

*Rebbetzin* discussed something. Then, they both left the house, leaving the man waiting and wondering. When *Rav Isser Zalmen* returned, he went right back to his discussion with the man as if nothing had occurred. "Where were we?" he asked. The man, of course, was not prepared to return to the conversation until he became privy to what had just taken place. A noise in the kitchen; the *Rebbetzin* cried out; the hushed discussion; both leaving and returning a while later. The man felt that he deserved an explanation. Obviously, he must have been close to the *Rosh Yeshivah* to make such a request.

*Rav Isser Zalmen* began to explain what had happened. A pot of milk in the kitchen had boiled over and spilled. He and his wife had a discussion to figure out how such a thing could have happened. The *Rebbetzin* suddenly realized that she had forgotten to pay the milkman for the milk. They both left immediately to search for the milkman and pay him. When he received the money, the milkman remarked that he did not know how he would have purchased food for dinner that night.

If things do not go smoothly, one should stop and ask himself: What did I do, what am I doing wrong? Whether one calls it retributive justice, tit for tat, what goes around comes around, or *middah k'neged middah*, measure for measure, it is something very real in our lives, something that, if we were only to open our eyes, might change the course of our lives.

בעצם היום הזה בא נח... אל התבה

**On that very day Noach came... into the Ark. (7:13)**

Can you imagine being too lazy to repent – even when you see clearly in black and white that the punishment for your sins is imminent? This is exactly what took place when Noach entered the *Teivah*, Ark. *Rashi* quotes the *Sifri (Ha'azinu, Bereishis Rabbah)* that Hashem made a point to have Noach enter the Ark *b'etzem hayom*, in midday, in full view of everyone. Apparently, Noach's compatriots were determined to prevent him from entering the Ark and saving himself. They declared that they would destroy the Ark and kill Noach. Hashem showed them that man is powerless before G-d.

Now, let us analyze these people. Clearly, they believed that there would be a flood. For one hundred and twenty years, they listened to Noach announce the end was coming. Hashem was going to wipe everyone out. They believed it enough to threaten Noach's welfare. Even when it began to rain, they did nothing but attempt to kill Noach. Why did they not get with the program and repent? **Horav Yaakov Kamenetzky, zl**, explains that they were lazy. Indolence can be devastating. Not only is it a human deficiency, but we see here that it ultimately cost the people of Noach's generation their lives. They could have repented. They should have repented, but they did not, because repentance demands effort. They were not willing to go that far.

I just came across an interesting quote: "Tomorrow is the only day of the year that appeals to a lazy man." *Machar*, tomorrow, is more than laziness; it is the word which identifies and defines Amalek, who always pushes it off until the next day.

We hear a great, inspirational *shmuess*, lecture; we are enthusiastic and inclined to change, to accept positive resolutions in our life. The Amalek/*yetzer hora*, evil inclination, within us says: "Great idea, but why not wait until the morning. Tomorrow is as good as today; what is the rush?" Tomorrow we are no longer in the mood. Amalek has won.

**Va'ani Tefillah**

אנחנו קדוש ושמן קדוש – *Atah kadosh v'Shimchah kadosh*. You are holy and Your name is holy.

We use the word holy arbitrarily, often without thinking of its meaning. We say *Atah kadosh* – "You (alone) are holy." Hashem alone is holy. The appellation "holy" applies only to Hashem, because only He is truly holy. **Horav Avigdor Miller, zl**, translates *kadosh* as perfect. Holy is perfect. Holy is the quality of true perfection. Thus, only Hashem can have the title holy, because only He is perfect. Men and objects and certain character traits and practices are called "holy." This is due to their close relationship with Hashem, the source of all *kedushah*. You alone are perfect. The closer one moves to Hashem, by following in His ways, the greater is the degree of "holiness," but perfection is achieved only by Hashem.

Hashem's Name is perfect, since He is perfect. Name can refer to the Name, which we utter with our lips, or it may refer to the report and knowledge of His deeds and ways. Thus, the word name, refers to more than just the Name we call Hashem. It refers to everything, which we perceive of Him, which is essentially endless. We believe that everything concerning Hashem is perfection. This behooves us to delve into and understand His ways and deeds, because that is the way in which we develop a deeper cognition of His greatness.

