

The Valuable Lesson Learned from Noach's Ark Noach Found Favor in G-d's Eyes in the Merit of Torah-study It Saves Us from Drowning in the Waters of the Mabul

In this week's parsha, parshas Noach, it is fitting that we examine the devastation HKB"H brought upon the generation of the flood. This devastation was precipitated by their extreme corruption. They transgressed the boundaries that HKB"H had established for mankind with the seven basic mitzvos He gave to Adam HaRishon. As a consequence, HKB"H punished them with the mabul; the waters of the flood eradicated all existing life from the face of the planet.

This punishment exemplifies the principle of "midah k'neged midah"—"tit for tat" or "measure for measure." At the time of creation, HKB"H separated the lower waters in the depths of the earth from the upper waters above the firmament, with established boundaries between them. For the sake of the mabul, these boundaries were eliminated; the two bodies of water united to punish the corrupt generation that had disregarded and violated the boundaries of kedushah. The waters of the abyss burst forth to submerge the entire surface of the earth; while the heavens opened up to flood the earth with its waters.

Even the tallest mountains were submerged beneath the combined forces of the upper and lower waters, as it is written (Bereishis 7, 19): **"והמים גברו מאד מאד על הארץ ויכסו כל ההרים—the waters overwhelmed the earth tremendously; they covered all of the tall mountains beneath all of the heavens.** All the inhabitants of earth—man and animal alike—were drowned by the powerful waters. The Torah chronicles the event as follows (ibid. 23): **"וימח את כל היקום אשר על פני האדמה מאדם עד בהמה עד רמש ועד עוף השמים וימחו—and He wiped out all existence on the face of the earth, from man to animals to creeping things and to the bird of the heavens; and they**

were blotted out from the earth. Only Noach survived and those with him in the ark.

All of Planet Earth Was Purified by Submersion in a Mikveh

After scrutinizing the details recorded in these pesukim, I would like to propose a noble idea to our esteemed audience. HKB"H purposely submerged the entire earth in water, so that it would undergo the process of purification by means of a mikveh. Through submersion in a mikveh, the earth would be cleansed of the widespread contamination that resulted from the perverse behavior of its inhabitants.

I have based this idea on the explanation of the Sefer HaChinuch (Mitzvah 175) regarding the mechanism of purification in a mikveh. Here is what he writes:

"ובטעם המים שיטהרו כל טמא אחשוב על צד הפשט, כי הענין הוא כדי שיראה האדם את עצמו אחר הטבילה כאלו נברא באותה שעה, כמו שהיה העולם כולו מים טרם היות בו אדם, וכמו שכתוב (בראשית א-ב) ורוח אלקים מרחפת על פני המים, ויתן אל לבו בדמיון כי כמו שנתחדש בגופו יחדש גם כן פעולותיו לטוב, ויכשיר מעשיו וידקדק בדרכי השם ברוך הוא.

ועל כן אמרו חכמים שלא תכשר הטהרה במים שבכלי, רק במים חיים או מכוונסים שהן על קרקע ולא בכלי מכל מקום, כדי לתת אל לבו במחשבה כאלו העולם כולו מים, והוא נתחדש בעלותו מהן כמו שאמרו. ואם יהיו המים בכלי או אפילו עברו על כלי, לא יתכן הענין הזה שאמרו אל מחשבת הטובל, כי יש גבול אל כל אשר הוא בכלי שהוא מעשה ידי אדם, ועל כן לא יחשוב בטבלו, כאלו כל העולם מים כאשר בתחילה ושהוא נתחדש לשעתו."

After immersion in a mikveh, a person should view himself as returning to the beginning of creation and that he has been created anew at that moment. He should imagine that just as

his physical body is being refreshed and renewed, so, too, are his actions; they will now be ready to act in accordance with the will of the Almighty. Before the creation of man, the entire world was full of water; the water was not yet covered by earth. As we have learned, tumah stems from the activity of the yetzer hara. The yetzer strengthens and enhances the influence of the earthly elements of the body—the “ah’far”—so that they may cover and submerge the divine spark located within man’s being—the element of “mayim.”

