



TORAH WEEKLY

A project of the Denver Community Kollel



Parshas Bo

January 7, 2022

A Taste of Torah Buried Treasure

by Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher

After 210 years in exile, the Jewish Nation is preparing to leave Egypt. They're readying their Pesach offerings, along with the matzah and *maror*, and have taken careful note of the other instructions Hashem gave Moshe. Among those directives is a request that the Jewish People, before departing Egypt, borrow gold, silver and garments from the Egyptians. (Ergo, they would never return these borrowed items, but that's a discussion for a different article.) This, teaches the Talmud (Brachos 9a), is necessary to fulfill G-d's promise to Abraham centuries earlier that upon leaving Egypt, his descendants would depart with great wealth.

When the long-awaited moment of the Redemption finally arrives, the Torah states that the Jewish People did, indeed, carry out this mission. The verse, in describing how the Jews went about this work, states (Bo 12:35), "And the Bnai Yisrael carried out the words of Moshe; they requested from the Egyptians silver vessels, gold vessels, and garments." Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berdichev (1740-1809) in his famed work *Kedushas Levi* points out that normally, when the Torah wishes to convey that the Jewish People followed Hashem's commandments as conveyed to them by Moshe, it states, "And the Jewish People did as Hashem had commanded Moshe." Here, however, only Moshe is mentioned, but not Hashem. What, wonders Reb Levi Yitzchak, is the reason for this glaring omission?

Moshe, notes the *Kedushas Levi*, is the greatest prophet to ever live. One major element of how Moshe's prophecy differs from that of other prophets was that a regular prophet would receive a message from Hashem and he would then share that message with the intended recipient. The person hearing the message would

hear it only from the prophet's mouth, not directly from Hashem. In the case of Moshe, though, our Sages teach that "the *Shechina* (Divine Presence of G-d) spoke, as it were, directly from Moshe's throat." The Jewish People essentially heard Hashem speaking to them through the person of Moshe, thus affording them much greater clarity of Hashem's words than they would have merited hearing Hashem's words through a regular prophet.

This is all true, continues the *Kedushas Levi*, for a regular mitzvah or directive that Hashem wished to convey to His Nation. The power of Moshe's prophecy was so great that the Bnai Yisrael received the spiritual potency of the commandment as if hearing it from Hashem Himself. The verse therefore usually says that the Jewish People did "as Hashem had commanded Moshe" to indicate the level of Divine communication.

When it comes to wealth, though, things get a bit more complicated. Money, in all its various forms and iterations, causes great harm, is the source of much evil, and wreaks enormous havoc. On the flip side, money can be used for great and wonderful things; it contains the potential to serve G-d and accomplish tremendous good. It is no small task to reveal the potential holiness that is latent within money without being affected by the negative pull it exerts upon us humans.

Reb Levi Yitzchak says that the Jewish People were given a great challenge with this Egyptian wealth: They needed to access and release the sparks of holiness that lay latent and hidden within the recesses of the crass riches. This was, in fact, the primary purpose of amassing all this wealth - to bring out the holiness hiding inside. Indeed, the Jewish People would suffer a great

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Stories for the Soul

Top Priority

In 1948, the Arabs were attacking the Jews living in Jerusalem, throwing grenades and firing down at them. It was terribly dangerous to be outside. Rabbi Yisroel Grossman (1923-2007) was running to the Bikur Cholim hospital to visit a student of his who had been mortally wounded by a grenade and lay dying, when he saw the legendary *tzaddik* Rabbi Aryeh Levine (1885-1969) enter the hospital with another man. Rabbi Levine went over to the corpses covered by white sheets, lifted the sheet off the face of a body, and had the man take a photograph! Rabbi Grossman was quite taken aback by Rabbi Levine's actions; perhaps he wanted to send images of the dead to the world to see the Arab atrocities, but where that did not take precedence to respect for the deceased!?

Rabbi Grossman asked Rabbi Levine what he was doing. Rabbi Levine replied, "Reb Yisroel, I heard that they are preparing a mass grave for these people who were tragically murdered. Some of the dead have wives who are unaware of their husbands' deaths, and if they cannot confirm this, they will be unable to remarry! I am taking photographs so these women will be allowed to remarry!"

Rabbi Grossman was awe-struck. Who else but the saintly Rabbi Aryeh Levine would think of this at such a calamitous time?

