



TORAH WEEKLY

A project of the Denver Community Kollel



Parshas Vayelech

October 1, 2022

A Taste of Torah

Living Well

by Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher

Biz hundert un tzvanzik. It's a classic Jewish blessing, expressed most poignantly in Yiddish, and translates to "Until 120." When we wish someone a long life, Jewish tradition tells us that 120 years is the limit (see commentators to Bereishis 6:3). (Interestingly, the Guinness Book of World Records says that the record for the oldest person is [drumroll please...] 119 years. Do with that what you will.) And, indeed, that is the lifespan of our great teacher Moshe, who tells the Jewish People in this week's parsha (Vayelech 31:2), "I am 120 years old today." Rashi, commenting on the word "today," says that Moshe was speaking on the final day of his life, and that he turned 120 on that very day. Rashi adds that Hashem completes the years of the righteous, ensuring they are both born and pass away on the same day.

What is the significance of a righteous person dying on the very day he was born? Rabbi Chaim Kanievski (1928-2022) in his work *Ta'ama Dikra* cites a Medrash that teaches that when the nation of Amalek battled the Jewish People after they crossed the Sea of Reeds, they specifically sent soldiers to battle whose birthday was on the day of battle, for one's birthday is an astrologically propitious day, and it is less likely that harm will befall an individual on his birthday.

If that is the case, one would expect a very righteous person to die on any day but his birthday, for that is a day of good fortune, not of tragedy! Rabbi Kanievski explains that for most people, that is true. However, for the very righteous, death is nothing more

than shedding the external physical shell and moving into a realm of absolute goodness; death is thus a fortunate event for individuals of such greatness!

The Chasam Sofer (Rabbi Moshe Sofer; 1762-1839), speaking on the 7th day of the month of Adar, which is marked by Jews as Moshe's *yahrtzeit*, wondered why this day is marked as a happy day. He noted that a number of efforts into which Moshe had invested decades of his life came to fruition on this day. On this final day, Moshe wrote the entirety of the Torah in all seventy languages, the culmination of bringing the Torah in its entirety from Heaven to Earth in a final, written form. In addition, Moshe recognized that on that very day the Jewish Nation had reached a point of maturation in their relationship with Hashem, as he commented (Devarim 27:9), "Today, you have become a nation to Hashem, your G-d." While Moshe had lived a long and productive life, he had not achieved completion of these two major endeavors he was tasked with, the writing of the entire Torah and the maturation of the Nation before Hashem. This final day, then, saw the perfection of Moshe's mission and the assurance that his life's achievement - the Torah and the Jewish People - would continue forever; it is thus a day of rejoicing.

As we move through the time of year known as the *Aseres Yemei Teshuva* (Ten Days of Repentance), we seek to better ourselves and look hopefully toward a future of spiritual success in areas where we may have previously failed. While many contemporary Torah authorities

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Stories for the Soul

Firm Friendship

The Satmar Rov, Rabbi Yoel Teitelbaum (1887-1979), arrived in America following World War II. He settled in Williamsburg, New York, where he rebuilt the Satmar chassidus that had been decimated during the Holocaust into one of the largest and most influential Chassidic communities in the world.

Rabbi Aharon Kotler (1891-1962) escaped the European inferno and arrived in the United States in 1941. In 1943, he opened Beth Medrash Govoha in Lakewood, NJ, and pioneered the notion of Kollel learning in America. His efforts bore fruit, as the Kollel movement swept the country, and Beth Medrash Govoha is today the largest yeshiva in North America.

The two great men differed strongly on a number of issues vital to the Jewish world. They were both unflinching and firm in their positions. Yet they had the greatest respect for each other. When Rabbi Kotler passed away, the Satmar Rov eulogized him effusively, famously paraphrasing a comment of Rashi regarding the lighting of the Menorah by Aharon the Priest: "Aharon did not change a thing!" Despite the fact that he disagreed with Rabbi Kotler on fundamental issues, he still testified that Rabbi Kotler did not deviate from the proper traditions and observances that Torah Judaism had kept for millennia!

In this week's parsha, Hashem instructs Yehoshua to stand firm as the

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Kollel Happenings

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.

BUILD YOUR LEGACY AND SECURE THE FUTURE OF TORAH WITH LIVE ON/LIFE & LEGACY

The Kollel is part of Rose Community Foundation's Live On/LIFE & LEGACY program, which focuses on creating financial stability for the future through planned giving. Think it's not for you? Think again! Anyone can make a planned gift, no matter the amount. Visit www.denverkollel.org, email rmh@denverkollel.org or call 303-820-2855 for more information.

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: As long as someone involved has intent, it is valid. If not, things are more complicated. What is this intent?

Answer: The Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 159:13) rules that when washing one's hands for *netilas yadayim*, one should *lechatchila* (preferably) have intent that this washing will permit eating bread. The Rema (ad loc.) adds that such intent by the person pouring (if there is someone else doing the

pouring) suffices. The Magen Avraham (ad loc.:25) is more stringent, ruling that lack of intent invalidates the washing even *bidi'aved* (after the fact). The Gra (ibid. 158:7), however, rules that *bidi'aved*, lack of intent does not invalidate. The Mishna Berura (159:75) says that if there is no other water available with which to wash again, one may certainly be lenient. **This week's question:** Why would open deliberately make his hands *tamei* (halachically impure)?

Lives of Our Torah Leaders

Rabbi Avraham ibn Ezra - Part VIII

IN addition to his poetic skills, Rabbi Avraham was a great grammarian, writing a number of works on different aspects of Hebrew grammar.

Rabbi Avraham was a mathematician, and he wrote a number of books on different topics in mathematics. He was also an astronomer, and he wrote several works on astronomy, including one on the calendar and one on the astrolabe (an instrument used in astronomy).

One of Rabbi Avraham's more famous religious works is *Yesod Mora Vesod Hatorah*, a philosophical work focused primarily on the 613 mitzvos and some of the reasoning for the mitzvos.

Rabbi Avraham's most famous and greatest work is his commentary on the Torah. Widely studied, Rabbi Avraham's usually terse comments on the Torah often require great contemplation and insight before they can be understood.

Because Rabbi Avraham also excelled in secular knowledge, including philosophy, some secular thinkers have ascribed various heretical theories to some of Rabbi Avraham's esoteric, mysterious passages in his commentary to the Torah. It is important to state unequivocally that Rabbi Avraham was a pious, G-d-fearing Jew, and such statements could never be ascribed to a giant of his stature, and many great Torah scholars have explained these passages in accordance with proper Torah outlook.

There is a legend that Rabbi Avraham met the Rambam, and several tales of their meeting have been related, as well. There is little actual evidence for such a meeting, though it is, in theory, possible, as Rabbi Avraham passed away sometime between 1164 and 1167, while the Rambam was born in 1138. If such a meeting did indeed take place, the Rambam would have been a young man and Rabbi Avraham several decades older.

A Taste of Torah

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discourage excessively focusing on one's mortality, it is not a bad idea to give some thought to the fact that none of us will be here forever, and we must do what we

can to achieve all we can with the time we are granted, so that when that day arrives, tragic as it will be, there will also be an element of rejoicing for a life well lived.

Stories for the Soul

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leader of the Jewish People and to be the final decision-maker, even in the face of opposition. Yet Moshe tells Yehoshua elsewhere to seek the advice of the Elders. Both are true - a leader must take the re-

sponsibility of making the right decision, even when it is unpopular. But he must show respect to those who have other ideas.