

THE OPEN BIBLE



Parasha Vayigash

- Genesis 44:18 – 47:27
- Ezekiel 37:15-28
- Luke 6:12-16

The Torah Portion at a Glance

Judah approaches Joseph to plead for the release of Benjamin, offering himself as a slave to the Egyptian ruler in Benjamin's stead. Upon witnessing his brothers' loyalty to one another, Joseph reveals his identity to them. "I am Joseph," he declares. "Is my father still alive?"

The brothers are overcome by shame and remorse, but Joseph comforts them. "It was not you who sent me here," he says to them, "but YHWH. It has all been ordained from Above to save us, and the entire region, from famine."

The brothers rush back to Canaan with the news. Jacob comes to Egypt with his sons and their families – seventy souls in all -- and is reunited with his beloved son after 22 years. On his way to Egypt he receives the Divine promise: "Fear not to go down to Egypt; for I will there make of you a great nation. I will go down with you into Egypt, and I will also surely bring you up again."

Joseph gathers the wealth of Egypt by selling food and seed during the famine. Pharaoh gives Jacob's family the fertile county of Goshen to settle, and the children of Israel prosper in their Egyptian exile. (adapted from chabad.org)

The Messiah in the Torah Portion

The historical and Biblical Messiah Y'shua was not hyped up on the modern psycho-babel that spews from many of today's popular televangelists. No, the Scriptures record a highly emotional Messiah who was often moved with compassion towards others. He wasn't fearful, stressed or anxious. Nor did he ever put his needs before others. Instead, Messiah cared for the needy and even wept at the death of his friend Lazarus. The prophet Yesha'yahu calls the Moshiach a "man of many sorrows." Isaiah 53:3-4, "He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of YHWH, and afflicted."

When we consider such, we can compare Y'shua ben Yosef to the Yosef in our weekly Torah portion. Yosef didn't conceal his emotions much, but allowed his feelings to show. He was moved by his brother's care for their father and he was overjoyed to finally meet his brother Benjamin. Y'shua showed his compassion in these verses:

- Mark 6:34, "When Y'shua landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things."
- Matthew 14:14, "When Y'shua landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick."
- Matthew 20:34, "Y'shua had compassion on them and touched their eyes. Immediately they received their sight and followed him."
- Matthew 15:32, "Y'shua called his disciples to him and said, "I have compassion for these people; they have already been with me three days and have nothing to eat. I do not want to send them away hungry, or they may collapse on the way."
- Hebrews 13:8, "Y'shua the Messiah is the same yesterday and today and forever."

Yosef fed and cared for the very same family that had betrayed and sold him. Yosef was sold for silver, falsely accused of sin, and forgotten for two years. Such events would cause anyone to be emotionally raw and unforgiving. Yet our Torah portion shows that Yosef did not retaliate against his family. He showed love and compassion to his brothers, even though they didn't deserve such. The Torah records that Yosef, like Y'shua, was also a man of many sorrows. His life was not all roses. He faced hardship and pain at every turn. Y'shua fed and cared for the very same people that would later yell "crucify." The Moshiach Y'shua also showed forgiveness on the execution tree when he cried "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." Yosef and Y'shua used their emotions to manifest the divine will of YHWH. Our emotions should cause us to react positively towards others in an expression of love and forgiveness. Take a few moments to pray about your attitude and actions towards others. Do you show the compassion of Y'shua and Yosef? Do you view other's needs as more important than your own? Are you a good representation of Y'shua's emotions?

Applying the Portion to Life Today

This week's Torah portion provides an excellent example of the power of forgiveness. Just read the parasha and see how gracious Yosef is to his brothers. While coming in contact with his long estranged family Yosef gains the upper hand. He could really get revenge. He is the person that the eleven stars, the sun and moon are bowing to. Yosef is the wheat sheaf that is surrounded by the other stalks as they revere him. Yosef is in the place of power in Egypt and could act as the judge and the jury. He could return "tit for tat" and seek revenge upon his family. Yosef had been wronged and mistreated; yet there remains in Yosef a desire for restoration. Yosef wants to forgive his family. Yosef understands a few facts about forgiveness.

