



Parasha Miketz

December 19, 2020

Torah: Genesis 41:1-44:17

Haftarah: Zechariah 2:14-4:7

Ketuwim Shlichim: 1 Corinthians 2:1-5

Shabbat shalom mishpacha! Our *parasha* today is *Miketz*. The story is about Joseph. It began last week with *Parasha Vayashev* when Joseph received a special coat from his father Jacob and it continues today with Joseph as the main character and concludes next week in *Parasha Vayigash*. I don't want to get ahead of myself and tell you about *Vayigash*, especially since Danny will be bringing that message next *Shabbat*. Here is the story so far, but just the main story with a lot of the detail left out.

Joseph received a special robe of fine wool from his father Jacob. His brothers were jealous and after he related two dreams suggesting that he would rule over them, their jealousy and hatred increased. Joseph was sold to a caravan on its way to Egypt and eventually wound up as a slave in Potiphar's house. There, he rejected Potiphar's wife's advances, she yelled rape, and Joseph was put in prison. While he was there, he interpreted the dreams of two of Pharaoh's officials, his butler and his baker. The meaning of the butler's dream was that he would soon be released and he was. He promised to speak to Pharaoh about Joseph, but forgot all about it.

Parasha Miketz now begins. Pharaoh had two dreams, one about seven fat cows and one about seven healthy ears of grain and then the fat cows and the healthy ears were eaten by seven emaciated cows and seven thin ears of grain. None of Pharaoh's advisors could interpret the dreams and it was then that the butler remembered Joseph and told Pharaoh about him. Joseph interpreted the dreams. He told Pharaoh that both dreams had the same message: there would be seven years of plenty in Egypt followed by seven years of severe famine. Joseph proposed to Pharaoh a plan to store the excess grain of the seven years of plenty as a reserve for the seven famine years and he appointed the thirty year old Joseph as vizier, second in command in Egypt. Things happened. Joseph began to oversee the collection of grain, got married to Osnat, and she bore him two sons: Manasseh and Ephraim. The famine began and it affected not only Egypt, but also the entire region. In Egypt, Joseph had food in plenty, which he sold to all who needed it. In famine in Canaan, Joseph's father Jacob sent his oldest ten sons to Egypt to purchase food. The brothers did not recognize Joseph and when they made their request to purchase food, he spoke to them harshly, accused them of being spies and put them in prison for three days. After that, he released them, but kept Simon as a hostage. To have him released, he required them to return to Canaan and to bring their brother Benjamin to prove their innocence. Back home in Canaan, Jacob heard their story, but refused to send Benjamin. Eventually, after food ran low and Judah personally guaranteed Benjamin's safe return, Jacob agreed to send him. When they arrived in Egypt, Joseph instructed his servant to invite the brothers to join him for a meal. Simon was freed and joined them. When Joseph saw his brother Benjamin, he was overcome with emotion. Before the brothers departed in the

morning, Joseph had his cup placed in Benjamin's sack of food and then sent out officials to arrest them and bring them back. *Parasha Miketz* ends with Joseph requiring that the "thief," Benjamin, remain as his slave. Be here next *Shabbat* to hear Danny present the climax.

