

## VAYECHI (*and he lived*)



**Genesis 47:28** And Jacob lived in the land of Egypt 17 years: so *the* number of Jacob's years was 147 years. C-MATS

**Question:** Why did Jacob continue to live in Egypt? Although Jacob's original intention had been to live in Egypt only until the end of the famine, יהוה commanded him to remain here for the rest of his life. *Chumash*

**Question:** Were these years in Egypt good for Jacob? These seventeen years were the best years of his life -- years of prosperity, goodness and peace; his other 130 years were filled with toil and pain. *Chumash*

**Question:** How can it be that our father Jacob, the greatest of the Patriarchs, lived the best years of his life in pagan Egypt? וַאֲתָרֵךְ **And he (Jacob) sent Judah before him to Joseph to point out the way to Goshen; and they came into the land of Goshen. (Genesis 46:28).** This was to establish a house of learning, where the sons of Jacob would study Torah. When one studies Torah, one is brought close to יהוה, so that even in Egypt one can live a true "life". Nevertheless, in the very next verses we read how Jacob entreats Joseph: "**Carry me out of Egypt!**" (Genesis 47:30) So great is his urgency that he is not content with an agreement or promise on Joseph's part, but insists that his son take a solemn oath to fulfill his request. We might find ourselves living a most ideal life in exile—a life of material comfort and spiritual fulfillment, a life of Torah, and charitable works. Nevertheless, *exile is not our home*, so we constantly plead to יהוה to "carry us out of Egypt". *Chumash*



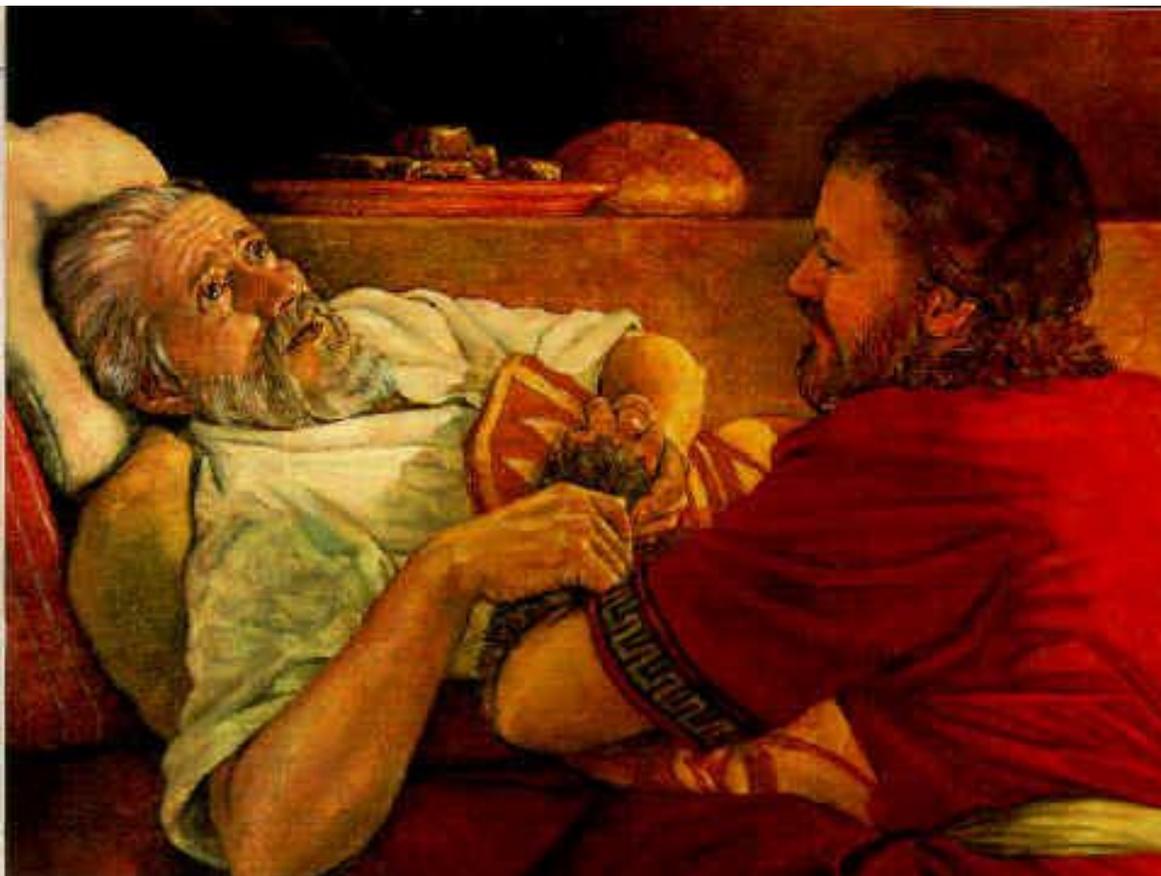
The Temple of Ramses II in ancient Egypt



The Great Pyramids and the Sphinx



Jacob lived in Egypt when the Pharaohs were worshipped as gods.



Joseph swears to Jacob

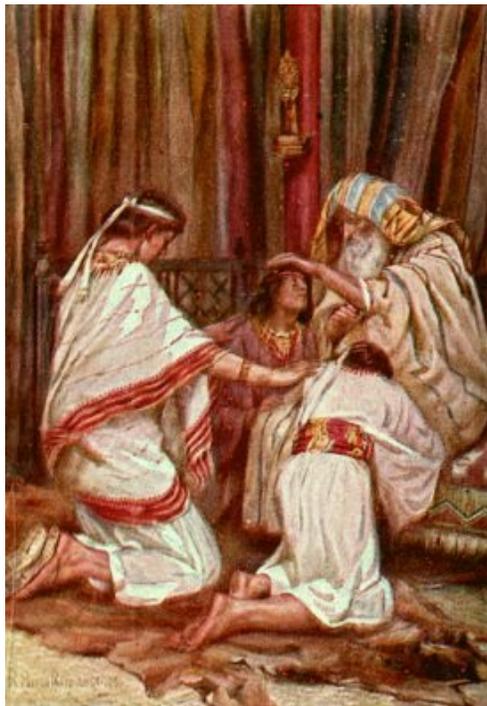
Genesis 47:29 And the time drew near that Israel must die: and he called his son Joseph and said to him, If now **קָצָה אֲנִי** I found grace in your sight, put your hand under my thigh and deal kindly **וְאֵמְרָה** and truly with me; do not bury me in Egypt: 30 But I want to lie with my fathers and you will carry me out of Egypt and bury me in their burying place. And Joseph said, I will do as you have said. 31 And Israel said, Swear to me. And he swore to him. And Israel bowed *down* at the head of the bed. C-MATS

**Question:** Why did Jacob make Joseph swear to him to bury him in Hebron? Didn't he trust Joseph? Pharaoh would take it as an insult to bury Jacob in another land after Egypt had been so good to Joseph's family. Only if Joseph were to take a solemn oath would Pharaoh deem it improper to stand in the way of him being buried in Hebron. *Chumash*

**Question:** Is it ever okay to break a promise? If we promise to do something, which we later realize is dangerous or against our values, then it's reasonable and even right to break such a promise. But in almost all other cases we should try our best to do what we said we would.

**Question:** Is there any reason to avoid making promises? A promise we never make is one we'll never have to break. It's best to avoid promising to do things, and to say something like 'I fully hope and intend to do such and such, but I can't promise...' Of course, we shouldn't even say that unless we truly feel we'll be able to come through.

**Question:** What if we make a promise that we later realize is going to be very difficult to keep? We have to determine if it is merely inconvenient - in which case we should endeavor to keep it anyway, or if there is a valid practical or ethical reason why it's just not feasible. In that case, it's probably better to back out, but to apologize and take it as a lesson not to promise things as easily in the future.



Jacob blesses Manasseh and Ephraim

**Genesis 48:1** And it came to pass after these things, that someone told Joseph, *Your father is sick:* and he took אֶת־ two of his sons with him אֶת־ Manasseh אֶת־ and Ephraim. C-MATS

**Question:** Visiting someone who is ill actually helps to cure him. How do you understand this idea? For one thing, the positive energy we give to someone with our caring visit can give him more physical and spiritual strength to recover.

**Question:** If a person is being taken care of by professional health-care providers, what can our visit possibly add? Even if someone is getting good care, there is nothing like the boost seeing someone who's there because he cares and not because it's his job. Besides, when the doctors, etc, see that a patient has people actively concerned, it can motivate them to try harder to help him, too.

**Question:** Why do you think people hesitate to visit the sick? It can feel awkward, not knowing what to say, etc. But the great kindness we do by even just coming to show we care, is more than worth any discomfort involved.



Jacob blesses Ephraim and Manasseh

**Genesis 48:2** And someone told Jacob and said, Look, your son Joseph *is* coming to you: and Israel strengthened himself and sat upon the bed. 3 And Jacob said to Joseph, El Shaddai appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan and blessed אֱתִי *me*, 4 And said to me, I will make you fruitful and *will* multiply you and I will make of you a multitude of people; and will give אֶתְּזֶה *this* אֶתְּזֶה *land* to your seed after you for אֶתְּזֶה *your holding (possession)* forever. 5 And now your two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, who were born to you in the land of Egypt before I came to you in Egypt, *are mine*; as Reuben and Simeon *are mine*, they will be mine. C-MATS

**Question:** What honor was Jacob giving Joseph in this verse? Jacob elevated Manasseh and Ephraim to the status of his own sons –in effect adopting them as his own–thereby transferring to Joseph a double portion of the inheritance. Thus Jacob removed the firstborn status from the tribe of Reuben and gave it to Joseph’s offspring. *Chumash*

**Question:** What is the birthright blessing? Joseph received the birthright blessing. As Joseph's literal descendants, through either Ephraim or Manasseh, we are part of that birthright blessing and should understand what it means - both as a gift and as a right.

**Question:** What is the right of the inheritance of the firstborn? "Under the patriarchal order, the right of inheritance of the firstborn is known as birthright. This generally included a land inheritance as well as the authority to preside." The physical possessions of the birthright included property, herds, flocks, etc. These were divided into balanced portions equal to the number of sons plus one, because the eldest son received a double portion. This son received the extra portion because he had to assume responsibility for his mother and unmarried sisters and to help his brothers when they needed it. He was the physical provider of the family. The birthright blessing was also a spiritual blessing within the patriarchal order of the priesthood and thus must go to a son who was righteous. The decision of which son was to receive the birthright was the prerogative of the father or patriarch of the family.

**Question:** Why didn’t the birthright belong to Reuben? In Jacob's family the birthright would seem to belong to Reuben, the firstborn of Leah, the first wife. But Reuben lost that right through his immorality. The rule of first-born’s right of inheritance at that time would not give the birthright blessing to the second son of the first wife. The rule was that the birthright always went to a firstborn son; therefore, the birthright went to Joseph, the firstborn of the second wife, Rachel. Since the birthright blessing was conditional we can all be grateful to Joseph, our ancestor, for his righteousness which allowed him to receive the birthright blessing. The blessings he received and the promises he obtained were mighty, but were also conditionally pronounced upon the heads of his descendants - us!

