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# Shabbat Vayigash

## December 26, 2009

### 9 Tevet 5770

## News

### SHALOM'S ORDINATION AS ELDER

Sabbath December 19, was a special sabbath for Shalom David, his family and his congregations. It was a Shabbath of ordination.



Shalom David is "Cohen Dat" (pastor) for several congregations in Israel, the Hebrew speaking congregation in Tel Aviv, the Jewish-Adventist Ethiopian congregation in Rehovot and is in charge of planting a new Hebrew speaking congregation in the suburb of Jerusalem.

After completing his Theological studies at Newbold, he arrived in Israel last summer and started his ministry in September 2009.

A pastor must be ordained to perform his ministry in a good way, that's why the congregation of Rehovot during their last nominations have decided, under the advice of the Field, to elect Shalom as Elder of their congregation.



We organized a great feast for this event, we asked the Hebrew speaking congregation of Tel Aviv to join their brothers and sisters in Rehovot and Richard Elofer led the ordination service with the elders and two Ethiopian pastors who are now living in Israel.

The ordination service was followed by a communion service and a joyful potluck where everyone enjoyed Ethiopian foods.

### CHANUKAH IN FLORIDA

It seems that Jeff recovered during the last days and could celebrate the last days of Chanukah with his congregations. Here is the email I received from Jeff about his celebrations:



"On the second weekend of Chanukah we celebrated the 8th night, the last night of Chanukah together. God blessed with a good turn out with a mix of believers and not-yet-believers. Over the two weekends at the two locations we saw over 150 different people. The Lord was exalted in song, ceremony, and as we discussed the true Light of the world and how to let His light shine through us."



# Overview

## Vayigash

Genesis 44:18-47:27

**W**ith the discovery of the goblet in Binyamin's sack, the brothers are confused. Yehuda alone steps forward and eloquently but firmly petitions Yosef for Binyamin's release, offering himself instead. As a result of this act of total selflessness, Yosef finally has irrefutable proof that his brothers are different people from the ones who cast him into the pit, and so he now reveals to them that he is none other than their brother. The brothers shrink from him in shame, but Yosef consoles them, telling them that everything has been part of G-d's plan. He sends them back to their father Yaakov with a message to come and reside in the land of Goshen. At first, Yaakov cannot accept the news, but when he recognizes hidden signs in the message which positively identify the sender as his son Yosef, his spirit is revived. Yaakov together with all his family and possessions sets out for Goshen. G-d communicates with Yaakov in a vision at night. He tells him not to fear going down to Egypt and its negative spiritual consequences, because it is there that G-d will establish the Children of Israel as a great nation even though they will be dwelling in a land steeped in immorality and corruption. The Torah lists Yaakov's offspring and hints to the birth of Yocheved, who will be the mother of Moshe Rabbeinu. Seventy souls in total descend into Egypt, where Yosef is reunited with his father after 22 years of separation. He embraces his father and weeps, overflowing with joy. Yosef secures the settlement of his family in Goshen. Yosef takes his father Yaakov and five of the least threatening of his brothers to be presented to Pharaoh, and Yaakov blesses Pharaoh. Yosef instructs that, in return for grain, all the people of Egypt must give everything to Pharaoh, including themselves as his slaves. Yosef then redistributes the population, except for the Egyptian priests who are directly supported by a stipend from Pharaoh. The Children of Israel become settled, and their numbers multiply greatly.

## Yaakov Recites the "Shema"

**T**he Torah states: "And Joseph harnessed up his chariot and went to greet Yisrael, his father, and he appeared to him and fell on his neck and wept on his neck continuously" (Gen. 26:29).

Rashi cites the comment of the Sages that Jacob (Yisrael) did not fall on the neck of Joseph and kiss him, because he was reciting the Shema Yisrael prayer at that moment.

Rabbi Pliskin writes, "I recall vividly how my father, Rabbi Shmuel Pliskin, of blessed memory, lived with this reality. He was in Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore after major surgery for cancer. I flew in from Jerusalem to visit him after having been away for seven years.

