



Fruits of Gratitude

RABBI CHAIM HEINEMANN

THE CHUMASH OF SH'MOS OPENS UP WITH Pharaoh commanding the midwives (Shifra and Pu'ah, a.k.a. Yocheved and Miriam) to kill all newborn Jewish boys. The midwives don't listen—they disobey those orders. Not only do they not kill the babies, they provide them with water and sustenance and they help them grow healthy. Pharaoh calls in the midwives and reprimands them, but they offer an excuse for their disobedience.

Then the Torah tells us,

Hashem was good to the midwives; the nation grew and became very strong. And it was, because the midwives feared Hashem, that Hashem made them houses. (1:20–21)

Our Sages explain that these “houses” are the dynastic houses of monarchy and priesthood. Yocheved's son Aharon became the progenitor of the Kohanim. One of Miriam's granddaughters married into the Tribe of Yehuda, and one of her descendants was King David.

But there is an obvious problem if we try to understand the way the Torah describes Hashem's reward to the midwives. The statement that the people “grew and became very strong” would seem to have nothing to do with the blessings Hashem gave the midwives!

My Rosh Yeshiva, Rabbi Elya Svei, of blessed memory, had a relative who once gave birth prematurely. The baby had to stay in the hospital for several months after it was born, going in and out of the ICU.

When the baby was finally discharged, his parents were extremely grateful, especially to the nurses in the neonatal unit. The father called Rav Elya, to ask him how he should express his gratitude. To buy gifts for each of the nurses was beyond his budget. What could he possibly do that would convey his feelings in a meaningful way?

Rav Elya advised him to do the following: Every year, for the rest of his life, he should bring this child back on his birthday to the neonatal unit and show the staff how much the baby had grown. “See the work of your hands! See the child whom you allowed to live and to grow!” The greatest reward for someone working in the neonatal ICU would be to see his or her accomplishments, to see how all that work was paying off, for the rest of the boy's life.

Rav Elya said that we should read the Torah's words, describing Hashem's gifts to the midwives, in the same light. The greatest reward for the midwives was to see the people grow and become strong. Pharaoh had wanted to kill the Jews and destroy the Jewish nation. When Shifra and Pu'ah disobeyed Pharaoh's command, they were rewarded by seeing his plan fail, as their work succeeded and the Jews continued to multiply.

Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler devotes many pages of *Michtav me'Eliyahu* to the topic of gratitude—to the idea of expressing gratitude, much of which he learns from this week's Torah portion and the next. In them, one sees how Moshe had gratitude to dirt and water, inanimate objects

which had helped him at some point; Moshe was unable to hit them later with his stick. One learns from Pharaoh how *not* to act—

A new King arose over Egypt, who did not know about Yosef. (1:8)

Many commentaries say that this was not actually a new king. Pharaoh *chose* to forget everything that Yosef had done for his country during the years of famine.

ONE OF MY FAVORITE STORIES ABOUT THIS topic involves Rav Dessler, and it has a Cincinnati connection, as well.

Rav Dessler had a son, Rabbi Nochum Velvel Dessler, who in 1932 had left his family home in England, to study in Lithuania. When the Second World War broke out, Reb Nochum Velvel escaped Europe by way of the Far East, arriving in San Francisco in 1940. He ended up in Cleveland, where in 1943 he helped found the Torah Academy.

In 1948, Rav Dessler arrived in New York and was reunited with his son. When he asked Reb Nochum Velvel who had helped him establish himself in the United States, Reb Nochum Velvel listed several people, including Rabbi Eliezer Silver.

Said Rav Dessler, “We must thank him!”

Reb Nochum Velvel offered to call, but Rav Dessler insisted on delivering his thanks in person—so they took an overnight train to Cincinnati!

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is distributed weekly
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Fruits of Gratitude CONTINUED

In the morning, after shul, they went to Rabbi Silver's house and had something to eat. Then the rabbi asked them what had brought them to Cincinnati. Rav Dessler said that he wanted to express his gratitude to the rabbi for everything he'd done to help his son.

