

## Noach was a righteous man, perfect in his generations. (6:9)

The *Talmud Avodah Zarah* (6a) distinguishes between the appellations *tzaddik*, righteous man, and *tamim*, perfect, in that *tamim* is applied to *derachav*, ways/demeanor, while *tzaddik* is used to describe *maasav*, deeds. *Rashi* supplements this, explaining that *tamim b'derachav* means that one is *anav u'shefal ruach*, low, meek, humble, while *tzaddik b'maasav* means that he distances himself from any form of *chamas*, theft.

From *Rashi*, we derive that *tzaddik* is a term used to describe one who takes great pains to be careful with other people's money. Heaven forbid that he make use of another person's money without his permission or with inappropriate intentions.

The **Kav HaYashar** writes: "One who refuses to benefit from someone else's money or possessions – and certainly (it goes without saying) that he refuses to deal with stolen goods – and all his business dealings are carried out with the height of integrity – he is a *tzaddik v'yashar*, righteous and upright... for the primary definition of *yiraah* and *tzidkus*, fear of Heaven and righteousness, are applied to areas of money; and any person who remains on his spiritual plateau with regards to areas of money is a *tzaddik gamur*, complete and perfect *tzaddik*" (free translation). The *Kav HaYashar* goes on to note that the term *rasha*, wicked, is used to describe one who acts inappropriately with regard to other people's money.

The **Meshech Chochmah** observes that the Torah uses the word *dorosav*, generations, in the plural. This implies that Noach was a *tzaddik tamim* in more than one generation. Thus, he suggests that this appellation applies to the span of Noach's life which extended two generations: prior to the Flood; and after the Flood. During the generation before the Flood, a generation that was steeped in *chamas* and moral depravity, Noach excelled in the area of *tzidkus*, righteousness. He did not touch another person's money, and he distanced himself from anything immoral. He remained the paragon of moral rectitude. The generation following the Flood was different. Noach was alone, as he was practically the sole survivor of the destruction of the world's population, charged with the mission of rebuilding the world. He had much on his mind, and no one with whom to share his feelings. On the other hand, he was "it"; he was the "man," the one in charge, the one to whom everyone would be indebted. He had every reason to allow this to go to his head. It was during this generation that the term *tamim*, which describes Noach's humility and lowly spirit, applies.

Thus *tzaddik/tamim* is divided between two generations: in the first, Noach was a *tzaddik*; in the second, he was a *tamim*.

In summation, we derive a powerful lesson from the Torah's depiction of Noach as righteous and perfect, terms which address his ability to rise above the basic desire to acquire material possessions – regardless of the "obstacles" in the way – and his capacity for maintaining his humility, despite every reason to be arrogant. One would expect such appellations to describe

someone who exemplifies a specific area of spirituality, who goes beyond the call of duty. Not to be a thief and to be humble, are simple acts of human decency. Otherwise, one is not a *mentch*, human being! Why should one be called a *tzaddik* just because he is not a *ganov*, thief?

Apparently, human nature is such and the drive toward materialism is so strong that inappropriate use/manipulation of another person's money/possessions is not viewed as earth-shattering. Indeed, if one maintains integrity with regard to another person's money, he is called a *tzaddik*, righteous person!

Whatever happened to simple human *mentchlichkeit*? Does decency no longer play a role in our lives? Apparently, the prohibitive commands of *Lo sigzol*, *Lo signov*, "Do not steal," are crucial in order to prevent an individual from being a thief. Sadly, these commands are not always a sufficient deterrent to prevent one from taking advantage of his fellow. I guess this is why someone who exerts the effort to act appropriately is considered to be a *tzaddik*!