

IT'S ALL IN THE STORY

A Devotional Meditation on Miketz (At the End Of)

Genesis 41:1-44:17; 1 Kings 3:15-4:1; Psalm 22; Jeremiah 22:24-30; Haggai 2:20-23;
Matthew 1:1-17; 1 Corinthians 15:20-28; Philippians 2:5-11; Revelation 19:11-13

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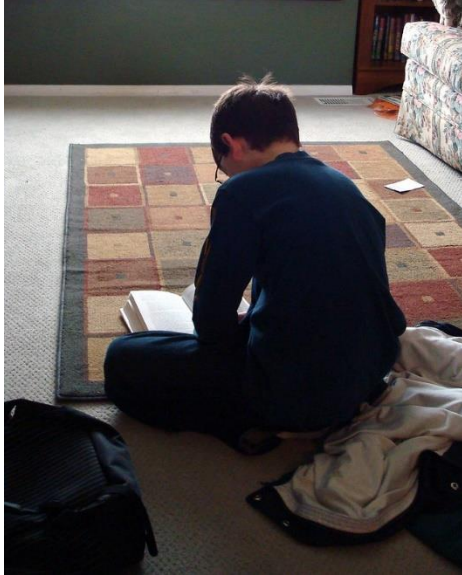


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The power of stories is in how they allow the storyteller to influence us, usually without our knowledge. That can be good or bad, depending on how we choose to use that power. That's why I'm glad the storytellers who influenced me in my youth were people with a godly worldview. Chief among them were the Catholic J.R.R. Tolkien, and his Anglican friend and colleague, C.S. Lewis. The biblical values they infused in their fictional writings shaped my worldview long before I read Lewis' theological works. His *Chronicles of Narnia* and Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* taught me to discern between good and evil, to value honor, to live at peace with others, and to stand strong against wickedness. They also taught me that there is a Creator Who made this world, and Who has expectations for how His creations should conduct themselves in relation to each other and to Him. Having learned this from their fictional characters, it was easy to understand the arguments for the

Christian faith Lewis presented in *Mere Christianity*. That nonfiction work is the explanation in plain English of what is depicted in his and Tolkien's stories.

As storytellers, Lewis and Tolkien mastered the same art Messiah Yeshua used throughout His ministry. He told stories in the form of parables to present spiritual truths, just as the Hebrew writers of the Bible had done for centuries. That's why stories make up so much of the Bible. I learned this years ago as I began a systematic study of the scriptures. I thought I might start with Paul so I could finally understand his letters, but instead of starting with Paul, I sensed that the Lord wanted me to begin at the beginning, in Genesis. When I finally got to Paul, I realized the history of Israel I had learned through the stories of Moses and the prophets put Paul's writing in context. That helped me understand how he and the Gospel writers could assert that Yeshua of Nazareth is Messiah, and point confidently to the messianic prophecies he fulfilled.

Consider, for example, the life of Joseph, a man we believe to be a "type of Christ," or forerunner of Messiah. Christians learned this from the Jewish sages, who see pictures of God's Anointed in biblical characters like Joseph, David, and Hezekiah. Christians and Jews disagree on whether Yeshua is the Messiah, but we can find common ground as we study the scriptures to learn what Messiah is supposed to do. This is why Joseph's story is important.

One revelation about Messiah comes through the account of how Joseph was taken from prison and raised to power:

Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "See, I appoint you over the whole land of Egypt." Then Pharaoh removed his signet ring from his hand and put it on Joseph's hand, clothed him with fine linen garments, and put a chain of gold around his neck. Then he had him ride in the chariot as second-in-command, the one that belonged to him, and they called out before him, "Kneel down!" So he appointed him over the whole land of Egypt. Pharaoh also said to Joseph, "I am Pharaoh, yet without your permission no one will lift up his hand or his foot in the whole land of Egypt." Then Pharaoh named Joseph Zaphenath-paneah and gave him Asenath daughter of Potiphara, priest of On, as his wife. Then Joseph went out, in charge of the land of Egypt.

Genesis 41:41-45 TLV

Do you see the Messianic elements? Joseph experienced a kind of death, being separated from his family, taken to a foreign land, unjustly condemned, and sentenced to prison. We can picture him saying words like those from Psalm 22, which Yeshua later cried out on the cross, "My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?"

That psalm was written by David, the man God proclaimed to be the ancestor of Messiah. We wonder, however, why God would proclaim an end to David's dynasty centuries later, as Judah, the last remnant of David's kingdom, was coming to an end:

"As I live," declares *ADONAI*, "even if Coniah son of King Jehoiakim of Judah were a signet ring on My right hand, yet I would pull you off, and give you over into the hand of those seeking your life, yes, into the hand of those whom you dread, even into the hand of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon and into the hand of the Chaldeans. . . Is this man Coniah a despised, shattered pot—a jar with no delight in it? Why are he and his seed cast out into the land they do not know? O land, land, land, hear the word of *ADONAI*! Thus says *ADONAI*: "Write this man childless, a man who will not prosper in his days. For no man of his seed will prosper, sitting on the throne of David and ruling again in Judah."

Jeremiah 22:24-30 TLV

Yeshua was descended from Coniah, also called Jeconiah. How, then, could He be Messiah if that line of David's descendants was cut off and, in a sense, died? The answer is in the word Haggai the prophet spoke to Jeconiah's great-grandson, Zerubbabel, after the return of Judah's exiles and the resurrection of the nation:

"Say to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah: 'I am going to shake the heavens and the earth, and I will overturn the throne of kingdoms and destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the nations. I will overturn the chariot and its rider, so horses and their riders will fall, each by the sword of his brother. On that day'"—it is a declaration of *ADONAI-Tzva'ot* [LORD of Hosts]—"I will take you, Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, my servant"—it is a declaration of *ADONAI*—"and I will set you like a signet ring. For I have chosen you." It is a declaration of *ADONAI-Tzva'ot*.

Haggai 2:20-23 TLV

The signet, the sign of God's authority, is the common element here. God refers to David's heir as His signet. It's the sign that is removed and restored in the prophetic words to Jeconiah and Zerubbabel. It's also the sign given to Joseph by Pharaoh, who represents God in the story. He is the one who reverses Joseph's position, in a sense resurrecting him from the dead by returning him to society, giving him a new name, and promoting him to power and authority over the entire kingdom. Everyone is required to kneel before him, and he is given a bride prepared for him. However, Pharaoh remains the supreme power, and Joseph is second only to him.

That's the role of Messiah: the sign and seal of God's authority over all the earth, and over life and death. Paul explains that in his teaching about the resurrection, noting that Messiah is the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep, meaning the dead who will be resurrected. He is the one who conquers all rule and authority and power in the Name and authority of God the Father. When he comes in great power and authority, He bears a new name, and everyone will be required to bow before Him. Then, He will present everything He has conquered to the Father, Who remains the Supreme Authority even over Messiah the Son. That's when He will celebrate His marriage with the bride prepared for Him – the bride called Israel, the Covenant Nation He has saved, just as Joseph saved the family of Israel.

It's all there in the story. Let's tell that story to our children and grandchildren, just as our fathers and mothers have done since the story began.