



RABBI AVROHOM WEINRIB

First Things First, First Son Second

Yaakov lived in Egypt... (47:28)

He blessed [Yosef's sons], saying, "Yisrael shall bless [its children] by you, saying, 'May Hashem make you like Ephraim and Menashe...'" (48:20)

THIS WEEK'S TORAH PORTION MAINLY DISCUSSES Yaakov's death. Why does it start with the words "Yaakov lived?"

The commentators also ask, why did Yaakov choose Menashe and Ephraim, from among all of the Tribes, as the prototypes for the Jewish People to use as models for all future generations?

Lastly, why was Yosef split into two separate tribes just before receiving this blessing from Yaakov?

Yosef was essentially a person with two distinct sides. On the one hand, he was Yosef *Hatzaddik* (the Righteous), who withstood all temptations—even while spending so many years in Egypt, a morally depraved land. On the other hand, Yosef was also a great political figure, a master of finance, one of the most powerful leaders in the world.

Yaakov, looking into the future of the Jewish People, saw the need to separate these two parts. Having them intertwined only leads to confusion and a lack of clarity as to which is more important. When one can separate his involvement in the world around him from his involvement in Torah and spirituality, he can then prioritize and give true value to his growth in Torah.

Therefore, the blessing for all future generations was to be like Ephraim and Menashe—they are separate, and Ephraim, the symbol of Torah, will be before Menashe, who was more involved in the ruling of Egypt.

This also explains why the Torah portion is referred to by its opening words, "Vay'chi Yaakov, Yaakov lived." Yaakov, by setting up for all future generations the clarity of prioritizing our Torah lives, guaranteed that his legacy would live on for all future generations.

Another answer to our second question is offered by *Sefer Chochmos Hamatzpun*. He explains that Menashe was the older of the two, and he certainly

deserved to be dealt with as such. When Yaakov switched his hands and put his right hand on Ephraim, the younger brother, Yosef protested that his oldest son, Menashe, deserved the right hand. One can imagine the hurt that Menashe might have felt from his grandfather's "mistreatment," through the use of the left hand. Menashe, who understood the tremendous power of Yaakov's blessing,

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RABBI ISAAC KAHN

Leadership, Roles, & Blessings

Yaakov called for his sons and said, "Come together and I'll tell you what will befall you in the end of days. Gather yourselves and listen, sons of Yaakov—listen to Yisrael, your father." (49:1–2)

THE COMMON ASSUMPTION IS THAT THESE verses introduce the blessings that Yaakov gave his sons before his death. However, this is problematic. For one thing, Reuven, Shimon, and Levi clearly don't receive blessings in the verses that follow. For another, after Yaakov addresses each of his twelve sons, the Torah says (49:28) "And *this* is what their father spoke to them and blessed them..." which seems to imply that whatever he had said until then was not his blessings!

On the strength of these questions, *Chizkuni* offers another explanation: In verses 3–27 Yaakov told his sons "what would be the future that would come upon them," i.e., he assigned each of his sons a unique mission.

I once saw, in a book (I don't remember which), a slightly different

explanation. Yaakov was telling his children that each of their roles would be different—royalty, priesthood, scholarship, commerce, etc.—yet all would contribute their talents to collectively serving Hashem. Yaakov was explaining to them why each one had received what he did, so as not to create jealousy or strife between them.

With this introduction, let us analyze Yaakov's words to his sons.

He began with Reuven, telling him that he, as a firstborn, should have been the king, but because he had acted hastily he was no longer fit for that position. Next came Shimon and Levi; again, since they had allowed their anger to determine their actions, they also were not fit for the position of royalty. This brought Yaakov to Yehuda, with whom Yaakov proclaimed the monarchy will remain, seeing in him the strength, knowledge, and composure necessary to be a true leader.

Now Yaakov continued, telling the remaining sons what their missions

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At the Kollel

Every Day

👤👤 “Dirshu” Gemara Shiur

(Maseches Sota)

Rabbi Yitzchok Preis.....

Sunday 7:15–8:15 AM

Monday–Friday 5:50–6:45 AM

👤👤 Kollel Yisgaber K’ari

(amud-a-day of Mishnah B’rurah)

Rabbi Chaim Heinemann.....