"Okay, but what brings you to Cincinnati?"

Rav Dessler repeated that he wanted to thank him for helping his son.

"But Rav Dessler, is there anything I can do for you?"

Rav Dessler said no, that he just wanted to thank him.

Rabbi Silver shrugged. "Must be *mussar!*"*

WE ALL KNOW HOW GRATEFUL WE SHOULD be to Hashem.

Let every soul (*n'shama*) praise Hashem—Halleluyah! (T'hilim 150:6)

Rabbi Levi said, in the name of Rabbi Chanina: For every breath (*n'shima*) a man takes, he must praise Hashem... (Yalkut Shim'oni, ibid.)

At the Kollel

Chavrusos are available

for private and group learning—
speak to Rabbi Chaim Heinemann!

weekdays: noon–1
Sunday–Thursday: 8–9:45

Minyanim for Standard Time

Shacharis

Sunday8:15 AM
Monday–Friday7:20 AM

Mincha

Sunday *thru January*1:15 PM
Mon.–Thurs. *thru January*2:35 PM
Sunday–Thurs., *Feb.–Mar.*5:45 PM
Shabbos2:45 PM

Ma'ariv

In the Beis Midrash:

Sunday–Wednesday9:45 PM
Thursday10 PM

What better way is there to express that gratitude than to give Hashem *nachas*—to make him proud of us? If we live Torah lives and we raise our children to follow in our footsteps, we can show Hashem how much we appreciate everything He has invested in us. 🕊

This week
at
the kollel



Rabbi Schon raffles off prizes at the January 1 boys' learning program

* Literally, "rebuke." Many Lithuanian (and later) yeshivos adopted the study of *mussar*, a program of moral, ethical, and spiritual development. Both Rabbis Dessler were proponents of this program.

Every Day

🕊🕊 **"Dirshu" Gemara Shiur**

(Maseches B'choros)
Rabbi Yitzchok Preis.....
Sunday 7:15–8:15 AM
Monday–Friday 5:50–6:45 AM

🕊🕊 **Kollel Yisgaber K'ari**

(amud-a-day of Mishnah B'rurah)
Rabbi Chaim Heinemann
Monday–Friday 6:55–7:20 AM

🕊🕊 **Kitzur Shuchan Aruch**

Live video conference!
Rabbi Dani Schon.....
Monday–Friday 12:05–12:20 PM

🕊 **Daf Yomi**

Rabbi Meir Minster.....
Sunday–Thursday 8–8:45 PM
Shabbos (at CZE) 1:00 pre-mincha

🕊🕊 **Nightly Halacha Chabura**

Rabbi Dani Schon
& Binyamin Teitelbaum
Monday–Thursday 9–9:45 PM

Sunday *Free brunch!*

🕊🕊 **America Runs on Torah**

(Jewish Law & Parasha)
Rabbi Dani Schon
and Yisroel Kaufman..... 10 AM
Grand Deluxe breakfast served

🕊 **Shivti**

(Self-contained learning, geared toward practical halacha) 10–noon A

Tuesday

🕊🕊 **Partners in Torah at the Mayerson JCC**

Rabbi Binyamin Teitelbaum.....8 PM

Wednesday

🕊🕊 **Torah Treasures for Seniors at the Mayerson JCC**

Rabbi Yitzchok Preis..... 10:30–11:15 AM

🕊🕊 **Downtown Lunch-n-Learn at Strauss & Troy**

Rabbi Yitzchok Preis..... 12–1 PM

Thursday

🕊🕊 **Halacha** based on the parasha

Rabbi Chaim Heinemann.....9:10–10 PM
Homemade refreshments served.

KEY: 🕊 Beginners
🕊 Intermediate
🕊 Advanced
🕊🕊 for men and women