



הַמִּזְרָחִי



# HAMIZRACHI

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**PARSHA WEEKLY**

## PARSHAT NOACH 5785 • 2024



**ISRAEL AT WAR**

**391** DAYS  
**101** HOSTAGES  
**86,000** DISPLACED








### WORLD MIZRACHI Picture of the Week

Participants of the Musmachim Semicha Program went on a Mizrachi tour to the south, including to the site of the Nova festival where they heard from Idan Rakovsky, former shaliach in Toronto, whose brother-in-law Avidan Tordjman was murdered there.









This week's edition is dedicated for the merit of the safe and speedy return of Matan Shachar ben Anat, a member of Tzevet Perez tank crew, together with all injured, missing, and captured, and dedicated to the memory of Tomer ben Shay hy"d, Itai ben Ruby hy"d, and Daniel Shimon ben Harav Doron Eliezer hy"d.

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**MIZRACHI**

www.mizrachi.org  
office@mizrachi.org  
+972 (0)2 620 9000



NASI

**Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon**

CO-PRESIDENT

**Rabbi Yechiel Wasserman**

CHAIRMAN

**Mr. Harvey Blitz**

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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.

**HAMIZRACHI**  
PARSHA WEEKLY

EDITOR

**Rabbi Reuven Taragin**

ASSISTANT EDITOR

**Esther Shafier**

GRAPHIC DESIGNER

**Leah Rubin**

ASSOCIATE EDITORS

**Yaakov Panitch**

**Zac Winkler**

PROOFREADER

**Renee Rosenberg**

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# Noah and Nechama

## The Unexpected Key to Experiencing Comfort



**Rabbi Doron Perez**

Executive Chairman, World Mizrachi

**N**oah is one of the most fascinating personalities in all of biblical literature.

What is most well-known about him is that despite the horrific, unparalleled tragedy of the entire world that G-d had created and then destroyed, humanity would continue in the merit of Noah. He was by far the most righteous person of his generation, so much so that only he and his family would be the only human beings on all the earth to survive. Like Adam and Eve at the dawn of human history, so would Noah and his wife reboot and restart the story of human history.

Although it appears explicitly in the verses, what is less known is that at his birth, Noah's father had great expectations that his newborn son would somehow alleviate so much of humanity's suffering. This is mentioned explicitly in the verse when Noah is named:

“And Lemech lived 182 years and begat a son, and he called his name Noah, saying, ‘this one will bring us respite from our labor and the bitter toil of our hands, from the ground which G-d had cursed.’” (Bereishit 5:29)

Somehow, there was an expectation that there would be respite and some form of alleviation from the curse of the land.

### The Curse of the Land

What curse is this referring to, and why specifically would Noah be the one to bring comfort?

The curse is clear – the punishment for Adam after the original sin was that the land would no longer easily give forth its fruits, but now it would only happen through hard labor. Whereas before, the land would automatically produce wheat and other produce, now, so much human toil would need to happen for the land to produce food and bounty. The curse and challenge of great toil and labor, not knowing what type of produce, if at all, the land would yield, and hence the threat of famine and starvation, was real. Life was so much more challenging once man was evicted from the utopian bliss of the Garden of Eden. Indeed, the land itself now seemed to be cursed producing many thorns and thistles (Bereishit 3:17-19).

### Great Expectations

How was Noah going to alleviate this? Why was there so much expectation that he was the chosen one?

The answer, say our Sages, is that Noah was the first human being to be born after the death of Adam. Adam lived for 930 years and upon his death came the expectation that perhaps the curse that he brought upon the earth would be removed. Perhaps his death was an atonement and a sign that a new era was being born. Hence, Noah brought with his very birth great prayer and expectation for a brighter and better world.

Indeed, the verses say this explicitly regarding Adam that the land will be cursed “all the days of your life.” This implies that since the sin was a result of Adam's actions and therefore the

punishment of the cursed land as well, would cease upon the death of Adam. Noah therefore, as the first to be born after the death of Adam, was the great hope and promise of a new era of blessing (Chizkuni, Abarbanel).

A number of our commentators (Rashbam and Seforno) say that the very naming of Noah itself was a hope and a prayer, as the tone of the verse of the naming implies – “this son should bring us respite and alleviation from this curse.” Our Sages furthermore continue that indeed Noah initially brought enormous reprieve and blessing to the world. It was that it was he who invented the plow and other farming tools. The fact that a metal plow could now be used to plow the land in place of other wooden and more primitive implements greatly enhanced the whole production process of produce. The world seemed to be less cursed and food was more readily available. Noah was indeed able to somehow lessen the curse of his forebear, Adam.

And indeed he was a righteous man and the greatest of his generation, not only spiritually but also in his scientific innovation of the plow, he bettered the predicament of man and brought blessing.

### What's in a Name?

Not only did Noah bear the dream, prayer, and promise for a better future for humanity, but his very name captured this sentiment as well.

His name is Noah and the reason given is because הוא ינחמנו – he will bring comfort to the world, comfort from the suffering of so many generations of curse. The Midrash and Rashi say though that if this is the case then his name should have been מנחם Menachem or נחום Nachum, נח, Noah. Rashi, therefore, says to match the reason given for the name and the name itself, the word Noah means “a rest,” in other words in context “a rest from or alleviating the suffering.”

The truth is that whether it means relieving נח or comforting נחם the meaning is essentially the same. The curse of the world would now be alleviated and

lessened, people's predicaments would be better and there would be a measure of healing, blessing, and comfort. The world would now be a different place because of both the righteousness of Noah's personality and his great invention for the betterment of mankind.

### The Meaning of Comfort

Incredibly this very same root word of נחם *nichum* is used once again a few verses later in the most unusual context. This says Rashi undoubtedly comes from the root Hebrew word meaning comfort – נחמה.

The challenge is that it is used in a context of meaning something totally different: regret and changing one's mind. The verse states:

“And Hashem regretted (נִחַם) that He had made man on the earth... (Bereishit 6:6).

Because of the great corruption and perversion in society, G-d so to speak, changed his mind about the world that He had created which had turned out through human action to be so evil. He regretted creating them. Vayinachem – He changed His mind [regretted] the creation of the world. This remarkable connection between comfort and changing one's mind is what Rashi highlights and this carries the key to the beginning of reprieve and comfort.

This is perhaps the most important insight into the dynamics of being comforted. I believe that the only way to understand what may give comfort is to analyze the connection in Hebrew between changing our mind and the transformative power of נִחַם, of comfort.

Rashi unlocks the mystery by explaining what the word נחם means whenever it appears in Tanach: “And He regretted: G-d's thinking (so to speak) was altered... So too, any time the word נחום appears in Tanach it means changing one's mind...” (Rashi, Bereishit 6:6).

Regret is part of a broader pattern at the heart of נחום, comfort – of shifting a mindset and altering one's thinking. Initially,

this surprised me. How are comfort and mind-shifting related? After contemplation, I realized that this is exactly what happened to me.

### Shifting the Darkness of October 7th

It was Monday, October 9th, 2023, two days after that fateful day, and I felt paralyzed from shock. One of our sons, Yonatan, was shot in the thigh and injured, and the other, Daniel, was missing. I was in a dark hole and didn't know how to lift my head out of it.

The turning point for me, which shifted my perspective, came in the form of a short video recorded on that Monday morning by Rabbi Shlomo Weitzen, the Rav of Psagot, whose married son Amichai had been killed on October 7th. Along with other religious families, his son had moved with his family a number of years ago to the secular *kibbutz* of Kerem Shalom on the Gaza border, creating a harmonious small community of both religious and secular Jews. On that fateful day, Amichai fought for six hours against scores of terrorists as part of the *kibbutz's* civil defense team, until they were overrun and killed. They saved hundreds of lives. Rabbi Weitzen mustered what seemed to me to be superhuman strength. Looking into the camera, he said that although he was in great pain, he knew that his son had saved many lives. This, he said, amounts to thousands of Jewish lives for generations to come. Even saving one life is saving an entire world. This is what his son had done on the last day of his life! From this, he drew strength.

This blew my mind – how could a father in so much pain say this so soon after his son's tragic passing? It taught me that perhaps I could begin to step out of my black hole and shift my perspective. Perhaps I could find some light in the darkness. It was then that I all of a sudden realized that in the painful darkness, there is also light. When I realized that although Daniel was missing and we were riddled with anxiety and concern for his well-being, Hashem had also done a great miracle for us and saved Yonatan. Many of his brothers in arms in the closest proximity to him

*Continued on page 5*

PERSONAL GROWTH

# Completely Committed



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

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Our *mitzvah* fulfillment is the most basic way we express our *avodat Hashem*. Our fulfillment ought to be both complete and deeply meaningful.

## Breadth

Our commitment to *mitzvot* should be comprehensive — we should endeavor to observe *all* of His commandments.<sup>1</sup> Carelessness, even regarding *one mitzvah*, reflects an incomplete commitment to Hashem's Will.

Denial of the need to observe a *mitzvah* is even more problematic. In fact, it renders one a “*mumar*.” Though the term generally refers to the total abandonment of Judaism, Chazal<sup>2</sup> applied it to one who refuses to fulfill even one *mitzvah* because he, too, rejects Hashem's authority.

The Ramban understood this as the intention of the last curse uttered on Har Gerizim upon our entry to *Eretz Yisrael*: “*Arur asher lo yakim et divrei haTorah hazot* (Cursed is the one who does not raise the words of this Torah).”<sup>3</sup> The Ramban<sup>4</sup> explained that the curse refers to someone who rebels against one of the *mitzvot*. His sin is not because of a momentary lapse or desire but because he denies the need to fulfill it. Though he fully commits himself to the other 612, his objection to the 613th defies Hashem's authority and renders him a heretic.

The Ramban's cousin, Rabbeinu Yonah, elaborated on this idea, which he called an “*ikar gadol*” (great principle).<sup>5</sup> He explained that such an approach has both practical and philosophical issues, neither of which should be taken lightly.

Practically, denial of the *mitzvah* means that one will never come to fulfill it. Even *tzaddikim* make mistakes from time to time, but because they recognize their sin as such, they eventually repent and repair their ways. One who denies the validity of a *mitzvah* or *aveirah* will continue violating it throughout his lifetime.

Philosophically, denying even one *mitzvah* is comparable to a servant who tells his master that he is committed to anything the master asks, except one thing. The exception undermines the commitment. “He shatters the authority of his master by doing as he sees fit.” Rabbeinu Yonah added that this is why the Torah describes this sinner as someone who does not “*yakim* (raise)” the Torah. His error runs deeper than lack of fulfillment. He does not “raise” the Torah because he degrades its value.

## Depth

Our commitment should be complete not just in breadth but also in depth. The first *parsha* of *Kriyat Shema* calls upon us to love Hashem with all of our hearts, souls, and resources.<sup>6</sup> The second *parsha* commands us to serve Him in a similar way.<sup>7</sup>

## A Full Heart

The mishnah<sup>8</sup> explains that loving Hashem with “all of our heart” must include both our *Yeitzer Tov* and *Yeitzer HaRa*. Our cares and emotions naturally pull us in different directions.<sup>9</sup> Though we yearn for *Avodat Hashem* and spirituality, another part of our will is selfish and focused on our needs, interests, and pleasure. Our will, like our physical heart, is divided in two; existentially, we are of “two hearts.”<sup>10</sup>

*Ahavat Hashem* means transcending this duality and focusing our care and concern on Hashem and His interests. We must bring ourselves to love Hashem with our entire unified heart – with both of our *yetzarim*.<sup>11</sup>

The Ramban<sup>12</sup> explains the second *parsha's* call to serve Hashem with all of our hearts similarly. People often perform *mitzvot* as cultural customs or by rote without thinking about their meaning and significance. We are meant to serve Hashem with our full heart — with a clear and definitive commitment to Him.

Shlomo HaMelech referred to this as serving Hashem with a “*lev shaleim*,” a complete and whole heart.<sup>13</sup> In the *korbanot* section of *Shacharit*, we describe Avraham Avinu's willingness to sacrifice Yitzchak the same way. Avraham subdued his natural mercy so he could fulfill Hashem's will with a complete heart.

