

Torah Wellsprings

*Collected thoughts
from
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Nach



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Torah Wellsprings - Noach

Temimus

It states (6:9) **נח את האלקים התהלך נח**, and the Baal HaTurim writes that the final letters spell **חכ"ם**, indicating Noach's wisdom. Even so, Noach would serve Hashem with temimus, as it states (6:9) **נח איש צדיק תמים**. Temimus goes together with wisdom. The Divrei Yisrael zt'l explains that the greatest wisdom is to serve Hashem with temimus.

The Divrei Yisrael writes that this is also alluded to in the pasuk (Mishlei 10:9) **הולך בתם ילך בטח**, "He who walks with temimus walks securely." The final letters spell **חכ"ם**, indicating that the greatest wisdom is when one has temimus.

This is because a wise person recognizes the feebleness of his mind in comparison to Hashem's perfection. He performs Hashem's will, even when he doesn't understand, because he knows that Hashem knows what is best, while he doesn't know anything in comparison to Hashem's wisdom. He accepts his life the way Hashem leads him, even when it doesn't make logical sense, because he knows that Hashem knows what is best for him.¹

The Torah (Bamidbar 7) tells us that the *nesi'im* donated gold and silver utensils and korbanos for the *chanukas hamizbeach*. Rashi explains that each of their donations had significance. One of their donations was (Bamidbar 7:19) **מזרק אחד כסף שבעים שקל בשקל הקדש**

שניהם מלאים סלת בלולה בשמן למנחה, "one silver sprinkling basin weighing seventy shekels... filled with fine flour mixed with oil for a korban minchah." Rashi writes that the gematriya of **מזרק אחד כסף** is 520. This represents two things. Rashi writes, "It represents that Noach had children when he was 500 years old and that the decree of the flood was established 20 years before Noach had children."

Why is it important to commemorate that the decree of the flood began 20 years before Noach had children? It is to demonstrate Noach's temimus.

The purpose of the teivah was to grant survival for mankind and animals after the flood. Noach thought he wouldn't bear children. He was already 480 when Hashem told him to build the teivah, and he didn't yet have children. So, Noach understood that he was building the teivah for others, for someone who would bear children, and not for himself, because he couldn't produce future generations. Noach built the teivah during these twenty years with temimus. He didn't ask, "Why should I build a teivah for someone else? Let some other person (whoever it is) build the teivah himself." Noach didn't ask these questions. He built the teivah with emunah and temimus, which is why these twenty years were memorialized in the *nesi'im's* donation.

1. Chazal say **מה ענין שמיטה אצל הר סיני**. Rebbe Moshe Mordechai of Lelov zt'l explained that the highest level of emunah wasn't attained at Har Sinai, when Hashem opened the heavens, and everyone saw that there is none other than Hashem. There is a greater level of emunah. That is during the shemittah year, when a farmer doesn't work his field for a year. He doesn't know what he will eat in the upcoming year, but he believes with emunah peshutah and temimus that Hashem will help. This is the highest form of emunah. This is hinted in Chazal's expression, **מה ענין שמיטה אצל הר סיני**, which can be translated as, "How can you even compare the emunah of shemittah to the emunah of Har Sinai? The emunah demonstrated during shemittah is far greater."

It states (Koheles 2:9) **אף חכמתי עמדה לי**, "Also my wisdom supported me." **א"ף** is *roshei teivos* of *אמונה פשוטה*. Rebbe Shlomke of Zvhil zt'l would say that this teaches us that simple belief is greater than all wisdom.

As we wrote, *temimus* means to do Hashem's will, even when we don't understand the reason, and it also means to accept the life that Hashem gives us, even when we don't understand why this should be our portion. For 499 years, Noach was barren, but he didn't ask, "Why should I, the *tzaddik* of the generation, remain barren, while all the *reshaim* around me are bearing children?" He didn't ask this question because he knew that Hashem's ways are just.

Indeed, it was for his good, as Rashi (5:32) writes, "People were bearing children at the age of one hundred years. Why did Noach have to wait until he was five hundred years old? Hakadosh Baruch Hu said, 'If Noach [will bear children in his younger years, if] his children will be *resha'im*, they will be destroyed in the flood, and it will be devastating for this *tzaddik*. And if they will be *tzaddikim*, I will burden him to build many *teivos*.' Therefore, Hashem withheld children from him until he was five hundred years old so Yefes, his oldest son, would be younger than [one hundred], the age of punishment, when the *mabul* came." Noach never asked questions about Hashem's hashgachah because Noach had the most incredible wisdom – the wisdom of *temimus* – to know that Hashem knows what's best.

Temimus – Hashem Knows What's Best

The *nusach* of Yizkor, is אב הרחמים שוכן מרום, "Compassionate Father Who dwells in heaven." Also, at a *levayah*, people say א-ל מלא רחמים שוכן מרום, "Hashem Who is full of compassion and dwells in heaven."

Why do we mention in these *tefillos* that Hashem dwells in heaven? It is because we are saying, "In this world, Hashem's ways might not appear like רחמים, compassionate, but Hashem dwells in heaven, and from that vantage point, it is clear and evident that everything is compassion and for the good.

Moshe Rabbeinu asked Hashem to explain to him why there are *tzaddikim* who suffer and *resha'im* who prosper (see Brachos 7.)

Hashem responded (Shemos 33) הנה מקום אתי, "There is a place near Me..." Hashem was telling Moshe that if you will come to My place, in heaven, you will understand, and you will see that everything is for the good.

It can be compared to a person on an airplane. From up there in heaven, he sees so much further than a person looking from down on earth. Hashem told Moshe to come to heaven and understand how everything is compassion and just.

