

Parashah #12  
(Updated 1.10.09)

VaYechi ~ וַיַּחֲיֶיךָ ~ And he lived

Torah: B'resheet/Genesis 47:28-50:26

Haftarah: M'lakhim Alef/1<sup>st</sup> Kings 2:1-12

B'rit Hadashah: Acts 7:9-16; Ivrim/Hebrews 11:21-22;

Kefa Alef/1<sup>st</sup> Peter 1:3-9; 2:11-17

## CHAPTER 47

According to the opening words in this Parashah, in **verse 28**, Ya'akov lived in (Mitz-rah-yeem) **Mitzrayim/Egypt**, 17 years and one of the commentaries stated that "Vayechi Ya'akov" can also be translated as "Ya'akov became alive". When we consider Ya'akov's life before coming to Egypt, it was a difficult one filled with pain and suffering, especially the 22 years in which he thought his favorite son, Yosef was dead.

In fact, when Pharaoh asked Ya'akov how old he was, he responded with "few and bad have been the days of my life". However, when he became reunited with his son, Yosef, he became alive again.

Here we go with words and numbers! The Hebrew word for **good** is **tov** and its numerical value is 17 (tet = 9 + vav = 6 + vet = 2). The fact that the last years of Ya'akov's life were good years is also found in the number of years that Ya'akov lived in Egypt with Yosef, which was 17 years.

At the time of Ya'akov's death, Yosef was 56 years old. Ya'akov and Yosef were together for a total of 34 years. Yosef was 17 when his brothers sold him into slavery and was united with his father when he was 39. The word **Vayechi (He lived)** has a numerical value of 34 (vav = 6 + yod = 10 + het = 8 + yod = 10) which represents the 34 years Ya'akov and Yosef spent together.

**Ya'akov/Jacob**, desiring to be buried with his fathers, (**verse 29**) wants **Yosef/Joseph** to pledge that he will make that happen, by putting his "hand under my thigh".

For those who were not part of our Torah Study when Avraham sent his servant, (Eh-lee-ayzer) Eliezer, to find a bride for **Yitz'chak/Isaac**, (**B'resheet/Genesis 24:2 & 9**), we learned then that "thigh" is a euphemism for the male organ. According to Rashi, the reason Avraham chose it to certify the oath has to do with placing one's hand on some sacred object, such as a Torah Scroll, tefillin, Bible, etc. "Because circumcision was the first precept given to Avraham, and because he fulfilled it through much pain, it was particularly precious to him, so Avraham asked Eliezer to take his oath upon it." Apparently, this became the standard of the day for making an oath.

Okay, back to **verses 29-31**. Yosef readily agrees to the request but Ya'akov wants him to "swear" to him. So what's the deal? This is his favored son, does he not trust him? After all, Yosef was a righteous man. Nonetheless, Yosef does as his father has requested and makes an oath by placing his hand under Ya'akov's "thigh".

## CHAPTER 48

Hearing that his father was ill, Yosef arrived at his father's bedside with (M'nah-sheh) M'nasheh (Forgetful) and (Eh-frah-yeem) Efrayim (Fruitful). So begins some interesting dialog between Ya'akov and Yosef. Do I hear the sound of "adoption" taking place in **verse 5**? "Now your two sons . . . are mine; Efrayim and M'nasheh will be as much mine as **Re'uven/Reuben** and **Shimon/Simeon** are." Now all of a sudden, Ya'akov has 14 sons and "the boys" have 12 brothers instead of a father and 11 uncles; not to mention all the cousins who are now nephews and nieces. Wow! What a turn of events!!! Be sure to read **verses 5 & 6** and see if you don't read the same thing!

Before we go on, let's go back to **verse 4** where the English words "multitude of people" and "everlasting possession" are used. I learned some Biblical Hebrew from Rabbi Ya'akov Youlus (my Orthodox friend in Jerusalem, remember?) that I would like to share with you.

- The Hebrew for **multitude of people** is (key-hal ah-meem) **kihal amim** which means a gathering of people who have gathered together for a purpose.
- The Hebrew for **everlasting possession** is (ah-cu-zat oh-lahm) **achutzat olam** and comes from the verb (lay-ah-koze) **leachoz** which means **to hold on** and the word (oh-lahm) **olam** means **forever**.

