



Parshas Vayechi 2023, peace and tranquility

The Parsha Perspective is in honor of Eretz Yisroel. May G-d protect our brave soldiers. May G-d return all the hostages. May G-d comfort all those who lost family or friends.

The Parsha Perspective is in honor of the Refuah Shlema of HaRav Amitai Ben Shoshanna and those who need to experience a speedy and complete recovery with G-d's help.

The Parsha Perspective is in loving memory of grandmothers, Gittel Bas Asher and Shoshanna Bas Sholom, and my aunts, Chana Bas Yehuda and Leah Mintche Bas Ya'akov Yosef, along with Edward Ben Efraim, Shlomo Ben Edward, and Yirachmiel Daniel Ben Gedalia. May their souls be uplifted and their memories a blessing.

Our Parsha concludes the first book of the Torah, Sefer Berashis. We begin with Ya'akov living the best seventeen years of his life in Egypt; as the end of his life neared, he called for Yosef to visit him. When Yosef arrived, Ya'akov asked him to swear he would bury him with his parents in Israel. After he swore, Ya'akov then blessed Yosef's two sons, Efraim and Menasha. He elevates them to the status of his sons and as tribes among the Jewish people.

As his days numbered, Ya'akov called his sons together one final time. He blesses each son and assigns them their role as a tribe amongst the Jewish nation. At 147 years old, Ya'akov Avinu passed away peacefully in Egypt.

Yosef receives permission from Pharoah to bury his father in Israel. Many senior Egyptian ministers accompanied Yosef and his brothers as they took their father to his final resting place. He is buried in Chevron, in the Meoras HaMachpelah, next to his parents and grandparents.

At the end of the Parsha, Yosef passes away in Egypt at 110 years old. But Moshe Rabbeinu takes his body out of Egypt as the Jewish nation is finally freed.

However, a question comes to mind: Our Parsha's first words are "*Vayechi Ya'akov - and Ya'akov lived in the land of Egypt.*" But the word "**Vayechi - and helived**" is an interesting choice for the Torah to use when describing how many years Ya'akov lived in Egypt. The Torah could have used a previous term, "*Vayeishev - and he settled in the land of Egypt,*" or "*Vayeihe - and he was in the land of Egypt.*" Why does the Torah use the word "**Vayechi - and he lived**" when stating how many years Ya'akov lived in Egypt?!

The Abarbanel, Rav Yitzchak Ben Yeudah Abarbanel, gives an interesting answer. He writes that one may have thought that Ya'akov would travel down to Egypt to see Yosef but not stay in Egypt for the rest of his life. So, the Torah uses the word Vayechi to indicate that Ya'akov came to Egypt to see Yosef and settled in Goshen.

However, the Ohr Hachaim Hakadosh, Rav Chaim Ben Attar, gives a deeper and more profound explanation. He asks an interesting question; the Pasuk uses Ya'akov's original name but switches in to the next Pasuk. The Parsha begins, "*Vayechi Ya'akov - and Ya'akov lived,*" but the next Pasuk begins, "*Vayikrevu Yemey Yisroel Lamus - and the time of Yisroel's passing came close.*" Why did the Torah switch and use Ya'akov's other name in the next Pasuk?

The Ohr Hachaim answers that Ya'akov's two names represent two levels within the Jewish people as they do for Ya'akov Avinu. The name Yisroel denotes peace and tranquility, something that evaded Ya'akov for most of his life. His name Yisroel was only used three times after Yosef was kidnapped and sold into slavery until they were reunited.

Even after he was told that Yosef was still alive, the Torah used the name Ya'akov because he did not believe them. Only once they explained the story and

showed him what Yosef sent, the Torah wrote *"Vayomer Yisroel - and Yisroel said, my son, Yosef is still alive."*

Yisroel describes a serenity and composure only felt he was with his entire family in their home, the city of Goshen. As the final Pasuk of last week's Parsha writes: *"Vayeshuv Yisroel - and Yisroel settled in the land of Egypt in the city of Goshen."*

Conversely, the name Ya'akov symbolizes chaos, distress and fear, emotions all too familiar to Ya'akov Avinu. Whether spiritual or physical, anxiety, worry and a general uneasiness followed Ya'akov for most of his life. From his brother, Esav, and his father-in-law, Lavan, to his wife, Rachel, taken from him too early and their son, Yosef, kidnapped, his life was filled with hardship and pain.

Yet, the Torah writes that he lived and thrived in spite of his misfortunes and difficulties. Even though he was at peace in Goshen with his family, the Torah chose to use the name and strength that he used to overcome the challenges he faced.

Notwithstanding the troubles and obstacles he experienced, Ya'akov established a family that gave birth to a nation. Their journey, filled with highs and lows brought forth and yielded a people that can succeed and prosper through the peaks and valleys of life.

The Ohr Hachaim writes that the Torah chooses to use the name Ya'akov when describing the best years of his life, for they led him to experience true peace and tranquility. Yes, the hardships he faced were difficult beyond comprehension, but it gave him the recognition of the ultimate serenity.

Hence, Ya'akov wished to share with his children when Moshiach would come when we would experience the ultimate peace and tranquility. Yet, G-d would not allow him to remove our struggle and our ability to experience true G-dliness in its whole Divine form.

But in my humble opinion, the Jewish nation has endured unimaginable pain and grief, leading to unity and oneness like never before. Now, we are ready to exemplify our name, the **Beni Yisroel** and experience the serenity of basking in G-d's Great Glory and share His Oneness with the world.

In our daily life, it is imperative that we realize that our greatest accomplishment would be the continuation of our families, convictions, and beliefs. Our biggest source of pleasure will be our children following in our footsteps with trust and faith in G-d.

Our highest achievement will not be the money in our account or the house we live in but the unity it creates. A family of unique and special people bound together by tradition, purpose, and belief. There is no greater blessing than our children not falling far from our tree, the G-dly tree of life.

**"To try, to fall, to fear, and yet to keep going:
that is what it takes to be a leader. That was Ya'akov, the man who,
at the lowest ebbs of his life, had his greatest visions of heaven."**

*Have a meaningful Shabbos!
Rabbi Sholom Yemini*