

עֵפְרַת הַשָּׁבוּעַ

A Weekly Torah Publication from the Students of Mesivta Ateres Yaakov
Ruth & Hyman Simon High School

פרשת בא

ה' שבט תשס"ה

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THE CHILDREN WILL LEAD

Reuven Davies, 12th Grade

This week's *parsha* is full of powerful lessons and messages on how a Jew is to live his life. Unfortunately, it is also filled with a counter force of evil. An epic of right and wrong comes to a dramatic close in this week's *sedra* which results in the root of the Jewish people and perhaps the roots of everything that stand against them. The *pasuk* tells us that Moshe Rabbeinu told Pharaoh, "With our children and with our elders we will go..." [10:9]. In others words, "We want to leave with everyone - no Jew will be left behind. Pharaoh responds, "Not so, let the men go..." In short, "No! It's going to be my way, and I only want to let the *men* go out."

There are many interepetations on Pharaoh's words, yet the Baal HaTurim suggests that when Pharaoh says "men", his intention is males of the ages of 20 to 60. Pharaoh refused to allow those under 20 or over 60 to leave. This is an unbelievable irony, for Pharaoh has denied *exactly* what Moshe had asked for!

If one thinks about it, Pharaoh was very much on top of his game. He was evil, thoughtless and wicked but he remained firm as ever. Pharaoh throughout the last few *parshiyos* has had an epiphany; he understood something about the Jewish People, something that many nations had known and would find out for years to come. In order for there to be a Jewish people, there has to be a past and there has to be a future. Klal Yisroel must have a past. Our ways of life are based on a "Mesorah," which passes down from father to son for generations. This concept is vital to what Judaism is all about. Yet what lies ahead is even more important. The past may be history but the future is what counts the most – for if we have no one to hand over our heritage to then how can we exist? When Pharaoh said, "Let the men go" he was, in effect, saying, "I don't want the young to go and I don't want the elderly to go. I'm taking away your past and your future." Moshe Rabbeinu responds that this is obviously unacceptable. The only way in which we can go forward as a nation, is with our youth and with our elders. This is what Pharaoh wanted

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COMING TO GO

Moshe Dovid Katz, 12th Grade

בא אל פרעה (י:א)

COME TO PHARAOH

Normally when you instruct someone to go somewhere you say "go" there, not "come" there. In this *pasuk* however, we see that when Hashem tells Moshe Rabbeinu to go to Pharaoh he says "come." Why does the *pasuk* say "come" to Pharaoh and not "go" to Pharaoh? We can answer this question with a story of Reb Yitzchok of Vorki.

There was once a Chassid called Reb Mottel of Kalshin. He had business interests in Warsaw and spoke Polish fluently. The government at that time was considering, although it had not yet been decreed, to burn all copies of the Shulchan Oruch, Choshen Mishpat. Being that this was the Jewish law regarding civil and criminal matters, it would force the Jews to settle their differences in the secular courts, providing justice according to the law of the land rather than in their own rabbinical courts which would dispense law the Jewish way.

Reb Yitzchok of Vorki called upon this Reb Mottel to go and approach a certain powerful minister and request of him to retract the government's consideration.

Reb Mottel replied in protest: "But that minister has a raging temper. He threatens to kill anyone who so much as approaches him in missions of this sort!"

The tzaddik replied and said: "When the Almighty sent Moshe Rabbeinu to save his brethren, He did not say 'Go to Pharaoh' but 'Come to Pharaoh.' Moshe was afraid of the Egyptian despot, so

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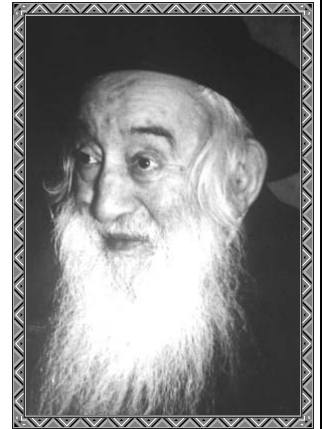
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FOCUS ON GREATNESS

