

עץ חיים

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ETZ HAYIM

TORAH AND COMMENTARY

THE RABBINICAL ASSEMBLY  
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<sup>18</sup>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. <sup>19</sup>My lord asked his servants, ‘Have you a father or another brother?’ <sup>20</sup>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.’ <sup>21</sup>Then you said to your servants, ‘Bring him down to me, that I may set eyes on him.’ <sup>22</sup>We said to my lord, ‘The boy cannot leave his father; if he were to leave him, his father would die.’ <sup>23</sup>But you said to your servants, ‘Unless your youngest brother comes down with you, do not let me see your faces.’ <sup>24</sup>When we came back to your servant my father, we reported my lord’s words to him.

<sup>25</sup>“Later our father said, ‘Go back and pro-

18 וַיֵּגֶשׁ אֵלָיו יְהוּדָה וַיֹּאמֶר בְּי אֲדֹנָי יְדַבְּרָנָא עִבְדְּךָ דְּכָר בְּאֲזֵינִי אֲדֹנָי וְאֶל-יְהוָה אִפְּךָ בְּעִבְדְּךָ כִּי כְמוֹךָ כְּפִרְעָה: 19 אֲדֹנָי שְׂאֵל אֶת-עִבְדְּךָ לֵאמֹר הֲיֵשׁ-לְכֶם אָב אוֹ-אָח: 20 וְנֹאמַר אֶל-אֲדֹנָי יֵשׁ-לָנוּ אָב זָקֵן וַיֵּלֶד זְקָנִים קָטָן וְאָחִיו מֵת וַיּוֹתֵר הוּא לְבִדּוֹ לְאָמוֹ וְאָבִיו אָהֵבוּ: 21 וְהֹאמַר אֶל-עִבְדֶּיךָ הוֹרְדֵהוּ אֵלַי וְאֲשִׁימָה עֵינַי עָלָיו: 22 וְנֹאמַר אֶל-אֲדֹנָי לֹא-יּוּכַל הַנְּעָר לַעֲזֹב אֶת-אָבִיו וְעֹזֵב אֶת-אָבִיו וּמָת: 23 וְהֹאמַר אֶל-עִבְדֶּיךָ אִם-לֹא יֵרֵד אֲחִיכֶם הַקָּטָן אִתְּכֶם לֹא תִסְפּוּן לְרִאיוֹת פָּנָי: 24 וַיְהִי כִּי עָלִינוּ אֶל-עִבְדְּךָ אָבִי וְנִגְדַלְוֹ אֶת דְּבָרֵי אֲדֹנָי: 25 וַיֹּאמֶר אָבִינוּ שָׁבוּ שְׁבוּרוֹלָנוּ מֵעַט-

### 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.

**20. his full brother is dead** In 42:13, they said, ambiguously referring to Joseph, “one is no more.” Now Judah cites Jacob’s words of 42:38.

**21. I may set eyes on him** Judah had inferred from Joseph’s request to bring Benjamin an assurance that no harm would befall the lad. He now may be subtly calling into question Joseph’s integrity and fair play.

#### 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.’<sup>26</sup>We 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.’<sup>27</sup>Your servant my father said to us, ‘As you know, my wife bore me two sons.<sup>28</sup>But one is gone from me, and I said: Alas, he was torn by a beast! And I have not seen him since.’<sup>29</sup>If you take this one from me, too, and he meets with disaster, you will send my white head down to Sheol in sorrow.’

<sup>30</sup>“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—<sup>31</sup>when 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.<sup>32</sup>Now 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.’<sup>33</sup>Therefore, please let your servant remain as a slave to my lord instead of the boy, and let the boy go back with his brothers.<sup>34</sup>For 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,

**28. and I said** That is, “I had to admit.”

**31. with us** These words are an addition to the Hebrew text (*ein ha-na-ar*), required by the context. The addition is also found in many of the ancient versions.

**your servants will send** Judah is in essence saying to Joseph, “You will be responsible for his death.”

אָכַל: <sup>26</sup>וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא נוֹכַל לָרֶדֶת אִם־יֵשׁ אֶחָיו הַקָּטָן אִתָּנוּ וַיֵּרְדְּנוּ כִּי־לֹא נוֹכַל לְרַאות פְּנֵי הָאִישׁ וְאֶחָיו הַקָּטָן אִינְנוּ אִתָּנוּ: <sup>27</sup>וַיֹּאמֶר עֲבָדְךָ אָבִי אֵלֵינוּ אַתֶּם יִדְעֶתֶם כִּי שְׁנַיִם יָלְדָה־לִּי אִשְׁתִּי: <sup>28</sup>וַיֵּצֵא הָאָחֵד מֵאִתִּי וְאָמַר אַךְ טָרַף טָרַף וְלֹא רָאִיתִיו עַד־הַנְּהָ: <sup>29</sup>וְלִקְחֶתֶם גַּם־אֶת־זֶה מֵעַם פְּנֵי וְקָרְהוּ\* אֶסּוֹן וְהוֹרְדֶתֶם אֶת־שִׁיבְתִי בְרָעָה שְׂאֵלָה:

<sup>30</sup>וְעַתָּה כְּבֹאִי אֶל־עֲבָדְךָ אָבִי וְהִנְעַר אִינְנוּ אִתָּנוּ וְנִפְּשׂוּ קְשׁוּרָה בְּנִפְּשׂוֹ: <sup>31</sup>וְהָיָה כִּי־אִין הִנְעַר וּמֵת וְהוֹרִידוּ עֲבָדֶיךָ אֶת־שִׁיבַת עֲבָדְךָ אָבִינוּ בְּיָגוֹן שְׂאֵלָה: <sup>32</sup>כִּי עֲבָדְךָ עָרַב אֶת־הִנְעַר מֵעַם אָבִי לֵאמֹר אִם־לֹא אָבִיאֲנֹו אֵלֶיךָ וְחָטַאתִי לְאָבִי כָּל־הַיָּמִים: <sup>33</sup>וְעַתָּה יִשְׁבֶּנָּא עֲבָדְךָ תַּחַת הִנְעַר עֶבֶד לְאֹדְנִי וְהִנְעַר יַעַל עִם־אָחָיו: <sup>34</sup>כִּי־אֵיךָ אֶעֱלֶה אֶל־אָבִי וְהִנְעַר אִינְנוּ אִתִּי פֶן אֲרַאֶה בְּרַע אֲשֶׁר יִמְצֵא אֶת־אָבִי:

**מה** וְלֹא־יָכַל יוֹסֵף לְהִתְאַפֵּק לְכָל הַנֹּצְבִים עָלָיו וַיִּקְרָא הוֹצִיאוּ כָּל־אִישׁ

29. חסר א'

**32. has pledged himself** Judah explains why he is acting as the spokesman, because Joseph knows that he is not the oldest brother (43:33).

