

AT THE ARTSCROLL SHABBOS TABLE

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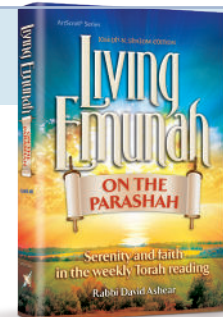
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PARASHAH

PASS THE TEST

Living Emunah on the Parashah by Rabbi David Ashear



In *Parashas Lech Lecha*, we begin to read about how Hashem tested Avraham Avinu. The *Mesillas Yesharim* (Ch. 1) writes that the purpose of man in this world is *laamod b'nisayon* - to withstand his tests. Avraham achieved greatness because he passed his tests. Hashem, in His infinite wisdom, gives each person the exact challenges he needs to become great. We are tested countless times each day. First Hashem takes into account a person's background, knowledge of the situation, and abilities to overcome the challenge. Only after everything is taken into consideration is the test finally administered. Hashem does this for millions of people every second of every day.

The *Midrash (Bereishis Rabbah 55:7)* says that the words "*Lech lecha - Go forth*," were used for two of Avraham's ten tests. The first of these was to leave his birthplace and travel to an unknown destination. The second was when Avraham was commanded to bring his son, Yitzchak, as an offering. The *Midrash* concludes: *וְאֵין אָנוּ יוֹדְעִים אִיזוֹ חֲבִיבָהּ* - *We don't know which [of those two tests] was more precious [to Hashem]*.

How can that be? How could passing the test of relocating compare to the test of being commanded to slaughter his son?

We learn from here that we have no idea how to measure a challenge. Each is experienced at a different point in a person's life, under different circumstances.

For this reason, it is not possible to measure the greatness of a person. On the surface, it may appear that one individual is on a very high level and another is on a lower one. But we are not privy to the challenges people face. We do not know how precious a single word of *emunah* is from people undergoing a difficul-

ty, whether a family frustration, a health issue, or a financial problem. They are in a constant struggle, torn between feeling resentment toward Hashem and accepting His tests with love. They have their ups and downs, but every time they pass a test, they achieve greatness.

It is difficult to observe those who are trying to be religious yet their material lives do not improve. We are told that observing the *mitzvos* of the Torah brings blessing, but we don't always see it. The reward for someone

WE HAVE NO IDEA HOW TO MEASURE A CHALLENGE.

who continues serving Hashem while suffering is beyond our comprehension. It is a fact that following the Torah is rewarded, but not necessarily right away. Avraham was told by Hashem that he should relocate, and he will become wealthy and have children. He listened, yet when he arrived at the new destination, there was a famine and he did not become wealthy right away. He was told he would have a child who would become a great nation, but twenty-five years elapsed before Yitzchak was born.

The *Zohar (Parashas Yisro)* says that *Shabbos* is the *mekor habrachah*, source of blessing. Yet some people start keeping *Shabbos* and close their stores for the holy day of rest, but do not see an increase in their earnings. Nevertheless, *Shabbos* is still the *mekor habrachah*. The fact that they did not

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ARTSCROLL MESORAH PUBLICATIONS



This coming week's *Daf Yomi* will feature a famous *Gemara* (*Eruvin* 86a), which gives a source for respecting the wealthy: **רבי מכבד... עשירים** - *Rebbi would show respect to wealthy people [who helped the poor]. R' Akiva would [also] show respect to wealth people [who helped the poor].*

A basic question presents itself on our *Gemara*. What is the justification for honoring people simply because of their wealth? If it is because they are using their money properly — as implied by the verse cited by our *Gemara* — then why not equally honor a poor man who accepts his lot in life happily?

Several different approaches emerge from the commentators.

Rashi follows the simple explanation of the *Gemara*: that honor is due to the rich on account of the many acts of kindness they perform with their money. *Ein Yaakov* cites an alternative version of *Rashi*, who quotes further from the *Geonim* that

since the wealth of the affluent is preserved, this indicates to us that Hashem is pleased with the way they are using their money. Therefore, we should honor them as well. *Rashi* writes also that as a result of the generosity of the wealthy, the world is “settled.” Rav Tzvi Hirsch Chayes adds that people who support the poor and sick perform an invaluable service to the world, one that would not be fulfilled if they would devote all their time and resources to study and contemplation. Their charity fulfills one of the purposes of the world, and so they are deserving of honor for the important role they play (*Kol Kisvei Maharatz Chayes, Darchei Horaah*, p. 213).

On a deeper level, the *Chida* explains from the *Arizal* that the gift of wealth stems from an outpouring (*shefa*) of blessing from Hashem. When a person is granted wealth, it indicates that Hashem has deemed him worthy of receiving a Heavenly

flow of bounty. He is a receptacle of G-d's beneficence. And neither he nor we should make light of such a gift. For this reason, continues the *Chida*, the rich have a special obligation to use their money properly, never squandering it inappropriately. Wealth emanates directly from Hashem; it may never be wasted or misused (*Pesach Einayim, Eruvin*).

