

# BITACHON LESSON FROM THE PARSHA

## פרשת אלה תולדת נח תשפ"ז – No Excuses!

וַיִּשָּׁאֵר אִדְךָ נֹחַ וְאִשְׁרֵי אִתּוֹ בַּתֵּיבָה

Only Noah and those with him in the Teivah survived. (Bereishis 7:23)

Rashi cites the Midrash Tanchuma

וּמִדְרַשׁ אַגְדָּה גֹנֵחַ וְכוּהָה דָם מִטְרַח הַבְּהֵמוֹת וְהַחַיִּיּוֹת. וַיֵּשׁ אֲמָרִים שְׂאֵחַר מְזֻזוֹת לְאָרִי וְהַכִּישׁוּ וְעָלְיוּ נֶאֱמָר (מִשְׁלֵי יא) הֵן צָדִיק בְּאֶרֶץ יִשְׁלָם

He was groaning and spitting blood because of the burden of caring for the animals, and some say that he delayed feeding the lion, and it struck him, and concerning him the Posuk states "Behold a Tzadik is punished in this world".

Chazal are clearly telling us that Noah was punished for his tardiness in feeding the lion. It is difficult to comprehend why. Noah's time on the Teivah was anything but a relaxing boat ride; it was the most arduous endeavor imaginable.

Let's try to picture what was going on for a year straight on the Teivah. Thousands of animals, of every variety, were aboard. Tons and tons of all types of food provisions and plants had to be organized, managed and distributed to every specific animal, at specific times.

The Midrash Rabbah (Bereishis 31:14) teaches:

וְאֵתָה קַח לָךְ וְגו'... הַכְּנִיס עִמּוֹ זְמוּרוֹת לְפִילִים, חֲצוֹבוֹת לְצִבְאִים, זִכְכִּית לְנִעְמִיּוֹת.... הַכְּנִיס עִמּוֹ זְמוּרוֹת לְנִטְיָעוֹת, יַחֲוִירִים לְתַאֲנִים, גְּרוֹפִית לְזִיִּיתִים.

He took in with him branches for feeding the elephants, wild onions for the gazelles, glass for the ostriches. ... He took in with him vine branches for planting vines after the Mabul, fig branches for planting fig trees, olive branches for planting olive trees.

The Midrash Tanchuma (Noach 9) teaches:

אָמַר רַבִּי לֹוי כָּל אוֹתָן שָׁנִים עֶשֶׂר חֹדֶשׁ לֹא טַעַם טַעַם שָׁנָה לֹא נָח וְלֹא בָנָיו שֶׁהָיוּ זֻקְקִין לָזֶן אֶת הַבְּהֵמָה וְאֶת הַחַיָּה וְאֶת הָעוֹפּוֹת. רַבִּי עֲקִיבָא אָמַר... יֵשׁ בְּהֵמָה שְׂאוֹכֶלֶת לִשְׁתֵּי שָׁעוֹת בַּלַּיְלָה, וַיֵּשׁ אוֹכֶלֶת לִשְׁלֹשׁ Neither Noah nor his sons were able to sleep during the entire twelve months because they were obliged to feed the animals, the beasts, and the birds. Rabbi Akiva stated ...some of the animals had to be fed at the second hour in the night and others at the third hour of the night.

Hardly a vacation or a picnic!

The Gemara (Sanhedrin 108b) relates:

אָמַר רַב חֲנַנְיָ בֶר בִּיזְנָא אָמַר לִיה אֲלִיעֶזֶר לִשְׁם רַבָּא כְּתִיב לְמִשְׁפַּחְתֵּיהּ יִצְאוּ מִן הַתֵּיבָה אֲתוֹן הֵיכָן הוּיָתוֹן א"ל עֶזֶר גְּדוֹל הִיָּה לָנוּ בְּתִיבָה בְּרִיָּה שְׂדֵרָכָה לְהֵאכִילָהּ בְּיוֹם הָאֲכָלוֹה בְּיוֹם שְׂדֵרָכָה לְהֵאכִילָהּ בְּלַיְלָה הָאֲכָלוֹה בְּלַיְלָה הָאִי זָקִיתָא לֹא הוּה יָדַע אָבָא מָה אֲכָלָה יוֹמָא חַד הוּה יֵתִיב וְקָא פִּאֲלִי רְמוֹנָא נָפַל תּוֹלַעְתָּא מִינָה אֲכָלָה מִיכָן וְאִילָךְ הוּה גְּבִיל לֵה חִירוּאָא כִּי מִתְלַע אֲכָלָה

Eliezer [the servant of Avraham Avinu - Rashi] said to Shem the son of Noah: ...Where were you and what did you do to care for the animals while they were in the Teivah? Shem responded: We experienced great suffering in the Teivah caring for the animals. Animals that typically eat during the day, we fed during the day, ones that typically eat at night, we fed at night. With regard to the chameleon, my father did not know what it eats. One day, he was sitting and peeling a pomegranate. A worm fell from it and the chameleon ate it. From that point forward my father would knead bran with water, and when it became overrun with worms, the chameleon would eat it.

It was an intense year!

Noah worked extremely hard and tried his very best to cater to every animal's unique needs. He definitely earned his title as a bona fide "Tzadik". Could he really be blamed for being late with the lion's supper, one time?! How can we understand his being culpable for this one occasion of tardiness? Taking everything he was dealing with into consideration, shouldn't he have been rewarded for the hundreds of other times that he delivered the lion's meals right on time, with super-human strength and dependability despite his impossible workload?

Chazal are teaching us an incredibly important and valuable lesson here: Not all times are equal.

In "normal" times when the routine of life hums along seamlessly, it isn't demanded of a person to live beyond his capabilities. But when there's a Mabul raging in the world, all the "normal" rules are suspended. When the world is in survival mode, one's capabilities are not adequate; Hashem demands of him to go beyond his "normal" capabilities.

When there's a Mabul, one must reach deep into himself and find capabilities that he never knew he had, and use them!

Often, when it comes to matters of Avodas Hashem in general, and to Emunah and Bitachon in particular, we hear people say things like "I'm not on that level", "I'm not holding there", "I don't have what it takes", or "I am not capable of living that way". Those excuses – and that is precisely what they are – can perhaps work

when the world is spinning on "normal". However, when there's a Mabul raging, it's a whole different story.

The environment of the 21<sup>st</sup> century world that we are currently in is nothing short of a spiritual Mabul. The raging waters of secularism, materialism and G-dlessness are everywhere. The decadent ideas and practices of the *Sitra Achra* have infiltrated every corner of the globe, and even penetrated our holy camps. The only protection we have from the howling winds of אִפְקוֹרְסוֹת and the blizzards of כָּחִי וְעוֹצֵם יָדֵי is in the Teivah of Hashem – our Shuls, Yeshivos, *Batei Midrash*, and (hopefully) our properly guarded homes.

In such an environment, being satisfied with our "normal" capabilities is not adequate. We must seek and find super-human strength to live with Emunah and Bitachon, and on levels that we didn't think were possible. We must live as if our very lives depended on our firm Emunah and Bitachon – because they do! The Mabul is raging. If we want to survive, there is no room for excuses – even good ones. That is the lesson that the lion taught Noah, and that is the lesson we all must learn.

## Good Shabbos!