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The Children of Rachel

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# Introduction

**“ma’aseh Avot Simon l’Banim”[[1]](#footnote-1)**

“The deeds of the fathers are a sign for the children”

There are many reasons for studying the Torah. I find myself anxious to know HaShem and my insatiable curiosity drives me to explore the many questions that are easily brought to mind when I study. This particular study began with the question: Why are two different tribes given the roles of being king? This was a particular concern because Yaaqob blessed Yehuda with kingship. Further, I know that the roles that the Patriarchs, and tribes, will reverberate down through history in the lives of the Bne Israel. This means that their actions are prophetic, as the Ramban taught.

**Ramban on Genesis 12:6 - And Avram passed through the land unto the place of Shechem:** I will tell you a general principle - understand it in all of the coming sections about Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaaqob, and it is a great matter. Our rabbis mentioned it in a brief way, and said,[[2]](#footnote-2) “*Everything that occurred to our forefathers[[3]](#footnote-3) is a sign for the children*.” And therefore the verses will write at length in recounting the journeys and the digging of the wells and the other events. And one who thinks about them can think as if they were superfluous things with no purpose. But all of the events come to teach about the future, for when an event occurs to a prophet, [meaning] of the three forefathers, he will contemplate from it the matter that is decreed to come to his seed.

In the course of this study I have learned that the wives of Yaaqob provides that pattern that their children follow. To understand Leah and Rachel is to understand why we have two kings; one who is a descendent of Leah and one who is a descendent of Rachel. To limit the size of the study, I am going to examine Rachel’s children in this paper.

There is a fascinating tapestry, woven in time, which features the children, grandchildren,[[4]](#footnote-4) and other descendants of Rachel who are preparing the way for Yehuda and his descendants. These children of Rachel are responsible for preparing for the Messianic kingdom.[[5]](#footnote-5) These children will control *physical* resources and prepare the way for the children of Leah.[[6]](#footnote-6)

Let’s begin by asking a question: Who are the “children of Rachel”? There are two answers to this question because Bilhah also bore children for Rachel. First are the children born to Yaaqob and Rachel, then come Rachel’s children born to her maid servant Bilhah. As it says:

***Bereshit (Genesis) 30:3*** *And she said: ‘Behold my maid Bilhah, go in unto her; that she may bear upon my knees, and I also may be builded up through her.’*

Here is a list and a table of Rachel’s children:

**Yosef**, Rachel’s firstborn, and

**Binyamin**, Yosef’s full brother, and

**Dan**, Yosef’s half-brother, and

**Naphtali**, also Yosef’s half-brother.

We can also show these children as a table to bring greater clarity.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Rachel’s Children** | **Bilhah’s Children** |
| Yosef and his descendants | Dan and his descendants |
| Binyamin and his descendants | Naphtali and his descendants |

We will primarily be looking at Yosef and Binyamin, but we will also briefly examine Bilhah’s children:[[7]](#footnote-7) Dan and Naphtali, who will play a supporting role.

As Kol HaTor says:[[8]](#footnote-8) *The Prince of Dan will assist Mashiach ben Yosef*.[[9]](#footnote-9)

# Rachel – Yaaqob’s Wife

Rachel is depicted in the Torah as Yaaqob’s beautiful[[10]](#footnote-10) and beloved wife.[[11]](#footnote-11) The Torah attests of Rachel:

***Bereshit (Genesis) 29:17*** *… Rachel was shapely and beautiful.[[12]](#footnote-12)*

Yaaqob sees his mother’s family in Rachel. She is his kin, his mother’s relative, and perhaps he sees the similarity in personality as well. Rachel is a shepherdess, caring for her father’s sheep all day. In fact, her name, Rachel, means a small lamb. She is described as “beautiful of form, and beautiful of appearance”.[[13]](#footnote-13)

Rachel is a woman who is at home in the outside world. She is outdoors, taking care of animals. She has leadership abilities, along with compassion and care. Her beauty “of form and appearance” implies harmony where the external is an expression of internal perfection. Yaaqob sees this two-dimensional beauty and the synchrony between body and soul which it implies, and recognizes her as a match and partner for his mission of bringing wholeness and truth to this world.

Rav Dessler[[14]](#footnote-14) teaches that the mode of serving God that was applicable before Adam’s sin and the different mode that was applicable after the sin.[[15]](#footnote-15) Be- fore the sin, all service was on a much higher level, in which everything was seen in terms of *truth* and *falsehood*, and evil was seen as a mere illusion. After the sin, however, the world was seen in terms of two realities: *good* and *evil*.

Before Yaaqob conquered the mysterious “man” who struggled with him in the night, the guardian angel of Esav, he was called Yaaqob; after this conquest, he was given the name Israel. The two names correspond to two different levels of service. Yaaqob’s mode of service after his conquest of the angel corresponded to the mode of service before Adam’s sin; his mode of service before that event corresponded to the level after Adam’s sin. One could say that Yaaqob had two different “portions”, one on the lower level, corresponding to the name Yaaqob and one on the higher level, corresponding to the name Israel.

Rachel and Leah, too, represent two different spiritual goals. The portion of Rachel, who was distinguished by her beauty, corresponded to the lower portion, which the Zohar[[16]](#footnote-16) calls “*the revealed* *world*”. On the other hand, Leah, who was not so beautiful, reflected the higher portion, “*the hidden world*”.

A man and a woman have separate portions in creation. When they marry, these portions complement one another. Rachel and Leah corresponded to the two different modes of Yaaqob’s service, Rachel to the level of “*Yaaqob*”, and Leah to the level of “*Israel*.”

Yaaqob’s entry into the mode of service called “Israel” coincided with his return to Eretz Israel, and this, in turn, coincided with the death of Rachel. Thus Leah was his sole helpmate during the period of his Israel-service, which included many of the years that he thought his beloved son Yosef was dead. During this time, Yaaqob was inconsolable, thinking that his life had been an utter failure. This was service in the “*hidden*” world indeed. From the point of view of the lower, visible world, he had lost everything; there was nothing to hope for, neither in this world nor the next. This was Yaaqob’s greatest test.

It should be noted that Rachel, whose task lay in “*the revealed world*”, had progeny who were eminently successful in making a kiddush HaShem in the visible world. Yosef became viceroy of Egypt, sustained the family in famine, and settled them in Egypt. Yehoshua, his descendant, led the conquest of the Land of Israel. Leah, on the other hand, whose task lay in “the hidden world,” produced Levi (Moshe and Aharon) and Yehuda (David), through whom HaShem gave to Israel, respectively, the spiritual gifts of Torah, priesthood, and the seed of Mashiach.

End of Rav Dessler.

Something amazing happened when Rachel died. When she died, Binyamin was born. This teaches us that there was a special affinity between Binyamin, and his descendants, and Eretz Israel. As we shall see, this resulted in a special blessing for Binyamin which culminated in the Temple being built in his portion of Eretz Israel.

Yosef, too, leaves Eretz Israel at 17 and spends the rest of his life outside of Israel. He rules the world from Egypt. Never the less, his sons receive the double portion in Eretz Israel.

Yosef and Binyamin were the only children of the only woman who was ever called *Yaaqob’s wife*, as we see in the Torah and the Midrash.

***Bereshit (Genesis) 46:19*** *The sons of Rachel Yaaqob’s wife; Yosef, and Binyamin.*

***Midrash Rabbah - Bereshit (Genesis) LXXIII:2*** *He hath remembered His mercy and His faithfulness toward the house of Israel; all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.’[[17]](#footnote-17) He hath remembered His mercy’ alludes to Abraham, as it says, Mercy to Abraham;’[[18]](#footnote-18) And His faithfulness,’ to Yaaqob, as it says, Thou wilt show faithfulness to Yaaqob; ‘Toward the house of Israel’ means Israel the patriarch. Who was the ‘house’ of our ancestor Yaaqob? Surely Rachel! For in connection with all the others it is written, And the children of Leah: the firstborn of Yaaqob was Reuben... and the children of Zilpah Leah’s maid were Gad and Asher... and the children of Bilhah Rachel’s maid were Dan and Naphtali.[[19]](#footnote-19) But in the case of Rachel it is written, The sons of Rachel, Yaaqob’s wife[[20]](#footnote-20): Yosef and Binyamin.[[21]](#footnote-21) Another interpretation: ‘He hath remembered His mercy and His faithfulness toward the house of Israel’ alludes to, AND GOD REMEMBERED RACHEL, AND GOD HEARKENED TO HER.*

The Torah attests of Rachel:

***Bereshit (Genesis) 29:17*** *… Rachel was shapely and beautiful.[[22]](#footnote-22)*

יְפַת-תֹּאַר, וִיפַת מַרְאֶה

When Yosef was born, Rachel, his mother, prophesied that *another* son would be added to this one:

***Bereshit (Genesis) 30:24*** *And she called his name Yosef; and said, HaShem shall add to me another son.*

Chazal says that the son which was added to Yosef, will be Binyamin:

***Midrash Rabbah - Bereshit (Genesis) LXI:4*** *Bar Kappara said: The addition granted by the Holy One, blessed be He, exceeds the principal. Cain was the principal, yet since Abel is recorded as an addition,[[23]](#footnote-23) he was born together with two twin sisters.[[24]](#footnote-24) Yosef was the principal, yet since Binyamin is recorded as an addition,[[25]](#footnote-25) he begot ten sons, as it is written, And the sons of Binyamin: Bela, and Becher and Ashbel, Gera, etc.[[26]](#footnote-26)*

***Midrash Rabbah - Bereshit (Genesis) LXXIII:6*** *AND SHE CALLED HIS NAME YOSEF, SAYING: THE LORD ADD TO ME ANOTHER SON.[[27]](#footnote-27) ANOTHER [i.e. different] in respect of exile. R. Yehuda b. R. Simon said: The tribes of Yehuda and Binyamin were not exiled to the same place as were the other ten tribes. The ten-tribes were exiled beyond the River Sambatyon,[[28]](#footnote-28) whereas the tribes of Yehuda and Binyamin are dispersed in all countries.[[29]](#footnote-29) ANOTHER SON -in respect of dissension.[[30]](#footnote-30) R. Phinehas said: Through Rachel’s prayer the tribes of Yehuda and Binyamin did not revolt [against the Davidic dynasty] together with the remaining ten tribes.[[31]](#footnote-31) ANOTHER denotes the behaviour of others.[[32]](#footnote-32)*

Yosef and Binyamin also stood together on Mount Gerizim, the mount of blessing:

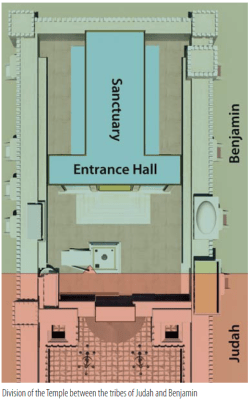
***Debarim (Deuteronomy) 27:12*** *These shall stand upon mount Gerizim to bless the people, when ye are come over Jordan; Simeon, and Levi, and Yehuda, and Issachar, and Yosef, and Binyamin:*

Yosef and Binyamin had their inheritance in the land of Israel adjacent to each other:

***Yehoshua (Joshua) 18:11*** *And the lot of the tribe of the children of Binyamin came up according to their families: and the coast of their lot came forth between the children of Yehuda and the children of Yosef.*

Ezekiel puts Yosef’s and Binyamin’s gates to the city of Jerusalem together:

***Yehezchel (Ezekiel) 48:32*** *And at the east side four thousand and five hundred: and three gates; and one gate of Yosef, one gate of Binyamin, one gate of Dan.*



**And so it goes; nearly every time that Binyamin is mentioned, Yosef is closely connected.**

We also find that after the “death”[[33]](#footnote-33) of Yosef, Yaaqob treated Binyamin like his only son:

***Bereshit (Genesis) 42:4*** *But Binyamin, Yosef’s brother, Yaaqob sent not with his brethren; for he said, Lest peradventure mischief befall him.*

***Bereshit (Genesis) 42:36*** *And Yaaqob their father said unto them, Me have ye bereaved [of my children]: Yosef [is] not, and Simeon [is] not, and ye will take Binyamin [away]: all these things are against me.*

The Midrash tells us that Binyamin is the only one of Yaaqob’s sons who is not associated with the selling of Yosef:

***Midrash Rabbah - Bereshit (Genesis) XCIX:1*** *BINYAMIN IS A WOLF THAT RAVENETH, etc.[[34]](#footnote-34) It is written, Why look ye askance (terazdun), ye mountains of peaks?[[35]](#footnote-35) R. Jose the Galilean and R. Akiba discussed this. R. Jose the Galilean applied the verse to the mountains. When the Holy One, blessed be He, came to reveal the Torah on Sinai, the mountains ran about and contended with each other, each claiming: ‘The Torah shall be revealed on me.’ Tabor came from Beth Elim and Carmel from Apamea. Thus it is written, As I live, saith the King, whose name is the Lord of hosts, surely like Tabor among the mountains and like Carmel by the sea so shall he come.[[36]](#footnote-36) The one says, ‘I have been called,’ and the other says, ‘I have been called.’ Said God to them: ‘“Why look ye askance (terazdun), ye mountains of peaks” (gabnunim)? Ye are all indeed high mountains, and yet ye are rather “gabnunim”, which has the same meaning as in the verse, Or crook-backed (gibben) or a dwarf;[[37]](#footnote-37) idolatrous worship has been performed on the tops of all of you. But Sinai, upon which no idolatrous worship has taken place, is The mountain which God hath desired for His abode’; therefore, And the Lord came down upon Mount Sinai.[[38]](#footnote-38) Nevertheless, Yea, the Lord will dwell therein forever in the Eternal House. R. Akiba related the verse to the tribes. When Solomon came to build the Temple, the tribes ran and contended with one another, one saying, ‘Let it be built in my territory,’ while the other said, ‘Let it be built in my territory. ‘Said the Holy One, blessed be He, to them: ‘Ye tribes, why look ye askance (terazdun)? Ye are all tribes, ye are all righteous. Yet ye are gabnunim.’ What does gabnunim mean? Ganabim (thieves); ye were all associated in the selling of Yosef. But since Binyamin was not associated in the selling of Yosef, [his is] ‘The mountain which God hath desired for his abode’. And thus you find that four hundred and eighty years previously the sons of Korah prophesied that it would be within Binyamin’s portion, as it says, My soul yearneth, yea, even pineth for the courts of the Lord.[[39]](#footnote-39) And thus it says, Lo, we heard of it as being in Ephrath; we found it in the field of the wood.[[40]](#footnote-40) R. Yehuda said: The Temple was built in Yehuda’s territory, for it is written, The Ephrathite of Bethlehem in Yehuda.[[41]](#footnote-41) R. Simeon said: It is in the territory of the son of the woman who died in Ephrath. And who died in Ephrath? Rachel. You might then think that it is in the portion of Yosef, seeing that he too was her son: therefore it states, ‘We found it in the field of the forest,’ which implies: In the portion of him who was likened to the beast of the forest. And who was so likened? Binyamin, as it is written, BINYAMIN IS A WOLF THAT RAVENETH.*

We can see from the above Midrash that the Temple was built in the land that was allocated to Binyamin. The Temple was the point where heaven and earth kiss.[[42]](#footnote-42) The Temple is like the neck of the body; it connects the higher world (head) to the lower world (the body). It is the place where HaShem meets with man. This alludes to the fact that Binyamin is where heaven and earth *kiss*.

When the land of Israel was divided among the tribes, the territories of Yehuda and Binyamin ended up converging by the location of the altar in the future altar. As a result, the south-eastern portion of the altar was in the territory of Yehuda, and the north-western part of the Temple was in the land of Binyamin.[[43]](#footnote-43) However, it was only around these two sides that a base of about two feet wide wrapped around the altar, called the Yesod (foundation – the place of the brit mila), a merit that Binyamin earned because of his intense desire to be a host to the Divine Presence.

As an aside, it is insightful to remember the reunion between Yosef and Binyamin in Mitzrayim (Egypt), and that it, too, was related to the Temple:

After forgiving his brothers, Yosef was overcome with emotion and “he fell upon his brother Binyamin’s neck and wept, and Binyamin wept upon his neck”.[[44]](#footnote-44) This scene doesn’t make sense given the background provided by Chazal. The Midrash says that Yosef identified himself to Binyamin. After the brothers brought Binyamin to Egypt, Yosef took him aside, showed him an astrological map of Egypt, and asked him to use his divine inspiration to locate his long-lost brother Yosef. Binyamin successively identified the district, the city, and the building in which they were sitting. When shown a map of the palace, he indicated the room they were in, and said “my brother is beside me.” This puts everything in a new light! If Yosef had already revealed himself to Binyamin, why did this emotional scene take place when Yosef identified himself to the rest of his brothers? Rashi explains that Yosef was weeping “for the two Temples that were to be in Binyamin’s portion [of the land of Israel] and were destined ultimately to be destroyed,” while Binyamin was weeping over “the Mishkan[[45]](#footnote-45) of Shiloh destined to be in Yosef’s portion, which also ended in destruction.” This seems like a non-sequitur. Why did the brothers’ reunion elicit this response from Yosef and Binyamin?

Chazal tell us that the destruction of the Beit HaMikdash was divine punishment for the baseless hatred that existed among the Jews at that time.

The Midrash also says that Yosef and Binyamin were equal:

***Midrash Rabbah - Bamidbar (Numbers) XIV:8*** *ON THE NINTH DAY ABIDAN THE SON OF GIDEONI, PRINCE OF THE CHILDREN OF BINYAMIN.[[46]](#footnote-46) Why did Binyamin present his offering after the sons of Yosef? Because, just as the Shechinah resided in the territory of the former at Shiloh, so it dwelled in the territory of Binyamin in the Temple at Jerusalem. Another exposition: It was in reference to what Scripture says, Before Ephraim and Binyamin and Manasseh, stir up thy might, and come to save us.[[47]](#footnote-47) HIS OFFERING WAS ONE SILVER DISH (KA’ ARATH).[[48]](#footnote-48) Read not KA’ARATH but ‘ikkereth (chief). It symbolized Rachel who was the main pillar of the house; she being Yaaqob’s chief wife; for it says, The sons of Rachel, Yaaqob’s wife[[49]](#footnote-49): Yosef and Binyamin[[50]](#footnote-50) and it says, Rachel died unto me.*[[51]](#footnote-51) *ONE SILVER. It was a result of her prayer that Binyamin was born, for it says, And she called his name Yosef, saying: The Lord add to me another son,[[52]](#footnote-52) and it is to her that the text applies,’ The tongue of the righteous is as choice silver’[[53]](#footnote-53) --righteous man or righteous woman. THE WEIGHT THEREOF WAS A HUNDRED AND THIRTY SHEKELS.[[54]](#footnote-54) Binyamin was born when Yaaqob was a hundred years old,-it was for this reason that he was called by the name of Binyamin (ben yamin),[[55]](#footnote-55) namely, because was born when his father was a hundred years old-and he himself was thirty years of age when he went down to Egypt. This gives you a total of a hundred and thirty. ONE SILVER BASIN (MIZRAK).[[56]](#footnote-56) A mizrak is the same thing as a gabia’ (goblet) and the MIZRAK here alludes to Yosef who tested the righteousness of his brothers in regard to Binyamin by means of the goblet. When Yosef saw that Yehuda risked his life for Binyamin he realized the righteousness of his brothers and made himself known to them. Moreover, because Yosef drank wine (yayin) in a goblet and the numerical value of yayin is seventy,*[[57]](#footnote-57) *the weight of the basin was for that reason SEVENTY SHEKELS, AFTER THE SHEKEL OF THE SANCTUARY. BOTH OF THEM FULL. BOTH OF THEM, Yosef and Binyamin, were equal, for the Tabernacle was erected in the territory of Yosef at Shiloh and the Temple in the territory of Binyamin at Jerusalem. This also explains the expression: FINE FLOUR MINGLED WITH OIL FOR A MEAL-OFFERING.*[[58]](#footnote-58) *ONE GOLDEN PAN OF TEN SHEKELS[[59]](#footnote-59) was in allusion to the ten sons that Binyamin had when he went down to Egypt; as it says, And the sons of Binyamin: Bela, and Becher, etc.,[[60]](#footnote-60) all of whom were righteous. This explains the phrase, FULL OF INCENSE. ONE YOUNG BULLOCK, ONE RAM, ONE HE-LAMB, etc.[[61]](#footnote-61) Here you have three kinds of burnt-offerings. They allude to the three times that the Temple was to be built in his territory; once in the days of Solomon, once in the days of the returned exiles, and the third in the days of the Messiah. ONE MALE OF THE GOATS FOR A SIN-OFFERING.[[62]](#footnote-62) This was in allusion to the edifice which Herod constructed, for it was built by a sinful king and the building was intended by him as an atonement for having slain Israel’s Sages. AND FOR THE SACRIFICE OF PEACE-OFFERINGS, TWO OXEN.[[63]](#footnote-63) This was in allusion to the two kings who came out of Binyamin, viz. Saul and Ishbosheth. An alternative explanation: In allusion to the two redeemers who came from that tribe, namely Mordecai and Esther. FIVE RAMS, FIVE HE-GOATS, FIVE HE-LAMBS. You have here three varieties of five each, corresponding to the three advantages that Binyamin received in each of which ‘five’ is mentioned. They are as follows:*

*(1) Binyamin’s portion was five times so much as any of theirs;[[64]](#footnote-64)*

*(2) To Binyamin he gave three hundred shekels of silver, and five changes of raiment;[[65]](#footnote-65) and the third was when Mordecai, who hailed from Binyamin, attained to the privilege of wearing five royal vestments; as it says, And Mordecai went forth from the presence of the king in royal apparel of blue and white, and with a great crown of gold, and with a robe of fine linen and purple.[[66]](#footnote-66).[[67]](#footnote-67) THIS WAS THE OFFERING OF ABIDAN, etc.[[68]](#footnote-68) When he had presented his offering in accordance with the above scheme, the Holy One, blessed be He, began to praise his offering, saying: THIS WAS THE OFFERING OF ABIDAN, etc.*

Binyamin had to go *down to Egypt* because he was the *only son* of his father.[[69]](#footnote-69) Does this sound familiar?

***Matityahu (Matthew) 2:13-15*** *And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Yosef in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him. When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt: And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son.*

***Yochanan (John) 3:16*** *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

So, Mashiach ben Yosef, the Messiah from the House of Yosef, is closely linked with Binyamin.

\* \* \*

Yaaqob’s preference for Rachel continued even after her death, and also influenced Yaaqob’s attitude to her children. Our Hakhamim[[70]](#footnote-70) speak of the passionate love for Rachel exhibited by Yaaqob, who already understood from their first encounter that she was his intended bride. At the same time, they also illustrate the intricate and complex relationship between Leah and Rachel, the two sisters and the two wives of Yaaqob whose fate was intertwined.

The midrash portrays Rachel as a prophetess, and her statements and the names she gave her sons contain allusions to the future. The Midrash perceives Rachel as an educational figure who delineated the path that her offspring were to follow. She possessed the art of silence [when she knew that her sister was given to Yaaqob deceitfully, but remained silent and did not tell him]; all of her descendants continued in this path, and could keep a secret.

As Jewish history shows, the descendants of Rachel, beginning with Yosef himself who held the reigns of *physical* power and set up the conditions of the Egyptian exile, the tribes of Ephraim [representing Yosef] and Binyamin, generally occupied the important management positions in the Jewish commonwealth. Consider the following examples:

The Jewish leader of the conquest of Canaan was Yehoshua, a member of the tribe of Ephraim.

The first king of Israel was Saul, a Benjamite.

Mordechai, a Benjamite, was the second ruler in Babylon during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar.

Because the Children of Rachel were the rulers during significant periods of history, we understand that the main *physical* resources of the Jewish nation were under the control of Ephraim throughout Jewish history. What is more, the tribe of Binyamin remained with the tribe of Yehuda following the schism, ensuring the presence of Rachel’s children in the kingdom of Yehuda as well. Without one of Rachel’s children in charge, the *spiritual* unity between HaShem and Israel cannot have *physical* expression.

Rav Kook[[71]](#footnote-71) views Mashiach ben Yosef[[72]](#footnote-72) and Mashiach ben David as two components of a larger product, namely, the Jewish people. If the Jewish people could be described as one person, Mashiach ben Yosef would be the body, Mashiach ben David the soul. This accords well with the Nazarean Codicil:

***I Corinthians 12:27*** *Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.*

The following table is an attempt to show the connections between Rachel, Tamar, and Yosef. They all had very similar events in their lives. This suggests that they must be related in such a fashion that they shed light on each of the others.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Rachel** | **Tamar** | **Yosef** |
| Rachel has 2 sons. | Yehuda has twins. | Yosef has 2 sons. |
| Eleventh born bursts into first born. | Second baby bursts forth to become first born. | Second born bursts into first born. |
| Greatly desires children. | Greatly desires children. | Potiphar’s wife greatly desires children. |
| 2nd wife. | Yehuda’s second wife. | Asnath was second woman. |
| Became wife under unusual circumstances. | Became wife under unusual circumstances. | Became wife under unusual circumstances. |
| Steals teraphim. | “Steals” Yehuda’s sperm. | Declared guilty of stealing Potiphar’s wife. |
| Very Beautiful | Beautiful | Very Beautiful |

Now, I ask: Where do we find that Rachel and her children take on the *physical* mission and Leah and her children take on the *spiritual* mission? This will be the subject of the next section.

# The Two Missions

Esav with Leah and Yaaqob with Rachel. These two pairs personify the concepts of *ikar* and *Tafel*, the essence (ikar) and the enabler of that essence (Tafel). Ikar is the inner essence and the main entity; the Tafel is what enables the ikar to flourish. For example, the ikar of an orange is the inner fruit while the peel is the Tafel, as it enables and protects the fruit. The same principle applies to a person; the ikar of a person is the neshama, the self, the mind and soul. The body is the Tafel, as it is what enables the soul to exist in this world, to learn, grow, and expand. This is the ideal relationship between the spiritual and physical world. The physical world is meant to reflect and illuminate the physical.

We learn the power of tefilla from Leah. Not only did she not marry Esav,[[73]](#footnote-73) but she merited to marry Yaaqob first.[[74]](#footnote-74) Rav Goldwicht points out that Esav and Yaaqob (Israel) were given *two* different missions. Yaaqob (Israel) was meant to do the *Avodat hapnim*, the inner spiritual work while Esav was meant to do the *Avodat hachutz*, to take the fruits of the field and elevate them for HaShem.[[75]](#footnote-75) Leah was destined for Esav[[76]](#footnote-76) while Rachel was destined for Yaaqob. Leah could have prayed for Esav to repent. But when she saw that Yaaqob took the blessings of Yitzchak[[77]](#footnote-77) and that even Eisav’s nuclear family had given up on him, she realized she needed to pray to marry Yaaqob.[[78]](#footnote-78)

**Yaaqob was meant to do the Avodat hapnim,[[79]](#footnote-79) the inner spiritual work of making the world a dwelling place for HaShem.**

Yaaqob’s mission is to create harmony between the physical, mundane life of the field (Esav’s place) and the spiritual life of the tents of study and prayer. The vision of the ladder[[80]](#footnote-80) is, at one and the same time, an expression of Yaaqob’s mission, and an expression of HaShem’s assurance that Yaaqob is capable of fulfilling this mission, of creating a merger of these two opposites, the physical and the spiritual.

**Esav was meant to do the Avodat hachutz,[[81]](#footnote-81) to take the fruits of the field and elevate them for HaShem,[[82]](#footnote-82) while at the same time conquering his own Yetzer HaRa.**

*The following is excerpted and edited from a paper written by Rabbi Joel David Bakst.*

The extent of the Esav’s spiritual contamination was first revealed to Rivka, then to Yaaqob and finally to Yitzchak, the father of the failed messiah. Matters were now a state of emergency, a “red-red” alert. The failsafe mechanism was to salvage the holy sparks of the Mashiach ben Yosef that dwelt within Esav, to redeem them and unite them with its other half, the soul of the Mashiach ben David. Yaaqob had to absorb into his being the remaining elements of the uncontaminated parts of the Mashiach ben Yosef of his brother Esav. The entire modus operandi of everything he said and did was recorded in Scripture was for this purpose. Rivka and Yaaqob masterminded a spiritual conspiracy of utterly mind-boggling proportions. Yaaqob was performing cosmic surgery on the soul of his possessed twin brother to redeem the captive soul of the Mashiach ben Yosef and to transplant it into his own soul!

This is why Yaaqob had to not only act like, but also literally dress up as Esav. On the deepest level he literally become Esav, that is, the holy aspect of the Mashiach ben Yosef within Esav. In order to receive the flow of divinity that Yitzchak was blessing his son it still had to be the cosmic force of Mashiach ben Yosef and not Mashiach ben David, which was receiving it. When Yaaqob declared, “I am Esav, your first born”, he was literally occupying the “soul space” of Esav as it exists in its sacred root above. It was only afterwards that the Mashiach ben Yosef aspect of “Esav” was re-possessed by the aspect of Mashiach ben David within Yaaqob and re-united. The “holy” Esav really did get the blessings, only they were now integrated into a single individual, Yaaqob. It was messianic surgery the likes of which had never occurred before and never will again. The entire course of history pivoted upon the Patriarch “stealing” the birthright and “impersonating” Esav. He now incarnated both of the messiahs and his life was dedicated to fulfilling the mission of both Mashiach ben David and Mashiach ben Yosef. The complete “incorporation” of the Mashiach ben Yosef, however, would not culminate until the showdown with Esav’s angel, the highest root of Esav. “Yaaqob Abinu began his mission as Mashiach ben Yosef from the day that he struggled and overcame the Oversoul of Esav”.[[83]](#footnote-83) It was then that the unification was complete and he received his additional name “Israel”, redefining his new entity. This is also the esoteric reason why Yaaqob was “forced” to marry Leah, who originally had been destined to marry Esav.[[84]](#footnote-84)

We can now appreciate the depths of the words of the prophet Malachi: “I loved you,” said HaShem, and you [the Nation of Israel] said, “How have you loved us? Is not Esau a brother of Jacob, the words of HaShem, yet I loved Jacob. But I despised Esau…”.[[85]](#footnote-85) The formula, “Is not Esau a brother of Jacob “is equating them above in their spiritual root where the essence of both is holy of holies. In their soul root Esav and Yaaqob are equal, but below; in his presently manifested state, Esav is contaminated and therefore, “ I loved Jacob. But I hated Esau…”[[86]](#footnote-86)

End *Rabbi Joel David Bakst* comments*.*

I suspect that this means that in the redemption there will be only a single man who will fill the role of Mashiach ben Yosef and then fill the role of Mashiach ben David. And that man was called Yeshua ben Yosef ben Yaaqob. Even his name hints to both roles.

Some of the Chasidic Masters believed “ben Yoseph” and “ben David” to be two different components/aspects of the same person, the Mashiach. It has also been noted by commentators[[87]](#footnote-87) that Maimonides’ complete omission of the subject of “ben Yoseph” suggests he believed all the messianic tasks and achievements would be accomplished by a single messiah.

Leah was destined for Esav while Rachel was destined for Yaaqob. Leah could have prayed for Esav to repent. But when she saw that Yaaqob took the blessings of Yitzchak and that even Esav’s nuclear family had given up on him, she realized she needed to pray to marry Yaaqob.[[88]](#footnote-88)

Not only did Leah not marry Esav, but she merited to marry Yaaqob first. Because Leah married Yaaqob first, her mission *was switched with Rachel’s*.[[89]](#footnote-89) She took on the Avodat hapnim, the spiritual mission. Rachel, in this switch, took on the Avodat hachutz, the physical side.[[90]](#footnote-90)

The Lubavitcher Rebbe[[91]](#footnote-91) explains that the fact that Esav was naturally inclined toward idolatry was not, in and of itself, a negative thing. It meant that his ordained mission in life was the conquest of evil rather than the cultivation of good.

The Sefat Emet[[92]](#footnote-92) says that when Yaaqob came in to Yitzchak he said, “I am Esav your firstborn”, he meant to say, “I’ve taken on the cloak of Esav’s responsibilities, the mission of the inner world along with the mission to elevate the outer world.” At that moment he merited Leah as his soul mate to help him complete his role. Rachel could have easily argued that she would take on a double role, but instead she gave over her role to her sister. She could’ve said, “Leah caused all the problems by acquiescing to Lavan instead of refusing to go to the wedding ceremony. I don’t have to sacrifice myself for this.” Or she could have insisted on marrying first while Leah would marry later. But she didn’t. She gave up the signs and her chance at fulfilling her destiny to save her sister from shame.

It wasn’t just the switching of the order of marriages, but a switching of roles for all generations. Rachel gave over her role of Avodat hapnim to Leah and took over Leah’s outer role. The central aspect of Yaaqob was his inner role and whoever he married first would complement that world. The signs Rachel gave over to Leah were about how to support Yaaqob in that mission. Rachel, knowing the power of tefilla that got Leah this far could have prayed, “Let me fulfill my intended mission and let Leah marry second”. But she didn’t and instead gave over her rightful position with a full heart to Leah. HaShem said, “You, who didn’t cry and pray then, may cease crying and praying now”. The Avot although they faced challenges, maintained their identity. But Rachel sacrificed her very identity to save her sister from shame. It is this incredible mesirat nefesh[[93]](#footnote-93) that will bring her children back to their borders and ultimately bring the Geula.

In this also lies the deeper meaning of the midrash that describes Yaaqob and Esav fighting in the womb “over the inheritance of the two worlds” (i.e., the material world and the “world to come”).

Thus, we understand that the children of Rachel have taken on the *physical* mission, whereas the children of Leah take on the *spiritual* mission. All of their descendants, throughout time, will take on these missions.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Children of Leah** | **Children of Rachel** |
| Spiritual Mission | Physical Mission |
| Reuben | Yosef |
| Shimon | Binyamin |
| Levi | Dan |
| Yehuda | Naphtali |
| Yissachar |  |
| Zebulon |  |
| Gad |  |
| Asher |  |
| Mashiach ben David | Mashiach ben Yosef |

Our Sages teach us that the lives of the forefathers foreshadow events in the lives of their descendants. To understand the events of history, relative to Israel, all we need to do is study the lives of the Patriarchs.

*The Ramban calls Bereshit (Genesis), Sefer Simanim, the book of signs. Bereshit is not just the story of what happened, it also foretells what will happen!*

**“Ma’aseh Avot siman l’banim”**

The actions of the father are a sign for the children.

This important concept will help illuminate many of the points in this paper.

## Characteristic of Rachel’s Children

Rachel’s children know how to control their tongues and keep secrets. Here are some examples to support this statement:

Rachel’s son Binyamin knew about the sale of Yosef but did not reveal it to his father; therefore, his tribe received the jasper[[94]](#footnote-94) stone[[95]](#footnote-95) in the High Priest’s breast piece.

Saul, the son of Rachel’s son, remained silent[[96]](#footnote-96) “but he did not tell him [his uncle] anything […] about [his being anointed for] the kingship.”

Esther, who was descended from Rachel, was similarly reticent:[[97]](#footnote-97) “But Esther still did not reveal her kindred or her people” and did not mention her Jewish origins in the palace of Achashverosh.[[98]](#footnote-98)

\* \* \*

Rachel and her children were known for their outstanding physical beauty and other physical attributes such as being very tall. We have already seen that Rachel was very beautiful. We will also find that Yosef and Binyamin had exceptional beauty. We will also find that Saul, the first king in Israel, was head and shoulders taller that the rest of men.

Rachel also had a deep appreciation of the beauty inherent in holiness. As Chazal have taught: True beauty shines from inner beauty, and true beauty is when a person is transparent.

## Rachel’s Children’s Names

Rachel had two children. Her firstborn was named Yosef and her second son was named Binyamin.

***Bereshit (Genesis) 30:22*** *And God remembered Rachel, and God hearkened to her, and opened her womb. 23 And she conceived, and bore a son, and said: ‘God hath taken away my reproach.’ 24 And she called his name Yosef, saying: ‘HaShem add to me another son.’*

***Bereshit (Genesis) 35:16-18*** *And they journeyed from Beth-el; and there was still some way to come to Ephrath; and Rachel travailed, and she had hard labor. 17 And it came to pass, when she was in hard labor, that the mid-wife said unto her: ‘Fear not; for this also is a son for thee.’ 18 And it came to pass, as her soul was in departing--for she died--that she called his name Ben-oni; but his father called him Binyamin.*

We will see that Yosef had two children. His firstborn was named Menashe and his second son was named Ephraim. These two children joined the sons of Yaaqob in becoming two of the twelve tribes. This makes them the ‘sons’ of Rachel as well. Throughout this study we will be speaking of these four men as the children of Rachel.

(Bilhah’s children are also Rachel’s children, but we will be focusing on Rachel’s two children.)

## Rachel’s Children Expressed as Numbers*[[99]](#footnote-99)*

The Zohar[[100]](#footnote-100) cites the name for four Ushpizin, Abraham, Yitzchak, Yaaqob and David, while the names of the others remained unspecified. However, the Nusach[[101]](#footnote-101) of the invitation of the Ushpizin[[102]](#footnote-102) that we have includes the name of all seven: Abraham, Yitzchak, Yaaqob, Yosef, Aharon, Moshe and David.[[103]](#footnote-103) However, *it is accepted that Yosef is the seventh*, and some of the Mekubalim[[104]](#footnote-104) write that the Zohar[[105]](#footnote-105) wrote “Shlomo” because he is from the root of the soul of Yosef[[106]](#footnote-106) and there are tzadikim[[107]](#footnote-107) who note that the Ushpizin of Shlomo is on Shemini Atzeret (the eighth day of Succoth).[[108]](#footnote-108)

Although the wholeness is primarily in the kingship of David, as he is complete, in the face of a man, the fourth leg, the correction on the fourth day, it is still not sufficiently completed before it is included with the kingship of the house of Yosef, the seventh day. The kingship of the house of David is considered the fourth in the work of creation, and Yosef is the seventh day. But when the kingship of the house of David is included in Yosef, and Yosef gives him additional delight from the king’s house, the kingship of the house of David is also called “the seventh day.”

***Bereshit (Genesis)37:2*** *These are the generations of Yaaqob. Yosef, being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brethren, being still a youth even with the sons of Bilhah, and with the sons of Zilpah, his father’s wives; and Yosef brought evil report of them unto their father.*

Yosef is the seventh “youth” mentioned in the Torah, and “All sevenths are endeared, this is the mid-point of the thirteen youths.[[109]](#footnote-109)

Yosef should be associated with the number “7” since he is the 1st son of the second wife of Yaaqob. Hence, Leah’s six sons should be associated with the numbers 1 – 6 , depending on their order of birth, and Yosef as the first son of Rachel is to be considered the 7th son of Yaaqob. Therefore, this means that Binyamin should be considered the 8th son.

Seven is the number of the natural world. There are 7 days in the week, 7 notes on the musical scale and 7 directions (left, right, up, down, forward, back and center). “Seven” - represented by the 7 days of Sukkot, is the world of nature. “Eight”, represented by Shemini Atzeret, is that which is beyond nature. Our Sages teach that seven are the attributes of physicality:

1. Height
2. Width
3. Depth
4. Top and bottom (limits height)
5. Front and back (limits width)
6. Left and right (limits depth)
7. The connecting of the other six

The Maharal finds that the week itself is based on a primary idea. He attributes the symbolism of six and seven to the structure of space: When you look closely you will find that the physical has six opposing sides, which are: top and bottom, right and left, front and back. All these six sides are related to the physical, because each side has extent, and limits physical objects. But it also has in it a seventh, and this is the middle, which has no exposure on any side. Because it is not related to any side it is like the non-physical, which has no extension [takes up no volume of space].[[110]](#footnote-110)

The cube, as a geometric shape, readily shows these attributes:



Six things of equal size, for example circles or apples, exactly fit around a seventh circle (in the center) of the same size. So, if you draw a circle of any particular size, you can draw exactly six circles of the same size around that central circle, no more and no less (if you want them all to touch). This idea relates to the concept that the seventh is actually at the center and is the focus of the other six.

