

# OHRNET

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## PARSHA INSIGHTS

by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

### The Descent of Man

*"All Israel shall bless, saying: 'May G-d make you as Ephraim and as Menashe.'" (48:20)*

Rabbi Yaakov Kaminetzky, one of the great sages of the previous generation, was once sitting in an airplane next to the head of the Histadrut, the Israeli Labor Federation. As Reb Yaakov was of advanced age, his children insisted that he travel in Business class to minimize the rigors of the journey from America to Israel. The rest of his family traveled in Economy. As soon as the "fasten seat belt" sign went off, one of his grandchildren bounded forward and said, "Zeide, would you like a drink?" Not long afterwards, another grandchild appeared and said, "Zeide, are you comfortable? Would you like another pillow?" This grandchild was followed by another and yet another. This monotonous procession of doting grandchildren did not escape the notice of the head of the Histadrut. After the fifth grandchild made his exit, he turned to Reb Yaakov and said, "Forgive me, Rabbi, but may I ask you a question?" "Of course," replied Reb Yaakov. Said the man: "I couldn't help notice the tremendous respect your grandchildren give you. I'm lucky if I get a birthday card from my grandchildren. What's your secret? Why is it that your children and grandchildren give you such respect?"

Reb Yaakov replied, "You see, we believe that we are descended from people whose spiritual greatness is almost impossible for us to imagine: Avraham, Yitzchak, Yaakov, Moshe. My *rebbe* (Torah teacher) used to say without false modesty and in total sincerity that he didn't come to the ankles of his *rebbe*, neither in Torah learning nor in purity of character. If you asked my *rebbe's* *rebbe* about his *rebbe*, he would have said the same. If you extrapolate this backwards even a few generations it becomes very difficult for us to have any idea of the greatness of the Vilna Gaon, who lived only some 250 years ago, let alone of the *Avot*, the Patriarchs.

"Ever since that supernal moment when G-d spoke to our ancestors at Sinai, our spiritual journey has been ever downward. That's why our children give us respect, because they see us as closer to Sinai than they. We are one generation closer to the giving of the Torah.

You, on the other hand, believe that you share common ancestry with the ape. So why should your children respect you? You are one generation closer to the ape than they are! They see themselves as a step up the ladder of the 'ascent of man.' In their view, it is *you* who should give *them* respect."

*"All Israel shall bless, saying: 'May G-d make you as Ephraim and as Menashe.'" (48:20)*

On Friday nights throughout the Jewish world, the first thing that a father does upon returning from *shul* is to bless the children with the words of this verse: "May G-d make you as Ephraim and as Menashe."

Why, of all our towering spiritual giants, are Ephraim and Menashe singled out to be the paradigm of blessing? Why don't we say, "May G-d make you like Avraham, or like Moshe"?

The phrase "the generation gap" was coined by sociologists to denote the lack of mutual understanding between generations. But in Judaism, the generation gap is the discrepancy between the spiritual attainments of one generation and those of its predecessor, for the march of history, spiritually, has been inexorably downward.

The reason that we bless our children to be like Ephraim and Menashe can be found in Yaakov's words to Yosef a few verses earlier: "Ephraim and Menashe will be to me as Reuven and Shimon." (48:5)

Although Ephraim and Menashe were Yaakov's grandchildren, they had not slipped down the rungs of the spiritual ladder; rather, they had managed to hang on to the spiritual level of the previous generation, of their uncles Reuven and Shimon.

When a father places his hands on the head of his children on a Friday night, he blesses them that they should be able to raise themselves above the downward march of history, to maintain the spiritual level of the previous generation and escape the downward spiral of the generation gap.

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# TALMUD TIPS

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by Rabbi Moshe Newman

## Vayechi: Berachot 2-8

### The Weight of Responsibility

*King David prayed to Hashem, "Protect me, for I am a righteous man." (Tehillim 86:2)*

Our Sages explain that King David's prayer was not a plea for protection due to his righteousness, as one might understand from the simple reading of the verse. Rather, King David was a very special person and leader, who conducted himself as king in a manner unlike other monarchs. *Chazal* describe the difference between the behavior of other kings and that of King David in the following manner: "All the kings of the east and west sit in splendor with their royal courts, while, on the other hand, King David immersed himself with ruling on halachic matters of family purity."

