



Taking Messiah Yeshua and Torah to the World!

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Message 12-29-09
VaYigash-And He Drew Near
Genesis 44:18-47:27
Ezekiel 37:15-28
Hebrews 11:8-13

Introduction

The title to this week's Portion, Vayigash, means to "draw near" (or "approach"), a reference to the dramatic and emotional confrontation between two mighty sons of Yaakov: Yosef, powerful and the viceroy of Egypt, and the future *gur aryeh Yehudah*, "Lion of Judah."¹

Genesis 47:20-26

20 So Yosef acquired all the land in Egypt for Pharaoh, as one by one the Egyptians sold their fields, because the famine weighed on them so severely. Thus the land became the property of Pharaoh. **21** As for the people, he reduced them to serfdom city by city, from one end of Egypt's territory to the other. **22** Only the priests' land did he not acquire, because the priests were entitled to provisions from Pharaoh, and they ate from what Pharaoh provided them; therefore they did not sell their land. **23** Then Yosef said to the people, "As of today I have acquired you and your land for Pharaoh. Here is seed for you to sow the land. **24** When harvest time comes, you are to give twenty percent to Pharaoh; eighty percent will be yours to keep for seed to plant in the fields, as well as for your food and for that of your households and your little ones." **25** They replied, "You have saved our lives! So if it pleases my lord, we will be Pharaoh's slaves." **26** Yosef made it a law for the country of Egypt, valid to this day, that Pharaoh should have twenty percent. Only the property belonging to the priests did not become Pharaoh's.

In this story about how Joseph built up the Pharaoh's power we are told how Joseph traded food for land. First it began with the people of Egypt but when it came to the priests of Pharaoh their land was to remain theirs. This is different from how the Lord set up the Levitical priesthood because with the Levitical priests they were not permitted to have any land. Their service to God was their inheritance.

Deuteronomy 18:1 The *cohanim*, who are *L'vi'im*, and indeed the whole tribe of Levi, is not to have a share or an inheritance with Isra'el. Instead, their support will come from the food offered by fire to *ADONAI* and from whatever else becomes his. **2** They will have no inheritance with their brothers, because *ADONAI* is their inheritance- as he has said to them. **3** "The *cohanim* will have the right to receive from the people, from those offering a sacrifice, whether ox or sheep, the shoulder, the jowls and the stomach. **4** You will also give him the firstfruits of your grain,

¹ From Torah with a Twist of Humor

new wine and olive oil, and the first of the fleece of your sheep. **5** For *ADONAI* your God has chosen him from all your tribes to stand and serve in the name of *ADONAI*, him and his sons forever.

The importance of this passage is found in the fact that this command is not just to the priests but to all of the tribe of Levi because they all serve in the Tabernacle and Temple of God. I believe the reason they received this honor is because they were the only ones who came when Moses called for someone to stand up for the honor of the Lord at the sin of golden calf. Levi stepped up and because of this the Lord honored them. We do know that the Levites received a city in each of the territories of the tribes of Israel. This was a place where they could go when they were not called to service in the Temple. They not only received the city but the land around it.

It is quite possible that another reason they were to live among the Children of Israel was so they could teach the Israelites the ways of the Lord or the Torah. In Judaism they call this Halachah or the way or walk. This word has taken on a different meaning over the millennia as having to do more with the way the rabbis have taught rather than the Torah of the Lord God Almighty. While it can help to explain some things when we turn to the writings of the rabbis we must never allow men to cause us to turn from the walk the Lord would have us take. This is the same with the teachings of the rabbis or the teachings of Christian teachers. There are good and bad teachings from both groups and it are up to us to learn to discern what is right and wrong.

One of the biggest things threatening Messianic Believers today is the move on the part of some to try to turn people from believing that Yeshua is a divine being who is fully man and God. This teaching is taking hold in many Messianic groups today and is even making inroads into the Church. Some coming out of the Church appear to be very susceptible to this teaching because they are not grounded in the Word. It seems that doubt can be planted and cultivated in an attempt to turn people from the truth of salvation. I say this because if one is drawn away from believing that Yeshua is God then the next step is to get them to not believe that salvation is only through Him.

I have seen this teaching up close and personal and I know it to be one that is rotten to its core when it traps someone into believing there is another way to gain redemption. What this teaching does is make people doubt their salvation and for that matter to doubt Yeshua. Another teaching that runs along with this is one where there is only YHWH and there is no Yeshua -Yeshua does not exist only YHWH does. The times we live in are no different than the ones in which the Apostles and their disciples lived and the threats they had to deal with are the same as what we are living with now. The major difference is, I believe, is we are living in the Last Days or the time before the Messiah Yeshua returns. Things have to be the same as they were in the days of Noah before the Lord destroyed mankind in a flood allowing only eight people to survive.

