**VA-YIGGASH**

18 Then Judah went up to him and said, “Please, my lord, let your servant appeal to my lord, and do not be impatient with your servant, you who are the equal of Pharaoh. My lord asked his servants, ‘Have you a father or another brother?’ 20 We told my lord, ‘We have an old father, and there is a child of his old age, the youngest; his full brother is dead, so that he alone is left of his mother, and his father dotes on him.’ 21 Then you said to your servants, ‘Bring him down to me, that I may set eyes on him.’ 22 We said to my lord, ‘The boy cannot leave his father; if he were to leave him, his father would die.’ 23 But you said to your servants, ‘Unless your youngest brother comes down with you, do not let me see your faces.’ 24 When we came back to your servant my father, we reported my lord’s words to him. 25 Later our father said, ‘Go back and pro-

**THE BROTHERS’ LAST TRIAL (continued)**

**JUDAH’S SPEECH (44:18–34)**

The encounter between Joseph and his brothers reaches its climactic moment.

18. **appeal to** Literally “speak in the ears of,” which is idiomatic for “have a hearing.”

the equal of Pharaoh The phrase is not mere flattery but a subtle reminder of Joseph’s power to grant a pardon by virtue of his exalted position.

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**CHAPTER 44**

The reconciliation between Joseph and his brothers is one of the great scenes in all of literature. It is preceded by a deeply moving speech by Judah, who uses the word “father” 14 times in 17 verses. Joseph is moved to tears and to self-revelation by Judah’s words. He realizes that his keeping Benjamin in prison would be doing to his brother and father what the brothers had done to him and their father years ago.

18. **Judah went up to him** He drew close emotionally as well as physically [Gen. R. 93:4]. The author of S’fat Emet understands these words to mean, “Judah approached himself.” He discovered who he really was, not the compromiser who had said “Let us sell him... not do away with him ourselves.” (Gen. 37:27), causing his father boundless grief, but the advocate for compassion and family harmony. Judah knows that his father still favors one brother, Benjamin, over the other brothers. Such knowledge, however, no longer drives him to jealousy. He understands that he cannot change his father; he can only change his reaction to his father’s deeds. Judah, although not the eldest of the brothers, emerges as the family spokesman and leader.
cure some food for us.’ 26We answered, ‘We cannot go down; only if our youngest brother is with us can we go down, for we may not show our faces to the man unless our youngest brother is with us.’ 27Your servant my father said to us, ‘As you know, my wife bore me two sons. 28But one is gone from me, and I said: Alas, he was torn by a beast! And I have not seen him since. 29If you take this one from me, too, and he meets with disaster, you will send my white head down to Sheol in sorrow:

30“Now, if I come to your servant my father and the boy is not with us—since his own life is so bound up with his—31when he sees that the boy is not with us, he will die, and your servants will send the white head of your servant our father down to Sheol in grief. 32Now your servant has pledged himself for the boy to my father, saying, ‘If I do not bring him back to you, I shall stand guilty before my father forever.’ 33Therefore, please let your servant remain as a slave to my lord instead of the boy, and let the boy go back with his brothers. 34For how can I go back to my father unless the boy is with me? Let me not be witness to the woe that would overtake my father!”

45 Joseph could no longer control himself before all his attendants, and he cried out,
“Have everyone withdraw from me!” So there was no one else about when Joseph made himself known to his brothers. His sobs were so loud that the Egyptians could hear, and so the news reached Pharaoh’s palace.

3 Joseph said to his brothers, “I am Joseph. Is my father still well?” But his brothers could not answer him, so dumbfounded were they on account of him.

4 Then Joseph said to his brothers, “Come forward to me.” And when they came forward, he said, “I am your brother Joseph, he whom you sold into Egypt. Now, do not be distressed or reproach yourselves because you sold me hither; it was to save life that God sent me ahead of you. It is now two years that there has been famine in the land, and there are still five years to come in which there shall be no

**no one else about** No outsider may share this intensely intimate moment of reconciliation. Furthermore, Joseph would not want the Egyptians to know that his own brothers had sold him into slavery.

**2. the news reached Pharaoh’s palace** Literally, “the house of Pharaoh heard.” The report quickly reached the royal court.

**3. I am Joseph. Is my father still well?** The terrifying picture Judah has painted of the aged father makes Joseph cry out. His words are more exclamation than inquiry, for he already knew the answer (43:27).

**REASSURANCE (vv. 4–8)**

4. your brother Joseph, be whom you sold

His words are both reassurance and rebuke: I shall behave as a brother should—even though you were not brotherly.

5. you sold

The brothers had indeed acted with evil intent.

God sent

The hidden, guiding hand of divine providence had been behind it all.

6. to save life

That I should be the agency of your survival.

6. no yield from tilling

Literally, “no plowing and harvesting.”

**CHAPTER 45**

3. Is my father still well? Why had Joseph not communicated with his father during his years of authority in Egypt? Was he angry at his father, whose favoritism had put him through so much? Or was he reluctant to shame his brothers by telling his father what had happened? (For that matter, there is no record of Jacob having been in touch with his own parents during his years at Laban’s house. Did Jacob resent his father Isaac’s favoritism as well?)

