

Shiur L'Yom Shishi¹

[Friday's Study]

READINGS: ***Torah Vayechi:*** **Genesis 49:29- 50:26**
 Haftarah: **I Kings 2:6-12**
 Brit Chadasha: **I Peter 1:20 - 2:1**

God will surely visit you.

[Genesis 50:25]

Today's Meditation is Psalm 137:7-9;

This Week's Amidah Prayer Focus is Petition #10, *Tzaddikim* [Men Who Do God's Will]

Vayetzav otam – Then he charged them ... *ani ne'esaf el-ami* – I am being gathered unto my people Genesis 49:29a

Knowing his vanishing point was rapidly approaching, the last patriarch of our nation - Ya'akov [KJV 'Jacob'] - called his sons to his bedside. 'Gather around now', he said, 'and I will tell you what will befall you in the aftertime of days'. The dying patriarch then called each young man born of his seed forward one-by-one, and spoke a few cryptic and/or allegorical words concerning that particular son's life, legacy, and progeny. With brutal honesty he processed through the lot of them - describing their personal potential, strength, personality flaws, and sin proclivities. He likened one to a lion, another to a donkey. He described one as being like a deer, another a wolf; and yet another as a serpent. He described one as being like the bough of a spreading tree, another being a troop, another as a harbor for ships, and yet another as a bread producer. With many words he exhorted and/or admonished them.

Torah records every single word that Ya'akov spoke over his sons that day. Students of Torah read his deathbed blessings word for word every year at this time. Why? What are modern readers expected to make of these striking - yet somewhat surreal - pronouncements that Ya'akov spoke over his sons? What possible relevance are the words our last patriarch uttered three millennia ago over people we have never met supposed to have to us today?

Consider the context. Up to this point in Torah the focus has been on our patriarchs and their individual life journeys. From this point forward, the focus will shift from the individual and his relationship with his Creator, the environment, and his fellow man, to our NATIONAL calling, mission, and destiny. We need to know who we are supposed to colobar with. We are not to expect them to be perfect. We

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are not to be shocked - or outraged - when they behave badly. We are a people. We are on the same team. We rise and fall together. While we need to see the glorious reservoir of potential that the Holy One has deposited in each of them - we must also be aware of, navigate around, and compensate for, their personality quirks, their distraction and seduction triggers, their *dark energy-corrupted* areas, and their sin-proclivities. As Torah puts it: “*Kol eleh shivtei Yisrael – all these are tribes of Israel.*” **Genesis 49:28**. For better or for worse, we are in this together. We each have our perspective – and our issues. We may not agree on much of anything. We may not even like each other. But as goes ‘the least of these my brethren’, so go we all. We are, indeed, our brother's keeper. We are not lone rangers. We are not competing sects. We are FAMILY.

The Vanishing Point

After speaking a word or two over each of his sons – and their tribes - Ya’akov extracted a pledge from them all that they would not bury his remains in Egypt, but would instead take his body back to Eretz Yisrael and bury him in the cave at Machpelah alongside his grandparents Avraham and Sarah, his parents Yitzchak and Rivkah, and his wife Leah. **Genesis 49:29-33**. Then, at the age of 147 years, the last of the patriarchs took the two final actions of his mortal life. First, he drew his feet up into the bed, then he breathed his last. His chest wall ceased to rise and fall with the ingress and egress of breath. The physical organ shortsighted physicians of the western world defines as his ‘heart’ ceased to beat, and blood ceased to flow through his arteries and veins. *Rigor mortis* began to set in on his now empty body. His organs, systems, and cells begin their journey of return to the dust from which they had come. At that moment, Torah tells us, *vayei’aseif el-amin* – *i.e.* he was gathered to his people.

Remember, it is all part of the Holy One’s Grand ‘Covenant End Game’ Plan of Redemption and Restoration. As the prophet declares:

***Behold, the days are coming, says the Holy One,
that I will bring back My people Yisrael and Yehudah from captivity,
says the Holy One, and I will cause them to return
to the land that I entrusted to their fathers, and they will abide there.***
[Jeremiah 30:3]

Chazak! Chazak!

We have been studying the Creator’s book of beginnings - the epicenter of all revelation - now for 3 months. How can we even begin to summarize the important truths this ancient has taught us? This book has been laying out for us the foundational elements of *what it means for a human being to have a relationship with the Creator of the Universe in real time*. This book has shown us *the inerrant brilliance of our Creator’s Mind*. It has built in us a foundation of *complete*

confidence in the wisdom of His Divine Plan - for Creation in general, for mankind in particular, for our families specifically, and for each individual that has ever been or ever will issue forth through the bloodline of Noach.

