



Rise Above Nature

Tsedaka! Tsedaka! Please give tsedaka. I'm collecting for a needy family. Please give tsedaka."

The man reached into his pocket, pulled out a coin, and handed it to the collector. He smiled at the collector and said, "Thank you for bringing me this mitzvah." He turned back toward his young chavrusa (study partner) and continued learning.

"May I ask you something?"

"Go right ahead."

"I have only been at the Yeshiva a few days. Yet, I have seen so many tsedaka collectors coming around. It is so hard for me to give money to each of them. I don't feel that I am a generous person. Yet, you do it so effortlessly; with a smile and a thank you! What is your secret?"

The older chavrusa smiled, thought for a moment, and began to speak.

"I am also not a generous person by nature. For many years, I found it very difficult to give tsedaka. I had my reasons to keep my money in my pocket. I only gave when I was forced, and then I only gave a little."

"What happened?"

"I began learning *mussar* (Torah character development). I learned 'Ahavas Chessed', a sefer by the Chofetz Chaim zt"l. He goes into great detail about the importance and the great reward of the mitzvah of tsedaka. Slowly, I began to take it to heart. I began to give more often and more generously. It was difficult, but I kept at it. I prayed to Hashem for *Siyata Dishmaya* (Heavenly Assistance). He helped, and sure enough, my nature changed. I now love giving tsedaka. I look forward to seeing these collectors. I thank them for bringing me this great mitzvah."

"That is a wonderful story."

Truthfully, the Netziv zt"l speak about it in Parashas Noach."

"Where?"

"The very first verse states, 'Noach walked with G-d'. The Netziv explains that Noach was not a compassionate person by nature. Rather, he acted kindly towards people solely because that was Hashem's Will. He wanted to 'walk with G-d' and fulfill His Will all of the time; even when it went against his own nature. Therefore, Noach changed his nature and learned to

be kind to people."

"That is truly amazing."

"I will tell you something even more amazing. Noach rose above his nature; therefore, Hashem lifted him above natural laws. While a mighty flood was destroying the entire world, Noach experienced a miraculous rescue in a tiny ark. Noach did not let his bad nature hurt him, therefore, Hashem did not allow natural laws to harm Noach."

Kinderlach . . .

Which mitzvah is difficult for you? Which one goes against your nature? Making peace? Listening to authority? Concentrating during learning? Sharing and giving? Being neat and orderly? Overcoming laziness? We each have our own tests. Our goal is to rise above our nature to do the will of Hashem. Rise to the occasion, kinderlach. Hashem will then give you special protection.



Tower One

Whendit zabl原因 falhani padut."

"What is he saying?" the man thought. "I asked him to help me and he's talking gibberish."

"Snezwatch vengussi ballini kendooz."

"I wanted him to bring me a brick," the other man thought. "He brought mortar instead. What a chutzpah! I'll show him that he can't get away with this. Actions speak louder than words!"

"Snoput! grezwack! flegomut!"

"Bingtoli fengillli pabilink!"

And so, a fight ensued. One man picked up his hammer, and struck the other on the head, killing him.

The whole earth was of one language and one unified plan." (Bereshis 11:1). What was their unified plan? To build a tower to Heaven, and make war with Hashem. He thwarted their plan and punished them by changing their one language to seventy languages. They could not understand each other. Instead of unity, they had strife, and their plan failed.

Why did Hashem choose to confuse them? There are many ways to punish people for their sins. He could have made an earthquake or a hurricane to knock down the tower, or a plague to kill the people. Why confuse their language? Rav Chaim Friedlander zt"l explains that the punishment fit the crime. The "Dor Haflaga" was unified in thought and purpose. This gave them a tremendous power to accomplish. As long as they had this unity, their strength stood, and no earthly power could truly stop them. Therefore, Hashem attacked the source of the might. He destroyed their communication. They became confused. This led to *machlokes* (strife). Without unity, their strength was sapped, and their plan failed. They were spread over the earth, never to unite again.

Kinderlach . . .

Just a few weeks ago, we prayed together on Yom Kippur asking Hashem, "May they all become one band, to do Your Will with a complete heart." Now we see the strength on "one band". It can create a tower to Heaven. Let us all work on unity in our own

homes, neighborhoods, and schools. Do you have lots of Shabbos preparations, and little time? No problem, We'll work together, and get it all done. Do we need to build a Beit Kinesset? A Beit Sefer? A Yeshiva? With unity among the members, the building will be done in no time. Helping those in need, learning Torah, and praying, are all done much better with unified hearts. Let's all unite, kinderlach, and build our own spiritual towers of mitzvos and "maasim tovim" (good deeds).

Parasha Questions

- How many years did Noach build the teiva? (Rashi 6:14)
- Did Noach enter the teiva secretly? (7:13 and Rashi)
- How high did the flood waters reach? (7:20 and Rashi)
- Was there day and night during the flood? (8:22)
- Was Adam HaRishon permitted to eat meat? (Rashi 9:3)
- Nimrod was a hunter. What did he hunt? (Rashi 10:9)
- Which language did the whole world speak? (Rashi 11:1)
- Name the descendants of Shem down to Avram. (11:10-26)