

# AT THE ARTSCROLL SHABBOS TABLE

WEEKLY INSPIRATION AND INSIGHT ADAPTED FROM CLASSIC ARTSCROLL TITLES

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Mesorah  
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פרשת עקב  
י"ח אב תשפ"ו

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## PROJECT DEDICATED BY THE JAFFA FAMILY

### PARASHAH

### RECOGNIZING THE SOURCE OF ALL BLESSING

Novominsk on Chumash by Yechezkel Ostreicher

— וְאָכַלְתָּ וְשָׂבַעְתָּ וּבֵרַכְתָּ אֶת ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ עַל הָאָרֶץ הַטֹּבָה אֲשֶׁר נָתַן לָךְ  
*You will eat and you will be satisfied, and bless Hashem, your God,  
for the good land which He gave you (Devarim 8:10).*

The Gemara (*Berachos* 48b) derives from this *pasuk* that as part of our obligation of *Bircas HaMazon* we must mention the praise of Eretz Yisrael and Yerushalayim, which we do in the second and third *berachos*, respectively. This seems rather strange, since we are required to recite *Bircas HaMazon* on bread that comes from anywhere, not only the food of Eretz Yisrael. Why, then, must we mention the praise of the Land and the *kedushah* of Yerushalayim when we *bentch*?

In speaking the praises of Eretz Yisrael later in the *parashah*, the Torah says (*Devarim* 11:12), *eretz asher Hashem Elokecha doresh osah*, A land that Hashem, your God, seeks out. *Rashi* asks a piercing question in the name of *Sifri*: How can we say that Hashem seeks only Eretz Yisrael, which would imply that only Eretz Yisrael is under Hashem's direct influence, knowing as we do that Hashem directs all events in every land? *Rashi* explains that while Hashem does direct all the countries, His "main" seeking-out, as it were, is Eretz Yisrael; by seeking out Eretz Yisrael, He seeks out the other lands as well.

In other words, any sustenance the world receives comes through Eretz Yisrael. Interestingly, we find a similar concept with regard to Yerushalayim: All of the *tefillos* of the world are accepted in *Shamayim* via Yerushalayim (*Berachos* 30a, see also *Rashi, Bereshis* 28:17, s.v. שַׁעַר הַשָּׁמַיִם).

There is a beautiful explanation from Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch that demonstrates this point. The *pasuk* in *Tehillim* (133:2–3) says, *Like the precious oil upon the head, running down upon the beard, the beard of Aharon;*

*running down over his garments. So the dew of Chermon, which descends on the mountains of Tzion; for Hashem has commanded there the blessing. May there be life forever [for the world]!*

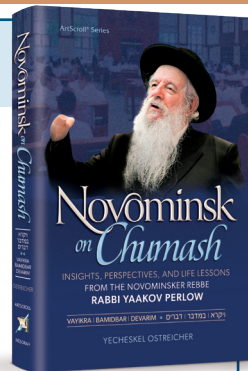
What is the correlation between the dew of Mount Chermon and the mountains of Tzion — Yerushalayim? Geographically, they are far apart. Rav Hirsch explains that Dovid HaMelech is revealing Yerushalayim's importance. Just as oil poured on someone's head trickles down to his beard and then to his garments, so it is with the goodness that Hashem pours upon the world. First, Hashem sends His kindness to the mountains of Yerushalayim, then to the other mountains of Eretz Yisrael, and from there the *hashpaah* trickles down to the entire world. When one sees dew on Chermon, he can be certain that it first descended on the mountains of Tzion. The source of

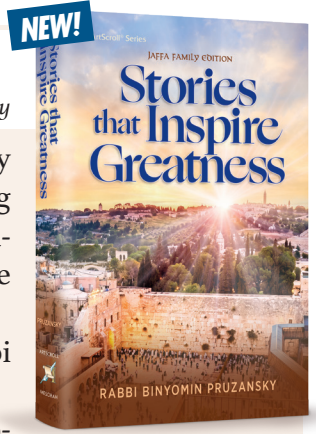
all good is Yerushalayim and Eretz Yisrael, for Hashem has *commanded His blessing* there, on the mountains of Yerushalayim. The *berachah* then extends itself and spills over to the borders of countries across the globe, *life for the entire world*.

