



# NEFESH SHIMSHON

DIVREI TORAH ON THE WEEKLY PARSHA AND HOLIDAYS FROM  
THE TEACHINGS OF **RABBEINU SHIMSHON DOVID PINCUS ZT"l**

ישראל בן רחל נחמה ויעקב בן רחל נחמה  
MAY THEY GROW TO BE TALMIDEI CHACHAMIM AND OVDEI HASHEM.

PEARLS OF WISDOM  
FROM THE PARSHAH

## A Belated Reward

וַיְהִי נֹחַ בֶּן חָמֵשׁ מֵאוֹת שָׁנָה וַיֻּלְּד נֹחַ אֶת שֵׁם אֶת חָם וְאֶת יָפֶת. (בראשית ה, לב)

**Noach was five hundred years old, and Noach gave birth to Shem, Cham and Yefes.**  
(*Bereishis 5:32*)

It took quite a long time until Noach finally got established, and there is an important lesson here for us all.

In Noach's time, everyone was rushing down the wrong path. They gave *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* only grief. There was just one person who wasn't like that. He was a perfect *tzaddik* and was faithful to his Creator. That was Noach, of course.

We might assume that Noach would be showered with blessing and crowned with great and shining success. But the reality was not that way at all, at least at first. All the people of his generation were living out long and pleasurable lives in great tranquility and wealth. Hashem gave them a taste of *Olam Haba*. And the one *tzaddik*, who found favor in *Hashem's* eyes, didn't even have children, which is a very great lack.

Everyone who saw this must have laughed at him: "Hey, there's Noach the '*tzaddik*.' What good does it do him? What's his reward for being honest,

upright and moral? Zilch. That loser doesn't even have children."

This wasn't a passing matter, either. It wasn't just a year or a decade like that. It went on for five hundred years! Everyone else was having children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren, and Noach the *tzaddik* was the most miserable and unfortunate person on earth, despised and reviled by all.

But we know the end of the story. He eventually had three sons, and their billions of descendants fill the world and are alive and well to this very day, while not a single soul is left from everyone else. All those people who thought they were so smart and led such successful lives are not here anymore to tell about it. The *Mabul* came and washed them away.

This phenomenon from the world's early days sets a pattern that has repeated itself countless times throughout history. Great empires, replete with wisdom, wealth and beauty, came on the scene one

after another, with great prominence and fanfare. Each met its own “*Mabul*,” and was deleted.

But we, the Jewish people, are alive and well today, even though a very many “*Mabuls*” have swept over us. And we will be around forever, because we have a “Noah’s Ark” in which we hide every time another “*Mabul*” comes.

What is this “Noah’s Ark”?

It is the *shul* and the *beis midrash*, as it says, “Go, My people, come into your rooms, and close your

doors behind you. Hide for a short moment until the fury passes.”

This verse from *Yeshayahu* applies both to *K’lal Yisrael* as a whole and to each individual Jew. The *beis midrash*, the Torah class – they are our shield and shelter from the great “*Mabul*” that is presently raging outside (rampant G-dlessness and self-abandonment to sensual pleasures). Never has there been a *Mabul* like this. But as long as we stay inside our “Noah’s Ark,” we will be safe and sound! ●

## Be a Partner

וַיַּחַל נֹחַ אִישׁ הָאָדָמָה. (בראשית ט, כ)

**Noach the man of the earth began... (*Bereishis* 9:20)**

**“Man of the earth” – Because of him, the people of the world perished, because he did not pray for them. (*Zohar, Vayikra* 15)**

Noach is called “man of the earth” because he is responsible for the fate that befell the people of the earth. If he would have prayed for them, the *Mabul* wouldn’t have destroyed them.

Why didn’t Noach pray for them? Why wouldn’t “a perfectly righteous man” *daven* for the welfare of his generation?

The answer we will offer here has to do with being a partner. There is a difference between a partner in a business and a worker for a business. We find that *Chazal* repeatedly use the expression, “Scripture considers it as if he were a **partner** with *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* in the creation of the world.<sup>1</sup>

This concept of partnership is fundamental to Judaism. It expresses the basic difference between the Jewish people and the nations of the world. The Jewish people are partners in the system. They are not merely created objects that exist in the world; they are partners in the world’s creation. The power of partnership expresses itself in various areas, but mainly in the Torah. The Torah is the soul of the world, and the Jewish people, by learning the Torah, bestow life upon the world.

There is a big difference between a partner and a worker. A worker can’t make fundamental changes to the system; he can’t build new parts of the business or do away with existing ones. But a partner’s actions

<sup>1</sup> *Shabbos* 10a et al.

