

upon His children for His work to be accomplished (1 Corinthians 12:28-31; Ephesians 4:11-13). You know what the gift is and have seen it operate through you at times. Just how do you operate with a recognizable supernatural gift? Your challenge is to follow the lead of Joseph.

First, remember that the gift has been given to you for purposes beyond your own personal aggrandizement. Instead, whenever you sense a spiritual gift working through you, be cautioned to give whatever glory is due to the Lord for His work to be accomplished through you. Too many times, men and women given gifts of prophecy or healing take advantage of their gifting and begin to use it for manipulative purposes. Many times this results in people who eventually bring dishonor to our Heavenly Father. Too frequently this impedes, rather than advances, His Kingdom work.

Hopefully, we can all take the life of Joseph and his humble example as the proper way to handle the spiritual giftings that are granted by the Lord to each one of us. We must use such spiritual gifts for the purposes of glorifying God, and ultimately drawing people unto Him. If you are straying in the other direction, beware!

Cry out to Him for mercy! Let Him receive the glory that He alone deserves! Ask the Lord to give you the same understanding that Joseph received. Perhaps as you give God the glory for the gifting you have received, He will give you increased responsibility in handling additional tasks in His Kingdom as others are impacted with the message of the gospel.

On the other hand, the Lord may decide to allow you to take credit for what He is doing through you. Then your reward may be here on Earth, rather than through eternity. Remember this reality: we all get the choice of when and by whom we want to be rewarded. Do you want the recognition of mere mortals, for a short season? Or would you prefer eternal favor? *It takes faith to choose the latter option.* Perhaps like Joseph, with some time in seclusion seeking the Father, we might be prepared to make the right choices. If nothing else, quietness before the Lord can certainly enhance our ability to more clearly hear His voice. Perhaps that is one of the reasons He has given us a day to rest and focus upon Him. Consider these questions as you ponder on *Mikkeitz* this *Shabbat*...

V'yigash וַיִּגַּשׁ He approached “Judah and Joseph Reconciled”

Genesis 44:18-47:27
Ezekiel 37:15-28

In this week's Torah reading, we see how Joseph encounters his brothers, who must come to Egypt to purchase provisions. He explains to them that what they intended for evil by selling him into slavery, God has turned around into something good, as he can help them:

“God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant in the earth, and to keep you alive by a great deliverance. Now, therefore, it was not you who sent me here, but God; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh and lord of all his household and ruler over all the land of Egypt” (Genesis 45:7-8).

When we consider God's plans to help people, through difficult circumstances, you can no doubt draw up a list of many potential applications of this—both in and outside of the Scriptures. Perhaps you yourself have seen the Lord work through terrible circumstances, which have ultimately turned out to be great blessings.

V'yigash is an annual reminder of the Father's plan to restore His people to a place of wholeness, just as He did the family of Jacob in ancient times. Each year Torah students have the opportunity to review these dramatic interactions between the sons of Jacob/Israel. The sovereign hand of the Creator should clearly be recognized throughout these recorded in *V'yigash*. We can be confident and assured that our Creator is still maintaining His promises to His people. The encouraging example of brothers finally being reconciled to one another at this particular juncture in the past, should give us great hope that eventually such a place of unity will be achieved among His people now. The Psalmist reminds us each of how glorious it is when we dwell together in unity.

"A Song of Ascents, of David. Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity!" (Psalm 133:1).

But what is it about this Torah portion that can be so encouraging to our generation, now looking back at these events after almost four millennia of intervening history? Are there some things that we could be focusing on in light of our present circumstances as a growing and expanding Messianic movement? What about the Messiah-like qualities exemplified by the two principal characters of this familial drama? Is it possible that for our edification and instruction, we have been given excellent examples of the self-sacrifice of Judah, and then the mercy of his brother Joseph?

The Self Sacrifice of Judah

As the previous *parashah* concludes and this one begins, we see that Judah is increasingly becoming a spokesperson for the family, seeking sustenance from the grain-rich Egyptians. Remember one distinction among the brothers from *Mikkeitz* (Genesis 41:1-44:17) last week: Judah pledged his life to his father Israel for the life of his brother Benjamin:

"Judah said to his father Israel, 'Send the lad with me and we will arise and go, that we may live and not die, we as well as you and our little ones. I myself will be surety for him; you may hold me responsible for him. If I do not bring him *back* to you and set him before you, then let me bear the blame before you forever'" (Genesis 43:8-9).

What had happened to Judah so that he was willing to lose his life for Benjamin? Could it be that his life experience with the Adullamites had softened his heart (cf. Genesis 38)? Earlier, we remember Judah urging his brothers to make a profit from the sale of Joseph rather than murdering him (Genesis 37:26-27). We also know that he has endured the loss of a wife and a son (Genesis 38:7, 10, 12), and knows the pain of those tragedies. Finally, the humbling circumstances with Tamar are obviously used to bring him into recognition of his unrighteousness (Genesis 38:26). Through it all he has developed a sincere tenderness for his father's feelings. When having to speak for the family before the yet-revealed Joseph, he makes the following declaration so that the youngest brother, Benjamin, might not be punished:

"Now, therefore, please let your servant remain instead of the lad a slave to my lord, and let the lad go up with his brothers. For how shall I go up to my father if the lad is not with me—for fear that I see the evil that would overtake my father?" (Genesis 44:33-34).

