Sermon for Sabbath: Our Deliverer

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Torah Portion: Vayigash (He drew near): Genesis 44:18-47:27; Ezekiel 37:15-28; Luke 6:12-16; Luke 24:30-48; Acts 3:11-26: http://tinyurl.com/fz3k9hp2.

Shabbat Shalom, brothers and sisters. If you remember last month around this time, I referenced a general principle of Torah interpretation proposed by the Jewish sage Maimonides—Ramban for short—who taught during the Middle Ages, and I happen to agree with him on this point. Relative to Genesis 12:6 and the following verses, Ramban wrote in his commentary: "I will tell you a principle by which you will understand all the coming portions of Scripture concerning Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It is indeed a great matter which our Rabbis mentioned briefly, saying (in Midrash Tanchuma Lech Lecha, 9), "Whatever has happened to the patriarchs is a sign to the children" (Source: https://www.sefaria.org/Genesis.12.6?lang=bi&with=Ramban&lang2=en). In the text referenced from the Midrash Tanchuma, we read, "R. Joshua of Sikhnin was of the opinion that the Holy One, blessed be He, gave Abraham a sign that whatever happened to him would likewise happen to his descendants." By way of disclaimer, I am not one to often look to the writings of the Rabbinical "sages" as a source of Truth, because only Scripture interpreted with the Holy Spirit is guaranteed Truth. I think there is as much confusion in the Talmud as there is Truth there, but Ramban's principle here aligns with Scripture; thus it is worthy of attribution.

The Apostle Paul expresses the same principle, though from the opposite angle, in 1 Corinthians 14:32, where he wrote: "The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets." In other words, any prophetic interpretation of Scripture must align fully with any other prophetic interpretation of Scripture. This is important for us to grasp when we look at later prophesies and align them with our understanding of older prophesies. According to what Paul is saying, they cannot contradict. His principle is even more important when we look back at any of the prophets and try to understand the meaning of their message in context and apply it to our theology today. In reverse order, Maimonides said that the prophesies of old would be a sign post for future generations who would experience something very similar in a type of repetitive, increasingly revelatory pattern. In my opinion, these patterns take on deeper, more significant meaning for each generation until the Last Days, and ultimately they all point to God's redemptive story so that we might all come to know Him and choose to return to Him through Messiah Yeshua. Our God provides abundance to His people in the midst of

famine, and He desires us to share in the abundance of His coming Kingdom when we love Him and keep His commandments, and this is the lesson that I hope to explain today. To round things out by way of introduction to today's message, I want to provide one other Scriptural representation of Ramban's principle. God Himself declares in Isaiah 46:9-10: "Remember the former things of old, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure…" I think it's safe to say, "Whatever has happened to the patriarchs is a sign to the children." The LORD's Word shall stand, and it declares what will happen later. We can have no doubts that the LORD's promises, explained to us so many different ways, will come to fruition. When we spoke about this principle last, I reminded you how Abraham left the Promised Land to go to Egypt because of a famine, and he later returned to Canaan, the Promised Land, but it was not yet "the city that has foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Hebrews 11:10).

In this week's Torah Portion reading from Genesis 44-47, called Vayigash, which means, "and He came near," the children of Jacob were invited by their betrayed brother Joseph, because of His mercy and grace, to dwell in the best of the land of Egypt and escape a worldwide famine, to seek provision among all the Gentile peoples. We're going to discuss this prophetic template today in detail, for Joseph is a sign post that points to the coming of Yeshua, but let me first give you a few examples of how God declared the end from the beginning. After the children prospered for many generations in Egypt, because of what Joseph did for them, they would become slaves to a new Pharaoh who did not know Joseph, and 430 years later Moses and then Joshua would lead the children back to the Promised Land on account of God's mercy and grace for His people and to make His name famous. The children, with God's blessing and abundance, would establish Israel, and inhabit the land for many generations. But a new type of famine would come upon the children, as God explained through the prophet Amos: "Behold, the days are coming," says the Lord God, "That I will send a famine on the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord" (Amos 8:11). Because of their sin, because they forgot the commandments of God and failed to love Him by teaching and doing His Word, the children would be exiled again, this time to Babylon, where they would dwell for 70 years in captivity. Applying the principle we started with to this verse from Amos, I believe the children of today are about to experience yet another similar famine, but this time the Word that will be forgotten by most will be not only be the Word of God in Scriputre, but also the Word who became flesh and offered Himself up