Harav Nosson Meir Wachtfogel *zt'l*
9 Adar 5670 / March 20 1910 - 2 Kislev 5759 / November 21, 1998

by Avi Lieberman

- Nosson Meir was born on Sunday, 9 Adar 5670 (1910) in Kuhl, Lithuania.
- His father, Harav Moshe Yom Tov was the town rav, and was amongst the fourteen elite students of the Slabodka Yeshiva who were handpicked to establish the yeshiva in Slutzk under the leadership of Harav Isser Zalman Meltzer *zt'l* (Another of these talmidim was Reb Aharon Kotler *zt'l*).
- Nosson Meir began his education in the Yeshiva of Kelm, and moved with his family to Montreal when he was 15. His father assumed a rabbinical position there, and he enrolled in Yeshivas Rabbeinu Yitzchak Elchonon.
- In Yeshivas Rabbi Isaac Elchonon, Nosson Meir learned together with Harav Avigdor Miller, Harav Moshe Bick and Harav Yehuda Davis.
- After several years, young Nosson Meir returned to Lithuania to learn in the Mir Yeshiva.
- Nosson Meir also learned under Reb Shimon Shkop, who gave him *semichah*, and in Kamenetz, under Reb Baruch Ber Lebowitz.
- It is said that before Reb Nosson Meir left Kamenetz, Reb Lebowitz asked to see his *semichah* from Reb Shkop. Reb Lebowitz determined that it was not effusive enough in its praise of Reb Nosson, and replaced it with a new one. In his humility, Reb Nosson Meir never looked at the diploma from Reb Lebowitz.



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REUVEN DAVIES (continued from page 1)

to take away from us, and this is why Moshe Rabbeinu responded, "No. We must also take our youngsters and our elders."

Indeed, this week's *parsha* is about our roots and especially about our children, and is the first *parsha* in the Torah to focus on "the children." There are about twenty times that children are mentioned in the *parsha*. Firstly, the focus of the oppressive persecution was against the male children. Furthermore, this week's *sedra* includes *makkas bechoros*; death of the first born, as well as the *mitzvah* of *pidyon haben* - redeeming the first-born. In addition, it is interesting to note that our most commonly used name is "*Bnei Yisroel* - the Children of Israel." It was after *makkas bechoros* that Pharaoh agreed to let everyone - including the children and livestock, leave Egypt. He no longer separated the children from the nation, and accepted that the children were the nation.

This week's *Parsha* presents the laws of Pesach and the Seder night. The focus is family and selflessness yet focused upon the individual. Each person must be counted but they must eat the *Korban Pesach* - Pascal Lamb - as a unit. The message could not be any clearer. Our nation is founded upon the principle of children. The children are the ones who guarantee our national continuity. Whether they are biological, adopted, or taught, they are the reason for creation. Every species must be focused on survival. Each individual must attempt to survive, not for selfish reasons but for selfless reasons. It is selfishness in the service of selflessness. Pharaoh knew this and finally was forced to take action, which involved somehow separating the Jewish people. The *Kli Yakar* explains that Pharaoh's argument was as follows: "If, as you say, your intent is to go to the

wilderness in order to bring sacrifices and serve Hashem, there is no need for the children to go. It is the accepted custom among all nations that the priests, who are men, perform the services." Moshe conceded; perhaps you might be correct - if all we planned to do was to bring sacrifices. However, there is more. "It is a festival of Hashem (*Chag Hashem*) for us." A "Chag" is a communal celebration. Such, indeed, is the very nature of Jewish festivals: Half (of the day) for the service of Hashem, and half "for ourselves," to celebrate and rejoice (*Gemara, Beitzah 15b*). This, explains the *Kli Yakar*, is the thrust behind Moshe's retort, "because it is a Chag for Hashem for us," and how could we possibly celebrate and rejoice without being surrounded by our families?

Judaism places great value on the *mitzvah* of *chinnuch*. The continuity of *Yiddishkeit* depends on our success in passing over what matters to us to the next generation. Does this mean sending our children to yeshivos? Certainly! But it means much more. In the yeshivas, and the schools, kids are put through the "educational process." Some children find this extremely stimulating. Some don't. And, to be honest, there are times when "education" can be stale and uninspiring. It is not reasonable to expect children to grow up valuing their Jewish education simply because they've been told that it's the right thing to do. If we want our progeny to attach importance to their Judaism, and their service of Hashem, then it behooves us to give them reason to do so.

