

Let's recap from last week: Jacob came down to Egypt in Year Two of the famine, with five years left to go. God told him not to worry about going down to Egypt, that he would return, **אָנְכִי אֶרְדָּ עִמָּךְ מִצְרַיִמָּה וְאָנְכִי אֶעֱלֶךָ גַּם עִלָּה וְיוֹסֵף יִשִּׁית יָדוֹ, I myself will go down with you to Egypt, and I myself will bring you up, yes, up again. And Joseph will lay his hand on your eyes** (46:4). Did this mean that he would go back to Canaan alive or dead? It's not clear. There is reason to believe that the family only wanted to ride out the famine in Egypt and not live there permanently. When Pharaoh asks the brothers **מָה מַעֲשֵׂיכֶם-What is it that you do?** (47:3) and they answered, **לָגוּר בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן-We have come to sojourn in the land** (47:4) **לָגוּר** means to **dwelt temporarily**. Their intention was to **dwelt temporarily** in Egypt and then go back to Canaan. But Pharaoh counters with an offer that they cannot refuse: **אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם לִפְנֵיךָ הוּא-The land of Egypt is before you; in the goodliest-part of the land, settle your father and your brothers; let them settle in the region of Goshen** (47:6). That is, **settle yourselves permanently here**. Last week's parasha ends with this text: **וַיָּשֶׁב יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם בְּאֶרֶץ גֹּשֶׁן וַיַּחֲזִקוּ בָּהּ וַיִּכְרְוּ וַיִּרְבּוּ מְאֹד-Israel settled in the land of Egypt, in the region of Goshen; they obtained holdings in it, were fruitful, and multiplied** (47:27). That verse reminds us of the first verse of the Joseph story: **וַיָּשֶׁב יַעֲקֹב בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם אֲבִיו בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן-Jacob settled in the land of his father's sojournings, in the land of Canaan** (37:1) Let's compare the two verses:

End of the Story-47:27	Beginning of the Story-37:1
וַיָּשֶׁב יִשְׂרָאֵל	וַיָּשֶׁב יַעֲקֹב
בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם	בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם
בְּאֶרֶץ גֹּשֶׁן	בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן
וַיַּחֲזִקוּ בָּהּ וַיִּכְרְוּ וַיִּרְבּוּ מְאֹד	--

Back at the beginning he went by the name, Jacob. Here at the end, he is Israel. At the beginning, he **settled in the land of his father's sojournings, the land of Canaan**. At the end he **settled in the land of Egypt, in the land of Goshen**, the land - of his sons' permanent settlement. At the beginning

<sup>1</sup> God's promise to Abraham, just prior to his circumcision if formulated with this words: **וְנָתַתִּי לְךָ וּלְזַרְעֲךָ אַחֲרָיִךְ אֶת אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם וְנָתַתִּי לָהֶם לְאֵלֵיהֶם וְהָיִיתִי לָהֶם לְאֱלֹהִים-I will give to you and to your seed after you, the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, as a holding for the ages, and I will be God to them.** (17:8) Notice that for Abraham Canaan is referred to as the **land of his sojourning's**, and that for Jacob, Canaan is referred to as the land of **his father's sojourning's**. God's promise to Abraham is clear: The land of temporary residence is supposed to become the land of permanent residence.

<sup>2</sup> Egypt quite literally was the land of death, where everything centered around the dead, and the great cultural fixation was on death and the great national projects were monuments to the dead.

of the story, they were supposed to create an **אֶמְלָכָה-an eternal holding<sup>1</sup>** in Canaan, but they ended up being unsettled there. And at the end of the story, when they were supposed to be unsettled in Egypt, they ended up owning permanent properties, **וַיַּחֲזִקוּ בָּהּ-they obtained holdings**, there. At the beginning of the story, their population in the land was destined to be as numerous **as the stars of the sky** or the **sands of the sea**, but by the end, their population in the land is zero. At the end of the story, they were fruitful and multiplied and enjoyed God's blessings in the land of Egypt, the land that was destined to enslave them. Seeing these verses side by side yields the following insight: the land that was destined to be the land of the living for them, (Canaan), was desolate and dead; and the land that was destined to be the land of suffering and death for them (Egypt)<sup>2</sup>, was full of life. Thus, when this parasha begins with the words, **וַיָּחִי יַעֲקֹב בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם-And Yaakov lived in the land of Egypt**, it's hard not to read them without irony:

Now in Egypt	Before in Canaan
A very "alive" Jacob lives in Egypt	A very "emotionally dead" Jacob lived in Canaan
in the "land of the dead"	in the "land of the living"
near a very "alive" Joseph.	far from a "dead" Joseph.

