

# AT THE ARTSCROLL SHABBOS TABLE

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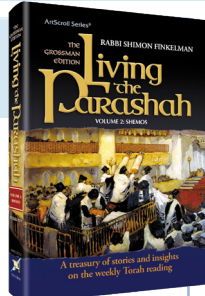
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 RABBI YITZCHOK HISIGER, EDITOR  
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WEEKLY INSPIRATION AND INSIGHT ADAPTED FROM CLASSIC ARTSCROLL TITLES

## PARASHAH

## SEIZE THE MOMENT

Living the Parashah, Volume 1, by Rabbi Shimon Finkelman



וַיִּפְגַּע בְּמָקוֹם וַיְלֵן שָׁם...

*He encountered the place and spent the night there ... (28:11).*

The unusual term “וַיִּפְגַּע – and he encountered” alludes to Yaakov’s miraculously swift encounter with Har Hamoriah, the future site of the *Beis HaMikdash*. A second miracle was that the sun set early, so Yaakov was forced to spend the night there. He dreamt a prophetic vision which symbolized the future of the Jewish people and their eternal connection to Eretz Yisrael. How did Yaakov merit this dream? *Chazal* relate:

*He [Yaakov] had gone as far as Charan (where Lavan lived). Once he arrived there, he said, “Is it possible that I passed by a place where my ancestors prayed [i.e., Har Hamoriah] and I did not pray there?” He set his mind to return, and went back as far as Beis El, and then the earth contracted for him (Rashi to 28:17, citing Chullin 91b).*

Rav Mordechai Schwab saw a great lesson in this. Yaakov was inspired to retrace his steps and make the long journey back to Har Hamoriah. The result was a prophetic vision from which the Jewish people continue to draw strength. Had he not acted upon that moment of inspiration, so much would have been lost.

It is easy for a moment of inspiration to pass without anything having been accomplished. It is truly unfortunate when this happens, for one can never know what benefits can be had from seizing the moment and striving to achieve.



Rabbi Yissocher Frand

### WE MUST SEIZE THE MOMENT OF INSPIRATION.

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During *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah* in 5763 (2002), Rabbi Martin Katz, executive vice-president of the Just One Life organization, and his daughter traveled from their home in Kew Gardens Hills, N.Y., to a location in nearby Forest Hills to perform the time-honored custom of *Kapparos*. Rabbi Katz explained to his daughter that they were going to Forest Hills because there he would be able

to have the chickens slaughtered and then perform the *mitzvah* of *kisui hadam* (covering the blood).

Among the many who came that day for *Kapparos* was David, a young man who usually attended Just One Life’s annual *teshuvah* gathering at which Rabbi Yissocher Frand is the featured speaker. David approached Rabbi Katz and said, “It’s my loss, but this year I couldn’t make it to the Just One Life gathering.”

“Let’s talk after we’ve both finished *Kapparos*,” Rabbi Katz replied.

Later, Rabbi Katz led David to his car and handed him an audio cassette. “Here is Rabbi Frand’s address at this year’s gathering. The cassette is yours as a gift.”

Over the next few months, Rabbi Katz usually met David at *Maariv* in Yeshivah Ohr HaChaim in Kew Gardens Hills. David lived in Forest Hills, and Rabbi Katz wondered why he did not *daven* closer to home. One night, David explained, “On that tape, Rabbi Frand discussed the fact that it is now one year since the attack *continued on page 2*

ARTSCROLL PUBLICATIONS

Rav Mordechai Gifter (1915-2001) was a leading *rosh yeshivah*, a brilliant Talmudic scholar, and an eloquent spokesman on behalf of American Torah Jewry. Born and bred in America, he traveled to Europe to study in the great *yeshivah* of Telshe in Lithuania, where he grew in his Torah knowledge and proficiency. After serving in a few rabbinic positions in America, Rav Gifter was summoned to become a *rebbe* in the newly established Telshe Yeshivah in Cleveland. Ultimately, he became *rosh yeshivah* of the Telshe Yeshivah.

After visiting gravesites on Har Hazeisim, Rav Gifter told his son-in-law, Rav Avrohom Chaim Feuer, of the Kabbalistic view that arranging a burial place during one's lifetime is meritorious to attaining a long life, for by making death become a reality, the spiritual quality of one's days dramatically improves.

Indeed, a *bachur* once asked Rav Gifter how he managed to remember everything he learned. Was he blessed with a photographic memory?

"Not at all," he replied. "You see, I view every day as possibly being

my last day on earth. I purchased a gravesite on Har Hazeisim over 15 years ago. So when I learn a piece of *Gemara*, I approach it as though it might be my last. I treasure it. And as a result, it is so precious to me that I never forget it."



Rav Gifter's desk with the front strip of molding removed.

