

Yeshivat Har Etzion Israel Koschitzky Virtual Beit Midrash
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PARASHAT HASHAVUA

PARASHAT VAYECHI

Le-iluy nishmat Yosef ben Aharon Shmuel H"YD, Grandpa Joe.

THE ALON SHVUT COMMUNITY MOURNS THE MURDER
OF EREZ ORBACH HY"D

Beloved son of Karen and Uri,

Beloved grandson of Miriam and Moshe.

May they be comforted among the mourners of Tzion
veYerushalayim.

Yaakov's Blessings to Menashe and Efraim

Rav Yoel Bin-Nun

When did Yaakov meet Menashe and Efraim?

And it came to pass after these things, that [someone] told Yosef, "Behold, your father is sick." And he took with him his two sons, Menashe and Efraim." (*Bereishit* 48:1)

The unit begins with the words, "And it came to pass after these things." Which events are referred to here?

From the story as recounted over the course of the chapter, we see that the phrase cannot be talking about the end of Yaakov's life, after he has lived in Egypt for seventeen years and after he has made Yosef swear that he will not bury him in Egypt (as recorded in the beginning of the *parasha*). The chapter describes Yaakov's **first encounter** with his grandsons, Menashe and Efraim, and the atmosphere is still suffused with the excitement of the reunion between Yaakov and Yosef. This is expressed in Yaakov's words:

"I had not thought to see your face, and behold, God has also showed me your children." (48:11)

Further on, it also appears that in this chapter Yosef's sons are **young children**,¹ as Yosef brings them out "from between his knees."

According to the principle that "there is no chronological order in the Torah,"² we must conclude that "it came to pass after these things" takes us back to an earlier point in time – specifically, after Yaakov arrived in Egypt. The account in our *parasha*, then, is a continuation of the first encounter between Yaakov and Yosef as described in the

¹ As Rembrandt indeed depicts them.

² *Pesachim* 6b, discussing the beginning on *Sefer Bamidbar*; see also Rashi on *Shemot* 24:1 and *Shemot* 31:18. Likewise, everyone agrees that Avram did not depart from Charan after the death of Terach; see Rashi, Ibn Ezra, and Ramban on *Bereishit* 11:31-32.

previous *parasha*.

This begs the question of why the story of the blessing to Menashe and Efraim is not recounted immediately after Yaakov's arrival in Egypt. One possibility is that the Torah wanted to juxtapose the blessing to Yosef and his sons to the blessings to the other tribes (chapter 49).

On the level of *peshat*, we might suggest that the previous *parasha* went on to describe the events that followed Yaakov's arrival from the point of view of Yosef, the ruler: his arrangements to ensure that his father and brothers would settle in Goshen; his planning and organization so that Egypt could deal with the famine; and his oath to his father (seventeen years later) not to bury him in Egypt, but rather in Canaan (a matter for which Yosef would have to receive special approval from Pharaoh, as recorded in 50:4-6). Only after recounting all of Yosef's efforts in these areas does the Torah come back to the family context and the first encounter between Yaakov and Yosef.

Accordingly to this explanation, "after these things" – after Yaakov arrived in Egypt – Yosef was told that his father is ill. It seems that Yaakov was weakened by the journey and the excitement of seeing Yosef again. At this point, at the beginning of his stay in Egypt, he blessed Yosef with the blessing that had been given to him in Luz, in Canaan.

Yaakov begins by saying, "God Almighty appeared to me in Luz, in the land of Canaan." What is the meaning of this introduction? His words contain no hint of his dream of the ladder, nor the Divine revelation and promise to him as he left for Padan Aram. Clearly, then, Yaakov is referring to the revelation in Luz upon his *return* from Padan Aram. Indeed, the exact expressions that Yaakov recalls were said to him upon his return:

And God appeared to Yaakov again, when he came out of Padan Aram, and **blessed him**. And God said to him, "Your name Yaakov – your name shall not be called any more Yaakov, but Yisrael shall be your name;" and He called his name Yisrael. And God said to him, "I am **God Almighty; be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations** shall come of you, and kings shall emerge from your loins, and the land which I gave to Avraham and Yitzchak – to you I will give it, **and to your seed after you I will give the land.**" (35:9-12)

Following this passage (in *Parashat Vayishlach*) we read:

