

miKetz

מִקֶּצֶת

“At the End”

Genesis 41:1–44:17**The Wisdom Tale**

Before we begin today’s study, we are going to look at a Jewish literary genre for a few minutes, which will help us understand our present narrative of Yosef’s life. On many occasions in the Old Testament, the *Tanach*, a literary pattern is followed, which is also found here in our present story. This pattern is referred to as “the Wisdom Tale.”

These wisdom tales tend to follow a pattern that can be easily followed to help us better understand the stories. The wisdom tale is used in wisdom literature to describe the humiliation, persecution, and ultimate exaltation of an individual, especially in the context of a royal court.

The pattern for these wisdom tales is pretty set in Jewish literature, and includes: 1) reason for the persecution of the individual; 2) the conspiracy; 3) the mention of those enlisted to try to help the person being persecuted; 4) the condemnation of the individual; 5) the rescue of the persecuted individual; 6) the exaltation of the individual (sometimes within the royal court); and 7) the confession of wrong-doing by the persecutors.

In the life of Yosef, we can see this pattern:

Reason (37:3-11: From last week’s study, why was Yosef persecuted? Yisra’el’s favoritism (the coat of many colors) and the dreams led to the jealousy and hatred by his brothers.

Conspiracy (37:18-20): His brothers plot his death. His being thrown in to the pit was noted to a type of death.

Helpers (37:21-22, 26-27): Re’uven and Y’hudah tell their brothers not to kill him. Re’uven tries to rescue him and return him to their father.

Condemnation (37:28; 39:19-20): a) Yosef is sold into slavery by his brothers; b) he is condemned into prison by Potiphar due to Potiphar’s wife’s accusation.

Rescue (39:2-3; chapters 40-41): a) He is successful in Potiphar’s house; b) he is brought out of prison.

Exaltation (39:4-6; 41:37-45): a) He is appointed Potiphar’s steward and placed in charge of the house; b) he is appointed vizier of Egypt, invested with royal robes; and acclaimed.

Confession (42:21-22): The brothers confess their guilt to each other.

So here we see this pattern in the narrative of the life of Yosef. ***Can anyone think of any other Old Testament narratives in which this pattern of persecution and exaltation is followed?*** We can see this pattern in the Book of Esther, right? Also, it is used in Daniel chapters 3 (the three men thrown into the furnace) and 6 (Daniel in the lion’s den). We also see this in Isaiah 53 (Suffering Servant Song). Now, in the New Testament, do we ever see this pattern followed? We can see it in at least two accounts in/about the life/incarnation of Yeshua: the passion narrative and in Philippians 2:5-11, where Paul states:

And think in your mind that which also Yeshua the Messiah [thought]: Who, as He was in the likeness of Eloah, did not take advantage of being an equal of Eloah. But He emptied Himself: and took on the likeness of a servant, and was in the likeness of the sons of men, and was found in fashion like a son of man. And He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the gallows. Because of this, Eloah also highly exalted Him, and gave Him a Name which is greater than all names: That at the Name of Yeshua, every knee will bow, that is in heaven and on earth and that is under the earth, And every tongue will confess, that Yeshua the Messiah is YHWH, to the glory of Eloah His Father.

So here we see this pattern used at least a few times and probably in other places as well. Now with this little introduction to wisdom tales, we will get on with our study. As we look at Yosef's life, keep the pattern in mind, and see if it helps you better understand the passage.

The Seven Years

And behold, there came up out of the river seven cows, well favored and fat fleshed, and they fed in the reed grass. And behold, seven other cows came up after them out of the river, ill-favored and lean fleshed, and stood by the other cows upon the brink of the river. Genesis 41:2-3

In this chapter, Yosef interprets Pharaoh's dreams as referring to seven-year periods. The first seven years is to be marked by great prosperity, followed by a seven-year period of great famine.

Jewish messianic expectations anticipate a seven-year period preceding the coming of the Messiah. The *Talmud* refers to this seven-year period as the *Shavua sheBen David*, the "Seven of the Son of David." Most of us are probably more familiar with the term, "the birth-pangs of the Messiah." The Sages understood this period to be characterized by increased sufferings and signs. Jewish apocalyptic literature predicts cataclysms, natural disasters, pestilences, famines, and wars during this period.

Seven years of tribulation preceding the coming of the Messiah is a regular expectation among believers in Yeshua as well. Revelation 12:6-14 seems to speak of two consecutive three-and-a-half-year periods. Hence, the belief in a seven-year tribulation before the return of Yeshua the Messiah.

