

Shavua Tov

Weekly Parsha

A Rood Awakening! Torah Commentary
By Glenn McWilliams

Torah Portion: *Vayechi* ו'י "And he lived"

Jacob made Egypt his home for 17 years. He lived to be 147 years old.

Vayechi Ya'akov be'erets Mitsrayim shva esreh shanah vayehi yemey-Ya'akov shney chayav sheva shanim ve'arba'im ume'at shanah.

Scripture for study: *Bereshit (Genesis) 47:28 – 50:26*

Our Torah portion this week is quite reminiscent of the earlier portion Chayei Sarah.¹ Both of these portions are ironically named, since both are named for the life of the person; "and he (Jacob) lived" and "the life of Sarah," and yet contain the stories of their deaths. The names of the portions are customarily taken from the opening words or verses of the portion. While the division of the Torah into 54 portions is a man-made tradition of convenience and is not dictated by the Torah itself, we may still draw a subtle message from the irony of these two portions.

We have already stated that there are numerous similarities or connections between Sarah and Jacob: Sarah is the first of the matriarchs of Israel, while Jacob is the last patriarch; Sarah had her named changed by YHWH, as did Jacob; Sarah was the first to rest in the cave of Machpelah, while Jacob was the last to be buried there.² Beyond these connections, however, is the subtle lesson that is evident in the lives of all the *tzadikim*;³ they live before they die. This may sound like a blatant statement of the obvious, but it is not. What we witness in the lives of the *tzadikim* is the fact that they live each day to its fullest. Thus when the Torah speaks of the lifespan of the *tzadikim*, it speaks not just of years, but of the days of their lives.

"And all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years: and he died." (Genesis 5:5)

"And all the days of Seth were nine hundred and twelve years: and he died." (Genesis 5:8)

"And all the days of Enos were nine hundred and five years: and he died." (Genesis 5:11)

"And all the days of Cainan were nine hundred and ten years: and he died." (Genesis 5:14)

"And all the days of Mahalaleel were eight hundred ninety and five years: and he died." (Genesis 5:17)

"And all the days of Jared were nine hundred sixty and two years: and he died." (Genesis 5:20)

"And all the days of Enoch were three hundred sixty and five years." (Genesis 5:23)

"And all the days of Methuselah were nine hundred sixty and nine years: and he died." (Genesis 5:27)

"And all the days of Lamech were seven hundred seventy and seven years: and he died." (Genesis 5:31)

"And all the days of Noach were nine hundred and fifty years: and he died." (Genesis 9:29)

"And the days of Terah were two hundred and five years: and Terah died in Haran." (Genesis 11:32)

"And these are the days of the years of Abraham's life which he lived, an hundred threescore and fifteen years." (Genesis 25:7)

"And the days of Isaac were an hundred and fourscore years. And Isaac gave up the spirit, and died..." (Genesis 35:28-29)

Even when Pharaoh inquired about the age of Jacob, the patriarch responded with a statement about the days of his life.

"And Jacob said unto Pharaoh, The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage." (Genesis 47:9)

So it is that both Sarah and Jacob remind us that the *tzadikim* live before they die. This lesson is furthered in the opening sentence of our portion. Not only does the Torah declare that Jacob lived, but it tells us that he lived even in Egypt.

"And Jacob lived in the land of Egypt 17 years: so the whole age of Jacob was an hundred forty and seven years." (Genesis 47:28)

In other words, even though Jacob was in Egypt and outside the land of promise, he still lived each day to the fullest. It is interesting to note the details that are contained in this opening verse. The Torah tells us that Jacob lived a total of 147 years, and that the last 17 of those years were spent in Egypt. It is interesting to note that the Hebrew word *nitzvah* (spelled Nun, Tzade, Vet, Hey), meaning “upright” or “erect,” has the numerical value of 147.⁴ Likewise the Hebrew word *tov* (Tet, Vav, Vet), meaning “good,” has the numerical value of 17.⁵ Thus we may say that Jacob walked upright all the days of his life, and even when in the perverse and idolatrous land and culture of Egypt, Jacob still lived a good life before Pharaoh as well as before all of his descendants.

This should be an inspiration for those of us living in exile from the earthly Messianic kingdom. Life is difficult, whether in the land of Israel or outside it. Trying to live a Torah observant life in a non-observant and even hostile world is indeed a challenge, but it is also our calling. While it may not be possible for us to walk out all of the Torah at this time, we are still to live the Torah to the fullest that we are able to. We should be walking good and upright lives even in this wicked and adulterous generation. As we shall soon see, Israel’s stay in Egypt was not without purpose. Neither is our current situation without purpose. As Joseph and Jacob were a blessing to Pharaoh and Egypt, so too are we to be a blessing to the place of our sojourning.

