

AT THE ARTSCROLL SHABBOS TABLE

A PROJECT
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Mesorah
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פרשת וארא
כ"ח טבת תשפ"ו
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WEEKLY INSPIRATION AND INSIGHT ADAPTED FROM CLASSIC ARTSCROLL TITLES

PROJECT DEDICATED BY MENACHEM AND BINAH BRAUNSTEIN AND FAMILY
L'ILLUI NISHMAS RAV MOSHE BEN RAV YISSOCHOR BERISH AND MARAS YENTA BAS YISROEL CHAIM

PARASHAH

NO CREDIT FOR RAW POTENTIAL

Rabbi Frand on the Parashah 2

וַיִּקַּח עַמְרָם אֶת יוֹכֶבֶד דֹּתוֹ לִוְיָאָה וַתֵּלֶד לוֹ אֶת אַהֲרֹן וְאֶת מֹשֶׁה

Amram took his aunt Yocheved as a wife, and she bore him Aharon and Moshe (Shemos 6:20)

As Aharon and Moshe are about to embark on their mission as Hashem's ambassadors to Pharaoh, the Torah takes a break to introduce the two men who are going to lead *Klal Yisrael*. As part of the family tree, the Torah states, "*Amram took his aunt Yocheved as a wife, and she bore him Aharon and Moshe.*"

Most of us read this *pasuk* without noticing anything extraordinary, but Rav Moshe Feinstein *zt"l* observes that until this *pasuk* we have no inkling as to who are Aharon and Moshe's parents.

The Torah is usually as concise as possible, yet in *Parashas Shemos*, the Torah goes to great lengths not to mention the names of Aharon and Moshe's parents: "A *man* went from the house of Levi and he took a *daughter* of Levi. The *woman* conceived and gave birth to a *son*. She saw he was good..." (*Shemos* 2:1-3). Why couldn't the Torah simply state, "Amram married Yocheved, and they had a son Moshe"? Why does the Torah deliberately conceal their identity?

The Torah is trying to teach us the difference between *raw* potential and *actualized* potential, explains Rav Moshe.

Moshe's future was quite predictable from the day he was born. Not many children shine at birth, bathing the room in light. It must have been quite obvious to Amram and Yocheved that they were dealing with a very special child — in fact, the Torah tells us as much: "*Vateirah es hayeled ki tov hu* — She saw that the child was good" (*Shemos* 2:2).

To some parents, just having a brilliant child is enough. Whether or not their child uses those brains to attain *Yiras Shamayim* and contribute to world is secondary; as long as the child is the smart-

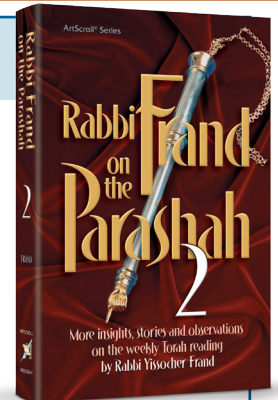
est in his or her class, the parents strut around proudly declaring the child's superiority.

Truthfully, however, brains — or, for that matter, any other God-given ability or talent — are nothing to boast about. Achievement, not potential, brings fame to a person and to his family, as the *pasuk* states, "Thus said Hashem: Let not the wise man glorify himself with his wisdom, and let not the strong man glorify himself with his strength, let not the rich man glorify himself with his wealth. For only with this may one glorify himself — contemplating and knowing Me" (*Yirmiyahu* 9:22-23).

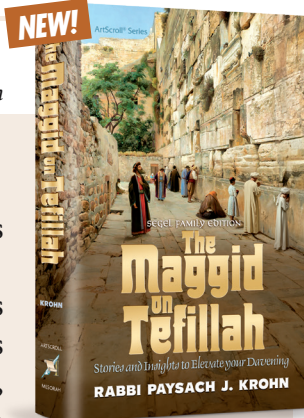
In *Parashas Shemos* Moshe was full of potential. He had the innate ability to become the leader of *Klal Yisrael*. As long as Moshe's abilities were in a state of raw potential, they were not a source of pride to his parents; Amram and Yocheved don't bear mention in the Torah for simply bringing a child with exalted abilities into the world. Had Moshe gone through life enamored by his own greatness, but doing nothing about it, he would not appear in the Torah at all.

When we read *Parashas Va'eira*, however, Moshe has already discarded the robes of the royal Egyptian nobility in favor of helping his fellow Jews, nearly losing his life in the process. Hashem has appointed him the leader of *Klal Yisrael*, and he is destined to receive the Torah at Sinai.

