

THE DAY FALSEHOOD MARRIED DESTRUCTION

by Shlomo Katz

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Noach

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Today's Learning:

Chagigah 2:6-7

Orach Chaim 329:7-9

Daf Yomi (Bavli): Nazir 18

Daf Yomi (Yerushalmi): Bava Metzia 20

The midrash records that when the animals came to Noach's ark two-by-two, Falsehood also approached the door and asked to be admitted. Noach said, "You may not enter unless you have a mate."

Upon leaving the ark, Falsehood met Destruction, who asked, "From where are you coming?"

"From Noach," said Falsehood, "and he will not let me enter the ark unless I have a mate."

"I will be your mate," said Destruction, "but only on the condition that whatever you sow, I will reap." And so it was! >From that day forward, whatever Falsehood sows, Destruction reaps.

One message of this midrash is obvious -- nothing good comes from falsehood. But there is also a deeper message, says R' Moshe Schwab z"l (mashgiach of the Gateshead Yeshiva; died 1979).

Everything that Hashem created has a purpose. In particular, anything that survived the flood necessarily serves a constructive purpose or Hashem would not have "bothered" saving it. What purpose does the marriage of Falsehood and Destruction serve?

In a sense, all that our eyes can perceive is a lie, for it appears to us that the material aspects of the world are its primary parts. Man's role in the world is to peel away the layers of materialism that shield the spiritual aspects of creation and to discover what the "real world" consists of. Fighting us is the yetzer hara, whose role is to convince us that the material world is the "real world."

Noach did not want Falsehood to be saved in the ark. However, when Falsehood joined forces with Destruction, Falsehood became a constructive force, for thereafter Falsehood would play a role in destroying and tearing down the facade that conceals the truths that man is tasked with discovering. (Ma'archei Lev Vol. IV, p. 59)

"Noach was a righteous man, perfect in his generations . . ." (6:9)

"For it is you [Noach] that I have seen to be righteous before me in this generation." (7:1)

There are several differences between the description of Noach in these two verses. Rashi comments about one of them -- the verse which speaks of Noach in the third person refers to him as a "perfect tzaddik" while the other verse, in which Hashem speaks to Noach, refers to him only as a tzaddik. From here we learn, writes Rashi, that one should not state a person's full praise to his face.

Another difference between the two verses is that the first verse uses the word "generations" (plural) while the second verse says only "generation" (singular). Why?

Finally, Rashi comments on the first verse that some Sages interpret this verse to indicate that Noach was not as great as he could have been. In what way was he lacking?

R' Shaul Yedidyah Elazar Taub z"l (the "Modzhitzer Rebbe"; died 1947) answers the above questions as follows:

There are two types of tzaddikim, one of whom is concerned only with his own improvement and the other of whom attempts to influence his surroundings. The former may be compared to sugar cane and the latter to powdered sugar, says R' Taub. Both tzaddikim are sweet in Hashem's eyes; however, powdered sugar dissolves and sweetens its surroundings while cane sugar does not.

The Zohar states that Noach was the former type of tzaddik, i.e., he made no attempt to influence his generation and avert the flood. In this respect he was lacking and was not the tzaddik he could have been. After the flood, however, he changed and realized that he was responsible for the spiritual welfare of his neighbors.

Thus, when Hashem spoke to Noach before the flood (in the second verse quoted above), Noach was not the type of tzaddik who could be called "perfect." However, if one looks at Noach's generations (plural), i.e., at his life as a whole, he did become the type of tzaddik who is "perfect." (Yisa Berachah)

"Now the earth had become corrupt before G-d, and the earth had become filled with robbery." (6:11)
If man is corrupt before G-d -- if he does not fear G-d and act properly vis-a-vis his obligations to G-d -- it is inevitable that the earth will become filled with robbery and other interpersonal sins. (Ma'ayanah Shel Torah)

