

INTERNET PARSHA SHEET
ON PARSHAS VAYECHI - 5757

B'S'D' Bonus QUESTION: "The scepter will not be removed from Yehuda" (49:10).
For most of our history we have been without a king. And during the second Temple period the Hasmonean kings were from the tribe of Levi and not Yehuda. How can Yaakov's statement be explained?

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"parasha-qa@jer1.co.il" Parsha Q&A - Vayechi Ohr Somayach

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Parsha Questions

1. What is a `parsha stumah'? 2. Give three reasons why Yaakov didn't want to be buried in Egypt. 3. "When I was coming from Padan, Rachel died on me... I buried her there on the way to Ephrat...." Why did Yaakov say all this to Yosef? 4. Initially, why was Yaakov unable to bless Ephraim and Menashe? 5. Name one great descendant of: a) Ephraim; b) Menashe. 6. According to the Parsha, how will the Jewish People bless their sons? 7. What burial ground did Yaakov give to Yosef? 8. How did the neighboring Canaanites react when Shimon and Levi killed the people of Shechem, and how did Yaakov react to their reaction? 9. What privileges did Reuven forfeit as a result of his rash actions? 10. Who is "Shilo"? 11. How did the tribe of Zevulun use the profits of its commerce? 12. Why is Yissachar compared to a `strong-boned donkey'? 13. What is a `shefifon'? 14. Which tribe had numerous olive trees in its territory? 15. Which tribe is compared to a wolf? 16. Which descendants of Binyamin "will divide the spoils in the evening (49:27)"? 17. Why did the Egyptians mourn the death of Yaakov? 18. From whom did Yaakov buy his burial place? 19. What oath did Yosef make to Pharaoh? 20. Which dignitaries paid respect during Yaakov's burial procession? 21. Which of Yaakov's grandsons carried his coffin?

I Did Not Know That! "Joseph's brothers saw that their father had died and they said, `Perhaps Yosef will hate us and repay us for all the evil we did to him.'" (50:15) When the brothers went to Canaan to bury Yaakov, and they passed the pit into which they had thrown Yosef, Yosef stopped and stared into it. The brothers thought he was awakening hidden hatred against them. In reality, Yosef was reciting a blessing, "Blessed is He who performed a miracle for me in this place." Da'as Zekenim MiBaalei Hatsofot

Recommended Reading List

Ramban 47:28 Egypt and Rome 47:31 Necessity for the Oath 48:1 The Division of Eretz Yisrael 48:7 Rachel's Tomb 48:15 (first part) Yosef's other children 49:10 (first part) Kings of Israel 49:17 Shimshon 49:31 Burial in the Ma'aras HaMachpela 49:33 The Death of Yaakov Sforno 47:31 Yosef's Oath 48:18 The Laying of Hands 49:7 The Humility of Dispersion 49:11 Signs of Mashiach

Answers to this Week's Questions All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary, unless otherwise stated

1. 47:28 - A `parsha stumah' is a parsha written in the Torah Scroll which is not preceded by a blank space. `Vayechi' is the only `parsha stuma' in the Torah. All other weekly portions are preceded by a blank space or they begin on a new line. 2. 47:29 - a) Egypt's ground was to be plagued with lice; b) At the time of the resurrection, those buried outside of Israel will suffer; c) so the Egyptians wouldn't make him into an idol. 3. 48:7 - Yaakov thought Yosef harbored resentment since Yaakov had not buried Yosef's mother, Rachel, in the Ma'aras HaMachpela. 4. 48:8 - The Shechina departed from him. 5. 48:19 - a) Yehoshua; b) Gideon. 6. "Yesimcha Elokim k'Ephraim v'ch'Menashe" -- May Hashem help you to be like Ephraim and like Menashe. 7. 48:22 - Shechem. 8. 48:22 - They gathered against Yaakov to attack him. Yaakov defended himself with sword and bow. 9. 49:3 - Priesthood and Kingship. 10. 49:10 - Mashiach. 11. 49:13 - They provided for the needs of the tribe of Yissachar so that Yissachar could learn Torah. 12. 49:14 - Just as a donkey bears a heavy burden, so the tribe of Yissachar bears the yoke of Torah. 13. 49:17 - A type of snake. 14. 49:20 - Asher. 15. 49:27 - Binyamin. 16. 49:27 - Mordechai and Esther. 17. 50:3 - Because he had brought blessing to Egypt and the famine ended. 18. 50:5 - From Eisav. 19. 50:6 - Yosef swore not to reveal Pharaoh's ignorance of the Hebrew language. 20. 50:13 - Menashe and Ephraim.

Bonus ANSWER: Yaakov did not promise that Yehuda would reign continuously, or that no other tribe would produce leaders; rather he promised that kingship would eventually return to Yehuda. (Gur Aryeh)

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From jr@novell.com Fri Jan 5 10:44:47 1996 mj-ravtorah@shamash.org
Shiur HaRav on Parshas Vayechi [From last year]

"Then Israel said to Joseph 'behold I am about to die and Gd will be with you and he shall return you to the land of your forefathers. And I have given you Shechem, as an additional portion above and beyond your brothers, which I had taken with my sword and my bow'" (Breishis 48:21-22). Targum Unkelos translates "Charbi U'vKashti" as "Tzlusey Uvausey", my prayers and my supplications. The Rav asked: why did Unkelos ascribe an interpretation of prayer to these words instead of the straightforward one of implements of war, the sword and bow?

The Rambam is of the opinion that the original sanctification of Eretz Yisrael that was performed by Joshua and the returnees from the Egyptian exile, was

a transient one and was nullified with the destruction of Eretz Yisrael, the first Beis Hamikdash and their associated exiles (Hilchos Bais Habechirah 6:16). This is based on the midrash (see Yalkut, Parshat Nitzavim 30:3) that ascribes the verse in Devarim 30:3 to the comparison between the Aliyah of Joshua and that of Ezra and the second temple: Joshua and his generation were the conquerors and absolute rulers of the land. Ezra and his followers were subject to Cyrus King of Persia yet they still were able to sanctify the land. The generation of Joshua was not obligated in Trumot and Maasrot until the completion of their conquest of the land and the division among the tribes (14 years), however the generation of Ezra was obligated immediately in these laws upon their return to the Holy Land.

This midrash can be explained in the following way: the original sanctification of the land by Joshua was based on military conquest. In order for the sanctification to take root, they had to conquer all of the land. It could not be done piecemeal. This sanctification process was fundamentally different from Ezra and his generation. The latter sanctified the land through Chazakah, settling of the land and the assertion of property rights over the land. This sanctification was an incremental one: additional pieces of Eretz Yisrael became sanctified as they were settled by the returnees from the Babylonian exile. This process ascribed perpetual sanctification to Eretz Yisrael (Kidsha L'Shaatah V'kidsha L'Asid Lavo) and was thus superior to the original conquest of Joshua.

The Rambam (Bais Habechirah 6:16) is of the opinion that the sanctity of the temple that was built by King Solomon is eternal (Shechina Aynah B'Tayla), however the original sanctification of Eretz Yisrael as performed by Joshua was nullified by the conquest of the land by the Assyrians and Babylonians. However the second sanctification of the land in the time of Ezra is eternal because it was achieved through "Chazakah". Chazakah is a difficult word to define, however the second sanctification was outstanding in that it was achieved through exceptional sacrifice and perseverance on the individual and communal levels. This overshadowed the original sanctification of Joshua and can never be nullified.

The Rav explained this further based on an interpretation of the Haftorah for Shabbos Channukah (Zechariah 4:1-7) in the name of Reb Chaim ZT"L. Zechariah relates a discussion between the angel and himself, where the angel asks him to describe the vision of a menorah. Zechariah professes to not understand the significance of the menorah and what it represents. There is a give and take between the angel and Zechariah as to whether Zechariah understands the vision or not. What is the significance of this discussion between the angel and Zechariah? The answer is that Zechariah realized that the menorah was symbolic of Ezra and his rebuilding the Beis Hamikdash. However Zechariah lived in a period where the Jewish People suffered from abject poverty. He understood the symbolism of a golden menorah, which represented splendor and wealth, however it in no way matched the existing state of poverty and deprivation among the Jewish People. They were so poor that the menorah of Ezra was made of lead, they were ruled by foreign powers, the high priesthood was subject to corruption and purchase by the highest bidder. They were so poor that they could not afford wine for Havdallah and had to institute the Takannah of making Havdallah within Tefilat Arvit. Zechariah could not understand how a golden menorah could symbolize the situation that Ezra and the Jews of his time faced in rebuilding the temple.

The angel replied to Zechariah that the vision he sees is not limited to Ezra, but refers to the coming of Moshiach as well, as the sanctification performed by Ezra is eternal. The sanctification of the land by Ezra planted the seeds and began the process that ultimately will culminate with the coming of the Melech Hamoshiach. The angel explained to Zechariah the significance of Ezra. "Not through great armies and not through great strength" the angel told Zechariah. The sanctification of Ezra will be different from the previous one done by Joshua. Joshua's sanctification was done through great armies and a show of strength. The second sanctification will be through the simpler, less obvious ways of Hashem, through Chazakah, through the dedication and self sacrifice of the Jewish People. Yet this sanctification will be greater than the previous one as it will begin the era of the ultimate redemption and will

endure eternally. Zechariah might think that the future looks as bleak as an insurmountable mountain. The angel tells him that through the sanctification of the land by Ezra that mountain will be rendered as flat and unobstructed as the level plains (Mi Ata Har Hagadol Lifnay Zerubavel Lmishor, Zecharia 4:7).

The sanctification of the land by Ezra required a preceding sanctification by Joshua via conquest. That is why Jacob said that he took Shchem through his sword and his bow. The direct hint is to the conquest of the land by Joshua that would be through physical conquest using the standard tools of battle. Unkelos explains that Jacob also was referring to the second and final sanctification that was achieved in the days of Ezra. This sanctification will come not through the strength of an army but rather through the prayers and supplications of Bnai Yisrael and their willingness to sanctify the land through their self sacrifice and dedication, both physically and spiritually, Tzelusey Uvausey. This Kedusha will last forever and will eventually herald the coming of Moshiach and the third Beis Hamikdash. At that time the golden menorah that Zechariah saw will shine brightly in regal splendor. (c) Dr. Israel Rivkin and Josh Rapps. Permission to reprint and distribute, with this notice, is hereby granted. These summaries are based on notes taken by Dr. Rivkin at the weekly Moriah Shiur given by Moraynu V'Rabbeinu Harav Yosef Dov Halevi Soloveichik ZT'L over many years. .

