

לעילו נשמת: אריה ישראל בן מרדכי ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

Torah Wellsprings

Collected thoughts
from
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Noach



לזכות רפואה שלמה,
מלכה בת רחל, מיכאל בן שולמית
יעקב משה בן דבורה שירה,
ואברהם יהודה בן שרה רבקה

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*Parshas Noach***Hasghachas Hashem in the timing of events**

In Noach's times, most people begot children at about a hundred years old. Noach was an exception. His firstborn child was born when he was five hundred years old (see 8:32). This waiting period probably caused Noach and his wife, Naama, much stress and anxiety. Why were they barren when all the neighbors are building families? For about four hundred years, their hearts suffered from that question.

It also seemed unfair. Noach was a איש צדיק תמים, a perfect tzaddik. He was very honest with all his money dealings while all his neighbors were seeking opportunities to steal. The trend of the times was adultery and avodah zarah, and Noach was honest and upright, and totally devoted to serving Hashem. As it states, וַיֵּלֶךְ נֹחַ אִישׁ צַדִּיק וְתָם הָיָה נֹחַ בְּיָמָיו, "Noach went with Hashem." Why

should he and his wife be barren while the greatest sinners of the times were building large families?

When Noach was five hundred years old his oldest son Yefes was born. The flood started almost a hundred years later, when Noach was six hundred years old, and Yefes was still under one hundred. In that era, the age of punishment was one hundred. All of Noach's children were under a hundred years when the mabul began, so they could be saved together with Noach, even if they weren't righteous. If they were over a hundred years old they would need to be righteous to be saved.

Furthermore, if Noach's children were righteous and born earlier, Noach would have to work very hard to build several teivos for them all. So we see that giving birth late in life was for his benefit

(see Bereishis Rabba 26:2, quoted in Rashi).

This should give chizuk to couples who have to wait some years before bearing children. The waiting period is very stressful. They don't understand why their neighbors have children early in their marriage, while they must wait and wait. But there is always a reason, and it is always for their benefit. If they could look behind the scenes, they would see that it is for their good.

When Yosef was born, Rachel prayed (Bereishis 30:24), יִסְרָאֵל, "May Hashem grant me another son." She only had one child, and she wanted another one. Her tefillah was only answered eight years later. Why did it take so long until Binyamin was born? Why weren't her tefillos answered earlier?

It was for the good. The Midrash (Targum Sheni, Esther 3:3) states that from all of Yaakov Avinu's children,

Binyamin was the only one who didn't bow down to Eisav, because he wasn't born yet. Therefore, the Beis HaMikdash was built on Binyamin's property. Waiting all those years for a second child proved to be for the good. If he had been earlier, we might not have merited the Beis HaMikdash.

Yitzchak Avinu, too, was barren for twenty years before bearing children. That too was a great kindness, because it detracted twenty years of slavery in Egypt.

We'll explain:

By Hashem's decree, the Jewish nation was to be in galus for four hundred years, and the hard labor of this exile was set to begin after all of Yaakov Avinu's children were niftar. This occurred with Levi's demise, the last of Yaakov's children. The hard labor in Mitzrayim began. There was another 86 years to go to fill the quota of 400 years of exile.

Had Yitzchak had children earlier, it would result with Levi (and Yaakov Avinu's other children) being born, and ultimately niftar, earlier. Instead of 86 years of hard labor, there would be twenty years more. So we see that it was for klal Yisrael's benefit that Yitzchak had children later.

Shidduchim

On the topic of "waiting" we come to the topic of shidduchim. Unfortunately, some singles go through very hard times before finding their bashert. In this realm, too, there is always a benefit earned from the waiting period.

Consider the following true story:

Reb Nissen Shtitzberg's zt'l daughter was a happy bride, because she recently married an outstanding yirei Shamayim and talmid chacham. But her joy was soon shattered. Her new

husband was suddenly niftar in the week of sheva brachos.

Being a widow without children, she couldn't marry anyone else, before she gets chalitzah. However, there was a problem. The brother who was eligible to make chalitzah was only five years old. It would take eight years until he becomes bar mitzvah, old enough to do chalitzah, before she can get remarried. Until then she was destined to be an agunah.

Reb Nissen Shtitzberg came to his Rebbe, the Yesod HaAvodah of Slonim zt'l and said, "You always teach us that everything is for the good. Please teach me how to look at the present situation. Explain to me how it can possibly be for the good. My daughter is a young widow, unable to get married again for eight years. How can I say that this is for the good?"

The Rebbe replied, "It was destined that your daughter

should get married and build a family in eight years from now, and that decree can't be changed.

"What is the alternative? That your daughter should be in shidduchim and not find her bashert until eight years from now? All those eight years you would be wondering why she isn't engaged yet? You would speak to every shadchan you know, do many segulos, hoping for a salvation. People will begin speaking lashon hara on your daughter. They will say, 'There certainly is something wrong with her, because otherwise, why isn't she engaged yet?' Or they will speak lashon hara on you that you're being too picky, and that you're preventing your daughter from getting married.

"But now you know that for eight years, there is nothing you can do. The time for her

to build a family hasn't come yet. You can go through these eight years without stress. When the brother is old enough to make chalitzah, you will find the right shidduch for your daughter. Don't you see that it's better this way?" It states (Shir HaShirim 1:15), **הַנָּךְ יָפָה רְעִיתִי הִנֵּה יָפָה עֵינֶיךָ יוֹנִים**, "You are beautiful my friend. You are beautiful, with dove-like eyes." In this pasuk, the Jewish nation is compared to a dove. Why?

The Midrash (Tanchumah, Tetzaveh 5) explains this in several ways.

