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- **Adventist Mission Website:** <http://wjafc.globalmissioncenters.org/> This website is the new resource provided by the Office of Adventist Mission of the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventists.
- **Russian Website:** <http://www.boruh.info/> This website is in Russian, many articles and the parasha are posted on it every week.



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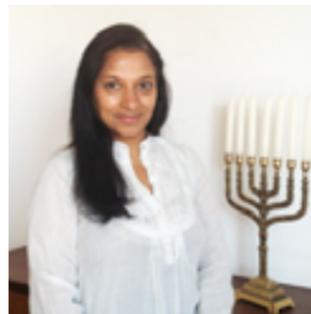
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Weekly
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of Information

We pray every week for the Jewish Ministry. I suggest our partners to pray from January 14 to 20 for Alexander & Irena Bolotnikov They are working in the United States of America, Sasha (Alexander) is the Director of the NAD Shalom learning Center, which is the leading training center for this ministry and the pastor/Rabbi of the Jewish Adventist Congregation in Portland, Oregon. Let's pray for their important ministry.



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NEWS

New Advisory in EAD

❖ We are happy to announce that the Euro-Asia Division (EAD) located in Moscow and which includes Russia, Ukraine and many other Republics of the Former Soviet Union have set up their Jewish-Adventist committee or advisory at the end of the year 2016. The first meeting was held in Kiev on October, 20. It was attended by Dimitry Zubkov, director of EAD office of Adventist Mission, Alexander Vaschinin, EAD Jewish ministry Director, Dr. Alexander Bolotnikov, NAD Shalom Learning Center director, Stanislav Nosov, president of the Ukrainian Union, and Leonid Rutkowski Adventist Mission leader for the Ukrainian Union. In addition of these leaders some pastors and church leaders involved

in the Jewish ministry in Ukraine, Russia, and some theologians from Zaoksky seminary. All together 30 people gathered in order to set up some project for this ministry in the territory of the Division. The Chairman was Alexander Vaschinin, after clarifying the purpose of this committee within the EAD, he presented a report on the World Jewish Adventist Congress of Paris in July 2016. The leaders of the Division and Union, Pastors Dimitri Zublov and Stanislav Nosov have again emphasized the importance of a friendship service to the Jewish people in harmony with the guidelines provided by the World Jewish Adventist Friendship Center of the General Conference. Then Dr. Bolotnikov introduced to the audience his training seminars, he shared his experience in the States, spoke about the use of Jewish feasts to teach the plan of salvation as presented in Leviticus 23 to Jews. The last part of the meeting was a strategic planning to implement the Jewish Adventist Friendship ministry in our Division. The members of the committee expressed their desire to have a new meeting as soon as possible with Richard Elofer, director of the General Conference World Jewish Adventist Friendship Center.



Parasha Overview: VAYECHI

After 17 years in Egypt, Yaakov senses his days drawing to a close and summons Yosef. He has Yosef swear to bury him in the Machpela Cave, the burial place of Avraham and Sara, Yitzchak and Rivka.

Yaakov falls ill and Yosef brings to him his two sons, Ephraim and Menashe. Yaakov elevates Ephraim and Menashe to the status of his own sons, thus giving Yosef a double portion that removes the status of firstborn from Reuven.

As Yaakov is blind from old age, Yosef leads his sons close to their grandfather. Yaakov kisses and hugs them.

He had not thought to see his son Yosef again, let alone Yosef's children. Yaakov begins to bless them, giving precedence to Ephraim, the younger, but Yosef interrupts him and indicates that Menashe is the elder. Yaakov explains that he intends to bless Ephraim with his strong hand because Yehoshua will descend from him, and Yehoshua will be both the conqueror of Eretz Yisrael and the teacher of Torah to the Jewish People.



