

Two More Examples of the Pit as a Place of Death

The Story of Joseph

If you are still not convinced that Joseph's descent into the pit was a picture of his descent into the grave (and hence an allusion to his "death"), then please examine the significance of the verses *immediately* following that event where Joseph was thrown into the pit.

²⁴ Then they took him and cast him into a pit. And the pit was empty; there was no water in it. ²⁵ And they sat down to eat a meal. Then they lifted their eyes and looked, and there was a company of Ishmaelites, coming from Gilead with their camels, bearing spices, balm, and *myrrh*, on their way to carry them down to Egypt (Genesis 37:24-25).

Immediately after Joseph was thrown into a pit, we are confronted with the story of Ishmaelite traders who burst onto the scene carrying spices—balm and myrrh. Do you know the significance of myrrh? It is a burial spice! It was one of the spices used to anoint Yeshua's body.²⁰ Is it a coincidence that immediately after Joseph was thrown into a pit (a picture of death) Ishmaelite traders came bearing a burial spice? I think not. In fact, the reason why the scripture mentions them and their cargo immediately after Joseph's descent into the pit is to help complete the picture of Joseph's death. It's as if the Ishmaelites brought the burial spices for Joseph's funeral!

The Story of Daniel

As you begin to develop the habit of reading and thinking thematically you will not be able to keep up with the vast number of thematic connections waiting to be discovered in the Scriptures. For example, let's create a simple outline of the events surrounding Joseph's exaltation from prison.

- ◆ Pharaoh had a dream that deeply troubled him.
- ◆ None of his magicians could interpret the dream.
- ◆ A Hebrew lad was brought before him to interpret the dream.
- ◆ The Hebrew lad interpreted the dream properly.
- ◆ The Hebrew lad was exalted to the position of first-in-command under Pharaoh.

Now, can you think of another person whose life is almost a mirror image of the points above? I can. His name is Daniel! If you read Daniel 2:1-49 you will notice numerous thematic connections between Daniel's life and Joseph's! Note the following thematic connections. In both stories:

- ◆ Pagan kings had a prophetic dream concerning future events about the entire world.

- ◆ A Hebrew slave interpreted the dream and gave glory to Adonai for revealing the dream.
- ◆ A Hebrew slave received gifts after properly interpreting the dream.

The question should immediately arise—Why are these two stories related so closely? To answer that question we need to rely on our second mathematical postulate, the Transitive Property of Equality.

$$\text{If } A = B \text{ and } B = C, \text{ then } A = C$$

Anyone who has studied the scriptures (whether Jewish or non-Jewish) knows that Joseph is a major Messianic figure. We saw this in Chapter 1 where I showed you the Sign of the Messiah in his life. So let's use this information with our postulate. The examples above clearly connect Daniel to Joseph thematically.

$$\text{Daniel} = \text{Joseph}$$

$$A = B$$

However, we also know that Joseph is a picture of the Messiah. Or, stated another way, Joseph is thematically connected to the Messiah.

$$\text{Joseph} = \text{Messiah}$$

$$B = C$$

Therefore, Daniel is also a picture of the Messiah.

$$\text{Daniel} = \text{Messiah}$$

$$A = C$$

If this is true, we should be able to look to Daniel's life and discover Messianic significance even as we've done with Joseph, Moses and David. Let's give it a try. First, let's see if we can discover the Sign of the Messiah in Daniel's life. Daniel 6 is the story of Daniel in the lions' den. Let me ask you a question. What was supposed to happen to Daniel once he was thrown into the lions' den? Surely, he was supposed to die. But instead, he came forth alive! As for the number three, note how many times the number three occurs throughout Daniel 6:1-23.

- ◆ Daniel 6:2—Daniel was one of *three* governors who ruled over the 120 satraps of the kingdom.
- ◆ Daniel 6:7 and 12—No one was to pray to anyone other than King Darius for *thirty* days.

- ◆ Daniel 6:10—Daniel prayed *three* times a day as was his custom.
- ◆ Daniel 6:13—Daniel continued to pray *three* times a day despite the king's decree.