One explanation is as follows:

"Just as the dove brought light to the world [in Noach's time], so too the Jewish nation, who are compared to the dove, brings olive oil and light the menorah before Me [in the Beis HaMikdash]."¹

1. The following are some other explanations stated in the Midrash, why the Jewish nation is compared to a dove:

1] The dove represents the Sanhedrin. Just as one's eyes lead his body

How did the dove bring light to the world?

Chazal say, Noach brought branches of every species of trees into the teivah, so he could replant them after the flood. But he didn't bring a branch from an olive tree, because the olive tree is strong and durable and could survive the flood.

Why did Hashem create the olive tree with a strong nature?

From the beginning of creation Hashem knew there will come a time when Noach will want to know if the flood was easing up. To help

Noach, Hashem made the olive tree durable, so it would survive the flood and the dove could take off a branch to show Noach that the waters were receding.

So, the dove, with the olive branch in its beak, teaches us that Hashem plans everything for the good of mankind. From the beginning of creation, Hashem planned that it should be good for Noach in the teivah. Contemplating on Hashem's compassion enlightens our eyes. We realize that everything is for the good, and everything is Hashem's compassion.²

[directing the person where he should go] so do the Sanhedrin direct the Jewish nation, because they abide by all their laws.

2] A dove recognizes its nest and dovecote. It knows where it must go. Similarly, the students [of the Jewish nation] all know their place.

3] A dove never departs from its mate, and the Jewish nation never departs from Hakadosh Baruch Hu.

4] All other birds jump about when they're being slaughtered. In contrast, the dove puts out its neck to be slaughtered. The Jewish nation is compared to a dove, because there is no nation that is killed *al kiddush Hashem*, and are prepared to give themselves over to death, like the Jewish nation.

2. The flood came because of theft (see *Rashi* 6:13). Theft means one doesn't believe Hashem gives everyone what they need, and that it is

Bad Influences – a lesson from the Dor Hamabul

A bachur was having chest pains. An x-ray showed that his lungs were charred.

“Why do you smoke?” the doctor asked him, showing him the picture of his dark lungs. “You’re destroying yourself.”

“I don’t smoke.”

“The x –ray doesn’t lie. It’s obvious that you smoke.”

After some discussion, the doctor understood that it was second-hand smoke. This bachur was learning in a yeshiva with many chain smokers in the beis medresh, and this affected him — though he himself never took a cigarette.

We see that people are influenced by other people’s deeds.

Diseases are similar. One

person has the contagious disease and it spreads to many others. This reminds us that one person can influence others.

Chazal (Sanhedrin 108.) say that before the mabul came even animals were sinning, for they were mating with foreign species. Therefore, the animals were also punished, and they drowned in the flood. The question is, if the entire nature was sinning, it seems mankind shouldn’t be punished. Corruption was in the air, affecting even animals. How could human beings be expected to go against the trend of the times?

The last pasuk of parashas Emor states, וידבר משה אל בני ישראל ויוציאו את המקלל אל מחוץ למחנה וירגמו אתו אבן ובני ישראל עשו “כאשר צוה ה’ את משה, “Moshe spoke with Bnei Yisrael. They

impossible to take more than your portion. This lack of *emunah* brought on the flood. Because *emunah* is the foundation of the world, and without the foundation, the world collapses.

brought the person who cursed [Hashem] outside the camp and they stoned him. Bnei Yisrael did as Hashem commanded Moshe.”

The final words, ובני ישראל עשו “Bnei Yisrael did as Hashem commanded Moshe” seems extra, because didn’t the Torah already state that they stoned him for his sin (as Hashem commanded them to do)?

Sefarim state that this man [who cursed Hashem] was an impure source. About this man the Torah (Vayikra 24:16) writes, ונוקב שם יקו"ק - the one who curses Hashem [shall be killed...]. The first letters spell יש"ו [the name of the Christian god. This man, who cursed Hashem, was reincarnated centuries later as יש"ו]. Because of his rishus, sinfulness ways, this man brought bad thoughts into the hearts of the Jewish people [in the desert]... Therefore, it states וירגמו אותו אבן, they stoned him. After he died, ובני ישראל עשו כאשר צוה ה' את

משה, ‘Bnei Yisrael did as Hashem commanded Moshe.’ Because [now that this evil person was killed, the bad influence ceased and] Bnei Yisrael were free to do Hashem’s will with pure thoughts for Hashem... The Jewish nation didn’t think it was right to kill a Jewish man. However, it states, ובערת הרע מקרבך, ‘You shall eradicate the bad from your midst.’ And this is because as long as the rasha is among them he is a source of evil, sprouting negative influences in your midst. When that bad goes away, the path is open for those who love Hashem to serve Him and to do His will. Because when one is ill, his contagious illness can make others ill. May Hashem protect us from all bad, in this world and in the next.

We learn from this how careful we must be from bad influences. The entire Jewish nation in the desert had trouble serving Hashem as long as this man was alive. His impurity

affected everyone – even those he didn't have direct contact with. When he was killed, the Torah announces, **ובני ישראל עשו**, **כאשר צוה ה' את משה**, now they could serve Hashem.

Good Influences

Included in our discussion is the importance of having good friends and being among tzaddikim. In overt and covert ways, good friends create positive influences, spreading holiness and yiras Shamayim to others.

The Gemara (Taanis 23.) says, **או חברותא או מיתותא**, “Either a friend or death.” The Gemara is hinting, “Either a good friend, who can influence you to become better, or chalilah a bad friend, whose influence leads to death.

We should strive to be among people who believe in Hashem, keep the Torah, and have yiras Shamayim. It is very hard to be among people who deny Hashem and don't want to keep the Torah, without being influenced.

