

YOUR GRANDCHILDREN

by Rabbi Berel Wein

One of the most memorable human scenes portrayed in the Torah is that of Yaakov blessing his grandchildren, Menashe and Ephrayim. Yaakov takes the occasion and transforms it from being a purely personal one to becoming a national and eternal paradigm. In you, my grandchildren, shall Israel always bless [future generations,] saying: May the Lord bless you as Ephrayim and Menashe. Thus, from that moment onward, Jews bless their sons and grandsons with the words of our father Yaakov: May the Lord bless you as Ephrayim and Menashe. I find it noteworthy that the blessing of generations in the Torah is one of a grandfather blessing grandchildren. The blessings of parents to children do not figure in the overall perspective of Jewish continuity and eternity in quite the same fashion and importance, as does the blessing of grandparents to grandchildren. We are all aware of the fact that there exists a special relationship and bond between grandchildren and grandparents. Only half-jokingly I have attributed this relationship to the fact that they have a common enemy. But the fact is that it is much less tension ridden and less difficult to be a grandparent than a parent. And the grandparent always sees ones self beyond the grave through ones grandchildren. Therefore, the accomplishments of grandchildren bring greater satisfaction to grandparents than to parents. Parents have a tendency to be less tolerant of their childrens independence and adventurism, while grandparents take a longer view of the situation. In the words of the Talmud: Even if great wisdom may not be present in me, age and experience [also have their say.]

The Talmud teaches us that if there be three consecutive generations of Torah scholars in a family then the Torah always finds an ability to make a home for itself in that family. I have found this statement to be true even when there is a later gap of generations regarding Torah scholarship or even observance within that family. I think that this is one of the reasons that Yaakov emphasized his blessing to his grandchildren. Yaakov has done his spiritual best as has his son Yosef. Now it is up to the next generation, to Menashe and Ephrayim. If they will continue in the ways and path of Yaakov, then the Jewish future is assured in the family and tribe of Yosef. The Torah will always come knocking at that familys door and eventually someone will open that door to it. One of my great teachers in the yeshiva that I attended long ago defined success in life to us as follows: If your grandparents and your grandchildren are both proud of you and your accomplishments, then you can claim success in life. Yaakov strives for this success and therefore concentrates his blessings on his grandchildren, Menashe and Ephrayim. By so doing, he also instructs all later Jewish generations to concentrate their blessings on their grandchildren as well. Building the three-generation cord is the certain key to Jewish survival and success. It is the ultimate blessing of past generations to the

future leaders and builders of Israel.

Shabat shalom.

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