In our present story of Yosef, the seven years of famine are described as a worldwide famine. In the days before the coming of the Messiah, the entire world will be overwhelmed with global cataclysms. In the Yosef story, these events are brought about by God in order to rescue Yosef's family and reunite them with Yosef. In the days before the coming of the Messiah, world events will culminate in the salvation of Yisra'el and the nations.

The Spirit of God

Pharaoh said unto Yosef, Forasmuch as Elohim has shown you all this, there is none so discreet and wise as you. Genesis 41:39

When Yosef correctly interprets Pharaoh's dream after all his magicians and wise-men failed, Pharaoh asks his court, "**Can we find such a one as this: a man in whom the Spirit of Elohim [*ruach elohim*] is?"** (Genesis 41:38) Then Pharaoh tells Yosef, **there is none so understanding [*binah*] and wise [*chokmah*] as you** (41:39). The words *binah* and *chokmah* are characteristics associated with the Holy Spirit (*Ruach haKodesh*) throughout the bible. These are also descriptions of the Messiah, in whom the Spirit dwells. Speaking about the Messiah, we read in Isaiah 11:2: **And the Spirit of YHWH shall rest upon Him: the spirit of wisdom [*binah*] and understanding [*chokmah*], the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge, and of the fear of YHWH.** Hence, just like Yosef, Yeshua the Messiah is filled with the Spirit and is characterized as having wisdom and understanding.

Exaltation of Messiah

You shall be over my house. And according unto your word, shall all my people be ruled. Only in the throne will I be greater than you. Genesis 41:40

In the story of the exaltation of Yosef, we may notice a foreshadowing of the exaltation of the Messiah. Yeshua teaches that, "**Whoever will be greatest among you, let him be your servant. For whoever exalts himself will be abased, and whoever is abased will be exalted.**" (Mattai 23:11-12) In the Kingdom of God, there will be a great reversal. Yosef was the greatest of all his brothers and the heir-

apparent, but he was reduced to being a servant. Since Yosef was demoted to the lowest position, he was exalted to the highest.

Yosef's descent into Egypt can be likened unto the incarnation of Yeshua the Messiah. Like Yosef, He took "the form of a slave" and "humbled Himself" (Philippians 2:7-8). Yosef lost his position of status in his father's household and found himself a slave and a prisoner. Yeshua, existing eternally in heaven with his Father, humbled Himself and became a slave. However, just as Pharaoh elevated Yosef to a position over all of Egypt, so God "highly exalted" Yeshua over all of creation (Philippians 2:9).

By giving Yosef his signet ring, representative of the name it bears, Pharaoh gives Yosef the authority of his own name. Yosef is given the authority to act in behalf of Pharaoh. Similarly, God exalted Yeshua and "and gave him the name which is above every name" (Philippians 2:9). What Name did God give to the risen and exalted Yeshua? YHVH, His Own sacred Name.

Pharaoh then clothes Yosef in garments of fine linen and gives him one of his own chariots. Based on the vision in Ezekiel 1:15-21, in rabbinic literature, the throne of God is referred to as His chariot. Remember that God gave Yeshua the Messiah a seat on His Own throne. In fact, in Revelation 7:17, Yeshua is called, "the Lamb in the center of the throne."

As Yosef goes out throughout Egypt, servants run before his chariot crying, "Bow the knee!" (Genesis 41:43) God exalts Yeshua the Messiah so that **at the Name of Yeshua, every knee will bow, that is in heaven and on earth and that is under the earth** (Philippians 2:10).

Pharaoh gives Yosef authority over his own household, saying, "You shall be over my house" (Genesis 41:40). The author of Hebrews tells us, "**Truly Yeshua the Messiah was the Son over His house**" 3:6). Just as Pharaoh gives Yosef authority over everything in Egypt except himself (Genesis 41:40); so too God has placed everything under Yeshua's authority except Himself. In 1 Corinthians 15:27, Paul, speaking about Yeshua says, **For He [God] has subjected all under His [Yeshua's] feet. But when He [God] says that everything has been made subject to Him [Yeshua], it is evident that He [God] is excluded, who subjected all to Him [Yeshua].**

Asenath

And Pharaoh called Yosef's name Zaphenath-paneah. And he gave him to wife Asenath, the daughter of Poti-phaera, priest of On. And Yosef went out over the land of Egypt. Genesis 41:45

Pharaoh also gave Yosef a bride, Asenath, the daughter of a pagan priest. All we know from the Scriptures is that she bore Yosef two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, who would become two of the patriarchs of the twelve tribes of Yisra'el.