The Chofetz Chaim said that this is the reason an *ehrllicher* Yid is often called a "*hechere* Yid," a high Yid. It can be compared to a person standing near a fence who can't see over it. But someone tall can see above the fence. He sees so much more than others. Similarly, a *hechere* Yid is a person who can see the world from a higher perspective, and such a person knows that the world is run with *chesed* and *rachamim*.

The Chofetz Chaim told a *mashal* of a person who came to a *beis medresh* for the first time in his life, and he thought that the *gabbai* distributed the *aliyos* unfairly. For example, he saw that the *gabbai* called up a young *bachur* for the first *aliyah*. The person thought, "Why doesn't he call up a respected person for the first *aliyah*? It must be that the boy is his relative." The next *aliyah* was given to someone sitting in the back, and the next *aliyah* to someone sitting on the left side of the *beis medresh*. There didn't seem to be any method or order. "These are his friends," the man figured. "But it isn't fair that he is choosing on his own. It would be wiser and fairer to go in order."

After the *tefillah*, he rebuked the *gabbai*.

The *gabbai* explained to him that he gave the first *aliyah* to a young *bachur* because he was the only *kohen* in the *beis medresh*. "The person in the back has *yahrzeit*, so he got the second *aliyah*..."

The Chofetz Chaim explained that Hashem runs the world with perfect order, and everything He does is with compassion.

If we don't understand, it is because we don't see the entire picture.

The Chofetz Chaim told another mashal of an unlearned person who heard someone say in Ashrei, *שומר ה' את כל אוהביו ואת כל הרשעים*, "Hashem protects all who love him and all the wicked..." The man didn't understand. "I understand that Hashem protects the people who love Him, but why does Hashem protect the resha'im?"

Then he heard another person say, *את כל אוהביו ואת כל הרשעים ישמיד*, "For all those who love Him and all the wicked He will destroy." He didn't understand why Hashem would destroy, *chalilah*, those who love Him.

But then he heard the entire pasuk, *שומר ה' את כל אוהביו ואת כל הרשעים ישמיד*, "Hashem protects all who love Him, and all the wicked He will destroy." Now the pasuk made sense to him.

When we see the world, we don't see the entire picture, and that's the reason we have questions. We only see what happens in this world, but we don't see what happens after one's death, and what happened in previous gilgulim. But if we could see the entire picture, we would know that Hashem is just, and all his ways are compassionate and kind.

There are many things that we don't understand, but we aren't expected to understand Hashem's ways. We are not in heaven to see the entire picture, but we believe that everything is only Hashem's compassion, everything is kindness, and everything is exactly as it should be.

The Ibn Ezra (Devarim 14:1-2) writes that just as children rely on their parents to take care of them in the best way, we are Hashem's children, as it states *בנים אתם לה' אלקיכם*, and we should trust that Hashem is leading us with kindness and with compassion. We don't always understand, but like children, we know that it is always good.

It states (Bereishis 6:8) *ונוח מצא חן בעיני ה'*, "Noach found favor in the eyes of Hashem." Some explain that Noach found favor in Hashem's eyes because Noach believed that whatever happened to him was *בעיני ה'*, by Hashem's *hashgachah pratis*.²

Chen

It states (Bereishis 6:8) *ונוח מצא חן בעיני ה'*, "Noach found favor in the eyes of Hashem." What did Noach do to receive *chen*, favor in Hashem's eyes?

The Or HaChaim says, "There is a single mitzvah or perhaps three or four mitzvos that are *mesugal* for *chen*." Noach performed

2. A man approached Reb Nota Tzeinvert zt'l with a bright smile and said, "Today, I discovered that Hashem is kind and performs kindness."

Reb Nota replied to this man with a story of a person who was having difficulty understanding a passage of Gemara he was learning. After toiling over the Gemara for some time, he discovered that Tosfos asks his question. He read Tosfos's answer, and it resonated with him. On the margin of the Gemara, he wrote next to the Tosfos, "Also, me, Yankele from Yerushalayim, agree with Tosfos' answer."

With this short story, Reb Nota taught this person that it is clear and obvious that Hashem is kind. Hashem doesn't need his *haskamah*.

The man replied, "Is it forbidden to say that I saw that Hashem is kind?"

Reb Nota quipped back, "Is it forbidden for me to tell you a story?"

Regarding our topic, perhaps it is known that Hashem does everything and that He is kind. To say such matters might be akin to saying, "I, Yankele, also agree..." Nevertheless, we should talk about and repeat these matters many times until we feel in our bones the truth that everything is from Hashem and for our good.

those mitzvos, and Hashem found *chen* in him (however, the Or HaChaim doesn't specify which mitzvos are mesugal for *chen*).

Some say, as we wrote above, that Noach had emunah that everything occurs *בעיני ה'*, according to Hashem's hashgachah pratis, and with this emunah, he attained *chen* in Hashem's eyes.

The Ben Ish Chai (*Ben Yehoyada, Beitzah 16.*) writes that *bitachon* is mesugal for *chen*. The hint is that the word *בטחון* is comprised of two words: *חן-טוב*. "With *בטחון*, one merits *חן* and *טוב*, *chen* and Hashem's kindness." This is hinted in the *pasuk* (*Tehillim 84:12*), *חן וכבוד יתן ה'*, "Hashem will give *chen* and honor; He will not withhold good from those who go with *bitachon*."

The Chareidim (*Mitzvos Asei 1*) writes, "Noach was always calm and tranquil. It states, *ונה*, *מנצח חן בעיני ה'*, and the Midrash explains that his calm and tranquil attitude found favor with Hashem. This is because tranquility

comes from the side of *kedushah*, and anger comes from the side of *tumah*."

So, according to the Chareidim, Noach found favor in Hashem's eyes because of his nature of *נה*, calmness, and avoidance of anger.