17 YEARS IN EGYPT

The parasha starts saying: **“And Yaakov lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years. So the days of Yaakov, the years of his life, were 147 years.”** (Genesis 47:28) When the Tzemach Tzedek (Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, the 3rd Rebbi of Lubavitch) was a young boy, his teacher taught him this verse and explained it to mean that the best years in Yaakov's life were the 17 years he lived in Egypt. (The word “tov” means good and has the numerical value of 17.) When he came home he asked his grandfather, the Alter Rebbe (Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi), “How can we say that Yaakov's best years were the years he lived in the sinful land of Egypt?” The Alter Rebbe explained: Before Yaakov arrived in Egypt, he sent Yehudah to build a place for him, and specially a place where to study the will of G-d so that the children of Yaakov would have a place to devote themselves to study the oral laws received through the Patriarchs. When a believer learns the Bible, he comes closer to Hashem. Therefore, since the

family of Yaakov learned G-d's will (called Torah by the Jewish people and transmitted orally through the various revelations received by Avraham, Yitzhak, and Yaakov), even in the sinful land of Egypt.

YOUR HAND UNDER MY THIGH

Yaakov made a strange request to Yosef: **“And when the time drew near that Israel must die, he called his son Yosef and said to him, ‘If now I have found favor in your sight, put your hand under my thigh and promise to deal kindly and truly with me. Do not bury me in Egypt,’** (Genesis 47:29). Many have asked the question: Why did Yaakov want Yosef to place his hand under his thigh? One of the answers is that during Yaakov's stay in Egypt, Yosef generously supported the entire family. As Yaakov was close to die, he began to worry about the future of his people and the relationship between Yosef and his brothers. Yaakov thought that though Yosef was a great *tsaddik* (righteous), his human feelings might prevail. Possibly, after his demise, Yosef might not treat his brothers so nicely

because of what had occurred to him. Yaakov said to Yosef, please put *yadecha* (your hand which means “your generous support”) *tachat yereichi* (under my thigh, which means “my family (who came from my thigh) who will survive me and live together with you in Egypt.”)

Later, returning from Yaakov's funeral, the brothers feared that Yosef would remember what they had done and his suffering for more than 20 years, which would lead him to take revenge. Therefore, they sent an emissary to Yosef saying, **“Your father gave this command before he died: ‘Say to Yosef, ‘Please forgive the transgression of your brothers and their sin, because they did evil to you.’”** (Genesis 50:16-17). Rashi asked, “When did Yaakov make this request?” The brothers could have understood it from the request Yaakov made of Yosef when he asked him to **“put your hand under my thigh.”**

SICKNESS IN GENESIS

The end of the book Genesis mentions for the first time a sickness, when it says: **“After this,**

PARASHA FOR THIS WEEK Vayechi

וַיְחִי

Genesis 47:28 - 50:26



When Yosef saw that his father had placed his right hand on Ephraim's head, he was displeased. He tried to lift his father's hand from Ephraim's head and place it on Manasseh's. (Genesis 48:17)

Yosef was told, **‘Behold, your father is ill.’** (Genesis 48:1), it is interesting to notice that the *Gemara* affirms that “Until Yaakov there was no illness: then Yaakov came and prayed, and illness came into being, as it is written, and ‘one told Yosef, Behold, thy father is sick.’” (Bava Metzia 87a). It is confirmed by another author: “The book of Genesis gives quite a definite account of social and individual life, and yet we have no record of an infant's being born blind, deaf, crippled, deformed, or imbecile. There is not an instance upon record of a natural death in infancy, childhood, or early manhood. There is no account of men and women dying of disease. Obituary notices in the book of Genesis run thus: ‘And all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years: and he died.’ ‘And all the days of Seth were nine hundred and twelve years: and he died.’ Concerning others, the record states: He lived to a good old age; and he died. It was so rare for a son to die before the father that such an occurrence was considered worthy of record: ‘And Haran died before his father Terah.’ Haran was a father of children

before his death.” (EGW, 3T 138). Therefore, the messenger who came to Yosef announced to him that his father was sick saying in Hebrew *Hinei* (Behold) which is interpreted by the Jewish scholars as, “it is a surprising thing” “your father is sick.” The messenger told Yosef, “What is happening to your father is not in accordance to the usual laws of nature.”

