

Kehos Chumash

Chassidic Insights: Vayechi, Chap. 49, Verse 32

32 Levi will not carry me since his descendants will carry the Holy Ark, and Joseph will not carry me since he is viceroy of Egypt: As we saw in the Overview, Jacob's death signaled the beginning of the descent that would end in the physical enslavement of his descendants.⁵¹ His removal from Egypt further intensified this descent.⁵²

This is the deeper reason why Joseph and Levi could not be party to Jacob's removal, since both embodied transcendence from subjugation: Joseph was practically the king of Egypt, both physically and spiritually.⁵³ Similarly, the fact that Levi's descendants would one day carry the Holy Ark meant that their job was to remain aloof from mundane life, focused on the Divine mission of the Jewish people. Levi's descendants were therefore never enslaved; they remained free to study the Torah throughout the Egyptian exile⁵⁴ so that they could be a spiritual inspiration to the rest of the nation. Likewise, when the Jews reached the Holy Land, Levi's descendants did not receive a portion of the land,⁵⁵ so that they could remain dedicated to serving God and teaching His ways of righteousness to the rest of the nation.⁵⁶

This explains why, although Levi was not to carry Jacob's bones, Moses, who was not only a Levite but a member of the Levite family that carried the Ark, carried Joseph's coffin out of Egypt: Carrying Jacob's coffin out of Egypt constituted a further descent into Egyptian exile; carrying Joseph's coffin out of Egypt, in contrast, was a part of the redemption. It was therefore fitting that a [Levite](#), indeed the chief Levite, Moses, carry out Joseph's coffin.

Thus, with Joseph's passing, the descent into slavery increased⁵⁷ and with Levi's passing the actual slavery began.⁵⁸

In our own lives, we can draw on the power of Joseph to be "king over Egypt," to recognize that we are inherently aloof from our challenges in exile. And like the tribe of Levi, who carried the Holy Ark, we, too, can draw upon the power of Torah to transform the darkness and challenges of exile into the light of spiritual growth.⁵⁹

51. Rashi on 47:28, above.

52. See *Zohar* 1:222a.
53. See on 39:1 and 41:55, above.
54. Exodus 1:10 (Rashi on Exodus 5:4); see above, on 15:13.
55. Deuteronomy 18:1-2.
56. *Mishneh Torah, Shemitah V'Yovel* 13:12.
57. *Shemot Rabbah* 1:4; see on 43:20, above.
58. Rashi on Exodus 6:16.
59. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 20, pp. 237-242.