

GENESIS Week 38, Chapters 44 and 45

Let's continue the story of Joseph as we move our way through Genesis. But, as we read Genesis 44, I want you to do something: everywhere we see Joseph dealing with his brothers, mentally picture Yeshua dealing with us. As we're going to see, Joseph is a kind of Old Testament version of Jesus; in more ways than immediately meets the eye. No, I'm not in any way suggesting that Joseph was an earlier incarnation of the Word; rather I mean that he is a "type". Joseph is used, partially, to create a pattern after which the Messiah will follow. Naturally, because Joseph is but a mere man, He cannot hold a candle to the essence and nature and stature and holiness of Yeshua HaMashiach; but we can learn some valuable principles about Yeshua from what we read of Joseph. The trick is to recognize patterns while avoiding allegory.

READ GEN 44 all

Despite the questions that the circumstances surrounding the banquet served to the 11 brothers must have inspired in them.....being invited to dine in the home of the 2nd most powerful man in all Egypt...the incredible coincidence of their being seated in exact order of their birth....the strange offering of the royal portion (5 times as much) of food given to Benjamin.....they got the grain they had come seeking, packed up their donkeys and left at first light of the next morning. They likely figured their ordeal was finally over.

Hardly. Just as before, Joseph had each brother's money placed back into his sack of grain; but a new twist was added. Joseph's silver cup was placed into the mouth of Benjamin's sack.

No sooner had the brothers begun their journey home than Joseph's house steward, sent by Joseph, catches up to these Israelites and once again accuses them of stealing from his master. The brothers are dumbfounded. The house steward tells the eleven exactly what Joseph had instructed him to say; that is, why have you repaid me evil for good, and why have you taken my goblet, or cup, from which I make my divinations?

First, let's address the cup. Actually, it was a bowl.....a silver bowl. The master of the house in Egypt in those days, if judged a sage, a seer, had a special bowl from which he and he alone drank. But, it was also used for the purpose of divining messages from the gods. One can only imagine how Joseph came by this "diviner's bowl".....likely it was a gift from the Pharaoh, because Joseph was undoubtedly, after accurately interpreting Pharaoh's dreams, determined the highest and best sage, diviner, in all the land. Typically, the bowl was filled with water, and then gold or silver objects, amulets, sometimes with magic inscriptions written on them, were put into the water, and from the reflections the seer would attempt to see the future. It is unimaginable that Joseph actually used the bowl for anything except to drink from.....but to keep up the appearance of being thoroughly Egyptian, he used the common knowledge of the bowl as an implement of divination to continue to test his brothers.

By the way: notice that we never hear a word about the brothers' questioning of whether or not Joseph was an Egyptian.....which he was not. So, why NOT? Why don't we hear the brothers wondering why Joseph doesn't even LOOK like other Egyptians? Egyptians, after all, are NOT Semites. They are from Ham. And, their physical features are quite different from Semites, the most obvious being their dark, rather than olive colored, skin. Once again, we have another hidden illusion to the Hyksos rulership over Egypt at this time. The whole of the Middle East would have been quite aware of this political situation in Egypt, whereby Bedouins conquered and ruled Egypt. So, it was of no surprise at all to these Israelites from Canaan.....these Semites.....that the vizier of Egypt looked, physically, much like themselves, even though he dressed in more typical Egyptian garb and adopted Egyptian customs and traditions. For the brothers well knew that Semites were, at this time, ruling over Egypt....it was common knowledge.