A different approach is suggested by *Yalkut HaGershuni*, based on Rav Yosef Shaul Natanson, author of *Divrei Shaul*. There is a special value to the possession of wealth, one that causes it to stand out among all other good qualities. Wealth enables a person to achieve in virtually all other areas as well. When a person is financially sound, he will have both the time and the peace of mind to study Torah and to develop himself spiritually in all other ways. Thus, those who possess

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לך לך מארצך וממולדתך ומבית אביך אל הארץ אשר ארצך

“Go for yourself from your land, from your relatives, and from your father's house” (12:1)

Rav Nachum of Chernobyl was famous for his efforts on behalf of Jewish captives. It was his custom to travel through towns and villages to collect money for the important *mitzvah* of *pidyon shevuyim* (redeeming captives).

Once, when he was in the town of Zhitomir, the local gentiles shamelessly accused him of some crime that he had not committed. The authorities promptly arrested him and placed Rav Nachum in jail. One of the distinguished members of the Zhitomir community paid Rav Nachum a visit at the prison. There he elaborated upon the verse, “Go for yourself from your land”:

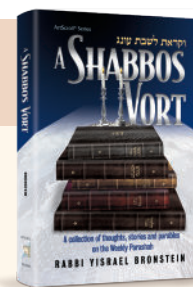
“Avraham Avinu,” said the man, “excelled at *hachnasas orchim*, showing hospitality to guests, and dedicated his entire life to finding new ways to honor his guests.

“*Hakadosh Baruch Hu* therefore commanded him,

‘Go for yourself from your land, from your relatives, and from your father's house.’ Once you become a wanderer and experience what it feels like to be without shelter or a place to rest, you will be even more sensitive to the needs of your guests.

YOU WILL BE EVEN MORE SENSITIVE TO THE NEEDS OF YOUR GUESTS.

“The same applies to you, Rav Nachum. Since your entire life has been dedicated to the freeing of captives, Heaven has granted you the opportunity to feel the bitter taste of captivity. Now you will possess an even greater sensitivity toward the plight of a captive!”



וַיֵּצֵא אוֹתוֹ הַחוּצָה וַיֹּאמֶר הִבֵּט נָא הַשָּׁמַיְמָה וְסַפֵּר הַכּוֹכָבִים אִם
תּוּכַל לִסְפֹּר אֹתָם וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ כֹּה יִהְיֶה זְרַעְךָ

And He took him outside and said: "Gaze now toward the heavens and count the stars if you are able to count them!" And

He said unto him, "So shall your offspring be."

The stars of the heavens and the sand of the sea

THIS DOUBLE IMAGE REFLECTS A CHARACTERISTIC OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE.

are the two metaphors used by Hashem when He tells Avrohom Avinu that "so shall your offspring be." But these two images are at opposite extremes.

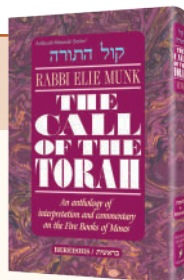
The innumerable stars shine in the immensity of space, whereas the sand is trampled on by everyone. This double image reflects a characteristic of the Jewish people, the stiff-necked people, obstinate and willful, for good and also for evil, as evidenced throughout its history.

Jewry will almost never know an unadventurous, peaceful, or stable existence. Its rise will be meteoric just as its descent will be to the very depths. Conquered, subjugated, the Jewish nation will undergo sufferings no other nation will ever know. But victorious, triumphant, once again coming to the fore, Jewry will attain unthought-of heights.

"When Jewry rises, it does so up to the stars; when it falls, it falls right down to the sand of the sea" (Rashi to Esther 6:13). 📖



Rabbi Elie Munk



PASS THE TEST continued from page 1

earn more money right away is part of their challenge.

Some people see blessing right away and others do not. Only Hashem knows why this is so. In the end, those who follow Hashem will only benefit.

Motti told me that in 1981 he rented a store in Manhattan from a friend for \$30,000 a month. Before signing the lease, he told his friend that he had become religious and was planning to keep the store closed on Shabbos.*

His friend's response was discouraging. "I tried to sell from this store, but I fell behind on my \$12,000 mortgage payment. I was open seven days a week, from early morning until midnight, and I still couldn't make ends meet. There's no way you're going to make the rental payments if you're closed on Shabbos. It's the busiest day of the week, by far."

Motti was steadfast in his commitment to observe Shabbos. "Don't worry," he replied. "I'll be fine." The two men signed the rental agreement and shook hands on the deal.

