



Parasha Miketz

December 24, 2022

*Torah:* Genesis 41:1-44:17

*Haftarah:* Zechariah 2:14-4:7

*Ketuwim Shlichim:* Romans 10:1-13

*Shabbat shalom mishpacha!* Our *parasha* today is *Miketz*. Our story today is about Joseph. It began last week with *Parasha Vayashev* when Joseph received a special coat from his father Jacob, continues today and concludes next week in *Parasha Vayigash*. Here is the main story so far. 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 and their jealousy and hatred toward him increased. Joseph was sold to a caravan on its way to Egypt and he eventually wound up as a slave in Potiphar's house. He rejected Potiphar's wife's advances, she cried rape, and Joseph was put in prison. While he was in prison, he interpreted the dreams of two of Pharaoh's officials, his butler and his baker. The meaning of the baker's dream was that he would be hanged and it came true. 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* begins. Pharaoh had two dreams, one about cows and one about seven ears of grain. In the first dream, seven fat cows were eaten by seven emaciated cows. In the second dream, seven healthy ears of grain were eaten by 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. This was two years after the butler was released from prison. Joseph had suffered in the prison for another two years, but it was necessary to wait that long for Pharaoh to have his dreams and to need to have the dreams interpreted. Joseph 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 a plan to store the excess grain of the seven years of plenty as a reserve for the seven famine years. Pharaoh appointed Joseph, thirty years old at the time, as vizier, the second in command in Egypt. As a part of Joseph's induction as vizier, Pharaoh renamed him. He named him *Tzafnat Pa'neach*, תַּצַּפְנַתְּ פַּנְעַח. It means "the god speaks and he lives," but this was not referring to the G-d of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Pharaoh referred to himself as the god who allowed Joseph to live. During the seven years of plenty, Joseph began to oversee the collection of grain. He was married to Osnat, and she bore him two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. Then the second seven years and the famine began and it affected not only Egypt, but 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 Simeon as a hostage. To have him released, he required them to return to Canaan and to bring back their brother Benjamin to prove their innocence. When they returned to 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. Simeon 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. The climax will come next *Shabbat*.

Joseph's story is a story of triumph after tragedy, being so greatly wronged and having suffered 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. We recognize Joseph as a type of Messiah, suffering for Israel, his family, just as Isaac in his role as a sacrifice prefigured Yeshua's sacrifice. There are many, many parallels between Joseph and Yeshua as Messiah. I won't be going into that kind of detail, but will point out one more very obvious parallel. Joseph's early and wrongful treatment was reversed and he rose to second in command in Egypt. The same happened to Yeshua who after being despised and killed was raised to sit 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, but not all of his brothers because Benjamin was not involved. Yeshua was also persecuted by His own family, His brother and sister Jews, but not all of them. Yeshua's disciples and His other followers are a picture of Benjamin, the son who remained in his father Jacob's house. 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 children of Abraham, 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. Just as He sent Joseph to Egypt, He sent His Son to Egypt, the world, to die as a sacrifice for the sins of His people Israel and every person who calls upon His name. But, the Jews didn't kill Yeshua. It was G-d's plan. Because of His love for all of mankind, Yeshua chose to die for our sins and it is our sins that killed Him.

But, for 2000 years, the majority of Jews have not recognized the promise of salvation in Yeshua's death, the gift which ends in the *olam habah*, the world to come, and eternity with ADONAI. Speaking of Israel, *Sha'ul* wrote to the congregation in Rome: 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 of Jews have rejected Him. Year after year, the three *parshiyot* about Joseph bring Messiah to their minds. Our prayer is that very soon they will be able to see the truth. These words in Romans have also been a stumbling block to Gentiles. Most Christian Bibles translate "goal" as "end" rather than its true meaning, "end goal." This is the antinomian position which proclaims that Yeshua by His death ended *Torah*. The correct meaning of this verse is that the *Torah* is pointing to salvation through Yeshua who is pictured in it. Rabbinic Jews changed the *Torah* in the *Talmud* to suit their beliefs and many Christians also believe that Jesus ended

the Law. Both will soon come to know ADONAI's truth about the *Torah*. Not only, will scales fall off of Jewish eyes, but off of the eyes of Yeshua's Gentile followers.

As followers and disciples of Yeshua, we are expected to act in a certain way. The word disciple comes from the word discipline. It is defined as: "the practice of training people to obey rules or a code of behavior." Yeshua is training us to follow after Him and Scripture is our only authority. We are not to reject or change the *Torah*, but to learn from it and where possible, to follow it.