**Genesis 48:6** And your children that will be born after them will be yours and will be called by the name of their brothers in their inheritance. 7 And as for me, when I came from Padan, Rachel died, to my sorrow, in the land of Canaan along the way, when *there was* still just a little way to go to Ephrath: and I buried her there on the road to Ephrath; that *is* Bethlehem. C-MATS



*Jacob Blesses Joseph's Sons* by Benjamin West

**Question:** Why did Jacob bring up the memory of Rachel's burial? So Jacob said to Joseph: I am asking you to trouble yourself to take me to be buried in the Land, even though I did not do the same for your mother. She died a short distance from Bethlehem, and I did not even take her to [Bethlehem] but buried her at the wayside. I know that there is resentment in your heart to me over this, but know that it was by Divine command that I buried her there, so that she should be a comfort for her children when Nebuzaradan (the chief general of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon) will exile them and they will pass by there. To this day, the tomb of "Mother Rachel" once a lonely site by the road but now in the middle of Bethlehem, is a place of prayer where believers come to pray and ease their grieving heart in times of personal and national need. *Chumash*



Rachel's tomb then and now

Genesis 48:8 And saw Israel אָתְּ the sons of Joseph and said, Who are these? 9 And Joseph said to his father, They are my sons who Elohim has given to me in this place. And Israel said, Please bring them to me and I will bless them. 10 Now the eyes of Israel were dim from age, so that he could not see. And Joseph brought אֹתָם them near to him; and he kissed them and embraced them. 11 And Israel said to Joseph, I had not thought I would see your face: and now Elohim has shown אֹתִי me also אֶתְּ your seed (descendants). 12 And Joseph brought אֹתָם them both out from beside his knees and he bowed himself with his face to the earth. 13 And took Joseph אֶתְּ them both, אֶתְּ Ephraim on his right hand toward Israel's left hand אֶתְּ and Manasseh on his left hand toward Israel's right hand and brought them near to him. 14 And stretched out Israel אֶתְּ his right hand and laid it upon Ephraim's head, who was the younger אֶתְּ and his left hand upon Manasseh's head, who was the firstborn, guiding knowingly אֶתְּ his hands; C-MATS

**Question:** What symbol does Jacob make when he blesses Manasseh and Ephraim? When Jacob lays his hands on Manasseh and Ephraim to bless them, Jacob's hands are now אָתְּ hands as Jacob crosses his forearms making the sign of the Paleo-Hebrew Tav and is grafting Joseph's two sons into the tribes of Israel. C-MATS

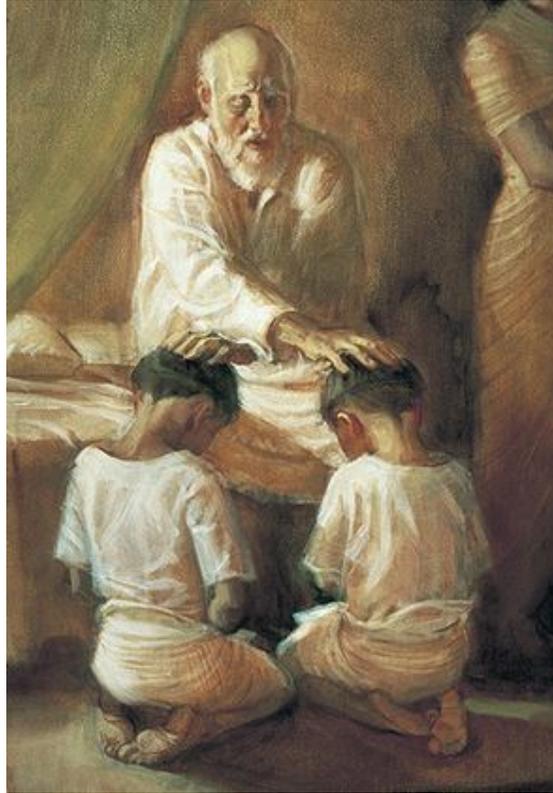
**Question:** How does one traditionally bless a person? The right hand has spiritual primacy and is usually laid on one's head. *Chumash*

Genesis 48:15 And blessed Israel אֶתְּ Joseph and said, Elohim, before whom my fathers, Abraham and Isaac did walk, the Elohim who fed אֹתִי me all my life long to this day, 16 The Angel which redeemed אֹתִי me from all evil, bless אֶתְּ the boys; and let my name be remembered by them and the name of my fathers, Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow like fish into a multitude in the midst of the earth. C-MATS

**Question:** The verse begins with Jacob's blessing to Joseph and ends saying that he blessed Manasseh and Ephraim. What was the blessing for Joseph? Jacob's blessing to Joseph was that his children, Ephraim and Manasseh should be righteous. When children conduct themselves in a proper way, the parents' pleasure is the greatest blessing they can wish for.

**Question:** Why would Jacob bless Manasseh and Ephraim to **grow like fish into a multitude**? The life of a fish depends in a large measure on its vitality and ability to swim upstream. If it permits itself to be swept along by the current of the rapids or the tide it will be scuttled and squashed. It is only because the Creator has endowed the fish with the precious instinct of self-preservation, whereby it is able to swim upstream against the forces of the billowing waves that it can thrive and survive. Jacob blessed his children to be capable and willing to swim upstream and resist the temptation of running with the herd and swimming with the tide. *Chumash*





Jacob blesses Ephraim and Manasseh

**Genesis 48:17** And when Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand upon the head of Ephraim, it displeased him: and he held up his father's hand to remove אֶתָּהּ *it (you)* from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head. **18** And Joseph said to his father, My father, this *is* the firstborn, put your right hand upon his head. **19** And his father refused and said, I know *it* my son, I know *it*: he also will become a people and he also will be great: but his younger brother will be greater than he and his seed will become a multitude of nations. C-MATS

**Question:** How was this prayer fulfilled? The Jews (Judah), to this day, are known as the sons of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, their patriarchs. And the sons of Jacob have grown to nations of millions. Ephraim became the chief tribe of the ten tribes in northern Israel. In fact, when the ten tribes in the north split from the two tribes in the south, the northern tribes were sometimes collectively called Ephraim.

**Genesis 48:20** And Israel blessed them that day saying, In you will Israel bless saying, Elohim make you as Ephraim and as Manasseh: and Israel set אֶתָּהּ Ephraim before Manasseh. C-MATS

**Question:** What does it mean “And Israel blessed them”? That is, in future generations the Israelites shall take their form of wishing prosperity to any nation or family from the circumstance of the good which it shall be known that יהוה has done to Ephraim and Manasseh: May יהוה make thee as fruitful as Ephraim, and multiply thee as Manasseh! So, to their daughters when married, they are accustomed to say, יהוה make thee as Sarah and Rebekah! *Adam Clarke Commentary*

**Question:** Should the younger child be set before the elder child to receive a blessing? It is no unusual thing for the younger to be set before the elder, both by יהוה and man, but especially by יהוה, who sees not as man sees, and proceeds not according to carnal descent, or those rules men go by: there had been many instances before this, as Abel was preferred to Cain, Shem to Japheth, Abraham to Nahor, Isaac to Ishmael, and Jacob to Esau; as there were after it, as Moses to Aaron, and David to his brethren. *John Gill's Exposition of the Whole Bible*

**Question:** Joseph thought his father, Jacob, had misunderstood him when he asked for a blessing for his two sons, but Jacob had really understood and acted appropriately. Our parents' wisdom and experience can help us to live a good and happy life. Do our parents always know better? Ultimately, a person has to run his or her own life and is the only one who can make their choices. Still, a parent's combination of life experience, knowing us since ... we were us, and genuine love and care for our wellbeing makes them valuable advisors whose advice we'll more often than not do very well to follow.

**Question:** Does just becoming older make a person wise? There is virtually no one who goes through life without picking up some wisdom and understanding along the way. However, a person who actively seeks wisdom will end up light-years ahead of someone of the same age who doesn't.

**Question:** If you could, would you trade lives with someone else you know? On the outside it might certainly feel like a good idea. However the truth is that everyone (even Jacob our forefather) has parts of their lives that are difficult, even if others can't tell and יהוה gives us each the life that is exactly right for us and ultimately will make us the happiest.

**Question:** The definition of a wealthy person is one who is happy with their lot in life. What do you think they mean and how do you relate to this idea? In a true, spiritual sense, a person's wealth or success is not defined by position or possessions, but by one's attitude. Someone who is happy with his lot in life is living a content and happy life—which is something money can't buy.

**Question:** Do you think it's possible for a person to train themselves to attain an attitude of being more 'happy with their lot'? One way is to stop and consider all the good things in their life and also how things could be worse. Most important, however is to develop an awareness of יהוה's presence in our lives and a trust that He is always directing our lives for our very best.

**Genesis 48:21** And Israel said to Joseph, **I am dying: but Elohim will be with you and bring אֶתְכֶם you again to the land of your fathers. 22** Also I have given to you one portion (*land/Shechem*) above your brothers, which I took out of the hand of the Amorites with my sword and with my bow. C-MATS

**Question:** What special gift did Jacob give Joseph? The city of Shechem *Chumash*

**Genesis 49:1** And Jacob called to his sons and said, **Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you אֵת what will befall אֶתְכֶם you in the last days.** C-MATS



Jacob blesses his 12 sons

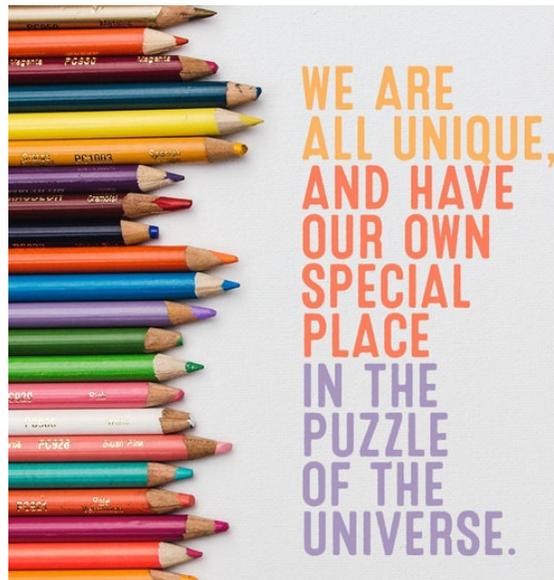
**Question:** What did Jacob want to tell his sons before he died? Jacob wished to reveal to his sons the end of the days and the return of the Messiah. He wanted to tell them about their leaving Egypt and returning to the Promised Land. He saw before them their futures and revealed to them what he saw. *Chumash*

**Question:** Who revealed to Jacob what would happen to his sons in the last days? It is **את** that reveals to the sons of Jacob what will befall them in the last days. C-MATS

**Question:** How can we become great? Jacob, our forefather, teaches his 12 sons the secret of greatness. As he's about to leave the world, he blesses them to reach greatness. But he doesn't simply give each of them the same blessing; rather, he carefully chooses his words and blesses each one according to *his* unique traits and abilities. The point is that we really can become great - not by copying anyone else's greatness, but by becoming the best and greatest individual we can possibly be.

**Question:** Each of us must look at the world as if it was created especially for us. What does this mean, and how can we apply it to our lives? Each of us is, in a sense, our own world, and it is up to us to make the most of that world, and not fall into the mistake of comparing ourselves with others. Each person has his own 'setting', life circumstances, strengths and weaknesses, etc., custom designed by יהוה for us to perfect ourselves and our own unique part of the cosmos. Live as if the world is yours - not to dominate or abuse, but to learn from and leave as a better place than when you arrived.

**Question:** How can a person come to recognize and develop his or her own special good qualities? Everybody has certain things that they are drawn to time and time again. One person likes helping out other people a lot. Somebody else just loves to learn about new things. Another person might have a knack to get others to laugh. Our special abilities give us a clue as to where we can excel. After that, it's up to us to develop ourselves and use our gifts given by יהוה for good and valuable purposes. For instance, someone who has a gift to make people laugh could choose to use it to help cheer up sick people, etc.



**Question:** Is it ever appropriate to judge one person as more "valuable" than someone else? This depends upon our perspective. In the sense what someone does makes his actions more valuable than another's. For instance, someone who dedicates himself to saving lives is certainly doing something more valuable than one who dedicates himself to collecting bottle-caps. However, in terms of who a person is, we can't deem any person more valuable than another. Every person is a creation of יהוה with infinite value. Every one of us has our own strengths and weaknesses and tasks we are meant to accomplish. The world is like a giant jigsaw puzzle. If even one piece (that is, one person) were missing, it would be incomplete. Each individual is an equally valuable and necessary part of יהוה's plan.

**Question:** In your opinion, is competition something which is beneficial or harmful? It depends. Certainly, competition has the potential to bring out "the best" in us, spurring us on to levels of greatness we wouldn't otherwise reach. The rabbis encouraged a type of competition among Torah scholars just for that purpose. However, one must be careful to draw the line and ensure that we don't allow the competition to become too personal. There is a danger, when we become too competitive that we might want to put down those we compete against or start to feel "superior" to others. Also, it's important to ask ourselves what we are competing for. If the goal of the competition is really worthwhile, competition can be a powerful tool.

**Question:** The Torah teaches us to "Love your fellow man as you love yourself". On a practical level, how would doing that change our interactions with people and affect the world in general? Truly "loving each other as ourselves" means that we care about other people's needs and we are as willing to take actions on their behalf with just as much energy and enthusiasm as we would for our own needs. Many of the world's problems and the hardships of individuals stem from the fact that people feel that they have to 'go it alone' and only look out for their own needs and perhaps those of their most immediate circle. If every one of us were truly and unselfishly concerned about everyone else, no one would lack anything physically or emotionally. While this is an extremely high spiritual level and may not be accomplished overnight, it is certainly a goal to be aware of and to strive towards.

**Question:** Can you think of any benefits in having weaknesses? It might seem ideal that each person would have every talent and strength and lack nothing. However if it were so, people would miss out on a very significant opportunity for personal growth. One of our main spiritual tasks in life is to become more kind and giving people. If no one lacked anything, there would be no one to give to. יהוה also created each person's weakness so as to enable others to grow by striving to fulfill them.



