

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 חָמֶשׁ מֵאוֹת שָׁנָה וַיּוֹלֶד נֹחַ אֶת שֵׁם אֶת חָם וְאֶת יֶפֶת (ה, לב)

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

In Noah'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 Noah, of course.

We might assume that Noah 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 Noah 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 Noah 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!! ●

Consider the Past and Fear the Future

מִפְנֵי מִי הַמָּבּוּל (ז, ז)

Noah didn’t believe that the decree of the *Mabul* had come to the world until the torrential rains actually fell, and pushed him to enter the Ark.

But how could this be? It says that he was “a perfectly righteous man.” He worked at building the *Teivah* for 120 years. He did so with great self-sacrifice, despite the scorn and persecution of his contemporaries. This is what is called a person of “little faith”?!

The answer is that Noah thought to himself, “*Hashem* is a very merciful G-d, and extremely patient. At the last moment, He could forgive them.”

Mordechai did not take this approach. His *emunah* was greater than Noah’s. When he learned of Haman’s evil plot, and understood that it was actually decreed by Heaven, he thought that was it. They are all doomed to die. He did not calm himself, saying, “Well, maybe *Hashem* will change

His mind at the last moment.” Though it was hard to understand how *Hashem* could wipe them out, seeing as He had sworn to the *Avos* that their seed will live forever, a *kasheh* doesn’t annul *Hashem*’s decree.

Mordechai fully believed that they were in very deep trouble. He gathered all the Jews to pray and cry and fast for their very lives, because the *gezeirah* is for real.

Since Mordechai took it seriously, he did something about it, and was able to annul it. Whereas Noah was not convinced the *Mabul* would really materialize and did not pray accordingly. This actually allowed the *Mabul* to happen. The *Mabul* is named after Noah: “For this, the waters of Noah, are to Me.” They are called Noah’s waters because he was indirectly responsible for them.

In our times, too, every individual should *daven*

לְעִלּוֹי נִשְׁמָה

מִזֶּה מִשָּׁה בֶּן אֱלִיעֶזֶר הַמְּבֹרָכָה ז”ל

וּמִזֶּה בְּרוּךְ זֶאֱבִי בֶּן נִפְתָּלִי קְדָאוֹם ז”ל

נִדְבַת נְדִידָה ~ עֲשֵׂת זָקִים בְּנֵי בָנִים וְהַפָּאָרָה בְּנֵי אֲבוֹתָם

tearfully, from the depths of his heart, that *Hashem* save us from disaster. We live in a generation known for very rapid changes. We should be concerned about what could happen. Some people fret about the economic situation, others are perturbed by issues of national security. Both can affect our lives deeply.

But more than anything, we should worry about spiritual matters. Yes, there are good *yeshivos* and girls' schools these days, but our children still need a lot of prayer, a lot of tears shed at candle-lighting on *Erev Shabbos*.

Parents' tears in *Tehillim* and prayers, over their children's future – that's what helps. Let us observe what happened in the past and learn from it for the future. Our children grow from our tears.

It is recounted that the Brisker Rov in his last days was visited by Rav Shach, who remarked to him that not everyone merited raising such a wonderful family of *Gedolei Torah* as did the Brisker Rov. The Brisker Rov replied, "Do you think I prayed only a few tearful prayers over them?! I fasted so many days for them!"

Let's think about this. In a generation of *Torah*, in a home of *Gedolei Hador*, many days were spent fasting, so many tears were shed over the children that they, too, should be *talmidei chachamim*.

What about us??

Times can and do change. The positive things we enjoy today don't have to stay that way forever. We should pray and cry out now, before it's too late, to be saved from what can be. ●

PARSHA TOPIC

A Jew's Relationship with Hashem is over Wine

וַיִּחַל נֹחַ אִישׁ הָאָדָמָה וַיֵּטַע כֶּרֶם, וַיִּשְׁתַּ מִן הַיַּיִן וַיִּשְׁכָּר וַיַּתְגַּל בְּתוֹךְ אֶהְלָה (ט, כא-כא)

When Noach left the *Teivah*, right away he took some of the kosher animals, as he had seven pairs of them from each species, and he brought *korbanos* to *Hashem*. When *Hashem* smelled the pleasing fragrance of Noach's offerings He promised never to bring another *Mabul*.

Noach was big enough of a *tzaddik* to establish a world with lasting power, a world that goes on and on until the final generation. There will never again be cause for another world-destroying flood.

Then Noach planted a vineyard. He then drank wine, got drunk, and rolled around shamefully in his

tent. What is the point of this story? What are we supposed to learn from it?

The "Self-Made Man"

Adam HaRishon was created perfect. He did not build himself up to be what he was. He was *Hashem's* handiwork.

