

פרשת ויגש / Parashat Vayigash

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32:1-32:52 MATSATI.COM / Rightly Dividing The Word of G-d

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The importance of studying the Word of G-d

השבועות הזה קוראים / This Week's Reading

תורה: Genesis 44:18-47:27

הפטרה: Ezekiel 37:15-37:28

הברית: Ephesians 2:1-10

החדשה

10 This week I would like you to think about how to study the bible. Interpreting
the bible is a very important task and whether we like to admit it or not we all
interpret the scriptures to a limited extent in our own way. This week in our
15 journey on interpreting the bible there are two words I would like you to think
about, the two words are “meaning” and “significance.” In philosophy and
linguistics, the sense of linguistic expression is something understood in contrast
to the thing that a word or phrase denotes or stands for (its referent). **Meaning** is
that which is represented by the words, sentences, and paragraphs, etc of the text.
It is what the author meant by his or her use of a particular sequence where letters
20 **Significance** is something that is conveyed as a meaning, for example the
relationship between the meaning and a person or persons in a given situation.
The significance then is the proper application of the meaning to our lives. While
examining the text this week, let's think about how we gain understanding
through meaning and significance.

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Finding the Meaning of the text

1. Understand the setting such as the people involved in the larger context of the section of verses.
2. Read parallel and related texts that may be found within the scriptures. For example the gospels contain parallel texts.
3. Note important words or phrases and transitions within the text. These are literary devices or techniques used in literature to produce a specific effect.
4. Understand the definitions of the words used within the text including cultural meanings of the time and place to understand what the author intends to convey.

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Finding the Significance of the text

1. What is the overall message that is suggested?
2. Does the text imply timeless principles taught elsewhere in the scriptures?
3. What does the text teach about G-d's character, about mankind's character, how G-d saves us, or how G-d has a relationship with His people?

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45 While reading the portion from this week's text let's ask the following questions: (i) "Do I understand the words?" (ii) "Are there key phrases used elsewhere in the bible?" (iii) "Does the bible teach the same thing elsewhere?" and (iv) "Do I understand the author's primary point in the text?"

50 **בראשית 45:28; 46:1-5**

28 לְשֵׂאת אֶתֹו וְתָחִי רוּחַ יַעֲקֹב אֲבִיהֶם: וַיֹּאמֶר יִשְׂרָאֵל
מִן רֵב עוֹד־יוֹסֵף בְּנִי חַי אֵלַיָּה וְאֶרְאֶנּוּ בְּטָרִם אֲמוֹתַי: וַיִּסַּע
יִשְׂרָאֵל וְכָל־אֲשֶׁר־לוֹ וַיָּבֹא בְּאֶרֶץ שֹׁבַע וַיִּזְבַּח זְבָחִים
2 לַאֱלֹהֵי אָבִיו יַצְחָק: וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים לְיִשְׂרָאֵל בְּמֵרָאת
הַלַּיְלָה וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב וַיַּעֲקֹב וַיֹּאמֶר הֲנִנִּי: וַיֹּאמֶר אָנֹכִי 3
הֵאל אֱלֹהֵי אָבִיךָ אֶל־תִּירָא מִרְדָּה מִצְרַיִמָּה כִּי־לָנֹכִי
גָדוֹל אֲשִׁימָךְ שָׁם: אָנֹכִי אֶרְדָּ עִמָּךְ מִצְרַיִמָּה וְאָנֹכִי 4
אֲעֲלֶיךָ נִגְם־עֲלָה וַיִּזְכֹּף יָשִׁית יָדוֹ עַל־עֵינָיו: וַיִּקַּם יַעֲקֹב 5
מִבְּאֵר שֹׁבַע וַיֵּשְׂאוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־יַעֲקֹב אֲבִיהֶם
וְאֶת־טַפָּם וְאֶת־נְשֵׂיהֶם בְּעֶגְלוֹת אֲשֶׁר־שָׁלַח פָּרְעֹה
לְשֵׂאת אֹתֹו: וַיִּקְחוּ אֶת־מִקְנֵיהֶם וְאֶת־רְכוּשָׁם אֲשֶׁר 6

Bereshit / Genesis
45:28; 46:1-5
45:28 Then Israel said, 'It is enough; my son Joseph is still alive. I will go and see him before I die.' 46:1 So Israel set out with all that he had, and came to Beersheba, and offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac. 46:2 God spoke to Israel in visions of the night and said, 'Jacob, Jacob.' And he said, 'Here I am.' 46:3 He said, 'I am God, the God of your father; do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for I will make you a great nation there. 46:4 'I will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also surely bring you up again; and Joseph will close your eyes.' 46:5 Then Jacob arose from Beersheba; and the sons of Israel carried their father Jacob and their little ones and their wives in the wagons which Pharaoh had sent to carry him. (NASB)

55 **Question (i) "Do I understand the words?"**

60 Generally for greatest understanding of the meaning of words it is best to read a bible translation that is written in your native tongue. However, it is also important to understand the origin of the translation therefore we should examine the Hebrew text. To do such it is necessary to have a Hebrew dictionary, lexicon, and concordance for word studies within the text we are examining. If you don't have these basic tools I recommend you get started on acquiring these texts and begin looking at them to enrich your understanding of the original languages through word studies.