HALAKHA - 11: "Praying towards Jerusalem" YESHIVAT HAR ETZION
ISRAEL KOSCHITZKY VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH (VBM)
HALAKHA: A WEEKLY SHIUR IN HALAKHIC TOPICS

This shiur is dedicated in honor of the birth of Yosef Netanel, born to Naomi and Ari Zivotofsky ('80). Mazal Tov!

"Praying towards Jerusalem"
by Rav Yaakov Medan

Translated and adapted by Rav Eliezer Kwass

A curious problem arose in the RBM (= the Real Beit Midrash of Yeshivat Har Etzion in Alon Shvut - home of the VBM; see a picture on our web page): the beit midrash does not face directly towards Jerusalem, but, instead, due north. Though under normal circumstances every Jew in the world prays towards Jerusalem, should an exception be made when that will mean not facing the aron kodesh during prayer? Rav Medan, in a lecture given to the students of Yeshivat Har Etzion on Shabbat parashat Lekh Lekha 5750, analyzed the issue and arrived at practical conclusions. This problem is not unique to Yeshivat Har Etzion; often conditions necessitate building a synagogue or beit midrash (for instance, the Yeshiva University main beit midrash in the RIETS building) whose front does not face Jerusalem. The lecture deals specifically with the beit midrash at Har Etzion, but the conclusion of Rav Medan is relevant to similar situations.

INTRODUCTION

1. The location of the beit midrash and the direction to Jerusalem:

The beit midrash faces due north precisely, as does the middle row of seats which faces the aron kodesh directly in front of it. The right and left rows of seats also face the aron kodesh.

The Temple Mount is 38.5 degrees northeast of the beit midrash. A line drawn from the place where the shaliach tzibbur stands to the Temple mount would run between two lone trees clearly visible on the hill left of Neveh Daniel (997 meters above sea level) in Gush Etzion.

2. Many of those praying in the beit midrash are faced with a choice between facing towards Jerusalem and facing the aron kodesh. This problem arises in many synagogues which for one reason or another were not built facing Jerusalem, and often in a markedly different direction. An especially serious problem arises at the southern portion of the Western Wall. If one prays while standing perpendicular to the Wall it often means deviating up to 70 degrees from the direction of the Holy of Holies!

3. To properly understand this issue, three questions must be posed: A. How important is praying towards Jerusalem and the Temple? B. How essential is precision in this area? C. Is there anything wrong with not facing the aron

kodesh in a synagogue?

THE IDEAL PRAYER DIRECTION

According to the gemara in Berakhot (30b), the source for praying towards Israel, Jerusalem, and the Temple Mount is the verse (from Shelomo's prayer at the dedication of the Beit Ha-mikdash), "They should pray to God towards Your chosen city." No dissenting opinions are quoted, and the gemara concludes with the following derasha: "Like the Tower of David built up beautifully ('le-talpiot') - [The Temple Mount is] the hill ('tel') that all mouths ('piyot') are directed towards."

In contrast, the gemara in Bava Batra (25) offers four directions in which to pray, none of them towards the Temple! Of these four options, there is only one veiled reference to prayer towards Jerusalem and the Temple. The four options listed there are: A. ANY direction (except, perhaps, east because of the heretics) is legitimate because the Shekhina (Divine Presence) is everywhere - Rabbi Yishma'el, R. Sheshet and others. B. Towards the WEST, because the Shekhina is in the west (this is the direction those within the Temple pray towards) - R. Akiva, R. Yehoshua son of Levi and others. C. Towards the NORTH, if one wants to become wealthy - R. Yitzchak. D. Towards the SOUTH, if one wants to become wise - R. Yitzchak (according to R. Yehoshua son of Levi, if one wants to become wealthy).

Regarding the last two opinions, Rashi argues that a person should direct himself toward Jerusalem, but only his face should point towards the south or north. However, the Mahari Abuhav (quoted by the Beit Yosef in OC 94) and the Rama, say the opposite. They maintain that the body should point toward the north or south and only the face should look toward Jerusalem.

Most Rishonim view these two passages, in Berakhot and in Bava Batra, as representing opposing positions. However, the Tosafot and the Rosh claim that R. Chanina, who mentions the direction of the Land of Israel at the end of the passage in Bava Batra, takes the position of the gemara in Berakhot.

Most of the poskim, including the Rambam, rule according to the passage in Berakhot, that one should face the Temple Mount during the silent prayer. However, the Smag and the Mahari Abuhav, rule like R. Yitzchak in Bava Batra, that one can choose to pray towards the north or south, depending on if he is interested in wealth or wisdom. As opposed to Rashi, they maintain that one's body should be directed north or south, and only one's face should point to Jerusalem.

The Shulchan Arukh and the Rama adopt the Mahari Abuhav's position. It is possible, according to their ruling, that in the same synagogue people might be pointed in three different directions during the silent prayer. One group would face Jerusalem and the Temple, another would face south, and still a third would be praying towards the north! This was not seen as problematic, even during public prayer (the Mishna Berura implies that the three options were also open to public prayer), when we are usually cautious to maintain uniformity, because of the prohibition "lo titgodedu" - do not break up into different groups ("lo ta'asu agudot agudot"). This position is difficult to apply and has not been practically adopted. In fact, a number of the Acharonim (see the Kaf Ha-chayim OC 94:6) attempted to limit the Shulchan Arukh's ruling to where extenuating circumstances prevent one from facing the direction of Israel, even though, ideally, one should only face towards Israel and Jerusalem.

Even the Mishna Berura (OC 94:12) records that the custom in Eastern Europe was not to adopt the Shulchan Arukh and Rama's position. Most people followed Rashi's opinion and only inclined their heads in prayer towards the north or south, while facing their bodies towards Jerusalem. This is based on maintaining uniformity in the synagogue ("lo titgodedu").

The approach (1. above) that the Shekhina is everywhere and therefore one can face any direction, is rejected by the poskim. The Taz does, however, rely on it when he rules that if one began praying facing the west he should not move his feet in order to face Jerusalem. The Ma'amar Mordekhai argues that one should move his feet to the proper direction. **PRECISELY FACING ISRAEL, JERUSALEM AND THE TEMPLE MOUNT**

We have shown that the bulk of the poskim rule that one should face

Jerusalem during prayer. What is defined as "facing Jerusalem?" How precisely does one have to point himself in that direction? Is it sufficient not to clearly turn towards a different direction, or is it essential to face a particular direction? Three sources imply that precision is not so important: A. Our version of Berakhot 30 reads, "One should direct one's HEART towards Jerusalem." It seems to speak primarily about an INNER direction (the Arukh Ha-shulchan notes this). B. The gemara implies that even with regards to one's physical position, precision is not so crucial. It sounds as if one standing outside of Israel can merely point towards ISRAEL, but does not need to direct himself to Jerusalem or the Temple. Likewise, throughout Israel it is sufficient to face Jerusalem, and not necessarily the Temple Mount (the Arukh Ha-shulchan also points this out). C. Rabbi Chanina (Bava Batra 25) tells Rav Ashi that in order to pray towards Israel, Babylonian Jews should face south during prayer. Even though Israel is southwest of Bavel, Rabbi Chanina does not require people to face southwest during prayer (the people of Israel are even called "the westerners" in the Babylonian Talmud). Apparently, there is no need to perfectly align oneself toward Israel, getting the rough general direction is sufficient (the Ma'adanei Yom Tov's second explanation of the Rosh's opinion)..

Likewise the Rosh (and following him the Tur and the Rama) writes that the prevalent custom among European Jewry was to face EAST during prayer, even though Israel is SOUTH of both Germany (the Rosh's original home), and Poland (the Rama's home).

Despite these sources, most of the poskim held that one should strive for precision as much as possible: A. The Tosafot in Berakhot reject the version of the gemara that reads, "direct one's HEART," because it refers to directing one's body also. B. Rabbeinu Yona explicitly writes that one standing outside Israel should not only face Israel, but also Jerusalem and the Temple Mount. Likewise, outside of Jerusalem people should also pray towards the Temple. In fact, anywhere in the world people should face the kaporet above the Holy Ark in the Holy of Holies. Rabbeinu Yona clearly calls for precision. C. The Ma'adanei Yom Tov explains that R. Chanina was, in fact, telling R. Ashi that the Babylonian Jews should ALSO face the south when they pray, and NOT ONLY the west: R. Chanina was actually trying to fine tune their direction so they would pray towards the southwest, towards Jerusalem, and not only the west, as they previously had been. Both the Chatam Sofer (Responsum 19) and the Yad Eliyahu (section 1) explain the gemara this way. The Levush (section 94) writes extensively to prove that in Lublin, Poland, where he lived it is necessary to pray towards the south east, not merely to the east. He calculates the exact direction and most of the Acharonim (especially the Yad Eliyahu) agree with him. Even the Mishna Berura agrees with the Levush's opinion and holds that, ideally, one should face precisely towards Jerusalem. As we mentioned earlier, the Arukh Ha-shulchan and it should be pointed out the Ma'adanei Yom Tov (in his second explanation as opposed to C. above - his first explanation) rule leniently like the Rosh and Rama (against the Levush).

There are two practical ramifications of how precise one must be in praying towards Jerusalem: 1. If one faces the wrong direction and realizes this in the middle of prayer, is it necessary to change directions mid-prayer?

The Taz and Ma'amar Mordekhai, as mentioned above, argue about whether to shift direction once one realizes the mistake. Even the Ma'amar Mordekhai, who usually requires redirecting oneself, is of the opinion that it is not necessary to switch directions in order to face Jerusalem more precisely. If a Jew in Europe accidentally faced towards the east he would not have to move while praying the amida to face the southeast. 2. If the whole congregation mistakenly prayed in the wrong direction, (for example: east and not southeast) can an individual pray exactly towards Jerusalem or is this considered arrogant or liable to provoke an argument? This is discussed in the Yad Eliyahu (at length) and in the Mishna Berura.