In loving memory of our dear  
husband, Abba and Zeidy,  
on his yartzheit  
Mr. Zev Aryeh Solomon

ר' זאב ארי' ב"ר יעקב שמואל ז"ל

נפטר ח' חשוון תשע"ד

ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

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**Parashas Noach**

תשע"ז

פרשת נח

**TORAH THOUGHTS ON THE PARSHA**

אנחנו תולדות נח נח איש צדיק תמים היה בדורותיו

**These are the offspring of Noach – Noach was a righteous man, perfect in his generations. (6:9)**

The phrase *b'dorosav*, "in his generations," has given rise to much commentary. One is either righteous, or he is not. What does "his generations" have to do with it? *Rashi* cites a dispute among *Chazal* as to the nature of this phrase: Is it an accolade, meant to praise Noach? Or a deficiency, considering Noach to be righteous only in contrast to his generation? Some see Noach as a very righteous person who was able to withstand the extreme evil of his generation. Indeed, had he lived in the era of Avraham *Avinu*, Noach would have been even greater. Others view his righteousness through the lens of contraposition. He was a *tzaddik*, righteous man, only in contrast to the people of his time. Reading this *Rashi* begs elucidation. The Torah attests to Noach's exemplary character, his ethical devoutness and unique moral compass. Why not leave well enough alone? He was a "good guy" – leave it at that. Why search for a way to paint his impeccable character in a deficient manner?

The **Alter, zl, m'Novoradok** explains that, indeed, both perspectives on Noach advanced by *Chazal* depict him as a *tzaddik*. The dispute is not concerning his level of *tzidkus*, but rather, concerning what motivated his righteousness. Some say that Noach wanted to grow spiritually, to grow closer to Hashem. He was self-motivated, because he understood the importance of a life of holiness and purity, a life of spiritual value in which morality is Heavenly-defined, not one based on human subjectivity.

The other position taken by our sages sees Noach choosing a life of piety because he was morally outraged by the behavior of his compatriots. When he saw how the members of his generation were steeped in licentiousness, moral corruption and avarice, he knew that he must distance himself from them as much as possible. Thus, both positions taken by *Chazal* applaud Noach as a *tzaddik*. Their opinions are contrasted only with regard to Noach's motivation: Was it positive growth? Or a reaction to society's revolting behavior?

The very fact that one who lives in a corrupt society, in an environment whose moral compass is maleficent, yet retains his distance from the common way of life, is in and of itself a commendable accolade. People are influenced by their environments. If one can fight against the negative pressure, he is deserving of praise and positive recognition. One's good deeds

are measured by the barometer of the challenges and obstacles over which he must triumph in order to maintain his spiritual status quo. The nature of man is to follow, to succumb to the allure of the society in which he lives. To confront and rise above the evil is meritorious. To suggest that he would be even greater under more conducive circumstances does not negate his present righteous status. It merely reinforces his present distinction.

**Horav Yaakov Yitzchak Ruderman, zl**, augments this idea with a vignette cited from the *Sifrei Kabbalah* concerning a dialogue which ensued between *Horav Chaim Vital, zl*, and his *Rebbe*, the holy *Arizal*. *Rav Chaim* asked a compelling question: How does Heaven view the *avodas hakodesh*, the holy endeavor/service, of the righteous Jews of that generation (sixteenth century) in contrast to the service performed by the holy *Tanaaim* and *Amoraim*, the *Gaonim* followed by the *Rabbanan Svravi*? Our *avodah* must pale by comparison to theirs. What value does our service have?

The *Arizal* replied with a story. The king of Egypt received a special gift from an admirer who was visiting his country: a parrot. This was at a time when it was absolutely unheard of to find anything that was not a member of the human species that spoke. People were amazed, as it was truly a unique gift. The *Arizal* questioned this phenomenon. What was so astonishing about a parrot speaking, more so than the ability of a human being to speak? The answer is simple: all humans speak. We take it for granted – despite the fact that it is a miracle. A bird, however, does not speak. To discover a bird that talks like a man is amazing!

The *Arizal* continued, "Herein lies the answer to your question. It is certainly true that our generation in no way compares to the previous generations. They were giants in a world inhabited with giants. Our generation is morally corrupt. The entire world has lost its spiritual and moral compass. Nonetheless, we go about our business serving Hashem, learning Torah as much as possible under the circumstances. True, our service and that of Noach are/were deficient in comparison to that of Avraham *Avinu*. The mere fact, however, that we are trying to make the effort to serve Hashem to the best of our abilities is every reason for praise.

