

AT THE ARTSCROLL SHABBOS TABLE

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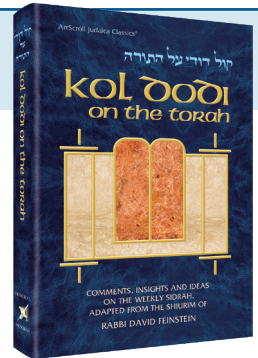
פרשת שמות
כ"ה טבת תשפ"ד
5784
JANUARY 6, 2024
ISSUE #171
RABBI YITZCHOK
HISIGER, EDITOR
DESIGN & LAYOUT:
MRS. AVIVA KOHN

WEEKLY INSPIRATION AND INSIGHT ADAPTED FROM CLASSIC ARTSCROLL TITLES

PROJECT DEDICATED BY MENACHEM AND BINAH BRAUNSTEIN AND FAMILY
L'ILLUI NISHMAS RAV MOSHE BEN RAV YISSOCHOR BERISH AND MARAS YENTA BAS YISROEL CHAIM

PARASHAH A BLESSING

Kol Dodi on the Torah by Rav Dovid Feinstein



ובני ישראל פרו וישרצו וירבו ויעצמו במאד מאד ותמלא הארץ אתם.
And the Children of Israel were prolific and teemed and became exceedingly great and powerful; and the land was filled with them (1:7).

It would seem, at first glance, that the blessing that Hashem gave the Jews — their great fertility and success — turned out, in reality, to be a curse. We see that their very greatness intimidated Pharaoh, as he said (v. 9), “Behold! The people of the Children of Israel are greater and stronger than us.” Had they not been so numerous and powerful, surely Pharaoh would not have imposed the harsh labor and the other cruel decrees. But can it be imagined that Hashem would give His people a curse disguised as a blessing?

There is a story in the *Midrash (Eichah Rab-basi 3:20)* about the Roman emperor Hadrian, who hated the Jews. Once, his imperial procession passed a Jew who saluted him and said, “Hail, O mighty Emperor!” When he heard this, Hadrian immediately ordered that the Jew be beheaded for having the audacity to greet the emperor.

A short while later, he passed a second Jew who, having seen what had just happened, remained silent as the emperor went by.

Again, Hadrian stopped and ordered his soldiers to behead the second Jew also, this time for his insolence in failing to greet the emperor.



Rav Dovid Feinstein

One of Hadrian’s ministers had the boldness to ask him, “I don’t understand. If a Jew greets you, you have him executed. If he fails to greet you, you have him executed. What is a Jew supposed to do?” Answered the emperor, “Don’t tell me how to get rid of this people whom I hate so passionately. I’ll treat them however I want to.”

In the same way, Pharaoh’s hatred of the Jews was beyond any sense or reason. Whether they were great or small, powerful or weak, he would have found some excuse to make their lives difficult. Therefore, it is wrong to think that Hashem’s blessing was in any way a curse.

Nevertheless, it may sometimes seem so on the surface, because our enemies use Hashem’s blessings as an excuse to hate us. Thus, Pharaoh would always be able to find an excuse to show his hatred.

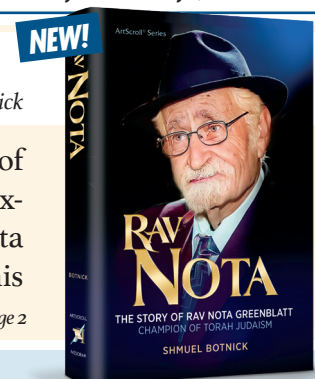
But there should be no doubt in our minds that whenever Hashem gives a blessing, it is genuinely a blessing. The fact that people like Pharaoh seize on any excuse to abuse and oppress us does not change this. Hashem carries out His plan despite them and His ultimate purpose will be achieved no matter what they do or say. 📖

TORAH GREATNESS

HIS CHEILEK

Rav Nota – The Story of Rav Nota Greenblatt by Shmuel Botnick

Rav Nota Greenblatt was in Palo Alto, California, where he had spent the bulk of the day writing quite a number of *gittin*; those in the field can describe just how exhausting an experience that is. Upon completion of the last *get* of the day, Rav Nota paid a visit to the Palo Alto Kollel. There, he delivered an impromptu *shiur* with his classic brilliance, a whirlwind of *Rambams* and *Raavads* spinning like *continued on page 2*



THIS WEEK'S ISSUE IS DEDICATED BY GIDEON AND RACHEL EVANS
IN MEMORY OF THEIR DEAR SON 'איתן מיכאל ז"ל בן גדעון ורחל שיחי'

MESORAH HERITAGE FOUNDATION

leaves on a windy autumn day.

