

## VaYechi (And He Lived) Genesis 47:28-50:26

This week, our Torah portion is filled with prophetic insights of all twelve tribes coming out of the world (represented by Egypt) and returning to יהוה and His inheritance for us – physically and spiritually. These insights can be seen from several different angles, but we will focus basically on three seemingly unrelated concepts, all traceable to Joseph:

- Shechem (שֶׁכֶּם)
- Onyx (שֹׁהַם)
- Bones (עֲצָמוֹת)

### Shechem

We first encounter **Shechem** in the dying wish of Israel to Joseph:

**Genesis 48:21** Then Israel said to Joseph, "Behold, I am dying, but Elohim will be with you and bring you back to the land of your fathers.<sup>22</sup> "Moreover I have given to you one **portion (Shechem - שֶׁכֶּם)** above your brothers, which I took from the hand of the Amorite with my sword and my bow."

The word translated as **portion** is the Hebrew word **Shechem** (odd, huh?). This is not the first time we have heard about **Shechem**. It was the **first stop of Abraham when he entered into the Promised Land** and the **location of his first altar**:

**Genesis 12:6** Abram passed through the land to the place of **Shechem**, as far as the terebinth tree of Moreh. And the Canaanites *were* then in the land.<sup>7</sup> Then יהוה appeared to Abram and said, "**To your descendants I will give this land.**" And there he built an altar to יהוה, who had appeared to him.

It was also **Jacob's first stop when he returned to the Promised Land** from his uncle Laban's:

**Genesis 33:18** Then Jacob came safely to the city of **Shechem**, which *is* in the land of Canaan, when he came from Padan Aram; and he pitched his tent before the city.<sup>19</sup> And he bought the parcel of land, where he had pitched his tent, from the children of Hamor, Shechem's father, for one hundred pieces of money.<sup>20</sup> Then **he erected an altar there** and called it El Elohe Israel.

Now, it was to **Shechem** that Jacob sent Joseph to check on the welfare of his **brothers** AND the **flocks**:

**Genesis 37:14** Then he said to him, "Please go and see if it is well with your **brothers** and well with the **flocks**, and bring back word to me." So he sent him out of the Valley of Hebron, and he went to **Shechem**.

When Joshua brings the children of Israel into the Promised Land (Joshua 8), the blessings and the curses are read from the Torah by half of the tribes standing on Mt. Gerazim and the other half standing on Mt. Ebal. These two mountains are positioned like **shoulders** with **Shechem** in the valley between. And **Shechem** even means **shoulders**! The city of **Shechem** is still in this valley, although its modern day name is Nablus. It is a very unfriendly Palestinian city from which many terrorists have come.

Later **Joseph's bones are returned to the Promised Land**, to Shechem:

**Joshua 24:32** The bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel had brought up out of Egypt, they buried at **Shechem**, in the plot of ground which Jacob had bought from the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for one hundred pieces of silver, and which had become an inheritance of the children of Joseph.

**Shechem** was where the kingdom of Israel was divided. It was the first capital of the northern kingdom (1 Kings 12:25). Later, this is where the Samaritans lived, who were a **mixture** of the survivors of the northern tribes of Israel and the gentiles whom the Assyrian king brought to the land after the exile of Israel. Yeshua came to **Shechem** to seek out these lost sheep.

**John 4:5** So He came to a city of Samaria which is called Sychar (**Shechem**), near the plot of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph.<sup>6</sup> Now Jacob's well was there. Yeshua therefore, being wearied from *His* journey, sat thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour.<sup>7</sup> A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Yeshua said to her, "Give Me a drink."

Yeshua stayed at Shechem for 2 days during which many more believed. This corresponds with the two thousand years during which He has been seeking the descendants of the twelve tribes among the Gentiles. Therefore, **Shechem** becomes symbolic of the lost sheep of the House of Israel. Remember how **Shechem** means **shoulders**? Now check out this verse:

**Isaiah 9:6** For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His **shoulder (shechem)**. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

**Shechem** seems to be a very important location not only to the Patriarchs, but also to Yeshua. It is a city that EVERY Israelite came to after "crossing over" the Jordan (symbolic for becoming a Hebrew) into the Promised Land. **Shechem's** location is the **West Bank**. It is situated in what the Bible calls "**the mountains of Israel**." Here's a little bit of prophecy and hope from Ezekiel:

**Ezekiel 36:8** " But you, **O mountains of Israel**, you shall shoot forth your branches and yield your fruit to **My people Israel, for they are about to come.... 15** "Nor will I let you hear the taunts of the nations anymore, nor bear the reproach of the peoples anymore, nor shall you cause your nation to stumble anymore," says Adonai יהוה! "...

