

Kindert Torah

Parashas Noach

בס"ד

It Takes Time

The world had gone too far. Corruption and immorality were everywhere, even among the animals. There was no remedy. The world had to be destroyed. Therefore, Hashem brought the flood. Twelve months from beginning to end. The only surviving life on earth was inside a tiny ark, where Noach and his family worked tirelessly taking care of all of the animals. At the end of the flood, they went out and repopulated the earth.

Twelve months are a long time. Hashem could have destroyed the earth in a moment. Why did He take twelve months, thereby making Noach and his sons work so hard for so long? Rav Meir Simcha of Dvinsk, zt"l in his sefer Meshech Chochma explains as follows. The animals had developed a bad nature, loving evil and corruption. They too needed re-education. Twelve months in the ark, living in close quarters was the solution. They received only limited amounts of food from the hand of man. This taught them humility and morality. Only after receiving a good education were they able to go out of the ark, and live properly in the world. This re-education does not happen overnight. It takes time.

Kinderlach . . .
Imagine someone who wanted to work on the midda (character trait) of anger. He said to himself, "Starting now, I will never get angry again." He passed his first test when someone stepped on his toe. "I am so patient!" he thought. "The next day, his sister spilled milk on his pants. He felt his anger rising, but he controlled himself. "I really have this anger problem solved." The third day, someone pushed in front of him while he was waiting patiently in line. That was too much. He lost his temper and reacted angrily. "I'll never solve this anger problem," he thought. "I may as well give up." The person had wonderful intentions. He did not realize that improving middos takes time. Two steps forward, one step back. As the verse states, "The tsaddik falls seven times and gets up" (Mishlei 24:16). Be patient, kinderlach, and give yourselves time. That is the lesson that we learn from Noach.

The Long Journey

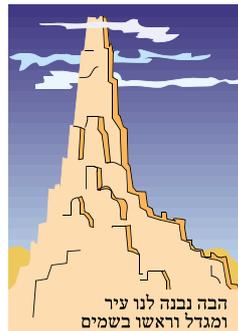
"I'm tired. This trip is very wearing."
"Me too. How far do we have to go?"
"Some distance. We're not there yet, but b'ezras Hashem we will be arriving soon."
"Good. This journey has been so long that I have lost track of time. I had no idea that the trip would take so long."
"Actually, it all depends on how fast you travel. Some people are able to make the

trip relatively quickly. For others, it takes more time.
"How long have we been traveling?"
"Several years now."
"Amazing. I hope we arrive soon."

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"And you shall know this day and take it into your heart" (from the Aleinu prayer). This passage presents a question. If you know something, then it is already in your memory. We often say, "I know it by heart." Why does the prayer separate the two - "And you shall know this day AND take it into your heart?" What do you add by taking it into your heart?

The answer is that there is a big difference between knowing something and taking it to heart. Knowing refers to intellectual knowledge - acquiring information, understanding it, and remembering it. That is important, because without the facts, a person will not know what to do. However, that is only the beginning of the story. One must take the knowledge to heart. He must do what he knows is right. He must think the right thoughts, and feel the proper emotions. This is much more challenging than just acquiring the knowledge. For example, one may know that it is proper to take time when saying berachos of praise and gratitude to Hashem. However, he has a bad habit of saying berachos as quickly as possible. It may take him a while to internalize his knowledge, take it to heart, and change his ways. This is the journey - from the head to the heart. It can be a quick excursion, or a long journey, depending upon many factors. The main thing is - keep traveling! Never lose sight of the destination. Keep asking The Almighty for *Siyata Di'Shmaya* (Heavenly Assistance). B'ezras Hashem you will get there.



Kinderlach . . .
We learned about the middah of a humble heart. The knowledge is in our minds. The next step is to begin the journey from the mind to the heart. It is only a few centimeters in distance. However, traveling those few centimeters can take years. Kinderlach, begin the journey and keep going. Do not get discouraged. It may take time. Some parts of the trip may be rougher than others. Do not give up in the middle! With Hashem's help, you will get there. You will know the Torah, take it to heart, and live by it. May we all reach the destination.

Tower One

"W"hendit zabltag falhani padut."

"What is he saying?" the man thought. "I asked him to help me and he's talking gibberish."
"Snezwatch vengussi ballini kendooz."
"I wanted him to bring me a brick," the other man thought. "He brought mortar instead. What a chutzpah! I'll show him that he can't get away with this. Actions speak louder than words!"
"Snoputi grezwactk flegomut!"
"Bingtoli fengilli pabilink!"

And so, a fight ensued. One man picked up his hammer, and struck the other on the head, killing him.

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"The whole earth was of one language and one unified plan." (Bereshis 11:1). What was their unified plan? To build a tower to Heaven, and make war with Hashem. He thwarted their plan and punished them by changing their one language to seventy languages. They could not understand each other. Instead of unity, they had strife, and their plan failed.

Why did Hashem choose to confuse them? There are many ways to punish people for their sins. He could have made an earthquake or a hurricane to knock down the tower, or a plague to kill the people. Why confuse their language? Rav Chaim Friedlander zt"l explains that the punishment fit the crime. The "Dor Haflaga" was unified in thought and purpose. This gave them a tremendous power to accomplish. As long as they had this unity, their strength stood, and no earthly power could truly stop them. Therefore, Hashem attacked the source of the might. He destroyed their communication. They became confused. This led to *machlokes* (strife). Without unity, their strength was sapped, and their plan failed. They were spread over the earth, never to unite again.

Kinderlach . . .
Just a few weeks ago, we prayed together on Yom Kippur asking Hashem, "May they all become one band, to do Your Will with a complete heart." Now we see the strength on "one band". It can create a tower to Heaven. Let us all work on unity in our own homes, neighborhoods, and schools. Do you have lots of Shabbos preparations, and little time? No problem, We'll work together, and get it all done. Do we need to build a Beit Knesset? A Beit Sefer? A Yeshiva? With unity among the members, the building will be done in no time. Helping those in need, learning Torah, and praying, are all done much better with unified hearts. Let's all unite, kinderlach, and build our own spiritual towers of mitzvos and "maasim tovim" (good deeds).