

AT THE ARTSCROLL SHABBOS TABLE

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פרשת נח
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HISIGER, EDITOR

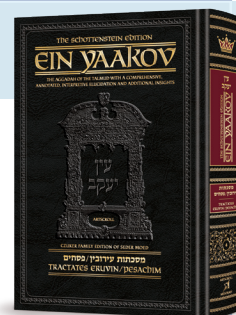
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WEEKLY INSPIRATION AND INSIGHT ADAPTED FROM CLASSIC ARTSCROLL TITLES

PARASHAH

PARTIAL PRAISE

The Schottenstein Edition Ein Yaakov – Tractates Eruvin/Pesachim



R' Yirmiyah ben Elazar said: We may say part of a person's praise in his presence, but we may mention his full [praise] only when we are not in his presence (Ein Yaakov, Eruvin, 18b:5).

It is not proper to say all of a person's praise in front of him, because this appears like flattery. When one praises another person lavishly in his presence, his praise is often viewed as an attempt to flatter him in order to get something from him (*Rashi, Maharal, Nesivos Olam*). Others explain that praising him too greatly in his presence might lead him to become conceited (*Maharsha, Pele Yoetz*).

This rule is learned from the story of Noach in this week's *parashah*: We see that part of a person's praise may be mentioned in his presence, for it is written (7:1), Hashem said to Noach, "For it is you that I have seen to be righteous before Me in this generation." When Hashem spoke to Noach, He described him only as being *righteous*. However, when He spoke about Noach not in his presence, but in the general narrative of the story, He said his full praise, as it is written (6:9), "Noach was a righteous man, perfect in his generations." Besides calling him righteous, Hashem called him perfect, giving him his full praise.

Insight: It has been explained why fulsome praise in the person's presence is inappropriate, but why did Hashem give partial praise to Noach in his presence, particularly according to the *Maharsha's* explanation that praising a person can make him arrogant? Would it not have been better had Hashem not praised him at all?

Rav Shmuel Orenstein told of an answer to this question that he heard in the address

given by Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik on the occasion of Rav Moshe Feinstein's installation as *nasi* of the Agudas HaRabbanim.

Many times, the preeminent sage of his generation finds himself alone. The common people do not see what the sage sees and thus do not understand the reasons for the various positions he takes. There is the danger that the sage might come to question his own decisions. *Perhaps the truth is indeed with the*

HIS WAS A LONE VOICE IN A FRENZIED WORLD GONE AWRY.

masses. Can it be that everyone is wrong and I am right? At that point, it is important for the sage to hear at least his partial praise — not to make him arrogant, but to reassure him that his preeminence is not for naught. His vision is indeed greater than that of the masses, and he is duty-bound to act accordingly.

Noach stood alone. His was a lone voice in a frenzied world gone awry. Could the truth really be on the side of the minuscule minority? And so Hashem reassured him with partial praise: *Come to the Ark and save yourself and your family from the rest of humanity and its fate. For indeed, you alone have I seen to be righteous before Me in this generation.* 📖

ARTSCROLL MESORAH PUBLICATIONS

הָבָה יֵרְדָה וְנִבְלָה שֵׁם שְׁפָתָם אֲשֶׁר לֹא יִשְׁמְעוּ אִישׁ שְׁפַת רֵעֵהוּ

Let us descend and there confuse their language, so that they will not understand one another's language (11:7).

Rashi explains what would happen as a result of the confusion of languages: "Someone would ask for a brick and the other man would bring him mortar. The first man would then rise up against the second and smash his brain."

It seems fairly obvious that the building of the Tower of Babel would have to come to a standstill once there would no longer be any means of communication between the people involved in its construction. But why does *Rashi* add that the resultant communication breakdown would lead to murder? If Hashem's intention was to halt the work on the tower, why was it necessary for there to be bloodshed as well?

The Brisker Rav, Rav Yitzchak Zev Soloveitchik, explains that *Rashi* here is teaching us an important lesson about the evil in

man. Once a person has resolved to commit a sin, he is not deterred by Divine punishment, even when it devastates his original plan of action. The builders of the tower were



The Brisker Rav,
Rav Yitzchak Zev Soloveitchik

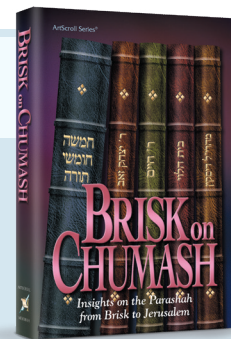
so determined that even when they found themselves unable to speak with each other, they would not consider abandoning their plans. Instead, they became so frustrated at the delay in their objective that they reacted irrationally and began to kill each other.