**33. remain as a slave** The brother responsible for the sale of Joseph into slavery (37:26ff.) now unwittingly offers to become the slave of his own victim!

#### THE RECONCILIATION (vv. 1–28)

JOSEPH REVEALS HIMSELF (vv. 1–3)

**1. before all his attendants** Literally, “be-

fore all who were standing by him,” i.e., his entourage.

“Have everyone withdraw from me!” So there was no one else about when Joseph made himself known to his brothers. <sup>2</sup>His sobs were so loud that the Egyptians could hear, and so the news reached Pharaoh’s palace.

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

<sup>4</sup>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. <sup>5</sup>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. <sup>6</sup>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

מֵעָלַי וְלֹא־עָמַד אִישׁ אִתּוֹ בְּהִתְוַדַּע יוֹסֵף אֶל־אָחָיו: <sup>2</sup>וַיִּתֵּן אֶת־קֻלּוֹ בְּבִכּי וַיִּשְׁמְעוּ מִצְרַיִם וַיִּשְׁמַע בַּיִת פְּרַעֲוִה:

<sup>3</sup>וַיֹּאמֶר יוֹסֵף אֶל־אָחָיו אֲנִי יוֹסֵף הָעוֹד אָבִי חַי וְלֹא־יָבֹלּוּ אָחָיו לַעֲנוּת אֹתוֹ כִּי נִבְהָלּוּ מִפָּנָיו:

<sup>4</sup>וַיֹּאמֶר יוֹסֵף אֶל־אָחָיו גְּשׁוּ־נָא אֵלַי וַיִּגְשׁוּ וַיֹּאמֶר אֲנִי יוֹסֵף אָחֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר־מָכַרְתֶּם אֹתִי מִצְרַיִמָּה: <sup>5</sup>וַעֲתָה אֶל־תַּעֲצְבוּ וְאִל־יִחַר בְּעֵינֵיכֶם כִּי־מָכַרְתֶּם אֹתִי הַנֶּה פִּי לְמַחְיָה שְׁלַחְנִי אֵלֵיהֶם לִפְנֵיכֶם: <sup>6</sup>כִּי־זֶה שְׁנַתִּים הָרַעַב בְּקֶרֶב הָאָרֶץ וְעוֹד חֲמֵשׁ שָׁנִים אֲשֶׁר אֵין־חָרִישׁ

REASSURANCE (vv. 4–8)

**4. your brother Joseph, he 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.

**to save life** That I should be the agency of your survival.

**6. no yield from tilling** Literally, “no plowing and harvesting.”

**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).

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. <sup>7</sup>God has sent me ahead of you to ensure your survival on earth, and to save your lives in an extraordinary deliverance. <sup>8</sup>So, 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.

<sup>9</sup>“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. <sup>10</sup>You 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. <sup>11</sup>There 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.’ <sup>12</sup>You can see for yourselves, and my brother Benjamin for himself, that it is indeed I who am speaking to you. <sup>13</sup>And 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.’”

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

וּקְצִיר: <sup>7</sup>וַיִּשְׁלַחַנִי אֱלֹהִים לְפָנֵיכֶם לְשׁוּם לְכֶם שְׂאֲרֵית בְּאֶרֶץ וְלִהְיוֹת לְכֶם לְפָלִיטָה גְדֹלָה: <sup>8</sup>וַעֲתָה לֹא-אַתֶּם שְׁלַחְתֶּם אֹתִי הִנֵּה כִי הָאֱלֹהִים וַיְשִׁימֵנִי לְאָב לְפָרְעָה וּלְאֶדוֹן לְכָל-בֵּיתוֹ וּמִשָּׁל בְּכָל-אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם:

<sup>9</sup>מִהֲרֹו וְעָלוּ אֶל-אָבִי וְאִמְרֹתֶם אֵלָיו כֹּה אָמַר בְּנֵךְ יוֹסֵף יוֹסֵף שְׁמֵנִי אֱלֹהִים לְאֶדוֹן לְכָל-מִצְרַיִם רָדָה אֵלַי אֶל-תַּעֲמֹד: <sup>10</sup>וַיִּשְׁבַּת בְּאֶרֶץ-גֹּשֶׁן וְהָיִיתָ קָרוֹב אֵלַי אֶתְּךָ וּבְנֵיךָ וּבְנֵי בְנֵיךָ וְצֹאנְךָ וּבְקָרְךָ וְכָל-אֲשֶׁר-לְךָ: <sup>11</sup>וְכִלְכַּלְתִּי אֶתְּךָ שָׁם כִּי-עוֹד חֲמֵשׁ שָׁנִים רָעַב פְּוִתוֹרֵשׁ אֶתְּךָ וּבֵיתְךָ וְכָל-אֲשֶׁר-לְךָ: <sup>12</sup>וְהִנֵּה עֵינֵיכֶם רְאוֹת וְעֵינֵי אָחִי בְנִימִן כִּי-פִי הַמְדַבֵּר אֵלֵיכֶם: <sup>13</sup>וְהַגִּדְתֶּם לְאָבִי אֶת-כָּל-כְּבוֹדִי בְּמִצְרַיִם וְאֵת כָּל-אֲשֶׁר רְאִיתֶם וּמַהֲרֹתֶם וְהוֹרִדְתֶּם אֶת-אָבִי הִנֵּה:

<sup>14</sup>וַיִּפֹּל עַל-צַוְאָרֵי בְנִימִן-אָחִיו וַיִּבְךְּ וּבְנֵימִן בָּכָה עַל-צַוְאָרָיו: <sup>15</sup>וַיִּנְשֹׁק לְכָל-

**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” (*moshel*) 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.

