



where we are *never really free to be who we were created to be*. It is any place where walls and ceilings seem to close in on a person, and in which dark forces rob from us not only the *means* but also the *will* to escape.

Egypt is a place where bread is going to become increasingly salty to the taste in the next few decades. And at least for everyone except Yosef it is a place where for a foreigner the stairs are so very, very steep that there is no need to even try to ascend.

Nevertheless, our exile in Egypt has been *more or less benign* thus far. As Tevye at the beginning of the play ***Fiddler on the Roof*** described the situation of the Jewish community in relation to the non-Jewish native population of Anatevka: “*So far, we don’t bother them . . . and they don’t bother us.*” All of that, however, is destined to change. Hence, the above quote from Dante’s ‘*The Divine Comedy*’ regarding exile continues as follows:

*"And what will weigh down on your shoulders most  
will be the bad and brainless company  
with whom you shall fall down into this ditch.  
"For all shall turn ungrateful, all insane and impious against you . . . .  
Paradiso, Canto XVII:61-64*

Such a fate awaits us ***b'acharit ha-yamim*** [i.e. in *the aftertime of days*].

### ***The Aftertime of Days***

Ya’akov knows – because he is now, as he prepares to enter the ***olam ha ba*** (the world to come) - flowing in a season of open prophetic vision – that ***b'acharit ha-yamim*** [i.e. in *the aftertime of days*] the seemingly friendly environs of Egypt will turn very, very unfriendly. Ya’akov – and perhaps *only* Ya’akov – knows that the sojourn of his descendants in Egypt . . . and elsewhere . . . will *gradually turn into an exile*, and that the exile will, year-by-year, bit-by-bit, turn uglier and uglier. Ya’akov knows that *the suspicions will come* . . . in Egypt and everywhere else . . . that those ‘Hebrews’ out there are ‘up to something’ and constitute a threat.

Ya’akov knows that an increasingly severe series of **official and unofficial pogroms** are going to be unleashed on us - and that few, if any, people will even care, much less take meaningful steps to stop them. Ya’akov knows over and over again the souls descended from him are going to be ‘**relocated**’ into ***ghettos*** where they can be *watched* – and *contained* – and *controlled* – and *deported* – and *slaughtered in great numbers* – more easily by suspicious foreign political and religious leaders.

Ya’akov knows that ***persecution is coming***, and will culminate in the **enslavement**

of those among his descendants, male and female, who are strong enough to do backbreaking manual labor, and in the **systematic genocide** of those who are not – the old, the weak, the infirm. Ya'akov knows that *in the long run* the safest place on earth for a child [whether natural or adopted/engrafted] of the covenant the Holy One made with Avraham and renewed with Yitschak and with him is ***Eretz Yisrael***.

### ***Immutable Truths***

It is time we all learned two immutable truths from the patriarchs whose lives we have studied in the book of Genesis:

**Immutable Truth #1:** Life anywhere outside Israel is merely a part of a sojourn, exile, enslavement progression.

**Immutable Truth #2:** The same people who welcome us with open arms and smiles one day will in time come to hate us, enslave us, persecute us and then – as we discovered in Susa in the time of Haman, in the courts of the Spanish Inquisition, in Ghettos throughout Europe, and in “work camps” like Auschwitz - pleasant places of *exile* can all too quickly become for us *crucibles of annihilation*.

So in verses 21-22 of Chapter 48 Ya'akov concludes his private conversation with Yosef with a *prophecy* and with a *bequest*. He makes it clear that Egypt – or Europe – or America, for that matter, is not “home” for his descendants. For any son of Ya'akov, home is “the land of your fathers.” Hence Ya'akov tells Yosef:

***Hineh anochi met***

*"Behold, I am dying,*

***V'hayah Elohim imachem***

*but Elohim will be with you,*

***v'heshiv etchem el-eretz avotechem***

*and bring you again to the land of your fathers.*

[Genesis 48:21]

Note that this prophetic declaration is two-fold: first, there is a promise/prophetic declaration **that ‘God’** [Hebrew, ***Elohim***] **will ‘be with you’** [i.e. in context, *with Yosef and his descendants*], on the one hand, and secondly, there is a promise/prophetic declaration that ***Elohim will ‘bring you*** [i.e. in context, *Yosef and his descendants*] ***again to the land of your fathers.***’

The first and foremost message Ya'akov wants to get across is that the Holy One is going to always *be with* Yosef and his descendants wherever they sojourn. There will always be a ***WITH-NESS***. They will never be alone. As the mountains surround Jerusalem the Holy One is all around His People. And He who keeps watch over Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps. The people of the Holy One will

never be forgotten. They will never be forsaken. They will never be left defenseless.

