

# VAYECHI { וַיֵּחִי } (And He Lived)

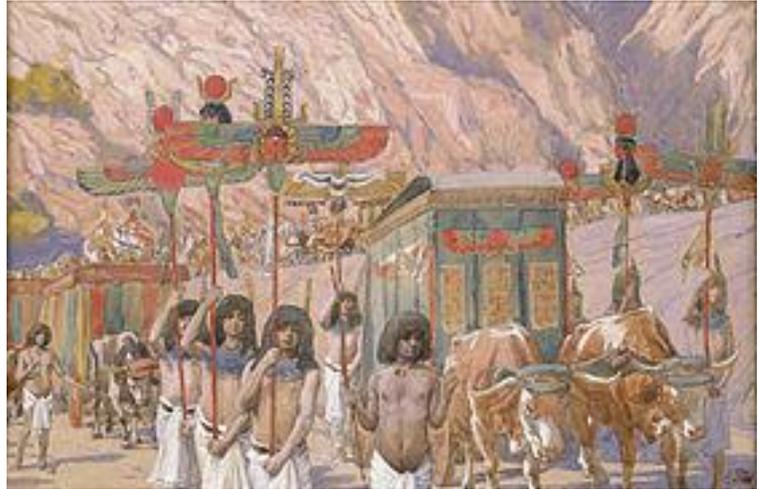
Genesis 47:28-50:26; 1 Kings 2:1-12, 1 Peter 1:1-9

A Messianic Jewish Commentary

By Hannah Neshet [www.voiceforisrael.net](http://www.voiceforisrael.net)

“And Jacob lived (Vayechi Yaacov) in the land of Egypt seventeen years; so the days of Jacob, the years of his life, were a hundred forty and seven years.” (Genesis 47:28)

This week’s Torah portion, Parashah Vayechi (and he lived), is the last Shabbat reading from the book of Genesis (Breisheet). In last week’s study, Joseph revealed his identity to his brothers and invited them, as well as his father, to live in Egypt in order to provide for them during the famine. Joseph, his brothers, and his father were joyfully reunited and reconciled.



Jacob's Body Is Taken to Canaan (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by [James Tissot](http://www.jamestissot.com))

In this portion of the Torah, Jacob knows he is coming to the end of his life, therefore he asked Joseph to bury him in the Land of Canaan. Before his passing, Jacob pronounced a patriarchal blessing upon his sons as well as blessing Joseph’s two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh.

Parasha Vayechi seems to deal primarily with endings – the end of Jacob’s life, of Joseph’s life, and the last words of King David before his death. There is a time for each of us to be born and a time for us to die, as it is written:

**“There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens: a time to be born and a time to die,...”** (Ecclesiastes 3:1-2)

The stark reality is that every one of us, no matter how deep our denial, will come to that day when our earthly life is finished. **“Both wise men die and likewise the fool and senseless person perish, and leave their wealth to others. Their inner thought is that their houses will last forever.”** (Psalm 49:10-11)

Isn't that the truth! Especially when we are young, it seems that we will live forever. Death seems a far-off, distant concept that will never touch us. But as we get older, we come to a sometimes sudden realization that time is passing us by and we have only so much of it left.

Our hope, however, is in these words, **“But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave, for He shall receive me.” (Psalm 49:15)**

Yeshua has promised that whoever believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life! <sup>1</sup> Halleluyah! For followers of Yeshua, death has lost its sting. <sup>2</sup> He is the bread that comes down from Heaven, the true bread that gives eternal life. Unlike the manna our fathers ate and died, we may eat of this ‘lechem chayim’ and not die but live forever! (John 6:50)

It seems to me appropriate that this parashah is usually read some time around the secular ‘New Year’, which is a time when people often take stock of the past year and set some intentions for the coming one.

As we contemplate the passage of time, the issues we must face are: *‘How are we living our lives today so that we may end them on this earth in peace?’* And secondly, *‘Are we living our lives with eternity in mind?’*

One day, we will each be required to stand before God and give an account of our lives (Romans 14:12). Will we live our lives in such a way that we have no fear or dread of standing before the Great Judge when our lives here on earth are over?