5. it was to save life

The narrative here makes an important theological statement. God could not prevent the brothers from choosing to do something cruel. God’s role was to sustain Joseph and guide him to bring something good and life affirming out of the unfairness inflicted on him. Abravanel notes that, although God used the sale of Joseph to further the divine plan, the brothers were still accountable for what they did. The verse seems to imply that the move was not intended to be permanent but would last only for the duration of the famine. The Israelites, however, became comfortable amid the material pleasures of Egypt.
yield from tilling. 7God has sent me ahead of you to ensure your survival on earth, and to save your lives in an extraordinary deliverance. 8So, it was not you who sent me here, but God; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh, lord of all his household, and ruler over the whole land of Egypt.

9“Now, hurry back to my father and say to him: Thus says your son Joseph, ‘God has made me lord of all Egypt; come down to me without delay. 10You will dwell in the region of Goshen, where you will be near me—you and your children and your grandchildren, your flocks and herds, and all that is yours. 11There I will provide for you—for there are yet five years of famine to come—that you and your household and all that is yours may not suffer want.’ 12You can see for yourselves, and my brother Benjamin for himself, that it is indeed I who am speaking to you. 13And you must tell my father everything about my high station in Egypt and all that you have seen; and bring my father here with all speed.”

14With that he embraced his brother Benjamin around the neck and wept, and Benjamin wept on his neck. 15He kissed all his brothers

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**8. who sent me** For the third time, Joseph repeats his understanding of the true significance of his life. He no longer accuses the brothers of having sold him but says they “sent” him, thereby substituting the beneficial result for their evil purpose.

**father to Pharaoh** No such title is known from ancient Egypt. The term “father” appears in some biblical passages as a title of honor for a prophet, a king, or a high administrator.

**ruler** The word translated as “ruler” (mosheh) here reminds us of the brothers’ reaction to Joseph’s dreams. They had scornfully asked, “Do you mean to rule over us?”

**INSTRUCTIONS TO THE FAMILY** (vv. 9–13)

**10. You will dwell** Joseph clearly has in mind a long-term migration from Canaan to Egypt.

**Goshen** Goshen is most likely located in the area of Wadi Tumeilat, which stretches from the eastern arm of the Nile to the Great Bitter Lake. Egyptian texts confirm the presence of Semites and other Asians in the northeastern part of the country both at the end of the Sixth Dynasty (ca. 2250 B.C.E.) and ca. 1700 B.C.E. in the wake of the Hyksos invasion.

**11. for there are yet five years of famine** This parenthetical note is inserted to overcome Jacob’s anticipated resistance to a massive migration from Canaan.

**12. You can see** These words are intended for the brothers, not the father.

**I who am speaking** Face-to-face, in your language, without an interpreter.

**13. all that you have seen** That is, your awareness of my situation is not derived from rumor but is firsthand.
and wept upon them; only then were his brothers able to talk to him.

16 The news reached Pharaoh's palace: "Joseph's brothers have come." Pharaoh and his courtiers were pleased. 17 And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Say to your brothers, 'Do as follows: load up your beasts and go at once to the land of Canaan. 18 Take your father and your households and come to me; I will give you the best of the land of Egypt and you shall live off the fat of the land.' 19 And you are bidden [to add], 'Do as follows: take from the land of Egypt wagons for your children and your wives, and bring your father here. 20 And never mind your belongings, for the best of all the land of Egypt shall be yours.'"

21 The sons of Israel did so; Joseph gave them wagons as Pharaoh had commanded, and he supplied them with provisions for the journey.

22 To each of them, moreover, he gave a change of clothing; but to Benjamin he gave three hundred pieces of silver and several changes of

15. only then So far the brothers have not uttered a word. It is only after the embrace that they are able to communicate with Joseph, something they were unable to do when he lived among them as a boy (Gen. 37:4).

PHARAOH'S INVITATION (vv. 16–20)

16. The news reached The point made in verse 2 is now repeated and expanded.

17. Pharaoh said Joseph's invitation to his family to settle in Egypt is now endorsed by the king himself.

18. the fat of the land The choicest products of the soil.

19. you are bidden [to add] The order is given to Joseph to relay to his brothers. The previous instructions could be carried out with no outside assistance. This one, however, requires official authorization, the effect of which is to accord Jacob's clan the special status of wards of the king.

20. never mind Do not be concerned about leaving behind personal possessions that will cause inconvenience if you take them along; do not allow such considerations to delay you.

RETURN TO JACOB (vv. 21–28)

22. a change of clothing The term halifot (literally, "a change [of clothes]") is specifically employed for a gift of clothing as a valued prize or a token of affection or honor.

several Literally, "five" (see 43:34, 45:6,11).

22. a change of clothing To replace the clothes they tore in their grief (Gen. 44:13)? Or as a reversal of what happened years ago, when they stripped Joseph of his clothes and threw him into a pit (Gen. 37:23)?

but to Benjamin Despite the risk of rekindling feelings of jealousy, Joseph displays his special closeness to his only full brother, repeating the favoritism that caused problems for his father and grandfather [BT Meg. 16b]. Ramban views Joseph's public favoring of Benjamin as yet another test of the depth and authenticity of the brothers' repentance.
clothing. And to his father he sent the following: ten he-asses laden with the best things of Egypt, and ten she-asses laden with grain, bread, and provisions for his father on the journey. As he sent his brothers off on their way, he told them, “Do not be quarrelsome on the way.”

