



8 years of Points to Ponder on

Parashas Vayechi

**Learning in the Shul this week is  graciously sponsored by the Monchar and Walzman families to commemorate the yahrtzeit of Elana and Yaffa's grandfather, Abraham Irwin (Avraham Chaim ben Tzvi)**

**&**

**by Michal and Ari Lasker In memory of their grandfathers Yosef Benyamin ben Shlomo Zalman and Yerachmiel Yitzchok ben Shmuel**

**וַיְחִ֤י יַֽעֲקֹב֙ Vayechi Yaakov (47:28) – Rav Zevulun Charlop Shlita** noted that a parsha that deals with death so intensely strangely is referred to as VaYechi. Why? Rav Charlop explained that when a person leaves a legacy in Nitzchiyus – in things that make a difference, then he continues to live on, long into the millenia and becomes more and more alive as the time goes on. (Think about how alive Rashi Tosafos and the Rambam are today as people worldwide discuss what they “Say” instead of what they “said” – that’s Toras Chaim).

**וַיְחִ֤י יַֽעֲקֹב֙** **And Yaakov lived (47:28)** – Why does the Parsha begin by highlighting how long Yaakov lived in Mitzrayim? Is it not possible to deduce this from knowing how long he lived and how old he was when he left Eretz Yisroel? The **Or HaChaim HaKadosh** explains that Yaakov’s life was filled with peril and challenge. Only when he was in Egypt, with a complete and reunited family, did he really “Live?” **Rav Mordechai Greenberg Shlita** adds that Yaakov found Sheleimut in Mitzrayim when he experienced the unification of knowing he was following Hashem’s master plan. According to Rav Greenberg, the only place to find that kind of Sheleimut and’ live’ is when one chooses to live in Eretz Yisroel. Hence the Possuk Lulai He’emantee  L‘iros B”Tuv Hashem B’Eretz Chaim – a reference to Eretz Yisroel.

 **וַיְחִ֤י יַֽעֲקֹב֙** **Yaakov lived in Egypt for 17 years (47:28) – Rashi** explains that this is a Parsha Stuma. **Rav Yoel Teitelbaum of Satmar ztl.** explained that the idea that a Jew can survive in exile with all of the Tzaros that befall him is a secret that is Satum (closed or hidden).  Yet, the **Eish Kodesh of Piacetzna** explained that when the world is closed, that is the time of the greatest opportunity for the Keitz – it is the time for the opening to the greatest moments of eternal living.  **Rav Amiel ztl.** pointed out that it is interesting that the Parshiyos that highlight death speak to life (Chayeii Sarah, Vayechi). He explained that this is because the ideal of Jewish life is how you fill it. If you fill it fully with new things and a passion for Hashem that will live on after the personal expiration of the body, that is life. This is called Chaim.

**יֹּ֗אמֶר הִשָּֽׁבְעָה֙ לִ֔י וַיִּשָּׁבַ֖ע ל֑וֹ**  **And he asked him to swear and he swore (47:31)**– Why would Yaakov trust a Shevua from Yosef, if, according **to Ramban**, the Avos only kept  the Mitzvos in Eretz Yisrael? Moreover, why did Yosef keep the oath he gave Pharaoh that he would not reveal that the king did not speak Hebrew? The **Chida**explains that the Avos did not keep the Mitzvos in Chutz L’Aretz as long as they knew that they would return to Eretz Yisrael. Yosef knew that he was not going to go back and in order to guarantee Jewish continuity he obligated himself to keep the Mitzvos even outside of the land.  The Avnei Nezer suggests that one might also answer that logically one needs to keep oaths that s/he obligates himself to keep. The only time one would need a Possuk to obligate one to keep his oath is when the oath affects him alone. IN THAT CASE, there is a Mitzva oof K’Chol HaYotzai Mi”Piv Yaaseh. However here? The logic dictated that Yosef keep the Shevuah.

**הִשָּֽׁבְעָה֙ לִ֔י** **Swear to me (47:31)** - Why did Yosef need to swear that he would fulfill the deal he made with Yaakov? **Rav Schachter Shlita** noted that **Rav Soloveitchik ztl.** explained that when we take on responsibilities sometimes excuses come into play as Yaakov mentioned to Yosef in regard to why he did not buy Rachel in Mearas HaMachpela. By swearing, Yosef would see to it that he would go the extra mile to fulfill his promise to his father. The Midrash explains that this was quite fortuitous insofar as Pharaoh did not want Yosef to go. It was only when Yosef said that he swore in the same way that he swore he would not reveal that he knew a language that Pharaoh didn’t, that Pharaoh relented.

