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**Year 5 | Issue 6**

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WITH

R' AVIGDOR MILLER ZT"l

BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

Great Men of The World

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*Part I. The Inventors*

***Kayin Goes Lost Forever***

When we read about the generations destroyed in the Mabal, we understand that they were wicked people who are not worthy of our admiration. וַתִּשְׁחַת הָאָרֶץ לְפָנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים וַתִּמְלֵא הָאָרֶץ חָמָס – And the earth became corrupt before Elokim and the earth was filled with violence (Noach 6:11), and therefore וַיִּמַח אֶת כָּל הַיְקוּם אֲשֶׁר עַל פְּנֵי הָאָרֶץ – Hashem obliterated every being that remained on the surface of the earth (ibid. 7:23). The family of Kayin – all of his descendants were totally destroyed in the Mabal. Today there isn't a single human being who comes from Kayin; we all come from the youngest brother, Sheis.

And so, with our hindsight knowledge we look back and we unanimously condemn Kayin and his seed. Of course we do – because the Torah condemns them! The verdict of history, the great flood that wiped them entirely off the face of the earth was the decree of Hashem, and it confirms our opinion that Kayin was worthy of being destroyed and that only Noach and his family were deserving of remaining alive.

However, it's important to realize that not everything that's written in the pesukim was so viewed by the people of the time. What is stated in the Torah as a simple and accepted attitude is not necessarily what the people at that time thought. Of course, when we read the words so many years later, so in retrospect we agree with it. But actually in many cases the Torah is pointing out secrets that were not understood by people in those days; very many things in the Torah were not accepted by the contemporaries when those things took place.

### **Ancient News Reports**

And therefore, let's imagine that we were living in the time before the Mabul and we'll listen to what was going on then. Imagine that we're reading the news of the day, what the Torah reports, as if we were reading l'havdil an ancient newspaper.

So we open up the Torah and we read about a person descended from Kayin by the name of Lemech. And we're told that his wife Ada gave birth to a boy named Yaval. Now, the Torah stops to give us information about this Yaval because he accomplished great things. If there were newspapers in those days so Yaval's name would be on the front page in headlines. What did he do? הוּא הָיָה אָבִי יֹשְׁבֵי אֹהֶל וּמִקְנֵה – He was the father of those who dwell in tents and raised livestock (Bereishis 4:20).

Now, 'father' doesn't mean that it was only his descendants who practiced that; we know that the descendants of Sheis and even the descendants of Sheim were in many cases nomad people who lived from raising livestock. The word 'Avi – father' here doesn't mean that

he was the progenitor, a physical father. It means that he was the inventor of the nomadic lifestyle of raising livestock, he introduced the society of אֵהָל וּמִקְנֵה to the world.

### ***An Advance In Civilization***

Now, we have to understand how important that was in the history of the world. You know that in ancient times cities were only a small part of humanity. Nomadic society, the spiritual heirs of Yaval, comprised a big part of the world's population. In some places the אֵהָל וּמִקְנֵה יוֹשְׁבֵי אֵהָל וּמִקְנֵה was the entire population; huge nations lived by wandering from pasture to pasture. And it was Yaval who instituted this great advancement of nomadic civilization to the world.

Because before Yaval turned the world upside down with his innovations, where did people live? They chose the easiest way; they dug out holes in the sides of the mountains. In northern Africa there are many tribes who live in caves to this day. There's nothing savage in living in a cave; they have radios and televisions in their caves and they're happy there. They wouldn't move out for anything because it's the cheapest place to live; there are a lot of conveniences there too – in the wintertime it's warm and in the summer it's cool.

Only that Yaval understood that if you live in a cave you cannot raise livestock successfully; because when your sheep and cattle graze in the vicinity of the cave and they finish all the grass where you are – so you have to move someplace else. But you can't take your cave with you; you're stuck! And that's why up until Yaval came along, people had only a few sheep; they couldn't afford to raise more.

### ***Originality And Ingenuity***

And then this great innovator, Yaval, came along and invented a few things, methods and contrivances that made it possible to set up entirely new societies. First he invented a portable home, a tent that you could fold together. To us it seems simple – a collapsible tent doesn't seem to be a complicated matter at all. But you have to know

that before anything exists it requires genius for the first man to think about it.