So, from what exact threat did King David pray to Hashem for protection in this Psalm? One answer offered by the commentaries is that King David was aware of a special "occupational hazard" of monarchs – stress – that potentially could lessen his effectiveness as the leader of the Jewish People, both in matters of the State and matters of the spirit. Even a miniscule degree of untreated and ignored tension – a degree that we might consider completely insignificant – might possibly have a negative impact on a person in his unique position.

This idea, which according to these commentaries is expressed in Sefer Tehillim, appears to be the source for the playwright's oft-quoted line, "Heavy is the head that wears the crown." (The exact wording is actually "uneasy," not "heavy.") This clever wording is intended to convey the difficulties involved in fulfilling the duties of kingship – especially the difficulty for the king to properly fulfill his great responsibility if he is worried.

Other kings of the world indulged themselves with every manner of luxury, privilege and feasting, which – as inappropriate as their behavior was – served to relieve the stress that was part of being a monarch. King David, however, spurned this accepted lifestyle of other kings, and devoted all of his time and efforts to Torah, *tefillah* and halacha. For this reason he prayed to Hashem that he not be affected by any measure of stress from his royal position, so that he would be able to lead the Jewish People in the path of Torah and fear of Heaven. (Iyun Yaakov)

▪ *Berachot 4a*

#### Preparing for the Evening Prayer

*Rabbi Yochanan said, "Who is a 'ben Olam Haba'? One who juxtaposes 'geulah' to 'tefillah' in the evening prayer service."*

"*Geula*" refers to the second *beracha* following the *Shema* at night, and whose theme is the fact that Hashem freed the Jewish People at the time of the Exodus from Egypt to give the Torah at Mount Sinai. "*Tefillah*" refers to the *Shmoneh Esrei* quiet prayer that we say immediately after the *beracha* of *geulah* at night as well as in the morning. A "*ben Olam Haba*" is someone who has a good place in the World-to-Come.

What is the special significance of saying *geulah* and then immediately following it with *tefillah* that it should merit this reward of such great magnitude?

A primary lesson to internalize when saying the prayer of *geulah* is that Hashem is faithful to us and we should be faithful to Him. At the time of the Exodus, the Jewish People put their faith in Hashem. As the Torah states in Shemot 14:31, "And they believed in Hashem." And as a result, they were rescued by Hashem with clear signs and miracles. So, at first we say the *beracha* of *geulah*, which expresses awareness of the reward given to those who have faith and trust in Hashem. And without delay, the next logical step is that we actualize this trust in the Creator by turning to Him, and to Him alone, in prayer with our personal requests. Prayer to Hashem shows that we trust in Him to truly listen to us, care for us and help us. Therefore, *tefillah* immediately after the *geulah* demonstrates our complete faith that Hashem rewards those who put their trust in Him. (Talmidei Rabbeinu Yonah. And see there another reason explaining Rabbi Yochanan's teaching. Regarding the halacha of praying the *Shmoneh Esrei* of *Maariv* immediately following the *beracha* of *geulah*, see the Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 236:2, and the *poskim* there.)

▪ *Berachot 4b*

# Q & A

## Questions

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?

*All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary, unless otherwise stated.*

## Answers

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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# WHAT'S IN A WORD?

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*Synonyms in the Hebrew Language*  
by Rabbi Reuven Chaim Klein

## Jacob's Three Names

The third patriarch of the Jewish People is blessed with three different names: *Yaakov* (Jacob), *Yisrael* (Israel), and *Yeshurun* (Jeshurun). In this essay we will explore the meanings of these three names and offer some deeper insights into their implications.

As the Bible itself clearly implies, the name *Yaakov* is derived from the root AYIN-KUF-BET, which means “heel,” because Yaakov was born holding on to his older brother Esav’s heel (Gen. 25:26).

When Yaakov was on his way back to the Holy Land after marrying and starting a family in Padan Aram, he encountered Esav’s Angel when crossing the Jabbok River. Yaakov overcame the angel and demanded that it bless him, to which the angel revealed that Yaakov’s new name shall be *Yisrael*, because he successfully “lords” (*sar*) over “angels” (*elohim*, or *el* for short) and man (Gen. 32:30). G-d Himself later confirmed this blessing by also bestowing upon Yaakov the name *Yisrael* (Gen. 35:10). Rabbeinu Bachaya (1255-1340) clarifies that Yaakov’s name was not *changed* to *Yisrael*, but that *Yisrael* was an *additional* name.

