

Rabbi Elchanan Shoff
PARSHAS VAYECHI

And Yaakov lived...seventeen years (Gen. 47:28). *Baal HaTurim* writes that the “good days” of Yaakov Avein’s life were only 34 years—the *gematria* of the word “and he lived” (וַיֵּחִי = 34). *Baal HaTurim* arrives at this figure by adding the seventeen years from when Yosef was born until when he was sold to the seventeen years that Yaakov spent in Egypt (17 + 17 = 34). The *Zohar* (*Hashmatos* 3:302a) writes that each of the seven *ushpizin* (“guests”/“hosts”) who visit us on Sukkos correspond to a different day of the week. According to this, Avraham corresponds to Sunday, Yitzchok to Monday, Yaakov to Tuesday, etc. Rabbi Chaim Palagi (in *Chaim Le-Gufa*, 10:28 in the name of *Shem mi-Shmuel* 19b) writes that Yaakov is associated with Tuesday because when detailing the story of the Six Days of Creation, the Torah says twice that what Hashem created on Tuesday “is good”. This alludes to the lifetime of Yaakov Aveinu who had two different periods of “good days” in his life. The *gematria* of *toiv*, “good”, is 17 and thus Yaakov had two periods of 17 years in his life which were together with his son Yosef. After all, we know from King David (*Tehillim* 133:1) that *mab tov umab naim, sheves achim gam yachad*, “Tov” is when “brothers live together.” Yaakov had 2 periods in his life when Yosef was alive and he lived together with his brothers.

One hundred and forty-seven years (Gen. 47:28). The Talmud Yerushalmi (*Shabbos* 16:1) writes that the 147 chapters of Psalms correspond to the 147 years of Yaakov’s lifetime. This teaches us that all the praises that the Jewish People sing of G-d correspond to Yaakov’s lifetime. See also Midrash *Shocheh Tov* (Psalms 22), the Yemenite *Midrash HaGadol*, and Rabbi Mendel Kasher’s *Torah Shleimah* (Vayechi ch. 47, 85).

And the days of Yisrael came close to death, and he called his son Yosef and he said to him, ‘if I now find favor your eyes, put your hand under my thigh, and do for me kindness and justice—do not bury me in Egypt’ (Gen. 47:27). Later on (Gen. 47:29), Yaakov makes Yosef swear that he will not bury him in Egypt. The author of *Halachos Gedolos* (*Hilchos Kibbud Av V’Em*, 56) cites the talmudic halacha that a man can bathe together with anybody, except for his father, because it is problematic for a son to see his father naked. Based on this, he explains that originally, Yaakov asked Yosef to put his hand under his thigh as a sign of an oath, but when Yosef did not do so, then he asked Yosef to swear. What was Yaakov Aveinu thinking in asking Yosef to put his hand under his thigh, did he not realize that this is problematic? Rabbi Yosef Rosen, known as the Rogatchover Gaon (Tzafnas Paneach al haTorah), answers that according to the Gemara (*Pesachim* 51a and Rashi there), the problem with seeing one’s father naked is that if one sees the place from whence he was conceived, then this will be a reminder about the mechanism by which that happened, and might cause him to have immoral thoughts. Based on this reason, Yaakov Aveinu felt that the

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prohibition does not apply to somebody like Yosef who is in control of himself. Yosef nevertheless seems to have felt that he should not "trust" himself, and chose to refrain.

And I will lie with my forefathers... (Gen. 47:30). Rabbi Yosef Shaul Nathansohn (*Divrei Shaul*, 2nd edition) writes that he saw in the sefer *Toldos Adam* (by Rabbi Zalman of Vilna) that this passage alludes to the concept of the Resurrection of the Dead, because here Yaakov Aveinu calls death "lying" with his forefathers: just as people lie down to sleep, but later get up, so do people lie down to die, but are destined to be reawakened.

