

*Shiur L'Yom Chamishi*¹

[Thursday's Study]

READINGS: ***Torah Vayechi:*** Genesis 49:13-28
 Haftarah: I Kings 2:5-6
 Brit Chadasha: I Peter 1:13-19

And Shaddai, may He give you blessing: blessings of the heavens, from above.
[Genesis 49:25]

Today's Meditation is Psalm 137:5-6;

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

Today we receive the call to *the next-to-last aliyah of the scroll of Genesis. Bar'chu et-Adonai ha-m'vorach. Baruch Adonai ha-m'vorach l'olam va'ed.*

A Quick Look At Our Newly Framed Horizons

Let us pause for a moment or two and consider what horizons this marvelous book of beginnings has opened for us in the past 12 weeks. The first thing the book of Genesis did was *introduce us to our Creator*. Then it meticulously *laid out for us the patterns and sequences of His Creative Approach*.

Continuing through the narratives of the events of the Garden, the Flood, and S'dom and G'morah, the great book of beginnings has *instilled in us an inspiring appreciation for the beauty and wisdom of righteousness on the one hand, and an understanding the destructive process of the malfunction theologians call iniquity on the other*. We have also been shown the fundamental dividing line between those two approaches to life. As it has revealed these things, it has also awakened us to *the reality and necessity of judgment and the passionate desire of our Creator to extend every reasonable opportunity of mercy*.

And if we have been paying attention to these narratives we now know very well, thanks to the book of Genesis, exactly *why we need a Redeemer* to enable us to cross over from sin and judgment, on the one hand, to righteousness and mercy, on the other. Through the descriptions of the lives of first the ancients, and more recently the *avot* [fathers/patriarchs], the book of Genesis has *laid out for us the foundational principles that govern all God-man interactions*. The text of Torah has recorded for *all those with ears to hear what the Ruach* [Spirit] *is saying, the essential details of the covenant through which the Holy One purposes to bring*

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the world to redemption – the covenant which the Holy One made with Avraham *Avinu*² – the covenant into which all human beings are, like Efrayim and Menashe, called, and offered the opportunity of adoption and engrafting³.

In connection with this stunning revelation of and call to COVENANT we have through the first book of Torah been introduced to - and have had modeled for us, first by the ancients and now by our own patriarchs - such essential staples of connection to our Creator through covenant as **the shedding of innocent blood** to provide both a **sin-covering** and a **medium of intimate approach**.

In further development of the COVENANT-based relationship theme the Holy One has used the narratives of the Book of Genesis to *train us in several other key aspects of God-man interaction*, helping us come to understand, appreciate, embrace and expect as a natural part of our own lives and in the lives of our children and of our children's children forever such important ingredients of covenant life as the **God-encounter**, the **Divinely-ordained life experience**, true **worship in spirit and truth**, real, heartfelt, meaningful **prayer**, **inspired dream interpretation** and **prophetic vision and utterance**.

And perhaps most importantly the book has taught us that **what matters most in our relationship with the Holy One is neither what good deeds we do nor what doctrines we profess – but is instead how fully and wholeheartedly we *sh'ma*** [listen for, pay attention to, hear, meditate upon, speak about, cherish, cling to and watch over to completion, and cooperate with] **the instructions for living which come forth from the mouth of the Holy One**.

We have, you see, if we have been paying attention at all, learned from the book of Genesis that the **power to walk out the Holy One's instructions to us is not found in us, our wills, or our minds. It is, instead, found in the words of the Holy One themselves** – because every word out of the mouth of the Holy One –

² *Avinu* is a compound Hebrew word meaning 'our father', or, more appropriately in this case, 'our patriarchal ancestor' – he through whom the inheritance was preserved for us.

³ This covenant of imputed righteousness for those who receive the overtures and friendship offer of the Holy One gladly, with hospitality, and who receive, incubate, and reproduce on earth His Words much the way a woman receives, incubates, and gives birth to a man's *zara* [seed], was initially cut with Avraham. It was then renewed [i.e. became a 'new covenant'] with Yitzchak. It then was renewed again [became a 'new covenant'] with Ya'akov. It will, in the book of Exodus, be renewed again [become a 'new covenant'] at Sinai for all those who accepted the Holy One's redemption from Egypt. In the book of Deuteronomy, it will be renewed again [become a 'new covenant' once again] between the Holy One and all those who will enter and possess the Promised Land under Y'hoshua. Jeremiah, Ezekiel and the letter to the Hebrews all confirm that this covenant is renewed again [becomes a 'new covenant'] for those who receive, embrace, and reproduce by following, living by both the Torah and the Spirit of, and thereby reproducing, Messiah.

including all the instructions for living we once thought of merely as ‘commandments’ we were supposed to follow by sheer force of will or out of fear of punishment - are infused with the same prophetic, creative power as the *Yehi Ohr* [*Light, Be!*] declaration of Genesis 1:3.

The opening book of the Torah has clearly laid a **firm, unshakeable foundation** for every other revelation that is to come. So let us finish the book that has taught us these things with the same zeal with which our study began. After all, we have been called to Torah’s only deathbed scene – at the deathbed of Ya’akov, the last of the true patriarchs. We are invited to eavesdrop on the last words of a man who has heard – and *sh’ma*-ed - the voice of the Holy One many times, who has seen stairways to heaven, and who has wrestled with an angel and lived.

