

12-16-23 To Roeh Israel Abilene – *Miketz* – “at the end of”
Torah Portion; Gen 41:1 – 44:17
Haftarah: 1 Kings 3:15 – 4:1
Suggested Acheron K’tuvim: Matt 9:27-31

Moshiach ben Yoseph

Central question of this message: Can you see Yeshua in Yoseph?

Today’s Torah portion is Miketz which means “at the end of.” Its name comes from the second Hebrew word in the passage (and the first six words in the English translation, below).

Gen 41:1-4

41 Now it happened at the end of two full years that Pharaoh had a dream, and behold, he was standing by the Nile. 2 And lo, from the Nile there came up seven cows, sleek and fat; and they grazed in the marsh grass. 3 Then behold, seven other cows came up after them from the Nile, ugly and gaunt, and they stood by the other cows on the bank of the Nile.

חלם ופרעה ימים שנתים מקץ ויהי 41:1
 dreamed: that Pharaoh full two years, at the end of And it came to pass
2492 6547 3117 8141 7093 1961

והנה על- עמד והנה
 the river. by he stood and, behold,
2975 5921 5975 2009

מראה יפות פרות שבע עלת הנה מן- והנה 2
 favoured well kine seven there came up the river out of And, behold,
4758 3303 6510 7651 5927 2975 4480 2009

ובריאת בשר ותרעינה באחו:
 in a meadow. and they fed and fatfleshed;
260 7462 1320 1277

הנה שבע פרות אחרות עלת אחריהן מן- הנה 3
 the river, out of after them came up other kine seven And, behold,
2975 4480 310 5927 312 6510 7651 2009

רעות מראה ודקות בשר ותעמדנה אצל הפרות על-
 upon the other kine by and stood and leanfleshed; favoured ill
5921 6510 681 5975 1320 1851 4758 7451

שפת הנה:
 the river. the brink of
2975 8193

In today's parasha we see the coming to power of Yoseph in Egypt, where he is elevated to an office that has not yet existed in that kingdom. It is a higher office than a Vice President in America. It is a higher office than a viceroy in Europe.

The office that Yoseph is elevated to, is in almost all respects the equivalent to that of Pharaoh, with the sole exception that Pharaoh has

the power to overrule Yoseph in any regard. Other than that, Yoseph speaks as if with the very words of Pharaoh himself.

Gen 41:38-45

38 Then Pharaoh said to his servants, "Can we find a man like this, in whom is a divine spirit?" 39 So Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Since God has informed you of all this, there is no one so discerning and wise as you are. 40 You shall be over my house, and according to your command all my people shall do homage; only in the throne I will 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 off his signet ring from his hand, and put it on Joseph's hand, and clothed him in garments of fine linen, and put the gold necklace around his neck. 43 And he had him ride in his second chariot; and they proclaimed before him, "Bow the knee!" And he set him over all the land of Egypt. 44 Moreover, Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Though I am Pharaoh, yet without your permission no one shall raise his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt." 45 Then Pharaoh named Joseph Zaphenath-paneah; and he gave him Asenath, the daughter of

Potiphera priest of On, as his wife. And Joseph went forth over the land of Egypt.

There are many very interesting things we can discuss found in this passage. But I want to focus only upon a few.

Yoseph's name was changed by Pharaoh. Why? Wasn't the name Yoseph good enough? I think I can offer several explanations.

Yoseph is a Hebrew name, and Pharaoh didn't wish for a Hebrew to be known by the Egyptians as being in such an exalted position. At that time it was a detestable thing for Egyptians to even eat with Hebrews. By giving him an Egyptian name, the people who had never known Yoseph as a slave or as a prisoner would not have reason to question his authority, or Pharaoh's judgment in elevating him.

Further, the Egyptian name has a meaning that Pharaoh wished for the people to hear, and reach a conclusion on their own. There are a couple of different ideas regarding what the Egyptian name Zaphenath-Paneah might mean. Since it is not a Hebrew name, there is some dispute regarding its meaning. I know of two explanations.

One is that the Egyptian name means, “one who is strong enough to withstand the temptation of having sex with a woman not permitted to him.” If this is the meaning of the name, it would be a testimony to all of Egypt that Yoseph’s accusal and incarceration were improper. But that would only be meaningful to those who knew the “inside story” of that part of Yoseph’s life.

Another interpretation, offered by Onkelos¹ in his Targum (a “living bible” type of interpretive writing) is that Zaphenath-Paneah signifies, “a man before whom all secrets are revealed.” This is due to the Hebrew word *tzefunot* meaning “secrets.”

Yet another interpretation is, “G-d speaks and he listens.”

Regardless of which interpretation you choose to adopt as the best, it is clear that the name as it was spoken in the culture of Egypt at that time, conferred great honor upon Yoseph.

I wish to turn to Yoseph’s wife. Pharaoh gave Yoseph a girl named Asenath, who is described as the “daughter of Potiphera.”

¹ Onkelos, possibly identical to Aquila of Sinope, was a Roman national who converted to Judaism in c. 35–120 CE. He is considered to be the author of the Targum Onkelos (c. 110 CE). According to tradition, Onkelos authored the Targum Onkelos as an exposition of the "official" interpretation of the peshat (or basic meaning) of the Torah as received by rabbis Eliezer ben Hurcanus and Joshua ben Hananiah.

