



Parshas Vayechi

December 17, 2021

A Taste of Torah

Mission to Accomplish

by Rabbi Nosson Schoss

In this week's parsha, Yaakov tells Yosef that Hashem promised him, "Behold I will make you fruitful and numerous, and I will make you a congregation of peoples" (Vayechi 48:4). Targum Onkelos adds that Hashem promised to make Yaakov into a great nation that will be composed of "tribes," referring to the twelve *shevatim* (tribes) who were Yaakov's children.

The Brisker Rav points out that similarly, in Parshas Vayishlach (35:11) Hashem told Yaakov "a nation and a congregation of nations shall descend from you," and there, as well, Targum Onkelos explains the redundant phrase to mean "a nation, composed of tribes." It is clear that Hashem blessed Yaakov that the Chosen Nation that would emerge from him would be comprised of separate parts, in the form of the Twelve Tribes.

Later in the parsha, this idea is expressed again. On his deathbed, Yaakov calls together all his children. He goes on to bless each child individually, and gives a completely different blessing for each child, as he tells each tribe what his specific mission, qualities, and strengths are. Rashi (49:28) notes, based on the wording of a verse in the parsha, that Yaakov included all the *shevatim* in all of the blessings he bestowed. What is the purpose of including each tribe in all of the blessings, if each tribe has its own unique blessing?

Every tribe has its own job to accomplish, and thus requires its own unique blessing. At the same time, it is only when everyone is engaged and performs their specific mission that the Jewish Nation comes together as a whole in achieving its larger purpose. It is therefore necessary for each tribe to connect with the blessing of the other

shevatim, as each *shevet* brings its special mission to the whole of the Jewish Nation.

This idea is not limited only to each tribe, however. Each individual, too, has specific traits and abilities that enable him to accomplish what only he can accomplish.

We find that Hashem sometimes compares the Jewish Nation to sand and sometimes to stars. Particles of sand generally exist together in large masses, like the Jewish Nation, which is a whole comprised of every single Jew. However, stars are many miles away from one another, and each one shines on its own, representing the unique character and purpose every Jew has to accomplish on his own. When each Jew fulfills his purpose, together we are a complete nation.

In the decades following the Chanukah story, the Chashmonai family who fought and were victorious over the Assyrian-Greek oppressors became the rulers of the Jewish People. The Ramban teaches that the Chashmonaim were later punished for making themselves into kings, because they ignored the fact that serving as king of the Jewish People is a task that is supposed to be for the tribe of Yehuda and not them, as they were *Kohanim* of the Tribe of Levi. A Jew has to recognize his personal abilities and strengths and serve Hashem in the way meant for him. When each of us fulfills our unique role in serving Hashem, together we stand as the nation of Hashem. When one tries to fulfill a different role, a void remains in the area he was meant to achieve, which can be the cause of destruction.

The Chovos Halvovos (Rabbi Bachye ibn Paquda; c. 1050-1120), in his introduction to Shaar Habechina, writes

Stories for the Soul

Wash Out

Before modern washing machines and driers were invented, washing laundry was a time-consuming activity; all the clothes had to be scrubbed by hand and then hung on the clothes line outside to dry. One day, a woman put out a temporary clothes line in the front of a shared courtyard, where she hung her clothes. A short time later, her upstairs neighbor came home and was annoyed at the lines that had been temporarily strung. Angrily, she cut them down, and the clean laundry fell onto the muddy ground. When the first woman later arrived to take in her wash, she was dismayed to discover a disaster - all the clothes were dirty and would have to be rewashed. It was obvious to her what had happened. However, she said nothing; she took the muddy sheets back into her house and began the whole laborious washing process once again.

When her husband returned home, she made no mention of the afternoon's aggravation. But late that night, there was a frantic knocking at their door. There stood the upstairs neighbor, in tears. Her child had a sudden high fever, and she was asking forgiveness for the laundry incident. The husband, who had answered the door, was surprised to hear about the event. His wife immediately and wholeheartedly forgave the woman and wished her child a full and speedy recovery.

