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BILVAVI ON NOACH

**Drashas from the
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שיחת השבוע 006 – נח – טהרה

01 | *The Purity of Mikveh*

The Mabul: The Waters That Purified The World

In *Parashas Noach*, the Torah describes the event of the Deluge / *Mabul*, the giant flood which destroyed all life on this world. The world had reached such a low point of spiritual contamination that it could not continue. Hashem punished the generation by opening up all of the heavens and releasing all of the waters upon the world.

There is a statement of the Sages, “From the wound itself, comes the recovery.” The Flood is not to be viewed simply as a punishment to that generation, but as a recovery to that ruined world. The Flood seems to us as nothing but an event of destruction, where the entire world was submerged by the flood besides for *Eretz Yisrael*, according to our Sages. What rectification did it bring to the world?

The Sages state that from the generations of Adam until Noach, the world was wicked, until the righteous man Noach came and received reward for all of the generations that had ignored Hashem. Not only was Noach rewarded, but in his merit, the world was created anew. All of the nations of the world ever since Noach (except for the Jewish nation) are called “*bnei Noach*” / sons of Noach. In other words, Noach brought about an entirely new world that had not existed before the flood. The waters of the Flood, the waters of destruction that obliterated all of the generations until Noach, at the same time were the beginning of a new world, which would now label all people in the world as “*bnei Noach*”.

Thus, the destruction brought about by the Flood was only a destruction of the generations from Adam until Noach. The Flood brought a rectification to the world, a new world in Noach’s merit, where people would now be called *bnei Noach*.

Even more so, the waters of the Flood, besides for being waters of retribution and wrath to the world, were like a giant *mikveh* that came and purified the world with its waters. A *mikveh* purifies the impure since water contains the power to purify. (There is also a concept that fire can purify, but it is mainly water which purifies and serves as a *mikveh* to purify the impure). So the flood brought destruction to the world, but it was also like a *mikveh* which purified the entire world. On a more subtle note, it was like a *maayan* (a spring), which can purify any level of spiritual contamination.

Just as an individual immerses in a *mikveh* when he is spiritually impure, and he is thereby cleansed from impurity by the waters of the *mikveh*, so is there a concept that the world as a whole can be purified by a “*mikveh*”, when the world has become entirely impure and it is need of being purified by water. That *mikveh* was the *Mabul*, which allowed for a new and purified world.

This purity that came to the world by the *Mabul* will once again come to the world at the time of the End of Days, as the prophet states, “*And the world will be filled with the knowledge of Hashem, like waters that cover.*” There will be purity that will come to the world, in the sense that everyone in the world will know of Hashem. This is in line with the words of the Rambam when he writes about the matter of *mikveh*: immersing in a *mikveh* means to immerse oneself in the “waters of *daas*”, which refers to the inner, spiritual knowledge of G-dliness.

Even more so, the Sages state that the world will last for 6,000 years and then it will be destroyed for 1000 years, and it will return to the state of being filled with water as it was in the beginning of Creation, and then Hashem will renew the world. Just as Hashem renewed the world in the generation of Noach by bringing the flood upon the world, so will Hashem purify the entire world in the end of days and return it back to water: “*I will remove the spirit of impurity from upon the earth*”. This will be done through water, which purifies. We will then see the prophecy fulfilled in which Hashem will renew the world, just as Hashem renewed the world in Noach’s times, through the *Mabul*.

In the future, death will be removed. Death was the curse given to mankind ever since the sin of Adam, and death causes the highest state of spiritual impurity; death is termed by our Sages as the “father of the father of all impurity”. In the future, when a great purity will come to the world, we will be purified from the great impurity that is death, and we will then be able to live forever.

When we reflect on this, we can better understand the purity that water accomplishes, and more specifically, the purifying power of the *mikveh* which we have in our times.

Raising Ourselves From ‘Earth’ To ‘Water’

Hashem created the world with four elements: fire, wind, water, and earth.