Avraham naturally loved Yitzchak. That is why Hashem referred to Yitzchak as the son “you love” when He commanded Avraham to sacrifice him.<sup>14</sup> Hashem asked Avraham to prioritize love for Him above love for his son. He asked Avraham to fill his entire heart with love for Him.<sup>15</sup>

Avraham fulfilled Hashem's command<sup>16</sup> and came to epitomize the service and love of Hashem “*b'chol levavcha*.” We, too, ask Hashem to help us achieve this level of service twice a day when we ask Hashem (in *Modim D'Rabbanan*) to sustain us and return us to the *Beit Mikdash* so we can keep His *mitzvot*, fulfill His Will and serve him “*b'leivav shaleim*.”<sup>18</sup>

## All Our Soul

In addition to our whole heart, the Torah commands us to serve and love Hashem with “all of our soul.”<sup>19</sup> The aforementioned mishnah explains that this means being willing to sacrifice our lives instead of serving *Avodah Zara*.<sup>20</sup> In such circumstances, we should choose our values over our lives and, despite it all, continue loving Hashem.<sup>21</sup>

One who sees *Avodat Hashem* as life's purpose will be *moseir nefesh* (sacrifice his life) instead of violating his principles. Of course, Hashem rarely calls upon us to sacrifice our lives. More often, we are asked to exhibit a different type of *mesirut nefesh* – not sacrificing our life for *Avodat Hashem*, but committing ourselves fully to it.<sup>22</sup> If *Avodat Hashem* is worth sacrificing our lives for, it is worth devoting our life to.<sup>23</sup>

In certain ways, this latter type of *mesirut nefesh* is even greater than martyrdom because it requires a lifetime, not just

RASHI TEACHES US HOW TO TEACH

# Sage on the Stage or Guide on the Side?



**Rabbanit Shani Taragin**  
Educational Director, World Mizrachi

Most educators are familiar with the educational approaches of “sage on the stage” vs. “guide on the side.” You can be a “sage on the stage” in your home and/or classroom, using your expertise to share knowledge with children/students through lectures and presentations. Or you can be a “guide on the side,” employing your skills to engage children/students in first-hand learning through projects and experiences.

Numerous professors of education have addressed these two approaches from the children’s/students’ perspectives and have acknowledged that to affect genuine understanding and active response, they must be engaged in processing information and reconstructing it in personal and meaningful ways, i.e., through teachers/parents facilitating learning through interaction as “guides on the side.”

Rashi explicates this approach in his explanation of Hashem’s command to Noah (Bereishit 6:14) – “*Aseh Lecha Tevah*” – “make for yourself an ark.” There are numerous ways, Rashi argues, for Hashem to save Noah and his family from the impending destruction. Why

did Hashem “bother” Noah with the long arduous task of constructing an ark? Rashi answers: “So that the people of the generation of the flood will see Noah engaged in construction for 120 years and will inquire of him ‘what is this to you?’ and Noah may answer ‘*HaKadosh Baruch Hu* will bring a future flood to the world.’” Through Noah’s demonstration and engagement with his generation and peers, perhaps they will repent from their evil ways and deter Hashem from destroying them.

Instead of preaching from a “soap box” or Instagram as a “sage on the stage” to his generation, Rashi explains Hashem’s command to build an ark as a chance for Noah to serve as a perpetual “guide on the side” role model for his “students/subjects.”

Though there are certainly responsibilities for parents/educators to present information, values, and lessons throughout their formative years, the true challenge of “chinuch” is to enable our children/students to interact with the teachings and with one another. Noah, as any parent/teacher, may not have all the answers to questions addressed to

him, but as a “guide on the side,” he may teach cause-effect relationships (i.e., iniquitous actions to punishment), leading to deeper understanding. Children and students do not spontaneously engage in active learning; they must be prompted to do so. *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* provides the students/His children of the generation 120 years’ worth of opportunities for active learning to take place!

Rashi poignantly teaches us how the “guide on the side” pedagogic approach incorporates role-modeling and personal Socratic interactions of questions and dialogue. Engaging our children and students in active learning experiences and discussion, as opposed to preaching, enables them to think, act for themselves, and potentially “repent” from their society-influenced behaviors.

Rashi highlights for us as parents and teachers the significance of helping and guiding our children and students to become problem solvers to save themselves from the “floods” in their lives and to effectively deal with the religious-social challenges of the twenty-first century.

*Continued from page 3*

that day were killed or badly injured. His survival and only moderate injury seemed to me as clear as day to be a miracle from Above. This did not change the fate of Daniel at all, yet it allowed me somehow to see light alongside that darkness. I felt blessed and a measure of curse; appreciation and anguished worry; a sense of darkness and light.

From Noah’s name and the circumstances of Hashem ‘changing His mind’, so to speak, emerges a remarkable insight into the quest for alleviation of pain and seeking a measure of comfort. We cannot always change our circumstances – often we have no choice but to accept the vicissitudes of life. We can, though, always choose our perspectives and mental paradigms. The

darkness and pain may always be part of our vision but need not blind us to the light and many other privileges we have.

Reprieve and comfort are indelibly linked to shifting our mindset and choosing in which world we wish to live.

# Halachic Q&A



## Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon

Nasi, World Mizrahi | Rabbi of the Gush Etzion Regional Council

Rosh Yeshiva, Jerusalem College of Technology | Founder and Chairman, Sulamot and La'Ofek

**Question: We know that the rainbow is a natural thing. If so, how does it show a covenant that G-d is making? How can a natural thing express the covenant between G-d and His creations?**

Answer: Our *parsha* speaks about the rainbow that G-d set as a covenant between Him and the world, which symbolizes that G-d will no longer bring a flood to the world:

“And I will confirm My covenant with you... This is the sign of the covenant that I give between Me and you...to generations forever: I have set My rainbow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth...and the bow will be seen in the cloud, I will remember My covenant between Me and you...”

The word covenant is the central word in this section, and indeed it appears seven times! (a guiding word). From here, the purpose of the rainbow is the covenant.

We know that the rainbow is a natural thing. If so, how does it show a covenant that G-d is making? The Even Ezra is of the opinion that the rainbow is something supernatural, which was created by G-d in the days of Noah.

As opposed to him, Nachmanides wrote (Genesis 9:12) that the rainbow is natural: “However, we are compelled to believe the words of the Greek philosophers who say that the rainbow is a natural phenomenon resulting from the sun’s rays passing through moist air...Hence, we should interpret the verse thus: The rainbow which I have placed in the clouds – ever since Creation...” Nachmanides explains that it can be derived from the Torah itself, which writes “I have set My rainbow in the cloud” and does not say “I will set My rainbow.” In other words, it is

speaking about giving in the past. Since the day of creation G-d set the rainbow in the cloud, as a sign of a covenant between Him and the world.

In light of Nachmanides explanation, the question repeats – how can a natural thing express the covenant between G-d and His creations?

Usually, a person does not feel at every moment and in every act G-d’s existence. When something unusual occurs – the Splitting of the Sea, the Plagues in Egypt, etc. – then he pays attention to G-d’s Hand which stands behind the scenes.

Therefore, G-d is showing us His covenant, His existence between us, specifically through the rainbow, through something natural. The natural rainbow reminds us that also natural things once stopped (during the flood), and that they, too, are activated by the Creator.

The Prophet Ezekiel prophecies (1:28):

Like the appearance of the rainbow that shall be upon the cloud on a rainy day, so was the appearance of the brilliance all around. That was the appearance of the semblance of the glory of G-d!

The prophet describes the semblance of G-d’s image like the vision of a rainbow. The rainbow symbolizes something complex (the colors of the rainbow) but existing within nature. So too is G-d’s existence, complex and deep, but located everywhere in nature.

These are difficult days. Wounded, Killed. But sometimes from within the difficult reality we come to understand how truly miraculous life is in *Eretz Yisrael*. We see how much terror our enemies seek to inflict upon us all the time. We see how the world is happy when they

are successful. And we see how much we must thank and praise Hashem at every moment, at every hour, for our existence in *Eretz Yisrael* and for the very existence of the State of Israel.

Our enemies attack us with cruelty, killing civilians, children, babies. And we, as we protect ourselves, are so careful not to hurt a living thing when there is no need to defend ourselves. The antisemitic world attempts to confuse and mislead, attempts to portray a two-sided war and equal losses on both sides. But we know the truth. We know that the goal of our enemies is to murder and to kill, to destroy and to annihilate – but ours is to defend and protect. Their goal is to add to the evil in the world and to harm us. And ours is to add to the good in the world and to bring light to its inhabitants. One who focuses on evil is temporary and fleeting and, in the end, will disappear. *Am Yisrael* that is intrinsically connected to good, connected to purity, has connected itself to eternity. And we will continue, continue to enlighten, continue to thrive, continue to grow for all eternity. “Hashem will not abandon His nation, nor will he forsake His inheritance.”

# עולם חדש

הרבנית שרון רימון  
Tanach teacher and author



מבראשית: "צא מן התבה אתה ואשתך ובניך ונשי בניך אתך: כל החיה אשר אתך... היצא אתך ושרצו בצרף ופרו ורבו על הצרף" (ח', טז-יז).

נדרשים כחות נפש אדירים לבנות עולם מחדש לאחר חווית חורבן טראומטית כל כך. מאין ישאב האדם כוחות להתחיל מבראשית? כיצד יוכל לתת אמון באפשרות קיום העולם?

נח, כדגם לאדם המאמין, שואב כוחות מאמונתו בה: **המבט האמוני נותן כחות להמשיך להתקיים בתוך סיטואציות קשות מפני שהוא מאפשר התבוננות "מלמעלה", מחוץ לסיטואציה הקשה והבלתי אפשרית, ונותן לה משמעות.** מתוך מבט אמוני ניתן להבחין שהעולם לא נחרב סתם, באופן אקראי, על ידי אסון טבע בלתי מוסבר. לעולם יש מנהיג, שבידיו הכל, והוא המכוון את העולם אל ייעודו. המבט האמוני נותן לאדם הסובל משמעות קיומית ואף משמעות להתרחשויות הקשות ולצעדיו הקטנים בתוך העולם. גם אם הוא לא מבין הכל, הוא יודע שיש מי שמכוון את הדברים, ושיש להם תכלית, ושיש לו תפקיד בתוך הסיטואציה אליה הוא נקלע.

נח יוצא מן התיבה ומבין שהיכולת לבנות עולם מחדש כרוכה בתקשורת של האדם עם ה', בורא העולם. הוא מחליט **להקריב קרבן**, המבטא את הרצון שלו **להתקרב** לה', להיות מחובר אליו: "ויבן נח מזבוח לה' ויקח מכל בהמה הטהרה ומכל העוף הטהור ויעל עלת במזבח" (ח', כ).

התקרבות האדם אל ה' מחדשת את החיבור בין האדם והעולם לה' ובכך מתאפשרת בריאת העולם מחדש: "ויבן ה' את ריח הניחח ויאמר ה' אל לבו לא אסף לקלל עוד את האדמה בעבור האדם... ולא אסף עוד להפכות את כל חי פאשר עשיתי: עד כל ימי הצרף זרע וקציר וקר וחם וקיץ וחרף ויום ולילה לא ישבתו" (ח', כא-כב). לא אז בלבד שהעולם נברא מחדש, אלא שה' מבטיח את המשך קיומו.

כדי כך שאין בכלל חיבור לטוב, התוצאה היא שאין קיום לאדם ולעולם. המשמעות היא מוות או חורבן, כפי שמתואר בתחילת פרשת נח: "ותשחת הצרף לפני ה' - הצלמים והמלאה הצרף חמס: ויבא אף-לצמים את הצרף והנה נשחתה פי השחית כל בשר את דרכו על הצרף: ויאמר אף-לצמים לנח קח כל בשר בא לפני כי מלאה הצרף חמס מפניהם והנני משחיתם את הצרף" (ו', יא-יג).

פסוקים חמורים אלה מתארים השחתה טוטאלית, שאין ממנה דרך חזרה, והתוצאה היא השחתת העולם, חורבן. אין אופציה לתיקון.

אולם, יחד עם הטוטאליות של ההשחתה, מתוארת גם האופציה לתיקון העולם: "ויבן מצא חן בעיני ה'... נח איש צדיק תמים היה בדורתי את הצלמים והתהלך נח" (ו', ח-ט). יש עוד אדם אחד צדיק בעולם, שבעבורו שווה להמשיך את קיום העולם. או להתחיל אותו מבראשית - לעשות לו RESET.

**מפרשת נח אנו למדים שלעתים הקלקול חמור עד כדי כך שאי אפשר להמשיך "כרגיל" ולתקן תוך כדי תנועה. לפעמים צריך להחריב ולהרוס עד היסוד כדי לבנות מחדש.**

המבול מחזיר את העולם למצב של תוהו ובוהו, בו אין הבדלה בין מים עליונים למים תחתונים, בו החושך שולט על פני תהום, ובו אין אפשרות קיום לחיים על פני האדמה.

אך התוהו ובוהו אינו מוחלט. בשעת החורבן שטה תיבה אחת על המים, ובה נמצא האדם, הראוי להמשיך את גרעין האנושות, ובעבורו שווה לברוא את העולם מחדש.

לאחר החורבן, כאשר המים הולכים ויורדים והארץ מתייבשת; כאשר תימות האש והעשן שוככים, יוצא האדם מן התיבה ומתבונן בעולם החרב סביבו. הוא עלול לשקוע באבל ובצער על האובדן והחורבן, ואף ביאוש. אך ה' מצפה ממנו לצאת ולהתחיל

בשבע הקודם, בפרשת בראשית, עסקנו באפשרות להתחיל מבראשית לאחר משבר. ראינו שהדרישה של ה' מהאדם היא לקחת אחריות על מעשיו.

