Points to Ponder

Noach 5780

**ויּ֥וֹלֶד נֹ֖חַ שְׁלשָׁ֣ה בָנִ֑ים Noach had three sons (6:10) – Rav Yaakov Ariel Shlita** highlighted that the three sons of Noach really represent three distinct ideologies. The Cham ideology states that a person can free himself of the obligations of his station in life. Alcohol, free spiritedness, anything he wants, can simply free him of any identification that holds him in a place with responsibilities. The Shem style is the opposite. By virtue of the name of Shem itself, Shem is the person who finds an identity in himself and in the world around him and literally covers all his bases in life with responsible coverage. He is most at home in an ethical environment. Yefes is somewhere in between. Yefes is the representation of one who desires to bottle and contain the colors and aesthetics of free spiritedness within a context that it can be observed. Hence the ultimate Beracha for him is to have his beauty in Shem’s tent.

**וַתִּמָּלֵ֥א הָאָ֖רֶץ חָמָֽס: For the world has become filled with Chamas (6:11) – Rav Schachter Shlita** would often note that there are 2 similar but different Mishnayos in Pirkei Avos – one speaks to the three things upon which the world stands and the other speaks to the principles that hold up the world. The difference says**, Rav Ovadiah of Bartenura**, is that one speaks to the pillars that the world was built upon – Torah, Avoda and Gemillas Chassadim. The other speaks to the purpose of the world – truth, justice and peace. If you are missing the latter, the world does not function and cannot exist anymore. Rav Schachter would remind us of the **Rambam** who notes that in general it is good to find a middle of the road approach between 2 extremes in life except when the world is pulling to one of the extremes when it is advisable to shift one’s practices to the other side “even if just a little bit” to try to balance one’s existence within world extreme. Rav Schachter would add that this was the case in the time of Noach where the world was so full of thievery. It is also true today where we have so much in the way of Arayos, lack of Tzniyus and Gezel that we probably should go to the other extreme to balance ourselves safely in the world.

**וַיְשַׁלַּ֖ח אֶת־הָֽעֹרֵ֑ב The Raven (8:7) – Rashi** cites the Gemara in Sanhedrin (108b) that notes that the Raven accused Noach of wanting to cohabit with his wife. **Rav Frand Shlita** notes that in his awareness this was the first example of Paranoia and is a sign of being a Shoteh. It also demonstrates a certain egoism on his behalf that when mixed with paranoia can have incredibly dangerous effects.

**צֵ֖א מִן־הַתֵּבָ֑ה אַתָּ֕ה וְאִשְׁתְּךָ֛ Go out of the Teiva, you and your wife (8:16) – Rashi** notes that while they were in the Teiva they could not live together and this command allowed them to reunite. **Or HaChaim** adds that even though the waters stopped and the danger passed, they were not to cohabit until they left. Why would this be so? The Gemara notes that when the danger is strong one cannot cohabit but why not after the danger? **Rav Goldvicht ztl.** would often note that there were 2 reasons for the prohibition against living together – the first was in order to join with the rest of the world which is in distress. The other reason is that while in the Teiva, Noach and his family were undergoing training to rebuild the world. That rebuilding needed to be built on the principles of Chessed and until they knew that they graduated the training, they were not to rebuild yet.

**כִּ֠י יֵ֣צֶר לֵ֧ב הָֽאָדָ֛ם רַ֖ע מִנְּעֻרָ֑יו  The inclination of man is evil from his youth (8:21)** – Is it true that our default is toward evil? **Ramban** notes that the inclination is toward bad but how we use it will have effects that can be good or bad. **Rav Kook ztl.** disagreed noting that the initial inclination of a person is Tov not Ra. **Rav Soloveitchik ztl**. noted that good and evil are definitions and irrelevant to the current discussion since technically humans are but potential. Man’s job is to create something out of the potential – that something could be either good or evil.

**אֶת־קַשְׁתִּ֕י נָתַ֖תִּי בֶּֽעָנָ֑ן It will be the sign of a covanent (9:13)** – Why will a rainbow be a sign of a Bris? **Rav Aharon Soloveitchik ztl** explained that in order to understand the depth of the colors of a rainbow it needs to refract the otherwise white light. Similarly, the soul of a person is like the white light and how it is refracted defines the perception of its color too.

**וַיָּ֣מָת הָרָ֔ן Haran died (11:28) – Rashi** explained that Haran died as a result of the fact that Terach turned his own son Avram in to Nimrod who cast him into the Kivshan HaEish. When he emerged unscathed, Haran accepted the same challenge. The Gemara (AZ 14b) notes that Avraham’s Meseches Avoda Zara was 400 perakim long. Why did he need 400 perakim? **Rav Naftoli Trup ztl.** explained that Avraham understood that within his life he was to bring people around to the recognition and service of Hashem. In order to do so, Avraham needed to understand where they were coming from and how they were off target. Hence, his Avoda Zara text was quite extensive as the world population service of Avoda Zara was quite diverse.

**Haftara: כִּי־מֵ֥י נֹ֙חַ֙ זֹ֣את לִ֔י  The waters of Noach (Yeshayahu 54:9**) – The mabul is identified with Noach since he should have davened for them and he did not (Zohar, Noach). The Midrash (Yalkut Shimoni V’Zos HaBeracha) notes that Noach told Moshe that he was bigger than Moshe since he survived the Mabul. Moshe responded that he survived but didn’t save anyone, Moshe saved the entire Jewish nation. **Rav Shaul Yisraeli ztl** explained that a real Jewish Tzaddik does not suffice with worrying about himself. He needs to be a positive influence on the world around him. He needs to understand that his Tzidkus affects that world and it affects him too.