

The extra portion Jacob gave to Joseph

This week's reading from *Parashat Vayechi* (*Bereshit / Genesis 47:28-50:26*) we are told that Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years and his total life span was 147 years. We are also told that Jacob spoke to Joseph saying *47:30 but when I lie down with my fathers, you shall carry me out of Egypt and bury me in their burial place.* And he said, *'I will do as you have said.'* (NASB) Note how Jacob's comments here indicate that he does believe that he has a part in the covenant blessings of God in the Promised Land, and that even in death, these things are true. Jacob tells Joseph that his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, will be as his own children (*48:5*) and declares that Joseph's descendents after him shall be called after their names (*48:6*). Jacob proclaims a blessing over Joseph's children. Throughout Jacob's life, we see favoritism occurring just as we see in his blessing over his children before he died. Notice how he makes a distinction between Judah and his brothers saying, *49:10 The scepter shall not depart from Judah, Nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, Until Shiloh comes, And to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.* (NASB) What was it about Judah's life, that caused such great things to be said as compared to his brothers? What is it about Judah that sets him apart to be given a messianic expectation of greatness?

Note Jacob's favoritism blessing Joseph's children placing Ephraim (second born) before Manasseh (first born) saying the younger will be greater than the older (*48:10-20*). Jacob had also essentially done this to Joseph giving him a place of authority and a special colored coat many years ago. Judah on the other hand was not a perfect character according to the Torah's description of his life. The Scriptures tell us that he was the one who was motivated by profit to get rid of their brother Joseph (*Bereshit / Genesis 37:26*). He did not behave as a righteous man in faith with his daughter-in-law Tamar (*Bereshit / Genesis 38:26*), he had sex with her presupposing she was a prostitute (*Bereshit / Genesis 38:18*). Later on however Judah offered himself as a substitute for Benjamin his brother (*Bereshit / Genesis 44:18-34*). Jacob describes the blessing over Judah saying his brothers will praise him, he will be as a lion, the scepter will not pass from between his feet, and to him will be the obedience of the people. These things are describing a person having a leadership po-

sition among his brothers. Though we are told these things about Judah, we are also told that Jacob gave Joseph an extra portion than his brothers (*Bereshit / Genesis 48:22*). What do you think he meant by that?

ספר בראשית פרק מט Bereshit / Genesis 49:8-12

יה ויאמר יוסף אל-אביו לא-כן אבי פי-זה הבכור שים ימינך על-ראשו: יט וימאן אביו ויאמר ידעתי בני ידעתי גם-הוא יהיה-לעם וגם-הוא יגדל ואולם אחיו הקטן יגדל ממנו וזרעו יהיה מלא-הגוים: כ ויברכם ביום ההוא לאמור בך יברך ישראל לאמר ישמך אלהים כפארים וכמנשה וישם את-אפריים לפני מנשה: כא ויאמר ישראל אל-יוסף הנה אנכי מת והיה אלהים עמכם והשיב אתכם אל-ארץ אבותי-כם: כב ואני נתתי לך שכם אחד על-אחיך אשר לקחתי מיד האמרי בחרבי ובקשתי:

48:18 Joseph said to his father, 'Not so, my father, for this one is the firstborn. Place your right hand on his head.' 48:19 *But his father refused and said, 'I know, my son, I know; he also will become a people and he also will be great. However, his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his descendants shall become a multitude of nations.'* 48:20 *He blessed them that day, saying, 'By you Israel will pronounce blessing, saying, 'May God make you like Ephraim and Manasseh!''* Thus he put Ephraim before Manasseh. 48:21 *Then Israel said to Joseph, 'Behold, I am about to die, but God will be with you, and bring you back to the land of your fathers. 48:22 'I give you one portion more than your brothers, which I took from the hand of the Amorite with my sword and my bow.'* (NASB)