They went up from Egypt and came to their father Jacob in the land of Canaan. And they told him, “Joseph is still alive; yes, he is ruler over the whole land of Egypt.” His heart went numb, for he did not believe them. But when they recounted all that Joseph had said to them, and when he saw the wagons that Joseph had sent to transport him, the spirit of their father Jacob revived. “Enough!” said Israel. “My son Joseph is still alive! I must go and see him before I die.”

So Israel set out with all that was his, and he came to Beer-sheba, where he offered

The number five, the number of fingers on each hand, is used throughout the Bible to express completeness or “a small abundance.”

24. quarrelsome The Hebrew term דרֵבַה means “trembling” and carries overtones of agitation, profound concern, or rage. The translation understands Joseph’s words to mean: Do not engage in mutual recrimination. But the text can also be saying: Have no fear for your safety on the journey to Canaan and back.

28. go and see him Jacob does not mention the famine and is not concerned with Joseph’s power and glory. His only desire is to visit his son, not to settle in Egypt.

THE MIGRATION TO EGYPT (46:1–47:10)

Jacob’s descent to Egypt follows the route of Abraham, which is now laden with national significance.

JACOB AT BEER-SHEBA (vv. 1–4)

1. Israel set out Presumably from Hebron, which was his last specified location (37:14).

24. Do not be quarrelsome on the way Do not enter into recriminations over who said “Kill him” and who said “Sell him.” The past is past and cannot be undone, and we all have to live with each other.

26. he did not believe them This is the fate of a liar; even when telling the truth, a liar is not believed [ARN 30].

Beer-sheba An important north–south road linked Hebron to this city, a distance of about 25 miles (40 km). Jacob stops here as he did before leaving for Aram-Naharaim (28:11) and as Isaac had done earlier (26:23–25).

offered sacrifices Because no mention is made of an altar, it must be assumed that Jacob
sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac. 2 God called to Israel in a vision by night: “Jacob! Jacob!” He answered, “Here.” 3 And He said, “I am God, the God of your father. Fear not to go down to Egypt, for I will make you there into a great nation. 4 I Myself will go down with you to Egypt, and I Myself will also bring you back; and Joseph’s hand shall close your eyes.”

5 So Jacob set out from Beer-sheba. The sons of Israel put their father Jacob and their children and their wives in the wagons that Pharaoh had sent to transport him; 4 and they took along their livestock and the wealth that they had amassed in the land of Canaan. Thus Jacob and all his offspring with him came to Egypt: 7 he brought with him to Egypt his sons and grandsons, his daughters and granddaughters—all his offspring.

uses the one that Isaac constructed at this place (26:25). This sacrificial rite was probably an offering of thanks to God that Joseph was still alive.

**the God of his father Isaac** Isaac is invoked here because he built the altar at Beer-sheba and experienced a revelation there (26:24–25).

**2. by night** The usual time of divine communication to the Patriarchs.

**3. I am God** See Comment to 15:7.

**the God of your father** This echoes verse 1 and suggests that when he performed the sacrifice Jacob recited some invocation that mentioned Isaac by name.

**Fear not** The same reassurance was given to Abraham and to Isaac. It is never preceded by a statement revealing human disquiet. The idea is that a person’s unexpressed inner anxieties and fears are known to God.

**a great nation** Another point of contact with the first revelation to the patriarchs (12:2). Now it is explained that the divine promise of peoplehood is to be fulfilled in Egypt. The patriarch is told that the migration to Egypt is to be total and of long duration. A family visit is thereby transformed into an event of national significance.

4. I Myself will go down with you Meaning, I shall protect you on the journey and in Egypt.

**will also bring you back** The promise is both personal and national. Jacob himself will be brought back for burial in the grave of his fathers (47:29ff., 50:5–13). His offspring will return to possess the Land of Israel.

**Joseph’s hand shall close your eyes** Literally, “Joseph shall place his hand on your eyes,” understood as a reference to the custom that the eldest son or nearest relative would gently close the eyes of the deceased.

**DEPARTURE FOR EGYPT** (vv. 5–7)

**5. The sons of Israel** The action is carried out by his sons because Jacob is too weak.

**6. and the wealth** Mention of the all-inclusive nature of the migration is meant to draw attention, once again, to the national significance of the event.

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**CHAPTER 46**

2. Jacob has another reassuring dream, recalling his dream when he prepared to leave the Land the first time. He is the only one of the Patriarchs to whom God speaks only at night.

3. Fear not to go down to Egypt God tells Jacob: do not fear that your descendants will be
8 These are the names of the Israelites, Jacob and his descendants, who came to Egypt.