Since man is created from the earth, the nature of man is to be drawn downwards, towards the earth. Just as an animal eats from the ground and lowers itself to the ground, so does man tend to be drawn towards lowliness, towards the “earth”. Although man is created with a soul which seeks to ascend to its Source in heaven, the initial and unrefined state of man causes him to descend to earth. Rabbeinu Yonah writes that “the spirit of the wicked causes him to descend further and further.” After the first sin in mankind, man was told “*You are earth, and to earth you shall return.*” This meant that ever since the first sin, man is drawn towards earth, towards lowliness, towards sin. Every time a person sins, he becomes more connected with the earth.

Therefore, the purity that a person needs is to rise above the “earth” that he has become entrenched in. In the makeup of the soul, earth is the lowest point, and above earth is water, then wind, and then fire. After a person has sinned, he has lowered himself into the earth. In order to be purified from the mud he has fallen into, he must rise from the ‘earth’ and enter into water.

That ‘water’ is essentially the purifying waters of the *mikveh*. We are also able to immerse in a *maayan* (a natural spring), which resembles the purity that came to the world through the *Mabul*. In

the generation of the flood, the morality of man had fallen so low that man had sunken deep into “earth”, and being entrenched in the “earth” continued the destructive behaviors of mankind. Thus, when man is entrenched in ‘earth’, the way he is purified is through rising from the level of ‘earth’ to the level of ‘water’.

The Rambam says that the law of *mikveh* is a decree of the written Torah which we cannot logically understand, but as we know, there is always a reason that we can understand since there is always an inner meaning to everything.

At the generation of the flood, the many sins of mankind caused them to become too entrenched in the ‘earth’, to the point that they deserved the curse of death that is associated with the ‘earth’. Thus they needed ‘water’ to purify them from.

But if a person rises from the ‘earth’ he has fallen into and he connects himself to the level of ‘water’ (and even more so, to the Source of all living waters, the *Mekor Mayim Chayim*, Who is Hashem), he then leaves the root of the sin that he had been connected with.

Understanding the Purity of Mikveh

The waters of *mikveh* (and even more so, a *maayan*) bring purity upon a person who has become spiritually impure. But that water purifies him only because it is the result of *leaving* the ‘earth’ that he had been previously connected with and to connect instead to the ‘water’. Therefore, this purity is not accomplished through the mere physical act of immersing in the *mikveh*.

Of course, the very act of immersing in a *mikveh* is what enables the purity, but as we have mentioned earlier from the words of the Rambam, there is more to the matter of *mikveh*. The underlying essence of the purification process of *mikveh* is that it requires one to leave behind sin, to leave behind the ‘earth’, and to elevate his existence to the level of ‘water’. It is not simply that a person walks into a *mikveh* impure and he emerges pure, as soon as he is out of the *mikveh*. Rather, the purity takes place only when a person *connects* himself to the waters of the *mikveh* [and what it entails].

Entering a *mikveh*, in its external and superficial aspect, means to enter into a pit of water that is 40 *se'ah* of water [as the *Halacha* states]. But the inner essence behind *mikveh* is to connect oneself to a level of existence that is ‘water’ to be above the level of existence that is ‘earth’. The message is to leave behind the loss of true vitality that resulted from sin, and to instead connect oneself to a place where he will get back his lost vitality.

Rabbi Akiva said, “Just as a *mikveh* purifies the impure, so does *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* purify Yisrael.” The waters of the *mikveh* elevate a person from the level of ‘earth’ that man has sunken into from his sins. It gives him back his lost vitality, by connecting him to the Source of life, Who is *HaKodosh Baruch Hu*, as it is written: “*For with You, is the source of life.*”

Thus, entering a *mikveh* or *maayan* is not merely about entering a body of forty *se'ah* of water. It means to connect oneself to the Source of our life. That is what lies at the purification process of *mikveh*.

Our 'Chiyus' - Knowing Where We Get Vitality From

It is possible that a person is not spiritually impure, he has never touched a corpse or any other objects that render him *tamei* / impure, but the attitude with which he lives life with is still at a very lowly state.

