שיחות ישראל

SICHOS YISROEL

ספר בראשית

Our Weekly Parsha Sponsors

Support Sichos Yisroel So We Can Continue To Expand!

נח

Standing Out or Growing Within?

FROM THE SHIURIM OF

HARAV YISROEL BROG שליט"א

ROSH HAYESHIVA, YESHIVAS TIFERES AVIGDOR

GRANDSON OF HARAV HAGAON AVIGDOR MILLER, ZT"L

Find Sichos Yisroel Here...

Flatbush/Boro Park

Rabbi Landau shul
Agudah of avenue L Rabbi
Bergman Ave N
Rabbi Yisrael Reisman
Bnei Yosef Ave P
Khal Tosefes Yom Tov (Perlstein)
Sharei Zion Ocean Pkwy Bais
Horaa of Flatbush Rabbi Frankel
shul East 21 and Ave J
Yeshiva Torah Vodas
Rav Scheinberg
Yad Yosef Torah Center Rabbi
Herbst Avenue M Posna Shul
Bedford Ave. Bnei
Binyamin
Ateret Torah Yeshiva Shomer
Shabbos
Emunas Yisrael Biegelizen
Alesk

Lakewood

Kol Shimshon
Beis Shalom
Satmar
Erech Shay
Arlington B″M
James St.
Rav Gissinger
Central Court
Rav Kahana's
Miller/Hertzka's
Rav Friedlander
West Gate
Lutzk
Rav Woody
Rachmastrifk
Rav Neustadt
Bobov
Coventry Shul
Sephardic on Princton
Rav Gelblat
Chasam Sofer
Novominsk
Rashbi Clifton

Cleveland

Detroit

Los Angeles

Chicago

Dallas

Minneapolis

Cincinnati

Far Rockaway

Monsey

Denver

Houston

North Miami Beach

More Locations Coming Soon!

PARSHAS NOACH

HaRav Yisroel Brog, Shlita | Rosh HaYeshiva, Yeshivas Tiferes Avigdor

Shiur Presented in 5770

THE CHEIT OF THE DOR HAFLAGAH

Chazal (Bereishis Rabbah 38) say that the cheit of the Dor Haflagah was לֹא נִתְפָּרֵשׁ, it was not explained in the Torah.[1] You have to understand that if the cheit wasn't explained in the Torah, there must be a reason for it. Obviously, if they would have murdered people, the Torah would have written that they murdered people. It wasn't that they were into robbery. It wasn't that they were into arayos. The Torah writes that the cheit of Dor Hamabul was their excessive indulgence into ta'anugos haolam (worldly pleasures). They were drawn after ta'anugos haolam. So what exactly was the cheit of the Dor Haflagah? Let us learn the parshah inside. Let's take a look at a few pesukim.

The passuk (Bereishis 11:1) says: ויהי כל הארץ שפה אחת, and there was one language in the land. Rashi says they all spoke Lashon Hakodesh.[2] That can't be such a bad thing. Everybody spoke Lashon Hakodesh. It wasn't a hip-hop language. It wasn't Ebonics. They were speaking mamash Lashon Hakodesh.

The passuk continues: ודברים אחדים - what does that mean? Rashi here gives us a little insight.[3] He says באו בעצה אחת, they came together in one mindset. ואמרו לא כל הימנו שיבור לו את העליונים, they said, "It's not right that Hakadosh Baruch Hu decides to live all alone in the elyonim, the upper regions. נעלה לרקיע, we're going to go up the shamayim, ונעשה עמו מלחמה, and we're going to make a war with Him." דבר אחר על יחידו של עולם; alternatively, אחדים refers to the the Sole One of the world. Meaning they spoke words against Hashem. So this passuk reveals to us that they went against Hashem.

---

[1] רַבִּי אוֹמֵר גְּדוֹל הַשָּׁלוֹם שֶׁאֲפִלּוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל עוֹבְדִים עֲבוֹדַת כּוֹכָבִים וְשָׁלוֹם בֵּינֵיהֶם, אָמַר הַמָּקוֹם כְּבֵיכוֹל אֵינִי יָכוֹל לִשָּׁלֵט בָּהֶם, כֵּיוָן שֶׁשָּׁלוֹם בֵּינֵיהֶם, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (הושע ד, יז): חֲבוּר עֲצַבִּים אֶפְרַיִם הַנַּח לוֹ, אֲבָל מִשֶּׁנִּתְחַלְּקוּ מָה הוּא אוֹמֵר (הושע י, ב): חָלַק לִבָּם עַתָּה יֶאְשָׁמוּ. הָא לְמִדְתָּ גְּדוֹל הַשָּׁלוֹם וּשְׁנוּאָה הַמְּחֻלָּקֶת. וּדְבָרִים אֲחָדִים, מַעֲשֶׂה דּוֹר הַמַּבּוּל נִתְפָּרֵשׁ, אֲבָל מַעֲשֶׂה דּוֹר הַפְּלָגָה לֹא נִתְפָּרֵשׁ. דָּבָר אַחֵר, וּדְבָרִים אֲחָדִים, שֶׁאָמְרוּ דְּבָרִים חֲדָשִׁים, אָמְרוּ אַחַת לְאֶלֶף וְתַרְנ"ו שָׁנָה הָרָקִיעַ מִתְמוֹטֵט בּוֹאוּ וְנַעֲשֶׂה סְמוֹכוֹת, אֶחָד מִן הַצְּפוֹן, וְאֶחָד מִן הַדָּרוֹם, וְאֶחָד מִן הַמַּעֲרָב, וְזֶה שֶׁכָּאן סוֹמְכוֹ מִן הַמִּזְרָח, הֲדָא הוּא דִכְתִיב: וַיְהִי כָל הָאָרֶץ שָׂפָה אֶחָת וּדְבָרִים אֲחָדִים (בראשית רבה ל"ח)