Moving on, Rabbi Ya'akov Youlus has some additional information concerning **verse 7** that I hadn't thought of before. Rather than try to explain in my own words. I will quote him here.

- “When we read Genesis 48:7 we are struck by how “out-of-place” this verse seems to be. In the middle of a discussion about Joseph’s sons, Jacob suddenly explains where and when he buried Joseph’s mother, Rachel. We would have expected this verse to be in Genesis 47, near to verses 29-30, where Jacob speaks to Joseph about his own burial. The question is why is it here? The answer is that it took Jacob a certain interval of time to realize that he may have requested something from Joseph that he does not fully deserve, referring to his request to be buried with his fathers in Machpelah. Jacob’s sudden reference to Rachel’s burial on the way to Ephrath reveals his guilty conscience and tells us that he is suffering from an inner conflict over the matter. It is as if Jacob is saying to Joseph, “I am sorry. I am asking you for something that I do not deserve. My request is out-of-proportion to my own failure to bury Rachel in the proper burial place alongside our fathers and mothers.” We are actually getting a glimpse of Jacob’s personality by knowing how bothered he is about Rachel’s burial place. We see this pattern many times in the Torah where something is said later rather than sooner. It is a lesson for us, a reminder that we should always search why every word and verse is where it is. As we study the Torah, our never-ending question should be: What am I receiving that will help me have a better understanding of myself and how can I improve myself?”

Then in **verse 8**, Ya'akov inquires “who are these?” and I'm wondering, what's up? But in **verse 10** we learn that “Isra'el's eyes were dim with age, so that he could not see.” We all know the story how Yosef brought the boys toward Ya'akov so his right hand would be placed upon M'nasheh, the first born, and his left hand would be placed on Efrayim; how Ya'akov crossed his hands so that Efrayim received the blessing of the “first born”. Yosef expressed his displeasure but Ya'akov's blessing remained first over Efrayim; then over M'nasheh.

In **verse 20** Ya'akov added this blessing “Israel will speak of you in their own blessings by saying, “May HaShem make you like Efrayim and M'nasheh”.

### Erev Shabbat Blessings

#### On Friday evenings, Torah observant people kindle the Shabbat candles and say blessings.

Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheynu melech ha-olam, Asher keed-shanu b'eed varo  
V'natan-lanu et Yeshua Mishee-chay-nu, Vitzi-vanu l'hee-ote or la-olam

Blessed art Thou, L~rd our G~d, King of the Universe  
Who has sanctified us by His Word, Given us Yeshua our Messiah  
And commanded us to be a light to the world.

- **We bless HaShem, the fruit of the vine and the bread.**

Baruch atah Adonai, Elohaynoo melech ha-olam, Borey pri ha-gafen  
Blessed art Thou, O L~rd our G~d, King of the Universe, Who creates the fruit of the vine

Baruch atah Adonai, Elohaynoo melech ha-olam, Ha-motzi lechem min ha-aretz  
Blessed art Thou, O L~rd our G~d, King of the Universe, Who brings forth bread from the earth

- **The husband blesses his wife by reading **Mishlei/Proverbs 31** over her.**
- **The wife blesses her husband by reading **Tehillim/Psalm 112** over him.**
- **Then the children are blessed.**
  - For the daughters, “May Elohim make you as Sarai, Rivkah, Rachel and Leah”, the matriarchs of **B'nei Israel/the children of Israel**. (That makes sense!)
  - Then we have the blessing for the sons, “May Elohim make you like Efrayim and M'nasheh”. (Whoa, wait just a minute here! Why don't we bless them after the patriarchs; Avraham, Yitz'chak, and Ya'akov?)

One of the reasons, we are told in the commentaries, is that there was no sibling rivalry between Efrayim and M'nasheh as there had been in the previous generations. Stop and think about it. There was rivalry between **Yishma'el/Ishmael** and **Yitzchak/Isaac**; between **Esav/Esau** and **Ya'akov/Jacob**; and 10 of his brothers sold **Yosef/Joseph** into slavery because of jealousy. Another reason is, although they dressed like Egyptians and lived like Egyptians, they didn't worship the Egyptian gods but remained true to the G~d of Avraham, Yitz'chak and Ya'akov.

