בס״ד

Divrei HaRav

Parshas Noach 5787

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Rav of Khal Noam Hashem

Friday Night

Directing Our Strengths Toward the Challenges of Our Generation

The Torah describes Noach: ״נח איש צדיק תמים היה בדורותיו״. The Rav cited several sefarim, particularly a teaching in the name of Rav Yehoshua Leib Diskin zt”l, explaining that tzaddik and tamim describe two distinct qualities. Each addressed a different failing in the generations through which Noach lived.

The generation of the Mabul was corrupted by theft and immorality. Noach stood against these sins through his righteousness, guarding his conduct while those around him descended into wrongdoing. This was his quality of tzaddik.

The generation of the Haflagah, however, rebelled against Hashem. Against that rebellion, Noach stood with temimus, wholehearted faithfulness to Hashem, as expressed in the command, ״תמים תהיה עם ה׳ אלקיך״.

This explains the Torah’s description, ״צדיק תמים היה בדורותיו״. He lived through two generations with different spiritual challenges, and he possessed the qualities necessary to withstand both.

The Rav emphasized that this does not mean Noach possessed one quality during one period and a different quality during another. Both were present within him. A tzaddik knows how to direct his strengths toward the particular avodah required at that moment. When the surrounding corruption involves theft and immorality, righteousness in conduct must come to the forefront. When the challenge is rebellion against Hashem, wholehearted faithfulness must come to the forefront.

Possessing good qualities is therefore only part of the task. A person must also recognize where to concentrate his efforts and which strengths the challenges of his time require him to bring into action.

With this, the Rav explained Hashem’s words before Noach entered the teivah: ״בא אתה וכל ביתך אל התבה כי אתך ראיתי צדיק לפני בדור הזה״. Here, Hashem calls Noach a tzaddik, without mentioning tamim.

Rashi explains: ״מכאן שאומרים מקצת שבחו של אדם בפניו וכולו שלא בפניו״. The Rav added a further explanation on the level of derush: the particular praise mentioned also corresponded to the challenge of that moment.

Noach was about to enter the teivah during the generation of the Mabul, whose corruption lay in its conduct. Hashem therefore highlighted Noach’s righteousness—the quality through which he resisted the sins of ״הדור הזה״.

Noach also possessed temimus at that time. Yet as he entered the teivah, the Torah emphasized the righteousness through which he had withstood his generation’s corruption and merited to be saved.

The lesson is to recognize the challenges before us and direct our strengths toward the avodah they demand. Being a tzaddik tamim bedorosav means possessing these qualities and knowing how to put them into practice amid the particular tests of our time.

Shabbos Day

Raising Our Children Through Our Own Growth

The parshah begins: "אלה תולדת נח נח איש צדיק תמים היה בדורותיו". Rashi explains: "ללמדך שעיקר תולדותיהם של צדיקים מעשים טובים".

The Rav considered the meaning of toldos. We find that Avraham Avinu brought people closer to Hashem, as the Torah describes: "ואת הנפש אשר עשו בחרן". What, then, is the particular significance of toldos, and what does Rashi teach us by identifying a tzaddik's maasim tovim as his primary toldos?

The Rav explained that these words contain an important lesson in chinuch.

A person sometimes tells himself: "It is already too late for me to change. It is too late for me to learn properly, improve my davening, or change habits I have had for years. But my child will be different. I will make sure that he learns, davens properly, and reaches the levels I never reached."

He gives up on his own growth and places all his hopes in his children's future achievements.

But this is not the way to build good toldos. A parent cannot set aside his own avodah and pass along to his children all the aspirations he has stopped pursuing. His influence on them begins with his willingness to continue working on himself.

It is not too late. He can add to his learning according to his ability, make an effort in davening, refine his middos, and become a better person. Even when his progress is modest, the fact that he continues trying to grow has a deep influence on his family.

