

Vayechi

Genesis 47:28 - 50:26

28 Jacob lived seventeen years in the land of Egypt, so that the span of Jacob's life came to one hundred and forty-seven years. 29 And when the time approached for Israel to die, he summoned his son Joseph and said to him, "Do me this favor, place your hand under my thigh as a pledge of your steadfast loyalty: please do not bury me in Egypt. 30 When I lie down with my fathers, take me up from Egypt and bury me in their burial-place." He replied, "I will do as you have spoken." 31 And he said, "Swear to me." And he swore to him. Then Israel bowed at the head of the bed.

Chapter 48

1 Some time afterward, Joseph was told, "Your father is ill." So he took with him his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. 2 When Jacob was told, "Your son Joseph has come to see you," Israel summoned his strength and sat up in bed.

3 And Jacob said to Joseph, "El Shaddai appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan, and He blessed me, 4 and said to me, 'I will make you fertile and numerous, making of you a community of peoples; and I will assign this land to your offspring to come for an everlasting possession.' 5 Now, your two sons, who were born to you in the land of Egypt before I came to you in Egypt, shall be mine; Ephraim and Manasseh shall be mine no less than Reuben and Simeon. 6 But progeny born to you after them shall be yours; they shall be recorded instead of their brothers in their inheritance. 7 I [do this because], when I was returning from Paddan, Rachel died, to my sorrow, while I was journeying in the land of Canaan, when still some distance short of Ephrath; and I buried her there on the road to Ephrath" — now Bethlehem.

8 Noticing Joseph's sons, Israel asked, "Who are these?" 9 And Joseph said to his father, "They are my sons, whom God has given me here." "Bring them up to me," he said, "that I may bless them." 10 Now Israel's eyes were dim with age; he could not see. So [Joseph] brought them close to him, and he kissed them and embraced them. 11 And Israel said to Joseph, "I never expected to see you again, and here God has let me see your children as well."

12 Joseph then removed them from his knees, and bowed low with his face to the ground. 13 Joseph took the two of them, Ephraim with his right hand — to Israel's left — and Manasseh with his left hand — to Israel's right — and brought them close to him. 14 But Israel stretched out his right hand and laid it on Ephraim's head, though he was the younger, and his left hand on Manasseh's head — thus crossing his hands — although Manasseh was the first-born. 15 And he blessed Joseph, saying,

"The God in whose ways my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked,
The God who has been my shepherd from my birth to this day —
16 The Angel who has redeemed me from all harm —
Bless the lads.
In them may my name be recalled,
And the names of my fathers Abraham and Isaac,
And may they be teeming multitudes upon the earth."

17 When Joseph saw that his father was placing his right hand on Ephraim's head, he thought it wrong; so he took hold of his father's hand to move it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's. 18 "Not so, Father," Joseph said to his father, "for the other is the first-born; place your right hand on his head." 19 But his father objected, saying, "I know, my son, I know. He too shall become a people, and he too shall be great. Yet his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his offspring shall be plentiful enough for nations." 20 So he blessed them that day, saying, "By you shall Israel invoke blessings, saying: God make you like Ephraim and Manasseh." Thus he put Ephraim before Manasseh.

21 Then Israel said to Joseph, "I am about to die; but God will be with you and bring you back to the land of your fathers. 22 And now, I assign to you one portion more than to your brothers, which I wrested from the Amorites with my sword and bow."

Chapter 49

1 And Jacob called his sons and said, "Come together that I may tell you what is to befall you in days to come.

2 Assemble and hearken, O sons of Jacob;
Hearken to Israel your father:

3 Reuben you are my first-born,
My might and first fruit of my vigor,
Exceeding in rank
And exceeding in honor.

4 Unstable as water, you shall excel no longer;
For when you mounted your father's bed,
You brought disgrace — my couch he mounted!

5 Simeon and Levi are a pair;
Their weapons are tools of lawlessness.

6 Let not my person be included in their council,
Let not my being be counted in their assembly.
For when angry they slay men,
And when pleased they maim oxen.

