

Vayigash (And he drew near)
Genesis 44:18-47:28

It's been a few years since I first was introduced to the concept of the houses of Israel coming together in the end times. It is so easy to see this in the story of Joseph. The **details** of this event, however, have still not been entirely revealed to us. The truth is the details are **all** hidden in the Word. I have such awe for a God who has a plan of restoration that progressively unfolds over thousands of years. Revelation is always perfectly timed. Of course looking forward prophetically is much more difficult than looking behind us. That's why the Hebrew concept of cycles is so important. Embedded within the cycles is truth. Truth that has occurred before...often multiple times....and will come around again. Ultimately the second coming of Messiah will bring about complete revelation.

Unity within the body of Messiah reveals truth that cannot be seen by the individual parts. That is one of the blessings the internet has brought us. Here we are, many friends often who have not seen each other 'face to face'. Yet we are able to share our ideas and our revelations. What one person says sparks a thought in someone else. Each person is a necessary part of the body. In this week's Torah portion Joseph encourages his brothers not to quarrel as they return home. As we look at what sometimes happens in the Messianic movement, we are reminded by Joseph, "do not quarrel."

Our beginning premise is that Joseph is not only a picture of Messiah (He is the head), but also a picture of the **body** of Messiah in exile. Yeshua's prayer to the Father was that we might be "one" with Him. Therefore we should be able to see ourselves and our future in much of what happened to Joseph.

After Joseph reveals himself to his brothers, he sends for his father and the family to come to Egypt where he might care for them. Only two years of the famine have passed and there are still five more years to deal with.

Genesis 45:1 Then Joseph could not restrain himself before all those who stood by him, and he cried out, "**Make everyone go out from me!**" So no one stood with him while Joseph **made himself known** to his brothers.

Joseph **separated** himself from the Egyptians in order to reveal his identity to his brothers. Many surmise that the way he "**made himself known**" to his brothers was to show them that he too was circumcised. Circumcision was unique to the Israelites in those days. It was a physical **sign of the covenant**. Today circumcision is a common procedure. Something different will be required to show Judah/Jews that we are their sibling. What might that be? What might be an unmistakable sign that few others possess that might be seen as a **sign of the covenant** to reveal our identity?

- **Exodus 31:13** "Speak also to the children of Israel, saying: 'Surely **My Sabbaths you shall keep**, for **it is a sign** between Me and you throughout your generations, that *you* may know that I *am* יהוה who sanctifies you.'

- **Exodus 12:13** 'Now **the blood shall be a sign** for you on the houses where you *are*. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you; and the plague shall not be on you to destroy *you* when I strike the land of Egypt.
- **Exodus 13:8** "And you shall tell your son in that day, saying, '*This is done* because of what יהוה did for me when I came up from Egypt.'
- **Deuteronomy 10:16** "Therefore **circumcise the foreskin of your heart**, and be stiff-necked no longer.
- **Deuteronomy 30:6** "And יהוה your Elohim will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love יהוה your Elohim with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.
- **Zephaniah 3:9** "For then I will restore to the peoples **a pure language**, that they all may call on the name of יהוה, To serve Him with one accord.

Jews today can recognize their brothers when they exhibit these physical signs. First of all is the Sabbath (and other prescribed dates). Then there is the blood of the lamb which we claim to be under, but that claim should also be equated with proclaiming what the Father did for us when we came out of **our** Egypt. That means we keep Passover. Our hearts should show that they have been circumcised and that should be evident by the true love that we show for יהוה and all those around us...including our brother, Judah. And of course there is our attempt to learn the pure language of יהוה.

Today's Jews recognize that we have some **power** (as Joseph did) to assist them in the same way that Joseph did. Not only have we become a military partner of Israel, but financially believers have become very supportive of Israel's needs. Still however, most Jews equate us with being of "Egypt". But some are beginning to notice us as we are bonding together in Torah-based communities, keeping Sabbath and the festivals, eating Biblically kosher, and loving one another with all our hearts, souls, minds, and strength. They watch with interest as we attempt to communicate with them in Hebrew and as we study Torah through the Hebrew language.

All this was evidenced by the comments made by our Jewish tour guide, Baruch, on my recent trip to Israel. I wrote down several of his comments:

- "I've never heard this before" (said specifically in response to teaching on the story of Joseph)
- "This is a high level of teaching. I've really enjoyed it!" (again concerning Joseph)
- "I don't feel lonely when I'm with you. Do you really want to join us here?"
- "Your teaching inspires me. They are beautiful words. Last night I was thinking that the Son of God is a God of the small things like our behavior, our decisions....as opposed to the Creator God who is a God of the big things. We have a crisis in our religion. We have a Big God, but we don't have a flesh and blood God. It makes it hard to find peace of mind....it's hard to be complete."
- Quote from Baruch's wife who joined us for a few days, "You people have a light. You're on a level above where we are."
- "I love this!"

