

## **He blessed Yosef ... shall bless the lads and shall call them my name... And he blessed on that day, saying: “In you shall Yisrael (be) blessed.” (48:15,16,20)**

Yaakov *Avinu* actually gave two blessings: one to Yosef, and one to Ephraim and Menashe. Upon reading the text of the blessings, however, we confront an anomaly: Yaakov actually directed the blessing meant for Yosef at his sons – Ephraim and Menashe. The blessing that Yaakov *Avinu* gave to Ephraim and Menashe was all about Yosef. Concerning Yosef’s blessing, the Torah writes, *Yevareich es ha’naarim*, “He (Hashem) should bless the lads,” while, concerning Ephraim and Menashe, the Patriarch said, “In you (singular), shall *Yisrael* be blessed,” which implies that the blessing was to him. *Horav Yisrael Belsky, zl*, posits that these blessings touch upon the greatest blessing one can give a father: that he have children that will do him proud, children who will be a credit to him and his legacy. Likewise, every child wants (or should want) that his parents be considered blessed people on account of him. Knowing that one is a source of pleasure and satisfaction to his parents is an amazing blessing. We may suggest that when children have parents of whom they are proud, it is a blessing. Knowing that your “last name” does not cause you grief as a result of a parent’s ignoble reputation is a blessing. Furthermore, I think the Torah is alluding to a double-edged responsibility that parents and children have towards one another. A father/mother should think twice before undertaking an activity that might shed ignominy upon their children’s good name – and vice-versa.

These blessings, however, have greater significance, as the *Rosh Yeshivah* explains. Parents are a link in the transmission of *Yiddishkeit*/Jewish heritage to their children, the next generation. When parents eschew their responsibility to live up to the elevated lifestyle of *emunah* and *bitachon*, faith and trust in the Almighty, bequeathed to them by our forebears, they have failed not only themselves, but also their progeny. If parents do not live up to their obligations to Hashem, the continuity of the blessing is severed, and, rather than inherit blessing, their children are heirs to a curse.

When Shifrah and Puah, at risk to their own lives, saved the Jewish infants, Hashem gave them a unique reward. The spiritual trait, *yiraas Shomayim*, fear of Heaven, which gave them the fortitude to do what was right, despite the decree of the evil despot, Pharaoh, became their permanent trait and legacy transmitted through the generations to the members of their respective families: *Malchus Bais David* – the Davidic dynasty; the Houses of *Kehunah* and *Leviyah*. Thus, descendants of Shifrah and Puah became heirs to a noble, eternal spiritual gene: *yiraas Shomayim*. The houses of *Kehunah* and *Leviyah* and *Malchus Bais David* –spiritually represented the material/physical leadership of the eternal Jewish nation. Their blessing was not a one-time deal, but rather, a blessing of *nitzchiyus*, eternity, that will never be lost.

When Yaakov blessed Yosef through his children, he signified that the entire Patriarchal legacy of Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov would flow through Yosef to his children, with no distortion or

diminishment in any way. He blessed Yosef that he should be able to transmit his spiritual inheritance without embellishment, in its entirety. This is all fine and well, but singling out two grandsons and granting them tribal status is, in and of itself, a recipe for envy. To bless the one son who was at the center of the controversy between the brothers, which ultimately was the reason for so much strife and so many years of anguish, seems to be counterproductive. Yaakov *Avinu* knew all this, and he certainly was not naïve. Yet, he believed that *Klal Yisrael* would understand that they will always have one individual who stands out, who is blessed with extraordinary capabilities, and who, despite all of his unique attributes, remains unpretentious and self-effacing. The Patriarch prayed that *Klal Yisrael* would view these lads with *nachas* and admiration, not with envy. He prayed that their success not fall prey to the destructive power of the evil eye, and that they garner respect, not opposition; admiration, not envy. At the end of the day, one should not go out of his way to call attention to himself or his child, but, at the same time, stunting a gifted child just because of what others might say is just as wrong. The only true competition that we have in life is ourselves. As such, we must strive to be the best that we can be, thereby fulfilling our own individual potential.