



פרשת נח

WITH

R' AVIGDOR MILLER ZT"L

BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

Lessons Of The Flood

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Part I. Learn Lessons

The Robots Rattle

I'd like to begin with a *possuk* that we say every morning in the *davenen*, *זְכֹרוּ נִפְלְאוֹתָיו אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה* – *Remember the wonders that He made* (Tehillim 105:5). Everybody who prays, if they come to *shul* on time, says that. After all, it's in the *siddur* so you can't skip it. But even if you say it, the question is do you know what you're saying? We are in the habit of rattling off *pesukim* and we don't think about what they're telling us.

Too many Jewish congregations today are made up of *frum* robots. Early in the morning fifty flesh and blood robots walk into the synagogue, and at 6:30, on cue, they all begin shaking and rattling off words. A half hour later – in the better places it's forty five minutes – they're finished. They fulfilled their Shacharis obligation for the day. What they said, nobody knows. What *daas* they acquired from the *davenen* today, nobody knows.

But since we're not saying it merely for the words, just to be *yotzei*, it makes sense that we should take the time to study the words we say. It's important because we're being told now about a new *mitzvah*, a command that most of us were unaware of: *זְכֹרוּ נִפְלְאוֹתָיו*, *Remember His wonders*, *אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה*, *that He did*.

Purposeful Wonders

Now right away, as soon as you think about this *possuk* just a little bit, you ask yourself a question: Why does it say "Remember the wonders *אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה*, *that He did*?" If it's His wonders, certainly He did it. Why are the words "that He did" added? It seems superfluous.

And the answer is that it's telling us *why* He made the wonders. He did it for the purpose that we should remember them. *זְכֹרוּ נִפְלְאוֹתָיו*, *remember His wonders*, *אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה*, *that He made for that purpose*, so that we should remember it. That's why He made them – the remembering is a perfection on its own. The more a person fulfills *זְכֹרוּ נִפְלְאוֹתָיו*, the more his

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mind is transformed and the more perfect he becomes.

Now, included in this command to remember His wonders are many things. The truth is if we would be serious about fulfilling this *possuk*, we'd be busy the rest of our lives with just this one mitzvah – there are enough *niflaos* to keep us thinking non-stop. That's why it's a good idea to get into the habit of fulfilling this *possuk*; to spend some time thinking about His wonders and the lessons that each one is trying to teach us.

A World of Word

If you're going to try it out, why not start with the first and greatest of all His miracles, the creation of this world *me'ayin*, from nothing. **בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא** **לְאֵלֶיךָ** – *In the beginning Hashem created* means that there was nothing – no space, no air, no molecules – *ayin* means that there was absolutely nothing and it was only the command of Hashem, the will of Hashem, that brought everything into existence. It means that all of creation is hanging on His word and nothing else. His word alone is what causes the world to exist.

Now, that's such a stupendous idea that it's capable of changing your entire way of looking at this world. It means that whatever you see in this world is the will of Hashem and nothing else. You don't see matter. You see something that is merely a form, a form of the words of Hashem when He said, **יְהִי** – “*Let there be.*” Mr. Shamoula and Mr. Shelby and you and you and I, all of us that are now facing each other, what do we see? We don't see people. We see only the *dvar Hashem*.

Not only us sitting here; all matter, all the phenomena of nature, are nothing but demonstrations of Hakodosh Boruch Hu. And so as you're walking in the street you're remembering this command, **זָכְרוּ נִפְלְאוֹתָיו**, and you begin to think that every stone, every tree, every sidewalk, is nothing but a sign, a demonstration of a Creator. It's only His will that you're seeing. There's no matter; matter is imagination. The only concrete and true thing that exists is Hakodosh Boruch Hu alone,

everything else is nothing but vapories, so to speak, from His mind.