 **וְעֵינֵ֤י יִשְׂרָאֵל֙ כָּֽבְד֣וּ מִזֹּ֔קֶן לֹ֥א יוּכַ֖ל לִרְא֑וֹת Yisrael’s eyes became heavy from age, he was no longer able to see (48:10) - Sforno** explains that he could not see the boys so he kissed and hugged them in order to establish a Kesher with them for a Beracha. **Rav Chaim Shmuellevitz ztl.** explains that through having a personal, visual Kesher with one’s teacher, one is zocheh to a Hashpaah that can be incredibly impactful.

**וַיִּשְׁלַח֩ יִשְׂרָאֵ֨ל אֶת־יְמִינ֜וֹ Yaakov sent forth his hand (48:14)** – Why didn’t Yaakov just simply ask them to change their standing places? **Rav Shimon Schwab ztl** explains that Yosef demonstrated 2 individual aspects of leadership. On the one hand, he was a leader in action and at the same time he was a spiritual leader. Yaakov was showing that both were important and deserving of the “right” to be on the “right”. Menashe represented the feet on the ground aspect of Yosef’s leadership. Thus, he got to stand on the right. Ephraim was representative of the spiritual Mesorah and was handed the continuity by receiving the right hand.

**וְיִדְגּ֥וּ לָרֹ֖ב בְּקֶ֥רֶב הָאָֽרֶץ: They should be as populace as fish within the land (48:16)** - The Midrash notes that in the same way that the fish rush to every morsel that falls within their midst, so too, Bnei Yisrael will be drawn to every morsel of Torah offered to them. **Rav Gifter ztl.** would often comment that the sign of a Ben Torah is his insatiable desire to rush to grab another word of Torah.

 **וְיִדְגּ֥וּ לָרֹ֖ב בְּקֶ֥רֶב הָאָֽרֶץ And they should multiply like fish (48:16)** – The Midrash explains that like fish who although they live in water rush to the top of the surface when new water is added to their habitat, so too, the children of Yaakov will drink the new words of Torah with a thirst even though they are surrounded by Torah. **Rav Aharon Kotler ztl.** explains how this is possible. He notes that life is precious as a whole but each moment of life is uniquely special as well. When one looks at life’s moments independently, one wants to spend that moment learning Torah or doing Mitzvos and will run in order to do so.

 **הַמַּלְאָךְ֩ הַגֹּאֵ֨ל  Hamalach HaGoel (48:16) – Rashi** explains that the Ne’arim refer to Menashe & Efraim**. Rav Zeidel Epstein ztl.** notes that while Yaakov blesses Efraim first and has the right hand on his head, when it comes to HaMalach it is Menashe first. Why? He explains that both Efraim and Menashe had critical jobs. Menashe was involved with Tzorchei Tzibbur while Efraim sat and learned. Lest one think that Efraim’s contribution were to be considered inferior—it is always Efraim before Menashe in the Beracha. However, when it comes to the protection, Menashe, who is the one out in the world needs to be mentioned first. For his job puts him at greater risk.

**לֹא־כֵ֣ן אָבִ֑י You are incorrect father (48:18)** – The Talmud (Kiddushin 31b Sanhedrin 81a) notes that a child may not contradict a parent. How could Yosef tell his father that he was wrong? **Tzafnas Paneiach** says that this rule applies only to Torah law. One can offer a different position in other matters. But the **Be’er Sheva (Sanhedrin 110)** says exactly the opposite. **Aruch Hashulchan** (YD 240:13) is skeptical as to whether one may contradict a parent on a non-Torah matter. **Maadanei Asher** suggests that the argument of Lo Kein was that I have never done that, is it mutar. Yosef was asking – not correcting.