בפרשת נח אנו מתוודעים למשבר בסדר גודל הרבה יותר משמעותי. תיאור המשבר מופיע בסוף פרשת בראשית: "ויבא ה' כי רבה רעת האדם בצרף וכל יצר מחשבת לבו רק רע כל היום: וינחם ה' כי עשה את האדם בצרף ויתעצב אל לבו: ויאמר ה' אמתה את האדם אשר בראתי מעל פני האדמה מאדם עד בהמה עד רמש ועד עוף השמים כי נחמתי כי עשיתם..." (בראשית ו', ה-ז).

האדם משחית את דרכו על הארץ עד כדי כך שה' מצטער על בריאת האדם, ומתכוון למחות את המין האנושי מעל פני האדמה. אם בפרשת בראשית למדנו שאפשר לתקן ולהתחיל מבראשית לאחר חטא וקלקול, בסופה של פרשת בראשית אנו למדים שלפעמים אי אפשר להמשיך, אי אפשר להתחיל מבראשית. העולם מתמוטט ונחרב.

מהם המעשים החמורים כל כך שבגללם נחרב העולם? דבר זה אינו נאמר במפורש. אך מלשון הכתוב ניתן להבין **שהרוע השתלט על העולם**. האדם, שביכולתו להיטיב ולהרע, ובדרך כלל יש לו גם כוונות טובות וגם כישלונות, התקלקל עד כדי כך ש"כל יצר מחשבת לבו רק רע כל היום". וכך מסביר רד"ק:

"...ראה כי לא הטיבו מעשיהם אבל הריעו אותם וכל יום היה קשה מחברו, זהו שאמר "רק רע כל היום". ופירוש "וכל יצר", משני יצרים שיש בלבו של אדם אחד טוב ואחד רע, כלו היה לרע ולא היה טוב בהם... והנה האל ברא עולמו להיות טוב או כולו או רובו, ואם כולו רע לא יוכל לעמוד כי לא יבחר האל כי אם בטוב..." (רד"ק לבראשית ו', ה). הקיום של העולם ושל האדם יכול להיות רק מתוך החיבור לה', למקור הטוב. כאשר הרע משתלט עד



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# My Takeaway from Sukkot



**Sivan Rahav Meir**  
World Mizrahi Scholar-in-Residence

Of all the amazing, joyful and meaningful events on Sukkot, two powerful moments stand out in my mind. One was on the morning of Simchat Torah at the Ramada Hotel in Jerusalem. Over 100 survivors of the Nova festival-turned-massacre had gathered to celebrate the holiday together with the Keshet Yehudi organization. On the walls hung photos of those killed and kidnapped on that tragic day—friends close to their hearts.

One of the participants held a Torah scroll in his arms and danced with it, his face glowing. He said to me: “Last year, look where we danced. And today, look where we are dancing...”

Then came the Torah reading. Each person stood before the open Torah and recited a blessing. Many did so with tears in their eyes. At the conclusion of the Torah reading, everyone declared together: “*Chazak, Chazak, Ve'nitchazek*” (“Be strong, be strong, and let us be strengthened”). It felt like a prayer, a declaration of choosing life: Out of brokenness, we will be strong.

The second moment occurred half an hour later, in a large tent that had been set up for bereaved families. A large prayer gathering was held, centered around families who had lost their loved ones. After completing the Torah reading on Simchat Torah, the Torah is immediately begun again from the beginning. And so, verses resonated in the air, bringing order to the world and to the heart: “In the beginning, G-d created the heavens and the earth” – the world is not an abandoned jungle; it has a purpose. Chaos cannot reign forever. And even if, at first, “the earth was unformed and void, and darkness was over the surface,” we await the proclamation: “And G-d said: Let there be light—and there was light.”

In the Torah portion, we read how from the darkness, light breaks forth. May it also break forth in our lives.



Shiri Vidan is a tour guide from Kibbutz Na'an. Last year, she heard me explain how we complete the reading of the entire Torah on Simchat Torah and then immediately begin to read it again, starting from Bereshit.

“I was very taken by this idea,” she wrote, “and I decided that I too would start to read the weekly *parasha*, starting from Simchat Torah. But we all know what happened that day...”

Despite the shock and horror, Shiri resolved to continue with her Torah study. “Throughout the turbulent year, the weekly *parasha* became my anchor,” she said.

Each week, she searched for an idea that resonated with her. “In the *parasha* of Ki Teitzei, for example, we learn about returning a lost object. I told my students, young counselors from the Israel Nature and Parks Authority, about this *mitzvah*, adding that I had recently discovered a lost object in my car—a flashlight — and had yet to find its owner.

“One of my students asked, ‘Is it a large, black flashlight?’ and I replied that indeed it was. Then she said, ‘I’m so happy that you found it – I’ve been looking for it, it’s mine!’”

She went on to say how gratifying it was to return a lost object to its owner specifically during the week when we read about this *mitzvah* in the Torah.

Shiri continued: “In a deeper sense, it seems that many of us have ‘lost’ our flashlight – the weekly *parasha* – which helps to light our way. We need to return

this precious ‘object’ to ourselves. Looking back on this challenging year, I feel so fortunate to have been able to begin reading the weekly *parasha* and I recommend it strongly to everyone. This past Shabbat, I started again from Bereshit [the beginning]!”



This Sunday was marked nationally as the remembrance day for Simchat Torah — the day last year when so many dear members of our nation lost their lives. On such a painful day, when we remember so many wonderful, precious souls, here is a quote from Miriam, widow of the soldier Ori Shani, who heroically engaged the terrorists in battle, saving the lives of many others:

“It’s exactly one year since Ori fell. Our baby, Ro’i, is just starting to walk. I watch him as he tries to take steps—falling, getting up, taking a few more steps, falling again, and rising once more. I look at him—and I think about myself. This is a message for me, a message for all of us: We must fall and get up again, stubbornly persevering, so that we can walk and grow.”



Betzalel Carmi, 72, was murdered in Sunday’s terror attack at the Gelilot Junction outside of Tel Aviv. His father, Avraham, a 96-year-old Holocaust survivor, eulogized him: “You merited 26 grandchildren at your funeral, this is a great thing. That evil man wanted to destroy the Jewish People but we continue to live.”



I received so many stories about the many soldiers who fell recently – it’s impossible to cover them all or to do justice to the unique character of each one. In times of such indescribable sadness, it’s worth focusing on a powerful statement from

*Continued on page 11*



# For the Shabbat Table



**Rabbi Danny Mirvis**  
CEO, World Mizrahi  
Rabbi of Ohel Moshe Synagogue, Herzliya Pituach

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

Towards the end of this week's *parsha*, after all the events of the flood, we read of Noach's intoxication and the shameful consequences. Although numerous commentators translate, “*Vayachel Noach*” – the opening words of the verses above – as meaning, “and Noach began” (from the root of the word “*techila*” – beginning), Rashi, based on the Midrash (Bereishit Rabba, 36:3), understands them to be a criticism of Noach:

“*Vayachel*: He debased himself (from the root of the word “*chullin*” – profane), for he should have first dealt with a different planting.” (Rashi, Bereishit, 9:20)

In the continuation of the Midrash, we find further criticism of Noach because he is called, “*Ish Ha'Adama*” – “a man of the earth”. Whilst this can be understood as an expression of agricultural skill, the Midrash sees it as an expression of Noach's downfall, for in the opening verse of the Parsha he is called “*Ish Tzaddik*” – a man of righteousness – and now he has regressed to being “*Ish Ha'Adama*” – a man of the earth.

At first glance, it seems somewhat harsh to criticise Noach for planting a vineyard and pinpointing this act as the turning point in his downfall. After all, all vineyards had just been destroyed by the flood, and planting a vineyard contributed towards the restoration of the natural world. Why was Noach deserving of such disapproval?

It is important to pay close attention to the wording of the criticism. Noach is not criticised for planting a vineyard, but for

choosing the vine as his first species for planting, “for he should have first dealt with a different planting.” When the time came to start planting, Noach ran to plant a vineyard for the sake of producing wine. This expression of Noach's priorities is what defined him as “*Ish Ha'Adama*.”

A person is defined by their priorities. The hardest choices are not between good and bad, but between good and good. Life provides us with many tasks and responsibilities, which all need our attention. The question is one of priority.

Noach's downfall from an “*Ish Tzaddik*” who “found favour in the eyes of Hashem” to an “*Ish Ha'Adama*” was not because of mistaken actions, but because of mistaken priorities. By prioritizing correctly, may all our actions find favour in the eyes of Hashem.

Shabbat Shalom!

Continued from page 4

a moment, of values, commitment, and discipline.<sup>24</sup>

May our association of *mitzvot* with Hashem's Will inspire us to commit ourselves completely, both in breadth and depth, to their fulfillment.



This piece is dedicated in memory of my dear friend, Captain Rabbi Avi Goldberg HY"D, who fell in Lebanon earlier this week. He was a true *anav* and *tzaddik* who lived up to the ideals described in this piece.

1. This is why the *pesukim* of *K'riyat Shema* that describe *kabalat ol mitzvot* (Bamidbar 15:39-41), use the term “*kol mitzvotay/Hashem*.” These are the only two *pesukim* in the Torah that command us to fulfill all of the *mitzvot*. Interestingly, Rashi (Berachot 12b) sees specifically *pasuk* 40 (as opposed to 39) as *kabalat ol mitzvot*. Rav Avraham Palaji (Avraham Et Einav, Berachot 12b) explains that this is because the *pasuk* mandates fulfilling (as opposed to just remembering) *all* of the *mitzvot*.
2. Chullin 4b.
3. Devarim 27:26.

4. Ibid.
5. Sha'arei Teshuvah 1:6.
6. Devarim 6:5. See also Devarim 13:4 and 30:6.
7. Devarim 11:13. See also Devarim 10:12. See also Devarim 26:16 and 30:2 regarding *mitzvah* fulfillment.
8. Mishnah, Berachot 54a.
9. Berachot 61b describes this as our being “governed” by both the *Yeitzer HaTov* and the *Yeitzer HaRa*.
10. This is why the Torah/Tanach often uses the word *levav* (or its other conjugations), instead of the word *lev*. The two letter *bets* connote the two sides of our heart. The *Re'ah* (Berachot 54a) explains that this is how the mishnah derives the need to serve Hashem with both of our *yetzarim* from the words “*levavcha*” – a word with has two letter *bets*. See also *Siftei Chachamim* Devarim 6:5:3. See *Shoftim* 19:5-9 for a source of how two letter *bets* (*Pesukim* 8 and 9) imply more devotion that just one (*Pesukim* 5 and 6).
11. See Rabbeninu Yonah (Berachot 44b in Rif pages) who discusses how to serve Hashem with the *Yeitzer HaRa*. See also Rambam, *Hilchot Dei'ot* 3 and *Shemoneh Perakim* 5.
12. Comments of the Ramban to the Rambam's *Sefer HaMitzvot*, *Aseh* 5.
13. *Melachim* I 8:61. *Sefer Melachim* continues using this term to describe descendants of Dovid who did (*Melachim* I 15:14) or did not (*Melachim* I 11:4 and 15:3 and *Melachim* II 2:23) serve Hashem this way.
14. Bereishit 22:2.
15. The *Sefer HaChinuch* (418) describes this as the essence of the commandment to love Hashem with “all our heart.” See also *Kli Yakar*, *Shemot* 20:14.
16. Understandably, after the *akeidah*, Hashem no longer referred to *Yitzchak* as the only Avraham loves. See Bereishit 22:12 (versus 22:2).
17. *Ba'al HaTurim*, Devarim 6:5 based on *Nechemyah* 9:8.
18. We also use this formulation on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur when we pray that the world should unify as one to fulfill Hashem's Will “*b'leivav shaleim*.”
19. Devarim 6:5, 10:12, 26:16, and 30:2,6.
20. See Bereishit Rabba 34:9, *Chizkuni* *Shemot* 8:9, *Reishit Chochmah* *Sha'ar Ha'Ahavah* 8:6, and *Sefat Emet*, *Lech Lecha* 5637 which describes the great value of this type of *mesirut nefesh*.
21. Note the mishnah's formulation: “Even if he takes your life.” See the *gemara* 61b which attributes this formulation to *Rebbe Akiva*.
22. See Berachot 20a and Rashi *Bamidbar* 7:1 which use the term *mesirut nefesh* in this type of context.
23. See *Seforno*, Devarim 6:5.
24. See *Sefat Emet* (*Emor* 5643) who elaborates on this point.

# Individual and Collective Responsibility



Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks zt"l

Once had the opportunity to ask the Catholic writer Paul Johnson what had struck him most about Judaism, during the long period he spent researching it for his masterly *A History of the Jews*? He replied in roughly these words: “There have been, in the course of history, societies that emphasised the individual – like the secular West today. And there have been others that placed weight on the collective – communist Russia or China, for example.”

