

Parashah #12

(Updated for 12.18.10)

VaYechi ~ וַיַּחֲיֶה ~ And he lived

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

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

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

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

Writer's note: I have learned most Christian commentators and Rabbis agree the complete plan of HaShem is in Torah and specifically in (say-fer B'reh-sheet) *Sefer B'resheet/Book of Genesis*. Most readers of scripture have not been taught to look for the Heavenly Father's plan and consequently miss what they are not looking for. With what is happening in the world, it is time for us to really pay attention!!!

CHAPTER 47

According to the opening words in this Parashah, in **verse 28**, Ya'akov lived in (Mitz-rah-yeem) *Mitzrayim/Egypt*, 17 years. One commentary stated "Vayechi Ya'akov" can also be translated as "Ya'akov became alive". Ya'akov's life, before coming to Egypt, was difficult as well as filled with pain and suffering, especially the 22 years when 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 ט = 9 + vav ו = 6 + vet ן = 2). The fact the last years of Ya'akov's life were good is found in the number of years Ya'akov lived in Egypt with Yosef, which was 17 years. Going a little further with the gematria: 1+7=8 which is the number of new beginnings. Ya'akov experienced a new beginning when he was reunited with his son, Yosef.

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 reunited with his father when he was 39. The word ***Vayechi* (He lived)** has a numerical value of 34 (vav ו = 6 + yod י = 10 + het ה = 8 + yod י = 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 he will grant *Ya'akov/Jacob's* wish, by putting *Yosef/Joseph's* "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, the word “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 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 confirms the oath by placing his hand under Ya'akov's “thigh”. Ya'akov believed in the Avrahamic promises. He believed the land of *Kena'an/Canaan* would one day belong to his children and he wanted to be buried there. Based on verse 29, I believe Ya'akov believed in life after death. This is what he meant when he told his sons, “I am about to be gathered to my people.” Ya'akov anticipated being reunited with his forefathers.

Torah does not say much about life after death. It's really not about how to go to heaven or what happens after we die. Torah is more concerned with how we live this life. In fact, it is possible to read the entire Torah and conclude there is no afterlife or resurrection from the dead. In the days of the apostles, a sect of Judaism called the Sadducees believed exactly that and this is why they are so “sad you see”!!! They read Torah, didn't see anything about an afterlife and concluded there is no afterlife, no heaven or hell, no resurrection from the dead. Another sect of Judaism from the same era disagreed. They were the Pharisees. They read the same Torah but reached a different conclusion. They found many hints and clues pointing toward the afterlife and resurrection from the dead. Once a Pharisee named Rabbi Simai was arguing with some Sadducees and they asked him to prove from the Torah the dead would be raised. Rabbi Simai said, “From where in Torah do we learn the resurrection of the dead? From the verse, ‘I also established my covenant with them to give the land of Canaan.’ It doesn't say ‘[to give] you’; it says ‘to give them.’ Therefore [since Abraham, Isaac and Jacob haven't yet received the land] the resurrection of the dead is proved from the Torah.” (b.Sanhedrin90b, Talmud, quoting Exodus 6:4)

Rabbi Simai's point is, HaShem promised to give the land to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob – not just to their descendants. However, (Eve-ream) **Iyrim/Hebrews 11:3** points out the patriarchs “died in faith, without receiving the promises.” HaShem must keep His promise, but in order to do so, He will have to raise the patriarchs from the dead. This explains why Jacob was so adamant about being buried in the tomb of his fathers in the land of Canaan.

CHAPTER 48

Hearing his father was ill, Yosef arrived at his father's bedside with (M'nah-sheh) M'nasheh (Forgetful) and (Eh-frah-yeem) Efrayim (Fruitful). Some interesting dialog begins 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." All of a sudden, Ya'akov has 14 sons and Yosef's two 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?) which 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-khoo-zaht 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 Youlus has some additional information concerning **verse 7** I hadn't thought of before. Rather than explaining in my own words, I 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 “Isra’el’s eyes were dim with age, so that he could not see.” We all know the story how Yosef brought his two sons 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 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.

Back to **verse 12**, “Yosef brought them out from between his legs and prostrated himself on the ground.” I had envisioned Yosef’s boys being young but for some reason it never dawned on me they were small enough to be only knee-high, so to speak. Additionally, I wondered why Yosef prostrated himself. I haven’t found any commentaries concerning this so if you have any suggestions and/or ideas, please share them with me. ☺

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”.

