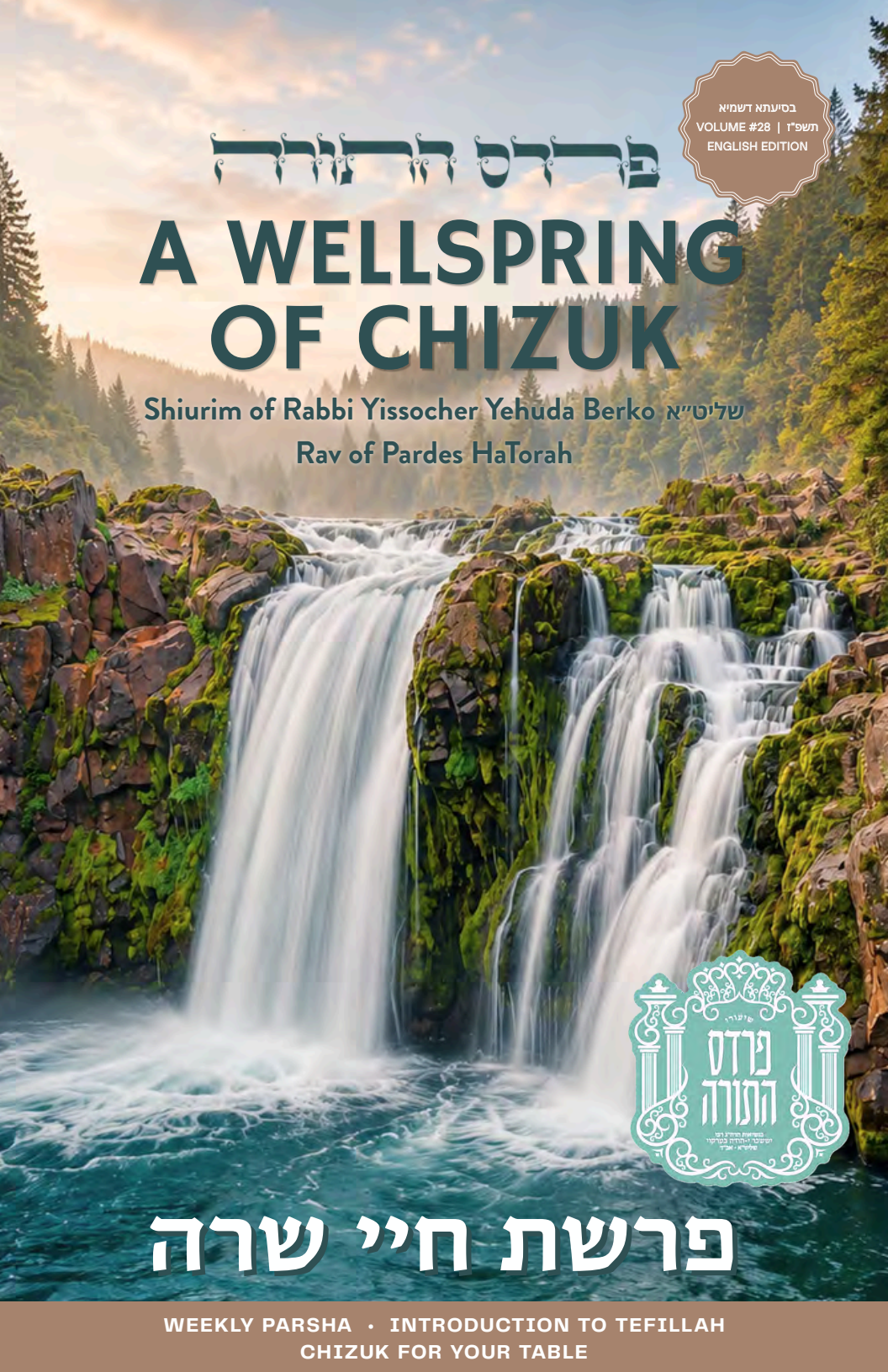

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פרשת חיי שרה
WEEKLY PARSHA • INTRODUCTION TO TEFILLAH
CHIZUK FOR YOUR TABLE

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פרשת חיי שרה

The Biggest Gift in this World: Nachas from Our Children

SARAH IMEINU'S IMMENSE JOY AT HEARING HER SON'S GREAT ACHIEVEMENTS

The *Vilna Gaon* taught the greatest source of pain in a person's life is lacking satisfaction from their children. Conversely, the greatest source of joy is experiencing *nachas* from them.