Joseph's story is a story of triumph after tragedy, being so greatly wronged and suffering so much. But, it was ADONAI's plan for him to suffer. He chose that Joseph would suffer so that in the end, many would be saved. There are so many parallels between Joseph as a type of Messiah and Yeshua as Messiah, that it is difficult to even find them all. One website has a section entitled "Sixty Ways That Joseph Prefigures Jesus" (Hebrew4Christians.com). I won't be attempting to go into that kind of detail, but will point out one very obvious parallel: Joseph's early wrongful treatment was reversed and he rose to second in command in Egypt. The same happened to Yeshua who after being despised and killed, is now sitting at the right hand of the Father and will soon return as King Messiah, Son of G-d. There is another very important side to this. Joseph's bad treatment came about by the actions of his very own brothers. And Yeshua was also persecuted by His own family, His brother and sister Jews. Just as Joseph was revealed to his family as the great and powerful vizier of Egypt, so will Yeshua soon be revealed to His family, the Jews, not only as *Mashiach*, the Anointed One, but also as *Melekh ben David*, Messiah, Son of David,. And, they will receive Him as the only sacrifice which can atone for their sins after so many years of rejecting Him. This was also ADONAI's plan. He sent His Son to die as a sacrifice for the sins of His people Israel and also everyone who calls upon His name. But, the Jews didn't kill Him. It was G-d's plan. Because of His love for all of mankind, Yeshua chose to die for us. But, for 2000 years, the majority of Jews have not recognized this wonderful gift which leads those who receive it to *olam haba*, the world to come, eternity with ADONAI. Regarding this, *Sha'ul* wrote to the Roman congregation: 3 "*For being ignorant of God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit themselves to the righteousness of God*" (Romans 10:3 TLV). For 2000 years, the majority of Jews have rejected Yeshua, the key to G-d's righteousness, and found ways to make their own righteousness. During this time, they have changed the *Torah* by adding to it and in doing so have re-written its meaning to make it into the righteousness which they sought. Some have also pursued other religions and many even have no religion and are atheists. But, *Sha'ul* says they have no excuse: 4 "*For Messiah is the goal of the Torah as a means to righteousness for everyone who keeps trusting*" (Romans 10:4 TLV). For 2000 years, the *Torah* has been clearly pointing toward Yeshua and for 2000 years the majority have rejected Him. Year after year, these three *parshiyot* about Joseph bring Messiah to their minds. Our prayer is that this year or some year very soon they will be able to see the truth.

Here are three words for today: *chazak*, קִזְקֵז, *shuv*, שׁוּב, and *achaz*, אָחַז. They are directed to three different groups, but each word could also apply in any of the three groups.

The first group is you. *Chazak* is to you, faithful followers of Yeshua here at *Beit Shalom*, but also to all of Yeshua's *talmidim* whom He has called into Messianic Judaism. This is a word which you know very well. As a congregation, we repeat it each time that we complete the final *parasha* in each Book of *Torah*. According to Strong's Concordance, *Chazak* means "to be or grow firm or strong, strengthen." In your case, I emphasize that it means "to be firm or strong," because you have been standing for many years, a group largely misunderstood by the greater body of Messiah. The word *Chazak* is also for the thousands of faithful Messianic Jews and Messianic Gentiles all over the earth. At this time, ADONAI reminds us all to "*chazak*," be strong.

This word is particularly for us today because of the trying times that we are facing. And, we don't know what we might yet face. But, because of your faithfulness to Yeshua and to the Messianic Movement to which you have been called, ADONAI says *chazak!* Continue to be strong as you face new challenges. But, also, recommit yourselves to service in Yeshua's army. Do as *Sha'ul* has told us to do: 11 "Put on the full armor of God, so that you are able to stand against the schemes of the devil. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the worldly forces of this darkness, and against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. 13 Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you may be able to resist when the times are evil, and after you have done everything, to stand firm" (Ephesians 6:11-13 TLV). It is sometimes hard not to see certain high profile individuals as the enemy, but they are not the enemy. They are being used by *HaSatan*. He is the enemy. Even in our struggle against the troubles of these days, we must remember that ADONAI said that we are to love our neighbor as ourselves. Yeshua took love even further. He said that we are to love our fellow believers even as He loves us. We must remember that today as we see fellow believers led astray. *HaSatan* is the twister of truth. He said to Eve, "Did G-d really say that?" And, he has used that same lie on many in the body today and caused them to stray from the real intent of ADONAI's Word. Verses 14-17 tell us what our armor is. Reread those verses as you pray. We must all put on G-d's armor daily and it will never be more important as the battle intensifies. To each of us, ADONAI says: *Chazak Chazak V'nitzchazek*; Be Strong, Be Strong, and Let Us Be Strengthened! He is our strengthener!