YOSEF FAITHFULNESS

The Torah states: **“And Yisrael said to Yosef: ‘I had not thought to see your face; and, lo, G-d has let me see also your seed.’”** (48:11)

In the Hebrew text, some scholars have noticed that the word *oti* which is in the Hebrew text but not translated in English seems superfluous. Grammatically, instead of saying *her'ah oti Elohim*, Yaakov could have said *herani Elohim*. Then they asked the meaning of this expression. Here is how this was interpreted by Jewish scholars and reported by Rabbi Moshe Bogomilsky “Yaakov told Yosef: ‘While learning that you were in Egypt and had a great po-

sition, many thoughts went through my mind about your loyalty to G-d, my teaching and spiritual situation. I began to doubt if your appearance would be the same as when we last saw each other, and I feared that your children had probably assimilated, resembling the young Egyptian boys with whom they associate.” However, Yaakov saw that the children of Yosef were not assimilated to the Egyptian society but were raised in the faith of Abraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov, and the Hebrew expression is interpreted as Yaakov saying “Not only do I see your face the way I would wish it to be, but looking at your children, I see in them a replica of myself. Thus, *her'ah oti Elohim* (G-d caused me to appear), *et zarecha* (through your children) due to their similarity to my appearance. They, too, look like young righteous boys.”

YAAKOV AND MASHIACH

Yaakov gave a prophecy to Yehudah about the future of his descendants and his tribe, he said:

Yaakov summons the rest of his sons in order to bless them as well. Yaakov's blessing reflects the unique character and ability of each tribe, directing each one in its unique mission in serving G-d.

Yaakov passes from this world at age 147. A tremendous procession accompanies his funeral cortege up from Egypt to his resting place in the Cave of Machpela in Hebron.

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

Yosef lives out the rest of his years in Egypt, seeing Ephraim's great-grandchildren. Before his death, Yosef foretells to his brothers that G-d will redeem them from Egypt.

He makes them swear to bring his bones out of Egypt with them at that time.

Yosef passes away at the age of 110 and is embalmed. Thus ends Sefer Bereshit, the first of the five Books of the Torah.

Haftarah Overview:

1Kings 2: 1-12

Yaakov is dying in our last parasha of the book of Genesis. He gives his last instructions to Yosef and other sons: [Yaakov] blessed Yosef, and said, "The G-d before whom my ancestors Abraham and Isaac walked, the G-d who has been my shepherd all my life to this day, the angel who has redeemed me from all harm, bless the boys; and in them let my name be perpetuated, and the name of my ancestors Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude on the earth." (Gen. 48:15-16).

The Jewish tradition has made a parallel between Yaakov dying and King David dying and giving instruction to Solomon his son in the Haftarah for this week: "When David's time to die drew near, he charged his son Solomon, saying: "I am about to go the way of all the earth. Be strong, be courageous, and keep the charge of the L-rd your G-d, walking in his ways and keeping his statutes, his commandments, his ordinances, and his testimonies, as it is written in the law of Moses, so that you may prosper in all that you do and wherever you turn. Then the L-rd will



"The scepter shall not depart from Judah, Nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, Until Shiloh comes, and to him [shall be] the obedience of the peoples." (Genesis 49:10). This verse has been interpreted in various ways by Jews and Christians. The Hebrew word *Shevet* has in fact three main meanings, "scepter", "rod" and "tribe". This same word symbolizes "power" and "authority" it is used by Balaam in his prophecy about Israel "a star shall come out of Yaakov, and a scepter [*Shevet*] shall rise out of Israel" (Numbers 24:17). These two prophecies combined help us to understand that: power and authority will be on Yehudah's shoulders to promote obedience to the Torah and to spread its knowledge among the nations, "obedience of the peoples." The Hebrew word "scepter" is connected to the Messiah in Psalm 110, which is a messianic psalm, "The L-rd sends forth from Zion your mighty scepter." (2). This authority is given to Yehudah "Until Shiloh comes" the last descendant of Yehudah who will receive the scepter will be the Messiah called in this text the Shiloh and known as the "Son of David." It is also the reading of this word in the Jewish tradition, in the tractate Sanhedrin the Rabbis suggest