One of the most important questions one needs to ask himself is: “What gives me true vitality? Where do I get my *chiyus* / vitality from?”

Some people are getting their *chiyus* from the ‘earth’: from pursuing worldly desires that attach a person to materialism. This is a dry source of vitality, and it does not provide a person with real *chiyus*. But others are getting their *chiyus* from the ‘waters’ that are available on this world – waters that are clear and pure, not waters that are dirtied and sullied with pieces of earth. This is a true and pure source of vitality, a life of holiness.

In clearer terms: if a person gets his vitality from materialism, such as food and other forms of materialism, although this might feel like pleasure (which is rooted in the element of water), it is pleasure that is derived from ‘earth’; it is a vitality that comes from a dry and dead source that contains no life, and it resembles the curse given to the Serpent, who is forced to get his vitality from whatever food that he comes across as it slithers its way across the ground.

But if a person is getting his vitality in life from non-materialistic pursuits, he is one who is connected to the Source of life. This refers to those who exert themselves in Torah-study and they feel like it is their *chiyus*, because they are aware that learning the Torah connects them to the Source of life, *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*.

Thus, true *chiyus*/vitality, a feeling of being alive, is not derived from any of the materialism found on this earth, but from the vitality found in ‘water’, from the realm of the spiritual that is completely devoid from any traces of ‘earth’.

Now we can better understand why the Rambam calls *mikveh* an immersion in “waters of *daas*.” It is because a person can only derive true vitality when he is immersed in *daas*, in a life devoid of pursuing materialistic desires.

This is the essence of becoming purified in a *mikveh*. It is not mainly about the act of dipping in the *mikveh*. Although the act itself is needed, the act of the immersion should be viewed as a mere ‘container’ that is needed to maintain the spiritual effects which we want to take hold of. The essence of the purity in *mikveh* is to leave behind any connection to materialism and to realize that our vitality must come from the Source of all our life, who is Hashem. This is what it means to live a life of purity, a life of holiness, a life of truth.

To further illustrate the ramifications of this concept, when the time comes where one is about to take leave of this world, where he will return his soul to Hashem and he will leave behind his body on this world. If he has mainly derived his pleasure and vitality in life from the materialistic desires of this world, then he will have no source of pleasure in the next world.

In the Next World (the Afterlife), there is no physicality and no materialism, so he will have nothing to enjoy there. But if one on this world has already come to the conclusion that true pleasure and vitality does not come from materialistic desires, but from the spiritual, from the “*wisdom [of Torah] which sustains its owner*”, from *daas*, from fear and love of Hashem, from closeness with Hashem – he is a person who will have a pure life on this world. He will leave this world pure, and enter into the Next World pure, and he will be able to partake of the pleasures of the Next World, which are completely spiritual in their nature; “the radiance of the *Shechinah*”.

Therefore, one must know clearly where he gets *chiyus* from. One must see if his *chiyus* is coming from various desires of This World, or if he has at least a little bit of real pleasure from the spiritual. If he merits it, he has even more pleasure in the spiritual. But one must at least know where he is getting his *chiyus* from, so that he will be aware of what superficially gives him *chiyus* and then he will search to find a real source of *chiyus*.

Purity – Removed from the Physical, and Completely Immersed in the Spiritual

This is what lays behind the purity of immersing in the *mikveh*. On an esoteric level, when one is submerged in the water of the *mikveh*, he is not on the ‘earth’ of this world, and he is instead completely in water. At that moment, he is in a space where there is no connection to materialism and there is nothing but purity.

Learning Torah is also compared to being immersed in a *mikveh*. When one is learning Torah and he is fully immersed in his learning, he is apart from the rest of the world and entirely immersed in a purified form of existence totally divorced from materialism.