Consequently, to purify man of his tumah, he must immerse in water. Thus, he arouses the source of creation—as if revisiting the first moments of creation--when the entire world was still inundated with water. In other words, submersion in the purifying waters of a mikveh is a symbolic act. Man should picture in his mind that he is returning to the beginning of creation, before HKB”H separated the waters below the firmament from the waters above the firmament. At that point, the world was still chaos and void, with the spirit of G-d floating above the surface of the water that covered and enveloped the entire earth (Bereishis 1, 2): **”וְהָאָרֶץ הִיְתֵה תֵהוּ וּבְהוּ...וְרוּחַ אֱלֹקִים מְרַחֶפֶת עַל פְּנֵי הַמַּיִם”**.

These same conditions prevailed at the time of the mabul. The lower waters and the upper waters united to cover the entire planet. The world returned to its original state at the beginning of creation. All of earth’s corrupt inhabitants were drowned, and the earth itself was cleansed of its filth and contamination by means of submersion in a mikveh consisting of the upper and lower waters.

Wonderful source from the “Torah Ohr”

I was filled with happiness to find support for this Idea in the holy writing of the great luminary the author of the “Tanya” in “Torah Ohr” (beginning of this week’s parsha) and these are the contents of his words with added flavors:

The “many waters” of the flood are called (Yeshayahu 54:9): **”מַי נֹחַ”** - “the Waters of Noah,” not merely because Noah was the protagonist of the Flood narrative, but because of the connotation of the phrase. The Hebrew word for Noah, *Noach*, denotes the satisfying type of rest one experiences after ceasing one’s labor, and is cognate to the Hebrew word *Shabbos*, which means the same thing. In fact, the *Targum Onkelos* renders the phrase (Breishis 2:2), “and He [G-d] rested on the seventh day” as *v’nach b’yoma sh’viaa*, using the Aramaic equivalent

of *noach* for the Hebrew root *shabbos*. In a spiritual sense, the Waters of Noah brought about this type of satisfaction.

The reason for this will be understood in light of the fact that the Great Flood was not merely an instrument for the destruction of the world’s sinners. If that were all G-d meant to do, why go to such extremes? Almighty G-d could have obliterated them without a trace in the proverbial blink of an eye – even without a worldwide flood. The explanation is that, although G-d did wish to annihilate the sinners who had overrun the earth, he chose floodwaters, in particular, as the means to this end for another reason:

Water possesses the ability to spiritually purify. The corruption of that generation had defiled the very earth, as we are told (Breishis 6:13): “for the earth is filled with violence,” and that, therefore, G-d would destroy part of the earth itself (see Rashi and other commentaries). While eliminating those who had defiled it, G-d also wished to purify the world. He therefore chose water, which has the ability to accomplish this, as it is written (Yechezkel 36:25) “And I [G-d] will sprinkle upon you pure waters and you will be purified; from all your defilements and from all your idols I will purify you.” In this sense, the floodwaters were similar to a spiritually purifying *mikvah*. Thus the expression “Waters of Noah” with its connotation of spiritual satisfaction refers, not to destruction, but to this purification and renewal of the earth.

The great Rabbis of Chabbad add: According to Jewish law, a proper *mikvah* must contain 40 *seah* (a unit of volume) of water, and this is the symbolic reason why the rains of the flood fell for 40 days and 40 nights.

The Decree Also Applied to Noah

Now let us continue dwelling into the depth of how Noah was saved from drowning in the mabul. The Torah teaches us: **“Only Noah survived and those with him in the ark (‘teivah’).**” Noah’s “teivah” floated atop the water that covered and purified the entire surface of the earth. It measured three-hundred cubits in length, fifty cubits in width and thirty cubits in height. HKB”H commanded Noah, the perfect tzaddik, to start building the ark one-hundred and twenty years before the mabul. All of the remaining, surviving inhabitants of earth entered the “teivah”—including Noah, his entire household and animals of all species. HKB”H saved them from the devastation of the mabul in order to start a new world with them.