In the Complete Jewish Bible, **verse 22** says, “Moreover, I am giving to you a sh’khem (shoulder, ridge, share, city of Sh’khem) more than to your brothers; . . .” Curious about this verse, I checked the Stone Edition of the Artscroll Chumash and found the following: “Rashi offers two interpretations of the word Shechem: It means literally the city of Shechem, which Jacob ceded to Joseph, beyond the territory that would fall to his offspring when the Land was divided among the tribes. Alternatively, it means portion, referring to the gift of the birthright which entitled Joseph’s children to receive two portions of Eretz Yisrael.”

Erev Shabbat Blessings

On Friday evenings, Messianic Sabbath-keeping families, 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, Vitziv-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 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 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 for all of Yisrael to be like Yosef, a father who is willing to transfer all he has to his son(s).

Is this what our Heavenly 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 the importance of unity by using the words "gather and assemble" in **verses 1 & 2**. Obviously, he knew 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*, and 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 the order they received the blessing and I have placed their birth order after their name in parenthesis. I really have NO idea what the relevance is but I'm sure 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** is interesting. Ya'akov, speaking directly to Re'uven, rebukes him. 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) is perhaps the best known as he is compared to a young lion and receives the blessing of the throne and rulership 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.

What does it mean when it says, "Judah, your brothers shall praise you . . ."? Shimon Bar Yochai said, "It means that all your brethren will be called by your name. A man does not say, 'I am a Reubenite' or 'I am a Simeonite', but he says, 'I am a Yehudi (Judahite; Jew).'" (Genesis Rabbah 98:6) HMMMM!!! So that's where that comes from!

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. 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. Ya'akov saw this in the spirit and his words allude to Samson's prowess. (verses 16-18) **Verse 18** specifically says, "For your salvation I wait, O Yehovah." The word translated "salvation" is (יְשׁוּעָה) yeshua. Yeshua's name means salvation. The Sages understood Ya'akov's exclamation to reflect his longing for Messiah, the true Judge of Israel, the true Salvation. The daily prayer for the coming of Messiah is based upon this passage. Observant Jews pray it three times a day. Notice how the name of Messiah finds its way into the blessing: "***Cause the branch (offspring) of your servant David to blossom forth speedily, and lift up his horn through your salvation (yeshua, יְשׁוּעָה), for we await your salvation every day. Blessed are you LORD, who causes the horn of salvation to blossom forth.***" (Fifteenth blessing of the Amidah) These words express the waiting, the longing and the hope in our expectation in Messiah. Ya'akov's exclamation reflects his longing for Messiah, the true Judge of Israel, the true Salvation. The Hebrew word translated as *wait* is *qavah* (קָוָה), a word also translated as *hope*. Messiah is the "hope of Israel". (Acts 28:20)
7. **Gad** (7), because of his faithfulness in crossing the *Yarden/Jordan* to help his brothers conquer the Land, would return to his territory by the same roads 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;

- b. Deborah's song of praise to G~d for the victory in which Naphtali's troops were instrumental;
- c. 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 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 Yosef would receive the same blessings Ya'akov had received from his own forefathers. (verses 22-26)

11. **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. This 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.

Let's compare the above with the New Jerusalem from the Book of Revelation. Once again, there are twelve gates named after the twelve tribes. We do not see a separate gate marked Christian, Messianic or even foreigner. What's my point? It simply means outside of being a Hebrew, an Israelite, or a grafted in child of Avraham, which gate do you plan on walking through to enter into His Kingdom? Truth is, HaShem has only one family and one set of instructions for His family. Just as there is not a separate gate for the "grafted in", there is not a separate set of instructions either. Those who are grafted into His family do not have to consider themselves second class citizens in the family. As rightful members of His family, we are to observe everything which makes our Father happy.

So, which gate will you enter? Will you be part of Efrayim or will you be part of the tribe of Asher or Gad or Shimon? Maybe, as you read through the blessings spoken over "the boys", you will relate a bit more to a certain one. Maybe one will stand out more than the rest. Only eternity will be able to tell which gate will be yours. One thing is for sure. There is only one set of instruction as revealed in the Torah and they are for our benefit and blessing. Those instructions were not written for only Judah to be blessed. He does receive the honor of being

in the natural lineage which gave birth to Yeshua. Without him, we would have no place in this family and the gates we will be allowed to enter would have remained locked. With privilege comes responsibility. Our privilege to love HaShem and to follow His Torah brings the responsibility not only to do so but to teach others as well.

