he Mishnah states, “There were ten generations from Adam to Noah…ten generations from Noah to Abraham, to indicate how great is His patience, for all those generations repeatedly angered Him, until Abraham our father came and received the reward of them all” (Pirkei Avoth 5:2).

This teaching requires an explanation. Although Noah was a righteous and perfect man in his generations, he did not receive the reward of them all, and yet Abraham did. We can understand this according to the words of Sforno, who writes: “Although Noah reprimanded people for their depraved conduct in his time, he did not teach them about God, nor how to follow His ways, even if he was righteous and perfect in thought and deed” (Sforno, Genesis 6:8). Thus Noah did not truly admonish his generation. Furthermore, God 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), meaning that he did not pray for his generation, but instead he began to gather his sons and family, and he entered the ark.

As for Abraham, how did he react when God 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” (Genesis 18:20-21)? Before going to save his nephew Lot, he began to pray for the inhabitants of Sodom, as it is written: “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).

Made in the Image of His Creator

It is known that if someone has complete faith in God, his faith will lead him to a love of God’s creations, meaning that he will love others and make peace between them. How much more will he not be jealous of what others have. He will not envy or put his hand on other people’s money, for since he has faith, he knows that all his sustenance is fixed for him by the Holy One, blessed be He. That being the case, why would he try to obtain money that belongs to others, which was not allotted to him and in no way belongs to him? All that has not been allotted to him will not come to him! When a person does not love others, it is a great indication that he does not firmly believe in Hashem. It is impossible for a person to believe in Hashem without loving Hashem’s creations, for they were made in the image of the King. As it is written: “God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness’” (Genesis 1:26). Whomever loves the King loves His handiwork, and whoever does not love His handiwork proves that he does not love the King. We learn just where this can lead us to from what the Sages have said on the verse, “A hanging person is a curse of God” (Deuteronomy 21:23), namely: “This is a degradation of the King, in Whose image man is created, and the Israelites are God’s children. This is comparable to two identical twin brothers. One became king, while the other was arrested for robbery and hanged. Whoever saw him would say, ‘The king is hanging’ ” (Rashi ad loc.). The Sages have also said, “When a man suffers, what does the Shechinah say? ‘My head aches, my arm aches!’ ” (Sanhedrin 46a).

When a person wants to cleave to the Holy One, blessed be He, and to demonstrate his great love for the Creator, he must cleave to His attributes.

As the Sages say in the Gemara, “What is the meaning of the text, ‘You shall walk after the L-RD your God’ [Deuteronomy 13:5]? Is it possible, then, for a human being to walk after the Shechinah? Has it not been said, ‘The L-RD your God is a devouring fire’ [ibid. 4:24]? However this means to walk after the attributes of the Holy One, blessed be He” (Shabbat 131b).

The Sages tell us that just as Hashem clothes the naked (having clothed Adam and Eve), we too should clothe the naked, and just as Hashem visits the sick (having visited Abraham), we too should visit the sick. Just as the Holy One, blessed be He, comforts mourners (having comforted Isaac), we too should comfort mourners, and just as He buries the dead (having buried Moses), we too should bury the dead. The Sages also say, “Just as He is gracious and compassionate, so too should you be gracious and compassionate” (Shabbat 133b).

Since Noah did not pray for the people of his generation or admonish them, it follows that he did not love them. If he had loved them, he would have worried that the waters of the flood would have destroyed them. He did not love them, however, since his faith in God was not perfect.

We learn something similar to this from the words of our Sages in the Midrash: “Noah went in with his sons...because of the waters of the flood [Genesis 7:7]. ...He lacked faith: had the waters not reached his ankles, he would not have entered the ark” (Bereshith Rabba 32:6).

This is extremely surprising. How could Noah, who is described as being “a righteous man, perfect in his generations” (Genesis 6:9), have possessed so little faith? The answer is that although he was righteous in his deeds, he still did not possess perfect faith. He was a zaddik in deeds, but in faith he was no so firm. On the other hand, the faith of Abraham was firm and powerful, as the Creator of the world Himself testified: “He believed in the L-RD” (Genesis 15:6). This teaches us that Abraham possessed faith. Why did this faith exist in Abraham but not in Noah, although the Torah testifies that Noah was righteous? It is because Abraham prayed for the people of his generation, but Noah did not. Abraham admonished the people of his generation, but Noah did not. Hence Abraham received the reward of ten generations, including that of the flood, for had Abraham lived in the time of Noah, he would have prayed for them. He would have brought them to their senses, in which case the Holy One, blessed be He, may not have wiped them out in the flood.

