



## The Ability To Change

By Yaakov Grunsfeld, 12th Grade

In this week's parsha, Vayechi, we encounter an interesting event that teaches us a very important lesson about Judaism. Yaakov gathers his children to speak to them and says to them "Gather around so I can tell you what will happen to you in days to come. Assemble and listen, sons of Jacob; listen to your father Israel." (Gen. 49:1-2) Yaakov seemingly repeats the same thing twice, but omits the reference to the future. "famously comments that this is because Yaakov attempted to prophesize what would happen in the times of ,but his ruach hakodesh was temporarily blocked by Hashem.

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks states that this portrays a fundamental feature of Jewish spirituality. "We believe that we cannot predict the future when it comes to human beings. We MAKE the future by our choices," Rabbi Sacks explains.

This contrasts the leading disposition of the time towards prophecy. Prophecies were generally viewed as fate and bound to happen no matter the precautions taken to undermine them. The self-fulfilling prophecy was a common theme among many ancient cultures of the time in stark contrast with our groundbreaking idea that the future is not determined and is dependant on our choices. This theme is clear in the story of who was on his deathbed and it had been prophesied that he would die. However, he did ,nor repentance, and recovered.

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## The Mesorah Of Yisrael

By Moshe Carroll, 12th Grade

At the beginning of this week's Parsha, as Yaakov Avinu's life came to a close, he made one final request to Yosef: לְבָנוּ לְיוֹסֵף וְיֹאמֶר לוֹ אִם-נָא מְצָאתִי חַן בְּעֵינֶיךָ שְׂמֵנָה גִדָּה תַחַת יָרְכִי וַיַּעַשׂ וַיְעֲשֶׂה עִמָּדֵי חֶסֶד וְאֶמֶת אֶל-נֶאֱמָר תִּקְבְּרֵנִי בְּמִצְרָיִם: וְשָׁכַבְתִּי עִם-אֲבֹתַי וְנִשְׂאָתְנִי מִמִּצְרָיִם וְקִבְרַתְנִי בְּקִבְרָתָם וַיֹּאמֶר אָנֹכִי אֶעֱשֶׂה וַיֹּאמֶר יוֹסֵף לְיֹאכֵב אֲנִי נֹאסֵף אֶל-עַמִּי קִבְרוּ אֹתִי אֶל-אֲבֹתַי אֲשֶׁר בְּשֵׂדָה עָפְרוֹן הַחַתִּי: Yaakov wanted to be buried with the other Avot and Imahot and so he requested from his most powerful son Yosef the chesed shel emet of being buried in Maarat HaMachpela. Yosef subsequently swears to bury his father in Chevron. Later on in the parsha, Yaakov repeats this request in front of the rest of his children saying, וַיִּצְוּ אוֹתָם וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם אֲנִי נֹאסֵף אֶל-עַמִּי קִבְרוּ אֹתִי אֶל-אֲבֹתַי אֲשֶׁר בְּשֵׂדָה עָפְרוֹן הַחַתִּי: With this said, Yaakov passes away without his sons even having the chance to respond. However, why would Yaakov command the rest of his children to bury him in Chevron when he already had Yosef swear to bury him there, and why would Yaakov ask his sons to bury him in Chevron, but not "wait" to hear their affirmation to fulfill his request? The Ramban answers that Yaakov repeated his final request to his other sons because he was afraid that, despite Yosef's swear, Paroh might not let him leave the country to bury Yaakov. Consequently, Yaakov asked the Shvatim to fulfill the request in case Yosef could not. This answer seems quite understandable in light of the beginning of the

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### Torah Teasers

By Rabbi Moshe Erlbaum, 9th Grade Rebbe

### Parshas Vayechi Questions

1. Which people appear in this parsha who are not descendants of Avraham? (3 answers)
2. What location appears in this parsha and is not mentioned anywhere else in Tanach?
3. Which beverages are referred to in Yaakov's blessings to his sons? (3 answers)
4. Where in this parsha is the same person mentioned twice in a verse, but referred to by different names?
5. In what context are fish mentioned in this parsha?
6. Where in this parsha does one person place his hand upon the head of another? Where else in the Torah does it say explicitly that one person places his hand on another? (2 answers)
7. Which two pairs of brothers are mentioned in the same verse?