We now understand why we speak about Eretz Yisrael in *bentching*. When a Yid gives thanks for a nourishing meal, he thanks Hashem not only for the food itself, but for the source and conduit of all the nourishment we enjoy — Eretz Yisrael. Whether the food he ate came from Nebraska or Idaho, he expresses his gratitude for having a part in the source of *berachah* of the food, the source of all *berachah* to the whole world. 🌍



The Novominsker Rebbe





Years ago, it was the final night of an unforgettable summer in Camp Munk, and the atmosphere was electric. The campers had gathered to hear who would win the most coveted prize in the division: a pair of professional walkie-talkies. In those days, there was no prize more desired.

For young Eytan, just eight years old and spending his first summer in camp, this was the moment he had worked toward with all his strength.

His learning rebbi, R' Weiss, had created a demanding program. Any boy who mastered a large amount of *yedios klaliyos*, general Torah knowledge, would be eligible for the grand prize. Eytan threw himself into the challenge, memorizing the names of all twenty-four Si-frei Tanach and all sixty-three *masechtos* of Mishnayos. He was sure the walkie-talkies were his.

When R' Weiss took the microphone, the room fell silent. Then came the announcement — and to Eytan's devastation, the rebbi called out another boy's name.

Eytan sat there crushed, his hands covering his tear-filled eyes. A moment later, R' Weiss had come to sit beside him.

"I know how disappointed you are," the rebbi said gently. "You worked very hard. But the contest was not only about Torah knowledge. The grand prize could only go to someone whose *middos* reflected what a true ben Torah should be. You could have done a little better in that area."

Then R' Weiss added words Eytan would never forget. "Torah is not just about what you know. It is about becoming a *ben Torah* of sterling *middos* and *derech eretz*. One day, you may appreciate this lesson — and perhaps even thank me for it."

The words stung deeply. But they stayed with him.

Years passed. Eytan grew up, married, and became a dedicated *yungerman*, spending his days and nights immersed in Torah. Nearly twenty years later, he was in Los Angeles for a family *simchah* and went to Shacha-

ris one Sunday morning. Nearby stood a distinguished-looking man who seemed strangely familiar. Then Eytan noticed the name on his tallis bag: R' Weiss.

It was his old learning rebbi from Camp Munk.

After davening, Eytan approached him. "Are you the R' Weiss who was a learning rebbi in Camp Munk?"

R' Weiss did not recognize him, so Eytan reminded him of that final night, the contest, and the walkie-talkies.

"R' Weiss," Eytan said sincerely, "I want to express my *hakaras hatov*. You did exactly the right thing. You showed me that you believed I could become more than a boy with a good memory. That lesson stayed with me and helped shape my life."

Fast forward forty-six years. R' Eytan Feiner, now the rav of the White Shul in Far Rockaway, was asked to record a *dvar Torah* for Camp Munk alumni in honor of Shabbos Chazon. Speaking about *derech eretz* and *ahavas Yisrael*, he shared the story of his youth and the walkie-talkies. The story quickly spread.

Not long afterward, an unexpected package arrived at the Feiner home. R' Feiner had just come in from the mountains when he noticed the box on his doorstep. He had not ordered anything, and neither had his wife.

Inside was a set of walkie-talkies.

Attached was a note from his old rebbi, R' Weiss:

"I can attest that your *middos* are now as outstanding as your Torah knowledge. Now, you truly deserve this prize."

*Today, those walkie-talkies sit on a shelf in R' Eytan Feiner's study — not as a toy, but as a testament to a life-changing lesson. They are waiting for the day he can pass them on to a talmid who understands that the crown of a good name, through middos tovos and derech eretz, is the greatest prize a person can ever acquire.* 📖

|            | SHABBOS AUGUST 1<br>י' אב  | SUNDAY AUGUST 2<br>י"א אב  | MONDAY AUGUST 3<br>י"ב אב  | TUESDAY AUGUST 4<br>י"ג אב | WEDNESDAY AUGUST 5<br>י"ד אב | THURSDAY AUGUST 6<br>י"ה אב | FRIDAY AUGUST 7<br>י"ז אב  |
|------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
| BAVLI      | Chullin 93                 | Chullin 94                 | Chullin 95                 | Chullin 96                 | Chulin 97                    | Chulin 98                   | Chulin 99                  |
| YERUSHALMI | Moed Katan 16              | Moed Katan 17              | Moed Katan 18              | Moed Katan 19              | Moed Katan 20                | Moed Katan 21               | Moed Katan 22              |
| MISHNAH    | Keilim 22:2-3              | Keilim 22:4-5              | Keilim 22:6-7              | Keilim 22:8-9              | Keilim 22:10-23:1            | Keilim 23:2-3               | Keilim 23:4-5              |
| KITZUR     | 196:2-8                    | 196:9-19                   | 196:20-197:5               | 197:6-198:3                | 198:4-14                     | 198:15-199:9                | 199:10-200:2               |
| ORAYSA     | Yevamos<br>Chazara 89a-90a | Yevamos 90b<br>Chazara 90a | Yevamos 91a<br>Chazara 90b | Yevamos 91b<br>Chazara 91a | Yevamos 92a<br>Chazara 91b   | Yevamos 92b<br>Chazara 92a  | Yevamos<br>Chazara 90b-91a |