Luke 17:26 "Also, at the time of the Son of Man, it will be just as it was at the time of Noach. **27** People ate and drank, and men and women married, right up until the day Noach entered the ark; then the flood came and destroyed them all.

1 Timothy 1:6 For some men, straying from these things, have turned aside to fruitless discussion, **7** wanting to be teachers of the Torah, even though they do not understand either what they are saying or the matters about which they make confident assertions.

I have seen this Scripture in action. I have seen those who call themselves leaders who are not that far ahead of those they are supposed to be teaching and leading. The problem that arises is when their flock begins to question their teachings and they don't know how to answer because they don't know. This is especially true when it comes to passages in the Apostolic Scriptures that speak of the truth and validity of Torah in the face of teachers saying the Torah is no more. The old adage "*not under law under grace*" is no longer the acceptable answer for a new generation of Believers who will no longer be led around by the nose. They refuse to be silenced when they question the teachings they are hearing.

I have seen this take place in many congregations. I know of some who meet on Saturday but have no problem if their people also attend Church on Sunday and the leaders are just as lax concerning the dietary laws found in the Torah. Even when people try to follow the Torah they tend to disregard some of its simplest commandments because it makes them uncomfortable to do so. A case in point is the commandment concerning the tzitzit or fringes. Let's take a look at exactly what we are told in the Torah about this commandment.

Numbers 15:39 "It shall be a tassel [*tzitzit*] for you to look at and remember all the commandments of the LORD, so as to do them and not follow after your own heart and your own eyes, after which you played the harlot, **40** so that you may remember to do all My commandments and be holy to your God.

We all know about the proverbial teaching about tying a string around our finger so we can remember something. This is what the tzitzit are meant to do. When someone first tries to follow this commandment they are self-conscious about it because they think that everyone is looking at them when they wear the tzitzit. Over time you become much less self-conscious and you even look for people to ask you what they are because when you explain it to them they will ask if you are Jewish. Imagine the looks you will get when you tell them you are not Jewish but obedient to the commands of your Lord and that when you follow this simple commandment doors are opened for you to share about your faith.

We wear the tzitzit out of obedience to God and in turn God rewards our obedience by opening up opportunities to share why we are doing what we are doing. You would be amazed at how this simple commandment opens up doors to share about our faith in Yeshua and our walk in following Him.

2 Timothy 4:3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but *wanting* to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, **4** and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths.

I have seen this Scripture in action as well, up close and personal. This is one that ties into the one we just discussed from 1 Timothy 1:6. People want to hear teachings that give them comfort or don't ask them to do much or to give up things they were doing before they were confronted with the truth. They want teachers or leaders who tell them what they want to hear. It would behoove teachers to pay attention to what they are teaching because the day will come when they will stand before the Master of all and be required to give an accounting of what they have been teaching.

It was not that long ago that I was told I was driving Christians out of one of my congregations because I told them what the Bible had to say about Christian teaching. I was told that the Bible study class in that congregation had a teacher that was able to reach out to the Church and draw them in and in turn I was turning them away because I would not water down what I taught. Never mind that I was teaching Scripture and the truth I was supposed to bow to the will of the few, and do what they wanted, rather than teach the truth. My response was I guess you were not paying attention when I pointed out that Judaism had some problems the same as Christianity did and that once again people were not listening to what I was saying because I commended the Church for sharing the truth of salvation to be found through Messiah Yeshua.

The problem was is that the people involved in this "correction" of my error were also the ones teaching that you did not need Yeshua to be saved and that Yeshua was not deity. So, they not only did not want me to teach the truth of Torah, they wanted me to deny my Redeemer. Under no circumstances would I do this and in the end I simply walked away from the congregation choosing to put my efforts into my home congregation here in Las Cruces. I now help people who do not want to be part of that congregation to start home groups and to connect with one another so they can help each other.

2 Peter 2:1 But among the people there were also false prophets, just as there will be false teachers among you. Under false pretenses they will introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, and thus bring on themselves swift destruction.

This passage connects with the other ones I have shared and seem to run in groups but all carry the same intent. They had the same problems we did as they went out to make disciples of the nations in order that they would come to salvation through Yeshua and to follow His teachings found in the Torah. We are living in dangerous times my friends and we must be on the alert. Events on the world stage are changing rapidly as the world turns against Israel in a way we have not seen for thousands of years. If you want to know what God's plan is just look to Israel and the nations. We need to take our heads out of the sand and pay attention before it is too late for us. No matter what we might think we are connected to one another and in the end who is the bride of Messiah?