Question (ii) "Are there key phrases used elsewhere in the bible?"

70 A closer look at the key phrases elsewhere in the bible one should have a concordance and cross-reference study bible handy. Let's look at a few verses

75 from the scriptures that might contain some key phrases which are found in the
portion of scriptures we are examining to illustrate this study technique. I am
using the Scofield Study bible, KJV which contains cross references to key
phrases.

Bereshit / Genesis 46:1

*So Israel set out with all that he had, and came to Beersheba, and offered
sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac.*

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Bereshit / Genesis 12:2

*12:2 And I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make
your name great; And so you shall be a blessing; (NASB)*

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Bereshit / Genesis 26:24

*26:24 The Lord appeared to him the same night and said, 'I am the God of
your father Abraham; Do not fear, for I am with you. I will bless you, and
multiply your descendants, For the sake of My servant Abraham.' (NASB)*

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Romans 11:26

*11:26 and so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, 'The Deliverer
will come from Zion, He will remove ungodliness from Jacob.' (NASB)*

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See also *Bereshit / Genesis 21:33, 26:32-33, 28:10, 28:13, 32:9, Shmot / Exodus
3:15*

Bereshit / Genesis 46:2

*God spoke to Israel in visions of the night and said, 'Jacob, Jacob.' And he said,
'Here I am.' (NASB)*

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Bereshit / Genesis 22:11

*22:11 But the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said,
'Abraham, Abraham!' And he said, 'Here I am.' (NASB)*

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See also *Bereshit / Genesis 31:11*

Bereshit / Genesis 46:3

*Gen46:3 He said, 'I am God, the God of your father; do not be afraid to go down
to Egypt, for I will make you a great nation there. (NASB)*

110

Bereshit / Genesis 35:11

*35:11 God also said to him, 'I am God Almighty; Be fruitful and multiply;
A nation and a company of nations shall come from you, And kings shall
come forth from you. (NASB)*

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Devarim / Deuteronomy 26:5

*26:5 'You shall answer and say before the Lord your God, 'My father was
a wandering Aramean, and he went down to Egypt and sojourned there,*

120 *few in number; but there he became a great, mighty and populous nation.*
(NASB)

See also *Bereshit / Genesis 28:13, 48:4, Shmot / Exodus 12:37*

Bereshit / Genesis 46:4

125 *Gen46:4 'I will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also surely bring you up again; and Joseph will close your eyes.'* (NASB)

Bereshit / Genesis 15:6

130 *15:6 Then he believed in the Lord; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.* (NASB)

Shmot / Exodus 3:8

135 *3:8 'So I have come down to deliver them from the power of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and spacious land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Amorite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite.* (NASB)

See also *Bereshit / Genesis 28:15, 31:3, 50:1, 25, Shmot / Exodus 3:12*

140 It is important while using a reference bible to understand the surrounding text of the verses we have which are referred too. It is easy to take a biblical text and misapply something in an attempt to find significance. Doing so would obviously be fruitless. The interesting points that can be made from the text can be facilitated by circling or underlining the words or phrases that seem to carry the central meaning of each verse or paragraph you are looking at. Ask the question "why is the text written this way?" Looking at other scriptures as references it is possible to gain some understanding on the reason for the usage or particular phraseology that is used. Look at how the author uses the same words or phrases in different places and contexts. Seek to understand the words in the present context. I recommend taking your own notes while you read the bible. Sometimes G-d can speak to you through the text on an area in your life. There may be a parallel thought or event that may be happening in your life that brings great significance to the passages for you. The primary message of the text may specify an area in your life that needs some work upon.

Question (iii) "Does the bible teach the same thing elsewhere?"

160 The story line of Yisrael going to Egypt, there are parallel's in the life of Avraham and the mistakes he made saying Sarah was his sister and not his wife. (I will leave this as an exercise for you. Try to find parallel narratives in the scriptures which relate to Yisrael's going to Egypt). G-d reassured Yisrael that he would become a great nation and that the Lord would return his children to the Promised Land.

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Question (iv) “Do I understand the author’s primary point in the text?”