That why Hashem raised Har Sinai above the nation and said, “If you don't accept the Torah your death will be over there” (**שם תהא קבורתכם**, Shabbos 88). The mountain over their heads was like an overturned pot, locking them all underneath. It implied, “You must remain within this camp. Don't leave and befriend the gentiles. Your friends, your influences, your life is solely under this canopy, together with good Yidden —not outside. If you leave, you will be confronted with negative influences, **שם תהא קבורתכם**, and over there will become your grave.

Therefore, the Gemara doesn't say **פה תהא קבורתכם**, “your grave will be here, under the mountain.” The problem is **שם**, going over there, away from the Jewish nation, and joining up with foreign influences.

About the generation of the flood, it states (6:11), **ותמלא הארץ חמס** “The earth was filled with corruption.” It is truly

remarkable that Noach was able to remain righteous at that time. How can one be a tzaddik when everyone else around him was sinning? Somehow, with super-human strength, Noach wasn't influenced by his surroundings, and he devotedly served Hashem. The Torah emphasizes that he was a צדיק... ברוותיו, a tzaddik even in his generation. If he were in the generation of Avraham, where there were good influences, he would

reach even higher levels (see Rashi 6:9).

Hashem brought the good people – Noach and his family — and the good animals (who didn't sin) into a secluded teivah — away from the corrupt world. It was like bringing them into an isolated ward, distant from the corrupt, ill-influences of mankind. The old world would be destroyed and a new world will be rebuilt with positive influences.

Tefillah

In this week's parashah, Hashem tells Noach to build a תיבה, to make a light for the תיבה, to enter the תיבה, and then (after the flood ended) to leave the תיבה.

The Maggid of Mezritch zt'l teaches that תיבה can also mean words of tefillah (תיבות (התפילה)). Thus, these pesukim teach many important lessons on tefillah. We will write here some of the Maggid's lessons (quoted in Toras HaMagid):

“צהר תעשה לתיבה, ‘illuminate the תיבה.’ I heard that Rabbeinu HaKadosh, Reb Dov Ber of Mezritch explained that when one doesn't pray with kavanah he is saying the tefillah with darkness. But when one davens with kavanah...every word of his tefillah shines. The Torah urges, צהר תעשה לתיבה, let every word of your tefillah shine with your good kavanah” (תורי (זהב, נה).

“The tzaddik, the great magid of Mezritz zt'l explained the pasuk (7:1), ויאמר ה' לנה בא אתה, וכל ביתך אל התיבה כי אותך ראיתי צדיק ולפני בדור הזה, 'Hashem said to Noach, come, you and your family to the תיבה, because I see that you are a tzaddik before Me in this generation.' Hashem was telling a tzaddik that he should come with his entire body, with all his 248 limbs, and with all his emotions, into the words of the tefillah. כי אותך, 'because I see you are a tzaddik' and therefore you will be able to daven with complete concentration. If one isn't kadosh and tahor, holy and pure, he won't be able to put all of himself into the words of prayer, as this is known. Just as Noach's teivah didn't accept animals that were corrupt [so too, the teivah, words of tefillah, push away someone who isn't kadosh and tahor.]” (עטרת ישראל, נח).

“The chassid, the magid, Reb Dov Ber zt'l taught: One should think about how his life and that of his wife and children are dependent on tefillah - and especially on the tefillos of the yamim norai'im. Our entire chiyus is dependent on proper tefillos...” The Maggid explains that this is the meaning of the pasuk (6:18), ובאת אל התיבה אתה ובניך ואשתך, ונשי בניך אתך, “Come into the words: You, your sons, your wife, and your son's wife with you.” Your entire family is dependent on your tefillos.

On the words צא מן התיבה, “Leave the תיבה” the Maggid explains that there are times when one should leave the words of tefillah, and instead cry out to Hashem with all your heart, without saying words. This is also a form of tefillah.³

3. Rebbe Bunim of Pshischa zt'l taught that Noach prayed such a tefillah, when he was in the teivah. He shouted to Hashem, without saying any words, and Hashem saved him.

In review, the Maggid of Mezritch teaches that the word תיבה we can learn that: (1) One should illuminate the words of his tefillah by davening with kavanah. (2) One should pray with all his 248 limbs, with all his heart and soul. (3) One's life, and the life of his family, is dependent on his tefillah, especially on the yamim nora'im tefillos. (4) Sometimes one should pray

Because it states (8:1-2), ויזכור אלקים את נח ואת כל החיה ואת כל הבהמה אשר אתו, "Elokim remembered Noach, with the animals that were with him in the *teivah*, and Hashem sent forth a wind over the earth and the waters cooled... and the rain of heaven stopped." Rashi explains that the *pasuk* doesn't say "הוי'ה remembered Noach." It says "Elokim remembered Noach" because even Hashem's attribute of strict justice (represented by the name Elokim) agreed to stop the flood, due to Noach's tefillos.

Rebbe Bunim of Peshischa *zt'l* asks that we don't have any source that Noach prayed when he was in the *teivah*! How does Rashi say that his prayers stopped the flood?

Rebbe Bunim found a source. It states (7:23), וישאר אך נח, and Rashi writes, "Noach was moaning and was weak from his hard toil, feeding the animals." Noach had to feed the animals by day and by night since some animals eat by day and some at night. Noach worked very hard. His desperation and broken heart were like a prayer before Hashem. It wasn't a prayer with words, but a call from the depths of his heart. His heart was shouting, "Hashem, Save me. I can't manage." Those silent *tefillos* roused Hashem's compassion, ended the flood, and set Noach free from the *teivah*.