Judaism, he continued, was the most successful example he knew of that managed the delicate balance between both – giving equal weight to individual and collective responsibility. Judaism was a religion of strong individuals and strong communities. This, he said, was very rare and difficult, and constituted one of our greatest achievements.

It was a wise and subtle observation. Without knowing it, he had in effect paraphrased Hillel’s aphorism: “If I am not for myself, who will be (individual responsibility)? But if I am only for myself, what am I (collective responsibility)?” This insight allows us to see the argument of Parshat Noach in a way that might not have been obvious otherwise.

The Parsha begins and ends with two great events, the Flood on the one hand, Babel and its tower on the other. On the face of it they have nothing in common. The failings of the generation of the Flood are explicit. “The world was corrupt before G-d, and the land was filled with violence. G-d saw the world, and it was corrupted. All flesh had perverted

its way on the earth” (Gen. 6:11-12). Wick- edness, violence, corruption, perversion: this is the language of systemic moral failure.

Babel by contrast seems almost idyllic. “The entire earth had one language and a common speech” (Gen. 11:1). The builders are bent on construction, not destruction. It is far from clear what their sin was. Yet from the Torah’s point of view Babel represents another serious wrong turn, because G-d scatters all the builders, and immediately thereafter He summons Abraham to begin an entirely new chapter in the religious story of humankind. There is no Flood – G-d had, in any case, sworn that He would never again punish humanity in such a way (“Never again will I curse the soil because of man, for the inclination of man’s heart is evil from his youth. I will never again strike down all life as I have just done” (Gen 8:21)). But it is clear that after Babel, G-d comes to the conclusion that there must be another and different way for humans to live.

Both the Flood and the Tower of Babel are rooted in actual historical events, even if the narrative is not couched in the language of descriptive history. Mesopotamia had many flood myths, all of which testify to the memory of disastrous inundations, especially on the flat lands of the Tigris-Euphrates valley (See Commentary of R. David Zvi Hoffman to Genesis 6, who suggests that the Flood may have been limited to centres of human habitation, rather than covering the whole earth). Excavations at Shurrukup,

Kish, Uruk and Ur – Abraham’s birth- place – reveal evidence of clay flood de- posits. Likewise the Tower of Babel was a historical reality. Herodotus tells of the sacred enclosure of Babylon, at the centre of which was a ziggurat or tower of seven stories, 300 feet high. The remains of more than thirty such towers have been discovered, mainly in lower Mesopotamia, and many references have been found in the literature of the time that speak of such towers “reaching heaven.”

However, the stories of the Flood and Babel are not merely historical, because the Torah is not history but “teaching, instruction.” They are there because they represent a profound moral-so- cial-political-spiritual truth about the human situation as the Torah sees it. They represent, respectively, precisely the failures intimated by Paul Johnson. The Flood tells us what happens to civil- isation when individuals rule and there is no collective. Babel tells us what hap- pens when the collective rules and indi- viduals are sacrificed to it.

It was Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), the thinker who laid the foundations of modern politics in his classic *Leviathan* (1651), who – without referring to the Flood – gave it its best interpretation. Before there were political institutions, said Hobbes, human beings were in a “state of nature.” They were individuals, packs, bands. Lacking a stable ruler, an effective government and enforceable laws, people would be in a state of per- manent and violent chaos – “a war of every man against every man” – as they

competed for scarce resources. There would be “continual fear, and danger of violent death; and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.” Such situations exist today in a whole series of failed or failing states. That is precisely the Torah’s description of life before the Flood. When there is no rule of law to constrain individuals, the world is filled with violence.

Babel is the opposite, and we now have important historical evidence as to exactly what was meant by the sentence, “The entire land had one language and a common speech.” This may not refer to primal humanity before the division of languages. In fact, in the previous chapter the Torah has already stated, “From these the maritime peoples spread out into their lands in their clans within their nations, each with its own language” (Gen. 10:5). The Talmud Yerushalmi, Megillah 1:11, 71b, records a dispute between R. Eliezer and R. Johanan, one of whom holds that the division of humanity into seventy languages occurred before the Flood.

The reference seems to be to the imperial practice of the neo-Assyrians, of imposing their own language on the peoples they conquered. One inscription of the time records that Ashurbanipal II “made the totality of all peoples speak one speech.” A cylinder inscription of Sargon II says, “Populations of the four quarters of the world with strange tongues and incompatible speech . . . whom I had taken as booty at the command of Ashur my lord by the might of my sceptre, I caused to accept a single voice.” The neo-Assyrians asserted their supremacy by insisting that their language was the only one to be used by the nations and popula-

tions they had defeated. On this reading, Babel is a critique of imperialism.

There is even a hint of this in the parallelism of language between the builders of Babel and the Egyptian Pharaoh who enslaved the Israelites. In Babel they said, “Come, [hava] let us build ourselves a city and a tower . . . lest [pen] we be scattered over the face of the earth” (Gen. 11:4). In Egypt Pharaoh said, “Come, [hava] let us deal wisely with them, lest [pen] they increase so much . . .” (Ex. 1:10). The repeated “Come, let us . . . lest” is too pronounced to be accidental. Babel, like Egypt, represents an empire that subjugates entire populations, riding roughshod over their identities and freedoms.

If this is so, we will have to re-read the entire Babel story in a way that makes it much more convincing. The sequence is this: Genesis 10 describes the division of humanity into seventy nations and seventy languages. Genesis 11 tells of how one imperial power conquered smaller nations and imposed its language and culture on them, thus directly contravening G-d’s wish that humans should respect the integrity of each nation and each individual. When, at the end of the Babel story, G-d “confuses the language” of the builders, He is not creating a new state of affairs. He is in fact restoring the old.

Interpreted thus, the story of Babel is a critique of the power of the collective when it crushes individuality – the individuality of the seventy cultures described in Genesis 10. (A personal note: I had the privilege of addressing 2,000 leaders from all the world’s faiths at the Millennium Peace Summit in the United Nations in August 2000. It turned out that

there were exactly 70 traditions – each with their subdivisions and sects – represented. So it seems there still are seventy basic cultures). When the rule of law is used to suppress individuals and their distinctive languages and traditions, this too is wrong. The miracle of monotheism is that unity in Heaven creates diversity on earth, and G-d asks us (with obvious conditions) to respect that diversity.

So the Flood and the Tower of Babel, though polar opposites, are linked, and the entire Parsha of Noach is a brilliant study in the human condition. There are individualistic cultures and there are collectivist ones, and both fail, the former because they lead to anarchy and violence, the latter because they lead to oppression and tyranny.

So Paul Johnson’s insight turns out to be both deep and true. After the two great failures of the Flood and Babel, Abraham was called on to create a new form of social order that would give equal honour to the individual and the collective, personal responsibility and the common good. That remains the special gift of Jews and Judaism to the world.

#### AROUND THE SHABBAT TABLE:

- Why is it important to have a balance between individual freedom and collective responsibility?
- Is it possible today to have a society that values strong individuals and communities? Why?
- Can you think of other stories from Tanach that highlight the pitfalls of the “Flood” and “Babel” mentalities, respectively?

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the Talmud: “Anyone who sheds tears over the loss of a righteous person, G-d counts and stores those tears in His treasury.”

When we cry over these terrible, painful losses, we must bear in mind that every single tear is counted and preserved in Heaven. Rav Kook explains that there is significance to our grief and sorrow. The tears we shed now are not in vain. This is

not just sadness over something trivial or frustrating; it is sacred sorrow, connected to eternity and to the deepest part of our soul and of our people.

When we mourn the right things, G-d counts each tear. These tears are not a sign of weakness — to the contrary, they testify to the depth of our connection to all that is good and holy. Each tear is a

commitment to continue bringing light into the world. That is why these tears don’t fall to the ground, they rise Above.

May we merit the fulfillment of the verse “You turned my mourning into dancing.” May all these eulogies and tears be transformed into joy and celebration.

# The Prohibition of Suicide



**Rabbi Hershel Schachter**

Rosh Yeshiva, Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary of Yeshiva University

*But your blood of your souls I will demand ... but of man, of every man for his brother, I will demand the soul of man. Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for in the image of G-d He made man. (Bereishis 9:5-6)*

**A**lthough the prohibition of *shfichus damim* – that is, *retzichah* (murder) – was given to Adam *HaRishon*, it is repeated in our *parsha*. Man had sinned to such a degree that he ruined his *tzelem Elokim* (image of G-d), to the point that Hashem had to destroy all of mankind in the *Mabul*. Since the *issur* of *retzichah* is related to every human possessing *tzelem Elokim*, one might have thought that the prohibition no longer applied. The Torah therefore asserts that *tzelem Elokim* continues to be present in Man, albeit to a reduced degree, and this warrants an *issur retzichah*. The *passuk* states that Hashem will exact retribution from the soul of the man who also spills his own blood. According to the Torah, a human being's life belongs not to him, but to Hashem. Thus, man has no right to be *me'abeid atzmo lo-da'as* (commit suicide); only Hashem has the right to end life. Nevertheless, there are certain extenuating circumstances in which this *issur* may not apply.

The *Halachah* recognizes that when waging *milchemes Yisrael*, there are special *dinei milchamah* that suspend the usual considerations associated with *piku'ach nefesh* (the saving of life). The *Minchas Chinuch* explains that it is obvious that in the normal course of events, war is associated with potential loss of life; the Torah does not rely on miracles. Thus, during wartime, the *Halachah* declares that we violate the usual *issur* to kill non-Jews, and we ignore the *sakanas nefashos* (danger to life) of the Jewish soldiers involved in the battle and accept the risk of loss of life.

This idea is relevant to the *issur* of committing suicide as well. The primary emphasis of the *dinei milchamah* is that we conduct ourselves according to whatever

is in the best interest of the war effort, regardless of the *sakanah* to individuals. Accordingly, if soldiers fear that after being captured, they may succumb to torture and reveal secrets that are detrimental to the general security of *Eretz Yisrael*, they are permitted to commit suicide.

Another example of the application of *dinei milchamah* to the *issur* of committing suicide relates to a heroic soldier's jumping on a grenade that is about to explode to save his fellow soldiers. If such action will strengthen the war effort, he is permitted (and obligated) to commit suicide to save his comrades. If this were not in the context of *milchamah*, it probably would be prohibited for one to actively put himself into *sakanah* and commit suicide to save the lives of others. Paraphrasing the *s'vara* (logic) advanced by the Gemara – “Why do you think that **that man's** blood is redder [than yours]? Perhaps **your** blood is redder [than his].” Since a person cannot make this assessment, it is preferable for him to be passive.

The Beis Yosef discusses other conditions under which it may be permissible for one to end one's own life. Citing the *Orchos Chaim*, he quotes the *Midrash* that lists two exceptions to the general prohibition of suicide. The *Midrash* expounds the *passuk*, ואך את דמכם לנפשותיכם אדרוש, taking the word אך as an exclusion: יכול כשאול ת"ל אך. יכול כחנניה מישאל ועזריה ת"ל אך – “It could be [that the prohibition of suicide applies even to someone] like Sha'ul; therefore Scripture states, ‘But.’ And it could be [that it applies even to someone] like Chananyah, Misha'el, and Azaryah; therefore Scripture states, ‘But.’”

The exception to the *issur* of committing suicide in the case of Chananyah,

Misha'el, and Azaryah applies to one who sacrifices himself *al kiddush Hashem*. The *Da'as Z'keinim MiBa'alei HaTosfos* explains that when Chananyah, Misha'el, and Azaryah were offered the choice of bowing down to Nevuchadnetzar's statue or being thrown into a fiery furnace, they chose to sacrifice their lives. Thus, Tosfos, quoting Rabbeinu Tam, maintains that in times of persecution, when Jewish people are coerced to transgress the Torah, it is a *mitzvah* for a person to commit suicide if he fears that he will be unable to withstand the torture and will commit an *aveirah*.

This, unfortunately, became relevant during the period of the *Ba'alei HaTosfos*, when the Crusaders traveling through France and Germany pressured many Jews to convert to Christianity on pain of death. In fact, the *Da'as Z'keinim MiBa'alei HaTosfos* refers to the very common practice of parents slaughtering their own children, first reciting the *berachah*, אשר קדשנו במצותיו וצונו על השחיטה, because of the fear that they might convert to save themselves.

This practice was fiercely debated by other *Ba'alei HaTosfos*, who argued that although one is certainly obligated to surrender his own life *al kiddush Hashem* under these circumstances, one is **not** permitted to kill himself or to commit murder out of concern that the victim will not be able to withstand the test of religious persecution. These *Ba'alei HaTosfos* claimed that Chananyah, Misha'el, and Azaryah did not take their own lives, but rather submitted to being thrown into the fiery furnace by **others**.

