

A Taste of Text: Source based learning for Shabbat

This weekly sheet is brought to you by Rabbi Dr. Moshe Freedman of Northwood United Synagogue in conjunction with Shapell's/Darché Noam

PARSHAT VAYECHI

DVAR TORAH: THE ANGEL'S TWO MISSING WINGS

Yaakov, says the Gemara (Pesachim 56a) wanted to reveal the end of days to his sons, but the Divine Presence mysteriously left him and his prophecy was cut off. This caused him to worry that one of his sons was not entirely righteous, and, like Avraham and Yitzchak before him, would be cut off from Klal Yisrael. His sons sensed his worry and all together declared "Shema Yisrael ..." – Listen, father Yisrael, we all believe wholeheartedly that Hashem is our God and Hashem is One. Yaakov responded ברוך שם כבוד מלכותו לעולם ועד – Blessed be the Name of His honored kingdom for ever and ever.

Two reasons are brought to explain why we say ברוך שם כבוד מלכותו לעולם ועד quietly every day during Keriat Shema. One appears in this passage in the Gemara, explaining that because Moshe did not write it in the Torah we do not say it out loud, but because Yaakov – as we received through our oral tradition – did say it, we still say it in a whisper. Another is brought by the Tur (Orach Chaim 619, quoting Devarim Rabbah Vaetchanan): Moshe heard the angels saying ברוך שם כבוד מלכותו לעולם ועד and brought it down to Israel. He – so to speak – stole it from on high. This is, the Midrash says, just like someone who steals a piece of jewelry from the palace and gives it as a present to his wife. To make sure his wife shouldn't be seen with palace jewelry he tells her only to wear it at home. Similarly, we say ברוך שם כבוד מלכותו לעולם ועד quietly, secretly. Only on Yom Kippur, when we ourselves are like angels, do we say it out loud.

The Arizal is quoted as saying that one of the six words of ברוך שם כבוד מלכותו לעולם ועד is written on each of the wings of the six-winged angels. However, the Gemara (Chagigah 13b) points out a contradiction: angels that are described in one place as having six wings are described in another as having only four. The Gemara's resolution is that one description, in the book of Yishayahu, was made while the Temple was standing, and the other, in the book of Yechezkel, came after the Temple's destruction.

Which two wings are missing? The Vilna Gaon and his contemporary Rabbi Elimelech of Lizhensk both said that the two missing wings were the ones upon which were written the words ברוך שם כבוד מלכותו, for after the destruction the honor of God's kingdom was diminished.

Harav Asher Weiss, shlita (Minchas Asher on Vayechi) brings all of the above and adds the following: A Jew reads the daily Kriat Shema, whispering his ברוך שם כבוד מלכותו לעולם ועד, but longing to scream out the words. His life's goal is to increase כבוד שמים. Will he have to wait until the coming of the Mashiach to express that daily? Can he suffice with one day a year, Yom Kippur, until the end of days?

The Targum Yerushalmi (Bereishit 49:1), brings the aggadah about Yaakov Avinu, but instead of the words ברוך שם כבוד מלכותו לעולם ועד, says יהא שמיה רבא מברך לעלמי עלמין. Chazal (Shabbat 119a) encourage us to say יהא שמיה רבא מברך לעלם ולעלמי עלמיה with all of our power. That line, at the middle of every Kaddish, is almost identical to ברוך שם כבוד מלכותו לעולם ועד – except its opening word יהא is in the future tense, a prayer for the future, not a praise about the present. That is our opportunity to "wear the stolen jewelry," to tap into the complete Honor of the Divine Kingdom of the future every day of our lives. That is also our opportunity to remember to align all of our behavior with the great goal of Judaism, bringing honor to the Divine Name.

SOURCE GUIDE: NAFTALI'S BLESSING

Naftali is given a one line blessing, but that short verse raises many difficulties. This source guide relates both to the problems in the verse and to some of the solutions that appear in the words of Chazal and the writings of the commentators.

<p>1. Bereishit 49:21 (literal translation) (21) Naftali is a 'sent doe', that 'gives words of beauty.'</p>	<p>בראשית מט: כא (כא) נַפְתָּלִי אֵילָה שְׁלַחָה הַנְּתָן אֶמְרֵי שִׁפְרָ:</p>
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Difficulties in the verse:

- What is a **sent** doe?
- Why is the feminine form used here – אילה instead of איל?
- What words of beauty does the blessing refer to?
- What does '**giving**' those beautiful words mean? If it refers to speech, why didn't it use one of the more common verbs for speech?
- What is the connection between the first and second parts of the verse?
- Why was this blessing specifically appropriate to Naftali?