**בְּךָ֗ יְבָרֵ֤ךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל֙ With your name Bnei Yisrael will bless (48:20)** – Why do we give Berachos using the names of Ephraim and Menashe? Why not the Avos or the Shevatim? **Rav Zalman Sorotzkin ztl.** explains that Ephraim and Menashe were unique. They were born princes and had every reason to assimilate. They did not. They preferred the life of Torah and Mitzvos. Halevai our children should be so Bentched and directed. (See a similar idea from Rav Moshe Feinstein on the Possuk V’Ata Shnei Boneicha). **Rav Gamliel Rabinovitch Shlita** suggests that Yaakov had just looked into the future and had seen the dedication of even the future generations of Ephraim and Menashe to Kiddush Shem Shomayim. With that awareness that such dedication does not come from nowhere, Yaakov wanted that as the basis for all of his children. At the same time **Rav Avraham Zalmanes ztl.** explains that Menashe & Efraim had no jealousy between them and this was the point of the Beracha.

**בְּךָ֗ יְבָרֵ֤ךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל Through you the Jewish people will bless their children (48:20)**- Why is this written in the singular (Bicha) and not the multiple (Bachem)? **Rav Refoel Sorotzkin ztl.** explains that the Beracha was directed at their father – at Yosef. For when children are a part of a blessing, it is also a blessing to the parent.

**שְׁכֶ֥ם אַחַ֖ד עַל־אַחֶ֑יךָ**  **And I gave you an additional Shechem on top of your brothers (48:22) – Rav Shalom Yosef Zevin ztl.**notes that the word Shechem has 2 meanings. One meaning was “portion” and the other was “shoulder”. Rav Zevin notes that the meanings were opposites – a portion speaks to one’s entitlement in something – ownership. The other definition refers to the leftover portion of something – for when we put our efforts into the Chitzoniyus of the world then it is a Shechem of refuse – a place Muchan l’Puraniyos. However, when we use it to develop a portion and lay a stake into it as an investor – it is like Chelek Hashem Amo.

**שְׁכֶ֥ם אַחַ֖ד עַל־אַחֶ֑יךָ**   **And I’ve given you an extra Shechem (48:22)** – The word Shechem has two implications – either a portion or a shoulder. **Rav Shalom Yosef Zevin ztl.** notes that these interpretations are actually opposites. A portion indicates something owned personally and kept to one’s self. The shoulder is put to the grind and is used to bring things out – publically. Rav Zevin explains that when one only thinks about Chitzoniyus it brings on trouble (like the city of Shechem). Instead one needs the internal Shechem – the personal involvement and connection to internal spirit – to withstand and even integrate the world at large into a greater inner world. Yosef was given Shechem Echad – the power to unite the internal and external Shechem.

**בְּחַרְבִּ֖י וּבְקַשְׁתִּֽי**: **Which I took from the Amorites with my sword and bow” (Gen. 48:22) – The Gemara**(Bava Basra 123a) notes that the words Charbee and Kashtee refer to Tefillah and Bakasha. How? **Rav Kook ztl.** explains that the sword cuts away all foreign thoughts that interrupt Tefillah while the bow refers to the focus and concentration of Tefillah – through the removal of extraneous thought and focus on direct prayer, one can properly focus on tefillah and defeat any enemy as Yaakov did.

**וַיִּקְרָ֥א יַֽעֲקֹ֖ב אֶל־בָּנָ֑יו Yaakov called to his sons (49:1)** – Yaakov seemed concerned about giving Mussar to Reuven, Shimon and Levi until he was on his deathbed. Why? **The Sifrei** (Devarim 2) notes that Yaakov was afraid that if he was harsh with them, they might leave him and join with Eisav. **Rav Moshe Tzvi Neriah ztl.** notes that we see how careful one needs to be when giving mussar. If one is too tough, it might lead the children or the students to the dark side.

**וַיִּקְרָ֥א יַֽעֲקֹ֖ב אֶל־בָּנָ֑יו And Yaakov called all of his sons (49:1)**– The midrash notes that Yaakov began with the word Kara as it was the verb that Yitzchak completed HIS berachos to Yaakov. **Maran HaRav Schachter Shlita** notes that the authors of the Midrash understood that each generation needs its own words to formulate Berachos but the practices should be connected with those of the earlier generations. Rav Schachter adds that if this is true regarding Berachos it is even more so in regard to Torah and Mitzvos as well. As Rav Soloveitchik explains,  true Chiddush is allowed and encouraged in Torah but Shinui is not.

