**Miller’s Musings פרשת ויחי**

Everybody appreciates a blessing, especially if it is from a venerable sage whose words carry weight in the divine realms.  So to receive a brocho from Yaakov Ovinu, no less, must have been anticipated with tremendous fervour by his sons.  And yet when we actually scrutinize the blessings, many seem to fall far short of the expected nature of a blessing. Condemnations such as that given to Reuven, “water-like impetuosity” and analogical character descriptions, “Yissochor is a strong-boned donkey” are certainly not what we would envisage.

The etymology of the word Brocho, as explained by Reb Boruch Mordechai Ezrachi shlita, carries the connotation of adding something to a pre-existing entity.  To give a brocho to someone entails leaving them more than they were previously.  He further explains that to achieve this Yaakov felt it was necessary to both help each brother understand who they truly were and also show them where they had erred in the past.  This was the approach prescribed for their personal growth.  To know their strengths and weaknesses and where they have previously fallen below their own potential was the surest way to ensure their development, hence the purest form of a Brocho that could be given.  Without knowing who one truly is how can one hope to become better in the future?

Everyone is composed of good and bad character traits.  We are all a composite of positive and negative elements that bring us closer or move us further away from our intended goals.  To understand this through self-analysis is critical to understanding who we are and who we are meant to be.  The problem lies in being able to provide an accurate appraisal of ourselves when we are so clouded by our own ego, biases and conversely feelings of lack of self-worth.  Without an objective opinion we can all too easily overlook where we struggle and more importantly where greatness lies within us.  This is the value of having a true friend.  Not one who tells us what we want to hear or belittles us for self-serving purposes.  But one who shows us where we can be better, whilst emphasising our tremendous virtues that we all have within us.  Finding a true friend is invaluable for appreciating ourselves so we can fully realise our potential.  It is surely one of the greatest blessings we can receive.

May Shabbos be full of true friendship all around us.

לעילוי נשמת לאה בת אברהם