

# Shavua Tov

Weekly  Parsha

*A Rood Awakening! Torah Commentary*  
By Glenn McWilliams

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Torah Portion: *Vayigash*

ויגש

“And came near”

**Judah walked up to [Joseph] and said, 'Please, your highness, let me say something to you personally. Do not be angry with me, even though you are just like Pharaoh.**

**Vayigash** elav Yehudah vayomer bi adoni yedaber-na avdecha davar be'ozney adoni ve'al-yichar apcha be'avdecha ki chamocha keFar'oh.

Scripture for study:

*Bereshit (Genesis) 44:18 - 47:27*

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Our Torah portion this week contains within it many significant and timely prophetic shadow pictures and practical applications for our time. For the sake of integrity and clarity, let me state from the very start of this teaching that I am an advocate of the “Two House” teaching. For those who may be new to this teaching, let me give a brief explanation of this concept. The nation of Israel consisted of twelve tribes which descended from the sons of Israel: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, Gad, Asher, Naphtali, Dan, Benjamin, and Joseph. I have listed Joseph last, because there is rarely mention of the tribe of Joseph. Instead, Jacob adopts Joseph’s two sons Manasseh and Ephraim as his own.<sup>1</sup>

When the children of Israel come out of Egypt, they are described as a mixed multitude.<sup>2</sup> In the wilderness years the Holy One forms them into a mighty host, with order, officers, judges, laws, government, and an identifiable presence. When Israel crosses over the Jordan River into the Promise Land, they are a nation of twelve tribes. Each tribe conquers and settles in its divinely appointed territory. These tribes are ruled over by judges for nearly 400 years. Eventually, as prophesied in the Torah, the children of Israel ask for a king to rule over them.<sup>3</sup> Shaul was the first king of Israel, followed by David and then Solomon. During this time, Israel became a great nation and prospered in the land. But this rapid growth was not without cost. Solomon

heavily taxed the people of Israel in order to build his palace, the Temple, and the army to protect the land. This taxation weighed heavily upon the people, and stirred some to speak of rebellion. When Solomon died, his son Rehoboam became king. David, Solomon, and Rehoboam were all from the tribe of Judah, making Judah the strongest of all the tribes. The Temple was built in the territory of Benjamin, but was much aligned with the tribe of Judah. The Levites likewise, because of the Temple, were also largely located in Judah and aligned with that tribe.

The other tribes sent Jeroboam to intercede for them with King Rehoboam to lighten the tax burden on the people. But when King Rehoboam responded to their request with a promise to increase the taxes even more, the remaining ten tribes rebelled and separated from the southern tribes.<sup>4</sup> The southern tribes of Judah, Benjamin and Levi, became the House of Judah, while the ten northern tribes became the House of Israel, also sometimes referred to as the House of Joseph, or the House of Ephraim.

To keep his people from developing a renewed loyalty to Judah, Jeroboam built his own temples and established his own priesthood for the House of Israel. Eventually this false cultic practice led to rampant idolatry among the House of Israel. Because of their rampant disobedience, YHWH ELOHIM used the Assyrian Empire to exile the House of Israel to the four corners of the earth. The scattered House of Israel is often referred to as the "Lost Tribes of Israel." Over the years and centuries these tribes have largely assimilated into their new cultures. Eventually these tribes will be gathered again. Proponents of the "Two House" theory teach that the Messianic/Hebrew Roots movement is the beginning of this gathering process. Many of the Gentiles that are coming to Torah are doing so because the Ruach HaKodesh is drawing them back to the covenant. The promise of the new covenant is with both the House of Judah and the House of Israel.

*"Behold, the days come, saith YHWH, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which My covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith YHWH: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith YHWH, I will put My Torah in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their Elohim, and they shall be My people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know YHWH: for they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith YHWH: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." (Jeremiah 31:31-34)*

We should note that at the beginning of this passage the Eternal One declares that He will make this covenant with both houses, while in the middle of the passage it speaks only of the House of Israel. This is because the House of Judah was never completely cut off from her Husband. We have talked numerous times about the marriage between YHWH ELOHIM and the children of Israel that took place at Mount Sinai. When the House of Israel broke this marriage covenant, YHWH literally divorced them, giving them a certificate of divorce and putting them out of His house.

