



Candle Lighting: 4:32

**Parshas Vayechi 5772**

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### **Bulls-Eye**

*“And as for me, I have given you Shechem, one portion more than your brothers, which I took from the hand of the Emorite with my sword and with my bow” (Bereishis 48:22).*

Onkelos comments that the words “my sword and my bow” are metaphors that refer to prayers and supplications. The *Meshech Chochmah* expounds and explains that the sword directly correlates to prayers and the bow specifically refers to supplications. Prayer refers to the traditional prayers established by the Sages, while supplication refers to personal prayers one initiates. There is one fundamental difference between the two-concentration. Prayers instituted by *Chazal* do not require intense concentration. With just the basic understanding of the words one fulfills his obligation of prayer. The reason for this is that the words have their own inherent meaning imbued within them by *Chazal*. We just have to be aware of what we are saying, allowing the prayers to take effect. Personal prayers, on the other hand, require much more concentration. We formulate our personal prayers solely by ourselves, and they only carry the meaning that we instill within them. If we want our supplications to produce any results, we have to concentrate with great diligence.

The *Meshech Chochmah* continues that these two types of prayers are represented in the metaphors “my sword and my bow.” Swords are weapons in their own right. Even without great expertise, a sword can be very damaging. A bow, however, depends on the skill and meticulousness of the archer. The arrow can only travel in relation to how far the archer pulls back the bow. Similarly, the archer must be very precise where he aims his bow in order to hit the target. When Yaakov said “my sword,” he was referring to the daily prayers instituted by *Chazal* that have power on their own right, similar to the sword. “My bow” was referring to Yaakov’s personal supplications that require far more concentration, similar to the bow that requires utmost focus.

### **Blessings In Disguise**

*“By you Israel shall bless saying, ‘May Hashem make you [the child] like Ephraim and Menashe’- and he put Ephraim before Menashe.” (Bereishis 48:20)*

What is it about Ephraim and Menashe that we wish our children to be like them? The Torah tells us very little, if anything, about these two individuals and leaves us wondering what to aspire to. If so, why do we want our children to be like people who we know nothing about?

The answer lies at the end of the *posuk*, “... and he [Yaakov] put Ephraim before Menashe.” There are two qualities alluded to- one from Ephraim and one from Menashe. The Torah painstakingly narrates how Yosef wanted Yaakov to transmit his blessings to Menashe, the older of the two, with Yaakov’s right hand. Yaakov, nonetheless, refused and insisted on blessing Ephraim with his right hand. Yaakov was telling Yosef that he should allow both children reach their fullest potential- regardless of their current status. Menashe was the older one now, but that doesn’t mean that Ephraim can’t surpass him. If Ephraim works hard and applies himself, he will succeed in life, and even be more successful than Menashe- albeit younger than Menashe. Ephraim teaches us that anyone can succeed.

Menashe possessed an important quality, as well. Throughout the Torah, there was a great deal of brotherly rivalry. Kain killed Hevel, Yishmael fought with Yitzchok- so much so that Sara insisted that Avraham kick Yishmael out of the house, the bitter dispute between Eisav and Yaakov is legendary, and Yosef did not get along with his brothers. This theme even continued in later generations when Korach wanted to be the leader of Klal Yisroel. The first two brothers to get along and not fight were Menashe and Ephraim. This is especially true of Menashe. He was just told that his younger brother would be more successful in every way, yet Menashe didn’t say boo. He didn’t want to hurt Ephraim, he didn’t want him to struggle, and he didn’t even complain. Menashe was quiet and maintained the peace. He understood that life is full of opportunities and it is up to us to

