



A Fascinating Allusion from the Great Rabbi of Ziditchov

The Gematria of the Names of Noach and His Three Sons Equals 13 Times חס"ד Corresponding to the 13 Midos HaRachamim

This week we read parshas Noach. The parsha begins by mentioning Noach and the names of his three sons, whose families were saved from the cataclysmic mabul brought by HKB"H to destroy all the corrupt inhabitants of earth. The world would be started anew after the flood from Noach and his sons. Here are the opening pesukim of the parsha (Bereishis 6, 9): "אלה תולדות נח נח איש צדיק תמים היה בדורותיו את חם ואת יפת." **These are the offspring of Noach; Noach was a righteous man, perfect in his generations; Noach walked with Hashem. Noach fathered three sons—Shem, Cham and Yafet.** We will endeavor to explain why HKB"H chose to build the world anew with the three sons of Noach.

This question is made even stronger in light of the fact that one of Noach's three sons, Cham, was wicked. When Noach was in a drunken stupor, Cham dishonored and disgraced his father. This prompted Noach to curse Cham's son, Canaan, who had reported Noach's condition to his father. Here are the pertinent pesukim (ibid. 9, 20):

"ויחל נח איש האדמה ויטע כרם, וישת מן היין וישכר ויתגל בתוך אהלו. וירא חם אבי כנען את ערות אביו ויגד לשני אחיו בחוץ. ויקח שם ויפת את השמלה וישימו על שכמ שניהם, וילכו אחורנית ויכסו את ערות אביהם ופניהם אחורנית וערות אביהם לא ראו, וייקץ נח מיינו וידע את אשר עשה לו בנו הקטן, ויאמר ארור כנען עבד עבדים יהיה לאחיו, ויאמר ברוך ה' אלקי שם ויהי כנען עבד למו, יפת אלקים ליפת וישכון באהלי שם ויהי כנען עבד למו."

Noach began to be a man of the soil and planted a vineyard. He drank of the wine and became drunk,

and he uncovered himself inside his tent. Cham, the father of Canaan, saw his father's nakedness and told his two brothers (who were) outside. Shem and Yafet took a garment, placed it upon both their shoulders, they walked backwards, and they covered their father's nakedness; their faces were turned away, so they did not see their father's nakedness. Noach awoke from his wine and realized what his young son had done to him. And he said, "Cursed is Canaan; a slave of slaves shall he be to his brothers." And he said, "Blessed is Hashem, the G-d of Shem; and Canaan shall be a slave to them. May G-d extend Yafet, and may He dwell in the tents of Shem; and Canaan shall be a slave to them."

In the Gemara (Sanhedrin 108b), our blessed sages teach us that Cham had already displayed corrupt behavior while they were still inside the teivah. In fact, he is listed as one of the three creatures who failed to behave modestly in the teivah. They were the "כלב ועורב וחם"—the dog, the raven and Cham. So, if HKB"H wiped out the entire universe because they were corrupt and perverse, why did He bother to save Cham, who was also corrupt and perverse?

חס"ד חס"ד ש"ח ח"ם יפ"ת Equals 13 Times

We will begin our discussion with a precious insight gleaned from the incredible teachings of the divine kabbalist Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch of Ziditchov, zy"a, in the sefer Beis Yisrael (Noach). Addressing the passuk: **Noach fathered three sons—Shem, Cham, and Yafet**—he writes that Noach, because he was a

tzaddik, was able to elicit the 13 “midos of rachamim” to evoke “chesed.” He substantiates this claim by pointing out that the gematria of the sum of the four names ת”ח ש”ם ה”ם יב”ת totals 836, which equals 13 times חס”ד (72), corresponding to the “13 midos of rachamim.”