The connecting of the six attributes at the center of the shape fundamentally reveals the nature of seven. It is used for connection. This leads naturally to the meaning of ‘seventy’ which is an elevated connection.

Nothing can exist in the physical world without these seven attributes, *nothing*.

Every item in the physical world must have these seven attributes and each of these seven must also exhibit the same seven attributes.

“If six stands for the physical creation and seven for the spiritual in the midst of the physical (Shabbat), then eight stands for that which is completely outside our world. It stands for the World to Come.”[[111]](#footnote-111)

ז, *zayin*, is the seventh letter in the Hebrew aleph-bet. The gematria, the numerical equivalent, of the letter *zayin* is seven. The name *zayin* means “crown”. This provides another idea to understand why Yosef and his descendants are rulers and kings.

Therefore, Yosef should also be associated with the tasks of Shabbat since Shabbat is the 7th day. I believe this interpretation is justified because in his final blessings Yaaqob says that Yosef is set apart from his brothers and this same phrasing is used to describe the Sabbath as a day set apart.

Another important point to think about in relation to Yosef is that the name Rachel means: “a small female lamb”.[[112]](#footnote-112)

Therefore, it seems that the six days of the week should be associated with studying the Torah, but on the seventh day we should stop studying and allow HaShem to speak to us. Hence, Yosef is ALWAYS associated with interpreting the meaning of HaShem’s messages.

Another very important aspect concerning Yosef is that his name means, “to add”. At his birth, Rachel asks that HaShem “add” another son. Since we mentioned that Binyamin is the 8th son and is the response to Rachel’s request; hence Binyamin should be associated with: “additional teachings”.

It should also be mentioned that the day Shavuot is celebrated after 7 times 7 weeks starting with the day after the Passover seder, and this period of time is referred to as “counting the omer”.[[113]](#footnote-113) This is significant because, later in Egypt, when Yosef becomes Prime Minister, more or less, his only job is to supervise wheat production.

Hence, even till this day, the rabbis claim that “the Torah is the bread of life”. In addition, it was generally accepted in ancient times that the messiah (i.e. the enlightened one) would come from Bethlehem which, in Hebrew, means: “the house of bread”.

## The Wife Who Was Loved

Our tapestry begins with a profound Torah statement.

***Bereshit (Genesis) 29:18*** *And Yaaqob loved Rachel; and said, I will serve thee seven years for Rachel thy younger daughter.*

It is well known then Yaaqob loved Rachel. Why is this statement profound? It is profound because it explains why Yosef will get the double portion of the firstborn and will have preeminence in establishing the physical aspect of the Messianic kingdom.

Yaaqob agreed to serve Laban for seven years in order to marry Rachel. Rachel was Yaaqob’s choice for his wife. When the seven years ended, He found Leah in his marriage bed rather than Rachel.

***Bereshit (Genesis) 29:25*** *And it came to pass, that in the morning, behold, it was Leah: and he said to Laban, What is this thou hast done unto me? did not I serve with thee for Rachel? wherefore then hast thou beguiled me?*

At this point, Yaaqob has married Leah instead of his beloved Rachel. He will serve an additional seven years in order to acquire Rachel as his beloved wife.

***Bereshit (Genesis) 29:30*** *And he went in also unto Rachel, and he loved also Rachel more than Leah, and served with him yet seven other years.*

Rachel is considered the primary wife of Yaaqob. This will help us understand why her firstborn son, Yosef, will receive the double portion of Yaaqob’s inheritance.

***Zohar, Bereshit, Section 1, Page 153a*** *Rabbi Eleazar further remarked: “Since Yaaqob had to find his wife by the well, why did he not meet there Leah, who was to be the mother of so many tribes? The answer is that it was not the will of God that Leah should be espoused to Yaaqob openly, and in fact he married her without his knowledge, as it is written: And it came to pass in the morning that, behold, it was Leah. It was also in order to rivet his eye and heart on the beauty of Rachel, so that he should establish his principal abode with her.”*

The marriage to Leah was part of the Divine Plan, but it was part of a secretive plan. Nonetheless, the Zohar teaches that the primary spouse of Yaaqob was Rachel.

From this history we can understand that Rachel, as Yaaqob’s first and most beloved choice for a wife, decided that her children should be given preferential treatment because they should have been his firstborn and only children. Never the less, HaShem had decreed that Yaaqob should marry Leah first and then Rachel. He also married their handmaids Zilpah and Bilhah. HaShem also decreed that Yaaqob should have twelve sons and that they should also be given very important roles in bringing the Messianic kingdom.

The Torah notes that Rachel was barren. When she beseeched Yaaqob to pray that she have children, Yaaqob made a less than compassionate statement:

***Bereshit (Genesis) 30:1-2*** *When Rachel saw that she had borne Yaaqob* *no children, she became envious of her sister; and Rachel said to Yaaqob, “Give me children, or I shall die.” 2 Yaaqob was incensed at Rachel, and said, “Can I take the place of God, who has denied you fruit of the womb?”*

Yaaqob’s angry answer, to Rachel, was heartless given Rachel’s distress. Chazal suggest that Yaaqob could have been more compassionate and at least pray to God to relieve Rachel’s distress as his father, Yitzchak, did for his wife, Rivka.

Yaaqob’s response to Rachel’s plea, “am I in the place of God - הֲתַ֤חַת אֱלֹהִים֙ אָנֹ֔כִי, will be used by her son to bring discouragement to Yaaqob’s sons at a time when they were in a difficult position.

***Bereshit (Genesis) 50:18-19*** *His brothers went to him themselves, flung themselves before him, and said, “We are prepared to be your slaves.” 19 But Yosef said to them, “Have no fear! Am I a substitute for God?*

In this pasuk, Yosef says the same words to Yaaqob’s children as Yaaqob said to Rachel: הֲתַ֥חַת אֱלֹהִ֖ים אָֽנִי. This turnaround was a chance for a tikkun, a correction. When Yosef’s says these fateful words, he quickly added:

***Bereshit (Genesis) 50:20-21*** *Besides, although you intended me harm, God intended it for good, so as to bring about the present result—the survival of many people. 21 And so, fear not. I will sustain you and your children.” Thus he reassured them, speaking kindly to them.*

Yosef demonstrated the compassion, that was called for in this situation, that was a correction for His father’s inconsiderate response to his mother. Never the less, After HaShem opened Rachel’s womb, Yaaqob loved Rachel’s children as much as he loved Rachel.

Because of Yaaqob’s love for Rachel he gave preferential treatment to Yosef and Binyamin. This caused a great deal of sibling rivalry and hate.

***Bereshit (Genesis) 37:3****-4 Now Israel loved Yosef more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age: and he made him a coat of many colors. 4 And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him.*

We need to understand the manifestations of this hate, and how the brother’s overcame this hate, in order to appreciate the tapestry of history in which there will be two ‘kings’: A king from the children of Rachel and a king from Yehuda and his descendants.[[114]](#footnote-114)

Before we look at these two kings, from the tribes of Josef and Yehuda, we need to look at some historical indicators of their positions and greatness as dictated by HaShem. The first of these positions involves the camping and marching order with which HaShem arranged the tribes. To understand this order, though, we need to see how Yaaqob arranged the tribes around his bier.

## Yehuda and Yosef – Dynamic Duo

Some of the greatest leaders of the Bne Israel came from the tribe of Yehuda or from one of Rachel’s descendants, as we can see in the following table.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Dynamic Duos** | |
| Leah | Rachel |
| **Yehuda** | **Yosef** |
| Caleb ben Yefuneh | Yehoshua ben Nun (Ephraim) |
| Betzalel | Oholiab (Dan) |
|  |  |
| David | Yonathan / Mephibosheth |
| Rechavam | Yeravam |
| Yeshua | Paul |
|  | Shimshon HaGibor (Dan) |
|  | Gidon (Menashe) |
|  | Mordechai (Binyamin) |
| Mashiach ben David | Mashiach ben Yosef |

Throughout this study we will be comparing Rachel’s children to Leah’s children. Yehuda was given the right of the firstborn when it was taken from Reuben. Yosef was given the double portion of the inheritance when it was taken from Reuben.

***Divrei HaYamim alef (1 Chronicles) 5:1-2*** *And the sons of Reuben the first-born of Israel--for he was the first-born; but, forasmuch as he defiled his father’s couch, his birthright was given unto the sons of Yosef the son of Israel, yet not so that he was to be reckoned in the genealogy as first-born. 2 For Yehuda prevailed above his brethren, and of him came he that is the prince; but the birthright was Yosef’s.*

Both Yehuda and Yosef were like their mothers and both are, in many ways, opposites of each other. In this section we will explore some of the similarities and some of the contrasts between these two tribes. The Midrash gives us a clue as to some of the similarities.

***Bereshit Rabbah 84:6*** *‘These are the generations of Yaaqob: Yosef...’ - What the text should have said here is, ‘These are the generations of Yaaqob: Reuven...’ Why, then, does it say Yosef? To tell us that all that happened to one of them likewise happened to the other.*

The description of the events of Yehuda’s life and the events of Yosef’s life seem to parallel each other. Consider the following examples:

1. Yehuda: Ill-fated marriage to Bat-Shua.

Yosef: Ill-fated relationship with the wife of Potiphar.

2. Yehuda: True, lasting marriage to Tamar.

Yosef: True, lasting marriage to Osnat.

3. Yehuda: Birth of Peretz and Zerach.

Yosef: Birth of Menashe and Efraim.

4. Yehuda: the younger bursts forth (paratz) and takes the birthright.

Yosef: the younger is blessed with power and royalty.

Sarah and Rivka, had one son who was most important, so did the latter matriarchs, Yaaqob’s wives. Leah’s most important son was Yehuda, while Rachel’s most important son was Yosef. The fact that Yaaqob had two principal heirs: Yehuda and Yosef, rather than one principal heir, as his forefathers had, results from Yaaqob having had two wives of full status (as opposed to maidservants or concubines), while Avraham and Yitzhak each had only one wife of full status.

When the kingdom split, following the death of King Shlomo, Rechavam and his descendants, of the house of David, ruled in Jerusalem, while Yeravam, of the house of Yosef, ruled in Tirtza. Later on, too, most of Yeravam’s successors, up until the Destruction of the Temple, were from the house of Yosef, and the kingdom of the ten tribes is very often referred to by the prophets by the name “Efraim”.

The Mishkan resided in the portion of Yosef and the Temple in the portion of Yehuda. The tribe of Binyamin was part of both of them, both in Jerusalem and in the strip emerging from their portion towards Shiloh.

In the days to come, the prophecy of Yehezchel (chapter 37) is destined to be fulfilled, concerning the joining of the branch of Yehuda and the branch of Efraim into a single royal house. According to tradition and Kabbala, two messiahs are destined to arise: Messiah son of Yosef and Messiah son of David.

What is common to all of these points is that all are related to the royalty and to the Temple. These points are the basis for the tradition that the two messiahs that will arise in the days to come will be from the descendants of Yosef and of Yehuda.

The Torah refers to the tribes as “Yehuda and his brothers” (44:14) and “Yosef’s brothers” (42:6). Nowhere is the group ever referred to as “Reuven and his brothers,” “Dan’s brothers,” etc.

The special Divine providence that rests upon Yehuda and Yosef seems to be hinted at in their very names. These two are the only ones among Yaaqob’s children who have God’s Name within their own names: Yehuda’s name includes the original form of God’s name, as does Yosef’s name in its form in Tehillim 81 (‘Yehosef’). Their names are also the only ones that include an inherent appeal to God: Yosef, in the prayer, “May God add (yosef) for me another son,” and Yehuda, in praise (hoda’ah) to God.

In the war against Amalek (Shemot 17), four leaders emerge: Moshe and Aharon - the permanent leaders, and also Chur of the tribe of Yehuda (at the top of the mountain) and Yehoshua of the tribe of Efraim (on the battlefield). Throughout the forty years in the desert, we find no other instance of additional or auxiliary leaders on the national level.

In the story of the spies, the only two who do not fail are Yehoshua (tribe of Efraim) and Kaleb (tribe of Yehuda).

In addition to their inheritances in the land, Yehuda and Yosef are each given a special city from among the cities of the forefathers, in special circumstances. Moreover, both earn their special city even before they receive their inheritance.

Yosef is given Shechem, as Yaaqob tells him - “I have given you one portion (Shechem ehad) more than your brothers” (48:22). Apparently, Yosef earns Shechem as reward for his courage for going off to Shechem at his father’s bidding, although he is aware of the dangers awaiting him.

Kaleb, the prince of the tribe of Yehuda, is awarded the city of Chevron for his courage in going there at the bidding of Moshe, although he knew of the dangers involved in this mission and despite the four giants that threatened the city. It is in Chevron that the royal house of Yehuda starts out (Shmuel II 2), while the royalty of the house of Yosef begins in Shechem (Melakhim I 12-13).

\* \* \*

Of the twelve spies that Moshe sent out, only two brought back a good report: Caleb ben Yefuneh and Yehoshua Bin Nun. Caleb from the Tribe of Yehudah and Yehoshua, the leader of the Tribe of Ephraim.[[115]](#footnote-115)

# Camping Order: The Shechinah

Why was the camp arranged in this manner?

**Yehuda** is the tribe of the kingship[[116]](#footnote-116),

**Issachar** is the tribe of the Torah[[117]](#footnote-117), and

**Zebulun** is the tribe of wealth[[118]](#footnote-118). Since this triumvirate includes the Torah and the kingship, it camps and marches first. To the right is Reuben’s camp.

**Reuben** represents repentance[[119]](#footnote-119),

**Gad** represents valor[[120]](#footnote-120) and

**Simeon** stays between them for forgiveness-by-association. This team is second to camp and move, because even though repentance is extremely important, it is still secondary to the Torah.

Behind them in the west comes **Ephraim’s** banner. This is the grouping of Rachel’s descendants (**Ephraim**, **Menashe**, and **Binyamin**). The Divine Presence stays in Binyamin’s portion. Later, the Temple would be built in Binyamin’s portion (in the western part of Israel). Binyamin also represents strength and security[[121]](#footnote-121). This representation of strength follows those of Torah and repentance, symbolizing that a person must use his strength to grow in Torah and overcome his evil inclination.

Marching last and camping in the north are the forces of **Dan**. Just as the north would later bring evil to Israel[[122]](#footnote-122), so too Dan’s portion (in the northern part of Israel) would be a center for idolatry[[123]](#footnote-123). Dan marched last because he had the power to retrieve those who had fallen outside the cloud.

There is another side to the tribe of Dan; a darker, more ignominious side. Dan was the lead tribe to encamp on the *northern* side of the Mishkan. In Hebrew, the word for north is ‘tzaphon’, which at its root means ‘hidden.’ North is the ‘hidden direction’ because it is the direction that receives the least light from the sun. It’s the direction that represents a lack of HaShem’s illumination upon us, the hiding of His Presence. The Prophet declares:

***Yirmiyahu (Jeremiah) 1:14*** *From the North, the calamity will be unleashed.*

In Bamidbar Rabbah, we find the following:

The North, from there Darkness goes out to the world. And this has a parallel to the tribe of Dan. Why? He darkened the world with the idol-worship that Yerovam made with the two golden calves…. Yerovam went around to all of Israel (to convince them to accept idol-worship) and they did not agree to him except for the tribe of Dan…

Shevet Dan’s attraction to idol-worship can be seen in the fact that the Clouds of Glory did not protect them from an attack by Amalek,[[124]](#footnote-124) because, as the Midrash says, “They were all idol-worshippers.” In a different Midrash, Dan is given the dubious distinction of being “the lowest of the tribes”.

**Asher**, however, is Dan’s neighbor, to counter this darkness with his light[[125]](#footnote-125). To help Asher is…

**Naphtali**, who represents blessing[[126]](#footnote-126). This contingent must move last, because idolators must remain in the back (Bamidbar Rabbah).

## Yaaqob’s 13 Descendants in Birth Order

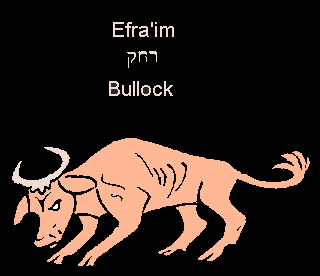
| **Mother** | **Name** | **Reason** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Leah | Reuven | **רְאוּבֵן derived from ראה (Ra’ah = see) + בּן (son) = “see a son”**  “My affliction was **manifest (seen)** before HaShem, therefore now will my husband love me; for my affliction has been **manifested (seen)** before HaShem as will be the affliction of my children before HaShem when they will be enslaved in the land of the Mizraee.” – Targum Jonathan  “Look at the difference between my son and the son of my father-in-law, who sold the birthright to Yaaqob (above 25:33). This one (Reuben) did not sell it to Yoseph, but he nevertheless did not contend against him but sought to take him out of the pit.” – Our Sages |
| Leah | Shimeon | **שִׁמְעוֹן derived from שׁמע (Shema = hearing)**  “Because it was **heard** before HaShem that I was hated, and He gave me this also: and so will be **heard** before Him the voice of my children when they will be enslaved in Mitzrayim.” – Targum Jonathan |
| Leah | Levi | **לֵוִי derived from לוה (Lavah = to cleave, to be attached)**  “This time will my husband be **united** to me, because I have borne him three sons; and thus, will it be that my children will be **united** to serve before HaShem.” – Targum Jonathan |
| Leah | Yehudah | **יְהוּדָה derived from ידה (Yadah = to revere, worship, praise)**  “This time will I give **praise** before HaShem; for from this my son kings will come forth, and from him will spring David the king, who will offer **praise** before HaShem.” – Targum Jonathan |
| Bilhah Rachel’s maid | Dan | **דָּן derived from דּין (Din = to judge, contend)**  “HaShem has **judged** me in His good mercies; He has also heard the voice of my prayer, and given me a son; and so it is to be that He will **judge** by the hand of Shimshon bar Manovach, who will be of his seed; and has he not delivered into his hand the people of the Phelishtaee?” – Targum Jonathan |
| Bilhah Rachel’s maid | Naphtali | **נַפְתָּלִי derived from פּתל (Patal = to struggle, to wrestle, to afflict)**  “With **affliction afflicted** was I before HaShem in prayer; therefore, He has received my request that I might have a son as my sister, and has given me two. Even so are my children to be redeemed from the hand of their enemies when they will **afflict** themselves in prayer before HaShem.” |
| Zilpah Leah’s maid | Gad | **גָּד in Hebrew: “good omen, good luck”**  “**Good luck** has come which will cut off the foundation of the nations.” – Targum Neofiti  “He was born circumcised” - Midrash Aggadah |
| Zilpah Leah’s maid | Asher | **אָשֵׁר derived from אשׁר (Ashar = happy/fortunate)**  “In my good **fortune**, for women consider me **fortunate**,” – Keter Aram Tsoba |
| Leah | Yissachar | **יִשָּׂשכָר derived from שׂכר (Sakhar = payment) + ישׁ (Yesh = here is)**  “HaShem has given me my reward, for that I gave my handmaid to my husband; even so will his children receive a good reward, because they will occupy themselves with the Law.” – Targum Jonathan |
| Leah | Zebulun | **זְבֻלוּן derived from זבל (Zabal = to enclose, to dwell with)**  “God has given me a good portion. This time, my husband will **live with me**, for I have borne him six sons." - Rashi |
| Leah | Dinah | **דִּינָה derived from דּין (Din = to judge, contend)**  **“Judgement** is from before HaShem, that there will be from me a half of the tribes; but from Rachel my sister will go forth two tribes, even as they will proceed (in like manner) from each of the handmaids. And the prayer of Leah was heard before HaShem; and the infants were changed In their wombs; and Joseph was given to the womb of Rachel, and Dinah to the womb of Leah.”  “Our Sages explained that Leah pronounced judgment (דָּנָה) upon herself. [She reasoned:] If this is a male, my sister Rachel will not be [esteemed even] as one of the handmaids. So, she prayed over him, and he was turned into a female.” (Ber. 60a). |
| Rachel | Yoseph | **יוֹסֵף derived from יסף (Yasaf = to add)**  “HaShem will **add** me yet another son to this one.” – Targum Jonathan |
| Rachel | Binyamin | **בִנְיָמִין derived from בּן (Ben = son) + ימין (Yamin = right hand, south) = "son of my right hand" – Name given by Yaaqob** |

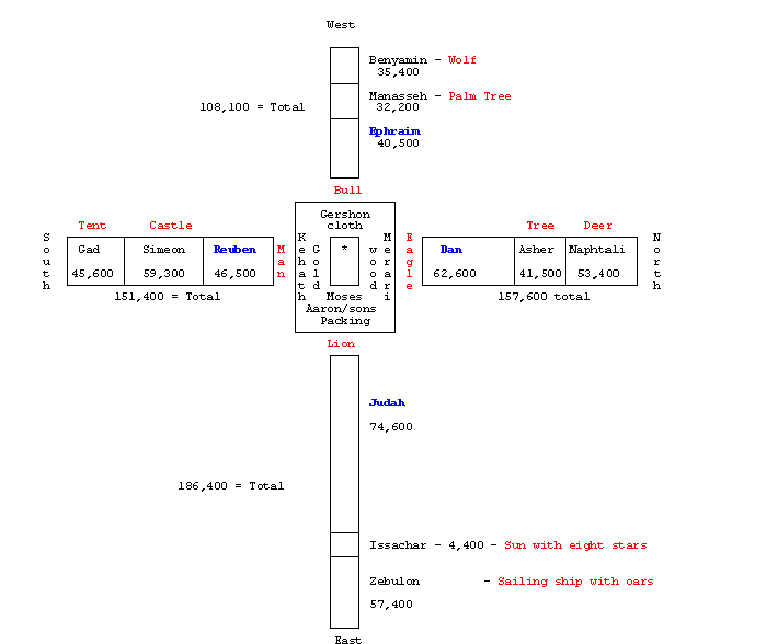
## Mazzalot

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Arrangement of Tribes Carrying Yaaqob’s Bier** | **Exodus Camping Order** |
| **East**   |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | |  | Yehuda | Issachar | Zebulon |  | | Naphtali |  |  |  | Reuben | | Asher | Yaaqob’s bier | | | Simeon | | Dan |  |  |  | Gad | |  | Binyamin | Manasseh | Ephraim |  | | https://www.betemunah.org/tribes_files/image007.gif |
| **Midrash Rabbah - Numbers II:8** ACCORDING TO THEIR FATHER’S HOUSE. … For this reason Scripture says, And his sons did unto him according as he commanded them;[[127]](#footnote-127) his ‘sons’ but not his ‘grandsons’. And his sons carried him (ib. 13). How did he command them to do it? He said to them: ‘My children, when my bier is being carried, Yehuda, Issachar, and Zebulun shall be on the east side; Reuben, Simeon, and Gad shall be on the south side; Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin shall be on the west side; Dan, Asher, and Naphtali shall be on the north side; Yosef shall not carry at all, for he is a king and must be shown due honour; neither shall Levi carry because he will carry the ark, and he that is to carry the ark of Him who is the life of all worlds must not carry the coffin of the dead.[[128]](#footnote-128) If you will comply with these orders and carry my bier as I have commanded you, God will in the future cause you to camp beneath standards. | ***Rashi to Bamidbar (Numbers) 2:2*** - *Each banner shall have [as] its insignia a colored cloth hanging from it. Each one’s color was not like the other’s, each color corresponded with the hue of its gem set in the breastplate.**[[129]](#footnote-129) Thusly, everyone could recognize his banner. Another interpretation [of] “with the insignia of their fathers’ houses”; By the sign their forefather Yaaqob gave them When they carried him from Egypt [for burial in Canaan], as it is said, “And his sons did to him just as he had commanded them”.[[130]](#footnote-130) ‘Yehuda, Yissachar, and Zebulun shall carry him from the east, Reuven, Shimon, and Gad from the south; etc.,’ as stated by Tanchuma to this portion.* |

From the above picture we can see that the tribal arrangement was extremely important to HaShem. This order was first established by Yaaqob when his bier was carried back to Canaan. This same order was used when the tribes were camping in the wilderness after the exodus.

When the Bne Israel camped in the wilderness after the exodus from Egypt; HaShem ordained that they should camp according to the following alternate arrangement. In this arrangement, Rachel’s children all camped together in the west under the banner of Ephraim.[[131]](#footnote-131)





When we observe the constellations on the ecliptic[[132]](#footnote-132) we see an arrangement of the constellations which are similar to the camping order, bier order, Ezekiel order, and the Revelation order. The four banners that head the tribes and front the Mishkan line up with the tekufot, the turning points of the year (seasons).

1. Tekufat Nisan, the **vernal equinox**, when the sun enters Toleh (Aries); this is the beginning of spring, when day and night are equal. Banner is *lion* for the tribe of Yehuda.
2. Tekufat Tammuz, the **summer solstice**, when the sun enters Sartan (Cancer); this is the summer season, when the day is the longest in the year. Banner are the *man-like Dudaim* of the tribe of Reuben.
3. Tekufat Tishre, the **autumnal equinox**, when the sun enters Moznayim (Libra), and autumn, begins, and when the day again equals the night. Banner is the *ox* of tribe of Ephraim.
4. Tekufat Tevet, the **winter solstice**, when the sun enters Gedi (Capricorn); this is the beginning of winter, when the night is the longest during the year. Banner is the *eagle* for the tribe of Dan.

Note: Most depict the standard of Dan as having a snake or serpent on it. I am adopting the Abarbanel’s perspective that this standard depicted an eagle as intimated by the Midrash.

***Bereshit (Genesis) 49:17****Dan shall be a serpent in the way, a horned snake (*שְׁפִיפֹן*) in the path, that biteth the horse's heels, so that his rider falleth backward.*

Yaaqob’s blessing to Dan, in Bereshit 49:17, symbolizes him by a type of snake called *shefifon* - שְׁפִיפֹן*,* which had wings in order to fly swiftly; *Abarbanel* explains that this is an eagle.



Each camp (i.e., each group of three tribes, located on one of the sides of the Mishkan) has a flag with a drawing symbolizing its tribes. According to the Midrash, these were the four images of the Merkava (Chariot) in Ezekiel’s vision (l:10): a lion, a man, an ox and an eagle. The camp of Israel is arranged into four forces, corresponding to the four creatures comprising the Chariot of the Shechinah.

***Midrash Rabbah - Exodus XXIII:13*** *I WILL SING UNTO THE LORD, FOR HE IS HIGHLY EXALTED (XV, 1). It is written, Deck thyself now with majesty and excellency (Job XL, 10). All things exalt themselves over something else; darkness exalts itself over the deep, because it is above it, and the wind exalts itself over the water because it is above it; fire exalts itself above the wind because it is above it,1 and the heavens exalt themselves over the fire, because they are above it, but God is exalted over everything--hence: FOR HE IS HIGHLY EXALTED. R. Abin said: Four kinds of exalted beings have been created in the world. The most exalted of all living creatures is man; of birds, the eagle; of cattle, the ox; and of wild beasts, the lion. All of these received royalty and had greatness bestowed upon them, and they are set under the chariot of God, as it says, As for the likeness of their faces, they had the face of a man; and they four had the face of a lion... and... also the face of an eagle (Ezek. I, 10). Why was this? So that they should not exalt themselves in the world and they should know that the Kingdom of Heaven is over them. For this reason does it say, For one higher than the high watcheth, and there are higher than they (Eccl. V, 7). This is the meaning of FOR HE IS HIGHLY EXALTED.*

The following table[[133]](#footnote-133) shows that the tekufot[[134]](#footnote-134) contain the same *tribes[[135]](#footnote-135)* that we see on the banners in the wilderness, which match the faces in Yehezchel and Revelation.

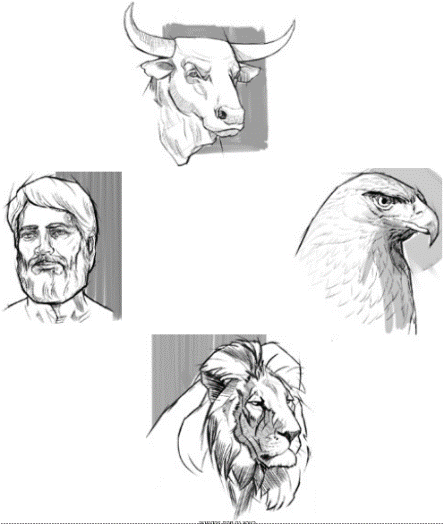
|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Tekufot** | **Tribe** | **Month** | **Constellation (Mazzalot)** | **Banner** |
| Tekufat Nisan | Yehuda | Nisan | Toleh - Lamb |  |
|  | Yissachar | Iyar | Taurus - Ox |  |
|  | Zebulun | Sivan | Teomim - Twins |  |
| Tekufat Tammuz | Reuben | Tammuz | Sartan - Crab |  |
|  | Shimon | Av | Aryeh - Lion |  |
|  | Gad | Elul | Bethulah - Virgin |  |
| Tekufat Tishri | Ephraim | Tishri | Moznayim - Scales |  |
|  | Menashe | Marcheshvan | Akrab - Scorpion |  |
|  | Binyamin | Kislev | Keshet - Bow |  |
| Tekufat Tebet | Dan | Tebet | Gedi - Goat |  |
|  | Asher | Shebat | Deli – Water carrier |  |
|  | Naftali | Adar | Dagim - fish |  |

According to Sefer Yetzirah 1

## Ezekiel’s Vision

In describing his vision, Yehezchel recounts the images he saw: On one of the four sides was an elusive image, described in the first chapter as an ox, and in the tenth chapter as a *keruv* - or cherub. These images are the same images as the head banners for the tribes when they camped in the wilderness.

***Yehezchel (Ezekiel) 1:10*** *As for the likeness of their faces, the four had the face of a man, and the face of a lion, on the right side; and the four had the face of an ox on the left side; the four also had the face of an eagle.*



***Yehezchel (Ezekiel) 10:14-15*** *And everyone had four faces; the first face was the face of a keruv, and the second face was the face of a man, and the third the face of a lion, and the fourth the face of an eagle. And the Keruvim were raised. This is the living creature that I saw by the Kevar River.*

But wait! There is another instance of these faces:

***Revelation 4:1*** *After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter. 2 And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne. 3 And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald. 4 And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold. 5 And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices: and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God. 6 And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind. 7 And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle.*

Notice that they are the same faces, just the faces are given to us in a different order. Now, the $64,000 question is: What is significant about the order?

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Camping** | **Mazzalot[[136]](#footnote-136)** | **Ezekiel 1** | **Revelation** |
| Lion  (east Yehuda) | Lion | Man | Lion |
| Man  (south Reuben | Man | Lion | Ox |
| Ox  (west Ephraim) | Ox | Ox | Man |
| Eagle  (north Dan) | Eagle | Eagle | Eagle |

Note these phrases from the Tanach:

“The courageous man whose heart is like that of a lion.”[[137]](#footnote-137)

“An eagle flies upward,” and “its eyes look far into the distance.”[[138]](#footnote-138)

“The power of a bull yields an abundant harvest.”[[139]](#footnote-139)

But what about “the face of a man”?[[140]](#footnote-140) It must refer to a quality that could be portrayed, not by any animal, but by humans, who are made in HaShem’s image.[[141]](#footnote-141)

Hence, “the face of a man” represents love.

In HaShem’s layout, the most important direction is the west. We understand this by noting that the ark of the covenant, in the Holy of Holies, was in the west relative to the rest of the Temple. Let’s examine the Biblical perspective for the westerly direction.

## The Westerly Direction

A heavy concentration of holy places is found in the area comprising the tribal territory of Binyamin: Gilgal, Bet-El, Kiryat-Ye’arim, Mitzpeh, Givat ha-Elohim, Nov, Giv’on and Jerusalem.

We see, then, that the border systematically passes in such a way that the sanctified site is in Binyamin, while the city itself is in the neighboring tribal territory, Yehuda or Ephraim.

In Sefer Yetzirah we learn that the tribes also have the following associations:

Yehuda / Nisan / Toleh

Yissachar / Iyar / Shaur

Zebulun / Sivan / Teomaim

Reuven / Tammuz / Sartan

Shimon / Av / Aryeh

Gad / Elul / Bethulah

Ephraim / Tishre / Moznaim

Menashe / Cheshvan / Aqurav

Binyamin / Kislev / Qashot

Dan / Tebet / Gedi

Asher / Shebat / Aquarius

Naftali / Adar / Dagim

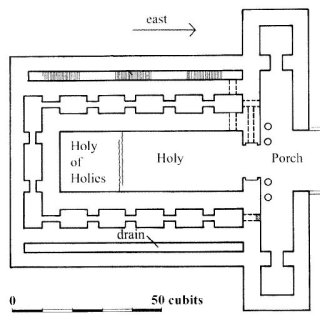
So, as one follows from the east around the Tent of Meeting, we see there is a correspondence, of the tribes, to the calendar of the year in its proper order. Now the question we need to ask is, why?

Perhaps the answer is found in the Midrash.

***Shemot Rabbah 15:7*** *You find that there are twelve constellations in the firmament, just as the heavens are not able to stand without the twelve constellations, so too the word is not able to stand without the twelve tribes.*

The Torah implicitly connects the tribes to the calendar to tell us that the impact which these cosmic bodies have on our earthly existence is significant.

Rachel’s children are associated with Tishre, Cheshvan, and Kislev. Tishre, the seventh month, is associated with Ephraim and contains the festivals of Rosh Hashana, Yom Kippur, and Succoth. Cheshvan is associated with Menashe and has no festivals. Kislev is associated with Binyamin and is associated with Chanukah.



The east-west axis of the *Mishkan* and the Temple are not random or arbitrary, but rather of spiritual significance. It is clear that the service was performed from east to west; the more one proceeds westwards, the deeper one enters into the Temple. The service in the courtyard is more external and material, as opposed to the service in the Holy, which is more internal and spiritual.

We can begin to understand the importance of camping in the ‘west’ when we understand that *those who go east are going away from HaShem*. All of Scripture indicates that distancing oneself or removal from before HaShem expresses itself in going eastward.

When Adam was expelled from the garden,[[142]](#footnote-142) where he walked with HaShem, he is cast out of the presence of HaShem and moved further *east*, further from ‘The Light’. The Cherubim[[143]](#footnote-143) were placed at the eastern gate because when man moves towards HaShem (travelling west) he will encounter the eastern gate.

Cain killed Abel and is sent even further to the east as his crime distances him from HaShem. Rashi[[144]](#footnote-144) says that the easterly direction always offers asylum for murderers:

**Rashi’s Commentary for: Bereshit (Genesis) 4:16 to the east of Eden** --There his father was exiled when he was driven out of the Garden of Eden, as it is said[[145]](#footnote-145) “and He stationed at the east of the Garden of Eden, etc., to guard” the way of approach to the Garden, from which we can learn that Adam was there. And we find that **the easterly direction always offers asylum for murderers,** as it is said:[[146]](#footnote-146) “Then Moses separated, etc.” [three cities of refuge] in the direction of the sunrise”.[[147]](#footnote-147) Another explanation: בְּאֶרֶץנוֹד means that wherever he went, the earth would quake beneath him, and the people would say, “Go away from him; this is the one who killed his brother”.[[148]](#footnote-148)

When Lot separated from Avraham,[[149]](#footnote-149) whom HaShem loved, he moved himself to the east. He moved himself away from The One to whom HaShem spoke. He moved himself away from ‘The Light’.

When our sins forced the Shechinah to leave the Temple (and the west), the Shechinah went east to go into exile with us.[[150]](#footnote-150)

In every case, going east means to move away from HaShem and to move away from ‘The Light’.

*Going to the east is* ***not*** *a good thing. Those who go east are going away from HaShem*.

Coming from the east, by going west, we move closer to HaShem. Going from the east, towards the west, is to move closer to HaShem.

The Alter Rebbe says that by looking at heaven and earth one not only becomes aware of their Godly vitalizing force, but also perceives how the world and all its inhabitants are truly nullified to the divine life-force. This can be perceived by observing the stars and planets, all of which travel in a westerly direction. This westerly movement is observed by people on earth looking at the heavenly bodies at night. Just as we say that the sun rises in the east and sets in the west, so all of the planetary bodies follow this same direction in their movement. In doing so they express their nullification to the *Shechinah,* the Divine Presence, which is in the west.

*And it is also seen with a glance of the eye that they are nullified to His blessed light, by the fact that they “prostrate” themselves every day towards the west at the time of their setting. As the Rabbis, of blessed memory, commented on the verse:[[151]](#footnote-151) “...and the hosts of the heavens bow before You,” that the Shechinah* abides in the west.[[152]](#footnote-152)

It is also well known that the Menorah with its seven flames of light teaches us how to shape our spiritual and intellectual existence, symbolized by the light, if it is to unfold on the soil of God’s Sanctuary. The main part of the Menorah in the Temple consisted of a center shaft upon whose summit the light burned in a westerly direction, turning towards the Holy-of Holies that contained the ark with HaShem’s Torah. From this center shaft emerged side arms to the right and left, which initially branched outward but then strove upward and, on the summit, turned their light from the right and the left towards the light of the center shaft.

Now that we have an understanding of the importance of the westerly direction Rachel’s children’s part in this direction, let’s look at the blessing that were given by Yaaqob and Moshe to Rachel’s children and their respective tribes.

## Bimodal Calendar

The Jewish calendar also contains another duality and synthesis: its days are counted in accordance with the cycles of the sun *and* the moon. While the West’s calendar, based on the Roman one, is purely solar, and the Islamic calendar is purely lunar, the Jewish calendar has aspects of both. Each month in the Jewish calendar follows the moon, yet, the Jewish year often contains two Adar months. This way, Passover always occurs in the spring, and all other months correspond to particular seasons accordingly. Here also, *Yosef* appears primarily associated with the year as a whole, while *Yehuda* appears to be primarily connected to the lunar months.

This duality in the Jewish calendar is reflected in the Jewish people itself and in their two prototypical leaders: Yehuda and Yosef.

Yehuda represents *Nisan*.[[153]](#footnote-153)

Ephraim[[154]](#footnote-154) represents *Tishri*.[[155]](#footnote-155)

Tishri is the new year for Gentile kings[[156]](#footnote-156)

Nisan is the new year for Jewish kings.[[157]](#footnote-157)

During Temple days the Torah was read through in three and a half years. The first cycle began in Tishri and the second cycle began in Nisan. This suggests that the first cycle represents Ephraim and Gentile kings, while the second cycle represents Yehuda and Jewish Kings.

Because the two cycles causes the same reading to be offset by six months, we learn that the readings have a connection to Ephraim, and then three and half years later that same reading applies Yehuda. Thus the months of the years achieve a prophetic significance relative to these two tribes.

## Ben Noach vs. Bne Israel[[158]](#footnote-158)

Bereshit (Genesis) 37:2: “…And Yosef brought evil speech about them to their father.”

Rashi commenting on 37:2, gives us the following insight:

אֶת־דִּבָּתָ֥ם רָעָ֖ה**: “Every evil thing** that he saw in his brothers, the sons of Leah, he would tell to his father: They were eating an animal that was not yet dead, were degrading the sons of the maidservants to call them servants, and were suspected of immorality. For all three, he was punished…”

The relationship between Yosef and the brothers began to deteriorate when he gave negative reports of the brothers’ actions to their father, Yaaqob Abinu. One of those actions was that they would eat from a limb of an animal that they had slaughtered, while the animal’s body was still shaking (known as mefarcheses), even though it seemed to be dead.

Yosef believed that they were transgressing the prohibition of eiver min hachai, eating a limb from a living animal. This account is very difficult to understand. Surely, the righteous brothers would not transgress such a severe issur, but what was their justification for eating it while it was still shaking? And why was Yosef punished for reporting this to Yaaqob, if it seemed to him that they were committing a transgression? On the other hand, if they were not transgressing eiver min hachai, how could Yosef give a slanderous report to their father?