"Your fear and your dread shall be upon every beast of the earth. . ." (9:2)
Why is the verse phrased thus, rather than, "The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth . . ."? R' Shlomo Rabinowitz of Radomsk z"l (1800-1866) explains that the verse is teaching an extra lesson. "Only to the extent of your own fear of and dread of Hashem will the other creatures of the world fear you." (Tiferet Shlomo)

[The following dvar Torah can be better appreciated with the Hebrew text in front of the reader.]
"Mitzrayim fathered Ludim, Anamim, Lehavim, Naphtuchim, Patrusim and Casluchim -- from where the Philistines came forth -- and Caphtorim." (10:13-14)

R' Yaakov Abuchatzera z"l (see page 4) found in these verses the following lesson regarding the evils of lashon hara:

The gematria of "Mitzrayim" (380) equals the gematria of the word "lashon" / "tongue." The names of Mitzrayim's children indicate the consequences of an evil tongue. [Ed. note: For the foregoing gematria to be correct, lashon must be spelled "chaser" / "lacking," i.e., without the letter "vav." Perhaps the fact that the word is chaser supports R' Abuchatzera's interpretation that an evil tongue is alluded to.]

Mitzrayim's first child was "Ludim," related to the word "v'lad" / "newborn." The name of the second child was "Anamim," related to the word "na'im" / "pleasant." Even though every person who is born is inherently pleasant and beloved, lashon hara brings about "Lehavim" / flames of hatred. This, in turn, leads to "Naphtuchim," containing the word "petach" / "opening," because lashon hara opens the strong bonds which bind friends together.

The names of the next two sons, "Patrusim" and "Casluchim," allude to the fact that even a recipient of kindness and charity can be made to turn against his benefactor through lashon hara. Specifically,

"Patrusim" alludes to "pat" / "bread" and the first syllable of "Casluchim" alludes to "kos" / "drink" -- together a reference to charity. Nevertheless, the second syllable of "Casluchim" alludes to war. [A "locheim" is a warrior.]

Finally, one who speaks lashon hara will eventually deny G-d Himself. This is alluded to in the name "Caphtorim," which is made up of the words "kofer" / "one who denies" and "Torah," i.e., one who speaks lashon hara may deny the truth of the Torah. (Pituchei Chotam)

R' Yaakov Abuchatzzeira z"l

R' Yaakov Abuchatzzeira was born in Morocco in 5566 / 1806 and served in the rabbinate there until shortly before his death. It was written about him:

The aforementioned rabbi was a kabbalist renowned for his piety and accustomed to performing miracles. It is said that Eliyahu Hanavi appeared to him. The aforementioned rabbi loved solitude and [for a time] did not leave the bet midrash / study hall all week long, except on Friday night. He was a master of charity, and his home was wide open to guests.

R' Abuchatzzeira's son wrote of his father's schedule:

He knew the six orders of the Mishnah by heart, and every night, he studied 18 chapters in holiness and purity. After that, he would study Shulchan Aruch and other poskim / halachic authorities, and he would review the sources in the gemara from which their rulings derived. Near midnight he would nap, then he would arise for tikkun chatzot / the midnight prayers that the exceptionally pious recite in mourning for the Temple. Afterward he would study kabbalistic works until morning, when he would hurry to don tallit and tefilin and be one of the first ten to arrive for minyan. After he prayed in the manner of the pious he would sit and study Torah, eating only the minimal amount necessary. After that, he would engage in acts of charity until nightfall.

In the winter of 5640 / 1879, R' Abucharzeira set out for Eretz Yisrael. However, upon arriving in a town near Alexandria, Egypt, he told those with him that it had been revealed to him in a dream that he would pass away after the next Shabbat. He also told them that he accepted Heaven's decree. He passed away on Sunday, 20 Tevet 5640 / January 4, 1880.

R' Abuchatzzeira's many distinguished descendants included his great-grandson R' Yisrael Abuchatzzeira, known as "Baba Sali." His written works include Torah commentaries and ethical works (most of a kabbalistic nature) and responsa on the laws of torts and financial matters entitled Yoru Mishpatecha Le'Yaakov. (Source: Gedolei Ha'dorot p. 723)

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