

VAYECHI - GENESIS

-And He Lived-

Dan Stolebarger - Holy Ground Explorations

Chapter 47:28 - 50:26

INTRODUCTION



PARASHAT VAYECHI - 'And He Lived'

28 Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years. So the days of Jacob, the years of his life, were one hundred forty-seven years. **29** The time came near that Israel must die, and he called his son Joseph, and said to him, "If now I have found favor in your sight, please put your hand under my thigh, and deal kindly and truly with me. **Please don't bury me in Egypt,** **30** but when I sleep with my fathers, you shall carry me out of Egypt, and bury me in their burying place."

Joseph said, "I will do as you have said."

31 Israel said, "Swear to me," and he swore to him. Then Israel bowed himself on the bed's head.

The verb **vayechi** means "and he lived," from the verb **chayah**, "to live," "revive," etc. The sages say that since Jacob had suffered so much in his life, the 17 years in Egypt were the happiest years of his life, and therefore Jacob truly lived, happy and content.

29 The time came near that Israel must die, and he called his son Joseph, and said to him, "If now I have found favor in your sight, please put your hand under my thigh, and deal kindly and truly with me. Please don't bury me in Egypt,

Dan - Note the draw of the LAND! Israel is a very special place, I have no words to express its draw on my life! I love the Land and pray that you all, one day, will have the blessing of 'walking the Land - where it all began!"

30 but let me lie with my fathers.

Sharon - Jacob lived 147 years! Amazing. He lived a hard yet blessed life. All he desired at the end of his days was to return to the place where his forefathers were buried. This caused me to pause and think what I would wish for at the end of my days. Dan - take me to Tabgha!

³ Jacob said to Joseph, "God Almighty appeared to me at Luz (Bethel) in the land of Canaan, and blessed me, ⁴ and said to me, 'Behold, I will make you fruitful, and multiply you, and I will make of you a company of peoples, **and will give this land to your offspring after you for an everlasting possession.**' ⁵ Now your two sons, who were born to you in the land of Egypt before I came to you into Egypt, are mine; Ephraim and Manasseh, even as Reuben and Simeon, will be mine.

Out of Jacob's long career, the Book of Hebrews selects this blessing of Joseph's sons by the patriarch as his great act of faith (Heb 11:21). It was his reaching out for the continuation of God's promise in the face of death. Ironically this is the very thing he had once accomplished by deception (Gen 27). Once more the blessing would be given to the younger, but this time there was not scheming or bitterness. It was an act of faith.

Jacob gave the birthright to Joseph by "adopting" Ephraim and Manasseh to the rank of his firstborn sons, thus giving a double portion to Joseph.

¹² Joseph brought them out from between his knees, and he bowed himself with his face to the earth. ¹³ Joseph took them both, Ephraim in his right hand toward Israel's left hand, and Manasseh in his left hand toward Israel's right hand, and brought them near to him. ¹⁴ Israel stretched out his right hand, and laid it on Ephraim's head, who was the younger, and his left hand on Manasseh's head, guiding his hands knowingly, for Manasseh was the firstborn. ¹⁵ He blessed Joseph, and said, "The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, the God who has fed me all my life long to this day, ¹⁶ the angel who has redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads, **and let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac.**

Let them grow into a multitude upon the earth."

Jacob deliberately crossed his hands so that his right hand was upon Ephraim (the younger grandson) and his left hand was upon Manasseh. Jacob did this to avoid humiliating Manasseh, since otherwise the men would have had to change places before the blessing could be given. It was almost as if Jacob was replaying how the blessing of his father Isaac would have been performed had both he and Esau come together for the blessing..

¹⁷ When Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand on the head of Ephraim, it displeased him. He held up his father's hand, to remove it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head. ¹⁸ Joseph said to his father, "Not so, my father, for this is the firstborn. Put your right hand on his head."

¹⁹ His father refused, and said, "I know, my son, I know. He also will become a people, and he also will be great. However, his younger brother will be greater than he, and his offspring will become a multitude of nations." ²⁰ **He blessed them that day, saying, "Israel will bless in you, saying, 'God make you as Ephraim and as Manasseh'" He set Ephraim before Manasseh.**

Shabbat Blessing: Many have wondered by Jacob chooses to bless his grandsons before blessing his 12 sons. Traditionally, the answer has been that Jacob chose to bless them because they are the first set of brothers who did not fight with each other. All the brothers who came before them in the Bible – Cain and Abel, Isaac and Ishmael, Jacob and Esau, Joseph and his brothers – deal with issues of sibling rivalry. By contrast, Ephraim and Menashe were friends known for their good deeds. And what parent wouldn't wish for peace among their children? In the words of Psalms 133:1 "How good and pleasant is it for brothers to sit peacefully together."

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Jacob called to his sons, and said: "Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you that which will happen to you in the days to come.

Note that in Jewish tradition, the following are all hidden from man's eyes: 1) the day of one's death; 2) the time of the Messiah's coming; 3) the time of the end of Edom's dominance; 4) the complete depth of the Torah.

JACOB'S BLESSINGS

Reuben: His firstborn status was revoked for his interference in Jacob's marital life; despite being the firstborn, he will not be leader of Israel.

