

# Being Blessed Is Not Enough

## Things Our Father Yaaqov Could Not Teach Us

Jack H Bloom

A rabbi's charge is, and remains, as was our father Avraham's,<sup>1</sup> וְהִיָּה בְרַכָּה, *veheyeh b'rakhah*<sup>2</sup> ("Be a blessing"), that, having been blessed, we in turn must bless others. It has become a glib half-truth, fashionably intoned at every occasion, to quote Genesis and affirm that each person, especially those we are fond of, is blessed by dint of having been created *b'tzelem Elohim* "in the image of God." Like any truism, this one, so easily accepted and so little respected, requires careful scrutiny.

The *Tzelem*,<sup>3</sup> following Maimonides, can, perhaps, best be understood to be humankind's cognitive being, since the creating God was and is incorporeal, and any other understanding is or borders on idolatry.<sup>4</sup> The biblical author, evidently unsatisfied with this partial truth in chapter 1, hastens to add the complementary truth in chapter 2, that beyond our cognitive essence, each of us is a *living* being because the Divine breath, the *Neshamah*,<sup>5</sup> was breathed into us by the living God.

The *Neshamah* [נִשְׁמָה] can best be understood as our somatic being, marked by pulsation and throbbing, feelings of all sorts, pleasant and painful, and a sense of corporeal aliveness. We are blessed by the living God [YHWH],<sup>6</sup> who has infused in us the breath of life, saturating each with the precious gift of *Neshamah*.<sup>7</sup>

The two are inextricably linked, forming the [*Tzelem* <=> *Neshamah*].<sup>8</sup> The *Tzelem* provides thought, form, and direction. The *Neshamah* gives life, energy, and vitality. The [*Tzelem* <=> *Neshamah*] is at one and the same time both indivisible and yet with each part having a life of its own. When "things" are going well, each part is in living interaction and relationship with the other. Thought,

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form, and direction alone would lead to a useless spinning of the wheels. Life, energy, and vitality alone would be directionless and we would be dragged around aimlessly by our feelings. We are thus neither *Tzelem* nor *Neshamah*, but both simultaneously, interacting reciprocally. When one is ignored, incapacitated, or traumatized, the other is grievously wounded. We are truly blessed when the *Neshamah* sustains the *Tzelem* and the *Tzelem* shapes the *Neshamah*.

This religious fact, that humankind's inalienable core is the functioning interacting reciprocal [*Tzelem* <=> *Neshamah*], undergirds our entire Jewish structure. This fact accounts for who we are and how we are. We ignore it at our peril. All are created this way. If only one of us is not so created, we are all in trouble.

The [*Tzelem* <=> *Neshamah*] is *not* negotiable. It is a given, ever present in us and in all others. The [*Tzelem* <=> *Neshamah*] is not contingent on our thinking and feeling correctly, behaving one way or another, on accomplishment or the lack thereof, on perceived goodness or experienced badness. Each of us, do what we will or won't, cannot be rid of it. It is our *essence*.

Though obscured in the murky fog of compromised living, the [*Tzelem* <=> *Neshamah*] is *always* waiting to be seen, heard, and attended to. When we and/or others turn away from the [*Tzelem* <=> *Neshamah*], neglecting it in ourselves, ignoring and disregarding it in others, harm is done, commitments broken, intimacies violated, children hurt, trusts betrayed, and great evil perpetrated. Blame and contempt, anger and condemnation, violence of all sorts directed toward ourselves but even more dangerously at others, increase our sense of alienation and isolation, turning us ever more away from the [*Tzelem* <=> *Neshamah*] with which we are blessed, and blocking any chance of experiencing it in others.

Blessing others is difficult, not easily done, and certainly not done by the book. Blessing others requires a great deal of skill beyond the simple desire to do "it." Before adequately blessing others, a rabbi must develop significant skills in two other areas—witnessing and naming. Witnessing and properly naming evidences of the [*Tzelem* <=> *Neshamah*] must happen and are a prerequisite for proper blessing.

Evidences of the [*Tzelem* <=> *Neshamah*] are often in flux, out of focus, flowing, moving at all times, and are most often either too strident or too dormant. Our most stringent efforts are required to witness those difficult, irascible, unredeemed parts of ourselves,

affirm their [Tzelem<=>Neshamah] relationship and gracefully name them. When these two are done properly and with elegance, blessing can take place.