Obviously, something occurred in the life of Judah that he cannot stand to think about his father's loss of his precious son Benjamin. Here, Judah exemplifies one of the principal traits of the future Messiah of Israel: he is willing to give his life for the life of his brother (cf. John 15:13).

Is this a trait that we should consider as we address required reconciliation with those who are our literal brothers, sisters, family members, *and* fellow members of the household of faith? Are we willing to place the needs of others ahead of our own?⁵² *This is admittedly difficult to do.*

The Mercy of Joseph

In our *parashah* this week, we are also exposed to the Messiah-like characteristic of mercy that is exemplified by Joseph. By the time the famine has taken its toll on the region, Joseph is in place to extend mercy to his brothers. In his position as the viceroy of Egypt, he has the authority to do anything he wants with them, but instead of taking revenge for previous wrongs, he understands clearly that the Lord has placed him in this position for the salvation of the family of Jacob (Genesis 45:7-8).

Joseph knows that the hand of the Almighty was upon him and that he was sent ahead to enact a great deliverance. The thought of vengeance is never mentioned, but instead as we read about Joseph's actions toward his brothers and how the whole family was settled in the best land of Egypt,⁵³ we are able to focus on the attribute of mercy.

Just how merciful would we be to our family members, if they had committed a similar crime against us? Can we trust the sovereign hand of our Creator, who works through all the circumstances of life to accomplish His will? These, and a multitude of questions, should arise as we think about just how merciful we have been throughout our lives, or perhaps even are now, to people who have done/do us wrong.

The Eventual Reconciliation

The Haftarah selection that corresponds to this Torah reading is Ezekiel 37:15-28, which deals with the future restoration of all Israel. At some point in time, our Heavenly Father is going to take the remnant of Israel from among all the nations, and make them into a single restored people of Israel in the Promised Land:

“Say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD, “Behold, I will take the sons of Israel from among the nations where they have gone, and I will gather them from every side and bring them into their own land; and I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel; and one king will be king for all of them; and they will no longer be two nations and no longer be divided into two kingdoms”’” (Ezekiel 37:21-22).

Perhaps one way to expedite the eventual restoration of the Kingdom, is that followers of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob should begin extending the mercy of Joseph to each other, *and* begin exemplifying the self-sacrifice of Judah. This is imperative if one understands that the Messiah of Israel has come and has inaugurated the era of the New Covenant:

“Behold, days are coming,’ declares the LORD, ‘when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made

⁵² Philippians 2:3b.

⁵³ Genesis 45:9-47:12.

with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them,' declares the LORD. 'But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,' declares the LORD, 'I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, "Know the LORD," for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,' declares the LORD, 'for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more' (Jeremiah 31:31-34).

What is that Law written on the hearts of His people? Do mercy and self-sacrifice sound like the Torah-based qualities that they should be demonstrating, as a result of the permanent forgiveness for sin—which Yeshua's atoning sacrifice has secured us?

If you desire to be reconciled like Joseph and Judah from ages past, then an extension of mercy and self-sacrifice to others can be a good place to start. Perhaps then we will understand just how good and pleasant it is to experience the reality of brothers and sisters dwelling together in unity!

***V'yechi* וַיְחִי**
He lived
"Vowed to the Land"

Genesis 47:28-50:26
 1 Kings 2:1-12

While reading through *V'yechi* this week, the following words delivered by the Patriarch Jacob really stuck out at me:

"Then Jacob said to Joseph, 'God Almighty appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan and blessed me, and He said to me, "Behold, I will make you fruitful and numerous, and I will make you a company of peoples, and will give this land to your descendants after you for an everlasting possession"' (Genesis 48:3-4).

V'yechi brings us to the end of the Book of Genesis. In just twelve readings, the Scriptures have covered thousands of years of human history. The family chosen to become a people for God's own possession, and the nation that will be a light to the world, is beginning to take shape as distinctive tribes. The life of the great Patriarch Jacob comes to a close, and his blessings bestowed upon his children and grandchildren give prophetic insight into the future characteristics and destinies of the twelve unique tribes and the emerging nation of Israel.⁵⁴

Both Jacob and Joseph have some dying requests upon their respective deaths.⁵⁵ Both men had a sincere desire for their remains to be returned to the land of their fathers. Why was this so important? Are there some things we can learn from these examples?

⁵⁴ Genesis 49.

⁵⁵ Jacob: Genesis 47:28-31; 50:1-11; Joseph: Genesis 50:22-26.