The Gemara (*Succah 49:*) states, "If a person has *chen*, you can be certain that he fears Hashem." Here we have another explanation of how Noach attained *chen*. Noach had *chen* because of his *yiras Shamayim*.³

It states (6:8) *ונה מנצח חן בעיני ה'*, "Noach found favor in Hashem's eyes." The Beis Avraham *zt'l* taught that Noach found *chen* *בעיני ה'* because he was cautious with his eyes.⁴

Hashem Desires Our Teshuvah

It states (6:13-14) *ויאמר אלקים לנח, קץ כל בשר בא לפני... עשה לך תיבת עצי גופר*, "Hashem said to Noach, 'The end of all flesh has come before Me.... Make for yourself an Ark of gopher wood...'"

3. The Skulener Rebbe of Monsey Shlita related that someone once came to his father *zt'l* seeking a *segulah* for *parnassah*. The Rebbe told him to say *פרשת היראה* (printed after *shacharis* in many siddurim). The man thought the Rebbe didn't understand him, so he explained that he wasn't seeking a *segulah* for *yiras Shamayim*; he was seeking a *segulah* for *parnassah*. The Rebbe replied with the *pasuk* (*Tehillim 111:5*), *טרף נתן ליראיו*, "Hashem provided food for those who fear Him." When you fear Hashem, you will have *parnassah*."

Reb Yehudah of Nasod *zt'l* was once on a train in a private compartment when an elderly woman came aboard. Fearing the prohibition of *yichud*, the Rav jumped off the moving train. His students asked him, "Why were you *moser nefesh*? There was nothing to fear. She's an old woman!"

He replied, "I wasn't afraid of her. I was afraid of the *aveirah* of *yichud*."

Chassidim would come to the Koznitzer Magid *zt'l* to receive counsel and *brachos*, but he didn't admit women into his room. Once, when the *gabbai* wasn't around, an elderly woman entered the Magid's room. The Koznitzer Magid hurried to the window and was ready to jump out. Fortunately, just then, the *gabbai* returned. Later, the *gabbai* asked, "The woman was old, and you're ill. What were you afraid of? Why were you ready to risk your life and jump out of the window?"

The Koznitzer Magid replied, "When the *yetzer hara* takes control, he can make an old woman appear young and a sick person healthy."

4. The Slonimer chassid, Reb Mordechai (Motke) Leider *zt'l* of Teveria, was once very ill as a young man; people thought he would die. After miraculously recovering, he came to the Slonimer beis medresh in Teveria. He announced, "Yesterday, I almost did the *kuntz*" (trick, implying that he almost died and went up to heaven).

Another Slonimer chassid, Reb Elazar Katz *zt'l*, replied, "What did you say? That you almost made 'the *kuntz*'? How would you survive up there in heaven without a *לא תתורו* (the mitzvah of guarding one's eyes)?"

Rashi writes, "Hashem has many ways to save Noach. Why did Hashem have Noach toil to build the teivah? It was so that the people of the generation of the mabul should see him building it for 120 years, and they would ask him, 'Why are you building this structure?' He would tell them that Hakadosh Baruch Hu is about to bring a mabul to the world. Perhaps they will do teshuvah." We can learn from this how patient and how welcoming Hashem is to the teshuvah of mankind. The generation is notoriously known as דור המבול, the wicked generation of the flood. The people of this time were רשעים, total resha'im, as it states (6:12) כי השחית גמורים, "For all flesh had corrupted its way upon the earth". (See Rashi on this pasuk, and the Zohar, vol.1, 62a, for a description and severity of their aveiros). Nevertheless, Hashem didn't want to destroy them. Hashem had Noach build the teivah for 120 years, hoping that people would do teshuvah!

It states (7:12) ויהי הגשם על הארץ, "The rain was upon the earth," and Rashi notes that in this pasuk the Torah calls the rain גשם, and not מבול. This is because "If they do teshuvah, it would be גשמי ברכה, rain of a blessing. But if they don't do teshuvah, the rain would become rain of a mabul." This pasuk also shows us Hashem's patience with mankind. They had many severe aveiros, and they ignored Noach's warning for 120 years! Nevertheless, until the final moment, the opportunity to do teshuvah was still open for them. If they had done teshuvah before the flood began, their teshuvah would have been accepted. Not only that, but the waters of the flood would be blessed rain for them. The mabul would instead become גשמי ברכה, rain of blessing.

When we think about these matters, we are certain that Hashem desires the teshuvah of Bnei Yisrael. Hashem desires even the teshuvah of resha'im, so Hashem definitely desires the teshuvah of Bnei Yisrael. Their teshuvah will be accepted with desire before Hashem. (See Divrei Chaim, beginning of our parashah).

We say in the brachah of יוצר אור in Shacharis of Shabbos ל הפותח בכל יום דלתות מזרח, "Hashem Who opens the doors of the eastern gate, each day". Birkas Avraham taught that the roshei teivos of שער דלתות, destruction, which means the phrase refers to a person who fell to the very lowest levels. Even for him, הפותח... דלתות, Hashem opens the gates of teshuvah and enables him to change his ways and to come close to Hashem.

Reb Moshe Wolfson zt'l teaches: As it is known, everything that happens in the world, the decree for was established on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. On those days of judgment, everything that will occur that year is determined. Nevertheless, we see in this parashah that the decree can always be mitigated and turned around.

The rain began on the 17th of Cheshvan, as it states (7:11-12) בחדש השני בשבעה עשר יום לחדש ביום הזה נבקעו כל מעיינות תהום רבה וארבת השמים נפתחו, "In the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on that day, all the foundations of the great deep burst forth; and the windows of heaven were opened, and the rain was upon the earth..." Rashi writes that, according to Reb Eliezer, חדרש השני, the second month, refers to Cheshvan. According to Reb Eliezer, the mabul began on the 17th of Cheshvan. The Torah calls the flood water גשם, because if they would do teshuvah, the rain would become rain of a blessing (as we wrote above from Rashi). Reb Moshe Wolfson zt'l says that this teaches us that one can do teshuvah, and the verdict can change, even after it was established. We know and believe that the decree of the flood was signed and decided on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, but it could be changed in Cheshvan!