Jacob’s first-born Reuben; 9 Reuben’s sons: Enoch, Pallu, Hezron, and Carmi. 10 Simeon’s sons: Jemuel, Jamin, Ohad, Jachin, Zohar, and Saul the son of a Canaanite woman. 11 Levi’s sons: Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. 12 Judah’s sons: Er, Onan, Shelah, Perez, and Zerah—but Er and Onan had died in the land of Canaan; and Perez’s sons were Hezron and Hamul. 13 Issachar’s sons: Tola, Puvah, Iob, and Shimron. 14 Zebulun’s sons: Sered, Elon, and Jahleel. 15 Those were the sons whom Leah bore to Jacob in Paddan-aram, in addition to his daughter Dinah. Persons in all, male and female: 33.

16 Gad’s sons: Ziphion, Haggi, Shuni, Ezbon, Eri, Arodi, and Areli. 17 Asher’s sons: Imnah, Ishvah, Ishvi, and Beriah, and their sister Serah. Beriah’s sons: Heber and Malchiel. 18 These died in the land of Canaan As in Num. 26:19.

Perez’s sons were Only Perez’s sons are named because he was the most important of the clans: David was his descendant.

15 Dinah Although she is not included in the computation, Dinah is mentioned because of the narrative about her in Gen. 34.

17 their sister Serah She is also mentioned in Num. 26:46 and 1 Chron. 7:30. It is inconceivable that Jacob’s 12 sons should have had 53 sons and only 1 daughter. In light of the general biblical tendency to omit women from the genealogies, there must be some extraordinary reason for her mention here, although no hint is given in the text. A similar notice about a sister is found in Gen. 4:22 and 36:22.

THE GENEALOGY OF JACOB (vv. 8–27)

A census of the Israelite clans interrupts the narrative. It lists names according to the Patriarch with whom they are associated.

8. the Israelites An imperceptible transformation has occurred. The children of the Patriarch Israel are now “the Israelites,” a national entity.

9. Reuben’s sons The four sons of Reuben listed here are identical to those in the parallel genealogies of Exod. 6:14, Num. 26:5–6, and 1 Chron. 5:3.

10. Zohar As in Exod. 6:15. In Num. 26:13 and 1 Chron. 4:24 it is replaced by Zerah. Both names mean “shining, brightness.”


absorbed into the Egyptian way of life. I will be with them in Egypt to keep them distinctive, and I will lead them out [Ha-amek Davar].

17. their sister Serah This unique mention of one—and only one—of Jacob’s granddaughters moves the Sages to speculate on who Serah was. They picture her first as a beautiful and talented young girl who breaks the news of Joseph’s survival to Jacob in a way that will not shock him. She survives into old age, and at the time of the Exodus, she tells Moses where to find the grave of Joseph. As a reward, according to one tradition, she never dies but enters Paradise alive, like the prophet Elijah [Seifer Ha-Yashar 166,203; BT Sot. 13a].
were the descendants of Zilpah, whom Laban had given to his daughter Leah. These she bore to Jacob—16 persons.  

19. The sons of Jacob’s wife Rachel were Joseph and Benjamin. To Joseph were born in the land of Egypt Manasseh and Ephraim, whom Asenath daughter of Poti-pherah priest of On bore to him. Benjamin’s sons: Bela, Becher, Ashbel, Gera, Naaman, Ehi, Rosh, Muppim, Huppim, and Ard. These were the descendants of Rachel who were born to Jacob—14 persons in all.  

23. Dan’s son: Hushim. Naphtali’s sons: Jahzeel, Guni, Jezer, and Shillem. These were the descendants of Bilhah, whom Laban had given to his daughter Rachel. These she bore to Jacob—7 persons in all.  

26. All the persons belonging to Jacob who came to Egypt—his own issue, aside from the wives of Jacob’s sons—all these persons numbered 66. And Joseph’s sons who were born to him in Egypt were two in number. Thus the total of Jacob’s household who came to Egypt was seventy persons.

18. of Zilpah The 16 descendants of Zilpah consist of 2 sons, 11 grandsons, 1 granddaughter, and 2 great-grandsons.  

19. The sons of Jacob’s wife Rachel Of the four Matriarchs, only Rachel is called “wife.” The title affirms Rachel’s superior status.  

20. Manasseh and Ephraim See Comment to 41:50.  

21. Benjamin’s sons Here, 10 sons are listed. Num. 26:38–40 records 5 sons (and 2 grandsons); 1 Chron. 7:6 notes 3 sons; 1 Chron. 8:1ff. mentions 5 sons. Moreover, the names and the order of seniority differ in the various lists. The divergences reflect different periods in biblical history as well as variant textual and historical traditions.  

23. Dan’s son The Hebrew reads b’nei, “sons”; the plural noun simply follows the stereotyped formulaic pattern “sons,” despite the single name that follows.  

Hushim In Num. 26:42 he is called Shuham, an inversion of the consonants.

24. Naphtali’s sons The same list is given in Num. 26:48ff. and 1 Chron. 7:13, except that in the latter source Jahzeel appears as Jahziel and Shillem as Shallum.  

26. his own issue Literally, “that came out of his loins.” In the Bible, the loins are the locale of procreative power. It is possible that the word appears in the singular here as a euphemism for the reproductive organ.  

numbered 66 Because this is not a symbolic number in the Bible, it must represent a genuine calculation based on the data just recorded. The key phrase is “who came to Egypt.” Accordingly, Er and Onan must be omitted because they died in Canaan. Verse 27 indicates that Manasseh and Ephraim are not included among the 66. They were born in Egypt and cannot be said to have come there. The computation would then be Leah 31 + Zilpah 16 + Rachel 12 + Bilhah 7 = 66.  

