



DATA of Plano

Parshas Vayeishev | 23 Kislev 5779 | December 1, 2018

Sermon

with Rabbi Zakon



Chanuka: The Ivory Tower, or Everyone?

Friday

Mincha/Candle lighting: 5:01

Shabbos Day

Shacharis: 9:00

Latest time for shema: 9:43

Learners' Service: 10:45

**Kiddush following services:
11:45**

Mincha: 4:35

Maariv / Shabbos ends: 6:05

Kol Hane'arim: 7:05

Learners' Service



Chanuka in the Parsha

From the Desk of Rabbi Yogi

Is It Good to Win the Lottery?



I'll admit it. I got excited along with the rest of the country when the Mega Millions lottery hit a whopping 1.6 billion dollar jackpot in October of this year. I bought a ticket and enjoyed an overly long conversation with my wife about what we would do with the money if we won. We decided that we'd knock down our house and build a better one in its place (with a Texas-proof foundation!), we'd take some amazing family vacations around the world, set up funds for all of our children and future grandchildren, and why not throw in a private

chef for good measure (or at least until we get a kosher chinese joint in town!). We were just as excited, as I'm sure many readers can relate to, considering the new charitable vistas a billion dollars would open up to us. We could finally get our shul that building our community has been eyeing for years and we could pay off the debts of organizations we admired. The possibilities were endless! I would be hard pressed to argue that it wasn't worth the two dollar cost of the ticket for all the imaginative fun that little slip of paper created for

us during those twenty-four spirited hours!

On the flip side of the mass lottery hysteria that was gripping the country lay a question that none of us, myself included, really wanted to consider, lest it ruin our collective daydreaming. Would winning the lottery be a genuinely positive thing for us in the first place?

Sure, we've read of lottery stories that warm the heart. The Lohse family from Bondurant, Iowa who have used and continue to use their two-hundred-and-two million dollar winnings to improve the lives of the people in their small city. They've made considerable improvements to their local parks, built a new football stadium for the local highschool and even opened a four-

and-a-half million dollar grocery store because the city of four-thousand didn't have one yet! Other lottery winners reported on in the news outlets have largely set aside self-indulgence, instead focusing on setting up considerable trust funds for all the current and future

members of their family. These winners might not set records for charitable giving, but their winnings have certainly helped create comfortable lives for many of those around them.

But for every lottery success story we hear of there seems to be a parallel tale of lottery nightmare to match. Stories of people losing preposterous amounts of winnings in short stretches of time on gambling, drugs, alcohol and vice. People whose lives have subsequently spun out of control, causing them to lose their marriages, children and even their very lives!

How do we know, then, which camp we would fall in if we were to win the lottery? Would we use the lottery winnings for good, making the world and our families' lives better in the process, or would



such massive, newfound wealth corrupt and tempt us until we couldn't recognize ourselves in the mirror?

Examining the details of the life of Avraham, the very first of the Jewish patriarchs, should shed much needed light on this matter. After all, is Avraham not the earliest recorded historical figure to win a lottery of sorts, when, G-d, as if out-of-the-blue, first reveals Himself to our fore-father (then seventy-five years old) and promises him vast earthly wealth if he would but follow Him to the Holy Land?

As the Torah recounts:

“And the Lord said to Abram, "Go forth from your land and from your birthplace and from your father's house, to the land that I will show you. And I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you, and I will aggrandize your name, and [you shall] be a blessing” (Breishit 12:1-2).

And, as Rashi notes (ad loc), “I will bless you” is a reference to a divine gift of wealth.

Avraham, in other words, was the very first person to hit all five lotto numbers and the Powerball!

What's interesting to note is that the Sages of the Mishnah teach that Avraham was tested with ten distinct trials during his lifetime, all of which he subsequently passed (Pirkei Avot 5:3), and all of the commentaries agree on one thing - G-d's asking Avraham to leave his home and go to the Holy Land is counted as one of those ten tests.

It's hard to comprehend! I can imagine how hard it must be to uproot your family from your hometown, leaving much of your family behind and moving to a new, foreign and mysterious place (“the land that I will show you.”), but who are we

kidding? Is there anyone amongst us who wouldn't take the leave-your-homeland-challenge for divinely assured vast wealth? Sign me up!!

