

## **In Honor of Shimon Emanuel's Pidyon Haben Sunday May 10 2020**

The ritual that we just went through on our front porch using social distancing and with zoom, using the Kohain an parents only, reminds me of a NETZIV where he comments on the switching of the hands of Jacob when " Israel put out his right hand and placed it on Ephraim's head for he was a younger and his left hand on the Menashe's head -he guided his hands- for Menasha was the first born. Joseph said to his father not so father for this one is the first born, put your right hand on his head" .

**יד** וַיִּשְׁלַח יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת-יְמִינוֹ וַיָּשֶׁת עַל-רֹאשׁ אֶפְרַיִם, **14** And Israel stretched out his right hand, and laid it upon Ephraim's head, who was the younger, and his left hand upon Manasseh's head, guiding his h  
וְהוּא הִצְעִיר, וְאֶת-שְׂמָאלוֹ, עַל-רֹאשׁ מְנַשֶּׁה: שְׂבֵל, **כי מנשה הבכור.**

Jacob's a unnatural movement of his hands bending his right hand across his body to reach the younger Ephraim was done intentionally. This says RASHI, is the meaning of the word *SIKAIL* related to the word *Sekhel*, or intellect.

**He guided his hands deliberately:** Heb. שְׂבֵל. As the Targum renders: אַחֲכַמְיִינוּ, he put wisdom into them. Deliberately and with wisdom, he guided his hands for that purpose, and with knowledge, for he knew [full well] that Manasseh was the firstborn, but he nevertheless did not place his right hand upon him.

The word "ki" in "ki Menashe bechor'.. is to be understood as "even though" Menashe was the bechor.

There are many reasons why Jacob did this.

The **CHIZKUNI** writes that Jacob wished to show greater honor to Ephraim and therefore moved his hand but did not ask Ephraim to come to his right side as this would have embarrassed Menasha the BECHOR. Additionally, Jacob foresaw Ephraim's descendants would be greater than those of Menashe.

**The NETZIV in the HAAMEK DAVAR** writes that Jacob purposely did not move the brothers around because Menasha remained the BECHOR and continued to receive all the visible manifestations of this. He alluded to this fact by leaving his right foot aligned with Menashe.

However in the matters of spirituality it was a Ephraim who took precedence, hence the switching of the hands.

One could say in explaining that it said that the hands which are close to the head are noticeably more controlled by one's intellect than the feet which tend to serve the body more. Thus, the alignment of the feet refers to physical matters while the switching of the hands refers to spiritual matters. This may also explain the posture of KOHANIM during their blessing with their feet joined together and the arms outstretched.

Further to the NETZIV the Sefer Yalkut PENINIM suggests a reason the Jacob switching his hands. The right hand is more connected with the brain which controls fine motor skills and reflects calm, collected, cool, rational thinking not controlled by or overruled by emotions.

The left hand is closer to the heart which represents emotion and desire.

Ephraim as the youngest son had a greater propensity towards his emotional aspect which could lead him to act based on his feelings. Jacob therefore placed his right hand on him telling him that he must allow himself to mature and to allow his intellect to rule over him. Menashe as the bechor was already settled in his life and for him Jacob felt it important to impart the message of the necessity of being guided by emotions no matter one's age.

Two sefardi customs I wish to mention reflecting Shimon Emanuel's background.

In the first, the mother sees the Kohen rising to grab hold of the child she begins to wail, fearing her child will be taken from her. Only after the money is handed to the Kohein does she calm down.

In another custom the Kohein actually addresses the baby as follows:

***"When you were in your mothers' womb, you were in the domain of your father in heaven and in the domain of your mother and father. Now you are in my domain as I am a Cohen and your father and mother are asking me to redeem you as you are a sanctified bechor"***

These 2 precious customs reflect the sentiments of the mother and her sense of impending loss as well as the charge of the priest and the notion of *reshus* or domain.

It is as if we have had this little baby pass through 3 separate domains in his short span of life, the fetal protection of mother then the virtual domain of the priest and now finally physically back to his parents.

Our blessing reflects the Friday blessing all parents give their sons...may the Lord bless you like Efraim and Menashe...may the Lord give you a balance of the heart and the mind, the rational and the spiritual and may always the Efraim precede the Menashe may the heart guide you above all.