We would like to focus on a fascinating passage in the Gemara (Sanhedrin 108a): “תנא דבי רבי ישמעאל, אף על נח נחתך גזר: דין, אלא שמצא חן בעיני ה', שנאמר (בראשית 1-2) ניהמתי כי עשיתם, ונח מצא חן בעיני ה'—apparently, the decree to punish and destroy the world with the mabul was issued against Noach as well; however, he was spared, since he found favor in the eyes of Hashem, as it states (Bereishis 6, 7): **“I have reconsidered My having made them; but Noach found favor in the eyes of Hashem.”**”

The commentaries find this perplexing, seeing as the Torah (Bereishis 6, 9) attests to the fact that Noach was **“a righteous man, perfect in his generations.”** So, why was he supposed to be included in this cataclysmic decree? Furthermore, if the decree was issued against Noach, as well, due to some inherent character flaw, how did he find favor in the eyes of Hashem? Why was he spared? After all, the Torah explicitly describes Hashem as a G-d (Devarim 10, 17): **“אשר לא ישא פנים ולא יקה שוחד”—Who does not show favor and does not take a bribe.**

We find a definitive answer to these two questions in the commentary of the Ohr HaChaim hakadosh (end of parshas Bereishis). While it is true that Noach was a perfect tzaddik; nevertheless, his righteousness was not enough to offset HKB”H’s regret, so to speak, at having created man; hence, His decision to destroy the world. Notwithstanding, Noach managed to fulfill several mitzvos, which are known to help a person find favor in the eyes of Hashem. This is what saved Noach and his family from the fate of the rest of creation and allowed them the opportunity to build the world anew. Here are the words of the Ohr HaChaim hakadosh: **“כי הגם שהיה צדיק לא תצילנו צדקתו, אלא בחינת החן שהשיג מאמצעות בחינת המצוות. כי יש לך לדעת, כי יש מצוות שתועלתם היא להמשיך חן על האדם, או בבחינת ג' או ד' מצוות ידועות”**—he states that there are three or four well-known mitzvos whose purpose is to bestow favor upon a person.

In this light, we can interpret the text as follows (Bereishis 6, 5): **“וירא ה' כי רבה רעת האדם בארץ וכל יצר מחשבת לבו רק רע כל היום, וינחם ה' כי עשה את האדם בארץ ויתעצב אל לבו, ויאמר ה' אמחה את האדם אשר בראתי מעל פני האדמה מאדם עד בהמה עד רמש ועד עוף השמים כי ניהמתי כי עשיתם—Hashem saw that man’s wickedness on earth was great, and that every inclination of his heart was only for evil all day long. And Hashem reconsidered having made man on earth, and it saddened His heart. And Hashem said, “I will eliminate man whom I created, from upon the face of the earth—from man to animal, to creeping things, and to birds of the sky; for I have reconsidered My having made them.”** HKB”H intended to destroy the entire world that

He had created; the reason He did not do so: **“ונח מצא חן בעיני ה'”**. Noach performed certain mitzvos that caused him to find favor in the eyes of Hashem. In that merit, HKB”H saved him from the mabul, and built a new world from him.

Now, the Ohr HaChaim hakadosh does not identify for us the mitzvos that are especially beneficial for finding favor in the eyes of Hashem. Hence, we should attempt to identify the specific mitzvah that Noach observed that allowed him to find favor in the eyes of Hashem and saved him from the mabul. Last year, we introduced sources that claimed that Noach found favor in the merit of observing Shabbas; however, the Ohr HaChaim hakadosh writes that there are several mitzvos that achieve this goal. Therefore, I would like to present a novel idea to our esteemed audience concerning one of the mitzvos Noach performed in order to find favor in Hashem’s eyes.