The Deathbed Scene

None of Ya’akov’s predecessors – male or female - had the opportunity to gather children around their deathbed and give them final words of exhortation or instruction. Ya’akov is unique among the *avot* in that regard. It appears the approaching era of increasingly hostile Egyptian exile, enslavement/captivity, and holocaust that lay before the progeny of Avraham which had been begotten through Ya’akov necessitated a few *last words*.

If ever a people group needed prophetic insight it was the people who had traveled with Ya’akov down the dusty roads from Hebron to the land of Goshen in Egypt. But what are we, many generations - indeed several *millennia* - removed, supposed to make of and learn from the “deathbed blessing” of Ya’akov? It seems, to us in 21st century America so far removed from our world. It seems as we read this intimate conversation between father and sons almost as if we are eavesdropping on something private - something only between Ya’akov and the 12 souls to whom which he, Leah, Rachel, Bilhah and Zilpah gave the gift of life.

Why, we might ask, did the *Ruach HaQodesh* include this private communication - word for word no less - in the Torah for all generations of Ya’akov’s descendants – and anyone else who was interested – to read? Is there possibly more to this three thousand plus year old deathbed blessing than meets the eye?

Is that a Flicker of Divine Light Shining In Ya’akov’s Tired Eyes?

Ya’akov’s final words to his sons [and to us, who were invited by Torah to attend and *sh’ma* this event] began with great promise. In yesterday’s aliyah we read that Ya’akov began this poignant drama by saying to his sons:

He'asefu v'agidah lachem et asher-yikra etchem

"Gather 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 b'nei Ya'akov

Assemble, and sh'ma [listen and heed, and act], you sons of Ya'akov;

v'shim'u el-Yisra'el avichem

Sh'ma [listen to] Yisra'el your father.

With bated breath and great anticipation we like Ya'akov's sons have now gathered and anxiously await the words that will follow - the 'last words' of the last of the *avot*. We know these will be the final instructions and exhortations of the man who saw angels ascend and descend on a staircase extending between Heaven and Earth, who *wrestled all night with a Divine Messenger*, and who *walked with the Holy One through storm after storm*.

Who could help but be excited? And the words with which Ya'akov has gathered us contain a promise that *ups the ante* even further if you will – he has said that he is going to tell us *what our future holds*. He has indicated the words he is going to speak will lay out for us what will happen to us in the days to come – the *aftertime of days*.

If we see the “deathbed blessing” of Ya'akov as just a tender (sometimes) farewell of an aged man saying goodbye to his sons we miss the point entirely. Ya'akov is not *reminiscing* and *wishing his sons well* (or ill, as the case may be) - he is *prophesying*. And he like all prophets is seeing things that will happen over the course of centuries and millennia, in a multi-dimensional form that *does not reveal the exact day or hour of any of the events* but hints that they will repeat themselves over and over, in every era of history. And if we understand that we understand that some of the things he prophesies in this passage will yet come to pass - either in our lifetime or in the lifetimes of our children.

The actual words that follow this tantalizing promise however are nothing if not obtuse. For all Ya'akov's lifetime of experience with the Holy One walking in Divine Light it appears that our patriarch, like us, still only sees 'through a glass darkly'. So . . . well, what are we to take away from this deathbed speech? Let me suggest a few things, Dear Reader.

The Concept of A Gathering and A Regathering

Note first of all the repetition in the invitation Ya'akov extends to us of the phrase

“gather yourselves together”⁴.

Note secondly what Ya’akov identifies as the subject matter of his discourse: “that which shall befall you *in the last days*”.

Note that in his opening clause Ya’akov tells his sons *he'asefu* – i.e. *gather yourselves together*. Then in a parallel clause near the end of his invitation to his deathbed he tells them *hiqavtzu* – *assemble*. Why did Ya’akov *avinu* use different verbs? It deserves a closer look.

The Seed-Time Gathering

The first time Ya’akov references a gathering/assembling in his deathbed invitation the operative Hebrew verb is *asaf*, *alef, samech, feh sofit*, Strong’s Hebrew word #622, pronounced *aw-sawf*. This verb root is derived from ancient agriculture – meaning *to collect or accumulate seed in a bag for sowing*. See the first Biblical usage at Genesis 6:21.

Seeds of course are *living things*. If at the end of a growing season you collect seeds in containers, though they may look lifeless, they are actually full of life. Totally unseen, through the winter they carry on respiration, absorb oxygen and give off carbon dioxide – just waiting for someone to expose them to water and sunshine in the spring.

The first gathering Ya’akov calls for, it appears, is a gathering *of/as seeds*. But such a gathering is only a beginning – a gathering for planting season. There is another kind of gathering to which Ya’akov our father calls us.

The Harvest-Time Gathering

The second time Ya’akov references a ‘gathering’ the operative Hebrew verb is no longer *asaf* [seed gathering] but is instead *qabatz*, *quf, beit, tzade sofit*, Strong’s Hebrew word #6908, pronounced *kaw-bawtz*. This word is also rooted in the agricultural world – this time in connection with the process of *harvesting grain*. See the first Biblical usage, in Genesis 41:35. See also Genesis 41:48 and

⁴ Two different Hebrew verbs are used. The first verb used 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 might be done to store up food or supplies for a journey. See the first Biblical usage, at Genesis 6:21. The second verb 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.

Deuteronomy 30:3-4.

The picture one should have in one's mind as he or she meditates on the Hebrew verb **qabatz** is thus the visual image of *a harvester gathering mature grain from a field*. In ancient times harvesters cut mature standing grain with a scythe, then gathered bundles of the fallen stalks of grain in his or her arms and tied them together for easy carriage.