It was a very great step ahead for civilization. Now you could fold up your home, put it on the back of your camels and travel to where the grass is greener. Don't think it was nothing; it was more important than the invention of telephones and radio; that's nothing compared to this. The tent was an epoch-making discovery, an invention of an entirely new way of life. When this portable home was invented, a new era dawned upon the world.

The cave dwellers were now able to leave their caves and begin making a real living by taking up the nomadic way of life. Once you can move about, then you can make use of Hashem's great gift of grass. You don't have to do anything; it grows on its own and it's the cheapest commodity available. And so you can raise up large herds of livestock.

One cow is like a delicatessen store on hoofs; you have fifty kinds of delicacies in one animal. You have a liver and you have lungs – if you know how to cook well then lungs are a delicacy. And you have the hindquarters and you have the breast; you have every kind of meat you could wish for. If you look in the window of a butcher shop so you see it's all arrayed in pans; it's appetizing just to look at. Fifty different kinds of meat!

### **Benefactors Of Mankind**

And so, as people began to make use of Yaval's invention the quality of life improved. People were wealthier; they had more food than ever. And everybody's mouth was full of praises for this great benefactor named Yaval. Yaval was a great man in his day! Nobody looked down at him for what he was – the progenitor of those who brought the Mabul onto the world. No, they praised Lemech and his son Yaval; they said, "How lucky he is to have such good children; such benefactors of Mankind."

And not only was he the *avi yosheiv ohel*, the inventor of the portable home that you could move with you to greener pastures,

but he was also the *avi mikneh*. That means that he spent many years studying the subject of breeding cattle. There are many ways of *chochma* in breeding cattle, how to produce the finest herds, and Yaval went all in for it. And he didn't patent the secrets he learned; he gave over the wisdom he acquired to his generation. He introduced to the world how to breed fat healthy cattle, quality cattle that would produce more meat per hoof. And because of Yaval's donation to his generation he became great in the eyes of his fellow men. The world looked at Yaval the way the newspapers today would portray him; as great material benefactor to Mankind, as the genius who was advancing society.

### ***Crickets And Violins***

Now, Lemech had another son whose name was Yuval. Yuval brought happiness to the world. **הוא הָיָה אָבִי כָּל תִּפְשׁ בְּנֹוֹר וְעֹוָב**. – He was the father, the inventor, of all those who hold the harp and the pipe (ibid. 4:21). The *kinor* is a harp and the *ugav* is a form of flute and these two include most musical instruments; most musical instruments are either string instruments like harps, violins, or they are wind instruments into which you blow.

Now, we have to understand that Yuval put great effort into the study of this science. He thought about this matter for many years and he considered how sounds are produced by animals; and he began to think “perhaps we can duplicate these sounds using the same methods”.

The cricket has a violin on its wing; if you study the cricket how does it make its noise? It rubs its wings together and the vibration of these “strings” produce a chirping sound. The grasshopper too – it rubs its hind leg against its wing and the vibrations of the wing make noise. Yaval studied that and he used that same system to create a violin. And then, he studied how other living things produce sounds by blowing through the vocal cords and he applied these methods to mechanical things, to flutes and other wind instruments.

And now the world had the enjoyment of music. Don't think it was a small thing, that it wasn't important. Suppose music didn't exist; suppose instrument music didn't exist and now a man came along and bestowed this gift on the world – we would praise him to no end. He would be lauded as a great innovator; he would be invited to the White House and be afforded every type of honor. By us as well; by the frum Jews too.

### **Silly Modern Music**

Today we're 'blessed' with an overabundance of music; we have too much music. It's employed for every sort of foolishness and so it's burying us alive. But in those days, when they heard the strains of music for the first time, it was a balm on the souls of Mankind; it gladdened the hearts of humanity.

And people applied music to virtuous words; they didn't use music for silly things, all the garbage that you hear from the music stores when you pass by. Like the Kuzari (2:65) says: "Music was once a *kli shareis* to serve Hashem and now it fell into the hands of slaves and servant girls."