FACING THE ARK VS. FACING JERUSALEM

I have not found any halakhic source mandating prayer TOWARDS the aron kodesh, but a group of Acharonim (the Ma'adanei Yom Tov, Peri Megadim, Arukh Ha-shulchan, and Mishna Berura) write that one should not pray with ONE'S BACK TOWARDS THE ARON. This prohibition takes

precedence over the obligation to pray towards Jerusalem. In other words, it is better not to pray towards Jerusalem if that results in one's back facing the aron kodesh. The Magen Avraham and Yad Eliyahu do not mention this consideration, implying that one should face Israel and Jerusalem at all costs.

The poskim who do take the position of the aron into account base this prohibition on two different verses: "their backs were to the House of God" (Yechezkel 8:16) and "they turned their backs towards Me" (Yirmiyahu 32:33). What is considered praying with one's back to the aron kodesh? In most of the synagogues and batei midrash whose arks are not facing Jerusalem, if one faced Jerusalem precisely his back would still not totally face the aron. What is the cutoff line?

The Arukh Ha-shulchan (OC 94:5) implies that the halakha is very stringent about praying with one's back to the aron:

"Likewise all those that stand to the north of the aron kodesh [mistakenly facing due east and not southeast] can face the east and incline towards the south. However, those standing on the southern side of the aron should not incline towards the south because then their back will be facing the aron kodesh. They should therefore face directly to the east."

Even though those standing to the south of the aron do not have their backs COMPLETELY facing the aron, he still forbids turning more toward Jerusalem.

This is how Ha-rav Amital shlita ruled for us in our beit midrash. All those standing southeast of the aron, including the shaliach tzipbur, should not incline towards the east but should remain facing due north, the direction of the aron. [This does not mean that they should pray in the direction that their seats face, northwest(!), but rather due north.]

I have two doubts about the Arukh Ha-shulchan's position: A. In 94:13 he writes that if the aron is on the northern or southern side of the synagogue one who is praying individually (not with a minyan) can pray towards the eastern wall. This seems to allow some leeway, even veering 90 degrees from the direction of the aron. B. Even if we accept that the Arukh Ha-shulchan rules stringently in this case, perhaps he was building on his own opinion that does not demand precision with regards to directing oneself towards Jerusalem. Perhaps, the majority of poskim who rule stringently about facing Jerusalem and the Temple Mount, would allow a person to pray only partially facing the aron.

Indeed, the Peri Megadim in the Mishbetzot Zahav seems to be less concerned about veering from the direction of the aron. Only the rav, standing right next to and south of the aron kodesh, would have his back to the aron if he inclined his body towards Jerusalem. With regards to the rest of the congregation, he, as well as the Divrei Chamudot on the Rosh, does not seem to be concerned with people only partially facing the aron.

The Mishna Berura, based on the Peri Megadim and Divrei Chamudot, seems to agree, for he writes:

"If he finds himself in a place where the wall faces the east he should incline towards the southeast. If, though, he finds himself praying south of the aron, he should not incline himself thus, so as not to appear to have one's back to the aron."

My general impression is that he is also only concerned about having one's back to the aron for one who stands directly south of the aron. Even though his formulation does not tightly prevent any other interpretation, his source in the Peri Megadim is certainly clear about this point.

Based on this, and on the Magen Avraham and the Yad Eliyahu, it would seem that as long as the line extending forward from between a person's shoulders reaches the front of the aron, it is legitimate to face precisely towards Jerusalem.

This presentation is, of course, only a theoretical suggestion, for the Rosh Yeshiva has already ruled based on the straightforward reading of the Arukh Ha-shulchan. We would like to point out, though, that even according to the Arukh Ha-shulchan when one BOWS he should try to face Jerusalem. One's heart should definitely be directed to Jerusalem and the Temple, as Daniel did in his prayer. Thereby, we will fulfill "They will pray to You towards the city which You chose," and Hashem will likewise respond - "You will hear from Your dwelling place on high."

adapted from Daf Keshet #240, Tammuz 5750, vol. 3, pp. 90-94.

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From: "gross@torah.org" "weekly-halacha@torah.org" Parshas Vayechi

For those of you who pay attention to the top of your e-mail, you will notice that we have switched servers to Project Genesis. Our hope is to improve services especially in regards to availability of back issues with this move as well as streamlining some other functions. We are very excited as Project Genesis, under the direction of Rabbi Menken, has created a quality Torah network in cyberspace. As of now, we have 1150 subscribers and are still growing - literally dozens joined us after Project Genesis announced our move. All of you are automatically subscribed and there is nothing more that you have to do except sit back and enjoy. Although we may have some growing pains with the change, we hope that they will be minimal.... One last note....I am pleased to announce that my bechor, Dovid Aaron has become a choson. His kallah is Chani Biala of Lakewood, New Jersey. MAZEL TOV TO THE BIALA AND KREISWIRTH FAMILIES! Good Shabbos, Jeffrey Gross Director of the WEEKLY-HALACHA L'zchus Hayaed Doniel Meir ben Hinda

WEEKLY HALACHA FOR 5757 COPYRIGHT 1996-7
SELECTED HALACHOS RELATING TO PARSHAS VAYECHI
By Rabbi Doniel Neustadt

A discussion of Halachic topics related to the Parsha of the week. For final rulings, consult your Rav.

Then Israel prostrated himself towards the head of the bed (Gen. 47:31) From here we derive that the Shechinah rests at the head of a sick person (Rashi)

Visiting the Sick: Halachic Guidelines

There are several Biblical sources for the mitzva of bikur cholim, visiting the sick(1). Some of the details of this mitzvah are derived from the manner in which Yosef visited his ailing father, Yaakov(2). Indeed, some Rishonim consider bikur cholim to be a mitzva min Hatorah(3). According to the Rambam(4), this mitzva is subsumed under the general commandment of v'ohavta l'rayacha k'mocha, You should love your fellow as yourself(5). The following are some of the more common halachos concerning bikur cholim:

The Shalah Hakadosh(6) divides the Mitzvah of bikur cholim into three categories:

B'gufo, with one's body - by taking care of the patient's needs.

This includes actually visiting him and raising his spirits. Often, the visit itself, particularly when the visitor is an important person, does wonders for the patient's medical condition(7). The Rambam(8) writes that one who visits the sick should be prepared to tell cheerful stories or engage in idle talk so that the patient's mind will be temporarily distracted from his illness. The Rambam adds that anyone who walks into a patient's room should do so happily, since a patient is sensitive to the mood of the people who visit him.

In our times, when patients lie in beds, it is permissible to sit on a chair near the bed(9). It is preferable, however, not to sit near the patient's head(10).

Some poskim hold that the mitzvah of bikur cholim applies also to a man visiting a sick woman - or vice versa - as long as they are careful about yichud(11). Other poskim disagree(12). Harav S.Z. Auerbach writes(13): "In my opinion just as nichum aveilim is permitted [across gender lines] so is it in regard to bikur cholim, but only to daven for the patient or to see to his/her needs, but not to have lengthy conversations".

B'memona, with one's money - by covering the sick person's expenses so that he has peace of mind.

B'nishmaso, with one's soul - by davening for the sick person. One who visits

a sick person and does not daven for him has not performed the mitzva of bikur cholim(14). One who is able to daven for a sick person and does not do so, is called a sinner(15).

When one davens for the health of a parent or a Rebbe, he should not honor them with any titles or descriptions. He should simply say, "my father ploni" or "my Rabbi ploni"(16).

When davening for a sick person, one should daven only in Lashon Ha'kodesh. If he davens in the presence of the patient, he may daven in any language(17). It is best if the sick person can daven for himself(18).

There is a dispute among the poskim if one is allowed to daven for the death of a patient who is suffering terribly and has no chance of recovery. Many allow it(19) while some do not(20).

Contemporary poskim deal with the issue of fulfilling mitzvas bikur cholim by means of the telephone. The consensus(21) is that while certain aspects of the mitzva can be performed over the telephone, other aspects cannot. They rule, therefore, that when a personal visit is impossible, a phone call should be made, so that the mitzva is at least partially fulfilled.

QUESTION: May a kohen visit a patient in a hospital?

DISCUSSION: In Eretz Yisroel, or in a hospital where the majority of the patients are Jewish, it is prohibited for a kohen to enter a hospital in order to visit a patient - unless he knows for certain that there are no Jewish corpses in the hospital(22).

Outside of Eretz Yisroel, or in any place where the majority of patients is not Jewish, it is permitted - in a situation of great need, such as a man visiting his wife or another relative - for a kohen to enter a hospital for the purpose of bikur cholim(23). Obviously, if the kohen is aware that there is a Jewish corpse in the hospital, he may not enter the hospital.

FOOTNOTES: 1 See Nedorim 39b and Sotah 14a. 2 Rashi Berishis 47:31. See Shabbos 12b and Gilyon Hashas. See also Shita Mekubetzes Nedorim 40a. 3 See Bahag 36 and Sdei Chemed Maareches Beis 116 who discusses the view of R' Yona. 4 Hilchos Avel 14:1. See also Meiri Nedorim 39b. 5 Leviticus 19:18. 6 Shlah vol. 2 Maseches Pesochim pg. 24. 7 See Nedorim 40a where the Talmud quotes an episode with R' Akiva concerning this. 8 Kuntres Hanhagas Habrius (quoted in Kol Hatorah vol. 40). 9 Rama YD 335:3. 10 Bais Hillel, ibid. 11 Aruch Hashulchan YD 535:11; Zkan Aharon 2:76. 12 Tzitz Eliezer Ramas Rochel 16 quoting Shu"t Vayaan Avrohom YD 5. 13 Written responsum published in Nishmas Avrohom YD 335:4. 14 Rama YD 335:4. Although one can daven for a patient without actually visiting him, still it is better to visit him and witness his condition. The feelings and emotions which are heightened by the visit, would serve to intensify the subsequent tefillah for the patient - Igras Moshe YD 1:223. 15 Brachos 12b. 16 Birkei Yosef YD 240:4; Reb Akiva Eiger OC 119:1; Shu"t Tzitz Eliezer Ramas Rochel 13. 17 YD 335:5 and Taz 4; Mishnah Berurah 101:16. 18 Breishis Rabba 53:19. 19 Tifferes Yisrael (end of Yuma, Boaz 3); Aruch Hashulchan YD 335:3; Igras Moshe CM 2:73-1; Sheorim Hametzuyanim B'halacha 194:2. Their view is based on the Ran in Nedorim 40a. 20 Tzitz Eliezer Ramas Rochel 5, who rules that in this situation one should not daven either way. 21 Igras Moshe YD 1:223; Minchas Yitzchak 2:84; Chelkas Yaakov 2:128; Tzitz Eliezer 5 Ramas Rochel 8:6; Yechave Daas 3:83. 22 Harav S.Z. Auerbach (written responsum published in Nishmas Avrohom YD 335:4); Shu"t Shevet Halevi YD 105. 23 Igras Moshe Yd 2:166.