As regarding Potiphera, there is also considerable discussion about him. All agree that Potiphera is the same person as Potiphar. The tradition is that Potiphar likely purchased Yoseph so that he could use Yoseph for homosexual pleasures, but Yoseph was able to resist.

Tradition also suggests that an angel mutilated Potiphar's male parts in punishment for this intention, and to prevent it ever being carried out. And since Potiphar was humiliated now with this injury, he quit the court of Pharaoh and became a priest of the Egyptian god On, where he fattened cattle for ritual slaughter. The name Potiphera suggests impotency, they say.

This tradition, if true, might offer an explanation as to why Potiphar's wife sought to lie with Yoseph, who might have been the only virile male in her home. And why Potiphar's anger might have been keen regarding that incident, more with his wife than with Yoseph. But to "keep up appearances" Potiphar chose to blame the entire episode on Yoseph, since Yoseph was a convenient "scapegoat."

We see in today's parasha Yoseph's deliverance from the dungeon and his meteoric rise to penultimate power. This gave our people the concept of the Moshiach ben Yoseph (Messiah son of Joseph). I want to examine that concept a bit further today.

Long before Yeshua walked the Earth as a man and showed us how to live G-d's Torah properly, our people had formulated the concept of a first, and a second, coming of Messiah. The first was Moshiach ben Yoseph. The second was Moshiach ben David.

The Jewish understanding of these two messiahs has morphed over the centuries, and in latest times (since the coming of Yeshua) the concept of the Moshiach ben Yoseph has been somewhat “buried.” That is because our most ancient writings regarding this figure make it far too plain that it describes Yeshua.

The ancient sources are clear. Moshiach ben Yoseph must appear before the Moshiach ben David. Ben Yoseph is to be from the Gallilee, and will be slain. His death will be the atonement for Israel's sins. And he will rise again.

Sadly, as a result of the early Christian claim that Yeshua is the Moshiach ben Yoseph, the later Rabbis have sought to actively minimize this figure, and even keep him secret.

In the Barcelona Disputation (July 20–24, 1263), our Sage Ramban is there with the Jewish-Christian Friar known as Pablo Christiani, who is

pressing him to admit that the Moshiach must die as the atonement. But Ramban dodges that confrontation and since most of early Christians did not well know about Moshiach ben Yoseph, he simply declares that there is nowhere in any of the Jewish writings a declaration that Moshiach ben David will die. He was right of course, but the discussion was about Moshiach ben Yoseph being fulfilled in Yeshua, and sadly Friar Christiani didn't see the sleight of hand which had just occurred in the conversation.

It seems clear that Ramban did not wish to reveal his knowledge that there was a Moshiach ben Yoseph whose attributes matched precisely those of Yeshua. And he was not alone. The effort in the Jewish rabbinic community to obscure the Moshiach ben Yoseph from even the Jewish people they serve, seems to be ongoing, and effective. The current teaching in the Jewish community is that the concept of the Moshiach ben Yoseph is a rabbinic invention which came along after Yeshua's earthly ministry, and there is no evidence for an atoning death by any Messiah of Israel. Of course, that is wrong. Let's look at a bit of proof.

To find the earliest references to Moshiach ben Yoseph in Torah, we can go back to Deuteronomy 33, where we find a passage that the rabbis most often cite as the source for this mystical figure.

Deut 33:16-17

16 And with the choice things of the earth and its fulness,
And the favor of Him who dwelt in the bush.
Let it come to the head of Joseph,
And to the crown of the head of the one distinguished among
his brothers.

17 "As the first-born of his ox, majesty is his,
And his horns are the horns of the wild ox;
With them he shall push the peoples,
All at once, to the ends of the earth.
And those are the ten thousands of Ephraim,
And those are the thousands of Manasseh."

ראם	וְקַרְנָי	לוֹ	הַדָּר	שׁוּרוֹ	בְּכוֹר	17
unicorns:	and his horns	His	glory	his bullock,	the firstling of	is like
<u>7214</u>	<u>7161</u>	<u>3807a</u>	<u>1926</u>	<u>7794</u>	<u>1060</u>	<u>9999</u>
	יַחְדָּו	יִנְגַּח	עַמִּים	בָּהֶם	קַרְנָיו	
to	together	he shall push	the people	with them	the horns of	are like
<u>9999</u>	<u>3162</u>	<u>5055</u>	<u>5971</u>	<u>871a</u>	<u>7161</u>	<u>9999</u>
וְהֵם	אֶפְרַיִם	רִבְבוֹת		וְהֵם	אֶרֶץ	אֶפְסַיִ
and they	Ephraim,	the ten thousands of	are	and they	the earth:	the ends of
<u>1992</u>	<u>669</u>	<u>7233</u>	<u>9999</u>	<u>1992</u>	<u>776</u>	<u>657</u>
			מְנַשֶּׁה: ם	אֶלְפֵי		
			Manasseh.	the thousands of	are	
			<u>4519</u>	<u>505</u>	<u>9999</u>	

This passage shows *two* different types of oxen. One is the *shor*,

OT:7794 שׁוֹר **showr** (shore); from
OT:7788; a bullock (as a traveller):

and the other is the *reim*.

