

# OHRNET

SHABBAT PARSHAT VAYECHI · 16 TEVET 5770 · JAN. 2, 2010 · VOL. 17 NO. 12

## PARSHA INSIGHTS

### MIRROR, MIRROR

*“Yosef took the two of them - Ephraim with his right hand, to Yisrael’s left, and Menashe with his left hand, to Israel’s right; but Yisrael extended his right hand and laid it on Ephraim’s head though he was the younger and his left hand on Menashe’s head. He ‘made his hands wise’ for Menashe was the first born” (48:13-14)*

Strange things happen to people when they look in a mirror. Their normal expression changes. An eyebrow is raised. Lips ever so slightly pursed. The head to the right and then to the left.

When we look in the mirror, we see ourselves not so much as we really are, but as we’d like to be. Head held a little higher, the posture more erect, holding in our breath so that clothes don’t betray the evidence of two too many slices of chocolate cake.

When we look at other people, however, our perspective changes radically. Rather than emphasize the positive we tend to scrutinize others for their defects and lay the stress on what’s wrong with them. What we see in ourselves as prudent, in others becomes stingy. Where we are vivacious, others are loud.

In this week’s Torah portion, when Yaakov blesses Yosef’s children Ephraim and Menashe, he crosses his hands and places his right hand, the stronger of the two, on the younger son Ephraim, and his weaker left hand on Menashe, the elder son. As Yaakov wanted to bless Ephraim with his right hand, wouldn’t it have been easier for him to have told Ephraim to stand opposite his right hand and Menashe oppo-

site his left, and that way there would have been no need for him to cross his hands?

The right side symbolizes two things: strength and importance. The left side also symbolizes two things: weakness and insignificance. When we look at ourselves in the mirror our right hand is reflected on the right side of the mirror. In other words, our strengths are reflected as being important. Our left hand — the hand that characterizes weakness — corresponds to our left hand in the mirror. Meaning that we see our weaknesses as insignificant. However, when we stand opposite someone else, our right hand corresponds to their left hand, meaning we emphasize their shortcomings. Our left hand is opposite their right. We play down their strengths.

This is what Yaakov was teaching the two brothers Ephraim and Menashe. When you look at each other, use the same eyes that you would use for yourself. See your brother’s weakness as secondary and his virtues as his essence.

For maybe the smaller brother will be greater than the elder.

• Sources: Rabbi Chaim MiVerlodjzin in Beit Yitzhak, Rabbi Chaim Zvi Senter

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## PARSHA OVERVIEW

After 17 years in Egypt, Yaakov senses his days drawing to a close and summons Yosef. He has Yosef swear to bury him in the Machpela Cave, the burial place of Adam and Chava, Avraham and Sara, Yitzchak and Rivka. Yaakov falls ill and Yosef brings to him his two sons, Ephraim and Menashe. Yaakov elevates Ephraim and Menashe to the status of his own sons, thus giving Yosef a double portion that removes the status of firstborn from Reuven. As Yaakov is blind from old age, Yosef leads his sons close to their grandfather. Yaakov kisses and hugs them. He had not thought to see his son Yosef again, let alone Yosef's children. Yaakov begins to bless them, giving precedence to Ephraim, the younger, but Yosef interrupts him and indicates that Menashe is the elder. Yaakov explains that he intends to bless Ephraim with his strong hand because Yehoshua will descend from him, and Yehoshua will be both the conqueror of *Eretz Yisrael* and the teacher of Torah to the Jewish People. Yaakov sum-

mons the rest of his sons in order to bless them as well. Yaakov's blessing reflects the unique character and ability of each tribe, directing each one in its unique mission in serving G-d. Yaakov passes from this world at age 147. A tremendous procession accompanies his funeral cortege up from Egypt to his resting place in the Cave of Machpela in Chevron. After Yaakov's passing, the brothers are concerned that Yosef will now take revenge on them. Yosef reassures them, even promising to support them and their families. Yosef lives out the rest of his years in Egypt, seeing Efraim's great-grandchildren. Before his death, Yosef foretells to his brothers that G-d will redeem them from Egypt. He makes them swear to bring his bones out of Egypt with them at that time. Yosef passes away at the age of 110 and is embalmed. Thus ends Sefer Bereishet, the first of the five Books of the Torah. *Chazak!*

## ISRAEL Forever

### WITH MY SWORD AND BOW

In his deathbed declaration to his son Yosef, the Patriarch Yaakov awarded him the city of Shechem "which I took from the Emorites with my sword and bow."

Although this would seem to be a reference to a physical conquest of that city, Onkelos explains that it actually means his prayers, which enabled his sons to achieve that victory.

This should serve as a reminder that military actions, although they require a physical effort, depend for their success on the spiritual strength of the nation.

While our enemies, in the words of the Psalmist, "come with chariots and horses", we "call out in the name of G-d" with the result that they fall while we rise in triumph for Israel forever.

