

# PHILOTORAH

יְהִי רְצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ שֶׁתְּשַׁלַּח מִהֲרָה רְפוּאָה שְׁלֵמָה מִן הַשָּׁמַיִם,  
רְפוּאָת הַנַּפְשׁ וְרְפוּאָת הַגּוּף לְחוּלֵי קוֹרוֹנָה – בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל, בְּעַם הַיְהוּדִי, וּבְעוֹלָם,  
וּלְנַפְגְּעֵי מַעֲשֵׂי טְרוֹר וְאַנְטִי־שִׁמְיוֹת – בְּכֹל מְקוֹם שֶׁהֵם, עִם שְׂאֵר חוּלֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל. אָמֵן.

**May HaShem protect our soldiers and the hostages; may He  
send R'FU'A SH'LEIMA to the many injured; and may  
He console the bereaved families and all of Klal Yisrael**



**YERUSHALAYIM** in/out for Parshat **NO'ACH**

October 20-21, '23 • ו' מרחשון ה'תשפ"ד

5:28PM  PLAG 4:52PM •   6:38PM R' Tam 7:19PM

For other locales, click on the Z'MANIM link

**The plan is to include with this week's No'ach material,  
the B'reishit columns that didn't make it in for last Shabbat**

PhiloTorah (169no) - 1 - all@once file

## Kiddush L'vana

With the molad of Marcheshvan (and a solar eclipse to allow some people to actually witness it) on Motza'ei Shabbat, the first op for KL this month - according to Minhag Yerushalayim - is Tuesday night, Oct 17th, but only after 7:00pm.

For the seven-days-after-the-molad people, their first op will be Motza"Sh October 21st. Strict 7-days people will wait unteil after 7:00pm. The flexible 7-days minhag will allow it right after Maariv, without waiting the few minutes (depending upon when you finish Maariv).

With the 3-days-after-the-molad opinion for first opportunity to say Kiddush L'vana and the 7-days-after opinion, there is yet another opinion: That during the rainy season, one should take the 3-days-after practice and during the summer months, one should wait until 7 days after the molad, relying on the greater likelihood of clear nights.

Minhag Yerushalayim (based on the GR"A) is to take the first opportunity after three days following the molad (except for Leil Shabbat) throughout the year.

## V'TEIN TAL U'MATAR LIVRACHA (T&M)

**See the TAL UMATAR link on the PhiloTorah grid for greater detail**

Not only will Kiddush L'vana add to the amount of time for Maariv (for those who haven't already said KL), but so will our switch (in Israel) to T&M.

Remember clearly: We are already saying MASHIV HARU'ACH UMORID HAGESHEM since Musaf of Sh'mini Atzeret (a.k.a. Simchat Torah in Eretz Yisrael). But we still say V'TEIN B'RACHA in the weekday Amida until we switch to T&M at Maariv on the eve of 7 Marcheshvan, which is Motza"Sh of Parshat No'ach - Oct 21.

People outside of Israel, continue to say V'TEIN B'RACHA until they switch to T&M at Maariv on Tuesday, December 5th, '23.

וַיֵּן בֶּן-שָׁשׁ מֵאוֹת שָׁנָה וְהַמָּבּוּל הָיָה  
מִיָּם עַל-הָאָרֶץ:

*"No'ach was 600 years old when the flood occurred; water was on the earth."*

וּשְׂאֲבָתֵם-מִיָּם בְּשִׁשׁוֹן מִמַּעַיְנֵי הַיְשׁוּעָה:

*"And you shall draw water with joy from the fountains of the salvation."*

P'sukim about bad water and good water - same gimatriya! (2113)

# NO'ACH



2nd of 54 sedras,  
2nd of 12 in B'reishit

Written on 230 lines in a Torah, rank: 15

18 Parshiyot; 5 open, 13 closed; rank: 12

153 p'sukim - ranks 4th

Largest in B'reishit - tied w/Vayishlach

1861 words - ranks 11 (6th in B'reishit)

6907 letters - ranks 13 (6th in B'reishit)

Drop in ranking for words and letters is due to No'ach's relatively very short p'sukim. No'ach ranks 49th in words per pasuk and 51st in letters per pasuk in the Torah. No sedra in B'reishit has shorter p'sukim.

## MITZVOT

None of the TARYAG mitzvot are counted from No'ach, yet there are mitzvot in the sedra, specifically (but not only) references to the Noahide laws. So too is P'RU URVU repeated to No'ach - it is counted as a mitzva from B'reishit, when it was commanded to Adam...

## Aliya-by-Aliya Sedra Summary

[P> X:Y (Z)] and [S> X:Y (Z)] indicate start of a parsha p'tucha or s'tuma. X:Y is [Perek:Pasuk](#) of the beginning of the parsha; (Z) is the number of p'sukim in the parsha.

## Kohen - First Aliya 14 p'sukim - 6:9-22

The sedra of B'reishit began with the glorious account of Creation and 'went downhill' from there: The exile of Adam and Chava from Gan Eden, Kayin and Hevel, the continuous degeneration through successive generations until G-d's 'regret' for having created the world and his 'decision' to destroy it. You have to cry for G-d (so to speak), Who begins His Torah with B'REISHIT BARA and in the penultimate pasuk of Parshat B'reishit had to say "I will obliterate humanity that I have created from the face of the earth - man, livestock, land animals, and birds of the sky. I regret that I created them." How sad!

The only high note of this universal downslide comes at the end of the sedra: "But No'ach found favor in G-d's eyes."

[P> 6:9 (4)] The sedra of No'ach continues this thread and tells us that No'ach was "completely righteous IN HIS TIME".

**SDT:** Rashi presents the divergent opinions as to whether "in his time" is complimentary or derogatory. Was No'ach great EVEN in his very wicked generation, or was he great only by comparison to the generation in which he lived. Although Rashi does not seem to favor one side over the other, it seems obvious that No'ach was not as

great as Avraham Avinu. A look at the fifth chapter of Pirkei Avot will reveal a significant difference between No'ach and Avraham. Ten generations from Adam to No'ach and ten from No'ach to Avraham, both to teach us about G-d's long patience. Same. Yet when the first full run of ten generations was up, the Flood came. When the second one was up, the Mishna tells us, that Avraham's merit sustained the whole world. No'ach's merit seems to have been only enough to save his own family. On the other hand, there was a significant difference between the generations of No'ach and Avraham that cannot be ignored, and makes comparisons unfair.

The Torah essentially repeats that No'ach had three sons - Sheim, Cham, and Yefet, and that the world was totally corrupt.

[S> 6:13 (48)] Then No'ach is informed by G-d of His plans to destroy the world and is commanded to build an ark, bring into it two of every kind of animal and sufficient food for his family and the animals.

Commentaries point out that No'ach was given ample time to try to influence his generation to mend its ways. He either tried and didn't succeed or didn't try too hard. He did exactly as he was told (implying, and not more).

### Think about this...

G-d could have destroyed the world and saved No'ach and family and the pairs of

animals with a miraculous snap of His finger (so to speak). In no time. With no human involvement. He could have, but He didn't. He could have left No'ach on his own, to do the whole job of saving his family and sample pairs of all the animals. He didn't do that either. (It probably would have been humanly impossible for No'ach to have done the whole job on his own.)

What G-d did do is command No'ach to build an ark of a specific size, a three-tiered floating structure, and to gather all the food necessary to feed many, many animals and his family for a year. This, say some commentaries, cannot be done without a heavy dose of miracle, of suspension of the laws of nature. But it wasn't all supernatural. No'ach was part of it. And that is what G-d usually wants when it comes to miracles. We, as humans, relate so much better to that kind of miracle. We need to see some familiar nature inside a miracle, in order to relate properly to it... and we also need to see the miracles inside nature.

## Levi - Second Aliya 16 p'sukim - 7:1-16

G-d tells No'ach and his family to go into the Teiva (ark) and to take with him seven pairs of each kind of kosher animal and bird. No'ach is told that in seven more days it will rain for 40 days and nights during which time all life on earth will be wiped out. No'ach was 600 years old at the time of the

Flood. And so it happened.

## How many giraffes?

Seven pairs because the giraffe is a kosher animal, or only one pair because the giraffe is never brought as a Korban? [The giraffe is halachically a CHAYA T'HORA, it is not fit for the Mizbei'ach.] Since some say that the reason for the seven pairs was because of sacrifices, and others say it was to provide kosher food, what's the answer for giraffes? Similarly, how many chickens? Sacrifices? No. Food? Yes. So which was it?

Rabbi Zev Leff explains that B'nei No'ach are permitted to offer sacrifices from ANY kosher animal or bird; No'ach was not restricted to cow, goat, sheep, and two types of doves - the only acceptable Korbanot for Jews. Hence, for either reason, it would seem that there were seven pairs of kudu, giraffe, okapi, gnu, yak, bison, chicken, sparrow, pheasant, quail, etc.

## Shlishi - Third Aliya 22 p'sukim - 7:17-8:14

The rains fell and the waters of the deep surged for 40 days and nights, but the Flood remained at its highest level for an additional 150 days. G-d 'remembered' No'ach and all with him in the ark, and the waters began to recede. The ark settled on Mt. Ararat and 40 days later (Remember the first 40 days which represent death of all

living things? This time the 40 represents the rebirth of those who survived the Mabul), No'ach opened the "window" of the ark and sent out a raven. Then he sent out a dove, and again, and finally after a full (365-day) year, the earth was ready to receive its new inhabitants.

## R'vi'i - Fourth Aliya 15 p'sukim - 8:15-9:7

[S> 8:15 (15)] G-d tells No'ach to leave the ark with his wife, his sons and their wives, and all the animals and birds. No'ach builds an altar and sacrifices upon it from all the kosher species. G-d's "reaction" to No'ach's offerings is that in spite of the basic evil inclination of human nature, He will not destroy in the "wholesale fashion" of the Flood (but rather punish on a more restricted and specific basis).

The laws of nature are "adjusted" to provide the world with a never-ceasing cycle of seasons and climatic conditions.

