

PARSHAS NOACH

By HARAV YAAKOV FEITMAN, KEHILLAS BAIS YEHUDAH TZVI

In last week's Parshah we read about the beautiful world Hashem created for us. It was perfect and innocent, pristine and flawless. However, this week we learn of two generations which ruined this impeccable picture. What happened and what do we learn from these joint tragedies? The Torah testifies that "the earth had become corrupt before Hashem and the earth had become filled with robbery" (6:11). The Malbim comments pithily that "as long as the sins were between man and G-d (*lifnei HaElokim*), Hashem forgave each transgression. However once the people began destroying each other (*chamas*), Hashem no longer forgave them and their fate was sealed." Concerning the Dor Haflagah, the generation which built the Tower, the iniquity was more subtle. The Zohar Hakadosh teaches that on the surface these people seemed to be above reproach. They wanted to build Shuls and Yeshivos, which they would fill with Sifrei Torah and holy objects. However, they meant all of these wonderful things for their own honor, not that of G-d. At first glance this may not seem so terrible. But, explains Rav Mordechai Miller zt"l of Gateshead, that kind of narcissism can be tolerated everywhere else, but not in the palace of the king. Gaavah – arrogance -- perhaps be ignored, but not when one should be concentrating exclusively on the glory of the King.

The Dor Haflagah's mistake was in misapplying Hashem's call *Naaseh Adam* – let us make man. It is true that man was to be the pinnacle of creation, the purpose and climax of all that came before him. But this grandeur had to stop at the door of the palace. When the Dor Haflagah sought to storm the heavens, it became obvious that they were carried away with their own prestige, enamored of their image in the mirror and in total denial of being a mere speck of protoplasm in the face of the A-mighty Creator.

How did Noach become the savior of mankind and the antidote to these two nefarious generations? The Ben Ish Chai (Sefer Od Yosef Chai, Lech Lecha) points to the word *hishalech* in the posuk "es HaElokim *hishalech* Noach – Noach walked with Hashem" (6:9). While the rest of world drifted deeper and deeper into evil, Noach walked away from their toxic influence. He always kept moving and kept growing. That was what saved him and ultimately saved the world, although it was overwhelmingly destroyed before it could be rebuilt. Noach never saw himself as an end in and of himself. He realized that he was a servant of Hashem and had a mission. Although when compared with Avrohom Avinu he was less than perfect, Noach did manage to preserve the earth and perhaps the universe itself, quite an accomplishment. This was all because he knew that when you live in the palace of the King, you can't think of yourself, only of the King.

The lesson for us all is powerful and eternal. Even when we are imperfect, we must remember our obligations to our fellow man. Destructiveness toward them is unforgiveable. However, even when we deal with our Creator, we must remember not to become entangled in our personal ego. Building institutions and structures must be for His sake, not for our own. We must always keep growing in our spirit stature or begin to sink into the chaos of arrogance and egotism. Noach raised himself above all others of his generation and so managed to save a world. We must endeavor to the same when called upon.

A GUTTEN SHABBOS

HALACHA OF THE WEEK 5779

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This week we will discuss random questions which have accumulated over the Yomim Tovim:

Question: If someone is not sure if he said *Retzei* in Bentching on Shabbos, should he bentsh over?

Answer: This is the subject of a major disagreement amongst the Poskim. The Mishnah Berurah (188:16) rules that he should bentsh over because he has probably not said it (see Shaar Hatziyun 12). However the Chochmas Shlomo (188:6) tends toward the conclusion that he should not repeat Bentching since Shabbos is an important presence at every meal and everyone tends to remember *Retzei*. The Shevet Halevi (4:18:2) rejects this conclusion and agrees with the Mishnah Berurah. The Elef Hamogein on the Mateh Ephraim (583:25) quotes the Sefer Peulas Tzadik (3:35) that since all the additions to Bentching are *d'rabbanan* (see Rosh Berachos 7:23), if there is any doubt, one should not repeat since we are lenient in *d'rabbanan*s. The Yalkut Yosef also follows this view in the case of any *d'rabbanan*. The bottom line is that we follow the Mishnah Berurah to bentsh over but only if the doubt arose immediately after Bentching but not later on (see Mishnah Berurah 114:38).

Question: May one text during Pesukei D'zimra?

Answer: There is a disagreement amongst Poskim if one may write during Pesukei D'zimra (see Sefer Chayei Moshe (1:167:8). The *Sedei Chemed* (10:72) concludes that it is best not to. One may therefore extrapolate that one may text only for something urgent, an emergency or a physician answering an important medical question.

Question: May an aveil l'a for a parent during the year be the Chazan on Shabbos or Yom Tov if he has Yohr Zeit during the following week?

Answer: Yes (Tzitz Eliezer end of volume 5, Kuntres Even Yaakov 48).

Question: With which hand should a lefty hold the Sefer Torah?

Answer: The Mishnah Berurah (282:1) rules that he should hold it in his right hand.

Question: Many Shuls have the custom to throw the Hoshanos on top of the Aron Hakodesh. In our Shul this is difficult and nearly impossible. Is this a problem?

Answer: Actually, the Munkatcher Rebbe, the Minchas Elazar zt"l (Darchei Chaim Vesholom, page 292) did not allow the Hoshanos to be thrown onto the Aron, so there is ample precedent not to do so.

Question: We have a chaburah learning Aruch Hashulchan twice a week. When they make a siyum iyH on one section of the Shulchan Aruch such as Orach Chaim, will that count as a seudas Mitzvah?

Answer: Absolutely (Bais Avi 2:52; Mishnah Halachos 6:166).

Question: Why do we shokel (shake and sway) when we daven and learn Torah?

Answer: The Kuzari writes that it is a remnant of when there was only one sefer for many people and each person would bend, read and straighten up. The Baal Haturim (Shemos 20:15) states that this is a fulfillment of the Posuk which states that Klal Yisrael shook and moved at Mattan Torah (see also Rama 48). Many other Meforshim see this as a fulfillment of the Posuk *kol atzmosei tomarna Hashem mi kamocha*, meaning "may all my bones (not just the mouth) praise Hashem. By shaking, we involve all our bones in the praise.

A GUTTEN SHABBOS