In response to the accusations of stealing the divining cup of the vizier, the brothers boldly announce that they are so sure that the cup is not among them, that should the house steward inspect their grain sacks and find it, that not only will they offer themselves to be slaves to the master, but that the one with the cup should die! It's interesting to me that seemingly every time it becomes necessary for one or all of these Israelite brothers to prove their intent or honesty on a matter, or need to resolve a difficult situation, death is the answer. They killed the males of Shechem for raping their sister. They decided to kill Joseph, but ONLY sold him off into slavery figuring he wouldn't survive very long in those conditions, anyway. Judah ordered that his daughter-in-law Tamar be burned alive for her supposed fornication and dishonoring of Judah's family by her out-of-wedlock pregnancy, Reuben offers his own children's lives to Jacob as retribution should anything happen to Benjamin.....on and on. What this shows me is that up to this point in their lives, ten of the 12 tribes of Israel had very little respect for life, and had utterly no understanding of God's moral principles!

The house steward refuses that offer, but does order that only the guilty party would bear punishment.....and that punishment was enslavement, not death. And, of course, to add drama to the situation, the house steward, already knowing exactly where the cup was because he had put it there, begins his dramatic inspection of the grain sacks with the oldest brother's first, and works his way down to the youngest. And, finally, as he opens the mouth of Benjamin's sack, the glittering of the polished silver bowl sends the brothers into a frenzy of disbelief and confusion, and they tear at their clothes in anguish, for they know what this means; Benjamin, their father's favorite, may be lost. And, it will probably kill Jacob.

Verse 14, however, marks a turning point in the character of at least some of the tribes of Israel. Notice that all the brothers returned, with Benjamin, to Joseph's house. Once the bowl had been found, all the brothers, except Benjamin, were free to go their way and return to their families in Canaan. But, they didn't do that. Rather than solve their problem the way they had so long ago with Joseph by abandoning him, they decided to stay with Benjamin and bear together whatever fate awaited them. And, it was Judah who now acted as spokesman for the brothers. The Judah who confessed that it was he that

had done wrong, and not his pregnant daughter-in-law Tamar; the Judah who offered up HIMSELF as surety for Benjamin's life to his father Jacob, Israel. Judah now confesses all to the vizier, Joseph, and tells him that while they are innocent in that they did not steal his cup or his money, that indeed, they are guilty before God. Guilty for their many wrong doings. Guilty for selling their little brother into slavery, guilty for deception and for grieving their father nearly to the point of death. And, so, Judah, the most humbled by life, apparently, of the 11 brothers, does in small measure what his greatest descendant, Yeshua, Jesus of Nazareth, will do in infinite measure in the future: he offers himself up to pay for the sins of his brothers.

I want to take a moment to show you some characteristics of Joseph and how he reacts and even his relation to Pharaoh that may help us to understand Jesus and His role, for it has long been understood that Joseph was a type of Messiah.

In verses 9 and 10, when Joseph's house servant accuses the brothers of taking Joseph's silver divining bowl, the brothers said that whoever is found with the bowl shall die and all the other brothers will become Joseph's slaves. The response to this offer is this: No, only the one who did the deed is responsible, the rest may go in peace.

Here we have perhaps the greatest principle of salvation in Christ: you are responsible ONLY for YOUR sins, not for the sins of any one else. Further, no one else can pay the price for your sins; YOUR sins are on your head. Was your father an abuser? You are not responsible for his sins. Was your mother mean and self-absorbed? You are not responsible for her sins. Is your brother a criminal? Those are his sins, not yours. Are you rebellious? No one else but you is responsible for your sin. This, however, is a good-news, bad-news deal; because although you aren't responsible for the sins of others, neither are others responsible for your sins. YOU must bear your own guilt. And, since the wages of sin before God is death....YOUR death.....your ETERNAL death.....what is to be done to escape this fate from which there seems to be no hope?

A little later, in verse 16, we get this profound speech from Judah, and another great principle of salvation is brought to light. Judah admits to Joseph that it is useless to plead innocence before him; because even though they did not commit the crime of which they had been accused (stealing the silver bowl), in fact they were guilty of other crimes; crimes they thought were well hidden and unknowable; crimes long past and nearly forgotten; crimes of the heart and soul. They were infested with sin and as a result lived sinful lives. And, despite their outward appearance of honesty and integrity, and their earnest pleading of innocence, all that they were, all they had done, has been exposed by God.