[2] שפה אחת. לְשׁוֹן הַקֹּדֶשׁ.

[3] ודברים אחדים. בְּאוּ בְעֵצָה אַחַת וְאָמְרוּ לֹא כָּל הַיְמֻנּוּ שֶׁיִּבֹּר לוֹ אֶת הָעֶלְיוֹנִים, נַעֲלֶה לָרָקִיעַ וְנַעֲשֶׂה עִמּוֹ מִלְחָמָה. דָּבָר אַחֵר עַל יְחִידוֹ שֶׁל עוֹלָם. דָּבָר אַחֵר וּדְבָרִים אֲחָדִים – אָמְרוּ אַחַת לְאֶלֶף וּתרנ"ו שָׁנִים הָרָקִיעַ מִתְמוֹטֵט כְּשֵׁם שֶׁעָשָׂה בִּימֵי הַמַּבּוּל, בֹּאוּ וְנַעֲשֶׂה לוֹ סְמִיכוֹת (ב"ר):

Now, Rashi later on (v. 9), says that דברים אחדים teaches us that there was tremendous achdus between the people of the Dor Haflagah.[4] The passuk says ומשם הפיצם, and from there Hashem scattered them. Rashi says לימד, this teaches us, שאין להם חלק לעולם הבא, the people of the Dor Haflagah lost their chelek in olam haba. Rashi continues: וכי איזו קשה, which generation's sins were worse של דור המבול או של דור הפלגה, the sins of the Dor Hamabul or the Dor Haflagah? אלו לא פשטו יד בעיקר, the Dor Hamabul persued tanaugos olam hazeh, but never challenged Hashem. ואלו פשטו יד בעיקר להלחם בו, but these, the Dor Haflagah, challenged Hakadosh Baruch Hu, to do battle with Him! ואלו נשטפו, yet the people of the Dor Hamabul were drowned, ואלו לא נאבדו מן העולם, while the people of the Dor Haflagah were not. שדור המבול היו גזלנים, the reason for this is that the Dor Hamabul were gazlanim, והיתה מריבה ביניהם, there was a lot of machlokes between them, לכך נאבדו, therefore they got flooded. ואלו, but these, the Dor Haflagah, היו נוהגים אהבה ורעות ביניהם, they conducted themselves with ahavah verei'us, with love and friendship שנאמר, as it says, שפה אחת ודברים אחדים, they were unified; they didn't infringe on each other's rights. They weren't out to rob one another, to steal one another, to dis one another, or undermine one another. And Rashi concludes: למדת, you learn from here, ששנאוי המחלוקת, that machlokes is hated, וגדול השלום and peace is great.

THE VALUE OF PEACE

Rabosai, we learn this concept many times throughout our lives, but very few people take it to heart.

Recently, I met someone involved in a famous machlokes. I wanted to give him an eitzah tovah. What does he tell me? He says, "You can't give me any eitzos to be matzliach." "What do you mean?" He said, "You know the Chazal that says אין כלי מחזיק ברכה אלא השלום, the only kli that's machzik brachah is shalom. I'm in a machlokes, so you can't give me any eitzos for how things can improve." He says, "I know a lot of maamarei Chazal, maybe more maamarei Chazal than you know," he tells me. I'm thinking to myself, "Are you retarded? Are you a lunatic?" I wanted to grab his beard and shake it really hard. You're looking me in the face and you tell me this? I told him, "You know what it reminds me of? The guy who says to grown son on Shabbos, 'Let's talk business - nisht Shabbos geret.' Or the guy who says, 'Lashon hara aside, tell me some goodies.'" The guy is modeh he has no brachah in his life because he's involved in machlokes, but he says, "Af al pi ken, I will continue in this way."