Our generation has its challenges. Society from without has had a deleterious effect on society within, but we must overcome the challenges and obstacles. Hashem does not judge us in comparison to the generation of *Tanna'im*, but

according to our own individual potential, in our own unique environment, in our own particular circumstances. Indeed, every little bit that we do is as significant to – and valued by – Hashem, as if it were performed by the *Tannaim*.

הוא איש צדיק חמים היה בדורותיו

**Noach was a righteous man, perfect in his generations. (6:9)**

The *Talmud Avodah Zarah* (6a) distinguishes between the appellations *tzaddik*, righteous man, and *tamim*, perfect, in that *tamim* is applied to *derachav*, ways/demeanor, while *tzaddik* is used to describe *maasav*, deeds. *Rashi* supplements this, explaining that *tamim b'derachav* means that one is *anav u'shefhal ruach*, low, meek, humble, while *tzaddik b'maasav* means that he distances himself from any form of *chamas*, theft.

From *Rashi*, we derive that *tzaddik* is a term used to describe one who takes great pains to be careful with other people's money. Heaven forbid that he make use of another person's money without his permission or with inappropriate intentions.

The **Kav HaYashar** writes: "One who refuses to benefit from someone else's money or possessions – and certainly (it goes without saying) that he refuses to deal with stolen goods – and all his business dealings are carried out with the height of integrity – he is a *tzaddik v'yashar*, righteous and upright... for the primary definition of *yiraah* and *tzidkus*, fear of Heaven and righteousness, are applied to areas of money; and any person who remains on his spiritual plateau with regards to areas of money is a *tzaddik gamur*, complete and perfect *tzaddik*" (free translation). The *Kav HaYashar* goes on to note that the term *rasha*, wicked, is used to describe one who acts inappropriately with regard to other people's money.

The **Meshech Chochmah** observes that the Torah uses the word *dorosav*, generations, in the plural. This implies that Noach was a *tzaddik tamim* in more than one generation. Thus, he suggests that this appellation applies to the span of Noach's life which extended two generations: prior to the Flood; and after the Flood. During the generation before the Flood, a generation that was steeped in *chamas* and moral depravity, Noach excelled in the area of *tzidkus*, righteousness. He did not touch another person's money, and he distanced himself from anything immoral. He remained the paragon of moral rectitude. The generation following the Flood was different. Noach was alone, as he was practically the sole survivor of the destruction of the world's population, charged with the mission of rebuilding the world. He had much on his mind, and no one with whom to share his feelings. On the other hand, he was "it"; he was the "man," the one in charge, the one to whom everyone would be indebted. He had every reason to allow this to go to his head. It was during this generation that the term *tamim*, which describes Noach's humility and lowly spirit, applies.

Thus *tzaddik/tamim* is divided between two generations: in the first, Noach was a *tzaddik*; in the second, he was a *tamim*.

In summation, we derive a powerful lesson from the Torah's depiction of Noach as righteous and perfect, terms which address his ability to rise above the basic desire to acquire material possessions – regardless of the "obstacles" in the way – and his capacity for maintaining his humility, despite every reason to be arrogant. One would expect such appellations to describe someone who exemplifies a specific area of spirituality, who goes beyond the call of duty. Not to be a thief and to be humble, are simple acts of human decency. Otherwise, one is not

a *mentch*, human being! Why should one be called a *tzaddik* just because he is not a *ganov*, thief?

Apparently, human nature is such and the drive toward materialism is so strong that inappropriate use/manipulation of another person's money/possessions is not viewed as earth-shattering. Indeed, if one maintains integrity with regard to another person's money, he is called a *tzaddik*, righteous person!

Whatever happened to simple human *mentchlichkeit*? Does decency no longer play a role in our lives? Apparently, the prohibitive commands of *Lo sigzol*, *Lo signov*, "Do not steal," are crucial in order to prevent an individual from being a thief. Sadly, these commands are not always a sufficient deterrent to prevent one from taking advantage of his fellow. I guess this is why someone who exerts the effort to act appropriately is considered to be a *tzaddik*!