As Blessed Symbolic Exemplars<sup>9</sup> of God *and* of those icons of God, humankind, every rabbi has taken a “solemn pledge” to bear witness to, properly name, and then bless the [Tzelem<=>Neshamah], always present and, it is hoped, awakening in each person (our “selves” included) or community. That which is *unwitnessed*, *unnamed*, and *unblessed* can never be fully human. And that which is not fully human detracts from God’s presence in the world, thus, as it were, diminishing God. *Witnessing*, *naming*, and *blessing* the evidences of the [Tzelem<=>Neshamah] in us and in others is not easy or simple work. Yet, that is perhaps what the whole Jewish religious enterprise is all about.

*Witnessing* requires that at all times and in *every* encounter, we bring full awareness to the [Tzelem<=>Neshamah], always present and, especially in stress, almost always obscured. A rabbi is a sort of satellite dish, focused on picking up the distant, often scrambled transmissions and emanations coming from one’s own and others’ [Tzelem<=>Neshamah]. This tuning device picks up that what is presented is not all that is there—that behind anger, there may be fear; underneath a rigid unyielding exterior, there may be a compassionate heart; hidden from view in the whining and suffering, there may be courage. Though the static may seem deafening and the view murky at best, as rabbis we are always checking for who else is in the room, for the light obscured by the shadow, the hidden parts that are evidence of the ongoing, never-ceasing presence of each human’s idiosyncratic and thus unique [Tzelem<=>Neshamah]. Witnessing is incredibly harder to do where the [Tzelem<=>Neshamah] is obscured, often by our own inability to witness it in those whom we experience as other. Witnessing requires willingness to enter an initially chaotic mess, being curious about, alert to, delighted by, making room for, supportive of, the signs and signals of the often hidden [Tzelem<=>Neshamah] in one’s self, in the other, and in the greater community. והיה ברכה, *veheyeh berakhah*, to be a blessing and to bless others requires witnessing the [Tzelem<=>Neshamah].

*Naming* creates new realities. Naming takes the undifferentiated, underdeveloped, rudimentary evidence of the [Tzelem<=>Neshamah] and gives relational meaning to already existing though inchoate realities.

God said, "Let there be light!" And there was light. God saw the light that it was *good*. God separated the light from the darkness. God named the light Day! and the darkness He named Night!<sup>10</sup>

God not only creates the world but by witnessing what has been created and naming it, moves the primeval chaos into a new reality. The light was light, but day is a new reality one can relate to. This makes possible for his future creation, humankind, to be in relationship with it. And that makes it good.

Man himself is given the task of naming the animals, giving order and meaning and relationship. The implication follows that though the creatures exist, relationship with them can only take place when they are properly named.

When we [Tzelem<=>Neshamah] seekers witness constellations ever-present though long concealed, garner evidence of the [Tzelem <=>Neshamah] so often obscured and sometimes rejected, and by proper naming bring these into human "being," perception, experience, and discourse, we create, as it were, something new. Humans do not and perhaps cannot relate to that which has no name. Naming that which heretofore had no name makes relationship possible. And it is *only* in relationship that "things" attain human "being." Naming makes an I-Thou relationship possible. *ברכה*, to be a blessing and to bless others requires proper naming.

Blessing others on God's behalf is an audacious act. Aware of our own relationship with God, whose bounty and being have made room in the world for us and our unique "being," and so knowing that our beingness is blessed, we, *in turn, can bestow blessing on others*. Blessing others with our personal presence and words is one of the ultimate acts of love a rabbi can perform. Crucial to being a rabbi, it is a primary way of attending to the [Tzelem<=>Neshamah] in us and in others. As with Avraham, only one who receives the blessing can impart it. Rabbis, blessed by being God's exemplars, are duty bound to bless humankind.

*ברכה*, to be a blessing requires blessing others. But this blessing business is no easy thing. Are we up to the task? That the charge given to Avraham was no easy thing becomes evident in the life of his grandson, our paradigmatic progenitor Yaaqov, who was named and blessed and whose blessing name, Yisrael, we carry to this day. Yaaqov spends a lifetime stumbling around in the land of blessing. Astute in almost all things, witness to strengths and weak-

nesses in others, able to play on their hidden attributes, he is incredibly vulnerable in the area of blessing. He is vulnerable both in being blessed, as we have seen in the mess with Esav and their father Yitzhak and, in blessing others, as we shall see when it comes to blessing his own sons. It is, one might say, following the text,<sup>11</sup> a wounded place in him. Whenever it is touched, he is close to being overwhelmed.