Simeon: Rebuked for the massacre of Shechem, Simeon will be scattered in Israel (the tribe ended up absorbed in Judah); he also will not be leader of Israel.

Levi: Rebuked for the massacre of Shechem, Simeon will be scattered in Israel (shevet Levi ended up in the Cities of Refuge); he also will not be leader of Israel.

Judah: Will be praised by all Israel; the kings of Israel will come from him, and from Judah the Mashiach would eventually come.

Dan: Shall produce great judges and promote justice in Israel

Naphtali: Shall produce beauty and praises in Israel

Gad: Shall produce victorious warriors of Israel

Asher: Shall be prosperous and full of olive oil

Issachar: Shall persevere like a beast of burden

Zebulon: Shall be prosperous seafaring merchants

Joseph: Shall be blessed with fertility and prosperity.

Benjamin: Shall produce victorious warriors of Israel

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10 The scepter shall not depart from Judah,
Nor a lawgiver from between his feet,
Until Shiloh comes;

Glen – This is a Messianic prophecy that Israel\Jacob gives to Judah. Jesus is of the lineage of Judah. What this means is the 'scepter' or right to rule Judea would not depart until Shiloh, meaning Messiah comes. Once Jesus came, Judea no longer had the right to rule their land. Rome was occupying it, but the situation got progressively worse. In Luke 19, Jesus' wept as He pronounced judgment on Judea for rejecting Him as their prophesied Messiah. How can we trust that Jesus is the Messiah? He fulfills prophecy, over 300 by some estimates. We can absolutely trust that Jesus is our Messiah.

Joseph went up to bury his father; and with him went up all the servants of Pharaoh, the elders of his house, all the elders of the land of Egypt, ⁸ all the house of Joseph, his brothers, and his father's house. Only their little ones, their flocks, and their herds, they left in the land of Goshen. ⁹ Both chariots and horsemen went up with him. It was a very great company.

Embalming required 40 days! The Egyptians mourned for Jacob 70 days— 2 1/2 months—just two days short of the normal time of mourning for a Pharaoh. This showed the great respect the Egyptians had for Joseph.

¹⁵ When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "It may be that Joseph will hate us, and will fully pay us back for all the evil which we did to him."
¹⁶ They sent a message to Joseph, saying, "Your father commanded before he died, saying, ¹⁷ 'You shall tell Joseph, "Now please forgive the disobedience of your brothers, and their sin, because they did evil to you.'" Now, please forgive the disobedience of the servants of the God of your father." Joseph wept when they spoke to him. ¹⁸ His brothers also went and fell down before his face; and they said, "Behold, we are your servants." ¹⁹ Joseph said to them, "Don't be afraid, for am I in the place of God? ²⁰ As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to save many people alive, as is happening today. ²¹ Now therefore don't be afraid. I will provide for you and your little ones." He comforted them, and spoke kindly to them.

Jewish tradition says that the brothers never confessed their sin to Jacob, and likewise Joseph never told his father that his brothers betrayed him. The midrash says that on the way to bury his father, Joseph passed by the place where he met his brothers when his father sent him to Shechem to check on their welfare. While he was there, Joseph stood near the pit where he was thrown and silently prayed to God, thanking Him for his deliverance. The brothers interpreted this to mean that Joseph was revisiting his wound and awakening his resentment and therefore they became fearful.

24 Joseph said to his brothers, "I am dying, but God will surely visit you, and bring you up out of this land to the land which he swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob."
25 Joseph took an oath from the children of Israel, saying, "God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here." **26** So Joseph died, being one hundred ten years old, and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt.

The Book opens with "In the Beginning God..." It closes "...in a coffin in Egypt." Man's failure brought a curse. God's Plan of redemption will be presented through a nation that will be born in the caldron of Egypt...



Jacob then blesses his grandchildren, yet his words go beyond the “mere” blessing.

The upbringing of Menasheh and Ephraim would offer needed instruction for the coping mechanisms necessary in the midst of exile and it would be in all the difficult phases in our life.

The first lesson would be gleaned from the name of Menasheh, “G-d has caused me to forget all my toil “. The difficulties and persecutions of our national journey could be so overwhelming that it could deflect or completely stop our movement forward. Assimilation and self hatred can become the results of such a deflection. There are times wherein our past, corporal or individual imprisons us in dungeons of pain and anger. There is no growth in those dark corners of our soul. Those chains need to be broken and put away from our consciousness”. Therein is the power of “ G-d has caused me to forget all my hardships”

Yet on the other hand we must also learn the lesson ensconced in the name of Ephraim, "G-d has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction." **The simple act of gratitude for what there is all around us is a critical key for moving forward out of "affliction" and into healthy growth.** We must learn to be aware and thankful for what good there is around us in order to have the strength to move forward.

In the midst of affliction it is difficult to see light. Without the hope that the light is there around us, the dungeons of despair become overwhelming. Jacob placed his hand on Ephraim first as if to say; "look around you and see the blessings that are there and by so doing you will be able to break forth out of the pains of the past"

As a people and as individuals we need to recognize the glorious opportunities that abound around us and at the same time we need to break out of the pains and persecutions of the past. In this manner we as a people and each one of us individually will achieve our purpose and goals. May we all be like Menasheh and Ephraim.

From an upcoming book "People in Torah" by Moshe Kempinski



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