

# PARSHAS NOACH

תשפ"ד

It is very difficult to talk about anything publicly without confronting the events of the day. This is true specifically when speaking about the parsha.

The story of Yetzias Mitzrayim is interesting just from the aspect of human psychology.

When Yaakov and his family came to Egypt, Yaakov and Yosef took specific steps to avoid any involvement in Egyptian society. They wanted Klal Yisroel to remain separate from Egyptian culture and Egyptian life. They made an excuse that they are shepherds and can't be involved in regular society. Klal Yisroel are secure and safe when they are separate and alone among the nations.

But after the generation of Yaakov and Yosef passed away, the Jews wanted to spread out of the Goshen ghetto and live among the Egyptians. On the one hand, Egyptian culture was the most advanced and sophisticated culture of the ancient world, but on the other hand, it was the most degenerate and morally corrupt society of the ancient world. When the Torah warns us against committing despicable acts of arayos, it describes all of them as being the standard practices and behaviors of the people of Egypt.

The Jews were impressed by the accomplishments of the Egyptians – the Sphinx, the Pyramids, engineering feats that till today we don't understand how they were made – and the Jews were attracted by it. Klal Yisroel tried to integrate into Egyptian society, and they stopped bris miloh, and this created a completely opposite reaction. The Egyptians suddenly started hating the Jews and wanted to brutally subjugate them and make them slaves.

In the last year of slavery, Moshe comes along and the makkos start happening one after the other. It becomes exceedingly clear to everyone that the Egyptian way of life and their whole belief system is utterly bankrupt and false. You have to be absolutely blind not to wake up and see that the drive to assimilate and become Egyptian was total mistake and a complete disaster. The Egyptians never accepted you – they immediately and totally rejected you and wanted to enslave you.

Naturally you would think that by the time makkas choshech came around, all the Jews who had previously tried to assimilate would have given up on it and come to their senses. But 80% couldn't bring themselves to adjust to the reality and they couldn't leave Egypt. You can blast people's minds with the most obvious things, but they are mentally stuck where they are. Hashem says they can't be taken out and they die during that makkah.

The night of makkas bechoros was an unbelievable gilui Shechinoh. But before that, when Moshe talks to Pharaoh, Moshe is careful to predict that the makkah will occur 'around midnight'. Rashi explains this with an unbelievable insight into human psychology – had Moshe said it would happen exactly at midnight, and someone's clock would have been off by one minute, the Egyptians would dismiss the entire makkah! They would say the prediction didn't come true because by their clock, it was off by a minute! People just don't budge – even when they want to change!

What did Klal Yisroel have to do to come to the level where they could leave Egypt?

The Rambam says sometimes there is a din on the individual, a din on a country or region, and a din on the entire world. At each level, we have to look at what we did to contribute to that din. When the Corona pandemic happened, I noted that it was a din on the entire globe that

had not taken place since the mabbul, and we were obligated to take a look at what was happening and how we contributed to that din.

We will give two examples of a din on a country or a region. The night of makkas bechoros, Klal Yisroel were instructed to take a lamb and slaughter it in front of the Egyptians and take its blood and smear it on their doorposts for everyone to see. It was a very public statement renouncing the avodo zoro of their Egyptian masters and it sent a message that they are no longer connected to them. Moshe also told everyone that no one may leave their house to go outside while the makkah was going on. Why? Rashi explains that once the destructive force was given the license to destroy an area, it will not distinguish between tzaddik and rosho in that area. Rashi is telling us that the way Klal Yisroel could avoid being impacted by the din on Egypt was to completely dissociate from the Egyptians. They needed to show that they are no longer a part of the region that the din was decreed on and they will be spared from that din.

When Hashem took Lot out of S'dom, the malochim warned Lot and his family not to look back at S'dom while the destruction was happening. Looking back at that moment would mean that you still feel emotionally connected to S'dom and you aren't making a clean break. This will make you susceptible to the din on S'dom since you still identify with them and you are a part of that place.

Let us discuss a number of issues from last week's parsha and this week's parsha.

The parsha says Lemech named his son Noach because this son will comfort us and relieve us from our back-breaking toil. The Yalkut brings a midrash which asks: was Lemech a novi? Did he already know that his son will be the one to save humanity from the mabbul 600 years later, and named him Noach now because of that? The midrash tells us a story that is frighteningly relevant today. The world was sinking lower and lower in morality, to the point where the midrash says people became so animalistic that they started to resemble monkeys. And as a result, Hashem punished them and it required tremendous effort to grow anything from the ground. There was extreme poverty from the lack of fertility of the earth.