When a poor person comes to the door we sometimes request to see his *hamlatzah*, a document from a rabbi, attesting that he is indeed needy. But when a person comes to the door with ripped clothing, he doesn't need to show an approbation to prove that he's poor. The poverty is screaming by his very appearance. This describes the tefillah of a broken heart. Even without words, the circumstance itself is like a loud shout before Hashem.

without words. It's a tefillah of yearning and pleading with all one's heart and soul to Hashem.

A counsel to daven with kavanah is to be aware that he is literally standing before Hashem, speaking with Him. The more one can imagine this, the greater will be his kavanah.

The Mesilas Yesharim (19) writes, "When one is davening or performing a mitzvos, one must think that he is doing so before the King of kings. As Chazal (Brachos 28:) state, וכשאתה מתפלל דע לפני מי אתה מתפלל, 'When you pray, know before whom you are praying.'

"There are three things one should focus well on, to attain fear of Hashem (יראת ה'רומויות).

"One is that he is standing

before the Creator, literally, and conducting a conversation with Him (albeit the human eye doesn't see Hashem). Indeed, this is the hardest part to picture in one's heart [that he is literally speaking to Hashem. It is hard to imagine] because the senses don't aid us, at all. Nevertheless, one who has a straight mind, with a drop of attention, can implant this truth in his heart. He will know that he is coming to speak with Hashem, literally, and that he is pleading and requesting from Him. Hashem listens, as when one speaks with his friend and the friend listens.⁴

"After one attains this awareness, one should think about Hashem's greatness, that he is exalted above all praises

4. A non-observant Yid was once in the yeshiva Kfar Chassidim when they were davening *Minchah*. He said, "I saw *bachurim* swaying back and forth. But the old man standing near the wall [Reb Elyah Lopian *zt'l*] appeared to be truly speaking with someOne..."

Also, regarding Reb Chaim Shmuelevitz *zt'l*, people say that when he was in the midst of tefillah, no one dared interrupt him. It was obvious that he was speaking directly before Hashem.

and above all kinds of perfections that a human mind can imagine and comprehend.

“He needs to also think about the lowliness of man, his earthliness and grossness, especially since he has sinned for so many years.

“When one thinks about all of the above, he will certainly tremble with fear as he speaks before Hashem and tries to appease Him...”

In addition to thinking that he is standing literally before Hashem, he should also think that there is no one around but him and Hashem. Even if there are other people in the beis medresh, in his mind’s eye, there is only him and Hashem.

The Chareidim teaches this lesson on the words *אני והו'י* הושיעה נא. “These words mean that when it’s *אני והו'י*, only myself and Hashem, [*הושיע נא*, there will be salvations]. For that is the truth: I am alone with Hashem. Although I am

among other people, nevertheless, since (a) no one sees the secrets of my heart other than Hashem; (b) no one is seeking to help me other than Hashem; (c) and no one can save me from my tzaros other than Hashem; therefore the people around don’t interfere from my union with Hashem. They are all like nothing. There is only me and Hashem. As it states (I Malachim 17:1) *הו'י אשר עמדתי לפניו*, 'I swear to Hashem Whom I stood before Him.' And it states (Bereishis 17:1) *התהלך לפני והיה תמים*, 'Walk before Me...' This is the implication of *אני והו'י*, there is only me and Hashem, when one prays with this awareness, *הושיע נא*, there will be salvations."

The Chazon Ish *zt'l* (Maaseh Ish vol.7 103) would say: Sometimes one must do hishtadlus with deeds too. But if one does hishtadlus with deeds but he doesn’t daven, he hasn’t completed his obligation for hishtadlus, for

the primary hishtadlus is tefillah.

This is because tefillah isn't lip service. Tefillah is a true conversation with Hashem. It is a private conversation, since as far as he is concerned no one else is around. There is no greater hishtadlus than when one prays with this awareness, and with all his heart. And his tefillos will bear fruit.

One Always Needs Tefillah

Rebbe Tzaddok HaCohen zt'l (Tzidkas HaTzaddik 66) teaches, "Tefillah is always necessary. Even when Heaven decreed something, it won't happen without tefillah. We see this in the episode when Hashem told Eliyahu to tell Achav that it will begin to rain. Still, Eliyahu climbed up Har Karmel and prayed a lot until the rain came. [He didn't rely on Hashem's promise, because he understood that the rain won't come without tefillos].

"Similarly, the Gemara (Rosh Hashanah 16) teaches that on

Rosh Hashanah everything that will happen throughout the year is decreed and determined. Nevertheless, Anshei Kneses HaGedolah say one must pray every day. These two points aren't a contradiction..." Because the decree was made on Rosh Hashanah, but for the decree to go into effect one needs daily tefillos.

The Or HaChaim teaches this lesson from the pasuk (Bereishis 30:22), ויזכר אלקים את רחל, וישמע עליה ויפתח את רחמה, "Hashem remembered Rachel, He listened to her prayers, and opened her womb." The Or HaChaim asks that וישמע עליה, "Hashem heard her prayers" seems extra. The pasuk could have written, ויזכר אלקים את רחל, ויפתח את רחמה, "Hashem remembered Rachel and opened her womb." Why does the pasuk add that Hashem heard her tefillos? The Or HaChaim answers, "This tells us that although she was remembered, she needed prayers."

Also, by yetzias Mitzrayim it states (Shemos 2:24), וישמע אלקים אתה ואת אבותיך אתה ואת אבותיך, “Hashem heard their shouts [and prayers] and Hashem remembered his covenant with Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov.” Hashem promised the avos that He will save the nation and redeem them from Mitzrayim, but that wasn’t sufficient. Bnei Yisrael’s tefillos were also needed.

