



## Parasha Vayechi

January 3, 2026

Torah: Genesis 47:28-50:26

Haftarah: 1 Kings 2:1-12

Ketuvim Shlichim: 1 Peter 1:1-25

*Shabbat shalom mishpacha!* Our *parasha* this week is *Vayechi*, usually rendered as "He lived!" The Hebrew is, וַיַּחַי יַעֲקֹב בָּאָרֶץ מִצְרָיִם, *Vayechi Ya'akov b'Eretz Mitzrayim*, "And lived Jacob in the Land of Egypt." Jacob came as an old man, 130 years old, and 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 essential passages in this *parasha* are his blessing of his grandsons, Joseph's sons Ephraim and Manasseh, and his prophetic words over his twelve sons. Jacob's first words to his sons were: 1 ....: "Gather together so that I can tell you what will happen to you in the last days" (Genesis 49:1b TLV). The "last days," אַחֲרִית הַיּוֹם, is an important concept. What Jacob told his sons was not what would happen soon, but what would happen at the end of the age, a prophetic view of how each son would fulfill his destiny. This age in which we are living now, הַזֹּה עַזְלָם Olam Hazeh, the world of the First Covenant and also the New Covenant, the world of temporal time, is distinguished from ADONAI's future perfect world, "the age to come," עַזְלָם הַבָּא Olam Haba.

*Ya'acov* knew he was near death, so he called Joseph to come to him and requested that he be taken to Canaan to be buried with his fathers in the Cave of Machpelah. As we have learned, *Ya'acov*'s name means "supplanter" or "heel grabber." Although he had supplanted his brother Esau early in life, he had ADONAI's favor. While ADONAI continues to call him *Ya'acov*, He interchanges it with his new name, *Isra'el*. Israel, a name that reflects his new personality, is what he became when ADONAI's messenger blessed him and renamed him. Its most basic meaning appears to be "struggles with *El*," G-d, derived from his wrestling with ADONAI's *malakh*, the angel. Looking at it etymologically, that is, with regard to word origin, the root *śarah* meaning "to rule" suggests that *Isra'el* can be interpreted as "Prince of *Elohim*" (Prince of G-d). A third possibility, also based on word origin, is "a man seeing G-d," and all three meanings fit Jacob's situation. By knowing his heart and subsequently changing his name, ADONAI approved Jacob to be the representative of Abraham's family, the bearer of His message to the people of the earth, and the ancestor of kings. Now, Jacob, Israel, as the bearer of ADONAI's plan of blessing for the nations, is about to pass it on to his descendants.

Earlier, in *Parasha Toldot* (Genesis 25:19-28:9), we learned that Jacob had two different inheritances to pass on to his sons. One was the birthright, and it included a double portion of his wealth. However, when he called his son Joseph to come to him, he elevated his two grandsons, Ephraim and Manasseh, to the status of sons, putting them in the place of his two firstborn sons: 5 So now, your two sons, who were born to you in the land of Egypt before I came to you in Egypt, they are mine. Ephraim and Manasseh will be mine, just like Reuben and Simeon. (Genesis 48:5 TLV). Reuben and Simeon were the first two sons born, but Jacob now elevates Ephraim and Manasseh to the highest status in his family, that of his firstborns. Jacob said to Joseph: 6 Any descendant of yours whom you father after them will be yours; they will be identified by the names of their brothers for their inheritance.

(Genesis 48:6 TLV). If any children had been born to Joseph later, they would have inherited only from him, but Ephraim and Manasseh were now on the same level as their uncles and inherited from their grandfather. But before blessing them, Jacob crossed his hands as he laid them on the boys' heads, placing his right hand on Ephraim's head, thereby giving him greater prominence over his older brother. Ephraim's name means "fruitfulness." Joseph had prophetically named his second son, not knowing that he would receive the greater blessing and prominence. While the double portion of wealth was divided between Ephraim and Manasseh, Ephraim received greater prominence. His descendants became the more prominent tribe, and his name was sometimes used prophetically to refer to the entire northern nation of Israel.