Noach Was Condemned to Serve Twelve Months of Confinement in the Teivah

We will begin by explaining why Noach was also included in the decree of the mabul. The Chasam Sofer (Noach 22b) explains at great length why HKB”H specifically saved Noach from the mabul by confining him in the “teivah.” After all, the Almighty could have saved him in numerous other ways that would not have required being penned up for an entire year in an ark with wild beasts and animals. In truth, this confinement was Noach’s punishment for not having rebuked the people of his generation. Here is an excerpt from his amazing insight:

“לפי עניות דעתי הרבה ריווח והצללה לפני הקב”ה, ולא היה צורך להסגיר נח בתוך התיבה... על כן נראה לי כי נח ובניו וכל אשר אתו, היו בעונש מה שהיו אסורים בבית הכלא הזה בתיבה ונצטערו בה בלי ספק, והיה משפטם שנה תמימה ואחר כך הורשו לצאת לא קודם.”

In my humble opinion, it is clear that the sojourn in the “teivah” represented a punishment for Noach and his family. It was certainly a form of incarceration, and they undoubtedly suffered. The duration of the imposed punishment was one complete year. Thereafter, they were allowed to exit the “teivah,” but not before serving the entire sentence. According to what we have learned, we can suggest that Noach’s punishment — the one-year incarceration in the “teivah” — was meant to atone for the fact that he failed to pray on behalf of his generation. According to the Chasam Sofer, this is consistent with the following teaching (Shabbas 33b): **“משפט רשעים בגיהנם שנים עשר בחודש”—the sentence of the wicked in Gehinom is twelve months.** Seeing as HKB”H is

exacting in His dealings with tzaddikim, Noah was incarcerated in the “teivah” for precisely twelve months.

This coincides with the words of the Midrash Tanchuma (Noach 2): “אמרו רבותינו, י”ב חודש בתיבה לא ראה שינה לא ביום ולא בלילה, שהיה עוסק וזן הבריות שעמו”—according to our Rabbis, during the twelve months in the “teivah,” Noah did not sleep by day or by night, because he was occupied taking care of and feeding the animals that were with him.

The Chasam Sofer proceeds to explain why Noah deserved this punishment:

“על שהצטרק עם אנשי דורו הרשעים, והיינו דאמר ליה הקב”ה (ז-א), בא אל התיבה, מאי טעמא לעונש הזה עליך, ואמר כי אותך ראית צדיק לפני בדור הזה, רצונו לומר שהיה מצטרק עם אנשי הדור הזה... ובאמת מה שהיה צדיק עם אנשי דורו, לא הדריכו ה' כי לא היה רצונו בכך, אלא היה עושה כן בטבעו הרך, ולא התחזק נגד עוברי רצונו.”

In other words, rather than rebuking his neighbors and acting sternly with them, he wanted to be accepted by them and was congenial towards them—even though they were thoroughly wicked. He did this of his own volition, because he had a weak and placid disposition. This was not what Hashem instructed him or wanted him to do. He should have objected to those who were transgressing the will of Hashem. (Translator’s note: The Chasam Sofer is playing on the word “צדיק”. Rather than stating that Noah was a tzaddik, the Torah is implying that he attempted to get along with the people around him.)

It is worth adding the following teaching from the Zohar hakadosh (Noach 67b). Although Noah is described as a tzaddik, he was flawed; he failed to pray on behalf of his generation, to save them from extermination. He should have prayed for them as Moshe prayed on behalf of Yisrael in the aftermath of the “cheit haeigel” (Shemot 32, 32): “ועתה אם תשא חטאתם, ואם אין מחני נא מספרך — **and now, if You would but bear their sin; but if not, erase me from Your book that You have written.** Therefore, the “mabul” is named after Noah, as we find in the passuk (Yeshayah 54, 9): “כי מי נח זאת לי אשר נשבעתי מעבור מי נח עוד על הארץ” — **for like the waters of Noah shall this be to Me, as I swore that the waters of Noah would never again pass over the earth.**

Let us add a little spice to the Chasam Sofer’s explanation. Noah’s flaw was that he failed to rebuke the people of his generation and pray on their behalf. In point of fact, this was a rather minor flaw akin to a person who commits murder accidentally. For, had he indeed rebuked them and prayed for

them, they would not have died. Therefore, just as a person who kills inadvertently is sentenced to galut; so, too, Noah was subjected to a form of galut. HKB”H confined him to the “teivah” for an entire year with animals and wild beasts.