A first-century pseudepigraphic writing, *Joseph and Asenath*, expands the character of Asenath. This was written by a Greek-speaking Hebrew author living around the time of the apostles, so we might be able to better understand the Jewish people's thinking and beliefs during this time.

In the mind of the author of this work, Yosef represents a messiah figure, and is even called, "the firstborn son of God." It is through the agency of this divine Yosef-man, this messianic figure, that Asenath is converted to the worship of the One true God. Although much Christian imagery is used in this work, including Yosef giving Asenath to eat from the "blessed bread of life" and to drink from "the blessed cup of immortality," the majority of scholars maintain that the work is "too Jewish to be written by a Christian."

Regardless of whether the author was a Jew or a gentile convert, whether a believer in Yeshua as the Messiah or not, he is intrigued by Asenath's pagan roots. In her, he sees a model for all future

converts to Judaism. He sees Asenath to be very much like Ruth, also a gentile brought in to Judaism through conversion and marriage to a redeemer-figure.

So how does this work help us with our study of Yeshua the Messiah? As the bride of Yeshua the Messiah, gentile believers are His Asenath. Just like Asenath and Ruth, they are brought into the family of Yisra'el through their Redeemer-Husband. Asenath tells Yosef in this work, "Your father Yisra'el is life a father to me." How true is it for those of us who believe in Yeshua the Messiah that we can join together and call God, "*Abba*, our Father."

Salvation to All Nations

And all countries came into Egypt to Yosef, to buy grain, because the famine was severe in all the land.

For seven years Yosef stores up grain in Egypt, anticipating the famine. When the famine does come, it is **severe in all the land**. All nations are forced to buy grain from Yosef in Egypt. So in a practical way, Yosef is a "savior" to all the nations.

Likewise, Yeshua the Messiah is the ultimate Savior of the world. Just as all nations had to go to Yosef for salvation, so too must all nations come to Yeshua the Messiah for their ultimate salvation. **YHWH has made bare, His Holy arm in the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our Elohim.** (Isaiah 52:10)

The nations looked to Yosef for salvation, while he was still estranged from his own family. Likewise, the nations are turning in repentance, *shuv*, to Yeshua the Messiah, while He is still estranged from most of His family. As Paul tells us in Romans 11:25, **blindness [hardening]of the heart, in part, has happened to Yisra'el until the fullness of the Goyim [gentiles] should come.**

Joseph in Disguise

And the sons of Yisra'el came to buy among those that came, for the famine was in the land of Kena'an. And Yosef was the governor over the land; he it was that sold to all the people of the land. And Yosef's brothers came and bowed down to him, with their faces to the earth. And Yosef saw his brothers, and he knew them, but made himself strange unto them, and spoke roughly with them. And he said unto them, Whence come you? And they said, From the land of Kena'an to buy food. And Yosef knew his brothers, but they knew him not. Genesis 42:5-8)

When Yosef's brothers arrive in Egypt, they do not recognize him; nor does Yosef reveal himself to them. After all, at this point, Yosef is dressed as an Egyptian, and speaks in Egyptian. As far as his brothers are concerned, he is an Egyptian prince. After so many years, I wonder if his brothers began to believe their lie to their father that Yosef had been killed,

Unfortunately, just as Yosef is disguised to his brothers, so Yeshua remains disguised to many of His brethren, the Jewish people. In some ways, gentile Christianity is to blame for this. Christian artwork has made Yeshua out to be this gentile figure with blond hair, and blue eyes. In the Scriptures, Yeshua speaks in Greek. Christianity has completely removed Him from His Jewish roots. In fact, many so-called believers are surprised that Yeshua is a Jew, not a Catholic! Christianity has also removed Yeshua from His Torah-observant lifestyle. In fact, most Christians declare that Yeshua broke the Torah commands and did away with Torah-observance completely for His followers. Why else would the church serve ham to celebrate His birth on a pagan holiday, originally observed to worship the sun-god? Since Yeshua is presented by the church to Jewish people as this gentile, Torah-destroying individual, it is a miracle that any Jewish people would claim Him as their Messiah!

Yosef did not return evil for evil. Many years prior, when he fell into the hands of his brothers, they treated him with contempt. But when the tables were turned and they unknowingly fell into his hands, he repaid evil with good. He even sent them home with extra grain and he returned their money to them. The question we need to ask here is, “Why didn’t he reveal himself to his brothers immediately?” Remember that he was testing them to see if they were still the same or had changed. So here we see that Yosef sustained his scam in order to test their hearts for repentance. Is it possible that Yeshua’s concealment from most of the Jewish people is His test of their hearts, awaiting repentance?