And they journeyed from Beit-El, and there was **but a little way to come to Efrat**, and Rachel travailed and she had hard labor... but his father called him Binyamin. (35:16-18)

Yaakov's words to Yosef in our *parasha* echo these excerpts exactly:

And Yaakov said to Yosef, “**God Almighty** appeared to me at Luz in the land of Cana’an, and **blessed me**, and said to me, ‘Behold, I will **make you fruitful, and multiply you**, and I will make of you a **multitude of people**, and **will give this land to your seed after you** for an everlasting possession.’ And now your two sons, Efraim and Menashe, who were born to you in the land of Egypt before I came to you in Egypt, are mine – like Reuven and Shimon they shall be mine... And as for me, when I came from Padan, Rachel died by me in the land of Cana’an on the way, when yet **there was but a little way to come to Efrat**, and I buried her there in the way of Efrat, that is Beit Lechem.” (48:3-7)

Why does Yaakov recall this revelation specifically?

The reason seems to be that this revelation not only includes the changing of Yaakov’s name to Yisrael, but is also juxtaposed to the story of Binyamin’s birth, bringing the number of the tribes of Israel to the total of twelve. All of them together are called “Yisrael,” as we see from the story of Eliyahu:

And Eliyahu took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Yaakov, to whom the word of the Lord came, saying, “Yisrael shall be your name.” (*Melakhim I* 18:31)

This juxtaposition exposes the thorny problem that had troubled Yaakov in light of his reunion with Yosef: Could Yosef now rejoin the family? What would happen with his two sons, Menashe and Efraim, sons of Osnat, daughter of Poti-fera? What place was there for these boys – who had grown up in the ruler’s palace, sons of an Egyptian princess – within Yaakov’s household? Could they be considered among the “tribes of Yisrael”? If Yaakov would not manage to absorb Yosef back into the family, would he be left outside, together with his sons?

For this reason, Yaakov recalls the revelation in Luz in the land of Cana’an, where he received the name Yisrael and then witnessed the completion of the twelve tribes. And at this point, with that memory in mind, Yaakov takes courageous action with far-reaching consequences: **he adopts Efraim and Menashe as children of Yaakov and Rachel**, as full-fledged tribes, just like Reuven and Shimon. They would not be considered sons of the Egyptian Osnat, daughter of Poti-Fera, but rather sons of Yaakov and Rachel.

In order to anchor this perception back at the time when the tribes appeared, it is necessary to “resurrect” Rachel, as it were, and to retell the story of her burial in the context of her birthing not only of Binyamin, but also of Yosef’s two sons, Efraim and Menashe. Yaakov thereby tells Yosef: You might be second to Pharaoh and obligated and defined by your diplomatic role, but your sons can return to the family by being considered children of Yakaov and Rachel.

When Yaakov asks, concerning Yosef’s sons, “Who are these?,” on the simple level he is asking as to their identity. On a deeper level, the question is an important and troubling one: Will they be part of Bnei Yisrael? Yosef answers, “They are my sons, whom God has given me in this place” (*ibid.*). And then Yaakov blesses them by virtue of and in light of the revelation in Luz.

Why does Yaakov change the order of Menashe and Efraim?

When Yaakov blesses Menashe and Efraim, he reverses their order. As we recall, Yaakov had once been in a similar situation, wherein Yitzchak, his father, had mistaken the younger son (himself) for the older one (Esav). Yaakov ended up paying a heavy price – he had to flee his home, and Rivka was forced to part from him forever. Why, then, does Yaakov now recreate a similar scenario?

The customs practiced by the forefathers (as well as the laws of the Ancient East) permitted a father, in special circumstances, to prefer one son over the others, but this fails to explain why in this situation it was worth doing so. Would this not sow seeds of jealousy and hatred between Efraim and Menashe? While the continuation of the *parasha* offers no evidence of any conflict in this regard, we must still ask how Yaakov could take the chance.

Clearly, Yaakov must have had a very good and very important reason for acting as he did – and this reason pertains to Yaakov’s interest in severing Efraim and Menashe from Osnat. Only this need could drive Yaakov to such an extreme act. According to the natural order, Menashe and Efraim are the sons of Osnat; they are Egyptian princes. But in the realm that transcends the physical, natural reality – by virtue of God’s revelation to Yaakov with the name God Almighty (*El Sha-dai*) – Efraim and Menashe are the sons of Rachel.