Genesis 45:4 And Joseph said to his brothers, "**Please come near to me.**" So they came near. Then he said: "I *am* Joseph your brother, whom you sold into Egypt.

Joseph brings his family to a place in Egypt (**Goshen**) which literally means "**drawing near**". What a wonderful name....truly a picture of unity and bonding together! Will the Jews be evicted from their land in the future? Will there be a modern-day Goshen where the descendents of Joseph will join together with Judah and be provided for? If the story of Joseph is a pattern, then this could be part of their/our future.

Genesis 45:10 "You shall dwell in the land of **Goshen**, and **you shall be near to me**, you and your children, your children's children, your flocks and your herds, and all that you have.¹¹ "There I will provide for you, lest you and your household, and all that you have, come to poverty; for *there are* still five years of famine." '

Like Joseph, his **descendents** have been dispersed out into the world that they might be positioned to be a rescuer to Judah. It's all been a part of the Master's plan to preserve Israel...the land and the people. All but Judah's identity has been hidden. However the rest of Israel has been growing and developing a solid foundation that will enable them to help their brother through the 7 years of Jacob's Trouble.

Jeremiah 30:7 Alas! For that day *is* great, so that none *is* like it; And it *is* the time of Jacob's trouble, but he shall be saved out of it.

Okay, let's switch directions now and take a "look" at what's going on in this portion with "seeing" and "eyes". We'll start with this verse:

Genesis 46:4 "I will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also surely bring you up *again*; and **Joseph will put his hand on your eyes.**"

Literally, this meant that Joseph would be there when Jacob died. However there's more to it than that. Joseph, as a picture of Yeshua, would put his hand over the eyes of Jacob. In other words....He would restrict his sight. Would you agree that the "eyes of Jacob" have been blinded, at least in part, in order that the plan of **יהיה** might go forth?

Romans 11:8 Just as it is written: "God has given them a spirit of stupor, **eyes that they should not see** and ears that they should not hear, to this very day."

When the time is right, these **eyes** will be opened again. Yeshua gave us a picture of this in John 9 when he uses his spit (from His mouth which is where the Word comes from) and the dust of the earth (symbolic of Abraham's scattered descendents) to open the eyes of a blind man. Oh to be able to have "eyes to see" all that is in front of us! Now let's look at some of the marvels of how the Hebrew language teaches us about sight.

The **letter "ayin"** pictographically is an eye. Numerically speaking it is the 16th letter of the aleph bet and stands for the number "70". The **word "ayin"** itself also means eye, AND it is one

of the words interpreted as a “well” of water. A well is a place for “seeing” throughout the time of the patriarchs. Yeshua opened the eyes of the woman at the well in Samaria. As the eyes are opened, what is it that a person is “seeing”? Wouldn’t it be the hidden meanings...the “sod” meanings of things? Well “sod” also has a numerical value of 70. Is 70 significant?

Even the pool of Siloam where the healing of the blind man took place....called the “Pool of Siloah” in Nehemiah 3:15 is the “ayin” (עַיִן) of Siloah. This pool was repaired by the son of a man named Colhozeh (כָּל-חֹזֶה) which means “all-seeing” and which also adds up to 70.

Seventy is the number of descendents that went down into Egypt. There are many discrepancies with the descendents that are listed and how exactly they add up to 70. And how is it possible that Benjamin could have 10 children when most likely he’s not over the age of 20? All genealogical listings in the Bible are given with specific meanings. What look like contradictions to us usually have to do with “sod” (secret) meanings. If we study the names, we can often get a few clues. It is likely that there were actually many more than 70 that descended down into Egypt. But here again....the number 70....it has a “sod” (hidden) meaning for those who have “eyes to see”.

The number of descendants of Shem, Ham, and Japheth, who repopulated the earth is given to us in Genesis 10 as 70. Moses chose 70 men to stand with him in Numbers 11:16 and Yeshua chose 70 as well in Luke 10. In Rabbinical thought, the nations are represented by the number 70. It is taught that there were 70 languages that emerged from the tower of Babel and that the Torah was translated into 70 languages from Mt. Sinai in order to be understood by the 70 nations.

Okay, let’s look at something else that’s very interesting this week. Did you notice that there seems to be a lot of emphasis on the fact that the brothers are shepherds? This is the Hebrew word for shepherd:

רָעָה

The Ancient Hebrew Lexicon of the Bible can help us paint a picture of what these letters actually mean.