## HERE'S A THOUGHT

We can see in the account of the Flood and its aftermath, a continuation of creation. It is as if stage 1 of creation was recorded in Breishit and here we have stage 2. In other words, the world came into existence during B'reishit and the 6 days of creation AND during the Flood which took place 10 generations

later. Sort of like a rough draft and a further revision. And we, by the way, constantly affect the continuous further dynamic revisions.

G-d blessed and commanded No'ach and his family (and all of mankind) to "be fruitful and multiply".

(Let the point in the use of the two verbs not go by without notice: The ability to have children and raise a family is a mitzva and a wonderful blessing as well.)

No'ach got permission to eat meat (this was denied to the previous generations), but was warned not to eat from a live animal. Murder and the other Noahide Laws are referred to and/or inferred, at this point. Again, No'ach and family are told to be fruitful and repopulate the world.

**CLARIFICATION:** No'ach was given permission to kill an animal for food. Previously, only 'road kill' or its equivalent was permitted.

## Chamishi 5th Aliya 10 p'sukim - 9:8-17

[S> 9:8 (10)] G-d makes a promise to mankind that He will never again destroy the world as He did with the Flood. The rainbow will serve as sign and reminder of this promise.

We acknowledge the significance of a rainbow by reciting a bracha when we see one - "...He Who remembers the

Covenant, is faithful to it, and keeps His word." Of the 10 items mentioned in Avot as having been created at the instant between the Six Days of Creation and the first Shabbat, all but the rainbow are supernatural. The rainbow, by virtue of its inclusion on this special list, can be seen as a bridge between the natural and the supernatural. Put differently, we should see G-d's handiwork in all the elements of nature, not just in obvious miracles. "The mouth of the Earth" was a one-time creation to dispose of Korach and his gang. But regular rocks and hills, crags and clefts are no less part of G-d's handiwork.

Some say that a rainbow is a sign that G-d is angry with the world and would want to destroy it - except He promised not to. On the other hand, Yechezkel describes the Heavenly Throne as being like a rainbow, and the radiance of the Kohen Gadol upon leaving the Holy of Holies on Yom Kippur is also likened to a rainbow in the sky. And a rainbow is beautiful, too!

## Shishi - Sixth Aliya 44 p'sukim - 9:18-10:32 Second longest Shishi in the Torah

[P> 9:18 (12)] Some time after leaving the ark, No'ach becomes a tiller of the soil and a grape grower. He produces wine and becomes drunk. One of his sons, Cham, behaves immorally with his father in his drunken state; Shem

and Yefet behave admirably in the situation, protecting their father's honor and modesty. When No'ach realizes what has happened, he curses Cham and Cham's son Canaan, and blesses Shem and Yafet.

No'ach lives 350 years after the Flood, and dies at the age of 950.

The arithmetic of No'ach's years (600 before + 350 after = 950) seems not to take into account the year of the Flood. There is a good case to be made for not considering the duration of the Flood in calculations of the chronology of the world. We might look at the Flood as a period of "suspended animation" - laws of nature were not in effect; perhaps time as we know it cannot apply to that interval either. The animals in the ark did not function in their normal ways. No'ach had no sleep during the whole period (if we take statements made as literal). It clearly was not a natural time.

[P> 10:1 (14)] The Torah next outlines the generations that followed No'ach and the nations that came from Sheim, Cham and Yefet.

These are the descendants of No'ach (numbers in brackets count the 70 nations of the world - based on the Living Torah by R' Aryeh Kaplan z"l). We'll call NO'ACH the zero generation. That makes SHEIM, CHAM, and YEFET, the first generation after No'ach.

The counting of the 70 nation-progenitors begin with the children of Sheim, Cham, and Yefet.

The Torah starts the genealogy with Yefet. Generation 2 from Yefet are:

- [1] **Gomer,**
- [2] **Magog,**
- [3] **Madai,**
- [4] **Yavan,**
- [5] **Tuval,**
- [6] **Meshech,** and
- [7] **Tiras** (who Rashi says is **Paras**, which partners him nicely with brother Madai [3]).

Third generation from No'ach via Yefet's children (from only two of them; no descendants are named from the other five children):

From Gomer:

- [8] **Ashkenaz,**
- [9] **Rifat,** and
- [10] **Togarma.**

From Yavan:

- [11] **Elisha,**
- [12] **Tarshish,**
- [13] **Kitim,** and
- [14] **Dodanim.**

2nd generation from No'ach via Cham:

- [15] **Kush,**
- [16] **Mitzrayim,**
- [17] **Put,** and
- [18] **K'na'an.**

3rd generation via Cham's children:

From Kush:

- [19] **S'va,**
- [20] **Chavila,**
- [21] **Savta,**

[22] **Ra'ma**,  
[23] **Savt'cha**

Ra'ma had

[24] **Sh'va** and  
[25] **D'dan** (both 4th generation)

Kush also fathered Nimrod, not  
numbered among the 70.

From Mitzrayim:

[26] **Ludim**,  
[27] **Anamim**,  
[28] **L'havim**,  
[29] **Naftuchim**,  
[30] **Patrusim**,  
[31] **Kasluchim**,  
(from either 30 or 31 came  
[32] **P'lishtim** - according to Rashi,  
Patrusim and Kasluchim swapped wives  
a lot and the P'lishtim came from both  
of them),  
[33] **Kaftorim**  
(who might also have come from either  
Patrusim or Kasluchim or from  
Mitzrayim - disputed by commentaries).

No one mentioned from Put.

[S> 10:15 (6)] From K'na'an:

[34] **Tzidon**,  
[35] **Cheit**,  
[36] the **Yevusi**,  
[37] the **Emori**,  
[38] the **Girgashi**,  
[39] the **Chivi**,  
[40] the **Arki**,  
[41] the **Sini**,  
[42] the **Arvadi**,  
[43] the **Tz'mari**, and

[44] the **Chamati**.  
So far, **25** from **Yefet**,  
**19** from **Cham**.

[S> 10:21 (12)] From Sheim:

[45] **Eilam**,  
[46] **Ashur**,  
[47] **Arpachshad**,  
[48] **Lud**,  
[49] **Aram**.

From Aram:

[50] **Utz**,  
[51] **Chul**,  
[52] **Geter**,  
[53] **Mash**.

From Arpachshad came

[54] **Shelach** and from him came  
[55] **Eiver**.  
Eiver is 4th generation. He had  
[56] **Peleg** and  
[57] **Yaktan** (5th generation).

From Yaktan:

[58] **Almodad**,  
[59] **Shelef**,  
[60] **Chatzarmavet**,  
[61] **Yerach**,  
[62] **Hadoram**,  
[63] **Uzal**,  
[64] **Dikla**,  
[65] **Oval**,  
[66] **Avima'el**,  
[67] **Sh'va** (same name as 24),  
[68] **Ofir**,  
[69] **Chavila** (same name as 20), and  
[70] **Yovav**.

That's **26** from Sheim. **Total 70**.

It should not be lost on us that the birth of the world population is describe as the 70 nations, and the birth of Israel begins (later) with the “70 souls” who went down to Egypt.

## Sh’VII Seventh Aliya 32 p’sukim - 11:1-32 Longest Sh’vi’i in the Torah

[P> 11:1 (9)] The Torah tells us of the attempt to build the “Tower of Babel”, the symbol of rebellion against G-d. G-d thwarted the plans, confused the languages of mankind and scattered the people far and wide.

**SDT:** Commentaries contrast the two sinful generations in this sedra. Dor HaMabul was destroyed because their sins included the destruction of society by total disregard of a person for his fellow. Dor HaPlaga sinned against G-d alone, not against each other. Such a society (albeit warped) can survive; G-d can permit it to continue under these circumstances.

[P> 11:10 (2)] The sedra returns to the lineage of **No’ach**, this time tracing only through Sheim. We find for each generation, the name of the “main” person, his age when his main, named son was born, how many years he lived after his “main” son was born, and the fact that other sons and daughters were born.

**Sheim** was 100 when he had **Arpachshad** (2 yrs after the Flood).

He lived a further 500 years (600).

[P> 11:12 (2)] Arpachshad had **Shelach** at 35. Lived 403 more years (438).

[P> 11:14 (2)] Shelach was 30 when he had **Eiver**. Then another 403 years (same as his father). (Total: 433).

[P> 11:16 (2)] Eiver was 34 when **Peleg** was born. He lived another 430 years (464).

[P> 11:18 (2)] Peleg was 30 when **R’u** was born. He lived another 209 (total, 239).

[P> 11:20 (2)] R’u was 32 when **S’rug** was born. Plus another 207 years (239).

[P> 11:22 (2)] S’rug was 30 when he had **Nachor**. He lived another 200 years (230).

[P> 11:24 (2)] Nachor was 29 when **Terach** was born. He lived 119 more years (148).

[P> 11:26 (7)] Terach was 70 (there’s that number again, and also notice how much older Terach was when he had children, compared with all previous generations back to Arpachshad.) Terach had three sons, **Avram**, **Nachor**, and **Haran**. (Remember that No’ach also had three sons.) Haran had **Lot**. Haran died. Avram married **Sarai** and Nachor married his niece **Milka**, Haran’s daughter.

The Torah makes a point of telling us that Sarai was barren.

Terach takes his son Avram, his grandson Lot, his daughter-in-law Sarai, they leave Ur Kasdim and head out for the land of K'naan. They make it as far as Charan and settle there. Terach dies in Charan at 205 years of age (first one since No'ach with a recorded age at death).

The sedra thus ends with the stage set for the next major phase of world development - the return to belief in one G-d and the "birth of Judaism" via Avraham Avinu.

## Haftara 31 p'sukim Yeshayahu 54:1-55:5

Yeshayahu draws a comparison between the covenant that G-d made with all mankind via No'ach and the promises to the People of Israel concerning their future. Just as G-d promised never to flood the whole Earth again, so too does He promise not to rebuke and punish Israel (in the future). There are phrases in the haftara that make the connection to the sedra all the stronger.

