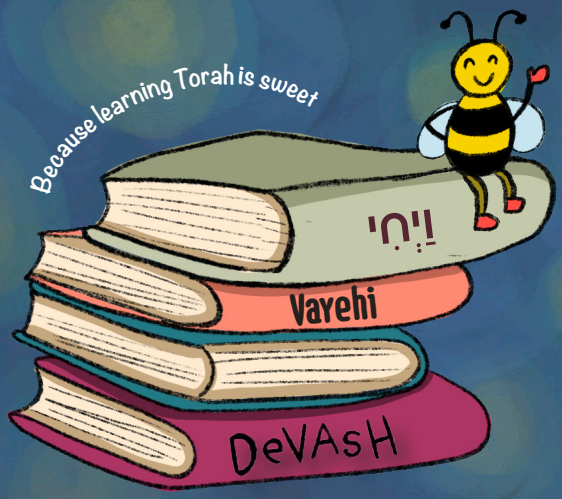


HADAR Children & Families
VOLUME 3 ISSUE 13

חנוכה חנוכה ונתחנוכה!

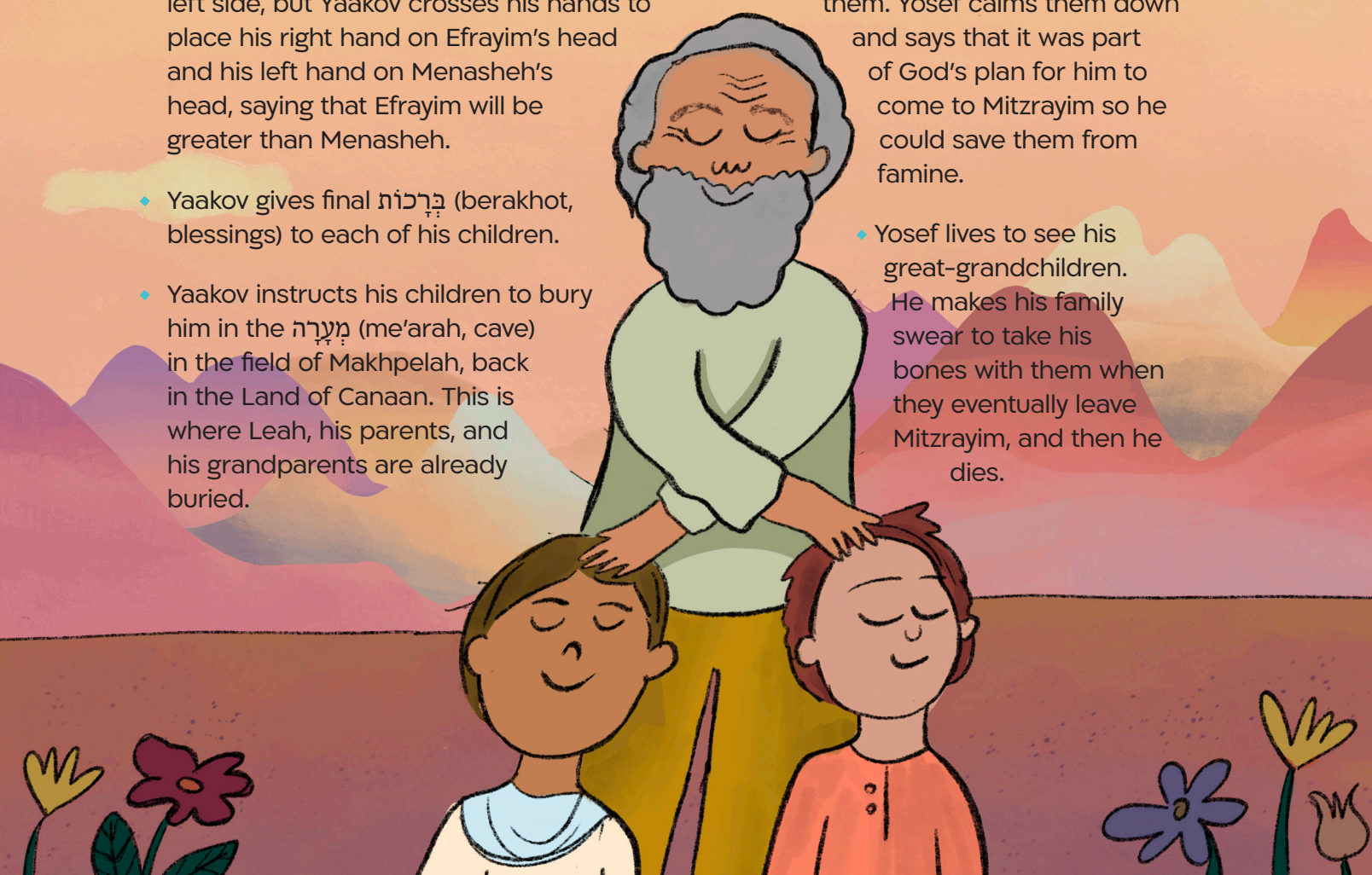


י'-ט"ז טֵבֵת תשפ"ז December 20–26, 2026



מָה בַּפָּרָשָׁה • In This Week's Parashah

- After 17 years in מִצְרַיִם (Mitzrayim, Egypt), Yaakov's life is coming to an end.
- Yaakov blesses Yosef's two sons, Menasheh and Efrayim. Yosef places Menasheh at Yaakov's right side and Efrayim at Yaakov's left side, but Yaakov crosses his hands to place his right hand on Efrayim's head and his left hand on Menasheh's head, saying that Efrayim will be greater than Menasheh.
- Yaakov gives final בְּרָכוֹת (berakhot, blessings) to each of his children.
- Yaakov instructs his children to bury him in the מְעָרָה (me'arah, cave) in the field of Makhpelah, back in the Land of Canaan. This is where Leah, his parents, and his grandparents are already buried.
- Yaakov dies. His family and Egypt mourn for him, and they bury him as he asked.
- Yosef's brothers are afraid that Yosef will take revenge against them. Yosef calms them down and says that it was part of God's plan for him to come to Mitzrayim so he could save them from famine.
- Yosef lives to see his great-grandchildren. He makes his family swear to take his bones with them when they eventually leave Mitzrayim, and then he dies.



מִדְרָשׁ • Midrash

In Vayehi, many mourners bury Yaakov in מְעָרַת הַמַּכְפֵּלָה (Me'arat Ha-Makhpelah, the Cave of Makhpelah).