27. the total . . . 70 persons The number 70 here, as elsewhere in biblical literature, is...
28. He had sent Judah ahead of him to Joseph, to point the way before him to Goshen. So when they came to the region of Goshen, Joseph ordered his chariot and went to Goshen to meet his father Israel; he presented himself to him and, embracing him around the neck, he wept on his neck a good while. Then Israel said to Joseph, “Now I can die, having seen for myself that you are still alive.”

31. Then Joseph said to his brothers and to his father’s household, “I will go up and tell the news to Pharaoh, and say to him, ‘My brothers and my father’s household, who were in the land of Canaan, have come to me. The men are shepherds; they have always been breeders of livestock, and they have brought with them symbolic, expressing totality. The number 70 is the base of 10 multiplied by 7, a number expressing completeness. It reiterates the point made in verses 1 and 6–7, emphasizing the comprehensive nature of the descent to Egypt, because this event is seen as the fulfillment of Gen. 15:13. Note that the Greek Septuagint, as well as the Exodus Qumran text, has a tradition of 75, which is not a stock number.

JACOB AND JOSEPH REUNITED (vv. 28–30)

28. He had sent This verse belongs immediately after verse 7, from which it was detached by the genealogy.

Judah It is only fitting that Judah, who bore responsibility for separating Joseph from Jacob (37:26–27), should now be charged with arranging the reunion.

29. ordered his chariot The literal meaning of the Hebrew is “hitched.” Although it was certainly not done by Joseph himself, attributing it to him heightens the impression of Joseph excitedly rushing forth to Goshen to greet his father. Despite his exalted position, Joseph does not wait for his father to come to him.

30. Now I can die I am ready for death now that my dearest wish has been fulfilled.

PREPARATIONS FOR THE AUDIENCE WITH PHARAOH (vv. 31–34)

Joseph had designated Goshen as the family’s proposed dwelling place (45:10). Pharaoh, in confirming the invitation to settle in Egypt, left the place unspecified (45:17–20). Joseph must now obtain clear royal authorization for Israelite settlement in Goshen.

32. This verse is part of Joseph’s address to be made to Pharaoh.

breeders of livestock Another way of saying “shepherds.”

29. he presented himself The verb used here (va-yera) is used elsewhere in the Torah only for appearances by God or an angel. One commentator suggests that Joseph’s appearance after so many years of being thought dead verged on being a miraculous, supernatural event, like the manifestation of an angel.

he wept It is not clear from the text who wept. Ramban believes that it was Jacob who wept. “By whom are tears more easily shed? By the aged parent who finds his long-lost son alive, or by the young man who is a ruler?” Rashi thinks that Joseph wept out of a mixture of strong, conflicting feelings, while Jacob offered a prayer of thanks to God.

30. Now I can die The word translated “now” (ha-pan) can also mean “once.” Jacob may be saying “Now I will only die once, physically, but achieve immortality through Joseph.”
their flocks and herds and all that is theirs.  

33 When Pharaoh summons you and asks, ‘What is your occupation?’ you shall answer, ‘Your servants have been breeders of livestock from the start until now, both we and our fathers’—so that you may stay in the region of Goshen. For all shepherds are abhorrent to Egyptians.’

47 Then Joseph came and reported to Pharaoh, saying, “My father and my brothers, with their flocks and herds and all that is theirs, have come from the land of Canaan and are now in the region of Goshen.” And selecting a few of his brothers, he presented them to Pharaoh. Pharaoh said to his brothers, “What is your occupation?” They answered Pharaoh, “We your servants are shepherds, as were also originally had extended the invitation to them (45:16–20).

34. shepherds are abhorrent to Egyptians This remark was occasioned by the fact that the townsfolk held the shepherd in low social esteem. Nevertheless, they were valued because they did the necessary work. Ordinary Egyptians did not want to do.

PHARAOH AND JOSEPH’S BROTHERS (47:1–6)

1. reported to Pharaoh Joseph must personally inform Pharaoh of his family’s arrival because it was through Joseph that Pharaoh

CHAPTER 47

3. We your servants are shepherds Joseph had asked his brothers to stress that they were breeders of livestock [46:33–34], because Egyptians held shepherds in low esteem. When Pharaoh asks the brothers about their occupation, they answer that they are shepherds, like their fathers. Why did they ignore Joseph’s request? At one level, we can speculate that Joseph was the first of Abraham’s line to grow up outside the Land and be integrated in the highest levels of a foreign society. His brothers, by contrast, grew up in the Land and see nothing embarrassing about being shepherds. (For that matter, neither does Pharaoh, who responds to their professional pride by putting them in charge of the royal flocks and herds.) We can see this passage as reflecting the healthy self-esteem of a people raised in their own land, in contrast to the concern of Diaspora Jews as to what their neighbors think of them. Joseph, despite his prominence and power, does not seem completely secure about his place in Egyptian society and finds it necessary to conceal part of his identity. At the same time, however, we can
our fathers. 4 We have come,” they told Pharaoh, “to sojourn in this land, for there is no pasture for your servants’ flocks, the famine being severe in the land of Canaan. Pray, then, let your servants stay in the region of Goshen.”

