

Message: 2026-01-03: Passing on Vision

Parashah Vayekhi: B'reshit 47:28-50:26

Introduction

I composed the majority of this message as I was walking through my woods last Shabbat. We have about 9 acres of woods, and we have cut trails through it all. It's a little like having your own little park where you never have to run into other people or hear 'On your left' shouted at you from behind, and you can walk and be alone with Adonai and your thoughts. I needed to take some time to think and pray; to talk and walk with my Father in heaven.

So, my message might meander a bit this morning due to the meandering nature of my walk through the woods where it started, but I do feel that these are the right words for today.

בעזרת השם

Be'ezrat Hashem. With God's help.

A phrase I have been using consistently over the last several weeks is be'ezrat Hashem. It means 'with God's help', and it's used commonly to express that God is ultimately in control, and His will will be done. I think it's one of those phrases that should become very bit as common as Shalom.

So, be'ezrat Hashem, with God's help, we will accomplish what He has for us this morning together.

Parashah Vayekhi פְּרָשָׁה וַיֵּחִי

Our reading today comes from Parashah Vayekhi, which is this week's parashah. This portion begins with the death of Ya'akov, and it ends with the death of Yosef.

Before Ya'akov dies, several things happen. He tells Yosef not to bury him in Egypt, but to bury him in the cave of Makhpelah along with Avraham, Sara, Yitz'khak, Rivkah, and Leah. He adopts Ephraim and Manasseh as his own, thereby giving Yosef a double blessing. Ya'akov blessed Yosef by blessing Yosef's children.

That hit me in a new way this week because it struck me as such a profound gift to Yosef. As a parent, I would much rather my children be blessed than me.

Later, Ya'akov gathers all of his sons together. All of Ya'akov's sons are all blessed, but it is interesting to note that their blessings reflect the lives that they have lived. They are still held accountable by Ya'akov, but they are still blessed.

After he dies, all of Egypt mourns the death of Ya'akov, and Pharaoh allows Yosef and the rest of the children of Yisra'el to go and to bury Ya'akov as he had requested.

Many years later, Yosef gathers his brothers together again as he himself is nearing death, and he gives them a similar charge.

Yosef says to his brothers,

God will surely remember you and bring you up out of this land to the land which he swore to Avraham, Yitz'chak and Ya'akov. God will surely remember you, and you are to carry my bones up from here.

B'reshit [Genesis] 50:24–25 (CJB)

This is what sets the stage for what unfolds in Sh'mot (Exodus). Individual family members went into Mitzra'im, and a nation emerges from Mitzra'im.

What I see in this parsha that I would like to talk about today is the importance of the relationship between Ya'akov and his children. It is the importance, the blessing, of passing on vision.

A Head of Many Hats

So, I've talked before about being a man of many hats. Yosef had a coat of many colors. I have a head of many hats. Like many of you, I've been a child and a friend. Artist, a musician, a student, a teacher, a DJ, a rock and roller, a builder, an engineer, a worship leader, an elder, a minister, a rabbi... that's one hat that's hard to remove.

But there are four hats that I have worn longer than any others. I am a son to my parents, I am a child of God, I am a husband to my wife, and I am a father. In many ways that last hat, being a father, has refined me more than any other. And that's because, through that relationship, by being a dad, I think I have learned more about who God is and who I am to God than any other.

I have four children (**and one grandchild**), and I love them all dearly. One of them you all know, Duncan, but three of them you don't. As adults their jobs and their interests moved them away. They are all amazing people, and I am proud to be their dad. That doesn't mean I like everything that they stand for or everything that they do. Some of their choices cause me great distress because I know that those choices will lead them down difficult paths. They are on their journey though, not mine, and I know God will be faithful to call them back in His time.

Train up a child in the way he should go, when he is old he will not turn from it.

Mishlei [Proverbs] 22:6 (TLV)

פִּי-יִזְקִין

Nevertheless, I love them, and my greatest desire is that they would return to walking in God's ways. Why? It's because I know that God's path leads to the most satisfying and fulfilled existence a person can achieve. When you are walking in God's ways, you are walking in his will, and there is no place better than that. It does not mean everything is easy. This walk can be hard, and we often face difficulty.

It means that we are where we should be, in the presence of Adonai.

He guides me in paths of righteousness for His Name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me.

Tehillim [Psalm] 23:3–4 (TLV)

Adonai has blessed me in this way. He has. Knowing who I am as a child of God gives me the confidence to face literally anything because I know that **I am with Hashem and Hashem is with me**. I am doing my best to walk in His will, and even in the valley of the shadow of death I know that I am blessed because He is with me.