This is the Sign of the Messiah in Daniel's life. This is a second witness to the fact that events in Daniel's life have Messianic significance.

I'm going to dispense with the suspense and suggest to you that the story of Daniel's trip to the lions' den is actually a prophecy of the Messiah's suffering, death, burial and resurrection.²¹ Daniel 6:1-4 informs us that Daniel was exalted above his comrades, the satraps (wise men) of Babylon. As a result, the Babylonian satraps were extremely jealous of him (Daniel 6:5-6) and took counsel to determine how they could defame his character. Let's take note of the following thematic connections between Daniel 6:5-6 and the Gospel account of Yeshua.

- ◆ The Babylonian satraps were contemporaries of Daniel.
 - We know the religious leaders were contemporaries of Yeshua.
- ◆ The Babylonian satraps were jealous of Daniel's wisdom and position.
 - The religious leaders were extremely jealous of Yeshua's successful ministry.
- ◆ The Babylonian satraps gathered together to take counsel on how to have Daniel killed.
 - The religious leaders took counsel to determine how to kill Messiah Yeshua.
- ◆ According to Daniel 6:5-6, the satraps could not find any fault in Daniel!
 - According to Matthew 26:59-61, the religious leaders could not find fault in Yeshua.

Are these thematic connections coincidental? Of course not! According to Daniel 6:11-12, the satraps found Daniel praying after the king made a decree prohibiting prayer to anyone but him. Isn't it amazing to note that when the religious leaders confronted Yeshua, He too was in prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane? Furthermore, please note the wording in Daniel 6:10 and Luke 22:39-41 concerning the habits of Daniel and Yeshua.

¹⁰ Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, *he went* home. And in his upper room, with his windows open toward Jerusalem, *he knelt down on his knees* three times that day, and *prayed* and gave thanks before his God, *as was his custom* since early days (Daniel 6:20).

³⁹ Coming out, *He went* to the Mount of Olives, *as He was accustomed*, and His disciples also followed Him. ⁴⁰ When He came to the place, He said to them, "Pray that you may not enter into temptation."⁴¹ And He was withdrawn from them about a stone's throw, and *He knelt down* and *prayed*.

As you can see, Daniel's story is a perfect thematic picture of Yeshua's story. But wait, there's more!

Daniel 6:13-15 records the actions of the satraps as they brought charges against Daniel before King Darius. Please note King Darius' reaction. He didn't want to execute Daniel! In fact, the scripture states that King Darius tried until sundown to free Daniel. However, the satraps *zealously* pressed the king, reminding him that according to the law of the Medes and Persians, his prior decree could not be revoked. In an amazing parallel, the religious leaders *zealously* brought charges against Yeshua before Pontius Pilate and he didn't want to kill Yeshua! Please note the following dramatic thematic connections.

- ◆ Daniel, a Jewish man, was brought before a pagan king.
 - Yeshua, a Jewish man, was brought before a pagan ruler!
- ◆ Charges were brought against Daniel.
 - Charges were brought against Yeshua!
- ◆ The satraps diligently pressed King Darius to execute Daniel.
 - The religious leaders diligently pressed Pilate to execute Messiah Yeshua!
- ◆ According to Daniel 6:14, King Darius tried (until nightfall) to do his best to free Daniel because he knew Daniel was righteous.
 - According to John 19, Pilate tried to release Yeshua three times, not wanting to kill Him because he felt that Yeshua was innocent!
- ◆ According to Daniel 6:14-15, when the satraps saw that King Darius was trying to free Daniel, they appealed to the law of the Medes and Persians, of which they said, "***It is the law of the Medes and Persians*** that no decree or statute which the king establishes may be changed."
 - According to John 19:7, when the religious leaders saw that Pilate was trying to free Yeshua, they appealed to the Torah (law) of God, of which they said, "***We have a law, and by our law He ought to die...***"!
- ◆ According to Daniel 6:18-19, King Darius fasted and could not sleep during the night that Daniel spent in the lions' den.
 - According to Matthew 27:19, Pilate's wife suffered many things in a dream (while she slept) because of Yeshua!
- ◆ According to Daniel 6:17, King Darius sealed the stone over the lions' den with his signet ring.
 - According to Matthew 27:65-66, Pilate ordered that Yeshua's sepulcher be made secure by sealing the stone!

