Our parasha begins by informing us of the number of years that Jacob “lived” in Egypt, and the total number of years of his life:

_Bereneshit 47:28_ And _Jacob lived_ in the land of Egypt _seventeen years_. _So the length of Jacob’s life was one hundred and forty-seven years._

**Numbers** are always significant, and it is exciting when we can attribute meaning to them... especially when they point to the Messiah. _Jacob lived 17 years_ in Egypt, and this is the same number of years Joseph lived with his _father in Canaan_ before he was sold as a slave. Every _Hebrew letter_ has a _number_ associated with it. Thus you can _add up the letters of words_ and find some _interesting associations_. Let’s key in on the number 17 and find its link with Messiah:

- **Good** (tov) - דל טוב 2 (ב) + 6 (ה) + 9 (ת) = 17
  - _Luke 18:19_ So _Yeshua_ said to him, "Why do you call Me _good_ (ונל טוב)? No one is _good_ (ונל טוב) but One, that is, Yah.

- **Sacrifice** (zevach) - זבח sacrificing 8 (ח) + 2 (ב) + 7 (ת) = 17
  - _Shemot/Exodus 12:27_ "that you shall say, 'It is the _Passover sacrifice_ (זבח פסח) of _ יהוה_, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt when He struck the Egyptians and delivered our households....
  - _Hebrews 10:12_ But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice (זבח פסח) for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of Yah,

- **To Fish** (deeg) - דגי 3 (ג) + 10 (י) + 4 (ד) = 17
  - _Jeremiah 16:16_ " Behold, I will send for many fishermen," says _ יהוה_, "and they shall _fish_ (דגים) them...
  - _John 21:11_ Simon Peter went up and dragged the net to land, full of large _fish, one hundred and fifty-three_; and although there were so many, the net was not broken.

_John 21:11_ above points out another _interesting number_ – there were 153 _fish_ caught in the nets:

- **The Passover** (haPasach) - מקר פסח 8 (ח) + 60 (ב) + 80 (א) + 5 (ת) = 153
  - _Shemot/Exodus 12:21_ Then Moses called for all the elders of Israel and said to them, "Pick out and take lambs for yourselves according to your families, and kill the _Passover_ (פסח) lamb.

- **Covenant** (be’reet) - ברית 400 (ב) + 10 (י) + 200 (א) + 2 (ב) = 612 (4 x 153)
  - _Jeremiah 31:33_ "But this is the _covenant_ (ברית) that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says _ יהוה_. I will put My Torah in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their Elohim, and they shall be My people.
We can conclude that there is indeed a Messiahian link with the numbers 17 and 153. And here’s another math link between the numbers themselves as 153 is the sum of the integers from 1 to 17:

\[1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 5 + 6 + 7 + 8 + 9 + 10 + 11 + 12 + 13 + 14 + 15 + 16 + 17 = 153\]

Now there’s even more. In the JPS Torah Commentary on Genesis, Nahum Sarna points out that the life spans of the three patriarchs lend themselves to factorization according to the following pattern:

- **Abraham** lived to be 175 = 5 x 5 x 7  
  5 + 5 + 7 = 17
- **Isaac** lived to be 180 = 6 x 6 x 5  
  6 + 6 + 5 = 17
- **Jacob** lived to be 147 = 7 x 7 x 3  
  7 + 7 + 3 = 17

In the above series, the squared number increases by one each time while the coefficient decreases by two. Not only that…in each case the sum of the factors is 17!! The patriarch’s lives all point to Messiah!

I guess I can’t stop here. Brad Scott does a teaching series on “numbers” on his website – [www.wildbranch.org/Archive/lesson95.html](http://www.wildbranch.org/Archive/lesson95.html). I would encourage you to read the entire article, but here is part of what he has to say about the number 17….I hope you appreciate his bit of humor at the end (emphasis mine):

