

A Taste of Text: Source based learning for Shabbat

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

PARSHAT VAYECHI

DVAR TORAH YOSEF & YEHUDAH: ABOVE & WITHIN

Among Yaakov's sons, Yehudah and Yosef play the most prominent roles in these last four Parshiot of Bereishit. The Torah devotes separate sections to the episodes of their lives – Yehudah and Tamar, and Yosef in Egypt – much as it does with Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov. And in this week's Parshah, the blessings Yaakov gives them are more developed than those of the other tribes. Their blessings are even longer; Yosef's blessing is 61 words long and Yehudah's 55; the next in line is Yissachar's which is 20 words.

Their prominence carries over into Jewish history. Yehoshua, descended from Yosef, first conquers the Land of Israel; and David Hamelech, descended from Yehudah, finishes the conquest and secures the Land's borders. Hashem has David anointed as king; and the Davidic line is established for all eternity. However, for most of the First Temple period, the Land of Israel was divided between the Southern Kingdom, ruled by a descendant of David Hamelech, of the tribe of Yehudah, and the Northern Kingdom, where the tribe of Efraim, Yosef's son, was the central force. Even in the end of days our tradition (Sukkah 52b) speaks of two messianic personalities, Mashiach ben Yosef and Mashiach ben David.

According to Harav Yehudah Aryeh Leib Alter, זצ"ל (the Gerrer Rebbe, 1847-1905, Sfat Emet on Parshat Vayechi 5655), there is a sharp contrast between the way Yosef and Yehudah each relate to the other tribes.

Yosef stands above his brothers. Before blessing all of his children, Yaakov gives a separate blessing to Yosef. He raises Yosef's sons Efraim and Menasheh to the level of the rest of the tribes, and Yosef's status is then elevated above the twelve tribes, which now include Efraim and Menasheh. “ואני נתתי לך שכם אחד על – I have given you a portion above your brothers” (Bereishit 48:22). This elevated status was the subject of Yosef's dreams, as the others bow down to him. Yosef is known for all generations as Yosef Hatzadik, the Righteous Yosef – above temptation, lofty and elevated, above.

Yehudah is the king, yet he is within the People. All Jews are referred to as Yehudim because a little bit of Yehudah is within every Jew. “Said Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai (explain Yaakov's blessing to Yehudah): All of your brothers will be called in your name. A Jew does say, ‘I am a Reuveni’ or ‘I am a Shimoni,’ but ‘I am a Yehudi.’ Said Rabbi Yehudah son of Simon: This is similar to a king who had twelve sons. There was one who was especially beloved, more than all of them, and he gave him his own portion and one with each of his brothers” (Bereishit Rabbah 98:6). Explains the Sfat Emet: “Every tribe has a portion in the power of Yehudah.” As the verse in Divrei Hayamim says: “כי יהודה גבר באחיו ולנגיד ממנו – For Yehudah was a power within his brothers, and a ruler from within them” (I Divrei Hayamim 1:5).

We need both types of leaders. We need those who, like Yosef, are high above us, lofty and inimitably righteous. But we need those like Yehudah who we can identify with and relate to because we sense that there is some of his greatness within us. May we speedily merit meeting the ultimate manifestation of these two types of great leaders, Mashiach ben Yosef and Mashiach ben David.

SOURCE GUIDE: THE YEHUDAH-DAN CONNECTION

The tribes of Yehudah and Dan were each compared to a גור אריה, a lion cub – Yehudah in the blessing he received from Yaakov and Dan in the blessing he received from Moshe. Our sources reveal a number of other striking connections. This source guide, that draws from an essay in Drashot Beit Yishai (Chapter 35 – Purim #3), by Harav Shlomo Fisher, שליט"א, is devoted to the Yehudah-Dan connection.

A. Yehudah and Dan: Surprising Partners

Whereas Yehudah is extremely prominent among the tribes, Dan was almost exactly the opposite. Yehudah is one of the heroes of the Book of Bereishit whose story is well developed; yet we hear almost nothing about Dan. Dan is the son of one of the maidservants, Bilhah; Yehudah is Leah's fourth son. Yehudah's camp always traveled first during Israel's journey to the Land of Israel; Dan was the last, the מאסף לכל המחנות the gathering in of all the camps.

