

וַיִּמְאֵן אָבִיו וַיֹּאמֶר יְדַעְתִּי בְנִי יְדַעְתִּי גַם־הוּא יִהְיֶה־לְעַם וְגַם־הוּא יִגְדֹּל וְאוֹלָם אָחִיו הַקָּטָן יִגְדֹּל מִמּוֹ וְזָרְעוֹ יִהְיֶה מְלֵא־הַגּוֹיִם:

MEKOR

BEREISHIS 48:19

But his father refused, and he said, "I know, my son, I know; he too will become a people, and he too will be great. But his younger brother will be greater than he, and his children[*s fame*] will fill the nations.

MEANING

RASHI, HAAMEK DAVAR

Yaakov Avinu tells Yosef - not by way of a *beracha*, but simply stating a fact based on his *ruach hakodesh* - that Menashe is the firstborn and that Gideon, through whom Hashem will perform a miracle, will come from him. Still, Ephraim, from whom will descend Yehoshua Bin Nun, will be greater, and the acclaim of the miracle he will perform by having the sun stand still at Givon will spread throughout the world.

MESSAGE

DEGEL MACHANEH EPHRAIM

The name **Menashe** represents spiritual failure – it connotes forgetfulness, disconnection from the ultimate purpose of existence (“כי נשני אלוקים”). **Ephraim**, on the other hand, represents spiritual success and fruitfulness (“פרו ורבו”). Yaakov Avinu is telling Yosef that although “Menashe” is the firstborn; **וְאוֹלָם אָחִיו הַקָּטָן** - “Ephraim”, spiritual success and elevation, **יִגְדֹּל** - not simply “will be greater than him”, but rather “receives his greatness *from* him!” Ephraim depends on Menashe – failure itself can serve as a “יְרִידָה לְצוּרָךְ עֲלֵיָהּ”, the impetus for the greatest spiritual growth. It is failure that enables us to learn from our mistakes and solidify our awareness of ultimate truth and ultimate falsehood. It is failure that allows us to express our commitment and resolve to the Master of the world and His holy service by refusing to surrender to the tempting impulse of despair.

THE INNER POINT

In this week’s *parsha*, Yaakov Avinu blesses his sons before his passing. In his glorious *beracha* to his beloved son, Yosef, Yaakov says, “The blessings of your father surpass the blessings of my ancestors, to the utmost bounds (תְּאֵאוֹת) of the eternal hills.” The *Sefas Emes* reveals the awesome depth of this beautiful *beracha*.

The Gemara teaches that one who takes pleasure in Shabbos merits a boundless inheritance, “נחלה בלי מצרים”. This boundless inheritance is associated with Yaakov Avinu, as the verse brought to support this teaching makes mention of “נחלת יעקב”. Yaakov Avinu is the man of truth, “תתן אמת ליעקב”. This means that he is constantly plugged into the “נקודה הפנימית”, the innermost kernel of creation which is bound to the Infinite One. This inner point of shining spirituality represents the foundation of truth upon which our *דשקרא* is founded; the ultimate goal served by every particle of physicality.

This inner point is related to the day of faith, **Shabbos**, which embodies our belief in a Creator, and thus a positive premise for creation. Just like Shabbos exists in the realm of time, an aspect of Shabbos may also be found in space; the inner point of spirituality found within everything. Just like Shabbos in **time**

enables one to taste a boundless inheritance of the great expanse expressed in time, a sense of ultimate freedom and contentment, so does awareness of and connection with the Shabbos in **space** fill one with an inner joy founded upon constant awareness and perception of Hashem’s presence and the purpose of existence.

This, explains the *Sefas Emes*, is Yaakov’s *beracha* to Yosef. Yaakov blesses Yosef with “ברכת אביך”, his very own spiritual standing, the ability to discover the inner point of Shabbos, truth within everything. Granting one a connection to the “נחלה בלי מצרים”, this *beracha* is “עֲדֵי־תְאֵאוֹת גְּבַעַת עוֹלָם”, a blessing that represents the deepest yearning of a world stuck within the boundaries of a physical existence.

All-inclusive, Yosef’s blessing reaches the very core of existence.



THE INNER POINT OF TRUTH WITHIN
EVERYTHING CARRIES US TO A BOUNDLESS
REALM BEYOND EVERYTHING.