<sup>16</sup>The news reached Pharaoh's palace: "Joseph's brothers have come." Pharaoh and his courtiers were pleased. <sup>17</sup>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. <sup>18</sup>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.' <sup>19</sup>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. <sup>20</sup>And never mind your belongings, for the best of all the land of Egypt shall be yours.'"

<sup>21</sup>The sons of Israel did so; Joseph gave them wagons as Pharaoh had commanded, and he supplied them with provisions for the journey. <sup>22</sup>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

אָחיו וַיִּבְרַךְ עֲלֵהֶם וְאַחֲרֵי כֵן דִּבְּרוּ אֶחָיו אִתּוֹ:

<sup>16</sup>וְהַקֵּל נִשְׁמַע בַּיִת פַּרְעֹה לֵאמֹר בָּאוּ

אֶחָיו יוֹסֵף וַיִּטֵּב בְּעֵינָיו פַּרְעֹה וּבְעֵינֵי

עַבְדָּיו: <sup>17</sup>וַיֹּאמֶר פַּרְעֹה אֶל-יוֹסֵף אָמַר

אֶל-אֲחֵיךָ זֹאת עֲשׂוּ טַעֲנוּ אֶת-בְּעִירְכֶם

וּלְכוּ-בָאוּ אֶרְצָה בְּנַעַן: <sup>18</sup>וּקְחוּ אֶת-

אֲבִיכֶם וְאֶת-בְּתֻכֶם וּבָאוּ אֵלַי וְאֶתְנַה

לָכֶם אֶת-טוֹב אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם וְאֶכְלוּ אֶת-

חֶלֶב הָאָרֶץ: <sup>19</sup>וְאֶתְּה צְוִיתָה זֹאת עֲשׂוּ

קְחוּ-לָכֶם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם עֲגָלוֹת לְטַפְכֶם

וּלְנִשְׁיֵיכֶם וּנְשֵׂאתֶם אֶת-אֲבִיכֶם וּבְאֶתֶם:

<sup>20</sup>וְעֵינֵיכֶם אֶל-תַּחַס עַל-כְּלֵיכֶם בִּי-טוֹב

כָּל-אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם לָכֶם הוּא:

<sup>21</sup>וַיַּעֲשׂוּ-כֵן בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּתֵּן לָהֶם יוֹסֵף

עֲגָלוֹת עַל-פִּי פַרְעֹה וַיִּתֵּן לָהֶם יְצֵדָה

לְדַרְךָ: <sup>22</sup>לְכֻלָּם נָתַן לְאִישׁ חֲלָפוֹת

שְׂמֹלֹת וּלְבִנְיָמִן נָתַן שְׁלֹשׁ מֵאוֹת כֶּסֶף

רביעי

**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 pre-

vious 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.<sup>23</sup> 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.<sup>24</sup> As he sent his brothers off on their way, he told them, “Do not be quarrelsome on the way.”

<sup>25</sup>They went up from Egypt and came to their father Jacob in the land of Canaan. <sup>26</sup>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. <sup>27</sup>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. <sup>28</sup>“Enough!” said Israel. “My son Joseph is still alive! I must go and see him before I die.”

וְחֵמֶשׁ חֲלֹפֹת שְׂמֹלֹת: <sup>23</sup> וְלֶאֱבִיו שְׁלֹחַ פְּזֹאֹת עֶשְׂרֵה חֲמֹרִים נְשָׂאִים מְטוֹב מִמְצָרִים וְעֶשְׂרֵה אֲתֹנֹת נְשָׂאֹת בָּר וְלֶחֶם וּמִזֹּן לְאָבִיו לְדֶרֶךְ: <sup>24</sup> וַיִּשְׁלַח אֶת-אֶחָיו וַיֵּלְכוּ וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם אֶל-תְּרִגְזוּ בְּדֶרֶךְ: <sup>25</sup> וַיַּעֲלוּ מִמִּצְרַיִם וַיָּבֹאוּ אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן אֶל-יַעֲקֹב אָבִיהֶם: <sup>26</sup> וַיִּגְדּוּ לוֹ לֵאמֹר עוֹד יוֹסֵף חַי וְכִי-הוּא מִשָּׁל בְּכָל-אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם וַיִּפַּג לְבֹו כִּי לֹא-הֶאֱמִין לָהֶם: <sup>27</sup> וַיִּדְבְּרוּ אֵלָיו אֵת כָּל-דִּבְרֵי יוֹסֵף אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר אֲלֵהֶם וַיֵּרָא אֶת-הָעֲגָלוֹת אֲשֶׁר-שָׁלַח יוֹסֵף לְשֵׂאת אֹתוֹ וַתְּחִי רוּחַ יַעֲקֹב אָבִיהֶם: <sup>28</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר יִשְׂרָאֵל רַב עוֹד-יוֹסֵף בְּנֵי חַי אֵלַי וְאֶרְאֶנּוּ בְּטֶרֶם אָמוּת:

חמישי

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

**מו** וַיִּסַּע יִשְׂרָאֵל וְכָל-אֲשֶׁר-לוֹ וַיָּבֹאוּ בְּאֶרֶז שֶׁבַע וַיִּזְבַּח זְבָחִים לְאֱלֹהֵי אָבִיו

v. 25. סבירין ומטעין "ארצה"

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 stem רגז 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).

**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

**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).



sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac. <sup>2</sup>God called to Israel in a vision by night: “Jacob! Jacob!” He answered, “Here.” <sup>3</sup>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. <sup>4</sup>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.”

