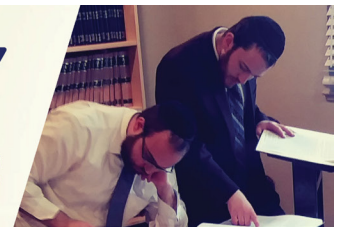




TORAH WEEKLY

A project of the Denver Community Kollel



Parshas Ki Savo

September 16, 2022

A Taste of Torah

A Blessing in Disguise

by Rabbi Chaim Gross

This week's parsha contains some of the most frightening and dismal predictions as to the future of the Jewish Nation. The verses climax with the description of G-d rejoicing over its destruction, and ends off with the ultimate threat – we will be returned to our captivity of old, sent back to Egypt to be sold as slaves once again. This time, though, it will not be others forcing us into slavery, but we ourselves who will attempt to do so. Out of desperation and complete loss of self-value, we will offer ourselves for sale as slaves – but even this will result in failure, for no one will be interested in owning a Jewish slave, so great will be their hatred of us.

The situation seems terribly bleak, with not one word of solace to be found in these verses. However, the Sfas Emes (Rabbi Yehudah Aryeh Leib Alter; 1847-1905) takes these verses and puts an entirely different spin on them, explaining that there is indeed great comfort to be found in the conclusion of these horrific curses.

The key lies in something discussed earlier in the parsha, made famous by its mention during the course of the Pesach Seder. At the Seder, we exclaim, “And it has stood as a support for our fathers and for us – for it was not an individual, isolated occurrence that someone came up against us; rather, in every generation they rise up to destroy us, and G-d saves us from their hands.” The text then continues to illustrate this point with the mention of the wicked Lavan’s attempt to wipe out the young nation, followed by Pharaoh’s efforts

to do the same.

Much discussion in the commentaries revolves around the question as to the meaning of the opening line, “And ‘it’ has stood as a support.” To what does “it” refer? There are many answers to this, but one of the most famous is that of Rabbi Yaakov Emden (1697-1776). He explains that we are not referring to the fact that Hashem always rescues us. On the contrary – we are thanking Hashem for the anti-Semitism, the natural dislike that the other nations display towards us in each generation. History generally shows that when there is a lull in persecution of Jews, there is an uptick in Jewish assimilation. We become comfortable in our surroundings, friendly with our neighbors, and soon begin attempting to blend cultures with them. It is precisely at that point that Hashem sends the great gift disguised as anti-Semitism. This dormant dislike begins to awaken – and with it, our Jewish identity is reignited once more. It is this faithful friend which saved us from the very first exile, that of Yaakov as he dwelled in the house of Lavan, then traveled with us down to Egypt, and accompanies us to this day as we experience the final Exile.

The Sfas Emes teaches that it is this great gift which is hinted to in the final verse of destruction of this week’s parsha. It projects the deep desire of the Jew in exile, desperate to sell his soul to his surrounding cultures and religions. He wants nothing more than to simply rid himself, once and for all, of his undesirable yellow star, to belong to the nations around him, thinking that this will save him from

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Stories for the Soul

A Cat Tale

One day in Yeshiva Knesses Chizkiyahu of Kfar Chassidim, the widow of the late Dean, Rabbi Noach Shimanowitz, went down to the storage room together with one of the students to bring up some supplies for the kitchen. While they were in the storage room, they heard suspicious noises. When Rebbetzin Shimanowitz asked the student what the source of the scurrying noises were, he told her that there were mice in the area. Rebbetzin Shimanowitz was aghast at this news, and asked the students to find a solution to the problem. A cat was duly obtained, with the hope that it would eliminate the problem.

A few weeks later, Rabbi Eliyahu Lopian (1876-1970), the *mashgiach* (spiritual supervisor) of the yeshiva, was walking in the yeshivah with a student when they ran into the cat. Rabbi Lopian was taken aback – he had been unaware of the cat’s presence, and this was the first time he had seen it on the yeshivah grounds.

“Whose cat is this?” inquired Rabbi Lopian. The student explained that the cat had been brought to the yeshivah to curtail the mice problem.

Rav Lopian inquired further, “And who feeds her?”

The student answered, “She has plenty of food – she eats the mice. We don’t need to bring her food.”

Rav Lopian answered, “I don’t understand. If she does her job

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Kollel Happenings

THE M.B. GLASSMAN FOUNDATION LIVE & LEARN LEARNING PROGRAM AT THE WEST DENVER KOLLEL TORAH CENTER

The Live & Learn Learning Program for seniors is held Tuesdays at the West Denver Kollel Torah Center. Coffee and pastries at 10:30 am, two classes of 45 minutes each from 10:40-12:15 (including 5 minute break between classes), and lunch (including take-home option) at 12:15. For more info, email info@denverkollel.org.

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A DEEPER LOOK AT THE PARSHA

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 on Zoom, 8:15-9 pm, for men and women.

Halacha Riddles

Last week we asked: How could a monkey help with *netilas yadayim*?

Answer: As discussed in previous weeks, water for *netilas yadayim* must be poured through human power. The Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 159:12) cites a dispute as to whether a monkey pouring water upon a human's hands would be valid for *netilas yadayim*. The Shulchan Aruch says that the opinion validating this appears correct, but the Rema (ad loc.) says that one should nonetheless be stringent. For Sefardim, who generally follow the Shulchan Aruch's ruling, such a washing would be valid, while for Ashkenazim, who generally follow the Rema's ruling, it would not be valid.

The Mishna Berura (ad loc. 74),

commenting on the Rema's stringent ruling, cites the Magen Avraham that *bidieved* (after the fact), such a *netilas yadayim* is valid, but then says that the Elya Rabba rules that one should wash again without a blessing, and may only be lenient if no more water is available.

It appears from the Mishna Berura (ibid.:71) that a monkey is singled out because it has sufficient intelligence to be trained to perform such a task. Another animal which would happen to pour water upon human hands with no "intent" whatsoever would have no validity.

This week's question: Any human age six and over may perform this halachic procedure according to all opinions. What is it?

Lives of Our Torah Leaders

Rabbi Avraham ibn Ezra - Part VI

Rabbi Avraham was a master astrologer, and wrote extensively about the influence of *mazalos*, or constellations, upon one's fortune in life. He wrote about his own personal bad *mazal*, or fortune, in life, commenting, "Were I

a merchant of candles, the sun would not set until I died!... Were I to trade in shrouds, men would not die in my lifetime!... Were I to sell armaments, all enemies would be reconciled and not make war!"

A Taste of Torah

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his historic troubles. And here come the most beautiful, comforting words: "And no one will buy you." As much as

you try, as strong as your desire might be, they will never agree to acquire you as their own - you will always remain

Stories for the Soul

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well and scares off the mice, she won't have anything left to eat! We brought her here to perform a service, so we have to feed her!"

Rav Lopian then entered his apartment and brought out a bowl of milk. At that moment, as he knelt to place the bowl before the cat, someone snapped a photo of the event - and

that photo is, today, one of the most famous photos in the Yeshiva world. A photo of a great *tzaddik* expressing his gratitude and concern for a cat!

In this week's parsha, we learn the importance of *hakaras hatov*, gratitude. Gratitude must be expressed to all, even animals or inanimate objects.

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