If one were to list his ultimate physical gratifications in this world, he might enumerate many materialistic desires. However, the *Vilna Gaon* explains that all that is merely secondary. There is an actual physical gratification in this world that surpasses everything else on that list: the merit of having children and the joy of seeing them succeed.

What is the secret to achieving this success? How much effort do we invest into raising our children?

The *Chasam Sofer* cites *Rashi's* questions to why the *parsha* regarding the passing of Sarah Imeinu and her burial is placed immediately following the account of the *akeidah*. *Rashi* explains that when Sarah received the news that Yitzchak was tied to the *akeidah*, ready to be sacrificed as a *karbon* for Hakadosh Baruch Hu, פרחה נשמתה - *her neshamah flew from her.* Upon hearing what had transpired, she passed away.

The simple interpretation, as understood by many of the *Rishonim*, is that she was overcome by terror and grief of having lost her only son. The *Chasam Sofer* argues that this cannot be the case. He notes that the *midrash*, which *Rashi* cites in Parshas Lech Lecha, states that Avraham Avinu was secondary to Sarah in the level of *nevuah.* While we cannot fully grasp the meaning of this statement - as the true greatness of the *Avos* and *Imahos* is beyond our comprehension, and we certainly cannot measure the stature of Avraham Avinu – the *midrash* teaches that Sarah was able to see exactly what was transpiring.

Asks the *Chasam Sofer,* how can we suggest that Sarah became so frightened by the news of the *akeidah* that she died from the resulting emotional distress?

Offering a different explanation, he says that when Sarah realized Yitzchak had reached such a spiritual height that he was prepared for the *akeidah* and was ready to give his life for the Ribbono Shel Olam. She was so deeply moved by the fact that her only child - for whom she had waited so many years, whom she cherished so deeply, invested all her strength, and for whom she had sent away Yishmael and Hagar - had now ascended to the level of ultimate *mesirus nefesh* - self-sacrifice for Hashem. She was so filled with overwhelming joy that her child had

reached such a peak. The *Chasam Sofer* writes that from the intensity of her joy, her *neshamah* ascended to Heaven; her physical body could no longer contain her *neshamah.*

EVEN WITH THE WORLD'S RESPONSIBILITIES, AVRAHAM AVINU'S MAIN FOCUS WAS YITZCHOK

The *Rambam* explains in great detail the history of Avraham Avinu's generation and those that followed. He states that at the beginning of creation, all of the world recognized Hashem as the Creator. But over time, humanity drifted away from the truth and stopped believing in Him.

Then came Avraham and he began to question who was truly running the world, ultimately leading to his discovery of the Ribbono Shel Olam. Avraham disputed his parents' beliefs – with the famous account of how he destroyed his father's idol shop – and eventually dared to stand up to Nimrod. The *Rambam* notes that they sought to kill him, leading to the miracle of the furnace in Ur Kasdim.

Following that miracle, Avraham began to spread the ideas of *Yiddishkeit*, teaching everyone about the existence of the Creator. Nothing held him back; even after being cast into the fiery furnace and emerging alive, he did not stop. He continued to demonstrate to the entire world that there is a Ribbono Shel Olam.

The *Rambam* describes how Avraham traveled from town to town, proclaiming and calling out that Hashem is the Creator. He would gather groups of people to teach them, tailoring his message to each person's level. The *Midrash* says his followers even wanted to crown Avraham their king. Yet, the *Rambam* notes that despite having tens of thousands of followers gathered around him, להודיע ליצחק בנו - *he made it known to Yitzchak, his son.* Avraham Avinu, the teacher of all of *Klal Yisroel,* who was titled נשיא אלקים - prince of Hashem - prioritized learning with his son Yitzchak and ensuring his education over all else.

