



PARSHAS NOACH – THE POWER OF TEFILLA – BY AVI FRIEDWALD

”כי מי נח זאת לי אשר נשבעתי מעבר מי נח עוד על הארץ” (ישעי נד ט)

“For like the water of Noach this shall be to me: Just as I swore that the waters of Noach will never again pass over the Earth ...”

Chazal (Zohar 1:67b) explain that the waters of the Flood are referred to by Hashem as ‘Waters of Noach’, because Noach should have davened for his generation to be saved.

There are a couple of questions that one can ask on this Chazal:

1. If the generation was indeed an evil generation and was full of murderers, Idol worshippers and thieves – what was Noach expected to do? Ask Hashem to forgive these people and ignore what they did?
2. When Hashem advises Noach of His plan to bring the flood – He says “... The end of all flesh has come before Me, for the earth is filled with robbery for them; and behold I am about to destroy them from the Earth” (Ber. 6:13). Noach may well have understood this as an irrevocable heavenly decree to destroy the world. So what could he have done? Should he have davened against the will of Hashem?

Rav Avigdor HaLevi Nevenzahl (one of the Rabbonim in the Old City) explains this, by first asking another question:

We know that when a person kills by accident (R”L), they are exiled to the *Orei Miklot* until the Cohen Godol dies. As a result, the Cohen Godol’s mother would provide the residents of the *Orei Miklot* with clothes and food, to dissuade them from davening for her son’s death (Mishna Makkos 2:6). In addition, the Mishna explains that if the Cohen Godol dies before a person who killed by accident is sentenced to exile by the Beis Din and a new Cohen Godol comes in, prior to his sentencing – then the accidental murderer needs to wait until this second Cohen Godol dies before leaving the *Ir Miklot*. The Gemora (Makkos 11b) explains that the second Cohen Godol should have davened that the perpetrator is acquitted and since he didn’t, the murderer would be entitled to daven for his early death.

Again, this seems completely incomprehensible – why should the second Cohen Godol have davened for everyone who is guilty to be acquitted. Surely he should be davening that the judges sentence people correctly – in which case the murderer needs to go to exile, and not be acquitted?

Rav Nevenzahl explains that actually, there is no such thing as a completely guilty person. Chazal (Gem. Sanhedrin 17a) tell us that if the entire Beis Din agree that a person is deserving of the death penalty, he is acquitted – as it must be possible to find some *zechus* for him.

There are two well known stories brought down in Chazal where a heavenly voice (*Bas Kol*) advised the *Chachomim* of the time as to the decision in heaven. The first is around the *machlokes* between Beis Shamai and Beis Hillel – where the *Bas Kol* announced “Both of these opinions are correct (lit. דברי א-לוקים חיים), however, the Halacha is like Beis Hillel” (Gem. Eiruvim 13b). The second is around a *machlokes* between Rabbi Eliezer and the *Chachomim* (Gem. Bava Metzia 59b) where a *Bas Kol* announced that the Halacha is always like Rabbi Eliezer. However, whereas in the first case – we do *Pasken* like this *Bas Kol*, in the second, we do not.

The question is why? If we do listen to *Bas Kol’s* we should *pasken* like it in both cases.

Rav Nevenzahl explains this with another Chazal (Zohar 1:47b) where we are told that there are 70 explanations for the Torah and each generation has a special link to one of these explanations. He suggests that this is why we can follow the first *Bas Kol*, but not the second one. The first *Bas Kol* stated that both Beis Shamai and Beis Hillel are true opinions, however in our generation we are linked to Beis Hillel. In the time of Moshiach, this will change and we will then follow Beis Shamai. The second *Bas Kol* however stated that the Halacha is always in accordance with Rabbi Eliezer and discounted the other opinions. This, Chazal could not accept, as both opinions are true, even if one is the correct one to follow for that generation. In addition, we have a rule that we always follow the majority opinion – and hence, cannot follow Rabbi Eliezer in this instance.

With this understanding, we can answer our three questions: It is true that in a generation where accidental murderers were sentenced to exile by *Beis Din*, they were indeed obligated to go to exile based on the factors visible to the *Beis Din* at that time. So, this is the appropriate *Psak* for that generation. However, the Cohen Godol should have davened that his generation be elevated to such a level that accidental murderers no longer need to be exiled, due to *Beis Din* being able to see merits that they wouldn’t have seen in weaker generations. Hence, he is partially liable for the exiling of this person. Similarly, Noach could have davened for his generation to be elevated to a higher level, whereby the heavenly *Psak Din* would have been different, because again – the merits of the generation would have come to the fore and the generation would therefore have come out meritorious. As he didn’t do this, he was considered partially responsible.

May all our Tefillos have this *Koach* to uplift our generation and therefore cause the heavenly court to look at Klal Yisrael with a positive light and interpret all of the prophesies around our *Geulah* in the best way possible!