We know what happened with Esav. The contretemps began with the sordid business of trading some grub for the blessing "owned" by his overtired hunter sibling just back from a jaunt in the fields. Witnessed though he must have been by his mother in one of the first hunter/gatherer splits,<sup>12</sup> he surmises that he cannot be blessed as he is; he has to present as "other." To steal the blessing he had already bought, he clumsily makes himself appear as his older brother whose heel he had entered the world holding. The deception is "successful" with the father who cannot "see" what is in front of him. Despite the text, which may reflect his mother's view of him, he had never really been the *ish tam* "simple man,"<sup>13</sup> certainly not in respect to blessing. He had unfairly bargained for it, and had received it under false pretenses. The blessing, bought and dissembled for, roused an understandable rage in his brother Esav and led to Yaaqov's being "cursed" with years of exile.

Though the inept blessing by his father led to pain and animosity, it taught Yaaqov little about blessing, its presence, its importance, its power, and its dangers. He did not learn that how one was blessed and what one was blessed for were crucial. The [*Tzelem* => *Neshamah*] present in others needs to be witnessed, properly named, and then blessed.

Perhaps we can forgive our errant forefather, understanding that Yaaqov's original blessing was tainted. Maybe it wasn't just nurture. Perhaps Yaaqov had inherited from Yitzhak a certain genetic predisposition toward "blindness" in the field of blessing. He who was a shrewd assessor of what was going on in others, he who saw the look in Lavan's face that indicated a subtle change in mood,<sup>14</sup> could not witness or properly name the loyalty, love, and persistence resident in his wife Lea, and so could not bless it even if he knew how. To him, she continued to carry the epithet "Dim Eyes" despite her seeing her husband and children with exquisite clarity. She wanted what any of the matriarchs wanted (*viz.*, her mother and grandmother-in-law): to bear many children and have her children blessed by Yaaqov, who himself had been blessed, and

whose task it was to bless. Yet, as we shall see, *none* of hers is blessed by their father. She does her best to get them blessed. She saw something special and unique in each of her “boys.” She witnessed the nascent [Tzelem=>Neshamah] present in each and quite properly names them, as we have seen, a prerequisite for their being blessed. Her proper naming of them, she prays, will provoke not only his love and appreciation but, more crucially, their being blessed by their blessing-impaired father—her husband who *had* been blessed.

Lea bears their first and proclaims, “Re’uven, ‘see a son!’”<sup>15</sup> and when he was not seen, she persisted and brought forth Shim’on/“Hearing.”<sup>16</sup> And if neither seeing nor hearing availed, then a third, Levi/“Joining”—he would join her husband to her<sup>17</sup> (as he was later to couple God and Israel with his service in the Temple)—and so might blessing rub off on her and her progeny. When none of this bearing, witnessing, and naming brought blessing or even a hint of gratitude, she brought forth one who was destined to be one of the greatest of all, Yehuda/“Giving thanks” for what God had provided.<sup>18</sup>

The text records a pause in bearing. With no newborn to suckle, her mind could well have been preoccupied with the ebbing hope that her four might still be blessed. It did not happen. With intensifying resentment, for she had truly merited more than she received, she bore Yissachar/“There is hire”—she had earned Yaaqov’s blessing five times over.<sup>19</sup> Still nothing! She persistently follows with her sixth son, and since her husband will not/cannot bless, she ups the ante, attempts it herself, and in one fell swoop simultaneously names and blesses him Zevulun/“Prince.” Then comes her daughter Dina, for whom no explanation of naming is given. If the sons had not been blessed, what could one hope for a “mere” daughter? Yet her fate will reverberate. Through all of this, Lea remains unseen, unheard, unwitnessed, unappreciated, and herself unblessed. And her progeny’s special gifts, even when recognized, are unappreciated and unblessed. Perhaps it was her husband, Yaaqov, who was the one with “dim eyes.”

With his beloved Raḥel’s son, Yosef, it was different. Beyond the arrogant, insufferable, preening young man, Yaaqov must have witnessed something of the [Tzelem=>Neshamah]. It was something very familiar, something very much like himself. There was greatness in the boy. Having been taught by his mother that “clothes make the man,” always having been taken with outward

appearances, (“and Raḥel was fair of form and fair to look at”),<sup>20</sup> and having learned little about seeing beyond the surface, he gave Yosef a beautiful coat that marked him as “other.” He knew well the part in himself that could put on a garment not his, present himself well, be clever beyond words, and use these artifices to be blessed by his own father and later to achieve some of his God-given aims.

