

Derech Ha-Rif

Excerpts from the Torah discourse delivered by The great Rabbi Yoshiyahu Yosef Pinto Shlita

For the Torah portion of Noach | Volume 46 | 6 Heshvan



First Shabbat Meal

“And Noah found favor in Hashem’s eyes (Bereishit 6:8).”
The Secret to Finding Favor in Hashem’s Eyes.

The Torah portion details the great miracle of Noah being spared in his ark with all the species of the world. In what merit was Noah spared from the ill fate of all mankind and creatures of the planet?

The Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh explains that there are three or four specific Mitzvot which grant a person additional grace in Hashem’s eyes. Noah accomplished one of these mitzvot and it gave him the merit he needed to be spared. Without these actions, Noah would not have been spared, as the perversity of mankind was so great and the level of judgment to which the creatures of the world were being judged was very exacting. Noah did not have sufficient deeds to count in his favor, to spare him from the fate of all people. Solely through the merit of this Mitzvah was he spared from the deluge.

And this special Mitzvah is that of Shabbat. The Zohar explains that one of the reasons why Noah was given his name, was because he did just that, rest (Noach) on the Holy day of Shabbat. In the merit of honoring Shabbat Noah “found favor in Hashem’s eyes (Bereshit 6:8).”

This should be a clear lesson to us all of the merit of keeping Shabbat. Honoring and practicing the associated Mitzvot of Shabbat creates a protective shield equivalent to Noah’s ark. Shabbat protects from harm, challenging times and evil people and gives a person grace in Hashem’s and man’s eyes. People are constantly on the lookout for Segulot or Amulets that will grant them protection, grace and financial success, but the true and best Segula is The Shabbat.

Noah was spared from the deluge in the merit of respecting Shabbat, even before it was formally designated as a Mitzvah, a commandment from Hashem. The greater our honor of Shabbat and exactitude in practicing its associated Mitzvot, the stronger and more watertight our personal ark will be. Every stringency and meticulousness we take upon ourselves regarding the safeguarding of Shabbat serves to strengthen our ark from the harm, challenges and Evil Inclination that is abound.

Respecting and strengthening our practice of Shabbat does not end with our personal practice but must extend to all the fellow Jews in our vicinity and to whom we can reach out. Having a part in a fellow Jew’s keeping of Shabbat further strengthens our protective ark from the harsh influences and difficulties of that entire week.

רק 5 בקות קריאה כיום
ואתם שותפים מלאים בסיום הזוהר העולמי

לקריאה בקבוצות שקטות
בווצאפ נא לשלוח הודעה למספר

054-2231166



Scan the Qcode to join the great Rabbi Yoshiyahu Pinto Shlita's whataapp group



Soul Of the Rif

The Torah outlines the Mitzva of destroying Amalek in the verse “Erase the memory of Amalek from under the Heaven (Devarim 25:19).” The Ridvaz says that the Mitzva to eradicate Amalek only applies when the Messiah comes. This is based on the first half of the same verse, which says “And it will be when Hashem, your G-d, grants you rest from all your enemies which surround the Land.” It emerges that the obligation to destroy Amalek only applies after we are victorious over the nations. In our current generation, there is no physical erasing of Amalek which can be performed, rather the concept of wiping out Amalek is in the heart of a person. This obligation exists today also. What is the meaning of this concept of Amalek in a person’s heart? This refers to the coldness - when people become cooled down in regard to Torah and Yirat Shamayim (fear of G-d). The things which bring this coldness into a person’s heart are regarded as Amalek; the notion of Amalek is not limited to one nation which carries this name. The commentaries explain that anything which cools a person’s heart in regard to spiritual matters and removes them from holy things, whether this be another person or the Evil Inclination coming against a person in an unusual way, is Amalek. The battle of a person to wipe out the memory of Amalek is to bring it down, to warm one’s heart and not to allow Amalek to dominate and become a part of oneself, rather one must attach oneself to Hashem.



2nd Shabbat Meal

"These are the generations of Noach, Noach was a perfect Tzaddik in his generations; with G-d Noach walked (Bereishit 6:9)."
Do not believe in yourself until the day you die.

We must consider just how much a person needs to be careful to avoid the Evil Inclination. If we analyze Noach, the holy Torah tells us in this week's portion that "These are the generations of Noach, Noach was a perfect Tzaddik in his generations; with G-d Noach walked." He lived in the difficult generation of the flood, a generation of wicked and sinful people, all of whom engaged in the worst kind of sins. They sinned to the point that Hashem needed to erase the top three tefachim (handbreadths) of earth in order that none of that earth would remain on account of the volume of contamination that the earth had become infused with because of the sins of the generation of the flood.