# Bringing the Prophets to Life

**Weekly insights into the Haftara by Rabbi Nachman (Neil) Winkler**

*Author of Bringing the Prophets to Life (Gefen Publ.)*

## No'ach

Our Rabbis' selection of chapters 54-55 in Yishayahu as this week's haftara seems to be rather obvious. These chapters are found in the latter part of Sefer Yishayahu in the section that includes the navi's visions of comfort, which is why they are included among the haftarot of consolation that we read recently. The connection to our parsha specifically, is found in the prophet's words **KI MEI NO'ACH ZOT LI**. Through these words, G-d pledges that, after redeeming Israel from her exile, He would never again pour out His wrath against them. Hashem then reaffirms this promise by comparing it to the oath He made to No'ach, saying: "for this vow is like the oath I made regarding the waters of No'ach (never again to flood the earth)", an oath, of course, that we read in this week's parsha.

But Rav Soloveitchik delves more deeply into this comparison between the generation of No'ach and that of Yishayahu. In commenting of G-d's decision to inundate the world, the

Rav quotes Hashem's reasoning for the flood as found in an earlier verse (B'reishit 6:5) - V'CHOL YEITZER MACHSH'VOT LIBO RAK RA... - Hashem saw that Man's natural inclination is only of evil. G-d knew that a society so corrupt, one that was enmeshed in satisfying the evil inclination, could never fulfill His demand that humanity create a world of morality and justice. Strangely, however, when he promises No'ach never again to bring such a catastrophe upon the world, He explains (8:21) - KI YEITZER LEIV HA'ADAM RA MIN'URAV, admitting that Man's natural inclination is "evil from his youth". The Rav asks why G-d gives the very same rationale as to why He would not destroy the world as He gave to explain why He must destroy the world.

In response, Rav Soloveitchik points to the subtle difference between Hashem's explanation as to why He was determined to destroy the world and his reason as to why He would never again do so. In describing the absolute corruption of the antediluvian Man, Hashem declares that - all of humanity's natural inclination is only to do evil. However, when He describes the new post-flood society he states - that the new generation would also be one whose inclination would be drawn to malevolence one...

but not V'CHOL - not all and not RAK, not only.

And this subtle "tweak", says the Rav, makes a world of difference, for humanity in the post-flood generation would now have the capacity for repentance and, with that, the ability to remove the V'CHOL and the RAK.

It is through this understanding that we better appreciate the message of our haftara as well. In appealing to a mournful nation, Yishayahu prophesies an unprecedented increase of Israel's population, a surprising expansion of their settlement and an unexpected renewal of the once destroyed and abandoned cities. The nation, still smarting from years of punishment, wonders how, after their corruption and their sinfulness, G-d would agree to do such a thing. The response of the navi is Hashem's oath to No'ach: just as one sinful generation was punished and a new one was reborn with the potential for repentance, so too, the people of Israel could do the same!

Indeed, a mere month after Yom Kippur, this message is especially comforting. While some might be doubtful regarding the efficacy of their attempts to repent, whether one day and some weeks of effort could move Hashem to forgive,

Yishayahu sends us a reassuring message in our haftara.

We, too, despite our tendency to be selfish and fall into sin at times, we, as the post-flood generation, can also remove the KOL and the RAK, we too can repent. ✨



The fun way to go over the weekly sedra with your children, grandchildren, Shabbat guests

## No'ach



top section is based on an old joke about the animals coming to the ark in pairs except for the worm which came in an apple <> then there is the 7-pear (pair) of

kosher animals <> and next to the 7-pear is a pair of sevens, backwards, making it also 7 pairs <> the Xed out fish is because they survived under the TEIVA and were not taken into it <> the Xed out unicorn is for a famous song by the Irish Rovers, which explains why we've never seen a unicorn - if they existed, they didn't make it onto the TEIVA <> the Xed out dinosaur represents the animals that were not taken onto the ark and were wiped out by the Flood (maybe) <> the logo for Rolls Royce followed by the at symbol is for RRat or Mt. ARARAT <> the dove with the olive branch is for the dove with the olive branch <> the rainbow is for the rainbow (some of these have to be simple) <> the address is that of the Rabbinical organization TZOHAR <> the grapes and wine is for No'ach's post-flood occupation <> an artist's version of the Tower of Babel <> the tallest building in the world at the present time: Burj Khalifa in Dubai - a tower that reaches the sky <> there are many images of names and places that are found in Parshat No'ach <> Here are some; you figure out the others: Gomer Pyle for GOMER <> kush ball for KUSH <> corn on the cob for TIRAS <> siddur with an ALEF for ASHKENAZ <> granny for SAVTA <> package for CHAVILA <> an oval for OVAL <> the pyramids for MITZRAYIM <> Under the Tower of Babel it says - "Let's build a tower", in Esperanto, an artificial language devised in 1887 as an international medium of communication, based on roots from the chief European

languages. Its goal was to restore the one world with one language, as pre-the Tower of Babel. <> the soap suds are KETZEF (haftara) <> There is a gopher with a twig - ATZEI GOFER, the wood for the Ark <> Wizard of Oz quartet, for somewhere over the rainbow, and for UTZ <> Bnot Tz'lofchad in the colors of the rainbow - they had NO ACH So too the sisters at the bottom <> Blades are LEHAVIM, offspring of Mitzrayim <> Sapphires are SAPIRIM, mentioned in the haftara <> The SH'VA for SH'VA (different spelling) <> IDF emblem of RAV SEREV (air force), abbreviated RESEN, a placename in the sedra <> So too, RECHOVOT <> Israeli pistol is an EKDACH, a word in the haftara <> The thirsty guy - also from the haftara <> And the word for rainbow in 13 different languages - representing the rainbow and the confusion of languages following the Tower of Babel fiasco.

A ParshaPix like this one is a great way to Parsha-bond with a child or grand-child. Depending on the age of your ParshaPixPartner, you can find many elements in it to trigger a discussion of Parshat HaShavua.

לע"נ  
הרב יעקב צבי ב"ר דוד אריה  
ז"ל  
Rabbi Jonathan Sacks z"l

## A Tale of Four Cities

### No'ach

Between the Flood and the call to Avraham, between the universal covenant with No'ach and the particular covenant with one people, comes the strange, suggestive story of Babel:

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

What I want to explore here is not simply the story of Babel considered in itself, but the larger theme. For what we have here is the second act in a four-act drama that is unmistakably one of the connecting

threads of B'reishit, the Book of Beginnings. It is a sustained polemic against the city and all that went with it in the ancient world. The city - it seems to say - is not where we find God.

The first act begins with the first two human children. Kayin and Hevel. Both bring offerings to God. God accepts Hevel's, not Kayin's. Kayin in anger murders Hevel. God confronts him with his guilt: "Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground." Kayin's punishment was to be a "restless wanderer on the earth". Kayin then "went out from the Lord's presence and lived in the land of Nod, east of Eden." We then read:

Kayin knew his wife, and she conceived and gave birth to Chanoch. He [Kayin] built a city, naming it Chanoch after his son (B'reishit 4:17).

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

There is an obvious parallel in the story of the founding of Rome by Romulus who killed his brother Remus, but there the parallel ends. The Rome story - of children fathered by one of the gods, left to die by their uncle, and brought up by wolves - is a typical founding myth, a legend told to explain the origins of a particular

city, usually involving a hero, bloodshed, and the overturning of an established order. The story of Kayin is not as founding myth because the Bible is not interested in Kayin's city, nor does it valorise acts of violence. It is the opposite of a founding myth. It is a critique of cities as such. The most important fact about the first city, according to the Bible, is that it was built in defiance of God's will. Kayin was sentenced to a life of wandering, but instead he built a town.

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

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

So Lot decides to settle there. Immediately we are told that the people of Sodom are "evil, great sinners against the Lord" (13:13).

Given the choice between affluence and virtue, Lot unwisely chooses affluence.

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

"Shall the Judge of all the earth not do justice?" (18:25)

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

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

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

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

The fourth scene is, of course, Egypt, where Yosef is brought as a slave and serves in Potifar's house. There, Potifar's wife attempts to seduce him, and failing, accuses him of a crime he did not commit, for which he is sent to prison. The descriptions of Egypt in B'reishit, unlike those in Sh'mot, do not speak of violence but, as the Yosef story makes pointedly clear, there is sexual license and injustice.

It is in this context that we should understand the story of Babel. It is rooted in a real history, an actual

time and place. Mesopotamia, the cradle of civilisation, was known for its city-states, one of which was Ur, from which Avraham and his family came, and the greatest of which was indeed Babylon. The Torah accurately describes the technological breakthrough that allowed the cities to be built: bricks hardened by being heated in a kiln.

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

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

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

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

The second mistake lay in wanting to make "a tower that reaches to the heavens". One of the basic themes of the creation narrative in B'reishit 1 is the separation of realms. There is a sacred order. There is heaven and there is earth and the two must be kept distinct:

"The heavens are the heavens of the Lord, but the earth He has given to the children of men." (T'hilim 115:16)

The Torah gives its own etymology for the word Babel, which literally meant "the gate of God". The Torah relates it to the Hebrew root BET-LAMED-LAMED, meaning "to confuse". In the story, this refers to the confusion of languages that happens

as a result of the hubris of the builders. But BET-LAMED-LAMED also means "to mix, intermingle", and this is what the Babylonians are deemed guilty of: mixing heaven and earth, that should always be kept separate. BET-LAMED-LAMED is the opposite of BET-DALET-LAMED, the key verb of Bereishit 1, meaning "to distinguish, separate, keep distinct and apart".

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

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

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

This is how polytheism was born, as the heavenly justification of hierarchy on earth. It is how rulers came to be seen as semi-divine - another instance of BET-LAMED-LAMED, the blurring of boundaries. It is where what mattered were wealth and power, where human beings were considered in the mass rather than as individuals. It is where whole groups were enslaved to build monumental architecture. Babel, in this respect, is the forerunner of the Egypt of the Pharaohs that we will encounter many chapters and centuries later.

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

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

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

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

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

## Around the Shabbat Table:

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

יהי זכרו ברוך

*Walk through the Parsha*

with **Rabbi David Walk**



## HAMAS - THE LAST STRAW

No'ach

The name of our ruthless enemy who callously murdered, raped and kidnapped so many people on our border with Gaza is an acronym formed from the Arabic words *Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamiya*, which means the Islamic Resistance Movement. On the other hand, through serendipity, that word, HAMAS, in Hebrew features

prominently in this week's Torah reading.