“…I do believe that the number ‘17’ does represent victory and resurrection….the time of Messiah’s resurrection fell on the 17th of Aviv in the year He was tried and crucified…. It is clear to all that call on the name of Yeshua, that His resurrection was victory for all and the beginning of our rest in Him. This victory and rest was pictured when the ark of Noach and his family rested upon Mt. Ararat on the 17th day of the 7th month. For you see, in Noach’s time the beginning of the year was still in Tishri. The commandment for Aviv to be the beginning of the year did not occur until the time of Mosheh. This meant that in Noach’s time the 7th month from Tishri was Aviv. So the ark actually rested on the 17th of Aviv. We are also told a detail of one of the most obvious types of the Messiah, Yoseph, that he was 17 years old when he had the dream concerning the prophecy of the Messiah and the 11 other tribes in B’reshith 37:2-14. I believe that it can be shown that the Israelites crossed the Gulf of Aqaba on the 17th of Aviv….The city Jerusalem appears in the Tehillim (Psalms) 17 times and there are 17 things unable to separate us in Romans 8:35-39. Yirmeyahu’s (Jeremiah’s) 17 prayers ended in Yirmeyahu 32:9, when buying the field for 17 shekels. There are 17 appearances of angels in the gospels and the book of Acts. And finally, we must not forget one of Frank Sinatra’s greatest hits was, ‘When I was Seventeen’.” (end of quote)

Okay, we’ll move on. It was extremely important to Jacob/Israel that he not be buried in Egypt. He leaves his request with Joseph:

**Bereshith 47:29** When the time drew near that Israel must die, he called his son Joseph and said to him, "Now if I have found favor in your sight, please put your hand under my thigh, and deal kindly and truly with me. Please do not bury me in Egypt.

Jacob wanted to make sure that his children never forgot that Egypt was not their home. No matter how much success or suffering they experienced in Egypt, they needed to remember that they were temporary sojourners in a foreign land. To Jacob, Egypt represented the power of assimilation that could potentially swallow up the Israelites. Egypt was a melting pot. Jacob knew that one day Elohim would fulfill his promise to Abraham by giving Israel the land of Canaan. Therefore, Jacob’s burial in the Promised Land served as a symbol to his children of his faith in the promises of יִרְמְיעָי. Egypt would not claim him as its own. He would return to his Hebrew heritage.
Jacob took special interest in the two sons of Joseph who were born in Egypt:

*Bereshith 48:5* "And now your two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, who were born to you in the land of Egypt before I came to you in Egypt, are mine; as Reuben and Simeon, they shall be mine.

Why did Jacob take such an interest in these two grandsons and even elevate them to the position of his own sons? These boys were a part of the Egyptian culture. Their mother was the daughter of an Egyptian priest. Presumably they spoke Egyptian. Some teach that Jacob was attempting to rescue them from the grasp of Egypt. He blesses them with Israelite identity.

For a moment, Jacob gets a little historical and we are tempted to gloss over this verse:

*Bereshith 48:7* "But as for me, when I came from Padan, Rachel died beside me in the land of Canaan on the way, when there was but a little distance to go to Ephrath; and I buried her there on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem)."

Ephrath (אִפְרַת) means "place of fruitfulness" and is a related word to "Ephraim" (אֶפְרָיִם). Jacob is relating that incident where it appeared that Rachel's "fruitfulness" had ended. In fact, shortly before Rachel's death, Jacob had received a promise at Beth El that his family should be fruitful:

*Bereshith 35:11* Also Elohim said to him: "I am El Shaddai. Be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall proceed from you, and kings shall come from your body.

How could that promise be fulfilled when his last wife of child-bearing age died? So imagine how Jacob felt when he found out that Joseph had a son whose name meant "doubly fruitful" (Ephraim)! It was as if he and his beloved Rachel were achieving that promise of fruitfulness after all! By dying, her "fruitfulness doubled" because she made room for this "doubly fruitful" son. When Jacob adopted Ephraim and Manasseh as his own, they were no longer sons of Egypt, but sons of his beloved wife, Rachel! He would be able to begin raising them as Hebrews! Like these boys, we also have been snatched out of Egypt and adopted into the family in order to be raised as Hebrews by our tender and loving Father!

Ephrath, or Bethlehem, is of course the location where the Messiah (the ultimate fruitfulness of Jacob) would be born. He also would have to die in order that His fruitfulness might continue by others being adopted into the family of Israel:

*Galatians 4:4* But when the fullness of the time had come, Yah sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Torah, to redeem those who were under the Torah, that we might receive the adoption as sons. And because you are sons, Yah has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!"

