

Parshat Noach: Architect of the Ark Mrs. Shira Smiles

Summary by Channie Koplowitz Stein

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

The Torat Yoshiyahu asks, why didn't Hashem save Noach miraculously? Why did he need to build an Ark? Rashi explains that Hashem wanted the people to question Noach as to the purpose of this structure and then they would hopefully repent. The B'Mikroei Shemo asks, why did Hashem not command Noach to call out to the population about the impending destruction as Yonah did in Ninveh? Why the need for 120 years of work? He points out that although both were guilty of thievery and other sins, the generation of the flood was corrupt through and through. When the flaw is deep within one's character, there is no repair, but when the character remains somewhat pure in spite of the sins, repentance and repair are possible. Nineveh's character was not corrupt to its core and could therefore repent, as it did. Nevertheless, writes the Tiv Hatorah, Hashem still hoped that perhaps a physical manifestation of the awaiting danger would prompt the generation of the flood to do *teshuvah*.

Rabbi Pinto asks, if miracles are meant to appear somewhat natural, why do we read about open miracles throughout the *Torah*? Where the miracles were glaringly obvious, the people involved went beyond the call of duty and Hashem responded in kind. Noach, on the other hand, did only what was required, not even praying for his people. Therefore, Hashem too responded with only the minimal, natural ways of survival. This idea is validated in Tehillim 121, "Hashem *tzilcha al yad yeminecha* - Hashem is your shade (your shadow) on your right hand." Just

as a shadow responds directly in proportion to one's actions, so does Hashem respond to us in proportion to our actions. Rabbi Yanky Tauber offers a beautiful insight based on the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe. When we recite the *Shema*, we say, "*me'odecha*." The true translation of *meod* is "very" or "more so". In other words, we should strive to go beyond what we perceive as our limitations, and reach for a higher, better self. The very letters of *MeOD* are an acronym for *ODoM*, Man, who through his perseverance and self sacrifice can go far beyond what he thought he was capable of doing. When a person extends himself, he has the power to infuse physical objects with supernatural energy, writes Rabbi Shmuelevitz.

The bronze Nikanor gates were a gift from the wealthy Nikanor for the Temple complex. They were fashioned in Egypt, and Nikanor himself accompanied them to Jerusalem. However, a great storm raged and the sailors threw one of the heavy doors overboard. When they wanted to throw the second door overboard, Nikanor refused, saying they should throw him overboard with the door. Immediately, the sea became calm, but Nikanor was distressed over the first door. Miraculously, when the ship arrived, the first door floated up on the shore. Nikanor's supernatural self sacrifice infused this door with similar supernatural powers to return. So too Noach had to push himself beyond his natural endurance to continue building the Ark over 120 years of jeers from the people around him, continues Rabbi Shmuelevitz. Noach's *mesirat nefesh* infused the Ark with the supernatural ability to house

so many animals and store so much food. Now that the holidays are over, will we go to a Torah lecture when it's not convenient, say extra prayers or *Tehillim* for others, or take on an additional resolution to demonstrate our self-sacrifice for Hashem and His Torah? Seforno tells us that Noach was saved not so much due to his own merit but simply because he found favor in Hashem's eyes. Thievery is a result of not caring for anyone else. While Noach did not become a thief, he did lack compassion as a result of his environment. The Ark served as a training ground for caring and compassion as Noach and his family were compelled to care for all of the animals, 24/7. In fact, the Midrash tells us that Avraham Avinu asked Shem in what merit the family left the Ark. He answered that it was in the merit of the chessed that they extended to the animals for that entire year. Hearing this, Avraham took upon himself to perfect the trait of chessed in himself and, in fact, chessed is the overriding characteristic we associate with him.

Rabbi Tauber quoting the Baal Shem Tov, reminds us that the alternate meaning of *teivah* is word. If we immerse ourselves in the words of Torah and of *tefillah* we will protect ourselves from the raging waters of our self-centered society. Just as Noach brought specimens of the outside world into the Ark, so must we bring the outside world into our lives to help us do our mission. Our mission is to leave our personal arks and go out to build a better world without greed, jealousy and hate, to create a world filled with kindness and the knowledge and love of Hashem.