The Parshat Drachim[[159]](#footnote-159) explains that there was a fundamental halachic disagreement between Yosef and the brothers, which was the at the root of all of the actions that Yosef reported to Yaaqob. There was a major question as to the halachic status of the Bne Yaaqob at that time: Did they have the status of Bne Noach, or were they already considered to be in the category of Bne Israel? There are numerous ramifications of this question, and in most cases, being a Ben Israel would involve far more yissurim[[160]](#footnote-160) than being a Ben Noach.

However, there are some situations where having the status of Israel would be more lenient than being a Ben Noach, and it was in these areas where the brothers and Yosef disagreed.

The Parshat Drachim explains that according to Torah law for Bne Israel, once the animal has been slaughtered, it is permitted to eat from its limbs, even if it is still shaking. However, according to the law for Bne Noach, even if the animal has been slaughtered, as long as it is still shaking, it is still considered to be alive, and therefore, if a person would eat from one of its limbs while it is still shaking, then he would transgress eiver min hachai.

The Parshat Drachim continues that the brothers considered themselves to have the full status of Bne Israel, and therefore, it was totally permitted for them to eat a limb from the animal even while the body was still shaking. He then argues that Yosef also agreed that their basic status was as Bne Israel. However, even though this was the basic halacha, Yosef was on such a high level of righteousness, that he felt that he should only conduct himself with the status of a Israel when that meant that he would have to be stricter in halacha.

However, when adhering to the status of a Israel would result in leniencies, he felt that he should be strict as if he was a Ben Noach. It is likely that the fact that he was strict on himself, would not seem to have bothered the brothers, but the problem was that he also felt that they should be as strict as he was. In addition, he acted on this belief, and informed Yaaqob that they were transgressing eiver min hachai by eating the shaking animal, because that is forbidden for Bne Noach.

As is always, the case, when Chazal point out failures of the great people in the Torah, they significantly magnify their errors so that they become relatable on our level. But on some minute level, it seemed that Yosef’s mistake was that he wanted to impose his own stringencies on others, and the result was that they resented him.

This cause me to consider the following table:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Yosef** (Rachel) | **Yehuda** (Leah) |
| **Ben Noach** | **Bne Israel** |
| **Physical Mission** | **Spiritual Mission** |
| Tafel - וטפל‎ (enabler of the essence, or secondary) | Ikar - עיקר  (essence, or primary) |
| Good vs. Evil | True vs. False |
| Very strict on himself, no leeway for transgressions. | Leniencies for his transgressions. |
| Rachel’s children must be in ***physical*** control of physical resources. | The ***spiritual*** control of Israel is in the hands of Yehuda’s family. |
| Awakening from below (human initiative) | Awakening from above |
| Concerned for the world. | Concerned for the family. |
| Tzadik Gamur[[161]](#footnote-161)  Yosef is the higher Tzadik who serves God through the higher consciousness. | Baal Teshuva[[162]](#footnote-162)  Yehudah is the lower Tzadik who serves God through the manner of lower consciousness. |
| Higher Wisdom –  Esoteric dimensions of the Torah. | Lower Wisdom -  Revealed dimensions of the written and oral Torah. |
| Ashkenazim | Sephardim |
| Written Torah | Oral Torah |
| Sealed deed of the purchase[[163]](#footnote-163) | Open deed of the purchase[[164]](#footnote-164) |
| Sod: Yosef symbolizes ***redemption***.[[165]](#footnote-165) A bottom up approach. | Sod: Yehuda symbolizes ***prayer***. A top down approach. |
| Yosef craves Torah study while performing mitzvot. | Yehuda craves mitzvot while studying Torah. |
| Level of Yaaqob | Level of Israel |
| Zionism[[166]](#footnote-166) |  |
| Concealed Holiness | Revealed Holiness |
| Revealed World  (Buried on the road.) | Hidden World (Buried in a cave.) |
| Hidden | Revealed |
| Toil of Shabbat. | Toil of the weekdays. |
| Yosef is pleasure, the Oneg of Shabbat, the eating of the Shabbat meal. | Yehudah is the pain and difficulty of the weekdays. |
| Roots | Fruit |
| Mashpia (Giver) | Mekabel (Receiver)[[167]](#footnote-167) |
| Higher rung now. | Higher rung in messianic days. |
| Mashiach ben Yosef  Messiah of the Beginning | Mashiach ben David |
| Zeir Anpin[[168]](#footnote-168) | Malchut[[169]](#footnote-169) |
| Ephraim[[170]](#footnote-170) represents *Tishri*.[[171]](#footnote-171) | Yehuda represents *Nisan*.[[172]](#footnote-172) |
| Tishri is the new year for Gentile kings[[173]](#footnote-173) | Nisan is the new year for Jewish kings.[[174]](#footnote-174) |

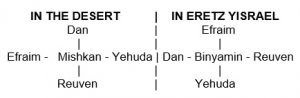
It is well known that husbands crave the physical aspect of their wives, while at the same time being the spiritual leader of his family. Similarly, wives crave the spiritual aspect of their husbands while being in charge of the physical aspects of their relationship. In the same way, Yosef had the *physical* power and craved the *spiritual* power; and Yehuda had the *spiritual* power while craving the *physical* power. The following table illustrates the *physical* control of resources utilized by Yosef and the *spiritual* control of resources utilized by Yehuda.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Yosef** | **Yehuda** |
| Yosef fed the world in Egypt. He caused the Egyptians to be circumcised. He gathered the wealth of the nations. | Yehuda founded the yeshiva in Goshen. He confessed his sins for the benefit of others.[[175]](#footnote-175) |
| Yehoshua conquered Canaan from the Gentiles and apportioned it to the Bne Israel. | Caleb conquered Chevron and apportioned it the tribe of Yehuda. |
| Saul was to obliterate the Amalekites. | David wrote the Psalms. |
| Mordechai ruled the world from Shushan  (127 provinces). |  |
| Mashiach ben Yosef | Mashiach ben David |
| Ephraim / Tishre / Moznaim  Menashe / Cheshvan / Aqurav  Binyamin / Kislev / Qashot | Yehuda / Nisan / Toleh |

## Tribal Inheritances

Amazingly, the four tribal inheritances surrounding Binyamin belong to the four heads of the camps that surrounded the Mishkan in the desert: Yehuda, Reuven, Ephraim, and Dan.

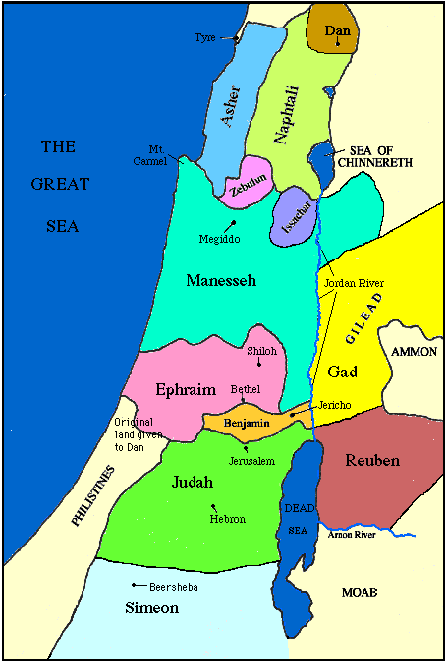
Recall from Sefer Yehoshua, that when the tribes receive their “inheritance” (as described in chapters 13->19), we find a very similar configuration!

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Note how in both configurations the site of the Shechinah, be it the Mishkan in the desert, or the Mikdash in Binyamin’s territory and is surrounded by the same four ‘leadership’ tribes! [The directions have simply rotated 90 degrees (and inverted).]

One could suggest that the Torah dedicates such minute detail to this manner of travel, to emphasize how the Mishkan serves this double purpose:

1. It acts as a symbol of HaShem’s presence within the camp of Israel,[[176]](#footnote-176) and...
2. It functions as a constant reminder to Bne Israel, as they travel, of their Divine purpose.



## Binyamin’s Territory[[177]](#footnote-177)

It is no accident that Binyamin, in whose portion the Divine Presence is destined to dwell, is part of the camp of Ephraim, on the west side – the “place of the Divine Presence”.[[178]](#footnote-178) The commentators note this: see, for example, Rabbenu Bechaye on Bamidbar 2:2 and, in a manner closer to our discussion, the Maharal, Gevurot HaShem, chapter 42, where he writes: “Binyamin went down first because he was closer to the sea (the West) and longed for it, and for this reason he merited to have the Divine Presence in his portion, because it was clear that he possessed the “power of the west,” and the Divine Presence is in the west.”

Chapters 18-19 of the book of Yehoshua describe the territories of the seven tribes that remained in Shiloh:

And the whole congregation of the children of Israel assembled together at Shiloh and set up the Tent of Meeting there. And the land was conquered before them. And there remained among the children of Israel seven tribes who had not yet received their inheritance. And Yehoshua said to the children of Israel, “How long will you be remiss in going to possess the land, which the Lord God of your fathers has given you…”

Several points in these chapters reinforce the idea that the territory of Binyamin is a special territory.

The details of the territory of Binyamin

The first point that clearly emerges is the fact that the territory of Binyamin is the first territory described among the territories of the seven tribes who were remiss in going to possess their land. This point is very interesting, because from every perspective, other tribes come before it, the precedence given to the sons of Leah over the sons of Rachel, the order of their births, etc. In addition, it is interesting that as opposed to all the other tribes who receive their territories in Shiloh, with respect to whom the description of their territories is short and concise, in the case of Binyamin, the description is detailed and similar in nature to the detailed account appearing in connection to the territories of Yehuda and the sons of Yosef.

R. Alkalai argues that natural redemption precedes the supernatural redemption. He refers to this as the Mashiach ben Yosef preceding the Mashiach ben David.[[179]](#footnote-179)

The word “pe’at - פְּאַת” in the sense of “side,” appears in Scripture in three different contexts: in the account of the cities of the Levites,[[180]](#footnote-180) in Yehezchel’s description of the borders,[[181]](#footnote-181) and in the chapters dealing with the Mikdash[[182]](#footnote-182) and in the command and execution of the Mishkan.[[183]](#footnote-183) In addition to these three contexts, the word appears several times in the account of the borders of the tribal territories, once in Yehoshua[[184]](#footnote-184) in the account of the northern border of Yehuda that abuts upon the tribe of Binyamin, and in four other places, all in the description of the territory of Binyamin.[[185]](#footnote-185) The fact that this word is used in the account of the territories primarily with respect to the tribe of Binyamin emphasizes once again the uniqueness of this territory.

*It may be suggested that the explanation for all these phenomena lies in the assumption that Binyamin is the tribe whose territory was chosen to serve as the territory of the Shechinah.[[186]](#footnote-186)*

## Mishkan’s Locations and the Temple

Rachel’s children are beloved by HaShem chose to rest His Presence in the Binyamin’s territory. Binyamin’s blessing, given by Moshe, deals exclusively with HaShem’s promise that His Shechinahwill dwell within Binyamin’s borders [‘shoulders’].

The concentration of holy places in the portion of Binyamin is noted in a surprising assertion by Rav Dimi[[187]](#footnote-187) to the effect that ALL OF THE STATIONS OF THE MISHKAN’S JOURNEY WERE LOCATED IN THE PORTION OF BINYAMIN:[[188]](#footnote-188)

***Zevachim 118b*** *When R. Dimi came [from Palestine], he said: The Shechinah rested on Israel in three places: in Shiloh,[[189]](#footnote-189) in Nob and Gibeon,[[190]](#footnote-190) and in the Eternal House;[[191]](#footnote-191) and in all of these it rested [on Israel] only in the portion of Binyamin, for it is said, He covereth him all day:[[192]](#footnote-192) all ‘coverings’ will be nought elsewhere but in Binyamin’s portion. Abaye went and told this to R. Yosef. Said he to him: Kaylil[[193]](#footnote-193) had but one son, and he is not ‘finished’.[[194]](#footnote-194) Surely it is written, And He forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh; and it is written, Moreover He abhorred the tent of Yosef, and chose not the tribe of Ephraim?[[195]](#footnote-195) — Said R. Adda [b. Mattenah]: What is his difficulty? perhaps the Shechinah was in Binyamin’s portion, while the Sanhedrin[[196]](#footnote-196) was in Yosef’s portion,[[197]](#footnote-197) as we find in the Eternal House that the Shechinah was in Binyamin’s portion, whereas the Sanhedrin was in Yehuda’s portion?*

In response to Rav Yosef’s proofs that Shiloh is located in the midst of the portion of Ephraim, and therefore it is impossible that it could be considered part of the portion of Binyamin, Rav Ada maintains that just as the border between Binyamin and Yehuda at Mount Moriah includes a strip that protrudes from Yehuda (including the altar and the place where the Sanhedrin sit) into the territory of Binyamin, so a strip protrudes from the portion of Yosef into the territory of Binyamin. This solution is somewhat problematic, since the distance between Shiloh and the southern border of Ephraim (the Ephraim-Binyamin border) is several kilometers long – a distance very much further than that between Mount Moriah and the Yehuda-Binyamin border. Nevertheless, the Gemara adopts this solution - and all for the purpose of incorporating Shiloh into the portion of Binyamin, so as to accommodate the view that all of the stations where the Mishkan rested, without exception – including even the distant Shiloh – must have been part of the portion of Binyamin, which is the portion of the Divine Presence.[[198]](#footnote-198) [[199]](#footnote-199)

During the conquest of Canaan, the main Israelite camp was at Gilgal.[[200]](#footnote-200) The “Mishkan” was at Gilgal for fourteen years; seven during the period of conquest of the Land, and seven during the period of division of the Land among the Tribes of Israel. Gilgal was situated in the tribal territory of Ephraim.

After the conquest and division of the land among the tribes, the tabernacle was moved to Shiloh in the tribal territory of Ephraim (Joshua’s tribe) to avoid disputes among the other tribes.[[201]](#footnote-201) The “Mishkan” remained in Shiloh from the time of Yehoshua, all through the Period of the “Shoftim,” the “Judges,” the fifteen of whom led the Jewish People for a period of approximately 400 years, according to traditional sources and approximately 200 years, according to modern scholars.

The subsequent history of the structure is separate from that of the Ark of the Covenant. After the Ark was captured by the Philistines, King Saul moved the tabernacle to Nob[[202]](#footnote-202), in the tribal territory of Ephraim.

The “Mishkan” was moved to Givon,[[203]](#footnote-203) in the tribal territory of Ephraim, for its last stop. After this, the Holy Temple, the “Beit HaMikdash,” would be built in Yerushalayim by Shlomo, the son of David.

The Ark was eventually brought to Jerusalem, half in the tribal territory of Ephraim and half in the tribal territory of Yehuda.



The Talmud in Zevachim 118: states that the “Mishkan” was at Gilgal for 14 years, at Shiloh for 369 years, and at Nov and Givon, together for another 57 years. Thus the Presence of HaShem was with the Jewish People, in “Eretz Israel” before the building of the “Beit HaMikdash,” for a total of some 440 years.

There is no mention of the tabernacle in the Tanach after the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple by the Babylonians in 587 BCE.

Concerning Shiloh, the Psalmist said:

***Tehillim (Psalms) 78:67-68*** *Moreover He abhorred the tent of Yosef, and chose not the tribe of Ephraim; 68 But chose the tribe of Yehuda, the mount Zion which He loved.*

HaShem’s allocation of His inheritance in the land of Israel provided that the Temple would be situated so that half of the Temple was in the territory of Binyamin and half was in the territory of Yehuda.

**Yoma 12a** *For it has been taught: What lay in the lot of Yehuda? The Temple Mount, the offices and the courtyards. And what lay in the lot of Binyamin? The Hall, the Sanctuary and the Holy of Holies. And a strip of land went forth from Yehuda’s lot and went into Binyamin’s territory, and on this the Temple was built. Binyamin the righteous was longing to absorb this strip of land into his territory [literally, swallow it] every day, as it is written, “He coveted it all day”.[[204]](#footnote-204) Therefore he obtained the privilege of becoming the host of the Omnipotent, as it is said, “And He dwells between his shoulders”.*

This arrangement was reflected in Moshe’s blessing to Binyamin:

***Debarim (Deuteronomy) 33:12*** *And to Binyamin he said: God’s beloved shall dwell safely by Him; He shall cover him all the day, and between his shoulders He shall rest.*

In this blessing, for the first time, the Torah connects the resting of the Divine Presence with a specific place in Eretz Israel, the portion of Binyamin.

## Levitical cities

In the account of the cities of the Levites appearing in Yehoshua 21, it is stated that cities of the Levites apportioned to the Kohanim, Aharon’s descendants, were only given to two tribes, Yehuda and Binyamin.[[205]](#footnote-205) It should be mentioned that at this point the Mishkan was standing in Shiloh, and the location of the future Temple was still not known, nor even the assumption that it would be built on the land of the tribe of Binyamin.

***Yehoshua (Joshua) 21:4*** *And the lot came out for the families of the Kohathites; and the children of Aaron the priest, who were of the Levites, had by lot out of the tribe of Yehuda, and out of the tribe of the Simeonites, and out of the tribe of Binyamin, thirteen cities.*

*Locations of Cities*

following table reflects the list in Joshua 21 of the Kohanim (Priests) cities in Binyamin’s territory:[[206]](#footnote-206)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Tribe** | **Levitical cities** | **Levite division** | **City of refuge** |
| Asher | Abdon | Gershonites |  |
| Asher | Helkath | Gershonites |  |
| Asher | Mishal | Gershonites |  |
| Asher | Rehob | Gershonites |  |
| Binyamin | Almon | Kohanim |  |
| Binyamin | Anathoth | Kohanim |  |
| Binyamin | Geba | Kohanim |  |
| Binyamin | Gibeon | Kohanim |  |
| Dan | Aijalon | Kohathites |  |
| Dan | Eltekeh | Kohathites |  |
| Dan | Gath Rimmon | Kohathites |  |
| Dan | Gibbethon | Kohathites |  |
| Ephraim | Beth Horon | Kohathites |  |
| Ephraim | Gezer | Kohathites |  |
| Ephraim | Kibzaim | Kohathites |  |
| Ephraim | Shechem | Kohathites | ♦ |
| Gad | Ramoth in Gilead | Merarites | ♦ |
| Gad | Jazer | Merarites |  |
| Gad | Mahanaim | Merarites |  |
| Gad | Heshbon | Merarites |  |
| Issachar | Daberath | Gershonites |  |
| Issachar | En Gannim | Gershonites |  |
| Issachar | Jarmuth | Gershonites |  |
| Issachar | Kishion | Gershonites |  |
| Yehuda | Ain [6] | Kohanim |  |
| Yehuda | Beth Shemesh | Kohanim |  |
| Yehuda | Debir | Kohanim |  |
| Yehuda | Eshtemoa | Kohanim |  |
| Yehuda | Holon | Kohanim |  |
| Yehuda | Jattir | Kohanim |  |
| Yehuda | Juttah | Kohanim |  |
| Yehuda | Kiriath Arba (Hebron) | Kohanim | ♦ |
| Yehuda | Libnah | Kohanim |  |
| Manasseh | Be Eshterah | Gershonites |  |
| Manasseh | Gath Rimmon | Kohathites |  |
| Manasseh | Golan | Gershonites | ♦ |
| Manasseh | Tanach | Kohathites |  |
| Naphtali | Hammoth Dor | Gershonites |  |
| Naphtali | Kartan | Gershonites |  |
| Naphtali | Kedesh in Galilee | Gershonites | ♦ |
| Reuben | Bezer | Merarites | ♦ |
| Reuben | Jahaz | Merarites |  |
| Reuben | Kedemoth | Merarites |  |
| Reuben | Mephaath | Merarites |  |
| Simeon | See Yehuda (above) |  |  |
| Zebulun | Dimnah | Merarites |  |
| Zebulun | Jokneam | Merarites |  |
| Zebulun | Kartah | Merarites |  |
| Zebulun | Nahalal | Merarites |  |

# Yosef and His Blessings

Yosef was special because he was the son of Yaaqob’s beloved wife, Rachel. The Torah attests of Rachel:

***Bereshit (Genesis) 29:17*** *… Rachel was shapely and beautiful.[[207]](#footnote-207)*

יְפַת-תֹּאַר, וִיפַת מַרְאֶה

and of her son Yosef:

***Bereshit (Genesis) 39:6*** *… And Yosef was well built and handsome.*

יְפֵה-תֹאַר וִיפֵה מַרְאֶה

The two verses uses the same Hebrew phrases: yefat / yefeh to’ar, vi-yfat / yefeh mareh, to which our Hakhamim apply the saying: “Throw a stick into the air, and it will [always] fall on its end”.[[208]](#footnote-208) This midrash indicates the physical trait shared by Rachel and Yosef, which the Bible expresses in identical language. The proverb teaches that we should not be surprised by this similarity, since Rachel was exceedingly beautiful, so was her son.

Yosef HaTzaddik is the *only* male in the Tanach who is described as beautiful. He is handsome in form and handsome in appearance. What is beauty? Beauty is when people can look through a person and see HaShem. It is also worth noting that beauty is when two opposite things come together in harmony.

The number of women that are described as “beautiful” or “handsome” is exceedingly small. That Rachel and Yosef are included in this list demonstrates the importance of the *physical* attributes to their mission. Bear in mind that ‘beauty’ = ‘transparency’. A beautiful person in one who is the same on the inside as they are on the outside. Rachel and Yosef were beautiful inside and out, and what’s more, that the inside and outside were interdependent. Their faces were a transparent canvas from which emanated their inner radiance.

Yosef’s blessing is extensive and shows Yaaqob’s special love for him. It is the bracha of Avraham to Yitzchak, and of Yitzchak to Yaaqob, and that Yaaqob gives to Yosef, son of Rachel.

Yaaqob gave Yosef the following blessing:

***Bereshit (Genesis) 49:22-26*** *Yosef is a fruitful vine, a fruitful vine by a fountain; its branches run over the wall. 23 The archers have dealt bitterly with him, and shot at him, and hated him; 24 But his bow abode firm, and the arms of his hands were made supple, by the hands of the Mighty One of Yaaqob, from thence, from the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel, 25 Even by the God of thy father, who shall help thee, and by the Almighty, who shall bless thee, with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that coucheth beneath, blessings of the breasts, and of the womb. 26 The blessings of thy father are mighty beyond the blessings of my progenitors unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills; they shall be on the head of Yosef, and on the crown of the head of the prince among his brethren.*

Moshe gave Yosef[[209]](#footnote-209) the following blessing:

***Debarim (Deuteronomy) 33:13-17*** *And of Yosef he said: Blessed of HaShem be his land; for the precious things of heaven, for the dew, and for the deep that coucheth beneath, 14 And for the precious things of the fruits of the sun, and for the precious things of the yield of the moons, 15 And for the tops of the ancient mountains, and for the precious things of the everlasting hills, 16 And for the precious things of the earth and the fulness thereof, and the good will of Him that dwelt in the bush; let the blessing come upon the head of Yosef, and upon the crown of the head of him that is prince among his brethren. 17 His firstling bullock, majesty is his; and his horns are the horns of the wild-ox; with them he shall gore the peoples all of them, even the ends of the earth; and they are the ten thousands of Ephraim, and they are the thousands of Manasseh.*

Moshe clearly indicates that Yosef is to be a prince among his brothers. This helps us to understand why we see a king from Rachel’s children before we see a king from the tribe of Yehuda.

***Bereshit (Genesis) 44:18*** *Then Yehuda came near unto him (Yosef), and said: ‘Oh my lord, let thy servant, I pray thee, speak a word in my lord’s ears, and let not thine anger burn against thy servant; for thou art even as Pharaoh.*

According to Midrash Rabbah,[[210]](#footnote-210) Yehuda approached Yosef with a three prong strategy; war, appeasement and prayer.

***Tehillim (Psalms) 48:5*** *For, behold, the kings joined together, they advanced together. 6 They saw, and were astounded; they were troubled, and fled. 7 Trembling took hold of them there, pangs, as of a woman in travail.*

*“For behold the kings joined together*”, this is Yehuda and Yosef. “*They advanced together*”, this one was filled with ire (*evra*) towards the other, and this one was filled with ire towards the other. “*They saw and were astounded*”, [this refers to the brothers’ reaction:] “*And the men were astounded, each man to his fellow*” “*They were troubled and fled*”, [this refers to the brothers’ reaction:] “*And his brothers could not respond*”. “*Trembling took hold of them there*”, this refers to the *shevatim*. They said: Kings are discussing one with the other; what concern is it to us if the kings are in discussion?[[211]](#footnote-211)

Regarding Yehuda and Yosef’s clash over Binyamin’s fate, The Midrash teaches: “They [the brothers] said: Kings are negotiating with each other; of what concern is it to us?”[[212]](#footnote-212) In light of the brothers referring to Yehuda and Yosef as “kings”, these two tribes must clearly be special in some way.

By choosing to send Yehuda, specifically, to Yosef, “To show the way before him to Goshen”,[[213]](#footnote-213) Yaaqob seems to recognize this as well. Yehuda represents the *spiritual* aspect of kingship.

On the other hand. Yosef exercises *physical* control over the *physical* aspects of the kingdom. This can be seen in Yosef’s life where we was in charge of all of Potiphar’s *physical* house except for Potiphar’s wife.

When he was cast into the prison pit, the warden put him in control of the prisoners and all of the *physical* aspects of the prison.

When Yosef was elevated to be second to Paro, he was put in charge of all of the *physical* aspects of the kingdom.

*The Redemption*

***Amos 9:13*** *Behold, the days come, saith HaShem, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt.*

*Yehuda approached him:[[214]](#footnote-214) Behold days are coming, the words of HaShem, when the plower will approach the harvester*.[[215]](#footnote-215) *The ‘plower’ is Yehuda. The ‘harvester’ is Yosef*.[[216]](#footnote-216)

Two ways theverse selected by the Midrash describes the future redemption. After a long and discouraging litany of Israel’s shortcomings and its agonizing descent into the throes of exile, Amos proclaimed that redemption would come and there would be such prosperity that by the time one year’s harvest was over it would be time for the next year’s plowing. The joining together of harvest and plowing would be a symbol of joy and deliverance, and it is in the same terms that the Midrash describes the meeting of the two brotherly ‘kings,’ likening Yehuda to the plower and Yosef to the harvester. Why? If we can understand this, we will have come a long way in understanding the destiny and goals of Israel.

*Yosef gets an extra letter.*

**Sotah *36b*** Yosef, who sanctified God’s Name in privacy, merited that one letter of the Name of the Holy One, Blessed is He, would be added to his name. Yehuda, who sanctified God’s Name publicly, merited that he would be called entirely by the Name of the Holy One, Blessed is He*.*

Yosef was sorely tempted by the seductive wife of Potiphar, his master, but despite her near success, Yosef remained strong and spurned her.*[[217]](#footnote-217)* In recognition of his merit, the letter ה from God’s Four-Letter Name was added to Yosef’s name, as we find in Tehillim (Psalms) 81:6 that that he is called Yehoseph [יהוסף]. Though he sanctified the Name by his steadfastness and courage, he did it in privacy, not making an impact on broad masses of people, so he was rewarded with only one letter of the Divine Name; it was inserted into his name in a hardly noticeable manner, and only one time in Scripture is it found.

HaRav Gedaliah Schorr notes that the name Yehoseph, which already had the letters י and ו, thus contained three letters of the Name: י, ה, ו. The last ה of the Four-Letter Name is lacking, quite appropriately, because, in Kabbalistic terms, that letter alludes to the attribute of מלכות, God’s Kingship, the attribute that signifies public awareness of His , power, just as a human king’s authority is acknowledged throughout his realm. Yosef did not bring God’s power to public awareness, so the final letter of the Name could not be awarded to him.[[218]](#footnote-218)

*Reveals Secrets of the Torah*

“Kol HaTor” says[[219]](#footnote-219) “And Pharoah called Yosef’s name Zaphenat Paneach” [i.e. Uncover of Secrets].[[220]](#footnote-220) One of the tasks of the Mashiach ben Yosef in each generation is to reveal the secrets of the Torah.

## A Father and a Son[[221]](#footnote-221)

A question emerges, again, only when we compare this parsha with a later section of text: In next week’s parsha, the first in the book of Shemot (Exodus), a textual anomaly arises:

***Bereshit (Genesis) 50:26*** *So Yosef died, being a hundred and ten years old; and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt.*

The Book of Genesis comes to an end with the death of Yosef, and the Book of Exodus begins with Yosef’s death, recorded for the second time:

***Shemot (Exodus) 1:6*** *And Yosef died, and all his brothers, and all that generation.*

While this may seem like a simple literary device, to “catch the readers up” and remind them where we are up to,[[222]](#footnote-222) it should be noted that fundamentally the Book of Genesis is a book of the *Avot* and *Imahot*, the patriarchs and matriarchs, while the Book of Exodus is about the Children of Israel.[[223]](#footnote-223) The death of all 12 tribes could have been mentioned in Genesis, closing the door on that generation, or, alternatively, all twelve sons could have died in the beginning of Exodus. Only Yosef “dies twice.”[[224]](#footnote-224)

Yosef was fundamentally different from his brothers; he was not truly a part of their generation. Yosef was a “throwback” to a previous generation. The simple, chronological understanding of this phenomenon comes as no radical interpretation: though two people’s lives intersect chronologically, one belongs to the previous generation, while the other may be a part of the next generation. Yosef’s case was somewhat more profound: His age placed him firmly in the generation of Yaaqob’s sons, yet Yosef’s essence was related to the previous generation. He was a rare individual who had the ability to transcend his age and transform himself into something else. In fact, most of the people who came into contact with him were struck by this quality. We may summarize this particular attribute in terms of Yosef’s place as a “hinge” between two generations. Yosef was not part of a new generation; he was an extension of Yaaqob:

***Bereshit (Genesis) 37:2*** *These are the generations of Yaaqob Yosef, being seventeen years old...*

The Torah describes Yosef’s unique position in various ways. First, we are told that Yaaqob loved Yosef because he was his *ben zekunim*:

***Bereshit (Genesis) 37:3*** *Now Israel loved Yosef more than all his children, because he was his son of his old age* (ben zekunim - בֶן-זְקֻנִים)*; and he made him a coat of many colors.*

This term is often translated as “the child of his old age”, though this would be an unlikely explanation on two accounts: A number of Yosef’s brothers are very close in age, being that there were four women bearing children during the same time period.[[225]](#footnote-225) Furthermore, Yosef had a much younger brother, Binyamin, who truly was the child of Yaaqob’s old age. Targum Onkelos translates *zekunim* as wise. Often, age is associated with wisdom; thus, Yosef is a “*ben zekunim*”,[[226]](#footnote-226) a wise child.[[227]](#footnote-227) The Midrash takes up this theme as well, explaining that all that Yaaqob received from his father by tradition was passed on to Yosef. Here there was no generation gap.[[228]](#footnote-228)

Pharaoh’s estimation of Yosef’s unique abilities seems very similar:

***Bereshit (Genesis) 41:43*** *And he made him to ride in his second chariot; and they cried before him, Avrich; and he made him ruler over all the land of Egypt.*

The term used to describe Pharaoh’s new right-hand man is somewhat obscure; Onkelos says that the word *Avrich* means “father of the king”.[[229]](#footnote-229) Rashi cites this teaching and adds that we have a tradition[[230]](#footnote-230) that the word means ‘a father (*av*) in wisdom, despite tender (*rach*)[[231]](#footnote-231) in years,’ one whose wisdom transcends their years.[[232]](#footnote-232)

Yosef himself seems to refer to this quality and this relationship with Pharaoh when he tells his brothers that God sent him to Egypt and placed him as a “father” to Pharaoh.

***Bereshit (Genesis) 45:8*** *So now it was not you who sent me here, but God; and he has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt.*

When it is Yosef’s turn to receive his father’s blessing Yaaqob says:

***Bereshit (Genesis) 49:22-24*** *Yosef is a fruitful bough, a fruitful bough by a well; whose branches run over the wall. The archers fiercely attacked him, and shot at him, and hated him. But his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Yaaqob; from there is the shepherd, the stone of Israel.*

Yosef is referred to as *even Israel* which is literally translated as the “stone of Israel.” Onkelos[[233]](#footnote-233) understands the word *even* (stone) as an amalgam[[234]](#footnote-234) of *av* and *ben*, father and son: Yosef is not only a son, he is also a father. While this is far from remarkable, many people in the history of the world have been both fathers and sons, Yaaqob’s comments do much to identify this unique quality Yosef possessed. Yosef was a son and a father; he had the status of one of the twelve tribes, yet he also had the status of one of the patriarchs. He is an *av* and a *ben*. This is the reason Yosef’s death, and none of the other brothers’, is recorded in Genesis together with the other patriarchs; his status was elevated to that of his father Yaaqob, his grandfather Yitzchak and his great-grandfather Avraham. Nonetheless, he is also mentioned in Exodus with the other brothers; he is also a son of Yaaqob, a member of the collective known as the Children of Israel.

(In the incident of Yehuda and Tamar, Shela, Yehuda’s third son, was supposed to be given to Tamar. Instead, Tamar seduced Yehuda, Shela’s father. This compares with Yosef who was a father and a son, where Yehuda is the father and substitutes for the son, just as Ephraim and Menashe substitute for Yosef in the matter of the tribal lands.)

When does Yosef achieve this status? When his father bestows upon him a double portion he is thrust above the others of his generation, and his children achieve the same status as the other brothers. That was the blessing of Yaaqob, but the message runs much deeper than mere portions and wealth, or even inheritance in the Land of Israel. The Midrash expresses the idea in a teaching in which each of the four species is “matched” with one of the patriarchs. This presents a problem, as there are only three patriarchs. The Midrash brings Yosef to the rescue:

***Vayikra Rabbah 30:10*** *Another exposition of the text, “the fruit of the hadar tree”: Hadar symbolizes Avraham, whom the Holy One, blessed be He, honored (hiddero) with good old age; as it says, “And Avraham was old, getting on in days”,[[235]](#footnote-235) and it is written, “And honor (vehadarta) the face of the old man.[[236]](#footnote-236) “Branches (kappot) of palm trees” symbolizes Yitzchak who had been tied (kafut) and bound upon the altar. “And boughs of thick trees” symbolizes Yaaqob; just as the myrtle is crowded with leaves so was Yaaqob crowded with children. “And willows of the brook” symbolizes Yosef; as the willow wilts before the other three species, so Yosef died before his brethren.*

It seems strange to consider Yosef the “fourth wheel”, for Yosef was part of the next generation; nonetheless, this is exactly what this Midrash does. The three patriarchs have Yosef added to create a quartet.[[237]](#footnote-237)

This teaching has implications regarding a deep mystical teaching known as the chariot, or Merkava. The Merkavawas part of an awesome vision beheld by the Prophet Yehezchel. This Merkavais best described as a *spiritual* vehicle, a means of connecting our *physical* world and ourselves with the *spiritual* world that lies beyond our sensory grasp. In a sense, the Merkavais a *spiritual* elevator which enables man to connect with Heaven. The rabbis teach that the patriarchs are themselves, through their actions and teachings, a Merkava:

***Midrash Rabbah Bereshit 82:6*** *“And God went up from him, etc.”[[238]](#footnote-238) R. Shimon b. Lakish said: The Patriarchs are [God’s] chariot, for it says, ‘And God went up from upon Avraham”;[[239]](#footnote-239) “And God went up from upon him; And, behold, the Almighty stood above him”...[[240]](#footnote-240)*

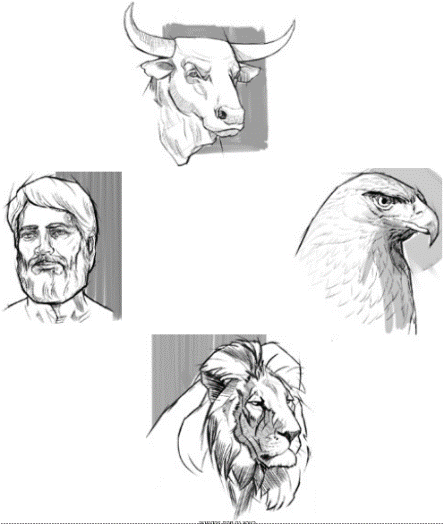
A chariot has four wheels; the mystical chariot of Yehezchel is no exception. When aligned with the three *Avot*, one wheel is missing; that fourth wheel[[241]](#footnote-241) is Yosef.[[242]](#footnote-242)

Interestingly, the first biblical character to ride in a chariot is Yosef:

***Bereshit (Genesis) 41:43*** *And he made him to ride in his second chariot; and they cried before him, Avrich; and he made him ruler over all the land of Egypt.*

There is another, deeper point which connects Yosef to the chariot of Yehezchel. In describing his vision, Yehezchel recounts the images he saw: On one of the four sides was an elusive image, described in the first chapter as an ox, and in the tenth chapter as a *keruv,*  or cherub.

***Yehezchel (Ezekiel) 1:10*** *As for the likeness of their faces, the four had the face of a man, and the face of a lion, on the right side; and the four had the face of an ox on the left side; the four also had the face of an eagle.*



***Yehezchel (Ezekiel) 10:14-15*** *And everyone had four faces; the first face was the face of a keruv, and the second face was the face of a man, and the third the face of a lion, and the fourth the face of an eagle. And the Keruvim were raised. This is the living creature that I saw by the Kevar River.*

***Bamidbar Rabba 2:10*** *Just as HaShem created the four points of the compass, so did He surround His Throne with the likenesses of four celestial Beings, and so did He command Moshe to organize the camp of the Bne Israel into four flag formations”.*

The image of an ox is used by Moshe when he blessed Yosef:

***Devarim (Deuteronomy) 33:13-17*** *And of Yosef he said, ‘Blessed of God be his land, for the precious things of heaven, for the dew, and for the deep that couches beneath, And for the precious fruits brought forth by the sun, and for the precious things put forth by the moon, and for the chief things of the ancient mountains, and for the precious things of the lasting hills, And for the precious things of the earth and its fullness, and for the good will of him who lived in the bush; let the blessing come upon the head of Yosef, and upon the top of the head of him who was separated from his brothers. As the firstborn of his* ***ox****, grandeur is his, and his horns are like the horns of a* ***wild ox****; with them he shall push the people together to the ends of the earth; and they are the ten thousands of Ephraim, and they are the thousands of Menashe.*

The highest, most intricate form of nature is life, or animal life, to be more specific. The four categories of living beings to which man has an ongoing, daily exposure (to the exclusion of the fish kingdom, with which we do not have extensive contact) are represented by the four images of the Divine Chariot. The lion is the “king” of the wild animals, the ox is the chief among the domestic animals, the eagle is the master of the avian world, and man, the pinnacle of all forms of life, is of course in a class of his own. By contemplating these four sections of the animal kingdom, which represent the highest and most complex forms of nature, a person can develop an appreciation of HaShem’s glory. In this sense, these beings are the banner-bearers of HaShem. They foster an awareness of His presence and His glory in the world.

Let us look more carefully at Yehezchel’s prophecy: The place at which Yehezchel has this vision is the River Kevar. In this vision, one aspect seems to shift between the image of an ox and a *keruv*. So many of the salient points are bound together by the etymology of these Hebrew words, that we must stop and take notice:

The letters *bet kaf Resh* spell *Bechor*, which means firstborn. Yosef is the fourth side of the *Merkava*; the root of the word *Merkava* is *RaCaB*. The site of Yehezchel’s vision of the *Merkava* was *KeVaR*, which is comprised of these same letters. Yosef rode in a chariot, and was called *Avrich*. Yosef is represented by the fourth side which is either an ox or a *keruv* another word composed of these same three letters.