Hence on the verse, “Noah was a righteous man, perfect in his generations,” some of our Sages have said: “Only in his generations was he a righteous man. Had he flourished in the generation of Moses or Samuel, he would not have been called righteous” (Bereshith Rabba 30:9). If Noah had lived in the time of Abraham, he would have been considered almost insignificant, for if Abraham had lived in the time of the flood, he would have prayed for that generation and encouraged them to repent. In that case the Holy One, blessed be He, might have not brought the flood upon them.
As Water Reflects a Face

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

This verse was interpreted by Rabbi Yosef Haim of Baghdad according to the passage, “As water reflects a face to a face, so one’s heart is reflected to him by another” (Proverbs 27:19). In other words, in the way that a man acts with his fellowman, his fellowman will act with him.

An example of this phenomenon can be seen with water. Water reflects the image of a person without alteration, with exacting precision. Likewise the conduct of a person is reflected in his relationship with society and those around him.

Hence the verse states: “These are the generations of Noah” – the Torah is telling us by allusion that if a person is pleasant (noach) with others – if he is pleasant (noach) in his attitudes and good deeds, in his language and conduct – then the offspring of his actions will also be pleasant (noach), and society and those around him will also be pleasant with him.

The term noach, writes the Rav, is composed of the same letters as chen (grace), telling us by allusion that by acting in this way, we will find grace in the eyes of all who see us.

The Seven Days

It is written, “And it came to pass after the seven days, that the waters of the flood were upon the earth” (Genesis 7:10).

Which seven days are these?

These are the days of mourning for the tzaddik, a period of time that delayed the onset of the flood. Hence the verse states “after the seven days.”

Another explanation: This teaches us that the Holy One, blessed be He, delayed yet again after having waited 120 years for them to repent. Since they failed to do so, the verse states: “And it came to pass after the seven days.”

Another explanation: This teaches us that the Holy One, blessed be He, changed the nature of the world for them. The sun rose in the west and set in the east, in order for them to understand, fear, and repent. However they failed to do so, which is why it is written: “And it came to pass after the seven days” (Avoth D’Rabbi Nathan 32a).

Emerging by their Families

It is written, “Every living thing, every creeping thing, and every bird came out of the ark by their families” (Genesis 8:19).

The Gemara notes that they came out of the ark “by their families,” not by themselves (Sanhedrin 108b).

Rabbi Yaakov Briel of Mantua Zatzal writes that the Sages say that every creature lacking bones does not live for more than 12 months. Now the judgment of the generation of the flood lasted 12 months, which means that the worms that entered the ark would have died before they could leave it. Nevertheless there remained creeping things that emerged from the ark. Which creeping things were these? They were the “families,” the descendants of those creatures which had entered the ark, but had died.

The Holy Tongue

It is written, “All the earth was of one language and the same words” (Genesis 11:1).

Rashi explains: “One language – the holy tongue.”

Rabbi Yechiya Korah Zatzal used to say, “The mitzvah of knowing the holy tongue is the foundation of the entire Torah. Although it is not among the 613 mitzvot, it is part of the study of Torah, for it is impossible to study Torah without knowing the holy tongue. This is because one must study the laws of the Torah and its mitzvot by means of the 13 rules of interpretation, which is impossible if one does not know the holy tongue.

Furthermore, the reward for studying Torah is in proportion to a person’s understanding of the holy tongue, since one who does not understand its subtleties cannot understand the Torah’s words and aims with any decree of precision. As such, a person’s reward will be greater, for he can study and understand things according to their true sense. Such is not the case for someone who cannot penetrate the subtleties of the language. He will be unable to understand the true nature of things, and even if he studies much, his efforts will be useless.
The gaon and tzaddik Rabbi Ezra Attiya Zatzal, the Rosh Yeshiva of Porat Yosef, greatly admired the tremendous sanctity of Rabbi Raphael. One day, Rabbi Raphael was asked to officiate at a wedding for one of the wealthy members of the community. Before the ceremony under the Chuppah began, the Rav was told that among the wedding guests was a woman who was dressed immodestly.