*"I had put her away, and given her a bill of divorce." (Jeremiah 3:8)*

It is this bill of divorce that explains the need for Yeshua's death. Since the Sinai Covenant was entered into by both the Groom and the Bride, both are bound by its words. The Torah teaches,

*"When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favor in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her: then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house. And when she is departed out of his house, she may go and be another man's wife. And if the latter husband hate her, and write her a bill of divorcement, and giveth it in her hand, and sendeth her out of his house; or if the latter husband die, which took her to be his wife; Her former husband, which sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife, after that she is defiled; for that is abomination before YHWH: and thou shalt not cause the land to sin which YHWH thy Elohim giveth thee for an inheritance." (Deuteronomy 24:1-4)*

So it is that YHWH ELOHIM divorced the House of Israel, but not the House of Judah. This is not to imply that the House of Judah does not need the atoning blood of Messiah Yeshua. After declaring YHWH'S divorce from the House of Israel, Jeremiah goes on to declare,

*"And it came to pass through the lightness of her whoredom, that she defiled the land, and committed adultery with stones and with stocks. And yet for all this her treacherous sister Judah hath not turned unto Me with her whole heart, but feignedly, saith YHWH. And YHWH said unto me, The backsliding Israel hath justified herself more than treacherous Judah." (Jeremiah 3:9-11)*

Clearly the House of Judah was likewise guilty of breaking the covenant, and is therefore liable for the blood of the covenant. To understand this, we must remember that this covenant was sealed in blood.

*"And he sent young men of the children of Israel, which offered burnt offerings, and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen unto YHWH. And Moses took half of the blood, and put it in basons; and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar. And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that YHWH hath said will we do, and be obedient. And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which YHWH hath made with you concerning all these words." (Exodus 24:5-8)*

Now that the House of Judah had broken this covenant sealed in blood, either their blood or the blood of a substitute would be required. It is Yeshua who provides this atoning sacrifice, shedding his innocent blood for their guilty blood. Therefore both Houses will ultimately enter the new covenant through the sacrifice of Messiah Yeshua. Because both Houses broke the covenant, both were sent into exile. The House of Judah was sent into exile in Babylon. Unlike the House of Israel that was scattered to the four corners of the earth, Judah was sent relatively intact into the land of Babylon. After 70 years of exile, the House of Judah repented and

returned to the land. Because of this repentance Judah was exiled, but not divorced. Therefore it is only the House of Israel that is mentioned the second time as entering into the new covenant. Since a man cannot take back a defiled first wife that has been put away, the House of Israel is bound to remain outside the covenant and under the curse of this ordinance until either she or her first husband dies. The Messiah Yeshua came to reconcile the House of Israel back to her first husband and to atone for the sins of the House of Judah. Yeshua poured himself out to become one with us (regardless of which House we belong to), taking on our sin, even the sin of the adulterous bride.<sup>5</sup> By faith in Yeshua, we (in our adulterous bride nature) are put to death. By faith in Yeshua we are likewise raised in him to become new creatures.<sup>6</sup> As new beings, we may now enter into a new covenant with YHWH ELOHIM. How sad it is to hear preachers and teachers saying that Jesus died to free us from the covenant, when in fact Yeshua died that we may enter the covenant. Through his death and resurrection The House of Israel will be reconciled to the House of Judah, and both will become one body with Messiah as the head of the body of the bride that will enter this new covenant. So it is that this division of the nation of Israel will be healed. There are numerous Scriptures that prophesy this event.

