



הַמִּזְרָחִי HAMIZRACHI

PARSHA WEEKLY



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World MizRachi is the global Religious Zionist movement, spreading *Torat Eretz Yisrael* across the world and strengthening the bond between the State of Israel and Jewish communities around the world.

Based in Jerusalem and with branches across the globe, MizRachi – an acronym for *merkaz ruchani* (spiritual center) – was founded in 1902 by Rabbi Yitzchak Yaakov Reines, and is led today by Rabbi Doron Perez. MizRachi's role was then and remains with vigor today, to be a proactive partner and to take personal responsibility in contributing to the collective destiny of *Klal Yisrael* through a commitment to Torah, the Land of Israel and the People of Israel.



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On the Shoulders of Giants

The Journey of Jewish Destiny



Rabbi Doron Perez
Executive Chairman, World MizRachi

Perhaps one of the greatest challenges any human being has ever faced, is that of Noah and his family.

As opposed to Adam and Chava, who came into a world created perfectly by G-d, Noah stepped out of the ark into a world which had been utterly destroyed. Adam and Chava were totally alone in a world without one other human being but they had not experienced death and loss until Kayin killed Hevel. Quite differently, every single human being, every living thing, every person that Noah knew and had grown up with and had ever interacted with was dead. The world was a wasteland, and he was charged by G-d with the responsibility to somehow now rebuild a destroyed and decimated world – a near impossible task. Perhaps this is why the first thing Noah plants is a vineyard – to make wine and celebrate life in the face of so much death. Unfortunately the wine led to inebriation and drunkenness which had painful consequences for him and his family. This was Noah's greatest mission and monumental challenge – to attempt to rebuild an entirely broken and destroyed world.

Sometimes we as human beings, and certainly as the Jewish people, perhaps more than any other people, are called upon to face seemingly impossible life

circumstances and challenges of so much pain, hurt and destruction.

From Darkness to Light

Avraham, according to our Sages, faced imminent death at the hands of Nimrod who wanted to kill him for his monotheistic belief and activism. Yet, out of his turmoil, emerged the unique spiritual journey of Jewish destiny.

Everything that was so good in Egypt turned into slavery and decrees of destruction for the Jewish people. Yet somehow through the darkness, Hashem redeemed us, and we entered into the light of freedom and redemption.

Thus the path of Jewish history has continued in our generation, even to the unspeakable horrors of the Holocaust, from which the Jewish people somehow emerged to affirm and rebuild life - to establish a Jewish sovereign state in its ancient homeland; to rebuild the world of Torah, so much of which had been destroyed in Europe... If ever there was a people who faced impossible challenges and somehow triumphed, it was our people.

So too on a personal level. Human history in general, and the Jewish people specifically is littered with incredible individuals who have had to face impossible situations

and have somehow prevailed to affirm life and to rebuild. There is unfortunately no shortage of this – I will share just two examples from recent history. Famously, the Klausenberger Rebbe, who while he lost his wife and 11 children in the Shoah rebuilt a family, a community and a hospital in Israel which continues to save lives and bring healing daily. In 2004, David Chatuel of Gush Katif was informed that his wife Tali, who was 8 months pregnant, along with his four daughters were murdered in cold blood together in their car not far from the Kissufim junction. David remarried and today has five beautiful healthy children and has rebuilt his life and continues to be a prominent educator. They are amongst so many other examples of heroic decisions in the face of impossible circumstances.

We all today stand on the shoulders of such giants who continue to affirm life in the face of danger and death, who believe in the future, despite the challenges of the present.

Our family, like so many other families in Israel today, are facing great challenges. A friend of mine who I work with, Rabbi Shmuel Slotky, has two sons who heroically went down south immediately on Shabbat to assist with the battle and were killed – their funeral was last Friday. Families have been decimated and there is so much pain and challenge of so many dead, so many wounded, and many also either missing or captured.

Our son, Daniel Shimon ben Sharon is one of those missing in action, with members of his tank crew, and we daven and pray for his and their speedy return amongst all the missing and captured of Israel. Our oldest son, Yonatan, was shot in the leg after five hours of battle with terrorists on the first day of the war, and by the grace of G-d was only injured lightly, with a bullet going in and out of his leg, and missing all the major arteries, nerves, and bones. Things could have been so different. Him and his fiancée, who is now his wife, Galya, made the decision together with our families, the Perez and Landau families, to get married at the original set time they were meant to get married, this past Tuesday



Life is full of inherent contradictions which seem irreconcilable. There is light and darkness, love and hate, sorrow and joy, sadness and simcha and so many other ongoing inherent contradictions in life that we are called upon to confront.

night, despite the pain, and concern for Daniel's welfare.

With the perspective of Jewish history and experience, this life affirming decision seems to be what the Jewish people as a whole and the individual Jews do time and time again when faced with seemingly insurmountable challenges.

Day One

There is a remarkable comment of the famous Rabbinic biblical commentator, Rabbi Ephraim of Lunichin in his commentary the *Kli Yakar*, regarding the first day of creation.

At the end of the first day of creation the *passuk* says that it was evening and it was morning – “יום אחד” – “day one”. After, every other day it says “יום שני...יום שלישי” – “The second day... the third day”. Why is it that after the creation of light and darkness on the first day it does not say that it was the first day, but rather says “יום אחד” – “day one”?

The *Kli Yakar* quotes the Gemara which highlights how nothing could be more opposite in life than light and darkness, than day and night – two opposite phenomena and experiences. Yet out of the contrast and contradictions, G-d says it was night and it was day, these two opposites, they are one, “יום אחד”. Everything created is indeed one. The Jewish people have proclaimed the oneness of creation and hence the oneness of G-d more than any other. The Shema ends with “Hashem is One” where the Jewish

people constantly proclaim the Oneness of G-d.

Life is full of inherent contradictions which seem irreconcilable. There is light and darkness, love and hate, sorrow and joy, sadness and simcha and so many other ongoing inherent contradictions in life that we are called upon to confront.

Our belief in one G-d, say our Sages, is a belief that both the good and the bad, the challenging and the uplifting, the pain and the joy stem from the One G-d who is the G-d of all creation and ultimately wants the good for all of His creatures.

We hope and pray for the good of *Klal Yisrael*. We hope and pray for the safety of our troops, every single one going into battle. We hope and pray for the healing of the sick, comfort for those who have lost, and the safe and speedy return of our son Daniel amongst all of those missing and captured in Israel.

מי כעמך כישראל, גוי אחד בארץ

“Who is like the Jewish people, one nation on earth.” (II Shmuel 7:23)

An Interview with Rabbi Reuven Taragin



Rabbi Reuven Taragin
 Educational Director, World Mizrachi
 Dean of Overseas Students, Yeshivat Hakotel

What is World Mizrachi doing to help those further away – the communities around the world who are concerned about their brethren here in Israel?

The first day after Yom Tov Sheni, we ran a worldwide *tefilla* and *chizuk* program online. Since then, we have been hard at work raising funds for the Rav Rimon Tzevet Perez campaign with the goal of purchasing special ceramic-plated vests and other life-saving equipment for the *chayalim*.

You are the Dean of Yeshivat HaKotel, how has the war affected your work in the Yeshiva?

I've been dedicating time to helping the *talmidim* of Yeshivat HaKotel – including almost 100 overseas students, some of whom just began their learning at the start of Elul and some who are returning students.

I have been setting up programming for these *talmidim*, finding replacement teachers for those called up for *miluim* and easing them back into a healthy routine. Obviously, all this is done while taking into account their physical well-being and security as well as facilitating their continued personal and spiritual growth as much as possible.

Additionally, I have been communicating intensively with the parents to explain the situation and help them feel comfortable and confident about their sons staying here.

Have many of your talmidim returned home in light of the situation?

Many *talmidim* and *talmidot* from various gap year programs have left Israel. Many people abroad are afraid. Those who are

here feel safe and are confident, but fear is contagious.

In light of this, the *talmidim* started an initiative to say to the world “that we are #NotGoingAnywhere.” That they are standing firm with our people at their time of need.

These *talmidim* are confident and proud to be able to be here now. They are strengthening themselves and supporting our people every way they can – first and foremost by being here with them at their time of need. They and we support those who left and want to strengthen those who are staying.

B”H over 800 students (and others) have joined the group to strengthen each other.

As part of this initiative, Rabbi Hershel Schachter, Rabbi Efreim Goldberg, Rabbi Aryeh Leibowitz and others are giving *Divrei chizuk* over Zoom each day.

You must have many former talmidim who have been called in for miluim. Are you in touch with them?

Yes. I am in touch with over one hundred *chayalim* and we have set up supply lines to get them to equipment they need. Unfortunately, there is a terrible amount of equipment that is missing – both military and civilian.

We have also started an “Adopt-a-*chaya*l” program in which each *talmid* (and alumni and parents who have chosen to be involved) learns for (and with when possible) and *davens* for one of our *chayalim*.

In addition, we have a daily Zoom in which *chayalim* on the front lines teach Torah and give *chizuk* to our *talmidim*, parents, and alumni.

Importantly, we are also supporting the wives of the *chayalim* – we have a WhatsApp group to make sure they have what they need. We sent flowers to each of them for Shabbat and we are ensuring that each one has meals for Shabbat and the support they need.

In addition to the *chayalim* and their wives, we have also started a support group for parents of *chayalim* who live overseas. Obviously, they need a unique type of support.

Can you please tell us about the Achdut Program that launched this week?

This week, we launched the Acheinu Worldwide Achdut Program. Since the war, we have seen an unprecedented expression of care and concern for and a sense of unity amongst our people. A fractured people just one week ago, has come together to defend ourselves and care for one another.

B”H there are many *achdut* initiatives taking place around the world. The uniqueness of Acheinu is that it is the only Worldwide Achdut movement. We believe that this is needed now more than ever. We need to unify not only those within each community, but communities and countries around the world. The collective site and banner coupled with international initiatives will *iy”H* help us feel this global unity.

