

א ב י ס כ ל ת ו ר א ה !

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י"ג טבת תשפ"ו · ויחי

A Jew's Connection to Israel

By Amalya Fischer '26

In פרשת ויחי, we encounter יעקב's death and the subsequent preparations for his burial. While יעקב does not make many demands for how his burial service should be carried out, he is adamant on one point: that he should be buried in Israel rather than Egypt. In fact, during a meeting with his son, יעקב makes יוסף swear to him that he will transport יעקב's body to Israel for burial. Through demanding language, expressed in the two words "השבעה לי" ("swear to me" (בראשית מז:לא)), יעקב places immense pressure on his son. Why would יעקב require יוסף to follow through on such a challenging demand? The trek back and forth between Israel and Egypt is not a walk in the park. In addition, פרעה will likely be opposed to letting יוסף leave with his father's body for an extended period of time. Furthermore, why did יעקב make his son explicitly swear that he would carry out this goal? Did he not trust his son's word that he would carry out his wishes? And why was it important to יעקב to be buried in Israel?

To answer this question, we must look earlier in אבן עזרא. מערת המכפלה of אברהם's purchase, בראשית comments (בראשית כג:יט) that the explicit mention of the תורה of such a purchase operates to show the superiority of the land of Israel - both for the living and for the dead. This commentary clearly shows the spiritual value of Israel: burial in Israel irrevocably connects the dead to the land, as well as to the Jewish nation.

Due to this attribute of spiritual connection, אברהם wanted to purchase and dedicate a place in the Holy Land for his departed wife. So too, יעקב saw similar importance lying in his own burial in the land of Israel. As an important member of the Jewish nation and a relative of יוסף, an influential figure in Egypt's political system, יעקב knew of the vital role he played in the future of the Jewish nation. Although Jewish life in ארץ גושן was then lucrative, accepting, and surprisingly successful, it would not always remain that way. יעקב knew that the relationship between the Jewish nation and Israel would become vital in the future, and it was up to him to establish such a link. Thus, he commands יוסף to bury him in Israel, placing him under oath to make sure his son was aware of the deep importance lying in such a task.

Today, in a world of terrifying antisemitism and anti-zionism, our connection to the land of Israel has become all the more important. Thus, we must do all we can to draw on the spiritual aspect of the Holy Land, thus connecting ourselves to our homeland and ancestral history. יעקב's insistence to be buried in Israel demonstrates the initiative we must take in bringing out such connections and strengthening our identification with our history and land, through life and death.

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Blessing Our Children to be Like אפרים and מנשה?

By Anna Szalat '28

In this week's פרשה, יעקב gathers all his sons giving each of them unique and interesting ברכות. Each ברכה is given in poetic words. יוסף brings his two sons מנשה and אפרים. יעקב blesses them by saying that all of the future generations of עם ישראל will bless their children to be like מנשה and אפרים. A question one can ask is why should we bless our children to be like them and not like other צדיקים like אברהם and יצחק?

רבי שלמה אריאלי gives an amazing answer, saying that there is a famous line in תנא דבי אליהו that says that each person should ask himself: "מתי יגיעו מעשי למעשי" "when will my actions equal the actions of my ancestors אברהם, יצחק, and יעקב". He says that each person should always challenge himself to reach the same level of קדושה as our אבות. Always try to make the effort to try and get on the same level as our אבות. Always try to make the effort to try and get on the level of יעקב, יצחק, and אברהם. This seems obvious since we pray three times a day to Hashem so that our level of spiritualness can get stronger and stronger. So why does the blessing that parents bless their children with use the names of אפרים and מנשה?

In this moment of history if we would make a family tree we would see that מנשה and אפרים are the farthest away from יעקב. They are his grandchildren and not only that, they did not have the opportunity to grow up beside יעקב. They grew up in מצרים surrounded only by idol worship and non-jewish

influences, yet they still managed to reach a very high level of spirituality, almost as high as אברהם. This is why until today, parents bless their children to be like אבות and אפרים because we learn from them to try our best to reach the level of holiness like our אבות. They teach us that even in our darkest times living in exile we must not get swayed in the wrong direction of our influences and always try to improve and strive to be on a higher level of קדושה. May all of עם ישראל reach the highest level of holiness soon.



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