Forgiveness Fact # 1: Forgiveness is absolution

There are several words in the Hebrew language for forgiveness. The one most often used today is "selihah" or in plural form "slichot." If you were on the streets of Israel today and bumped into someone you would simply say "slichot" for "forgive me" or "pardon/excuse me." This word means a total absolution and pardoning of the offense. Slichot is also the name of a section of prayers spoken during times of repentance and on Yom Kippur. Because a person either sins against the Almighty YHWH or against another person, slichot is a two dimensional action. Slichot is given either from man to man or from the Creator to man. This teaching will deal specifically with human forgiveness. In Hebrew these sins are called "bein adam le-havero" or injury against a fellow man. Interestingly these sins against other people must be forgiven before forgiveness from YHWH is granted.

The Messiah's comment on this subject in the book of Matthew reflects the rabbinical teachings of his time. "For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins," Matthew 6:14-15. The Talmud has several sayings that read almost identical to this verse. Both the person who has sinned and the person who has been sinned against have an obligation to accept and give. "All who act mercifully (forgivingly) toward their fellow creatures will be treated mercifully by Heaven, and all who do not act mercifully toward their fellow creatures will not be treated mercifully by Heaven," says the Talmud.

Forgiveness Fact # 2: To get it grant it

To get forgiveness you must grant forgiveness. Forgive when asked. That's pretty basic isn't it? Well, it is also pretty hard. When you've been hurt, when your integrity has been questioned, when people are untrustworthy it is very difficult to put the past behind you. Yet you must. Messiah Y'shua taught this when he told his talmidim to pray, "Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us."

This parasha begins with Yosef's brother begging for forgiveness and a pardon for his younger brother Binyamin. "Y'hudah went up to him and said: "Please, my master, let your servant speak a word to my master. Do not be angry with your servant, though you are equal to Pharaoh himself," Genesis/Beresheet 44:18. Y'hudah and the brothers have realized their wrongs and don't want to bring any more grief to their father. Even though the brothers did not know Yosef's identity, they approached Yosef to seek a different outcome than what has been determined. The brothers could have treated Binyamin just like they had previously treated Yosef but they did not. Instead Y'hudah offers himself as a substitute and proves that he has learned his lesson. Messiah Y'shua taught that to get forgiveness you must give it, "Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us," He said.

Forgiveness Fact # 3: It considers other people

"Now then, please let your servant remain here as my master's slave in place of the boy, and let the boy return with his brothers. How can I go back to my father if the boy is not with me? No! Do not let me see the misery that would come upon my father," Beresheet 44:33. Forgiveness brings harmony and shouts out "it is not all about me!" It wipes the slate clean, fixes the broken, and reaches out in love. In Beresheet 37:26-27 the very same brother, brother Yahudah, who sold Yosef into slavery offers himself as a slave to Yosef in order to spare Binyamin (and Ya'acov). Through this selfless act of substitution Yahudah was actually seeking slichot and righting the wrongs of the past. Messiah Y'shua acknowledges this when He said "greater love hath no man than he who lay down his life for his friends."

The Talmud says, "if you have done your fellow a little wrong, let it be in your eyes great; if you have done him much good, let it be your eyes a little; if he has done you a little good, let it be in your eyes great; if he has done you a great wrong, let it be in your eyes little."

Forgiveness Fact # 4: It reveals your true self

During the course of events of this parasha Yosef breaks into weeping a total of three times until finally he can restrain himself no more. "Then Yosef could no longer control himself before all his attendants, and he cried out, "Have everyone leave my presence!" So there was no one with Yosef when he made himself known to his brothers. And he wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard him, and Pharaoh's household heard about it," Beresheet 45:1 & 2. True forgiveness does this for you. It breaks down the

walls that have been built over the years. It reveals what is hidden beneath angry faces and harsh words. Forgiveness brings to surface the pains of the past and acknowledges that wrong is wrong.