Yosef is not happy with the exchanging of the order of his sons, but he accepts what Yaakov tells him. It seems that Efraim and Menashe also accepted the situation, being young children, and also perhaps because they stand and receive their blessings together, at the same time and in the same place, in contrast to Yaakov and Esav, who could not stand together before Yitzchak.

Yaakov’s blessing to Yosef’s sons

And he blessed Yosef, and said, “May God, before Whom my fathers, Avraham and Yitzchak, walked; the God Who has been my Shepherd all my life long until this day; the angel who redeemed me from all evil – bless the lads, and let my name be placed upon them, and the name of my fathers, Avraham and Yitzchak, and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth.” (48:15-20)

The language of the blessing recalls the revelation of the angel who delivers Yaakov from all evil while he is with Lavan the Aramean in Padan Aram (31:11-13).

However, there is a significant difference. Yaakov’s blessing to Yosef, in which he mentions his fathers, Avraham and Yitzchak, has a special dimension to it. Avraham had sent Hagar and her son away, as well as the children of his concubines. Yitzchak, too, had been forced to accept that his two sons could not inherit him together. But for Yaakov, the situation is different. Not only will all his sons – including the sons of Bilha and Zilpa – inherit together, but Efraim and Menashe will also be considered his sons, and together they will build the twelve tribes of Israel. From this point onwards, there is no more rejecting or excluding anyone from the family of the forefathers. Everyone is part of the family; all are children

of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov, and all together will “multiply exceedingly in the midst of the land.”

Only this can bring proper closure to *Sefer Bereishit* with all its families and genealogies, and all its stories of chosenness and rejection. By the end of *Sefer Bereishit*, there is no more exclusion; “they are all My children.”

The Birthright of Menashe vs. the birthright of Efraim

Yaakov awards Yosef not only the blessing of the sons, but also leadership of the family. The blessing that God had given Yaakov in his vision in the night, when he was on his way to Egypt, used the word “*anokhi*”:

“I (*anokhi*) shall go down with you into Egypt, and I will also surely bring you up again, and Yosef shall put his hand upon your eyes.” (46:4)

Similarly, when Yaakov transfers leadership of the family and the promise to Yosef in Egypt, he says:

“Behold, I (*anokhi*) die, but God shall be with you, and bring you back to the land of your fathers.” (48:21)

And again, when Yosef hands the promise on to his brothers:

“... I (*anokhi*) die, and God will surely visit you, and bring you up out of this land to the land of which He swore to Avraham, to Yitzchak, and to Yaakov.” (50:24)

But in Yaakov’s blessing to Yosef, we find an additional element of critical importance:

“And I have given you **one portion more than your brothers, which I took** out of the hand of the Emori with my sword and with my bow.” (48:22)

On the surface, we might have understood this extra portion as a part of Yosef’s inheritance to the firstborn leader. However, from the latter half of the verse, it is clear that Yaakov is speaking of a particular, specific inheritance. It seems that that Yosef, as the head of the family and as Rachel’s firstborn, **received from his father, while still in Egypt (!), a special inheritance** in the land – the region of Shekhem.

Shekhem, Inheritance of Yosef

The city of Shekhem, hinted to in Yaakov’s blessing to Yosef, will ultimately become the connection between the inheritances of Menashe and Efraim. There Yosef will be buried, and his resting place will be a place of encounter for his descendants for all generations (see *Yehoshua* 24:32).

The huge inheritances of Yosef’s sons on the western side of the Jordan (*Yehoshua* 16, 17), to which are added the inheritance of Menashe on the eastern side, are testimony to the success of Yaakov’s strategy, against all odds.

There can be no question that the double inheritance of Menashe is an expression of his birthright. Menashe is the only tribe that receives an inheritance on each side of the Jordan, from Gilad to Shekhem – an inheritance that connects the two sides. Efraim, on the other hand, does not receive a birthright (double) inheritance. His portion is smaller than

Menashe’s portion on the western side of the Jordan alone. However, he receives the blessing of leadership and dominion of “a multitude of nations” (48:19) – a reference to the leadership of Yehoshua bin-Nun in the conquest and inheritance of the land.