<sup>5</sup>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; <sup>6</sup>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: <sup>7</sup>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

יִצְחָק: <sup>2</sup>וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים | לְיִשְׂרָאֵל  
בְּמִרְאָת הַלַּיְלָה וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב | יַעֲקֹב  
וַיֹּאמֶר הַנְּנִי: <sup>3</sup>וַיֹּאמֶר אֲנֹכִי הָאֵל אֱלֹהֵי  
אָבִיךָ אֶל־תִּירָא מִרְדֵּה מִצְרַיִם כִּי־לְגוֹי  
גָדוֹל אֲשִׁימְךָ שָׁם: <sup>4</sup>אֲנֹכִי אֵרֵד עִמָּךְ  
מִצְרַיִמָּה וְאֲנֹכִי אֶעֱלֶךָ גַּם־עִלְּהָ וְיוֹסֵף  
יְשִׁית יָדוֹ עַל־עֵינֶיךָ:

<sup>5</sup>וַיִּקָּם יַעֲקֹב מִבְּאֵר שֶׁבַע וַיֵּשְׂאוּ בְנֵי־  
יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־יַעֲקֹב אֲבִיהֶם וְאֶת־טָפְסָם  
וְאֶת־נְשֵׂיהֶם בְּעֶגְלוֹת אֲשֶׁר־שָׁלַח פַּרְעֹה  
לְשִׂאת אֹתוֹ: <sup>6</sup>וַיִּקְחוּ אֶת־מִקְנֵיהֶם וְאֶת־  
רְכוּשָׁם אֲשֶׁר רָכְשׁוּ בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן וַיָּבֵאוּ  
מִצְרַיִמָּה יַעֲקֹב וְכָל־רְעוֹ אֹתוֹ: <sup>7</sup>בָּנָיו  
וּבְנֵי בָנָיו אֹתוֹ בְּנֹתָיו וּבְנֹת בָּנָיו וְכָל־  
רְעוֹ הֵבִיא אֹתוֹ מִצְרַיִמָּה: ס

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.

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

<sup>8</sup>These are the names of the Israelites, Jacob and his descendants, who came to Egypt.

Jacob's first-born Reuben; <sup>9</sup>Reuben's sons: Enoch, Pallu, Hezron, and Carmi. <sup>10</sup>Simeon's sons: Jemuel, Jamin, Ohad, Jachin, Zohar, and Saul the son of a Canaanite woman. <sup>11</sup>Levi's sons: Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. <sup>12</sup>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. <sup>13</sup>Issachar's sons: Tola, Puvah, Iob, and Shimron. <sup>14</sup>Zebulun's sons: Sered, Elon, and Jahleel. <sup>15</sup>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.

<sup>16</sup>Gad's sons: Ziphion, Haggi, Shuni, Ezbon, Eri, Arodi, and Areli. <sup>17</sup>Asher's sons: Imnah, Ishvah, Ishvi, and Beriah, and their sister Serah. Beriah's sons: Heber and Malchiel. <sup>18</sup>These

8 וְאֵלֶּה שְׁמוֹת בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל הַבָּאִים  
מִצְרָיִם יַעֲקֹב וּבָנָיו  
בְּכֹר יַעֲקֹב רְאוּבֵן: <sup>9</sup>וּבְנֵי רְאוּבֵן חֲנוּךְ  
וּפְלוּא וְחֶצְרוֹן וְכַרְמִי: <sup>10</sup>וּבְנֵי שִׁמְעוֹן  
יְמוּאֵל וְיַמִּין וְאֶהֱד וְיַכִּין וְצֹחַר וְשָׂאוּל  
בֶּן־הַכְּנַעֲנִית: <sup>11</sup>וּבְנֵי לֵוִי גֶרְשׁוֹן קָהָת  
וּמְרָרִי: <sup>12</sup>וּבְנֵי יְהוּדָה עֵר וְאוֹנָן וְשִׁלָּה  
וּפְרָץ וְזָרַח וְיִמָּת עֵר וְאוֹנָן בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנַעַן  
וַיְהִי בְנֵי־פְרָץ חֶצְרוֹן וְחַמוּל: <sup>13</sup>וּבְנֵי  
יִשָּׁשְׁכַר תּוֹלַע וּפּוּבָה וְיֹב וְשִׁמְרוֹן: <sup>14</sup>וּבְנֵי  
זְבֻלּוֹן סֶרֶד וְאֵלֹן וַיְחַלְאֵל: <sup>15</sup>אֵלֶּה | בְּנֵי  
לֵאָה אֲשֶׁר יָלְדָה לְיַעֲקֹב בְּפָדָן אֲרָם וְאֵת  
דִּינָה בְתוּ כְלֶנֶפֶשׁ בָּנָיו וּבָנוּתָיו שְׁלֹשִׁים  
וְשִׁלֹּשׁ:  
<sup>16</sup>וּבְנֵי גָד צְפִיּוֹן וְחָגִי שׁוּנִי וְאַצְבָּן עֲרִי  
וְאֶרֹדִי וְאַרְאֵלִי: <sup>17</sup>וּבְנֵי אָשֶׁר יִמְנָה  
וַיְשׁוּהָ וַיְשׁוּי וּבְרִיעָה וְשָׂרָה אַחֲתָם וּבְנֵי

#### THE GENEALOGY OF JACOB (vv. 8–27)

A census of the Israelite clans interrupts the narrative. It lists names according to the Matriarch 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.”

**12. Er, Onan** See 38:3–10.

*died in the land of Canaan* As in Num. 26:19.

**Perez's sons were** Only Perez's sons are named because his 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.

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.

<sup>19</sup>The sons of Jacob’s wife Rachel were Joseph and Benjamin. <sup>20</sup>To Joseph were born in the land of Egypt Manasseh and Ephraim, whom Asenath daughter of Poti-phaera priest of On bore to him. <sup>21</sup>Benjamin’s sons: Bela, Becher, Ashbel, Gera, Naaman, Ehi, Rosh, Muppim, Huppim, and Ard. <sup>22</sup>These were the descendants of Rachel who were born to Jacob—14 persons in all.

