

#11 VaYigash Genesis 44:18-47:27

By Moshe Schwab

While Praying:

- * What is our view of life? Do we value sports, art, or some other thing?
- * What does our life look like? What are we trying to get out of life?
- * Will we stand our ground? (This phrase can mean something different to each person). Will we stand our ground spiritually? (Are we self-seeking or does our life revolve around God?)
- * We all can wear different hats and be focused on life in different ways (Will you only care about yourself or will you drop your selfish behavior and seek the things of God; He can give us true purpose and eternal purpose; He can satisfy us like nothing else can; through Him we have something worthwhile to stand our ground for; we can give up ourselves for the greater and better good; we can seek the things of God.)

VaYigash means, “and he drew near.” This portion begins with Yehudah (Judah) petitioning Yosef (Joseph) for Benjamin. Yehudah tells Yosef the story about why Benjamin was not with them originally and that their father would die if Benjamin did not return. Yehudah then offers himself as a replacement for Benjamin. Then filled with emotion Yosef asks those around him to leave and reveals that he is Yosef to his brothers. They are dumbfounded as he talks and Yosef tells them that the famine will last five more years and that through him, God has provided for them. Yosef invites them to come to Egypt so they won't die in the famine, they embrace each other, and Pharaoh's court hears that Yosef's family is there. Pharaoh is pleased and he provides wagons, new clothes, grain and presents for Yosef's brothers so that they can go and return.

When Yosef's brothers arrive back home in Canaan, they tell their father that Yosef is alive and the leader of all Egypt. When Ya'akov saw all they brought back, he believed them and he wants to go see Yosef. They brought everything with them To Egypt. Ya'akov stopped at Be'er-Sheva on the way where God spoke to Ya'akov there and told him not to be afraid to go to Egypt and that God would eventually return them to the land of Canaan. Ya'akov's descendants are listed who went to Egypt. All the men who went to Egypt were 70 not including the women. Yosef and his father meet and it is a very emotional experience. Yosef tells Pharaoh that his family is keepers of livestock and Yosef instructed his family to also say the same because shepherds were considered abhorrent to the Egyptians. Yosef tells them to do this so they should be given the land of Goshen.

Yosef presents 5 of his brothers and his father to Pharaoh and Pharaoh gives them his blessing to live in the land of Goshen. Ya'akov speaks to Pharaoh. Yosef takes care of his family and makes sure that they have food. The famine was severe and the people of Egypt had to trade their livestock and all their land for food. The people farmed the land and willingly gave Pharaoh 20% of their produce because Yosef had saved their lives. The people of Israel prospered and increased in numbers. Ya'akov lived 17 years in Egypt before he died.

Like others, Judah is another messianic type. Just as Judah said he would stand in for Benjamin, Yeshua stood in for us and died for our sins. Joseph is a messianic figure because he saves his family from the famine and from almost certain death. Yeshua saves us from sin and we can have life through Him. Someday, we will have eternal life by keeping God's commandments with the help of the Holy Spirit. We receive the Holy Spirit through Yeshua the Messiah. Instead of keeping thousands of man-made laws, the Holy Spirit helps us to do what is right. We see a theme of God saving His people in the readings today and of hope for a future kingdom.

What is our view of life? Do we value sports, art, or some other thing more than God? I get the impression from a lot of people that having things and being successful is the most important thing in their life. Sometimes other things take second place like family, sports, partying, entertainment, etcetera.

One of my friends years ago spent all his free time rebuilding cars. He made extra money doing it which was definitely an incentive. He said he believed in God, but spent very little time praying and caring about what God cares about. I should hope we are all doing better than he did. He was also married and had two children. His idea of getting along was working at his job and rebuilding cars. I'm not kidding. One time I just happened to be around and he asked me to help him carry an engine to his garage from the back of a pickup and he just kept on working. That was his view of life.

We definitely need to be making an effort to get something spiritual out of our life. I'm not against hobbies or having fun, but we need to put God first, not last. In the case of my friend, God was practically non-existent in his life. It might not be a bad idea to write down what your life looks like. Yeshua (Jesus) said in Matthew 13:44-46 NKJV, "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it."

