



The Path To Follow

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GUARD YOUR TONGUE!

Measure for Measure

According to a person's actions in this world, he causes a corresponding response in Heaven, measure for measure. If someone is usually forbearing and exhibits kindness and patience in dealing with people, he thereby awakens Divine mercy above. The Holy One, blessed be He, will show mercy to others because of him, and he will also be shown mercy and patience concerning his sins, as the Sages have said: "Whoever reigns in his natural tendencies, strict judgments against his sins are reigned in." However if someone never lets anything pass and fails to demonstrate mercy to others, he increases the power of strict justice against them and against himself. Hence all of his deeds will be scrutinized by Heaven, for in the same way that a person deals with others, Heaven will deal with him. This is why the Holy One, blessed be He, is uncompromising when it comes to Lashon Hara. One who awakens the attribute of justice by speaking ill of others also awakens an accusation in Heaven against the Jewish people, thereby strengthening the Satan's ability to accuse Jews.

- The Chafetz Chaim

FAITH CANNOT EXIST WITHOUT A LOVE FOR OTHERS

(BY RABBI DAVID HANANIA PINTO SHLITA)

It is written, "These are the offspring of Noah – Noah was a righteous man, perfect in his generations" (Genesis 6:9). Here Rashi cites a discussion of the Sages: "Some of our Sages interpret it favorably: How much more if he had lived in a generation of righteous people, he would have been even more righteous. Others interpret it derogatorily: In comparison to his generation he was righteous, but if he had been in Abraham's generation, he would not have been considered of any importance."

We need to understand why our Sages disagreed as to whether Noah's righteousness was complete or not, since everyone acknowledged that he did not sin, and in his own generation he was a tzaddik. Even if we say that he was not as righteous as Abraham, could we ever imagine that his righteousness was not genuine, since the Torah testifies that he was a tzaddik? It states that Noah found grace in Hashem's eyes, for He said to him: "It is you that I have seen to be righteous before Me" (Genesis 7:1), and it was by Noah's merit that the world returned to normal after the flood. Can we even say in our time that the righteousness of a certain tzaddik is not perfect if it does not resemble that of another tzaddik? Each tzaddik has his portion in the World to Come according to his deeds in this world, and it is impossible to diminish the righteousness of one tzaddik due to the righteousness of another. The Midrash states, "These are the offspring of Noah – Noah...." Surely Scripture should have written, "These are the offspring of Noah – Shem..." (Bereshith Rabba 30:5). We may say that this doublet led some of our Sages to view it as a criticism of Noah, for they understood the name Noah as signifying rest (menucha). That being the case, it seems that Noah wanted to relax at home and occupy himself with Torah and mitzvot all by himself. He did want to participate in public life, either to reprimand people or bring them closer to Torah and good deeds, as Abraham did in his time. Thus the Sages said, "Abraham converted the men and Sarah the women" (ibid. 39:14). Sforno (6:8) explains this to mean that Noah did not teach the people of his generation to know G-d and walk in His ways, even though he was righteous in thought and deed.

Consequently, some of our Sages viewed this was a criticism, since it was shameful for a tzaddik to study Torah alone and not leave his home in order to reprimand others and encourage them to repent of their evil deeds. Since the text states, "Noah – Noah..." (Genesis 6:9), we learn that he wanted to rest and not confront his generation. Therefore had Noah lived in the generation of Abraham, he would not have been important, for Abraham was the one who confronted his generation and brought people under the wings of the Shechinah. The Mishnah tells us, "There were ten generations from Adam to Noah.... There were ten generations from Noah to Abraham, to indicate how great His patience is, for all those generations repeatedly angered Him, until Abraham our father came and received the reward of them all" (Pirkei Avoth 5:2). We need to understand the difference between Noah and Abraham, especially why Noah, although he was a tzaddik, did not receive the reward of all these generations, contrary to Abraham. We may explain this by what we said earlier, namely that Noah had no desire to reprimand the people of his generation. Not only that, but when Hashem said to him, "Come into the ark, you and all your household, for it is you that I have seen to be righteous before Me in this generation" (Genesis 7:1), Noah did not pray for his generation, but simply began preparing his sons and family members to enter the ark. Yet what did Abraham do when Hashem said to him, "Because the outcry of Sodom and Gomorrah has become great, and because their sin has been very grave, I will descend and see whether they act according to its outcry, which has come to Me" (ibid. 18:20-21)? Before going to save his nephew Lot, Abraham began to pray for the

