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A Symbol of Unity, Harmony and Inclusivity

Tiferes Shlomo on the Parsha

נח איש צדיק תמים היה בדורתו

Noach was a righteous man, perfect in his generation

The Pasuk describes Noach as being a Tzaddik, perfect “in his generation”. Some of the sages interpret this in a negative light, saying that “if he lived in the generation of Avraham, he would not have been considered as anything significant.”

The way of true Tzaddikim is that even when they have attained spiritual greatness in their service of Hashem, they remain completely humble and do not see themselves as being anything significant or special in their own eyes.

This path of humility was paved by Avraham and he bequeathed it to his descendants.

When Davening to spare the city of Sodom, even though he had the privilege and standing to be able to speak to Hashem “face to face”, he declared that “I am but dust and ashes”.

This is the inner meaning of the blessing that Avraham’s descendants would be like the stars of the heavens and the sand of the sea. Even though they would attain lofty heights like the stars of the heavens, in their own eyes, they would see themselves like the sand of the sea.

The Pasuk praises Noach as being a genuine Tzaddik and perfect man. His only shortcoming was that he was aware of his spiritual greatness and felt proud about it.

This is what our sages are referring to in their interpretation of the verse. Had Noach lived in the generation of Avraham, he would have learned from his ways of humility. In doing so, he would still have been a Tzaddik, but “he would not have been considered as anything significant” in his own eyes.

The rainbow is a symbol of unity, harmony and inclusivity. I’m not talking about how the rainbow has been adopted and used as a symbol within broader society, but rather how it is as a symbol within Torah thought and Jewish values.

In Kabbalistic thought, the different colours of the rainbow represent the Seven Divine Sefiros, the G-dly energies through which Hashem created the world and through which He channels His light, Hashpaah and ongoing influence and control within the world.

Within our souls, which are made in G-d’s image, these are our different emotional drives. They are; Chesed - kindness and love, Gevurah - discipline and strictness, Tiferes - mercy, Netzach - ambition, Hod - submission, Yesod - connectivity or attachment and Malchus - humility.

Whilst we each possess all of these traits, in each person, some of the traits or characteristics will be more dominant than others. Which characteristic is more dominant within us, shapes our personality, creates the lens through which we view and interpret things within the world around us and drives our behaviours.

Chassidus illustrates this with the difference between the Mishnaic sages Hillel and Shammai. Both of them studied under the same teachers, receiving the same teachings and mentoring. Yet their approaches to Halacha and the way that they interacted with others, were completely different.

Hillel’s soul was rooted in the attribute of Chesed. This is why his rulings are almost always lenient and permissive, seeking to allow things wherever possible. He was also renowned for his warmth and kindness in his dealings with others.

In contrast, Shammai’s soul was rooted in the attribute of Gevurah. As such, he took a stricter, more restrictive approach in his Halachic conclusions. He is also portrayed as being more judgmental in his interactions with others.

The uniting of the different colours in the rainbow, represents what is referred to as *Hiskallelus* - integration or inclusivity. This describes a state where the Sefiros do not stand separate and isolated from one another, but rather coexist, unite and operate together, sharing their influence with one another.

The rainbow teaches us that even though we have different personalities, giving rise to our different outlooks, opinions, approaches and behaviours, this should not be a cause for separation and divisiveness. But more than just coexist, we have to unite and get along, sharing of ourselves with others and being open to receive their influence as well.

The rainbow is a symbol of love and unity - Ahavas Yisrael and Achdus Yisrael. Just as the diversity of colour is what gives the rainbow its beauty, so it is with the diversity as a people.

The ultimate sin of the generation of the Flood, as clearly stated in the Pasuk, was that the earth had become filled with robbery (גנבה). Even though they were also guilty of idolatry and immorality, their fate was only sealed on account of their robbery. Their punishment came not because of their violations between man and G-d but because of their sins between man and his fellow man.

After the Flood, Hashem designated the rainbow as a sign that He would never again destroy the world by flood. Should the sins of man arise before Him and He wish to bring destruction upon the world, the rainbow would cause Him to hold back.

From the Flood we see that what “bothers” Hashem most, is when there is a lack of unity and harmony; when we mistreat and disrespect one another.

Perhaps the sign of the rainbow is meant to be a sign for us as well; a sign of the unity that we must constantly be working towards, that despite our differences, we are expected to love one another, respect one another and always stand together.

The Zohar teaches that the rainbow is a Messianic symbol, stating that one should not look for the footsteps of Moshiach until they see a brilliant rainbow shining in the sky.

Our sages teach that the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash and subsequent Exile came on account of Sinas Chinam - baseless hatred. Our redemption and return, will come when we have corrected this sin, by achieving baseless love.

Perhaps this is the message of the Zohar. We cannot anticipate the arrival of Moshiach, until we attain this unity - and not just any rainbow, but a brilliant rainbow, a brilliant shining display of the highest degree of Ahavas Yisrael and Achdus.

The Weekly Halacha Analysis

Preparing our Homes for Shabbos

Rabbi Yonason Johnson

To dedicate an edition of Hamaor or to commission a Halachic Analysis topic please email rabbijohnson@gmail.com

Two accompanying angels

As young children we are taught that two angels escort each person home from Shul on Friday evening, one good and one bad. If the house is prepared for Shabbos with candles lit, the table set and beds arranged, the good angel gives a blessing that it should be the same next Shabbos. The bad angel is forced to answer amen. If the house is not prepared for Shabbos, the bad angel wishes that it should be the same next week and the good angel is forced to answer amen.

