

ענין השבוע

AL EY DESHE

לעילוי נשמת
מרת עקא עדנה
צפורה ע"ה וסרטל
בת משה מנחם הלוי ז"ל



Weekly Torah Insights and inspiration on the Parsha from the Rosh Yeshiva Shlit"a of Gur

Buffer Zone

There is a debate in the Gemara (Zevachim 113b) if Eretz Yisrael was included in the *mabul*. The Gemara asks: If we suppose that the *mabul* did rage in Eretz Yisrael, where did the *re'em* take shelter? This giant beast

ta'avos, and they were punished with boiling water.² How could the *re'em* survive outside the *teivah* in boiling water? The Gemara answers that the water nearby the *teivah* miraculously remained cool. Otherwise, as the Gemara points out, the *teivah's* pitch coating would have melted in the water's heat: this proves that the surrounding waters stayed cool.

This argument is difficult to understand. For the waters to remain cool required a miracle, as the Gemara says. If so, a different miracle could have preserved the tar; maybe the miracle was simply that the tar didn't melt. How do we know that the waters around the *teivah* stayed cool?

It is important to understand that the saga of the *teivah* was not a one-time episode. It was meant to teach for all time how to take shelter from every deluge of this world.

בְּמַה יִזְכֶּה נֶעַר אֶת אָרְחוֹ, לְשֹׁמֵר כְּדַבְרֶךָ -
How can a youngster purify his path? By observing Your word (Tehillim 119:9). The

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The kedushah of the *teivah* cannot fully protect against the heat of *aveirah* unless some cool water is preserved around it.

couldn't possibly fit inside the *teivah*.¹ The Gemara answers that its horns were tied to the *teivah*, and the tip of its nose was in the *teivah*. The Gemara challenges this: We are taught that the *dor hamabul* was punished with heat just as they sinned with heat; they sinned with the 'boiling blood' of

1 The Ramban (6:19) writes that the *teivah's* ability to house all the world's creatures was miraculous. This leads to a difficulty: what is the Gemara's problem regarding the *re'em*? Surely, it too could have fit in the *teivah* miraculously. Perhaps, the miracle of fitting many small creatures into a limited space can be termed a 'hidden miracle,' more so than fitting in a gigantic creature which is by itself too large to fit.

2 See *Zohar hakadosh*, vol. 2, 150b.

Well-Spoken

מֵאֵלֶּה נִכְרְדוּ אֵיִי הַגּוֹיִם בְּאַרְצֹתָם, אִישׁ לְלִשְׁנוֹ
לְמִשְׁפְּחֹתָם בְּגוֹיֵיהֶם

From these, the islands of the nations were separated in their lands – each according to its language, by their families, in their nations. (Bereishis 10:5)

The Gemara (Sotah 36b) relates that when Yosef was to become viceroy of Mitzrayim in fulfillment of his dreams, he was taught the seventy languages of the nations by the *malach* Gavriel, as any king of Mitzrayim needed to be fluent in all seventy. The Gemara says that initially, Yosef had difficulty picking up all the languages. Gavriel added the letter *hei* of Hashem's Name to Yosef's name, making it Yehosef, and then he learned the languages. This is alluded to in the pasuk (Tehillim 81:6) עֲדוּת בִּיהוֹסֵף שְׁמוֹ בְּצֵאתוֹ עַל אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם, שְׁכַת לֹא יִדְעָתִי אֲשַׁמֵּעַ – *He appointed it as a testimony for Yehosef when he went out over the land of Mitzrayim, when I heard a language unknown to me.*

Naturally, it is impossible to grasp seventy languages in one night; that is why Yosef needed to be taught by a *malach*. Yet even with this supernal teaching, Yosef couldn't pick up this knowledge. What was stopping him? And if it was beyond him even with miraculous instruction, why should it help to add a *hei* to his name?⁸

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8 See *Sfas Emes*, Mikeitz 5635 s.v. *Eidus*.

Buffer Zone

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*Panim Yafos*³ notes that the letter *kaf* of קָדַרְךָ (*like Your word*) seems out of place.

The *Panim Yafos* explains that a Yid must not content himself with observing the word of Hashem exactly; he must observe *like* the word of Hashem. He must add on to the strict letter of the law, placing a buffer zone between his conduct and what is forbidden by the Torah.

The Gemara maintains that the *teivah* was surrounded by cool water because that is how we are to conduct ourselves when warding off the hot waters of this world. We are to ensure that the waters around our '*teivah*' remain cool, that we keep a distance from the aggressive heat of the outside world.

On this theme, the *Panim Yafos* elucidates a pasuk in Ovadiah (1:7), עַד הַגְּבוּל שְׁלַחְךָ כָּל אֲנָשֵׁי בְרִיתְךָ, הַשִּׂיאוּךָ יְכַלּוּ לְךָ אֲנָשֵׁי שְׁלַמְךָ - *All the men of your covenant escorted you until the border; the men at peace with you misled you and prevailed over you.* You allowed yourself to approach until the 'border' itself, and did not create distance between yourself and the forbidden. As a result, your enemies, the incarnation of Esav,⁴ who

were 'at peace' with you, were able to prevail over you.

