

Parashat Noach

The Power of Mesirut Nefesh – Self Sacrifice

"Noach was 500 years old when he had Shem, Cham and Yefet" (5:32)

It says in the midrash. "Says Rav Yudin, what's the reason that all the generations had children at 100 but Noach had children at 500? Says Hashem, if his children were evil they would have drowned in the flood and that is bad for this tzaddik. If they were tzaddikim, Noach would have to make many teyvot (for each of their families). So Hashem didn't give him children until he was 500 so that his children would be worthy enough to be saved from the flood.

One may ask a question however. Is it really a toil for a father to work for his children? Every father ultimately works for his kids. There is no better happiness to work in order to save ones kids! In a span of 120 years, Noach had more than enough time to make teyvot for himself and his children. He would have hired workers and made it happen. Just because Hashem didn't want Noach to toil, he made this tzaddik suffer for 500 years being ridiculed by all the evil people around him? It doesn't make sense.

In order to understand this we need to analyze some other parts of Chazal. There's a story in Gemara Yomah about Nikanor who went to bring the doors of the Beot Hamildash from Alexandria, Egypt. When he was on the ship to get to Erez Yisrael, there was a storm that was going to sink the ship. So true people on the ship made him throw one of the doors off the ship, but the waters still didn't calm down. So they wanted to throw the other door in the Ocean as well but Nikanor wouldn't let them, he said that if they want to throw the door in the ocean then they throw him in as well. All of a sudden, the storm stopped. Once they reached the port, the other door rose from under the ship and came out. All the gates in the Beit Hamikdasg were made out of gold except the gate of Nikanor because miracles happened with those doors. The mesirut nefesh that nikanor had gave strength to the gates that a miracle should happen with them and they accompanied the boat.

We see that Har Hamoriah became holy because of akeidah was performed on it. But by Har Sinai, even though Hashem made his presence on it, it lost it's holiness right after the Torah was given. But Hat Hamoriah is holy forever! The reason is that since the Avraham Avinu gave his whole heart in the act of the akeidah and he had mesirut nefesh to do G-D'S will, the mountain became holy forever.

Chazal say that when the Beit Hamdash was existing, the altar was the atonement for man. But now that the Beit Hamdash is not existing, a persons table atones for ones sins by giving food to guests and poor people. Even though the host is the one who does all the toiling, since because of the table, acts of chessed and charity are done, the table becomes like an altar and this is the power it recieves since it served it's owner to help him do cheessed and charity.

Noach was commanded to built a teyva. the flood was going to wipe out the whole world, no specific spot wpuid be saved. So Noach was supposed to make a "binyan shel hatzalah" an ark that had the power of salvation embedded in it. And this is the reason why for 120 years Noach was toiling and building. The mesirut nefesh he invested entered the walls of the ark, transforming it into a fortress of salvation. (This power was not just for Noach and his family but for generations there was this power of salvation for the Jews. The Yallut on Parashat Beshalach says that the tree they hung Haman on in the times of Purim came from the ark of Noach. This one tree stemming from Noach's mesirut nefesh saved the entire Klal Yisrael!

All of this power invested in the teyva would only work of Noach built it himself because only Noah who found favor in G-d's eyes could bring such a salvation for the Arians there was no one else that could build such a teyva. That's why it says that if Noach's children were righteous, HE would have to do all the toiling to build their arks because only HE had the power to do it. But Hashem knew that it was difficult for Noach to build more than ark himself.

Now we see that if an inanimate object could receive such a power of mesirut nefesh, all the more so a human being who was brought up with mesirut nefesh and love, all the more so he has special powers inside of him, powers of mesirut nefesh he/she could give to others.

That's what it means when it says that Moshe Rabbeinu had 10 names but Hashem only called him by the name that Batya gave him - Moshe. That's the reward of a Gomel cheessed, that from all the names that Moshe had, Hashem only chooses the one which Batya gives to him. Every name that Moshe had described and expressed the righteous parts of Moshe. Each one emphasized only one point and that'd why he needed 10 names so it could cover all his points. But the name Moshe, which was given because of "ki min hamayim meshisuhu" what does this have to do with Moshe at all? It doesn't express any of his traits, all it says is what Batyah did!

The power of mesirut nefesh that Batyah had that she ignored her father's decree and saved a Jewish baby. This power of gemilut cheessed and mesirut nefesh that she did was invested and embedded into the character of Moshe Rabbeinu and that it why he merited to be the savior of klal yisrael. Because with mesirut nefesh he looked after Lavan's sheep, and with the same mesirut nefesh he saved Bnei Yisrael whether he was standing in front of Pharaoh or he was in heaven speaking with Hashem, all 40 years of desert life was totally just to help and save Bnei Yisrael. So much so, that when Hashem wanted to destroy klal yisrael he wanted to be erased from the Torah as well!

This was all embedded and developed inside of Moshe because of the mesirut nefesh that Batyah had when she pulled him out of the water. So the name that Moshe had actually shows the greatness of Moshe more than all 10 other names. And this is the reward of gomlei chessed, that the chessed and mesirut nefesh that they do creates fruits and the one that the cheessed is being done to (Moshe) is called by that cheessed his entire life.