

## Hashem said to Noach come... into the Ark. (7:1)

The **Baal Shem Tov, zl**, notes that the Hebrew word for “word” is *teivah*. Hashem’s instruction to Noach to come into the *Teivah* can be interpreted as: “Come into the word”; enter within the words of Torah and *tefillah*, Torah study and prayer. In the words, you will find refuge; you will find sanctuary within the wisdom of Torah, comfort and solace within the words of prayer. Here you will be protected from the raging floodwaters of life.

An important lesson may be derived from this exposition. When Noach entered the Ark, it enveloped him. He was ensconced within the *Teivah*. Likewise, when we *daven* or learn, the words of prayer and Torah must encompass us; they must embrace us. We become a part of the words, as they superimpose upon our entire being. How does this happen? When *tefillah* is heartfelt and sincere, when the words of prayer are much more than articulated by rote, when they emanate from within us, then we are one with the “words.”

I believe that there is a famous story that does justice to this idea. There are a number of versions to this story, but I am choosing the most simple and direct. A young shepherd boy passed by a synagogue where he heard people praying. He, too, wanted to pray, so he entered the *shul* and took a seat in the back. One problem: everyone was reading from a *siddur*, which he could not read, as he was illiterate. He did, however, know how to verbalize the letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Not knowing what else to do, he stood in the back of the *shul* and yelled out, “*Aleph! Bais! Gimmel!*” until he completed the entire *Aleph Bais*.”

A few of the worshippers were offended by this lack of decorum. (Imagine this happening today in any of our *shuls*!) They went over to the boy and were about to escort him from the *shul*, when the *Rav* came over (the story goes that it was *Horav* Levi Yitzchak Berditchever) and told them, “Stop! That boy’s shouting is more precious than any other prayers recited here today. His prayer ascended right up to Heaven!”

When prayer emanates from the heart, it counts. This boy’s letters went up to Heaven, where Hashem formed them into *teivos*, words.