


HASHKAMA WEEKLY

פרשת וארא
כז' טבת תשפ"ו
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חכמה ב-אI תאמין?

By Reb Gemini

Consider the following "Torah" thought, generated by Gemini: Did the AI get it right? Do you find it to be accurate? Or did the technology miss the boat?

Rabbosai, we have to talk about water. In the beginning of Parshas Va'era, we see a fascinating inyan (matter) regarding the first Makkah of Dam (Blood). Hashem tells Moshe Rabbeinu to tell Aharon to stretch out his hand over the waters of Mitzrayim (Shemos 7:19). Rashi, bringing down the Midrash Tanchuma, explains that because the Nile protected Moshe when he was a baby in the basket, it was not appropriate for him to strike it. Now, let's be real for a second. Does the Nile River have feelings? If I kick my shtender because I'm frustrated that the Chazan is dragging out Mussaf, is the wood offended? Of course not. But the Baal HaMussar, Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler, teaches in Michtav Me'Eliyahu that Hakaras Hatov (gratitude) isn't for the benefit of the benefactor—it is to refine the soul of the beneficiary. If you can learn to appreciate a lifeless river, you might eventually learn to appreciate your mother-in-law, or even—miracle of miracles—the Gabbai who gives you an aliyah. This sensitivity stands in stark contrast to the behavior of Pharaoh later in the Parsha. We see Pharaoh going out to the water in the morning (Shemos 7:15), which Rashi explains was his time to relieve himself secretly, so people would think he was a god who didn't have human needs. Notice the irony: Moshe looks at the water and sees a savior to be respected; Pharaoh looks at the water and sees a tool to prop up his own ego. The connection between these two limudim (lessons) is frighteningly clear. A person who cannot show gratitude to the ground he walks on or the water he drinks will inevitably end up like Pharaoh—so full of himself that he thinks he created the river (Yechezkel 29:3). The distance between being a Mentch and being a Rasha (wicked person) is often measured by how we treat things that can do absolutely nothing for us in return. **Practical Takeaway:** This week, try a small exercise in "inanimate Hakaras Hatov." When you finish your coffee, before you toss the cup in the trash, take a split second to think, "This cup served me." It sounds funny, and people might think you've lost your mind, but it trains the "gratitude muscle." If we stop taking the paper cups for granted, maybe we will stop taking the Ribono Shel Olam's patience for granted, too. And if nothing else, at least you won't be the guy yelling at the automatic doors at the grocery store for not opening fast enough.

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Regular Kiddush This Week

With Cholent, Kugel, and Short Shuir

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Shabbus Zmanim

Chestnut Ridge, NY

1:30 pm	מנחה
4:36 pm	הדלקה
--:-- pm	מנחה - קבלת שבת
4:54 pm	שקיעה
5:51/6:06 am	עלות השחר (16.1/72)
7:18:11 am	נץ החמה
7:15 am	שחרית
Hot kiddush & Shiur after davening	
9:06/9:42 am	סיור קריאת שמע
10:06/10:30 am	סיור תפילה
12:06:12 pm	חצות היום
12:36:12 pm	מנחה גדולה (30)
2:54:45 pm	מנחה קטנה (גר"א)
3:54:49 pm	פלג המנחה (גר"א)
--:-- pm	מנחה
4:55 pm	שקיעה
5:40/5:45 pm	צה"כ ר' משה (8.5/50)
5:47 pm	מעריב (52)
5:55/6:07 pm	צה"כ (60/72)



Next Week's Zmanim

Chestnut Ridge, NY

1:30 pm	מנחה
4:44 pm	הדלקה
5:02 pm	שקיעה
7:15 am	שחרית
5:03 pm	שקיעה
5:55 pm	מעריב (52)

This Week's Riddle

Riddle: Which grandfather and grandson lived the same amount of years?

Answer: Levi and his grandson Amram both lived 137 years. (Shemos 6:16, 18).



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משל ונמשל ב-א תאמין?

By Reb Gemini

Mashal: Imagine, if you will, a Yid named Berel driving down the New Jersey Turnpike. He is late for a chasunah (wedding) in Lakewood, and his foot is a bit heavy on the gas pedal—let's just say he is flying b'dieved. Suddenly, the red and blue lights of a State Trooper flash in his rearview mirror. Berel's heart drops into his stomach. He turns off the radio, grips the wheel white-knuckled, and makes a silent, desperate pact with the Ribono Shel Olam (Master of the Universe). "Hashem," he pleads, "if this Trooper drives past me, if he pulls over the guy behind me, I swear, I will never speed again. I will be strictly shomer chok (law-abiding), I will finally pay my pledge to the building fund, and I will never talk during Chazaras Hashatz again!" Miraculously, the police car speeds right past him to chase a red sports car. Berel lets out a massive sigh of relief, wipes the cold sweat from his forehead, and checks his watch. "Nu," he thinks, "If I don't speed up a little, I'm going to miss the kabbalas panim." Within three minutes, he is doing ninety again.

Nimshal: We smile because we know Berel; in fact, if we are honest, we see him every morning in the mirror. This phenomenon is the very yesod (foundation) of the tragedy we read about in this week's Parsha, Parshas Va'era. Pharaoh is the paradigm of stubbornness, yet when the Makkah (plague) of Tzefardea (frogs) becomes unbearable, he sounds like a true baal teshuvah. He begs Moshe Rabbeinu, "Entreat Hashem... and I will let the people go" (Shemos 8:4). But the pasuk tells us exactly what happens the moment the frogs die: "But when Pharaoh saw that there was relief (revacha), he hardened his heart" (Shemos 8:11). The Sforno, zichrono livracha, explains a frightening concept here. He notes that the "relief" itself was the cause of the hardening. The moment the pressure was off, the clarity of the crisis vanished. It wasn't that Pharaoh intellectually forgot the miracle; it was that without the immediate tza'ar (pain), his old nature—his hergel (habit)—snapped back into place like a rubber band. We are all, to some degree, experts in crisis management but failures in comfort management. When the tooth hurts, we promise the world to the Ribono Shel Olam; ten minutes after the Tylenol kicks in, we are back to complaining about the cholent.

Practical Takeaway: So, what is the eitzah (advice) for us simple people? We cannot live our lives waiting for Makkos to wake us up to do the right thing. The Alter of Kelm teaches that a person must capture the clarity of the moment of inspiration and carry it into the mundane. When you have a moment where you see the Yad Hashem (Hand of God)—maybe you narrowly avoided a disaster, or perhaps you just heard a shmuess (ethical discourse) that actually kept you awake—do not let that moment pass into the ether. Freeze it. concretize it. Commit to something small immediately, before the "relief" sets in. Do not promise to finish the whole Shas (Talmud); promise to learn one Mishnah and do it right then. Because as we see from Pharaoh, the biggest enemy of our spiritual growth isn't always the Yetzer Hara fighting us with logic; sometimes, it is just a comfortable chair and a lack of frogs.

GOOD SHABBUS!