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PARSHA - PARASHAT VAYECHI YESHIVAT HAR ETZION
ISRAEL KOSCHITZKY VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH (VBM)
PARASHAT HASHAVUA

Le-iluy nishmat Avner Yosef ben Yehuda Arieh from his children and grandchildren Oren and Rachel (Kronisch) Seliger, Jeffrey Kronisch, Zehava and Naama.

***** This shiur is dedicated in honor of the birth of Yosef Netanel, born to Naomi and Ari Zivotofsky ('80). Mazal Tov!

PARASHAT VAYECHI

Parashat Vayechi is both the conclusion of the individual conflict of Yosef and his brothers, and the conclusion of the wider story of the transformation of the story of individuals (avot) to one of the people (shevatim). The berachot of Yaakov clearly reflect this latter theme in regard to many of the shevatim (Yehuda, Asher, Zevulun, Yosef, etc.). We, therefore, have split today's shiur into two. The first half examines Yosef and his role vis-a-vis the brothers (once again) in light of the different berachot Yosef receives in the parasha. In order not to ignore the special character of Vayechi, however, the second half discusses a particularly difficult section of the berachot and explains it in relation to subsequent Jewish history. This serves as an example of what must be done for each of the berachot.

Ezra Bick

The following shiur is a summarized adaptation of one by Rav Ariel Iram (Chipsper)

The narrative of the previous parshiot takes place within the framework of a contest between Yosef and his brothers. At the end of this story, Yosef is clearly the effective leader, if by no other reason than his political position in Egypt. By analyzing the berachot in the parasha, we can gain a fuller understanding of the final resolution of this contest.

Yaakov blesses Yosef: "His bow dwelled in strength and his arms were made strong ... by the God of your father Who shall help you and by Sha-kai Who shall bless you, the blessings of heaven above and the blessings of the depths below, the blessings of breasts and womb."

This berakha echoes exactly half of the blessing of Yitzchak to Yaakov. On the one hand, "God shall give you from the dew of the heaven and from the riches of the land, and much grain and wine;" and, on the other, "Peoples shall serve you and nations shall bow down to you, be a lord over your brothers and your mother's sons shall bow down to you." In other words, Yitzchak blessed Yaakov with prosperity and fruitfulness, and with power and dominion. If we compare Yaakov's blessing to Yosef with that given to Yehuda ("your father's sons shall bow down to you"), it seems clear that Yaakov has split his own berakha into two - prosperity and fruitfulness to Yosef, power and kingship to Yehuda. What's more, the blessing of Yosef includes not only fruitfulness of the land, but also his own progeny - "the blessings of breast and womb." (This is even more strongly emphasized in Moshe's berachot before his death, which in the case of Yosef closely follow the verse from Yaakov's berakha which was quoted above.)

This is seen even more clearly in the earlier, private berakha given to Yosef (and his children) by Yaakov. Yosef is composed of two tribes, Ephraim and Menashe. Menashe's name signifies weakness and forgetfulness, whereas Ephraim's symbolizes, like Yosef's own name ("May God add to me another son"), fruitfulness and plenitude - "For God has caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction." Yaakov (48:3) calls Yosef and says to him: "Kel Sha-kai appeared to me in Luz in the land of Canaan and blessed me. And He said to me, I am going to cause you to be fruitful and multiply you and make of you a multitude of peoples ..." This is a quote of God's speech to Yaakov in Beit-El (35:11-12), with one excision, "... and kings shall come forth from your loins." Yaakov cites the berakha (leaving out the royalty, which belongs to Yehuda) in order to introduce his adoption of Ephraim and Menashe as tribes. The fruitfulness and multiplication promised by God has been delayed by the death of Rachel. Ephraim and Menashe fulfill

the fruitfulness of God's blessing to Yaakov. Yosef has inherited Rachel's mission to bear the fruit of Yaakov and that is why Efraim and Menashe are included as tribes. When Yaakov blesses Efraim and Menashe - "My name and the name of my fathers, Avraham and Yitzchak, shall be called over them" - he adds "and they shall spawn into a multitude in the midst of the earth."

(This also explains the switching of Yaakov's hands. Since the essence of the berakha is plenitude, Efraim, whose name reflects this principle, takes precedence over Menashe. The right hand gives the berakha with largesse, the left with measure. Yaakov explains the preference by saying, "I know, my son, I know, he too shall be a people and he too shall grow, but his younger brother shall grow greater and HIS SEED SHALL BECOME A MULTITUDE OF NATIONS.")

The life of Yosef exemplifies the principle of plenitude and prosperity. Wherever Yosef is (after he reaches Egypt), we find a multiplication of prosperity, whether the house of Potifar (39:4-6), the jail (39:23), or finally the house and kingdom of Par'o. Yosef is "the provider for all the land" (42:6). Finally, and most importantly, he is the provider for his father's house. Yosef's recognition and acceptance that this is his role, as he says to his brothers, "for God has sent me before you as sustenance," is an integral part of the reconciliation with his family. After Yaakov's death, Yosef reiterates this role, "I shall provide for you and your children" (50:21). When the brothers offer to be his slaves, he rejects it. Yosef has accepted the role of the berakha of Yaakov - sustenance, plenitude, support of life. The role of kingship, power and dominion is given to Yehuda, and Yosef accepts that.

It is worth noting that in all cases when Yosef causes a burst of prosperity in a house, he acts under the dominion of someone else. The "king" is not Yosef, but rather Potifar, the warden of the jail, or Par'o. This apparently is the proper division. Yosef is able to fulfill his destiny, to bring about plenitude and prosperity, when he acts beside a "Yehuda" who fulfills the role of king. The partnership of the two, each in his own role, is what sets the stage for the complete fulfillment of the berakha of Yaakov.

This concludes the series on Yosef and his brothers. The four different shiurim we presented, while not contradictory, have definitely stressed different aspects of this story and offered different explanations for what the underlying theme is. I would suggest you now re-read all four and try to integrate, for yourself, an ongoing understanding. To some extent, the different shiurim complement each other, in interesting ways.

Concerning today's shiur, I am wondering if it suggests that economists shouldn't be politicians (i.e. rulers), but should only work for them. Think about it.

Some other questions to ponder.

1. Yosef's distinction from the other brothers was designated "bekhora" by Rav Leibtag in last year's shiur. This is primarily exemplified by the double-shevet character of Yosef - he literally gets two portions, like a bekhora, in everything. This year's shiur explained this nature of Yosef somewhat differently. Another distinction of Yosef was in the special portion of Shekhem given to him by Yaakov (48:22) "beyond [what is given to] your brothers." What is the significance of this? Why Shekhem? What does this have to do either with "bekhora" or with "plenitude?"
2. A midrashic connection of Yosef to Shekhem worth thinking about is the following. A midrash states that Osnat, the wife of Yosef and the mother of Efraim and Menashe, was the daughter of Dina and Shekhem ben Chamor, born of the rape. This sounds very meaningful - but I am not sure what it means. Any suggestions?
3. Combining this week's shiur with last week's implies that Yosef accepted his role as provider for the brothers, but did not forget that they had not intended that. Rav Bin-Nun's explanation for Yosef's behavior in Miketz and Vayigash was also based on a distinction between what Yosef was trying to do, and what the actual meaning of the parshiot is (he accepts the basic point that it is about reconciliation and teshuva). It appears that the gap between intention and outcome is an important theme here. Why does the

Torah see that as a crucial element in the story of the genesis of the Jewish people?

4. What about Yaakov? What is his reaction to the story of Yosef and his brothers? (Some mefarshim believe that Yaakov never knew the real story.) Does Vayechi help us answer this question?

Finally, since Vayechi is the only place in Bereishit where the brothers other than Yosef and Yehuda get much individual attention, we present a shiur on one brother whom we might otherwise ignore.

Ezra Bick

The Meaning of Yaakov's Message to Dan

by Rav Yitzchak Blau

No biblical deathbed scene creates more drama than Yaakov's final message to his children. While the drama of the scene is clear, the precise meaning of Yaakov's words proves more enigmatic. The Abarbanel lists four possible approaches to understanding Yaakov's message:

- 1) He reproves his children for their errors.
- 2) He blesses them for the future.
- 3) He states prophecy regarding their future.
- 4) He delineates their portion in the holy land.

Different parts of the messages to certain children clearly fit into the above categories. Reuven, Shimon and Levi receive tokhacha, Yehuda hears a prediction regarding the duration of his monarchy, Yosef receives a blessing and Asher apparently discovers the nature of his portion in Israel. Dan, on the other hand, receives a more puzzling message difficult to comprehend or categorize.

Let us investigate the pesukim and list the difficulties. The pesukim (Bereishit 49: 16-18) read as follows:

"Dan will judge his people as one of the tribes of Israel." "Dan will be like a snake on the road, a serpent on the way, who bites the foot of the horse and the rider falls backwards." "For your salvation I hope. Hashem."

Pasuk 16 - In what sense will Dan judge his people? Why will this judging be "as one of the tribes of Israel?" Pasuk 17 - What does the comparison to a snake biting a horse's foot and toppling the rider say about Dan? Pasuk 18 - Why does Yaakov interject a prayer at the closing of the message?

When a mefaresh approaches this problem, he must determine which other biblical texts exist regarding Dan that might help elucidate our text. As a collective, the tribe of Dan receives notable mention on three occasions. 1) They are "me'assef le-kol ha-machanot" or the last tribe in the travel procession. 2) They take part in "pesel Micha" (Shoftim 18). 3) Their portion in Israel lies on one of the borders.