Now that Moshe has used his potential to achieve all that he has, the time has come for his parents to be identified as the proud parents of the leader of *Klal Yisrael*. 📖



R' Moshe Feinstein



The Warsaw Jewish Cemetery is one of the largest Jewish cemeteries in the world.

To me, the most meaningful one is that of a noted *mohel* in Poland, R' Yaakov Tzvi Witelsohn, known as R' Kuppel Mohel, who served in that capacity for close to sixty years. His monument is shaped like a *kisei shel Eliyahu* (Chair of Elijah's), alongside the chair where the *sandak* sits at a *bris*.

Among the engravings on the tombstone is the *pasuk* רִמְמוֹת קֵל בְּגֵרוֹנָם וְחֶרֶב פִּיפִיּוֹת בְּיָדָם — *The lofty praises of God are in their throats, and a double-edged sword is in their hand* (Tehillim 149:6). As I am a *mohel*, the story behind this tombstone enhanced my davening. I believe it will enhance yours as well.

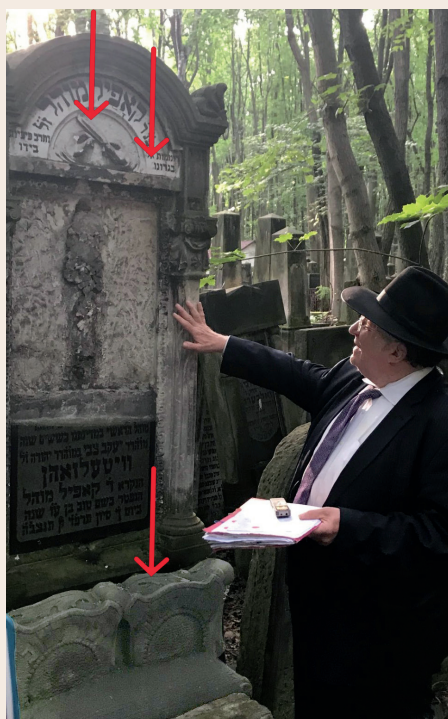
R' Hillel David once attended a *bris* in the Rotberg family in Brooklyn. The infant's great-grandfather, R' Yehuda Friedman, was a Holocaust survivor, and his joy was boundless.

Before the *bris*, R' David approached him and said, "Mazel tov! After all you endured during the war, living to see this day must be a source of great joy."

"You are right," replied Mr. Friedman. "There were times in the camps when I did not think I would survive. Who could have imagined marrying, becoming a father, a grandfather, and now a great-grandfather? It is truly an ex-

traordinary simchah."

R' David continued, "When I was young, I heard of R' Boruch Berkowitz of Williamsburg. Every Friday night he attended as many *shalom zachars* as possible, sometimes climbing ten flights of stairs, just to say *mazel tov*. Some nights he went to ten homes.



R' Paysach Krohn at the kever of R' Kuppel Mohel. Note the *Kisei shel Eliyahu* chairs, the *pasuk* of *romemos kel* and the image of a double-edged *bris* knife.

"When asked why, he said, 'This is my revenge on Hitler. The Nazis tried to wipe out the Jewish people. Every new Jewish child undoes their plans. The growth of Klal Yisrael is our revenge, and I love to witness it.'"

A few days after the *bris*, Mr.

Friedman called his grandson, who davens in R' David's shul, and said, "Please give your rav this message. This morning during davening, a thought came to me that I never would have had if not for his story about the *shalom zachars* in Williamsburg."

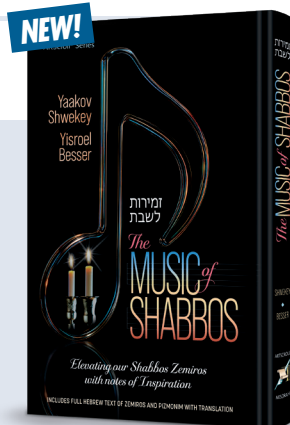
"In the *Hallelukahs* we say, רִמְמוֹת קֵל בְּגֵרוֹנָם וְחֶרֶב פִּיפִיּוֹת בְּיָדָם — *The lofty praises of God are in their throats, and a double-edged*

EVERY NEW JEWISH CHILD UNDOES WHAT HITLER AND THE NAZIS TRIED TO DO

sword is in their hand (ibid. 149:6). This alludes to the double-edged knife that is used by a *mohel* during a *bris*. The next words in the *pasuk* are remarkable: לַעֲשׂוֹת נִקְמָה בַּגּוֹיִם — *to execute vengeance among the nations [who seek our death]*.