Another detail we should note in this portion is the fact that Joseph was 17 years old when Jacob sent him to Shechem to find his brothers.⁶ Thus, Joseph lived with Jacob for 17 years before their separation, and again for 17 years after their reunion. The symmetry of this reality is hard to miss. The Torah reveals this detail of the 17 years spent in Egypt even before it mentions the total years of Jacob’s life. By the symmetry of these sets of 17 years it would seem to indicate that Jacob “lived” when Joseph lived with him for the first 17 years, and that his life was less than living during the 22 years of Joseph’s absence. While grieving is indeed a natural and healthy part of life, there is no question that it does diminish our sense of living. And yet, even in grieving we should seek to grieve fully.

We should also note that Joseph’s absence from Jacob coincides with the number of years that Jacob willingly stayed away from Isaac. Jacob worked for Laban seven years for Leah, another seven years for Rachel, another seven years for his flocks and his herds, and spent a year travelling back to the land, which makes a total of 22 years that Jacob was in exile from his family. When Jacob was reunited with Joseph, the Torah tells us that Jacob lived fully once again during the last 17 years of his life which he spent with his beloved son Joseph. This idea is supported in the words of the Torah itself. When the brothers returned to their father with the good news of Joseph being alive and viceroy of Egypt, the Torah declares,

“And they told him all the words of Joseph, which he had said unto them: and when he saw the wagons which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived.” (Genesis 45:27)

So we may draw the conclusion that while Jacob lived every day of his life to the fullest, it is clear that the joy of those days was diminished by the absence of Joseph and the actions of his

sons. It is also clear that Jacob persevered through this adversity and continued to fulfill his mission and purpose as a *tzadik* and patriarch of Israel.

There is one more peculiar detail involving the number 17 in the life of Jacob that I believe is worthy of mention. The Torah teaches that Abraham lived 175 years, Isaac lived 180 years, and that Jacob lived 147 years. These numerical details lend themselves to those who have a love for numbers. Those scholars who have a gift for numbers have seen a mathematical pattern in the lifespans of the three patriarchs based on factorization: Abraham lived 175 years = $5 \times 5 \times 7$; Isaac lived 180 years = $6 \times 6 \times 5$; while Jacob lived 147 years = $7 \times 7 \times 3$. Nahum Sarna points out that the squared number in each of the patriarch's lifespans increases by one, while the coefficient of each is decreased by two.⁷ What does all of this mean? I haven't a clue! What fascinates me is the fact that the sum of the factorization of each of the patriarch's lifespans equals 17: Abraham, $5+5+7=17$; Isaac, $6+6+5=17$; Jacob, $7+7+3=17$. In some ways it is as if the Torah is saying that not only did YHWH go down into Egypt with Jacob,⁸ but that all of the patriarchs went down into Egypt with Jacob. In this sense we may say that the whole of the people of Israel were now in Egypt. Sarna states it this way:

*"Through their factorial patterns, the patriarchal chronologies constitute a rhetorical device expressing the profound biblical conviction that Israel's formative age was not a concatenation of haphazard incidents but a series of events ordered according to God's grand design."*⁹

This thought has been made abundantly clear through the words of the Torah itself.

"And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance. And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age. But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full." (Genesis 15:13-16)

"Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for Elohim did send me before you to preserve life." (Genesis 45:5)

"And Elohim sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance." (Genesis 45:7)

"And he said, I am Elohim, the Elohim of thy father: fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation: I will go down with thee into Egypt: and I will also surely bring thee up again." (Genesis 46:3-4)

"And his brethren also went and fell down before his face; and they said, Behold, we be thy servants. And Joseph said unto them, Fear not: for am I in the place of Elohim? But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but Elohim meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive." (Genesis 50:18-20)

Clearly all that will transpire in Egypt concerning the children of Israel must be understood in this context; it is all by the hand of YHWH ELOHIM, ruler of the universe. It is important that we understand this reality because of the harsh news that follows the report on the longevity of Jacob's life.