When he was still in his 40s, Rav Gifter wrote a will in which instructed how he should be eulogized, asking that his *talmidim* study for the merit of his *neshamah*, that his *matzeivah* give him no titles except for HaRav, and that it should say one simple line: "He taught Torah and raised students of stature and high caliber in Torah and fear of the Almighty."

It is told that following the passing of Rav Meir Simcha Hakohen of Dvinsk (1843-1926), the Roga-

tchover Gaon, Rav Yosef Rosen (1858-1936), also a *rav* in Dvinsk, paid his colleague the highest tribute: He went to Rav Meir Simcha's *beis medrash* and ordered to bury Rav Meir Simcha's *shtender* in the grave alongside him. This practice is performed only when it is absolutely certain that the *shtender* can testify in heaven to its owner's total dedication to Torah.

Similarly, Rav Gifter intended to have his *aron* (casket) one day constructed from the wood of the desk reserved solely for diligently learning Torah. In the end, however, since the *minhag* in Eretz Yisrael is not to inter the deceased in a coffin, but rather to place the body directly into the earth, his wishes could not be fulfilled. Yet, his *rebbetzin* wanted, in some way, to carry out the wishes of her husband, so she had the front strip of molding of the *rosh yeshivah's* table pried off to be placed alongside him as an eternal witness to his absolute commitment to Torah. 📖

## SEIZE THE MOMENT

continued from page 1

on the Twin Towers. He said that we have to ask ourselves if that tragedy has really effected a change within ourselves in any significant way. For example, is our *davening* any better than it was before 9/11?

"I thought about it and I realized that my *davening* leaves a lot to be desired. I decided to undertake serious improvements. One is to make sure that I always *daven Maariv* with a *minyán*, which I had not been careful about in the past.

I've been keeping to this commitment and I come here for *Maariv* because seeing you inspires me. After all, you're the one who gave me the tape that started me on this path of change!"

David's enthusiasm for what he had accomplished influenced some of his friends to undertake similar commitments. But then, Rabbi Katz noticed that David had not been at *Maariv* for a few days and he became concerned — until he received a phone call from David.

"Rabbi Katz, I'm sure you've been

wondering where I've been the last few days. Well, this is the story. You know that bulletin board in the back of the *beis midrash* where we *daven Maariv*? Well, I was looking at it one night and I noticed a sign saying that they were desperately seeking someone with a certain blood type to donate platelets to save a person's life. I called the number and, as it turns out, I'm a match for that person ... So I've been away for these past few days..."

And all from listening to a tape, being inspired, and acting upon that inspiration. 📖



Open Your Eyes by Rabbi Dov Keilson

Rav Avraham Grodzinsky, famed *mashgiach* of the Slabodka Yeshiva and close *rebbe* of Rav Avigdor Miller, once asked a student how things were. The boy answered, “In *ruchniyus*, excellent. In *gashmiyus*, *nu-nu*.” Rav Avraham retold this incident during a *shmuess* to his *talmidim*. He explained that the boy was in effect saying, “In what I am doing for Hashem, excellent. I am doing a very good job! But regarding that which Hashem is doing for me? *Nu-nu*, could be better.”

Unfortunately, this attitude is all too common and is the reason why so many people do not spend their lives thanking Hashem. They are so distracted by the cracks and bumps on the road of life that they fail to notice the endless kindness that is being showered upon them every second.

The *posuk* states, *מה יתאוונן אדם חי* - *What can a person complain about if he is alive?!* (*Eichah* 3:39). The gift of life is so overwhelming that if one is blessed with it, he cannot possibly have any complaints (see *Rashi, Kiddushin* 80b).

The Lomza *mashgiach* once saw a *bachur* walking in the halls of the *yeshiva* looking downcast. The *mashgiach* took him by the lapel and exclaimed, “*Mazel tov! Mazel tov!*” The boy looked at his *rebbe* in wonder and asked, “What is the *mazel tov, rebbi?*” The *mashgiach* replied, “You are alive! You are alive! That is the greatest *mazel tov!*”



Rav Avraham Grodzinsky

**THE GIFT OF LIFE IS SO OVERWHELMING THAT IF ONE IS BLESSED WITH IT, HE CANNOT POSSIBLY HAVE ANY COMPLAINTS.**

Nothing in life should be taken for granted. How do we not appreciate, for example, the fact that we do not have a headache? Do we realize how complicated the components in our brain are? Even if we were to take the greatest telephone company with connections all over the world, the brain is still thirty-seven thousand times more complicated! Yet, in the abundance of Hashem’s kindness, we *baruch Hashem* usually do not have headaches. Do we actually ever stop for a moment to thank Hashem for this phenomenon?

David Hamelech teaches (*Tehillim* 92:5), *כי שמחתני ה' בפתולך*, *כי שמחתני ה' בפתולך* - *When You cause*

*me to rejoice in Your works, Hashem, in Your handiwork I shall praise.*

If we do not open our eyes and recognize the joys of life, then we will also miss out completely on the great purpose of a Jew — to express gratitude.