And there is a second message. The second message is that neither Egypt nor any other land of sojourn or exile is ever to become to Yosef and his descendants a 'home'. Egypt – and other lands of exile - are not forever. By the power of His strong right Hand the Holy One will *bring [them] again to the land of [their] fathers.*' He will not only make it possible for us to escape Egypt with our lives – He will personally BRING us back to the land He promised to Avraham, to Yitschak and to Ya'akov's descendants forever.

The Holy One's promise is not that we can somehow work, or strive, fight, earn, or buy our way back to the homeland. His promise is that HE HIMSELF WILL EFFECUATE OUR RETURN. He will send a prophet, or a deliverer, or a host of angels, or Messiah – or whatever and whoever - is necessary to make sure it happens just as He said it would. He will bankrupt Heaven, if that were possible – to return us to the land of Avraham, of Yitzchak and of Ya'akov. Bless the Holy One, His promise is irrevocable, and His Word is true.

Of course, only Yosef and his sons were present to hear this prophetic announcement. Y'hudah was not present – nor was Reuven, or Sh'mon or Levi or even Benyamin. This message was, at this time, at least, for Yosef and his line alone. Yosef would later tell the rest of the brothers about this promise, but for now the announcement of Divine intention was integrally related to a personal bequest Ya'akov was making to Yosef through his adoption of Efrayim and Menashe. Ya'akov followed the declaration of ultimate return to the land with this bequest of the largest portion of inheritance there:

***V'ani natati lecha Sh'chem achad al-acheycha***  
*Moreover I have given to you one portion above your brothers,*

***asher lakachti miyad ha-Emori***  
*which I took out of the hand of the Amori*

***b'char'bi uvekashti***  
*with my sword and with my bow."*  
[Genesis 48:22]

At this point in the narrative the knowledgeable reader who is familiar with the account Torah gives of the lives of the *Avot* [fathers/patriarchs] will stop and ask himself or herself – *when, pray tell, did Ya'akov ever take anything out of the hand of the Amori [Amorites] with his sword and his bow?* The only reference in Torah to any warlike act that Ya'akov or his family was involved in was the massacre at

Shechem in the wake of the rape and abduction of Dinah, and this massacre was accomplished without Ya'akov's approval, much less his participation. So *what on earth is Ya'akov talking about?* Of what parcel of land exactly is Ya'akov saying he is going to give to Ya'akov 'a portion above [his] brothers'?

### ***The Mystery of Yosef's 'Portion Above His Brothers'***

We know that Ya'akov inherited from his father Yitzchak the field and the cave at *Machpelah* near Hebron some *livestock* [sheep, goats, oxen, donkeys and/or camels], and some *grazing rights in Kena'an*. We know that he acquired by purchase a tract of land near *Shechem*. We know that a long time ago he acquired some livestock from Lavan, but we also know that he gave a good portion of that to Esav to appease and pacify his brother's anger. We know as well that the *Amori* [Amorites] – at least those living near Hebron - were in a covenant with Ya'akov's grandfather, Avraham<sup>2</sup>. We therefore have a bit of a mystery. What exactly is Ya'akov *talking about*<sup>3</sup>? We do not know.

Perhaps as some commentators have speculated after Ya'akov purchased the tract at Shechem<sup>4</sup> a group of Amori dispossessed him, such that he had to retake it by force. The text is not specific.

Talmudic commentators argue in regard to the meaning of this fascinating statement. Some understand that Ya'akov is, at the time of his deathbed speech, bequeathing the city Shechem to Yosef as an inheritance. Most, however, believe that '*sh'chem*' [ridge, or 'shoulder'] in this passage refers instead to an extra portion of inheritance that will be given to Yosef AFTER the conquest of the land. If so, this means that Ya'akov is speaking *prophetically* instead of historically, and 'his' sword and bow are to be taken to mean the collective swords and bows of his descendants, who will make war against the Kena'ani under the leadership of Yosef's descendant Y'hoshua.

### ***The Deathbed Prophet Speaks***

In Chapter 49 of *Sefer B'reshit* Ya'akov/Yisrael gathers his sons around his sick

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<sup>2</sup> See Genesis 14:13.

<sup>3</sup> Talmudic commentators argue in regard the meaning of this statement. Some understand that Ya'akov is now giving the city *Shechem* to Yosef as an inheritance. Most, however, believe that the reference to '*sh'chem*' in this passage refers to an extra portion of inheritance that will be given to Yosef AFTER the conquest of the land. If so, this means that Ya'akov is speaking prophetically, and 'his' sword and bow are to be taken to mean the collective swords and bows of his descendants, who will make war against the Kena'ani under the leadership of Yosef's descendant Y'hoshua.