A midrash (Bavli Sotah 13a) tells us that there was a lot of excitement in this story! The midrash describes the mourners reaching Me'arat Ha-Makhpelah, and Esav is standing there waiting to stop them from burying Yaakov. Esav claims that the one spot remaining in the burial cave belongs to him.

Yaakov's children answer that Esav had sold his place in the burial cave when he sold the birthright to Yaakov (back in Toldot). Esav demands evidence, and Yaakov's children explain that the document proving this was left back in מִצְרַיִם (Mitzrayim, Egypt). Esav insists on seeing the document, so Yaakov's sons send Naftali back to get it because he's the fastest runner. We learn this from Yaakov's blessing to Naftali, which compares him to a doe (a female deer):

Bereishit 49:21 | **בראשית מט:כא**

Naftali is a doe let loose, who gives lovely fawns. | נַפְתָּלִי אַיָּלָה שְׁלֻחָה הַנֹּתֵן אִמְרֵי שָׁפֶר׃

A doe can run as fast as 47 miles per hour! Naftali must have been really speedy.

R. Abbahu teaches that the end of this pasuk hints at the events described in the midrash:

תלמוד בבלי מסכת סוטה דף יג עמוד א

אָמַר רַבִּי אַבָּהוּ: אַל תִּקְרֵי "אִמְרֵי שָׁפֶר", אֶלָּא "אִמְרֵי סֵפֶר".

Bavli Sotah 13a

R. Abbahu says: Do not read it as imrei shafer (lovely fawns); rather, read it as imrei sefer (the words of the book – the written evidence from Mitzrayim that Naftali ran to get).





