

A Torah Study Guide
for the Young
& Young at Heart

PARASHAT
VAYECHI

ויחי

Genesis 47:28-50:26

by
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& his kids

Note to the adult teacher: It will be necessary for you to give the scriptural context and background for each of the points listed below.

Great Discoveries in This Week's Parashah (Torah Portion)





- 47:28 The End of Jacob's Life Draws Near; His Last Wishes
- 48:1 Jacob's Sickness
- 48:8 Jacob Blesses Ephraim and Manasseh
- 49:1 Jacob Blesses His Twelve Sons
- 49:29 Jacob's Final Request and Death
- 50:1 Mourning for Jacob; Joseph Receives Permission to Bury Jacob in the Promised Land; the Trip Back to Canaan
- 50:15 Joseph's Brothers Fear for Their Lives and Joseph Reassures Them
- 50:22 The Rest of Joseph's Life; Joseph's Last Prophetic Words to Israel; His Death at 110 Years of Age

Exploring This Week's Parashah: The Twelve Tribes of Israel






1 The Twelve Tribes of Israel Throughout the Scriptures

The twelve tribes of Israel are an important theme in the Scriptures and are listed numerous times from Genesis to Revelation. We first meet the twelve tribes in Genesis 29, then again in Genesis 35. They are listed again in Genesis 49 when the dying Jacob prays a prophetic blessing over each of his sons. While praying over his twelve sons, Jacob under the inspiration of the Spirit of Elohim foretells or predicts what will happen to each of their tribes in the future. The tribes are listed eight more times during Israel's wandering in the wilderness (Exodus 1; Numbers 1, 2, 13, 26, 34; Deuteronomy 27 and 33), after Israel had entered the promised land (Joshua 13; Judges 5), during Israel's kingdom years (1Chronicles 2, 12 and 27), by the prophet Ezekiel with regard to a future prophecy (Ezekiel 48) and in the Book of Revelation (chapter 7).

Elsewhere in the Bible, the term "twelve tribes" is mentioned, although they are not always listed by their individual names.

-  (a) Did Yeshua believe that the 12 tribes of Israel would disappear never to be heard from again? (See Matthew 10:5-8 and 15:24.) What did Yeshua promise his disciples with regard to the 12 tribes of Israel? (Read Matthew 19:28.)
-  (b) Did Paul the apostle and the writer of much of the Apostolic Scriptures (or New Testament) believe that the 12 tribes of Israel would disappear never to be heard from again? (Read Acts 26:6-8.)
-  (c) Did James believe that the 12 tribes of Israel would disappear never to be heard from again? (Read James 1:1.)
-  (d) Did John the apostle and the author of five books in the Apostolic Scriptures believe that the 12 tribes of Israel would disappear never to be heard from again? What did he say about them regarding the soon-to-come New Jerusalem? (Read Revelation 21:12.)

2 Let's Explore Some Other References to 12 Tribes of Israel?

-  (e) What did Yeshua instruct his disciples that their ministry should be regarding the tribes of Israel? (Read Matthew 10:6; 15:24.)
-  (f) With regard to the 12 tribes of Israel, what was on the minds of the disciples just before Yeshua ascended to heaven for the last time? (Read Acts 1:6.)
-  (g) What did Peter say in Acts 3:21 must happen first before Yeshua can return to this earth? What did he mean by the "restitution" or "restoration" of all things? Could this have anything to do with the disciples' last question to Yeshua in Acts 1:6 about the restoration of the kingdom of Israel—that is, that a king of Israel would once again rule over the 12 tribes like David once did?
-  (h) Read Ezekiel 37:15-28. This is a prophecy that hasn't happened yet. If the Bible is the Word of Elohim, then this prophecy has to be fulfilled. When? It will happen when David is king again over the twelve tribes of Israel. Where is David today? (Read Acts 2:29.) When does David come back to life again? (Read 1 Thessalonians 4:15-18.) When does the resurrection of the dead occur? Has the second coming of Yeshua happened yet? Now go back to Ezekiel 37. What do verses 26-28 say? Has this happened yet? Has YHVH set his temple, tabernacle or dwelling place among men yet?
-  (i) Now read Ephesians 2:11-19. What does Paul say the Gentiles have to do and become part of if they are to have a relationship with Elohim? (Notice verse 12 where it says which commonwealth, nation or citizenship Gentiles must become part of, and through a spiritual relationship with Yeshua, they become part of the family of Elohim (verses 13-19).)