But what is the meaning of “by my sword and by my bow”? Was it not Shimon and Levi who conquered Shekhem by their sword?

Here Yaakov states explicitly that any inheritance conquered by the family belongs to the patriarch (see Ramban). It is not Shimon and Levi who, by means of the sword, will decide on the inheritances, but rather Yaakov, “by his sword and by his bow,” who will decide. And he gives Shekhem to Yosef – the same place to which he dispatched Yosef as a boy to go and check on the “welfare of his brothers.”

Thus, the circle is closed: Yosef will inherit the portion where his brothers (seemingly Shimon and Levi) had sought to kill him, and from whence he was sold as a slave. Shimon and Levi had surely meant to inherit Shekhem for themselves by their sword, but it was taken from them – as we shall see below.

Thus, the end of chapter 48 connects to chapter 49 – the chapter of the blessings for inheritances.

The “Latter” Days

And Yaakov called to his sons, and said: “Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you that which shall befall you in the last (latter) days.” (49:1)

Chazal teach that Yaakov wanted to reveal to his sons what would happen at the end of days, but his Divine inspiration suddenly left him (see Rashi). According to the *peshat*, however, what Yaakov seeks (and indeed goes on) to tell them is not a matter of prophecy or wonders, but rather simply the matter of inheritances. The “last days” (*acharit ha-yamim*), in Biblical Hebrew, means the “latter days”³ that will come after the present time in Egyptian exile. Yaakov refers to the time when *Bnei Yisrael* will return to the land of their forefathers’ inheritance.

When the family dwelled in Cana’an, the brothers were mired in evil reports, hatred, and the sale, leading the entire family to exile in Egypt. However, it is specifically in Egypt that all the blessings of *Eretz Yisrael* and its portions of inheritance are revealed, with the promise that Yaakov will be buried in the ancestral burial ground, the inheritance of Yosef with Efraim and Menashe, and the blessings of the tribes, replete with allusions to their inheritance. All this is a vision of the “last days” – the time to come after the exile.

The Inheritance of Reuven

Reuven is rejected as firstborn by his father. This is reflected, first and foremost, in his inheritance. The son who is

³ In Biblical Hebrew, whatever is not “first” (*rishon*) is by necessity “later” or “afterwards” (*acharon*), occurring after whatever came first. For example, “And he placed the handmaids and their children first, and Leah and her children afterwards (*acharonim*), and Rachel and Yosef last (*acharonim*)” (*Bereishit* 33:2).

the “first of his father’s might” is supposed to receive the main and most important portion, symbolizing the leadership of *Am Yisrael* as a whole. As such, Reuven should have received Mount Chevron, where Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov lived. However, owing to his “going up to his father’s bed,” Reuven loses his birthright. And “unstable as water,” he asks for his inheritance first, before the other tribes – on the eastern side of the Jordan.

Reuven’s behavior – in the episode of Yosef and the pit, in his rash promise concerning surety for Binyamin, and in his request for his inheritance – shows him to be too hasty and not sufficiently thought-out. Yaakov therefore tells him, “You shall not excel.” However, these are merely matters of character. Reuven’s grievous sin against his father concerns his interference in Yaakov’s intimacy, the episode involving Bilha.

Withholding Inheritance from Shimon and Levi

“Shimon and Levi are brothers... I will divide them in Yaakov and scatter them in Yisrael.” (49:5-6)

In accordance with Yaakov’s words, the inheritance of Shimon is indeed situated within the inheritance of Yehuda (Yehoshua 19:9). Later on we find descendants of Shimon living in the Dotan area in the northern Shomrom, during the period of Yoshiyahu’s monarchy (*Divrei Ha-Yamim* II 34:6) and during the Second Temple Period (*Sefer Yehudit*). The tribe of Shimon remained nomads even in the land (see also *Divrei Ha-Yamim* I 4:42-43).