Noach stood firm with holy righteousness, he did not sin or become corrupted, nor did his children. After all the years in which Noach guarded himself, at the age of six hundred years, when he left the Ark, he planted a vineyard of grapes. It was there that he stumbled with sin and descended as far as he did.

In light of this, let us consider just how forbidden it is for a person to rely on themselves. As the Mishna (Avot 2:4) says: Do not believe in yourself until the day of your death. Noach did not sin for six hundred years, and even though he lived in a generation of extremely wicked people, he never sinned. He guarded himself with cleanliness and purity, even though his generation laughed at him for doing so. However, after a year he left the ark and emerged to find an empty world, with no wicked and cursed people, and stumbled and fell down when he planted a vineyard. This brought great damage to the world, and in place of being a man of G-d, as he is termed in the opening verse of the portion brought above, he falls to becoming "Noach, man of the earth."

The Evil Inclination never stops, it continually tries to make the masses stumble. It saw that Noach had succeeded in almost everything spiritual without stumbling. Nonetheless, it waited until Noach had come out of the Ark, and then brought him down through a small mistake with the vineyard, in order to make him fall.

Therefore, a person should never rely on themselves that they cannot stumble, even if they have passed difficult tests. Even in regard to small things, the Evil Inclination waits in ambush for a person at every turn. One cannot leave even a small opening to the Evil Inclination, as we are told "Sin crouches at the entrance (Bereishit 4:7)." The Evil Inclination is found in the small openings that man leaves for him, it is from there that he strikes and brings a person down, through things which appear small and minute.



Q & A with the Rif



Question:

Dear Rabbi, I wanted to ask about the interplay between two concepts. On the one hand, everything is in the Hands of Heaven, and on the other, the Torah also tells us "And you shall guard your souls (Devarim 4:15)." To what extent must one make efforts and guard oneself?

Answer:

Everything is in the hands of Heaven apart from fear of Heaven (Berachot 33b). The Talmud also tells us: Fear of heaven is in the hands of man, and the same is true about suffering from cold and traps (Ketubot 30b). The chilliness through which a person becomes cold is in a person's hands to respond to, we are told "And you shall guard your souls very much" (Devarim 4:15). A person cannot say, "All is in the hands of Heaven, so I will go to a minefield and walk around there, and since I am in the hands of Heaven, nothing will happen to me." This is very dangerous, a mine can explode and cause death, and we do not rely on miracles.

Everything is in the hands of Heaven and we also need to know the limits of this within nature. We should not mistakenly deduce that since all is in Heaven's hands one can endanger oneself. If one enters a situation of danger, even if they are saved, this can subtract from one's merits, and there is also the possibility that one's sins will cause one not to merit to be saved and a disaster can befall someone.





3rd Shabbat meal

"These are the happenings of Noach, Noach was a perfect Tzaddik in his generations (Bereishit 6:9)." Not to make the calculations of Hashem.

In this week's portion, the Torah tells us that Noach was perfect in his generations. Let us endeavor to understand the meaning of this phrase.

It is possible to explain the meaning of this verse in light of another.

The Navi (prophet) says:

In those days, Chizkiyahu became deathly ill, and the prophet, Yeshayahu, son of Amotz, came to him and said, "So says Hashem: Command your household, for you will die and not live (Melachim II, 20:1)." Upon Chizkiyahu being told that he would not live any longer, he inquired as to why he needed to die. Yeshayahu explained that he was being punished for his avoidance of getting married and fulfilling the Mitzva of having children. King Chizkiyahu responded to Yeshayahu, explaining that he had not got married, because he saw through Ruach Hakodesh (Divine Insight) that Resha'im (evil people) would be among his descendants. Indeed, these would include King Menashe who placed an idolatrous image in the sanctuary of the Beit Hamikdash and served idols. For this reason, he did not get married.

