

## **So he blessed them... saying, “By you shall Yisrael bless saying, ‘May G-d make you like Ephraim and like Menashe.’” (48:20)**

Yaakov *Avinu* blessed his grandsons with what has become the standard of blessing. *Horav Yechezkel, zl, m’Kuzmir*, notes that the word *becha*, by you, is singular, as if the speaker is addressing one person, which is not the case. Both Menashe and Ephraim were present during this blessing; thus, *bach* refers to both of them. The *Kuzmirer* explains that *bach* alludes to complete unity in which two individuals – in this instance, Menashe and Ephraim – who are unified in complete harmony as one person. Only when perfect amity prevails can *brachah*, blessing, radiate to *Klal Yisrael*.

When Yosef presented Ephraim and Menashe to Yaakov, he did so in such a manner that Menashe, his older son, would be on Yaakov’s right and Ephraim would be on his left. Instead, Yaakov crisscrossed his hands, placing his right hand on the head of Ephraim and his left on the head of Menashe. At first glance, one might question the Patriarch’s judgment. Indeed, *Chazal (Megillah 16b)* do just that, “On account of two *selas*, the weight of a fine wool garment, that Yaakov gave to Yosef in excess of what he gave to Yosef’s brothers, the matter evolved and our forefathers descended down to Egypt.” In other words, the entire Yosef debacle had its origins in the preferential treatment Yaakov showed to Yosef. Why would the Patriarch stir up (what could have resulted in) jealousy between the two brothers, Menashe and Ephraim?

The *Rebbe* explains with a simple analogy. A father has two sons. He gives one a gold coin and the other son a silver coin. Clearly, such action can provoke jealousy between the brothers. If one has only one son, however, and he places the gold coin in the son’s right hand and the silver coin in his left hand, understandably no jealousy occurs, since it is one person. This is the meaning of *Becha yevorach Yisrael*, “By you shall *Yisrael* bless.” You – in the singular – is how the two of you shall act: one unit, complete peace and harmony, as if you were one person. Only then can the blessing, “May G-d make you like Ephraim and Menashe,” when no jealousy existed, be effective.

The following is not a new story. I used it years ago. It is so powerful and inspiring that I feel I can use it again. A popular American entertainer was asked to put on a show for a group of World War II veterans. He was a noted comic, and these men, having suffered the trauma and pain associated with war, could use a pick-me-up. He said that he had very little time and too many commitments. He would give them ten minutes.

Surprisingly, for some reason, the comic stayed for thirty minutes. After every monologue, the audience applauded. While this entertainer was quite used to applause, something special, encouraged him to keep up his monologue, so that he could experience more applause. Finally, he bid the audience good night and went backstage, where someone stopped him and asked, “What happened? I thought you were only willing to be up there for a few minutes.”

He replied, "I really was pressed for time, but I can show you the reason that I stayed. Just look at the front row and see for yourself."

Two men were sitting next to one another in the front row. Each of these men had lost an arm in the war. One had lost his right arm; the other had lost his left arm. Together, they were able to applaud. This is exactly what they were doing – right to left – two men, working as one.