Through the lives of Jacob, Joseph, and David, we can see that even great people of God (and perhaps especially great people of God) suffer many trials and tribulations in the course of their lifetime. The question is, *“Will we forgive those who have wronged us and go on with God to live in peace, love and joy? Or will we allow these difficulties and sorrows to harden our hearts to God, to others, and to life itself?”*

When we look back over our life, we all have regrets. I write to several brothers in Yeshua who are incarcerated for various crimes; some of them will spend the rest of their life in prison. One has been behind bars since he was a youth and has no hope of ever tasting freedom or enjoying many of things we take for granted – satisfying work, a picnic in the park, a loving marriage, or the joys and trials of raising children.

So many express regret, now that they are followers of Yeshua, over the mistakes and wrong turns they have made that landed them in prison. They wish they could go back and do it all over again – this time differently - but unfortunately, in this life we don't get a ‘do over’.

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<sup>1</sup> John 3:16

<sup>2</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:55

There are some things in life that we can't change. We have to live with the consequences of our choices and decisions; but what we can do is to allow these trials of life to transform us into the people of character and holiness that God created us to be.

**“When the time drew near that Israel must die, he called his son Joseph and said to him, “Now if I have found favor in your sight, please put your hand under my thigh, and deal kindly and truly with me. Please do not bury me in Egypt, but let me lie with my fathers; you shall carry me out of Egypt and bury me in their burial place.” (Genesis 47:29-30)**

Jacob prepared for the end of his life by asking Joseph to make a vow not to bury his body in Egypt; but to carry him back to the Land of his Fathers' and to bury him there with his fathers. Although Jacob lived the last seventeen years of his life in Egypt, and God had blessed him there so that he and his children became prosperous and fruitful, he never forgot the Land God had promised him by divine Covenant.

Even while in exile, the people of Israel sat by the rivers of Babylon and wept, remembering Zion, and vowing to never forget her: **“If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand**



**forget its skill! If I do not remember you, let my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth—if I do not exalt Jerusalem above my chief joy.” (Psalm 137:5-6)**

We must understand this eternal longing in the Jewish soul in order to comprehend the fierce determination of the people of Israel, even today, to remain in the Land that God promised us through our forefathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Many of those who live in exile among the nations of the world still maintain a strong emotional tie to the Land of Israel.

## Ephraim and Manasseh

When Jacob became ill, Joseph brought his two sons from his Egyptian wife, Asenath, daughter of the priest of On, to his father for the patriarchal blessing. Jacob asked who the two boys were and Joseph answered, **“They are my sons, whom God has given me in this place.” (Genesis 48:9)**

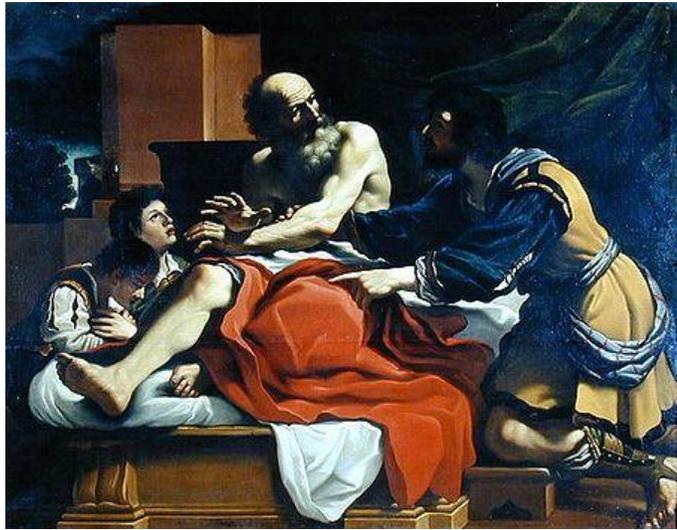
Although Jacob led, in many ways, a difficult and trial-filled life, in the end he praised the Lord for His exceedingly abundant goodness towards him. When he saw Joseph's sons, he thought only of the goodness of God. **“And Israel said to Joseph, “I had not thought to see your face; but in fact, God has also shown me your offspring!” (Genesis 48:11)**

There are times when God's goodness not only meets our expectations but even exceeds them!

