

From the High School

continued from page 3

from Egypt drew near, it was Serach who had the historical knowledge to properly identify the location of Yosef's burial plot. This enabled Moshe to fulfill Yaakov's family's promise to Yosef that his bones would be carried with the Jewish people out of Egypt.

Why was it crucial for the generation of the redemption to be led not only by the "new" leaders of that generation, such as Moshe and Aharon, but also by established leaders such as Serach? In a stirring description, Rav Soloveitchik explains:

Why was it crucial that Serach play a role in the redemption? The generation of the exodus witnessed signs and wonders on an unprecedented scale. Such excitement could easily lead to a sense that their generation represents true religious greatness and that nothing that came beforehand really matters. Yet this conclusion is false. Every generation, irrespective of its accomplishments, needs to turn to its elders for counsel and wisdom. The living example of someone who knew Yaakov Avinu was an invaluable resource for the generation of redemption. For the same reason, the blessing in the Amida refers to "the remnants of the scribes" (*"al peleitat sofrehim"*) rather than simple "the scribes." **We want not only wise individuals but also those with memories of previous generations.**

With the new year underway, we recall that sometimes general society encourages us to champion the new for its own sake. Certainly, as committed Modern Orthodox Jews, we embrace the good that contemporary society has to offer. Yet at the same time, looking to wise individuals with extensive life experience is crucial to our spiritual success. Indeed, as we conclude *sefer Bereishit* and transition to *sefer Shemot*, Serach bat Asher reminds us that this lesson may well be the secret to our redemption.

— Rabbi Tzvi Sinensky — HS, Judaic Faculty and Director of Interdisciplinary Learning and Educational Outreach

Answers to questions on page 1

- (1) That Yaakov would be buried in Israel
- (2) He switched his hands on Ephraim and Menashe
- (3) A lion (4) To bury him in Israel (5) 110

Joseph Kushner Hebrew Academy

Rae Kushner Yeshiva High School

KushnerComments

Parshat Vayechi

Friday, January 10, 2020

יום שבת תשפ

From the Lower School

1. What did Yaakov make Yosef promise to him?
2. What did Yaakov do when he gave his blessing to Yosef's children?
3. To what animal was Yehuda compared?
4. What did Yosef ask of his brothers?
5. How old was Yosef when he died?

— Rabbi Aron Srolovitz — JKHA Principal
Answers can be found on the last page.

From the Middle School

The Power of Community

At the end of *perek 48*, Yaakov *avinu* mentions that he got cities from the Emori with his sword and arrows. The Targum Onkeles as well as the Gemara say that sword and arrow are a reference to davening. The sword corresponds to formal established *tefila* which we daven with the *tzibbur* (community). The arrow corresponds to *bakashos* which are personal requests, added on to the standard text of prayer.

R. Meir Simcha from Dvinsk, the Meshech Chochma, explains why the Torah refers to these prayers as sword and arrow. He explains that a sword is inherently dangerous. Even if the person wielding the sword is not so strong or quick the sword can still cause damage just due to its sharpness. The arrow on the other hand can only hurt if it is shot with force and aimed directly at the target.

Continued on page 2....

From the Middle School

continued from page 1

This is reflective of the two types of *tefila* referred to earlier. *Tefila* which happens in Shul with a minyan is like a sword. It is inherently powerful, even if the person davening doesn't have proper *kavana*. On the other hand, a personal request is only as powerful as the *kavana* and sincerity with which it is prayed.

This teaches us the importance of communal *tefila*. While it is very difficult to completely focus on our *tefila* and properly concentrate throughout, *tefila* with a minyan is like a sword. Even if we don't swing it so powerfully its inherent power can make it effective.

- Rabbi Dovid Sukenik — MS, Mashigiach Ruchani

From the High School

The Evils of Envy

Bereishit 48:16 teaches, "*Hamalach hago'el oti mikol ra, yevarech et hane'arim viyare bahem shemi v'shem avotai, Avraham v'Yitzchak, v'yidgu larov bakerev ha'aretz*" "The angel who has redeemed me from all harm, bless the lads. In them may my name be recalled, and [in] the names of my fathers, Avraham and Yitzchak, and may [the children] be teeming multitudes upon the earth." This pasuk is the *beracha*, or blessing, that Yaakov gives to Ephraim and Menashe, in which he blesses them that they should multiply like fish within the land. What is the significance of the comparison between the Jewish people and fish?

Many suggest that Yaakov wanted them to emulate fish when it came to multiplying, because fish do so underwater. In fact, based on this passuk, we find many comparisons of Jews or others to fish. The concept of "*kein ayin hora*," ("without the evil eye,") according to Rabbi Tanchum Burton, is related to the damaging power of envy. It is not possible to view the fruitfulness of fish precisely because it occurs in a place that is shielded from human view. This hiddenness acts as a type of protection against the evil eye, in accordance with the Talmudic idea that "blessing only rests upon something that is concealed from the eye" (*Bava Metzia* 42a).

As applied to the Jewish people, the idea is that just as fish do not experience envy, so too the Jewish people should avoid both being the

Continued on page 3....

From the High School

continued from page 2

subject of or even acting out of envy. When people are jealous because someone else has more wealth, it can cause envy, an emotion that comes from a sense of injustice. The Torah tells us that the resulting spiritual energy can trigger a process of judgment against the one who is envied and lead to very destructive consequences.

We can now understand Yaakov's blessing: not only did he wish that Ephraim and Menashe be fruitful and multiply like fish, but also that they never fall prey to the spiritual danger of envy. Ultimately, this would ensure not only that they build families and avoid the pitfalls of this trait, but also that they are spared from spiritually destructive forces that might otherwise harm them and our families.

- Sammy Cohen is a Sophomore at RKYHS

The Secret to Our Redemption

Parshat Vayechi is the initial source in the Torah for the mysterious watchwords of the redemption, "*Pakod yifkod Elokim etchem*," Hashem will surely remember you" (*Bereishit* 50:25). Strikingly, the midrash sees in this phrase a keepsake whose secret was held for generations by Serach, daughter of Asher.

Indeed, according to the midrashic tradition, Serach played an essential role in the process of redemption. She first appears on the scene by breaking the news to Yaakov that his beloved son Yosef is still alive. Through her savvy musical talents and sensitivity, she successfully conveys the message to Yaakov, an elderly man, without overwhelming him.

Later, when Moshe suddenly appears on the scene claiming to have been chosen by God to be the Jews' redeemer, the people are skeptical. In expressing himself, Moshe invokes the phrase, "*pakod yifkod*" (*Shemot* 13: 19). Upon hearing Moshe's language, Serach responds, "This is the man who will redeem Israel from Egypt, for such I heard from my father time after time, "*pakod yifkod*." It was due to Serach that the Jewish people came to trust in Moshe.

Similarly, according to the Talmud (*Sotah* 13a), as the redemption

Continued on page 4....