

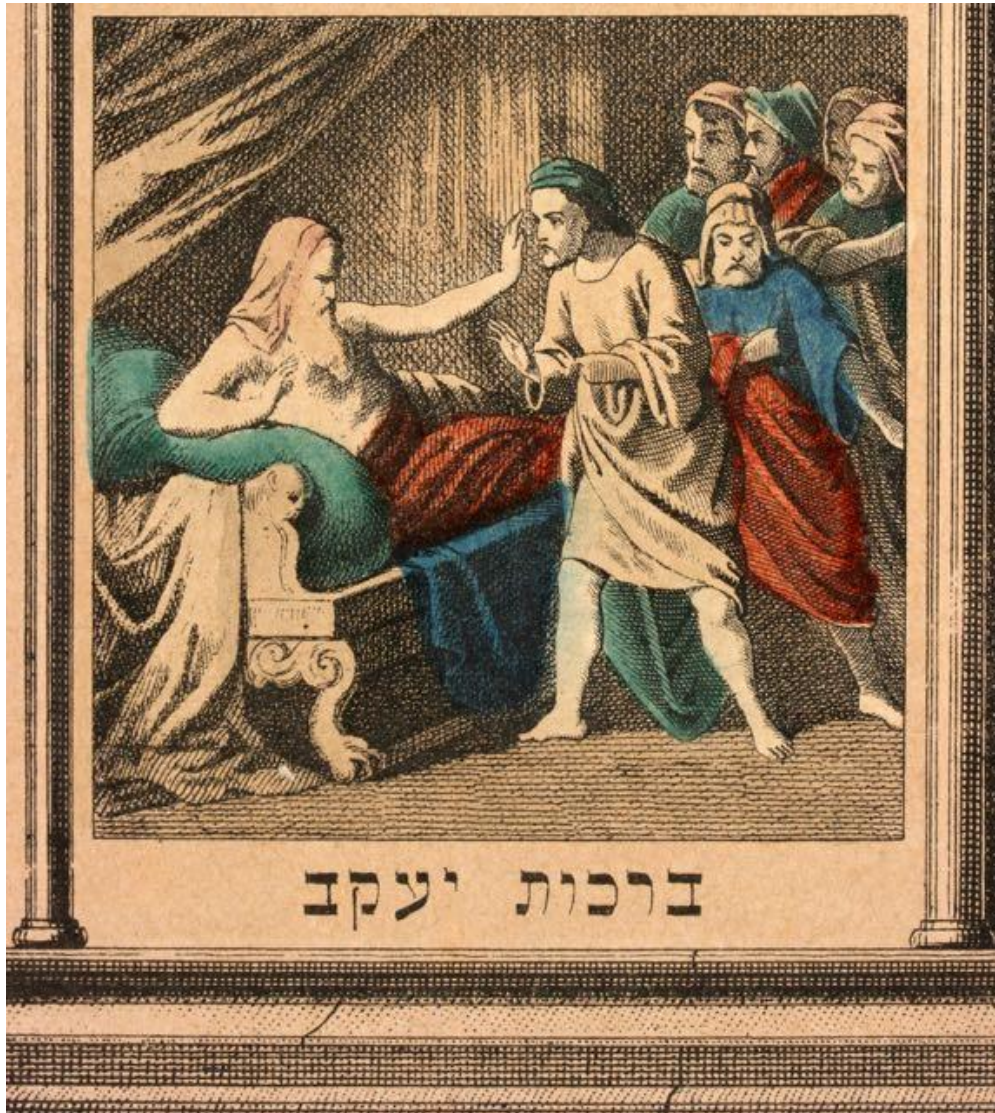
Jacob's Blessings
Parashat Vayechi
Rabbi Carl M. Perkins
Temple Aliyah
January 3, 2015

Jacob blessing Joseph's children:



La Semaine Israelite (French version of Tzema Urena), Paris, France, 1846, Gross Family Collection, Tel Aviv

Jacob blessing his own children (note how well they're getting along):



Mizrah, Metz, France, ca1880, Gross Family Collection, Tel Aviv

Another depiction of Jacob blessing Joseph's children:



Mizrah, United States, ca1880, Gross Family Collection, Tel Aviv

Where did he get that picture?

“And Jacob proceeded to ask Joseph: *Who are these?* ... Hereupon Joseph began to reply pleadingly: Father, they are my sons. Like me, they are righteous: *They are my sons. They are the ones whom God hath given me by this one.* (Genesis 48:9).

(ויאמר יוסף אל־אביו בני הם אשר־נתת־לי אֱלֹהִים בְּזֶה)

What is meant by the phrase *by this one*? That he brought their mother Asenath into the presence of his father and said to him: Father, I beseech you, even if only for the sake of this righteous one.” (*Pesikta Rabbati*, 3:4, translated by William Braude, Yale Univ. Press, p. 78.)



Blessing the Sons of Joseph, Rembrandt van Rijn, 1665
Museumslandschaft Hessen Kassel, Kassel, Germany

“Asenath’s presence at the current scene of benediction is a symbol of, as Simon Schama puts it, ‘the artless innocent mother, in implied contrast to Rebecca, the artful and culpable thief of Esau’s benediction.’ [Rembrandt’s Eyes, p. 607.] Through Asenath, in her role as daughter-in-law to the patriarch, Jacob has the chance to redress his former sins against his father and brother and confer blessing to both of his grandsons, ending the long history of deception and rivalry. Asenath represents not only the caring wife, mother and daughter-in-law, but also the penitent convert to Judaism and the reconciler of generational strife.”

(from “Family Benediction: The Role of Asenath in Rembrandt’s Jacob Blessing the Sons of Joseph,” Jamie Buettner, California State University, Fresno.)