**“Glory belongs to God, whose power is at work in us. By this power he can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine.” (Ephesians 3:20)**

Joseph, however was surprised to see that Jacob (Israel) stretched out his right hand to place it on the head of Ephraim, the younger boy, and crossed his hands, thereby placing his left hand on Manasseh's head, even though Manasseh was the firstborn (and therefore the rightful heir of the firstborn blessing).

Perhaps God had spoken to Jacob, as He had to his mother, Rebecca, saying, "*The elder shall serve the younger.*"<sup>3</sup> God did not make His choice on the basis of merit, but simply by Divine election, since this word was spoken while the children were yet in the womb, before they were even born.



Jacob, Ephraim, and Manasseh (17th-century painting by [Guercino](#))

There is so much the Word has to say about God's destiny for specific children, even before they are born – even before they are formed in the womb! God said to Jeremiah, "**Before you were formed in the womb, I chose you; I set you apart before you were born, I appointed you a prophet to the nations....**" (Jeremiah 1:5) Incredible! Jeremiah was chosen by God as a prophet to the nations before he was even formed in the womb?

Yes, God may choose our children before they are ever born, and appoint them to do great and mighty exploits for Him and for the sake of His Kingdom. How tragic to think of those who are aborted, their mothers not understanding this truth that God knows each and every baby, even before they begin to grow and develop in our wombs. With God there is forgiveness through the blood of Yeshua but it is still a terrible loss to the world to lose these precious children through the shedding of innocent blood which we call abortion.

Now Jacob (Israel), being divinely led, blessed the younger son with his right hand, against all natural reason. The Word of God tells us to trust in the Lord with all our hearts and lean not on our own understanding.<sup>4</sup> May we be led by the Spirit in all our decisions and be radically obedient, even when it goes against our natural understanding.

This is not the first or only time that a younger child was chosen over the elder: Moses was the second born; and David was so young and insignificant in his father's eyes that he was not even

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<sup>3</sup> Genesis 25:23

<sup>4</sup> Proverbs 3:5

considered worthy of election. Jesse, his father, did not even call him from the fields when Samuel came to check out his sons and to anoint the next king of Israel to succeed King Saul. Gideon was also the youngest in his family. We tend to judge others by their outward appearances but God judges the heart. God knows whom He can trust to be faithful to Him.

Joseph thought his father had simply made a mistake, perhaps due to his old age; but no, Jacob (Israel) purposefully put Ephraim before Manasseh, just as he (Jacob) was placed before Esau, his elder brother; and even as his father, Isaac, was placed before his elder brother, Ishmael.

## The Father's Blessing

God's blessing is on all of His children, and each one is deeply loved; but certain individuals have a specific destiny and calling. Jacob, discerning God's election of Ephraim over Menasseh, blessed them: **"So he blessed them that day, saying, 'By you Israel will pronounce blessings, saying, 'God make you as Ephraim and as Manasseh''"; and thus he put Ephraim before Manasseh.**" (Genesis 48:20)

The father's blessing is so powerful! Even today, every Friday evening, observant Jewish people bless their sons with the same blessing Jacob spoke over Ephraim and Manasseh: **"May God make you as Ephraim and as Manasseh."**<sup>5</sup>

Blessing our children - especially on Friday evening as we have a festive meal, light the candles, break bread (challah) together and usher in the holy Sabbath day - is a beautiful custom filled with meaning.



But why would we bless our sons to be like Ephraim and Manasseh? What was so special about them?

Ephraim and Manasseh were raised outside the Land of Israel, in Egypt, a highly secular, ungodly society that served many false gods and practiced sorcery and witchcraft. However, these two boys, born to a Hebrew father and an Egyptian mother, held onto their faith in the God of Israel as the one true God.