inhabitants of Sodom, as we read: "Far be it from You to do a thing such as this, to put to death the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous would be like the wicked. Far be it from You! Will the Judge of the entire earth not perform justice?" (v.25). By saying this, Abraham received the reward of all the generations, even Noah's generation, for had Abraham lived in that time he would have encouraged them to repent. In fact the Gemara states, "Noah with his sons...went into the ark because of the waters of the flood" [Genesis 7:7]. Rabbi Yochanan said, 'He lacked faith: Had the water not reached his ankles, he would not have entered the ark' " (Bereshith Rabba 32:6). Abraham's faith, however, was strong, and of him it is said: "He believed in the L-RD, and He counted it to him for righteousness" (Genesis 15:6). Such was not the case with Noah, for nowhere is it written that Noah believed in Hashem, since his faith was lacking. In fact by reprimanding the people of his generation, bringing them closer to the Shechinah, and praying for the inhabitants of Sodom, Abraham clearly demonstrated the power of his faith.

We must perceive the great principle in this: Whoever possesses complete faith in Hashem, this faith will lead him to love others and want to establish peace among them. He will definitely not covet their possessions or try to take their money, for a person with faith realizes that his entire sustenance is determined by Hashem. Hence he will not want other people's money, for this money has not been destined to him. It does not belong to him in any way, and he will never possess anything that is not meant for him. As for someone who does not love others, this definitely indicates that he does not firmly believe in G-d. In fact it is impossible for a person to believe in Hashem without loving others, since they were created in the image of the King, as it is written: "G-d said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness'" (Genesis 1:26). Therefore whoever loves the King will also love the work of His hands, and whoever does not love the work of His hands demonstrates that he does not love the King. Let us examine the implications of this from the verse, "He who is hanged is cursed by G-d" (Deuteronomy 21:23). Here the Sages have said that this constitutes a disgrace to the King, for men are made in His image and the Jewish people are His children. "To what can this be compared? To twin brothers living in one city. One was appointed as king, while the other took to highway robbery. At the king's command they hanged him, but all who saw him exclaimed: 'The king is hanged!' The king then issued a command and he was taken down" (Sanhedrin 46b). The Sages also said, "When a man suffers, what does the Shechinah say? 'My head aches, my arm aches!' " (Chagigah 15b). Hence G-d grieves over the spilled blood of the wicked, and especially over the blood of the righteous.

The Gemara states, "A non-Jew presented himself before Shammai and said, 'Convert me on condition that you will teach me the whole Torah while I am standing on one foot.' He repulsed him with the builder's cubit that was in his hand. When he went before Hillel, he said to him: 'What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbor. This is the whole Torah. The rest is commentary; go and learn it' " (Shabbat 31a). Rabbi Akiva said, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" [Leviticus 19:18] is a great principle of the Torah" (Yerushalmi, Nedarim 9:4). When someone wants to draw closer to Hashem, he cannot cleave to Him directly, but only to His attributes, as the Sages have said: "Is it possible, then, for a human being to walk after the Shechinah, for has it not been said, 'The L-RD your G-d is a devouring fire' [Deuteronomy 4:2]? However the meaning is to walk after the attributes of the Holy One, blessed be He. As He clothes the naked...so should you clothe the naked. ... [As He] visited the sick... so should you visit the sick. [As He] comforted mourners...so should you comfort mourners" (Sotah 14a).

MUSSAR FROM THE PARSHA

A Person and His Generation

It is written, “Noah was a righteous man, perfect in his generations” (Genesis 6:9).

