

Treasures of the Torah

*“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, 46 and upon finding a single pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.
Matthew 13:45*

‘YHVH has a Plan’



24th DECEMBER 2022 - 30TH KISLEV 5783

MIKETZ: ‘At the End’

Genesis 41:1 - 44:17

Additional Readings: Zech 2:14 -4:7, Jn 10:22-28, Luke 24:13-29

Shabbat shalom Talmidim.

Summary

Joseph comes to the end of his imprisonment

Joseph interprets Pharaoh’s dreams

Joseph receives honour and status as Pharaoh’s governor

Joseph’s ten brothers travel to Egypt and unknowingly meet Joseph.

Joseph demands that Benjamin be brought to him and retains Simeon as hostage

Jacob agrees to let Benjamin go but only under Judah’s protection.

Joseph receives his brothers once again, and prepares a meal for them all.

The brothers, about to return back home, are halted when a silver goblet is found in Benjamin’s bag. They are arrested but plead their innocence, and pronounce that they are all guilty of the theft.

This week’s Parsha is our tenth portion for this year. The number ten coincidentally, is the number that not only reflects balance and harmony over creation but symbolises God’s authority and governance.

Is there anything that is coincidental in God’s plan?

Our study concentrates on Joseph’s captivity, release and rise to power.

We begin:

Genesis 41:1 When two full years had passed, Pharaoh had a dream: He was standing by the Nile, 2 when out of the river there came up seven cows, sleek and

fat, and they grazed among the reeds. 3 After them, seven other cows, ugly and gaunt, came up out of the Nile and stood beside those on the riverbank. 4 And the cows that were ugly and gaunt ate up the seven sleek, fat cows. Then Pharaoh woke up. 5 He fell asleep again and had a second dream: Seven heads of grain, healthy and good, were growing on a single stalk. 6 After them, seven other heads of grain sprouted—thin and scorched by the East wind. 7 The thin heads of grain swallowed up the seven healthy, full heads. Then Pharaoh woke up; it had been a dream. 8 In the morning his mind was troubled, so he sent for all the magicians and wise men of Egypt. Pharaoh told them his dreams, but no one could interpret them for him.

In the time line, Joseph is now two years on from the moment Pharaoh's cupbearer and baker left the prison. Joseph had long ago interpreted their dreams. Had he been forgotten? It would be easy to think so, because a Hebrew slave in prison would have been a lowly and forsaken soul, much more than one who was serving in his Egyptian master's house.

Joseph had to wait those two years to complete a period of time ordained by YHVH for Him. There is no detail regarding the length of time Joseph actually spent in jail. We know that he was 17 years old when he was carried into Egypt as a slave, but we don't know for how many years he served in Potiphar's house or the age at which he was imprisoned.

However, what we come to understand is that Joseph's time in prison enables him to stand before Pharaoh and interpret his dream at the age of thirty. Consider this, it took two years for Pharaoh to have the dream that only Joseph could interpret.

During those two years at least, Joseph worked unhindered in the prison.

CH39:19

19 When his master heard the story his wife told him, saying, "This is how your slave treated me," he burned with anger. 20 Joseph's master took him and put him in prison, the place where the king's prisoners were confined. But while Joseph was there in the prison, 21 the Lord was with him; he showed him kindness and granted him favour in the eyes of the prison warden. 22 So the warden put Joseph in charge of all those held in the prison, and he was made responsible for all that was done there. 23 The warden paid no attention to anything under Joseph's care, because the Lord was with Joseph and gave him success in whatever he did.

Joseph's role, made the prison warden's job a little less difficult, I would say.

Sometimes, we may find that our position in life seems unfair. Our job may be boring, hard and unfulfilling. Our working life, just becomes laborious and arduous. There just does not seem to be a way out.

The message of the gospel tells us that we must take the good news to those in captivity and release those in the prison cell. The Hebrew word for 'dungeon' is 'bowr' Strong's H952 which means to 'examine' and is connected to the H877 which means a 'cistern or pit.'