Yaakov called for his sons. When they came, he said, 'Come together, and I will tell you what will happen in the course of time. Come and listen, sons of Yaakov; listen to your father Israel. (Genesis 49:1,2)

that "Shiloh may be a name, the proper name that bore by the Messiah." And Onkelos, this proselyte who translated the Torah in Aramaic, translation which is today included in every *Chumash* study book, has introduced the Character of the Messiah in his translation, "until Mashiach (משיחא) will come, to whom the monarchy belongs." The scepter is clearly given to the Messiah in Psalm 45 "The scepter of your kingdom is a scepter of uprightness; you have loved righteousness and hated wickedness." (6-7). The text of Genesis continues saying "Binding his foal to the vine and his donkey's colt to the choice vine, he has washed his garments in wine and his vesture in the blood of grapes." (Genesis 49:11). The first comment of Rabbi Hirsch on this verse 11 is "Yaakov now envisions Mashiach. And how does he envision him? He sees the redeemer of mankind, the conqueror of nations, riding not on a horse but on a young donkey."

It is very interesting to notice that in the Torah, there is a special *Mitzvah* about donkey: "Every firstborn of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb, or if you will not redeem it you shall break its neck." (Exodus 13:13). The donkey is singled out from all the unclean animals to symbolize sanctification and the "belonging" to the L-rd, the one who has been redeemed by Hashem. Since the death of the

Egyptian first born, and the saving, all first born in Israel belong to Hashem and must be redeemed. However in our text of Exodus, among all unclean animals, only the first born of donkey has to be redeemed. Rabbi Hirsch says about this link between Genesis 49:11, the donkey and the Messiah: "Proof of the accuracy of our interpretation is found in Zechariah 9:9 "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey." If Messiah has not yet come, it is difficult to imagine the Messiah coming in the 21st century riding a donkey, however, it is easier to consider Yeshua entering Yerushalayim on a donkey 2000 years "The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them. They brought the donkey and the colt and put on them their cloaks, and he sat on them. Most of the crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. And the crowds that went before him and that followed him were shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the L-rd! Hosanna in the highest!" (Matthew 21:6-9). as the one who fulfilled all Messianic prophecies.

APOSTOLIC WRITINGS — HEBREWS 11:21-22

In Hebrew 11 we have two connections with our parasha. The first one is about the death of Yaakov and his blessings to the sons of Yosef: "And he said, "Swear to me;" and he swore to him. Then Israel bowed himself upon the head of his bed." (Genesis 47:31), a text used to demonstrate the great faith of Yaakov, and Hebrews 11 "By faith Yaakov, when dying, blessed each of the sons of Yosef, bowing in worship over the head of his staff." (Hebrews 11:21). This text gives a very interesting interpretation of the text of Genesis, "Israel bowed himself upon the head of his bed" as it is, this text is not clear, we don't understand what he did, but reading the Brit Hachasha, it helps to understand how the Jewish people understood it 2000 years ago. Yaakov was worshipping G-d, a great example given to his descendants: children, grand-children, and great-grand-children.

The second text is about the very last moment of the life of Yosef, "And Yosef said to his brothers, "I am about to die, but G-d will visit you and bring you up out of this land to the land that he swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Yaakov.' Then Yosef made the sons of Israel swear, saying, 'G-d will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here.' So Yosef died, being 110 years old. They embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt." (Genesis 50:24-26). What a great faith Yosef had at his last hour of life. He remembered the teaching of Abraham to his family, a teaching that Abram

received from G-d: "Then the L-rd said to Abram, 'Know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be afflicted for four hundred years. But I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions.'" (Genesis 15:12-14). It was very long time before Yosef that G-d gave this prophecy about the people of Israel to Abraham, and Yosef kept this prophecy in his heart, that is why when he revealed his identity to his brethren, he said to them "It is not you who sent me... but G-d." He was faithful to Abraham, and to G-d, that is why these last words of Yosef to the children of Israel are seen as an act of faith, Yosef assured the people of G-d that one day they would leave Egypt for the promise land, the land of Abraham, Isaac and Yaakov. That is why in the letter to Hebrews it is said that "By faith Yosef, at the end of his life, made mention of the exodus of the Israelites and gave directions concerning his bones." (Hebrews 11:22). It is interesting to notice that in the Jewish *Halacha* (or Jewish application of Torah) it is forbidden to Jews considering living permanently in Egypt. Egypt is not part of the territory that G-d has given to Israel.