דַּקָּה שֶׁל דִּיוּן • One-Minute Debate

How to play:

Here are some arguments to get you started, but try to come up with your own. Then debate someone!

For a true one-minute debate, give each side 30 seconds to make its best case.



Debate: Everything happens for a reason.



Agree!

- You might not understand the reason now, or ever, but the reason exists. This idea gives meaning to our lives and everything that happens to us.
- Yosef understood that the reason his brothers threw him into a pit was so that he could eventually become second-in-command in מִצְרַיִם (Mitzrayim, Egypt) and save everyone from hunger. It seems that understanding the reason for his hardship made Yosef able to forgive his brothers.
- We can use any experience, positive or negative, to help us grow.

Disagree!

- Everyone experiences challenges in life. That's just the way things are.
- Telling people that their suffering has a purpose can be very insensitive and make them feel even worse! There's a book in Tanakh called Iyyov, and even God said there that you really shouldn't do this.
- It's not our job to figure out why things happen in life. The important thing is to try our best to be kind to others and serve God no matter what happens.





- Why do you think the midrash shows Esav continuing to compete with Yaakov, even after Yaakov's death? What's that supposed to tell us?
- In the midrash, how does Naftali use his special talent? Have you ever been called on to help in a tense moment, because of your special talents? Can you think of a situation where your special talents could come in handy?

Content and editing by Shoshie Lockshin, Jason Rogoff, Jeremy Tabick, Ethan Tucker, and Effy Unterman.
Design by Jen Klor. Illustration by Rebecca Kerzner.

aliyot:
1) Bereishit 47:28 to 48:9
2) 48:10 to 48:16
3) 48:17 to 48:22
4) 49:1 to 49:18
5) 49:19 to 49:26
6) 49:27 to 50:20
7) 50:21 to 50:26

haftarah: Melakhim Alef 2:1-12

שְׁאֵלוֹת הַשָּׁבוּעַ • Parashah Scavenger Hunt

The answers to the first seven questions can be found in the matching numbered aliyah in the Torah reading. The answers to questions 8 and 9 are harder and can come from anywhere in the parashah. The answer to question 10 is in this week's haftarah.



Good luck!

1. How old was Yaakov when he died?
2. Who was Yosef's firstborn son?
3. Why did Yaakov cross his hands when he blessed his grandchildren?
4. Who will live by the sea?
5. Who don't the archers like?
6. What was unusually Egyptian about Yaakov's body after he died?
7. Who comforts whom?



8. In last week's parashah, after being reunited with Yosef, Yaakov said that he was ready to die (46:30). According to our parashah, how long did Yaakov end up living after he said that?
9. What two-word phrase did Yosef use twice to talk about the Israelites' eventual departure from מִצְרַיִם (Mitzrayim, Egypt)?





10. **From the haftarah:** Where did King David live while he ruled over Benei Yisrael?

* Look for the answers on page 8!

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הַפְטָרָה • Haftarah

In both our parashah and haftarah, a leader is about to die: Yaakov in the parashah and King David in the haftarah. Both leaders give instructions to their children about what to do after their deaths.

A midrash comments on another specific connection between these two stories:

Tanhuma Vayehi 2

"A person has no power over the day of death" (Kohelet 8:8) -

...Regarding David, it is written, "And King David was old" (Melakhim Alef 1:1). But when he came close to dying, it says "When David's life was drawing to a close" (Melakhim Alef 2:1).

Similarly, when Yaakov came close to dying, he made himself humble before Yosef by saying: "If I have found favor in your eyes." When did he say this? "When Yisrael's life was drawing to a close" (Bereishit 47:29).

