

Hanukkah 2021

Conformed To His Image (Friday)

1. Interesting that the story of Joseph is being read during Hanukkah.
 - a. Interesting because Hanukkah is considered a "strictly" Jewish observance.
 - b. Yet Joseph represents those who lived outside of the land among the nations.
 - c. More specifically, those not held in high regard by those in the land.
 - d. Not only a picture of the Messiah but I believe a picture of the Body as well.
 - e. In other words, this pattern is being highlighted in Scripture during this season.

2. Folks in our community who feel strongly we should not observe because it's "Jewish."
 - a. Because it isn't commanded, they argue, we shouldn't be doing it.
 - b. But because Joseph's story is being highlighted at this time says something.
 - c. It is my view that Hanukkah is our story just as much as our Jewish friends.
 - d. There is reason Joseph's role in God's plan for Israel at large is emphasized now.

3. My goal is not to discuss the story of Hanukkah so much as it is to see how the story of Joseph and certain themes embedded in the Hanukkah tradition converge.
 - a. Will say in regard to the season that, most important message is "dedication."
 - b. In our day, means we should resolve to rededicate ourselves to God's purpose.
 - c. Be committed to continue the Father's will in the earth in spite of the opposition.

4. Society has yet to say we can't observe Shabbat or that we can't keep the *moedim* etc.
 - a. But walking up to the line of dictating what we can't do if we don't comply.
 - b. Things are shaping up that will bring us to the point where we must decide.
 - c. In a sense, we are fast approaching our Maccabee moment -- "Enough!"

5. Consequently, we need to fix our gaze on our King so as not to be carried away by our passions and opinions and other such potential snares lest we wield the wrong sword at the wrong time and in the wrong place.
 - a. Instead, times and circumstances encourage us to be a reflection of who He is.
 - b. To be steadfast in our commitment to be conformed to the image of the Son.
 - c. With this thought in mind, we turn our attention to Joseph.

6. When Jacob came into the land to dwell, the narrative shifts from his sojourn in Syria to his offspring.
 - a. Gen 37:2 -- "This is the history (*toledot*) of Jacob" also "genealogy, offspring."

7. But when it begins to mention his offspring, list begins and ends with Joseph.
 - a. No one else is mentioned here implying Joseph is to be emphasized.
 - b. Rabbinical sources give reasons for this.
 - c. First, Joseph was the son of the woman Jacob loved and for who he worked for.

8. Then there are the similarities between Jacob and Joseph.
 - a. For instance, Jacob was hated by his brother; Joseph was hated by his brothers.
 - b. Esau threatened to murder Jacob; Joseph was threatened with murder.
 - c. Midrash lists many other parallels.

9. When all is considered, it is clear that, Joseph was destined to be Jacob's heir.
 - a. It wasn't just an appointment made by default -- Reuben defiled his father's bed.
 - b. It was in keeping with what we see in other situations.
 - c. Cain is of the wicked one; Abel is righteous.
 - d. Ishmael is the son of the flesh, Isaac the son of promise.
 - e. Jacob I have loved, Esau I have hated.

10. As in these other situations, there is something about Joseph that identifies him as the rightful and appropriate heir.
 - a. In this family, is very important that the appropriate heir be assigned.
 - b. In Abraham's family, inheritance was more than passing on goods & property.
 - c. Was propagating covenant and forming a nation destined to impact the nations.

11. In order that a person might fulfill their purpose, God grants them the tools needed.
 - a. That might be talent, specific skills, characteristics and can include wealth, etc.
 - b. In many situations, (certainly this one) their children share in that mission.
 - c. Consequently, the children will be expected to carry on when parents can't.
 - d. In order to carry the purpose forward, they will need the same tools.

12. Some focus on the "tangible" tools -- wealth, property -- but others look for more.
 - a. Very early on, Jacob realized that Esau didn't have the necessary tools.
 - b. Which is why he bargained for and obtained the birthright and later the blessing.
 - c. It stands to reason that Jacob was able to discern, among his children, the heir.
 - d. In other words, Joseph possessed the "tools" needed to carry the torch forward.
 - e. And so it is written:

Obadiah 1:18

The house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame; but the house of Esau shall be stubble; they shall kindle them and devour them, and no survivor shall remain of the house of Esau," For the Lord has spoken.