"As I walked into his hospital room, he immediately said Shema Yisrael. Then he said the following: 'Why did Ya'akov (Jacob) choose this moment to recite the Shema? Why not earlier or later? The answer is that after not having seen his beloved son for so many years he was overwhelmed with profound feelings of love and joy. These feelings can be channeled for love of the Almighty. That is exactly the right moment to say Shema Yisrael. Moreover, now the reciting of the Shema will bring out these feelings over and over again.'

"While this is a concept I had heard before, I learned from my father how to internalize a Dvar Torah into a living reality. Torah insights are not merely ideas to be repeated, but are meant as instructions for living. As I write this I can once again feel the love my father had for me and the love which we should all feel for our Heavenly Father."

The midrash which describes Yaakov's actions is difficult to understand. Yaakov did not kiss his son because he was saying the Shema. Surely if it was time for this mitzvah, Yosef should also have been performing it! The Maharal, in his supercommentary to Rashi, offers a resolution to this difficulty: When Yaakov saw Yosef his son as king, his heart was filled with love and fear of God, noticing how His means of dealing with the world are good and perfect and how He rewards those who fear Him. This is the practice of chassidim - when good things happen to them, they cleave to God because of the good and faithful acts that He has done for them. This is represented by saying the Shema, in which the unity of the Kingdom of Heaven is mentioned, as well as the love that we must have for it. It was appropriate for him to say the Shema when

Yosef came to him; after all the trouble that he had had because of his son, now that he saw him as king, he loved God Who had done this for him. So he accepted upon himself His kingship and His love and fear. (Gur Aryeh on Rashi, Genesis 46:29)

It was not the time for saying Shema, as on every morning and evening, but instead a spontaneous gesture of love for God which was particularly pertinent to Yaakov's circumstances.

## The Torah Kept Israel United

Throughout the ages, many have been amazed at the Jewish people's survival. Faced with a history of suffering, sorrow, and persecution, Jews have met adversity with strong resilience and fortitude. What is our secret? How have we maintained our distinctness and uniqueness? What has been the key to avoiding assimilation into the cultures of the nations?

Rabbi Boruch Leff proposes an answer to these questions in a thought from this week's portion. He said that "Perhaps the most dramatic story in all of Torah takes place in our Parasha. After being sold by his brothers and having been away for 22 years from his family, Joseph reveals himself. The brothers had been unaware that the Emperor who has been tormenting them, accusing them of being spies, jailing Shimon, and potentially taking Benjamin as a slave, is actually Joseph. When Joseph says the words, "I am Joseph!" (Genesis 45:3), the brothers are speechless. Joseph comforts them with a long monologue and expresses his forgiveness. He also gives the brothers instructions to bring Jacob down to Egypt.

Towards the end of these instructions, Joseph gives the directive, "As he sent his brothers off on their way, he told them, "Do not be quarrelsome on the way." (Genesis 45 :24), the Jewish tradition has read this words from Joseph as "Do not become agitated on the way", and Rashi explains this cryptic statement: "Do not become involved in a matter of halacha and the trip does not become a source of anger for you." Imagine. The brothers have just faced the shock of their lives in meeting Joseph once again. Wouldn't the brothers be contemplating their fateful, incorrect decision to sell Joseph so many years ago? Yet, Joseph is concerned that they would concentrate on Torah study—God's word taught by Yaakov their father—and lose their way back

home! Joseph seems to assume that the brothers would naturally turn to Torah study during their travels.

In addition, now they had to go back and face their father, Jacob, to whom they lied about Joseph all of these years. How would they be able to have the presence of mind to study Torah at such a difficult time? Very often in Jewish learning, the question is the answer. The more you think deeply about a question, the more you repeat the question in your mind, the more you begin to realize that the question itself leads directly to the answer. The same is true here.