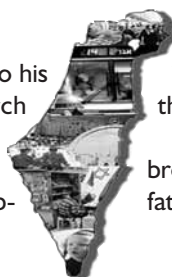
## LOVE OF THE LAND - THE PLACES

Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and Eretz Yisrael

### SHECHEM – A PURCHASE AND A PLOT

On his way back from the house of Lavan to his parents in Eretz Yisrael, the Patriarch Yaakov purchased a portion of land in the city of Shechem.

The city was the site of a war between its inhab-



itants and the sons of Yaakov who avenged the violation of their sister Dinah by a local prince.

It was here too that Yosef was sold into slavery by his brothers and where he was eventually buried in the plot his father had purchased.

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## PARSHA Q&A ?

1. Why is kindness towards the dead called “*chesed shel emet*” — kindness of truth?
2. Give three reasons Yaakov didn’t want to be buried in Egypt.
3. How do you treat a “fox in his time” (i.e., a commoner who rules)?
4. “When I was coming from Padan, Rachel died on me... I buried her there on the way to Efrat...” Why did Yaakov say all this to Yosef?
5. Initially, why was Yaakov unable to bless Efraim and Menashe?
6. What does *pillalti* mean?
7. What does “*Shechem*” mean as used in this week’s parsha? (two answers)
8. Which individual is called “the *Emori*”? Why? Give two reasons.
9. What did Yaakov want to tell his sons but was unable to?
10. What privileges did Reuven lose due to his rash actions?
11. What congregation from Yaakov’s offspring did Yaakov not want to be associated with?
12. What did Yehuda do after he heard Yaakov rebuke Reuven, Shimon and Levi? Why?
13. What does milk do to teeth?
14. Why is Yissachar like a “strong-boned donkey”?
15. With what resource did both Yaakov and Moshe bless Asher?
16. In Yosef’s blessing Yaakov said, “They embittered him...” Who are “they”?
17. Which descendants of Binyamin “will divide the spoils in the evening”?
18. From whom did Yaakov buy his burial place?
19. What oath did Yosef make to Pharaoh?
20. Which two sons of Yaakov did not carry his coffin? Why not?

## PARSHA Q&A!

### Answers to this Week’s Questions!

All references are to the verses and Rashi’s commentary unless otherwise stated.

1. 47:29 - Because the giver expects no reward from the recipient.
2. 47:29 - a) Egypt’s ground was to be plagued with lice; b) At the time of the resurrection, those buried outside Israel will suffer; c) So the Egyptians wouldn’t make him into an idol.
3. 47:31 - Bow to him.
4. 48:7 - Yaakov thought Yosef harbored resentment since Yaakov had not buried Yosef’s mother, Rachel, in the *Ma’arat HaMachpela*.
5. 48:8 - The *Shechina* departed from him.
6. 48:11 - “I thought.”
7. 48:22 - a) The actual city of Shechem; b) A portion.
8. 48:22 - Esav. a) He acted like an Emorite; b) He trapped his father with words (*imrei pi*).
9. 49:1 - When *mashiach* will come.
10. 49:3 - Priesthood and Kingship.
11. 49:6 - Korach and his congregation.
12. 49:8 - He drew back. He was afraid that Yaakov would rebuke him for the incident with Tamar.
13. 49:12 - It makes them white.
14. 49:14 - Just as a donkey bears a heavy burden, so the tribe of Yissachar bears the yoke of Torah.
15. 49:20 - Oil-rich land.
16. 49:23 - Yosef’s brothers, Potifar and his wife.
17. 49:27 - Mordechai and Esther.
18. 50:5 - From Esav.
19. 50:6 - Yosef swore not to reveal Pharaoh’s ignorance of Hebrew.
20. 50:13 - Levi, because he would carry the *aron* (holy ark). Yosef, because he was a king.

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- When the inherited estate cannot provide for all the children
- The priority of male or female children to a limited estate
- When the gender of one of the heirs is in doubt
- The advantages of having a son or daughter

## THE MYSTERIOUS DAUGHTER

What hidden message lies in the words of the Torah (*Bereishet* 24.1) that "G-d blessed Avraham *bakol*" (with everything)?

Rabbi Meir's view is that the blessing was that he did not have a daughter.

In contrast Rabbi Yehuda states that he had a daughter and her name was *bakol*.

In his commentary on *Chumash*, Ramban explains Rabbi Meir's position as based on the impossibility Avraham would have faced in finding a suitable husband for a daughter. None of his Canaanite neighbors could be considered, and if he had to send her abroad to his family she would be negative-

ly influenced in that pagan environment.

One solution to this dilemma might have been to marry her off to his son Yitzchak, which would have been permitted according to the opinion (*Mesechta Sanhedrin* 58b) that Noachide law then in effect for our ancestors permits marrying a sister.

This is rejected, however, on the basis of a question raised by Tosefot as to why, according to Rabbi Yehuda, did Avraham have to send his servant abroad to find a wife for Yitzchak when he could have matched him with his sister. One of the answers given by Tosefot is that the daughter was not the child of Sarah but rather of her handmaiden Hagar, thus making her unfit as a wife for Yitzchak.