**הֵאָֽסְפוּ֙ וְאַגִּ֣ידָה לָכֶ֔ם Gather and I will tell you (49:1)** – The Midrash explains that he spoke to them about Machlokes. Yaakov told them to be in a united group. **Rav Yaakov Kamenetzky ztl.** noted that their job was to live as one community with 12 different jobs within the community – but with the realization that all 12 jobs are needed. No single Shevet is supposed to overshadow or cut boundaries into another Shevet’s turf or job. He told the Shevatim to work together in the service of Hashem. **Rav Aharon Lichtenstein ztl.** added that this was Yaakov’s intent in giving them 12 different Berachos. The Achdus of the brothers was not because of their unanimity but rather their diversity in personality and unity in purpose.

**האספו ואגידה לכם  Gather around and I will tell you (49:1**) – There is a famous Gemara (Pesachim 56a) that notes 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 Baruch Shem because his thanks in אמונה  grew in the process.

**האספו ואגידה לכם  Gather around and I will tell you (49:1)** – The Gemara notes that Yaakov said Baruch Shem 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 Bris, 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 Baruch Shem 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 עבודת הקרבנות. But being a Jew only in the heart is not enough for Hashem.

**הֵאָֽסְפוּ֙ וְאַגִּ֣ידָה לָכֶ֔ם Gather around and I will tell you (49:1) - Rashi** explains that Yaakov wanted to reveal the future to his children and it was hidden from him. Why did Yaakov want to do this? **Rav Yaakov Kamenetzsky ztl.** explained that Yaakov wanted to strengthen the people’s resolve and faith during the Galus but the revelation of the time would cause the people to give up hope and so he found a different way -- dividing up the land. That, along with the cutting of the cedar trees for the Mishkan gave the people hope that would withstand the pressure of assimilation.

**ראובן 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.

**רְאוּבֵן֙ בְּכֹ֣רִי אַ֔תָּה Reuven you are my Bechor (49:3)** - Why did Reuven lose the Bechora if he did Teshuva? Moreover, even in his sin, he was merely displaying his concern for his mother? **Rav Zeidel Epstein ztl.** explained that while he had acted nobly toward his mother, he ignored his Kibud Av in the process. This he never received kappara for. When we act with noble intent, we need to consider whom we are hurting in the process.

**יֶ֥תֶר שְׂאֵ֖ת וְיֶ֥תֶר עָֽז Charming in Strength and in power (49:3)** – Yaakov tells Reuven that he was supposed to be both Melech and Kohein Gadol. Why did he lose both? **Rav Schachter Shlita** explained that a Kanai cannot lead if he flies off the handle. That is why Shimon and Levi were bypassed as well.  The **Peh Kadosh of Rav Itzele of Volozhin**notes that a person needs to be in the middle of the extremes. He adds that too many go to extremes out of Gaava.  Despite the anger and the Kannaus of a person, one needs to split it up. That is why Yaakov tries to save Shimon and Levi by noting that he will disperse them among Klal Yisrael.

**יֶ֥תֶר שְׂאֵ֖ת וְיֶ֥תֶר עָֽז: Superior in rank and in power (49:3) – Rashi** explains that Reuven should have merited Kehuna and Malchus. **Rav Schachter Shlita noted in the name of Rav Soloveitchik** ztl. that he lost those rights because he demonstrated that while he had good intentions, he could not seal the deal. He had the idea to save Yosef but was not able to make it happen. Thus, he was not the person to be the leader.

**פחז כמים אל תותרYou 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.

**כִּ֥י עָלִ֖יתָ מִשְׁכְּבֵ֣י אָבִ֑יךָ Because you moved your father’s bed (49:4)** – For one action, Reuven’s children are doomed forever? Besides, didn’t Reuven have the purest of intentions in moving his father’s bed**?  Rav Zaidel Epstein ztl.** explains that when we are doing good deeds we need to consider that good intentions often make bad deeds appear to be good ones.

**שִׁמְע֥וֹן וְלֵוִ֖י אַחִ֑ים   Shimon and Levi are brothers (49:5) - Rav Elya Svei ztl.** notes that the Torah wants us to know that their intention was positive. Still, their actions demonstrate that they cannot be left at full strength. This is why they need to be divided among Am Yisrael. Rashi explains that this is why the Mechanchim come from Shimon and the Leviim travel through Am Yisrael to collect Terumos and Maaseros. **Rav Yechzkel Levenstein ztl.** asks how a father sets his children up not to have time for anything but seeking a Parnassa? Rav Elya answers that the parent who sees his child’s potential and also the limits and boundaries for the child’s potential to be utilized positively, is the successful parent. By being aware and setting the blessing for the children, Yaakov set the tone for the success of the children and for their ability to be impactful for the success of the entire nation.