The coat was an awkward, inept attempt at blessing. It provoked anger for favoritism and infuriated the brothers whose very names testified to their own yearning to be blessed, and whose special gifts had gone unwitnessed and unblessed by their father. Time had not taught him very much. He could not name the greatness in Yosef appropriately and therefore could not bless it in a way that was useful.

And when it came to those generative years at the end of his life when, in the fullness of his life experience, the task of blessing his progeny fell upon him full force, Yaaqov remained, as always, blessing impaired.

In what have come down to us as the “Blessings” of Yaaqov, due, perchance, to the biblical “spin doctor”<sup>21</sup> who, in summing up all of Yaaqov’s testament, repeats three times in one brief sentence that he blessed each of them. As a matter of fact, Yaaqov had blessed only one, and the careful reader will nonetheless observe the degree of his impairment.

Despite all his brushes with blessing, he had not learned that though it is only he who receives blessing who can impart it, that alone is not enough. To bless requires beyond the prerequisite<sup>22</sup> of being and feeling blessed—witnessing the essential [*Tzelem* => *Neshamah*] residing in each of his sons, then giving it a proper name so it can have “human existence,” and only then blessing it.

Yaaqov continues to the end of his days the habits that had caused so much trouble and are destined to cause more. If it is true that

מעשה אבות סימן לבנים<sup>23</sup>

“the acts of the patriarchs are an omen to their descendants”

maybe it was his habits (learned from mom?) that engendered the multitude of splits that have bedeviled our people. Those splits foreseen when Yaaqov, unaware of the deeper implications of his

words, says proudly to his brother Esav, now ready to reconcile over the stolen blessing:

כי במקלי עברתי את הירדן הזה ועתה הייתי לשני מחנות

For with only my rod did I cross this Jordan,  
and now I have become two camps.<sup>24</sup>

The text points in an unknowing allusion to all the splits, seeded so long ago, that are to have such great impact—the split between Yosef and his brothers, between Yehuda and the tribes who lived in the land named for Yosef’s son Efrayim, later known as Israel. (That split was papered over in the reigns of David and Solomon<sup>25</sup> only to resurface after Solomon’s death.)<sup>26</sup> The conflict between the sanctuary at Beth El in the land of Efrayim and the Temple of Jerusalem, and on and on; the tendency implicit in Genesis’ story of the twins, to think that there is blessing enough for only one. This leads inevitably to the insatiable craving to have it all; this split, passed over to our Christian brothers and sisters who claimed the blessing for themselves exclusively. This thinking is present in all the splits between those who feel blessed and those who we think are not. It is a split implicit in all fundamentalism, in all the either/or splits that seem endemic in human nature and have wrought havoc with humankind.

Yaaqov’s blessing his children commences when Yosef, fulfilling the mitzvah of visiting his dying father, brings the grandchildren Efrayim and Menashe along. Despite the absence of the rest of his family, Yaaqov spontaneously decides to use the visit to bless his favorites. He starts appropriately enough by presenting his own credentials as one who has been blessed.

ויאמר יעקב אל יוסף אל שדי נראה אלי בלז בארץ כנען ויברך אתי

Yaaqov said to Yosef: God Shaddai was seen by me in Luz (and the reader will note that our blessing-impaired forefather uses the pre-Beth El, pre-blessing name of the place),<sup>27</sup> in the land of Canaan; he *blessed*<sup>28</sup> me.<sup>29</sup>

In the presence of his favorites, he describes his own having been witnessed and properly named, as were Avraham (Avram) and Yitzhak (for it is through Yitzhak that seed will be called by your name),<sup>30</sup> but then he stumbles as he specifies the naming for only one set of grandchildren, Yosef’s sons:

ויברך את יוסף ויאמר האלהים אשר התהלכו אבותי לפני  
 אברהם ויצחק האלהים הרעה אתי מעודי עד היום הזה  
 המלאך הגאל אתי מכל רע יברך את הנערים  
 ויקרא בהם שמי ושם אבותי אברהם ויצחק

Then he *blessed* Yosef and said: The God in whose presence my fathers walked, Avraham and Yitzhak, the God who has tended me ever since I was (born), until this day—the messenger who has redeemed me from all ill-fortune, may he *bless* the lads! May my name continue to be called through them and the name of my fathers Avraham and Yitzhak!<sup>31</sup>

Yaaqov had been adequate at witnessing the [Tzelem=>Neshamah] in Yosef and Yosef's sons Menashe and Efrayim, naming them in the line of his father and grandfather. Even this was done somewhat ineptly for, no doubt, word of dad's playing favorites again will get back to the other siblings, whose angry response we can presume. Yaaqov then blesses Yosef's sons:

