

## Adonai Does Not Forget

♪ *Hatishkach ishah ulah merachem ben-bitnah gam; eleh tishkachnah ve'anochi lo eshkachech. Hen al-kapayim chakotich chomotayich negedi tamid – Can a woman forget her nursing child, Or fail to have compassion upon him? She may forget, but know it or not, Israel you are always before Me... Behold I have engraved my people, on the palms of My hands. Your walls are always before me, Israel. How can I forget? ♪* (Hatishkach, J. Chernoff, Isaiah 49:15-16)

♪ *Lest I forget Gethsemane, lest I forget Thy agony, lest I forget Thy Love for me, lead me to Calvary ♪* (J. Hussey).

*"<sup>10</sup> For God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love that you showed for His name, in having served and continuing to serve the kedoshim" (Hebrews 6:10)*

*"Wherever you are, be there!"* Joseph was involved with all of his heart in his not-so-great situation – a jail. Scripture states: *"Do you see a man skilled in his work? He will stand before kings. He will not stand before obscure people"* (Prov. 22:29). However, *"being in jail"* was not Joseph's business, it was the warden's business. Yet, even when it isn't his business but instead his misfortune, Joseph adheres to *"<sup>23</sup> Whatever you do, work at it from the soul, as for the Lord and not for people"* (Col. 3:23) While companions, friends, family, and even brethren may forget, the Lord does not forget. He is there. If we operate with and within His principles, he gives us success: *"<sup>21</sup> But Adonai was with Joseph and extended kindness to him and gave him favor in the eyes of the commander of the prison... because Adonai was with him, and Adonai made whatever he did successful"* (Gen. 39: 21-23).

*"<sup>23</sup> Yet the chief of the cupbearers did not remember Joseph – indeed, he forgot him"* (Gen. 40:23). Joseph is almost 30 years old, from seventeen to thirty – how quickly do the years pass! No freedom, no wife, no children, no bank account, no property, no fun. Even more painful, these last two years had to be the most difficult two years in Joseph's life – if it were I, I could hear myself saying *"I am getting old, and nothing is happening. Betrayed again! This time by my own companions in misery..."* What would you (and I) do? Give up, get bitter, become selfish, curse Adonai, maybe? Not Joseph – he kept on keeping on. These trials are not insignificant and are they are not trivial. I can only imagine. With every day's routine, boredom, misery and no future in sight, wouldn't you be tempted to give up? I can also imagine Joseph reviewing the events of 13 years ago, with his brothers, with his dad, when the world was ahead, and he was invincible. Then three years ago, when he was in charge of the affairs of one of the most important men in all of Egypt, Potiphar. Was it worth it? Maybe if he had given into the woman, he'd still be in charge and with prestige. Does it pay to serve God? Yes, Adonai is with me, but I am in this hole, in these conditions, in this miserable situation, in this endless spiral to never-never land. If only I had not shared my dreams. If only I had not screamed. If only I had not worn my coat of many colors, if only I had not told my father what my brothers were doing. If only I had negotiated with Potiphar's wife. If only! If only I were dead...

Two years to the day after the release of the Chief of the Cupbearers, on the anniversary of the hope lost, the last time he got excited about something happening, on this, another miserable day at the jail, at night, Scripture tells us that Pharaoh had a dream. Who can you trust? Answer: *"not my brothers, not my employer, not the people I serve, not my comrades and fellow companions in misery, no one!"* That is, no one except Adonai. Evidently, Joseph had trust (faith) in Adonai throughout his life. Thirteen years have passed since Joseph was first sold and became a slave. Can you imagine trusting Adonai that much? Joseph trusts and he never forgets and evidently, he never doubts either.

*"Yesimcha Elohim keEphraim veche-Menasheh."* Biblical names are very important, especially in their original Hebrew translation! There are at least two significant names in Parashat Miketz which deserve our attention. In today's Torah portion we are told that Joseph had two children who were born to him in Egypt by his Egyptian wife, Potiphar's (and Potiphar wife's daughter!): Manasseh and Ephraim. Moreover, the text informs us the reasons for Joseph giving them their names. We are told that Joseph's firstborn was named Manasseh because for

Joseph it meant: *"because God has caused me to forget all my trouble and all my father's house."* (Genesis 41:51). According to the JPS, the meaning of the Hebrew word *Menashe* is, *"he who causes to forget."*

Joseph's second son was named *Ephraim*. There is a slight difference of opinion concerning the meaning of this word. It could have been from the Hebrew root, פרה, which would indicate "fertile land," or from the root אפר, which means "pasture-land." Either etymology would aptly describe the future territory of the tribe bearing that name which was located west of the Jordan in the central region. It was blessed with good soil and rainfall. Thus, the name speaks of fruitfulness or fertility. Accordingly, Joseph's own intention was for the name to signify: *"God has made me fruitful in the land of my oppression"* (Genesis 41:52).

*God's ways are not our ways* (Isaiah 55:8, 9). Scripture tells us that: *"<sup>18</sup> Where there is no divine vision people cast off restraint, but blessed is the one who keeps Torah."* Or in the more familiar version: *"Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth Torah, happy is he"* (Proverbs 29:18). We need a vision, a revelation from God. That is what Isaiah, Ezekiel, Jeremiah, and Paul got. We must have more than goals and dreams, we must have His strategy, His plan, His knowledge, His goals for us. In short, we must have a personal revelation to guide our paths and give us direction. This is our "Google Map" for life's paths.

However, when God is really interested in bringing forth something great, He often causes the death – even double & triple deaths of vision. These deaths are all related to the potential (gifting) He has given unto us. After the dreams and interpretations which clearly came from God as a gifting unto Joseph, there he is in this situation. In trouble (one more time) for exercising his God-given gifts. How often do we despair in the gifting God has given us when they seem to bring nothing but troubles! Is God causing multiple deaths of vision in your life? Perhaps the release from prison and the palace are just around the corner...

Vision is what we receive, it is what we see, it is what we lose, and it is how we get discouraged when we notice the difference between what we know (envision) and what actually is (reality). In spite of success in our endeavors, we have also experienced failures. Failures prompt us to ask 'what am I doing' or 'Am I in the right place' or 'Is this God's Will?' I believe it is important to be honest about ourselves and honest about our motives or we might not be able to make it to where God wants us to go ultimately because hardship and opposition will surely come our way. We need a vision to start, and to know the what, where and when to say/not say and how to do things. A vision to keep you going, regardless of circumstances, because often circumstances are against you. If we can catch a fresh vision in these days, we'll be able to continue in the path He has laid for us. If we are able to renew what God gave us, we'll be able to serve Him in a happy and successful way. On the anniversary of Joseph's forgotten day, the cupbearer remembered Joseph, *Adonai* never forgot, and the rest is history...

Twenty-two years ago, on December 27, 1998, I received vision to retry again to join the IAMCS from Rose Price, Jonathan Settel and Rabbi Judah Hungerman. Then on January 23, 1999 I wrote check 1493 reapplying to the IAMCS, six years after being denied acceptance in December 1993 for invalid reasons. On December 26, 1999, a full year later, we were admitted to the IAMCS (after all the difficulties with the Simpkins and another Messianic Congregation in the Southeast). On January 4, 2000, seven years after first applying, we got our certificate of membership to the IAMCS. On December 21, 2008, nearly ten years to the date after the original vision from Rose, I gave my first ever English message in the MJAA SE Regional conference. You see, *Adonai* never forgot... *Shabbat Shalom!*