

God's Everlasting Covenant
presents
Shadows of the Messiah: Yosef (Part I)

Studying the Torah is fascinating. It is a lifelong pursuit and is full of riches more valuable than gold and wisdom that simply cannot be measured. Each year that we study, we are more convinced than ever that the Torah contains the treasures of God's heart, passed down through Moses, for those who will come to love the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

One of the most amazing stories written down for us is about Joseph, or Yosef, the eleventh son of Jacob through his beloved wife, Rachel. If you remember (see Genesis 30:1-24), Rachel was barren for many years, and then the LORD finally opened her womb. After giving birth to Yosef, Rachel asked the LORD to add to her another son, and a short time later, she gave birth to Benjamin, and then she died in childbirth. (Genesis 35:16-20).

In Genesis 37, the story of our hero begins. The Torah tells us that Yosef was loved more than all of Jacob's other sons because he was the child of his old age, and so Jacob made him a special tunic. Yosef, according to his brothers, was also a "tattletale." He would bring reports to his father about what his brothers were doing wrong. To add insult to injury, he also had dreams about the future, and rather than understanding those dreams as prophetic, his brothers thought they were waking fantasies of grandeur and had nothing of significance to tell them.

Yosef dreamt a dream which he told to his brothers, and they hated him even more. (Genesis 37:5)

In their hatred, they devised an evil plot to get rid of him. One day when Jacob sent Yosef to check on the welfare of his brothers and the flocks, he was approaching Dothan.

They saw him from afar; and when he had not yet approached them, they conspired against him to kill him. And they said to one another, "Look! That dreamer is coming! So now, come and let us kill him, and throw him into one of the pits; and we will say, 'A wild beast devoured him.' Then we shall see what will become of his dreams." Reuben heard, and he rescued him from their hand; he said, "We will not strike him mortally!" And Reuben said to them: "Shed no blood! Throw him into this pit in the wilderness, but lay no hand on him!" – intending to rescue him from their hand, to return him to his father. And so it was, when Yosef came to his brothers they stripped Yosef of his tunic... Then they took him, and cast him into the pit; the pit was empty, no water was in it.

They sat to eat food; they raised their eyes and saw, behold! – a caravan of Ishmaelites was coming from Gilead, their camels bearing spices, balsam, and lotus – on their way to bring them down to Egypt. Judah said to his brothers, "What gain will there be if we kill our brother and cover up his blood? Come,

let us sell him to the Ishmaelites"...and they sold Yosef to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver. (Genesis 37:18-28)

This story should sound remarkably familiar to us. Yosef's brothers conspired to kill him. Yosef was the beloved son of his father and was stripped of the robe that his father gave him. He was separated from his father, was thrown into a pit, and then sold for pieces of silver by his brother Judah. It's not clear in Genesis 37, but it may have been Judah who was the initiator of the plot. More about that later.

Look at the similarities! Yeshua's brothers conspired to kill Him (Matt 27:1). Yeshua was also the Father's beloved Son (Matt 3:17, 17:5) who was stripped of his robe (Matt 27:28). He was separated from his Father, was thrown into a pit (Matt 27:59-60) and sold for silver (Matt 26:15) by a man named Judah (Judas Iscariot). Coincidence? Definitely not. The stories in the Bible are not just stories. They are often prophetic shadows of what is to come, so that when the events happen, we will recognize God's hand in them and be able to understand what He is trying to tell us. This part of the story of Yosef foreshadowed the suffering of the Messiah. In fact, the sages gave the Messiah two different titles from reading and studying the Bible or *Tanakh*. They saw him as both the reigning King *and* the suffering servant of Israel. Thus, he is called *Moshiach ben David* (Messiah, son of David) and *Moshiach ben Yosef* (Messiah, son of Yosef). They believed there were two Messiahs. And they were partially right. What they didn't understand is that there would one Messiah, who would enter into history at two different times to accomplish two different and distinct purposes. Ah, the benefits of hindsight!

Another interesting parallel is found in the next few verses. The brothers hatched a plot to deceive their father by dipping Yosef's tunic in blood, leading Jacob to believe that Yosef had been torn to bits by a wild beast.

Then Jacob rent his garments and placed sackcloth on his loins; he mourned for his son for many days. (Genesis 37:34)

When Yeshua died as the sacrifice for all mankind, His Father rent His garments also in His grief, and He mourned for His only son.

And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up his spirit. And behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth shook and the rocks were split. (Matthew 27:50-51)

The veil of the Temple was a picture of our heavenly Father's garment.

Let's skip ahead in our story and discover together more important similarities which will help us to understand what is happening with regard to Yeshua's brothers, the Jewish people, today.