[4] ומשם הפיצם. לְמֵד שֶׁאֵין לָהֶם חֵלֶק לָעוֹלָם הַבָּא; וְכִי אֵיזוֹ קָשָׁה, שֶׁל דּוֹר הַמַּבּוּל אוֹ שֶׁל דּוֹר הַפְּלָגָה? אֵלּוּ לֹא פָשְׁטוּ יָד בְּעִקַּר וְאֵלּוּ פָּשְׁטוּ יָד בְּעִקַּר לְהִלָּחֵם בּוֹ, וְאֵלּוּ נִשְׁטְפוּ וְאֵלּוּ לֹא נֶאֱבְדוּ מִן הָעוֹלָם? אֶלָּא שֶׁדּוֹר הַמַּבּוּל הָיוּ גַּזְלָנִים וְהָיְתָה מְרִיבָה בֵּינֵיהֶם, לְכָךְ נֶאֱבְדוּ; וְאֵלּוּ הָיוּ נוֹהֲגִים אַהֲבָה וְרֵעוּת בֵּינֵיהֶם, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר שְׂפָה אַחַת וּדְבָרִים אֲחָדִים, לְמֵדְתָּ שֶׁשְּׂנוּאָה הַמַּחֲלֹקֶת וְגָדוֹל הַשָּׁלוֹם.

We have to make sure we don't have any machlokesim in our lives. I don't care if you dislike the person. I don't care what the issue is! I know family members who haven't talked to each other for years! Neighbors. Shuls. Rabanim! All kinds of nonsense. You should know, you're better off being a Dor Haflagah person than a Dor Hamabul person, because it is less damaging in that aspect. Get along. That's the first thing you have to know. You have to get along with others.

SINNING WITH ACHDUS

So one ma'aleh the Dor Haflagah had was achdus. But they had an agenda. The agenda was the reason for their achdus. The purpose of their unity was to challenge someone else's Unity. That was the echad of Hakadosh Baruch Hu. They used their achdus, their ichud, not to join with the achdus of Hakadosh Baruch Hu, but to undermine the achdus of Hashem.

You have to realize these people were amazing people because this event transpired not many years after the Mabul. The events of the Dor Haflagah took place in the days of a man named Peleg. Peleg was born 101 years after the Mabul. They spoke only Lashon Hakodesh. These people knew about Hashem. They were all descendants of Noach. The Mabul wasn't that long ago. These people were the *garin*, the seed of the whole world. There were no other humans in the world. They were going to be the dor deah, so to speak, the dor that brings Hashem to the forefront. They were going to be mesaken the cheit of the Mabul. The opposite of merivah and gezel. Etiquette. They walked nicely. They smiled. "Shalom aleichem." Everybody was bentched, "Shalom aleichem," "Aleichem shalom." They had all the achdus, they were united but only insofar as they needed it for their goal, which was their fight against Hashem. What's the pshat?

THEY SAID THE MABUL WAS "NATURAL"

Now, Rashi (ibid) brings another pshat in דברים אחדים. It comes from the word חד - sharp words. אמרו, they said, אחת לאלף ותרנ"ו שנים, once every 1656 years, הרקיע מתמוטט, the world comes apart, you get a tsunami. כשם שעשה בימי המבול, Like what happened in the days of the Mabul, בואו ונעשה לו סמוכות, come, let's make supports for it. That means they came up with this idea that the Mabul was not a consequence of the wrongdoings of man. It was a result of the nature of the world. Every 1656 years, the world falls apart. Therefore, they said, "Let's make this huge, high city. We'll build it in the sky. When the next 1656 years come, we'll be ready for it."

MIGDAL BAVEL: SOCIAL-HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Who was the 'chacham' giving all these shitos? It was Nimrod. This is all Nimrod's torah.

The passuk says ויהי בנסעם מקדם, they traveled from Kedem (Bereishis 11:2). Why would they travel? So Rashi says שהיו יושבים שם, they were sitting in this place called Kedem, like it says ויהי מושבם הר הקדם, their dwelling place was Har Kedem.[5] ונסעו משם לתור להם מקום, and they traveled from there, seeking for themselves a place, להחזיק את כולם, that could hold all of them, ולא מצאו אלא שנער, they only found Shinar. This is strange. What was wrong with the place they were living in? They were feeling a little bit cramped?

What is Shinar? Shinar is Bavel. Now, where were they living? The teivah landed in Har Ararat. That's where the teivah came to rest, and then they lived in this place called Har Kedem. The Chumash tells us that earlier. They lived together and they traveled and then settled in Shinar in Bavel.