Earlier we saw various opinions of the meaning of the word *Avrich*. The Ibn Ezra is of the opinion that this singular word is extrapolated from the word *berech*, which means knee: By Pharaoh’s order, everyone was commanded to bow on their knees[[243]](#footnote-243) at the sight of Yosef and his chariot.[[244]](#footnote-244) *Berech* is composed of these same three letters.[[245]](#footnote-245) These same three letters seem to have great significance for Yaaqob, as well: Throughout Yaaqob’s life the main issues that motivate and animate his life story were the issues of *bechora* (firstborn) and *bracha* (blessings), both of which are composed of these same letters. Yaaqob’s life story reaches its culmination in Yosef; as an extension of his father, Yosef receives the *bechora*, and the choicest *bracha*.

The nature of these three critical letters, which seem to bind together the narrative of Yaaqob and Yosef, encapsulates a very powerful message: These three letters are all “seconds”. As we know, Hebrew letters[[246]](#footnote-246) have numerical values which are often a key to otherwise unnoticed connections between concepts. The letter *bet* - בָּis the second of the single digits (*aleph bet*); *caf* - כֶis the second of the tens, and *resh* - רִis the second of the hundreds. The numerical value of these three letters is 222, making the numerical value of all the words which are composed of these letters identical. While we might have assumed that the word for firstborn, *bechor*, should have been composed of the first of each series of numbers (i.e., *aleph yud koof*, totaling 111), we find instead a profound idea: In many societies, firstborn sons wielded unlimited power under the rule of primogeniture. Judaism rejects the philosophical underpinnings of this system, for Judaism teaches that the only creation *ex nihilo* (creation of matter from nothingness) is God’s creation of the world. After the creation of Adam and Eve, all living things are extensions of previous generations. Thus, the “firstborn” is not first, he is an extension of the previous generation, hence the numerical value of *Bechor* is 222.[[247]](#footnote-247) The firstborn should see himself as an extension of his parents; indeed, the double portion assured the firstborn is a sort of compensation for the tremendous responsibility placed on the shoulders of the eldest son to care for the younger siblings[[248]](#footnote-248) as a quasi-parent.[[249]](#footnote-249)

No one in Tanach embraces this responsibility as well as Yosef did. Yosef is the quintessential firstborn. Despite his brothers’ treatment of him, he provides for all their needs for over seventy years, giving them shelter, food and jobs. Yosef is not just a father for Pharaoh, he is a father for all[[250]](#footnote-250) of Egypt and the surrounding territories. He is the *Mashbir Hagadol,[[251]](#footnote-251)* especially for his brothers.[[252]](#footnote-252)

What, then, of Yaaqob’s “abandonment” of the Torah law that mandates a double portion for the firstborn? Prior to the Revelation at Sinai, the Patriarchs were not bound by commandments *per se*. What set them apart, what made them spiritual giants worthy of fathering God’s chosen people, was their ability to discern and live by the deep spiritual meaning of the Torah.[[253]](#footnote-253) Their spiritual sensitivity to the Will of God enabled them to live according to the same philosophical principles that would later be codified in the system of Torah law. On that plane, Yosef, not Reuven, was the true firstborn. When Reuven had an opportunity to save his younger brothers from sin, and at the same time save Yosef from death, he was only partially successful.[[254]](#footnote-254) Later, in a desperate attempt to convince Yaaqob to allow Binyamin to join him on a dangerous mission to Egypt, Reuven assures Yaaqob that if any harm befalls Binyamin, Yaaqob “can kill two of my sons.”[[255]](#footnote-255) This pathetic plea indicates that not only was Reuven not an effective parent for his younger siblings, he was guilty of gross malpractice in terms of his own children.



Yosef, on the other hand, is the true “father.” His intelligence, his compassion, his dignity and his unwavering fidelity made him the object of admiration and emulation, trust and dependence for Potiphar, Pharaoh, and, eventually, for his own family. He was, from a very early age, a *ben zekunim*, a young man far wiser than his tender years, an Avrich, and an Even Israel. He was as strong as an ox, and as beautiful and innocent as a *keruv*. His unique combination of attributes made him both father and son. For this reason, his death is included, along with the other patriarchs, in the Book of Genesis, as an extension of Yaaqob, as well as in the Book of Exodus, along with the other sons of Yaaqob.

And when the Book of Exodus begins with the death of all the brothers, Yosef, the brother who was once excluded from the family, is once again counted. He is counted twice, for he was both a son and a father.

# Binyamin and His Blessings

Binyamin was the last son born to Yaaqob, and the last son born to Rachel. So, according to this order, Binyamin would be associated with the last month of the year, the month of Adar.

According to Chazal (the Sages of the Talmud), Binyamin was sinless:

***Shabbath 55b*** *An objection is raised: Four died through the serpent’s machinations,[[256]](#footnote-256) viz., Binyamin the son of Yaaqob, Amram the father of Moses, Jesse the father of David, and Caleb the son of David. Now, all are known by tradition, save Jesse the father of David, in whose case the Writ gives an explicit intimation. For it is written, And Absalom set Amasa over the host instead of Joab. Now Amasa was the son of a man whose name was Ithra the Israelite, that went in to Abigail the daughter of Nahash, sister to Zeruiah Joab’s mother.[[257]](#footnote-257) Now, was she the daughter of Nahash? Surely she was the daughter of Jesse, for it is written, and their sisters were Zeruiah and Abigail?[[258]](#footnote-258) Hence it must mean, the daughter of one who died through the machinations of the Nachash [serpent].[[259]](#footnote-259) Who is [the author of this]? Shall we say, the Tanna [who taught] about the ministering angels? — Surely there were Moses and Aaron too! Hence it must surely be R. Simeon b. Eleazar, which proves that there is death without sin and suffering without iniquity. Thus the refutation of R. Ammi is [indeed] a refutation.*

The Talmud relates that only ‘Four died through the serpent’s machinations (and not on account of their own sins):

**Binyamin** son of Yaaqob,

Amram father of Moses,

Jesse father of David and

Caleb son of David’.

Binyamin was the most perfect and sinless of Yaaqob’s sons. The sinlessness of Binyamin links him to Mashiach who also was sinless:

***2 Corinthians 5:20-21*** *Now then we are ambassadors for Mashiach, as though God did beseech [you] by us: we pray [you] in Mashiach’s stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him [to be] sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.*

The one who comes at the end (birth order) has to have absolute perfection.

Binyamin is blessed with success (sometimes qualified). Rashi mentions prophecies of Shaul and Mordechai & Esther.

Yaaqob blessed Binyamin with the following blessing:

***Bereshit (Genesis) 49:27*** *Binyamin is a wolf that raveneth; in the morning he devoureth the prey, and at even he divideth the spoil.’*

Moshe gave Binyamin the following blessing:

***Debarim (Deuteronomy) 33:12*** *Of Binyamin he said: The beloved of HaShem shall dwell in safety by Him; He covereth him all the day, and He dwelleth between his shoulders.[[260]](#footnote-260)*

The reason for the Divine choice of the portion of Binyamin is not stated explicitly in the Torah. Hence, our point of departure will be various rabbinical sources that try to explain it.

*Sifri Devarim*:[[261]](#footnote-261) *For what reason did Binyamin merit to have the Divine Presence rest in his portion? The situation may be compared to a king who visits each of his sons for a period of time. Each of them says, “He is staying with me!” The youngest son says, “Surely my father will not leave my older brothers and stay with me.” He goes about with a gloomy countenance and a heavy heart. His father sees him standing, sad and dejected. He says [to the older brothers], “You will all have a portion at the banquets, but I shall sleep over with him”. So the Holy One said: The Temple will stand in the portion of Binyamin, while sacrifices will be brought from all of the tribes.*

*Another explanation: For what reason did Binyamin merit to have the Divine Presence rest in his portion? Because all the other brothers were born outside of the land, while Binyamin was born in Eretz Israel.*

*Another explanation: For what reason did Binyamin merit to have the Divine Presence rest in his portion? Because all of the other brothers participated in the sale of Yosef, while Binyamin was not party to the sale. The Holy One said: If I tell these [other tribes] to build the Temple, when they pray before Me I will not be filled with mercy towards them. I shall not rest My Presence in their portion, for they were not merciful towards their brother.*

*Another explanation: For what reason did Binyamin merit to have the Divine Presence rest in his portion? The situation may be compared to a king who had many sons. When they grew up, each went his own way. The youngest of all of them was beloved by his father; he would eat with him and drink with him; he would lean upon him when he went out and lean upon him when he came in. Thus, the righteous Binyamin was the youngest among the brothers, and Yaaqob would eat with him and drink with him, lean upon him when he went out and lean upon him when he came in. The Holy One said: The place where that righteous one [Yaaqob] rested his hands, there I shall cause My Presence to rest. Therefore it is written:*

The house of Yosef includes Binyamin since they were both from Rachel. Binyamin never sinned in his whole life. The one who comes at the end has to have absolute perfection. Ben oni = son of power (sorrow). Binyamin is from only the right hand side. Yadid (yad yad) HaShem, the very beloved friend of HaShem in Debarim (Deuteronomy) 33, blessing.

***Zevachim 118b*** *The Divine Presence rested only in the portion of the tribe of Binyamin, as it is stated in Moses’ blessing to Binyamin: “The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by Him; He covers him all the day and He dwells between his shoulders”,[[262]](#footnote-262) meaning: All coverings, i.e., times of resting of the Divine Presence upon the Jewish people, shall be only in the portion of Binyamin.*

\* \* \*

The Lubavitcher Rebbe gives us an insight into Yosef’s desire for the *spiritual,* while controlling the *physical* resources; much as women control the physical aspect of their home and family while desiring the spiritual.

***Bereshit (Genesis) 44:2*** *And put my goblet—the silver goblet—at the top of the youngest one’s pack…*

Binyamin and Yosef were extremely similar in outlook. They were bound up to each other like one soul.

By framing Binyamin, Yosef was creating a situation where his brothers could atone for their sin of selling him. When the brothers would put their own lives at risk to save Binyamin, it would be as if they were doing so to save Yosef. They would thereby undo their crime against Yosef, by doing the exact opposite. This would remove from them the negative repercussions of their sin.

On a deeper level, the goblet Yosef placed in Binyamin’s pack alludes to a profound gift that Yosef sought to give his brothers and their descendants. He knew that the Jewish people would be in Egypt for a long time and that they would not all be able to attain or maintain his level of Divine consciousness, which enabled him to survive and thrive in the decadence of Egypt. He therefore sought a means to prevent them from getting sucked in to Egyptian depravity, ensuring instead that they would eventually leave the darkness of Egypt and receive the Torah. Yosef realized that the quality they would need was a sublime, subconscious love for HaShem, which would overcome the gross materialism of their milieu. He also knew they would not be able to spark such a love by themselves, so he devised to implant this love in them. Specifically, he chose to implant it in Binyamin.

Both Yosef and Yehudah want Binyamin.

Spiritually, Binyamin was an intermediary between Yosef and his brothers. Relative to Yosef and the patriarchs, Binyamin was on a lower spiritual order, together with his other brothers. Relative to the other brothers (excluding Yosef), however, Binyamin was on a higher level, putting him almost on a par with Yosef. Specifically, whereas Yosef personified the perfectly righteous individual, Binyamin personified the glimpse of saintliness that people who are not yet perfectly righteous experience intermittently, during times of spiritual transcendence, such as prayer or meditation.

Binyamin was thus the perfect vehicle for what Yosef tried to accomplish. His higher spiritual level relative to his other brothers enabled him to receive Yosef’s spiritual input, while his similarity to them enabled him to receive it on their behalf.

Yosef alluded to the sublime, subconscious love for HaShem he was implanting in his brothers with his silver goblet. The word for “silver” (כסף) also means “yearning” (כיסופים). Silver thus alludes to yearning and love for HaShem. Inasmuch as wine signifies the joy that wine brings,[[263]](#footnote-263) Yosef’s wine goblet alluded to love for HaShem that is filled with joy. By hiding his silver goblet in Binyamin’s pack, Yosef embedded his level of joyful love of HaShem in the souls of all Jews, even those who can only occasionally experience it consciously and within whom it normally lies dormant.[[264]](#footnote-264)

Placing the goblet in Binyamin’s pack also had other implications. As we have seen, Yosef’s focus was on bringing Divine consciousness down from the supernal to the terrestrial.[[265]](#footnote-265) He is therefore associated with the study of the Torah, through which Divine consciousness is brought down into the world. In contrast, Binyamin’s focus was on elevating the terrestrial upward toward the supernal, which is the function of prayer, the effort to rise up and transcend our earthly consciousness. By planting his goblet in Binyamin’s pack, Yosef was sharing with him his specialty, the study of the Torah.

# Menashe and Ephraim

At this point, we need to remember what I wrote at the beginning of this study. “Rachel, as Yaaqob’s first and most beloved choice for a wife, decided that her children should be given preferential treatment because they should have been his firstborn and only children.” This will help us understand why Yaaqob tells Yosef that Ephraim and Menashe are to be compared to Reuben and Shimon.

***Bereshit (Genesis) 48:5*** *And now thy two sons, who were born unto thee in the land of Egypt before I came unto thee into Egypt, are mine; Ephraim and Manasseh, even as Reuben and Simeon, shall be mine.*

The Torah compares Ephraim and Menashe to Reuven and Shimon to tell us that they would have equal status as two of the tribes in the division of the land. By elevating Efraim and Menashe to the level of Yosef’s brothers, Yaaqob in effect gives the double portion to Yosef. These two grandsons of Yaaqob, sons of Yosef, become tribes in their own right and each will one day receive their own portion in the Land of Israel, a clear indication that Yosef, and not Reuven, has received the double portion.[[266]](#footnote-266)

Furthermore, they would have the same population as Reuven and Shimon. Even though dividing Yosef into two tribes results in thirteen tribes instead of twelve, only twelve tribes take part in the division of the land, as the tribe of Levi is scattered throughout the land and receives no specific portion.

Yaaqob acquired the blessing of the firstborn which included a double portion of the inheritance, despite the fact that he was not the firstborn. Now, Yaaqob will be giving the double portion to Yosef by blessing his two sons Ephraim and Menashe. These two will receive the double portion of Yaaqob’s inheritance, but again we find the younger son, Ephraim, receiving the blessing of the firstborn.

In Bereshit (Genesis) 48:10-16 we find that Yaaqob’s eyesight fails him in his old age (as did Yitzchak’s) and Yosef brings his sons and moves them towards Yaaqob, who kisses and hugs them. Yosef then takes his sons off of Yaaqob’s lap, so that he can present them formally to Yaaqob, for their brachot. After bowing before Yaaqob, Yosef carefully and formally presents his sons to Yaaqob with Menashe on his left and Ephraim on his right so that Yaaqob’s hands will rest on the appropriate heads for the blessings. Yaaqob switches his hands, resting his right on Ephraim’s head and his left on Menashe’s.

Yaaqob blessed Menashe and Ephraim with the following blessing:

***Bereshit (Genesis) 48:15-20*** *And he blessed Yosef, and said: ‘The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God who hath been my shepherd all my life long unto this day, 16 the angel who hath redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; and let my name be named in them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth.’ 17 And when Yosef saw that his father was laying his right hand upon the head of Ephraim, it displeased him, and he held up his father’s hand, to remove it from Ephraim’s head unto Manasseh’s head. 18 And Yosef said unto his father: ‘Not so, my father, for this is the first-born; put thy right hand upon his head.’ 19 And his father refused, and said: ‘I know it, my son, I know it; he also shall become a people, and he also shall be great; howbeit his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his seed shall become a multitude of nations.’ 20 And he blessed them that day, saying: ‘By thee shall Israel bless, saying: God make thee as Ephraim and as Manasseh.’ And he set Ephraim before Manasseh.*

Abarbanel explains that Yaaqob intended to transfer the rights of the first-born from Reuven to Yosef, as Reuven had forfeited the right to that honor and position. Since this could be interpreted as a perversion of justice, he emphasized that this was implied in the prophecy which he had received earlier in Canaan. He understood that the first three assurances in the blessing, “fruitful, numerous, and a congregation of nations”, were directed to him specifically, and referred to three additional sons who had not yet been born. Since he had only one additional son, Binyamin, he realized that the other two had to be Ephraim and Menashe. He knew this from the fact that the word ‘fruitful’ in the first assurance has the same root in Hebrew as the name ‘Ephraim’. The second assurance, ‘numerous’ is a reference to Menashe. Even though the name ‘Menashe’ is not rooted in the word for ‘numerous’ in Hebrew, this connection was not necessary, since as Yosef’s first born it was already fitting that he should be the head of one of the tribes. Ephraim, however, as the younger son, required the support of the prophecy to enable him to be the head of a separate tribe. The third assurance, ‘a congregation of nations’, referred to Binyamin.

Finally, Yaaqob mentions the burial of Rachel on the road to Efrat as another indication that Ephraim deserved to head a separate tribe who represented Yosef, in addition to Menashe who was the first-born of Rachel. The memory of Rachel would be preserved through the name of the son of her son. The root of the place-name ‘Efrat’ is the same as the root of the name ‘Ephraim’, just as we saw with the word ‘numerous’ in the prophecy. This gave Yaaqob a second reason to counter any complaints about making Ephraim a tribal leader.

***Bereshit (Genesis) 48:7*** *And as for me, when I came from Paddan, Rachel died unto me in the land of Canaan in the way, when there was still some way to come unto Ephrath; and I buried her there in the way to Ephrath--the same is Beth-lehem.’*

## A Blessing for Leah[[267]](#footnote-267)

When Yosef had been appointed viceroy in Egypt, he was given Asenat[[268]](#footnote-268) by Pharaoh as a wife.[[269]](#footnote-269) Who was she? The Chizkuni[[270]](#footnote-270) tells us, citing a different Midrash: When Dinah[[271]](#footnote-271) was abducted by Shechem,[[272]](#footnote-272) she conceived and gave birth to a baby girl. Yaaqob’s sons did not want their niece, given her parentage, to stay within the family house. Yaaqob reluctantly agreed, and sent her away. He gave her a necklace, with the family insignia on it. She hid in a bush, which is *seneh* in Hebrew, hence the name Asenat. The angel Gabriel came and rescued her, and brought her to Egypt. When other girls “climbed heights to gaze” at Yosef, they would throw him precious objects and jewelry. Asenat threw her necklace. Yosef caught it and noticed the family insignia. Once he realized that she was from his father’s family and not an Egyptian, he married her.

Perhaps there is a deeper message here. Back in Parashat Vayeitzei, Leah had already given birth to six sons, unlike Rachel, who was childless. When pregnant with a seventh child, Leah selflessly prayed that it would be a girl and not a boy, lest she take away Rachel’s prospects of mothering at least as many tribes as Yaaqob’s maidservants, Bilhah and Zilpah, who each had two sons. Leah’s prayers were answered; that girl was Dinah (see Rashi to 30:21) and Rachel went on to mother Yosef and Binyamin.

Yet the ensuing results of Leah’s benevolent act were very difficult for her. Her daughter Dinah had to endure the terrible trauma of being captured by Shechem. Her granddaughter Asenat was sent away from her home, her destiny unclear. Where was the reward for Leah’s selflessness?

Yet God never neglects or ignores acts of kindness. He guides events to ensure eventual reward, measure for measure. Leah gave up the possibility of mothering an additional tribe. Yet her descendants Menashe and Ephraim, through the line of Dinah herself, via Asenat, ended up becoming tribes of Israel in their own right, unlike any of Yaaqob’s other grandchildren. Her benevolence, albeit after a long and painful journey, was eventually rewarded.

## Chanukah Torah Reading

The Torah reading for the eighth day of Chanukah (the maftir, when it falls on Shabbat) begins with the sacrifice brought by the prince of the tribe of Menashe. The twelve tribes correspond to the twelve months, and the month that corresponds to Menashe is Cheshvan.[[273]](#footnote-273) Cheshvan is the month when, according to tradition, the Bet HaMikdash will be rebuilt.

The first Bet HaMikdash was dedicated in Tishri, which corresponds to Ephraim, while the second Bet HaMikdash was rededicated in Kislev, which corresponds to Binyamin.

Thus, all three Temples were or will be dedicated in months that are connected with the children of Rachel, the “Mistress of the House” [i.e., the Temple].)

On the eighth day of Chanukah, when we read about the sacrifice of 3 Menashe’s descendant, we allow ourselves to look forward to the future redemption, which also is connected with Menashe, as explained above. We say, “This is the dedication”.[[274]](#footnote-274)

## Ephraimites Leave Egypt too Early

The tribe of Ephraim left Egypt thirty years before the proper time. The people had been fooled by a false redeemer about thirty years before Moshe came back to Egypt from Midian. A descendant of Ephraim claimed he had been sent by God to take the Jews out of Egypt. Thousands escaped with this false redeemer and were slaughtered by the Philistines. The Midrash says that 300,000 Bne Ephraim were killed in the land of the Philistines when they tried to leave Egypt thirty years early.

The only reference, to this event, we have in the Tanach is from Chronicles.

***Dibre HaYamim (I Chronicles) 7:21*** *and Zabad his son, and Shuthelah his son--and Ezer, and Elead, whom the men of Gath that were born in the land slew, because they came down to take away their cattle.*

The Midrash unpacks this events and gives us more detail.

***Midrash Rabbah - Exodus XX:11*** *THAT GOD LED THEM NOT BY THE WAY OF THE LAND OF THE PHILISTINES.[[275]](#footnote-275) God did not conduct Himself with them in the usual manner;[[276]](#footnote-276) for usually when one purchases servants it is on the understanding that they wash and anoint him, help to dress him and draw his carriage and light the way before him. God, however, did not do so, for He did not lead them in the usual way, but He washed them, as it says: Then washed I thee with water;[[277]](#footnote-277) He anointed them, as it says: And I anointed thee with oil; He clothed them, for it says: I clothed thee also with richly woven work; He bore them, for it says: And how I bore you on eagles’ wings;[[278]](#footnote-278) He illumined the way before them, as it says: And the Lord went before them by day... and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light[[279]](#footnote-279) -for this reason does it say: AND GOD LED THEM NOT BY THE WAY OF THE LAND OF THE PHILISTINES, etc. Why did He not lead them through the land of the Philistines?[[280]](#footnote-280) Because the tribe of Ephraim in error departed from Egypt before the destined time, with the result that three hundred thousand of them were slain.[[281]](#footnote-281) And why were they slain? Because they counted [the four hundred years] from the day when God spoke with Abraham between the pieces,[[282]](#footnote-282) but they erred by thirty years,[[283]](#footnote-283) as it says: The children of Ephraim were as archers handling the bow[[284]](#footnote-284) Had they not thus miscalculated they would not have departed; for who wanted to bring forth his children to the slayer?--Ephraim, himself; as it says: But Ephraim shall bring forth his children to the slayer.[[285]](#footnote-285) It was the Philistines who slew them, as it says: And the sons of Ephraim: Shuthelah... whom the men of Gath that were born in the land slew.[[286]](#footnote-286) Their bones lay in heaps on the road, for they had gone out of Egypt thirty years before the rest of their brethren. Therefore the Holy One, blessed be He, reasoned: If Israel behold the bones of the sons of Ephraim strewn in the road, they will return to Egypt. It can be compared to a king who took a wife and wished to return to his country. He set her in her bridal litter, but his wife died before he could enter the country. Whereupon he buried her at the entrance of the country and then married her sister. The king then decided: I will lead her by a circuitous route, lest she behold the grave of her sister and wish to withdraw [from the marriage]. So what did he do? He led her round about the country. Similarly, God said: ‘Let them go round about so that they may not see the bones of their brothers cast on the road and wish to go back to Egypt.’ What did God do? He took the blood of the sons of Ephraim and dipped His garments, as it were, therein, for it says: Wherefore is Thine apparel red?.[[287]](#footnote-287) God said: ‘ I will not be comforted, until I avenge Myself of the crime against the sons of Ephraim,’ for it says: And God was not comforted (naham).[[288]](#footnote-288)*

The Bne Ephraim were the ones that the prophet Yehezchel brought back to life in the Valley of Dry Bones. And once brought back to life, they made aliyah and raised families there, unlike the Jews who died in the desert following Moshe Rabbenu to the Promised Land. It may have been their tremendous yearning to live in Eretz Israel that resulted in their early deaths, but it was probably also the reason for their reincarnation and second chance to live in the Holy Land.

As Rashi points out there, we shouldn’t be so surprised. After all, they were descendants of Yosef, whose love of Eretz Israel is legendary, perhaps because he spent most of his life away from it. In fact, out of 110 years of life, Yosef only lived on the land between the ages of 8 and 17,[[289]](#footnote-289) nine years altogether, not a lot of time.

Let us add a tantalizing thought as to why the members of Ephraim miscalculated. After all, they descended from Ephraim, the son of Yosef. Hence, they were not involved whatsoever in “the sale of Yosef.” Now, although the Gemara[[290]](#footnote-290) teaches us that all of Bne Israel are responsible for one another; nevertheless, that principle only applies when they have an opportunity to protest and fail to do so. In the case of Ephraim, he wasn’t born, yet, at the time of the tragic sale; hence, he did not have the opportunity to protest the sale. Therefore, the sons of Ephraim mistakenly thought that they did not have to serve the extra 30 years that were appended to the original decree of 400 years due to the sin of “sale of Yosef”. Nevertheless, they were wrong. For, although they did not participate in the sale of Yosef, they still required atonement. For, Yosef himself was partially responsible for his sale into slavery. As the Shela HaKadosh[[291]](#footnote-291) writes in the name of the kabbalists, Yosef HaTzadik is counted among the ten martyrs who died to atone for his sale. By reporting his brothers’ bad deeds to their father, he caused the sale.

The Bne Ephraim, from whom Mashiach ben Yosef will descend, mistakenly believed that It was incumbent upon them to pave the way for the redemption.

To explain the matter, we must rely on Chazal’s teaching that in preparation for the future redemption, HaShem will initially send Mashiach ben Yosef, hailing from the tribe of Ephraim, prior to Mashiach ben David, hailing from the tribe of Yehuda. As we have learned in the Gemara:[[292]](#footnote-292)

The Rabbis taught in a Baraita: HaShem will say to Mashiach ben David, who will be revealed speedily in our times, “Ask something of Me, and I will grant it to you” . . . But when he sees that Mashiach ben Yosef was killed, he will say to Him, “Master of the Universe, I ask You for nothing but life”. HaShem will say to him, “As for life, before you even requested it, your father, David, already prophesied about you:[[293]](#footnote-293) “He asked life of You and You have already granted it to him, etc.”.

Regarding this subject, the Maharsha writes in Chiddushei Aggadot:

At the time of the future redemption, swiftly in our times, initially Mashiach ben Yosef will come to save Israel . . . Yet, he will be killed by the multitudes of idolaters that will return to Yerushalayim. The complete redemption will not be realized until the arrival of Mashiach ben David.

## Mashiach

We learn in the Zohar HaKadosh[[294]](#footnote-294) that Mashiach ben Yosef comes from shevet Ephraim. This is alluded to in the Prophets:

***Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 11:11*** *It shall be on that day that the Lord will once again show His hand to acquire the remnant of His people, who will have remained from Assyria and from Egypt and from Pathros and from Cush and from Elam and from Shinar and from Hamath and from the islands of the sea. He will raise a banner for the nations and assemble the castaways of Israel; and He will gather in the dispersed ones of Yehuda from the four corners of the earth. The jealousy of Ephraim shall stop and the oppressors of Yehuda shall be cut off; Ephraim will not be jealous of Yehuda, and Yehuda will not harass Ephraim. Rashi comments: Mashiach ben Yosef and Mashiach ben David will not be jealous of each other.*

This enlightens us with regards to the egregious error of the sons of Ephraim, who departed Egypt prematurely; they thought that they were following in the footsteps of their elder, Yosef, paving the way for all of Israel. According to their calculation, the 400 years of galut were over for them, since the additional 30 years were on account of “the sale of Yosef”, a sin which they had no part of. This led them to conclude that they were supposed to leave Egypt separately in order to pave the path of redemption for all of Israel.

Now, they were indeed very brave men and great warriors. Nevertheless, by leaving alone without the rest of the Bne Israel, they realized that they might be killed along the way, just as the future Mashiach ben Yosef hailing from shevet Ephraim, who will come to redeem Israel before Mashiach ben David, will be killed. They were willing to accept this risk in order to fulfill their task, just as their predecessor, Yosef HaTzadik, had done and just as their descendant, Mashiach ben Yosef, was destined to do in preparation for the future redemption.

In truth, however, they were mistaken. They should not have left Egypt without explicit permission from HaShem to do so. Their misguided act was not in any way comparable to Yosef’s descent to Egypt. He did not go down to Egypt of his own free will; he was sold into slavery by his brothers. Similarly, Mashiach ben Yosef will only come to redeem Israel after being instructed to do so from above. Therefore, they were punished and they all died in the process.

Notwithstanding, their intentions were for the sake of Heaven and they sacrificed their lives for the sanctity of HaShem. Therefore, HaShem will dip His garments in their blood, so to speak. Furthermore, at the time of the future redemption, when Mashiach ben Yosef will come initially to redeem Israel and will perish, HaShem will add his blood to the blood of the sons of Ephraim. Thus, HaShem will exact revenge from the Gentiles that killed them. It turns out, therefore, that they will *not* have died in vain. Seeing as they acted for the sake of Heaven, HaShem will use their blood to hasten the redemption for all of Israel.

Yosef understood that one day the Jewish people will have to rally behind Yosef, not as a substitute for Yehuda, but as a preparation for the Kingdom of Yehuda. Apparently, Nachmanides’ comment that Yosef waited for fruition of his dreams before contacting his father, referred to the creation of spiritual precedents for the Jewish people.

There will be two messiahs one day -- Messiah Son of Yosef, who prepares the way for the Messiah Son of David, himself a descendent of Yehuda. According to tradition, the Messiah Son of Yosef will unite all Israel in preparation for the arrival of the Messiah Son of David, but will die in the process[[295]](#footnote-295) in an act of self-sacrifice for his people. Just like his ancestor Rachel, whose self-sacrifice allowed the building of the Second Temple, his self-sacrifice will allow the building of the Third Temple.

# Dan and His Blessings

Of the twelve tribes, the tribe of Dan is probably the one most closely associated with the judicial system; even the name means ‘to judge’. He was named that by his mother Rachel when she rejoiced in the birth of Dan, saying, “HaShem has *judged* me, and He has also heard my voice. [I have passed the test.] He has given me a son”.[[296]](#footnote-296)

The *tribe* was known for its penchant for judicial rule. The Talmud[[297]](#footnote-297) states that if you find a person who is always demanding that his disputes with others be heard in bet din (court), then you can be confident that his ancestry can be traced back to the tribe of Dan. Tellingly, when Esav contested Yaaqob right to be buried in the Mearat HaMachpelah,[[298]](#footnote-298) it was Chushim, the son of Dan, who quickly passed judgment on Esav and killed him.

Yaaqob’s blessing to Dan is as follows:

***Bereshit 49:16-18*** *Dan will judge his people, as one of the tribes of Israel. Dan will be a serpent on the road, a viper on the path, that bites the horse’s heel so that the rider falls backward. For your deliverance, I wait, HaShem.*

Most commentators, including Rashi and the Ramban, understand this bracha as a prophecy regarding Shimshon, the famed judge (shofet) from the shevet Dan. Shimshon (Samson) was renowned for his herculean strength.[[299]](#footnote-299) This control of a physical resource was the hallmark of Rachel’s children.

The Rashbam, however, takes umbrage to Rashi’s interpretation. He writes that it does not make sense to posit that Yaaqob’s prophecy regarding the future tribe of Dan focused on one individual, a person whose death at the hands of the Philistines was a “troubling matter.” Instead, he explains that Yaaqob’s blessing was alluding to the role of the future tribe of Dan being “the gatherer for all the camps”:

***Bamidbar (Numbers) 10:25*** *And the standard of the camp of the children of Dan, which was the rearward of all the camps, set forward according to their hosts; and over his host was Ahiezer the son of Ammishaddai.*

Shevet Dan, from the days of Moshe through Yehoshua, was positioned in the rear of the itinerant nation. The Rashbam explains that travelling in their position meant they were involved in dealing with the enemies of Bne Israel who would be lapping at their heels, setting up ambushes and the like. They were Gibborim, courageous, and entrusted with protecting Bne Israel from these attacks.

Obviously, this was an important role in the security of the future Bne Israel. However, it is possible there is something more revealed by the Rashbam’s approach than Dan’s role as tactical rear-guard.

HaShem specified that the work of building the Mishkan be overseen by Betzalel of the tribe of Yehuda, who was joined by Ahaliab, son of Achisamach**,** of the tribe of Dan. The Ibn Ezra writes in his long commentary: The Gaon said: Why were Betzalel and Ahaliab chosen? And he answered: Because Betzalel was from the descendants of Yehuda, whom Yaaqob compared to a *lion cub*.[[300]](#footnote-300) And Ahaliab was from the descendants of Dan, whom Moshe compared to a *lion cub*.[[301]](#footnote-301)

Bear in mind that the Mishkan and the Bet HaMikdash, the Temple, were both built to provide a *physical* place for HaShem’s presence to dwell among the Bne Israel. Thus we see that Dan, like Yosef was involved in the control of the *physical* resources.

***Shemot (Exodus) 31:2-6*** *See, I have called by name Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Yehuda: 3 And I have filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, 4 To devise cunning works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, 5 And in cutting of stones, to set them, and in carving of timber, to work in all manner of workmanship. 6 And I, behold, I have given with him Ahaliab, the son of Achisamach, of the tribe of Dan: and in the hearts of all that are wise hearted I have put wisdom, that they may make all that I have commanded thee;*

Betzalel was descended from an aristocratic family of the tribe of Yehuda; Ahaliab, by contrast, was from the tribe of Dan, a less prestigious tribe, since they descended from Yaaqob’s handmaiden Bilhah. The Torah mentions Betzalel and Ahaliab together, to demonstrate that to HaShem, both were on an equal level.[[302]](#footnote-302)

Another midrash clearly explains the relationship between these two tribes with respect to the building of the Mishkan:

***Shemot Rabba 40:4*** *Let him come and join him so that they not mock him, and so that nobody be arrogant, for the great and the small are equal before the Omnipresent, Betzalel from Yehuda and Ahaliab from Dan, and he joins him.*

The Zohar[[303]](#footnote-303) explains that Betzalel represents the Kabbalistic “right side” (kindness, benevolence), while Ahaliab represents the “left side” (severity, strictness). They were able, then, to act in concert to build not just the Mishkan’s *physical* structure, but also its *spiritual* plane.

Centuries later, another scion of Dan played a leading role in the construction of the First Temple.[[304]](#footnote-304) The Talmud cites this as evidence that this tribe preserved their artistic tradition throughout that period.[[305]](#footnote-305)

Yaaqob had died, and it was time to bury him. The Gemara[[306]](#footnote-306) tells us that, “When they arrived at the Cave of Machpelah, Esav approached and began disturbing them. He said, ‘We know that there can only be four couples buried in this cave, and thus far, there are three, plus Leah; the remaining spot next to Leah is for me!’ They replied to Esav, ‘But you sold your rights to Yaaqob’… Esav said, ‘Show me the contract’, and they replied, ‘But the contract is back in Egypt!’ So they sent Naftali,[[307]](#footnote-307) who was swift like a gazelle, to retrieve the contract. Chushim, the son of Dan, was there, and he was hard of hearing.[[308]](#footnote-308) He asked the others, ‘What is going on?’ They told him. He said, ‘And until Naftali returns, must our father sit here in this disgraceful state?’ He took a staff and smashed Esav on the head with it. Esav’s eyes fell out and landed on Yaaqob’s leg. Yaaqob opened his eyes and smiled.”

So Chushim killed Esav. And yet, Tosafot tells us[[309]](#footnote-309) that the descendants of Esav have a tradition telling us that Yehuda killed Esav, and in fact, this is the opinion of the Sifri. He explains that both are true. First, Chushim stepped in and gave Esav a serious blow causing his eyes to come out, but he was still alive. Then Yehuda stepped in and finished him off, killing him.[[310]](#footnote-310)

Moshe also blessed the tribe of Dan. This is his blessing:

***Debarim (Deuteronomy) 33:22*** *And of Dan he said: Dan is a lion’s whelp, that leapeth forth from Bashan.*

The most well-known and historically important person to ever have come from the tribe of Dan was Shimshon HaGibor (Samson), who was the last to lead the Bne Israel during the period of the Judges.

# Goats and Coats

The second time[[311]](#footnote-311) we see a special coat being associated with a goat was when Yosef’s brothers sold him into slavery and deceived Yaaqob, Yosef’s father, by dipping Yosef’s special coat into goat’s blood in order to make Yaaqob believe that Yosef was dead.

***Bereshit (Genesis) 37:3*** *Now Israel loved Yosef more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age; and he made him a coat* (ketunot - כְּתֹנֶת) *of many colours.*

The *Or HaAphelah* on *The garment of many colours*,[[312]](#footnote-312) teaches that one of the other places that the word כתונת (translated here “garment”) is used, in the **Torah**, other than Yosef’s כְּתֹנֶת פַּסִּים (coat of many colours / long sleeves), was in the description of Adam’s garment (this is the first usage of the ketonet) and the garments of the priests.[[313]](#footnote-313)

By giving Yosef this special garment, Yaaqob hinted[[314]](#footnote-314) to Yosef that he would bring about the end of days since he is the predecessor of Mashiach ben Yosef.[[315]](#footnote-315)

This suggests that Yosef’s coat of many colors is also Adam’s garment.

***Bereshit (Genesis) 3:21*** *And HaShem God made for Adam and for his wife garments* כָּתְנוֹת *of skins, and clothed them.*

A *ketonet passim* is mentioned in one other place in **Tanach**: II Shmuel 13:18-19, where it is worn by Tamar, the daughter of King David. It is described as a garment worn by a king’s daughters who are virgins. Thus, this special clothing symbolized royalty. Chazal also saw it as signifying the status of a Kohen, whose role prior to the giving of the Torah was filled by the firstborn. The Midrash[[316]](#footnote-316) states that Yaakov told Yosef[[317]](#footnote-317) that he assigned him as the firstborn and gave him the special garments that God made for Adam, which had been passed to Nimrod, Avraham, Yitzchak, Esav and Yaaqob. Ramban[[318]](#footnote-318) understood that a *ketonet* *passim* is a priestly garment and the Kli Yakar[[319]](#footnote-319) viewed the giving of this garment as a way of designating Yosef as the firstborn.[[320]](#footnote-320)

Long sleeves and long tunics were a sign of one who did not have to work, while laborers wore shorter garments.[[321]](#footnote-321) A person of high status or royalty demonstrated his position by wearing longer tunics and long sleeves. The implications of Yaaqob’s gifting such a garment to Yosef would not be lost on the other brothers.

(We can readily understand, now, why Chazal see Yosef ben Yaaqob as the predecessor of Mashiach ben Yosef.)

In this event of Yosef’s blood-stained garment, Yaaqob did recognized Yosef’s coat. From these three events, we see that Yaaqob began the saga with deception. His children, led by Yehuda, make the follow-on saga using Yosef’s coat dipped in goat’s blood.

Another verbal connection between the incident with Yehuda and Tamar with Yosef’s coat is in the words: *Know now* (הַכֶּר-נָא). The only two places in the Torah where we find this Hebrew phrase: *Know now* (הַכֶּר-נָא) is in:

***Bereshit (Genesis) 37:32*** *and they sent the coat of many colours, and they brought it to their father; and said: ‘This have we found. Know now* (הַכֶּר-נָא) *whether it is thy son’s coat or not.’*

And

***Bereshit (Genesis) 38:25*** *When she was brought forth, she sent to her father-in-law, saying: ‘By the man, whose these are, am I with child’; and she said: ‘Discern* (הַכֶּר-נָא), *I pray thee, whose are these, the signet, and the cords, and the staff.’*

The use of this unique phrase connects these two events, the sale of Yosef and the incident of Yehuda and Tamar, and encourages us to learn more about the two events by seeing them as closely related.

