

**Parshat Miketz**  
**Resilient We Remain**  
**Nomi Kaltmann - Class of 2022**

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Despite the Jewish patriarchs and matriarchs having many different interactions and recorded stories of exchanges with non-Jewish people surrounding them, Joseph is the first recorded forebear to have actively lived and dwelled amongst gentiles for a prolonged period.

When Joseph's story is told in the Torah, the people of Israel were still few in number and were mainly the offspring of Jacob and his wives Rachel, Leah, Bilhah and Zilpah. At this time in history, the people of Israel existed as a small group of isolated shepherds that lived in Canaan.

Joseph's upbringing was tragic and difficult. His mother Rachel had died while birthing his baby brother Benjamin. Unliked by his brothers, he was sold into slavery and subsequently imprisoned. Yet, despite what we would regard to have been extensive trauma, Joseph does not become depressed by his surroundings.

Joseph maintains his belief in God and Divine providence. This is seen that when summoned to interpret the dreams of Pharaoh in this week's Parsha, Miketz. When Pharaoh asks him to interpret his dream, Joseph responds:

וַיַּעַן יוֹסֵף אֶת-פַּרְעֹה לְאִמְרַת בְּלִעְדֵי ה' יַעֲנֶה אֶת-שְׁלוֹם פַּרְעֹה:

Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, *"Not !! God will see to Pharaoh's welfare."*

Even though Pharaoh is keen to recognize Joseph and his abilities, Joseph displays his faith and belief in God noting that these dream-interpretation abilities are not his, but rather a Divine gift direct from God. Despite the history of his traumas and difficulties, Joseph displays a level of faith in God that would be difficult for most to achieve.

Rashi takes the word **בלעדי** - "Not I" and notes that Joseph responds to Pharaoh with the answer: "The wisdom to interpret dreams is not my own, but God will answer — He will put in my mouth an answer that will be for Pharaoh's welfare.

Joseph then explains the meaning of the cows and grain in Pharaoh's dream of being symbolic of the years of plenty and the years of famine that will imminently arrive in the land of Egypt.

And in response to this interpretation, which no other Egyptian advisor had been able to provide to Pharaoh, Joseph is elevated. In a sudden twist of fate, after many years of living as a slave and imprisoned, Joseph is speedily released from jail and promoted to the lofty position of viceroy of Egypt!

Sforno explains that the nature of Divine salvation is that it comes hastily and draws a parallel noting that the salvation that will bring the Mashiach will also be super quick and speedy.

When Joseph informs Pharaoh that the seven years of plenty he witnesses in his dreams will be surpassed by seven years of lacking, so severe that they would cause global starvation, he delivers this message carefully and with the right emphasis.

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Egypt, with its position as a global center for wealth, travel and trade at the time had become used to its level of prosperity.

Joseph knew that news of further prosperity would not have been of interest to Pharaoh, as the Egyptian people had come to expect prosperity as a way of life.

However, Ramban notes that Joseph emphasized the famine and the potential disaster that Pharaoh could avoid if proper preparations were made for the upcoming famine and catastrophe.

Through these interactions in this week's Parsha, Joseph provides us with the proper attitude to addressing misfortune and a model for resilience. Despite what many would have regarded as a traumatic time in which God seemed to have allowed him to suffer and remain in jail, Joseph does not lose his faith. He maintains his belief in God and continues to trust that God will provide for him.

As we are about to end 2020 during what globally has one of the toughest years in recent history, we can be guided by the story of Joseph. The trials have been great. The experience of disease has been challenging on our bodies and minds.

We have witnessed people we know become sick and the global pandemic has raged on with little regard for all the things we had planned for the year.

However, as Jewish people, we possess a level of resilience and belief. There will yet be better days in the future. While we cannot understand God's ways, we have belief that God is all good and things will get better.

The journey is not always easy and looking at the experiences of Joseph can help us to look at his resilience with awe.

As the year 2020 winds down, we can have belief that from the darkest days we can emerge stronger, more resilient and with our faith intact.

Shabbat Shalom.



Nomi Kaltmann lives in Melbourne, Australia and comes to Maharat after earning her Bachelor of Laws and Bachelor of Liberal Arts in Politics and Jewish Civilizations from Monash University. In 2019, Nomi became the first Australian woman to enroll in the Yeshivat Maharat four-year Semikha program. She also holds a Masters degree in Legal Practice from the Australian National University. Nomi has worked for the Shadow Attorney General of Australia and as an advisor to the former Minister for Small Business in the Victorian Legislative Assembly. Specialising in charities and not-for-profit law, Nomi has worked for the Australian Charities Commission. In 2020 Nomi was selected to intern at Tablet Magazine and for a fellowship at Hillel International's Centre for Rabbinic Innovation. Nomi is one of the founding members of the Women's Orthodox Tefillah Group in Victoria. She is also the inaugural president of the Jewish Orthodox Feminist

Alliance in Australia, which she looks forward to formally launching in Australia when COVID-19 restrictions ease.