Many years pass, and with their passing, a variety of events take place in Egypt, culminating in Yosef's promotion to the second highest position in the land under Pharaoh. Our "dreamer" becomes known as an interpreter of dreams when Pharaoh gets a glimpse of the future famine

that will come upon the earth. Through Yosef's efforts, disaster for Egypt is averted by storing up grain, and the Torah tells us that

...all the earth came to Egypt to Yosef to buy provisions, for the famine had become severe in all the earth. (Genesis 41: 57)

These are the events which brought about the eventual reunion between Yosef and his brothers. Let's fast forward again and focus in on what happens just before Yosef reveals his identity to his brothers. According to the Torah in Genesis chapter 42, Jacob decides to send his sons down to Egypt to buy food. But he does not allow Benjamin to go with them. Benjamin is the only son he has left of his beloved Rachel, and so believing Yosef to be dead, Benjamin has become the favored son. Also, keep in mind that Benjamin was never part of the plot to get rid of his brother Yosef. One could say that Benjamin never rejected his brother Yosef.

When the ten sons of Jacob arrive in Egypt, they are sent to Yosef. He recognizes them, but they do not recognize him. Why is that? This is an often overlooked gem that deserves our attention. The brothers do not recognize him because Yosef was dressed like an Egyptian. In all ways, he looked, sounded and acted like an Egyptian. He was second in command of the entire kingdom of Egypt, second only to Pharaoh. Yosef accuses them of being spies and they explain who they are, the twelve sons of Jacob, recalling that the youngest son is still with their father, and that one son is gone. This does not satisfy Yosef, who is playing a game with them to test their hearts. He sends them into prison for three days and then brings them to him again, telling them if they will leave one brother in prison in Egypt, return home and bring their youngest brother, Benjamin, back to him, their story will be verified. They depart with grain and provisions in tow, leaving Simeon in Egypt. Finally returning home, they relate their experiences to their father. Jacob is upset, and refuses to allow Benjamin to return to Egypt. Eventually, their provisions run out, and the brothers are forced to return to Egypt once again. They remember what Yosef told them, not to return without Benjamin. Here is where our story gets interesting.

Then Israel said, "Why did you treat me so ill by telling the man that you had another brother?" And they said, "The man persistently asked about us and our relatives saying, 'Is your father still alive? Have you a brother?' and we responded to him according to these words; could we possibly have known that he would say, 'Bring your brother down?'" Then Judah said to Israel his father, "Send the lad with me, and let us arise and go, so we will live and not die, we as well as you as well as our children. I will personally guarantee him; of my own hand you can demand him. If I do not bring him back to you and stand him before you, then I will have sinned to you for all time. (Genesis 43:6-10)

The first thing to note is that suddenly, the Torah changes from speaking of Jacob to *Israel*, the name that God gave him at Bethel. Why? We believe that this is an indication that there is more going on here than a simple story about Jacob and his sons. This is prophetically speaking of Israel, the future nation that will come from the twelve sons of Jacob. This is a shadow pointing to what will happen in the future.

The second thing to note is when Israel is reluctant to send Benjamin for fear of losing him; Judah intervenes and speaks, not to Jacob, but to Israel. Again, this is a hint to us that this is about the nation of Israel at some future time.

We would do well at this point to take a side-step and remember that Judah is one of the twelve tribes of Israel. Jumping ahead in history, after Solomon died, the nation of Israel was split into two kingdoms: Judah and Israel. Israel was the northern Kingdom and was made up of the ten other tribes, plus the descendants of Yosef, Manasseh and Ephraim. Judah was in the south. Israel went into captivity first at the hand of the Assyrians, and later Judah went into captivity at the hand of the Babylonians. When they returned, only a remnant of Judah, from the southern Kingdom, returned to the Land. The people of the Kingdom of Israel dispersed among the nations and were never identified again. To this day, no one knows who they are for certain. They are referred to as the lost tribes of Israel. Well, they are only lost in human terms, for God knows who they are. For our purposes, it is widely accepted by many that those known as Jews today are from the tribe of Judah.

Another important note is that it is Simeon, *Shimon* in Hebrew, who was left behind in Egypt. *Shimon* means hearing in Hebrew. From Shimon comes the word *shema*, and the holiest and most famous prayer in all of Israel:

Shema Yisrael, Adonai eloheinu, Adonai echad: Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.

The word *shema* carries with it the idea of both hearing *and* obeying. In Judaism, there is no hearing without obedience. If you hear only and do not do what you hear, you have not heard anything at all.

So, they left Simeon (who represents their hearing) back in Egypt, and it is Judah (who represents the known Jews today) who intervenes and promises to protect Benjamin (who represents the brother who never rejected Yosef). If he fails in this, he agrees that he will have sinned against Israel for all time! This is an amazing statement, and we shall understand why these two things are so important and why they have prophetic implications for us today.