Our first global project is the Worldwide Siyum which will include people in each country finishing Shas Mishnayot in memory of those killed in advance of the Sheloshim. There will probably be much learning in the days leading up to the Sheloshim. The Acheinu initiative will

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 Rabbi Taragin's
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PARSHA V'EMUNAH

Micro and Macro-Faith



Rabbanit Shani Taragin
 Educational Director, World Mizrachi

The “plan” this year was to write weekly articles addressing messages of education in the Parsha and commentaries; post-chagim plans, however, have drastically changed. Our oldest son, who was supposed to continue his residency in emergency medicine at Sharei-Tzedek hospital, has been sent to serve in a combat unit; our son-in-law, busy preparing shiurim in Bava Kama (laws of damages) over chag, was called out of yeshiva where he serves as a Ra”m, and is now dealing with the damage near the Gaza border. And our 20-yr. old son, three weeks shy of completing his basic training, has been promoted to a full-fledged Golani soldier. Schools and nurseries have been closed, and grandparents, mothers, and teenagers have been monitoring the home front. This is a time for change of plans and action, a call for strengthening of forces – in the North and South of Israel – and in our hearts and minds – an opportunity to edify our *emunah*. So each week, I will *be'ezrat Hashem* address ideas of *emunah*, strengthening our faith and resolve, based on messages of the *parsha* and commentaries.

Parashat Noach presents Noach as a “righteous man, whole-hearted, in his generation.” Albeit based on many early *midrashim* and numerous medieval commentaries, Noach is portrayed as upright and outstanding, Rashi consistently incorporates subtle critique towards Noach. In addition to teaching us based on Chaza”l (Rashi 6:9 “*bedorotav*” – Sanhedrin 108a) that had he lived in the generation of Avraham, he may not have been so righteous, Rashi also asserts (Rashi 7:7) that Noach was “*miktanei emunah*”, of little faith. He didn't completely believe that the *mabul* would come and therefore did not enter the ark seven days earlier as commanded by Hashem, but rather waited for the heavy rains of the flood to fall before entering.

To properly understand this dichotomy of Noach's righteous yet not-so-faithful personality, we must understand the term “*ktanei emunah*” found in Mesechet Sotah 48a concerning those who do not believe that Hashem will provide food for them tomorrow. Rav Tzadok HaCohen (Kuntres Sefer Hazichronot, mitzvah 1, pg. 24) explains that such people indeed have *emunah*, yet are afraid that their iniquities may dispel Divine Providence; they believe in Hashem but don't sufficiently believe in themselves that they are worthy of Hashem's supervision and blessings. That is why they're referred to as “*ketanei emunah*” – they see themselves as “*ketanim*” – as small.

Rebbe Avraham Yehoshua Heshel of Apta (“Ohev Yisrael”) explains that there are two types of *emunah* – one is the belief that something will happen (“micro-faith”), and the other is the belief that through strengthening our relationship with Hashem, we can help make things happen (“macro-faith”). Noach believed that the flood would come, but he did not believe that he had the power to affect his generation and change the decree of destruction. Rashi (6:14) explains that the primary purpose of Hashem's command to Noach to build an ark was not to save him, his family, and animals from destruction; Hashem could have protected them through other means! Rather, the goal of constructing the ark over the course of 120 years was to warn the generation of the flood and arouse them to repentance.

According to Rashi, Noach should have entered the ark seven days before the flood to further demonstrate to his peers that punishment was imminent. But Noach, after 120 years of indifferent reactions and apathetic responses, no longer believed that he could arouse the hearts of his contemporaries. He no longer believed in his own potential to

affect those around him and therefore only entered the “*teiva*” when the “waters forced him” to do so to save himself! That is why Rashi employs Chazal's qualification of “*ketanei emunah*” – he didn't possess the belief that he had the potential to affect change; he gave up in despair.

Perhaps that is why Rashi compares Noach specifically to Avraham Avinu even though Chaza”l speak of Noach's righteousness in contrast to other non-specific generations (see Sanhedrin 108a, Bereishit Rabba 30:9). Avraham did not only possess faith in Hashem's omniscient powers, he also believed that Hashem endowed him with the potential for greatness, and power to influence others.

When our prophets speak – they don't just tell us what WILL be, but what COULD be, imploring us to be of “macro-faith,” repenting and catalyzing change! Rav Kook z”l (Orot HaKodesh 1:30) called to each one of us:

עֲלֶה לְמַעַל עֲלֶה, כִּי כַחַץ לְךָ בְּנֶפֶשׁ רוּחַ, כִּנְפֵי נְשָׁרִים אֲבִירִים. אֶל תַּכַּחשׁ בָּם, פֶּן יִכַּחֲשׁוּ לָךְ. דְּרוֹשׁ אוֹתָם, וְיִמְצְאוּ לָךְ מִצָּד

Go up, rise, for you have great strength, you have wings of wind, wings of knightly eagles. Don't deny them lest they deny you. Seek them out, and they'll come to you right away.

We are currently facing challenging, fearful times. With sons on the front lines of battle and danger lurking, we naturally have reservations and fears concerning our futures. We have also witnessed tremendous strength, courage, and potential for personal and national greatness since the outbreak of this war. Noach's despair leads to destruction, whereas Avraham's faith to inspire others leads to Divine promises of salvation and international respect. Let us not be content to be counted now as “*ketanei emunah*.” Let us strive for “greatness” of faith in our potential to write history with HaKadosh Baruch Hu, inspiring and catalyzing repentance, salvation, and redemption!

Halachic Q&A



Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon

Head, Mizrachi Rabbinic Council | Rabbi of the Gush Etzion Regional Council
 Rosh Yeshivah, Jerusalem College of Technology | Founder and Chairman, Sulamot and La'Ofek

Question: My family has a bat mitzva celebration in Gush Etzion. Am I allowed to travel there at this time, or is this perhaps forbidden because of the danger involved?

Answer: The specific question involves the dangers of travel in Gush Etzion and the roads of Yehuda and the Shomron, but at first glance the question should possibly be expanded to ask how we are allowed to ride in a car in Tel Aviv or other places in the country. After all, there is a constant danger of traffic accidents (which have caused many more injuries than terrorist activity). We can also ask about many other dangers.

The Talmud teaches us that a person should never enter into a dangerous situation and rely on being saved by a miracle:

“A person should never put himself in a dangerous place and say that a miracle will take place for him, perhaps the miracle will not happen. And if it does occur, it will be detracted from his merits.” [Shabbat 32a].

On the other hand, in five other places the Talmud allows going into a danger because of the principle that “G-d watches over the innocent ones” [Tehillim 116:6]. In two sources, the Talmud adds that since “many people have walked in a place” one is allowed to go there (Shabbat 129b; Yevamot 72a). That is, one is allowed to go into danger in places where most people often go. This would imply that since tens of thousands of people (and perhaps more) ride on the roads of Yesha every day, the matter is covered by the above verse and the people are protected.

Can one decide to be stringent and avoid the danger?

Is one allowed to be stringent and not rely on the verse, “G-d watches over the innocent ones”? The fact that G-d provides protection can be understood in two ways (this seems to be the subject of a dispute among the early commentators, but we will not go into details here).

(1) It is possible that a measure of danger exists but since many people ignore it, one is allowed to do the same, because of the decree that “G-d watches over the innocent ones.” That is, the Holy One, Blessed be He, takes care of the majority of people and He does not demand that we act in a way that is different from most other people.

(2) Perhaps the fact that “G-d watches over” the people does not mean that one is allowed to go into danger, **but redefines this situation as one where there is no danger!**

One possible difference between these two outlooks involves the possibility of being stringent with respect to entering a danger. If we understand that the danger has been removed, there is no reason to attempt to be stringent, since the situation is no longer dangerous at all. (This is what seems to be implied by Rashi, Yevamot 12b – “Meshamshot”).

However, if the danger remains but we have been given permission to ignore it, perhaps one who wants to act in a stringent manner can choose to travel by train or bus (and thereby substantially reduce the danger of accidents). This principle seems to be implied by the **Ritva** (Yevamot 73b). It is written in the Talmud that one should not perform a circumcision on a cloudy day, and the Ritva adds:

“‘G-d watches over the innocent.’ For this reason, one who does not want to do a circumcision on a cloudy day is allowed to delay, and it is good that he does not rely on this verse.” The Ritva gives credit to the Rambam for this ruling.

This implies that whenever the rule that “G-d protects the innocent” is invoked, a danger still exists but we have been given permission to ignore it. **Therefore a person can decide not to ignore the danger, and he can even delay the mitzva of a circumcision in order to avoid this level of danger.** It would then be correct not to perform a circumcision on Shabbat under these circumstances. This would imply that a person who prefers not to travel to Gush Etzion at this time is allowed (according to the opinion of the Ritva) to refrain from the trip, and he is not considered as not showing a proper level of faith.

Facing Danger in Order to Support Settling the Land

It is possible that with respect to a trip to Gush Etzion there is another factor, in addition to permission to do something that might be dangerous. **Tosafot** discuss the fact that a husband can force his wife or a woman can force her husband to move to Eretz Yisrael (Ketuvot 110b). According to what they write, in their time one could not force another to move to Eretz Yisrael because the route was fraught with danger: “This ruling is not in force today since the roads are dangerous.” Thus, they write that one should not put himself in danger in order to move to Eretz Yisrael.

However, **Rabbi Yehuda Halevi writes that for the purpose of moving to**

גרעין קיום לעולם, ובכך גם יסתיים סיפור המבול – נח ומשפחתו יצאו מן התיבה אל מציאות חדשה, ויתחילו לבנות את העולם.