In the third and fifth verses of our parsha, God uses this term to describe the behavior of the Generation of the Mabul (usually translated as 'flood', but is probably closer to 'cataclysm'). This word is variously translated as violence, lawlessness, wickedness, cruelty, outrage, and immorality.

Rashi, on the other hand, follows the opinion of our Sages and translates it as 'robbery'. There are two terms in Hebrew for theft. One is G'NEIVA and the other is G'ZEILA. The former is done stealthily; the latter involves violence or weapons. The Chizkuni explains that GEZEL and CHAMAS are both armed robbery, and since we don't believe in synonyms in Biblical Hebrew, we must ask, 'What's the difference?'

Chizkuni explains that for the crime to be called GEZEL a critical amount must be stolen. CHAMAS, however, describes the act, regardless of quantity pilfered. In other words, CHAMAS describes the violent act regardless of the robber's gain. With CHAMAS, the perpetrator only cares about performing violence. It's the cruelty for the sake of cruelty.

Our Sages considered this behavior

reprehensible. They said: If there is a box filled with sins - there is no more severe accuser among them than robbery (Sanhedrin 108a). They concluded that the world's fate at the time of the MABUL was sealed only on account of their sin of CHAMAS.

What makes this sin so severe? Rabbeinu Bechaye suggests that the severity of the CHAMAS is predicated upon the fact that it is extremely difficult to repent from armed robbery, because the perpetrator must return the exact items or (if cash) amount stolen. That's often hard to accomplish when things are being smashed and destroyed.

The Orchot Tzadikim expands this category. He explains that the CHAMAS in our verse includes the judicial system. He avers that our scenario described a total breakdown of society where judges and the judicial system did not provide justice to the weak and helpless. This group historically includes widows, orphans and strangers, a total breakdown in social justice.

According to Rav Ya'akov Meidan this last view of CHAMAS explains the verses at the end of last week's parsha. In this view of the situation, the B'NEI ELOHIM (B'reishit 6:2) and the NEFILIM (verse 4) weren't

celestial beings. They were the strong men who dominated society and wanted to be viewed as godly, a common phenomenon in ancient societies.

In this approach, CHAMAS describes the total breakdown of morality in society. The leaders behave without regard for the well being of those they lead. Actually, that's a pretty good description of the corrupt leadership in both Hamas and the PA. I heard one respected commentator describing how he has sympathy for the average Palestinian in the street, but none for their corrupt, uncaring leaders. One might say that people get the leaders they deserve, but it's not hard to feel for the plight of many under Hamas and PA rule.

In the early part of the twentieth century, Rav Avraham Yitzchak HaKohen Kook observed the First World War and was appalled by the savagery. He wrote: The Torah's description on the negative human behavior that led to the MABUL is unflinching: 'The earth became corrupt... and was filled with crime (CHAMAS)... all flesh had corrupted its way on earth... 'the earth is filled with lawlessness (CHAMAS)'. It is frighteningly current and accurate. The world continues to be flooded with corruption, crime and destruction. War is the major activity in

terms of commitment and resources.

Things have only gotten worse since Rav Kook passed away in 1935. But there is always hope. Rav Kook continued: The hearts and minds of so much of humankind are deeply troubled and locked in hatred and fear. The Torah's call to transform all the evil into good is more critical now than ever. May we be blessed to become powerful agents of goodness, righteousness and repair for the sake of our generations and all humankind.

In the coming weeks, we must pray with all of our spiritual power that the kidnapped be returned, that HAMAS is destroyed as a viable organization and that a stable peace is established on our border with Gaza. But we also must have hope that we find a way forward in a world without the corruption of the kind of oppressors found in our parsha and in the Gaza Strip.

We must pray and fight for the victory of kindness and care for our shared humanity over the rule of HAMAS and all that represents. May the victory be swift and complete. 🙏

## Rav Kook Torah

by Rabbi

Chanan Morrison • [www.ravkooktorah.com](http://www.ravkooktorah.com)



# Balancing the Universe

The Torah's revelation at Mount Sinai was such a momentous event, it was heard around the world:

“When the Torah was given to Israel, the sound reverberated from one end of the world to the other. In their palaces, the kings of all the nations were seized with fear. They gathered around the wicked prophet Bilaam and asked, ‘What is this tremendous sound that we hear? Perhaps a flood is coming to the world!’ Balaam replied, ‘No, God has already sworn not to bring another flood.’ ‘Maybe not a deluge of water, but destruction by fire?’ ‘No, He already promised never to destroy all flesh.’ ‘Then what is this tremendous sound that we hear?’ ‘God has a precious gift [the Torah] safeguarded in His treasury... and He now wishes to bestow it to His children!’” (Z'vachim 116b).

How can the Midrash compare that extreme act of mass destruction – the Great Flood – to the most significant event in the history of humanity, the Revelation of the

Torah? Why did the majestic sounds from Sinai bring back fearful memories of the Flood?

## An Unbalanced Universe

God created the universe with a precise balance between its physical and spiritual aspects. According to the Midrash (Chagiga 12a), Adam was so tall, his height stretched from the earth all the way to the heavens. What does this mean?

The Sages were not concerned with Adam's physical height. This description of Adam is meant to express the careful equilibrium that existed between his physical and spiritual components. Adam stood between the earth and the heavens, reaching both in equal measure.

After the sin of the Tree of Knowledge, however, Adam disrupted this delicate balance. His transgression of God's command diminished his spiritual stature. Yet his physical qualities remained as powerful as before.

## The Great Flood

Adam's descendants inherited his physical powers. They too lived remarkably long lives. And, like Adam, their spiritual strength was diluted. This imbalance between the physical and the spiritual led to a situation in

which their intense physical desires overwhelmed their sense of morality and justice. “All flesh had perverted its way on the earth” (B'reishit 6:12).

To correct this situation, God brought the Flood of No'ach's generation. This catastrophic event greatly weakened the universe's material side. The flood waters washed away the top three handbreadths of soil (Rashi on 6:13). Humanity's physical strength was also greatly reduced, and people began living shorter lives.

## **The Rainbow**

This insight also explains the covenant of the rainbow. Were there not rainbows before the Flood? How did the rainbow suddenly become a symbol of protection from Divine punishment?

In truth, the rainbow was created immediately before the Shabbat of Creation (Avot 5:6). Before the Flood, however, the rainbow could not be seen. It was a KESHET BE'ANAN, a rainbow in the clouds. The thickness and opacity of the clouds, a metaphor for the world's dense physicality, obscured the rainbow. Only after the Flood, in a world of diluted physical strength, did the rainbow finally become visible.

The rainbow is a symbol of weakness.

Physical weakness, since the clouds no longer conceal it. And also spiritual weakness, in that only a Divine promise prevents the world's destruction as punishment for its sins. The Sages taught in Ketuvot 77b that rare were the generations that merited tzadikim so pure that no rainbow appeared in their days.

*The rainbow is a sign of God's covenant that “there will never again be a flood to destroy the earth” (9:11). Occasionally the world benefits from the presence of a tzadik whose merits are so great that the world does not need to resort to the Covenant of the Rainbow.*

The Flood and its aftermath restored the world's fundamental balance. In addition to weakening the material universe, God bolstered humanity's spiritual side with the Noahide Code of basic morality. The Flood annulled all previous obligations, and initiated a new era of repairing the world via the Seven Mitzvot of Bnei-No'ach.

## **A Better Path to Realign the Universe**

At Sinai, the world gained a second, superior path to maintain its delicate balance. The Torah provided a new way to repair and purify the world. It is for this reason that the Midrash compares the Flood to the Revelation at Sinai. Both events served to maintain the universe's equilibrium

between the material and the spiritual.

The Midrash says that Bilaam responded to the kings by quoting from Psalms, “God sat enthroned at the Flood... God will give strength [Torah] to His people” (T'hilim 29:10-11). This verse compares the effect of the Flood to that of the Torah.

The path of Torah, however, is a superior one. Instead of destroying and weakening the physical world, the Torah builds and strengthens the spiritual. Thus the psalm refers to Torah as 'strength'. This is the true path of universal balance and harmony, as the psalm concludes, “God will bless his people with peace.”

*Adapted from Shemu'ot HaRe'iyah 8,  
No'ach 5690 (1929)*

## **CHIZUK & IDUD**

*Divrei Torah from the weekly sedra*

*with a focus on living in Eretz Yisrael*

*Chizuk for Olim & Idud for not-yet-Olim*

*by **Rabbi Yerachmiel Roness***

*Ramat Shiloh, Beit Shemesh*

### **Parshat No'ach: Israel Today**

Over the last week I joined Jews the world over, sitting glued to the news,

in the attempt to be au courant, up to date, regarding the events here in Israel. How could it be that Israel, the strongest military power in the Middle East, would fall victim to the most barbaric acts of evil to be perpetrated on Jews since the Nazi atrocities of the Second World War?! How?!

As we prepare to read Parshat No'ach and reacquaint ourselves with the story of the Flood, we remember that as the water began to subside, No'ach sent out a dove to help understand whether the time had come to leave the ark.

The first time the dove (Yona) was sent out, it was forced to return to the ark, as the Torah relates: V'LO MATZ'A HAYONA MANO'ACH L'KAF RAGLAH, (B'reishit 8:9). 'And the dove found no rest for the sole of her foot.'

The Midrash notes that since the Jewish people are likened to the dove, this verse contains a lesson for us all:

Like the dove, when Jews living in the Diaspora find no rest, they should always return back to the Ark, to Eretz Yisrael. During the last hundred years, as Jews were forced to deal with pogroming Cossacks, political revolutions and upheavals, they

slowly, and at times reluctantly, returned Home. Over the last fifty years, however, more and more Jews from Western countries have made Aliyah. These were Olim who could have stayed peacefully in their homes abroad, yet they brought themselves to Israel in search of spiritual fulfilment. Coming here many felt they had successfully brought tranquility into their lives.

And yet, since Simchat Torah it seems as if the world has turned topsy turvy...