ויאמר ד' לנח בא אתה... אל התבה

**Hashem said to Noach come... into the Ark. (7:1)**

The **Baal Shem Tov, zl**, notes that the Hebrew word for "word" is *teivah*. Hashem's instruction to Noach to come into the *Teivah* can be interpreted as: "Come into the word"; enter within the words of Torah and *tefillah*, Torah study and prayer. In the words, you will find refuge; you will find sanctuary within the wisdom of Torah, comfort and solace within the words of prayer. Here you will be protected from the raging floodwaters of life.

An important lesson may be derived from this exposition. When Noach entered the Ark, it enveloped him. He was ensconced within the *Teivah*. Likewise, when we *daven* or learn, the words of prayer and Torah must encompass us; they must embrace us. We become a part of the words, as they superimpose upon our entire being. How does this happen? When *tefillah* is heartfelt and sincere, when the words of prayer are much more than articulated by rote, when they emanate from within us, then we are one with the "words."

I believe that there is a famous story that does justice to this idea. There are a number of versions to this story, but I am choosing the most simple and direct. A young shepherd boy passed by a synagogue where he heard people praying. He, too, wanted to pray, so he entered the *shul* and took a seat in the back. One problem: everyone was reading from a *siddur*, which he could not read, as he was illiterate. He did, however, know how to verbalize the letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Not knowing what else to do, he stood in the back of the *shul* and yelled out, "*Aleph! Bais! Gimme!*" until he completed the entire *Aleph Bais*."

A few of the worshippers were offended by this lack of decorum. (Imagine this happening today in any of our *shuls*!) They went over to the boy and were about to escort him from the *shul*, when the *Rav* came over (the story goes that it was *Horav* Levi Yitzchak Berditchever) and told them, "Stop! That boy's shouting is more precious than any other prayers recited here today. His prayer ascended right up to Heaven!"

When prayer emanates from the heart, it counts. This boy's letters went up to Heaven, where Hashem formed them into *teivos*, words.

ויהי הגשם על הארץ ארבעים יום וארבעים לילה

**And the rain was upon the earth forty days and forty nights.**

(7:12)

When something happens in Thailand, does it have anything to do with us? We hear about an earthquake across the globe, does it impact us? Can we learn something from this

tragedy? A Jewish businessman who lived in China took a business trip to Poland. One could not be in Poland and not take a day off to visit with the saintly **Chafetz Chaim**. The man rearranged his schedule so that he could detour to Radin. Perhaps he would be fortunate to receive a blessing from this saintly leader of world Jewry.

The man arrived in Radin and immediately proceeded to the home of the *Rebbe* of the Jewish People. He presented himself before the *Chafetz Chaim*, who, upon inquiring his place of origin, asked, "What is new in China?" The man replied, describing life in China, "There are a few Jews and even less opportunity for them to earn a living. There is no *rav* or *shochet*, ritual slaughter." The *Chafetz Chaim* agreed with his visitor, "It is the same all over the world. I have had vignettes from all corners of the globe – each with the same sad story. This is why I wrote a short *sefer*, book, entitled *Netzach Yisrael*, the eternity of *Yisrael*. It will strengthen the hearts and minds of Jews all over."

"Tell me more about China," the *Chafetz Chaim* asked. The man related that a large dam had burst, flooding a large valley and destroying everything it its wake. Thousands of people had perished, thousands of homes had been destroyed. It was a cataclysmic disaster.

Hearing this, the *Chafetz Chaim* began to tremble. He wanted to hear more about it. He asked the man to tell him every detail about the disaster that had befallen China. After a few moments of relating the events in China, the guest became perturbed and gathered up his courage (or *chutzpah*) and asked, "*Rebbe*, what does this have to do with us? How is world Jewry affected by what takes place in China?"

The *Chafetz Chaim* calmly responded, "If a man were to build a stage in the town square of Warsaw and proceed to make a proclamation in *Yiddish*, who would you say was his intended audience?" "Clearly, he was speaking to Warsaw's Jews," the man replied. "Why do you say that?" asked the *Chafetz Chaim*. "The majority of the city's residents are gentiles. Do we not always follow the majority?"

"True," countered the traveler, "but only the Jews understand the man's language."