We cannot always guarantee that our children will not be exposed to a negative or ungodly environment. We can't keep them perfectly sheltered in a bubble; but what we can do is to give them our blessing to be like Ephraim and Manasseh, or like Sarah, Rachel, Rebecca, and Leah,

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<sup>5</sup> The traditional blessing for daughters is, "May G-d make you like Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah."

who were not tempted by their immoral surrounding; but instead maintained ethical and righteous behavior.

When we bless our children to be like Ephraim and Manasseh, we are exhorting them to resist the negative peer pressure and immorality of the society in which they live, and instead hold true to the values we have taught them from God’s Word.

**“And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”** (Romans 12:2)

So what about children who do not receive their father’s blessing? In today’s society where divorce runs rampant, so many children are growing up without a father. What if we, ourselves, did not receive the blessing of our father? Maybe he was absent or simply unavailable; perhaps he was not a godly father who understood the power of blessing. Some children, rather than receiving a blessing from their fathers receive a curse – through criticism or even neglect.

And yet, we all have a Heavenly Father who dearly loves us and is always for us, helping us, protecting us, guiding us, and providing for our needs. It is His blessing which we can receive, and His blessing that overrides any curses placed upon us by our earthly father or any other mortal being. This is good news!

### The Lost Ten Tribes

The name, Ephraim, **אפרים** comes from the word, pri, **פרי** which means ‘fruit’. Out of Ephraim was destined to come what is called in Hebrew ‘m’loh goyim’ **מלא-הגוים**.<sup>6</sup> This may be translated as ‘a multitude of nations or Gentiles’.

This is the same promise that was given to Avraham –he would become ‘father of a multitude of nations or Gentiles’. This was fulfilled in Yeshua, as all those of any tongue, tribe, or race, multitudes of people who were formerly Gentile, have now become part of the commonwealth of Israel and full members of the family of God through the blood of Yeshua.<sup>7</sup>



The Twelve Tribes of Israel

All those who are of faith in the Messiah Yeshua are now considered the ‘seed of Abraham’. (Galatians 3:29)

<sup>6</sup> Genesis 48:19

<sup>7</sup> Ephesians 2:11-19

Any time we see the word Ephraim used in Scripture, we can know that this is referring to the offspring of Joseph, those who eventually came to be known as *'the lost Ten Tribes'*. These Israelites, of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, were exiled due to their sins, assimilated among the nations (goyim – Gentiles) and seemingly 'lost'.

Because their sins were apparently worse than Judah's, God rejected the ten Northern tribes (called Ephraim or Joseph) and exiled them into the nations of the earth where they became assimilated and eventually lost their Israelite identity. They even considered the Torah a 'strange thing'.

**“The children of Ephraim, being armed and carrying bows, turned back in the day of battle. They did not keep the covenant of God; *they refused to walk in His Torah....Moreover He rejected the tent of Joseph, and did not choose the tribe of Ephraim, but chose the tribe of Judah, Mount Zion which He loved...*”** (Psalm 78:9-19,67-68)

The good news, however, is that our God is gracious, merciful, and provides a way of redemption. He knows where they are and has promised to bring them back one day into Covenant (Brit) with Him, restoring them into unity with Judah (the Southern Kingdom).

He is doing this in our day through bringing Gentiles into Covenant with Him through the blood of the Jewish Messiah, Yeshua.

God speaks about this issue throughout the book of Hosea through his adulterous wife, Gomer, and their illegitimate children: Jezreel, Loh Ruhamah (No Compassion), and Loh Ami (Not My People): **“I will sow her in the land for Myself, and I will have compassion on *No Compassion (Loh Ruhamah)*, I will say to *Not My People (Loh Ami)*; You are My people (Ami), and he will say, You are My God.”** (Hosea 2:23)

And again this mystery is explained in the book of 1 Peter: **“But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation. His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of the darkness into His marvelous light. Who once were *not a people (Loh Ami)* but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy (*Loh ruhamah*) but now have obtained mercy (*rachamim*).”** (1 Peter 2:9-10)

Halleluyah! Those who were far away have been brought near; those who had no compassion or mercy upon them have found compassion and mercy in the Lord. And those who were not God's people have become the people of God – Jew and Gentile – one new man. We can be one mishpachah (family) in unity under Yeshua Hamashiach (the Messiah) who has broken down the middle wall of partition (machitzah).