- Rebbe Yehuda Aryeh Leib Alter of Ger zy"א

Vayechi is the final parsha in the Torah that speaks of life in Eretz Yisrael before we enter into full exile in Mitzrayim and begin to journey - for the remainder of the Torah - in attempt to return to the Promised Land.

The Torah and Chazal are replete with adjectives for Eretz Yisrael. An overview of two such descriptions and attributes:



אֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל גְּבוּהַ מִכָּל אֲרָצוֹת

Highest of all lands

[Kidushin 69a]



אֶרֶץ חֻמְדָּה טוֹבָה וְרַחְבָּה

A land that is wide/broad

[Birchas HaMazon, based on Yirmiyahu 3:19 & Shemos 3:8]



Topographically, this is false. Three explanations:

1. Maharal	Highest spiritual location
2. Netziv	Highest relative to surrounding area/countries
3. Maharsha	Eretz Yisrael provides the highest perspective .

- Eretz Yisrael was the first land formed during Creation. The rest of the world emanated from that central point.
- Although Eretz Yisrael is not literally the highest place on earth, since it's the **starting point of all existence** and the focal point of the Torah, it is a place that provides the greatest perspective.
- The Zohar calls Eretz Yisrael the **מֶרְכֵּז of the world**.
- The higher up we are, the broader our perspective.
- Pesachim 87a: Talmidei chachamim* are like tall towers (כַּמְגִּדּוֹת); *daas torah* gives them the best insight on life, and thus they have the potential for the most influence.

Eretz Yisrael isn't particularly wide, so what does this mean?

- Rav Moshe Wolfson's *mashal*: The notion of someone trying to sell a piece of land that measures an *amah* by an *amah* (~48x48 cm) is laughable. Land that size is useless.
- However, if someone tries to sell a **diamond** the same, it would be considered huge and astronomically valuable.
- Eretz Yisrael is the massive diamond; it lacks physical size, but it packs infinite value in its relatively small frame.
- If we appreciate how חֻמְדָּה and טוֹבָה it is, we can come to appreciate how רַחְבָּה it is. It's far "bigger" than it appears. Its exterior aesthetics pale in comparison to its meaning.
- Eretz Yisrael is not a detail or a derivative concept in the Torah, rather it's the main topic, the **entire story**.
- When we join the seemingly disparate pieces and stories of the Torah, we recognize that all the little pieces/diamonds form one massive diamond.
- The first Rashi in Torah says that when we oust the seven nations, they'll call us לִקְטָנִים / robbers. Why? Aren't they aware of the concept of war and conquest? Considering that Eretz Yisrael is the origin/center of the world, being driven out of such a lofty place would feel more dramatic than simply losing land; thus, the seven nations feel they got kicked off the *planet* and had their lives 'stolen' by us.

Eretz Yisrael grants perspective for our outward look on life and all that we encounter and perceive in the world.

Eretz Yisrael crystallizes the inner components of Torah and bestows appreciation for the relevance of its messages.

As we attach more firmly to Eretz Yisrael, our lives are infused with more meaning, and Torah becomes more clear and focused.

וְשִׁכַחְתִּי עִם-אֲבֹתַי וְנִשְׁאַתְנִי מִמִּצְרַיִם וְקִבַּרְתִּנִי בְּקִבְרֹתָם וַיֹּאמֶר אֲנֹכִי אֶעֱשֶׂה כְּדִבְרֶךָ: וַיֹּאמֶר הַשִּׁבְעָה לִּי וַיִּשָּׁבַע לוֹ... [בראשית מז:ל-לא]

- Vayechi opens with Yaakov insisting that he be buried in Chevron, demonstrating that Eretz Yisrael is squarely on his mind.
- Before his family heads into a long and painful *galus*, Yaakov Avinu provides the **proper mindset** regarding our homeland - whenever we have to leave Eretz Yisrael or are unable to be there, it's crucial we take 'Eretz Yisrael perspectives' with us.

לְכֹל-תְּכֵלֶה רְאִיתִי הָאֵץ רַחְבָּה מִצְוֹתֶיךָ מֵאֵד: [תהילים קיט:צט]

- Dovid HaMelech says that all things in this world have a limit, but "Your commandment is exceedingly **broad**".
- Torah and mitzvos, which are centered around Eretz Yisrael, have limitless potential and are also expansive and broad.
- Armed with a **strong bond to our land** (a place far grander than its modest borders) and **the insight that mitzvos are infinite truths packaged in finite terms** (human expressions of infinite Godliness), we can combat exile and prepare for *geulah*.