And he [Yaakov] said, 'swear to me' and he [Yosef] swore to him, and Yisrael bowed at the head of the bed (Gen. 47:31). Rashi explains that Yaakov bowed at the head of his bed because his bed was "complete", as none of his sons were evil, and even Yosef was the king of the Egyptians and was captured amongst them, but maintained his piety. Rabbeinu Yoel (*Sefer HaRemazim*, p. 174) writes that the "head of the bed" (ראש המטה) alludes to Reuven. This is because as the oldest of the twelve sons, Reuven was the head of the tribes (ראש המטות). Accordingly, Yaakov bowed at the head of the bed to hint to the notion that even Reuven was a righteous person.

And he took his two sons with him (Gen. 48:1) See *Sheiltos (Acharei Mos, §93)* who writes that from here we derive that one should not visit the sick alone (he should take somebody along with him). See also *Torah Shleimah* (to Gen. 48:13) for the reason behind this.

And Yisrael strengthened himself, and he sat on the bed (Gen. 48:2). The Talmud (*Nedarim* 39b) says that whoever visits a sick person, takes away one-sixtieth of his sickness. Rabbeinu Yoel (*Sefer HaRemazim*, p. 174) writes that this is hinted to in the word "the bed" (המטה = 59 + 1) which equals 60. Moreover, when discussing Hashem supporting the sick, it says "Hashem will support him on the bed of his sickness" and the word for "bed" there is ערש, while the word for bed here in Targum Onkelos is also ערסא. A similar idea is cited in the name of the Vilna Gaon. The aforementioned passage in the Talmud qualifies its statement by saying that only if somebody is a *ben-gilo* (of the same mazal, this colloquially means "kindred spirit") with the sick person does he take away 1/60 of his sickness. Based on that, the Vilna Gaon explains that Yosef was surely a *ben-gilo* of Yaakov (as Rashi explains in the beginning of *Parshas Vayeshev* that there were so many similarities between Yaakov and Yosef). Because of this, when Yosef was first informed of his father's illness, that news was introduced to him with the "behold" (הנה = 60), whose *gematria* is sixty—alluding to the full potency of Yaakov's illness. However, when Yosef actually visited his father, it says that he sat on "the bed" (המטה = 59), whose *gematria* is only 59. This shows that 1/60 was taken away from his illness, such that only 59 parts remained.

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Rachel died upon me... (Gen. 48:7). The Midrash (*Leviticus Rabbah* 37:1) writes that Yaakov Avinu meant she died “because of me”, because Yaakov Avinu delayed fulfilling his vow to sacrifice to Hashem if he leaves Lavan’s house unscathed. Rabbi Meir Simcha of Dvinsk (*Meshech Chochmah*) suggests that we can explain “because of me” based on the Ramban (to end of the Parshas *Acharei Mos*) who writes that once Yaakov Avinu entered the Holy Land, he no longer was intimate with Rachel, because he only kept the *mitzvos* in Eretz Yisroel, and it is forbidden to marry one’s wife’s sister, so once he married Leah, he was really forbidden to Rachel whenever they would be in Israel. The Talmud (Niddah 31a, see also Sanhedrin 70b) says that sexual intercourse during certain times of a woman’s pregnancy can help strengthen the child, so when Yaakov refrained from doing so with Rachel, Binyamin was not as strong and this complication was enough to make the childbirth complicated. It was due to complications in her childbirth that Rachel died, and Yaakov Avinu took responsibility for that by saying she did “because of me”, meaning because he refrained from intercourse with her. Rabbi Aryeh Leib Tzintz (*Melo Haomer*) similarly explains that Hashem had Rachel die right when they entered the Holy Land, because it would be a disgrace for the righteous Yaakov to live with two sisters in the Holy Land. Because Hashem did this for Yaakov’s honor, he says that Rachel died “because of me”.

And I—when I was coming from Padan—Rachel died upon me... (Gen. 48:7). Rabbeinu Yoel (*Sefer HaRemazim*, p. 175) writes that the *gematria* of the phrase “And I—when I was coming from Padan—Rachel died upon me” (ואני בבאי מפדן מתה עלי רחל) = 1050 +1), equals the exact same amount as the *gematria* of the Talmudic (*Sanbedin* 22b) expression, “A woman only dies on account of her husband” (אין אשה מתה אלא על בעלה) = 1051), and indeed the Talmud itself adduces this principle from the verse at hand.

