



## **Parasha Vayechi**

January 2, 2021

*Torah:* Genesis 47:28-50:26

*Haftarah:* 1Kings 2:1-12

*Ketuvim Shlichim:* 1Peter 2:11-17

*Shabbat shalom mishpacha!* Our *parasha* this week is *Vayechi*, “He lived!” The “he” is Jacob, who lived in *Mitzrayim*, the land of Egypt, for 17 years. In this *parasha*, the last one in the Book of *Bereshit*, Genesis, he is nearing the end of his life. Two important passages of Scripture of this *parasha* are his blessing of Joseph’s sons, *Ephrayim* and *Mana’she* and his prophetic words over his twelve sons. We take our text today from Jacob’s first words to his sons: *1 Jacob called his sons and said to them: “Gather together so that I can tell you what will happen to you in the last days”* (Genesis 49:1 TLV). Since we are in the “last days,” it is appropriate for us to see how we got here and some lessons we have learned from events which happened between the time of this *parasha* and today.

We will only focus on one of Jacob’s sons today, *Yehudah*, Judah, because it was his descendants who led Israel through all of the years leading up to the last days. Here is some discussion of Jacob’s prophecy.

<First, referring to Judah’s name which means “praised,” Jacob said: *8 “Judah, so you are— your brothers will praise you:”* (Genesis 49:8a TLV). This definitely is not about the man Judah. His brothers never praised him. He wasn’t the best role model. He had two negative episodes in his life. He was the one who suggested selling Joseph and then, his dealings with his daughter-in-law Tamar were not honorable. He did show good character when he offered himself as a substitute for Benjamin and when he guaranteed with his life Benjamin’s return to his father, Jacob. But, it’s still not about him. It’s about his descendant, Yeshua. But, the praise of His brothers is a prophecy not yet completely fulfilled. I believe that this refers to Yeshua’s modern brothers and sisters and the majority of them haven’t praised Him. But, they will soon when all Israel finally sees Him as He really is.

*8 “Your hand will be on your enemies’ neck. Your father’s sons will bow down to you”* (Genesis 49:8b TLV). The kings descended from Judah will constantly be at war; their hands on their enemies’ necks. The second sentence is also about the kings who would descend from Judah, David and the others. Israel bowing down can apply both to the human kings of Judah and to Yeshua, the King of Kings.

*9 “A lion’s cub is Judah— from the prey, my son, you have gone up. He crouches, lies down like a lion, or like a lioness— who would rouse him? 10 The scepter will not pass from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until he to whom it belongs will come. To him will be the obedience of the peoples”* (Genesis 49:9-10 TLV). These two verses describe the ruling position that the Tribe of Judah will have throughout the ages. Why Judah, the fourth son, was chosen to be the progenitor of kings is a mystery which ADONAI has not yet answered. There are only two specific references to lions and Judah is this one and one in the Book of Revelation. Both times it seems to refer to Yeshua. In Revelation, it is revealed by an elder near ADONAI’s throne who said: *5. “the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed—“* (Revelation 5:5b TLV). The scepter, the staff which symbolized the king,

was prophesied to remain in the Tribe of Judah until the Promised One comes. He is the One to whom it truly belongs. The scepter continued through the sons of David and their sons up until the time of Yeshua. He is the “He” referred to in 49:10 to whom it belongs. The underlying Hebrew word is *Shiloh*, defined in Strong’s Concordance as “he whose it is,” a Messianic title. Yeshua fulfilled that part of the prophecy when He came to earth as a man.

11 “Binding his foal to the vine, his donkey’s colt to the choice vine, he washes his garments in wine, and in the blood of grapes his robe. 12 His eyes are darker than wine, and teeth that are whiter than milk” (Genesis 49:11-12 TLV). This seems to be a reference to the abundance of wealth and provisions had by the kings of Judah as well as by the members of the Tribe of Judah.