Yet we find a number of striking connections and strong contrasts. They are both compared to lion cubs:

<p>1. Bereishit 49:9 Yehudah is a lion cub. You rose up from tearing. He bent down, lied down like a lion, and, like a lion, who can raise him up? Devarim 33:22 And to Dan he said, "Dan is a lion cub, pouncing from the Bashan.</p>	<p>בראשית מט:ט גור אריה יהודה מטורף בני עליה פרע רבין כאריה וקליבא מי יקימונו. דברים לג:כב וילדן אמר דן גור אריה יזנק מן הכשון.</p>
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Similar to their roles in the Camp of Israel as those who traveled first and last, these two tribes represent the northern and southern borders of the Land of Israel:

<p>2. Bamidbar 10:14, 25 (14) The flag of the camp of the children of Yehudah traveled first with their hosts; and over the armies were Nachshon son of Aminadav. (25) The flag of the camp of the children of Dan traveled as the gatherer of all of the camps; and over the armies were Achiezer son of Amishadai. Shoftim 20:1 ... from Dan (in the north) to Beer Sheva (in the south, in the area of the tribe of Yehudah) ...</p>	<p>במדבר י:יד, כה (יד) ויסע דגל מחנה בני יהודה פראשה לצבאתם ועל צבאו נחשון בן עמינדב. (כה) ונסע דגל מחנה בני דן מאסף לכל המחנות לצבאתם ועל צבאו אחיעזר בן עמישדי. שופטים כ:א ... למדן ועד באר שבע ...</p>
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According to Tosafot (Gittin 55b), the tribes of Dan and Yehudah were also partners in bringing down Esav. The Gemara (Sotah 13a) says that when Esav interfered with Yaakov's burial, "Chushim son of Dan took a club and hit Esav on the head." However, the Yerushalmi and Sifrei say that Yehudah killed Esav. Tosafot resolve that perhaps through Chushim's blow Esav did not die, and Yehudah was the one who actually killed him.

Yehudah and Dan are also partners in the Mashiach:

<p>3. Yalkut Shimoni Bereishit Chapter 49, Section 160 "Yehudah is a lion cub" – This refers to the Messiah descended from David, who came from two tribes. His father is from the Tribe of Yehudah and his mother from Dan. Both of them are called a lion, for it says, "Yehudah is a lion cub" (Bereishit 49:9); and Dan is called a "lion cub" (Devarim 33:22).</p>	<p>ילקוט שמעוני בראשית פרק מט, רמז קס "גור אריה יהודה" – זה משיח בן דוד שיצא משני שבטים. אביו מיהודה ואמו מדן. ושניהם נקראו אריה, שנאמר: "גור אריה יהודה" (בראשית מט:ט), ודן נקרא "גור אריה" (דברים לג:כב).</p>
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B. Yehudah and Dan: Front and Back, Inside and Outside

Dan's lofty and positive partnership with Yehudah is surprising in light of a group of extremely negative associations about the Tribe of Dan: 1) The people rejected by the Clouds of Glory, that Amalek was able to attack, were from the Tribe of Dan (Yalkut Shimoni Ki Teitzei). 2) The fire that consumed the fringes of the camp affected the people of Dan (Targum on Bamidbar 11:1); and 3) an idolatrous cult was set up in Dan (Shoftim 18:30). Shimshon, the great leader from the tribe of Dan, was also a complex figure. On the one hand, the Divine Presence was with him (Shoftim 13:25); he judged the Jewish People like David from Yehudah (Rashi on Bereishit 49:16); and his name is based on the word שמש, the sun, an image used to describe Hashem in Tehillim (84:12). Yet he tragically fell through the Philistine Delilah (see Sotah gb).

The key to understanding Dan, says Rav Shlomo Fisher, is a comment by Rebbi Nachman of Breslov, זצ"ל (1772-1810, Ukraine, in I Likutei Moharon 56). When the Torah says that Dan is the "מאסף לכל המחנות – the gatherer of all of the camps," it means that they were the ones who would gather in all of the lost souls of Israel, the stray sheep of G-d's People, trying to bring them closer to G-d. But this is a spiritually dangerous enterprise, involving dangerous encounters with evil. This explains the complex mixture of positive and negative within the Tribe of Dan and its most prominent personality, Shimshon.

Yehudah and Dan fight different types of battles against evil. Yehudah fights like a normal army; but Dan uses guerilla warfare. Both are necessary and together Yehudah and Dan brought down Esav. Yehudah and Dan were also partners in building the Mishkan: Betzalel from Yehudah joined with Ahaliav from Dan. The Arizal says that Betzalel made the inner layer of tapestries that covered the Mishkan and Ahaliav made the outer layer of eleven goat hair coverings. This inner-outer partnership, this front lines and guerilla warfare partnership, this head tribe and last tribe partnership exists even in the parents of the Mashiach.

WHO ARE THESE? BY RABBI AVRAHAM FISCHER

Yosef is informed that his father Yaakov is ill, so he drops everything and takes his two sons Menasheh and Efraim to see their grandfather for what might be the last time. Yaakov promises that Hashem's blessing to give the Land of Israel to his children will apply equally to Yosef's sons: "And now, your two sons who were born to you in the land of Egypt before I came to you to Egypt are mine; Efraim and Menasheh will be like Reuven and Shimon for me" (Bereishit 48:5). "And Yisrael saw the sons of Yosef and he said, 'Who are these?' And Yosef said to his father, 'They are my sons, whom G-d has given me here.' And he said, 'Bring them now to me and I will bless them'" (Bereishit 48:8-9). "And Yisrael said to Yosef, 'I thought I would never see your face, and behold G-d has even shown me your children'" (Bereishit 48:11).