Perhaps more than anything, the first book of Torah has shown us *the awesome power of our Creator's spoken Words*. His words, we have discovered, are nothing less than the *essential building blocks of Creation*. They are *Divine Energy*. They are Seed, brimming with generations – indeed eons – of Life. The Words of the Holy One are the Ultimate Power Source that fuels, directs, sustains, invisibly but inexorably coordinates - and when necessary auto-corrects - absolutely everything in the Heavens and on the Earth. They reverberate throughout space, time and matter. They send out pulses of energy that keep producing, reproducing, and magnifying that which the Holy One designs in His Brilliant Mind. What kind of words does a Creator speak? He speaks words of CREATION. He speaks words of BLESSING. He speaks words of CALLING. He speaks words of COVENANT COMMITMENT. And He speaks WORDS OF FOOL-PROOF INSTRUCTION for anyone desiring to live a real life, in real ways, in real time.

What is more, in *Sefer B'reshit* the Holy One has introduced us to *Divine Calling* and *Divine Empowerment*, PURPOSE, DESTINY, and MISSION. In this *sefer* He has also taught us the most significant and worthwhile thing we can do during our brief stay upon the Earth. It is not to amass great wealth. Nor is it to attain great power or accomplish great feats. Nor is it to perform random acts of what we or other men might think of as kindness or philanthropy. The most significant and worthwhile thing we can do on earth, we have learned, is *to listen very carefully for, and to conform our thoughts, words, and actions to the Words uttered by the Divine Voice*. Through the inspired narratives and Divine declarations of *B'reshit*, you see, the Holy One has taught us how glorious and world changing it is for a human being to *sh'ma* our Creator's Voice. When we make that our priority, we have discovered, we become empowered to live lives that bring honor and glory to Him, not to us, in the eyes of our fellow men. On the other hand, in *B'reshit* the Holy One has also shown us the ultimate folly of, and the inevitable negative consequences that flow into our lives, our families, and our world from, choosing to follow ways that seem right or wise in our own eyes instead of living according to His Brilliant instructions.

***A Dramatic Change in Focus Lies Just Over The Horizon:
The Next Phase of the Grand Redemptive and Restorative Plan Awaits***

It is only with these foundational understandings of what covenant with the Creator of the Universe involves well in hand that we can hope to be successful in moving on into the teachings of the subsequent books of Torah. Those books, you see, will

start from the premise that we like our ancestors Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya'akov have both an *intimate relationship with our Creator* and *all the Divine Favor we can ever hope for* by virtue of the eternal truths in Messiah that were supernaturally projected upon earth out of time for our ancestors at *Moriyah* [Genesis 22] and at the *well of Charan* [Genesis 24], at *Beit-El* [Genesis 28], and as we have studied more recently at *Dotan* [Genesis 37], in *the Egyptian palace of Tzafanat-Paneach* [Genesis 44-45] and in the sanctuary our ancestors called *Goshen* [Genesis 47].

Rooted and grounded in these truths we will, in subsequent books of Torah, find ourselves *getting to know our Creator* at deeper and deeper levels, as we focus more and more on the wonderful things that the Holy One has laid out for His intimate friends to *think about, talk about, do* and *abstain from doing* in order that we might fulfill the grand destiny and every redemptive purpose for which we were created and called into relationship with Him in the first place.

While the Great *Sinaitic Mitzvah Download* will be the primary focus of the four remaining books of Torah, that Download will presuppose the existence of, build upon, and color in the details of the Avrahamic covenant and *the entire Genesis Revelation stream*. That is why the Holy One did not begin Torah with the '10 Commandments', or in fact with any of the '*thou shalt*' and '*thou shalt not*' of the Sinaitic discourse. Had He done so, the Torah might perhaps fairly be considered 'law' – a list of dos and don'ts. Had that been the way the Holy One gave us the Torah it might have been reasonable to conclude – as theologians both of Judaism and of Christianity have long been wont to do - that the 'dos and don'ts' of the Sinaitic covenant were intended to be *the prerequisites to establishing a relationship with God*. If Torah had begun with a list of dos and don'ts Torah would at its essence look like the form of 'works-based righteousness system' it has often been mistakenly described to be. But this is not what happened at all. Before announcing any *dos* or *don'ts* at Sinai, the Holy One spent *50 long attention-getting chapters* first *prophesying over* and *prophetically empowering* us, and then *meticulously and lovingly laying out for us the principles of relationship with Him*. Through the lives of the ancients and the *avot* He gave us example after example demonstrating how ordinary humans - *despite being sinful, imperfect, human beings* from the beginning of the process through the end, can not only *experience* but actually *abide forever* in relationship with Him.