**Spiritual Exercise:** How can you help others this week? How can you share your talents?

*Love one another  
as I have loved you.*



Tribes of Israel



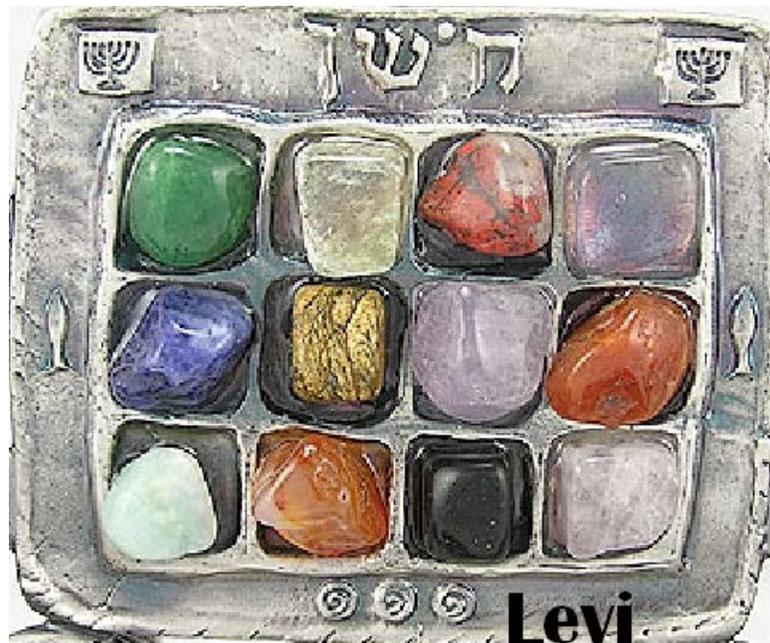
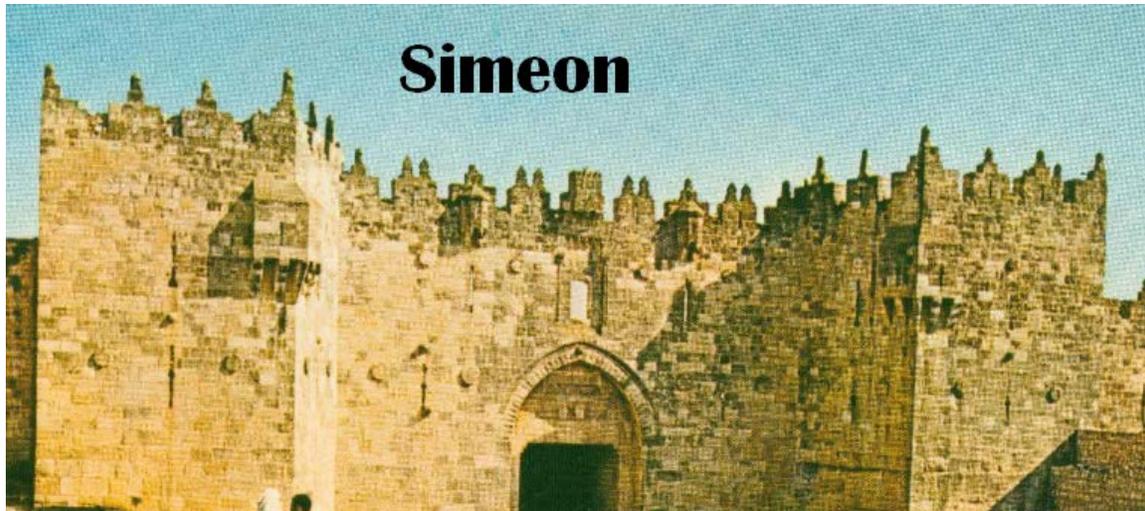
The mandrake was obviously rare, and was supposed to have aphrodisiac properties.

**Genesis 49:2** Gather yourselves together and hear, sons of Jacob; and listen to Israel your father.  
**3** Reuben, **רִבְעֵן** *you are my firstborn, my might and the beginning of my strength, excellent of **רָאשׁוֹן** lifted up (dignity) and excelling in power:* **4** Unstable as water, you will not excel (*your superiority will end*); because you went up to your father's bed; then you defiled *it*: he went up to my couch.  
C-MATS

**Question:** Why did Jacob wait until now to rebuke Reuben? Jacob said, "I did not rebuke you all these years, so that you should not leave me and stay with my brother Esau." This implies a general rule for those who wish to admonish others in a constructive way. They must weigh their words carefully, lest their sincere comments do more harm than good. *Chumash*

**Question:** Why did Reuben lose his right to national leadership as the firstborn? Reuben is unstable as water with which you rushed to vent your anger, similar to water, which rushes ahead and causes damage without a thought to the consequences. Therefore you do not deserve all these superior positions that were fit for you, because you ascended upon your father's couch; then you profaned it. Since you sinned the birthright is given to Joseph, the kingship to Judah, and priesthood to Levi. *Chumash*

**Question:** Was Reuben treated justly? Reuben did not mean to sin. On the contrary, he thought he was acting virtuously in defending his mother's honor. Reuben repented sincerely, but to no avail. A leader cannot be impulsive. He must think through his decisions and reckon their consequences.



**Genesis 49:5 Simeon and Levi are brothers; instruments (swords) of cruelty are in their habitations. C-MATS**

**Question:** Why were Simeon and Levi, the next oldest brothers, not given the kingship? Simeon and Levi were also unworthy to succeed Jacob as ruler. They had attacked the males of Shechem and men of the sword are unworthy of being “the king who by justice establishes the land”. *Chumash*

**Question:** What was Jacob saying to Simeon and Levi? Jacob said to them, “You were brothers to Dinah, but you were not brothers to Joseph because you sold him. You stole these “instruments of cruelty”. They are not yours, but Esau's, to whom it was said, “**And by your sword you will live** וְאֵתֶּךָ (Genesis 27: 40). (Esau will live by the sword and not you. Jacob’s sword was prayer and that is what they should live by.) *Chumash*

**Genesis 49:6** Let me not enter their council; let me not be united to their assembly: for in their anger they killed *men* and in their self-will they *maimed cattle*. 7 Cursed *be* their anger, for *it was* fierce; and their wrath, for it was cruel: I will divide them in Jacob and scatter them in Israel. C-MATS

**Question:** Did Jacob curse Simeon and Levi or just their anger? Even when he rebuked them, he cursed only their anger; thus Balaam says in Numbers 23:8: **How will I curse whom Elohim has not cursed? Or how will I denounce whom יהוה has not denounced?** *Chumash*



**Genesis 49:8** Judah, **אָתָּה** you are he whom your brothers will praise: your hand will be at the neck of your enemies; your father's children will bow down before you. C-MATS

**Question:** Why did Jacob give Judah the kingship of Israel? The kingship of Israel originally belonged to Reuben, Jacob's firstborn. But Reuben forfeited this right when he sinned by "violating his father's marriage bed", and the sovereignty was transferred to Judah. In his blessing to Judah, Jacob alludes to two virtues for which Judah merited the leadership of Israel:

a) When the other sons of Jacob plotted to kill Joseph, Judah saved his life by arguing that selling him into slavery would be a more "profitable" solution. **And Judah said to his brothers, What profit is it if we kill אָתָּה our brother and conceal אָתָּה his blood? 27 Let's sell him to the Ishmaelites and let's not harm him, because he is our brother and our flesh.** (Genesis 37:26-27).

b) Judah publicly admitted his guilt in the incident of Tamar, thereby saving her and her two unborn sons from death. **Judah acknowledged them and said, She has been more righteous than I am, because I did not give her to Shelah my son.** Genesis 38:26 *Chumash*

**Genesis 49:9** Judah is a lion's cub from the prey, my son, you have gone up (*you stand over your prey*): he bows down, he lies down as a lion and as an old lion; who will rouse him up? (*Who dares to provoke him?*) **10** The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver (*rulers staff*) from between his legs, until Shiloh (*Messiah*) comes; and to him will belong the obedience of the people. *Prophecy Fulfilled-Gen. 49:10 The time of His coming-Luke 2:1-7; Gal. 4:4, The Seed of Judah-Luke 3:33; Called Shiloh or One Sent-John 17:3; To come before Judah lost identity-John 11:47-52; To Him shall the obedience of the people be-John 10:16; From the tribe of Judah-Matthew 1:1-3.* **11** Binding his foal (*donkey*) to the vine and his אָתוֹ ass's colt to the choice vine, he washed his garments in wine and his clothes in the blood of grapes: **12** His eyes are darker than wine and his teeth whiter than milk. C-MATS

**Question: His teeth whiter than milk.** Giving someone a smile is even more valuable than giving them a material gift. How do you understand this? A person who displays the whites of his teeth to his friend is better than the one who gives him milk to drink. To whiten your teeth to your friend is to smile at him. As you show him the whites of your teeth, your smile, you show him your love; you show him you care. You show him that he's valuable to you. As we grow older, in addition to our physical needs, we develop other emotional needs. We yearn to feel important, to feel valued and appreciated, and to feel like we belong. A smile provides security, the feeling of being valued, of being cared for. The whites of our teeth simply yet unequivocally proclaim "I am glad that you exist!" יהוה created us in a way that it's almost impossible not to feel better after receiving a sincere smile (or giving one, for that matter). Getting a material gift may make a person feel good, but a smile is like a ray of sun that reaches deep down into a person's soul and can fill the darkest mood with light.

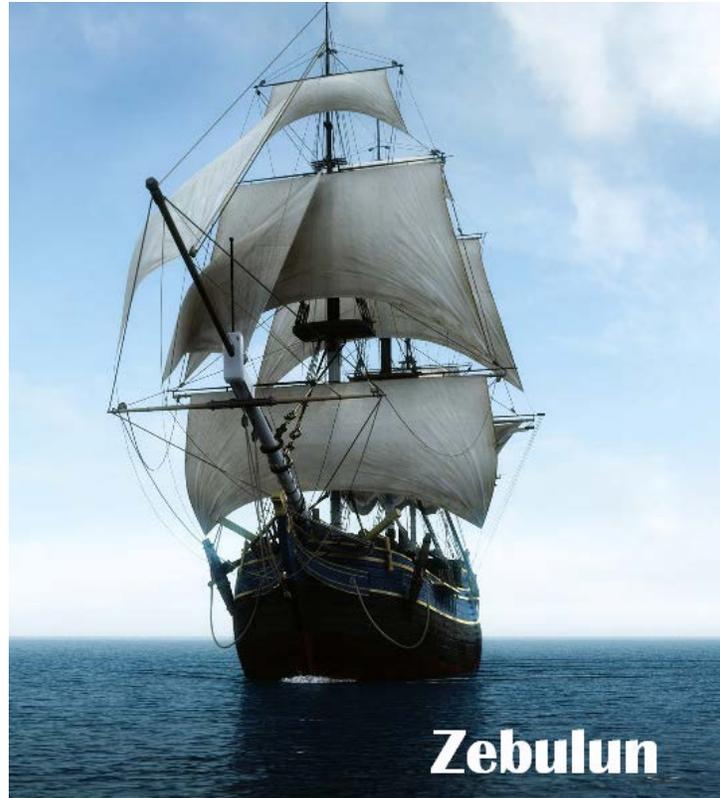
**Question:** What is one of the greatest gifts you can give your child? Give your children a great gift. Just smile at them. Let them know beyond a shadow of a doubt how excited you are that they are yours. They will take that feeling with them for the rest of their lives. As the milk they nursed sustained them as infants, our smiles will continue to nourish and sustain them with the emotional joy and security of knowing how much their parents love them.

**Question:** Why do you think encouraging words are so powerful to lift a person up? A big part of how we feel depends upon how we view ourselves and our accomplishments. A person often feels down because he's focusing on the negative. Encouraging words help a person to re-focus on the positive side of himself, and this makes him feel much better.

**Question:** What are some ways to encourage people? We can express appreciation for anything that they do for us-even the little things. We can look for other people's good traits and abilities and point them out to them. Sometimes even just a listening ear to let them talk things out is a big boost.



**Focus on the Positive**  
**and amazing things will happen**



**Genesis 49:13** Zebulun will settle at the haven of the seashore; and he will become a haven (port) for **אֲנִיּוֹת** ships; and his border will adjoin to Zidon (fishery). C-MATS

**Question:** What occupation did the tribe of Zebulun have? The verse describes the tribe of Zebulun as sea-faring merchants. Its territory would be in the Galil, between the Sea of Kinnereth and the Mediterranean, and its border would extend to Zidon, a famed center of commerce at the northwest boundary of Israel. Jacob gave precedence to Zebulun because Issachar's Torah learning was made possible by Zebulun, who engaged in commerce and supported Issachar.

**Question:** Issachar and Zebulun worked together to benefit each other. What is gained when people share their talents and strengths with others? Each of us has special talents and strengths as well as areas of weakness. When people share their talents they both gain in areas that would be impossible for them to accomplish by themselves.

**Question:** How can we start to do this? The first step is to sincerely consider what our talents and strengths are. What do we have to offer the world? Next we should consider in which areas might we need strengthening? Then we can begin to seek ways of helping others who could benefit from what we have to offer. And although we should be open to receiving the help that is offered us, it is a much higher level if we can give of ourselves without expecting anything in return.

**Spiritual Exercise:** Are you friendly with anyone who is very different than you? Look at how this person could benefit your life. Make an effort to get to know someone that is very different from you but still wants to do what is right.