### Answers

1. Efron (Genesis 49:29), Mamre (Genesis 49:30), and Pharaoh (Genesis 50:4) are mentioned in this parsha. They are not descendants of Avraham.
2. The eulogy for Yaakov took place in Goren Ha'atad (Genesis 50:10-11). This place does not appear anywhere else in Tanach.
3. Water is referred to in the blessing of Reuven (Genesis 49:4). Milk and wine are referred to in the blessing of Yehudah (Genesis 49:12).
4. In the same verse, Yaakov is referred to both by the name Yaakov and by the name Yisrael (Genesis 49:2).
5. In the blessing to Ephraim and Menashe, the verse states "And they should multiply like fish in the midst of the land" (Genesis 48:16).
6. Yaakov places his hands on the heads of Ephraim and Menashe when giving them a blessing (Genesis 48:14). In Leviticus 24:14, witnesses who heard someone curse Hashem place their hand on his head before executing him. In Numbers 27:23, Moshe rests his hands on Yehoshua to transfer the leadership.
7. Ephraim and Menashe, and Reuven and Shimon, are all mentioned in the same verse (Genesis 48:1).



First Aliyah: Jacob lived his last seventeen years in Egypt. When Jacob sensed that his days were numbered he summoned Joseph and asked him to promise that he would bury him in Israel. Joseph acceded to the request. When Jacob then fell ill, Joseph visited him, accompanied by his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. Jacob conferred upon Ephraim and Manasseh the status of tribal progenitors, a status hitherto enjoyed only by Jacob's sons. Joseph asked his father to bless Ephraim and Manasseh.

Second Aliyah: Joseph presents his two sons, placing Manasseh, the firstborn, to Jacob's right, and Ephraim to Jacob's left. Jacob, who was nearly blind at this point, crossed his hands, placing his right – more prestigious – hand on Ephraim's head. He blessed them: "May the angel who redeemed me from all harm bless the youths, and may they be called by my name and the name of my fathers, Abraham and Isaac, and may they multiply abundantly like fish, in the midst of the land."

Third Aliyah: Joseph was disturbed that Jacob placed his right hand on Ephraim, and he attempted to adjust his father's hands. "I know, my son, I know," Jacob responded, explaining that the "younger brother will be greater, and his children[']s fame] will fill the nations." Jacob blessed the two boys further, saying that all of Israel will bless each other by saying: "May G-d make you like Ephraim and Manasseh."

Fourth Aliyah: Jacob summoned all his sons, and delivered to each a poetic, and sometimes cryptic, parting personal message. Reuben was chastised for his impetuosity and for "ascending upon his father's bed." Shimon and Levi were rebuked for their anger, which expressed itself in the killing of the Shechemites and the attempted execution of Joseph. Judah was blessed with monarchy, success in waging battle, and an abun-

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# 10-Minute Halacha Shiur

Given by Rabbi Aryeh Lebowitz  
on yutorah.org

Transcribed by  
Eli Wiseman

## Halachos of Zimun

**Q: What are some sources about the obligation of a zimun?**

**A:** The Gemara (berachos 45a) says three people who ate together are obligated in zimun.

R' Asi says it is from the pasuk (Tehillim 34:4) "אֶתִּי וּגְרוֹמִמָּה שָׁמוּ יִתְדָו" Acknowledge the greatness of Hashem with me, let's exalt His Name together."

Rashi explains the word יִתְדָו is in the plural form, so this pasuk is expressing that two people should join and recite praises such as birkat hamazon.

This is the source for the Shulchan Aruch orach chaim siman 192).

R' Abahu says it is from the pasuk (Devarim 32:3) "כִּי שָׁם ה' אֶקְרָא הֶבְרִי גִדְל לֵאלֹהֵינוּ" "When I proclaim the name of Hashem, ascribe greatness to our God."

The same explanation from the previous pasuk can be described here since הֶבְרִי is in the plural.

This is the source for the Mishna Berura (siman 192 sief katan 1).

