

RECONCILIATION PRIORITIES

A Devotional Meditation on Vayigash (And He Drew Near)

Genesis 44:18-47:27; Ezekiel 37:15-28; Psalm 22:1-31;
Matthew 25:45-47; Luke 15:11-32; Romans 11:13-16; Hebrews 5:7-10

Albert J. McCarn
December 27, 2025

A friend of mine once made a thoughtful observation about the parable of the Prodigal Son. That story by Messiah Yeshua is one of his best known teachings. It's the tale of a man who had two sons, the younger of whom demanded his share of the inheritance so he could go out into the world and seek his fortune. He never found it, of course, but instead squandered the fortune he had inherited from his father, and soon found himself feeding pigs for a living. In time, he realized the errors of his ways, and decided to go home and ask to be received as a hired servant rather than a son.



Joseph Converses With Judah, His Brother, by James Tissot, 1896-1902, [The Jewish Museum](https://www.jewishmuseum.org/).

Yeshua wanted to emphasize the power of God's grace, mercy, and forgiveness toward those who turn from their wicked ways and start on the path of righteousness. That's why the father in his story did not merely take the son back as a hired servant, but welcomed him with joy and ordered a celebration for his son. The son's acceptance by the father was like life from the dead.

Sadly, the Prodigal's older brother was displeased to see his troublesome sibling return. He was the loyal son, or at least kept up the appearance of loyalty. His younger brother's return meant there would be a rival in the house, that his own inheritance might be in jeopardy, and that he could never be certain of his father's affections or true intentions. That's what we infer from Yeshua's parable, which ends with the father pleading with the older son to join the festivities.

This is where my friend offered his thoughtful observation. He said it would have been very sad if the younger son had turned aside on the way back to the father and gone instead to his older brother. The father did want his sons to be reconciled, but lasting reconciliation – the kind that restored the whole family – could not happen unless both sons were first reconciled to the father.

We see that same process in the story of Joseph and his brothers. Joseph's father Jacob understood the importance of the Covenant calling he had inherited from his father Isaac, and he had to make sure he passed on stewardship of that Covenant to the most qualified of his twelve sons. When eight of the twelve proved themselves unreliable, Jacob set his hopes on the very capable young Joseph.

That didn't make Joseph's older brothers happy. In a sense, they were prodigals who demanded their share of the inheritance by ambushing Joseph and ensuring he was sold as a slave into Egypt. When Joseph's brother Judah took the lead in convincing Jacob that Joseph was dead, the old man's hopes shifted to his youngest son, Benjamin.

Joseph, meanwhile, had his own father wound. As the years passed with no word from his father, Joseph, like David the Psalmist, must have cried out,

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning?

Psalm 22:1 ESV

Yeshua echoed those words from the cross. He, too, had to be reconciled to the Father, learning obedience through his sufferings so that he could then reconcile the world to the Father.

Jacob's sons also learned through their sufferings. The fundamental element of their reconciliation with one another was that they each reconciled with Jacob first. We see that in the dialogue of Judah and Joseph, beginning with Judah's plea on behalf of his brother Benjamin:

"Now therefore, as soon as I come to your servant my father, and the boy is not with us, then, as his life is bound up in the boy's life, as soon as he sees that the boy is not with us, he will die, and your servants will bring down the gray hairs of your servant our father with sorrow to Sheol. For your servant became a pledge of safety for the boy to my father, saying, 'If I do not bring him back to you, then I shall bear the blame before my father all my life.' Now therefore, please let your servant remain instead of the boy as a servant to my lord, and let the boy go back with his brothers. For how can I go back to my father if the boy is not with me? I fear to see the evil that would find my father."

Then Joseph could not control himself before all those who stood by him. He cried, "Make everyone go out from me." So no one stayed with him when Joseph made himself known to his brothers. And he wept aloud, so that the Egyptians heard it, and the household of Pharaoh heard it. And Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph! Is my father still alive?"

Genesis 44:30-45:3 ESV

We take note of Judah's selfless effort to sacrifice all his hopes and dreams for the sake of his youngest brother, Benjamin, and we notice Joseph's tests of his brothers to learn whether they were still the angry men who had plotted to expel him from the family. What we should also note is that all of them had developed a love for their father that united them more securely than anything else. That's why Judah pleaded not only that Benjamin could be free, but that their father might not be brought to an early and bitter grave through the loss of Benjamin. That plea touched Joseph's heart and moved him to cry out, "Is my father still alive?"

This is what welded these twelve sons of different mothers into a single family. They knew their father would die in time, but they didn't want him to leave them with the family still in disarray and God's Covenant of Redemption for the world still in jeopardy. The inheritance would mean nothing if that Covenant was lost.

Today we stand in the same place as Israel's sons in antiquity. The family is still divided between those who remained in the house, descended spiritually and physically from Judah, and those gathered from the nations into the spiritual house of Joseph. We have watched each other with suspicion for far too long, wondering if we really are part

of the same family. Much as our Father yearns to see us all reconciled, he must first ensure that we have his interests at heart above all else. That's what makes us family and brings life from the dead.