If Yeshua were to give us a word of encouragement regarding our walk as His disciples, what would He say? Very possibly, He would say *chazak*, be strong. As a congregation, we repeat this word 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." As followers of Yeshua, we are growing stronger, firmer in our commitment to Him. As we see the world turning away from G-d and persecution increasing, Yeshua strengthens us. ADONAI said to Israel: 10 "Fear not, for I am with you, be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you. Surely I will help you. I will uphold you with My righteous right hand." (Isaiah 41:10 TLV). He said: "I will *im-mastika*, אֲמַצְתִּיךָ, strengthen you." "I will *azartika*, אֲזַרְתִּיךָ, help you." "I will *temaktika*, תִּמְכֶּנִּי, uphold you." Who is His righteous, right hand who does this? It is Yeshua who in His death was exalted, raised to sit at the right hand of the Father.

Right hand is an important concept in Hebrew thought. When Benjamin was about to be born and Rachel was dying, she named him *Ben Oni*, Son of my sorrow. Regarding the naming of Benjamin, Matthew Henry in his commentary said: "But Jacob, because he did not want to renew the sorrowful remembrance of the mother's death every time he called his son by his name, changed his name, and called him Benjamin, the son of my right hand; that is, 'very dear to me, set on my right hand for a blessing, the support of my age, like the staff in my right hand.'" *Yamin* means "right hand." *Ben - Yamim*, son of my right hand. Another meaning of *Benyamin* is "son of my strength." The right side is a place of favor and strength.

ADONAI goes on to say through Isaiah: 11 "Behold, all who were angry at you will be ashamed and disgraced. Those who quarrel with you will be as nothing and perish. 12 Though you will look for those who contended with you, you will not find them. Those who warred against you will be as nothing at all. 13 For I am Adonai your God who upholds your right hand, who says to you, "Fear not, I will help you." (Isaiah 41:11-13 TLV). *Yemineka*, יְמִינִי, is "your right hand." ADONAI is with us and will help us. He upholds our right hand, our strength, so that we will be victorious in both physical and spiritual battles. The exhortation, *Chazak*, is particularly relevant for us today because of the trying times that we are facing. And, we don't know what we might yet face. Continue to be strong as you face new challenges.

To be able to withstand the world, symbolic Egypt, we must 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). Here is the armor.

*Sha'ul* tells us to “Put on the belt of truth.” What is truth? Yeshua said: 17 “*Make them holy in the truth. Your word is truth.*” (John 17:17 TLV). When Yeshua said this, the only Scripture, ADONAI’s Word, was the *Tanakh*. It is ADONAI’s basic truth which has been expounded upon by the *Ketuvim Shlichim*, the writings of Yeshua’s disciples. To put it on as a belt, we must know it. Study to show yourself approved! (2Timothy 2:15).

He said: “Put on the breastplate of righteousness.” The breastplate protects your heart. Symbolically, the heart is the place of the issues of life, from which either good or bad things can come. Temptations can affect our hearts. Righteousness means being right in the eyes of ADONAI. Put on the breastplate of righteousness by walking fully and completely in Yeshua’s footsteps so that our life is right in ADONAI’s eyes. 10 *It is clear who are the children of God and who are the children of the devil by this—anyone who does not act righteously or love his brother is not of God.* (1John 3:10 TLV).

Next, *Sha'ul* said: “Make your feet ready with the good news of *shalom*.” Making our feet ready means that as we move about, we are to take *shalom* everywhere we go. According to the Complete Jewish Bible, *shalom* means: “peace, tranquility, safety, well-being, welfare, health, contentment, success, comfort, wholeness and integrity.” *Shalom* is much more than hello or goodbye. Not only should we carry *shalom* with us, but also do our best to introduce it into situations which we encounter. Yeshua said: 33 “*These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have shalom. In the world you will have trouble, but take heart! I have overcome the world!*” (John 16:33 TLV). The Yiddish for trouble is *tsuris*. It means troubles, worries, aggravation, woes, suffering, grief or heartache. In the world, we have all these things, but because Yeshua has overcome the world, we have His *shalom*. But, you must believe that you have it!

Next, *Sha'ul* encourages us to “Take up the shield of faith to protect us from *HaSatan*’s flaming arrows. We can expect if we are Yeshua’s that we will be the Adversary’s target, but we are protected by our faith. The writer of Hebrews says regarding faith: 1 *Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of realities not seen.* (Hebrews 11:1 TLV). Through faith, we see victory over *HaSatan*. It is the power of belief with the knowledge that he is a defeated foe and his flaming arrows cannot hurt us if we stand in faith. *Ya'acov* said: 7 *Therefore submit to God. But resist the devil and he will flee from you.* (James 4:7 TLV). The Greek word *antistēte* (anth-is’s-te-te) means resist or oppose. We resist him by our word of faith, “in Yeshua’s name *HaSatan*, be gone!”