The One Mann Man

But that's only the first of His wonders. There's so much more and **זָכְרוּ נִפְלְאוֹתָיו** means that you should remember all of them. Did you ever take a few minutes – a few minutes on the clock – to think about the *mann*? Suppose you're walking in the street toward the subway or to the *bais haknesses*; wherever you're walking. So you say, “From here to the end of the block I'm going to think of the *mann* that came down in the *midbar*.” You hear such a crazy thing? A man is walking in Brooklyn, from East 7th Street to East 8th street and the whole block, every step, he's thinking of the *mann*. Nobody else is thinking about the *mann*. One Jew in Brooklyn, that's you, is fulfilling this great commandment, **זָכְרוּ נִפְלְאוֹתָיו**.

Now, the *mann* is too long a subject to finish it up from now to the end of the block – there's too much to think about, so many lessons. The *mann* teaches that **לֹא עַל הַלֶּחֶם לִבְרוֹ יִחְיֶה הָאָדָם** – you don't live on bread; you live on **מִוֶּצֵא פִי ה'שָׁם**. If Hashem says *mann* can feed you, *mann* will feed you.

Bread doesn't give you sustenance. Why should bread keep you alive? It's a *neis*, that's all. Hashem commanded that the bread should turn into all the materials the body needs to sustain itself, thousands of different materials! Food is a *neis*! And therefore when a person trains himself to remember the *mann*, he's thinking not only about the miracle in the *midbar* but the miracles that are taking place in his body right now.

The Repeated Marah Miracle

Now, you want to think the same thing again tomorrow? Nothing wrong with that. But you can change it up too. Tomorrow as you're walking, you say to yourself, “Until the end of the block I'm going to think about when Moshe Rabbeinu took the branch and threw it in the bitter water and **וַיִּמְתְּקוּ** **הַמַּיִם**, *the water became sweet* (Shemos 15:25).

When you think about the *neis*, how the bitter water became sweet, so little by little you're reminded that our water is no different. Where does our water come from? It comes from the ocean and the ocean water is too bitter to drink. Our water should taste bitter; ocean water is not drinkable after all. But no; וַיִּמְתַּקוּ הַמַּיִם, Hakodosh Boruch Hu makes it sweet.

He causes the sun to evaporate the water and as it takes the water vapor out of the ocean, it leaves over all the salt in the ocean. And sweet water rises to the sky in the form of clouds and that's how the rain comes down to us. It's the same *neis*; *vayimtiku hamayim*. And if you do it more than once, if you try thinking these thoughts ten times, a hundred times, maybe you'll get into the habit that whenever you drink a glass of water you'll be able to say aloud after you drink the water, "Ahh! וַיִּמְתַּקוּ הַמַּיִם, how sweet is New York tap water."

Mitzrayim Memories

Now, once you get the hang of fulfilling this *possuk* you can accomplish every minute of your life. We don't have to waste any time. Even when you're hanging on the strap in the subway, close your eyes and think about *Yetzias Mitzrayim*. Keep your hand tightly on your wallet – don't forget about that because the man standing next to you he's not thinking about *Yetzias Mitzrayim*; he's thinking about your wallet – so you have one hand hanging onto the strap and one hand on the your wallet and you're thinking, לְמַעַן תִּזְכֹּר אֶת יוֹם צֵאתְךָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם כֹּל יְמֵי חַיֶּיךָ.

You never thought about that in the middle of the day? Hashem said about us "You are My firstborn son," and He demonstrated it by means of miracles. You know what thoughts like that do to your mind? You're transformed into a new person. A new mind means you're a new person.

And so by practicing every day וַיִּמְתַּקוּ הַמַּיִם, what are you doing? First of all you're fulfilling that commandment that nobody else does and you're becoming distinguished in Hashem's eyes. You're exceptional. And in addition to that, you're gaining

an understanding of the lessons; the more you think about them the more you're perfecting your mind, creating a Torah mind.

Mabul Memories

Now, everything you heard so far is just an introduction to tonight's subject. Because one of the greatest of the נִפְלְאוֹתָיו אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה, the wonders that He made in order for us to remember, is told to us in this week's *parsha*. And that's the Mabul, the great Flood that wiped out Mankind. There's no question that among all of the wonders, the Flood was one of the most grand and most terrible episodes in history.