The disciples became fishers of men (Israelite "fish" lost in the sea of humanity).


3 Who Is Israel According to Jacob? (Genesis 48:14 and 16)

-  (j) Read Genesis 48:1-20.

Can you imagine your father or grandfather praying a special prayer-blessing over you where he would tell you what was going to happen to you in the future, and in the future of your children and grandchildren and beyond? Imagine that what he was praying over you had the inspiration and authority of YHVH behind it, which means that prayer-blessing was *GOING TO COME TO PASS* no matter what! That's what Jacob did when he prayed over his two grandsons, Ephraim and Manasseh.


When Jacob was laying his hands on Ephraim and Manasseh to bless them in *Genesis 48*, he crossed his arms. Then in verse 16 he speaks of the "Angel/Messenger [from heaven] that redeemed me from evil." What Jacob is referring to here is something that happened to him in *Genesis 31:11-13* when the One who would later become Yeshua the Messiah told him to leave Laban and to return to the Promised Land. That Messenger was El (short for Elohim), and he protected Jacob and his family on their return trip to Canaan and delivered them from all their enemies (Laban and Esau) who wanted to kill them. Jacob said that El (who we know became Yeshua) redeemed or saved him from all evil.

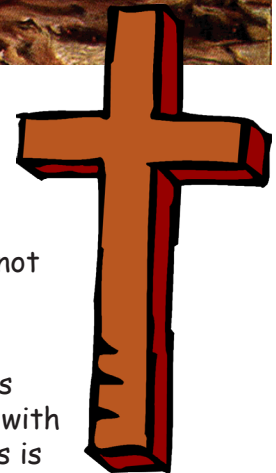
 (k) Who is the Savior or Redeemer who saves man from all evil? If you're not sure, then read *Titus 2:14*; *Romans 4:25*; *Galatians 1:3-4*.

 (l) Not only did Jacob speak about Yeshua the Redeemer who was the future Messiah to come, but he did something interesting with his arms. Read *Genesis 48:14* and see how he laid his arms on Ephraim and Manasseh. What symbol did he make with his arms?




When Jacob crossed his arms, he made the sign of the ancient paleo Hebrew letter tav, which looks something like our "t" or "x". The letter tav was a picture-symbol that meant "a mark, sign, ownership, to seal, to make a covenant, to join two things together."

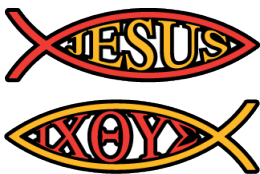
 (m) Are you getting the picture of what this all points to? If you're not quite sure what we're talking about, we'll give you a gigantic hint: What was Yeshua crucified on?



That's the symbol Jacob made over his grandsons. When Yeshua spilled his blood at the cross to pay for your sins, the Bible says that he bought you with his blood and that you now belong to him. (Read *1 Peter 1:18-20*.) The cross is Yeshua's mark of ownership over his people.


Finally, there is one more clue that we want to look at that is found in *Genesis 48:16*. Jacob prophesies that the descendants of Ephraim and Manasseh would grow to be a large multitude of people in the midst of the earth. The Jewish rabbis teach us that the Hebrew here literally means that they would become like fish in the sea of humanity.