Then Jacob began to bless his sons in their birth order. The blessing that he pronounced upon Joseph, his 11th-born, was excellent, the most-praising of all the blessings he gave. This may have been a well-deserved reward, as Joseph was ADONAI's obedient servant throughout his life and also Jacob's favorite son. He blessed him this way: *22 A fruitful son is Joseph, a fruitful son beside a spring—daughters walk along a wall. 23 The archers were bitter and shot arrows and were hostile towards him. 24 Yet his bow was always filled, and his arms quick-moving—by the hands of the Mighty One of Jacob. From there a Shepherd, the Stone of Israel, 25 from the God of your father who helps you, and Shaddai who blesses you, with blessings of heavens above, blessings of the deep that lies below, blessings of breasts and womb. 26 The blessings of your father surpassed the blessings of the ancient mountains, the desire of the everlasting hills. May they be upon Joseph's head, upon the crown of the one set apart from his brothers.* (Genesis 49:22-26 TLV).

In Abraham's family, the first inheritance is the firstborn's property. Joseph replaced his brother Reuben in this honor, but it was given to his sons rather than to him. 1 Chronicles describes this change in the firstborn's property right: *1 The sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel—he was the firstborn, but when he defiled his father's bed, his birthright was given to the sons of Joseph, son of Israel—so he is not reckoned as the firstborn in the genealogical record.* (1 Chronicles 5:1 TLV). There was a second inheritance bestowed upon the son selected by ADONAI, who need not be the firstborn. This inheritance includes the right to continue the lineage and uphold the promise made by ADONAI to Abraham, which states that "nations and kings would arise from him." Isaac was Abraham's second-born son and received this inheritance. Jacob was Isaac's secondborn, and he received it. But who among Jacob's sons received this birthright? *2 Though Judah was the strongest among his brothers, and a ruler came from him, the birthright belonged to Joseph.* (1 Chronicles 5:2 TLV). Joseph, through his two sons, received the birthright to the property, but as this verse reveals, Judah received the right to be the ancestor of kings. This right, the right to pass on the lineage from which nations and kings would come, went to Judah, the fourth born.

Here is Jacob's blessing of Y'hudah, his fourthborn son: *8 Judah, so you are ("so you are" refers to Judah's name, meaning, praised. In this verse, he is praised by his father, but in the future will be praised by his brothers.)—your brothers will praise you: Your hand will be on your enemies' neck. Your father's sons will bow down to you. 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. 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 49:8-12 TLV). Verse 10 is ADONAI's definitive

proclamation, through Jacob's prophecy, that Judah would carry on the bloodline from which kings would come. In his earlier life, Judah wasn't the best person. After Joseph was put in the pit, Judah was the one who suggested that they sell him (Genesis 37:26). He also did not deal honestly with his daughter-in-law Tamar (Genesis 38:26), and he had sex with her as a prostitute (Genesis 38:18). Maybe he redeemed himself by demonstrating good character when he interceded and offered himself to Joseph as a substitute for Benjamin (Genesis 44:18-34). But did this qualify Judah to become the ancestor of the Messiah? Probably not in our minds, but Judah being chosen for this honor is another example of ADONAI's divine prerogative. ADONAI had said to Moses: *19 ... I will be gracious toward whom I will be gracious, and I will show mercy on whom I will be merciful.*" (Exodus 33:10b TLV). Balaam's prophecy about Israel also revealed that ADONAI would bring forth a king from Jacob's descendant: *17 I see him, yet not at this moment. I behold him, yet not in this location. For a star will come from Jacob, a scepter will arise from Israel...*" (Numbers 24:17a TLV). This is about the Messiah, who is referred to as "Him." Jacob had said about Judah: *10 Your father's sons will bow down to you* and *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). "To whom it belongs," כִּי־יָבוֹ שִׁילֹה ki-yavo Shiloh, is considered to be a messianic title, and is sometimes translated "until Shiloh comes." "His feet" is another reference to the Messiah. In these statements, Jacob refers to the ruling position that Judah's descendants will hold among his brothers, a point hinted at in Balaam's prophecy. Because the leadership position was passed to Judah, all the kings of Israel would come from his tribe, and the final king, the Messiah, ADONAI's ultimate anointed.

The firstborn had the right of inheritance, but in the second generation, Isaac, the secondborn, became the family leader and was entitled to a double portion of the inheritance. In the third generation, the inheritance was divided. Judah received the inheritance of leadership, and Joseph's sons received the double-portion inheritance of property. However, Judah's leadership inheritance was not realized until David became king some 600-plus years later, a partial fulfillment. We are now awaiting the complete fulfillment of this inheritance, which will occur when Yeshua returns to earth to take his rightful place as *Melekh BenDavid*, King, Son of David. Jacob's prophecy about Judah tells us that the scepter, the ruling staff of kings, would not leave Judah's descendants until *Shiloh* comes, a reference to Yeshua, a messianic title, understood from ancient times to refer to the Messiah.