**Genesis 49:14** Issachar is a strong donkey lying down between two burdens: **15** And he saw a resting-place that it was good וְאֵתֵּי and the land that it was pleasant; and bowed his shoulder to bear and became a band of slaves (*forced labor*). C-MATS

**Question:** How was Issachar a servant to tribute? Issachar's dedication to the Torah made him a servant (donkey) of the people rendering decisions and teaching the complex regulations concerning the fixing of leap years. Issachar set the calendar and the feast days for יהודה's people according to the laws of Torah. *Chumash*



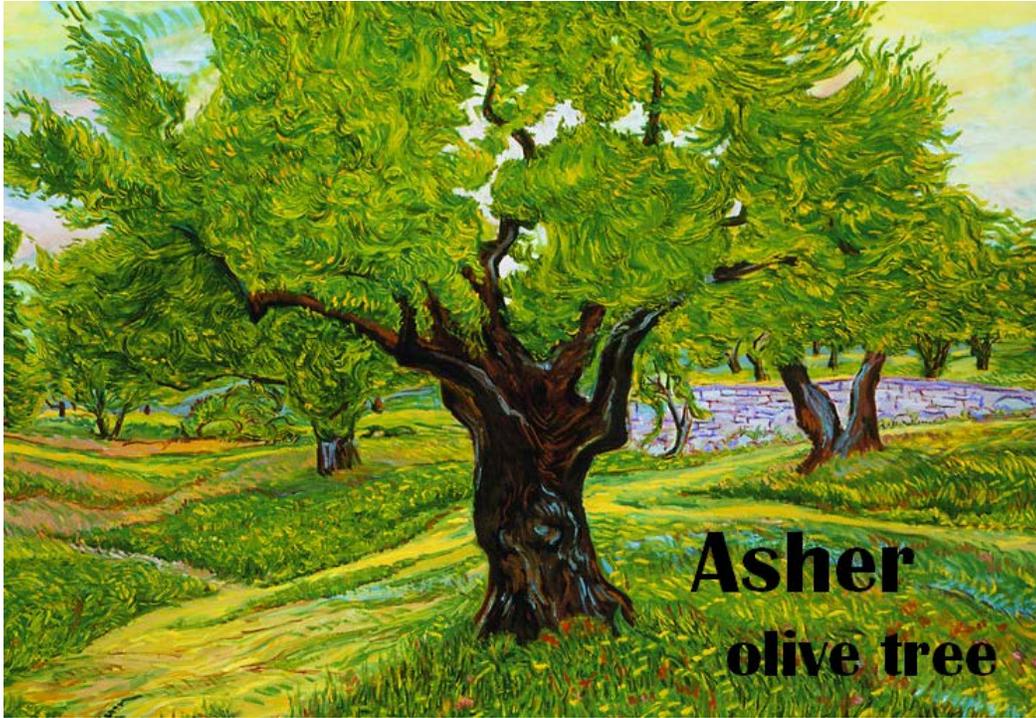
**Genesis 49:16 Dan will judge his people, as one of the tribes of Israel. 17 Dan will be a serpent on the way, an adder (*snake*) in the path that bites the horse's heels, so that his rider will fall off backward. 18 I have waited for your salvation (*Yeshuwah*), O יהוה. C-MATS**

**Question:** What did Jacob see in Dan's future? This refers to Samson, a judge from the tribe of Dan. When Samson was captured by the Philistines, blinded, and brought in chains to a palace where "there were upon the roof about three thousand men and women that beheld while Samson made sport" he "took hold of Samson אֶת the two middle pillars upon which the house rested and leaned upon them... and he bowed himself with all his might; and the house fell upon rulers and upon all the people that were in it. So the dead that he killed at his death were more than they that he killed in his life. Samson called out in his last breath, "O Adonai יהוה, remember me! Judges 16:27-30 *Chumash*



**Genesis 49:19 Gad, a troop will overcome him: but he will overcome at the last. C-MATS**

**Question:** What did Jacob see in the future of Gad? Gad fought with their brothers against the Canaanites valiantly and did not return home to their territory until the Land was won. Jacob prophesied that after the conquest Gad will return safely on its heel by the same road and paths upon which it had initially traveled-and not one of the troops will be missing. *Chumash*



**Asher**  
**olive tree**

**Genesis 49:20** Out of Asher his bread (*food*) will be rich and he will yield royal delicacies (*fit for a king*). C-MATS

**Question:** What did Jacob see in the future of Asher? Asher, the prosperous one, as his name implies, was to be rich, and honored, and strong, and peaceful. Moses blessed him also, "Most blessed of sons is Asher; let him be favored by his brothers, and let him bathe his feet in oil of the Land, and it will flow with oil like a wellspring. *Chumash*



**Naphtali**

**Genesis 49:21 Naphtali is a doe set free: he uses beautiful words (sayings). C-MATS**

**Question:** What did Jacob see in Naphtali's future? This refers to the Genousar valley (in the province of Naphtali), which is quick to ripen its fruit as swift as "a doe set free" to run, and upon which one delivers words of thanks and praises יהוה. Another meaning is that Jacob prophesied on the war with Sisra when the men of Naphtali were swift to answer the call of Deborah the judge. **And called Barak אֶת־ Zebulun אֶת־ and Naphtali to Kedesh; and he went up with ten thousand men at his feet: and Deborah went up with him. Judges 4:10;** "uses beautiful words" alludes to the song of triumph sung by Deborah and General Barak after the victory against the Canaanites. When they returned from battle, they brought with them beautiful words. **Then sang Deborah and Barak the son of Abinoam on that day, saying, Praise you יהוה for the avenging of Israel, when the people willingly offered themselves. (Judges 5:1-2) Chumash**



**Genesis 49:22 Joseph is a fruitful vine, even a fruitful vine by a well; whose branches run over the wall: 23 The archers have attacked him fiercely and shot at him and hated him. C-MATS**

**Question:** How did Joseph prevail over "the archers"? Joseph rose to prominence despite the hatred he suffered. People with arrow-like tongues (his brothers and Potiphar's wife) dealt bitterly with Joseph, but by the grace of יהוה he rose to prominence despite them. *Chumash*

**Genesis 49:24 But his bow remained in strength (taut, ready and faithful) and his arms were made strong by the hands of the Mighty Elohim of Jacob, from there is the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel. C-MATS**

**Question:** Who is the shepherd? Joseph became the shepherd who provided food for the stone of Israel-the foundation-Jacob. *Chumash*

Genesis 49:25 *Even* the El (*G-d*) of your father, who will help you; אֱלֹהֵי and by the Shaddai (*Almighty*), who will bless you with blessings *from the* heavens above, blessings *from the* deep that lies under (*below*), blessings of the breasts and of the womb: 26 The blessings of your father have prevailed above *than* the blessings of my ancestors *extending* to the endless bounds *of the* everlasting hills: they will be on the head of Joseph and on the crown (*brow*) of the head of him that was separate from his brothers. C-MATS



Genesis 49:27 Benjamin will *be as* a ravenous wolf: in the morning he will devour the prey and at night he will divide the spoil. C-MATS

**Question:** What was Jacob seeing in the future for Benjamin? This is a reference to Mordechai and Esther (who were of the tribe of Benjamin) who divided the spoils of Haman, as it is written: "On that day did give the King Ahasuerus to Esther the queen אֶת־ the house of Haman the Jews enemy." Esther 8:1 *Chumash*

Genesis 49:28 All these *are the* twelve tribes of Israel: וְזֵאת and *this is* what their father spoke to them and blessed אֹתָם them; he blessed אֹתָם them every one according to his *own* blessing. C-MATS

**Question:** Are the words of Jacob to Reuben, Simeon, and Levi rebukes rather than blessings? Man is mortal and thus subject to failure. He must work to overcome personal imperfection. Often, a person does not realize, or refuses to acknowledge, his shortcomings, and therefore there is no striving for change or transformation. The greatest blessing is knowledge of personal weaknesses. Jacob made his children aware of their flaws and encouraged correction, so his rebuke was indeed a great blessing.



Genesis 49:29 And he warned **אֹתָם** *them* and said to them, I am to be gathered to my people: bury **אִתִּי** *me* with my fathers in the cave that *is* in the field of Ephron the Hittite, 30 In the cave that *is* in the field of Machpelah, which *is* before Mamre, in the land of Canaan, with which bought Abraham **אֶת־** the field **מֵאֵת** *from* Ephron the Hittite for a possession as a burying place. 31 There they buried **אֶת־** Abraham **וְאֶת־** *and* Sarah **אִשְׁתּוֹ** *his wife*; there they buried **אֶת־** Isaac **וְאֶת־** *and* Rebekah **אִשְׁתּוֹ** *his wife*; and there I buried **אֶת־** Leah. 32 The purchase of the field and the cave that *is* there *was* **מֵאֵת** *from* the children of Heth. C-MATS

**Question:** What request did Jacob make of his sons? And Jacob again commanded his sons on that day, saying, “Behold I shall be this day gathered unto my people; carry me up from Egypt, and bury me in the cave of Machpelah as I have commanded you. Don’t let any of your sons carry me, only yourselves, and this is the manner you shall carry me, when you go to the land of Canaan to bury me, Judah, Issachar and Zebulun shall carry my coffin at the eastern side; Reuben, Simeon and Gad at the south, Ephraim, Manasseh and Benjamin at the west, Dan, Asher and Naphtali at the north. Don’t let Levi carry it with you, for he and his sons will carry the ark of the covenant of יְהוָה with the Israelites in the camp, neither let Joseph my son carry it, for as a king so let his glory be; however, Ephraim and Manasseh shall be in Joseph’s place.” (This is the same pattern used when the tribes camped around the Tabernacle.)  
Jasher

Genesis 49:33 And when Jacob had *finished* instructing **אֶת־** his sons, he drew up his feet into the bed and breathed his last and was gathered to his people. C-MATS



Death of Jacob

**Question:** What was importance about the death of Jacob? Immediately after his death the spiritual exile began, even though the physical and emotional travails of enslavement did not start until the death of all of Jacob's sons. The hearts of the children of Jacob were in expectation of the suffering and despair of the impending bondage in Egypt.

**Question:** What is particularly interesting about chapter 50? In chapter 50 it is interesting to see that his title reflecting respect to Jacob's authority and covenant position relative to Yahshua the Messiah as Father of the 12 tribes.

**Genesis 50:1** **וַיִּשָׁק** and you Joseph fell upon his father's face and wept upon him and kissed him.  
C-MATS

**Question:** How did Joseph react to his father's death? Joseph fell on his father and he cried out and wept over him and he kissed him, and he called out in a bitter voice, and he said, "O my father, my father". And his son's wives and his entire household came and fell upon Jacob, and they wept over him, and cried in a very loud voice concerning Jacob. And all the sons of Jacob rose up together, and they tore their garments, and they all put sackcloth upon their loins, and they fell upon their faces, and they cast dust upon their heads toward the heavens. And the thing was told unto Asenath Joseph's wife, and she rose up and put on a sack and she with all the Egyptian women with her came and mourned and wept for Jacob. And also all the people of Egypt who knew Jacob came all on that day when they heard this thing, and all Egypt wept for many days. And also from the land of Canaan did the women come unto Egypt when they heard that Jacob was dead, and they wept for him in Egypt for seventy days.  
*Jasher*

**Genesis 50:2 And commanded Joseph אָתְּ his servants, אֲתָם the physicians, to embalm אָתְּ his father: and so embalmed the physicians, אֲתָם Israel. C-MATS**

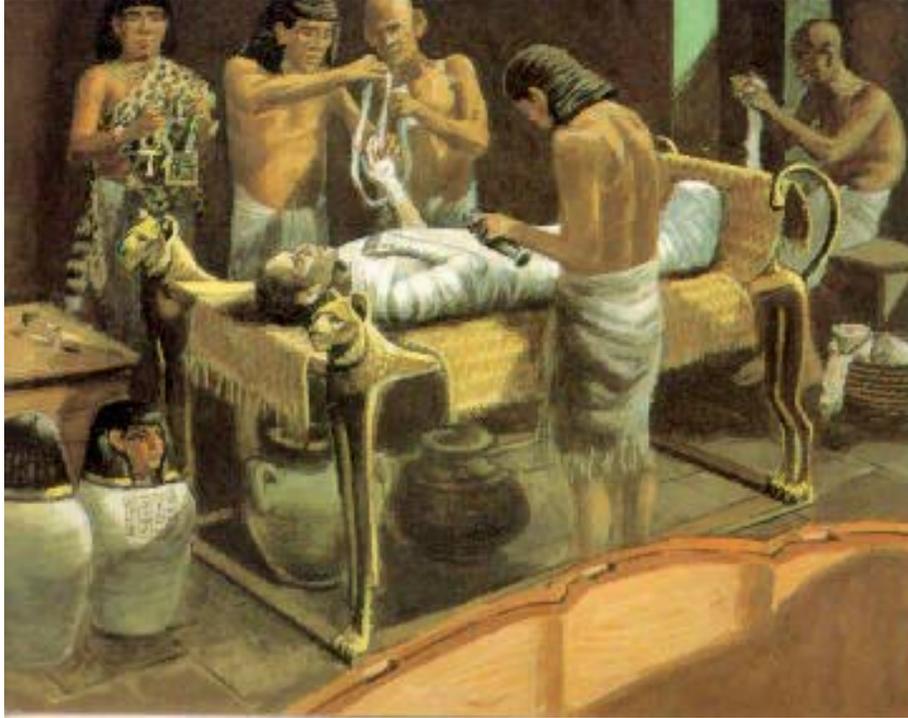
**Question:** How did Joseph preserve Jacob's body for burial? And it came to pass after this that Joseph commanded his servants the doctors to embalm his father with myrrh and frankincense and all manner of incense and perfume, and the doctors embalmed Jacob as Joseph had commanded them. *Jasher*