The *Rambam* explains that Yitzchak followed in his father's footsteps, teaching the masses - but he too, focused mainly on teaching his son Yaakov. Furthermore, the *Rambam* states that Yitzchak appointed Yaakov, who in turn gathered all his children to teach them. (The *Rambam* mentions an interesting detail: Yaakov chose Levi to serve as the *Rosh Yeshiva.* However, years later, when Yaakov went down to Mitzrayim, he first sent Yehuda ahead to establish a *yeshivah*. This suggests that Yehuda was also a *Rosh Yeshiva.* Thus, it appears there were two *Roshei Yeshivah*.)

The *Rambam* emphasizes that the *Avos*, who were busy educating the entire world, prioritized the *chinuch* of their own children above all else. Despite having the responsibility of teaching and learning with the entire world, their main focus remained teaching their children the right path.

WHY DID HASHEM LOVE AVRAHAM SO GREATLY?

The Torah describes that when Hashem resolved to destroy Sodom, He insisted on informing Avraham first. Why was

this necessary? Hashem is the *Melech Malchei Hamlachim* and the Ruler of the World; why must He disclose His actions to Avraham before carrying them out?

The reason Hashem wanted to tell Avraham before the destruction was: כי ידעתיו - *for I have known him,* meaning I have a profound love for him.

What is the basis for this unique love that Hashem has for Avraham? למען אשר יצוה את בניו ואת ביתו אחריו - *so that he may command his children and his household after him*. Avraham Avinu instructs his children and the next generation how to serve Hashem and ושמרו דרך ה׳ - *keep the way of Hashem, he ensures they follow His paths.*

Despite the *mesiras nefesh* and the numerous *nisayonos* faced by the *Avos* and *Imahos*, and even though Avraham and Sarah traveled from place to place announcing and proclaiming Hashem as King of the Universe, there was one defining characteristic that Hashem truly loved: למען אשר יצוה את בניו ואת ביתו אחריו - *The essence of Avraham Avinu is his dedication to teaching his children.*

INVESTING IN THE NEXT GENERATION – ETERNAL LIFE

Rashi points out that the *posuk* mentions את ביתו אחריו, referring to Avraham's family in the future. This implies a time even after Avraham has passed away. *Rashi* is addressing the fact that after Avraham left this world, his household remained. Why is that so?

Rashi notes, כל המעמיד בן צדיק כאילו אינו מת - *whoever leaves behind a righteous son it is as if he never died.* This is the central point we must analyze as we follow the path of the *Avos* and *Imahos*. We learned that Sarah passed away because of the intense joy she felt seeing Yitzchak reach such a high spiritual level. As the Rambam notes, although the *Avos* and *Imahos* traveled globally and were surrounded by tens of thousands of followers and students, they remained focused on teaching their own children.

STANDING FIRM AGAINST THE TIDE

Hashem views a parent's devotion to their children as the ultimate achievement. Even more so, the fulfillment of raising a generation that continues a legacy of Torah and *Yiras Shamayim* makes one essentially live forever.

How is this achieved? Avraham Avinu and Sarah Imeinu taught us the way. They stood firm against a world that opposed them and remained strong in their convictions. They knew the *emes* and refused to be intimidated by the rest of the world.

The *Rambam* places these two concepts side by side: First, that the entire world was against them and second, that Avraham was not only unintimidated but actively went out to teach the opposing world. He suggests that once you are no longer intimidated by the world, you gain the courage to teach your child, which is the highest form of gratification.

NAVIGATING MODERN TRIALS AND PRESSURES

Today, we live in times similar to Avraham, in a world with low values and morals. However, we were fortunate enough to have great *tzaddikim* to guide us on the right path. In *Eretz Yisroel* was the *Belzer Rebbe,* the *Brisker Rav,* the *Chazon Ish,* and many other *gedolim*.