There is an interesting story that brings this to light. In a small shul in Europe the town rav once overheard a child ask his father "Tatty, you work so hard, and you always look so tired. The father answered with a sigh " it is difficult to be a

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Jew." After the son had left the room, the rav called the father over. "That's not the right way to speak to a child," he said. "If you're going to keep telling your son, it is difficult to be a Jew, then guess what; he's going to grow up not wanting to be! You should be telling him, 'My son, it's so sweet to be a Jew!' Sure, there are hard times too - but why harp on them. Show your son - by your own example - how sweet and fulfilling it is to lead the life of a Torah-observant Jew, and rest assured he will follow in your footsteps!"

Once upon a time, life wasn't as exciting and fast-paced as it is nowadays. There weren't so many thrilling distractions vying for our youths' attention and affection. Now more than ever, it's crucial to acquaint our children with the

stimulating, exciting, and experiential aspects of Jewish life. The next time you go to do a mitzvah, take the children along. Let them live and experience the taste of a mitzvah.

We are told to emulate Hashem in all His ways. Just as He is One and is selfless, so too must we be selfless. This is the purpose of education. This is the purpose of family. This is the purpose of marriage. This is the purpose of life. In this world we are tried over and over again. Our fellow brethren are lost to assimilation everyday and the answer is our children. If we act properly and follow Moshe's example, our children will march alongside us for eternity. Good Shabbos.

Hashem invited him to come along with Him..."

The Chassid went on and encountered the minister, happy and unafraid. The minister was awestruck in the presence of the Chassid standing before him – and granted his request.'

Here we see the answer of Reb Yitzchok of Vorki; the reason for using the word "come" was an invitation to Moshe to join with Hashem in order to pacify Moshe's fear of the Egyptian autocrat. We too should feel that every time we set out to do Hashem's commandments, we are being invited to do so, and we will be protected along the way.

וְהָיָה הַדָּם לְכֶם לְאֹת עַל הַבָּתִּים [יב:ג]

by Tzadok Picker

AND THE BLOOD WILL BE FOR YOU A SIGN ON THE HOUSES

This *pasuk* is explaining how Klal Yisroel would be protected from *makkas bechoros*; by putting the blood of a sheep on the doorposts, 'the blood will be a sign to Hashem to pass over that house'.

The Baal HaTurim, however, points out that the *gematria* of the word 'לכם' is equal to 'המילה', since Klal Yisroel did *bris mila* that night. We now have reason to say that it was not just the sheep's blood, but the *bris mila* which protected Klal Yisroel on that night.

The Baal HaTurim points out further that the word 'אֹת'; a sign,' is usually spelled with a *vov*, unlike it is here where it is spelled, 'לֹאֹת.' This is because the *pasuk* is hinting to the fact that it was now 401 (את) years since the *bris mila* of Avraham Avinu.



- As a Canadian citizen, Reb Nosson Meir was able to escape Europe when World War II broke out. Soon after, he married and settled in Williamsburg, New York.

- When Rav Aharon Kotler *zt'l* established Beis Medrash Govoha in Lakewood in 1941, Rav Nosson Meir joined him as *Mashgiach*. For scores of years he delivered *drashos* in *mussar* to thousands of worthy students from the consecrated walls of the Lakewood Yeshiva.

- He was a true, living example of the heights one can reach through sincerity and authentic piety.

- Reb Nosson Meir was known for his yearning for *Mashiach*, and like the Chafetz Chaim, Reb Nosson Meir kept a suit ready to wear when greeting *Mashiach*.

- In his later years he devoted himself to establishing and maintaining dozens of kollelim throughout North America.

- After Reb Aharon Kotler's passing in 1962, Reb Wachtfogel continued to lead the yeshiva with the former's son, R' Shneur (*niftar* 1981), and grandson, Reb Malkiel. In his last years, Reb Wachtfogel brought Reb Mattisyahu Solomon *shlit"a* from Gateshead, England as his own successor.

- He passed away on Shabbos, 2 Kislev 5759 (1998), which is the *yahrtzeit* of Reb Aharon Kotler. He left several children, including Reb Elya Ber Wachtfogel *shlit"a*, rosh yeshiva of the Yeshiva Zichron Moshe in South Fallsburg, New York.