We understand that, regarding Judah, the ancestor of Messiah Yeshua, his selection was by ADONAI's grace and favor, despite his early life not being the most outstanding example. What about *Levi*, the father of the tribe from which the *Kohanim* and the Levites came? His prophecy was also not one to be desired: *5 Simeon and Levi are brothers, instruments of violence are their knives. 6 In their secret counsel may my soul not enter. In their contingent may my honor never be united. For in their anger they slew men, and in their self-will they maimed oxen. 7 Cursed be their anger for it was strong and their rage for it was cruel—I will disperse them in Jacob, I will scatter them in Israel.* (Genesis 49:5-7 TLV). Both Moses and Aaron were descendants of Levi. It was *Shi'mon* and *Levi* who tricked the Hivites into circumcising themselves. When the Hivites were in pain, the brothers entered the city and murdered all the men (Genesis 34). It appears to be ADONAI's grace at work in His choice of Levi's descendants as well. The last sentence of the prophecy, "I will disperse them in Jacob, I will scatter them in Israel," could refer to ADONAI's plan for their inheritance of land. As priests and Levites, their inheritance was scattered among all the tribes rather than having a single tribal area, as the other brothers received. The inheritances that Ephraim,

Manasseh, Levi, and Judah received from ADONAI were because of ADONAI's divine choice and His grace.

What is grace? We usually think of the definition: "ADONAI's unmerited favor," and it certainly is. But do some seek grace when there is no grace? Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a Lutheran pastor in Nazi Germany, coined the term "cheap grace." Cheap grace is not a reference to ADONAI's grace, but a counterfeit. It's a grace that is "cheap" in value, not cost, a man-made grace. An example is the indulgences that a person could buy from the Catholic Church during Martin Luther's time. A person could sin, pay a fee to cover it, and then sin again. That kind of grace is utterly worthless before ADONAI. The term "cheap grace" implies that a person believes a sin is justified, even though the sinner is not actually spiritually justified. It can be outward piety and physical works without a relationship to Yeshua. To these people, He said: "Depart from me, I never knew you." (Matthew 7:21-23). It is a theology that ignores the biblical truth *Sha'ul* taught: *11 For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, 12 training us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live in a manner that is self-controlled and righteous and godly in the present age.* (Titus 2:11-12 TLV). Instead, today, many live as if grace is a ticket to heaven, free from any moral demands. This kind of grace calls sinners to come to the Messiah but does not require them to surrender to Him. In this kind of grace, they accept Him, supposedly receive Him, but do not find it necessary to be obedient to Him. The prevalence of this type of grace within Yeshua's body is why we must have revival today, *teshuvah* (repentance of sins), and a return to the Biblical lifestyle He teaches. Not only is our greater society morally bankrupt, but a large portion of those who claim to follow Yeshua are as well. They claim to follow Him but deny it with their actions. We have major Christian denominations today with millions of participants who choose to change ADONAI's Word to suit their social beliefs, both ordaining clergy and marrying individuals who violate G-d's Law. *13 If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination, and they should surely be put to death. Their blood should be on them.* (Leviticus 20:13 TLV). We are not living in ADONAI's theocracy today, as Israel was under His First Covenant, so we do not put people to death for this sin. But without repentance, this sin can lead to spiritual death, final separation from ADONAI. We are to love those who commit this sin and pray for them, but we cannot tell them they are right.