There's more to this awesome prophecy in Ezekiel, but we'll get to that a little later. For now, just connect **Shechem** with **the return of the Israel to the land** and with "**shoulders**".

## Onyx stones

The **onyx stone** was found in two different places in the attire of the High Priest's garments. First, the name of every tribe of Israel was engraved on **two onyx stones** as a memorial before Elohim. The High Priest would wear these **stones** up on his **shoulders** much like a Shepherd carries his sheep:

**Exodus 28:9** "Then you shall take **two onyx stones** and engrave on them the names of the sons of Israel: <sup>10</sup> "six of their names on one stone, and six names on the other stone, in order of their birth. .... <sup>12</sup> "And you shall put **the two stones** on the **shoulders** of the ephod *as* memorial stones for the sons of Israel. So Aaron shall bear their names before יהוה on his two **shoulders** as a memorial.

The second way **onyx** is used is as a single stone among eleven others worn on the breastplate of the High Priest. **The onyx is the eleventh jewel and is ascribed to Joseph** who is the eleventh son.

**Exodus 28:20** "and the fourth row, a beryl, an onyx, and a jasper. They shall be set in gold settings. <sup>21</sup> "And the stones shall have the names of the sons of Israel, twelve according to their names, *like* the engravings of a signet, each one with its own name; they shall be according to the twelve tribes.

Recall that Joseph had been given the prestigious robe by his father, symbolic of the family **priest**. The association of the **onyx stone with Joseph**, and **Joseph as a priest** points to **Yeshua**, our High Priest interceding on the behalf of all the tribes (they're all written on the onyx stones on his shoulders) at the right hand of the Father:

**Romans 8:34** Who *is* he who condemns? *It is* Messiah who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at **the right hand of Adonai, who also makes intercession for us**

Thus by looking at **Shechem** (shoulders) and **onyx**, we have made connection between Joseph, Yeshua, the 12 tribes, and the High Priest.

## Bones

Now for our third concept:

**Genesis 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** from here."

There's much more to this statement than first meets the eye. In Hebrews 11 we find the famous "Hall of Faith." What faith element would you have picked from Joseph's life to list in the Hall of Faith? Would it have been how he rose to power in Egypt and saved the lives of many during the famine, despite his being sold into slavery by his brothers? Would it have been how he fled Potiphar's wife? Read what Joseph is credited with:

**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.

So ...WHAT IS SO IMPORTANT ABOUT JOSEPH'S BONES?

To begin our quest, let's take a look at several verses about bones:

**Genesis 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. She was the very essence of the bridegroom. She was formed from his very **bone**. As a couple, they would unite and again become **one (echad)** flesh. But... what more can we learn about **bones**?

**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**."

Of course this is speaking of the Passover lamb. Yeshua's body would also not endure a broken **bone**. His body is a picture of the "**oneness**" of the bridegroom and his bride.

Hundreds of years after the death of Joseph, Moses sees to it that **bones** of Joseph are taken to Israel:

**Exodus 13:19** And Moses took the **bones** of Joseph with him, for he had placed the children of Israel under solemn oath, saying, "Elohim will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my **bones** from here with you."

In a very sad story in Judges 19:2 we are told that the concubine taken by a man for his wife was adulterous. You can read the story there for yourself, but upon her death, her husband cuts her into twelve **bones**....just like the 12 tribes....and sent each tribe one of her **bones**.

**Judges 19:29** When he entered his house he took a knife, laid hold of his concubine, and **divided** her into twelve pieces (עֲצָמוֹת - **bones**), limb by limb, and sent her throughout all the territory of Israel.

This is so gruesome, and what could possibly be the meaning of this? Jeff Benner, known for his work on ancient Hebrew paints an interesting picture of the word for **covenant** that might just tie in. I will quote from his book, [The Living Words ~ Volume 1](#):

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

**Genesis 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 כָּרַת *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.

May I add, that as a result of Israel’s unfaithfulness, they were also **cut into 12 pieces** as the unfaithful concubine pictured in Judges? Hmmmm....a picture of the scattering?