 (n) Now let's ask the clincher question. Jacob prophesied that Ephraim and Manasseh's descendants would have a Messiah who would be their Redeemer and Savior. He made the sign of the cross over them, and ended up by saying that they'd be like fish. What religious group on earth today preaches about a Divine Messenger from heaven who is God (Elohim), speaks about a cross and has a fish as their symbol? That is who Jacob said that many of his grandson's descendants would be.



4 Who Is Israel According to the Apostle Paul?


The Apostle Paul says in a number of places that those who come to Yeshua used to be Gentiles (non-Israelites, heathens, pagans or people who belong to the nations of the world), but once they come to Yeshua they are now Israelites.

 (o) Read what Paul says about this in Ephesians 2:11-19. Read it slowly several times to get the meaning of what he is saying. You may need your parent or teacher to help you to understand what Paul is literally saying here.

 (p) Then in several places, Paul says that those who believe in Yeshua and have repented of their sins have become the sons of Abraham. (Read Romans 4:16; 9:8-11 and Galatians 3:7,9,14,28.) What does Paul say in Galatians 3:29?

In Galatians 3:29, Paul makes a very amazing statement. He says that those who come to Messiah are the seed or offspring of Abraham. The Greek word for "seed" or "offspring" is "sperma" meaning "sperm" or one who is a literal descendant or children of someone—in this case, Abraham. What Paul was saying here is that many believers in Yeshua would be actual descendants or children of Abraham from all 12 tribes of Israel.


5 There Is No Gentile Gate


 (q) Now go and read Revelation 21:12 where we find a wonderful description of the glorious New Jerusalem, which will come down from heaven. How many gates are there, and what are their names? Note that there is no gate called the "Gentile Gate." Only redeemed Israelites (those who know Yeshua as their Savior and Redeemer) will be able to enter the New Jerusalem. All twelve tribes of Israel will be a part of the New Jerusalem.


6 No Covenants Made With the Gentile Nations

Finally, as we trace the twelve tribes of Israel from the beginning of the Bible in Genesis to the very end of the Bible in Revelation, let's note one more important truth about Israel. In past Torah Explorers, we have learned that YHVH makes covenants or promises with man. In fact, he doesn't do anything without making an agreement with men. We have seen that he made an agreement with Abraham called the Abrahamic Covenant. He then made another agreement with Moses and the Israelites at Mount Sinai called the Mosaic or Sinaitic Covenant.

Israel broke their promises they made to YHVH at Mount Sinai and worshipped pagan gods and disobeyed YHVH's Torah. So YHVH promised in the future to make another agreement with some future Israelites whose hearts would be right and would love and obey him forever.

 (r) Read about this renewed covenant in Jeremiah 31:31-33. With whom would he make this future covenant? With Israelites or with Gentiles?


 (s) Now go to the Apostolic Scriptures and read Hebrews 8:8, where the writer is quoting from Jeremiah 31:31-33. The writer of Hebrews is talking about believers in Yeshua—or what we would now call, born-again believers. Is there any mention here that YHVH would make a new covenant with Gentiles? With whom does he make it? Does that mean that YHVH must consider his end-time saints to be Israelites?


 (t) If Yeshua is your Master and Savior, are you a Gentile or an Israelite, according to what we have been studying above?



YHVH and Israel

The point of this Torah Explorers study has been to show that the 12 tribes of Israel DID NOT just go away and disappear. They are at the center of YHVH's plan and purpose all the way to the very second coming of Yeshua and even beyond that into eternity in the New Jerusalem. The 12 tribes literally become the spiritual family of YHVH Elohim, which are his adopted sons and daughters who will live with him forever in his spiritual kingdom.

 (u) Read Romans 8:14-16; 2 Corinthians 6:18; 1 John 3:1-2. In your own words, briefly summarize what is being said in these verses that you have just read.

 (v) If you believe in love and obey Yeshua, then you are an Israelite and have a place in his forever kingdom. HOW does this make you feel? If you don't know Yeshua, love and obey him, then what do you need to do?



No Yeshua, no joy!
But know Yeshua, know joy!

