



## Parshat Vayechi

For the week ending 16 Tevet 5760  
24 & 25 December 1999

### Overview

**A**fter 17 years in Egypt, Yaakov senses his days drawing to a close and summons Yosef. He has Yosef swear to bury him in the Machpela cave, the burial place of Adam and Chava, Avraham and Sara, Yitzchak and Rivka. Yaakov falls ill and Yosef brings to him his two sons, Efraim and Menashe. Yaakov elevates Efraim and Menashe to the status of his own sons, thus giving Yosef a double portion that removes the status of the first-born from Reuven. As Yaakov is blind from old age, Yosef leads his sons close to their grandfather. Yaakov kisses and hugs them. He had not thought to see his

begins to bless them, giving precedence to Efraim, the younger, but Yosef interrupts him and indicates that Menashe is the elder. Yaakov explains that he intends to bless Efraim with his strong hand because Yehoshua will descend from him, and Yehoshua will be both the conqueror of Eretz Yisrael and the teacher of Torah to the Jewish People. Yaakov summons the rest of his

reflects the unique character and ability of each tribe, directing each one in its unique mission in serving Hashem. Yaakov passes from this world at the age of 147. A tremendous funeral procession accompanies his funeral cortege up from Egypt to his resting place in the

the brothers are concerned that Yosef will now take revenge on them. Yosef reassures them, even promising to support them and their families. Yosef

great-grandchildren. Before his death, Yosef foretells to his brothers that Hashem will redeem them from Egypt. He makes them swear to bring his bones out of Egypt with them at that time. Yosef passes away at the age of 110 and is embalmed. Thus ends Sefer Bereishet, the first of the five Books of the Torah.

### Insights

#### EASY STREET

*-boned donkey; he rests between the boundaries. He saw tranquility that it*

(49:14-15)

**B**etween 9% and 10% of American schoolchildren are clinically depressed. Include those who are just above the cutoff

sought professional help. Whichever way you look at it, 9% is a frightening number.

Why do so many children experience feelings of depression?

America is a society predicated on making everything easy. Convenience shopping. TV dinners. Drive-thru banking. These short-term benefits breed a certain attitude: Nothing should cause me effort.

One of the fundamental components of a happy person is a healthy self-esteem. Probably more cases of juvenile depression are linked to low self-esteem than any other cause. What give us a sense of self-esteem?

By making life into *easy street*, by giving the subliminal message that everything has to be easy, we have unconsciously taken away a major formula for achieving self-esteem: Rising to a challenge. Overcoming

s the difference between fun and happiness?

Mount Whitney in California is the highest peak

could probably fly to the top of Mount Whitney in about 15 minutes. To walk the same distance might take you 15 days.

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It could well be that flying to the top of Mount Whitney is a lot more fun than climbing it, but climbing

achieved something quite difficult. Fun is something external, and because it is fleeting. Happiness is inside. It becomes part of your essence.

Studying Torah is the ultimate in deferred gratification. The Torah is as hard as steel and as difficult to hold onto as water. It takes many years of

its sublime intricacies and yet there is no *simcha* in the world like studying Torah.

There is no physical pleasure in this world that can compare with the ecstasy of cracking a difficult *Tosefot*. Happiness that there is.

*-boned donkey; he rests between the boundaries. He saw tranquility that it was good... yet he bent his shoulder to bear and became an*

Yissachar is the tribe of Torah scholars. A Torah -boned -d gives him the stamina to carry out his *rests*

He rests between the boundaries of the day and night. How can anything

night. The *talmid chacham* scholar experiences repose of the soul on a spiritual plane that is beyond the boundaries of day and night. On that plane he has a contentment that is out of this world. He saw

comes from hard work and dedication to G-Torah.

And he ends up much higher than Mount Whitney.

## Haftarah: Melachim I 2:1-12

### OUT OF DATE?

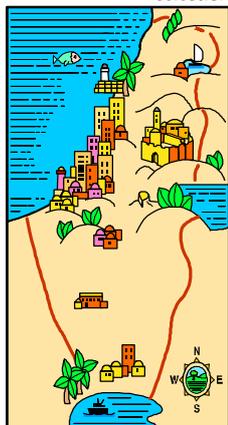
**W** computer is obsolete. What pearls of wisdom can we glean from the elderly? Yaakov on his deathbed gathers his sons to bless them. These blessings are peppered with rebuke, and lives. In the Haftarah, the ailing King David gives his final

lived the life of a king, complete with all its joys and troubles, has one message for Shlomo. He does not tell him where to place his investments or which career to choose. Rather he tells him that there is nothing above or beyond the Torah. This is the wisdom of the aged tzaddik. While we may believe that life can offer us nothing more satisfying than the Torah, only an aging Yaakov or David can know it. In making any decision, although we may attempt to do G-

Only one who has liberated himself from a self-centered attitude can direct us along the true path.

## LOVE OF THE LAND

*Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and Eretz Yisrael*



### HAR GERIZIM AND HAR EYVAL

*shem, your L-d, brings you to the land which you come to inherit, you shall declare the*

This command was fulfilled by the Jews in the following fashion: Six tribes stood on one mountain and six on the other. In between them stood the Holy Ark and the elders of the Kohanim and Levites. The latter turned first towards Har Gerizim and said the words recorded in the Torah in the form of a blessing for those who obey the particular faced Har Eyval, repeating the same command in the form of a curse for those who disobeyed it, and all

We may see in the manner which these blessings and curses were declared a lesson for the nation entering its promised land. A man may conduct himself in a manner worthy of blessing, but if he turns away from his responsibilities even momentarily he may be inviting the opposite.

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