**Q: Is Zimun a Mitzvah from the Torah or from the Rabanan?**

**A1:** The Shulchan Aruch (siman 192 sief 1) codifies zimun is a Rabbinical mitzvah and the pesukim are only hints to the mitzvah.

**A2:** The Chazon Ish writes zimun is a Torah ordained mitzvah since the sources that are of the opinion zimun is from the Torah are more reputable.

**Q: Does one say baruch hu uvaruch shemo at the end of the zimun?**

**A1:** The Mishnah Berurah (siman 192 sief katan 4) says the minhag is that everyone says it, but the Magen Avraham says only the leader of the zimun should recite it.

**A2:** The Kaf HaChaim (ibid. sief katan 8) as well as other opinions mentioned in the Beir Haitav (ibid. sief katan 3) say one should not say it.

This is the opinion of the Sephardim.

**Q: How is the mitzvah of zimun performed?**

**A:** It used to be the leader would recite birkat hamazon and the ones that joined would have kavana and fulfill birkat hamazon. The only time those people would an-

swer would be baruch she achalnu meshelo uvi tuvo chayenu.

Nowadays, since people cannot have full intention, everyone recites birkat hamazon.

The Mishna Berura (ibid. sief katan 28-9) writes the leader should recite the brachot out loud and wait till others finish the bracha to say the end of the bracha so others can respond amen.

**Q: What is the main text of the zimun?**

**A1:** The Rema says it is until the first bracha and the non-leaders need to respond to hear the first bracha and say it with the leader.

This is Ashkenazic opinion.

**A2:** The Shulchan Aruch says the main part of the zimun is the birkat hazimun and technically they don't have to bench together.

This is the Sephardic opinion.

**Q: What food must one eat in order to be included in a zimun?**

**A:** The Mishna Berura (siman 193 sief katan 6) says there needs to be 3 people who ate bread. If they ate anything besides bread, a zimun is not required.

If two ate bread and the other ate or drank anything besides water, they can have a zimun of 3.

For a zimun of 10, just 3 need to eat bread and the others can eat or drink anything.

However, 7 need to eat bread in order to say Elokeinu.

In V'zot HaBracha R' Sternbuch is quoted as saying **coffee and tea** are not considered water and therefore one can **join** to make a zimun.

However, **soda** and other drinks made from **water and sugar** are considered water and one **cannot join** to make a zimun.

**Q: What does the Gemara (berachos 45a) mean when it says three people who ate together are obligated in zimun?**

**A:** The Shulchan Aruch (siman 193 sief 5) says if 3 started their meal together, even though they didn't finish together, or 3 ended together even if they didn't start together are obligated in zimun. If they were not together for the meal, they can bench on their own.

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# SPARKS OF CHASSIDUS



*With Yaakov  
Fuchs*

The Bnei Yissaschar writes that the reason Yaakov wanted all of his descendants to bless their children to be like Efraim and Menashe instead of other tribes of Bnei Yisrael is that Efraim and Menashe conducted themselves according to the Torah's fundamental law; namely, that one should neither consider oneself greater than another nor envy another. Even though Yaakov put Efraim (the younger son) before Menashe, the firstborn, Efraim didn't become arrogant, and Menashe didn't become jealous. It was Yaakov's wish that his descendants both didn't become arrogant or jealous of one another. I believe there is another point to be added on top of what the Bnei Yissaschar wrote so beautifully. Efraim and Menashe were two Jews growing up in an environment countering everything the Dvar Hashem teaches; however, they not only came out as Jews but as ehrlicher Yidden. When Yaakov Avinu saw this, he knew that this would be the obvious Bracha for his descendants. To be a Jew is to thrive in the less than terrific environments that may surround us from time to time. To be a Jew is to say no to the temptations of the outside world and say, "Anu ameilim v'hem ameilim."

*(Moshe Carroll- Continued from page 1)*

following perek, where Yosef has to ask permission from Paroh to leave and Rashi says he is only granted such permission because Yosef swore to fulfill the request. However, this answer does not explain why Yaakov went out of his way to explain why and where he wanted to be buried to his other sons? If he was using the rest of the brothers as a backup in case Yosef couldn't do it, why didn't he make them swear, or at least wait for an answer from them?

