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INTERNET PARSHA SHEET ON NOACH - 5774

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From: "Yeshivat Kerem B'Yavneh" <kohn.kby@gmail.com> Date: Oct 19, 2012 5:54 AM Subject: Parshat Noach from Yeshivat Kerem B'Yavneh To: "Yeshivat Kerem B'Yavneh" <kohn.kby@gmail.com>
Rav Moshe Stav

After Noach exited the ark and offered sacrifices, it says: Hashem smelled the pleasing aroma, and Hashem said in his heart, "I will not continue to curse again the ground because of man, since the imagery of man's heart is evil from his youth, nor will I again continue to smite every living being, as I have done." (Bereishit 8:21)

In this pasuk, the Torah explains that the world should not be punished on account of man's sins, since man is prone to sin and thus the world is always under threat of destruction. Therefore, G-d swears that He will never again bring a flood to destroy the earth. This reasoning, however, was true even before the flood, so why wasn't it raised before the flood to prevent it? Furthermore, it appears that this claim is linked to Noach's sacrifice. What is the connection?

In the beginning of the parsha, G-d's command to Noach to build the ark and bring the animals into it is repeated twice (in ch. 6 and ch.7), and there are a number of differences between the two commands:

In the first one, Noach is told to bring two each of the animals, whereas in the second he is told to bring seven pairs of kosher animals.

In the first there is no mention of Noach's praise that he is righteous, whereas in the second he is told that he is righteous.

In the first the command is said in the name of Elokim, whereas in the second in the name of Hashem. Chazal comment that initially, G-d intended to create the world with the attribute of justice, and when He saw that it would not survive he joined the attribute of mercy with it. Clearly, there is not regret or change of mind before G-d, but rather this midrash expresses the two manners of Divine Guidance that are revealed in the world. On the surface -- the laws of nature appear, which are the established rules with which the world was created and operates, and they are called "din" (justice). This manner of Guidance is revealed through the name Elokim, which means "Master of all forces." Because

of this, even the nations of the world recognize this manner of guidance, as stated in numerous places in Chazal and the Rishonim.

However, there is a manner of direct Guidance in which G-d directs the world willfully and with special attention, and when man is not worthy to exist according to the standard rules of creation and he requires special Guidance, Hashem arouses His desire in the continuation of the world and he has mercy on His creation and creatures.

However, for a person to merit this kind of guidance, he must recognize it. The people of the generation of the flood sinned because of the good that they had, as the Torah describes the "bnei elohim," who allowed themselves to do as they wished, and the long lives of that time. After the flood, the nature of the world changed, as explained in the Rishonim, and weakness descended upon the world. This causes man to recognize his insignificance and imperfection, and forces him to recognize his dependence on the Creator of the world, and to turn to Him and pray to Him. This is why G-d turned to Noach twice. The first time announces the destruction of the world and its reestablishment. However, the second calling teaches that in the new world that will be built he will be dependent entirely on direct Guidance, and this idea is expressed in the sacrifice, in which man recognizes that everything returns to G-d, the Source of existence, and through this recognition he merits eternal existence.

Therefore, in the first command, he is commanded to bring only that which is necessary for natural existence, whereas in the second the need for sacrifice is also mentioned. Similarly, the first time does not mention Noach's merit to be saved, since in the natural manner of Guidance signified by the name Elokim there is no special, clearly apparent Providence on the righteous person. This is expressed in the discrepancy between the names of G-d used, as explained.

This also answers the initial two questions. Since the whole sin of the generation of the flood was that they did not want to recognize G-d's goodness to them, at the moment that Noach offered a sacrifice, the attribute of mercy was aroused to rectify the creation in a manner that sin should never again develop to the extent that it will cause people to forget G-d entirely.

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[Parshapotpourri] Parsha Potpourri by **Rabbi Oizer Alport** - Parshas Noach Shema Yisrael Torah Network 7:28 PM
to Potpourri Parshas Noach - Vol. 9, Issue 2 Compiled by Oizer Alport

V'zeh asher ta'aseh osah shalosh meios amah orech ha'teivah chamishim amah rach'bah u'shloshim amah komasa tzohar ta'aseh la'teivah v'el amah t'chalena mil'malah (6:15-16) The Zohar HaKadosh states that prior to the sin of eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge, the serpent was known merely as "Ches." After the serpent successfully enticed Chava to sin, Adam added to its name the letter "nun" from Hashem's name of Lordship (ado-nai) and the letter "shin" from Hashem's name Sha-dai in order to mitigate its potential to bring evil and sin into the world. Similarly, the accusing angel was initially known as Samech-Mem, but in order to counteract its wicked powers Adam added one of Hashem's names and called it Sam-ael.

The Meged Yosef quotes his grandfather, the mystic Rav Leib Sarah's, that for a time, Adam's plan worked successfully. The additions from the Divine names were able to keep the evil powers in check and the world functioned reasonably for 9 generations. The Torah notes, however, that in the generation of Noach the world was filled with chamas. This alludes to the fact that they sinned so greatly that they allowed the serpent and the prosecuting angel to regain their initial strength, as chamas is a combination of their two original names (Ches and Samech-Mem).

In order to restore justice and civilization to the world, Hashem had no choice but to once again diminish the power of this dastardly duo. He commanded Noah to make an ark which would measure 300 cubits long (approximately 500-600 feet), 50 cubits wide, and 30 cubits tall, with the roof of the ark sloping upward to one cubit so that the rain would run off.

As each letter in the Hebrew alphabet has a numerical value, we may reexpress the dimensions of the ark as shin cubits in length, nun cubits in width, lamed cubits in height, and an aleph cubit finish on the roof. The length and width are precisely the two letters needed to once again transform the "Ches" back into the nachash, while the height and the finish on top are exactly what was needed to reduce the mighty Samech-Mem into the Sam-ael, thereby allowing Noah to combat the "chamas" which was rampant in his generation and be saved from the flood brought to destroy it.

Vaye'chasu es ervas avihem up'neihem achoranis v'ervas avihem lo ra'u (9:23) After the waters of the flood subsided and Hashem commanded Noah and his family to leave the ark, Noah encountered a desolate wasteland, a reminder of the year of unprecedented destruction the world had just endured. Overwhelmed by the sheer amount of rebuilding which was necessary to render the world once again inhabitable, he chose to begin by planting a vineyard. The Torah criticizes Noah's actions, noting that he desecrated and sullied himself by doing so. The end result was that he became drunk after drinking from the wine and passed out naked in a drunken stupor.

When Noah's sons Shem and Yefes became aware of his humiliating and degrading condition, they approached him with a garment to cover him, an act for which they were praised and rewarded. However, what is interesting to note is that the Torah emphasizes that when Shem and Yefes approached Noah, they walked backward and turned away their faces so as not to see their Noah in his disgraced state. This is difficult to understand. Even if they were ashamed to personally witness their father's degraded state, why did they approach him while walking backwards? Why didn't they simply walk in a regular fashion and close their eyes, which is significantly easier?

The Alshich HaKadosh explains that although the motivation for Shem and Yefes's action was their father's honor, the reason that they covered him in this manner was not for his sake, but for theirs. They understood that exposure to impurity has a deleterious effect on one's soul. Even if he finds the immoral item repugnant, contact with it inherently causes damage. In particular, a person's face is part of his Tzelem Elokim - Divine Image - and whatever it is exposed to automatically leaves an impression. For this reason Shem and Yefes felt they had no choice but to approach their uncovered father in this unnatural manner in order to protect their faces from coming into contact with such impurity.

Similarly, Lot and his family were warned by the angels that although they merited being saved from Sodom, they were forbidden to turn around while escaping to look back at the destruction. In spite of this, Lot's wife turned around when they were fleeing and immediately turned into a pillar of salt (Bereishis 19:26). Although she transgressed the command against looking back at Sodom, for what was she punished so harshly? Rav Don Segal explains that when a person looks at something, he becomes spiritually connected to it. In this case, when Lot's wife turned around to gaze at Sodom, she became connected to the city and was punished with destruction as if she were part of the city.

In a modern application of this concept, Rav Don Segal relates that he was once driving his teacher Rav Chatzkel Levenstein in a car when Rav Chatzkel suddenly and abruptly ducked down as if somebody was shooting at him and he needed to protect himself. Startled, Rav Don asked what the problem was. Rav Chatzkel explained that they had just driven past a large movie theater which was shining down spotlights in order to attract attention and encourage people potential patrons to come inside. Rav Chatzkel, who was aware of the powerful influence exerted

even by something with which our face and eyes come into temporary and unintentional contact, felt that he had no choice but to duck and protect his Tzelem Elokim from the impurity latent in the spotlights of the theater.

Vaye'chasu es ervas avihem up'neihem achoranis v'ervas avihem lo ra'u (9:23) Rashi writes that in the merit of Shem's alacrity in covering the nakedness of his drunken father (Noah), he merited that his descendants - the Jewish people - would receive the mitzvah of tzitzis (Bamidbar 15:37-41). As we know that Hashem rewards people for their good deeds measure-for-measure, Rav Moshe Meir Weiss points out a number of fascinating parallels between the actions of Shem and the mitzvah of tzitzis.

When reciting the Priestly Blessing, the Kohanim wrap themselves in a tallis. This is because we merited receiving the mitzvah of tzitzis through the actions of Shem and of Avrohom (Sotah 17a), both of whom were Kohanim (Nedorim 32b). Shem acted quickly to cover his father and protect him from being disgraced and humiliated. Interestingly, the minimum size for a four-cornered garment to be obligated in tzitzis is determined by whether it is large enough to cover enough of a person's body so that he would be willing to wear it outside in public without being embarrassed (Mishnah Berurah 16:4).