**Question:** Why did Joseph die before his brothers? Joseph sinned, because he embalmed his father. Embalming was an Egyptian custom based on the teachings of the nation's idolatrous beliefs. Under Torah law, however it is strictly forbidden. The Torah requires that the body be permitted to discompose naturally, as quickly as possible, and without any hindrance. You are dust and to dust shall you return. *Chumash*

**Genesis 50:3 And forty days were required for him; for such are the required days of those who are embalmed: and the Egyptians mourned for אֵתוֹ him seventy days. C-MATS**

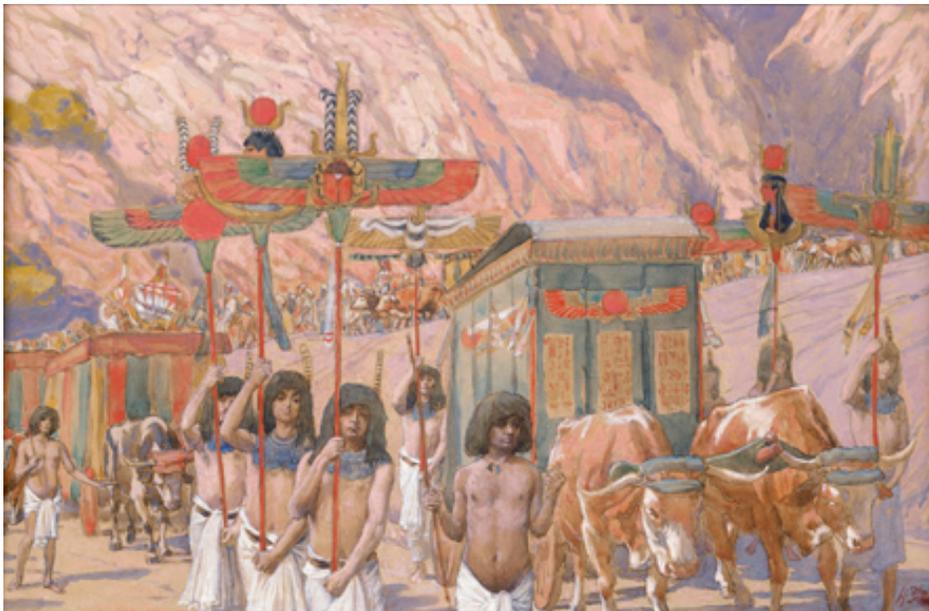
**Question:** How long does it take to embalm a person? 40 days

**Question:** How is a body embalmed? They laid the body out on a wooden table and prepared to remove the brain. To get into the cranium, the embalmers had to hammer a chisel through the bone of the nose. Then they inserted a long, iron hook into the skull and slowly pulled out the brain matter. Once they had removed most of the brain with the hook, they used a long spoon to scoop out any remaining bits. Finally, they rinsed the skull with water. After they had removed the brain, the embalmers took a special blade made from obsidian (a sacred stone) and made a small incision along the left side of the body. They carefully removed the abdominal organs through this slit, except for the heart which they almost always left in the body. Once they removed the organs, the embalmers rinsed the empty chest cavity with palm wine, in order to purify it. Then, to maintain the body's lifelike form, they filled the cavity with incense and other material. This kept the skin from shrinking down inside the cavity when the body was dried out. After the embalmers removed the organs and re-stuffed the body, they laid the body down on a sloped board and covered it completely with natron powder. The Egyptians collected this powder, a mixture of sodium compounds, from the shores of Egyptian lakes in the desert west of the Nile Delta. The embalmers left the body in the powder for 35 to 40 days to allow enough time for the body to dry completely. Then the embalmers removed the incense and other stuffing from the body cavity and refilled it with natron, resin-soaked linen and various other materials. When the body was fully stuffed, the embalmers sewed up the incisions and covered the skin with a resin layer in order to keep moisture out. Bandaging was the next process, and it typically took a week or two to complete. The embalmers wrapped the body in a shroud and began methodically winding the bandages around the different parts of the body. Typically, they started with the hands and feet, wrapping all of the fingers and toes individually, and then moved on to the head, arms, legs, and torso. Once all the parts of the body were wrapped, the embalmers began wrapping the body as a whole. As they applied new layers, the embalmers coated the linen with hot resin material to glue the bandages in place. When the mummy was completed, it was housed in a coffin decorated to look like the person.



Jacob is embalmed

Genesis 50:4 And when the days of his mourning were past, Joseph spoke to the household of Pharaoh saying, If now **מֵצָאתִי** *I found* grace in your eyes, speak to Pharaoh and say, 5 My father made me swear saying, *I am about to die:* in my grave which I have dug for myself in the land of Canaan, bury me there. Now therefore, please, let me go up and bury **אֶת־** my father and I will return. 6 And Pharaoh said, Go up and bury **אֶת־** your father as he made you swear. C-MATS



Jacob's Body Is Taken to Canaan (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by James Tissot)

**Genesis 50:7 And Joseph went to bury אָתּ his father and אִתּוֹ with him went all the servants of Pharaoh, the elders of his house and all the elders of the land of Egypt. C-MATS**

**Question:** Who was in charge of the burial plans for Jacob? Joseph personally attended to Jacob's burial even though he was the greatest man of the time. In reward for this-measure for measure- Moses, the greatest of all, personally attended to Joseph's remains when Israel left Egypt. *Chumash*

**Genesis 50:8 And all the House of Joseph and his brothers and his father's house: only their little ones and their flocks and their herds, they left in the land of Goshen. 9 And there went with him both chariots and horsemen: and it was a very great company. C-MATS**

**Question:** What did the Pharaoh request for the Egyptians to do for Jacob? And Pharaoh commanded that it should be proclaimed throughout Egypt, saying, "Whoever does not go up with Joseph and his brothers to the land of Canaan to bury Jacob, shall die. " And all Egypt heard of Pharaoh's proclamation, and they all rose up together, and all the servants of Pharaoh, and the elders of his house, and all the elders of the land of Egypt went up with Joseph, and all the officers and nobles of Pharaoh went up as the servants of Joseph, and they went to bury Jacob in the land of Canaan. *Jasher*

**Question:** Who carried Jacob's coffin? The sons of Jacob carried his coffin; according to all that their father commanded them. The coffin was of pure gold, and it was inlaid round about with onyx stones and bdellium; and the covering of the coffin was gold woven work, joined with threads, and over them were hooks of onyx stones and bdellium. Joseph placed upon the head of his father Jacob a large golden crown, and he put a golden scepter in his hand, and they surrounded the coffin, as was the custom of kings during their lives. And all the troops of Egypt went before him in this array, at first all the mighty men of Pharaoh, and the mighty men of Joseph, and after them the rest of the inhabitants of Egypt, and they were all girded with swords and equipped with coats of mail, and the accessories of war were upon them. All the weepers and mourners went at a distance opposite to the coffin, going and weeping and lamenting, and the rest of the people went after the coffin. Joseph and his household went together near the coffin barefooted and weeping and the rest of Joseph's servants went around him; each man had his ornaments upon him, and they were all armed with their weapons of war. Fifty of Jacob's servants went in front of the coffin, and they threw along the road myrrh and aloes, and all manner of perfume, and all the sons of Jacob that carried the coffin walked upon the perfumery, and the servants of Jacob went before them throwing the perfume along the road. Joseph went up with a heavy camp, and they did this every day until they reached the land of Canaan, and they came to the threshing floor of Atad, which was on the other side of Jordan, and they mourned an exceeding great and heavy mourning in that place. *Jasher*

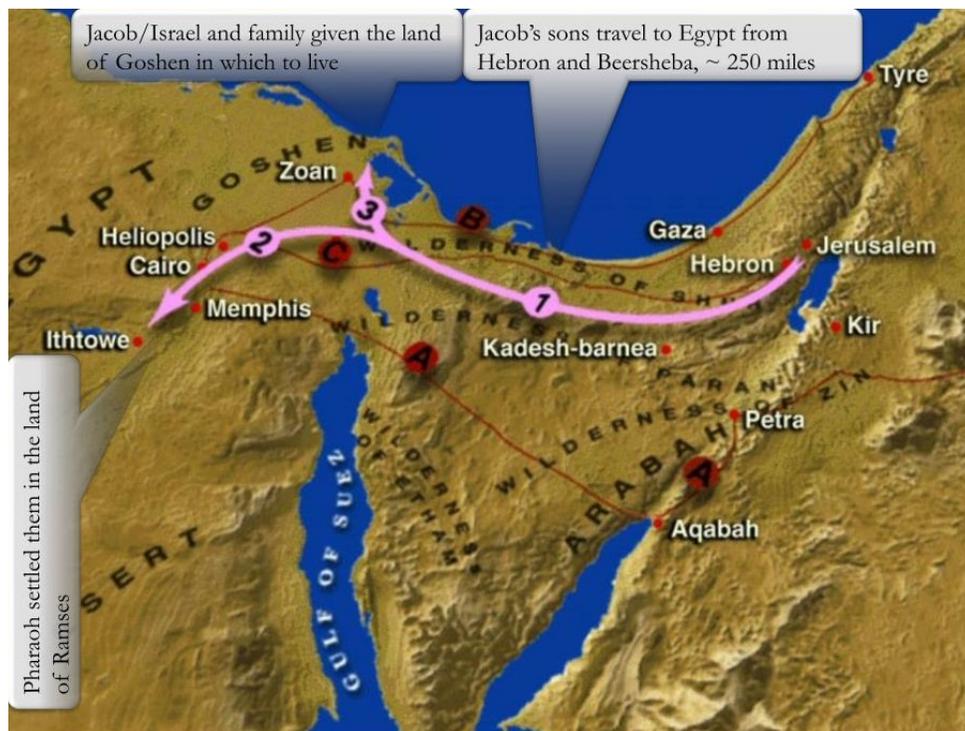
**Genesis 50:10 And they came to the threshing floor of Atad (bramble or thorn), which is beyond the Jordan and there they mourned with a great and very solemn lamentation: and Joseph made mourning for his father seven days. C-MATS**

**Question:** How many days did Joseph mourn his father? From here is derived the law of seven ("shiva") days of mourning after the dead. *Chumash*

**Question:** Is there a threshing-floor for brambles “the threshing floor of Atad (*bramble or thorn*)”? The verse teaches us that they surrounded Jacob's coffin with crowns like a threshing-floor, which is surrounded with a hedge of brambles, because the sons of Esau, of Ishmael and of Keturah also came... They came to wage war [against the Israelites]; but when they saw Joseph's crown hanging upon Jacob's coffin, they all took their crowns and hung them upon his coffin. It was taught: thirty-six crowns were hung upon Jacob's coffin. *Chumash*

**Question:** How many kings of Canaan came to mourn for Jacob? And all the kings of Canaan heard of this thing and they all went forth, each man from his house, thirty-one kings of Canaan, and they all came with their men to mourn and weep over Jacob. And all these kings beheld Jacob's coffin, and behold Joseph's crown was upon it, and they also put their crowns upon the coffin, and encircled it with crowns. And all these kings made in that place a great and heavy mourning with the sons of Jacob and Egypt over Jacob, for all the kings of Canaan knew the bravery of Jacob and his sons. *Jasher*

**Genesis 50:11** When saw, the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites אֲנִי the mourning in the threshing floor of Atad, they said, This is a deep mourning of the Egyptians: therefore, the name of it was called Abel-mizraim (*mourning meadow of Egypt*), which is beyond the Jordan. 12 And his sons did for him just as Israel instructed them: 13 For his sons carried אֹתוֹ him into the land of Canaan and buried אֹתוֹ him in the cave of the field of Machpelah, which bought Abraham אֶת the field as a possession for a burying place מֵאֵת from Ephron, the Hittite, before Mamre. C-MATS



Journey from Goshen to Cave of Machpelah in Hebron 250 miles

**Question:** How was Jacob's burial different from other men? Jacob was buried in Hebron, in the Cave of Machpelah, which Abraham had bought from the sons of Heth for the possession of a burial place, and he was buried in very costly garments. No king had such honor paid him as Joseph paid unto his father at his death, for he buried him with great honor like the burial of kings. Joseph and his brothers made a mourning of seven days for their father. *Jasher*

**Question:** Where is Jacob buried? Jacob was buried in the Cave of Machpelah located in the ancient city of Hebron. This is the second holiest site for Jews, (after the Temple Mount in Jerusalem) and is also cherished by Christians and Muslims, both of whom have traditions which maintain that the site is the burial place of three Biblical couples: (1) Abraham and Sarah; (2) Isaac and Rebecca; (3) Jacob and Leah. According to the Midrash and other sources, the Cave of the Patriarchs also contains the head of Esau,