Qabatz is vastly different from the English word 'assemble', in that it does not mean 'assemble' or 'gather' in the Western sense of *having a meeting* with each other, or *engaging in pleasant socialization*, but instead focuses on the physical action of *collecting into one place*.

The prophetic import of the use of these two agricultural verbs in Ya'akov's deathbed invitation is that for Ya'akov's descendants the future is destined to consist of **3 distinct stages**. The first and last stages will correspond to the two 'gatherings' he mentions in his invitation.

First will come the **asaf**-gathering when the descendants of Ya'akov, of every tribe, will be gathered *like seeds* – to be kept until sowing time. This gathering, as I see it, occurred in connection with the Exodus. The tribes remained 'gathered' throughout the wilderness wandering, the conquest of the land under Y'hoshua, the era of the Judges, and throughout the time there was a United Kingdom - under kings Shaul, David and Sh'lomo.

What will happen *between these two types of gathering*? It *doesn't take a rocket scientist* to figure it out.

The Diaspora

The middle stage – which many commentators refer to as the '*Times of the Gentiles*' - is a *dispersion stage*. It is a time when the seed that had been so carefully gathered for seed-time and kept for just such a time on God's Timetable as this will be *scattered*, or *planted*, as if by a sower going forth to sow a field.

We are presently in this 'dispersion' era. This era began in 722 BCE with the '*Northern Kingdom*' being taken into captivity by the Assyrians and dispersed throughout the earth. As the plagues and the Exodus were the first [seed-time] gathering of Ya'akov's descendants the Assyrian dispersion was the *first sowing*⁵.

⁵ It seems logical, and is supported by some historical evidence, that some of the members of the Northern Kingdom tribes fled to the Southern Kingdom when Assyria attacked. For every member of a Northern Kingdom tribe which migrated back to and joined the community of the

The process continued in 586 BCE when the ‘*Southern Kingdom*’ was taken into captivity and its people were relocated by the Babylonians so they could not rebel again against Babylonian authority. This was the *second sowing*.

Now that this is said I acknowledge that the issue of just *who* is dispersed *where* is a highly controversial one. I do not wish to become involved in the arguments on either side of the controversy. I confess frankly and openly that *I do not know where all the descendants of Reuven, Sh'mon, Menashe, Yissakhar, Gad, Asher, Dan, etc.* [i.e. the tribes of the ‘first sowing’] are today. For that matter, I confess that I also do not know where all the descendants of Y'hudah, Binyamin, and Levi [the primary tribes involved in the *second sowing*] are located today.

Who is Who and Who is Where?

This author has read numerous arguments on all sides of what I call the ***who is who and who is where controversy***. They are inconclusive at best. After all the reading the truth is that we simply still do not pretend to know where all the seeds the Holy One sowed are now located. It apparently was not the will of the Holy One for us to be able tell anyone anywhere from what tribe they are descended, nor even if they have in them either a drop of Jewish blood or a strand of Hebrew DNA. We just don't know – and we are supposed to be perfectly *fine with that*.

But this we do know – ***the Holy One has sown ALL Ya'akov's descendants as SEED!*** And we also know that ***wherever such seeds have been dispersed the Holy One knows exactly where they are***. At the time He chooses - when it will *serve His purpose* and as and how it will most effectively *reveal His glory* – He will breathe upon those seeds suddenly, and wherever they are they will miraculously and almost simultaneously *sprout*. And then they will, like Aharon's rod, quickly yield *limb, flower, and fruit* consistent with the essence of the tree from which they emanated.

Even as I write this and as you read it the dispersion stage – called by some the ***Diaspora*** [a Greek word meaning spreading seed] – is *in the process of winding down*. Some of the Ya'akovian/Yisraeli seeds that the Holy One has sown in the world have fallen *along the way*, some *on stony ground*, and some *among thorns*, a large quantity have fallen in *good ground*. For every one of these seeds that has remained pure and identifiable as a *Hebrew*, a *Levi*, or a *Jew*, many, many others have cross-pollinated with other seed, through intermarriage and assimilation. The Ya'akovian/Yisraeli bloodline has thereby been intermingled with virtually every other bloodline of mankind and that while the Ya'akovian/Yisraeli DNA is in

Southern Kingdom vast numbers of persons descended from the tribes which made up the Northern Kingdom were sold into slavery in throughout the four corners of the earth.

many cases hidden and disguised there is some very fine *Ya'akovian/Yisraeli wheat* presently growing undetected in great fields that some consider to consist only of barley and tares.

The Growing Season Will End, and Harvest Will Come

But the end of the growing season is *rapidly approaching*. The Holy One will soon cause the descendants of Efrayim, Menashe, Zevulun, Gad, Asher, Naftali, Dan, Yissakhar, Reuven, and Sh'mon, as well as the scattered remnants of Y'hudah, Benyamin, Sh'mon and Levi to be *gathered together* [Hebrew *qabatz*] with one another. The end of the 'Times of the Gentiles' will soon come, and the Divine Harvester – the 'Lord of the Harvest' whom our sages call the Messiah - will call forth a great 'regathering' of all the scattered descendants of Ya'akov.