Both patriarchs Yaakov and Yosef were men of faith, that is why the letter to the Hebrews is given them as an example. That is why they are listed among the great men/women of faith.

How do we react when we

are in a difficult situation, do we still keep our faith in our heavenly father? Do we remember the promises G-d gave us when everything was OK? It is easier to remember G-d and his promises when everything is OK, but it is more difficult to remember Him when we are in trouble. We always try, first, to fix everything by our own power and strength, and we remember G-d only when things are really going wrong and out of control. That is why in the chapter 11 of Hebrews the text gives a definition of faith: "faith is the assurance of [things] hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." (Hebrews 11:1) notice, "faith is the assurance", an "assurance" means that we are "sure" there is no doubt. When we "hope", we expect it will happen, but we are not sure that it will happen, we just "hope".

The Biblical "faith" is the "assurance" that what we hope is not just a hope, but it will happen. As surely as I know that tomorrow morning the sun will rise as it rose this morning and the morning before, the promises of the L-rd will be fulfilled in my life. We don't say: "I hope that tomorrow the sun will rise," no. We say: "I am sure that tomorrow morning the sun will rise." It is the same with our "hope", we all hope in the second coming of Mashiach, it is not just a "hope" we have this assurance that it will happen, as it is written. And as Maimonides put it down "I believe with perfect faith in the coming of the Messiah, and though he tarry, I will wait daily for his coming."

establish his word that he spoke concerning me: 'If your heirs take heed to their way, to walk before me in faithfulness with all their heart and with all their soul, there shall not fail you a successor on the throne of Israel.' "Moreover you know also what Joab son of Zeruah did to me, how he dealt with the two commanders of the armies of Israel, Abner son of Ner, and Amasa son of Jether, whom he murdered, retaliating in time of peace for blood that had been shed in war, and putting the blood of war on the belt around his waist, and on the sandals on his feet. Act therefore according to your wisdom, but do not let his gray head go down to Sheol in peace. Deal loyally, however, with the sons of Barzillai the Gileadite, and let them be among those who eat at your table; for with such loyalty they met me when I fled from your brother Absalom. ... I swore to him by the L-rd, 'I will not put you to death with the sword.' Therefore do not hold him guiltless, for you are a wise man; you will know what you ought to do to him, and you must bring his gray head down with blood to Sheol." Then David slept with his ancestors, and was buried in the city of David." (1 Kings 2:1-10).

STORIES AND TRADITIONS

A TRUE SCHOLAR

Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach had one steadfast rule after delivering his daily lecture at Yeshiva Kol Torah in Jerusalem. After he finished discussing a Talmudic topic, and proceeded to the next topic, no one could ask a question about the previous one. This approach would prevent confusion among the many students in attendance. It was therefore to the amazement of all the pupils when Rabbi Auerbach entertained a question from an otherwise very quiet student on a topic he had finished discussing twenty minutes prior. He proceeded to backtrack to the earlier topic and reexamined the entire thought process in intricate detail. All the students were astounded. They had distinctly remembered their Rebbe explaining everything clearly the first time. After the lecture, a few of the older students approached the sage to question his favoring the younger student with his departure from an otherwise sacred rule.

Suddenly they realized that the student in question had been at the Yeshiva for almost a year without ever asking a question in the middle of a discourse. Today was the first time he mustered the courage to ask. Had the Rosh Yeshiva dispensed with the question as normal procedure would have dictated, he may never had asked again. Rav Auerbach departed from protocol and fear of invoking jealousy to give the young student a new confidence that would help him emerge as a true scholar."