*“The word of YHWH came again unto me, saying, Moreover, thou son of man, take thee one stick, and write upon it, For Judah, and for the children of Israel his companions: then take another stick, and write upon it, For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel his companions: And join them one to another into one stick; and they shall become one in thine hand.” (Ezekiel 37:15-17)*

*“Then answered I, and said unto him, What are these two olive trees upon the right side of the menorah and upon the left side thereof? And I answered again, and said unto him, What be these two olive branches which through the two golden pipes empty the golden oil out of themselves? And he answered me and said, Knowest thou not what these be? And I said, No my master. Then said he, These are the two anointed ones, that stand by the Master of the whole earth.” (Zechariah 4:11-14)*

The apostle Shaul likewise spoke of these things in his letter to the Ephesians, describing those from the House of Israel that had been scattered among the nations.

*“Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; That at that time ye were without Messiah, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without Elohim in the world: But now in Messiah Yeshua ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Messiah. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; And that he might reconcile both unto Elohim in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby... For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners,*



*but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of Elohim.” (Ephesians 2:11-16, 18-19)*

With this brief explanation as background, let us turn our attention to the Torah portion before us. I believe that this portion is indeed a shadow picture of numerous future events yet to unfold before us. In the story of Jacob, Joseph, and his brothers, we see a father grieved by the division and separation of his family. Here we should see Jacob’s grief over Joseph’s death and absence as our heavenly Father’s grief over the death and absence of the House of Israel. Clearly nothing would delight Jacob more than seeing his whole family united again, including the son who was dead (Joseph) and is now alive. Here we should understand Yeshua’s parable of the prodigal son as it relates to the Two House teaching. The two sons represent the House of Israel and the House of Judah. The House of Israel leaves the Promised Land and is defiled in the land of uncleanness. The other brother stays home and keeps the Torah. Finally the wayward brother (the House of Israel) repents and returns to the covenant, and receives the Father’s many blessings. The faithful brother (the House of Judah) is jealous over the affection and joy of the return of the rebellious one. The Father responds,

*“It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.” (Luke 15:32)*

So it is that we shall see these same dynamics play out in the future as these Two Houses are reunited. In many ways our Torah portion this week gives us instructions for that day.

Our Torah portion begins with a bit of a role reversal. Throughout much of the story of Joseph, we have focused upon Joseph as the type of Messiah. It is Judah who embodies the spirit of Messiah in the opening verses of our portion. Here we witness Judah pleading and interceding for the guilty brother, asking the Viceroy for mercy and compassion on his brother and family. Not only does Judah plead for his guilty brother, but he also willingly offers to give his own innocent life in exchange. We should not miss the fact that Judah does this not for his own sake, but for the sake of his brother and out of love for his father.

It is this powerful act of unselfishness on the part of Judah that stirs the heart of Joseph his brother and brings about the reconciliation of the family. We should take note that before this reconciliation takes place, Judah does not recognize his brother Joseph. Here we see a shadow picture of the Two Houses again. We may also see the beginning of this process in a statement made by Joseph when his sons were born. Joseph was exiled to a distant nation. There he was somewhat assimilated into the life and culture of the land, given a Gentile name, and even a Gentile wife. Joseph’s life had become very comfortable in the land of Egypt. This reality is evident in the names of Joseph’s two sons.

*“And unto Joseph were born two sons before the years of famine came, which Asenath the daughter of Potipherah priest of On bare unto him. And Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh: For Elohim, said he, hath made me forget all my toil, and all my father’s house. And the name of the second called he Ephraim: For Elohim hath caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction.” (Genesis 41:50-52)*

In many ways this is a description of the House of Israel that has become fruitful, comfortable, and even somewhat forgetful in the land of exile. The House of Israel has adapted to and even adopted the culture and customs of the land of exile. But it is Joseph that first recognizes his brother Judah and begins to weep for home, and for his father. This is where I believe we are now in the Messianic/Hebrew Roots movement. The House of Israel recognizes Judah (The House of Judah) as brother and family. There is a stirring in the heart of Joseph (the House of Israel) and a longing for family, unity, forgiveness, healing, and especially for Father. We should note that Joseph several times asks Judah if his father is still alive. But as of yet, Judah does not recognize Joseph (the House of Israel) as a brother. Joseph still looks too much like Egypt for Judah to see him for who he really is. In the same way, those of the House of Israel still look a little too much like the world, the nations, and the Church for Judah to recognize them as being their brothers.