When approaching their drunken father with a garment to cover him, Shem walked backward and turned away his face so as not to see or even face his father's nakedness. As a result, the first thing one does when donning a tallis is to wrap it around his face so that he cannot see. Additionally, the Torah specifically writes (Bamidbar 15:39) the prohibition against lusting after one's eyes in the section containing the mitzvah of tzitzis. Not surprisingly, the Gemora in Menachos (44a) tells the story of a man who was about to sin with a harlot when he was saved from his immoral plan by his tzitzis.

Mitzrayim was a son of Cham (10:6), who had the audacity to either castrate or sodomize his passed-out father. Not surprisingly, the Medrash in Tanna D'Vei Eliyahu (7) teaches that the Egyptians were the most immoral and depraved people in the world. As a result, the section in the Torah containing the mitzvah of tzitzis also contains the mitzvah to remember the Exodus from Mitzrayim (Egypt), as the mitzvah of tzitzis represents the triumph of morality and decency.

To receive the full version with answers email the author at oaiport@optonline.net.

from: Kol Torah Webmaster <webmaster@koltorah.org> to: Kol Torah <koltorah@koltorah.org> date: Thu, Oct 3, 2013 at 8:48 PM subject: Kol Torah Parashat Noach

**Invalidating Non-Orthodox Wedding Ceremonies – Rav Asher Weiss's Novel Approach
by Rabbi Chaim Jachter**

Rav Asher Weiss has emerged as one of the great Halachic authorities of our time. His writings demonstrate a most impressive breadth of knowledge in addition to "out of the box" yet "down to earth" innovative thinking that has won him acclaim throughout all sectors of the observant Jewish community. Recently, Rav Weiss released his first work of responsa entitled Teshuvot Minchat Asher, which demonstrates Rav Weiss' standing as a world-class Poseik.

In this essay, we shall present a significant contribution made by Rav Weiss to an issue that unfortunately arises all too often – the Halachic validity of wedding ceremonies conducted by non-Orthodox rabbis. Rav Weiss (in responsum number 72) deals with a situation in which a woman married in a Conservative ceremony and received her Get under the auspices of a Conservative Get administrator (which, experience teaches, cannot be relied upon).

The woman subsequently remarried, became observant, and had five children with her second husband. Rav Weiss discusses whether or not

there is a concern that the children are Mamzeirim (illegitimate and therefore forbidden to marry almost all Jews, as a result of the woman remarrying without receiving a valid Get from her first husband). Rav Weiss concludes that the children are legitimate since her first marriage was not conducted in accordance with Halachah (and thus in reality did not require a Get in the first place). He advances two novel reasons to invalidate the non-Orthodox wedding ceremony which are most worthy of attention. In this essay, we will focus on what specifically invalidates most non-Orthodox wedding ceremonies aside from the well known issue of the absence of valid witnesses (only observant and Orthodox adult males are considered valid witnesses according to Halachah; see Shulchan Aruch Choshen Mishpat Perek 34).

The Double Ring Ceremony

Rav Moshe Feinstein wrote several responsa about the Halachic status of Reform wedding ceremonies (Rav Weiss writes that there is no substantial difference between Reform and Conservative – which by now, 2013, is almost certainly correct; the merger of some Reform and Conservative congregations serves as ample evidence), including a 1970 responsum in which he examines several of the problematic aspects of such weddings (Teshuvot Igrat Moshe, Even HaEzer 3:25). In addition to the lack of valid witnesses, which is addressed in Gray Matter 1:83-90, Rav Moshe argues that Reform marriages also lack Halachic validity for other reasons:

They do not perform an act of Kidushin. Rather he merely responds “yes” to the Rabbi's question, “Do you wish to take this woman as your wife?”... These are not words of Kidushin [such as the required phrase, “Behold you are betrothed to me with this ring”]; rather, these words express consent to joining in marriage. [The man and woman] subsequently exchange rings as an expression of their marriage, which they believe to have been contracted already by answering “yes.”

In the above responsum, Rav Moshe suggests that double ring ceremonies raise concern about how the couple understands the wedding procedures. “Even though he gives her a ring,” he writes, “she also gives him a ring, which demonstrates that his giving her a ring was merely a present in honor of their marriage, and there is no act of Kidushin.”

Dayan Aryeh Grossnass (Teshuvot Lev Aryeh 31) presents a similar approach. It should be noted, however, that there are many variations of the double ring ceremony, and they might have different Halachic standings.

Disagreement with Rav Feinstein

Many great Rabbis disagree with this assertion of Rav Moshe. Both Rav Zalman Nechemia Goldberg and Rav Hershel Schachter expressed their opinions to this author that once the groom gives the bride a ring, they are married. Whatever happens after the delivery of the ring is irrelevant in their view.[1]

The Gemara (Nedarim 87a) seems to support Rav Goldberg and Rav Schachter's view. The Gemara states that one may retract even a formal statement (such as testimony in Beit Din) as long as the retraction occurs immediately after the statement (Toch Kedei Dibur). However, this rule does not apply to four areas of Halachah - cursing our Creator (God forbid), idolatry, Kidushin, and Gittin. Accordingly, once Kidushin have taken effect, one cannot retract them (except with a Get or death). Thus, once the groom gives the bride a ring, the bride's giving the groom a second ring should be irrelevant.

Defense of Rav Feinstein's Ruling

Nonetheless, one may suggest a defense of Rav Moshe's ruling. Rav Chaim Soloveitchik (commentary to Rambam's Hilchot Chalitzah 4:16) explains that a couple does not become married merely by the ritual performance of Kidushin. Rather, Da'at, intention, is necessary to create the marriage. Accordingly, the couple must have Da'at that giving the ring creates the Kidushin; without intention, the Kidushin cannot take effect. Since the statement of vows and the double ring ceremony confuse the couple's Da'at, the marriage is not effective.

Rav Asher Weiss bolsters this point with the following insight:

The entire concept of Kidushin according to the laws of our holy Torah is that a man acquires his wife. Even though the Rishonim clarify that this is not a monetary acquisition and that a husband does not own his wife (Rav David Fohrman offers a magnificent explanation of this point in his Dvar Torah on Parashat BeReishit that appears on the website of the Aleph Beta Academy), nonetheless the Torah describes marriage as “Ki Yikach Ish Ishah” (when a man takes a woman), as an act of acquisition... This concept is entirely antithetical to the contemporary secular concept of marriage as an egalitarian and mutual commitment... a [non-Orthodox couple] express this intention by exchanging rings which gives concrete expression to their intention not to be married according to the Torah's definition of Kidushin.[2]

Moreover, in videos of non-Orthodox weddings that this author has seen (in efforts to solve problems of Igun and Mamzeirut), the Rabbi often declares at the conclusion of the Chupah, “I now pronounce you man and wife in the eyes of man and in the eyes of God.” Women who participated in these ceremonies have told this author that they thought they were married according to Jewish tradition when the rabbis made this declaration. Rav Weiss notes this stands in stark contradiction to the proper Halachic approach, which dictates that the Rabbi merely supervises the ceremony and makes sure it is done correctly, while the Chatan giving the ring to the Kalah creates the Kidushin.

Rama (E.H. 42:1) writes, “Regarding Kidushin, we do not use assumptions or [circumstantial] proofs to establish that a [man or] woman did not intend to be married.” Thus, it seems that we cannot assume that the couple did not intend to be married at the right time in the ceremony. Nevertheless, there is still room to invalidate most non-Orthodox weddings. This is because the basis for Rama's ruling (as explained by Rav Yechezkel Landau, Teshuvot Noda BiYehudah 1:59, cited by Pitchei Teshuvah, E.H. 42:3) is that unarticulated thoughts have no Halachic significance (a concept known as “Devarim SheBeLeiv Einam Devarim”). However, in the case of the double ring ceremony, the circumstances clearly indicate a lack of Da'at. The groom and bride demonstrate with their actions that they do not want the groom's delivery of the ring to effect Kidushin. In fact, Tosafot (Kidushin 49b s.v. Devarim) write that when the individual's intentions are obvious, they do indeed have Halachic standing. The Chazon Ish (E.H. 52:3) also writes that even Rama would invalidate a marriage if it is blatantly obvious that the couple did not intend to marry Halachically (see Techumin 18:92-99).

Indeed, it is common in observant communities for a man to present an engagement ring to his fiancée, yet we do not believe that the couple is thereby married (see Rama, E.H. 45:2). This is because they clearly do not intend to create Kidushin with the engagement ring.

Limitations of Rav Feinstein's Ruling

Rav Moshe's ruling probably does not apply to every case of a double ring ceremony. This author saw on video a traditional Conservative Rabbi (a category that is rapidly disappearing) conduct a double ring ceremony. The rabbi told the groom to give the ring as an expression of marriage and subsequently told the bride to give him a ring as a pledge of her love. He seemed to be attempting to distinguish between the groom's delivery of the ring (which creates Kidushin) and the bride's handing the groom a ring.

Although Rav Moshe strongly disapproves of such a ceremony (Teshuvot Igrat Moshe, E.H. 3:18), he probably would believe that this form of a double ring ceremony does not invalidate the wedding. In this case, there might lack concrete evidence that the couple does not wish to create Kidushin with the delivery of the ring from the groom to the bride.

Ownership of the Ring

Rav Moshe (Teshuvot Igrot Moshe, E.H. 1:76) further notes that the groom often does not own the ring at Reform weddings. If the ring belonged to the bride (or anyone else) before the ceremony, the Kidushin are not valid.

Rav Zalman Nechemia Goldberg expressed his disagreement with Rav Moshe to this author. He referred to a ruling of the Rosh (Kidushin 1:20, codified in Shulchan Aruch, E.H. 28:19) that if one borrows a ring and informs the lender that he wishes to use it for Kidushin, the Kidushin are valid. Although the ring was borrowed, the lender intends to give the ring as a present (and not merely a loan) to the groom so that the Kidushin can take effect. Similarly, the groom intends to acquire the ring in order to properly implement the Kidushin.