In America, we had the *Satmar Rebbe* and the *Sar HaTorah,* Rabbi Aharon Kotler, and Rabbi Moshe Feinstein who laid the Torah foundations and paved the way for the growth of *Yiddishkeit* in America.

With the help of our *gedolim*, our task is easier because we are less intimidated by Western culture. However, we still face *nisayonos* on a daily basis. We encounter challenges when we seek to do what's right and elevate our homes - whether through *tznius*, learning Torah, *middos tovos,* or making Shabbos more uplifted.

Some may ask mockingly, "Why be so extreme? Why do you need your home to be so centered on Torah? Why can't you just be middle-of-the-road, like the rest of the world?"

We face constant pressure from those around us, criticism from family, neighbors, and friends. Their judgment and disapproval can hinder us from standing as firm as Avraham and Sarah in laying our foundations.

But instead, we must draw strength from their example; just as they stood against the tide, we must not be intimidated by a neighbor or a friend. We must stay strong and invest the right *chinuch* in our children.

As the *Vilna Gaon* said, having *nachas* from your children is the greatest joy in this world. *Rashi* points out that through this investment, your essence will live on forever.

Hashem loved Avraham and Sarah because they gave everything for the next generation. When we realize the immense value of the next generation, we will protect our homes and devote all our efforts to our children.







Introduction to Tefillah

BEFORE RECEIVING THE TORAH WE MUST LEARN FROM THE AVOS

Examining the sequence of the Torah, it is interesting to note that *Matan Torah* only occurs in Parshas Yisro. Yet prior to that, there are numerous *parshiyos* which include narratives of the *Avos* before *Har Sinai.*

Why does the Torah not begin with Parshas Yisro and *Matan Torah*? *Rabbeinu Tam,* in the *Sefer HaYashar,* explains that the Ribbono Shel Olam wished to demonstrate: "Before I bequeath you with the Torah, here is an introduction of how we can be certain we are truly doing what is required of us."

Examine the order of Bereishis; the *parshiyos* leading up to *Matan Torah.* If your actions and lifestyle align with the *Avos* and *Imahos*, then you are on the right path.

Many people might claim they follow the Torah and *halachah,* or make excuses for their behavior. However, if they question themselves and contemplate, "Am I a reflection of the *Avos*? Would I fit into the household of Avraham and Sarah?" they would then realize where they are truly up to.

The *Rabbeinu Tam* says that this is why the Torah provided an introduction before *Matan Torah* concerning the *Avos* and *Imahos*. They serve as a test and provide us with clarity on whether we are genuinely following the Torah perfectly.

DAVENING FOR OURSELVES: THE KEY BEQUEATHED BY OUR AVOS

One of the primary things we see vividly in the conduct of the *Avos* and *Imahos* is their *emunah*, *bitachon*, and the power of their *tefillah*. Their *emunah* and *bitachon* were embedded in every action they took; and every step of the way was accompanied by *davening* to Hakadosh Baruch Hu. Their conduct serves as an incredible foundation for how to lead our lives.

For instance, when in need of a *yeshuah* in both spiritual or physical matters - whether it concerns *parnassah*, having children, or any other area - people often search for a great t*zaddik* or *rebbe* to whom they can give their name, a *kvittel*, so he can *daven* for them. In doing so, we forget to *daven* for ourselves!

We fail to realize the key the *Avos* and *Imahos* bequeathed to us; the priceless treasure they have taught us. The *Avos* and *Imahos*, who were the greatest *tzaddikim* since the beginning of mankind, what did they do when they were in need? They *davened*.

Similarly, when we are looking for *yeshuos*, the first priority is to *daven*. Certainly, we should give *tzedakah*, and

we should definitely visit a *tzaddik* to be mentioned for a *brachah*. But let us not forget what the *Avos* taught us to do in time of need: to go straight to Hashem and daven.