**אָר֤וּר אַפָּם֙ Their anger should be cursed (49:7)** – If their anger is cursed, why would Yaakov want to spread it out in Yaakov? Moreover in Sefer Yehoshua (19:1) it sounds as if, Shimon received a portion in the portion of Yehudah to which **the Gra** explains, this was part of the fulfillment of Yaakov’s declaration. **Rav Binyamin Eisenberger Shlita** explains  that anger is a trait which finds its source in pride and haughtiness (Gaavah). However, when one is so selfless that he is divided among others, there is no self for self-aggrandizement and therefore no room for narcissistic injury and anger.

**לֹֽא־יָס֥וּר שֵׁ֨בֶט֙ מִֽיהוּדָ֔ה The scepter shall not depart Yehuda (49:10)**– The **Ramban** notes that thisi s the reason for the destruction of the family of the Chashmonaim who violated this rule of Yakov Aveinu. However, why didn’t the Chachamim of the original generation warn the Macabees of the danger in accepting the rule? Did they not know that the practice was forbidden? **Rav Yaakov Kamenetszky ztl.** explains that it was clear from the outset of Bayit Sheni that this Bayit was only to be temporary – and was established to help prepare for an elongated Galus. The Chachamim didn’t want to appoint a real king then as well. When the Chashmonaim saw the empty throne, they grabbed it. Originally, the Macabees intend only to be presidents and not kings – hence no need to enforce the rule. However when this changed and an attempt at establishing a dynasty occurred, they were wiped out.

**וּלְבֶן־שִׁנַּ֖יִם מֵֽחָלָֽב And white toothed from milk (49:12)** – The Gemara (Kesubos 111b) posits that one who whitens his teeth toward his friend is greater than he who gives the friend milk to drink. **Rav Pam ztl.** explained that the WAY we perform Chessed is often more important than the Chessed itself (compare to Kibbud Av V’Im in Kiddushin). This is perhaps an additional level of explanation to the Possuk in Nishmas about our eyes shining like the sun and the moon. – When we demonstrate excitement in our eyes as we see our friends there is excitement.

**יִשָּׂשכָ֖ר חֲמֹ֣ר גָּ֑רֶם Yissachar is a bony donkey, lying between the boundaries. (Bereshis 49:14)** - Why is a donkey an appropriate reference for Yissochar? **Rav Shalom Rosner Shlita** suggested that this is a reference to the Talmud’s (Avoda Zara 5a) statement that a man should approach Torah like an ox and a donkey. (l'olam yasim adam atzmo al divre torah k'shor la'ol u'kchamor l'masa). What is the difference between an ox and a donkey and why does the Gemera state that we need to act like both an ox and a donkey in the way we approach the study of Torah?  The **Chafetz Chaim** explains the nuance between an ox and a donkey with respect to Torah. An ox is a strong animal and is used to **prepare** the field for planting. The donkey is used to carry the produce from the field **after** it is ripe.  With respect to work in a field, the ox is pre and the donkey is post.  Rav Rosner suggested that as an ox prepares a field, we need to prepare ourselves for the study of Torah and the performance of mitzvos.  As a donkey, after we learn or experience a spiritual high, we must internalize and carry that moment with us– otherwise we will not reap the fruits if our labor. Yissachar is depicted not only as a talmid chacham, who was engaged in learning, but one who brought it home and implemented what he learned.

**וַיֵּ֤ט שִׁכְמוֹ֙ לִסְבֹּ֔ל He will bend his back to the load (49:15)** - The Gemara in Megillah (6b) explains that one who declares that he toiled but was unsuccessful should not be believed. However, the Talmud (Nidda 70b) that one who wants success must realize that he can toil and be unsuccessful simply because he did not seek Rachamim -- that he did not daven. So why is he who says Yagatee V’Lo Matzasee not believed? Maybe he SHOULD be believed that he wasn’t successful because he didn’t ask for Rachamim? **Rav Ovadiah Yosef ztl.** explained that sharpness in one’s learning is based on the effort put into it. But the ability to recall one’s learning and to keep it current, this is not only dependent on one’s time but also on Rachamim from Hashem.