Reuven, you are my firstborn—my strength and the first of my vigor... (Gen. 49:4). Rashi explains that Reuven was born of Yaakov Avinu’s first drop of seed. However, this is problematic because Rashi (to Gen. 25:26) writes that with each of Yaakov Avinu’s twelve sons, a twin girl was born. If Reuven was indeed the firstborn of Yaakov’s children, then it means he was born first and his twin sister was born second. But, Rashi himself (to Gen. 26:26) writes that when there are twins (like Yaakov and Eisav), then the first child to be conceived is born second, and the second child to be conceived (whose place is closer to the exit) is born first. If so, then if Reuven was the first one to be born, he could not have also been the first one conceived, but rather his twin sister was conceived with Yaaakov’s first drop of semen, not Reuven! Rabbi Chaim Yosef David Azulai (the Chida) asks this question

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in *Dvash le-Fi* (Maareches Tav, 30).¹ Perhaps we can answer that although Reuven was born of the first drop of Yaakov's semen, that drop only fertilized an egg inside Leah after the second drop already fertilized the egg that would be the zygote of Reuven twin's sister. According to this, Reuven was indeed formed from the first drop, but was *conceived after* his twin sister, so he was formed closer to the exit and would be born first. This would solve the problem. Interestingly, Rabbi Chaim Palagi (*Nefesh Chaim* 10:39) cites a *Zohar* (end of Parshas Metzora) which disagrees with Rashi about the twins. The *Zohar* says that because Esav was Yitzchak and Rivka's firstborn, this means that he was formed from Yitzchak's first drop of seed. According to this *Zohar* our question about Reuven is moot. See Rabbi Menachem Azariah of Fano's *Asara Maamaros* (*Chikur Din*, 3:18) who raises this contradiction about whether the birth order of twins reflects the order in which they were conceived and offers a Kabbalistic solution.

The scepter shall not be removed from [the tribe of] Yehuda, and the engraving-tool from between his legs, until Shiloh will come, and unto him the nations will gather (Gen. 49:10). The Chida (Pnei David §7) writes that the gematria of "Shiloh will come" (יבא שילה = 358) exactly equals "Messiah" (משיח = 358). Rabbeinu Yoel (Sefer HaRemazim, p. 182) also mentions this allusion, and adds that the arrival of Eliyahu HaNavi is also hinted to in this verse: Embedded in the phrase "and unto him the nations will gather" (ולו יקהת עמים) is the term "and Levi", alluding to Eliyahu HaNavi (who is from the tribe of Levi, if he is Pinchas) who will also arrive with the Messiah. Indeed, the gematria of the word "and Levi" (ולוי = 52) equals the gematria of the name Eliyahu (אליהו = 52).

...from milk (Gen. 49:12). Rabbeinu Yoel (*Sefer HaRemazim*, p. 185) notes that from the beginning of Yehuda's blessing until its end comprises 54 words. This number corresponds to the 54 *parshiyos* in the Torah, which teaches us that Yehudah was a master of Torah and Torah Study. We have discussed elsewhere whether there are really 53 or 54 *parshiyos* in the Chumash.

Yissachar is [like] a donkey bone, crouching... (Gen. 49:14). Rabbi Chaim Palagi (*Yisamach Chaim*, 8:68) writes in the name of Rabbi Eliyahu HaKohen of Izmir (based on an unpublished manuscript) that the word "crouching" (רובץ) is an acronym for the phrase found in Zechariah (2:14): "Rejoice and be happy, O Daughter of Zion" (רני ושמחי בת ציון). He explains that the Messiah is described as a poor man riding atop a donkey, and many sources (see *Bava Basra* 8a and *Zohar Chadash* 8b) say that the final redemption will come in

¹ See what he wrote to answer this in *Pnei David* (*Vayechi*, 16).