This is especially true given that the Torah is God's instructions for Life and the brothers were searching for specific Divine guidance as to how to deal with their current travails. They would only find it in serious Torah study. Torah study has united Jews throughout history and has saved us from assimilation. This is truly the secret of Jewish survival throughout the millennia. To paraphrase Rabbi Saadia Gaon of the 11th century, the Jewish people is only a people and can only be a people as a result of the Torah. We are not a nation based on land, language, or culture. If ever there would be a time when Jews would stop caring about the wisdom in the Torah, we would cease to be a people and would quickly disappear to assimilation."

## Failure to Recognize Their Savior

Yosef's words and actions are no more and no less than educational tools. Yosef is not seeking revenge, nor is he seeking vindication. Everything he says to his brothers and everything he does from the moment they stand before him is geared toward bringing the brothers to recognize him, to see him - and, as a result, to see his dreams—for what they really are. It is toward that end that Yosef pushes them, but they do not seem to understand. They don't understand that it is Yosef that he wants them to seek; they don't understand that it is Yosef he wants them to accept; they don't understand that it is Yosef who is in the room with them.

The brothers' failure to recognize Yosef is more than ironic, more than a personal insult, more than tragic. The fact is that everyone else who came into contact with Yosef throughout his life, including Potifar and his wife, the chief baker and the chief wine steward, the chief officer of Pharaoh's prison, and Pharaoh himself, immediately saw Yosef's greatness. Yosef rose to the top in every situation - save one: Only his brothers could

not or would not recognize his leadership qualities, his innate talent, his God-given gifts. This is the essence of *sinat hinam*, the quintessential example of baseless hatred: The brothers' hatred blinded them to Yosef's greatness. Even when Yosef stands before them, having overcome every possible obstacle in his personal rise to power, even when he practically begs them to open their eyes and see the man behind robes of royalty, they refuse to see. They seem to prefer their jealousy and hatred over acceptance of Yosef as their rightful leader.

Yoseph is, in the Jewish tradition, the anti-type of the Messiah, that's why the Jewish Messiah bears the title of *Mashiach ben Yoseph*—Messiah Son of Yoseph.

Exactly as Yoseph did everything to be recognized by his brothers, Yeshua did everything to be recognized by his brothers Jews. They did not recognize him, but ultimately one day, he will reveal himself to them saying "I am Yeshua, your brother" as Yoseph said "I am Yoseph your brother".

### Partners in Gan Eden

The Talmudic sage Rabbi Yehoshua ben Alim was a very learned and wise man. When he asked, "Who will be my partner in Gan Eden (World-to-Come)," he was told in a dream, "You and Naness the butcher will be together in Gan Eden." Rabbi Yehoshua was astonished; "After spending all my time studying and teaching the Torah, I will share Gan Eden with a simple butcher?" he said. "I must find Naness and see what kind of person he is." Rabbi Yehoshua went from village to village and from city to city asking for Naness the butcher. Finally he came to a place where there was a butcher by that name. The people couldn't understand why Rabbi Yehoshua was so interested in meeting the butcher. "Rabbi, he is an ignorant person," the townspeople said. "I would like to see him anyway," answered Rabbi Yehoshua. Naness too couldn't understand why the great sage was interested in meeting him. "Why did you bother to come see a simple person like me?" Naness the butcher asked Rabbi Yehoshua.

"Tell me, my son, what good deeds have you done?" asked Rabbi Yehoshua. "As you can see, I am a very simple man," answered Naness. "I have very old parents who are weak and can't do anything for themselves. Everyday I visit them, wash them, dress them, and feed them." Rabbi Yehoshua kissed Naness on the forehead and said, "In that case, I consider myself lucky to be your partner in Gan Eden!"

### G-d's Blessings

A person who lived all his life in the big city decided one day to become a farmer. He bought a parcel of land and went to live on the farm. Knowing that whether his land will grow crops depends on the mercy of G-d, he prayed fervently to G-d for rain. His prayers were answered and rain descended on the fields. Now he was sure that his field would yield fruits and vegetables. Yet, a while later, when he checked his field, to his dismay, he found only weeds. His disappointment became even greater when he saw that all his neighbors' fields were indeed filled with beautiful fruits and vegetables.

In despair, he approached one of his neighbors, "My field had the same amount of rain as yours. My field had the same sunshine as yours. My field is even the same size as yours, yet mine didn't yield any fruit while yours did. Can you explain to me what happened?"