The Hebrew words from which Jacob’s words “the last days” are translated are *acharit hayamim*, literally, “the end of days.” I think that a better way to understand it is “the end of the age,” when one time period ends and another one begins. There are two other Hebrew terms which can also apply. *Olam hazeh* is this present world or present age and *olam haba* is the world or age to come. In my understanding, the *olam hazeh* will end when Yeshua returns to earth as king and at that time, the *olam haba*, the world to come, will begin, a world under His physical rule on the earth. But, the *acharit hayamim*, the end of days, is not a specific ending or beginning. It is a period of time, a great number of years, which occurs at the end of the present age, the *olam hazeh*. Don’t be confused by these terms. Right now, today, we are living in the *acharit hayamim*, the end of days, a period of time at the end of the *olam hazeh*, the present age. Although Jacob said that these were things to happen in the last days, some of them did not occur in the very last days, but somewhere in the middle. This is not to suggest that the end of days began with Jacob’s words to his sons, but to recognize that some things did happen in between. But, the primary focus of his words were on the last days.

When did the last days begin? Joel prophesied about these days. He said: 1 “So it will be afterward, I will pour out My Ruach on all flesh: your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. 2 “Also on the male and the female servants will I pour out My spirit in those days” (Joel 3:1-2 TLV). Note that in Christian Bibles, these are verses 28 and 29 of chapter 2. In the TLV, “afterward” is translated from the Hebrew אַחֲרֵי-כֵן, *acharei kein*, “the last days” or “the latter days.” On *Shavuot* in the year 30 CE, *Shimon Kefa* put it this way: 16 “But this is what was spoken about through the prophet Joel: 17 ‘And it shall be in the last days,’ says God, ‘that I will pour out My Ruach on all flesh. Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams’” (Acts 2:16-17 TLV). The point being made here is that “the last days” is a range of years. According to these Scriptures, the last days began sometime in the 1<sup>st</sup> century and are continuing now. We are now and we have been in “the last days” since Yeshua came to earth physically.

Recently, you heard me speak of a specific date when the time of the end began. This date is determined by deciphering the words spoken by the angel Michael to Daniel: 4 “But you, Daniel, close up the words and seal the book until the time of the end” (Daniel 12:4a TLV). But, Michael did not say *acharit hayamim*. Instead, he said: עַתְּ קֵץ, *eit keitz*, time of the end, a reference to a very specific coming day. Don’t be confused. We are in the “last days” and have been since Yeshua’s coming, but recently, a specific day, the “time of the end” has been identified. It is not the end, but the beginning of the “end.” Daniel Bruce’s research revealed that the beginning of the time of the end was July 7, 1967, the time of the recapture of

Jerusalem by Israel and the fulfillment of Yeshua's prophecy in Luke 21:24. We are now living in the "the time of the end," a time we could not have reached without first the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy (66:7-10) about the re-establishment of the physical nation of Israel. The "time of the end" is a time of tribulation and increasing troubles, but it is not the "great tribulation." That occurred in the year 70 in Jerusalem. Regarding these present tribulations, Yeshua said: 33 *"These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have shalom. In the world you will have trouble, but take heart! I have overcome the world"* (John 16:33 TLV)! Yeshua spoke these words while sitting in the upper room following His last Passover. Danny referred to this verse last week. From the Greek, the word trouble is *thlipsis* and it means tribulation. There has always been tribulation at one place or another throughout the ages. But now, it seems to be a different kind of tribulation. There is trouble throughout the world. This is where we now find ourselves, at the time of the end, a time of increasing trouble. Referring to this very period, the time of the end, Yeshua said: 29 *"But immediately after the trouble of those days, 'the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light and the stars will fall from heaven and the powers of the heavens will be shaken'"* (Matthew 24:29 TLV). It is following those things that He will come for us and we shall rise to meet Him in the air (1Corinthians 15; 1Thessalonians 4). But, even with all this present turmoil going on around us, Yeshua tells us to: "take heart for I have overcome the world."

