



Parasha Vayigash

January 4, 2020

Torah: Genesis 44:18-47:27

Haftarah: Ezekiel 37:15-28

Shlichim: Acts 7:9-15

Shabbat shalom mishpacha! Today in *Parasha Vayigash* we continue with the story of Joseph. *Vayigash* is the first Hebrew word in Genesis 44:18, the name by which this *parasha* is known. It refers to Joseph's brother Judah and means "and he came near." The story of Joseph is one of the longer-running narratives in *Torah* and so far has extended over three *parshiot*, *Vayeshev*, *Miketz*, and *Vayigash*. Next week we conclude with the fourth and last *parshiot* about Joseph, *Vayechi*. In the first two and again today, we have seen a number of events which initially seem isolated and unrelated incidents, but as the story unfolds, they turn out to have been directed by ADONAI. In the first *parasha*, *Vayishev*, Joseph had two dreams. In one, he saw himself and his eleven brothers gathering wheat into shocks in the field and the eleven shocks which they gathered came and prostrated themselves before Joseph's shock. Then he had another dream and in it the sun, moon, and eleven stars prostrated themselves before him, a very obvious reference to his father, mother and eleven brothers. At seventeen years of age he was probably not the wisest one around, not the sharpest tool in the chest, and he immediately went and told not only his brothers about these dreams, but also his father. But, as foolish as this might seem to us, G-d was setting the stage for a great salvation and He used Joseph's brashness to begin to turn his brothers against him, something that was necessary in order for ADONAI to carry out His plan. The brothers were so angry about Joseph's bragging, about him thinking more about himself than they thought he should, that they committed a tremendous sin, and sold their brother into slavery. While it didn't seem so at the time, we are told later that they had great remorse about what they had done.

In today's *parasha* the brothers finally find out that G-d was not only the originator of Joseph's dreams, but He was also involved in their selling him to a caravan of Ishmaelites who just happened to be on their way to Egypt. In today's *parasha*, just as the first dream prophesied, we find Joseph revealing himself to his brothers after they have prostrated themselves before him. As they are lying on the ground, Joseph says to his brothers: 4, "Please come near me." So they came near. "I'm Joseph, your brother—the one you sold to Egypt," he said. 5 "So now, don't be grieved and don't be angry in your own eyes that you sold me here—since it was for preserving life that God sent me here before you (Genesis 45:4b-5 TLV). Before all this happened, Judah was the only one who had the courage to speak and he pleaded for Joseph to release Benjamin who had been kept as a prisoner after the brother's previous trip to Egypt. Judah offered to take his place. At this point, Joseph could stand it no more and ordered the servants out of the room before he broke down weeping before his brothers. And, he revealed to them that he is their brother Joseph.

We all understand that Joseph was a type of Messiah, a savior figure, in that he was sent by ADONAI into Egypt in order to later save his family. As a Messiah figure, there are many, many parallels between Joseph and Yeshua that it would take all our time today just to list and discuss them. But, even though that's not today's message, we will list a few. Yeshua and Joseph both began their life work at the age of 30. They were both sent by their father to their brothers. The brothers hated both Joseph and Yeshua and rejected their claims. Joseph was sold into Egypt on the advice of his brother Judah. Yeshua was handed over to the Romans by the hand of his disciple Judas, whose name was actually Judah. Both Joseph and Yeshua were persecuted because of false

witnesses. Potiphar's wife told lies about Joseph and Yeshua was falsely accused before the Sanhedrin and before Pilate.

Our focus today is but one of these, the age at which both Joseph and Yeshua began their ministry. Recently, as a congregation, we talked quite a bit about the book, *The Non-Torah*. A number of you also read it. Its premise is that the *Talmud* is not a divinely inspired work and that we cannot and should not use it to show or attempt to confirm spiritual principles. In other words, G-d did not write the *Talmud* as He did when He inspired all of the writers of the *Tanakh* and all of the writers of the New Covenant Scriptures. Many within rabbinic Judaism consider the *Talmud* to be of equal authority with the written *Torah*, but we cannot. It is not G-d-inspired and we cannot trust it for the truth. We can, however, learn from it.

While we don't consider it to be G-d inspired, we can learn from the *Talmud* and its included writings. One that we will look at today is *Pirkei Avot*. In it there is information which can give us insight regarding the age at which Joseph and Yeshua began to walk in their calling. This particular one is a tractate found in the *Mishnah*, the written form of the "oral torah." *Pirkei avot* means, "the ethics of the fathers" and was written during the early years of rabbinic Judaism, sometime prior to 200CE. Ironically, this tractate begins with what has become the foundation principle on which rabbinic Judaism bases their case that *Talmud* is equal to written *Torah*. It begins with these words: "Moses received the Torah from Sinai and gave it over to Joshua. Joshua gave it over to the Elders, the Elders to the Prophets, and the Prophets gave it over to the Men of the Great Assembly" (*Tractate Avot* 1:1a). The Men of the Great Assembly was a group led by Ezra the *Kohen* shortly after the return from Babylon. The torah spoken of here is not the written *Torah*, but the "oral torah," the group of orally transmitted writings which were only oral for thousands of years, but eventually were written down in about 200CE. The written form, the *Mishnah* (meaning study by repetition) became the foundation of what later became the *Talmud* (meaning teach or study). If you wish to explore this subject further, I recommend that you get a copy of the book, *The Non-Torah: Exposing the Mythology of Divine Oral Torah*. You can find it at www.amazon.com.

