

חסידות

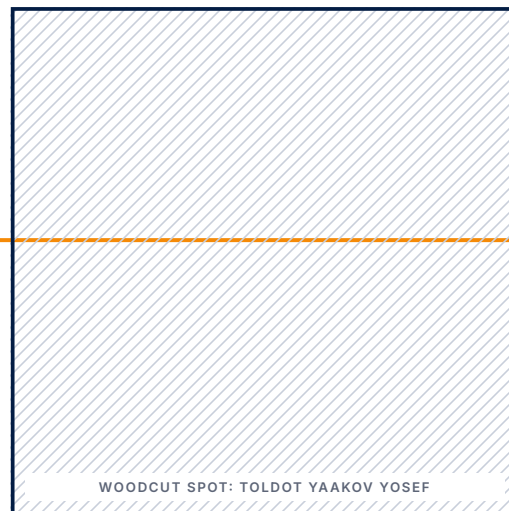
From the Chassidic Courts

POLNOYE · TOLDOT YAAKOV YOSEF, NOACH

What really makes Shabbat rest holy

Toldot Yaakov Yosef

Through guarding the "covenant of speech" — refraining from idle talk and devoting speech on Shabbat to holiness — one draws down "rest" (menuchah) both above and below, enabling the threefold Shabbat meals (corresponding to Shem, Cham, and Yefet, i.e., Malchut, Binah/Abba-Imma, and Tiferet) to unite as one, and thereby to acquire nefesh, ruach, and neshamah; one who instead sits alone or indulges in idle or mundane speech loses this union, reducing his Shabbat to the spiritual equivalent of a weekday ("borrow on My account" applies only to one who joins face-to-face with the Divine and others, "and I will repay" with blessing). Noach's example — walking with God in thought, speech, or deed according to one's level — teaches that true Shabbat rest is achieved by cleaving to holiness even in attention and speech, not merely refraining from labor. AI SUMMARY



These are the generations of Noach. Noach was a righteous (tzaddik) man, perfect (tamim) in his generations; Noach walked with God. And Noach begot three sons: Shem, Cham, and Yafet, etc. (Genesis 6:9-10). And in the midrash (homiletical teaching) on Parashat Noach (Bereishit Rabbah 30:5): "Rest for the upper [worlds], rest for the lower [worlds]," etc. And we will also explain the question raised by the Tosafot (medieval commentaries) on "Borrow on My account and I will repay" (Beitzah 15b, Tosafot s.v. "levu"), for behold, we say (Pesachim 112a), "Make your Shabbat like a weekday [rather than depend on others]," etc.

(Numbers 8:2), and on "for she heard that Hashem had visited His people to give them bread" (Ruth 1:6) — from where did she hear it? From the peddlers who go about the towns, etc. (Ruth Rabbah 2:11). The point that emerges is this: when Yisrael are face to face with Him, blessed be He, this is the meaning of "Good and upright is Hashem, therefore He instructs

sinners in the way" etc. (Psalms 25:8) — look there [for the fuller explanation]. And so too with a talmid chacham (Torah scholar), as it is written, "and to Him shall you cleave" (Deuteronomy 10:20) — cleave to the talmid chacham. Then [the verse] "and I will turn toward you, and I will establish My covenant with you" (cf. Leviticus 26:9) [applies], by way of the secret of a union face to face, to bestow a direct light, which is [the state of being] satisfied — unlike the alternative, etc. Look there [for the fuller explanation].

And through this, [the phrase] "lavu alai" (borrow on My account) can be understood: to join with Me panim b'panim (face to face) — then I am able to speak musar (moral reproof). And "as long as there is tochachah (rebuke) in the world, there is blessing" (Tamid 28a). And this is the meaning of "ani pore'a" (I will repay) — to bestow blessing. This is not so, however, when one turns his back and not his face, for then he stands alone by himself, and the Name,

may He be blessed, likewise turns His face away from him; and then [applies the teaching], "make your Shabbat into a weekday," etc. And this is readily understood.

This, it seems to me, [explains] "and it cast the emet (truth) to the ground" (Daniel 8:12) — whenever they cast the words of Torah to the ground, etc. (Petichta de'Eichah Rabbah 2) — in line with what comes afterward, "emet (truth) will sprout from the ground" (Tehillim 85:12), and this is readily understood.

By this it can be understood that because he caused contentment (nachas) Above, to bring about zivug (union) panim b'panim (face to face), in the mystery of "I will establish My covenant with you" (Bereishit 6:18), as is written in the Zohar — he thereby also caused contentment below, drawing forth abundance to his generations, both before the Flood had come, and also afterward. And this is readily understood (kal l'havin).

Here too one may say, that it is written in the Zohar concerning the matter of "rest above, rest below," regarding Shabbat (see Zohar I, Noach), as cited there. And let us explain the aforementioned difficulty of the Tosafot in another way.

Regarding this, it seems to me that it is written (Bereshit 2:5), "and every siach ha-sadeh" (shrub/discourse of the field), etc., and they interpreted in the Zohar (Bereshit 25b) and Tikkunim (Tikkunei Zohar 86b) that this refers to the tzaddik (righteous person), etc. — see there. The matter is this: there are two kinds of zivug (union/coupling). One is the zivug elyon (supernal union), in the secret of speech, and this is the secret of "they saw her speaking" (see Ketubot, chapter 1, mishnah 8), as is written in the kitvei (writings). And there is a zivug tachton (lower union). Corresponding to these there are two covenants: the brit ha-lashon (covenant of the tongue) and the brit ha-ma'or (covenant of the flesh/the sexual organ). And through the guarding of the brit ha-lashon, the brit ha-ma'or is guarded, as it is written, "v'nishmarta mikol davar ra" (Devarim 23:10) — "and you shall guard yourself from every evil thing" — meaning from evil speech, for one causes the other.