תנחומא ויחי ב

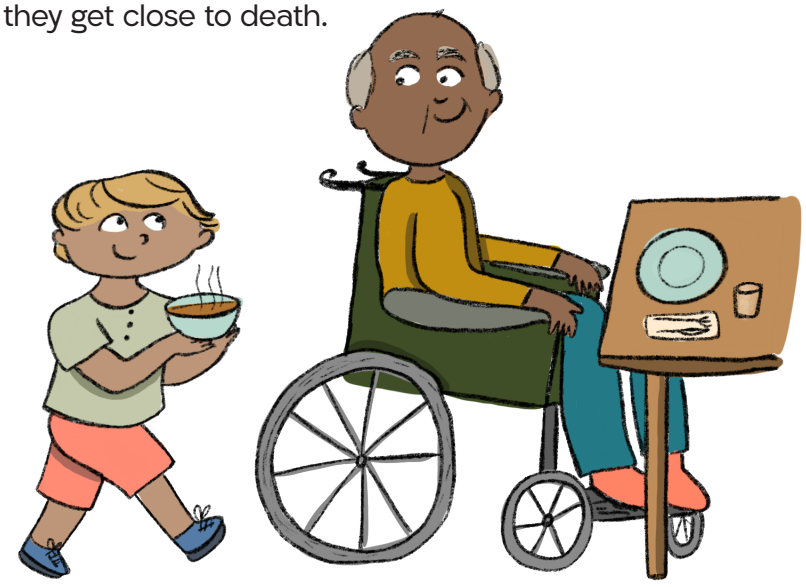
"וְאֵין שִׁלְטוֹן בְּיוֹם הַמָּוֶת" (קהלת ח:ח) -

...וְאַף דָּוִד כְּתִיב בּוֹ, "וְהַמֶּלֶךְ דָּוִד זָקֵן" (מלכים א א:א). כֵּיוָן שֶׁנִּטָּה לָמוּת, "וַיִּקְרְבוּ יְמֵי דָוִד לָמוּת" (מלכים א ב:א).

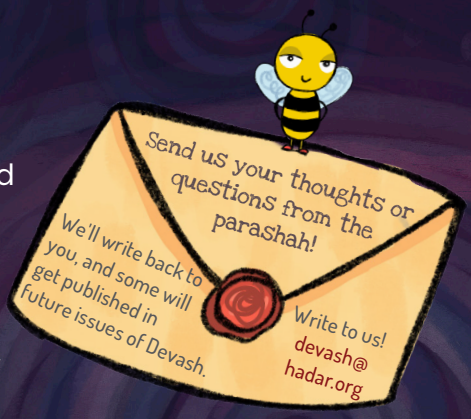
וְאַף יַעֲקֹב כְּשֶׁנִּטָּה לָמוּת, הִתְחִיל מַשְׁפִּיל עַצְמוֹ לִפְנֵי יוֹסֵף, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: "וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ אִם נָא מָצָאתִי חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ." אֵימָתַי, כְּשֶׁקָּרַב לַמִּיתָה, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: "וַיִּקְרְבוּ יְמֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לָמוּת" (בראשית מז:כט).

The lesson in this midrash is drawn from a pasuk in Kohelet.The straightforward meaning of the pasuk is that people can't control when they die. But the midrash suggests that the pasuk could also mean that people lose control, and experience powerlessness, when they get close to death.

One example is from King David. The midrash points out that even while he was old and frail, he was still called "King" - he still had his title of honor. But in our haftarah, when it was time for him to die, he is just called "David" as if the power of being king were gone. Another example is from our parashah, where Yaakov begs his son for help - and parents shouldn't have to beg their children for anything! So that shows a loss of dignity.



- What does it mean that even great kings will lose their power one day? What does this teach us about power and honor, or about human nature?
- Very old age can sometimes leave adults feeling less powerful. Can you imagine how that would feel? How should people respond to that? What can you do to show honor to people in that position?



פַּרְשָׁנוּת • Commentary

Yaakov blesses Efrayim and Menasheh, saying:

Bereishit 48:16

May the angel who has saved me from all harm bless these children.
In them may my name be called, and the names of my fathers Avraham and Yitzhak.
And may they become a great many upon the earth.

