



GUIDE TO THE WEEKLY PARSHA

ISSUE 12

3rd January 2015

VAYECHI

12th Teveth 5775

Kohen - First Aliya:

Chapter 37, verse 28 – Chapter 38, verse 9

- ✚ Seventeen years have passed since Yaacov moved down to Mitzraim and at the age of 147 he realises he is soon coming to the end of his life.
- ✚ Yaacov summons Yosef to him and makes him swear that when he dies, Yosef will not bury him in Mitzraim, but in the cave of machpelah alongside his wife Leah and his other forefathers and Mothers.
- ✚ Yosef recognises how ill Yaacov has become and brings his two sons, Menashe and Ephraim to him for a blessing.

Levi - Second Aliya:

Chapter 38, verses 10 - 16

- ✚ Yaacov blesses Yosef first.
- ✚ Yaacov crosses his arms in order to place his right hand on the head of Ephraim, who was standing on Yaacov's left hand side and his left hand on the head of Menashe who was standing on Yaacov's right, before blessing them both.

Sh'lishi - Third Aliya:

Chapter 38, verses 17 - 22

- ✚ Watching this, Yosef attempts to straighten Yaacov's hands but he resisted.
- ✚ Yaacov told Yosef that Menashe was destined for greatness, but Ephraim would be even greater.

R'Vi'i - Fourth Aliya:

Chapter 39, verses 1 - 18

- ✚ Yaacov gathers the rest of his sons together around his bedside. in order to bless them
- ✚ Yaacov tells Reuven even though usually a first born is honoured with a double portion of his father's belongings, because of Reuven's sins he will get nothing. However Hashem in his mercy has forgiven him.
- ✚ As Shimon and Levi destroyed Shechem and instigated the killing of Yosef. Yaacov told them they are too dangerous to be together so their portion share of the land of Israel will be scattered across the whole country.
- ✚ Yehuda is compared to a lion and hence blessed with future leaders emanating from his tribe.
- ✚ Zevulan was blessed with great business acumen enabling him to support the tribe of Yissachar while they excel in torah study.
- ✚ Compared to a snake, Dan's descendants will become almighty warriors who will attack their enemies with unexpected manoeuvres.

Chamishi - Fifth Aliya:

Chapter 39, verses 19 - 36

- ✚ Gad his told that his tribe will also become great fighters and even though they will return back in peace, they will always be in a state of constant threat from their other surrounding enemies.
- ✚ Asher was blessed with plenty of olive trees which its produce will you in the future temples.
- ✚ Compared to a deer, Naftali is blessed with light-footed messengers who will swiftly deliver the latest news to the other tribes.
- ✚ Yosef is blessed with two portions through his sons Ephraim and Menashe.
- ✚ Benjamin is told that the Beis Hamikdash will be built in his portion of land.

Shishi - Sixth Aliya:

Chapter 39, verse 27- Chapter 40, verse 20

- ✚ Yaacov passes away and Mitzraim mourn for him for seventy days.
- ✚ With Pharaoh's permission, Yosef and his brothers buried Yaacov next to his first wife Leah in the land of Canaan, in the cave of Machpelah.

Sh'vi'i - Seventh Aliya:

Chapter 40, verses 21 - 26

- ✚ Yosef gets his brothers to promise him that at the time of the Exodus from Mitzraim, his bones would be transported for reburial in the land of Canaan.
- ✚ Yosef dies at the age of one hundred and ten

Haftorah – MELACHIM (1ST BOOK OF Kings) Chapter 2, verses 1 to 12

OVERVIEW:

- ✚ Shlomo (Solomon) is standing by his dying father's bedside to receive King David's final message to him.
- ✚ King David encourages Shlomo to be strong and remain steadfast in his belief of Hashem, to ensure that his reign as the successor of the Davidic Dynasty will be a prosperous one. This includes rewarding and punishing various people for their actions during David's reign.
- ✚ Upon his death, Shlomo takes his father's place as King and his sovereignty is firmly established in the land of Israel.

LINK TO TORAH READING:

- ✚ The Haphtarach echoes the same theme portrayed in this week's Sedra. Just as King David, on his death bed delivers his final instructions to Shlomo. The Torah reading discusses at length Yaacov's parting words and blessings to his sons before he dies.

WEEKLY DISCUSSION:

This week's Parsha is called Vayechi, literally translated as "and he lived", referring to the life of Yaakov. This is a strange title as the Parsha mainly deals with the days leading up to his death. Change is a very powerful thing, especially changes in how we all interact with each other. Yaacov's persona changed a lot throughout his life including his own name Yaacov being changed to Yisrael, but the most important change we saw in him was the change that defines him. His character trait of 'Truth and Honesty'

When I first read the sedra, I thought when Yaacov recited the blessings he gave to his sons, he seemed very harsh and unkind but in fact he was being very fair and candid with them all. Yaacov learned through his life, that truthful criticism was needed now, which was a fundamental change from the perception's he had when he was younger. Earlier in his life; he deceived his father to get a blessing and a birthright which belonged to his older brother Esav. However he soon realized Honesty is the best policy and changed his ways.

Our commentators, say that Yaacov was teaching his sons an important lesson here; so that they could change too. He felt the criticism he meted out would help all of them find their own way in the future and make them better men, especially as Yaacov knew they were all destined to become role-models as the heads of each of the twelve tribes of Israel.

Going back to why this Parsha is called Vayechi, The answer is Yaacov had changed so much throughout his life that his own course of changes allowed him to live to his best potential. When the time came for Yaacov to die; he wanted his son's to understand why he switched around the leaders. Yaacov knew what strengths and weaknesses each son had, so he wasn't being brutal, he was being honest with them, about why he made the changes necessary and that they should not quarrel and fight with each other for supremacy, just to accept in their hearts the correct decision was made for all of their benefit's.

Jewish people remember their loved ones on the anniversary of their deaths. Yahrzeit's are not to remember how they had died, but how they had lived, enabling us to learn lessons from their life experiences so we can adapt and incorporate them into our own lives. Changing who you are makes us better people. Change is a lifelong job and sometimes is not easy. Hence the Parsha's name, Vayechi. Remembering Yaakov and the struggles he had to endure throughout his whole life, and the changes he made for the 'Greater Good' May Hashem bless us all to do the same.