Following this master’s lead, I would like to add a tantalizing tidbit. We find the following statement in the Gemara (ibid. 108a): ‘תנא דבי רבי ישמעאל, אף על נח נחתך גזר דין, אלא שמצא חן בעיני ה’.’ A Baraisa was taught in the Academy of Rabbi Yishmael: The decree to punish and destroy the world with the mabul also applied to Noach; however, he was spared, since he found favor in the eyes of Hashem, as it states (ibid. 6, 7): **“I have reconsidered My having made them; but Noach found favor in the eyes of Hashem.”** Rashi teaches us that the Tanna deduced that Noach was included in the decree of the mabul because of the juxtaposition of the beginning of the passuk—**“I have reconsidered My having made them”**—with the word **“ונוח”**—**“and Noach”**—as if it states that G-d reconsidered making Noach. However, they also interpret the two parts of the passuk separately; in which case, we understand that Noach was spared, because he **“found favor in the eyes of Hashem.”**

The commentaries find this perplexing. If the Torah depicts Noach as a **“tzaddik,”** why was he included in the cataclysmic decree? Furthermore, if he was flawed and deserved to die in the mabul, then how did he find favor in the eyes of Hashem? After all, the Torah explicitly describes Hashem as a G-d (Devarim 10, 17): **“אשר לא ישא פנים ולא יקח שוחד”**—**Who does not show favor and does not take a bribe.**

To explain why Noach also deserved to be punished, let us refer to the Zohar hakadosh (Noach 67b). Even though Noach was a tzaddik, he possessed a major character flaw. He neglected to pray for the people of his generation not to be exterminated. This is in stark contrast to Moshe Rabeinu, who beseeched HKB”H after the “cheit ha’eigel” to spare the people of Yisrael (Shemos 32, 32): **“ועתה אם תשא חטאתם, ואם אין מחני נא”**—**and now, if You would but bear their sin; but if not, erase me from Your book that You have written.** It is for this reason that the mabul is associated with Noach, as per the passuk from the haftarah (Yeshayah 54, 9): **“כי מי נח”**—**for like the waters of Noach shall this be to Me, as I swore that the waters of Noach would never again pass over the earth.** Noach could

have averted the mabul with his prayers. Due to his failure to pray for his generation, the death decree of the mabul was also issued against Noach.

Additionally, our sacred sefarim, led by the Chasam Sofer (Noach), assert that Noach was indeed a true tzaddik, even though he neglected to fulfill the mitzvah of (Vayikra 19, 17): **“הוכח תוכיח את עמיתך”**—**you shall rebuke your fellow.** He was obliged to rebuke the people of his generation and encourage them to correct their corrupt behavior before he was commanded to build the ark. Thus, we have learned that Noach was also sentenced to die in the mabul, because he did not pray on behalf of the people of his generation, and he failed to admonish them.

Noach Found Favor in the Eyes of Hashem on Account of His Descendants

So, now we will explain how Noach did manage to find favor in the eyes of Hashem. We learn in the Midrash (B.R. 29, 5): **Rabbi Simon said: We find that HKB”H performs acts of “chesed” for later generations in the merit of earlier generations. But where do we find that HKB”H performs them for earlier generations in the merit of later generations? “But Noach found favor in the eyes of Hashem.” In what merit (did he find favor)? In the merit of his offspring.** According to the Matnos Kehunah, this is evident from the juxtaposition of pesukim. Parshas Bereishis concludes by informing us: **“But Noach found favor in the eyes of Hashem.”** Parshas Noach opens by explaining how he found favor: **“These are the offspring of Noach”**—he found favor on account of his descendants.

It seems obvious that the passuk is referring to the descendants of Noach’s son Shem, who was a tzaddik. For, Avraham Avinu descended from Shem, the first of the line of kedushah that produced the people of Yisrael who received the Torah on Har Sinai. In fact, the descendants of Shem include all of the holy Avos and Moshe Rabeinu, who prayed on behalf of Yisrael and admonished them to live by the precepts of the Torah.