Jacob (Israel) then called his sons together to give his last words before his death.

**“Jacob called his sons, and he said: “Come together that I may tell you what is to befall you in the end of days. Assemble and listen, O sons of Jacob, and listen to Israel, your father.”**  
(Genesis 49:1-2)

According to Rabbinic Jewish commentators in the Talmud (Oral Law), it is written that Jacob wanted to reveal the Messiah’s coming at the end of days but was prevented by the Holy Spirit. *“Jacob wished to reveal to his sons the ketz (end of days), whereupon the Shechinah (Divine presence) departed from him.”* — *Talmud Pesachim 56a*

Jacob blessed each of his sons; some were blessed with beauty and fertility (Joseph), the swiftness of a deer (Naphtali), the ferociousness of a wolf (Benjamin), scholarship (Issachar), military might (Gad) and so on.

However, we may notice issues the aging father, even on his deathbed, still holds against some of them. Jacob recalled his firstborn son, Reuven’s sin – how he defiled his father’s bed by lying with his concubine. Reuven forfeited the rights of the firstborn by his lack of character. He possessed dignity and excellence, but his instability became his undoing. (Genesis 49:4)



Jacob Blesses His Sons (illustration from the 1728 *Figures de la Bible*)

This shows us that moral character is a more important factor than hereditary right. We may possess great gifts and potential, but we must work to strengthen our character as well, so that we may be stable enough to inherit the blessings that come along with excellence and power.

Jacob also cursed Simeon and Levi’s uncontrolled anger, which caused them to massacre many innocent men in the matter of Shechem’s rape of their sister. We may note that it was their sin he cursed, not their person. And yet the Simeonites were eventually intermingled with the tribe of Judah<sup>8</sup> and the Levites were eventually dispersed among the other tribes of Israel.

This demonstrates the power of blessing or cursing, life or death that is in our tongue.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Joshua 19:1

<sup>9</sup> Proverbs 18:21

Is it possible that even this great man of God held unforgiveness in his heart? David also, in this week's haftorah, brings up an unhealed, undealt with offense; and on his deathbed, asks his son to deal with it in justice. (1 Kings 2:5-9) Isn't it somehow tragic that such a great man of God, mighty King David of Israel, a man after God's own heart, passes into eternity with vengeance in his heart and on his lips?

This is such a huge issue! The Torah forbids us to hold a grudge against anyone, **“You shall not take vengeance nor bear any grudge.”**<sup>10</sup> and again, **“Do not say, “I will recompense evil”; but wait for the Lord, and He will save you.”** (Proverbs 20:22)

And yet so many people hold onto offenses and grudges against people even unto the very end. We need to work through the process of forgiveness – of others and also ourselves.

Judah was proclaimed the leader of the Tribes of Israel:

**“Judah, you are he whom your brothers shall praise; your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; your father's children shall bow down before you.”** (Genesis 49:8)

When Israel came out of Egypt, it was Judah who became God's *'holy ones'*:

**“When Israel came forth out of Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of strange language; Judah became His sanctuary, Israel His dominion.”** (Psalm 114:1-2)

In Hebrew, the word used does not refer to His sanctuary but His holiness (k'dosho קדשו), from the word kadosh קדוש, which means *'holy'* or *'set apart'*.



The lion of Judah on the coat of arms of Jerusalem

The Jewish people who have descended from the tribe of Judah have been 'set apart' to be a 'holy nation'. Now, those not of Jewish descent who have joined the commonwealth of Israel through Yeshua the Messiah are also called to holiness.

The Hebrew word for Jew comes from Judah (Yehudah יהודה), from the root 'ydh' ידה which means *'to thank'*. Leah, Jacob's wife, used a play on words in calling her son Judah, saying that now she would praise (thank) the Lord (Genesis 29:35). The apostle Paul said that a true Jew, inwardly, is one who praises (thanks) the Lord, whether Jewish or Gentile by bloodline.<sup>11</sup>

From the tribe of Judah would come leaders, legislators and kings. Many leaders in every field of humanity – science, medicine, literature, technology, and the arts - have come through the Jewish people who have descended from the tribe of Judah.