Pray for Everything

We should pray to Hashem for everything — the major and the minor, the trivial and the essential, because we can’t do anything without Hashem.

In the tefillos of yamim nora'im we say, קדוש אתה וגו' ושמך, “Hashem, You are holy and awesome. It doesn’t seem correct that we should turn to you for trivial matters. However, אין אלוהים מבלעדך, there is no other G-d other than You, Hashem. So where should we turn for our needs, if not to Hashem?

Chassidim once heard Rebbe Pinchas of Koritz zt'l pray, “Hashem! Please! Let our maid return...” The Rebbe was on a very high level and he prayed constantly for all Klal Yisrael. His students thought: “Certainly, the Rebbe has deep intentions in mind.”

The scholarly chassidim tried to understand the Rebbe’s hidden intention, but they couldn’t decipher his words. So they asked him to explain the meaning of this prayer.

He replied, “The tefillah was exactly as it sounded. My wife needs help. Recently, the maid left. So, I prayed that the maid should return” (Divrei Shmuel). The Rebbe understood that for all one’s needs — the small and the large — one should turn to Hashem.

Someone told me that he remembers, as a child, that he was angry with the contractors who build homes, because they don’t take into consideration the children’s

needs. For example, the light switch is high and children can't reach it. The counters are high, and they can't get to the coffee maker on the counter on their own, either. They have to ask their parents to turn on the light, to help them get to the sink, or to make a hot drink for them.

But when he became older, he realized that this was intentional. Small children shouldn't have access to these matters on their own. They should ask their parents to help them.

For our purposes, we use this as a parable to remember that we should ask Hashem to help us for anything we need. It isn't in our abilities to take matters on our own. We have to ask Hashem, and then we can receive.⁵

The Gemara (Brachos 26:)

teaches that עמידה, שיחה, פגיעה all are synonyms for tefillah. The roshei teivos of these three words is שפ"ע. This hints that when one prays he draws down Hashem's bounty.

A father told his daughter, who was a kallah, that he can't afford to rent a kallah chair for her chasunah. "You will have to use a regular chair."

The kallah was very embarrassed. She didn't want to be different than all her friends, who had a kallah chair.

Her father replied, "I wish I could help you. But your father's resources are limited. I advise you request from your Father in heaven, because He can do anything and everything."

She took her Tehillim and said many chapters with tears,

5. This can be compared to receiving a notice from the post office that you have a package waiting to be picked up. If you won't go to the post office you won't get the package. Similarly, Hashem sends us bounty, but it is up to us to pray, to draw it down.

begging Hashem for a kallah chair. Days and weeks passed, and nothing changed. Apparently, there wouldn't be a kallah chair at her chasunah.

They were in for a surprise, because when they go to the hall there was a beautiful kallah chair waiting for her to sit on. She cried from joy. It was even nicer than the kallah chairs her friends had. No one knew how it got there, but she didn't wait to ask. Ecstatically she sat down on the kallah chair, and greeted her guests.

How did the chair get there?

This ballroom had two floors, with two halls. The upstairs ballroom was taken by a wealthy, American family. It was they who ordered the kallah chair only it was accidentally delivered to the first floor.

The date was the 20th of Sivan. Some don't make a chasunah on that day (because it's a fast day, commemorating the massacres of ת"ה ת"ט). The

people making the chasunah upstairs were planning to have it at nighttime, when it will be ב"א סיון. The people on the first floor planned the chuppah by daytime, before shekiyah.

The American father sent his son to the hall ahead of time, to make certain everything was properly set.

The son immediately called saying, "There's no kallah chair!"

The father called the party planner and demanded to know where the kallah chair was.

The party planner spoke with his crew, who insisted they delivered the chair to the hall. The matter was a mystery, until they figured out that it was set up on the first floor.

They went downstairs to pick up the chair, but by that time the kallah was already sitting there, enjoying the kallah chair. They didn't want to destroy the kallah's joy, and in any event, there was time

before the chasunah would begin upstairs. When the kallah went to her chuppah the chair was quickly taken upstairs.

This story demonstrates the power of tefillah. This kallah prayed for a kallah chair, and she got it. Indeed, all our hearts' desires can be attained through tefillah.

It could be argued that a kallah chair is something trivial compared to the many other important matters one should daven for on the day of one's chasunah. Perhaps that's true, but it is important to daven for the trivial matters too, because there is nothing that we shouldn't daven for.

And when we pray, all our needs can be fulfilled with tefillah.

A Salvation through Tefillah isn't a Miracle

The Gemara (Kiddushin 29:) tells, "Abaya heard that Rav Yaakov brei d'Reb Acha was

coming to learn by him. There was a mazik (damaging spirit) that used to be in the beis medresh where Abaya's students learned (outside the city). Even if two people came by daytime they were harmed. Abaya said to his students, 'No one should offer Rav Yaakov a place to sleep [so he will be forced to sleep in the beis medresh]. Perhaps a miracle will occur [and he will destroy the mazik.]'

"That night Rav Yaakov slept in the beis medresh. The mazik appeared. It looked like a snake with seven heads. Every time Rav Yaakov bowed down [in his tefillos] one of its heads fell off. The next day, Rav Yaakov said, 'If a miracle didn't happen, my life was in danger.'"

The Maharasha asks two questions:

Abaya said, "Perhaps a miracle will occur..." It seems that he wasn't certain. How could Abaya risk Rav

Yaakov's life, and let him go to a place that's dangerous?