The Holy One taught us that man was never intended to start a relationship with His Creator with the dos and don'ts of Sinai in mind – but is instead supposed to start His Relationship with His Creator with '*In the Beginning ...*' in mind. He taught us that before we start focusing our attention on and exerting our energy in

attempting to ‘fulfill’ what the world calls His ‘commandments’ we are supposed to let Him work a sign and wonder in us - establishing an intimate relationship with us through the medium of our surrender to the eternal Messianic truths evident in the geography and the experiences of *Eden*, in *the cry of Hevel’s blood*, in *Kayin’s ‘mark’*, in *Noach’s ark*, in *the bow that appeared in the clouds after the Flood*, in *the call of and blessing over the life of Avraham*, in *the bread and wine served by Melchizedek*, in *the ram miraculously provided at Moriyah*, in *the bride miraculously provided at the well of Charan*, in *the portal to Heaven experience of Ya’akov at Beit-El*, and so forth and so on through the Book of Genesis.

You see, Dear Reader, before the Holy One gave His people the very first ‘commandment’ [which will by the way be 12 chapters into the Book of Exodus, and will, interestingly enough, have to do with trusting in the blood of the Passover lamb] the Holy One made sure we had – if we only had ears to hear - *a full-fledged understanding of the kind of relationship with Him necessary to make the ‘commandments’ he gives to us as gifts of love become far more than ‘law’ to us*. If we have the kind of relationship with the Holy One that was modeled for us by Avraham, by Yitzchak and Ya’akov the effort we spend learning and walking out the so-called ‘commandments’ of the Holy One during the course of our lives will be *the farthest thing from legalism that the human mind can conceive*.

An Illustration

Let me explain what I am talking about by way of illustration. Imagine two people – potential business partners – meet for the first time. At the meeting one person, the stronger personality, does all the talking. He lays out all the rules of what the other person has to do to become and remain his business partner, and makes it clear there are to be no deviations and no excuses whatever, and that if the other party misses the mark just once, the partnership is over. If the other person accepts this ‘deal’ he condemns himself to a lifestyle of legalism, and dooms himself to failure.

This is analogous to the way many people approach what they call the ‘commandment’ passages of Torah. But that does not mean that is the way Torah is intended to be. In fact the Holy One gave us the book of Genesis [and, for that matter the first 18 chapters of the Book of Exodus] as both an *introduction to* and a *foundation upon which to hang* the ‘commandments’ of Torah. Think of the ‘commandments’ of Torah sort of like an upper-level course of study, for which completion of the study of the book of Genesis is an absolutely mandatory prerequisite. The ‘commandment’ passages are not given – nor are they intended to be either studied or applied - in a vacuum. They are to be understood, studied, and implemented in the context of a Greater Plan, a Greater Vision, a Greater

Empowerment – and as a natural progression of the kind of Vibrant, Pre-existing, Ever-Deepening Covenant Relationship that men like Chanoch, Noach, Avraham, Yitzchak, Ya’akov and Yosef modeled for us in the stories that form the narrative of the scroll of *B’reshit*.

Imagine two different people from those mentioned in the above illustration – but still potential business partners – meet for the first time. At the meeting one person, again the stronger personality, introduces himself, and tells the other, in absolute sincerity, how much potential for greatness he sees in, and how much he believes in, and cares for, and wishes the best for, him or her. Then imagine that, in passionate and fascinating language the stronger partner proceeds to tell the other person all not only about *who he is* but also how he has related to, and become close friends with, all the other business partners he has had in the past. Next imagine that over a period of months the stronger personality communicates with the other regularly, proving himself over an extended period of interactions and life experiences to be wise, caring, and trustworthy. Imagine the two become close, close friends. Imagine they talk and do so much together that one with the weaker personality begins to think like the one with the stronger personality, and begins to find great joy and fulfillment in just walking with and relating to the stronger personality.

Next, imagine the one with the weaker personality begins to trust the stronger person wholeheartedly, and to realize the stronger person not only wants only his or her good, but is wise enough to know what will – and will not be – good for him or her, and is strong enough to even make good come about through the weaker person’s mistakes. Now, imagine that, once this type of relationship exists, the stronger person begins to teach the other person, through example after example, illustration after illustration, and real-life experience after real-life experience, how a person can engage in concrete actions that will help the person not only become a successful, fulfilled, prosperous, and happy business partner, but the best, happiest, and most productive human being he or she can be.