There is a constant drama that occurs between younger and older brothers throughout the book of Bereshith. We will see it one more time in the story of the sons of Joseph as he brings his sons in for his father to bless:

*Bereshith 48:13* And Joseph took them both, Ephraim with his right hand toward Israel's left hand, and Manasseh with his left hand toward Israel's right hand, and brought them near him. Then Israel stretched out his right hand and laid it on Ephraim's head, who was the younger, and his left hand on Manasseh's head, guiding his hands knowingly, for Manasseh was the firstborn. And he blessed Joseph, and said: "Elohim, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, The Elohim who has fed..."
me all my life long to this day," The Angel who has redeemed me from all evil, Bless the lads; Let my name be named upon them, And the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; And let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth." Now when Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand on the head of Ephraim, it displeased him; so he took hold of his father's hand to remove it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head. And Joseph said to his father, "Not so, my father, for this one is the firstborn; put your right hand on his head." But his father refused and said, "I know, my son, I know. He also shall become a people, and he also shall be great; but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his descendants shall become a multitude of nations." So he blessed them that day, saying, "By you Israel will bless, saying, 'May Elohim make you as Ephraim and as Manasseh!' "And thus he set Ephraim before Manasseh.

Joseph tried to make sure that his older son was blessed first. After all, three times his father, Jacob, had been involved with setting the younger before the elder, and each time it had led to calamity. Jacob had:

- Stole the blessing from his older brother, Esau, resulting in his exile from his home and family for many years.
- Favored the younger Rachel over Leah resulting in tension between the sisters.
- Favored the youngest of his children, Joseph and Benjamin, resulting in hostility between the brothers.

As a result of his father’s favoritism, Joseph had been thrown into a well by his brothers, and eventually sold as a slave. Was Joseph afraid there may be another negative consequence in Jacob’s choosing Ephraim over Manasseh? Did Jacob know something that Joseph did not? According to Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, Jacob knew two things that caused him to choose Ephraim over Manasseh. First, he knew his family’s stay in Egypt would be an extended stay. Before leaving Canaan to see Joseph, Elohim had appeared to Jacob in a vision:

Bereshith 46:3 So He said, "I am Elohim, the Elohim of your father; do not fear to go down to Egypt, for I will make of you a great nation there.

Jacob was aware that their entrance into Egypt was a part of the long exile which Elohim had told Abraham would be the fate of his children:

Bereshith 15:13 Then He said to Abram: "Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years.

The second thing Jacob knew was based on something about the names of his grandson’s, Ephraim and Manasseh. To understand this, we will have to go back to Joseph’s circumstances surrounding the naming of his children. When Joseph finally emerged from prison to become the governor of Egypt, he married and had two sons:

Bereshith 41:50 And to Joseph were born two sons before the years of famine came, whom Asenath, the daughter of Poti-Pherah priest of On, bore to him. Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh: "For Elohim has made me forget all my toil and all my father's house." And the name of the second he called Ephraim: "For Elohim has caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction."

The following quotes are excellent insights from Rabbi Sacks (emphasis mine):

“With the utmost brevity the Torah intimates an experience of exile that was to be repeated many times across the centuries. At first, Joseph felt relief. The years as a slave, then a prisoner, were over.
Living Waters: A Hebrew Roots Fellowship
www.yourlivingwaters.com/downloads

He had risen to greatness. In Canaan, he had been the youngest of eleven brothers in a nomadic family of shepherds. Now, in Egypt, he was at the center of the greatest civilization of the ancient world, second only to Pharaoh in rank and power. No one reminded him of his background. With his royal robes and ring and chariot, he was an Egyptian prince (as Moses was later to be). The past was a bitter memory he sought to remove from his mind. Manasseh means “forgetting.”

But as time passed, Joseph began to feel quite different emotions. Yes, he had arrived. But this people were not his; nor was its culture. To be sure, his family was, in any worldly terms, undistinguished, unsophisticated. Yet they remained his family. They were the matrix of who he was.