The second exclusion the *Midrash* mentions is that of Sha'ul HaMelech, who threw himself upon a sword when it became apparent that the Pelishtim would

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# A Most Precious Gift



**Rabbi Yisroel Reisman**  
Rosh Yeshiva, Yeshiva Torah Vodaas

**W**e find ourselves today on *Rosh Chodesh MarCheshvan*. Many believe the addition of the word *mar* is added to the beginning of the month as it translates to bitter representing the month with which we begin the winter, a time that is dark and days that do not have any *chaggim*. Really, in the context of the new month, *mar* means “dripping water” – a month in which we begin to *daven* and hope to see rain fill *Eretz Yisrael* as a *bracha* as well as the month in which our *Yeshivos* reopen to thousands beginning the new winter *zman*.

We find in *Parshas Noach* two different matters in which Hashem punished the world. The first was the flood which brought destruction upon all of creation as a means of total reestablishment of all life. The second was on the *Dor HaFlaga* where a single language was broken into seventy languages to remove all understandable communication between those that wanted to challenge Hashem. Both of these punishments were not just a form of Hashem using force against Man, but were the appropriate response to the sins of each generation. By the flood, the entire *Tzuras HaAdam*, the form and being of man, was destroyed and removed from any sort of continuance and existence. But what about the *Dor Haflaga*? How did the “punishment fit the crime?” Perhaps since their directions and intentions were towards Hashem Himself, the reaction

should have been similar to the response against the generation of the flood.

Rav Hutner, *ZT”L*, (Pachad Yitzchok – Rosh Hashana) explains for us why the *Dor HaFlaga* were punished in this fashion. The Targum Onkelos in *Parshas Breishis* famously teaches that Man was created with a *ruach mimalala* – the power of speech. This is what separates us from all other creations and is an ability only we were gifted with. This was not just a punishment given by Hashem but the division of one language now divided into seventy was a minimization and weakening of Man entirely. Being unable to communicate with one another is the result of us using the defining characteristic that makes us human in an inappropriate and incorrect fashion. Our gift of speech need not be viewed as a physical capability, but rather should be seen as a spiritual talent that was designed for us and us alone. Wiping out the *Dor HaFlaga* would not be the appropriate response because the judgement against them needed to reflect the sin they had committed. Not only do we find ourselves saying the wrong things, but also sometimes refraining from saying what needs to be said. How many times are we in a position where someone may need help that we can provide or even has something small like an untied shoelace that we can point out? We have become lazy with our speech and have hurt others by not being there when needed. A member of our *shul* once came to me very bitter. He explained that

each morning he wakes up quite early in order to shower before the 6:15 *minyan*. He also takes the time to clean out his ears with a *Qtip* before coming to *shul*. He said that one morning he somehow had forgotten the *Qtip* that was poking out of his ear and came in to *daven* like any other morning. As he walked by his friends he greeted them as he always does wishing them a good morning. It was only once he began putting on his *Tefillin Shel Rosh* that he noticed it was still there! “Do I not have any friends in the *shul*? Why would nobody tell me?” he expressed to me rightfully upset. We unfortunately know too many people, perhaps now more than ever, who go through their own personal tragedies, but feel too uncomfortable to just call and tell them we are here. “I don’t know what I would say, it wouldn’t feel right to reach out.” We know that the members of the Sanhedrin and Yosef HaTzaddik were all familiar with seventy languages. How so? Would someone of such stature really take the time to sit and learn such a large number of languages? Rav Hutner explains that these *Gedolim* were who they were because of their ability to communicate with so many different types of people. They used what Man was given in the most effective form possible because that is why we have been given this ability – to speak to others and for others.

● Edited by Zac Winkler.

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seize and disgrace him. The *Beis Yosef* thus seems to permit a person to commit suicide out of fear of being tortured by the enemy and, by extension, in cases of extreme pain and suffering. However, this *heter* does not apply to taking **another person’s** life, even to save

him from having to endure continued pain and suffering. Rav Ahron Soloveichik would quote the *sefer HaK’sav V’Hak’abalah*, who provides a source for the fact that euthanasia, “mercy killing,” is considered *retzichah*. The double phrase, “but of man, of every man for his brother,” im-

plies that there are **two** forms of *retzichah* that the Torah here addresses. The words *ומיד האדם* refer to the typical, cruel act of murder, where the killer intends to harm his victim. In contrast, the expression *איש אחיו* implies that the killer is a dear friend of the victim; he kills him at the

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# Remembering Rav Ovadiah Yosef



**Chief Rabbi David Yosef**

Sefardi Chief Rabbi of Israel and Rishon LeZion

**T**his coming week, on מרשון ג, the third day of Cheshvan, will be the 11th *yahrzeit* of my father, Rav Ovadiah Yosef, ז"ל. I would like to share some memories with you.

When I was five, Abba came home beaming. He had saved up and managed to buy a fridge and washing machine. We children were overjoyed. As the fridge was placed in the kitchen, we sang and danced.

We grew up on Rechov Elkanah in the Tel Arza neighborhood. I have such sweet memories of that time. It might have been the most peaceful time in Abba's life, before he became Chief Rabbi. Abba sat on the *beit din* with a very close-knit group of friends – Rav Elyashiv, Rav Eliezer Goldschmidt, and Rav Betzalel Zolty [later to become the chief rabbi of Yerushalayim], and they were constantly conferring with each other. Often, I would come home at night to see these great geonim huddled around the table, discussing whatever issue they were facing in *beit din*.

We lived on the first floor of the building, and Rav Ben Zion Abba Shaul lived on the second. Abba and Rav Ben Zion were childhood friends from Porat Yosef, and they would frequently speak in learning. Many years later, when I was rav of Har

Nof, there was a complex *sh'eilah* involving an apartment situated on top of a *shul*, and someone quoted a *psak* from Rav Ben Zion. So I went to discuss it with him personally, and he told me that the case in question was no problem. "But I faced a real problem," he told me, "back when we lived in that building in Tel Arza. Your father sat and learned just underneath our apartment, creating a *beit medrash* in his living room."

On *leil Shabbos*, Abba found it impossible to sleep due to the heightened *kedushah* of the day, and he would learn until *Shacharis*. He would start off with all of us boys surrounding him, and one by one, we would all drop off and he would remain alone, engrossed in the *sugya*.

But the constant exertion, lack of sleep, and poor nutrition over the years took its toll on Abba's health, eventually affecting his eyesight to the extent that doctors feared he might lose his sight entirely. On hearing this, Abba wasted no time and traveled immediately to Tzfas. There, at the gravesite of Rav Yosef Karo, he shed torrents of tears, begging, "I abided by the *Beit Yosef's* rulings, always fighting that *halachah* should be practiced according to your decisions!" Gradually, his vision improved, and he returned to his regular

study schedule. His dark glasses were the sole reminder of that precarious time.

As a teenager, I learned how to type, and as such, became indispensable to my father. He would write *teshuvot* by hand and give them to me to type up for his *sefarim*. When I was 17, I gave a *shiur* in Katamon each evening. But I was so valuable to him that he would sometimes tell me to keep on typing and that he would deliver the *shiur* in my stead. The *shiur* was always well-attended, because the participants knew that at least twice a week, they would merit hearing *shiur* from Abba, not me.

I can't even imagine Abba in any pose other than leaning over his cherished *sefarim*. Political and social obligations were dispensed with alacrity. As we grew older, there began to be family *smachot* and events at which his participation was necessary. Once he excused himself from a family *simchah*, and the hosts implored him to remain just a little longer. "They are waiting for me at home," he explained.

"Who's waiting, Abba?" I asked, intrigued.

"They: the Rashba, Rambam, and Rav Akiva Eiger. How can I hold them up?"

● Adapted from *Mishpacha's Special Tribute Supplement: Rav Ovadiah Yosef, October 9, 2013*

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victim's behest. The killer who engages in euthanasia for the benefit of the victim may even think that he is performing a *mitzvah*! Nevertheless, the Torah states that Hashem will demand punishment for this form of murder as well.

Given that the Torah views euthanasia as *retzichah*, what is the basis of permitting suicide in a case of extreme pain and torture? When *shfichus damim* is involved, we apply the principle of *yehareig v'al ya'avor*; the *issur* of *retzichah* supersedes all other considerations, even that of *pi-*

*ku'ach nefesh*. Just as one may not transgress the prohibition of *retzichah* and participate in mercy killing, it should be similarly forbidden to commit suicide, even to avoid pain and suffering.

The answer seems to be along the lines of a distinction made by the *Minchas Chinuch*, which many *Poskim* have accepted. The *Minchas Chinuch* suggests that *shfichus damim*, which carries with it a *chiyuv misah*, refers specifically to the murder of **another person**. Suicide, in contrast, is punishable by *misah bidei Shamayim*

(death at the hand of Heaven), not *misah beis din* (a court-imposed death penalty), as implied by the term אדרוש in the *pas-suk*, ואך את דמכם לנפשתיכם אדרוש. Thus, whereas *retzichah* falls within the category of *aveiros* that are *bein adam lachaveiro* (between man and his fellow), *me'abeid atzmo loda'as* is an *aveirah* in the realm of *bein adam laMakom* (between man and G-d). Suicide is not merely a different example of the general *issur* of *retzichah*; it is a completely separate *issur* unto itself.

● Adapted from Rav Schachter on the *Parsha III*.

# Think Rationally Towards the Future



**Rabbi Shalom Rosner**

Rosh Beit Midrash, Machon Lev English speaking program

בְּעֶצְם הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה בָּא נֹחַ וְשֵׁם־וְחָם וְיָפֶת בְּנֵי־נֹחַ וְאִשְׁתׁ נֹחַ ... אֶתֶם אֶל־הַתֵּבָה (בראשית ז:יג)

*In the middle of this very day, Noach came, and Shem and Ham and Yafet, Noach's sons, and Noach's wife and his sons' three wives with them, into the ark. (Bereshit 7:13).*

Noach is commanded to enter the *teva* (ark) smack in the middle of the day. The Torah uses the term **בְּעֶצְם הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה**. Similar language is used in two other instances (highlighted by Rashi - Devarim 32:48). The term **בְּעֶצְם הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה** is used when Moshe is to ascend the mountain to die as well as when *Bnei Yisrael* leave *Mitzrayim* (Shemot 12). Rashi explains that the common denominator is that in all of these instances, people may try to prevent the event from transpiring, but G-d will ensure that it occurs in the light of day and no one will be able to thwart the event from occurring!

- **Noach** – the people of the generation may try to block Noach from entering the Ark, so G-d had Noach enter in the **light of day** to show the people they could do nothing to prevent it.
- **Yetziat Mitzrayim** – the exodus occurred in the **light of day**, to underscore that it was visible to all and Egyptians could not halt it.
- **Moshe's death** – the people may have tried to do all in their power to stop Moshe from ascending the mountain upon which he was to die, so Moshe ascended in the **light of day** to show all that they could do nothing to interfere with Moshe's death.

The *Shemen Hatov* raises an interesting question with respect to Noach. In the two other instances, both with respect to *Yetziat Mitzrayim* and Moshe's death,

the people had something to gain from seeking to prevent the occurrence. In the first instance, Moshe will remain alive and with the people, and in the second, the Jewish people would remain in Egypt under Egyptian rule. However, it seems like the people who would prevent Noach from entering the ark have nothing to gain! The flood would occur and wipe them out anyway. Why would they contemplate preventing Noach from entering the ark if they would derive no benefit from that act?

The *Shemen Hatov* offers three suggestions, and we will focus on the third explanation. Unfortunately, when individuals have a strong opinion on a matter, at times, they act in an irrational manner. They seek to accomplish an objective, irrespective of the ramifications it may have on other individuals or society as a whole. The people of Noach's generation may seek to kill him because he was offering rebuke to them over the hundred years it took to build the ark. They just wanted to stop him from preaching, whether or not there would be a positive result from their action. They did not focus on whether, in the long run, their act would have any impact on the severity of the flood and the ability to save their lives.

We see this on several occasions in the Torah. As we have mentioned before regarding *makat tzefarde'a*, Rashi points out that this *pasuk* (Shemot 8: 1-2) switches from the plural *hatzefarde'im*, the frogs, to the singular *hatzefarde'a*, the frog,

and he quotes *Hazal*, who explain this discrepancy:

צִפְרָדַע אַחַת הִיְתָה וְהָיוּ מְכִין אוֹתָהּ וְהָיָא מִתְזַת נְחִילִים נְחִילִים.

*There was one big frog, and every time the Egyptians hit it, it split and multiplied.*

Rabbi Yaakov Yisrael Kanievsky, also known as the Steipler, asks a seemingly obvious question: If the frog multiplied each time the Egyptians beat the frog, why did they continue to do so? It completely defies logic! They saw the consequences of their actions, so why didn't they just stop?

The Steipler explains that we see from here the power of anger. A person can become so angry that he begins to act irrationally. Then, despite the reality that stares him in the face, he can't control his reaction. The Egyptians saw that it wasn't helping to hit the frog, but their anger made them unable to think straight and control themselves. And so, they kept on hitting!

