



Parasha Vayigash

December 27, 2025

Torah: Genesis 44:18-47:27

Haftarah: Ezekiel 37:15-28

Ketuvim Shlichim: Acts 7:9-15

Shabbat shalom, Mishpacha! In *Parasha Vayigash*, we continue with the story of Joseph. It begins, וַיָּגֶשׁ אֵלָיו יְהוּדָה, *Vayigash elav Yehudah*, "And came near to him, Judah." The story of Joseph is one of the longer narratives in the *Torah* and, so far, has spanned three *parshiot*: *Vayeshev*, *Miketz*, and *Vayigash*. Next week, we conclude with the fourth and final *parasha* about Joseph, *Vayechi*. In the first two and again today, we see several events that initially seem like 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 they gathered came and prostrated themselves before Joseph's shock. Then he had another dream in which the sun, moon, and eleven stars prostrated themselves before him, an apparent reference to his father, mother, and eleven brothers. At seventeen years of age, he was probably not the wisest around, not the sharpest tool in the tool chest, and he immediately told not only his brothers but also his father about these dreams. But as foolish as Joseph's actions might seem to us, ADONAI was setting the stage for a great salvation, and He used Joseph's brashness to begin turning his brothers against him, which was necessary for ADONAI to carry out His plan. The brothers were so angry about Joseph's bragging and about his thinking more of himself than they thought he should that they committed a terrible sin and sold their brother into slavery. While it didn't seem so at the time, we eventually learn they felt deep remorse for what they had done.

In today's *parasha*, the brothers learn that G-d was not only the originator of Joseph's dreams but also involved in their selling him to a caravan of Ishmaelites who happened to be on their way to Egypt. In today's *parasha*, as his first dream had prophesied, we find Joseph revealing himself to his brothers after they have prostrated themselves before him. Judah was the only one with the courage to speak, and he pleaded with Joseph to release Benjamin, who had been held as a prisoner since the brothers' previous trip to Egypt, and he offered to

take his place. At this point, Joseph could stand it no more and ordered the servants out of the room. He broke down in tears before them and revealed himself as their brother, Joseph. As they lay on the ground before him, Joseph said 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).

We recognize that Joseph was a type of Messiah, a savior figure, because he was sent by ADONAI to Egypt to save his family. In his position, there are many parallels between Joseph and Yeshua, and it would take all our time today to list and discuss every one. While that's not today's subject, we will list several. Yeshua and Joseph both began their life's work at the age of 30. They were both sent by their father to their brothers. The brothers hated Joseph just as Yeshua was hated by many of his Jewish brothers, and they both rejected their claims. Joseph was sold into Egypt on his brother Judah's advice. Yeshua was handed over to the Romans by his disciple Judas, whose name was actually Judah. Both Joseph and Yeshua were persecuted because of false witnesses. Potiphar's wife lied about Joseph, and Yeshua was falsely accused before Pilate and the Sanhedrin.

Our focus today is on one of their parallels, the age at which both Joseph and Yeshua began their ministries. We find some interesting information about this in an unusual place. Over the past several years, our messages have included information about the book, *The Non-Torah*, and some of you have read it. Its premise is that the *Talmud* is not a divinely inspired work and that we cannot and should not use it to demonstrate or confirm spiritual principles. In other words, ADONAI did not write the *Talmud* as He did when He inspired all the writers of the *Tanakh* and the New Covenant Scriptures. Most within Rabbinic Judaism consider the *Talmud* to have equal authority with the written *Torah*, but we cannot agree. It is not G-d-inspired, and we cannot trust it to be true. However, in some cases, we can learn from it as a historical lesson.

Two passages from the *Talmud* that we will examine today are in *Tractate Pirkei Avot*. It contains information that can give us insight into the ages at which Joseph and Yeshua began walking in their callings. It is found in the *Mishnah*, the foundational part of the *Talmud*, which, according to those in Rabbinic Judaism, is the written form of the "oral torah." *Pirkei Avot*, meaning "the ethics of the fathers," was written down by Rabbi Judah

the Prince around 200 CE during the early years of rabbinic Judaism. The first passage we will look at today is one on which Rabbinic Judaism bases its claim that the *Talmud* holds the same authority as the written Torah. It states: "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, and this supposes an oral transmission, mouth-to-ear, from Moses all the way up to these men. In this passage, the "*torah*" refers not to the written *Torah* but to the "oral torah," a set of instructions supposedly transmitted orally for thousands of years before being written down around 200 CE. Its written form, the *Mishnah*, meaning study by repetition, became the foundation of what later became the *Talmud*, a word meaning study or learning. If you wish to explore this subject further, I recommend obtaining a copy of the book *The Non-Torah: Exposing the Mythology of Divine Oral Torah*. You can find it on Amazon.com.