This is exactly the position we have before Jesus. Joseph says to Judah "how is it that you think you can hide ANYTHING from me, don't you know I practice divination?" What is divination? It is the supposed power of the gods used to help the human diviner discern hidden things. Divination is man's attempt to be like gods. Most of the time it was a hoax men perpetrated on other men. At other times men turned their lives over to

Satan who gave them certain insights in exchange for their souls. At times, God gave the power to divinely discern to His prophets.

Jesus says there is NOTHING about us that is hidden from Him. All the evil and deceit that is in us is exposed to Him. And, how does Yeshua know this? Divination. Yeshua, being divine, knows everything there is to know about us. Things we don't even really know about ourselves. Where does Yeshua get this power of divination? Simple. He IS divine.

Then in verse 18 we are presented a principle that can fly right by us unless we open our eyes to it: Judah, in paying homage to Joseph, says this: "...you who are EQUAL of Pharaoh...". Oh, how KEY this is. Look at Joseph's position in Egypt. He was appointed to power BY Pharaoh. Joseph was given authority to wield all of Pharaoh's power, by Pharaoh. Joseph is so connected to Pharaoh that He is essentially the equal of Pharaoh. But, is Joseph the Pharaoh? No. The Pharaoh still exists and is the highest of the high. Joseph was the Vizier, but Pharaoh was Pharaoh.

This was put here that, in addition to knowing this important piece of history, we might understand the relationship between Yeshua and Yehoveh. Between Jesus the Son and God the Father. There is at once an equality....a oneness.....a unity....echad..... between Jesus and the Father, and yet a subservience of the Son to the Father. Joseph wielded the full power and authority of Pharaoh, but he was NOT Pharaoh. Yeshua wields the full power and authority of the Father, yet Yeshua is NOT the Father. Joseph was the ruler of Egypt, so was Pharaoh the ruler of Egypt, yet Joseph was NOT Pharaoh. Yeshua is God, but He is not God the Father.....He is God the Son. And, the Son is ultimately subservient to the Father, just as Joseph was subservient to the Pharaoh. Do you see this? The relationship between Joseph and the Pharaoh is the earthly demonstration of the heavenly, spiritual relationship between the Word who became flesh, Jesus, and the Father of all things, Yehoveh. Of course, the picture presented in Joseph and Pharaoh is not flawless nor perfect, because the physical can never fully represent nor explain the spiritual. But, it IS a correct picture, as far as it goes.

So, here in Genesis 44, as in all the first of the 5 books of the Torah, we see this glaring Messianic foreshadowing that quickly brings to mind what Jesus said as it was written in Matthew 5:17,18; "Do not think I have come to abolish the Torah or the Prophets. I have come NOT to abolish but to complete. Yes indeed! I tell you that until heaven and earth pass away, not so much as a yud or a stroke will pass from the Torah....not until everything that must happen, has happened".

When Jesus says 'I have come not to abolish but to complete', it can in its MOST literal sense be said, "I have come NOT to abolish, but to fill full (of meaning)".

The Jews right up until today study only the Old Testament, the Tanach, portion of God's Word, which Jesus Himself studied. And, all the greatest Jewish religious leaders and scholars and Rabbis, both ancient and modern, who must have read these passages in Genesis about Joseph in Egypt, and Judah offering up his life for his brothers, thousands

of times, missed the ultimate fulfillment of it. In fact, all of the Torah and the Prophets were certainly understood to be true; but the ancient Hebrews thought that it was more about Israel's history and God's laws and commands, than about God pouring out his heart, about His explaining the need for and the characteristics of a coming Messiah, and about a personal relationship with God. And, it was Yeshua who would fill the Torah and the Prophets full of meaning; not just by explaining it, but by living it, and fulfilling it. It was Jesus that the Torah and the Prophets pointed to beginning with the Book of Beginnings, Genesis. Jesus didn't come to abolish the Torah and the Prophets, as so many now think. He didn't come to replace the Old with the New. He came to bring the Older Testament to its fullest God-intended meaning and purpose, through the Newer. And, of course, Jesus IS the New Covenant.