When Yehuda is asked to recognize the coat, staff, and ring that were the pledge for a goat, he does so in a very forthright manner. Yehuda acknowledges the pledged items as his own using our key word:

***Bereshit (Genesis) 38:26*** *And Yehuda acknowledged* (וַיַּכֵּר) *them, and said: ‘She is more righteous than I; forasmuch as I gave her not to Shelah my son.’ And he knew her again no more.*

While Yehuda recognized his pledged items, he also could not recognize Yosef when he fronted him in Egypt.

***Bereshit (Genesis) 42:8*** *And Joseph knew his brethren, but they knew him not.*

Coats played a significant role in the investiture of Yosef as ruler in Egypt, which contributed to Yosef’s ‘disguise’. In addition, Yosef now had a full beard which he lacked when his brothers last saw him.

# Rachel’s Children as Kings and Leaders

At the end of Genesis we read about the blessings that Yaaqob gave to Yehuda. This blessing seems to have two parts.

***Bereshit (Genesis) 49:10*** *The sceptre shall not depart from Yehuda, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, as long as men come to Shiloh; and unto him shall the obedience of the peoples be.*

This pasuk speaks of the “sceptre” and the “ruler’s staff”. The Zohar sees these as two symbols which apply to Yehuda and to Yosef.

***Soncino Zohar, Bereshit, Section 1, Page 25b*** *“the sceptre shall not depart from Yehuda nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet”,*

*“the sceptre” referring to the Messiah of the house of Yehuda, and*

*“the staff” to the Messiah of the house of Yosef.*

Since we know that eventually Yehudah and Yosef will be rolled into a single “stick”,[[322]](#footnote-322) it makes sense that Yaaqob’s blessing speaks of both of these symbols apply to Yehuda alone.

The physical resources of the Jewish nation were under the control of Ephraim throughout the history of the Jewish monarchy, stretching over the entire first Temple era.

But even the other half of the schism designated David’s remnant was unable to survive without the participation of Rachel’s children. The tribe of Binyamin stayed with Yehuda following the split, ensuring the presence of one of Rachel’s children in the kingdom of Yehuda as well. The Temple, symbolic of the flow of Divine energy into Israel, stood in Binyamin’s portion of Israel, and the Tabernacle that preceded it stood in the portion of Yosef. The principle is clear; one of Rachel’s children must be in *physical* control of the earthly expression of the spiritual unity between HaShem and Israel at all times.

Several of Rachel’s children reigned as kings over the Jews before there was a king from the tribe of Yehuda, despite the fact that Yehuda was given the kingship. The unified Jewish people can only function smoothly if the children of Rachel occupy the position that we would define as the Chief Executive Officer in the corporate entity of Israel.

***Bereshit (Genesis) 49:10*** *The sceptre shall not depart from Yehuda, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be.*

## Division of Responsibilities

The moral leadership of the Jewish people was formally handed over by the dying Yaaqob to Yehuda. Yaaqob designated Yehuda as the spiritual symbol of Jewish unity, the moral focus of the spiritual union between God and Israel. The spiritual leadership of Israel is in the hands of *Yehuda*, and specifically the descendants of David.

But while Yehuda is in charge of Israel’s spiritual might, it is Yosef who controls the earthly manifestation of spiritual power. Both Yehuda and Yosef possess a claim to Jewish royalty. For the Jewish nation spiritual relationships are always supreme; it is only the king who is the symbol of Israel’s spiritual unity with HaShem, who comes from the line of Yehuda that is allowed to sit in the Temple. It is he who is HaShem’s representative. But he has to surrender the management over Israel’s physical resources to the king that represents Yosef in order to successfully express the unity between God and His people in the world.

The relationship between Yehuda and Yosef is often complex and touchy. If they are in perfect unity, Israel prospers, but if they are at odds with each other, their rivalry often causes severe problems, up to and including total corporate dissolution of the Jewish people as an independent physical entity.

The unity of Yehuda and Yosef is a manifestation of the unity of HaShem and of the unity of the Bne Israel, as the Navi said:

***Yehezchel (Ezekiel) 34:31*** *‘You are my sheep, the sheep of my flock, you are Adam, and I am your God,’ declares the Lord God.*

The Talmud interprets:

***Yevamot 61a*** The graves of gentiles do not render items impure though a tent, as it is stated: “And you My sheep, the sheep of My pasture, are men [*adam*]”,[[323]](#footnote-323) from which it is derived that you, the Jewish people, are called men [*adam*] but gentiles are not called men [*adam*].

You Israel are collectively called Adam ... The collective Israel is a single human being.

This duality is also discussed by our sages in terms of “learning” and “deed” (or “Torah” and “mitzvot”). Yehuda represents Torah study while Yosef represents Mitzvot. Thus the sages of the Talmud debate: Which is greater, learning or deed? Learning involves the development and perfection of self, while doing entails the servitude of self to the task at hand. Yosef, whose name means “to add,” represents growth and achievement, while Yehuda, whose name means “to acknowledge” and “to submit” is the paradigm of commitment and self-abnegation.

## Yosef as ruler in Egypt.

The story of Yosef[[324]](#footnote-324) and his brothers begins with a verse that is ambiguous, confusing and very telling, with four clauses that can be read in different ways.[[325]](#footnote-325) The verse is recited by the narrator. The first clause is linguistically straightforward. `These are the generations of Yaaqob, Yosef was seventeen years old’. Yaaqob, of course, has thirteen children, but only Yosef is named as `the generations of Yaaqob’. Yosef is intended as the spiritual heir to Yaaqob as we will see.[[326]](#footnote-326) The second clause is usually translated as ‘he was shepherding the flock with his brothers’. But that is not how the Hebrew reads; the *word order* reads ‘he was shepherding his brothers with the flock’. The suggestion could be made that he, a seventeen year old boy is the leader of his years older brothers alluding to them as sheep and providing their physical needs.

Yosef was sold into slavery in Egypt primarily by his brother Yehuda.

***Bereshit (Genesis) 37:26-28*** *And Yehuda said unto his brethren, What profit is it if we slay our brother, and conceal his blood? 27 Come, and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him; for he is our brother and our flesh. And his brethren were content. 28 Then there passed by Midianites merchantmen; and they drew and lifted up Yosef out of the pit, and sold Yosef to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver: and they brought Yosef into Egypt.*

After Yosef revealed the meaning of Paro’s dreams, Paro called Yosef HaTzadik, *Tzafnat Paneach*,[[327]](#footnote-327) which, as Targum Onkelos translates, means the (*man through whom*) *the hidden is revealed*. Thus we should expect that Yosef, through his life and acts, will reveal much of the hidden light of Mashiach.

Yehuda will become subject to Yosef when he arrives in Egypt. But, he will have a very special leadership role. A *spiritual* leadership role.[[328]](#footnote-328)

***Bereshit (Genesis) 46:28*** *And he sent Yehuda before him unto Yosef, to direct his face unto Goshen; and they came into the land of Goshen.*

Rashi quotes a Midrash to show us that Yehuda, in the above pasuk, was supposed to establish a yeshiva for Torah study.

Rashi to Genesis 46:28 **to direct him:** Heb. לְהוֹרֹת לְפָנָיו, as the Targum renders (לְפַנָאָה קֳדָמוֹהִי), to clear a place for him and to show him how to settle in it.

**him:** [Lit., ahead of him.] Before he would arrive there. The Aggadic interpretation of [לְהוֹרֹת] is [that there should be teaching]: to establish for him a house of study, from which teaching would emanate.[[329]](#footnote-329)

**And he sent Yehuda before him**: Rabbi Chanina, the son of Rabbi Acha, and Rabbi Chanina (disagreed). One said to set up a home for him. And one said to set up a home for him so he can teach Torah in it and the tribes can learn in it.[[330]](#footnote-330)

Yehoshua also makes mention of the love of the women who inherited the land: the daughters of Tzelafchad, of the tribe of Menashe, and Ikhsa, daughter of Kalev, from the tribe of Yehuda.

So, Yehuda was given the *spiritual* role of establishing Torah study for the Jews in exile. Now, let’s examine the *physical* role that the children of Rachel played as they became leaders.

## Yehoshua, the Ephraimite judge.

The Midrash relates the tradition that some of the tribe of Ephraim died in the south of Canaan. Having miscalculated the end of the 400 years of slavery which HaShem prophesied to Abraham,[[331]](#footnote-331) they left Egypt on their own, 30 years ahead of schedule, and were slaughtered by the Philistines. HaShem circumvents the scene of this tragedy, believing that the rest of the Israelites, having just emerged from their long period of oppression and violence, are not ready to encounter the sheer horror of these skeletons. As the midrash states, “Therefore the Holy Blessed One reasoned: If Israel behold the bones of the Ephraimites strewn in the path, they will return to Egypt”.

At the splitting of the Reed Sea, the Tosefta[[332]](#footnote-332) writes that it was the tribe of Yehuda, while other sources further delineate that Nachshon ben Aminadab, a descendant from Yehuda, jumped in first and caused the waters to split. At the same time, we find the midrash[[333]](#footnote-333) informing us that the sea split when it saw the *Aron* of Yosef.[[334]](#footnote-334)

Later we see an Ephraimite “spy” who brings a good report after spying out the land of Canaan. The two spies who saved all hopes for entering the promised land were Yehoshua and Kaleb, descendants of Yosef and Yehuda respectively.

After the death of Moshe, Yehoshua, an Ephraimite, led the Bne Israel into the Promised Land and assigned territory to each of the twelve tribes. Members of his tribe settled in the fertile, hilly region of central Canaan.

Yehoshua, son of Nun, was an Ephraimite, one of Rachel’s descendants. The Midrash asserts that the salvation that occurred in his time in the war at Gilgal:[[335]](#footnote-335) “Stand still, O sun, at Gibeon, O moon, in the Valley of Aijalon”! was by merit of Rachel’s kindness.[[336]](#footnote-336)

In sefer Bamidbar we see Yehoshua, AKA Hoshea, is to be one of the spies and he is of the tribe of Ephraim.

***Bamidbar (Numbers) 13:16*** *These are the names of the men that Moses sent to spy out the land. And Moses called Hoshea the son of Nun Joshua.*

***Bamidbar (Numbers) 13:8*** *Of the tribe of Ephraim, Hoshea the son of Nun.*

Thirty-nine years after the incident of the spies, Yehoshua is put in charge of leading the Bne Israel into the Promised Land.

The Midrash[[337]](#footnote-337) maintains that when Amalek attacked Israel it was Joshua, a descendant of Yosef, who was instructed by Moshe to select warriors to battle Amalek. Moshe said to him, “Your ancestor [Yosef] said, ‘I fear God’, while of Amalek it is written: He did not fear God.[[338]](#footnote-338) Let the descendant of the former inflict retribution on the latter.”

***Bamidbar (Numbers) 27:16-19*** *‘Let HaShem, the God of the spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation, 17 who may go out before them, and who may come in before them, and who may lead them out, and who may bring them in; that the congregation of HaShem be not as sheep which have no shepherd.’ 18 And HaShem said unto Moses: ‘Take thee Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is spirit, and lay thy hand upon him; 19 and set him before Eleazar the priest, and before all the congregation; and give him a charge in their sight.*

It is Yehoshua who will divide the land, by lots, and apportion it to the tribes.

***Yehoshua (Joshua) 1:1-2*** *Now after the death of Moses the servant of HaShem it came to pass, that HaShem spake unto Joshua the son of Nun, Moses’ minister, saying, 2 Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel.*

History records Yehoshua as the first Judge of the Bne Israel, but there is no doubt that he was also and Ephraimite king.

## Tzadik gamur and Baalei teshuva[[339]](#footnote-339)

In Chassidic writings, Rachel is associated with the tzadik-personality, while Leah is associated with the Baal-teshuva (penitent) figure. The tzadik is the pure and sacred human being, reflecting the harmony and goodness of his Creator. The bail-teshuva, on the other hand, embodies the tumultuous individual who must continuously battle the negative urges and destructive habits rooted in his or her psyche.

From a more kabbalistic perspective, Rachel represents the natural, revealed world, whereas Leah represents the hidden, deeper dimension of reality. This lends support to our earlier observation:

1. The *spiritual* leadership of Israel is in the hands of Yehuda, and specifically the descendants of David.
2. One of Rachel’s children in must be in *physical* control of the earthly expression of the spiritual unity between HaShem and Israel at all times.

Yosef is the prototype of the Tzadik gamur,[[340]](#footnote-340) while Yehuda of the Baalei teshuva.[[341]](#footnote-341)

## Machir Son of Menashe

***Bamidbar (Numbers) 35:39-41*** *And the children of Machir the son of Manasseh went to Gilead, and took it, and dispossessed the Amorite which was in it. 40 And Moses gave Gilead unto Machir the son of Manasseh; and he dwelt therein. 41 And Jair the son of Manasseh went and took the small towns thereof, and called them Havothjair.*

Jair, took the lead in conquering the villages of Gilead. And we wondered why this seemingly inconsequential tale should be the last piece in the narrative section of the Bible. We also noticed a confusing mystery about Jair’s lineage: it is described one way in the Book of Numbers and another way in the Book of Chronicles. He seems to be a member of the tribe of Yehuda, but for some reason, he conquers territory on behalf of the tribe of Manasseh - and is even described as a “son of Manasseh.” Why is that?

***Bamidbar (Numbers) 36:1-2*** *And the chief fathers of the families of the children of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh, of the families of the sons of Yosef, came near, and spake before Moses, and before the princes, the chief fathers of the children of Israel: 2 And they said, HaShem commanded my lord to give the land for an inheritance by lot to the children of Israel: and my lord was commanded by HaShem to give the inheritance of Zelophehad our brother unto his daughters.*

## Gideon

Gideon, liberates them from foreign rule and governs them.

## King Saul, the Benjamite.

When Yehuda stood before the ruler, Yosef, his impassioned plea to take himself and let Binyamin return to his father included the following words: “… *my father’s soul is bound up with Binyamin’s soul*” - וְנַפְשׁוֹ, קְשׁוּרָה בְנַפְשׁוֹ.[[342]](#footnote-342)

So we find that Yaaqob’s soul was bound up with the soul of his son Binyamin.

Yaaqob did not have an easy life. He loved Rachel, but was tricked into marrying her sister Leah. And when he finally married Rachel, his home suffered from rivalry between the two sisters. This strife was not limited to Yaaqob’s household. It continued on in future generations: in the struggle between Rachel’s son Yosef and Leah’s sons; and in the conflict between King Saul, a descendant of Rachel, and David, a descendant of Leah.

We hear these ‘soul’ words again from king Saul’s[[343]](#footnote-343) son who should have inherited his father’s kingship.

***Shmuel alef (I Samuel) 18:1*** *And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was bound up with the soul of David* - וְנֶפֶשׁ יְהוֹנָתָן, נִקְשְׁרָה בְּנֶפֶשׁ דָּוִד, *and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.*

Yonathan, of the tribe of Binyamin, and David, of the tribe of Yehuda, had their souls bound together.

Yonathan, as Soul’s son, should have inherited his kingship. However, Yonathan ben Saul deferred to David his friend.

***Shmuel alef (I Samuel) 18:2-4*** *And Saul took him that day, and would let him go no more home to his father’s house. 3 Then Jonathan made a covenant with David, because he loved him as his own soul. 4 And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David, and his apparel, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle.*

What’s going on here? What’s going on is that we are hearing the ripple effects of the Yosef story because these men are the descendants of the two prime actors in the Yosef story…because who is Shaul and who is Yonatan his son? Shaul is a king from the tribe of Binyamin. Oh and who is David? David is from the tribe of Yehuda. Yehuda and Binyamin one more time.

Yehuda came face-to-face with the recognition that his father loves Binyamin more, would rather have Binyamin home with him than Yehuda, and that was okay. Yehuda says, take me instead. It’s okay, you can love him more. When did Binyamin ever repay Yehuda for that? Yonatan repays that debt because what does it look like from Yonatan’s perspective, when David comes back triumphant?

If you’re Yonatan, who is next in line to become king? You are. Who does your father love—you. Now, who does your father love? Look at how Shaul is treating David. Shaul took him, adopted him as his own son that day, and didn’t allow David to return back to his father’s house. You are mine. Shaul knows that David will one day become king and what would that mean for Yonatan? For Yonatan, it is the greatest threat that could possibly imagine. But that’s not how Yonatan sees it.

“V’nefesh Yonatan nikshra b’nefesh David.” The heroism of this child of Binyamin mirrors the heroism of the original Yehuda. Yehuda had once said this for Binyamin, now a child of Binyamin will say it for Yehuda. It’s not threatening for me that father would love another child more than me. Let father take David, I love David like my own soul. And then he takes of his cloak. Strips himself off of his cloak and gives it to David; what does that remind you of, oh yes, there was a time when a child of Rachel’s did have a cloak stripped by Yehuda, forcibly in the sale of Yosef. Now, it’s not forcible.

Now the child of Rachel, child of Binyamin, willingly strips his cloak and gives it to the child of Yehuda. It’s a moment of healing, a moment in history where at least, at that brief point, the two sides of the family were reconciled, because of the moment, when a man faced his greatest possible threat, he turned his back on his own welfare and loved his brother from the other side of the family like his own self. The memories of the sale of Yosef run deep but the heroism of Yonatan is that he didn’t remember just the animosity, he remembered the sacrifice too, he remembered the love and in that remembrance lies Yonatan’s greatness.

## Jeroboam, son of Nebat

Jeroboam, of the tribe of Ephraim, was the first king of the northern Kingdom of Israel.[[344]](#footnote-344) Jeroboam was not a rebellious troublemaker. He was anointed to be king over the ten tribes by God’s prophet as described in detail (1 Kings, Ch. 11):

***Melachim alef (I Kings 11:29)*** *It happened at that time, while Jeroboam was leaving Jerusalem, the prophet Ahijah the Shilonite found him on the way; he was clothed in a new garment, and the two of them were alone in the field.* ***30*** *And Ahijah laid hold of the new garment that was on him, and rent it in twelve pieces.* ***31*** *And he said to Jeroboam: ‘Take thee ten pieces; for thus saith HaShem, the God of Israel: Behold, I will rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon, and will give ten tribes to thee--* ***32*** *but he shall have one tribe, for My servant David’s sake, and for Jerusalem’s sake, the city which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel--* ***33*** *because that they have forsaken Me, and have worshipped Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, Chemosh the god of Moab, and Milcom the god of the children of Ammon; and they have not walked in My ways, to do that which is right in Mine eyes, and to keep My statutes and Mine ordinances, as did David his father.* ***34*** *Howbeit I will not take the whole kingdom out of his hand; but I will make him prince all the days of his life, for David My servant’s sake, whom I chose, because he kept My commandments and My statutes;* ***35*** *but I will take the kingdom out of his son’s hand, and will give it unto thee, even ten tribes.*

The Talmud comments:

Just like a *new garment* has no defect, the Torah scholarship of Jeroboam was totally free of defects. Another interpretation of a *new garment*: they came up with new insights that no ear had previously heard. And the *two of them were alone in the field*: all other scholars were like blades of grass in comparison. Some say: the secrets of the Torah were revealed to them like an open field.[[345]](#footnote-345)

We are introduced to an obviously brilliant individual, similar in many respects to his illustrious progenitor, Yosef, far superior in ability to even the most talented Jews, clearly singled out to rule on the basis of merit.

Yet this same Jeroboam instituted the practice that ultimately caused the destruction of the Temple and the loss of Jewish independence. When he came to power, he calculated that if he allowed the Jews to continue the practice of the tri-annual pilgrimage to the Temple in Jerusalem, he would ultimately forfeit his kingdom. Only the kings of David’s line are allowed to sit in the Temple; all others, including the Kings of Israel must stand. If he led his people on the tri-annual pilgrimage they would see the Davidian king, Rechavam, sitting on his throne in the Temple while he, Jeroboam, was forced to remain standing with the rest. He theorized that his people would ultimately return their allegiance to the house of David and cast him aside. On the other hand if he didn’t lead the pilgrimage himself the people would also reject him for his lack of observance.

The Temple in Jerusalem, that supreme symbol of Jewish spiritual unity, was a symbol of his own lack of legitimacy. The upshot; Jeroboam replaced the Temple; he put soldiers on the roads leading to Jerusalem, and prevented Jews from making the pilgrimage to Solomon’s temple. But the people he ruled over were fervent worshippers of God, as indeed was he, and they were hardly prepared to give up Divine service or their tri-annual pilgrimage to God’s Temple. Jeroboam set up a Golden Calf in the North and South of the country as alternative pilgrimage sites.[[346]](#footnote-346)

It was God Himself who told Jeroboam[[347]](#footnote-347) that He preferred him to the Davidian Kings; that He would give him ten out of the twelve tribes to reign over and leave the Davidian king in Jerusalem with a single tribe only for the sake of the memory of His beloved David. In Jeroboam’s mind, the establishment of the alternate pilgrimage sites was necessary to carry out God’s will. The way he saw it, the pilgrimage to Jerusalem was irreconcilable with the continuance of his rule, and God clearly wanted himto rule.

In the days of Rehoboam, son of Solomon, the kingdom of Israel was split. Ten of the tribes followed Jeroboam יָרָבְעָם, from the tribe of Ephraim. They formed the northern kingdom called “Israel”. Yehuda and Binyamin continued to follow Rehoboam, Solomon’s son, from the tribe of Yehuda.

Jeroboam engaged in idolatry and denigrated the prophet Ahijah of Shiloh;[[348]](#footnote-348) this disgrace was taken away when Jeroboam was put to death.[[349]](#footnote-349)

For the next 240 years, the Holy Land is split into two kingdoms: the northern Kingdom of Israel, encompassing ten breakaway tribes under Yosefian leadership; and the southern Kingdom of Yehuda. (Interestingly, the tribe of Binyamin remains loyal to the Judean throne).

## The Northern Kingdom

The Northern Kingdom of Israel, closely associated with the Tribe of Yosef.

The character of the Bne Yosef, both past and present, can be summed up quite easily by reviewing what exactly the Bible has to say about the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Throughout prophecy the Northern Kingdom is always referred to as Yosef. Therefore whatever is said about the Biblical Northern Kingdom of Israel holds true for the Bne Yosef and helps us identify its characteristics.

Yosef as the representative for the Northern Kingdom is described as rebelling against G-d’s chosen House of David monarchy and the Holy Temple, built by Solomon, son of David, but built for all Israel and not just for Yehuda. By rebelling against David, Jerusalem and the Temple, Yosef can best be described as **rebelling against the very foundations of what today we define as the religion of Torah Judaism.**

The tension, balance, and contrast between Yehuda and Yosef is very apparent in the way the Torah places the very parallel stories of Yosef and Yehuda side by side,[[350]](#footnote-350) as well as in the depiction of their direct confrontation, in the Torah portion of Vayigash.[[351]](#footnote-351) Even the names of these two tribes are similar, because Yosef sometimes is called “Yehoseph”, carrying the first three letters of G-d’s name, HaShem, just like Yehuda.

This balance and tension has continued throughout our history, most notably with King David and King Shaul, the two kingdoms of Yehuda and Israel (also called Ephraim in the Torah), and even eventually with the coming of two Meshichim, ben David and ben Yosef, also known as Mashiach ben Ephraim.

## Eliyahu, harbinger of Mashiach

The midrash records a disagreement among the Rabbis concerning the origins of Elijah. Some argued that he was from the tribe of Gad, while others maintained that he was a Benjaminite. Elijah came and stood before them. He said to them: “My masters, why do you disagree about me? I am from the descendants of Rachel”.[[352]](#footnote-352) This midrash is connected to the fundamental Rabbinic disagreement as to whether the harbinger of the Redemption will be from the offspring of Rachel or from those of Leah. Thus, we see that the rivalry between the two sisters did not come to an end but even pertains to the identity of the herald of the future Redemption.

## Mordechai as ruler in Babylon.

Mordechai[[353]](#footnote-353) and Esther represent the unity of Binyamin and Yehuda; they represent the Beit HaMikdash. This is one more of the ironies of the book of Esther: far away from Israel, far from Jerusalem, when the building of the second Beit HaMikdash has stalled, there is one vestige of holiness, a remnant of the Beit HaMikdash in Shushan - in the persons of Mordechai and Esther.

In fact, the unfinished17 second Beit haMikdash18 is the Midrashic subtext for the entire book of Esther.

***Esther Rabbah 1:15*** *R. Nehemiah said: In the third year after he stopped the building of the Temple. When three years had passed after he stopped the building of the Temple, “he made a feast for all his ministers and servants.”*

***Esther Rabbah 1:1*** *This is Achashverosh who stopped the building of the Temple. He is a brother to the destroyer - that is, Nebuchadnezzar, who destroyed the Temple.*

## Saul of Tarsus

Paul, whose Hebrew name was Saul, also claimed to be a Benjamite (Rom. xi. 1; Phil. iii. 5).

## Sephardim and Ashkenazim[[354]](#footnote-354)

According to one specific reference in the Prophets we are able to generally ascertain where the exiles of both Yosef and Yehuda went once they left the Holy Land so many centuries ago. The prophet Obadiah (1:20) mentions that the exiled hosts of the Children of Israel went to dwell amongst the previously ejected Canaanites in a land called Tzarfat, which is the Hebrew name for modern day France. Interestingly, the same pasuk states that the exiles of Jerusalem, obviously the tribe of Yehuda who stayed faithful to the holy city were exiled to the land of Sepharad, which in Hebrew is modern day Spain.

***Obadiah 1:20*** *And the captivity of this host of the children of Israel shall possess that of the Canaanites, even unto Zarephath; and the captivity of Jerusalem, which is in Sepharad, shall possess the cities of the south. 21 And saviours shall come up on mount Zion to judge the mount of Esav;[[355]](#footnote-355) and the kingdom shall be HaShem’s.*

Based upon this one pasuk many commentators have discerned that the Jewish inhabitants of France, Germany and Eastern Europe are descendants of Yosef, whereas those of Spanish origins are from Yehuda. In modern and direct terms, the blood-lines of Yosef are the original ancestors of the major portion of what we today call Ashkenazi Jewry, whereas the Yehuda blood-line is the source of the original Sephardic Jews from Spain.

There you have it, Biblical proof that Ashkenazim are from Yosef and Sephardim are from Yehuda. At least, this is how it was many centuries ago. Over many centuries, and especially in recent times, we see both personal and mass migrations, where individuals and whole communities moved from one country to the next. Today, the blood-lines of Ashkenazim and Sephardim, and who exactly is from a Yosef tribe or from Yehuda is very much intermingled. Personally, I view this as a blessing from G-d and a partial fulfillment of the prophecy to reunite the Houses of Yosef and Yehuda.

This being said, and the blood-lines being somewhat identified, let us now turn again to the characteristic traits of Yosef, their secularism, and rebellion against Jerusalem, the Davidic Kingdom and the Holy Temple and view this in light of the growth of radical secularism amongst European Ashkenazi Jews over the past two centuries and only then can we come into the modern realm and discuss secular Zionism. I believe the answer to the above question as to the modern identity of Yosef is becoming ever so much clearer.

Those who have ever studied the cultural, sociological and even psychological differences between Sephardim and Ashkenazim come to some rather striking conclusions. While there is of course much that is similar between the two peoples, there are specific traits in personality and world outlook that sharply divide the two types. Interestingly, but it should come as no surprise that the modern day differences between Sephardim and Ashkenazim ever so clearly parallel the differences between Biblical Yehuda and Yosef. Indeed, although the blood-lines are clouded, the identities of the souls still shine through bright and clear.

## Ashkenazim

Yosef is portrayed in the Bible as cosmopolitan, world savvy, and what we would today call secular. It is then of no wonder that modern day Ashkenazim descendants of Yosef should follow in the footsteps of their ancestors. Yosef was clever, strong and ever so “bull-headed”. Sound familiar? The difference between religious and secular Ashkenazim we will discuss later, but for right now let us focus on the secular and how these modern descendants of Yosef fit into the messianic scenario.

the Ashkenazi secular State of Israel must be viewed not as a re-establishment of Southern Kingdom of Yehuda, but rather as the re-establishment of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Never in the history of Zionism was it ever conceived to re-establish the Biblical state of Yehuda. Never did the Zionists consider naming their new state Yehuda although the founders all considered themselves Jews.

Indeed, the founding Zionist fathers created for themselves a new name and a new identity. No longer were they to be called Jews. Now they are Israelis. This term has not been in use since the days of the fallen Northern Kingdom over 2500 years ago. The resurrection of the term Israeli to also include the members of the tribe of Yehuda (Yehudim-Jews) has not been heard since the days of King Solomon. Like the Northern Kingdom, the present secular State of Israel rejects the authority of the House of David, enshrined as it is in the Orthodox religious leadership, they reject the concepts of both rebuilding the Temple and reconstituting the Sanhedrin. However, to their credit, they have accepted as fact that Jerusalem, capital of old Yehuda is now the one capital of all Israel.

The secular State of Israel today embraces the same rebellious spirit of the ancient Bne Yosef of the old Northern Kingdom of Israel. As such modern day Israel is the metaphorical Tribe of Yosef, if not the real tribe by rite of Ashkenazi blood-lines. We have now identified modern day Yosef.

In order to do this, let us first remember that the term Mashiach, although it literally means “anointed one” actually means a redeemer and savior. Therefore Mashiach ben Yosef is to be the savior of the modern day State of Israel. This therefore means that Mashiach ben Yosef will somehow have to be an Israeli politician and some kind of religious leader.

Throughout ben Yosef literature it is repeatedly taught that he is supposed to die in battle with the enemies of Israel.

Rabbi Hayim Vital, master Kabbalist and codifier of the Arizal system sums up ben Yosef’s fate by saying that his date with death is due to the fact that his soul emanates from the Tree of Knowledge, Good and Evil, instead of emanating from the Tree of Life. This metaphor is packed with meaning.

As we know in the Garden of Eden, there were the two trees; eating the fruits of one brought eternal life, eating the fruits of the other brought death. Adam as we know ate of the Tree of Knowledge, Good and Evil and thus brought death to the world. Mashiach ben Yosef as the true “son of man” (Adam) follows in his footsteps and like every other human being since Eden is destined to “go the way of all the earth.”

Mashiach ben Yosef, might very well be a dreamer as was Yosef himself, but also like Yosef, Mashiach ben Yosef will be a savvy, modern and to the eye very secular politician. In his heart and private practice he will be righteous, whether that righteousness as prescribed by Torah Law will be a known thing to the public remains to be seen. If Mashiach ben Yosef is to be anything like Father Yosef, then indeed he will most likely follow in his footsteps and appear one way in public, and yet, be an entirely different person in private.

Another interesting point about ben Yosef mentioned in classical sources is that similar to Father Yosef his brothers, specifically those led by Yehuda, are said not to recognize him. We know the significance this played in the Biblical story, but we really do have to consider the ramifications of what this would mean if modern day Jews do not recognize Mashiach ben Yosef.

we can foresee Mashiach ben Yosef being a Jewish leader who is not much recognized and accepted by the religious community at large.

Throughout scripture and classical Torah literature it is Yosef who is portrayed as the antagonist of Esav. Esav’s descendants, Edom, have always been identified with the Romans, and the nations that succeeded them, modern day Europe, with the Church of Rome at their head. Thus the classical conflict of Mashiach ben Yosef is said to be with Rome

The present world situation is ripe for the rise of Mashiach ben Yosef. As we have described him, so shall he come. The religious will not welcome or accept him, whereas many of the secular will look to him as if he, Mashiach ben Yosef, is in reality Mashiach ben David. For this reason alone, he may be destined to die. Then again, like any other Jew, he may humble himself before his Creator in Heaven, embrace the Holy Torah and thus embrace the Tree of Life. In such a case, what will be is anyone’s guess, and HaShem’s Grace will decide the matter.

In Jewish tradition the coming head of Edom / Europe will be called Armilus, based on the name Romulus, the legendary founder of Rome. In one Jewish source, Armilus is identified by his non-Jewish / Christian name. The Midrash Milkhamot HaMashiach calls Armilus, the “Anti-Christ.”

## King 🡺 War against Amalek 🡺 Temple

“Kol HaTor” says,[[356]](#footnote-356) “His horns are the horns of a unicorn with which he strikes the peoples”.[[357]](#footnote-357) The main task of the Mashiach ben Yosef is the everlasting war against Amalek.

This section was written by Rabbi Yitzchok D. Frankel.

***Bereshit (Genesis) 41:42*** *And Pharaoh removed his ring from his hand and placed it on the hand of Yosef . . .*

There are three individuals mentioned in Tanach who were given rings to make them viceroy, and each of them is associated with the war against Amalek.

**Yosef**. The first is Yosef, as mentioned in our verse. Yehoshua, a descendant of Yosef is later chosen to wage war against Amalek.

This Midrash[[358]](#footnote-358) also makes some interesting comparisons between Yosef and Amalek. Due to these comparisons, Yosef is the most fitting candidate to defeat Amalek, the leading scion of Esav, and visit upon him his punishment from HaShem. Some of these comparisons there are as follows:

1. Yosef said, “I fear G-d”,[[359]](#footnote-359) whereas about Amalek it is written, “And he did not fear G-d”.[[360]](#footnote-360)

2. Yosef was small among his brothers, as it is written, “For he was a son of old age”,[[361]](#footnote-361) and about Amalek it is written, “Behold, I have placed you small among the nations”.[[362]](#footnote-362)

3. Esav lost his rights as a firstborn through his evil deeds, whereas Yosef was not originally a firstborn but acquired these rights through his good deeds.

4. Yosef expressed faith in Techiyat HaMaitim, as it is written, “G-d will surely remember you”,[[363]](#footnote-363) whereas Esav denied Techiyat HaMaitim, as it is written, “Behold, I am going to die”.[[364]](#footnote-364)

5. Yosef grew up among two wicked people, Potiphar and his wife, but did not learn from their deeds. Esav grew up among two tzaddikim, but did not learn from their deeds.

**Haman**. The second of the three is Haman, a descendant of Agag, king of Amalek. About Haman it is written, “And the King removed the ring from his hand and gave it to Haman.”[[365]](#footnote-365)

**Mordechai**. The third is Mordechai. After Haman is executed (thanks to Mordechai’s efforts and prayers), it is written, “And the King removed his ring which he had taken away from Haman, and gave it to Mordechai.”[[366]](#footnote-366)

Why Rachel’s Children?

Yosef and Mordechai, who descends from Binyamin, are the children of Rachel. (Mordechai was a scion of King Shaul.) The Midrash we cited above says that Yehoshua, a descendant of Ephraim ben Yosef, was chosen to lead the first battle against Amalek because Yosef was the son of Rachel.

Why are Rachel’s children chosen to receive royal rings, become viceroys, and fight Amalek?

The Gemara[[367]](#footnote-367) tells us that Rachel’s children were fitting to have the rights of the firstborn, as it is written:

***Bereshit (Genesis) 37:2*** *These are the offspring of Yaaqob: Yosef . . .”.*

This verse implies that Yaaqob’s primary offspring was Yosef. However, Leah’s children received the firstborn rights instead through the merit of Leah’s great prayers. HaShem partially returned the birthrights to Rachel in reward for her modesty in giving the Simanim to her sister. Yosef capitalized on these rights when he split into two tribes and thus received two portions in Eretz Israel. As we know, the firstborn takes a double portion.

From this Gemara we see that it is because of Rachel that her children are fitting to have the rights of the firstborn, i.e., to take the leadership of Klal Israel. There is also a Midrash that accords the leadership specifically to the children of Rachel:

When Shaul began to rule as king, the Holy One Blessed Be He said: “The offspring of Amalek will only fall into the hand of Rachel’s son.” You find that in Rephidim, he (Amalek) fell into the hand of Yehoshua, as it is written:

***Shemot (Exodus) 17:13*** *And Yehoshua weakened Amalek.*

***Pesiqta Rabbati, ch. 13*** *Said the Holy One Blessed Be He: “This tribe is always ready to extract punishment from Amalek . . .”*

Yet all this is enigmatic. Yehuda should be the warrior who challenges Esav / Amalek, since the kingship belongs to the tribe of Yehuda. We find many places where the Torah speaks of Yehuda’s valor in war.

HaRav Yonasan Eibeshutz, in his famous work Yaaros HaDevash (part 1, derush 3), takes note of this incongruity. He answers that as far as conquering Esav himself is concerned, Yehuda plays the leading role. It is written about Yehuda:

***Bereshit (Genesis) 49:8*** *Your hand is on the neck of your enemy.*

And the Midrash[[368]](#footnote-368) comments on this verse that victorious war is led only by Yehuda. But fighting Amalek is a different story altogether. Amalek has a mother with great merits, and it takes a mother with even greater merits, Rachel Imeinu, to overcome him.

Who was Amalek’s mother, and what great thing did she do in her life? The Torah says:

***Bereshit (Genesis) 36:22*** *And the sister of Lotan was Timna.*

Rashi comments[[369]](#footnote-369) that this verse was written to tell us that Timna was a princess. Nevertheless, she left it all to cleave to Avraham by becoming a concubine of one of his descendants, namely, Eliphaz the father of Amalek. Thus, we see that Amalek’s mother had great mesirus nefesh for spirituality.

Who can counteract such mesirus nefesh? Rachel can, since she performed a parallel act of mesirus nefesh, but one that was even greater. Let us compare the acts of these two women: Timna had no choice but to become a concubine if she was to marry Eliphaz since he already had a number of wives before she came along. Rachel, on the other hand, had the chance to be Yaaqob’s primary wife, but she sacrificed it when she gave the Simanim to Leah. As a result, she became “wife number two.”

It emerges that only Rachel’s children have a merit great enough to overcome the merit that Amalek inherited from his mother.

Based on this amazing insight of the Yaaros HaDevash, we can explain not only why the children of Rachel led the war against Amalek but also why they received royal rings and become viceroys. It is written regarding Bilaam’s prophecy: “And he saw Amalek and he took up his parable and said:

***Bamidbar (Numbers) 24:20*** *‘The first among nations is Amalek. But his end is to be eternally destroyed.’*

Throughout the course of history, Amalek will exist. At times, he will seem to be disappearing, but this is only temporary. The true and final defeat of Amalek will occur only at the end of days, when David of the tribe of Yehuda regains kingship. Until this occurs, the provisional antagonists of Amalek are the children of Rachel.

The Concept Of The Ring

What is the concept expressed by the royal ring that was lent to the children of Rachel? It is their interim power, their status of viceroy as opposed to that of king. Rachel’s children do not assume ultimate authority. They act only as the king’s independent representatives. This is seen clearly in the case of Yosef; whose power originates with Pharaoh. This is also the position of Shaul, whose monarchy is predestined to be only temporary in order to make way for David and his eternal monarchy. This is also the position of Mordechai; whose power derives from Achashverosh.

This is why a parallel exists between Yosef and Mordechai. Yosef was treated by Pharaoh as follows:

***Bereshit (genesis) 42:42-43*** *And he dressed him in garments of fine linen and placed a golden chain on his neck and seated him in the chariot second to him.*

And Mordechai was treated by Achashverosh as follows:

***Esther 8:15*** *And Mordechai went out from before the King in royal garments . . .*

When the ultimate destruction of Esav will occur, it will be due to Yosef. Yaaqob realizes this immediately upon Yosef’s birth:

“When Rachel gave birth to Yosef . . .” When the antagonist of Esav was born, as it is written:

***Ovadiah (Obadiah) 1:18*** *And the House of Yaaqob will be a fire, and the House of Yosef will be a flame, and the House of Esav will be straw, and they shall burn them and consume them . . .[[370]](#footnote-370)*

Here, too, Yosef’s power to consume Esav stems from his mother Rachel. The proof is that even the children of Bilhah, Rachel’s handmaiden and, later, mother surrogate,[[371]](#footnote-371) serve as antagonists of Esav. In the famous encounter between Esav and Yaaqob’s funeral procession ascending from Egypt, as Esav attempts to steal back the rights of burial in Mearat HaMachpelah, it is Naftali (son of Bilhah) who is given the task of running back to Egypt to bring the documents proving that Yaaqob had purchased from Esav all rights to the property. In addition, it is Chushim ben Dan (grandson of Bilhah) who ultimately slays Esav.