Hopefully, I have your attention. These thematic connections are absolutely amazing! They've been in the scriptures for centuries and yet most of us have been totally unaware of how intimately they're connected. Furthermore, we haven't understood the purpose of stories like Jonah and the big fish and Daniel in the lions' den. They were written to teach us about the ministry of the Messiah so that when He came we would be able to verify that He fulfilled the prophecies.

The last few details I'd like to bring to your attention concern Daniel's "execution." First, let's read these verses according to the New King James Version.

¹⁶ So the king gave the command, and they brought Daniel and cast him into the *den of lions*. But the king spoke, saying to Daniel, "Your God, whom you serve continually, He will deliver you."¹⁷ Then a stone was brought and laid on the mouth of *the den*, and the king sealed it with his own signet ring and with the signets of his lords, that the purpose concerning Daniel might not be changed (Daniel 6:16-17, NKJV).

In an unmistakable manner, Daniel was placed into the lions' den to provide us with a picture of Yeshua being placed into His sepulcher. Furthermore, a stone was rolled over the mouth of the den, a prophecy of the fact that a stone was rolled over Messiah Yeshua's grave! Could the picture be any clearer? Daniel's descent into the lions' den is a picture of the Messiah's death!

Actually, the picture can be clearer. According to the NKJV, Daniel was placed into a den of lions. Now, let's look at a Jewish translation.

Then the king commanded and they brought Daniel and threw him into the *lions' pit*. The king exclaimed to Daniel, "May your God, Whom you serve continually, save you!" A stone was brought and was placed over the opening of *the pit*, and the king sealed it with his signet ring and with the signet rings of his nobles, so that his will regarding Daniel could not be changed (Daniel 6:16-17).²²

The Artscroll Tanakh states that Daniel was thrown into a lions' *pit*! The word translated as *den* (NKJV) and *pit* (Artscroll Tanakh) is taken from the Hebrew word כַּנֶּיֶם (SEC# H1358), which means a *pit/den* (for wild animals). It is derived from a prime root corresponding to the Hebrew word גוּוּ כַּנֶּיֶם (SEC# H1358), which means to dig. As you can see, this Hebrew word has a three-letter verbal root whose meaning is similar to the three-letter verbal roots for the Hebrew words pit, cistern and well! And I'm sure you know where I'm going with this. Just as Joseph descended into and ascended from the pit (an empty cistern), so likewise, Daniel descended into and ascended from a pit (den for wild animals). Both of these men's lives are clear pictures of Messiah Yeshua's life. Their descent into pits was a picture of the Messiah's death because the Messiah was placed in a sepulcher, which, like a pit, is a *hole in the earth*.

As you can see, there is Messianic significance whenever a Messianic figure descends into and ascends from a pit. Clearly, a pit is the Tanakh's picture of the grave. The thematic connections found within the stories of Joseph and Daniel confirm this beyond a shadow of doubt!

Concerning our list of thematic connections, we can now add *animal dens* to our list of equivalent expressions representing the grave or death.

grave ≡ pit ≡ belly of the fish ≡ cistern ≡ well ≡ animal den

In summary, we have learned how the Tanakh teaches us about the death of the Messiah. When we see a Messianic figure go into a pit, belly of a fish, cistern, well or animal den, we know that this is simply a picture of the Messiah's death. By inference, we should understand another point. When Jonah descended into the belly of the fish, shouldn't he have died? When Joseph was thrown into the pit with no water, wasn't it for the purpose of killing him? When Daniel was thrown into the lions' pit, wasn't he supposed to die? But of course! Well, what is the significance of their emergence from those places of death? It is a picture of victory over death! And that's just a phrase for the word RESURRECTION! The Tanakh has taught us about the death, burial and resurrection of the Messiah by using the pictures of Messianic figures descending into and ascending from *pits and other assorted holes in the earth*. With this foundation, we are now ready to interpret another portion of II Samuel 17:14-23.