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THE ARK OF PRAYER

What does building a "Teivah" (תיבה) mean?

This week in Parashat Noach, we read about Noach, who is described as "a righteous man, perfect in his generation" (Bereishit 6:9). Hashem commands Noach to "make for yourself a Teivah/Ark" (Bereishit 6:14) because the world around him had become corrupt and was destined to be destroyed.

In Hebrew, the word for Ark, "Teivah" (תיבה), can also mean "word." The Baal Shem Tov teaches that when Hashem tells Noach to "enter the Teivah," we can understand this on another level to mean "enter the words"-the words of tefillah and prayer.

Noach's rescue plan was not simply to enter the physical Teivah and sit and wait for the storm to pass. He was encouraged to enter the "words," to call out to Him, and to recognise that Hashem is in control. This is a powerful message: when we face challenges, Hashem does not want us to feel alone or hopeless. Rather, difficult moments are an opportunity to turn towards Hashem, ask Him for help, and strengthen our connection with Him.

But this idea applies just as much when things are going well. When we experience happiness, success, and blessing, we should also turn to Hashem to say thank you. The good and difficult moments in our lives can both be opportunities to connect with Hashem. We may not always understand why things happen, but we can choose how we respond.

Sometimes, our "Teivah" is not a physical place of safety. It is our tefillah and the words that allow us to step away from the chaos around us, reconnect with Hashem, and remember that we are never truly alone.

Shabbat Shalom!

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FROM ARK TO ACTION

The Torah introduces Noach by saying: "נֹחַ אִישׁ צַדִּיק תָּמִים הָיָה בְּדֹרֹתָיו אֶת הָאֱלֹקִים הִתְהַלֶּךְ נֹחַ"—"Noach was a righteous man, perfect in his generations; Noach walked with God."

Chazal famously contrast Noach with Avraham Avinu. Regarding Noach, the Torah says, "את האלקים התהלך נח"-"Noach walked with Hashem." When it came to Avraham, however, Hashem says, "התהלך לפני והיה תמים"-"Walk before Me and be perfect."

The Shem MiShmuel explains that these represent two different types of avodah.

Noach's greatness was one of preservation. He lived in a world that was spiritually collapsing, and his task was to prevent the corruption of the outside world from

penetrating him. This is what the תיבה, the Ark, represents: the creation of a protected spiritual environment in which kedushah can be preserved despite the destruction taking place outside.

This itself was an enormous accomplishment. When everyone and everything surrounding a person has become corrupt, simply remaining an איש צדיק תמים is heroic.

Avraham Avinu, however, represents the next level. He does not merely protect himself from the world; he goes out and changes the world. Noach needs, so to speak, to walk with Hashem in order not to be swept away. Avraham is able to walk לפני ה׳ and move forward, bringing Hashem's presence into places where it had not previously been recognised.

This gives added meaning to Hashem's command to Noach after the Mabul that he should "צֵא מִן הַתֵּבָה"-"Leave the Ark." The Teivah was essential, but one cannot remain inside the Teivah forever.

There are periods in life when our avodah must be "בא אל התיבה"-"Enter the Teivah." We must protect our homes, our children, our values, and our kedushah from a culture capable of overwhelming them.

But ultimately, Hashem also commands, "צא מן התיבה"-"Leave the Teivah." The kedushah that was protected inside must now be brought outside. Judaism is not only about surviving the world; it is about elevating the world.

Sometimes serving Hashem means "Enter the Teivah," and sometimes it means "Leave the Teivah." The wisdom is knowing when to protect our kedushah and when to bring that kedushah out into the world. ■

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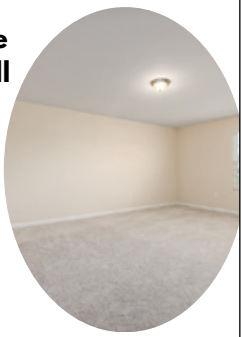
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