

עֵפְרַיִם הַשְּׁבִיעִי

A Weekly Torah Publication from the Students of Mesivta Ateres Yaakov
Ruth & Hyman Simon High School

A BLESSING IN DISGUISE

Rabbi Mordechai Yaffe, PhD. Menahel

In this week's parsha, we find that Yaakov Avinu establishes the format by which Jewish parents, throughout the generations, would bless their sons. Across the millennia, we have asked that Hashem should make our sons like Ephraim and Menashe, the two children of Yosef. While no doubt these two were very special, we can be relatively certain that the children of the other shevatim were also exceptional and worthy of setting the examples for the future as well. Why were these two individuals singled out to be the exemplars for the brachos that we want from Hashem for our children? Furthermore, Yaakov tells Yosef that these two children "Will be to me like Reuven and Shimon (48:5)". Quite frankly, this doesn't seem to be such a tremendous advantage, given that Reuven is ultimately described by Yaakov and being "unstable as water" and that the anger of Shimon is cursed by his father! Would it not have been far more appropriate for Yaakov to have likened them to his own two favorite sons, the ones for whom he had demonstrated the most concern, namely Yosef himself and Binyamin?

It is possible to explain that Ephraim and Menashe had one specific quality that distinguished them from everyone else in the family. All of the other children and grandchildren were born, raised, and developed under the unique auspices and guidance of Yaakov Avinu himself. In addition, they had only experienced the kedusha of being nurtured by the holy atmosphere of Eretz Yisroel. Ephraim and Menashe, however, represented a new type of member of Klal Yisroel. They were citizens of a foreign

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LIGHT IN THE MIDST OF THE TUNNEL Yaakov Chessed Polansky, 12th Grade

The Torah tells us in this week's *parsha* that Yaakov Avinu lived seventeen years in Mitzrayim. The Baal HaTurim explains that these years were the best years of Yaakov's life.

The Tzemach Tzedek asks an obvious question. Egypt is called the "ערות הארץ, the nakedness of the land." The land of Egypt is the lowest of the low; and Yaakov spent his *best* years there? How is this possible? Wouldn't it make sense that his stay in such an impure place be just the opposite?

An answer to this can be found from when Yehuda was sent to the region of Goshen. Yehuda was sent to Goshen "להורות לפניו גשנה". Rashi explains that this really means that Yehuda was sent to set up a Beis Medrash for all of Bnei Yisroel to learn Torah.

"להורות" has the same *shoresh* as "Torah". Furthermore, the word "גשן" has the root of "גש" - to come close. We can see from here that a way to come *close* to Hashem is to learn *Torah*. The way for a Jew to feel fulfilled, and *close* to Hashem is through Torah study.

As wonderful as this answer is, a question still remains. True, Yaakov was able to learn Torah here along with all of his children, but they could have done the same in a holier place! Yaakov's years in Egypt could have been fine, but not the *best* years. To say so seems like a bit of an exaggeration. Yaakov had been learning Torah his entire life; what makes his years of learning in Egypt that much greater? Why couldn't his family go learn in Eretz Yisroel, making his Torah that much greater?

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פרשת ויחי

יג טבת תשס"ה

December 25, 2004

Candle Lighting:	4:16
Latest שמע:	9:38
Latest שחרית:	10:41
Earliest הבדלה:	5:22

This week's edition of
ATERES HASHAVUA
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RABBI MORDECHAI GIFTER ZT'L 7 Cheshvan, 5676 / October 15, 1915 – 24 Teves 5761 / January 18, 2001 *Part II*



- Rav Gifter often spoke of the amazing simcha and fervor that permeated the Telz Yeshiva as the bachurim learned. When he first arrived, young Mordechai noticed one bachur in particular out of the hundreds whose simcha appeared to be especially prominent. When he asked who this

student was, he was told that he was the poorest *bochur* in the yeshiva.

- During his tenure in Telz, Mordechai also learned under HaRav Azriel Rabinowitz *zt'l*, son of Rav Chaim Telzer.

- Mordechai was also close to HaRav Zalman Bloch *zt'l*, his mentor in Telz and *menahel ruchani* of the yeshiva. He eventually married HaRav Bloch's daughter, Tlita.

- Years later Rav Gifter would describe to his talmidim the love of Torah of the *baal habattim* in the town of Telz, and how they so cherished each talmid for their constant exertion in Torah.

- Rav Gifter held correspondence with many gedolim, among them the Rogotchover gaon, HaRav Ezra Altshuler; author of *Takonas Ezra* and HaRav Yosef Zusmanowitz, author of *Truas Hamelech* and a rav in Wilkomir.

- A number of the letters, mostly including profound *halachic* essays between Rav Gifter and these gedolim were later published in the *sefer Shem Olom*, published by the Telz yeshiva of Cleveland.

- He had a very close relationship with Rav Mordechai Pogromanski *zt'l* who would often come to Telz. Rav Gifter arranged for a group of top talmidim to learn Torah and *mussar* with him, and later related that he had been very influenced by his teachings. Rav Gifter studied both *nigleh*

and *nistar* with him, and related that he had often merited to be *meshamesh* him.

- In the summer of 5699 (1939), Rav Gifter became engaged to the daughter of HaRav Zalman Bloch, with the wedding date set to a year later. He then set off to learn in the yeshiva of Brisk for the upcoming winter.

- On the first day of *selichos* that year, WWII broke out. The 24 year old Rav Gifter went to Washington to try to secure visas for the roshei yeshiva and talmidim of Telz. He spent two weeks knocking on the doors of countless people, until he finally got hold of hundreds of visas for everyone in the yeshiva along with their families.

