

PARASHAH: Vayigash (He approached)
ADDRESS: B'resheet (Genesis) 44:18-47:27
READING DATE: Shabbat
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(Note: all quotations are taken from the **Complete Jewish Bible**, translation by David H. Stern, Jewish New Testament Publications, Inc., unless otherwise noted)

Let's begin with the opening blessing for the Torah:

***“Baruch atah YHVH, Eloheynu, Melech ha-‘Olam,
asher bachar banu m’kol ha-amim,
v’natan lanu eht Torah-to.
Baruch atah YHVH, noteyn ha-Torah.
Ameyn.”***

(Blessed are you, O' LORD, our God, King of the Universe,
you have selected us from among all the peoples,
and have given us your Torah.
Blessed are you, LORD, giver of the Torah.
Ameyn.)

This week's parashah contains a very significant "remez" (hint) about the current situation facing the Nation of Isra'el today, plus the haftarah portion itself conveys a very important message that is pertinent to both the Jewish People and the Church. Accordingly, we shall examine both of the passages during this commentary.

Up to this point, Yosef (Joseph) had remained unknown to his brothers. The Spirit of the Holy One was guiding him as he put his brothers through various tests of integrity and humility. Although at times it seemed rather cruel to treat them with such harshness, in fact, this was the crucible that would serve to break them down. They needed to learn a very valuable lesson, one that would transform them into the God-ordained family that they needed to be. To be sure, if Yosef's brothers failed to learn how to put off hate, jealousy, bitter-ness, and resentment, countless more unnecessary suffering might have taken place, and their father Isra'el would have gone to his grave with a grieving soul.

Yosef has orchestrated a scenario by which the brothers have reached a position of "checkmate" so to say: if they allow the "guilty" Binyamin to remain with Yosef, their father will surely die; if they attempt to defy Yosef by taking Binyamin back to their father, they all might die. Whether or not Yosef, the brothers or Binyamin realized it, HaShem had cornered them and now a reckoning must take place! The guilty brothers must come to grips with the sibling they abandoned long ago.

Understanding the Dispute of the Brothers

Joseph the Idealist

It is possible to approach the dispute between Joseph and his brothers from a number of different angles. It is possible to see Joseph is an idealist, dreaming dreams of redemption and salvation, as the Sages teach, "Come and see: All that befell Joseph befell Zion as well... It is written concerning Joseph, 'And **Joseph** had a **dream**' (Genesis 37:5), and it is written concerning Zion, 'When God will return the captivity of **Zion**, we will be like **dreamers**'" (Psalm 126). Joseph dreamed, for he had great ideals. True, he brings a bad report to his father concerning his brothers, but this is only because he makes such great behavioral demands of them; he feels that they are capable of more. Because of the weighty implications involved he sees no other course than informing his father, Jacob, concerning the behavior of his brothers. The brothers, on the other hand, take a different approach - they are more realistic, more pragmatic.

It is possible to view this conflict in light of our present-day situation - for, are we not, after all, the great grand children of the forefathers? And just as Joseph was despised for being a dreamer who longed for the redemption, so too today hatred is often fostered towards those who yearn for the redemption of Israel. They go misunderstood and are often accused of dragging the nation into imminent danger or self-destruction. People believe that these dreamers want the unattainable, and the hatred is at times so great that, "They could not say a peaceful word to him" (Genesis 37:4).

It is told, in the name of the **Vilna Gaon**, that all those who exert themselves settling the Land of Israel, reestablishing the Holy City of Jerusalem, and advancing the redemption - those who strive to secure Jewish control over the Land of Israel, possess something of "**Mashiach ben Yoseph**," the Messiah from the line of Joseph. They continue in the spirit of Joseph, and they - like Joseph - go misunderstood. The true validity of their approach goes unrecognized, as it is written, "Joseph recognized his brothers, but they did not recognize him" (ibid. 42:8).

Joseph possesses a great and deep vision, and others do not succeed in understanding him. If only they were willing to recognize Joseph's leadership, says the Vilna Gaon, redemption would come immediately.