However, one may respond that the Rosh's ruling applies only to those who know that the wedding ring must belong to the groom. Rav Moshe states this explicitly in Teshuvot Igrot Moshe (E.H. 1:90).

In fact, the Mishnah Berurah (649:15) seems to support Rav Moshe's contention. It rules that one who uses a borrowed Lulav does not fulfill the Mitzvah on the first day of Sukkot (the first two days in the Diaspora, according to some Rishonim), unless the lender knows that the borrower must Halachically acquire it. Otherwise, we assume that the lender gave the Lulav as a loan and not as a present.

Conclusion

We must make every effort to assure that divorcing couples who were married in a Reform or Conservative Jewish ceremony receive a valid Get. Only when a spouse refuses to participate in a Get ceremony, or when possible Mamzeirut exists, do some rabbinical courts consider relying on Rav Moshe Feinstein and the authorities who agree with him to invalidate a non-Orthodox wedding ceremony. Rav Asher Weiss has further bolstered Rav Moshe's ruling which has saved the spiritual lives of tens of thousands of Jews. Indeed, in the specific case addressed by Rav Weiss, no less of an authority than Rav Yosef Shalom Eliashiv himself agreed with Rav Weiss' ruling that the five children born to the woman from her second husband are not considered Mamzeirim.

[1] This does not mean that Rav Goldberg and Rav Schachter endorse a double ring ceremony. Rather, they argue that it does not invalidate a wedding ceremony.

[2] This, of course, does not apply to non-Orthodox couples who marry in an Orthodox ceremony where rings are not exchanged. Rav Weiss' approach underscores the importance of resolutely maintaining the integrity of the Orthodox wedding ceremony without giving expression to egalitarian values which might impinge on the Kashrut of the Kidushin.

Thanks to hamelaket@gmail.com for collecting the following items:

from: Destiny Foundation/Rabbi Berel Wein <info@jewishdestiny.com>
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subject: Weekly Parsha from Rabbi Berel Wein

In My Opinion :: Rabbi Berel Wein

After The Holidays

There always is an emotional and even physical letdown that people experience immediately after the departure of the glorious holiday-laden month of Tishrei. Here in Israel the daylight hours become shorter, especially with the change of the clock to wintertime. The blessing of the rainy season begins to manifest itself, and it is time for flu shots and other such joys. And since this year of 5774 is a leap year, the winter season will be a month longer than it has been for the past two years. When I was a student in the yeshiva long ago, my beloved teachers and mentors would encourage us by reminding us that we now had an extra month to our winter semester and could and should therefore accomplish

so much more in our Torah learning. The truth be said, not all of us budding scholars took the matter and encouragement to heart.

But our teachers did realize that after the month of holidays we all did need a kick start to really get going. The memories of the holidays, the inspiration and meaning of the prayer services, the sense of family and well being, all are the fuel to help us get going. But the recharging of our batteries for a successful winter is an individual project that requires will and devotion, focus and stamina. The task is not beyond our capabilities. However it does require strength of mind and purpose and an optimistic outlook.

It is a well-known psychological phenomenon that weather; the amount of sunlight present, rain, clouds and other such factors definitely influence human mood and attitude. I always found it interesting that the Torah has very little to say about weather. It mentions that our father Avraham sat outside his tent in the heat of the day but it does not record for us generally how hot the Middle East is much of the year. It does not recognize nor seem willing to accommodate the human mood swings that the change of seasons brings on. Humans are the most adaptable of all creatures, living all over the globe, in frost and heat, rain forest and desert. No other living creature can do so. It is part of God's blessing to humans to fill the earth and conquer it. Humankind has fulfilled that blessing and challenge admirably over the millennia of our existence.

It is one of the myriad wonders of creation that are part of our daily existence. The Talmud does deal with one weather condition, though mainly in relationship to the rainy season in Israel and the necessity and efficacy of prayers to ward off the scourge of drought from our blessed but arid country. Pretty much the Jewish view was and is that weather is up to Heaven and therefore prayer and perseverance are the only weapons that we humans possess in dealing with it.

Since the Land of Israeli lies on a geological fault line, earthquake tremors are often felt here. In the Bible we read of a large-scale earthquake that occurred in First Temple times, and in the early nineteenth century the city of Safed was leveled by a major earthquake. But no worries my friends, this year is going to be a great and serene one.

I am traveling to Brazil and the United States for most of this month. The pressure of fund-raising for Destiny Foundation is a constant and worrisome one for me but I am fairly well accustomed to it by now. Destiny has in place a number of Conversation programs for the forthcoming good and healthy winter months. They include conversations in Israel with Rabbi Shlomo Riskin, Rabbi Nosson Scherman and Professor Robert Aumann among others. This month there is also a conversation program in New York with Rabbi Elie Abadie, M.D. of the Edmond J. Safra Synagogue, Rabbi Paysach Krohn and me. The secret of overcoming after-holiday blues is to keep busy with constructive projects and productive works.

That really is basically the secret of life itself, for it was for these purposes that we were created. There are many distractions in life and pettiness abounds everywhere. We should not be frustrated and depressed by these. The distance between where we were spiritually in the month of Tishrei and where we are spiritually today may be significant. Yet we should never despair of our abilities to improve and succeed in every facet of human living. The goodness that we harvested during Tishrei will stand us in good stead all year long. Onward and upward! Shabat shalom

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Weekly Parsha :: Rabbi Berel Wein
Noach

After the destruction of civilization in the great flood a new generation arose and searched for a way to immortalize itself – so that their existence would withstand any new natural disasters. They gathered in the Tigris-Euphrates valley and there built the great city that would be called Nineveh. And to guarantee that their achievements would be forever remembered, they embarked on building a colossal structure – a great tower pointing towards - and seemingly even touching - the sky. It was the first ancestor of our modern-day skyscrapers. This was the great technological leap forward in the discovery of creating bricks as a building material, which enabled such a project to be imagined and executed. The Torah specifically relates to us that the sole purpose of this tower soaring heavenward was “to build for us a name” – a remembrance, an eternal monument to human technology and ability that later generations would gaze upon in awe and admiration.

It was a testament to the human ego and its accompanying hubris. That is perhaps what Midrash is implying when it states that, “....we will prop up the heavens” with this tower. They were saying that puny man could successfully defy God and nature and immortalize itself with its technological wonders and its insatiable ambitions.

Every dictator in history has sought to immortalize his achievements in stone and marble lest his greatness become unknown to future generations. Almost all of these memorials have failed to live up to their original purpose. The slaves who built the pyramids of Egypt are more well-known than are their pharaonic masters.

The Parthenon and Coliseum lie in ruins and Nineveh itself has long since disappeared from the map of the world. And the great twin towers of the World Trade Center of New York City are also no longer with us. The irony of all of this is that none of the great architectural monuments of the ancient, medieval and modern world were felled by nature. There was no need to prop up the heavens in order to save Nineveh from destruction. Nineveh and all of the other great monuments of the ancient world were all destroyed by human beings who were themselves bent upon creating their own eternal monuments to their own achievements. It is part of the inborn competitive nature of human beings to attempt to destroy the immortality of others as a means of guaranteeing one's own immortality. Thus we continue to hound people who are already in the grave, searching for scandal and blame. The Torah itself tells us that the tower at Nineveh was never completed because people did not understand each other's language – basically, they could no longer cooperate one with the other.

The fractiousness and parochialism of humans towards each other is what truly stands in the way of human immortality. Rabbi Yisrael Lipkin of Salant summed up this lesson in his pithy remark: “Concern for the needs of others in this world is my entry ticket to the World to Come.” Torah values and its observance coupled with good deeds, not physical monuments, are our guarantors in achieving immortality. Shabat shalom

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Ohr Somayach :: Torah Weekly :: Parshat Noach
For the week ending 5 October 2013 / 1 Heshvan 5774
by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair - www.seasonsofthemoon.com
Insights

We Have The Technology

“They said to one another, 'Come, let us make bricks and burn them in fire.' And the brick served them as stone, and the lime served them as mortar.” (11:3)

Technology is the conceit of the modern world.

The GPS system in our car allows us to receive satellite signals locating our position to within six feet anywhere on the planet. Behind the helm of our trusty gleaming V-8, we are the kings of the road. Previous generations pale into technological primitives.

We have the technology.

With a cellular phone we can call from the desert, from the top of a mountain, from the middle of nowhere, and communicate to anywhere in the world. And what are those deathless words that we wish to communicate across the tens of thousands of miles?

“Hi! Guess where I am!”

Now that's what I call progress.

We may know where our car is better than ever before, but when it comes to knowing where we ourselves are, that's a different story.

If we had developed in any real sense over the last couple of thousand years, would we still find anything of value in Shakespeare? If the human spirit had undergone a comparable degree of progress to technology, the poetry and art of those who died hundreds of years ago should seem impossibly quaint to the modern eye. If we were really more advanced, no one should be in the slightest bit interested in John Donne, Cervantes, Sophocles, Pascal, Mozart or Boticelli — except for historians. And yet, we recognize that our generation is hard put to come anywhere close to these artists.

Technology is an apology for our feelings of inferiority when we compare ourselves to our forebears. Our axiom is, “We may have less to say, but we can say it from the middle of nowhere.” Cold comfort is better than none.

At the end of this week's Torah portion there is a description of the attempt of the Generation of Dispersion (Dor Hapalaga) to build a tower that reached into the sky.

“They said to one another, 'Come, let us make bricks and burn them in fire.' And the brick served them as stone, and the lime served them as mortar.”

Rashi comments: “In Babylon there were no stones...”

Because there were no stones in Babylon, they were forced to apply technology and invent the brick. Immediately following this verse they say, “Come, let's build a city and a tower with its top in the heavens.”