The more visible known entrance to the caves



The Tomb of Abraham

**Question:** Who opposed Jacob being buried in the Cave of Machpelah? They came unto Kireath-arba, to the cave, and as they came Esau stood with his sons against Joseph and his brothers as a hindrance in the cave, saying, "Jacob will not be buried here, for it belongs to us and to our father. " Joseph and his brothers heard the words of Esau's sons, and they were exceedingly angry, and Joseph approached Esau saying, "What is this thing which they have spoken? Surely my father Jacob bought it from you for great riches after the death of Isaac 25 years ago and also all the land of Canaan he bought from you and from your sons and your seed after you. Jacob bought it for his sons and his seed after him for an inheritance forever and why speak about these things this day?" Esau answered, saying, "You speak falsely and utter lies, because I did not sell anything belonging to me in all this land, as you say, neither did my brother Jacob buy anything belonging to me in this land." Esau spoke these things in order to deceive Joseph with his words, because Esau knew that Joseph was not present in those days when Esau sold all belonging to him in the land of Canaan to Jacob. Joseph said unto Esau, "Surely my father inserted these things with you in the record of purchase, and testified the record with witnesses, and it is with us in Egypt". And Esau answered, "Bring the record, all that you will find in the record, so will we do." Joseph called Naphtali his brother, and he said, "Quickly run to Egypt and bring all the records; the record of the purchase, the sealed record and the open record, and also all the first records in which all the transactions of the birth-right are written. You shall bring them to us that we may know from them all the words of Esau and his sons which they spoke this day." Naphtali listened to the voice of Joseph and he ran to Egypt, and Naphtali was lighter on foot than any of the stags that were upon the wilderness, for he would go upon ears of corn without crushing them. When Esau saw that Naphtali had gone to get the records, he and his sons increased their resistance against the cave, and Esau and all his people rose up against Joseph and his brothers to battle. All the sons of Jacob and the people of Egypt fought with Esau and his men, and the sons of Esau and his people were killed before the sons of Jacob, and the sons of Jacob killed forty of Esau's men. Chushim the son of Dan, the son of Jacob, was at that time with Jacob's sons, but he was about a hundred cubits distant from the place of battle, for he remained with the children of Jacob's sons by Jacob's coffin to guard it. Chushim was dumb and deaf; still he understood the voice of alarm among men. Chushim asked, saying, "Why do you not bury the dead, and what is this great alarm?" and they answered him the words of Esau and his sons; and he ran to Esau in the midst of the battle, and he killed Esau with a sword, and he severed Esau's head, which rolled into the Cave of Machpelah and came to rest in Isaac's lap, where it remains to this day. Thus it came to pass that "Esau's head lies in the bosom of Isaac." (Thus was fulfilled the prophecy of Rebecca, who said: "**Why should I be deprived of you both in one day?**" (Genesis 27:45). Although the death of the two of them did not occur on the same day, their burial took place on the same day. *Chumash* When Chushim did this thing the sons of Jacob prevailed over the sons of Esau and the sons of Jacob buried their father Jacob by force in the cave, and the sons of Esau saw it. *Jasher*

**Question:** What happened after Esau was killed? It was after this that the sons of Esau waged war with the sons of Jacob, and the sons of Esau fought with the sons of Jacob in Hebron, and Esau was still lying dead not buried. *Jasher*

The battle was heavy between them, and the sons of Esau were killed before the sons of Jacob, and the sons of Jacob killed 80 sons of Esau, and not one of the people of the sons of Jacob died; and the hand of Joseph prevailed over all the people of the sons of Esau, and he took Zepho, the son of Eliphaz, the son of Esau, and fifty of his men captive, and he bound them with chains of iron, and gave them to his servants to bring them to Egypt. It came to pass when the sons of Jacob had taken Zepho and his people captive, all those that remained were greatly afraid for their lives that they should also be taken captive, and they all fled with Eliphaz the son of Esau and his people. They took Esau's body and they went on their road to Mount Seir. They came unto Mount Seir and they buried Esau in Seir, but they had not brought his head with them to Seir, for it was buried in that place where the battle had been in Hebron. *Jasher*

**Genesis 50:14** And Joseph returned to Egypt with his brothers and all that went **אִתּוֹ** with him to bury **אֶת** his father, after he had buried **אֶת** his father. **15** And when Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, Joseph may now hate us and will certainly repay us **אֶת** all the evil which we did to **אִתּוֹ** him. **16** And they sent a messenger to Joseph saying, Your father commanded us before he died saying, **17** You will say to Joseph, please forgive the trespass of your brothers and their sin; because they did evil to you: but now we ask you to forgive the trespass of the servants of the Elohim of your father. And Joseph wept when they spoke to him. C-MATS

**Question:** Why did Joseph's brothers lie to him by saying his father said not to harm your brothers? Joseph's brothers lied to him for the sake of keeping peace between them. (Jacob did not, in fact, say this, for he did not suspect Joseph of revenge.) *Chumash*

**Question:** Why did Joseph weep when his brothers sent him this message? Joseph wept that they had suspected him of revenge. *Chumash*

**Genesis 50:18** And his brothers went and fell down before his face; and they said, We are your servants. **19** And Joseph said to them, Do not be afraid: am I in the place of Elohim? **20** But as for you, you meant evil against me; but Elohim meant it for good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to keep many people alive. C-MATS

**Question:** What was Joseph saying? Joseph was saying: You did me an evil, which turned out for the good; if I wished to avenge myself on you, I, too, would have to do the same to you and bring you good. But this I cannot do, for only **יהוה** can do so. *Chumash*

**Question:** What had Joseph learned about revenge? He understood that יהוה wants us to treat others properly, regardless of how they treat us. He knew that **יהוה** watches over and guides everything that happens, and ultimately will give each person whatever he deserves as a consequence to his actions. We need only be concerned about "keeping our side of the street clean", by treating others the way we know is right.

**Question:** How can a person teach himself to be able to treat people right, unconditionally? It is very helpful to remember that our most important relationship is the one we have with יהוה. He gives us all that we have, and hopes that we will act based upon proper values. יהוה wants us to treat others well. This value exists independently of how we are treated by others. We can be sure that יהוה is watching out for us, and in the end will make sure that we -- and everyone else -- will get exactly what we deserve. Our only focus need be to do the right thing at any given moment.

**Question:** What does a person gain who is able to break out of the "revenge cycle", -- of feeling the need to get even? He will begin to live a much happier and more peaceful life. He will go about his day confidently, bringing good into the lives of everyone he meets. Ultimately others will treat him better as well, since his relationships with others are bound to improve. It pays to leave the getting even up to יהוה and just try to be the best people that we can be.

**Spiritual Exercise:** Can you think of a time when you took revenge on someone? Have you asked יהוה to forgive you? How can you make restitution to that person?

**Genesis 50:21** Now therefore, *do not fear: I will provide for אֶתְכֶם you וְאֶת־ and your little ones. And he comforted אֶתָם them and spoke kindly to them. 22 And Joseph lived in Egypt with his father's household: and Joseph lived 110 years. C-MATS*

**Question:** When did Pharaoh die? It came to pass in the thirty-second year of the Israelites going down to Egypt that is in the seventy-first year of the life of Joseph, in that year died Pharaoh king of Egypt, and Magron his son reigned instead. *Jasher*

**Question:** Who ruled after Pharaoh died? Pharaoh commanded Joseph before his death to be a father to his son, Magron, and that Magron should be under the care of Joseph and under his counsel. All Egypt consented to this thing that Joseph should be king over them, for all the Egyptians loved Joseph, only Magron the son of Pharaoh sat upon his father's throne, and he became king in those days in his father's place. Magron was forty-one years old when he began to reign, and forty years he reigned in Egypt, and all Egypt called his name Pharaoh after the name of his father, as it was their custom to do in Egypt to every king that reigned over them. It came to pass when Pharaoh reigned in his father's place, he placed the laws of Egypt, and all the affairs of government in the hand of Joseph, as his father had commanded him. *Jasher*

**Question:** How well did Joseph reign over Egypt? Joseph was successful in all his ways, and יהוה was with him, and יהוה gave Joseph additional wisdom, and honor, and glory, and love toward him in the hearts of the Egyptians and throughout the land, and Joseph reigned over the whole country forty years. All the countries of the Philistines and Canaan and Zidon, and on the other side of Jordan, brought presents to Joseph all his days, and the whole country was in the hand of Joseph, and they brought to him a yearly tribute as it was regulated, for Joseph had fought against all his surrounding enemies and subdued them, and the whole country was in the hand of Joseph, and Joseph sat securely upon his throne in Egypt. They served יהוה all their days, as their father Jacob had commanded them. *Jasher*

**Genesis 50:23 And Joseph saw Ephraim's children to the third generation: the children also of Machir, the son of Manasseh, were brought up upon Joseph's knees. C-MATS**

**Question:** How was Joseph blessed? Although Joseph was the first of the brothers to die, he lived to see Ephraim's children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren. *Chumash*

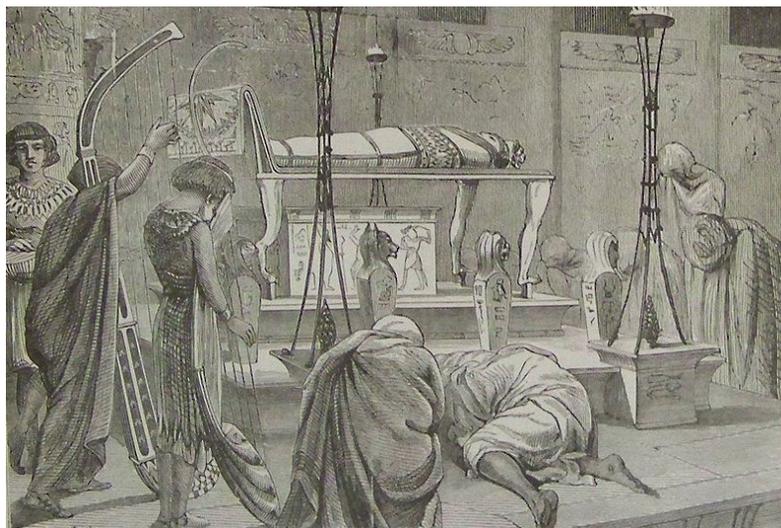
**Genesis 50:24 And Joseph said to his brothers, I am dying: and Elohim will certainly visit אֶתְכֶם you to bring אֶתְכֶם you out of הַאֲרֶץ this land to the land which he swore to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob. 25 Then they took an oath to Joseph אֶת־ Children of Israel saying, Elohim will remember אֶתְכֶם you, we will carry up אֶת־ your bones from here. C-MATS**

**Question:** What did Joseph say to his brothers before he died? Joseph said unto his brothers and to his father's household, "Behold I am about to die and יהוה will surely visit you and bring you up from this land to the land, which he swore to your fathers to give to them. It shall be when יהוה shall visit you to bring you up from here to the land of your fathers, then bring up my bones with you from here." *Jasher*

**Question:** Why didn't Joseph ask his brothers to bury him in the Promised Land as soon as he died? Joseph knew that Pharaoh would not permit him to be buried outside of Egypt. Joseph was later buried in Shechem, because Jacob gave him this city as a gift or his brother tribes wanted to make amends for their mistreatment of him in that very place, for it was in Shechem that they sold him. *Chumash*

**Genesis 50:26 So Joseph died, being 110 years old: and they embalmed אֹתוֹ him and he was put in a coffin in Egypt. C-MATS**

**Question:** How many years did Joseph live in Egypt? How long did Joseph rule in Egypt? Joseph lived in the land of Egypt ninety-three years, and Joseph reigned over all Egypt eighty years. It came to pass after this that Joseph died in that year, the seventy-first year of the Israelites going down to Egypt. *Jasher*



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

**Question:** How was Joseph buried? Joseph was one hundred and ten years old when he died in the land of Egypt, and all his brothers and all his servants rose up and they embalmed Joseph, as was their custom, and his brothers and all Egypt mourned over him for seventy days. They put Joseph in a coffin filled with spices and all sorts of perfume, and they buried him by the side of the river, that is Sihor, and his sons and all his brothers, and his father's household made a seven days mourning for him. Jasher

**Question:** Do you think there was a reason that both patriarchs were embalmed? Could it be that יהוה wanted to save the DNA of the patriarchs? Embalming brings perfect preservation of teeth-one of the places where we can obtain DNA sampling, from the pulp inside the tooth. The Y-chromosome nuclear DNA that is transmitted from father to son to son unchanged for a period of about 3,000-5,000 years according to geneticists that will help us identify biologically the elusive Israel's tribes. The 12 tribes of Israel will be identified in the last days according to Ezekiel 47-48, Revelations 7 & 14 and brought back to their home.