<sup>23</sup>Dan’s son: Hushim. <sup>24</sup>Naphtali’s sons: Jahzeel, Guni, Jezer, and Shillem. <sup>25</sup>These were the descendants of Bilhah, whom Laban had given to his daughter Rachel. These she bore to Jacob—7 persons in all.

<sup>26</sup>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. <sup>27</sup>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.

בְּרִיעֵהָ חֶבֶר וּמְלֵכֵי־אֵל: <sup>18</sup> אֵלֶּה בְּנֵי זִלְפָּה  
אֲשֶׁר־נָתַן לָבָן לְלֵאָה בָּתּוּ וַתֵּלֶד אֶת־  
אֵלֶּה לִיעֶקֶב שֵׁשׁ עֶשְׂרֵה נַפְשׁ:

<sup>19</sup> בְּנֵי רָחֵל אֵשֶׁת יַעֲקֹב יוֹסֵף וּבְנֵימִן:  
<sup>20</sup> וַיִּוָּלֶד לְיוֹסֵף בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם אֲשֶׁר  
יָלְדָהּ לּוֹ אֲסֵנֶת בַּת־פְּוֹטִי פֶּרַע כַּהֵן אֵן  
אֶת־מְנַשֶּׁה וְאֶת־אֶפְרַיִם: <sup>21</sup> וּבְנֵי בְנֵימִן  
בְּלַע וּבְכָר וְאֲשָׁבֵל גְּרָא וְנַעֲמָן אַחֵי  
וְרֹאשׁ מַפִּים וְחָפִים וְאָרֹד: <sup>22</sup> אֵלֶּה בְּנֵי  
רָחֵל אֲשֶׁר יָלְדָה לִיעֶקֶב כָּל־נַפְשׁ אַרְבָּעָה  
עֶשְׂרֵה:

<sup>23</sup> וּבְנֵי־דָן חֻשִׁים: <sup>24</sup> וּבְנֵי נַפְתָּלִי יַחֲזִיאֵל  
וְגוּנִי וְיֵצֶר וְשִׁלֵּם: <sup>25</sup> אֵלֶּה בְּנֵי בִלְהָה  
אֲשֶׁר־נָתַן לָבָן לְרָחֵל בָּתּוּ וַתֵּלֶד אֶת־  
אֵלֶּה לִיעֶקֶב כָּל־נַפְשׁ שִׁבְעָה:

<sup>26</sup> כָּל־הַנַּפְשׁ הַבָּאָה לִיעֶקֶב מִצְרַיִמָּה  
יִצְאִי יָרְכוּ מִלְבָּד נָשִׂי בְנֵי־יעֶקֶב כָּל־נַפְשׁ  
שִׁשִּׁים וָשֵׁשׁ: <sup>27</sup> וּבְנֵי יוֹסֵף אֲשֶׁר־יָלְדוּ לוֹ  
בְּמִצְרַיִם נַפְשׁ שְׁנַיִם כָּל־הַנַּפְשׁ לְבֵית־  
יִשְׂרָאֵל יַעֲקֹב הַבָּאָה מִצְרַיִמָּה שִׁבְעִים: פ

**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 loin.” 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

<sup>28</sup>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, <sup>29</sup>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. <sup>30</sup>Then Israel said to Joseph, “Now I can die, having seen for myself that you are still alive.”

<sup>31</sup>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. <sup>32</sup>The men are shepherds; they have always been breeders of livestock, and they have brought with them

שש<sup>28</sup> וְאֶת־יְהוֹדָה שָׁלַח לְפָנָיו אֶל־יוֹסֵף לְהוֹרֹת לְפָנָיו גִּשְׁנָה וַיָּבֵאוּ אֶרְצָהּ גִּשְׁן׃  
<sup>29</sup> וַיִּצְוֶה יוֹסֵף מְרַכְבָּתוֹ וַיַּעַל לְקִרְיַת־יִשְׂרָאֵל אָבִיו גִּשְׁנָה וַיֵּרָא אֵלָיו וַיִּפֹּל עַל־צוּרְאָיו וַיִּבְכֶּה עַל־צוּרְאָיו עוֹד׃<sup>30</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל־יוֹסֵף אָמוּתָה הַפַּעַם אַחֲרַי רְאוּתִי אֶת־פָּנֶיךָ כִּי עוֹדֶךָ חַי׃  
<sup>31</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר יוֹסֵף אֶל־אָחָיו וְאֶל־בֵּית אָבִיו אָעֵלָה וְאֶגִּידָה לְפַרְעֹה וְאָמַרְהָ אֵלָיו אַחֲי וּבֵית־אָבִי אֲשֶׁר בְּאֶרֶץ־כְּנַעַן בָּאוּ אֵלָי׃<sup>32</sup> וְהָאֲנָשִׁים רְעֵי צֹאן כִּי־אֲנֹשִׁי מִקְנֵה הֵיוּ וְצֹאנָם וּבִקְרָם וְכָל־אֲשֶׁר

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 cer-

tainly 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-pa-am*) 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.’<sup>33</sup> So when Pharaoh summons you and asks, ‘What is your occupation?’<sup>34</sup> 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.”

