

VAYCHI

12th of 54 sedras;
12 of 12 in B'reishit



Written on 148.33 lines (rank: 45th)

12 parshiot, 7 open and 5 closed

In addition, the first part of the sedra is the end of the previous parsha from Vayigash. Vaychi is the only sedra that does not begin at a parsha break.

85 p'sukim - ranks 44th in the Torah

1158 words - ranks 44th in the Torah

4448 letters - ranks 43rd in the Torah

It is the shortest sedra in B'reishit

MITZVOT

No mitzvot are counted from Vaychi

Aliya-by-Aliya Sedra Summary

[P>] and [S>] indicate start of a parsha p'tucha or s'tuma. X:Y is Perek:Pasuk of the beginning of the parsha; (Z) is the number of p'sukim in the parsha



Towards Improved Layning & Davening Enunciation

The name of the sedra is made up of two syllables. The first is a VAV/PATACH which is closed by YUD/SH'VA NACH, resulting in VAY

(close sounding to the English word vie). Second syllable is CHI (the CH is as in Chanuka, not Chicago and not chair). The sedra name and its first word is vay-CHI (not va-yechi and not va-y'chi).

Kohen - First Aliya - 13 p'sukim - 47:28-48:9

[47:28 (4) part of the last parsha of Vayigash] The sedra begins with Yaakov at age 147, having been in Mitzrayim for 17 years. (Remember that Yosef was 17 when the trouble started.) The Torah tells us that Yaakov is near death and Yosef is called to his bedside. Yaakov asks Yosef that he (Yaakov) should not be buried in Egypt but rather in Me'arat HaMachpeila. Yosef agrees - Yaakov asks Yosef to swear to it.

SDT: Why would Yaakov insist that Yosef swear - didn't he trust him? Among other reasons, the oath might prove necessary in obtaining permission from Par'o for the funeral. Even if Par'o would have been inclined to say "no", he would respect an oath. This, according to Midrash, because Yosef had sworn not to divulge a particular secret about Par'o (that he, Yosef, knew more languages than Par'o - a fact that would not impress Par'o's subjects favorably). Par'o could not say to Yosef, "I don't care what promises you made", etc.

Another commentary suggests that

Yaakov feared that Yosef might not be happy with Yaakov being buried with Leah, while his mother Rachel was buried by herself, on the road.

[P> 48:1 (22)] Sometime later, Yosef is informed (by Efrayim who regularly ministers to and learns Torah with Yaakov) that Yaakov is sick ("at death's door"). Yosef brings his two sons with him to Yaakov (so that they can receive his blessing). Yaakov is strengthened by the news of Yosef's impending visit (Thus is the power of Bikur Cholim).

A-s'nat, wife of Yosef - The Midrash says that she was Dina's daughter, who was raised by Potifar in Egypt. The Midrash also says that when Potifar's wife accused Yosef of improper advances, it was A-s'nat who privately told Potifar the truth, thus saving Yosef's life.

Yaakov tells Yosef of G-d's promises to him and his descendants and of Rachel's death and burial. He then assures Yosef that his two sons, Efrayim and Menashe, will be equal to Yaakov's sons. (This in essence, is the double portion of inheritance that Yaakov is giving to "his heart's firstborn", the elder of his beloved Rachel's sons.) Then Yaakov takes notice of the boys and asks Yosef to present them so that he can bless them.

Levi - Second Aliya - 7 p'sukim - 48:10-16

Yaakov's eyesight fails him in his old age (as did Yitzchak's - Yaakov's failing eyesight can be blamed on his crying for 22 years for Yosef, as stated in the Midrash) and Yosef brings his sons and moves them towards Yaakov, who kisses and hugs them. Yosef then takes his sons off of Yaakov's lap, so that he can present them formally to Yaakov, for their brachot. After bowing before Yaakov, Yosef carefully and formally presents his sons to Yaakov with Menashe on his left and Efrayim on his right so that Yaakov's hands will rest on the appropriate heads for the blessings. Yaakov switches his hands, resting his right on Efrayim's head and his left on Menashe's. Then Yaakov blesses Yosef by blessing his (Yosef's) children with the famous words HAMAL'ACH HA'GO'EL OTI...