We can now comprehend how Noach managed to find favor in the eyes of Hashem, even though he was flawed. Because he was a pure tzaddik in his own generations, he was able to elicit the “13 midos of rachamim.” HKB”H transmitted these

midos to Moshe saying (Shemos 33, 19): **”והנתי את אשר אהון—”I will favor whom I choose to favor, and I will have mercy on whom I choose to have mercy.** They expound on this passuk in the Gemara (Berachos 7a): **”I will favor whom I choose to favor,” even though he is not worthy; “and I will have mercy on whom I choose to have mercy,” even if he is not deserving.**

Clearly, this illuminates for us the words of the esteemed Rabbi of Ziditchov, zy”a, that the gematria of the sum of the names of Noach and his three sons—**נ”ח ש”ם ח”ם יפ”ת** – equals 936—13 times **חס”ד**, alluding to the “13 midos of rachamim.” Hence, through the juxtaposition of pesukim at the end of parshas Bereishis and the beginning of parshas Noach, we learn that in fact the decree of the mabul applied to Noach, as well, but he was spared in the merit of his future generations. Additionally, this enabled him to curry favor in the eyes of Hashem and to elicit the “13 midos of rachamim,” sparing his own life and the lives of his three sons.

נ”ח ש”ם ח”ם יפ”ת Is an Acronym for ינח”ש

It is with immense pleasure that I will now share with my brothers the delightful words of the great Rabbi of Ziditchov, zy”a. He goes on to interpret a passuk in parshas Vayigash related to the encounter between Yosef HaTzaddik and his brothers, the shevatim, who failed to recognize him. With regards to the missing chalice, he says to them (Bereishis 44, 15): **”מה המעשה הזה אשר עשיתם, הלוא ידעתם כי נחש ינחש איש—”what is this deed that you have done? Do you not realize that a man like me can foretell events!** This statement is surprising. After all, Yosef was the epitome of a tzaddik and surely took great care to preserve the kedushah of his spoken word. So, how could he have uttered an apparent falsehood? Especially since the Torah states explicitly (Bamidbar 23, 23): **”כי לא נחש ביעקב ולא קסם בישראל—”for there is no divination in Yaakov and no sorcery in Yisrael.**

He explains that Yosef HaTzaddik, like all tzaddikim, had Hashem in mind in all of his endeavors and transactions. Thus, in the matter of his chalice, he intended to elicit the “13 midos of rachamim” on behalf of his brothers. This is alluded to by the word **גבי”ע**, which contains the letters **י”ג ע”ב—13 and 72.** Thus, it alludes to the **13 times חס”ד** (whose gematria is **72**) corresponding to the “13 midos of rachamim.” This fascinating

allusion was already mentioned in the Megaleh Amukos on Vaeschanan (172).

The esteemed Rabbi of Ziditchov, however, uses this allusion to interpret Yosef’s remark to his brothers: **”הלא ידעתם: כי נחש ינחש איש אשר כמוני”**. He points out that the term **ינח”ש** is an acronym for **נ”ח ש”ם ח”ם יפ”ת**, whose gematria equals **13 times 72**. Understood in this light, Yosef uttered an absolute truth. He had intentionally placed the **גבי”ע** in Binyamin’s saddlebag as a symbolic gesture to elicit the “13 midos of rachamim” on behalf of his brothers. Hence, he used the term **ינח”ש**, which is an acronym for **נ”ח ש”ם ח”ם יפ”ת**, because he wished to elicit the “midos of rachamim.”

HKB”H Wrapped Himself in a Tallis to Utter the “13 Midos of Rachamim”

We will now proceed to explain why HKB”H included the wicked Cham among the three sons of Noach to complete the calculation alluding to the “13 midos of rachamim.” Let us refer to the passuk in parshas Ki Sisa that describes the revelation of the “13 midos of rachamim” to Moshe (Shemos 34, 6): **”ויעבור ה’ על פניו ויקרא, ה’ ה’ אל רחום וחנון ארך אפים ורב חסד: “Hashem passed before him and proclaimed: “Hashem, Hashem, G-d, merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in kindness and truth. He preserves kindness for thousands of generations, forgiving iniquity and willful transgression and sin; He absolves, etc.”** They expound in the Gemara (R.H. 17b):

”ויעבור ה’ על פניו ויקרא, אמר רבי יוחנן אלמלא מקרא כתוב אי אפשר לאומרו, מלמד שנתעטף הקדוש ברוך הוא כשליח צבור, והראה לו למשה סדר תפלה, אמר לו כל זמן שישראל חוטאין יעשו לפני כסדר הזה ואני מוחל להם.”