It is interesting to note further

that even after these acts of murder were committed, work was still not stopped on the tower, for the next verse states, "And Hashem dispersed them from there over the face of the whole earth and they stopped building the city." The confusion of language and the violence that followed in its wake were both not sufficient to put a stop to the project until Hashem actually dispersed them forcefully.

We find a similar pattern of events in the discussion of the people of Sodom. They had all gathered at Lot's doorway, threatening to break the door down if he did not allow them to take away his guests for their perverted purposes. The angels who were in the house with him grabbed

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IT IS A SOBERING THOUGHT TO REALIZE THE DEPTHS TO WHICH A HUMAN BEING CAN SINK.

PERSPECTIVE

ONE LINE REPLACES A BOOKSHELF

We're All in This Together by Rabbi Yissocher Frand

If you go to a bookstore, you'll find a huge section of self-help books, many of which are meant to teach people how to be happy. I have one line that can eliminate the need for entire shelves of books:

For this is the essence of man — he was not created for himself, but to help others.

What seems to fly over the heads of most Americans today is that the more you give, the less you focus on yourself. And the less you focus on yourself, the happier you are. People who are constantly busy with whether they have their needs met are miserable people. Those who focus outward and try to help others are happy people.

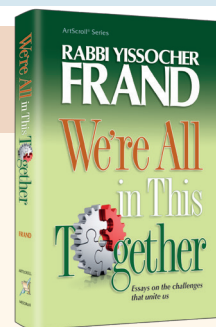
I had a friend, David Hyman, who was diagnosed with lung cancer at the age of 52, never having smoked

a single cigarette in his life. He waged a 2½-year battle with the disease and ultimately passed away. When I visited him two weeks before he died, he shared an incredible insight. "When a person is battling cancer, he has to be on the receiving end of most interpersonal relationships. During treatment, he has no choice but to accept favors from others.

"One day, my son-in-law came to visit me and I had a shoeshine kit on hand. Nowadays, nobody polishes shoes anymore, but I felt strong that day, and I asked my son-in-law, 'Can I polish your shoes?'"

David Hyman took out the polish and buffer, and he polished his son-in-law's shoes.

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him away from the frenzied crowd and struck the men at the doorway with blindness. What was the stricken men's reaction? Did they run off to seek relief or medical attention for their sudden loss of sight? Did they at least desist from their evil designs? No! "*They struggled to find the door*" (Bereishis 19:11). They were so bent on committing their crime that even a devastating plague of blindness could not deter them from pursuing their desired course of action.

It is a sobering thought to realize the depths to which a human being can sink once he has made up his mind that he wishes to ignore his conscience and pursue a course of sin!

And it is invigorating to consider the strength of one's determination for the positive once one has committed to doing something good. Our power to make a difference is inestimable. 📖

ONE LINE REPLACES A BOOKSHELF *continued from page 2*

"Rabbi Frand," he said, "it felt so good to help someone — even a little. It felt so good to give."

Several years ago, Gallup and Healthways released a study in which they polled 372,000 people to gauge how happy they were. The last question the pollsters asked was whether the person answering the poll was religious.

One of the 372,000 people polled was a religious Jew, and when they reached that last question, he replied in fine Jewish fashion: "You tell me: What do you think? Based on my previous answers, am I religious?"

"Yes," the pollster replied, "based on your answers, I think you are religiously observant, because we have found that religiously observant people are happier people."

You know why? Because in religion, it's not about you. You're part of something bigger than yourself. And that makes you happier. 📖

WHAT PEOPLE WILL SAY

Encounters with Greatness By Rabbi Nachman Seltzer

There is an incredible feeling of humanity and approachability to Rav Dovid Cohen, *rosh yeshivah* of Yeshivas Chevron in Yerushalayim.

I once asked Rav Dovid if I should write *hashkafah sefarim* in addition to those I had written on *halachah* or if I should stick solely to *halachah*.

"It's very important that you write *halachah*, *hashkafah*, and *mussar*," was his answer. And then he shared a personal anecdote. "When I first published my *sefer Zeman Simchaseinu* (a *Succos*, *hashkafah*-themed *sefer*), people mocked me for it [feeling that it was 'lighter' material and not of the depth they expected]. Some jokingly began referring to me as 'Dudi Cohen.'"

My jaw dropped.

"It didn't matter at all," he said. "Not even a little bit."

Rav Dovid looked me in the eye. "Never, ever, make any decisions in life because of what this one or that one will think or say! If you do that, you will never get anywhere in life!"