7 Cursed be their anger so fierce,
And their wrath so relentless.

I will divide them in Jacob,
Scatter them in Israel.

8 You, O Judah, your brothers shall praise;
Your hand shall be on the nape of your foes;
Your father's sons shall bow low to you.

9 Judah is a lion's whelp;
On prey, my son, have you grown.
He crouches, lies down like a lion,
Like the king of beasts — who dare rouse him?

10 The scepter shall not depart from Judah,
Nor the ruler's staff from between his feet;
So that tribute shall come to him
And the homage of peoples be his.

11 He tethers his ass to a vine,
His ass's foal to a choice vine;
He washes his garment in wine,
His robe in blood of grapes.

12 His eyes are darker than wine;
His teeth are whiter than milk.

13 Zebulun shall dwell by the seashore;
He shall be a haven for ships,
And his flank shall rest on Sidon.

14 Issachar is a strong-boned ass,
Crouching among the sheepfolds.

15 When he saw how good was security, And how pleasant was the
country,
He bent his shoulder to the burden,
And became a tolling serf.

16 Dan shall govern his people,
As one of the tribes of Israel.

17 Dan shall be a serpent by the road,
A viper by the path,
That bites the horse's heels
So that his rider is thrown backward.

18 I wait for Your deliverance, O LORD!

19 Gad shall be raided by raiders,
But he shall raid at their heels.

20 Asher's bread shall be rich,

And he shall yield royal dainties.

21 Naphtali is a hind let loose,
Which yields lovely fawns.

22 Joseph is a wild ass,
A wild ass by a spring
— Wild colts on a hillside.

23 Archers bitterly assailed him;
They shot at him and harried him.

24 Yet his bow staved taut,
And his arms were made firm
By the hands of the Mighty One of Jacob —
There, the Shepherd, the Rock of Israel —
25 The God of your father who helps you,
And Shaddai who blesses you
With blessings of heaven above,
Blessings of the deep that couches below,
Blessings of the breast and womb.

26 The blessings of your father
Surpass the blessings of my ancestors,
To the utmost bounds of the eternal hills.
May they rest on the head of Joseph,
On the brow of the elect of his brothers.

27 Benjamin is a ravenous wolf;
In the morning he consumes the foe,
And in the evening he divides the spoil."

28 All these were the tribes of Israel, twelve in number, and this is what their father said to them as he bade them farewell, addressing to each a parting word appropriate to him.

29 Then he instructed them, saying to them, "I am about to be gathered to my kin. Bury me with my fathers in the cave which is in the field of Ephron the Hittite, 30 the cave which is in the field of Machpelah, facing Mamre, in the land of Canaan, the field that Abraham bought from Ephron the Hittite for a burial site — 31 There Abraham and his wife Sarah were buried; there Isaac and his wife Rebekah were buried; and there I buried Leah — 32 the field and the cave In it, bought from the Hittites." 33 When Jacob finished his instructions to his sons, he drew his feet into the bed and, breathing his last, he was gathered to his people.

Chapter 50

1 Joseph flung himself upon his father's face and wept over him and kissed him. 2 Then

Joseph ordered the physicians in his service to embalm his father, and the physicians embalmed Israel. 3 It required forty days, for such is the full period of embalming. The Egyptians bewailed him seventy days; 4 and when the wailing period was over, Joseph spoke to Pharaoh's court, saying, "Do me this favor, and lay this appeal before Pharaoh: 5 'My father made me swear, saying, "I am about to die. Be sure to bury me in the grave which I made ready for myself in the land of Canaan." Now, therefore, let me go up and bury my father; then I shall return.'" 6 And Pharaoh said, "Go up and bury your father, as he made you promise on oath."

7 So Joseph went up to bury his father; and with him went up all the officials of Pharaoh, the senior members of his court, and all of Egypt's dignitaries, 8 together with all of Joseph's household, his brothers, and his father's household; only their children, their flocks, and their herds were left in the region of Goshen. 9 Chariots, too, and horsemen went up with him; it was a very large troop.