The Sages of the **Talmud** teach us: "Joseph, for sanctifying God's name in a hidden, private manner, was rewarded by having a letter from God's name (the Tetragrammaton - YHVH) added to his own." The Hebrew **Yoseph** later became **Y'hoseph**, an additional '**Heh**,' or 'h' being added - taken, as it were - from God's own name (cf. Ps. 81:5 has Y'hoseph in the

original Hebrew). "Judah," the **Talmud** continues, "for sanctifying the name of God openly, publicly, merited receiving a name that was made up entirely of the letters of God's name." The Hebrew **Yehudah** contains, albeit rearranged somewhat, all of the letters of God's name. The above appears to be in keeping with what we have been saying up till now. Joseph is an introspective type. He possesses inner spiritual might. He is not afraid to go out and gather followers because he possesses unseen inner strengths. Judah, on the other hand, sanctifies God's name openly, this is the appearance of the Kingdom of Israel.

Joseph opens up channels - "gets the ball rolling," so to speak; such is the nature of "**Mashiach ben Yoseph.**" "**Mashiach ben David,**" The Messiah of the house of David, comes along and completes the work. There are those who possess the might, the courage and the bravery to initiate; yet they don't possess the qualities needed to finish the job - this is not their strong point. Such is the nature of Joseph. Judah, on the other hand, represents culmination, completion. These, in essence, are the roots of two distinct approaches that afterwards appear and reappear throughout Jewish history. We are called upon, each one of us, to approach the sons of Jacob, the fathers of the Twelve Tribes of Israel, with an appreciation for their true greatness, and in so doing, to learn whatever possible from the significant courses that they followed.¹

Y'hudah's Entreaty

As I mentioned at the onset of the story of the life of Yosef, his life was designed by HaShem to mirror that of a more famous son of Avraham, Yitz'chak, Ya'akov, and Isra'el, namely, Yeshua. Yeshua was the only, unique Son of God, in that Yeshua was not merely one of God's sons; he IS God veiled in flesh! Yet, we learn that when HaShem took on humanity, he became humbled and obedient to death, even death at the hands of an angry mob. This mob consisted of his brothers according to the flesh—the Judeans—as well as Roman tormentors.

Yosef was rejected by his brothers because of the anointing that rested upon him, and because he visibly enjoyed the favor of his father. In a midrashic (homiletic) kind of way, Yeshua was also rejected by his brethren—the corporate Jewish Nation, because of the anointing that rested upon him, and because the Father favored him. But the same Father that masterfully planed every facet of Yosef's life is the same Father that led Yeshua to the execution stake. It was not an accident that Yeshua was delivered into the hands of death, and it was no accident that Yosef was either. Thus, it is now becoming apparent that, for the brothers, there is no escaping the destiny that belongs to them. With this realization at hand, Y'hudah now steps to the forefront.

¹Rabbi Zalman Melamed, *Fathers and Sons* (Yeshiva.org.il 1988), 2-5 [www.yeshiva.org.il/midrash/doc/doc6/EVaygash61.doc] as of 12.16.2005

Y'hudah has emerged as the leader of the brothers, and is now prepared to disclose the heart of the matter: family unity and survival is at stake. He explains to Yosef that the actions of his fellow brothers has caused this great calamity, and that at all costs, the life of their father must be preserved. Speaking for the group, Y'hudah confesses their guilt, brought on by the internal knowledge that it was they who sold Yosef into slavery, causing their father's heart and soul to weaken, but compounded by the fact that they were also guilty of getting Binyamin involved in all of this mess. In desperation and humility, but delivered with heartfelt honesty, Y'hudah begs to Yosef for mercy, for the sake of their father.

The speech of Y'hudah in chapter 44:18-34 reflects the heart of a man who has realized that without complete and utter selflessness, love cannot accomplish its goal. Speaking corporately, he has come to the point where he realizes that one life cannot be preserved without the sacrificing of another. Indeed, it was Y'hudah who promised to his father that if he did not return with Binyamin, that he himself would remain eternally in debt to his father (44:32). It was also Y'hudah who decided before Yosef to become the substitute for his younger brother (44:33). He was willing to become guilty so that life might be preserved—his brother Binyamin, his remaining guilty brothers' lives, and the life of his father.