No matter how upset we are in a given situation, we cannot lose our cool, or more importantly, we must think rationally. We ought to consider the ramifications of our actions, to look beyond the immediate situation and consider the lasting impact of what we do or say may have on others. All too often, short-sightedness can lead to a more severe result in the future than the perceived disaster we are grappling with in the present.

# A Window You Shall Make for the Ark



**Michal Horowitz**  
Judaic Studies Teacher

**W**e are all familiar with the narrative that unfolds in this week's *parsha*, *Parshas Noach*. It had been ten generations since Adam and Creation, and all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth. G-d decided it was necessary to destroy all life forms – from man to animal – and even the three *tefachim* of top soil were washed away and destroyed in the deluge.

The only human survivors of the flood were Noah and his wife Naama, their three sons, Shem, Cham and Yafes, and the wives of their sons. As for the animals, any animals that were in the ark survived, as well as all the fish in the sea (Rashi to 7:22).

Before the flood began, Hashem gave Noah precise instructions as to how to build the Ark. It was to have three floors – the top for the people, the middle for the animals, and the bottom for the garbage. The roof was to be sloped so the rain would run off it and down. Included in the instructions to build the Ark, Noah was commanded: *צַהַר תַּעֲשֶׂה לַתֵּבָה* – *a tzohar you shall make for the Ark* (Bereishis 6:16).

What was the *tzohar* that Noah was to construct? Quoting Medrash Bereishis Rabbah, Rashi offers two opinions:

**צַהַר**. "אֵל חֵלוֹן" אֲבָן טוֹבָה הַמְאִירָה לָהֶם

*There are those who say the tzohar was a window, and there are those who say it was a precious gem that gave illumination for them.*

As they were in the Ark for an entire year, and the world was inundated with water and darkness, we understand the second opinion of Rashi: *אֲבָן טוֹבָה הַמְאִירָה לָהֶם*. The *tzohar* was a precious stone or gem that illuminated the Ark for them.

(This too is somewhat difficult to understand. We might wonder; how could one stone illuminate the entire Ark and provide enough light for all of its inhabitants?

However, certainly Hashem could make a *neis* and the entire Ark would be illuminated from one stone. Once the stone was up and Noah's *hishtaduls* was done, from that one stone – much light would shine forth [It is not lost on me as I type these words that from our massive outpouring of national *hishtaduls*, Hashem can make many great miracles and much light can and will shine].)

However, according to the first opinion quoted by Rashi, "אֵל חֵלוֹן", that the *tzohar* was a window – for what did the eight people in the Ark need a window? It was storming, the world was full of destruction, there were the rain waters pouring down from above, the waters of the deep rising from below, destruction at every moment floating all around and over the Ark... What purpose would a window serve the Ark's inhabitants?

One answer remains as important for Noah in his time as it is for us, each individual in *Am Yisrael*, today. When the world around is storming, one may not ensconce him or herself in a protective cocoon without a window to the destruction happening outside, all around. It is morally reprehensible and against the Torah to say, "I am safe (or live under the illusion of safety: for today, no Jew anywhere in the world is safe), I am protected, I have my secure Ark which will keep me warm, dry, and protected, and hence, I can close my ears, my eyes, my heart, my mind and my life to the destruction around me."

When the world is storming – when our nation is fighting for her Land and Home! – when our soldiers are fighting on southern and northern fronts, when 101 captives are still being held in Gaza, when thousands of our brothers and sisters have lost their lives, and so many are bereaved, R"l, it is criminal to close our "windows", to live with the (false) illusion of safety, and to shut our hearts, minds and prayers to their plight!

When one member of Israel is suffering, the entire Israel suffers along –

*וְאָחִיכֶם, כֹּל בַּיִת יִשְׂרָאֵל יִבְכוּ אֶת הַשָּׂרֵפָה, אֲשֶׁר שָׂרְף ה' (Vayikra 10:6). A window you shall make for the ark.*

Israel Prize laureate and presidential candidate Miriam Peretz, who lost two of her sons (Uriel and Eliraz, *HY"D*) during their service in the IDF, has paid condolence visits to over tens of families who lost loved ones in Hamas' barbaric attacks on Israel last year.

Speaking with *Kan Reshet Bet*, Peretz said, "Every morning, I have terrible lists, I did not ever think that I would have *binders of names*. One after the other, I go from morning to night between bereaved families all across Israel... we need all the help. Yesterday I went to fourteen families, people who I don't know."

Peretz also noted that there are families who are surrounded by thousands of visitors, and there are those who have only a few. She recalled that there was one mother who called her and asked her to come, because she was already standing on the porch. "Many times they need to hear that their sons and daughters who fell, fell not because they ran to battle but because they wanted to live. The greatest comfort is that we live," she said.

"When a grandmother tells me, 'I won't make *kuba* any more,' I embrace her and show her the rest of the siblings and tell her, 'What about them? You won't make *kuba* for them?' And then the grandmother says, 'No, no, for them, I'll make it!'"

"There are no bereaved families here – *there is a bereaved country*," she emphasized.

*צַהַר תַּעֲשֶׂה לַתֵּבָה* – *there are those who say a precious gem and there are those who say a window.*

הַכּוֹתֵב בְּכִי, בְּבִרְכַת יִשְׁעוֹת וְנַחֲמוֹת, ה' יִרְחַם עֲלֵינוּ וְעַל אֲרֻצֵּינוּ.



# The “Peshat” of “Derash” on the word “Hu’chal”



**Rabbi Menachem Leibtag**

Tanach Study Center | Yeshivat Har Etzion

“**A**nd also Shet gave birth to a son, and called him Enosh - AZ [then] HUCHAL [soon to be translated] to call out in the Name of G-d”.

At first glance, the translation of this *pasuk* appears to be quite straightforward, i.e., the word HUCHAL means BEGAN [like “*Thatchil*” – to begin], and hence, the Torah now informs us that in the time of Enosh man began to “call out in G-d’s Name.” And indeed, Rashbam and Ibn Ezra explain this *pasuk* in this manner.

Nonetheless, the classic commentators (as well as several *Midrashim*) interpret this *pasuk* in the opposite direction, understanding that the word “HUCHAL” implies the defilement of G-d’s Name (*shoresh “chilul”* – see *Targum Unkelos*). For example: Rashi – Man began IDOL WORSHIP by calling G-d’s name on certain objects and/or people.

Rav Saadyah Gaon – calling in G-d’s Name became DEFILED.

Ramban – Man NULLIFIED [“*bitul*”] G-d’s Name.

Rambam – Man began IDOL worship [*Hilchot Avodah Zara* I:1]

At first glance, these interpretations seem rather “stretched.” After all, this *pasuk* is the first time in Chumash that we finally find (what appears to be) a POSITIVE statement concerning the progress of mankind. Why then do *Chazal* read this *pasuk* in such a NEGATIVE light?

To answer this question, and to better appreciate *Chazal*, we posit this “negative” interpretation stems from the Torah’s use of two key “biblical phrases:”

- 1) “*az huchal*”
- 2) “*l’kro b’shem Hashem*”

Had these two phrases not been found anywhere else in *Sefer Breishit*, then most likely everyone would have agreed to the “simple” interpretation (as suggested by Rashbam) that man BEGAN to call (or pray) to G-d. However, we will see how the word “*hu’chal*,” and the concept of “calling out in G-d’s Name,” appears numerous times in *Sefer Breishit*, and hence, those sources must be taken into consideration when interpreting this *pasuk*.

Let’s begin with the word “*hu’chal*,” noting how it is used in a NEGATIVE context each other time that it is mentioned in *Parshiot Breishit* and *Noach*.

## BEFORE THE FLOOD

Immediately after the Torah introduces Noach, we find another interesting use of “*hu’chal*.” “*va’yhi ki HE’CHEL ha’adam...*” – And it came to pass as man began to multiply... and gave birth to daughters...” This *pasuk* introduces the story of the MABUL with G-d’s anger with man for his behavior (hence limiting his life span to 120 years).

Even though “*he’chel*” clearly implies a “beginning” (see Ibn Ezra), there can be no doubt that this *pasuk* introduces the beginning of a NEGATIVE process!

## AFTER THE FLOOD

In a similar manner, immediately after the Flood, note how the Torah introduces its description of the incident of Noach and Canaan: “*VA’YACHEL Noach ish ha’adama*” – Noach, the tiller of the soil, BEGAN to plant a vineyard...”

Here again we find the BEGINNING of a “downward” process. Even though Rasag and Seforno explain “*va’yachal*” as “began,” Rashi (quoting the Midrash) explains

“*va’yachel*” as “*chulin*” – that he defiled himself.

## BEFORE MIGDAL BAVEL

In the next chapter, when the Torah lists the genealogy of Noach’s grandchildren, we find yet another use of the word “*ha’chel*” in the description of Nimrod: “And Kush gave birth to Nimrod, *HU HA’CHEL* – he BEGAN – to be a *GIBOR* [strong/brave man] on earth... His kingdom began in Bavel...”

Here, “*ha’chel*” clearly implies a “beginning,” yet as we all know (and as the *pasuk* alludes to in its mention of Bavel), Nimrod is most probably the mastermind behind the Tower of Babel Project.

Once again, we find the beginning of a “downhill” process.

## AT MIGDAL BAVEL

Finally, when G-d “comes down” to punish the builders of MIGDAL BAVEL, we find yet another use of “*hu’chal*.” “And G-d came down to see the city and the tower... and He said, it is because they are united... *v’zeh HA’CHILAM la’asot* – and this caused them to START this undertaking, and now nothing will stop them...”

Once again, we find that the Torah uses specifically this word to indicate the beginning of a process that is against G-d’s will!

## BACK TO ENOSH

Based on these four examples where the Torah employs the word “*hu’chal*” to describe the BEGINNING of a DOWNHILL process, it should not surprise us to find that *Chazal* offer a similar explanation in 4:26, that the generation of ENOSH began to “defile” G-d’s Name, rather than exalt it.

*Continued on page 18*

# Small Actions



**Rabbi Eli Mansour**  
Edmond J. Safra Synagogue, Brooklyn

In *Parshat Noach*, the Torah introduces us to a fellow by the name of Nimrod. The *pasuk* writes that he was a great hunter in front of G-d. People would say that Nimrod was the example given for a great hunter in front of G-d. So there is a very interesting Eben Ezra explaining what it meant that he was a great hunter in front of G-d. So he writes that Nimrod would build altars and he would bring the great animals that he hunted as sacrifices on his altars.

The Ramban is shocked at such an explanation of the Eben Ezra. And Ramban says that it can't be and that Eben Ezra is making the *rasha* (bad) person into a *tzadik*, (righteous man). It says the Rabbis had a tradition that Nimrod was a bad guy. So then how can it be that Eben Ezra held that since Nimrod brought sacrifices in front of G-d, it is as if to say that he was a *Tzadik* with his sacrifices.

So I saw an explanation that was brought down in the book *Moser Derech*, based on a principal of the Saba from Kelem. The Saba from Kelem says that a person is judged in life, not on the big things that

he does or the grand things that he does, but really on the small things that he does. One is not necessarily judged on the one or two big events that he does in his life. For example, where one built a hospital or pioneered a great project, one is, however, judged on the day-to-day items, on the small items – for example, on the everyday “good morning” to his friend, or the giving of charity to the guy who walks in, or helping somebody across the street. Doing the small *chessed* (acts of kindness) day to day is really the true test of a person, and not the one or two big things one does in his life. The big things are not an indication of one's servitude and loyalty to *Boreh Olam*. If a person could be careful to tie his shoes in the morning according to the Halacha, that's already an indication of his servitude to *Boreh Olam*. You are not necessarily judged on the big things.

So the Saba from Kelem wants to say this. Nimrod wanted to go against that philosophy. Nimrod used to trap big animals. He used to trap lions, elephants, and big animals. And it was those big animals that he

would put on the altar. And Nimrod was trying to advocate that this is what G-d is interested in: Only in the big deeds, only in the great things. And that's why Nimrod was considered a *rasha*, a bad person, because he was trying to go against a *halacha* that we have. The *halacha*, for example that says, even if a person can't afford a big animal, he's able to bring a meal offering on the altar, or even just bring a bird on the altar. So therefore Nimrod over here, because of his philosophy, even though he was building sacrifices like the Eben Ezra says, and even though he was building them in front of G-d, the Eben Ezra meant that Nimrod is still *rasha* because of it. So therefore Ramban's contention is no contention. The Eben Ezra was correct. Nimrod was a *rasha*, because he was trying to convey the philosophy that only the big deeds count.

But, in Judaism, it's to the contrary. We are measured really by the day-to-day small deeds and not necessarily by the big actions that we do.