The greatest blessing I can imagine though would be for all my children to once again be walking in His ways. All of my children being blessed by living in the will of God would be a quadruple blessing to me.

Forget Yosef's double blessing. He should have had more kids. I want a quadruple blessing. No, I will add Ilona and Eli to that list now too. I'm looking for a sextuple blessing.

There are people who think that that a parent should be disqualified from ministry if they have children, even adult children, who are wandering. There might be some of these people amongst you.

I would like us to take the same metric by which earthly fathers are judged and apply it to God our Father. Avinu Shabashama'im. Do the wanderings of his children disqualify him. The master of the universe?

Do the failures and flaws of God's children make him any less God?

Many people think so. God's children and their character is one of the main reasons why people choose to not believe in God. However, as people of faith, people of Emunah, we know God's character. We know that God's desire is for all his children to walk in his ways.

Why? Because God desires to walk with his children.

So why then are God's children so quick to condemn and disparage God's other children?

Here's another question. Let's leave other people out of this. Why are we so quick to condemn or disparage ourselves? Are we better or more righteous than Adonai?

We know that our failings grieve Avinu, but does he ever stop loving us or wanting the best for us? Does he ever give up on us?

Does God despair?

The answer to those questions, if you don't know, is no. He never stops loving us. He never stops wanting and hoping for the best for us. He never gives up on us, and, this is important, he never despairs. He is incapable of it. That is because despair is the antithesis of his nature.

He is eternally faithful, righteous, and true. He is love.

Those are the traits we need to be about as well.

Do the failures of the children of Israel make them less God's children?

What about the chosen people, the people of Israel? Let's spend a minute on this.

God's love is a universal concept that applies to all humanity, of course.

כִּי כֹה אָהַב אֱלֹהִים אֶת הָעוֹלָם

For God so loved the world...

Yochanon [John 3:16] (CJB)

We see this principle in the very first promise that Adonai made to Avraham that by him all families of the earth will be blessed. That has always been God's plan. However, Adonai chose Israel as His example to the world. His eternal faithfulness to them is a testament to the whole world of the nature and character of God. We wander and we suffer. We experience great success and terrible loss. We live in exile and we are gathered home.

Sha'ul talks about this concept in Romans at great length.

Then what advantage has the Jew? What is the value of being circumcised? Much in every way! In the first place, the Jews were entrusted with the very words of God. If some of them were unfaithful, so what? Does their faithlessness cancel God's faithfulness? Heaven forbid! God would be true even if everyone were a liar!

Romans 3:1–4 (CJB)

Do the failings of the children of Israel in any way reflect on the character of Adonai, or is it in His eternal faithfulness to bring them back that we see His true nature?

The children of Israel, the Jewish people, we have always endured. Even after persecutions and exiles, Adonai brings us back. Our traditions, scriptures, language, and identity have been maintained throughout the millennia as a testament to the faithfulness of God.

Sha'ul talks about this at great length throughout the book of Romans, but I see this really come together in chapter 11.

With respect to the Good News they are hated for your sake. But with respect to being chosen they are loved for the Patriarchs' sake, for God's free gifts and his calling are irrevocable. Just as you yourselves were disobedient to God before but have received mercy now because of Isra'el's disobedience; so also Isra'el has been disobedient now, so that by your showing them the same mercy that God has shown you, they too may now receive God's mercy. For God has shut up all mankind together in disobedience, in order that he might show mercy to all.

Romans 11:28–32 (CJB)

God's faithfulness to show mercy to Israel, to restore Israel, the Jewish people, is testament to the whole world that he desires to show mercy to all. They are chosen to be the example through which God reveals his character.

{Side note: If you are having trouble understanding Romans because of errant teaching, doctrine, theology, etc., I would suggest you read The Mystery of Romans by Dr. Mark Nanos to help you reframe Sha'ul's letter without all of the baggage of historically inaccurate interpretation.}

Our Vision at Or HaOlam

The issue of God's character is one that is important to us at Or HaOlam. In fact, it defines our vision.

This exchange in the besora of Yokhanon helps us make this connection.

Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it will be enough for us." Yeshua replied to him, "Have I been with you so long without your knowing me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Don't you believe that I am united with the Father, and the Father united with me? What I am telling you, I am not saying on my own initiative; the Father living in me is doing his own works. Trust me, that I am united with the Father, and the Father united with me.

