

Parashat Vayechi

פרשת ויחי

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Love, Praise, Worship, and Passion for God

השבועות הזה קוראים / This Week's Reading

תורה: Genesis 47:28-50:26

הפטרה: 1 Kings 2:1-12

הברית: 1 Peter 1:1-9

החדשה

Triennial cycle: *Bereshit / Genesis 47:28-48:22*

In this week's Parashah, Parashat Vayechi, Yisrael (Yaakov/Jacob) is dying and Yoseph (Joseph) brings his two children to Yisrael so that he could bless them before he dies. In the narrative Yisrael adopts Yoseph's children as his own (48:5). This is the source verse for the origins of the half tribe of Manasseh and the half tribe of Ephraim that are mentioned later on in the Torah. Yisrael also mentions that his wife Rachel died while he was traveling to Ephrat (Bethlehem). I find it interesting that he mentions Ephrat as the destination of his journey in the land of Canaan. Ephratah means fruitful in Hebrew. Ephratah was the second wife of Caleb, the son of Hezron, mother of Hur; Caleb was one of the men sent to spy out the land (1 Chronicles 2:19 and 2:50). Ephratah was the ancient name of Bethlehem in Judah according to *Bereshit / Genesis 35:16, 35:19, and 48:7*. In *Ruth 1:2* the town is called "Bethlehem-Judah," whose inhabitants were called "Ephrathites" in *Micah 5:2*. The city was also called "Bethlehem-Ephratah" in *Matthew 2:6*, "Bethlehem in the land of Judah." In *Tehilim / Psalms 132:6* it is mentioned as the place where David spent his youth, and where he heard the Torah and the Ark of the Covenant he saw at Kirjath-jearim in *1 Samuel 7:1* and *2 Samuel 6:3-4*. Ephrat (Bethlehem) is an important city throughout the history of Yisrael and to God.

בראשית 48:5-9

5 אֶת־הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת לְרֵעֶךָ אַחֲרַיךָ אַחֲוֹת שׁוֹלָם: וְעַתָּה
שְׁנֵי־בָנֶיךָ הַנּוֹלָדִים לְךָ בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם עַד־בָּא אֵלַיךָ
מִצְרַיִמָּה לִיְדֵם אֶפְרַיִם וּמְנַשֶּׁה כִּרְאוּבֵן וְשִׁמְשׁוֹן יְהוּדָה
6 לִי: וּמוֹלַדְתְּךָ אֲשֶׁר־הוֹלַדְתָּ אַחֲרֵיהֶם לְךָ יְהוּדָה עַל שֵׁם
7 אַחֲוֵיהֶם יִקְרָאוּ בְּנֵחֻלָּתָם: וְאֲנִי בָבֹאִי מִפְּסֵן מִתָּה עָלַי
רָחֵל בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן בְּדֶרֶךְ בְּעוֹד כְּבָרְתִי־אֶרֶץ לְבָא
אֶפְרַתָּה וְאֶקְבְּרָה שָׁם בְּדֶרֶךְ אֶפְרַת הוּא בֵּית לְחַם:
8 וַיֵּרָא יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־בְּנֵי יוֹסֵף וַיֹּאמֶר מִי־אַלְהֵי: וַיֹּאמֶר
9 יוֹסֵף אֶל־אָבִיו בְּנֵי הֵם אֲשֶׁר־נָתַתְּ לִי אֱלֹהִים כּוֹהֵן וַיֹּאמֶר

Bereshit / Genesis 48:5-9

48:5 'Now your two sons, who were born to you in the land of Egypt before I came to you in Egypt, are mine; Ephraim and Manasseh shall be mine, as Reuben and Simeon are. 48:6 'But your offspring that have been born after them shall be yours; they shall be called by the names of their brothers in their inheritance. 48:7 'Now as for me, when I came from Paddan, Rachel died, to my sorrow, in the land of Canaan on the journey, when there was still some distance to go to Ephrath; and I buried her there on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem).' 48:8 When Israel saw Joseph's sons, he said, 'Who are these?' 48:9 Joseph said to his father, 'They are my sons, whom God has given me here.' So he said, 'Bring them to me, please, that I may bless them.' (NASB)

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35 According to the Scriptures, Ephratah was the ancient name of the city of Bethlehem in Judah (see *Bereshit / Genesis 35:16, 35:19, and 48:7*, and *Ruth 1:2*) in the Tanach and in *Matthew 2:6* in the Ketuvei Shelachim (The Apostolic Writings). Yaakov (Yisrael) was traveling to stay at Ephrat (Bethlehem) when Rachel died on the way. Further insight into this location is found while reading in *Tehilim / Psalms 132:4-6* shown below.

