



## Haftarat Parshat Vayechi: Living Legacies

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The haftarah of Parshat Vayechi invites us to compare and contrast the last will and testament of David Hamelech with that of Yaakov Avinu. In this week's parsha, Yaakov delivers his final messages to all his children, departing from the world with closing words for each of them. He addresses their respective virtues and vices, offering guidance not only for the rest of their personal lives, but for the legacy that each tribe would contribute to the spiritual makeup of the Jewish people.

David, on the other hand, addresses only one of his children in our haftarah, issuing a final set of directives to his son and heir, Shlomo. Among other things, Shlomo is instructed to tend to his dying father's unfinished business with various individuals.

These contrasting approaches to legacy reveal two distinct paths of leadership and family dynamics, each carrying profound implications for future generations.

As I write this column, just a few hours after attending the funeral of First Sergeant Netanel Pessach, the twentieth alumnus of the Ohr Torah Stone network to fall in battle, these ancient episodes take on a deeper and more personal meaning.

During Netanel's funeral, with Parshat Vayechi in mind, I found myself reflecting on a commonality between Yaakov and David. In the Gemara in Taanit (5b), Rav Yitzchak surprisingly declares that Yaakov never died.

By the same token, in Rosh Hashana (25a), Rabbi introduces the phrase, still present in our liturgy and the origin of the popular song "David, Melech Yisrael, chai chai v'kayam", announcing that "David, King of Israel, lives and remains." In what sense can truth be found in these two profound statements?

Both Rav Yitzchak and Rabbi are clearly speaking not of the physical persons of Yaakov and David, but of what each represents. The legacy of Yaakov, the dynasty of David and the lasting influence of those two individuals on those, our nation, who came after them. We continue to identify with these sources of inspiration and this is what lives on.



And, in a manner both moving and tragic, the same is true of those who have fallen in battle. Think of Tzvi Marantz z”l, a graduate of our Neveh Shmuel High School, who had a vision of distributing tzedaka boxes for people to set aside money not for an organization, but directly to families in need of help and support. Today, in his honor, a mission is underway to distribute a million such boxes, as a continuation of his legacy. (If you wish to have a box delivered to your home, please reach out to me at [roshmosdot@ots.org.il](mailto:roshmosdot@ots.org.il).)

Or Yonatan Samo z”l, another fallen Neveh Shmuel graduate who had left a note clarifying that in the event he were to be killed, he wished to donate his organs to the greatest extent possible – and today, seven people are able to continue to live their lives, made possible by his own commitment to kindness.

And the same holds true for Netanel, whose mother Revital spoke at the funeral of his being an Ish Chesed, a person of unbounded kindness, asking attendees to follow in his path by dedicating five minutes a day to reconnecting with those with whom we’ve have lost touch – or those whom we’ve ignored.

Just like Yaakov and David, these young men and so many others live on through their lasting legacies, through the teachings they have left us and the acts of kindness they modeled for us. When we embrace their virtues and transform their memory into action, we ensure that their light continues to illuminate our path forward and at least partially, to live on through us.