Though they were no more than shepherds (a class the Egyptians despised), they had been spoken to by G-d – not the gods of the sun, the river and death, the Egyptian pantheon – but G-d, the creator of heaven and earth, who did not make His home in temples and pyramids and panoplies of power, but who spoke in the human heart as a voice, lifting a simple family to moral greatness. By the time his second son was born, Joseph had undergone a profound change of heart. To be sure, he had all the trappings of earthly success – “G-d has made me fruitful” – but Egypt had become “the land of my affliction.” Why? Because it was exile. There is a sociological observation about immigrant groups, known as Hansen’s Law: “The second generation seeks to remember what the first generation sought to forget.” Joseph went through this transformation very quickly. It was already complete by the time his second son was born. By calling him Ephraim, he was remembering what, when Manasseh was born, he was trying to forget: who he was, where he came from, where he belonged.

Jacob’s blessing of Ephraim over Manasseh had nothing to do with their ages and everything to do with their names. Knowing that these were the first two children of his family to be born in exile, knowing too that the exile would be prolonged and at times difficult and dark, Jacob sought to signal to all future generations that there would be a constant tension between the desire to forget (to assimilate, acculturate, anaesthetize the hope of a return) and the promptings of memory (the knowledge that this is “exile,” that we are part of another story, that ultimate home is somewhere else). The child of forgetting (Manasseh) may have blessings. But greater are the blessings of a child (Ephraim) who remembers the past and future of which he is a part.”

Okay, let’s focus in on some more of the interesting details of this scenario with Ephraim and Manasseh. First, let’s specifically look at this verse:

Bereshith 48:14 Then Israel stretched out his right hand and laid it on Ephraim's head, who was the younger, and his left hand on Manasseh's head, guiding his hands knowingly, for Manasseh was the firstborn.

The “right hand” represents the Messiah, who we know is at the right hand of the heavenly Father. Today, the Messiah’s hand is on Ephraim though he is still in Egypt (dispersed among the nations). That “right hand” seeks to bring Ephraim back. When Jacob crossed his hands, he formed an “X” or a which is the letter “Tav” in the archaic Hebrew aleph-bet. The letter symbolizes “sign” or “covenant.” Yeshua said he was the “Alef” and the “Tav” (remember Yeshua spoke Hebrew):

Revelation 22:13 "I am the Alef and the Tav, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last."

Therefore, these boys were sealed with the “sign” of the completed work of the Messiah. It is because of Messiah Yeshua that the children who are born in the gentile world can be adopted into and blessed by Israel.
Glenn McWilliams (<http://www.michaelroodministries.com/torah/PDF/2007_Vayechi.pdf>) does an excellent job in his commentary on Vayechi in explaining the *prophetic implications* of the *blessing* over Ephraim and Manasseh. Don’t miss the *additional reference* to 153! I will quote from McWilliams’s commentary, making slight additions in the Hebrew and adding emphasis:

“Let us now look at this unique blessing:

`Bereshith 48:16 The Angel who has redeemed me from all evil, Bless the lads; Let my name be named upon them, And the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; And let them *grow* (יִדְוּ) into a multitude in the midst of the earth.”`

Here we see that Israel prays that his name “Israel” and the names of his father’s Abraham and Isaac would be named upon them. In other words, Israel is asking that when people see Ephraim and Manasseh, and by implication their descendants, that they would indeed recognize them as belonging to the heritage of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel. There is also a somewhat hidden reference to the future of the descendants of Ephraim. Here we should remember that much to the disappointment of Joseph, Israel crossed his hands, placing his right hand upon Ephraim the younger son, and the left hand upon Manasseh. Thus Ephraim becomes the dominant one. The Hebrew word translated as “grow” in this blessing is the Hebrew word *yidgu* (יִדְוֻ) from the root word *dag* (דָּג), which means “fish.” It should seem strange that Israel would ask to cause Ephraim to multiply like fish upon the earth. This is especially strange, since fish do not multiply upon the earth but in the seas. But here Israel is making an allusion to another spiritual reality. Just as the House of Ephraim or the House of Israel would be scattered to the four corners of the earth, there are also numerous prophecies concerning the gathering of the House of Israel, not the least of which is found in the prophet Jeremiah, where declares,

`Jeremiah 16:15 "But, seven lives who brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north and from all the lands where He had driven them. For I will bring them back into their land which I gave to their fathers. 16 "Behold, I will send for many fishermen," says seven, "and they shall fish…”`

We may also remember that Yeshua called his disciples to a unique ministry.