**לִֽישׁוּעָֽתְךָ֖ קִוִּ֥יתִי I hope in your Salvation Hashem (49:18) –** Of all places, why does this Possuk appear in the Berachos of Dan**? Rav Benny Lau** explains that unlike all the other Berachos which seem to speak about a future, this one speaks to a present. The Meforshim apply it to the descendant of Dan –Shimshon HaGibbor who will not be a silent defender of the Jewish people but rather an active one, who after losing the initial aspect of his campaign, will take vengeance on the Plishtim in his final act of heroism. However, Yaakov reminds us that even in that act, Shimshon is only acting with the salvation of Hashem and His will in mind, not for personal gain. And even after success is achieved, it is not complete until the salvation of Hashem and His will is complete.

**לִֽישׁוּעָֽתְךָ֖ קִוִּ֥יתִי I await your Salvation Hashem (49:18)**– The midrash comments that Yaakov thought that the Geulah would come in his days. When he saw him die he knew it was not destined to be and so he said L’Yeshuaseicha Kiveesee Hashem. The midrash explains that this is all a reference to Shimshon. Why did Yaakov see more promise in his rise than in all the others? **Rav Nosson Tzvi Wachtfogel ztl.** explains that he knew Shimshon was to be a Nazir and to be a Nazir, one needs to take on a Kabbala. This Kabbala demonstrates a certain personal responsibility which is important to the makeup of a kingly personality. Unfortunately, in Shimshon’s case, this was not the reason for his Nezirus. Hence, Yaakov saw his rise was not the final one and Yaakov davened for Jewish salvation at the hand of Hashem.

**הַנֹּתֵ֖ן אִמְרֵי־שָֽׁפֶר Who offers beautiful words (49:21)** – The Midrash (Tehillim 89) explains that this refers to words of Torah offered by Shofar. Naftali was identified as a disseminator of Torah. We know that Yissoschar and Levi had special rights to the Torah but not Naftali? **Rav Yisrael Reisman Shlita** explained that in Shir HaShirim Rabba (8:10) we find that those who learn under pressure get 1000 portions of reward. The proof is from Naftali. Rabbi Reisman explained that Naftali went to work and still took time out of their schedule to learn They were the working guys who still made their Torah study primary. Their Sachar was greater than that of the Poskim of Levi and Yissochar. On a different occasion, Rabbi Reisman added that when you get to a Siyum HaShas Shevet Yisochar may be the one getting up to speak but it is Shevet Naftali who make it possible.

**בֵּ֤ן פֹּרָת֙ יוֹסֵ֔ף בֵּ֥ן פֹּרָ֖ת עֲלֵי־עָ֑יִן  A charming son is Yosef, a charming son pleasant to the eye (49:22) – The Gemara** tells us that Yosef and his descendants are impervious to the Ayin HaRa. But why should an Ayin HaRa ruin a perfectly righteous person? **Rav Dessler ztl.** explains that unless one is a Nosein – a giver, by nature, then people will be jealous of his success. For one to avoid Ayin HaRa one needs to be like the fish – impervious to the whims of the outside and doing that which is right.

**בִּנְיָמִין֙ זְאֵ֣ב יִטְרָ֔ף Binyamin is a devouring wolf (49:27)** - The midrash comments that just like a wolf grabs its prey, the Mizbeiach, destined to be in Binyamin’s portion, will grab the Korbanos. What is the connection between a wolf and the Mizbeiach? The **Lubavitcher Rebbe ztl.** quoted the Tzemach Tzedek who explained that it is like the situation concerning Shabbos, about which the Mechilta comments that Tosefes Shabbos, too, is like a wolf, grabbing from the beginning and end of the day itself. The Rebbe ztl. added that the same is true with Korbanos -- they too grab, because the normal time for the Mizbeiach is during the day. Still, Terumas HaDeshen can be done before daybreak and the burning of the fats on the Mizbeiach is done after the setting of the sun making the Mizbeiach like the Shabbos -- grabbing some more in a means to extend its influence -- just like the wolf.

**בִּנְיָמִין֙ זְאֵ֣ב יִטְרָ֔ף Binyamin is a devouring wolf (49:27) – Rashi** explains that Yaakov was referring to Shaul (a descendant of Binyamin) about whom he prophesized that Shaul would defeat the enemies that surrounded him. Yet, early in his career, Shaul is identified as the one who stole the Luchos from Goliath. How do we know this? **Rav Meir Moshe Hillel of Bagdad ztl** noted that it is hinted to, in our Possuk – Binyamin would grab Ze’av which in Gematria is 10 – a reference to the ten Dibbbros he would grab from the enemy.