לָהֶם הִבִּיאוּ: <sup>33</sup>וְהָיָה כִּי־יִקְרָא לָכֶם פְּרַעֲהַ וְאָמַר מִה־מַּעֲשֵׂיכֶם: <sup>34</sup>וַאֲמַרְתֶּם אֲנֹשֵׁי מִקְנֵה הַיּוֹ עֲבָדֶיךָ מִנְעוּרֵינוּ וְעַד־עַתָּה גַם־אֲנַחְנוּ גַם־אֲבֹתֵינוּ בַּעֲבוּר תִּשְׁבוּ בְּאֶרֶץ גֹּשֶׁן כִּי־תוֹעֵבֵת מִצְרַיִם כָּל־רֹעֵה צֹאן:

**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.”<sup>2</sup> And selecting a few of his brothers, he presented them to Pharaoh.<sup>3</sup> Pharaoh said to his brothers, “What is your occupation?” They answered Pharaoh, “We your servants are shepherds, as were also

**מז** וַיָּבֵא יוֹסֵף וַיַּגִּד לְפְרַעֲהַ וַיֹּאמֶר אָבִי וְאֶחָיו וְצִאֲנָם וּבְקָרָם וְכֹל־אֲשֶׁר לָהֶם בָּאוּ מֵאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן וְהֵנָּה בְּאֶרֶץ גֹּשֶׁן: <sup>2</sup>וּמִקְצֵה אָחִיו לָקַח חֲמִשָּׁה אֲנָשִׁים וַיִּצְגַּם לִפְנֵי פְרַעֲהַ: <sup>3</sup>וַיֹּאמֶר פְּרַעֲהַ אֶל־אָחִיו מִה־מַּעֲשֵׂיכֶם וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֶל־פְּרַעֲהַ רֹעֵה צֹאן עֲבָדֶיךָ גַם־אֲנַחְנוּ גַם־

**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.

originally had extended the invitation to them (45:16–20).

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

**are now in the region of Goshen** Joseph selected this location from the beginning (45:10, 46:34). He now prepares Pharaoh for the brothers’ formal request (v. 4), hoping to predispose him in its favor.

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

**2. a few of his brothers** The first clause means, literally, “and from the extremity of his brothers (i.e., from the best among them) he took five men” (see Judg. 18:2).

**3. What is your occupation** Pharaoh had not yet been told anything about the brothers,

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. <sup>4</sup>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.” <sup>5</sup>Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, “As regards your father and your brothers who have come to you, <sup>6</sup>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.”

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

אבותינו: <sup>4</sup>ויאמרו אל־פרעה לגור בארץ באנו כי־אין מרעה לצאן אשר לעבדיך כי־כבד הרעב בארץ פגען ועתה ישבו־נא עבדיך בארץ גשן: <sup>5</sup>ויאמר פרעה אל־יוסף לאמר אביך ואחיה באו אליך: <sup>6</sup>ארץ מצרים לפניך הוא במיטב הארץ הושב את־אביך ואת־אחיה ישבו בארץ גשן ואם־ידעת וישבם אנשי־חיל ושמתם שרי מקנה על־אשר־לי:

<sup>7</sup>ויבא יוסף את־יעקב אביו ויעמדהו לפני פרעה ויברך יעקב את־פרעה: <sup>8</sup>ויאמר פרעה אל־יעקב כמה ימי שני חייך: <sup>9</sup>ויאמר יעקב אל־פרעה ימי שני מגורי שלשים ומאת שנה מעט ורעים

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-yvarekh*, 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.

appreciate Joseph’s sensitivity to the feelings of his Egyptian neighbors. Jewish law and custom legitimates adjusting our behavior “for the sake of ways of peace” (*mi-p’nei darkhei shalom*),

furthering good relations with those around us by avoiding giving offense to their values and sensibilities.

**9. Few and hard** One would not expect

been the years of my life, nor do they come up to the life spans of my fathers during their sojourns.”<sup>10</sup> Then Jacob bade Pharaoh farewell, and left Pharaoh’s presence.

<sup>11</sup>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. <sup>12</sup>Joseph sustained his father, and his brothers, and all his father’s household with bread, down to the little ones.

<sup>13</sup>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. <sup>14</sup>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. <sup>15</sup>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

הָיָה יְמֵי שְׁנַי חַיֵּי וְלֹא הִשְׁיִגּוּ אֶת־יְמֵי שְׁנַי חַיֵּי אָבֹתַי בְּיָמֵי מְגוּרֵיהֶם: <sup>10</sup>וַיִּבְרַךְ יַעֲקֹב אֶת־פַּרְעֹה וַיֵּצֵא מִלְּפָנָי פְּרָעָה:

<sup>11</sup>וַיּוֹשֶׁב יוֹסֵף אֶת־אָבִיו וְאֶת־אָחָיו וַיִּתֵּן לָהֶם אַחְזָה בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם בְּמִיטֵב הָאֶרֶץ בְּאֶרֶץ רַעַמְסֵס כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה פְּרָעָה: <sup>12</sup>וַיִּכְלֹל יוֹסֵף אֶת־אָבִיו וְאֶת־אָחָיו וְאֶת כָּל־בֵּית אָבִיו לֶחֶם לְפִי הַטֶּף:

<sup>13</sup>וְלֶחֶם אֵין בְּכָל־הָאֶרֶץ כִּי־כָבַד הָרָעַב מְאֹד וַתִּלָּה אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם וְאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן מִפְּנֵי הָרָעַב: <sup>14</sup>וַיִּלְקֹט יוֹסֵף אֶת־כָּל־הַכֶּסֶף הַנִּמְצָא בְּאֶרֶץ־מִצְרַיִם וּבְאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן בְּשֹׁבֵר אֲשֶׁר־הֵם שֹׁבְרִים וַיָּבֵא יוֹסֵף אֶת־הַכֶּסֶף בְּיָתֵהּ פְּרָעָה: <sup>15</sup>וַיְהִי כִּשְׁנֵי שָׁנִים מִצְרַיִם וּמִכְנָעַן וַיָּבֹאוּ כָּל־מִצְרַיִם אֶל־יוֹסֵף לֵאמֹר הִבֵּה־לָנוּ לֶחֶם וְלֶמָּה נָמוֹת נִגְדָּה פִּי אִפְס כֶּסֶף:

*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!”<sup>16</sup> And Joseph said, “Bring your livestock, and I will sell to you against your livestock, if the money is gone.”<sup>17</sup> 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.<sup>18</sup> And when that year was ended, they came to him the next year and said to him, “We cannot hide from my lord that, with all the money and animal stocks consigned to my lord, nothing is left at my lord’s disposal save our persons and our farmland.<sup>19</sup> 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.”