The next notable *tzaddik* was Noach. Noach was something else altogether. He was born into a world steeped in wickedness, and he successfully stood up to some very difficult tests.

Noach was a "self-made man," in the spiritual

sense. After him came Avraham, who was totally self-made. There never was a person who built himself up from nothing the way Avraham did. It says about him: “Avraham was one and only.”

Besides bringing awareness of *Hashem* back into the world, Avraham also taught the nations how to be civilized and humane, which was *Hashem's* message to the world.

Nowadays, wherever you go, if someone falls in the street and is in distress, an ambulance comes and takes him to a hospital, and they even trouble themselves to contact his family about it. We live in a world where civilized behavior is the norm. This comes from *Avraham Avinu*.

Noach, and even more so Avraham, were “self-made men,” in the spiritual sense.

Adam's World Was Not Meant to Last

The world we live in cannot be based on *Adam HaRishon*, who was created perfect. Hashem has enough angels in heaven. He doesn't need a world full of perfected, angelic beings.

Rather, *Hashem* created us and placed us in this world as creatures who carry “the image of G-d,” thus enabling us to build ourselves and the world. Hashem created *Adam HaRishon*, and we, in Hashem's image, “create” ourselves. This explains why the world of *Adam HaRishon* was destroyed. It was not meant to last.

Thus the *Mabul* was not just a punishment. It was the undoing of *Adam HaRishon's* world, of the original world as created by G-d. Then began a new world based on “*tzaddik*.” The first such *tzaddik* was Noach.

This is our world today. It is a world that stands on the pillar called “*tzaddik*,” as it says: “A *tzaddik* is the foundation of the world.” Our personal world, too, needs to be based on “*tzaddik*.” Each one of us in his own personal world, in his own life, home and family, needs to build things on the foundation of righteousness. This is the world of Noach.

It All Starts With Humanity

Noach established the level of humanity, and on top of this, Avraham came and established the level of the Jewish people. The world's most basic level is that of humanity, and we Jews, in addition to being members of the human race, are also members of the people of Israel. But we cannot disown our basic humanity.

As explained, kindness was instilled into the world as a *human* trait. It is not uniquely Jewish. It is important for us to realize this.

Many young people, when Mother tells them to put on a sweater, don't want to. And when the doctor's orders are to do a certain thing for our health, many of us won't do it unless forced to. That's why *Hashem* in His great mercy created the sense of hunger and made food to be tasty. Otherwise, we might not eat at all.

Why are we this way? What is this strange behavior all about?

It is a *human* trait not to listen to those who are concerned with our bodily welfare. Wearing a sweater, or taking a medicine, is for protecting the body, which is essentially an animal trait. Animals instinctively protect their physical wellbeing. When we are protecting our body, we feel we are being animalistic, which we feel is degrading, so we try to avoid it.

But this is a mistake. If we want to be human, we need to protect the body, too. We need to do everything this entails, for we cannot disown our bodies.

Similarly, there are Jews who look down on humanistic matters, such as being polite, saying please and thank you, etc. They feel it is beneath them, because they are not mere human beings, they are Jews.

This is a serious mistake. In order to be a Jew, you first need to be a human being.

In short, Noach created the world of humanity, and Avraham created the world of Jewishness. Now let's talk about what a human being is and what a Jew is.

Speaking is Connecting

How shall we define being human? Many objects have a clear definition. It is relatively easy to define a chair, a table, a house, etc. What about a human being?

It seems to me that a human being is the only object in the world with such an unclear definition. One scientist will say that a human is an intelligent animal, and another will insist on a different definition. What is the true definition of a human being? What unique ability does a human have?

The true, and only, definition of a human being is as follows: a creature that has the innate ability to connect to *Hashem*. So to speak, a human being is like an antenna that can pick up airwaves broadcast from afar. We naturally conceive of *Hashem* as being in heaven, whereas we are here on earth. Between heaven and earth there is a vast gap.

Humanity is an instrument that has the innate capacity to bridge the gap between heaven and earth, to connect to *Hashem* and have a relationship with Him.

Once when I was speaking in Johannesburg, South Africa, to a small group of Israelis gathered in someone's home, a listener (who was not Torah-observant) asked me, "What do you mean when you say, 'To connect to *Hashem*?'"

I answered, "If I speak to you, and I know that you are listening, and you know that I know that you are listening, and I know that you know that I know that you are listening, we are connected. It's a simple fact. In the same way, if you speak to *Hashem*, and you know that *Hashem* is listening, and He knows that you know that He is listening, you are connected to *Hashem*."

Humanness is the ability to connect to *Hashem*.

Korbanos is the Highest Level

There are different levels of connecting and relating to *Hashem*.