This is a clear indication that Joseph's time in captivity, whether as a slave in Potiphar's house or in jail, was one of preparation. His pride as the chosen and favoured son of Jacob, had to be broken. His beautiful coloured garment was stripped from him leaving him naked and covered in the soil of the empty well. Serving Potiphar, brought him the attire of the slave, and who knows what clothing covered him in the dungeon. We can only imagine what the inside of the jail looked like. Joseph would have no doubt recalled the teachings of his father Jacob, about the God of Israel. These would have sustained him during the lonely dark hours. His early years in Egypt matured him and prepared him to stand before Pharaoh.

We see that God places Pharaoh back into a sleep immediately after his first dream, and there he dreams again. So troubled is the Pharaoh that he knows he must have an interpretation. No one among the magicians and the seers can bring any illumination or meaning. Suddenly the chief cupbearer pipes us:

"Uhum! Ugh!.. Pharaoh, I recall a Hebrew prisoner who once interpreted a dream of mine. It was when you imprisoned me and the baker about two years ago. What he said came to pass. I know he's Hebrew and all that, but it might be worth a shot."

Of course I paraphrase, but what we see is that perfect timing is what God is good at. To recount, we see that not only had the cupbearer and baker been thrown in the clink, they were also given Joseph to attend to them. 40:1-4. This chain of events is simply sublime. The interpretation of the servants' dreams are not completely sweet. Joseph brings both good and bad outcomes. Will the same thing happen again?

What had he to lose? He had already been made a slave and thrown into prison for false accusations. However, if Joseph knew anything, it would be that his God would protect him and show him favour. Even before the psalms were written Joseph knew the God that David would write about.

David said in the psalms, "where can I go from you my God?"

Psalms 139:7-12

7 Where can I go from your Spirit?

Where can I flee from your presence?

8 If I go up to the heavens, you are there;

if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.

9 If I rise on the wings of the dawn,

if I settle on the far side of the sea,

10 even there your hand will guide me,

your right hand will hold me fast.

11 If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me

and the light become night around me,"

12 even the darkness will not be dark to you;

the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you.

Joseph spent 13 years in Egypt before his rise to power. In our western culture, 13 is considered as an unlucky. It stems from the fact that there were 13 seated at the last supper; Judas being the 13th person. Biblically, the number 13 represents unity, cleansing and purity. It is the value of the words 'ahava' love, and 'echad' unity in oneness.

At the age of thirty, the same age that Yeshua was commissioned into ministry, Joseph stands before Pharaoh, hair cut, washed clean, prepared and given new clothes.

The dreams are significant and highlight two distinct areas for our attention. Both dreams tell of the same events. Joseph also had two dreams. In his account, he dreams of sheaves of grain.

Gen 37:5 Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him all the more. 6 He said to them, "Listen to this dream I had: 7 We were binding sheaves of grain out in the field when suddenly my sheaf rose and stood upright, while your sheaves gathered around mine and bowed down to it."

8 His brothers said to him, "Do you intend to reign over us? Will you actually rule us?" And they hated him all the more because of his dream and what he had said.

9 Then he had another dream, and he told it to his brothers. "Listen," he said, "I had another dream, and this time the sun and moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me."

In the second dream we see, I believe, an allusion to the sun and moon deities of Egypt and also the brothers paying homage to him. Once again, both dreams relate the same events.

In Pharaoh's dream we see Pharaoh, a God to the Egyptians, standing over the great River Nile. The Nile is also a deity and the source of life throughout Egypt. It feeds the crops and supplies the drinking water. A few centuries down the road, God will turn its waters into blood, and the river will become a source of death. This is God showing Himself supreme over the gods and idols of Egypt.

Joseph is presented to Pharaoh.

Joseph stands before the Pharaoh and listens to the dreams. What could Joseph be expecting — what would Pharaoh be expecting?