According to Rabbi Yochanan Zweig, dean of the Talmudic University in Miami, Avraham's test was not about the journey at all. The real test, in fact, was to arrive only *after* he received his promised riches. What would happen then? Would he use these gifts for himself or would he employ them to better humanity?

Avraham's test was to be a foreshadowing of the tests that all future lottery winners would one day face.

Of course, we know how the Biblical narrative goes. Post lottery Avraham becomes the everlasting paradigm of chesed (loving kindness), leaning on his resources to feed and care for hungry desert travelers who fatefully passed by his place of dwelling. The Midrash notes that Avraham didn't stop there, instead taking the opportunity to nourish the travelers' souls with teachings of the oneness of the Almighty and of the misguided nature of idolatry. Avraham, far from being corrupted by his earthly possessions, employed them in his life's mission - to love and educate humanity.

And here lies Avraham's secret to passing spiritual tests - extensive advance preparation. For although the text of the Chumash reveals almost nothing of Avraham's life and nature prior to this first test, the oral tradition informs us of Avraham's spiritually rich early years discovering the one true G-d, and of his later years - still prior to this first test - willingly persecuted for this belief.* Avraham was prepared well in advance of G-d's test, fortified with a deep sense of mission and purpose. When money was added to that equation, Avraham knew how to use it accordingly.

So, is it good to win the lottery? It all depends on your preparation.

*See Rashi on Breishit 11:28 regarding Avraham's willingness to be martyred for his beliefs and the Rambam's The Guide for the Perplexed 3:29 quoting from a record in Egyptian books about agriculture which describes Avraham's years long imprisonment in a city called Kuta because of his disagreements with the locals who worshipped the sun.



Kiddush this week is sponsored by the Zakon family with thanks to Hashem for Devorah's recovery from major surgery twelve years ago, today.



Mazel tov to the Shani and Jamie Sapitzky on the birth of Tehila Chana.

Big mazel tov to the new grandparents, Reuven and Shelly Sapitzky.

May you merit to raise her to Torah, chupa, and maasim tovim.



Mark Your Calendar



- ◆ **Chanukah begins**– Sunday evening, December 2nd
- ◆ **Begin reciting “V’sein Tal...” in Shemoneh Esrei**– Tuesday evening, December 4th
- ◆ **Chanukah Jump Party**– Sunday, December 9 at 10:30 a.m. (Jumpstreet, West Plano)
- ◆ **Lecture from Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller at Ohr Hatorah**– Tuesday, December 13 at 8:00 p.m.
- ◆ **Next Partners in Torah**– Monday evening, December 17
- ◆ **Women’s Melavah Malka Series**– Upcoming- Dates TBA
- ◆ **Crash Course in Hebrew Reading**– Monday evenings beginning January 7th.



Inaugural Partners in Torah was a smashing success. Join us again on December 17th.

In and Around the DATA Sunday Experience



As part of the unit on Bikur Cholim (The mitzvah of visiting and caring for the ill), the lower grades visited an assisted living home and performed for the residents.





DATA
of Plano
PRESENTS

LET'S BOUNCE

FAMILY CHANUKAH PARTY



SUFGANIYOT, SNACKS AND DRINKS WILL BE SERVED!
ALSO ENJOY CRAFTS, ACTIVITIES AND LOTS OF BOUNCING!



LOCATED AT JUMP STREET 6505 WEST PARK BLVD. SUITE 200
SUNDAY, DECEMBER 9TH · 10:30AM - 12:30PM · \$8 PER PERSON OR \$35 PER FAMILY



**Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller
Returns to Dallas !**

THE DOWNFALL OF SUPERWOMAN...
(because she never existed anyway!)

**BECOMING SUPER
YOU!**

**Thursday, December 13th
8:00 at Ohr Hatorah**

KOL HANE'ARIM

Saturday night Torah study for boys with prizes, fun and monthly refreshments.



Monthly refreshments

Learning for a half hour, followed by a weekly raffle for exciting prizes.

Participate 13 out of 17 weeks throughout the winter, and receive tickets to a sports game for every boy and a parent!

Weekly, one hour after Shabbos ends.





CRASH COURSE IN HEBREW READING

Learn Hebrew in just over a month.

MONDAY EVENINGS
BEGINNING JANUARY 7TH | 7:30-8:30 PM
3251 INDEPENDENCE PARKWAY, PLANO

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This course is free for qualified registrants. For more information or to register, email enissel@dataofplano.org.