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the merit of Torah Study. This, of course, only refers to the study of Torah for its own sake, as the Talmud elsewhere (*Sanhedrin* 99b) states that Levi says that the study of Torah for its sake brings the *geulah* closer. Based on this, the *Maharsha* (there) renders our verse as meaning the follows: “Yissachar [who represents the study of Torah with proper intentions] causes [“bone” and “causes” are both גרם] the donkey [who represents the Messiah, to come]”. Rabbi Moshe Alshich (to Ps. 94:8) also explains that the idea of the Messiah riding a donkey is related to the blessing of Yissachar.²

And he saw rest—that it was good (Gen. 49:15). This is somewhat problematic because the tribes of Yissachar is always associated with Torah Study, yet the Talmud (*Brachos* 64a) says that Torah Scholars do not have any rest, neither in This World, nor in the World to Come. Accordingly, how can we say about Yissachar that he has “rest”? Rabbeinu Yoel (*Sefer HaRemazim*, p. 188) writes that the word “rest” is spelled without the letter *vav* (מנוחה) as opposed to (מנוחה), and he explains this by citing a Talmudic passage that reads: “Torah Scholars have no rest in This World, only in the World to Come [do they have rest]”. This version, of course, is at odds with the version of the Talmud that we have in front of us, but at least according to this version, there is no direct contradiction between our passage here in the Torah and the Talmudic passage about rest for Torah Scholars. It remains to be seen if any other sources have the same version of this Talmudic passage as Rabbeinu Yoel does.

From [the land of] Asher, oil is his bread, and he gives the king’s delicacies (Gen. 49:20). This verse has exactly seven words in it, and the middle word of this verse is “and he” (מאשר שמנה לחמו והוא יתן מעדני מלך). In the Masoretic version of the Bible, there are another two verses which also have seven words with the word “and he” in the middle: “A patron advises patronage, and he establishes himself on patronage” (Isa. 32:8) and “God understands its [wisdom’s] path, and He knows its place” (Job 28:23). Rabbi Moshe Sofer (*Chasam Sofer Al HaTorah*) explains that these three verses allude to the sanctity of Shabbos which gives strength and fortitude to the three days before it and the three days after it. Shabbos positively affects the rest of one’s week in three areas: ¹One’s sustenance for the week is granted to him in the merit of his enjoyment of Shabbos (see *Shabbos* 119a). This is alluded to in Yaakov’s blessing to Asher which speaks of oil being his source of income as being tied to “giving the king’s delicacies” which refers to enjoying the delicacies of Shabbos.

² My dear friend and cousin Rabbi Yitzchok Tandler of Atlanta suggested that for this reason, the Haftara for Shabbos Chanukah is Zechariah 2 (the verse cited above), because that passage alludes to Torah Study’s role in bringing the Messiah.

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²One's good heartedness for the week is dependent on the extent of his effort in heeding to the command of Hashem in observing Shabbos. This is alluded to in the verse regarding patronage. ³One's wisdom for the week is also dependent on his Shabbos observance, as following the rules of Shabbos opens one to deeper understandings of ideas embedded in the Torah. This is alluded to in the verse concerning the path and place of wisdom. The Talmud (*Shabbos* 150b) relates a story about a certain pious Jew whose field was suddenly breached and he hurried to fix the breach in his fence, when he suddenly realized that it was Shabbos, so he stopped and did not fix the breach. A miracle happened for him that a *tzlaf* bush grew in the place of the breach, and through that bush, this pious Jew was able provide sustenance for himself and his family. Rashi explains that a *tzlaf* bush is a big tree with many branches (so its presence served as a fill-in for the breached fence) and it produces three types of edible fruits: berries, another sort of fruit, and shoots. Perhaps these three types of edible fruits allude to the fact that there are three sources of sustenance that come from Shabbos, because, as we noted above, one's sustenance for the week depends upon his enjoyment of the Shabbos, and on Shabbos we eat three meals. Rabbi Aryeh Leib Tzintz (*Melo HaOmer*) takes a completely different approach in tying together these three verses which all have seven words. He explains that three verses represent a thesis, antithesis, and synthesis of the idea of how one should approach generosity. Yaakov's blessing to Asher teaches us that when approaching generosity, one should verbally offer very little, but practically give a lot. This mimics the behavior of Avraham Avinu who offered the three angels disguised as men some bread, but in the end served them an elaborate meal with butter and mill, and veal and tongue. The blessing of Asher too begins by referring to oily bread, but then concludes with the delicacies of the king. This means that when hosting guests, one should not "toot his own horn" by telling them all the niceties with which he will provide them. However, the next verse—the one in Isaiah about generosity —seems to teach the exact opposite. That verse teaches that there is an advantage in publicizing one's generosity in that spreading knowledge of one's good deed can help encourage other people to likewise act generously and open up their homes. According to that approach, it seems, one should "toot his own horn" by announcing to the world all the good things he has done for others. The contradiction between these two approaches is tempered by the third approach—the verse in Job about wisdom. That passage explains that in reality both approaches are valid, but it takes somebody with a Godly wisdom to know exactly the time and place for each approach.