But at the time of Noach's birth, Hashem decided to try something different. He reasoned that if the nisayon of poverty isn't inspiring them to do teshuvoh, perhaps making life easier will inspire them to do teshuvoh. So there was a tremendous blessing of prosperity and wealth right when Noach was born and this is why Lemech named him Noach. But as a result of all their wealth, the people started to become consumed with taivoh and turned to extreme practices of znus. They weren't satisfied with the natural taivos, and started to enjoy unnatural taivos, and then totally unnatural taivos.

Then Hashem was vacillating between destroying mankind or sparing mankind. He decided to wait another 120 years for them to do teshuvoh and if they don't turn around by that time, there will be no choice but to bring a mabbul.

Then at the beginning of Parshas Noach, we read that society falls apart and the world must be destroyed. Noach builds a taivoh not just to protect himself physically from the flood waters, but to disconnect and isolate himself from the corruption and the chaos of the world in order to be spared from the din that was being acted out on that corrupt, chaotic world.

When it comes to tragedies that befall the Jewish people there is a very unpopular Rambam that I always mention. We need to constantly

review this Rambam. When tragedies happen, we are required to make a cheshbon hanefesh – individually and collectively – to see how to correct the spiritual failings which brought the tragedy about in the first place. Klal Yisroel just experienced a tremendous tragedy. But now we will approach this from a totally different point of view.

For the past 8 months, Israeli society collapsed. In the name of all these stupid, liberal slogans – saving democracy, etc. – the Israeli Left decided they were going to destroy the country. They intentionally downgraded the economy, they intentionally destroyed the morale of the military, and there was no social cohesion remaining in Israeli society.

In the middle of Chodesh Elul, a sincere, well-meaning Jew, who for years has been involved in exposing secular Israelis in Tel Aviv to Torah concepts and Torah observance, brought a well-known rabbi to participate in his public exhibition of Judaism. Violent protests ensued and the police came in to escort him out. All in the name of freedom and democracy. Hateful speech like Torah is forbidden.

This individual tried to organize a public minyan in Tel Aviv on Yom Kippur – like he did for many years in the past for the secular Jews who still want some connection to Torah and Yiddishkeit. But a group of people sued him in court and they forbade it. He had the tefilloh anyway and it ended in violence. The court also forbade hakafos shniyos which he always conducted. It means Torah cannot be observed in the public square by force of law – in the name of democracy. But it has nothing to do with preserving democracy. They hate the frum Jews and society is falling apart because of the fear that someday soon, Torah will take over Israeli society.

Then an unbelievable thing happens. Simchas Torah – the end of Succos.

What is Succos about? The pesukim in Nach say they made an incredible chag haSuccos at the beginning of Bayis Sheni that hadn't been seen since the times of Yehoshua Bin Nun. The gemara in Arachin asks, didn't Dovid and Shlomo make incredible chagim of Succos in their time? The gemara answers that at the beginning of Bayis Sheni, Anshei Knesses Hagedolah were concerned that avodo zoro would return and destroy the second Beis Hamikdosh like it destroyed the first! So they davened to Hashem to remove the yetzer horo for avodo zoro. When their tefillos were answered, they celebrated by making a tremendous chag HaSuccos.

There is another midrash in Bereishis which asks why Hashem allowed Alexander the Great to be so successful in conquering the world and thereby spread Greek culture throughout the ancient world? The midrash answers that Hashem wanted to undermine the belief system of avodo zoro that dominated the world at that time. If Klal Yisroel would stay pure and continue developing Torah Shebaal Peh in isolation from the rest of the world, the Greeks and their philosophy could be used to dismantle the beliefs of avodo zoro and pave the way for Torah to fill the vacuum and bring Moshiach.

Alexander got all the way to India and he died there. And in fact today, the western part of India is Muslim and the eastern part, where Alexander didn't reach, is still under the influence of ancient avodo zoros. So this part of Hashem's plan was successful. But Klal Yisroel also got involved in Greek culture and the plan to show the world the beauty of Torah to the world and bring Moshiach had to be delayed and he allowed Christianity and Islam to emerge as bridge religions instead. This is how the Rambam concludes.

So Succos is a chag which focuses on the eventual accepting of Hashem and the Torah by all the nations of the world. But Shmini Atzeres changes the focus. It is a day which celebrates Klal Yisroel's special, unique relationship with Hashem. Simchas Torah is the simcha of Torah Shebaal Peh. And this year, on this very day that we are celebrating, something fascinating happened.

There are 22+1 places in the Negev that are near Gaza. There are 22 yishuvim and a small city called Tifrach. It is a totally frum city with a major Yeshiva with thousands of bochurim at the heart of it, and other

smaller yeshivos and kollelim around it. There are two frum yishuvim and 20 non-frum yishuvim.

Then there was a music festival which came for the first time to Israel – led by Hindu worshippers celebrating with avodo zoro and music and psychedelic drugs and znus, etc. On Simchas Torah!