Of course, today people enjoy the music of slaves and servant girls; you can teach yourself to enjoy anything. If you train yourself to say "Oooh" and "Ahhh" when a child is banging on the garbage can lid, so after a while you start enjoying it; *m'ken zich einreden* – you can persuade yourself of any kind of foolishness.

And people are doing it all the time! Don't you see people who enjoy booze? To most of us liquor is distasteful. You can barely take the little bit that you have to take to make a *l'chaim* at a bar-mitzvah or something. But when people practice up on it, so after while they go for it in a big way. So you see that even the most silly things can become beautiful in your eyes.

But in those days people weren't as silly as they are today. And therefore music was a great blessing because it was utilized properly. You can be sure that in those early days people utilized the inventions of Yuval to aggrandize virtue; they spoke of heroes who lived noble

and virtuous lives. They sang of the creation of the world; you could be sure that we would have been inspired by those songs. And therefore the world was now a new place; it was re-created as a result of the contribution of Yuval. And everybody gave brachos v'hodaos to Yuval; they showered blessings on the great public benefactor for innovating the pleasures and benefits of musical instruments.

### **Blessing Of Metal**

Now, Lemech had a third son; his second wife Tzila gave birth to Tuval-Kayin. who also accomplished something that had never been done before. He was לִטֵּשׁ כָּל הַיָּשׁ נְחֹשֶׁת וּבְרָזָל, the forger of cutting tools of copper and iron (Bereishis 4:22). Tuval-Kayin was the perfecter of the art of metallurgy.

You know that metals are usually not found in the free state; they're bound up with minerals, and therefore it was quite an achievement when people learned how to release the metals from the minerals. And it was Tuval-Kayin who innovated the methods of extracting metals from ore; he showed them ways and means extracting and then utilizing the metals. Not only copper, but iron too which is more complicated to achieve, but more useful too.

Now, metal is a great blessing for the world. Of course it's been used as a curse too, weapons and so on, but there's no question that Hakodosh Boruch Hu deposited great stores of metal in the surface of the earth as a blessing for mankind – wherever we turn we see metal. And Tuval-Kayin's discovery of smelting, removing the metals and then refining them by adding certain chemicals to give it a certain character – different processes for different metals – all this was a great discovery for the world. And it was this great man from the family of Kayin who started this entire process.

### **Etiquette; Polished Pleasantness**

Now, it states here also (ibid.) that the sister of Tuval-Kayin was Na'amah. Now, whatever Chazal say about her, in addition to that there's a plain pshat. Na'amah means she was a pleasant person, that

she had certain good qualities. Now, it doesn't say what she invented but you can be sure that there were certain things she introduced for the benefit of Mankind. I cannot tell you the details because the Torah doesn't say what she did exactly, but she is listed with the inventors for a reason.

I imagine that she was just as gifted as her brothers and she instituted practices of etiquette; certain ways of speaking pleasantly. You know, people can be very kind-hearted but they don't have the polish that causes other people to admire them. But Na'amah, her name means pleasantness, and there's no question that she was well-known in her time for her innovations.

And so we have here a whole family of benefactors to Mankind; the descendants of Kayin were considered the superior family on the stage of history. And even though there was already a younger brother, Sheis, from whom children were being born, but people said, "What could Sheis accomplish? What are we getting from him already? It's Kayin's family that are the innovators; they are the ones who are a blessing for the world. They were the blessed family in the eyes of the world; it's very important to realize that they were the ones who were getting the credit for benefiting the world.

## *Part II. The Tzadikim*

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### **Noach Walks On Stage**

Now, after a while there appeared on the scene a new character whose name was Noach. Now, he certainly had qualities; he was a tzadik tamim (Noach 6:9) so he certainly was a man of kindliness. There's no question that people had reasons to like him. "He's a fine man," they said. "We have nothing against righteous people. But what do we have from him? He's good for himself; maybe he's good for his family too. But for the rest of Mankind? He didn't help us in anything. We're not blaming him but there's no reason to compliment him; to bless him and to aggrandize him."