Another unique thing about Efrayim and M'nasheh is that they are the only ones who received their father's heritage during **his** lifetime. The other children of Ya'akov received their portions but Yosef's double portion was divided between his sons making them equal with their uncles. This is the best blessing a father can give, to be willing to remove himself from the picture and hand everything over to his children. According to one of the commentaries, the opening phrase, "Yisrael will base their blessings on you", refers to Yosef. The verse implies a wish that all of Yisrael will be like Yosef, a father who is willing to transfer all he has to his son(s).

So, I asked myself, "Is this what our Abba, Father did when he sent his son Yeshua to walk on this earth?" What do you think?

## CHAPTER 49

I don't know about you, but I think we could spend several weeks discussing this chapter alone.

Ya'akov calls his sons together in order to bless them before he dies. In doing so, he stressed to them the importance of unity by using the words "gather and assemble" in **verses 1 & 2**, because he knew that disunity and divisiveness would destroy the greatest of blessings. Also, at the end of **verse 1**, there are several different translations for the (Eve-reet) **Ivrit/Hebrew** words (ah-kah-reet hah-yah-meem) **acharit hayamim**; the literal translation is **end of the days**, which of course, refers to the latter days.

As I began to study the blessings over the sons of Ya'akov, I initially thought they were in birth order but that's not true. I have listed them according to their line up in receiving the blessing. In parenthesis, after their name, I have placed their birth order. I really have NO idea what the relevance is but I think it means something.

1. **Re'uven** (1), as first born, should have received the priesthood and kingship but those were given to Levi and Y'hudah, respectively because . . . of the way Re'uven dealt with his anger concerning the Bilhah incident. I think **verse 4** reads very interestingly. Ya'akov is speaking directly to Re'uven, rebuking him and then, it looks/sounds like he's making an additional remark to the others who are around. How does your's read? (**verses 3 & 4**)
2. **Shim'on and Levi** (2 & 3) being the next two oldest are told why they forfeited their leadership. Ya'akov grouped them together because they were comrades in their conspiracy and violence against the men of Shechem. (**verses 5-7**)
3. **Y'hudah** (4) of course, is perhaps the best known as he is compared to a young lion and receives the blessing of the throne and rule over the tribes. (**verses 8 & 9**) For those of us who are Believers in Yeshua HaMashiach, I believe **verses 10-12** are very prophetic concerning our soon-coming King.
4. **Z'vulun** (10) was given precedence over Yissakhar because he made it possible for Yissakhar to be able to devote his time to Torah study. (**verse 13**)
5. **Yissakhar** (9) received a blessing that would appear to be agricultural in nature, however, this terminology, according to Rashi, reflects Yissakhar's "spiritual role as bearer of the yoke of Torah and cultivator of the spiritual treasures of the people." (**verses 14 & 15**)
6. **Dan** (5) had a famous descendant, Samson, who single handedly fought and defeated the Philistines, which Ya'akov saw in the spirit and his words allude to Samson's prowess. (**verses 16-18**)
7. **Gad** (7), because of his faithfulness to cross the **Yarden/Jordan** and help his brothers conquer the Land, he would return to his tribal territory by the same roads and paths and not one of his troops would be missing. (**verse 19**)

8. **Asher** (8) received a prophecy that is pretty clear, just as it is written (**verse 20**). However, one of the commentaries suggested that “Gad, Asher’s older brother, would be free to devote himself to the defense of the nation because Asher would make available his rich produce whenever the Gadites were in need.”
9. **Naftali** (6) This short verse (**21**) has some interesting commentaries. I share with you from the Artscroll Chumash, Stone Edition the following. “Rashi offers three Midrashic interpretations:
- Naphtali’s territory, i.e. its crops will ripen swiftly, like a hind let loose to run free.
  - In the war against Sisera (during the time of Deborah, the prophetess) the valiant warriors of Naphtali were nimble as hinds, and played a leading role in the battle.
  - On the day Ya’akov was buried, the swift Naphtali ran with proof that Ya’akov, not Esav, was entitled to be buried in the Cave of Machpelah. As related in Sotah 13a, when Ya’akov’s sons came to bury him, Esav tried to stop them, claiming that as the firstborn he had a prior claim to the last remaining grave site in the cave. He demanded, “Produce your deed to the cave!” Thereupon the fleet Naphtali ran like a hind to Egypt and brought back the deed.