The verses could also refer to an individual member of the tribe. Dan's noteworthy individuals include Oholiav, who helped Betzalel construct the mishkan; Shlomit bat Divri, mother of the megadef, and Shimshon. Among the three individuals mentioned, Tanakh clearly portrays Shimshon as the most significant of the three by far.

With this background in mind, let us return to Yaakov's message. The snake imagery seems to revolve around a battle. This certainly fits in with Shimshon who fought the Pelishtim. It also works nicely with Dan as the last tribe in the order of traveling. When any nation attacked from the rear, Dan represented the first line of defense. Most mefarshim employ one of these two models to explain the entire section. Radak, Rashi and Ramban view the passage as referring to Shimshon. Rashbam and Malbim see it in terms of Dan's role as the last tribe to travel.

We can now turn to the individual pesukim. In what sense does Dan judge the people? Radak simply refers to Shimshon's role as a shofet. Rashi and Ramban agree that the verse speaks of Shimshon but translate "yadin" in a different way. They argue that "yadin" means "will take vengeance" (as in Devarim 32:36 and Tehillim 110:6) and not "will judge." According to this interpretation, the pasuk refers to Shimshon taking vengeance on the Pelishtim on behalf of the people. Perhaps they disagree with Radak because the biblical account of Shimshon does not include any judging in the judicial sense. Rashbam, who sees the passage as referring to Dan as a collective, agrees with Rashi's and Ramban's translation of "yadin."

How does Dan judge "ke-echad shivtei yisrael?" Most mefarshim

explain that Dan either judges or takes vengeance on behalf of the entire people as one. In other words, the emphasis on the individual qualities of a tribe in the berakhot of Yaakov are not due to divisiveness but in order to bring to the unified whole the qualities of the individual part. Rashi mentions the possibility that "ke-echad" means as the singular tribe of Israel, a reference to Yehuda. A potential source for such a parallel would be Moshe's comparing Dan to a "gur aryeh" (Devarim 33:22), the same phrase Yaakov employs to describe Yehuda (49:9). Here, the emphasis is on equating the role of the vanguard, a snake, with the more glorious role of Yehuda. In any case, interpretation of this problem at the end of the first pasuk remains similar whether one views it in terms of collective Dan or Shimshon.

Why does Yaakov compare Dan to a snake biting the horse and, thereby, overturning the rider? Malbim explains that the quickest part of an army and the part that would attack the camp first would be the horsemen. Dan, as the "me'assef le-kol ha-machanot," would have to defend against the cavalry. Malbim agrees with Rashbam that the passage refers to Dan's role as an entire tribe and not to an individual member of Dan.

If we turn to the view that Yaakov speaks about Shimshon, the imagery of the something below overturning a larger structure has great resonance. Rashi sees the image as referring to Shimshon toppling the pillars and collapsing the Pelishtim temple. If so, the snake parallel recedes into the background and the key to the image consists of a large structure toppled from below.

On the other hand, many mefarshim think that Shimshon somehow resembles a snake. Radak explains that Shimshon worked alone as does the snake. Ramban similarly states that Shimshon engaged in guerrilla warfare in the manner of a snake. The midrash in Bereishit Rabba (cited by Rabbenu Bachya) lists many other parallels between Shimshon and a snake.

We now come to the last pasuk. Why does Yaakov interject a tefila? As both approaches center around a battle, Yaakov may be praying on behalf of Dan. Alternatively, Yaakov may be citing a tefila to be recited by Dan. Rashi views this verse as the prayer of Shimshon. Ibn Ezra mentions the possibility that there is an understood word "va-yomer" prior to "li-yeshuatkha." Such a view agrees with Rashi that Yaakov cites the future words of Dan.

If we understand the whole passage as referring to Shimshon, another option emerges for the last pasuk. Yaakov emphasizes the limitations of Shimshon's salvation when contrasted with the yeshua of Hashem. Having foreseen what happens when a Shimshon provides aid, Yaakov turns to Hashem to ask for His help. Thus, Ramban and Netziv explain that Shimshon's salvation was temporary. Yaakov pleads with God to provide a more permanent solution. Da'at Zekenim offers the possibility that Shimshon expresses arrogance in his power and fails to offer credit to God. Therefore, Yaakov emphasizes the turn toward God for succor. This creates an ambivalent picture. Although Yaakov is blessing Dan, and, as we saw in the interpretation of "one of the tribes of Israel," is emphasizing the importance of Dan's contribution to the "klal," he is simultaneously warning against glorifying the role of the individual hero, who all too often assumes semi-divine stature.

Rashbam vehemently rejects the Shimshon approach, arguing that Yaakov would not focus on a single individual. However, as we have seen, the snake imagery may have more resonance if Yaakov speaks about Shimshon. As usual, the reader must carefully avoid assuming that the pashtanim have a monopoly on the peshat. The midrashic Shimshon view offers some advantages. In any case, we have seen how a broader employment of Tanakh can help illuminate a difficult passage.

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 How much importance do we attach to blessings that we receive from others? How seriously do we take them? Our Sages established that "everything depends upon the one who gives the blessing and the one who receives it." What if G-d Himself gives the blessing?

A deeper significance to the concept of blessings is found in the A-mighty's declaration to Avraham, "Veheyei berachah - You will be a blessing." This gave Avraham the Divine authority to bless anyone else he wanted, according to Rashi. The Ramban explains that Avraham became the model through whom other people blessed each other.

But there is another way to understand "Veheyei berachah." The Torah tells us that Avraham Avinu, just before his death, "gave Yitzchok all that he possessed. And to the children of his concubines, Avraham gave gifts." But how did he give his many other children gifts, if he bequeathed it all to Yitzchak?

"All that he possessed," the Midrash writes, does not simply refer to Avraham's material wealth, but also to his spiritual wealth, his essence, his very being. Avraham's personality and demeanor, his perspective on life - these he bestowed solely upon Yitzchak. One dare not equate material riches of cattle and oil with the spiritual riches secured by Avraham and passed to Yitzchak.

Yaakov, too, in Parshat Vayechi, wishes to bestow blessings upon his children as a last will and testament. The Torah states, "Each man according to his blessing, he blessed them." Yaakov individualized each of his blessings for each of his sons, Rashi writes.

But Rav Yosef D. Soloveitchik, zt"l, explains that "according to his blessing" does not necessarily refer to the blessings' recipients, his sons, but could, in fact, refer to Yaakov himself. Yaakov blessed them with his blessing - that is, with his essence, with his very being.

In addition to tailoring each berachah to the personality and temperament of each of his sons, Yaakov gave them all a common berachah, one that he had received from Yitzchak, who, in turn, had received it from Avraham.

Parents have always made every effort to bless their children with estates of material wealth. Some are even judged by how much they've left for their children.

The meaning of "Veheyei berachah" shouts out to us. You will be a blessing! How much of you did you bequeath to your children? How much of your Torah and moral character, how much of your spiritual legacy will your children inherit? Let us be sure to answer those questions.

Rabbi Yaakov Pollak Rabbi Pollak is the Rabbi of Congregation Shomre Emunah, Brooklyn, New York. © 1996. Orthodox Union

YESHIVAT HAR ETZION ISRAEL KOSCHITZKY VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH (VBM) STUDENT SUMMARIES OF SICHOT DELIVERED BY THE ROSHEI YESHIVA PARASHAT VAYECHI SICHA OF HARAV LICHTENSTEIN SHLIT"A

***** This shiur is dedicated in honor of the birth of Yosef Netanel, born to Naomi and Ari Zivotofsky ('80). Mazal Tov!

Menashe and Efraim

Summarized by Rav Yosef Tzvi Rimon

Menashe and Efraim take on special importance in our parasha. Firstly, they are considered by Yaakov as if they were his own sons, and hence they are entitled to all that is due to any of the shevatim - "Efraim and Menashe will be to me like Reuven and Shimon." Then, at a later stage, Efraim and Menashe receive an even greater zekhut than the rest of the tribes: "By you shall Israel bless, saying: May God make you as Efraim and Menashe." For all generations to come, when a father blesses his son, he will bless them that they should become like Efraim and Menashe.

This requires some explanation. What was the unique greatness of Efraim and Menashe? Why do we not bless our sons by invoking the names of the Avot, following the example of the way in which we bless our

daughters: "May God make you like Sara, Rivka, Rachel and Leah?" It would seem that we should bless our sons, "May God make you like Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov," or even "...like all the tribes of Israel."

The answer is to be found in Yaakov's words at the beginning of the chapter, when he compares Efraim and Menashe to Reuven and Shimon: "And now your two sons who were born to you BEFORE I CAME TO YOU IN EGYPT, they are mine. Efraim and Menashe will be to me like Reuven and Shimon..." Yaakov chooses specifically those two sons who were born to Yosef in Egypt before Yaakov's arrival there. Inherent in this very fact we find the explanation for their being singled out.

Efraim and Menashe were born and brought up in a foreign country, far away from Yaakov and his family. Despite this isolation, they grew up firmly rooted in Jewish tradition. All those who followed them were born when all of benei Yisrael, the entire family, were already in Egypt, and for them the challenge of remaining within the tradition and the family would be much less difficult.

Yaakov himself, during the many years that he spent with Lavan, lived isolated from his family. According to the midrash, he later declared that he had passed the test of "I lived with Lavan and kept the 613 mitzvot." Yaakov also knew that his descendants were destined to spend many long years in galut, away from "home," and he was afraid for their religious fate. Would they be able to follow his example and remain faithful to the Torah even when far removed from their familiar surroundings?

Menashe and Efraim demonstrated to Yaakov that his example while living with Lavan was not a one-time phenomenon. They, too, despite their isolation from the family, were steadfast in their faith. This was their unique characteristic, and this is what rendered them worthy of their elevated status. (Originally delivered on Leil Shabbat, Parashat Vayechi 5753. Translated by Kaeren Fish.)