<sup>4</sup> From the apostolic writings, we can glean that the land Ya'akov is talking about is in the area which in the time of Y'shua of Natzret was called Samaria, near a village called *Sychar* – where Y'shua encountered the 'woman at the well. See **John 4:5-6**.

bed and proceeds to prophesy over them one by one [or in some cases two by two]. Anyone who has been at the deathbed of a friend or loved one understands the sense of awe and reverence that naturally attended this gathering of Ya'akov's children. Ya'akov called his sons together and said:

***he'asefu v'agidah lachem et asher-yikra etchem***

*"Gather<sup>5</sup> yourselves together that I may tell you that which will happen to you*

***b'acharit ha-yamim***

*in the aftertime of days.*

***Hikavtzu v'shim'u***

*Assemble<sup>6</sup>, and sh'ma [listen and heed, and act accordingly],*

***b'nei Ya'akov v'shim'u el-Yisra'el avichem***

*you sons of Ya'akov; Sh'ma [listen to] Yisra'el your father.*

If the natural attitude of awe and reverence that attends a deathbed visitation did not attract the undivided attention of Ya'akov's children, surely this sober declaration did! Ya'akov is not, he promises, merely going to share a few last moments with his family members and say 'goodbye'. He is, he promises, going to **prophesy** over them. He calls his sons [and, we assume, his daughter, Dinah] to gather around him to declare over them what will happen ***b'acharit ha-yamim*** [in the after-time of days].

There is only one problem. When Ya'akov's children heed the call and anxiously gather around him and Ya'akov opens his mouth to speak, the words that come out sound - at least to our untrained ears - like *the farthest thing in the world from the end-times prophecy he had caused us to expect.*

The declarations which follow Ya'akov's 'deathbed call' to his children do not as we might expect them to speak to us of *weeks of years*, or *beasts* arising from tumultuous seas, or horns, or marks, or Armageddons or anti-Messiahs. Nowhere does Ya'akov reference *famines*, or *earthquakes*, or *wars*, or *rumors of wars*. Nowhere does he speak of a great 'falling away', of the 'time of Jacob's trouble', of the coming 'day of the Lord', or concerning either the glorious appearing or the

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<sup>5</sup> The Hebrew verb root is ***asaf***, *alef, samech, feh sofit*, Strong's Hebrew word #622, pronounced *aw-sawf*'. This verb root means to collect things that are scattered or pack them into a place or chest – as is done to store up food or supplies for a journey. See the first Biblical usage, at Genesis 6:21.

<sup>6</sup> The Hebrew verb root is ***qabatz***, *quf, beit, tzade sofit*, Strong's Hebrew word #6908, pronounced *kaw-bawtz*'. The word is rooted in the agricultural process of harvesting and storing grain. See the first Biblical usage, in Genesis 41:35. see also 41:48, and Deuteronomy 30:3-4. ***Qabatz*** does not mean 'assemble' or 'gather' in the context of having a meeting with each other, or engage in activities, but in the sense of collecting into one place – as grain is collected and stored into one place – in order that it can be readied for use or distribution.

establishment of the coming kingdom of the Messiah.

What a *let down* [or so we might think]! I mean, after all the build-up the words Ya'akov winds up speaking to his children about what will befall them *b'acharit ha-yamim* [in the aftertime of days] will not even mention Pharaoh or the *coming enslavement* – much less Moshe, Miryam, Aharon, or the great deliverance that we all know will occur a few generations later.

Ya'akov's final words are in fact going to seem to the modern reader to be far more cryptic, personal, and emotional than prophetic. He will look at his sons one by one before he speaks to them - but *through whose eyes will he see them?* Will Ya'akov, as his gaze falls upon each of the sons he has sired, gathered around his deathbed, simply speak the thoughts that come forth from his heart concerning them? Or will the words he speaks emanate from the throne of the Most High God he has come to know so well since that night long ago when he laid his head upon a stone and dreamed of a stairway to Heaven.

And one wonders how much Ya'akov will understand, how much his sons will understand – and, for that matter, how much we will understand - about the words he is about to speak in these precious moments. If we look at Ya'akov's words merely as *history*, we can assume he – and the sons he had called to his bedside - all knew everything he was talking about, even if we do not. If, however, we see Ya'akov's words as he promised they would be - *prophetic declarations concerning future generations* – particularly of 'the days to come' or 'aftertime of days', to coin Ya'akov's own phraseology – the answer of who knew – or knows – most becomes far from clear.

### ***The Prophecy Over Reuven***

Ya'akov starts this round of prophecy with words relative to Reuven<sup>7</sup>. Can you imagine the sense of expectation Reuven had as his father turned his gaze upon him, and began to speak his final message?