In this week's parsha, as the Jewish People prepared to leave Egypt, they asked the Egyptians for their valuables and were thus greatly enriched. But, says the Talmud, Moshe was busy recovering the body of Yosef, so it could be buried in the Land of Israel. Our Sages apply the verse "A wise man takes mitzvot" (Proverbs 10:8) to Moshe's actions - for mitzvot were his top priority.

Kollel Happenings

DON'T QUIT YOUR DAY JOB THIS WED. AT T4T

Join Jonathan Fleisher, Esq., Principal at Law Offices of Jonathan Fleisher, and Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher, Senior Educator for the Denver Community Kollel, as they work through the issues of quitting a job at Torah for Tycoons. Class on Zoom on January 12th at 7:30 pm. For more info, visit denverkollel.org or email info@denverkollel.org.

A DEEPER LOOK AT THE PARSHA WITH RABBI SHACHNE SOMMERS

Join Rabbi Shachne Sommers as he discusses a number of difficulties encountered in the weekly Torah portion, and develops a comprehensive approach to resolve the issue, simultaneously conveying a deeper understanding of the material being discussed. Tuesday nights at the Southeast Kollel Torah center, 8-9 pm, for men and women.

TALMUDO BIYADO GEMARA CLUB FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL BOYS

Learn, review, and acquire a masechta! Boys in grades 6-8 are invited to join Rabbi Chaim Gross at the Southeast Kollel Torah Center/Ohel Yissochor weeknights Mon.-Thu. from 8-8:30 pm for a Gemara shiur followed by review. Contact Rabbi Nesanel Kipper at rnk@denverkollel.org for further details.

Halacha Riddles

Last week's question: Two separate groups of three men ate their meals and were going to have a *mezuman*, but one of the members of each group erroneously recited the *bracha acharona* (after blessing) early. One group can still have a *mezuman*, while the other cannot - how can this be? (No additional people joined.)

Answer: In one group, the person who recited the *bracha acharona* ate bread, and so he can be counted toward the *mezuman* even though he already *bentched*. (This is only true if two remain who did not yet recite *bracha acharona*.)

(In addition, if there is a group of ten or more and some erroneously *bentched* early, as long as seven remain who didn't *bentch* yet, three of those who ate bread and *bentched* can be part of the *mezuman* of ten and Hashem's Name is included.)

In the other group, the person who recited the *bracha acharona* early ate some other food that did not require *Birkas Hamazon*, and so once he has recited the *bracha acharona*, he can no longer be part of the *mezuman* (Mishna Berura 197:9 from Magen Avraham 197:4).

If one of the three did not eat bread, but one of the other two who *did* eat bread *bentched* early, there is a question whether the three can still have a *mezuman*. See Bi'ur Halacha (194:1 s.v. *echad*) who cites several sources that a *mezuman* cannot be held.

This week's question: A group of three men ate together. None of them has recited *Birkas Hamazon*, yet one of the three did something that takes away their ability to have a *mezuman*. What did he do?

Lives of Our Torah Leaders

Rabbi Meir Shapiro - Part XXXIII

Rabbi Shapiro sought to change that. In addition, he did not want to create a yeshiva where the students would live a life of poverty. On the contrary, he wished to raise the honor and prestige of Torah students by creating a beautiful yeshiva building which would

include all the amenities needed for a student to thrive and to be viewed with great esteem by society. Rabbi Shapiro envisioned accepting the cream of the crop of yeshiva students and developing them into the Torah leaders of the next generation.

A Taste of Torah

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failure when they used this very gold to create a Golden Calf, though they would redeem themselves and their riches when they enthusiastically and generously gave of it for the construction of the *Mishkan* (Tabernacle).

Because the nature of taking Egypt's wealth involved a task that required struggling with less-than-ideal human tendencies and overcoming them, the commandment to obtain this wealth could not come with the same degree of spiritual clarity and light that other commandments did. The Jewish People needed to get their hands dirty, so to speak, to uncover the treasure that was truly buried within the physical riches

they took with them as they exited Egypt. They therefore were able to relate to this commandment only at the level of hearing it from Moshe, but not directly from Hashem.

Though many would say, "Give me the wealth and I'll use it properly," the reality is that money has brought down many a well-meaning individual. Living in a time of plenty and affluence, we would do well to constantly remain vigilant that the prosperity we enjoy not drag us toward spiritual destruction and doom. We must keep it on a tight leash and make sure that we pull our wealth upwards toward performing acts of kindness, mitzvos and service of Hashem.

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