These are the angels that we greet when saying the Piyut Shalom Aleichem Malachei Hashareis.

The source of this account is a teaching of Rabbi Yossi bar Yehuda found in the Gemara¹.

The Maharsha explains that every Mitzvah in the Torah is associated with two angels. The angel on the right side (the side associated with holiness) is a good angel. This angel serves as a defender in the merit of the Mitzvah when it is fulfilled. The angel on the left side serves as a prosecuting angel if a person fails to keep that Mitzvah.

The Perisha² explains that there is no such thing as a bad angel. Rather, the two angels reflect the two Koichos within a person; the intellectual dimension which is connected to spiritual form (Tzurah) and the dimension of desires which is connected to physical substance of the body (Chomer). This is the terminology used in works of Chakira. Chaza"l refer to these two dimensions as the Yetzer Tov and Yetzer Hora.

When a person resolves to serve Hashem and remembers Shabbos which is equated to all of the Mitzvos of the Torah, the Yetzer Hora begins starts to become accustomed to appreciating holiness. The Yetzer Tov becomes strengthened and prevails over the Yetzer Hora which becomes weaker and weaker, ultimately answering amen and conceding.

Preparing and cleaning for Shabbos

This Aggadic teaching is applied as Halacha in Shulchan Aruch³ which rules that a person should prepare their table, spread their beds and prepare all of the things in their house so that they are ready when they come home from Shul.

The Alter Rebbe⁴ explains that this is part of

Kovod Shabbos (honouring Shabbos).

The beds mentioned in the Gemara and Shulchan Aruch refers to beds on which one sits i.e. couches⁵. Other Acharonim explain that it includes beds for sleeping as well⁶.

The Magen Avraham⁷ writes that one should clean the cobwebs from the home before Shabbos. This includes cleaning the home in general as well⁸.

Keeping the floor clean

The Magen Avraham quotes Darkei Moshe that on Shabbos one should be careful not to throw food or crumbs etc. off of the table and onto the floor. Doing this drives away the good angel who does not appreciate the dirtied house.

Even though this is praiseworthy, we are not careful in this regard and rely on sweeping the floor after the evening meal in a manner which is permitted on Shabbos⁹. If one will not sweep the floor after the meal, care should be taken to avoid things falling onto the floor while eating.

The same applies during and after the Shabbos day meal¹⁰.

(This Darkei Moshe suggests that the two angels remain for the duration of Shabbos. Tosefos Shabbos questions that this does not fit with what we say in Shalom Aleichem, 'Tzeischem Leshalom', may you leave in peace, which suggests that the angels leave straight away¹¹.

Machatzis Hashekel¹² explains that the blessing Tzeischem Leshalom does not mean that the angels leave then, but rather it is a blessing that when they leave (at the end of Shabbos) they should do so in peace.)

Tablecloths

The Gemara and Shulchan Aruch write that the table should be prepared before Shabbos. The Poskim explain that this refers to them being covered with a tablecloth.

The Ram"o adds that the table should remain covered for the entire Shabbos until after Havdalah¹³. This is the Minhag Ashkenaz as recorded in the Tur¹⁴.

It is customary to use white tablecloths. Where it is customary to eat with tablecloths during the week as well, one should have special tablecloths for Shabbos.

Two tablecloths

Magen Avraham¹⁵ records that Maharsha"l would

cover his table with two cloths so that when he would remove the top cloth to shake out the crumbs, the table would remain covered.

Based on this, pious individuals take care that the table should not be uncovered even momentarily on Shabbos. The Chozeh of Lublin would say that an uncovered table on Shabbos is (forbidden) like the uncovered hair of a married woman.

Which tables?

The tables in the room where one will be eating should be covered. Biur Halacha¹⁶ quotes Elya Rabbah that it is preferable to cover the tables in other rooms as well. It is also customary to cover the tables in Shul and in the Beis Midrash.

Setting the table before Shabbos

In addition to laying the tablecloth before Shabbos, which is required min hadin, it is preferable to also have the covered Challahs on the table from before Shabbos¹⁷. This also has Halachic bearing when the candles are lit on the table. The presence of the Challahs prevents the table from becoming Muktzah itself as a Bosis - a base to the Muktzah candles.

It is also praiseworthy to have the table fully set with wine, cutlery, plates, cups etc. from before Shabbos¹⁸. It is also customary to place flowers and fragrant plants on the table¹⁹.

Shabbos is referred to as a Shabbos Hamalka, the Shabbos queen. We should prepare for and welcome Shabbos into our homes the same way we would for honoured guests.

1. Shabbos 119b
2. OC 262
3. OC 262:1
4. OC 282:1
5. Magen Avraham 289:1 writes that it refers to couches as does the Alter Rebbe.
6. Bach as quoted in Pri Megadim Eshel Avraham explains that Mitos which is written in plural, refers to beds for sitting and for sleeping.
7. Beginning of OC 289, based on Reishis Chochma
8. Shulchan Aruch Harav 262:2
9. The Halachos of sweeping on Shabbos will be
10. Mishna Berura 262:1
11. See Shaarei Teshuvah that because of this question, one Gadol wanted to remove the final stanza Tzeischem Leshalom.
12. OC 282:1 ד"ה וכתב
13. Mishna Berura 262:4
14. OC 289
15. ibid
16. 282 יסדר ד"ה
17. As implied by Tosfos Pesachim 100b
18. Siddur Yaavetz, Aruch Hashulchan 262:1
19. Siddur Yaavetz



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