



Parent Child Learning

פְּרָשֶׁת וַיְחִי

Prepared by Rabbi Poupko

A Reversal of Fortune



Review these pesukim about Ephraim and Menasheh...

¹ Some time afterward, Joseph was told, "Your father is ill." So he took with him his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. ² When Jacob was told, "Your son Joseph has come to see you," Israel summoned his strength and sat up in bed. ³ And Jacob said to Joseph, "El Shaddai appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan, and He blessed me, ⁴ and said to me, 'I will make you fertile and numerous, making of you a community of peoples; and I will assign this land to your offspring to come for an everlasting possession.' ⁵ Now, your two sons, who were born to you in the land of Egypt before I came to you in Egypt, shall be mine; Ephraim and Manasseh shall be mine no less than Reuben and Simeon.

¹³ Joseph took the two of them, Ephraim with his right hand—to Israel's left—and Manasseh with his left hand—to Israel's right—and brought them close to him. ¹⁴ But Israel stretched out his right hand and laid it on Ephraim's head, though he was the younger, and his left hand on Manasseh's head—thus crossing his hands—although Manasseh was the first-born.

¹⁷ When Joseph saw that his father was placing his right hand on Ephraim's head, he thought it wrong; so he took hold of his father's hand to move it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's. ¹⁸ "Not so, Father," Joseph said to his father, "for the other is the first-born; place your right hand on his head." ¹⁹ But his father objected, saying, "I know, my son, I know. He too shall become a people, and he too shall be great. Yet his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his offspring shall be plentiful enough for nations." ²⁰ So he blessed them that day, saying, "By you shall Israel invoke blessings, saying: God make you like Ephraim and Manasseh." Thus he put Ephraim before Manasseh.

בראשית פרק מח: א-ה, יג-יד, יז-כ

(א) וַיְחִי אַחֲרַי הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה וַיֹּאמֶר לְיוֹסֵף הִנֵּה אָבִידָה חֻלָּה וַיִּקַּח אֶת שְׁנֵי בָנָיו עִמּוֹ אֶת מְנַשֶּׁה וְאֶת אֶפְרַיִם: (ב) וַיִּגַּד לְיַעֲקֹב וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה בָנְךָ יוֹסֵף בָּא אֵלֶיךָ וַיִּתְחַזֵּק יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיֵּשֶׁב עַל הַמֶּטֶה: (ג) וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב אֶל יוֹסֵף אֵל שְׁדַי נִרְאָה אֵלַי בְּלוּז בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן וַיְבָרֵךְ אֹתִי: (ד) וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלַי הֲנִי מִפְּרֹדֶה וְהַרְבִּיתִּי וַיִּתְּנִידָה לְקַהֵל עַמִּים וְנָתַתִּי אֶת הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת לְזֶרְעֶךָ אַחֲרַיִךְ אַחֲזֵת עוֹלָם: (ה) וְעַתָּה שְׁנֵי בָנֶיךָ הַנוֹלָדִים לָךְ בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם עַד בָּאִי אֵלֶיךָ מִצְרַיִמָּה לִי הֵם אֶפְרַיִם וּמְנַשֶּׁה כְּרֵאוּבוֹן וְשִׁמְעוֹן יִהְיוּ לִי:

(יג) וַיִּקַּח יוֹסֵף אֶת שְׁנֵיהֶם אֶת אֶפְרַיִם בְּיָמֵינוּ מִשְׁמָאל וְיִשְׂרָאֵל וְאֶת מְנַשֶּׁה בְּשִׁמְאֵלוֹ מִיְמִין וְיִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּגֶשׁ אֵלָיו: (יד) וַיִּשְׁלַח יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת יָמֵינוּ וַיִּשֶׁת׀ עַל רֹאשׁ אֶפְרַיִם וְהוּא הִצְעִיר וְאֶת שִׁמְאֵלוֹ עַל רֹאשׁ מְנַשֶּׁה שְׁכַל אֶת יָדָיו כִּי מְנַשֶּׁה הַבְּכוֹר:

(יז) וַיִּרְא יוֹסֵף כִּי יִשִׁית אָבִיו יָד יָמֵינוּ עַל רֹאשׁ אֶפְרַיִם וַיִּרַע בְּעֵינָיו וַיִּתְמַדֵּךְ יָד אָבִיו לְהַסִּיר אֹתָהּ מֵעַל רֹאשׁ אֶפְרַיִם עַל רֹאשׁ מְנַשֶּׁה: (יח) וַיֹּאמֶר יוֹסֵף אֶל אָבִיו לֹא כֹן אָבִי כִּי זֶה הַבְּכוֹר שִׁים יָמִינְךָ עַל רֹאשׁוֹ: (יט) וַיִּמָּאֵן אָבִיו וַיֹּאמֶר יָדְעִיתִי בְנִי יָדְעִיתִי גַם הוּא יִהְיֶה לְעָם וְגַם הוּא יִגְדֵל וְאוֹלָם אַחִיו הַקָּטָן יִגְדֵל מִמֶּנּוּ וְזָרְעוֹ יִהְיֶה מְלֵא הַגּוֹיִם: (כ) וַיְבָרְכֵם בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא לֵאמֹר בְּךָ יְבָרֵךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר יִשְׁמַךְ אֱלֹהִים כָּאֶפְרַיִם וְכַמְנַשֶּׁה וַיִּשֶׁם אֶת אֶפְרַיִם לִפְנֵי מְנַשֶּׁה:

Discuss the following questions based on what you read...

- 1) What does Yaakov mean when he says that Ephraim and Menasheh are like Reuven and Shimon to him?
- 2) How did Yosef position Ephraim and Menasheh before Yaakov? What does Yaakov do with his hands?
- 3) How did Yosef react to what Yaakov did with his hands? Why did Yosef feel this way?
- 4) Was Yaakov choosing favorites between Ephraim and Menasheh?
- 5) Yaakov says that in the future parents will bless their sons using the names of Ephraim and Menasheh. Why them? Why not Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov?
- 6) [Middle School Question] See the Kli Yakar below. Where else in Sefer Bereisheet do we see a younger brother chosen over an older brother? What lesson does this teach us?

Because Hashem chooses more often the smaller one. And any person that feels a sense of smallness (humility) Hashem is more likely to elevate their status...and this happened to all of the descendants of Avraham, since Yishmael was the first-born to Avraham but he was disqualified and Yitzchak was chosen. Eisav was the first-born to Yitzchak and Eisav was disqualified and Yaakov was chosen. Reuven was the first-born to Yaakov and Reuven was disqualified and Yosef was chosen. Menasheh was the first-born to Yosef, but Ephraim was especially chosen.

כלי יקר

כי הקב"ה בוחר ביותר בקטנים, וכל אדם שיש בו צד קטנות אז ביותר הקב"ה מגביהו...וקרה זה לכל זרע אברהם, כי ישמעאל בכור לאברהם נפסל ישמעאל ונבחר יצחק, עשו בכור ליצחק נפסל עשו ונבחר יעקב, ראובן בכור ליעקב נפסל ראובן ונבחר יוסף, מנשה בכור ליוסף נבחר אפרים ביותר.