We read this parasha at the beginning of the year to teach us that regardless of what was decreed, it can be changed for the better.

It states (Bereishis 4:16) ויצא קין מלפני ה', and the Midrash (Bereishis Rabba 22:13) states, "Adam HaRishon met Kayin and asked, 'What happened in your judgment?' Kayin replied,

'I did teshuvah and I made a compromise.' Adam HaRishon was hitting himself on his face, and he said, 'So great is the power of teshuvah, and I didn't know.'"

We have to understand what Kayin meant when he said ונפשתי, I made a compromise. What compromise did he make? And also, didn't Adam HaRishon know the strength of teshuvah? What did he learn from Kayin's teshuvah that he didn't know before?

The Chasam Sofer (Toras Moshe, Shabbos Shuvah) explains that Kayin didn't do teshuvah with a whole heart. Chazal tell us that Kayin was כמי שגונב דעת העליונה ומרמה את בוראו, he acted like someone who thinks he can outsmart and trick Hashem. (See also Rashi Bereishis 3:16). This means when Kayin said that he regrets his aveirah, he didn't mean it. His teshuvah wasn't sincere. Nevertheless, his teshuvah was accepted to the extent that he made a פשרה, a compromise with Hashem, and his aveirah was forgiven, at least partially. Adam HaRishon was amazed at the strength of teshuvah, and he said, "I didn't realize the extent of the power of teshuvah! Even when one's teshuvah is dishonest, it is sufficient to make a compromise."

Many times, the yetzer hara weakens a person's resolve to do teshuvah. The yetzer hara says, "You aren't doing teshuvah with a full heart. You yourself know that you will go back to your old ways, and you won't remain with your resolve. Why should your teshuvah be accepted?!" The person can reply, "Our Father in heaven wants our teshuvah, even when it is at a very low level. Even when we tell Hashem that we will improve our ways, and it is essentially רמיה, trickery and dishonesty, because it is likely we won't improve our ways, nevertheless, we are attempting to become better, and that is also precious in Hashem's eyes."

Being Among Good Influences

Chazal (Sanhedrin 108a) tell us that the fish in the sea didn't die in the mabul. The animals on dry land died, as it states (7:22) מכל אשר

בהרבו מתו, "All that were on the dry land, died," but, as Chazal say, ולא דגים שבים, the fish at sea didn't die. Why didn't the fish die?

The רמב"ם (Mizrachi) explains that the fish didn't sin (לא השחיתו דרכם), like the animals on dry land did.

This explains why the fish didn't die in the flood, but we still must understand why the fish didn't sin, while the rest of the animals did.

The Maharal (Gur Aryeh) explains this with a Rashi (Bereishis 6:6) וינחם ה' כי עשה את האדם, Hashem was consoled that He created man in this world, because if he were created in heaven, היה ממרידן, he would cause heaven to rebel against Hashem. The Maharal writes, "We learn from this that when a person sins, he causes all those who are in his vicinity to rebel. If man were in heaven, he would cause the malachim in heaven to rebel and to go against Hashem's will, chas v'shalom. This explains the reason the fish didn't sin. They weren't with man; instead, they are at sea, in their own world, and in their own environment; therefore, they weren't affected by man's sins, like the animals were."

Let us learn from this the importance of living in a good neighborhood, where there are righteous Yidden with yiras Shamayim. How much good can come from this, b'ruchniyus and b'gashmiyus! L'havdil, when one is among resha'im, their evil ways influence the people in their vicinity.

It states (8:11) ותבוא אליו היונה לעת ערב והנה עלה זית, "The dove came back to him in the evening, and behold an olive leaf it had plucked with its bill." The Midrash (Bereishis Rabba 33:6) states that the leaf came from Gan Eden. The gates of Gan Eden opened for her, and she brought the leaf from there.

The Ramban asks how, according to this explanation, did Noach know from the olive leaf that the flood subsided? There was no flood in Gan Eden! He answers, "Perhaps the gates of Gan Eden were closed [throughout the duration of the mabul] so

that the water of the mabul shouldn't enter. When the mabul waters subsided, the doors of Gan Eden opened." We learn from this that when there is a mabul in the world, even Gan Eden is in danger of being affected. The only counsel is to close the gates of heaven from the mighty waters.

On a practical level, this means that when the yetzer hara is burning on the streets, these powerful waters threaten to flood the entire world. They have the ability *chas v'shalom* to penetrate the houses of the Jewish people, and even their *batei knesiyos* and *midrashos*, and to cause destruction. At these times, there is an obligation to keep the doors of the home and of the *batei medrashim* sealed shut. This means to not allow foreign material, ideas, and influences inside. Or, more precisely, this means to guard the home from the internet.⁵

The Gemara (Zevachim 113b) states that there is a huge animal called **אורזילא**. Even when

this animal is just born, it is as large as **הר תבור**, Mount Tavor. How did this animal survive the flood? The Gemara says that we can't answer that it placed its head in the teivah because even its head was a *parsah* and a half long! Its large head wouldn't fit into the teivah. The Gemara answers that this animal placed its nose into the teivah. Rashi writes, "So it could breathe." In this manner, the animal survived and later had children. Reb Chaim Kreisworth zt'l said that there is a great lesson here: Even if a person fell to very low places, and he is drowning in the waters of the mabul (which means he is drowning in the *tumah* and debased culture of the non-Jewish world), if he will at least place his nose into the teivah, into *kedushah*, this will save him, and it will save the generations after him...