The Lord's Prayer, as instructed by Jesus in Matthew 6, (which, by the way, is but part of the long discourse that we, today, call the Sermon on the Mount), is given to us as the best and greatest model of how to pray to the Father of the Universe. But, remember: it's not that we pray TO Jesus, rather we pray to the Father in the name of Jesus. We pray to the Father by means of Jesus. We only have the standing to pray to the Father because we are in union with Yeshua. Jesus didn't pray to Himself, but to the Father. Even the prayer begins "Our Father....". But, if there be a second best example of what our attitude of prayer ought to be, it must be Judah's plea, here in Genesis 44, as he lays prostrate before Joseph. He confesses all; he acknowledges his lack of understanding, his helplessness before the greatness of his master, his guilt.... perhaps not of what he was accused, but his absolute guilt beyond measure, nonetheless. He acknowledges that in vain did he try to hide his sin and his evil deeds, but the master was able to divine it all, so it was a futile attempt. He intercedes for others, his brothers, Benjamin, his father Jacob, whom he now loves and values above himself. He pleads with complete honesty of soul; he offers himself up, a substitute, for what was due the others.

And, now, the question is, how will the Master, Joseph, receive these pleadings? Will he rightfully mete out justice for the great guilt of those who are bent over in hopeless anguish before him? Hold your breath, because what will see at the beginning of the next chapter gives us the answer. And, it is put there to show us the way that Yahweh, Creator, God of Israel, will respond to yours, mine, and our pleadings to Him, from our position of absolute, undeniable guilt.

READ GEN. 45 all

Last chapter, we saw Judah pleading before Joseph for mercy. Confessing his guilt before God for his actions. Asking to be the one upon which all payment for offenses against the Master, Joseph, be extracted. Offering himself up as a substitute for his brother, Benjamin, so that his father, Jacob, would not be grieved to the point of death.

Because all we have studied since Chapter 40 concerning Joseph is a foreshadowing of the Messiah, we are approaching that pivotal moment in Scripture that will tell us just how the Lord God of the Universe hears and reacts to our pleas for mercy. And, it is shown to us in the form of how Joseph reacts to the pleas of his elder brother, Judah.

Chapter 45 opens by telling us that Joseph could simply no longer contain himself. So he dismissed everyone that was around him, that he might be alone with his 11 brothers. And, then, he broke down and wept. With weeping so violent, with his body heaving with the intensity and a range of emotions now pouring out of him like a dam bursting, his crying out could be clearly heard outside of his home. What he felt we can probably all, to some degree, identify with. These were tears of deep pain finally released; of relief from an ordeal that had come to a poignant conclusion after so many years; of gratitude for a reuniting with his family; of sadness seeing his brothers eaten up with guilt, but at the same time, joy, having witnessed them embrace repentance; and, of course, this gave Joseph the opportunity to forgive. But, Joseph also wept for he knew the thing he longed for the most was at hand; he would be soon be back in the presence of his beloved father.

Oh, what similar but greater spectrum of emotions that Jesus must have felt as He hung there on that cross, his life draining away. As He suddenly felt the full burden of the immeasurable, crushing weight placed upon Him for the sins of every human that had ever, or would ever, live. As He absorbed the Divine wrath of His Father, in righteous judgment, for the sins He bore, none of which were His. And, how long He remained silent, choosing to endure for my sake and your sake, until He sensed the conclusion was but moments away. Then, in agony and in victory He could no longer contain Himself, and cried out in a voice so loud and powerful and filled with such pain: “Eloi, Eloi, L’mah sh’vaktani?!” ...God, God, why have you separated yourself from me? Those people gathered around Him hid their faces in awe and fear, and the 6” thick veil in the Temple split from top to bottom.

