



TIFERET HASHABBAT

This Week in Tiferet

On Tuesday, in preparation for Asarah B'Tevet, our students participated in a Yom Iyun on improving one's midot. Shiurim were given by our staff about honesty, humility, gratitude and anger, all with an eye to being better and kinder people.

On Wednesday, we were privileged to hear from Rabbi Dr. J.J. Schachter, University Professor at Yeshiva University, who spoke to our students about "The Capacity to Change." This Shabbat our Shana Bet will be spending their last Shabbat in Tiferet. We will miss them – but we know that their bond to Tiferet will last forever!

תורת תפארת

Hands, Feet, and Brotherly Love

Mrs. Sarah Leah Haber

Parashat Vayechi

וישלח ישראל את-ימינו על-ראש אפרים, והוא הצעיר, ואת-שמאלו, על-ראש מנשה: שכל, את-ידיו, כי מנשה, הבכור (בראשית מח', יד').

When Yosef wanted his father, Yakov, to bless his sons, he positioned the older son - Menashe by his father's right hand and the younger son – Efraim by Yakov's left hand, as he felt was appropriate. The pasuk says that Yakov consciously switched his hands, putting his right hand on Efraim, the youngest BECAUSE Menashe was the oldest.

Two questions arise from this pasuk:

- 1) Why didn't Yakov simply ask the boys to switch places if he wanted to put his right hand on Ephraim, the younger son, instead of switching his hands?
- 2) Shouldn't the pasuk say "he wisely switched his hands, DESPITE the fact that Menashe was the oldest, not BECAUSE Menashe was the oldest?"

The Netziv explains that Yakov did not intend to negate the status of Menashe completely - after all he was the Bechor-but rather that the greatness of Menashe manifested itself in the physical aspects of life while Efraim excelled in the spiritual areas of life. Therefore in the order of camps of the Jews in the desert, Efraim preceded Menashe, because he is "older" in the spiritual sense.

The hands are connected to the head, and belong to the upper spiritual realm of the human being in contrast to the feet which propel the body, the lower more physical aspect of man. This is why Yakov did not switch the positions of the brothers; if he would have, it would look like he was removing Menashe's status as bechor completely. Rather, they remained standing such that Menashe was adjacent to the right FOOT of Yakov and Efraim to the left FOOT, because Menashe was superior in the physical aspects of the world, represented by the foot. But Efraim reigned in the spiritual world, symbolized by the right HAND that was on his head. So the pasuk does make sense: he put his right hand on Efraim BECAUSE Efraim was the bechor in that area and did not switch them BECAUSE Menashe was the bechor (in the physical arena.)

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תורת תפארת (המשך)

This explains why in the beginning of Sefer Bamidbar, Efraim preceded Menashe in the counting process but by the end of the sefer, Menashe came first. In the midbar the Jews lived a miraculous, spiritual lifestyle, and in that arena, Efraim ruled. But by the end, as they were nearing the entering the land, the miracles ceased, natural methods took over, and in those aspects, Menashe reigned.

One may wonder why fathers bless their children on Friday night to be like Efraim and Menashe. Why were these boys chosen instead of some of the shevatim? Some suggest that it is because these are the first two brothers who actually got along despite their different roles. The shevatim, at certain times, did not respect each. The brothers felt that Yehuda, who personified the pure spiritual world, as represented by the insular shepherding environment, was the ideal representative of the Jewish way of life and therefore should rule. Yosef, with his dreams, somehow represented someone who lived in a more physical world while maintaining his spirituality. The brothers did not respect this and saw Yosef as a rebel. But the reality is that Hashem did not create all people with identical abilities; He granted different talents to everyone. One person may easily master hundreds of pages of gemara, while one excels in the medical field. But He did expect us, like Efraim and Menashe, to respect each other's abilities even if they are different from our own.

May we all fulfill the Friday night blessing and live like Efraim and Menashe, who though very different from each other, loved each other with all their hearts.

Mazal Tov!

Mazal Tov to Zach and Davida (Shubowitz 5770, 5771) Schlessel on the birth of a baby girl, Sima Chaya! May they be zochim to raise her l'Torah, l'chupa u'l'maasim tovim!

Mazal Tov to Jenn Lauer (5770) on her engagement to Josh Geffner! May they be zochim to build a bayit ne'eman b'Yisrael together!

Mazal Tov to Shira Haar (5770) on her engagement to Akiva Ehrlich! May they be zochim to build a bayit ne'eman b'Yisrael together!

The End Is Just the Beginning Jen Gardner (5775)

Why is the parsha called Vayechi, to live, when the whole parsha is surrounded around Yaakov dying? The real question we have to ask here is what is life? We learn:

"ואתם הדבקים בה' אלקיכם חיים כלכם היום"
"But you will cling to Hashem for you are alive today."
Living is being connected to Hashem. Jews are inherently connected to Hashem, but to fully connect to Hashem in a way that is visible in the world, you have to overcome challenges and tests that Hashem sends us to prove that the connection is unbreakable. The time when you can really see that you have overcome all of the tests Hashem sent your way is right before someone dies. Meaning the only time you really notice that someone is alive is when he is about to pass away.

This was the actual end of Yaakov's life but this is the beginning of ישראל בני ישראל, the future of the Jewish people started by Yaakov's twelve sons. Part of seeing whether one has lived a truly fulfilling life is to see what he has left behind. In this case, Yaakov has left the future of Klal Yisrael as his legacy.

The parasha begins "ימי יעקב שני חייו"-the days of Yaakov were the years of his life. The ויגד משה explains that when someone lives a life full of Torah and mitzvot, the years fly by very quickly. Parashat Vayechi is the time when we see that Yaakov really lived through fulfilling Hashem's tests, living a Torah lifestyle and leaving a Torah legacy.