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

16 וַיֹּאמֶר יוֹסֵף הֲבֵנו מִקְנֵיכֶם וְאֶתְנָה לָכֶם בְּמִקְנֵיכֶם אִם-אָפֶס בְּסֹף: 17 וַיָּבִיאוּ אֶת-מִקְנֵיהֶם אֶל-יוֹסֵף וַיִּתֵּן לָהֶם יוֹסֵף לֶחֶם בְּסוּסִים וּבְמִקְנֵה הָעֶזְאֵן וּבְמִקְנֵה הַבָּקָר וּבַחֲמֹרִים וַיִּנְהֵלֵם בְּלֶחֶם בְּכָל-מִקְנֵיהֶם בַּשָּׁנָה הַהוּא: 18 וַתָּבוֹאוּ הַשָּׁנָה הַשְּׁנִית וַיֹּאמְרוּ לוֹ לֹא-נִכְחַד מֵאֲדָנִי כִּי אִם-תֶּם הַכֶּסֶף וּמִקְנֵה הַבְּהֵמָה אֶל-אֲדָנִי לֹא נִשְׂאָר לִפְנֵי אֲדָנִי בְלֹתֵי אִם-גּוֹיְתָנוּ וְאֲדָמָתָנוּ: 19 לָמָּה נָמוּת לְעֵינֶיךָ גַּם-אֲנַחְנוּ גַּם אֲדָמָתָנוּ קָנָה-אֶתְנוּ וְאֶת-אֲדָמָתָנוּ בְּלֶחֶם וְנִהְיֶה אֲנַחְנוּ וְאֲדָמָתָנוּ עֲבָדִים לְפָרְעָה וְתוֹ-זֶרַע וְנִהְיֶה וְלֹא נָמוּת וְהָאֲדָמָה לֹא תִשָּׂם:

20 וַיִּקַּן יוֹסֵף אֶת-כָּל-אֲדָמַת מִצְרַיִם לְפָרְעָה כִּי-מָכְרוּ מִצְרַיִם אִישׁ שָׂדֵהוּ כִּי-חֹזֵק עָלֵהֶם הָרָעַב וַתְּהִי הָאָרֶץ לְפָרְעָה:

*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<sup>3</sup>MA-ASEH

**47:19 serfs** The Sages placed so many restrictions on slave owners that slavery became economically disadvantageous (e.g., BT Kid. 20a). 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. <sup>21</sup>And he removed the population town by town, from one end of Egypt's border to the other. <sup>22</sup>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.

<sup>23</sup>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. <sup>24</sup>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." <sup>25</sup>And they said, "You have saved our lives! We are grateful to my lord, and we shall be serfs to Pharaoh." <sup>26</sup>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.

וְאֶת־הָעָם הֶעֱבִיר אֹתוֹ לְעָרִים מְקֻצָּה 21  
 גְּבוּל־מִצְרַיִם וְעַד־קֶצֶהוּ: 22 רַק אֲדָמַת  
 הַכֹּהֲנִים לֹא קָנָה בִּי חֹק לְכֹהֲנִים מֵאֵת  
 פְּרֻעָה וְאָכְלוּ אֶת־חֶקֶם אֲשֶׁר נָתַן לָהֶם  
 פְּרֻעָה עַל־פֶּן לֹא מָכְרוּ אֶת־אֲדָמָתָם:  
 23 וַיֹּאמֶר יוֹסֵף אֶל־הָעָם הֵן קָנִיתִי אֶתְכֶם  
 הַיּוֹם וְאֶת־אֲדָמַתְכֶם לְפֻרְעָה הֵא־לְכֶם  
 זֶרַע וְזִרְעֹתָם אֶת־הָאֲדָמָה: 24 וְהָיָה  
 בַּתְּבוּאָת וּבְנִתְתֶם חֲמִישִׁית לְפֻרְעָה  
 וְאַרְבַּע הַיְדֹת יִהְיֶה לְכֶם לְזֶרַע הַשָּׂדֶה  
 וְלֹא־כִלְכֶם וְלֹא־אֲשֶׁר בְּבֵתֵיכֶם וְלֹא־כֹל  
 לְטַפְכֶם: 25 וַיֹּאמְרוּ הֲחִייתָנוּ נִמְצָא־חַן  
 בְּעֵינֵי אֲדֹנָי וְהָיִינוּ עֲבָדִים לְפֻרְעָה:  
 26 וַיִּשָּׂם אֹתָהּ יוֹסֵף לְחֹק עַד־הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה  
 עַל־אֲדָמַת מִצְרַיִם לְפֻרְעָה לְחֹמֶשׁ רַק  
 אֲדָמַת הַכֹּהֲנִים לְבָדִים לֹא הָיְתָה  
 לְפֻרְעָה:

מפסיר

**21. he 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.

<sup>27</sup>Thus Israel settled in the country of Egypt, in the region of Goshen; they acquired holdings in it, and were fertile and increased greatly.

וַיֵּשֶׁב יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם בְּאֶרֶץ גֹּשֶׁן  
וַיֵּאָחֲזוּ בָהּ וַיִּפְרּוּ וַיִּרְבּוּ מְאֹד:

**27. Thus 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.

# הַפְּטָרָה וַיִּגָּשׁ

## HAFTARAH FOR VA-YIGGASH

EZEKIEL 37:15–28

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 *ehad* (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.”

**37** <sup>15</sup>The word of the LORD came to me:

<sup>16</sup>And 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.”

<sup>17</sup>Bring them close to each other, so that they become one stick, joined together in your hand.

<sup>18</sup>And when any of your people ask you, “Won’t you tell us what these actions of yours mean?”

<sup>19</sup>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.” <sup>20</sup>You shall hold up before their eyes the sticks which you have inscribed, <sup>21</sup>and 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. <sup>22</sup>I 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. <sup>23</sup>Nor 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.

**Ezekiel 37:16. O mortal** The Hebrew is, literally, “son of man.” The Hebrew phrase recurs repeatedly in Ezekiel and frequently as here: “and you, O son of man.” The phrase emphasizes the mortality of the prophet who, at his commission, beheld God transcendent in the heavens.