The following is my prayer for Yeshua's disciples in the Church. For them, the word is *shuv*. According to Strong's Concordance this word means "to turn back, return." This is not questioning their faith. This does not mean "turn back to Jesus." We understand that you have made a firm commitment to serve Him. The meaning of *shuv* for you is that you would turn back to the original understanding of the message in the letters which Peter, Paul and James gave as Jews speaking in Jewish ways. All of the Bible was written by Jews and by one other, Luke, who had a strong Hebraic background. To best understand the writings of Jews, each of us must "rightly divide the Word of truth" (2Timothy 2:14). It cannot always be made simple. The writers of many modern Bibles are sincerely seeking to help Christians understand Scripture. But, by seeking to simplify the understanding, without realizing it, they are taking them further away from the truth. Under the inspiration of G-d, the Bible was written by Jews and our highest and best level of understanding of it can only be reached by studying it from a Hebraic perspective. Seek to find what the New Testament originally meant and do not rely on every interpreter. Do your best to understand the words of Paul as a 1st century follower of Jesus who was speaking in the vernacular and with Jewish nuances. Embrace and do not fear the Old Testament. It is the foundational truth of the whole of the Bible. Also realize that italicized words in Bibles are added by their translators and are a reflection of their agenda. Identify italicized words as you read your Bible and scrutinize them carefully. Better yet, disregard them. Read only the Word of G-d and not any additions which in reality are the theology of the translators. Compare what you read in your Bible frequently to the Hebrew and Greek texts to ensure that the translators haven't added words. Watch especially for the word "covenant" to see if it is in the original language or has been added by the translators. Finally, make the widely used Church motto "*sola scriptura*," Latin for "Scripture alone," your own personal way of understanding the Bible. Remember that the Church and Messianic Judaism are not competitors. Together, we are the full body of Christ and we are in the same battle and on the same side. G-d also says to you, *Chazak!* Be strong in these trying and difficult days leading to our Messiah's victorious return to earth.

The word *achaz* is to our Jewish brothers and sisters. It is my prayer for them. Strong's Concordance defines *achaz* as "to grasp, take hold, take possession." Take hold and take possession of your birthright, the birthright paid for by your *Goel*, your Kinsman Redeemer, Yeshua. It's been yours all along, always available. For centuries, the rabbis have seen Joseph as a picture of a suffering servant Messiah whom they called *Mashiach ben Yosef*, Messiah, son of Joseph. Because they could not resolve the conflicting view of a suffering Messiah and a victorious Messiah, they saw two Messiahs. The second Messiah whom they saw, the conquering king Messiah, *Mashiach ben David*, Messiah, son of David, is our Messiah, Yeshua. He is the one who is coming soon.

Several years ago, here at the synagogue, we ministered to an elderly orthodox gentleman who had come to our area for one purpose. He believed that he was *Mashiach ben Yosef*, the suffering Messiah and he brought that message to us. Treating me with the greatest of respect, he did his best to get me, and ultimately you in the congregation, to accept him as that. At the same time I was doing my best to show him that Yeshua is both *Mashiach ben Yosef* and *Mashiach ben David*. Neither of us was successful then, but I still pray that the seeds which were planted in him at that time bore fruit. I had a great affection for him and still do.

Many in traditional Judaism now recognize that we are in *Ikvot Mashiach*, "the footsteps of the Messiah." The signs of the times tell us that the coming of *Mashiach* is near. Don't wait! Seek ADONAI now! Trust Yeshua now and join the many thousands of His Jewish followers who have had the scales fall off their eyes. The *Ruach* will reveal Him to you! At some time soon, all Israel will trust Him, as prophesied by *Sha'ul*: 26 ..., "*The Deliverer shall come out of Zion. He shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob. 27 And this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins*" (Romans 11:26b-27 TLV). But, don't wait! You can be *bikkurim*, firstfruits, now. Do it now and avoid the rush when all Israel comes to Yeshua. ☺

