

them to make provisions for the animals, as it is written, “And as for you, take yourself of every food that is eaten and gather it in to yourself, that it shall be as food for you and for them” (Genesis 6:21). This consisted of all types of food in order to provide for the needs of every animal (Tanhuma 58:2). They fulfilled their duty by occupying themselves with providing the animals with as much care as possible, and in the final analysis it was this that saved them from the flood. The lion is proof that they acted in conformity to G-d’s command, for the meat of a lion is not edible, yet Noah continued to nourish the lions even after having been bitten by one. This proves that they acted in an unselfish manner.

We may yet add another reason. At the time, the attribute of Divine Justice hovered over the world, and the Accuser said, “the work of His hands is being drowned” (Megillah 10b). This is why, in order that the Accuser not plead that there was no reason for G-d to save them while the entire world was being destroyed, they were busy performing good deeds, deeds “which save from death” (Tanna D’vei Eliyahu Zutah 1). As it is written, “charity [tzeddakah] rescues from death” (Proverbs 10:2), and they annulled their will before the Divine will. This was because the Accuser was pointing his finger at them and demanding justice: “Why did they not reprimand their fellows? Why should they live while others die?”

The answer to this is that they held the interest of the animals – thanks to whom they were saved – as their top priority, and they forsook their own comfort in order to fulfill the task that G-d had entrusted them with. They occupied themselves with taking care of the animals, both clean and unclean, with equal devotion, and it was because of this that they were saved from the flood.

This is the question that Abraham’s servant Eliezer had asked Shem, namely: “What merit managed to save you from the flood? G-d’s creations perished, and you didn’t reprimand your neighbors as required to lead them to repentance and be saved. And if you think that you were saved because of being upright,

this is because your pride leads you in error! Perhaps you took care of the animals in order to gladly partake of their meat after the flood? Perhaps you only acted out of self-interest!” (See Sanhedrin 108b).

To this, Shem the son of Noah replied that they had no thoughts whatsoever of this type and no intention of personally profiting from the meat of the animals. The attribute of strict Justice did not have any grievance against them either, for everything that they did for the animals was done in a strictly unselfish way. The proof for this is that they continued to feed the animals even after “a lion struck and bit my father Noah.”

From this we learn a lesson that is valid for everyone. When one obeys G-d’s will, it is proper to do so without ulterior motives, as it is said, “Fulfill His will as you would your own will” (Perkei Avoth 2:4). Do it solely because G-d commands it. If G-d testifies that a man is upright, he should not feel proud of himself, for “Every haughty heart is an abomination to the L-RD” (Proverbs 16:5) and “G-d cannot live in the same world as the conceited” (Sotah 5a). One must submit oneself to G-d with humility and feel that one is not worthy of being called upright. If not, then to make us lose any merit that we have acquired, the evil inclination will chime in our ear: “How righteous you are!”

It is written, “Noah did according to everything G-d commanded him” (Genesis 6:22), which “consisted of the construction of the Ark” (Bereshith Rabba 31:14). Furthermore it is stated, “And Noah did according to everything that the L-RD had commanded him” (Genesis 7:5), which consisted of his entry into the Ark (Rashi ad loc). Even if he did not merit being saved by his virtues, he merited it for his good care of the animals in the Ark. He built the Ark, and in the final analysis he entered into it as G-d had commanded him, doing so without pride, and only to obey G-d to the letter

IN MEMORY OF THE TZADIKIM

RABBI SHEMUEL HALEVI KLEIN

Rabbi Shemuel Halevi Klein, who passed away on Adar 28, 1827, was the author of *Machatzit HaShekel*.

The following relates the story of a “theft” in the night.

It was already late in the night. Rabbi Moshe Sofer, the main student of Rabbi Nathan Adler (Rabbi of the city of Boskovice in Moravia), was studying Torah in the attic of his teacher’s home, separated by a simple partition from a small synagogue that was housed entirely in the attic. All of a sudden, in the silence of the night, a strange murmur was heard in the synagogue. After a moment, Rabbi Moshe could make out the sound of bells. These were the bells found on the crown covering the Torah scrolls housed in the holy Ark. This particular crown was possessed of rare beauty, made entirely from pure gold, and which his teacher had brought with him to Boskovice. It was his only possession, having inherited it from his ancestors.

Rabbi Moshe Sofer feared coming too abruptly into the synagogue, lest he be attacked by the intruder. So he decided to remain where he was and to wait silently, his eyes fixed on the synagogue’s door. In this way he hoped to determine the thief’s identity.

After a moment, the sound of muffled footsteps could be heard coming closer to the door. The first thing that could be seen was a hand holding a large sack. Even with the crown in the bag, one could clearly distinguish the sound of its bells. Immediately after, there appeared the silhouette of the thief himself, who quickly escaped by the staircase that led to the outside. The eyes of Rabbi Moshe Sofer almost jumped out of their sockets when he saw him, and he collapsed into a chair lest his remaining strength leave him.

It had been only several months earlier that Rabbi Nathan Adler had been named as Rabbi of the city. As was his custom, he came to Boskovice humbly and silently, and the dignitaries of the town only learned of his arrival once he had already been in town. That same day, the townspeople welcomed him with a show of great honor, then everyone accompanied him to the main Beit Midrash. There, Rabbi Nathan met an elderly man who was bent over his books and completely absorbed in his study, to the point that he was not at all aware of the new Rabbi’s entry or his entourage. Without saying a word, Rabbi Nathan approached the elderly man, extended his hand to greet him, and after a few minutes the two were plunged into a lively Torah discussion. The new Rabbi discovered that before him was a genius, a great scholar in all areas of Torah. During the course of their discussion, the elderly man expressed an interesting idea, and Rabbi Nathan replied to his listener, “Excuse me, but I’ve found the exact same thing in *Machatzit HaShekel*.” The elderly man smiled slightly and responded, “Actually, I noted this opinion in my *Machatzit HaShekel* on page [such and such].”

“Are you the famous Gaon Rabbi Shemuel Klein?” a surprised Rabbi Nathan asked, as he again shook the hand of the elderly man whose identity he had just discovered. Since that time, they developed a profound friendship.

Returning to our story, the “thief” who was stealthily distancing himself from the synagogue with the golden Torah crown in his sack was none other than Rabbi Shemuel Klein himself, author of *Machatzit HaShekel*!

Rabbi Moshe Sofer did not know what to do, so embarrassed he was of what he had just witnessed. He decided to wait until morning in order to properly reflect on the situation. The sun had barely risen when forceful knocks could be heard on the door of Rabbi Nathan Adler’s home. Armed policemen excused themselves for interrupting so early in the morning, and explained that according to information that they had received, the Rabbi had been hiding objects of great value in the house, and the law obliged them to verify this immediately.

At that time, all citizens had to give the valuable objects that they possessed over to the state. This was because the country was at war with France, and keeping gems or precious objects at home was considered a crime that was severely punishable. The residents of the house, who in the meantime had been awakened, knew very well of the existence of the golden crown, and thus had very good reason to be worried. When the policemen climbed into the attic, the residents began to tremble. Only Rabbi Moshe Sofer, who began to make the connection between everything that had happened, knew that in fact there was no reason to be worried. He now perfectly understood that the elderly Rabbi Shemuel Klein had saved his teacher from a severe punishment by his “theft” of the night before. Despite everything, there was still one mystery that remained, even for him. When the policemen opened the door of the holy Ark and did not find anything there either, the stunned residents began to breath a great sigh of relief. Yet once the policemen left, that great question remained, well capable of raising concern: Where had the crown gone?

Bewildered, Rabbi Nathan Adler and his family heard from Rabbi Moshe Sofer’s own mouth the partial solution to the mystery.