Although the Torah seems to use *Yaakov* and *Yisrael* almost interchangeably, there are different approaches explaining when/why the Torah uses each name. Many commentators, including the Maharal (1520-1609) and Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (1808-1888) explain that *Yaakov* is used when referring to Yaakov as an individual, while *Yisrael* is used when referring to Yaakov in the context of his greater role as the progenitor of the Jewish nation. Rabbi Elimelech of Lizhensk (1717-1786) explains that the names *Yaakov* and *Yisrael* are placeholders for two different approaches to the worship of G-d: *Yaakov* alludes to “fear of G-d” and *Yisrael* refers to “love of G-d.” Rabbi

Chaim Ibn Attar (1696-1743), author of *Ohr HaChaim*, systematically demonstrates that *Yaakov* is used whenever the Torah describes Yaakov in a downtrodden, sad state, while *Yisrael* is used when he was happy and peaceful.

But — *Yaakov* also has a third name: *Yeshurun*. This name appears only four times in the entire Bible: three times towards the end of Deuteronomy (Deut. 32:15; 33:5; 33:26) and once in Isaiah (Isa. 44:2).

How do we know that the name *Yeshurun* refers to *Yaakov*? One place where we clearly see this is in the passage customarily recited before the morning prayers, which presents the Jewish People as “the congregation of Your [G-d’s] firstborn son *Yaakov*, whom from Your love that You loved him and from Your happiness that You were happy with him, You called his name *Yisrael* and *Yeshurun*.” The earliest source of this prayer is the Midrash *Tanna DeVei Eliyahu* (*Seder Eliyahu Rabbah*, ch. 21).

[Interestingly, Rabbi Meir Simcha of Dvinsk (1843-1926) notes that besides the aforementioned prayer, the Jews are almost never referred to as *Yeshurun* in the liturgy. However, in the Yom Kippur prayers we say that G-d is the “Forgiver of Israel and the Pardoner of the Tribes of Jeshurun in all generations.” Rabbi Meir Simcha accounts for this double expression by explaining that “Forgiver of Israel” refers to His forgiving sins between man and G-d (typified by the Golden Calf), and “the Pardoner of the Tribes of Jeshurun” refers to His forgiving sins between man and man (typified by Yosef’s brothers selling Yosef as a slave).]

What is the meaning and implications of the name *Yeshurun*?

As the Bible relates, Esav offers a false etymology for Yaakov's birth-name: After Yaakov bought the firstborn rights from Esav and, years later, cleverly took Yitzchak's blessings that were intended for Esav, Esav claimed that Yaakov's name *Yaakov* was related to AYIN-KUF-BET's other meaning, "deceit or trickery" (Gen. 27:36). In light of this, Nachmanides (to Num. 23:10 and Deut. 2:10; 7:12) explains that G-d gave Yaakov the name *Yeshurun*, derived from *yashar* ("straight"), in order to counter Esav's false assertion that *Yaakov* refers to "deceit" or "crookedness." On the contrary, Yaakov is somebody who is "wholesome" and "straightforward" (see Micha 7:20, who associates Yaakov with "truth").

A complementary tradition points out that the name *Yeshurun* is a portmanteau of the phrase *yashar v'naeh* ("straight and fine") and actually equals that phrase in *gematria* (if *Yeshurun* is spelled with two VAVs). This explanation is cited by Rabbi Avraham ben Ezriel in *Arugos HaBosem*, *Periush HaRokeach* to the Siddur, and Rabbi Chanoch Zundel of Bialystok in *Eitz Yosef*.

Rabbeinu Bachaya explains that *Yeshurun* is related to the word *shur* ("gaze"), and recalls the fact that the Jews were the people who came closest to "gazing" upon G-d's Holy Presence when He revealed Himself to them at Mount Sinai. The Vilna Gaon (1720-1797) explains that *Yeshurun* is a cognate of the word *shir* ("song"), in allusion to that fact that the Jews sang G-d's praises after the Exodus. Similarly, Rabbi Yaakov Tzvi Mecklenburg (1785-1865) writes that *Yeshurun* alludes to the idea that the Jewish People were the only ones to accept the Torah, which is called a *shirah* (Deut. 31:19).

The Zohar (*Vayechi* 222a) teaches that *Yisrael* denotes a higher spiritual level than *Yaakov*, and *Yeshurun* denotes an even higher level than *Yisrael* (*Vayishlach* 177b). How are we to understand the implications of this?