At that time Yosef and his brothers – wherever and to whatever extent they may have been separated - will be *reunited once again*. If and to the extent, therefore, there are 'lost tribes' I believe the members thereof will in connection with this great regathering awaken to their true identity, will be joined together with Y'hudah, ***and will bring a harvest of millions of gentile followers of the God of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Ya'akov in their wake.***

I find a strong hint of this in the deathbed prophesies of Ya'akov over Y'hudah and Yosef. In the prophesy over Y'hudah, Ya'akov prophesies Y'hudah will bind his donkey to "the vine" and his donkey's colt to the "choice [most fruitful] vine". Over Yosef, Ya'akov prophesies he will be what? **A fruitful vine - the choicest of vines, which will spread out over a wall.** Do you not see the connection of these prophetic utterances with the superimposed 'dry bones' and 'two sticks' messages of *Yechezkiel* [Ezekiel] chapter 37?

So as you read the verses of today's aliyah do not merely look back at history to gain understanding of them. Look around you at what is happening today; and take a peek into *your future*, and that of *your children*!

And now let us look more specifically at the words Ya'akov spoke from his deathbed over Zevulun, Yissakhar, Dan, Gad, Asher, Naftali, Yosef, and Binyamin.

Zevulun

Today we read of Ya'akov's blessing of the last 8 sons born to him – from *Zevulun* through *Benyamin*. The name *Zevulun* [pronounced *zev-oo-loon*] is made up of the Hebrew letters *zayin, beit, vav, lamed, and nun sofit*. Zevulun was Ya'akov's tenth son overall, and sixth and last by Leah.

The details of Zevulun's birth are found in Genesis 30:19-20. The verb root of his name is **zabal**, *zayin, beit, lamed*, Strong's Hebrew word #2082, pronounced *zaw-bawl*, and meaning "he dwells", or "he makes his home". Leah named this her 6th son *Zevulun* because having borne him 6 sons she felt Ya'akov would now choose to dwell in her tent - not Rachel's. *Zevulun fathered three sons, Sered, Elon and Yachle'el [i.e. Jahleel] from which the tribe bearing his name devolved.*

Here are the words Ya'akov speaks of this son – and his tribe – on his deathbed:

Zevulun lechof yamim yish'kon
'Zebulun shall settle the seashores;

v'hu lechof onyot
he will be a harbor for ships;

v'yarchato al-Tzidon
his border shall reach Sidon.

Since we know virtually nothing from Torah concerning Zevulun other than his birth and his participation along with his brothers in the plundering of Shechem, the conspiracy to murder – and then cover up the disappearance of – Yosef, and the three trips to Egypt [two to buy grain, and the third at the beginning of the exile], we are not aware of any historical basis for Ya'akov to make this statement. It thus appears to be completely prophetic⁶.

Where has the great sower sown the **zara** [seed] of Ya'akov's son Zevulun? Are there somewhere in the world living descendants of Zevulun's sons Sered, or Elon, or Yachle'el? The Holy One knows⁷. If there are living descendants of Zevulun presently alive on planet earth perhaps Ya'akov is telling us that we should expect to find them *along the seashores of the world*. Perhaps a part of what Ya'akov foresaw was a group of long lost descendants of Zevulun coming from the seacoasts and harbor resorts of the four corners of the world to the great Harvest-time regathering.

Yissakhar

Yissakhar [*yod, sin, sin, kaf, resh*] was Ya'akov's ninth son overall, and his final son

⁶ In the most immediate and visible fulfillment of this prophecy, in the time of the division of Kena'an under Y'hoshua, the Western border of the tribal allotment of Zevulun was 'towards the [Mediterranean] sea'. Citing **Joshua 19:11**. Hebrew legend has it that many men of Zevulun became mariners and sea-merchants, and used the wealth they obtained by such maritime ventures to sponsor men of the neighboring tribe of Yissakhar in advanced Torah studies.

⁷ See Revelation 7:8.

by Leah. The details of his birth are found in Genesis 30:17-18. One interpretation of the name Yissakhar is "man of reward" [from the Hebrew verb *sh'kar*]. Yissakhar was the product of the mandrake incident related in Genesis 30:9-18.

Yissakhar was the 5th and next-to-last son born to Ya'akov by Leah. The details surrounding his birth are set forth in Genesis 30:19-20. When *Yissakhar grew up he fathered four sons, namely Tola, Puvah, Iyov, and Shimron*⁸. *It was these fours sons that the tribe of Yissakhar descended.* In 1 Chronicles 12:32 it is said of the sons of Yissakhar:

And . . . the children of Yissakhar
. . . were men that had understanding of the times,
to know what Israel ought to do

Ya'akov remarks concerning his son Yissakhar and his descendants as follows:

Yissakhar chamor gorem

Yissakhar is a strong donkey,

ovetz beyn ha-mishpetayim

Lying down between the saddlebags.

Va'yar m'nuchoh ki tov

He saw a resting-place, that it was good,

v'et-ha-aretz ki na'emah

The land, that it was pleasant;

va'yeit shich'mo lisbol

He bows his shoulder to the burden,

vayehi lemas-oved

And becomes a servant doing forced labor.

Are there somewhere in the world living descendants of Yissakhar's sons *Tola, Puvah, Iyov, and/or Shimron*? Again, as was the case with Zevulun, the Holy One knows⁹. If there are, perhaps Ya'akov is telling us that we should expect to find them *carrying the burdens of others*. Perhaps a part of what Ya'akov foresaw was a group of long lost descendants of Yissakhar carrying others from the four corners of the world to the great Harvest-time regathering.

Dan

⁸ Genesis 46:13.

⁹ See Revelation 7:7.