Returning to the idea set forth by the Yaaros HaDevash–that Rachel’s act of giving over the Simanim to Leah is the power that ultimately defeats Amalek: Was Leah ever aware that Rachel gave her the Simanim? It would seem that the answer is a resounding no! If Leah had known of her sister’s great sacrifice, could the harsh words that Leah spoke during the incident of the Dudaim ever have been uttered? When Rachel asks Leah for some of the Dudaim that Reuven found in the field, Leah is taken aback and responds:

***Bereshit (Genesis) 30:15*** *Is it a small thing that you have taken my husband, and to take also the Dudaim of my son?*

It is inconceivable that the righteous Leah would have accused her sister Rachel of taking “her” husband if she had known what Rachel had done with the Simanim. Leah would have realized that the truth was the exact opposite: Rachel had given her husband to Leah!

Rachel, at this point, could have set the record straight and responded to her sister by revealing to her the horrible truth, but why would she have? It would have only made Leah feel worse. The whole reason she had given her sister the Simanim in the first place was to save her embarrassment.

Thus, Rachel accepted the hurtful event as a normal consequence of being the beloved second wife. Thereafter, she suffered the further pain of remaining childless as Leah had children five and six.

## Mystical Perspectives

Kabbalah teaches that Saul’s soul was rooted in what is known as the “World of Concealment”,[[372]](#footnote-372) while that of David is from the “Revealed World”.[[373]](#footnote-373) For this reason, Saul was modest - i.e. hidden.

Saul’s soul root lay in the sixth of the Kings of Edom, relating to the sefira of yesod, whose name was the same as his; this king was one of the Edomite Kings whose death is mentioned explicitly.[[374]](#footnote-374) Thus Saul “reigned… and died”. Being from the world of Tohu (“chaos”), His kingship, could not endure. David, on the other hand, is rooted in the world of Tikkun (“repair”), and for this reason his kingship endured.[[375]](#footnote-375)

Although the house of royalty was destined to be from Yehuda, who had the trait known as “hoda’a” - both gratefulness and acknowledgement, Saul, although from the tribe of Binyamin, deserved to be king in his own right, but wasn’t destined to father a succession of royalty.

Our Sages have taught that the Torah arranged three commands to be dependent on a particular order as it pertains to Amalek. Let us look at these B’Seder, in order:

The Talmud[[376]](#footnote-376) speaks of the process of rebuilding of the Beit HaMikdash.[[377]](#footnote-377) The Talmud conditions that rebuilding on the destruction of Amalek.

***Sanhedrin 20b*** *And thus R. Yehuda said: Three commandments were given to Israel when they entered the land: to appoint a king,[[378]](#footnote-378) to cut off the seed of Amalek,[[379]](#footnote-379) and to build themselves the chosen house.[[380]](#footnote-380) While R. Nehorai[[381]](#footnote-381) said: This section[[382]](#footnote-382) was spoken only in anticipation of their future murmurings,[[383]](#footnote-383) as it is written, And shalt say, I will set a king over me etc.[[384]](#footnote-384)*

The Midrash speaks of these same three requirements:

***Pesiqta deRab Kahana, Midrashic Homilies for Shabbat Zachor, Pisqa III, III:XIV*** *“...When the Lord your God gives you peace from your enemies on every side, in the land which he is giving you to occupy as your patrimony, you shall not fail to blot out the memory of the Amalekites from under heaven” (Deut. 25:17-19): R. Azariah, R. Yehuda bar Simon in the name of R. Yehuda bar Ilai: When the Israelites entered the Land, they were commanded in three matters: to appoint a king, to build the chosen house, “And they shall make me a sanctuary” (Ex. 25:8), and to wipe out the memory of Amalek.*

It states that the nation of Israel is commanded to perform three commandments **sequentially** after they occupy the land of Israel:

1. They are to appoint a king,
2. They are to eradicate the offspring of Amalek.
3. They are to construct the holy Temple.

The Ramban comments on **Shemot (**Exodus**) 17:16**: “By saying, ***The*** *hand* ***upon the throne of the Eternal: the Eternal will have war with Amalek from*** *generation* ***to*** *generation,* Scripture intimates that the Israelites must first appoint a king over themselves [before they are to annihilate the offspring of Amalek], for ***the throne of the Eternal***refers only to the king, as it is said, ***Then Solomon sat on the throne of the Eternal****.[[385]](#footnote-385)* In line with the plain meaning of Scripture, this is correct.

The eradication of Amalek comes after we have a King who is a descendant of Rachel (Either from the tribe of Yosef or from the tribe of Binyamin). I have dealt with this topic extensively in the study titled “Esther”. Only AFTER Amalek is destroyed can the Mashiach ben David restore the Beit HaMikdash.

Notice the pattern:

King Saul comes to destroy Amalek and fails. He is replaced with King David.

In the future, I expect to see the same pattern:

A Benjamite king comes first to destroy Amalek, Then Mashiach ben David comes to reign. Look for the pattern!

## The Meaning of the name “Amalek”

Amalek: The term may be divided into *Amal* - to toil, and the letter *kuf,* with the meaning ‘ejection of the life-spirit’ e.g. *katal* - to kill with removal of life-spirit. So Amalek means ‘becoming dispirited through loss of spirit as a result of hard labor and continuous toil’. Such detachment is negative in nature.

Amalek represents intellectual doubt, the kind that erodes one’s sense of belief that HaShem is running world. This is why the Hebrew word *Amalek* (in Gematria) has the numeric value of 240, which is equal to the Hebrew word *safek*, which means *doubt*.

# Mashiach ben Yosef

Sefer Bereshit (Genesis) speaks of two great kings from the house of Yaaqov: Yosef and Yehuda.

***Bereshit (Genesis) 41:42-43*** *And Pharaoh took off his ring from his hand, and put it upon Yosef’s hand, and arrayed him in vestures of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck; 43 And he made him to ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried before him, Bow the knee: and he made him ruler over all the land of Egypt.*

***Bereshit (Genesis) 49:10*** *The sceptre shall not depart from Yehuda, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be.*

These two men hint to the two Meshichim who will appear to lead the world into the redemption. Yosef was the first world ruler and Yehuda was the ruler over the sons of Yaaqov.[[386]](#footnote-386)

These two great men exhibit the attributes that we will later see in Mashiach ben Yosef and Mashiach ben David. Therefore it behooves us to examine these two men and compare their lives to the roles that Chazal have assigned to the two Meshichim.

Sefer Bereshit (Genesis), Yosef and Yehuda meet for the first time as adults in Pharaoh’s court. Yosef is unrecognizable to Yehuda having been raised an Egyptian for so many years. While Yehuda has maintained his cultural identity, Yosef looks ever so different. More than this, rather than following in the “family business,” Yosef, is now a politician, a Prime Minister of Egypt, a man of the world, so very much unlike the House of Yaaqob, who are few, isolated and different. Yosef’s name is Egyptian, as are his appearance, wife and children ever so opposite from his brothers. All in all, there is nothing left “Israelitish” of Yosef except one major defining factor. This is his heart.[[387]](#footnote-387)

Yosef did not appear to be Torah observant. He appeared to be cruel, demanding, and unreasonable. He appeared to be an Egyptian, a Gentile. What was in his heart was not visible to his brothers. He was a Torah observant Jew who was completely mis-interpreted by his brothers!

And Yehuda, son number four, takes charge; not by means of authority or Divine decree but rather because that was his personality. His personality made him rise up like a rocket and become a leader among his brothers. This is most unusual that the number four son should rise up and take a position of power and authority in the presence of his older brothers. Nonetheless, Reuven son number one, and Levi, son number three are not heard from. Apparently, they acquiesce to the leadership role of their younger brother Yehuda.

There is only one problem here; there already is a leader among the brothers, a mighty and powerful leader at that! This leader is Yosef! Although he is not a leader of his brothers by their choice, he is a leader by right and Divine design. Therefore we have two leaders, Yosef and Yehuda.

The friction between their two personalities exists and existed even prior to Yosef’s identity being revealed. As it was then, so it is today, as we shall soon see.

Ezekiel prophesied[[388]](#footnote-388) that the jealously and conflict than lasted throughout the history of the kingdoms of Yehuda and Israel (Yosef) would eventually be resolved in messianic times, with Yosef taking his subordinate place under a Judean king of House David. This prophecy refers to far more than a mere political realignment. It addresses matters that go deep to the heart, to the fundamental psychologies that defined these two men and their perspective Kingdoms. While the Bible is full of information about Yosef himself, and the history of his many descendants, through the Tribes of Ephraim and Menashe, nevertheless, many fail to analyze, or to recognize Yosef personality types and their fundamental differences from Yehuda personality types.

While Yosef is in Egypt being tempted by and resisting the advances made by Potiphar’s wife, Yehuda is soliciting a prostitute who unbeknown to him is his daughter in law. So while Yosef disciplines his sexual urges, Yehuda does not. For having such control, Yosef acquired the title, HaTzadik (the one who does what’s right).

One of the things that is emphasized about Mashiach ben Yosef is something that is said about Yosef himself: “And Yosef recognized his brothers, but they did not recognize him”.[[389]](#footnote-389)

On this verse, the Gaon Rabbi Eliyahu of Vilna explains:

“This is one of Yosef’s attributes. Not just in his generation but in every generation, Mashiach ben Yosef recognizes his brothers and they do not recognize him. It is an act of Satan, which conceals Mashiach ben Yosef’s attributes such that the Jews unfortunately do not recognize his footsteps and in fact even scoff at them… If not for this, our troubles would already be over. If Israel recognized Yosef, Mashiach ben Yosef’s footsteps comprising the ingathering of the exiles, etc., we would already be completely redeemed.”[[390]](#footnote-390)

While the potential Mashiach ben Yosef of every generation brings the people the truth and presents before them the conditions for the redemption, the people deny and disrespect him. But because of his “Ahavat Yisroel”, he is willing to suffer. It is the people’s refusal to recognize the truth which brings upon them the needless wars and tragedies. For if the Jewish People had only accepted and understood Mashiach ben Yosef’s message, he would bring the redemption swiftly, in the way of “Achishena”, with glory and without needless suffering.

Mashiach ben Yosef, AKA Yeshua ben Yosef, provided His credentials as Mashiach ben Yosef by explicitly telling the people that He had control over the *physical* resources.

***Luqas (Luke) 7:22*** *Then Yeshua answering said unto them, Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached.*

Like Yosef in Egypt, Mashiach ben Yosef also fed the people.

***Matityahu (Matthew) 15:32-38*** *Then Yeshua called his disciples unto him, and said, I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with me now three days, and have nothing to eat: and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way. 33 And his disciples say unto him, Whence should we have so much bread in the wilderness, as to fill so great a multitude? 34 And Yeshua saith unto them, How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven, and a few little fishes. 35 And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground. 36 And he took the seven loaves and the fishes, and gave thanks, and brake them, and gave to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude. 37 And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the broken meat that was left seven baskets full. 38 And they that did eat were four thousand men, beside women and children.*

Just to emphasize the point that Mashiach ben Yosef fed the people, note that it is recorded that He did it a second time in order to bear witness to His ability.

***Mordechai (Mark) 6:37-44*** *He* (Yeshua) *answered and said unto them, Give ye them to eat. And they say unto him, Shall we go and buy two hundred pennyworth of bread, and give them to eat? 38 He saith unto them, How many loaves have ye? go and see. And when they knew, they say, Five, and two fishes. 39 And he commanded them to make all sit down by companies upon the green grass. 40 And they sat down in ranks, by hundreds, and by fifties. 41 And when he had taken the five loaves and the two fishes, he looked up to heaven, and blessed, and brake the loaves, and gave them to his disciples to set before them; and the two fishes divided he among them all. 42 And they did all eat, and were filled. 43 And they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments, and of the fishes. 44 And they that did eat of the loaves were about five thousand men.*

Rachel’s children are also responsible for fighting Amalek and HaShem’s other battles.

**Yehoshua**, the Ephraimite, fought Amalek:

***Shemot (Exodus) 17:8*** *Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim. 9 And Moses said unto Joshua: ‘Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek; tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in my hand.’ 10 So Joshua did as Moses had said to him, and fought with Amalek; and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill.*

**Yehoshua**, the Ephraimite, fought the Canaanites to procure Eretz Israel:

***Yehoshua (Joshua) 6:2*** *And HaShem said unto Joshua: ‘See, I have given into thy hand Jericho, and the king thereof, even the mighty men of valour.*

***Yehoshua (Joshua) 8:1*** *And HaShem said unto Joshua: ‘Fear not, neither be thou dismayed; take all the people of war with thee, and arise, go up to Ai; see, I have given into thy hand the king of Ai, and his people, and his city, and his land.*

**Yehoshua** was a descendant of Ephraim ben Yosef, the one who fought Amalek.

The Vilna Gaon taught[[391]](#footnote-391) that Yehoshua bin Nun began to manifest the mission of Mashiach ben Yosef from the time he lead the battle against Amalek.[[392]](#footnote-392) War against Amalek, who represent the antithesis of Tikkun Olam, is one of the main aspects of Mashiach ben Yosef’s mission, whether it is on a physical or spiritual plane.

Part of what Moshe Rabbenu bestowed to Yehoshua when he assumed the leadership of the Jewish people, was the spiritual mission of Mashiach ben Yosef, in its entirety; as it says: “And you shall place, from your majesty, upon him…”

Yehoshua was the most fitting choice to receive the mission of Mashiach ben Yosef, as a descendant of Yosef’s son Ephraim, to whom Yosef had extended his right hand, bestowing exceptional blessing and spiritual strength, which would be required in the mission of Mashiach ben Yosef towards Tikkun Olam.

Thus it was Yehoshua bin Nun who lead the conquest of Eretz Israel, for the goals of Tikkun Olam depend upon the fulfillment of the Jewish people’s destiny in Eretz Israel.[[393]](#footnote-393)

King **Saul**, the Benjamite, also fought Amalek:

***Shmuel alef (1 Samuel) 15:7*** *And Saul smote the Amalekites, from Havilah as thou goest to Shur, that is in front of Egypt.*

Shaul HaMelech manifested strong qualities of Mashiach ben Yosef during his reign. The Vilna Gaon taught[[394]](#footnote-394) that during the wars that Shaul fought, during his reign he manifested the mission of Mashiach ben Yosef, which includes going to war against the enemies of the Jewish people and expanding the borders of the land of Eretz Israel.[[395]](#footnote-395)

Also, HaShem’s choosing Shaul to be the king commanded specifically with the mission of wiping out Amalek[[396]](#footnote-396)clearly places Shaul in the role of Mashiach ben Yosef; one of whose main mission is to fight against Amalek.

Another, more subtle hint is the verse[[397]](#footnote-397) where Shaul refers to himself by the term: **צעיר**; which is a reference to Ephraim, the son of Yosef, and subsequently, Mashiach ben Yosef, who stems from Yosef .

**Mordechai**, the Benjamite, guided the people to slay all of their enemies:

***Esther 8:7-12*** *Then the king Ahasuerus said unto Esther the queen and to Mordecai the Jew, Behold, I have given Esther the house of Haman, and him they have hanged upon the gallows, because he laid his hand upon the Jews. 8 Write ye also for the Jews, as it liketh you, in the king’s name, and seal it with the king’s ring: for the writing which is written in the king’s name, and sealed with the king’s ring, may no man reverse. 9 Then were the king’s scribes called at that time in the third month, that is, the month Sivan, on the three and twentieth day thereof; and it was written according to all that Mordecai commanded unto the Jews, and to the lieutenants, and the deputies and rulers of the provinces which are from India unto Ethiopia, an hundred twenty and seven provinces, unto every province according to the writing thereof, and unto every people after their language, and to the Jews according to their writing, and according to their language. 10 And he wrote in the king Ahasuerus’ name, and sealed it with the king’s ring, and sent letters by posts on horseback, and riders on mules, camels, and young dromedaries: 11 Wherein the king granted the Jews which were in every city to gather themselves together, and to stand for their life, to destroy, to slay, and to cause to perish, all the power of the people and province that would assault them, both little ones and women, and to take the spoil of them for a prey, 12 Upon one day in all the provinces of king Ahasuerus, namely, upon the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month Adar.*

Finally, **Mashiach ben Yosef** has the task of completely destroying Amalek and all of HaShem’s enemies:

\* \* \*

Mashiach ben Yosef was truly a “Bne Yosef” while being of the lineage of David and of Yehuda. The fact that Mashiach ben Yosef controlled the physical resources while being a descendent of Yehuda suggests that He was the embodiment of the Navi’s prophecy:

***Yehezchel (Ezekiel) 37:19*** *Say unto them, Thus saith the Lord HaShem; Behold, I will take the stick of Yosef, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his fellows, and will put them with him, even with the stick of Yehuda, and make them one stick, and they shall be one in mine hand.*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Yosef** | **Brothers Led By Yehuda** |
| **Ben Noach** | **Bne Israel** |
| Very strict on himself, no leeway for transgressions. | Leniencies for his transgressions. |
| Rachel’s children must be in ***physical*** control of physical resources. | The ***spiritual*** control of Israel is in the hands of Yehuda’s family. |
| Concerned for the world. | Concerned for the family. |
| Torah SheBichtav | Torah SheBaal Peh[[398]](#footnote-398) |
|  |  |

## In Egypt

Yosef finally discloses his identity upon witnessing Yehuda’s return to his previous kingship status. The Tribes are reunited and Yosef will continue in his role merely as the dispenser of the grain and all the physical needs of his brethren. It is Yehuda, though, who will take over at the helm in Goshen, as it is specifically he who is sent by Yaaqob to establish a Bet Midrash, a house of learning, in the land that Yaaqob agrees to inhabit.[[399]](#footnote-399) Why, we might ponder, would Yaaqob send Yehuda and not Levi[[400]](#footnote-400) or Yissachar,[[401]](#footnote-401) those whose primary responsibility was the diligent learning and teaching so essential to Bne Israel’s existence?[[402]](#footnote-402)

HaShem led Yosef down a very different path from the rest of his family which we should rightly call Israel, and later (in history) Yehuda. Yosef, while assimilated externally, remained faithful to Israel internally. Yet, it is Yosef’s external and foreign posture / appearance that brings him into what our Sages taught was direct conflict with Yehuda. As is clear from the Genesis encounter, Yosef is testing his brothers to see if they are willing to stand together as brothers and defend Binyamin, whom he (Yosef) had set up and falsely accused of theft. Yehuda takes up the argument for Binyamin and his words are harsh and confrontational. Yosef recognizes the sincerity in Yehuda’s words and shortly discards all pretenses and reunites with his brothers.

Two Meshichim “close up together”, two pieces of wood become one, this refers to Mashiach ben Yosef and Mashiach ben David;[[403]](#footnote-403) also,

***Zohar Vayigash 206a*** *Yehuda was a king and Yosef was a king, and they approached one another and they united together as one.*

Malbim teaches us that according to rabbinic tradition this prophecy of Yehezchel is actually referring to two Meshichim, not one. He explains that before Mashiach ben David will reign over Israel, there will first be Mashiach ben Yosef, a mashiach from the house of Yosef. This Mashiach will gather up the ten lost tribes that were scattered throughout the world and reunite them with the Kingdom of Yehuda.

***Yehezchel (Ezekiel)37:15-17*** *And the word of HaShem came unto me, saying: 16 ‘And thou, son of man, take thee one stick, and write upon it: For Yehuda, and for the children of Israel his companions; then take another stick, and write upon it: For Yosef, the stick of* ***Ephraim****, and of all the house of Israel his companions; 17 and join them for thee one to another into one stick, that they may become one in thy hand. 18 And when the children of thy people shall speak unto thee, saying: Wilt thou not tell us what thou meanest by these? 19 say into them: Thus saith the Lord HaShem: Behold, I will take the stick of Yosef, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his companions; and I will put them unto him together with the stick of Yehuda, and make them one stick, and they shall be one in My hand.*

## Two Trees

In the Garden of Eden, there were the two trees; eating the fruits of one brought eternal life, eating the fruits of the other brought death. Adam as we know ate of the Tree of Knowledge, Good and Evil and thus brought death to the world. Mashiach ben Yosef as the true “son of man”[[404]](#footnote-404) (Adam) follows in his footsteps and like every other human being since Eden is destined to “go the way of all the earth.”

Rabbi Hayim Vital, master Kabbalist and codifier of the Arizal system sums up ben Yosef’s fate by saying that his date with death is due to the fact that his soul emanates from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

Mashiach ben David on the other hand is said to eat from the Tree of Life and as such will introduce to the world the radical *removal* of the concept of what we know as death.

It is well-known that Mashiach Ben Yosef is killed. But actually, this does not have to happen. For if the redemption comes the way of “Achishena” (swiftly and with glory) – that is, the Jewish People do “teshuva” – then Mashiach Ben Yosef triumphs in battle. On the other hand, if the redemption comes “BiEta” (slowly, at its fixed time) – then one of the results of such a scenario is that he falls in the midst of a difficult and bitter battle, where great suffering and needless tragedy take place.

Mashiach ben Yosef’s mission involves the ingathering of the “body” of Israel.

Mashiach ben Yosef (Mashiach the descendant of Yosef) of the tribe of Ephraim (son of Yosef), is also referred to as Mashiach ben Ephraim, Mashiach the descendant of Ephraim. He will come first, before the final redeemer, and later will serve as his viceroy. [The harmony and cooperation between Mashiach ben David and Mashiach ben Yosef signifies the total unity of Israel, removing the historical rivalries between the tribes of Yehuda and Yosef.][[405]](#footnote-405)

The essential task of Mashiach ben Yosef is to act as precursor to Mashiach ben David: he will prepare the world for the coming of the final redeemer. Different sources attribute to him different functions, some even charging him with tasks traditionally associated with Mashiach ben David (such as the ingathering of the exiles, the rebuilding of the Bet HaMikdash, and so forth).

The principal and final function ascribed to Mashiach ben Yosef is of political and military nature. He shall wage war against the forces of evil that oppress Israel. More specifically, he will do battle against Edom, the descendants of Esav. Edom is the comprehensive designation of the enemies of Israel, and it will be crushed through the progeny of Yosef. Thus it was prophesied of old, “The House of Yaaqob will be a fire and the House of Yosef a flame, and the House of Esav for stubble..”:[[406]](#footnote-406) “the progeny of Esav shall be delivered only into the hands of the progeny of Yosef.”[[407]](#footnote-407)

Mashiach ben Yosef’s jobs are many, and they include bringing the entire Jewish people back to Israel (kibbutz Galiyot),[[408]](#footnote-408) infusing them with a newfound spirituality, and revealing the secrets of the Torah, among other things. Another important task that he is to accomplish is the complete destruction of Edom, as the pasuk says in Ovadiah - the house of Yaaqob will be fire, and the house of Yosef a flame, and the house of Esav will be like straw, and he shall light them and consume them.

The job of Mashiach ben Yosef is gathering in the exiles and building the material aspects of Eretz Israel.

This final purpose follows all the other ones, and is the reason why he leads the Jewish people in the war of Gog and Magog. Although many people mistakenly think otherwise, this great war is actually after Mashiach ben Yosef has done most of his job, and actually gives us a segue into the period of Mashiach ben David.

If we can imagine the scene for a moment, we have Mashiach ben Yosef who has led the entire Jewish people to a genuine spiritual renaissance, returning the entire nation back to their rightful homeland, to Israel. He represents the promise of a new age for humanity, one of peace, love and harmony. And yet, he is challenged by a force known as Gog and Magog. This force is actually composed of a few different components, but is mainly led by Amalek, the arch-enemy of the Jewish people (which reared its ugly head in World War II in the form of the Nazis of Germany), as well as the Erev Rav - that section of the Jewish people who attempts to remove the Jewish people’s relationship with HaShem. They combine forces with many other nations of the world (see Yehezchel 38-39) to try to prevent the triumph of Mashiach ben Yosef and his mission to remove evil from the hearts of mankind. This true axis of evil, however, would rather die than allow mankind to be beholden to the Higher Power that created them.

Just as Mashiach ben Yosef is about to destroy the last vestiges of evil, the leader of the Erev Rav, named Armilus, is somehow able to kill him.

Military strength and conquest of the land of Israel, the conspicuous traits of the tribe of Ephraim appear here in Mashiach ben Yosef, whose job is to take vengeance on the other nations and conquer the land from them in return for all that they did to us.

“from the shadow of Yehoshua your servant...for he was the one who divided the land of Israel, and his descendant Mashiach ben Yosef will be the one who will lead the Jewish people to defeat Gog and his helpers at the end of days.”

Targum Yonatan[[409]](#footnote-409) referred to Mashiach ben Yosef as a character who mainly suffers, but the sources that we have brought[[410]](#footnote-410) prove the opposite, that the main portrayal of Mashiach ben Yosef is as the one who avenges the vengeance of what the Jews suffered from the other nations. One who looks at the comparisons of Aurbach, will understand how he arrived at his mistaken conclusion. Despite the fact that there is an opinion that Mashiach ben Yosef will be killed,[[411]](#footnote-411) all of the victories of Mashiach ben Yosef which are mentioned in the sources, prove that also according to that opinion, Mashiach ben Yosef will first of all win many battles.

According to our teacher the Vilna Gaon, all of the work of the ingathering of exiles, the building of Yerushalayim and the expansion of the settlement in the land of Israel to return the diving presence, in all of their details and minute details, are the job of the mashiach of the beginning, the first mashiach, Mashiach ben Yosef,

This ultimate confrontation between Yosef and Esav is alluded already in the very birth of Yosef when his mother Rachel exclaimed:

***Genesis 30:23*** *G-d has taken away my disgrace.*

With prophetic vision she foresaw that an “anointed savior” will descend from Yosef and that he will remove the disgrace of Israel. In this context she called his name “Yosef, saying ‘Yosef HaShem - may G-d add to me ben acher (lit., another son), i.e., ben acharono shel olam - one who will be at the end of the world’s time’,[[412]](#footnote-412) from which it follows that ‘meshu’ach milchamah - one anointed for battle’ will descend from Yosef.”[[413]](#footnote-413)

***Succah 52b*** *And HaShem showed me four craftsmen’ (Zecharia 2:3). Who are these four craftsmen? R’ Chunuh ben Bizna, citing R’ Shimon Chasida, replied: Mashiach the son of David,* ***Mashiach the son of Yosef****, Eliyahu, and the Righteous Priest.*

The immediate results of this war[[414]](#footnote-414) will be disastrous: Mashiach ben Yosef will be killed. This is described in the prophecy of Zechariah, who says of this tragedy that:

***Zechariah 12:10*** *they shall mourn him as one mourns for an only child.[[415]](#footnote-415)*

His death will be followed by a period of great calamities. These new tribulations shall be the final test for Israel, and shortly thereafter Mashiach ben David shall come, avenge his death, resurrect him, and inaugurate the Messianic era of everlasting peace and bliss.[[416]](#footnote-416)

Quite significantly, R. Saadia Gaon (one of the few to elaborate on the role of Mashiach ben Yosef) notes that this sequence is not definite but contingent! Mashiach ben Yosef will not have to appear before Mashiach ben David, nor will the activities attributed to him or his death have to occur. All depends on the spiritual condition of the Jewish people at the time the redemption is to take place:

The essential function of Mashiach ben Yosef is to prepare Israel for the final redemption, to put them into the proper condition in order to clear the way for Mashiach ben David to come. Of that ultimate redemption it is said, that if Israel repent (return to G-d) they shall be redeemed immediately (even before the predetermined date for Mashiach’s coming). If they will not repent and thus become dependent on the final date, “the Holy One, blessed be He, will set up a ruler over them, whose decrees shall be as cruel as Haman’s, thus causing Israel to repent, and thereby bringing them back to the right path.”[[417]](#footnote-417) In other words, if Israel shall return to G-d on their own and make themselves worthy of the redemption, there is no need for the trials and tribulations associated with the above account of events related to Mashiach ben Yosef. Mashiach ben David will come directly and redeem us.[[418]](#footnote-418)

Moreover, even if there be a need for the earlier appearance of Mashiach ben Yosef, the consequences need not be as severe as described. Our present prayers and meritorious actions can mitigate these. R. Isaac Luria (Arizal) notes that the descendant of Yosef, by being the precursor of the ultimate Mashiach, is in effect kissey David, the “seat” or “throne” of David, i.e., of Mashiach. Thus when praying in the daily Amidah, “speedily establish the throne of Your servant David,” one should consider that this refers to Mashiach ben Yosef and beseech G-d that he should not die in the Messianic struggle.[[419]](#footnote-419) As all prayers, this one, too, will have its effect.

It follows, then, that all the above is not an essential or unavoidable part of the Messianic redemption that we await. Indeed, it - (and the same may be said of the climactic war of Gog and Magog) - may occur (or may have occurred already!) in modified fashion.[[420]](#footnote-420) This may explain why Rambam does not mention anything about Mashiach ben Yosef. R. Saadia Gaon[[421]](#footnote-421) and R. Hai Gaon,[[422]](#footnote-422) as well as a good number of commentators, do refer to him briefly or at length. In view of the divergent Midrashim and interpretations on this subject it is practically impossible to present a more definitive synopsis that would go far beyond the above. Thus it is wisest to cite and follow R. Chasdai Crescas who states that “no certain knowledge can be derived from the interpretations of the prophecies about Mashiach ben Yosef, nor from the statements about him by some of the Geonim;” there is no point, therefore, in elaborating on the subject.[[423]](#footnote-423)

***Ovadiah 1:17*** *But in mount Zion there shall be those that escape, and it shall be holy; and the house of Yaaqob shall possess their possessions. 18 And the house of Yaaqob shall be a fire, and the house of Yosef a flame, and the house of Esav for stubble, and they shall kindle in them, and devour them; and there shall not be any remaining of the house of Esav; for HaShem hath spoken. 19 And they of the South shall possess the mount of Esav, and they of the Lowland the Philistines; and they shall possess the field of Ephraim, and the field of Samaria; and Binyamin shall possess Gilead. 20 And the captivity of this host of the children of Israel, that are among the Canaanites, even unto Zarephath, and the captivity of Jerusalem, that is in Sepharad, shall possess the cities of the South. 21 And saviours shall come up on mount Zion to judge the mount of Esav; and the kingdom shall be HaShem’s.*

He we see, from verse 18, that the House of Yosef (including its leader) has a military role in the end-times drama. Verse 21 indicates that this is a joint effort. From this we see that the time when the Mashiach ben Yosef comes ends with a period of peace. This would indicate the period we have seen above when there is world peace, a renewal of the Davidic kingdom, etc. Let me summarize the Rabbinic writings[14] with regards to Mashiach ben Yosef:

There will be a period of about seven years of terrible famines and other troubles. The land of Israel will at that time be under Non-Jewish control, and a leader of the tribe of Ephraim, will arise to lead militarily against these nations who control Jerusalem. He will be successful, but after his initial victory he will die in battle. This will cause a great mourning and many will lose faith. At that time (still within the seven years) the Mashiach ben David will be revealed, he shall finish the battle. After which, he will resurrect all the dead, starting with the Mashiach ben Yosef. Both of them will go up to Mount Zion to fulfill the prophecy in:

***Ovadiah 1:21*** *And the saviors* (plural - both Messiahs) *shall go up onto Mount Tzion and judge Mount Esav, and the kingdom will be for HaShem.*

There is the fulfillment of ALL the major prophesies like an end to war and a world at peace with the Jewish people in a restored Jerusalem with the third Temple.

One of the things that is emphasized about Mashiach Ben Yosef is something that is said about Yosef himself: “And Yosef recognized his brothers, but they did not recognize him”. While the potential Mashiach Ben Yosef of every generation brings the people the truth and presents before them the conditions for the redemption, the people deny and disrespect him. But because of his “Ahavat Israel”, he is willing to suffer. It is the people’s refusal to recognize the truth which brings upon them the needless wars and tragedies. For if the Jewish People had only accepted and understood Mashiach Ben Yosef’s message, he would bring the redemption swiftly, in the way of “Achishena”, with glory and without needless suffering.

But in the scenario of “BiEta”, only a handful understand, identify, and go with Mashiach Ben Yosef. And while the people continue to deny him, he continues his mission in any case, provoking the goyim and sanctifying the Name of G-d, and eventually falling, as stated above. It must be pointed out here that the major obstacle for Mashiach Ben Yosef is not the gentiles, but rather the destroyers from within. They are called the “Erev Rav”.[[424]](#footnote-424) According to the Gaon from Vilna, the major battle of Mashiach Ben Yosef is against the “Erev Rav”, who prevents the Holy People from recognizing the truth which would bring the redemption swiftly, “HaGiulat Achishena”.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Mashiach ben Yosef**  **(Yosef)** | **Mashiach ben David**  **(Yehuda)** |
| Rachel | Leah |
| Revealed / or explicit | Hidden / or sealed |
| Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil | Tree Of Life |
| Tikkun Olam  (repair the world) | Tikkun Adam  (repair man) |
| Yosef ben Yaaqob | Yehuda ben Yaaqob |
| Northern Kingdom (Israel / Ephraim) | Southern kingdom (Yehuda) |
| Material | Spiritual |
| Body | Soul |
| Ashkenazim | Sephardim |
| Tzadik gamur[[425]](#footnote-425) | Baalei teshuva[[426]](#footnote-426) |
| Torah SheBichtav  (Written Law) | Torah SheBaal Peh[[427]](#footnote-427)  (Oral Law)[[428]](#footnote-428) |
| Pshat - literal | Sod - secret |
| Physical Mission | Spiritual Mission |
| Tishri | Nisan |
| Ita’aruta de L’tata (arousal from below) | Ita’aruta de L’Eila (arousal from above) |
| Yetzer HaRa (Evil Inclination) | Yetzer HaTov (Good Inclination) |
| West | East |
| Mission: Restoration and Purification | Mission: Elevation and Transformation |
| mashpia (giver) | mekabel (receiver) |
| Tafel - וטפל‎  (enabler of the essence, or secondary) | Ikar - עיקר  (essence, or primary) |

## Tikkun

The mission of man is referred to as Tikkun Olam (World-Rectification). It exists one step below and feeds into, man’s original purpose, Tikkun Adam (Self or Soul-Rectification). This dichotomy makes up the complete picture of all of man’s challenges and experiences in this world: Man’s relationship to the world around him, his outer world; and his relationship to his inner world, within himself.

Tikkun Olam corresponds to Mashiach ben Yosef and Tikkun Adam corresponds to Mashiach ben David.

# Revealed and Hidden

Another important tool for identifying Mashiach ben Yosef in Tanach, is being aware of revelation and explicitness in Tanach, vs. lack of explicitness and withholding of detail. In Yirmiyahu the verse describes two “documents” which are to be “preserved”. One is called: “the revealed or explicit document”. The other is called: “the hidden or sealed document”.

In Kol HaTor the Vilna Gaon teaches that these two documents represent the two Meshichim. The “revealed/explicit document” represents Mashiach ben Yosef, while the “hidden/sealed document” represents Mashiach ben David.

What this comes to teach us is that Tanach relates to the qualities of the two Meshichim differently. The qualities of Mashiach ben Yosef are identified through the explicit details and revealed facts found in the verses of Tanach. Although this is also true to a certain extent of the qualities of Mashiach ben David, they are mainly expressed by the absence of details given and are implicit, instead of explicit.

***Bereshit (Genesis) 42:8*** *Yosef recognized his brothers, but they did not recognize him*.

The above enigmatic pasuk accurately describes Mashiach ben Yosef. MbY is standing in front of us, yet we have no idea who He is. Part of this idea I described in my study titled: FLOWER.

R. Hillel Rivlin of Shklov writes:[[429]](#footnote-429)

“Yosef recognized his brothers, but they did not recognize him”. This [hiddenness] characterizes Yosef, not only in his generation, but in every generation in which the Mashiach ben Yosef recognizes his brothers but they do not recognize him. It is part of a diabolical scheme that the qualities of Mashiach ben Yosef are concealed in [the final period of] the Footsteps of the Messiah. Due to our many sins, he is scorned, as well. If this were not the case, our suffering would already have ended. If only Israel would recognize Mashiach ben Yosef*’s* “footprints” [i.e., the signs of his presence], the ingathering of the exiles, etc. [enumerated throughout *Kol HaTor,* including the messianic role of science], we would already have seen the complete Redemption.

Yonathan was destined to be second to King David. There was supposed to be a shared kingdom. Jonathan's reaction is that he falls in love with David basically. He loves him and he says to David later, I know you're going to be king, "Ve'ani eheyeh lecha lemishneh," and I'll be second in charge, which if you think about it that's always the role of the children of Rachel. They're always second in charge to the king, that Mishneh lamelech, with Mordecai, with Joseph.

Here, Jonathan is saying it. He's perfectly okay with that, and that really would have happened. If you even listen to the language, "Venefesh Yahonatan niksherah benefesh David," what does that of? "Nefesh Yahonata niksherah benefesh David," where else do you have one soul bound up with another?

It's actually Jacob and Benjamin. Judah says it about Benjamin's relationship with Jacob. If you think about it, those are those words, which are very difficult for Judah to say, to recognize that his father loves Benjamin more, and that he'll be the slave. This is the same thing with Jonathan. Jonathan also, it's very difficult for him to say "Venefesh Yahonatan niksherah benefesh David."

King Saul is saying, you're crazy, he's your rival, he's going to displace you, and you love him? That ability to go over to the other side of the tracks, where he's echoing Judah, again, he's repaying Judah in a certain way for those words. Now, Benjamin is repaying Judah and saying I'm willing to be the second in charge to you because of that. That's what should have happened and it would have happened, if not for King Saul, who wouldn't let it happen.

The children of Rachel are always second to the king. Consider that Yosef was second to Paro (and also to Yaaqob). Yehoshua was second to Moshe. King Saul was destined to be second to King David in the same way the Mashiach ben Yosef is destined to be second to Mashiach ben David. The “revealed/explicit king” is Mashiach ben Yosef, while the “hidden/sealed king” represents Mashiach ben David. This suggests that either both Meshichim will be ruling together, or the two will become one. One will be hidden withing the revealed Mashiach.

## Pshat and Remez

Rabbi Hayim Vital attributed to Yosef the extroverted expression of religion, called in Hebrew, the Pshat. Pshat is usually defined as the simple meanings of religion, but its major emphasis is on externals. Pshat is the external, platonic face of religion. As Yosef was more interested in appearances and not necessarily in essence, Yosef became the archetype of externals-based religion and platonic societies. Platonic externals always emphasize correct form as being the ultimate goal and end-all of expression. How one appears means everything to the external platonic.

Religion that emphasizes external form over internal spirit is expressing the spirit of Yosef. This is the Pshat. Needless to say, overemphasis on form at the expense of substance leads to loss of essence and thus the corruption of form.

Rabbi Vital associates Yehuda (and David) with sincere devotional experiential religion. In Hebrew, this level is called Sod, the secrets. And why is it a secret? The answer is because at this level of religious expression, where essence means everything, the relationship between the person and God is most personal and intense. It is internal and as such not visibly seen or measurable by outsiders who judge only by forms. To such platonic types the relationship of the devote is a mystery, a secret which defies platonic external forms.

## Torah SheBaal Peh - Torah SheBichtav

When the Tanach gives detail about people, it is generally communicating the teachings and qualities associated with Mashiach ben Yosef and Tikkun Olam. When we find that details of a certain episode or period in a person’s life are left out, we can assume, by very absence of detail, the implicit inclusion of qualities associated with Mashiach ben David and Tikkun Adam.