Shinar was a city. It was the first time they had a city. Until now, they lived in tents. They were tent-dwellers. They came and they built this huge city. They built batei arei chomah over there. ויאמרו איש אל רעהו, they settled in this fortified city that they built, and each one said to his friend, הבה נלבנה לבנים, let's fire up bricks, ונשרפה לשרפה, we'll put them in the oven, ותהי להם הלבנה לאבן, it'll turn to stone. והחמר היה להם לחמר, then they had cement (v. 2). ויאמר, then they said, הבה נבנה לנו עיר, let's build for ourselves a city, ומגדל, a tower, וראשו בשמים, and its head will be in shamayim. ונעשה לנו שם, let's make a name for ourselves. פן נפוץ על פני כל הארץ, lest we become scattered, because if we don't have unity, if we don't build for ourselves an infrastructure and we don't create an economy that can serve everybody, we might end up with everybody going in their own way, and we will get scattered. We don't want that. So let's come and make a name for ourselves."

We need to understand what this challenge was about. What was eating them? The first thing you have to know is that this is the second challenge that every single person faces.

THE DOR HAMABUL'S CHALLENGE

The **first** challenge is the sugya of the Dor Hamabul. Every one of you and every one of us will go through the challenge of ta'anugos. You will all be drawn to pleasures in this world. Your insides will scream, "Live the good life. Enjoy life!" If it hasn't happened yet, trust me, it'll happen in a couple of years. And it may be happening now, and you don't even realize it. You may be awash in it, and you don't chap, "This is ta'anugos!" Maybe you're in the sugya of ta'anugos, you don't chap. But then there's another sugya.

[5] בנסעם מקדם. שֶׁהָיוּ יוֹשְׁבִים שָׁם, כְּדִכְתִיב לְמַעְלָה וַיְהִי מוֹשָׁבָם וְגוֹ' הַר הַקֶּדֶם וְנָסְעוּ מִשָּׁם לָתוּר לָהֶם מָקוֹם לְהַחֲזִיק אֶת כֻּלָּם וְלֹא מְצְאוּ אֶלָּא שִׁנְעָר.

THE DOR HAFLAGAH'S CHALLENGE

The **second** challenge is about the sugya of Dor Haflagah. That is the sugya of ego. Every single person wants to be independent. It doesn't make a difference whether you're the biggest rosh yeshivah. It doesn't make a difference if you're the biggest chassidishe rebbe, how big your beard is, how big your shtreimel is, or how big your peyos are. There is a middah in the world: Everybody has an ego, and that ego demands, "I want to be somebody." This drives us in everything we do.

Some people can't make it in a certain society. You know what they do? They leave that society. I'll give you a classic example. Here's a fellow in yeshivah, and he's struggling. Why? He has his ego screaming at him, "I want to be somebody. I don't want to be a nobody." So what's the correct response? Shtell tzu to the yeshivah life, do what's expected of you in yeshivah, and become somebody. "No, no, no. I don't want to be their somebody. I want to be an independent somebody." So what does the guy do? He starts to either find a new yeshivah, or he starts to withdraw, and create for himself a name in that society as 'being different.' But his first yesod is, "I don't want to shtell tzu, to have somebody tell me what I have to do."

The yetzer hara twists us in every which way. He gets one guy to want to change his approach to Yiddishkeit. I'll never forget when I was a bachur, learning in a Litvishe yeshivah, when I had this idea. I came from a Litvishe family and had no shaychus to Chassidim. But one day, I decided I wanted to learn Chassidus. "I'll become a Chassid," I decided. I started learning Chassidishe sefarim. I heard that Chassidishe rebbes smoked pipes, so I got myself a pipe. I liked that part of the Chassidus. I said, "I'll start practicing." I got myself some tobacco. I went into a yeshivah classroom at night, and I went early in the morning, at six o'clock. I lit my pipe and opened my sefarim, and I thought I was flying. And the rosh yeshivah gave me a hassle. That wasn't very smart of him because the more he hassled me, the more I wanted to do it. It was completely הבה נעשה לי שם. That was the point. "And what's wrong with Chassidus?! Are you an anti Semite? And what's wrong with this and what's wrong with that? They're heilege Yidden. It's mechazek me. I need this." All kinds of shtussim and hevalim. It got to the point where it got very uncomfortable between me and my parents. I was going home for bein hazmanim. My father told me, "You've got to talk to your Zeida about it." He was sure my Zeida (R' Avigdor Miller, zt"l) would take a stick and bang me over the head in one minute. I said, "Okay, I'm maskim."

At first, I was scared to tell him the truth. I know my Zeida wasn't a chassid at all. Then, I decided I'm going to ask him. I made an appointment with him. We were taking a walk and I told

my Zeida, "I want to become a Chassid." I told him the whole story with the rosh yeshivah. He said, "It's a wonderful idea!" I said, "Really?!" "Absolutely! Only one condition. You should pursue it. But do it in a way that nobody knows that you're a Chassid - because the real Chassidus is inside. It's not outside. Outside Chassidus is not where the real Chassidus is at. The Chassidus is in the penimiyus. Become a real, true Chassid on the inside. That's what you will do from now on." I said, "What about a Rebbe? A Chassid has to have a rebbe, no question about it." He said, "Get a big one. Don't get a little one. You'll find a lot of people who want you as a Chassid. They're desperate for Chassidim," he said. "That's not a good rebbe. Get a rebbe that doesn't need you, and develop a relationship with him. It will be wonderful." I said to myself, "What?! What's happening?! What happened to my Zeida?! Did he fall on his head or something?" Then I realized my Zeida was just brilliant! Because from that day on, my career in Chassidus was over! I didn't realize at the time, but I lost my cheishek and my drive to chassidus because now it was okay. It was a good thing. Just that it had to be a secret. I couldn't argue with that. I came back and I told my rosh yeshivah, "My Zeida said it's 100% okay." A chacham, a great chacham! I was cured.[6]

