

## Go from your land and your birth place... And I will make of you a great nation. (12:1)

The *Talmud Rosh Hashanah* 16b teaches that four things can nullify the unfavorable decree against an individual: Charity; prayer with *tzeakah*, crying out; changing one's name; change of action, or changing his way of life. The *Talmud* cites a fifth possible way to overturn an evil decree: a change of place. They support this idea with the *pasuk*: "Go from your land," which is followed up, "I will make of you a great nation." This indicates that, in his new location, Avraham *Avinu* would finally be blessed with a son, the precursor of a great nation. *Rashi* quotes the *Midrash* which interprets the *pasuk* differently: "Go out from your astrology, ie, abandon your astrological calculations." Apparently, Avraham had seen by way of the zodiacal signs that he was not destined to have a son. Hashem said that it was true with regard to Avram, but Avraham (his new name) shall have a son.

The first family of Judaism, Avraham and Sarah, were not destined to have children. Their *mazel* was against them. Hence, Hashem had to change "them," so that they would not be affected by the predetermined zodiacal signs.

*Mazel* plays a critical role. For some it is beneficial, and for others it means that they will be challenged throughout life. In his commentary to *Parashas Noach*, the **Maggid, zl**, of Dubno offers a *mashal*, parable, which gives us insight into the value of *mazel*. Indeed, he demonstrates how individuals, whom Hashem has endowed with tremendous opportunity for spiritual success, have used their gift wrongly, basically misapplying and undermining their *mazel*.

He relates the "story" of the man who met a great *tzaddik*, righteous person, who was well-known for the efficacy of his blessings. Whomever he blessed saw the fruits of the *tzaddik*'s blessings. The man asked the *tzaddik* to "please bless me." The *tzaddik* responded, "It should be the will of G-d that the first enterprise in which you get involved should be blessed with success." When the man heard this he was overjoyed. He could not contain himself. Regrettably, he had no money to invest in a business deal. Therefore, he figured that he would go home and spend the day counting his savings. This meant breaking open his "piggy bank," filled with nothing but pennies, and counting each one separately.

He began counting: one, two, three, etc. During his accounting endeavor, his wife came home. After seeing what he was doing, she expressed that she thought that he had lost his mind. She asked him politely to stop his preposterous counting. He ignored her. "But it is only pennies!" she screamed. He ignored her. "Are you out of your mind?" she demanded. He ignored her. This went on for some time, until they got into an all-out brawl. In fact, it was the biggest fight they had ever had. She berated him, and he countered with his own critique of her. The *tzaddik* was proven right. He had blessed him with success in his very first enterprise. He had one doozy of a fight with his wife.

The *Maggid* explains the lesson to be derived from here. Noach had just been saved from certain death. The world had been wiped out. Noach was spared. Hashem saved Noach so that he should plant the seeds of the future. He would be the progenitor of mankind, the father of the new world. He was blessed. It would make sense that the first thing to which Noach would commit himself that day would succeed beyond anyone's imagination. So what did Noach do? He planted a vine tree, which immediately produced luscious grapes from which Noach made the most incredible wine. Noach imbibed and got carried away. The rest is history. Noach was granted an unusual gift from Heaven, and he used it unwisely.

Some individuals are born with silver spoons of blessing in their mouths. Their *mazel* is off the charts. They have the ability to achieve the greatest and most exalted heights in spirituality and scholarship. Some take advantage of this exceptional gift; others just allow it to slip through their hands. When someone sees that he is blessed, he should put it to good utility, or he might end up living a life filled with regret.

In his *Ka'ayal Taarog*, **Horav Reuven Abitbul, Shlita**, quotes the teaching of the *Zohar HaChadash* that in the *elef ha'shishi*, sixth millennium, an unusual surplus of wisdom will descend on the world. If *Klal Yisrael* will be worthy, they will use this blessing and apply it to Torah study. If they will be negligent, it will evade them and become the possession of the *umos ha'olam*, nations of the world. We have seen this presage achieve fruition in our generation. On the one hand, Torah study is at a new high. Never have there been as many *yeshivos*, so much learning, so many *seforim* published. It is amazing. Yet, we have been witness to a scientific and technological boom that is unprecedented in the annals of history. Let us take this to heart: all of this science; the technology; the growth of a system of communications and space exploration that is absolutely mind-boggling. All of this is important, but it could have been Torah! Every new smart phone, tablet, satellite, could be a *yeshivah*, a *Bais Yaakov*, a *kollel*. The blessing is there. It is up to us to make use of it.

*Rav* Abitbul quotes **Horav Yaakov Galinsky, Shlita**, who explains this with a *mashal*, parable. Our generation has merited an incredible spiritual flow of *siyata diShmaya*, Divine assistance. What are we doing about it? It is very much like the fellow who prepared a wedding for his son, inviting three-hundred guests. The day of the wedding, the city was hit with a major snow storm. Highways were shut down, schools were closed, the subways were off schedule, people were literally stranded. A wedding is still a wedding, and the festivities must go on. Those who were relatives of the *chassan* or *kallah*, or the close friends of either families braved the elements to attend the wedding. Indeed, one hundred guests did come. Upon factoring in the inclement weather and miserable driving conditions, this was regarded to be a considerable crowd.

The caterer could not take into account the weather. Three hundred portions had been prepared at the beginning of the week. What was he to do with the extra portions? Serve them! Thus, after each guest finished his portion, a waiter appeared with another portion. By the time he had completed the second portion, the guest could hardly think of food. Yet, the caterer sent out more

food. The alternative was the garbage. The guests were visibly impressed. After all, who had ever heard of being served so much food at a wedding? Little did they realize that they were served three portions because two thirds of the guests had not been able to attend.

This is a parable. The lesson is obvious. At the beginning of each year, the Almighty allocates a certain amount of *siyata diShmaya* for those who study Torah in the coming year. If the *siyata diShmaya* which is set aside for one million students of Torah is redeemed by only half a million students, however, then they will be the lucky recipients of a double portion of Heavenly assistance. The assistance is there for those who are willing to come and get it. Otherwise, those wise students who make the effort will be blessed with a greater portion.