Yeshua physically took on the unfaithfulness of the tribes when He hung on the tree. The Hebrew word for “**out of joint**” in the following Messianic verse means **divided** or **disconnected**:

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

Please note that the bones were not **broken**, but **out of joint or disconnected**. Still, because of Yeshua’s sacrifice, we are able to put the **out of joint bones** back together and become **one** 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 we will finish up with some familiar verses from Ezekiel 37. I’m not claiming to have it all figured out, but I see some interesting things here.

**Ezekiel 37:1** The hand of יהוה came upon me and brought me out in the Spirit of יהוה, and set me down in the midst of the valley; and it *was* **full of bones**.<sup>2</sup> Then He caused me to pass by them all around, and behold, *there were* very many in the **open valley (Shechem was in a valley)**; and indeed *they were* very dry.<sup>3</sup> And He said to me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" So I answered, "O Adonai יהוה, You know."<sup>4</sup> Again He said to me, "Prophecy to these bones, and say to them, 'O dry bones, hear the word of יהוה!'"<sup>5</sup> Thus says Adonai יהוה to these bones: "Surely **I will cause breath to enter into you, and you shall live**.

This could be **individual** salvation with the promise to these dry bones being breath (spirit) and life. **John 14:6** Yeshua said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the **life**. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

<sup>6</sup> "I will put sinews on you and bring flesh upon you, cover you with skin and put breath in you; and you shall live. Then you shall know that I *am* יהוה." <sup>7</sup> So I prophesied as I was commanded; and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and suddenly a rattling; and **the bones came together, bone to bone.**

Now these individual believers, these **bones**, are coming together, **bone to bone**. Community is beginning to happen here!

<sup>8</sup> 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. <sup>9</sup> Also He said to me, "Prophecy to the breath, prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath, 'Thus says Adonai יהוה: "Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live." ' " <sup>10</sup> So I prophesied as He commanded me, and breath came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet, an exceedingly great army. <sup>11</sup> 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!' <sup>12</sup> "Therefore prophesy and say to them, 'Thus says Adonai יהוה: "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.** <sup>13</sup> "Then you shall know that I *am* יהוה, when I have opened your graves, O My people, and brought you up from your graves. <sup>14</sup> "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, יהוה, have spoken *it* and performed *it*," says יהוה."

It seems to be a several step process with these dry bones coming to life, becoming joined together as community and the grand finale being Israel given the breath of the Spirit and entering into the land of Israel. Verse 11 very clearly indicates that **these bones are “the whole House of Israel”!** Now the word for **bones** is עצם. The parent root is עץ, the word for **tree**! The connection between these two words is that the **bones** are the **tree** of the body. Continuing on in Ezekiel 37 will take you 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? **עץ, the word for tree!**

Now, let's see if we can somehow connect a few dots here.

- Joseph requires his descendents to take an oath that they will carry his bones to Egypt
- Joseph makes the “Hall of Faith” in Hebrews 11 because of this request
- Adam's bride was formed from a bone taken from his body
- Neither the bones of the Passover lamb or of Yeshua were broken
- Moses takes the bones of Joseph with them into the Exodus
- The body of an unfaithful wife is cut up into 12 bones and sent to each of the 12 tribes

- In the “cutting of the covenant” the agreement is that if you do not keep your end of the bargain, you would be cut up like the animals
- Yeshua physically endured (bones out of joint), the unfaithfulness of the tribes which caused their scattering
- We can become **one** (echad) with Messiah’s body, His flesh and His bones
- The Valley of Dry Bones is a picture of the work of the Spirit in the restoration of all of Israel. This is further pictured by the two sticks (trees/bones) joining together and becoming one.

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 was the eventual return of all of Israel to the Promised Land.

So we’ve looked at:

- Shechem (shoulders)
- Onyx stones (represents Joseph as a type of Yeshua and the 12 tribes)
- Bones (12 tribes coming together)

Prophecy can be very difficult to figure out. I hope that what you take from this is that The Father has a plan. Over and over He seems to be giving us pictures of the reunification of the tribes of His people Israel and how He will return them to the Land of Promise, Israel. Joseph was noted for his faith in Hebrews 11 because he caught that **vision**. I hope it matters to you, also. Baruch HaShem.

Shabbat Shalom,  
Ardelle