

**Jacob's Last Days.**

<b>Vayechi</b>	<b>And He Lived</b>
<b>Torah:</b>	Genesis 47:28-50:26
<b>Haftarah:</b>	I Kings 2:1-12
<b>Brit Chadashah:</b>	I Peter 1:1-9

I usually let the people study the Haftarah and the Brit Chadashah on their own and concentrate on the Torah.

**Summary:**

The portion deals with Jacob's last days, his adoption of Manasseh and Ephraim and his final blessings over his sons. Once Jacob is taken back to Canaan to be buried (he is mummified after the manner of the Egyptians [Gen. 50:2]), Joseph's brothers again plead for forgiveness – nothing is stopping Joseph from punishing them. He again assures them of his forgiveness and the passage ends with a summary of the life of Joseph and his instruction to take his bone back to Canaan when Israel eventually leaves Egypt.

As his death approaches, Jacob makes Joseph swear a solemn oath (putting hand under thigh means grabbing his father's privates) that he will be buried in Canaan.

Next Jacob adopts the two sons of Joseph as full sons – which is why there are thirteen tribes, though Levi is often left out of the counting. Any other children Joseph has will have to join the tribes of their older brothers. The brothers will become full tribes in Israel.

They are formally presented to their grandfather. They would have seen him before this, but Jacob is following as formal adoption ceremony. Jacob is only adopting the sons Joseph bore in Egypt, when Jacob thought he was dead. Jacob switched hands and puts his right hand on Ephraim as a sign the younger son will dominate the older son, Manasseh. The two tribes would become mighty in Israel.

Jacob give Joseph an extra inheritance the treasure he took from the Amorites with his sword and his bow (48:22). He was a warrior who was often called upon to drive off people trying to steal his livestock and some may even have tried to attack the camp.

What follows next is a series of blessings and judgments on his sons. Be careful not to try and assign more prophetic significance than the Scriptures give.

Reuben was his first born, but soiled his father's couch, so he gets no blessing.

Simeon and Levi murdered innocent people and are told that they will be scattered among Israel.

Judah received the greatest blessing. The sons of his father will bow down to him, just as they bowed down to Joseph, but at a distant time in the future – Judah will become the royal house in Israel. He is as majestic and as powerful as a lion and from his descendants Messiah will come (49:10). Judah shall rule until Messiah came. Messiah came before Judah became a Roman province. 49:11, 12 are descriptions of royalty – purple is the royal colour.

Zebulun will be a coast dweller and be a ship builder.

Issachar will be a great farmer and will come under foreign domination from which it must break free. A donkey is a beast of burden and a sign of captivity. His shoulder shall also carry a burden.

Dan will be a judge and will be a good fighter.

Right in the middle Jacob takes a break and expresses his confidence in the rescuing of G-d (49:18).

Gad will successfully fight off those who try to invade his territory.

Asher will produce gourmet food. This is probably the strangest blessing, but Jacob has likely tasted his son's good food.

Naphtali will become a great orator and make pretty speeches (Jews are good at that still)

Next comes the blessing on the sons of Joseph. Jacob tries to make this blessing great than the one he bestowed on Judah. He mentions his successful rise above his adversity. He is called the rock and the shepherd of Israel, because now Israel can grow into a great people under his protection. At the end, Jacob gives him a mighty seven fold blessing. He will be blessed up to the ancient summits and Joseph will be the summit and prince of his brothers.

Benjamin receives a little blessing (papa has got his favorite back again), but he will be a good fighter.

His final words outline where he is to be buried and when he is finished, there is an interesting symbolic reference. He pulls his feet up on his bed and dies. It is just a fancy way of saying that he died.

Chapter fifty begins with the extensive funeral arrangements. 40 + 60 days of mourning. Joseph leaves his family behind and travels with a large group of Egyptians and we are told whether his brothers were allowed to come with him. Probably not. They denied him his father for 22 years. They are being denied accompanying their father to his final resting place.

This may be why, the brothers again sought his forgiveness. They may have been cooling their heels and worrying about what he was going to do to them when he got back.

The passage ends with a short summary of Joseph's life. He lived to 110. He spent 93 of those years in Egypt, but his heart still belonged to Canaan. Joseph had his family swear that he would one day be buried beside his father. When he dies, he is embalmed, so there will one day be two mummies at Macpela.