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<sup>10</sup> Lev. 19:18

<sup>11</sup> Romans 2:28-29

**“Judah is a lion’s whelp; from the prey, my son, you have gone up. He bows down, he lies down as a lion; And as a lion, who shall rouse him?”** (Genesis 49:9)

Jacob also likens Judah to a lion cub; therefore the tribe of Judah is known as ‘Gur Ariyeh’. **Judah (Yehudah)** is called a ‘lion’s whelp’ and the emblem of kingship is given to the tribe of Judah (the ruler’s staff). Where I am now living in the Land of Israel, the territory is called **Match Yehudah**, which means the Tribe of Judah. It is supposed to be the original territory of Judah, and its symbol is the lion.

Yeshua is also called the ‘**Lion from the Tribe of Judah**’. He is the eternal ruler and His kingdom shall never end. (Isaiah 9:6-7). Indeed, from the royal tribe of Judah came forth the promised Redeemer, Messiah, and anointed King of Israel – Yeshua Hamashiach! As prophesied, one day the dominion of His authority will extend to the entire world.

**“The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh comes; and to Him shall be the obedience of the people.”** (Genesis 49:10)

Yeshua is the Son of God to whom every knee shall bow and every tongue confess He is King of Kings and Lord of Lords. (Philippians 2:10)

What is the meaning of the word, Shiloh? <sup>12</sup> This is a word whose meaning has been the subject of much debate among Bible scholars in the context of this passage. Literally, it means ‘*that is his*’; but is also used as a synonym for the Messiah (called ‘Christ’ by Gentile Christendom). The Messiah did come before the ‘scepter departed from Judah’; but he was not recognized by His own people, since he came at that time to fulfill the mission of the Suffering Servant (Mashiach ben Yoseph).

The second part of this Messianic prophecy (to Him shall be the obedience of the people) is yet to be fulfilled at Yeshua’s second coming.

It is interesting to note that Jacob’s prophecy (that the scepter shall not depart from Judah) contains every letter of the Hebrew alphabet except one – the letter **zayin ז** – which represents the Hebrew word for *weapon*.

This indicated to the Torah sages that when the Messiah would come, it would not be through military force, but rather through the Holy Spirit. And even so, the Jewish leadership of Yeshua’s day did not recognize him as the Messiah because they were looking for a military leader who would conquer the Roman oppressors with weapons and force. <sup>13</sup>

The name Judah also uses all the four letters of the proper name of God, YHVH יהוה with the addition of one Hebrew letter – **dalet (ד)** - which stands for **delet (door)**. Yeshua, who was

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<sup>12</sup> From Hebrew4Christians website on VAYichi

<sup>13</sup> Hebrew4Christians

crucified in the Land of Judah, became the ‘door’ to salvation. He is the One whom His brothers will praise.

**“I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.”** (John 10:9)

Come Adonai Yeshua.....

### Forgiveness Brings Healing

After Jacob’s sons buried him, as they promised, in the cave at Machpelah in the field near Mamre, which Abraham had purchased as a burial site, they began to fear Joseph. They worried that he may still be holding a grudge against them, and may now take his revenge since their father was no more.



Burying the Body of Joseph (illustration from the 1890 Holman Bible)

But this was not the case – Joseph showed himself to be a true man of God, a foreshadow of Yeshua, who once again reassures his brothers, **“Don’t be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You planned evil against me; God planned it for good to bring about the present result – the survival of many people.** (Genesis 50:19-21)

Not only does Joseph promise not to harm them, but he also promises to do good to them – to care for them and their little ones. He comforted them and spoke kindly to them. Oh, how marvelous is forgiveness. It not only sets free the person who wronged us, but also sets us free from a root of bitterness which can defile many.

We are exhorted in the word not to return evil for evil but to overcome it with good. (Romans 12:21) Yeshua our Messiah also taught us to love and bless even our enemies. **“But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;”** (Matthew 5:44).

