

Points to Ponder
Vayechi 5778
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וישלח ישראל את ימינו And Yisrael sent forth his right (48:4) – Why didn't Yaakov just simply ask Menashe and Ephraim to switch their places? **Rav Shimon Schwab ztl.** explains that Yosef's strength was in both places, he was both a man of action and one of spirit. Each of his sons primarily stressed one of these attributes. Lest either one think he was diminished in his contribution to his father, grandfather or nation – Yaakov left each in his proper place.

לכנסו ואגידה לכם Gather around and I will tell you (49:1) – There is a famous Gemara (Pesachim 56a) that Yaakov tried to reveal the future to his children and it was hidden from him. He thought that perhaps something was amiss with one of the children and expressed his fears. They answered him that **שמע ישראל ה' אלקינו ה' אחד** – Listen Yaakov, there is nothing wrong with us. Why did the **פסוק Shema** calm Yaakov down? **Rav Dr. Michael Rosensweig Shlita** suggested that Yaakov understood the different strengths and powers of his children and was worried that the differences would ultimately prevent them from unification and from developing an accurate description of **יחוד ה'**. They responded that we are united and so is our description of Hashem. Yaakov responded **ברוך שם** because his thanks in **אמונה** grew in the process.

לכנסו ואגידה לכם Gather around and I will tell you (49:1) – The Gemara notes that Yaakov said **ברוך שם** but Moshe did not. Why did Moshe leave this out? **Rav Schachter Shlita** noted that the **Nesivos** explains that in the days of Yaakov the whole Torah was **7 מצוות** and **גיד הנשה** and perhaps **אהבת ארץ ישראל**. He therefore knew that the only thing holding his children back – perhaps creating a **פסול** for them was the fact that they lacked an **אמונה** that would be able to match the **אמונה** he had. When they answered in the affirmative, he said **ברוך שם** because he saw that the **כבוד שמים** would continue to be maintained as it was in his day. However in Moshe's time there were already **613 מצוות** and the **כבוד שמים** was not simply proven by that which existed in the heart. **Rav Schachter** added that the obligation to serve Hashem with a full heart today is not just in the heart – it must refer to **הקרבת עבודת**. But being a Jew only in the heart is not enough for Hashem.

אתה ראוּבן בכרי אתה Reuven you are my Bechor (49:3) – Why does Yaakov wait 48 years to reproof Reuven? Rashi notes it was because he was afraid Reuven would leave him and join Eisav. Yet, wasn't Eisav the exact opposite of **ראובן**? **Rav Nebenzahl Shlita** explains that if one so stunts the growth of a child through the harshness of extreme criticism that destroys his confidence and **כבוד**, it can make the child move to an extreme so far that he will take a position that is antithetical to who he really is and what he believes in.

פחד כמים אל תותר You have the restlessness of water (49:4) – Why does Yaakov curse **ראובן's** impulsiveness here yet when he went to find the **דודאים** it is seen as a good thing (See **Sforno** there)? Perhaps we can suggest that the difference is at whom the energy is directed. When it came to finding the **דודאים**, **ראובן's** strong emotions led him to find a means of ending his mother's hurt feelings. It involved no one else and did not challenge anyone else. When he moved the beds, it was an impulsive action that sparked him to see his father as wrong and thus he acted. When one sees not how he can fix a situation but rather what everyone else did that was wrong, this causes danger as a result of impulsivity.

איש כברכתו ברך אותם Each one was blessed according to his blessing (49:28) – Often one assumes that if each is blessed differently it should lead to a division or a split in ideology and ultimately in nationality. Why was this not the case with the שבטים? **Rav Baruch Gigi Shlita** explained that when the differences and unique talents are all used to unite under the ברכה of Hashem and the talents are directed to Him, then unity can reign. If the person is in the center, then anything different from him or her is likely to be perceived as a threat and defeated.

Yosef told them don't worry for do I stand in the place of Hashem? (50:19) – Why doesn't Yosef simply state that he is not permitted to take revenge as it violates the Torah? **Rav Yechezkel Levenstein ztl.** points out that we learn from here that one needs to use as many ways as possible to understand the will of Hashem and his מצוות. Ultimately we listen because Hashem told us to do so but we listen and understand better and gain more when we add to our knowledge base of Hashem's ways.

Haftorah – וחרקת והיית לאיש And you will become strong and become a man (Kings 1:2:2) – **Rashi** explains that Shlomo was 12 years old at the time and becoming a man was a בר מצוה theme. Why does Dovid explain the obvious? And what is meant by the argument of וחרקת? **Rinas Yitzchak** explains that **איש** is a reference to having שמים יראת. Sometimes, that requires some חיזוק to get to. In order for one to grow into a wise, strong person one needs to think of the future and prepare for it accordingly.