“Hashem passed before him and proclaimed.” Rabbi Yochanan said: If not for an explicit passuk, it would be impossible to say this. This teaches that HKB”H wrapped Himself (in a tallis) like a “shaliach tzibbur” (the communal prayer leader) and demonstrated to Moshe the order of tefilah. He said to him: Any time Yisrael sins, let them perform before Me this order, and I will forgive them.

I had a wonderful idea. Rabbi Yochanan specifies that HKB”H wraps Himself in a tallis **”כשליח צבור”**—like one who lead the community prayer to utter the “13 midos of rachamim.” Now, we learn in a Mishnah (Avos 2, 4): **”הלל אומר, אל תפרוש מן הצבור—”**

Hillel says: Do not separate yourself from the community. In his sefer Kikar LaAden, the brilliant Gaon Chida points out that: **The first letters of the word צבור is an acronym for tzaddikim, beinonim, and reshaim. You should connect with them (all three categories of Jews), to provide a tikun for all of Yisrael.**

Let us elaborate on this notion. It is evident from the “chelbinah” in the ketores that the community also includes reshaim. The “chelbinah”—galbanum—was one the eleven spices of the incense that was burned in the Beis HaMikdash every morning and every evening. Here is the pertinent passuk (Shemos 30, 34): **וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה קַח לְךָ סַמִּים נָטָף וְשַׁחֲלֵת וְחֵלְבִינָה וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה לָקַח לְךָ סַמִּים וְלִבְנֹנִים זָכָה בַד בְּבַד יִהְיֶה—Hashem said to Moshe: “Take yourself spices—‘nataf,’ and ‘shecheilet’ and ‘chelbinah’—spices and pure ‘levonah’; they shall be equal one to another.”** Rashi explains: **“Chelbinah’ is a spice whose smell is foul . . . Scripture counted it among the ingredients of the ‘ketores’ to teach us that we should not consider it insignificant to include the sinners of Yisrael with us as members of the congregation for our fasts and tefilos, so that they should be counted among us.**

The Shem MiShmuel (Toldos) explains that the sinners of Yisrael want to join us in our tefilos; however, since they have yet to perform proper teshuvah, it is very difficult for them to withstand the yetzer hara. Therefore, is advisable to draw them in and have them join us. For, in the merit of uniting with the congregation, it will be conducive for them to perform teshuvah. Thus, they will be inspired to make amends for all of their wrongdoings.

All Three Categories Require Tikun

At this point, I would like to present to our esteemed audience a novel idea and perspective concerning the three components of the **tzibbur—tzaddikim, intermediates, and reshaim.** Upon further scrutiny, it should be evident that all three categories require a significant tikun. None of them can fulfill their roles in the service of Hashem properly without establishing a strong bond with the other groups of Jews.

Let us begin by considering the most significant group in the community—the tzaddikim. Even the biggest tzaddikim, who serve Hashem perfectly, bear a tremendous responsibility to

ensure that all Jews abide by the precepts of the Torah. As Moshe Rabeinu instructs Yisrael (Devarim 1, 13): **“הִבּוּ לָכֶם אַנְשִׁים חֲכָמִים וְנִבְוֹנִים וַיְדוּעִים לְשִׁבְטֵיכֶם וְאַשִּׁימָם בְּרָאשֵׁיכֶם—provide for yourselves distinguished men, who are wise, understanding, and well known to your tribes, and I shall appoint them as your heads.** Rashi notes that the word **“וְאַשִּׁמָם”** is written without the letter “yud” (changing the meaning of the word from “I will appoint” to “their guilt”) to teach us that the sins of Yisrael hang on the heads of their judges; for they should have protested and directed them to the proper path. Thus, we see that tzaddikim have a responsibility to correct a rasha.