Based on the above three interpretations, the verse concludes by referring to

- Naphtali’s beautiful praises to G~d in gratitude for the abundant crops;
  - Deborah’s song of praise to G~d for the victory in which Naphtali’s troops were instrumental;
  - The deed to the cave, which contained the “beautiful confirmation of Ya’akov’s ownership.
10. **Yosef** (11) received much praise from his father. Reference is made to his ability to overcome the hatred he suffered from his brothers and from Potiphar’s wife. The “bow” alludes to his power and his ability made possible by the G~d of his father. Moreover HaShem will give him blessings from above (rain), from below (springs or wells), from the womb (children) and the breast (provision). Ya’akov ends his blessing with the hope that Yosef would receive the same blessings that Ya’akov had received from his own forefathers. (**verses 22-26**)

**Binyamin** (12) and his descendants, likened to a wolf, were mighty fearless warriors. Binyamin’s offspring will triumph over Israel’s enemies and divide the spoils of victory, which is an allusion to Mordechai and Esther, of the tribe of Binyamin, who defeated Haman and were awarded his estate. (**verse 27**)

“All these are the twelve tribes of Israel” (**verse 28**). Even though Yosef’s tribe had been divided into two tribes, for clarification, there are **ALWAYS** twelve tribes. The full-fledged tribes are the ones mentioned in Ya’akov’s blessings (M’nasheh and Efrayim are not counted separately). When Levi is recognized as a tribe then the tribe of Yosef is recognized as a combined tribe. If Levi is omitted, as in the division of the land and the encampments in the wilderness, then M’nasheh and Efrayim are counted as tribes. This is important to keep in mind for our future studies.

Here we are again . . . same song, different verse. This time in **verse 29** (same verse, different chapter), after Ya’akov has blessed his sons, he issues yet another request to the entire family, that he be buried in (Hehv-rown) **Hevron/Hebron** in the Machpelah Cave by Mamre. Why did he make the announcement to the entire family? Didn’t Ya’akov believe that Yosef would carry out his oath? Didn’t he trust him? Perhaps we will find an answer to these questions before the end of our study today.

## CHAPTER 50

After Ya’akov “breathed his last” (**verses 2 & 3**), Yosef had his father embalmed, which took 40 days. Then the Egyptians mourned for him seventy days. Wow! That’s a rather lengthy time for mourning and on top of that, Ya’akov was not an Egyptian but apparently he had become somewhat of a revered personality in the land.

According to one of the Rabbis, Ya’akov was afraid of excuses; he knew that Yosef would not deliberately fail to carry out his wishes but given Yosef’s position, there might have been a legitimate reason why Yosef could not fulfill it. For that matter, given the above information on his celebrity status, Pharaoh might have preferred Ya’akov’s tomb to be in Egypt. Since he made the request again, in front of all of the brothers, perhaps he felt if Yosef couldn’t carry out the request, the other brothers could. **Verse 6** sheds additional light on this subject, when Pharaoh responds to Yosef’s request to take his father to Hebron. Pharaoh says, “Go up and bury your father, as (since) he made you swear.” I do hear a little hesitancy in his reply.

Jewish tradition places great importance on (lay-vah-yah) **Levaya, the act of accompanying the dead body to the grave**. **Verse 8** tells us that the entire household of Yosef, his brothers and his father’s household left the land of

Goshen to bury Ya'akov in Kena'an. They left behind only their children, their flocks and their cattle. Apparently, Pharaoh had some concerns because **verses 7-9** tell us that . . .

- all of Pharaoh's servants
- the leaders of his household
- the leaders of the land of Egypt
- as well as chariots and horsemen

. . . a very large caravan (I guess!!!!) went with Yosef.

As I am preparing this, it just dawned on me . . . funeral processions, it's a Jewish thing!!! And if I am not mistaken, this is "first mention" of such.