Naftali is a speedy gazelle who gives good words (Gen. 49:21). The Tosafistic work *Imrei Noam* says that the secret behind Naftali's speed—that he was light on his feet like a

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gazelle - is that as he would travel on the pathways, he would give “good” and “nice” words to everybody. Meaning, he would greet all the people he met while on his way with warmth and good cheer. Because he offered everybody well-wishes, nobody would have the inclination to stop him from going to wherever he was headed, so he was able to get places much faster than other people. This is why the Talmud (*Sotah* 13a) says that when they needed to retrieve their documents attesting to their right to bury Yaakov in the Tomb of the Patriarchs, Naftali was sent all the way back to Egypt to fetch those papers.

Naftali is a speedy gazelle who gives good words (Gen. 49:21). Rabbi Yaakov Tzvi Mecklenburg explains that the word “gazelle” (אילה) is related to the word for plains (אלוני, אילון), as the gazelle can run through tough terrain as though it were a flat plain.

Naftali is a speedy gazelle who gives good words (Gen. 49:21). Rashi explains that this prophecy refers to the war that Devorah fought against Sisera (Jud. 4), in which 10,000 men of Naftali participated in the victory that led to Devorah and Barak singing their famous song. The *Peirush HaRokeach* (p. 326) adds that the *gematria* of the phrase “speedy, who gives good words” (שלוחה הנותן אמרי שפר) = 1691 + 1 equals the *gematria* of the sentence “This is Deborah who sang song” (זו דבורה שאומרת שירה) = 1692). Moreover, he notes that in all the blessings that Yaakov gives to his children, he always compares his sons to a noun which is male-gendered in the Hebrew language, the only exception is the blessing of Naftali in which he likened to a gazelle (אילה), a word which is female gendered in Hebrew. This alludes to the fact that the victory over Sisera will be achieved through a *woman*—Deborah. Rokeach also notes that this is alluded to in the first letters of the words in the phrase “a speedy gazelle who gives” (אילה שלוחה הנותן) which spells out the word “woman” (אשה). *Tosafos* (to *Rosh Hashanah* 33b) write that we are accustomed to blowing 100 blasts with the *shofar* on Rosh Hashannah to correspond to the 100 sobs that Sisera’s mother cried over her sons’s death. This too is alluded to in the verse at hand which is a prophecy about the war with Sisera and uses the word “good” (שפר), whose letters can also spell out the word *shofar* (שופר), “ram’s horn”.

Binyamin is a clawing wolf.. (Gen. 49:27). *Tosafos HaShaleim* (here) cites in the name of Rabbeinu Shimshon that the comparison to Binyamin and a wolf is that the amount of children that Binyamin had (10) equals the *gematria* of the word “wolf” (זאב = 10), and that Mordechai—who descends from the tribe of Binyamin—“clawed” the ten sons of Haman

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(in the Book of Esther)³. Similarly, it says in *Tosafos HaShalem* (to Esther) that when the Jews requested to hang the sons of Haman, they says “And the ten sons of Haman should be hanged” (Est. 9:13) and Rabbi Elazar Rokeach of Worms explains that the word “should be hanged” (יתלו) could be read as “ten hang” (י תלו), which alludes to the fact that the fate of the Jews hung, or was contingent upon, the merits of Binyamin’s ten sons. Essentially, it was Binyamin’s ten sons who caused the downfall of Haman’s ten sons!