This lesson is particularly important for our generation. We are living in a very trying time. The *tumah* around us is powerful, and

5. Reb Yankele Galinsky zt'l told the following *mashal*:

Someone addicted to alcohol wanted to break his habit. He knew he would fail in stopping at once, so he made a *kabbalah* that he would only drink together with another person. This would automatically limit his consumption because he wouldn't always find someone to drink with.

Once, he wanted a drink, but he didn't have anyone to drink with. He went outside to look for one of his friends, but one friend was working that day, and another was already drunk. He couldn't find a drinking partner.

Desperate for a drink, he placed two cups on the table. Now, everything was ready for the drink. As soon as he found someone, they would be able to drink, and they wouldn't need to delay looking for cups.

A few hours later, he still didn't have anyone to drink with, so he filled the cups with wine. Now there would be absolutely no delays. All he needed was to find someone, and they would be in business. He searched some more, but he couldn't find anyone. He returned home, disappointed.

But then he noticed a fly sipping from one of the cups. "I have a partner!" he shouted, and gulped down both cups of wine!

Reb Yankele Galinsky explains that the problem was that he went too close to his test. The cups were prepared, the wine was filled, and that led him to come up with the ridiculous idea that the fly was his drinking partner. Had the wine been in the bottle, and the cups in the cupboard, he wouldn't have come up with such a flimsy excuse.

The lesson is that we have to keep our distance from tests. If the test is in front of your eyes, your chances of failure are higher.

An example of this lesson is the internet. Some say they will only go on good sites. But who can guarantee that? When the test is right in front of you, you have less control. Therefore, fortunate are those who steer far away from the test.

it tries to capture everything into its "flood." A person should place his nose into kedushah. This means he should have experiences of kedushah. He should go to a beis medresh to daven, and he should have set times for Torah. He has to "breathe" healthy, spiritual air. This will help him survive the mabul, the flood of tumah of our times. These moments of kedushah will be his oxygen, and like the אורזילא animal, he will be able to survive these difficult times.

A Drop of Kedushah

The story of the אורזילא animal teaches us the significance of a "drop of good." Fortunate are those who can be in a beis medresh all day long. Tzaddikim said that the yeshivos are our teivas Noach, and fortunate are those who can spend many hours studying Torah and serving Hashem in them. This will certainly elevate him above the debased nature prevalent in this world. But even a person who doesn't have time for that (or he isn't yet on the *madreigah* to spend so much time with *ruchniyus*), nevertheless, even a "scent" of kedushah helps. The few moments he is among kedushah will have an influence and save him from the flood of this world. This teaches us the concept of *nekudah tovah*, a drop of good, how great it is, and how much it can accomplish! The אורזילא smelled the scent of the teivah and was saved, so should everyone seek moments when he can be among kedushah. The scent and the experience will elevate him and save him.

In the days of the generation of the flood, the entire world was corrupt. Therefore, Hashem said (6:13) קץ כל בשר בא לפני, "The end of all flesh has come before Me..." Everything had to be destroyed; there was almost no good in the world. However, Noach was the spark, the kedusha that remained in the world. נח איש צדיק, Noach was the tzaddik. Noach was a bright light of good among all the bad. He was saved, and from him the world continues until today. This teaches us the significance of a drop of good, how much it can accomplish. Noach was a bright light of goodness, but in comparison to all the

bad of the world, it was a spark in the darkness. Nevertheless, it was sufficient to save Noach and the entire world. So, too, when a person has many aveiros, r'l, he should seek to at least have a scent of goodness. Perhaps he has mitzvos in the past, which he already performed. Perhaps he can perform some good now? Perhaps he can go to a *beis medresh* to learn some Torah? This scent of holiness might be slight, in comparison to all the bad he is attached to, r'l, but it has the potential to save him and pull him out of where he is.

Just as Noach – a spark of goodness – saved the world, so, too, each person is called עולם קטן, a small world (Tikunei Zohar 130b). In his *olam katan*, small world, one drop of goodness can turn everything around. About this it states (Mishlei 10:25) צדיק יסוד עולם, "a tzaddik is the foundation of the world." A drop of righteousness can establish the world.

We say at the beginning of the Selichos: לך ה' הצדקה ולנו בושות הפנים, מה נתאונן ומה נאמר, מה נדבר ומה נצטדק, נחפשה דרכינו ונחקרה אל ה'... לא בחסד "To You, Hashem, is the righteousness, and we are ashamed. What can we say? How can we say we aren't guilty? We will seek our ways and investigate them and return to Hashem..." Reb Moshe Shapiro zt'l asks why we must search our ways so carefully to find our sins (as it states נחפשה דרכינו ונחקרה "we will seek our ways and investigate them...")? Unfortunately, our bad deeds are easy to find, they don't need to be searched for, to find them. We know our faults without looking for them. We know which areas we need to improve in. So why does it state נחפשה דרכינו ונחקרה, "we will seek our ways and investigate them?"

The answer is that we aren't looking for our faults. We are looking for our good deeds. נחפשה דרכינו means we are searching for the drop of good that is in us. We are looking for the sparks of goodness and good deeds that we have. It is essential to find them, because with them, we will be able to do *teshuvah sheleimah* before

Hashem.⁶ We can take this lesson even further to understand that the yetzer hara comes to a person and blows his misdeeds out of proportion, until he loses sight of all the good that he has. The yetzer hara makes him focus on some minor transgression and causes him to lose hope, while preventing him from seeing that there is so much good in him.