ר - head of a person

ע - an eye, or to see/watch

ה - to reveal

So the pictographic picture of shepherd becomes “one who watches over with the intent of revealing”.

Sometimes it seemed that Joseph and his brothers placed more emphasis on their **flocks** than on their **families**. What might this all mean?

Genesis 46:32 'And the men *are* **shepherds**, for their occupation has been to feed livestock; and they have brought their flocks, their herds, and all that they have.'

The world sees flocks primarily as something to eat. But **shepherds care and protect their sheep**. They are willing to give up their lives for their sheep. When in Genesis 47:3 Pharaoh asks the brothers what their occupation is, they reply, "**Your servants are shepherds, both we and also our fathers.**" Shepherding is what Israelites do. If we consider ourselves to be Israelites, then **our job too is to nourish and protect the flock. Joseph also is a shepherd** as he tends to and nourishes the family.

Genesis 45:11 "There **I will provide for you**, lest you and your household, and all that you have, come to poverty; for *there are* still five years of famine." '

In fact, the first shepherd listed in the Bible is Abel:

Genesis 4:2 Then she bore again, this time his brother Abel. Now Abel was a **keeper (רֹעֶה) of sheep**, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.

As a bit of a side note, when it calls Cain a “tiller of the ground”, it actually says that he was a “servant of the ground.” Hmmm....who (or what) do you want to be a servant to?

The word **shepherd (רֹעֶה)** is often translated as one who “**feeds**”. Adonai is spoken of throughout the Hebrew Scriptures as one who **feeds** His people and provides for them:

Genesis 48:15 And he blessed Joseph, and said: "Elohim, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, The Elohim who has **fed (רֹעֶה)** me all my life long to this day,

Psalms 23:1 A Psalm of David. יהוה *is* my **shepherd**; I shall not want.

Isaiah 40:11 He will **feed (רֹעֶה)** His flock like a **shepherd (רֹעֶה)**; He will gather the lambs with His arm, And carry *them* in His bosom, *And* gently lead those who are with young.

David’s claim to the throne is based upon God’s command that he **feed/shepherd** the people:

2 Samuel 5:2 "Also, in time past, when Saul was king over us, you were the one who led Israel out and brought them in; and יהוה said to you, 'You shall **feed (רֹעֶה)** My people Israel, and be ruler over Israel.' "

Failure of the leaders of Israel to feed the people, either physical or spiritual nourishment was deemed a severe sin:

Ezekiel 34:2 "Son of man, prophesy against the **shepherds (רֹעֶה)** of Israel, prophesy and say to them, "Thus says יהוה Elohim to the **shepherds (רֹעֶה)**: "Woe to the

shepherds (רָעָה) of Israel who feed themselves! Should not the **shepherds** (רָעָה) **feed** (רָעָה) the flocks?

The theological idea of the good shepherd who feeds his flock with **truth** becomes prominent in the Apostolic Scriptures:

Jeremiah 3:15 "And I will give you **shepherds** according to My heart, **who will feed you with knowledge and understanding**.

John 10:11 "I am the good **shepherd**. The good **shepherd** gives His life for the sheep.

Now, let's return to the Torah portion and read the reason that the brothers give for coming to Egypt:

Genesis 47:4 And they said to Pharaoh, "**We have come to dwell in the land, because your servants have no pasture for their flocks**, for the famine *is* severe in the land of Canaan. Now therefore, please let your servants dwell in the land of Goshen."

In the time of famine, the priority of the faithful of the family of Israel is taking care of the flocks. The Father is always concerned for His sheep. The brothers have come a long way since the time when Joseph brought back a negative report to Jacob concerning their **shepherding**. Let's go back a bit:

Genesis 37:16 So he said, "I am seeking my brothers. Please tell me where they are **feeding** (רָעָה - **shepherding**) *their flocks*." ¹⁷ And the man said, "They have departed from here, for I heard them say, 'Let us go to **Dothan**.' " So Joseph went after his brothers and found them in **Dothan**.

