

Aside from the ברכות that יעקב gives to his children, פרשת ויחי is most famous for the two ברכות that we repeat each and every week, giving them to our קינדלעך every שבת (48:20):
בְּךָ יִבְרַךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר יְשׁוּעָה אֱלֹהִים:
כֹּאֲפָרִים וְכַמְנוּשָׁה.

All the מפרשים discuss this פסוק at length. The explanations are well known and classic, but it is worth repeating, as חזרה is always valuable. Why specifically מנשה and אפרים, and not any other שבטים? Two aspects stand out here. First, אפרים did not become a בעל גאווה for being placed first, and second, מנשה did not feel slighted or resentful for being placed second. There was no קנאה, and there was no גאווה. This is the ברכה we give our children. כלל ישראל, unfortunately, struggles with these two מחלות - גאווה and קנאה - as seen in the story of יוסף and his brothers. In this sense, מנשה and אפרים represented a return to the ideal state of mutual respect. This is the ברכה we aspire to have: one of harmony and respect for one another.

In the same spirit of hope for the future, יעקב tells יוסף (48:22): אֲשֶׁר לְמִתָּתִי מִיַּד הָאֱלֹמִרִי בְּתַרְבִּי וּבְמִשְׁתִּי: (48:22). The Targum says רַצִּון וּבְצִלוֹתַי וּבְכַעֲוִתַי, meaning with תפילה and with רצון. A צדיק can achieve something through רצון, as we say רַצִּון יִרְאִי יַעֲשֶׂה. But on a higher level this is accomplished through תפילה, a medium that connects us to הקדוש ברוך הוא.

An interesting chap vort for חנוכה (even though you guys are going to see this in ויחי, I'm recording this on חנוכה) is the connection between שמן, אור, and פתילה. A candle's flame comes from the fire, its fuel is the שמן, and they are connected by the פתילה. The word פתילה, when rearranged, spells תפילה, teaching us that תפילה connects us to הקדוש ברוך הוא, much like the wick connects the flame to the oil.

This idea parallels the קשת, which is a bowstring. What links a קשת to תפילה? The Kotzker Rebbe offers a sharp insight: the further you pull back the bowstring, the further the arrow will fly. Similarly, the more heart and sincerity you put into your תפילה, the greater its effect will be.

So we daven that we and all of ישראל כלל should experience ישועות and נחמות, and most importantly, that all of our משפחות should be גוענעט and שטארק, and we should be able to serve הקדוש ברוך הוא, and in that זכות we should see אמן! משיח צדקנו במהרה בימינו. Good Shabbos!