The Gemara (Brachos 61a) states יצר הרע דומה לצר הרע, "The yetzer hara is compared to a fly." We can explain the comparison between the yetzer hara and a fly in the following way: When there is a fresh piece of meat, a fly will search for that one spot in the meat that is beginning to spoil, and it goes there and sucks at it. There is a lot of good meat available, but the fly looks for the spoiled parts, and it focuses solely on that. So too the yetzer hara also tells us to focus on something small, something spoiled, and causes us to lose sight of all the good. When the yetzer hara wants to capture people in its net, it searches to find some area where this person is weak and is struggling, and causes him to focus on it. The person believes the yetzer hara, and he thinks he is a total failure.⁷

Tests and Toil

It states (Tehillim 36:7) צדקתך כהררי א"ל, "Your kindness is like the mighty mountains..." The Midrash (Bereishis Rabba 33:1) says that this pasuk refers to the salvation of Noach. Hakadosh Baruch Hu says, the kindness I did with Noach in the teivah until it rested

upon הררי א"ל, the mountains of Ararat (see this week's parashah, 8:4), was because of הררי א"ל.

The meaning of this Midrash is very concealed. What is the connection between הררי א"ל and הררי א"ל? Also, what does it mean that the kindness Hashem did with Noach was due to הררי א"ל?

As an introduction to the answer, the Sifsei Tzaddik (אות ט"ו) begins with the Chidushei HaRim's explanation to the Gemara (Succah 52a), which says, "For the tzaddikim, the yetzer hara will appear like a large mountain." In the future, Hakadosh Baruch Hu will slaughter the yetzer hara, and the tzaddikim will cry from astonishment when they see how large the yetzer hara was. In their eyes, the yetzer hara will appear like a large mountain.

The yetzer hara poses significant challenges to tzaddikim, yet they succeeded in fighting against it.

Hashem says צדקתך כהררי א"ל, that He did kindness with Noach because of הררי א"ל, this means because of the great tests that Noach had to deal with. Noach, like all tzaddikim, had to fight against the large and powerful yetzer hara. But he had a great struggle because he lived in a very challenging time. His generation, דור המבול, "The Generation of the Flood," was very sinful, and Noach had to fight hard and battle against the yetzer hara to remain in his righteous ways. The challenges appeared to him like a mountain, but Noach courageously and mightily passed all the tests. This is the reason the "mountains" are called הררי א"ל,

6. I heard from Reb Moshe Ludmir zt'l (author of sefer Yagdil Torah) that he was once feeling very broken and down. He went to the Beis Yisrael of Gur zt'l and told him that he had made a cheshbon hanefesh, and concluded that he didn't possess any good qualities or good deeds. The Rebbe looked at him with his penetrating eyes and said, "One doesn't need a cheshbon hanefesh to come to that conclusion. It should be easy for us to find the bad. The purpose of the cheshbon hanefesh is to discover his positive qualities, and his successes in avodas Hashem."

7. We are not saying that a person should completely ignore the bad, because whatever needs to be rectified should be fixed. The problem is when this one aspect of bad becomes the person's entire focus, and it causes him to feel very critical and negative about himself. Believe in yourself, focus on your good, and that will give you the strength to overcome the yetzer hara and his many tests.

"Hashem's mountains". Hashem loves those tests, and Noach brought a great nachas ruach to Hashem by facing them. Due to this, Hashem saved Noach.⁸

Hashem told Noach to take two animals of every species into the teivah, and sets of seven from the kosher animals, so that Noach could bring a korban from them. The Ramban teaches that the non-kosher animals came on their own to Noach. Noach didn't have to search for them. However, Noach had to search for the sets of seven from the kosher animals. The Ramban learns this from the words (6:20), שנים מכל יבואו אליך להחיות, "Two of each [species] shall come to you to preserve alive," and the word יבואו isn't written regarding the kosher animals. The Ramban writes that יבואו, "shall come," indicates that they came on their own, but Noach had to find the kosher animals. The Ramban writes, "They came to Noach in sets of two on their own. Noach didn't have to climb mountains or go to islands to hunt them. But...the animals that came in groups

of seven, the *pasuk* doesn't state that they came on their own. Noach had to search for those animals to bring them into the *teivah*."

The reason for this differentiation is discussed in *Ramban* (7:8-9). He writes, "The animals that came [in sets of two] for the survival of their species, Hashem didn't obligate Noach to search for them. But those who came [in groups of seven, so Noach could sacrifice them], it was the opposite, because it is proper to toil in mitzvos." Avodas Hashem should be difficult, with tests and struggles. That is how it is meant to be.⁹

The Torah (9:23) tells us that Shem and Yefes covered their father, Noach, and for this good deed, Yefes was rewarded that his descendants would have burial, and Shem was rewarded with the mitzvah of *tzitzis*. Rashi writes that Shem received a greater reward because שנתאמן יותר מיפת, "Shem exerted himself more than Yefes" in this mitzvah. Yefes performed the mitzvah

8. The Sfas Emes zy'a (תרנ"ב ד"ה אלה) asks: Everything is revealed before Hashem yisbarach. From the beginning of creation, Hashem knew that the world would be destroyed in the mabul. Hashem could have created the world starting from Noach's time! Why did Hashem create a world only to destroy it?

Sfas Emes answers with the Chazal (Kesubos 5a) which says, גדולים מעשה צדיקים יותר ממעשה שמים וארץ, "The actions of tzaddikim are greater than the action of creation of heaven and earth." The story of Noach teaches us this lesson. Hashem created the world, heaven and earth, but the flood destroyed that world. The world was reestablished in Noach's merit and continues until this day. This teaches us that the deeds of tzaddikim are greater than the deeds of creation of heaven and earth.

9. A father asked his son to get out of the car and check if the blinkers were working. The son said, "They're working. They're not working. They're working. They're not working."