5 Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, “As regards your father and your brothers who have come to you, 6 the land of Egypt is open before you: settle your father and your brothers in the best part of the land; let them stay in the region of Goshen. And if you know any capable men among them, put them in charge of my livestock.”

7 Joseph then brought his father Jacob and presented him to Pharaoh; and Jacob greeted Pharaoh. 8 Pharaoh asked Jacob, “How many are the years of your life?” 9 And Jacob answered Pharaoh, “The years of my sojourn [on earth] are one hundred and thirty. Few and hard have

so his question is not surprising and was anticipated by Joseph (46:33).

4. to sojourn The use of the verb gur (translated “sojourn”) links the migration to Egypt with the divine prophecy to Abraham, “Know well that your offspring shall be strangers (gerim, plural of ger) in a land not theirs” (15:13).

5. Then Pharaoh said He makes a simple statement that acknowledges and legitimates the Israelite presence on Egyptian soil.

6. in the best part of the land The king is true to his word (45:18).

capable men Hebrew anshei hayil, literally “men of substance.”

in charge of my livestock The literal meaning of the phrase sarei mikneh is “officers of cattle,” referring to superintendents of the royal cattle, an office mentioned frequently in Egyptian inscriptions. This appointment makes some of Joseph’s brothers officers of the crown and grants them legal protection not usually accorded aliens.

PHARAOH AND JACOB (vv. 7–10)

Joseph presents his father to Pharaoh in a separate, private audience, probably because he felt it would not be dignified for the aged Patriarch to appear publicly in the role of a supplicant.

7. greeted The word translated as “greeted” (va-yarekh, literally “and he blessed”) here probably means “he saluted.” The content of the greeting is not given, but it was customary in the ancient Near East to wish the king long life (as in 2 Sam. 16:16 and 1 Kings 1:31).

8. the years of your life Pharaoh may be wondering if Jacob has exceeded the ideal Egyptian life span of 110 years.

9. my sojourn Jacob responds by telling of his “sojournings.” He uses the term either as a reference to the unsettled and turbulent nature of his life or as a figure of speech for “life’s journey.”

hard Jacob recalls the unbroken chain of suffering and misfortunes he has endured.
been the years of my life, nor do they come up to the life spans of my fathers during their sojourns.” 10 Then Jacob bade Pharaoh farewell, and left Pharaoh’s presence.

11 So Joseph settled his father and his brothers, giving them holdings in the choicest part of the land of Egypt, in the region of Rameses, as Pharaoh had commanded. 12 Joseph sustained his father, and his brothers, and all his father’s household with bread, down to the little ones.

13 Now there was no bread in all the world, for the famine was very severe; both the land of Egypt and the land of Canaan languished because of the famine. 14 Joseph gathered in all the money that was to be found in the land of Egypt and in the land of Canaan, as payment for the rations that were being procured, and Joseph brought the money into Pharaoh’s palace. 15 And when the money gave out in the land of Egypt and in the land of Canaan, all the Egyptians came to Joseph and said, “Give us bread, lest we die before your very eyes; for

my fathers In the mouth of Jacob the term refers only to Isaac and Abraham. The former lived to 180 (35:28), the latter to 175 (25:7).

10. Jacob bade Pharaoh farewell He saluted the king, as in verse 7.

and left Pharaoh’s presence The patriarchal period in the history of the people Israel has now come to an end.

JOSEPH’S AGRARIAN POLICIES (57:11–27)

11. Joseph settled his father His role as provider for his family reminds the reader that the famine is still raging.

the region of Rameses This is another name for Goshen. The pharaoh Ramses II, in the 13th century B.C.E., enlarged the city of Tanis and made it his capital. Thereafter, his royal name was attached to it. The use of the name here in Joseph’s time is anachronistic.

13. there was no bread The severity of the remaining years of famine is such that the people become wholly dependent on the state for their survival.

14. gathered in Joseph averts disaster through a series of drastic measures that, in effect, nationalize the land and livestock and turn the populace into tenant farmers of the state.

Jacob to sound so bitter about his life. He has been reunited with his beloved son, whom he thought dead, and has been promised a life of ease in Egypt. Jacob’s life has been described as “a story with a happy ending that withholds any simple feeling of happiness at the end. . . . Although he gets everything he wanted, it is not in the way he would have wanted. Everything has been a struggle” (Alter).
the money is gone!” 16 And Joseph said, “Bring your livestock, and I will sell to you against your livestock, if the money is gone.” 17 So they brought their livestock to Joseph, and Joseph gave them bread in exchange for the horses, for the stocks of sheep and cattle, and the asses; thus he provided them with bread that year in exchange for all their livestock. 18 And when that year was ended, they came to him the next year and said to him, “We cannot hide from our lord that, with all the money and animal stocks consigned to our lord, nothing is left at my lord’s disposal save our persons and our farm-land. 19 Let us not perish before your eyes, both we and our land. Take us and our land in exchange for bread, and we with our land will be serfs to Pharaoh; provide the seed, that we may live and not die, and that the land may not become a waste.”