Thus, there are also levels to purity, and not every person will be purified by the *mikveh* on the same level. A person is purified in the *mikveh* to the degree that he is living a purer kind of life where he does not get his main vitality in life from materialistic pleasures. When a person is mainly derives his vitality in life from the non-materialistic pleasures, of him it is said, “Who is a *ben olam haBa?*”, even as he is on this world.

But a person who mainly gets his pleasure from materialism of this world is the *am ha'aretz* /the ignoramus, who is too connected to the “*aretz*”, to the earth. The *am ha'aretz* is not just someone who does not know Torah. A person might know Torah, but he is still living life on the level of an *am ha'aretz*, when he is too connected to the pleasures of this earth and he is not connected to spiritual pleasure, to the Source of life; he cannot divorce himself from the materialism of this world.

How Much Vitality Do I Have? And Where Am I Getting It From?

Adding on another subtle point, there are two clarifications one needs to discover. Firstly, a person must know is **how much** vitality he has in his life; if he feels vitality at all in his life, and how much. Secondly, after knowing how much vitality he has, then a person should wonder: “And **where** am I getting my *chiyus/vitality from?*”

One should examine his 24|7 schedule, and see if he is getting *chiyus* or not; to see if he has a feeling of being alive.

Of course, all people are alive, as long as they are not physically dead and their souls are still inside their body. But the question is: How much does a person *feel* like he is alive? Many times a person will discover that he doesn't even feel alive!

One might be aware that he receives pleasure from time to time, sometimes from good food and sometimes from an engaging conversation, and sometimes from an intriguing Torah thought that someone told him. But he still might not feel *chiyus* throughout the course of his day. He might do what he has to do, he might learn Torah because he has to and he does all the *mitzvos* that he has to do, but it might all be “by rote” and he feels no *chiyus* in it.

So the first question one needs to ask himself is: How much *chiyus* does he feel in his life - and if he has it at all.

The second question to ask oneself is: “Where am I getting my *chiyus* from?” The greater a person is, the higher source of *chiyus* he has. A true Torah scholar gets his vitality from exertion in Torah, as is written of Yissocher, “*And he saw that serenity was good.*” The exertion in Torah learning is not just an exertion, but an exertion that provides a person with vitality, with the more he exerts himself in Torah.

(Understandably, there are also people who continuously get vitality, but not from Torah learning. Although they might seem energetic and full of life, they are living their life on the level of an ignoramus.)

True *chiyus* in life means that a person constantly is deriving *chiyus*, at almost any given moment of the day, and the source of this *chiyus* is his Torah learning; and on a deeper level, to the Giver of the Torah, Hashem, Who is the Source of all life. When one is connected to Hashem through learning the Torah, his soul is bound up with Him as he learns Torah, and this connection itself brings a pleasurable feeling of vitality. It is the truest source of vitality we can access, it connects us to the Source of life, and it separates us from the level of the ignoramus, who is connected to the materialism, impurity, and earth of this world.

The waters of the flood purified the entire world, and from then onward, it revealed upon Creation the power to be immersed in ‘water’, in true pleasure, to be disconnected from all materialism. This was the rectification that the Flood brought to the world: now anyone in Creation can have the ability to receive *chiyus* from a true source, which is above ‘earth’. That was the purity that came to the world with the Flood, and we can all access it ever since.

When one is clear about what gives him *chiyus* and then he merits to derive true *chiyus* in his life, where he is not attached to pursuing materialism and he is instead immersed in learning Torah and in the pleasure involved in it, when he feels vitality from the fact that he loves and fears Hashem Who gives him life, when he feels vitality from the fact that he lives a life of closeness with Hashem – of this it is said, “*And purify our hearts to serve You in truth.*” His purity of heart will spread to the rest of himself, for his vitality is coming from an entirely pure Source.

The more one’s soul is connected to Hashem, to that degree, will there be more layers of his existence that become more purified [by the *mikveh*].