As we look at what is going on around us right now in our state, there is great uncertainty. What is going to happen? Will our Republican senators win or will their opponents win? Is Joe Biden going to be inaugurated as president or will a miracle take place and President Trump continue as president? What we do know is that untold numbers of prophets have prophesied that he would win. Now, some of them are hedging their bets. Are they false prophets? The mark of a true prophet is whether or not their prophecy comes true. In Biblical history, fulfillment sometimes it took hundreds of years. We must give our prophets who prophesied President Trump's win space, a little more time. But, if it doesn't happen, we have to come to a conclusion. Either they are false prophets or as *Sha'ul* said: "we prophesy in part and we know in part." I'm not trying to give them a hard time. These are dedicated men and women of G-d. I'm certain that their motives were good. But, what has happened is a lesson for all of us. Don't listen to everyone who prophecies just because you want it to come to pass. Seek ADONAI for your own answers.

Right now, we must look at reality and the reality almost certainly is that we will have at least four years of rule by those whom we consider to be socialists and radicals. We continue to pray that our two senators will win and their presence help to offset the agendas' of the others. What will happen during these coming four years, we don't know. What we do know is that we are to be of good cheer because Yeshua has overcome the world. And, we are not to have a spirit of fear. *Sha'ul* said: 7 *"For God has not given us a spirit of timidity but of power and love and self-discipline"* (2Timothy d1:7 TLV). Timidity is from the Greek *deilia*, which means cowardice or timidity. If we have cowardice, timidity or fear, the only answer for us is to draw nearer to ADONAI and to Yeshua. We have been given the tools which we need in order to stand in faith in an uncertain world.

One of Judah's descendants whom Jacob prophesied about was King *Yosiyahu*, Josiah, the son of King Amon, a very wicked king. But, Josiah wasn't wicked; he was a most righteous king. Scripture says this about him: 25 *"Before him there had never been a king like him, who turned to Adonai with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his might, according to all the Torah of Moses, nor has any king like him risen since him"* (2Kings 23: 25

TLV). There is a lesson for us today in what Josiah did and also in what ADONAI did following his reign as king.

Here is a summary of everything which Josiah did which was right in G-d's eyes. After he had been reigning for 18 years, the Scroll of the *Torah* was discovered in the Temple. He read it before all the people. And, Josiah's heart was touched and he cut a covenant with ADONAI to serve Him, to keep His *mitzvot* and to serve Him wholeheartedly. These are the things which he did after making this covenant. He had all the vessels made to serve *Ba'al* and *Asherah* removed from the Temple and destroyed. He went to *Beit-el* and stopped the idolatrous priests from burning incense to ADONAI in the high places there and in all Judah and around Jerusalem. He also stopped those burning incense to *Ba'al* and all the other false gods. He removed the *Asherah* pole that had been placed in the Temple and destroyed it. He tore down the quarters of the male cult prostitutes inside the House of ADONAI. He defiled and destroyed all the high places throughout Judah where incense had been burned to false gods. He defiled and destroyed *Tofet*, the place in the *Ben-hinnom* valley where children had been sacrificed by fire to *Molech*. He did away with the horses and burned the chariots which the kings of Judah had dedicated to the sun. He tore down the altars his grandfather, King Manasseh, had placed in the courtyards of the Temple. He destroyed the shrines south of Jerusalem built by King Solomon for the worship of *Ashtoreth*, the abomination of the Zidonians, and *Chemosh*, the abomination of Moab, and *Milcom*, the abomination of the Ammonites. He destroyed the shrine and the altar in the city of *Beit-el* where King Jeroboam had placed one of the golden calves when Israel separated itself from Judah and became the northern kingdom. He also removed the shrines of the high places in the towns of Samaria placed there by the kings of Israel and he slaughtered their priests on their altars. He commanded the people to celebrate the Passover. It had not been celebrated like this since the time of the Judges. Unbelievable, but true! He got rid of the necromancers and the mediums and all the idols in the land. As we just read, there had never been a king like him. It's also very hard to believe that some of the people of Israel were still worshipping false gods at a shrine which had been built by Solomon about 350 years earlier, built to please his foreign wives. *6 So Solomon did what was evil in the sight of Adonai and did not fully follow after Adonai, unlike his father David* (1Kings 11:6 TLV). Solomon did not live up to the charge given to him by his father David which we read from our *haftarah* portion today. He became the first of the kings who turned away from ADONAI. Josiah didn't have the wisdom or wealth of Solomon, but served ADONAI wholeheartedly.