The tribe of Levi receives no inheritance at all, but rather is dedicated to Divine service and lives in the Levite cities. Moshe and Aharon elevate the tribe of Levi higher and higher, while Shimon descends lower and lower (Pe’or and the plague, *Bamidbar* 25). Yaakov’s words are borne out by history, and these two tribes lack any independent inheritance.

a. Yehuda – Victory and Inheritance

“Yehuda – it is you whom your brothers will praise; your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; your father’s children shall bow down before you. Yehuda is a lion’s whelp... The staff (*shevet*) shall not depart from Yehuda, nor the ruler (*mechokek*) from between his feet, until the coming of Shilo, and the people shall obey him. Binding his foal to the vine, and his donkey’s colt to the choice vine, he washes his garments in wine and his clothes in the blood of grapes; his eyes are red with wine, and his teeth white with milk.” (49:8-12)

Yehuda will reign like a lion’s whelp rising from the prey, crouching like a lion after its prey. The “*shevet*” that will always remain with him is the staff or scepter of the leader, and the “*mechokek*” refers to the royal official overseeing provisions for the citizenry, the “sons of your father.” The figure who answers to this description, of course, is David, son of Yishai. Most of the commentators explain the name “Shilo” here as being derived from “*shilia me-rechem*” – that which emerges from the womb, i.e., a descendant. The reference, then, is to the King Mashiach, and “the people shall obey him.”

My father and teacher, Dr. Yechiel bin-Nun z”l,⁴ explained the words “until the coming of Shilo” as an allusion: “The spoils [of war] will be brought in tribute [or “as a gift”] to him (*shai lo*).” In the expression “*ad ki yavo shilo*” (conventionally translated as, “until Shilo comes”) the word “*ad*” means “prey,” as in the blessing given to Binyamin:

“... in the morning he shall devour the prey (*ad*), and at night he shall divide the spoil.” (49:27)

Examples of this image of the parading of the spoils in honor of the victorious king are to be found in the books of the Prophets, for example:

At that time, a gift (*shai*) shall be brought to the Lord of hosts... to the place of the Name of the Lord of hosts, Mount Tzion. (*Yeshayahu* 18:7)

And in *Sefer Tehillim*:

Vow and pay to the Lord your God; let all that are round about Him bring gifts (*shai*) to Him Who is to be feared. He shall cut off the spirit of princes; He is terrible to the kings of the earth. (*Tehillim* 76:12-13)

Yehuda’s inheritance is also depicted in his blessing. The final verses of the blessing are understood as referring to Mount Chevron, which is so well suited to vineyards that each single vine can produce enough grapes to load a donkey, and the wine is so plentiful that it can be used even for washing laundry. The Judean Desert (*Midbar Yehuda*) is such an expansive area for abundant herds that the eyes grow red from wine, and the teeth white from milk.

Inheritances of the Smaller Tribes

“Zevulun shall dwell at the shore of the sea, and he shall be a haven for ships, and his border shall be at Tzidon.

Yissakhar is a sturdy donkey crouching down between the sheepfolds; and he saw that rest was good, and the land that it was pleasant, and he bowed his shoulder to bear, and became a servant to tribute.

Dan shall judge his people, as one of the tribes of Israel. Dan shall be a serpent by the way, an adder in the path, that bites the horse’s heels, so that his rider shall fall backward. I await Your salvation, O God.

Gad, raiders [or “troops”] shall maraud him, but he shall prevail over the last.

Out of Asher his bread shall be fat, and he shall yield royal dainties.

Naftali is a hind let loose; he gives good words.” (49:13-21)

Although the inheritance of Zevulun is the most

⁴ In his book *Eretz Ha-Moriah – Pirkei Mikra Ve-Lashon* (Alon Shvut, 5766), pp. 177-182. The reason why the name cannot refer to the city of Shilo, in the portion of Efraim (as Rashbam proposes) is because the name of that city is generally written in *Tanakh* without the letter “*yud*.”

explicitly defined of all the tribes in Yaakov's blessings, this particular blessing was not realized. Zevulun was meant to inherit the great valleys from the Carmel to Rosh Ha-Nikra, and the coastline up to Tzur (Tyre) and Tzidon (Sidon). However, the Phoenicians maintained complete control over these areas, and the tribes were never able to dominate the northern coastal areas.

This fact emphasizes the gap between the plan for the inheritances in the "last days" and the reality of the period of settlement and monarchy.

Yissakhar unquestionably dwelled in the Jezreal Valley, which lies "between the sheepfolds [*mishpatayim* – mountains]." A steep price for this dwelling was paid in suffering ("he bowed his shoulder to bear"): many different rulers would subjugate his descendants, starting from the Canaanite cities (Sisera), followed by the Midianites. The tribes of Zevulun, (Asher) and Naftali would come to his aid in the time of Devora, and also in the time of Gid'on (*Shoftim* 4:6-10; 5:18; 6:35).

