



## The Art of Jewish Parenting: Noach

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Hershel Reichman

In Parshat Noach the Torah describes Noach, “*Eleh toldot Noach Noach ish tzadik tamim hayah b’dorosov et Elokim hishalech Noach.*” Noach was a righteous person, perfectly righteous in his generation, Noach walked with Hashem.” Rashi points out that while Noach walked with Hashem, Avraham Avinu walked before Hashem. Noach needed support to keep him on the straight path, while Avraham was able to stand strong in his righteousness on his own. Rashi is establishing an important point here. There are *tzadikim* who depend upon a support system to remain pure. They need a certain environment and the right conditions to support them. They cannot remain righteous in an antagonistic environment. Noach literally had to shut himself off in the ark to remain a *tzadik*. He lacked inner strength. He would’ve been ruined had he remained to mingle freely with the wicked people around him. In contrast, Avraham lived and traveled freely among wicked people. He passed through Babylonia, Egypt, and Canaan, through environments that were antagonistic to his monotheistic and ethical beliefs. Yet he remained strong and independent despite the antithetical and antagonistic world he found himself in. The first time the Almighty speaks to Avraham he commands him, “*Lech lecha m’artzecha...* leave your support system, your country, birthplace, family, and natural culture. You will become a great famous nation and the whole

world will be blessed through you.” We see that in a sense Avraham, the father of the Jewish nation, was greater than Noach. Rashi teaches us that the model of Avraham is to be independently righteous, to go not only beyond one’s environment, but to be righteous despite that environment. Not only did he transcend it, but he succeeded in conquering it and changing it for the better. Avraham had many followers and made many converts.

The goal of the Torah is for every Jew to become independently righteous and not to be dependent upon support systems or his environment. We see this concept repeated throughout the Torah. Yosef Hatzadik spent 22 lonely years in Egypt in a completely foreign and antithetical culture full of idolatry and licentious. Whether it was with the dregs of society in prison or in the palace of the king, he remained independently righteous and true to his ideals. When he saw the Egyptian taskmaster beating a Jew he killed him and fled to Midayn. For 60 years he lived in a land rife with impurity and idolatry, yet he became Moshe Rabeinu the greatest prophet of all times, the one Hashem chose to give us the Torah. The Torah’s goal through the 613 *mitzvot* is to develop an independent committed Jew who can function in any environment no matter how antithetical and antagonistic it is. For close to 2000 years the Jewish people have wandered around the world and encoun-

tered environments that were more often not only unsupportive but openly anti-Semitic. Yet despite that the Jews displayed incredible independence of spirit and commitment to Hashem.

Hashem commands us, “*V’halachta b’drachav,*” to go in His ways. Who is more independent than Hashem who is dependent on nothing, who was, is, and will be and who created the world and can destroy it at will. Every one of us has the potential to be an *ish hanetzach*, a man and woman of eternity, independent of time and place. Whether the environment is supportive or antagonistic, we need to follow the example of Avraham Avinu. We as parents have to raise our children to be independently righteous, to be self reliant in their *tzidkut*. When we teach our children *Torah*, we need to encourage them not only to tell over what they learned but to be creative and to come up with their own ideas, their own questions, and one day their own answers. Give your child a reward for a good question and more positive feedback for good answers. If they do a good deed on their own give them a hug, a smile, a candy and show them how special they are. As much as possible we need to encourage our children to be independent in action and thought, to be self-reliant, dedicated Jews like Avraham Avinu who walked with confidence and faith before Hashem.

## Money Matters: Secular Courts Part I

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Dayan Shlomo Cohen

If two Jews go to a secular court to decide a dispute between them it is as if one lifted one’s hand against Moshe and his *Torah*. Not only is this a problem for the plaintiff but also for anyone who helps him. Therefore a Jewish lawyer would have a problem representing a Jewish person in a secular court. If someone did go to a secular court and then decided to do *teshuvah* the case must be stopped and resumed in *beit din*. Where Reuven took Shimon to court against Shimon’s will, anything Reuven wins more than would have been decided in a *beit din* is theft and must be returned. However if Shimon also wanted to go to a secular court, then he cannot claim that he lost more than he would’ve lost in *beit din*. If a plaintiff went to a secular court and

lost, he cannot have a change of heart and decide to go back to *beit din*. However in some instances where they see that Reuven really wants to do *teshuvah*, *beit din* has the option of accepting or refusing the case. If one of the parties decides in the middle of a case in *beit din* to go to a secular court, they can be forced back as they signed to abide by an arbitration.