But, with all that King Josiah did that was right in ADONAI's eyes, it did not change the judgment which He had already set to come on Judah. Josiah read in the Book of the *Torah*, most probably Deuteronomy, that ADONAI would judge Israel in the latter days for their sin. Verse 25 says: *25 Before him there had never been a king like him, who turned to Adonai with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his might, according to all the Torah of Moses, nor has any king like him risen since him* (2Kings 23:25 TLV). It was too little, too late. The next verse says: *26 Nevertheless, Adonai did not turn from the fury of His great wrath which burned against Judah,..* (2Kings 23:26a TLV). All the right things which Josiah had done including his devotion to *Torah* did not appease ADONAI's anger. *27 Adonai said, "I will banish Judah also from My presence as I banished Israel, and I have spurned this city, Jerusalem, which I chose, and the House about which I had said: 'My Name will be there'"* (2Kings 23:27 TLV). Tradition tells us that Jeremiah was the author of 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings, originally one book. If that is true, then this statement which we just read is a statement from ADONAI delivered by a prophet. As far as I know, we don't have a prophet who has declared what will happen to our nation in the *acharit hayamim* except Rabbi

Jonathan Cahn. His prophecies were warnings. His first warnings were given through the book, *The Harbinger*, in 2012 and we and our nation did not heed them. Then, Harbinger II eight years later, in the fall of this year, continuation of the warnings was given. The book ends with this: "I turned to the city, set the trumpet to my mouth, and blew. And now the trumpet has sounded. Let the one who has ears, hear it, and return, and be saved." To our credit, a large segment of the body of Messiah responded to that warning. We have fasted and prayed and we have repented. But, the question is, was ADONAI's decision regarding what is going to happen in the United States made before the great *teshuvah*, the great repentance, of this year? Was our repentance too little, too late to turn things around? We don't know the answer, and we continue to pray for ADONAI's mercy. But, we also have to be prepared for His judgment. King Josiah was the most righteous of any king of Judah, but his righteous acts could not change ADONAI's judgment which He had already made. But, this does not mean that we will be powerless as a body. There will be revival and there will be a great harvest in this time of trouble.

What are we to do! Our only answer is that we must draw nearer to Him. This message today is not to unsaved people, but to people who have said to Yeshua, I accept your sacrifice and commit my life to Your service. We can't be playing "church," particularly not in the last of the last days. We have to be very serious about our devotion to Yeshua. How long the trouble, the tribulation of these days, will last no one knows. But, we do know that we have an opportunity to be Yeshua's witnesses to those around us for the coming four years or however long Yeshua tarries. Has He tarried because of our lack of harvest? Or, could it also be because of His great mercy and love for those who have strayed and those who have never come to Him? Is this extra time to give them an opportunity for *teshuvah*?

The writer of Hebrews puts it clearly for us: 37 "*For yet "in a very little while, the Coming One will come, and He will not delay"* (Hebrews 10:37 TLV). The very little while is much shorter "little while" today. And, when the appointed time comes, Yeshua will come. 38 "*But My righteous one shall live by emunah; and if he shrinks back, My soul takes no pleasure in him"* (Hebrews 10:38 TLV). That's us! We're His righteous ones. Because we have trusted in Yeshua by faith, by *emunah*, we have been declared righteous. But, also according to this verse, the righteous can shrink back. If we have shrunken back from our calling, the writer of Hebrews says that *Ruach HaKodesh* takes no pleasure in us. ADONAI's soul, His *Ruach*, takes no pleasure in those who have shrunken back from their calling. 39 "*But we are not among the timid ones on the path to destruction, but among the faithful ones on the path to the preservation of the soul"* (Hebrews 10:39 TLV). This is our positive confession. This must be our confession! We must be the faithful ones on the path to the preservation of our eternal souls, our spirits which live forever.

