SUMMARY OF PARASHAT VAYICHI

Parashat Vayichi (□□□□) which means “and he lived” refers to the last 17 years of the life of the patriarch Jacob , Ya’aqob, in Egypt.

1. JACOB’S LAST DAYS

When Jacob feels his life is coming to an end, he calls Yosef and makes him promise to bury him in Israel, and not in Egypt. Yosef agrees to his father’s request. When Jacob falls ill Yosef visits him, accompanied by his two sons Menashe and Ephraim. Jacob adopts Yosef’s sons, Ephraim and Menashe, as his own sons and gives them each one portion of his inheritance. Hence, instead of inheriting one single tribe like his brothers, Yosef will inherit two tribes. Yosef asks his father to bless his children. Jacob crosses his hands and places his right hand, with which he would bless the first-born, on the head of Ephraim, the younger of the two brothers. And he blesses them saying: “May the angel of HaShem who redeemed me from all evil bless these two lads, and may they be called by my name and by the name of my parents, Abraham and Isaac, and may they multiply in abundance upon the earth.” Yosef is concerned because he thinks that Jacob placed his right hand on Ephraim by mistake, and tries to place his father’s hand on Menashe. But Jacob refuses and tells him that he knows who the older son is, but “the younger brother will be greater than him, and his offspring shall be plentiful enough for nations.” Then Jacob blesses them saying that the people of Israel will bless one another saying: “May God bless you as Ephraim and Menashe.” This event, happened probably when Jacob just arrived to Egypt.

2. JACOB’S FINAL BLESSING

Jacob summons all of his sons and dedicates a personalized message, blessing or even criticism, based on the character, talents, future and potential of each one of them. Reuben is criticized for his impulsiveness and for having desecrated his

father’s bed. Shimon and Levi are also reprimanded for their anger, which was expressed in the slaughter of Shechem’s men. Yehudah is blessed with monarchy and success in battle. Zebulun is blessed to be successful in his maritime trade endeavors. Jacob compares Isakhar to a strong donkey (the donkey was a respected animal in those days) that works tirelessly. Dan has the ability to judge. Gad will be brave in battle. Asher has the ability to produce abundant oil and market it. Naftali is blessed with the speed of a deer. Yosef is recognized for his charm, his suffering and his righteousness and receives a wide variety of blessings. Benjamin is finally to a ferocious wolf who fearlessly faces his enemies. Jacob also reiterates before all his children his request to be buried in Israel, in the Cave of Machpela in Hebron. After blessing his children Jacob dies at the age of 147.

3. THE FUNERAL

Egypt mourns seventy days for Jacob’s death. Yosef receives permission from Pharaoh to transfer Jacob’s body to Israel. A large funeral procession made up of all the elders of Egypt and all of Jacob’s family goes to Israel to bury Jacob.

4. FAMILY REUNITED

Then, back in Egypt, Yosef’s brothers fear that now, once Jacob is no longer alive, Yosef will take revenge on them for having sold him as a slave. But Yosef assures them that he does not hold a grudge against them. The family of Israel is finally united and at peace again.

5. YOSEF’S LAST WISH

Yosef lives to the age of 110. Before passing away, he tells his brothers that God will eventually lead them out of Egypt and return them to the Land of Israel. Yosef makes them promise that when the time comes, his remains should be taken with them to be buried in the land of Israel, as his father did.