Therefore, in this parashah, we have a **double** portrayal of the Messiah Yeshua. Yosef has already been shown to be a shadow of the Messiah to come, in the pain and suffering of rejection that he experienced, while Y'hudah reflects the dual roles of servant and substitute that Yeshua became for his guilty brothers. Y'hudah was willing to forsake his own life, for the lives of his family members; Yeshua our Messiah laid down his own life so that his family might have life in return! Of course the comparison of Y'hudah to Yeshua is rather inadequate, in that, the sacrifice of Yeshua effected the whole world, rather than just one family.

“Messiah” Revealed

The opening few verses of chapter 45 are some of the most tender and significant verses in the Torah. Having portrayed the life of an exiled and abandoned brother, this family reunion will only be excelled by the greatest family reunion in the history of mankind—the reuniting of Yeshua and his immediate family, the Jewish People. Let's examine the similarities below.

In our Torah portion, Yosef instructs everyone except he and his brothers to leave the room. In this suspenseful moment between immediate family members, he discloses his true identity to them,

“I am Yosef!”

But, astounded and speechless at the impossible, his brothers could not answer him. The moment is surely heart rendering and moving, and Yosef doesn't want them to risk misunderstanding him anymore. He bids them to gather closer to him, closer to his heart, as he whispers ever so gently,

"I am Yosef, your brother, whom you sold into Egypt."

I believe that you could have heard a pin drop in the room that day, as his brothers' eyes were opened to the truth. Their brother—the one whom they wronged, whom they forsook because of his silly predictions of leadership, the one considered by them as least significant, the one beloved of their father—was now standing before them alive, and proclaiming to forgive them! It is significant for us to realize the power and magnitude of love and clarity of soul that true forgiveness and restitution carries with them.

As it was for Yosef and his brothers that moment, so it will be for Yeshua and his brothers that day as he draws them close and speaks to them tenderly,

"I am Yeshua!"

At first, it may also seem incredible to them as well, but, as his brothers learn of his true identity, that he was not merely some insignificant carpenter from Natzeret or just another good rabbi, that he was not speaking under his own influence when he told them of the power in becoming a servant, that it was the Will of the Father that allowed them to do him injustice—that he had been placed in a position of suffering and leadership to preserve their very lives—then they will also finally and corporately become reconciled to their long-lost brother!

Consider what the Torah has to say in the prophetic book of Ezekiel,

"And I will bring you into the wilderness of the people, and there will I plead with you face to face. Like as I pleaded with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so will I plead with you, saith the Lord God."

(20:35, 36, KJV)

Also note the theme of this passage from Zechariah,

"And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn." (12:10, KJV)

In these particular passages, HaShem is speaking about a time when corporately the Nation of Isra'el must contend with the LORD in truth! Is Yeshua the

Messiah? And if so, is HaShem the one who sent him to preserve their very lives 2000 years ago? Is this the very same brother that we rejected, standing before us today? The pleading that the Torah mentions is the same pleading that both the Father and the Son proclaim as an “echad,” as a unity, the very same pleading that is taking place this very day,

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” (Matthew 11:28-30, KJV)

Personal Application

The lessons for us today are clear: carrying the burden of guilt and shame are unbearable. Sin is a yoke that is too heavy for us to carry. Similarly, running from the Truth of HaShem’s anointed One will consistently wear us down and eventually lead to the point of our own destruction. We were not created to function in this manner. HaShem has decreed that in order to preserve life, we must place our trust in his anointed One, and allow his forgiveness to transform our hollowness into the reality of his righteousness—full measure! Yosef’s brothers needed a supernatural change in their spiritual makeup, and the internal confession of the brothers coupled with the forgiveness of Yosef was the conduit by which the Ruach HaKodesh made that possible. Although the Torah does not explicitly state that each one confessed and asked for Yosef’s forgiveness, it is implied in the confession of Y’hudah their spokesman. Jumping ahead a little further into the Torah (B’resheet 50:15-21), we will find that for the brothers, like so many of us today, even though forgiveness had been granted on their behalf, they still sometimes wrestled with the concept of total and complete restitution.

Yosef’s brothers received a revelation of the plans of HaShem, brought on as the façade melted away to reveal this simple truth beneath: one was chosen from among the rest and singled out to preserve the life of all. The Stone Edition, Artscroll TaNaKH (Mesorah Publications) has this to say about the reunion:

“When Joseph said, “I am Joseph,” God’s master plan became clear to the brothers; everything that had happened for the last twenty-two years fell into perspective. So, too, will it be in the time to come when God will reveal Himself and announce, “I am HASHEM!” The veil will be lifted from our eyes and we will comprehend everything that transpired throughout history (Chafetz Chaim).”