And, we do have hope. Yeshua said: 29 "*But immediately after the trouble of those days, 'the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light and the stars will fall from heaven and the powers of the heavens will be shaken'" (Matthew 24:29 TLV). Trouble, here, is that same Greek word, *thlipsis*, tribulation. In this world, we will have tribulation, but don't be afraid, for Yeshua has overcome the world. When we see these signs in the heavens, our deliverance is near. And, the powers in the heavens, *HaSatan* and his powers and principalities have been defeated. The next verse says: 30 "*Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the land will mourn, and they will see 'the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven' with power and great glory"* (Matthew 24:30 TLV). We don't know what the sign of the Son of Man is? It may be He, Himself, as He appears in the sky. Some translations read: "the tribes of the earth will mourn." The TLV correctly*

translates the Greek word *ge'* as land. The tribes of the land are the tribes of *eretz Yisra'el*, the Land of Israel. The tribes, the people of Israel, "all Israel spoken of by *Sha'ul* (Romans 11)," will see Yeshua and mourn. The next verse says: 31 "He will send out His angels with a great shofar, and they will gather together His chosen from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other" (Matthew 24:31 TLV). All who have trusted and followed Yeshua are the chosen who will be gathered. He is coming for us in the clouds as *Sha'ul* tells us in 1Thessalonians 4 and 1Corinthians 15. That is our reward for our trust and faithful service to ADONAI. And, we will live for eternity in ADONAI's Kingdom on the earth, a kingdom ruled by His Son Yeshua.

Jacob, the man whose name was changed to Israel, prophesied over his son Judah: 10 *The scepter will not pass from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he to whom it belongs will come. To him will be the obedience of the peoples*" (Genesis 49:10 TLV). He, to whom it belongs, *Shiloh*, Yeshua, has come once, but will come a second time. He has called us and equipped us for His service today, to be a part of preparing for His return. If you're a part of Messianic Judaism, you are a part of a special end-time movement. It's a movement made up of the first fruits of Israel, Jews who have trusted Yeshua, along with called Gentiles. Our ministry is to the Jew first, but equally to the non-Jew. It is no accident that you are here. But, being here, we must realize that what is happening today is a part of ADONAI's end-time plan. We are not to be like Chicken Little who said: "the sky is falling, the sky is falling." Neither are we to say: "everything's coming up roses for you and for me." We must be Berean and conduct our own Holy Spirit guided Scripture study. I encourage you to listen to Danny's message last *Shabbat* again on Facebook. It was a very realistic look at what we are to expect in life. Consider watching again or reading my message from August 22<sup>nd</sup> this year entitled *D'rash B'har HaZeitim*, a study of Yeshua's words given on the Mount of Olives. Each of us who interprets Scripture, prophecies. But, even though we see through a glass darkly and we prophesy in part, we can't shrink back. We are not correct about everything, but knowing that shouldn't stop us from continuing to seek Scriptural answers.

These really are "the days of Elijah" and we will see an Elijah figure in coming years. Just as *Yochanan* the Immerser came in the spirit of Elijah, Scripture tells us that another will come in the spirit of Elijah at the end of the age. And as that song also says: "Yeshua will come, riding on the clouds." These are the days of Elijah! In a word to all for these uncertain days until Yeshua returns, *Sha'ul* exhorts us: 7 "And the shalom of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Messiah Yeshua" (Philippians 4:7 TLV). We have *shalom, shalom*, perfect peace! Be of good cheer! Yeshua has overcome the world! Oh L-rd, bring revival! Bring revival! *Shabbat shalom!*