

# דרכים בפרשה ויחי

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**ויחי יעקב בארץ מצרים שבע עשרה שנה ויהי  
ימי יעקב שני חייו שבע שנים וארבעים ומאת  
שנה ויקרבו ימי ישראל למות**

*Yaakov lived in the land of Mitzrayim seventeen years. The days of Yaakov, the years of his life were one hundred and forty-seven years. The days of Yisrael's death drew near*

Rabbeinu Bachye comments that there is no question why the Torah suddenly calls Yaakov by his alternate name Yisrael instead of writing ויקרבו ימי יעקב למות “the time approached for Yaakov to die,” because the Torah uses both names interchangeably. Throughout our Parsha the names Yaakov and Yisrael are used intermittently (“Yaakov” appears six times, whereas the name “Yisrael” appears thirteen times.)

On a deeper level, he explains that there is a distinct pattern in the Torah sometimes choosing to refer to Yaakov by his original name and sometimes by his additional name, Yisroel. The name Yaakov applies to the physical part of Yaakov's personality, whereas the name Yisrael refers to his spiritual aspects. When Yaakov had first been given the name “Yaakov” the Torah stated that this reflected his holding on to the heel of his brother, Esav (25:26). We find the name Yisrael first used in connection with Yaakov having successfully battled with the *Sar shel Eisav*, the Malach that represented Esav (32:29). It is therefore clear that the additional name Yisrael was intended principally to reflect Yaakov's spiritual accomplishments.

Contrary to the name Avraham which replaced the name Avram, the name Yisrael did not replace the name Yaakov. It reflected the fact that Yaakov had attained an additional dimension. The name

Yaakov henceforth became subordinate to that of Yisrael, but both names remained.

In our Parsha, any discussion of the physical death of Yaakov, or the subsequent handling of his body, he is called Yaakov. But with regards to the spiritual discussions, such as his instructions to his children found in his ethical will, the name that is used is Yisroel

The Ksav Sofer offers a different answer to why the possuk switched to Yisrael. The gemara in Mesechta Taanis (5b) states that Yaakov Avinu did *not* die. The Ksav Sofer explains that since Yosef was like his father, in a sense, this was a continuation of Yaakov Avinu, and therefore, he did not die. However, as mentioned, the higher level of Yaakov is the level of Yisrael, and Yosef only reached the level of Yaakov, but he did not reach the higher level of Yisrael. Therefore, the Yisrael dimension did indeed die. Accordingly, the Torah states that Yaakov's years were one hundred and forty-seven, but it was Yisrael that died.

Perhaps we can explain this a little differently: The name Yisrael was given to Yaakov *כי שרית עם אלקים ועם אנשים ותוכל* - *for you have fought with “God[ly beings]” and with men, and you have won.* It goes without saying that Yaakov Avinu taught everything that he could to Yosef. Those lessons were accepted and incorporated into Yosef's life. Therefore, Yaakov Avinu lived on. However, the concept of Yisrael, i.e. the fighting, is not something that gets passed on. Each person must be willing to fight on their own, because every challenge is unique.

We find that right after receiving his new name, Yaakov asks the *malach* what his name is. The *malach* responds: *למה זה תשאל: אין לנו שם קבוע, משתנים שמותנו, הכל לפי מצות* - *Why do you ask me my name- We have no fixed names; our names change, all depending upon the job that we are commanded to carry out as the shlichus with which we are charged.* From here we understand that Yaakov's challenges are not the same as Yosef's challenges.

Yaakov Avinu did not die, but it was at this moment that the next generation would need to stand up and embrace their own battles, because Yisrael's battles on our behalf were no longer.

**מרדכי אפפּעל, Good Shabbos**