There they buried Avraham and Sarah his wife, there they buried Yitzchak and Rivkah his wife, and there I buried Leah (Gen. 49:31). The Terumas HaDeshen writes that the wives of Eliyahu HaNavi and Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi—who entered the Garden of Eden alive without dying—are allowed to get married, because even though their husbands did not actually die, they turned into angels, and there is no prohibition of marrying the wife of angel, only the wife of another man. The Yalkut HaGershuni (to Even Haezer 17, p. 147) points to the Minchas Chinuch (Mitzvah 203) for a clearer understanding of this ruling. The Minchas Chinuch explains that this ruling is based on the words of Rashi (to Yevamos 49b): The Talmud understood that when one becomes prohibited to his wife who was unfaithful, this prohibition is not so strong that it could stop a marriage from taking effect. Meaning, if one’s wife in unfaithful him and becomes forbidden to him, and then he divorces, and then he tries to (illegally) remarry her, then the marriage can technically take effect (even though it is illegal to do). Rashi explains that we know this from the fact that if one's wife is unfaithful, she does not automatically lose her status as his wife, but rather remains technically married to him (until he divorces her, or he dies), even though they are forbidden from being intimate with one another ever again. In essence, argues the Minchas Chinuch, Rashi understood that anything which could block a marriage from taking effect in the first place could also dissolve a marriage post facto. Accordingly, it is understood that an angel cannot contract a marriage with a woman. Thus, the fact that one is an angel could block a marriage from taking effect should he try to marry a woman. If so, then when a human who was already married later turned into an angel, this new development should dissolve his pre-existing marriage (even without him divorcing her or dying). This is why the Terumas Hadeshen would allow the wives of Eliyahu HaNavi and Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi to get married to others. With all of this in mind, Yalkut HaGershuni turns to the verse at hand which says that at the Tomb of the Patriarchs was

³ See also *Shelah* (Taanis 88) who writes that in Daniel’s vision of the Four Beasts that corresponded to the Four Exile, the exile of Persia/Media is characterized as a “wolf” because Haman was their chief enemy in that time, and Haman is called a wolf.

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where Avraham and Sarah “his wife” were buried, as well as Yitzchok and Rivkah “his wife,” as well as Leah. But why did Yaakov not mention that Leah was “his wife”, as he had mentioned about the wives of his father and grandfather? Rabbi Eliyahu HaKohen of Izmir (Midrash Talpiyos, s.v. **יעקב**) explains that when Hashem called Yaakov “El”, He meant to say that Yaakov had attained a spiritual level commensurate with that of an angel. Accordingly, based on the above, Leah could no longer be considered Yaakov's “wife” because he was now something of an angel. Since this happened some time before Leah’s death, at the time that Yaakov buried Leah, she was not really “his wife”, which is why he did not mention that Leah was “his wife” like he said about his father’s wife and his grandfather’s wife.

And Yosef fell upon his father’s face, and he cried upon him, and he kissed him (Gen. 50:1). In Rabbi Yehuda Hachassid’s ethical will (4) he writes that one may not kiss the body of one of his children who died, because then, even one will not remain for him. In *Sefer Chassidim* (236), he writes, that if a person’s son or daughter dies, then he should not kiss (their dead body) or allow his wife to kiss them, because this will shorten the lives of his remaining sons and daughters. From these two passages, we see that there is only a problem to kiss the dead bodies of one’s children—but not of anybody else. However, the *Peirush HaRokeach Al HaTorah* (p. 331) writes: That anybody who kisses dead people, their children will die. He then explains that Yosef was allowed to kiss his dead father because Yaakov Aveinu is considered to still be alive (Taanis 5b). The same explanation is offered by the Maharil Diskin. Rabbi Chaim Ibn Attar (*Ohr Hachaim* here) writes that a live person should not kiss a dead body because the dead are brimming with different forms of impurity. Doing so causes a blemish in the soul of the kisser. He explains that Yosef was justified in kissing Yaakov, because Yaakov was still considered alive. Rabbi Chaim Yosef David Azulai, also known as Chida, in his work *Dvash Lfi* cites in the name of Rabbeinu Efrayim (see R. Efraim’s commentary, p. 68) that there is tradition from Rabbi Eliezer son of Rabbeinu Yehudah that it is dangerous to kiss a dead person, because when one kisses a dead person, he has become endeared to the deceased who will then attempt to bring the kisser into his world (i.e. the world of the dead), unless the dead person is his mother or father. Nonetheless, a dissenting opinion is that of Rabbi Avraham Saba (*Tzror HaMor to Chayei Sarah*) who writes that we see from Yosef’s actions that one is *obligated* to kiss his deceased relatives a “kiss of departure” to show they are now separating from each other. He also infers this from the Torah’s description of Avraham grieving over Sarah before he buried her, “And Avraham got up from upon the face of his dead” (Gen). Why does it say “from upon the face...” instead of just saying “from his dead”? Rabbi Saba explains that this alludes to the fact that Avraham