They wanted to make a tower to challenge G-d.

This is a seeming non-sequitur. What does the lack of stones in Babylon have to do with building a city and a tower to challenge G-d? Why is making bricks a harbinger of incipient rebellion?

The Dor Hapalaga was intoxicated with technology. Bricks were the Babylonian equivalent of a Saturn V rocket. Take some mud, bake it and voila! Genius. If Man can take mud and turn it into towers and spires and palaces, what can he not do? Is there a limit to his powers?

From this kind of thinking there is a very small step for Mankind to think that they can dispense with G-d completely.

“Let us build and make for us a name.”

We have the technology.

• Sources: Rabbi Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld, Rabbi Yissochar Frand

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Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum
Parshas Noach

For the earth is filled with robbery through them. (6:13)

The Midrash teaches that the members of that generation were no ordinary thieves. They made sure to steal less than a shavah perutah, value of a penny, which, according to Jewish law, is not accorded judgment in bais din. Therefore, they were punished by Heaven as a bnei Noach, who are treated differently by law. A ben Noach has seven Noachidic commandments. One of them is the prohibition against stealing. A ben Noach, however, is punished even for stealing less than the value of a perutah. A Jew must steal a perutah in order to be punished. Why is this? In his

commentary to Eiruvim 62a, Rashi writes: "A Jew is mochel, forgives/overlooks, anything less than a perutah. A non-Jew does not." Money means so much to him that every fraction of a cent has meaning. Thus, if he steals less than a perutah - he pays.

The Alter m'Slabodka, Horav Nosson Tzvi Finkel, zl, derives an important practical lesson from this Halachah. Let us step back a moment and cogitate upon the difference between a Jew and a ben Noach: less than the value of a penny! The Jew overlooks what he considers an insignificant amount of money; thus, he forgives whoever takes it from him. The gentile neither overlooks, nor does he forgive. Half a penny divides us! For half a penny a person belittles himself to descend to the level of a ben Noach.

The lesson goes deeper. It does not take much to elevate oneself. The smallest upward movement makes a spiritual difference which goes beyond our ability to understand. Likewise, a backward movement - regardless how insignificant - is a negative spiritual drop. The eminence of the great is not to be measured only in the great steps. Every step forward, regardless of its size and significance, is a giant spiritual step. The barometer of spiritual excellence by which they are measured is much different from ours.

Noach, the man of the earth, debased himself and planted a vineyard. (9:20)

The Midrash comments: Vayichal Noach, "He (Noach) was nischalleil, profaned. Why? Vayita kerem, 'He planted a vine.'" He should have planted something else. Chazal are teaching us that, from the get-go, planting the vineyard was a disgraceful, baneful act. The fact that Noach later drank from the fruits of the vine and became inebriated is merely the consequence of his earlier chillul, profanation. Elsewhere, Chazal state; Vayichal Noach ish ha'adamah, "Since he (Noach) required the earth, he became profaned." Originally, he was referred to as Noach ish tzaddik, "the righteous man." Now that he planted a vineyard, he was transformed into an ish ha'adamah. Clearly, we must understand the planting of the vine. What about planting a vineyard could be so harmful? Wine gladdens the heart; it is used for the Altar's libations, for Kiddush, etc.

When we take into consideration the source of this wine shoot, we become even more perplexed. The Baal HaTurim cites Pirkei D'R'Eliezer that says that this shoot was originally in Gan Eden. It was later used by Avraham Avinu for his famous eishal, hospitality place. Certainly, if Noach was taking a shoot from Gan Eden, it was for a holy purpose. It was not for the mundane. Noach felt it was the correct thing to do. Why is he held in contempt for this fact? In Asufas Maachos, Horav Chaim Yaakov Goldvicht, zl, explains the error of Noach's act based upon a similar act of misplaced devotion exhibited by Avuyah, father of Elisha, the Tanna who, as a result of his heretical views, later became known as Acheir, the Other One. Elisha ben Avuyah was once a great man, destined to become one of the greatest Tannaim. His distinguished disciple was Rabbi Meir, who continued to repeat the lessons he had learned from his Rebbe prior to his turning away from the Torah. Yet, he ended up as the infamous Acheir, a man with no name. What happened? Shlomo Hamelech says, Tov acharis davar meireishis davar, "The end of a matter is better than its beginning" (Koheles 7:8). Rabbi Akiva commented concerning this pasuk, "The end is better." When? "At such a time that it is better than its beginning." What is the meaning of this statement? Chazal (Yerushalmi Chagigah 2:1) explain that this refers to Avuya, the father of Elisha, who was himself one of the primary Torah scholars in Yerushalayim. On the day of Elisha's Bris, circumcision, he invited all of the sages of Yerushalayim, placing them all in one large room. Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Yehoshua had a separate room for themselves. While the others were occupied with celebrating the festivities, Rabbi Eliezer said to Rabbi Yehoshua, "While they are busy with themselves, let us be occupied with ourselves." They immediately sat down to learn Torah with a fervor that was expected of such Torah giants. Their studies covered the entire gamut of the Written Law, Chumash, Neviim and Kesuvim. Their learning was so intense that a great fire descended from Heaven and surrounded them.

At this point, Avuyah noticed them and said, "If this is the power of Torah, I dedicate my son to the study of Torah." Chazal say, since his intention was not completely l'shem Shomayim, for Heaven's sake, the Torah did not endure in his son, Elisha.

Let us understand this Chazal. Avuyah was not an insignificant person. This is indicated by the fact that the distinguished sages of Yerushalayim attended his celebration. Furthermore, the mere fact that he saw the Heavenly fire surrounding the two Tannaim as they were learning, something which no one else was able to notice, indicates his spiritual stature. Undoubtedly, Avuyah's intention was for his son to develop into a Torah giant, just like the other rabbis. So, what did he do so wrong that warranted such a tragic end to his son's Torah stardom?

Rav Goldvicht explains that, indeed, his failing was miniscule. Regrettably, great people are not allowed even the minutest infraction. When Avuyah observed the

incredible honor granted one who studies Torah, that tinge of honor affected his thought process, so that when he dedicated his son to Torah study, a vestige of personal prejudice was involved. It was not all for the sake of Torah. There was a speck of kavod, honor, intermingled. It was not much, but it was enough to affect the purity of the lishmah, for Torah's sake. When is the "end" good? Only when the "beginning" is good.

Reishis, "the beginning," must be pristine - if the conclusion is also to be without taint. This concept does not appear to be consistent with Chazal's statement (Pesachim 50b), "One should occupy himself with the study of Torah and mitzvah observance even if it is not lishmah, for its sake, because mitoch shelo lishmah bah lishmah, from doing it not for its sake one will come to study Torah and perform mitzvos for the sake of the mitzvah." Indeed, Horav Chaim Volozhiner, zl, posits that it is impractical, almost impossible, for one to achieve the spiritual plateau of lishmah initially, from the very beginning, without first going through a period of shelo lishmah. He compares this to one who attempts to climb to a high place without the use of a ladder. The steps, one at a time, facilitate his ascent. Likewise, the shelo lishmah allows for the lishmah to be realized.

The Rosh Yeshivah explains that, when a seed is planted, the tree's potential growth is determined. The very beginning of growth must be pure, free of any vestige that might blemish its growth. The young plants' growth is based on the beginning, because this is when it takes root, when its foundation is established. Later on, when it has reached a certain level of maturity, the effects of outside negative influences are not as detrimental.

In establishing an organization, institution, or any major endeavor or undertaking, what takes place in the beginning has compelling ramifications. Altering of the lishmah factor by Avuyah produced a spiritual cripple who would one day earn the infamous appellation of Acheir, the "other one." How careful we must be - especially at the onset of any project - to remain focused on its purity, pristine goals and objectives.

Where did Noach go wrong? He planted a vine. Having survived the destruction of the world, Noach was charged with rebuilding it. When he first entered the Teivah, Ark, he took along seeds and shoots from every growing plant and vegetation. Now that he was leaving the Ark with the intention to commence the rebuilding, he had the opportunity to begin by planting the agricultural products necessary to sustain the human race. Yet, rather than select wheat to make bread, he chose to plant a vine. There is nothing intrinsically wrong with wine; on the contrary, as mentioned earlier, it is used to gladden the heart and poured for the sacrificial libations. As the first planting, however, as Noach's commencement to rebuild the world, it left something to be desired. The world is not rebuilt on the foundation of the vine. Wine is wonderful, but it requires great care upon imbibing it. Without control, wine can be dangerous. It was, therefore, not a good choice as the beginning for establishing the standard for human sustenance.

Rav Goldvicht goes a drop further in applying the idea of reishis, beginning, to explain the unpardonable sin of Amalek. The Amalek nation was not the only people who challenged the Jews. Yet, they are the only one whom we are to make a point to remember to obliterate. Why? They were the first to rise up against the Jews, to challenge Hashem's protection to His people. After the liberation of the Jews from Egypt amidst unprecedented miracles and wonders, no nation had the gall to start up with us - no nation - except Amalek. Furthermore, it was no ordinary period in our history. Amalek attacked at a time during which our relationship with Hashem was just beginning. It was the period when our spiritual foundation was in the process of being concretized. We were on an unparalleled spiritual high. Amalek's incursion was purposeful - to destroy our relationship with Hashem; to demean our faith; to undermine the glorious rapture that ensued us during the early moments of nationhood.

Amalek plunged into the burning hot pool of spiritual elevation, something which no other nation dared do, and succeeded in cooling the existing temperature. True, he was burnt, but the fiery heat was now abated. Other nations could now make their own attempt. One who attacks the "beginning" deserves his own "beginning": a singular punishment, unprecedented and unsympathetic, one that endures for eternity.

