



Kinder Torah ©

Parashas Vayechi



The Best Blessing

"Abba, can you please help me understand this week's parasha?"
"I will surely try, Chaim. What's the problem?"

"Yaakov Avinu was near the end of his life. He wanted to bless his sons before he passed away. Yosef brought his two sons, Ephraim and Menashe, to Yaakov for a blessing. Yaakov asked him, 'Who are they?' Rashi adds that they were not fit to receive a bracha."

"So far so good, Chaim."

"Here is the difficult part. A few moments later Yaakov Avinu blesses Ephraim and Menashe. Not only that, he declares that this is the blessing that you will give to all of the children of Israel thought all of the generations. How did they suddenly go from not fitting to receive a blessing to receiving the bracha that would be repeated for thousands of years?"

"Excellent question, Chaim. Rav Zalman Sorotzkin asks the very same question."

"Wow."

"The answer begins with Rashi's comment on verse 49:1. Yaakov Avinu gathered his sons together in order to tell them what would happen to them in the end of days. He saw with *Ruach HaKodesh* all of the exiles, persecutions, wars, famines, pogroms, assimilation, and other misfortunes that would befall Klal Yisrael. The emunah and bitachon of our nation would be tested to the very limit. We would be challenged to keep the Torah and mitzvos while under foreign rule. In the end, the walls of the ghetto would fall and we would be invited to join the Gentile world. All of the wealth and honor of a secular life awaited us. We just had to give up . . . the Torah. To withstand this, and all of the other tests, we needed a special, very powerful bracha."

"Yaakov Avinu looked at Ephraim and Menashe. Who were they? Two young men who were born in Mitzrayim. They were sons of the *Mishne Li'Melech* - The king's second in command. They were born into wealth, power, and royalty. All of the knowledge and *gashmias* of Mitzrayim was theirs for the taking. They could have had any position they wanted. The most influential ministers in the government wanted them for sons-in-law. Did it affect them?"

"Not at all."

"Correct, Chaim. They went to the 'Jewish ghetto' in Goshen every day to learn Torah with their grandfather Yaakov. They did not turn away from their heritage. When the decree of *avodas parech* (hard labor) was declared, they joined their brothers in the suffering. They did not invoke royal privileges. Yaakov Avinu

decided that this was the middah that would save Klal Yisrael throughout the centuries, and especially at the end. Therefore he declared that 'Yisrael will bless with you saying, "May Hashem make you like Ephraim and Menashe"' (Bereshis 48:20) - the sons who withstood the test."

Kinderlach . . .

We always need Hashem's blessings. His Siyata Di'Shmaya (Heavenly Assistance) helps us every step of the way. This is especially true today. There are so many distractions to take us away from learning Hashem's Torah and keeping His mitzvos. All of the wrong doors are open. What keeps us going in the right direction? Yaakov Avinu's blessing. "May Hashem make you like Ephraim and Menashe." They withstood the test and stayed loyal to Hashem. We can too. When Abba and Imma bless you on Shabbos night concentrate well and think, "I want to be like Ephraim and Menashe. I will not give in to the pressure. I will ignore all of the nonsense. I will learn Torah, and do mitzvos. They did it, I can too!"



It Comes Back

"Avi, do you want to come with me?"

"Where are you going, Abba?"

"To Saba and Savta's house."

"Sure, Abba. I love going to Saba and Savta's house. What are we going to do there?"

"Saba just bought a new bookshelf. I want to help him put it together and arrange his books."

"That is so nice of you, Abba."

"It's the least that I can do, Avi."

"What do you mean, Abba?"

"My mother and father raised me from birth. They fed me, clothed me, educated

me, and gave me practically everything that I have in life. Now I have an opportunity to pay back a little something by helping them. How can I pass it up?"

"Abba, it is a real honor to help you and Saba. We were learning about this very subject in our parashas ha'shavuah class."

"Really Avi. That is so interesting. Please tell me about it."

"The parasha begins by informing us that Yaakov lived in Mitzraim for seventeen years. The Chizkuni points out that this verse was written to praise Yosef."

"That sounds perplexing, Avi. How does Yaakov's presence in Mitzraim praise Yosef?"

"Because Yosef supported his father, Yaakov, for those seventeen years."

"That is real *Kibbutz Av* (honoring your father)."

"The Chizkuni adds that Yaakov had fed Yosef for seventeen years, before he was sold. Yosef merited to support his father just as many years as his father had supported him."

"Yosef was very fortunate. Not everyone has such a zechus (merit)."

"Abba, may we all be blessed as he was."

Kinderlach . . .

Our parents are so good to us. They do everything for us. Every morsel of food that we eat, every stitch of clothing that we wear, comes from them. Where would we be without them? Nowhere. Therefore, when we see an opportunity to do something for them, we should jump. "Let me help you with your coat, Abba." "Can I pour you a drink, Abba?" "Let me carry your bag, Abba." Kinderlach, if we show enthusiasm in this mitzvah, perhaps Hashem will give us the same opportunity as Yosef. To help our parents as much as they helped us.

Parasha Questions:

- How old was Yosef when he died? (50:26)
- Was Yosef able to harm his brothers? (50:19 and Rashi)
- What were Yosef's brothers afraid of? (50:15)
- Why did Mitzrayim cry over Yaakov's death? (Rashi 50:3)

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