The reason that we find almost no explicit reference in Torah SheBaal Peh to Mashiach ben Yosef, whereas much more is found in explicit reference to Mashiach ben David, is in compensation for the greater amount of explicit material that relates to Mashiach ben Yosef in Tanach (Torah SheBichtav). On the other hand, because Mashiach ben David is related to much less in Torah SheBichtav, Torah SheBaal Peh compensates by referring to those qualities and aspects more explicitly.

## Gentiles

Our Sages taught that Yosef spoke seventy languages, thus indicating that his task was a universal one, common to all nations.

***Midrash Rabbah - Numbers XIV:5*** *SEVENTY SHEKELS, AFTER THE SHEKEL OF THE SANCTUARY (VII, 49). This alludes to the fact that Gabriel came and added to Yosef’s name one letter from the name of the Holy One, blessed be He, and taught him seventy languages; as is borne out by the text, He appointed it in Yosef (Yehoseph - יהוסף)[[430]](#footnote-430) for a testimony, when he[[431]](#footnote-431) went forth against the land of Egypt. The speech I had not known I understood.[[432]](#footnote-432) Had he not done so the Egyptians would not have accepted Yosef as a ruler over them.*

He protected the Jewish people in Egypt, and is described as “*the opposing force to Esav*”,[[433]](#footnote-433) defending the nation against those who attack the Jewish people.

# Conclusion

When we study the Torah’s account of Yosef and his brothers, we ignore the personal perspective of the people involved in the story, and rather study it from the global perspective. Both Yosef and Yehuda were kings; they both had the power of leadership that guides the collective. Binyamin represents the place of the Mikdash and the revelation of the *Shechinah*, and his tribal inheritance, including Yerushalayim, is found between those of Yosef and Yehuda. Yosef attempted to rule over Binyamin, but through Yehuda’s self-sacrifice, Binyamin was eventually considered part of Yehuda. Hundreds of years later, when the kingdom was broken up, Binyamin joined the Kingdom of Yehuda (despite the historical struggle between David and Shaul), and not the Kingdom of Yosef, and this established that it would be the Kingdom of Yehuda that would form the basis of Israel for all generations.[[434]](#footnote-434)

# Epilogue

The Deeper Meaning of Israel’s

Latest Election Cycle

By Rav Yehuda Hakohen

14 Heshvan 5783 – November 8, 2022

Post-Election Benjamin Netanyahu. Nov. 6, 2022.

The constant election coverage and polls that Israelis were bombarded with over the last several weeks had essentially conditioned much of the public to see a political race taking place between two blocks – a right and left block (or a pro-Netanyahu and anti-Netanyahu block).

The fact that President Yitzhak “Buji” Herzog will task the party leader with the most potential coalition partners totaling at least 61 seats with forming a government notwithstanding, the media’s framing tends to have created a misleading illusion of something resembling a multi-limbed two party system.

Likud leader Binyamin Netanyahu seems assured to be given first crack at forming a coalition. We shouldn’t be surprised if he initially attempts to form a government with the Haredi parties and outgoing Defense Minister Benny Gantz (National Unity), leaving Betzalel Smotrich (Religious Zionism), Itamar Ben-Gvir (Otzma Yehudit) and Avi Maoz (Noam) in the opposition.

This isn’t because Netanyahu has any personal or ideological preference for Gantz over Smotrich and his partners. Rather, it’s for two important reasons that are often lost on the average voter:

1. External – In the face of mounting pressure from the United States, Europe and Diaspora Jewish organization, Netanyahu will most likely (as always) try to moderate his image to the outside world by forming a coalition with parties more in line with Western sensibilities who at least pretend to support the policy of partitioning our country into two states.

2. Internal – Netanyahu will want to leave himself a potential alternative coalition waiting in the opposition in order to keep his initial, more internationally palatable coalition partners in line.

It’s also possible that Smotrich and Ben-Gvir separate their factions in order to allow the former to join the government while the latter is left out as a concession to all those pressuring the Likud leader against a narrow nationalist coalition.

Applying Western Political Framings to Israeli Society

Another problematic feature of our election coverage was the presentation of Israel’s political map as a one dimensional linear spectrum.

To properly analyze the dynamics of our political system, it’s important to recognize that Western political framings don’t fit Israeli society. The Shas party, for example, successfully campaigned on its identity as the only electoral option that is simultaneously Jewish, yemini (nationalist) and ḥevrati (supportive of social programs to help our weaker sectors). While the party champions socio-economic policies that would put it squarely on the left of any European nation’s political map, its positions on Jewish culture and identity might place it on the right of any such nation in which it represents the dominant majority population.

What pundits from outside Israel might find even stranger is the fact that Shas leader Aryeh Deri made it clear throughout his campaign that a vote for Shas will help ensure Netanyahu’s return to the prime minister’s office.

In addition to seeing Netanyahu as a close political ally and sensing that the contradictions between where each party hopes to lead Israel are currently non-antagonistic, Deri understood that many of his potential voters were struggling to choose between his party and Netanyahu’s Likud. In order to make it easier for this demographic to vote Shas, Deri made clear his intention to recommend Netanyahu to the president and to sit in a Likud-led coalition. A party campaigning hard (and planning to deliver) on its leftist socio-economic policies rarely flaunts the fact that it plans to form a government with a prime minister well known for liberal economic positions. This dynamic alone should make clear the problematic nature of trying to understand Israel through Western linear political framings.

Liberal, conservative, left, right, religious and secular are all categories that developed in Europe and have deep roots in the West. They grew out of Greco-Roman civilization, Christian dogma and the revolutionary transition from feudalism to capitalism. Trying to impose such a framing on non-Western societies obviously leads to major errors in our analyses.

Left vs. Right

Right and left, for example, mean something totally different in the Israeli context than they do in the West.

The term “left” in the State of Israel generally refers to two groups. The first is Israel’s westernized Liberal-Zionist ruling class that is primarily concerned with the material wellbeing of the Jewish people (security, economy, diplomacy, etc.) but maintains a very European sense of national identity while remaining largely estranged from the ancient values and traditions of Am Yisrael.

The second group is a smaller sector of the population that is far more universalist and has almost fully adopted the narrative of Israel’s critics. Despite its seemingly insignificant numbers, this second group actually does resemble the left in other parts of the world and expresses some important points that the broader Israeli society should really consider (but probably can’t just yet). On election day, this group likely voted for Ḥadash-Ta’al (or Balad if they didn’t fear voting for a faction unlikely to pass the 3.25% threshold).

The term “right” in Israeli society also refers to two groups – ideologically motivated Jewish nationalists (for lack of a better term) fully living their people’s story on the one hand, and those with a European style of nationalism similar to the first group of “leftists” but who resemble Western conservatives in their focus on security and economic liberalism on the other.

An early feature of this past election cycle had actually been the antagonization of contradictions between these two groups of “rightists” (the most offensive example being Yisrael Beiteinu leader Avigdor Lieberman’s crass video portraying Netanyahu as a puppet of Rav Zvi Yisrael Tau). What had been referred to by certain political figures as the “normal right” or “sane right” is actually those who’ve adopted conservative Western positions, while those psychologically living in Jewish history and loyal to the aspirations and folkways of our ancestors are often defamed as “messianic” or “extreme.”

From whatever perspective we approach Israel’s political map, it’s helpful to acknowledge that terms like “left” and “right” have already become too broad and ambiguous to mean anything concrete. And that’s without even struggling with the question of where the Haredi and Palestinian parties would fall on such a linear political spectrum.

Israel’s Tribal Political Map

It’s clear that a more precise set of terms is required to more accurately understand Israeli society and the broader Jewish world. And when we search within our own culture for such a socio-political framework, we find that what best suits our people is a model based on our Hebrew tribal identities.

Although these tribes were once biologically defined, today they should be understood differently. If we accept the worldview of our ancestors that saw the people of Israel as expressions of a single spiritual organism shining into this world, then we should see the tribal identities as different shades of that collective soul. Or in simpler terms, as different personality types found within the Jewish people.

Yosef vs. Yehuda

The two main leadership tribes within Israel have always been Yehuda and Yosef. Yehuda represents what’s unique about the children of Israel’s identity, worldview and historic mission, while Yosef tends to be more focused on Israel’s material wellbeing and emphasizes that which we share in common with other nations – especially the most dominant civilization of any given period.

Yehuda and Yosef are also orbited by tribes that serve as extreme expressions of their characteristics (for a breakdown of the Jewish people’s broader tribal political map and how these identities manifest in Israel’s current political system, readers are encouraged to check out this more in depth analysis).

This friction between Yehuda and Yosef has played itself out in many different ways over thousands of years. One of the clearest examples would be the two rival kingdoms of the first Temple period. The most impactful leaders of the kingdom of Israel came from the tribe of Yosef (specifically the Ephraim sub-tribe) while the kingdom of Yehuda continued to be led by the descendants of David.

While most Jews today are descendants of the Yehuda kingdom (which is why the term “Jew” subsequently expanded to include the tribes of Shimon, Levi and Binyamin), anyone living through that historic period would have likely seen Israel as the more important kingdom. But while the Yosef-led Israel was stronger and more engaged with other nations, it was also more culturally influenced by these nations than the landlocked isolationist Yehuda kingdom. Unchecked, this led to the Israeli kingdom’s ultimate downfall.

Our sages have long understood the concept of Mashiach ben Yosef (the messianic force of Yosef) as the redirecting of Yosef’s ability to successfully manage the material world towards the fulfillment of Jewish national aspirations.

The Gaon of Vilna taught his students that the physical rebuilding of the Jewish people in our land would be the process of Mashiach ben Yosef and that it would emphasize the features of our identity that we share in common with other nations. In his eulogy of Binyamin Z’ev Herzl, HaRav Avraham Yitzhak HaKohen Kook expounded on this idea and essentially dubbed the Zionist movement that messianic expression of Yosef.

But once Zionism’s revolutionary role was accomplished, Yosef appears to have naturally slid back towards an assimilationist impulse that characterized its tribal identity in the Diaspora (it’s worth exploring the dialectical relationship between the Haskala and Zionism). The desire of our Zionist political factions for Israel to be accepted as part of the West is a clear expression of this.

There are contemporary examples that can help us better understand the friction between Yosef and Yehuda that lie at the core of the current tensions within Israeli society.

Yehuda Jews tend to understand the world around them through lessons learned from the Jewish past, the statutes of our Torah and ancient prophetic ideas about our collective destiny and mission. When any given social or political issue arises, a Jew with a more Yehuda orientation generally tends to see the issue through the prism of Israel’s history spanning thousands of years. He might even cite Biblical examples of how our ancestors responded to certain challenges in ancient times in order to advocate for similar policies today.

But Jews with a more Yosef orientation tend to look at the very same social or political issue through the prism of what’s universally considered just according to the values of what they perceive to be the most morally advanced civilization of the time.

So Yehuda and Yosef generally look at the same issues, come to radically different policy conclusions and often relate to the positions of the Other as deeply frightening.

Yehuda often sees the universalist orientation of Yosef as stemming from a weak connection with our people’s identity and an unhealthy need to gain gentile acceptance, while Yosef generally sees the particularist orientation of Yehuda as dangerously chauvinistic and out of touch with a more enlightened modern world.

Illusion of a Unity Government

Even though the groups superficially defined as comprising the right in Israeli society have had significantly more electoral power in recent elections than those defined as left, the plutocratic coalition headed by Naftali Bennett (Yamina) and Yair Lapid (Yesh Atid) showed us that the divide between Yehuda and Yosef is actually deeper and more significant that what many of us are conditioned to see as a right-left divide.

The Bennett-Lapid government, with the exception of Mansour Abbas’s United Arab List party, was comprised of different shades of Yosef. And because the tribe of Yosef today represents and emphasizes the part of Israeli identity that we share in common with the West, one can easily look at all the political expressions of Yosef as making up a linear political spectrum ranging from liberal to conservative. This government was mistakenly hailed by many as a unity government representing different ends of Israel’s political map because the people making that claim tended to see the non-Yosef tribes as essentially illegitimate and beyond the pale of what should be politically acceptable.

While on the surface, Israel’s internal conflict might appear to be one between a westernized ruling class and a population more connected to the identity and traditions of our people, there’s also something deeper taking place beneath the socio-political surface between the forces of Yosef and Yehuda. The more we understand this friction, the more we appreciate its place at the center of these past elections.

The Inevitable Shift

Itamar Ben-Gvir was the focus of this past election cycle not because of his positions on Arab issues but rather because his rising popularity signals a significant socio-cultural shift. What once appeared to exist at the fringes of society has suddenly gained acceptance from the Israeli masses.

Attempting to examine Religious Zionism, Otzma Yehudit, Noam and their voters through a Western political lens can easily lead one to mistakenly equate them with far-right nationalist formations in Europe and the United States. But although some shallow parallels can be drawn, this lazy analysis completely misses the mark and can only lead to erroneous conclusions. In truth, such a comparison is probably as accurate as categorizing our Haredi community as Israel’s version of the American Christian right. It simply doesn’t fit (a slightly better but still flawed comparison might be the Muslim Brotherhood).

The Jewish people are unique in history. We’re the only example of an ancient people that was displaced from its land, maintained its identity in exile for roughly 2,000 years despite overwhelming persecution and actually returned home to take possession of its land and establish a modern state (largely using colonial tools). That’s why it’s so easy to see Zionism as either an indigenous people’s liberation movement or as a colonial project born in Europe.

Both claims can be proven true using selective facts but a more intellectually honest and inclusive perspective reveals that Israel simply can’t be understood through Western political framings or neatly placed into the categories most political analysts in the West are accustomed to. Anyone seeking to understand the dynamics of Israeli society and where we are headed therefore needs to be careful to first understand the Jewish people.

In the cultural conflict taking place within Israel between those psychologically living in Jewish history and those psychologically living in the ideological paradigm of the modern West, Yehuda – or Shimon in Ben-Gvir’s case – appears to have gained power over Yosef (especially if we view Netanyahu’s Likud as a neutral bridge faction between Yosef and Yehuda). In truth, this shift was inevitable. If it didn’t happen this election cycle, it would have likely happened the next one. For a long time it’s been clear to anyone paying close attention to Israel’s socio-cultural trajectory that we’ve been moving in a more Jewish particularist direction and will likely continue to do so.

What needs to be understood is that this marks an important milestone in Israel’s national development.

So long as Yosef ran the state and set its Western liberal ideological paradigm as the paradigm all other tribes must function within, Yehuda remained focused on narrow Jewish national concerns and Israel under Yosef’s leadership could only exist as a self-styled outpost of Western civilization in the Semitic region (a “villa in the jungle” in Ehud Barak’s words).

But once Yosef cedes leadership to Yehuda, Yehuda will suddenly find itself needing to develop solutions to real societal challenges and human needs that are actually more just than the solutions offered by the liberal ideological paradigm. To accomplish this, Yehuda and its satellite tribes will need to develop a genuine sensitivity to the sectors of society that appear most at risk by their political ascension (Arabs, African asylum seekers, LGBTQ+ people, descendants of Jews who are not themselves Jews according to how we’ve defined the term for thousands of years, etc.) and to find solutions that address their needs coming from real Jewish sources.

The Israeli public and Jewish Diaspora need to see that Israel can become a more deeply Jewish society without excluding or marginalizing anyone.

This shift is especially important in regards to Arab issues because Zionism (a uniquely Jewish flavor of European-style nationalism) doesn’t possess the depth of Jewish national consciousness to safely confront the Arab narratives or the tools to imagine a state that’s deeply Jewish yet fully inclusive of the Other. Zionism tends to relate to the Jewish people as an object with a problem and seems obsessed with proving to the world that Israel is right and the Arabs wrong.

The introspection and self-criticism required for Israel’s growth can be dangerous for those Jews with a shallow reactionary nationalism. But the core voters and spiritual leaders who supported the Religious Zionism list last week tend to see the Jewish people as a subject with desires and are therefore not truly Zionist (if we’re equating Zionism with Yosef). Only those Jews deeply rooted in the worldview of our ancestors and meta-narrative of our people stretching back thousands of years have the ability to confront the Arab narratives without losing their own.

It might be unrealistic to expect Smotrich or Ben-Gvir to do this work but we should appreciate that their conceptions of Torah, Jewish identity and our people’s connection to this land can serve as a base and provide fertile soil for their future successors to formulate new ideas and paths forward. So although we shouldn’t relate to these specific political figures as our ideal leadership or as the ultimate destination Israel is meant to arrive at, they’re most likely a necessary part of a journey that requires us to shed the colonialist mentality inherent in Zionist thinking and to adopt a national consciousness more authentic to our people that aspires to universalism and healthy engagement with the outside world. As counterintuitive and frightening as this might be for some people, these election results might constitute progress in our national development that will likely only be appreciated much later in the process.

One of the ways Yosef had fought to delay this shift was to make our last few election cycles not about Israel’s identity or major policies but rather about the willingness of each political faction to sit in a government with an ostensibly corrupt “King Bibi.” But there’s a limit to how long these tricks can work. Although Yosef built the State of Israel and played a leading role in achieving most of its successes, the nation is now ready for a more advanced stage of the Jewish liberation project and Yosef’s role will likely shift from a leading role to a supporting one as Israeli society continues to develop.

The Challenges Ahead

This new period Israel is entering comes with a new set of challenges and contradictions to be resolved. The forces of Yosef need to reconcile the fact that they no longer have a democratic mandate to run the nation-state they established. They’ll also need to accept the fact that the western liberal paradigm (the ideological superstructure of an unjust system responsible for untold human suffering) does not hold a monopoly on addressing the needs of human beings. In fact, one of the major reasons Israel came back to life in modern history is to create new frameworks for addressing the needs of humanity that are actually more advanced than the frameworks they are destined to eclipse. Humanity can do better than capitalism and liberalism. Democracy shouldn’t just be a synonym for westernization in countries like ours but rather a mechanism for empowering people to influence the structures we live under.

Rather than fight against the trajectory of Israeli society, those deeply concerned with universal values should work to ensure that these values be promoted in such a way that doesn’t bring them into conflict with Israel’s Jewish identity or appear to be imposed on society as a tool of cultural imperialism (such efforts almost always incite a backlash in societies like ours). By working together with the forces of Yehuda, perhaps Yosef can help develop a uniquely Jewish universal approach that can actually compete with Western liberalism on its own ideological turf.

The challenge for the forces of Yehuda (and Levi, Shimon and Yissachar), meanwhile, will be to help the Yosef Israelis find their healthy place in what the State of Israel is becoming. Despite no longer being suited for leadership, Yosef still has significant contributions to make to Israeli society and to accomplishing the Jewish people’s collective historic mission (according to our prophets and sages it’s actually Yosef that will ultimately defeat Esav).

What’s most important to keep in mind is the larger process of Israel’s national development, from European-style Jewish nationalism (Zionism), to a more uniquely Jewish brand of national consciousness to a Hebrew Universalism rooted in Israel’s ancient identity and worldview but facing the rest of humanity in the modern world with a strong desire to give. The transition period we’re currently entering is understandably frightening for a lot of people but this current shift is a necessary part of the process that will ultimately lead Israel to being what we came back to life to be.