ESCAPE INSTEAD OF CONFORMATION

Every single person could face the same challenge. I was speaking to a yungerman living in a yeshivah community. He told me he's moving out. I said, "Why are you moving out? Why are you running away?" "I'm not comfortable here." I told him, "You're losing your opportunity to grow. You could end up with gornisht. What do you mean that you are not comfortable in a yeshivah? Don't you realize the yetzer hara is setting up a trap for you, your wife, and your kids?! If you leave the yeshivah community, you'll be going down."

There was once a different Yid who came here, a chassidishe Yid, who moved here from out of town. He came to Cleveland and I met him. I see he's wearing a small yarmulke. He was a funny-looking guy. I said, "Where are you from?" He tells me where he's from. He talked with a shtickel chassidishe accent. He didn't talk English like an American. He told me that he came from a nice chassidishe neighborhood. I said, "What are you doing in

6 Ed. note: R' Avigdor Miller's brilliance lay in exposing the underlying motives without confrontation or humiliation. He recognized that his grandson's attraction to Chassidus was driven by a desire to stand out, fueled by the opposition he encountered. By warmly approving while advising him to keep his Chassidus private, he removed both the struggle and the prospect of recognition, leaving only the inner avodah. His advice to choose a rebbe who did not need him likewise directed him toward growth rather than self-importance. Once those ulterior incentives disappeared, so did his enthusiasm. He was thus "cured" of his misplaced motives, without any disparagement of Chassidus itself.

Cleveland?" "I wanted to get away from the big city." I said, "You know, for you, Cleveland could be your שְׁאוֹל תַּחְתִּית, your 'deepest pit.'" I said, "Cleveland, for you, could be your end." All of a sudden, he reverted to Yiddish. He said, "You came to Cleveland. What are you doing in Cleveland?" I said, "I came to Cleveland for the yeshivah. With me, it's a different story. I didn't run away."

Then there are people being eaten alive by kina, tremendous jealousy. People are not comfortable in a certain shul, for example. You know why? Because people in that shul actually learn. So this fellow now has to conduct himself in a certain manner. But he wants to be different. He doesn't want to shtell tzu. A mentsch has to know, when you don't want to shtell tzu, you are now experiencing the Dor Haflagah!

Rabbosai, that was what the Dor Haflagah was all about. The Dor Haflagah was all about, "Let us create a wonderful, kind, moral society. We're going to live like mentschen. We're not going to live with any frumme shitos from Noach, or from his son Shem! Shem is going to give me shitos?! Shem, the Rosh Yeshivah! Because Shem was a rosh yeshivah. You'll tell me what to do? We'll do what we want?! 'השמים שמים לה." The Torah tells us that this beautiful, model city, was pashut designed for nothing less than trying to throw off the yoke of Hashem - with all the mussar, with all the signs for mussar shmooze that were hanging on the walls, morality classes, lectures, all kinds of ethical lessons going on in that place. You want to know something? It was all a big cover up. People don't realize, all you're doing is trying to get away from Hashem. Not that a person has to live by a yeshivah. I didn't say that. I'm telling you, you have to know we all have this struggle. Every one of us has this struggle.

COOL-ISM AS A COVER-UP

Every guy goes through a matzav in his life where he decides he wants to be a cool guy. Everybody wants to be a cool guy. It's a metzius. What's this cool guy business? What's it about? You know what it's about? "I don't want to have an ol, a yoke. I don't want somebody telling me how I have to live my life. That's all. I don't want this." If a person doesn't want that, it's the ego. Everyone is ego-driven. We all have this ego. We want to be independent, not meshubad to anybody, not even to Hashem, r"l.