Megilat Kohelet: Perek 7 Part III

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller

"The end of something is better than its start..." The value of the beginning is where it ends up. Oftentimes, one sees people at the beginning of their life who don't seem very exceptional. But in the end they turn out to accomplish great things. The traits they had when they were younger, their good heart, their steadiness, were traits they kept and later developed. Others who seemed to have great potential wasted it on nonsense such as the pursuit of careers that had only extrinsic value.

Rashi points out the reverse, something that was not good at the end because it only seemed to be good at the beginning. The example given is *Acher*. Nobody could have anticipated his end. His future seemed so promising. But there was something wrong at the beginning. The Gemara tells us that at his brit all the great *Torah* sages who were there

were given a lot of honor. His father then said, "I hope my son grows up to be a *talmid chacham* so that he gets this kind of honor." From the beginning he was raised to see *Torah* as an extrinsic value to self. There was no bitul (self nullification). *Acher* reached the highest realms of understanding reality until he got to a place where he could understand no longer. Instead of saying here's my limit, he claimed there was plurality because he could not understand the nature of different forces working in concert. His conclusion was, since the problem can't be with me the problem is up there. It came from his thinking that everything has to fit into his self-defined box which is what the pursuit of honor can drive one to do.

"Don't be hasty to anger because anger lies in the lap of fools." We should train ourselves to be aware when we begin to get angry. Then we should tell ourselves, I won't act on this

anger until I know what direction to take it. One should ask oneself, is this anger the result of a physical phenomenon or is it something having to do with spiritual wrong. If it's about something physical, acknowledge that it's your body doing the talking. You have to tell yourself, "This will pass. I don't have to act on this. It's not worth the anger. It will do me more harm than good." Don't give *gashmiut* (physicality) your heart. However with spiritual matters, there is justification for displaying anger and at times one must use stern words. But before doing so, you have to ask yourself-is it going to help. If it won't, the Maharal says to think of the words of *Tefilat Haderech*-"Take us to peace, bring us to peace, let us reach our destination in peace." Expressing anger where it won't help will not bring us to that end goal.

Kotev and Mochek Demonstrations Part III

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Shimon Isaacson

Can you zip or unzip a sweatshirt with words on it on *Shabbat*? A problem arises with bringing together and breaking apart letters on the shirt much like a book with wording on the side. Therefore, it should be avoided if possible. One can be lenient in cases of necessity as per the Mishna Berura. Jigsaw puzzles that are meant to last may not be put together on *Shabbat*. Wooden picture puzzles where pieces are fitted into corresponding holes are permitted. Picture puzzles with a background are ok for children. Puzzles that are meant to be taken apart and are affixed to a surface may pose a problem. However if the pieces are on a cardboard background, one can posit that it is the same as affixing a background to a background, which is permitted. Nevertheless, adults should avoid this if possible.

Writing with icing on a cake violates the Rabbinic prohibition of Kotev. It follows that if

one cuts through the letters, one is violating *Mochek*. One may not cut through icing with script writing as the letters are attached. Cutting between print letters is permitted.

Are biscuits with lettering ok to eat on *Shabbat*? The Maharam MiRottenberg prohibited this. Most Acharonim permit it on the basis that the Maharam ruled stringently in a specific case of biscuits which were meant to be erased/consumed as a Kabbalistic *segula* (good sign) for wisdom. The Dagei Merivava notes that it is permitted as one is eating the letters directly, there is no intention to erase, and the writing is temporary. Likewise, the Mishna Berura permits it as one is swallowing letters in the normal manner of eating.

Are chocolate bars with imbedded words a problem? Here too, the letters are engraved in the bar and one breaks the words with one's mouth and not with an instrument. The Chazon

Ish, ruled stringently and prohibited it. The custom is to be lenient.

A four-pack yogurt, which when attached form a complete picture, may not be broken apart on *Shabbat*.

Food particles stuck to a bentcher may not be removed on *Shabbat* as one can come to pull letters off a page.

Food packages with printed words or images should be opened before *Shabbat*. If one needs to tear them on *Shabbat*, one should be careful to tear where there are no letters or pictures or between the letters.

Shoes with soles that leave a written imprint in the snow may be worn on *Shabbat* as the writing is unintentional.