Dan [*dalet, nun sofit*, meaning *he judges*] was Ya'akov's *fifth son overall*, and the first by anyone other than Leah. A firstborn in his own right, he was the eldest of the two sons Ya'akov fathered through the surrogate motherhood of Bilhah, Rachel's maid [the other such son being Naftali].

The details of Dan's birth are set forth in Genesis 30:1-6. When Rachel was convinced that she was unable to have children but saw she had given Ya'akov a child through Bilhah's surrogacy she cried "**The Holy One has judged me**" (Genesis 30:5) – hence Bilhah's son was named Dan – or God judges. Dan had only one son, whom he named *Chushim*.

Of Dan and his descendants Ya'akov prophesied:

Dan yadin amo

"Dan will judge his people,

ke'achad shivtei Yisra'el

As one of the tribes of Yisra'el.

Yehi Dan nachash aley-derech

Dan will be a serpent in the way,

Shfifon aley-orach ha-noshech ikvei-sus

An adder in the path, that bites the horse's heels,

vayipol rochevo achor

So that his rider falls backward.

Are there somewhere in the world any living descendants of Dan's son *Chushim*? The Holy One knows¹⁰. If there are perhaps Ya'akov is telling us that we should expect to find them among *those who lay in wait for, and strike at the heel of the Holy One's people*. Perhaps – just perhaps - some of those we think of [and reasonably so based upon their behavior toward us] as *enemies* will turn out in the end to be *a part of us*.

It is not a thought that pleases the flesh. But it is the kind of thing we must keep in mind. It may help us to understand why Y'shua of Natzret placed so much emphasis on teaching us to love those we think of as our enemies.

Ya'akov's Messianic Prayer

Caught up in prophetic vision Yisrael/Ya'akov's next words seem out of place.

¹⁰ It should be noted that Revelation 7, in listing the tribes from which 12,000 descendants will be sealed as servants of the Holy One, omits only Dan from the original list of tribes, substituting Yosef [also present through Menashe and Efrayim] for Dan, but offering no explanation for the substitution.

Perhaps he sees the Messiah coming far in the future, for he interrupts his prophecies over his sons to say:

L y'shu'atecha kiviti Adonai

I wait for your y'shua [deliverer/savior/redeemer], Oh Holy One
[Genesis 49:18]

The acknowledgement of the need for a Redeemer, particularly when coupled with the use of the word/name **y'shua** [in the second person possessive form – *y'shuatecha*] is what makes this prayer so fascinating. Of course, since **y'shua** is a Hebrew word meaning savior/deliverer/redeemer, the term **y'shuatecha** could refer to any of Israel's judges. And, since this prayer is spoken immediately after the prophecy over Dan, perhaps it refers, in the first instance, to *Shimshon* [known to most of us by the Anglicized 'nickname' Samson], who was a **Dani**, and whom the Holy One raised up to deliver Israel in the period of the judges.

As we discussed in yesterday's aliyah however, history is prophecy. Hence the events which occurred in the lives of the patriarchs - and which they saw prophetically - do not occur and see fulfillment only once but occur repeatedly and are fulfilled several times at differing levels. *Ultimate fulfillment of each always points to Messiah.*

That is I believe what Y'shua was teaching the *talmidim* in Luke 24:27, when ***'beginning with Moshe and all the prophets, He explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning Him.'*** And it is surely a part of what Y'shua had in mind when He declared in Luke 24:44:

***Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me
in the Torah of Moshe, the Prophets, and the Psalms.***

As he was prophesying over his sons, could Yisrael/Ya'akov have experienced prophetically a foretaste of what Y'shua would teach His *talmidim*? Ya'akov says that he has *'waited'* for the Holy One's Deliverer/Savior to come. In Hebrew the verb we translate as *'waited'* is a covenant term meaning *to steadfastly believe in something, and to live one's life in reliance upon and to count the thing believed in as sure as present reality.*

We in this generation "wait" for the triumphant return of the same Deliverer/Savior for whom Ya'akov waited. And though we have seen more of Him than Ya'akov did, we still wait for the ultimate fulfillment of all the TaNaKh says that Deliverer/Savior will do – i.e, to reveal Himself to Israel, to regather her from whence she has been dispersed, to cleanse her of her sin, to draw all nations to her, to establish His government on Temple Mount, to judge the nations which oppressed His people, and to rule in righteousness and justice.

As much as Y'shua has already done in the area of individual salvation, you see, never forget that much, much more remains to be done, for Y'shua has yet to bring forth corporate, national salvation as has been promised. As Shaul of Tarsus taught, "*All Israel will be saved.*" **Romans 11:26.** Note that the future tense – will be saved, not the past tense 'has saved', or the present tense 'is saving' is used.

We all, like our ancestor Ya'akov, wait for your *Y'shua*, Oh Holy One!

Gad

After breathing this brief but awe-inspiring prophetic prayer Ya'akov continues prophesying over his sons. The next son over whom Ya'akov prophesies is Gad. **Gad** [gimel, dalet, sometimes meaning 'good fortune' and sometimes meaning 'a troop'] was Ya'akov's 7th son overall, and the first of two sons Ya'akov had by the surrogate motherhood of Zilpah, Leah's maid [the second of the two was Asher]. The circumstances surrounding Gad's birth are described in Genesis 30:9-11.

Gad's name comes from the Hebrew word *troop*. Leah named her maid's firstborn Gad, saying "Good fortune [or, a troop] is coming." Gad grew up to sire seven sons: *Ziphion, Haggi, Shuni, Ezbon, Eri, Arodi, and Areli*

Ya'akov prophesies over Gad as follows:

Gad gedud yegudenu v'hu yagud akev

"Gad, a troop will press on him, but he will press on their heel.