What To Think Before Immersing In The Mikveh

Speaking practically, whether a person is obligated or not to go to the *mikveh* (according to *Halacha*), whether he goes every day or not, the *avodah* of going to the *mikveh* is not simply to immerse one’s body in the *mikveh*, in the same way that a chicken bathes in the water in order to clean its body. The inner attitude towards *mikveh* is to be in a state of mind where one connects himself to the Source of our life, where we are disconnected from all materialism of this world. In this way, one is both externally and internally in the *mikveh*.

Both aspects are needed in order to be purified by the *mikveh*. One’s body might be in the *mikveh*, but his mind might be elsewhere, thinking about various thoughts that are very un-spiritual. His soul is not connected to the place of purity which his body is immersed in, and this contradiction between his body and soul will not allow for a true purification. When one is immersing in the *mikveh*, it is the time for one to connect oneself to an inner kind of life, divorced from all materialism.

In Conclusion

This is but a beginning towards immersing oneself in the general waters of “*daas*” that enable one to connect to the true Source of vitality and pleasure, and to disconnect from all materialism, which can eventually merit a person to receive the purity of “Just as a *mikveh* purifies the impure, so does *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* purify Yisrael” – to be found constantly in a state of purity and holiness.

הדור שלנו תשס"ז 007

הדור שלנו

Our Generation

How A Generation Can Sink Lower

The Mishnah in *Avos* (5:2) states, "There were ten generations from the time of Adam to Noach, and they continually were angering [Hashem]."

Certainly, this deterioration in society did not happen all at once. The first generation did not make a drastic change from the proper way. At first, there was just a slight turn from the truth, and then it increased little by little, until the tenth generation, those of the *mabul* came and acted as they did.

Similarly, the Rambam (*Hilchos Avodas Kochavim* 1:2) describes how the early generations came to do *Avodah Zarah* (idolatry): people originally thought that the sun and moon had some power from Hashem; over time, people came to think that these objects created the world.

The *Gemara* (*Bava Basra* 75a) tells us, "The elders (in the time of Yehoshua) said, 'The face of Moshe was like that of the sun, and the face of Yehoshua is like that of the moon.'"

Why did only the elders realize this? If someone had seen Moshe and also Yehoshua, he knew that Yehoshua was not like Moshe. But if someone only saw Yehoshua, he would think that his radiance was in fact like that of the sun. So we see that people make errors if they do not have the right historical perspective.

The *poskim* (legal authorities) comment on customs that communities have, and say that some of them are nonsense, and some are actually against the Law! Children think they must hold on to their fathers' customs, and over time, errors get built one on top of the other.

The depth of the problem is that the new generation thinks that what they see is the normal way of life - that it was always this way, and it will always be this way.

As long as they know there is an error, there is hope that it can be fixed. The Torah refers to Hashem hiding Himself with a double concealment ("*haster astir*"; *Devarim* 31:18).

The Ba'al Shem Tov explains that the problem is not so much that He is concealed, but that the concealment itself is concealed from us, and we do not even feel the need to seek Him. We think He is revealed when He is hidden, and then there is no hope.

Our Generation – The Heels of Moshiach

Our Rabbis have written hundreds of years ago that our generation is called the *ikvesa d'meshicha* (the "heels" before *Moshiach*). If this has been true for a long time, we are now at the heels of the heels.

There were errors many hundreds of years ago that our Rabbis tried to remove. But there are other errors that have surfaced in the last few generations. We are here in a world where every average person has what a wealthy man did not have a thousand years ago! One does not see these as luxuries, but as necessities! People get used to these things, and if they lose them, they can even collect charity to replace them, as it says in *Kesuvos* (67b).

Our Rabbis have taught that the generation of the *Mabul* would be reincarnated in the period before *Moshiach*. Is this not being fulfilled before our very eyes...?

Noach looked at his generation, and said to them, "You are in error!" He started building the Ark, and when people asked him about it, he said, "Hashem said that He plans to destroy His world!" He explained to them that "all flesh has corrupted its way" (*Bereishis* 6:12).