Rabbi Raphael made it clear to the father of the bride that this woman had to immediately leave the synagogue. Even after he was told that this woman was very influential and people were reluctant to offend her in any way, he refused to listen. He said, “As long as this woman does not leave this place, I will not conduct the wedding.”

People were obligated, upon the Rav’s order, to ask the woman to leave. However she stubbornly refused to heed the Rav, and decided to stay. Rabbi Raphael sat down and said to those around him, “I will wait for her to leave the miniature Sanctuary.” This woman, who had demonstrated so much insolence towards the Rav, was punished a few minutes later, for she suddenly collapsed and died.

When he reached the age of 80, Rabbi Raphael left his rabbinical position in Egypt and settled in the Holy Land. On Wednesday, Cheshvan 10, 5689, he rendered his soul to his Creator and was buried on the Mount of Olives, next to the sanctified place of the Temple.

**Equivalen to Murder**

It is written, “Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man his blood shall be shed” (Genesis 9:6).

Rabbi Israel Meir HaCohen Kagan Zatzal of Radin, the author of Chafetz Chaim, finds an allusion in this verse to a teaching of our Sages in the Gemara: “Rabbi Nachman bar Yitzchak said, ‘He who publicly shames his fellow, it is as though he has shed blood’” (Bava Metzia 58b).

He wrote, “Whoever sheds the blood of man – this alludes to one who shames his fellow in public, meaning that he sheds the blood of man ba’adam ['in man'] by making his face blanch when he becomes pale; his blood shall be shed – meaning that he has the same status as a murderer.” Our Sages have also said, “Better for a man to throw himself into a fiery furnace than to shame his fellow in public” (Berachot 43b).

A story is told concerning the gaon Rabbi Yeshaya HaLevi Horowitz Zatzal, the author of Shnei Luchot HaBrit, who was known as the Shelah. He was the Rav of Frankfurt am Main, where he taught Torah. The home of Rabbi Yeshaya was open to everyone, both to students who came to shelter themselves in his shadow and learn Torah and the fear of Heaven from him, and to simple Jewish drifters who wanted to eat something and rest their bodies in a warm bed, exhausted from the harsh realities of living without a home.

One day two silver spoons, which were quite valuable at the time, went missing from the home of the Rav. Since numerous attempts to locate them proved useless, the family began to suspect a student who often frequented the Rav’s home. In fact after a careful search, the stolen spoons were found in this student’s bag. The stolen items, and fact that they were discovered in the student’s bag, became the subject of conversation in town. The members of the community were furious at the brazenness of this student, who returned evil for good by stealing silverware from the home of their venerated Rav, who had welcomed this student into his home and taken care of all his material and spiritual needs. The student was overcome with anguish and guilt over the tremendous shame that he experienced, and he fled the city of the Shelah for another town. In his resentment, he even converted to Christianity.

Nevertheless, he found no peace of mind in his new home, and his heart was bitter over not having acted honestly or taken to the right path. He began to wander from town to town and from country to country, until he finally arrived in the great city of Constantinople, where he started to engage in commerce. In fact he eventually became one of the wealthiest men in town, and news of his intelligence and wealth reached the ears of the king’s ministers. This man, the Rav’s former student, found favor in the eyes of these ministers, who put him in charge of customs in the city of Jaffa in Eretz Israel.

The thought of the holy city of Jerusalem came to Rabbi Yeshaya HaLevi one day, and he considered moving there. He immediately put this idea into motion, took his belongings, and left for Jerusalem. He boarded a ship and began to prepare with sanctified zeal for his arrival in the Holy Land. When the Rav disembarked, his former student – whose bag had contained the silverware that had been stolen from the Rav’s home, and who later converted to Christianity – saw him, but the Rav did not recognize him. His former student showed him tremendous respect and asked him to come to his home by the edge of the sea. In this way, he said, the Rav could rest from his long journey before traveling to Jerusalem.

Rabbi Yeshaya was in no position to refuse this offer, since it had come from an important official. He therefore agreed to travel to his home in order to recuperate from his exhausting journey.

When they arrived at the home of the former student, he offered the Rav all kinds of delicacies in order to help him regain his strength. After a certain time, he took him by the arm and showed him all the rooms in his home, displaying all his wealth and glory. They eventually came to a room that was larger than the rest, one that was filled with weapons. The Rav’s former student then took a large pointed knife out of a bag, turned to the Rav, and said to him: “Rabbi, recite vidui, because I brought you here to slice your throat!”