Are there, somewhere in the world, any living descendants of any of Gad's seven sons? The Holy One knows¹¹.

Asher

Asher [alef, shin, resh, meaning on course, in position, and going straight to the target and/or toward the goal'] was Ya'akov's eighth son overall, and the second and last son of Ya'akov born through the surrogacy of Zilpah, Leah's maid [the firstborn of Zilpah's surrogacy being Gad]. Asher's birth is described in Genesis 30:11-13. Upon his birth, Leah named him Asher, saying "*On course, in position and going straight toward the target am I!*" **Genesis 30:13.**

Asher had four sons Yimnah, and Yish'vah, and Yish'vi, and B'riyah, and one daughter, whom he named *Serach*.

Ya'akov blessed Asher and his descendants as follows:

¹¹ See Revelation 7:5.

Me'Asher shmenah lachmo
Out of Asher his bread will be fat,

V'hu yiten ma'adanei-melech
He will yield a king's delicacies.

Are there somewhere in the world living descendants of any of Asher's four sons?
The Holy One knows¹².

Naftali

Naftali [*nun, fey, tav, lamed yod*, meaning *my struggle*] was Ya'akov's sixth son overall, and his second son by the surrogacy of Bilhah, Rachel's maid. The details of Naftali's birth are set forth in Genesis 30:7-8. Naftali was given his name by Rachel, who upon his birth said: "***With great wrestlings have I wrestled my sister, and have prevailed.***" **Genesis 30:8.** Naftali grew up to have four sons, whom he named *Yachatz-el, Guni, Yetzer, and Shillem.*

The land allotted to the tribe that devolved from Naftali was near the 'Sea of Galilee', also known as Kinnereth. Ya'akov's blessing over Naftali reads as follows:

Naftali ayalah shluchah ha-noten imrei-shafer
*Naftali is a doe set free q=who bears beautiful fawns.*¹³

Are there somewhere in the world living descendants of any of Naftali's four sons?
The Holy One knows¹⁴.

Yosef

Yosef [*yod, vav, samech, feh sofit*, Strong's Hebrew word #3130, pronounced *yo-safe'*] was Ya'akov's firstborn son by Rachel, his chosen and most beloved wife. He was the last of the children born in the house of Lavan. The story of his birth is found in Genesis 30:22-24.

God [Elohim] remembered Rachel,
and God [Elohim] listened to her, and opened her womb.
She conceived, bore a son, and said,
"God [Elohim] has taken away my reproach."
She named him Yosef, saying,

¹² See Revelation 7:6.

¹³ Others translate this verse '***Naftali is a spreading tree, that puts out beautiful branches.***' [*Baaley Tosafot; Malbim*]; or '***Naftali is a full-bearing field, that bears beautiful trees.***' [*Chizzkuni; HaKethav V'HaKabbalah*].

¹⁴ See Revelation 7:6.

"May the Holy One [yod, hey, vav, hey] add another son to me¹⁵."

We know more about Yosef than we know about any of Ya'akov's other sons. His trials and tribulations are well chronicled in chapters 37, 39 – 48, and 50 of *Sefer B'reshit* [the book of Genesis]. Though hated by his brothers he was the Holy One's *chosen vessel of redemption*. Through his affliction the Holy One ordained for the family to be preserved from the famine with which He judged the inhabitants of the land of Kena'an.

As we might have expected Yosef received a wonderful blessing from his father, Here it is:

Ben porat Yosef

"Yosef is a fruitful vine,

ben porat aley-ayin

A fruitful vine by a spring;

b'not tza'adah aley-shur

His branches run over the wall.

V'yemamaruhu v'robu

The archers have sorely grieved him,

v'yistemuhu ba'alei chitzim

Masters of strife made him their target.

Vateshev b'eytan kashto

But his bow abode in strength,

vayafozu zro'ei yadav midei avir Ya'akov

The arms and hands are strengthened by the hands of the Mighty One of Ya'akov,

misham ro'eh eben Yisra'el

(From there is the shepherd, the stone of Yisra'el),

Me'el avicha veyazreka

Even the God of your father will help you,

v'et shadai vivaracheka

even Shaddai will bless you,

birchot shamayim me'al birchot tehom rovetzet tachat

With blessings of heaven above, Blessings of the deep that lies below,

birchot shadayim v'racham

Blessings of the breasts, and of the womb.

¹⁵ Yosef means 'He will add'.

Birchot avicha gavru

The blessings of your father have prevailed

al-birchot horai ad-ta'avat giv'ot olam

above the blessings of the ancient mountains, or the bounty of the age-old hills.

tihieynah l'rosh Yosef

They will be on the head of Yosef,

ul'kodekod nezir echav

on the crown of the head of him who is separated from his brothers.

Note if you will that Ya'akov *does not mention one word about what Yosef's brothers did to him* – anywhere in anyone's blessing. Have you ever wondered why that is the case?

It is of course possible that no one – including Yosef – ever told him the particulars of what happened at Dotan. In that case, what the brothers told him – about finding the *coat of many colors* stained with blood and not knowing what happened to Yosef – was never corrected during Ya'akov's life. It is also possible however that with the passage of time and the revelation of the Holy One's greater plan, the matter of the emotional wounds inflicted in connection with Yosef's violent abduction was simply no longer deemed important enough to mention. Consider that possibility each time you are tempted to nurse the hurts inflicted upon you by others in this life.