If one searches for a trigger that unleashed the horrible savagery exhibited by Hamas, it seems that it was preceded by deep discord and friction amongst the Jewish People. The sad truth encapsulated in the saying: "united we stand, divided we fall", was sadly made most evident as our enemies in Gaza observed our internal strife viewing it as the most propitious time for them to attack.

Miraculously, as a result of the horrendous events we have begun to come together as never before. There are so many varied illustrations of this wondrous sense of ACHDUT within our nation.

One young Israeli who had embarked upon a long-planned trip to 'see the world' was on his way to New

Zealand. Hearing the news at the first stop-over, he promptly changed his plans, boarding a flight back to Israel in order to join his reserve unit.

An especially moving incident took place at a New York airport. Hundreds of IDF reservists who arrived there in order to make their way back to Israel, were met at the ticket booth by an elderly Chareidi man who paid for the ticket of anyone trying to go join the war effort.

When a local hospital found that its cleaning staff did not show up, 150 Bnei Akiva youth showed up to do the job. [The nurses claimed the hospital had never 'smelled so good and clean'].

These are just some small choice examples, of a deep sense of togetherness which has enveloped us all.

Returning to the Parsha, we learn that No'ach's world was destroyed because of the CHAMAS which is translated by the Targum as CHATUFIN, meaning snatching and taking possession of other people's person and property. However, this same word is used in modern day Hebrew to denote captives or hostages. How chillingly appropriate...

Just as No'ach's world was flooded and destroyed as a result of Chamas, today too, our hope for a brighter future, demands that we eliminate this destructive force of evil. If we do so, we can hope to retrieve our captives and see the rainbow's sign of hope and peace.

### **No'ach**

There are ten generations from Adam to No'ach, and a further ten generations from No'ach to Avraham. At the conclusion of the first of these time-periods, No'ach's generation had sunken to its nadir, while with Avraham Avinu, human civilization reached a lofty summit. The root and source of this difference may be traced to two markedly different behavioral patterns. Upon hearing of the impending flood designed to bring about the destruction of all of mankind, No'ach does not petition the Almighty to save his creation. Avraham, in contradistinction, hears of G-d's intention to wipe out the inhabitants of one small city, and immediately intercedes. Turning to G-d with incredulity he pleads: "Will You sweep away the innocent along with the guilty?!"

This, however, is not Avraham's sole Zechut, merit. Next week we read of

his response to the call of Lech Lecha - the challenging Nisayon of Aliya to Eretz Yisrael. Having made this first sacrifice - severing his ties with his past, and arriving in Eretz Yisrael, Avraham does not delude himself for a moment. Never does he think that he has thereby accomplished his life goal and can therefore rest on his laurels. In Parshat Vayeira, we discover Avraham as the paragon of Chesed - "Chesed L'Avraham". Not yet having fully recuperated from the Brit Mila, Avraham is already 'back at work', manning his station and searching the horizon for any potential guests.

This characteristic of continuously advancing M'CHAYIL L'CHAYIL, from one project to the next, is a major part of Avraham's legacy. Each family's Aliya is a personal reenactment of Avraham's journey. Yet, the arrival here while being an accomplishment does not constitute the ultimate goal. True, by choosing to reside in the Palace of the King a great step forward had been taken. However, just like Avraham, it is important to remember that this is quite possibly the first Nisayon of many to come... [I still remember the message we were told at our college graduation: "Your graduation is not the denouement, but rather it is truly a commencement."]

Some families find that life in Israel is harder than they had expected. Indeed, moving to Eretz Yisrael entails leaving Chutz La'Aretz behind in more than just the physical sense. As the plane distances one from the actual borders of a foreign land, one must begin to distance oneself from the American Dream as well. Having made Aliyah, we must remember that, not only have we changed our domicile, but we must bear in mind that we have to change our values. The thirst for knowledge, for Torah and acts of kindness, has to take the place of the race for the acquisition of tangible things, i.e. bigger and fancier homes, cars, gadgets etc.

This is the great educational attribute of Avraham that we read of in B'reishit 18:19 - KI YE'DAATIV - 'for I have known him to the end that he may command his children and his household after him and they will keep the ways of the L-rd to do justice and judgment...' The commentators try to explain the nature of G-d's knowledge of Avraham. The Meshech Chochma points out that the verse does not say that "he will command" his son, but rather speaks to G-d's intimate knowledge of Avraham's character. The "knowing" described here is not knowledge of future events in a manner which would deprive Man of

free will.

Rashi suggests that G-d's knowledge of Abraham is akin to the knowledge one gains from being exceedingly close to one whom one loves dearly. [I might add that this is why the bible describes carnal knowledge - the most intimate manner in which one can "know" another being as Yedia].

The Ramban suggests that this verse hints to the highest level of "Hashgacha Pratit" providence - (something that we, in Israel, intuitively sense. We are subject to God's individual attention; Hashem is with us 24/7, 365 days of the year. "M'reishit Shana Ad Acharit Shana").

Rabbi Soloveitchik wrote of the Mitzva "implicit in the principle of providence". Hashgacha Pratit is dependent on Man's actions, and "Man is obliged to broaden the scope and strengthen the intensity of the individual providence that watches over him. Everything is dependent on him; it is all in his hands. When a person creates himself, ceases to be a mere species man, and becomes a man of God, then he has fulfilled that commandment which is implicit in the principle of providence", (Halachik Man p.125).

Avraham's life was a continual series of tests. Chazal teach us that Avraham had successfully weathered

ten different Nisyonot, tests or trials, by which he continuously "created himself" as a man of G-d, bringing himself closer and closer to the Divine.

As we aspire to walk in his footsteps we realize that the Lech Lecha of Aliya is just the beginning of the journey... 🏠👉

## From the Pen of Rabbi Nachman HaKohen Kahana

No'ach

## Am Yisrael is poised to eradicate the tum'a from Eretz Yisrael

The hierarchy of the Beit HaMikdash is composed of a triad of kohanim: the Kohen Gadol, the S'gan (assistant KG), and the Mashu'ach Milchama (the kohen anointed for war).

The Mashu'ach Milchama is anointed specifically for the purpose of addressing the troops before entering battle.

The troops are awaiting the command to attack. Their weapons are sharp and effective. The goals are clear. The enemy is in sight, and the rush of adrenaline is raising the morale of the troops to a high, and their muscle sinews are taught.

At this point the Mashu'ach Milchama ascends the platform for all to see and hear.

Question: Why a kohen? At this point right before the cannons boom, troops have to hear the message of the ranking military figure who will lead them in the charge; so why the message of a kohen?

Answer: The Mashu'ach Milchama, by his very presence, radiates the inescapable truth that all wars against Am Yisrael are fueled by the intent to annihilate the Jewish God.

Wars against us, from time immemorial, were and are intended by gentile enemies to eradicate from human consciousness the fact that the Creator chose the Jewish people over all others. They seek to turn reality into myth, so that the facts that Hashem redeemed us from Egyptian slavery; gave us with His Torah, and appointed the Jewish nation as the eternal possessors of the Holy Land - Eretz Yisrael - are false.

Every anti-Semite from ancient emperors to the lowest present-day Jew hater is in fact denying these historic facts and seeks to eradicate and pervert the raison d'etre for the creation of the world.

Christianity tried for 2000 years and failed, and now Islam is trying. But they too will fail and pay the price of eternal damnation.

What does the Mashu'ach Milchama say

to the troops?

D'varim 20:2-4

When you are about to go into battle, the kohen shall come forward and address the nation (army). He shall say: Hear, Israel: Today you are going into battle against your enemies. Do not be fainthearted or afraid; do not panic or be terrified by them. For Hashem your God is the One who goes with you to fight for you against your enemies to give you victory.

The region of Azza (Gaza) is part of Biblical Eretz Yisrael. Our ground troops are preparing to enter Azza and cleanse it from the tum'a that has spread over that land.

There is no Mashu'ach Milchama today, but his message: Do not be fainthearted or afraid; do not panic or be terrified by them would be superfluous, because our holy troops are overflowing with the kohanic message, For Hashem your God is the One who goes with you to fight for you against your enemies to give you victory.

HaShem gives strength to His people;

HaShem will bless His people with peace.



## JUDAIC JUDAISM

The seven "laws of the sons of Noah" are a basic code that is even more foundational for humanity than the Ten Commandments. They prohibit murder, idolatry, incest, blasphemy, theft, injustice and eating the flesh of a living animal (Sanhedrin 56a/b).

These Noachide Laws are incumbent upon every human being. Jews have a further series of commandments which mark us as Judaic Jews, a phrase used by the historian Arnold Toynbee.

Non-Jews however are expected to be Christian monotheists who take Christianity seriously, or Muslim monotheists who take Islam seriously.

This does not denote any disrespect towards non-monotheists like Buddhists or Hindus, but Biblical thinking regards non-monotheists as lacking in true belief.

## Repentance by the Animals

Somehow comparable to the Rosh HaShana practice of Tashlich, No'ach and his generation needed their sins to be washed away, which is why there had to be a global flood.

Rashi says that No'ach and his family could have been saved without needing to build and enter an ark, but nonetheless there was a need to construct an ark - a crucial task that took a lengthy time, decades and centuries, to fulfil - as a warning to the other human beings of that generation who had sinned so grievously.

All this time God was waiting for the people to repent but He waited in vain. Not only for the human beings to repent but even the animals.

Why did the animals - not just the humans - have to repent? Because they had behaved cruelly and without self-control.

## Noah Found Favour

Last week's sidra of B'reishit tells us in its concluding passage that No'ach found favour in the eyes of the Lord.

When the flood came, No'ach was worthy of being saved from destruction because, as the opening verses of this week's Torah portion tell us, he was more ethical than the other people of the time and was the tzadik of his age. He "walked with God".

Walking with God is HALACHA in Hebrew, and No'ach was a man of halacha. Nonetheless, Avraham was superior to No'ach, say the sages,

because he "walked before God" (B'reishit 24:40). That is because he lived in a more righteous age and God trusted him to walk ahead without needing to hold his hand.

It seems paradoxical that God saw Noah as "righteous before Me in this generation" (7:1) but the commentators Ramban and S'forno say that this only indicates a quality in No'ach himself that was lacking in his family.