But if nobody's thinking about it, then all of that was lost on Mankind. Such an event should go lost?! A once in history event, never repeated again, should go to waste?! The surface of the entire earth was covered by water. A remarkable thing! The oceans became shallow by means of great upheavals in the earth's surface topography and the waters poured out over the continents.

One time in history this happened. The waters were raging; וַיִּגְבְּרוּ הַמַּיִם. Suddenly, raging waters burst out from the bowels of the earth; lava too. There were thousands of volcanoes spewing forth rivers of hot lava. They find today extinct volcanoes in the thousands; it was a phenomenon we don't see today that thousands of volcanoes should be spouting out their contents at once.

Velikovsky's Theories

By the way, I want to tell you, the Flood involved not only this earth. Velikovsky, in his book *Worlds in Collision*, gives a good idea and we don't have to reject it. He theorizes that some of the planets came close to this earth – it was on purpose; Hashem planned it so – and they pulled the earth out of its regular system of orbiting around the sun and the disturbance caused the upheavals.

Now you don't have to accept what Velikovsky said, but it's quite probable there was some great disturbance that Hakodosh Boruch Hu utilized to upset the function of this world because ordinarily

Part II. Frightening Lessons

Ancient Memories

Now it's been a long time since then and today the Mabul has been all but forgotten by the people of the world. Even the Jewish people have primarily relegated it to reading about it once a year in *krias haTorah*. And it's a pity because that's not enough. *Krias haTorah* was made to reinforce those memories, to inspire them and to sharpen them; but just to listen? And even then, when the *baal korei* is reading the *pesukim*, we're thinking about who will get the best *aliyah* or maybe what's for *kiddush* today. And meanwhile the lesson is entirely lost.

But you have to know that in the earlier times, in the generations that followed the Flood, it was spoken about all the time by Mankind. Such an upheaval, such a catastrophe, made a tremendous impression on all the nations. Fathers and mothers spoke about it to their children; grandfathers surely spoke about it to their grandchildren. It was a household subject that was constantly reiterated.

All over the world we find memories of the Flood inscribed in the ancient writings, on temple walls and monuments. On both sides of the Atlantic, even in the far north among the Norsemen, and way down in the south too among people who live on islands, there are inscriptions with various Flood stories. There's a book that has a collection of these inscriptions from all over the world. If you're interested, I'll someday quote them to you. From all over the world! And that's only because it made a strong and lasting impression on Mankind.

Changed Generations

And that was the purpose. "Remember His wonders that He made," means that the purpose of the Mabul was so that it should be remembered. The purpose was to create impressions on our minds, to create attitudes. And it did! People spent time thinking about the Mabul story and it changed them. For many generations people became better as a result.

such things cannot happen. Whatever it was, the world groaned in its upheavals on a scale never before or after seen. Valleys became mountains and mountains became valleys. The oceans became shallow because the land was covered with water. It was a tremendous upheaval.

Layers of strata were laid down at that time, one after the other in quick succession. Men and animals were buried there in great numbers. Great shoals of fish were suddenly trapped and fossilized. How is it that they find today hundreds of thousands of fish in a fossil bed? Fish don't fossilize when they die normally because they are consumed by scavengers and they decay. But at that time they were captured suddenly. There rained down a hail of minerals; it fell upon them and they dissolved quickly and they were buried and stratified in a matter of minutes.

The Ice Age

That's why you have the entrapment of thousands of mammoths in Siberia. A mammoth is a big huge elephant, bigger than elephants of today. It needs a lot of grass to keep going every day. And when they excavated the mammoths from the permafrost they found buttercups in their stomachs; daisies, dandelions and fresh grasses. And their meat was fresh; the pack dogs that joined the mammoth expedition fell upon the meat and devoured it. Even the eyeballs in some cases were intact.