The dreams tell of seven years of abundance followed by seven years of famine. So bad are the lean years that despite the feasting of the emaciated cows upon the full fat ones, their appearance does not change and they repulse the Pharaoh. Again, in the second dream the healthy ears of grain are eaten by the shrivelled ears of grain. To us, we understand the meaning because Joseph gives us interpretation. The imagery is not hard to understand, but it was for the magicians and wise men.

Joseph highlights the need to find a man who can oversee the great task of getting Egypt ready. What could be the solution? At any other time, Joseph would not have been prepared for the role. He certainly did not put himself forward for the job.

What we see in this encounter between the two, is that Joseph gives the whole situation and the interpretation to God. YHVH receives the glory.

41:15 Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I had a dream, and no one can interpret it. But I have heard it said of you that when you hear a dream you can interpret it."

16 "I cannot do it," Joseph replied to Pharaoh, "but God will give Pharaoh the answer he desires."

Joseph's promotion is staring him in the face.

Pharaoh tasks him with the job and elevates him to his second in command, governor over all of Egypt. No one apart from Pharaoh is greater. Joseph is given Pharaoh's signet ring which he wears on his hand, though it could also be worn on a chain around his neck.

Joseph's Rise to Power

37 So the advice was good in the eyes of Pharaoh and in the eyes of all his servants.

38 And Pharaoh said to his servants, "Can we find *such a one* as this, a man in whom *is* the Spirit of God?"

39 Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Inasmuch as God has shown you all this, *there is no one* as discerning and wise as you. **40** You shall be over my house, and all my people shall be ruled according to your word; only in regard to the throne will I be greater than you."

41 And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "See, I have set you over all the land of

Egypt." **42** Then Pharaoh took his signet ring off his hand and put it on Joseph's

hand; and he clothed him in garments of fine linen and put a gold chain around his

neck. **43** And he had him ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried out before him, "Bow the knee!" So he set him over all the land of Egypt. **44** Pharaoh also

said to Joseph, "I *am* Pharaoh, and without your consent no man may lift his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt." **45** And Pharaoh called Joseph's name Zaphnath-Paaneah. And

he gave him as a wife Asenath, the daughter of Poti-Pherah priest of On. So Joseph went out over *all* the land of Egypt.

The power of God is all over Joseph so that even Pharaoh can't miss it:

37 So the advice was good in the eyes of Pharaoh and in the eyes of all his servants.

38 And Pharaoh said to his servants, "Can we find *such a one* as this, a man in whom *is* the Spirit of God?"

Friends, when God puts you in position, even your enemies will see. What will transpire will be unfathomable and extraordinary. How can a lowly Hebrew slave become second only to Pharaoh. It has to be God!

Psalms 23 says,

5 You prepare a table before me

in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

6 Surely your goodness and love will follow me

all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

We are told that the Pharaoh and all the courtiers were happy to have such a man over them. Look what it says Matt 21

21 "His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'

Friends, when God is pleased with you, you become a blessing and everyone knows it.

However, we must understand that the servant that receives the reward is the person who does the master's will even if it means losing his own life. There are so many who listen to

the saying and believe that just being a good believer is enough and God will be pleased with you. There is no doubt that we are rewarded for our deeds but not everyone will receive the same reward.

As Joseph's he is tasked in not only overseeing the preparation of Egypt through the feast and famine, but that he is also given charge of the court. This would have been a very powerful position indeed — possibly, even over Egyptian law.

Joseph's name is changed to Zaphnath-Paaneah. This name does not seem to have a distinctive meaning or perhaps the meaning has been lost. It has however, been assumed to mean 'one who reveals mysteries or even (See Onkelos, Rashi, Septuagint and Josephus' *Antiquities* 2:6:1) Other suggestions worthy of consideration: In the Septuagint, we find 'the one who furnishes the nourishment of life or 'healer of the world' (Vulgate).