That is what Torah is like. First come *understanding, trust, and relationship*. Only then do the things people have come to call ‘commandments’ make any sense. The things in Torah people call ‘commandments’, you see, have nothing to do with *establishing* relationship. They *flow from relationship*, and deal with fulfilling one’s potential, purpose and destiny in life – not in earning the stronger covenant partner’s favor.

Back to Today’s Aliyah

And what all happens in the last aliyah of the great book we call ‘Genesis’? Quite

a lot actually. First of all we say goodbye to our ancestor Ya'akov of blessed memory. Ya'akov is now ready to cross through the portal called death – the narrow channel that lies between life on earth and the realm of the eternal. Here is how Torah records his departure:

V'yechal Ya'akov l'tzavot et-b'nav

When Ya'akov made an end of charging his sons,

vaye'esof raglav el-hamitah

he gathered up his feet into the bed,

vayigva vaye'asef el-amav

and yielded up the spirit, and was gathered to his people.

[Genesis 49:33]

Ya'akov's voice fell silent. There would be no more words. There would be no more *Modeh Ani*'s. There would be no more *Ani ma'anim*'s². There would be no more calling the sons to *teshuvah* – or leading the family in prayer. There would be no more pithy, fatherly proverbs. There would be no more smiles, no more laughter, and no more tears. Ya'akov had made the most of his appointed time to live; now it was his appointed time to die. He laid down on his bed, and got very still. He exhaled a long, final breath. And suddenly, his spirit soared in unseen realms, and his age-ravaged body knew *refuah shelaymah*. The last of the Patriarchs was no more.

The reality of what he had just lost hit Yosef like a ton of bricks. He had lost his father once - for twenty-two long years. Now, he had lost him again. He fell on the face that had shone on him such favor. With his right hand he gently closed the lids of the first eyes into which he had ever gazed. His tears flowed like rain. He kissed the beloved cheek over and over, until it grew cold, and he could kiss it no more. Goodbye, Dear Father. Take your rest, now – and may it be sweet. It won't be long, in the great scheme of things, until we meet again.

Arrangements Must Be Made

The burden – or should I say the honor – of making the arrangements for the interment of Ya'akov's earthly remains fell upon Yosef. He was the organizer. He was the administrator. He was the businessman. He had both the means and the right connections. He understood the ramifications of the fact that Ya'akov's death occurred on Egyptian soil. He knew what Egypt's laws required regarding the handling and disposition of bodily remains. Yosef gave the order the law of the land required – and his father's body was embalmed.

² Maimonides' 12th 'Principle of Jewish Faith, this daily declaration is *Ani ma'amin b'emunah sh'leima b'viat ha-Mashiach* – i.e. *I trust with complete emunah in the coming of the Messiah ... V'af al pi sheyitmach'meiha* - *And even though he tarries ... im kol zeh achakeh lo b'kol yom sheyavo* - *nevertheless each day I wait expectantly for his coming.*

V'yachantu ha-rof'im et-Yisra'el

and the physicians embalmed Yisra'el.

[Genesis 50:2]

Yosef then arranged for his father to receive two funerals - one in Egypt (with 70 days of mourning, in the Egyptian style), and one in the land of Kana'an (with 7 days of mourning, in the Hebrew style).

Vayimle'u-lo arba'im yom ki ken yimle'u yemei ha-chanutim

Forty days were fulfilled for him, for that is how many the days it takes to embalm.

vayivku oto Mitzrayim shiv'im yom

The Mitzrim wept for him for seventy days.

[Genesis 50:2]

In fulfillment of his promise to his father Ya'akov took pains to bury Ya'akov with Leah, and with his father, mother, grandfather, and grandmother, in the cave of Machpelah. Here is the Biblical account of Ya'akov's Hebrew funeral:

Yosef went up to bury his father; and with him went up all the servants of Pharaoh, the

Zakenim of his house, all the Zakenim of the land of Mitzrayim,

all the house of Yosef, his brothers, and his father's house.

Only their little ones, their flocks, and their herds, they left in the land of Goshen.

First Stop - The Threshing Floor of Atad

The burial procession of Ya'akov contained a great many Egyptian dignitaries. The text says it included four groups of non-Hebrews: 1. *all the servants of Pharaoh*; 2. *all the Elders of the land of Mitzrayim*; 3. *chariots*; and 4. *horsemen*. This group could not be expected to travel with the bereaved family all the way to Hebron. They apparently merely escorted the bereaved ones to just beyond the Egyptian border, and held a ceremony before returning to their positions and work in Egypt. The text describes the place where they stopped as *'the threshing floor of Atad, which is beyond the Jordan'*. Torah says: *there they lamented with a very great and sore lamentation*. The mourning ceremony attended by these dignitaries was so intense that the Kena'ani living in the area said: This is *ha-evel kaved l'Mitzrayim* – *i.e. the heavy wailing of the Egyptians*.