כב ואני נתתי לך שכם אחד 48:22 *'I give you one portion more than your brothers, which I took from the hand of the Amorite with my sword and my bow.'* (NASB) Jacob says what he is giving to Joseph is from אשר לקחתי מיד האמרי “that which I took from the hand of the Amorite.” What was it that Jacob had taken from the hand of the Amorite by sword and bow? The Torah does not provided any details regarding what Jacob had taken from the Amorites. In addition, when Jacob blessed Joseph’s children (Manasseh and Ephraim), he switched his hands on their heads, blessing the younger son over and above the older

son. Joseph did not seem to understand what was happening or what it was that Jacob had given him. The rabbis have much to say concerning these things. We are told according to Daat Zkenim the following:

Daat Zkenim on Genesis 48:22, Part 1

וְאָנִי נֹתֵתִי לְךָ, “I have given (allocated) to you;” Rabbi Moshe raises the point that Yaakov was directly responsible for fueling jealousy between the brothers, commencing already with giving his son Joseph a garment that was visibly more expensive than those worn by his brothers. On account of this error in judgment, the whole family descended to Egypt, only to become enslaved for hundreds of years after initially having been welcomed there. (Compare Talmud, tractate Shabbat folio 10). We must also marvel that Joseph followed in his father’s footsteps by giving his full brother Binyamin far more valuable gifts than he gave to his other brothers (Genesis 45:22). In order to answer these questions we must remember that what Yaakov gave to Joseph was done while he was relatively young and immature, younger than 17 years old, an age at which Ishmael in Genesis 21:14 has still been described by the Torah as a יֶלֶד, “a child;” at that time the brothers who were jealous of him had reason to be so. What had he done to deserve preferential treatment by his father? Now that his dreams had come true, not only did they not feel jealous of him, but they were grateful and proud of his achievements. Moreover, they had become economically dependent upon him. Even if he had not treated them well, they were legally obligated to honor him on account of his position. If he gave Binyamin more gifts, that was easily explained by the fact that he was his only full brother. However, what bothers me is that at a time when he had not yet revealed to the brothers who he was, (Genesis 43:34) the brothers of Binyamin must have asked themselves for the reason that this ruler of Egypt who had – according to their assumption- never previously laid eyes on Binyamin, should have given him five times as much

as he gave to them. Surely, this would have aroused the other brothers' jealousy of Binyamin. However, the brothers found a reason for this also, as they considered it as Joseph compensating Binyamin for having insisted that he make the journey to Egypt just because he had not trusted the brothers' statement that he even existed. Furthermore, I believe that Joseph, already at that point, had decided to reveal his true identity. He was certain that as soon as they would find out that he, Joseph, was a full brother of Binyamin, they would not begrudge him the additional gifts. Some commentators explain the words: שְׂכֵם אֶחָד, in our verse, the extra portion of ancestral parts of the land of Israel, allocated by Yaakov to Joseph, as referring to the grave in that city in which the remains of Joseph would be interred after the Israelites taking over that country. (Compare Joshua 24:32) The matter can be compared to a parable of thieves who had robbed the owner of a vineyard of a full casket of wine when they were found out by the owner. That owner asked the thieves to do him one favor; seeing that they had already emptied the casket of its contents he asked them to at least return the empty casket to him. Joseph had been sold in Sh'chem. The time had come to at least bring his remains back there. (Compare B'reshit Rabbah, 85,3).

The point of Daat Zkenim commentary on *Bereshit / Genesis 48:22* is that Jacob was responsible for this whole situation in the manner in which he favored one son over the others. Joseph in turn treated his younger brother with more gifts than his brothers. The idea is that what Jacob had done to Joseph, placing above his brothers, was done at the age of 17, the age of which the Torah describes Ishmael as still a ילד, “*a child*,” and so the brothers had reason to be jealous. So the conclusion is as an older man, his brothers were proud of him and his achievements, and the gifts to his brother Benjamin was because he was his full brother. The interpretation of the verse in *Bereshit / Genesis 48:22* כֹּב וְאֶנִּי נֹתַתִּי לָךְ שְׂכֵם אֶחָד עַל-אַחֶיךָ *‘I give you one portion more*

than your brothers, which I took from the hand of the Amorite with my sword and my bow. (NASB) is found in the words שכם אחד, where Jacob is describing the extra portion of ancestral parts of the land of Israel, allocated by Jacob to Joseph, is referring to the place in that city in which the remains of Joseph would be honored after Israel had taken over that country. (see *Joshua 24:32*) Note also that Joseph had been sold in Shechem, a place of sin, greed, lust, and idolatry. Another interpretation may be that because Jacob had separated Joseph into two groups (Manasseh and Ephraim), he was giving Joseph an additional portion. In addition, returning to the land has the parallel of redeeming the place, in the sense of bringing his remains back there. (see *Midrash Rabbah Bereshit Parashat 85, Part 3*).

