

The Avos have passed and Yoseph remains in the Land of Mitzrayim with his brothers, and three generations of his own family. Yoseph is 110 years old and he makes a last request to his brothers.

וַיִּשָּׁבַע יוֹסֵף אֶת־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר פָּקֹד יִפְקֹד אֱלֹהִים אֶתְכֶם וְהָעֵלְתֶם
אֶת־עַצְמוֹתַי מִזֶּה:

“And Yoseph had the sons of Yisrael swear saying: When the Lord has surely sought after you; then you must lift up my bones from this (land and bring it to the Promised Land).” (Genesis 50:25).

Here, Yoseph stepped into the role filled previously by Avraham, Yitzchok, and Yisrael. Yoseph becomes the leader of his generation and reminds them—the entire generation there with him; his brothers, and his grandchildren, great-grandchildren, along with his nephews, and great nephews—of the Promise. The Promise he reminds them of was given to Avraham, Yitzchok, and Yisrael. The Promise is that they will sojourn in the Land of Mitzrayim and HaShem will eventually take them out and bring them to conquer the Land of Canaan.

Yoseph is not given this Promise from HaShem. It is passed along from his father. He reminds his generation that this sojourn is about to begin. Unlike Yaakov, whose bones were carried immediately back to Canaan, to the burial place in Chevron (Ibid 50:13), Yoseph is embalmed, interred, and buried in a grand burial in the Land of Mitzrayim itself. (Ibid 50:26). This burial fulfills his fitness as a royal of the Land of Mitzrayim. (See Genesis 41:43 and our comments there).

Yoseph makes the ultimate sacrifice and he stays with his family. He does not make his children or brothers bury him immediately in Shechem, a plot he owns by deed, (see ibid 49:22), and was to be his ultimate burial location. (Joshua 24:32). He purposely wants his body to stay in Egypt so he can go up with them, when they do. Why does he do this? Why delay his burial? Why burden his own neshama, and a generation to exhume his bones at a later time?

Rashi comments on a previous verse when Yaakov asked to be buried in the Land, immediately. (Genesis 47:29). He says, *Yaakov did not want to be buried in the soil of Egypt because of the coming of the plague of lice. Also, those who have to roll to Eretz Yisrael at the*

time of Resurrection will do so painfully. Finally, Yaakov did not want the Egyptians to make an idol out of him. We will ask an obvious question on this Rashi, later.

Given these reasons, Rashi does not explain why Yoseph was okay with staying and being buried in Egypt.

The Gemara in Kesubos 111a says, *On a similar note, you say: “And Yoseph took an oath from the children of Israel, saying: the Lord will surely remember you, and you shall carry up my bones from here” (Genesis 50:25). Rabbi Chanina said: There are inner matters here. Yoseph knew concerning himself that he was completely righteous, and if the dead of the lands outside of Eretz Yisrael come alive, why did he trouble his brothers to carry his coffin four hundreds parsecs to Eretz Yisrael? The reason is that he was concerned lest he not merit the tunnels.*

The Gemara Sotah 13b says, *Rav Yehuda says in the name of Rav: For what reason was Yoseph called: Bones, even during his lifetime, as he had his brothers take an oath that “the Lord will surely remember you, and you shall carry up my bones from here” (Genesis 50:25)? Because he did not protest for the honor of his father, as the brothers said to Yoseph while unaware of his true identity: “Your servant our father” (Genesis 43:28, 44:31), and Yoseph said nothing to them in protest that they referred to his father Yaakov as Yoseph’s servant.*

These Gemaras seem to interpret the need for Yoseph to make his brothers promise as a retribution Yoseph had to do. Either he felt himself not worthy of the tunnels or because he allowed his father to be called servant before him. Either way, the promise to take his bones is a favor the brothers are doing for him.