נח מהווה המשך של אדם הראשון. אדם הראשון קיבל תפקיד לשמור על העולם, לשלוט בבעלי החיים ולנהל את העולם, ונח הוא זה שבזכותו ניצל כל עולם החי מן החורבן. הוא זה שיוצא מן התיבה, מקריב קרבן לה', ממשיך להתהלך את האלקים בעולם הזה, ולבנות את העולם מחדש, אפילו לאחר מבול וחורבן קשה.

בכל דור יש צדיקים כנח, אשר בזכותם העולם ממשיך להתקיים; בעבורם היה כדאי לברוא את העולם ואת האדם, כפי שאומר רש"י: “אף על פי שגלוי לפניו שסופן לחטוא ולאבדן, לא נמנע מלברוא בשביל הצדיקים העתידיים לעמוד מהם” (רש"י לבראשית ו', ו).

בכל עת, האדם עומד למבחן, האם יבחר בטוב או ברע, האם ישחית את דרכו על הארץ ויחריב את העולם (רוחנית מוסרית ופיזית) או יהיה “נח” – יתהלך את האלקים, ימצא חן בעיני אלקים ואדם, ויצליח לחיות את העולם כולו, לשקם אותו מחורבן והרס, ולהיות זה ש”יִנְחֲמֵנו מִמַּעֲשֵׂנוּ וּמִעֲצָבוֹן יְדִינֵנו” (ה', כט).

Continued from previous page

the land even greater dangers are permitted:

“And if the man who rises up to Eretz Yisrael puts himself into greater dangers because of his yearning and his hope of being forgiven for his sins, he has a good reason to expect to be forgiven for putting himself in danger ... He knows that this path of his is better than the path of men who put themselves in danger in order to wage war...” [Kuzari, Section 5, 23].

ה' אִמְחָה אֶת הָאָדָם אֲשֶׁר בְּרָאֲתִי מֵעַל פְּנֵי הָאֲדָמָה מֵאָדָם עַד בְּהֵמָה עַד רֶמֶשׂ וְעַד עוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם כִּי נִחְמָתִי כִּי עֲשִׂיתֶם” (ו', ה-ז). רעת האדם גוברת על יתרונותיו, וה' מתאכזב מהאדם, מצטער על בריאתו, ומחליט למחות את כל בני האדם מהעולם. זהו משבר גדול מאד, שנראה כסופי וחסר סיסוי לתיקון.

אולם, מיד לאחר מכן מופיע שביב תקווה: “וְנָח מָצָא חֵן בְּעֵינָיו ה'” (ח). למרות שרוב בני האדם השחיתו את דרכם, יש עדיין אדם שמוצא חן בעיני ה'. בתקווה זו מסתיימת פרשת בראשית, ובתקווה זו מתחילה פרשת נח: “אֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדֹת נֹחַ נֹחַ אִישׁ צַדִּיק תָּמִים הָיָה בְּדֹרֹתָיו אֶת הָאֱלֹהִים הִתְהַלֵּךְ נֹחַ: ויִּלְדָּ נֹחַ שְׁלֹשָׁה בָנִים אֶת שָׁם אֶת חָם וְאֶת יָפֶת” (ט-י).

נראה שחז"ל בחרו במיקום מדויק לסיום פרשת בראשית ולתחילת פרשת נח:

סיפור ראשית העולם, שהתחיל בתקווה גודלה של “וירא אלקים כי טוב”, מסתיים עם ההכרה ש“רבה רעת האדם בארץ” עד כדי כך ש“נחמתי כי עשיתם”, ובכל זאת יש איש אחד צדיק המוצא חן בעיני ה'.

סיפור המבול, המתאר את הייאוש והחורבן, מתחיל דווקא עם התקווה של האיש הצדיק תמים, המתהלך את האלקים, כשם שאדם הראשון התהלך בגן עדן עם אלקים. לאדם צדיק זה נולדים שלושה ילדים, שיהוו המשך לעולם, שעומד להיחרב. ואכן, מיד לאחר שה' מודיע לנח על המבול ועל השחתת הארץ, הוא מצווה עליו לבנות תיבה, בעזרתה ינצלו הוא ובני משפחתו ואף בעלי החיים. בזכות נח יישאר

תשחת הארץ לפני האֱלֹהִים וְתִמְלֵא הָאָרֶץ חָמָס: וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הָאָרֶץ וְהִנֵּה נִשְׁחָתָה כִּי הִשְׁחִית כָּל בָּשָׂר אֶת דְּרָכֹוֹ עַל הָאָרֶץ: וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים לִנְחָ קֵץ כָּל בָּשָׂר בָּא לִפְנֵי כִּי מָלְאָה הָאָרֶץ חָמָס מִפְּנֵיהֶם וְהִנְנִי מַשְׁחִיתָם אֶת הָאָרֶץ (בראשית ו', יא-יג)

פרשת נח נפתחת בקטסטרופה עולמית – בני האדם משחיתים את דרכם ואת העולם עד כדי כך שהארץ מלאה חמס, וה' מחליט להחריב את העולם שברא.

כיצד הגענו מפרשת בראשית, בה נברא העולם שנאמר עליו “וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת כָּל אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה וְהִנֵּה טוֹב מְאֹד” (בראשית א', לא), לפרשת נח, בה מתוארת השחתה של הארץ עד כדי חורבן טוטלי במבול?

ייחודו של האדם הוא בכך שנברא עפר מן האדמה וה' נחם בו נשמת חיים. האדם מורכב מגוף ונפש, מעולמות עליונים ועולמות תחתונים. הוא נברא בצלם אלקים, ניתנה לו בחירה חופשית, ויש לו תפקיד משמעותי בעולם: “וַיְדַוּ בְּגִגַּת הַיָּם וּבְעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וּבְכָל חַיַּה הָרֹמֶשֶׂת עַל הָאָרֶץ” (א', כח). הפוטנציאל של האדם אדיר – להיות שליח ה' בעולם, להנהיג ולפתח את העולם, ולחבר בין העולם העליון לעולם התחתון. אך האדם עלול גם לבחור ברע, להשחית את הארץ, ואף לפגוע בעולמות עליונים.

פרשת בראשית מתארת הידרדרות וקילקולים שהתחילו מיד לאחר בריאת האדם, ומסתיימת באמירה כואבת ביותר: “וַיֵּרָא ה' כִּי רָבָה רַעַת הָאָדָם בָּאָרֶץ וְכָל יֵצֵר מַחֲשַׁבַּת לֵבֹ רָק רַע כָּל הַיּוֹם: וַיִּנְחָם ה' כִּי עָשָׂה אֶת הָאָדָם בָּאָרֶץ וַיַּחְעֻצֵּב אֶל לֵבֹ: וַיֹּאמֶר

there is mortal danger (always leading to some casualties), the very command to fight against the Seven Canaanite nations takes precedence over the rules of mortal danger. Perhaps every trip in the land is part of the process of settling Eretz Yisrael and helps in the effort to keep the land in our possession. However, it is more reasonable to suggest that all of this is relevant only when an actual war is taking place.

Continued on page 9

פרשת נח



הרבנית שרון רימון
 Tanach teacher and author

Continued on next page

A Tale of Four Cities



Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks zt”l

Between the Flood and the call to Abraham, between the universal covenant with Noah and the particular covenant with one people, comes the strange, suggestive story of Babel:

The whole world spoke the same language, the same words. And as the people migrated from the east they found a valley in the land of Shinar and settled there. They said to each other, “Come, let us make bricks, let us bake them thoroughly.” They used bricks for stone and tar for mortar. And they said, “Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower that reaches the heavens, and make a name for ourselves. Otherwise we will be scattered across the face of the earth.” (Gen. 11:1-4)

What I want to explore here is not simply the story of Babel considered in itself, but the larger theme. For what we have here is the second act in a four act drama that is unmistakably one of the connecting threads of Bereishit, the Book of Beginnings. It is a sustained polemic against the city and all that went with it in the ancient world. The city – it seems to say – is not where we find G-d.

The first act begins with the first two human children. Cain and Abel both bring offerings to G-d. G-d accepts Abel’s, not Cain’s. Cain in anger murders Abel. G-d confronts him with his guilt: “Your brother’s blood cries out to me from the ground.” Cain’s punishment was to be a “restless wanderer on the earth.” Cain then “went out from the Lord’s presence and lived in the land of Nod, east of Eden.” We then read:

Cain knew his wife, and she conceived and gave birth to Enoch. He [Cain] built a city, naming it Enoch after his son. (Gen. 4:17)

The first city was founded by the first murderer, the first fratricide. The city was born in blood.

There is an obvious parallel in the story of the founding of Rome by Romulus who killed his brother Remus, but there the parallel ends. The Rome story – of children fathered by one of the gods, left to die by their uncle, and brought up by wolves – is a typical founding myth, a legend told to explain the origins of a particular city, usually involving a hero, bloodshed, and the overturning of an established order. The story of Cain is not a founding myth because the Bible is not interested in Cain’s city, nor does it valorise acts of violence. It is the opposite of a founding myth. It is a critique of cities as such. The most important fact about the first city, according to the Bible, is that it was built in defiance of G-d’s will. Cain was sentenced to a life of wandering, but instead he built a town.

The third act, more dramatic because more detailed, is Sodom, the largest or most prominent of the cities of the plain in the Jordan valley. It is there that Lot, Abraham’s nephew, makes his home. The first time we are introduced to it, in Genesis 13, is when there is a quarrel between Abraham’s herdsmen and those of Lot. Abraham suggests that they separate. Lot sees the affluence of the Jordan plain.

Lot raised his eyes and saw that the whole plain of the Jordan up to Tzoar was well watered. It was like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt. (Gen. 13:10)

So Lot decides to settle there. Immediately we are told that the people of Sodom are “evil, great sinners against the Lord” (Gen. 13:13). Given the choice between affluence and virtue, Lot unwisely chooses affluence.