What is the opposite of cheap grace? There are many good definitions of "real" grace today, and here is one: "Real grace is ADONAI's reward to those who do not deserve it, His mercy to undeserving people." *Sha'ul* frequently contrasted grace with law. He said: *21 I do not nullify the grace of God—for if righteousness comes through Torah, then Messiah died for no reason!* (Galatians 2:21 TLV). In other words, if salvation could be attained through works or obeying laws, then Yeshua would not have needed to die as our sacrifice for sin. *Sha'ul* was speaking to those who trusted in Law-keeping and being a part of the Judaism of that day for salvation. There are still some who try that today, but we have never followed that plan. If a person first trusts in Yeshua and then turns away from His grace to trust in an "obedience salvation," he has fallen from His grace. The Galatians were led to Yeshua by *Sha'ul*, but they took the advice of some misguided Messianic Jews and became proselytes to Judaism, believing *Torah* obedience was the path to justification. *Sha'ul* said to them: *4 You who are trying to be justified by Torah have been cut off from Messiah; you have fallen away from grace.* (Galatians 5:4 TLV). A person can trust in Yeshua, but their later actions can cause them to fall from grace. That is not what we are trying to do. We have a balanced understanding of salvation by faith through ADONAI's grace, followed by righteous behavior. *Sha'ul* was careful to say that grace does not do away with the moral requirements of

ADONAI's law. Grace does not cancel out the righteous requirements, the commandments of the law. It confirms them and validates them. He said: *31 Do we then nullify the Torah through faithfulness? May it never be! On the contrary, we uphold the Torah.* (Romans 3:31 TLV). Our salvation in Messiah Yeshua is by trusting faithfulness, but our acceptance of His gracious gift of salvation does not abolish our need for the *Torah*. Without the teaching and instruction of the *Torah* in Genesis through Revelation, we do not know what righteous conduct is. It is through the *Torah* that we learn how to live a righteous life, the life taught to us by Yeshua.

How can we, who have received Yeshua as Messiah, continue in His grace? The only way is to follow our Messiah's example and deny ourselves. If we don't deny ourselves, we are guilty of seeking "cheap grace." Yeshua said: *24 ... , If anyone wants to follow after Me, he must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Me. 25 For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.* (Matthew 16:24b-25 TLV). This means that by denying ourselves, we are putting away our selfish desires and following the example that Yeshua has shown us. It involves a death, the death of our "old man," our soulish desires.

Have you ever thought about *Yom Kippur* as having meaning beyond on that one day? We think about the message of *Pesach* (Passover) regularly; why not *Yom Kippur*? ADONAI commanded: *27 However, the tenth day of this seventh month is Yom Kippur, a holy convocation to you, so you are to afflict yourselves....* (Leviticus 23:27a TLV). Other versions say "deny yourselves." The *Talmud* says this means we are to fast, and we do follow this as a tradition on *Yom Kippur*. But I really think "to afflict ourselves" means something different. The Hebrew word is *בְּעִיטִים* *va-initim* from the Hebrew root *עִטָּה* *anah*, which means to "bow down" or "afflicted." Afflict is used in the sense of "humble," meaning that we are to give ourselves totally to ADONAI, that is, to humble ourselves. It's good to fast in unity with our brothers and sisters in traditional Judaism on *Yom Kippur*, but I don't believe that's what ADONAI is requiring of us regarding *Yom Kippur*. He tells us that we must approach Him on *Yom Kippur*, or on any other day when a person comes to Him for salvation, with a humble heart, a heart totally given to Him. These words, "afflict yourselves," are about coming humbly for salvation. In this context, our individual day of salvation was our *Yom Kippur*, a day when we afflicted ourselves, that is, when we fully submitted to Yeshua. Understanding it this way means that "afflicting ourselves" is not only on *Yom Kippur* but also every day, when we must deny our human desires for pleasure and give ourselves entirely to Him. Yeshua's statement about denying ourselves is slightly different in Luke: *23 Then Yeshua was saying to everyone, "If anyone wants to follow Me, he must deny himself, take up his cross every day, and follow Me."* (Luke 9:23 TLV). He said that denying ourselves must be a daily thing. If we begin each day thinking specifically about "taking up our cross," we will be much less likely to allow our "old man" to have his way.

At the beginning of our *parasha*, Jacob said to his sons: *1 ... : Gather together so that I can tell you what will happen to you in the last days* (Genesis 49:1b TLV). This is a prophecy about the "end times," a period that appears to have begun with Yeshua's coming to earth. Quoting Joel 3:1, Shimon Kefa said: *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 2:17 TLV). Joel was referring to that *Shavuot* following Yeshua's ascension, the time when ADONAI poured out His Spirit upon Shimon Kefa and those worshipping Him on the Temple Mount. But earlier, Joel had prophesied about ADONAI pouring out His *Ruach* on all flesh: *23 So be glad, children of Zion,*