When it is time for Joseph to reveal his true identity, he sends everyone but his brothers out of the room. I believe that Joseph does this for two reasons. First, by sending everyone out of the room, Joseph covers the shame of his brothers. Joseph would not allow anyone to see his brothers in a shocked and remorseful condition. I believe that there is an important message for those who understand themselves to be a part of the House of Israel. They should neither judge nor expose (through criticism) their brother's blindness. For far too long those in the Christian Church have been exposing Judah's blindness to the Messiah, while at the same time being blind to their own identity, as well as to the Torah. This is what Shaul meant when he wrote,

*“What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded (According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear;) unto this day. And David saith, Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumbling block, and a recompense unto them: Let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see, and bow down their back alway. I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy. Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fullness? For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office: If by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh, and might save some of them. For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead? For if the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches. And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree; Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear: For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in His goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off. And they also, if they abide*

*not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graft them in again. For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree: how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree? For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in." (Romans 11:7-25)*

For far too long Christians have boasted against the branches that YHWH pruned from the tree for the sake of the new branches being grafted in. Measure for measure, those that have been boasting have been deceived in their blindness. Just as Jacob exploited his father Isaac's blindness to steal Esau's blessing, and then was himself deceived by his sons concerning Joseph, so too those of the House of Israel boasting against Judah's blindness to Yeshua as Messiah are blind to the pagan sun-god worship they practice and call truth. Little does the Church realize that the blindness that her brother Judah has suffered was for her sake and not his own. Now she, like Joseph, must learn to see the hand of YHWH in all that is transpiring. This is not only for their reconciliation, but for the redemption, reconciliation, and restoration of all of creation. So it is that the Church now must learn to appreciate her brother's blindness and suffering, and seek to cover his nakedness. She should not be pointing out how blind her brother is, but rather how he has been suffering this blindness for her sake. So in the spirit of Joseph, the Church should seek to protect her brother's reputation.

A second reason that Joseph sends everyone from the room is that it leaves him in a very vulnerable position. Alone in a room with eleven brothers who have been known to kill in order to rescue one of their own<sup>7</sup> is a vulnerable place to be. By removing everyone from the room, Joseph removes any appearance of threat before he reveals who he is to his brothers. Here we should also note that when Joseph reveals himself to Judah and his brothers, they do not immediately respond.

*"Then Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him; and he cried, Cause every man to go out from me. And there stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren. And he wept aloud: and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard. And Joseph said unto his brethren, I am Joseph; doth my father yet live? And his brethren could not answer him; for they were troubled at his presence." (Genesis 45:1-3)*

First we should note that Joseph cannot contain himself. This is true for many of the House of Israel. When they come to the realization of who they are, it is difficult to contain the joy, the freedom, and the excitement of realizing they belong to the covenant. But like Joseph, their joy, excitement, and enthusiasm is not always shared by their brother Judah. Even though they declare their identity to him without any other intention than to embrace their brother and be embraced by him, their revelation is not always welcome news. Joseph's brothers remember the past. They remember the animosity, the fear, the anger, and the wrongs done. Let us here also recall that Joseph's brothers did what they did to Joseph because they perceived him as a threat. Now again they fear Joseph, not knowing what his intentions really are. So it is presently with the Two Houses. In this present situation, the House of Judah is the one who has been hurt and

victimized by those now claiming to be their brothers. So when former Christians/Egyptians who have been testing and trying the House of Judah suddenly say, "We are Joseph, your brother," it is not always so settling. Our brother Judah receives this news with some fear and trepidation.

We should note in our portion that it is not enough for Joseph simply to say, "I am Joseph."