Motti remained true to his conviction. The store closed on Shabbos and opened every Sunday. Somehow, despite the quiet streets and lack of overall business activity elsewhere, the few customers who entered the store would always place huge orders, \$15,000 or \$20,000 at a shot. Motti earned a lot of money in that location and was never late on a rental payment.

Heeding Hashem only helps. We do not always see benefits right away, but if we can overcome the challenge and continue serving Him, we will pass one of life's most difficult tests. 📖

HONORING THE WEALTHY

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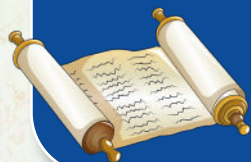
wealth have great potential for personal growth. Rebbi and R' Akiva — who were wealthy themselves — had special regard for the rich, knowing just how much greatness the affluent can achieve.

Maharil explains that there was more to Rebbi and R' Akiva's respect of wealthy people than meets the eye. Rebbi and R' Akiva were the premier sages of their respective generations, both were exceedingly humble, and both were very wealthy. Since they did not wish to accept any honor for their greatness in Torah, they devised the following plan: They each started a "trend" (based on Torah sources, as the *Gemara* goes on to show) of giving respect to wealthy people, and this quickly became common prac-

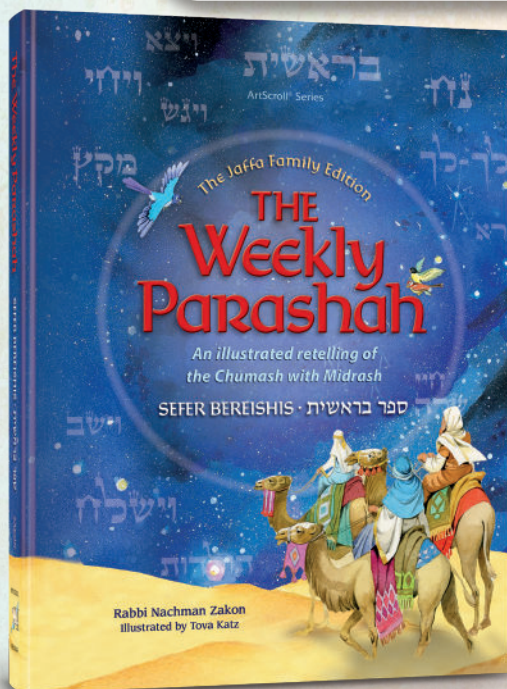
tice. As a result, any honor shown to these sages could then be attributed to their wealth and not to their mastery of Torah (*Maharil*, cited in *Iyun Yaakov* and *Likkutim*).

ONE SHOULD FIND SOMETHING WORTHY OF RESPECT IN EVERY PERSON.

Meiri implies that our *Gemara* means wealth as only one of a variety of qualities that are worthy of respect. Thus, he writes that "it is fitting for the wise and all those of exalted character to honor each person according to his particular qualities — whether it be wisdom or wealth or any other quality as well." One should find something worthy of respect in every person. 📖



Parashah for Children



A Great Smell

Hashem wanted Avram to travel so his influence and fame would spread throughout the world. Avram would be like a great-smelling air freshener, that has a beautiful smell, but if it is sitting in a bottle no one can smell it! A person must take it out of the pantry, open the bottle, and spray it all over. Ahhh, now the whole room smells better. By traveling, Avram would bring this “great smell” — that is, understanding that Hashem created the world — to the world. How? Wherever Avram went he would convince people to believe in Hashem.

Eretz Yisrael

Also, Hashem told Avram to leave Charan because he wanted Avram to live in the greatest land in the world: Eretz Yisrael. It's the holiest land on earth! In Eretz Yisrael, Avram would become a greater tzaddik than if he lived anywhere else in the world.

WHO'S WHO IN THE TORAH

Og

Og was a giant, and the only survivor of the great Mabul, other than Noah and his family.

Og hung onto the Teivah and Noah fed him food through a hole in the Teivah.

Because Og arrived when Avram was baking “oo-gos,” another word for matzah, he was nicknamed Og.

He lived a very long time — over 500 years. That was his reward for letting Avram know that Lot had been captured. But since he did this hoping Avram would be killed, he didn't die peacefully in his bed.

A great descendant of Avram killed him: Moshe Rabbeinu. Og was killed in a war with the Jews right before they entered Eretz Yisrael. How? Moshe jumped very high and reached up to Og's ankle. He struck it with an axe and Og fell over, dead.



FASCINATING FACTS

When Sarai was considered the most beautiful woman in Egypt, she was over 65 years old!

Avram was rewarded for saying he wouldn't even take a string or shoe straps, giving up a fortune. What was his reward? Because he said he wouldn't even take a string, Hashem gave Avram's descendants the mitzvah of putting tzitzis on a four-cornered garment. And because he wouldn't take a shoe strap, Hashem also gave Avram's children the mitzvah of tefillin straps.