Who *was* Reuven? We know him primarily as Ya'akov's firstborn son by Leah. We know his name means '**Behold – a son!**' But who was he REALLY? Who was he SPIRITUALLY? And who **is** he PROPHETICALLY? Who is Reuven in the eyes of the Holy One, who formed him in his mother's womb? Who will Reuven be in the end of days? [See **Revelation 7:5; Ezekiel 48:6-7 and 31.**] And hence who is Reuven **to US?**

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<sup>7</sup> In Hebrew Reuven's name is written רֵאוּבֵן [*resh, alef, vav, veit, nun sofit*].

What did Reuven *hope for* as his father turned to him in the course of his deathbed blessing? What did he *fear* his father might say?

What do we know of Leah's firstborn? We know that Reuven at one point in his worst moment tried unsuccessfully to usurp his father's place of authority in the covenant household by taking as a concubine Bilhah, Rachel's maidservant - the mother of his half-brothers Dan and Naftali. **Genesis 35:22**. Reuven thereby 'uncovered his father's skirt', dishonored both his father, his stepmother Rachel, and his half-brothers. We know the emotional wounds from this betrayal were painful to Ya'akov and very damaging to the covenant family's *bayit shalom*<sup>8</sup>.

We know that later, in connection with the Yosef-enslavement incident, Reuven had a plan that differed radically from his brothers. We read in Torah that Reuven actually had *a plan in mind to rescue Yosef* from the pit. **Genesis 37:21-22**. Perhaps he genuinely desired to rescue the young dreamer, or perhaps he just wanted to 'play the hero' to get back in his father's good graces. But alas, whatever his motivation, he never put feet to his plan. He got distracted, apparently, and failed to keep watch over his brother after he was thrown in the pit, and hence his plan to rescue the young man came to naught. **Genesis 37:29-30**.

We know that when his plan to rescue Yosef did not come to fruition he did not seek to undo the sale his brothers had made of Yosef by redeeming him, but instead willingly participated in the brothers' conspiracy of deception and strategic silence and cover-up whereby for over 20 years Ya'akov was made to believe, that Yosef had been torn to pieces by wild animals.

We also know that once Yosef in the guise of an Egyptian viceroy Tzafanat-Paneach had demanded that Binyamin be brought to Egypt, Reuven offered the lives of his own sons as surety for Benjamin's safety. **Genesis 42:37**. He actually made the ridiculous statement to Ya'akov that Ya'akov could *put both of my sons [who were, of course, Ya'akov's grandchildren] to death if I do not bring him back to you.*" That was *a rash, totally irrational, and completely useless vow* – which Ya'akov appropriately ignored. Why would Ya'akov want to kill two of his own grandchildren?

And so, with this being the history of relationship between Ya'akov and Reuven, here are both a transliteration and a translation of Ya'akov's deathbed statements to Reuven:

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<sup>8</sup> The Hebrew phrase *bayit shalom* literally means *peace in the home*. It refers to the peace, wellbeing, prosperity and harmony of a person's home and family relationships.

***Reuven bechori atah kochi v'reshit oni***

***"Reuven, you are my firstborn, my might, and the beginning of my strength;***

***yeter set veyeter az***

*The pre-eminence of dignity, and the pre-eminence of power.*

So far so good. Reuven must have been feeling pretty good up to this point. His expectations of blessing must have soared to new heights. But alas, the joy was to be short-lived. Ya'akov paused, then continued:

***Pachaz kamayim al-totar***

*Unstable as water, you shall not have the pre-eminence;*

***ki alita mish'kevei avicha***

*Because you went up to your father's bed;*

And then, turning perhaps to the other children gathered there, perhaps heavenward, Ya'akov declared to some unspecified someone – and to us –

***Az chilalta yetzu'i alah***

*He defiled my bed!*

*Wow!* Ya'akov 'went there'. Yes, he did. ***Ouch!*** Keep in mind as you read this that Reuven was a *real person*, Dear Reader. Can you imagine how it had to hurt to hear these words from the mouth of the one who sired you – and to know that *the rebuke they represented was completely deserved?* Despite all that has happened, Reuven apparently never repented or reconciled with Ya'akov for the sin he committed against Ya'akov's fatherhood in Genesis 35:22 – attempting to usurp his role as leader of the family by taking Bilhah, the mother of Reuven's brothers Dan and Naftali, to bed.

