

דברי מנחם

Diarei Menachem

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In this week's Parsha, we read of the birth of Yosef's two sons: Efrayim and Menashe. Rather than the verse informing us that Yosef's wife Osnat, daughter of Potifera, chief of On, bore children, the Torah narrative records first that, "to Yosef were born two sons" (B'reishit 41:50).

The emphasis is on Yosef and not on his wife, but not just because Yosef is a central motif in the unfolding drama in Egypt. Rabbi Hirsch points out that by stressing that the two sons were born to Yosef, we also get to marvel at how the brothers remained dedicated to the ideals of their father.

For, after all, Yosef married into Egyptian aristocracy; as a former slave and convict he could, at home, well have been subservient to his wife and her Egyptian mores. But no! It appears that Osnat adopted Yosef's spiritual outlook and although the two sons grew up in a broader and idol-worshiping Egyptian environment, they yet grew up dedicated to Yosef's ethics (R. Hirsch).

On Leil Shabbat, we bless our boys that they should be like "Efrayim and Menashe" because these brothers, Yosef's sons, did not argue over the "crossed" blessings they received from Yaakov. But, no less, we also bless our boys that they might emulate Efrayim and Menashe, two individuals who clearly demonstrated powerful integrity and perseverance in upholding a Jewish way of life against all the odds.