We can be certain that Noah wasn't considered anything important by his generation – nobody considered him a competitor in greatness with the members of the family of Kayin. People looked back at Kayin's family, at Yaval and Yuval and Tuval-Kayin and even at Na'amah with the greatest admiration; they spoke of them glowingly always. And they thought that if there was anyone who brought a blessing onto the world it was they. They were the innovators, the "producers," and their merits were mentioned and reiterated always! People spoke about them, and told stories about them – they were regarded by everyone as the builders of the world and heroes of humanity.

And so what could a man like Noah – no matter how righteous he may be – what can a man like that show to compete with the descendants of Kayin? If we would search the newspapers of ancient times we wouldn't find anything mentioned of Noah. Nobody would think of Noah as a candidate for the one who brought blessing to the world. In the mouths of Mankind, he was not mentioned at all!

### ***The Chumash Teaches Truth***

But then along comes the *chumash* and changes everything; the Torah comes along and turns everything upside down. And it tells us that the family of Kayin was the one that caused the world not to be blessed, but to be destroyed. That's the verdict of the Torah! It's the *d'var Hashem!*

Nothing remained of them; they were all wiped off the face of the earth. No descendants of Yaval or Yuval or Tuval-Kayin were left alive. There wasn't enough merit in all their inventions, in all the benefits they provided, that even one of them should be able to survive the Mabul.

Only **נֹחַ מְצָא חֵן בְּעֵינֵי ה'שָׁם**. It was Noah, the righteous man – the one whose importance for the world was disdained when compared to the innovators – he was the one who found favor in the eyes of Hashem. And when compared to the righteousness of Noah, all the

great benefits and inventions of the family of Kayin dwindle into nothing – it was only the righteous Noach who saved the world.

### **Noach The Shipbuilder**

You know, the ship that Noach built was very big. If you read Behold a People (“A Didactic History of Scriptural Times” by Rav Avigdor Miller, Page 19), you’ll see over there the details of the dimensions of the *teivah*. Now, the erection of such a huge ark required a very long time – a considerable part of Noach’s lifespan was consumed by the task of building the edifice that would save the world.

Now, Hakodosh Boruch Hu surely could have made some other stratagem to preserve all the living things without Noach. Hashem could have destroyed the sinners and preserved all the species in other ways, ways that would have seemed more natural to us. The entire Mabul could have been obviated if Hashem would have sent a destruction on all those who deserved to be destroyed, and spared the creatures and persons He wished to save.

And that’s a puzzle – what’s this business of Noach building a tremendous ship and gathering together all the species of the world to be saved along with him?

### **The Tzadik Saves The World**

We have to understand this as a great lesson, a very important lesson. This grand spectacle was planned by Hashem in order to proclaim forever the principle that the world exists because of the virtuous man, or men. It was Noach who preserved for us all that we have; he was the preserver of Mankind, the true benefactor of the world. If we are here today, it’s because of Noach – everyone here is the seed of Noach.

And that’s why Mankind, as well as all of the beasts and fowl, were saved by means of Noach’s Ark – in order that we should forever understand that the rebirth of the world came because of the merit of Noach. When we see today a squirrel climbing a tree or a bird

flying in the sky we know that it is derived from an inhabitant of the Ark. Don't waste that opportunity when you see a squirrel – you're being taught now that the righteous individuals are so important in the eyes of Hashem that for their merit the entire Creation continues to live.

Not only squirrels and sparrows; all men today are descendants of those that were preserved in the ark that Noach built. If you have your own life, your own body, it's all due to the righteous man. All the living testify to this fundamental principle that the man that "walked with Hashem" (ibid. 6:9) was the cause of all existence; he contributed the most important thing to the world – he contributed righteousness.

### **Babylonian Tax Reform**

That's what we're talking about tonight. The biggest gift you can give to the world is the gift of a righteous life, a life of achievement in avodas Hashem. That's how Hakodosh Boruch Hu wants us to understand the history of the world; not only ancient history but the history that is being made right now. It's a lesson for always; it was intended as an eternal demonstration for all future generations that the those who are serving Hakodosh Boruch Hu, they are the protectors of the world.