But in *Pirkei Avot*, another section can help us understand the time when 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, 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 that relate to modern concepts used today in Rabbinic Judaism, and one used in Messianic Judaism. You didn't know that "no pain, no gain" came from the *Talmud*, did you? "Thirteen, for the obligation to observe the *mitzvot*" seems to relate to the *Bar Mitzvah*, a ceremony we use today to mark a boy's transition from childhood to the beginning of manhood. But the phrases "Ten for the study of Mishnah" and "Fifteen, for the study of Talmud" are misleading and anachronistic, as they reference concepts that did not exist at the time these statements were supposedly delivered orally, that is, before becoming written. That is because *Pirkei Avot* was not included in the Mishnah until 200 CE, and these words were said to have been spoken some time after the return from Babylon. The *Mishnah*, the foundational part, and the rabbinic commentary, called the *Gemara*, together make up the

Talmud, and there are two of them. The Jerusalem *Talmud* was completed around 400 CE, while the Babylonian *Talmud* was completed between 500 and 600 CE.

But we can learn from the *Talmuds* by carefully choosing what to focus on, and today we are concentrating on what was said in *Pirkei Avot* about the "age of thirty." This version reads "Thirty for strength," while others read "Thirty for the peak of strength" or "Thirty for full vigor." This means that age 30 was the time in life when a Jewish male was ready to take on leadership in his field. According to *Pirkei Avot*, a Jewish male would begin working at his livelihood at age 20, but he would still require 10 more years of maturity before reaching his full vigor.

The *Torah* says: 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 2 Samuel 5:4 that David entered kingship at age 30, and in Ezekiel 1:1 that Ezekiel began his prophetic calling at age 30. The Levites also entered service at age 30 (Numbers 4:3; 23; 30). By calculation from the Scriptures, we can also see that *Yochanan haMatvil*, John the Immerser, a *kohen*, would have entered his prophetic ministry at about age 30. The timing fits for him because the Scriptures tell us that John was about 6 months older than Yeshua (Luke 1:35-36) and had already been ministering before Yeshua came to him at the Jordan River.

But the *Torah* does not specify the age at which *kohanim* begin their service, and tradition holds that it may be at physical maturity, often by age 13. Yeshua entered His ministry when He was about 30 years old: 23 *“Yeshua was about thirty years old when He began his ministry”* (Luke 3:23 TLV). This does not mean that He became a *kohen* at that time. We know that ADONAI's plan for everything that was to happen "in time" predate time itself, and that Yeshua was appointed as the High Priest of Israel by His Father before time began. 20 *Moreover, it was not without a sworn oath. (Others indeed have become kohanim without a sworn oath, 21 but He with an oath—sworn by the One who said to Him, “Adonai has sworn and will not change His mind, ‘You are a kohen forever.’”)* (Hebrews 7:20-21 TLV).

Putting two and two together, we see that prophets, Levites, and kings entered their full vigor and their appointed work at 30 years old. As Messiah, Yeshua fills important biblical roles: the prophet like Moses, as mentioned in Deuteronomy 18; a priest of the order of *Malkitzedek*, as outlined in Hebrews 7; and a king, as outlined in Isaiah and Zechariah. 5