`Mark 1:16 And as He walked by the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. 17 Then Yeshua said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men.”`

For whom would the talmidim (disciples) of Yeshua be fishing? Yeshua made this very clear.

`Matthew 10:6 "But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. 15:24 But He answered and said, "I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”`

There is yet another obtuse reference to the scattered House of Israel being “fish” found in a resurrection appearance story in the gospel of John. After Yeshua’s death and resurrection Yeshua’s talmidim returned once more to their actual fishing nets. They fished all night and caught nothing. The next morning Yeshua was standing on the beach, and he called to them to cast their net on the right side of the ship. When they did so, their net was filled. The gospel tells us exactly how many fish they caught.

`John 21:11 Simon Peter went up and dragged the net to land, full of large fish, one hundred and fifty-three; and although there were so many, the net was not broken.`

Most of us would have been quite content to know that they caught a lot of fish, or 100 fish, or even 150 fish. But the gospel writer tells us that it was exactly 153 fish. If the author took the time to relay this specific
detail, we should reckon that it must have a specific significance. The sages tell us that the number 153 is a reference to a statement by the prophet Hosea.

Hosea 1:10 "Yet the number of the children of Israel Shall be as the sand of the sea, Which cannot be measured or numbered. And it shall come to pass In the place where it was said to them, 'You are not My people,' There it shall be said to them, 'You are sons of the living Elohim.' Then the children of Judah and the children of Israel Shall be gathered together, And appoint for themselves one head; And they shall come up out of the land. For great will be the day of Jezreel!

To understand the connection between this prophecy of Israel’s return, the reconciliation of the two Houses of the nation of Israel, and the 153 fish that were caught by Yeshua’s talmidim, we need to recognize that the gematria of the phrase “the sons of Elohim” is 153:

Sons of Elohim - יִֽהְּלֶה יְהֹוָֽה
40 (を持) + 10 ( י) + 5 ( ה) + 30 ( ל) + 1 ( א) + 5 ( יה) + 10 ( י) + 50 ( נ) + 2 ( ב) = 153

(my addition to McWilliam’s commentary):

John 1:12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become sons of Elohim, to those who believe in His name:

Quote continues - “Thus the number of fish in the net was to serve as a confirmation and a reminder of the mission Yeshua gave the talmidim to go out among the nations and gather the lost sheep of the House of Israel. While this gematria may seem somewhat arbitrary to some, I assure you there is yet further confirmation of this reality.

Joseph objected to Israel crossing his hands so that Ephraim, the younger son, would receive the blessing of the right hand. Assuming that Israel did not realize that Joseph had placed the children in the proper order for blessing, he tried to correct his father. But Israel assured him that he was doing what יהוה had ordained. Israel responded to Joseph’s plea for Manasseh, saying,

Bereshith 48:19 But his father refused and said, "I know, my son, I know. He also shall become a people, and he also shall be great; but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his descendants shall become a multitude of nations (יִֽהְּלֶה יְהֹוָֽה).

Here we see that Israel blesses Ephraim to become a “multitude of nations.” The Hebrew uses the word "goyim" (גויים) or "Gentiles." Thus we see not a blessing, but a prophecy that Ephraim, the House of Israel, would become a multitude of Gentiles. It is interesting that in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures, this passage is rendered as playthos ethnov (πλήθος έθνων). We should note the similarity between this phrase and that used by the apostle Shaul (Paul) when he describes how the Gentiles were broken off the wild olive tree and grafted into the cultivated tree.

Romans 11:25 For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles (πλήθος οικουμενής) has come in.

The phrase “fullness of the Gentiles” in the Greek manuscripts is a similar “playroma ton ethnon” (πλήρωμα τών έθνων). The similarities are too blatant not to see the connection between them. Clearly Shaul understood the ministry of reconciliation of Messiah and his talmidim. So Shaul would write to the brethren in Ephesus:

Ephesians 2:11 Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh -- who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands -- that at that time you were without Messiah, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without Adonai in the world. But now in Messiah you who once were
far off have been *brought near by the blood of Messiah*. For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation,

*Ephesians 2:19* Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of Adonai,

End of quote.

