



Names

Kefa – Peter

Messiah – English for Mashiach; anointed one; Christ in the Greek means to be smudged – anointed

Moshe – Moses

Shaul – Paul

Yeshua – Jesus' real name

Yĕhōvâh – God's real name forever (Exodus 3:15)

Y'hudah – Judah

Yochanan – John

Yosef – Joseph

Terms

Haftarah – reading from the prophets

Tanakh – Old Testament portion of Bible

Torah – 1st 5 books of the Bible

Torah portion – there are 54 portions of the Torah

Vayigash – the 11th Torah portion

VaYigash means, “and he drew near.” This portion begins with Y'hudah petitioning Yosef to free Benjamin. Y'hudah tells Yosef the story about why Benjamin was not with them originally and that their father would die if Benjamin did not return. Y'hudah 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 they arrive back home 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 returned to Egypt and brought everything with them. Ya'akov stopped at Be'er-Sheva on the way where God spoke to Ya'akov and told him not to be afraid to go to Egypt and that God would eventually return them to the land of Canaan. Then, 66 of Ya'akov's descendants are listed that went into Egypt so that all the men in Egypt then were 70 (including Ya'akov, Yosef, and his 2 sons). This did not include 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 instructed his family to also say the same because shepherds were considered abhorrent. He 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 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.

Just as Judah said he will stand in for Benjamin, Yeshua stood in for us and died for our sins. We see also that 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 have a better life through Him and someday, eternal life through Yeshua. We see a theme of God saving His people in the readings today and of hope for a future kingdom.

The Haftarah for Vayigash is Ezekiel 37:15-28. Before this portion, Ezekiel had just prophesied life coming to the bones of Israel. This prophecy was about Israel regaining its hope. God promises Israel that they will rise from the dead someday. "Thus says the Lord GOD: 'Behold, O My people, I will open your graves and cause you to come up from your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel.'" Ezekiel 37:12 NKJV. We clearly see that God has given His people the hope of the resurrection.

Our portion then begins with Ezekiel taking two sticks and putting them together, one for Israel and the other for Judah. This represents a future time when Israel will be one nation again and Ezekiel says that they will be one forever with one King and shepherd and they will not sin again. The nations will know that God has set them apart as holy.

Israel has become a nation in one day as prophesied in Isaiah 66:7-8, but the future prophecy of the resurrection and the kingdom with God as their king is yet to come some day. God has a future for Israel. Just as the story of Yosef shows us that God will accomplish His will for the children of Israel; this portion affirms that God will someday make Israel a holy nation forever before all the nations.

Recently, I heard a Jewish rabbi teach that after we die we go on as an unembodied spirit. It seems some of the rabbis have lost an understanding of the truths of the scriptures. Instead they study the Talmud. In this portion, Israel rises from the dead. Rabbi Shaul taught that as well. "So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power." 1 Corinthians 15:42-43 NKJV.

It is clear that those who believe in God and follow His commandments will rise from the dead. Those who don't keep God's commandments will go to the lake of fire. Revelation 21:8 NKJV says, "But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone." In the present we are also commanded to believe on the Messiah Yeshua and receive the Holy Spirit. Rabbi Kefa said in Acts 2:38-39 NKJV, "Then Peter said to them, 'Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.'"

In the messianic times we are now in, God has lavished His favor on us through the Messiah. Just as the descendants of Jacob were almost dead from lack of food, we were dead in sins. And, just as through Joseph and Pharaoh king of Egypt, Israel was allowed to stay in the land

and survive and prosper, we also are delivered through an act of favor of our God through Yeshua the Messiah so that we could keep God's commandments with the help of the Holy Spirit. The Holy spirit is our helper. "He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever — the Spirit;" John 14:16-17. What is the first helper? It is God's commandments; they are intended to help us in all of life; they are "your wisdom and your understanding" it says in Deuteronomy 4:6 NKJV.

Yosef's brothers find out that Yosef is now a leader in Egypt. The prophetic gifting of Yosef has saved the whole region and Yosef's family. Ezekiel prophesies that God will raise the dead some day. In the New Testament portion, Rabbi Shaul also says God will raise the dead. God cares about His people in the present and helps us. Those who keep His commandments will have eternal life with a caring and good God.