We say, "Oh, come on! I'm not against Hashem. I just don't like those frummies." That's what people say, "I don't like those frummies." I say: You know who you sound like? Lot. Lot said, "I'm getting tired of this frummie - Avraham. I'm getting tired of him." You know what Rashi says, what Chazal say? Lot was getting tired of Hashem. It's the exact same thing here. When it says over here ויהי בנסעם מקדם, you know where it says the exact same language? By Lot.[7] It says Lot was נסע מקדם, the exact same words! (Bereishis 13:11) You know what the Midrash says? They were

[7] מקדם. נָסַע מֵאֲצֶל אַבְרָם וְהָלַךְ לוֹ לְמַעֲרָבוֹ שֶׁל אַבְרָם; נִמְצָא נוֹסֵעַ מִמִּזְרָח לְמַעֲרָב. וּמִדְרַשׁ אַגָּדָה הִסִּיעַ עַצְמוֹ מִקִּדְמוֹנוֹ שֶׁל עוֹלָם; אָמַר אִי אֶפְשִׁי לֹא בְּאַבְרָם וְלֹא בֵּאלֹהָיו.

just like Lot. They were traveling away from Hashem. The society that Noach had built up, you know what they decided? It wasn't good enough for them. What was wrong with the place that Noach was living in? What's wrong with Shem and Eiver's neighborhood? They produced – if you look in the parshah before – they produced seventy children and each child had a whole family. These are the seventy umos. They built this whole family, the whole mishpachah. All of a sudden, they decided the place wasn't comfortable enough for them. "We can't live in this place. It doesn't contain us. It's not the kind of lifestyle we want to live. It's not how we want to live. We don't want to live in tents. We want to live in houses." So they traveled. And where did they end up, of all places? In Bavel. Their going to Bavel was not a mikra, incidentally.

A mentsch has to know with all that they said, that was their shitah: נעשה לנו שם. That's what every one of us has to understand is his challenge. I don't care who it happens to. It happens to everyone.

BUCKING THE SYSTEM: "I WANT TO BE DIFFERENT"

I remember experiencing this in yeshivah. There was a bachur. I was in camp with him when we were already in our late teens, and he was a very frum bachur. He wore a gartel. He davened a long shemoneh esrei. He was different, a different bachur. At that time, people said he was a frummie. But most people think that when you see a guy doing that, you know what he's doing? We think he has more yiras shamayim than everybody else. I don't know. It could be that he has less. It's all the yetzer hara of נעשה לנו שם. At the time, I didn't know. You know when I knew it? A year later, when he "shmad-ed up." He went to a certain yeshivah and they didn't treat him right in that yeshivah. That yeshivah has since closed, baruch Hashem. But they didn't treat him right in that yeshivah. I know this because he wrote my grandfather all kinds of letters. I once saw a bunch of letters my grandfather got. They tried to straighten him out, normalize him, and he was complaining that the rosh yeshivah didn't let him do frum zachim, and he asked my grandfather. The next thing I know, the guy was mamash shmad-ed up, converted! Then a group of boys grabbed him in Flatbush. They brought him to my grandfather's house. My grandfather would not see him, he wouldn't talk to him. It's all the same yesod. It's נעשה לנו שם.

One guy grows a big chup - that's called נעשה לנו שם. You see a yeshivah bachur, you watch them, they get to a certain age and all of a sudden, they start to get stylish with their haircuts. You see another guy who goes the other way. He gives himself a haircut on zero. He's going chassidish. I tried both. I know. (Laughing.) All you're trying to be is anything but regular, because you want to

have a shem for yourself. You're driven by "I want to be different. I don't want to have to do the same thing that everybody else does." Really, what it comes from is, "I don't want to do the ratzon of Hashem. I want to do my ratzon." That's נעשה לנו שם, and every one of us goes through this challenge. I don't care what excuses you have. You could have millions of excuses. I've heard them all. It's all the same thing.

Participant: What exactly did the Dor Haflagah do that showed they were going against Hashem?

They decided to start a new lifestyle and move away from where Noach and his sons established a community. The first thing is, they're making their own community. But the real underlying 'warning sign' was that's why they came up with all kinds of shitos. First, they said the rule is achdus. If you join our community, you have to have achdus. Everybody loves that. All bums love achdus. Then the first project they talk about is, "Let's build a thing against Hashem. We'll protect ourselves against Hashem." Protection. Everybody has to have protection. Everybody has to have guns. You have to protect yourself against Hashem. That's the first thing. Then you're going to war on Hashem. And then you can undermine the whole system. The idea is, you're bucking the system. There is Hashem's system in the world, and you've got to shtell tzu. That's the point.

Now, I'm not saying a guy can't be a chassid. I remember in Telz Yeshivah once, there were five guys that "converted" to chassidus. They picked a very vocal chassidus. They became Stoliners, and they started to shrei during davening like it was out of this world. It was funny. They put themselves in a different place in the beis medrash and they let go - "Amen yehei shmei raba!!!" and everybody turned around to look at them. It was a joke. They made a big ruckus, a show of themselves. I called them in. I said, "To become a chassid is wonderful. But why don't you do it in Stolin? I guarantee if you went to Stolin, you'd be considered a misnaged. Don't you understand? You want to be a Stoliner in Telz? That's weird. In Telz, you should be a Telzer. When you go to Satmar, you don't become a Stoliner or Telzer. In Satmar you act like a Satmar. That's what you do." But the guy who's bucking the system says, "This is how we serve Hashem!" That's the yetzer hara that a mentsch has. Every mentsch has that yetzer hara, and everybody has their tremendous chachmos explaining why the yeshivah was wrong or why they put it down like this. You've heard it all already. I've been through all the sugyos already. I told them, "I know this sugya, I'm a talmid chacham." That's what a mentsch has to understand.