The Rav was overcome with fear, and he began to weep. He tried to dissuade his former student from carrying out his deadly plan. He said to him, “What did I do to you that made you bring me here to kill me? For what possible reason could you spill completely innocent blood?” However he did not say a word.

Rabbi Yeshaya continued to ask for his life to be spared, but the former student suddenly replied with a voice that raged with anger: “The Rav is pleasing to an ear that won’t hear. Recite vidui quickly, lest I take this knife and kill you before you can say it!” When Rabbi Yeshaya realized that he had fallen into a deadly trap without any way to escape, he began to pour out his soul before the Holy One, blessed be He, confessing with abundant tears. His former student stood before him, his knife in hand, as he spoke. When the Rav finished his confession, the student approached him and said, “Lie on the floor and spread out your arms and legs.” The Rav obeyed. He then said, “Stretch out your neck and prepare yourself to be slaughtered.”

He then grabbed the Rav’s neck in one hand as he held the knife in the other. He said to the Rav, “Close your eyes and recite Shema Israel before I slaughter you!” The Rav closed his eyes and, his voice trembling, began to recite Shema Israel with reverence and love. He had prepared himself to submit both body and soul to the hands of his Creator, and his soul almost left him when he reached the word echad. Suddenly his former student lowered his head towards Rabbi Yeshaya, placed his mouth on his neck, and kissed him. He said, “My teacher and my Rav, stand up. Please forgive me. I did this for your own good.”

Rabbi Yeshaya immediately opened his eyes and got up, unable to believe what he had heard. He said, “Who are you? Are you an angel sent by the Holy One, blessed be He, to save me from the abyss?” His former student replied, “I’m no angel. I’m your former student. I used to cleave to the dust of your feet for many years, but in the end I went astray and converted to Christianity.”

**A TRUE STORY**

**I WILL WAIT**

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continuation Page 4
The Rav quickly remembered the student in whose bag his stolen silverware had been found, and who had eventually converted to Christianity because of the shame that his theft had caused him. In fact his hair stood on end as he remembered the incident of long ago. Drawing strength from his soul, he began to question his former student as to what he had just done: “Why did you want to kill me at first, but then suddenly changed your mind?”

The student replied, “Know that I never had any intention of killing you, as you thought. I am aware of your good deeds and I know that you are a great tzaddik. When you got off the ship today, I immediately recognized you and remembered what had happened to me. I thought to myself that it is not fitting for my teacher, who has just arrived in the Holy Land, to go to Jerusalem with a stain on his soul, one that renders him liable to death.

“I took pity on you, for your soul contains a small blemish on account of me, when you took the stolen silverware out of my bag in front of everyone. Because of that — because of the shame and anguish that I experienced in public — I left Judaism. I later converted, and thus you drove me away from G-d’s heritage. Although you did this in order to save your money, you could have done it discreetly, not publicly, in front of everyone. This is considered a tremendous sin for you. Yet Hashem knows the truth — He knows that I never wanted to avenge myself on you, for I had only good intentions. The pain that I made you experience today will serve to atone for that fact that you caused a soul in Israel to perish. Now your soul is pure and free of all sin, and you can enter Jerusalem like pure olive oil.”

Rabbi Yeshaya listened in silence as his former student was saying all this. Indeed, not a word left his lips. When his former student saw that the Rav’s face was filled with dread, he fell to his feet and said: “My teacher and my Rav, forgive me for the pain that I caused you. He Who probes heart and mind knows that I did it with good intentions.” The Rav replied, “I forgive you.” His former student then threw himself on the Rav’s neck and embraced him, and he escorted the Rav to Jerusalem with great honors. The pious Shelah ascended to Jerusalem and took it upon himself to make amends. During his numerous discourses before attentive audiences, he spoke of the gravity of publicly shaming others, something that is truly a tremendous sin for you. Yet Hashem knows the truth — He knows that I never wanted to avenge myself on you, for I had only good intentions. The pain that I made you experience today will serve to atone for that fact that you caused a soul in Israel to perish. Now your soul is pure and free of all sin, and you can enter Jerusalem like pure olive oil.”

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