Rashi explains that the expression “in his generations” is regarded by some as a compliment of Noah, while others regard it as a criticism of him. Those who believe it to be a compliment interpret the expression to mean that since Noah was a righteous and perfect man in his generation, how much more would this have been true had he lived in Abraham’s generation. Those who think that it is a criticism of Noah understand it to mean that he was regarded as righteous by the standards of his generation, but by the standards of Abraham’s generation he would have been regarded as nothing. From here we see that a person must elevate himself regardless of his generation. He should not take the level of his generation into account, but instead he should grow in accordance with his own abilities. If he does otherwise, he will be heavily criticized for it. Even if Noah found grace in Hashem’s eyes, it was still shameful for him not to have grown sufficiently. Abraham reached a higher level, waging G-d’s battles and enduring unprecedented hardships. Yet he was not static, for he followed the path that he established through fire and blood, elevating himself well above his generation. Since we find no criticisms of Abraham, we learn that a person should not pay attention to the level of those around him, thereby limiting his efforts and contenting himself on just being better than others, not more. He must realize that he has a great responsibility to use all the abilities and talents that he possesses.

As for those Sages who thought that this expression was meant as a compliment of Noah, they believed that even in a generation as difficult as his own, he still managed to overcome every obstacle that confronted him. Although his generation was destined for destruction on account of its tremendous wickedness, Noah still did not abandon his great merit, and that is what he was praised for. This means that the Torah is complimenting him by stating that this was a tremendous accomplishment on his part. From here we see the magnitude of our reward when we succeed in doing good during a difficult time. We also learn how we must conduct ourselves. We should realize that in a difficult time, even a little spirituality has tremendous value, and Heaven views it with great admiration. On the other hand, with regards to the duties imposed on man, it is disgraceful for a person to content himself with exerting little spiritual effort, even if he compares favorably with others. In fact a person must grow because he must grow, not because he must be greater than others. This is what the prophet Isaiah said, namely that in the future “the jealousy of Ephraim shall stop” (Isaiah 11:13). This means that the growth of the Jewish people is not measured by comparing themselves with others, since they may get the impression that they have achieved more than them, and due to laziness they may stop growing. Thus when jealousy will have disappeared, the growth of the Jewish people will be without limits. Their goal will then consist solely of rejoicing in Hashem and benefiting from the splendor of the Shechinah.

– Rabbi Avraham Shaul of Novardok

A Pearl From the Rav:

The Waters of the Flood Purified the Earth

It is written, “The rain was upon the earth for forty days and forty nights” (Genesis 7:12).

Why did Hashem make it rain upon this generation for forty days and forty nights, not more or less?

The answer is that the generation of the flood rendered the earth incredibly impure, and the Holy One, blessed be He, had to effect changes upon the world, as it is written: “He wiped out every existing thing off the face of the ground...only Noah survived” (Genesis 7:23). Since the earth became impure, Hashem had to purify it. How could this be done? By the waters of the mikveh, meaning that Hashem made it rain upon the earth for forty days, which corresponds to the forty seahs of water contained in a mikveh.

– From Kerem David

The Offspring of the Tzaddikim

It is written, “These are the offspring of Noah – Noah was a righteous man” (Genesis 6:9).

Rashi states that the main offspring of the tzaddikim are their good deeds.

People usually say that in terms of education, they only put an effort into raising their own children to become good Jews and bnei Torah. When these children become adults, they also fail to pay attention to their own conduct, saying instead that all they care about is their children. In fact it would be good to see a son who is worthy of such a name!

This is why the verse states, “These are the offspring of Noah – Noah,” for Noah did not neglect his own spiritual growth for the sake of his children. Instead he considered himself as one of his very own sons, and he strived to elevate himself as well. He himself was the son of this name, one who understood that he had a duty to serve Hashem. This is the meaning of the explanation, “The main offspring of the tzaddikim are their good deeds,” for the tzaddikim see their good deeds as their very own sons.

– Beit Yaakov

Those Who Show Mercy, Mercy is Shown to Them

It is written, “For the earth is filled with violence through them” (Genesis 6:13).

Rashi states, “Their verdict was sealed only because of robbery.”

The Midrash recounts that Abraham asked Shem the son of Noah how they were saved from the flood. Shem said that by having shown mercy to the animals, wild beasts, and birds, they themselves were shown mercy by Heaven.

Therefore if the generation of the flood had shown mercy to others, they too would have been shown mercy by Heaven, meaning that they would have also been saved from the flood. However they showed no mercy to one another, and in fact they treated each other violently. Hence no mercy was shown to them when their fate was decided, and a decree was pronounced against all their sins put together.

– Tiferet Shlomo

Enough to Eat

It is written, “And you, take for yourself of every food that is eaten...and it shall be for you and for them to eat” (Genesis 6:21).

