

Torah: B'resheet (Genesis) 47:28 – 50:26
Haftarah: M'lakhim Alef (1 Kings) 2:1-12
B'rit Hadashah: Luke 9:1-27

	year 1 47:28-48:22	year2 49:1-26	year3 49:27-50:26
1	47:28 – 31	49:1 – 4	49:27 – 30
2	48:1 – 3	49:5 – 7	49:31 – 33
3	48:4 – 9	49:8 – 12	50:1 – 6
4	48:10 – 13	49:13 – 15	50:7 – 9
5	48:14 – 16	49:16 – 18	50:10 – 14
6	48:17 – 19	49:19 – 21	50:15 – 20
7	48:20 – 22	49:22 – 26	50:21 – 26

and Jacob called to his sons and he said / gather together so I can tell to you what will happen / with you in the last of the days	<i>va'yiqr'a Ya'aqov el-banav va'yómer he'as'fu ve'agíydah lakém et ashér-yiq'ra' et'kem be'akhariyt ha'yamiym</i>	וַיִּקְרָא יַעֲקֹב אֶל-בָּנָיו וַיֹּאמֶר הֲאֶסְפּוּ וְאֶגִּידָה לָכֶם אֶת אֲשֶׁר-יִקְרָא אֶתְכֶם בְּאַחֲרִית הַיָּמִים:
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This chapter is known as “The Last Words of Jacob” or “The Testament of Jacob.” It contains not only blessing, but also curses, censure, praise, and geographical and historical notations. The poetic nature makes it the most difficult to translate in all of Genesis. The two names, Ya'aqov and Yis'raél are each used 5 times, emphasizing the dual character of individual and national aspirations. Three narratives converge here: the nationhood promise to Avraham (12:2) revealed in the sons of Ya'aqov (49:28); the offspring promise to Ya'aqov (28:14); Yosef's story with his brothers and the significance of the dominance of Y'hudah. The tribal order is uniquely presented in a chiasm with Zilpah at the center (C), Bilhah surrounding (B), framed by the 6 sons of Leah and the 2 sons of Rakhel (A).

Aliyah Highlights

- Gen. 49:1-4** Presupposing his death (Ge. 48:21), Ya'aqov sends for his sons. Their individual role is projected into a national distant future: the “last days” (*akhariyt ha'yamiym* - אַחֲרִית הַיָּמִים), a precursor to the prophetic technical term, eschatology. The repetition of “listen” and interchange of relational terms (sons/father, Ya'aqov/ Yisrael) reiterate the imagery. Firstborn of Leah, Re'uven has disqualified himself from leadership, described as “unstable as water” (Is. 57:20).
- Gen. 49:5-7** Shimon and Levi are addressed together, next in line for leadership are disqualified. Levi will regain favor, refreshingly showing that this early tradition is not completely binding – it is their anger that is cursed, not they themselves.
- Gen. 49:8-12** Y'hudah is praised and blessed in striking contrast to the first three. Verbal praise is not only a reference to his name (Ge. 29:35), but most often reserved for God himself. “Father's sons” contrasts Yitz'khaq's blessing “mother's sons” (Ge. 27:29). His growing up (*aliyta* - עָלִיתָ) reflects his ability to address his faults to exercise justice. Most agree on the messianic implications of v.10, though there are no biblical references to “Shiloh” as a messianic title.
- Gen. 49:13-15** Usual order of Yissakhar/Zevulun is reversed here. Z'vulun would become an inland tribe (Asher was coastal). Rabbinic literature would describe Yissakhar engaged in the study of Torah while Z'vulun supported his brothers through commerce.

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5. **Gen. 49:16-18** Dan is the first of the concubine tribes addressed. Dan would become one of the largest tribes (60K+) in the wilderness, but almost non-existent in later history of the land. Ya'aqov's prayer in v. 18 may reflect this struggle.
6. **Gen. 49:19-21** Gad would engage in warfare with its neighbors (Judg. 11, 1Ki. 22:3, 2Ki. 10:33) in the future. Asher will settle in the fertile land of western Galilee (De. 33:34, Josh. 19:24-31). Naftali is symbolized with beauty.
7. **Gen. 49:22-26** Yosef is thematically addressed with 1) attributes (v.22), 2) history (v.23ff), 3) divine protection (v.24ff) and 4) prosperity. There are no records of archer attack. Symbolically, slander is referred to as an arrow. For "Mighty one of Ya'aqov" (aviyr – אַבִּיר) see Is. 49:26, 60:16, Ps. 132:2, 5. Image of God as a shepherd is common (Ge. 48:15).

Theme

Meritocracy – Re'uven was disqualified from leadership by merit, despite his status of Firstborn. Y'hudah arose from his place by his meritorious actions. Perhaps true meritocracy can be achieved by leveling the playing field between the privileged and the disadvantaged through righteous living.

Thought Focus

HaShem the Shepherd: Ya'aqov says that HaShem had been his shepherd all his life (Ge. 48:15), Now, this same shepherd will help Yosef's sons (49:24). But how will this shepherd lead them? The key is in the past - in how Ya'aqov's forefathers walked *before* HaShem. Shepherds don't visibly lead their sheep, but often *drive* them from behind, gently guiding the sheep to walk before the shepherd.

Daily Devotional questions for reflection and application

1. (47:28) Ya'akov and Yosef both expressed confidence in the after-life. What gets you through life's hardships? (Job 19:25-27, 1Co 15:13, 19-20, Gal 2:20, Eph 1:11-14)
2. (48:10) Are God's plans are hidden from your view? Why or why not? (Isa 6:10, Ecc 3:1-8, 2Co 6:2, Isa 49:8, Mat 11:15, Isa 55:6-7)
3. (48:17) Does God's right hand uphold you? (Psa 16:11, Psa 18:35, Psa 98:1, Exo 15:6, 1Ki 22:19, Isa 48:13, Isa 62:8, Mat 20:21-23, Act 7:55-56, Col 3:1-3)
4. (49:1) How do you express the hope that is in you regarding the "last days?" (Jer 46:28, Mic 4:1, Gen 49:10, Dan 12:4, Rev 10:4, 1Pe 3:15, 2Ti 4:2, Luk 12:12, Isa 2:1-4, Deu 29:29, Act 4:8-13)
5. (49:19) Does God reveal his word to you, instructing as to when to attack and when to defend? Do you ask Him for understanding? (Hab 3:16, Mat 16:18, Col 3:16, Deu 6:6-9, 2Ti 2:15)
6. (49:28) Are you comfortable with your place in the Kingdom of God? (Gal 3:28, 1Co 12:14-21, Rom 11:16-21, 1Co 7:17-24, Pro 27:8, Rom 12:3-8)
7. (50:21) Do you work from your worst fears, or your best hopes? (Joh 15:19, 13:34, Mat 28:20, Rev 17:14, Hag 2:4-7, 2Ch 20:14-17, Exo 14:13, 1Jo 4:4)