Not one incident happened in any of the frum yishuvim. Tifrach had a simple lock and somehow this stopped the heavily armed terrorists. It makes no sense. Ofakim is a mixed Yishuv of frum and secular and there is a yeshiva there, and there was a weird story and the yeshiva wasn't touched. You have to be blind to not see there is something happening here.

Nothing happened in any frum yishuv. The other 20 were devastated. 260 participants in the Hindu music festival were killed, many wounded and others captured.

What happened in Tel Aviv? Remember, they don't want religion coming to Tel Aviv. The army was totally unprepared and they needed food supplied from outside. They kashered 100 treif restaurants in Tel Aviv because the army was desperate and they needed these restaurants to prepare kosher meals for their soldiers! Hashem is sending them a clear message. You don't want davening and hakafos and Torah and mitzvos coming to Tel Aviv, but I will see to it that 100 treif restaurants become kosher despite all your best efforts to stop Torah from coming in! There won't be hakafos shniyos in Tel Aviv – but not because of you. The secular Left wanted to tear Israeli society apart and undo any achdus in the nation, and Hashem sends something that forces complete achdus in all Klal Yisroel worldwide at this time.

Let us try to understand what happened and what it means for us, relating to what I mentioned last week.

People are under the illusion that it is not safe here in Israel and it is safer back home in the U.S. and the U.K. It is nothing other than a false sense of security. There are certain basic ideas of emunoh and bitochon that people are missing in a very drastic way.

I was told of a seminary girl who was here from Cherry Hill, New Jersey, and her family was worried and brought her home. And what happened in Cherry Hill, New Jersey? A bunch of people dressed up like Hamas terrorists and went into a Jewish high school and beat up a bunch of students there! In Manchester, England, there were mass rallies supporting Hamas chanting 'kill the Jews!' Tens of thousands of people! Jews in England were terrified last Friday when Hamas called for an International Day of Rage because of the siege placed on Gaza by the Israeli army. In New York, they had helicopters over Jewish schools at the time of dismissal to ensure it was safe for the Jewish kids to leave school. Why do people think it is safer anywhere? They have no idea about how Hashem runs the world.

It is true that we need an army and a police force. The truth is that none of it will make us safe if Hashem isn't protecting us from harm. The gemara in Bava Basra says you collect taxes in the city to support all the city's needs. For basic necessities like water, taxes are collected from everyone without exception. But for defense of the city, Torah scholars are exempt because their Torah contributes to the protection of the city. This idea comes straight from the gemara and it is paskened by the Rambam. It wasn't made up recently by some contemporary radical right-wing chareidi. Torah has tremendous protective value.

People's sense of security can come from different sources. People in the West rely on their egos and their gaivoh. In Israel, it is common for people to feel protected because of the superior technology, intelligence, and advanced weaponry of the IDF. But every now and then, Hashem sends a message that all their power and abilities are utterly useless. A few years ago, Hamas designed balloons carrying fires to float over the border fence and start blazes in nearby Israeli farms and yishuvim. They caused tremendous damage and the IDF was powerless to stop them. Just imagine – the fourth most powerful army in the world was rendered totally ineffective by a bunch of balloons!

The Torah used to be ridiculed as primitive and immoral by the intellectual class because of mitzvos like wiping out Amoleik and the seven nations of Eretz Canaan. But now you hear these same intellectuals saying Hamas is an existential threat so we have to wipe out all of them – not leave a single Hamas member alive. The irony is rich.

The total bankruptcy of the people who think they understand how the world works and how to defend the country and how to run a society without Torah and leave Hashem out of the picture, is being shown in the most extreme way for everyone to see. Open your eyes.

We can talk about all the political and geographical reasons to explain why Yerushalayim is safe. But there is no guarantee of anything. We cannot figure out the cheshbonos of Hashem. We have to look at ourselves and ask ourselves to what degree is my sense of security coming from the gaivoh of human ego, and to what degree is it coming from bitochon in Hashem? The human ego has led the State of Israel to complete disaster and collapse. The Leftist understanding of the world simply does not understand the reality of evil, and they are completely unequipped to deal with evil when it confronts them and tries to destroy them.

When I visited Radin, I spoke with the old non-Jewish mayor of Radin who was around at the time of the Holocaust. He described how the Germans came into Radin and rounded up all the Jews, led them to the cemetery and shot them. What was the reaction by the non-Jewish population, I asked? He told me they were in their homes and they heard the shooting. They waited for the shooting to stop – which signaled to them that all the Jews of Radin were killed, and went out to loot the empty Jewish homes. That means they didn't care about innocent Jews being slaughtered. They only cared about taking advantage of the German invasion to enrich themselves with Jewish wealth.