Binyamin

Binyamin was the twelfth and *last* son born to Ya'akov. Binyamin was the only son of Ya'akov born in *Eretz Yisrael* [the Land of Israel]. He was born near the city of *Beit-Lechem* [Bethlehem].

Ya'akov's beloved Rachel died giving birth to Binyamin and was buried on the road to Beit-Lechem. With her dying breath she named him *Binoni* [usually translated *son of my trouble*, or *son of my sorrow*]¹⁶. Ya'akov, however, did not accept this name, changing it immediately to Binyamin [*beit, nun, yod, mem, yod, nun sofit*], Strong's Hebrew word #1144, pronounced *bin-yaw-mene'* and usually

¹⁶ See Genesis 35:18. The name *binoni* is a contraction of the Hebrew words *ben* [*beit, nun sofit* - son] and *oni* [*alef, vav, nun, yod* - often translated 'my trouble']. The verb root of the word *oni*, however, is *avan*, [*alef, vav, nun sofit*, Strong's Hebrew word #205, pronounced *aw-vawn'*. which is more literally translated 'my iniquity', or 'my vanity'. This verb is first used in Torah in Numbers 23:21, where Bila'am the prophet hired by the Moavi' king Balak explained why he could not curse Yisrael as Balak desired. Bila'am declared: "*He [the Almighty] has seen no iniquity [avan] in Ya'akov*". See also Psalm 6:8, where the Psalmist declares "*Depart from me, all you workers of iniquity [avan], For the Holy One has heard the voice of my weeping.*"

translated ‘*son of my right hand*’ but more literally translated ‘*right-hand son*’.

What did Ya’akov mean by this renaming? Hebraically this related to the blessing this son would receive. The son receiving *the inheritance of the firstborn* would be seated on the father’s ‘right hand’. As you will recall, when Ya’akov adopted and blessed Yosef’s two sons Efrayim and Menashe, Yosef became disturbed when he saw Ya’akov place his right hand of blessing upon Efrayim [though Menashe was the firstborn]. Why did he become disturbed? Because he understood that the one at the *right hand* of the father received the father’s role and position in regard to familial authority as well as the double portion of the inheritance. He was concerned that Efrayim, the younger son, was being given authority over Menashe, the elder.

We see a *strange thing* happen with Binyamin. While one would think that since Yosef and Binyamin were whole brothers [the only two sons of Ya’akov by Rachel] Binyamin’s tribe would be associated with the tribes of Yosef’s sons. But this is not what happened. Instead Binyamin’s tribe became associated and over the centuries virtually combined with **Y’hudah** – the pre-eminent [though fourth-born] son of Ya’akov *by Leah*.

A deepening of the relationship between Y’hudah and Binyamin began as you may recall in parsha *Miketz*, when in connection with the second journey to Egypt to redeem Sh’mon and purchase grain Y’hudah committed himself to be Binyamin’s protector. Read carefully Y’hudah’s commitment to Ya’akov at that time:

*“Y’hudah said to Yisra’el, his father, “Send the boy with me,
and we will arise and go, so that we may live, and not die,
both we, and you, and also our little ones.
I will be collateral for him.
From my hand will you require him.
If I don’t bring him to you, and set him before you,
then let me bear the blame forever”*
[Genesis 43:8-9]¹⁷

From that time forward Binyamin and Y’hudah were *inextricably joined together*. Hence, the placement of the tribes in the camp of Israel in the wilderness put Binyamin as the ‘mirror image’ of Y’hudah. Y’hudah marched in the lead [the eastern-most part of the camp] on the right; Binyamin marched in the rear [the Western-most part of the camp] on the left – the exact mirror image or ‘flip side of the coin’.

And when the land of Eretz Yisrael was allocated among the tribes by *Y’hoshua*,

¹⁷ See also Genesis 44:18-34 – where Y’hudah offered his own life to ransom Binyamin, in fulfillment of this vow of protection.

son of Nun, the tribal allotment of Binyamin [containing Y'rushalayim] adjoined that of Y'hudah [on Binyamin's southern border]. And it was actually Y'hudah's tribal allotment that contained Beit-Lechem, Binyamin's birthplace, and the tomb of Binyamin's mother Rachel.

Under the kingdom of David the tribal allotments of Binyamin and Y'hudah basically merged. This combination continued under Shlomo and even when the kingdom divided, under Rehoboam.

This combination of Binyamin and Y'hudah has highly significant Messianic implications. Hopefully we can explore them at a later time. For the present, however, we are studying Ya'akov/Yisrael's final blessing of Binyamin. That *b'rachah* is as follows:

Binyamin ze'ev yitraf

"Binyamin is a ravenous wolf.

B'boker yochal ad

In the morning he will devour the prey.

V'la'erev yechalek shalal

At evening he will divide the spoil."

[Genesis 49:27]

In Conclusion

After concluding Binyamin's blessing Torah resumes as a narrative - with one final verse for today's aliyah:

Kol-eleh shiv'tei Yisra'el shneym asar

All these are the twelve tribes of Yisra'el,

vezot asher-diber lahem avihem vayevarach otam

and this is what their father spoke to them and blessed them.

ish asher kevirchato berach otam

He gave each one his own special blessing.

[Genesis 49:28]

Questions For Today's Study

1. Today we have read about when Ya'akov gathered his sons around his deathbed and prophesied over each of them. Make a list of the six sons he blessed in verses 13-27. Beside the name of each of the sons write a summary of what Ya'akov prophesied over that son.