The European Holocaust was a cataclysmic destruction much like the Flood - only it did not devastate the entire world, "only" European Jewry. Six million souls ascended to Heaven, as they sacrificed their lives to sanctify His Name. If not for a handful of survivors whose goal was to rebuild the glorious Torah world of Europe, their memory would have vanished together with them. I have selected the life of one these visionary builders due to his devotion to the ideal of maintaining the pristine nature of reishis, the beginning.

The Ponevezher Rav, Horav Yosef Shlomo Kahaneman, zl, can be credited with re-establishing the Torah world in Eretz Yisrael post-Holocaust. Indeed, most of the yeshivos functioning in Eretz Yisrael today are either a direct result of his efforts or

offshoots of his work. The Ponevezher Rav was a brilliant Talmudic scholar who was well-known as such prior to World War II, at a time in which Europe had no dearth of Torah giants. It was his fiery love of Torah and firm trust in Hashem which served as the foundation upon which he erected his yeshivah. He had no money, no financial support - only a dream, a vision which he sought to transform into reality.

He was asked by Horav Shlomo Lorincz, zl, a close confidante, how a person in his position, having lost his entire family, his community, all of the European Torah institutions, could exhibit such a degree of extraordinary creativity and acumen that would shame a man much younger than he. He explained, "The truth is, I am engulfed by dejection and despair; yet, this is precisely why I am involved in building... In my situation, there are just two options: either I roam around and break windows, or I build and I build without stopping!"

His tormented spirit was soothed by devoting himself to rebuilding the devastated yeshivos. He did not permit the empty feeling within him to fester and destroy him. Instead, he garnered his pain, harnessing it into a source of unparalleled creativity. There is insufficient space available to describe this Torah giant, but, for our purpose, I cite from a letter he sent to Eretz Yisrael in 1955:

"Upon one of Bnei Brak's beautiful inclines, there rises a huge building bearing the name of the Ponevezh Yeshivah. This great edifice was erected in the proximity of Rabbi Akiva and his colleagues without assistance from any official sources, without any allocations from the government, the Jewish Agency or political parties; rather, it was established in the merit of the holy Ponevezh Yeshivah in Heaven. This yeshivah was built through the merit and the pure spirits of holy and pure individuals, the many hundreds of roshei yeshivah and talmidim, students, of Ponevezh Yeshivah in Lithuania, who sanctified Hashem's Name throughout their lives, until their very last moments, when they returned their pure souls to their Creator. In their merit, Torah is being increased within its walls and hundreds of sons of Tzion, who are more precious than gold, study the Torah of our G-d, day and night. In their merit, our holy yeshivah is suspended between Heaven and earth, alive and well, aspiring to and achieving its one and only goal, spreading Torah among our holy people and elevating the prestige of Torah in Klal Yisrael..." Everything about the founding, establishment and maintenance of the yeshivah was beyond the realm of reality. The founder was a physically ill person who stopped at nothing to build Torah. He had no funds, but he was considered a master fundraiser. He gave up his ability to be known as a gaon olam, prodigious Torah scholar, to become instead a Rosh Yeshivah, builder of Torah for thousands. As he himself once said, "I sacrificed the status of the Ponevezher Gaon for the sake of the Ponevezh Yeshivah."

Va'ani Tefillah

V'shinantam levanechah - teach them thoroughly to your children.

In an alternative interpretation of this pasuk, Chazal say, "Do not read, it v'shinantam, but, v'shilastem." V'shinantam would be derived from shnei/shnayim, two, while v'shilastem is a derivative of shlishi, three. Chazal are teaching us that a teacher should personally study the subject matter three times. He must have himself learned it twice in order to absorb and retain the lesson. The third time is when he teaches it to the student. The word shinun, which means study, is derived from shnayim, two, or to repeat. The Talmud Eiruvim 54b compares the learning of something only one time to a hunter who has captured a bird and, although not rendering it unfit to fly away, expects it to stay with him. When one repeats his studies, he retains it; otherwise, it will "fly" away.

V'dibarta bam - and speak of them.

The Torah seems to be presenting us with two criteria for teaching Torah. Shanein/v'sheenantem means to teach the subject matter by means of terse, forceful and easy to-be-remembered statements. V'dibarta bam implies to talk of them, explain them, elucidate them. Horav S. R. Hirsch, zl, observes that, by combining these two approaches, we can readily discern the correct manner for disseminating Torah to our children/students. First, teach it in the form of brief, concise statements. Then, impress them upon this memory by more detailed comment and discussion. This means that they must be taught Torah She'B'Ksav and Torah She'Baal Peh.

Sponsored in loving memory of our father and grandfather Eliyahu ben Yaakov z"l nifter 3 Cheshvan 5757 - by Dr. Jacob Massuda and Family

Britain's Chief Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks

Righteousness is not Leadership

The praise that Noah is accorded is unparalleled anywhere in Tanakh. He was, says the Torah, "a righteous man, perfect in his generations; Noah walked with God." No such praise is given to Abraham or Moses or any of the prophets. The only person in the Bible who comes close is Job, described as "blameless and upright (tam ve-yashar); he feared God and shunned evil" (Job 1: 1). Noah is in fact the only individual in Tanakh described as righteous (tzaddik).

Yet the man we see at the end of his life is not the person we saw at the beginning. After the flood:

Noah, a man of the soil, proceeded to plant a vineyard. When he drank some of its wine, he became drunk and lay uncovered inside his tent. Ham, the father of Canaan, saw his father naked and told his two brothers outside. But Shem and Japheth took a garment and laid it across their shoulders; then they walked in backward and covered their father's naked body. Their faces were turned the other way so that they would not see their father naked. (Gen. 9: 20-23)

The man of God has become a man of the soil. The upright man has become a drunkard. The man clothed in virtue now lies naked and unashamed. The man who saved his family from the flood is now so undignified that two of his sons are ashamed to look at him. This is a tale of decline. Why?

Noah is the classic case of someone who is righteous but not a leader. In a disastrous age, when all has been corrupted, when the world is filled with violence, when even God himself – in the most poignant line in the whole Torah – "regretted that He had made man on earth, and He was pained to His very core," Noah alone justifies God's faith in humanity, the faith that led Him to create mankind in the first place. That is an immense achievement, and nothing should detract from it. Noah is, after all, the man through whom God makes a covenant with all humanity. Noah is to humanity what Abraham is to the Jewish people.

Noah was a good man in a bad age. But his influence on the life of his contemporaries was apparently zero. That is implicit in God's statement, "You alone have I found righteous in this whole generation." It is implicit also in the fact that only Noah and his family, together with the animals, were saved. It is reasonable to assume that these two facts – Noah's righteousness and his lack of influence on his contemporaries – are intimately related. Noah preserved his virtue by separating himself from his environment. That is how, in a world gone mad, he stayed sane.

The famous debate among the sages as to whether the phrase "perfect in his generations" is praise or criticism may well be related to this. Some said that "perfect in his generations" means, only relative to the low standard then prevailing. Had he lived in the generation of Abraham, they said, he would have been insignificant. Others said the opposite: if in a wicked generation Noah was righteous, how much greater he would have been in a generation with role models like Abraham.

The argument, it seems to me, turns on whether Noah's isolation was part of his character – he was a loner – or merely a necessary tactic in that time and place. If he was naturally a loner he would not have gained by the presence of heroes like Abraham. He would have been impervious to influence whether for good or bad. If he was not a loner by nature but merely by circumstance, then in another age he would have sought out kindred spirits and become greater still.

Yet what exactly was Noah supposed to do? How could he have been an influence for good in a society bent on evil? Was he really meant to speak in an age when no one would listen? Sometimes people do not listen even to the voice of God himself. We had an example of this just two chapters earlier, when God warns Cain of the danger of his violent feelings toward Abel – "Why are you so furious? Why are you depressed? ... sin is crouching at the door. It lusts after you, but you can dominate it" (Gen. 4: 6-7). Yet Cain did not listen, and instead went on to murder his brother. If God speaks and men do not listen, how can we

criticise Noah for not speaking when all the evidence suggests that they would not have listened either?

The Talmud raises this very question in a different context, in the years leading to the Babylonian conquest and the destruction of the First Temple, another lawless age:

R. Aha b. R. Hanina said: Never did a favourable word go forth from the mouth of the Holy One, blessed be He, of which He retracted for evil, except the following, where it is written, “And the Lord said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof” (source). The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Gabriel, “Go and set a mark of ink on the foreheads of the righteous, that the destroying angels may have no power over them; and a mark of blood upon the foreheads of the wicked, that the destroying angels may have power over them.” Said the Attribute of Justice before the Holy One, blessed be He, “Sovereign of the Universe! How are these different from those?” “Those are completely righteous men, while these are completely wicked,” He replied. “Sovereign of the Universe!” said Justice, “they had the power to protest but did not.” Said God, “It was fully known to them that had they protested they would not have heeded them.” “Sovereign of the Universe!” said Justice, “If it was revealed to You, was it revealed to them?” Hence it is written, “[Slay] the old man, the young and the maiden, and little children and women; but do not come near any man on whom is the mark; and begin at my Sanctuary [mikdash]. Then they began at the elders which were before the house.” R. Joseph said, “Read not mikdash but mekuddashay [My sanctified ones]: this refers to the people who fulfilled the Torah from alef to tav.” (Shabbat 55a)

According to this passage, even the righteous in Jerusalem were punished at the time of the destruction of the Temple because they did not protest the actions of their contemporaries. God objects to the claim of Justice: Why punish them for their failure to protest when it was clear that had they done so, no one would have listened? Justice replies: This may be clear to angels – translate this to mean, this may be clear in hindsight – but at the time, no human could have been sure that his words would have had no impact. Justice asks: How can you be sure you will fail if you never try?