Five chapters later comes the great scene in which G-d announces his plan to destroy the city, and Abraham challenges him. Perhaps there are fifty innocent people there, perhaps just ten. How can G-d destroy the whole city?

“Shall the Judge of all the earth not do justice?” (Gen. 18:25)

G-d then agrees that if there are ten innocent people found, He will not destroy the city. In the next chapter, we see two of the three angels that had visited Abraham, arrive at Lot’s house in Sodom. Shortly thereafter, a terrible scene plays itself out:

They had not yet gone to bed when all the townsmen, the men of Sodom – young and old, all the people from every quarter – surrounded the house. They called to Lot, “Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us so that we may know them.” (Gen. 19:4-5)

It turns out that there are no innocent men. Three times – “all the townsmen,” “young and old,” “all the people from every quarter” – the text emphasises that, without exception, every man was a would-be perpetrator of the crime.

A cumulative picture is emerging. The people of Sodom do not like strangers. They do not see them as protected by law – nor even by the conventions of hospitality. There is a clear suggestion of sexual depravity and potential violence. There is also the idea of a crowd, a mob. People in a crowd can commit crimes they would not dream of doing on their own. The sheer population density of cities is a moral hazard in and of itself. Crowds drag down more often than they lift up. Hence Abraham’s decision to live apart. He wages war on behalf of Sodom (Gen. 14) and prays for its inhabitants, but he will not live there. Not by accident were the patriarchs and matriarchs not city dwellers.

The fourth scene is, of course, Egypt, where Joseph is brought as a slave and serves in Potiphar’s house. There, Potiphar’s wife attempts to seduce him, and failing, accuses him of a crime he did not commit, for which he is sent to prison. The descriptions of Egypt in Genesis, unlike those in Exodus, do not speak of

violence, but, as the Joseph story makes pointedly clear, there is sexual license and injustice.

It is in this context that we should understand the story of Babel. It is rooted in a real history, an actual time and place. Mesopotamia, the cradle of civilisation, was known for its city states, one of which was Ur, from which Abraham and his family came, and the greatest of which was indeed Babylon. The Torah accurately describes the technological breakthrough that allowed the cities to be built: bricks hardened by being heated in a kiln.

Likewise the idea of a tower that “reaches to heaven” describes an actual phenomenon, the ziqqurat or sacred tower that dominated the skyline of the cities of the lower Tigris-Euphrates valley. The ziqqurat was an artificial holy mountain, where the king interceded with the gods. The one at Babylon to which our story refers was one of the greatest, comprising seven stories, over three hundred feet high, and described in many non-Israelite ancient texts as “reaching” or “rivaling” the heavens.

Unlike the other three city stories, the builders of Babel commit no obvious sin. In this instance the Torah is much more subtle. Recall what the builders said:

“Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower that reaches the heavens, and make a name for ourselves. Otherwise we will be scattered across the face of the earth.” (Gen. 11:4)

There are three elements here that the Torah sees as misguided. One is “that we make a name for ourselves.” Names are something we are given. We do not make them for ourselves. There is a suggestion here that in the great city cultures of ancient Mesopotamia, people were actually worshipping a symbolic embodiment of themselves. Emil Durkheim, one of the founders of sociology, took the same view. The function of religion, he believed, is to hold the group together, and the objects of worship are collective representations of the group. That is what the Torah sees as a form of idolatry.

The second mistake lay in wanting to make “a tower that reaches to the heavens.” One of the basic themes of the cre-

ation narrative in Bereishit 1 is the separation of realms. There is a sacred order. There is heaven and there is earth and the two must be kept distinct:

“The heavens are the heavens of the Lord, but the earth He has given to the children of men.” (Ps. 115:16)

The Torah gives its own etymology for the word Babel, which literally meant “the gate of G-d.” The Torah relates it to the Hebrew root *b-l-l*, meaning “to confuse.” In the story, this refers to the confusion of languages that happens as a result of the hubris of the builders. But *b-l-l* also means “to mix, intermingle,” and this is what the Babylonians are deemed guilty of: mixing heaven and earth, that should always be kept separate. *B-l-l* is the opposite of *b-d-l*, the key verb of Bereishit 1, meaning “to distinguish, separate, keep distinct and apart.”

The third mistake was the builders’ desire not to be “scattered over the face of the whole earth.” In this they were attempting to frustrate G-d’s command to Adam and later to Noah to “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.” (Gen. 1:28; Gen. 9:1). This seems to be a generalised opposition to cities as such. There is no need, the Torah seems to be saying, for you to concentrate in urban environments. The patriarchs were shepherds. They moved from place to place. They lived in tents. They spent much of their time alone, far from the noise of the city, where they could be in communion with G-d.

So we have in Bereishit a tale of four cities: Enoch, Babel, Sodom, and the city of Egypt. This is not a minor theme but a major one. What the Torah is telling us, implicitly, is how and why Abrahamic monotheism was born.

Hunter/gatherer societies were relatively egalitarian. It was only with the birth of agriculture and the division of labour, of trade and trading centres and economic surplus and marked inequalities of wealth, concentrated in cities with their distinctive hierarchies of power, that a whole cluster of phenomena began to appear – not just the benefits of civilisation but the downside also.

This is how polytheism was born, as the heavenly justification of hierarchy on earth. It is how rulers came to be seen

as semi-divine – another instance of *b-l-l*, the blurring of boundaries. It is where what mattered were wealth and power, where human beings were considered in the mass rather than as individuals. It is where whole groups were enslaved to build monumental architecture. Babel, in this respect, is the forerunner of the Egypt of the Pharaohs that we will encounter many chapters and centuries later.

The city is, in short, a dehumanising environment and potentially a place where people worship symbolic representations of themselves.

Tanach is not opposed to cities as such. Their anti-type is Jerusalem, home of the Divine presence. But that, at this stage of history, lies long in the future.

Perhaps the most relevant distinction for us today is the one made by the sociologist Ferdinand Tonnies, *Gemeinschaft* (community) and *Gesellschaft* (society). Community is marked by face-to-face relationships in which people know, and accept responsibility for, one another. Society, in Tonnies’ analysis, is an impersonal environment where people come together for individual gain, but remain essentially strangers to one another.

In a sense, the Torah project is to sustain *Gemeinschaft* – strong face-to-face communities – even within cities. For it is only when we relate to one another as persons, as individuals bound together in shared covenant, that we avoid the sins of the city, which are today what they always were: sexual license, the worship of the false gods of wealth and power, the treatment of people as commodities, and the idea that some people are worth more than others.

That is Babel, then and now, and the result is confusion and the fracturing of the human family.

AROUND THE SHABBAT TABLE:

- What do you think the sin of the builders of the Tower of Babel was?
- Do you think cities today support the argument made by Rabbi Sacks in this essay about the potential for evil in cities?
- How can we create large, flourishing cities where the residents are more righteous?

Chamas



Rabbi Hershel Schachter
 Rosh Yeshivah, Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary of Yeshiva University

כי מלאה הארץ חמס מפניהם.
 For the earth is filled with robbery through them. (Bereishis 6:13)

The Bartenura points out a discrepancy between two *mishnayos* in Avos. One Mishnah teaches (Avos 1:2), – על שלשה דברים העולם עומד, על התורה ועל העבודה ועל גמילות חסדים “The world depends on three things: on Torah study, on the service [of Hashem], and on kind deeds.” A subsequent Mishnah (1:18), however, seems to list other considerations that are necessary for the existence of the world: על שלשה דברים העולם קיים על הדין ועל האמת, ועל השלום – “The world endures on three things: justice, truth, and peace.”

The difference between the two *mishnayos* is that in the former, Chazal wish to identify what the purpose of the *bri'ah* was. Torah, *avodah*, and *gemilus chasadim* are the reasons that the world was created and that it continues to exist. The latter *mishnah*, in contrast, focuses on the things that are necessary for society to function. From a pragmatic, technical point of view, civilization cannot sustain itself unless there is justice, truth, and peace.

That is why, as Rashi quotes regarding the generation of the *mabul*, גזר – לא נחתם על הגזל – “Their sentence was not sealed except on account of robbery.” The severity of dishonesty should be kept in mind when we consider our personal conduct.

The Rambam (Hilchos Dei’os 1:3-4) formulates his famous principle known as the *shvil hazahav*, the “Golden Mean,” writing that proper conduct demands that one

follow the “*midah beinonis*,” a middle path between two extremes. There is, however, an exception to this rule. The Gemara in Sotah (2a) explains that טוהה in her state of disgrace should separate himself from wine.” Since wine may well have brought the sotah to this state, the witness should be moved to limit its consumption in order to prevent the mood of levity that might lead him to immorality.

We see from this Gemara that if one lives in a generation in which a particular area of *halachah* is commonly violated, he should lean to the extreme in that area, at least until the situation reaches equilibrium. One who witnesses a *sotah* must be concerned that he too may follow the path of *pritzus* associated with the *sotah*’s behavior. Under such circumstances, the Torah recommends that he take extreme measures to offset the improper influence of society.

We are surrounded by so many people who cheat in business or who are dishonest with regard to paying income tax or sales tax. We should therefore be overly cautious in matters of adherence to the laws of honesty. Unfortunately, we also find ourselves in a culture in which *pritzus* is commonplace. It thus seems reasonable that in issues pertaining to *arayos*, our behavior should reflect the opposite extreme, to make sure that we do not follow the corrupt practices of our society.

In fact, the Ralbag (To’aliyot HaRalbag, Bereishis 5:32) writes that this is one of the moral lessons we are meant to glean from the story of Noach. The Ralbag attributes Noach’s decision to begin to have children only at the age of five hundred to the fact that he lived in a society that was steeped in depravity.