Next, let us consider the “beinonim”—the intermediates. Their situation is contradictory. On the one hand, they are obliged to connect with a tzaddik. As it is written (ibid. 11, 22): **“לְאַהֲבָה אֶת ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ לֵלְכָת בְּכָל דַּרְכָיו וּלְדַבְקָה בּוֹ”—to love Hashem, your G-d, to follow all His ways, and to cling to Him.** Rashi cites the Sifrei: **Is it possible to say this? After all, He is a consuming fire. Rather, it means to cling to Torah-scholars and sages, and I will consider it as if you clung to Him.** Yet, on the other hand, there is a downside to beinonim” connecting with tzaddikim. Since their service of Hashem does not measure up to the service of tzaddikim, they could be subjected to harsher scrutiny from “midas hadin.” This was the case with Lot, who asked the malach to allow him to flee from Sedom to a nearby city (Bereishis 19, 19): **וְאֶנְכִי לֹא—“but I cannot flee to the mountain lest the evil attach itself to me and I die.** Rashi comments: **When I was with the people of Sedom, HKB”H would see my deeds and the deeds of the townspeople, and I would appear to be a tzaddik and worthy of being saved; however, when I will come near a tzaddik (Avraham), I will appear to be a rasha.**

We can now focus on the third component of the “tzibbur,” the reshaim. Our blessed sages compare these sinners to the “chelbinah,” the foul-smelling component of the ketores. They undoubtedly require a major tikun. They need to abandon their evil ways and return via teshuvah to make amends for their sins and to return to the upright path of Torah and mitzvos. Thus, we have shown that all three categories of Jews alluded to by the term **צבור** require a form of tikun, each one according to its spiritual level.

The Wonderful Three-Way Connection Rectifies All Three

We will now demonstrate how the union of the three categories of Jews provides them all with a wonderful tikun. While it is true that when HKB”H compares the service of an intermediate to the service of a tzaddik, it does not measure up. However, when He compares it to the evil deeds of reshaim, it is commendable and saves him from being judged severely. We find this to be true of Noach as it states in the beginning of the parsha: **“Noach was a tzaddik, perfect in his generations.”** Rashi notes that according to some Rabbis, this is interpreted in a derogatory manner: **According to the standards of his generation, he was a tzaddik, but if he was in the generation of Avraham, he would not have been considered anyone of significance.**

In the sefer Beis Shmuel Acharon (Vayeira), he applies this concept to interpret the passuk (Mishlei 16, 4): **“כל בעל ה' למענהו: וגם רשע ליום רעה—everything Hashem made, He made for His sake, even the evildoer for the day of retribution.** In other words, even reshaim sanctify Hashem **“ליום רעה”**, when their just punishment is meted out. As we have learned in the Mishnah (Avos 6, 11): **“כל מה שברא הקב”ה בעולמו לא בראו אלא לכבודו: שנאמר כל הנקרא בשמי ולכבודי בראתיו יצרתיו אף עשיתיו.”** **Everything HKB”H created in His world, He created solely for His glory. As it is stated (Yeshayah 43, 7): “All that is called by My name, and for My glory, I created it, I formed it, also I made it.”** So, what benefit and honor accrues to HKB”H from the reshaim among us?

Let us explain. Consider the day of retribution, when the forces of “din” prevail over Yisrael, chas v’shalom, for failing to serve Hashem properly. On that day, HKB”H evaluates the rest of Yisrael in comparison to the reshaim. As a result, they are judged more favorably and exonerated. Let us apply this understanding to the passuk above: **“Everything Hashem made, He made for His sake”—**so that the name of Heaven would be sanctified through them; **“even the evildoer for the day of retribution”—**for even the rasha serves a positive purpose—to see the rest of Yisrael in a positive light on the day of retribution, when the forces of “din” prevail; this enables them to be judged favorably and exonerated.

We can now comprehend why HKB”H commanded us to include the “chelbinah,” representing the sinners of Yisrael,

among the spices of the incense. They are attacked constantly by their yetzers and are overwhelmed by them. However, by joining and participating in the tefilah of the “tzibbur,” they demonstrate their sincere desire to be numbered among those who serve Hashem. This is viewed as a big merit on their part. For, they are instrumental in exonerating the Jews of intermediate status, who are able to overcome their yetzers by serving Hashem by avoiding that which is wrong and doing that which is good and right. Indeed, in comparison to tzaddikim, their service of Hashem is still lacking, but in comparison to the evil deeds of reshaim, their service is extremely significant.

