

## Torah Portion: **Vayehi**

(Book of Genesis)

*“And Jacob called his sons and said, “Come together that I may tell you what is to befall you in days to come”*

-Genesis 49:1

The 20<sup>th</sup> century American inventor Charles Kettering wrote, “My interest is in the future because I am going to spend the rest of my life there.” *Looking to the future* is the mantra of human existence. The future has become the proverbial olive branch of hope for a better life. It is also the escape hatch from the realities of the present. An entire industry has developed giving birth to the professional futurist.

Futurism is nothing new to humankind. In ancient times it was called prophecy. The prophets were people who envisioned the future based on the present societal strengths and shortcomings. Then there were the biblical dreamers, like Joseph, who foretold the future based on dreamlike intuition. Jacob spends the final moments of his life telling his sons (in no uncertain terms!) what they can expect from the future based on their past behavior. The prophet Joel encapsulates biblical futurism when he teaches, *“The old shall dream dreams and the youth shall see visions”* (Joel 3:1).

Between dreams and visions, past and future, whatever happened to the present? Life is lived in the present. Longing for the past or pining for the future diminishes the value of today’s joy and happiness. The foundation for a bright tomorrow is the sweat and toil of today; dealing with realities of the present, not merely hoping things will change in the future. The late 19<sup>th</sup> century father of modern Zionism, Theodore Herzl, wrote, *“Im Tertzu Ein Zo Aggadah-If you will it (and work for it) it is not a dream!”*

With the death of Jacob, and his beloved son Joseph, the book of Genesis comes to an end. Genesis transported us from the universal to the particular, from the creation of the world to the creation of a unique clan. The seed of peoplehood was planted in God’s covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, a dream and vision for a special land and a unique people.

And the saga continues. . . .

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