Points to Ponder

Noach 5779

**נח איש צדיק תמים היה בדורותיו Noach was a complete Tzaddik in his generation (6:9) – Rashi** cites the famous Midrash that notes that some used this phrase as a praise of Noach and some as a derision. Why would we deride Noach? And why is such a Machlokes even acceptable given its limited relevance? **The Alter of Novorhodok ztl.** explained that everyone agreed that Noach was a Tzaddik. The only issue was what pushed him to be the way he was. Those who use the words as a praise note that Noach’s Tziddkus came about without any counter-pressure from the outside. He merely lived a life of growth irrespective of the generation he was born in. The other position maintains that it was a reaction to the terrible environment that led Noach to figure out that he needed to be EXTRA careful but in a different generation, he might not have had the need to push so hard on himself. But there is no question that both positions praise Noach.

**ותמלא הארץ חמסThe land became filled with graft & theft (6:11)** – Why was this so terrible? After all, the Torah had not been given as yet. Why punish the people for following their desires? **The Alter of Kelm** explains that they were not living with “Seder” with order in their lives. Without order in one’s life, there can be no life. If we are both hot and cold at the same time or dry and wet or burning and cooling – we will not be able to handle it. If it is so for the individual it is also true in the society at large which is why there cannot be a world or a society with chaos. This was the sin of the generation of the Mabul – everything went. When everything is ok, nothing is ok and the world destroys itself.

**נבקעו מיענות תהום רבה The fountains of the great depths burst forward (7:11) – Rashi** explains that this was Middah K’Negged Middah. They sinned “Rabba” and thus they were punished with the Tehom Rabba. Why is this a Middah K’Negged Middah? In word alone? **Rav Baruch Sorotzkin zt”l** explained that in the normal course of events Hashem has built in means of punishing a person to alert him to his misdeeds. There is no need to destroy mankind overall. However, this is the case when mankind destroys the basis of creation, allowing the animal world and even the botanical life to be a part of his debauchery, the punishment needs to be a bigger overhaul. That is the intent here – because the sin was so tremendously destructive, the punishment too, needed to be greater as well.

**בעצם היום הזה בא נחIn the middle of this day Noach and his family came (7:13) – Rashi** notes that the people saw him going in and threatened to kill him and the family and destroy the Teiva. **Rav Yaakov Kamenetzsky ztl.** would point out that the Yetzer HaRa is so convincing that even when they saw the message he had been professing for 120 years coming true, instead of being swayed by the message, they chose to ignore the point and kill the messenger. We too, sometimes fall prey to that Yetzer HaRa.

**וישאר אך נחAnd Noach alone remained (7:23) – Rashi** notes that Noach was bitten by the Lion. **Rav Avrohom Kalmanowitz ztl.** asked why it is that although Noach took care of the lion for a whole year, missing one lousy meal time is what he should be remembered for? He explained that this was the absolutely last lion on earth. One cannot delay the food of the last lion on earth.

**שופך דם האדם באדם He who spills the blood of a person (9:6**) – Why did Hashem mention murder after the Mabul? The Mabul was a result of Chamas? **Rav Schachter Shlita** explained to us that the **Meiri** notes that in the Luchos the Dibbros are linked 1 & 5 and 2&6 etc. Thus, there is a connection between knowing there is a Hashem and not murdering. Lest one think that after the generation of the Mabul, we lost our Tzelem Elokim and murder was therefore allowed, Hashem reminded us that this was not so. **Rav Hutner** adds that when the possuk mentions that day and night Lo Yisbosu means that a non-Jew is not to observe the Shabbos. Why is that mentioned here? Rav Hutner explains that until the Mabul everyone could keep Shabbos but the Tzelem Eloim was so reduced that only those so commanded could keep the Shabbos and others could not.

**ויהי כל הארץ שפה אחתThe land was filled with one language and a few things (11:1)** – As we are introduced to the episode of Migdal Bavel, we become somewhat mystified as to what exactly was their Aveira. Why could they not simply have made a miscalculation and treat them accordingly? (Indeed no one smaller than **Rashbam** seems to have trouble (based on the Pshat) figuring out what the people did that was sinister.) Moreover, assuming **Rashi**’s explanation, why take away their Achdus**? Rav Elchanan Samet Shlita** suggests that the people were not interested in working together. They merely wanted to cast off Hashem in the communal sense in the same way that Adam did in Gan Eden. In the same manner (and the same style linguistically) that Adam needed to be cast away from Gan Eden, The people in Bavel needed to be broken apart to see that without a binding under the banner of Hashem, they are not strong at all.

**Haftara: וכל בניך לימודי ה' And all your children will be those who study Hashem (54:13)** – The Talmud tells us that we should not read it as Banayich – the children but rather Bonayich – the builders. **Rav Chaim of Volozhin** explains that every action has impact in building the world at large. **Rav Shalom Rosner Shlita** referred to an **Aruch LaNer**  (end of Yevamos) who noted that this gemara appears 4 times and speaks to the different types of peace in the world: Berachos is between man and Hashem. Yevamos is between man and his brother Nazir between man and his wife and Kreisus between the body and the soul. The letters of the different Mesechtos spell Bonayich.