Keep this scene in mind as we prepare to go into the second *sefer* of Torah. The next time a group of Hebrews leave Egypt carrying a coffin will also be a day of *ha-evel kaved l'Mitzrayim* – *i.e. the heavy wailing of the Egyptians* – alas, for very different reasons. Oh, and by the way, remember also the prophetic presence of the chariots and the horsemen. We will also see them again the next time the Hebrews take their leave of Pharaoh's domain.

The Final Leg of the Journey - From Atad's Threshing Floor to the Cave of Machpelah In the Shade of the Oaks of Mamre

After the Egyptians turned back, Yosef and his brothers pressed on. The route they took from the threshing floor of Atad *beyond the Jordan* – i.e. in the Trans-Jordan region - is not stated. But their destination - and their mission - was clear:

Vaya'asu vanav lo ken ka'asher tzivam

His sons did as he had instructed them.

Vayis'u oto v'nav art'zah Kena'an

His sons carried him into the land of Kana'an,

vayikbeiru oto b'mearat s'deh ha-Machpelah

and buried him in the cave of the field of Machpelah,

asher kanah Avraham et ha-sadeh l'achuzat-kever

that Avraham bought with the field, for a possession of a burying-place,

me'et Efron haChiti al-penei Mamre

from Efron the Hittite, facing Mamre.

[Genesis 50:12-13]

Of Fear and Forgiveness

After Ya'akov/Yisrael's burial was accomplished Yosef and his brothers completed the reconciliation they began approximately 20 years earlier. Here is the Biblical account of this event:

***When Yosef's brothers saw that their father was dead,
they said, "It may be that Yosef will hate us,
and will fully pay us back for all of the evil that we did to him.***

Seventeen years previously Yosef had forgiven the brothers unilaterally – without them even knowing who he was, much less repenting of their sin or *asking him for forgiveness*. He forgave them not as a response to any act of contrition or overture of reconciliation on their part, but proactively, as an act of Covenant faithfulness. He forgave them simply because forgiveness of every insult, offense, or wrong is what the Holy One requires of – and inspires in - a son of the Covenant. He was not being magnanimous; he was just being faithful to the Holy One's direction. But it certainly looked like magnanimity to his brothers, who had never even sniffed, much less caught, the thermal drafts of that particular nuance of Covenant life before. His announcement of forgiveness and release caught them totally by surprise. As a result none of them had ever repented to Yosef concerning either what they had thought about him, what they had said to and about him, what they had conspired to do to him, or what they had done to him. They had not repented of the *malice* and *ill will* they had felt toward him. They had not repented of the *eyerolls*, the *dagger stares*, the *mocking tone*, the *name-calling*, or the *lashon ha-ra*

they had directed at him. They had not repented of laying in wait for him. They had not repented of stripping him naked, *beating him*, and *throwing him in a pit*. They had not repented for laughing and eating while he screamed for someone – anyone – to come to his aid. They had never repented of debating, while he was in the pit, whether it would be more advantageous to kill him or to sell him off as a slave. They had never repented of dividing twenty pieces of silver between themselves as he was being dragged off in chains to a life of slavery to strangers in a foreign land. They had never repented of covering up his true fate – and probable continued existence - from his father, his beloved younger whole brother Binyamin, and everyone who knew him and might have come looking for him. They had only been *external objects of forgiveness*; not active partakers of it. They had been incidental beneficiaries of forgiveness, but never partners in it. As a result, they had never felt the true power of forgiveness. They had never actually received or acknowledged forgiveness in any meaningful way. They had not embraced it. They had not been changed by it. They had never made *mikveh* in forgiveness' rushing streams of living water. They had never their guilt and shame washed away as far as the east is from the west. They had never seen their sins, which were as scarlet, turn white as snow before their very eyes. It was time. At long, long last, it was finally time.

