

# Parsha Pearls

FROM THE WORDS OF THE GEDOLIM

## And all the earth was one language, and of the same words. (11:1)

Rashi explains that the people saw that a flood had come to the world and killed millions of people, and they feared it would happen again. Their wisest men gathered and came to the conclusion: "Once every 1656 years the sky falls in. Let us built support pillars for it!"

Rabbi Avigdor Miller said: The Gemora in Yevamos (63A) says, "No misfortune comes upon the world except because of Yisroel." If an accident occurs in some faraway land where there is not even one Jew, it is a principle of Torah that it happens only because of the Jewish people. Rashi adds, "To scare them so that they will repent." We are obligated to look from afar and learn fear of Heaven, and not wait until catastrophe strikes closer to home. If we learn fear of Heaven from the misfortunes of faraway lands, then we will be spared misfortunes close to us, G-d forbid.

Scripture states, "You smite a scoffer, and the simpleton becomes wise" (Mishlei 19:25). Here are two types of people: the scoffer and the simpleton. The scoffer refuses to hear any rebuke. He avoids rabbis and scholars, because he doesn't want anyone to tell him of his faults. The simpleton (pesi) is a person who talks

himself (mefateh) into sinning, but he is ready to listen when others speak to him. For a scoffer, no amount of rebuke helps; he must be smitten. Hashem smites the scoffer and he is taken to the hospital, and still he does not change. But the simpleton sees what happened to the scoffer, and learns from it.

Today people read the newspaper, hear the news, but it makes no impression – a terrible waste! Blood is being shed for nothing, with no positive result. If we would gain awareness and fear of Hashem, then all the world with its events would be serving a purpose. But the blood of the nations is shed, and we learn nothing. We gain no fear; we say that it just happened that way, for various reasons, and we need not fear. This is the way of those who lack emunah.

This was the sin of the generation that built the Tower. They saw the Flood as a natural phenomenon, and took steps to prevent it. They failed to recognize that if Hashem caused so many people to die, He must have done it for a good reason. "He Who chastises nations, is He not thereby rebuking them?" (Tehillim 94:10) Hashem punishes only in order to teach those who remain and all future generations. "He is the

one Who teaches man knowledge" (ibid. 11) – the entire purpose of all misfortunes and wars is only to teach man knowledge. The purpose of the Flood was only to teach the later generations, and these people showed that they had learned nothing – to them the Flood was a mere accident. If so, Hashem had killed all those people for nothing, and He considered it as if the builders of the Tower had shed their blood.

In our time we have experienced a flood of fire, a flood that has no equal since the creation of the world. What happened to the Jewish people in Europe should terrify us and arouse us from now until the redemption. We should be speaking constantly of the judgment of Hashem – "what is this G-d has done to us?" (Bereishis 42:28) The crematorium and all the other kinds of slaughter and torture that took place should be constantly before our eyes. But instead, a great silence has descended upon the earth. Worse yet, they learn the opposite of the lesson they were supposed to learn. The Jewish world is ruled by wicked atheists who write the newspapers; the Jewish populace, including the religious, read their words and see only the heretical meaning of the Holocaust. They say, "How can we speak critically of that

great generation of holy martyrs? The Jews of Europe, as is well known, were all righteous and pious, G-d-fearing and wholesome." If even on such righteous people Hashem brought a flood of fire, then what good does it do to be righteous? "It is vain to serve G-d." (Malachi 3:14)

But this great lie could only be propagated by men with closed eyes. We must reveal the truth, the same truth that the Chofetz Chaim spoke when he said that a terrible tragedy was about to come upon the world because they had cast away Judaism. Rabbi Elchanan Wasserman wrote in a letter that most Jewish children were being raised like gentiles, and

a great catastrophe was on its way. Today's American Jews did not see the world of Europe and they refuse to hear the truth, but the gedolim then looked with open eyes and saw what was happening. The general populace had cast away their Judaism. The largest Jewish party in Poland was the Socialist Bund; in Lithuania most Jews were Zionists. Jewish Europe was rotten at the core. Of course there were gedolim and holy men whom we lost, but they were the atonement for the majority.

Today, when an Arab throws a bomb and kills 10 or 20 Jews, isn't that a hint? Some hint! Once upon a time when one Jew was killed it

was a hint. But today – nothing. Hundreds have been killed but they ignore it. They're waiting for bigger hints, G-d forbid. They're going to come. Bigger and bigger. And when the hints come, they still won't get the message; they'll say, "It's the fault of the Orthodox who didn't come to Eretz Yisroel and strengthen the Medinah. You kollel people who are wasting your time, why didn't you come and join the army?" And they'll find other ways of corrupting the hint. But we have to find the chest of gold, which is when a Jew learns to take a hint from Hakadosh Boruch Hu. And we don't wait for big hints. (Lecture in yeshiva; R-57)

## **Let us go down and mix up there their languages, so that each man will not understand the language of his fellow. (11:7)**

The Gemora in Sanhedrin 109a says that a third of the tower was burnt and a third sank into the earth. The worst of the people were transformed into monkeys, evil spirits and demons. The Midrash says that the sea rose up and overran part of the world. The remaining people were swallowed up by the mountains. If so, the question arises: After making all these miracles to destroy them, why did G-d have to mix up their languages as well? Furthermore, of all the miracles, the only one mentioned explicitly in the Torah is the mixing of the languages. Why was this the most important action taken by G-d?

This problem is addressed in the Zohar: "Why did He have to confound their languages? Because they were all speaking the Holy Tongue, and that language gave them help, for these things depend on actions and words of the mouth...Once their language was changed, their actions had no success. For the powers above do not know or recognize any language but the Holy Tongue, so when their language was confounded

their power was weakened and their strength was broken. Come and see that whenever a word is spoken below in the Holy Tongue, all the powers of heaven know about it and are strengthened through it, but if it is spoken in another language, they do not know or recognize it. Therefore, as soon as their language was confounded, 'they stopped building the city.' For their power had been broken and they did not know how to carry out any of their plans." (Zohar 75b)

Thus, it is the greatest misfortune when wicked men speak the Holy Tongue, for this was the only way the builders of the Tower were able to succeed in leading the entire world to rebellion against G-d, bringing bitter punishments upon the world. Although righteous men such as Avraham Avinu, Noach, Shem and Ever were alive at the time, G-d saw that there was no way of stopping the wicked men from success, except by taking the Holy Tongue away from them. (Vayoel Moshe, Lashon Hakodesh, Chapter 19)



True Torah Jews  
183 Wilson St. PMB 162  
Brooklyn, NY 11211

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1710 Flushing Ave  
Ridgewood NY, 11385  
T: 718.963.1960 F: 718.963.1985  
E: support@concordiasvc.com