"And the time drew nigh that Israel must die." (Genesis 47:29)

Since Jacob wrestled at the river Jabbok, we have been taking care to notice the distinction between the names "Jacob" and "Israel."¹⁰ We have stated that Jacob is the name that belongs to the physical realm. Jacob describes the biological or carnal man who lives in the flesh. Israel is the name of the spiritual man who wrestled with his *yetzer hara*¹¹ and prevailed. A clear example of this distinction may be seen in our Torah portion.

"And it came to pass after these things, that one told Joseph, Behold, thy father is sick: and he took with him his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. And one told Jacob, and said, Behold, thy son Joseph cometh unto thee: and Israel strengthened himself, and sat upon the bed." (Genesis 48:1-2)

"Gather yourselves together, and hear, ye sons of Jacob; and hearken unto Israel your father." (Genesis 49:2)

Here let us notice that it is the earthly, carnal man Jacob that is weak and sick upon his bed, but it is the spiritual man Israel that strengthens himself to give the blessing. Notice that the name Jacob appears only twice in this whole chapter; once in the above passage, and once as he recounts part of the narrative of his life's journey. During the blessing of Ephraim and Manasseh only the name Israel is used. The same is true of the second passage. The biological children are the offspring of Jacob, but he wants them to listen to the spiritual man Israel. We will look at these blessings in a moment, but now let us return to the harsh news mentioned above.

Since Israel is the name that is predominately used to describe the spiritual realm, and Jacob is the name that is used to describe the carnal realm, we should expect that the Torah would say,

"And the time drew nigh that JACOB must die."

But instead we are surprised to see the shocking news,

"And the time drew nigh that ISRAEL must die." (Genesis 47:29)

How could this be? I believe that this is an important shadow picture of things yet to come. What we witness in this shocking news is that the spiritual reality of Israel (the prince or exalted of EL) is no longer embodied in one person, but would be bestowed upon a people, a many-membered body. In other words, this was the end of the patriarchal period. Now Israel would no longer be one man, but one people living as one man with one mind, one heart, and one purpose. This could not happen as long as the brothers fought with each other for dominance.

Instead, they would have to learn how to live and die for each other. They would have to learn how to live and act as one body. In this final portion of the book of Bereshit/Genesis, we see a very powerful transition from focusing upon the mission of one man to focusing upon a people who are the descendants, both physically and spiritually, of this one man. Through his blessings Jacob imparts the spirit of Israel upon his children, no longer the sons of Jacob, but now to become the children of Israel. In this picture we see a shadow picture of the person of Yeshua who likewise dies, raises, and then imparts the Spirit of Messiah to the many members of his body. Thus after the man Israel dies, the people Israel are born. The same is true also for the man Messiah and the body of Messiah that continues to embody the attributes, power, vitality, and purpose of Messiah in the world. So it is that Yeshua would declare to his *talmidim*,¹²

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.” (John 12:24)

“Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.” (John 16:7)

“And behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.” (Luke 24:49)

“But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.” (Acts 1:8)

By his death, resurrection, and ascension, Yeshua, in whom the Spirit resided without measure,¹³ poured out the Spirit of Messiah upon those who believed and followed.¹⁴ So we should understand from our portion that the sons of Jacob did not simply become a secular, worldly nation of Jacob, but rather they became the spiritual nation of Israel. It is very much a spiritual reality with a spiritual purpose. Israel is not merely a homeland for people of Jewish descent. Israel is a spiritual calling to keep the Torah! This is not to say that it has no fleshly or tangible aspect; it most certainly does. In fact, this is part of the uniqueness of the calling, for it requires us not only to love and serve YHWH with our heart and mind, but with our bodies as well.¹⁵ The nation of Israel is called to be the tangible, manifest embodiment of YHWH ELOHIM in the earth. As the *talmidim* of Yeshua, we are not called to be the body of Yeshua but the body of Messiah and the temple of the Holy Spirit.

“Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Messiah; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto Elohim.” (Romans 7:4)

“The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Messiah? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Messiah? For we being many are one bread, and one body.” (1 Corinthians 10:16-17)

"Now ye are the body of Messiah, and members in particular." (1 Corinthians 12:27)

We are not to be a part of secular Christendom; we are called to give our whole selves to becoming an embodied spiritual reality. We are the body of Messiah and we are Israel.

It should not escape our attention that the first of the blessings that Israel gives is the adoption of Ephraim and Manasseh.