NO TEARS ARE IN VAIN

There is a remarkable story from the *Chazon Ish* that highlights the incredible power of *tefillah*. During the early years in Eretz Yisroel, many non-religious *kibbutzim* were established. Upon the arrival of many *Yidden* from abroad, efforts were immediately made to direct them toward these *kibbutzim*, to distance them from Torah observance. The *Chazon Ish* strongly opposed the Zionists and their goals and did everything in his power to prevent *Yidden* from falling into the trap. Together with other notable *tzaddikim* of the time, like Reb Yankele Galinsky and Reb Sholom Schwadron, they would go on missions to rescue those poor *Yidden*, bringing children and young men back into *yeshivos*.

Reb Yankele Galinsky related that he once asked the *Chazon Ish,* "I don't understand; one of the *Yidden* we saved became a great *talmid chacham,* as did his wife and children. Yet their father was one of the most significant antagonists against religious Jewry in his time. He held a government position and was notorious for the harm he sought to inflict on religious Jews."

Reb Yankele wondered how it is possible for such a father to bear a child who would become a *talmid chacham,* with generations of *frum*, *ehrliche Yidden.*

The *Chazon Ish* replied: "I remember his grandmother in Kosov, the city where I was born and where my father served as the *rebbi*. I recall when this man - the father of the *talmid chacham* - abandoned *Yiddishkeit* and left for Eretz Yisroel. His mother sat in mourning as if she had lost a child, and all of Kosov knew of the bitter tears she wept over her son's fate."

The *Chazon Ish* continued, "I said to myself then that there is no way her tears would be in vain. Now I see where those tears went."

They did not affect her son directly, but those tears were reserved for the next generation. The grandmother's tears and *tefillos* reached the grandchildren. Although the father caused much trouble for the *Yidden* in Eretz Yisroel, he simply could not overcome the tears and *tefillos* of his mother. And thus, his descendants grew up to be great *talmidei chachamim.*

One of the greatest challenges and heartaches people often face is thinking, "I have *davened* so many times and it didn't work. I *davened* with such *kavanah* and recited *tehillim* repeatedly and I have yet to see a *yeshuah*."

The *yetzer hara* constantly approaches us with this doubt. Even if we have seen some *tefillos* answered in the past, the *yetzer hara* tries to discourage us by saying, "Do you really think your *davening* helps? Look at what a small percentage of your *tefillos* were answered."

This story of the *Chazon Ish* is a vital foundation we must keep clear in our minds. Every *tefillah* ascends and pierces the Heavens, and the Ribbono

Shel Olam answers it. As we recite in *Shemonei Esrei,* כי אתה שומע תפילת כל פה - for You hear the *tefillah* of every mouth, the Ribbono Shel Olam listens to every word of *tefillah* uttered by a *Yiddishe* child.

WE HAVE HOPE IN THE RIBBONO SHEL OLAM BECAUSE WE BELIEVE HE ANSWERS EVERY TEFILLAH

At the conclusion of *Shemoneh Esrei*, we recite the *posuk* from Dovid Hamelech: יהיו לרצון אמרי פי - *may the words of my mouth be acceptable, may these words of my tefillos ascend to You and be embraced with full favor.* והגיון לבי לפניך - and the deliberation of my heart before You, refers even to the things I did not voice, but intended to express, which remain within my heart. ה' צורי וגואלי - Hashem, my Rock and my Redeemer, Ribbono Shel Olam, You are my Creator and my *yeshuah*; You rescue me from all difficulties and redeem me from every small pain I have endured.

The *Beis Aharon* of Karlin remarked on the phrase, כי אתה שומע תפילת כל פה - *for You hear the tefillah of every mouth.* The Ribbono Shel Olam listens to every *tefillah* even if it is just "of the mouth," meaning it merely passes your lips. Even if it lacked deep feeling, was devoid of emotion, or was said without proper concentration, the fact that it was תפילת כל פה - *that it was simply spoken* - is enough.

We conclude the *brachah* with, ברוך אתה ה' - invoking Hashem's Name, שומע תפילה - *who listens to our tefillos,* because the Ribbono Shel Olam listens to every *tefillah* we offer.

