

**TorahFax: Vayigash**  
**Rabbi Zalmen Marazov**

Thursday, Tevet 9, 5784 / December 21, 2023

Questions & Answers on this week's Parsha, Vayigash, in which we read how Yaakov and his family moved to Egypt. It was a re-unification of the family after being separated from Joseph for 22 years.

Q. How old was Yaakov when he came to Egypt?

A. Yaakov was 130 years old when he moved to Egypt and was finally again united with Joseph.

Q. In last week's Parsha we read about Pharaoh's dreams, which Joseph interpreted that seven years of plenty and then seven years of famine will come to Egypt. As a result, Joseph became Viceroy of Egypt. Yaakov and his family moved to Egypt as a result of the famine. In which year of the famine did Yaakov move to Egypt?

A. During the second year of the famine. However, the famine didn't last for seven years. When Yaakov and his family came to Egypt, G-d brought an end to the famine in honor of Yaakov.

Q. How long did Yaakov end up living in Egypt?

A. Yaakov lived there for seventeen years. However, his descendants stayed in Egypt for 210 years, until the Exodus.

Q. How many years were Yaakov and Joseph together, excluding the years of separation?

A. Thirty-four years. The first seventeen years of Joseph's life and the last seventeen years of Yaakov's life, after Yaakov came to Egypt and they were together again.

Q. The number of descendants who moved with Yaakov to Egypt (including Joseph and his children) were seventy. How many of them were men and how many women?

A. Sixty-seven men and three women. The three women were: Yaakov's daughter, Dina; his granddaughter, Serach (daughter of Asher); his granddaughter Yocheved (daughter of Levi) who later gave birth to Moshe. Yocheved was born as they entered Egypt.

Q. Which of Yaakov's sons had the most children and who had the least?

A. His youngest son, Binyamin (Benjamin) had ten sons. His son, Dan, had only one son.

Q. The Torah tells us that when Joseph met his father, after 22 years of separation, "He fell on his father and wept on his neck profusely." What did Yaakov do at that time?

A. Our sages say that Yaakov utilized that wonderful moment in which he was bursting with emotions of joy and love, to read the "Shema" – affirming his love and gratitude to G-d. It was a moment of a lifetime and Yaakov dedicated it to G-d.

Monday, Tevet 6, 5784 / December 18, 2023

In this week's Parsha, Vayigash, we read that after Joseph reveals his identity to his brothers, he urges them, "Hasten and go up to my father and say, 'Thus had said your son Joseph: G-d made me a ruler of all of Egypt, come down to me, delay not.'"

When Yaakov hears that his beloved son was found and is the ruler of Egypt he exclaimed, "Joseph my son is alive! I will go and see him before I die."

The Torah tells us that when Joseph hears that his father is coming, "He made ready his chariot and went up to meet Israel his father."

Our Rabbis explain that, instead of having his servants prepare his chariot, Joseph himself prepared his chariot to meet his father. The mitzvah of honoring parents is so great that Joseph wanted to prepare his chariot by himself in honor of his father.

The only reward mentioned in the Ten Commandments is for the mitzvah of honoring parents, for which the reward is long life.

The Talmudic sage Rabbi Yehoshua ben Alim was a very learned and wise man. When he asked, "Who will be my partner in Gan Eden (World-to-Come)?" he was told in a dream, "You and Naness the butcher will be together in Gan Eden."

Rabbi Yehoshua was astonished; "After spending my life studying and teaching the Torah, I will share Gan Eden with a simple butcher?" he said. "I must find Naness and see what kind of person he is."

Rabbi Yehoshua went from village to village and from city to city asking for Naness the butcher. Finally, he came to a place where there was a butcher by that name.

The people couldn't understand why Rabbi Yehoshua was interested in the butcher. "Rabbi, he is an ignorant person," the townspeople said. "I would like to see him anyway," answered Rabbi Yehoshua.

Naness too couldn't understand why the great sage was interested in meeting him. "Why did you bother to come see a simple person like me?" Naness the butcher asked Rabbi Yehoshua.

"Tell me, my son, what good deeds have you done?" asked Rabbi Yehoshua.

"As you can see, I am a very simple man," answered Nanness. "I have very old parents who are weak and can't do anything for themselves. Every day I visit them, wash them, dress them, and feed them."

Rabbi Yehoshua kissed Nanness on the forehead and said, "In that case, I consider myself lucky to be your partner in Gan Eden!" Indeed, honoring parents is one of the greatest mitzvot.