

A LESSON FROM THE PARASHA

A Land Flowing with Spirituality

RABBI
NOSSON
WIGGINS



The Maharal, in the very beginning of his *Gur Aryeh*, writes that one of the objectives of *Sefer Bereishis* is to demonstrate that the Land of *Eretz Yisrael* rightfully belongs to the offspring of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yakov because the generations preceding the *Avos* were unworthy. Although Yishmael and Eisav descended from Avraham, they too were deemed unworthy of receiving *Eretz Yisrael*. A critical proof to *Klal Yisrael's* rights to *Eretz Yisrael* appears in *parshas Lech Lecha* when Hashem promises to give the Land of *Eretz Yisrael* to Avraham's children. According to Chazal (our Sages; see *Bava Basra* 100a), Hashem instructs Avraham to make a *kinyan* (acquisition) on the Land of *Eretz Yisrael*. The *Kli Yakar* observes that Hashem initially instructs Avraham to *look* at the land, and afterward tells him to *walk* the width and breadth of the land. The *Kli Yakar* raises the following question: If Avraham was to acquire the land through *looking* at it why was he subsequently required to *walk* it, and if looking at the land was not a significant transaction why was he instructed to do so in the first place?

The *Kli Yakar* suggests that Hashem wanted Avraham to acquire the Land of *Eretz Yisrael* in two different ways. The first aspect of the *kinyan* was a spiritual one and was acquired through looking at the Land of *Eretz Yisrael* while the second was physical and was acquired through walking along the boundaries

of *Eretz Yisrael*.

While the physical aspect of the *kinyan* and all of its rich benefits are contingent on *Klal Yisrael's* fulfillment of the Torah and *mitzvos*, and *galus* (exile) is the result of our misdeeds, nonetheless, the spiritual aspect of the *kinyan* is everlasting. Even when *Klal Yisrael* is dispersed across the globe, the *kedusha* (sanctity) constantly flows from the *Beis Hamikdash Shel Ma'aleh* (The Spiritual Abode that corresponds to the place and structure of the physical *Beis Hamikdash*) and permeates the entire Land of *Eretz Yisrael*, making it a land that is full of spiritual opportunities. Hashem desired that even when *Klal Yisrael* collectively are in *galus*, that the *kedusha* of *Eretz Yisrael* remains accessible to those who pursue it. It is for this reason that we find many great Jewish leaders (Rabbi Yehudah Ha-levi, Ramban, and Ramchal just to mention a few) throughout the centuries who, following the burning desire within them for the *kedusha* of *Eretz Yisrael*, risked their lives just to lay their feet upon its holy soil.

Although we are still in *galus*, next time we visit *Eretz Yisrael*, let's try to remember the opportunities for *kedusha* which the Holy Land affords us. Chazal (*Bava Basra* 158b) teach "*Avira d'Eretz Yisrael Machkim*" – the air of *Eretz Yisrael* makes a person wise. The atmosphere of *Eretz Yisrael* is infused with a special *kedusha* which every Jew can tap into, anytime. 🕉

THE RABBI WAS ASKED ON THE PARASHA

THIS WEEK WITH
RABBI DOVID SPETNER

Q) I noticed that in the war of the of the four kings against the five kings, each king is mentioned by name except for the king of the city of Bela. Why is this?

A) The Ramban maintains that this is because it was such a small city (as Lot says in next week's *parasha* 19:20) that the king's name was hardly known outside his city. Maharal suggests that the lack of name for the king of Bela is precisely what led our Sages (quoted by Rashi) to interpret the names of each of the four kings as an allusion to their wickedness. The king of Bela however, like his city, was not nearly as wicked (as Rashi writes in 19:20) as the other kings. The only reason, therefore, to list the names of the other four kings would be to allude to something that they share in common – their intense wickedness. (The opposing four kings are part of a different set and may be named for their own reason). 🕉

Something always bugged you about the upcoming *parasha* (or last week's)? Ask! If you would like to submit a question on the *parasha*, please email it to parasha@cincynollel.org. Questions will be selected to address at the discretion of the Rabbi who is answering that week. Questions may be edited for brevity/clarity.

PLEASE KEEP TINOK BEN SHOSHANA IN MIND IN YOUR TEFILLOS

Sponsorship & feedback:
parasha@cincynollel.org

Sponsored by
Dr Marc Rothenberg

In memory of grandparents, Ben and Pearl Weissman z'l, and Hannah Rothenberg z'l on their upcoming *yahrzeits*

Cincinnati Torah
is distributed weekly
to local shuls
and the community
e-mail list.



