



RABBANIT SHARONA HASSAN

GUEST DVAR TORAH

# Yaakov and the Blessing of Grandparenthood

The glow of the candles, the scent of Shabbat filling the room, a father's hands resting gently on his son's head as he whispers a *bracha* for this child to be like Ephraim and Menashe. Perhaps this is a scene you know well. But have you ever wondered why, in this intimate and holy moment, we invoke these two names rather than Avraham, Yitzchak, or Yaakov?

As a child, I learned that Ephraim and Menashe were the first brothers to overcome sibling rivalry since Creation. I suspect this explanation was also meant as a gentle nudge to cooperate more graciously with my own siblings.

Rav Yosef Soloveitchik offers a far deeper and more transformative insight, "Yaakov was the first patriarch to establish direct communication with his grandchildren." Avraham never meets Yaakov. Yitzchak does not live to bless his grandchildren. Yaakov is the first patriarch to

stand at the intersection of past and future, with children who carry his responsibility forward and grandchildren who embody the promise beyond his reach. Yaakov is the first grandfather.

This moment is not incidental. It marks a shift in Jewish history. When Yaakov places his hands on Ephraim and Menashe, he is not simply blessing two boys. Yaakov's connection with Ephraim and Menashe marks the first moment in Jewish life where legacy is no longer anxious, but trusting.

Why does Yaakov bless his grandsons before blessing his own children at all? Perhaps Yaakov answers this himself: [*Beresheit* 48:11] And Yisrael said to Yosef, "I never imagined to see you again, and here G-d has let me see your children as well."

This is not only a statement of gratitude. It is a revelation. Yaakov understands that something new has been given to him. Yosef being lost and returned was enormous, but the emergence of grandparenthood is monumental.

Parents often live with urgency, worrying about outcomes, choices, and risks. Grandparents live with perspective. They have seen struggle and survival, and know that broken moments can be redeemed and journeys rarely unfold in straight lines.

Yaakov is the first patriarch to experience this shift. For the first time in Jewish history,

## **Rechov Nili Apartment for Sale – NIS 4.3 million**

On Rechov Nili, 3 BR 1.5 BTH apartment, 97 meters, first floor walkup. Short walk to Katamon and to HaPalmach grocery shopping, pizza and coffee shops. Bright, high ceilings, 3-air directions.

Contact Ronit at 053-7206538 (WhatsApp +1 516-314-0280). No brokers.

covenant is carried not only through responsibility, but through relationship. Grandparents can hold the past, present, and future at once. Their experience invites them to pray for children as they walk foreign paths, and to be present when the next generation circles back - not as an obligation, but as a gift.

Yaakov did not expect or pray to see Yosef again. He is blessed to hold the past, present, and future together.

Yaakov's blessing includes the words *Hamalach HaGoel Oti*. These verses have become part of the nightly bedtime *Shema*, sung as a lullaby, accompanying the Children's Aliyah on Simchat Torah, and at a *brit milah*. They reflect the quiet, joyous responsibility of grandparenthood, connecting past and present while offering hope that future generations will flourish.

Rav Yosef Soloveitchik describes this relationship with unusual tenderness: "The *Midrash* tells us that the sons of Yosef studied with their grandfather... who listened to their problems, conversed and worked closely with them, played and planned with them... Yaakov knew the secret language of *mispar hadorot*, of uniting generations."

Yaakov blesses not out of fear of what might be lost, but out of confidence in what can still be carried forward.

At the conclusion of our *parasha*, of

*Sefer Beresheit*, we see this impact carried forward almost immediately as the Torah describes Yosef's connection with his own great-grandchildren!

This is the *kavanah* whispered to the crown of a child's head before Shabbat dinner. We pray that our children succeed in worlds we will never fully enter. We pray that, like Yosef, they remain connected even when distance, difference, or time separates us. And we pray that one day they will return with children of their own, carrying traces of what we once gave them.

To bless like Yaakov is to release control without releasing love. It is to trust that what matters most will find its way forward, and to accept our place in an unbroken chain not as its owners, but as its faithful stewards.

As we place our hands on our children, we step into an ancient intergenerational trust. We bless them not only for who they will become, but for the generations they will one day bring forth. In doing so, we claim our place among Yaakov's descendants, among *Bnei Yisrael*, carrying a legacy strong enough to travel, and gentle enough to return. ■

**Sharona Hassan** is the founder of Grand Plan, an initiative dedicated to empowering grandparents to create and leave joyous Jewish legacies. She served at the Rubissa [Ladino for Rebbitzin] of Sephardic Bikur Holim in Seattle and now resides in Modiin. For more information about Grand Plan, please contact [sharona@grandplan.pro](mailto:sharona@grandplan.pro)



**Netanel Shimoff**  
**Injury & Health Claims**

Car Accidents | Medical Malpractice  
Work Accidents | Negligence &  
Insurance | Bituach Leumi



**SHIMOFF AZOULAY**  
Law Firm



**Avia Azoulay**  
**Civil & Commercial**

Corporate | NGO's | Contracts  
Dispute Resolution & Litigation  
Wills & Estates

📞 02-5660002 📍 King George 16 A Jerusalem 📧 [Office@aslegal.co.il](mailto:Office@aslegal.co.il) 🌐 [aslegal.co.il](http://aslegal.co.il)  
Serving clients across Israel – professionally and personally