2. Ya'akov/Yisrael's deathbed prophecies and blessings were unique to each son.

[A] Which three of the 12 sons do you think received the greatest blessing/prophecy? Why?

[B] Have the blessings of the son you think received the greatest blessing/prophecy been realized yet? If so when? (If in part, specify in what part it has been fulfilled and in what part it has not been fulfilled, and when you think that part will be fulfilled). If not, when do you think it will be?

[C] Which of Ya'akov's sons received a prophecy but no blessing?

[D] Which of Ya'akov's sons besides Yosef and Y'hudah received both a prophecy and a blessing?

[E] In the first generation to enter Eretz Yisrael, we know that Kalev and Y'hoshua were the leaders. With what tribes were those men associated?

[F] Did Kalev do anything which reminds you of the prophesy of Ya'akov over the tribe of which Kalev was a member? Explain.

[G] Did Y'hoshua do anything which reminds you of the prophesy of Ya'akov over the tribe of which Y'hoshua was a member? Explain.

3. Many centuries after Ya'akov's prophecy and blessing of his sons and their tribes all the tribes joined together under a king. We all know that the first king of Yisrael was *Shaul* [Saul], son of Kish.

[A] Of which tribe was Shaul a member?

[B] Did Shaul do anything while king which reminds you of the prophesy of Ya'akov over the tribe of which Shaul was a member? Explain.

[C] In the B'rit Chadasha there is much written about another man named Shaul - Shaul of Tarsus, called "Paul" by some of the Gentiles. From what tribe was this other Shaul descended?

[D] Did Shaul of Tarsus do anything which reminds you of the prophesy of Ya'akov over the tribe of which this Shaul was a member? Explain.

4. When the descendants of Yisrael divided into two kingdoms after Shlomo's death:

[A] Who was the first king of the Northern Kingdom, and from what tribe did that person come?

[B] Who was the first king of the Southern Kingdom, and from what tribe did that person come?

5. Pick a tribe of Israel and look up that tribe in a reference book. Write an essay on what you find out about that tribe.

6. In I Kings 2:5-6 David gives Shlomo some instructions about how to deal with

one of Israel's former generals.

*Moreover you know also what Yo'av the son of Tzeru'yah did to me,
even what he did to the two captains of the hosts of Yisra'el,
to Aviner the son of Ner, and to `Amasa the son of Yeter,
whom he killed, and shed the blood of war in shalom,
and put the blood of war on his sash that was about his loins,
and in his shoes that were on his feet.*

*Do therefore according to your wisdom,
and don't let his gray head go down to She'ol in shalom.*

[A] What instructions does David give to Shlomo about Yoav [Joab]?

[B] Look up Yoav [Joab], Aviner [Abner], and Amasa in the Bible Dictionary.
What passages of Scripture describe Yoav's actions in regards to Abner?

[C] What passages of Scripture describe Yoav's actions in regards to Amasa?

[D] Why do you think David includes these instructions in his charge to Shlomo about how to enter into the promise of God?

7. In today's reading from the B'rit Chadasha reading *Kefa* [Peter] gives critical instructions as to what we as ones called apart unto the Holy One should *do* and *not do* during our sojourn here. Please do not let these important words of instruction just go in one ear and out the other. Kefa is not writing an essay for school. He is laying out, from his storehouse of Godly wisdom, *inspired instructions for living*. He is summarizing the "*sh'ma*" and "*sh'mar*" lifestyle that those who live by the Words of the Holy One are to exhibit.

*Therefore, prepare your minds for action,
be sober and set your hope fully on the grace
that will be brought to you at the revelation of Y'shua the Messiah -
as children of obedience, not conforming yourselves according to your former lusts
as in your ignorance,
but just as he who called you is holy,
you yourselves also be holy in all of your behavior;
because it is written, "**You are to be holy; for I am holy.**"*

*If you call on him as **Father**,
who without respect of persons judges according to each man's work,
pass the time of your living as strangers here in reverent fear:
knowing that you were redeemed, not with corruptible things,
with silver or gold,
from the useless way of life handed down from your fathers,
but with precious blood,
as of a lamb without spot, the blood of Messiah;*

[A] List the things Kefa says we should do.

[B] What does Kefa say we should not do.

[C] In Strong's, look up the words translated as "*former*" and "*lusts*" [KJV] (which the NIV translates as "*evil*" and "*desires*"). Write the Greek words and their meanings.

[D] Based upon the Strong's definitions of the words, and based upon the general stream of thought that you have found in this chapter of I Peter, what "former lusts/evil desires" do you think Kefa is saying we should not conform to?

[E] What do you think it means, in your life, to "*be holy*". [In other words, if you were to see yourself as "holy", what would be the criteria you would use to determine that you were holy?]

[F] If you are a child, what do you think it means, in your parents' life, for them to be holy? Or, if you are a parent, what do you think it means, in your children's life, for them (hint: consider each one separately) to be holy?

*May you rest in the knowledge that the Holy One
has proclaimed you as holy in His sight;
and May all the prophetic words spoken of you come into fulfillment.*

The Rabbi's son

Meditation for Today's Study

Psalm 137:5-6

*If I forget you, Y'rushalayim,
Let my right hand forget its skill
Let my tongue stick to the roof of my mouth
if I don't remember you;
If I don't prefer Y'rushalayim
above my chief joy.*