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Once, when I went to visit Rav Dovid, we began discussing the security situation in Eretz Yisrael and I asked him what we were supposed to be doing about the situation. Rav Dovid put his arm around me. "It's a clear *Gemara* in *Sanhedrin*," he replied. "In a time of danger, a person should busy himself with Torah learning and acts of kindness."

"What does the *Gemara* mean by acts of kindness?" I asked him.

He explained. "Acts of kindness

refers to the type of *chesed* that only you can do and not anyone else. But there's another act of *chesed* that doesn't take any time at all."

"What?"

"Caring about people," he replied. "Having empathy for one another. People don't care enough. A person has to change his entire outlook on life and has to care about every single



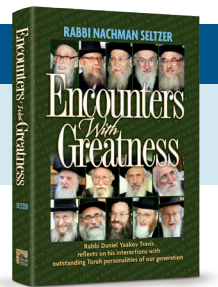
Rabbi Dovid Cohen

"NEVER, EVER, MAKE ANY DECISIONS IN LIFE BECAUSE OF WHAT THIS ONE OR THAT ONE WILL THINK OR SAY!"

Jew as if he were his brother! To greet them, to relate to each one as if he is a lofty being — that's what's missing from *Klal Yisrael* today, and that's why the *geulah* has still not arrived."

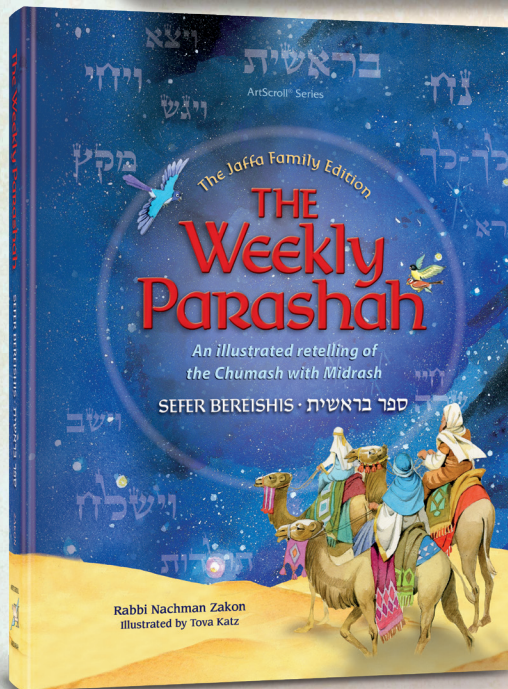
I stood there listening to him speak, and I felt touched to my innermost being.

He went on: "Rav Chaim of Volozhin writes in the introduction to his *sefer Nefesh HaChaim* that the *tachlis* of a person is to think about other people. Live life to think about other people and not about yourself." 📖





Parashah for Children



The Teivah

Noach finished building the Teivah. He followed Hashem's instructions on how to build it. It was big. It had to carry Noach and his wife, his three sons and their wives — and the biggest zoo the world had ever seen! The Teivah contained a male and female of every creature on earth, and 7 pairs of all kosher animals. The Teivah would also have to carry a year's supply of food to feed everyone, people and animals!

The Teivah was 300 amos long (almost 600 feet), fifty amos wide (almost 100 feet), and 30 amos high (almost 60 feet high). That's the height of a four-story building, and it was very long and wide!

Think about it. As big as it was, it wasn't big enough for every single animal! It was a miracle that everything fit in.

FASCINATING FACTS

Not only did the Mabul destroy every living thing, but it destroyed everything that grew from the ground as well. That's why Noach brought baby trees into the Teivah, to replant after the Mabul.

When a lion roared or a bird chirped, Noach knew exactly what it was saying. He understood all the animal languages.



Were there fish in the Teivah?

No. The Mabul didn't kill the fish.

How old was Noach when the Mabul started?

Six hundred years old!

A Teivah Tour

From the outside the Teivah looked like a high, black, rectangular building, with a sloped roof that was only about two feet wide at the top. It had a window at the top. There was a door near one of the corners.

Why was it black? Because after the Teivah was built Noach covered it with black tar, both on the outside and the inside, to make it waterproof. He wanted to make sure it was strong and would not leak. It had to survive the powerful waters of the Mabul.

Let's take a tour of the three floors of the Teivah. We'll start on the ground floor. This is where

Noach would throw all the dirt made by all the living creatures. The next floor up, the second floor, is for all the animals. The third, top floor is where Noach and his family stayed. Walking through the Teivah we see hundreds of rooms.

Once Noach and the animals move into the Teivah it will be their home ... for an entire year!

