



## THE GREATEST TREASURE

Dear Parents,

*Erev Shabbos Parashas Naso 5781*

Being born into privilege has often propelled such a fortunate child into a trajectory of success later in life. Those lacking that pedigree, often seem at a disadvantage. The great foundational credo of the United States that “All Men are Created Equal,” has stirred the imagination of millions, but the stark reality is that history has not borne out the promise.

The issue of man’s great potential is addressed in a somewhat hidden message in this week’s *Parsha*. After the command to count the family of *Kehas*, mentioned in last week’s *Parsha (Bamidbar 4:1)*, *Parshas Naso* begins with *Hashem* commanding *Moshe* to count the family of *Gershon (Bamidbar 4:22)*. The *Kli Yakar*, cites the *Medrash (Bamidbar Rabbah 6:1)*, who deals with the question of why *Gershon*, who was the *Bechor*, first born, was not mentioned before *Kehas*? The answer given is that since *Kehas* was tasked with the great and holy responsibility of carrying the *Aron*, the Holy Ark, he was mentioned first, to show greater honor to the *Aron*.

**why {was} Gershon ... the Bechor, first born, ... not mentioned before Kehas? “**

The *Kli Yakar* points out that this begs the question. Why indeed, was *Gershon* not honored with the special task of carrying the *Aron*? It would seem to be appropriate to appoint the *Bechor* to this lofty position. The *Kli Yakar* answers that *Hashem’s* objective in passing over *Gershon* for this task was to give honor to *Talmidei Chachamim*, those who study the Torah contained in the *Aron*. Were *Gershon* to be given the job of carrying the *Aron*, people would assume he was appointed because he was the *Bechor*. The focus would have been on *Gershon’s* status as the *Bechor*. Now that it was given to his younger brother *Kehos*, the focus shifts to the importance of the task; *Kehos* is to be honored because of their job of carrying the *Aron*.

The *Kli Yakar* then continues, basing himself on the *pasuk* quoted in the above *Medrash* to emphasize why *Kehos* is given preference: *(Mishlei 3:15) “It is more precious than pearls...”* The word for pearls – *Peninim* can also mean first (as in *V’Zos*

*Lifanim B’Yisrael (Rus 4:7)*), meaning it – the Torah, is more precious than the *Peninim*

**When it comes to Torah – all men are created equal.”** (one who came) first (the *Bechor*). The *Kli Yakar* explains the message is that, in his words, the crown of Torah is as if ownerless and open and accessible to all. If the right to carry the *Aron* went to the firstborn, people would think Torah is reserved only for the privileged few. But that is not the truth!

The lesson is crucial. When it comes to Torah – all men are created equal. No one has more of a right, of a claim, of an inheritance to Torah more than any other Jew. Whoever wants to can stake their claim, anyone can work hard and become the owner of their portion of Torah.

The message for our children is clear. Some people are born with a leg up, be they advantages of fame, fortune, family or even birth order. Some people are born with advantages of latent skills, talents and abilities which can be nurtured and developed, perhaps in music, the arts, sciences etc. However, everyone has the inborn ability, the tremendous potential to become great in Torah learning and living. The only barrier to becoming wise in Torah is failing to make the effort. One doesn’t need a musical ear, an artistic bent, a bubbly personality, physical strength, a strong number sense or to be a first born. One does need to sincerely desire to acquire Torah and make the consistent effort to move forward, accomplish and to try and master it, to become a shining Torah personality.

**... everyone has the inborn ability to became great in Torah learning and living.”**

We can understand that anyone can find a golden watch lost on the side of the road. Anyone can win millions of dollars in a lottery. That is what it means for something to be ownerless. Anyone can have access to it. We are all privileged to have a portion in the Torah, by virtue of it being, in a sense, ownerless. If we encourage our children to truly believe that they have access to this greatest of treasures, they will maintain the enthusiasm, commitment and passion to make themselves great in Torah.

Best wishes for a Nachas-filled, treasured Shabbos,

Rabbi Kalman Baumann