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פרשת ויחי
Parshat Vayechi

אשרינו Ashreinu

Enhancing your Study of the Weekly Torah Portion

The Order

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Ariella Greenberg ('22)
Shuey Silkin ('23)
Gavi Kahn ('22)
Shoshana Weinstock ('24)

הַמַּלְאָךְ הַגֹּאֵל אֹתִי מִכָּל רָע יְבָרֵךְ אֶת הַנְּעָרִים וְיִקָּרֵא בָהֶם שְׁמִי וְשֵׁם אֲבֹתַי אַבְרָהָם וְיִצְחָק וְיִדְגּוּ לָרֹב בְּקֶרֶב הָאָרֶץ

"May the angel who redeemed me from all harm bless the youths, and may they be called by my name and the name of my fathers, Avraham and Yitzchak, and may they multiply abundantly like fish, in the midst of the land" (Bereishit 48:16).

This famous pasuk is the song that most parents sing to their children at night and an integral part of Kriyat Shema Al Hamita. It is the beginning of the blessing that Yaakov is giving to his grandsons Ephraim and Menashe.

The Ketav Sofer notes that Yaakov mentions the order of the forefathers in an interesting order. Yaakov should be consistent and either list them in order of youngest to oldest, or oldest to youngest. Instead, Yaakov mentions himself (the youngest) first, then the oldest (Avraham), then the middle (Yitzchak). Instead of going 3-2-1 or 1-2-3, he says 3-1-2 (for those of you who need more of a visual to the idea).

The Ketav Sofer answers beautifully about the significance of each forefather and describes the reasoning of the order above:

Yaakov's nickname, Yisrael, means to struggle with God. Yaakov embodies the struggle we all have with God, and the first aspect of the bracha was for the Jews to be able to follow God's will accordingly.

Avraham comes next, because he represents the next step. After you struggle and win, you must focus on your accomplishments. Avraham represents the mentality one should have to follow the correct path.

Yitzchak comes last, and is perhaps the most important. His name means "to laugh". Yitzchak represents the happiness/ the simcha that comes with the life of being a Jew.

The bracha therefore is the following progression. First one struggles to properly adhere to the laws of Torah Judaism, then they must feel respected and accomplished, and only then can they live a life of true happiness.

Choose Wisely

Ariella Greenberg ('22)

In this week's parsha, Parshat Vayechi, Yaakov gives each of his sons a bracha before he dies. Before blessing Shimon and Levi, he says:

בְּסֹדָם אַל תָּבֹא נַפְשִׁי

"Let my soul not enter their counsel" (Bereishit 49:6)

A possible answer lies in the nature of Yaakov's bracha to Shimon and Levi. His bracha to them is more of a rebuke. Yaakov curses the anger and relentless wrath of his two sons and destines them to be divided, as to prevent any possible violent collaboration between the two tribes. The allusion to the Zimri/Pinchas incident later down the line reveals to us an important lesson.

Pinchas, the hero of the story, was from Shevet Levi. Both Zimri and Pinchas were descended from the brothers who had killed an entire city and had been rebuked for their angry natures.

Zimri inherited the familial trait of defiance and passion as expressed by his sin with Cosbi. Pinchas, being from Shevet Levi, inherited the same trait. Unlike Zimri, however, Pinchas used the trait to defend what it was that he was passionate about. As a result of his passionate defense of Hashem and His Torah, Hashem grants Pinchas a *brit shalom*, a pact of friendship.

Perhaps the reason that Yaakov alludes to this incident when addressing Shimon and Levi is because this event demonstrates for us that the trait within Shimon and Levi is not necessarily a negative one. Pinchas demonstrated how one can use what can potentially be a harmful trait for the good. Yaakov did not want his name mentioned in connection with Zimri because Zimri's failure to learn from the mistakes of his ancestors and inability to use his inherent qualities for the good would be an embarrassment for Yaakov.

The lesson that we can learn from this is that it is up to us to use our qualities for the good or for the bad. We can be like Zimri, who disgraced Yaakov's name, or like Pinchas, with whom Hashem made a covenant of friendship. We can't control our inherent qualities, but we can choose to use them *l'tova*. Shabbat Shalom!

Consequences

Shuey Silkin ('23)

In this week's parsha it mentions the brothers told that their father commanded Yosef to forgive the brothers and not to be upset with them for selling him to slavery so many years ago. While Rashi (50:16) points out that Yaakov never actually made this commandment, one can still ask, why would Yaakov even need to make such a commandment to Yosef? The sale of Yosef was a horrible thing, but they eventually benefited from it?!

