

# THE HARRY H. BEREN TORAH WEEKLY

A project of the Denver Community Kollel

Parshas Noach

November 1, 2019

## A Taste of Torah

### Perfect Unity

by Rabbi Yosef Melamed

“Goodness of the Lebanon, most beautiful of sites, joy of all the world, and completely beautiful,” are all descriptions found in the *Hoshanos* prayers recently uttered on Sukkos. In case you weren’t sure, these are all adjectives used to describe the most beautiful and holy place on earth, the *Bais Hamikdash* (Temple) in Jerusalem.

The Zohar in this week’s parsha (1:75a) teaches something very interesting. The builders of the Tower of Bavel (Babel) had some pretty lofty architectural dreams. They hoped to build a tower that would be similar to the most beautiful place on earth mentioned above, the *Bais Hamikdash*. This is very puzzling; what indeed is the connection between the Tower of Bavel and the *Bais Hamikdash*? Also, the Tower of Bavel was not a good thing – as is evident by G-d’s intervention to prevent its construction. What could be wrong with a building meant to replicate the *Bais Hamikdash*? Yet another issue: The Midrash (Yalkut Shimoni 62) teaches that the builders of the tower intended to use it to ascend to the heavens and wage war against G-d. That seems like a pretty ridiculous notion, especially considering, points out Rabbi Chaim Friedlander (1923-1986), that the leader of the project was none other than Nimrod (see Rashi Bereishis 10:8), about whom Chazal say “he recognized his Creator and intentionally rebelled” (Rashi *ibid.*:9). This means that Nimrod understood Who Hashem was and realized that he could not simply ascend to the sky and fight with Him. How, then, are we to understand this plot?

Rabbi Friedlander (Sifsei Chaim Parshas Noach) cites a Medrash (Bereishis Rabba 11:1) that teaches the greatness of peace. The Generation of the Flood engaged in robbery and other selfish acts. They were destroyed completely from the face of the

earth. The Generation of the Dispersion, builders of the Tower of Bavel, however, did not suffer the same fate, despite their great sin. This is because they acted with unity. Rabbi Friedlander explains that the Generation of the Dispersion understood the great power of unity. The Tower of Bavel was meant to replicate the unity created through the *Bais Hamikdash*, which is called the “city that is connected together” (Tehillim 122:3). “There the tribes ascended, the Tribes of G-d, as a testimony to Israel, to thank G-d” (*ibid.*:4). Similarly, the Tower of Bavel was to be a great communal project and subsequent meeting place. The unity brought about by that tower would, so to speak, be the tool to wage war with Hashem. Through that unity, Hashem would, based on the system He had put into place, be inhibited from punishing the wrongdoings of the builders. They would thus be free to engage in whatever activities of sin they desired, unsubdued.

However, says Rabbi Friedlander, the builders missed a fundamental point. True unity does not just mean shared minds for one joint, selfish purpose. Such a unity is powerful (as indeed the above Medrash states that it prevented the Generation of the Dispersion from suffering death), but it is a unity that is ultimately lacking. This is because, as Mishlei (Proverbs) teaches (18:1), the desire of temptation causes separation. In such a type of unity, each person is only thinking about himself and how he can personally gain from the united community. And if that is the case, when there arises any difference of taste, desire, or temptation, there is automatically strife, friction, and rivalry. The superficiality of this joint group was proven when a mere language barrier imposed by Hashem turned the once strong and united front into a war scene,

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*Because Torah Is for Every Jew*

## Stories for the Soul

### Kindness Repaid

One Erev Yom Kippur, a yeshiva student by the name of Elazar Tzadok Turchin was ready early to go to shul to prepare for Yom Kippur. As he was rushing to shul, the elderly Tepliker Rav (Rabbi Shimshon Aharon Polonsky; 1876-1948) called to him, “Young man! Can you please help me tidy up my home for Yom Kippur? I can use some assistance.”

Reb Elazar Tzadok put aside his plans and focused on helping the Tepliker Rav. When he completed the task, the Tepliker Rav told him, “I know that you have many things to do, and you helped me with *mesirus nefesh* (personal sacrifice). Therefore, Hashem will certainly help you this year beyond the rules of nature.”

After this incident, Reb Elazar Tzadok became like a new person. He would learn thirty pages of Talmud a day, in depth, and wouldn’t forget anything. His scholarship was above and beyond the norm, and the entire Torah was at his fingertips.

Anyone seeking a particular passage would go to him, and he would tell them exactly which page and line they sought. Without looking inside, he could tell everything that was written on any given line, from the Talmud itself to Rashi and Tosafos printed on the sides of the Talmud, and even the other commentators printed along the margins of the Talmud.