The woman's father, who lived in the apartment, was a great Torah scholar and Kabbalist. Upon hearing what happened, he said, "The fact that you didn't respond to her and prevented this from becoming a fight will be the merit you need to be helped. Your great deed will grant you a child who

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Kollel Happenings

LEGAL HOLIDAY LEARNING ON DEC. 24 AND 31

The Kollel's Legal Holiday Learning program continues on Fridays Dec. 24 and Dec. 31 in West Denver and Southeast Denver. Breakfast at 8:45 at the West Denver Kollel Torah Center (*shacharis* at 7) and at Aish of the Rockies (*shacharis* at 6:45 and 8) followed by learning. December 24th topic: *Idol Threat: Examining If Other Religions are Considered Avoda Zara*. For sponsorship opportunities and more info, email info@denverkollel.org.

TALMUDO BIYADO GEMARA CLUB FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL BOYS

Learn, review, and acquire a masechta! Boys in grades 6-8 are invited to join Rabbi Chaim Gross at the Southeast Kollel Torah Center/Ohel Yissochor weeknights Mon.-Thu. from 8-8:30 pm for a Gemara shiur followed by review. Contact Rabbi Nesanel Kipper at rnk@denverkollel.org for further details.

A DEEPER LOOK AT THE PARSHA WITH RABBI SHACHNE 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 the Southeast Kollel Torah center, 8-9 pm, for men and women.

Halacha Riddles

Last week's question: Three adult Jewish males ate a meal together and were ready to make a *mezuman*. However, they made a discovery and could no longer make a *mezuman*. What did they discover?

Answer: : One of them realized that the food he had eaten was not kosher. If one

ate non-kosher food, even inadvertently, he cannot be included in a *mezuman* (Shulchan Aruch 196:1 with Mishna Berura 4).

This week's question: How is it possible for three people to make a *mezuman* if they are Sefardim but not if they are Ashkenazim?

Lives of Our Torah Leaders

Rabbi Meir Shapiro - Part XXX

Indeed, Rabbi Shapiro's vision was realized, as tens, if not hundreds, of thousands of Jews across the world study the same folio of Talmud daily. Hundreds of *daf yomi shiurim* (classes) are delivered daily, both in person and virtually. The

translation of the Talmud into English (and other languages such as French) has made the Talmud accessible to virtually anyone. In short, it can be said that *daf yomi* has created nothing short of a Torah study revolution for the Jewish People.

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that one of the main reasons why people aren't grateful to Hashem for all the good He bestows upon them is because they see things that others have, and wish they would have them. He explains how we need to realize that Hashem gives every person everything that's needed for him to accomplish his purpose in the world. If Hashem didn't give something to us, it must be completely unnecessary for us to have it. Our goal should be to accomplish our purpose in the world, and be completely grateful to Hashem for giving us all that we need to accomplish that.

A Holocaust survivor was once asked if, after all he experienced, he remained with any questions of faith in Hashem. He responded that he never doubted

Hashem's existence and control of the world. However, he did have one big question: Why did Hashem choose to keep him alive? At the time, continued the man, he had no idea what the answer was, but he committed himself to make sure that before he dies, he'll have a clear answer. He was going to make sure he accomplishes his purpose in this world to the best of his abilities, something only he can do.

Every person has his or her unique abilities and purpose to achieve in this world; if one is alive, there's a reason, there's more to do. It is when everyone plays their specific roles that, together, we truly come together as the Chosen Nation of Hashem.

Stories for the Soul

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will be great."

About a year later, this righteous woman gave birth to a son who grew up to be Rabbi Yosef Shalom Elyashiv, who became one of the foremost Torah scholars and halachic authorities of our time.

As Yaakov blessed Yosef's two sons Menashe and Efraim, he switched his

hands so that his right hand rested upon Efraim, despite Menashe being the eldest child. The commentators point out that although Menashe could have been insulted, he did not harbor any ill will at all. Our Sages teach us that overcoming one's base desires to avenge an insult is a source of great merit.

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