20 So Joseph gained possession of all the farm land of Egypt for Pharaoh, every Egyptian having sold his field because the famine was too much for them; thus the land passed over to

\[\text{into Pharaoh's palace}\]

Joseph took nothing for himself.

16. sell He will sell to them the “bread” mentioned in verse 15.

17. horses This is the first time the Bible mentions the horse, which was widespread in the Near East by the middle of the 16th century B.C.E. Its place at the head of the list marks its high value.

18. the next year Literally, “the second year.” This could refer to the second year of the famine, to two years after the arrival of Jacob, to the second of the remaining five years of famine, or to the seventh year of the famine. The last might explain why the people ask for seed. The predicted end of the famine is at hand, and it is time to prepare for next year’s harvest. Farmers continue to sow their fields in years of famine.

19. Take us and our land The suggestion to barter livestock for food had come from Joseph. Now the Egyptians initiate the proposal to surrender their land and become serfs of the crown.

provide the seed Egyptian sources document the practice of the state lending seed corn to farmers for repayment at harvest time.

20. Joseph gained possession Private landed property existed in all periods of Egyptian history, but after the expulsion of the Hyksos in the middle of the 16th century B.C.E., the major part of the land became the actual property of the state.

HALAKHAH L’MA-ASEH

47:19 serfs The Sages placed so many restrictions on slave owners that slavery became economically disadvantageous (e.g., BT Kidd. 26a). In any case, the Torah requires us to help the poor so that they should not have to sell themselves into slavery in order to repay a debt (cf. Lev. 25:25,35).
Pharaoh. 21 And he removed the population town by town, from one end of Egypt’s border to the other. 22 Only the land of the priests he did not take over, for the priests had an allotment from Pharaoh, and they lived off the allotment which Pharaoh had made to them; therefore they did not sell their land.

23 Then Joseph said to the people, “Whereas I have this day acquired you and your land for Pharaoh, here is seed for you to sow the land. 24 And when harvest comes, you shall give one-fifth to Pharaoh, and four-fifths shall be yours as seed for the fields and as food for you and those in your households, and as nourishment for your children.” 25 And they said, “You have saved our lives! We are grateful to my lord, and we shall be serfs to Pharaoh.” 26 And Joseph made it into a land law in Egypt, which is still valid, that a fifth should be Pharaoh’s; only the land of the priests did not become Pharaoh’s.

21. be removed the population town by town  The text is generally understood as referring to a population transfer on a large scale, probably to remove farmers from nationalized lands.

22. the land of the priests  Because the temples received fixed royal endowments, they were under no pressure to barter their lands for food or seed.

23. here is seed  The provision of seed depends on the barter of the peasants’ land for food.

24. one-fifth to Pharaoh  The state-controlled land is cultivated by the former landowners, who pay a tax of 20 percent of the harvest in return for the privilege and for the seed allotment. Such an interest rate was not considered excessive in the ancient Near East.

25. grateful  Joseph’s actions must be judged in the context of the ancient Near Eastern world, by whose norms Joseph emerges here as a shrewd, successful, and highly admirable administrator.

26. still valid  The Hebrew formula meaning “until this day” (ad ha-yom ha-zeh) is used here in a legal context (as in 1 Sam. 30:25). The narrator here bears witness to the fact that the ancient laws described in verses 22 and 24 were still in use in his day. The statement reflects the fact that at various periods of Egyptian history individual temple estates were exempt from taxation by royal decree.

22. Only the land of the priests  Among Israelites, priests and Levites owned no land [Num. 18:23–24]. They depended on the tithes and gifts of worshipers, which led them to identify with the poor among the people. In Egypt, by contrast, the priests were a privileged class, likely to be sympathetic to other privileged elements in Egyptian society.

23–24. Rashbam criticizes Joseph as ruthless, comparing his dispossessing the people of their lands to the actions of Sennacherib [infamous Assyrian king; 2 Kings 18, esp. vv.31–32].

25. we shall be serfs to Pharaoh  A generation later, the Egyptians would take their revenge on Joseph for having reduced them to slavery, by enslaving his people.
27. **Thou Israel** Following the digression, the narrative resumes the story of the Israelites. This verse is closely connected with verse 11.

settled This verb is in the singular, whereas the succeeding three verbs are each plural. The inconsistency is deliberate. Israel the individual Patriarch merges with the national entity. See Comments to 46:3ff.

and were fertile and increased greatly God's blessing, bestowed on Jacob on his return from Haran (35:11) and repeated as he was about to go down to Egypt (46:3), is now being fulfilled.
The verses of this haftarah are an independent unit of divine revelation that continues the theme of national restoration that was expressed dramatically in the vision of the resurrected dry bones in verses 1–14. Verses 15–28 focus on the promised reunification of the northern and the southern tribes, the renewal of the Davidic royal lineage, and the re-establishment of the covenant between God and the people Israel. Ezekiel 37 as a whole progresses from physical revival and national ingathering (vv. 1–14) to political unification and spiritual restoration (vv. 15–28).

The haftarah itself is composed of two parts. In the first, the prophet performs a symbolic act that anticipates the unification of the tribes of Judah and Israel in the homeland, followed by an explanation of its significance (vv. 15–23). The second part develops the themes of this explanation (vv. 24–28). The prophecy was delivered in the Babylonian exile, sometime after the destruction of the Temple in 587–586 B.C.E.