“Furthermore, even if a miracle will occur, that will be deducted from Rav Yaakov's merits.” As the Gemara (Shabbos 32:) teaches, when a miracle happens to a person, it is deducted from his merits. So even if Rav Yaakov is saved, he would lose some of his mitzvos and merits. How could Abaya cause this loss for Rav Yaakov? The Maharasha replies that Abaya was certain Rav Yaakov would live. Hashem would certainly listen to his tefillos and save him. The Maharasha adds, *ואין זה מיקרי נס*, “This isn't called a miracle.” When one prays, and Hashem saves him, it isn't called a miracle, and he won't lose his merits.

When Abaya said “Perhaps a miracle will happen to him” he meant that perhaps the mazik would attack him before he has a chance to pray, and then he will lose some of his merits. Nevertheless, since it

was likely that he will have time to pray to kill the mazik – as indeed happened – therefore, Abaya thought it was a good idea to bring Rav Yaakov there, to kill the mazik.

From this Maharasha we learn that when one davens and Hashem answers him, it isn't called a miracle.

Sometimes, Hashem answers a person's prayers, even before he begins to daven. Hashem loves him, knows his requests, and grants it to him, even before he asks for them.

It says, *קרוב ה' לכל קוראיו לכל אשר יקראוהו באמת*, “Hashem is close to all those who call to him; to all who will call him in truth.” Upon first glance, it seems this pasuk is saying the same matter twice. But upon closer study, one sees two differences between the beginning of the pasuk and the end. The end of the pasuk discusses someone praying *באמת*, sincerely. This isn't mentioned at the beginning of the pasuk.

Furthermore, the pasuk changes tenses. It begins in present tense, קרוב ה' לכל קוראיו, "Hashem is close to all those who call to him." And ends in future tense, לכל אשר יקראהו, באמת, "To all those who will call to him with truth."

The Arizal explains that the two questions answer each other. Generally, one has to pray, and then Hashem is close to him. However, when one truly prays sincerely, then even when he is planning to daven in the future, and he hasn't begun davening yet, Hashem will be close to him, to grant him his needs.

Praying for Hashem's Honor

After Shemonah Esrei we say, עשה למען שמך עשה למען ימינך, עשה למען תורתך, עשה למען קדושתך, "Answer us for Your name's sake, for Your right arm, for Your Torah, for Your holiness."

The poskim teach that when

one says these words נעשה רעש גדול למעלה, "It rouses a great commotion in heaven." The Tur (122) states that those who are cautious with this tefillah, זוכה ומקבל פני שכינה, merit welcoming the face of the Shechinah."

The Likutei Chaver ben Chaim (Noach) explains that the specialness of this tefillah is that we request that Hashem should answer our tefillos for His honor; for His sake; and that is a very special tefillah.

After the sin of the meraglim, Moshe prayed and said, (a) if Hashem destroys the Jewish nation, the nations of the world will think Hashem doesn't have strength to bring them into Eretz Yisrael, and that would be a great chillul Hashem.

Moshe also prayed, ה' ארך אפים, ורב חסד, that Hashem should have mercy on the nation because of Hashem's attributes of kindness and compassion.

Hashem said, סלחתי כדבריך, "I forgive them, as you said." Rashi writes, "Because of what you said that the nations will say Hashem doesn't have strength to bring them into Eretz Yisrael..." It was specifically that prayer that saved them, and not the prayer that Hashem have rachmanus on them. Because when one prays for Hashem's honor, the prayer is very powerful, and it is more likely to be answered.

The Tchebiner Rav said, מצוה לפרסם, it's a mitzvah to publicize this Rashi, so people will know the great power of tefillah that pleads for Hashem's honor. Moshe's plea for compassion wasn't accepted, but Moshe's plea that Hashem should save them for His honor was accepted.

In this week's parashah it states (9:13), את קשתי נתתי בענן, "I placed My bow in the cloud." The Chasam Sofer zt'l said that קשתי is roshei teivos forימיןך, תורתך, שמך, קדושתך, just as we say at the end of Shemonah Esrei, עשה למען שמך

עשה למען ימיןך, עשה למען תורתך, עשה למען קדושתך.

The pasuk is saying that a cloud prevents the tefillos from going up to heaven, as it states (Eichah 3:44), סכות בענן, לך, "I covered you with a cloud..." and the Midrash learns from this pasuk that after the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash a cloud prevents our tefillos from going up to heaven. As the Gemara (Brachos 32:) says, "From the day the Beis HaMikdash was destroyed, the gates of tefillah were locked." But when we pray for Hashem's honor, את קשתי נתתי בענן, we can penetrate this cloud, and the tefillos will go up to Hashem.

Therefore, let us say these words at the end of Shemonah Esrei with kavanah. Let us request that Hashem help us for His sake. Because when we pray for Hashem's honor, there is a greater likelihood that our tefillos will be answered.

Guard Your Eyes...

'ונה מצא חן בעיני ה', "Noach found favor in Hashem's eyes." The commentaries give various explanations as to how Noach found favor in Hashem's eyes. The Beis Avraham explains, נח מצא חן בעיני ה', Noach found favor, because he was cautious with his eyes.

Guarding your eyes isn't easy, but each time one is cautious he is keeping the mitzvah of לא תתורו אחרי לבבכם, "Don't stray after...your eyes."

There was a renowned Slonimer chassid called Reb Mordechai (Motke) Leider zt'l. Once, as a yungerman, he fainted in the beis medresh, and people succeeded to revive him. The next day he came to the beis medresh and said, "Yesterday I almost made the kuntz" (implying that he almost died and went up to heaven).

Another renowned Slonimer chassid, Reb Elazar Katz zt'l

replied, "What did you say? That you almost made 'the kuntz'? In heaven you don't have the mitzvah of לא תתורו (the mitzvah to be cautious with one's eyes)." The kuntz, special trick, is to be in this world, and pass these difficult tests.