It is a custom in Jewish and Torah-observant homes to bless sons on the evening of Shabbat with the words, “May you be like Ephraim and Manasseh,” based on the blessing Jacob gives Joseph’s sons in Bereshith 48:20. Why are sons blessed with these names and not with the names of our more famous patriarchs? One reason is the desire for our children to be strong enough to keep their Hebrew identity, even if it is within a hostile and pagan environment.

Another thought is that Ephraim and Manasseh were the first pair of Hebrew brothers who did not fight. They broke the pattern of contention found between Isaac and Ishmael, Jacob and Esau, as well as Joseph and his brothers. Nothing pleases our Father more than peace “among brothers”:

*Psalm 133:1* A Song of Ascents. Of David. Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity!

Now I’d like to take a leap to the end of our parasha where we find something interesting:

*Bereshith 50:25* Then Joseph took an oath from the children of Israel, saying, “Elohim will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones (לֹֽא) from here.”

We find this verse alluded to in Hebrews 11, the chapter known as the “Hall of Faith.” With all the extraordinary events that occurred in Joseph’s life, it is amazing what Joseph is recognized for:

*Hebrews 11:22* By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the departure of the children of Israel, and gave instructions concerning his bones (לֹֽא).

Let’s journey through the Scriptures following the “bone” trail:

*Bereshith 2:23* And Adam said: “This is now bone of my bones And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man.”

Eve was the “bride” of Adam. Having been taken from his very “bones”, she was the very essence of the bridegroom. As a couple, they would unite and again become one (echad) flesh. Let’s see where else we find bones….

*Shemot/Exodus 12:46* “In one house it shall be eaten; you shall not carry any of the flesh outside the house, nor shall you break one of its bones.

Like the Passover lamb, Yeshua also would not endure any broken bones. His body is a picture of the “oneness” of the bridegroom and his bride. At the time of the Exodus, we are told that Moses sees to it that the bones of Joseph will be taken along to the Promised Land:

*Shemot 13:19* And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him, for he had placed the children of Israel under solemn oath, saying, “Adonai will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here with you.”
After the **Israelites** are **settled** into the **Promised Land**, we read the sad story of an **adulterous concubine**. You can read the story yourself in **Judges 19**, but upon her **death**, her husband **cuts her body into 12 bones** (ḇērēyṯ) and sent each **tribe** one of her **bones**:

**Judges 19:29** And when he had come into his house, he took a knife, and laid hold on his concubine, and **divided her**, together with her **bones**, into **twelve pieces**, and sent her into all the coasts of Israel.

The story is so gruesome, but let’s see if we can attach some **Hebraic understanding to it**. **Jeff Benner**, known for his **ancient Hebrew insights**, paints an interesting picture of the word for “covenant” that just might tie in. The following is quoted from his book, *The Living Words ~ Vol. 1* (emphasis mine):

“While the Hebrew word ṣārāh beriyt means “covenant,” the root of the word and its cultural background are helpful in understanding its fuller meaning. This word comes from the root ṣārāh barah meaning “to select the choicest meat.” The word ṣārāh beriyt is literally the choicest, fattest, animal that is slaughtered for the covenant ceremony.

*Bereshith* 31:44 “Now therefore, come, let us make a covenant (beriyt), you and I, and let it be a witness between you and me.”

The phrase “make a covenant” is found thirteen times in the Hebrew Bible where the word “make” is the Hebrew word ṣārāh karat meaning “to cut.” Literally, the phrase “make a covenant” means, “cut the choice pieces of meat.” When a covenant is made, the fattened animal is cut into two pieces and laid out on the ground; each party of the covenant then passes through the pieces. This symbolic act signifies to both parties that if one of the parties fails to meet the agreement, then the other has the right to do to the other what they did to the animal. (See Jeremiah 34:18-20).