### לְעִילּוֹי נִשְׁמֹת

מִזִּדְדֵי מוֹשֶׁה בֶּן אֱלִיעֶזֶר הַמְבוֹרָגָד ז”ל

וּמִזִּדְדֵי בְרוּךְ זָאב בֶּן נִפְתָּלִי קָרְאוֹס ז”ל

נִדְבַת נְבִדִיחִים ~ עֲטַרְת זְקִינִים בְּנֵי בָנִים וְהַפְאֵרַת בָּנִים אֲבוֹתָם

have far-reaching power.

*Hashem* made us partners in His world. Our actions help shape reality. The world is in our hands. And Torah learning is our greatest power to shape and influence the world. When we seek to ascertain the Torah's true meaning, we thereby wield a certain control over the Torah. We make determinations.

*Chazal* speak of this mainly in connection with the determination of the date of the new moon.<sup>2</sup> This is where it comes out most beautifully. The Jewish people set when the month will begin, and this in turn sets the dates for the holidays that fall in that month, thereby determining what happens in the world in various ways.

Another big difference between a partner and a worker is the sense of personal involvement. A hired worker doesn't care as deeply about what happens in the business. He doesn't own it. He does his best at the job, puts in an honest day's work, receives his salary at the end of the month, and that's as far as it goes. His monthly salary does not reflect fluctuations in the business's success.

If the business closes down, he will have to look for a new job, but he isn't the one who files for bankruptcy. That's why he doesn't care as deeply about the state of the business.

But a partner has everything at stake. When the business declines, it is his loss. If things are really bad, he might have no cash flow at all, and be living in poverty.

But when it goes well, it's his gain. He takes a cut of the profits. He has a share in the net worth of the business.

This explains why Noach did not *daven* for his generation as he should have. Noach saw himself as a worker. It's not his world; it's *Hashem's* world. It's not his personal loss; it's *Hashem's* loss. He didn't care like someone who sees himself as "a partner in Creation" does. Yes, Noach served *Hashem* faithfully. He was a reliable worker. But if something happens to the world, it's not his "business."

*Avraham Avinu's* approach was quite different.

<sup>2</sup> See *Yerushalmi, Sanhedrin* 1:2.

At *Bris Bein Habesarim*, *Hashem* informed him that his offspring would be "a stranger in a land not theirs."<sup>3</sup> Why? Because Avraham just made a *Bris* with *Hashem*, and a *Bris* is a covenant, it creates a partnership. Avraham is now a "partner" in *Hashem's* "business." When the business suffers, the partners suffer along with it. That's how it goes.

So before *Hashem* went to overturn Sedom and Amorah, He "felt obligated" to inform Avraham, and exclaimed:

הֲמַכְסֶּה אֲנִי מֵאַבְרָהָם – "Shall I conceal this from Avraham?!"<sup>4</sup>

Avraham was a partner in *Hashem's* world, and it was only right that he should know what was being done with it. Indeed, Avraham prayed and pleaded valiantly when he heard the proposed plan, putting forth many arguments against it, because he felt personally connected. He was a partner in the world.

Noach didn't feel this way, and didn't do what Avraham did, so the *Mabul* was called after his name: "For this, the waters of Noach, are to Me."<sup>5</sup>

This explains the following story recounted in the *Gemara*:

Ula and Rav Chisda were walking on the way. When they came to the entrance of the home of Rav China bar Chanilai, Rav Chisda groaned and sighed. Ula said to him, "Why are you sighing? Didn't Rav say that a sigh breaks half of a person's body?"

Rav Chisda replied, "How could I not sigh? A home that had sixty bakers by day and sixty bakers by night, and they baked for anyone who was in need. And he never took his hand out of his money purse, because he thought that perhaps a pauper from a good family will come, and while I am putting my hand into the money purse, he will feel ashamed.... Now this home has been reduced

<sup>3</sup> *Bereishis* 15:13.

<sup>4</sup> *Bereishis* 18:17.

<sup>5</sup> *Yeshayahu* 54:9.

to a mound of earth. Shall I not sigh?”

Ula said back, “This is what R. Yochanan said: ‘From the day that *Beis Hamikdash* was destroyed, it was decreed on the homes of *tzaddikim* to be destroyed, as it is written, “In the ears of *Hashem* of H-sts, if many homes will not become desolate, the great and good will have no inhabitants.” And R. Yochanan said, ‘In the future, *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* will make them settled again, as it is written, “A song of ascents for David. Those who trust in *Hashem* like Mount Zion.” Just as *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* will, in the future, make Mount Zion settled again, so it is with the homes of the *tzaddikim*. *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* will in the future make them settled again.”