for sin. Blessed are those who call upon His name and endure until the end, but woe to those who forget Him and build around themselves a famine of righteousness.

That being said, following the captivity in Babylon, God would call the children back again to the land, because of His mercy and grace and for His glory, and they would rebuild Jerusalem and dwell in the land of Judah for many generations. Unfortunately, they departed from the love of God another time—they complicated God's Word and made it a burden rather than a blessing and they sought their own way and their own gain in this midst of all their man-made rules. Because they continued to miss the mark, they would fall into the hands of invading armies and ultimately under the yoke of Rome, another Babylon. This time God Himself would come to His children in the flesh, the prophetic answer to countless prophesies, including the story of Joseph, and He would provide the Bread of Life that they lacked, the Word of God exemplified in every way, so they might be fed by Spirit and Truth and enter into the Promised Land of God forever. But this time, God would not just feed the children of Israel. Our Yeshua, who is One in being with the Father, offered Himself up as an eternal sacrifice, because of His mercy and grace for all people, so that anyone who calls upon His name would be saved. He is Yahweh, who came in the flesh, and anyone who accepts Him as such will have abundant life, never lacking provision. This is another part of God's story that we will also explore today. After this, many of the children would turn their backs on Him again, and for this they would be exiled again, this time for 1,878 years, a lengthy time of many desolations. But because of His mercy and grace, God brought the children back into the land in 1948, and this time I believe He will show His glory forever, but not before one final famine. In similar fashion to the second temple era, Israel is falling short—they have yet to acknowledge Messiah Yeshua, they reject His coming into the world, just as their fathers rejected Him. Even the Gentile nations who once embraced Him are now rejecting Him.

The famine is fast approaching. But Yeshua will once again be revealed to the children of Israel in the midst of their trouble. When Israel cries out, "Baruch Hashem Yeshua," which is to say, "Blessed is He who comes in the Name of the LORD," this is when Yeshua will return to bring judgment against His enemies, the ones who rebel against Him and His Word, and establish His Kingdom forever and ever for all of the children who have remained faithful, because of His mercy and grace, and for His own glory. Yeshua said this Himself in Matthew 23:39, where we read Him explain to His Jewish brothers, "I say to you, you shall see Me no more until you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD." Even this promise of God was prophesied, as we read in Psalm 118:22-29: "The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief

cornerstone. This was the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day the LORD has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it. Save now, I pray, O LORD; O LORD, I pray, send now prosperity. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD! We have blessed you from the house of the LORD. God is the LORD, and He has given us light; bind the sacrifice with cords to the horns of the altar. You are my God, and I will praise You; You are my God, I will exalt You. Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! for His mercy endures forever." Our LORD Yeshua is the chief cornerstone of the third temple that He has been building in His people since His coming, since He freely provided His mercy and grace through His death and resurrection, and now His Holy Spirit provides light in the hearts of all who faithfully follow Him, but He will not return until His people, the children of Israel, call out, "Save now, I pray, O LORD, O LORD. I pray, send now prosperity. … Blessed is Yeshua, who comes in the name of Yahweh." In other words, He will come when His people cry out, LORD, take away this famine of your Word, take away this famine of your love, of your blessing, of your Truth. Return, Oh, LORD. Blessed is Your name, Yeshua. Blessed is the name of the LORD. Please bring to us your promised Kingdom. The children, who don't recognize Yeshua today will one day soon call out to Him and he will return for the benefit of all who have endured in their faith, and it is at that time that He will reveal Himself for every eye to see (Revelation 1:7).

