



The Fruits of Your Labor

“Abba! Abba! We are so happy that you are home. It is getting late and we were beginning to worry.”

“I’m sorry that I was delayed, kinderlach. I had to go to a levaya (funeral).”

“Oy, vey, Abba. Who passed away?”

“A big talmid chochom. He taught many students and wrote several sefarim (Torah books) in his life.”

“He lived a full life.”

“Yes, but he never had any children.”

“How sad.”

“You might think so, Avi. However, the Rav who delivered a hesped (eulogy) on this talmid chochom looked at his life a little differently. He referred to the Daas Zekanim MiBaalei HaTosafos on this week’s parasha. They cite the Medrash Tanchuma that quotes a verse in Mishlei (11:30), ‘The fruit of a tsaddik is a tree of life.’ If a man leaves this world without children, he is distressed and cries because he did not establish future generations. Hashem says to him, ‘You have fruits! Your fruit is the Torah that you strove (to learn)!’ As the verse states, ‘The fruit of a tsaddik is a tree of life.’ His sons are not referred to as his fruits; rather ‘the tree of life’ is his fruit. And that ‘tree of life’ is none other than Torah, as the verse states, ‘It (the Torah) is a tree of life’ (Mishlei 3:18).”

“How comforting.”

“Yes, Chaim. This same idea is expressed in the very first verse of the parasha, ‘These are the offspring of Noach – Noach was a tsaddik’ (Bereshis 6:9). The end of the verse apparently does not match the beginning. The generations should be referring to his sons, Shem, Cham, and Yafes. Instead, Noach’s generations are his deeds, which were righteous and earned him the title of tsaddik.”

“That is very impressive, Abba, because Noach had many descendants.”

“Correct, Chaim. In his lifetime, he saw the repopulation of entire world. All seventy nations were descended from him! That is a truly astounding number of offspring. Yet, they are not mentioned at all. Noach’s righteousness – his good deeds – are called his descendants.”



“I see. This talmid chochom who passed away had many, many spiritual descendants – his talmidim, whom he taught directly, and his sefarim, which were learned and will continue to be learned by many other talmidim. These righteous deeds will be with him for all generations. His toil in Torah produced a beautiful tree of life which has borne many fruits.”

Kinderlach . . .

Did you ever see someone plant a tree? It is very hard work. First, he must dig a deep hole in the ground. Then he must plant the sapling and refill the hole. He must water the tree, plow around the roots, and prune the branches. Finally, it becomes strong enough to produce fruit. However, he cannot eat the fruit for the

first three years. The fruit of the fourth year he must eat in Yerushalayim. After that, he can finally eat the fruits in his home, but he must still work at watering, pruning, fertilizing, and picking the fruits of his tree. Similarly, producing spiritual fruits is hard work. Learning Torah – stretching ones intelligence and endurance to the utmost to understand Hashem’s holy words – is not easy. It also takes years to see the fruits of ones labor. However, just as the fruits of a mature tree are sweet, so too the fruits of toil in Torah are delightful.

You can enjoy them in this world. However, they give you eternal pleasure in olam habbo. They are your descendants! They carry on for you after you leave this world. Work hard in this world, kinderlach. Produce many fruits! Enjoy their sweetness in this world, and get nachas from them forever.

Kindness Saved Them

“The end of all flesh has come before Me because the earth is filled with chamas (robbery)” (Bereshis 6:13). Rav Eliyahu Dessler zt”l explains that the flood which destroyed the entire world was the verdict handed down by Hashem for the crime of chamas. Why did the world receive such a severe punishment for robbery? Theft is the result of the desire to take. People who are only interested in themselves, thereby taking what does not belong to them will destroy themselves

and their entire society. What is the antidote? Giving. We find Noach and his family, who survived the flood, were totally occupied with giving during the entire year that they were enclosed within the ark.

The Gemora (Sanhedrin 108b) relates a conversation between Shem, the son of Noach and Eliezer the servant of Abraham about life in the ark. “How did you manage to care for all of those animals in the ark?” asked Eliezer. “It was very difficult,” Shem replied. “We had to feed each animal at its eating time -- day and night. We had to figure out what food each animal ate. One time my father was late feeding the lion. He let out such a roar that all of the animals in the ark were terrified. My father went to him and the lion bit him, crippling him for life. None of us slept a wink the entire year. We were too busy caring for all of the animals, giving each one his individual food at the proper time.”

Kinderlach . . .

Chamas was the sin of Noach’s generation. It is the same sin as chamasnu (We took things against people’s will). Do you remember that from the viduy (confession) on Yom Kippur? We all felt so badly when we thought about those sins. Now is our chance to make sure we don’t repeat them. “Me first. I only got two candies and everyone else got three. I want more time on the swing even though there are many others waiting. I want a second piece of cake even though others did not even have one piece yet.” These are all actions of taking. What would Noach do? “Please go ahead before me. Two pieces of candy are plenty for me. Please, take your turn on the swing; I’ve had enough time. Please make sure everyone else has received a piece of cake before you give me one.” Noach was a baal chessed (master of acts of kindness). Chessed saved him from destruction. Stealing, pushing, grabbing, and taking only lead to bad things. Chessed is the cure for those bad things.

Parasha Questions:

- Did spiritual beings enter the ark? (Rashi 6:19)
- What was the “measure for measure” punishment of the floodwaters? (Rashi 6:11)
- At what time of the day did Noach and his family enter the ark? (7:13 and Rashi)
- How high did the water rise over the mountaintops? (7:20 and Rashi)