According to the Talmud, God reluctantly agreed. Hence the strong principle: when bad things are happening in society, when corruption, violence and injustice prevail, it is our duty to register a protest, even if it seems likely that it will have no effect. Why? Because that is what moral integrity demands. Silence may be taken as consent. And besides, we can never be sure that no one will listen. Morality demands that we ignore probability and focus on possibility. Perhaps someone will take notice and change his or her ways, and that “perhaps” is enough.

This idea did not suddenly appear for the first time in the Talmud. It is stated explicitly in the book of Ezekiel. This is what God says to the prophet:

“Son of man, I am sending you to the Israelites, to a rebellious nation that has rebelled against me; they and their ancestors have been in revolt against me to this very day. The people to whom I am sending you are obstinate and stubborn. Say to them, ‘This is what the Sovereign Lord says.’ And whether they listen or fail to listen—for they are a rebellious people—they will know that a prophet has been among them.” (Ezekiel 2: 3-5)

God tells the prophet to speak, regardless of whether people will listen. So, one way of reading the story of Noah is as a failure of leadership. Noah was righteous but not a leader. He was a good man who had no influence on his environment. There are, to be sure, other ways of reading the story, but this seems to me the most straightforward. If so, then Noah is the third in a series of failures of responsibility. Adam and Eve failed to take personal responsibility for their actions (“It wasn’t

me”). Cain refused to take moral responsibility (“Am I my brother’s keeper?”). Noah failed the test of collective responsibility.

This way of interpreting the story, if correct, entails a strong conclusion. We know that Judaism involves collective responsibility (“All Israel are responsible for one another”). But it may be that being human also involves collective responsibility. Not only are Jews responsible for one another. So are we all, regardless of our faith or lack of it. So, at any rate, Maimonides argued, though Nahmanides disagreed (Maimonides, *Hilkhot Melakhim* 9: 14. Ramban, *Commentary to Genesis* 34: 13, s.v. *Ve-rabbim*).

Hassidim had a simple way of making the point. They called Noah a *tzaddik im peltz*, “a righteous man in a fur coat.” There are two ways of keeping warm on a cold night. You can wear a fur coat or light a fire. Wear a fur coat and you warm only yourself. Light a fire and you warm others. We are supposed to light a fire.

Noah was a good man who was not a leader. Was he, after the Flood, haunted by guilt? Did he think of the lives he might have saved if only he had spoken out, whether to his contemporaries or to God? We cannot be sure. The text is suggestive but not conclusive.

It seems, though, that the Torah sets a high standard for the moral life. It is not enough to be righteous if that means turning our backs on a society that is guilty of wrongdoing. We must take a stand. We must protest. We must register dissent even if the probability of changing minds is small. That is because the moral life is a life we share with others. We are, in some sense, responsible for the society of which we are a part. It is not enough to be good. We must encourage others to be good. There are times when each of us must lead.

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks is a global religious leader, philosopher, the author of more than 25 books, and moral voice for our time. Until 1st September 2013 he served as Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth, having held the position for 22 years. To read more from Rabbi Sacks or to subscribe to his mailing list, please visit www.rabbisacks.org.

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Parsha Parables By Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

Drasha Parshas Noach

Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

Window to the World

Did you ever stop to imagine what life was like inside of Noah's ark?

There were three floors; the middle floor was filled with a collection of the world's animals wild, domestic, and otherwise. Birds and critters of all shapes and sizes, vermin and an endless potpourri of creepy crawlers whose pesky descendants bear witness to their survival during that tempestuous period.

Then there was a floor of refuse. There was no recycling center, and no sewage system that I am aware of.

The humans had the top floor. Cramped in an inescapable living space was Noah, his three sons, their wives and one mother-in-law. I think the rest of the scenario can play clearly in our minds. Surely, it was far from easy. What intrigues are the detailed architectural commands that Hashem gave Noah. Hashem details measurements and design for an ark that took 120 years to build! Why? Are there lessons to be learned from the design of the design of the ark? After all, Hashem promised that there will be no more floods. If there are no more floods, then there need not be any more arks. So what difference does it make how it was built. Obviously, there are inherent lessons we can learn from the design of the ark. Let's look at one.

Noah is told to build a window. It seems practical enough; after all sitting for an entire year can get awfully stuffy. So Noah is commanded to build a window for breathing room. It is a little troubling. Does Noah need a command to add something so simple as a window? Does it make a difference whether or not he had a window? Did that command have to

be incorporated into the heavenly plans for an ark that would endure the ravaging flood?

A renowned Rosh Yeshiva, tragically lost his son to a debilitating disease at the prime of his life. Not long married, the son left a widow and a young child. The Rosh Yeshiva and his Rebbitzin were devastated at the loss and the shiva period was a most difficult time.

One of the hundreds of visitors was the Bluzhever Rebbe, Rabbi Yisrael Spira, whose entire family was wiped out during the Holocaust. He sat quietly, taking in the pain of the bereaved family. Finally, when it was time to say something, Rabbi Spira turned to the Rosh Yeshiva and spoke. "Your loss is terrible, but at least your son will have a living remnant, his child. He will also have a resting place and stone where the family can visit. I do not even know where any of my children who were killed by the Nazis are buried." Then he added, "yet somehow Hashem has given me the strength to rebuild my family and life." Those words truly helped console the Rosh Yeshiva.

Sometimes when we are locked in our little boxes, we, too, need a window. When we think our world is crumbling and that we are doomed to a fate that is too difficult to bear, Hashem tells us to make a window. Sometimes, in our frustrations we have to look across the globe, or even across the river to know that despite our difficulties, others must endure a more difficult fate. And when we realize that they can endure, whether it is an Og holding on the back of the ark, or struggling with those lost amongst the ruins, we can remember that life inside the ark is not so bad after all.

Dedicated by Marty & Reva Oliner in memory of Reb Shimon Sumner of blessed memory.

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Rabbi Yissocher Frand - Parshas Noach

Compliments -- In The Presence And Outside The Presence Of A Person

In Parshas Noach, the Torah states: "Go into the tayva, you and all your family, for you I have seen as righteous before Me in this generation." [Bereshis 7:1] Rashi comments that the Parsha begins [Bereshis 6:9] with the words "And Noach was a COMPLETELY righteous person (tzadik tamim) in his generation." However, here when Hashem tells Noach to enter tayva, He merely calls Noach righteous, not completely righteous. This teaches, Rashi says, that it is appropriate to only say part of a person's praise in his presence, saving the full description of praise for a time when the person is not present.

This Rashi is based on the Talmud [Eruvin 18b] which states this principle in the name of Rav Yirmiya ben Elazar. As a matter of fact, this is not the only place in Chumash where Rashi invokes this teaching. Rashi mentions the exact same idea in Parshas Beha'aloscha. Miriam and Aharon have problems with the fact that Moshe Rabbeinu separated from his wife. G-d addresses them critically regarding the fact that they spoke against their brother, but He first told them to step outside. Rashi [Bamidbar 12:5] attributes the reason that G-d told them to step outside, away from the presence of Moshe, to the fact that He wanted to emphasize the uniqueness of Moshe to them and "one says only part of the praise of a person in his presence and all of his praise when the person is not present." In describing to Aharon and Miriam who their brother was, the Almighty was going to spare no detail. He described "all his praises." Therefore, the message had to be delivered away from Moshe's presence. This Rashi in Beha'aloscha, which is almost identical to the Rashi here in Parshas Noach, is based on a teaching in the Sifrei in the name of Rav Elazar ben Azarya.

Rav Elazar ben Azarya is a Tanna (sage of the Mishnaic period). He taught the principle of "saying part of the praise of a person in his presence and all the praise of a person not in his presence." Rav Yirmiya ben Elazar (the source of this teaching in Tractate Eruvin) was only an Amora (sage of the later Talmudic period). He was, in fact, a latter day Amora. The question can therefore be asked: What was Rav Yirmiya ben Elazar adding -- several generations later -- to what was already taught by Rav Elazar ben Azarya many years earlier?

Furthermore, we should note that in our Parsha, Rashi's expression is "From here we learn..." (m'kaan anu lomdim). In Parshas BeHa'aloscha, Rashi's language is "Because we say..." (l'fi she'omrim). What is the difference between these two expressions?

I saw what I think is a beautiful answer to these questions in a Sefer called Heimach Yenchamuni from the current Tolner Rebbe in Jerusalem. He asks whether the principle of saying all of a person's praise in his absence and part of his praise in his presence is an "issur" or a "mitzvah". Another way to express this is -- is the emphasis "do not say all of a person's praises in his presence" (a prohibition) or is the emphasis to say the praises of a person (mitzvah), but we are advised that when we say them in front of him, we should only say part of the praises.

Rav Elazar ben Azarya in the Sifrei (quoted by Rashi in Beha'aloscha) and Rav Yirmiya ben Elazar in Eruvin (quoted by Rashi here in Noach) were speaking about two different things. Rav Elazar ben Azarya was speaking about a case where the Almighty had to set the record straight. He had to say compliments about Moshe Rabbeinu to impress upon Aharon and Miriam his true nature. Therefore, Hashem took them outside so they would be away from Moshe's presence. But this narrative gives us no indication that it is appropriate to say nice things to a person (the idea of "partial compliments in his presence"). There the emphasis is on saying "complete compliments outside his presence". Therefore Rashi explains there why they were asked to step outside: "Because one does not say complete praise in the presence of the subject".

In Noach, however, we see something else. G-d could have merely told him "Come inside the Ark". The sentence could have ended there. But the Almighty adds something: "For you I have seen to be a righteous person before Me in this generation." This superfluous expression teaches us something new: "From here we see that it is part of the Attributes of G-d to give compliments."

No matter who one is, no matter how successful and how acclaimed a person may be, everyone likes a compliment. A compliment does something for a person. It strengthens him. This is the novelty that Rav Yirmiya ben Elazar is teaching us from Parshas Noach. "From here we see that one says (partial) praise to a person." This idea was not found in Parshas BeHa'aloscha and it was not taught by Rav Elazar ben Azarya.