Embalming Joseph



Proposed site of Joseph's tomb in Egypt

**Question:** Where was Joseph buried in Egypt? Prof Manfred Bietak has been digging at Tell el-Dab'a in Egypt for over 40 years. He has identified it as "Avaris", the ancient Hyksos capital. Avaris is in the middle of the area the Bible calls "Goshen" i.e., the area that the Israelites lived in prior to the Exodus. Between 1986 and 1988, Prof. Bietak found the remains of a monumental statue that seems to have belonged to a non-Egyptian ruler of Avaris. Over the statue's right shoulder you can still see his "throw stick" i.e., the symbol of his rule. On the back of the statue you can still see evidence that this ruler was wearing a striped garment made up of at least three colors: black, red and white. Remarkably this garment resembles the Biblical Joseph. He was found in a tomb. The tomb was empty. This may be as a result of looting, but one can't help but recall that the Biblical narrative explicitly tells us that when the Israelites left on the Exodus, they took Joseph's bones with them (**And took Moses אֶת־ the bones of Joseph with him: because Joseph had sworn to אֶת־ Children of Israel saying. Elohim will certainly visit אֶתְכֶם you; and you will carry up אֶת־ my bones away from here אִתְּכֶם with you. Exodus 13:19**). In other words, in order to fit with the Biblical narrative, any tomb of Joseph in Egypt would have to be empty. They call the statue the "Asiatic" i.e., he is not Egyptian; rather he is a man who comes from the area of Canaan/Israel. They might as well call him the "Ish Ivri". Not much is left of his face because after his rule, as with the Biblical Joseph, his people seem to have experienced a downfall. Put differently, someone in ancient times took a hammer to his face. But his hairdo is still intact. They call it a "mushroom" hairdo and it's specifically related to non-Egyptians from the area of ancient Canaan/Israel. Interestingly, it's quite the "do", and the Talmud goes out of its way to tell us that Joseph was quite the fashionista (Genesis Rabbah, 87:3). In fact, the Rabbinic *Midrash Tanhuma Vayyesheb* 8 specifically talks about Joseph curling his hair. The statue was found in a layer corresponding to the year c. 1,700 BCE. In other words, if we take 1,500 BCE as the date for the Exodus, and if the Israelite sojourn in Egypt was around 200 years, the statue of this ruler perfectly fits the story of the Biblical Joseph who ruled around 215 years prior to the Exodus. *Patterns of Evidence: The Exodus*

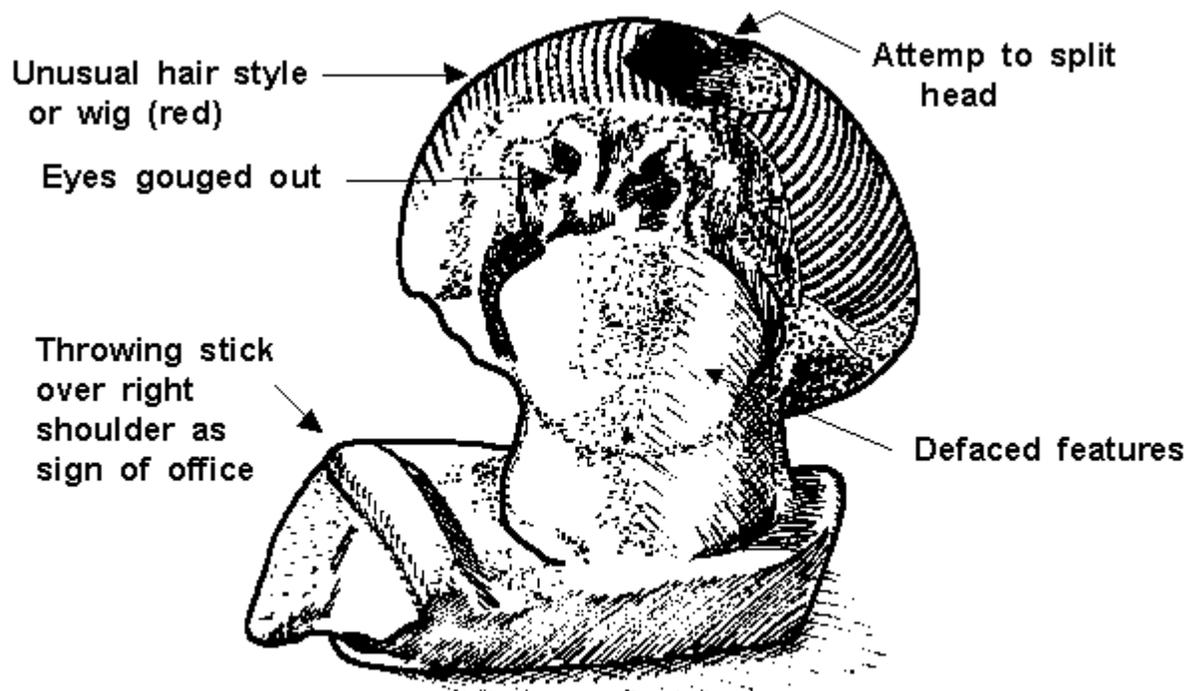
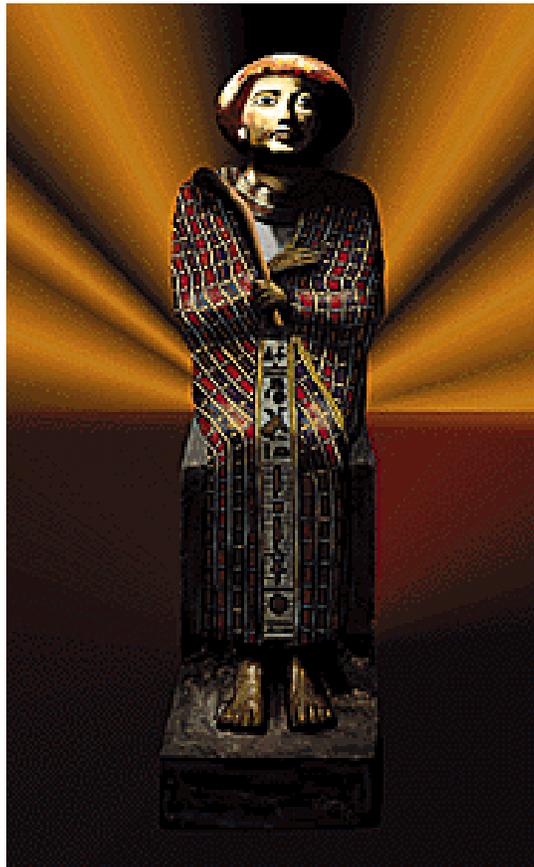


Fig. 3. Is this the damaged head of Joseph's statue?



**Question:** Is the Egyptian Ruler Im-hotep actually the Biblical Joseph?



This boulder was discovered in 1890 at the Nile telling a story of Imhotep.

The first evidence connecting Imhotep to Joseph, date him to the time of the 7 year famine, during the reign of pharaoh Djoser. This rock was found by Charles Wilbour, in 1890, on the Island of Sihiel, at the first cataract of the Nile river, by the rapids of Aswan. These were inscriptions made 1000 years after the reign of Djoser, claimed to be a copy of a document made by pharaoh Djoser during the 18<sup>th</sup> year of his reign, of how Imhotep saved his country from the 7 year famine. Imhotep helped with 7 years of famine and 7 year of plenty. It said that Imhotep “wanted to consult his God, because the answer is not within him.” The document called Imhotep “son of Ptah”, Ptah is the ‘creator’ who created everything, including other gods. The same inscription spoke about pharaoh’s dream that were later interpreted by Imhotep as 7 years of plenty and 7 years of famine. It also talked about the taxes levied by Egypt on its citizens, except priests, to help with the preparation. These accounts mirror Genesis 47:26 account of Joseph.

In 1926, fragments of a statue of Pharaoh Djoser were excavated at the step-pyramid of Saqqara. At the base was an inscription of Djoser and "Imhotep, Chancellor of the King of Lower Egypt, Chief under the King, Administrator of the Great Palace, Hereditary Lord, High Priest of Heliopolis, Imhotep the Builder, the Sculptor, the Maker of Stone Vases..." Here is the inscription and the box is the name "Imhotep."

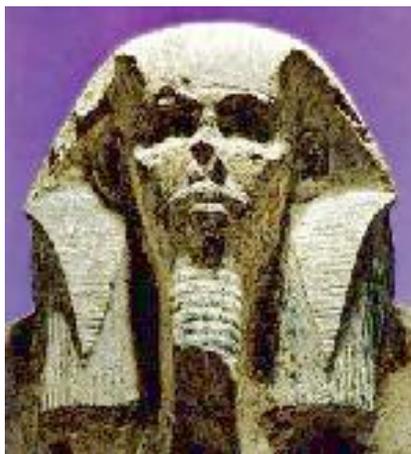


Manetho, Egyptian historian lived in 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC, credited Imhotep for inventing stone dressing during Djoser’s reign. “...during his (Djoser) reign lived Imouthes (Imhotep), who, because of his medical skills have the reputation of Asclepius (the god of medicine) among the Egyptians and who was inventor of the art of hewn stone.” Imhotep became the God of healing. Was considered as the first architect, engineer, and physician in Egypt

Inscriptions at the pyramid of King's tomb said Imhotep was filled with wisdom and lived 110 years. Genesis 50:26 "So Joseph died, *being 110 years old.*"

Imhotep was the "Priest of Heliopolis" the Biblical temple of 'On.' **Genesis 41:45** **And Pharaoh called Joseph's name Zaphnath-paaneah (*preserver of life*); and he gave him אֶת־ Asenath (*belonging to Neith*) the daughter of Poti-pherah (*he whom Ra gave*) priest of On, as a wife.** The original text said "Prince of On" not priest of On.

**Question:** What were Imhotep's attributions?



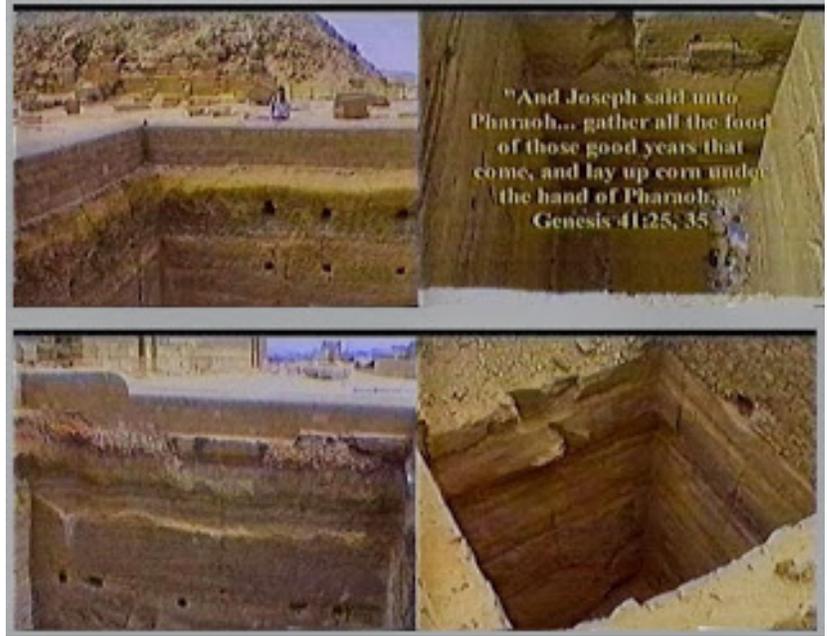
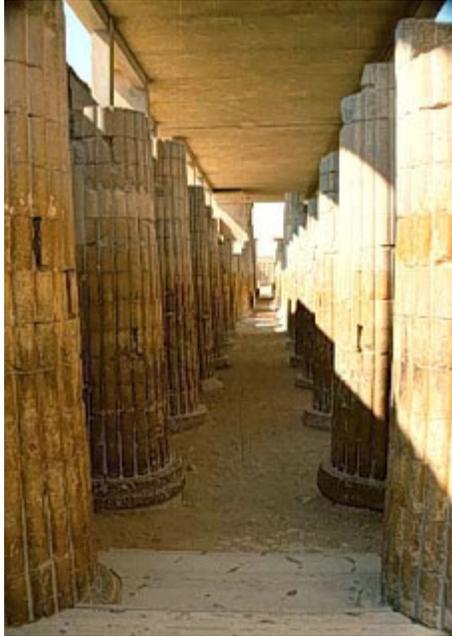
Statue of Imhotep holding a papyrus scroll in his lap

Joseph's canal: El Fayoum, the Venice of Egypt, in the Fayoum Oasis, still named "Bar Yousef." It made this valley fertile for the 7 years of plenty to prepared grain stored.

Imhotep first used stone to make pyramids instead of mud brick. And he constructed the step-pyramids and dressed it in smooth lime stones.

It was in the reign of Djoser, Egypt because truly a great nation, by management of the grains during the famine. There are remnants of huge grain pits. The Saqqara complex has a wall that surrounds it with 13 false doors and one real one. 40 pillars shaped in as corn cobs supported this wall. Each column connected to the main wall form smaller chambers. There are series of very large and deep pits, very much larger than burial chambers. All centers are assessable by tunnels. These were not hidden, thus not tombs. These massive pits are most likely grain storage pits for the years of famine. Also pits were found in pyramids that were filled with grains. This was probably a place the world comes to Egypt to buy grain. By the wall, there were 40 cubicles that were just big enough for a person to stand in to receive their grain and make payments. All the large pits were connected together by tunnels. Grains were found at the floors of these pits. These circumstantial evidence fits Joseph's story.