*They sent a message to Yosef, saying,
"Your father commanded before he died, saying, "So you are to say to Yosef,
'Now please forgive the disobedience of your brothers, and their sin,
because they did evil to you.'
Now, please forgive the disobedience of the servants of the God of your father."
Yosef wept when they spoke to him.
His brothers also went and fell down before his face;
and they said, "Behold, we are your servants."
[Genesis 50:16-18]*

Is there anyone YOU need to ask forgiveness from, Beloved? Is there anyone you have harbored anger or ill-will toward? Is there anyone you have hated instead of loved, cursed instead of blessed, or mocked instead of encouraged? Is there anyone with whom you have been impatient, or in relation to whom you have behaved selfishly? Is there anyone you have called names? Is there anyone to whom you have attributed derogatory or insulting labels? Is there anyone concerning whom you have spoken *lashon hara*? Is there anyone concerning whom you have rushed to judgment without the confirmation of two or three competent eyewitnesses? Just as, from his deathbed, Ya'akov pleaded with his ten eldest sons to ask forgiveness from Yosef, is there anyone your Father in Heaven is now pleading with you to approach, repent to, and seek forgiveness from?

In the case of Yosef and his brothers, it took 39 years for the wounds to finally heal. But at the end, the wounds were indeed healed. And in the end, Yosef 'spoke

kindly' to the very brothers who once could not speak a word of *shalom* to him.

*Yosef said to them,
"Don't be afraid, for am I in the place of God?
As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good,
to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save many people alive.
Now therefore don't be afraid. I will nourish you and your little ones."
Vayenachem [and he comforted them],
Vayedaber al-libam [and he spoke kindly to them].
[Genesis 50:19-21]*

***The Light of Mashiach Ben Yosef Grows Dim –
But If We Who Remain Will Just Keep the Dream and Vision Alive,
That Light Will Never Go Out!***

As the curtain closes on *Sefer B'reshit* Yosef himself is preparing his brothers – and the world - for his own imminent death. He knows that he is the *lone candle burning* in the land of Mitzrayim. He knows that his life represents the thin *techelet* thread that separates order from chaos, hope from despair, the 'clean' from the 'unclean', the 'holy' from the 'profane', and light from darkness. He knows that when he dies all hell is going to break loose in Egypt. But die he must – for this too is part of the Holy One's Grand Plan for the Redemption of Mankind as a species and for the Restoration of Creation to its intended Eden-like state of beauty, fruitfulness, and harmony. Yosef is okay with that. He will lay down his life voluntarily. It will constitute his ultimate act of love for his Creator, for his family, for his species, and for the world. Redemption and restoration cannot come, you see, unless a Mashiach ben Yosef, like a grain of wheat, falls to the earth and dies.

Before Yosef expires, however, he gathers his family around him and prophesies to them. He gives his 'upper room discourse'. He wants them all to know – and hold onto the promise - that *a great visitation of the Holy One is to come*. And, to make absolutely sure this promise is tangible and unforgettable, he asks of his brothers and kinsmen the only favor he ever asked of anyone his entire life. He asks them to promise that when the Holy One brings them out of Egypt, they would remember him, and carry his bones with them to the Beautiful Land. As he puts it:

anochi met v'Elohim pakod yifkod etchem

"I am dying, but God will surely visit you,

v'he'elah etchem min-ha-aretz hazot

and He will bring you up out of this land

el-ha-aretz asher nish'ba l'Avraham l'Yitzchak ul'Ya'akov

to the land which he swore to Avraham, to Yitzchak, and to Ya'akov.

And lest there be no confirming witness for this prophecy, Yosef provided his own *corroborating testimony*, by way of having his brothers swear an oath:

Pakod yifkod Elohim etchem
When the Holy One 'visits' you - He surely will -

v'ha-alitem et-atzmotai mizeh
carry up my bones from here.
[Genesis 50:25]

The Promise of a Great 'Visitation' to Come

Yosef promises that the Holy One will not leave Israel – or the world – orphaned, but has appointed a time to make a very special ‘visit’ that will shake the world, and cause bone to come together with bone, as it were. The Hebrew verb our English Bibles use to frame this promise is ‘visit. That is a nice word, of course; but it does not begin to describe what the Hebrew word Yosef actually used – i.e. *paqad* – entails. The first usage of *paqad* in Torah is found in Genesis 21:1, where the Holy One is said to have ‘visited’ [Hebrew, *paqad*] Sarah as He had promised. As you will recall, in Genesis 18 the angel of the Holy One had advised Sarah that He would return ‘at the appointed time’ [Hebrew, *l'moed*], at which point Sarah would have a son. **Genesis 18:14**. In Genesis 21, as a result of the prophesied ‘visit’, Sarah indeed gave birth to a son – Yitzchak. The Hebrew verb *paqad* can thus be seen to involve a *very personal, very purposeful, very impactful interaction* that radically changes the status quo relative to the one ‘visited’. Hopefully, you can see that there are, hidden in the verb *paqad*, glorious – if not overwhelming - aspects of *manifest personal presence, of face-to-face interaction, of intimate inspection, of accountability, of re-assignment, of reprioritization, and of protocols for follow-up communion*. It is coming, Beloved! The Creator of the Universe is going to make a grand, impactful ‘visit’ to earth that will shake the planet to its foundations, and its people to their core – and change everything forever. He will not leave us orphaned. He will come to us – like rain, spring rain. He has torn us, but He will heal us. He has dispersed us, but He will regather us – and like harvesters, we will come to Him rejoicing, bringing our sheaves!