Birkat Asher asks *on this, why did the rest of the brothers not want to be buried in the Promised Land? He was, indeed, the one that promised his father to bury him in the Land. So he was having them promise him, as well. However, the question stands because we know all of the brothers had a plot in the Land. It is because the other brothers went with Yoseph the same time. All of the brothers were exhumed when the Israelites left Egypt, as Rashi learns in Exodus 13:19. Further, it is just as clear that HaShem would remember them and redeem them from exile, as they had to stay there to go into exile. They could have easily left after the years of famine ended. It is one of the wonders that they stayed, but it was all part of the Promise.*

If the other brothers were also buried in Mitzrayim and were exhumed later one, why did Yoseph have to make them promise? It seems to me that the brothers had their children bury

them immediately in the Land, or made their own children take them at the Exodus. As to Yoseph, we can answer this question by stating Yoseph was the one that promised his father, to bury his father back in his plot in the Land. So Yoseph is recorded making a likewise bequest. More than that, Yoseph knew he had to be buried like a royal, because he was one. Thus, he asked that eventually his body be taken back to the Land. However, there is another reason Yoseph made his brothers make him this promise.

Tur HaAruch says similar to this. *“Yoseph has his brothers swear.” When he realized that his brothers were advanced in age, he included also their offspring in this oath as none of his surviving brothers might be alive when the Israelites would leave Egypt. Everyone knew of the exile that awaited them in Egypt and that its conditions would be very harsh. The reason that he did not make them swear to transfer his remains to the Land of Canaan immediately after his death, may well have been that he knew that it was beyond their political power to have such an illustrious ruler as Yoseph buried in a foreign country.*

Daas Zekeinim says, *“Yoseph spoke to his brothers and he made them swear an oath;” It is difficult to understand why Yoseph repeated the words פקוד'פקוד. We would have expected him to say: “when the Lord will remember you and take you out of Egypt, take my remains with you.” This would have been parallel to Yaakov’s last request from his son Yoseph.” (Compare to Genesis 47:30). We may be correct in assuming that the first time he used the expression פקוד'פקוד, this was meant as a reference to how Yaakov his father had introduced a similar request. Then the verse says, “the Lord will most certainly remember you, etc.” The numerical value of the letters in the word פקוד is 190. It was meant as a hint that the Lord would shorten the decree according to which the people would have to wait 400 years for their redemption by 190 years. As a result, they would have spent only 210 years in Egypt at the time of the Exodus. The root פקד has been used as meaning “to be absent” (in the passive mode נפקד) in Numbers 31:49 where the officers returning from the punitive campaign against Midian thanked HaShem for having returned without having lost a single soldier in that campaign. [One can comment that the word spelled without the letter vav as it appears in our text invalidates the numerical values quoted.]*

Tur HaAruch adds, *the number 210 being characterized by the numerical value of the word ודד, the word used by Yaakov when he instructed his sons to go down to Egypt to buy food in the first place. (Genesis 42:2)*

These comments mean that the promise Yoseph made directly ties into the duration and the eventual end of the exile.

Rabbeinu Bechaya points out what is missing from Yoseph's request. He says, *יִשְׁבַּע יוֹסֵף* "Yoseph made the children of Israel swear an oath." *Actually, we would have expected the Torah to write: "Yoseph adjured his brothers." (Like it says Genesis 47:29-31). However, he made even later generations take this oath as he did not know precisely when the opportunity would come to keep this oath. This is why Moshe felt duty-bound to raise Yoseph from his grave before the Israelites left the country and to take his bones with them (compare Exodus 13:19). The meaning of the verse there is that Moses felt that unless he located Yoseph's remains and took them with, the entire nation would be guilty of not honoring their oath. Yoseph had the extraordinary merit that 600,000 men all functioned as his pall bearers throughout the many years they were in the desert until finally they laid him to rest at Shechem (Joshua 24:32). It is a well-known tradition that the righteous are buried when they have been accompanied by a mass funeral cortege. Our sages (Kesuvos 17) elaborated saying: "as his arrival so his exit." *וַיֹּאמֶר יוֹסֵף אֶת עַצְמוֹתַי מִזֶּה, לָלוּהָ עֲלֵיכֶם אֶת עַצְמוֹתַי מִזֶּה, בְּיָבוֹא הַיָּמָא הַהוּא לְבָרְכָא בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל.**

The passuk can be read, "And Yoseph swore to his brothers, saying, 'The Lord will surely remember you and you will raise my bones from this tomb.'" There is no lamed or the word "el" but "es" can be a filler and can also mean *to*. So Yoseph was actually the one swearing to his brothers that they will be redeemed.