THE FATE OF THE DOR HAMABUL VS DOR HAFLAGAH

Participant: How does this work with Rashi who says that Dor Haflagah fared better in Olam Hazeh but they lost their Olam Haba?

The Dor Haflagah had a ma'aleh. Living in this world be'achdus brings brachos for This World. That's why they didn't get wiped out in This World. Hashem gave them a chance. Ultimately, they were given a chance...to do teshuvah. That's why Hashem doesn't blow them out with water. The Dor Hamabul, when it came their time, Hashem blew them out completely; Hashem didn't just scatter them and give them a chance.

Participant: Hashem could have stopped them before they started building the tower and then they wouldn't have lost their Olam Haba. If they were not doing it for the right reasons, why did Hashem give the Dor Haflagah a chance to build the tower?

No, no, it's better to have a chance. To get a chance in This World is better. To have success in this world is also a brachah. It says about Achav, for example, the rasha, Achav - he was a tremendous rasha - that he lost his chelek in Olam Haba also it says. But he was successful in wars because of certain good things that people did in his time. That was just a lesson for us, to see the ma'aleh of hopefully getting to Olam Haba and doing those things. It shows us the importance of those things.

SIGNS OF CHANGE FOR THE GOOD

Participant: When a person changes his behavior, how can he tell if he is doing it for the right reasons, and if he has the right goal in mind?

A person really has to ask himself two things. **Number one** - my grandfather told me this yesod - you first ask yourself: Does anybody else have to know what I'm thinking? That's the first thing. Not that the seeds of becoming independent have to be on display. Change could sometimes be inside. You have to know from the start what the end result will be. Do people have to know that I'm different? That's alef.

Second of all, when a person is not shtelling tzu to a certain matzav, when that matzav is not making a person compromise his Yiddishkeit, but it's demanding more of his Yiddishkeit, then a person knows it's okay. If it's taking him away from a higher ideal, he wants to lessen the burden, then he knows he's running away.

Participant: What is a sign that a person has the right intentions?

You can tell by whether the change is happening on the inside or the outside.

SECRETS THAT ARE NOT SECRET

Participant: Are you saying a person must keep his changes hidden from others?

I said that's the first criteria for being aware of your true intentions.

When you're moving up, if it's private, no one knows about it, then it's bechezkas safety. Bechezkas safety.

There is a talmid chacham that brought me a list of things he does. He once heard a shmooze from me, a very big talmid chacham, a guy who knows a lot. And he happened to be listening to a shmooze. He came to me afterwards and he said, "I've got to talk to you. You shook me up." He said, "I have a lot of chumros and I taka realize that I've been bucking the system with my chumros. What should I do?" I said, "You heard it. You figure it out." He said, "What should I do?" I said, "Stop them." He said, "But a lot of them are so baked in. If I would become normal today," he said, "I would lose my whole ma'amad." I said, "You don't have no ma'amad. Your ma'amad is an ir in the shamayim. It's a migdal, you built a tower in the heavens." He said, "What should I do? Stop doing this? Stop doing that?" The guy mamash created around himself a whole persona that everyone knows about. I said, "What can I tell you? Have a freilechen Purim." I said, "I always knew you were a Purim Yid." I said, "The things you do in secret, that's not nogea to other people." Ein hachi nami, indeed, the problem was that he made all his chumros public knowledge. I tell you, people start doing things in secret and then they can't control themselves; they have to tell people. "You know? I have secrets." They let people know that the secret is this. This is what they do.

MISGUIDED GROWING HURTS YIDDISHKEIT

It's amazing. In yeshivos I see guys who get into strength training. Guys get to a stage where they decide, "I want to become strong." It's a popular thing in the yeshivishe velt. You decide you want to get big muscles. You write away to publications for information. In my day, it used to be Charles Atlas (Italian-born American bodybuilder, 1892-1972). He was a big man, very muscular. Everybody was trying to be like him. You look at others and you think you can also become famous like them. It's all the same yesod: נעשה לנו שם. If you hear one gadol wants to be healthy, you say, "I want to be healthy, that's all. I'm just trying to be healthy." And you wear signs all over yourself. You say, "I am learning and I am doing two things at once." It's gevaldig.

There used to be a society in America called The Salanter Society. They became a 'mussar movement.' I read their books. I read their history. I read true stories about children who went through that system. It was amazing. It was called The Salanter System. They had this big picture of Rav Yisrael Salanter and everything was done apparently al pi mussar. But in actual fact, they were frei like anything! They didn't do any mitzvos. It was a Jewish school, or rather, a Jewish-oriented school. It was located in the Lower East Side of Manhattan. It catered to the upper-crust bessere mentschen who wanted their children to grow up with good manners, etiquette and be ba'alei mussar but there was no real tochein. Today it would be a joke.

