

Pardes Yehuda

פרשת נח תשע"ז
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Weekly Torah insights translated and revised by Dovid Pinchas Rose, based on the Yiddish יהודה פארדס by Yehuda Zvulun Klitnick

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לעילוי נשמת אביו מרדכי בן ראובן ואמו שרה לאה בת אביגדור ע"ה

On the surface, our Parsha, combined with Rashi's comments, leaves us with us an enigmatic and ambiguous portrait of Noach. The following three *toyrebs* help to sharpen the picture.

The source of Noach's calm serenity

(את האלהים התהלך נח: ו ט)

Noach walked with G-d (6:9)

We know that Noach calmly and patiently suffered derision from his peers throughout the entire 120-year span of building the Teiva/Ark, [since it served as a silent, but eloquent, unheeded call to the entire settled word to repent [DPR]]. He was also enormously taxed with arduously caring for the soon-to-be-floating menagerie on the Ark. Rav Levi in Medrash Tanchuma informs us that Noach and his sons suffered sleep deprivation for a full twelve months in caring for the tame and wild beasts and fowl. Rashi (on 7:23) adds that Noach even suffered bites and scratches from ornery beasts while caring for them. Noach accepted all these trials with equanimity, trusting fully in Hashem that all that He sent was for his ultimate good, and the good of all mankind. The simple fact that he was "with G-d" (את-האלקים) made him secure in the conviction (התהלך-נח) that he would continue on that path. We find corroboration for this from Shemos 18:23, Yisro's advice to Moshe: *If you do this thing, and the Lord commands you, you will be able to survive.* "Commands you" (ואנך) indicates a unified team, acting in unison; "if you hold steadfastly to Hashem", then *עמדת עמך* you will be able to withstand any and all tribulations in life.

(שמח זבולון)

Noach's ambiguous status explained

אלה תולדות נח נח איש צדיק תמים הנה בדרתיו: ו ט בא אתה וכל ביתך אל התבה כי אתך ראיני צדיק לפני בדור הזה: ו א

These are the generations of Noah, Noah was a righteous man he was perfect in his generations; Noah walked with God (6:9). Come into the ark, you and all your household, for it is you that I have seen as a righteous man before Me in this generation. (7:1)

A close reading of these pesukim reveals two fine points which need explication, and which will yield a valuable insight. Firstly, why is Noach first tagged a "perfect tzaddik", and then soon thereafter with the seemingly lesser designation of merely a "tzaddik"? Secondly, why the shift from "in his generations (*plural*)" to "in this generation (*singular*)". The Holy Yismach Moshe, citing the Medrash, teaches that Noach displayed the flaw of not praying that his evil compatriots repent through teshuva for their moral depravity. Furthermore, the Rambam's *Moreh Nevuchim/Guide for the Perplexed* relates that throughout the generations from Adam HaRishon until Noach, the usual lifespan was 120 years, and that the several who lived until the hoary age of 900 and above did so miraculously. We conclude

that Noach, who was 600 years old at the time of the Great Flood, had thereby observed many generations leading up to the *Dor haMabul*/Generation of the Flood who were free of grievous sin. Therefore, Noach, the Tzaddik, did not feel driven to daven for and defend them, nor to seek their repentance. His failure to pray for preceding generations was actually no shortcoming, and he was entitled to the designation of "perfect tzaddik", and in "his generations". But nonetheless, why was Noach not mispallel on behalf of his contemporaries? He might have done so even absent a compelling reason. It was because "he walked with Elokim", and he saw "Elokim" as symbolizing the Divine Trait of Harsh Judgment. A punishment was indeed proper for the evildoers, as Noach saw things, and hence he failed to entreat and advocate on their behalf. All things considered, Hashem did "demote" him, if we may say so, by limiting his tzidkus to his existing generation, and losing the sublime status of a "perfect tzaddik."

(ייטב לב סיגעט)

Noach a drunkard? Not at all!

(וישתו מן היין וישכרו: ט כא)

And he drank of the wine and became drunk (9:21)

We have been writing all along that Noach was a tzaddik -- whether perfect or imperfect. But can we take on face value that he became inebriated? How would such behaviour be compatible with tzidkus of any sort? Jews have never looked upon drunkenness kindly. We look to the Holy Sons of Yaakov, the Shivtei Kah, for an insight. Our source, is the posuk which speaks of the Brothers' reunion meal with Yosef and Benyomin מג ד (בראשית עמ וישתו וישכרו עמ) *they drank and became intoxicated with him (43:34)*. Explaining "they became intoxicated", Rashi writes: *שתו לא שתו ומיום שמכרוהו לא שתו*: SINCE THE DAY THAT THEY HAD SOLD HIM, NEITHER THEY NOR HE HAD DRUNK WINE, BUT ON THAT DAY THEY DRANK. Sefer *Yefeh Toar* on Medrash is reluctant to accept the Medrash at face value, since inebriation is such a repulsive character trait that we shrink from attributing it to the righteous Brothers [because it is a total breach of self-control unworthy of a person created betzelem Elokim [DPR]]. We stress that they were unaccustomed to drinking wine, and had not done so apart from that occasion. (In fact they had not imbibed wine for the entire 22 years that had elapsed after the Sale of Yosef.) A teetotaler is susceptible to inebriation from drinking only a small amount of wine. The same surely applied to Noach, who had spent an entire year confined to the Teivah, and many prior years building it, with no access to wine. So a standard, "social" serving of wine was enough to make him "tipsy." There was no fundamental character flaw at work.

