



## Parshat Noach – Wonderful Words

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Mrs. Shira Smiles

By: Devora Kaye

“V’Noach matza chen b’inei Hashem. Noach found grace in the eyes of Hashem.” What grace did Noach possess? In addition, Hashem could have saved Noach in any number of ways. Why was it necessary for him to build an ark and live among the animals?

The core sin of the Generation of the Flood was in the area of speech. They did not keep their word. Once the floodgates of dishonesty are opened, it flows down to all areas of life. In Tehilim 45 we read, “The beauty of man is when grace is on the lips.” Hashem made two covenants with the Jewish people: *brit halashon* – a covenant of the mouth, and *brit milah* – a covenant to act morally. The two are interconnected. This is the grace that Noach found in Hashem’s eyes. He mastered the art of refined speech.

The Sefat Emet notes that if a person learns silence, he can be careful when he does speak to communicate in a modest way. Indeed we see in this *parsha* that although the Torah measures every word, two extra words are used to describe the non kosher animals of the ark. “*Umin habeheima asher lo tehora*” instead of

“*temeiah*,” to emphasize how far one must go to speak in a sanctified way.

In Breishit, when Hashem created man, the Torah writes, “*Vayipach b’apo nishmas chaim*.” Targum translates this as, “*ruach memalelah*” – the power of speech. When a person abuses this power, he casts away the part of him that makes him human. A coarse manner of speech corrupts his divine image. Therefore, we understand why Hashem wanted to destroy the world. His plan was to recreate it with individuals who would appreciate the divine spark within them. When a person misuses his speech he destroys his human essence and becomes almost animalistic. This is why Noach spent the year with animals. It was a constant reminder of what makes a human being elevated and different from animals, namely his power of speech.

Rebbetzin Feldbrand, in *Towards Meaningful Prayer*, writes that “*teiva*” can be translated interchangeably to mean word or ark. He was saved by the power of words.

When we wallow in the superficial aspects of this world we are no better than animals. Noach was punished and sentenced to live with animals for a year. This was to teach

him that his generation had stayed at the level of animals because he did not reach out to inspire them.

On some level we are all responsible for each other and are enjoined to pray when troubles come. If one does not *daven*, it shows a lack of appreciation for prayer and insensitivity to the pain of others. This needs cultivation. If you hear bad news, pray. If a friend confides in you, try to help him. If you cannot assist him, at least daven for him. Understand that if Hashem made you aware of this trouble, you have a responsibility to do something.

Why did Hashem show Noach the covenant of the rainbow after the Flood? The Sforno answers that in a sense Hashem is hinting to us that every person has a responsibility as part of *Klal Yisrael* to pray in a time of need. The rainbow signifies a time of judgment. It is our wakeup call to beseech Hashem to turn it into mercy.

As we begin the new semester, let us rededicate ourselves to prayer, proper speech, and helping people in need with fresh vigor and hope for a year of growth and self improvement.

## Parshat Noach: Born or Bred Tzadik

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur on Chassidut by Rabbi Hershel Reichman

By: Dena Weiss

“*Noach haya ish tzadik tamim b’dorosov*.” Noach was a righteous man, perfect in his generation. According to Rashi this implies either praise for his righteousness, or criticism – he was only considered a *tzadik* because his generation was wicked. This is perplexing. After all, Noach was saved from the Flood. Why would our Sages portray him negatively?

To answer this question the Shem Mishmuel poses another question. Hashem told Avraham, “Walk before me and you will be perfect.” Avraham needed to go through a process to become perfect, and Hashem gave him a challenge to reach a great level of

righteousness. On the other hand, the Torah states that Noach was already a perfect *tzadik*. How then can Rashi say that Avraham was at a higher level than Noach?

The Zohar says that Noach symbolizes the spiritual power of Shabbat. The *Avot* signify *Yom Tov*. According to Chassidut and *Kabbala* the greatest source of holiness is *Shabbat*. Why then is *Shabbat* connected to Noach, who was not even Jewish?

The Shem Mishmuel answers that the holiness of *Shabbat* came in to the world through an act of Hashem and is part of the natural fabric of time. However, the holidays are the creation of the Jewish people, who are

given the charge to create that holiness. This is why in the *kiddush* of *Shabbat* we say, “*Mekadesh haShabbat*, Blessed are You... who sanctifies the Sabbath,” and in the *kiddush* of *Yom Tov* we say, “*Mikadesh Yisrael v’hazmanim*, – Who sanctifies Israel and the holiday times.”