In the Merit of Studying Torah Day and Night Noach Found Favor in the Eyes of G-d

Following this line of reasoning, let us proceed to explain how Noah managed to find favor in G-d’s eyes. The passuk states (Bereishis 7, 1): “ויאמר ה' לנח בוא אתה וכל ביתך אל התיבה כי אותך ראיתי צדיק לפני בדור הזה, מכל הבהמה הטהורה תקח לך שבעה שבעה איש ואשתו ומן הצדיק לפני בדור הזה, מכל הבהמה אשר לא טהורה הוא שנים איש ואשתו”—Then Hashem said to Noah, “Come to the ‘teivah,’ you and your entire household, because it is you that I have seen to be righteous before Me in this generation. Of every pure animal take unto you seven by seven, a male with its mate, and of the animal that is not pure, two, a male with its mate. Here Rashi comments: “Pure”—that which is destined to be pure for Yisrael; thus we have learned that Noah learned Torah. In other words, if he didn’t learn Torah, he would not have known the signs of a kosher animal and the signs of a non-kosher animal.

This explains very nicely how Noah was able to remain righteous in the generation of the mabul—a generation replete with wicked people. For, we have learned in the Gemara (Kiddushin 30b): “בראתי יצר הרע ובראתי לו תורה תכלין, ואם אתם עוסקים ואתם נמסרים בידו”—HKB”H said to Yisrael: “I have created the yetzer hara, and I have created Torah as its antidote. If you engage in Torah-study, you will not be delivered into its hand.” Seeing as Noah studied Torah, he was not controlled by the yetzer hara.

Furthermore, we find another tremendous chiddush in the teachings of our blessed sages. Noah was able to remain righteous in three corrupt generations—the generation of Enosh, the generation of the mabul and the generation of the dispersion—solely in the merit of his Torah-study. Thus, he exemplified the words of the passuk (Tehillim 1, 2): “כי אם בתורת ה' חפצו ובתורתו יהגה וילילה”—rather, his desire is in the Torah of Hashem; and he meditates in His Torah day and night. Apropos this passuk, we find the following elucidation in the Midrash (B.R. 26, 1):

“כתיב (תהלים א-א) אשרי האיש אשר לא הלך בעצת רשעים, אשרי האיש זה נח... אשר לא הלך בעצת רשעים, זה דור אנוש, ובדרך חטאים לא עמד, זה דור המבול, ובמושב לצים לא ישב, זה דור הפלגה. כי אם בתורת ה' חפצו, אלו

שבע מצות שנצטווה, ובתורתו יהגה יומם ולילה, שהגה דבר מתוך דבר, אמר מה טעם ריבה הקב"ה בטוהרים יותר מטמאים, לא שהוא רוצה להקריב מהן קרבן, מיד (בראשית ח-כ) ויקח מכל הבהמה הטהורה וגו' [שהקריב קרבנות כשיצא מן התיבה]. והיה כעץ שתול על פלגי מים, ששתלו הקב"ה בתיבה."

The first passuk in Tehillim praises the man who refuses to follow the ways and advice of the wicked. The Midrash identifies Noah as such a person; it identifies **"the wicked"** as the generation of Enosh, **"the sinners"** as the generation of the mabul and **"the mockers"** as the generation of the dispersion. Instead, Noah's desire was **"the Torah of Hashem"**—the seven mitzvos he was commanded to observe and uphold. **"He meditates in His Torah day and night"**—he deduced that HKB"H instructed him to take more kosher animals into the "teivah" with him, because He was supposed to offer korbanot when he exited the "teivah."