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"RavFrاند" List - Rabbi Frاند on Parshas Vayechi

The Essence of a Jew: "I Have More Than My Share" In this week's Parsha, the blessing given to Yehuda reads, [Bereshis 49:8] "Yehuda -- your brothers will praise you..." (yoducha achecha). This is the simple translation of the verse, that the word 'yoducha' comes from 'l-hodos,' meaning to thank or to give honor. However, the Daas Zekeinim m'baalei HaTosfos bring an alternative interpretation of these words. They say that the blessing of Yaakov was that "All Jews will be called after your name" -- i.e. Jews (Yehudim) from Judah (Yehuda). As we all know, this is true in many languages. The name for Jew in German, which unfortunately was rubbed in our faces, is Jud -- from Judah. The name 'Yid,' is from Yehuda. The name 'Jew' is from Judah, as well. The question, however, is: why? What is it about the name Yehuda, and the nature of this name, that it should be chosen to define what the essence of a Jew is for all eternity? If we look in Parshas Vayetze [29:35] when the children were born, we find, "she conceived again and bore a son and declared 'This time let me gratefully praise Hashem (O-deh es Hashem),' therefore she called his name Yehuda..." [from the same root as O-deh]. Rash"i asks, "What does Leah mean, 'let me praise Hashem'?" He explains that she received more than her "fair" allotment of sons. If the Twelve Tribes were destined to descend from four Matriarchs, based on an equal share basis each mother would have had 3 sons. Leah, who was already the mother of Reuvein, Shimeon, and Levi said that with the birth of Yehudah, "I now have more than my share." The Chidushei HaRim says that the statement, "I have taken more than my share," sums up the Jewish attitude to life. "I have more than I deserve" is the essence of what a Jew is supposed to be. That is why we are called by

the name Yehuda. Esav said "I have a lot" [33:9]. That means there is always more to have. The philosophy of Yaakov is "I have everything" [33:11]. If one has everything, there is nothing more to have. This is to be the Jewish philosophy -- I have more than I deserve; I don't deserve even this. That is why we are called by the name Yehuda.

Don't Violate the Torah to Keep The Torah: Ends Don't Justify Means

The blessing to Yehuda continues: "The scepter shall not depart from Yehuda..." [49:10]. The Ramba"n says that the intent of this verse is that monarchy shall not pass from Yehuda to any of his brothers. All rulership in Israel must stem from Yehuda. The Ramba"n adds a frightening and unbelievable elaboration: "This was the reason for the punishment of the Chashmoneans who ruled in the time of the Second Temple." The Chashmoneans, who were Kohanim, but who ultimately assumed the Monarchy, were guilty of violating Yaakov's decree of "The scepter shall not depart from Yehuda." The Ramba"n says about the Chashmoneans, "They were most elevated and righteous (Chasidei Elyon) and if not for them, Torah and Mitzvos would have been forgotten from Israel." And yet, he says that their punishment for violating this decree was great -- to the extent that the Talmud says, [Bava Basra 3b] "whoever says 'I descend from the House of the Chashmoneans' is a slave." All descendants of this great family were killed. They have no remnant among us today. Rav Simcha Zissel says that this Ramba"n teaches us a lesson that we so often forget: Never, ever, do the ends justify the means. Even though the Chashmoneans were righteous and what they did was noble; even though they saved the Beis HaMikdash and saved Torah; even though the Monarchy was thrust upon them and they were well-intended, even though they violated the Torah for the best of reasons and the best of intentions... it doesn't make a difference! One must never violate the Torah to keep the Torah. One can have the most noble calculations and reasons in the world, but the lesson we see is "Don't break the Torah to 'keep' the Torah." We don't have the right to do that. The ends never justify the means. They were right in rededicating the Beis HaMikdash. They were right in what they did. But they went too far. Did they do it with bad intent? G-d forbid. Did they do it for their own self-aggrandizement? Chas V'sholom. But they transgressed "The scepter shall not depart from Yehudah." The consequences of that are always bad.

How many times are we faced, again and again, with this situation? The big picture is good. We are going to accomplish so much by doing it. So we have to transgress something 'small.' We have to violate some 'little' halacha, for the 'big picture,' for the 'bottom line.' Never! This is what the Ramba"n is saying. The Chashmoneans were wiped out because they violated "The scepter shall not depart from Yehudah." This is a lesson which we have to review again and again, because so many times and in so many situations it is so difficult to accept. It seems so worthwhile... It seems so right... But that is the rule -- Don't violate the Torah to keep the Torah.

A Request of Mercy: Bring Sickness Into the World We hear, unfortunately all too frequently, of tragedies where airliners suddenly explode in the sky. In discussing such a tragedy, I once heard a woman on a radio talk show express a thought which she felt was semi-consoling in the midst of the great misfortune. "Thank G-d they didn't know what hit them. A bomb goes off at 31,000 feet, one doesn't have a chance to think. One is just dead. They died without pain or anguish. They didn't think 'I am going to die'. They were spared from that trauma." I want to suggest that this is not a proper attitude. I want to bring as a proof from a Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer on this week's parsha. On the verse "Behold your father is sick" [48:1] the Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer comments, that from the time the world was created until Yaakov, no one ever got sick and died. A person would be fit as a fiddle until one day, all of a sudden, he would sneeze and his soul would depart through his nostrils. Regarding this situation, Yaakov our Patriarch came and asked 'Mercy from G-d' that people should get sick, so that they would have an inkling that death was approaching: "Please do not take away my soul until I have a chance to command my children and my household." Yaakov told G-d, "I want to get my house in order; I want to

get my own thoughts in order; I want to talk to my children." And G-d responded, as it is written, "Behold your father is sick." This was a condition about which all of humanity was amazed, since nothing like this had ever happened since the creation of Heaven and Earth. What we see from this Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer is that it is not good to just die without warning, and to be suddenly taken from this world. People need time to put their own thoughts in order and to put their houses in order. They need time with their children. They need time with their spouses. As much as we suffer from disease, at least we have a warning -- and that is a blessing. People who die 'without knowing what hit them,' are not 'fortunate;' they are 'deprived.' 'Wisdom Among the Gentiles should be believed' [Eicha Rabba -- 2:9]. After the Challenger disaster, there was a tumult as to whether the astronauts did or did not know of their pending doom. When they finally found the tapes and heard that their last words were "Uh-oh,!" their lawyers wanted to sue N.A.S.A. because they suffered 'extra trauma,' because they 'knew.' A non-Jewish columnist wrote, at that time, "Does it necessarily follow that it would have been more merciful that death come so instantaneously that the final conscious emotion was a sense of exhilaration, or does such an end rob a person of the right to reflect, even if only for a few precious moments, on those things that made life worth living." I think that it's true. A person needs time. He needs time to do Teshuva [return to HaShem]. He needs time to make peace -- if with no one else, then at least with his Creator. We need time. That is what the Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer is saying. Let it be a moment, but we need time.

Personalities & Sources: Daas Zekeinim m'Baalei haTosfos -- Collection of comments on Chumash by the Tosafists of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries (France/Germany). Rash"i -- R. Shlomo Yitzchaki (1040-1105); Father of all Torah Commentaries; France. Chidushei HaRim -- R. Yitzchak Meir of Ger (1799-1866), founder of Ger Chassidism; Poland. Ramba"n -- R. Moshe ben Nachman (1194-1270); Gerona, Spain; Israel. R. Simcha Zissel Ziv -- (1824-1898) "The Alter from Kelm"; disciple of R. Yisrael Salanter; head of a famous Mussar Yeshiva, the Talmud Torah of Kelm, Lithuania. Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer -- Midrash composed by the school of the Tanna R' Eliezer ben Hyrcanus (c. 100). An important commentary on this midrash was composed by R. Dovid Luria (1798-1855); Russia.

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Shiur HaRav Soloveichik ZT"L on Parshas Veyeichi
 Why did Yaakov require that Yosef take an oath that he would bury him in Canaan? The classical answer is that in case Paroh would not want to allow Yaakov to be buried in Canaan, the oath would convince Paroh to allow him to be buried there.

The Rav explained that in order to understand this story, one must read between the lines. We need to understand exactly what Yosef represented, He had attained the highest political level in Egypt. Paroh said that only the throne separated Yosef's power from his in Egypt, Rak Hakisei Egdal Mimeka. When the Egyptians needed food, Paroh told them to go to Yosef and do whatever he will require of them. If he was at such a high level why would Yaakov feel that it was necessary to make Yosef take an oath. Yosef had sufficient power to order his removal to Canaan, why was it necessary to back it up with an oath? After all, This was Yosef who was so wise, powerful and respected that he even succeeded in getting Paroh to listen to him and recognize the need to feed all people who were affected by the

famine, not only the Egyptian population. Also, Paroh had great respect for Yosef's family. He commanded Yosef to tell his family that Egypt was open before them and they can settle in the finest parts of the land. So Paroh was pre-disposed to looking favorably at Yosef and his family. So why did Yosef feel that he had to apply pressure to Paroh to get him to agree to allow Yaakov's burial in Canaan?

The Rav said that he finally understood Yosef's actions after he was told the following story. Edmund Rothchild, the well known philanthropist, passed away around the time of the 1948 War of Independence. He wanted to be buried in Israel but because of the war taking place at that time his remains could not be sent over. He was buried in France. Some time later, when conditions permitted the exhumation and reinterment in Israel, his children made a request to the interior ministry to send his remains to Israel. When some time passed and they did not receive a reply, they inquired and were told that De Gaulle himself was holding up their request. They were wondering why De Gaulle himself would be interested in this matter.

When asked, he responded that he was troubled by the request. He had always thought of Rothchild as first and foremost a Frenchman. To be a Frenchman means that one is born, lives, dies and is buried on French soil. He could not understand why he would want his remains removed to non-French soil. Such a request would imply that he was not a true Frenchman. Eventually De Gaulle gave in and allowed the exhumation and transportation to Israel, however his opinion of the family Rothchild as Frenchmen was changed.

This was Yosef's dilemma. He had spent so many years as the Viceroy of Egypt. Yosef was thought of as Egyptian to the core by Paroh and all of Egypt. One could well imagine, that Yosef had his enemies and detractors that were constantly insinuating that he was not a loyal Egyptian. Paroh believed in Yosef and paid no attention to these anti-Yosef forces. However, if Yosef would now request that his father be buried outside of Egypt, Paroh might begin to doubt Yosef's loyalty to Egypt. How could he, the most powerful person in Egypt after Paroh, prefer to have his father buried in a foreign land? Perhaps Yosef thought of Egypt as simply another country that he passed through. Or maybe he still considered a foreign land, Canaan, his true home. Yosef was afraid that Paroh might have second thoughts about his decision to grant so much power to Yosef.