One of the common practices among Jewish people to this day is "Sitting Shiva" (pronounced sheevah). **Shiva** is the Hebrew word for the number **seven**, and "**sitting shiva**" is the **seven-day period of mourning** following a relative's burial. It all began here in **verse 10**. I found **verse 11** interesting; when the local inhabitants, the **Kena'ani/Canaanites** saw the mourning going on, they named the place **Avel-Mitzrayim/mourning of Egypt**. Apparently their large caravan was distinctively Egyptian, although the one being buried was **a Hebrew/an Ivrit**.

Returning to Egypt from burying their father, Ya'akov in **Eretz Isra'el/the land of Israel**, it is said in one of the commentaries, that the brothers passed by the spot where Joseph had been sold. Yosef went to the pit and recited the blessing "G~d performed a miracle for me in this place." Hearing this, the brothers became fearful and in **verse 15** said, "Yosef may hate us now and pay us back in full for all the suffering we caused him."

A message was sent to Yosef from the brothers (**verses 16-21**) which caused Yosef to weep. When they appeared before him, he assured them again, that what they had meant for harm, G~d meant it for good, so that many people's lives had been saved. Further, he agreed to provide for them and their little ones, comforting them and speaking kindly to them.

Our Parashah ends with **verses 24-26**, as Yosef is dying, prior to all of his older brothers. Yosef extracted an oath from them that when they are delivered from Egypt that they will carry his bones from there back to the Promised Land. So Yosef died, they embalmed him and put him in a coffin in Egypt.

Before we leave this Parashah, I want to share some last minute information concerning the Patriarchs.

### Life Attitudes

Each of the "life attitudes" or characteristics of the patriarchs can be summed up in one word.

- For Avraham, the Hebrew word is (kheh-sehd) **chessed** meaning **kindness**.
- For Yitzchak, the Hebrew word is (g'voo-rah) **gevurah** meaning **strength**.
- For Ya'akov, the Hebrew word is (eh-met) **emet** meaning **truth**.

According to one of the commentaries, **emet** is also synonymous with **splendor** and Ya'akov, the man walking in the "splendor of truth" is described as not only the finest of the patriarchs, but the **ideal** patriarch.

Truth brings favor with HaShem and men. Ya'akov's life was true, meaningful, wholesome, spiritual and complete. His life was also filled with disappointments and hardships. His last years were spent in Egypt, the world's leading power at the time. It was filled with sorcery, witchcraft, idolatry and immorality. Perhaps it was easy for Ya'akov, being 130 years old when he entered **Mitzrayim/Egypt**, but what about Yosef? He was a young man, brought to Egypt in his late teens and was ultimately given power over all of Egypt when he was 30 years old, in his prime, and yet he maintained a walk with HaShem in an evil land. This speaks well of the character of the fathers of our faith.

VaYechi ~ **וַיְחִי** ~ And he lived  
**Haftarah: M'lakhim Alef/1<sup>st</sup> Kings 2:1-12**

The final words of Ya'akov to his sons, in our Torah portion, provide the connection to the Haftarah. You see, both events are about the final words and deaths of two great Israeli men. Each of these two men essentially told their descendant(s) the same thing . . .

- If you are faithful to HaShem, there will be blessings
- If you are unfaithful, expect great challenges and difficulties

So, you might ask, how does one remain faithful to HaShem? In **M'lakhim Alef/1<sup>st</sup> Kings 2:3** King David (pronounced Dah-veed) advises his son “. . . keep the charge of the L~rd your G~d,

- to walk in His ways,
- to keep His statutes,
- His commandments
- His ordinances
- and His testimonies,

. . . according to what is written in the law of Moses.” All of these echo what was given to their forefathers in the following scripture.

**D'varim/Deuteronomy 6:17** says, “You should diligently keep the **commandments** of the L~rd your G~d, and His **testimonies** and His **statutes** which He has commanded you.”

Then in **D'varim/Deuteronomy 26:17**, we learn “You have today declared the L~rd to be your G~d, and that you would walk in His **ways** and keep His **statutes**, His **commandments** and His **ordinances**, and listen to His voice.”

While it appears that each word is distinctive by itself, it appears that there may be some overlap between them, so let's take a look.

