

Parsha Encounters

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Parshas Vayechi - Rabbi Moshe M. Willner

Chinuch

In this week's Parsha, Yaakov Avinu tells Yosef Hatzadik that his two sons Ephraim and Menashe will have the same status as the shevatim. The torah relates to us that Yaakov Avinu said "and now your two sons who were born to you **in Egypt** are mine". The passuk implies that Ephraim and Menashe were especially dear to Yaakov because they were born in Egypt prior to his arrival there. Wouldn't we think the opposite? The children born with Yaakov Avinu in close proximity should have had a closer relationship to him. R' Moshe Feinstein brings out a great lesson in chinuch to be learned from here. It is not sufficient to be *mechanech* (educate) one's child to behave according to the Torah at home or in a Torah society. The influence of his parents must be strong enough to stay with him even when he finds himself amongst those whose lifestyle contradicts yiddishkeit. Such was the chinuch that Yosef received from his father Yaakov Avinu. When Yosef was faced with the temptation of Potifar's wife, it was his father's image that strengthened him to pass the test.

Yosef was not only successful in retaining Torah values taught to him by Yaakov, he passed it along to his children as well. We can only imagine the hardship in bringing up the only Jewish children in a country as decadent as Egypt. Nevertheless they remained steadfast to the lifestyle of their father. It is for this reason why Yaakov can say regarding Ephraim and Me-

nashe "they are mine", for Ephraim and Menashe are proofs of how effective Yaakov's parenting was. However the children who would be born after Yaakov and the shevatim's arrival to Egypt would not prove how powerful his chinuch was, since at that point they would be growing up in a Torah community.

From Yaakov Avinu we learn how Chinuch must be far reaching to all situations, and powerful enough to affect even one's grandchildren. This concept holds true by a Rebbi of students as well. There is a story told about R' Shlomo Heiman, the Rosh yeshiva of Torah Vadaas. One day only a handful of students came to his shiur. Nevertheless he delivered the shiur in a loud and dynamic fashion as if there were hundreds of students sitting there. One of the students commented to his Rebbi, that he could speak in a more relaxed and quiet tone since there were only a few students present today. R' Heiman responded, I need to speak with a loud voice for I'm not giving a shiur to you alone but rather to your children and their children as well. With this in mind we must feel a strong sense of appreciation to our parents and grandparents for it is only through their efforts that we are able to grow in Torah and Yiddishkeit.

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Halacha Encounters

Shmoneh Esrei

Rabbi Henoch Plotnik

The Talmud Yerushalmi (Brochos ch. 4:3) derives the obligation to recite eighteen brochos in the amidah from the eighteen times the names of the avos are grouped together in the Torah. Although we really only find seventeen such occurrences, the posuk in this week's parsha "v'shem avosai Avrohom V'Yitzchok" which was recited by Yaakov Avinu serves to represent the eighteenth. Since the Amidah is the focal point of our avodah, it is worth reviewing some of the critical aspects of this tefillah.

One is required to stand during the Shmoneh Esrei similar to the kohen who did his avodah while standing. (O.C. 98:4). During shacharis, one should already stand up by the chazan's recitation of "t'hilos l'kel elyon", and at mincha and maariv when the chazzan recites the preceding kaddish. (R' Chaim Kanievsky's Shlita interpretation of the Mishna Berurah quoted in Ishei Yisroel 23:2). One who is too ill or old to stand can daven sitting, but should attempt to stand at the junctures where we bow. (M.B. 94:20). Leaning is preferable to sitting and should be a person's first option if he is unable to stand. A healthy person should not daven while leaning, even if the surface he is leaning on is not absolutely supporting him to the extent that if taken away he would fall down. (See Ishei Yisroel 23:19 who infers this from hilchos k'riyas hatorah) In any event, b'dieved the tefillah counts even if he sat. (Pri Megadim M.Z. 94:5). A recently published pamphlet distributed in the "special kosher" meals on airplane flights to Israel contains teshuvos from contemporary Gedolei Poskim in Eretz Yisroel, most notably Rav Wosner and Rav Zilberstein of B'nei Brak, discouraging standing, especially in the aisles, when davening on airplanes. Besides the challenge of davening with kavana, blocking passage and davening in front of the restrooms pose issues of their own. Forming minyanim is similarly problematic, especially as it can cause inconvenience and chilul Hashem towards other passengers. The poskim also require one to sit immediately when the flight crew declare, no matter where one is holding in shmoneh esrei.

Although one should exert oneself to have kavana of the meaning of his words throughout the amida, kavana in the first bracha is essential (O.C. 98). According to the well known chiddush of R' Chaim Brisker zt"l, realization that one is standing in

Hashem's presence is essential throughout the entire amidah. Although, technically, one should repeat the tefillah if he lacked the proper kavana, the Ramo discourages this because it is too likely he will not have any better success the second time. One should not daven until he feels he can free his mind from distraction.

The Biur Halacha poses a very interesting question - suppose someone already recited the first brochos and realized he didn't have kavana, why should he continue davening if all the ensuing brochos will be l'vatolo (in vain) as a result of his lack of kavana in the birchas ha'avos? If someone indeed finds himself in this predicament, the Chofetz Chaim recommends that he wait for Chazaras hashatz and have kavana when the chazzan repeats the first brocho. There is also an opinion that kavana in Modim will suffice to salvage his shmoneh esrei - (see Kehillas Yaakov Brochos siman 26). If someone caught himself not having kavana before his recital of Hashem's name at the end of the brocho, he should go back to "elokai avrohom" and continue from there. (Chayei Adam) It is brought in the name of the Chazon Ish that even if one finished the whole first brocha without kavana, he should review the brocho in his mind with kavana before proceeding to "ato gibor".

According to Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach zt"l (Halichos Shlomo 8:8), if one did not have kavana in one of the other brochos he has the right to repeat it, even if it means repeating Hashem's name.

Although we may feel a sense of guilt at not being able to have proper kavana for even a short time, we may take comfort in knowing that even the chachmei hatalmud felt challenged in this sacred task. Indeed, Tosafos quotes the Talmud Yerushalmi that Shmuel expressed his difficulty in maintaining kavana throughout the amidah.

Rav Elya Lopian zt"l is quoted as giving an answer to the familiar question - if Hashem didn't bring Moshiach to the lofty and elevated generations that preceded us, why would we be zoche? The answer he gave was that our struggle to counter the influences and temptations of today's society (referring to his day) is worth so much in the eyes of Hashem that its value is inestimable in heralding moshiach's arrival. Perhaps the knowledge of the value of this precious struggle will give us the chizuk to push on and persevere as we attempt to daven properly and come closer to Hashem.

Rabbi Plotnik, an alumnus of the kollel, is the rav of Beis Tefilla.