The End of the Beginning; The Beginning of the End

And then with one brief sentence the *Ruach HaQodesh* and the scribe we know as Moshe bring *Sefer B'reshit* [our Book of Beginnings] to a bittersweet end.

Vayamot Yosef ben-me'ah va'esor shanim
So Yosef died, being one hundred ten years old,

vayachantu oto vayisem ba'aron b'Mitzrayim
and they embalmed him, and he was put in an ark³ in Mitzrayim.

³ The word our English Bibles translate as coffin in this passage is the Hebrew word *aron*, *alef, resh, vav, nun sofit*, Strong's Hebrew word #727, pronounced *aw-rone*'. This is the same word translated as ‘ark’ in Exodus 25 [referring to the ‘ark of the covenant’]. It is used to refer to any wooden chest or box built to contain something precious. The root word is *arah, alef, resh, hey*,

Oh my! A prince of Egypt *lying in state* – unburied? This presents a picture that constituted an unforgivable scandal in ancient Egypt, the land of the pyramids and mummies - an unburied coffin! Yosef's remains are - horror of horrors - placed in a box, and not interred in any other way. But note the Hebrew text calls the particular box in which Yosef's bones were placed an *aron* – *i.e.* an ark. We will see that kind of box again – not too far from now.

Perhaps the death of Yosef is not as much an ending as a beginning. Something definitely seems to have been left *undone, unfinished, incomplete*. While the book is at an end, there is a definite sense that *the story is far from over*. Bones in the *aron* cry out to the Holy One ...

Do not forget Yosef!

Do not forget Your Promise!

We do not belong here!

Please, Please, Holy One ... Do not leave us here in Egypt!

And every time during the next 300 or so years the brothers of Yosef, or their children, or their children's children, passed by that unburied coffin on their way to build Pharaoh's cities and storehouses, if they listened with their heart, they could hear these words:

I die; but the Holy One will surely visit you,

and He will bring you out of this land

unto the land which he promised to Avraham, to Yitzchak, and to Ya'akov.

...

The Holy One will surely visit you;

and when He does,

carry up my bones from hence.

And so the Great Writer's pen halts on the Scroll of Life – if only for a few moments. *Sefer B'reshit* ends as it begins - with a statement of *pure faith*. Be strengthened by this message Beloved! The Holy One our God has an end game – and it is glorious! The Great and Powerful God who created the heavens and the earth *will surely visit us!* He *will surely bring us out of the lands of exile* in which we find ourselves. He *will surely take us, like a bridegroom takes a newlywed bride, into a new home*. And that home will surely be none other than the land He promised to Avraham, and to Yitzchak, and to Ya'akov.

Behold, the Bridegroom is coming. Make yourself ready. Prepare your hearts for

Strong's Hebrew word #717, pronounced *aw-raw'*, and picturing someone plucking grapes or gathering a crop.

the day of His visitation. *Chazak, chazak, v'nitchazeik.*

Questions For Today's Study

1. What was Ya'akov/Yisrael's last instruction to his sons?
2. Describe the [a] burial arrangements and events; and [b] mourning timetables, that followed Ya'akov/Yisrael's death.
3. In Genesis 50:24 and 25 Yosef prophesies twice to his brothers that "*the Holy One will surely visit you.*" Do a study on the Hebrew word that our English Bibles translate as "visit", as follows:

[i] In Strong's look up the Hebrew word translated as "visit" in these verses.

[ii] Write the Hebrew word, in Hebrew letters, with vowel points.

[iii] Write the transliteration and pronunciation of this word.

[iv] In Gesenius' Lexicon, find the *pa'al/qal* form of this verb (or as close to it as you can get), and write the primary definition of that verb.

[v] After reviewing the other notes of Gesenius regarding this verb, write a paragraph (at least three sentences) describing what you think Yosef was telling his brothers the Holy One was going to do in this verse, considering what the verb really means, and the shades of meaning and usage that pertain to the *pa'al/qal* form of the verb.