It's because there was a sudden change of climate at that time and a great frost descended. Those days, before the Mabul, all over the world there was one climate. There was a gentle mild climate everywhere and grasses grew in abundance in the northernmost parts of the world. And that's why these animals are entrapped in the ice in the thousands; because they didn't die gradually. A sudden frost descended upon them and they were therefore quick-frozen and remained for thousands of years as evidence of what happened at that time.

Isn't that an original idea? When it says זָכְרוּ נִפְלְאוֹתָיו, remember His wonders, it means to also think about the Mabul. So someday when you're sitting on the bus and you have nothing to do, let's say you forgot to take along your *sefer*, so think for a moment or two about the Mabul.

You'll need many many bus rides for that. There are endless lessons to learn – when Hashem brings a catastrophe like that you can be sure He has many intentions – but on its most simple level, I'd like to discuss tonight two of the many lessons that we're expected to learn.

Noach's Nieces and Nephews

When Noach's family was huddled in their little ark for one full year they were busy thinking. They were busy with other things too; they were very busy taking care of their cargo, but at the same time they were thinking, "What's going on out there? What's happening to our cousins? What's happening to our uncles and aunts? What's going to be with all our nieces and nephews?" That's Noach's nieces and nephews! "What happened to our friends, our neighbors?"

And they knew unfortunately what did happen to them; and they were talking about it. They knew about the *aveiros* that people were involved with, and they were witnessing the results now. The water came pouring down, flooding everywhere, and there was no recourse. There was no place to go. Even the highest mountains eventually were covered.

It was a terrible sight. If you could look through the window of the *teivah*, you would find people holding on to pieces of wood for their dear life but the waters were too strong. And they were boiling hot too. Mankind was being wiped off the face of the earth because of their sins! Such a catastrophe!

Purpose of Punishment

And they studied that in the *teivah*. For a full year, as death raged around them, Noach and his family studied the terrible event of how all Mankind was destroyed. They sat and pondered the lesson

that there is such a thing as responsibility for sin, punishment for *aveiros*.

Nowadays the world has forgotten that. Today the ideal of punishment has gone lost. When a man commits a crime, it's only a question of the utilitarian achievement of punishment. In the universities they'll make committees and discuss it. Is it a deterrent? Or is it a rehabilitation? Maybe it's restitution? Whatever it is, it's a debate, and in the debate, punishment goes lost and Mankind loses sight of the great principle that there is such a thing as intrinsic responsibility for sin.

It's a duty of the conscience; the conscience must feel that the sinner deserves a punishment. Of course, we want the criminal locked up because we want to be safe, but that's not the primary purpose of punishment. When Mankind steps in and inflicts punishment, we do it more than anything else because wickedness is wrong. We are actually only vicars, emissaries, of Hakodosh Boruch Hu whose abhorrence at a sin, at a crime, is tremendous. Sin is wicked! Wrong behavior is wicked! That's what punishment comes to tell you.

Today that attitude that the Mabul came to teach has gone lost, and we're worse off for it. There's no such thing as wickedness anymore, no punishment. What Mabul? Who cares? Who thinks about that? Wickedness has lost its edge in modern society and that's caused a breakdown in society and on all sides. Mankind is suffering because of that.

The Holocaust and The Horses

But I'm not talking only about the gentiles. Even the *frum* Jews have forgotten this lesson of the Mabul, that Hashem doesn't put up with wickedness. How could it be that just recently, only fifty years ago Hashem brought a Mabul on our people in Europe and we react to it like a horse would react. Punishment? Oh no! That can't be.

Even the Orthodox, I'm afraid to say, don't want to open their mouths and say anything. Nobody wants to say the plain truth that the Holocaust was a Mabul brought by Hashem because of our sins.

The Jews in Europe had learned to hate Judaism. Not all of them, but there were so many of them that it became a wave of revolt against the Torah.