We see clearly what happens to people who approach the border and do not distance themselves from evil. That is why the *teivah* needed a buffer of cool water. The *kedushah* of the *teivah* cannot fully protect against the heat of *aveirah* unless some cool water is preserved around it.

The Gemara (Eiruvim 21b) says that when Shlomo Hamelech instituted the *mitzvos d'Rabbanan* of *eiruvim* and *netilas yadayim*, a *bas kol* rang forth and said, בְּנֵי אִם חָכַם לְבָךָ יִשְׂמַח לְבִי גַם אֲנִי, חָכַם דְּבָר בְּנֵי וְשִׂמַח לְבִי וְאִשִּׁיבָה חֲרָפִי דְּבָר - *My son, when your heart becomes wise, then My heart, too, will rejoice.*⁵ *Grow wise, My son, and gladden My heart; then I will have an answer for those who humiliate Me.*⁶

Tosafos asks why Shlomo's institution of *shniyos l'arayos*⁷ (secondary prohibitions of *arayos*) did not merit such a *bas kol*.

Based on what we have seen, the answer is clear. Truthfully, we as Yidden should not need a *gezeirah* of *shniyos l'arayos*. On our own, we ought to keep

a distance from anything resembling *issur*. We shouldn't be drawn to wrongdoing; to the contrary, it should repulse us. If Shlomo Hamelech needed to grab Klal Yisrael by the proverbial ears and drag them away from transgression by enacting Rabbinical decrees – that is no cause for gladness to Hashem. It is cause for concern, for alarm that Yidden have fallen to this level.

Dovid Hamelech spells out this concept: אֲהַבִּי ה' שְׂנְאוֹ רָע - *Lovers of Hashem, despise evil!* (Tehillim 97:10) Just as we keep our distance from a repulsive object, in the same way, we are to despise all evil and seek to flee its vicinity.

The *teivah* needed to be completely sealed, leaving no gaps for water to enter. וְכִפְרָתָהּ אֶתָּה מְבִיט וּמְחוּץ בְּכִפָּר - *Coat it inside and out with pitch* (Bereishis 6:14). But that was not enough; even so, it could not traverse the boiling water without a pocket of cool water surrounding it. We, too – even as we sit in our '*teivos*,' we cannot directly approach the 'hot water' of this world without placing a buffer of protection around us.

(נח תשכ"ד – ס"ג מאמר ב)

3 Parshas Noach, *mahadura tinyana*.

4 Sanhedrin 39b states that Ovadiah Hanavi was a *ger* from Edom.

5 Mishlei 23:15.

6 Mishlei 27:11.

7 Yevamos 21a.

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The *Shem M'Shmuel*⁹ cites the Chiddushei HaRim who explained the reason Rashi often translates words into Old French.¹⁰ A nation's language is not only a vehicle for communication; it contains the nation's essence and culture, and all those who use it become drawn toward that culture. As is well-known – said the Chiddushei HaRim – the French are a decadent people. Since

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during Rashi's time many Yidden resided in France and spoke its language, Rashi sought to heal the language to an extent by using it for Torah.

Yosef struggled to learn the languages of the nations because he was entirely out of touch with their cultures and lowly ways of life. Gavriel thus added to his name the letter *hei*, representing

Olam Hazei which was created with *hei*.¹¹ Through this, Yosef attained a measure of connection to *Olam Hazei* and the nations of the world, and he was thus able to learn their languages. Moreover, he could now elevate all the languages, so that in the future, any Jew could rise above the depraved nature of the nations.

In the *tefillot* of Yom Tov, we say *אתה בחרתנו מכל העמים... ורוממתנו מכל הלשונות – You chose us from all the nations... and You elevated us above all the languages.* This is not a redundant phrasing. It means that besides Hashem's kindness in selecting us from all the nations, He also gifted us with *Lashon Hakodesh*, the pure language¹² of *malachim*, which draws a person to *kedushah* just as the languages of the world draw a person to impurity.

The Yerushalmi¹³ states that any Jew who resides in Eretz Yisrael and speaks *Lashon Hakodesh* can be informed that he is a *ben Olam Haba*. Now, we know many people who keep these conditions, and yet are far removed from *Olam Haba*. The Yerushalmi refers, then, to a person who not only lives these ideals, but fulfills their essence: who lives in Eretz Yisrael and accordingly maintains a close relationship with Hashem;¹⁴ and who speaks *Lashon Hakodesh* and talks a pure and refined speech, elevated above the languages of the world. Such a person is a *ben Olam Haba*.

Maseches Nedarim begins with a concept called *כינויי נדרים*, 'nicknames' of vows. The Gemara (3b, 10a) presents two opinions for the origin of the term *kinui*:

it is borrowed from the gentile languages, or it is a word invented by the *Chachamim*.

Following the opinion that *kinui* originated as a non-Jewish word, why did Chazal adopt it?