TAKING RESPONSIBILITY NOT REVENGE

A boy tries to meet the challenge of doing what's right, even when others

are not. (a story from Aish.com)

"Man, what a mess!" groaned Yaakov Samuels, as he turned on the lights to the gym. He and his Neighborhood League basketball team, the Flames, had arrived for their evening practice at the local basketball court and found the place more resembling the local dump. The guys shook their heads in disbelief. Recently, the guys had made an arrangement with the Eagles, another team in their neighborhood, to share the little-used gym, practicing on alternating nights. But it seemed as if the Eagles had flown the coop the night before, without bothering to clean up after themselves.

It took Yaakov and his friends almost half an hour just to get the place usable, with their anger towards the other team growing every passing minute.

Eventually they got into their practice, and started to loosen up. In the process, they managed to make a pretty decent mess of their own. Two hours flew by, and it was time to wrap it up for the night. The guys quickly got changed, and started to head out. But a loud, piercing whistle, stopped them in their tracks. It was Yaakov who was coming out of the locker room with a whistle around his neck. "Hey guys, wait up! We forgot something," he called out. The boys looked at him and shrugged. "We did a good job tonight messing up the place." Yaakov said. "Let's clean up after ourselves before we go." His teammates burst out in protest. "What?!" shouted Rich. "Clean up for those dumb Eagles, after the mess they left for us? Forget it!"

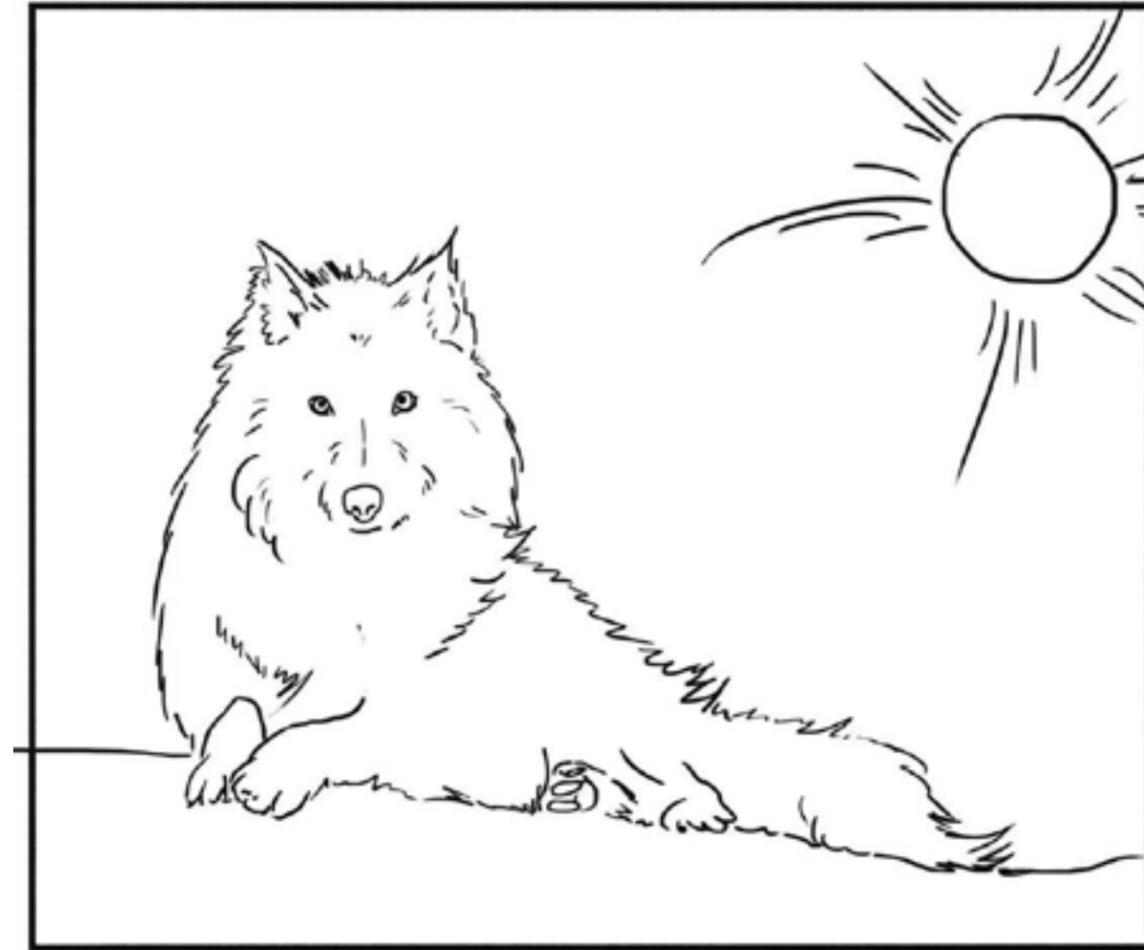
"Yeah!" seconded Larry, "Let them see how it feels tomorrow to walk into a dumpster!"