It states (9:23), ויקח שם ויפת את השמלה וישימו על שכמם שניהם וילכו אחורנית ויכסו ערות אביהם, "Shem and Yafes took the cloak, placed on their shoulders, and walked backwards, and covered their father's ervah." Rashi explains that they walked backwards, so they wouldn't see their father undressed. The pasuk concludes, פניהם אחורנית וערות אביהם לא ראו, "Their faces were turned backwards, and they didn't see their father's ervah..." Rashi explains, "Why does it say a second time [אחורנית, that they turned their heads backwards]? This teaches us that when they came near Noach, and they

had to turn towards him to cover him, they turned their faces away.”

When they came into the room, they walked in backwards towards their father. When they covered him, they had to turn towards him, so they were cautious to turn their faces away.

The Alshich HaKadosh asks, they could have just closed their eyes? Why did they have to turn their heads away, or to walk in backwards? The Alshich answers that even to face an ervah creates a pgam, a blemish, on the soul. Shem and Yafes didn't want to see, and not even to face, an ervah. We learn from this how careful one must be to protect the purity of one's soul.

The Torah also states (9:24), וַיֵּרָא חָם אֲבִי כְנַעַן אֶת עֶרְוַת אָבִיו, "Cham, the father of Canaan saw his father's ervah," and in result, Noach cursed Cham that he would be a slave. The Gemara (Sanhedrin 70) states the terrible things Cham did to

Noach, but the literal words of the pasuk imply that Cham's sin was that he saw his father's ervah. The Beis Yisrael zt'l said we can learn from this the severity of not guarding your eyes. It seems that for this alone, one deserves the curses Noach gave to Cham, chalilah.

The Midrash (Tanchumah, Behalasha 10) states, "The Jewish nation says to Hakadosh Baruch Hu, 'Ribono Shel Olam, You know the great strength of the yetzer hara. [How can we possibly overcome him?]' Hakadosh Baruch Hu replies, 'Remove him little by little in this world, and I will remove him entirely from you in Olam HaBa.'" It is true that it is very difficult to guard the eyes, therefore we are advised to take on small kabbalos to help us improve, and then Hashem will help us succeed.

In particular, one must safeguard his home from forbidden sights and influences. This lesson is

learned from this week's parashah:

The Torah tells that the dove returned to Noah with an olive branch in its mouth, וידע נח כי קלו המים מעל הארץ, "Thereby Noah knew that the waters upon the earth had receded." The Midrash (Bereishis Rabba 33:6) asks: How did the bird get an olive branch? Weren't all the trees destroyed in the flood? One answer is, נפתחה לה, "The gates of Gan Eden opened, and she brought the olive branch from there."

The Ramban (8:11) quotes this Midrash, and asks that if the olive branch came from Gan Eden, where the flood didn't fall, how did Noah know from the olive branch

that the waters of the flood were subsiding?

The Ramban answers that during the mabul, the gates of Gan Eden were sealed, so the waters of the flood wouldn't enter there. When Noah saw that the dove was able to enter Gan Eden, Noah understood that the gates of Gan Eden were open once again. That was his sign that the waters had receded.

This Ramban teaches that even the doors of Gan Eden had to be sealed shut during the mabul, so the rains wouldn't go there. We can learn from this to seal the doors of our homes from foreign influences, from the modern-day mabul of heresy and temptation, so our homes will be an enclave of Gan Eden.

The Golden Winter Nights

Rebbe Hershele of Zidichov zt'l said that the winter nights have kedushah like chol hamoed. This means that if one rises early, before alos hashachar, and he studies

Torah or davens, the holiness he experiences is similar to chol hamoed.

Rebbe Hershele of Zidichov zt'l added that when one prays

to Hashem before alos hashcahar in the winter, he can accomplish as much as one can accomplish by tefillas Ne'ilah on Yom Kippur.

On motzei Simchas Torah, Rebbe Bunim of Peshischa zt'l once said, "The Great Days have passed. Now come the Great Nights."

Once, after Simchas Torah, the Beis Aharon zt'l said, "We are approaching the regular, standard days of the year." That thought disappointed him, because he yearned for the holiness of the yomim tovim. Then he concluded, "When I remind myself of the long winter nights, I'm calm."

Rebbe Moshe Mordechai of Lelov zt'l explained, "The Beis Aharon was a masmid who learned the same amount of hours each day, winter or summer. So why was he looking forward to the long winter nights? He was looking forward to waking up early in a cold in the house, when one has to throw off the blanket to

wake up. Those were the special moments of the winter that he looked forward to."

After Simchas Torah, the chassidim came to the Sar Shalom of Belz zt'l and said, "We're about to travel back to Russia, but after being here, how can we return to the cold Russian winter?" They were mostly worried about the spiritual coldness, and distance from Hashem's service, that they feared they would encounter when they get back home.

The Rebbe replied with a mashal:

The famous city of Chelm was warmed by day from the sun, and cold at night. The elders of Chelm gathered to seek a way to catch the sun, so it would also shine at nighttime.

They came to the following conclusion: They will put large pots inside the ground, and the sun will set inside the pots. In this manner, they could have the sun at night as well.

But it snowed, and the pots became filled with snow and ice. The people of Chelm were distraught. But the wise men of Chelm told them, "This isn't a problem. Take out your spades, get rid of all the ice and snow that's in the pots, and you will find the sun underneath."

They brought their spades and shovels, and began working to

uncover the sun. As they worked they became hot from the physical labor, which brought them to the conclusion that they found a way to keep warm in the winter nights.

