



Kerem
School



הספרייה הלאומית
المكتبة الوطنية الاسرائيلية
THE NATIONAL
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Parashat Vayechi
Volume 1 Edition 12
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in conjunction with NLI

In this week's Parashah of Vayechi we read about Yaakov blessing his two grandsons and each of his 12 sons. This week's NLI resource features a postcard with a picture from the late 1890's of a Rabbi blessing a young child in the Synagogue.

"THE RABBI'S BLESSING"

This is a postcard depicting life in Germany around the year 1900, and is one of a number of postcards printed around the same time. This postcard is entitled, "The Rabbi's Blessing", and shows the Rabbi of the synagogue blessing a young child, watched by both an elder-man of the congregation and a character who appears to be the child's father.

The artist, Hermann Junker (1838-1899) was born in the German city of Frankfurt and studied art under the guidance of Jewish artist, Moritz Oppenheim.

Junker created a set of forty postcards which document Jewish life in Germany through the second half of the 19th century. These include a Pidyon HaBen ceremony, Friday night dinner, Chanukah, Eating in the Sukkah, Jewish German soldiers praying on Yom Kippur and plenty more (to view more of these pictures, see the QR code overleaf).

A Blessing on Your Head

In this week's Parashah, Yaakov blesses his twelve sons and two grandchildren (the sons of Yoseph) - Ephraim and Menashe. As a result and to this very day, parents bless their children on a Friday night before making Kiddush.

Why do we bless our boys to be like Ephraim and Menashe (rather than any of our forefathers)?

Unlike Yitzchak and Yishmael, Yaakov and Esav, or Yoseph and his brothers – all of whom has difficult sibling relationships - Ephraim and Menashe were brothers who lived in harmony. They spent their lives focussing on what was best for their community and their nation, rather than themselves. Also, they grew up outside the Land of Israel yet remained true to their Judaism despite negative influences. We too wish for our children to not be affected by bad influences and to remain safe within a positive, secure environment.

Why do we bless our daughters to be like Sarah, Rivkah, Rachel and Leah?

Each of our matriarchs possessed unique qualities that played a vital role in building up the strength and future of our nation. They enabled others to reach their full potential through leadership, kindness and personal example. Besides this, each of our matriarchs were great, righteous women who had been raised in families of evil-doers yet were able to overcome a bad environment to positively inspire and influence those around them.

Activities:

Something to discuss



Look closely at the painting overleaf. How can you tell that the people are inside a Shul?

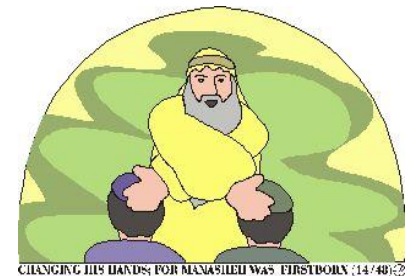
Describe the man's clothing. What do you think he is holding under his arm?

In this week's Parashah, we read that when Yaakov blesses his grandsons, he crosses over his hands so that his right hand is on Ephraim's head and his left hand is on Menashe's. Why do you think he did this?

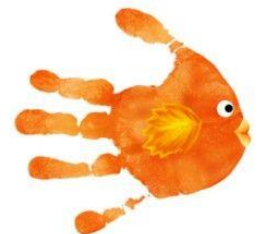
This week's Parashah explains how Yaakov crosses over his hands to bless his grandchildren. Here is a beautiful idea for a grandchild/grandparent piece of original artwork using hands:



To see a large collection of paintings by Hermann Junker, scan this code.



With his hands on their heads, Yaakov blessed Ephraim and Menashe to be "numerous like fish". Can you turn a handprint into a fish like this one?



Consider making your own Birkat HaBanim (Blessing for the Children) card which you can personalise with photos, drawings etc. For the Hebrew text, see here:

