

# THE GIANT BONES

When it comes to stories in Torah, they are all meant to impart a lesson in avodas Hashem. Usually this is relatively clear cut. For example, the story of Yonah and the giant fish teaches us about teshuva in a pretty straightforward way.

Then there are some stories that are so strange, that it is a challenge not only to learn from them, but even to simply understand why they're told in the first place.

One such story is in the Zohar that Harav Levi Yitzchok focuses on in Parshas Noach.

It concerns Rebbi Chiya and Rebbi Yehuda, who were once travelling and decided to turn to the "great mountains." In a valley there, they discovered the bones of people who had perished in the mabul.

What was so special about these bones?

They were extremely large bones. So big in fact, that it took them 300 steps to cross one person.

Seeing these bones, they understood why the people of that generation were not afraid when Noach informed them that a mabul was coming.

A 300 foot tall person is not afraid of a little rain!

And should the "great wellsprings of the depths" open up and shoot water from below, they figured they can just put their enormous feet over the geysers and stop the eruption. They stubbornly refused to be intimidated.

This is the story in the Zohar.

## RABBIS ON THE ROAD?

The first troubling aspect of this story is its location.

What business do these great rabbis have touring the "great mountains?"

And we're not talking about any rabbis, but *amoraim*. Their place is in the *beis medrash* learning Torah, not going on excursions to "great mountains."

This is especially disconcerting when we consider what was on those mountains: the bones of the *dor hamabul*! If you have to go to a mountain, at least choose one that is not infused with impurity, not to the final resting place of such rotten characters.

Furthermore, once they discovered the bones, instead of immediately leaving, they walked **on** the bones for 300 steps. Who does such a thing?

In addition to understanding the story itself, we must also see how this story is relevant to us, to our *avodas Hashem*. There are a number of approaches to this.

## 1. DON'T BE LIKE THEM

The most obvious and basic lesson we can learn from this story, is not to behave like the sinners of the *mabul*!

They were so stubbornly confident in their ability to win against Hashem, that they refused to change their ways. And the most bizarre thing is: in a way they were right!

The Zohar says that if they would have been united, like the *dor haflaga* was, they wouldn't have been destroyed. The *dor hamabul* possessed such giant spiritual abilities that, channeled properly, they could have been a tremendous force.

This brings to mind the *maamar chazal* "One should always be soft like a reed and not hard like a cedar". As great as one is, he must be flexible and not too confident in his own capabilities, forgetting that everything really comes from Hashem.



A LOOK AT THE TORAH OF  
HARAV LEVI YITZCHOK  
THROUGH THE REBBE'S SICHOS

## 2. LOOK AROUND YOU

The *amoraim* found themselves on a mountain and bumped into these giant bones. Did they turn away in disgust, eager to distance themselves as fast as possible from this sordid past?

No! They instinctively understood that when a Jew sees something, it has been brought to his attention in order to learn something.

In this case, what they learned was an increased appreciation for Hashem's creations: *מה רבו מעשיך ה'.*

Seeing a 300 foot skeleton is sure to impress us. Although we know instinctively that Hashem is capable of creating such beings, actually seeing them brings home *מה גדלו מעשיך ה'—* how great are your works Hashem.

This is on two levels: in the fact that they actually existed in the first place, and that Hashem was able to conquer them.

After all, how do you assess the true strength of an army? By examining the strongest opponent that it defeated. In this case, the greatness of Hashem is brought out by the defeat of these giants.

## 3. THE LOWEST OF THE LOW

We all know that our job in the world is *avodas habirurim*, elevating mundanity to holiness.

There is nothing lower than the generation of the *mabul* and all they

represented; they were the lowest of the low.

The beautiful lesson we learn from this story, is that wherever a Jew finds himself, although it might be the lowest place possible spiritually, he is there for *avodas habiburim*, in order to elevate it.

Even if one is already 300 feet deep in "*dor hamabul*," not only is he not too far to be saved, he is there to help the situation around him, to transform it to holiness.

When Moshiach comes, the entire world will be filled with G-dliness. That includes even such coarseness and immorality as represented by the bones of the *dor hamabul*.

Which leads us to the next level:

All that was discussed until now did not affect the bones themselves. On the contrary—the lessons that we learned were from how evil they were. So they remain bad, while we grow spiritually thanks to our conviction **not** to be like them.

While this has some merit, it still does not represent the true *avodas habiburim*, elevating the bones themselves.

## 4. HOLY BONES

As mentioned previously, the people of the *mabul* possessed a tremendous spiritual capacity, but unfortunately they abused it.

By these *amoraim* bringing their bones into Torah—by not just leaving

them to rot, but actively discussing them—their true nature was revealed.

To put it in the terminology of Harav Levi Yitzchok in the *biurim* on Zohar:

The bones represent the ultimate of *tohu*, Rebbi Chiya and Rebbi Yehuda are the ultimate of *tikkun*. By them incorporating these bones into their own Torah, the bones are transformed and their true potential on high is unlocked.

## 5. DON'T JUST SIT THERE

This also explains why they had to go there rather than just sitting in the *beis medrash* and talking about them, which would seemingly have accomplished the same thing.

By walking on the actual bones and learning Torah, the bones themselves became a "platform," so to speak, for their Torah.

It is not enough to sit on the couch and come up with great ideas about how to transform the world. That might be right, and on some level even accomplishes something by making them part of Torah. But to do the job fully we must go out there, seek out the lowest of the low, and purify it.

Wherever we are, even in the worst place possible, we are there for a reason. Hashem put us there to help the situation, not to run away. **1**

*(Based on the sicha of Shabbos Parshas Noach 5744)*

1. Meseches Taanis 20:1

לזכות החייל בצבאות ה'  
שמעון בן ח' מושקא שי'  
לרגל הולדתו בח"י אייר - ל"ג בעומר ה'תשע"ט

ולזכות אחיו ואחותו  
החיילים בצבאות ה'  
מנחם מענדל בן ח' מושקא שי'  
לרגל יום הולדתו בז' מר-חשוון  
ואסתר הנ'ל רחל בת ח' מושקא תח'ל'  
לרגל יום הולדתה בי"א מר-חשוון

יה"ר שיגדלו חי"לים בצבא כ"ק אדמו"ר  
מתוך שמחה, בריאות והרחבה