Rav Eliyahu Munk explains that the reason that Yaakov went out of his way to repeat his burial request to the rest of his children was because he wanted to emphasize to his descendants that Egypt, while a nice temporary home during the famine, is not their permanent home. Yaakov wanted to remind the Shvatim that their ancestral homeland, the place that Bnei Yisrael truly belongs and should return to, is not Egypt, but Eretz Yisrael. The *ומשך חכמה* Parshat Bechukosai teaches that Yaakov was worried that Bnei Yisrael would substitute the Nile for the Jordan, as the German Jews of his time substituted Berlin for Yerushalayim, and Yaakov, worried that Bnei Yisrael would forget their mesorah, went out of his way to remind all of his descendants of their true home, of Israel, so that one day, when their redemption would come, they would know where to go. This interpretation of Yaakov's final request to his children is certainly a fitting way to end Sefer Bereishit which emphasizes the Jewish connection to their homeland.

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## Blessing Of The Sons



By Zecharia  
Lebowitz,  
10th Grade

In this week's parsha we learn about the blessings that Yakov Avinu gave to the sons of Yosef. This same blessing is the same one given by most fathers to their sons on Friday night “yesimcha alokim k'eohraum u'chemenshe”

There's an obvious question that one might ask: Why do we bless our kids to be like Ephraim and Menashe? While they were great people and tremendous tzadikim, why specifically do we bless our children to be like them? Why don't we bless them to be like Avraham Avinu, Yitzchack Avinu, or even Ya'akov Avinu?

One answer can be that Ephraim and Menashe has something unique that nobody else had, not even the Avos: they had a good relationship and a love for each other. However, all of the other Avos had some sort of infighting in their families. Avraham Avinu had a terrible relationship with his father Terach. The constant fighting between Yitzchack Avinu and Yishmael. The fighting between Yakov and his twin brother Eisav. And perhaps most disturbing of all was the way that Yosef was treated by his brothers, who tried to kill him but eventually just sold him away.

This is why we bless our children to be like Ephraim and Menashe, they were the first generation in which fighting and bickering with one another was not inherent in the relationship. Our fathers bless us that we should live a life of shalom without having terrible relationships with our families.

Another possible answer to this question is that Ephraim and Menashe were “mere sons of Yosef” meaning that they had their own tribe and were not part of anyone else's tribe. So for that reason our fathers bless us, that we should become much more than what was originally expected from us. And spiritually we should grow out of proportion. May we all be zocheh to the camaraderie shared by Emphraim and Menashe. Have a good shabbos!

*(Yaakov Grunsfeld- Continued from page 1)*

This speaks for the nature of prophecy. It is not a prediction as to what will happen in the future, but rather it is a warning of what can happen if we don't correct our ways. Even deeper than that, it speaks for the nature of human beings. While we have been able to predict the movement of the planets, stars, and even galaxies for years, despite all the technology available to us, we can never predict how a human will act and likewise how a human will change. That is what makes human beings so different from what we see around us. Animals don't have the ability to change their predispositions or the way they act, in stark difference to human beings. Humans have the ability to change themselves and their own future.

Rabbi Sacks conjectures that this is what is intended when God famously tells בני ישראל that if you ask for the name of God, Moshe should respond with the phrase אהיה אשר אהיה. This is often translated as “I am that I am.” However, this is more accurately translated as “I will be what I will be.” As the God that is preparing to lead בני ישראל out of slavery and into freedom, He chose the name that symbolizes the absolute freedom that comes from the ability to choose your own fate. To become what you become based on your own choices and not on some predetermined destiny.

This is the lesson that תורה and רש"י are trying to teach us. We cannot predict the future because our future is still unwritten. We are not predestined to fall into some reality, it is our responsibility to make the future what it is.



# Loving A Fellow Jew

By Avi Mandel, 10th Grade

In this week's parsha, Yaakov blesses each of his sons before he passes away. He tells Yehuda that since he admitted his sin by the story of Tamar, he'd merit that his descendants would always be the kings of the Jewish people. However, it seems that Yosef did something much greater than Yehuda did and should get this reward over Yehuda. When Yosef was sold to Potiphar, an Egyptian noble, Potiphar's wife noticed his handsome looks. She then tried to seduce Yosef into committing adultery with her every day, yet he refused every day. On the other hand, when tempted by Tamar, Yehuda gave in and had relations with her, and only later admitted his sin. Shouldn't Yosef get a greater reward than Yehuda? Isn't abstaining from sin and not giving into one's desires a much greater action than admitting to one's sin and doing teshuva? Shouldn't Yaakov have proclaimed Yosef and his descendants as the kings of the Jewish people?