Children who see their father learning something he did not know, making an effort in an area he finds difficult, and correcting his behavior learn from his life that avodas Hashem continues at every stage. They see that there is always room to improve. His example becomes part of their chinuch.

This is the Rav's explanation of "עיקר תולדותיהם של צדיקים מעשים טובים". A person's maasim tovim do more than improve his own life. They form the foundation of his influence on his children. Through his own growth, he gives them a path to follow and encourages their growth as well.

This does not remove the obligation to guide and educate our children. It teaches us where chinuch begins. Before asking our children to become better, we must continue asking it of ourselves. Instead of resting with "My child will do it," we must also say, "I will keep trying, learning, and improving."

"עיקר תולדותיהם של צדיקים מעשים טובים": by continuing to improve our own deeds, we help light the way for our children.

Shalosh Seudos

Noach and Moshe Rabbeinu and Responsibility for the Home and the Klal

The Rav cited the teaching of the sefarim that Moshe Rabbeinu was a gilgul of Noach. In this connection, he discussed the interpretation linking "כי מן המים משיתהו" to the waters of the Mabul. What is the deeper relationship between Noach's avodah and Moshe Rabbeinu's?

Even the rain at the beginning of the Mabul left an opening for teshuvah. Had the generation repented, it could have become rain of blessing. Alongside the impending destruction, there remained an opportunity for renewal.

The Rav also cited the account of the kings of the nations approaching Bilam at the time of Matan Torah. They asked whether another Mabul was coming, and he explained that Hashem was giving the Torah to His people.

The connection is that both events transformed the world. The Mabul brought about a changed world, followed by the assurance of "זרע וקציר וקור וחם וקיץ וחרף". Matan Torah likewise established a new reality for the world.

The sefarim explain that Moshe Rabbeinu came to rectify Noach's failure to rebuke his generation sufficiently. Moshe repeatedly gave mussar to Klal Yisrael and accepted responsibility for their spiritual condition.

The Rav proposed an additional way to understand the relationship. Perhaps Noach's avodah need not be understood solely as a failing that Moshe later corrected. Each had a particular responsibility, suited to his time and his mission.

During the Mabul, Noach was commanded to enter the teivah with his family. His task at that moment was to preserve himself and his household, providing the foundation from which the world would be rebuilt. Noach and his sons would emerge to establish future generations. That responsibility demanded his full attention and dedication.

His work was focused on a small circle, yet it carried enormous importance. Within the teivah, the foundation of the future world was being preserved. Caring for his home and family was the avodah entrusted to him at that time.

Moshe Rabbeinu had a different mission. He was charged with responsibility for all of Klal Yisrael: guiding them, giving them mussar, and receiving the Torah on their behalf. His avodah embraced the entire nation and brought change to the world.

Understood this way, Moshe's connection to Noach involved more than correcting a deficiency. Moshe's avodah also rested upon what Noach had accomplished. By preserving life and establishing future generations, Noach made possible the world in which the Torah would eventually be received. The work within the family laid the foundation for the later work on behalf of the klal.

The Rav applied this to our own avodah. We should not measure its value solely by its public visibility or the number of people it reaches. Some work takes place before a large audience; other work happens quietly, within a home or within a person's own heart. That work, too, is precious before Hashem.

A siyum haShas and the great gatherings that honor Torah are wonderful achievements. But someone who is not participating in such an occasion should not conclude that his learning lacks value. A person who learns a few lines of Gemara, works to understand them, and gains a real understanding has accomplished something valuable. Its worth does not depend on publicity or fanfare.

The same applies to responsibility within the home. Caring for family, educating children, and growing inwardly are important forms of avodah. At a particular stage of life, they may be precisely the responsibilities a person must fulfill with wholehearted dedication.

There is a time for the avodah of Noach and a time for the avodah of Moshe. Our task is to recognize the responsibility Hashem has entrusted to us and devote ourselves to it. Through faithful work, whether quiet or public, we take our part in building the world.