What did they think about that? One who lived then saw his father and grandfather acting that way, so he assumed it must be okay. There were probably "Rabbis" then who also acted that way. "How could we change it all? This is the proper method!" They didn't see the error, because the change from the ninth to the tenth generation was not that apparent.

All of a sudden, one man called Noach comes and says, "You are all wrong!"

They assumed he must be in error, and that they were right. "Perhaps he just imagined his prophecy," they figured. They thought, "We're not much worse than the last generation. Of course, it's always necessary to fix things and the generations tend to decline in level, but not to the extent that he is claiming!"

This is a lesson for how we are today. We may not ask, "What is wrong with us?" but "What is right with us?" Everything is the opposite of how it should be. As *Chazal* (our Sages) expressed it, "I see an upside-down world" (*Pesachim* 50a). There is not even a minimal understanding of the true way of life.

Our Lavish Lifestyle

People here [in America] are not just living in opulent homes, but in palaces! The houses of people here are becoming like graves.

This way of life was not how our ancestors lived. They lived and sought something completely different.

I can practically guarantee that your *Gan Eden* (Paradise) will not be nice as your houses. The *Chovos HaLevavos* writes that this world and the next are opponents. If so, they cannot coexist. Where should there be opulence? Either in the *Bais HaMikdash* (Temple), or in *Gan Eden*, but there should not be such a thing in this world.

This way of life has become so deep-rooted here that you do not understand that this is not the true way of life. This way of life has been going on for a few generations already.

How much do you work to pay for your house? People are devoting the entire day, their whole lives, to pay for more and more materialism.

If someone from Europe of old would visit this society, he would assume that this is must be Purim, and that gentiles are masquerading as Jews!

What we see is the opposite of how Jews should live.

Why don't you immediately get up and move to the Land of Israel? Isn't it more holy there? Isn't it a little more spiritual there? It is more than a little. So why stay here? Obviously, because there you will have less money, and your home will be a quarter of the size: only five rooms...you want comfort...

Do we all want *Moshiach* to come and gather us to the Land of Israel?? Do you want to get up and go there when he comes?? If so, why not do it tonight? If we want true life, with spirituality, not with this materialism among the gentiles, are we able to take the first plane to Israel? But people make all sorts of excuses why they don't move.

Life here is all about seeking materialism. You all live like the wealthiest. This entire way of life is wrong!

If an irreligious person would ask, "What is wrong with my life?" the answer would be, "There is a Torah, and unless you guide your life by it, everything is wrong." He is not someone who occasionally sins. He does not even understand that he must live according to the Torah and the *Shulchan Aruch* (Code of Jewish Law).

You all understand this. But Hashem has also enjoined us not to destroy the world! If someone pursues materialism, he destroys the world, because its purpose is to reveal His honor. Is Hashem's honor what concerns us all day? If so, then the world is serving its proper function. But if not, we are destructive.

Sell Your House...!

Our *Avos* (patriarchs) focused solely on revealing Hashem in their souls and in the whole world. And we must strive to touch their level.

First of all, [if you want to change], you must sell your homes here. You can use the money from it to support *yeshivos*, *kollels*, orphans, and widows.

On Yom Kippur, the *Kohen Gadol* (High Priest) would pray that in the *Sharon* region, "Their homes would not become their graves." Yet your homes are your graves!

What does Hashem want from you? Sell your house!

But each person will say, "My spouse doesn't want to." Neither one of them wants to.

Does anyone think that Hashem is pleased with these houses??

I understand that you need a home, and you should not live in the street. But does anyone entertain the slightest possibility that he reveals the glory of Hashem in this way? Is this the purpose of life? Yet you invest the best part of your lives for this.

When a person cannot pay the mortgage, he runs to the Rabbi, who advises, "Read the portion of the *man* (manna) each day." He should have said, "Why did you buy that house? Sell it! What do you need it for?"

Do we really want to change, now that Rosh HaShanah is approaching?

