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דבר אחר: [לשם מה קרא להם יעקב? אלא לגלות להם את] קץ הנגזר [נסודות צפונים ומפן שכרם של צדיקים ועושיהם של רשעים וטיול הצדיקים בגן עדן מה הוא. התאספו באחד שנים-עשר שבטי-יעקב והקיפו למשט הנחב, שהיה יעקב אבינו שוכב עליה. [והיו] מבקשים שיגיד להם קץ הכרכות והנחמות, משנגלה לו הסוד, [הקף] נעלם ממנו, [ומשנפתח לו השער, [הקף] גרש ממנו. תזר יעקב אבינו וברך את בניה, איש כמעשיו הטובים ברך אותם. [באשר נתאספו שנים-עשר שבטי-יעקב והקיפו משט הנחב, שהיה יעקב אבינו שוכב עליה, חשבו שהוא יגלה להם סדרי ברכות ונחמות, ונתפסה ממנו] ענה יעקב אבינו ואמר להם: אברהם, אבא של אבי, יצא ממנו פסול - ישמעאל וכל בני-קטורה; יצחק אבי, יצא ממנו פסול - עשו אחי; ירא אחי, שלא יהיה ביניכם איש, שלבו חלוק על אחיו ללכת לעבד אלהים אחרים. ענו שנים-עשר שבטי-יעקב כלם באחד ואמרו: "שמע מאתנו, ישראל אבינו, ה' אלקינו ה' אחד". ענה יעקב אבינו ואמר: "יהי שמו הגדול מברך לעולמי עולמים".

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ג. ראובן בכרי אתה. [וכי לא ידע ראובן שהוא הבכור?] רבי נתן דורש לשבח: בכורי אתה - לך נאה הבכורה. [ש]שאר בכורות גזלין וחסנין, שנאמר: "וילך עשו השדה לצוד וגו'" [בראשית כ"ז ה']. אבל אתה לא חטאת, אלא מן התפקד [לקחת]. שנאמר: "וימצא דודאים" [שם ל' י"ד]. [ושאר בכורות שונאין זה את זה - בין להביל, ישמעאל ליצחק, עשו ליעקב, אבל אתה [נאמר בך:] "ויאמר אליהם ראובן אל תשפכו דם" [שם ל"ז כ"ב].

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ואפיצם בישראל. [מהי ברכה זו?] ברך ללוי, שיעמיר חקמים בבתי מדרשות, מורים הנראות בישראל. ואין "ואפיצם" אלא לשון הנראה, שנאמר: "יפוצו מעינתיו חוצה" [משלי ה' ט"ז]. [מדרש]

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We know from what follows that at this moment Ya'akov did not view his sons in their uniformity but in their characteristic diversity. Hence he now says to them: "Different though you are from one another, devote yourselves with that very diversity to the one spirit that unites you. Then I will reveal to you what will befall you in the end of days." Only when you will be imbued by one spirit will אחריית come.

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Rav Hirsch

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When it is achieved, a *Mesorah* relationship between grandfather and grandchild contains an emotional intensity and intellectual closeness that in some ways transcends the parent-child relationship. Psychologically, one would not expect a deep identification between two individuals whose great discrepancy of years could easily spawn alienation. Yet grandparents, more so than parents, are sensitive to the transiency of time and to the pressing need to assure the perpetuation of one's lifelong principles. The child is far more than a biological extension; he embodies one's hopes for spiritual continuity. If, as is found frequently, a bond between old and young is achieved amongst Torah Jews, it is due to this singular awareness of a *Mesorah* community in which past and present generations are contemporaries.

Jacob was the first patriarch to establish direct communication with his grandchildren. He was the first to make a solemn declaration, an historic pronouncement, which is responsible for the sense of closeness we still have with the past, thereby laying the foundation for the dialogue of the generations. He literally conquered time and space when he said to Joseph, "Now your two sons, who were born to you in the land of Egypt, before I came to you in Egypt, are mine. Ephraim and Menashe shall be mine, no less than Reuben and Simeon" (Gen. 48:5).

How appropriate, therefore, that our people is called Israel or Jacob, for it was he who created the Jewish community which ensures Jewish continuity. What preceded him were patriarchal families. He laid the foundation for a people. Though the covenant was made initially with Abraham, it was not until Jacob that the secret of perpetuating the *Mesorah* was discovered.

Rabbi Soloveitchik
"The First Jewish Grandfather"

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In a very real sense, this introductory period of Jewish history can be seen as a journey towards one specific moment, the moment when Yaa-kov lies on his deathbed surrounded by his children. Unlike Avraham and Yitzchak, each of whom had progeny who were lost to Jewish history, Yaa-kov now knows that all of his children intend to follow his ways. After three generations of struggle with outside influences and internal turmoil, the Hebrew family is finally whole. The patriarchal era can now safely end.

The journey of the patriarchal households to that moment teaches that *before we could become a nation we had to be a family.*

The Jewish home is and always has been the single most important educational unit in the perpetuation of our people. What our children learn at home, through example and word, shapes both their knowledge of and their attitude towards Jewish tradition and practice. The home's centrality finds its roots in the earliest moments of our people's story, in the journey of the patriarchal families, centuries before our nation is created.

Rabbi Shmuel Goldin "Unlocking Torah"