אִם־אֶתֶן שְׁנַת לְעֵינַי
לְעַפְעַפֵי הַנּוֹמָה׃
עַד־אֲמָצֵא מְקוֹם לַיהוָה
מִשְׁכַּנּוֹת לְאֶבֶר יַעֲקֹב׃
הִנֵּה שָׁמַעְנוּהָ בְּאֶפְרַתָּה
מִצֹּאנֹה בְּשַׂדֵּי־יַעֲר׃

Tehilim / Psalms 132:4-6 132:4 I will not give sleep to my eyes Or slumber to my eyelids, 132:5 Until I find a place for the Lord, A dwelling place for the Mighty One of Jacob.’ 132:6 Behold, we heard of it in Ephrathah, We found it in the field of Jaar. (NASB)

50 David’s Psalm indicates that he will not allow his eyes to sleep until he has found a place for the Lord. He writes that “*behold we have heard of it in Ephrathah, we have found it in the field of Jaar.*” Do you think that David is writing prophetically of Yeshua’s birth in Bethlehem? As you think upon this for a moment, I want to discuss how there are a number of pitfalls that can trip up Believers who seek to please God. One of these is an emphasis on external behaviors with the exclusion of examining our hearts. We have to understand that our external behavior is a function of our hearts and both should be taken into
55 consideration under that context. For example, in *Hitgalut / Revelation 2:1-7*, the believers in the ecclesia at Ephesus were challenged to re-evaluate their worship to make passion for God a priority.

60 ***Hitgalut / Revelation 2:1-7***

65 *2:1 ‘To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: The One who holds the seven stars in His right hand, the One who walks among the seven golden lampstands, says this: 2:2 I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance, and that you cannot tolerate evil men, and you put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them to be false; 2:3 and you have perseverance and have endured for My name’s sake, and have not grown weary. 2:4 ‘But I have this against you, that you have left your first love. 2:5 ‘Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place unless you repent. 2:6 ‘Yet this you do have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. 2:7 ‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God.’ (NASB)*

75 According to the angel of the ecclesia in Ephesus, our lives are laid bare before the Lord (2:1-2). There are no secrets that are hidden from Him and no pretenses that can fool Him. God loves and knows His people and He commands faithfulness. According to the Scripture, it appears that the Ephesians did take the Scriptures seriously and were earnestly contending for the truth (2:2). Yet, the

80 Lord said *'But I have this against you, that you have left your first love'* (2:4).
Reading this text should make us very uneasy. Here the ecclesia was commended
for their stand for truth and purity but that was not enough. The believers lost
their love for God having a lack of passion for Yeshua is described as having
85 fallen from a great height (2:5). What followed was a call for repentance that
needed immediate attention. God's people should always have a passion for Him,
His character, and His work in our lives. We need to be careful about where our
passions lay whether in the Lord or in our pride, knowledge, or our own works.

As we think on these verses, the reality is that there is an obvious
continuity found within the Scriptures (Torah → Ketuvim → Ketuvei Shelachim).

אֶפְרַת הוּא בֵּית לֶחֶם: ⁹⁰ The verses in the Tanach beginning in the Torah,
and in the Ketuvim (Writings), and then following
in the Ketuvei Shelachim (Apostolic Writings, NT), this gradual progression in
the text is illustrating for us how God is directing our attention to the Messiah,
Yeshua. Yaakov (Yisrael) said in Hebrew *"Ephrat she is the house of bread,"* the
95 meaning of Bethlehem in Hebrew is "house of bread." Bethlehem, the house of
bread, is a place of plenty and Ephrat a place of God's fruitfulness. These verses
emphasize the importance of the city of Bethlehem and the place of birth of
Yeshua the Messiah the true bread that comes from heaven (see *John 6:22-65*).
Yeshua said *6:51 I am the living bread that came down from heaven*, and isn't it
100 interesting that the living bread (Yeshua) would come down and be born in
Bethlehem the "house of bread?" As we study the scriptures and share God's
truth with others, let us not be afraid to contend that God's Word is trustworthy
and true and that all of Scripture points to Yeshua the Messiah.

What can we learn from this week's study? Do not lose your first love
105 *"Yeshua the Messiah."* In purity of heart, in truth, and taking the Scriptures
seriously, we can see within the text the reality of our lives, both as individuals
and as a corporate community of believers, we are to seek the truth of God and
bear witness of God working in our lives for good while holding fast to our savior
Yeshua. The Lord has revealed to us His plan for salvation which is to have faith
110 in Yeshua. He also loves us enough to warn us to repent. He wants our full
unbridled love in return a love that does not compromise. *Hitgalut / Revelation*
warn us that we cannot insist on truth and purity without love and a passion for
God! Worship demands that we surrender our pride and praise Him (God) alone.
In addition to this, our love is what attracts others to the message of the gospel.
115 We do not have to compromise on the truth, purity, and authority of the Word of
God, but we do have to be on guard for our Love, Praise, Worship, and Passion
for the Lord.

I hope everyone had a wonderful Chanukah and holiday season.

Be Blessed in Yeshua our Messiah!

הללויה לאדוננו מורנו ורבינו ישוע מלך המשיח לעולם ועד:
Hallelujah for our Lord, our Teacher, our Rabbi,
"Yeshua" King Messiah forever and ever