We are like a driver on the road who might move over a little when he should make a U-turn, because he is going in the wrong direction. You want advice for improving while staying here. It's like a robber who asks for advice in improving his intentions during his work. The robber prays for success in his work too. Does anyone think that this reveals Hashem's name in the world? Obviously, he must find a new job!

We want to keep the same way of life, and use the same "recipe"... We think that if things aren't a certain way, no one will marry your children... I have a simple suggestion: Come to the Land of Israel, where these demands are not made. People live on a much lower material level. Sell your home here and buy a five-room apartment there. Everything will be wonderful.

If we really want true life, we must realize that all of this large city of Manhattan is **falsehood**!! It is a place for people that want comfort and the kind of opulence which belongs only in the *Bais HaMikdash*! You cannot build a life that is totally the opposite of the proper way of a Jew.

It is of course possible that anyone can fail spiritually, as even great people did, but they fell from their high level. They didn't start out creating a completely wrong life.

You can't keep living here in this way, continuing to raise your children in this fashion. You are worried about not fitting in here if you change? So don't stay here!

The Rambam (*De'os* 6:1) says that a person is drawn after the people of his place. Can anyone claim that he is not drawn after the people here? We cannot argue with the Rambam. Chazal say (*Avos* 6:10), "I will only live in a place of Torah." If that is true, why won't you get up and leave? We know that we will all leave one day. Will that be when you die, or before, so you can build a proper life?

Hashem has given us free will. But people say, "I'm already in the middle of life. I have a wife and children and their schools, and we cannot change things easily. Maybe next year." What would happen if a child is somewhat ill and needs special care? You would rearrange your entire life accordingly [so you *do* have free will to change things].

Before the new year comes, we must discover what we really want. Do we want to live with Hashem, or do we want to stay with all we have and also introduce a little bit of *Avodas Hashem* (worship of God)?

People say to me, "I'm not earning enough. You know that the economy in America is not good now." I say, "So what is the problem?" They say, "I need money to give *tzedakah* (charity)." But is that really what Hashem wants? Is that your real motive?

Why didn't the Chafetz Chaim and other *gedolim* (great Rabbis) think of that brilliant idea? They should have left the *Beis Medrash* (house of study) and made money for charity! The answer is that such is not the ideal. If you're already working, then you must give *tzedaka*.

What do we really want for the New Year? Do we want a *shanah*, a change (*shinui*), or the same way of life? Will we realize that we cannot make a big change the way we are?

When Noach said his words thousands of years ago, no one listened, because they were not willing to accept that we are here for an entirely different goal. It is like a teacher who doesn't go in to the classroom but spends his time drinking coffee or talking on his cell phone.

Is our life serving its proper purpose? I'll give an example that applies even in Israel. There are weddings for 3-4 hours in the evening and people do whatever they can to make them bigger and bigger, and spend tens of thousands. Did Avraham marry Sarah also in such a way? Is Hashem really pleased with all this lavishness and these five-course dinners?

When a girl is born and they make a Kiddush, people say, "*Mazal Tov*," and fill their bellies with all the delicacies of the world. What is the point? Does anyone really think that Hashem is pleased that everyone is eating more and more *kugel* and *cholent*!?

Although there was a *minhag* (custom) to make a Kiddush, the real *minhag* was to thank Hashem, except that in addition, since we have a body, we need to have some food to involve the body also in the *simchah* (celebration). They really wanted to thank Hashem, but they added a little food.

Where has it come now? They don't thank Hashem anymore. So what remains? Just more and more food. If a person doesn't want to make such a Kiddush, he is criticized for not keeping ancestral tradition. To the contrary, keep the *minhag*! Gather people who can understand gratitude to Hashem, and also add a little food for the body. But now, the soul of it, the thanks, is gone, and only the food for the body remains.

This was a single example of our whole way of life nowadays. The soul is more and more hidden from people here, and there is more and more body. Had I not seen this with my own eyes, I would not believe it. If one doesn't live here and suddenly visits and sees it, he cannot fathom this. Are these proper, sincerely religious Jews? It is unbelievable.