**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.

**איש כברכתו ברך אותם  Each child was blessed according to his abilities (49:28) – Rav Schachter Shlita**would regularly remind us that parents need to educate each child in accord with his own capabilities. Each person is totally different. Different personalities approach the same differently. Rav Hirsch explains that the sin of Yitzchak was that he did not realize that Eisav was pressured to live in the style of Yaakov. Had he educated Eisav differently, he might have turned out differently. There needs to be a basic learning for everyone but we are ruining talmidim by making everyone think they need to learn the exact same way.  Zevulun got the same Kavana in his Beracha as Yissochar. Each one got the Beracha that he was cut out for.  We need not to make learning and Shmiras Hamitzvos all or nothing for acceptance. If we do, we will lose those who aren’t fully there yet.

**אִ֛ישׁ אֲשֶׁ֥ר כְּבִרְכָת֖וֹ בֵּרַ֥ךְ אֹתָֽם Each man according to his blessing (49:28)** - What about Reuven Shimon and Levi? They did not receive Berachos? **Rav Baruch Mordechai Ezrachi Shlita** explained that there is beracha in receiving Tochacha (reproof) because from it we learn how to return to being better Jews.

**אֲנִי֙ נֶֽאֱסָ֣ף אֶל־עַמִּ֔י I am passing away (lit. Gathering to my nation) (49:29)** – What nation was Yaakov referring to? There was no nation that had passed yet? **Rav Moshe Feinstein ztl.** explains that Shem and his followers who had all accepted the fundamentals of the faith are included here as they too were not a part of this world but lived preparing for the next one.

**וַיְדַבֵּ֣ר יוֹסֵ֔ף אֶל־בֵּ֥ית פַּרְעֹ֖ה Yosef went to the House of Pharaoh and commanded them to speak to Pharaoh (50:4)** – Why did Yosef not ask for permission to bury his father himself? Why did he need to go to the household? **Rav Chaim Kanievski Shlita quotes the Steipler** who explains that Yosef was afraid that Pharaoh would tell him that he could not leave since he did not have a replacement. But, Yosef knew that Pharaoh could not say that to the people without embarrassing them. Therefore he sent them to do his requesting.

**ל֥וּ יִשְׂטְמֵ֖נוּ יוֹסֵ֑ף And the brothers saw that their father died and said “Lest Yosef hate us and take retribution” (50:15) –**Rashi explains that the brothers were disinvited to Yosef’s table and this is what led them to worry. Why then did Yosef disinvite them? **Rav Bernard Weinberger ztl** explains that Yosef was concerned about proper protocol: In truth, he was the viceroy and thus Melech. However, upon his father’s death, Reuven was the actual Bechor and based upon the Brachos of Yaakov, Yehudah was to be Melech. If so, should Yosef cater to them or they to him since he was still viceroy? Given the dilemma, Yosef chose to avoid the Shayla and stopped being with them in public in order to present Machlokes.

 **ויאמר אליהם יוסף אל תיראו כי התחת אלקים אנכיYosef 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.

**פָּקֹ֧ד יִפְקֹ֣ד אֶתְכֶ֗ם Hashem will surely remember you (50:24)** - These words become the secret codewords of the Geulah. Why? **Rav Haim Sabato Shlita** explains that the secret to redemption is in remembrance. When one remembers where he came from and tries to return to that previous status, the person actually returns much further ahead. Remembrance is what secures us in exile and it is what leads to Geulah -- and beyond.

**פָּקֹ֧ד יִפְקֹ֣ד אֶתְכֶ֗ם Hashem will surely remember you (50:25) – Rav Wolbe ztl.** explains that this concept of Pekida is the greatest of 7 levels of Geulah (Yaaleh V’Yavo etc.) Zechira is not a stand alone concept but rather part of a major undertaking. The Gra notes that each of the 7 levels corresponds to the 7 heavens and when Pekida happens, the Geulah request has pierced the 7 heavens.