The famous Kabbalist Rabbi Yitzchak Luria (1534-1572), more commonly known as the Arizal, teaches

that G-d's influence in creation filters down through four Worlds. Outside of these four worlds is the infinite "G-dhead" (*Ein Sof*), which is the source of everything. From there, His influence filters down to the Worlds of Emanation (*Atzilut*), Creation (*Briyah*), Formation (*Yetzirah*), and finally to the world which we occupy, the World of Action (*Asiyah*). Rabbi Nosson Nota Shapiro (1585-1633) explains in *Megaleh Amukos* that the names of the angels in *Briyah* end with the *-el* suffix (like Raphael, Michael, and Gavriel), while angels in the world of *Yetzirah* end with *-ron/on* suffix (like Metatron and Sandalphon). Yaakov's three names conform to this nomenclature and indicate his place in three of these worlds: *Yaakov* represents his place in the world of *Asiyah*, *Yisrael* in the higher world of *Briyah*, and *Yeshurun* in the even higher world of *Yetzirah*.

According to the Talmud (*Yoma* 73b), the Kohen Gadol's breastplate was inscribed with the names of the three patriarchs, the twelve tribes, and the phrase "The Tribes of Yeshurun." Rabbi Moshe Sofer (1762-1839) in *Chasam Sofer* (to *Yoma* 73b) writes that this was only true of Aharon the Kohen Gadol's breastplate, but later in history the subsequent breastplates actually read: "The Tribes of *Yisrael*" instead of "of *Yeshurun*." He explains that the appellation *Yisrael* implies that the Jewish People reached their level through Divine assistance, as it is a portmanteau of *yashar* ("straight") and *El* (a name of G-d). This implies a high spiritual level, but one that still requires them to be "helped along." On the other hand, *Yeshurun* implies a people who are inherently "straight," and is used to describe the Jewish People at their pinnacle, when they have reached their peak spirituality entirely through their own efforts.

[Interestingly, Rabbi Shmuel Eidels (1555-1631), known as Maharsha, explains that *Yeshurun* is actually another name for G-d, a view which he ascribes to Rashi. The late Rabbi Nosson Kamenetsky (1930-2019) penned an exhaustive essay exploring Maharsha's view, and how Rabbi Yechezkel Landau (1713-1793) understood what Maharsha meant (in responsa *Noda b'Yehudah Tinyana*, *Orach Chaim* §126).]

*For questions, comments, or to propose ideas for a future article, please contact the author at [rclein@ohr.edu](mailto:rclein@ohr.edu)*

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## PARSHA OVERVIEW

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**A**fter 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 Sarah 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 summons 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!*

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## LOVE OF THE LAND

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### Yaakov and the Foundation Stone

**B**oth on his way out of Eretz Yisrael, before his marriage, and during his last years in Egypt, Yaakov always had in mind his responsibility for laying the foundation for the Sanctuaries that his descendants would someday erect.

The stone that Yaakov had set up as a *matzeiva* (pillar), after sleeping and experiencing a prophetic dream on what would someday become the Temple Mount was, writes the *Ohr Hachayim HaKadosh*, the *Even Shetiah* (Foundation Stone). This was the stone from which the creation of the world began, and

upon it would rest the Holy Ark in the Beit Hamikdash.

While in Egypt, Yaakov planted the cedar trees whose wood his descendants would take with them on their way out of bondage to use for the boards of the Mishkan sanctuary.

Yaakov thus laid the foundation for the Sanctuary in which his posterity would serve Hashem on their way to Eretz Yisrael, and for the Beit Hamikdash they would build in Yerushalayim.

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# ASK!

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## Mr. Good-Man

M. Dupont wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

Thank you for your yeshiva's Jewish educational service. It is the most informative and enjoyable one online. I was wondering what Judaism says about man being born evil. Thank you for your answer and regards.

Dear M. Dupont,

No, man is not "born evil."

The Torah says that "the inclination in man's heart is evil from his youth." (Genesis 8:21) The Talmud explains "youth" here to mean from the time of birth. However, this evil inclination is external; it is not intrinsic to a person's pure soul. Our pure soul is given to us even earlier, at the time of conception.

So, Judaism sees man as basically good, created in G-d's image, but with temptation towards evil. While the evil inclination is strong, Judaism believes that a person can choose to overcome it. This is the concept of free choice, which is basically the purpose of our existence: To choose good over evil.