*Continued from page 17*

## “LIKRO B'SHEM HASHEM”

Let's examine now the second phrase of this *pasuk* – “*l'kro b'shem Hashem*” – as it will provide us with additional support for why Chazal understand this event as such an important “milestone” in the history of idol worship.

Recall from *Parshat Lech L'cha* how this very same phrase is used when Avraham Avinu arrives at (and returns to) Bet-El:

“...and he built there an altar to G-d, and he called there in G-d's Name [*va'yikra b'shem Hashem*].”

As the prophet Tzania himself later explains, this concept becomes the ultimate goal of the Jewish nation: “For then I will unite all the nations together that they speak the same language so that they all CALL OUT IN G-D'S NAME – *l'kro kulam b'shem Hashem* – and to serve Him with one accord.”

If our understanding is correct – that Avraham Avinu is chosen to rectify mankind from the direction taken by the builders of Migdal Bavel, then, thematically, it makes sense to explain the *pasuk* concerning the generation of Enosh in a negative light, for Avraham is chosen not only to fix the sin of “*v'naaseh lanu SHEM*,” but also to teach mankind what they had misunderstood since the time of Enosh, the sin of “*az hu'chal l'kro b'shem Hashem*.”

# Remembering the Future



**Rabbi Moshe Weinberger**  
 Congregation Aish Kodesh, Woodmere

**H**ashem (Bereishis 6:16) told Noach, “Make a *tzohar* for the ark.” What was this *tzohar*? Rashi explains that some say it was a window and others say that it was a precious stone which gave them light. The Gemara (Sanhedrin 108b) teaches us that Rav Yochanan is the one who explains that the *tzohar* was a precious stone and that the word *tzohar* [צהר] is connected to the word for “afternoon” [צהריים] as if to tell Noach to take “precious stones and diamonds in order that they should give you light like the afternoon.” Particularly in light of the fact that we see the ark had a window (Bereishis 8:6), what forced Rav Yochanan to explain that the *tzohar* was a precious stone rather than a window?

Ever since Rosh Hashana, I have been thinking about the words from the *Musaf* davening, “And You also recalled Noach with love and remembered him for salvation and mercy when You brought the waters of the flood to destroy all flesh because of the evil of their deeds. Therefore, may his remembrance come before You, Hashem our G-d, to multiply his seed like the dust of the earth and his descendants like the sand of the sea.” What does the word “therefore” mean here? It almost sounds like the flood and the evil of the deeds of the generation caused the memory of Noach to go up before Hashem.

Perhaps we can understand this better if we look at the words right before this in the davening: “Everything is revealed and known before You, who looks and gazes until the end of the generations...” In other words, one normally looks into his past or at Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov to find some source of merit. But once we point out that Hashem “looks and gazes until the end of the generations,” we see that Hashem also remembers future generations in order to save their ancestors!

I later found that the *Midrash* (Bamidbar Raba 29:5) makes the same point: “‘And Noach found favor in G-d’s eyes;’ Rav Simon says: We find that Hashem does kindness with the later generations in the merit of the earlier generations. How do we know that Hashem does kindness with the earlier generations in the merit of the later generations? ‘And Noach found favor in G-d’s eyes.’ In what merit? In the merit of [‘These are the generations of Noach,] his descendants.’” In other words, when the Torah says that Noach found favor in Hashem’s eyes, we would expect the next pasuk to tell us what Noach had done to merit finding favor in G-d’s eyes. But instead, the next pasuk says “These are the generations of Noach.” Remarkably, Rav Simon explains that this means Noach was saved in the merit of his descendants. Hashem saved Noach because He remembered Noach’s future and the generations which would come from him.

Rav Yochanan explained (Sanhedrin 108a) that Noach was not worthy of being saved. He was only considered a *tzadik* relative to his own degraded generation and was only saved in the merit of his descendants, the future generations. Perhaps that is the meaning of the word “therefore” in the Rosh Hashana *Musaf*. Noach’s merit rises before Hashem because of “his seed [who were] like the dust of the earth and his descendants like the sand of the sea.” He was saved because “Everything is revealed and known before You, who looks and gazes until the end of the generations...”

It is no coincidence that Rav Yochanan, who explains that Noach was not deserving of redemption on his own, rejected the explanation that the *tzohar* was a window. This is similar to why the angels (Bereishis 19:17) told Lot, Avraham’s nephew, as he fled from Sedom, “Do not look behind you.” Rashi explains the reason: “You

are saved in Avraham’s merit. You do not deserve to see their punishment while you are being saved.” Perhaps according to Rav Yochanan, because Noach was being saved in the merit of his descendants and not in his own merit, he did not deserve to look out at the world being destroyed through a window. He was therefore forced to explain that the *tzohar* must have been some source of light other than a window. The ark did, however, have a window, so that after the destruction was complete, Noach was able to open the window and look out and see the new world.

I read that one of the *baalei mussar* was walking around the Kineret in *Eretz Yisroel* with a guide and saw some remarkable trees. The branches of these trees seemed to go back into the ground and other trees seemed to grow from those roots. It was impossible to tell the difference between the trees’ branches and their roots. He asked the guide to explain the trees roots to him. He explained that the roots get their nourishment and ability to grow from the tree. “And where,” the rav asked, “do the roots get their nourishment?” The guide explained that they draw their sustenance from the tree! The *baal mussar* saw a deep lesson in this, saying, “Where do children come from? From their parents. And what do the parents look forward to? What do they pin their hopes on? Their children! The parents give birth to the children but, if the parents merit, the children provide merit to the parents. The tree does not simply produce seeds which grow into other, separate trees. It produces branches which turn into roots from which the tree, in turn, receives nourishment!”

This is our hope in life. We want to lay down roots, children, who will grow into *bnei* and *bnos Torah* who will spiritually nourish us as well. We *daven* on Rosh

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# The Hero for the Simple People



Rabbi YY Jacobson  
TheYeshiva.net

**T**his is the history of Noach. Noach was a righteous man; he was wholesome in his generation; Noach walked with G-d.

The Talmud, and Rashi, ever sensitive to nuance, take note of the fact that the words, “in his generation” are superfluous. Obviously, Noach lived and functioned in his generation.

The Talmud offers two opposing explanations. In the words of Rashi:

*Among the sages, there are those who interpret this as praise of Noach: If he was righteous in his [corrupt] generation, certainly he would have been even more righteous had he lived in a generation of righteous people. Others interpret it negatively: In relation to his wicked generation he was righteous; had he been in Abraham's generation he would not have amounted to anything.*

Who was Noach? is the question. Did G-d save him because he was a “perfect tzaddik,” or because there was nobody better?

Yet there is something disturbing about this discussion. The Torah is clearly trying to highlight Noach's virtue. “*But Noach found favor in the eyes of G-d,*” is how the previous portion concludes. Then, we have the above verse: “*This is the history of Noach. Noach was a righteous man; he was wholesome in his generation; Noach walked with G-d.*” Later in the portion G-d says to Noach: “*I have found you righteous before Me in this generation.*” G-d, clearly, is trying to extol Noach. What drove some Rabbis to denigrate him and say that, relative to other generations, he would amount to nothing special?

What is more, Noach is the only person in the entire Tanach who is called a *tzaddik*, a perfectly righteous individual. G-d tells Noach: “I have found you to be a *tzaddik*

before me in this generation.” And we, the Jews, say: Yes, but not really...

There are various interpretations. One of my favorite ones was presented by the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, in 1964. Not only were the Rabbis not trying to minimize Noach's virtues; they actually wanted to highlight his praises even more. Equally important, they were trying to teach us all a transformative lesson.

What did Noach accomplish? He saved all mankind. In the absence of Noach, humanity would have become extinct soon after it had begun. Single-handedly he ensured the continuity of life on Earth. He is the man who builds an ark, rescues all living organisms, and ensures our world survives.

An achievement indeed, if there was ever one.

And who is the individual who achieves this feat? A person called by the Torah “a man of the earth.” The only story the Torah tells us about Noach, outside of constructing the Ark and spending a year in it during the Great Flood, is that he was a farmer; he planted a vineyard, became intoxicated, and exposed himself. That's all. The last thing we hear about him is that he lay there in his tent, drunk and bare.

The Rabbis deduce from the text that “*Noach, also, was of those people who were wanting in faith: he believed and he did not believe that the Flood would come, and he would not enter the Ark until the waters forced him to do so.*”

Noach was a fine man, who lived a decent, moral life, and tried to do what G-d wanted, but was not without his flaws, doubts, and struggles. Compared

to Abraham he would not have amounted to much.

But look what this simple fellow achieved! In a society dripping with greed and temptation, Noach held to his morals, walked with G-d, and swam against the tide, saving the planet from destruction. Civilization survived not because of a towering, titanic figure; but because of a simple man who dared to live morally when everyone around him behaved despicably.

Remarkably, by degrading Noach and stating that in other generations Noach would have been eclipsed, the Rabbis turned him into the most inspiring figure, someone who serves as a model for all of us ordinary men and women. Noach is my hero, the hero of the ordinary cut-of-the-mill individual who is no great thinker, warrior, leader, or man of transcendence. By explaining the biblical text the way they did, the Sages turned Noach into a symbol for us ordinary people, who appreciate a fine cup of wine and a little schnaps, how we can make a difference in people's lives.

The message of Noach is life-changing. You don't need to be Abraham or Moses to transform the world. Noach was just another kid on the block, but look what he did! With your own courage not to toe the line of corruption, fakeness, and falsehood, with a little gentleness, friendliness, compassion, kindness, and goodness, you can save lives, ignite sparks, and create an “ark” of sanity amidst a raging flood.

In the presence of great moral giants, he might be eclipsed, the Talmud says. Standing near Abraham he would appear insignificant. And that is exactly what made him so significant! He set a standard for those of us who appear in our own eyes as insignificant.

# Noach: Build!



**Rabbi Judah Mischel**

Executive Director, Camp HASC; Mashpiah, OU-NCSY

**R**eb Avraham Mordechai Alter, the ‘Imrei Emes’ of Gur, zy’a, transplanted seeds of the nearly decimated Chasidic community of his father (the Sefas Emes), and his grandfather (the Chidushei haRim), in Eretz Yisrael. Having survived the war, the Imrei Emes escaped Poland and arrived in Yerushalayim in 1940. Three of his sons survived and ultimately succeeded the Imrei Emes as Gerrer Rebbes, while most of the rest of his family was murdered in the Shoah.

Reb Noach Yoskovitz, a grandson of the Imrei Emes, himself suffered and survived five years of the terrors of Bergen-Belsen and Auschwitz. However, he found himself ensconced in the Santa Maria al Bagno ‘displaced persons’ camp in Southern Italy, where cruel and immoral British policies effectively barred Jewish immigration to Eretz Yisrael. Israel’s national Holocaust archives include an emotional letter from Noach and a group of friends, pleading with authorities for permission to make aliyah — so that they could “serve Hashem with peace of mind and taste the holy air of the Land of Israel.” Following a massive hunger strike, coupled by diplomatic interventions and daring ‘illegal’ operations with *siyata d’shmaya*, Reb Noach and many other Jews were eventually successful in ascending to the Holy Land.

Arriving in Yerushalayim in 1946, Reb Noach had an emotional reunion with his grandfather. As for many survivors, the burden of heavy emotions, survivors’ guilt and trauma made it difficult for Reb Noach to contemplate how to move forward. Seeing this, his *zeideh* asked him softly, ‘Why do you think the *Ribbono shel Olam* spared Noach? Why did he survive the destruction?’

Locking eyes with his beloved grandson he then cried out, “*Va-yisha’er ach Noach! Only Noach was left!, Va-yisha’er ach Noach! Only Noach was left!*” With a tear in his eye, he continued: “Consider, *meyn kynd*, how much has been washed away, how much we have lost! ...How much *you* have lost! Years of your life, opportunities, time... You must now run to the *beis medrash* and begin again! Rebuild yourself, rebuild Torah, rebuild *Yiddishkeit*....*Vayisha’er ach Noach! Only Noach, only Noach, only Noach was left! You survived to build, meyn kynd, build, you are to rebuild the world!*”

■ ■ ■

“All existence on earth was blotted out — humans, cattle, creeping things, and birds of the sky; they were blotted out from the earth. Only Noach was left, and those with him in the ark.” (7:23)

“Many waters are unable to extinguish the love, and rivers cannot drown it.”  
(*Shir haShirim*, 8:7)

Rashi brings a precious *pshat* from the Medrash Rabbah. The “many waters” are the nations of the world, while “rivers” refers to their ministers and kings. But these can never extinguish the love between the *Ribbono Shel Olam* and His nation, nor drown it, “not through force nor *eimah*, ‘terror,’ nor through enticement and seduction.” The love between Hashem and the Jewish People is absolute and eternal.