"And now thy two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, which were born unto thee in the land of Egypt before I came unto thee into Egypt, are mine; as Reuben and Simeon, they shall be mine." (Genesis 48:5)

Once again we are given to understand that being Israel is not exclusively biological. Ephraim and Manasseh represent those from among the Gentiles who come to the covenant through faith in Messiah. Again, we must understand that those who are grafted in are the same as those who are native born. Thus we read in the Torah:

"One law shall be to him that is homeborn, and unto the stranger that sojourneth among you." (Exodus 12:49)

"One ordinance shall be both for you of the congregation, and also for the stranger that sojourneth with you, an ordinance for ever in your generations: as ye are, so shall the stranger be before YHWH. One law and one manner shall be for you, and for the stranger that sojourneth with you." (Numbers 15:15-16)

"Ye shall have one law for him that sinneth through ignorance, both for him that is born among the children of Israel, and for the stranger that sojourneth among them." (Numbers 15:29)

There are yet other connections between Ephraim and Manasseh and those that would come into the covenant from among the Gentiles. In last week's portion I gave a brief history of the "Two House" teaching. I explained that the nation of Israel was divided into two Houses after the death of King Solomon. The northern tribes became the House of Israel, while the southern tribes of Judah, Levi, and Benjamin became the House of Judah. The northern tribes eventually fell to idolatry, and Elohim exiled them to the four corners of the earth through the Assyrians. Later, Judah also fell to idolatry and other violations of the covenant, and were sent collectively to Babylon where they later repented and returned to the Promised Land. The House of Israel, however, remains scattered among the nations even today. In our Torah portion today we see a wonderful allusion to these events in the blessing over Ephraim and Manasseh. We should mention here that the House of Israel is also referred to as the House of Ephraim or even the House of Joseph.

Let us now look at this unique blessing.

“The Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; and let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth.” (Genesis 48:16)

Here we see that Israel prays that his name “Israel” and the names of his fathers Abraham and Isaac would be named upon them. In other words, Israel is asking that when people see Ephraim and Manasseh, and by implication their descendants, that they would indeed recognize them as belonging to the heritage of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel. There is also a somewhat hidden reference to the future of the descendants of Ephraim. Here we should remember that much to the disappointment of Joseph, Israel crossed his hands, placing his right hand upon Ephraim the younger son, and the left hand upon Manasseh. Thus Ephraim becomes the dominant one. The Hebrew word translated as “multitude” in this blessing is the Hebrew word *yidgu* (Yud, Dalet, Gimmel, Vav) from the root word *dag* (Dalet, Gimmel), which means “fish.” It should seem strange that Israel would ask YHWH to cause Ephraim to multiply like fish upon the earth. This is especially strange, since fish do not multiply upon the earth but in the seas. But here Israel is making an allusion to another spiritual reality. Just as the House of Ephraim or the House of Israel would be scattered to the four corners of the earth, there are also numerous prophecies concerning the gathering of the House of Israel, not the least of which is found in the prophet Jeremiah, where YHWH declares,

“But, YHWH liveth, that brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north, and from all the lands whither he had driven them: and I will bring them again into their land that I gave unto their fathers. Behold, I will send for many fishers, saith YHWH, and they shall fish them.” (Jeremiah 16:15-16a)

We may also remember that Yeshua called his disciples to a unique ministry.

“Now as he walked be the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. And Yeshua said unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men.” (Mark 1:16-17)

For whom would the *talmidim* of Yeshua be fishing? Yeshua made this very clear.

“But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” (Matthew 10:6)

“But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” (Matthew 15:24)

There is yet another obtuse reference to the scattered House of Israel being “fish” found in a resurrection appearance story in the gospel of John. After Yeshua’s death and resurrection Yeshua’s *talmidim* returned once more to their actual fishing nets. They fished all night and caught nothing. The next morning Yeshua was standing on the beach, and he called to them to cast their net on the right side of the ship. When they did so, their net was filled. The gospel tells us exactly how many fish they caught.

“Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land full of great fishes, an hundred and fifty and three: and for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken.” (John 21:11)

Most of us would have been quite content to know that they caught a lot of fish, or 100 fish, or even 150 fish. But the gospel writer tells us that it was exactly 153 fish. If the author took the time to relay this specific detail, we should reckon that it must have a specific significance. The sages tell us that the number 153 is a reference to a statement by the prophet Hosea.

“Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered; and it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living Elohim. Then shall the children of Judah and the children of Israel be gathered together, and appoint themselves one head, and they shall come up out of the land: for great shall be the day of Jezreel.” (Hosea 1:10-11)

To understand the connection between this prophecy of Israel’s return, the reconciliation of the two Houses of the nation of Israel, and the 153 fish that were caught by Yeshua’s *talmidim*, we need to recognize that the gematria of the phrase “the sons of Elohim” is 153.¹⁶ Thus the number of fish in the net was to serve as a confirmation and a reminder of the mission Yeshua gave the *talmidim* to go out among the nations and gather the lost sheep of the House of Israel. While this gematria may seem somewhat arbitrary to some, I assure you there is yet further confirmation of this reality.

Joseph objected to Israel crossing his hands so that Ephraim, the younger son, would receive the blessing of the right hand. Assuming that Israel did not realize that Joseph had placed the children in the proper order for blessing, he tried to correct his father. But Israel assured him that he was doing what YHWH had ordained. Israel responded to Joseph’s plea for Manasseh, saying,

“I know it, my son, I know it: he also shall become a people, and he also shall be great: but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his seed shall become a multitude of nations.” (Genesis 48:19)

Here we see that Israel blesses Ephraim to become a “multitude of nations.” The Hebrew uses the word “*goyim*” or “Gentiles.” Thus we see not a blessing, but a prophecy that Ephraim, the House of Israel, would become a multitude of Gentiles. It is interesting that in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures, this passage is rendered as *playthos ethnov*. We should note the similarity between this phrase and that used by the apostle Shaul when he describes how the Gentiles were broken off the wild olive tree and grafted into the cultivated tree.

“For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in.” (Romans 11:25)

The phrase “fullness of the Gentiles” in the Greek manuscripts is a similar “*playroma ton ethnon*.” The similarities are too blatant not to see the connection between them. Clearly Shaul understood the ministry of reconciliation of Messiah and his *talmidim*. So Shaul would write to the brethren in Ephesus,

“Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; That at that time ye were without Messiah, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without Elohim in the world: But now in Messiah Yeshua ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Messiah. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us.” (Ephesians 2:11-14)

“Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of Elohim.” (Ephesians 2:19)

We should also note that in the very next chapter Jacob calls all of his children together that he may prophesy over them. But immediately the first three sons are described in a discrediting fashion. Reuben is reminded of the sin of defiling his father’s bed,¹⁷ while Simeon and Levi are rebuked for their violent and impulsive behavior in the rescue of Dinah.¹⁸ Without meaning to minimize what is said of the others, one must admit that there is little said about Zebulun, Issachar, Dan, Gad, Asher, Naphtali or Benjamin. Clearly the focus of Israel’s prophecy is upon Judah and Joseph. Let us look at the blessings that were pronounced over these favored ones.

“Judah, thou are he whom thy brethren shall praise: thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies; thy father’s children shall bow down before thee. Judah is a lion’s whelp: from the prey, my son, thou art gone up: he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion; who shall rouse him up? The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be. Binding his foal unto the vine, and his ass’s colt unto the choice vine; he washed his garments in wine, and his clothes in the blood of grapes: His eyes shall be red with wine, and his teeth white with milk.” (Genesis 49:8-12)

“Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well; whose branches run over the wall: The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him: But his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty Elohim of Jacob;(from thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel:) Even by the Elohim of thy father, who shall help thee; and by the Almighty, who shall bless thee with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lieth under, blessings of the breasts, and of the womb: The blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills: they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren.” (Genesis 49:22-26)

Clearly what we see described is the rising of two dominant Houses in the nation of Israel. Judah is designated as the royal line. It is prophesied that he will rule over his brothers. This is ultimately fulfilled by the reigns of David and Solomon. It is also prophesied here that Messiah, or Shiloh, will come from the tribe of Judah. It is Shiloh's throne and reign that will be eternal. Joseph, on the other hand, will also be a dominant house. But note that the fruit of Joseph will run over the walls; that is to say that the descendants of Joseph will be outside of the land of Israel. The literal Hebrew of this blessing is quite different than the translations. Israel also prophesies that the House of Joseph will be blessed in their exile. Note also that they will be sent to the utmost bound of the everlasting hills. Here Joseph will be victorious in his mission. We should also see that in the blessing of Judah it is prophesied that when Shiloh or Messiah comes, there will be a gathering of people. This people that will be gathered are clearly the lost sheep of the House of Israel. This gathering began with the ministry of Yeshua and now continues through the many-membered body of Messiah. When Messiah returns he will complete this ingathering and restoration of the two Houses of Israel.