The words “that is eaten” seem redundant. Furthermore, where could Noah have put such a large quantity of food, enough to feed all the people, wild beasts, and birds in the ark for an entire year?

Regarding the expression “of every food that is eaten,” the Sages have said that this consists of all that can be swallowed in one gulp, a reference to food having the volume of a chicken egg (Yoma 80a). Therefore the words “that is eaten” signify the quantity of an egg (a kebeitzah), which can be swallowed in one gulp.

REASONS FOR THE MITZVOT

Unity and Sin

It is written, “The whole earth was of one language and of common purpose. ... The L-RD descended to look at the city and tower which the sons of man built, and the L-RD said, ‘Behold, they are one people with one language for all, and this they begin to do! And now, should it not be withheld from them all that they propose to do?’” (Genesis 11:1, 5-6).

When a person speaks insincerely, his speech is not unified, but instead is divided in two: What is in his heart and what is on his lips. As for the generation of the dispersion, their speech was unified and everyone was united in complete love, which they believed would protect them. In fact they relied upon their unity to build a tower that was actually an idol, as Rashi states. They believed that by the merit of their unity, no harm would come to them. Actually, unity does have the power to save a transgressor from punishment. Concerning the verse, “Ephraim is joined to idols. Leave him alone” (Hosea 4:17), the Sages have said that when unity exists among the Jewish people – even if there is idolatry among them, as in the generation of Enosh – they are forgiven. However unity will not save people if they sin on purpose and believe that their unity will protect them. Not only will their unity not save them in that case, the very fact that they relied on their unity to protect them will be considered a sin! Thus the passage states: “The whole earth was of one language” – there was complete unity among them; “the L-RD descended to look” – Hashem searched deep within their hearts, which only Hashem can do, for angels cannot perceive the thoughts of the heart. Hashem said, “Behold, they are one people with one language for all” – they truly possess unity, but “this they begin to do” – their unity is the beginning of their sin. “And now, should it not be withheld from them all that they propose to do” – now that there is nothing among them but unity, nothing will prevent them from succeeding in what they do. Yet since this unity is devoted to sin, “Let us descend and confuse their language.”

– Imrei Shafer

ESHET HAYIL

For Your Sake

Hanna was childless for several years, yearning for children during all that time. We too yearn for children; they represent our work, and we recite many prayers on their behalf. The haftarah that we read on Rosh Hashanah, the day when Hashem watches over us like a shepherd over his flock, the day when He decides the fate of everyone, teaches us the goal of having children. Why, in fact, do we yearn to have children? Hanna provides us with the answer by saying, “Give Your maidservant male offspring, and I shall give him to the L-RD all the days of his life” (I Samuel 1:11). The objective of having children is to plant them in the tents of Torah, in holy yeshivot for their entire lives. It is for this reason that they have come into the world, and that is their destination.

– Peninei Rabbi Yechezkel

This means that Hashem commanded Noah to prepare a quantity of food equal to an egg for each meal, in accordance with the words “that is eaten.” Hashem then blessed this food so it would satisfy every eater. Hence the verse ends by stating that “it shall be for you and for them to eat,” for although a small quantity would be eaten, it would be enough to nourish them all.

– The Vilna Gaon, cited in Ma’ayana Shel Torah

The Lesson of the Raven

It is written, “He sent out the raven, and it kept going and returning until the waters dried up from upon the earth” (Genesis 8:7).

The Sages say that the raven was upset with Noah for having sent it out, rather than choosing another bird. Noah replied, “In what way does the world need you?” Hashem said to Noah, “Take it back, because the world will need it in the future,” a reference to a time, yet future, when ravens would feed the prophet Elijah during a famine. This is the meaning of, “until the waters dried up from upon the earth,” for then the raven will be needed (Bereshith Rabba 33:5).

What did the Sages mean by this story? They wanted to teach us that the Torah does not state that Noah sent the raven on a mission. Instead he simply “sent out” the raven, in the sense of being dismissed. Why did he do this? It is because the raven had sinned while in the ark. It told Noah that others had also sinned, a reference to Ham and a dog. Noah replied that although they had sinned, the world needed them. However the world did not need the raven, and therefore (because it had sinned) it could be sent away and become lost. In response, Hashem told Noah to accept the raven, for it would be needed to feed Elijah during a future famine. Hashem deliberately chose the raven to feed Elijah in order to teach him to have mercy on all creatures, for Elijah was a stern figure. Hashem also told Noah: You as well, the man from whom the world will now be established, should learn to have mercy on every creature, and even if the raven sinned, do not send it away. Accept it, for the world still needs it.