Yosef therefore applied pressure to Paroh saying that it is his father's wish to be buried in Egypt, not Yosef's. Yosef wanted to send a message to Paroh that his trust in him was well placed. He did indeed believe that Egypt was his home. However in this case he is powerless to change his father's burial place, as he took an oath to bury him in Canaan. He is the messenger in this case and is powerless to alter the request of his father.

That is why Yosef was sensitive in how he phrased the request to Paroh. He sent messengers to Paroh to ask in a roundabout way, saying that he is just a messenger of his father who requested that he be buried in Canaan. Yosef wanted to stress that he was not rejecting his status as an Egyptian. Rather he is only making this request because of the oath that he swore to his father.

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 5757 - "Tehillim: How many psalms?"

The Weekly Internet
 P A R A S H A - P A G E ---
 --- by Mordecai Kornfeld of Har Nof,
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 ===== This week's publication has been dedicated by David Kastor, with a prayer for the speedy return of Bracha bas Raatzta to her full health.

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TEHILLIM: HOW MANY PSALMS?
THE DISCREPANCY IN THE PSALM-COUNT The days of Yaakov, the years of his life, were one hundred and forty-seven years.
(Bereishit 47:28)

There are one hundred forty-seven psalms in the book of Tehillim, corresponding to the 147 years of Yaakov's life, as suggested in the verse "You are Holy, enthroned upon the praises of Yisroel [= another name for Yaakov]." (Massechet Sofrim 16:11)

What did Yaakov say (during the nights when he would stay up tending Lavan's sheep)? ...The entire Book of Tehillim, as it says, "You are Holy, enthroned upon the praises of Yisroel (=Yaakov)." (Bereishit Rabba 74:11)

To most people, it comes as quite a surprise to hear that there are 147 psalms in the Book of Tehillim. In all printed editions of the Book there are 150 psalms! Apparently, the arrangement of the psalms in the days of the Talmud differed somewhat from what appears in today's texts. It is inconceivable that three psalms that were not in the ancient edition were added from some other source; the comments of the Sages of the Talmud cover every single one of the psalms in our current editions. The secret to the mysterious addition of three psalms over the centuries must lie with the rearrangement of the existing psalms -- i.e., splitting what was originally one psalm into two separate units, in three different instances. One such instance is in fact recorded in the Talmud itself. In Berachot 9b we are told that the first two psalms in Tehillim (according to our count) should actually be counted as one long psalm. Apparently, the practice of splitting this psalm into two parts was prevalent already in Talmudic times and the Gemara had to point out that this was not originally the case. However, this is the only instance of such a phenomenon found in the Talmud. This accounts for only one of the three "missing" psalms -- i.e. the three psalms that were "added" to the original 147 by breaking them off from their parent psalm. How can we account for the other two missing psalms? This question is discussed by many later commentaries (Yefe Mareh [to Yerushalmi Shabbat 16:1], Rav Elazar Flekles [Teshuvah Me'Ahavah 1:111] and others), but in the end is left unresolved. Very little has been written on this matter that is both convincing and in keeping with the Talmudic and Midrashic sources. (Rav David Cohen, in Ohel David end of vol. II, offers some interesting insights on the subject, but leaves room for further research. See also Rav Wolfe of Heidenheim's essay on this subject, -- in the Tehillim he printed in Redelheim, Germany -- based on the division found in the Salonika 1521 print of the Yalkut Shimoni.) Let us attempt to reanalyze the situation.

II 2 UNACCEPTABLE SOLUTIONS There are several possibilities we may consider in our search for the extra psalms: According to one reading in Rashi Megillah 17b (which is the reading found in all printed editions and is the reading quoted by Tosafot ad loc.) it seems that what we today call psalms 9 and 10 are in fact counted as one psalm. (The two psalms indeed are related in theme. It is also interesting to note that psalm 9 contains the beginning of a loose alphabetical acrostic -- from Aleph to Kaf -- and psalm 10, the end -- Lamed, and later Koph through Tav.) It may also be learned from the Torat Chaim (Shavuot 15b) that according to Rashi (ibid.), psalms 90 and 91 should be considered as one. (It is interesting to note that the two are indeed read together when they appear in the prayerbook.) We now have candidates for the extra two psalms. Alternatively, the commentary attributed to Rashi on Divrei Hayyamim (I, 16:34) asserts that Pss. 105 and 106 are in reality one long psalm, both reflected in the prayer that King David offered in Divrei Hayyamim (ibid.). Following through that approach, it would have to be concluded that Ps. 96 is also part of the same long Ps., since it is included in the same prayer of

King David in its entirety. This approach thus offers us *both* of the extra psalms; #96, #105, and #106 are all considered to be one psalm! We now have enough candidates to satisfy our quest for the extra psalms. Unfortunately, it can be shown that none of these three possibilities are viable options. The Gemara (Berachot 9b) tells us that the psalm beginning with the words "Barchi Nafshi" (Ps. 104) is actually the 103rd psalm since Pss. 1 and 2 should be considered as only one psalm. From this it becomes clear that the "added" psalms cannot be found anywhere before #104 -- the Talmud tells us that even in ancient times that was the 103rd Ps. of Tehillim. All of our potential candidates are thus rejected, since they all involve psalms before #103. (In fact, a more careful examination of the sources shows that in all these cases Rashi's words can indeed be interpreted in other ways. He does not necessarily mean to say that two psalms are actually one, large psalm. The search for the two "added psalms" must resume.

III 6 RULES: A PROCESS OF ELIMINATION As we mentioned, the psalms for which we are looking must be located after what is today called Ps. 104. A number of logical criteria may also be assumed:

1) It is known from Talmudic sources (Mishnayot Sukkah 5:4) that there are fifteen psalms in the "Shir Hamaalot" series. None of these psalms could ever have been joined to an adjacent one, as this would diminish the number of Shir Hamaalot psalms (Pss. 120-134). 2) If a psalm begins with an introductory epigraph, such as "A psalm of David" or "A praise of David" (as in Pss. 108-110, 138-144), it is clear that the psalm cannot possibly be connected to the one before it. 3) Any psalm which is written according to an alphabetical acrostic can be assumed to be in its original form; it is impossible that there was once another "piece" to such a psalm that was subsequently broken off. An alphabetical acrostic must begin with Aleph and end with Tav! (This rules out connecting Pss. 111, 112, 145, 119 to an adjacent psalm.) 4) If there are two adjacent psalms, the first of which ends with the word "Hallelujah," and the second of which begins with "Hallelujah," it is clear that these two psalms could never have constituted a single psalm. (Rules out any connection between 105-106, and 145-150.) 5)

Tosafot Kiddushin 33a (based on Midrash Socher Tov, Ch. 1) tells us that Tehillim is divided into five sections or "Books." These books, as Tosafot points out, are clearly demarked in Tehillim. It is obvious that the last psalm of one book could not be attached to the following psalm, which is the start of a new book. (Rules out connecting 106-107.) 6) Ps. 136 has a constant refrain in every verse (Ki Le'olam Chasdo), and cannot be combined with the psalms before it or after it, which do not have this refrain.

One may still surmise that Pss. 134-135 were once connected. The Gemara in Pesachim 117a, however, clearly negates this possibility, stating specifically that one of the two Hallelujah's of Ps. 135 (verse 1 or 3) marks the beginning of a new Ps.. It becomes clear after processing all of the above criteria that we *must* find the extra psalms between Ps. 113 and Ps. 118. Thus, our search for the extra two psalms has been narrowed down to the six psalms commonly known as "Halle!" (I later found that Rav Shlomo of Chelme, in "Mirkevet HaMishneh," [Salonika 1782, part II, Hilchot Chanukkah 3:13] makes a similar calculation. Because he leaves out rule six, however, his conclusion differs slightly from ours.)

IV THE ADDED PSALMS The most obvious candidate to combine with an adjacent psalm is tiny Ps. 117, which, consisting of only two verses, is the shortest chapter in the entire Bible. Tosafot in Pesachim 117a asserts (apropos of a different question) that it is not possible that a psalm should consist of only two verses. Obviously Tosafot is of the opinion that Ps. 117 is not an independent psalm but is the end of Ps. 116 or the beginning of Ps. 118. At some point, it was severed into a separate unit. In Sukkah 38b the verse "Give thanks to Hashem for He is good..." which is the first verse of Ps. 118 in contemporary editions, is referred to as "the beginning of the chapter," so it appears that the two-versed 117 should not be appended to the beginning of 118, but rather to the end of 116. (In fact Tosafot specifically groups Pss. 116 and 117 together, in Sukkah 54a.) Thus we have accounted for two of the three "extra" psalms: 1 and 2 were originally one, as were 116 and 117. But we

PARASHAT VAYECHI YESHIVAT HAR ETZION ISRAEL
KOSCHITZKY VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH (VBM)
INTRODUCTION TO PARASHAT HASHAVUA

by Zvi Shimon

PARASHAT VAYECHI

This shiur is dedicated in honor of the birth of Yosef Netanel, born to Naomi and Ari Zivotofsky ('80). Mazal Tov!

Jacob's Last Wish

The Rashbam (Rabbi Shmuel ben Meir, France, 1080-1160) comments that our parasha should actually begin with the last verse of the previous parasha, parashat Vayigash: "Thus Israel settled in the country of Egypt, in the region of Goshen; they acquired holdings in it, and were fertile and increased greatly" (47:27). The reason for which it does not is in order that parashat Vayigash should not end on a sour note with Pharaoh controlling all of the lands of Egypt (see 47:26), but rather positively with the sons of Jacob settling and flourishing in Egypt. The Rashbam's assumption is that the above verse (47:27) is a positive portrayal of the condition of the people of Israel in Egypt. This assumption is supported by the Netziv's (Rabbi Naftali Zvi Yehuda Berlin, Lithuania, 1817-1893) interpretation of the opening verse of our parsha: "Jacob lived seventeen years in the land of Egypt so that the span of Jacob's life came to one hundred and forty-seven years" (47:28).

