

Rabbi Dov Ber of Mezeritch
Ohr Torah
Parashas Vayechi

Siman #58

"And he blessed Joseph and said... 'The angel who redeemed me... may he bless the lads.'"

The Zohar explains that this refers to the "blessing of children." Even though a person may be complete on their own, their joy is not fully complete until their children also achieve completeness, as our Sages said: "May it be the will of God that your offspring be like you." This is not the case, however, if someone has no children; they do not require this.

The wise son seeks everything for the sake of bringing joy to his father, and when the father sees this, he gives him (also through his wisdom) for the sake of his children. This is the meaning of the verse **"He will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children..."**

This is also the concept behind the blessings that the people of Israel bestow upon their Father in Heaven.

[NOTE explanation:

1. "The Angel Who Redeemed Me... May He Bless the Lads": A Focus on Continuity

When Jacob blesses Ephraim and Manasseh, he invokes not only God but also "the angel who redeemed me." This suggests a personal and experiential connection to divine providence. Jacob recognizes that his life's blessings—protection, guidance, and redemption—are not just for him but must extend to the next generation.

The Zohar highlights that blessings of children reflect a deeper sense of completeness. A person may achieve spiritual, intellectual, or material accomplishments, but true fulfillment comes when their values and connection to the Divine are transmitted to their descendants. The joy of seeing one's children embrace and amplify those values surpasses individual achievement.

This aligns with the rabbinic teaching: **"May it be the will of God that your offspring be like you."** It expresses the hope for generational continuity, where children embody and carry forward the legacy of their parents, spiritually and morally.

2. The Role of the Wise Son: Seeking for the Father's Joy

The text introduces the idea of a "wise son" who acts with selflessness, seeking to bring joy to his father. This mirrors a deeper spiritual truth: the ultimate purpose of our actions should not be self-serving but directed toward bringing pleasure to our Creator, our "Father in Heaven."

When the father sees the son's devotion and wisdom, he reciprocates by giving blessings for the sake of the son and the broader family. This reflects a dynamic, reciprocal relationship between generations. On a spiritual level, it mirrors the relationship between humans and God: we strive to align our actions with God's will, and in doing so, we draw divine blessings into our lives.

3. "He Will Turn the Hearts of the Fathers to the Children": Intergenerational Teshuva

The verse from Malachi (3:24), **"He will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers,"** highlights the transformative power of relationships between generations. It suggests that a genuine spiritual awakening can flow in both directions:

- Parents inspire children by passing on their values and faith.
- Children, through their growth and dedication, can reignite the spiritual passion of their parents.

This mutual influence fosters continuity and renewal within families and communities.

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4. Blessings to God: A Reciprocal Relationship

Finally, the text draws a parallel to how the Jewish people "bless" God. While God is complete and lacks nothing, the "blessing" refers to our efforts to align ourselves with His will, thereby "completing" His purpose in creation. Just as a parent's joy is enhanced when their children succeed, God's presence in the world is magnified when we embody divine values through our actions.

Our prayers and mitzvot, much like Jacob's blessing for his grandchildren, serve as a conduit for expressing our desire for connection and continuity with the Divine. This reciprocal dynamic mirrors the relationship described between Jacob, Joseph, and his sons, emphasizing the cyclical and interdependent nature of blessings.

In Summary:

- **Individual completeness is tied to generational continuity.** Jacob's blessing reflects the joy and fulfillment that comes from seeing children achieve spiritual and moral completeness.
- **The wise son represents a selfless devotion to bringing joy to the father, paralleling our relationship with God.**
- **Generational bonds (fathers to children and vice versa) are a central avenue for spiritual growth and renewal.**
- **Just as Jacob blesses his grandchildren, our actions and prayers "bless" God, completing the divine purpose and bringing joy to our Father in Heaven.]**

Siman #59

Ephraim and Manasseh will be to me like Reuben and Simeon.

There are two levels of service to God.

1. The first is through Torah and prayer, where one strengthens oneself more in the service of God.
2. The second is that even when one serves without intellectual clarity, one still desires greatly to serve the Creator.

This is like a parable of someone who has traveled many miles toward a city. Even if others try to dissuade him from continuing, he says, "Haven't I already traveled so far? How can I stop in the middle?"

The tzaddik (righteous person) is called "all" (כל), as everything comes through them, and they are called Ephraim, because they are fruitful and multiply through their mitzvot, as mentioned.

There is another level called Manasseh (מנשה), which is associated with forgetting, as in the verse, **"For God has made me forget my father's house"** (Genesis 41:51). This refers to forgetting the Holy One, blessed be He. A person should reflect, "Have I not served God?" For one who does not serve out of awe and love cannot truly be called a servant of God.

Awe (יראה) refers to the state where fear falls upon a person—not something one arouses oneself, but rather a higher, overwhelming fear that descends upon them. This is known as the "elevation of feminine waters" (עלאת מים). True awe comes when trembling and dread fall upon a person, and from the fear, they do not know where they are. Their intellect becomes purified, and tears flow naturally.

If this does not happen, even though it may seem that they are serving and loving God, it is, in truth, nothing. Awe is the gateway to God, as the verse says, **"This is the gate to the Lord"** (Psalms 118:20). Awe is the gateway to love. Without entering through this gateway, how can one achieve love?

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This is the meaning of **"Her husband is known at the gates"** (Proverbs 31:23). When a person unites with the Divine Presence (Shechinah), meaning awe, God, who is referred to as "man" (איש), pursues one who possesses awe, which is called "woman" (אשה). When this connection is achieved, it is said of the person, **"The portion of the Lord is His people"** (Deuteronomy 32:9).

But someone who serves without even reaching the level of awe, who performs commandments only out of habit and assumes they are loving God and serving with joy, is mistaken. That joy is mere frivolity. Therefore, such a person must return to God with all their heart and soul and serve with greater passion.

This is the meaning of Manasseh: that through forgetting God, one comes to serve Him more fervently.

Reuben also represents the same idea as Ephraim, as in the concept, **"Look at what I have brought to You."** **Simeon** (שמעון) is explained as "sham avon" (שם עון), meaning "there is iniquity."

[NOTE- summary:

Service with Understanding (Ephraim/Reuben): This is like Torah and prayer, where one strengthens their connection to God through clarity and dedication. Ephraim symbolizes being "fruitful" in good deeds and mitzvot.

1. **Service Despite Forgetfulness (Manasseh/Simeon):** Even when lacking clarity or feeling distant from God, one can still desire deeply to serve. Manasseh reflects the struggle of "forgetting" God yet using that distance as motivation to reconnect and serve more fervently.

The text emphasizes that **true service requires awe of God**, which is not self-generated but a profound, overwhelming fear that purifies and leads to love. Without this awe, service becomes superficial, like habitual acts without deeper intent.

Ultimately, **awe is the gateway to love and connection with God**. The journey of both closeness and struggle (Ephraim and Manasseh) helps one achieve greater passion and devotion in serving God.]