Targum Onkelus

<p>2. Targum Onkelos on Bereishit 49:21 (21) Naftali will be placed on good land; his lot and inheritance will produce fruit that they will thank and bless over.</p>	<p>תרגום אונקלוס בראשית מט: כא (כא) נפתלי בארעא טבא יתרמי עדביה ואחסנתיה תהי מעבדא פירין יהון מודין ומברכין עליהון:</p>
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What is the אילה שְׁלַחָה according to the Targum? Why the feminine? What are the beautiful words and why does the אילה שְׁלַחָה blessing inspire them?

Rashi

Rashi's first comment helps elucidate the Targum:

<p>3. Rashi on Bereishit 49:21 "The sent doe" – this refers to the Ginosar Valley, where the fruit would ripen as quickly as a swift doe. The 'sent doe' is one sent to run. "Who gives beautiful words" – this should be explained as the Targum does.</p>	<p>רש"י על בראשית מט: כא (כא) אילה שלוחה - זו בקעת גינוסר שהיא קלה לבשל פירותיה כאילה זו שהיא קלה לרוץ. אילה שלוחה אילה משולחת לרוץ: הנותן אמרי שפר – כתרגומו.</p>
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Rashi offers two additional explanations:

<p>4. Rashi on Bereishit 49:21 Another approach is to explain the verse as a prophecy referring to the war against Sisera. "You (Barak, from Kedesh in Naftali's portion of the land of Israel) should take with you ten thousand men of the tribes of Naftali [and Zevulun]" (Shoftim 4:6). They went there energetically, and were spoken of as "sent" in the expression "They were sent by foot in the valley" (Shoftim 5:15). "That gives forth beautiful words" – because through them Devorah and Barak sang (the "Song of Devorah" in Shoftim 5).</p>	<p>רש"י על בראשית מט: כא ד"א על מלחמת סיסרא נתנבא (שופטים ד) ולקחת עמך עשרת אלפים איש מבני נפתלי וגו' והלכו שם בזריזות וכן נאמר שם לשון שלוח בעמק שולח ברגליו. הנותן אמרי שפר. על דם שרו דבורה וברק שירה.</p>
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Naftali's troops, sent to the front, are the swift doe, and it is that victory over Sisera that brought about the beautiful words of Devorah's song. Compare this second explanation with that of the Targum: what are the pros and cons of each? Rashi then brings yet a third approach:

<p>5. Rashi on Bereishit 49:21 Our Rabbis expounded this verse as referring to the day of Yaakov's burial, when Eisav challenged Yaakov's right to be buried in the Cave [of the Machpelah]. This appears in Masechet Sotah 13a ...</p>	<p>רש"י על בראשית מט: כא ורבותינו דרשוהו על יום קבורת יעקב כשערער עשו על המערה במסכת סוטה (דף יח) ותרגומו יתרמי עדביה יפול חבלו והוא יודה על חלקו אמרים נאים ושבח:</p>
<p>6. Sotah 13a When they reached the Cave of the Machpelah Eisav came and held them back [from burying Yaakov] ... He said to them, "Bring me a contract (proving Yaakov's sole ownership over the burial cave)." They said to him, "The document is in Egypt." Who will go? Let Naftali go, for he is as light as a doe, as it is written, "Naftali is a swift doe, who gives beautiful words." Said Rabbi Abahu: Don't read this as 'beautiful' words (<i>imrei shefer</i>), but as the words of the 'document' (<i>imrei sefer</i>).</p>	<p>סוטה יג. ... כיון שהגיעו למערת המכפלה אתא עשו קא מעכב ... אמר להו הבו לי איגרתא. אמרו ליה איגרתא בארעא דמצרים היא. ומאן ניזיל? ניזיל נפתלי דקליל כי איילתא דכתיב נפתלי אילה שלוחה הנותן אמרי שפר. א"ר אבהו אל תקרי אמרי שפר אלא אמרי ספר.</p>

This third explanation allows for a very direct reading of this verse: Naftali himself, says Yaakov before he passes away, is as swift as a doe, sent by the brothers to bring the important document (see the dramatic ending of the story in that passage in Sotah).

Other Commentators:

אֵילָה שְׁלֵחָה

Ramban – See his explanation, based on the ancient custom for kings to send each other good tidings through a message tied to the leg of doe.

Chizkuni and Haktav Vehakabalah– According to their reading (backed up by verses in the Tanach) the word אֵילָה means valley, not doe, and שְׁלֵחָה means wide or planted, not sent. He also translates the rest of the verse differently (once again, with support from parallels in Tanach): אֲמָרֵי שֵׁפֶר are beautiful trees. The entire blessing, then, focuses on the very fertile area where the tribe of Naftali lived.