170 To understand the author’s primary point it is a good idea to draw an outline of
the book or section of verses that you are reading. Try to find parallel passages;
again, sometimes it helps to use a reference bible and a commentary. This helps
to define the context of the passages and keep that context in mind. Look at the
genre such as narrative, poetry, and wisdom literature, which genre do these
175 section of verses fall within? In order to understand the author’s primary point in
the text we have to understand that words and phrases sometimes carry different
meanings at different times in the history of the language and culture. Take the
following as an example:

1 Samuel 4:9

180 *4:9 Be strong, and quit yourselves like men, O ye Philistines, that ye be
not servants unto the Hebrews, as they have been to you: quit yourselves
like men, and fight. (KJV)*

1 Corinthians 16:13

185 *16:13 Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.
(KJV)*

190 The phrase “quit you like men” means “act like men” but today in the English
language the word “quit” means “to cease.” Can you see the difficulty in
understanding the text here? Sometimes just a simple or plain reading of the text,
there may be too little information to understand how a word is used and
understood by the author and his/her audience. And even if the word meaning is
known, the overall meaning of the text may still be partly confusing. The
195 meaning of the text may be more than the sum of its words and in scripture a lot
of the time that is exactly the case.

Conclusions

200 The point of this week’s parsha I wanted to discuss the issue of interpretation
and the Bible. Now you may be thinking wow this is a lot of work. I don’t want
to work so hard to study the Bible; my day is busy enough to have to do this type
of studying of the Bible. Well nothing in life comes easy and studying an
important text like the bible is just one example. There is great value in studying
the bible in this way. Let me explain. In life value isn’t telling someone what
205 you are going to do; value is found in showing what you have done. We see this
in the scriptures this concept of expressing actions to define terms: “look” means
“lift up the eyes” in *Bereshit / Genesis 22:4*, “be angry” means “nose is burning”
in *Shmot / Exodus 4:14*, “reveal” means “to unstop the ears” in *Rut / Ruth 4:4*, and
“have no compassion” means “have a hard heart” in *1 Shmuel / 1 Samuel 6:6*.
210 This action oriented attitude found in the scriptures demonstrates to us we have to
take action in our own spiritual growth process. We cannot simply sit back, relax,
casually read the scriptures and assume we are going to grow spiritually into
someone G-d wants us to be. We have to take action, we have to sit down and

diligently study the scriptures. We have to understand the meaning and significance of the text.

215 The rabbis interpreted the Jewish Laws, explained, elucidated, expounded upon, and we find in the return from the Babylonian exile orally translated the Hebrew texts into the vernacular language of the time which was Aramaic. In the day of the writing of the scriptures, religion was not a system of ethics, a code of conduct or simply a collection of lofty ideas. The sum of religion for the Hebrew
220 was his earthly journey. That is why it is written in the scriptures of one's "walk" with HaShem. One's life with G-d involved every moment, and every place one set his feet upon the ground. This is why the scriptures (see *Tehillim / Psalms 1*) speak in terms of "the way of the wicked" and the "path of righteousness." Similarly, Yeshua did not often ask the people what they believed. He was more
225 concerned with their works, what they did, true religion is not what one thinks, but what one does (see *James 1:27* and *Matthew 25:31*). Yeshua said by their fruit you shall know them (see *Matthew 7:16, 7:20*).

So what does this mean for us today? Today we have to know what the Lord wants us to do, how the Lord wants us to live our lives. How do we find this out?
230 We find it out by studying the Word of G-d. Yeshua said the broad way leads to destruction, the narrow way to life (see *Matthew 7:13-14*). The Word of G-d is a light to one's path (see *Tehillim / Psalms 119:105*) and if we acknowledge Him, He will direct our path (see *Mishley / Proverbs 3:6*). The idea of life, our lives being the sum of our worship to G-d is fundamental throughout the scriptures. If
235 we are to live our lives for HaShem today we must study the scriptures and obey what the scriptures say! G-d has given us all things to enjoy and rejoice before Him. G-d has also given us His Words; therefore shouldn't the most enjoyable thing be the study of His Holy Word?

240 **Further Thoughts for Personal Reflection**

If it is not a joy to study the Bible (the Word of G-d) then maybe it is time to re-evaluate your faith. Why do you believe in Yeshua? Is your faith just a get out of Hell free ticket? Maybe your faith is simply an esoteric ontological sense of
245 the reality of G-d that really has no place in your life outside of your mind? I certainly hope this is not the case but if studying the Bible is not a joy then maybe that is exactly the problem?

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Be Blessed in Yeshua our Messiah!

הללויה לאדוננו מורנו ורבינו ישוע מלך המשיח לעולם ועד:

Hallelujah for our Lord, our Teacher, our Rabbi,

"Yeshua" King Messiah forever and ever