I believe that the above commentary is hinting in the right direction. However, today, unequivocally, **to understand Yeshua IS to understand HaShem!** Only by placing one’s trusting faithfulness in Yeshua can one ever hope to catch a genuine glimpse of the sweeping scope of humanity, thereby, comprehending the Will and plans of HaShem. **To know HaShem today, one must contend with**

the Son. Once this surrender takes place, the blindness vanishes and a reconciling between family members—between us and our Heavenly Abba—takes place.

Yosef's brothers now listened as he related how what they meant for evil, God had used in creating a good situation. What have we to fear when things don't go the way that we plan? Why consider giving up when our friends and family forsake and seemingly abandon us? Certainly Yosef was susceptible to these thoughts and emotions, and he had good reason to experience them, if indeed he did. Yet, our Father has demonstrated time and time again that he is intimately interested in the well being of our lives, and that if we will earnestly trust in him, he will take care of us.

The parashah goes on to detail the events surrounding the reuniting of Isra'el to his long lost son Yosef. Isra'el meets the Pharaoh and blesses him, further demonstrating the potential blessing that awaits those who show favor to HaShem's chosen few. Isra'el was also God's anointed one. The Pharaoh, I believe, found favor in the site of HaShem because he chose to "speak well of" both Yosef and his immediate family. Remember, when those who are not of Avraham (symbolized by the surrounding nations) bless (speak well of) Avraham (symbolized by his offspring), then HaShem blesses them in return. This blessing and promise of heritage as a child of Avraham (if you will remember from **Parashat Lekh L'kha, B'eresheet 12:3**), extends to those faithful from among the nations that have joined him in righteousness (read Romans chapter 4).

Conclusions

Finally, I want to briefly examine the haftarah portion along with this Torah portion. The address is Ezekiel 37:15-28. Here the prophet is instructed by HaShem to tell of the future restoration of the House of Y'hudah with the House of Isra'el. In this family reunion, HaShem promises to purge them of their filthiness and forgive their transgressions. This renewal of the heart of the Nation will also result in HaShem replacing them back into the Land of Promise, never again to be uprooted. Moreover, the Holy One promises to renew his covenant of shalom with them, to multiply them, to sanctify them, and to place his sanctuary among them for evermore! "Baruch habah b'shem ADONAI!—(Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD)—namely Yeshua!"

These are 100% literal and very significant promises awaiting Am Yisra'el (the People of Isra'el) in the coming Millennial reign of their (as of yet, not corporately realized) Messiah, Yeshua! Some biblical scholars have attempted to finesse or, even worse, spiritualize away these blessed promises, but the unchanging, literal Word of HaShem remains true, despite their erroneous views. In fact, as the passage also promises in verses 21-25, many of the people have already begun their 'aliyah (return) to the Land of Isra'el! This fact alone flies in the face of the

mistaken biblical teaching taught lately. **Replacement Theology cannot not thwart the eternal plans of the Holy One of Isra'el!**

However, in order for Isra'el to come to the place where HaShem will deal with them as Yosef dealt with his brothers, they, like Y'hudah, must be willing to admit their guilt and shame in forsaking their brother Yeshua, and they must beg for his forgiveness. The wonderful truth is that, not only is he willing and able to forgive them, but he has already made the necessary provision for their forgiveness!

He died and rose again to demonstrate that HaShem sent him ahead of them to insure the survival of the Land, and to preserve life! Yes, he will prove to them, corporately and finally, that what they intended for evil, God intended for good! May that day come soon!!

The closing blessing is as follows:

***“Baruch atah YHVH, Eloheynu, Melech ha-‘Olam,
asher natan lanu Torah-emet,
v’chay-yeh o’lam nata-b’tochenu.
Baruch atah YHVH, noteyn ha-Torah.
Ameyn.”***

(Blessed are you O' LORD, our God, King of the Universe,
you have given us your Torah of truth,
and have planted everlasting life within our midst.
Blessed are you, LORD, giver of the Torah.
Ameyn.)

“Shabbat Shalom!”

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