*"And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I am Joseph your brother..." (Genesis 45:4)*

Joseph beckons to his brothers to draw near to him. After his brothers draw near to him, he says, "I am Joseph your brother." The House of Israel today too must show their brother Judah that they mean no harm. They must seek to draw their brother near to them. They must first build trust and mutual understanding. When their relationship is no longer threatening, then they may declare they are the House of Israel; that they are brothers, not adversaries. Because of the Christian Church's evangelical efforts to liberate those of the House of Judah from their bondage to the Torah and convert them to sun-god worship through persuasion, persecution, and the penalty of death, we have much to overcome.

The third application of this concept of those of the House of Israel putting every man out from them and standing alone to reveal themselves may be that those in the House of Israel need to put away from them any connection with their pagan Christian past before they can speak with integrity to their brothers. It does them little good to continue to declare themselves as belonging to the covenant people if they are still practicing the pagan idolatry that caused them to be driven from the house of YHWH to begin with. To "stand alone" means that they must clearly come out of the Church and stand, honest and vulnerable, before their brother Judah and invite him to embrace them. This does not mean that they are to become Jews, nor are they to simply embrace all of the customs, traditions, additions, and subtractions made to the Torah that define modern-day Pharisaic Judaism. Thus those of the House of Israel invite their brother Judah to "come near" to them and embrace Torah as taught by Yeshua the Messiah. For reconciliation to happen, for the Two Houses to become one, it will require confession, repentance, restitution, and restoration in both houses.

We should also take note here that this "reunion" takes place in the land of exile and not in the land of Israel. So it is that we should expect to see the healing of the Two Houses take place outside the land before it enters into the land. While this does not exclude the possibility that those present in the land will experience this restoration, it does seem to indicate that it will begin outside the land and then come to the land.

I will be the first to admit that I am not an expert in the realm of end-time prophecy. I do my best to stay away from such topics, deferring instead to teachers such as Michael Rood, Monte Judah, Eddie Chumney, Bill Cloud, and others who are much more gifted and knowledgeable than I. But let me venture to suggest here just a possible shadow picture involving this text. The fact that it is a famine in the land of Israel that forces the House of Judah out of the land, and that eventually all of the brothers leave the land and come to the House of Joseph, which largely, though not exclusively, lives outside the land, I believe that this indicates that the



restoration and reconciliation of the Two Houses will take place during the time of Jacob's trouble and the great tribulation. In other words, when Judah is again driven from the land of Israel, the House of Joseph, still living outside the land, will rise up and provide rescue, respite, refuge and nourishment to his brother Judah.

Unlike World War II, when no country wanted the Jews and left them to be slaughtered by the millions, this time Joseph will declare himself and reach out to his brother Judah. Once again I believe food and not theology will be at the heart of this reconciliation. Those of the House of Joseph who live in the United States and other places of prosperity and abundance, like Joseph, must realize that they have been exiled to these places by the hand of YHWH for the purpose of sustaining life. Like Joseph, they must realize that they are to be planning and preparing during these years of plenty for the bad years of tribulation and persecution yet to follow.

I believe that before reconciliation comes between the Two Houses, there will be a time of purging in the land of Israel. This purging may be the thermal nuclear war that Michael Rood mentions in his teaching on Zechariah chapter 5.<sup>8</sup> Whatever the impetus may be, I believe that this reconciliation will be brought about by necessity rather than simply a spirit of goodwill. Our portion makes it quite clear that whatever the impetus for reconciliation - famine, war, or persecution, it will be by the hand of YHWH. This does not mean that Joseph should not already be reaching out to his brothers in a spirit of love and reconciliation. As I said earlier, time is indeed needed to build trust and understanding. Relationships will be limited by suspicion and fear. Theologies, ideologies, lack of understanding, and religious spirits will hinder the progress of these relationships. Thus like Joseph and his brothers, the Two Houses will spend time testing each another to see if the invitation to relationship is mutual, safe, and sincere. Necessity will ultimately push them beyond their comfort zone and cause them to meet each another.

