

י"ב טבת תשע"ט
MOVING ON IN LIFE

ויהי אחרי הדברים האלה ויאמר ליוסף הנה אביך חלה ויקח את שני בניו
עמו את מנשה ואת אפרים¹

Closing the book on a chapter in life is always hard. After experiencing the joys that life has brought so far, you tend to reflect on that which just happened, while simultaneously looking forward with both eagerness and anxiety of the experiences yet to come. For example, a teenager graduating high school goes through the past four years at graduation. At the same time, he's looking forward to the new opportunities his years in Yeshiva and college entail, while also still hoping to cling onto the past, as now he realizes he has to get a job and start life. יעקב אבינו also realized that a book in Jewish history was literally and figuratively about to close, and was preparing his descendants for the trials and tribulations he knew they would face while in מצרים. Therefore, he made sure to bless all of them in his sickness, before he died.

It is interesting to note that before יעקב, people wouldn't die from disease. Instead, they would just drop dead, never knowing when to expect the day of death. יעקב therefore davened that there should be a sign that the יום המיתה was approaching, so the one who is about to die can say their proper goodbyes and last will and testament to their families. הקב"ה granted his request, and brought death by disease into the world.² The פסוק הראשון³ by פסוק says that הקב"ה instilled man with a נשמה by blowing it into his nostrils. It therefore makes sense that the soul departed the person the same way it entered, through the nostrils. Today, the erection of a substance from the nasal canal is called a "sneeze". This is the source for people saying "bless you". It used to be that instead of mucus, the sneeze was the way the soul left, so everytime someone sneezes, we shout out a blessing granting a long life.

We mentioned earlier that from the פרקי דר"א that יעקב asked for sickness, as opposed to immediate death. From this point on, there was disease in the world. However, thank G-d we see many times that people actually get healed from disease. How, then, was disease a sign of imminent death, that יעקב knew that now was the time to say his goodbyes, as he had so desired? The גמרא tells us that indeed יעקב introduced disease, but there was only fatal disease. It wasn't until the time of אלישע that people were healed from disease. However, this contradicts a שיטה of רשב"י in the גמרא. We know of the פסוק of "וה' ברך את אברהם בכל".⁵ We already saw one שיטה of what this פסוק meant when we discussed פרת חיי שרה. However, the גמרא we brought down there⁶ tells us of the שיטה of רשב"י, who says that "כל" alludes to a special amulet that אברהם had, which possessed special healing powers.⁷ What healing powers did this amulet have, if there was no sickness until the times of יעקב? There are two answers brought down.⁸ Either we can say that the sickness of אברהם was from external wounds, while the sickness of יעקב and אלישע was internal, or we can say like ר"ת and ר"י. They reinterpret the גמרא in בבא מציעא to say that the sickness of יעקב and אלישע was specifically a fatal illness. Until יעקב, there was no such thing as a fatal sickness, as death was from an immediate sneeze.

¹ בראשית מח.א

² פרקי דרבי אליעזר נב.ו.

³ בראשית ב.ז.

⁴ בבא מציעא פז.

⁵ בראשית כד.א

⁶ בבא בתרא טז:

⁷ The גמרא mentions that after אברהם died, הקב"ה hung this amulet from the sun, and its powers were felt throughout the world

⁸ תוספות שם ד"ה "שכל"

י"ב טבת תשע"ט
MOVING ON IN LIFE

asked for a warning that death would come, but it wasn't until אלישע that the ability to heal from a fatal disease came into existence. However, the stone of אברהם healed nonfatal disease.

We successfully answered the contradiction in the time of אברהם, but we see by יצחק that he expected the day of death as well, which is why he wanted to give the ברכה to עשו. The uses the פסוק "לא ידעתי יום מותי" of לשון "I do not know the day of my death". Being that no one knew the day of death, why did יצחק feel that specifically now was the time to bless עשו? Also, why does the פסוק use this לשון? To answer both questions, רש"י brings down the that says that a person is most מדרש¹⁰ susceptible to death when he reaches the point where he is within 5 years of how old their parents were when they died. שרה died at 127.¹¹ From various calculations, רש"י indicates that at the point of the ברכות, it comes out that יצחק was 123. Since he was within the 5 years of שרה's death, he was worried that death was imminent, so he rushed to give the ברכות in case he was about to die.

Based on the premise that one is most susceptible to death when they reach within 5 years of the parent, it would seem יעקב didn't ask for disease until he reached that point. We know יצחק died at 180, but we also know יעקב didn't make it that far, as he died at 147. Therefore, it must have been when he reached within 5 years of רבקה's age of death. As we pointed out when discussing פרשת וישלח, the תורה doesn't record רבקה's death, so how do we know how old she was? The truth is, רבקה's life story is a little fuzzy in terms of detail. רש"י says she got married at 3, but other sources argue on this. It would seem that the most authoritative פסק on the matter was the ספרי.¹² However, all the ספרי says regarding רבקה was that she lived the same amount of years as קהה, the paternal grandfather (and maternal uncle) of משה and אהרן. When discussing the lineage of משה and אהרן, the פסוק¹³ has קהה's lifespan at 133 years. Therefore, רבקה must have also lived 133 years. When יעקב came down to מצרים, we see that he was 130 years old.¹⁴ He waited until all of his children were together, and knowing he was most susceptible to death, a disease came upon him, signaling to take care of unfinished business and say his proper goodbyes before it was time.

As we move on to ספר שמות, where we start becoming a nation and receiving the מצוות, we must first reflect on the lessons ספר בראשית has taught us. The משנה¹⁵ tells us "אין דרך ארץ אין" "you can't have תורה without ארץ תורה", "תורה without ארץ". The משנה also states that the converse is true; you can't have ארץ תורה without תורה. We need ספר בראשית before we get the מצוות, so we learn from the ספר בראשית in מצוות 3, so we got 3 מצוות in מצוות first, so we got 3 מצוות in מצוות. Before we go on to explain the מצוות that will come up, I feel it'd be best to recap the lessons we talked about every week:

LESSON	פרשה
Know who you are, and don't succumb to people telling you to change	נח
Raise children in a way that continues the transmission of the מסורה	לך לך

⁹ בראשית כז.ב

¹⁰ בראשית רבה סה.יב

¹¹ בראשית כג.א

¹² ספרי דברים פסיקתא שנז

¹³ שמות ו.יח

¹⁴ עיין בראשית מז.ט

¹⁵ אבות ג.ז

¹⁶ They are: פרו ורבו, ברית מילה, ואיסור אכילת גיד הנשה

י"ב טבת תשע"ט
MOVING ON IN LIFE

Find your own connection to תורה	וירא
Learning תורה helps us recognize the השגחה's הקב"ה in this world	חיי שרה
Thinking before we act	תולדות
The "requirement" of going לפנים משורת הדין	ויצא
The dark times only mean there is an undying hope	וישלח
Lying (and all sins) come back to haunt you	וישב
Being able to learn from, and therefore love, everybody	מקץ (חנוכה)
Seeing the הקב"ה in everything: שויתי ה' לנגדי תמיד we do	ויגש
Properly preparing for the end	ויחי

Just as יעקב did as he realized a new chapter in Jewish history was about to start, I want to end ספר בראשית with a ברכה. Not only have we learned the lessons mentioned above, but through hearing many other people and what they have to say, we have learned tons of important lessons in the past few months. As we move together towards ספר שמות, we should take everything we heard to heart, and get ready to accept the תורה together, כאיש אחד בלב אחד. Thank you for your motivation to write every week. חזק, חזק, ונתחזק.