Maybe because Yosef turned his situation into a position of great success, the brothers thought it unnecessary to ask him for forgiveness. Only after the brothers recognized how their actions towards Yosef affected their father did they realize that an apology was warranted.

When Yaakov got ill, he apologized to Yosef for burying Rachel on the side of the road instead of inside of Ma'arat HaMachpela like the rest of the Avot and Imahot. Yaakov apologizes even

though we ultimately benefited from her burial location when Nebuchadnezzar exiled us from Israel and Rachel davened (and continues to cry out) to Hashem on our behalf.

Yaakov's apology shows us that even when someone benefits from your actions or decisions, it is appropriate to apologize for the part(s) that caused them distress. This comes to teach us that although the brothers' actions eventually led Yosef to success, he still deserved an apology for the suffering they caused him along the way.
We learn from this that no matter the outcomes of our mistakes,whether good or bad, we must make sure to apologize because we don't know the possible consequences of our actions and who they affect. Have a good Shabbos.

Deeper Meaning

Gavi Kahn ('22)

Every day, we do so many things by just going through the motions and we never put much thought into our actions. When saying Shema, we say the first line out loud and then we say the phrase: "*Baruch Shem Kevod Malchuto L'olam Va'ed*" quietly. Have you ever wondered why we do this or why we say it out loud on Yom Kippur?
In this week's parsha, Yaakov is nearing the end of his life as he calls his sons to his side:

וַיִּקְרָא יַעֲקֹב אֶל בָּנָיו וַיֹּאמֶר הֵאָסְפוּ וְאַגִּידָה לָכֶם אֵת אֲשֶׁר יִקְרָא אֶתְכֶם בְּאַחֲרִית הַיָּמִים

"Yaakov called for his sons and said, "Gather and I will tell you what will happen to you at the end of days" (Bereishit 49:1).

The Gemara Pesachim (56a) expounds on this pasuk: Yaakov hoped to tell his sons what would happen at the end of days but the Divine spirit left him and his mind was blank. He feared that the reason this occurred was because there may have been an idol worshiper among his children. This was a reasonable assumption as Avraham had Yishmael as a son and Yitzchak had Esav as a son. Yaakov was worried that maybe one of his sons was also not following the ways of Hashem. His sons assured him that this wasn't the case by saying the Shema, and Yaakov responded: "*Baruch Shem Kevod Malchuto L'olam Va'ed*" as a sigh of relief.

The gemara then points out that Moshe didn't include this phrase when he wrote down the Shema later in the Torah. Should we say "*Baruch Shem…*" or not? The gemara concludes that we should compromise and say the phrase quietly.

Another reason why we say it quietly is because it is a phrase that was said by the angels when Moshe went to get the Torah from Hashem. Therefore, since we are impure and human, we shouldn't be saying it aloud like angels but rather we should whisper it. This is why on Yom Kippur, when we are trying to be like angels, we say the phrase out loud. It is also worthy to point out that Yaakov said the phrase out loud, which is a lesson to us as to how great he actually was – angel-like.
This midrash about Yaakov and his sons gives us a deeper understanding of some events in the parsha and allows us to gain insight into something in our daily routine that we often overlook, like many other things we do. We all should take this insight as an understanding that there is a reason for everything that we do and we should add the most meaning to our lives by uncovering the message and meaning behind activities that we gloss over in our everyday lives.

Sibling Serenity

Shoshana Weinstock ('24)

What is the significance of the bracha given to Menashe and Ephraim by Yaakov? One of the many customs in Jewish life is for parents to bless their children on Friday nights. A daugh-

ter is given the bracha of, "May you be like Sarah, Rivka, Rachel, and Leah" and a son is given the bracha of, "May you be like Ephraim and Menashe." Why is the blessing for girls to be like our matriarchs, but our forefathers are skipped in the blessing for boys, and instead they are blessed to be like Ephraim and Menashe?

This question can be answered by considering the relationships of our forefathers' sons: Avraham's sons, Yitzchak and Yishmael, fought. Yitzchak's sons, Yaakov and Esav, fought as well, and Yaakov's sons didn't get along either. There is a pattern of fighting and chaos between children of our forefathers, but Ephraim and Menashe broke the trend as there was no rivalry between them. This is proven when Yaakov switches his hands and gives Ephraim, the younger son, a bracha first instead of the eldest Menashe.

There is no greater bracha than to have peace between siblings or children. Since this is unnatural and special in normal sibling relationships, parents bless their sons to be like Ephraim and Menashe. Additionally, one should strive to be like Menashe and Ephraim by being kinder to his or her sibling, even when it is very difficult to do so.

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