It's hard not to see the parallels in Joseph's story to the coming of our LORD. Yeshua died and then rose from death, and He has come to bring salvation to the Jews and also the Gentiles, just as Joseph was sold into slavery by his brothers and considered dead, even by his father, but he rose up out of his prison cell to bring salvation to the Egyptians as well as the children of Israel. We know that the resurrection of Yeshua is the beginning of the redemption story for all flesh, just as the story of Joseph is the beginning of Israel's redemption from many years of sin in the land of Canaan, especially the sin against their own brother, and yet through his captivity and metaphorical death and resurrection, Joseph also brought salvation to the whole world, represented by Egypt. In Joseph's story, there was a literal famine in the whole world, and it was only two years into a seven-year stretch when things got exceptionally bad. Israel and all the nations were affected by this. There wasn't a single person who was satiated. Every man, woman, and child was in need. They all came to Joseph, and he provided them with all of the food they needed, whether they were Jews or Gentiles. God used Joseph's unjust suffering to bring redemption to those who had sinned against him, and ultimately to the whole world—whoever accepted him and his terms, that is. Despite the pain and suffering he endured at the hands of his brothers, and really at the hands of the Egyptians also, consider Joseph's first revelatory words to his

brothers in Genesis 45:4-8: “Please come near to me.” I have to pause here. What does the LORD desire more than this from His people? Yeshua so desires Israel to be saved, and He wants His people to call out to Him. And one day they will: We read on: “So they came near.” He will also explain the full Truth to them, and they will look upon Him who they pierced and mourn for Him (Zechariah 12:10), just as we see prophetically represented in Joseph’s words that follow: “Then he said, ‘I am Joseph your brother, whom you sold into Egypt. But now, do not therefore be grieved or angry with yourselves because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life. For these two years the famine has been in the land, and there are still five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvesting. And God sent me before you to preserve a posterity for you in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you who sent me here, but God; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt.” In like manner, the LORD Yeshua reigns as King over all, He rules whether we profess Him or not, and He provides abundant spiritual food to all who obey Him, and He sits at the right hand of the Father; He is God who manifests Himself as the visible and active power interceding for His people in the world through His Spirit whom He has sent to dwell within all who believe.

The section I just covered is analogous to the state of man in the flesh, without our redeemer, and then the abundance God provides to us when our Redeemer is revealed to us. Ecclesiastes 7:20 notes, “For there is not a just man on earth who does good and does not sin.” Paul writes similarly in Romans 3:9-12, “For we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin. As it is written: ‘There is none righteous, no, not one; There is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; they have together become unprofitable; there is none who does good, no, not one.” Like every man, woman and child in the known ancient world who hungered during the great famine, we all hunger and thirst for righteousness as we go about our days in the world, but according to the Word of the LORD, when we hunger faithfully for the righteousness that God has commanded, we will have our fill (Matthew 5:6). Without the salvation that comes from Yeshua, there is no satisfaction to the hunger that people have. Every man, woman and child has been created with a hunger for God, so that we might choose to dwell with Him and to be accepted by Him. That hunger descends into famine apart from Him, and it is sin that separates us from a Holy God and leaves us famished. There is no way to satisfy our hunger other than through Him; through the forgiveness He offers those who come to Him with humble and contrite hearts, seeking Him for spiritual food. Yeshua came in the flesh to die on our behalf, to cover our sins with His blood, and

then rise from the dead—because death could not hold the Creator of Heaven and Earth and everything in them. Upon His resurrection, He opened His hands to offer to all flesh the Bread of Life and the Living Water that fills us and sustains us with everything we need to live with God.