We can answer that although Yosef's merit of controlling his desires in regards to Potiphar's wife seems to be greater than Yehuda's merit of admitting his sin by Tamar, there is one great attribute that Yehuda possessed that Yosef did not. Yosef was a handsome, prosperous man, and would often strike jealousy into the hearts of people around him. Yosef unintentionally would attract the ayin hara (evil eye) from people, and this jealousy eventually turned into his brother's hatred for him, which led them to sell him. However, Yehuda was respected and loved as the leader of his other brothers. This is crucial for any monarch to have, even a non-Jewish one. It says in Pirkei Avot, "Anyone with whom the people around him are pleased, Hashem is pleased with him" (3:13). This means to say that someone who is loved by his peers is loved by Hashem. This does not mean, G-d forbid, that the holy Yosef Hatzadik was not loved by Hashem since his brothers were jealous of him, rather, it means that because of his greatness, he inspired envy of him in many other people.

From the fact that Yehuda was chosen to have his descendants be the Jewish kings and not Yosef, we learn the great importance of having good relationships with other people. It is extremely important to always be at peace with other people and restore any bad relationships we have with others. If we take this message to heart, may Hashem help us to remove sinat chinam (baseless hatred) for our fellow Jews from our hearts, and replace it with ahavat chinam (baseless love), and with this may we merit to see the coming of Mashiach and the rebuilding of the Beit HaMikdash.

*(Chabad Aliyot Summary- Continued from page 2)*

dance of wine and milk in his portion. Zebulun was blessed with success in his sea-trade endeavors. Jacob likened Issachar to a thick-boned donkey who finds both rest and ample work. Dan was blessed with the tenacity of a serpent and the ability to judge.

**Fifth Aliyah:** Gad was blessed with bravery in battle. Asher's blessing: an abundance of olive oil. Naphtali was blessed with the speed of a deer. Joseph was recognized for his charm, suffering, and righteousness, and was showered with a variety of blessings.

**Sixth Aliyah:** Benjamin was likened to a devouring wolf. Jacob then repeated his request to be buried in Israel, in the Cave of Machpelah in Hebron, and he passed away at the age of 147. After an extended national mourning period, Joseph received Pharaoh's permission to carry Jacob's body up to Israel. A huge funeral procession consisting of all the elders of Egypt as well as Jacob's family went and buried Jacob. After returning to Egypt, Joseph's brothers feared that now, after Jacob had passed away, Joseph would exact revenge from them for selling him into slavery. Joseph reassured them that he harbored no ill feelings towards them.

**Seventh Aliyah:** Joseph lived until the age of 110. Before passing away he told his brothers that G-d would eventually take them out of Egypt and return them to the Promised Land. Joseph asked his brothers to promise that when that time arrived they would carry his remains with them, and inter him in Israel.

## Our Guide to Olam Haba

### By: Avi Cohen, 11th Grade

In this week's Parsha Yaakov is dying from an illness. We can learn a very important lesson from this. If we would be able to ask Hashem for one wish, what would it be? Happiness, love, to be healthy, and so on. The Midrash tell us that the avot actually asked for the opposite; they asked to look old, to suffer, and to be ill. The obvious question is why did they react this way? The answer is that we attribute major importance to our well-being in this world. The avot were constantly aware that the goal of our existence is to go to Olam Haba. This is why they requested whatever would promote spiritual well-being and rejected anything that might be harmful to the welfare of the nishama.

*(10MH- Continued from page 3)*

It can be implied from his words even if 3 joined at different intervals during the meal, they are obligated in zimun.

**Q: If people ate at different table can they join?**

**A:** It doesn't matter if they are at the same table or different tables as long as they have the intention to make a zimun they can. For example, at a wedding even though people are at different tables they are eating as part of a group, so one zimun covers everyone. Whereas, a restaurant can have two groups of people at one table, but the two groups have nothing to do with each other.