Are you surprised to hear this? A person should value God as if God was a treasure. In the other story (parable), the merchant gave everything he had. I feel that seldom do we value our spiritual lives the way Yeshua explained in that story. How much do we value our spiritual lives and God?

Where do we stand? If I just asked someone where they stand, perhaps they'd pick an issue like the environment or the economy, or a political party. Will we stand our ground spiritually? Will we be self-seeking or do we make God and things of God important in our lives?

Isaiah 26:3 NKJV says, "You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You." Making God important in our lives brings perfect peace. That is truly amazing. Having peace in our lives is important. Don't we all want that? Through God we can have great peace. There are hundreds of promises in the Bible. God gives us strength, God can help us, God can protect us, God can heal us, and God has even saved my life on at least a couple of occasions. You cannot put a price on that.

Let's look at Ephesians 3:16-20 NKJV:

"That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height—to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us."

How rich is God? Shaul prays for the riches of God's glory for those he is writing to. He prays for them to be strengthened spiritually; he prays for their faith and that they can be both rooted and be grounded in love and to know the love of the Messiah. The fullness of God has to do with the presence of God at the Mishkan (the Tent of Meeting in the desert). That is the Jewish concept. The Bible talks about the presence of God filling the Mishkan and so Shaul wants us to also be filled with the presence of God through the Holy Spirit so that God would always be with us and help us to live right. Because of the Holy Spirit, God is able to do, "Exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the

power that works in us." The Holy Spirit is at work in the lives of believers. Wow, that is really wonderful and amazing.

Shaul says that we should be rooted; we should not be moved from having faith in God and being faithful. I have removed trees from my property and it is a very difficult job. We need to be rooted, immovable. We should be grounded so we are completely settled to follow God. Perhaps he is thinking about the Jewish word for settle which can also mean reside (יָשַׁב, yashav). We are to live in God and through God.

We all can wear different hats in life and accomplish various things. We can be focused on life in different ways. God needs to be at the core of all we do. Do we want what God offers us? God offers us blessings that are unimaginable in the present and then eternal life. This life is short and eternity is a long time. We need to take our lives more seriously and take God more seriously.

How do we make God the core of all we do in life?

- By being committed to doing what is right every day. I pray that every morning.
- I think about how I am doing and if I have done something wrong, I ask God for forgiveness and commit myself to not doing that again.
- By knowing God's commands and doing them. There are more than 10 commandments. Shaul expands on loving your neighbor from Leviticus 19:18 in his writings to give us ideas on how to do that. Loving your neighbor is not one of the ten commandments.
- Shaul also tells us things related to the Torah that we are absolutely not to do.
- He also uses the Torah to give us positive commands.
- We do what is right with our job, with our family, with our friends, with acquaintances etcetera.

Sin is not following God's commandments. Our sin separates us from God.

Isaiah 59:2 NKJV

"But your iniquities have separated you from your God;
And your sins have hidden His face from you,
So that He will not hear."

We should have deep respect and awe for our great Yehovah and creator. Yehovah is the creator and we need to treat Him as such.

Isaiah 66:2 NKJV

"For all those things My hand has made,
And all those things exist,'
Says the Lord.
'But on this one will I look:
On him who is poor and of a contrite spirit,
And who trembles at My word.'"

If we decide to put Yehovah in his proper place in our lives, we will be part of the new heavens and earth with God for eternity and it will be wonderful and amazing all the time. You better believe it! Who wouldn't want that!

Isaiah 66:22-23 NKJV says,

"For as the new heavens and the new earth
Which I will make shall remain before Me,' says the Lord,
'So shall your descendants and your name remain.
And it shall come to pass
That from one New Moon to another,

And from one Sabbath to another,
All flesh shall come to worship before Me,' says the Lord."

In the new heaven and earth, believe me, God will make it the best time you can imagine. After all, He is the Creator.

Will we only be self-centered or will we follow God and keep His commandments. Will we allow God to be in our life? He can give us true purpose and eternal purpose; He can satisfy us like nothing else can; through Him we have something worthwhile to stand our ground for; we can give up ourselves for the greater and better good by putting God in His proper place in our lives; we can seek the things of God and His blessings. Where will we stand?