Ula saw that Rav Chisda still was not calmed. He said to him, “It is sufficient for a servant to be like his master.”

Now we will explain the back and forth. Rav Chisda sighed. Ula remarked that it was decreed on the homes of the *tzaddikim* to be destroyed. Rav Chisda interpreted this as a punishment that

falls also on the *tzaddikim*, thus he was not calmed. True, *tzaddikim* can incur punishment, but perfect *tzaddikim* are above all evil decrees, as it is written **יִפֹּל יְגִשׁ מִצְדָּדָה אֶלְךָ וְרִבְבָה מִיְמִינְךָ אֵלֶיךָ לֹא יִגָּשׁ** – “At your side will fall a thousand, and ten thousand at your right hand, but it [the punishment] will not approach you.”<sup>6</sup> This is why Rav Chisda was not satisfied with Ula’s explanation, nor with his consolation that their homes will be rebuilt.

Then Ula explained that it is not a punishment. Rather, “It is sufficient for a servant to be like his master.” In other words, the *tzaddikim* are not like workers, who have reward and punishment. They are like members of the household. When the master’s home is destroyed, this leaves also the son and the servant homeless. So the *tzaddikim*, like their Master, are homeless.

Also the consolation of rebuilding is to be understood in this light. It is not just that their homes are destined to be rebuilt. Rather, when the Master’s home will be built, the servant’s home will be like the Master’s home, for “The servant of a king is like a king.”<sup>7</sup> Upon hearing this, Rav Chisda was calmed. ●

<sup>6</sup> *Tehillim* 91:7.

<sup>7</sup> *Yalkut Shimoni, Bereishis* 21.

## An Imperfect Mitzvah

וַיָּמָת הָרֵן עַל פְּנֵי תְּרַח אָבִיו בְּאֶרֶץ מוֹלְדוֹתוֹ בְּאוּר כְּשָׂדִים. (בראשית יא, כח)

**Haran died in front of Terach his father in his homeland in *Ur Kasdim*. (*Bereishis* 11:28)**

*Chumash Bereishis* is called *Sefer HaYashar* because it tells of the *Avos*, of their outstanding straightness and righteousness, and their absolutely awesome dedication to *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*. The Torah recounts all this so we, too, will follow in their footsteps, and walk on the straight path, each according to his ability.

Besides the *Avos*, the Torah tells stories also of people less righteous. It is very important to pay

attention to what may be learned from their deeds, too. If the Torah went out of its way to recount the story, it must bear an important lesson for us.

Our *pasuk* tells of *Avraham Avinu’s* brother, Haran, who died “in front of Terach his father in his homeland in *Ur Kasdim*.”

What happened to Avraham’s brother? How did he meet an early death?

The *Midrash* explains<sup>1</sup> that when Avraham smashed the idols of his father Terach, after which the wicked king Nimrod decreed that Avraham be cast into a fiery furnace, Haran was standing on the side, hesitating. He thought to himself: “If Avram wins, I am with him. And if Nimrod wins, I am with him.”

In the end, Avraham emerged unscathed from the fire, which was an open miracle. They then put Haran, Avraham’s brother, on the spot: “Whose side are you on?” Haran answered, “Avram’s.” They cast him, too, into the fiery furnace, and there he died.

Avraham gave up his life for the sake of Heaven, and was saved. Haran did not have the same lofty *kavanah*. He had in mind to go with the winner, whoever it would be. He died in the furnace. No miracle took place for him.

We need to understand what happened here. Why did *Hashem* withhold the reward for Haran’s good deed? True, Haran may not have had the purest intentions, but still, he threw himself into the fire in the Name of *Hashem*. Why wasn’t he saved?

Let’s take a look at Haran’s children. He fathered Sarah, who is the Matriarch of the entire Jewish people, and Lot, from whom descended two very great *tzaddikos*: Rus and Naomi. They are the matriarchs of the Davidic dynasty and of *Mashiach*.

This shows that every good deed, even if it lacks pure intentions, even if it was not performed for the sake of Heaven, is very greatly rewarded!

<sup>1</sup> *Bereishis Rabbah* 38:13.

Sometimes we see people doing good deeds, such as pledging donations in shul, or assisting with a certain matter, and it is clear that their intentions are not so pure. They want to earn a good name for themselves and build up their status in the community, and so forth.