Let us open our eyes to see and reflect and focus on what Hashem, in His infinite kindness and compassion, is doing for us every single second we are alive, for the kindnesses we receive second by second, as well as the gift of life itself. When we begin to see, we will begin to thank, and our lives will become an unending song of gratitude. 📖

Amazing stories from Nava Ben Moshe about the power of *hafrashas challah* by Rabbi Nachman Seltzer

One of the most interesting elements of *hafrashas challah* is that when a woman begins doing *hafrashas challah*, she finds herself in a “*mitzvah goreres mitzvah*” chain, where one *mitzvah* leads to another, no matter what the religious level of the woman doing the *hafrashah*. It’s a built-in, almost automatic result.

This isn’t a regular loaf of bread. This is *Shabbos* challah. It’s connected to something much greater than the sum of its parts. It brings the woman back to the home of her

grandmother, to the unique aromas of her childhood. Once that challah emerges from the oven in all its glory, she can’t just place it on the table. No. The table needs to be set so that it is worthy of such challah.

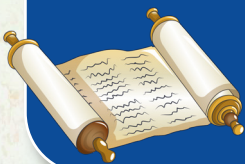
Before she knows what’s happening, she is lighting *Shabbos* candles, because challah and candle lighting are the kind of *mitzvos* that go together. It’s a chain. A wondrous chain that has brought so many back to full *mitzvah* observance, all from the very outwardly simple act of baking challah — a process that

will make a person’s life so much sweeter.

Here’s the beautiful part:

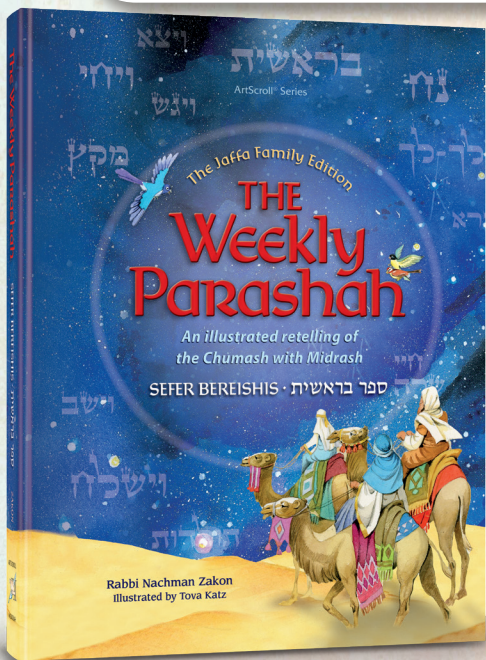
The process of *hafrashas challah* proves that you don’t need a degree in *kiruv*. Every single one of us can bring people back to Torah, sometimes in ways that are so simple, it boggles the imagination. Even just baking a challah and giving it to your not-yet-religious neighbor sends a powerful message: “I care about you. And *Shabbos* cares about you.” 📖





# Parashah for Children

## פרשת ויצא



How old was Yaakov when he got married?

84

Why didn't Yaakov marry Rachel right away?

For one week after the wedding, Yaakov was celebrating his marriage to Leah. It wouldn't be right to celebrate marrying Rachel at the same time. That would be mixing two happy events with each other.

Of the sons of Yaakov, whose name contains all the letters of Hashem's Name?

Yehudah. His name — יהודה — is made up of the four letters of Hashem's Name, plus the letter *dalet*.

## Please, Not Eisav!

**L**avan had two daughters, Leah and Rachel. Leah was the oldest, and her eyes were weak. Rachel was very beautiful.

People love talking about *shidduchim*! They used to say that since Yitzchak has two sons, and his brother-in-law Lavan has two daughters, Leah, the older daughter, would marry Eisav, the older son. Yaakov, the younger son, would marry Rachel, the younger daughter.

When Leah asked people what kind of man Eisav was, she was horrified. People told her that he was an evil murderer. She did not want to marry him!

Leah sat in prayer, and she cried and cried to Hashem, "Please let it be Your will that I do not marry Eisav." All that crying made her eyes weak.

Prayers are powerful. As we shall see, not only did she not marry Eisav, she married Yaakov — and she married him even before Rachel did!



Giving Leah the secret signal was a very great thing for Rachel to do. When the First *Beis HaMikdash* was destroyed Hashem promised He would end the exile and bring the Jews back to Eretz Yisrael. Why? As a reward to Rachel for what she did.



Why did Yaakov treat Lavan with *derech erez*? Lavan had cheated him, making him work for fourteen years instead of seven by switching Leah for Rachel. Must you show respect to such a man? The answer is – yes! When dealing with dishonest people you can do two things. You can behave like them – or you can be better than they are. Yaakov chose to be better than Lavan.