Reb Elya Ber Wachtfogel *shlit"a* attending a *bris* this past summer at Camp Ronimu; Monticello, NY

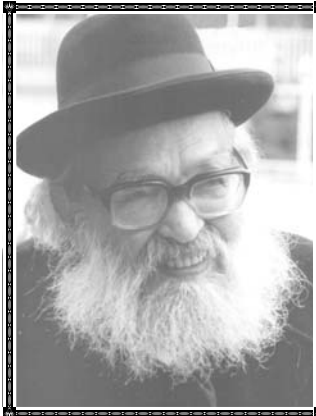
אמת ליעקב

Weekly Insights from Moreinu HoRav Yaakov Kamenetzky zt"l

ויהי חשך אפלה בכל ארץ מצרים (י:כב)

AND AN ENVELOPING DARKNESS FELL ON THE LAND OF EGYPT

Rashi on this *pasuk* explains that one of the reasons that Hashem chose to punish the *Mitzriyim* with the plague of darkness was so that they would not see the death of the members of Klal Yisroel that were unfit to be redeemed. HaRav Yaakov Kamenetzky zt"l asks a question on this Rashi. What were the distinguishing characteristics between those that were able to be redeemed and those that were unfit? We find in the *Midrash* that at the time of *krias Yam Suf*, the *malachim* complained to Hashem that, "הללו עובדי עבודה זרה והללו עובדי



זרה עבודה זרה, Both the *Mitzriyim* and *Bnai Yisroel* worship *avodah zarah*." The *malachim* could not distinguish between the *Mitzriyim* and the members of Klal Yisroel who had been redeemed. What then was it that separated those worthy of redemption from those that were not?

Rav Yaakov answers that the difference between the two groups was that the group that died during the period of darkness had wanted to prevent the rest of Klal Yisroel from leaving. The four hundred years of slavery that had been prophesized had not yet been fulfilled, and they presumed that as such it was not yet time to go. They feared that they would meet the same fate that befell the people of the tribe of Ephraim, who attempted to leave early, and were massacred by the *Plishtim*. They refused to listen to the words of Moshe and the *zekeinim*, who told them that the end of the slavery had been hastened in the *zechus* of the *avos*. Because of their refusal to listen to the words of their leaders, they were punished.

Rav Yaakov continues by pointing out that while the *malachim* were not able to see anything in Bnei Yisroel other than the fact that they were just as bad as the *Mitzriyim*, Hashem was able to see the tremendous potential that Bnei Yisroel possessed, which would be realized in a mere six weeks, when Bnei Yisroel would be ready for *kabolas haTorah*.

Rav Yaakov concludes by pointing out the emotions that Bnei Yisroel must have felt during the *choshech*. They must have felt that they were being punished even more than the *Mitzriyim*, as within a period of three days, at least four fifths of Bnei Yisroel had been destroyed. They must have been bewildered as to what Hashem had in mind for them. However, as it turns out this devastation was the final preparation for the *geulah*. So too, in our days, as we wonder what Hashem has in store for us, and why Bnei Yisroel suffers so greatly, we can be comforted by the fact that we are approaching the final *geulah*.

Someone once came to Reb Chaim Kanievsky *shlit"a* and cried as he poured out his heart over his many hardships. He was going through many *tzaros* and asked Reb Chaim for his blessings. Reb Chaim asked someone to get him a certain bottle of wine he had set aside in his house, and gave some to the man to make a *bracha* on. They both made a *l'chaim* and exchanged blessings.

Less than a week later, word came back to Reb Kanievsky's household that all this man's hardships were gone, and he was deeply grateful to Reb Chaim for his help.

When approached about this seeming 'miracle', Reb Chaim explained, "There was no miracle performed here. The wine I gave him to drink was from the bottle I make a *l'chaim* on every year upon completing *shas*. It is the power of *talmud Torah* which helped this man!"

Reb Chaim Kanievsky felt it was his constant diligence and *hasmodah* in learning that helped this individual. It is worthy to note that a couple who was childless for sixteen years went to Reb Chaim recently for a *bracha*, and are making a *kiddush* in honor of the birth of a girl this shabbos in Monsey, NY.

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