10 When they came to Goren ha-Atad, which is beyond the Jordan, they held there a very great and solemn lamentation; and he observed a mourning period of seven days for his father. 11 And when the Canaanite inhabitants of the land saw the mourning at Goren ha-Atad, they said, "This is a solemn mourning on the part of the Egyptians." That is why it was named Abel-mizraim, which is beyond the Jordan. 12 Thus his sons did for him as he had instructed them. 13 His sons carried him to the land of Canaan, and buried him in the cave of the field of Machpelah, the field near Mamre, which Abraham had bought for a burial site from Ephron the Hittite. 14 After burying his father, Joseph returned to Egypt, he and his brothers and all who had gone up with him to bury his father.

15 When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "What if Joseph still bears a grudge against us and pays us back for all the wrong that we did him!" 16 So they sent this message to Joseph, "Before his death your father left this instruction: 17 So shall you say to Joseph, 'Forgive, I urge you, the offense and guilt of your brothers who treated you so harshly.' Therefore, please forgive the offense of the servants of the God of your father." And Joseph was in tears as they spoke to him.

18 His brothers went to him themselves, flung themselves before him, and said, "We are prepared to be your slaves." 19 But Joseph said to them, "Have no fear! Am I a substitute for God? 20 Besides, although you intended me harm, God intended it for good, so as to bring about the present result — the survival of many people. 21 And so, fear not. I will sustain you and your children." Thus he reassured them, speaking kindly to them.

22 So Joseph and his father's household remained in Egypt. Joseph lived one hundred and ten years. 23 Joseph lived to see children of the third generation of Ephraim; the children of Machir son of Manasseh were likewise born upon Joseph's knees. 24 At length, Joseph said to his brothers, "I am about to die. God will surely take notice of you and bring you up from this land to the land that He promised on oath to Abraham,

to Isaac, and to Jacob." 25 So Joseph made the sons of Israel swear, saying, "When God has taken notice of you, you shall carry up my bones from here."

26 Joseph died at the age of one hundred and ten years; and he was embalmed and placed in a coffin in Egypt.

Haftarah for Vayechi

I Kings 2:1-12

Chapter 2

1 When David's life was drawing to a close, he instructed his son Solomon as follows: 2 "I am going the way of all the earth; be strong and show yourself a man. 3 Keep the charge of the LORD your God, walking in His ways and following His laws, His commandments, His rules, and His admonitions as recorded in the Teaching of Moses, in order that you may succeed in whatever you undertake and wherever you turn. 4 Then the LORD will fulfill the promise that He made concerning me: 'If your descendants are scrupulous in their conduct, and walk before Me faithfully, with all their heart and soul, your line on the throne of Israel shall never end!'

5 "Further, you know what Joab son of Zeruiah did to me, what he did to the two commanders of Israel's forces, Abner son of Ner and Amasa son of Jether: he killed them, shedding blood of war in peacetime, staining the girdle of his loins and the sandals on his feet with blood of war. 6 So act in accordance with your wisdom, and see that his white hair does not go down to Sheol in peace.

7 "But deal graciously with the sons of Barzillai the Gileadite, for they befriended me when I fled from your brother Absalom; let them be among those that eat at your table.

8 "You must also deal with Shimei son of Gera, the Benjaminite from Bahurim. He insulted me outrageously when I was on my way to Mahanaim; but he came down to meet me at the Jordan, and I swore to him by the LORD: 'I will not put you to the sword.' 9 So do not let him go unpunished; for you are a wise man and you will know how to deal with him and send his gray hair down to Sheol in blood."

10 So David slept with his fathers, and he was buried in the City of David. 11 The length of David's reign over Israel was forty years: he reigned seven years in Hebron, and he reigned thirty-three years in Jerusalem. 12 And Solomon sat upon the throne of his father David, and his rule was firmly established.

(Philadelphia, Jerusalem: Jewish Publication Society) 1985.