- When able to do so, Rav Gifter's kallah immediately left Telz for America. The wedding took place in the winter of 5700, and thereafter the couple lived in Baltimore.

- Upon his move to Baltimore, Rav Gifter became very close with Rav Michael Hacoen Forshlager *zt'l*; author of *Toras Michael* and one of the talmidim of the *Avnei Nezer*.

- With the expansion of the Ner Yisroel Yeshiva in Baltimore, Rav Gifter began delivering *chaburos* to the talmidim on the *masechta* of gemara being learned at that time.

- In 5703 (1943) Rav Gifter became rav of the chareidi community in Connecticut. He would longingly recall this period in his life where he was able to learn Torah undisturbed. It was during this time that he conceived *chiddushim* on the entire *Shulchan Oruch* as well as all the *masechtos* of *shas*.

- In 5704 (1944), Rav Gifter's uncles HaRav Eliyahu Meir Bloch and HaRav Chaim Mordechai Katz founded the Telz yeshiva in Cleveland. They asked Rav Gifter to become the *mashgiach*, and as soon as he arrived in the yeshiva he began delivering *shiurim*.

- When his uncle, Rav Eliyahu Meir Bloch passed away, Rav Gifter was appointed rosh yeshiva along with his dear friend Rav Boruch Sorotzkin *zt'l*. *Part III next week!*

A number of years ago, a couple appeared before Rav Mordechai Gifter *zt'l*, asking him to rule on a family dispute. The husband, a member of Rav Gifter's kollel felt that, as a *ben Torah*, it was beneath his dignity to take out the garbage. His wife felt otherwise. Rav Gifter concluded that while the husband should in fact help his wife, he had no legal religious obligation to remove the refuse.

The next morning before Shacharis, Rav Gifter appeared at the door of the young couple. Startled, the young man immediately asked his rebbe in.

"No," responded Rav Gifter, "I did not come to socialize but to take out your garbage. You may believe it's beneath your dignity, but it's not beneath mine!" The message was heard, and through personal example the young man became a *ben Torah* to the fullest sense of the word.

אמת ליעקב

Weekly Insights from Moreinu HoRav Yaakov Kamenetzky zt"l

ויקרא יעקב אל בניו ויאמר האספו ואגידה לכם את אשר יקרא אתכם באחרית הימים
הקבצו ושמעו בני יעקב ושמעו אל ישראל אביכם (מט:א-ב)

AND YAAKOV CALLED TO HIS SONS, AND HE SAID TO THEM, 'GATHER TOGETHER SO THAT I MAY TELL YOU WHAT WILL BEFALL YOU AT THE END OF TIME. GATHER AND LISTENS SONS OF YAAKOV, AND LISTEN TO YISROEL YOUR FATHER.'

The Midrash relates that through the giving of the *birchas Yaakov*, Yaakov was warning his sons to avoid arguing with one another, and to act as one group. HaRav Yaakov Kamenetzky zt"l explains this Midrash in the following way. Through the *brachos*, Yaakov was teaching each of the *shevatim* what his job and purpose in Klal Yisroel would be. Yaakov did not believe that Klal Yisroel should exist as one unit, with no differences of opinion amongst them, but rather they should exist as twelve parts working together to form one nation. Yaakov expected that there would be differences of opinion amongst the *shevatim*, but this to him was not problematic. The concept of *shalom* is not that everyone must agree, as different groups have different ways of thinking, but Yaakov was warning them that their *machloksim* should only be *l'shem shomayim*. Each *shevet* however, must respect the beliefs of the next, as each *shevet's* view is accurate based on the concept of, "אלו ואלו דברי", "אלקים חיים." In a *machlokes l'shem shamayim* every opinion is valid.



Rav Yaakov at the Be'er Hagolah Dinner with a Russian child.

Through the giving of the *brachos*, Yaakov was making this very point. Each *shevet* had its own niche that it was expected to fill; however, each *shevet* was expected to be a part of a nation, and to respect, and not infringe upon any other *shevet's* job. In order to make this point, Yaakov insisted that all be present while he spoke individually to each one, and told him what his task in Klal Yisroel would be. He was teaching his sons that each of them had specific *midos*, and a specific purpose that he had to fulfill by himself. Each one of the *shevatim* had a role to play in the upkeep of Klal Yisroel as a nation. No *shevet* could claim that its role was more important than any other, as they had all been present when Yaakov had instructed them as to their specific functions.

We must learn a lesson from this. Even when we disagree with someone, we must remember to respect them, and their way of thinking. We may disagree with the idea, but not the individual. Perhaps through this we can correct the *aveirah* of *sinas chinam*, so that we may finally be *zoche* to the *geulah sheleimah*, *bimheira biyameinu amen*.

Once, while traveling, Sir Moses Montefiore decided to get down from his carriage and walk, while his entourage followed some distance behind. Suddenly, some youngsters recognized him as a Jew. Not knowing that he was a distinguished knight of the realm, they began to hurl insults at Sir Moses. His attendants pounced upon the youngsters and wrestled them to the ground. The aides were about to administer a sound thrashing when Sir Moses hurried over and said, "Leave them alone. Let them stand up. Many people have given me great titles. They've called me, 'Sir', 'Your Excellency' and 'Your Honor'. But no one has ever given me a royal title such as these men have. They addressed me with the greatest title of all: They called me *Yehudi*. They called me a Jew."

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We would like to thank

Franklin Printing

for printing this week's

edition of the

Ateres HaShavua.

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