But, also within *Pirkei Avot*, we find words which can help our understanding regarding the time at which both Joseph and Yeshua began their ministries. **21.** Ben Hei Hei would say: "According to the pain is the gain. **22.** He would also say: Five years is the age for the study of Scripture. Ten, for the study of Mishnah. Thirteen, for the obligation to observe the mitzvot. Fifteen, for the study of Talmud. Eighteen, for marriage. Twenty, to pursue [a livelihood]. Thirty, for strength, Forty, for understanding. Fifty, for counsel. Sixty, for sagacity (meaning skill in understanding). Seventy, for elderliness. Eighty, for power. Ninety, to stoop. A hundred-year-old is as one who has died and passed away and has been negated from the world" (*Pirkei Avot* 5:21b-22). There are certain things in these verses which relate to modern concepts which we use today. "Thirteen, for the obligation to observe the mitzvot," for the obligation to observe the commandments, seems to relate to a *Bar Mitzvah*, the ceremony which we use today to celebrate a boy's movement from childhood to beginning manhood. But, "Ten for the study of Mishnah" and "Fifteen, for the study of Talmud," are misleading and actually are anachronisms, words referring to something which was not even present at the time of this writing, something which came later. That is because *Pirkei Avot* was written before 200CE and the *Mishnah* was not even written down until that date and the *Talmud* was not completed for several more hundreds of years after that.

But, we can still learn by choosing carefully and are focusing on what was said about the age of thirty. This particular version says "Thirty for strength." Others say "Thirty for the peak of strength" or "Thirty for full vigor." The implication borne out in discussion is that the age of 30 is the time of life in which a Jewish male would enter into his individual life's work, the time at which he was ready for leadership. He had already begun the work of his livelihood at age 20, but he still required some 10 more years of maturity before entering into his calling. Regarding Joseph, it says this: *46 Now Joseph was 30 years old when he began serving as representative of Pharaoh, king of Egypt* (Genesis 41:46a TLV). We also find in Leviticus 4:3 that the *kohanim*, the priests entered into their ministry at age 30, in 2Samuel 5:4 that David entered into kingship at age 30, in Ezekiel 1:1

that Ezekiel began his calling as a prophet at age 30. And, also by calculation we can see that *Yochanan* the Immerser, John the Baptist, would have entered into his prophetic ministry at about age 30. The time fits for John because he was 6 months older than Yeshua and had already been ministering before Yeshua came to him at the Jordan River. And there at the Jordan, Yeshua entered His ministry at about age 30 according to Luke: 23 “*Yeshua was about thirty years old when He began his ministry*” (Luke 3:23 TLV). When we see that something similar is stated three or more times in Scripture, we must pay attention. Putting two and two together, we see that prophets, priests and kings entered into their full vigor and their appointed work when they were 30 years old. And, since we know that Yeshua is the “prophet like Moses described in Deuteronomy 18, is a priest after the order of *Malkitzedek* described in Hebrews 7 and is the king described in Isaiah 9 and Zechariah 9, there is a definite important connection. The time chosen by ADONAI for full vigor, the age of 30 is a significant age. It is the age at which certain prophets, all priests and King David, if not the other kings of Judah, entered into their appointed offices. When we read that Yeshua began His ministry at age 30, as students of Torah, we should immediately think: prophet, priest and king. And, Yeshua, the second Moses, followed Moses as prophet, priest and king, entering into these offices at age 30. Yeshua was anointed for all three when He was 30, served as a prophet during His earthly ministry, began His ministry as *Kohen Gadol*, High Priest, after His resurrection and although He is already King in heaven, He will begin to walk in that calling here on earth upon His triumphant return.

You may have noticed with regard to the age of 80, *Pirkei Avot* says “Eighty, for power.” I believe that this is a reference to Moses, who began his ministry at age 80. Why didn’t he begin it at age 30? We don’t know and we don’t have a reference about Moses at age 30. We do have one at 40. Acts 7 says regarding Moses: 23 “*When he was approaching forty years of age, it came into his heart to visit his brothers, Bnei-Yisrael*” (Acts 7:23 TLV). We don’t know why Moses had to wait until he was 80 to enter into his leadership role. Possibly, Moses required more preparation for his ministry. But, when he did enter it at age 80, he entered it with power, the power of G-d to do mighty miracles. I think that most of you know that I am in that same age category. I don’t know what “with power” means for me, but I am ready and willing for whatever ADONAI wishes to give me.