– Kehilat Yaakov

Overview of the Parsha

Parsha Noah describes the corruption of mankind and recounts humanity’s new beginning (which would eventually give rise to the chosen people), from Noah to Abraham. The corruption of man’s ways extends to the earth, which Hashem decides to destroy. However He orders Noah to build an ark, and the flood kills everyone on earth while leaving the last vestiges of life on the ark. The earth is renewed when Noah emerges from the ark, and an altar is built on which Noah brings a burnt-offering, an offering that reconnects the earth to G-d. Hashem decides to never again strike all living things or bring about another flood. He concludes a covenant whose sign is the rainbow. Returning to a life on earth, Noah plants a vineyard, drinks its wine, and unclothes himself. Following the actions of his sons at that time, Noah blesses Shem and Japheth. However he curses Canaan, the son of Ham, condemning him to be a slave to his brothers. After the death of Noah, the parsha lists the 70 nations that descended from him. Next comes man’s attempt to build the Tower of Babel in order not to be dispersed, though Hashem in fact disperses them over the entire earth. After listing the descendants of Noah, the parsha lists the descendants of Shem, from whom Israel would emerge, down to the children of Terah. Terah leaves Ur of the Chaldees for the land of Canaan, and his death in Haran serves as an introduction to the story of Abraham.

YOUR EYES SHALL BEHOLD YOUR TEACHER

Rabbi Yechezkel Abramsky – The Author of Chazon Yechezkel

The gaon Rabbi Yechezkel Abramsky Zatzal was an amazing scholar, a prince of Torah. Even though he was far superior to everyone else, he devoted himself with all his heart and soul to spreading Torah to every segment of the people. He did not scorn those who were viewed as being “unimportant,” for he taught Chumash, Rashi, Mishnah, and Gemara to everyone, and the appeal of his teachings was famous around the world. Everyone knew that his lectures could be grasped by all, even by those who had no concept of the subject at hand. Rabbi Yechezkel’s clarity of mind was astonishing, for it stemmed from the speed of his understanding, to which he devoted a great deal of work. He used to say that he studied the Gemara eight times prior to giving a lecture, and a lecture for ba’alei batim demanded more preparation than for yeshiva students. He explained the love of Torah in the following way: When a person who has studied so diligently that all the ways of Torah and the particulars brought by Rashi and Tosaphot are clear to him – since he has studied them a hundred and one times – yet his patience in learning the last time is equal to that of the first time, this demonstrates a true love for Torah. Before teaching any of his students, he would review the material beforehand, for it is simply forbidden to give a lecture without preparing properly. In this way, one does not enter the category of those who deceive.

– Peninei Rabbi Yechezkel

A TRUE STORY

Food for the Soul

It is written, “All the fountains of the great deep” (Genesis 7:11).

Rashi states, “The great deep. Measure for measure: They sinned by ‘the evil of man was great,’ and they were punished by ‘the great deep.’”

Rav Shach Zatzal said, “The judgments of Hashem are measure for measure. Each person, when a misfortune befalls him, can reflect upon his deeds and see that his punishment is measure for measure.”

He recounted the following story: “I had an eye problem that was so serious I couldn’t read, yet reading is my life! I wondered why Hashem afflicted me in this way, and I discovered that it was a measure for measure punishment. In my youth there was tremendous poverty in my town, and in the Beit Midrash candles were sparingly distributed in order for people to study during the night. When a person’s candle went out, he would return home. Yet I wanted to continue learning Torah! The truth is, if I had asked and beseeched the Shamash for another candle, he would have given me one. However I was sensitive by nature, and I did not like asking for favors. I remember that when I received free meals, I did not ask to eat ‘yamim’ with a family, as the other yeshiva students did, for anything I received to satisfy my hunger was enough for me. When my pants became worn, one of my friends suggested that I ask for another pair from one of the ba’alei batim, for he would surely give me whatever extra pants he had. I told myself that it would be better to be dressed in rags than to ask someone for something. With regards to this, whenever my candle went out, I studied by heart and reviewed what I had learned. Sometimes I studied by moonlight so as not to need a gift from anyone. Yet now I realize that I did not act correctly. I see that Heaven is upset with me and saying: ‘For a single meal per day, you accepted a gift from others in order not to starve. It was only a second meal from which you abstained, because it was possible for you to get by without it. Therefore by the fact that you did not ask for another candle, you demonstrated that you did not consider extra Torah learning to be something that was absolutely necessary, but as something you could get by without.’ That is why I have problems seeing, a punishment that is measure for measure.”