There is yet another danger that is revealed within this portion. Again let me emphasize, as does the portion, that this reconciliation will take place out of necessity and outside the land of Israel. We should note that the bulk of the movement is away from the land of Israel. Within this story of Joseph and his brothers we see three trips down to Egypt and back again. The first trip to Egypt is without Benjamin; the second trip is with Benjamin; and on the third trip, all the seed of Jacob come down. Again, daring to venture into the realm of the prophetic, I will suggest that this is a shadow picture of three separate exiles from the land of Israel. I believe that the first trip down to Egypt represents the exile of Judah to Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar.<sup>9</sup> Judah returned from this trip seventy years later under the Persian king Cyrus.<sup>10</sup> The second journey of Judah to Egypt is a picture of the exile by the Roman Empire. After a lengthy occupation of the land, Rome sacked Jerusalem, destroyed the Temple, and exiled the House of Judah from the land of Israel, renaming it Palestine. Israel returned from this exile in 1948 to begin rebuilding a homeland. I believe the third journey that includes the whole house of Jacob will be this final future exile while the land of Israel is being purged. Here, however, we see yet another danger.

Joseph is securely and powerfully situated in the land of exile. Blessed by the hand of YHWH, Joseph has the ability to provide for the well being and security of his brothers that are driven into exile by the famine. We should note that Joseph does all in his power to isolate and

insulate his brothers and family from the immorality and idolatry of the land of Egypt. When the brothers come into the land of Egypt, Joseph instructs them to tell Pharaoh that they are shepherds. This seems like peculiar advice, given the further information that shepherds are considered an abomination in Egypt.<sup>11</sup> But it was this advice that would assure that the children of Israel would be given the best and most fertile land as well as be isolated from the rest of the Egyptian culture. Living with abundance can be a blessing, but when this abundance draws one away from his calling and purpose, such abundance can easily become a curse. After all, the children of Israel came to the land and settled there. The Torah teaches us that they had possessions in the land of Egypt.

***“And Israel dwelt in the land of Egypt, in the country of Goshen; and they had possessions therein, and grew, and multiplied exceedingly.” (Genesis 47:27)***

While Egypt was a place of rescue and refuge for the children of Israel, it was never to be their heritage. The land of Israel was their heritage. We have already seen that the land of Israel is indeed a special land. If the rabbis and sages are right, then at least one part of the message of Jacob’s dream of the angels ascending and descending the ladder at Bethel, was to show the special sanctity of the land of Israel.<sup>12</sup> We should also note that every journey out of the land is described as going “down” to Egypt, while every return to the land is described as “going up” to Israel. This is not just a geographical description but a moral one as well. We must ascend to being Israel. Remember that Jacob’s name was changed only after he wrestled with his *yetzer hara* and prevailed.<sup>13</sup> We should also note that the sons of Jacob are not called the children of Israel until after they have overcome their differences and reconciled one with another. Thus, while it is in the plan of YHWH ELOHIM that the children of Israel “go down” into the land of exile, it should never feel like home. The danger that lurks in the abundance and security of the land of exile is evident in the Hebrew of the above quoted verse. In Hebrew, this verse may rightly be read,

***“And Israel settled in the land of Egypt in the land of Goshen, and it seized them, in it they were fruitful and multiplied greatly.” (Genesis 47:27)***

Ibn Ezra and Kli Yakar teach that the brothers were no longer content with what Joseph gave them and bought their own land in Egypt, indicating that the brothers were no longer feeling like aliens but assimilated citizens.<sup>14</sup> Seized by the prosperity and lushness of the land, the children of Israel soon forgot the ravished land of promise. The comfort of Egypt/America can indeed be tempting. There are many from both houses that already have put down their roots in the land of exile. If we look carefully, we will see how subtle its bondage begins. In our portion we must already realize that while Joseph literally saved the country of Egypt from starvation and destruction, and while he sat in the second highest position of authority in the country, he was in many ways still a slave to Pharaoh and could not leave his position even to retrieve his father and family. Again we should note the subtle pattern that emerges here. At first, the presence of the children of Israel is seen to be a blessing. As the land of their habitation is blessed because of their presence, all is well. But when the land of their exile realizes that the blessings they are experiencing are because of the presence of the children of Israel living among them, they will eventually seek to entice them to stay, and then ultimately assure they

will stay by enslaving them. When Israel then rebels against this enslavement, the persecution begins in earnest.