Some scholars propose that in the Coptic language, it signifies a 'revealer of secrets,' or, 'the man to whom secrets are revealed,' (Rabbi Michael Leo Samuel)

Whatever we feel the name means, we know that it was of significant meaning to the Egyptians, and that through Joseph, God sustained Egypt. Why? — Jacob and Israel would soon make their home there, and both Jacob and Joseph would die there too.

There is a lot more we can glean from this wonderful story, least of all that God not only uses us to solve the problems in the world but He works with us through personal trial and circumstance. It not my intention to do a complete commentary on the chapters, but before we finish, let us ponder one more thing.

We are told that Joseph was given Asenath as his wife. The passage tells us that she was the daughter of Poti-Phera, the high priest of the sun god Ra in the city of On, or Heliopolis. Before we move on, we must not muddle Poti-phera the high priest with Potifar, the one who took Joseph as a slave. Genesis 39:1, states that 'Potiphar was captain of the Pharaoh's guard, not the high priest. Can you imagine the atmosphere within the household if Joseph found himself related to the man who imprisoned him, and his wife who falsely accused him?

However, it would seem that Joseph has no choice but to marry out and take a pagan for his wife.

One tradition tells that in order for Asenath to be accepted by Joseph she would have had to convert to his faith and thus turn her devotion from the gods of Egypt. This would make her a gentile convert. It would also legitimise their offspring as being bonafide sons of Jacob — hence Jacob's blessing upon them. This would also make sense, as for example, we see that Joshua, who comes from the tribe of Ephraim, would later be chosen by God to succeed Moses, and would bring the Israelites into the promised land. Asenath, is to be numbered among the devout women converts: Hagar, Zipporah, Shiphrah, Puah, Rahab, Ruth and Jael.

In another account in the Midrash, Asenath was the daughter of Dinah, (daughter of Jacob - Joseph's sister) following her rape by Shechem the Canaanite. The sons of Jacob want to kill the child as she was a reminder of Shechem's act, and this would not bode well with others. Jacob, however, writes the incident on a gold disc and places it around the child's neck before sending her off. Guided by the angel Michael, she arrives in Poti-phera's house, and on reading the writing on the disc, he accepts the child, saying, "This

girl is the daughter of the great ones”. Poti-pha’s wife, who is barren, accepts the child as her own.

There are many other traditions to look at. Perhaps you might want to study them yourselves. The story of Dinah is both a fascinating and complicated one.

The life of Joseph, up to this account is extraordinary. Sometimes it may take only a small event to humble us, but the enormity of what God had planned for Joseph meant that great change had to occur in the handsome young man. All of God’s plans are extraordinary; we must consider that. Despite Joseph’s trials, he knew that God was with him. I believe that despite Potiphar’s action in imprisoning his Hebrew slave, in order to respect his wife’s accusation, Potiphar had regard for Joseph. Perhaps this helped in some way in Joseph finding favour with the prison warden.

David wrote in psalm 144:

Praise be to the Lord my Rock,

who trains my hands for war, my fingers for battle.

2 He is my loving God and my fortress,

my stronghold and my deliverer, my shield, in whom I take refuge,
who subdues peoples under me.

3 Lord, what are human beings that you care for them,

mere mortals that you think of them?

4 They are like a breath;

their days are like a fleeting shadow.

5 Part your heavens, Lord, and come down;

touch the mountains, so that they smoke.

6 Send forth lightning and scatter the enemy;

shoot your arrows and rout them.

7 Reach down your hand from on high;

deliver me and rescue me from the mighty waters,
from the hands of foreigners

8 whose mouths are full of lies,

whose right hands are deceitful.

9 I will sing a new song to you, my God.....

So when you think that your life is like being in a lonely, cold cell or dungeon, when you think that others couldn’t care less, and even if you feel that you have not achieved much and that your life is just living each day to survive, remember that God considers you even though you are mortal and weak, and often prideful, and faithless. He made you in His image and has a plan for you. When you lift Him up and give Him the credit in front of an unbelieving world, when you serve Him as a true and willing servant you will be brought before kings and nobles. He will lift you up and you will be given high esteem. However, what we must learn is that such esteem will come at a price. It demands our humility not our pride.