Indeed, the *passuk* states, כל בשר – כי השחית כל בשר, – “for all flesh had corrupted its way upon the earth” (Bereishis 6:12), implying that even the animals corrupted their way by mating with animals of other species (Rashi). Because of the decadence of his generation, Noach adopted an extreme position, and distanced himself from marital relations until much later in life.

• Adapted from Rav Schachter on the Parsha II.



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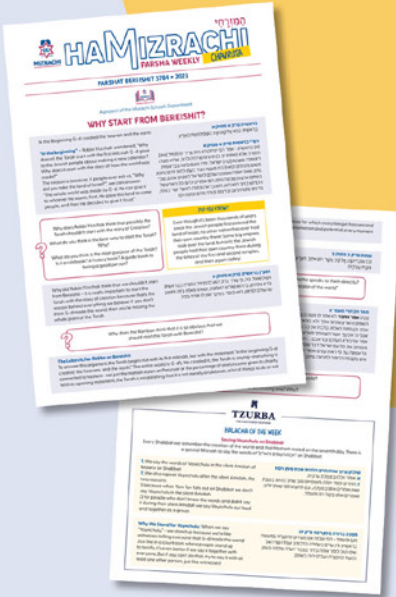


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How Responsible was Noah for the Flood?



Chief Rabbi Sir Ephraim Mirvis KBE
Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth

Is it possible that Noah bore some responsibility for the flood?

Such a seemingly preposterous suggestion arises out of the haftarah for Parshat Noach, Isaiah 54. There is a direct link between verse 9 of the *haftarah* and the *parsha*.

There, the prophet refers to the flood and reassuringly tells us that in the same way as Hashem has kept His word never again to destroy life on earth, so too He will keep His word not to be angry with us nor to rebuke us.

Now, both Abarbanel and Radak point out that this verse can be read in two different ways. In both ways, there's a reference to the flood, but there's one significant difference between the two. The prophet says, "*Ki mei noach, zot li*."

If you read '*ki mei*' as one word, it's "*kiy mei Noach*," – "Like in the **days** of Noah." This is a reference to a particular period in time. Hashem is saying, "As for Me, this is like in the days of Noah."

Alternatively '*ki mei*' can be two different words. "*Ki mei Noach*," – "Like the **waters** of Noah." Hashem is saying, "As for me, this is like the waters of Noah," as if to suggest that we can call the flood Noah's flood.

This possibility is preferred by us around the shabbat table, when in '*Yonah Matza*' (one of the *zemirot* sung on Shabbat) we sing, "*ka'asher nishba al mei Noach*," – "Just as Hashem swore to us concerning the waters of Noah."

Referring to the flood in this way is an indication that Noah did bear some element of responsibility. And the reason

is clear: he was charged by Hashem to build an ark over a long period of 120 years. What Hashem had in mind was the possibility that Noah would reshape the minds and the hearts of people, that he would influence and inspire them to turn in *teshuvah*, but he failed to do this with even a single person.

As a result, he did bear some element of responsibility for what ensued.

Let us therefore learn not to be like Noah in this respect. In the event that we are aware of a situation that is wrong and we are in a position to influence and inspire others to change direction, let us never fail in our responsibility to change things for the better.

Why Didn't Noah Pray on Behalf of The People in His Generation?




Rabbi Shalom Rosner
Yeshivat Kerem B'Yavneh

Many commentaries take issue with the fact that Noah does not seek to defend the people of his generation before G-d. Noah is a true servant. G-d asks Noah to build an ark and he does so. G-d requests that he gather the animals and Noah abides by His request. The Torah uses the phrase "*va'yaas Noach*" several times to highlight that he indeed fulfilled all of Hashem's requests. Why did Noah not pray to Hashem or request that the generation be saved?

In Parshat Vayera, when Avraham learns of the imminent destruction of Sodom, he pleads with Hashem to spare the inhabitants of Sodom. When Moshe hears of Hashem's desire to annihilate Am Yisrael and start a nation from Moshe's descendants, Moshe pleads for their forgiveness. Why did Noah not attempt to persuade Hashem to reconsider bringing a flood to destroy the earth's inhabitants when he was informed of the fate of his generation?

In defense of Noah, the Ohr HaChaim offers two explanations. The first is based on linguistics and the second is based on logic. When Hashem appears to Avraham in connection with Sodom, Hashem tells Avraham "I will descend and see" "נא ואראה" – It is clear that a final decision has not yet been taken (Bereshit 18:21).



Why did Noah not attempt to persuade Hashem to reconsider bringing a flood to destroy the earth's inhabitants when he was informed of the fate of his generation?

Hashem is telling Avraham that he is evaluating whether or not to destroy Sodom. Therefore, Avraham has the ability to try to persuade Hashem to spare the inhabitants of Sodom. Similarly, when Hashem informs Moshe that he is frustrated with the nation, it does not appear that Hashem made a final decision (see Bamidbar 14:11). Therefore, Moshe is able to defend *Am Yisrael* before Hashem.

In contrast, when Noah is informed of the flood – it is presented by Hashem as *fait accompli*. G-d tells Noah: "I am destroying them from the earth" (והנני (משחיתם את הארץ (Bereshit 7:13). Once G-d makes a decree there is no ability for Noah to change G-d's will. Avraham and Moshe were presented with G-d's considerations, Noah with G-d's final decision.

Therefore, Noah's prayers would be useless in changing the will of G-d.

In addition, the appearance to Avraham and Moshe was not necessary. Hashem could have carried out His destruction without consulting them. The mere fact that Hashem raised his considerations with them was so that they could plead for mercy on behalf of the sinners. Noah however, had to be informed of the immediate danger, since he had to build an ark in order to be spared. Hashem's revelation to Noah was not a hint to pray, but practical advice so that Noah and his family can survive the flood.

For some reason Noah is viewed as a very ambiguous figure. Some claim that he was righteous compared to those wicked people who lived in his generation, but if he lived in the generation of Avraham he would not have been viewed as such a righteous individual (see Rashi on first pasuk). The Ohr HaChaim cleverly defends Noah so that we understand why he merited being saved. It is always good when judging others to give them the benefit of the doubt.



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The Offspring of the Righteous



In this week’s *parsha*, *Parshas Noach*, we learn of the deluge that inundated the world, destroying all life forms, save for Noach, his wife Na’ama, their three sons and their wives, and the animals in the *teyva* (ark). After the world was washed away, and the flood waters receded, Noach and his family emerged from the ark and began the daunting task of rebuilding the world. As a sign of His promise that He would never again flood the entire world, Hashem placed a rainbow in the clouds.

The opening *pasuk* of the *parsha* tells us: *These are the offspring of Noach – Noach was a righteous man, perfect in his generation, Noach walked with G-d* (Bereishis 6:9).

Why does the verse begin by stating that ‘these are the offspring of Noach’ and then diverge into a description of Noach’s righteousness, instead of listing the names of his sons – Shem, Cham and Yafes – as we would have expected?

Rashi (ibid) famously answers: לַמֶּדֶה שֶׁעָקַר לְמִדּוֹתֵיהֶם שֶׁל צַדִּיקִים מַעֲשִׂים טוֹבִים – *to teach you that the main offspring of a righteous person are his good deeds*.

Rashi is teaching us that the everlasting legacy of the righteous is *not* their biological children, as we actually might expect. It is, rather, their good deeds, the way they lived their lives, and the positive impact they made in the lives of others. The best example of this is Moshe *Rabbeinu*, who – by the word of G-d – separated from his wife and children to lead the people. And yet, he lives on in each and every generation through the holy Torah he brought, and taught, to the nation.

In more recent times, *gedolim* such as the Chazon Ish (1878-1953) *zt”l*, *zy’a*, and the Lubavitcher Rebbe (1902-1994) *zt”l*, *zy’a*, live on – not in the biological children they

were never blessed with – but in their Torah and *ma’asim tovim*, whose rewards, longevity and eternity are infinite and boundless, producing spiritual *peiros* (fruits) in each and every generation.

However, there is a deeper understanding to this Rashi, which enlightens us to the connection between a person’s children and their *ma’asim tovim*, their good deeds.

In his *Short and Sweet on the Parsha* (Feldheim, p.13-14), R’ Shlomo Zalman Bregman writes:

‘These are the offspring of Noach – Noach was a righteous man, perfect in his generation’ (Bereishis 6:9). Rashi cites the famous *medrash* that even more so than one’s children, the main offspring of a person is his good deeds.

Rav Moshe Feinstein *zt”l* explains how the comparison between *ma’asim tovim* and offspring is apropos:

1. Just as one loves his children and helps them for that reason – and not just because he ‘has to’ – so too one should perform mitzvos out of love and not simply out of duty, because he ‘has to.’ As the *pasuk* says: ‘And you shall love the L-rd your G-d’ (Devarim 6:5). Rashi teaches: עָשֶׂה דְּבָרָיו מֵאַהֲבָה – *perform His word, keep His word, from love*, and not from fear. When it comes to *mitzvos* and *ma’asim tovim*, the highest level of performance is one motivated by love of G-d, and love of fellow man.
2. Just as we love our children even when they fall short of our expectations – for a parent always loves his or her child, come what may – so too we should love the *ma’asim tovim* we have performed in the past, and not regret that we didn’t do things in a bigger and better fashion. It is true that there is always room for improvement, but we must

be encouraged by the good deeds of our past, realize their worth, and be inspired to perform even more good deeds in the future!

3. Just as a parent always analyzes his child to find shortcomings that need to be corrected, and guides his child along the correct path in life, so too we should look at our *ma’asim tovim* with the same critical eye – finding which areas need to be corrected, and rerouting ourselves when necessary to ensure our good deeds are ‘on the right path’ in life.

4. Just as a parent works very hard to make sure his children lack nothing that they might need to become even bigger and better, so too we should toil over our deeds to improve them as far as humanly possible. We must toil in the realm of good deeds and acts of loving-kindness towards others, just as we toil in the realm of Torah learning, and *l’havdil*, in the realm of making a *parnassah*. In this way, we will ensure that just as our children’s needs are met, so too, our spiritual needs will be met.