This serves as the foundation for *tefillah:* the Ribbono Shel Olam heeds every single word uttered; every *tefillah* pierces the Heavens and receives an answer. The only questions we might have are when, how, and in what form His answer will come.

The Ribbono Shel Olam is the essence of goodness. הטוב כי לא כלו רחמיך - *the Good One, for Your mercies never cease; His compassion is limitless.* והמרחם כי לא תמנו חסדיך - *the Merciful One, Your kindness has not ended.*

כי מעולם קוינו לך - *for we have always hoped in You.* Because I know Your mercy and goodness are infinite, we therefore have always hoped in You - I continue to *daven* and yearn for You. Why? Because I am certain that my *tefillos* are being answered.

THE 100% GUARANTEE: TRUSTING HASHEM'S CALCULATIONS

All we have to believe is that He will answer my *tefillah* right now. The calculations of how He chooses to map out the results should be left to Him. However, every time we *daven* - whether it is *shacharis*, *minchah*, or *maariv*, whether reciting a *kapittel* of *tehillim*, or simply speaking to the Ribbono Shel Olam while we are shopping, or sending our children off to school - that *tefillah* was a 100% success.

There is no such thing as a *tefillah* that is only partly effective. The fact that a *tefillah* might be answered at a specific time as per the Ribbono Shel Olam's plan is entirely not up to us.

It might just mean that the Ribbono Shel Olam says, "If I answer this *tefillah* now, you will have $10,000; but if I save it for later, it will be worth a million dollars." Those calculations should simply be left up to Him and His infinite kindness.

TWO MINUTE TAKE-AWAY CHIZUK FOR YOUR TABLE

Breaking Negative Middos

THE SIGN FOR YITZCHAK'S KALLAH AND THE MIRACLE AT THE WELL

When Eliezer, Avraham's servant, departed to find a *kallah* for Yitzchak, he established a sign to recognize the right woman. He chose to evaluate that if she is a woman of kindness, she will be worthy of entering the household of Avraham Avinu. Arriving at the well, he observed that as Rivka approached to draw water, the water miraculously rose up to meet her. Wow, what a beautiful sign; she must be an incredible *tzadeikus*.

However, after this miraculous event, the *posuk* mentions that she bent down to provide water, not only for Eliezer, but also for all his camels, which was a great act of kindness.

Why does the Torah recount these details? The miracle of water rising for Rivka should suffice as a sign that she clearly is a righteous woman worthy of marrying Yitzchak. The very laws of nature were subjugated and altered for her; what further proof could one possibly need that she belongs to Avraham's family?

OVERCOMING MIDDOS VS. PERFORMING MIRACLES

Reb Chatzkele Kozmirer explains that overcoming a negative *middah* is far greater than a miracle. How can this be? If the Ribbono Shel Olam performs miracles only for *tzaddikim*, what does it mean that breaking a *middah* surpasses a miracle?

The *meforshim* explain that there are people for whom the Ribbono Shel Olam performs miracles because of specific good deeds they have done. If he does something exceptional, out of the ordinary, Hashem declares him worthy of an out-of-the-ordinary miracle. However, this does not necessarily mean the person has reached their ultimate path.

A person who consistently breaks their inborn negative *middos* - which requires incredible self-sacrifice day after day, week after week - signifies that they are on a much higher level.

Eliezer thought to himself that it is possible Rivka did something extraordinary, leading the Ribbono Shel Olam to perform a miracle for her. But this does not necessarily define her essence.

However, when she continues to bend down to provide water for the camels, and perform further acts of kindness even after the miracle, it demonstrates that she is fundamentally a good person.

As we work through our daily struggles, we must keep in mind that refining a *middah* is greater than a miracle. Which means every time we overcome a negative *middah*, we can tell ourselves, "Wow! we have accomplished something far greater than a miracle."

When a person feels positive about their actions and feels a sense of achievement, and when they realize their efforts are truly valued, it grants them the passion to progress further.



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