We can trust our wonderful God, that whatever any person may do against us, He has the power to transform it all for good – and not only our own good, but the good of many people. This is the wondrous goodness of our God – that even when we sin, He speaks comfort and kindness to us. His lovingkindness is better than life.

As we journey through life, may we be quick forgivers – both of others and of ourselves. For if we can't forgive someone, not only will our Father not forgive us, but we also close our lives to the abundant life He has in store for us.

*“If you are holding on to revenge, love can't walk in. If you are hanging on to resentment, you are hanging on to being a victim, and if you are holding on to being a victim, there's no space in your mind to be a victor.”* (Randy Gage, Transforming Thoughts)

And the first person we usually have to forgive is our self. No matter how bad we think we are, we have a God who has already forgiven us through the blood of His son, Yeshua Hamashiach (the Messiah). We must forgive ourselves and move on or we will continue to repeat our dysfunctional and destructive patterns (or as it is sometimes called, ‘taking another spin around the same mountain’).

If we are feeling blocked or stuck in our lives, it may be helpful to: 1) mentally forgive anyone with whom we are holding onto an offense or grudge. 2) Mentally or verbally ask forgiveness of all those we have wronged in the past (gossiped about, sinned against, etc.) And 3) mentally forgive oneself for any failures or mistakes.

Once we complete the process of forgiveness, the wells of living water that may have been stopped up may be re-opened and flow freely through us once more. And as we go through trials and tribulations, may we take comfort and inspiration from this Biblical account of Joseph, who went from pit to prison, to a position of servant-leader.

He did not allow his trials to harden him; but rather humbled himself, surrendering to God in trust and faith, forgiving all who had wronged him, and God eventually – in due time - exalted Joseph over all of Egypt.<sup>14</sup>

Joseph, like his father before him, approached the end of his life, asking for a solemn vow not to bury him in Egypt, in exile, but to carry his bones back to the Land of his fathers. This has been the refrain of Jewish people in exile everywhere,

**“How can we sing the Lord's song on foreign soil? If I forget you, Jerusalem, may my right hand forget its skill. May my tongue stick to the roof of my mouth if I do not remember you, If I do not exalt Jerusalem as my greatest joy!”** (Psalm 137:4-6)

God is re-gathering the exiles of Judah; rebuilding the ruined cities and returning us to a fertile, beautiful Land, for which I am eternally thankful. He has done for us even more than we could have asked or thought or imagined. I know that many from Ephraim, the descendants of Joseph, would also dearly love to come home; and yet as of this day, the door has not been freely opened.

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<sup>14</sup> See articles, Happy Day I and II [www.voiceforisrael.net/articles](http://www.voiceforisrael.net/articles)

One day we will all live together in the Land of Israel as one flock – one mishpacha (family) under Yeshua, son of David. May we live free, in the peace and joy that comes only through release of all offenses and grudges, entrusting them to the One who judges righteously. May we allow each and every trial that comes into our lives to refine us and transform us into the image of His Son.

## Haftarah Vayichi – Chazak Chazak!

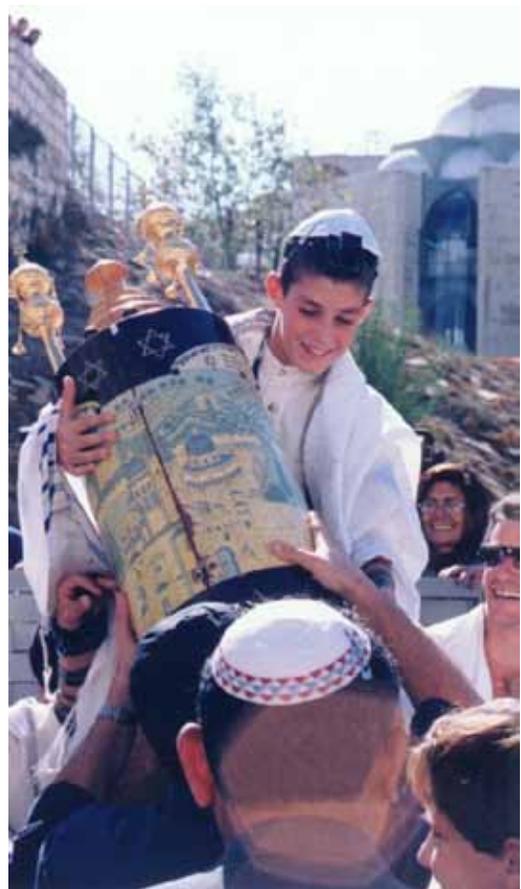
In Haftarat Yayichi, King David concluded his life with his final words before passing on the charge of the Throne of Israel to his son, Solomon,