The lasting legacy a person leaves in this world, as well as the תּוֹלְדוֹתֵיהֶם עָקַר, one’s main offspring, are the spiritual fruits that we create when we engage in *mitzvos* and good deeds. And then, like a father’s love for his child, we will surely be loved by fellow man and beloved before G-d.

“It states in the Zohar: Every time a person performs a *mitzva*, The Blessed Holy One takes pride and says: ‘Such are the deeds of My children!’ And G-d recites praise about this person, as a father who speaks and repeats the words of his young child, who is beloved to him” (*Loving and Beloved*, by Simcha Raz, p.49).

Toldot Bnei Noach



After we read the opening *pasuk* of chapter ten: “*ayle Toldot Bnei Noach...*”, we would expect to find a simple listing of Noach’s children, and maybe even some of his grandchildren. We also find that this chapter divides into three distinct “*parshiot*” that we would expect to divide evenly among Shem, Cham and Yefet.

Nevertheless, when we study this chapter we uncover some rather interesting details, that we may not have otherwise expected.

First of all, note how the first “*parshia*” includes the descendents of both Yefet and Cham, while the next “*parshia*” discusses only Canaan. Note as well how YEFET branches out to what later becomes Europe (i.e., Greece, etc.), CHAM branches out to what later becomes Africa (Mitzrayim, Kush = Egypt, Ethiopia etc.) as well as the seven nations of Eretz Canaan. Finally, SHEM branches off into Mesopotamia (and Asia Minor).

Even though the description of Yefet’s offspring is straightforward, the genealogy of Cham clearly puts an emphasis on Nimrod – most likely because he becomes the builder of Migdal Bavel, and because he enters Mesopotamia, even though the rest of his family remains in Africa (see 10:10-12, note Rashi and Ramban!).

We also find extra details concerning Canaan, for Chumash will later explain how G-d gives the land of Canaan to Avraham (note 15:18-20). Therefore we find not only the name of Canaan’s children, but also the borders of their land.

Hence we conclude that the descendants of CHAM focus on Canaan and his children. [Note how this relates as well to 9:22-25 where the Torah describes Cham as the ‘father of Canaan’ throughout the story of Cham’s sin against his father.]

Even more interesting is the Torah’s presentation of the descendants of SHEM (see 10:21-30). Note how the focus of this entire “*parshia*” describing bnei SHEM actually focuses almost exclusively on EVER, his great-grandson! First of all, note the opening *pasuk*: “And SHEM also had children, he [SHEM] is the [fore]father of ALL the children of EVER...” (see 10:21). Then the “*parshia*” quickly lists SHEM’s own children, focusing on ARPACHSHAD – who gives birth to SHALACH – who gives birth to EVER. (note 10:22-25). We find no detail of Shem’s grandchildren, other than Arpachshad. However, we do find minute details concerning Arpachshad’s son EVER, his two sons: PELEG and YOKTAN. Then we are told of the reason for PELEG’s name (clearly this relates to, and sets the background, for the Migdal Bavel narrative that follows in chapter 11).

Then, the Torah enters minute details of all of the children of Yoktan ben Ever [thirteen in total] AND where they lived (see 10:25-30).

Just like Canaan and his children became the Torah’s “key” descendants of Cham, Ever and his children become the “key” descendants of Shem. [Hence, it should not surprise us that we find that CHAZAL speak of the YESHIVA of ‘SHEM & EVER.’]

Clearly, this entire unit (i.e., chapter ten) is not merely listing the grandchildren

of Noach. Rather, in its presentation of his grandchildren, we are also setting the stage for the story in Sefer Breishit that will follow – whereby G-d promises Avraham Avinu – a descendant of Ever – that one day he will be charged to inherit the land of Canaan, in order to fulfill a divine destiny.

Furthermore, this most likely explains what the Torah refers in later references to an “*Ivri*”, as in “*Avram ha’ivri*” (see 14:13). This appears to be a general name for the descendants of EVER. [Note as well from the ages of the people mentioned in the genealogies in chapter 11 how Ever outlives all of his great-grandchildren. He is the last generation to live over four hundred years, for in the next generation man’s lifespan seems to drop in half to under 200].

Finally, one could also suggest that chapter 10 also serves as an introduction to the story of Migdal Bavel. To prove this, simply note 10:5,10,20,31,32. This also may explain why Chazal identify Nimrod as one of the key builders of that Tower.

[Regarding the “correct” chronological order of chapters 10 and 11, note Radak on 10:32. See also Rashi & Ramban on 11:1 (and our questions for self study).]

In conclusion, don’t let what may appear to be a ‘boring’ set of *psukim* in Chumash fool you. They usually contain much more than first meets the eye.

Following the Example of Noah and Yosef



Rabbi Eli Mansour
Edmond J Safra Synagogue, Brooklyn

Parashat Noah tells the famous story of Noah, the lone righteous person in a corrupt, sinful generation, and who was thus saved by the flood which -Gd brought upon the earth by constructing an ark as G-d had commanded him.

Rav Menahem Azarya of Fano (Italy, 1548-1620) writes that Noah's soul later resided within the person of Yosef. This is why both Noah and Yosef are given the title "Sadik" ("righteous person"). Noah is described as an "Ish Sadik" in the first verse of Parashat Noah, and throughout the ages, Yosef has always been referred to as "Yosef Ha'sadik."

Indeed, numerous parallels exist between these two righteous figures. Most notably, perhaps, both sustained the world during a period of grave crisis. Noah sustained humankind and the animal kingdom on the ark during the flood that killed all living creatures on earth, and Yosef, through his prophetic insight which forewarned of an impending famine, oversaw the storage of grain in Egypt which sustained the ancient world during the devastating famine which would have otherwise caused widespread starvation.

Noah is described as having "found favor in G-d's eyes" ("Masa Hen Be'eneh Hashem" - Bereshit 6:8), just as Yosef found "favor in the eyes" of his master, Potifar ("Va'yimsa Yosef Hen Be'enav" - Bereshit 39:4). Noah spent twelve months trapped in the ark, and Yosef spent twelve years in the Egyptian dungeon. Furthermore, our Sages teach that the sea split for Beneh Yisrael

in the merit of Yosef, whose remains were being transported out of Egypt for burial in Eretz Yisrael. Just as Yosef saved Beneh Yisrael from the waters of the sea, Noah saved the world from the waters of the flood.

It is worth probing a bit deeper into the fact that these two great men are both credited with sustaining the entire world. The Hebrew root "Z.N." has two seemingly unrelated meanings - sustenance (as in the verb "Zan" - "feed"), and promiscuity (as in "Zenut" - forbidden intimate relations). A clear example of these two meanings is the description of Rahab - the woman who assisted the two spies sent by Yehoshua to scout the city of Yericho - as an "Isha Zona" (Yehoshua 2:1). This has been interpreted to mean either that she had a store, selling food to sustain the townspeople, or that she worked as a harlot. While at first, these two meanings seem unrelated, in truth, they are very much connected. King Shlomo warns in the Book of Mishleh (6:26), "Ki Be'ad Isha Zona Ad Kikar Lahem" - "For the sake of a harlot woman, until a loaf of bread." This means that a person who pursues forbidden relationships sacrifices his livelihood, and ends up sacrificing "a loaf of bread" for the sake of forbidden relations. It is as though a person chooses which "Mezonot" he will have - sustenance, or illicit relationships. These are the two sides of the same coin.

With this in mind, we can return to the connection between Yosef and Noah. They both earned the privilege of sustaining the

world because they both withstood the formidable challenge of temptation. Yosef, of course, was tempted by Potifar's wife, and he escaped rather than succumbed. Noah lived in a generation overrun by immorality, but with great strength and conviction, he resisted this influence and lived a noble, dignified lifestyle. As both excelled in avoiding one meaning of "Mezonot," they were granted the special privilege of providing the other kind of "Mezonot" for the entire world.

Like Noah, we, too, live in a generation that has all but eliminated even the most basic standards of morality; and the influence of this culture is far more pervasive and powerful than it was in Noah's time. Let us follow his and Yosef's example of strict adherence to our values and principles in the face of temptation, and may Hashem reward our efforts by blessing us all with sustenance, success and prosperity, Amen.



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Getting the Ship Back on Course



Rabbi Moshe Weinberger
 Congregation Aish Kodesh, Woodmere

According to Chazal, the *pasuk* in Ha'azinu (Devarim 32:7), “Remember the days of old, contemplate the years of other generations” refers to the generations of the flood and the dispersion. In the words of the Yalkut Shimoni, “‘Contemplate the years of other generations,’ every generation has those like the generation of the flood and every generation has those who are like the generation of the dispersion.” We must understand the nature of the generations of the flood and the dispersion in order to learn from them and improve ourselves accordingly because there is an aspect of these generations within each of us.

Civilization only emerges at the very end of *parshas Bereishis* and in *parshas Noach*. Until the end of the *parshas Bereishis*, that *parsha* primarily involves individuals, but not entire societies. It is remarkable that just like the Torah introduced the first man almost contemporaneously with his first sin, so too the Torah introduced the advent of civilization and its sins concurrently, as well. In the case of civilization, we encounter the mysterious בני אלהים, important men, who took the בנות האדם, the daughters of man. Second is the story of man's sin and the destruction of the world through the flood. And third, the Torah explains man's sin of the building of the great city and tower, and the generation's punishment.

The *tzadikim* teach us that the sins of the generations of the flood and the dispersion are archetypes for all human faults throughout the generations. According to Rashi, the primary sins of the generation of the flood related to גזל ופריצות, theft and immorality. It is important to understand, however, that Hashem created man with an innate need and inclination to get married and have children. He told man

(Bereishis 1:28) “be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth.” He also created man with an innate desire to acquire possessions, as we see from the same *pasuk*, which continues, “And you shall conquer [the world] and rule over the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and over all living things which walk on the earth.”

