



Parshas Vayechi

December 30, 2017

A Taste of Torah

Staying on the Right Side of Things

by Rabbi Chaim Yeshia Freeman

In this week's parsha, the Torah records the episode of Yosef bringing his children to receive a blessing from his father Yaakov prior to Yaakov's death. The Torah tells us that Yosef assigned his older son Menashe to the right of his father so that he would be blessed with his right hand, as we find that the right hand has spiritual primacy and is the preferred hand for performing mitzvos. His younger son Efraim was assigned to the left side of his father, so that he would bless him with his left hand. However, Yaakov didn't agree with his son, as he switched his hands. Yosef, upon seeing this, tried correcting his father, pointing out that his older son should be blessed with the right hand. Yaakov responded that he understood what he was doing. Indeed, said Yaakov, Menashe would merit to become a nation and to become great. However, Efraim was destined to become even greater; therefore, explained Yaakov, he had decided to place his right hand upon Efraim. Rashi, citing Chazal, tells us that from Menashe would descend Gideon, through whom Hashem would perform a great miracle that would save the Jewish People from their enemies. Efraim, however, would produce Yehoshua, who would bring the Jewish People into the Land of Israel and teach them Torah. Additionally, Hashem would stop the sun in the sky in one instance and the moon in another on behalf of Yehoshua, a miracle that would make him known throughout the world.

The obvious question on this story is that if Yaakov felt that Efraim deserved to be blessed with the right hand, why did Yaakov only switch his

hand and not the actual placement of his two grandsons? He should have moved Efraim to stand opposite his right side.

Rabbeinu Bachya (1255-1340) explains that Yaakov did, in fact, change the placement of the two. He explains that when the Torah states that he switched his hands, it is referring to *Yosef's* hands. After rearranging Menashe and Efraim, Yosef's hands, which were upon his two sons, needed to be moved, as well. However, the opinion of most commentators is that Yaakov only switched his hands and not his grandsons' placement. According to these commentators, the question remains: Why didn't Yaakov move Menashe and Efraim themselves?

The Chizkuni (Rabbi Chizkiah ben Mano'ach; 13th century) explains that Yaakov did not want to shame Menashe by causing him to have to move. He thus sought to minimize the switch he felt he must make by only switching his hands, without relocating Menashe to his left. This is a very important and often overlooked concept, as people sometimes seem to think that if one must reprimand another, it's okay to go all out and really lay in to the person. Yaakov, though, taught us the importance of sensitivity; even when we must do or say something which will make someone uncomfortable, we should still minimize the level of discomfort.

There is a fascinating story with Rabbi Elazar Menachem Shach (1899-2001) that takes this concept even further. It happened that he strongly disagreed with a position taken by another prominent Torah personality. At this time, Rabbi Shach was an elderly man,

Stories for the Soul

Great Expectations

based on a story on revach.net

In the beginning of the 20th century, a Jewish boy in Chicago lost his father at an early age and grew up on the streets. Eventually, he became a gangster, and in time became the leader of his group of criminals. One morning, he and his gang were about to carry out a daring robbery. Suddenly, this Jewish gangster changed his mind and walked away from the planned heist and from his life of crime. In one stunning moment, the man abruptly walked away, leaving his criminal past permanently behind him.

What had led to the sudden, unexpected change? The former gangster revealed the answer in an article he authored. That morning, an early childhood memory of him stealing an apple from a pushcart had suddenly entered his mind. When his father found out about it, he put him on his lap and tearfully said, "The Torah says 'Lo signov,' 'Do not steal,'" and then he slapped him. Twice more, he tearfully repeated the same words and slapped him.

The gangster had remembered this scene in vivid detail that morning, picturing in his mind's eye the anguish on his father's face. This picture was enough to jolt him out of his life of crime, and lead him to a more honest and productive future.

Before Yaakov passes from this world, he blesses his children. These blessings are, in fact, a revelation of the abilities and expectations that Yaakov left his children with, their mission and the mission of their descendants.