When the last of his questions was answered and the crowd dispersed, Rabbi Yitzchak Feldman, rabbi of Congregation Emek Beracha of Palo Alto, presented a question of his own. “How is it,” he asked, “that the *rav* is able to spend hour after hour writing *gittin* and then immediately deliver such an incredible *shiur*?”

Here was Rav Nota’s response: “In the *Shemoneh Esrei* on *Shabbos* and *Yom Tov* we say, *V’sein chelkeinu b’Sorasecha*, a request that Hashem grant us our *cheilek* (portion) in Torah.”

Rav Nota paused.

“What does it mean when we request our ‘*cheilek*’ in Torah?” he asked rhetorically.

Rabbi Feldman was silent.

“When we *daven* for our ‘*cheilek*,’” Rav Nota explained, “it means our ‘primary self.’ Meaning, we ask Hashem that, no matter what it is that we do, the Torah should be our true portion, it should be our foremost identity.”

Rav Nota completed this thought and then looked Rabbi Feldman in the eye.

“My *cheilek*,” he said, “is in Torah.”

It was a five-word explanation for a ninety-year phenomenon. No matter how weary, how traveled, or how busy Rav Nota was, he continued to learn.

Torah was his *cheilek*.

No story demonstrates this as cogently as the following. Rav Nota once walked into the Phoenix Kollel’s *beis medrash* while they were in the middle of second *sefer*. The *kollel* was learning *Beheimah HaMakshah* — the fourth chapter of *Maseches Chullin* and they were in the heart of the difficult subject of *ben pakuah*.

Rav Nota paused for a moment and listened. He then produced his cellphone and placed a call.

“Mrs. Goldstein,” he said, “this is Rabbi Greenblatt. I want to ask you a favor. Something urgent has come up. Can we postpone our appointment for two or three hours?”

Rav Nota listened for a moment, nodded, smiled,

said, “Thank you, Mrs. Goldstein,” and then rammed his phone back into his pocket. He then sprang into action.

“*Ich daft dus lernen*, I must learn this!” he cried. “*“Siz shoin asach tzeit vuhs ich hub dus nisht gelernt!* I have not learned this *sugya* in a long time!” He sat down.

“Bring a *Gemara*, please,” he requested, and a *sefer* was quickly handed to him. “I’m not going to bother you,” he called out to the students of the *kollel*. “I’m going to keep quiet.” He opened the *Gemara* and began to learn softly.

But after a few minutes, he couldn’t contain himself. He began to talk, slowly at first, and then picking up speed and animation. The students huddled around him as Rav Nota launched into a *shiur* that lasted for three hours, churning out sources and his own novel ideas as if he had spent weeks in preparation.

The *shiur* ended and all present headed home, not quite believing what they had just witnessed.

And Rav Nota? He headed to his appointment, ever grateful to Mrs. Goldstein for her gracious patience.

Torah was his *cheilek*, but, in a conversation with a young Memphian, Rav Nota revealed yet another perspective. Josh Feingold was walking down Memphis’s Cole Road when he presented his *rebbe* with a question. “When the needs of the community are so great,” he asked, “how does one prioritize the study of Torah?”

Rav Nota paused. “Torah,” he then said, “is a *kesser* (crown).”

They walked in silence and Josh, not fully understanding Rav Nota’s answer, tried again. Rewording the question slightly, he repeated it. “How does one prioritize *limud haTorah* when there is so much to do for the community?”

“Torah,” Rav Nota repeated, “is a *kesser*.”

And then Rav Nota repeated it once again. “Torah is a *kesser*.”