Rabbi Turchin did an act of kindness for another, but he reaped a far greater reward for his favor.

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## Kollel Happenings

### COLLEGE ADMISSIONS SCANDAL AT NOV. 6 T4T

Join Rick Kornfeld, shareholder, RechtKornfeld PC, and Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher, Senior Educator for the Denver Community Kollel, as they examine this hot-button issue. Nov. 6<sup>th</sup>, 12-1:15 p.m. at the East Side Kosher Deli. Cost: \$25. RSVP info@denverkollel.org.

### A DEEPER LOOK AT THE PARSHA WITH RABBI SHACHNE SOMMERS

Join Rabbi Shachne Sommers as he discusses a number of difficulties encountered in the weekly Torah portion, and develops a comprehensive approach to resolve the issue, simultaneously conveying a deeper understanding of the material being discussed. Tuesday nights at the Southeast Kollel Torah center, 8-9 pm, for men and women.

### SFAS EMES: A PIERCING LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS

It is one of the most widely-studied works of our time. Sfas Emes gives us a glimpse into the infinite depths of Torah and Jewish thought. Kollel Scholar Rabbi Avraham Dovid Karnowsky is an expert in this great work, and a master in bringing its timeless lessons into daily life. Join Rabbi Karnowsky on Thursdays, 8:15-9 pm at the Southeast Kollel Torah Center, 4902 S. Xenia St.

## Parsha Quizzers

The six items below can be found in Rashi's commentary to this week's parsha. Can you figure out where they are? (Answers on bottom)

- |                              |                     |
|------------------------------|---------------------|
| 1) Stone light               | 4) Vegetarian diet  |
| 2) More to sacrifice         | 5) Three is a crowd |
| 3) Meant for another mission | 6) Support the sky  |

Correction from last week: The correct answer for question 3 is 3:3, not 2:3.

## Lives of Our Torah Leaders Rabbi Eliezer Silver Part XXVI

Despite the challenges, Rabbi Silver for us to declare our allegiance to wrote to *rabbonim* across the country, Agudath Israel..." he wrote. "Agree, imploring them to unite under the sign and answer me in the affirmative." Agudah banner. "The time has come

## A Taste of Torah

*continued from front*

as described by the Medrash (Yalkut Shimoni ibid.). One fellow asked for water, and his friend (due to his inability to overcome the language barrier that had suddenly sprung up) would bring him dirt. In anger, the first fellow killed him with his hammer. One fellow asked for one tool and his friend would bring a different one. In a fury, the first fellow would kill the second one.

True unity is the likes of that found in the *Bais Hamikdash*, where the different Tribes of the Jewish People joined together in service of Hashem. In such a unity, language is not a barrier. Difference of location is not a barrier. Even difference of status and roles isn't a cause for any level of separation. Kohen, Levi, Yisrael, man, woman or child don't make a difference

when connecting to the source of all unity, Hashem, through subordination to His will and joining together in His service. This was the mistake of the Generation of the Dispersion, and, as Rabbi Gedalia Schorr (1910-1979) points out, the irony of their dispersion is that it serves as a lesson to all generations that a unity that is not associated with serving Hashem leads straight to the same fate - dispersion and eternal separation.

Let us take that lesson to heart, and harness the power of true unity by joining together in the service of Hashem. By doing so, we will truly embody the prayer recited on Shabbos at *mincha*, "You are one, and Your name is one, and who is like Your nation Yisrael, a united nation on earth!"

## Stories for the Soul

*continued from front*

Noach had to feed all of the animals in the Ark. This task took all of his time and effort, weakening him greatly. Yet, the commentators point out, this constant

engagement in helping maintain the future of the world was the merit that enable him and his family to survive the Flood that destroyed all else.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 6) Support the sky 11:1 s.v. <i>udvartm</i> | 3) Meant for another mission 8:7 s.v. <i>ad</i>                         |
| 5) Three is a crowd 9:25 s.v. <i>amr</i>    | 2) More to sacrifice 7:2 s.v. <i>shv'a</i> , also 8:20 s.v. <i>mkol</i> |
| 4) Vegetarian diet 9:3 s.v. <i>lachem</i>   | 1) Stone light 6:16 s.v. <i>rohan</i>                                   |

## Parsha Quizzers - Answers

The Torah Weekly is made possible through a generous grant from the Harry H. Beren Foundation of Lakewood, NJ, in memory of Harry H. Beren, z"l  
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