Dothan means "two wells". We know that when Joseph found his brothers that they ended up throwing him in a well. It was a well that had **NO WATER**. **They were shepherding their flocks in an area DEVOID OF WATER**. Remember that a well is a place of "seeing" and water is a symbol of the "Word". No wonder Joseph had to take back a negative report! At this point **they were not very good shepherds!**

Shepherds and pastors are the same Hebrew word. רָעָה has harsh words for shepherds/pastors who do not care for their flocks:

Ezekiel 34:1 And the word of רָעָה came to me, saying, ² "Son of man, prophesy against **the shepherds of Israel**, prophesy and say to them, 'Thus says the רָעָה Elohim to the shepherds: "**Woe to the shepherds of Israel who feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks?**" ³ "You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool; you slaughter the fatlings, *but* you do not feed the flock." ⁴ "The weak you have not strengthened, nor have you healed those who were sick, nor bound up the broken, nor brought back what was driven away, nor sought what was lost; but with force and cruelty you have ruled them." ⁵ "So they were scattered because *there was* no shepherd; and they

became food for all the beasts of the field when they were scattered. ⁶ "My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and on every high hill; yes, My flock was scattered over the whole face of the earth, and no one was seeking or searching *for them*." ⁷ Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of יהוה: ⁸ "as I live," says יהוה Elohim, "surely because My flock became a prey, and My flock became food for every beast of the field, because *there was* no shepherd, nor did My shepherds search for My flock, but the shepherds fed themselves and did not feed My flock" -- ⁹ therefore, O shepherds, hear the word of יהוה! ¹⁰ Thus says יהוה Elohim: "Behold, I *am* against the shepherds, and I will require My flock at their hand; I will cause them to cease feeding the sheep, and the shepherds shall feed themselves no more; for I will deliver My flock from their mouths, that they may no longer be food for them." ¹¹ ' **For thus says יהוה Elohim: "Indeed I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out.** ¹² "As a shepherd seeks out his flock on the day he is among his scattered sheep, so will I seek out My sheep and deliver them from all the places where they were scattered on a cloudy and dark day." ¹³ "And I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land; I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, in the valleys and in all the inhabited places of the country. ¹⁴ "I will feed them in good pasture, and their fold shall be on the high mountains of Israel. There they shall lie down in a good fold and feed in rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. ¹⁵ "I will feed My flock, and I will make them lie down," says יהוה Elohim.

Taking special note of verse 11, read Yeshua's words:

Matthew 15:24 But He answered and said, "I was not sent except to **the lost sheep of the house of Israel.**"

John 10:14 "I am the good **shepherd**; and I know My *sheep*, and am known by My own. ¹⁵ "As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. ¹⁶ "And **other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring**, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock *and* one shepherd.

According to Ezekiel 34:12, this re-gathering will happen on a "**cloudy and dark day**". This is of course the time of the tribulation.

Let's take it a step farther:

John 21:15 So when they had eaten breakfast, Yeshua said to Simon Peter, "Simon, *son of Jonah*, do you love Me more than these?" He said to Him, "Yes, Adonai; You know that I love You." He said to him, "**Feed My lambs.**" ¹⁶ He said to him again a second time, "Simon, *son of Jonah*, do you love Me?" He said to Him, "Yes, Adonai; You know that I love You." He said to him, "**Tend My sheep.**" ¹⁷ He said to him the third time, "Simon, *son of Jonah*, do you love Me?" Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "Do you love Me?" And he said to Him, "Adonai, You know all things; You know that I love You." Yeshua said to him, "**Feed My sheep.**"

So I hope you see the thread of **the shepherd and his sheep** that runs from Genesis to Revelation. Yeshua is the **good Shepherd**, but He's also **the lamb of Elohim**. **We are the sheep** of his pasture, but **we're also shepherds who care for the flock**. Joseph was a shepherd; likewise all his brothers were shepherds. In fact just about everyone seems to be a shepherd! Even Rachel, Rebecca and Moses' wife were shepherds! The point I am trying to make, and you've probably gotten it by now is that if Joseph is a picture of the body of Messiah in exile, then it is our job to also be shepherds. We should be about the business of feeding, tending, and looking for the flock. **It is our job to be feeding the flock with truth.**

The family of Israel went to Egypt as shepherds, but the implied message is that they became tempted by the wealth of Egypt:

Genesis 47:27 So Israel dwelt in the land of Egypt, in the country of Goshen; and they had possessions there and grew and multiplied exceedingly.

"They had possessions there" may have become a blessing and a curse for them. They went down into Egypt with **their own possessions**. They ended up acquiring some of "Egypt". Their wealth would unfortunately begin to change their identity. The book of Yasher says they allowed themselves to be gradually sold into slavery because they became indebted in order to grow wealthy. And so we see again that there is "nothing new under the sun".

Let's end with Peter's words to the leaders of the flocks:

1 Peter 5:2 Shepherd the flock of Adonai which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly;³ nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but **being examples to the flock;**⁴ **and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.**

Shabbat Shalom!
Ardelle