○Z

## HAAMEK DAVAR

- Dr Jacob Solomon

No'ach

Within the narrative of the Migdal Bavel:

*G-d came down to look at the city and the tower that the sons of man had built (11:5)*

The S'forno considers the city-building initiative and where the tower came in.

He views the tower as the symbol of the city's outlook. G-d's "coming down" represents His investigating the motives for the whole project. It was rooted in selfishness: 'making ourselves a name'. It was a communal self-centered ego-trip. The urban agenda contained nothing on care for

the weaker members of the community or other good works.

S'forno implies that there is nothing wrong with a city, just as there is nothing wrong with food and drink. It is what you do with what you have that counts. He cites the case of the wayward and rebellious son (D'varim 21:18-21), whereby a youngster who is entirely out of the control of his parents is, as last resort, judicially executed. The Gemara qualifies the 'wayward and rebellious' elements with the son's consuming huge quantities of meat and wine, and will ultimately find himself robbing and killing others to support his addictions. Better to die innocent than guilty.

This, explains the S'forno, is what G-d saw when He descended. He saw that the entire project was based on self-interest and showing-off, as well as the creation of a city-deity above all deities. Like gluttony and alcohol, they all bring out the worst in people, and the worst in a community. Better that the city should be broken up here and now than develop into a negative communal force.

The Kli Yakar examines why the Tower of Babel was indeed a negative communal force. He frames his explanation within the Rabbinic saying: "The gathering of the wicked

is bad for them and bad for the world; the scattering of the wicked benefits them and benefits the world" (Sanhedrin 71b). At first, those participating in the tower project were 'of one language and of common purpose' (11:1). They lived in peace. But as they grew in numbers, they feared they would have to split up, and scatter into different communities. Inevitably that would lead to conflicts over resources in the region. As the Kli Yakar explains "wars are a regular occurrence between the inhabitants of one region and those living in another." For that reason, the participants wished to transform their community into an urban culture so that they could prosper, stay together, and live in peace with one another.

That was very well. The Kli Yakar observes that people are attracted to cities that are successful and well-run. Large communities offer specialized work opportunities, and providing a range of goods and services not found outside. So "Come, let us build a city with a tower reaching to heaven" was a plan to turn a rural society into an urban community. It was a win-win situation; everyone would gain. They would be one nation, rather than a people forced to divide according to the available primary resources.

But as the Kli Yakar explains, the words "each person said to his neighbor" (11:3) implied that there was something very different at the individuals' level that overrode the community concerns. It was that each person had an agenda of his own. That was to "make a name" for himself (11:4). G-d penetrated the recesses of the individual minds of the participants in that gathering, He saw that these personal agendas conflicted. Each person would only be able to achieve the power and fame that he inwardly craved if he would dominate the other people. Indeed, "let us make ourselves a name" indicates that each participant saw the involvement in the tower project in terms of "how can my involvement make me powerful and famous?" Strife would not decrease, but greatly increase if they stayed together. With such a mindframe, it would be best for them to be immediately separated and scattered. The Kli Yakar wryly concludes by observing: "There is never peace among people whose agendas are solely to make a name for themselves. This has been shown by behavior among our own people".

Perhaps this may be taken further. Almost inevitably, when large numbers of people gather together, a dominant and typically intolerant-

of-others culture develops. And with it emerges a hierarchy with typically the powerful and selfishly ambitious climbing and imposing their will and doctrines over the others. This may start with the best of intentions, but may all-too-easily degenerate into a power struggle that suppresses the flowering and self-expression of those who have much to offer, but get trampled on by the ruling elite. It's likely that this is what Ibn Ezra hints at when he explained that G-d's dispersing that assembled community was for their own benefit: each group would find their own settlements with the inter-communal language barriers making it possible for each culture to find their own voices among themselves without being taken over by other. Which they could never do when all together, as a one-only humanity. And possibly this was for the future development of Klal Yisrael: one of those many groups would eventually produce someone worthy of G-d's focus and plan for humanity, as with Avraham Avinu... 📖

# The Daily Portion

## - Sivan Rahav Meir

### A prayer for the captives

Translation by Yehoshua Siskin

Rami Goren found a prayer that his grandfather Rav Shlomo Goren -- who was the Chief Rabbi of the IDF from 1948-1968 -- composed for the safe return of prisoners captured in the Yom Kippur War 50 years ago. Rami revised his grandfather's prayer a little, feeling that we could benefit from reciting it now:

"May the One who blessed our forefathers, Avraham, Yitzchak, and Ya'akov, Moshe, Aharon, David and Shlomo, may He bless and protect and rescue our dear sons, soldiers of the IDF, and all others fighting for the security of our nation and our land, and our citizens -- young and old, men, women, and children -- who are in terrible distress, and subject to grave danger in captivity.

May the Holy One blessed be He be filled with compassion for them, sustain them and strengthen them, revive their spirit and their hope, rescue them from prison, bring them from constriction to comfort, from enslavement to redemption, and may

the Lord send healing from heaven to the wounded among them, healing of the body and of the soul, and may all of them return quickly to their homes and to their land, healthy and whole, for long life and for peace, and may the words of the prophet come true for them: 'To bind the wounded of heart, to proclaim release of the captives.' And let us say AMEIN."

AMEIN.

To receive Sivan Rahav-Meir's daily WhatsApp: [tiny.cc/DailyPortion](https://tiny.cc/DailyPortion)

### Dvar Torah by Rabbi Chanoch Yeres

to his community at

Beit Knesset Beit Yisrael, Yemin Moshe  
*Graciously shared with PhiloTorah*

First, I would like to send condolences to all the families of the victims of the HAMAS terror attack and pray for the hostages to be safe and to be returned speedily. Our hearts go out to all our soldiers guarding Israel's borders, north and south and pray that G-d watch over all of them and be blessed with swift victory over our enemies.

This week's Haftara projects the glorious future of the Jewish people and describes the splendor of Jerusalem in breathtaking dimen-

sions. During this indescribable vision, the prophet Yeshayahu draws a striking comparison between our present suffering in exile and the Flood in the time of No'ach. Yeshayahu says in the name of G-d, "For a brief moment of anger, I concealed My countenance from you but with everlasting kindness I will show My compassion. As with the waters of No'ach about which I swore that they will never again flood the world, so I have sworn, never again to become angry with Israel." (54:8-9)

The prophet assures the Jewish people that their painful years of exile and suffering will soon end never to be repeated.

Drawing attention to the Flood, he guarantees that "As the world has never experienced a second flood so will the Jewish people never experience another exile." This equation between the flood and the Jewish people's suffering in exile, suggests a strong association between the two. It appears that G-d's unconditional guarantee to withhold a flood from this world serves as sound evidence to the eternal redemption of the Jewish people.

Rabbi D. Siegel wrote that to appreciate this association, one needs to analyze No'ach's role during

the flood and G-d's response to it. The Torah tells us in the beginning of our Parsha that the flood was sent because humanity turned totally inwards. The Torah states "And the land was corrupt before G-d and the land was full of robbery" (6:11). All of mankind became focused on themselves satisfying all their personal pursuits without taking anyone else's privileges into consideration. Humanity was literally destroying itself with every person concerned only for himself, showing no care or respect for anyone else.

No'ach's world had to be kindness and compassion. No'ach's family was totally preoccupied with their magnanimous chore of continuously following the varied feeding schedules of each living being. In this way, the family was totally involved in acts of kindness, providing for others every moment of their stay. This total reversal of priorities, placing their entire focus on the needs of others, reestablished the world.

Upon reentry, No'ach pleaded with G-d never to repeat the devastating flood waters. In this week's Haftara, we discover that due to No'ach's dedication to kindness bore everlasting fruits and in response to No'ach's kindness, G-d promised to shower His boundless kindness on

the world.

In view of this, Yeshayahu draws our attention to this guarantee and states in the name of G-d, "For the mountains may jar and the hills may shift but My kindness will never leave you and My covenant of peace will never falter" (54:10). We should realize wholeheartedly that G-d will also respond to our kindness to one another with the same unconditional guarantee and shower His blessing upon His people for an eternity.

Our strength is the unity amongst ourselves and the outpouring of kindness and helping friends and family who are in distress. We thank those who are reaching out to show solidarity. This provides our strength at this challenging time. 🏰

## The Weekly 'Hi All' by Rabbi Jeff Bienenfeld

### Two columns for B'reishit & No'ach

*As you can imagine, I have what to say about the crisis in which we find ourselves here in Israel. Unthinkable, surreal atrocities have occurred. A sadistic savagery and brutality has been unleashed upon the innocent. It is a time for prayer; a time for all of us to come together as one. And we all need chizuk to help us endure this tragedy and rise to victory. I hope*

*what I have to say below can provide a small measure of this chizuk.*

In the Navi (Shmuel Alef, 30), we read about David who, returning to Ziklag with his men, is aghast to see the city destroyed by Amalek with all the women and children having been taken captive. Their reaction is heartbreaking: "David and the people who were with him raised their voices and wept, until they had no strength to weep [any more]" (30:4).

And then, something extraordinary occurs. "David drew strength from HaShem, his Gd" (30:6). On this verse, Radak comments (in my elaboration) that David placed his hope in HaShem and would not allow himself to become paralyzed and demoralized by the evil he witnessed, and he then rises to pursue the enemy.

On Sh'mini Atzeret / Simchat Torah, we too awoke to an attack which saw our communities in the South ravaged by a murderous rampage of unspeakable horror. And while David thankfully rescued all of his captives, our story has yet tragically not ended, with the fate of our captives still painfully hanging. And yet, much like our great ancestor, our people have also managed - and not without astonishing courage and fortitude - to surmount the evil they witnessed

and go on the offensive.

And our prayer: May we, with Gd's help, be equally fortunate, as was David, to bring each and every one of our loved ones back home!

But there's more. Let us never for one moment doubt the justice of our cause. The very first Rashi in the Torah explains why the Torah begins with B'reishit and not with the first mitzva recorded in Sh'mot. To wit: that the nations of the world understand that the Land of Israel belongs to us by virtue of a divine decree issued by the Creator of all the lands on Earth. Some have commented that Rashi's exhortation was not so much directed at the world's nations, but rather at us, to ensure that we, as Jews, remain steadfast in our belief that this Land is ours!