By this, the following may be understood: "These are the tol'dot (generations/offspring) of Noach" — that through the guarding of the "berit ha'elyon" (the upper covenant), the "berit halashon" (covenant of the tongue/speech), which is called "Noach" (rest/ease), there comes "nach" (ease/rest) to the "tachtonim" (lower beings/powers), enabling one to guard the "berit hame'or" (the covenant of the organ, i.e., sexual purity) — and understand this well. This is why the tol'dot (offspring) of Noach are Shem, Cham, and Yefet, whose initial letters form the word "si'ach" (speech/conversation). Afterward I found this in Likutei Torah, see there (parashat Noach, s.v. "vayoled") — meaning that one should be careful regarding idle speech (sichat chullin) all his days, and especially on Shabbat, which is called "a covenant between Me and the Children of Israel" (Exodus 31:16-17).

Also, this hints at the three meals of Shabbat. Friday night's meal, called "the meal of the field of holy apples" — this is Malchut (Kingship), which is called "Name" (Shem), as is known from the secret of "Blessed be the Name of His glorious Kingdom forever and ever." The Shacharit (morning) meal of Shabbat corresponds to the three upper sefirot of Abba and Imma (Father and Mother), in the secret of Chochmah, Binah, Da'at (ChaBaD); these are the union of Abba and Imma — Havayah (the Tetragrammaton) and Ehyeh, whose gematria (numerical value) equals Cham, seventy-five — and this is called, in secret, Atika (the Ancient One) clothed within Abba and Imma. The Minchah (afternoon) meal of Zeir Anpin, the secret of Tiferet, is called Yefet. Then all are joined together, in the secret of "God shall enlarge Yefet, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem" (Genesis 9:27). This is why it is called "three meals" — for then the three aspects are united together.

By this, "borrow upon me" may be understood — that is, the intent of the gathering of people and their joining together in the third meal is that they join together and "borrow upon me," to unify the three aspects mentioned above, which is "upon me," in the secret of "then you shall delight upon (al) HaShem" (Isaiah 58:14); understand this. And then, "and I will repay" — for through the zivug (union/pairing) the shefa (divine flow/abundance) is drawn

forth to bestow, which is not so when one sits at this meal by himself; then "make your Shabbat like a weekday," etc.

This is what is meant by "Noach walked with Elokim" — that in any case, on the Shabbat called "Noach," one's thought must cling to Elokim, whether through mach'shavah (thought), or through dibbur (speech), or through ma'aseh (deed), at the very least — each person according to his own level: for the common man, through deed; for the talmid chacham (Torah scholar), through speech; and for the tzaddik (righteous person) and chassid (pious person), even through thought. This is like what I heard, that hesach hada'at (diversion of attention/mind) is forbidden on Shabbat, derived by a kal vachomer (a fortiori inference) from tefillin, etc. U'dvarav sheyitztayru al pi hadin — "and his words should be examined according to the law" (an expression indicating the statement requires further verification, lit. "and his words are correct and true" abbreviated).

And this is the meaning of "and Noach begot [Shem]": the nyacha (rest) and shevitah (cessation) of Shabbat have three aspects. One is to acquire on Shabbat the nefesh, ruach, and neshamah (the three levels of the soul), and preparation for this is required during the six weekdays — three days before Shabbat and three days after it — [this aspect] is called "shem" (name), as in "and David made himself a name" (II Samuel 8:13), and as in "to make for Himself an everlasting name" (Isaiah 63:12); [this is] to rectify the aspect of asiyah (action/doing) through practical mitzvot (commandments) — to

acquire the nefesh through asiyah, which is Malchut (the sefirah of Kingship), called "shem," nesting within the asiyah that is called nefesh.

And also, all six days of the week serve to clarify the 288 nitzutzin (sparks); and together with the Name of Ban, [the resulting number] equals the gematria (numerical value) of "shem" (name). But on Shabbat there is nyacha and shevitah from clarifying the 288 sparks, for there are no birurim (clarifications) on Shabbat.

Thus, the offspring (toldah) of Noach is "Shem" — in the aspect of the asiyah performed during the six weekdays — while on Shabbat he is "Av" (father) to all of them, which is the nyacha.

Category B is Cham, which is Binah (Understanding) in the union of Abba (Father), gematria "Cham," which brings forth voice and speech. And the intention is to acquire ruach (spirit) on Shabbat, and this requires preparation, as mentioned above, as is known from the writings (Pri Etz Chaim, Shaar HaLulav, chapter 7) regarding the intention of the hakafah (circling) in the secret of speech—see there. And also that the speech should be with the warmth of the flaming fire of the category of the tzaddik (righteous one) who is called "chai" (alive), which they pronounce "PRISH" — the opposite of the rasha (wicked one) who is called "dead," because his words of Torah and prayer are done with laziness, as I wrote in the explanation of the difficulty regarding "u'faarah pi l'li choq" (Isaiah 5:14), concerning which Rabbi Yochanan and Reish Lakish disagree (Sanhedrin 111a) — see there. And on Shabbat there is rest and cessation from mundane matters, only words of holiness, and one acquires ruach (spirit).

Translation: translated by AI (anthropic/claude-sonnet-5)

