>21</sup>"Remember these things, Jacob, for you, Israel, are my servant. I have made you, you are my servant; Israel, **I will not forget you.**

a) Jeremiah 23:39

<sup>39</sup>Therefore, **I will surely forget you** and cast you out of my presence along with the city I gave to you and your ancestors.

2) Isaiah 49:15

"Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, **I will not forget you!**

3) Luke 1:68

"Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come to his people and redeemed them.

4) Exodus 2:24

God heard their groaning and **he remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob.**

5) Deuteronomy 4:31

For the LORD your God is a merciful God; **he will not abandon or destroy you or forget the covenant with your ancestors**, which he confirmed to them by oath.

6) Deuteronomy 31:6

Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for **the LORD your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.**"

d. *Never forget the power and potency of your soul. Tap into its strength and don't let your circumstances kidnap the core of your true being.*

1) Psalms 118:1-7

<sup>1</sup>Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever. <sup>2</sup>Let Israel say: "His love endures forever." <sup>3</sup>Let the house of Aaron say: "His love endures forever." <sup>4</sup>Let those who fear the LORD say: "His love endures forever."

<sup>5</sup>When hard pressed, I cried to the LORD; he brought me into a spacious place. **<sup>6</sup>The LORD is with me; I will not be afraid.** What can mere mortals do to me? <sup>7</sup>The LORD is with me; **he is my helper.** I look in triumph on my enemies ...

a) Hebrews 13:5-6

<sup>5</sup>Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "**Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you**" (Deu 31:6). <sup>6</sup>So we say with

confidence, "**The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid.** What can mere mortals do to me?" (Psa 118:6).

2) Romans 8:31

<sup>31</sup>... If God is for us, who can be against us?

3) John 4:4-6 (CJB)

<sup>4</sup>You, children, are from God and have overcome the false prophets, **because he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.** <sup>5</sup>They are from the world; therefore, they speak from the world's viewpoint; and the world listens to them. <sup>6</sup>We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God doesn't listen to us. This is how we distinguish the Spirit of truth from the spirit of error.

e. *No matter the difficulty, realize that even afflictions can eventually bring you to greatness and growth. Find and **use your experiences** to dig deep into your self to bear fruit—and to become the best person you can be.*

1) Exodus 3:1-10

<sup>1</sup>Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and **he led the flock to the far side of the wilderness** and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. <sup>2</sup>There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. <sup>3</sup>So Moses thought, "I will go over and see this strange sight-- why the bush does not burn up." <sup>4</sup>When the LORD saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, "Moses! Moses!" And Moses said, "Here I am." <sup>5</sup>"Do not come any closer," God said. "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground." <sup>6</sup>Then he said, "**I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.**" At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God.

<sup>7</sup>The LORD said, "I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. <sup>8</sup>So **I have come down to rescue them** from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey ... <sup>9</sup>And now the cry of the Israelites has reached me, and I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them. <sup>10</sup>So now, go. **I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt.**"

a) 1Chronicles 21:17

<sup>17</sup>David said to God, "Was it not I who ordered the fighting men to be counted? I, the shepherd, have sinned and done wrong. **These are but sheep.** What have they done? LORD my God, let your hand fall on me and my family, but do not let this plague remain on your people."

b) Jeremiah 50:6

<sup>6</sup>"**My people have been lost sheep;** their shepherds have led them astray and caused them to roam on the mountains. They wandered over mountain and hill and forgot their own resting place.

c) Matthew 15:21-24

<sup>21</sup>... Yeshua withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon. <sup>22</sup>A Canaanite woman from that vicinity came to him, crying out, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is demon-possessed and suffering terribly." <sup>23</sup>Yeshua did not answer a word. So his disciples came to him and urged him, "Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us." <sup>24</sup>He answered, "**I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel.**"

2) 1Samuel 17:33-37

<sup>33</sup>Saul replied, "You are not able to go out against this Philistine and fight him; you are only a young man, and he has been a warrior from his youth." <sup>34</sup>But David said to Saul, "Your servant has been keeping his father's sheep. When a lion or a bear came and carried off a sheep from the flock, <sup>35</sup>I went after it, struck it and rescued the sheep from its mouth. When it turned on me, I seized it by its hair, struck it and killed it. <sup>36</sup>Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, because he has defied the armies of the living God. <sup>37</sup>**The LORD who rescued me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will rescue me from the hand of this Philistine.**" Saul said to David, "Go, and the LORD be with you."

3) 2Timothy 4:9-18

<sup>9</sup>Do your best to come to me quickly, <sup>10</sup>for Demas, because he loved this world, **has deserted me** and has gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, and Titus to Dalmatia. <sup>11</sup>Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, because he is helpful to me in my ministry ... <sup>13</sup>When you come, bring ... my scrolls, especially the parchments. <sup>14</sup>**Alexander the metalworker did me a great deal of harm. The Lord will repay him for what he has done.** <sup>15</sup>You too should be on your guard against him, because he strongly opposed our message. <sup>16</sup>**At my first defense, no one**

**came to my support, but everyone deserted me. May it not be held against them.** <sup>17</sup>But **the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength**, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. And I was delivered from the lion's mouth. <sup>18</sup>The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

4) Hebrew 11:32-38

<sup>32</sup>And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson and Jephthah, about David and Samuel and the prophets, <sup>33</sup>who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions, <sup>34</sup>quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword; whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies. <sup>35</sup>**Women received back their dead, raised to life again. There were others who were tortured, refusing to be released so that they might gain an even better resurrection.** <sup>36</sup>Some faced jeers and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. <sup>37</sup>They were put to death by stoning; **they were sawed in two;** they were killed by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated—<sup>38</sup>**the world was not worthy of them.** They wandered in deserts and mountains, living in caves and in holes in the ground.

a) The Martyrdom of Isaiah<sup>3</sup> 5:2

<sup>2</sup>And (Manasseh) sawed him asunder with a wood-saw.

---

3 The first five chapters of this work are a Jewish expansion of 2Kings, detailing the **martyrdom** of Isaiah. Chapters 6-11 are a Christian work which detail Isaiah's **ascension** through the seven heavens. This section is akin to the apocalyptic literature of Enoch in that Isaiah's soul is ushered through various stages of heaven. Each section is a composite of various sources. This complicates the dating of the book. **The Jewish section was likely written in Hebrew and translated into Greek. Hebrews 11 appears to refer to the martyrdom of Isaiah** ("some were sawn asunder") or the same tradition that Isaiah the prophet was martyred by being sawn in half. This would imply a date prior to the late first century.