

PORTION	DATE	HEB DATE	TORAH	NEVIIM	RENEWED
Shemot	18 Jan. 2020	21 Tevet 5780	Exo. 1:1-6:1	Isa. 27:6-28:13; 29:22-23	Matt. 2:1-12

It is written, “And Yosēph died, and all his brothers, and all that generation. And the children of Yisra’ēl bore fruit and increased very much, multiplied and became very strong, and the land was filled with them.” (Exo. 1:6-7) There are four questions that needed to be answered. First, the Torah already informed us that Yosef died in B’resheet (50:26) at the age of 110. Second, what is the meaning that “all his brother, and all that generation” died? Third, what is the connection between the death of the brothers and the entire generation that immediately followed afterward, “The children of Yisrael bore fruitful and increased very much”? Four, if the Torah is saying that “the children of Yisrael were fruitful”, then it would have been sufficed to say, “They were fruitful.”

Or HaChaim explains that the verses above are actually one as it is to inform us the chain of events that led to the beginning of the enslavement and its causes. And there are four causes. First that led to the enslavement is the death of Yosef. If he was alive, it would have been enough to ensure that the Mitzrim would not oppress the Children of Yisrael as he was a viceroy and no one would persecute any member of his family.

Second is the death of the brothers. For as long as one of them was alive, the Mitzrim gave them respect and would not degrade them. The Talmud¹ comments that when the Torah recounts which people accompanied Ya’akov when he was taken from Mitzrayim to Canaan for burial, it mentions the servants and elders of Mitzrayim before Yosef’s brothers. It is written, “And Yosef went up to bury his father. And with him went up all the servants of Pharaoh, the elders of his house, and all the elders of the land of Mitzrayim.” (Gen. 50:7) After the burial, when the mourners returned to Mitzrayim, it first mentions the brothers before mentioning Mitzrim, as it is written, “And after he [Yosef] buried his father, Yosef returned to Mitzrayim, he and his brothers and all who went up with him to bury his father.” (ibid, v. 14) The Gemara explains that before Ya’akov’s funeral, the Children of Yisrael were not respected by the Mitzrim aristocracy, but when they saw the honor that the Canaanite kings bestowed upon Ya’akov at his funeral, they began treating his children with respect.

Third is the death of that entire generation, meaning, the seventy souls that entered Mitzrayim with Ya’akov died. As long as they were alive, again, they did not enslave them. This also spurs another question as Yochebed, Moshe’s mother was still alive. We will discuss this later. Returning to the brothers, the Mitzrim were not able to convince the brothers to work. The Gemara² explains, using verse 13 which states that the Mitzrim enslaved the Children of Yisrael בְּכַחַד (be·fa·rech; with crushing harshness). It reads this word as a contraction of

¹ Sotah, 13a

² ibid, 11a