

Parshah Vayigash

- Parshat Vayigash is the eleventh parshat in the Torah. The text of this parshat is Genesis 44:18-47:27.
- We begin reading “Then Judah came near unto him, and said: 'Oh my lord, let thy servant, I pray thee, speak a word in my lord's ears, and let not thine anger burn against thy servant; for thou art even as Pharaoh.” The parshat is named vayigash after the first distinct word of this parshat which means “and [he] came near.”
- This parshat can be broken into the following segments: Judah’s plea; Joseph reveals himself; Pharaoh’s command; Return to Canaan; Journey to Egypt; Settlement in Egypt; and Famine.
- Judah’s plea: Judah came near to Joseph and explained how Joseph had inquired about their father and brother and the brothers responded with truth. He reminded Joseph how the brothers were forbidden from coming back to Egypt unless Benjamin was with them. Judah went on to tell of Jacob’s reaction to the brothers’ request that Benjamin must accompany them to Egypt – how he was sorrowful and gravely afraid. He then goes on to tell Joseph that if Benjamin does not return to his father that he father would die in sorrow and Judah would forever bear the blame to his father. He requested that he be kept as Joseph’s bondsman and that Benjamin be permitted to return home to Jacob.
- Joseph reveals himself: Joseph could no longer contain his emotions and he commanded that everyone except his brothers be removed from before him. Joseph’s weeping was made known to his entire house and also to the house of Pharaoh. Joseph revealed himself to his brothers and asked if his father was still alive. The brothers were afraid but Joseph called them to come near to him. He told them that he was indeed the brother they sold into slavery. He told them not to be afraid or saddened for God had sent Joseph to Egypt to preserve life. He told his brothers that “God sent me before you to give you a remnant on the earth, and to save you alive for a great deliverance.”
- Joseph told his brothers to hasten back to Canaan and to bring their father to Egypt. They shall live in Goshen – the entire house of Jacob – along with their flocks and herds. Joseph swore that he would sustain them all so they would not become impoverished. Joseph fell upon Benjamin’s neck and they wept. He then kissed each of his brothers and they wept and talked.
- Pharaoh’s command: To Pharaoh was it reported that Joseph’s brothers had come to Egypt and this pleased Pharaoh. Pharaoh commanded that the brothers be given provisions for a return trip to Canaan. They were to bring their father and entire household to Egypt where they would be given “the good of the land of Egypt, and you shall eat the fat of the land.”
- Pharaoh commanded that wagons be taken from Egypt for the wives, children, and their father. They are not to worry in regards to their other property for “the good things of all the land of Egypt are yours.” The brothers were given provisions, wagons, and clothing. To Benjamin was

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also given five changes of clothing and three-hundred shekels of silver. The brothers were also sent with he-asses and she-asses laden with grain, provisions, and “the good things of Egypt” which were to be given to Jacob. The brothers took all that they were given and departed to Canaan.

- Return to Canaan: The brothers returned to Canaan unto their father Jacob. They told Jacob that Joseph is still alive and master over Egypt but Jacob did not believe them. The brothers told Jacob all that Joseph had said and when he saw the wagons and gifts his spirit was revived. Israel responded, “It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive; I will go and see him before I die.”
- Journey to Egypt: Israel took all that he had and journeyed to Beer-sheba where he made sacrifices unto God. There God spoke to Jacob in his dreams telling him not to be afraid to go into Egypt for it will be there that God will make Jacob a great nation. God swore that He would go to Egypt with Jacob and bring his him back to Canaan yet again. God also promised that Jacob would see his son Joseph.
- Jacob arose and left Beer-sheba with all his property and his entire household and brought them to Egypt. The names of the children of Israel who went to Egypt are given as well as their sons. “All the souls belonging to Jacob that came into Egypt, that came out of his loins, besides Jacob’s sons’ wives, all the souls were threescore and six. And the sons of Joseph, who were born to him in Egypt, were two souls; all the souls of the house of Jacob, that came into Egypt, were threescore and ten.”
- Settlement in Egypt: Jacob sent Judah before them to go to Joseph and show them the way to Goshen. Joseph readied his chariot and met his father in Goshen where they embraced each other and wept for a long time. “And Israel said unto Joseph: ‘Now let me die, since I have seen thy face, that thou art yet alive.’” Joseph said that he would go to Pharaoh and tell him that his father and brothers have come to Egypt and they are shepherds and keepers of cattle. Joseph told his father and brothers that when they are called before Pharaoh and he inquires of their occupations they are to say they are keepers of cattle. “that you may dwell in the land of Goshen; for every shepherd is an abomination unto the Egyptians.”
- Joseph presented himself before Pharaoh and told him that his father and brothers have come to Egypt and they were in the land of Goshen. Joseph took five of his brothers and brought them before Pharaoh. When Pharaoh inquired of their occupations they responded that they and their father were shepherds. They requested that due to the famine and the lack of grazing area that they and their flocks be permitted to remain in Goshen. Pharaoh responded to Joseph saying, “Your father and your brethren have come unto you; the land of Egypt is before you; in the best of the land make your father and your brethren to dwell; in the land of Goshen let them dwell. And if you know any able men among them, then make them rulers over my cattle.”
- Jacob was brought before Pharaoh and Jacob blessed Pharaoh. Pharaoh inquired as to Jacob’s age and Jacob responded: “The days of the years of my sojournings are a hundred and thirty years; few and evil have been the days of the years of my life, and they have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their sojournings.” Jacob blessed Pharaoh and left his presence. Joseph placed his father and brothers “in the land of Rameses, as Pharaoh had commanded” and sustained them “with bread, according to the want of their little ones.”
- Famine: The famine continued and all the money that had been used to purchase grain was given into the house of Pharaoh. When all the money from Canaan and Egypt had been spent the

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Egyptians came to Joseph and said, "Give us bread; for why should we die in your presence? For our money fails." Joseph told the people to give him their cattle for grain and the people brought their cattle and flocks to Joseph. In exchange, Joseph gave the people grain for that year. In the second year the people came and sold themselves and their land to Joseph for grain so Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh. The only portion of land that was not bought by Joseph was that of the priests for "the priests had a portion from Pharaoh, and did eat their portion which Pharaoh gave them."

- Joseph gave the people seed to plant on the land that now belonged to Pharaoh. One-fifth of the yield was to be given to Pharaoh and the other four-fifths of the yield was to belong to the people to sustain their households. The people praised Joseph and swore to be Pharaoh's bondsmen. "And Joseph made it a statute concerning the land of Egypt unto this day, that Pharaoh should have the fifth; only the land of the priests alone became not Pharaoh's." Israel dwelt in Goshen where they became wealthy and were fruitful and multiplied.