

PARSHAT VAYECHI
16 TEVET 5781/31 DECEMBER 2020

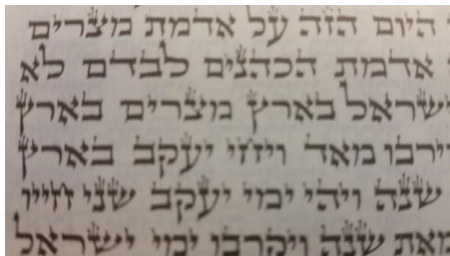


Water Lily Pond

Painting by Claude Monet, 1917

“I have come back to things that are impossible to do: water with weeds waving in the depths. Apart from painting and gardening, I am good for nothing. My greatest masterpiece is my garden.” ~ Claude Monet

CONFOUNDING BEGINNINGS AND ENDINGS



1. Why is this passage closed? (Rashi)
2. Jacob: Noticing Joseph's sons, Israel asked, "Who are these?" (Genesis 48:8)
Jacob called for his sons and said, "Gather yourselves and I will tell you what will happen to you in the End of Days...." (Genesis 49:1)

Joseph: Joseph said to his father, "Not so, father, for this is the firstborn; place your right hand on his head." (Genesis 48:18)
"So now fear not. I will sustain you and your young ones." Thus he comforted them and spoke to their heart. (Genesis 50:21)
3. The narrative of happiness is inevitably frustrated by the fact that only insufficiencies, defaults, deferrals can be "told"....Traditional narrative is a quest after that which will end questing....Closure is an act of make-believe, a postulation that closure is possible. (D. A. Miller, *Narrative and Its Discontents: Problems of Closure in the Traditional Novel*)

4. You have opted for security, tranquility: for the *answer*.
I have chosen insecurity and worry: the *question*.
I mark time at the edge of life whereas you have already
Reached death's shore.
To die on the threshold. (Edmond Jabes, *The Book of Shares*)
5. After they had finished dinner, Rabbi Yitzhak said, "This is what Rabbi Yohanan said: Our father Jacob did not die." Rabbi Nachman said, "But surely there was eulogizing and embalming and burying him! Was it for nothing that they did this?" Rabbi Yitzhak said, "I am interpreting (*doreish*) a Biblical verse." (Talmud, Ta'anit 5b)
6. Even though he was in the Land of Egypt, he knew that all of "Egypt" was just a hiding, inside of which there was nothing but that divine life-force....In the Talmud Rabbi Yohanan says: "Jacob our father did not die." When the sages objected, "But was he mourned, embalmed, and buried for naught?" Rabbi Yohanan answered: "I am just interpreting scripture." When a person seeks to interpret scripture and struggles at it, oral Torah is created. Such a person can find some of the light that comes from Jacob our Father's living even within the hiding. (Sefat Emet)
7. And yet did we not know that the closure of the book was not a simple limit among others? And that only in the book, coming back to it unceasingly, drawing all our resources from it, could we indefinitely designate the writing beyond the book. (Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*)
8. כִּי כֹה אָמַר יְהוָה לְבֵית יִשְׂרָאֵל דְּרִשׁוּנִי וְחִי
"Thus said Adonai to the House of Israel: Seek Me (*dirshuni*)/inquire for Me/interrogate Me/weave stories through Me, and you will live." (Amos 5:4)