For to us a child is born, a son will be given to us, and the government will be upon His shoulder. His Name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God My Father of Eternity, Prince of Peace. (Isaiah 9:5 TLV). 9 Rejoice greatly, daughter of Zion! Shout, daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you, a righteous one bringing salvation. He is lowly, riding on a donkey— on a colt, the foal of a donkey. (Zechariah 9:9 TLV). The time chosen by ADONAI for full vigor, the age of 30, is an important age. It is the age at which certain prophets, Levites, and King David entered their appointed offices. When we read that Yeshua began His ministry at age 30, as students of the Torah, we should immediately think of prophet, priest, and king. And, Yeshua, whom we see as the second Moses, followed Moses as prophet, priest, and king, entering into these offices at age 30. He was anointed and consecrated for his ministry at the Jordan River when He was 30 years old: 16 After being immersed, Yeshua rose up out of the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Ruach Elohim descending like a dove and coming upon Him. 17 And behold, a voice from the heavens said, “This is My Son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased!” (Matthew 3:16-17 TLV). That Yeshua served as a prophet during His earthly ministry was verified by Shimon Kefa, Peter, when he identified Him as "the prophet like Moses": 22 Moses said, ‘Adonai your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from among your brothers. Hear and obey Him in all that He shall say to you.’ (Acts 3:22 TLV). He began His active ministry as Kohen Gadol, the High Priest of Israel, after His resurrection, but He was appointed before time and anointed for that office at His immersion in the Jordan. He has always been a priest: 17 For it is testified, “You are a kohen forever, according to the order of Melechizedek” (Hebrews 7:17 TLV).

Yeshua is the prophesied King of Israel as announced by the Wise Men: 1 Now after Yeshua was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of King Herod, magi from the east came to Jerusalem, 2 saying, “Where is the One who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him” (Matthew 2:1-2 TLV). There are numerous places in the Gospels where Yeshua is called BenDavid, Son of David, a reference to His kingship. Matthew wrote: 1 The book of the genealogy of Yeshua ha-Mashiach, Ben-David, Ben-Avraham: (Matthew 1:1 TLV) and 27 As Yeshua went on from there, two blind men followed Him, crying out, “Ben-David, have mercy on us!” (Matthew 9:27 TLV). Mark wrote: 47 When he heard that it was Yeshua of Natzeret, he began to cry out, “Ben-David, Yeshua! Have mercy on me!” (Mark 10:47 TLV). Luke wrote: 38 And he cried out, saying, “Yeshua, Ben-David, have mercy on me!” 39 And those leading the way were scolding him, so he would be

quiet. But he kept shouting all the more, "Ben-David, have mercy on me!" (Luke 18:38-39 TLV). While Yeshua is "asked" if He is "King of the Jews" by Pilate (Matthew 27:11) and Caiaphas (Mark 15:2; Luke 23:3), and is also derisively hailed by that title by the soldiers crucifying Him (John 19:3), there is only one place I have found where He is sincerely called King. It was by the worshipping crowds when Yeshua made His triumphal entrance into Jerusalem in the last week of His earthly life: *13 So they took palm branches and went out to meet Him, shouting, "Hoshia-na! Baruch ha-ba b'shem Adonai! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!' The King of Israel!"* (John 12:13 TLV). The sign above Yeshua's head on the cross also read "King of the Jews," but it was written derisively. (Matthew 27:37, Mark 15:26, Luke 23:38, and John 19:19). But Scripture leaves no doubt that Yeshua is now *Melekh Yisra'el*, King of Israel. He is reigning over His spiritual kingdom in heaven, but upon His triumphal return to earth, He will assume His role as King over the whole world.

We read in *Pirkei Avot*: "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." Concerning the age of 80, it says, "Eighty, for power," and I believe 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 have no information about him at that age, but we do have information at 40. Acts says: *23 "When he (Moses) 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, but that 40-year period was likely significant, as it was for Yeshua in the wilderness for 40 days. It may have been Moses' wilderness period, a foreshadowing of Israel's time in the wilderness. And Moses may have required more preparation time for his ministry, but when he entered it at age 80, he did so with power, the power of G-d to perform mighty miracles. I am in the 80's category, and much closer to 90 than 80, but I don't compare myself to Moses in any way other than by age. However, I have already received *Pirkei Avot's* mark of the age of 90, "to stoop."