The ancient rabbis were perplexed when they examined the Scriptures. They were perplexed because they saw two different pictures of the Messiah in the *Tanakh*. In Isaiah 52 and 53 they saw the one whom they called *Mashiach ben Yosef*, Messiah, son of Joseph, the prototype who suffered at the hands of his brothers and in Egypt before his promotion by Pharaoh. Even though modern rabbinic Jews say that these passages in Isaiah refer to the nation of Israel and not Yeshua, it was not always that way. Several of the ancient rabbis saw the Messiah in Isaiah 53 and because of that, spoke about the one whom they called the suffering servant Messiah or sometimes the leper scholar Messiah. The ancient rabbis also saw another one in the *Tanakh*, a powerful figure, the one whom they called *Mashiach ben David*, Messiah, the son of David. He is seen as a conquering king, the one whom Israel hoped that Yeshua was when they laid down palm branches at His feet during His last entry into Jerusalem. The two Messiahs are one and the same, *Yeshua haMashiach*. He came first as the suffering servant Messiah who died for the sins of Israel and is coming again as the conquering and ruling king. He will return to rule and reign from Jerusalem over all the earth. Isaiah spoke about His return: 1 *The word which Isaiah, son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem: 2 “It will come to pass in the last days that the mountain of Adonai’s House will stand firm as head of the mountains and will be exalted above the hills. So all nations will flow to it. 3 Then many peoples will go and say: “Come, let us go up to the mountain of Adonai, to the House of the God of Jacob! Then He will teach us His ways, and we will walk in His paths.” For Torah will go forth from Zion and the word of Adonai from Jerusalem*” (Isaiah 2:1-3 TLV). The Prophet Micah spoke something very similar: 1 *But at the end of days the mountain of Adonai’s House will be established as chief of the mountains, and will be raised above the hills. Peoples will flow up to it. 2 Then many nations will go and say: “Come, let us go up to the mountain of Adonai, to the House of the God of Jacob! Then He will direct us in His ways, and we will walk in His paths.” For Torah will go forth from Zion, and the word of Adonai from Jerusalem* (Micah 4:1-2 TLV). Here are two witnesses who agree; Isaiah and Micah. It will happen!

Yeshua is coming again, and soon. And, He has told us to occupy until He comes. There are also parallels between us and Yeshua. Some of us may be prophets, but not likely kings. However, we are all *kohanim*, priests. *Shimon Kefa* said: 9 “*But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, so that you may proclaim the praises of the One who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light*” (1Peter 2:9 TLV). We are priests, and like Yeshua, we are also anointed. He was anointed at the Jordan River after He allowed John to immerse Him and a voice came from heaven saying: “*You are My Son, whom I love—with You I am well pleased!*” (Luke 3:22b TLV). We are anointed when we allow the Holy Spirit to take control of our lives. It usually happens when we ask G-d to immerse us, to baptize us, in the *Ruach Kodesh*, the Holy Spirit. When Yeshua was on the Mount of Olives with His *talmidim* right before His ascension, He told us about this anointing. His disciples asked: 6, “*Lord, are You restoring the kingdom to Israel at this time?*” 7 *He said to them, “It is not your place to know the times or seasons which the Father has placed under His own control. 8 But you will receive power when the Ruach ha-Kodesh has come upon you; and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and through all Judah, and Samaria, and to the end of the earth”* (Acts 1:6b-8 TLV). That power is the anointing power which we must have in order to be His witnesses. He had spoken to His disciples previously in the Galilee about what they were to do as His witnesses. He said: 19 “*Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, immersing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Ruach ha-Kodesh, 20 teaching them to observe all I have commanded you. And remember! I am with you always, even to the end of the age*” (Matthew 28:19-20 TLV).

Yeshua has given that power, the power of the Holy Spirit to each of us who has called upon His name and asked for the gift of His Spirit. That power is available to all for the purpose of being His witnesses. Mark 16 gives us an overview of some the power available to us through faith: 15 *He told them, “Go into all the world and proclaim the Good News to every creature. 16 He who believes and is immersed shall be saved, but he who does not believe shall be condemned. 17 These signs will accompany those who believe: in My name they will drive out demons; they will speak new languages; 18 they will handle snakes; and if they drink anything deadly, it will not harm them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will get well”* (Mark 6:15-18 TLV).

We don’t see much of this happening today, but we should be seeing it. Most of us, myself included, are like Yeshua’s disciples were in the Garden of Gethsemane when He asked them to wait and pray. They failed Him three times. He said about them: 41 *The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak*” Matthew 26:41b TLV). But, these same men were much different after His *Ruach* fell on them at *Shavuot*. They became powerful witnesses who fulfilled their callings even at the peril of their lives. And, so should we be powerful witnesses after we have been filled with His Spirit. The old joke about us who have been filled with the Spirit may be true. It says: “we leak.” That’s humorous, but, I don’t really think that that is the case. ADONAI’s Spirit, once given, is still within us, but for various reasons we may have suppressed it. Some have not received it. If you have never asked Him for this infilling, there is no time like the present. Let this be our prayer today: “Yeshua, help us to put aside any part of the “old man” which may still be within us. Cause your *Ruach* to strengthen our faith, that we might truly be effective *talmidim* for You and that the spiritual power which You have given us would be manifested in signs and wonders through all of us who believe. And, may Your kingdom come and your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Amen!” *Shabbat shalom!*