If we read the dialogue between Yaakov and Yosef carefully, a puzzling question arises: Why doesn't Yaakov recognize his own grandchildren? From the outset, it is clear that he knows he has two grandsons named Menasheh and Efraim; yet he asks, "Who are these?" He has lived in Egypt for 17 years; have they never visited him before?

Some commentaries attribute Yaakov's inability to discern that the two figures before him are his grandsons to his failing eyesight: "And Yisrael's eyes were weak with age; he was not able to see" (Bereishit 48:10). However, this fact is mentioned after the exchange between Yaakov and Yosef that establishes the identity of Menasheh and Efraim; if blindness were the reason, it should have been said earlier.

The author of Kehillat Yitzchak (Harav Yitzchak ben Nissan of Vilna, 18th century) suggests that in order to function in Egyptian society as the sons of the vizier, Menasheh and Efraim needed to learn in Egyptian schools, and so they dressed in Egyptian school uniforms. However, upon returning home, Yosef ordered them to change into Hebrew clothing, the clothing of their heritage. In this way, they would be equipped to represent their people before the Egyptian court effectively, without relinquishing their attachment to their family origins, (not to mention their aspirations to return to Canaan).

Therefore, whenever Menasheh and Efraim came to visit their grandfather, to care for him and learn Torah with him, they would be dressed as Yaakov was. This time, however, the news of Yaakov's illness caught Yosef unprepared, and he brought his sons to their grandfather while they were still wearing their Egyptian school uniforms. Yaakov asks, "Who are these?" – I see they are Menasheh and Efraim, but I have never seen them dressed this way, apparently assimilated into the Egyptian royal court. Yaakov is understandably worried.

Yosef reassures him: "These are my children whom G-d has given me." Just as I have been able to remain loyal to the values of Torah while functioning in Egypt, so have they. And they know about Hashem – "here" in Egypt. But in these circumstances we must behave this way. Despite these outward signs, they know who they are. Yosef is forced by circumstances to reveal his family's fractured existence to Father Yaakov.

Doubtless this revelation resonated with Yaakov who himself needed to spend twenty years in the foreign and antagonistic environment of Lavan. He, too, declares (see Rashi on Bereishit 32:5), "I have lived with Lavan – and kept the 613 commandments."

Yaakov now understands the pressing need to bless his grandsons: "G-d, before Whom my fathers Avraham and Yitzchak walked; G-d, Who cared for me from my beginning until this day; the angel who redeemed me from every evil; may He bless the young men and may my name and the name of my fathers Avraham and Yitzchak be called upon them; and may they multiply greatly in the midst of the land" (Bereishit 48:15-16). Yaakov's blessing emphasizes the connection to Hashem and the continuity with the Patriarchs in order to ensure Menasheh and Ephraim's success "in the midst of the land" of Egypt.

Yaakov sees that his grandchildren will need to keep their names and ideals and to protect them even more carefully than he needed to in the house of Lavan; their challenges, the challenges of public life, are even greater than those faced in Lavan's house – and thus they need Hashem's special blessing.

There are many tensions for the Jew living within a secular society. The problems are legion and the solutions are complex and elusive. Among the questions that must be asked are: How can I best serve Hashem and help the Jewish people? What program of preparation shall I adopt in order to ensure that I can achieve my goals? How shall I maintain my identity? Will my behavior increase, or diminish, anti-Semitism? Have I strayed so far from my ideals that those who imparted them to me – my grandparents, parents and teachers – would not recognize me? Or can I assure them that I am one of Yosef's children, functioning in the world, while staying true to Torah?

Yaakov and Yosef provide a solution by their own examples. Before venturing out into the world where Lavan was dominant, Yaakov learned in the Yeshivah of Shem and Ever for 14 years (Rashi on Bereishit 28:11). Even in Pharaoh's palace, Yosef never stops invoking Hashem's name (Rashi on Bereishit 39:3). Consequently, he was able to resist the advances of his master Potiphar's wife only because the image of his father appeared to him (Rashi on Bereishit 39:11). Only by strengthening their ties with their Torah values could the children of Israel survive.

We, too, need to guard and constantly work on the sanctity of our Jewish identity: to establish times for Torah study, to improve our mitzvah performance, to suffuse our homes with Jewish ideals. And we need a blessing like that of Yaakov to his grandchildren, a blessing that preserves a connection to our ancestry and an awareness of Hashem's presence.

שבת שלום ומבורך

We mourn the tragic deaths of 1st Lieutenant Shir Hajaj, הי"ד, 2nd Lieutenant Erez Orbach, הי"ד, 2nd Lieutenant Shira Tzur, הי"ד, and 1st Lieutenant Yael Yekutieli, הי"ד, murdered in a terrorist attack this week. We continue to pray for a refuah shleimah, a complete healing, for all those wounded in the attacks against our People.

*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.*

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