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. He too wants to 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 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. One hundred ten days computes to 3 months and 20 days. Wow! That's a rather lengthy time for mourning and, on top of it all, Ya'akov was not Egyptian. Apparently he had become a revered person in the land.

According to one of the Rabbis, Ya'akov was afraid of excuses; he knew 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. Because of 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. Pharaoh responds to Yosef's request to take his father to Hebron by saying "Go up and bury your father, as (since) he made you swear." I do hear a little hesitancy in his reply.

Hebrew tradition places great importance on (lay-vah-yah) **Levaya, the act of accompanying the dead body to the grave**. **Verse 8** tells us 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 . . .

- 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.

Oh wow! It just dawned on me . . . funeral processions, it's a Hebrew thing!!! And if I am not mistaken, this is "first mention" of such.

One of the common practices among Hebrew people to this day is “Sitting Shiva” (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 (Eve-reet) *Ivrit/Hebrew*.

One commentary said, when returning to Egypt from burying their father, Ya’akov, in *Eretz Isra’el/the land of Israel*, 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, what they had meant for harm, G~d meant for good. Many peoples’ lives had been saved. Further, he provided for them and their little ones, comforting them and speaking kindly to them.

“Yosef lived 110 years. Yosef lived to see Efrayim’s great-grandchildren, and the children of M’nasheh’s son Makhir were born on Yosef’s knees.” (**verses 22-23**) I was curious about Yosef’s age. 100 means completeness or fullness. 10 means trial and testing, law, order. I can see Yosef had a life complete and full through much trial and testing, yet law and order did come out of all the ordeals. Living to see one’s great grandchildren must be an awesome experience. . The word Hebrew word used here is (yah-lahd) *yalad* (Strong’s #3205) and means to *bear, bring forth, beget*. The phrase “born on Yosef’s knees” is a Hebrew idiom which alludes to Yosef assisting or tending as a midwife in this child’s birth.

Our Parashah ends with **verses 24-26**. Yosef is dying prior to all of his older brothers. Yosef extracted an oath from them promising, when they are delivered from Egypt, they will carry his bones 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. Surrounded by all this he maintained a walk with HaShem in an evil land. This speaks well of the character of the fathers of our faith and gives us fine examples to follow.

VaYechi ~ וַיַּחֲיֶיךָ ~ And he lived
Haftarah: M'lakhim Alef/1st 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 consequences

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

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

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

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

The above all make up the Torah. As we know, *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 ~ וַיַּחֲיִי ~ And he lived

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

Kefa Alef/1st 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 his bones would be taken to **Hevron / Hebron** and be buried in the cave at Machpelah which, remember, was purchased by Avraham. This is proof this portion of land does, in fact, belong to the Hebrew people. They have the title deed to it and the bones of the Patriarchs are there as proof!

Ivrim/Hebrews 11:21-22 Most everyone knows Chapter Eleven is considered 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, 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 almost 400 years later (Sh’mot/Exodus 13:19 and Y’hoshua/Joshua 24:32).

Kefa Alef/1st Peter 1:3-9 This particular passage begins with the liturgical form of making a (b’rah-khah) *b’rakhah/Hebrew 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/1st 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 Pursuant. We are to “live such good lives among the pagans (or gentiles) 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 (Eve-reet) *Ivrit/Hebrew* and English. I have included (lee-ooze) *liuz/transliteration* to help facilitate your pronunciation. Say it with feeling!!!

(Hebrew)

Chazak, chazak, v'nit'chazek!

(LiuZ/Transliteration ~ sounds like)

(Kah-zahk, kah-zahk, v'neat-kah-zehk!)

(English)

Be strong, be strong and let us be strengthened!

Next week's lesson: Parashah # 13

Sh'mot ~ שמות ~ Names

Torah: Sh'mot/Exodus 1:1~6:1

Haftarah: Yesha'yahu/Isaiah 27:6~28:13; 29:22-23; Yirme'yahu/Jeremiah 1:1-2:3

B'rit Hadashah: Mattityahu/Matthew 22:23-33; Mark 12:18-27; Luke 20:27-44;

Acts 3:12-15; 5:27-32; 7:17-36; 22:12-16; 24:14-16; Ivrim/Hebrews 11:23-26

Shavuah tov (have a good week)!!!

Who fills his mind with Torah clears it of fear and folly.

Rabbi Chanina Sgan HaKohanim