

Parshas Vayechi

This week's parsha is Vayechi, the final parsha in the book of Bereishish. The parsha deals with the death of Yakov Avinu and ultimately the death of Yosef, and the decline of the state of the Jews in Egypt, as part of the narrative of the exile of Egypt.

Medrish Rabba quotes Rabbi Shimon Ben Lakish, who stated that "the days of the righteous die, but they themselves do not...". The gemara in Taanis 5b discusses a conversation between Rabbi Yitzchak and Rabbi Yochanan on the statement that Yakov didn't pass away. Even though, he seemed to be embalmed, and was no longer alive. The conclusion of that discussion it seems, can be interpreted, that Yakov didn't pass away because of his offspring (based on a juxtaposition of pesukim). The gemara quickly relates a discussion between Rav Nachman and Rabbi Yitzchak who parted ways from one another, and Rabbi Yitzchak says to Rav Nachman the parable "Ilan Ilan, BaMah Avorechicha? (Tree, tree how can I bless you?), and the conclusion is that the tree's offspring should be like the tree which provided sustenance.

The connection between the two stories I would posit is that the first story, the rabbis were discussing that the only way "Yakov didn't die" was because of his offspring, and the next story relates that blessing for good offspring.

The Haftora is from Malachim 1, 2:1-12, where we are recounting the end of the life of David Hamelech, and what he commanded his offspring (Shlomo Hamelech). David Hamelech is trying to

relay the message to Shlomo to maintain steadfast in the ways of the Torah, in this way, the offspring will remain true to the ways of Hashem, and the seed will never cease in the lineage of Yakov- as the gemara relates, keeping Yakov alive. The lesson to us, is that remaining in the ways of the Torah (as David tells to Sholom Hamelech).

In last week's parsha we saw that Yehuda went ahead to set up houses of learning in Goshen for Yakov, and that Yakov live the "best years of his life" with his offspring whom he worked tirelessly, and committed to a way of Torah, so the later generations can and will survive. This Haftora, and Parsha, when compared to the others we've read is a wonderful way to culminate the book of Bereishis, where we are provided with the background and the foundations that brought us together as a nation. Staying true to Torah is what will bring us to Mashiach, and the hopes and dreams of a better time.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe explains, it is not enough to rely on the confirmation that Mashiach will eventually come, rather, we must cry out to end the golus, and be redeemed from the current Egypt sooner than later.

Yakov's constant reassurance from Hashem about Israel as a nation is a testament to Yakov doing everything to ensure the future generations will remain close to Hashem. For example, Yakov recounts the burial of Rachel to show that Yosef may have been upset that he is required to bury Yakov in Israel, but Yakov didn't do the same for Rachel. But Yakov was looking into the future when the Jews will need Kever Rachel (and the prayers of Rachel- see Rashi 48:7). Similarly, when Yakov saw in the

future that the offspring of Menashe and Efraim would be troubled, he questioned “who are these” and Yosef, said, these are my children. Because Yakov was looking into the future, he wanted to do everything in his power to ensure the continuity, much like he was always trying to ensure that his sons and Yosef would do everything correctly.

In this way, we must be true to Torah, and stay practicing as best as possible in the ways of the Torah, as it is this that keeps and kept us as a nation alive, so we can welcome Mashaich speedily in our days.

Good Shabbos