Resuming our story in Genesis 43, the eleven brothers go down to Egypt. This time, Benjamin, whose name means “son of the right hand” is with them. They arrive in Egypt and come to Yosef’s house. Simeon, who represents the brothers’ ability to hear and obey, is brought to them. Now all the brothers are together at the same time. Everything is ready for a beautiful and miraculous reunion.

They come before Yosef. Yosef again inquires about their father. Yosef sees Benjamin and he is so moved to compassion that he has to leave the room and weep, away from the brothers’ presence and hearing. He feeds them and then proceeds to orchestrate one final test, hiding the money they brought to Yosef and his silver goblet into Benjamin’s sack and sends them on their way. Then Yosef sends his men after them and accuses them of evil, of stealing. The brothers all protest saying they would never do such a thing, and then declare that whoever has

the money will die and the rest of them will become the slaves of Yosef. Yosef responds instead that the one who has the money will become a slave and the others will go free.

Of course, the brothers are horrified when the money and the silver cup is found in none other than Benjamin's sack. It is interesting to note here that the silver cup, which represents redemption, is found with Benjamin. Here we see their anguish expressed:

They rent their garments...when Judah arrived with his brothers to Yosef's house, he was still there. They fell to the ground before him...So Judah said, "what can we say to my lord? How can we speak? And how can we justify ourselves? God has uncovered the sin of your servants." (Genesis 44:13-16)

The "sin of your servants" is what they did against their father and to Yosef. It is Judah who admits it, and takes responsibility for it by speaking it. It is interesting that he does this, because the Torah tells us that after the brothers had agreed not to kill him when Reuben begged for Yosef's life, it was Judah who suggested they sell him. In fact, the Rabbi's believe that the brothers ended up blaming Judah for the entire incident. Our story of Yosef is "interrupted" for an interesting narrative describing what happens to Judah shortly after they sold Yosef.

It was at that time that Judah went down from his brothers and turned away toward an Adullamite man whose name was Hirah. (Genesis 38:1)

Judah ends up marrying a Canaanite woman, which was forbidden to them as descendants of Abraham. When the Torah says, "he went down" and "turned away" this is speaking also of his spiritual descent. His wife conceives two sons which both die because they did evil in the sight of the LORD, leaving his daughter-in-law, Tamar, a widow. Judah further disobeys the Torah's laws on Levirate marriage and does not give his third son as a husband for Tamar so that she can have a son and carry on the family legacy. She dresses herself up as a prostitute, Judah sleeps with her, she becomes pregnant, and he becomes a victim of a ruse, just as he years before had deceived his father by a ruse.

Here is what Rashi writes:

This narrative [Genesis 38] interrupts the story of Yosef to teach how Judah's brothers lowered him in esteem because of the incident with Yosef, for when they saw their father's intense grief, they blamed Judah for it. "You told us to sell him," they charged. "Had you advised us to send him back to Father, we would have listened!" As a result of their disenchantment with him, Judah moved away from the family and settled in Adullam, where he became the business partner of Hirah.

Back to the story of Yosef, it appears that when Judah admits to the "sin of your servants" he has come to the realization that everything that has befallen him is a result of the sin he committed against Yosef, and he admits they deserve the punishment of slavery. But Yosef corrects him saying only Benjamin will be his slave and the rest of the brothers may return to their father. Judah begins to recall the vivid memories of the intense grief Jacob suffered at the

loss of Yosef as he begins to explain what will happen if they do not return with Benjamin. He tells the story to Yosef, as if reminding him of their plight. It appears as if Judah is going to explain why they should be freed, but in reality, Judah's words focus on what leaving Benjamin behind will do to their father.

“And now, if I come to your servant my father and the youth (Benjamin) is not with us – since his soul is bound up with his soul – it will happen that when he sees the youth is missing he will die, and your servants will have brought down the hoariness of your servant our father in sorrow to the grave. For your servant took responsibility for the youth from my father saying, ‘If I do not bring him back to you then I will have sinned to my father for all time.’ Now therefore, please let your servant remain instead of the youth, as a servant to my lord, and let the youth go up with his brothers. For how can I go up to my father if the youth is not with me, lest I see the evil that will befall my father!”
(Genesis 44:30-34)

From this, we can see that Judah has changed, and he takes full responsibility by offering himself as the slave! It is this declaration of repentance from Judah that brings Yosef to tears and he can conceal his identity no longer!

Now Yosef could not restrain himself in the presence of all who stood before him, so he called out, “Remove everyone from before me!” Thus no one remained with him when Yosef made himself known to his brothers...”I am Yosef...Come close to me, if you please...I am Yosef your brother – it is me, whom you sold into Egypt.”