בראשית מח:טז

הַמַּלְאָךְ הַגֹּאֵל אֹתִי מִכָּל רָע יְבָרֵךְ
אֶת הַנְּעָרִים
וְיִקָּרֵא בָהֶם שְׁמִי וְשֵׁם אֲבֹתַי
אַבְרָהָם וְיִצְחָק
וְיִדְגּוּ לָרֹב בְּקֶרֶב הָאָרֶץ׃

Our פַּרְשָׁנִים (parshanim, commentators) ask: **What angel is Yaakov talking about?**

רש"י

מַלְאָךְ הָרָגִיל לְהִשְׁתַּלֵּחַ אֵלַי בְּצָרָתִי. כָּעִנְיָן שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלַי מַלְאַךְ הָאֱלֹקִים בַּחֲלוֹם יַעֲקֹב... אָנֹכִי הָאֵ-ל בֵּית-אֵל (בראשית לא:יא-יג).

Rashi (France, 1,000 years ago)

The angel who was usually sent to me when I was in trouble. As it is said, "And the angel of God said to me in a dream: Yaakov... I represent the God of Beit El." (Bereishit 31:11)

According to Rashi, Yaakov is talking about an angel who protected him many times, such as years before when he was running away from Lavan.

- Why might Yaakov ask that angel to bless his grandchildren?



Hizkuni explains that Yaakov's prayer is actually directed to God:

Hizkuni (France, 800 years ago)

Yaakov begins by referring to the Holy Blessed One (in pasuk 15), and ends with speaking about an angel (in pasuk 16). The two pesukim have to be understood like this: "The God before Whom I and my forefathers have walked – and Whose angel protected me against all harm – may that God bless the boys."

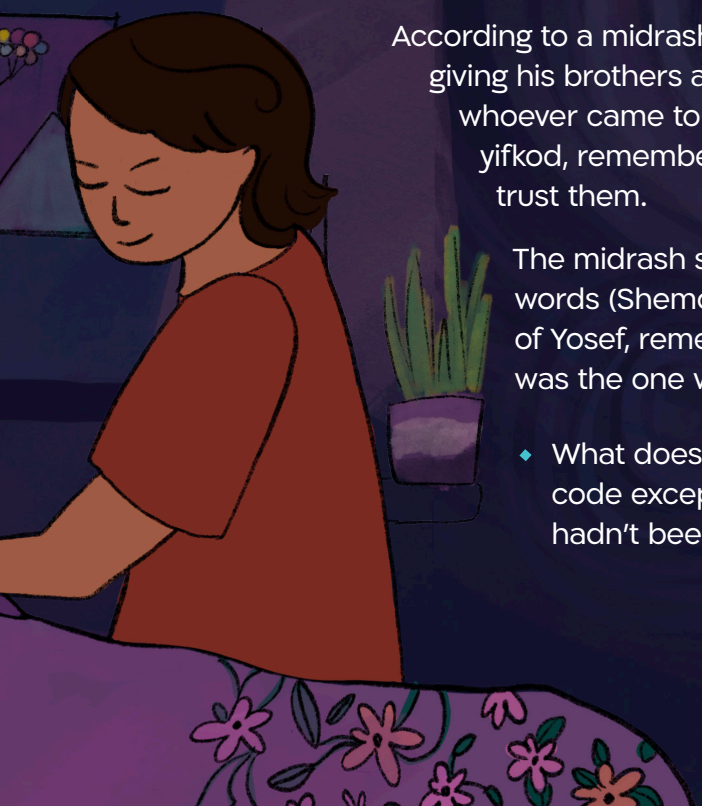
חזקוני

פָּתַח הַכָּתוּב דִּבָּרָיו שֶׁל יַעֲקֹב בְּשֵׁם הַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא וְסִיֵּם בְּמַלְאָךְ, אֶלָּא הָכִי קָאָמַר הַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא אֲשֶׁר הִתְהַלְּכוּ אֲבֹתַי לְפָנָיו עַל יְדֵי הַמַּלְאָךְ הַגֹּאֵל אוֹתִי, הוּא יְבָרֵךְ אֶת הַנְּעָרִים.