The father explained to the young boy that the blinking means that the lights work correctly. Similarly, when it comes to *avodas Hashem*, we expect ups and downs. When everything is smooth and straightforward, something is wrong. That's just not how *avodas Hashem* works.

Someone said to a *rosh yeshiva*, "My son learns in your yeshiva. How is he doing? Is he studying well?"

The *rosh yeshiva* replied, "I don't know what to say. There are days when he studies well, but there are times when he doesn't..."

The father smiled broadly and said, "That's what I was hoping to hear."

The *rosh yeshiva* was startled; why was the father happy to hear that his son's performance fluctuated? The father explained, "I'm a cardiologist, and I watch the lines on a cardiograph machine. When the lines go up and down, I know the patient is alive. When there's a straight line, I know it's over. For me, ups and downs are a sign of life."

without interest, with a dead heart, and therefore, he received a reward fitting for the dead, burial.

It states (8:11) ותבא אליו היונה לעת ערב והנה עלה זית, טרף בפיה, "The dove came back to him in the evening – and behold! an olive leave it had plucked with its bill."

Rashi says (quoting Eiruvim 18b) that טרף means food, and בפיה means that she spoke. This means that the dove spoke to Noach about her food and parnassah. She said, יהיו מזונתי, מרורין כזית של הקב"ה ולא מתוקין כדבש בידי בשר ודם, "Let my parnassah be bitter like an olive, but it comes from Hakadosh Baruch Hu's hand, rather than a parnassah sweet like honey, coming from man." In addition to its literal meaning, there is also a hidden lesson here. Rashi is telling us that a small act of avodas Hashem, small like an olive branch, but it was hard to do, and it was bitter like an olive, this is more precious to Hashem than many good deeds that come easy to the person, as though it was sweet like honey.

The Mishnah (Avos 4:28) states, ברוך הוא שאין, לפניו... מושא פנים, "Blessed is Hashem. There isn't before Him... finding favors..." This means that Hashem judges everyone equally, and everyone has an equal opportunity. Hashem doesn't "play favorites" to give more opportunities to one over another. Chasid Yaavatz asks that it doesn't seem so. Some people are born with a good nature, and it is easy for them to do good. They naturally want to study a lot of Torah, and they innately have a lot of yiras Shamayim. They do chesed generously, and their hearts are clean from any scent of cruelty and hatred. On the other hand, some people were born with an evil nature, and they desire to do bad – bad to others and to Hashem. Doesn't this seem unfair? Isn't this מושא פנים, taking favorites, one over another?

Aren't the tzaddikim given a better beginning and opportunity?

But the answer is found at the end of the Mishnah: ודע שהכל לפי החשבון, "And know that everything is according to the calculation." This means the judgment is with a חשבון, calculation. Hashem expects more from those who were born with a good nature, and if they don't do what they could, they will be held accountable. In contrast, Hashem has lower expectations from those who are born without these qualities, and even if they do a little, it is very praised and precious in Hashem's eyes.

So, there is no favoritism, because everyone is judged according to what they should have done based on the situation, tests, and abilities that were given to them.¹⁰

A similar lesson is taught by Rebbe Hershele Liska zy'a (אד"ר תבואה, סוכות) to explain the Chazal (Brrachos 8a) גדול הנהנה מיגיעו יותר מירא שמים, someone who enjoys the work of his hands is greater than someone who has yiras shamayim. The meaning of this Chazal is a mystery. If his only quality is that he works and has a job, and he earns his money on his own, should he already be considered greater and better than someone who has yiras Shamayim?

But the explanation is that הנהנה מיגיעו refers to a person who worked hard to attain yiras Shamayim, and to overcome his yetzer hara. He is greater than a yirei Shamayim, which means he is greater than a person who received his level of yiras Shamayim without having to work hard and to strive to attain it. This is because the primary praise is the levels one worked hard to attain.

10. Chasid Yaavatz concludes, "This resolves the famous dilemma of צדיק ורע לו ורשע וטוב לו, why we see tzaddikim who suffer in this world, and resha'im who have a good life. The answer can be that the tzaddikim should have done more, and they are punished for not doing so. The rasha'im may have done enough, according to their level and abilities. Therefore, they deserve goodness in this world."

Limud Zechus

Hashem considers our great challenges, and with this in mind, our aveiros seem less severe. Hashem understands that people aren't so guilty for their aveiros, because (8:21) יצר לב האדם רע מנעריו, from the time when one is very young, the yetzer hara enticed him to perform aveiros.

When Noach brought the korbanos after the flood, Hashem remembered this truth and decided to have compassion on mankind. As it states (8:21), ויאמר ה' אל לבו לא אספ לקלל עוד את האדמה בעבור האדם כי יצר לב האדם רע מנעריו "Hashem said in His heart: 'I will not continue to curse again the ground because of man, since the **yetzer** of man's heart is evil from his youth.'"

On the other hand, this same yetzer hara was the reason and the cause of the decree and punishment of the flood, as it states in parashas Bereishis (6:5-7) וירא ה' כי רבה רעת האדם בארץ וכל יצר מחשבת לבו רע כל היום... ויאמר ה' אמוחה "Hashem saw that the evil of man was great in the earth, and every **yetzer** of his heart was only evil all day long.... Hashem said, "I will blot out man, whom I created..." How can the same yetzer hara be initially the cause of decree and punishment, and afterwards, be the reason Hashem has compassion on us?