I saw a photograph in the Chubashav *pinkas*; it's a book describing the town of Chubashav in Europe. It's a picture of a parade through the streets of the town in the 1930s. And the people, the paraders, are carrying a big banner, all the way across the street from one side to the other, and on the banner inscribed in Yiddish it says, "Nider mit der klerikalism." It means "Down with the clericalism." Clericalism means the rabbis. A big sign openly displayed in the streets of a Jewish town. Down with the rabbinate! Down with the *frumme*! It means down with the Torah, down with Hashem. And it was like that everywhere.

Hashem's War

"The Jews in Europe declared war on Hashem." That's what Reb Elchonon Wasserman *zichrono livracha* said. "And now He has declared war on them. That's why He's sending His armies against them." Reb Elchonon said that about Hitler.

Now, Reb Elchonon knew about the *yeshivas*. He knew about the *talmidei chachomim* more than you. But he knew that the *yeshiva* people with their *rebbe*s were only a drop in the ocean of European Jewry and they didn't have anybody who listened to them.

Now, it doesn't mean all the Jews were *mechallel Shabbos*, no. But even the Jews who kept *Shabbos* and *kashrus* and everything else, they were no longer on the side of the *roshei yeshivah*.

The Child Leaders

And their children were leading the way. I remember we sat on *Shabbos* singing *zemiros* in the small town where I used to stay but we were drowned out. Because outside the town there was a big *hachshara* of Jewish boys and girls who were preparing to go to Eretz Yisroel. And they made fires on *Shabbos* and they ate *tarfus* and they threw away all of Judaism. That was the new generation and they were going to settle in Eretz Yisroel. Aretz!

Aliyah! That's what mattered. *Shabbos*, not important. *Tefillin*, not important. *Mikveh*, not important.

And here in the town, the old people were left without a generation to follow them. So even though they sang *zemiros*, their hearts were with their children. That's how parents are – when their children forsake the Torah, the parents lose hope and they are no longer enthusiastic for the Torah.

The Am Yisroel stopped keeping *Shabbos* in Europe. They stopped putting on *tefillin*. They stopped keeping everything. There was a large-scale rebellion against Hakodosh Boruch Hu in Europe. They were getting worse and worse until Hashem finally said, "It's enough! I'll bring it to an end!"

But this they don't want to talk about in the synagogues; it's not popular talk and therefore the people don't get the lesson. And all those who perished in the Holocaust perished in vain because nothing is being learned from it; nobody's getting better. Even many Holocaust victims didn't learn anything; many of those who escaped the concentration camps didn't learn anything.

One of The Reasons

Now, nobody is going to be bold enough to say they understand all the reasons – certainly not me; *chas v'shalom*, I should say such a thing but I certainly understand that this is *one* of the elements in what happened. No question that the Holocaust included a reaction to those that rebelled against Hashem violently and virulently; and it would have led to the the worst kind of results had they been allowed to continue to exist. Yes, that's one of the reasons, absolutely.

Only that the lessons of the Torah, the attitudes of the Torah are so far from our minds, that nobody wants to tell people the secret that Hakodosh Boruch Hu punishes for sins. Such a secret that it's everywhere in the Tanach. Not only the Mabul. Wherever you look in Tanach it's reiterated so many times that it's perhaps one of the most salient features of Tanach: If Jews will forsake the Torah

הָרֵב וְאִם תִּמְאַנּוּ וְיִמְרִיתֶם – if you'll refuse and you'll rebel
תֵּאָכְלוּ – you will be consumed by the sword (Yeshaya 1:20).

Just Retribution

But in Noach's time, the family *did* learn. They learned that when מִלְּאָה הָאָרֶץ חֶמְסָה there will be retribution. They looked back and they saw there was injustice in the world, there was violence in the world, there was immorality, and they understood the wherefore of the Flood. They didn't say it was an accident, that nature at times runs wild, goes on a rampage, and that's why the world was flooded and Mankind was the victim of natural causes. That kind of talk wasn't used in ancient times because everybody felt the presence of Hakodosh Boruch Hu and they understood everything is done for a reason.