The brothers are reunited at long last. Not only are they reunited, but they are restored and reconciled.

Now, as we have already mentioned, it does not take a great leap to discern that there is another story going on here. Our hint lies in Genesis 43:6, 8, and 11 when the Torah changes from speaking of Jacob to Israel. Actually, the first time this happens is in Genesis 37:12-13, but we will talk about that more in detail later. But this change from speaking of *Jacob* to *Israel* tells us that this story is not only the story of Jacob and his sons, but one that involves all of Israel. If we can, for a moment, believe this relates to the end times, we will understand that this story has very important prophetic implications for us. Let's take a look at the “cast of characters” in our story and who they represent.

Jacob = the Father in Heaven

Yosef = the rejected son, Yeshua

Benjamin = the brother who never rejected his brother, the Messianic Jews

Silver cup = redemption (salvation), which is found with Benjamin, the Messianic Jews

Simeon = hearing

Judah = the known Jews today

Egypt = the Gentile world and the Diaspora

The 7 year famine = Daniel's 70th week and the Great Tribulation

If we think back to our story, it is when the brothers are all united together that things begin to change. It was when Shimon (hearing) joined his brothers that they began to see. But let's go back further in our story for a moment to pull our prophetic allegory into focus.

Jacob [the Father in Heaven] sends his beloved son, Yosef [Yeshua] to Dothan [the earth] to check on his flocks [the Jewish people]. The brothers [the corrupt Sadducean Jewish leadership] devise a wicked plan to kill Yosef [Yeshua] because of their jealousy. They grab him [place Yeshua under arrest] throw him into a pit [took him to the cistern under Caiphas' house]. The brothers sell him into slavery [Roman government]. At the hands of his brothers, Yosef [Yeshua] is separated [nearly 2000 years] from Jacob [Heavenly Father] and the brothers believed him to be dead. A famine [Daniel's 70th week] comes to the Land of Israel. The brothers leave Israel [Diaspora] and come to Egypt [the world] to get their needs met during the long separation, but they receive harsh treatment and are accused as spies. They meet Yosef who appears in every way to be Egyptian [Christianity has stripped away Yeshua's Jewishness and has presented Him as a Gentile more than a Jew] and so the brothers [the Jews] don't recognize him. Great trial and testing come to the brothers [the Great Tribulation]. In the meantime, Benjamin [the Messianic Jews] was never involved in the deception and never rejected his brother Yosef [Yeshua]. He becomes very close to Jacob and becomes the favored son. Meanwhile, back in Egypt [the world] the brothers [the Jews] are having a hard time. Finally, they are forced to bring Benjamin before Yosef. By this action, they are forced to recognize the value and importance of their brother Benjamin [the Messianic Jews] as beloved by their father Jacob [the Heavenly Father] and they want no harm to come to him. Remember, it is Judah who said to Israel, "I will personally guarantee him; of my own hand you can demand him. If I do not bring him back to you and stand him before you, then I will have sinned to you for all time." They do not want to sin against their father Jacob [Heavenly Father] for all time. Shimon [hearing], who was in prison, joins them all before Yosef [Yeshua]. It is when Judah [the Jews] repents and recognizes that all these difficult things have come upon them because they have sinned against their father and because of what they did to Yosef [Yeshua]. At the same time, when Judah [the Jews] understands how important Benjamin [the Messianic Jews] is to Jacob [Heavenly Father] and that redemption is with him, it is then that Yosef [Yeshua] removes his Egyptian clothing and reveals himself as their dead brother come back to life! "*Ani Yeshua...I am Yeshua, your brother...come close to me.*" The brothers are dumbfounded and they weep "...and they will look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they will mourn for Me as one mourns for an only child, and be embittered over him like the embitterment over a [dead] firstborn son." (Zechariah 12:10).

And so we see, Yeshua will not return and reveal Himself until three things happen:

- The Father removes the blindness of the Jews that He Himself ordained in order to bring redemption to the Gentiles (see Romans 11:8-10 which is quoting Deuteronomy 29:4, Isaiah 29:10 and Psalm 69:22-23)
- The Jews recognize that the Messianic Jews, whom they have persecuted and rejected, are their brothers and are carrying the "silver cup" of redemption
- They repent of what they did to their Father by rejecting the Living Torah, Yeshua, who is their brother

Yeshua will reveal Himself as their long lost brother, who they believed to be dead, but is now alive! Oh, what a glorious day that will be for all of us. This is what we need to be praying for! This will bring about the restoration of all of Yeshua's brothers, Jew and Gentile alike, the final redemption and the establishment of the Messianic Kingdom! Hallelujah! May He come quickly, and in our days!

Please continue the amazing story of Yosef in *Shadows of the Messiah – Part 2*