But, Yeshua knew, just as Joseph knew, that soon he would be back in the presence of his father. His mission was accomplished. God’s will was done. What his brothers had done to Him for evil, the Father has used for good. Joseph saved Israel’s **physical** life: Jesus saved Israel’s **eternal** life.... Israel’s, **and** all the families of the earth who would be joined to Israel’s covenants.

One thing was left to be done: Joseph now ordered that his father and all the clan of Israel be brought to Egypt that he might care for them. As of this time, only the first two years of the 7-year famine had passed, and the next 5 would be even worse.

When Jesus died, He instructed His disciples to “feed my sheep”. Just as Joseph had forgiven given his brothers, the fact remained that the “famine” was ongoing. When Jesus left, there was going to be trouble in the world; it’s condition of evil and malevolence was going to continue. And, it would gradually get worse.

When Pharaoh heard of the coming of Joseph’s brothers, he was pleased for Joseph and rewarded Joseph’s years of loyalty and service with the order that wagons were to be sent to Canaan to bring Israel’s clan and their belongings back to Egypt, and that they were to be given the “best” of the land to live in. Of course, Joseph had already determined that the land of Goshen would be the suitable place, and had undoubtedly suggested as much to the king of Egypt.

The Father has prepared a place for Yeshua's brothers....all who have accepted and kept the faith in Yeshua. He is ready to welcome all who will come, and will send for us at the appropriate moment. A moment that I think is very very near.

The land of Goshen as a place for Israel was not an arbitrary choice. It was good, excellent actually, pasture land, perfect for grazing sheep. But, just as important, it was well away from the bulk of the Egyptian population that despised sheep and shepherds. For, the Egyptians' preferential meat was from cattle, not sheep, and they considered shepherds to be of the lowest class of people. This would prove to be a boon to the Israelites, for during the next 100 years or so, they would be left to prosper and multiply far and above their Egyptian hosts. Later, however, the jealousy of the Egyptians against the Israelites' preferential treatment and prosperity would lead to their persecution and enslavement.

In true Oriental tradition, Joseph sent valuable gifts back to Canaan for his father, and enriched each of his brothers, with Benjamin, once again, getting the royal portion of 5 times as much as the others. One can only imagine that this royal treatment by Joseph upon Benjamin likely continued all their lives. And, it could only have served to make Benjamin's relationship with his brothers strained, at the least. In fact, I suspect that the instruction of Joseph to his brothers in V24 of "do not quarrel on the journey", at least in part was due to the highly favorable treatment Benjamin received, and what the brothers might think to do about it. After all, these were the same men that 20 years earlier had deposited the teenaged Joseph in a dry well due to nothing more than the favoritism Joseph had been shown by their father.

This "do not quarrel" is kind of a strange inclusion into the story, I think. Yet, because the story of Joseph is such a model of what was to come in Yeshua, the story would be missing something without the admonition of Joseph's brethren not to quarrel. For, this is what is expected of the brothers (and sisters) of Yeshua, us, as we are on our journey with God. He, as do all the Apostles, begs us not to quarrel, but to have one-ness of spirit. Not a million bodies and one mind....but a million bodies and one heart. Unified not by consensus, but by means of our union in Christ. Wow. Have we ever failed Him in this.

Upon their arrival home in Canaan, they reported to Jacob that Joseph was alive and, in fact, was a ruler of Egypt. Is it any wonder that Jacob didn't at first believe these sons who had proved to be of such doubtful character? I suspect his first thought was, 'what kind of trick is this, and for what gain?'

But, with the appearance of the wagons and the gifts, he was convinced of the truth of it, and V27 says his spirit was revived. Jacob, after all these years, had never recovered from the loss of Joseph, and it had taken its toll on his countenance. But, now, with the news that Joseph was alive and well, he was filled with peace; the painful past was forgotten, and his life was once again complete.