The Belzer Rebbe was hinting to them that if they work hard by toiling in Torah and to daven with kavanah, etc. they will remain warm throughout the Russian winter.⁶

Avoiding Anger

The Torah tells us that נח מצא חן בעיני ה' Noach found favor in Hashem's eyes, but the Torah doesn't tell us how Noach attained that chen. The Chareidim (9:42) answers that if the Torah doesn't tell us how, his name is the answer.

נח means calm, tranquil, pleasant, someone who doesn't become angry. These are the traits that gave him chen.

The Chareidim writes: "Noach found favor [chen] in Hashem's eyes' (Bereishis 10:8) because he was always noach [peaceful and serene]. Noach is mentioned three times [in the first pasuk of the parashah]⁷ because when one is relaxed and calm, his serenity will be seen by the (1) way he speaks (2) the way he walks (3) and in the way he

6. Rebbe Fishel Strikover *zt'l* would say that Hashem can cause it to snow over an entire city in order to test just one *bachur*, to see whether he will wake up to learn Torah, despite the cold.

7. אלו תולדות נח נח איש צדיק את האלקים התהלך נח

does things... A tranquil spirit comes from the side of holiness, while nervousness and anger comes from the side of impurity..."

The Gemara says, "HaKadosh Baruch Hu loves three people. The first is someone who doesn't become angry. This is

as the Chareidim said, someone who is נח (tranquil) has נח before Hashem.⁸

The Chozeh of Lublin zt'l taught that anger happens mostly in the home. When one is in beis medresh, and at work, he (generally knows how to control his anger.

8. The Ben Ish Chai told the following parable: There was a king who always wanted to know the public opinion. From time to time, he and his prime minister would dress up like regular people and roam about the kingdom to hear what the common folk were saying.

"Where does the king desire to go today?" the prime minister asked him. "I want to go the hospital."

The prime minister didn't like the idea. "What can we learn over there that is important for your kingdom?" But the king insisted, so the prime minister went along. They came to a person who was in great agony. "What happened to you?" they asked.

"I was bitten by a wild dog."

"Isn't there a cure?"

"There is one cure. If one takes out the liver of this dog while the dog is still alive, it could be used as a remedy."

"So why are you so distressed? You can cure yourself."

The ill man replied, "When the dog bit me, I was so angry, I threw a stone at it and killed it. Now, I don't have a cure. That's why I am so distressed." When they left the hospital, the prime minister said to the king, "I told you that it was a waste of time to go to the hospital. We didn't learn anything at all."

The king disagreed. "It isn't so," he said. "I learned a very important lesson. I learned that when one is angry and acts in haste, he will end up regretting what he did. From now on, I will be cautious. I will never execute someone in the kingdom before waiting a night to think things over."

Anger occurs in the privacy of one's home. Therefore, the Torah says, **את הכבש האחד תעשה בין בבקר ואת הכבש השני תעשה בין הארבעים**. The word **כבש** can mean **לכבוש**, to conquer, to overcome. The Torah tells us that twice a day one should conquer the yetzer hara of

כעם. Once, when you come home in the morning after shacharis, and once again, when you come home in the afternoon. Before entering your home, make a kabbalah that you will not become angry, and then you will be saved from anger.

Chessed is a Segulah for Children

Rebbe Baruch of Zichlin zt'l came to Rebbe Henoch of Alexander zt'l for Shabbos parashas Noach, and he told the Rebbe that his son-in-law still doesn't have children.

Rebbe Henoch of Alexander zt'l told him that chesed is a segulah for children, because in heaven, the chamber for bearing children is next to the chamber of deeds of loving-kindness. So, if the chambers for children are closed, one can do chesed, enter the chamber of gemilus chasadim, and from there jump into the chamber for children.

He added that Rashi (6:9)

עיקר תולדותיהן של צדיקים מעשים טובים. This can be translated, עיקר תולדותיהן של צדיקים, the primary way tzaddikim merit children, מעשים טובים, is because they do gemilus chasadim. Therefore, the next pasuk states, ויולד נח שלשה בנים את שם ואת חם ואת יפת, "Noach gave birth to three children: Shem, Cham, and Yafes," implying that Noach bore those children because he was involved with chesed.

The Midrash (Tanchumah, Noach 2) teaches, "Some animals eat the first hour of the day, some eat the second hour of the day and some animals eat the third hour of

the day. There are animals that eat the third hour of the night, or at midnight, or before dawn. Our Rabbis tells us that for the twelve months when Noach was in the ark, he didn't sleep, not by day and not at night, for he was busy feeding the animals."

Another form of chesed that Noach was occupied with was giving rebuke to his generation, and directing them on the right path. The Seforno writes that in this merit Noach had children.

It states (6:9-10), את האלקים ויולד נח שלשה בנים. The Seforno explains, "Noach followed in Hashem's ways to do kindness for others, for he would rebuke his generation... Therefore, ויולד נח שלשה בנים, 'Noach gave birth to three children...' From the time

Noach began giving tochachah (rebuke) to his generation, he merited bearing children."

In particular, tzedakah and giving loans is mesugal for bearing children, especially, good children. The Gemara (Bava Basra 9:) states, "Whoever is accustomed to giving tzedakah, Heaven will give him children who are wise, wealthy, and experts in all parts of the Torah..."

And it states (Tehillim 37:26), כל היום חונן ומלוה וזרעו לברכה, "All day long he is compassionate and he lends money, and his children will be blessed..." This hints that by giving tzedakah and loans, one merits having good children. (The Divrei Avraham said this explanation to the Chasam Sofer zt'l, and the Chasam Sofer zt'l praised it.)

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