The first is *emunah*, the second is *tefilah*, and the height of connectedness is *korbanos*. The word קרבן

denotes closeness, קרבה, drawing close to *Hashem*. By offering a *korban*, a person says to *Hashem*, so to speak, "I am connected to You down to my last drop of blood! I am ready to give You even my very life-blood!"

In the relationship between man and wife, when the husband feels love, this could be just an internal emotion, and this, too, is good. But it is very important that he express his love also in speech. And the most important thing is to express it even in actions, for instance, by bringing his wife a gift, which is an expression of love.

So it is with love for *Hashem*. The strongest expression of our love for Him is when we take an animal, which externally resembles a human being (it has eyes, ears, mouth, etc) and we say, symbolically, "*Hashem*, I am pouring out my own blood for You!"

When Noach offered a *korban*, this brought him tremendously close to *Hashem*. And when "*Hashem* smelled the pleasing scent" of Noach's offering, He told him, so to speak, "Now humanity has true worth and content. I will no longer need to destroy the world. You have shown yourself to be a solid base for the world."

This is what Noach achieved. He built a lasting world for *Hashem*. But he did not stop there.

Loving *Hashem*

We have defined humanness as the ability to connect to *Hashem*. A human is a being who has a relationship with *Hashem*. If so, what is a Jew?

A Jew has a love relationship, an emotional relationship, with *Hashem*. Not a business relationship, but an emotional relationship. Receiving the *Torah* at Sinai is described in *Shir HaShirim* as a marriage, with the accompanying feelings and emotions.

Noach wanted to establish this kind of a relationship with *Hashem*. He wanted to do what Avraham actually did later on. Noach reached his highest peak of relationship with *Hashem* when he brought his *korbanos*, at which point he wanted to

go even further. He said to *Hashem*, so to speak, "Let us love one another. Love is expressed by sharing joy, by celebrating and drinking wine together."

So after he brought his *korbanos*, Noach planted a vineyard. So to speak, he wanted to drink a *lechayim* with *Hashem*. In this way he sought to create not just a solid relationship with *Hashem*, but a love relationship with Him. In other words, Noach wished to be the father of the Jewish people.

But Hashem did not agree. He brought Noach to drunkenness and disgrace. He showed him, so to speak: "If you want to have a strong relationship with Me as a human being, that's wonderful. But if you want a relationship of love with Me, I am not interested because you are not fitting; you are like a drunken peasant in My eyes." Noach's inner nature was revealed for all to see. A non-Jew, even if he is connected to Hashem, is not to have a love relationship with Him.

Loved Cannot be Forced

Humanity was forced to accept the seven *mitzvos* of Noach. They understood that *Hashem* is all-powerful, that He can punish. But do they enjoy keeping these *mitzvos*? Do they fulfill them with love and joy? Not really, because the *mitzvos* are not fitting to their personalities, to their essence.

But when *Hashem* approached the Jewish people and offered them the *Torah*, accepted it immediately, because it is fitting to them. This is what Jewishness is all about. It is a love relationship with Hashem. And this kind of connection has to start from the person himself. It can never be engendered by the pressure and influence of others.

Only *Avraham Avinu* established this kind of relationship. Avraham was just three years old

when he understood on his own that the world has a Creator, whereupon he drew close to Him. He suffered greatly for his faith and for teaching it to others. He is called, "*Avraham, who loves Me*," and he is the foundation of the Jewish people.

The Chosen People

The nations of the world have complaints against us Jews. It bothers them deeply that we call ourselves the Chosen People and claim that we are privileged to a special relationship with G-d.

Our answer to the nations of the world is very simple. When an employer hires workers, he needs to give them a fair salary. But when someone loves another, it's not a matter of being "fair." It's not a business relationship. Where there is love, gifts are given not because they are "deserved"; they are given out of love.

Noach wanted to invite *Hashem* for a private party, to celebrate together over wine. But *Hashem* chided Noach by bringing him to a shameful state of drunkenness that revealed his inner nature. He was saying to Noach, so to speak, "Just look at yourself. That's no way to behave. I am sorry, but I can't drink with such company."

A relationship of love with *Hashem* is not a matter of reward. It is not payment for services rendered. It is a matter of love, and *Avraham Avinu* is the one who entered upon such a relationship with *Hashem*.

A non-Jew doesn't, by nature, joyfully give up his life for *Hashem*. He does what he has to do, and that's why his relationship with *Hashem* is not defined as a love relationship. But a Jew brings a wine libation with his *korban*. Whenever he connects to Hashem, he does it with true, inner joy, with wine, out of love. He is excited over it, in an uplifted spirit of *kedushah*. ●