The generation of the flood, however, took these natural, healthy inclinations and turned them into the most destructive things in the world in the form of theft and immorality. It is the same way with all sin, which does not arise from an inherently evil desire. Rather, sin comes from a perversion and misdirection of the entirely proper human inclinations to get married, have children, and acquire possessions. Hashem does not want man to completely repress his natural human desires. Rather, he must express those tendencies within their proper boundaries.

The punishment of the generation of the flood was rain. Rain in and of itself is a great blessing. Nothing can grow without it. Rain is only a curse when it descends without limit. A flood means receiving blessing without limits. Even good things in unstoppable, unlimited, uncontrolled quantities cause destruction. That is why the flood fit the generation's sins measure for measure. Because they exercised their otherwise natural, healthy inclinations without proper limits or boundaries, Hashem sent them rain, which is normally a blessing, in excess and without limit as the appropriate consequence.

The root of the sin of the generation of the dispersion, however, was גאווה, conceit. They said (Bereishis 11:4) “Let us make a name for ourselves.” They desired to use science and technology to achieve great things. Just like it was with the generation of the flood, this desire in and of itself is

positive. The desire to make a name for one's self, to accomplish great things and have a positive self-image and healthy sense of self-esteem is a good thing. Its goodness, however, depends on the existence of boundaries. One's positive sense of self must be balanced with ענוה, humility, with the recognition of (Avos 2:1) “דע, מה למעלה ממך,” knowing what is above.

Shlomo Hamelech said (Koheles 5:1) “Hashem is in heaven and you are on the earth. Therefore, your matters should be small.” Man can achieve great things, but he must also recognize his place. His potential to accomplish is finite and he is finite.

The punishment for the unbounded ambition of the generation of the dispersion was therefore appropriate. The *pasuk* says (Bereishis 11:7), “Let us confuse their language.” Because of their conceit, each person failed to truly recognize and understand the nature of the others around him. Hashem therefore took away their ability to understand one another even on the simplest level. This separation between people resulted in (Id. at 9) “From there Hashem dispersed them over the entire face of the earth.” All hatred, divisiveness, war, and the like result from man's tendency to see only himself and his inability to recognize the reality of others. Consequently, Hashem caused everyone to completely separate from one another where one person could not understand a single word that another person says.

Just like mankind, at the dawn of civilization, sought to blaze its own path to achieve great things without regard for propriety and limitations, so too each of us has the potential and the desire to attain greatness, לעשות לנו שם, to make a name for ourselves. It is very difficult to express our natural, healthy inclinations

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History's First Self Promoters



Rabbi YY Jacobson
 TheYeshiva.net

The whole earth was of one language and of common purpose ... And they said one to another: ‘...Let us build for ourselves a city and a tower whose top shall reach the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered over the face of the entire earth.’

“‘And G-d descended to look at the city and tower which the sons of man built, and G-d said, ‘...Shall it not be withheld from them all they proposed to do?...’ G-d scattered them across the face of the earth, and they stopped building the city.”

This is a strange story. Why did G-d interrupt their project? What was their sin? Their motives for building a city with a tower “whose top shall reach the heavens” are quite understandable, even noble. Mankind was only just reconstructing itself after the Flood, which had wiped out the entire human race, save for Noah and his family. Noah and his children were, according to tradition, still alive, thus giving the people a first-hand report of the Flood. If fledgling humanity were to survive, they needed to construct a strong city and tower that could possibly avoid the next disaster. What was wrong with their scheme? Hasn't the Bible made it a moral imperative to “Be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it”?

Subduing the world never meant obliterating nature, or despoiling the environment. It meant responsible stewardship and making ourselves less vulnerable to nature through every possible natural mean. Why did G-d disapprove of their seemingly wonderful undertaking?

One of the possible answers is this: In stating their objective for creating the city and the tower, the people declared, “Let us build for ourselves a city and a tower whose top shall reach the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves.” Their motive behind this dramatic construction

plan was to immortalize their legacy in concrete structure; the endurance of their names in the annals of history.

But what's the big deal? Who among us does not crave to be remembered? Who among us would mind securing a place in *Who's Who*? How many of us would crave to read about ourselves in the newspapers or on websites (as long as the name is spelled right)? How many of us really loathe seeing our names carved in glory on concrete walls, on the printed page and in the lasting pages of history books? Does G-d really care that much if people want to make a name for themselves?

The answer is simple. When you have observed a flood in which the entire human race has perished, have you nothing else to think about but securing for yourself a name and a legacy?

Imagine somebody gazing at a home swiftly being consumed by a flood. Instead of running to rescue the people inside the home, this person stands and reflects how he can be sure to make a name for himself in the process. This would be grotesque. Can't you ever forget about your ego? Is there never a moment you are capable of saying to yourself, “Forget my legacy! Human lives need to be saved!”

There are such people. They are PR addicts, at all expenses. A tragedy strikes and their only concern is: How do I use this to make a name for myself? How do I seize the opportunity to get my name out there yet again? These people usually need help. Their inner core is all-but-dead. In the long run, it is likely to harm their PR, too, since they have nothing truly “inside” to give and display to the world.

When an entire generation has observed the consequences of a Flood that destroyed virtually the entire human race and becomes consumed instead with how to secure its legacy rather than with how to rebuild civilization and recreate a world

founded on moral goodness and kindness, something is profoundly wrong. A worm has crept into the very foundation of the project, and will ultimately prove destructive to the entire edifice. Corruption, manipulation, deceit and abuse of power are likely to flourish in the new city and tower.

This is true of every grand campaign undertaken to help humanity. If the objective is self-aggrandizement rather than service to G-d and His children, the very core is tainted. And the consequences of this blemish will likely be manifested in the future.

Seven decades ago our people experienced the greatest “flood” in our long and bloody history, with the murder of a third of the Jewish people, including one-and-a-half million children. Hundreds of communities were systematically wiped out and nobody uttered a pips.

In the aftermath of this titanic destruction, there were those who succumbed to basic human nature and asked one question: How do I make a name for myself as a grand leader, activist or visionary? But there were others who had one question on their mind: What do I do to rebuild a shattered people?

In our own lives we often observe people whose lives have been destroyed by a “flood,” in one form or another. Our question at such a time must always be: How do I rebuild a broken heart? How can I ignite a tortured soul? How do I bring more light into a dark world? How do I increase acts of goodness and kindness? What new mitzvah can I undertake to heal the world? How do I extend myself to be there for another person?

What will I do today and tomorrow to move our aching planet one step closer to redemption?

Noach: L’chaim...Ul’vracha



Rabbi Judah Mischel
 Executive Director, Camp HASC; Mashpiah, OU-NCSY

Professor Elie Wiesel wrote about his lonely and difficult years after arriving in New York as a broken, exhausted refugee. Born and raised in Sighet in the tradition of Viznitzer chasidim, a turning point in his life came when he met the Lubavitcher Rebbe. Wiesel attributed his gaining hope, and redemptive strength to move forward and rebuild his life after the War, to this relationship.

In his memoir, *All the Rivers Run to the Sea*, Weasel describes one of his meaningful visits to 770 Eastern Parkway for *yechidus*, a private audience with the Rebbe on Simchas Torah. He was welcomed into to Rebbe’s room and was offered to ‘say L’chayim’:

The Rebbe handed me a glass filled to the brim with vodka.
 “Rebbe,” I said, “in Viznitz, a Chossid does not drink alone.”
 “Nor in Lubavitch,” the Rebbe replied.

The Rebbe emptied his glass in one gulp. I followed suit.
 “Is one enough in Viznitz?” the Rebbe asked.
 “In Vishnitz,” I said bravely, “one is but a drop in the sea.”

The Rebbe smiled; “In Lubavitch as well.”
 He handed me a second glass and refilled his own. He said L’chaim, I replied L’chaim, and we emptied our glasses.

“Let me bless you so you can begin again....”

■ ■ ■

Our sedra chronicles the story of the destruction and rebuilding of the world during the generations that precede and follow the *mabul*. Alighting from the *teivah* to find the world completely wiped out,

“And Noach began...he planted a vineyard...And he drank of the wine and became drunk, and he uncovered himself inside his tent (9:20-21).”

Rashi comments: in “beginning” by planting a vineyard, עָצַם חֲלִין, “he profaned himself (as in *chol*),” as he ought to have started rebuilding society by planting something else. The ‘new world’ should have begun with something that would have led to goodness in life, and peace.

After the murder of his family (including his great father and teacher, Rav Elchonon hy”d), Rav Simcha Wasserman and his wife spent their lives spreading Torah and rebuilding Yeshivos and Kollelim in the United States and Eretz Yisrael with incredible sacrifice and dedication. In shiurim, Rav Simcha often referred to the demise of Noach and the tragic conditions which Noach faced. ‘Can we even begin to understand the despair and loneliness he must have felt in stepping out of the ark and viewing the world in total destruction? How can we judge him for seeking out a bit of comfort in a glass of wine? The Torah has numerous references to the uplifting qualities of wine: יַיִן יִשְׂמַח לֵב אָנוּשׁ, “Wine brings joy to the heart of man” (*Tehillim*, 104:15). The wisest of all men, Shlomo Hamelech, himself suggested that we “give wine to those who are bitter of soul” (*Mishlei*, 31:6)

Reb Simcha answered with self-revelatory insight, reflecting on his own life’s mission. Chazal’s indictment against Noach was, in fact, justified. Hashem had entrusted Noach with a mission to rebuild the world after the devastating Flood. Instead of wallowing in his own personal misery and seeking an escape from his sorrows, Noach was to have

planted wheat, to sustain the new world emerging from the ruins.

