

***Miketz***  
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Shabbat Shalom!

My torah portion, Miketz, begins with Pharaoh having two unusual dreams. He doesn't understand them so Pharaoh learns about the slave Joseph, who can interpret dreams, and calls for him. Joseph explains that the dreams are a message from God to tell Pharaoh that there will be seven years when the crops are good, followed by seven years of famine. What Joseph predicted came true. Joseph suggests that they plan for the bad years ahead, by saving some food during the good years, and Joseph was put in charge of the food supply by Pharaoh.

Later in Egypt, all of Joseph's brothers, except the youngest brother, Benjamin, are sent to get food during the famine. Little do they know that they would be getting food for their own brother, Joseph, who they had sold into slavery years before. Joseph recognizes his brothers, but they do not recognize him. He accuses his brothers of being spies and keeps them prisoner for three days. On the third day, Joseph says to them that he will keep one brother while the rest go back to get their youngest brother, Benjamin. Benjamin is Joseph's only full brother with the same mother and father, and he feels closest to him.

Once the brothers come back with Benjamin, Joseph invites them to dine with him. He seated them from oldest to youngest. All the brothers were surprised and wondered how he knew their age order. Joseph had some fun playing around with their minds.

Then, Joseph ordered the house steward to fill all of the brothers' bags with food, and to put his silver goblet in the bag of the youngest, Benjamin. When they wake up the next morning, they leave for home. Then, Joseph tells his house steward to go after the brothers, to find the one who stole the goblet, even

though he already knows who has it. The brothers are taken back to Joseph. They find that his goblet is in Benjamin's bag. Joseph says that Benjamin has to stay as his slave.

Why would Joseph want to put his youngest brother, the one he cares the most about, in harm's way? I don't think Joseph wants to harm Benjamin. I think he is testing his other brothers to see if they had changed. I believe Joseph's brothers have changed because they seem to feel guilty. If they hadn't changed, then they would have just left Benjamin as Joseph's slave. The whole situation reminds them of the terrible thing they did to Joseph years ago.

Joseph is testing them to see if they would give up on Benjamin, like they did to him, or if they will try to save him. I think he is giving his brothers a chance to do things right this time. If Joseph didn't want to give his brothers another chance, then he could have simply kept *them* to be his slaves. But, he wants to give them a chance to do things differently this time.

Rabbi Moses Maimonides says that complete change is when you're in the same situation as before, and you act differently.

We all do things we know we shouldn't, and wish we could take it back. For example, there have been times when I have been mean to my little sister and excluded her from things, which I later felt bad about and soon regretted. We should all try to learn from our mistakes like the way Joseph's brothers should. In the next Parsha, Joseph tells his family who he is and they are reunited.

For my bat mitzvah project, I have been volunteering at the Hebrew Home and Hospital. I spend my time at the Hebrew Home doing many things. I talk with residents, I help them get around in the building, and I help the staff with things that need to be done, such as delivering mail, and other projects. It makes me feel good to know that I am there to help them. And they enjoy it when young volunteers like me come there and spend time with them. I have learned a lot

from the residents at the Hebrew Home. I plan to continue to volunteer there for a long time.

I have also learned a lot this year while preparing for my bat mitzvah. I would like to thank Mrs. Fox and Rabbi Small for helping me write my d'var torah, Rhonda Holtman and Cantor Cohn for helping me prepare for this day, and all my past Hebrew school teachers for teaching me about Judaism. Finally, I would like to thank my parents and my sister Hayley for all their love and support.