ויברכם ביום ההוא לאמר-בך יברך ישראל לאמר  
 ישמך אלהים כאפרים וכמנשה

So he *blessed* them on that day, saying: "By you shall Israel give *blessings*, saying: God make you like Efrayim and Menashe!"<sup>32</sup>

The words have become our Friday night way of blessing our children. And for those who serve Jews in the midst of "affluenza"<sup>33</sup> and secularism, it is a very topical and poignant blessing. It is crucial to bless those who, despite their affluence and despite their acceptance, have heroically maintained their Jewishness in a foreign land.

Yet not only are Yosef and his foreign-born sons Yaaqov's children, all twelve and unmentioned Dina are his. Now, in his old age, he must gather them together and bless them. This was the task he was not up to. He himself summons them all to his bedside. They know what such a meeting portends. It is blessing time. They know the routine from what they have heard of the blessing of their father, their aggrieved uncle Esav, and their great grandfather, Avraham. They will hear about their future as their father has told them when he summoned them. Those predictions will be interspersed with words of *blessing* for each. That was the way it was done. Their expectancy rises as they gather to hear their father's *blessing*. One might have thought that having *blessed* Yosef and his progeny privately, Yaaqov, with his demise approaching, would

have had the good *grace* not to differentiate among them when all were present. The reader will note well a peculiar fact. Yaaqov had still not learned the lesson of the coat he had so long ago bestowed upon Yosef! Yaaqov uses the occasion, as he promised, to predict for them what would happen in their future. As he, one by one, calls the roll of the first ten sons (six of whom Lea of the “dim eyes” bore him and did the crucial work of preparation by witnessing and naming them for his blessing), the word בָּרַךְ “blessing” appears nowhere. *None* is *blessed* until Yosef’s turn comes. Then, apparently unable to contain himself, there is an outpouring of *blessing* six times in just two verses.

מאל אביך ויעזרך ואת שדי ויברכך

ברכת שמים מעל ברכת תהום רבצת תחת ברכת שדים ורחם

By your father’s God—may He help you, and Shaddai, may he give you *blessing*: *blessings* of the heavens, from above, *blessings* of Ocean crouching below, *blessings* of breasts and womb!<sup>34</sup>

ברכת אביך גברו על ברכת הורי

עד תאות גבעות עולם תהיין לראש יוסף ולקדקד נייר אחיו

May the *blessings* of your father transcend the *blessings* of mountains eternal, the bounds of hills without age. May they fall upon the head of Yosef, on the crown of the consecrated one among his brothers.<sup>35</sup>

There are words of בִּרְכָה, blessing and abundance only for one. For none of the others is there בִּרְכָה. Once again, only with Yosef and his sons Efrayim and Menashe is the Hebrew root בָּרַךְ used. Only Yosef’s line is blessed.

Yaaqov wasn’t very good at witnessing and naming the [Tzelem=>Neshamah] in others, except for Yosef. His failing was that he could not name (though Lea had done her very best) and *bless* the [Tzelem=>Neshamah] in the others. There is not one word of *blessing* in the whole last testament for them—cold, accurate, pungent descriptions, yes, but no *blessing*.

Yaaqov could not witness the dedicated holiness resident behind Levi’s anger that would one day mediate between God and God’s people. Anger and violence belonged to his brother Esav; it was not his. He lived by his wits and his cunning; violence was not part of him. It was anger that he was most afraid of, denying its presence in himself. And where were the creativity and music that

were to show up later despite Levi's not being *blessed*? Yes, that happens too, despite not being *blessed*.

With Yehuda,<sup>36</sup> he described what will one day be recognized as Yehuda's power and strength. Yehuda is lavishly praised, but contrary to the party-line commentary found in the Torah texts of both the Conservative and Reform movements,<sup>37</sup> which list the words to him as being *blessing*, there is not *one* word of *blessing* for him. *Blessing* is reserved only for Yosef and his progeny.

Yaaqov's failings are indeed an omen and a warning to us. We are reminded how crucial it is for us to "Be a *blessing*," to witness the [Tzelem<=>Neshamah] in all, to give it proper naming and *bless* it.