**“Be strong (*chazak*), therefore, and show yourself a man, and keep the ways and commandments of God as written in the Torah, that you may prosper in all you do and wherever you go.”** (1 Kings 2:2-3)

The Lord spoke these very words to Joshua when the charge of the Israelites was passed to him after Moses’ death, **“Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the Torah which Moses My servant commanded you, do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go.”** (Joshua 1:7-8)

This is the same charge given to every young man at his bar mitzvah<sup>15</sup> – *“Now you are a man – be strong and stay faithful to God.”* In the end, isn’t this the whole point of our lives – that we may pass on our faith to the next generation – that they may also walk in the ways of God.

**“For He established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a Torah in Israel, which He commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children, that the generation to come might know them, the children who would be born, that they may arise and declare them to their children, that they may set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments:”** (Psalm 78:5-7).



Bar Mitzvah  
boy holding the Torah Scroll in Jerusalem

<sup>15</sup> Bar Mitzvah – Jewish coming of age ceremony.

There are so many influences competing for the hearts, minds, and souls of our children; may God give us wisdom, grace and strength, to pass on our faith to our children, that they may set their hope in God, and not forget Him, but keep His commandments and walk in His ways of righteousness, kindness, and justice.

So ends our study of the first of the Five Books of Moses (Chamishah Chumshei Torah). According to Jewish custom, we conclude each of the Five Books of the Torah by proclaiming the words, “**Chazak, Chazak, v’nitchazek**” (Be strong, be strong, and let us strengthen one another).

This is the ancient cry of the Israelite warrior, “**Be strong and of good courage, and let us prove ourselves strong for our people, and for the cities of our God.** (2 Samuel 10:12)

So let us proclaim this together – **Chazak, Chazak, v’nitchazek!** May we be strong and may we strengthen one another more and more as we approach the day of His coming.<sup>16</sup>

B’shem Yeshua Hamashiach (in the name of Yeshua the Messiah) who strengthens us. Amen.

## Vayechi Study Questions

1. When you consider your life, are there things that you would deeply desire to accomplish before it comes to an end here on earth? How do you want your life to have made a difference? Are you moving towards the fulfillment of these desires?
2. Do you have any regrets that you need to let go of now? Anyone you need to forgive (including yourself)?
3. Can you describe a time when God not only met your expectations but even exceeded them with His goodness?
4. If you have children, do you see a specific calling on each one? How can you purposefully bless your children & encourage them to grow into righteous men and women of God even in the midst of an immoral or ungodly environment?
5. Did you receive your father's blessing? What kind of impact (negative or positive) did his blessing (or lack of) have on you?
6. What does it mean to be a true 'Jew' (whether of Jewish or Gentile lineage) according to the Hebrew meaning of the word?
7. From which tribe did Yeshua come forth?
8. What symbol is on the emblem of Jerusalem and why?
9. Where was Jacob buried?
10. What was Joseph's response to his brothers after the death of his father? What does this show us?
11. What were King David's last words to his son, Solomon, before his death?
12. With what exhortation do we end each of the books of the Torah?

About the Author:

Hannah Neshar grew up in an Orthodox Jewish home and received her education in a religious Hebrew school in Canada. During a crisis pregnancy, she came to know Jesus (Yeshua) as her Messiah and Savior. She now lives in Israel with her children and grandchildren, teaching the Jewish roots of the Christian faith.

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