Less than an hour later, Rabbi Shemuel Klein himself appeared at the door. He held in his hand the sack that contained the crown and thus returned the “stolen” object to its owners with a great smile on the lips. Everyone now understood the whole mystery. It happened that the existence of this crown of rare beauty, known by many, had been brought to the attention of one of the town’s citizens. That person had informed the police of this precious object. Fortunately, the night earlier, well into the morning, Rabbi Shemuel Klein had heard of this development from a personal friend who was close to the police. On one hand, he did not want to frighten the Rav and his family, yet on the other hand he feared that any delay would prove fatal. He therefore decided to act alone and as quickly as possible. His suspicions proved correct, and his courage and rapid action had saved the Rav from a serious breach of the law.

THE MORAL OF THE STORY

Noah the man of the earth (by the Maggid of Dubno)

It is written, “And Noah, the man of the earth, began and planted a vineyard” (Genesis 9:20).

The Midrash states: Noah fell and profaned himself. Why? He “planted a vineyard.” Could he not have chosen to plant something more essential? Not satisfied with the least sprout, nor with the least cutting, he went and planted a vineyard. Did he absolutely need a “vineyard”? Rabbi Hiya bar Abba said, “The same day that he planted, he drank of his vineyard. That same day, he behaved shamelessly.”

Let us cite yet another comment of Midrash Rabba concerning the verse that states, “And G-d blessed the seventh day” (Genesis 2:3). It is written, “The blessing of the L-RD makes rich, and toil adds nothing to it” (Proverbs 10:22). The Midrash says: “The blessing of the L-RD makes rich” refers to Shabbat; “and toil adds nothing to it” refers to mourning.

The Maggid of Dubno explains this to us with the following parable.

A traveler encountered a Tzaddik who had a reputation for having all his blessings come true.

“Rabbi, give me a blessing!” the traveler asked.

“May it be G-d’s will that blessing and success rest on the first thing that you do when you arrive home.”

The man told himself that when he enters his house, the first thing that he will do is to count his money, and it will be on this that the Rabbi’s blessing will rest.

Barely having entered his home, he told his wife, “Quick, give me some money.” Not understanding what was going on, she thought he had gone crazy and refused to give him a thing. He raised his voice and cursed her, which caused a great deal of hurt, so much so that the dispute began to ignite, taking on incredible proportions. This was because it was the first thing he did when he came home.

We know very well that the days of the week only receive their blessing and plenty through Shabbat, which is, according to the Zohar, the source of all abundance. Everything that a man

does on Shabbat is bathed in this influence, and the days of the week are in this way blessed. This is the meaning of “You have called it the most desirable of days.” All the days of the week desire and aspire to Shabbat. That G-d blessed the seventh day (Genesis 2:3) means that He made it the source of blessing and abundance, a source from which the other six days receive their sustenance. This is why we, the Children of Israel, are duty-bound to introduce into our Shabbat all that is pleasurable (with an intention that is pure, of course). The entire day should be imbued with the fear of G-d, yet at the same time we should make it pleasant by means of food and drink, for it is in this way that Hashem’s blessing will spread to the entire week. “The blessing of the L-RD makes rich” – this consists of Shabbat, our Sages have said. Shabbat is a source of abundance for all that relates to human endeavor, which is why we should keep ourselves from tarnishing it with toil, lest this stir up difficulty for all the days of the week.

The planting of Noah should also be understood according to the same principle. After the flood, Divine mercy on the world increased considerably in order that it could rebuild and establish its foundations again, as it is written, “I will not continue to curse again the ground” (Genesis 8:21). It was therefore proper that the first thing man did to reconstruct the world should be the object of a special blessing that would assure him great success. Instead of benefiting from it, Noah thought it proper to plant a vine. It was thus in the vine that this abundance of blessing was demonstrated, and this idea was expressed by the Sages when they said, “The same day that he planted, he drank of his vineyard. That same day, he behaved shamelessly.” This imagery clarifies the statement of the Midrash: “Noah began [vayeche] – he fell [nitale] and profaned himself [chuline].” This is because by his actions he chose that, in the end, his holiness be desecrated. This is why the Midrash continues and asks, “Could he not have chosen to plant something more essential?”