Forgiveness Fact # 5: It is a gift of unmerited favor

Yosef knows that forgiveness is absolution from the sin. So instead of punishing the brothers for what they have done to him, Yosef pardons them and embraces them. "Then he threw his arms around his brother Binyamin and wept, and Binyamin embraced him, weeping. And he kissed all his brothers and wept over them. Afterward his brothers talked with him," Beresheet 45:14-15. Yosef keeps the mitzvah found in Vayikra (Leviticus) 11:18, which says, "though shalt not take vengeance nor hold a grudge." This act of mercy, this act of forgiveness is not earned. Forgiveness is to be given freely to a repentant person. It is not optional.

Slichot realizes that to "err is human," people will be offended. Just as Yosef gave a huge tribute of gifts to his brothers and father, forgiveness gives those involved the gift of a new beginning. With Yosef and his brothers slichot brought hugs, smiles, tears, kisses, and a fresh start. "Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as YHWH forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity," Colossians 3:13-14. Slichot should put an end to bitterness and strife and help bring healing to the family of Messiah.

Forgiveness Fact # 6: It reveals the truth

While revealing his identity to his brothers Yosef is not scared nor is he slow to remind them of their sin. The truth is that they sinned against him. Just as Judah/Y'hudah drew near to offer repentance/teshuvah, now Yosef draws near to offer forgiveness. Please note that before forgiveness can come there must always be teshuvah. "Then Yosef said to his brothers, "Come close to me." When they had done so, he said, "I am your brother Yosef, the one you sold into Egypt! And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that Elohim sent me ahead of you. For two years now there has been famine in the land, and for the next five years there will not be plowing and reaping. But Elohim sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance," Beresheet 45:4-8. While YHWH used the course of events in Yosef's life, what his brothers did was still a grievance.

The truth is that Yosef forgives them of this hideous injury AND admits that it was from YHWH. While Yosef had earlier interpreted many dreams, now Yosef is interpreting the events of his life. What has happened has happened; the past is the past and it cannot be changed. A person must be accountable and responsible for their actions for restoration to take place. This might even mean humbling yourself to admit a wrong you did or did not do. This is the truth and the truth will set you free.

There was once an old and wise Rabbi who was teaching a group of children about repentance and forgiveness. As he concluded his lesson he wanted to make sure that he had made his point. The ancient Rabbi leaned towards the children and said, "Can anyone tell me what you must do before you can obtain forgiveness of sin?" There was a short pause and then, from the back of the group, a small boy spoke up. "Sin," he said. Sin, hurt, and pain can be erased, healed, and forgiven through a proper understand of slichot and a proper offering of forgiveness.

Whether you are a Rabbi yourself of just an ordinary Joe there is much still to be learned about forgiveness. Y'shua said to offer this pardon even if you are sinned against seventy times seven times. Forgiveness is a supernatural power able to bridge the gap between offended parties while restoring fellowship through love.

Forgiveness. Just think about the emotions this word conjures up. Imagine Americans forgiving other Americans for years of segregation and racism based upon skin color. Visualize a guilty death row inmate being mercifully pardoned because of life changes. Envision Yosef graciously forgiving his brothers for throwing him into a dark pit, selling him into a life of slavery, and blaming his disappearance on wild animals. Imagine forgiveness restoring friendships or relationships in your life. It can if you can replicate the actions of Yosef and let go of the pain. When you apply this week's Torah portion to your life, you will never be the same.

