מאורות | MEOROS WEEKLY

Rabbi Yehuda Meir Hirsch
MACHON MEOROS HAKSAV

Three Sons, Three Paths

וַיִּהְיוּ בְנֵי נֹחַ הַיֹּצְאִים מִן הַתֵּבָה שֵׁם וְחָם וָיֶפֶת וְחָם הוּא אֲבִי כְנָעַן. שְׁלֹשָׁה אֵלֶּה בְּנֵי נֹחַ וּמֵאֵלֶּה נָפְצָה כָּל הָאָרֶץ.

"The sons of Noach who emerged from the ark were Shem, Cham, and Yefes, and Cham was the father of Canaan. These three were the sons of Noach, and from these the whole earth was populated."

(Bereishis 9:18-19)

Human Motivation

Two early founders of modern psychology, both of whom rejected Torah belief, asked: What makes man tick? The first viewed man as driven primarily by instincts, desires, urges, and needs, with little control over his impulses. His student argued that people are motivated mainly by others' opinions and the desire to appear admirable, respectable, or successful.

Both portray man as ruled by selfish drives — inner cravings or social approval — with little room for freedom or moral growth.

Torah offers another answer: **a person can act lishmah, without ulterior motives, simply because it is right.**

Three Ideologies

Parshas Noach repeatedly names Shem, Cham, and Yefes, but when they emerge from the Teivah, adds:

וַיִּהְיוּ בְנֵי נֹחַ הַיֹּצְאִים מִן הַתֵּבָה שֵׁם וְחָם וָיֶפֶת... וּמֵאֵלֶּה נָפְצָה כָּל הָאָרֶץ

"The sons of Noach who came out of the ark were Shem, Cham, and Yefes... and from these the whole earth was populated" (Bereishis 9:18-19).

Maharal of Prague explains that these sons represent three foundational approaches to life. Just as humanity physically descended from them, mankind's outlooks and motivations follow their three paths. Yefes, whose name relates to beauty and appearance, represents doing good to look good. Cham, associated with chumriyus, materiality and physicality, represents instinct, appetite, and impulse. Shem, connected to lishmah, represents doing right because it is right: three motivations — desire, approval, or truth.

Same Act, Different Intention

Their responses to Noach reveal these outlooks. After the Mabul, Noach became intoxicated and lay uncovered. Cham saw him and showed no concern; Shem and Yefes quickly covered him with dignity. Although they performed the same outward act, Yefes was rewarded that his descendants, Gog and Magog, would merit proper burial, while Shem received the mitzvah of techeiles in tzitzis.

Netziv explains that their intentions differed. Yefes sought to cover the visible shame of an exposed body and restore his father's outward dignity. Shem sought to cover the neshamah's inner embarrassment, the spiritual disgrace of Noach's condition. Yefes' external, physical concern earned physical burial; Shem's inward, spiritual concern earned a spiritual garment — tzitzis adorned with techeiles.

Identical deeds can be worlds apart in Heaven because of their intentions.

PARSHAS NOACH
תשפ"ז
ISSUE
13

מִתּוֹךְ שֶׁלֹּא לִשְׁמָהּ בָּא לִשְׁמָהּ

(Pesachim 50b)

A Jew's actions shelo lishmah can develop into lishmah. Even a deed done for gain or recognition carries within it the seed of pure ratzon.

Rav Yerucham Levovitz zt"l

The Mashgiach of Mir

"Darwin claimed that man descended from apes because he looked in the mirror and saw himself.

Had he looked at the Chofetz Chaim, he would never have made such a claim!"

A Life Lishmah

Beyond Desire and Ego

The Inner Calling

Rav Shneur Zalman of Liadi explains in Sefer HaTanya חסד לאמים חטאת (Mishlei 14:34): a non-Jew cannot act purely lishmah, without an ulterior motive, simply "because it is right." A Jew's actions shelo lishmah can develop into lishmah, as Chazal teach: מתוך שלא לשמה בא לשמה.

A Jew who had strayed from his roots lived among non-Jews, changing his behavior and dress to fit in. Eventually, emptiness and the question "What is my purpose?" gave him no rest. His friends' answers went in circles: "Why do we work?" "To eat." "Why eat?" "To live." "Why live?" "To have fun." "Why have fun?" They looked at him strangely: "To have fun!" As the verse states: אכול ושתו כי מחר נמות, "Eat and drink, for tomorrow we die" (Yeshaya 22:13; Taanis 11a).