Additionally, others have interpreted these words that Jacob speaks to Joseph in the following way.

Rashbam on Genesis 48:22:1

נתתי לך, *and what I say to you now refers to that land,* ואני *I have assigned to you,* שכם אחד, *a share על אחיך, over and beyond the shares which you will divide with your brothers in territory which I and my offspring will conquer from the Emorite in the future with my sword and bow, (in the wars conducted by Joshua). [The author, whose exegesis of the past tense used in Yaakov's statement is most remarkable, now deals with possible objections that could be raised against his interpretation of Yaakov's words. Ed.] Even though it is written in the Book of Joshua 24:12 לא בחרבך ולא בקשתך, "not with your sword nor with your bow (did you drive out the Emorite, but because G'd sent scorpions and the like against these people," this verse does not contradict what Yaakov said here. Firstly, these scorpions did not cross the river Jordan, so how can we understand Joshua quoting G'd as saying "I have sent the scorpions ahead of you to drive out the two Kings of the Emorite, etc." (same verse)? When reading the words quoted in Joshua before, we must put the stress on the pronoun endings of the words בחרבך בקשתך, i.e. "your sword,*

your bow. Joshua meant that although on the face of it appeared that your prowess with the sword and bow accounts for your successful conquest, your success was due to the merit of your ancestor Yaakov. The effect of that merit was equivalent to the effect of well trained archers and swordsmen using their physical weapons.

Sforno on Genesis 48:22:1

ואני נתתי לך, Yaakov emphasizes the word אני in order to explain that he was not violating any of the rules pertaining to the distribution of the land of Canaan to the tribes, seeing such a distribution was not yet something at hand, but was still in the realm of the potential. Seeing that he, Yaakov, had personally conquered the city of Shechem, in spite of this city being part of the land of Canaan, seeing that he had taken it from the “Emorite,” i.e. someone whose deeds were as evil as those of the Emorite, (although the inhabitants had been Hittites), what he was allocating to Joseph now was an actual, a gift bestowed by him now, and had no bearing on any distribution of land conquered by Joshua in the future. Yaakov hints that givers who promise a lot wind up actually not even keeping part of their promises, such as Esau. When Yaakov, at the time, had bought the birthright from Esau, Esau forfeited not only his additional share in the land as a firstborn but wound up without any share in the land of Canaan whatsoever.

Notice how the rabbis interpret these things as a future expectation. Rashbam says this refers to the land that was divided amongst the brothers at a future time, similar to our interpretation that Jacob had divided Joseph into two groups (Manasseh and Ephraim). In addition, the mentioning of the sword and bow, as compared to what the Lord God did (*sending scorpions to drive out the people*) the rabbis suggest that it is the Lord God who has helped His people to conquer the land. Sforno states that this was a reference to the distribution of the land to the brothers, but states the reason Jacob does not elaborate on what he meant was because of pride, and that those who boast, what they have will be taken from them. The idea

is that Joseph was one man, but he had two sons, and these sons would be called by their names, and doing so would entitle them to two such shares in the land, thereby providing them with an additional share. Sforno also says in his commentary (Part 2) that *“the weapons of warriors are the sword and the bow, the equivalent weapons of the righteous, the scholars, are their wisdom and understanding. This is what Psalms 45:4 has in mind when the author writes: חַגּוֹר חַרְבֶּךָ עַל יָרֵךְ גִּבּוֹר (“Gird your sword on your mighty thigh”). Our sages in Shabbat 63 already commented on this verse that the psalmist does not refer to actual weapons but to the use of words of Torah as being the tools used by the Torah scholar. [The interpretation of this verse as something allegorical, and almost diametrically opposed to the plain meaning of the text, is disputed by some scholars in the Talmud there. Ed.]”* This is a very significant comment because we find a direct NT application to what Jacob is saying to Joseph in the verse, כֹּב וְאֲנִי נָתַתִּי לְךָ נֶשֶׁכֶם אֶחָד עַל-אֶחָיִךְ אֲשֶׁר לָקַחְתִּי מִיַּד הָאֱמֹרִי בְּחַרְבֵי וּבְקִשְׁתֵּי: 48:22 ‘I give you one portion more than your brothers, which I took from the hand of the Amorite with my sword and my bow.’ (NASB) The rabbis say that the weapons are the words of the Torah. This suggests a spiritual aspect of warfare in this world. The Apostle Paul spoke about this in the following way, according to *2 Corinthians 10:1-8*.