People are endowed with different personalities. Some people are born leaning towards evil and have to work very hard to become good. Others are born with righteous personalities and need no effort to remain a *tzadik*. Noach, who was born circumcised, was in that latter group. In contrast, Avraham, who was not born a *tzadik*, needed to work on himself

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for close to a century before Hashem commanded him to perform a *brit*. Noach is like *Shabbat*, a gift from Hashem to the world. The Avot are *Yom Tov*, self created sanctity, compelled to overcome great challenges to reach perfection. This is why Rashi states that Avraham was greater than Noach.

Hashem gives us various good *middot* and talents, which are really not our doing. They are Hashem's gifts, the Noach in us. We also possess bad *middot* that need correction. We should cherish our strengths and develop them for the betterment of the world. At the same time we should appreciate our weaknesses as an opportunity for us

to work on ourselves and turn them into strengths. Once a person begins overcoming their weaknesses he will discover new-found strengths even greater than his inborn gifts. This is the power of *teshuva*, repentance, which outweighs natural righteousness.

## Bringing Torah to Life: Shabbat for Children part II

Based on a Naaleh.com chinuch class by Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller

Older children, from age seven to twelve, already understand the meaning of *Shabbat*. However you may need to review it with them. Remind them that everything comes from Hashem and that He gives us *Shabbat* as an opportunity to express our gratitude.

During long *Shabbat* afternoons, you must have activities planned for young children. You may want to sleep but it is a bad idea to leave kids to their own devices. Make an investment and buy several good *Shabbat* games. Spend time with them. Youth groups are wonderful. Go to them even if it means taking a long walk. If necessary, make your own youth groups. Have the children recite selected *mishnayos* from *Pirkei Avot* and reward them with goodies. Halacha quizzes with prizes are great. Songs, *parsha* reviews, and treats are all good ways to make *Shabbat* delightful for children.

When my children were young they had to be at the *Shabbat* table for *kiddush*, the first course, *zemiros*, and *bentching*. Then I would act as if I didn't notice when they got up to play. Kids that age should not be expected to sit for so long.

It's important for kids to go to *shul*, but also for them not to disturb the *davening*. It takes effort to balance both. Very young children should not go at all or perhaps only for the end of *Mussaf*. It's good for them to feel the *Shabbat* aura of *shul* and to see a multitude of Jews getting together for *tefila*. As they get older you can take them for more of the *davening*. At around age 8 or 10 they will

need to start going regularly. Your role then is to make them understand the importance of *tefila* on *Shabbat* with a *tzibbur*. Tell them that the Zohar says that the holiest moment on *Shabbat* is during *Mussaf* when the congregation says "Ayeh makom kvodo," when so many Jews are looking for Hashem's *kavod*.

Encourage your teenage girls to go to *shul*. Doing something spiritual, instead of just spending *Shabbat* novel reading, eating and shmoozing adds a special quality to the day. Emphasize to them that *tefila b'tzibbur* has extra *kedusha*. Explain that *shul* is a place where one can draw down the *Shechina* into *Klal Yisrael*. If you can, accompany them. Recently, the Belzer Rebbe had the women's section of his *shul* improved and expanded. He ordered that the girls in school be told that *Am Yisrael* needs their *tefilos* and *tefillah b'rabim* has unique power. In addition, if a teenage girl attends *shul* regularly on *Shabbat*, then later on when she is married with little children and a lot of responsibilities, she will make time to *daven* as she will understand its special importance.

Being busy on *Shabbat* becomes a bigger issue for older kids from age twelve through the teen years. On long winter Friday nights, treat them to their favorite nuts and chocolate and stay up with them to shmooze and share ideas. Get them to invite their friends over. This way you have some control over who they are with. Have plenty of good books available for their reading pleasure. Some kids will enjoy question and answer games

with prizes. Encourage them to become youth group leaders. This is good because it gives them the ability to influence others. Getting them involved in *kiruv* is wonderful. If you have a student who is committed, but at the beginning of the way, suggest a simple *sefer* and set your teen up as a learning partner. This can prove to be mutually beneficial.

At this age, your goal should be to deepen your teen's concept of *Shabbat*. Discuss why *Shabbat* is different and what makes it special.

I don't let my teens leave the *Shabbat* table. Teenagers don't like feeling excluded or listening to boring adult talk. Find a way to engage them. Try to get them to sing *zemiros*. *Shabbat* talk should be elevated – no politics or *lashon hara*. Work hard to find topics your kids will be interested in. Talk about Jewish history in light of the *parsha*. Present interesting halachic scenarios and *sheilot*. Invite colorful guests. You may have to make the meal a little shorter but the children need to be there, because of their bond with Hashem which is developed through *Shabbat*.

Older children like being involved in the *Shabbat* cooking and then seeing the fruits of their labor at the table. Send them shopping for the foods they like.

Ultimately, *chinuch* entails a lot of effort, prayer and *siyata d'shmayah*. Put your best foot forward, and ask Hashem to guide you on the right path.