**פָּקֹ֨ד יִפְקֹ֤ד Hashem will redeem you (50:25)** - These words (Pakod Yifkod) will serve as a codeword for the Geulah (See Rashi to shemos 3:18). Ramban asks what kind of a codeword is it if everyone knows it? **Rav Hutner ztl.** explained that the sign was not for others to test the person but rather for the person to test himself or herself. Sometimes we REALLY believe that which we WANT to be so in our desire to be ehrlich. To those who might have these types of Chalomos, Yosef asked them to apply the Pakod Yifkod test. If those words aren’t there, you are not experiencing  Nevuah.

**Haftarah:**

**וְחָזַקְתָּ֖ וְהָיִ֥יתָֽ לְאִֽישׁ You will be strong and be a man (I Kings 1:2) – Rashi** explains that Shlomo was but 12 years old and Dovid HaMelech was telling him that he would become a Bar Mitzvah. **Rav Yitzchak Sorotzkin Shlita** wondered why Dovid HaMelech needed to state the obvious. He answered, citing Rav Chaim Soloveitchik ztl. that the issue is not about chronological or biological age. It is about Yiras Shomayim. Being an “Ish” is about showing Yiras Shomayim. Sometimes this required a bit of strengthening. However, if one wants to be a wise leader, he needs clairvoyance. That clairvoyance comes with Yiras Shomayim. **Rav Schachter Shlita** added that to achieve destiny too, one needs the faith that comes with Yiras Shomayim.

**לְמַ֣עַן תַּשְׂכִּ֗יל אֵת כָּל־אֲשֶׁ֣ר תַּֽעֲשֶֹ֔ה**  **So that you will be Successful in all that you do (Melachim 2:3)**– Why is the word “Taskil utilized here instead of the more common “Tatzliach”? **The Malbim** explains that Hatzlacha is dependent on outside forces totally. Taskil involves the person using his or her internal skills to recognize the right way to go. **Rav Avraham Rivlin Shlita** adds that Dovid HaMelech was telling Shlomo that if he uses his Seichel to follow the word of Hashem, he will not only be Maskil but he will be Matzliach materially as well.

**אֲשֶׁר־עָ֨שָׂה לִ֜י יוֹאָ֣ב בֶּן־צְרוּיָ֗ה אֲשֶׁ֣ר עָשָֹ֣ה לִשְׁנֵֽי־שָׂרֵ֣י צִבְא֣וֹת יִ֠שְׂרָאֵל לְאַבְנֵ֨ר בֶּן־נֵ֜ר וְלַעֲמָשָֹ֚א בֶן־יֶ֙תֶר֙ And you know what Yoav did to me when he killed the 2 generals Avner and Amasa (Melachim I 2:5)** – What did killing the generals have to do with Dovid HaMelech? **The Brisker Rav** ztl.explains that it had nothing to do with him. Rather, Dovid notes that when Yoav joined Adoniyahu that was the first strike, these were the second and third**. Rav Yaakov Kamenetzsky ztl.** suggests that by killing them by the sword, Yoav created the impression that Dovid HaMelech had ordered the hits on the 2 generals for being Mored B’Malchus. This was likely to cause unrest against the crown – unfairly. Therefore, Yoav had actually sinned against the crown and Dovid by killing the generals.

**וְהִנֵּ֣ה עִ֠מְּךָ שִֽׁמְעִ֨י בֶן־גֵּרָ֥א בֶן־הַיְמִינִי֘ מִבַּחֻרִים֒ וְה֚וּא קִֽלְלַ֙נִי֙ קְלָלָ֣ה נִמְרֶ֔צֶת** **And behold with you is Shimi Ben Geira and he cursed me a major curse (Melachim I: 2:8) –** **Rav Yaakov Kamenetzsky ztl.** pointed out that it is incredible to see that despite the way that Shimi treated Dovid, Dovid allowed his son to study with Shimi. This is because of the love of Torah which was paramount to him. Dovid did not place his own loyalties above those of Hashem’s will.

**-- וּשְׁלֹמֹ֕ה יָשַׁ֕ב עַל־כִּסֵּ֖א דָּוִ֣ד אָבִ֑יו And Shlomo sat on the throne of his father Dovid (Melachim I 2:12) -- Rav Schachter Shlita** would point out to us that when we make the Berachos of the Haftara and ask Hashem to bless us with Malchus Beis Dovid, the Rambam interprets that this means that the Davidic line -- from Dovid to Shlomo and onward will be fulfilled in its entirety at the dawn of the Geula. The purpose of this week’s Haftara is that it gives us the strength and the faith to endure until the arrival of Moshiach.