■ ■ ■

“Everything has an appointed season, and there is a time for every matter under the Heaven.” (Koheles, 3:1) This Shabbos marks *Rosh Chodesh Cheshvan*, and in many communities and *yeshivos*, it is the beginning of *chofef zeman*, the “winter” or

primary session. However, for countless soldiers who are *bnei Torah*, *hesder* and *mechinah* students and *kollel avreichim* — along with their valiant wives, families and relatives — there is no beginning or end of a “*zman*,” but rather a continuous *עת מלחמה*, “time of war.” How many *chayalim* are already in their second or third *sevev miluim*, or round of reserve duty? How many have been away from home for months on end, answering the call to protect and serve, and rebuild our world?

I recently spoke with the young wife of a soldier returning to the front for another tour of reserve duty, while she cared for their infant alone. “Of course it is hard,” she admitted, “but what choice do we have? This is our *mitzvah* and our *zechut*....”

How many similar young families are crying out, “If not us, then who?” Their selfless dedication to others, their *achrayus*, responsibility for *Am Yisrael*, is the highest expression of Torah ideals. For, facing the darkest of voids, they teach us the meaning of *Va-yisha’er ach Noach*, “Only Noach was left!” They demonstrate to each and every one of us that we, too, are charged with the obligation and *achrayus* to protect and rebuild.

Through this path of sacrifice we are building an everlasting structure, a vessel to contain Hashem’s promise of Redemption and a time of peace. Yet, as the *eis milchamah* continues to unfold and battles rage in our North and South, the most selfless of our community and nation are literally building our future, the future of the existence of the Jewish People in our Holy Land. May Hashem protect them, and may they, and all of us, see the fruits of these holy labors, the ultimate and complete *binyan* of *Artzeinu haKodesha*.

# Cry of Chesed

**Mrs. Shira Smiles**

International lecturer and curriculum developer

“**V**ayizkor Elokim et Noach – Hashem remembered Noach.” (Bereisheet 8:1) Chazal teach that Hashem remembered how Noach fed the animals in the Ark for twelve months. Was Noach not a “tzadik tamim,” a perfect individual who had numerous fine qualities? Is this the only thing that we can point out? Further, this is one of the ten verses quoted in the *Zichronot* section of *Musaf* on Rosh Hashanah. What is the significance of this and how is it relevant to us?

In *Lev Eliyahu*, Rav Lopian explains that had Noach and his family not been involved in this *chesed*, they never could have left the Ark. It was only the *zechut* of Noach’s total devotion and concern for the needs of each animal that allowed him to survive the flood. Indeed, this particular act reflects the ways of Hashem, Who takes care of the whole world. We, too, are taught, “*vehalachta bedrachav*,” to emulate Hashem and concern ourselves with the needs of others. We are obligated to feel the pain of another and see how we can

alleviate their distress and address their needs.

In his *Machzor Rosh Hashanah*, Rav Druk discusses that when the world is being judged, we emphasize the *middah* of *chesed* that can tip the scales for a person’s merit. “*Olam chesed yibaneh*,” we, too, must build our individual worlds on this quality.

“*Ve’tzedakah tatzil mimavet*” (Mishlei 10:2), when there is a decree of death in the world, such as at the time of the flood, the only recourse to be saved is to engage in *chesed*. The Ark itself was not sufficient to stop the raging waters from breaching and drowning everyone. Rather, it was the act of selfless giving to the animals during the entire year that protected Noach’s family and spared them from destruction.

Rav Scheinerman in *Ohel Moshe* quotes a powerful idea from Rav Haksher that further expounds on why Noach needed this specific merit. It was a *tikkun* for Noach since he was faulted for not praying for his generation; he lacked a certain degree of necessary empathy and compassion.

It was, therefore, important for him to rectify his error by showing boundless concern for the animals to develop and solidify this *middah*.

We learn in Sanhedrin 98b that Rabi Elazar’s students asked him what one should do to be spared the pains preceding the coming of *Mashiach*. He responded, “Engage in Torah study and acts of kindness.” As we find ourselves in these tumultuous times, we must strengthen ourselves in this arena. To say a few chapters of *Tehillim* is not enough: organize *Tehillim* groups among friends, encourage others to create groups. Find ways to assist those under siege, organize or contribute to collections to provide basic needs for others. Call people who may be feeling alone, give them strength and comfort. This is what we are being summoned to do, *be’ezrat Hashem*, may it help us merit a full redemption. In the words of the prophet Yeshayahu (1:27), “*Tzion bemishpat tipadeh ve’shavehah be’tzedakah*.”



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# End and finish? Beginning and prelude!



**Rabbanit Yemima Mizrachi**  
Popular Torah teacher and author

**W**hat happened to him, Noach?! This righteous, innocent man, full of grace. The man who survived in his shelter for days and nights when there was a terrible flood outside, the wounded man, limping on his thigh, “נח נח” means NOACH ONLY. This is its real meaning. But the Midrashic explanation is (Midrash Tanchuma, Noach 9) that he was coughing and spitting blood because of the trouble he had with the cattle and beasts (נח is taken as a מיעוט limitation, meaning to say that something is defective); others say, that he was once late in bringing food to a lion, so it struck him.” (Rashi)

And then it's over! And the dove arrived with an olive branch, exactly what the children of October 2023, were waiting for, a promised dove, an olive branch... Oh wow. “Rabbi Yochanan said: 14 times it is said ‘and’ about Noah: And Noah began [vayyahel] to be a farmer, and he planted [vayyita] a vineyard, and he drank [vayyeshet] of the wine, and was drunk [vayyishkar]; and he was uncovered [vayyitgal] within his tent. And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw [vayyar] the nakedness of his father, and told [vayyaged] his two brothers outside. And Shem and Japheth took [vayyikah] the garment, and laid it [vayyasimu] upon both their shoulders, and went [vayyelekh] backward, and covered [vaykhassu] the nakedness of their father; and their faces were backward, and they did not see their father's nakedness. And Noah awoke [vayyiketz] from his wine, and knew [vayyeda] what his younger son had done to him, and he said [vayomer]: Cursed be Canaan...”

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Hashana that Hashem remembers us for the good in the merit of our future generations because Hashem “looks and gazes until the end of the generations.” We *daven*

Noach got drunk and brought shame upon himself. But he saved the world! Only when he left the protected space did he understand the chaos. And Chazal, do not hesitate to rebuke the survivor: “Foolish shepherd! You should have prayed for your generation!” (Zohar on the *parashah*). Oh dear.

In modern parlance, we would call Noach a post-traumatic person. He has done wonderfully in his own struggle, wounded and bleeding, caring for those around him, and now he can no longer. How can you start all over again!

Who does this happen to? To the innocent righteous. The people who only believe in good, the people who believe that there will be a flood. What do you do when the good is broken? Only then was hope born.

In *Parashat Bereishit* we read the words “And G-d saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good” and Chazal say in a strange interpretation “Very good refers to death.” Why? Because after the very good there is no more reason for hope.

At second *hakafot* this year, I suddenly saw Joanna. The young Joanna was widowed from her hero husband, Nachman Natan Hertz, five months ago and her friends insisted on taking her out a little, to make her happy. I asked Joanna: “Which song would you like us to sing to him now?” And she answered me: “I don't want to sing to him, I want to sing to me. There is one song that helps me endure these difficult days.” Then, Joanna began to sing to me quietly: “And I will be even better and even better and even better...”

that Hashem will save us from the flood of impurity in this world for the sake of our children so that we will merit to see the building of a new and wondrous world.

She was very good. Like so many in our generation, she had an innocent, righteous husband. But the “very” was broken because death took it. But now two new phrases were born to Joanna: “and I will have it” and “even better.”

The one who had it and it was taken from him will still have it. Because there is something after the trauma, something following the trauma, and that thing is called hope.

That is the great lesson of Mother Rachel, Cheshvan's mother. A very beautiful girl, very loved, a very good bridegroom. She was very kind. She experienced great sorrow. She received a great reward for it, there is a reward for her deeds, but that was not enough. Until then, “there is still hope for the rest of you” From the rest, she will insist that hope grows. Hope that she will get better and better...

The only prayer we have left from Rachel is a supplemental Rosh Chodesh prayer: “ר' אשי ח'דשים ל'עמך נתת”, Rachel's initials. She is the one who coined the phrase: “And may this month be the end and finish of all our troubles, the beginning and prelude of the redemption of our souls.” The end of the very best is the beginning of hope. Don't run to alcohol and sedatives now. And if G-d forbid there is such a person in your environment, do not look at his spoilage. Respect the innocent man very much. The very broken man. Take a measured step back and cover him with love. Sing to him that he will get even better and even better.

May we finally merit to see the future world Hashem has always remembered with the coming of *Moshiach*!

# Hebrew Language in the Parsha



**David Curwin**

[balashon.com](http://balashon.com)

Author of the book *Kohelet: A Map to Eden* (Maggid)

In *Parshat Noach*, the Torah provides an etymology for the city of Bavel, found at the conclusion of the famous “Tower of Babel” story. The people on earth all spoke one language and began building a city and tower to avoid being scattered. To thwart their plan, G-d caused them to speak different languages, preventing them from communicating:

הָבֵה נִרְדָּה וְנִבְלָה שָׁם שְׁפָתָם אֲשֶׁר לֹא יִשְׁמְעוּ אִישׁ שֵׁפֶת רֵעֵהוּ וַיִּפְּץ ה' אֹתָם מִשָּׁם עַל־פְּנֵי כָל־הָאָרֶץ וַיַּחְדְּלוּ לִבְנֹת הָעִיר עַל־כֵּן קָרָא שְׁמָהּ בָּבֶל כִּי־שָׁם בָּלַל ה' שֵׁפֶת כָּל־הָאָרֶץ וַיִּמְשֹׁם הַפִּי צָם ה' עַל־פְּנֵי כָל־הָאָרֶץ

“Let us, then, go down and confound their speech there, so that they shall not understand one another’s speech.’ Thus, the LORD scattered them from there over the face of the whole earth; and they stopped building the city. That is why it was called Babel, because there the LORD confounded the speech of the whole earth; and from there the LORD scattered them over the face of the whole earth.” (Bereshit 11:7-9)

It is widely understood that this story and its etymology serve as a polemic against Babylon. The Babylonians viewed their

city and its ziggurat temples (reflected in the story of the Tower) as the “gateway to the gods.” This view is embedded in their etymology for the city’s name: *bab-ilu*, meaning “gate of god.”

However, there is a difficulty with the Torah’s etymology. The root בלל means to mix things together into a new mixture, as in *בָּלִילָה* (“batter”). Yet, as Prof. Yonatan Grossman notes, the story of the Tower presents a scenario where the opposite occurs:

“It is strange to find this verb used to characterize a city in the sense of ‘scatter.’ Rather than being blended or mixed, the people of the city are geographically scattered and culturally-linguistically separated.”

Indeed, G-d’s punishment for the people was dispersal, not mixing them together. So, why was the verb בלל chosen?

Grossman explains that Babylonian mythology additionally held that Babylon was a gathering place for the gods, which aligns with בלל as mixing. But he also points out that there is a similar Akkadian

word, *abalu*, meaning “to sweep away or carry water,” related to the Hebrew root *יבל*, the source of הוֹבִלָה – “carrying, transport.” Since *abalu* implies movement, the use of בלל suggests that “Babylon was not a place of divine assembly, but a place of human dispersion.”

Interestingly, the Mishna uses the related root *בלבל* to describe a similar phenomenon in the opposite direction:

כָּבַר עָלָה סַנְחֵרִיב מֶלֶךְ אַשּׁוּר וּבִלְבַל אֶת כָּל הָאֻמוֹת  
“Sancheriv, king of Assyria, already arose and confused [the lineage of] all the nations.” (Yadayim 4:4)

This refers to the Assyrian king Sancheriv, who, after conquering nations, resettled their inhabitants throughout his empire. While Assyria, like Babylonia, was a Mesopotamian kingdom, Sancheriv’s actions were the reverse of the Tower story: whereas G-d took people who spoke one language and caused them to speak many, Sancheriv took people of diverse backgrounds and mixed them together to assimilate under one identity.

## Parsha Riddle



**Reb Leor Broh**

Mizrachi Melbourne

What 2 details or descriptions are given concerning the animals but not the birds?

### Answer to the Parsha Riddle

- In the case of the animals, Noach was instructed (7:2) to take seven (pairs) of the kosher variety, and two of the non-kosher variety, whereas in the case of the birds (7:3) he was told to take seven (pairs), but no mention is made that this applied only to the kosher variety.
- Rashi comments that in fact, in regards to the birds as well, the number of seven applied only to the kosher variety even though this was not mentioned explicitly. It is derived by comparison with the animals. 2. Whereas the male and female animals are described (7:2) as “male and female” and “male and female”, birds are only described (7:3) as “male and female.”
- Rabbenu Bechaye (7:2) explains that this is due to the difference in how they give birth to their young. In the case of animals, as they give birth to live animals similarly to humans, the Torah uses human like descriptions of תארא. Birds however lay eggs and being so different to human births, the Torah only uses the description of תארא.





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