

RABBI JACK'S MESSAGE IN A MINUTE



December is for disguises. In *Miketz*, this week's Torah portion, Joseph, who is now Viceroy of Egypt, comes face to face with his ten brothers for the first time since they sold him into servitude.

"And Joseph recognized his brethren, but he made himself a stranger to them, so they did not know him." (Gen:41:7) How could not one of Joseph's siblings realize they were speaking to their younger brother? The verse says that Joseph 'made himself' unknown to them, meaning, according to the Midrash, that he disguised himself by his clothing, wearing makeup, and speaking a foreign language. He intentionally concealed who he was. This choice by Joseph led to a delay in the reconciliation of him and his family, including his aged father Jacob.

Our most sacred text makes frequent use of the disguise motif. Jacob fooled his blind father Isaac by wearing Esau's animal fur clothes, Laban hid his daughter Leah under a wedding veil so Jacob would marry her first before Rachel. And Tamar masked herself and pretended to be a prostitute to successfully deceive Judah her own father-in-law. In every instance there was a disastrous result, rectified only when the person's true self was revealed.

The lesson is clear. We all hide behind our smiles, our houses, clothes, titles, jobs, and numerous other facades. Our wisdom filled Bible tells us-over and over again- be yourself, do not be afraid to show who you really are, embrace your identity. It is only then that the goodness of life will unfold. Just ask Joseph.

L'shalom,

Rabbi Jack