• *Bava Batra* 141a

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## WAILING WESTERN WALL

**From: Regina**

*Dear Rabbi,  
I am interested in learning about the Wailing or Western Wall. Can you explain to me how this sacred place began (history) and how it has evolved over the years? My teacher is teaching us this subject in my Jewish religion class. However, I want to learn more by asking you. Thank you in advance.*

Dear Regina,

The Western Wall is really only of secondary importance and holiness. That's because the mountain which the wall surrounds and the Temple that once stood atop it is what's really significant about the site. Let me explain.

The holy mountain in Jerusalem upon which the Temple was built is called Mount Moriah. According to Jewish tradition and Scriptures, it was from this Mount that G-d first created Earth (Yoma 54b), upon which Adam was formed (Sanhedrin 38b), Cain, Hevel (Gen. 4:1-4) and Noach (Gen. 8:20) offered their sacrifices to G-d, Abraham bound Isaac (Gen. 22:1-3) and Jacob had his prophetic dream (Gen 28:11,16-18).

It was this Mount which G-d revealed would be the future site of the Temple (Deut. 12:10,11), was purchased by King David for that purpose (2 Sam 24:18,24-25) and upon which Solomon built the First Temple in 825 BCE (2 Chron. 3:1). Solomon's Temple was destroyed by the Babylonians, rebuilt as the Second Temple by Ezra and Nehemiah in 352 BCE (over 1000 years before Islam built its mosques on the ancient Jewish site) and then destroyed by the Romans resulting in the Diaspora of the Jews till this day.

The Temple was built by constructing a retaining wall all the way around the mountain that was used to level off an arch-supported, hollow platform surrounding the top of the mountain. [As a model, consider a cone surrounded by a box, where the tip of the cone protrudes from a hole in the

top of the box]. It was on this platform, called the Temple Mount, where the Temple was built over the tip of the mountain protruding above the platform; the innermost section of the Temple, called the Holy of Holies, was actually built around the exposed mountaintop itself. The platform was originally 250m by 250m, and later expanded in Second Temple times to its present size of 300m by 480m (app. 12 soccer fields, 3 by 4) where the Temple itself was not in the center but rather toward the northwest corner of the Temple Mount.

When the Second Temple was destroyed in 70 CE, the retaining walls around the mountain remained in tact to support the elevated platform of the Temple Mount. While the retaining wall on the eastern side of the Mount remained exposed, uneasy access prevented it from becoming a focal point for prayers. Over time, most of the other retaining walls were rendered unfit either because they were covered by the Arab quarters built to the north and west of the Mount or because they buttressed the mosques built over the western and southern walls. Thus, only a relatively small part of the retaining wall was exposed and not in front of the mosques – and this was in the western retaining wall.

As mentioned above, since the ancient Temple was toward the northwest of the Mount, this was also the closest exposed section to the location of the ancient Temple. It therefore became the most accessible, palpable and significant remnant of the holy Temple to the Jews, who gathered there over the millennia since the destruction to lament that tragedy and express their longing for the redemption and rebuilding of the Temple.

That's why (this part of) the Western Wall is also called the Wailing Wall. It's holy only insofar as it surrounds the holy mountain and served to support the Temple Mount and the Temple. But what a Jew really expresses by visiting, praying and weeping at that site is his hope that the full glory of the Mount, which has since been usurped by others, will be restored to its original owners, the Jews, who were, and still are, the source, foundation and inspiration for others' interest there in the first place.

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# QUESTION MARKET

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## BANK ACCOUNT FOR A MINOR

**Question:** A friend of mine opened a savings account in the name of his firstborn son and each month deposited a sum in the account. He did not do so for his other children. When he passed away and the existence of this account became known, the brothers argued that the sum should be divided amongst them since their father had never passed over the account to the oldest and therefore intended it to be a part of the general inheritance. What is

the right thing to do?

**Answer:** In his book "Pure Money", Rabbi Shlomo Cohen, a *dayan* in a Jerusalem Beit Din, quotes authorities who rule that since the account was opened in the name of the oldest son only, each deposit was acquired by the bank on his behalf even though he was a minor. There is no need for him to share this sum with his brothers.

## THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY \_\_\_\_\_

### A QUICK DEPARTURE

Arranging an appointment with the very wealthy potential donor in a foreign land was no easy matter, even for someone so greatly respected as Rabbi Yosef Kahaneman, founder of the Ponevez Yeshiva in Bnei Brak. He finally succeeded thanks to the strenuous efforts of a former student who lived in the man's city.

When, upon arriving from the airport, the rabbi and his student knocked on the door they were greeted by the man they wished to meet, only to learn that he was presently involved in a business transaction, and they would have to wait for a quarter of an hour. When that time passed the host excused himself and said that it would be another hour

until he was free to see them. At this point Rabbi Kahaneman picked himself up, said goodbye to his potential donor and departed for the trip back to Israel.

The student was shocked that his rav who had made a special trip to encourage this fellow to support his major Torah institution was ready to leave and asked for an explanation.

"You told me that once our meeting was over you had a learning session with a partner," came the answer, "and I am not prepared to let you lose that opportunity to learn Torah. As regards the needs of my institution, I am sure that Heaven will take care of them if I do what is right."

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