

Parshas Noach 5763

Noach first had children when he was 500 years old. That was pretty old even in those days. And Rashi feels the need to explain that. אמר ר' יודן מה טעם כל הדורות הולידו לקי' שנה, וזה לת"ק, אמר הקב"ה אם רשעים הם יאבדו במים ורע לצדיק הזה, ואם צדיקים הם אטריח עליו לעשות תיבות הרבה, כבש את מעינו ת"ק שנה.

Obvious question. What would have been so difficult about building several תיבות; נח could have hired contractors, he had 120 years, contractors we know are slow but in 120 years a lot can be done, and he could have built as many תיבות as he wanted.

It seems that the תיבה had to be built by נח himself; no one else could do it for him. Why?

The Torah says וימח את כל היקום, everything - buildings, bridges etc. - was eradicated. The water, the Gemara in סנהדרין tells us, was boiling hot, so nothing could stand up to it. So how did the תיבה itself remain intact?

מגלה עמוקות: The תיבה was built into the dimensions of the שם השם. The letters of שם have the values 10, 5, 6 & 5. The letters of שם אדנות have values 1, 4, 50 & 10. Taking the first letter of שם הויה and first letter of שם אדנות and multiplying we get $1 \times 10 = 10$. Doing the same with second letters gives $4 \times 5 = 20$. Third letters give $50 \times 6 = 300$. And fourth letters give $5 \times 10 = 50$. So we have 10, 20, 300 & 50. 10 and 20 together are 30, the height of תיבה. 300 is length of תיבה. And 50 is width of תיבה.

Not just numbers. We could build a boat with the same dimensions and it wouldn't have any such power. Rather, the תיבה was the physical embodiment of נח's tremendous faith in the רבשי"ע. For 120 years he built it, despite the mockery of taunts of disbelief of all his friends and neighbors. Think of the courage that required; of the sacrifices that must have entailed. Remember that נח had shown tremendous promise as a youth, which everyone had recognized: he had been named נח when he invented agricultural tools, and everyone said: זה ינחמני, he's the hope of the future. He was looked up to; admired. And at the height of his powers he embarked on this seemingly wild, quixotic project to build a giant boat because the end of the world was coming. What strength of character that must have taken! What unshakable faith! What courage!

And so the very dimensions of the תיבה reflected the שם השם, they were the outer reflection of the אמונה and בטחון and מסירת נפש, the faith and trust in the רבשי"ע even at the cost of great self-sacrifice, that had gone into every plank and every nail of the תיבה. And it was that which made the תיבה impervious to destruction.

And that is why נח had to build the תיבה himself. It couldn't be contracted out. Because no contractor could built into the תיבה that faith and courage which

alone would give it the power to stand up to the raging, boiling waters of the flood to come.

תִּיבַהּ, of course, is long gone. And הקב"ה has promised no to bring another מַבּוּל, at least of water.

But there are other types of מַבּוּל. There are others floods that threaten to engulf us. There is the flood of assimilation, which has swept away so much of our people. There is the flood of hedonism, the non-stop bachanal which threatens our youth. And there is the flood of שנאת ישראל, the feral hatred that boils around us, which the פסוק describes so strikingly with the words: והרשעים כים נגרש השקט: לא יוכלו, the wicked are like a foul and churning sea which is never still.

And so we need a תִּיבַהּ of our own, to stand up to these floods.

And we have such a תִּיבַהּ. It's no coincidence that in לשה"ק the word תִּיבַהּ means - not only an ark, but also - a word. Words are also תִּיבוֹת. Words of truth, of honesty, of faith, have tremendous power. And most powerful of all are words of תורה. Like תִּיבַהּ ש'נח, every word of תורה is an embodiment of our אמונה in the רבש"ע, of our faith and our trust in Him. And just as the dimensions of תִּיבַהּ ש'נח reflected the שם השם, so too each word of Torah reflects the שם השם; indeed, as the רמב"ן explains in his introduction to the Torah, each word of תורה is a שם השם. And so like תִּיבַהּ ש'נח, each word of תִּיבַהּ is a haven and a bulward against the raging flood.

We saw before deep significance in the dimensions of the תִּיבַהּ of נח. There is another allusion in those dimensions, which is also pointed out by our קדמונים. The dimensions of the תִּיבַהּ were 30x50x300. 30 is ל'י, 50 is נ'י, and 300 is ש'י. Together they spell לשון, the tongue, whose task it is to produce תִּיבוֹת, words of Torah, each word a תִּיבַהּ, an ark, floating serenely above the boiling sea.

The floodwaters are rising. We have to be sure that the תִּיבוֹת are ready. With every word of תורה that we learn, with every שיעור in which we participate, with every effort that we expend to support to תלמידי חכמים and ישיבות, we add to that fleet of תִּיבוֹת. And in those תִּיבוֹת, because of those תִּיבוֹת, we can hope to make it safely home to port, despite the floodwaters, as did נח finally, when יונה מצאה בו מנוח, he found rest at last, as shall we, בב"א.