**Q: Can one force another, while he is in middle of eating, to answer for the zimun?**

**A:** If 2 finished, they can force another to answer.

If only one finished, he cannot force another to answer, and can bench on his own if he is in a rush. But if his rav or someone that he is obligated to honor is there, he has to wait till his rav finishes.

**Q: If one ate with 2 others but said birkat hamazon by himself can he still can answer?**

**A:** The Shulchan Aruch (siman 194 sief 1) says this case and a case where 2 people benched and one forgot to, the 3 can make a zimun.

The Rema says in a case where one joined with another group, he cannot join the original group.

**Q: Can children join a zimun?**

**A1:** The Ashkenazic custom is that children cannot join to make a zimun.

**A2:** The Sephardic custom permits children to create a zimun.

R' Shlomo Zalman Auerbach says in a case where there is a mix of Ashkenazim, Sephardim, and children, they can make a zimun. He suggests that one of the Sephardim should lead birkat hazimun.

**Q: Who should lead the zimun?**

**A: 1)** A cohen or a talmid chacham have precedence, however, they can pass on the right to lead.

**2)** A levi according to some have precedence over a yisrael

*(SOG- Continued from page 8)*

"world?" said Rabbi DovBer gently. We are here to serve the almighty and to travel to wherever we get closer to Hashem. Our home is the world to come.

Adapted from Chabad.org

## STORIES OF GREATNESS

TOLD OVER BY: TZVI GRUSHKO

Among the followers of Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov, founder of the Chassidic movement, was a Jew who worked the land in a small farming village near Mezeritch. The Baal Shem Tov had a special empathy for these simple rural Jews, whom he held in high regard for their wholesomeness, integrity, and unequivocal faith in G-d. So whenever the above-mentioned villager would come to spend a Shabbat with his Rebbe, he would be accorded a most gracious and affectionate welcome. At the conclusion of one such visit, the Baal Shem Tov requested of him: "Please, on your way home, stop by Mezeritch. I want you to give my regards to one of my closest and most illustrious disciples, the scholarly and pious Rabbi DovBer." The villager was overjoyed to be of service to his beloved Rebbe. As soon as he arrived in Mezeritch he began to inquire after the great Rabbi DovBer, but no one seemed to know of a "great Rabbi DovBer" among the town's scholars and mystics. Finally, someone suggested that he try a certain "Reb Ber", an impoverished schoolteacher who lived on the edge of town. The villager was directed to an alley in the poorest section of town. Along both sides of the muddy path stood row upon row of dilapidated hovels, leaning upon one another for support. There he found the schoolteacher's "house", an ancient, rickety hut with broken panes occupying the better half of its tiny windows. Inside, a scene of heart-rending poverty met his eye: A middle-aged man sat on a block of wood, at a 'table'

consisting of a rough plank set upon other wooden blocks. Before him sat rows of cheder children on "school benches" — also ingenious contraptions of planks and blocks. But the teacher's majestic face left no doubt in the villager's mind that he had indeed found his man. Rabbi DovBer greeted his visitor warmly and begged his forgiveness — perhaps his guest could return later in the day, when he had finished teaching his students? When the villager returned that evening, the hut's classroom furniture had disappeared: the planks and blocks had now been rearranged as beds for the teacher's children. Rabbi DovBer sat upon the lone remaining block, immersed in a book which he held in his hands. Rabbi DovBer thanked his guest for bringing word from their Rebbe and invited him to sit, pointing to a table-turned-bed nearby. At this point, the villager could no longer contain himself. Outraged at the crushing poverty about him, he burst out: "Rabbi DovBer, what can I say? How can you live like this? I myself am far from wealthy, but at least in my home you will find, thank G-d, the basic necessities — some chairs, a table, beds for the children..." "Indeed?" said Rabbi DovBer. "But why don't I see your furniture? How do you manage without it?" "What do you mean? Do you think that I schlepp my furniture along wherever I go? Listen, when I travel, I make do with what's available. But at home — a person's home is a different matter altogether!" "But aren't we all travelers in this

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