

Parshah Vayechi

- Parshat Vayechi is the twelfth parshat in the Torah and the final parshat of Sefer Bereishit. The text of this parshat is Genesis 47:28-50:26.
- We begin reading “And Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years; so the days of Jacob, the years of his life, were a hundred forty and seven years.” The parshat is named vayechi after the first distinct word of this parshat which means “and [he] lived.”
- This parshat can be broken into the following segments: Jacob’s command; Jacob’s first blessing; Jacob’s second blessing; Jacob’s last charge and death; Burial of Jacob; Joseph and his brothers; and, Joseph’s death.
- Jacob’s command: “And Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years; so the days of Jacob, the years of his life, were a hundred forty and seven years.” As Jacob’s end grew near he called Joseph to come to him and make an oath that Joseph would not bury Jacob in Egypt. Jacob had Joseph swear that he would take him back to Canaan and bury him with his fathers. Jacob so swore.
- Jacob’s first blessing: A report was sent to Joseph that his father was sick. Joseph took his two sons with him to visit his father Jacob. Jacob told Joseph that God spoke to him telling him that he would be made a great nation and the land of Canaan would be an everlasting possession to them. Jacob declared that “Ephraim and Manasseh, even as Reuben and Simeon, shall be mine.” Jacob told Joseph that Rachel died on the way to Ephrath “and I buried her there in the way to Ephrath – the same is Beth-lehem.”
- Upon seeing Joseph’s sons, Jacob inquired as to who they were. Joseph responded that they were his sons that God had given to him. Jacob called them forth so that he may bless them. Israel’s eyes were weak but he kissed and embraced Joseph’s sons. Israel said to Joseph “I had not thought to see your face; and, lo, God has let me see your seed also.” Joseph took Ephraim and placed him near Israel’s left hand and he also took Manasseh and placed him near Israel’s right hand. Israel placed his right hand on the younger Ephraim’s head and his left hand on the older Manasseh’s head and blessed them. When Joseph realized that Israel had placed his right hand on his younger son’s head it displeased him and he attempted to move his father’s right hand to the head of Manasseh. However, his father refused to move his hand and said, “I know it, my son, I know it; he also shall become a people, and he also shall be great; however his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his seed shall become a multitude of nations.” Israel blessed Joseph’s sons that day. Israel told Joseph that he is about to die and blessed Joseph that God would bring him back to the land of Canaan. He also told Joseph “I have given to you one portion above your brethren, which I took out of the hand of the Amorite with my sword and with my bow.”

- Jacob's second blessing: Jacob called together his sons so he could tell them what would befall them in the future. Reuben was stripped of his first-born rights for his sin of defiling his father's bed. Simeon and Levi are cursed because of their anger and the others are warned against listening to their council. They will be divided in Jacob and scattered in Israel. Judah shall become ruler over his brothers and the people shall all obey him. The scepter of power shall never depart from the descendants of Judah. "Zebulun shall dwell at the shore of the sea, and he shall be a shore for ships, and his flank shall be upon Zidon." Issachar shall be a laborer and Dan shall judge the people. Gad shall be a warrior, Asher shall be wealthy, and Naphtali will be a word-smith. Joseph shall be mighty among his brothers and all the blessings upon Jacob shall be upon Joseph. Benjamin is like a wolf that devours his prey and divides the spoils. Jacob blesses each of his sons.
- Jacob's last charge and death: Jacob charges his sons that he is to be gathered to his people. He is to be buried "in the cave that is in the field of Machpelah, which is before Mamre, in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought with the field from Ephron the Hittite for a possession of a burying-place." When Jacob was finished giving charge to his sons he died.
- Burial of Jacob: Joseph fell upon his father's face and wept. He commanded his servants the physicians to embalm Jacob. The forty days of embalming was fulfilled and the Egyptians wept for Jacob for seventy days. When the days of weeping had closed Joseph went to Pharaoh and requested that his father's request of burial be fulfilled. Pharaoh told Joseph to go and bury his father as Jacob had made Joseph swear. "And Joseph went up to bury his father; and with him went up all the servants of Pharaoh, the elders of his house, and all the elders of the land of Egypt, and all the house of Joseph, and his brethren, and his father's house; only their little ones, and their flocks, and their herds, they left in the land of Goshen."
- A great company of people went with Joseph, and they were escorted by chariots and horsemen. When they came to the threshing floor at Atad they stopped and mourned for Jacob for seven days. When the Canaanites saw this mourning they said "This is a grievous mourning to the Egyptians" and they name the place Abel-mizraim, which is beyond the Jordan. Joseph and his brothers did as they were commanded and buried their father in the cave of the field of Machpelah. Joseph and all those who went to Canaan with him then returned to Egypt.
- Joseph and his brothers: When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead they said, "It may be that Joseph will hate us, and will fully requite us all the evil which we did unto him." They sent a message to Joseph saying that their father commanded them to ask for forgiveness from Joseph for what they had done to him. Joseph wept with his brothers and told them to not be afraid for he is not in the place of God. "And as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save many people alive. Now therefore fear not; I will sustain you, and your little ones.' And he comforted them, and spoke kindly unto them."
- Joseph's death: Joseph dwelt in Egypt and lived to be 110-years-old. Joseph saw Ephraim's children unto the third generation and Manasseh's unto the second generation. Joseph said unto his brothers "I die; but God will surely remember you, and bring you up out of this land unto the land which He swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob." Joseph took an oath from the children of Israel saying that when God remembers them that they are to carry his bones out of Egypt with them. Joseph died and he was embalmed and placed in a coffin in Egypt.

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