The psalmist says, ‘I will declare the works of the Lord, and sing to Him a new song.’

Let that song be a personal one between you and God.



*Numbers 6:24 'Y'varekh'kha Adonai v'yishmerekha.
[May Adonai bless you and keep you.]*
*25 Ya'er Adonai panav eleikha vichunekka.
[May Adonai make his face shine on you and show you
his favour.]* 26 *Yissa Adonai panav eleikha v'yasem l'kha
shalom*
*[May Adonai lift up his face toward you and give you
peace.]*

Until next time.
 Shabbat Shalom
 Grant Marshall
 Co-founder Arrows of Ephrayim Ministries

Glossary

Rashi: Shlomo Yitzchaki today generally known by the acronym '**Rashi**' was a medieval French rabbi and author of a comprehensive commentary on the Talmud ...

The acronym "Rashi" stands for **Rabbi Shlomo Yitzhaki**, but is sometimes fancifully expanded as **Rabban Shel YIsrael**

Targum: Targum Onkelos (or Onqelos), is the official eastern (Babylonian) Targum (Aramaic translation) to the Torah. However, its early origins may have been western, in Israel. Its authorship is attributed to Onkelos, a famous convert to Judaism in Tannaic times (c. 35–120 CE)

Targum Jonathan: Targum Jonathan), otherwise referred to as Targum Yonasan/Yonatan, is the official eastern (Babylonian) Targum to the Nevi'im/Prophets. Its early origins, however, are western (i.e. from the Land of Israel), and the Talmudic tradition attributes its authorship to Jonathan ben Uzziel of Jerusalem in the time of King Herod

Tannaim: Tannaim were the Rabbinic sages whose views are recorded in the Mishnah, from approximately 10- 220 CE. The period of the Tannaim, also referred to as the Mishnaic period, lasted about 210 years.

Talmud: The Talmud means "instruction, learning", "teach, study") is a central text of Rabbinic Judaism. The term "Talmud" normally refers to the collection of writings named specifically the Babylonian Talmud (Talmud Bavli), although there is also an earlier collection known as the Jerusalem Talmud (Talmud Yerushalmi) or Palestinian

The Talmud has two components:

1. The Mishnah (c. 200 CE), the first written compendium of Judaism's Oral Law;
2. The Gemara (c. 500 CE), an elucidation of the Mishnah and related Tannaitic writings that often ventures onto other subjects and expounds broadly on the Hebrew Bible.

Midrash is a form of literature that interprets and elaborates upon biblical texts, mostly compiled from the 5th century CE through the medieval period. Books in this category generally share common methods of interpretation, like filling in gaps in biblical stories. Sections of midrash appear frequently throughout the Talmud. (Sefaria)

Aggadah:

“Midrash Aggadah” is a term referring to stories and commentary that expand upon non-legal biblical texts. Some works strictly interpret the text, while others use the text as a springboard for ethical or theological sermons. (Sefaria)

Jubilees: The Book of Jubilees claims to present "the history of the division of the days of the Law, of the events of the years, the year-weeks, and the jubilees of the world" as revealed to Moses (in addition to the Torah or "Instruction") by angels while he was on Mount Sinai for forty days and forty nights. The chronology given in Jubilees is based on multiples of seven; the jubilees are periods of 49 years, seven "year-weeks", into which all of time has been divided.

Jasher:

Composed: Middle-Age Spain, 1300 CE

Sefer Ha-Yashar (The Book of Righteousness); one of the most popular ethical books in the Middle Ages. It remains an anonymous work probably written in the 13th century.

Vulgate: This is the Latin Bible. Translated from the Hebrew and Aramaic by Jerome between 382 and 405 CE, this text became known as the 'versio vulgata', which means 'common translation'.