That was one great achievement of the Flood. It came to show the remaining family from whom the world would be built up again that sin is not just bad, it's catastrophic. The family that walked out of the *teivah* after a year, they knew in their blood, in their bones, that sin is a terrible misfortune. You can't sin and say, "Oops, I'm sorry I sinned." Oh no! If a man would smash his head, he wouldn't say, "Oops!" If he broke his spine, he wouldn't say, "Oops." Oh no! Sin is catastrophic.

That was one of Hashem's intentions in bringing the *Mabul* and it accomplished that purpose. There's no question that the atmosphere was cleared by the *Mabul*. And the more *we* think about it, the more we fulfill וְזָכְרוּ נִפְלְאוֹתַי אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה and remember the destruction that sin brought on the world, the more we learn that lesson and the more the purpose is fulfilled.

Part III. Happy Lessons

A Second Lesson

Now, I'm somewhat wary of talking tonight about the second lesson of the *Mabul* that I was thinking about. Because I'm afraid that this first

lesson, of the catastrophe of sinning against Hashem and of the *Mabul* it brings, will be obscured and overshadowed. But because this is a place where we like to talk about happy things—I don't want anyone to leave this place tonight depressed—I'm going to talk now about the second lesson, a happier one, and I hope you won't let it overshadow the first one.

The second very important lesson that Noach and his family learned is as follows: "How lucky it is for us that we are inside the ark! How good it is to be alive!" Outside the *teivah*, lives are being lost. All the people who yesterday were going along their merry way, walking on dry land, living life, and now their lives were being snuffed out. "That could have been us! But we're still alive." That's what they were thinking about for twelve months: "How sweet life is!"

For the first time these people discovered that you don't need any ice cream to be happy. You don't need any theaters. You don't need any traveling. You don't need any good times because the best good time is when you realize that you're alive. The biggest fun, the greatest fun and enjoyment, is to be alive.

It's a great pity that Mankind forgets about that and everyone is busy trying to look for icing on top of his cake and he doesn't realize that *this* is it – life itself is the icing and the cake together.

The Greedy Specialist

You know when you realize it most? When there's a close call, a little *mabul* in your own life, and you just made it by the skin of your teeth. Here's a man, he makes an appointment with a specialist; his doctor sent him there and he goes with his heart in his mouth. And as he sits in the waiting room the specialist walks through cheerily – he sees a full waiting room and each patient means to him a lot of money, so he's in a good mood – and he says to you, "Why so glum, my friend? How are things?"

So you say to him, "It depends on the outcome."

He waves cheerily and walks in his office. Whatever the outcome is, he's going to get from

you whatever it is. The bill is going to be paid in either case.

So the tests begin, and you don't get any answer right away. You can't sleep at night; you can't eat. You're on edge. Finally, after ten days, he calls you up and he says, "I'm sorry to tell you that there's nothing wrong with you."

The World Is Yours

Ooh wah! You don't need any vacation now. A few weeks ago you were thinking of going on vacation, maybe to Florida or California. No, you don't need a vacation anymore. You're living it right now. You walk out in the street and the world is now yours. You're walking on the clouds. Your heart sings within you. You realize now how beautiful the sky is, how beautiful the street is, how beautiful the pavement is. Everything is now bathed in a splendor and that splendor is life, the happiness of being alive. What fun to be alive! Now he begins to understand what he possesses; at least for ten minutes. For ten minutes he's happy.

A close call is therefore a very great benefit. It opens up the eyes of the blind and you begin to see what you didn't see before and what is most imperative for you to see. Because to live one's life without appreciating the happiness of life is a great waste of an opportunity. And so the false alarm is a glorious opportunity to remind him to enjoy it while he is still able to continue enjoying it.

That's what Noach and his family felt when they came out of the teivah. "We're alive! Mazel tov!"

Regret At The End

It's a pity that Mankind is missing that. You know people, many people, at the end of their days so they may think like this: "Why didn't I study more Torah?" There was one *tzaddik* who was weeping on his deathbed about the minutes he wasted from learning. Another *tzaddik* was weeping like this: "Why wasn't I more kindly to my relatives? Why didn't I call them up long distance once in a while? I forgot about my relatives. I was so busy with my

own thing." All kinds of regrets people have at the end.