and rejoice in Adonai, your God. For He gives you the early rain for prosperity, Yes, He will bring down rain for you, the early and latter rain as before. (Joel 2:23 TLV). Rain was also to bring prosperity. In today's world, the physical early and latter rains do not follow the pattern ADONAI gave. Then, the *Yoreh*, the early rains, usually began in mid-October, while the *Malkosh*, the latter rains, began in mid-April. Today, there is drought, but this is ADONAI's promise through Joel: the climate patterns of today will return to those set by ADONAI, and He will bring them about for Israel's prosperity. But was Joel also using rain as a symbol of the *Ruach Kodesh*? I believe he was. ADONAI, speaking through Isaiah to Jacob, Israel, about the latter days, said: 3 "For I will pour

**(A)** water on the thirsty land

and **(B)** streams on the dry ground.

I will pour

**(A)** My Spirit

on your offspring,

and

**(B)** My blessing on your descendants.

"(Isaiah 44:3 TLV).

In this verse, we see Hebrew parallelism: A aligns with A and B with B. The water (*mayim*), being poured, is rain and is parallel to "My Spirit." If rain symbolizes the *Ruach*, ADONAI's Holy Spirit, then wouldn't Joel's early rain be the outpouring at *Shavuot* in the 1st century? In a similar way, would not the latter rain be an outpouring of ADONAI's Holy Spirit at the end of the last days, a time we are now in, some two thousand years after the early rain? We are waiting and praying for that outpouring to come, the time of refreshing. While the latter rain of the Spirit is present now in a measured amount, Scripture shows that we are awaiting a downpour!

Our *Shlichim* reading today says: 3 *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah! In His great mercy, He caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Messiah Yeshua from the dead. 4 An incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading inheritance has been reserved in heaven for you.* (1Peter 1:3-4 TLV). That is what awaits those who have trusted Yeshua in faith, having received ADONAI's grace, and then have walked faithfully in His commandments. But, *Kefa* also speaks to those who have strayed: 19 *Repent, therefore, and return—so your sins might be blotted out, 20 so times of relief might come from the presence of Adonai, and He might send Yeshua, the Messiah appointed for you.* (Acts 3:19-20 TLV). The Greek word translated "relief" in this verse is *anapsyxeōs*, (an-aps-e-ze-os), and can also be translated as "refreshing," something we as Yeshua's followers need. We need our spirits to be refreshed, and this can happen through our action of "repenting and returning," because each of us has sinned and fallen short of ADONAI's glory. In writing this, *Shimon Kefa* seems to have envisioned a future time when Yeshua's body of believers would need to return, a time near His return for us.

Jacob said to his sons: 1 ....: "Gather together so that I can tell you what will happen to you in the last days" (Genesis 49:1b TLV). We are now living in the *Olam Hazeh*, the present age, awaiting the *Olam Haba*, the age to come, the age of Yeshua's return. In time, we are in the last of the *Acharit Hayamim*, the "last days." The *Acharit Hayamim* period began with Yeshua's 1st-century disciples and the *yoreh geshem*, the early rain of the Holy Spirit, which He poured out on them. ADONAI has chosen us to live at the end of the *Acharit Hayamim*, during the period of awaiting the *malkosh gemshem*, the latter rain outpouring of the *Ruach Kodesh*, and the end-time revival. As Yeshua's disciples, we cannot afford to live with "cheap grace," a manufactured, fake grace that Scripture does not support. We must have the grace that compels us to take up our cross daily. If we want to live in Yeshua's grace, we must turn away from our own desires daily and be willing to die for Him. *Ya'acov's* prophecy spoken over his son *Yehudah* was a time-specific prophecy, a prophecy about our near future. He said: 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). This could only be about the end of the *Acharit Hayamim*, the end of days, the

time in which we are living. When Yeshua first came, He did not come as a king but as a servant. Jacob's words to his son Judah are a prophecy of Yeshua's coming as king at the end of the *Acharit Hayamim*. The time is near. We must pray for *teshuva* (repentance) and revival, as well as for the outpouring of the *malkosh geshem*, the latter rain of ADONAI's Spirit, which will empower it. Will Yeshua's body be faithful to do this, or will it remain business as usual? Yeshua is coming soon. We must be faithful, faithful to not only repent daily, but to return to righteousness, and to pray for His refreshing latter rain earnestly! *Shabbat shalom!*