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had kissed Sarah after she died (so he could be said to have been “on her face” he “got up” from that position). Nonetheless, *Maavar Yabok (Sefat Emet, 11)* qualifies Rabbi Saba’s ruling by saying that it only applies to anybody besides one’s son or daughter, but one’s own son or daughter it is forbidden to kiss after they died. The Midrash *Sechel Tov* proves from Yosef that one is allowed to kiss a dead body as long as it is before burial.

And Yosef returned to Egypt—he and his brothers and everyone who ascended with him to bury his father—after he buried his father (Gen. 50:14). Why does this verse refer to “burying” Yaakov twice? It is not only redundant, but superfluous! Rabbi Yosef Rosen, known as the Rogatchover Gaon, writes in *Tzafnas Paneach al HaTorah* that the **second** “his father” does not refer to Yosef’s father Yaakov, but to Yaakov’s grandfather, Yitzchak. He explains that the Talmud Yerushalmi (Taanis 4:2) says that the three forefathers are buried in the same way that people recline at a formal meal. The Gemara (Brachos 46b) explains that in a formal meal, if there were two people, then the more prominent person’s couch should be placed the highest, and below him would be his friend’s. If there were three people, then the more prominent person’s couch would be placed in the middle, the second most-prominent person would be placed in the highest position, and the third least-prominent person would be placed below. The prominence of the three forefathers decreased with the generations (see Avraham is the more prominent, and Yaakov the least). Accordingly, when the Tomb of the Patriarchs only housed Avraham and Yitzchak, then Avraham was in the more prominent position, and Yitzchak was to his left—in the least prominent position. However, when Yaakov was also to be buried there, they could not bury Yaakov to Avraham’s right, because when there are three people, the middle one is the most prominent, and the one to his right is the second-most-prominent, yet Yaakov was the third-most prominent, not the second-most. So instead they exhumed Yitzchak’s body and reburied him to Avraham’s right, and then they were able to bury Yaakov to Avraham’s left. This is why the Torah speaks of Yosef burying “his father” twice—Yosef returned with those who had helped him bury "his [Yosef's] father" and they had also reburied "his [Yaakov's] father"!

And Yosef’s brothers saw that their father died, and they said to him: ‘lest Yosef hate us...’ (Gen. 50:15). In *Midrash Tanchuma* (17) it says that when Yaakov’s sons were on their way back to Egypt from burying Yaakov in the Holy Land, they saw that Yosef went to make a *bracha* at the pit into which his brothers tossed him. This is similar to the Halacha that a person is obligation to make a *bracha* at place where a miracle occurred on his behalf, “Blessed in the Omnipresent who made for me a miracle in this place”. When Yosef’s

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brother's saw Yosef make such a *bracha*, they reasoned that once their father had died Yosef will not return to hating them. See also *Midrash Sechel Tov*.

And he was placed in a coffin in Egypt (Gen. 50:26). The Tosafists (in *Moshav Zekanim*, beginning of *Shemos*) write that the juxtaposition of Yosef's coffin to the beginning of *Shemos*, which lists **the names** of Yaakov sons, teaches us that one is supposed to write the name of the deceased on a tombstone which marks the head of the coffin.