This is why the brothers' instruction to be buried in the Land is not recorded. It is not simply about being buried in the Land. This is the ultimate sign of faith that Yoseph had in the Promise. The Promise that was given to Avraham, Yitzchok, and Yaakov would come true. He believes it so fully that he is comforted by the fact that he can be buried in a tomb in Egypt, like a Pharaoh, and he knows the future People, Sons of Israel—the Israelites—will eventually leave Egypt and take his bier with them. He does not make them take his body because he is afraid of the Day of Judgment, or that he will not merit tunnels, or because of some lack of honor of his father. He makes the promise to let the whole Israelite generation know with certainty that they will be redeemed from Mitzrayim. The promise he makes them pledge will be passed down. The

leaders of each tribe will know about it and they will pass it on. Those who hear of it will know that Yoseph is confident he will be returned to the Promised Land. So, too, they will be the ones to bring him, so they will be returned to the Promised Land.

A true leader stays with his people. Yoseph stayed in exile and only came out when all of his brethren went out as well. As to Rashi's reasons for Yaakov wanting to be buried immediately in the Land, they do not apply to Yoseph. He would not be bothered by lice in an elaborate tomb—not being in the ground. He already was an idol, as a royal of Egypt, and the natives of Canaan would just as easily worship a tomb there. As for the pain of rolling through tunnels, the Gemara seems to give the obvious explanation, that if he is moved to the Land prior to the days of Resurrection, then Yoseph would be in the Land at the time of Resurrection, and not be bothered to have to roll. It is curious that according to Rashi, Yaakov had no faith that his children would take his body out of Egypt with them. Regardless, Yoseph chose to stay, and he made the promise to his brothers that they would be redeemed.

BONUS SHTIKEL

Yaakov calls his sons to his death bed to tell them what will become of them in the End of Days. (Genesis 49:1). These verses are known as the Birchas Yaakov, blessing of Yaakov. Rashi quotes the Midrash and says that *Yaakov wanted to speak of the prophecy of the End of Days, but his mind went blank, and instead he spoke of other things.* (Bereishis Rabbah 98:2). Interestingly, the Gemara Psachim 56a says similar. *Yaakov wanted to reveal to his sons when the complete redemption would arrive at the end of days (see Daniel 12:13), but the Divine Presence abandoned him, rendering him unable to prophesy. He feared one of his sons would abandon the heritage, so his sons said to him: ‘Hear Israel, the HaShem is our Lord, HaShem is One. They said: Just as there is only one Lord in your heart, so too, there is only one in our hearts.*

The Gemara, clearly, is telling us more a story of faith than Yaakov’s inability to say prophecy. The Midrash makes it clearer that Yaakov was blocked from saying the prophecy. The Midrash doesn’t say that Yaakov then blessed his children. It says *he spoke of other things.* However, a closer reading of the following verses, and these words in the Midrash, reveal that Yaakov did, indeed, talk about End of Days. He just spoke about it using *other things* as the parable. Not directly, but through parable.

If one would read through what Yaakov said in the next verses about his sons, it would reveal itself as prophecy. He spoke of things in the past that were not seen by him but revealed only through divine spirit. (Reuven mounted his marital bed when Yaakov was away, see Genesis 35:22; 49:4). Shimon and Levi were the ones that plotted to kill Yoseph (ibid 49:6); Yehuda will eventually be king (ibid 49:8) and kingship will always be with Yehuda (ibid 49:10); Zevulun will have his land by the sea (ibid 49:13); Shimshon will arise out of Dan (ibid 49:17); Yoseph’s children will become king and rulers (ibid 49:25-26); Binyamin would produce the incident of the concubine of Gibeah, but will also house the Holy Beis HaMikdash (ibid 49:27).

Clearly, there is much prophecy here. What is recorded in the Torah, Tanach, is select history and tales meant for us to take with us until the End of Days. These words lead us to the Promise of ultimate Redemption. It is our duty to learn and decipher the words. Just as Yoseph was so sure in the Promise of the Exodus, we must equally keep these words of the Torah with us as a Promise that the End of Days—ultimate Redemption, peace on earth, the whole world knowing of HaShem—is coming.