

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

Binyamin is a ravenous wolf
in the morning he eats prey
and in the evening he divides spoil

*bin’yamiyn ze’ev yit’raf
ba’boqer yokal ad
ve’la’érev ye’khaleq shalal*

בְּיָמֵינוּ זֶאֱבִי טֹרֵף
בַּבֹּקֶר יֹאכַל עֵד
וּלְעֶרֶב יַחַלֵּק שָׁלָל:

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. 49:27-30** This prophecy over Binyamin does not seem to match his image in the story of Yosef. The contrast of morning and evening express continual, repetitive action (Ps. 92:3). Ya’aqov’s last command to his sons is to bury him in Makhpelah, purchased in The Land by Avraham.
- Gen. 49:31-33** The death/burial of Rivkah and Leah had not been stated until now. Ya’aqov’s death is described with traditional words of respect.
- Gen. 50:1-6** Yosef’s immediate response to his father’s passing is unique. In all of scripture, only Ya’aqov and Yosef were embalmed. At Yosef’s request, it was physicians, not priests who embalmed his father, disconnecting the procedure from any pagan context. He was given royal Egyptian honors, and likely the same 30-day mourning period later observed for Aharon (Nu. 20:29) and Moshe (De. 34:8). The request to “go up” to bury his father was made to the court, not Pharaoh himself.
- Gen. 50:7-9** The funeral procession was vast, and secure. Leaving children and livestock hints at an undercurrent of anxiety regarding a tenuous return.
- Gen. 50:10-14** The first stage of the funeral was a public ceremony, including 7-days of Egyptian rites. Then the brothers fulfill their father’s last request (Ge. 49:29-32), burying him in Hebron/Makhpelah. Then they returned to Egypt.
- Gen. 50:15-20** As the loss of the patriarch becomes reality, family cohesion weakens and the brothers’ fear Yosef’s retribution, proving Ya’aqov never knew the details of their actions. Their third-party approach transitions to face-to-face, emphasizing their relationship as “servants of HaShem” (v. 17) rather than their brotherhood. Once again, Yosef’s noble character and personal theology triumphs over the human desire for vengeance – HaShem is sovereign!
- Gen. 50:21-26** Yosef’s statement of care hints at a deteriorating situation for Yis’rael. 110 years was the ideal lifespan in ancient Egypt. Living to see four generations was a sign of reward. To have children “born on the knees of” someone is to legitimize progeny (Ge. 30:3, 48:12). Yosef does not

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ask to be buried in The Land immediately like his father, but is embalmed, again hinting at unfavorable conditions. That HaShem will “surely remember you” (*paqod yif’qod* – פָּקֹד יִפְקֹד) – said twice – is a profession of faith that HaShem will intervene in human affairs. We know that the oath made here with the people was fulfilled when his bones were carried out in the Exodus (Ex. 13:19) and that he was eventually buried in Shekhem (Josh. 24:32/Ge. 33:19). There is no fanfare or honors at Yosef’s death, as there was for his father. The sense is foreboding and heavy with anticipation of enslavement.

Thoughts Focus

Prophecy is descriptive, not prescriptive: Yis’rael’s words to Binyamin are tribal, not individual. In this story, Binyamin is more lamblike than like a “ravenous wolf.” Yet future events will prove this out. In Judges 3:15, the first savior and judge of Yisra’el, Ehud, was from this tribe, which also followed Devorah to war (Judg. 5:14), and mustered 26k skilled warriors in civil war (Judg. 20:15-25, 1Ch. 8:40, 12:2). Two of David’s heroes were Binyamini (2Sa. 23:27-29), as was Sha’ul, the first king (1Sa. 9:1).

Yosef’s Theology in a nutshell (Ge. 50:19-20): Do not be ruled by fear or by vengeance (Le. 19:18). It is arrogant to usurp the prerogative of HaShem, to whom vengeance belongs. Moreover, HaShem may use human intentions, actions and their consequences – even evil ones – as the instrument for ultimate good beyond the desire, knowledge or awareness of the people involved (Pr. 16:9, 19:21, 20:24)

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 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)