But perhaps the past history of Reuven – who has truly been '*as unstable as water*' in his dealings – is only a part of the story. Perhaps Ya'akov not only looked back into Reuven's past, but also looked forward into his descendants' future. Perhaps Ya'akov was prophetically seeing ahead to the events of Numbers 16, and what is commonly referred to as the '***Rebellion of Korach***'? Korach and his largely Reuvenite followers effectively deposed – for a time period – Moshe and Aharon, much as Reuven had sought to depose Ya'akov. Following the Levite Korach's lead, the Reuveni would attempt to take the Bride of the Holy One unto themselves, and declare themselves the new leaders/patriarchs, much as Reuven had done. The followers of Korach are clearly identified in Numbers 16:1, as:

***'certain Reuveni*** [descendants of Reuven] –  
***Datan and Aviram – and On son of Pelet . . . .'***

Now consider that both the events described in Genesis 35 and Numbers 16 are merely prophetic of yet future events – events which are described in such prospective-looking books as Daniel and Revelation. Many think of Reuven as a ‘lost tribe’<sup>9</sup>. But whatever you believe about where or who the descendants of Reuven are today, one thing is certain - ***the Holy One knows where every descendant of Reuven is*** – physically and spiritually. And He knows exactly what Reuven’s descendants are destined to do. It is all recorded in Torah.

Lest you give upon Reuven however, consider that both the prophetic book of Ezekiel and the Book of Revelation see Reuven’s descendants as being restored to full tribal position alongside *Y’hudah* [Judah], Levi, and Efrayim in the ‘end of days’. See Revelation 7:5; Ezekiel 48:6-7, 31.

### ***The Prophecy Concerning Sh’mon and Levi***

The next subjects of Ya’akov’s deathbed prophecy are sons number 2 and 3 – *Sh’mon* [Simeon] and Levi. Both of these sons were born to Ya’akov by Leah, and were whole brothers of Reuven and Y’hudah. Here are the words Ya’akov/Yisrael declares concerning Sh’mon and Levi:

***Shim'on v'Levi achim***

*Sh'mon and Levi are brothers;*

***k'lei chamas mecheroteyhem***

*Weapons of violence are their swords.*

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<sup>9</sup> There is, of course, and has been for centuries, an often heated debate going on among sages and theologians as to whether there are – or are not – any ‘lost tribes’ still extant, i.e., whether all the descendants of the tribes which made up the Northern Kingdom were or were not killed by the Assyrians and/or did or did not migrate to the Southern Kingdom to re-unite with Y’hudah, Levi, and Sh’mon. The author is not expressing an opinion on this debate, but merely acknowledging that some consider Reuven to be a ‘lost tribe’.

***B'sodam al-tavo nafshi***

*My soul, don't come into their council;*

***B'k'halam al-techad k'vodi***

*My glory, don't be united to their assembly;*

***ki v'apam hargu ish***

*For in their anger they killed a man,*

***uvirtzonam ikru-shor***

*In their self-will they hamstrung an ox.*

***Arur apam ki az***

*Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce;*

***v'evratam ki kashatah***

*And their wrath, for it was cruel.*

***achalkem b'Ya'akov***

*I will divide<sup>10</sup> them in Ya'akov,*

***v'afitzem b'Yisra'el***

*Scatter<sup>11</sup> them in Yisra'el.*

Historically we understand what Ya'akov is talking about. With Ya'akov, we relive with horror the events that transpired at Shechem in the aftermath of the rape of Dinah. Those events are described in Genesis 34. In that situation, Sh'mon and Levi plotted and executed revenge on not only the rapist himself but on all every man, woman, and children of the city.

It was definitely *ugly*. As we have discussed, it was not that Shechem did not deserve judgment. The issue was whether the judgment would be inflicted by the Holy One, in *His timing*, and in *His manner*, or would be inflicted *by Sh'mon and Levi* as their flesh dictated was appropriate.

Sh'mon and Levi decided to take judgment into their own hands and shed blood

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<sup>10</sup> The Hebrew verb root utilized by the Divine Writer to describe the process our English Bibles calls 'dividing' is ***chalaq***, *chet*, *lamed*, *qof*, Strong's Hebrew word #2505, pronounced *khaw-lawk*'. This verb root pictures an intentional act of separating out portions, and assigning them different tasks. The first instance of the use of this verb root is found in Genesis 14, where the Divine Writer tells us that, in preparation for the rescue of Lot and his family, Avram 'divided' himself against [the armies of Cherdalaomer and his allies].

<sup>11</sup> The Hebrew verb root utilized by the Divine Writer to describe the process our English Bibles calls 'scattering' is ***putz***, *peh*, *vav*, *tzade sofit*, Strong's Hebrew word #6327, pronounced *pootz*. This verb root is the same one used in Genesis 11 to describe what the residents of the plain of Shinar did not want to do [i.e., disperse, scatter, go in different directions], the resistance to which caused them to build first the city of Bavel [Babel] and ultimately its 'tower reaching to heaven'.

that was the Holy One's alone to shed - if, when, and how He so desired.