Kollel Happenings

RABBI REISMAN WEEKLY IN DENVER

Join thousands around the globe in listening to the renowned weekly Navi shiur of Rabbi Yisroel Reisman! Rabbi Reisman's weekly Motzoei Shabbos class is shown at Beth Jacob High School, 5100 W. 14th Ave., this week at 7:30 pm. For sponsorships and info, contact info@denverkollel.org.

CODE OF CONDUCT: CREATING BOUNDARIES IN THE WORKPLACE AT JAN. 10 T4T

Join Marc Cooper, President, Cooper Development, and Rabbi Aron Yehuda Scwab, Dean, Denver Community Kollel, as they discuss how to make the professional world a better place. Wednesday, January 10, at 12-1:15 p.m. at the East Side Kosher Deli. Cost: \$25. RSVP info@denverkollel.org.

A DEEPER LOOK AT THE PARSHA WITH RABBI SOMMERS

Join Rabbi Shachne Sommers as he discusses a number of difficulties encountered in the weekly Torah portion and develops a comprehensive approach to resolve the issue, simultaneously conveying a deeper understanding of the material being discussed. Tuesday nights at Aish Denver (lounge area), 8:15-9 pm, for men and women.

Increase Your Jewish IQ

By Rabbi Yaakov Zions

Last week we asked: What is the source of our daily recitation of the Shir Shel Yom (the psalm which the Levites recited in the Temple on that day of the week)?

A: Both the Rambam and the Tur cite this custom, albeit with a major difference. The Rambam (end of Sefer Ahava) quotes a custom of reciting the psalm of that day. The Tur (Orach Chaim 133) seems to imply to recite only the mishnah (Tamid 7:4) that outlines which psalms were said throughout the week. Originally, the Ashkenazi custom (following the Tur) was to recite the

mishnah. However, the Magen Avraham (Orach Chaim 132:4) argues that even according to the Tur, one should recite the psalm of that day. This is in addition to the abovementioned mishnah, which is recited by Ashkenazim after the recitation of *ketores* (on Shabbos and Yom Tov morning). Source: Siddur Aizor Eliyahu, page 81.

This week's question: The *Shir Shel Yom* (daily psalm recited each morning) is generally recited each morning at the end of *Shacharis*. What are exceptions to this rule?

To submit an answer to Rabbi Zions, email ryz@denverkollel.org.

Lives of Our Torah Leaders

Rabbi Moshe Alshich, the Alshich Hakadosh - Part V

Perhaps Rabbi Moshe expressed this role himself, as he wrote in his introduction to Torah Moshe:

"I never aimed at things too high or beyond me. From my earliest days, the study of the Talmud was my chief occupation, and I assiduously attended the yeshiva, where I made myself familiar with the discussions of [the Talmudic sages] Abaye and Rava. The night I devoted to research and the day

to halacha. In the morning I read the Talmud and in the afternoon *poskim* (halachic decisors). Only on Fridays could I find time for the reading of Scripture and Midrash in preparation for my lectures on the parsha of the week and similar topics, which I delivered every Shabbos before large audiences, eager to listen to my instruction."

Rabbi Moshe Alshich passed away at the age of 85 in 1593 in Tzfas.

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and it was very hard for him to travel even short distances, but he felt the need to make a trip to visit his colleague and express his disagreement. Upon arrival, Rabbi Shach was ushered into the house by the person's wife, who remained in the room with the two great men. Rabbi Shach spoke with his colleague on a number of issues, but did not mention the topic for which he had come in the first place! After a little while, he bade farewell and returned to the car. The driver, who was aware of the purpose of the trip, was astounded that Rabbi Shach had not brought up the very subject that he

had come to discuss and expressed his bewilderment.

Rabbi Shach responded that in front of the man's wife, he could not issue a rebuke, for it would diminish the esteem in which she held her husband. He therefore refrained from bringing the matter up at all, even though this effectively wasted the entire trip!

We have much to learn from our leaders of both the recent and distant past. We must take care that when we discuss a sensitive subject, we ensure that it is being done so in the proper fashion and in the proper setting.