Three Days

Hereby you shall be proved. As Pharaoh lives, you shall not go forth hence, except your youngest brother come here. Send one of you, and let him fetch your brother. And you shall be bound, that your words may be proved, whether there be truth in you. Or else, as Pharaoh lives, surely you are spies. And he put them all together into prison three days.

And Yosef said unto them the third day, This do, and live: for I fear Elohim. If you be upright men, let one of your brothers be bound in your prison house, but go you, carry grain for the famine of your houses. And bring your youngest brother unto me. So shall your words be verified, and you shall not die. And they did so. Genesis 42:15-20

As part of their test, Yosef accuses the brothers of being spies and imprisons them for three days. Why three days? Is there anything in Yosef’s life that occurred over a three day period? Yes, the brothers had left Yosef in the pit for three days before they sold him into slavery. Now, as believers, we know that three days is a recurrent theme in Scripture, and that Yeshua was in the grave for three days, and then rose again. Even the rabbis understood that God never leaves the righteous in distress for more than three days (*Genesis Rabbah* 56:1 and 91:7).

Anguish of Soul

And they said one to another, We are truly guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the distress of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear. Therefore is this distress come upon us. Genesis 42:21

Apparently, the three days in jail gave the brothers a chance to remember their past treatment of Yosef. They lament how they **saw the distress of his soul**. In the Servant Songs of Isaiah, we read: **From the travail of His soul, He shall see light, and shall be satisfied in His understanding. My Righteous servant shall justify many, and their iniquities, He bears.** (Isaiah 53:11)

The Requirement of Blood

And Re’uven answered them, saying, Spoke I not unto you, saying, Do not sin against the child? And you would not hear: therefore also, behold, his blood is required. Genesis 42:22

Re’uven’s anxiety over the blood of Yosef reminds us, or at least should remind us, of the vengeance of blood and the charge of being “Christ-killers” that the Jewish people have endured for almost 2,000 years. Throughout church history, Jewish people have suffered at the hands of those within the church, claiming to be doing “God’s will.”

In the Book of Deuteronomy, there is a law which is relevant to what the church has done to the Jewish people for so long. In Deuteronomy 24:16, we read: **The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers: every man shall be put to death for**

his own sin. No human court, not even the church, has the right to punish someone for the sins of their fathers or ancestors.

One interesting aspect of how the church, who continues to persecute Jewish peoples in some parts of the world, tends to deny charges of being anti-Semitic. Forget about the anti-Semitic comments made by many church leaders, including Martin Luther. Forget about the 6 million Jewish people killed by Hitler, who was even assisted by many within the German church. Forget about synagogue worshipers being gunned down in the United States. Even forget about the tagging of graffiti at the Yeshiva in Mercy Island. If all of these events were really about avenging the Messiah's blood, why has the church never labeled the Italian people as Christ-killers? After all, are they not the descendants of the Romans, who crucified Yeshua the Messiah? Even more to the point is the fact that if we really wanted to avenge the Messiah's death, then we would have to kill God. After all, was it not God who sent His Son, Yeshua the Messiah, to die on our behalf? Now do you see the illogical nature of this?

Even if the Jewish people, as a nation, were responsible for Yeshua's death, it would still be unbiblical to exact vengeance on their descendants. However, in reality, it was not the nation as a whole, but a few corrupt leaders of the Jewish people, including the High Priest, who forced Pilate's hand to have Yeshua crucified. And we must remember that even this was part of God's overall plan, in order to bring salvation to His people and the nations.

In like manner, it is wrong for Jewish people to continue to hold contempt for Christians, due to the sins of the medieval church and its reformers. It is time that both sides to confess their own sins, and repent, and forgive the other side for atrocities done in the past in the name of God. We are each responsible to God solely for our own sins. And remember that with the measure we judge others, so will we be judged.

It should be sufficient for us to know that all have sinned and fallen short of God's glory (Romans 3:23). And in the Torah we are told, "Everyone shall be put to death for his own sin" (Deuteronomy 24:16). This is in complete agreement with the New Testament, where we read: "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). It is time for us to realize and admit that we, both Jew and gentile, are all deserving of God's strict justice and punishment. Therefore, we are all in need of His mercy and grace. So we need to put aside our hatred and admit our common need for atonement and our common hope in a Redeemer. The "good news," the gospel, is that although we should each be put to death for our own sins, God has sent us His Only Son to die in our place!