13. In other words, Jacob is the coal of fire that supplies the heat.
 - a. However, it can't consume unless a flame leaps from it.
 - b. Joseph is that "flame" **להבה** *lehavah* -- "intense flame, flash"
 - c. Also translated as the "polished head of a spear; Joseph is the tip of the spear.

14. Though hot, fire lacks the power to go forward; the flame consumes stubble (enemy).
 - a. But the flame cannot come into existence without the fire.
 - b. Similarly, Jacob and Joseph were intertwined.
 - c. Jacob was the source from which Joseph derived his essence.
 - d. Joseph was the continuation of what Jacob had initiated.

15. Think of it this way: Messiah is the light of the world and yet calls us the light.
 - a. He is the source but it is through His people that He advances His purpose.
 - b. In fact, gleaned from Hanukkah, He is the servant lamp and source of light.
 - c. We are the branches who extend the light though we don't generate our own.
 - d. We receive from Him and continue what He has initiated.

16. Like Joseph in regard to Jacob, we need the same tools invested in the Messiah that we might continue His work.
 - a. This is why He sent His Spirit -- that we would be empowered to be witnesses.
 - b. Interestingly enough, the initial manifestation of His Spirit was flames of fire.
 - c. By His Spirit we are given gifts that further His purposes in and thru the Body.

17. So, because they were so intertwined, Jacob designated that Joseph was to be his heir.
 - a. So now, let's explore why they were so intertwined and why it is so important.

Genesis 37:3

Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age.

18. At one level this simply says that Jacob preferred him because he was born well after all of the others.
 - a. We have a tendency to favor the "baby" especially after we have grown older.
 - b. But there is another way to look at it -- older tends to mean "wiser."
 - c. There was something about Joseph that only the wise could discern.
 - d. It was something that, early on, only Jacob could see and why he was made heir.

19. However, when Joseph was sold into slavery and Jacob thinks him to be dead, things must have been in suspension where the legitimate heir to the family was concerned.

- a. Jacob lamented that he would "go down into the grave to my son in mourning."
- b. He refused to be comforted; tradition says that he mourned Joseph for 22 years.
- c. So we are left to wonder whether he determined to assign another.

20. However, when his other sons returned from Egypt after having been reunited with their long lost brother, they told their father that "Joseph lives."

- a. At first he didn't believe them but when he saw the carts, his spirit revived.

Genesis 45:28

Then Israel said, "It is enough. Joseph my son is still alive. I will go and see him before I die."

21. When they were reunited, Jacob said to Joseph:

Genesis 46:30

"Now let me die, since I have seen your face, because you are still alive."

22. As he prepared to die, he desired to see Joseph one last time and told his son:

Genesis 48:11

"I had not thought to see your face; but in fact, God has also shown me your offspring!"

23. Jewish commentators have much to say about the fact that three times the Bible mentions Jacob's desire to "see Joseph."

- a. Emphasizing, there was something about Joseph's face that he needed to see.
- b. This desire is connected to the "something" he saw in him from the beginning.
- c. **That "something" was that he, Joseph, most closely resembled Jacob.**

24. Out of eleven sons and one daughter, surely more than one resembled their father as far as facial features -- i.e. eye color, shape of nose, etc.

- a. But something about Joseph's appearance set him apart beyond the physical.
- b. Jacob, being older, wiser and more spiritually sensitive could see it.
- c. He could see the "resemblance" and for this reason, made him the heir.
- d. But after 22 years in Egypt, would he still "resemble" Jacob?

25. In fact, by the time Jacob and Joseph were reunited, his son probably looked more Egyptian than Hebrew.

- a. Jacob was looking for something beyond physical.
- b. Jacob was looking to see if he possessed the necessary tools to go forward.