That's what the gemara (Bava Basra 7b) tells us. It says there that there was once a nasi who wanted to build up the walls and fortifications of his city in order to protect those who dwelled there from marauders. And so he imposed a tax on all the inhabitants of the city. Now, Reish Lakish you know was an outspoken man; he's famous for speaking up. So Reish Lakish made a protest; he said that **רַבָּנָן לֹא צְרִיכֵי נְטִירוּתָא**, the *talmidei chachomim* don't need any *shmirah*. What that means is that the learners of the town should be exempt from the fortification tax because they're defending the city anyhow; they're protecting the city by means of their *avodas Hashem*. And that's how the *halacha* is: we don't put a tax for the fortifications on the *chachomim* because their righteousness is a fortification for the city.

## **Tzadikim Also Lock Their Doors**

Now, let's not make any error. We're always going to hire people to guard the city. Even if we would have a city full of sages we would always hire policemen and guards; we'll have bars and bolts. It's common sense and that's what the Torah wants you to do. There's no question that we must live according to natural processes and we utilize fortifications and armies. Dovid Hamelech had a very good army! And he himself was an excellent soldier and he went into battle not with a Tehillim alone. He carried a big battle mace to smash the heads of his enemies. Certainly Jews were good fighters and they employed all weapons when they needed to.

And still that's Hakodosh Boruch Hu says (Brachos 64a): *Talmidei chachomim* are *marbin shalom ba'olam*, they bring welfare and peace on the world because Hakodosh Boruch Hu reacts to their presence. The *neturei karta*, the ones who are actually guarding the city (Yerushalmi Chagiga 1:7), are the Noachs, the people of righteousness who find favor in Hashem's eyes.

## **Who Is An Apikores**

The gemara (Sanhedrin 99b) says: Who is called an apikores? An apikores doesn't mean merely a disbeliever – it means somebody who doesn't agree with important Torah attitudes. So the gemara gives an example. It says there if he says “*Mai ahanei lun rabbanan* – What benefit do we have from the learners of Torah, *l'didhu karu*, *l'didhu tanu* – they learn for themselves.”

Now we're talking here about people who understand that it's a virtuous act to give away time for Torah. You could sleep more if you don't learn Torah, you could earn more money. Certainly there are things you could have done with your time that would have benefited you more in this world. And therefore they appreciate that the people who study Torah are doing themselves a benefit. *L'didhu karu* – They're learning for themselves, means that it's for their benefit. Yes, we agree to that. *L'didhu tanu* – they're learning for their own benefit. There's big benefits there.

But what do we get out of it? That's the question they're asking. And that's called an apikores.

### **Apikorsim And Parasites**

I remember when I was a yeshiva boy in Europe, so the Jews many times used to call us names in the street, they used to call us 'parasites'. That's how it was already in Europe; a yeshiva bochur was an object of scorn. They looked down at him and they told him so to his face. I'm sorry to say that in Europe many Jews publicly scorned the yeshiva bochur. They called them names on the street and one of their favorite epithets was 'Parasites!' Because they were apikorsim; in their eyes anyone who wasn't producing materially, was worthless. That's how it used to be.

*Mai ahanei lun rabbanan* is a question that is asked by very many people. And those who don't ask it with their mouths are thinking it in their hearts: What do we get out of them? "It's true," they say, "There are people in Yerushalayim who suffer poverty for the Torah; they have fourteen children and they live in two rooms and are burdened down with debt because they are learning Torah all their lives. Righteousness is an ideal for them; good for them." That's the nice man who says that. He says, "I'm happy for them," and he might even support them as the objects of charity. But it's not because he understands that the world is benefiting from them.

### **The Merit Of Tzadikim**

And that's a terrible mistake; it's a corruption of character. A tzadik is a very great benefit for you, for the generation. The gemara (Taanis 24b) tells of a *bas kol*, that's a minor form of prophecy, that was sent to reveal that the entire world received its sustenance in the merit of Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa. Who knows how many times we have had good suppers because of tzadikim? Who knows how many times you've made a good business deal or found a good job because of tzadikim? Who knows how many times tragedies would have happened; families destroyed, communities uprooted if not for the merit of the tzadikim who have found favor in the eyes of

Hashem? Who knows how many times you didn't get sick because of the righteousness of tzadikim?