And more. There is something else that needs to be stressed. David, our great spiritual poet was also a warrior. True, as the Talmud states (Y'vamot 79a), the DNA of our peoplehood is etched with the virtues of compassion, humility, and chesed, but we owe no one any apology for an offensive against a heinous enemy. The Midrash (B'reishit Rabba 3), as explained by the Berdichever Rebbe (Kedushat Levi, B'reishit), asserts that while HaShem certainly prefers -

and mandates - that mankind behave in accordance with the virtues of their yeitzer hatov - with goodness and kindness, there are times when mobilizing the characteristics and tactics of the yeitzer hara - rage, confrontation and war, are more than justified when facing down and defeating satanic forces that seek our destruction.

Rav Soloveitchik put this last point rather strongly. "One must never acquiesce in evil, make peace with it, or condone its existence. Defiance of and active opposition to evil, employing all means that Gd put at our disposal, is the dominant norm in Halacha... Man is summoned by Gd to combat evil, to fight evil, and to try to eliminate it as much as possible." (Out of the Whirlwind, pp. 102-104) And last Shabbat, we suddenly came face to face with that evil's coldblooded incarnation - the Hamas monstrous butcher!

But what of us who are not on the front lines of battle; what can inspire us to do our share? The previous Lubavitcher Rebbe offered this insight on a phrase in Hallel (T'hilim 116:16). We pray to HaShem: ANA HASHEM... HaShem, for I am Your servant. How are we to translate ANA The commentators struggle with this question as the word, when spelt

**ALEF-NUN-ALEF, means "please". Here it is spelled ALEF-NUN-HEI. The Rebbe felt that this ANA should be translated as "where", with this powerful message:**

**"Tell me, HaShem, where do you want me to be, and wherever that place is, there I will be there to serve you!" The Rebbe offered this explanation upon his arrival in the USA in 1940. And now, in 2023, the chizuk for us is no different. For reasons which we cannot fathom, HaShem has placed every Jew - living here in Israel and in the Diaspora - in the same "place" - in this calamitous and dire emergency. This is where we are and where we are supposed to be. The only question is, will I - can I - serve HaShem even here, and now?! And our response, of course, must be: ANI AVD'CHA, absolutely! Each person in his/her own way, with their own abilities and resources can proudly declare that they are prepared to be HaShem agent, serving His people in this time of crisis!**

**How might that service find expression? Of course, there is prayer and Torah study. There is charitable funding and activities of chesed. One should also not minimize the obligation to be NOSEI B'OL CHAVEIRO, to share in the worries and burdens of another (Avot 6:6). In**

**traumatic times like this, heeding to the wisdom of Mishlei (12:25) to console one another and help relieve their anxieties and fears, is a kindness of great magnitude. The Zohar has described our people as one corporate body. Much like an injured finger is felt by the entire body, so too when one Jew suffers, our entire nation is in pain. And its converse, to heal one part of the body is felt by and benefits the entire body. No Jew is ever alone, and although it may be hard to grasp how saying T'hilim in the States can empower the Jew in Israel, quite remarkably, that is exactly what occurs. Let us remember the astute observation of the Maharsha (B'rachot 32b, Chidushei Agadot, s.v. davar acheir) that when we give others chizuk, either directly or otherwise, we ourselves are strengthened. Thus, CHAZAK CHAZAKV'NITCHAZEIK.**

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**Although so much more can be said, let us conclude with this deep insight of the Baal Shem Tov. The prophet declares: "...it will be a time of anguish for Yaakov, but from it, he will be saved" (Yirmiyahu 30:7). The simple reading of the text promises that while the Jewish people may suffer, HaShem will ultimately save**

us. To this, the Besht offered this profound interpretation. Our people will experience torment and distress, affliction and grief, and yet - counterintuitive though it may seem - from that very TZARA itself will come the most powerful version of our selfhood. Touching the pain, enduring the suffering can reveal the best and most glorious truth about who we are and what we're meant to be. And through that wondrous discovery - MIMENA YIVASHEI'A - will come our salvation!

In ancient Israel's battle against Ammon and Aram (Shmuel Bet 10), Yoav exclaimed to Avishai, his brother: "Be Strong and let us both be strong for the sake of our people... and HaShem will do what is good in His eyes" (10:12). To which Ralbag comments: If we do all in our power to defeat the enemy, HaShem will do His part and we will triumph.

And so, our prayer in this fateful hour: "In the days and weeks ahead, may all of our valiant and unflagging efforts on behalf of our soldiers and people here in Israel evoke HaShem's mercy to help us defeat this wicked archfoe and lead us to victory and vindication! V'CHEIN Y'HI RATZON.

## **B'reishit**

*Needless to say, our heartfelt prayers go out to all the families who have suffered the loss of loved ones, who have loved ones who are wounded, whose loved ones have been captured by the Hamas terrorists, and whose loved ones have been called to serve in the IDF. May HaShem protect our soldiers and us all and quickly avenge the murderous attack we have so terribly suffered.*

## **In Praise of Imperfection**

After the spiritually intense and religiously active festivals of Tishrei, we once again find ourselves re-entering our mundane existence with all the quotidian issues and problems remaining not much changed over the past month. And, as for all the firm resolutions and lofty goals we seriously set for ourselves, we now wonder whether we'll ever be successful in implementing any of them. Naturally, we feel somewhat depressed, but we elect to carry on notwithstanding. However, as we do, there is an important lesson from the Creation chapter that ought to provide us with some measure of encouragement and succor.

Let us call it the **PRINCIPLE OF IMPERFECTION** and it goes something like this. If our goal in life is to

be perfect - perfect in dress, speech, manners, ethics, etc. - then perfection will elude us every time. And yet, people often strain after this much sought-after objective because its antonym - imperfection - is interpreted to mean some terrible moral stain, a shameful defect, an embarrassing human reality. Such an understanding, however, is clearly mistaken. In fact, it is part of the arsenal of the YEITZER HARA in its attempt to defeat us time and again as we quest for some measure of success.

The PRINCIPLE OF IMPERFECTION, therefore, states that it's perfectly OK to be imperfect. The state of imperfection is neither good nor bad; it just is. Precisely because we are all finite physical creatures subject to natural decay, our self-actualization can never achieve perfection. Even in the moral and ethical sphere, we will inevitably make mistakes. Thus, immediately after Yom Kippur - in the Maariv Shemoneh Esrei - we beseech HaShem to forgive us for our sins. Simply put, the reality of the human condition as such will always require some correction, some fixing, some recalibration. And all that is for the good. In this interminable but worthwhile effort, the real goal is not perfection, but rather to become better, better and still better. And

while we may never achieve perfection, we can merit greatness!

In the Parsha, this principle of imperfection expresses itself thusly: On the 3rd day, the earth was commanded by G-d to produce fruit-bearing trees, where the actual tree would have the same taste as the fruit. Yet, strangely enough, the earth, as it were, disobeyed G-d's command and produced the fruit trees we have today where the bark tastes like ... bark. (B'reishis Rabba 5:9) How are we to understand an inanimate object (i.e., the tree) spurning G-d's orders? Moreover, on the 4th day, the original two luminaries - equal in size and luminescence - are soon reduced to a large bright sun and a small pale moon. Why? Because, as Rashi famously tells us (1:16), the moon complained and was thus diminished.

Now, how are we to understand the deeper meaning behind these Midrashim.

The Maharal offers this fascinating approach: Creation, as such, must play out imperfectly because - by definition - it is a finite, physical, material manifestation of G-d's Will, however difficult this is to grasp.

As such, this corporeal, earthly Creation must necessarily be transitory and flawed - inherently

imperfect. With this understanding, the "sin" of the Earth and Moon is not to be understood as "transgression" or "disobedience", but rather as the NEFESH HACHAYIM (gloss to 1:6) chooses to define CHEIT. In his view, to sin - is to be found wanting, deficient, CHASEIR. Thus, the Earth and the luminaries, by virtue of their temporal, ephemeral existence, cannot produce what is ideally expected of them. Indeed, even of man, Shlomo HaMelech declared (Kohelet 7:20): "There is not a righteous man on earth that does only good and never sins."

It should now become clear why HaShem willed Creation to play out as such. Namely, to teach us this empowering principle, that living imperfectly is not a failure but rather the central challenge facing mankind.

One author (Tal Ben-Shahar in his *The Pursuit of Perfect*) suggests that instead of striving to be a perfectionist, we should rather aspire to be an optimalist. That is, to optimize and take full advantage of our given talents and abilities, fully accepting the truth that we will assuredly hit many bumps and be forced to take many a detour along the way in our attempt to accomplish anything worthwhile. In any case, human greatness lies precisely in our responding to such imperfections by

transforming them into an exercise of graduated goodness where each step upward is inherently valuable and amply rewarded.

The extraordinary insight of R. Yitzchak Hutner, zt"l, makes this point quite powerfully. In Mishlei (24:16), we read: "For though the righteous fall seven times, they will rise, and the wicked will stumble [not to rise again] when evil comes upon them." R. Hutner chooses to interpret the verse to mean not, "when the righteous fall", but rather, the righteous will fall, that falling is a necessary prerequisite for achieving righteousness. Indeed, the cycle of falling and rising constitute the essential dynamic of man's existential reality in this world.

The New Year is upon us and, BE"H, there is much that we hope to do. Let us remember then that in whatever we seek to achieve, there will inevitably be resistance. Mistakes will blemish our efforts and we will probably fall short of all of our goals. But when that discouraging inevitability occurs, we must internalize this important principle of imperfection and accept the stern reality that man must "try and err, and then try again." He must be prepared to be bloodied and bruised, to heroically travel a long and tortuous road - but to believe that, in the end, he will

ultimately prevail - not to perfection but to greatness!