26. The wise and spiritually discerning realize that good character, kindness, integrity and other such virtues radiate from within.
- Express a beauty that has nothing to do with looks and outward appearance.
 - This kind of "beauty" transcends the limitations of a physical body.
27. Jacob is described to us as being someone who was "temperate" (**טַם** *tam*).
- When Esau was out hunting his prey, he was tending to the flocks.
 - He busied himself with learning in order to temper his baser inclinations.
 - He discerned the importance of the Abrahamic covenant and its ramifications.
28. He realized that, to bear the name/calling of Israel meant a life of trial and hardship.
- But he also realized the long-term rewards for him, his family and mankind.
 - The sages consider Jacob to be the embodiment of the ideal human being.
 - That is not to say a "perfect" human in that he was without fault and failures.
 - But to say "perfect" in the way that God called Abraham (his seed) to be.
29. The Jewish sages believe that Jacob's "beauty" in fact resembled Adam's beauty.
- By that they mean, the innate splendor that Adam enjoyed before the fall.
 - "Resemblance of Adam" -- metaphor describing those who strive for "beauty."
 - Adam's "beauty" was given to him: He was God's handiwork.
 - Jacob's was earned through struggles and the will to overcome hardship.
 - Still, he too was the product of God's handiwork, albeit through other methods.
30. These same attributes and characteristics are what Jacob saw/looked for in Joseph.
- It may have been that the 11 brothers bore a more striking physical resemblance.
 - That is not what Jacob favored; it was spiritual "beauty" that he looked for.
 - It had not diminished by the time Jacob saw him again -- "You are still alive."
 - To the contrary, it had increased and become clearer in the time they were apart.
31. Joseph had grown/matured in wisdom, integrity and was full of the Spirit of God.
- Overcome jealousy, hatred, accusation, assault & abandonment directed at him.
 - Also overcame his own intolerance of his brother's shortcomings (bad report).
 - Instead, looked on them with compassion; forgave them of their shortcomings.
32. Seeing this "beauty" Jacob was satisfied that Joseph would carry the torch forward.
- He was content to die; his parting words to (about) Joseph were:

Genesis 49:26

The blessings of your father have excelled the blessings of my ancestors ... They shall be on the head of Joseph.

33. Here is my point in light of the season we are in; not just the Hanukkah season.
 - a. Season of darkness that is descending upon the world much like for Maccabees.
34. Only a spiritual person can truly appreciate spiritual beauty.
 - a. Spiritual splendor produces light that reflects the light of the Father (resemble).
 - b. Those striving for true holiness (not religious type) will recognize it in others.
 - c. This will become even more important as the days grow darker.
35. Others may recognize a distinction in God's people but will respond much differently.
 - a. Potiphar's wife responded to Joseph's beauty in a carnal fashion.
 - b. She desired to corrupt it and cause him to fail.
 - c. His brothers responded with the baser instincts of jealousy and resentment.
 - d. This prevented them from seeing the resemblance of their father in his face.
36. Think of it this way: if Joseph truly resembled the "image of Jacob" -- a man his brothers loved and revered -- they should have seen it and should have followed him.
 - a. But they did not (or would not); they were acting more like Esau at this time.
 - b. If we resemble our King, should expect a negative response from the world.
 - c. This thought brings me to mention what happened at Hanukkah in Yeshua's day.
37. John 10 -- at Hanukkah, mentions that only His sheep recognize His voice and follow.
 - a. John 10:30 -- "I and my Father are one."
 - b. Many took up stones to kill Him because "You make yourself God."
 - c. At which point, He responded:

John 10:37-38

“ If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me; but if I do, though you do not believe Me, believe the works, that you may know and believe that the Father is in Me, and I in Him.”

38. Point: Yeshua resembled the Father (If you have seen me, you have seen the Father).
 - a. Wasn't determined by similitude but by action, temperament and word.
 - b. Those who said they loved and worshiped Him should have recognized this.
 - c. They should have been as sheep and followed Him.
 - d. Jealousy and other instincts took over and they could not see the resemblance.
39. As for us, we are to grow in our "resemblance" of Yeshua.

- a. We must strive for true holiness; to worship God "in the beauty of holiness."
 - b. As we do, must learn to recognize the same in our brothers and sisters' face.
 - c. Mutually, exhibit the "Resemblance of (the last) Adam" on our face.
 - d. When the world sees us, they should see Him (His reflection, image).
40. Not limited by outward trappings; Mike Reagan/Ron Reagan (2004 Dem convention).
- a. Joseph looked more like an Egyptian but remained "seed of Abraham."
 - b. We are to reflect His light in the world; His character, His virtue and His power.
41. Seek and be receptive to receive all the "tools" (gifts) from the Father that are needed.
- a. Don't be envious of the other person's tool pouch or his/her purpose.
 - b. Don't embrace jealousy and resentment of those who exhibit spiritual beauty.
 - c. Be provoked to develop skills and attributes you have been given in order to do.
42. As "heirs of the promise" it is incumbent upon us to carry the torch of truth forward as a flame of fire, equipped and empowered by our Source -- Messiah Yeshua.
- a. And as we do, we are being conformed to His image.
 - b. We are the light of the world because He is the Light of the World.

1 John 3:1-3

Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.