Every time the yetzer hara comes with new ideas to make not serving Hashem properly look acceptable. I mean is there anything wrong with mussar? Similarly, is there anything wrong with Israel? Today, "Israel" became the new yetzer hara, you know what I mean? People say, "Imagine, he's a combat soldier, and he supports Israel."

"ANYBODY COULD BE MOSHIACH"

Rabbosai, that's the reason why in any system, you need to be aware of your inner motivations.. You can't even stand and daven an extra-long Shemoneh Esrei, al pi halachah. Al pi halachah you can't stand and daven a long shemoneh esrei in order not to be different from others. You have to know: Why are you being different? Here is a guy who stands and davens a long shemoneh esrei. Who are you to stand and daven a long Shemoneh Esrei?

I once had a talmid. The guy used to daven the longest Shemoneh Esrei. I told the guy to stop. He said, "No." I told the guy, "Stop it." I told him, "Cut it out." I used to speak about it. He used to hear me. One day, he came to me and he said, "You know, today, I finally heard you." That was after many times of telling it to him. He said, "You know, you're right. Today, for the first time, I thought, 'Why do I stand and daven a long shemoneh esrei?'" You know what he says? "I realized it. I want everybody to think I'm a good person." I said, "Mazel tov. I've been telling you for a long time." From that day on, he tried to stop.

Then he went to the other extreme and he fell off the tracks. Do you know why? Because his whole Yiddishkeit was motivated by, "I want to be somebody." This is the same 'plague' that affects many, many people. I asked this fellow, "Why did you become frum?" He said, "I heard a speech out West that anybody could be Moshiach and I decided I'm running for Moshiach." That was the reason. He said, "I became frum to become Moshiach." I said, "I hate to disappoint you, you're not becoming Moshiach. Forget about that. You can't 'run' for Moshiach. It's not like trying to become President Obama. You can't run for Moshiach. You have to be an erliche Yid. You've got to be a mentsch for the sake of being a mentsch."

You can't become frum in order to become Moshiach. You're going to be very disappointed someday if you're going to try to be Moshiach.

KAVOD AS A MOTIVATION

Participant: Is it a problem if someone does something for kavod?

Kavod should motivate you. We spoke about that a lot of times. Kavod to motivate has to motivate you to do the right thing, not to do the wrong thing. That's the sugya. Kavod has to motivate you. You

have to use kavod as a tremendous motivation. But the motivation has to be not to get off the tracks, beyond the tracks, but to do the right thing and to do it better.

Participant: Can you learn more if you do it to get kavod?

That's fine. If you want to learn more, no problem.

Participant: What does it say about someone if he learns more just for the sake of kavod?

It says nothing, but he's doing the right thing. If he's doing the right thing for the wrong reasons, it's also a good thing. But that's only the first step. If that mehalech remains his mehalech for the rest of his life then it's a sign. Maybe he doesn't believe he can succeed. He can't reach the next step of learning lishmah, with proper motivation, the activity itself is its own reward.

In Summary

Although the Dor Haflagah was relatively close to the Dor Hamabul in terms of time, they did not learn a lesson about maintaining a close relationship with Hashem. On the contrary, as they tried to make a name for themselves, the sins of the Dor Haflagah were worse than the sins of the Dor Hamabul. Their real goal in being different was to challenge the authority of Hashem. Their attempt at rebellion is a banner to all of us, as we still wage a battle with egoism and the struggle to accept authority - whether it is the authority of the Ribbono Shel Olam, a kehillah, or a yeshivah. This week, I will (bli neder) assess the kabbalos that I made recently to see what is motivating me to change. I will see whether there are changes I can 'bring inside' so that they are not done for publicity, but for sincere internal change.

OUR CORPORATE SPONSORS

LTC Technologies
WWW.LTCTECHGROUP.COM

HAN CAPITAL

Hischadshus
Counseling Services
(516)313-9483
+972 58 77-83148

CHARLEY WINERY

BECOME A CORPORATE SPONSOR

HELP US EXPAND OUR PRESENCE IN THE TRI-STATE AREA, ERETZ YISROEL AND EUROPE!
5000+ LOYAL READERS! $500/MONTH

Sign Up to Receive Sichos Yisroel Weekly

SichosYisroel.com
ytatorah@gmail.com "sign up"
440-525 -3337 "join group"

Does your Filter block our email links?
Contact us at ytatorah@gmail.com to join our no link weekly email.

TO RECEIVE SICHOS YISROEL IN ERETZ YISROEL CALL

058 - 328 - 0814 Yerushalyim
053 - 416 - 2653 Kiryat Sefer
052 -435 - 8397 Ramat Beit Shemesh