The frequent blessing we recite after eating most foods, beautifully expresses this idea. "Blessed are You, HaShem our Gd, King of the Universe, Who creates the many forms of life and their needs (CHESRONON), to sustain the life of all that lives, blessed be He, Giver of life to the worlds." In addition to Tosafot's understanding of this b'racha (B'rachot 37a, s.v. BOREI), we might suggest this interpretation: We bless HaShem and acknowledge that He has created many forms of life along with their deficiencies - along with their imperfections. Why? So that in confronting the challenges of these CHESRONOT, we can enrich, enliven and invigorate our lives - L'HACHAYOT BAHM NEFESH KOL CHAI. 🙌

## Afterthoughts

- Yocheved Bienenfeld

## Parshat No'ach

Parts of this parsha puzzle me. No'ach the man and No'ach the parsha. In terms of the parsha, I have difficulty understanding the apparent importance of knowing exactly how many days it rained; how many more days until the underground springs

ceased to pour forth water; exactly how high the water rose above the mountains; how many days it took for the water to subside; how many days passed between the times No'ach sent forth the raven and the dove.

Obviously, these things puzzled Chazal as well since there is so much discussion about the dates in the Gemara, and so many different opinions about the timing (e.g., Rashi; Ramban - and even within Ramban himself). It would seem clear to me that the simple fact that the world was engulfed by water and that all life perished is enough to inform me of the magnitude of the event and of the tragedy.

Since the Torah seemed to be stressing the importance of time, it leaves me wondering about the passage of time after No'ach and his family leave the ark.

The whole incident with the planting of the vineyard and of No'ach's subsequently becoming drunk - when did that happen? The day they left the ark? How long after No'ach offers up his sacrifices and is assured by Gd that this will never happen again, does this event occur? Chazal fill in some missing information when they explain how and from where No'ach, all of a sudden, has vines to plant. How long did it take for the grapes to

grow? To ferment? At what point did it become possible for Noach to become drunk? And did this occur immediately after he sees the enormity of the destruction and of the job that lay ahead of him? Was it after he determinedly began to rebuild a better world and realized how meek his efforts were compared to the results? All this period of time which might offer us some insight or a guess as to what and why this happened, is ignored. It, apparently, isn't deemed important for the average mind. Gd clearly has His reasons and, just as clearly, I am not privy to them.

(Ultimately, I would guess that all these unknowns were purposely left that way to wait for Chazal to tackle them. Because they, who were vastly brighter than I and blessed with RU'ACH HAKODESH, use these very details that confound me as sources for Halachic conclusions. Gd's purpose, indeed.)

Regarding No'ach the man. Who is he? We do know more about him than we do about Avraham when he first appears on the scene. We know, at least, that Gd considers No'ach to be ISH TZADIK TAMIM - a righteous man, perfect in his generations, which we are not to learn about Avraham until much later. And it's interesting that, despite Gd's declaration about No'ach, Chazal feel

impelled to question the nature of this man. Why? Is it because he doesn't seem to relate to the world around him or to what is occurring? This probably was what was bothering them. No'ach's only relationship is that which he has with Gd.

Something is missing.

Given all this, I was thinking about the story as a whole to try to make some sense of it for myself (aside from the details regarding the description of the flood). In climbing "into No'ach's skin", as it were, this is one take that spoke to me even though it's just one possibility. Based upon the opinion that says that No'ach was lacking, that he didn't succeed in influencing others to do teshuva, there were consequences. Can you imagine what it must have been like in the Ark for a year? Even if we ignore the Chazal that says that Noach never slept (which I can truly believe), the logistics speak for themselves. He is living all this time surrounded by a countless number of animals of all types. (Just think about the smell!) He had to see to their individual needs, feed them accordingly; sanitation (?). How long would that have taken on a daily basis?

Even with help from his family - and, I imagine from Gd Himself - he

probably didn't have a moment's rest. We are told that this year of forced caring for and about others, even though they were animals, was to impress upon him and inculcate in him the concept of chessed. Something which might have helped him avert the disaster of the flood, as Avraham tried to do regarding the fate of Sodom and Amora.

I would like to suggest an additional point: could this have been more than a learning experience? Could it have been a form of punishment for his lack of caring and involvement? Is it possible that after No'ach emerges from the ark, despite Gd's reassurance, that the overwhelming devastation was too much to bear? Did he see himself as greatly responsible in not have tried to prevent it?

He no longer hears from Gd as he did before, he is merely ISH HAADAMA - a man of the earth - now. Did he try to lose himself from this reality by becoming drunk? This approach makes a lot of sense to me. It sees No'ach as a human being, perhaps not with the necessary outgoing personality, or self-assured enough to tackle the problem. It doesn't offer any solutions, but it's a different way of thinking about No'ach, the man of the earth - that he now was.

Before, Gd was communicating with

him but no longer. He was unique, only in his having been saved. Now, he was your "normal" human - man of the earth, human with all the emotions that come along with that. Poor No'ach. One can feel for him.

I would like to conclude with a wonderful positive comment about No'ach that is contained in an explanation of a Rashi by Rebbe Yitzchok Isaac of Zidichov:

When the Torah tells us that No'ach finally went into the Ark, it specifies MIPNEI MEI HAMABUL - because of the waters of the flood (7:7). Rashi offers the following: "No'ach, too, was one of those with little faith; he believed yet he did not believe fully that the flood would come..." Rabbi Yitzchak Isaac chose to understand it in the following way: "Noach was one of those with little faith - HAYA MA'AMIN; V'AINO MA'AMIN SHEYAVO HAMABUL - Even though No'ach was among those with little faith (in that generation), HE believed!! And so, he could not believe that the flood would actually come (given his belief that Gd had mercy on all His creations) until the waters actually came.

[There is a Chassidic legend that tells that when Rebbe Yitzchak reached the "heavenly Yeshiva", Rashi came to greet him and thanked him for his

unique and pleasant interpretation of his words on No'ach.]

## **ATZABEI HAGOYIM...**

The idols of the nations are silver and gold, the work of human hands... Those who make them will become like them: so, will all who trust in them (T'hilim 135: 15, 18).

If you want to understand (if it is at all possible) how the Arab terrorists, part of the Islam community can behave the way they do; how they can kill others, innocent civilians sleeping in their homes, hiding in shelters, men, women and children, forcibly abduct innocents, without any compunction, how bestial groups like this can come into being, look at the above quote.

David HaMelech told us of this millennia ago. And although we don't consider Islam a form of avoda zara because of the technicality that they don't have images they serve or because they believe in only one Gd, they are, indeed, serving avoda zara. The Gd they serve is one they have created and defined, and that is the essence of avoda zara. The god they have created is a god that is AKHBAR - KABIR - great and powerful. Theirs is a service of power and might, ruling the world, and killing anyone unfortunate enough to get in their way. K'MOHEM YIHYU OSEIHEM - if

you create a god who is identified by his might, you will behave just like him.

And why won't a Jewish soldier kill an Arab who is holding a baby for protection? Why not kill him and not worry about the baby? Because the Jew has a Gd Who is defined as YUD-HEI-VAV-HEI, a Gd of mercy. He is gomel chasadim. He created the world in order to give - not to take and conquer and rule. And so, the Jew is a BA'AL CHESSED; a giver, not a taker. A survivor, not a killer.

Perhaps, this is why in the blessing preceding the Shmoneh Esrei, (GAAL YISRAEL), we spell out exactly who our Gd is: GO'ALEINU - our Redeemer is HASHEM TZ'VAKOT SH'MO - the Lord of Hosts is His name - Hosts, as in armies of His celestial creation, not the armies who take innocent lives; because He is - K'DOSH YISRAEL - the Holy One of Israel - the Gd the Jews hold by; the Jews who are RACHMANIM, BAISHANIM, V'GOM-LEI CHASSADIM - merciful, retiring, doers of kind deeds - not just any Gd.

And that is the Gd who will redeem and bring salvation to the world.

Have no fear of sudden terror or of the ruin when it overtakes the wicked: Devise your strategy but it will be thwarted, propose your plan, but it will not stand, for Gd is with us.

# TAL UMATAR

**GM** In Israel, we begin asking for rainfall in the Maariv Amida of the eve of the 7th of Marcheshvan - this year, 5784, that is on Motza'ei Shabbat Parshat No'ach - with these words -

וַיִּתֵּן טַל וַיִּמְטַר לְבָרְכָהּ עַל  
פְּנֵי הָאֲדָמָה

*And give dew and rain as a blessing on the face of the land*

Looking for a pasuk in Tanach to match the gimatriya of that phrase, yielded two verses, neither of which gave anything to say about our prayer for rain.

But regular gimatriya is not the only numeric value of Hebrew letters and words.

There is also Gimatriya MILUI, full gimatriya, which we get by spelling out each letter. If the letter LAMED, for example, is spelled LAMED-MEM-DALET, the MILUI gimatriya of a LAMED is  $30+40+4 = 74$ . And so on, with all letters.

The regular gimatriya of the words we are focusing on is 1302. As just mentioned, that search gave us nothing interesting to comment on.

The MILUI gimatriya of the phrase totaled 4188. That matched one pasuk - but with nothing to say about

it.

Then comes the NISTAR gimatriya. The hidden gimatriya. Spell out each letter and look only at the hidden part of the word. With LAMED, it is the MEM and DALET that comprise the NISTAR value. The LAMED is revealed. The MEM and the DALET are hidden. ALEF, spelled ALEF-LAMED-PEI, the ALEF itself is part of the MILUI, but the NISTAR is the LAMED and PEI, which total 110. And so on.

The NISTAR gimatriya of our phrase is 2886. This number yields 8 p'sukim in Tanach whose regular gimatriyas match the NISTAR of V'TEIN TAL...

And one of them, definitely speaks to us - Vayikra 22:31 (in Parshat Emor) -

וְשָׁמַרְתֶּם בְּמִצְוֹתַי וַעֲשִׂיתֶם אֹתָם  
אֲנִי ה'

*You shall keep My commandments and perform them. I am HaShem.*

Rainfall is not a given. It is not just a meteorological phenomenon. It is a Judgment of G-d and is dependent upon our behavior. Just look in the second passage of the Sh'ma. ...if you will hearken diligently to My commandments... that I will give the rain of your land in its season... And let's not even mention the other side of the coin.