Another great builder who emerged from the ruins is Rav Yisrael Meir Lau, *shlit’a*. In *Out of the Depths*, the former Chief Rabbi recounts the harrowing episode of the last conversation he had with the tormented survivor, Yiddish poet Itzik Manger, in the hospital. Suffering from alcoholism and depression, the bedridden and emaciated poet poured out his heart to Rav Lau, struggling to reconcile the Torah’s description first of Noach as a *tzadik* (6:9) and then later as an *ish ha’adamah*, “a man of the earth” and a lowly drunkard.

“I have reached the stage where I understand Noach,” sighed Manger. “When he went back home after the *Mabul* and began to look for his hometown, his *shtetl*, he found nothing. He wanted to visit his neighborhood *shtiebel*, his *beis medrash*, but found no trace! Where was the postman he knew, the wagon driver? No one was left. No house or street, no neighborhood or friends — not a living soul.... In order to forget his solitude, he drank of the wine and became drunk.”

Manger continued his lament by naming family members, communities and yeshivos throughout Europe — all gone. It seemed to him that “all existence on earth had perished” (7:23): “No one is left. I remained alone in the world. So you will excuse me...if sometimes, in order to forget the horrors, I drink a little, like Noach after the flood.”

■ ■ ■

HaYom Yom is a collection of daily aphorisms and sources compiled by the Lubavitcher Rebbe, with the instruction to “live with each day.” In it, the Rebbe shares two versions of how one might respond to the blessing of *L’chaim*.

Continued on next page

Ark’s Aim

Mrs. Shira Smiles
 International lecturer and curriculum developer

Teivat Noach features prominently in our *parashah*. The Ramban notes that even ten arks would not have been able to contain Noach, his family and all the animals. If Hashem was going to perform a miracle of salvation for Noach, why was it specifically through the ark?

Rashi (Bereishit 6:14) notes that the 120-year process of building the ark enabled the people of Noach’s generation to inquire about his task and be inspired to do *teshuva*. Rabbi Birnbaum in Bekarei Shemo raises an interesting question on this Rashi. Why didn’t Hashem send a Navi to awaken them to do *teshuva* just as He sent Yonah to awaken the people of Nineveh? Why wasn’t Noach sent to speak to the people directly? He explains that the generation of the Flood had corrupted their *middot* so entirely that they were not even worthy of being aroused to repentance. In this respect, Noach’s generation was beyond salvation. However if one would awaken himself through observing the deeds of Noach he would be worthy of salvation. Hence, the ark was a medium of Hashem’s kindness, giving someone who otherwise deserved to die a chance to be saved.

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Citing the downfall of Noach in our Parsha, we are advised to respond, *L’chaim tovim u-l’shalom*, “For good life and for peace!” A second response, recommended by the Maggid of Mezritch, is *L’chayim v’livracha*, “For life and blessing!” *Livracha* may also be read as *leiv racha*, ‘sensitive heart,’ reflecting the true *avodah* and goal of sharing a drink with another Jew — opening our hearts to feel and connect with the other, to begin life again

together, acknowledging the Source of life and goodness and blessing.

Having spent years of solitude and hard labor in Siberia, Reb Mendel Futerfas, zy’a, had tasted the bitterness of Soviet persecution, yet maintained his faith and joy. He was known for his lengthy farbrengens and for embracing the *avodah* of ‘making a *l’chaim*.’ After all, the problem was not that Noach planted



One purpose of the ark was to create a cohesive society where they could learn the benefits of unity, dependence and community.

prided themselves on their individuality. Indeed, this independence created a society that lacked respect for one another, hence robbery became commonplace. One purpose of the ark was to create a cohesive society where they could learn the benefits of unity, dependence and community.

An additional lesson that the sojourn in the ark taught was the importance of kindness. Rabbi Goldvicht in Asufot Maarachot explains based on the Midrash that Noach and his family spent the entire year with sleepless nights feeding the animals. As such they were trained to be givers and concerned with others’ needs aside from themselves.

Building the *teivah* was thus the perfect channel to inspire Noach’s generation, build Noach himself and initiate building the new world.

a vine and prepared a drink; it was that Noach drank alone, and did not bless another with ‘*L’chaim*.’

Whatever flood, challenge, or difficulty we may face, may we be healthy, happy and well; may we be blessed to open our hearts and share with friends, and to ‘begin again’ with revealed good: *L’chaim, l’chaim U-livracha!*

“In slight anger, for a moment, I hid My face from you”



“**H**ester panim – hidden face”. It had no other name. G-d hid Hamas from us. The Sage’s definition of the word *chamas*, which we find in our *parashah*, is wise and resounding: “The earth is full of *chamas*: When someone brought a basket full of fruit to market offering to sell it, he would be mobbed by people each of whom helped himself to less than the value of a *prutah*. By using this subterfuge, the party helping himself to fruit without paying for it, escaped being cited before a judge, who did not entertain claims below that amount.”

Hamas is “less than a *prutah*,” fomenting local unrest on the border so that any retaliatory action against it is considered disproportionate. Until one terrible morning, on Shemini Atzeret, it turns out that the “less than a *prutah*” crimes have swept over everything and the country has been filled with Hamas.

This Midrash is also the medicine for the difficult days we are all going through: there is no such thing as a small act! Every tiny act of kindness, every comforting word, every embrace, fills the entire country! If Hashem’s hidden face was a terrible moment: “For a little while I forsook you,” the mercy will be huge: “But with vast love I will bring you back!”

When Mother Rachel of Ofakim baked cookies for the terrorists, she had no idea that there would be a reward for her act and hope for her future. You have no idea what every act of cooking, baking and feeding does these days. The Midrash to our *parashah* tells of four people (men! Pay attention!) who saw a world disappear and rise again just because... they were feeding people! “Four saw a new world... Moshe, Iyov, Mordechai and Noach...” Moshe was informed that G-d wanted to destroy the people, G-d forbid, Mordechai lived at the time of the decree of destruction, Iyov sees

the destruction of his family, *lo aleinu*, Noach sees a world that has perished... and they all feed; Moshe feeds manna, Mordechai feeds Esther, Iyov feeds the poor, Noach feeds the animals.

A cookie, a pot, a basket of fruit and we will see them, with G-d’s help, through the skylight of our homes, returning to the ark and finding rest for their feet.

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within the proper boundaries. חטא, sin, means missing the mark. We do not know the correct measure of our natural tendencies. It is difficult to know the difference between a healthy appetite and an unhealthy תאוה, desire. Similarly, it is difficult to know the difference between an appropriate sense of self-worth and the

inappropriate lure of גאווה וכבוד, arrogance and honor-seeking.

Just like it has been for mankind as a whole, we must understand the process of learning to recognize and utilize our natural, human, healthy impulses within the proper boundaries. There will be failures

along the way, but we must not be discouraged. We must use those mistakes to help us hone our efforts in our constant struggle to find the right balance in our lives.

Hebrew Language in the Parsha



To see if the waters had subsided, Noach sent out a raven and a dove. The Torah reports about the dove’s second journey:

וַתָּבֹא אֵלָיו הַיּוֹנָה לֵעֵת עֶרֶב וְהָיָה גֵּלְהָדֹזִית טָרָף בְּפִיקָהּ...

“The dove came back to him toward evening, and there in its bill was a plucked-off olive leaf! Then Noah knew that the waters had decreased on the earth.” (Bereshit 8:11)

While the image of a dove with an olive branch in its beak is familiar to all, there is a difficulty with the common understanding of the verse.

Olive leaves are known for their durability. It’s extremely difficult to destroy them.¹ And they float – so why would it have been so surprising for the dove

to find them? Why did it prove that the waters had subsided?²

One answer to this question lies in a different translation of the word טָרָף, rendered here as “plucked-off.” That is Rashi’s explanation. And indeed, in most cases in the Tanakh, the root טרף does mean “to tear (away).”

So for example, Shemot 22:30 instructs וּבִשֹּׁר בְּשָׂדֶה טְרֵפָה לֹא תֹאכְלוּ – “you must not eat flesh torn-to-pieces in the field.” From this use of טְרֵפָה eventually came the adjective טָרָף meaning non-kosher food in general.

The same root also gives us טָרַף, meaning “food” in a more general sense, as in וַתִּתֶּן לָהּ טָרֶף לְבֵיתָהּ – “She provides food for her household” (Mishlei 31:15). Linguists suggest that טָרַף first meant “prey,” and then simply “food.”

The root טרף can also mean “to confuse”, which leads to the use מְטָרֵף meaning “crazy.” This usage is also related to the sense “to tear to pieces”, in that violent action can also cause confusion.

But there is also an unrelated meaning of the root טרף: “fresh.” It has that meaning in Yechezkel 17:9, Rabbinic Hebrew³, as well other Semitic languages like Aramaic and Arabic. According to modern scholars (such as Daat Mikra), this may be the meaning of the word טָרָף in our verse in Parashat Noach. Noach wasn’t impressed that the dove found a plucked-off leaf, but rather a new, fresh leaf – indicating that the trees had begun growing again.

1. See Torah Temimah on Bereshit 8:11.
2. Rosh on Bereshit 8:11.
3. For example, Mishna Otzkin 2:1.

Parsha Riddle



Reb Leor Broh
Mizrachi Melbourne

In listing the generations between Shem and Avraham in Parshat Noach, what is conspicuously absent that does appear in the listing of the generations between Adam and Noach in Parshat Breishit ?

Answer to the Parsha Riddle

The word “יִרְמָה” (And he died) does not appear in the generations listed between Shem and Avraham. Rabbeinu Bechaye explains that this alludes to the Royal House of David descending from Shem, from whom Mashiah will descend and of whom it says, he will not die. He adds further, that it also alludes to Tzichat HaMeitim (Resurrection of the dead) that will be experienced by the Jewish people who descend from Shem.



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