A Jew cannot be satisfied with this; his neshamah calls him to a higher purpose. In this understanding, non-Jews descend from Cham or Yefes and are content within those value systems. A Jew, descended from Shem, seeks a life lishmah, beyond gain, recognition, or even emotional fulfillment — a life aligned with a higher, absolute purpose.

It's in Our Blood

Le'asid Lavo, the nations will complain that they were not given Torah like the Jews: "Why didn't You hold the mountain over us?" They will claim the Jews accepted only under coercion. The Midrash teaches that Hashem will ask for their ספר יוחסין, book of lineage.

The Chasam Sofer explains that this concerns inner nature, not ancestry alone. Only descendants of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov possess this deeply rooted רצון טוב, the innate desire to do right. Even a coerced good deed expresses their genuine will: coercion strips away what obscures it. Thus, כופין אותו עד שיאמר רוצה אני, As the Rambam explains at the end of Chapter 2 of Hilchos Gerushin, "we compel him until he says, 'I want to.'" every Jew truly desires to fulfill Hashem's will; it is only his *yetzer hara* that prevents him. When coercion weakens that resistance, his consent expresses his true inner will. Coercion uncovers, rather than creates, the Jew's essential desire, inherited from his forefathers.

The nations, descending from Cham and Yefes, lack this same ingrained רצון טוב. Holding the mountain over them could produce external acceptance without inner desire, which would not be a binding acceptance of Torah.

Bound for Destruction

Sefer Bereishis traces Dor HaMabul, destroyed by the flood; Dor HaFlagah, whose unity collapsed; Sedom, overturned; and the lines of Yishmael and Eisav. This progression shows the repeated failure of Cham's and Yefes' legacies to endure: their systems, beliefs, and commitments lack lasting zechus kiyum, sustaining merit.

By contrast, Torah traces בירור אחר בירור, successive selection: Adam, Sheis, Shem, Avraham, Yitzchak, Yaakov, and ultimately the Shivtei Yisrael — a lineage of lishmah, serving Hashem beyond external motives. The broad record of humanity narrows; the narrative slows at Avraham and elaborates on the Avos, while briefly mentioning Yishmael's and Eisav's descendants.

"Midrash Tanchuma compares this to a king searching for a precious gem among dirt and pebbles. Once he finds the gem, he sets the dirt and pebbles aside and turns his attention to the treasure." (Tanchuma, Vayeishev 1; see also Rashi to Bereishis 37:1.)

THE THREE SONS OF NOACH

Three Dimensions of Man • Three Pillars of the World

נֹחַ — חֵן

שֵׁם — לשמה — מהות ותכלית	**NEFESH / NESHAMAH** **Truth and purpose** *Pure ratzon • Lishmah* **תורה לשמה** Revealing truth and the will of Hashem
יֶפֶת — יפה — פתי	**RUACH** **Ego and self-image** *Beauty • Pride • Honor* **עבודה** Transforming ego into humility and devotion
חָם — חמימות — מח	**GUF** **Physical desire** *Instincts • Pleasure • Taavah* **גמילות חסדים** Elevating physical action through giving. As opposed to the chessed hara that is stated In Parshas Kedoshim, Vayikra 20:17: **"וְאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר יִקַּח אֶת אֲחֹתוֹ... חֶסֶד הוּא"** Rashi explains: **"לשון ארמי: חרפה —** **חסודא"** — here *chesed* means disgrace or shame.

THE POWER OF THE PINTELE YID

"Digging for Diamonds"

"Freud searched the human psyche and found taavah. Adler searched and found ego. But one must know where and how to dig for diamonds.

A Gadol digs deeper, beyond desire and ego, and uncovers the neshamah tehorah — the priceless diamond of pure, untainted ratzon lishmah hidden within every Yid."

The Three Dimensions Within Man

Every person contains three battling dimensions: Guf, Ruach, and Neshamah. Guf represents taavos, instincts, and pleasure; Ruach represents ego, gasus haruach, pride, self-image, recognition, and superiority. Neshamah is the innermost, untainted ratzon to fulfill Ratzon Hashem purely lishmah, without pleasure, honor, or gain.

These are forces within us, not merely different kinds of people: the body seeks pleasure, the ego glory, the neshamah truth.

The Guf asks, **"What do I enjoy?"** Ruach asks, **"How am I perceived?"** Neshamah asks, **"What does Hashem want?"**

Our lifelong task is to rise above bodily demands and ego's illusions, allowing the neshamah to reveal our purpose.

For Sponsorship & Dedication Opportunities or to Sign Up to the Meoros Weekly →

publish@meoroshaksav.com 732.782.5000 meoroshaksav.com