כִּי לֹא בִקְשָׁתִי אֶבֶטֶח וְחַרְבִי לֹא תוֹשִׁיעֵנִי.

*For I do not trust in my bow, nor does my sword save me. (Tehillim 44:7)*

This *pasuk* seems to contradict the words of Yaakov Avinu (*Bereishis* 48:22) when he gives Yosef his inheritance: *And as for me, I have given you Shechem — one portion more than your brothers, which I took from the hand of the Amorite with my sword and my bow.* The Gemara (*Bava Basra* 123a), commenting on this contradiction, asks, “Do Jewish people win wars with their swords and the arrows?”

Dovid HaMelech says this is not the case. Therefore, Yaakov’s “swords and arrows” must refer to something else. The *Yalkut Shimoni* (440) draws the answer from *Yeshayah* (41), which speaks to the Jewish people about the End of Days: the “sword” is *tefillah* and the “arrow” refers to requests.

The Navi continues and urges the Jewish people in Hashem’s Name, “Fear not, O worm of Yaakov.” Though this seems an unusual metaphor of comfort, the Midrash explains: A worm may be small and fragile, yet it can fell mighty cedars with its mouth. So too, the strength of the Jewish people lies in their mouth — in the power of prayer.

Dovid HaMelech understood from his very first confrontation that his “military power” was in his prayers. He told Goliath, “*You come with your sword and your shield, and I come in the Name of Hashem, Master of Legions, the God of the battalions of Israel that you have ridiculed*” (*I Shmuel* 17:45). He then crystalized this image in the famous *pasuk* (*Tehillim* 20:8), *אֱלֹהִים בָּרָכָב וְאֶלֶּה, בְּסוּסִים וְאֶנְחָנוּ בְּשֵׁם ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ נִזְכִּיר, וְאֶלֶּה בָּרָכָב וְאֶלֶּה, בְּסוּסִים וְאֶנְחָנוּ בְּשֵׁם ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ נִזְכִּיר*, *Some with chariots, and some with horses; but we, in the Name of Hashem, our God, call out.*

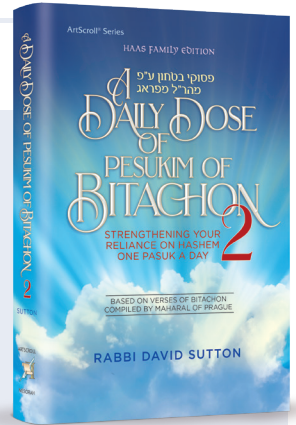
The Brisker Rav comments on the *pasuk* in *Bereishis*

in which Yaakov refers to “my sword and my arrow.” He cites the Targum Onkelos’s translation of *cherev* — sword — as prayer, and *kashti* — my bow — as a request.

Although those two words seem synonymous, in fact there is a crucial difference. The Brisker Rav explains that a sword is naturally sharp; just by touching it, a person can be hurt or even killed. However, a bow and arrow sitting passively on the ground have no power to harm anyone. The force and energy of the archer enable the arrow to fulfill its purpose.

The same distinction, he says, is true for the two types of prayer. The sword represents the *Shemoneh Esrei*, the prayer composed by the Anshei Knesses HaGedolah. Because *kedushah* is embedded in the words of this *tefillah*, when a person prays with a *minyan*, even without concentration, the prayer “works.” We unlock the gates of *Shamayim* simply by saying the prescribed words. Requests, on the other hand, are the personal prayers we say in our own words. These are like an arrow. For them to be effective, the person praying must put his energy behind the words and launch them on their flight to *Shamayim*. Without that energy, they are powerless to accomplish anything.