"It is exactly as you say!" the *Chafetz Chaim* replied with a slightly raised voice. "All of these disasters are signs from Heaven. They are Heavenly messages sent to the world – for whom? For those who understand the language! What do the Chinese comprehend about *middas HaDin*, the attribute of Heavenly Justice? The messages are directed towards those who learn, who study the Torah and are able to understand that Hashem wants us to repent. He is talking to us: See what happened in China – it could be you next! How do Jews in Poland become aware of these messages? Hashem catalyzes a Jew from China to travel to Poland. While he is there, he relates the catastrophe that took place in China. Now the Jews in Poland have a Heavenly imperative to repent." Heavenly messages are dispatched all of the time; unfortunately, we are not always tuned in to listen.

The believing Jew is acutely aware that there are no coincidences in life and that things do not just happen. There is a rhyme and reason for everything. Nothing can affect us unless it is so decreed from Heaven, and, likewise, we cannot escape Heavenly retribution. Last, we must remember that punishment is not an end in its own, but only a medium from which we are to derive a lesson, a window into Hashem's demands of us.

In his *Hahe'erah Sheb'nistar*, *Horav Eliav Aderi, Shlita*, focuses on the forty-day punishment of the *Mabul*, Flood. Veritably, that generation had sinned so egregiously that the

Heavenly decree against them had been total annihilation. That entire generation, except for Noach and his family, were to be wiped out from the face of the earth. Nothing would be left of them. Could this punishment not have been executed through the medium of a giant tsunami? Why did Hashem send a torrential rain that lasted specifically forty days?

*Rashi* states that the number forty was by design. The *yimei yetziras ha'velad*, gestation period of a child, is forty days. Thus, Hashem punished them, for, through their immoral behavior and illicit relationships, they had caused Him to create many illegitimate children. Forty days of destruction for the forty days of their destroying the many potential *neshamos*, souls, which they compelled Hashem to bring into the world. Alternatively, **Horav S. R. Hirsch, zl**, writes that the number forty implies creation (forty-day gestation period). The *Mabul* lasted for forty-days, alluding to it setting the tone and foundation for the re-creation of the world. With the decimation of that society, the world as we had known it then, the world that was left was actually the beginning of the creation of a new world.

We find this idea in *Hilchos Shabbos*. Destroying an edifice is considered *kilkul*, destruction, and, thus, not under the *halachic* purview of *melech machasheves*, calculated labor, the criterion for determining the validity of an act of labor. Accordingly, one who destroys on *Shabbos* is not *chayov*, liable. *Shabbos* labor must be constructive. If, however, the destruction is for the purpose of building – ie, knocking down a building in order to lay a new foundation to build another edifice – one is liable. Destruction for the purpose of construction is actually a constructive labor. Ridding the world of evil, so that good can be planted, is constructive. It is a good thing.

Hashem repays us *middah k'neged middah*, measure for measure, gives out retributive justice. This is a tremendous kindness, because, when we receive a punishment and we engage our minds, we are able to identify the area of our life in which we are deficient. This, says **Horav Yechezkel, zl, m'Radomsk**, is what David *Hamelech* alludes to in *Tehillim* 62:13, *U'lecha Hashem ha'chesed ki atah teshalem l'ish k'ma'aseihu*, "And yours, my Lord, is kindness, for You reward each man in accordance with his deeds." *Teshalem* means to pay back – reward and punishment. What act of kindness is there in punishment? The *Radomsker* explains that, when Hashem punishes *k'ma'aseihu*, according to the individual's actions, measure for measure, he allows the offender the opportunity to introspect and peer into his deficiencies, to see where he went wrong – and correct the area in which he has strayed. The greatest blessing is to point out one's failings discreetly, so that he can repair them. Hashem does not punish; Hashem instructs.

The *Talmud Berachos* 5a states that a person who has *yissurim*, troubles, suffering, should introspect and investigate his actions. In other words, nothing "just happens." *Chazal* are teaching us that the correct response to suffering is to study one's actions, to delve into his motives and intentions: Are they pure? Are they worthy? Ostensibly, one will figure out what has catalyzed his present predicament, and he will do something about it, like correcting his lapse.

There is a story that occurred concerning **Horav Isser Zalmen Meltzer, zl**, that underscores this idea. A man came to visit *Rav* Isser Zalmen. While the two men were talking, they heard a noise from the kitchen. Quiet, followed by the *Rebbetzin's* crying out. *Rav* Isser Zalmen ran to the kitchen. Quiet, followed by hushed voices, as the *Rosh Yeshivah* and his