<http://www.arkdiscovery.com/joseph.htm>



Storage bins for grain

**Question:** Where is Joseph's Tomb today? It is on the outskirts of the West Bank city of Nablus in the Palestinian Authority, near the site of biblical Shechem. It is one of the holiest sites in Judaism as many Jews believe the site to be the final resting place of the biblical patriarch Joseph and his two sons Ephraim and Manasseh. In the years after Israel captured the West Bank in 1967, Jews consolidated their hold on the site. Since 1995, when Nablus was handed over to the Palestinian National Authority, the tomb became a target for violent protests by Arabs against the Israeli government. Several Israeli soldiers were killed at the site and in 2000 the complex was ransacked by an Arab mob. Subsequently, Israel prohibited Jewish visits to the site and the site gradually fell into disrepair. Pressure from Jewish groups led to infrequent visits allowed under IDF protection. Attempts to renovate the site are currently underway.



Joseph's tomb in Shechem located in the Palestinian city of Nablus.



This site is constantly under attack by the Palestinians.

### Do You Know???

1. Jacob made \_\_\_\_ swear to bury him in Canaan.
2. Jacob placed \_\_\_\_ before Manasseh when he blessed them.
3. Judah was compared to a \_\_\_\_.
4. The Messiah came through the line of \_\_\_\_.
5. Zebulun became a haven for \_\_\_\_.
6. Issachar was compared to a \_\_\_\_.
7. Dan was compared to a \_\_\_\_.
8. Gad was known for its \_\_\_\_.
9. Asher was known for its pure \_\_\_\_.
10. Joseph was compared to a fruitful \_\_\_\_.
11. Naphtali was blessed that he will be quick as a \_\_\_\_.
12. Benjamin was compared to a \_\_\_\_.
13. Jacob is buried in the city of \_\_\_\_.
14. Jacob lived in Egypt for \_\_\_\_ years.
15. Joseph was buried in \_\_\_\_.
16. Joseph was \_\_\_\_ years old when he died.
17. Joseph reigned in Egypt for \_\_\_\_ years.
18. Joseph was later buried in \_\_\_\_ when the Israelites left Egypt.
19. Embalming takes \_\_\_\_ days.
20. You should mourn a person for \_\_\_\_ days.

**Answers:**

1. Joseph
2. Ephraim
3. lion
4. Judah
5. ships
6. donkey
7. serpent
8. troops
9. olive oil
10. vine (grapes)
11. deer
12. wolf
13. Hebron
14. 17
15. Egypt
16. 110
17. 80
18. Shechem
19. 40
20. 7



David's Dying Charge to Solomon (1643 painting by Ferdinand Bol)

## Haftorah

In this week's *Haftorah*, King David delivers his deathbed message to his son and successor, Solomon, echoing this week's Torah reading that discusses at length Jacob's parting words and instructions to his sons.

1 Kings 2:1 Now the days of David drew near that he should die; and he warned אֶת־ Solomon his son, saying, 2 I go the way of all the earth: be strong and show yourself a man; 3 And keep אֶת־ charge of יהוה our Elohim and walk in His ways, keep His statutes, His commandments, His judgments and His testimonies, as it is written in the Torah of Moses, that you may prosper in אֵת all that you do אֶת־ and wherever you go: 4 That may continue יהוה אֶת־ His promise which He spoke concerning me saying, If they are watchful, your sons to אֶת־ their ways, to walk before Me בְּאֵמֶת in truth with all their heart and with all their soul, then there will not fail to have a man on the throne of Israel. 5 Also אֶת־ you know אֵת what Joab the son of Zeruah did to me and what he did to the two captains of צְבָאוֹת hosts of Israel, to Abner the son of Ner and to Amasa the son of Jether, who he killed and shed the blood of war in peace and put the blood of war upon his girdle about his loins and in his shoes that were on his feet. 6 Do therefore, according to your wisdom and let not his gray haired head go down to the grave in peace. 7 But show kindness to the sons of Barzillai the Gileadite and let them be of those that eat at your table: for so they came to me when I fled because of Absalom your brother. 8 And, see, you have with you Shimei the son of Gera, a Benjamite of Bahurim, which cursed me with a grievous curse in the day when I went to Mahanaim: but he came down to meet me at the Jordan and I swore to him in בַּיהוה, saying, I will not put you to death with the sword. 9 Now therefore, hold him not guiltless: for you are a wise man and know אֵת what אֶת־ you ought to do to him; but you should bring down אֶת־ his gray haired head, with blood, to the grave. 10 So David slept with his fathers and was buried in the City of David. 11 And the days that David reigned over Israel were forty years: seven years he reigned in Hebron and thirty three years he reigned in Jerusalem. 12 Then sat Solomon upon the throne of David his father; and his kingdom was established greatly. C-MATS

## Brit Chadashah

**Question:** How did Elohim prepare Joseph for saving Egypt and Canaan? Acts 7:9 And the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt: but Elohim was with him, 10 And delivered him out of all his afflictions, and gave him favor and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh king of Egypt; and he made him governor over Egypt and all his house. 11 Now there came a famine over all the land of Egypt and Canaan, and great affliction: and our fathers found no sustenance. 12 But when Jacob heard that there was corn in Egypt, he sent out our fathers first. 13 And at the second time Joseph was made known to his brethren; and Joseph's kindred were made known unto Pharaoh. 14 Then sent Joseph, and called his father Jacob to him, and all his kindred, threescore and fifteen souls. 15 So Jacob went down into Egypt and died, he and our fathers, 16 And were carried over into Sychem, and laid in the sepulcher that Abraham bought for a sum of money of the sons of Emmor the father of Sychem. C-MATS

**Question:** How did Jacob and Joseph walk in faith? They believed that one day Elohim would return them to the Promised Land. **Hebrews 11:21** By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff. **22** By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones. C-MATS

**Question:** How do you as a believer walk in faith? **1 Peter 1:1** Peter, an apostle of Yahusha haMashiach, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, **2** Elect according to the foreknowledge of Elohim the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Yahusha haMashiach: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied. **3** Blessed be the Elohim and Father of our Adonai Yahusha haMashiach, which according to his abundant mercy has begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Yahusha haMashiach from the dead, **4** To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fades not away, reserved in heaven for you, **5** Who are kept by the power of Elohim through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. **6** Wherein you greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, you are in heaviness through manifold temptations: **7** That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perishes, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Yahusha haMashiach: **8** Whom having not seen, you love; in whom, though now you see him not, yet believing, you rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: 9 Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls. C-MATS

**Question:** All the patriarchs gave their children a blessing and a look at the future. What did Yahusha tell his disciples before he died? **John 13:1** Now before the feast of the Passover, when Yahusha knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end. **2** And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him; **3** Yahusha knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from Elohim, and went to Elohim; **4** He rose from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. **5** After that he poured water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded. **6** Then he came to Simon Peter: and Peter said unto him, Master, do you wash my feet? **7** Yahusha answered and said unto him, **What I do you know not now; but you shall know hereafter.** **8** Peter said unto him, You shall never wash my feet. Yahusha answered him, **If I wash you not, you have no part with me.** **9** Simon Peter said unto him, Master, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head. **10** Yahusha said to him, **He that is washed needs not save to wash his feet, but is clean everywhere: and you are clean, but not all.** **11** For he knew who should betray him; therefore said he, **You are not all clean.** **12** So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, **Know you what I have done to you? 13 You call me Teacher and Master: and you say well; for so I am. 14 If I then, your Teacher and Master, have washed your feet; you also ought to wash one another's feet. 15 For I have given you an example that you should do as I have done to you. 16 Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his master; neither he that is sent is greater than he that sent him. 17 If you know these things, happy are you if you do them. 18 I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen: but that the scripture may be fulfilled, He that eats bread with me has lifted up his heel against me. 19 Now I tell you before it comes that when it is come to pass, you may believe that I am he.** C-MATS

## Keeping Promises

**Question:** What is a sign of a good, honest person? One is honest who keeps his promises. In this week's Torah portion, Joseph promises his elderly father Jacob that after he passes away Joseph will make sure Jacob is buried next to his ancestors in Hebron, and not in idolatrous Egypt (where they were currently living). Even though it was risky and difficult to approach the Egyptian king and get him to agree, Joseph did just that - in order to keep his promise and to teach us the value of keeping ours.

### PROMISING START

'ONE MORE DAY!' Liz smiled as she read the scribbled note her younger sister Gail had taped to her door. For the past week, the kid had excitedly been 'counting down' the days left until her birthday - and the days until Liz would take her out to the cool new pizza parlor, like she'd promised. *Well, why not?* thought Liz. She liked her little sister (most of the time, anyway) and they *both* really liked good pizza. The next day came around and Gail was bouncing around the house like a super-ball waiting for Liz to get changed so they could go on their big 'pizza-date.' Then the phone rang. "Liz, it's for you!" Gail yelled "But talk fast okay - 'cuz we've gotta go!" "Hi Liz, it's Tiff. You're never going to believe it. Jan's cousin works at the auditorium and he just called and told her there are five unclaimed VIP seats for this afternoon's Circus Amaze-Us show and he promised to give them to us free if we zip over there right now. I saved one last place in the car for you!" Liz really *couldn't* believe it. The Circus Amaze-Us show was the hit of the season and even if you could afford the tickets - they were next to impossible to get. She was about to say *I'll be right over*, when she felt a tug on her sweater. "Hurry up, Liz. It's time to go," Gail was pleading. Suddenly Liz felt torn in two and her tongue tied in a thousand knots. "Hey, you didn't faint or anything did you, Liz?" came the voice on the other end of the phone."

"Um, no - Tiff, I'm here. Just give me a second, okay?" Liz mumbled and turned to face her little sister's bright, expectant face. "Um, Gail, you really want to go out now, right?" "You bet! Let's go!" "Yeah ... but I got this call now and I'm not so sure if... Maybe, do you think we could like go tomorrow instead?" Liz could hardly watch as her sister's face went from sunny to cloudy to stormy dark. "Not go today? But Liz - today's my *birthday*, and I've been waiting so long." "I know, Gail, but you see, my friends..." "But you PROMISED!!!" The young girl started to cry. "Liz? Where did you go? Are you coming or not?" Tiff asked. Liz wanted so much to go with her friends - yet she knew how much Gail was counting on her and she also knew from experience how bad it felt when someone promises something then backs out. She lifted the phone receiver that suddenly felt as heavy as a lead weight. "Thanks a million, Tiff. You guys go have a great time - but I've got to pass." She thought she heard something like the words 'out of your mind' coming out of the phone as she hung up. "Okay! Let's go!" Liz said, with as big a smile as she could manage. The sisters got to the pizza parlor and as they ate Liz tried her best not to think about the amazing time her friends were having. "Hey, there are all your friends," Gail said, pointing to the door. Liz turned and sure enough, Tiff and the crew were marching in, looking really down. "What are you guys doing *here*?" asked Liz. "Aren't you supposed to be at the show?" "We got there and not only were there no tickets, but the guy who was supposed to give them to us had gone home!"

Promises, promises, promises - you can't count on anybody nowadays, can you?" sputtered Tiff. Liz nodded sympathetically while inside she felt so glad she'd shown her kid sister that she could count on her.

**Question:** What life lesson do you think someone could learn from this story? The way a person keeps his promises says a lot about what kind of person he is. Liz faced a tough choice, but she kept her word and not only made her sister feel good, but she felt good about herself, too.

**Question:** Is there ever a time it's okay not to keep our promises? Though generally we should keep our word even when it's difficult, there could be times that we promise something seriously destructive, either under pressure or by mistake. In such a case, it's okay to back out. If we can, it could be worthwhile to first talk it out with someone whose opinion we respect.

**Question:** What do you think a person could do to avoid breaking promises? One easy thing is not to make them in the first place. Some people who take their word seriously have a practice almost never to promise, but to say 'they will try, but they can't promise.' Of course this is no excuse to take what we say lightly and we should indeed sincerely try to do what we say we will.

**Question:** Is there a way a person could use promises as a tool to better achieve his goals? Once we learn to take our promises seriously, if there is something we know clearly is the right thing to do but we know it will be hard to do - we can promise ourselves (or others) and use the motivating power of the promise to drive us to our goal.

**Spiritual Exercise:** Do not make a promise. Say, "I will try." If you do make a promise, always keep your promise.

### **Resources:**

*The Stone Edition of The Chumash*

*The Complete Messianic Aleph Tav Scriptures C-MATS* [www.AlephTavScriptures.com](http://www.AlephTavScriptures.com)

"Weekly Torah Portion" from [www.aish.com](http://www.aish.com)

*Antiquities of the Jews* by Josephus

*Book of Jasher*

**Joshua 10:13** And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies. Is not this written in the book of Jasher? So the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and hasted not to go down about a whole day.

**2 Samuel 1:18** (Also he bade them teach the children of Judah the use of the bow: behold, it is written in the book of Jasher.)