Yeshyahu told him that we do not investigate the hidden plans of Hashem. He asks us to fulfill the Mitzvot, including having children, and therefore the Mitzva must be fulfilled. The result of evil people coming into existence is a separate problem, which was not Chizkiyahu's issue to deal with. Yeshayahu continued that it was on account of calculating what was to happen and how it was to happen, that he was to die. At this point Chizkiyahu responded that he had received a tradition from his father, which traced back King David that even if a sharp sword is placed on a person's neck, they should not despair of receiving divine mercy. Chizkiyahu then suggested that he marry the daughter of Yeshayahu so that Hashem would save him, and Yeshayahu agreed. Chizkiyahu married her and in the end, a son named Menashe was born, and ultimately, he set up an idol in the sanctuary of the Beit Hamikdash. From this story, we see a tremendous concept. Even if a person knows that evil will result from the performance of a Mitzva, for example, one will have a child who will be a wicked person, they remain obliged to perform the Mitzva, for it is the command of Hashem. It is forbidden to investigate the hidden matters of Hashem, as the results of obeying what He has commanded are not given to a person to take account of. Yeshayahu believed Chizkiyahu and knew that he was a Tzaddik and that his prophecy was accurate and would be fulfilled, but regardless, the fact remained that Hashem commanded him to do something, so Chizkiyahu had to do so.

Therefore, he gave him his daughter, even though this meant that in the end, the evil Menashe was born. It is known that Menashe even killed his own grandfather Yeshayahu. A person cannot examine and investigate what will be and how it will be; they must fulfill the Mitzva. The same can be said about Noach. It is said that he was perfect because he knew that his generation were evil and Hashem told him to build the ark for one hundred and twenty years. He worked every day on the Ark, as the flood would come and destroy the world. Despite this, Noach married a wife and had children.

He did not reason to himself that since the whole world was evil, his children may come to learn from them and sin. He acted differently to Chizkiyahu, and had children in a dangerous generation. On account of this, the Torah says "Noach was a perfect Tzaddik in his generations," on account of his virtue that he went with complete perfection and had children in the most difficult and challenging generation.

"He was a perfect Tzaddik in his generations (Bereishit 6:9)." The courts of Hashem and the angel Matatron.

The holy Sefarim write that there are two courts in heaven, one is the court of Hashem and the other is the court of the angel Matatron. The court of Hashem is one of kindness and mercy, Hashem performs goodness with His creations, and deals with them with kindness and mercy. In contrast, the court of Matatron is run with the strictest form of judgment.

For this reason, after the event with Uriyah, King David said "From before You, my judgment should go out (Tehillim 17:2)." He meant to say that his judgment should go out from the court of Matatron but first pass through the court of Hashem, since Matatron was very strict; if a person had sinned, they would receive harsh judgment from that court. When a person feels that they are faced with strict justice, this is a sign that they are being judged by the court of Matatron. If a person wants to get out of that court, they must perform actions which Hashem loves, such as kindness, acting with humility and being pleasant to people. When He sees that a person is being judged by Matatron, but they have kindness within them, and other desirable characteristics, Hashem takes that person's judgment and adjudicates it in His court. Based on this, we can explain the verse that "Noach was a perfect Tzaddik in his generations." Some interpret this more positively, whilst others understand it negatively.

If we judge based on the court of Matatron, then his judgment will be strict, and therefore, he is judged negatively. However, before the court of Hashem, this verse is interpreted favorably, since Noach was a very humble and straightforward man who did kindness with people and animals, he worried that they would have food for twelve months and was dedicated to ensuring that they would eat on time as needed. Therefore, Noach found favor in the eyes of Hashem because he was humble, and Hashem took the judgment from the court of the angel to His own court, where Noach was then judged with kindness and mercy, so that he left meritorious rather than suffering the attribute of strict justice.

A person must know the following key concept: When he or she is humble and worries about other people, then Hashem Himself judges them, as the verse says "Judge me Hashem, and argue my case (Tehillim 43:1)." However, if a person is strict and deals with the world with strict judgment and haughtiness, and engages in arguments and lacks kindness, then Hashem leaves such a person in the court of Matatron, where the attribute of justice is exacting. Therefore, a person should be careful to be humble and modest, kind and merciful to people. If a person does this, then Hashem will do good for them, have mercy on them and deal with a person as they have dealt with others, and treat them with mercy and kindness.

Treasure charms from the Rif



A charm for the 10th of Cheshvan, the day commemorating Gad the son of our forefather Yaakov.