The central concern of the first part is national unification and the ascension of one king over all. It is built on the structure of act, inquiry, and explanation. The second part further develops the theme of monarchy (adding such terms as “shepherd” and “prince”) and national purification. It focuses on settlement in the Land, and the new sanctuary. The elements of ingathering, monarchy, repurification, and Temple building constitute the main configuration of messianic hope for ancient Israel and for subsequent Jewish generations.

The themes of the haftarah are underscored by recurrent terminology. In a striking manner, they reflect the concerns and hopes of the nation. The first of these is “unity,” expressed through variations of the word ṣehad (one). Another recurrent theme is “permanence,” expressed as a permanent change from the past and as a vision of a permanent future. The idioms used are lo od (never again, vv. 22,23) and l’olam (forever, vv. 25,26,28).

Through these repeated terms and ideas, the haftarah achieves an intensity of focus and emphasis. Indeed, through them the dispersed nation is given hope in a new future, unsullied by the defilements of sin, and restored to their land and God, one people forever. This is the new covenant of peace prophesied to the people. It is an unconditional promise.

RELATION OF THE HAFTARAH TO THE PARASHAH

What the Torah portrays as a family event, the prophet Ezekiel projects as a national hope: the reconciliation and reunification of all the people Israel. In the parashah, Judah assumes a leadership role among his brothers and negotiates with Joseph for the redemption of his brethren (Gen. 44:18–34). This leads to the restoration of family unity and the collective ingathering of Jacob’s offspring in Egypt during the time of drought. In the haftarah, God prophesies the unification of the northern and the southern tribes, symbolized respectively by Judah and Joseph, along with their national ingathering to the ancestral homeland. In the Torah, the initiation of reconciliation starts on the human plane and requires bilateral human understanding for its fulfillment. In Ezek. 37:15–28, the initiation of redemption belongs to God alone, as does its consummation: a divine grace transforming human hopelessness. Joined together, the Torah episode of reconciled brothers is a portent of the redeemed and reunited nation prophesied in the haftarah. Put in the manner of the classic rabbinic epigram, “the acts of the fathers are a sign for the children.”
15The word of the Lord came to me:
16And you, O mortal, take a stick and write on it, “Of Judah and the Israelites associated with him”; and take another stick and write on it, “Of Joseph—the stick of Ephraim—and all the House of Israel associated with him.”
17Bring them close to each other, so that they become one stick, joined together in your hand.
18And when any of your people ask you, “Won’t you tell us what these actions of yours mean?” answer them, “Thus said the Lord God: I am going to take the stick of Joseph—which is in the hand of Ephraim—and of the tribes of Israel associated with him, and I will place the stick of Judah upon it and make them into one stick; they shall be joined in My hand.” 20You shall hold up before their eyes the sticks which you have inscribed, 21and you shall declare to them: Thus said the Lord God: I am going to take the Israelite people from among the nations they have gone to, and gather them from every quarter, and bring them to their own land. 22I will make them a single nation in the land, on the hills of Israel, and one king shall be king of them all. Never again shall they be two nations, and never again shall they be divided into two kingdoms. 23Nor shall they ever again defile themselves by their fetishes and their abhorrent things, and by their other transgressions. I will save them in all their settlements where they sinned, and I will purify them. Then they shall be My people, and I will be their God.


take a stick . . . and write on it  Each stick has an inscription referring to Judah (representing the southern tribes) or to Joseph (representing the northern tribes), and the Israelites associated with them (see Rashi).

16–22. Ezekiel frequently dramatized his oracles through symbolic actions (see Ezek. 4:1–2, 9–11, 5:1–2, 12:3).

21. I will purify them  Ezekiel’s priestly concerns lead him to regard the people’s sins and restoration in cultic terms: Idolatry is described as ritually defiling, and salvation is presented in terms of purification.

they shall be My people, and I shall be their God  This is a formulaic expression of the covenantal bond and its reciprocity. It is also found in Ezek. 11:20 and 14:11, with alternate for-
24 My servant David shall be king over them; there shall be one shepherd for all of them. They shall follow My rules and faithfully obey My laws. 25 Thus they shall remain in the land which I gave to My servant Jacob and in which your fathers dwelt; they and their children and their children’s children shall dwell there forever, with My servant David as their prince for all time. 26 I will make a covenant of friendship with them—it shall be an everlasting covenant with them—I will establish them and multiply them, and I will place My Sanctuary among them forever. 27 My Presence shall rest over them; I will be their God and they shall be My people. 28 And when My Sanctuary abides among them forever, the nations shall know that I the Lord do sanctify Israel.

27. My Presence shall rest over them. “My Presence” is the translation here for mishkani. The prophet uses the old vocabulary of the wilderness Tabernacle (mishkan) to indicate the renewal of the divine Presence among the people (cf. Exod. 25:8–9). Ancient Jewish tradition (Targum) interpreted mishkani (My tabernacle) as “My (indwelling) Presence,” or Sh’khinah. Eliezer of Beaugency emphasized the protective aspect of the symbolism.