– Lulei Toratcha

THE DEEDS OF THE GREAT

Hashem Nourishes All His Creatures

Rava was one of the greatest Torah scholars of Babylon in his time. He was also very wealthy. Whenever a poor person came to town, he would first go and see Rava, for he knew that he would not leave empty-handed. One day a certain poor man, who had previously been rich, went to see Rava. Until only recently, this man had been accustomed to eating delicacies. However since he lost his entire fortune in a bad business venture, he did not even have bread to eat. He therefore went to see Rava and asked, “Give me something to eat, for I haven’t had anything all day!” Rava asked, “What do you usually eat? Tell me, and I will have it prepared for you.” The man replied, “I used to eat plump and tender capons, and I would drink old, sweet wine!”

Rava was astonished and thought that it was not good to make such a request, for the poor cannot always find someone to provide them with what they are accustomed to eating. Rava therefore said to him, “You’re used to eating such expensive food? Aren’t you worried that it will be too difficult for people to prepare such food for you?” The man replied, “Am I asking for something of yours to eat? I am only asking for something that belongs to Hashem, for everything is His and He gives each person what he needs. If He so desires, He will give enough money to people for them to provide me with the food I need. I have grown so weak that I no longer have the strength to eat what I’m unaccustomed to.” They were still speaking when Rava’s sister came to pay him a visit. He had not seen her for 13 years, and yet she arrived at that very instant! She was carrying a gift for her brother Rava: Plump and tender capons, along with old, sweet wine! Rava stood up and said, “We haven’t seen each other for so many years, and yet here you come bringing exactly the kind of food that this man needs! You were certainly sent to teach me how the Holy One, blessed be He, prepares food for all His creatures, at the right time and according to a person’s needs.” Rava then turned to the poor man and said, “Forgive me for what I said to you. Please sit down and have the capons and wine that my sister brought me.” When Rava’s disciples arrived and discovered what had happened, they learned just how a person must put an effort into giving the poor everything they need.

IN THE LIGHT OF THE HAFTORAH

Those Who Rebelled Against Me

It is written, “You shall go out and see the corpses of the men who rebelled against Me...and they will lie in disgrace before all mankind” (Isaiah 66:24).

There are four who stand at the gates of Gehinnom: One who was compelled to sin, one who sinned by mistake, one who sinned on purpose, and one who sinned to rebel. One who was compelled to sin, Hashem forgives. One who sinned by mistake, if he brings an offering or endures hardship, his soul will be saved and of him it is written: “If there will be for someone but a single defending angel out of a thousand...then He will be gracious to him” (Job 33:23-24). One who sinned on purpose enters Gehinnom and remains there until his punishment is over, after which he ascends. As for one who sinned to rebel, he remains there forever, as it is written: “You shall go out and see the corpses of the men who rebelled against Me.”

– Rabbi Yosef Ya’avetz on Pirkei Avoth 4:16

Unbelievers, converts to Christianity, atheists, those who give false Torah interpretations, those who deny the resurrection of the dead, those who separate themselves from the community, and those who terrorized the living – leaders who weighed down the community with excessive fear, which was not for the sake of Heaven...even if they did not make them sin, but led them by a straight path, for this was their way of pushing the community to serve them by its opinion and deeds, not to serve the Master of the universe – all these people, those who sinned and made others sin, men such as Jeroboam the son of Nabat and his followers, descend into Gehinnom and are punished forever. Thus it is written: “You shall go out and see the corpses of the men who rebelled against Me, for their worm will not die and their fire will not be extinguished, and they will lie in disgrace before all mankind.” – Ramban, Shaar HaGemul