4. In today's concluding passage from haftarah *Vayechi*, we bid a sad goodbye to the great shepherd-king David. Before David breathes his life, however, he has some final instructions for his young son, Shlomo, concerning two people: *Barzillai* of Gilead (who stood with David when Absalom took over the kingdom – for the story, read II Samuel 19:31-39), and *Shimei*, of the tribe of Benyamin, who cursed David during the same time frame (**II Samuel 16:5-13**). For the family of Barzillai, David commands a blessing; for Shimei, on the other hand, whose venomous cursing of David proved him to be a false prophet who merely spouted politically correct double-talk, David instructed Shlomo that – for the good of the kingdom – his life should be brought to a bloody end.

Here are the final words of our shepherd king:

*But show kindness to the sons of Barzillai the Gil'adite,
and let them be of those who eat at your table;
for so they came to me when I fled from Avshalom your brother.*

*Behold, there is with you Shim'i the son of Gera,
the Binyamini, of Bachurim, who cursed me with a grievous curse
in the day when I went to Machanayim;
but he came down to meet me at the Yarden,*

*and I swore to him by the Holy One, saying, 'I will not put you to death with the sword.'
Now therefore don't hold him guiltless, for you are a wise man;
and you will know what you ought to do to him,
and you shall bring his gray head down to She'ol with blood.*

*Then David slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David.
The days that David reigned over Yisra'el were forty years;
seven years reigned he in Hevron, and thirty-three years reigned he in Y'rushalayim.
Shlomo sat on the throne of David his father;
and his kingdom was established greatly.*

[A] In the haftarah for today Shlomo is commanded to “show *chesed*” to someone who seems relatively unimportant to us. Who is it?

[B] Look up *chesed* in Strongs and Gesenius [KJV translates this as ‘kindness’], and write the word in Hebrew letters (with vowel points), as well as a definition for *chesed* that fits with this passage.

[C] Explain why David commanded Shlomo to “show *chesed*” to the descendants of Barzillai the Gileadite.

5. Read II Samuel 16:5-13 – i.e. the story of David’s encounter with Shimei.

[A] Write an explanation of why David commanded Shlomo to bring about Shimei’s death by violence.

[B] Read ahead to I Kings 2:29-46. Do you think Shlomo’s actions with regard to *Yoav* [Joab] and Shimei were sinful? Why or why not?

[C] Read Exodus 34:6-7. Does that passage have anything to do with the Torah aliyah for today? If so, what?

6. In the final B’rit Chadasha reading for *Vayechi* Kefa describes Messiah Yeshua, and the “good fruit” that comes into one’s life through knowing Him and following His Torah teaching:

*[Messiah] who was foreknown indeed before the foundation of the world,
but was revealed at the end of times for your sake,
who through him are believers in the Holy One, who raised him from the dead,
and gave him glory; so that your faith and hope might be in the Holy One.*

*Seeing you have purified your souls
in your obedience to the truth through the Spirit in sincere brotherly affection,
love one another from the heart fervently:
having been begotten from above, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible,
through the word of God, which lives and remains forever.*

*For, "All flesh is like grass; and all of man's glory like the flower in the grass.
The grass withers, and its flower falls; but the Holy One's word endures forever."
This is the word of good news that was preached to you.*

*Putting away therefore all wickedness,
all deceit, hypocrisies, envies, and all lashon hara ...*

[A] What do you think it means that Yeshua was *foreknown indeed before the foundation of the world*?

[B] Kefa mentions that we who know Yeshua and walk in His Torah teaching are *begotten from above* [the literal rendering of the phrase our English Bibles translate as “born again”]. Through what instrument does Kefa say we were begotten?

[C] What things does Kefa indicate will be “put away” by one who is begotten from above through this instrumentality?

[D] In Strong’s, look up the Greek words our English Bibles translate as “wickedness, deceit, hypocrisies, envies, and “evil speaking” in verse 1 of chapter 2. Write and define each Greek word. Then see if you can find the Hebrew word that would correspond to each Greek word, and search out those Hebrew words in Gesenius, tracking them to their verb roots. Finally, describe the Hebraic word picture you see developing with regard to each of these words.

Chazaq, chazaq, venitchazeik!

Be strong, be strong - and may we all be strengthened together!

The Rabbi’s son

Meditation for Today’s Study

Psalm 137:7-9

Remember, Oh Holy One, against the children of Edom,

The day of Y’rushalayim;

Who said, "Raze it! Raze it even to its foundation!"

Daughter of Bavel, doomed to destruction,

He will be happy who rewards you as you have served us.

Blessed will he be who takes and dashes your little ones against the rock.