It was a cryptic sentence, but the message was clear. When you recognize the primacy of Torah study, nothing can diminish its importance. 📖



THIS WEEK'S DAF YOMI SCHEDULE:

SHABBOS	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
6 כה	7 כו	8 כז	9 כח	10 כט	11 א	12 ב
Bava Kamma 65	Bava Kamma 66	Bava Kamma 67	Bava Kamma 68	Bava Kamma 69	Bava Kamma 70	Bava Kamma 71

THIS WEEK'S MISHNAH YOMI SCHEDULE:

SHABBOS	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
6 כה	7 כו	8 כז	9 כח	10 כט	11 א	12 ב
Kesubos 3:1-2	Kesubos 3:3-4	Kesubos 3:5-6	Kesubos 3:7-8	Kesubos 3:9-4:1	Kesubos 4:2-3	Kesubos 4:4-5

MERIT OR MAZAL?

The Schottenstein Edition Ein Yaakov – Moed Kattan/Chagigah

There is a basic question that must be addressed regarding the influence of *mazal*. The *Gemara* states that one's lifespan, children, and wealth are dependent on his *mazal* rather than his merits. But in numerous places, the Torah itself promises these blessings to those who perform the *mitzvos* and obey Hashem's will, and the converse to those who disobey (see, for instance, *Vayikra* Ch. 26 and *Devarim* Ch. 28). It thus seems quite explicit that a person's lifespan, children, and wealth *do* depend on a person's behavior and are not preordained. Furthermore, we constantly pray to Hashem to be granted such blessings. But are our prayers not meaningless if these matters have already been determined by our *mazal* and cannot be altered?

The early commentators offer various approaches to these questions.

Rashba (*Teshuvos* 1:148, 409) and *Rabbeinu Bachya* (*Devarim* 8:18) make a distinction between the community and the individual. Regarding the community as a whole, the Torah promises these rewards based on their merits and actions. This is because the power of a community is so great that it can overcome the influence of the *mazalos*. But with regard to an individual, *mazal* indeed holds great sway (see further *Rashba* §409 for another approach).

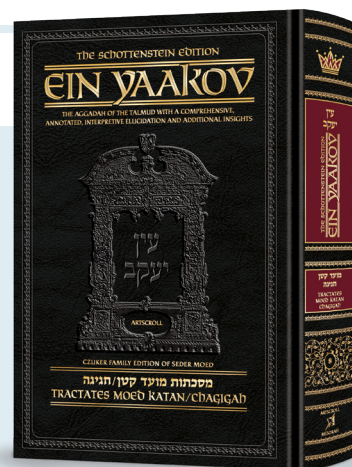
Rabbeinu Bachya (*Devarim* 31:14; *Kad HaKemach, Parnassah*) suggests

yet another answer: With regard to other blessings, a person's merits and good deeds can indeed overcome the evil portent of his *mazal*. But the *Gemara* teaches that regarding these three matters (lifespan, children, and sustenance), the person's merits alone cannot alter the *mazal's* decree. Even so, asserts *Rabbeinu Bachya*, there is one proven remedy by which one can prevail over his *mazal*: sincere prayer

THERE IS ONE PROVEN REMEDY BY WHICH ONE CAN PREVAIL OVER HIS MAZAL.

and crying out to Hashem, which have the power to alter the decree even with regard to these three things.

Ritva answers that the *Gemara* simply means that these blessings do not completely depend on one's merits. Rather, they also depend on *mazal*. Nevertheless, if one has especially great merits, he can fully overcome his *mazal* and change his fate. *Ritva* makes clear that this applies only to a supremely righteous individual who possesses enormous merit, and no two righteous people will necessarily share the same fortune. [However, this approach is questioned by *Chiddushei*



HaRan, who notes that the *Gemara* seems to say that sometimes, even someone as saintly as Rabbah may not be able to overcome his *mazal*.)

Chiddushei HaRan, citing others, offers yet another approach. The fate of a person foretold by his *mazal* can certainly be altered by his merits and good deeds, as the Torah states. However, the *Gemara* teaches that one's *mazal* cannot be entirely uprooted and nullified, even if he possesses great merits. Thus, while the evil decrees of the *mazal* may be softened by prayer and *mitzvah* observance, they will ultimately come to pass in some form. In this sense, the *Gemara* says that one's lifespan, children, and sustenance are not merit-based, for they will always remain at least partially based on *mazal*. This explains why Rabbah suffered so greatly in his life. Most certainly, he bettered his fate through his great merits and prayers. However, he would not have lived as long or as well as Rav Chisda no matter how hard he would have prayed, for his *mazal* could only be tempered, but not completely overcome. 📖

For further discussion of this fascinating topic, see *The Schottenstein Edition Ein Yaakov – Moed Kattan/Chagigah*, pages 120-123.