It is recorded by our holy sages, such as Rabbi Chaim Palagi, that the 10th of Cheshvan is the day on which Gad, the son of Yaakov, our forefather was born. In light of this, our Rabbis explain that this day is uniquely auspicious for one who wishes to begin or complete an endeavor on it. They explain that this can be derived from the very origins of Gad's name. They explain that upon his birth, his mother Leah, exclaimed "Good luck (Gad) has come," with the Hebrew word "Gad" meaning 'good luck' as explained by Rashi, and he was henceforth given that name. Therefore, anyone who initiates or concludes an endeavor on the 10th of Cheshvan can be assured of the unique divine assistance associated with the tribe of Gad. May G-d bless all our handiwork. May the pleasantness of my Lord, our G-d, be upon us - may He establish our handiwork for us; our handiwork may He establish. And may there be a great Heavenly blessing, expansion of the mind, increased success, such that blessing permeates all our activities. Let there be success, blessing, joy and bountiful salvation.



The assurance that Hashem gave to Rachel, our foremother
The Midrash (Eichah Rabbah Petichta 24) states that upon Hashem seeing the sheer severity of the sins committed by Bnei Yisrael (the Jewish people), a calamity was imminent. Rather than merely surmising to destroy the Beit Hamikdash (temple) and its accompanying implements, Hashem rather wanted to annihilate the Bnei Yisrael, leaving no remnant of their existence on Earth. In this sense, Bnei Yisrael were perilously perched on the precipice of a yawning chasm. The Midrash continues, stating that the forefathers, the pillars of our existence, ascended to G-d and pleaded Bnei Yisrael's case. First Avraham ascended, crying bitter tears, yet his supplications went unheeded. Then Yitzchak ascended, receiving the same response, and finally Yaakov ascended, yet was also unsuccessful in appeasing Hashem. The Midrash explicates their conversations, as below:

Avraham pleaded with Hashem, stating: 'Remember Hashem that I was the only person in the world who had faith in You. Indeed, even when You commanded me to sacrifice my dear son, and legacy, I accepted this with full faith. Hashem - please save Bnei Yisrael!' Yet Hashem rejected his pleas, explaining that He could not save this nation submerged in Avoda Zara (idolatry), the greatest treason possible. Yitzchak then approached Hashem and said: 'Master of the Universe, I was thirty-seven years old when my father was commanded to sacrifice me. As a fully-grown man, I could have resisted, yet I agreed and whole-heartedly surrendered myself to be a pure sacrifice for You. Please Hashem have mercy on Bnei Yisrael!' And again, Hashem rejected his pleas.

Finally, Yaakov approached Hashem crying and said: 'I battled with Esav and maintained my faith throughout. Indeed, I left the world with a pure, untainted legacy, with all of my twelve sons following in Your ways, as the verse says: "The tribes of G-d, are testimony to Israel (Yaakov) (Tehillim 122:4)." Please Hashem have mercy on Bnei Yisrael!' And once again Hashem rejected the plea.

Then Moshe cried to Hashem and said to Him: 'For forty years I was like a horse running before Bnei Yisrael in the desert, as the verse states: Forty years I quarreled with a generation, and I said, "They are a people of erring hearts (Tehillim 95:10)." Please have mercy on them!' Yet Hashem refused to relent. Hashem responded to all of them: 'You all surely know what Bnei Yisrael have done. They served Avoda Zara, practiced Sinat Chinam (baseless hatred), committed the three cardinal sins of murder, licentiousness, and Avoda Zara - how can I possibly forgive them?! Clearly Hashem was at breaking point, determined to eradicate any traces of Bnei Yisrael. At that moment, Rachel, our foremother, rose before Hashem, and said as follows: 'Master of the Universe, I am a small person, unworthy of anything. Yet I had a great husband, that they called Yaakov, and he loved me tremendously. His love was so strong that he resolved to marry me, and even agreed to slave away for the evil Lavan for seven years to this end.' She continued: 'I however saw my sister Leah crying, for she desperately wanted to marry Yaakov. Her eyes had reddened, and she had become sick from crying, for she feared that if she didn't marry Yaakov, she would have to marry Esav. I therefore arranged for my dream husband to instead take Leah as a wife, and thereby surrendered my happiness for the sake of my sister's. Yet despite this, I bore no ill-feelings or grudges towards anyone. I did this with a full-heart, with total conviction, forgoing my own-honor in doing so.' She then concluded: 'So too You, Master of the Universe, how can You bear a grudge against Bnei Yisrael? Indeed, I, as a mere human with an Evil Inclination, am prone to feelings of resentment, yet I overcame them, putting my own feelings aside in favor of my sister's. But You! How can You not learn from my conduct, and have mercy on Your people, Bnei Yisrael?!'

