

Feeling Left Out ©

By Dr. Akiva Gamliel Belk

Bereisheit 48

This Devri Torah Limood is in the loving memory of Thomas H. Davis ben Na'amah, Joyce Duff bat Na'amah, Carrie bat Brachah Rivkah, Martha bat Sarah, Sharon bat Vivian, Sarah bat Chavah, Ethel Channah bat Channah, George ben Idah, Donald ben Channah, Gary Lee ben Channah Yochanan ben Chavah and Stephen ben Martha, may they rest in peace.

Dear Ones we read that Yaakov lived in the land of Mitzriam for seventeen years.

Bereishiet / Genesis 47.28

וַיְחִי יַעֲקֹב בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם שִׁבְעַת עָשָׂר שָׁנָה וַיְהִי יָמָיו יַעֲקֹב שְׁנֵי תַיִו שִׁבְעַת שָׁנִים וְאַרְבָּעִים וּמָאתַיִם וְשָׁנָה:

And it was Yaakov lived in the land of Mitzriam seventeen years; and it was, Yaakov's entire life was a hundred and forty seven years.

What is Ha Torah Sharing with us? Ha Torah is Saying that Yaakov could have spent 17 year cycles with His grandsons, Ephraim and Menasheh. Ha Torah is Saying Yaakov could have shared 884 Shabbats with His grandchildren.

Why is this important?

Yoseif was removed from the place of his captivity when he was 30 years old, Bereisheit 41.46.

Pharaoh gave Osnat [the daughter of Deenah and grand daughter of Yaakov to Yoseif as a wife. Shechem, the prince of Shechem was the father of Osnat. Osnat bore two sons to Yoseif, Menasheh and Ephraim They were born to Yoseif before the famine. It is likely that Menasheh was born in the first year of plenty and Ephraim in the second year. This would mean Menasheh could have been eight years old and Ephraim could have been seven years when they met their grandfather, Yaakov. They could have also been twins and born at the conclusion of the seven years of plenty. If this were the situation they would have each been two years old when they met their grandfather. We know they had to be at least two years old because Yoseif said to his brothers that the famine was [now] two years, Bereisheit 45.6.

The point is they spent 17 productive years with their grandfather. When Yaakov called them into bless them the boys may have been as old as 25 or as young as 19. Each spent quality productive years with Yaakov. SO THEN WHY did Yaakov wait until hours before his death TO BLESS them? See Bereisheit 48. The entire Perik is about Yaakov's blessing of his children. We are instructed to bless our children as Yaakov did, Bereisheit 48.20.

The question we ask is, why did Yaakov wait to this time to bless his grandchildren?

וַיְבָרְכֵם בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא לְאֵמוֹר בְּךָ יְבָרְךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל לְאֹמֹר יִשְׁמַךְ
אֱלֹהִים כְּאֶפְרַיִם וְכַמְנַשֶּׁה וַיִּשֶׂם אֶת־אֶפְרַיִם לְפָנָי מִנְּשָׂה:

And Bless them, in [that] day, say the same blessing. You shall bless Israel saying, May G-d Make you like Ephraim and like Menasheh...

On the one hand for seventeen years it may have appeared like Ephraim and like Menasheh were out casts because of their lenage. Shechem was their father. He over powered their mother. He kidnapped her. He raped her. He was the lowest of the low. The place of their up bringing

may have been an issue. Ephraim and Menasheh, were born outside of Eretz Yisroel. They were raised in the land of Mitzrim among idol worshipers. Then what about the influence of living in Mitzriam? They were not part of a minyan of ten Jewish men above the age of twelve. How could they say their daily prayers and study Ha Torah etc? How could they keep kosher? They were not taught by Rabbis in a day school. They did not have the advantages that Yaakov's sons enjoyed. Ha Torah Does Not describe any other interaction with their grandfather Yaakov. One could argue that Ephraim and Menasheh were feeling left out. Many of the things that existed in their lives are the things that some of us may feel left out. **SO WE CAN UNDERSTAND HOW THEY COULD FEEL LEFT OUT...**

Yet it is clear that Yaakov saw things differently. He included Ephraim and Menasheh. He included them because their lives were very righteous. **ALL OF HIS CHILDREN'S LIVES WERE RIGHTEOUS.** He also included them to bring a message to each of us about including others especially others who may have genealogy issues, who may have community issues who may have pasts that don't fit the mold of observant Judaism.

May each of us be real careful to include others in our lives and among our group at B'nai Noach Torah Institute.

Blessings and peace,

Dr. Akiva Gamliel