- **Ways/derekhim** [deh-rehk-heem] (**דרכים**) – Seems to describe the path one is instructed to walk based on Torah instructions.
- **Statutes/hukkim** [hoo-kheem] (**חקים**) – Often these are instructions which appear to have little or no reasonable explanation, other than HaShem declared them to be important for His own reasons.
- **Commandments/mitzvot** [mitz-vote] (**מצות**) – These are specific commands or orders. In modern Judaism, this term is often used to refer to good deeds.
- **Ordinances/mishpatim** [mish-pah-teem] (**משפטים**) – Often translated as “judgments”, these teachings usually refer to legal matters. Mishpatim and hukkim are two of the more legally oriented aspect of Torah.
- **Testimonies/edot** [eh-dote] (**עדות**) – Are references to things that serve as witnesses or give evidence of something.

All of the above make up the literature known as the Torah. As we know, the word “torah” means “teachings” or “instructions”; more specifically, “instructions from a loving Father”. In short, the Torah is G~d's loving instruction book for His children, whom He loves deeply.

VaYechi ~ **וַיְחִי** ~ And he lived

**B'rit Hadashah: Acts 7:9-16; Ivrim/Hebrews 11:21-22;**  
**Kefa Alef/1<sup>st</sup> Peter 1:3-9; 2:11-17**

**Acts 7:9-16** is the final recap of our Torah portion. We are told about Ya'akov moving to Egypt and upon his death bed had Yosef swear to him that his bones would be taken to **Hevron/Hebron** and be buried in the cave at Machpelah

which had been purchased by Avraham, proving that this portion of land does, in fact, belong to the Jewish people, who have the title deed to it.

**Ivrim/Hebrews 11:21-22** Now, most everyone knows that Chapter Eleven is the “faith” chapter of the B’rit Hadashah. **Verse 21** parallels **B’resheet/Genesis 48:15 & 16** and **verse 22** parallels **B’resheet/Genesis 50:24 & 25**. Yosef lived as a highly honored Egyptian who was entitled to an elaborate tomb but he believed the promises to his great-grandfather, Avraham, that there would be an Exodus/departure from **Mitzrayim/Egypt**. His instructions to carry his bones to **Eretz Yishra’el/Land of Isra’el** (**B’resheet/Genesis 50:24-25**) were carried out more than 400 years later (**Sh’mot/Exodus 13:19** and **Y’hoshua/Joshua 24:32**).

**Kefa Alef/1<sup>st</sup> Peter 1:3-9** This particular passage begins with the liturgical form of making a (b’rah-khah) **b’rakhah/Jewish benediction**. The initial b’rakhah of the “Amidah” begins, “Praised be you, Adonai, our G~d and G~d of our fathers . . .” In other words, He is to be praised for all He is and for all He has done for us.

**Verse 6 & verse 7** is where I see a parallel to our parashah. It speaks of experiencing “grief in various trials. Even gold is tested for genuineness by fire.” Yosef’s brothers did experience some grief and did go through various trials as Yosef tested them to be sure their repentance for their past deeds was, in fact, real.

**Kefa Alef/1<sup>st</sup> Peter 2:11-17** A direct parallel to our Torah portion begins in **verse 11** with regard to “aliens and temporary residents”. Surely Yosef and his family were aliens and temporary residents in **Mitzrayim/Egypt**. Yosef was respectful of Pharaoh but continued to honor and give HaShem all the glory and honor due Him. (i.e. interpreting the dream, etc.)

As Messianic Jews and Believers in our Hebraic roots, we learn in these verses how we are to conduct ourselves among those who do not understand the importance of being Torah Observant. We are to “live such good lives among the pagans (or gentiles) that even though they now speak against you as evildoers, they will, as a result of seeing your good actions, give glory to G~d.” (**verse 12**)

#### **The corresponding Psalm for this Torah portion is: Psalm 41**

At the close of each book of Torah, is the following, and I want to encourage you to repeat it in both the (Eve-reet) **Ivrit/Hebrew** and the English. I have included the **transliteration**/(lee-ooze) **liuz** to help facilitate your pronunciation. Say it with feeling!!!

(Hebrew)

**Chazak, chazak, v’nit’chazek!**

(Transliteration ~ sounds like)

**(Kah-zahk, kah-zahk, v’neat-kah-zehk!)**

(English)

**Be strong, be strong and let us be strengthened!**