

# A MYSTERIOUS ENDING

*by Rabbi Berel Wein*

The psalmist asks the question "from where shall my salvation arise?" He has no doubt that salvation will somehow come to him but he does not know how that will occur. Life is so unpredictable and volatile that no person, government or institution can truly plan with certainty its success and salvation. "The best laid plans of mice and men..." certainly are undone by events and circumstances that are completely incapable of being foreseen.

This is one of the salient lessons of this week's parsha. Yosef is saved from a life of slavery and prison and transformed into a royal magistrate in an instant. He is certain that somehow God will redeem him that his dreams were not merely youthful folly and that he is destined for greatness and fame, but he has no concept how this can occur.

It takes a confluence of strange and even mundane events - Pharaoh's stewards being imprisoned in the same cell block as Yosef, their strange dreams, Pharaoh's birthday, Pharaoh's own disturbing dreams, the confessions of the wine steward as to his earlier misdeeds and Yosef's boldness in interpreting Pharaoh's dreams - to vault Yosef into rulership in the land of Egypt.

Who could have scripted such a drama in advance of its actual happening? But in reality is this not the way that life always plays itself out for all of us personally and certainly for the Jewish people nationally? We are all Yosef, confident of redemption and vindication but terribly confused as to how this will actually come about.

There are many participants in a person's redemption and success. This is true certainly so in the national life of the Jewish people. We may naively think that it is always completely up to us but God has His ways and in the words of the rabbis "God has many messengers that do His bidding." Many times they do so unwittingly and certainly unaware that they are fulfilling Divine destiny.

The wine steward, the warden in Yosef's prison, even the Pharaoh himself, are apparently unaware of the roles and actions that destiny has assigned to them. There is an unseen rhythm that guides Jewish life and every person in the world is potentially God's messenger to help realize and actualize Jewish destiny. We may not like all of the actors in this script but they all play a role nevertheless.

And because of this we are constantly reminded of the eternal question "from where will my salvation and redemption come?" Usually it comes from unforeseen circumstances and people who are strangers to us and our ways and even our hopes and goals. The drama of life is unending and

complicated.

The Torah warned us of this by stating that "the hidden things belong to God but what is clear is that Jews should observe the Torah and transmit it to their following generations." But there always is a "miketz" - an ending, a fulfillment and an achievement of goals. How that "miketz" occurs is the everlasting mystery of life itself.

Shabat shalom.

Chanuka sameach

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