"Dovid HaMelech, in his infinite wisdom, alluded to the fact that every *bris* is retribution against those who wished to annihilate Klal Yisrael. Indeed, the birth and growth of our children is our greatest rebuttal to all who wished to eradicate us." 📖

	SHABBOS JANUARY 17 ב' טבת	SUNDAY JANUARY 18 ג' טבת	MONDAY JANUARY 19 ד' טבת	TUESDAY JANUARY 20 ה' טבת	WEDNESDAY JANUARY 21 ו' טבת	THURSDAY JANUARY 22 ז' טבת	FRIDAY JANUARY 23 ח' טבת
BAVLI	Menachos 6	Menachos 7	Menachos 8	Menachos 9	Menachos 10	Menachos 11	Menachos 12
YERUSHALMI	Succah 29	Succah 30	Succah 31	Succah 32	Succah 33	Beitzah 1	Beitzah 2
MISHNAH	Arachin 6:4-5	Arachin 7:1-2	Arachin 7:3-4	Arachin 7:5-8:1	Arachin 8:2-3	Arachin 8:4-5	Arachin 8:6-7
KITZUR	47:8-21	47:22-48:5	48:6-End	49:1-6	49:7-50:2	50:3-10	50:11-51:1



קַה רַבּוֹן עֲלֵם וְעֹלָמֵיָא O Creator, Master of this world and all worlds.

This classic *piyut* was written by Rav Yisrael Najara, whom the Ari HaKadosh said possessed a *nitzotz*, a spark, of Dovid HaMelech in his soul.

The *zemer*, with its soaring lyrics and glorious imagery, has the capacity to lift souls, but it does not have an obvious connection to Shabbos. Why then is it a Shabbos *zemer*?

The opening words of Shabbos, just after we have accepted its *kedushah*, are *Mizmor shir l'yom haShabbos, tov l'hodos l'Hashem u'l'zameir l'shimcha Elyon* — A psalm, a song for the Shabbos day. It is good to thank Hashem and to sing praise to Your Name, O Exalted One (*Tehillim* 92:2).

Shabbos is the time to sing the praises of Hashem. Why is that?

The Radak explains that during the days of the week, a person is overwhelmed by the pressures of making a living, but on Shabbos, he is free. That tranquility should lead a person to heightened reflection, allowing him to contemplate the blessings of his life. Therefore, Dovid HaMelech says, this is the song of Shabbos — it is good to thank Hashem.

If this is the point of Shabbos, then this song is the peak of the *seudah*. Sometimes, I will look around my own Shabbos table and ask each of my children what it is they wish to thank Hashem for: another week has passed, and that means that each of us has merited a flow of new blessings.

I developed a *minhag*, a custom, based on a question I heard my brother-in-law ask his children at the Shabbos table. He is a great devotee of the Torah of R' Avigdor Miller and a *talmid* of R' Simcha Bunim Cohen,



R' Simcha Bunim Cohen

so, following their lead, he went around the table and asked them how many days it had been since Rosh Hashanah had passed. This was deep in the winter, but they were all able to make the calculation, because he had ingrained this in them — on Rosh Hashanah we were newly granted the gift of life, and each day that has passed since then, we have benefited from that gift. Dare we take it for granted?

The *paytan* also expresses the boundless nature of our obligation to praise Hashem, proclaiming: לֹא יִחָיֶה גִבֹּר שְׁנֵי אֲלָפִין, לא יעול גְּבוּרָתוֹ בְּחֻשְׁבָּנָיָא, Even if man lived thousands of years, he could not fathom the extent of Your powerful deeds.

As much as we can glimpse some of the *chasdei Hashem*, there is so much that we cannot see.

Through my family's work with special *neshamos*, we are keenly aware of the challenges many people face. We know individuals who cannot walk on their own, who cannot speak on their own, and who cannot breathe on their own.

How can someone who *can* breathe, walk, and talk—who can dance and sing—not feel obligated to live each moment with gratitude? During the week, a person might be excused if they are distracted, but not on Shabbos. On Shabbos, there is no excuse not to contemplate this, and if you contemplate it, you will sing.

Mizmor shir l'yom haShabbos, A song for the Shabbos day — it is good to thank Hashem and to sing praise to Your Name. 📖

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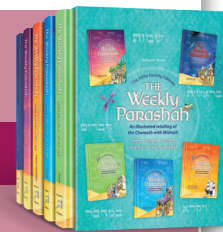
THE WEEKLY QUESTION

Which types of crops were not destroyed by the plague of Barad, and why were they spared?

