

Parshas Vayechi in a Nutshell

(Genesis 47:28–50:26)

Jacob lives the final 17 years of his life in Egypt. Before his passing, he asks Joseph to take an oath that he will bury him in the Holy Land. He blesses Joseph's two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, elevating them to the status of his own sons as progenitors of tribes within the nation of Israel.

The patriarch desires to reveal the end of days to his children, but is prevented from doing so.

Jacob blesses his sons, assigning to each his role as a tribe: Judah will produce leaders, legislators and kings; priests will come from Levi, scholars from Issachar, seafarers from Zebulun, schoolteachers from Simeon, soldiers from Gad, judges from Dan, olive-growers from Asher, and so on. Reuben is rebuked for "confusing his father's marriage bed"; Simeon and Levi, for the massacre of Shechem and the plot against Joseph. Naphtali is granted the swiftness of a deer, Benjamin the ferociousness of a wolf, and Joseph is blessed with beauty and fertility.

(continued next column)



"Act vigorously, don't be deterred by obstacles, act as needed in every situation. When you are committed to accomplishing that which needs to be done, G-d will be with you."
--The Rebbe Maharash

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A large funeral procession consisting of Jacob's descendants, Pharaoh's ministers, the leading citizens of Egypt and the Egyptian cavalry accompanies Jacob on his final journey to the Holy Land, where he is buried in the Machpelah Cave in Hebron.

Joseph, too, dies in Egypt, at the age of 110. He, too, instructs that his bones be taken out of Egypt and buried in the Holy Land, but this would come to pass only with the Israelites' exodus from Egypt many years later. Before his passing, Joseph conveys to the Children of Israel the testament from which they will draw their hope and faith in the difficult years to come: "G-d will surely remember you, and bring you up out of this land to the land of which He swore to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob." ❖

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The Baali Korei,
and the
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Halachic Zmanim
Shabbos, January 2, 2021
Eastern Standard Time
Earliest Tallis 6:19 AM
Latest Morning Shema 9:38 AM
Earliest Mincha (Gedola) 12:25 PM
Plag Hamincha 3:46 PM
Earliest Evening Shema 5:12 PM

Anshei Lubavitch Congregation

Rabbi Levi and Leah Neubort

Adult education:

Rabbi Avrohom and Rivky Bergstein

Youth Outreach:

Rabbi Eli and Ruty Steinhauser

Shabbos Schedule

Erev Shabbos – Jan 1 / Teves 17

Candle Lighting 4:21 pm

Mincha 4:25 pm

Shabbos Day – Jan 2 / Teves 18

Shacharis 9:30 am*

Torah Reading 10:30 am

Rabbi Drasha 11:05 am

Mincha 4:25 pm

Rabbi's Drasha 4:45 pm

Shabbos Ends 5:26 pm

**Latest morning Shema is now 9:38 AM. Be sure to recite the Shema at or before that time (even if at home).*

Weekday Schedule (not on a holiday):

Minyan

Shacharis (Mon-Fri) 6:15 am

Shacharis (Sunday) 9:00 am

Mincha (Sun-Thurs) 1:45 pm

Maariv (Sun-Thurs) 9:15 pm

*Good News!
There will be an indoor
and outdoor Minyan
this Shabbos morning*

Chassidic Masters

“Powerful Insights From the Rebbe”

Compiled by Mordechai Rubin

1. The Three Lives of Jacob

Jacob’s life in the Holy Land empowers us to experience moments of true freedom—moments in which we assert our true will over all forces, both external and internal, that seek to quell it.

Jacob’s years in Haran with Laban where Jacob married and built a family. Inspire and enable us to not only persevere in our struggles but to revel in them, to experience them as vibrant and exhilarating periods in our lives.

And Jacob’s period in Egypt teaches us how to deal with situations in which we feel overpowered by forces beyond our control. It teaches us that these times, too, are part and parcel of our lives: that these times, too, can be negotiated with wisdom, dignity and integrity. That these times, too, can be realized as vital and productive seasons of our lives.

2. Jacob and Rachel

Intrinsic to our nature is a perpetual striving for self-improvement. The human being is never content to just be: the very thought of a missed opportunity or an unrealized potential gives him no rest, spurring him to the ceaseless toil and unremitting ambition he calls life.

He, we said. For though the drive for self-betterment is present in every individual of our species, it belongs to our “male” or active-assertive aspect. But no less integral to our being is our “female” element—our capacity for receptiveness and sacrifice, our conviction that there is no greater greatness than the abnegation of self to a higher end.

Man is thus a creature with not one, but two centers to its being. Man is spirit revolving upon an axis of fulfillment-seeking selfhood, as well as a soul centered upon a core of selflessness.

As Jews, we inherit this duality from Jacob, the choicest of the Patriarchs, and Rachel, the quintessential mother of Israel. From Jacob, whose life of accomplishment is crowned by a royal procession to the heart of the Holy Land where the founders of Israel are enshrined, we derive our potential for self-perfection. And from Rachel, the young mother who died in childbirth and who dwells in a lonely wayside grave in order to better bear witness to the suffering of her children, we receive our capacity for commitment and self-transcendence.