Is there a prophetic aspect to this episode? What happened in connection with the Exodus, specifically, that is analogous? Consider the aftermath of the golden calf. Remember who strapped sword to thigh and went throughout the camp slaying '*every man his brother*'? Do you recall anywhere in the narrative where the Holy One ever told Moshe – or the Levi'im – to do such a thing?

The books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy have a regularly repeated formula according to which when the Holy One initiates something the text clearly tells us "*And the Holy One spoke to Moshe, saying: . . .*" That formula is conspicuously absent in the story of the slaughter that occurred after the sin of the golden calf. Moshe - a descendant of Levi – and his brethren, did all that on their own, just as Moshe had taken it on himself to slay the Egyptian overseer, and Levi, conspiring with Sh'mon, had taken it on himself to inflict judgment on the *Shechemi*. In each case, men assumed the right to inflict judgment that rightfully belonged only to the Holy One. *Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce; and their wrath, for it was cruel*, says Ya'akov.

And now, let us look even further beyond. Have you read the books of the Maccabees? Do you know from what tribe the Maccabees were descended? Have you read of what they did to people – fellow Jews – who had *Hellenized* [adopted Greek/pagan customs]? They savagely *butchered them*. They *burned their houses and their towns*. Of course those persons deserved judgment. But *when did the Holy One authorize the Maccabees to inflict that judgment on His behalf?* They were raised up to cast off the Syrian oppression - - not to *judge the faithless of Israel*. The Holy One is more than capable of doing that without anyone's help. And *until He is allowed to do that, Israel will not be purged of her sin and return to Torah*.

Consider also, dear Reader, that as the events outlined in the narratives of Daniel and Revelation unfold Sh'mon and Levi will be found conspiring for violence again. History is prophecy. In other words, what happened before, in the lives of the patriarchs, will *repeat itself* time and again - until Messiah establishes His kingdom, and judges the world in righteousness.

### ***The Prophecy Concerning Y'hudah***

The final prophecy about which we will read in today's aliyah pertains to Ya'akov's fourth son – *Y'hudah*. The name *Y'hudah* is derived from the Hebrew verb root *hoda*, sometimes translated 'he praises', but as a relative of the verb *yada* [he knows intimately and has intimate relations with] is more particularly rendered '*he acknowledges*', '*he appreciates*', or '*he admits*'. Chiddushei HaRim, a prominent

19th century Chasidic leader, offered the opinion that the Jewish people are aptly named after Y'hudah, because 'it is a distinctly 'Jewish' trait *to be appreciative of the good that God does for us, and to acknowledge all that he has given us. Our lives are full of blessings and gifts from God*, and we must learn from Leah [who bore and chose the name of Y'hudah] to notice the gifts of the Holy One and be appreciative of them.

The Hebrew root word *hoda*, in the sense of 'he admits', was also an apt description of the man we know as Y'hudah, for when he was confronted by Tamar with his sin [see **Genesis 38:1-30**], he humbled himself and *admitted it*, and dealt with it as a repentant sinner rather than sweeping it under the rug, denying his culpability, and blaming someone else for the situation. This action, of course, turned his life completely around. It was his capacity to acknowledge, admit, confess, and deal with his sin that placed him above his brothers, and qualified him to take the lead in the Divine Mission of the Jew – to *reflect the Holy One's Divine Light* among the nations.

This is beautifully pictured in the Hebrew spelling of Y'hudah's name. Y'hudah consists of the letters *yod, hey, vav, dalet, and hey*. The first two letters of his name are *yod, hey*. The third and fifth letters of his name are *vav, hey*. Put those letters together [i.e. remove the *dalet* from Y'hudah's name] and do you know what you have? *Yod, hey, vav, hey* – the Divine Name. In between the *vav and the hey* at the end of Y'hudah's name is a *dalet* ['d' sound], which is a Hebrew pictograph of a door, or portal, or passageway. Y'hudah was Divinely commissioned to be the door/portal/passageway of the Holy One, and His Divine Light [including, of course, Messiah, the Light of the World], into all the world.

Here are the beautiful prophetic words with which Ya'akov/Yisrael blessed Y'hudah – this bearer of Divine Light, and carrier of the *Sh'kinah*:

***Y'hudah atah yoducha acheycha***

*Y'hudah; your brothers will praise you:*

***yadecha b'oref oyveycha***

*Your hand will be on the neck of your enemies;*

***yishtachavu lecha b'nei avicha***

*Your father's sons will bow down before you.*

**Gur aryeh Y'hudah**

*Y'hudah is a lion's cub.*

**miteref beni alita**

*From the prey, my son, you have gone up.*

**kara ravatz ke'aryeh uchelavi**

*He stooped down, he crouched as a lion, as a lioness.*

**mi yekimenu**

*Who will rouse him up?*

**Lo-yasur shevet mi-Y'hudah**

*The scepter will not depart from Y'hudah,*

**umechokek mibeyn raglav**

*Nor the ruler's staff from between his feet,*

**ad ki-yavo shiloh**

*Until he comes to whom it belongs.*

**v'lo yikhat amin**

*To him will the obedience of the peoples be.*

**Osri l'gefen iroh**

*Binding his foal to the vine,*

**V'lasorekah beni atono kibes**

*His donkey's colt to the choice vine;*

**B'yayin levusho**

*He has washed his garments in wine,*

**Uv'dam anavim sutoh**

*His robes in the blood of grapes:*

**Chachlili eynayim miyayin**

*His eyes will be red with wine,*

**ulven-shinayim mechalav**

*His teeth white with milk.*

This is a situation, unlike the prophecies concerning the first three sons, where we find *no real historic basis* for any of these statements. Y'hudah the individual has not particularly distinguished himself thus far. Much of what we *do* know of Y'hudah, in fact, is not really all that encouraging. Let's see. He *participated in the conspiracy to kill Yosef*. He even *devised the plan to sell Yosef into slavery*.

Y'hudah then left the family and descended into the depths of Kena'ani lifestyle,

taking a Kena'ani concubine, and fathering children by her, two of which were so vile that the Holy One killed them. He then slept with a prostitute [he thought] by whom he had twins. Things began to turn around for him when he, consistent with his name, admitted his sin, owned up to it, and took responsibility for it.

Then, however, when the famine threatened the entire family, Y'hudah finally 'stepped up to the plate'. He *personally vouched for Binyamin's safety* to induce Ya'akov to let Binyamin accompany the brothers on the second trip to Egypt, and then when all looked hopeless he *personally risked his life to save Binyamin's*.

Y'hudah's story is important because it is *the story of an overcomer and transcender*. He was not perfect. He had many flaws and trod many foolish paths. But he did not accept his flaws as 'just the way I am' or lay down and die in his foolish paths.

### *The Lion and the Prey*

Ya'akov describes Y'hudah as a *lion's cub*. And he indicates this lion's cub/son of his has 'gone up [*Hebrew alita*] from the prey'. What meaneth this? The '**prey**' referenced in Ya'akov's prophecy over Y'hudah may well be a reference to *Yosef* [the brothers led Ya'akov to believe Yosef had fallen 'prey' to wild animals and been torn asunder]. He then '**stooped down**', walking the Kena'ani lifestyle, consorting with Kena'ani women, and sleeping with prostitutes. But he did not stay in that situation. He **rose up**. And he did so as a *lioness* – because a cub [Binyamin] was in danger.

### *Until Shiloh comes . . .*

The second half of Ya'akov's remarks relative to Y'hudah – the **reference to a "scepter-bearer"** – is clearly prophetic. In the first instance, it refers to *Kaleb* [Caleb], the original 'lion' of the tribe of Y'hudah. In a more distant sense, it refers to *David*, the great King, and founder of the Davidic dynasty. In its most ultimate sense, however, it applies to *Y'shua* – in both his first coming [binding his foal to the vine, his donkey's colt to the choice vine] and in His return [*He has washed His garments in wine, His robes in the blood of grapes; His eyes will be red with wine, His teeth white with milk.*]"

Perhaps the most fascinating aspect of this prophecy, however, is the reference Ya'akov makes to the coming of '*Shiloh*'<sup>12</sup>. This is a noun derived from the Hebrew verb root *shalah*<sup>13</sup>. Strong's interprets this verb root, which is also the verb root of the word *shalom*, as meaning 'to prosper', or 'to be secure'. The

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<sup>12</sup> *Shiloh* is *shin, yod, lamed, hey*. Strong's Hebrew word #7886, it is pronounced *shee-lo'*.

<sup>13</sup> *Shalah* is *shin, lamed, hey*. Strong's Hebrew word #7952, it is pronounced *shaw-law'*.

Hebraic word picture underlying the verb root *shalah* is that of *ascending flames of fire* [*shin*], representing the manifestation of the Holy One, providing the ox goad, or *teaching/disciplining rod* [*lamed*] that leads to the window [*hey*] of *revelation and understanding*.

The word *Shiloh* represents a slight modification of the picture described above. Between the ascending flames of fire [*shin*] and the ox goad [*lamed*], is interjected a *Divine hand* [the pictograph of the letter *yod*]. *Shiloh* refers to one who represents a manifestation of the Presence of the Holy One, and whose Divine Hand the scepter<sup>14</sup> [referred to in the same phrase] will be used as an ox goad [instrument of teaching and discipline] to lead people to revelation and understanding. This is the perfect picture of Messiah and of His Biblical function.