The boys all glared at Yaakov, but he stood his ground. "Look, just because those guys chose to act like animals, doesn't mean we should also. We made a mess and its only right to clean it up. You guys can do what you want, but I'm sticking around and doing what has to be done." Yaakov grabbed a broom and hoped the others would join him. But the guys weren't buying, and within a few moments, Yaakov was left alone in the gym, holding the broom. The boy looked around. The place was really trashed from their rowdy practice session. He sighed as he realized that working by himself he would probably be there half the night. Yaakov felt tempted to just scrap the idea and take off like everybody else. After all, the Eagles didn't seem to care, and even his own teammates didn't care -- why should he?

"No," he thought to himself, "I've gotta do it. It's just not right to leave a mess like this for someone else, ever. What does the way anybody else acted have to do with it?" He dutifully started into his work when he heard the door open. It was Rich. "Um, hi Yaakov. I thought about what you said, and you're right...so I came back to help you out." Yaakov smiled as the two of them began cleaning up together. But they had barely gotten started when three more boys showed up to help. Soon, nearly the whole team had returned and, working together, the gym was soon spotless! As the guys flicked off the lights, and finally headed home, they all walked out feeling good about themselves, glad that they had chosen taking responsibility instead of taking revenge.

KIDS PARASHA VAYECHI

וַיְחִי



Genesis 47:28 - 50:26

"Yosef is a fruitful bough, a fruitful bough by a spring; his branches run over the wall. The archers bitterly attacked him, shot at him, and harassed him severely, yet his bow remained unmoved; his arms were made agile by the hands of the Mighty One of Yaakov (from there is the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel), by the G-d of your father who will help you, by the Almighty who will bless you with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that crouches beneath, blessings of the breasts and of the womb. The blessings of your father are mighty beyond the blessings of my parents, up to the bounties of the everlasting hills. May they be on the head of Yosef, and on the brow of him who was set apart from his brothers. Benjamin is a ravenous wolf, in the morning devouring the prey and at evening dividing the spoil." (Genesis 49:22-27)

<http://www.bnai-tikkun.org.nz>

Inspirational Corner

❖ Yaakov's sons then made their humiliating confessions to their father, of their wicked treatment of Yosef, and entreated his forgiveness. Yaakov did not suspect his sons were guilty of such cruelty. But he saw that G-d had overruled it all for good, and he forgave and blessed his erring sons. (1SP 152)

Inspirational Corner

❖ As Yaakov was about to die, his children gathered about him to receive his blessing, and to listen to his last words of advice to them. He forgave his children for all their unfilial conduct, and for their wicked treatment of Yosef, which had caused him many years of grief as he had reflected upon his supposed dreadful death. As he spoke with his children for the last time, the Spirit of the L-rd rested upon him, and he uttered prophecies concerning them, which reached far in the future. While under the spirit of inspiration, he laid open before them their past lives, and their future history, revealing the purposes of G-d in regard to them. (1SP 154)