- Genesis 44:18 – 47:27
- Ezekiel 37:15-28
- Luke 6:12-16

Portion Points to Ponder

1. The Hebrew name for this portion is "Vayigash." What does this mean?
2. Read Ezekiel 37:15-28. How does this relate to the story of Genesis this week?
3. Consider the words found in Luke 6:12-16. What did you learn from studying this passage?
4. How does this Torah portion speak of the Messiah Y'shua?
5. Describe two ways that you can apply this week's Torah portion to your life.
6. Why does Yosef test his brothers regarding the cup, money, and even Simeon? Do you think he was trying to decide if they had learned from their previous sins?
7. This portion begins with the phrase "Judah came near." How is this phrase important?
8. Judah speaks to Yosef about his father Ya'acov in a loving manner. It was Judah that originally wanted to mislead and emotionally hurt his father by selling Joseph into slavery. Why the change?
9. What does it mean that Jacob's life "was bound up in Benjamin's life?"
10. How are Benjamin and Yosef connected?
11. Who offered himself as surety for Benjamin?
12. When Yosef made himself known to his brothers he was very emotional. How is this symbolic of Y'shua being "the man of sorrow?"
13. Yosef said "I am Yosef" and his brothers could not respond. Explain why this is similar to how all believers will be silent when we stand before the judgment seat of YHWH.
14. Discuss how the statement "I am Yosef" is being repeated today by believers who are coming to the knowledge of their Israelite identity.
15. Yosef said "elohim sent me before you to preserve life." How is this similar to Romans 8:28?
16. How many years had the famine ravaged the world at the time of Yosef's reunion with his family? Compare this to the resurrection of Messiah and the return of Messiah.
17. Why did Yosef use the word "remnant" in Genesis 45:7?
18. Where did the Israelites dwell as they came to the land of Egypt? Why is this land important?
19. Why did Yosef want his family to live in the land of Goshen?
20. Had Yosef and Benjamin ever met?

21. "Yosef fell upon the neck of Benjamin and wept" in Genesis 45:14. How is this different than Esav falling upon the neck of Jacob in Genesis 33:14?
22. Pharaoh promoted Yosef and his family and gave them the best land of Egypt. Is this a representation of Proverbs 16:17?
23. How did Ya'acov respond when he heard that Yosef was alive and well? Is this similar to Thomas in the book of John chapter 20?
24. On the way to Egypt, Jacob stopped at Beer Sheva to offer sacrifices. Why? What came of such worship?
25. What did YHWH promise Jacob about his journey to Egypt?
26. Study the words found in Genesis 46:3 which says, "I am YHWH, the elohim of your father; do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for I will make you a great nation. The terms for "great nation" is "goy gadol." What is significant about this phrase? Who is a goy?
27. In Egypt, Yosef had two sons named "Ephraim" and "Manasseh." Were these boys full blooded Israelites? Why or why not?
28. Benjamin named each of his sons in honor of Yosef. What are the meanings of these names in the Hebrew: Bela, Beker, Ashbel, Gera, Naaman, Ehi, Rosh, Muppim, Huppim and Ard
29. How many Israelites went down into Egypt? Explain the differences found in Genesis 46:26 and 46:27 AND Acts 7:14. Why do these verses give different numbers?
30. Who went first to Yosef? See Judges 20:18.
31. What was the trade of the Israelites? Why was this an abomination to the Egyptians?
32. Explain how the lifestyle of the Hebrews separated them from the Egyptians.
33. Was Goshen the best of the land?
34. Why would Ya'acov bless the evil Pharaoh?
35. How did the famine make Egypt rich? Compare this to Amos 8:11.
36. Who were Pharaoh's original slaves? How did the sons of Jacob become slaves to Pharaoh?
37. What did you learn from this week's "Open Bible" teaching?

The Open Bible is a teaching series written by Daniel Rendelman of Emet Ministries. Daniel Rendelman is the found and leader of Emet Ministries and the author of the book "Finding the Truth." He, his wife, and five children live in Newberry, South Carolina. He can be reached at emetministries@gmail.com. Find more teachings, audio messages, videos, and music at www.emetministries.com.

