



NEVER GIVE UP

Erev Shabbos Parashas Noach 5783

Dear Parents,

In describing the final lead up to the *Mabul*, the Great Flood, the *Torah* (*Bereishis* 7:4) speaks of an additional seven days of waiting, which, according to most *Mefarshim*, was in addition to the 120 years of preparing for the flood that *Hashem* informed *Noach* of initially. *Rabbeinu Bachye* has a very interesting explanation for these additional days.

Rabbeinu Bachye says that *Hashem* let it be known that in addition to the 120 years that He granted mankind to do *Teshuva*, to repent of their wicked ways, He was now giving them an additional seven days in the hopes they come to their senses, repair their behavior and avoid the impending doom.

What?? If 120 years went by and they did not do *Teshuva*, despite seeing *Noach* working on the *Tayva* and explaining that the flood was coming, what did *Hashem* expect to happen from an additional week? Does it make any sense that a person who persisted in his ways for years and years, and was not dissuaded from his life's chosen path during all that time would suddenly have an epiphany and recreate himself in a matter of days?

Apparently, a reasonable possibility exists for such a turnaround. In attempting to explain this phenomenon, *Rav Zalman Sorotzkin, zt'l*, in *Oznaim LaTorah* cites the *Gemora* and *Medrash* (as does *Rashi*) which explain these seven days were the seven days of mourning for *Mesushelach*, who was the world's *Tzaddik* in the generations before *Noach*. As a sign of honor for that *Tzaddik*, *Hashem* delayed the flood for seven days until the mourning period was over. Furthermore, experiencing a *Tzaddik*'s passing and hearing the eulogies can awaken feelings of *Teshuva* in a person.

Rav Sorotzkin goes on to explain that there is a sound psychological rationale for *Teshuva* to be a real possibility, even after so many years. People had seen *Noach* year after year engaged in his 'foolish' endeavor of building an ark and ranting about how the end of the world was near. They were so accustomed to seeing it, it had become so routine, that people were convinced that even *Noach* didn't really believe it himself anymore, he was just stuck in his ways. With such an attitude, they certainly were not changing. However, in these final seven days, they witnessed *Noach* and his family bringing provisions to the *Tayva*, animals miraculously appearing and rather than fleeing, obediently begin entering the *Tayva*. This new turn of events makes an impact on a person and it was only because they were so stuck in their ways, that ultimately, they were not moved to change.

Children engage in less than perfect behavior, but they are not stuck in their ways, *B'H*. The takeaways from *Rabbeinu Bachye* should now be clear. Never, ever give up on a child or any human being. *Hashem* who has absolute knowledge of how people operate had a reasonable expectation that they could still change, after 120 years and more of very bad behavior! Since that is true, we, parents and teachers have a good chance to find something that can reverse even a longstanding issue. What has been a problem all along does not need to remain a problem. If one approach doesn't work, try a different one. Any child can change at any point and reverse course and start moving in the right direction.

At the end of the day, *Hashem* has endowed man (and children!) with free choice. At the same time, parents exert a larger than life influence over their children – for good or for not so good. By internalizing the attitude within ourselves that my child can become a productive, successful person, then no matter what difficulties he or she may be encountering presently, there is always hope. Never give up. Never give up. Never give up.

Best wishes for a beautiful and hopeful *Shabbos*,

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Rabbi Kalman Baumann
Principal

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