A SHINING EXAMPLE

It was a regular Wednesday at Hadasah Ein Kerem in the pediatric emergency room ward, and Sarah, one of the pediatric emergency room physicians, was walking the hall. It seemed like all the normal maladies were cycling through that day. And then something out of the ordinary did seem to be happening. Was that a *kallah* (bride) in her white wedding gown walking into a room? Sarah hurried down the hall to see. It was! "If I may, is everything ok? What are you in the ER for?" The *kallah*

turned and looked up at Sarah with shining eyes and a smiling face. "I heard today that a *kallah* on the day of her wedding has a special power of blessing. As I was being pampered getting ready for my wedding day, I couldn't help thinking, I want to share blessing with someone else, where can I go? Then the thought struck me that I should go to the hospital and give a blessing of recovery to as many people as I can, so here I am!" 🕊️



A BA'AL HATURIM FOR YOU

In this week's *parasha*, Hashem tells Avram that he will make him into a great nation and "Va'avar'cha mivar'checha umkalellcha a'or." ("Those who bless you will be blessed and those who curse you will be cursed.") Baal Haturim says that the numerical value of *Va'avar'cha mivar'checha* is the same as "*Kohanim hamevarchim bonecha*," meaning the *Kohanim* that bless your children are hinted to in the first part of the phrase, and the numerical value of *umkalellcha a'or* is the same as "*Bilam habo likalel bonecha*," hinting that the one who will be cursed for attempting to curse the Jewish people is the wicked Bilam. 🕊️

Mazal Tov to

Rabbi Nosson and Mrs. Libi Wiggins on the birth of a baby boy! 🕊️

Welcome to

Rabbi Yaakov and Mrs. Rachel Apter, our newest Kollel members! 🕊️

THE LEGENDARY GOLEM OF PRAGUE (PART I)

RABBI NOSSON WIGGINS

Rumors of the Maharal's *golem* first appeared in 1837 (more than 200 years after the Maharal's death in 1609!), however the stories told of the *golem* had him doing simple household chores. The legendary and wondrous activities of the Maharal's *golem* which we are familiar with today only appeared for the first time in *Niflaos Maharal*, published in Piatrkow, Poland, in 1909 by Rabbi Yehuda Yudel Rosenberg. The year of publication coincided with the 300th *yahrzeit* of the Maharal. The book was an immediate bestseller and was subsequently translated into many languages.

Niflaos Maharal records a collection of extraordinary stories about the Maharal's *golem*, named Yossele, and how it saved the Jews of Prague from death and persecution on many occasions. Most notably, the function of Yossele the *golem* was to save the Jews of Prague from the accusations of the notorious blood libels.

The title page of the book (written by Rabbi Rosenberg) makes an astounding assertion: "This book was written by Rabbi Yitzchak Katz, son-in-law of the Maharal. It was hidden in the royal library of Metz. More than 100 years ago Metz was destroyed during a war, and many of the old books and original manuscripts fell into the hands of the wealthy residents of the city. After expending great effort, I was able to obtain a copy of this book."

In the introduction to the book, Rabbi Rosenberg tells, in greater detail, how he purchased a copy of the book from Rabbi Chaim Sharfstein of Metz for an enormous sum of money. He also cites the "famous and well-known" story that Rabbi Yechezkel Landau of Prague, after immersing in the *mikvah* and donning *tallis* and *tefillin*, went up to the attic of the Maharal's shul to see the *golem* while a group of ten students recited *Tehillim* on his behalf in the sanctuary below. After descending from the attic, Rabbi Landau's face was struck with awe and he reinforced the Maharal's prohibition that nobody enters the attic of the shul.

To assert his copyright, Rabbi Rosenberg included in his introduction a copy of the bill of sale which Rabbi Sharfstein wrote and signed. In this letter, Rabbi Sharfstein promises never to sell a copy of *Niflaos Maharal* to anyone else.

In short, Rabbi Yudel Rosenberg has claimed that the book which he published was a copy of an original manuscript authored by none other than the Maharal's son-in-law, Rabbi Yitzchak Katz. If we are to believe Rabbi Rosenberg's story, then the accounts contained within *Niflaos Maharal* would be authentic stories which Rabbi Katz either witnessed first-hand or heard from his father-in-law, the Maharal of Prague.

To be continued... 🕊️