It could in fact be that this "compliment" of the Almighty to Noach was the key to Noach's salvation. The Medrash Rabbah in Tehillim indicates that it was Noach who spoke the words: "Thou wilt destroy those that speak lies; the man of blood and deceit the L-rd abhors. But as for me -- due to the magnitude of Your kindness I will enter Your house..." [Tehillim 5:7-8]. ...The Medrash says that Noach says "As they (the generation of the flood) did, so did I." In other words, "I was as bad as they were". (The Talmud in Sanhedrin teaches a similar idea, that really Noach himself should also have died in the Flood, based on personal shortcomings.) But Noach adds (according to the Medrash) that G-d did him a favor and therefore "I -- due to the magnitude of Your kindness -- will come into your house" "Because", Noach says, "You told me that 'You I have found to be righteous before me in this generation', I was motivated to be righteous." "What made me change," says Noach, "is that You, Almighty, complimented me. That is why I changed -- because of the 'partial praise' I heard You say before me."

Rabbi Gissenger of Lakewood, New Jersey, was a student of Rav Pam and a very distinguished Rav in his own right. Several years ago, his shul honored him at a dinner and they invited Rav Pam to come speak about his disciple. Rav Gissenger was given the honor of introducing his Rebbi. He said, "When I was 16 years old in Rav Pam's shiur, before we left for the summer, Rav Pam encouraged us to try and write him our Chiddushei Torah (novel Torah-based thoughts) over the summer." Rabbi Gissenger in fact did that and sent his Torah insights to Rav Pam in the mail. Rav Pam sent him back a postcard in which he wrote, "I enjoyed very much your Chiddushei Torah..." whereupon Rav Gissenger whipped out the postcard that Rav Pam had sent him 30 years earlier!

He kept that postcard. Why did he keep it? He was so inspired and thrilled by the fact that Rav Pam stated he enjoyed his Chiddushei Torah that it made his decade! It inspired him for life! This is what a compliment can do.

"From here we see that one says partial praise of a person to his face" -- it is a good, advisable, practice to engage in! This is teaching us a mitzvah (meritorious practice), not an issur (prohibition). It is the behavior of the Almighty and it is a behavior worth emulating. When someone davens for the amud, if he is half decent tell him "Yasher Koach! I enjoyed your davening! Good job!" Give a person a compliment. It won't cost you anything and it is emulating the ways of the Ribono shel Olam.

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Weekly Halacha
by Rabbi Doniel Neustadt
Body Care on Shabbos

Question: Is it permitted to use baby wipes for cleaning a baby on Shabbos or Yom Tov?1

Discussion: When using baby wipes on Shabbos [or Yom Tov], we are concerned with violating the Shabbos Labor of Sechitah, Squeezing.2 If the wipe can be used without Squeezing then it may be used on Shabbos. A baby wipe that is slightly moist and is gently dabbed onto the diaper area would be an example of the permissible use of a baby wipe on Shabbos.

However, a baby wipe that is very moist — and there are numerous types of wipes on the market ranging from very moist to hardly so — would be prohibited from use on Shabbos,3 and indeed, may even be muktzeh, since the slightest pressure applied upon it would cause Sechitah.4 Moreover, pressing any type of baby wipe — even one which is only slightly or moderately moist — against the baby's skin, and/or scrubbing the diaper area with it may also be forbidden, as such pressure would result in Sechitah.

In actual practice, cleaning a baby who is wet or lightly soiled can generally be accomplished by gently dabbing a wipe on his skin. Indeed, one does not want to “squeeze” out any more moisture than necessary so as to eliminate the need to dry off the diaper area before putting on the diaper. When cleaning a baby who is more heavily soiled, however, one normally has to apply pressure to the wipe in order to clean the baby off. This becomes a case of Squeezing and may be forbidden on Shabbos and Yom Tov.

Question: On Shabbos or Yom Tov, is it permitted to use a cotton swab (Q-tip) to dab hydrogen peroxide, etc., on a cut or an abrasion?

Discussion: Based on the previous Discussion, there is no reason to prohibit using cotton swabs on Shabbos. Although it is forbidden to soak a cotton ball (or a piece of cotton batting) and then squeeze the liquid out of it,5 this does not apply to using a swab. The small piece of pressed cotton at the swab's end is not meant to absorb, nor is the liquid “squeezed” out of it. When used normally, the tip merely transfers the liquid to the cut without any squeezing taking place. It is permitted to be used.6 Obviously, though, in the atypical case where the swab is used in a manner which would result in squeezing, it would be forbidden to use it on Shabbos.

Question: On Shabbos or Yom Tov, is it permitted to flush a toilet which contains a disinfectant tablet that colors the water?

Discussion: There are a number of different types of toilet disinfectants and deodorizers on the market which color the water blue when the toilet is flushed. L'chatchilah, none of them may be used on Shabbos or Yom Tov, as flushing a toilet and thereby coloring the water in the toilet bowl may be prohibited min ha-Torah as a violation of the Shabbos Labor of Coloring. The blue color gives the water in the bowl a more “hygienic” look, so the coloring of the water is beneficial and hence forbidden on Shabbos.7 It is important, therefore, that the disinfectant unit be removed from the tank or bowl before the onset of Shabbos or Yom Tov.

Question: What should one do if he forgot to remove the disinfectant tablet or if he is a guest in a home where such a device is in the toilet?

Discussion: It depends on the type of tablet that has been inserted in the toilet:

If the disinfectant unit is inserted near the top of the rim of the tank, then he may flush the toilet. This is permitted because the direct act of flushing will not color the water since the water will not turn blue until it has risen to the top of the tank; the Coloring is merely an indirect result of the flushing, a gerama, which is permitted under these circumstances.8

However, if the disinfectant unit is in the bottom of the tank or is suspended from the rim of the bowl, then the toilet may not be flushed. Flushing such a toilet will directly color the new water coming in and gerama will not apply. One should make every effort to remove the disinfectant tablet from inside the tank or the bowl, preferably through “indirect movement.” If this is impossible or impractical, and one will be embarrassed to leave the toilet unflushed (kevod ha-beriyos), he may rely on the view of some poskim who argue9 that flushing such a toilet is not a violation of Coloring,10 and he should flush the toilet in an unusual way, e.g., by using his elbow or foot.

Question: Is it permitted to brush one's teeth on Shabbos, with or without toothpaste?

Discussion: The consensus of contemporary poskim is that it is forbidden to use toothpaste on Shabbos.11 Their main concern is that applying toothpaste to the teeth or the brush could result in a transgression of the prohibited Shabbos Labor of Memareiach, smoothing. Liquid toothpaste, however, is permitted.

Brushing without toothpaste is permitted,12 provided that the following conditions are met:

* Use a toothbrush that is designated for Shabbos use only.13 Some poskim require that the Shabbos toothbrush also look different from the weekday one, e.g., be of a different color or style.14

* Use a soft brush so as not to irritate the gums and cause bleeding. [People with extremely sensitive gums who bleed whenever they brush their teeth may not use a toothbrush at all.]

* To avoid the prohibition of Sechitah, squeezing, a dry toothbrush should be used. It is, however, permitted to rinse the mouth with cold water first and then use the toothbrush.15

* The toothbrush should not be rinsed off after it is used unless it is going to be used again on that same Shabbos.16

1 Numerous poskim have grappled with this issue and have rendered various, somewhat contradictory responses to this question. Some poskim, following a more stringent line, have forbidden using baby wipes altogether on Shabbos (see Minchas Yitzchak 10:25), while others tended to be more lenient. For a comprehensive review of the halachic debate, see Shulchan Shelomo 320:22; Children in Halachah, pgs. 205-207; Orchos Shabbos, pgs. 573-576; Ohr ha-Shabbos, vol. 8, pgs. 40-64 and vol. 18, pgs. 20-23.

2 The poskim debate whether or not “squeezing” wipes is a Biblical or a Rabbinic prohibition; see Igros Moshe, O.C. 2:70 and Children in Halachah, pgs. 207-208.

3 It would be permitted, however, to prepare this type of wipes before Shabbos by squeezing out most of the moisture from them.

4 See O.C. 320:16-17.

5 Shemiras Shabbos k'Hilchasa 32:59.

6 Based on a ruling of Harav A. Weiss, published in Ohr ha-Shabbos, vol. 18, pgs. 22-23, disputing the ruling of Orchos Shabbos 13:45 who does not permit using cotton swabs on Shabbos.

7 Shulchan Shelomo 320:31-3. See Peninei ha-Maor, vol. 1, pg. 523.

8 For two reasons: 1. Because of kevod ha-beriyos; 2. Because at this point, the person flushing the toilet certainly has no intention of Coloring the water. While it is still inevitable that it will happen (pesik reisha), when gerama is combined with pesik reisha it is permitted according to many poskim; see Eglei Tal, Zorea 21; Har Tzvi, O.C. 188; Halachos of Shabbos, Zorea, pg. 59, quoting Harav M. Feinstein.

9 1. The main purpose of the tablet is to disinfect the toilet; the color of the water is merely incidental and unintentional; 2. Coloring water is permitted, as Coloring does not apply to foods or beverages.

10 See Tzitz Eliezer 14:47; Be'er Moshe 2:28; Az Nidberu 12:13.

11 Igros Moshe, O.C. 1:112; Seridei Eish 2:28; Minchas Yitzchak 3:48; Tzitz Eliezer 7:30; Shevet ha-Levi 5:45. [While a minority opinion permits using toothpaste—see Ketzos ha-Shulchan (Badei ha-Shulchan 138:31), Gevuros Eliyahu 91, Yabia Omer 4:27-30 and Nefesh ha-Rav, pg. 168—it is almost universally accepted not to do so.]