The pasuk says of *nedarim*, *כִּי יִפְלֵא לְנִדֵר נָדָר – When one acts wondrously to take a vow* (Bamidbar 6:2). The Ibn Ezra explains that it is a marvel for a person to voluntarily sanctify himself by refraining from pleasures that were not forbidden.

As *galus* drew near and the Jews were to be scattered among the nations, Chazal sought to instill *kedushah* into the gentile languages, so that Yidden could access it wherever they would find themselves. Since *nedarim* are a vehicle for raising one's *kedushah*, Chazal attached a gentile word, *kinui*, to the terminology of *nedarim* – and now, *kedushah* could be found even where there had been only *tumah* beforehand.

There is a similar implication if we follow the opinion that *kinui* is a word invented by the *Chachamim*.

The Chasam Sofer writes¹⁵ that any word found in Chumash or Nevi'im is considered *Lashon Hakodesh*, but not words added by the *Chachamim* in the Mishnah and the Gemara. Following the above theme, the *Chachamim* added these expressions to extend *kedushah* (albeit in a smaller measure than *Lashon Hakodesh*) to more words, to make *kedushah* and spiritual attainment more widely accessible to Klal Yisrael.

(נח תשפ"ג – ס"ג מאמר א)

9 Devarim 5679.

10 Certainly, Rashi didn't lack a sufficient vocabulary in *Lashon Hakodesh*, and besides, Rashi's intent is generally clear even without the Old French translation.

11 Menachos 29b.

12 See *Moreh Nevuchim*, part 3 chapter 8.

13 Shekalim 3:3.

14 See Kesubos 110b, – כל הדר בארץ ישראל דומה כמי שיש לו אלוה – *One who lives in Eretz Yisrael is considered as having a G-d.*

15 Bereishis 11:1.

Generation to Generation

אלה תולדת נח, נח איש צדיק תמים ה'ה בדרתיו

These are the offspring of Noah – Noah was a righteous man, perfect in his generations. (Bereishis 6:9)

Chassidim relate that the Yid Hakadosh of Peshischa once exclaimed, “When will we finally see that perfect child?”¹⁶ *When will the child we've been toiling for all these generations finally materialize?*

Sefarim explain that the Yid Hakadosh meant this as a reproof on a popular approach to life. As each generation grows and raises children, they say to themselves, *All the toil, all the blood, sweat and tears that I am putting forth – it's all so that my children can grow and become great in Torah and yiras Shamayim.* And as that generation ages and their children grow and parent children of their own, these former children forget why their parents toiled so – so that they could grow great. Instead, they focus their energy on raising *their* children to greatness. And so it continues.¹⁷ *When will the child we've been toiling for all these generations finally materialize?*

We can assume that the Yid Hakadosh wasn't referring to simple people who aren't concerned for their *ruchniyus* at all, pinning their hopes on their children instead, banking on *אבא מזכה אבא* (“a child brings merit to his father”). Such people did not exist in Peshischa.

He was talking about people who in their younger years were deeply invested in their *ruchniyus*, who worked hard and began climbing the ladder of spiritual achievement. But as time went on and the responsibility of providing for their families weighed upon their shoulders, they began to sink into their worldly concerns and lose focus of their former goals. They began shifting their aspirations to their children, hoping that *they* would live out these dreams of spiritual greatness. The same repeats itself generation after generation. To this, the Yid Hakadosh cried out, “When will we see that perfect child?” And that cry continues to reverberate.

Even today, when *baruch Hashem* many people are able to stay in the tent of Torah as they build their homes, without the need to step into the mud of the outside world – still, their own advancement begins to slow and then stop as they raise their children. In this vein, the Beis Yisrael lamented¹⁸ about the way people invest in being *mechanech* their children while abandoning their own growth.

Someone might say, *What's the problem? We're all serving the same Hashem, after all, and two are better than one. Besides, the same Hashem Who commanded me to serve Him, commanded me to raise my children to do the same!*

If someone wants to quiet his conscience, that's a fine answer. But if he seeks the truth, and recalls his former unrelenting pursuit of growth in *avodas Hashem* – then it becomes clear that we are not bemoaning the role change as he raises his children; that is his present mitzvah, and it should be done with joy. We are bemoaning the loss of his fervor and drive to become, himself, a pure *eved Hashem*.

Instead of giving half-baked excuses, we might do better to remain with the question: *When will the child we've been toiling for all these generations finally materialize?* That way, at least, we'll have some motivation to make something of ourselves.

There may be no good answer to the Yid Hakadosh's plaintive cry. But it's worthwhile to keep in mind a pithy comment a chassid once made: *Why should I worry about my wife's children more than my mother's?* Just as a father can see to the growth of multiple children, he must maintain his own growth along with his children's.

אלה תולדת נח, נח איש צדיק תמים ה'ה בדרתיו — Noach viewed himself as one of his *toldos*, tasking himself with his own *chinuch* as well as his children's. That is how he grew into a *perfect man in his generations*.

(בנאות דשא – נח תשפ"ב)

16 In Yiddish: מען שוין זעהן דאס רעכטיגע קינד?

17 See *Beis Yaakov* – Alexander, Parshas Noach.

18 Noach 5716.