This enlightens us as to how Noah found favor in the eyes of Hashem. Regarding the virtues of the Torah, the passuk states explicitly (Mishlei 5, 19): **"אילת האהבים ויעלת חן"**—**a beloved hind inspiring favor**. The Gemara provides us with the following elucidation (Eiruvim 54b): **"מאי דכתיב אילת האהבים—what is the meaning of the description: 'A beloved hind inspiring favor'? She (the Torah) imparts favor upon those who study her**. Thus we learn that a person who studies Torah finds favor in the eyes of Hashem. This then is the interpretation of the Gemara: **אף על נח**—**Noach was condemned along with the rest of that generation due to his failure to rebuke them and pray on their behalf; "however, he found favor in the eyes of Hashem"**—by engaging in Torah-study day and night. This explains the allusion presented by the Ba'al HaTurim regarding the passuk (Bereishis 6, 9): **"את האלקים התהלך נח סופי תיבות חכם"**—the last letters of the three words "האלקים התהלך נח" form the word **"חכם"**. In other words, Noah possessed the wisdom of the Torah; in this merit, he was spared.

Let us elaborate on this notion based on the premise that Noah had the status of an inadvertent killer, whose punishment is galut. Now, we have learned in the Gemara (Makkos 10a):

"אמר רבי יוחנן, מניין לדברי תורה שהן קולטין שנאמר (דברים ד-מג) את רבבי יוחנן, כצד במדבר וגו' וכתיב בתריה (שם מד) וזאת התורה—**Rabbi Yochanan said: Where do we find that words of Torah provide refuge (like an "ir miklat"—a city of refuge—that provides sanctuary for an inadvertent killer)? For it says (regarding the cities of**

refuge): **"Betzer in the wilderness . . ." and following that it is written: "This is the Torah."** Subsequently, the Gemara explains: **"In what way do they provide refuge? From the Malach HaMaves; like that which occurred with Rav Chisda, who was sitting and studying in the house of study, and the agent of the Malach HaMaves could not approach him, because his mouth never paused from study. It went and sat on a cedar in the house of study; the cedar split, Rav Chisda paused, and it was able to prevail over him."**

In similar fashion, Noah found favor in the eyes of G-d and his life was spared. In the merit of studying Torah, which acts like an "ir miklat"—a sanctuary for inadvertent killers—he was saved.

In Every Generation We Must Enter Noah's Ark to Find Sanctuary from the Stormy Waters

After searching for support for this notion, I was ultimately rewarded. The Sefas Emes (Noach 5632) presents in the name of his elder, the esteemed author of the Chiddushei HaRim, zy"a, an important principle. All the pesukim in the Torah are eternal; they are relevant in each and every generation and apply to every individual Jew. Therefore, the fact that HKB"H saved Noah from the waters of the mabul by placing him in a "teivah," is meant to teach us a vital lesson. He explains, in his own inimitable way, that **"Noach's teivah"** alludes to the words of the holy Torah. (Translator's note: The Hebrew word "teivah" means ark and also means word.) So, in the merit of Torah-study, a person is saved from the devastating waters of the mabul that surround us in Olam HaZeh—namely the ever-present calamities and misfortunes that befall mankind in every generation.

In the sefer Likutei HaRim (Noach), he brings additional support for this idea in the name of the Chiddushei HaRim from the Midrash related to a passuk in the passage of tzitzis (Bamidbar 15, 40):

"למען תזכרו ועשיתם את כל מצוותי. משל לאחד מושלך לתוך המים, הושיט הקברניט את החבל ואמר לו, תפוש חבל זה בידך ואל תניחאו, שאם תניחאו אין לך חיים, אף כך אמר לו הקב"ה לישראל, כל זמן שאתם מדובקין במצוות (דברים ד-ד) ואתם הדבקים בה' אלקיכם חיים כולכם היום, וכן הוא אומר (משלי ד-יג) החזק במוסר אל תרף נצרה כי היא חייך."

"So that you will remember and perform all of My mitzvos." It is analogous to a person who was thrown into the water; the captain extended a rope and said to him, **"Grab the rope in your hand and don't let go of it; for if you**

let go of it, you will not live.” Thus did HKB”H say to Yisrael, “As long as you abide by the mitzvos, ‘and you who cling to Hashem, your G-d, you are all alive today:” Similarly, He says, “Hold fast to the discipline of Torah, do not let go. Guard it, for it is your life.”