Monday–Friday 6:55–7:20 AM

👤👤 Kitzur Shuchan Aruch

Live video conference!

Rabbi Dani Schon.....

Monday–Friday 12:05–12:20 PM

👤 Daf Yomi

Rabbi Meir Minster.....

Sunday–Thursday 8–8:45 PM

Shabbos (at CZE) 1:00 pre-mincha

👤👤 Nightly Halacha Chabura

Rabbi Dani Schon

& Binyamin Teitelbaum.....

Monday–Thursday 9–9:45 PM

Chavrusa Learning

(private & small groups).....times vary

Sunday *Free brunch!*

👤👤 America Runs on Torah

(Jewish Law & Parasha)

Rabbi Dani Schon

and Yisroel Kaufman.....10 AM

Grand Deluxe breakfast served

Tuesday

👤 Mishnah

Rabbi Yitzchok Preis.....8:10–9 PM

👤👤 Partners in Torah at the Mayerson JCC

Rabbi Binyamin Teitelbaum.....8 PM

Wednesday

👤👤 Torah Treasures for

Seniors at the Mayerson JCC

Rabbi Yitzchok Preis.....10:30–11:15 AM

👤👤 Downtown Lunch-n-Learn at Strauss & Troy

Rabbi Yitzchok Preis.....12–1 PM

Thursday

👤👤 Halacha (based on the parasha)

Rabbi Chaim Heinemann.....9:10–10 PM

Homemade refreshments served.

Minyanim for Standard Time

Shacharis

Sunday.....8:15 AM

On Sundays when the Kollel is not

in session, Shacharis is at 8 AM

Monday–Friday.....7:20 AM

Mincha

Sunday.....1:15 PM

Mon.–Thurs. thru January.....2:30 PM

Sun.–Thurs., Feb.–Mar.....5:45 PM

Shabbos.....2:40 PM

Ma’ariv

In the Beis Midrash:

Sunday–Wednesday.....9:45 PM

Thursday.....10 PM

KEY: 👤👤 Beginners

👤 Intermediate

👤 Advanced

👤👤 for men and women

Looking for a chavrusa? See Coordinator Rabbi Chaim Heinemann!

Chavrusos are available noon–1 PM on weekdays, and 8–9:45 PM Sun.–Thurs.

First Things First CONTINUED

surely felt like crying out, “Why does my younger brother deserve the higher-level blessing?”

Yet Menashe remained silent and uttered not a single word.

Seeing this, Yaakov said, “Let all brothers and members of the Jewish People have such a relationship with each other! Let all brothers be happy with their siblings’ fortune and not feel a twinge of jealousy! This will allow for a Jewish People that is devoid of strife and will live in a state of *shalom*.”

May we all merit to give, receive, and live up to this powerful blessing, of following in the ways of Menashe and Ephraim in their conduct with each other. 🥂

What’s Your Focus? CONTINUED

would be. Zevulun would live on the coast and prosper in the shipping industry, while Yissachar would be scholars, bearing the yoke of Torah, as a donkey bears the yoke of its load. Dan would be judges, Gad the soldiers, and from Asher would come regal delicacies. Naftali would be swift in commerce, in battle, and bearing good news.

Then Yaakov reached Yosef. He explained to him that, although he had what it took to be a king, “they embittered him and became antagonists...” (49:22)—his brothers had chosen to be led by someone else. However, Yaakov proceeded to bestow on Yosef all that he himself had received from his parents. (Our Sages write that Yosef was also called a “Patriarch.”)

Finally, Yaakov ended with Binyamin and his bravery.

Only after directing his sons to their respective paths did Yaakov actually bless them (49:28): “He blessed each according to his appropriate blessing.” The Torah, however, does not tell us what exactly those blessings were.

We can bring another proof to this explanation from this week’s *Haftarah*. As we all know, a *Haftarah* usually speaks about a topic similar to that of the Torah reading. This week the *Haftarah* begins with “David’s days drew near to die, and he instructed his son Shlomo...” (Melachim I, 2:1). King David, as he neared death, gave his son, Shlomo, instructions, not blessings, for his future—just as his ancestor Yaakov had done. 🥂