Though crucial, doing it is no easy thing. And witnessing and naming the obvious, what we like and approve of, is not enough for *blessing*. We are called to witness, name, and *bless* those different from Efrayim and Menashe, who do not yet succeed in creating Jewish lives in the well-off Diaspora. We are called to ready for *blessing* those who are peripheral and struggling with who they are. Our task is to witness, name, and *bless* those whose gifts are in hiding—those who need *blessing* to aid in the discovery of who they really are.

It is not too easy, this business of being witness to the *blessing* in us and in others, alertness to, witnessing of, providing ongoing testimony for, advocating on behalf of, and naming and *blessing* the often obscured and sometimes rejected [Tzelem<=>Neshamah] in ourselves, in others, and in the world at large. Yet being *blessed*, we are called to *bless* all. None of us is fully up to the task—we can all do only a part of it. As rabbis we have no choice but to undertake it, knowing that too often we will fail and spend a lifetime learning to do it better.

It is told of one of my teachers, the late Milton H. Erickson, who was perhaps the greatest therapist of our era, that a patient, having heard of his healing prowess, traveled halfway around the world to see him. Entering Milton's somewhat shabby office, he was shocked as he took in its well-worn furniture, overused chairs, and ramshackle bookshelves—rather humble surroundings for such a great man. Erickson noticed him looking around in disbelief, fixed his intense gaze upon him, and said, "I know it's not much, but I'M HERE!"

I'M HERE! We can have no better motto. Each of us is more than enough. Each of us is all we've got. Each of us and all of us are

*blessed*. We need to know and be assured that our *blessedness* is not in the doing, it is in the *being*. We are *blessed* through no choice of our own. Our being *blessed* is God's irrevocable gift. So when the going gets tough, and assuredly it will, each of us can do no better than respond *הינני*, *hineni* "I'm here," words that have reverberated down through the ages. Each of us is more than enough. Each of us is a *blessing*.

With thanks and *blessing* to Stephen Gilligan in recognition of years of friendship and learning.

### Notes

1. Translations of biblical texts by Everett Fox, *The Five Books of Moses* (New York: Schocken Books, 1996), except where the author takes some minor liberties.
2. Genesis 12:2.
3. Genesis 1:26, 27.
4. Cf. Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed*, chpt. 1 (trans. M. Friedlander; New York: Hebrew Publishing Co., 1881): "In man the 'form' (צלם) is that constituent which gives him human perception: and on account of this intellectual perception the term צלם is employed."
5. Genesis 2:7.
6. This name of God derives from the Hebrew root "to be." Its best meaning is "Was! Is! Will be!"—thus, The Eternal. Sarna, in his *Genesis Commentary* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1989), points out that YHWH "is the...immanent, personal God...who shows concern for the needs of human beings."
7. From the Hebrew root נשם "to breathe."
8. The brackets indicate the interrelated unity of these two elements. The double arrow (<=>) signifies a reciprocal relationship.
9. The author coined this term years ago to best describe what it is to be a rabbi. A rabbi is a walking, talking, living symbol who stands for both God and the best in humankind. Symbolic exemplarhood is the major provider of rabbinic influence, potency, and power. It is also at the root of much rabbinic loneliness and isolation.
10. Genesis 1:3–5.
11. Genesis 32:30–33.
12. Genesis 25:27.
13. Genesis 25:27.
14. Genesis 31:2.

15. Genesis 29:32.
16. Genesis 29:33.
17. Genesis 29:34.
18. Genesis 29:35.
19. Genesis 30:18.
20. Genesis 29:16.
21. Genesis 49:28.
22. *Viz.*, Sarna on Genesis 48:4 (*The JPS Torah Commentary, Genesis* [Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989]).
23. Talmud Bavli; Sotah 34a; others Ramban on Genesis 12:6.
24. Genesis 32:11.
25. 1 Kings 4.
26. 1 Kings 12.
27. Genesis 28:19.
28. "Blessed" is italicized to indicate the use of the Hebrew root בֵּרַךְ "blessed" in the text.
29. Genesis 48:3.
30. Genesis 21:12.
31. Genesis 48:15–16.
32. Genesis 48:20.
33. Symptoms: swollen expectations, hypercommercialism, shopping fever, chronic stress, etc. (1997 KCTS/Seattle & Oregon Public Broadcasting (OPB). John de Graaf and Vivian Boe).
34. Genesis 49:25.
35. Genesis 29:26.
36. Genesis 49:8–12.
37. *Etz Hayim: Torah and Commentary* (The Rabbinical Assembly; Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2001), p. 300: "Judah is lavishly praised and blessed." *The Torah: A Modern Commentary* (Plaut et al.; New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1981), p. 312, The Blessing of Judah.