I hope you recognize the truth, not just because I am saying it. Is this how our ancestors lived? Do you think next year will be better? The only way it will be better is if you do *teshuvah* (return, repentance); *tefillah* (prayer) and *tzedakah* alone cannot help.

You have to know how to return. We came as a *neshamah*, and we will need to return the soul in its purity. *Teshuvah* means to live as a soul, not only as a body. Otherwise, there is no repentance. One who is bound with the body will be affected by it to sin. If we are unwilling to disconnect from our material perspective, all of our prayer and charity will not help.

Leave Your Fancy Apartment In Manhattan And Move To Eretz Yisrael!

I realize that my words contradict the norm in this city and such places. The fact that you live this way here does not indicate in the least that this is the truth. The fact that many people are like this does not mean anything. In the generation of the *mabul*, there were also a lot of people, but almost no one survived.

Do not expect that you will naturally improve over time. You must decide: What do you want? If you want falsehood, there is nothing to talk about. But deep down, we all want truth, but you have never heard anyone who speaks it. Everyone does the opposite.

Now one person has come and spoken differently: Get up, leave everything, separate from all of this, spend your time learning Torah, have a little *parnasah* (livelihood), and that's all. But definitely not here. This is an impure place. There is no holiness here. There cannot be *kedushah* (holiness) with so much *tum'ah* (impurity).

It is so obvious to someone who slightly feels the truth. But this is novel to someone immersed in a certain perspective. When you come to the Heavenly court, remember that someone once told you that this whole way of life is false. Don't say, "I didn't know." I'm not saying this to make you guilty there. But some people have to stand up and say, "Enough! The party is over!"

You are living like gentiles. Your homes are hardly different from the homes of the gentiles.

Going Out to Eat In Restaurants

How could it be that a Jew and gentile would eat in the same restaurant? How could a Jew eat at a sidewalk café?!

Did Avraham *Avinu* open a restaurant to fulfill the desires of people? Of course not! But people come in if there is a *hechsher* (certificate that the food is kosher). I don't understand how

a *hechsher* can be given in a place where there is so much *peritzus* (promiscuity)! It is like a store where they sell kosher food, but on the way in, you need to bow before an idol. They ask the *mashgiach* (kosher supervisor) about it, and he says, "There's nothing to worry about; the food is kosher." Everything is *not* kosher!

Do you think Rav Moshe Feinstein *zt"l*, or Rav Aharon Kotler *zt"l*, or one of the Chassidic Rebbes, would come in with his wife to eat in such a place? Of course not! Would our *Avos* have gone to such places? They would rather have died than step foot in such a place! The fact that we need to speak about this shows how low we have fallen.

Nothing But The Truth

I am not here to give an inspirational talk. This is like seeing someone who is about to fall, or has fallen, in a river and doesn't realize. You won't say, "Inspire yourself; Elul and Rosh HaShannah are coming." You'll say, "You are falling! Save yourself immediately!"

All the lecturers and *tzaddikim* (righteous people) cannot help you with speeches. You must decide to separate from everything. If a person and his family decide to get up, take their things, and leave this place, because it is a place of *tum'ah*, and he wants to go to the Holy Land, he starts to build a true life. But if you want to stay here and try to improve in the midst of all this commotion of everyone chasing after money, you would have to be on an incredibly high level to succeed.

I hope that those who were here will tell others that a strange man came from Yerushalayim and said strange things. At least this way, other people will hear about it. Let them hear that someone says that this is not the right way to live.

I don't know if any of you will heed these words. But I know that each of us has a true choice: either to live in falsehood - or to get up and live in a place of holiness, the place of our ancestors, and there to try to connect to Hashem by putting effort into Torah, mitzvos, and good deeds, with very little time for *parnasah*.

I hope your hearts will be opened and each of you will feel the truth on his own, and we will seek the King of the World, the Creator, blessed be His Name.

Shanah Tovah to all.