*Sha'ul* tells us to: “Take the helmet of salvation.” If you are not wearing this helmet, you have no chance against *HaSatan*. The Scripture which comes to mind is about the sons of Sceva the *kohen*. They tried to remove a demon by invoking the name of Yeshua whom *Sha'ul* preached. But, they, themselves, did not know Yeshua, weren’t wearing the helmet of salvation, and this is what happened: 15 *But the evil spirit answered them, “I know Yeshua and I know about Paul, but who are you?”* 16 *Then the man with the evil spirit sprang at them, subduing and overpowering all of them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.* (Acts 19:15-16 TLV). If we don’t know Yeshua personally, it is futile to try and deal with the Adversary.

*Sha'ul* said: “Take the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of G-d.” Use the Word as a sword just as Yeshua did. In the wilderness, He said to *HaSatan*: “It is written” and then quoted *Torah*. (Matthew 4:1-11). *Kefa* also said: 8 *Stay alert! Watch out! Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, searching for someone to devour.* 9 *Stand up against*

him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being laid upon your brothers and sisters throughout the world. (1Peter 5:8-9 TLV).

Sha'ul then said: 18 Pray in the Ruach on every occasion, with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, keep alert with perseverance and supplication for all the kedoshim. (Ephesians 6:18 TLV). Why pray in the Spirit? Sha'ul also teaches us: 26 In the same way, the Ruach helps in our weakness. For we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Ruach Himself intercedes for us with groans too deep for words. 27 And He who searches the hearts knows the mind of the Ruach, because He intercedes for the kedoshim according to the will of God. (Romans 8:26-27 TLV). I interpret that to mean when we pray in the Spirit, in tongues, we don't know what we are praying, but the *Ruach* does and intercedes for us. We must all put on G-d's armor daily and it will never be more important as the battle intensifies.

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. Our prayer for the salvation of all Israel is urgent. Pray for ADONAI's time for Yeshua to be revealed to all Israel! 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, we are also praying for *bikkurim*, firstfruits, Jews to be saved now. The Jewish firstfruits of the salvation of Israel become a part of the remnant and add their prayers for all Israel.

Messianic Judaism has been here for 55 years, but is about to come into new prominence within Yeshua's greater body of believers, the Church, and also in traditional Judaism. Our time has come to be the light that we are called to be. The time has come for us to be the messengers that Yeshua will return soon. We in Messianic Judaism are no more special than Yeshua's followers in the Church. We are here because of our calling by ADONAI and the truth that Messianic Judaism is a sign. When it began in 1967, it was a sign of the "last days." Its twin sign was the recapture of Jerusalem by Israel that same year, 1967. These two signs appeared at the same time. The recapture of Jerusalem was prophesied by Yeshua in the Book of Luke. He said: 24 ... Jerusalem will be trampled by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled" (Luke 21:24b TLV). An equally important sign some 19 years earlier was the miraculous rebirth of the Nation of Israel in 1948. That Messianic Judaism was birthed through the *bikkurim*, the firstfruits of salvation of the whole body of Jews is very important. These firstfruit Jews have been reaching out to their fellow Jews since 1967, encouraging them and exhorting 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. Even those who are Atheists, Buddhists or Hindus, are holy, set apart, because ADONAI has never divorced them even though He has had good reason through the years to do so. He chose them, set them apart, and He has promised through the prophets that He will bring about their final redemption. The scales will fall from their eyes and they will mourn for their brother Yeshua whom they have rejected.

Benjamin in our story can be a picture of Yeshua's Jewish disciples and His other Jewish followers, the son who remained in his father Jacob's house. Benjamin would include all Jewish believers in Yeshua from the 1<sup>st</sup> century until now. Our friend Rabbi Judah Hungerman suggested this possibility a number of years ago and I have meditated on it, expanding it. Benjamin's father Jacob sought to protect his youngest 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 Jews at home, that is, relatively unknown. They are still at home now, but His coming time for their full revelation is near. Their modern birth, Messianic Judaism's rebirth after its birth in the 1<sup>st</sup> century, happened 55 years ago in 1967. The youngest of all the brothers, Messianic Judaism as represented by Benjamin, is about to be fully revealed to his ten 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 Yeshua can worship ADONAI in the same Hebraic way that their fathers did, 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). Hard times are here. Our society is an “its all about me” society, every man for that which gratifies himself. A large part of those who claim to be Yeshua's body fit the statement “holding to an outward form of godliness, but denying its power. But, there is a faithful remnant in the Church and also in Messianic Judaism. In response to this present Godlessness, Yeshua's body is being called to greater action. 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 supporting each other to meet the challenges of this time.

Our *haftarah* today proclaims: 14 *“Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion! For behold, I am coming and I will live among you’—it is a declaration of Adonai.”* (Zechariah 2:14 TLV). Yeshua is coming to live among us soon. During His last Passover, He gave us these words of comfort and encouragement: 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). He left us His *shalom*. We can have it and we all should. To not be afraid is to “be strong?” *Chazak Chazak V'nitzchazek*; “Be Strong, Be Strong, and Let Us Be Strengthened!” Yeshua is our strengthener! *Shabbat shalom!*