In a prophetic template of Yeshua's resurrection, Joseph's brothers did not recognize him when he revealed himself to them as Lord over all the Earth, but he persisted in His effort to reveal himself, and ultimately they believed. In Genesis 45:1-4, we read: "Then Joseph could not restrain himself before all those who stood by him, and he cried out, 'Make everyone go out from me!' So no one stood with him while Joseph made himself known to his brothers. And he wept aloud, and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard it. Then Joseph said to his brothers, 'I am Joseph; does my father still live?' But his brothers could not answer him, for they were dismayed in his presence. And Joseph said to his brothers, 'Please come near to me.' So they came near. Then he said: 'I am Joseph your brother, whom you sold into Egypt."

He continued, "Hurry and go up to my father, and say to him, 'Thus says your son Joseph: 'God has made me lord of all Egypt; come down to me, do not tarry. You shall dwell in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near to me, you and your children, your children's children, your flocks and your herds, and all that you have. There I will provide for you, lest you and your household, and all that you have, come to poverty; for there are still five years of famine.' And behold, your eyes and the eyes of my brother Benjamin see that it is my mouth that speaks to you. So you shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt, and of all that you have seen; and you shall hurry and bring my father down here.'" I believe this story has multiple layers of meaning, just like I explained when we started. It's first realization was in the resurrection, when Yeshua revealed Himself to His apostles, who had scattered and hid following His death and resurrection. A second meaning can certainly be discerned in this reading, when Yeshua will come down a second time to reveal Himself to His brethren who call upon His name and cry out in the midst of their desperation for His mercy and help. They won't be expecting Yeshua, but they will call for Yahweh to save them, and Yeshua is the one who will come. I expect a similar scene to what we just read from Genesis.

In Luke 24:36-48, we can see the first parallel story of Yeshua, who had been sent to His death by His brothers and crucified by Rome (another Egypt), but was then resurrected unto glory, as Lord over the Heavens and all the Earth. Upon His resurrection, "...Yeshua Himself stood in the midst of them, and said to them, 'Peace to you.' But they were terrified and frightened, and supposed they had seen a spirit. And

He said to them, ‘Why are you troubled? And why do doubts arise in your hearts? Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have.’ When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet. But while they still did not believe for joy, and marveled, He said to them, ‘Have you any food here?’ So they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish and some honeycomb. And He took it and ate in their presence. Then He said to them, ‘These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.' And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures. Then He said to them, ‘Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Messiah to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things.’” Just as the Apostles and Jewish disciples were witnesses to Yeshua’s resurrection, witnesses to the repentance and remission of sins offered through Yeshua’s death and resurrection, so too were Joseph’s brothers offered repentance and remission of sins as they stood before their brother. And just as Yeshua’s Jewish followers are given the First Fruits of salvation, the best that all of Creation has to offer—to know the Lord and His redemptive plan for the whole world, which they were then commanded to preach, so too were Joseph’s father and brothers given the best of the land of Egypt, where they were commanded to be shepherds, and not just for their own sheep, but also to pharaoh’s sheep—all the sheep in the whole world.

Before we get into the next level of meaning, I think it’s important to stop for a moment and bring some understanding where you might have confusion. Generally, in Scripture, Egypt metaphorically represents the world, which is perishing, while the physical land of Israel represents the kingdom of God as we can experience it in our present state as followers of Yeshua. This is certainly the case in the Exodus story coming up in our reading within the next few weeks. However, in the story of Joseph, the metaphor is somewhat flipped. In this historical allegory, Pharaoh metaphorically represents God the Father, and Joseph represents God the Son. Before I lose you on this, consider the fluidity of metaphor that Scripture presents in these other examples: In Revelation 5:5 and Genesis 49:9-19, among other places, Yeshua is referred to as “the Lion of the tribe of Judah.” However, the foolish imitator, Satan, is also described as “a roaring lion, seeking whom he may to devour” (1 Peter 5:8). Likewise, Yeshua declared in John 8:12, “I am the light of the world,” but in 2 Corinthians 11:14, Paul writes that “Satan transforms himself into an angel of light.” There are many more examples of this fluidity in Scriptural metaphor, but these two get the point across.