This week's
Yerushalmi Yomi
schedule:

JANUARY /
טבת-שבט

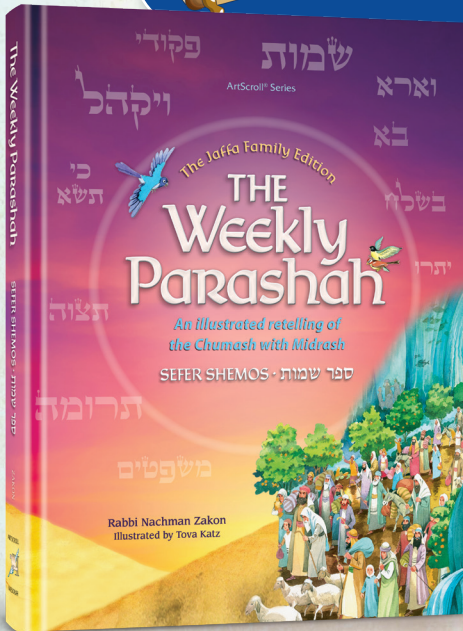
SHABBOS	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
6 כה Terumos 4	7 כו Terumos 5	8 כז Terumos 6	9 ח Terumos 7	10 ט Terumos 8	11 י Terumos 9	12 יב Terumos 10



Parashah for Children

פרשת שמות

Pharaoh Refuses



Moshe and Aharon stared at the man sitting before them. Though he was so powerful, Pharaoh was actually very short. He had a long beard, and wore a crown on his head.

Looking at the two Jews, Pharaoh, mighty Pharaoh, grew terrified. In a low, trembling voice, he managed to squeak out, "What do you want?"

"The G-d of the Jews has sent us," they answered, "to tell you to send His people out so they can serve Him in the desert."

Pharaoh got angry! No one ever told him what to do. He was Pharaoh, king of Egypt!

"Who is this G-d?" he said sharply. "I never heard of him." Pharaoh went into a room in his palace and picked up a large book that listed all the idols

of Egypt and other countries. Pharaoh looked through it, looked up at Moshe and Aharon with a smirk on his face, and said, "Your G-d is not here."

He may have been the "birthday boy," and the most powerful leader in the world, but Pharaoh was also foolish. Did he really expect to find the Name of our living G-d in a book of dead stone and golden idols?

"Tell me," asked Pharaoh, "is your god a young, mighty warrior? What does He do?"

"He created the world, everything in it, and He gives you life."

Now Pharaoh wasn't frightened. He was just plain angry! "Liars! I am the master of the world. I created myself and the Nile River. I will not send out the Jews."

Moshe and Aharon repeated their request. "Let us go for a three-day trip into the desert to worship G-d."

"You want me to lose the work of hundreds of thousands of slaves for three days?" Pharaoh answered. "It's impossible!" He glared at them. "This is not your business! Don't try to stop my slaves from working."

Moshe and Aharon realized it was a waste of time to continue talking to Pharaoh. They turned around and left the palace.



THE WEEKLY QUESTION

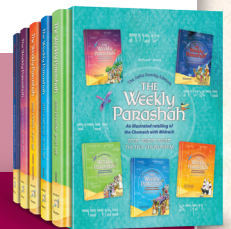
Question for Shemos:

How old was Yocheved when she gave birth to Moshe Rabbeinu?

Kids, please ask your parents to email the answer to shabbosquestion@artscroll.com by this Wednesday to be entered into a weekly raffle to win a \$36 ARTSCROLL GIFT CARD! Be sure to include your full name, city, and contact info. Names of winners will appear in a future edition. HINT: The answer can be found in *The Jaffa Family Edition Weekly Parashah*.

The winner of the Parashas Mikeitz question is: ELIJAHU ROBENOV, Briarwood, NY

The question was: How could the brothers not recognize Yosef when they met him? He was their brother and they grew up together! The answer is: When the brothers sold Yosef, he was only seventeen years old. Now he was grown up, a man of thirty. His face was covered with a beard. That is why the brothers didn't recognize him.



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