OT:7214 רֵאֵם **re'em** (reh-ame'); or
re'eym (reh-ame'); or **reym** (rame);
or **rem** (rame); from OT:7213; a wild
bull (from its conspicuousness):

These two animals are totally different. The *shor* is the domestic ox, which bears burdens, and gives up its flesh for food, and its hide for leather.

The *reim* is the wild ox, which is incapable of being tamed, and which goes anywhere it desires and is feared.

Yoseph is the first-born *shor* ox. And as we know, the first-born of the herd is sanctified to G-d, and is born under the sentence of a sacrificial death. There was no other choice for this animal.

Num 18:17-18

17 But the first-born of an ox or the first-born of a sheep or the first-born of a goat, you shall not redeem; they are holy. You shall sprinkle their blood on the altar and shall offer up their fat in smoke as an offering by fire, for a soothing aroma to the Lord.

Then look at the *reim* ox. It is also called the elrox, or “wild ox.” This animal is now extinct. The last one died in Poland in the 17th century.

Julias Caesar reported seeing it in the black forest, and said it was almost as big as an elephant. It is said to have stood over 6 feet high to the top of the shoulders and around 9 feet high at the top of its black horns. Caesar adds that every time it saw a human, it would attack.

It is the same animal that G-d challenged Job to tame, if he could.

Job 39:9-12

9 "Will the wild ox consent to serve you?

Or will he spend the night at your manger?

10 "Can you bind the wild ox in a furrow with ropes?

Or will he harrow the valleys after you?

11 "Will you trust him because his strength is great

And leave your labor to him?

12 "Will you have faith in him that he will return your grain,

And gather it from your threshing floor?

So, what one ox is, the other is not. One is lowly, enslaved, and bound for sacrifice. The other is powerful, feared and free, and without master.

Moses, in the prophecy regarding Yoseph, is not speaking of oxen. He is speaking in figurative language of what is to come from Yoseph, in his name.

So, the prophecy indicates that this first-born of Yoseph will begin as lowly, and a servant, confined and later bound to be sacrificed. But later he will be crowned with the great horns of the *reim*, and will be master over all. How can he be transformed from the lowly *shor* to the amazing *reim*?

So, the process is clearly seen. Ben Yoseph must first fulfill his destiny as the lowly servant, destined to die as the sacrifice, then must rise from the death to be the all-powerful king which is subject to no earthly authority, but rules over all.

Our people have understood Moshiach ben Yoseph for a very long time. He has become known by even other names. He has been called “son of Ephraim” and even only by “Ephraim.”

In the midrash Pesikta Rabbati chapter 37 we find the patriarchs saying to Messiah ben Ephraim,

Ephraim our righteousness. Although we are your ancestors, yet you are greater than we. For you bore sins on our behalf, and awful sufferings, by which the earliest and latest generations are atoned for. Among the peoples of the earth you became a derision, and a scorn for Israel’s sake. You sat in darkness and gloom, your eyes saw no light. Your skin cleaved to your bones and your body was as dry as wood. And your eyes were darkened from fasting and your strength was dried up like a potsherd. And all this happened because of the iniquities of our children.

So, the concept of Moshiach ben Yoseph, the suffering servant Messiah, is not a Christian invention, nor is it a later rabbinic invention. Well before Yeshua walked among us as a man, it was central to the theology of our people and is found referenced in virtually every body of Jewish literature.

It is important for us to understand that our people have, for millennia, understood the idea of two messianic comings. The first being the suffering servant (ben Yoseph), and the second being the conquering king (ben David). This was well-established long before Yeshua walked the Earth as a man.

So you can understand why those of our people who encountered Yeshua in the flesh desperately wished for him to be the Moshiach ben David and not the Moshiach ben Yoseph.

For if He were coming as ben David, then He would vanquish Rome, and restore the kingdom of G-d on earth and Israel would live in peace and prosperity.

I believe this is why so many people who were crying out to Yeshua for help called him, “Son of David.” This was their way of saying that not only was Yeshua the Messiah, but He was the all-powerful Messiah who could give them what they needed.

Matt 9:27-31

27 And as Jesus passed on from there, two blind men followed Him, crying out, and saying, "Have mercy on us, Son of David!" 28 And after He had come into the house, the blind men came up to Him, and Jesus said to them, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" They said to Him, "Yes, Lord." 29 Then He touched their eyes, saying, "Be it done to you according to your faith." 30 And their eyes were opened. And Jesus sternly warned them, saying, "See here, let no one know about this!" 31 But they went out, and spread the news about Him in all that land.

Yeshua is the fulfillment of the prophecy regarding Yoseph given in Deuteronomy 33, as the first-born son, the suffering servant. And so His death as a sacrifice, and resurrection unto life, is not an invention. It is

solid theology. But He will most certainly return once again as the wild ox – the king who cannot be bound by others, whose crowns are on high.