But you have to know there's a fundamental regret *all* Mankind will have, and that is, "Why didn't I enjoy life?" When a man is approaching his last moments, he looks back and thinks, "Why was I so stupid? My mind was obsessed with so many superficialities, worries and silly ideas." He suddenly realizes that there's a lot of fun around but he didn't even begin to enjoy it. All the happiness of normal living suddenly flashes upon his mind like on a screen and he sees all the good times he had. "Why didn't I enjoy those days of happiness?"

Pleasures Of Life

There were many days that you ate three meals a day and you could have enjoyed all that. There were many days that your bowels moved. It's a miracle the bowels move. And many days you urinated painlessly. Many nights you slept a delicious slumber. There were many days when you were still in the health of youth and you were able to breathe deeply without racking your sick lungs, so many days with no pain.

There were so many days you could walk around. Walking! A pleasure! It's a happiness to walk. Locomotion is one of the great forms of happiness. You drank water sometimes? To drink water, that's "Ah!" It's one of the great pleasures of life! To see! Looking is fun! Merely to sit and look through your two perfect cameras, color cameras. They focus for distant vision and immediately they can change to close vision. And you're constantly taking pictures. It's fun to see things!

Life is full of so much fun only that we don't realize until we're on the verge of losing it, until the Mabul comes, the *malach hamavess* that is going to take a person out of this world. But when a person waits until then, it's a little too late to enjoy those pleasures.

The Most Intense Pleasure

But those are just details – seeing, walking, breathing, urinating, they're very big details but it's

not everything. Of all the pleasures that we find in life, there is one all embracing pleasure and it's the most intense pleasure of all. The greatest fun you could find in this world is the fun of being alive!

There's nothing like it. That's why when a man is given the opportunity to choose great pleasures, intense pleasures, but at the cost of his life soon thereafter, nobody would be so silly as to sacrifice his life. Because when it comes to the final analysis, everybody understands that the true happiness is being alive.

Now that's deeply rooted in the human psyche. It's so deeply rooted that it is the most urgent of all of our longings. It is pathetic to read in the literature of man this yearning to continue to live; legends of antiquity about men who sought fountains that would give them eternal life, legends about men who begged the gods of mythology to grant them that they should live forever. Again and again we see that man, most of all, desires to continue to exist on this earth.

And there's a reason for that. It has been so planned by Hakodosh Boruch Hu that life should be sweet – sweet beyond any sweetness that we could think of. There's no such thing as an unpleasant day. To open up your eyes and to be alive, it's the greatest of all forms of happiness! There's no fun like being alive! The mere fact that I could walk down the avenue and see the light of day, any kind of a day, cloudy, sunny, it's a joy.

On Solid Footing

But because we ignore it and we're too lazy to think about it, Hakodosh Boruch Hu made sure to remind us once with a very big reminder. Of course, there were many reasons for the Mabul but absolutely included in the lessons is that the Flood came to teach Mankind the importance of *roka ha'aretz al hamayim*, the happiness of being able to walk down the street living life, breathing.

Everybody says that blessing in the morning; "We thank You Hashem we're walking on solid land." Isn't that a queer blessing? Every morning we're reminding ourselves of the pleasure of walking on

solid land. It's because we need reminding. It's a tremendous pleasure and it's a pity that so much happiness, so much vigor and joy goes lost from our lives because we don't learn this lesson that Noach and his family learned.

When Noach entered the *teivah*, that became his home for the duration of the Mabul. For a full year he and his family were sealed up in a ship on the high waters waiting for the great Flood to come to an end, waiting for the great pleasure of normal life. Just to be able to be alive on the earth, to walk on dry land.

The Great Wait

And they waited for that. Over and over again the Torah reiterates: *וַיִּחַל עוֹד*, and Noach waited some more (Noach 8:10). *וַיִּיחַל עוֹד*, and he waited, with anticipation, even more (ibid. 8:12). Because as the days and weeks wore on, Noach began to long more and more eagerly for the great joy of walking on the dry land.

