

A Muse: Miketz

This week's portion is a continuation of the deception and pay back that has been so characteristic in Genesis, certainly from the beginning of the Jacob narrative as we have already pointed out in previous musings. Of concern in this week's portion is the question why didn't Joseph attempt to establish contact with his family, if for no other reason than to let Jacob know that he is alive and well, thriving in Egypt. It would appear to be quite cruel of Joseph not to have done so. Yet, Joseph is a product of his environment and as Jacob was opportunistic and calculating in his relationship to his brother it isn't surprising that Joseph too has demonstrated similar tendencies.

Joseph clearly had issues with his father and certainly with his brothers. It may very well be that Joseph saw his father as an enabler of his brothers and thus hatched the plot by which he would deceive them and his father as he had been deceived by them.

An interesting sub-theme which emerges in the deception and false accusations suggested by Alan Dershowitz is that those falsely accused remain silent and do not protest because it will do no good, but in the end are vindicated. Potiphar's wife accusing Joseph of inappropriate sexual advances towards her doesn't evoke reaction from Joseph. Joseph, however, is vindicated and becomes the king's vizier. Similarly, when Benjamin is falsely accused he doesn't try to defend himself in view of the evidence against him. He too is vindicated. It was only after Joseph realizes that the brothers aren't inclined to forsake their youngest brother, Benjamin, does he call off the charade, realizing that the cycle of deception, false accusation and payback have to cease being a part of their family culture. [Incidental to all this is the further pay back of Yehudah, (who becomes the volunteer hostage) for his treatment of Tamar when he prejudged and misjudged her when he himself had been complicit].