Moreover, as we read last week, when Jacob saw that Joseph was alive he said, **אֲמוּתָה הַפַּעַם-Now I can die**, meaning, **now I can really die<sup>3</sup>**, because up until now he had been living **as if** he were a dead person. But instead of dying on the spot, he goes on to live in Egypt for another **seventeen years<sup>4</sup>**. The Torah signals to us that the final chapter of Jacob's life is bracketed by 17-year units: Joseph lives under Jacob's tutelage for 17 years in Canaan, and Jacob lives under Joseph's tutelage for 17 years in Egypt.<sup>5</sup> **וַיְהִי יְמֵי יַעֲקֹב שְׁנַיִם חֲמִישִׁים וָשֶׁבַע שָׁנִים וְאַרְבָּעִים וּמֵאֵת שָׁנָה-And the days of Yaakov, the years of his life, were seven years and a hundred and forty years.**

**Jacob and Joseph: Their Ages at Critical Moments**  
 The Torah is a narrative. Numerical information is presented in stories. Charts and diagrams are modern tools.

<sup>3</sup> The verse continues: **חַי כִּי עוֹדָךְ חַי-since I have seen your face, that you are still alive!** (46:30).

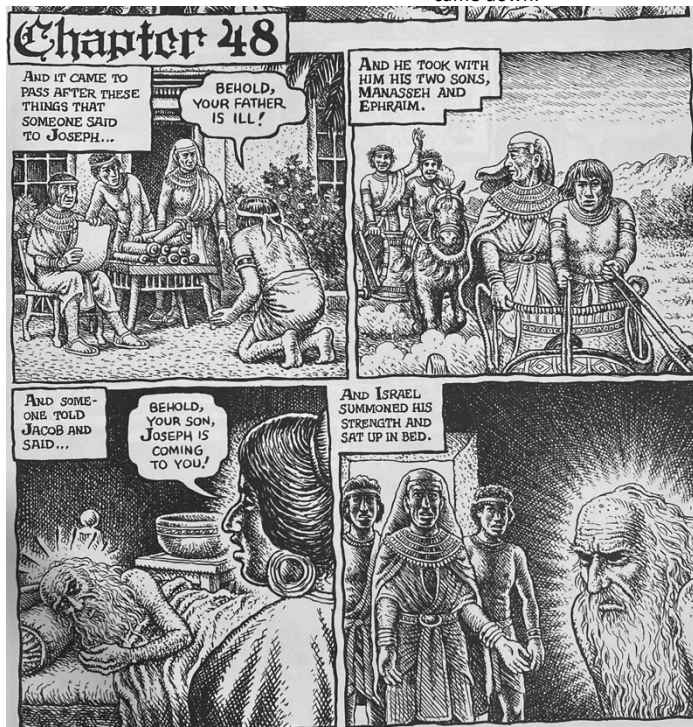
<sup>4</sup>This is similar to Isaac who fears that his death is imminent prior to blessing his sons and goes on to live for another 80 years. (Now here, I have grown old, and do not know the day of my death. 27:2)

<sup>5</sup> And check out the significance of the number 17:

Abraham	175=	5*5*7	5+5+7	=17	An interesting theory: the number 17 is the sum of the factors of the patriarchal ages.
Isaac	180=	6*6*5	6+6+5	=17	
Jacob	147=	7*7*3	7+7+3	=17	
Source: Joel J. Forman, <i>Mathematical Codes in the Torah, Jewish Bible Quarterly</i> , 27 (1999) pp. 119-124					

Event	Jacob	Joseph
Birth of Joseph	91	0
Age of Jacob at Joseph's abduction	108	17
When Joseph is elevated	121	30
When the famine starts	128	37
When the family comes down	130	39
Jacob's death	147	56

Ages noted in **red** are supported by explicit texts: 37:1 (Joseph's abduction), 41:46 (Joseph's elevation), 47:28 (Jacob's death). Ages in **bold italics** are extrapolated. For example, the famine starts 7 years after Joseph's elevation at age 30, and the family comes down to Egypt in the 2nd year of the famine, (after the 7 years of plenty), thus Joseph is 39 when they come down. If Jacob is 147 at his death and lived in Egypt for 17 years, he was 130 when he came down.