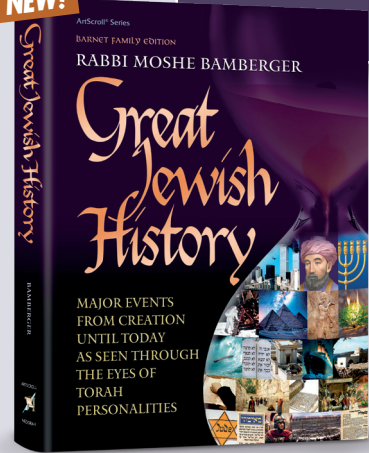
Kids, please ask your parents to email the answer to shabbosquestion@artscroll.com by this Wednesday to be entered into a weekly raffle to win a \$36 ARTSCROLL GIFT CARD! Be sure to include your full name, city, and contact info. Names of winners will appear in a future edition. HINT: The answer can be found in *The Jaffa Family Edition Weekly Parashah*.

The winner of the question for Parashas Mikeitz is: **ELI BANKER, Lakewood, NJ**

Question for Mikeitz was: Who did Binyomin have in mind when naming his ten children?
Mikeitz Answer: Binyomin gave his sons names that would remind him of Yosef.



NEW!



Great Jewish History

ROMMEL'S FALL PREDICTED BY THE OHR HACHAIM HAKADOSH

An astounding story exists about a commentary of the Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh, written by Rabbi Chaim ibn Attar (1596-1643), and its historic impact some three centuries after his passing. The Ohr HaChaim notes that in the verse (*Bamidbar* 24:17), "A star has issued from Yaakov, and a scepter-bearer will arise from Yisrael," the Jewish people are referred to as both Yaakov and Yisrael. Yaakov is a name that is considered to be on a lesser level than the name Yisrael. He explains that if the Jewish people were not to achieve the greater level of spirituality, if they were to remain on the "Yaakov" level, they would be defeated in war by Romulus. If, however, the Jewish people were to be righteous and worthy of being referred to as "Yisrael," then Romulus would not be powerful enough to vanquish him.

The Ohr HaChaim's interpretation is steeped in esoteric knowledge and eludes our understanding. Simply, Romulus is a reference to Rome, since, as the legend states, he was its forefather. There was a time, however, when this term had a different meaning.

During World War II, the German army under General Erwin Rommel was advancing toward the Holy Land. At that moment, the statement of the Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh took on chilling relevance: if *Klal Yisrael* would be worthy, they would triumph over the forces of "Rommel the wicked." His words now resonated as a portent of hope.

Aware of the gravity of the situation, the Rabbis of Eretz Yisrael proclaimed a public fast on the Ohr HaChaim's *yahrzeit*, the 15th of Tammuz. Twenty thousand Jews gathered at the grave of this holy sage to daven. Among them was the Husyatiner Rebbe, who became transfixed by a vision of Hashem's Ineffable Name hovering above the tombstone. He



Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh's kever

reassured those around him that all would be well. His confidence spread quickly, restoring hope and strengthening a fearful nation's faith in divine protection.

Unbeknownst to them, disaster had indeed been imminent. As Rommel prepared to push forward, his forces were halted by a massive sandstorm that made movement impossible. Seeking to reposition his troops to a more protected area, Rommel requested permission from Hitler, stressing that this was not a retreat but a tactical maneuver. Hitler's response was unequivocal: "No retreat."

A battle of egos followed. Convinced that victory was within reach, Rommel was furious. He traveled to Berlin to plead his case in person, only to be kept waiting for eight hours before being admitted. Hitler remained adamant, relenting only after three crucial days had passed. By then, valuable time had been lost.

Since desert offensives were conducted at night under a full moon, further delays followed as Rommel waited for July. Then came another unexpected turn: the typically dry month brought steady, at times torrential rains, postponing the battle yet again. During this delay, the British appointed a new commander, General Bernard Montgomery, who ultimately defeated Rommel's Afrika Korps at the Battle of El Alamein.

After the war, Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel wrote that June 30, 1942, marked the high point of Germany's desert campaign. From then on, it steadily collapsed.

June 30, 1942, was the *yahrzeit* of the Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh—the very day thousands had poured out their hearts at his gravesite. Just as he had foretold, Rommel was turned back.



Husyatiner Rebbe,
Rabbi Yisrael Friedman