The Strength and Integrity of the Three-ply Cord

With great delight, we will now return to the teaching of Hillel HaNasi: **“אל תפרוש מן הצבור—do not separate yourself from the “tzibbur” (community).** We learned from the Chida that the first letters of **צב”ר** are an acronym for **צדיקים בינוניים**—tzaddikim, “beinonim,” and reshaim. The union of all three provides the entirety of Yisrael with a tikun. By praying together with righteous, meritorious tzaddikim, whose tefilos deserve to be heard, HKB”H accepts all of their tefilos.

If, however, the congregation consisted exclusively of tzaddikim and “beinonim,” “midas hadin” is liable to judge the intermediates, chas v’shalom, because their service does not measure up to the service of the tzaddikim. Therefore, HKB”H instructed us to also include the tefilah of sinners with the congregation. Compared to them, the beinonim’s service of Hashem is viewed favorably. By allowing the beinonim to be seen in a more favorable light, the reshaim themselves accrue merit. In this merit, HKB”H withholds His anger and helps the reshaim perform teshuvah until they make amends for all of their wrongdoing.

Thus, we see that as a result of the union of all three groups, they all achieve a wonderful tikun. The tzaddikim have a tikun, because it is incumbent upon them to influence the sinners of Yisrael to return by means of teshuvah. The beinonim are afforded tikun, because in comparison to the reshaim, they appear to be tzaddikim. As for the reshaim, coming to pray with the “tzibbur” demonstrates their desire to overcome their yetzers and to serve Hashem properly; they, too, have a tikun. For, by allowing the beinonim to be viewed in a more positive

light, HKB”H helps them perform teshuvah and make amends for all of their sins. This exemplifies the dictum of the wisest of all men (Koheles 4, 12): “והחוט המשולש לא במהרה ינתק”—**the three-ply cord will not be severed easily.**

It is with great pleasure that we can now interpret the elucidation of Rabbi Yochanan: “**Hashem passed before him and proclaimed.**” **Rabbi Yochanan said: If not for an explicit passuk, it would be impossible to say this. This teaches that HKB”H wrapped Himself (in a tallis) like a “shaliach tzibbur” and demonstrated to Moshe the order of tefilah. He said to him: Any time Yisrael sins, let them perform before Me this order, and I will forgive them.**

Note that he specifies that **HKB”H wrapped Himself** (in a tallis) **like a “shaliach tzibbur”** to impress upon us that when we pray, it is necessary to include all three categories of Jews—alluded to by the term **צבור**, which stands for **tzaddikim, beinonim, and reshaim.** This glorious union is able to evoke the “13 midos of rachamim,” ensuring that HKB”H will accept even the tefilah of the reshaim, who would otherwise not be

worthy of their own accord based on “midas hadin.” This is consistent with what we have learned in the Gemara (Berachos 7b): **‘אמר רבי יוחנן משום רבי שמעון בן יוחי, מאי דכתיב ואני תפלתי לך ה’**.” **Rabbi Yochanan said in the name of Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai: What is the meaning of the passuk (Tehillim 69, 14): “But as for me, my tefilah is to You, Hashem, at a favorable time”? When is it a favorable time? When the congregation prays.**

This explains very nicely why HKB”H chose to leave Noach and his three sons alive after the mabul. As explained, the gematria of **נ”ה ש”ם ח”ם יפ”ת** equals **13** times **ח”ס”ד** corresponding to the “13 midos of rachamim.” Now, Shem was a tzaddik. Yafet helped his brother Shem cover their father’s nakedness; he is considered a “beinoni”—intermediate. Cham, in contrast, dishonored his father; he is considered a rasha. By uniting all three in his tefilah, the righteous Noach was able to evoke the “13 midos of rachamim” to save the world from obliteration. He then commenced to rebuild the world and pave the way for Bnei Yisrael to receive the Torah on Har Sinai.



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