Why does the Torah inform us of the length of Jacob's residence in Egypt? This could easily be calculated by the reader on the basis of Jacob's age, 130 (see 47:9), upon his arrival in Egypt, and the total years of his life, 147. The Netziv explains that the Torah specifically states that Jacob lived in Egypt for seventeen years to indicate that, as opposed to his years in Israel, these last years in Egypt were pleasant and untroubled. His entire family escaped famine and were alive and prospering on Egyptian soil.

However, a close analysis of the continuation of our parasha raises a seemingly different appraisal of the situation.

"And when the time approached for Israel to die, he summoned his son Joseph and said to him, 'Do me this favor, place your hand under my thigh as a pledge of your steadfast loyalty: please do not bury me in Egypt. When I lie down with my fathers, take me up from Egypt and bury me in their burial-place.' He replied: 'I will do as you have spoken.' And he said, 'Swear to me.' And he swore to him. Then Israel bowed at the end of the bed. (Bereishit 47:29-31)

Jacob asks Joseph to bury him in the land of Israel. He is not satisfied with Joseph's affirmative response and asks him to swear that he will fulfill the request. Why does Jacob make Joseph take an oath? Are Joseph's words not enough? Does Jacob not trust his son? The Ramban (Rabbi Moshe ben Nachman, Spain, 1194-1274) offers the following answers:

"Swear unto me, and he swore unto him - Jacob did not suspect that his righteous and beloved son would disobey his father's command and renege on the matter which he had promised him by saying, I will do according to thy words. But Jacob did so in order to strengthen the matter in the eyes of Pharaoh, as perhaps he might not give Joseph permission to leave him, and he would instead say to him, 'Send your brothers and our servants, and they will bring him up there.' It may be that Pharaoh would want the prophet [Jacob] to be buried in his country as an honor and privilege to them. It was for this reason that he made him swear for it would not then be proper for him to force Joseph to violate his oath, and Joseph too would feel more obligated to fulfill his father's wish on account of the oath. Such indeed was the case, as Pharaoh said, Go up and bury thy father, as he made you swear (50:6)." (Ramban 47:31)

According to the Ramban's first explanation, the oath was not intended for Joseph but rather for Pharaoh. Jacob suspected that Pharaoh might refuse the request on account of his not wanting Joseph to leave Egypt or due to his wanting Jacob to be buried in Egypt. Rabbi Hirsch (Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, Germany, 1808-1888) adds in a similar vein:

"We would have thought that carrying out this request [of burying Jacob in the land of Israel] would not entail such difficulties that it should require a ceremonious oath for it. But, as can be deduced, Pharaoh and the Egyptians would by no means have been pleased if Jacob and his family had moved again back out of Egypt, so that the bringing of the body up to Canaan would by no means make a good impression. It would clearly show that Joseph's family still did not consider themselves naturalized and their hearts were still in their old homeland."

Pharaoh might not only desire that Jacob be buried in Egypt, but he might also be offended by the request and be suspicious of the Israelites' loyalty to his kingdom (an accusation raised by the next Pharaoh, see Exodus 1:10). The purpose of the oath, according to this explanation, is to justify the request to bury Jacob in the land of Israel in Pharaoh's eyes. Pharaoh would understand that Joseph is obliged because of the oath that his father made him take.

The Ramban, however, suggests a second explanation for the oath: "Joseph too would feel more obligated to fulfill his father's wish on account of the oath". It is not only directed towards Pharaoh, but also towards Joseph himself. The oath is to demonstrate to Joseph the importance that Jacob attributed to being buried in the land of Israel. Jacob wanted to stress that his request should not be regarded lightly and that Joseph should invest his maximum in accomplishing it. However, the question arises, why is it so important for Jacob to be buried in the land of Israel?

Scripture states that Jacob wished to be buried with his forefathers, Abraham and Isaac, in the Cave of Machpela (47:30). His desire to be buried in Israel stems from a yearning to connect with his past, with previous generations. An opposite explanation raised by our sages is that Jacob knows that those buried in the land of Israel will be the first to be resurrected in the Messianic era. Jacob's motivation is personal and relates not to the past but to the future, the messianic resurrection of the dead. Close analysis of Jacob's request, however, reveals another dimension. Jacob twice stresses his objection to being buried specifically in Egypt: "please do not bury me in Egypt ... take me up from Egypt" (47:29,30). It is not only that he wishes to be buried in Israel but also that he dreads being buried in Egypt. Why is Jacob so antagonistic to Egypt?

Rashi (Rabbi Shlomo ben Yitzchak, France, 1040-1105), citing a different explanation of our sages, suggests that Jacob requested not to be buried in Egypt "so that the Egyptians shall not make of me an idol." Jacob feared the long-term spiritual consequences of his being buried in Egypt. The Egyptians, being an idolatrous people, were likely to transform Jacob into an idol after his death. Jacob therefore prudently requested to be buried in Israel.

The Midrash Ha-gadol (14th century Yemenite collection of homiletic interpretations of our sages compiled by Rabbi David Ha-edni) offers an alternative explanation:

"Why did our father Jacob endeavor to have his bones taken from Egypt? It is so that the tribes would not settle in Egypt claiming that were Egypt not holy soil, Jacob would have certainly not been buried there."

Jacob's request is not a product of self-interest. It rather stems from a deep concern for the future of the people of Israel. This is hinted to by Scripture's usage of the name Israel in Jacob's request for burial in the land of Israel: "And when the time approached for ISRAEL to die he summoned his son Joseph..."(47:29). The verses preceding the request (47:28) and following it (48:2) use the name Jacob. Why does the verse describing the request to be buried in the land of Israel use the name Israel? The name Jacob reflects an individual personal standpoint but the name Israel reflects a national perspective. It is Israel, the bearer of the national mission, who asks out of NATIONALISTIC concerns to be buried in Israel.

What so concerned Jacob? Was he not, after all, finally enjoying some peace of mind? Does not Scripture testify to the speedy rise of the tribes in wealth and power? Pharaoh himself proposed to Joseph in relation to his brothers: "settle your father and your brothers in the best part of the land ... and if you know any capable men among them, put them in charge of my livestock (47:6)." The brothers were put in charge of all of Pharaoh's

livestock!

I believe the answer to this question may be found in the Ramban's commentary to the beginning of our parsha.

"And Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years - Jacob's descent into Egypt alludes to our present exile at the hands of the 'fourth beast,' which represents Rome. [There are many parallels,] for it was Jacob's sons themselves who, by the sale of their brother Joseph, caused their going down there. Jacob, moreover, went there on account of the famine, thinking to find relief with his son in the house of his son's friend, for Pharaoh loved Joseph and considered him as a son. It was their hope to ascend from there as soon as the famine would cease in the land of Canaan, just as they said, 'To sojourn in the land we have come, for thy servants have no pasture for their flocks, for the famine is heavy in the land of Canaan' (47:4). But then THEY DID NOT COME UP, but instead the exile prolonged itself upon Jacob and he died there, and his bones ascended from there accompanied by all the elders and courtiers of Pharaoh, who instituted severe lamentation for him. Our relationship with our brothers Rome and Edom is similar. We ourselves have caused our falling in their clutches, as they made a covenant with the Romans, and Agrippa, the last king during the Second Temple, fled to them for help. It was due to famine that Jerusalem was captured by the Romans, and the exile has exceedingly prolonged itself over us, with its end, unlike the other exiles, being unknown." (Ramban 47:28)

The Ramban, following his exegetical principal of "ma'asei avot siman le-banim" - the narratives of the patriarchs hint to future events affecting the Jewish people, interprets Jacob's descent to Egypt as a foreshadowing of the exile which occurred during the time of the Romans. According to the Ramban, the exile was a result of the Jewish people's making a treaty with the Romans and settling in foreign lands. This parallels the tribes' descent to Egypt. Jacob went down to Egypt for one purpose - to survive the famine. He had no intention whatsoever of remaining in Egypt. The return to Israel was, however, postponed, year after year. Jacob finally realizes that a speedy return to Israel is an illusion. It is this realization which troubles him and prods him towards the end of his life to attempt to rectify the situation. Jacob never sets roots in Egyptian soil nor does he integrate into Egyptian society. His aspirations lie in the covenant of his forefathers, in the land of Israel. He is too aged to return there himself and his offspring are too busy successfully integrating and ascending the economic ladder to consider departing. The tribes wish to remain in Egypt, to settle this foreign land. Jacob's request to be buried in Israel is a blaring message to the tribes to remember their true calling, their real home. In the words of Rabbi Hirsch:

"Jacob noticed what a powerful influence Egypt was beginning to have on his descendants, how they already began to see the Jordan in the Nile, and to find their stay in Egypt as no exile. It is this attitude which motivated Jacob to press with such ceremonious solemnity that they should not bury him in Egypt, but that they should carry him to their old true homeland. It was motive enough for Jacob to say to them: 'You hope and wish to live in Egypt, I do not wish even to be buried there!'"

This message was directed specifically to Joseph, the leader and sustainer of the family. It was Joseph who invited Jacob and his sons to dwell in Egypt. It is he who now has the power to effect change. Did Joseph absorb the message?

Although Joseph and his brothers never returned to live in Israel, the message was nevertheless not lost on Joseph. He responds to his father's request by saying: "I will do as you have spoken" (47:30). Rabbeinu Bachya (Rabbi Bachya ben Asher, Spain, end of 13th - beginning of 14th century) cites the following homiletic interpretation of Joseph's response: "I will do as you have spoken" (47:30)- "Just as you made me take an oath to carry your bones out of Egypt so will I make the tribes take an oath to carry my bones out." Joseph's response to his father's request is not only a willingness to do as was requested; it is also an adoption of Jacob's outlook with regard to the centrality of Israel. Joseph's request of the tribes at the end of the book of Genesis: "you shall carry up my bones from here" (50:25) is a direct reaction and consequence of his father's request. Joseph tells his father that

he, too, will similarly ask to be buried in Israel. Joseph who spent the larger portion of his life in Egypt and reached the highest echelons of that society knows that Egypt is not his real home. His deepest commitments lie elsewhere, in the land of Israel, in the covenant of his forefathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

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