It’s true that this is not the optimal way to do *mitzvos*, but we mustn’t make light of it, either. It has a lot of value. *Chazal* say:

A person should always engage in Torah learning and *mitzvos*, even if it is not for *Hashem’s* sake, because from doing it not for *Hashem’s* sake, he will come to do it for *Hashem’s* sake.

As a reward for the forty-two *korbanos* that Balak offered, he merited that Rus will descend from him.<sup>2</sup>

*Chazal* said further:

He who says, “This coin is for *tzedakah* so that my son may live,” or “So that I will merit the World to Come,” is a perfect *tzaddik*.<sup>3</sup>

We may not be on the highest *madreigah*. Perhaps our deeds are not so pure. But we should still do whatever we are capable of. *Chazal* promised that from *shelo lishmah*, we will come to *lishmah*. In the end, we will purify our *kavanos* and do our deeds with proper *sheleimus*. ●

<sup>2</sup> *Sanhedrin* 105b.

<sup>3</sup> *Rosh Hashanah* 4a.

## Pray Before It Happens

כִּי מִי נֶחַ זֹאת לִי. (מתוך ההפטרָה)

**For this, the waters of Noach, are to Me. (from the *Haftarah*)**

*Chazal* learn from this verse<sup>1</sup> that Noach was called to account for the *Mabul*, and that’s why it was

called after his name: מי נח, “The waters of Noach.”

But who was really responsible for the tragedy that took place – Noach, or the people of his

<sup>1</sup> *Zohar Bereishis* 67b.

generation? Weren't they steeped in robbery and forbidden relations? Why was Noach, the *tzaddik* of the generation, held to account for what happened?

It's because a perfect *tzaddik* like Noach was expected to pray and beseech on behalf of his generation, and since he didn't, the Flood was named after him.

We will explain the point. After the *Mabul* was over, when Noach exited the *Teivah* and saw the utter destruction, he was moved by the tragic sight. He cried tearfully and offered *korbanos* to *Hashem*. Due to the pleasing scent of Noach's *korbanos*, *Hashem* swore He would never bring another flood to destroy the world, as it says, וַיִּרַח ה' אֶת רִיחַ הַגִּיחָח, – “And *Hashem* smelled the pleasing scent...”<sup>2</sup>

This is why Noach was held accountable. When his heart was aroused, when he cried and prayed, when he offered pleasing *korbanos*, the effect was enormous! *Hashem* swore He would never bring another *Mabul*. If so, why didn't Noach do so *before* disaster struck? Why wasn't he aroused to tearful prayer while the world could still be saved? He could have prevented it from happening.

We find this same idea expressed in a *Midrash*. It is written:

עַל נְהָרוֹת בָּבֶל שָׂם יְשָׁבְנוּ גַם בְּכִינוּ – On the rivers of Babylon, there we sat and also wept.<sup>3</sup>

The *Midrash* recounts that when the exiled people of *Yehudah* saw *Yirmeyahu HaNavi* leaving them on the banks of the rivers of Babylon, and going his way:

They all broke out in tears, and screamed

<sup>2</sup> Bereishis 8:21.

<sup>3</sup> Tehillim 137:1.

out, “Our Master *Yirmeyahu*, are you leaving us?!”

*Yirmeyahu* answered them, “I bring heaven and earth to testify that if you would have cried once while you were still in *Tzion*, you would not have been exiled.”<sup>4</sup>

I remember that when I was a child, when I would get up after a good, long, uninterrupted learning session, my father would say to me, “Now you are in trouble. Now you see that if you want to do it, you can. So what happened yesterday, and the day before?”

Tragedies happen so we will feel pain and thereby be woken up to *daven* and cry out to *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*. Since this is their purpose, if we would have cried out before the tragedy, we could have stopped it from happening. If we would have cried yesterday, there would be no reason for today's tragedy, since its purpose was already achieved.

This puts a question to us. Why didn't we cry yesterday?

The *Chofetz Chaim* would exhort people that they should *daven* and plead to *Hashem* while things are good, like they would if they had fallen ill, *chas veshalom*. As *Chazal* say:

A person should always pray before the trouble comes.<sup>5</sup>

We all would like to avoid sickness and trouble and calamity, the whole purpose of which is to make us cry out to *Hashem*. So we should *daven* now, while we are still okay, and save ourselves from what didn't have to be. ●

<sup>4</sup> *Yalkut Shimoni*, *Yirmeyahu* 327.

<sup>5</sup> *Sanhedrin* 44b.