Yochanon [John 14:8–11] (CJB)

That is why we are so purposeful in our avodah to restore and accurately portray the character of Yeshua. It restores His identity as the Messiah of Isra'el, and it allows us to see the Father in an increasingly bright light. Knowing the Messiah enables to know the Father in a way that is otherwise impossible.

The vision and purpose of Or HaOlam is working to bring Jewish people, and those grafted in, to their covenantal identity in Messiah.

Or HaOlam is not a fringe social club. We aren't here because we like the Sabbath, or the festivals, or the dancing, or music, or culture. All of those things are fantastic. We love those things, and those things are likely some of what drew many us in to this place. However, drawing close to the Messiah in truth should be a transformative experience.

Our vision is to be a place where other Jewish people can meet the Messiah Yeshua because it is in Yeshua that they can fully realize the character of the Father. This is true for the whole world, of course. This place is for all people who want to know the Messiah in truth, but we are here because we believe that Adonai has called us to hasten the coming of Messiah by proclaiming the true character of Messiah Yeshua to the Jewish people.

For if their casting Yeshua aside means reconciliation for the world, what will their accepting him mean? It will be life from the dead!

Romans 11:15 (CJB)

That is the goal of our vision. **Life from the dead.**

I occasionally hear chatter that I have some different vision for Or HaOlam, and that is absolutely not true. I am fully and completely dedicated to the vision that God gave Rabbi Shmuel (and the other early members) for this community. Rabbi Shmuel has led, and is continuing to lead, our community through this season, but eventually someone else has to lead through the next season. Because until Mashiakh comes, there will have to be a next season. That's the way the circle of life works.

What I know that I have been called by God to be, and I don't use that phrase lightly or in vain, is to be another servant used by God to accomplish His purposes (be'ezrat Hashem).

We see this example throughout the Torah, and it is exemplified in our parashah today as well.

The vision for the children of Israel started with God's first covenant with Avraham.

Now Adonai said to Avram, "Get yourself out of your country, away from your kinsmen and away from your father's house, and go to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, I will bless you, and I will make your name great; and you are to be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, but I will curse anyone who curses you; and by you all the families of the earth will be blessed."

B'reshit [Genesis] 12:1-3 (CJB)

This first covenant with Abraham is the vision. The vision passed from Avraham to Yitzkhak to Ya'akov.

Ya'akov, Yisra'el, was the leader of his family, but it took Yosef to save the family and lead them to Egypt. It took Moshe to lead them out of Egypt and through the transformative wandering in the wilderness, but it took Yehoshua to lead the nation of Yisra'el into the promised land of Yisra'el. Yehoshua was not better than Moshe or Yosef or Ya'akov or Yitzkhak or Avraham. They were different leaders for different times at different stages of God's plan. That's all.

The vision did not change.

The vision and the purpose of this community is also not going to change. Our HaOlam is a community with a vision that believes we are here to do our Father's work.

Hashem brings people into our community for many different reasons, and we are not here to judge the intentions of your heart. We are glad you are here. If you are here to learn and grow and live in community and experience avodah to the God of Israel (אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל) and to learn about the character and practice of Yeshua, the messiah of Israel (מְשִׁיחַ יִשְׂרָאֵל), then we are glad you are here.

However, if you are here and you have decided that you do not support our vision (and there is nothing we or Hashem can do to change your mind), it could be that Adonai has placed a different calling on your life. We are not all called to the same task, and that's ok. You are a child of God. As my friend Debbie likes to say, 'be clothed and fed', but please don't be a stumbling block to us on the path that God has called us to walk.

Our vision is to work to "bring Jewish people, and those grafted in, to their covenantal identity in Messiah" because when that happens it means life from the dead.

We are working to hasten the day of the coming of the Lord speedily and in our days.

Wrap up

I started today by talking about my role as a father and my hopes for my children, but what I hope you really take away from this is God's character and His hopes for His children.

For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.

Yochanon [John] 3:16 (TLV)

Our Father in Heaven, Avinu Shebashama'im, sent Yeshua HaMashiakh, Or HaOlam, and we are here to reflect His character and proclaim His name in the earth. Our mission is to be a place where other Jewish people can come to faith and find their identity in Yeshua Ha'Mashiakh, but this message and invitation is for all people so that whoever believes in Him would have eternal life.

Be'ezrat Hashem, with God's help we will see this accomplished, and I pray we see this speedily and in our days.

Resources

- The Complete Jewish Bible
- Tree of Life Version
- Lexham Hebrew Bible
- Hebrew New Testament
- The Mystery of Romans: The Jewish Context of Paul's Letters: <https://a.co/d/eLINKBA>