Yaakov's reference to fish in his bracha for Efrayim and Menashe (and all Jewish children in perpetuity) is explained on at least two levels. Fish are prolific; Yaakov was blessing his descendants that they should become a large nation. It is also known that the EYIN HARA has no hold over fish (which also had something to do with their survival during the MABUL without being in the Ark). And this too was part of his

GIMATRIYA: EFRAYIM = 331. MENASHE = 395. EFRAYIM UMNASHE = 732. REUVEN = 259. SHIMON = 466. REVEN V'SHIMON = 731. EFRAYIM UMNASHE KIR-UVEN V'SHIMON YIHYU LI. K' means like. 732 is very close to 731.

bracha. (Side point: The Yiddish name Fischel (fish) is often paired with Efrayim; obviously, this bracha is the source of that name-pair.)

Shlishi - Third Aliya - 6 p'sukim - 48:17-22

When Yosef realizes that Yaakov has switched hands (and has thus "favored" Efrayim over the firstborn Menashe) he gets (understandably) very upset and tries to "correct" the positions of his father's hands. Yaakov resists, explaining to Yosef that he is fully aware of what he is doing; and that Efrayim will indeed surpass his brother in greatness.

On this same day, Yaakov blesses them by saying that the traditional blessing for sons shall be: "May G-d make you like Efrayim and Menashe."

Think about this... Imagine the panic that Yosef must have felt when he witnessed the potential of "family history repeating itself". How can Yaakov do what he was doing when he was painfully aware of the consequences of favoring one son and of the jealousy that it creates (can create).

That's the point! It CAN create jealousy, but it need not. It depends upon the character of the people involved. A parent can "tiptoe" around just so long, making everything equal and even, in the hopes

that jealousy will not emerge. But that kind of behavior just postpones the jealousy, it does not eliminate it. Parents have to help build the character of their children, so that they will develop good MIDOT, personality traits.

Perhaps Yaakov Avinu saw that his two grandsons possessed the qualities that "allowed" him to do what he did. Two major personality traits that a person should strive for (and that parents should try to help develop in their children) are: not being boastful when in a superior position and not being jealous or resentful when in an inferior position. Efrayim was destined to become greater than his older brother Menashe. These two brothers were such that Efrayim did not lord himself over Menashe, nor was Menashe jealous of Efrayim's prominence. What greater blessing can a father give his sons than "May G-d make you like Efrayim and Menashe!"

Yaakov then tells Yosef that he (Yaakov) is about to die; that G-d will be with the family-nation; that He will restore them to the Land of their ancestors; and that he (Yaakov) has provided Yosef with an additional portion of the Land.

From A Candle by Day by Rabbi Shraga Silverstein z"l

Being too careful is being too
careless in a different direction.

R'vi'i - Fourth Aliya - 17 p'sukim - 49:1-17

[P> 49:1 (4)] Yaakov gathers his sons around him with intentions of revealing to them "the end of days" (knowing the future will ease the pain of the difficult times ahead) - but it is not to be!

SDT: Egyptian exile would have been more tolerable, had our ancestors known about this 190 year "grace period". This is the KEITZ (KUF (100) + TZADI (90) = 190) that Yaakov wanted to reveal to his sons. But this he was not permitted to reveal it. (Of course, this is not the "regular" (P'shat) meaning of the pasuk, but it operates on a REMEZ level.)

(The blessings, often mixed with fatherly criticism, combine to become the brachot of the Tribes.)

Yaakov's words about Reuven speak of his unrealized potential to have been the leader and the indiscretion that lost him the position of leadership.

[P> 49:5 (3)] Yaakov refers to the violence of Shimon and Levi. He curses their anger - not them.

Important lesson for us all, from this. Don't say to your son, "BAD BOY!" - he'll begin to believe it, and that's destructive. Say, "You did a bad thing." It might not seem to be so important, but it is. Especially,

because we don't say these kind of things once, but rather countless times over many years.

[P> 49:8 (5)] Yehuda receives the brightest words - he is promised the leadership and respect of his brothers.

[P> 49:13 (1)] Zevulun is given the blessing of prosperity...

[P> 49:14 (2)] and Yissachar will carry the burden of Torah scholarship. (The image of a donkey indicates perseverance, strong will - qualities that are suitable for a scholar.) Together, these two tribes will form a partnership that will be mutually beneficial.

[S> 49:16 (3)] Dan will be the judge (and upholder of the honor, the one that will avenge Israel by fighting the P'lishtim) of the people. Rashi says that this is a prophecy about Shimshon, who was from the tribe of Dan.

This parsha and Aliya finish with the famous 3-word pasuk: To Your salvation, I hope, HaShem.

When a person sneezes, he is supposed to say **LISHU'ATCHA KIVITI HASHEM (LKY)**. This is based on the traditional understanding that prior to Yaakov Avinu, there was no sickness before one died. Rather, the soul just left the body as it had been breathed in, through the nostrils, with a sneeze, so to speak. Yaakov acknowledged the "gift" of being sick before death, so that one can put his affairs in order. A sneeze is no longer

a sign of death, but just a reminder of illness (sometimes a symptom and sometimes just a reminder). This is why people say **ASUTA** or **LIVRIYUT**, or something like that, to a person who sneezes. But the sneezer himself should quote the words of Yaakov Avinu. And even though people are more familiar with ASUTA (or whatever someone else says when someone sneezes), it is closer to a requirement for the sneezer himself to say **LISHU-ATCHA KIVITI HASHEM**.

Heard long ago from Rabbi Y. L. Ginsberg z"l. The context is also instructive. A group of NCSY advisors was preparing for a Shabbaton/Convention. Everyone was busy. Someone sneezed. Rabbi G apologized for interrupting but said he HAD TO tell us this vort about sneezing. The lesson was three-fold. The DT about sneezing itself. The fact that even a sneeze can trigger one to share Torah with others. And the fact that even busy people need a time out for Torah every so often. And maybe a fourth lesson - that words of Torah that came not only from the brain but from the heart and soul also, and went to the brain, heart, and soul of those listening - can be remembered more than 50 years later.

Happy 19th Birthday, Shoham
Born on the 11th of both Tevet and January -
19 years ago. Next Tevet/January match up
scheduled for 5796/2036

Chamishi - 5th Aliya - 8 p'sukim - 49:19-26

[S> 49:19 (1)] Gad will be blessed with good fortune (this is Malbim's interpretation which is by far the most optimistic of the various understandings of the pasuk).

[S> 49:20 (1)] Asher's blessing also seems to be that of prosperity (and/or eloquence).

[S> 49:21 (1)] Naftali is likened to a swift deer (or spreading tree, according to other opinions) and is blessed with eloquence (and probably, prosperity).

[S> 49:22 (5)] Yosef's blessing is extensive and shows Yaakov's special love for him. It is the bracha of Avraham to Yitzchak and of Yitzchak to Yaakov that Yaakov gives to Yosef, son of Rachel.

A fruitful son is Yosef.

BEIN PORAT (YOSEF) = 2+50 (52) + 80+ 200+400 (680) = 732. The Gimatriya of Efrayim and Menashe: 1+80+ 200+ 10+ 40 (Efrayim) + 6 (and) + 40+50+ 300+ 5 (Menashe) = 732

Shishi - Sixth Aliya - 27 p'sukim - 49:27-50:20

[S> 49:27 (33)] Binyamin is blessed with success (sometimes qualified). Rashi mentions prophecies of Shaul and Mordechai & Esther.