Where there is no source in the Torah, *Beit din* will usually decide in accordance with *dina d’malchusa dina* (The law of the land). For example there is no source in the Torah for severance pay but *beit din* will allocate severance pay where they feel it is justified as it has become accepted business practice. When we say *dina d’malchusa dina*, *beit din*

does not go by a judge’s decision but by the way they understand written law. *Batei dinin* do not have the power to deal with criminal cases and dangerous situations will be referred straight to the authorities. *Beit din* will call the defendant three times before giving the plaintiff permission to take the defendant to a secular court.

A manager of a large company who does not have permission to go to *beit din* can go to court. In these cases, the process can be shortened. Where one knows beforehand that the case cannot be handled in *beit din*, it can go straight to a secular court however it’s always worth asking before.



## Opening The Gates of the Machzor: Malchiyot Part II

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Mrs. Shoshie Nissenbaum

The first addition to the *shemonei esrei* on Rosh Hashana is *Zachreinu l'chaim*. We ask Hashem, to remember us for life. True life is *deveikut b'Hashem*, cleaving to Hashem. We ask Hashem, "Let me experience you, let me live a genuine life of clinging to you. Open my eyes so that I can see opportunities for *deveikut*." Rav Wolbe points out that we never ask for *chayim* in the singular form. We never ask only for ourselves but rather for all of creation. True life is only when we're giving to others, when we're sharing and connecting with other people. We ask for a life of connection with Hashem and His children.

We continue with *Mi komocha*... We continuously ask Hashem for mercy. "*K'rachem av al banim*... As a father has mercy on his children." Rosh Hashana is a day of judgement and we know that none of us would be worthy if Hashem would count every of one our sins. "*Mi yizke b'din*... Who can come out meritorious on this day of judgement?" Only with the attribute of *rachamim* can it happen. *Rachamim* comes from the word *rechem* (womb). The womb is a wondrous organ that supports change and growth. When we ask Hashem for *rachamim* we are asking for a chance to grow and change. We plead with Hashem, "Inspire us to believe within ourselves that we can change and give us opportunities to do so." "*Mi komocha av harachamim*..." Who is like you who gives us endless chances to change and grow and improve ourselves.

The highlight of the *brachot* of the day is *Hamelech hakodesh*. If we forget the other additions in *shemonei esrei* we don't need to go back. But if we forget this addition we have to repeat *shemonei esrei* again. It's with this blessing that we accept upon ourselves the holiness of the day. The Yesod V'shoresh Avodah writes that we should recite the words of *V'ata kodesh* with intense joy keeping in mind that Hashem designated us to be part of His inaugural ceremony. *Ata* in the Hebrew language is *lashon nochech*, first person, direct, face to face. When we recite these words we should recognize that we are standing directly before Hashem, the source of all holiness.

The next three paragraphs start with the word *U'vchen*. The Baal Hamachzor borrows this word from Megilat Esther. When Esther prepared to go to King Achashveirosh uninvited she said, "*U'vchen ovo el hamelach shelo k'dat*... I don't deserve to be here. It's not my place. But, *U'vchen*, I will come anyway." *U'vchen* is the numerical value of 72. Hashem's 72 letter name is *kulo rachamim*, all merciful. By saying the word *U'vchen*, Esther was invoking Hashem's mercy so she could go before the king. And we know that every time the word *hamelech* is mentioned in the *megilah* it's hinting to Hashem. It is in Queen Esther's merit that we can approach Hashem. She taught us that Hashem is so full of mercy that even if we are not worthy of standing

before Him, He will call us to come before Him anyway.

On Rosh Hashana, the books of life and death are open. Hashem determines the fate of each of us for the new year. The possibilities of good and evil are endless. Yet there are no personal requests to be found in our *machzor*. Instead we ask, "*U'vchen ten pachdecha*...", instill within us awe, that we might look at You Hashem and see You everywhere." The main goal of our prayers on Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur is to sanctify Hashem's name. There's so much we could ask for. Yet we plead that the entire universe be filled with awe, fear, and love of our Creator the King. We ask for *yirat haromemut*, let us not be afraid of punishment. Rather let us be awed by your greatness. Let us see you everywhere and let us feel *ein od milvado* (there is nothing besides You) every moment of our existence.

In the third paragraph we say *U'vchen tzadikim*, the righteous will see and be glad. All the evil will evaporate like smoke. When we say *tzadikim* we refer to all of *Am Yisrael* as it says, "*V'ameich kulim tzadikim*." We are davening for all of *Klal Yisrael* and presenting them to Hashem as *tzadikim* because we truly believe every Jew is holy. There will come a time when Hashem will separate the evil deeds from the person and he will just be left with his holiness and good deeds, his true inner essence.