There is video footage of the immediate aftermath of the invasion of Kibbutz Beeri which suffered a massive slaughter of the Jewish population. Before the Israeli Army had a chance to retake the kibbutz, the regular civilian population of Gaza heard that the kibbutz was overrun by Hamas, and they came out of Gaza by the hundreds to loot all the Jewish homes. These aren't innocent, peace-loving civilians as the Left likes to portray them. They are all the same.

There is a time when you have to wake up and see how twisted and cynical the Left is regarding morality and civilized behavior.

How did the United States win the war against Japan? Very simple. My father was stationed in Hawaii towards the end of the Second World War. They were getting ready to ship off the soldiers to China as a launching area for the invasion of Japan, and they expected a million soldiers to die in the final battle. Instead, they bombed Hiroshima and Nagasaki and killed a few hundred thousand people and ended the war with much fewer casualties.

Is it moral? Of course it is moral!

Why? The Meiri in Sanhedrin asks: how do we know the halacha of **הבא להרגך השכם להרגו**? Most people would answer that it comes from the **posuk** of **בא במחותרת**. But the Meiri says it comes from the instruction to wipe out the Midianim when they sent their women to seduce Klal Yisroel. The Meiri is telling us that there are two types of rodfim. There are individual rodfim and there is a nation of rodfim. When an entire nation is being represented by its soldiers who fight and attack you on their behalf, the entire nation gets the din of a rodef. There is no distinction of innocent civilians.

When the U.S. wanted to defeat Germany, they carpet-bombed the city of Dresden which was the major industrial center. When it was over, there wasn't a single building which was left standing and all life was eliminated. Tens of thousands of civilians were killed and it broke the spirit of Germany to continue fighting. But here we see Biden claiming the overwhelming majority of Gaza citizens are innocent civilians. It is twisted and dishonest and morally bankrupt. Unfortunately, we have assimilated much of this western morality into our minds.

You can't talk about Torah in public because it is too provocative. But they have all kinds of gay pride parades in Yerushalayim and pro-Hamas demonstrations because that is freedom of expression! This is a twisted mentality and many of us have bought into their morality and sense of security.

We can learn a simple lesson from 9-11. One maamin who believed in the koach of sheker was able to take on the entire United States, The Taliban are true believers who defeated the U.S. military. But at least they were armed fighters. For us, the Maccabim weren't trained fighters, they only had the koach of Torah and the koach of tefilloh – and they defeated the mighty Greek armies.

Every Jewish life is precious and many soldiers are now in danger and we will do all we can to help materially. But we can help much more with our koach of Torah and koach of tefilloh. We have nothing to do with the western sense of gaivoh and ego which has been shown to be totally bankrupt in a matter of days. Hashem is showing it to us so clearly and we have to be blind not to see it.

I was interviewed when I was in Auschwitz. I said many millions of Jews died in the Holocaust, but something else also died here – the adoration and belief in the progressive, morally advanced, sophisticated culture of the West – epitomized by German academia. And in a few short years those at the height of Western culture became the most brutal and barbaric depraved animals.

In the 1880's there was tremendous anti-Semitism in Russia. The Jews were desperate to find some solution. The gedolim of the time all said that assimilation is not only not going to help, but it will make things worse. It is just like golus Mitzrayim – where the more the Jews tried to be accepted into Egyptian society, the more they were hated and persecuted.

And then there was the solution of Zionism – if we only had our own land and our own nation-state, no one would have any hatred toward us. We are hated in Europe only because we are seen as stateless foreigners who don't belong to any nation. No-one hates nations who have their own country in some distant continent, like Guatemala. We should be just a nation like all other nations with our own homeland, language, flag and literature. It is assimilation on a national basis, which was supposed to solve anti-Semitism.

And after the Second World War, the secular Zionist rallying cry was "Never Again". Why? Because now we have our own country and our own army capable of defending Jews from their enemies. The holocaust was possible only because the Jews didn't have a country to flee to and an army to protect them.

But now, ever since World War II, the greatest source of Jew-hatred world-wide comes from Anti-Zionism. Instead of solving the problem of Anti-Semitism, it has simply taken its place. "Never Again"? Really? We see now, after all the pro-Hamas demonstrations calling for gassing the Jews and killing Jewish babies, it can happen anywhere.

All the secular intellectual elites of this country are being exposed for all their sheker and hypocrisy in front of our eyes. 99% of the country is now united. The army is now forced to function. Hashem made sure there is achdus and there is religion in Tel Aviv.

The only security we have comes from Hashem. We can't minimize the loss of a single Jew – certainly not 1300 Jews who were brutally murdered, and almost 200 people captured. But we have to look inward and see how much we have bought into this bankrupt Western ideology. We have to get the message that the world stands on our learning and our davening, and that is how we contribute the maximum that we can to protect Eretz Yisroel.