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Parashat Noach - #301

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## On the Parashah...

### Human Action

[Tal Chermon]

Everything that was created by Hashem needs to "**be done**," i.e. to be completed. By our actions of completion, we endow all former acts with their true significance. We can construe our deeds as if they are the extension of the tenth utterance, "Let us make man" (Bereshit 1:26). We finish off the **making** of man by the further development and improvement of mankind. Additionally, by our actions of completion we endow all of the previous nine utterances with their true significance. The Torah relates that initially there was unformed chaos which Hashem gradually arranged. We might have assumed, incorrectly, that this process of arrangement was completed at the end of the seven days of Creation. Our Sages, however, inform us that there were two thousand years of chaos, which Hashem had only begun to arrange. It was up to us to continue the process of creating order. After these two thousand years of chaos came two thousand years of human elevation by the Divine instruction of the Torah. These are followed by two thousand years during which the Messiah will come. Armed with the Torah, we tackle the task of rectifying the chaos in the world and slowly but surely advancing the world from Olam Ha-Tohu (The World of Chaos) to Olam Ha-Tikun (The World of Rectification).

## Rav Aviner on...

### Don't Eat Poison

[Be-Ahavah U-Be-Emunah – Sukkot 5774 – translated by R. Blumberg]

Don't eat poison. Don't eat sugar or salt, fat or white flour. Obviously I'm not talking about a single teaspoonful here and there. I'm talking about overdoing it.

The Master-of-the-Universe, who is good to all and whose mercy is over all His works, who sustains the entire world in His goodness, created food that is both healthy and tasty. Tosafot, d.h. Boreh, in Berachot 37a comments on the words of the after-blessing Boreh Nefashot: "G-d creates all life and its needs: Like bread and water, which we cannot do without. For all the things You have created to sustain every living being. In other words, for everything in the world that G-d created for our pleasure, even if we can survive without it, such as apples."

Everything is so delicious and so sweet in G-d's world. And what does man do? He separates the sweetness and sells it separately. He removes the sugar from sugar cane and adds it to heavily sweetened soft-drinks, seven teaspoonfuls per cup, thereby destroying people's health. And not only does this destroy man's physical health, but his spiritual health as well, because the soul does not like excess consumption. This troubles and saddens it.

And what is excess consumption? It means gluttonously eating beyond one's true health needs. Some people are so enslaved to their own gluttony that they view eating as solely a means of satisfying that gluttony, and they let their gluttony reign without thinking about whether the food they are eating is helpful or harmful.

Maran Ha-Rav Kook wrote: "When one eats out of gluttony, his anguish increases, along the lines of 'those who eat bread in anguish' (Tehillim 127:2)" (Orot Ha-Kodesh 3:292).

Likewise, in Orot Ha-Teshuvah, the three paragraphs about improper food consumption (14:8-10) are placed in the midst of paragraphs about anguish.

Some people eat not out of a real need, but to assuage their anguish and frustration. But the truth is the exact opposite. According to Rambam (Hilchot De'ot, Chapter 3), there are three levels, one higher than the next, with regards to eating

1. Eating out of gluttony.

2. Eating to be healthy.

3. Eating to be healthy so as to obtain strength to serve G-d.

4. And there is a fourth level that is still higher, that Rambam does not mention, but is found at the end of the book Mesillat Yesharim (Chapter 26): raising sparks of holiness. This is the level of "Kedushah", holiness. It is exemplified by the Cohanim, when they consume sacrificial meat. In that instance, the very fact of eating constitutes Divine service. Obviously, we are not on that level.

Yet we are not on the third level either. After all, Rambam wrote that such a type of eating is close to the level of prophecy (Shemoneh Perakim, Chapter 5).

And even the second level, eating for the benefit of our health, is difficult for us. After all, there are 1.6 billion people on earth who are overweight, and 520 million who are outright obese.

Every day, 140 million dollars are spent on illnesses linked to excess weight, and 55 million dollars are spent on weight-loss programs.

So, dear friend, don't eat poison. Aspire to the third level or at least to the second. True, such things are not popular in our world, which is a world of immediate gratification.

In Western culture in general, the world is viewed as a place to satisfy our cravings. This is seen as the purpose of life. It is a continuation of Greek culture, which is itself a continuation of even more ancient paganism.

By contrast, Avraham Avinu taught that our purpose on this earth is to meet our obligations, as is explained in Mesillat Yesharim, Chapter 1. Pleasure is just a means for enabling man to meet those obligations.

Obviously, it's permissible to eat a sugary treat, some candy or cake occasionally, as on Shabbat or holidays. But one should not do it "like those people who eat and drink and make all their lives a holiday" (Shabbat 151. Rambam, Hilchot De'ot 5:1). And to think that there are plenty of people who celebrate every day, four or five times, by consuming candy and other sweets!

The rule is this: the righteous eat until satisfied, whereas the wicked are never satisfied, because the brain apparatus of being satisfied is not built for candies. So stop eating sugar and salt, margarine and white flour/carpenter's glue. Have mercy on your body which is on high alert to rid itself, via great toil, of all these poisons. Have mercy on your soul, which senses your decline and weeps inside.

You might be asking yourself: So from now on I should live ascetically, suffering all my life with food that tastes like cardboard?

But that's not the case. Slowly, you'll regain your natural sense of taste that you lost. Go back to clean, healthy natural food.

"This is the bread that G-d is giving you to eat...Each man shall take as much as he needs...The one who had taken more did not have any extra, and the one who had taken less did not have too little. They had gathered exactly enough for each one to eat...Some did not listen to Moshe and left a portion over for the morning. It became putrid and maggoty with worm... The people gathered it each morning, according to what each person would eat" (Shemot 16:15-21).

On Shabbat one can enjoy oneself, and on Yom Tov as well. But one should not go too far. Shabbat is holy. Shabbat is for G-d.

## **Shut She'eilat Shlomo - Questions of Jewish Law**

### A Skull that did not Wear Tefillin

Q: Why is failing to wear Tefillin such a severe transgression that the Gemara (Rosh Hashanah 17a) says: "Who are the sinners of Israel? Rav said: a skull that did not wear Tefillin"? Can someone who did not put on Tefillin rectify their sin?

A: Some explain that "a skull that did not wear Tefillin" refers to someone who did not wear Tefillin even one time during his lifetime (Rabbenu Chananel ibid. and Rif ibid. 4a). Others explain that the reason he never put on Tefillin is because the Mitzvah is embarrassing to him. He does not want to put straps and boxes around his head and on his arms (Tosafot ibid. and Rosh ibid. 1.5). And there are still others who explain that this statement does not only apply to Tefillin but to any mitzvah that is done with one's body, since it is forbidden to shame any mitzvah and it is a disgrace not to fulfill it even one time (Ron ibid. in pages of the Rif and Korban

Netanel ibid. #10). The Tosafot there, however, did mention that if someone did not put on Tefillin, he is able to repent. Everything can be repaired. Nothing stands in the way of repentance even in the case of severe transgressions. The Tosafot said that if he repents, the repentance will hang in the balance until he dies and the suffering of death will complete the process of repentance. There are people who stand in the street and try to get Jews to put on Tefillin even if they will not do so again. The last Lubavitcher Rebbe – Ha-Rav Menachem Mendel Schneerson – explained that a person should put on Tefillin at least once in his lifetime so he does not have "a skull that did not wear Tefillin" according to the first explanation (see Sha'arei Halachah U-Minhag vol. 1, p. 84).

Special thank you to Orly Tzion for editing the Ateret Yerushalayim Parashah Sheet



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