Ezekiel 37:24-28

24 My servant David will be king over them, and all of them will have one shepherd; they will live by my rulings and keep and observe my regulations. **25** They will live in the land I gave to Ya'akov my servant, where your ancestors lived; they will live there- they, their children, and their grandchildren, forever; and David my servant will be their leader forever. **26** I will make a covenant of peace with them, an everlasting covenant. I will give to them, increase their numbers, and set my sanctuary among them forever. **27** My home will be with them; I will be their God, and they will be my people. **28** The nations will know that I am *ADONAI*, who sets Isra'el apart as holy, when my sanctuary is with them forever."

As we are in the later chapters of Ezekiel we are seeing the promises of the future. My servant David is referring to the Messiah, of the line of David of the tribe of Judah. Israel will be united at last under the rule of the Son of God. Yeshua was a son of David and yet was before Him. He stands as a Priest in the Temple of His Father, not because He is from the tribe of Levi, but because He is of the line of Melchizedek, a Priest and King before David and Aaron. He is a Priest of the eldest son in the house of His Father. He is King because He was born of the line of David in the tribe of Judah.

In some of the Scriptures I shared about false teachers and prophets, Ezekiel brings us hope in the darkness that is coming. When we get to story of the Exodus and the dark days it teaches us about we also see the hope that is found in those days the same hope we will find in the *Day of the Lord*.

Isaiah 13:6 Wail, for the day of the LORD is near! It will come as destruction from the Almighty.

Isaiah 13:9 Behold, the day of the LORD is coming, cruel, with fury and burning anger, to make the land a desolation; and He will exterminate its sinners from it.

Acts 2:20 'THE SUN WILL BE TURNED INTO DARKNESS AND THE MOON INTO BLOOD, BEFORE THE GREAT AND GLORIOUS DAY OF THE LORD SHALL COME. **21** 'AND IT SHALL BE THAT EVERYONE WHO CALLS ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED.' [Joel 2:28-32]

2 Peter 3:10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.

Are you ready for the *Day of the Lord*, known in Judaism as the *Birth pangs of the Messiah*?

1 Corinthians 5:5 *I have decided* to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Yeshua.

There is no question in my mind that the *Day of the Lord* and the *Birth Pangs of the Messiah* are referring to the coming of Yeshua. If He is not the Son of God and God in the flesh then why are we calling on Him to be saved and what would be the point in believing in Him at all unless He is who He says He is or better yet He is who Scripture says He is.

Hebrews 11:8-13

8 By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going. **9** By faith he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign *land*, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise; **10** for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God. **11** By faith even Sarah herself received ability to conceive, even beyond the proper time of life, since she considered Him faithful who had promised. **12** Therefore there was born even of one man, and him as good as dead at that, *as many descendants* AS THE STARS OF HEAVEN IN NUMBER, AND INNUMERABLE AS THE SAND WHICH IS BY THE SEASHORE. [Genesis 15:5, 22:17, 32:12] **13** All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.

We are known as the children of Abraham because of his faith. What was it that set Abraham apart from those who had come before him that God chose him to make His covenant with, a covenant for the faithful? Abraham heard the voice of God speaking to him telling to leave his birth land and travel to where the Lord would direct him to. How could he explain that to his father and to his family? What about his wife Sarah? Was she totally committed to her husband to follow him wherever he went listening to a voice from a God they could not see? I believe the voice Abraham heard was like the one Elijah heard when he was in the cave hiding from Jezebel.

1 Kings 19:9 There he went into a cave and spent the night. Then the word of *ADONAI* came to him; he said to him, "What are you doing here, Eliyahu?" **10** He answered, "I have been very zealous for *ADONAI* the God of armies, because the people of Isra'el have abandoned your covenant, broken down your altars and killed your prophets with the sword. Now I'm the only one left, and they're coming after me to kill me too." **11** He said, "Go outside, and stand on the mountain before *ADONAI*"; and right then and there, *ADONAI* went past. A mighty blast of wind tore the mountains apart and broke the rocks in pieces before *ADONAI*, but *ADONAI* was not in the wind. After the wind came an earthquake, but *ADONAI* was not in the earthquake. **12** After the earthquake, fire broke out; but *ADONAI* was not in the fire. **And after the fire came a quiet, subdued voice.**

God was not to be heard in the noise around him. He was heard in the quiet after the noise. The same is true in our own lives. During our times of trouble there is so much going on can we really hear the voice of the Lord? That's why we must make time for Him every single day of our lives. We must put aside all the hustle and bustle of our lives and pause and make time to listen to our Creator.

Mrs. Green berg notices a little ol' man rocking in a chair on his front porch. "Hello there! I couldn't help but notice how cheerful you look. Tell me, what's your secret for a long happy life?" "Well, I smoke three packs of cigarettes a day, I drink a case of whiskey a week, I eat nothing but fast food, and I never exercise." "Wow! How old are you?" "twenty-three."

May the Lord bless you and yours... *Mordecai Silver*

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