The Sefas Emes (Shelach 5631) writes in the name of the author of the Chiddushei HaRim, his elder, zy”a, that the rope in the analogy alludes to the holy Torah. He cites the passuk (Mishlei 3, 18): **“It is a tree of life for those who hold it tightly.”** In other words, the Torah provides life to those who recognize that the main source of life is the Torah alone. Similarly, he writes in Kehillat Yaakov that the rope is the holy Torah; it is a rope with which to bind and constrain the yetzer hara.

This provides us with a glimpse of understanding into what the Shela hakadosh (Yoma) writes in the name of the Sefer Chareidim. He teaches us an incredible, fundamental principle that every Jew should reflect upon day and night: **“This world is a stormy sea. A person should imagine that he is swimming; he must lift his head upwards toward his Maker, and take care that the turbulent waters do not enter his mouth; he must protect himself from the waves that come to hinder him; otherwise, he will be responsible for his own demise.**

It appears that we can explain his meaning based on a statement from David HaMelech, Yisrael’s sweet psalmist, in Shir HaMa’alos (Tehillim 124, 3): **“לולי ה' שהיה לנו בקום עלינו אדם, אזי עבר אזי חיים בלעונו בחרות אפם בנו, אזי המים שטפונו נחלה עבר על נפשנו, אזי עבר -- על נפשנו המים הזידונים”** **Had Hashem not been with us when men rose up against us, then they would have swallowed us alive, when their anger flared up against us. Then the waters would have inundated us; the current would have surged across our soul. Then they would have surged across our soul—the treacherous waters.** He teaches us that all of the ordeals we experience in Olam HaZeh represent **“מים”** **“מים--the treacherous waters that a Jew is liable to drown in if he does not recognize the key to his survival.**

With this understanding, we can better comprehend Rabeinu Bachaye’s explanation (Introduction to parshas Masei) as to why we refer to the day-to-day operation of Olam HaZeh as **“הטבע”**--“mother nature.” The term **“הטבע”** comes from the root of **“טבע”**, meaning to drown. This aims to teach us that if a person is not careful, chas v’shalom, he is liable to drown and sink in the natural order of Olam HaZeh. Here is what he writes: **“כי לכך נקרא הטבע בשם הזה, כי יטבע האדם ביוון מצולתו וירד לבאר שחת אם לא יזהר בו, כמי שבא במצולות ים ולא ידע לשיט וטובע”** **—for this reason, nature is referred to by this name; because a person will drown in the mire of his abyss and will descend to the depths of despair if he is not wary of it—like a person who falls into the depths of the sea and doesn’t know how to swim and drowns.**

Based on what we have learned from the Chareidim and the Shela hakadosh, the solution is to **“raise one’s head upwards toward his Maker.”** We can suggest that this implies engaging in Torah-study. By exercising the intellect in one’s brain to comprehend and fathom what he has learned, he is in effect raising his head above the treacherous waters of Olam HaZeh. This guarantees that he will not drown in the waters of “mother nature.” This is on the condition, however, that **“he takes care that the turbulent waters do not enter his mouth.”** In other words, he must take care lest matters of Olam HaZeh—such as eating forbidden foods and speaking “lashon hara”—corrupt the kedushah of his mouth.

Thus, we can provide a very nice interpretation of David HaMelech’s words (Tehillim 32, 6): **“על זאת יתפלל כל חסיד אליך לעת”** **“מצוא רק לשטף מים רבים אליו לא יגיעו”** **—for this every devout person should pray to You when misfortune befalls him—that the abundant, flood waters do not reach him.** Let us refer to an elucidation in the Gemara (A.Z. 2b): **“ואין זאת אלא תורה, שנאמר (דברים) : ‘זאת’ refers only to Torah, as it states: “And ‘זאת’ (this) is the Torah that Moshe placed . . .”** This then is the message conveyed by David HaMelech: **“על”** **“זאת יתפלל כל חסיד אליך לעת מצוא”**—a person should pray that he will be able to successfully cling to and abide by the Torah—which is referred to as **“זאת”**—whenever he is in trouble. Then he explains why: **“רק לשטף מים רבים אליו לא יגיעו”**—so that he doesn’t drown in the flood waters of our existence, in the world of nature--**“הטבע”**.

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