Messianic Judaism has been here for 53 years, but is about to come into new prominence within Yeshua's greater body of believers, the Church and also traditional Judaism. Our time has come to be the light that we are called to be. The time has come for us to be messengers that Yeshua will return soon. None of this is because those of us in Messianic Judaism are any more special than Yeshua's followers in the Church. It is because Messianic Judaism is a sign. It is a sign of the "last days." Its co-sign is the recapture of Jerusalem by Israel that same year, 1967. These two signs appeared at the same time. The recapture of Jerusalem was even prophesied by Yeshua in the Book of Luke. Referring to the Jews, He said: 24 "*They will fall by the edge of the sword and be led away captive into all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled*" (Luke 21:24 TLV). An equally important sign some 19 years earlier was the miraculous rebirth of the Nation of Israel in 1948. It is also very important that Messianic Judaism was birthed through the *bikkurim*, the firstfruits of salvation of the whole body of Jews. These firstfruits have been reaching out to their fellow Jews since 1967, encouraging them, exhorting them and pleading with them to turn to their *Mashiach*. *Sha'ul* said: 16 "*If the firstfruit is holy, so is the whole batch of dough; and if the root is holy, so are the branches*" (Romans 11:16 TLV). All Israel is holy, set-apart, to ADONAI. He has never divorced them even though He has had good reason through the years to do so. He chose them He and has promised that He will bring about their final redemption.

There are other parallels in *Parasha Miketz* and Joseph's story. About fifteen years ago, a friend of ours, a Messianic Jewish rabbi (Rabbi Judah Hungerman), gave a message based on this *parasha* at the MJAA Conference in Orlando. In it, he proposed that Benjamin, the youngest brother, was a picture of Messianic Judaism. I don't remember any more details from his message. After remembering his statement, I have been thinking about how this could apply. Here is one idea. Benjamin's father Jacob sought to protect his son by keeping him at home until he was forced by circumstances, circumstances brought about by G-d, to send him to Egypt. ADONAI, the Father, has kept His sons and daughters, Messianic Judaism at home, that is, inconspicuous, from the time of their founding until His coming time for their full revelation and sending into Egypt, the world. The youngest of all the brothers, Messianic Judaism, is about to be revealed to its older brothers, the Jews of the world, as a special sign from ADONAI. Messianic Judaism is a sign of the times. It is a proclamation that Jews who follow Jesus, Yeshua, can worship ADONAI in the same Hebrew way that their fathers did. And, it is a sign to both the Church and to the Jews of the world. Messianic Judaism is visible evidence that we are in the last days.

This is what we are seeing in the world today: 1 *“But understand this, that in the last days hard times will come— 2 for people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, 3 hardhearted, unforgiving, backbiting, without self-control, brutal, hating what is good, 4 treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, 5 holding to an outward form of godliness but denying its power”* (1Timothy 3:1-5a TLV). I am sure that you will agree that this is what we are seeing today? In response to this Godlessness, Yeshua's body is being called into greater action. As a local body, we have been strong, but ADONAI's word to us today is *chazak*, “be strong.” We must continue to stand firm, even stronger, both as individuals and families, but also as a congregation. It will take the efforts of each of us to meet the challenges of this time. Yeshua gave us these words: 27 *“Shalom I leave you, My shalom I give to you; but not as the world gives! Do not let your heart be troubled or afraid”* (John 14:27 TLV). Isn't “do not be afraid” almost the same as *chazak*, “be strong?” The last paragraph of *Birkat HaMazon*, the Blessing after Meals, seems appropriate as a blessing today for us and for everyone who is a part of the Commonwealth of Israel, Messianic Jews, Messianic Gentiles and Christians and traditional Jews. “Blessed are You, O L-rd, King of the Universe, who in goodness gives goodness to all, and will continue to benefit us with goodness and gifts for all time and make us worthy of the return of the Messiah and the life of the world to come. May He who causes peace to reign in the high heavens, let peace descend on us and all Israel. Amen.” Yeshua says to us today: *Chazak Chazak V'nitzchazek*; “Be Strong, Be Strong, and Let Us Be Strengthened!” He, Yeshua, is our strengthener! *Shabbat shalom!*