Yeshua was sold over to the Gentiles, just as Joseph was sold to the Egyptians, but through this experience He was revealed to be equal to Pharaoh in his glory. We read last week in Genesis 41:40-43: “You shall be over my house, and all my people shall be ruled according to your word; only in regard to the throne will I be greater than you. And Pharaoh said to Joseph, ‘See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt.’ Then Pharaoh took his signet ring off his hand and put it on Joseph’s hand; and he clothed him in garments of fine linen and put a gold chain around his neck. And he had him ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried out before him, ‘Bow the knee!’ So he set him over all the land of Egypt.” Now on first glance, this prophetic template may not appear to present Joseph in an equivalent position to Pharaoh, and some might even use this to question the status of Yeshua. I’m going to address this briefly.

We have to remember one thing: Yeshua came in the flesh, and while He lived as a man on the Earth, He did not express the fullness of His godly power, but that power was still within Him, and when He was restored through His resurrection to His position at the right hand of God—metaphorically, the active and visible power of God in the world—there was no longer any distinction. Philippians 2:5-11 explains this best: “Let this mind be in you which was also in Messiah Yeshua, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Yeshua every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Messiah Yeshua is Yahweh, to the glory of God the Father.” When Pharaoh explains that his subjects must bow the knee to Joseph as He goes throughout the land, he is explaining that Joseph’s authority is equal to his own and demands the same respect. He literally took off his ring of authority and gave it to Joseph, who represents Yeshua in the flesh. While Joseph was managing food during the famine for Pharaoh, he was bringing all things under submission for Pharaoh. And in the end, Pharaoh ended up possessing the whole world, and all were subject to him, even Israel, who was dwelling on land set apart at Pharaoh’s pleasure. But who was responsible for this? Whose authority made all this come to pass? Who, in fact, was the one who provided food for Pharaoh himself?

Genesis 45:8 brings such an important concept to the table that we cannot miss as we consider this prophetic template. There we read Joseph say, “God has made me a

father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt." How could this be? Importantly, the historical allegory, the prophetic template of Joseph and Pharaoh is meant to express the complex unity of God the Father and God the Son, with the Holy Spirit. We have One God who exists outside of our plane of understanding, and yet He manifests Himself in different ways within our plane of understanding. When He came as the Son, He was subservient to the Father because He embodied flesh—He took on the experience of one of His creatures, and yet He maintained His identity as God, which He often stated. And in His glorified state—His eternal Spirit—He is one in being with the Father, as He said in John 10:30; namely, "I and the father are one." Later, He said to Philip in John 14:9: "He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"

The prophet Isaiah explains this complex unity also in Isaiah 9:6-7, where we read, "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." He is both Father and Prince, and He is Mighty God. "Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this." He is eternal, and He Himself would be the one acting to make this all happen.

In another analogous prophesy in Zechariah 14:8-9, we read concerning Yeshua in the end of days: "And in that day it shall be that living waters shall flow from Jerusalem, half of them toward the eastern sea and half of them toward the western sea; In both summer and winter it shall occur. And the LORD shall be King over all the earth. In that day it shall be—'The Lord is one,' and His name one." I don't want to to dive too deeply into apologetics today, but I do want to assert my belief that "Yeshua" will be the one name that we all know God by in that day, for God saves us all through Yeshua and we will only dwell in His presence on account of Yeshua. It is Yeshua who saves us from the famine, Yeshua who brings us to the promised land, and Yeshua who provides us abundance as our King and LORD. Paul explains this same mystery in Titus 2:11-14, among other similar verses, where we read: "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Yeshua HaMashiach, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works." And this is where we can go back to our historical allegory. Joseph brought the grace of God to

all men, not just his brothers, but also the Egyptians. And Joseph, equal with Pharaoh in every observable and measurable way, redeemed all people from famine and death, and he created his own special people, zealous for good works, wearing the signet ring that afforded Him complete power and authority. We're going to see more of this play out metaphorically as the story of Joseph continues.