2 Corinthians 10:1-8

10:1 Now I, Paul, myself urge you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ I who am meek when face to face with you, but bold toward you when absent! 10:2 I ask that when I am present I need not be bold with the confidence with which I propose to be courageous against some, who regard us as if we walked according to the flesh. 10:3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, 10:4 for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. 10:5 We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ, 10:6 and we are ready to punish all disobedience, whenever your obedience is complete. 10:7 You are looking at things as they are outwardly. If anyone is confident in himself that

he is Christ's, let him consider this again within himself, that just as he is Christ's, so also are we. 10:8 For even if I boast somewhat further about our authority, which the Lord gave for building you up and not for destroying you, I will not be put to shame. (NASB)

Notice the way in which Paul writes to the believers in Corinth. He speaks of meekness and gentleness, of having confidence, and being courageous, and walking in the flesh. He says *10:3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, 10:4 for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. (NASB)* He says these weapons destroy speculations and lofty ideas that are raised up against the knowledge of God. The weapons of war as being the words of the Torah, are meant to take every thought captive (10:5) to obedience. Those people he is talking to believe these are outwardly things, fleshly things, but they are not, and Paul is exhorting them to take their thoughts captive by the study of God's word, and the obedience of the faith. He says that he will not be put to shame, and as we know according to the psalms, shame is synonymous to sin, and therefore he is saying that he has not sinned, specifically in his boasting about the authority that God had given him to build up rather than to destroy. The exhortation is meant to build and not tear down.

In the Torah portion, note all of the things we have been discussing regarding the verse in Bereshit / Genesis, כב וְאֲנִי נָתַתִּי לְךָ אֶחָד עַל- 48:22 *'I give you one portion more than your brothers, which I took from the hand of the Amorite with my sword and my bow.'*(NASB) We are told that Jacob gave Joseph an extra portion than his brothers (*Bereshit / Genesis 48:22*). He mentions the sword and bow, but does not go further in his comments to detail how this happened. This is compared to what the Lord God did according to the Torah by sending scorpions to drive out the people in the Promised Land, the rabbis suggest that there is a cooperative work here, that it is the Lord God who has helped His people to conquer the land. In addition, the rabbis say that the weapons Jacob was referring to are the words of the Torah. The Apostle Paul makes a similar conclusion. (*2 Corinthians 10:1-8*) Therefore, the important lesson to learn from this week's Torah portion, is that the most powerful Weapon of all is the Word of God. Not only for our

own lives, but also for the movement of things in this world, to the destruction of strongholds, and the conquering of nations. Paul spoke to Timothy saying that the word of God, the Torah *“is given by inspiration of God...”* (2 Timothy 3:16) Regarding the prophets, Peter tells us, *“...holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.”* (2 Peter 1:21) The word of God is powerful, and the danger is to not have a casual familiarity with the Word of God, of which lacks reverence and respect for the awesomeness of our God. On the Day of Shavuot, Peter quoted David saying, *“Men and brethren, this Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke by the mouth of David...”* (Acts 1:16) When we look at and study God’s word, take the perspective that the Lord God is present in this place. This is a very rabbinic concept, the study of Torah and the presence of God resting upon His people, this is the theology of the Oral Torah (*Mishnah Pirkei Avot 3:2*), and it is the theology of Yeshua the Messiah (*Matthew 18:19-20*). Our Father in heaven has given us many blessings, and a double portion in His Son, Yeshua the Messiah. Let’s not take this for granted, but very seriously, for this is the greatness of our God!