(בית ישראל השלם לנוח ז' האדמו"ר ממאסטערסדארף זצוק"ל)

One year, on 25 Tishrei, Rav Yechezkel of Kuzmir was sitting at the Yahrzeit Seuda/memorial meal of the Holy Kedushas Levi of Barditshev, surrounded by his chassidim. He inquired of the assemblage whether any of them had personally merited to have known the Barditschever Rebbe, of blessed memory. The Kedushas Levi had been Rav in the town of Zelichov before Barditshev, and there happened to be an elderly Yid at the tisch who hailed from there. When asked directly, the old gentleman said, "Of course I remember Rav Levi Yitzchak personally," and proceeded to relate this story, which happened to him. "The Rebbe's custom was to travel from place to place in the region, collecting funds to help poverty-stricken Yiddishe households in advance of Chanukah. I lived in a village just outside Zelichov where I ran a kretschma/inn, rented from the local poritz landowner. For years I was on the list of steady donors. One year, with Chanukah falling out later in the calendar, the weather was frightfully cold and the Rebbe asked if he could stay the night with me. I was overjoyed. What a *zchiya*/merit that any true Yid would envy! I took to preparing the nicest bed I could for the Rebbe to rest his head, and the Rebbe retired for the night. Naturally, my excitement at hosting such a distinguished guest did not allow me to fall asleep, and I tossed and turned. Halfway through the night, I heard the sound of *negelvasser* being washed. The Rebbe was washing and dressing and soon left his bed. He commenced pacing to and fro in the room, all the while engaged in a barely-audible self-dialogue, whose meaning I could not discern. By the break of day, the Rebbe took his leave, thanking me for the warm bed and hospitality, and promising that he would someday return the favours. Now that entire winter was bitterly cold and my *parnassah* was touch-and-go, since road travel was much reduced. I fell into arrears with the poritz, who summoned me after Pesach with the devastating news that unless I scraped together the back rent I owed within two weeks, he would have me thrown into debtor's prison and would transfer the lease to a new tenant -- thus scrapping my livelihood totally. All appeals were in vain and the brute slammed the door in my face. In desperation, I decided to turn to the great tzaddik Rav Levi Yitzchak, my guest from the previous Chanukah, for whom I did a meaningful *chesed*, which he had promised to repay. Of course the Rebbe remembered me and listened intently as I unburdened my heavy heart. The Rebbe's response was simple: 'Hashem will surely help, you needn't worry about your livelihood. The main thing is to be *besimcha*/joyful and confident. The Rebbe had me bring him a blank sheet of writing paper, after which he secluded himself in his inner chamber, the *Kodesh Penima*. Through the door, I heard the Rebbe pacing, much as had done in my kretschma, and again uttering words to whose meaning only he was privy. He emerged, holding the letter, sealed in an envelope, with instructions to deliver it to the poritz who was making my life so miserable. But he warned me strictly not to open the envelope under any circumstances, come what may. I gratefully accepted the *missive* and set out at once for the poritz's house. On the way, I recalled that the Rebbe had not asked for pen and

ink, and began to question the veracity of the letter. But I dismissed those errant thoughts, thinking that the Rebbe probably already had the writing supplies at hand and was lacking only the paper. Still, I rode on and on, all the while sorely tempted to break the seal on the envelope and inspect the paper inside. But no! Out of fear of disobeying the Rebbe's instructions, which surely were only for my own good, and full of faith that he would not mislead me, I vanquished the urge to look inside the mysterious envelope. But I began to tremble as I approached the poritz's office, fearful that if the letter were not in order, or, worse, really a blank paper, that the wicked man would draw his pistol and shoot me on the spot! The terror had me in its grip, and I rashly tore open the envelope and inspected the letter. My worst fears seemed confirmed: the paper was utterly and totally blank, with nary a word on it. But I was only a minute from the poritz, and I stole myself with unsullied faith in the Barditschever Rebbe, knowing full well that he would not have led me into a dangerous predicament. Trembling, I slinked into the poritz's room and handed over the letter. Peleh peloim,

**STORY
OF THE WEEK:**
**The Barditschever's
blank piece of letter paper
saves a Yid's parnassah
-- but not to its full
potential**

wonder of wonders, the man took his reading glasses out of his vest and started poring over the "letter", "reading" it again and again. I could not fathom the strange scene that unfolded before my eyes: a man of probity, although an evil one, "reading" -- for content -- a *missive*, devoid of words. The poritz began to speak to me with a gentle tone, for the first time ever. 'I've been thinking things over and I know that you've been good for the rent over many years. And who knows, in fact, whether the new tenant will be able to pay any better than you -- or at all! So why don't we just forget about the back rent, because now I realize that you had a very hard winter. But going forward, I expect the rent on my desk, every month on the first, without fail. Understood?' Of course I assented, and left him, totally drained of emotion stemming from the ordeal. I lost no time in returning to Rav Levi Yitzchok, taking along some *milkhig* delicacies from the inn, as a gift. The Rebbe was standing outside, apparently in waiting for me, and apparently fully aware of what had developed in the poritz's office. He let out a cry: "Tell me exactly what you did with the letter!" Shamefacedly, I confessed that I had not been able to suppress the urge to open the envelope and peek inside. 'Oy vey, oy vey! What have you done, what have you done! Had you but followed my instructions, the kretschma would have remained in your hands, and then gone down through your later generations. You lost that all by opening the envelope!' The old man ended his tale at Rav Yechezkel Kuzmirer's tisch: "I takeh managed the kretschma until I became too frail to continue. But then the lease was taken from me and I had nothing more from the business. My friends, learn from my misfortune: follow any instructions from your Rebbe to the smallest detail. *Ki mipihem anu chaim*: we literally live from their mouths' utterances."

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