(From R. Crumb, *The Book of Genesis Illustrated*)

**The Adoption of Menashe and Ephraim.** Joseph is told that his father is sick-חלה (48:1a). Who told him? We don't know. So he takes his two sons, Menashe and Ephraim-ויקח את שני בניו עמו את מנשה ואת אפרים (48:1b). Where does he take them? It doesn't say. But in the next verse (48:2) they are in front of their grandfather's deathbed. We can assume that he wants them to see their grandfather while they still can. Does Joseph know what is going to happen? Is he anticipating his father's blessing and adoption for his two sons? We don't know. But we do notice something strange. Joseph's wife, Osnat, is absent. It is unlikely their maternal grandfather Poti-Fera (41:45), who is part of the Egyptian elite, was consulted here either. Did the boys have a relationship with him? Probably. All of this, therefore, is taking place in stealth. Would that surprise us, given Jacob's past? Not really. What would the boys themselves have thought about this? Their Egyptians! They speak Egyptian, they dress in Egyptian clothes, they *walk like Egyptians*, their mother is an Egyptian priestly princess, their maternal grandfather is a major Egyptian cleric, and their father is second in power

to Pharaoh! And now this hot-hearted-hoary-headed-Hebrew-man-from-Canaan, whom they barely know, is about to hug them and kiss them and place his hands on their heads and bless them and adopt them as his own children?! They would have every reason to object. But to their credit, they don't. Now that their father's true identity has been revealed - to them too - and now that they have a whole mess of uncles and cousins, they are probably asking themselves, "Who are we? Where do we belong?" And now they, as young adults, have to re-create their own personal identity. Will they align their identity with their mother, or will they differentiate from her to align their identity with their father? (Take a good guess.) Jacob's blessing subverts their Egyptian identity and replaces it with a Hebraic identity.

When Jacob is told of their imminent arrival, ויַתְחַזֵּק יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּשְׁבּוּ עַל הַמִּטָּה - *he strengthens himself, and sits up on the bed*. Anyone who has ever been present at the bedside of a sick person, can truly appreciate the mental and physical fortitude required simply to sit up. We can connect this moment to the various demonstrations of his strength throughout Jacob's life: he set up stone monuments, he moved rocks from wells, he fought with angels. The man was strong. Or we could, like the rabbis, find a message beneath this gesture: Jacob was motivated by respect. Rashi: אַף עַל פִּי שֶׁהוּא בֶּנִי, מְלֶךְ הוּא, אֲחֻלֵּק לוֹ כְבוֹד - *He said: Even though he is my son, he is a king and I will show him respect*. It is tempting to identify this moment as an end-of-life rally. Hospice nurses, palliative care specialists, researchers, and regular relatives of dying people have noted that people on their deathbeds will experience what they call *terminal lucidity* or an or a *pre-mortem surge*, during which the patient will experience a surge of activity and clarity prior to death. Is this such a moment? Is his testament to his sons a part of his end-of-life surge?

**The Adoption Text 48:3-5**

<p>וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב אֶל יוֹסֵף אֵל שְׂדֵי נְרָאָה אֵלַי בְּלוֹז בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן וַיְבָרֵךְ אֹתִי. וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלַי הַבְּנֵי מִקְרֶךָ וְהַרְבִּיתֶךָ וְהַתְמִיתֶךָ לְקַדְדֵל עַמִּים וְנָתַתִּי אֶת הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת לְנֶדְוָךָ אַחֲרָיִךָ אֶחָזֶת עוֹלָם</p>	<p><b>Yaakov said to Yosef: God Shaddai was seen by me in Luz, in the land of Canaan; he blessed me and he said to me: Here, I will make you bear fruit and will make you many, and will make you into a host of peoples; I will give this land to your seed after you, as a holding for the ages!</b></p>
<p>וְעַתָּה שְׁנֵי בְנֵי הַנּוֹלָדִים לְךָ בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם עַד בָּאִי אֵלַיךְ מִצְרַיִם לִי הֵם אֶפְרַיִם וּמְנַשֶּׁה כְּרֹאבוֹן וּשְׁמִעוֹן יִהְיוּ לִי</p>	<p><b>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 Menashe, like Re'uvon and Shim'on, let them be mine!</b></p>

Jacob could have chosen from many episodes of his life, but he focusses on the Luz/Beit El story, specifically the one that occurs at the pinnacle of his life, after his rapprochement with Esau, (but also after the rape of Dina), and just before the death of Rachel, when he receives (again) his new name, Israel. If we read this passage closely and compare it with

what God said to him originally back in 35:11-12, we will note a couple of interesting things: Abraham and Isaac are mentioned there, not here, and there is a promise that *kings shall go out from your loins*. Not here. ! עם ישראל חי!

**This Parasha Sheet is sponsored by Mitch Rosen in memory of his grandparents Samuel Leib, Abraham (Al) Rosen, and Molly Rosen. May their memories be a blessing.**  
**SHABBAT SHALOM!** **AM YISRAEL HAY!**