Baal Haturim – Along with the Baalei Tosafot, he explains that the feminine is used here because of Devorah's involvement in the war.

הַנֹּתֵן אֲמָרֵי שֵׁפֶר

Rashbam – The beautiful words, according to him, are good tidings from the battlefield after a victory.

Rabbeinu Bechayei – He explains this expression, along with the entire pasuk, according to the Kabbalah.

Siftei Kohan – See how he develops the uniqueness of Devorah, and why the verse now shifts from feminine to masculine (other commentators deal with this difficulty).

Kli Yakar – According to the Kli Yakar, the beautiful words are those of the Torah, and the name Naftali itself refers to the Torah. The Midrash (Bamidbar Rabbah 14:10) expands Naftali as נופת לי, referring to the sweetness of the Torah.

<p>7. Kli Yakar on Bereishit 49:21 Therefore (since Naftali refers to the sweetness of the Torah) he is compared to a doe ... that is always beloved to its mate like when they were first together, so the words of Torah are always beloved to those involved in Torah, just like they were when they first learned them.</p>	<p>כלי יקר על בראשית מט: כא ... וע"כ המשילו לאילה ... וחביבה על בעלה כל שעה כשעה ראשונה אף ד"ת חביבין על בעליה כל שעה כשעה ראשונה:</p>
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PEACE OF MIND BY RABBI YAAKOV LYNN

יִשְׁשַׁכָּר חֲמֵר גֵּרָם רִבֵּץ בֵּן הַמְּשַׁפְּתִים - Yissaschar is a strong-boned donkey; he rests between the boundaries.
וַיִּרְא מְנוּחָה כִּי טוֹב וְאֵת הָאָרֶץ כִּי נְעִמָּה וַיֵּט שִׁכְמוֹ לְסַבֵּל וַיְהִי לְמַס־עֶבֶד - He saw “menucha” that it was good, and the land that it was pleasant, yet he bent his shoulder to bear and he became an indentured labourer.

In parshas Vayechi, the Torah recounts the brachos which Yaakov Avinu gave to his sons. Each bracha was tailor-made for the son to whom he was speaking. Yaakov sought to recognize the unique qualities in that son (and his tribe) and gave a bracha that those traits should be strengthened.

Yissaschar was the one of the twelve tribes who excelled and focused on the area of Torah study. Torah study, while enriching, is hard work – the Gemara says in many places that Torah study actually weakens a person physically because it is so taxing.

Why, then, asks Rav Yerucham Levovits in his sefer Da’as Torah, did Yaakov mention the term menucha (tranquility) in his bracha to Yissaschar?

Similarly, Rav Yerucham asks, if menucha is a concept connected with the study of Torah, why was the Torah given to the Jewish people at Mount Sinai – in the middle of a barren, uncomfortable desert – and not in a more lush setting, “each person under his own grape vine or fig tree?”

Rav Yerucham answers that these questions are based on our misunderstanding of what true “menucha” is. To illustrate, he examines the way armies train their soldiers. To be sure, a soldier in battle cannot afford to be tense or nervous – he needs menucha. Perhaps the soldier should prepare for battle by going on vacation, relaxing himself in a comfortable environment and loading up on physical pleasures? Why do armies instead send their trainees through basic training courses, depriving them of sleep and other comforts, making them work harder and harder as the training progresses?

Rav Yerucham’s answer helps us learn how we can attain this elusive state of menucha. While we tend to think that the way to get “peace of mind” is by indulging in physical pleasures and acquiring more things to make our lives easier and more convenient, the result is often the opposite. We become addicted to these comforts, and when those things are inaccessible, we can find no rest.

On the other hand, one who has learned not to treat pleasures and comforts as luxuries can enjoy them when they are available and can remain calm when they are not. His peace of mind is not dependent on outside stimuli; it is available to him wherever he is and whatever obstacles are in his way.

Rav Yerucham concludes that the barren desert was the perfect place for the Torah to be given because the key to menucha is accustoming ourselves to hard work, no matter the conditions around us. Yissaschar’s toil in Torah made him the paradigm of menucha, since no inconvenience or lacking luxury could break his concentration.

*This publication is compiled by the staff and Rabbonim at **Shapells/Yeshivat Darché Noam** for men and **Midreshet Rachel v’Chaya Seminary** for women in Jerusalem. Find out more about the **married couples’ programme** and the **Pathways Israel** and **Pathways Plus** programmes offered at www.darchenoam.org +972-2-651-1178, 5 Beit Hakerem Street, Jerusalem.*

To dedicate a Taste of Text, please email Rabbi Freedman at
rabbi.dr.moshefreedman@gmail.com

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