These are Yaakov's words to his 12 sons and he blessed them.

Commentaries point out that Yaakov's words don't always seem to be blessings - but they do contain implied blessings and prophecies.

Yaakov tells his sons that he is about to die and wants to be buried in Me'arat HaMachpeila. (He does not make them swear as Yosef did, since they might not be able to fulfill an oath.)

Yaakov "dies". The wording in the Torah is indirect - the words death or dying are not used - indicating the special "quality of life" (strange term to use here, but purposely chosen) even in the death of Yaakov Avinu.

The Torah next tells of the preparation for burial. Yosef tells Par'o of his oath and receives permission for the funeral procession to Canaan. The funeral and mourning for Yaakov is elaborate and extensive.

When they return to Egypt, the brothers are filled with guilt feelings and offer themselves to Yosef as slaves. Once again, Yosef assures the brothers that all that has happened is G-d's will and for the best.

Yosef cries because the brothers are falsely accusing him of planning to take revenge against them.

Interesting/sad/ironic (choose the adjective you like best) that part of their original problem was false accusations against his brothers.

Sh'VII - Seventh Aliya - 6 p'sukim - 50:21-26

Yosef promises to support his brothers and families. Yosef lives to 110 (less than his brothers - punishment for hearing his father humiliated by being referred to as "your servant" and not objecting - so say sources). Yosef has helped raise even his great-grandchildren. He tells his brothers that G-d will eventually take them out of Egypt, restore them to Eretz Yisrael, and he asks them to remember him and take his remains with them when they leave. Yosef (and the brothers) dies; thus B'reishit, the book of the Avot & Imahot, ends.

According to Seder HaDorot HaKatzar, the brothers died over a period of 22 years, in this order: Yosef, Shimon, Yehuda, Reuven, Binyamin, Yissachar, Asher, Zevulun, Gad, Dan, Naftali, Levi.



CHAZAK, CHAZAK, V'NITCHAZEIK after Sh'vi'i (or Acharon).

(Some say the person with the CHAZAK Aliya should not say ChCh"V. This is so because it might be considered a HEFSEIK - interruption - between the Torah reading and the final b'racha. Possibly, too, ChCh"V might be said by everyone else, to/for the one who gets the Chazak Aliya.)

Chatzi Kaddish, then the final 4 p'sukim are repeated for the Maftir.

Although standing for the Aseret HaDibrot is problematic, there does not seem to be an objection for standing for CHAZAK at the end of each Sefer of the Torah. With the Aseret HaDibrot, Chazal feared people saying that standing for them while sitting for the rest of the reading indicates that the Aseret HaDibrot were commanded by G-d and the rest of the Torah by Moshe Rabeinu. To debunk that mistaken notion, it is best to either sit for all reading or stand for all reading. No such fear with Az Yashir or Chazak.

Haftara - 12 p'sukim - Melachim Alef 2:1-12

Short Haftara for a short sedra.

Just as the sedra tells us of the father on his deathbed giving instructions and blessings to his sons, and requesting an act of Chesed, so too do we find King David at death's door, instructing his son Shlomo concerning matters of Faith, State, and Chesed.

Rabbi Julian G. Jacobs z"l, in A Haftara Companion, makes the following observation. In the sedra, the term used for Yaakov's passing on is "to sleep with his fathers", rather than the simpler, "to die". So too for David HaMelech in the haftara. In each case, the father had a worthy son to

continue in his ways, and this is a form of "living on" that perhaps explains the absence of the verb, to die.

As there are similarities between the sedra and its haftara, so are there contrasts. Yaakov speaks to all his children, comforted by their having been reunited and confident in the fact that they all will continue with the way of life of Yaakov, and Yitzchak and Avraham before him. David is speaking to only one of his sons and dies knowing of the treachery of other sons and people whom he thought to be friends. Still, a good choice of a haftara for Vaychi.