And therefore it's an important exercise of avodas Hashem to practice up loving the tzadikim and to appreciate them immensely. We try to think along with Hakodosh Boruch Hu and that means that if **נָח מָצָא הוּן בְּעֵינֵי הַשָּׁם** and it was enough to save the world so we have to think like that too. You never thought about it? Well, you better start doing it now. That's what it's in the chumash for. Hakodosh Boruch Hu wants to know, "Are you appreciating what they do for the world? You think I wrote it in the chumash just for a story, just to fill the space?!"

### **Yeshiva Boys And College Students**

So as you walk down the street in Williamsburg or down the street in Boro Park, you should suspect that maybe there are tzadikim there who are upholding the world. I'm sure there are tzadikim there. There are righteous people there who are doing more for the world than all of the "great" and famous people who are looked up to and aggrandized. Wherever you walk in a Jewish kehillah, you should think that thought, "Maybe there are people here who are **נָח מָצָא הוּן בְּעֵינֵי הַשָּׁם** and they're upholding the world."

The world today looks at the yeshiva bochur and they see that he's sitting all day in front of ancient texts, discussing details of laws that seem archaic and outdated. The college boy, he's the good one, they think. He's the one who is doing something for the world. Maybe he'll be a doctor or an engineer. He'll build buildings and bridges. What a success; what righteousness! He'll be a Yaval! Maybe he'll be a Yuval or Tuval-Kayin! A blessing! That's how the world looks at it.

But we have to go back to the ideal of the Torah, the ideal of **נָח מָצָא הוּן בְּעֵינֵי הַשָּׁם**. It takes work; it takes effort to learn to appreciate what the righteous person does for the world. And therefore right now we have to get busy thinking that we love the tzadikim and that we appreciate them to no end.

## The Lesson Of The Ark

That's the fundamental principle of what we're learning now – by means of the Mabul and the rebirth of the world in such an astonishing manner whereby the human race as well as all the species of animals were saved by means of Noach's ark, the Torah teaches us the fundamental principle that it is righteousness that supports the world. If the world continues to have certain privileges, certain benefits, you must understand that it's because of the merit of those who incur the favor of Hakodosh Boruch Hu.

Noach's righteousness was what gave the world its rebirth. That's what the Torah wants to teach us. נֹחַ מָצָא חֵן בְּעֵינֵי ה' – *Noach found favor in the eyes of Hashem* is the eternal lesson that the righteous ones, those who try to raise the banner of righteous living, of proper behavior, of being always mindful of Hakodosh Boruch Hu and walking in the ways of His Torah, these are the ones who bring blessings down upon the world.

### Have A Wonderful Shabbos

#### LET'S GET PRACTICAL

##### *Understanding Who's Important*

This week I will *bli neder* take one action each day to remind me of the great lesson that the world stands in the merit of the righteous individual. Examples: I will hold the door open for the Rov of my Shul while remembering that he represents the Torah and those who uphold the world by studying it. Or, I will speak of Tzaddikim with admiration to my children or anyone who will listen.

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# QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

שאל אביך ויגדך ויקניך ויאמרו לך

Q:

**Should a wealthy father-in-law support his son-in-law in Kollel even if he's not such a serious learner?**

A:

You have to know that today, when you leave the yeshiva, it's like going out of the *teivah* of Noach. Suppose somebody wanted to leave the *teivah* in the middle of the *Mabul*, what would you say? Outside, there is a *Mabul* today. Not a *Mabul* of water, but a *Mabul* of filth, of wickedness. And therefore, the longer he is in the Kollel, the better off he is.

Now, if you can teach him a *parnasa* while he's in the Kollel so that gradually he can go into a decent living and then maybe he'll be able to establish himself in a good, *frum* neighborhood with a *parnasa* – even better. Whatever it is, as long as he can he should be in the Kollel. He should get married from the yeshiva and stay in the yeshiva so that the first years are Kollel years. And his wife gets accustomed to being a Kollel wife and the children are Kollel children. What happens later, we'll see. But at first keep him in the Kollel as long as you could afford to keep him there.

TAPE # E-102

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As a *zechus* of *Pidyon Shvuyim* for our Yemenite brother in cruel captivity for 5 years.

Levi Salem Marhabi, in mercy