Both Dan and Gad are depicted in the blessings as tribes that play a leadership role. Dan will lead in the manner of the serpent – an historical allusion to the battles they waged in conquering Leshem (which is Tel Dan) in the north, and to Shimshon.

Gad, on the other hand has "companies" or "troops," and "he shall prevail over the last (*akev* – literally, "heel") – meaning, he will protect the "heel" – the tribes on the other side of the Jordan. Gad was the powerful tribe that protected Reuven.

Asher and Naftali inherited the most fertile regions of the Galilee. "His bread shall be fat" – bread is dipped in olive oil (one of the prime natural products of *Eretz Yisrael*) and oil olives grow plentifully in the valleys of the Galilee.

The blessing to Naftali describes the mountains of the upper Galilee, where gazelles and hinds roam and graze amidst the natural forest. Onkelos's translation understands Naftali's blessing as a reference to the fertile valleys at the feet of the mountains of the Galilee. And indeed, the Kinneret and the surrounding valleys are included in Naftali's inheritance. According to this explanation, "a hind let loose (*ayala shelucha*)" depicts a valley that is well-watered ("*shelachin*").

Rashi (49:21) combines these two interpretations:

"*Ayala shelucha*" – this refers to the valley of Ginnosar, where fruits readily ripen, just like a hind, which is quick to run..., "let loose" to run."

He views the image of the "hind let loose," springing its way through the mountains of the Galilee, as a metaphor, while adopting Onkelos's words about the valley of Ginnosar and its like as the reality represented by the metaphor.

b. Inheritances of Yosef and Binyamin

Yosef is a fruitful bough (*ben porat*), a fruitful bough by a well, whose branches (*banot*) run over the wall... but his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands

were made supple (or "golden" – *va-yafozu*, 'paz' meaning 'fine gold') by the hands of the might God of Yaakov, from thence, from the shepherd, the Rock of Israel: By the God of your father, Who shall help you, and by the Almighty Who shall bless you, with blessings of heaven above... The blessings of your father are potent above the blessings of my ancestors, to the utmost bound of the everlasting hills, they shall be on the head of Yosef and upon the crown of the head of him who was separated from (or "the distinguished of" – "*nezir*" in the sense of "he who wears a crown" - *nezer*) his brothers. (49:22-26)

"*Porat*" describes a fertile vine planted by a spring. Its two main branches ("*banot*") are Ephraim and Menashe, as reflected in Onkelos's translation (v. 22):

"... Two tribes shall emerge from his sons, receiving a portion and an inheritance."

Yosef's fertile inheritance is blessed both with rain and with abundant underground springs – the expanses of the Shomron and the Sharon ("the utmost bound of the everlasting hills").

The two most prominent blessings are given to Yehuda and to Yosef, both of whom are described as leaders: the "staff shall not depart" from Yehuda, while Yosef is "the distinguished of his brothers." "The arms of his hands were gilded" (as in pictures of Pharaohs holding bows), and he inherits the principle blessings given to the forefathers. Yosef is endowed with blessed royalty, while Yehuda has the staff and official status.

Is there any way of maintaining two forms of leadership simultaneously within a single nation, without creating a split? In Yaakov's blessing, such a reality seems possible. In historical terms, this was a very difficult challenge, and it remains so.

Another allusion to inheritance is to be found in the blessing to Binyamin, who is also endowed with power to fight ("a ravenous wolf..."):

"...In the morning he shall devour the prey, and at night he shall divide the spoil." (v. 27)

The Tosefta (*Shevi'it* 7:12) explains:

"In the morning he shall devour the prey" – this refers to Yericho, which ["ripens"] early, "and at night he shall divide the spoil" – this refers to Beit-El, which ["ripens"] later.

The inheritance of Binyamin includes both Yericho, which is at a very low altitude and where the fruit ripens early, and Beit-El, atop a mountain 1200 meters higher, where the fruit ripens much later – even in relation to the rest of the country.

Yaakov's blessings, to a far greater degree than his burial in Ma'arat ha-Makhpela, represent a vision of the land promised to the tribes, spread out and depicted in all its glory.

Translated by Kaeren Fish

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