**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).

**לו** <sup>15</sup>וַיְהִי דְבַר־יְהוָה אֵלַי לֵאמֹר:

<sup>16</sup>וַאֲתָה בְּיַדְךָ קַח־לָךְ עֵץ אֶחָד וּכְתֹב עָלָיו לְיְהוּדָה וּלְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל חִבְרָיו וּלְקַח עֵץ אֶחָד וּכְתֹב עָלָיו לְיוֹסֵף עֵץ אֶפְרַיִם וְכָל־בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל חִבְרָיו:

<sup>17</sup>וְקָרַב אֹתָם אֶחָד אֶל־אֶחָד לְךָ לְעֵץ אֶחָד וְהָיוּ לְאַחַדִּים בְּיָדְךָ: <sup>18</sup>וּכְבַּאֲשֶׁר יֹאמְרוּ אֵלֶיךָ בְּנֵי עַמְּךָ הֲלוֹא־תִגִּיד לָנוּ מִה־אֵלֶּה לָּךְ: <sup>19</sup>וַדַּבֵּר אֲלֵהֶם כֹּה־אָמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה הִנֵּה אֲנִי לֹקֵחַ אֶת־עֵץ יוֹסֵף אֲשֶׁר בְּיַד־אֶפְרַיִם וְשִׁבְטֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל חִבְרָיו וְנִתְתִּי אוֹתָם עָלָיו אֶת־עֵץ יְהוּדָה וְעִשִׂיתָם לְעֵץ אֶחָד וְהָיוּ אֶחָד בְּיָדִי: <sup>20</sup>וְהָיוּ הָעֵצִים אֲשֶׁר־תִּכְתֹּב עֲלֵיהֶם בְּיָדְךָ לְעֵינֵיהֶם: <sup>21</sup>וַדַּבֵּר אֲלֵיהֶם כֹּה־אָמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה הִנֵּה אֲנִי לֹקֵחַ אֶת־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִבֵּין הַגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר הִלְכוּ־שָׁם וְקִבַּצְתִּי אֹתָם מִסָּבִיב וְהִבַּאתִי אוֹתָם אֶל־אֲדֹמָתָם: <sup>22</sup>וְעִשִׂיתִי אֹתָם לְגוֹי אֶחָד בְּאֶרֶץ בְּהָרֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וּמִלֶּךְ אֶחָד יִהְיֶה לְכֻלָּם לְמֶלֶךְ וְלֹא יִהְיֶה יְהוִי־עוֹד לְשְׁנֵי גוֹיִם וְלֹא יִחַצּוּ עוֹד לְשְׁתֵּי מַמְלָכוֹת עוֹד: <sup>23</sup>וְלֹא יִטְמְאוּ עוֹד בְּגִלּוּלֵיהֶם וּבְשִׁקּוּצֵיהֶם וּבְכָל פְּשָׁעֵיהֶם וְהוֹשַׁעְתִּי אֹתָם מִכָּל מוֹשְׁבֹתֵיהֶם אֲשֶׁר חָטְאוּ בָהֶם וְטִהַרְתִּי אוֹתָם וְהִיוּ־לִי לְעָם וְאֲנִי אֶהְיֶה לָהֶם לֵאלֹהִים:

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

**23. 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-

<sup>24</sup>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. <sup>25</sup>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. <sup>26</sup>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. <sup>27</sup>My Presence shall rest over them; I will be their God and they shall be My people. <sup>28</sup>And when My Sanctuary abides among them forever, the nations shall know that I the LORD do sanctify Israel.

וְעַבְדִּי דָוִד מֶלֶךְ עֲלֵיהֶם וְרוּעָה אֶחָד  
יְהִיָּה לְכֻלָּם וּבְמִשְׁפָּטֵי יִלְכוּ וְחֻקֹּתַי  
יִשְׁמְרוּ וְעֲשׂוּ אוֹתָם: <sup>25</sup>וַיֵּשְׁבוּ עַל־הָאָרֶץ  
אֲשֶׁר נָתַתִּי לְעַבְדִּי לְיַעֲקֹב אֲשֶׁר יֵשְׁבוּ־בָהּ  
אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם וַיֵּשְׁבוּ עָלֶיהָ הִמָּה וּבְנֵיהֶם  
וּבְנֵי בְנֵיהֶם עַד־עוֹלָם וְדָוִד עַבְדִּי נָשִׂיא  
לָהֶם לְעוֹלָם: <sup>26</sup>וְכָרַתִּי לָהֶם בְּרִית שְׁלֹם  
בְּרִית עוֹלָם יְהִיָּה אוֹתָם וּנְתַתִּים  
וְהִרְבִּיתִי אוֹתָם וּנְתַתִּי אֶת־מִקְדָּשִׁי  
בְּתוֹכָם לְעוֹלָם: <sup>27</sup>וְהִיָּה מִשְׁכַּנִּי עֲלֵיהֶם  
וְהָיִיתִי לָהֶם לֵאלֹהִים וְהִמָּה יְהִיוּ־לִי  
לְעָם: <sup>28</sup>וַיֵּדְעוּ הַגּוֹיִם כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה  
מְקַדֵּשׁ אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּהִיּוֹת מִקְדָּשִׁי  
בְּתוֹכָם לְעוֹלָם: ס

mulations in 36:28 and 37:27. The formulary is common in other prophetic writings (cf. Hos. 2:25) and in the Torah (cf. Lev. 26:12; Deut. 29:12).

**24. My servant David** That is, a descendant of the Davidic dynasty. The expression goes back to the founding of the dynasty (see 2 Sam. 7:5, and its citation in Ps. 89:4,21; cf. 1 Kings 11:13,32,34,36,38). Ezekiel anticipates a restoration of the United Monarchy of Davidic times.

**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’kbinah*. Eliezer of Beaugency emphasized the protective aspect of the symbolism.