Next let's read in Genesis 47:1-6: "Then Joseph went and told Pharaoh, and said, 'My father and my brothers, their flocks and their herds and all that they possess, have come from the land of Canaan; and indeed they are in the land of Goshen.' And he took five men from among his brothers and presented them to Pharaoh. Then Pharaoh said to his brothers, 'What is your occupation?' And they said to Pharaoh, 'Your servants are shepherds, both we and also our fathers.' And they said to Pharaoh, 'We have come to dwell in the land, because your servants have no pasture for their flocks, for the famine is severe in the land of Canaan. Now therefore, please let your servants dwell in the land of Goshen.' Then Pharaoh spoke to Joseph, saying, 'Your father and your brothers have come to you. The land of Egypt is before you. Have your father and brothers dwell in the best of the land; let them dwell in the land of Goshen. And if you know any competent men among them, then make them chief herdsmen over my livestock.'" Because Joseph saved his brothers from the famine, he was able to offer them the opportunity to be shepherds of their own flocks in the best of the land. And yet, through the will of Pharaoh, the children of Israel were also commanded to become shepherds for the flocks of Egypt. Joseph had already told them to dwell in the land of Goshen prior to this, for He had all power and authority. In like manner, those Jews who were called to be Yeshua's apostles and disciples, to live in the best the land—they had the salvation of Yeshua—because of their salvation, they were instructed to be shepherds not just of their own flocks, but also the flocks that came from all the nations. And they were positioned to do this well by the power of the Holy Spirit, which Yeshua had promised to them.

This beautiful allegory, which actually happened in Egypt, which God set up to point to the coming of His Son, our Messiah Yeshua, has yet another layer of meaning that we can't miss. After their salvation from the famine, Israel was not living in the Promised Land. The fledgling nation of 70 men would now dwell in a foreign land as sojourners and pilgrims, where they were instructed to be shepherds for their own people and for the people of the nations. Consider how this story aligns with Peter's interpretation of Scripture in 2 Peter 2:9-12, where we read: "But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a

people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy. Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation." Now that Yeshua has come for the salvation of all people, now that Joseph has revealed himself for the salvation of his people as well as the people of all the nations, it is incumbent on those who are called to be the shepherds, those who believe in the salvation of Yeshua and therefore spread His Gospel, to have honorable conduct among all people—in other words, to keep the commandments of God and the faith of Yeshua—while they sojourn in this world shepherding the flocks; while they await the return of Messiah to glorify us in the same way that He was glorified. WE can see that the famine in Egypt persisted for another five years in the same way that separation from God through sin persists in all the Earth, but because of Joseph, because of Yeshua, those who come to follow Him are given the food needed to sustain them until He comes to bring all who follow him into the Promised Land, and in the meantime, the people who follow Him are called to feed all of the sheep of the world.

As we continue, imagine for a moment a people who would fight against Joseph as he delivered food to the whole world, or imagine someone who lived in contempt of his authority, or imagine someone who didn't play by the rules he set for the distribution of food. Would these people be fed by the one who had the authority to give them food? The story of Joseph is quite clear that everyone is in obedience to him who receives the food that he has to offer, and this is the case for those who wish to receive the bread of life from Messiah Yeshua today. Woe to those who are unwilling to give all they have in exchange for the life He provides. Consider Genesis 47:3-20, where we read: "Now there was no bread in all the land; for the famine was very severe, so that the land of Egypt and the land of Canaan languished because of the famine. And Joseph gathered up all the money that was found in the land of Egypt and in the land of Canaan, for the grain which they bought; and Joseph brought the money into Pharaoh's house. So when the money failed in the land of Egypt and in the land of Canaan, all the Egyptians came to Joseph and said, 'Give us bread, for why should we die in your presence? For the money has failed.' Then Joseph said, 'Give your livestock, and I will give you bread for your livestock, if the money is gone.' So they brought their livestock to Joseph, and Joseph gave them bread in exchange for the horses, the flocks, the cattle of the herds, and for the donkeys. Thus he fed them with bread in exchange for all their livestock that year. When that year had ended, they came to him the next year and said to him, 'We will not hide from my lord that our

money is gone; my lord also has our herds of livestock. There is nothing left in the sight of my lord but our bodies and our lands. Why should we die before your eyes, both we and our land? Buy us and our land for bread, and we and our land will be servants of Pharaoh; give us seed, that we may live and not die, that the land may not be desolate.' Then Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh; for every man of the Egyptians sold his field, because the famine was severe upon them. So the land became Pharaoh's."