And finally it happened. They walked out with the biggest *simchas hachaim*. That was the biggest lesson, the exhilaration they felt then. "We're going to be walking on dry land again. We survived. *Mazel tov*. We're alive!"

I once told you this story. In Lomza yeshiva, the *mashgiach* once saw a boy was down, so he took him aside and seized his two lapels and said, "*Mazel tov*, You're a lucky fellow. Everybody should envy you." And he went on for a half hour. The boy was looking at him, waiting to hear what the good news is. "*Mazal tov! Mazel tov!*" The *mashgiach* said it five or six times. What's this all about? And finally the *mashgiach* said, "Congratulations! You're alive!" That's the *mazel tov*.

Congratulate Yourself

And so the Mabul was a great reminder that we should always be saying that *mazel tov* to ourselves. "You are lucky to be alive! There'll come a time when you won't be, so you might as well enjoy every second of it now." Enjoy it *k'pshuto* – be happy with it right now. Don't let a minute go by! Every moment

that you're breathing and your heart is beating, that you have awareness, that your brain is functioning, you are existing. It's fun to be alive! Just to walk on the earth!

And so we come back to the *mitzvah* of זָכְרוּ נִפְלְאוֹתָיו אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה – Remember the wonders that He did; that He did because He wants you to think about them. And among all of His great wonders included in that *mitzvah*, we should never forget about the tremendous catastrophe of the Mabul. And as you're walking down the sidewalk, you're thinking, "Ahh! The pleasure of being alive and being able to walk on dry land. Ahh! What could be better!" Of course, it never leaves your head the great lesson of the catastrophe of sin, that the Mabul came to show. You'll be more careful now. You won't open up your big mouth to your brother. You won't look where you shouldn't. You're more afraid of sin now. But at the same time you don't forget the second lesson, and so you're thinking, "I'm alive! I'm breathing, my heart is beating, and I'm still walking on this earth!" There's no fun in the world to compare it to!

Have A Wonderful Shabbos

LET'S GET PRACTICAL

Remembering The Flood

This week I will try to accomplish the *mitzvah* of "remembering His wonders" and thinking of the Mabul. Every morning when I say the *bracha* of *Roka ha'aretz al hamayim* I will *bli neder* take a minute to remember the lessons of the Mabul. First that sin has consequences, sin is catastrophic. And secondly, the great happiness of life. Regular life and walking on dry land is the greatest pleasure we can wish for.

This week's booklet is based on tapes:

127 - The Rainbow | 552 - Kabbolas Hatorah – Love of Hashem

604 - Exile | 630 - Who Is Like Your People Israel

Listen: 718.289.0899 Press 1 for English and 2 for Thursday Night Lectures



Many rabbonim say we should not discuss in public why the churban of Hitler happened. Why do you, Rabbi Miller, think it is important to discuss it?



And the answer is this: Because it's one of the most frequent questions against the *emunah*. The public has the impression that everybody in Europe was an observant Jew and therefore there's the argument, "That's what happens to observant Jews." And then there's another argument: "In America they're not observant and it didn't happen."

And so it's important to defend the honor of Hakodosh Boruch Hu and explain to people that in Europe it was much worse than America. Not that there was less observance, no. Less observance than America is hard to find. But in Europe, the people were throwing away the Torah more rapidly than any other place. They had just two generations ago kept everything and now they had revolted against the Torah violently! Not like American ignorami who went to public school and never learned anything and they became *goyim* because of the environment. These Jews in Europe learned to hate Judaism. Not all of them, but there were so many of them that it became a wave of revolt against the Torah.

And Reb Elchonon Wasserman *zichrono livracha* said, "The Jews in Europe declared war on Hashem." And he said, "And now He has declared war on them. And that's why He's sending His armies against them."

So therefore, if you won't speak in this vein, the people will remain with their fatal error and they'll think that the Jews in Europe were all perfect and they were unjustly visited with retribution.