May *Shiloh* come quickly, Dear Reader. In *my heart*. In *my home*. In *my world*. And in *yours*.

### *Questions For Today's Study*

1. In Chapter 48, verses 21-22, of Genesis Ya'akov concludes his private conversation with Yosef with a *prophecy* and with a *bequest*.

[A] What did he prophesy about Yosef [or Yosef's descendants]?

[B] What did he bequeath to Yosef [or Yosef's descendants]?

[C] When did Yisra'el/Ya'akov take any land from the hand of the Amori with sword and bow?

2. In Chapter 49 Ya'akov gathers his sons around his sick bed and prophesies over each of them.

[A] After reading verses 1-12 of Chapter 49 make a list of the four sons Ya'akov blesses.

[B] Beside the name of each of the sons, write a summary of what Ya'akov prophesies over that son.

[C] With regard to Reuven, what event did Ya'akov call to mind?

[D] With regard to Sh'mon and Levi, what event did Ya'akov call to mind?

[E] With regard to Y'hudah, what things were said that refers to Messiah?

Explain.

[F] In Strong's and Gesenius, look up the words translated as "*scepter*" and "*rod*" in the blessing of Y'hudah. Write the Hebrew words and their meanings.

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<sup>14</sup> The word which our English Bibles translate as scepter in this verse is *shevet*, *shin*, *beit*, *tet*, Strong's Hebrew word #7626, pronounced *shay'-vet*. It refers to a rod, club, or scepter – something held in the hand and wielded as an instrument of authority and power. See **Numbers 24:17** for the next Messianic reference involving a scepter. See also **Psalm 45:6**, and **Hebrews 1:8**.

3. As you know when B'nei Yisrael comes out of Egypt several generations later the tribe of Levi [from which Moshe and Aharon were to come forth] is going to be appointed as the priestly tribe. Look at the prophecy of Ya'akov over his son Levi.

[A] Was Levi selected by the Holy One because of worthiness?

[B] What does that say to you about the Holy One's ways of *selecting people/groups to do His work*?

[C] Based upon Ya'akov's prophecy, what kind of work do you think Levi was best qualified to do?

4. In the Haftarah verse assigned for reading today David charges his son Sh'lomo to so live and to so reign as to qualify David's descendants for one of the Holy One's promises, first made to Y'hudah in B'reshit 49, then restated to David through the prophet *Natan* [Nathan] in II Samuel 7:12-16.

*L'ma'an yakim Adonai et-devaro*  
*That the Holy One may establish his word*

*asher diber alay l'emor*  
*which he spoke concerning me, saying,*

*im-yishmeru vanecha et-darkam*  
*"If your children take heed to their way,*

*l'lechet l'fanai b'emet*  
*to walk before me in truth*

*b'chol-levavam uv'chol-nafsham*  
*with all their heart and with all their soul,*

*l'emor lo-yikaret lecha ish me'al kise Yisra'el*  
*there shall not fail you (said he) a man on the throne of Yisra'el.*

[I Kings 2:4]

[A] What do you think that promise means?

[B] How do you think it will be fulfilled?

5. In the B'rit Chadasha aliyah assigned for today Kefa [Peter] continues blessing all those who base their lives upon the Torah teaching of Messiah Y'shua:

*. . . whom not having known you love;*  
*in whom, though now you don't see him, yet believing, you rejoice greatly*  
*with joy unspeakable and full of glory -*  
*receiving the result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.*

*Concerning this salvation, the prophets sought and searched diligently,*  
*who prophesied of the grace that would come to you,*

*searching for who or what kind of time the Spirit of Messiah,  
which was in them, pointed to,  
when he predicted the sufferings of Messiah,  
and the glories that would follow them.*

*To them it was revealed, that not to themselves,  
but to you, did they minister these things that now have been announced to you  
through those who preached the Good News to you  
by the Ruach HaKodesh sent out from heaven; which things angels desire to look into.*

[A] Why do we “love” Y’shua the Messiah?

[B] What does it mean that we “love” Him? Since we have not seen Him, how can we love Him?

[C] Look up the Greek word translated as “love” in Strongs and write a definition of it that fits with this passage. [Hint: It might help to read John 21:15-22 and then chapter 13 of I Corinthians.]

[D] What is supposed to be the inward emotion we experience as we “love” and believe in Y’shua?

[E] Why do you think angels “long to look into” the mysteries of the salvation of the creatures known as ‘man’?

*May you meet Messiah everywhere you turn this day.  
May Shiloh come indeed – and soon!*

***The Rabbi’s son***

***Meditation for Wednesday’s Study***

Psalm 137:4

*How can we sing the Holy One’s song  
in a foreign land?*