The ancient rabbis were perplexed when they examined the Scriptures, perplexed because they saw two different depictions of the Messiah in the *Tanakh*. In Isaiah 53, they saw the one they called *Mashiach ben Yosef*, the Messiah, son of Joseph, who suffered at the hands of his brothers and also in Egypt before his promotion by Pharaoh. Although modern rabbinic Jews say that Isaiah 53 refers to the nation of Israel and not to Yeshua, this was

not always the case. The *Talmud* in *Sanhedrin* 98a and the *Midrash, Ruth Rabbah*, say it refers to the Messiah. They also saw Him in Isaiah 50 (vv. 6-7) and Psalm 22. In *Targum Jonathan*, some ancient rabbis saw the Messiah depicted in Isaiah 52:13 and, as a result, spoke of the one they called the suffering servant Messiah or the leper scholar Messiah. But the ancient rabbis also saw another Messiah in the *Tanakh*, a powerful figure, the one whom they called *Mashiach ben David*, the Messiah, the son of David. They saw Him as a conquering king, the one the people of Judah hoped Yeshua was when they laid palm branches at His feet during His last entry into Jerusalem. But as we know, the two Messiahs are the same, *Yeshua haMashiach*. He came first as the suffering servant Messiah who died for the sins of Israel and the world, and is coming again as the conquering and ruling king who will 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). And the Prophet Micah spoke words very similar to these (4:1-2). Here are two witnesses who agree, Isaiah and Micah. Yeshua will return as King, and I believe it will be soon!

Yes, Yeshua is coming again, and He has told us to occupy until He comes. We are to make disciples, teach and follow His commands, love others, be watchful and ready, and "occupy" by using the gifts He has given us for building His Kingdom. There are also parallels between Yeshua, a Prophet, a Priest, and a King, and us. Some of us are prophets, and a few are kings; yet 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, and we are anointed when we allow the Holy Spirit to take control of our lives. This usually happens when we first trust in Yeshua as Messiah and receive a measure of His *Ruach Kodesh*, the Holy Spirit. But more *Ruach* is available to us, an amount equal to what He poured out on *Shimon Kefa* and the others gathered on the day of *Shavuot*: 4 *They were all filled with the Ruach ha-Kodesh and began to speak in other*

tongues as the Ruach enabled them to speak out. (Acts 2:4 TLV). This same outpouring was evident about ten years later when ADONAI sent Shimon Kefa with the Gospel message, and the Holy Spirit fell upon Cornelius and the Gentiles gathered at his house: 44 While Peter was still speaking these words (his Gospel message to the Gentiles), the Ruach ha-Kodesh fell on all those hearing the message. 45 All the circumcised believers who came with Peter were astonished, because the gift of the Ruach ha-Kodesh had been poured out even on the Gentiles. 46 For they were hearing them speaking in tongues and magnifying God. (Acts 10:44-46a TLV). And there are numerous references in the Book of Acts stating that Yeshua's followers were "filled with the Spirit." (Acts: 4:8, 4:31, 6:3, 9:17, 13:9, and 13:52). Years earlier, just before He ascended to the Father, Yeshua told His disciples about the Holy Spirit that would soon come upon them. 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 we must have to be His witnesses.

We can also ask Him to immerse us in the Holy Spirit and to pour out His Spirit more fully into our lives. It is not something that must be done ritually or trevailed for, but can be asked for individually, even in our personal prayer closet. Yeshua said: 13 *If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Ruach ha-Kodesh to those who ask Him!*" (Luke 11:13 TLV). Yeshua has given that power, the power of the Holy Spirit, to each of us who have called upon His name and asked for the greater infilling of His Spirit. That power is available to all for the purpose of being His witnesses. It is not something to be afraid of, and we do not place any preconceptions on how He will do it. Mark 16 gives us a glimpse of some of 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 believe it can and will. Most of us, myself included, are much like Yeshua's disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane,

who failed Him three times when He asked them to wait and pray. He said this about them: 41 *The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak*" Matthew 26:41b TLV). But those 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.

Our relationship with the Father and the Son is spiritual and supernatural, yet it is also expressed in the physical realm through how we conduct ourselves as Yeshua's disciples. We have been told to study the Scriptures and to walk in them (2 Timothy 2:15), but this is best done with the aid of the Holy Spirit, not just our human effort. There is an old joke about us who have been filled with the Spirit: it says, "We leak." But I don't really think that's 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 for this infilling, there is no time like the present. There's nothing to be afraid of. The Bible says it's so. Let this be your personal prayer today: "Yeshua, help me put aside any part of the 'old man' that may still be within me! I ask You to fill me with Your *Ruach* and strengthen my faith so that I may serve as an effective disciple of Yours. I also ask that the spiritual power You give me be revealed in signs and wonders, not only through me but especially now through all who believe. May Your kingdom come and Your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven, soon, and in our days. Amen!" *Shabbat shalom!*