

INSIGHTS from the SEDRA

Insights from the Sedra is a project of the Scholar's Kollel of Great Neck. It aims to provide several questions and answers about the Sedra, culled from various commentaries, including the following: Baal Haturim, Darash Moshe, Vedibarta Bam by Rabbi Moshe Bogomilsky, Torah Treasures by Dov Furer, Wellsprings of Torah by Alexander Friedman, and Kol Dodi by Rabbi Dovid Feinstein, Great Torah Lights by Rabbi Yitzchak Meir Goodman, Something To Say by Rabbi Dovid Goldwasser, The Vilna Gaon, Growth Through Torah by Zelig Pliskin and The Call of the Torah.

ויברך את יוסף ויאמר

“And he blessed Yosef and said...” (48:15)

The blessing that follows was actually addressed not to *Yosef* but only to *Yosef's* two sons. Why, then, does Scripture say that *Yaakov* blessed *Yosef*?

In order to show that there is no greater blessing for a father than the wish that his children should take after him and become good people. Hence *Yaakov's* blessing to *Menashe* and *Ephraim*, “*The angel who has redeemed me from all evil bless the lads and let my name be named in them and the name of my father, Abraham and Yitzchak*” (v. 16) is the greatest blessing *Yosef*, their father, could possibly have received.

(Rabbi Isaiah Horowitz)

ויקרא בהם שמי ושם אבתי

“And may my name be called upon them, and names of my forefathers Avraham and Yitzchak...” (48:16)

There are various reason why the Men of the Great Assembly included specifically eighteen blessings in the *Shemoneh Esreh* prayer. One source is the eighteen times the Torah mentions all of our forefathers in the same verse. When counting the verses where the forefathers are mentioned by name, we find only seventeen. Our verse is the eighteenth. *Yaakov* named *Avraham* and *Yitzchak* and said, “*my name.*” His mentioning “*my name*” makes it as though his name was actually written in the verse. Our verse is therefore considered one where all of our forefathers are mentioned.

(Teachings of the Talmud, Yerushalmi Berachot 4:3)

ברך ישראל לאמר ישמך אלקים כאפרים ומנשה

“By you shall Israel bless saying, ‘My G-d make you like Ephraim and Menashe...’ (48:20)

Why should *Yaakov* have wanted all of his descendants to bless their children with the example of *Ephraim* and *Menashe* rather than with that of some other two of the tribes of Israel?

Because the two young sons of *Yosef* had conducted themselves in accordance with the fundamental law of the Torah; namely, that one should neither consider oneself greater than another nor envy another. Even though *Yaakov* had set *Ephraim*, the younger son, before *Menashe*, the first-born, *Ephraim* did not become arrogant, and *Menashe* did not become jealous. Seeing this, *Yaakov* expressed the hope that all the Children of Israel would be like *Ephraim* and *Menashe*, free of arrogance and envy.

(Igra DeKallah)

ואני נתתי לך שכם אחד על אחיך אשר לקחתי מיד האמרי בחרבי ובקשתי

“I have given you Shechem, one portion more than your brothers, which I took from the hand of the Amorite with my sword and with my bow.” (48:22)

Targum translates “my sword and my bow” as my prayer and my will. Why is the bow likened to prayer? Because just as the more one tautens the bow the further the arrow will fly, so too, the more one applies his mind to his prayer with true devotion, the further and higher will it soar into the heavens. (Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Kotzk)

כל אלה שבטי ישראל

“All these are the tribes of Israel.” (49:28)

Until the destruction of the first *Beit Hamikdash*, when the king had a question or if there was a question of national significance, the *Kohen Gadol* would consult with the *Urim VeTumim*. According to one opinion, the letters on the stones of the *Choshen* would indicate the answer.

There seems to be a problem with this method. We know that the names of the twelve tribes were inscribed on the twelve stones of the *Choshen*. But the letter *tet* is not found in any of their names! What would happen if the message from the *Urim VeTumim* would need a *tet*? The answer is that the words כל אלה שבטי ישראל, *all these are tribes of Israel*, were also inscribed on the stones and the word שבטי has the needed *tet*. (Teachings of the Talmud, Yerushalmi, Yoma 7:3)

האספו ואגידה לכם את אשר יקרא אתכם באחרית הימים הקבצו ושמעו בני יעקב

“Assemble yourselves and I will tell you what will befall you in the end of days. Assemble and hear, sons of Yaakov.” (49:1-2)

The word "יקרא" with an "א" means calling. The text should read "יקרה" with a "ה", which means happen? *Yaakov* called his children and told them he would tell them "אשר יקרא", what should be the “call” to the Jewish people in the end of days, so they can merit the coming of *Mashiach*. The rallying cry should be הקבצו – “gather together in unity” and ושמעו – “listen and learn the teachings of Torah.” Through this we will merit the revelation of *Mashiach*. (Iturei Torah)

והעלה אתכם מן הארץ הזאת

“And He will bring you up out of this land...” (50:24)

The actual period of enslavement in Egypt lasted 116 years. Perhaps it is for this reason that *Yosef* chose to use the expression והעלה אתכם, *And He will bring you up*, a phrase that is not used elsewhere as an expression of redemption. The numerical value of the word והעלה is 116. After you will have been enslaved and oppressed for 116 years, Hashem will have pity. He will then raise you up from the depths of your despair and return you to your true home, *Eretz Yisrael*. (Kol Dodi)

SHABBAT SHALOM

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