Binding of Shim'on

And he turned himself about from them, and wept. And he returned to them, and spoke to them, and took Shim'on from among them, and bound him before their eyes. Genesis 42:24

Having heard that Re'uven had tried to save his life, when his brothers wanted to kill him, Yosef now selects the second oldest brother, Shim'on, and has him bound. Remember that although this may appear rather unfair, Shim'on was not so innocent. **Remember what he and his brother Levi did in Shechem, to avenge the rape of their sister, Dinah (Genesis 34)?**

Shim'on's name in Hebrew is from the root *shema*, which means, "hearing." So, working within the rabbinic hermeneutics, just as Yosef took "hearing," Shim'on, from his brothers, so God has stopped up the ears of His people to prevent them from recognizing the Messiah. **God gave them...eyes to see not and ears to hear not, down to this very day** (Romans 11:8). While Shim'on sits in jail, Yosef sends his brothers back with grain for their families.

Severe Famine

And the famine was severe in the land. Genesis 43:1

While estranged from Yosef, Yisra'el and his sons suffered in the severe famine. What is interesting is that the time of estrangement of Yeshua the Messiah from His brethren, the Jewish people, is also likened to a famine. However, it is not a regular famine, but a famine of hearing God's voice. We read in Amos 8:10-11: **And I will turn your feasts into mourning, and all your songs into lamentation: and I will bring up sackcloth upon all loins, and baldness upon every head, and I will make it as the mourning for an only son, and the end thereof, as a bitter day. Behold, the days come, says the Adonai YHWH, that I will send a famine in the land: not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of YHWH.**

Judaism teaches that the age of the prophets came to an end near the beginning of the Second Temple period. Now we believers in Yeshua realize that after approximately 400 years of silence, God's voice began to be heard again through the voice of John the Immerser, through Yeshua, and through His apostles. However, for those Jewish people who do not believe in Yeshua the Messiah, after the time of the prophets, Yisra'el has endured through a famine of hearing the words of God, as predicted in Amos.

Similarly, the Sages teach that during the time of Yosef's separation from his father, Yisra'el, the Holy Spirit was removed from Yisra'el (*Genesis Rabbah* 91:6). The Sages came up with this as a reason that Yisra'el could not prophetically understand that Yosef was actually still alive. After all, Yisra'el had dreamed a vision of the ladder, had been greeted by angels when he returned the land, and had wrestled with God. How could he not know that Yosef was alive and that his sons were deceiving him? The answer to this dilemma of the Sages was that the Spirit had been removed from him.

The same can be said of Yisra'el during the long years in exile and estrangement of the Messiah. Though God through His Spirit certainly sustains His people in every place they reside, His Shekinah, His Dwelling Presence, has been removed from Zion, and will not return until the Messiah returns. Also, it is as if Yisra'el has been spiritually blinded in regard to the Messiah.

Joseph the Nazirite

And they drank, and were merry with him. Genesis 43:34b

The scene of Yosef wining and dining with his eleven brothers reminds us of Yeshua's Last Seder. On that fateful night, Judas had left early to betray Him, so Yeshua was at the table with the eleven remaining *talmidim*, disciples. On that evening, Yeshua told them, **And I tell you, hereafter I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you, in the Kingdom of My Father which is in heaven.** (Mattai 26:29) So Yeshua has not had any wine in close to 2,000 years. Sad!

Before Yisra'el dies, he will bless Yosef, saying : **The blessings of your father are mighty, beyond the blessings of my progenitors unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills. They shall be on the head of Yosef, and on the crown of the head of the prince [nazir], among his brothers.** (Genesis 49:26) We need to understand that the Hebrew word *nazir* can simply mean a sign of separation. So in this verse, it doesn't mean that Yosef was actually a Nazirite, but that he had been separated apart from his brothers. Of course, the Sages are never accused of being responsible translators, so they translated this literally as saying that Yosef was a Nazirite. Imagine that!

The Sages point back to our present verse to show how Yosef was a Nazirite. Since our verse says that **they drank, and were merry with him** (Genesis 43:34b), this shows that during all of their years of estrangement, Yosef did not drink any wine (*Genesis Rabbah* 92:5, quoting Genesis 43:34). In similar fashion, Yeshua the Messiah has not tasted any wine while estranged from His brethren, nor will He until

He is reunited with all who are his at the messianic banquet. In that day, we will all sit at table with Avraham, Yitz'chak, and Yisra'el, and Yeshua will raise His cup and give the *beracha*, the blessing, and we will all eat and drink with Him.

Shalom!