**Countless times** over the years following the institution of this covenant, **Israel failed to abide by the covenantal agreement. Just as the animal of the sacrifice was cut in two pieces, Israel was also cut in two for their unfaithfulness to the covenant by being cut into two nations – Israel and Judah.”** End of quote.

Could we perhaps add to this that as a **result of Israel’s unfaithfulness**, they were also **cut into 12 bones** like the **unfaithful concubine**? Is this another **picture** of the **scattering of the tribes**?

**Yeshua physically** took on the **unfaithfulness of the tribes** when He **hung on the tree**. The Hebrew word for “out of joint” (parad - ṯāḇāḏ) also means “divided” or “disconnected”:

**Psalm 22:14** I am poured out like water, And all My bones are out of joint (ṯāḇāḏ)...

Because of **Yeshua’s sacrifice**, we are able to put the **out of joint bones** back together and become **one (echad) with Him** once again. We can become **bone of his bone**, in the same way that Eve became **one with Adam**. This was the **goal of Messiah** when he said he had come for those **scattered pieces… the lost sheep of the house of Israel**.

**Ephesians 5:30** For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones.

**1 Corinthians 12:12** For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Messiah.
Now let’s finish with this exciting picture of the **bones coming together**:

**Ezekiel 37:1** The hand of יְהֹוָה came upon me and brought me out in the Spirit of יְהֹוָה, and set me down in the midst of the **valley** (root word indicates something split - פָּרָשִׁים); and it was full of **bones**.

2 Then He caused me to pass by them all around, and behold, there were very many in the open valley; and indeed they were very dry.

3 And He said to me, **“Son of man, can these bones live?”** So I answered, **“O Adonai יְהֹוָה, You know.”**

4 Again He said to me, **“Prophesy to these **bones**, and say to them, ‘O dry bones, hear (shema - שֶׁמֶא) the word of יְהֹוָה!**

5 **“Thus says Adonai יְהֹוָה to these **bones**: ‘Surely I will cause breath to enter into you, and you shall live.**

Notice in verse 4 the **bones** are told to “**hear**” (shema) the word of יְהֹוָה! To “**shema**” is not only to “**hear**”, but to “**obey**”! Once this occurs, the **bones** can begin to be knitted together in community:

**Ezekiel 37:8** Indeed, as I looked, the sinews and the flesh came upon them, and the skin covered them over; but there was no breath in them. Also He said to me, "Prophesy to the breath, prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath, 'Thus says Adonai יְהֹוָה: “Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live."’

10 So I prophesied as He commanded me, and breath came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet, an exceedingly great army.

11 Then He said to me, "**Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel.** They indeed say, 'Our bones are dry, our hope is lost, and we ourselves are cut off!'"

12 "Therefore prophesy and say to them, 'Thus says Adonai יְהֹוָה: ‘Behold, O My people, I will open your graves and cause you to come up from your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel.'"

13 "Then you shall know that I am יְהֹוָה, when I have opened your graves, O My people, and brought you up from your graves."

14 "I will put My Spirit in you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I, יְהֹוָה, have spoken it and performed it," says יְהֹוָה.

Verse 11 tells us that these **bones** are the “**whole house of Israel**”! Like Joseph, these **bones** have been taken to the land of Israel! This is a promise for Israel, friends! Now just “one more thing”...guess what the parent root for **bones** (בֹּצֶים) is? It is קָנָה, the word for “tree”! If you continue on reading in Ezekiel 37, you will come to the very familiar “two stick” prophecy detailing the restoration of the House of Judah and the House of Ephraim. And guess what the Hebrew word for “stick” is? קָנָה, the word for tree!

So now, what do you think it was that Joseph understood about **bones** that gained him entrance into the faith chapter of Hebrews? I think Joseph understood that his life was a living representation of the restoration of the 12 tribes of Israel before they had even split. He knew that the return of his **bones to Israel** paralleled the eventual return of all of Israel to the Promised Land. Joseph was noted for his faith in Hebrews 11 because he caught that vision! Baruch HaShem!

**Shabbat Shalom,**

*Ardelle*

Be strong! Be strong! And may we be strengthened!

**בָּרוּךְ הַשָּׁמֵעַ**

Torah Commentary ≪ Vayechi