For those who live outside the land there is yet one further feature that I want to mention for the sake of your consideration. For those who consider themselves as part of Ephraim, the House of Israel, or are part of the House of Judah that is living outside the land, there is a warning of danger in this blessing. Notice that Israel prophesied numerous blessings in the land of exile. At the end of last week's portion we are told,

“And Israel dwelt in the land of Egypt, in the country of Goshen; and they had possessions therein, and grew, and multiplied exceedingly.” (Genesis 47:27)

In Hebrew this may also be read as saying “and the land possessed them.” In other words, the land of Goshen in Egypt was so plush and rich that they became enamored with its wealth and prosperity, and thought little of the Promised Land. Here we must remember that when they last saw the land of Canaan there was a terrible famine in the land. Now, contrasting the famine-blighted land of promise and the plush, rich land of Egypt, who can blame the sons of Jacob for wanting to remain in the land of their exile? Jacob realized the danger of all this wealth, power, and opulence. Therefore he made all of his sons swear that when he died they would not bury him in the land of Egypt, but would take him back to Canaan, the land of their heritage and the land of promise. By making his sons swear an oath to him, Jacob empowered them to leave Egypt and make their way back home. The fact that Jacob made Joseph swear the oath first is for two reasons. Joseph was the son most entangled in the wealth and power of Egypt. No one was more in bondage to Egypt than Joseph, whom Pharaoh guarded carefully. Thus Jacob made Joseph swear an oath on the covenant to inspire Joseph to look towards home. The second reason for Jacob making Joseph swear such an oath was that Jacob knew that Joseph would need such an oath to convince Pharaoh to let Joseph out of his sight and out of his country. We should note that when the brothers carry the body of Jacob out of Egypt and return to Canaan, their children and livestock remain behind in Egypt.¹⁹ We shall see that this is one of the four compromises that a later Pharaoh will offer the children of Israel to keep them enslaved in Egypt and assure their return.²⁰ Thus Jacob did all in his power, even with his last breaths, to free his descendants from what was to come upon them. And yet, the children of Israel returned to Goshen in the land of Egypt. For a brief moment they went up, but because

they were still attached to that which was left behind, they returned to the land of their exile, the land of their possession, the land of their enslavement.

There is a very important message in this for those living in the abundance of the exile. When we are called out of exile, we should have no strings attached to Egypt. Everything must come out. There should be no compromises to keep the heart longing to return. We are to be wholly fixed upon YHWH. I assure you that there no is place better to be than in the will of YHWH ELOHIM!

SHAVUA TOV !

¹ Chayei Sarah “the life of Sarah” Genesis 23:1-25:18

² The Kestenbaum Edition Tikkun, Messorah Publication, Pg. 47

³ *Tzadikkim* is the Hebrew plural form of *tzadik*, which is the name of the righteous.

⁴ Letters represent numerals in Hebrew, much like Roman Numerals are letters. This means that every Hebrew word has a numerical value. The process of calculating the numerical value is called Gematria. (Nun=)50 + (Tzade=)90+(Vav=)2+(Hey=)5=147.

⁵ Spice of Torah, Gematria Locks, Judaica Press Pg. 4, 81

⁶ Genesis 37:2

⁷ The JPS Commentary Genesis, Nahum Sarna, The Jewish Publication Society, Pg. 324

⁸ Genesis 46:3

⁹ Nahum Sarna Pg. 324

¹⁰ Genesis 32:22-31

¹¹ *Yetzer hara* is man’s inclination to do evil. *Yetzer hatov* is the inclination to do good.

¹² *Talmidim* is the Hebrew word for “disciples.”

¹³ John 3:34

¹⁴ Acts 2:1ff

¹⁵ Deuteronomy 6:5

¹⁶ Number in Scripture, E.W. Bullinger, Kregel Publishing, Pg. 273: “Benay HaElohim=153”

(Bet=)2+(Nun=)50+(Yud=)10+(Hey=)5+(Aleph=)1+(Lamed=)30+(Hey=)5+(Yud=)10+(Mem=)40=153

¹⁷ Genesis 35:22; 1 Chronicles 5:1

¹⁸ Genesis 34:25-26

¹⁹ Genesis 50:8

²⁰ The four compromises are found at Exodus 8:25 - “Sacrifice to your Elohim in the land,” Exodus 8:28 - “Only ye shall not go very far away,” Exodus 10:10a, 11a - “Let YHWH be so with you, as I will let you go, and your little ones... Not so: go now ye that are men,” and Exodus 10:24 - “Let your flocks and your herds be stayed.”