

GREAT FOR SHARING
AT THE SHABBOS TABLE!

PARSHAS
NOACH

בְּשִׁיטְחָא

BY RABBI NETANEL NAAMAT
RABBI NAFTALI ZIONS
RABBI AVICHAI BENSOUSSAN



PEACE FOR THE WICKED

Towards the end of *Parshas Noach*¹ we find the story of *Migdal Bavel* — the 'Tower of Bavel'. The peoples of the world united together with evil designs, intending to wage war against Hashem Himself. Their unified effort would not fail, or so they thought. However, Hashem confused their language and confounded their plans. Disgraced, destroyed and disorganized, they returned to their cities, and continued on with their lives.

Rashi,² quoting the Medrash³ questions the discrepancy between the two events in *Parshas Noach*. In the beginning of the *Parshah*, we find that the whole of humanity, save Noach and his family, were doomed to perish in The Flood. Their crime? Larceny — the world was a den of thieves and miscreants.

Yet, when it came to *Migdal Bavel*, we find that there were many survivors. And their crime? Outright rebellion — total and complete disobedience. Why was Noach's generation wiped out, while the generation of *Migdal Bavel* was not?

The Medrash explains that the people of Noach's time were at each other's throats, always fighting with one another. The people of *Migdal Bavel*, however, were united in love and respect, therefore, they were not destroyed.

R' Aharon Kotler⁴ poses the obvious question — it is true they were united, but they were united in *aveiros*! Their unity was a bastion of evil, not a beacon of light; if anything, their unity should cause a more severe and deeper punishment.

R' Aharon explains that there were two aspects to their evil deed. One was the evil itself, and the second was the peace and solidarity surrounding the deed. There is no doubt, he writes, they paid dearly for their crimes, both in this world and the next. However, peace and solidarity act as a shield against Heavenly retribution. And although their harmony was indeed for an evil cause, the harmony itself was enough to shield them from further destruction.

If this is true when the wicked unite, one can only try to imagine the impact when people put aside their differences and work together to further *avodas Hashem*.

1 *Bereishis* 11:1-9

2 *Bereishis* 11:9 s.v. ומשם הפיצם

3 *Bereishis Rabbah* 38:6

4 *Mishnas Reb Aharon* on *Bereishis* 11:1

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Mind the Gap - Taking the Next Step

Achudus, shalom, peace and harmony... All wonderful sentiments, but it can be so difficult when it comes down to reality. How do I get along with the fellow who is always on my nerves, is too short-sighted to see my point of view, or simply rude and impolite. I just don't like the fellow, what can I do?

There are two steps¹ one can take to help feel a kinship to another. The first is to recognize that we all have different personality types, that is simply the way Hashem made us. Although we may view behavior as malicious or ill-intended, oftentimes the root of the behavior stems from a different perspective, even if it has now blossomed into something offensive.

Once we can recognize that a person's actions may not be as petty as we assumed, the next step is to appreciate that essentially, we are all working towards similar goals. Happiness in our lives, and a relationship with Hashem are just some of the many common objectives we share. By finding common ground we will be able to smooth out the rough edges of our relationships.

1 *Pri Tzadik, Roshei Chadoshim, Sivan 5*

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When one has Yiras Shomayim, he loves performing mitzvos as well as he can. Thus, he studies Halacha and Poskim with great energy and drive, to achieve maximum clarity. After such a labor of love, he naturally remembers each Halacha with great accuracy and recall. - Vilna Gaon zt"l, Even Shleima 8:8

COPS AND NEIGHBORS

Living the *kollel* lifestyle had its perks, no doubt, but it also came with some challenges. Such was life, thought Rabbi Sivan,* as he, his wife, and three children crammed themselves into a small apartment on the second floor of their building. Though small, the space itself was not the issue, nor was the difficulty in dragging a stroller up and down the stairs multiple times a day. The challenge was their neighbors below.

Despite doing all they could to minimize the noise, their neighbours complained. Sometimes the neighbours banged on the ceiling. Sometimes they banged on the door. And sometimes they called the management. But day in and day out, it seemed like the Sivan's neighbours existed solely to create arguments out of nothing, happy to embroil themselves in controversy.

Despite this, Rabbi Moshe Sivan and his wife Dalia always greeted the neighbors with a smile, sometimes a wave, and a hearty, "Good morning!" It simply wasn't worth getting into a fight — for what purpose and to what end?

However, things came to a head one morning when Rabbi Sivan was home alone with the baby. Hearing a knock at the door, he left his son in his bouncy seat and opened the door, stunned to find two police officers standing there. His shock turned to amusement when he noticed that they were surprised as well to find an obviously Orthodox Jewish man standing before them.

"Can I help you?"

"Yes — we had a complaint from your neighbor downstairs, seems that..." the officer's voice trailed for a moment as he checked his notes, "the entire apartment was shaking?"

"It was? That's odd. I don't... Oh! I know what it is." Rabbi Sivan walked over to his son's bouncy seat and turned off the vibration feature. "That should do it, officers."

The two policemen smiled at what was obviously a ridiculous complaint. They thanked Rabbi Sivan, and left.

The next day, Moshe got up and went to his car, as he always did. As he neared his vehicle, he spotted his neighbour from downstairs. "Good morning!" Moshe called out, as he gave a cheery wave. "Have a nice day!"

"Ever since that moment," Moshe Sivan told his listeners, "they never said a word again. Not a complaint, not a bang, and they didn't call the police. I can't say we became fast friends, but they certainly realized that they could not make me an enemy."

**Based on a true story, names have been changed.*

DID YOU KNOW?

- When one changes their feelings of animosity to that of friendship, Hashem switches from judgment to mercy.¹
- If *Klal Yisrael* follows Hashem's Torah, not only will no other nation attack *Klal Yisrael*, but there will also be peace within the nation itself.²

¹ *Alshich* on *Vayikrah* 19:18

² *Ohr HaChaim* on *Vayikrah* 26:6

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