When countries declare that they won’t sell us weapons, they are not taking anything significant away from us. Each of us is equipped with a full stockpile of arms — our prayers and our heartfelt requests. No one can take them away from us, and no one can overcome their power. 🇲🇳



## THE WEEKLY QUESTION

WIN A \$36  
ARTSCROLL  
GIFT CARD!

*Can you find a part of the parashah that is found in the first berachah of Shemoneh Esrei?*

Kids, please ask your parents to email the answer to [shabbosquestion@artscroll.com](mailto: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 Pinchas is: CHAVA RACHEL GODICK, Kew Gardens, NY**

Question for Pinchas was: On which month and day of the calendar did Moshe Rabbeinu finally see Eretz Yisroel?  
Pinchas Answer: Moshe Rabbeinu saw the Land on the 7th of Adar, the last day of his life.



## PART 21: RAV YAAKOV'S QUESTION –REALLY? YES, REALLY

Once, in the early 1980s, Rabbis Zlotowitz and Scherman were speaking to the Rosh Yeshivah, HaRav Yaakov Kamenetsky zt"l. R' Scherman recalls the conversation, which left a vivid impression on him and R' Meir:

"During the conversation, the Rosh Yeshivah asked, 'And when will you do the Shas?' We were shocked. Shas!? Surely, he didn't think we were worthy or capable enough for such a mammoth undertaking. But he was serious. I will never forget what he said, word for word: *'Thr kent doss tohn, un ihr darft doss tohn, un ihr vet doss tohn. Oib der Aibershter vet mir shenken yohren vell ich eich gebben a brif.'* ('You can do it, and you should do it, and you will do it. And if the One Above grants me the years, I will give you a letter.')

It took several years before it became possible to carry out what the Rosh Yeshivah had foretold, but the memory, the mission and the unexpected vote of confidence remained as a challenge and inspiration. When the Shas project began, R' Yaakov was no longer with us, however his son, the Philadelphia Rosh Yeshivah, Rav Shmuel shlit"a, echoed his father's feelings in his own warm *michtav berachah* for the Shas."

It is important to understand why the Rosh Yeshivah's encouragement was so meaningful. R' Yaakov, who was known as an uncompromising *"ish emes,"* never lent his name to anything that might be dubious. It was quite understandable, therefore, that when we first started ArtScroll, he was slow to give our works his enthusiastic support. First, he had to be sure that it comported with his high standards of presenting the Torah correctly and accurately, both in content and *hashkafah*. He knew and trusted Rabbis Zlotowitz and Scherman personally, but what about this venture of presenting the Torah in En-

glish? To answer such questions, the Rosh Yeshivah enlisted R' Yosef Elias to review our work and report to him. It was only when he was convinced, that he began writing ArtScroll warm letters of approbation, starting with a *haskamah* on the Rabbi Elias Haggadah, followed a year later with a *haskamah* on the Yad Avrohom Mishnah Series.

Why the delay in beginning to work on the Shas, and what finally made it possible? Such a huge undertaking requires huge funding, and ArtScroll didn't have it. In an earlier column we told how Joel Fleishman created the Mesorah Heritage Foundation, which enabled people to make tax-deductible contributions – large and small – to fund the important scholarly works which ArtScroll/Mesorah has been publishing in increasing numbers for so many years. Therefore, although very strenuous, fundraising was and continues to be necessary, and the Foundation was the vehicle that made it possible.

Once it was decided that Mesorah Heritage Foundation could, and therefore would, begin to carry out the Rosh Yeshivah's charge, the next question was how to create the manuscript. At first, we thought that we should simply transcribe an outstanding Daf Yomi shiur and merely have it edited. Looking back, we wonder how we could have been so naïve. We learned soon enough that several layers of uniquely qualified people of the highest caliber would be required to produce each of the 73 volumes and that the writing and editing of a volume would cost an average of nearly \$300,000 each.

One would think that with the amazing growth of yeshivos and outstanding *talmidei chachamim* in America, it would be easy to assemble a staff, but that, too, would be naïve. Why? What was the job description? And how should the forthcoming ArtScroll Shas present the Gemara? In other words, what kind of *shiur* should "Rabbi ArtScroll" say, and on what level?

Next week, the tale will be told.

**UP NEXT: The Talmud Takes Shape**



R' Yaakov Kamenetsky  
with R' Scherman  
and R' Zlotowitz