Doesn't this sound familiar? Are we not instructed to sell everything we have to buy the precious pearl, the treasure hidden in the field, which is to dwell with Yeshua forever in the kingdom of God? Is not Yeshua the Bread of Life who takes away the sins of the world? In Matthew 13:44-46, our LORD teaches us this Truth: "Again, 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." The food Joseph provided to all the world was metaphorically that Spiritual food that has more value than anything else on the Earth, which we must give up everything to obtain. To take on Messiah Yeshua is to give up everything else, to accept that we are famished and perishing without Him, but with Him we have food for our salvation and the seed to plant to bring in even more fruit for the harvest at the end of the age provided that we endure with Him until He returns.

In Genesis 47:23-25, we see the LORD's seed metaphor come to life in our historical allegory: "Then Joseph said to the people, 'Indeed I have bought you and your land this day for Pharaoh. Look, here is seed for you, and you shall sow the land. And it shall come to pass in the harvest that you shall give one-fifth to Pharaoh. Four-fifths shall be your own, as seed for the field and for your food, for those of your households and as food for your little ones. So they said, 'You have saved our lives; let us find favor in the sight of my lord, and we will be Pharaoh's servants.'" In Messiah Yeshua, we are all given the seed to plant from the Word of God, and God lets us plant in His field that belongs to Him, but what comes of that seed is up to how we serve our God in our lives. Does the seed take root and flourish, bearing that fruit for God's kingdom, or does that seed get choked off by the cares of the world, the pride of life, does it not get tended properly, does it get snatched up by the wicked one who wants to prevent the harvest? In any case, the LORD expects His people to produce fruit with the seed He gives us and return the first fruits to Him in thanksgiving and joy, for He is the one who provides us with everything we need.

The Lord's parable of the sower in Matthew 13:3-9 gives us more insight into what we're reading in Genesis, and what kind of servants we ought to be as we approach the LORD who provides us with everything we need. There, Yeshua taught us, saying: "Behold, a sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds came and devoured them. Some fell on stony places, where they did not have much earth; and they immediately sprang up because they had no depth of earth. But when the sun was up they were scorched, and because they had no root they withered away. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up and choked them. But others fell on good ground and yielded a crop: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"

In Matthew 13:18-23, Yeshua provided the interpretation for this parable: "When anyone hears the Word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the wayside. But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles. Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful. But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty." And so when Yeshua comes to us and says, as Joseph said to the people of the land, whether Jew or Gentile, "Look, here is seed for you, and you shall sow the land," will we plant the seed in good land? Will our heart be right with Him and will we serve Him with gladness? Will we cultivate the fruit patiently, with endurance? Will we serve the Lord because we love him, depending on him to bring the sunshine and the rain? Will we fertilize the soil to give the seed the nutrients it need to grow, for we are the "salt of the Earth"? Will we be willing participants with Him in bringing forth the harvest, and seek Him in all things? Will we have fruit to bring back to God, and fruit to feast on with Him when He returns? Let us be like the people who said to Joseph, "'You have saved our lives; let us find favor in the sight of my lord, and we will be Pharaoh's servants.'" Let us serve Yeshua every day of our lives because we have found favor in his sight; let us serve the Lord and bring the fruit of the harvest He has allowed us to have to his altar, not getting caught up in the trials and tribulations that are sure to come on account of the famine that is still all around us. He instructed us to go out to plant the seeds of the Gospel, and to be shepherds of His sheep. Let us go out and do so gladly. Shabbat shalom.