

BEFORE THE PICTURE IS COMPLETE

by Rabbi Label Lam

And Joseph harnessed his chariot and went up to meet Israel his father in Goshen. He appeared before him and he fell on his neck, and he wept excessively. (Breishis 46:29)

But Jacob did not fall on the neck of Joseph and he did not kiss him. Our sages say he was reciting "Shema". (Rashi)

It seems rather cool and aloof for Jacob to engaged in a religious ritual rather than embrace his estranged son after twenty-two years of forced separation.

Jacob, who had been the bearer of the great promises of building a holy nation, had heard with his own ears the dreams told by Joseph. Although he rebuffed him at the time in front of the brothers the verse testifies, "And his father guarded the matter" meaning as Rashi explains, "He was waiting and anticipating when they would be fulfilled." (Breishis 37:11) Now, imagine how many events beyond human control had to be orchestrated with precision and sequence before those dreams could come to fruition.

- 1-Joseph would have to incur the jealousy and suspicion of his brothers, in an otherwise unified and functional family, to the degree that they would be willing to sell him into slavery.
- 2-Joseph would have to find his way to a prison that would put him in close contact with people close to Pharaoh.
- 3-Those men would have to have dreamt troubling dreams to invite Joseph to display his "talent" for interpreting dreams.
- 4-Pharaoh would also have to have his pair of problematic dreams that call Joseph's specialty into play on a grander scale.
- 5-Pharaoh would have to be convinced that not only is Joseph's understanding of the dreams true, but he would have to be inspired to trust Joseph with executing the plan that would save his country.
- 6-A world famine would have to descend over the whole world making Egypt the only place to go to for food thanks to Joseph's insightfulness and farsightedness.
- 7-The brothers who had pursued him so zealously would have to be brought to a point of truth

and reconciliation.

8-Joseph would have to be able to relocate every citizen in Egypt in order that their father Jacob could be convinced of the safety and wisdom of bringing the entire family to Egypt.

9-That step would be in perfect concert with the Divine decree that was told to Avraham 190 years earlier: "Know with certainty that your offspring will be strangers in a land of strangers."

No person would so capable of manipulating nature, the minds of men, and monarchs to have created such a result. Jacob and Joseph and all the other players were as much confounded by the circumstances in which they found themselves as anybody else. Still the drama was led to conclude exactly as foretold in those dreams

By the time Jacob and Joseph were ready to greet each other, it was abundantly evident that the fingerprints of Divinity were all over those chapters of their lives. Like someone who traveling around a long circuitous mountain road comes to a lookout vista, Jacob was able to see from there the whole trail of Jewish history with perfect hindsight.

This meeting was much more than the reunification of a father and his son. It was a rare moment of reaffirmation and confirmation of The Almighty's absolute unity and mastery over the universe, history and the affairs of man. It was not less than the final touches on a seamless vision of reality the likes of which we anticipate daily but may need to wait a lifetime, like Jacob, before the picture is complete

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