While by necessity the House of Judah may leave the land to “go down” to the land of their exile, a land of refuge and provision, the heart of the children of Israel must always be to “go up” to the land of promise and the land of Torah. Israel will never be able to fulfill its calling in a land where Torah is not the law of the land.

With all of this being said, we do indeed need to be careful and cautious about where our treasures are, for as Messiah has taught us, where our treasures are, there our hearts will be also.<sup>15</sup> We should also realize here the importance of the feast of Hanukkah when we seek to rededicate our living temples and purge them of all the defilement of the pagan culture around us. We should remember that we are pilgrims and sojourners in this world and this land. When Pharaoh inquired of Jacob his age, the patriarch responded,

*“The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the day of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage.” (Genesis 47:9)*

Notice here that Jacob first of all counts his life in days and not just years. This tells us that Jacob lived each day of his life as completely as possible. But we should also notice that Jacob describes these days as few and evil. He also describes his life and the life of his fathers as a pilgrimage on this earth. We too should not become so attached to this passing world. This is true whether we are currently living in the land of Israel or in the land of exile. Our home is in the world to come. Anywhere else we live other than the world to come, we do so only as pilgrims and ambassadors of Messiah.<sup>16</sup> Therefore our treasures are not to be in this world. We must be careful that we do not become possessed by the land of exile. We shall see in next week’s portion that it took the death of Jacob to cause the children of Israel to return to the land. But even then they returned to Egypt. Thus the Holy One would eventually drive them out of the land by great persecution. I pray that when the time comes for us to return to the land, we will be ready to walk in faith and go to the land of our heritage, the land of Torah.

While there certainly are dangers involved in leaving the land and coming to live in a land of refuge and plenty, we should realize that YHWH ELOHIM is with us even in exile. YHWH spoke to Jacob,

*“I am Elohim, the Elohim of thy father: fear not to go down to Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation: I will go down with thee into Egypt; and I will also surely bring thee up again...” (Genesis 46:3-4)*

When the time of Israel’s final exile from the land comes, it will be by the hand of YHWH, and to fulfill the purposes of YHWH. While we may be exiled from our land, we will not be exiled from our Elohim. He will lead us and guide us. In the end, even in exile we shall see and understand how all that has transpired in the history of the children of Israel and the world has been by the guiding hand of the Creator. We shall see His purpose in the events of our lives and be drawn ever closer to Him. Thus, when He calls us to come out of the land of exile and

cross again through the wilderness, I pray we will have the faith to follow Him to His Holy Mountain where He shall cleanse us from every spot, wrinkle, theology, philosophy, man-made tradition, addition, subtraction, and uncleanness, and present us to Himself a new Bride, ready to enter the new covenant and live in the land of Torah as the restored image of YHWH in the world.

SHAVUA TOV!

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<sup>1</sup> Genesis 48:5

<sup>2</sup> Exodus 12:38

<sup>3</sup> Deuteronomy 17:14ff; 1 Samuel 8:5ff

<sup>4</sup> 1 Kings 11:11ff; 1 Kings 12:1ff

<sup>5</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:21

<sup>6</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:17; Colossians 1:20; Revelation 21:5

<sup>7</sup> Genesis 34:26

<sup>8</sup> The Mystery of Iniquity, Michael Rood, Bridge-Logos, Pp. 137-152

<sup>9</sup> 1 Chronicles 6:15

<sup>10</sup> 2 Chronicles 36:22-23

<sup>11</sup> Genesis 46:34

<sup>12</sup> Genesis 28:12

<sup>13</sup> Genesis 32:24-29

<sup>14</sup> The Schottenstein Edition Interlinear Chumash Bereshit, Mesorah Publication, Pg. 294

<sup>15</sup> Matthew 6:21

<sup>16</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:20