



DEAR TORAH TIDBITS FAMILY

RABBI AVI BERMAN

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I am entering Shabbat Noach with very mixed feelings. For the last thirteen years, despite Shabbat Noach being the first Shabbat back in yeshiva and ulpana, my sons and daughters have always chosen to spend it with our family instead. And it's not because we were staying home for a family Shabbat, as enjoyable as those are. It is because Shabbat Noach is, every year with few exceptions, the staff Shabbaton for the OU Israel Teen Centers. Staff from all over the country come together in Givat Washington with rabbis and other inspirational educators for a Shabbat that I have written about many times in these pages, a Shabbat that literally gives strength to the entire team to do the incredible work that they do for the rest of the year.

Let's be honest. Working with teens at risk in Nahariya, Kiryat Shmona, Akko,

Sderot, Dimona, and so many other cities is not easy. Living in those neighborhoods is not easy either. Our staff work day in and day out with teens in challenging circumstances, and they give their entire hearts to them. To have a Shabbaton to celebrate our staff and recognize their efforts, to give them the strength, the tools, the Torah, and the inspiration, was so, so important to us.

And it really is an incredible Shabbaton. Staff from our Pearl and Harold Jacobs Zula Outreach Center and from our OU Israel Teen Centers across the country all came together for one inspirational Shabbat. Rav Shmuel Eliyahu, the Rav of Tzfat, joins us, together with numerous other rabbis, including Rav Yoni Lavi. Every now and then, we are also joined by politicians who came to see the wonderful work OU Israel does with teens at risk across the country. Staff stay up late Friday night to listen to Harel Hetzroni, who started the Zula 25 years ago and continues to work with our teens at risk. Through Rav Shmuel Eliyahu, Chaim Pelzner, and Oren Asulin, incredible leaders for our programs, were able to expose our staff to amazing stories taking place across the country, and empower them for another year.

One thing changed this year: I will not be attending this year's staff Shabbaton, nor will my children. It was one decision of many as a result of the cutbacks we have had to make at OU Israel due to the drop in the dollar and the downturn in donations. Any extraneous costs, even a few extra

May the Torah learned
from this issue of Torah Tidbits
be in loving memory of our dear friend

Yehuda Leib Berren ז"ל
יהודה לייב בן אהרון יצחק ז"ל
on his sixth Yahrzeit

Aliyah L'kever
Monday, October 19th - ח' מרחשון

12:30pm

Har HaMenuchot
Gush תט, Section ט, Row ג

Zoom: 81541104297 Password: 261019

תנ"צ"ב

plates of food at a Shabbaton, have to be weighed very carefully.

It leaves me with very mixed emotions. On the one hand, I understand that we have to be fiscally responsible and make cuts where necessary. On the other hand, I have endless love and admiration for our staff, who work day in and day out for these teens across the country. I am personally going to miss this Shabbat with them, and the chance to tell them firsthand how much I appreciate them, and how much the Jewish people appreciate all the work they do for the country, for the Jewish people, and for teens who unfortunately come from homes where they are not receiving that inspiration.

This brings me to this week's parsha. Many commentaries dwell on the question of what it was about Noach that led HaKadosh Baruch Hu to save him from the rest of his generation. Why was he more deserving than others? The Torah describes Noach as an "ish tzaddik tamim hayah bedorotav" - "a righteous man, wholehearted in his generations" (Bereshit 6:9). What is this description of tzaddik (righteous), and what is the concept of tamim (wholehearted)? What was it about Noach that enabled him to overcome the challenges of his generation?

I saw in one of the writings of Rav Mordechai Eliyahu zt"l that he speaks about two different elements that Noach needed in order to overcome what was happening in his generation. The first relates to



the fact that Noach lived in a generation where people were corrupt, where there was stealing and immoral behavior of every kind, and yet he continued to behave in a way that showed everyone he had a moral compass. Most people are influenced morally by those around them. It takes a tremendous amount of morals and ethics to stand up strong and say, "No. That is wrong, and I'm not doing it." But that was the first of Noach's special qualities.

The second element we see in Noach is in conversation with the narrative that precedes the Flood, the Tower of Babel story. Noach had to contend with a generation that was willing to challenge HaKadosh Baruch Hu. It was a generation that said, "Let's build a tower that will be taller than God, where we can even fight against God." Noach, on the other hand, understood that

there is a God who runs the world. When God commanded him to build a boat, he did so for 120 years. He knew that this is what he had to do. After the Flood, when HaKadosh Baruch Hu gives Noach the basic commands known as the Noahide laws, he takes them on and we believe that any gentile who accepts them and keeps them will be part of Olam Haba.

So, Rav Eliyahu zt"l explained, these two incredible compasses made Noach the right candidate to save from the worldwide Flood. But where did Noach get this from? What enabled him to stand strong in his actions and beliefs in these two very challenging times? The answer can be found when we look at the words of our Sages. Noach's grandfather was Metushelach, and his father was Lemech, great leaders of their generations. Rashi (on Bereshit 7:4) quotes the gemara (Sanhedrin 108b) that HaKadosh Baruch Hu postponed the Flood until after Metushelach had passed away. He was so righteous that HaKadosh Baruch Hu spared him the pain of seeing the destruction of the world.

This contains such an important lesson.

Clearly, Noach's amazing attributes were acquired by having the right role models - Metushelach and Lemech. When grandparents, parents, aunts, uncles, and friends model the right behavior and beliefs, it has a great influence on the next generation. This is why Noach stood out among his entire generation to be saved.

Our staff attending the Shabbaton this Shabbat have chosen for many years to be guides for the next generation. They understand that the more positive role models and positive people we surround the next generation with, the more we will, Baruch Hashem, raise a younger generation that is willing to fight for the country, for their people, for their Torah, for their values, and for what is truly important in life.

When I look at the messages of this week's parsha, it makes me miss our incredible staff even more this Shabbat. I hope that, be'ezrat Hashem, we will be able to raise the funds necessary to hold this Shabbat again next year, and to bring back the things we unfortunately had to cancel this year because of budget cuts. With your help, and the help of Hashem, we will continue inspiring the next generation for many more years to come.

Wishing you all an uplifting and inspiring Shabbat,



Rabbi Avi Berman
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from this Torah Tidbits
be in loving memory of and לע"נ

ר' חיים בן זרח ז"ל
Chaim Greenberg ז"ל
נלב"ע ב' חשוון התשכ"ו

יהודית בת הרב יהושע דב ז"ל
Julia Fink-Greenberg ז"ל
נלב"ע ב' ט' חשוון התשס"ו

ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

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