- Sources: Yerushalmi Berachot 3:5; Bereishet Rabba 34

## Divine Providence and Falling Leaves

From David:

Dear Rabbi,

I would appreciate any help which the Rabbi can give as regards to the following point: When a specific leaf falls off a tree or a specific animal is killed by another animal, is there a specific reason or decree why that specific leaf fell? Or is there such a thing as natural occurrences which are

random and uncontrolled? I would appreciate any information and sources that discuss and explain this philosophical point which touches on "bechira" (free choice), etc., and thank you in advance. Best regards.

Dear David,

The view that certain events are not individually guided is a view that is accepted by Maimonides in the Guide for the Perplexed, and also by Rabbi Ovadiah Sforno in his commentary on Chumash. They maintain that the degree of individual Divine Providence is directly proportional to the spirituality and G-dliness of the being. Hence, animals and plants have Providence only on a species level.

The exception would be when the animal or plant interacts with a human being – then there is guidance. For example, the apple falling near Sir Isaac Newton is Divine Providence, whereas an apple falling off a tree in Cortland, NY, with no human around, is a result of the laws of nature that G-d created.

Others, principally the Kabbalists and the Chassidic thinkers, maintain that absolutely everything is a matter of individual Divine Providence.

This argument may not be as extreme as it sounds: Perhaps the Kabbalists agree in principle with Maimonides' basic concept, yet they disagree in that they maintain that everything interacts with humanity on some level, and that even a very subtle and low level interaction with humans requires Divine Providence.

Regarding how there could be an argument in this area: Just as in any area of Torah, different minds see things differently – as long as they use Torah sources and methodology they are all "the words of the living G-d."

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# LETTER AND SPIRIT

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*Insights based on the writings of Rav S.R. Hirsch by Rabbi Yosef Hershman*

## Landholdings

**A**s Yaakov approaches the end of his days, he calls to Yosef, expressing his last wish: *Please...deal with me with chesed [lovingkindness] and truth; please to not bury me in Egypt!*

What is meant by *chesed and truth*? *Chesed* is phonetically related to the word for overflow, and means to devote oneself entirely, to literally spill over one's goodness. *Emet*, truth, qualifies and contains *chesed*, and in turn, preserves the true character of *chesed*.

Boundless love is a powerful force – powerful enough to break rules. *Chesed with emet* is a love that does not, out of intensity of devotion, lose sight of what is essential.

The same language is used to describe Eliezer's mission to find a wife for Yitzchak, which includes a cautionary directive to ensure that Yitzchak does not relocate to Aram. Lest Eliezer be carried away by a *chesed*-driven desire to find a match for Yitzchak, he is anchored by the *emet* of ensuring her spiritual suitability and the suitability of Yitzchak's environs. Here, Yaakov asks Yosef to act with *chesed* bound by *emet*. Yaakov knows well that Yosef will bury his father with pomp and splendor, but he tells him: *For all your chesed, do not lose sight of emet. I would rather not be buried at all than be buried in Egypt.*

Why was it so important for Yaakov *not* to be buried in Egypt?

The first burial plot mentioned in the Torah is the one that Avraham purchased for Sarah: he requests an *achuzat kever*. The word *achuzah* stems from the verb *to hold*. But *achuzah* does not imply that the owner *holds* the property – in fact the term refers to *landed* property and not to movable property. It is not that the owner *holds* the property – in fact, land *cannot* be held – but the *land* holds the owner. In a technical sense, land physically holds and supports its inhabitant. It also holds the owner in an economic sense, as it can serve as a guarantor of debt. And land also has a powerful spiritual hold over its owner. Avraham, in searching for a permanent, everlasting burial site for Sarah, wanted that place to be in the Land of Israel. And so he purchased an *achuzah*, a “landholding” there.

Two verses before Yaakov instructs Yosef regarding his burial, we are told that the children of Yaakov settled in Egypt, *and v'ye'achazu bah* – “they acquired land there.” Literally, these words mean “and they allowed the land to take hold of them.” They became bound to the land, in the sense that Avraham intended Sarah to be bound eternally to the Land of Israel. Yaakov surely saw this and noted the powerful influence the land of Egypt had and would continue to have on his descendants. This motivated his entreaty that they not bury him in Egypt, but instead carry him to his homeland. In doing so, he sought to weaken the bond his children had established with Egypt and establish for himself an eternal bond with the Land of Israel. This was the *emet* of which he spoke when he gave Yosef burial instructions. No matter the pomp and circumstance which would characterize his burial in Egypt – he insisted that the *chesed* of giving him honor be informed by his *emet* of attachment to the Land of Israel.

- Sources: Commentary, Genesis 47:29; 23:4



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