- If you look up pasuk 15, do you see the problem that Hizkuni is talking about?
- Why would Hizkuni prefer to think that God is blessing the children, rather than the angel?
- There is a custom to recite this pasuk before going to sleep, after reciting the bedtime Shema. What's meaningful about saying this pasuk at this time?
- Try it out! Say or sing this pasuk before bed and imagine being blessed by the same angel who protected Yaakov or by God. Which one is most meaningful to you?

מִדְרָשׁ • Midrash

One of the last things Yosef says to his brothers is a promise: וֵאלֹקִים פָּקֹד יִפְקֹד אֶתְכֶם (but God remember, will remember you) (Bereishit 50:24).



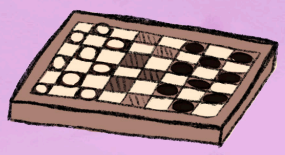
According to a midrash (Yalkut Shimoni on the Torah #64), Yosef was giving his brothers a secret code. In the future, God would give whoever came to save Benei Yisrael the words פָּקֹד יִפְקֹד (pakod yifkod, remember, will remember), and the people would know to trust them.

The midrash says that when Moshe finally came with these words (Shemot 4:31), only Serah, who was still alive from the days of Yosef, remembered them! The midrash concludes that she was the one who persuaded the people to believe in Moshe.

- What does it say about the people that they all forgot the code except for Serah? What would have happened if Serah hadn't been there? What does that say about Serah?

דִּקְדּוּק • Grammar





Is there always a reason for every dot on every Hebrew letter?

Well, yes! We will learn more about various דְּגֵשִׁים (degeishim)—the dots in the middle of letters and what their purpose is.

In our parashah, some degeishim show up just to make the sound more beautiful!



Bereishit 49:25

מֵאֵ֣ל אָבִ֗יךָ וְיַעְזְרֶךָּ֔ וְאֵ֖ת שַׁדַּ֑י וְיבָרֲכֶ֙ךָּ֙

Me'eil avikha ve-**ya'azreka** ve'et Shaddai **viyevarekheka**
The God of your father's house who helps you, and
Shaddai who blesses you

In each of the bolded words, the final letter kaf has a dagesh in the middle. That means you pronounce it "ka," instead of the more common "kha" that you usually hear at the end of this kind of word, like here:



Bemidbar 6:24

יְבָרֶכְךָ֥ יְהוָ֖ה וְיִשְׁמְרֶֽךָ׃

Yevarekhakha Hashem ve-yishmerekha
May God bless you and protect you

The degeishim in the example from our parashah are known as דָּגֵשׁ לְתִפְאֶרֶת (dagesh le-tiferet), a dagesh that's there just to make a word sound more poetic and beautiful. Here are two more degeishim le-tiferet, which you might recognize from Hallel:

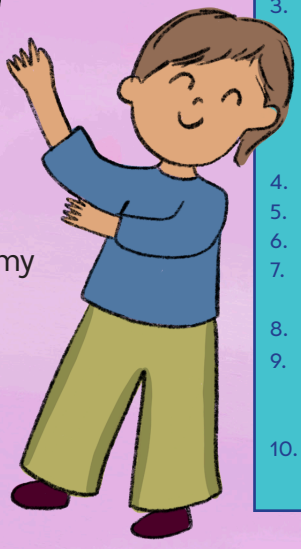


Tehillim 118:28

אֵלִ֣י אַתָּ֔ה וְאוֹדֶ֖ךָּ אֱלֹקַ֣י אֲרוֹמְמֶֽךָּ׃

Ei-li Atah ve'odeka Elokai aromemeka
You are my God and I will praise you, you are my
God and I will raise you up

Listen up for these beautiful dots!



Parashah Scavenger Hunt Answers:

1. 147 (47:28)
2. Menasheh (48:14)
3. So he could put his right hand on the head of Efrayim, whom he predicted would be greater than Menasheh (48:19)
4. Zevulun (49:13)
5. Yosef (49:23)
6. It was mummified! (50:2)
7. Yosef comforts his brothers (50:21)
8. 17 years (47:28)
9. פָּקֹד יִפְקֹד (pakod yifkod, [God] will surely remember) (50:24-25)
10. Hevron and Yerushalayim (Melakhim Alef 2:11)