The key to deciphering this contradiction is in the words רק רע כל היום, "only evil, all day long." When one is bad "all day long," this means he isn't trying to do good. When one battles against the yetzer hara, although he will lose many times, there will also be some

successes. As it states, שבע יפול צדיק וקם, "A tzaddik falls seven times and rises". His attempts to be good will arouse Hashem's compassion. However, רק רע כל היום implies that the yetzer hara took over, and the person doesn't even try to improve his ways. This brought on Hashem's wrath and the decree of the mabul.¹¹

When Noach left the *teivah* he offered up *korbanos*. Hashem said (8:21), לא אספ לקלל עוד את האדמה בעבור האדם כי יצר לב האדם רע מנעריו "I will never again curse the earth because of man because man's heart is bad from his birth..." The Kedushas Levi asks: If man's heart is evil, wouldn't that be a reason to punish him? How do we understand the *pasuk*?

The Magid of Mezritz zt'l (quoted in *Kedushas Levi*) explains that man's corrupt heart, when overcome, is the source and origin of Hashem's immense pleasure. Hashem says that He will never again destroy the earth because Hashem enjoys the service of people who, despite their tendency to do bad, fight and overcome their *yetzer hara*.

The Kedushas Levi adds that this explains the beginning of the *pasuk* (8:21), וירח ה' את ריח הניחוח, "Hashem smelled the pleasant aroma [of the *korbanos*]." The Baal HaTurim writes that the expression, וירח את ריח is written only twice in Tanach. Once in *pasuk* (8:21) and the other is (Bereishis 27:27), וירח את ריח בגדי, which can be translated, "He smelled the scent of rebellion." It is the rebellious nature of his heart that creates ריח ניחוח, Hashem's pleasure, when a person overcomes this nature to serve Hashem.¹²

11. There is a custom, stated in Shulchan Aruch (see Rema 264:9), that on erev Shabbos someone should light the wicks, and then immediately blow them out. Later, when the wife lights the Shabbos lecht, it will be easier for the wicks to catch fire because they were already lit and singed earlier. Perhaps this is to hint to us that the primary avodah is to light the candle that had blown out. This means that even if a person fell from his level and thinks that the נר ה' נשמת אדם, the candle of his neshamah, was eternally extinguished, he should strengthen himself and rekindle the candle of his soul. If he does so, his neshamah will now shine brighter than had the candle never been extinguished.

12. Someone told Reb Mendele of Vitebsk zt'l that he sees no end to his battle against the yetzer hara. When he finally succeeds in breaking one yetzer hara, a new one arrives. "What is the purpose. There is no end to the fighting." Rebbe Mendele explained to him that these tests create clothes for Hakadosh

Consider the following mashal (the Baal HaTanya tells a similar mashal in *Torah Or*, t'l, *Vayishlach* ד"ה וְהָנָה הַקְּרָבָנוֹת regarding a bird that speaks):

A wealthy, powerful king had many musicians and singers. They would play and sing before him, and the king had much pleasure from them. But mostly, the king would listen to his pet bird, which was trained to sing. All birds, by nature, can whistle a few notes, but this bird was able to sing real songs and carry a tune.

One of his professional singers said to the king, "I sing better than your bird. Why does the king prefer the bird's singing over mine?"

The king replied, "You sing beautifully, but this bird is a novelty and one of its kind.

It is the only bird in the world that can sing songs. That's why I prefer listening to the birds' singing over the best singers and musicians."

The *malachim* sing better than us, and they serve Hashem with far more fear, love, and perfection than we can, but malachim don't have a yetzer hara, and they don't have hatred (see Shabbos 89a). Therefore, it is no chidush that they can sing before Hashem. But we are human beings, and the "yetzer hara becomes stronger over us each day" (see Succah 52b), to prevent us from doing avodas Hashem. Yet we are strong and we don't listen to the yetzer hara, and we serve our Creator. This makes a much greater nachas ruach for our Father in heaven.¹³

Baruch Hu, keviyachol. Just as people don't want to wear the same pair of clothing every day, so, too, Hashem wants to wear new clothing. We create these clothes when we overcome the yetzer hara in various ways, due to the different tests that come our way.

It is known that the midos represent parts of the body (for example, Chesed is represents the right hand, Gevurah the left hand, Chachmah, Binah Daas represent the brain, and Netzach Hod, the two legs. Tiferes, Chazal tell us, is the body (the trunk of the body). Orach l'Chaim (Vayeitzei וַיֵּצֵא ד"ה א"י ויהלום) of Zlotchev zy'a explains that the body is called Tiferes because Tiferes means that Hashem has pleasure from us, as it states (Yeshayah 49:3) עֲבָדִי אֲתָהּ יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר בְּךָ אֶתְפָּאֵר, "You are my servant, Yisrael, in whom I take glory." The reason Hashem takes pride and joy in us is because of our human body. He writes, "I heard from Rebbe Dov Ber zt'l (the magid of Mezritzh) that Tiferes is called גּוּפָא body (introduction to Tikunei Zohar), because Hashem Yisbarach isn't מִתְפָּאֵר proud with his malachim and serafim who serve Him, because they must serve Him, and they don't have a yetzer hara or free choice. But Hashem Yisbarach praises himself with man who is clothed in a human body and has the free will to do as he desires. When he serves Hashem, this creates Tiferes, Hashem's pride."

13. The Baal HaTanya (*Torah Or*) concludes that if a person fasts for several days and has no strength, and can't say even one chapter of Tehillim, and the like. However, when he puts some food into his mouth, his strength will immediately return, and he can praise Hashem. So, we see that gashmiyus matters give a person strength to serve Hashem. Is there anything more precious to Hashem, that a *davar gashmi* (an item of this world) should be raised to sing to Hashem and to serve Him?!

Someone asked the Chazon Ish zt'l about a very special *bachur*, a *masmid*, a *talmid chacham*, with sterling *middos*. He told the Chazon Ish, "It looks like he doesn't even have a *yetzer hara*." The Chazon Ish replied, "Then he is a *baal mum* (flawed)." Because, as a rule, a person should have a yetzer hara. That's what makes his *avodas Hashem* precious to Hashem.