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1. Midrash Tanchuma 9 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Midrash Tanchuma 9 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The forefathers include: Abraham, Yitzchak, Yaaqob, and the twelve sons of Yaaqob, the tribes of Israel. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Including Yosef’s two sons Rachel has twelve grandsons. Two from Yosef and ten from Binyamin. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. The idea for this study, and many of its words come from a shiur given by Rabbi David Fohrman. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. According to an ancient tradition, Rachel and Leah were twins: ”Rachel and Leah turned out to be … twins” (*Seder Olam Rabbah* 2). As with Jacob and Esau, so too with Laban’s twins, Leah was called the elder and Rachel the younger. Bereshit (Genesis) 29:18 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. This means that Bilhah’s children *were* Rachel’s children. Consider the following Pasuk: “The Lord make the woman that has come into your house like Rachel and like Leah, who did build the house of Israel; and do you worthily in Efrat and be famous in Beit-Lechem.” (Ruth 4:11) [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Kol HaTor 150 [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. The prince of Dan represents the people of Dan. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Bereshit (Genesis) 29:17 attests: “Leah had weak eyes; Rachel was shapely and beautiful.” The midrash adds that there was no maiden fairer than Rachel (Tanchuma, Vayeze 6) [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. In the genealogy of Yaaqob, Rachel is listed as Yaaqob’s wife, while Leah is noted as Laban’s daughter – Bereshit (Genesis) 46:15,19). [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. The text calls Rachel, when we first meet her, a “יְפַת-תֹּאַר” – a phrase that occurs in Deuteronomy 10, describing a beautiful (non-Jewish) woman who is captured in battle. In the Torah, such a woman is clearly a longshot for marital harmony, but the Torah clearly allows a man to take that captive to wife (under specific conditions). (Fascinatingly, the *only* other time the same phrase is used is to explain Potiphar’s wife’s attraction to Yosef, which also did not work out particularly well). Rachel was of comely form and comely appearance.” Rachel relates to the Divine service of those who are righteous from the outset, being “of comely form and comely appearance,” without a blemish or flaw. (In particular, the term “form” refers to “the form of the image of the limbs, each limb according to the image that is appropriate and necessary.” The term “appearance” refers to “the facial countenance.” Combined, these two expressions indicate perfection in the observance of the 248 positive commandments that are called “the 248 limbs of the King,” (Tanya, ch. 4. See Tikunei Zohar, Tikkun 30; Zohar, Vayishlach 170b.) and of the 365 prohibitions which correspond to the 365 nerves and sinews, which relate to the glow of one’s countenance. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Bereshit (Genesis) 29:17 [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Rabbi E.E. Dessler, in *Strive for Truth,* vol. III, Part 5, p. 154ff. This section is excerpted and edited from this book. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Adam, wearing the clothing of world humanity, is now two steps removed from the goal of creation. First, we have to fix what has been damaged (through the eating of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge) and then we have to take up where Adam left off (his original directive in the Garden of Eden “to work it and to guard it”). Where there was originally needed only one mode of *tikkun,* now there are two modes. Where there was originally intended to be one redeemer, now there are two - one for each mode of tikkun. These two are referred to as the *Trein Meshichim* - the Two Messiahs. Because of the Fall, Adam had, in effect, split himself into two personas with two missions. Adam is the Split Messiah. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Zohar 2:29b, Vaera. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Tehillim (Psalms) 98:3 [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Micah 7:20 [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Bereshit (Genesis) 35:23-26 [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. She alone is so designated. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Bereshit (Genesis) 46:19 [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. The text calls Rachel, when we first meet her, a “יְפַת-תֹּאַר” – a phrase that occurs in Deuteronomy 10, describing a beautiful (non-Jewish) woman who is captured in battle. In the Torah, such a woman is clearly a longshot for marital harmony, but the Torah clearly allows a man to take that captive to wife (under specific conditions). (Fascinatingly, the *only* other time the same phrase is used is to explain Potiphar’s wife’s attraction to Yosef, which also did not work out particularly well). [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Cur. edd.: as it says, And she bore an additional son (E.V. ‘ and again she bore’), his brother Abel (Gen. IV, 2), [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Supra, 22:2 [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Bereshit (Genesis) 30:24: The Lord add to me another son. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Bereshit (Genesis) 46:21 [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Bereshit (Genesis) 30:24 [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. A legendary river, said to run with tremendous force the whole week, carrying along stones and earth, and consequently unnavigable, but resting on the Sabbath. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Thus, the second son for whom she prayed-Binyamin-was to be ANOTHER from Joseph in the matter of exile. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Whereas Joseph (i.e. the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh) revolted against Rehoboam, Binyamin remained loyal. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. This makes good sense, but the emendation of ‘E.J. is preferable: Binyamin did not separate itself from Judah as did the other ten tribes. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Cur. edd. read: Because he acted differently from such as Jeroboam and his companions. This, however, has already been said in different words, the text is probably corrupt. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. When Yosef’s brothers, excluding Binyamin, threw Yosef into the pit. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Bereshit (Genesis) 49:27 [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Tehillim (Psalms) 68:17 [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Yirmiyahu (Jeremiah) 46:18 [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Vayikra (Leviticus) 21:20 [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Shemot (Exodus) 19:20 [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Tehillim (Psalms) 84:3 [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Tehillim (Psalms) 132:6 [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Shmuel alef (I Samuel) 17:12 [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Bava Batra 74a - The Bait HaMikdash was the place of connection between this world and the upper world. The three functions of the mouth were omnipresent on a deeper level in the Bait HaMikdash: The korbanot-offerings were a form of divine food which connected heaven and earth, the ‘voice’ of G-d emanated from between the Keruvim atop the Holy Ark, and the Gemara refers to the Bait HaMikdash as ‘the place where heaven and earth kiss’. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. This characterizes the difference between the Divine service of the descendants of Leah and those of Rachel, as can be understood from the Zohar’s explanation (Zohar, Vol. I, p. 259a.) of why the primary portion of the Altar’s foundation was located in the tribal heritage of Binyamin, and not in the portion of Yehuda. True, Yehuda was “the foremost of the tribes,” (Therefore, the Zohar, loc. cit. speaks of the Altar “lacking half a cubit in the east, the direction associated with Yehuda..., and half a cubit in the south.” Middot 3:1 speaks of it “lacking a cubit in the east and a cubit in the south.” See Nitzutzei Zohar to the Zohar, loc. cit., and Ezrat Cohanim to Middot, loc. cit., Beit Yosef, sec. 2, s.v., badarom which discuss and offer resolutions to the contradictions between the sources. See also Likutei Levi Yitzchak to Zohar, Vol. I, p. 267.) but Binyamin was a tzaddik. This is not true of Yehuda. He was one of Leah’s sons “who ‘hated’ Yosef” (Bereshit 37:4) and participated in his sale. True, he repented, but the foundation of the altar could not be positioned in the tribal portion of a baal teshuva, but rather in the tribal portion of Binyamin who was a tzaddik. (Sefer HaMaamarim 5626, loc. cit.). From this, it can be understood that since the ten brothers participated in the sale of Yosef, even though they repented, they were not on the level of Yosef and Binyamin, the sons of Rachel, who remained on the level of tzaddikim from the beginning of their lives onward. (See also Or HaTorah, Shir HaShirim, Vol. 2., p. 650, which mentions similar concepts.) [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Bereshit (Genesis) 45:14 [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. The Tabernacle in the wilderness (the predecessor of the Temple in Jerusalem). [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Bamidbar (Numbers) 7:60 [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. Tehillim (Psalms) 80:3 - Thus Binyamin is coupled with these, in Israel’s salvation. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Bamidbar (Numbers) 7:61 [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. None of the other wives are so described. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. Bereshit (Genesis) 46:19 [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Bereshit (Genesis) 48:7 - The expression signifies that the death was apparently his peculiar loss. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. Bereshit (Genesis) 30:24 [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. Mishle (Proverbs) 10:20 [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. Bamidbar (Numbers) 7:61 [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. Heb. ימן בן = ימן years of age; i.e. 10 + 40 + 50 = 100. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. Bamidbar (Numbers) 7:61 [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. יין =10 + 10 + 50=70 [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. These recall the offerings in the Tabernacle and the Temple. Mingled alludes to the fact that the Shechinah rested on both alike. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. Bamidbar (Numbers) 7:62 [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. Bereshit (Genesis) 46:21 [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. Bamidbar (Numbers) 7:63 [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. Bamidbar (Numbers) 7:64 [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. Bamidbar (Numbers) 7:65 [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. Bereshit (Genesis) 43:34 [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. Bereshit (Genesis) 45:22 [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. Esther 8:15 [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. The number five is obtained as follows: [1] blue, [2] white, [3] crown, [4] fine linen, and [5] purple. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. Bamidbar (Numbers) 7:65 [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. Bereshit (Genesis) 39:3-5 [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. AKA Rabbis [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. In Shemuot HaRe’iyah VaYishlach (5691), quoted in Peninei HaRe’iyah, ‘Eulogy in Jerusalem’ from Ma’amarei HaRe’iyah. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. The Mashiach ben Yosef in some sources is referred to as the “Mashiach ben [descendant] Ephraim”. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. All the family members – Yitzchak, Rivka, Yaaqob and Esav – knew the name of the game and that they were the key players in a great cosmic drama to rectify the damaged root of the Tree of Knowledge. The stakes were as high as they could get and every move was premeditated. The father, the mother and the twin sons all had total consciousness and knew who they really were, where they were coming from and where they were going. Yaaqob was the *Mashiach ben David* for that generation. His counterpart was Esav who was the potential Mashiach ben Yoseph. Acting together they had the ability to initiate and complete the final tikkun for all reality. All factors being equal, there never would have been the history of the world as we know it, and reality would have “quantum jumped” back into the higher dimensionality of Adam before the Fall. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. Bereshit Rabbah 70:15, 71:2, which state: “Prayer can have strong consequences. Not only did Leah’s prayer nullify the decree that she would marry Esav, but it enabled her to take precedence over her sister.” See Yafeh To’ar to Bereshit Rabbah. It appears that Rashi understood that through her prayer, Leah evaded her predestined responsibility. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. *The truth be told, Esav was destined to be the Messiah for the entire world.* The question, however, is *which* messiah? Not the well-known Messiah from the loins of King David. Rather, Esav was the potential *Mashiach ben Yosef,* the Messiah from the lineage of Joseph. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. This follows the opinion of Rav in Bava Batra 123a. See also Bereshit Rabbah70:16; Midrash Tanchuma, Parshat Vayeitzei, 4; et al. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. Bereshit (Genesis) 27:24-29 [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. This section was written by Rabbi Meir Goldwicht, Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshiva University [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. Avodat = work or service & Hapnim = interior [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. Bereshit (Genesis) 28:12 [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. Avodat = work or service & Hachutz = exterior [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. The *Malbim* sheds some light on the mindset of Yitzchak and Rivka. He explains that when HaShem created the world the *best and most efficient way* was for man to perfect himself spiritually to the point where he would be a fitting resting place for the Shechinah in this world. Understandably, this is not possible for everyone to achieve, nor is it practical, as it requires a complete devotion to HaShem and a separation from worldly pursuits, as necessary as they may be. To this end, HaShem chose one nation for this holy mission and all the other nations would fill the physical needs of that chosen nation. Even within that nation, not everyone will be cut out for the task; rather one group will be separated for this purpose. This refers to the tribe of Levi within all of Israel. [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. Kol HaTor [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. Rashi, Bereshit (Genesis) 29:17 [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
85. Malachi 1:2-3 [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
86. Leshem Sefer Hakadosh pg. 64 quoting the ARI from the end of A’rba Maiot Shekel HaKodesh. [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
87. see *Kapot Temarim*to *Laws of Kings,*chapters 11 and 12 [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
88. This section was excerpted and edited from a paper by Mrs. Shira Smiles. [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
89. Rabbi E.E. Dessler, in *Strive for Truth,* vol. III, Part 5, p. 154ff, discusses these points in greater depth. [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
90. Megillah 13b [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
91. Menachem Mendel Schneerson (April 18, 1902 OS - June 12, 1994 / AM 11 Nissan 5662 - 3 Tammuz 5754), known to many as the Lubavitcher Rebbe or simply as the Rebbe, was a Russian Empire-born American Orthodox Jewish rabbi, and the last Rebbe of the Lubavitcher Hasidic dynasty. He is considered one of the most influential Jewish leaders of the 20th century. Menachem Mendel Schneerson (April 18, 1902 OS - June 12, 1994 / AM 11 Nissan 5662 - 3 Tammuz 5754), known to many as the Lubavitcher Rebbe or simply as the Rebbe, was a Russian Empire-born American Orthodox Jewish rabbi, and the last Rebbe of the Lubavitcher Hasidic dynasty. He is considered one of the most influential Jewish leaders of the 20th century. [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
92. Yehudah Aryeh Leib Alter (15 April 1847 - 11 January 1905), also known by the title of his main work, the Sfas Ernes (Ashkenazic Pronunciation) or Sefat Emet שפת אמת (Modem Hebrew), was a Hasidic rabbi who succeeded his grandfather, Rabbi Yitzchak Meir Alter, as the Av beit din (head of the rabbinical court) and Rav of Gora Kalwaria, Poland (known in Yiddish as the town of Ger), and succeeded Rabbi Chanokh Heynekh HaKohen Levin of Aleksander as Rebbe of the Gerrer Hasidim. [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
93. mesirat nefesh (מסירת נפש, “giving over the soul”) - self-sacrifice. [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
94. *Yashfe*, with the meaning of yesh peh, there is a mouth. [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
95. Shemot (Exodus) 28:20 [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
96. Shmuel alef (I Samuel) 10:16 [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
97. Esther 2:20 [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
98. Genesis Rabbah 71:5; Tanchuma, Vayeze 6 [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
99. This section was excerpted and edited from an article by Peter von Cornelius. [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
100. The holy Zohar (Emor p. 103 2, according to Masok Midvash) [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
101. *Nusach* primarily means “text” or “version”, the correct wording of a religious text or liturgy. Thus, the Nusach tefilla is the text of the prayers, either generally or in a particular community. [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
102. *Ushpizin* is Aramaic for “guests”, a reference to the seven supernal guests, “founding fathers” of the Jewish people, who come to visit us in the *succah* (the branch-covered hut in which we eat our meals throughout the festival of Succoth), one for each of the seven days of the festival. [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
103. The source of these is the holy Zohar in Raya Meheimna (Pinchas 255 2), where Moshe and Aharon are cited, and with them Shlomo Hamelech. [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
104. A traditional Kabbalist in Judaism is called a Mekubal ( מְקוּבָּל). Mekubalim is the plural. [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
105. The Zohar is the chief text of the Jewish Kabbalah, presented as an allegorical or mystical interpretation of the Torah. [↑](#footnote-ref-105)
106. Ateres Tzvi [of Zidichoiv} at the end of the sefer. [↑](#footnote-ref-106)
107. Tzadik; pl. tzadikim is a title in Judaism given to people considered righteous, such as Biblical figures and later spiritual masters. [↑](#footnote-ref-107)
108. (See Pri Tzaddik [of Harav Tzadok of Lublin] Shemini Atzeres 38 [↑](#footnote-ref-108)
109. Rabbi Yitzchak Ginsburgh [↑](#footnote-ref-109)
110. Gevurot HaShem 46 [↑](#footnote-ref-110)
111. **Strive for Truth**, by Rabbi Eliyahu E. Dessler, volume II, page 151. [↑](#footnote-ref-111)
112. i.e. an ewe [↑](#footnote-ref-112)
113. An: “omer” is a unit of measure used with wheat [↑](#footnote-ref-113)
114. Yehuda and Yosef clashed over Binyamin’s fate. The Midrash, in addressing this tension, teaches: “They [the brothers] said: Kings are negotiating with each other; of what concern is it to us?” (Bereshit Rabbah 93:2). [↑](#footnote-ref-114)
115. Bamidbar (Numbers) 14:6 [↑](#footnote-ref-115)
116. Bereshit [Genesis] 49:10 [↑](#footnote-ref-116)
117. Devarim [Deuteronomy] 33:18 [↑](#footnote-ref-117)
118. Bereshit [Genesis] 49:13 [↑](#footnote-ref-118)
119. Bereshit [Genesis] 37:29- 30, Rashi ad loc. [↑](#footnote-ref-119)
120. Bereshit [Genesis] 49:19 [↑](#footnote-ref-120)
121. Devarim 33:12 [↑](#footnote-ref-121)
122. Yirmiyahu 1:14 [↑](#footnote-ref-122)
123. Kings I 12:29 [↑](#footnote-ref-123)
124. Midrash HaGadol, Debarim 25:18 [↑](#footnote-ref-124)
125. Devarim 33:24 [↑](#footnote-ref-125)
126. Devarim 33:23 [↑](#footnote-ref-126)
127. Bereshit (Genesis), 50:12 [↑](#footnote-ref-127)
128. ‘Coffin’ and ‘ark’ are expressed by the same word in Hebrew. [↑](#footnote-ref-128)
129. The breastplate was one of the vestments worn by the *Kohen Gadol*. It was set with twelve gems representing the twelve tribes. Vayikra (Leviticus) 28:15--21. [↑](#footnote-ref-129)
130. Bereshit (Genesis), 50:12 [↑](#footnote-ref-130)
131. Bamidbar (Numbers) 2:18 [↑](#footnote-ref-131)
132. The *ecliptic* is the mean plane of the apparent path in the Earth’s sky that the Sun follows over the course of one year [↑](#footnote-ref-132)
133. Based on information in the old Jewish Encyclopedia. [↑](#footnote-ref-133)
134. The solstices and equinoxes. These are the times when the seasons change: spring, summer, fall, winter. [↑](#footnote-ref-134)
135. I do not yet understand why the actual pictures made by the stars do not line up. [↑](#footnote-ref-135)
136. Starting with the first month, Nisan, and proceeding counter-clockwise. [↑](#footnote-ref-136)
137. Shmuel bet (2 Samuel) 17:10; Mishlei (Proverbs) 28:1 [↑](#footnote-ref-137)
138. Iyov (Job) 39:27, 29 [↑](#footnote-ref-138)
139. Mishlei (Proverbs) 14:4 [↑](#footnote-ref-139)
140. Yehezchel (Ezekiel) 10:14 [↑](#footnote-ref-140)
141. Bereshit (Genesis) 1:27 [↑](#footnote-ref-141)
142. Bereshit (Genesis) 3:24 [↑](#footnote-ref-142)
143. Bereshit (Genesis) 3:24 [↑](#footnote-ref-143)
144. To Bereshit (Genesis) 4:16 [↑](#footnote-ref-144)
145. Bereshit (Genesis) 3:24 [↑](#footnote-ref-145)
146. Debarim (Deuteronomy) 4:41 [↑](#footnote-ref-146)
147. Midrash Devarim Rabbah, Lieberman, p.60; Tanchuma Buber ad loc. [↑](#footnote-ref-147)
148. Midrash Tanchuma, Bereshit 9 [↑](#footnote-ref-148)
149. Bereshit (Genesis).13:11 [↑](#footnote-ref-149)
150. The idea of the Shechinah being in the west, and the east-west orientation of the Mishkan and the Mikdash, is not a technical issue. It began in the Garden of Eden, and according to the Rambam, Avraham chose the west at the Akeida, and so too at Mount Sinai, and afterwards in the Mishkan and the Mikdash. [↑](#footnote-ref-150)
151. Bava Batra 25a. [↑](#footnote-ref-151)
152. The Shechinah is currently in exile because of our sins. In the messianic age it will again be in the Temple. At that time the planets will all move in an easterly direction. The Shechinah’sdeparture from the Mikdashat the end of the First Temple period, as described by the prophet Yehezchel, was eastward to the Mount of Olives: “And the glory of the Lord went up from the midst of the city, and stood upon the mountain which is on the east side of the city” (Yehezchel11:23). [↑](#footnote-ref-152)
153. *Above the Zodiac: Astrology in Jewish Thought***,** By Matityahu Glazerson. [↑](#footnote-ref-153)
154. The son of Yosef. [↑](#footnote-ref-154)
155. Ibid. 151 [↑](#footnote-ref-155)
156. Rosh HaShana 3a–b and cf. Gittin 8:5. [↑](#footnote-ref-156)
157. Mishna Rosh HaShana 1:1. [↑](#footnote-ref-157)
158. This section was written by Rabbi Yehonasan Gefen. [↑](#footnote-ref-158)
159. Parshas Drachim, Drush 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-159)
160. negative vows, prohibitions [↑](#footnote-ref-160)
161. A “complete tzadik” [tzadik gamur] who not only vanquishes in full his innate evil inclination, but even transforms it into good [for which reason he is referred to as *tzadik v’tov lo*”, a tzadik who possesses only good]. The path of tzaddikim is focused within the realm of holiness and defined by the observance of the Torah and its mitzvot. [↑](#footnote-ref-161)
162. The path of teshuva reflects the efforts to transform evil to good and, in a larger sense, to elevate worldly entities to holiness. A characterization used by Chazal in connection with Yehuda’s descendant, King David (Moed Katan 16b; Avodah Zara 5a). [↑](#footnote-ref-162)
163. Yirmiyahu (Jeremiah) 32:14 [↑](#footnote-ref-163)
164. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-164)
165. Redemption is identified with the attribute of Yesod. Redemption refers to an outpouring of an abundance of Divine blessing and revelation. Thus, it is associated with the Sefirah of Yesod which is the medium that will convey this influence to the lower realms (*Torat Menachem,* Vol. 5, pp. 101-102).] [↑](#footnote-ref-165)
166. The connection between Yosef and Zionism appears multiple times in the Sfat Emet, and is further developed by Rav Kook. [↑](#footnote-ref-166)
167. Yehuda’s self-nullification can be seen when he offered to be a substitute for Binyamin. Bereshit (Genesis) 44:33. [↑](#footnote-ref-167)
168. Zeir Anpin (Aramaic: זְעֵיר אַנפִּין meaning “Lesser Countenance/Small Face” [↑](#footnote-ref-168)
169. Malchut is the tenth of the sephirot in the Kabbalistic Tree of Life. It sits at the bottom of the Tree, below Yesod. This sephirah has as a symbol the Bride which relates to the sphere of Tiferet, symbolized by the Bridegroom. [↑](#footnote-ref-169)
170. The son of Yosef. [↑](#footnote-ref-170)
171. Ibid. 5 [↑](#footnote-ref-171)
172. *Above the Zodiac: Astrology in Jewish Thought***,** By Matityahu Glazerson. [↑](#footnote-ref-172)
173. Rosh HaShana 3a–b and cf. Gittin 8:5. [↑](#footnote-ref-173)
174. Mishna Rosh HaShana 1:1. [↑](#footnote-ref-174)
175. Bereshit (Genesis) 46:28 [↑](#footnote-ref-175)
176. Shemot (Exodus) 25:8 [↑](#footnote-ref-176)
177. This section was written by Rav Yitzchak Levi. [↑](#footnote-ref-177)
178. see Bava Batra 25a [↑](#footnote-ref-178)
179. R. Yehuda Alkalai, a great Sephardic Rav from Serbia who made *aliya* in 1874. [↑](#footnote-ref-179)
180. Bamidbar (Numbers) 35:5 [↑](#footnote-ref-180)
181. Yehezchel (Ezekiel) 47:1, 48:1 [↑](#footnote-ref-181)
182. Melachim alef (I Kings) 12 [↑](#footnote-ref-182)
183. Shemot (Numbers) 25-26, regarding the table, the boards of the Mishkan, the courtyard, and similarly in the execution of the Mishkan. [↑](#footnote-ref-183)
184. Yehoshua (Joshua) 15:5 [↑](#footnote-ref-184)
185. Yehoshua (Joshua) 18:12, 14, 15, and 20. [↑](#footnote-ref-185)
186. The Shechinah (Hebrew: שכינה‎) is the English transliteration of a Hebrew word meaning “dwelling” or “settling” and denotes the dwelling or settling of the divine presence of HaShem. [↑](#footnote-ref-186)
187. Zevachim 118b [↑](#footnote-ref-187)
188. By Rav Yitzchak Levy [↑](#footnote-ref-188)
189. Shiloh served as a sacral center for all the tribes, housing the Ark of the Covenant under the priestly family of Eli. [↑](#footnote-ref-189)
190. These were two separate places, but they are generally coupled, which probably explains why cur. edd. read ‘three’, treating these as one. [↑](#footnote-ref-190)
191. The Temple in Jerusalem. [↑](#footnote-ref-191)
192. Debarim (Deuteronomy) 33:12. — This refers to Binyamin. [↑](#footnote-ref-192)
193. Rashi suggests that this was the name of Abaye’s father. [↑](#footnote-ref-193)
194. That one son — Abaye — is but half-baked — he has not mastered his studies. [↑](#footnote-ref-194)
195. Tehillim (Psalms) 78:60, 67. The comparison of these two verses shews that the Tabernacle was in Ephraim’s portion, not Binyamin’s. [↑](#footnote-ref-195)
196. The religious and civil court; v. Sanh. 2a. [↑](#footnote-ref-196)
197. He assumes that the Sanhedrin had its seat in or by the Tabernacle, and that the verses in Psalms refer to the forsaking by the Divine Presence (Shechinah) of this Sanhedrin. [↑](#footnote-ref-197)
198. This beautiful point is noted by Rabbi Yoel Elitzur, in his article, “The Border of Binyamin and the Location of Beit Orot,” in *Kol Tzofayikh*, 5752. [↑](#footnote-ref-198)
199. By Rav Yitzchak Levy [↑](#footnote-ref-199)
200. Masechet Zevachim 118, Joshua 4:19; 5:8–10 [↑](#footnote-ref-200)
201. Joshua 18:1; 19:51; 22:9; Psalm 78:60 [↑](#footnote-ref-201)
202. AKA Nov. Locate just north east of the Mt. of Olives. [↑](#footnote-ref-202)
203. AKA Gibeon [↑](#footnote-ref-203)
204. Debarim (Deuteronomy) 33:12 [↑](#footnote-ref-204)
205. The Rabbis lay stress on the name, “beloved of the Lord,” by which Binyamin is distinguished (Deuteronomy 33:12; Sifre, *l.c.*). He is counted among the four men who died by the poison of the serpent in Paradise; *i.e.*, without sin of his own, the other three being Amram, the father of Moses; Jesse, the father of David; and Kileab, the son of David (Shabbat. 55b). [↑](#footnote-ref-205)
206. The sons of Aharon the Kohen, who were of the Levites, had by lot from the tribe of Yehuda and from the tribe of Shimon, and from the tribe of Binyamin, thirteen cities - Yehoshua *(*Joshua)21:4. [↑](#footnote-ref-206)
207. The text calls Rachel, when we first meet her, a “יְפַת-תֹּאַר” – a phrase that occurs in Deuteronomy 10, describing a beautiful (non-Jewish) woman who is captured in battle. In the Torah, such a woman is clearly a longshot for marital harmony, but the Torah clearly allows a man to take that captive to wife (under specific conditions). (Fascinatingly, the *only* other time the same phrase is used is to explain Potiphar’s wife’s attraction to Yosef, which also did not work out particularly well). [↑](#footnote-ref-207)
208. Genesis Rabbah 86:6 [↑](#footnote-ref-208)
209. Bereshit (Genesis) 30:24 And she called his name Yosef, saying: ‘HaShem add to me another son.’ [↑](#footnote-ref-209)
210. Bereshit Rabbah 93:6. [↑](#footnote-ref-210)
211. Midrash Rabba, Bereshit 93:2 [↑](#footnote-ref-211)
212. Bereshit Rabba 93:2 [↑](#footnote-ref-212)
213. Bereshit (Genesis) 46:28 [↑](#footnote-ref-213)
214. Bereshit (Genesis) 44:18 [↑](#footnote-ref-214)
215. *Amos* 9:13 [↑](#footnote-ref-215)
216. Bereshit Rabbah 93:5 [↑](#footnote-ref-216)
217. Bereshit (Genesis) 39 [↑](#footnote-ref-217)
218. The ArtScroll Tanach Series, Bereshis vol.1b [↑](#footnote-ref-218)
219. Kol HaTor [122 [↑](#footnote-ref-219)
220. Bereshit (Genesis) 41;45 [↑](#footnote-ref-220)
221. This section was written by Rabbi Ari Kahn. [↑](#footnote-ref-221)
222. See Igra D’kala page 177a. [↑](#footnote-ref-222)
223. See the introduction of the Ramban to the Book of Shemot (Exodus). [↑](#footnote-ref-223)
224. See Ohr HaChayim Shemot (Exodus) 1:6, who reveals that there is a deep mystical secret in the repetition of Yosef’s death. He cites a passage recorded in the spiritual diary of Rav Yosef Karo, Maggid Meisharim, a document which records mystical revelations shared by an angel. [↑](#footnote-ref-224)
225. Ramban Bereshit (Genesis) 37:3. [↑](#footnote-ref-225)
226. The Sfat Emet notices that it says he was a wise child to **him**, that Yaaqob saw this quality; the brothers did not see it, they saw him as a *na’ar* a frivolous child. [↑](#footnote-ref-226)
227. Ramban Bereshit (Genesis) 37:3.. [↑](#footnote-ref-227)
228. Rashi based on Midrash Rabbah 84:8, explains the meaning of the wisdom referred to by Onkelos, that Yaaqob passed on the traditions studied from Shem and Ever to Yosef. [↑](#footnote-ref-228)
229. Onkelos Bereshit (Genesis) 41:43. [↑](#footnote-ref-229)
230. Sifri Devraim *piska aleph*. [↑](#footnote-ref-230)
231. The Megaleh Amukot says that *rach* is equal to 220 in *gematria*, and the slavery which will be endured will be for the 22 years that Yosef was separated from his father multiplied by ten brothers. [↑](#footnote-ref-231)
232. Rashi Bereshit (Genesis) 41:43. [↑](#footnote-ref-232)
233. Onkelos Bereshit (Genesis) 49:42. [↑](#footnote-ref-233)
234. See Rashi Bereshit (Genesis) 49:42. [↑](#footnote-ref-234)
235. Bereshit (Genesis) 24:1 [↑](#footnote-ref-235)
236. Vayikra (Leviticus) 19:32 [↑](#footnote-ref-236)
237. This idea that the three *Avot* are sometimes seen as three and sometimes seen as four is represented by the Tefillin. The Tefillin worn on the head has the Hebrew letter *shin* engraved on each side, but on one side the *shin* has 3 arms, while on the other side it has four. The Shla Hakadosh believes that this is two manifestations of the *Avot*, alone - where there are three, or with Yosef, where there would be four. [↑](#footnote-ref-237)
238. Bereshit (Genesis) 35:13 [↑](#footnote-ref-238)
239. Bereshit (Genesis) 27:22 [↑](#footnote-ref-239)
240. ibid. 28, 13 [↑](#footnote-ref-240)
241. See Derashot Ri Ibn Shuab for the first day of Succoth, who reveals the connection between the four species and the Chariot. [↑](#footnote-ref-241)
242. See Megaleh Amukot Parshat Vayechi. [↑](#footnote-ref-242)
243. See the Arizal in Etz Hadaat Parshat Bereshit (Genesis). [↑](#footnote-ref-243)
244. Ibn Ezra Bereshit (Genesis) 41:43. [↑](#footnote-ref-244)
245. See Megaleh Amukot Parshat Vetchanan section 93. [↑](#footnote-ref-245)
246. If you have any knowledge of Hebrew I urge you to look a version of this essay with Hebrew sources and notes. This chapter is challenging if read without the Hebrew words. See http://rabbiarikahn.com/ . [↑](#footnote-ref-246)
247. See Be’er Mayim Chaim Shemot (Exodus) chapter 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-247)
248. See Rav Yitzchak Hutner Mamari Pachad Yitzchak Succoth chapter 54 especially sections 12,14. [↑](#footnote-ref-248)
249. Heard from Rabbi Yosef Soloveitchik. [↑](#footnote-ref-249)
250. The twelve tribes are associated with the twelve months significantly Yosef is associated with the month of Av, see Rav Zadok of Lublin in Pri Zadik Eikev section 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-250)
251. See Bereshit (Genesis) 42:6. [↑](#footnote-ref-251)
252. See Noam Elimelech Parshat Shemot (Exodus). [↑](#footnote-ref-252)
253. The Ohr HaChayim (Bereshit (Genesis) 49:3) maintains that the forefathers only kept laws that he found useful, or more precisely would not keep lows that they found an impediment to them. The Shem MiShmuel understands that Yaaqob fulfilled the commandments - even if he didn’t quite perform them. He explains that commandments have bodies and souls, and Avraham was attuned to the souls and therefore didn’t need the “body” of the physical performance. The Noam Elimelech Parshat Debarim, states that Avraham had certainly achieved the spiritual perfection of someone who had performed all the commandments. For more on this concept see http://arikahn.blogspot.com/2008/10/lech-lcha-5769.html especially footnotes 7-10. [↑](#footnote-ref-253)
254. See Bereshit (Genesis) 37:21,22,29. [↑](#footnote-ref-254)
255. Bereshit (Genesis) 42:37. [↑](#footnote-ref-255)
256. I.e., because the serpent caused Adam and Eve to sin, but not on account of their own sin. — This is not to be confused with the doctrine of Original sin, which is rejected by Judaism, v. B.B., Sonc. ed., p. 86, n. 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-256)
257. II Sam. XVII, 25 [↑](#footnote-ref-257)
258. I Chron. II, 16. ‘Their sisters’ refers to the sons of Jesse; v. preceding verse. [↑](#footnote-ref-258)
259. It may be observed that the Talmud calls this an explicit intimation. [↑](#footnote-ref-259)
260. A metaphoric allusion to the Temple which would later be built in Binyamin’s territory. See Midrash Tanchuma Yashan; Zohar [↑](#footnote-ref-260)
261. Ve-Zot ha-Berakha, piska 352 [↑](#footnote-ref-261)
262. Debarim (Deuteronomy) 33:12 [↑](#footnote-ref-262)
263. Tehillim (Psalms) 104:15; Mishle (Proverbs) 10:19. [↑](#footnote-ref-263)
264. Likutei Torah 3:90bc; Ma’amarei Admur HaEmtzai, Bereishit, pp. 291 ff; Or HaTorah, Bereishit, vol. 2, pp. 681 ff, vol. 6, pp. 2206 ff. [↑](#footnote-ref-264)
265. Above, on Bereshit (Genesis) 34:16. [↑](#footnote-ref-265)
266. See Rashi and Rabbenu Bachya on Bereshit 48:5. [↑](#footnote-ref-266)
267. This section was written by Rabbi Chaim Gross. [↑](#footnote-ref-267)
268. According to tradition, Asenat was actually Dinah’s daughter (Yaacov’s granddaughter). This explains why Yoseph was the only one of the tribes to receive a double portion in the Land of Israel. His sons with Asnath, Menashe and Ephraim, were both considered as separate tribes. In this way, Dinah received her portion in the land through her daughter. Pirke Rabbi Eliezer 38; Yonatan ben Uziel, Rabbenu Bachya, on Genesis 41:45. [↑](#footnote-ref-268)
269. Bereshit (Genesis) 41:45. [↑](#footnote-ref-269)
270. Rabbi Chizkia ben Manoach, 13th century [↑](#footnote-ref-270)
271. Daughter of Yaaqob [↑](#footnote-ref-271)
272. Bereshit (Genesis) 34:2 [↑](#footnote-ref-272)
273. This is true when one counts Nisan as the first month and counts the tribes in the order that they traveled in the desert and also brought their sacrifices, as related in the Torah reading for Chanukah. [↑](#footnote-ref-273)
274. This section was written by Rabbi Marc Penner. [↑](#footnote-ref-274)
275. Shemot (Exodus) 13:17 [↑](#footnote-ref-275)
276. Translating Derek Eretz (E.V. ‘By the way of the land ‘) in the way of the earth, i.e. in the usual manner. [↑](#footnote-ref-276)
277. Yehezchel (Ezekiel) 16:9 [↑](#footnote-ref-277)
278. Shemot (Exodus) 19:4 [↑](#footnote-ref-278)
279. Shemot (Exodus) 13:21 [↑](#footnote-ref-279)
280. The difficulty is the explanation given in the verse: Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war. Surely Israel, who had beheld the wars with the Amalekites soon after their departure, without wanting to go back to Egypt, would not be unduly alarmed at a war with the Philistines? Hence the explanation which follows. [↑](#footnote-ref-280)
281. Sanhedrin 92b. [↑](#footnote-ref-281)
282. Bereshit (Genesis) 15:13-16. [↑](#footnote-ref-282)
283. For they should have commenced to count from the birth of Isaac, thirty years afterwards. [↑](#footnote-ref-283)
284. Possibly (as ‘E.J.) the proof lies in the continuation of this quotation: They kept not the covenant of God (Psalms 78:9)--i.e. they did not wait the full period. [↑](#footnote-ref-284)
285. Hoshea (Hosea) 9:13 [↑](#footnote-ref-285)
286. Dibre HaYamim (I Chronicles) 7:20ff [↑](#footnote-ref-286)
287. Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 63:2 [↑](#footnote-ref-287)
288. By a play on words, naham (E.V. ‘led ‘) is connected with naham (to comfort), and the verse translated: And God was not comforted, because of the manner in which the Philistines had acted. [↑](#footnote-ref-288)
289. Why does the Torah need to tell us his specific age? Because 17 is the numerical value of Y-H-V-H according to its “miniature number” (1+5+6+5 = 17), Yoseph being a miniature or microcosm of the three Patriarchs. He is also a “fourth leg” in the Divine Chariot, the human carriers of G-d’s Presence. 17 is also the value of the word “Good” with its many implications. (Shela) [↑](#footnote-ref-289)
290. Sanhedrin 27a [↑](#footnote-ref-290)
291. On Vayeishev [↑](#footnote-ref-291)
292. Succah 52a [↑](#footnote-ref-292)
293. Tehillim (Psalms) 21:5 [↑](#footnote-ref-293)
294. Mishpatim 120a, Pinchas 123a [↑](#footnote-ref-294)
295. Succah 52a [↑](#footnote-ref-295)
296. Bereshit (Genesis) 30:6, Rashi [↑](#footnote-ref-296)
297. in Pesachim 4a [↑](#footnote-ref-297)
298. Machpelah, in Hebron, is the cave in which the Patriarchs were buried [↑](#footnote-ref-298)
299. Shoftim (Judges) 15:11-15 [↑](#footnote-ref-299)
300. Bereshit (Genesis) 49:9 [↑](#footnote-ref-300)
301. Debarim (Deuteronomy) 33:22 [↑](#footnote-ref-301)
302. Rashi on Exodus 35:34. [↑](#footnote-ref-302)
303. Zohar 2:220b, 222a, et al. [↑](#footnote-ref-303)
304. II Chronicles 2:13. See also I Kings 7:13–14. [↑](#footnote-ref-304)
305. Talmud, Arachin 16b. [↑](#footnote-ref-305)
306. Sotah 13a [↑](#footnote-ref-306)
307. Another son of Bilhah and of Rachel. [↑](#footnote-ref-307)
308. This is Rashi’s opinion. See, however, *Pirke Di rabbi Eliezer* 39, where it is clear that Chushim could neither hear nor speak at all. See also Radal, ad loc. [↑](#footnote-ref-308)
309. Gittin 55b s.v. *biyehuda biharugei malchus*. [↑](#footnote-ref-309)
310. Midrash Shochar Tov 18:32 supports the view that Yehuda killed Esav, but says that it was at the funeral of Yitzchak, and it was Yehuda’s successful attempt to protect Yaaqob’s life. [↑](#footnote-ref-310)
311. The first time we saw this combination is when Yaaqob received Yitzchak’s blessing. Since this does not contribute to our narrative I am not going to delve into it here. I have a separate study devoted to just Goats and Coats. [↑](#footnote-ref-311)
312. Bereshit (Genesis) 37:3 [↑](#footnote-ref-312)
313. Shemot (Exodus) 28:2-4 [↑](#footnote-ref-313)
314. The word פַּסִּים/*passim* shares the same numerical value as the word קֶץ/*ketz* – end (190). [↑](#footnote-ref-314)
315. Siftei Kohen [↑](#footnote-ref-315)
316. BereshitRabbah 97:6 [↑](#footnote-ref-316)
317. Bereshit (Genesis) 48:22 [↑](#footnote-ref-317)
318. In Shemot (Exodus) 28:2 [↑](#footnote-ref-318)
319. On Bereshit (Genesis) 37:3 [↑](#footnote-ref-319)
320. Note the subtle irony in the verse saying that Yaakov loved Yosef because he was the youngest son, and then designating Yosef the spiritual firstborn. The *Midrash Rabbah* [*Parashat Tzav*] 10:6 and *Shir HaShirim Rabbah* 4 link the *ketonet* of Yosef to the *ketonet* of the Kohen, whose role was originally intended for the firstborn. [↑](#footnote-ref-320)
321. *Eshed Hanechalim* to *Bereshit Rabbah* [↑](#footnote-ref-321)
322. Yehezchel (Ezekiel) 37:15-17 [↑](#footnote-ref-322)
323. Yehezchel (Ezekiel) 34:31 [↑](#footnote-ref-323)
324. Aaron Wildavsky points out that Yosef who grows up as Hebrew chose to become an Egyptian, while Moses who grows up as an Egyptian chose to become a Hebrew. Yosef brought the Hebrews into the Egyptian exile while Moses brought them out of the Egyptian exile into the borders of the promised land. Wildavsky, Aaron, Assimilation versus Separation, (Transaction Publishers, New Brunswick, U.S.A., 1993) Pg. 1. The almost secular story of Yosef is an odd bridge between the Abrahamic family and the Mosaic exodus. [↑](#footnote-ref-324)
325. Bereshit (Genesis) 37:2 [↑](#footnote-ref-325)
326. In Bereshit (Genesis) 25:19 we have the statement `This is the story of Yitzchak, Abraham beget Yitzchak. The text then goes on to tell of Yitzchak. There is no mention of Ishmael or Keturah’s (the wife Abraham married after the death of Sarah) children. The only relevant child is the heir. This implies that Yosef is the intended spiritual heir to Yaaqob. [↑](#footnote-ref-326)
327. Bereshit 41:45 [↑](#footnote-ref-327)
328. Rabbenu Bechaye (as well as the commentary of the Maharzu to the Midrash Rabbah) claims that Yehuda was superior to his brothers in several different areas, including Torah knowledge. It was only natural, then, that Yaaqob assigned him the responsibility of founding the yeshiva in Egypt. [↑](#footnote-ref-328)
329. From Tanchuma Vayigash 11 [↑](#footnote-ref-329)
330. Midrash Rabba, Vayikra 95 [↑](#footnote-ref-330)
331. Bereshit (Genesis) 15:13 [↑](#footnote-ref-331)
332. Brachot, 4:16 [↑](#footnote-ref-332)
333. Bereshit Rabba, 87:8; Yalkut Shimoni, Tehillim, #873 [↑](#footnote-ref-333)
334. See the Chida’s Midbar Ki’deimos, ma’areches “kuf,” #5. [↑](#footnote-ref-334)
335. Yehoshua (Joshua) 10:12 [↑](#footnote-ref-335)
336. Tanchuma [ed. Buber], Vayeze 18 [↑](#footnote-ref-336)
337. Shemot Rabbah 26:3 [↑](#footnote-ref-337)
338. Debarim (Deuteronomy) 25:18 [↑](#footnote-ref-338)
339. Rabbi Moshe Wolfsohn [↑](#footnote-ref-339)
340. Righteous one, who never sinned in the first place. [↑](#footnote-ref-340)
341. Those who return to HaShem, acknowledging their mistakes. [↑](#footnote-ref-341)
342. Bereshit (Genesis) 44:30 [↑](#footnote-ref-342)
343. Saul, who is described as “the most handsome young man in Israel (like Rachel, like Yosef), head and shoulders above the people” (I Samuel 16:2), was a natural choice for king. [↑](#footnote-ref-343)
344. Jeroboam reigned for 22 years. [↑](#footnote-ref-344)
345. Sanhedrin 102a [↑](#footnote-ref-345)
346. Sanhedrin 101b [↑](#footnote-ref-346)
347. Melachim alef (1 Kings) 11:29-39 [↑](#footnote-ref-347)
348. Melachim alef (1 Kings) 12–14 [↑](#footnote-ref-348)
349. Divrei HaYamim bet (II Chronicles) 13 [↑](#footnote-ref-349)
350. Bereshit (Genesis) Ch. 37 - 39 [↑](#footnote-ref-350)
351. Bereshit (Genesis) 44:18 [↑](#footnote-ref-351)
352. Genesis Rabbah 71:9 [↑](#footnote-ref-352)
353. Esther 2:5 [↑](#footnote-ref-353)
354. This section was written Rabbi Ariel Bar Tzadok. [↑](#footnote-ref-354)
355. Esav’s all-encompassing downfall, we have been told, would occur at the hands of Rachel’s children. (For various reasons why this is so, see *Bereshit Rabba*, 75:5, 99:2; *Yalkut Shimoni*, end of *Ki* *Teitzei*; *Yalkut Shimoni*, *Sefer* *Shoftim* (5:51); *Pesiqta Rabbati*, #12. (See, however, the terminology in *Bava Batra* 123b.), and see the *Tzeida L’Derech*’s commentary on *Rashi* to 30:25. See, as well, the *Chida*’s related remarks in his *He’Elam Davar*, #111 (and his *Rosh David*, *parshat Vayeishev*), and see *Midbar Ki’deimos*, *ma’areches* “*gimmel*,” #1. See also: *Parshas Derachim*, *drush* 26; R’ Yehonasan Eibshitz’s *Ya’aros Devash*, *cheilek* 1, *drush* 3 and *drush* 5, and *cheilek* 2, *drush* 2; R’ David Tebel’s *Nachalas David*, *Drashos*, #5; and R’ Tzaddok *HaKohen*’s *Kometz HaMinchah*, #58 (pp.52-53). See also the *Meshech Chochma*’s explanation appearing in his commentary on *Vayishlach*, 32:6 (concerning the *Midrash Tanchuma*). In addition, see R’ David Cohen’s (Chevron) *Yi’mei HaPurim*, *ma’amar* 23, p. 158. See also R’ Avraham Rivlin’s elaboration on the matter in his *HaSetarim B’Esther*, pp. 279-326, and see the remarks of R’ E. E. Kowalsky appearing in his father’s work, *Nechamas Shalom*, vol. 2, pp. 376-379. See also the *Ozhrover Rebbe*’s *Be’er Moshe*, *Vayeitzei*, pp. 608-609. Lastly, see the fascinating *remez* cited in *Chaim shel Torah*, *parshas Vayeitzei*, pp. 170-171. ) [↑](#footnote-ref-355)
356. Kol HaTor 131 [↑](#footnote-ref-356)
357. Debarim (Deuteronomy) 33:17 [↑](#footnote-ref-357)
358. Bereshit Rabbati, Vayeitzei 30:25 [↑](#footnote-ref-358)
359. Bereshit (Genesis) 42:18 [↑](#footnote-ref-359)
360. Debarim (Deuteronomy) 25:18 [↑](#footnote-ref-360)
361. Bereshit (Genesis) 37:3 [↑](#footnote-ref-361)
362. Ovadiah (Obadiah) 1:2 [↑](#footnote-ref-362)
363. Shemot (Exodus) 13:19 [↑](#footnote-ref-363)
364. Bereshit (Genesis) 25:32 [↑](#footnote-ref-364)
365. Esther 3:10 [↑](#footnote-ref-365)
366. Esther 8:2 [↑](#footnote-ref-366)
367. Bava Batra 123a [↑](#footnote-ref-367)
368. Shochar Tov, ch. 18 [↑](#footnote-ref-368)
369. ibid., v.12 [↑](#footnote-ref-369)
370. Rashi, Bereshit (Genesis) 30:25 [↑](#footnote-ref-370)
371. This means that Bilhah’s children were Rachel’s children. Consider the following Pasuk: “The Lord make the woman that has come into your house like Rachel and like Leah, who did build the house of Israel; and do you worthily in Efrat and be famous in Beit-Lechem.” (Ruth 4:11) [↑](#footnote-ref-371)
372. Nekudat Tzion, yesod of Imma, the “World of the Male” [↑](#footnote-ref-372)
373. yesod of Nukva, or Nekudat Tzion V’Yerushalayim [↑](#footnote-ref-373)
374. see Bereshit (Genesis) 36:37 [↑](#footnote-ref-374)
375. Likutei Torah in the Writings of the Ari, on Samuel I 17 [↑](#footnote-ref-375)
376. Sanhedrin 20b [↑](#footnote-ref-376)
377. The holy Temple [↑](#footnote-ref-377)
378. I Samuel 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-378)
379. Ibid. 25:19 [↑](#footnote-ref-379)
380. Ibid. 12:10. The three were to be in that order. [↑](#footnote-ref-380)
381. [Ms. M. ‘R. Nehemiah.’] [↑](#footnote-ref-381)
382. Ibid. 17:14. [↑](#footnote-ref-382)
383. It was not a command to appoint a king, but a prophecy that Israel would demand one; then, a king having been appointed, he would be subject to the laws stated in the section. [↑](#footnote-ref-383)
384. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-384)
385. I Chronicles 29:23. Ramban thus brought proof to the opinion of those scholars mentioned above, who interpret this verse as containing a hint that the reckoning with Amalek is to be deferred until there will be a king in Israel. [↑](#footnote-ref-385)
386. Bereshit (Genesis) 37:26, 49:8. [↑](#footnote-ref-386)
387. Of course he was circumcised too, but that was hidden from the brothers and would later be used to prove his identity. [↑](#footnote-ref-387)
388. Ezekiel 37:16-19 [↑](#footnote-ref-388)
389. Bereshit (Genesis) 42:8 [↑](#footnote-ref-389)
390. Kol HaTor 2:39 - Kol HaTor, the Vilna Gaon’s teachings on Israel’s redemption process, was compiled by his student Rabbi Hillel Rivlin of Shklov. In it are found deep insights pertaining to some of the most critical questions of recent generations. Foremost among these is the rarely discussed concept of Mashiach ben Yosef – a teaching the Gaon reveals to be deliberately withheld from us due to it possessing the secret of Israel’s salvation. [↑](#footnote-ref-390)
391. Kol HaTor 1, 23. [↑](#footnote-ref-391)
392. Shemot (Exodus) 17 [↑](#footnote-ref-392)
393. see Kol HaTor 2 at length [↑](#footnote-ref-393)
394. Kol HaTor 1, 23. [↑](#footnote-ref-394)
395. Kol HaTor 2, 36 [↑](#footnote-ref-395)
396. 1 Shmuel (Samuel) 1:14 [↑](#footnote-ref-396)
397. I Shmuel (Samuel) 9:21 [↑](#footnote-ref-397)
398. The Sfat Emet *Vayigash* 5658 [↑](#footnote-ref-398)
399. See Toros Vi’uvdos Mi’Beis Raboseinu (Weiss), p. 97, quoting Tiferet Yoel (vol. 3, p. 61). See also R’ Moshe Feinstein’s comments in Drash Moshe, Vi’idos Vi’asifos, drush 2, p. 404. [↑](#footnote-ref-399)
400. It is Levi, in fact, who, the Rambam (Hilchot Avodah Zara, 1:3) writes, was “separated by Yaaqob and appointed the head while placed in the yeshiva to teach the way of G-d…” See also the Arizal’s Likutei Torah, parshas Vayeitzei (p. 90): “Levi sod talmud Torah, neged Yaaqob ish tam…”- and see also p. 94 regarding Levi and Yehuda. (See also Afikei Mayim, Purim (inyan 3, pp. 136-137) discussing Likutei HaGra.) Based on the distinction between Yehuda and Levi drawn by the Netziv- see the introduction to his commentary on the She’iltos (Kidmas Ha’emek, 1:4 (5, 6))- however, we could perhaps understand Yaaqob’s choice specifically of Yehuda. (For a brief synopsis of the Netziv’s remarks, see Nichocha shel Torah (R’ M. S. Shapira), p. 360.) See also the Izhbitzer’s Mei HaShiloach, vol. 1, Likutei haShas (Yuma 26a), p. 248. See also Har Tzvi al HaTorah, parshas Vayechi, p. 25, discussing the same Gemara. In addition, see R’ Tzaddok HaKohen’s Machshavos Charutz (63a) and Ohr Zarua LaTzaddik (6a) where he discusses Yehuda as representing the Torah and talmidei chachamim. See also the Chida’s remarks in his Pesach Einayim on Sanhedrin 5a. The gematria remez (goshna=mashiach) cited in the Sefer Mat’amim (p. 13, and quoted in Otzar Ta’amei HaMinhagim, p. 337) perhaps sheds additional light on the choice specifically of Yehuda. For elaboration, see the Bne Yissachar, ma’amarei chodshei Kisleiv-Teives, ma’amar 2 (#25). Lastly, see also Derech Sicha, pp. 193-194. [↑](#footnote-ref-400)
401. See especially the Netziv’s comments in Ha’emek Davar on Vayechi (49:14), and V’zos HaBracha (33:18), and see Koveitz Iyun HaParsha, 5765, gilyon 15/16, pp. 51-52. Regarding the unique madreiga of “bi’nas Yissachar,” see R’ Avraham Azulai’s Chesed L’Avraham (Eiyn Yaaqob, nahar 13). See also Bne Yissachar, Ma’amarei Chodshei Kislev-Tevet, ma’amar 5, #2, and see R’ C. Y. Goldvicht’s Asufas Ma’arachos, Chanukah, ma’amar “Yod’ei Binah.” [↑](#footnote-ref-401)
402. I subsequently saw the question posed, as well, in Koveitz Iyun HaParsha, 5768, gilyon 40, pp. 36-37. See also Ze’ev Yitraf on Beraishis, p. 446. (See also R’ A. Bazak’s Nekudas Pesicha, pp. 52-53.) [↑](#footnote-ref-402)
403. see Malbim on Ezekiel 37:19 [↑](#footnote-ref-403)
404. Yeshua’s favorite term for himself is “son of man” – Mt. 8:20, 9:6, 10:23, Mar. 2:28, etc. [↑](#footnote-ref-404)
405. See Isaiah 11:13 and Rashi there. And Torah Shelemah on Genesis 29:16, note49 [↑](#footnote-ref-405)
406. Obadiah 1:18 [↑](#footnote-ref-406)
407. See Pirke Heichalot Rabaty, ch. 39; Sefer Zerubavel; Midrash Aggadat Mashiach (most of which is quoted in Lekach Tov, Balak, on Numbers 24:17ff.); and cf. Rashi on Succah 52b, s.v. charashim. See also Ramban, Commentary on Song 8:13. [↑](#footnote-ref-407)
408. “Misped b’Yerushalayim” in “Maamarei HaRaya”, by Rav Kook [↑](#footnote-ref-408)
409. Shemot (Exodus) 40,11. Aurbach, p.618-620 [↑](#footnote-ref-409)
410. see also Elya Raba 18 [↑](#footnote-ref-410)
411. Succah 52a [↑](#footnote-ref-411)
412. The Messianic aspect is derived by analogy with Genesis 4:25 which in Aggadat Mashiach (cited in Lekach Tov on Numbers 24:17) is put into Messianic context. [↑](#footnote-ref-412)
413. Midrash Yelamdenu, cited in Kuntres Acharon of Yalkut Shimoni. (This Kuntres Acharon appears only in very few editions of Yalkut Shimoni, but was republished in Jellinek’s Bet Hamidrash, vol. VI. Our passage appears there on p. 81, par. 20; and is also cited in Torah Shelemah on Genesis 30:23-24, par. 84 and 89.)

     In context of his military function, Mashiach ben Yosef is referred to as meshu’ach milchamah (cf. Sotah 42a, and Rashi on Deuteronomy 20:2, for this term); see Bereshit Rabba 75:6 and 99:2; Shir Rabba 2:13 (a parallel passage of Succah 52b); and Aggadat Bereshit, ch. (63) 64. [↑](#footnote-ref-413)
414. Targum Yonatan on Exodus 40:11, and on Zechariah 12:10 (manuscript-version in ed. A. Sperber); Aggadat Mashiach; Pirke Heichalot Rabaty (in version cited by Ramban, Sefer Hage’ulah, shaar IV; ed. Chavel, p. 291); and Rashi on Succah 52a; identify the battle of Mashiach ben Yosef with the war of Gog and Magog. [↑](#footnote-ref-414)
415. Succah 52a, and parallel passages. [↑](#footnote-ref-415)
416. Pirke Heichalot Rabaty, ch. 39 (cited in Sefer Hage’ulah, shaar IV); Sefer Zerubavel; Aggadat Mashiach (cited in Lekach Tov, ibid.). See R. Saadia Gaon, Emunot Vede’ot VIII:ch. 5, adding Scriptural “prooftexts” or allusions for all details; and the lengthy responsum of R. Hai Gaon on the redemption, published in Otzar Hageonim on Succah 52a, and in Midreshei Ge’ulah, ed. Y. Ibn Shmuel, p. 135ff. Cf. Rashi and Ibn Ezra on Zechariah 12:10; Ibn Ezra and Redak on Zechariah 13:7. [↑](#footnote-ref-416)
417. Sanhedrin 97b [↑](#footnote-ref-417)
418. Emunot Vede’ot VIII:6; see there at length. Cf. Or HaChayim on Numbers 24:17. [↑](#footnote-ref-418)
419. Peri Eitz Chayim, Shaar Ha’amidah:ch. 19; and Siddur Ha-Ari; on this blessing. The Ari’s teaching is cited in Or HaChayim on Leviticus 14:9, see there (and also on Numbers 24:17, where he relates this prayer to the next blessing of the Amidah); and see also Even Shelemah, ch. 11, note 6. Cf. Zohar II:120a (and Or Hachamah there), and ibid. III:153b. See next note. [↑](#footnote-ref-419)
420. The battle of Gog and Magog (see above, Appendix I, note 2) is another of the complex issues of the Messianic redemption. In fact, an authoritative tradition from the disciples of the Baal Shem Tov states that the extraordinary length of the present severe galut has already made up for the troubles of that battle and the trauma of the death of Mashiach ben Yosef, so that these will no longer occur; see R. Shmuel of Sochachev, Shem MiShmuel, Vayigash, s.v. Vayigash 5677 (s.v. venireh od, p. 298bf.). [↑](#footnote-ref-420)
421. Emunot Vede’ot VIII:ch. 5-6. See also the commentary on Shir HaShirim attributed to R. Saadia Gaon, published in Chamesh Megilot im Perushim Atikim (Miginzei Teyman), ed. Y. Kapach, on Song 7:12-14 (p. 115; and also in Midreshei Ge’ulah, p. 131f.; as noted already by the editors, this passage is most probably based on Sefer Zerubavel). [↑](#footnote-ref-421)
422. See his extensive responsum, cited above note 13. [↑](#footnote-ref-422)
423. Or Hashem, Ma’amar III, klal 8: end of ch. 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-423)
424. Mixed multitude [↑](#footnote-ref-424)
425. Righteous one, who never sinned in the first place. [↑](#footnote-ref-425)
426. Those who return to HaShem, acknowledging their mistakes. [↑](#footnote-ref-426)
427. The Sfat Emet *Vayigash* 5658 [↑](#footnote-ref-427)
428. Rabbi Akiva is the essence of the Oral Law. Moses brings the written Law down to the world; Rabbi Akiva is the nucleus around which the Oral Law is transmitted and generated within the world. There are many parallels between Moses and Rabbi Akiva (Sifrei, Debarim 357; both lived 120 years...); but Moses comes from within, Rabbi Akiva from without (he is the offspring of converts; Moses descends from Jacob, Rabbi Akiva from Esau). Jacob is the root of the Written law; Esau is the root of the Oral Law (Genesis 25:28 ki tzayid b'piv). Jacob and Esau are twins; at one level Esau is the firstborn, at another Jacob fulfils that destiny. (This is also the root of Moses’ apparent inability to understand the Torah of Rabbi Akiva and his suggestion that the Torah be given through Rabbi Akiva; in fact, in a very deep way, it was.) [↑](#footnote-ref-428)
429. *Kol HaTor*, Chapter 2, par. #39 (p. 485 in Kasher). [↑](#footnote-ref-429)
430. Heb. יהוסף formed by the addition of ה to the usual יוסף. [↑](#footnote-ref-430)
431. I.e. Yosef. E.V. ‘He’, i.e. God. [↑](#footnote-ref-431)
432. Tehillim (Psalms) 81:6, The rendering is based on the Midrashic interpretation. E.V. ‘The speech of one that I knew not did I hear’. [↑](#footnote-ref-432)
433. Bereshit Rabbah [↑](#footnote-ref-433)
434. Rav Moshe Stav [↑](#footnote-ref-434)