When Rachel concluded her words, Hashem responded: "A cry is heard on a height -wailing, bitter weeping- Rachel weeping for her children. She refuses to be comforted for her children, who are gone Yirmiya 31:14."

Hashem then continued and promised Rachel, saying: "Restrain your voice from weeping, your eyes from shedding tears; for there is a reward for your labor -declares G-d: They shall return from the enemy's land. And there is hope for your future - declares G-d: Your children shall return to their country (Yirmiya 31:15-16)." At this point, Hashem removed the decree to eradicate Bnei Yisrael; He decided to give Bnei Yisrael a second chance, such that on the day when they do Teshuva (repentance), He will rebuild the Third Beit Hamikdash, with the world returning to its former glory. We sit and ponder the words of Rachel, our foremother, for it was her words which finally ensured our salvation. All our forefathers, Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov are equivalent to legs of the chair of G-d's glory, yet their prayers were not accepted. Indeed, even the prayer of Moshe, who ascended to Heaven and returned with the holy Torah for us to cherish for eternity, was unable to persuade Hashem; it was only the prayers of Rachel which succeeded. Her words can be thought of as Bnei Yisrael's 'insurance policy' - through which we can rest assured that the day of the rebuilding of the Third Beit Hamikdash will come. Hashem's promise, however, is greater than that of any insurance broker, or banker, it is the unbreakable promise of "Your children shall return to their country (Yirmiya 31:15-16)" - that the day will come when all of Bnei Yisrael will return to Eretz Yisrael. The question therefore becomes when will this day come? The answer is that it will come once we comprehend the mistake which we have consistently failed to understand for over two thousand years. It is only once we comprehend and internalize the nature and gravity of this mistake, that the Messiah can come. Indeed, Hashem informed Rachel that He would redeem us; He gave her His assurance, and thereby obligated Himself to bring us back to our land. The fulfillment of this assurance now rests solely in our hands. When we begin to return to the ways of our land, charged with an unyielding drive to follow in the ways of Hashem, only then will we permit Hashem to follow-through on His assurance. Only then will Hashem be able to actualize the fruits of His assurance, with Jerusalem being rebuilt in its full majesty, in a suitable state to welcome the Messiah, with it being devoid of any deficiencies, and with the world being devoid of any sense of exile. For a moment, just picture the scene through the lens of the words of Yeshaya: "Death will be destroyed forever. G-d will wipe the tears away from all faces and will put an end to the reproach of G-d's people over all the earth (Yeshaya 25:8)" and "the land shall be filled with devotion to G-d (Yeshaya 11:9)." Yeshaya illustrates an oasis, whereby the entire world will be saturated with only goodness; it will be a sanctuary brimming with holiness and spirituality. This is the scene which Hashem promised Rachel; it is the assurance that "your children shall return to their country (Yirmiya 31:15-16)."

In light of the above, our mission is to retrieve this assurance from the cellar. We must remove it from the wrestling arms of its straight jacket, and instead gently untie it, giving space for it to permeate the world, through creating space for it in our souls. This assurance of returning to our land, ought to be our guiding mantra - emblazoned on our foreheads, informing us of our destination and how to get there.

And how can we allow the assurance to shine and be actualized? We can do so through engaging in genuine and meaningful Teshuva, submitting ourselves to our Father in Heaven. And the chief catalyst for this Teshuva must be our attachment to Torah, namely through allowing the Torah penetrate into our hearts. For as our sages relate, if one fails to allow the Torah to penetrate within, as symbolized by not reciting a blessing (Birchat HaTorah) on it before learning, then the Torah learnt will not transform the essence of that person (Bava Metzia 85b). Rather, explain the sages, that Torah will be tainted, lacking in authenticity, and will be unable to remedy the impurities within one's soul.

To conclude, let us accept upon ourselves to learn Torah for the sake of Heaven, whether it be a single verse in Tehillim, or in the Book of Devarim. Let us accept upon ourselves to generate novel Torah ideas with pure minds, totally for the sake of Hashem's glory; indeed, let all of our Mitzvot be performed with pure intent, untainted by personal biases, or competing interests, but rather totally for the sake of serving Hashem. In this way, with G-d's help, we will merit to experience the fulfillment of Hashem's assurance to Rachel, our foremother, and "return to our land."