3. Eternal Life

The name of this week’s Torah reading raises an obvious question. Vayechi means “And he lived.” Nevertheless, the entire Torah reading focuses on the very opposite of life: Jacob’s final sickness, his farewell blessings to his children, and his burial.

By choosing this name, the Torah teaches us fundamental lessons about life and death. Life is eternal, continuous, and ongoing. There is no way it can pause for a moment.

Once we understand what life is, it’s understandable why life is identified with G-d, as it is written: “And G-d the L-rd is true. He is the living G-d.” For He is the only entity whose existence is truly continuous. Everything else flashes momentarily on the screen of time and then passes on.

How can a mortal share in eternal life? Through clinging to G-d, as it is written: “And all of you who cling to G-d... are alive.” Otherwise, our lifetimes are fleeting shadows, brief and flickering moments.

This was our Sages’ intent when they said: “Jacob our ancestor did not die. Since his descendants are alive, he is alive.” Jacob was alive, for he was connected to G-dliness in a complete manner. He had no individual existence of his own; every element of his life was lived for G-d’s sake.

In his passing, Jacob showed the eternality of his life, how he had tapped the spark of G-d within his soul and taught his children how to perpetuate this legacy. By naming this passage Vayechi, the Torah highlights this quality, showing each of us how we can step beyond our mortality and connect with the infinite. ❖

**Please remember Anshei Lubavitch
in your end-of-year donations.**

From Our Sages

Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years (Genesis 47:28)

These seventeen years were the best years of his life—years of prosperity, goodness and peace; his other 130 years were filled with toil and pain.

-- (Midrash; Baal HaTurim)

When Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Lubavitch (1789–1866) was a child attending cheder, his teacher taught the verse “Jacob lived for seventeen years in the land of Egypt” according to the commentary of the Baal HaTurim—that Jacob lived the best years of his life in Egypt.

When the child came home, he asked his grandfather Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi: How can it be that our father Jacob, the greatest of the Patriarchs, lived the best years of his life in pagan Egypt?

Replied Rabbi Schneur Zalman: It is written that Jacob “sent Judah ahead of him . . . to show the way to Goshen” (Genesis 46:28). The Midrash explains that this was to establish a house of learning, where the sons of Jacob would study Torah. When one studies Torah, one is brought close to G-d, so that even in Egypt one can live a true “life.”

-- (HaYom Yom)

Nevertheless, in the very next verses we read how Jacob entreats Joseph: “Carry me out of Egypt!” So great is his urgency that he is not content with an agreement or a promise on Joseph’s part, but insists that his son take a solemn oath to fulfill his request.

A Jew might find himself living a most ideal life in galut (exile)—a life of material comfort and spiritual fulfillment; a life of Torah, mitzvot and charitable works. Nevertheless, galut can never be our true home. We constantly sense that this is not our place, constantly beseech G-d to “carry us out of Egypt.”

Nor do we content ourselves with the guarantees and promises written in the holy books that the redemption will eventually come. After praying for the redemption in the morning prayers, we do so again in the afternoon prayers, and yet again in the evening prayers. We approach G-d every day, many times a day, to plead and clamor: Take us out of Egypt!

-- (The Lubavitcher Rebb)

They came to Goren HaAtad (“the threshing floor of brambles”) . . . and there they mourned with a great and very deep lamentation (Genesis 50:10)

But is there a threshing floor for brambles? Rabbi Abbahu said: The verse teaches us that they surrounded Jacob’s coffin with crowns, like a threshing floor which is surrounded with a hedge of brambles, because the sons of Esau, of Ishmael and of Keturah also came. . . . They came to wage war [against the Israelites]; but when they saw Joseph’s crown hanging upon Jacob’s coffin, they all took their crowns and hung them upon his coffin. It was taught: thirty-six crowns were hung upon Jacob’s coffin.

-- (Talmud, Sotah 13a; Rashi)

[Joseph] made a mourning for his father of seven days (Genesis 50:10)

From here is derived the law of seven (“shivah”) days of mourning after the dead.

-- (Jerusalem Talmud)

Haftorah for Vayechi in a Nutshell

1 Kings 2:1-12

In this week's haftorah, King David delivers his deathbed message to his son and successor, Solomon, echoing this week's Torah reading that discusses at length Jacob's parting words and instructions to his sons.

King David encourages Solomon to be strong and to remain steadfast in his belief in G-d. This will ensure his success in all his endeavors as well as the continuation of the Davidic Dynasty. David then goes on to give his son some tactical instructions pertaining to various people who deserved punishment or reward for their actions during his reign.

The haftorah concludes with David's death and his burial in the City of David. King Solomon takes his father's place and his sovereignty is firmly established. ❖

We must carry out the Divine service of both Menasheh and Ephraim. We start our day with prayer and study, connecting to our Jewish identity, the service of Menasheh. We then set out to accomplish our daily activities, carrying out the service of Ephraim and transforming darkness into light.

-- (The Lubavitcher Rebbe)

**Join us each
weekday morning
Mon-Fri as we delve into
the mysteries of
Chassidic concepts.
5:55 am
followed immediately
by Shacharis.**

***Said Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish:
the DAYS of the righteous die,
but THEY do not die. . . . It does
not say "Israel drew near to
die," but "the days of Israel
drew near to die."***

Good Shabbos to all!

שבת שלום גוט שבת!