"The answer is simple!" explained the neighbor. "G-d's blessings are only effective when you do what is expected of you. I planted seeds, fertilized the ground and removed the weeds, so now G-d's blessing of rain has brought forth wonderful fruits. You, however, didn't do anything in your field. All you did was pray, but you didn't do anything to cultivate G-d's blessings... How can you expect G-d's blessings to bear fruit?"

## EDITOR

A newsletter published by the  
World Jewish Adventist Friendship Center  
Under the umbrella of the  
General Conference —Global Mission Office

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## Haftara

### Ezekiel 37:15 - 28

**PARASHA:** Yosef and Judah are the two leaders of Israel. Yosef rules in Egypt, Judah is the leader of Israel listed as the first and the one who defends his brothers and especially Benyamin: “Judah and his brothers came to Joseph’s house.” (Genesis 44:14). “Then Judah stepped up to him and said, “O my lord, let your servant please speak” (Gen. 44:18).

**HAFTARAH:** A schism has divided Israel in two kingdoms, Judah in the South and Israel (Yoseph) in the North. The Lord does not like this situation He would like to see Israel, his people to be united again. Yoseph and Judah are the symbol of this unity. “Mortal, take a stick and write on it, “For Judah, and the Israelites associated with it”; then take another stick and write on it, “For Joseph (the stick of Ephraim) and all the house of Israel associated with it”; and join them together into one stick, so that they may become one in your hand. (Ezekiel. 37:16-17). This text is clearly a Messianic text, that’s why some commentators have seen Judah as the representative of Israel and Yosef or Ephraim as representative of the kehilah (assembly) of the Mashiach.

The unity between Israel and Judah will protect them against apostasy and idolatry: “I will save them from all the apostasies into which they have fallen, and will cleanse them. Then they shall be my people, and I will be their G-d” (Ezekiel. 37:23).

David is presented as the future king: “My servant David shall be king over them; ” (Ezekiel. 37:24). But David died long time before Ezekiel, that’s why we understand that “David” is the Messiah, who Son of David and therefore is called after the name of his ancestor David.

The spiritual leader of God’s people will be the Messiah. “and they shall all have one shepherd” (Ezekiel. 37:24). The Lord give many promises: 1) They shall live in the land ... forever. 2) David shall be their prince forever. 3) I will make an everlasting covenant of peace with them; 4) I will bless them and multiply them, 5) I will set my sanctuary among them forevermore. 6) My dwelling place shall be with them; 7) I will be their God, and they shall be my people... forevermore. (Ezekiel 37:28) The key word here is “forever”.

## Besorat Yeshua

### Mark 13:18-31

**PARASHA:** Yosef is the type of the Messiah, after all his sufferings he saved his people from famine and death. “And Joseph provided his father, his brothers, and all his father’s household with food, according to the number of their dependents..” (Genesis 47:12).

**BESORAH:** Yeshua is coming back, Mark continues to give signs of his coming... “But in those days, after that suffering, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light” (Mark 13:24)

The description of the second coming of Yeshua is the ultimate realization of what we have read in the Haftara. “Then they will see ‘the Son of Man coming in clouds’ with great power and glory.” (Mark 13:26).

This Son of Man coming in cloud’s with great power and glory is the David who will reign over Israel forever.

Exactly like Yoseph he will forgive his “brothers” (Israel) for what they have done to him and will introduce them, with all the believers in the new Gan Eden, the new Jerusalem that will come down from heaven and will stand on the month of Olive, near the Old City of Jerusalem.

Then Israel and Ephraim (Israel and the Church) will be saved forever and As Shaul the Shaliach said: “And so all Israel will be saved; as it is written, “Out of Zion will come the Deliverer; he will banish ungodliness from Jacob.” “And this is my covenant with them, when I take away their sins.” As regards the gospel they are enemies of God for your sake; but as regards election they are beloved, for the sake of their ancestors; for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.” (Romans 11:26-29).

Yeshua said: “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.”