12 See Minchas Shelomo 2:35:3.

13 Based on Mishnah Berurah 327:10.

14 Minchas Yitzchak 3:48; 3:50.

15 Igros Moshe, O.C. 1:112; Shevet ha-Levi 5:45.

16 Igros Moshe, O.C. 1:112.

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Bnei Noach and Korbanos

By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

Question #1: Rite or Wrong?

“My neighbor is not Jewish and believes in G-d, but she has rejected any of the existent organized religions. She often burns incense, which she learned about in Eastern religions, and she says that she does this to feel G-d’s presence in her life. May I enter her house while the incense is burning?”

Question #2: Joining the Sprinklers

“This must be the strangest question that I have ever asked. While camping, I met a group of sincere non-Jews who told me that they believe in one G-d and have regular getaways to discuss how they can live more in His image. While I was with them, they sprinkled some wine and oil on a campfire in commemoration of the Biblical sacrifices. They invited me to join them, which I did not, but I am curious to know whether I could have sprinkled with them.”

Question #3: The Doubting Moslem

“My coworker, who still considers herself a Moslem, confides in me a lot of her doubts about her religion. Should I be encouraging her away from Islam, or is it not necessary to do so, since they do not worship idols?”

Answer:

Although it is not that common for a rav to be asked about the halachos that pertain to gentiles, it should actually be commonplace. After all, most Jews are in frequent contact with non-Jews in their professional life. Furthermore, since there are hundreds of gentiles for every Jew in the world, each one of them should be concerned about his or her halachic responsibility. Many non-Jews are indeed concerned about their future place in Olam Haba and, had the nations not been deceived by spurious religions, thousands and perhaps millions more would observe the mitzvos of Bnei Noach that they are commanded. It is tragic that they have been misled into false beliefs and practices. Fortunately, there is a revival of interest among gentiles to observe the requirements given them in the Torah. There are now many groups and publications devoted to educating non-Jews about their halachic responsibilities.

The mitzvah requirements of non-Jews are usually referred to as the “Seven Mitzvos of the Bnei Noach,” although in actuality, these “Seven Mitzvos” are really categories. A gentile is required to accept that these commandments were commanded by Hashem to Moshe Rabbeinu (Rambam, Hilchos Melachim 8:11). A non-Jew who follows these instructions qualifies to be a “righteous gentile,” one of the Chassidei Umos Ha’olam who merits a place in Olam Haba.

Jews should be familiar with the halachos that apply to a non-Jew, since it is forbidden to cause a gentile to transgress his mitzvos. This is included under the Torah’s violation of lifnei iver lo sitein michshol, “Do not place a stumbling block before a blind person.” In this context, the verse means: Do not cause someone to sin if he is blind to – i.e., unaware of – the seriousness of his violation (Avodah Zarah 6b). For example, a Jew may not sell an item to a gentile that he will use for idol worship, or an item that is designed for criminal activity.

Gentiles and the Beis Hamikdash

May a gentile pray in the Beis Hamikdash?

The Beis Hamikdash was meant to serve gentiles as well as Jews, as the pasuk states, ki beisi beis tefila yikarei lechol ha’amim; My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations (Yeshaya 56:7). This sentiment was expressed by Shlomoh Hamelech in his public prayer whereby he dedicated the Beis Hamikdash, "...and also to the gentile who is not from Your people Israel and who comes for the sake of Your Name from a distant land. When they will hear of Your great Name, Your powerful hand and Your outstretched arm and come to pray in this house, You will hear from Heaven, the place of Your abode, and do whatever the gentile requests of You, so that all the nations of the Earth will know Your Name and fear You (Melachim I 8:41- 43).

Gentiles and Sacrifices

Not only was the Beis Hamikdash a place where gentiles could pray and serve Hashem, it was also a place where they could offer korbanos (Zevachim 116b). A gentile who desired to bring a korban in the Beis Hamikdash could do so, and, when it is rebuilt, their offerings will be welcome. The laws governing how these korbanos are offered are similar, but not identical, to what governs voluntary korbanos offered by a Jew.

A Jew may voluntarily offer several types of korbanos in the Beis Hamikdash. He may offer a korban shelomim (sometimes called a “peace-offering”), in which case the owner receives most of the meat to eat in Yerushalayim when he is in a state of purity (taharah). A Jew may also offer a korban olah, which is offered in its entirety on the mizbei’ach, the altar, in a very specifically prescribed fashion.

A gentile may offer a korban olah in the Beis Hamikdash, but he may not offer a korban shelomim. When this olah is offered, the procedure of its offering is virtually identical to that of a Yisrael. This means that any Jewish shochet may slaughter the korban, but it may not be slaughtered by a gentile, since a gentile’s slaughtering is, by definition, invalid as shechitah. The kohanim then proceed to

offer the korban of the gentile, just as they would offer the korban of a Jew, following all the halachos of a korban olah.

Gentiles and Imperfections

The animal that the gentile offers in the Beis Hamikdash must be completely unblemished (Vayikra 22:25). An animal that suffers visible impairments or injuries is called a baal mum and is invalid. Some examples of this are an animal with a broken limb, one that cannot walk in a normal way, one whose limbs are noticeably disproportionate to one another or relative to the size of the animal, or one that is blind. All told, there are 73 different imperfections that invalidate a korban as a baal mum (Sefer Hachinuch). Were a kohen to offer the imperfect offering of a gentile, he would be violating the Torah’s express prohibition and be liable for the resultant punishments. For an in-depth discussion of this topic, the reader is referred to Minchas Chinuch, Mitzvah 292. The same author mentions that the laws governing a gentile’s korban may, in one situation, actually be more stringent than those governing a Jew’s korban. The details of how this can happen are beyond the scope of this article.

Treatment of Holy Bulls and Sheep

There are a few differences in halachah between the korban olah offering of a Jew and that of a gentile. Prior to a Jew offering a korban, he rests his hands on the head of the animal and presses down on the animal’s head. This procedure is called semichah, and, while doing so, the owner of the korban recites viduy, confessing his sins. However, when a gentile’s offering is brought, no semichah is performed (Temurah 2a).

There is another curious difference between the olah offered by a gentile and that offered by a Jew. When a Jew consecrates an animal as a korban olah, someone who subsequently uses the consecrated animal, such as one who sheared the wool of a consecrated ram or worked a consecrated bull, violates a serious prohibition of the Torah called me’ilah. The individual who committed this prohibition negligently must offer a special korban called an asham as atonement. However, when a gentile donates an olah there is no prohibition min haTorah to use the animal and the proscription of me’ilah does not exist. The Gemara concludes that using the consecrated animal is prohibited only miderabbanan (Temurah 3a).

Gentile Exceptions

A Jew may also offer wine to the Beis Hamikdash, which is then poured onto the mizbei’ach. However, a gentile may not offer wine or other similar offerings (Temurah 2b, as explained by Rashi). On the other hand, a gentile may donate any item of value, including cash, to the Beis Hamikdash to assist in its upkeep (Bedek Habayis). This leads to a very surprising halachah. Although, as I mentioned above, there is no prohibition of me’ilah should one use the korban of a gentile, property that he donates to the Beis Hamikdash is subject to this prohibition the same way that a Jew’s donation to the Beis Hamikdash is (Temurah 3a).

Outside the Beis Hamikdash

Once the Beis Hamikdash was constructed, the Torah prohibited a Jew from offering korbanos anywhere else in the world (Devarim 12: 13, 14, 26, 27). Someone who sanctifies an animal as a korban and then offers it on an altar outside the Beis Hamikdash violates two grave prohibitions of the Torah called shechutei chutz, slaughtering a korban outside the approved area, and ha’ala’ah bachtutz, offering a korban outside its approved area. As a result, since our Beis Hamikdash unfortunately still lies in ruins, we cannot offer any korbanos to Hashem and we must await its rebuilding to offer them.

A gentile is not required to observe these mitzvos, and consequently, he may offer korbanos anywhere he chooses: in his backyard, on his camping trip or even in a shul! A Jew, however, may not assist in this endeavor, since this violates his mitzvos shechutei chutz and ha’ala’ah bachtutz, notwithstanding the fact that the korbanos were sanctified by a gentile! (Zevachim 45a; Rambam, Hilchos Maasei Hakorbanos 19:16).

Although a Jew may not offer these korbanos for the gentile, he may instruct the gentile how to offer them correctly. To quote the Rambam, “A gentile is permitted to offer korbanos olah to Hashem anywhere he would like, provided that he offers them on an altar that he constructed. A Jew may not help him, since a Jew is prohibited from offering korbanos outside the Beis Hamikdash. Nevertheless, a Jew may teach him how to bring the korban to Hashem properly” (Rambam, Hilchos Maaseh Hakorbanos 19:15).

The Rambam added a requirement to this halachah -- the korban must be offered on some type of constructed altar.

Blemished Offerings

Whereas the korban of a gentile offered in the Beis Hamikdash must be performed by kohanim, a gentile who offers a korban outside the Beis Hamikdash may perform the procedures himself, and actually must have the procedures performed by a non-Jew. In addition, he may offer from any kosher species (Bereishis 8:20 with Bereishis Rabbah and Rashi), whereas in the Beis Hamikdash animal

offerings must be only from sheep, goats, bovines, turtledoves and pigeons, even when the owner is a gentile. Furthermore, most of the 73 blemishes that invalidate a korban as a baal mum do not apply to what a gentile offers outside the Beis Hamikdash. The only mum restriction that applies outside the Beis Hamikdash is a missing limb, but any other injury or physical impediment does not invalidate the korban (Temurah 7a; Avodah Zarah 5b).

Gentile Mitzvos

We need to address one more point before we can answer our opening questions: May a gentile observe mitzvos of the Torah, and may he create his own observances?

A gentile may not keep Shabbos or a day of rest (meaning, a day that he refrains from doing any activity that is forbidden on Shabbos, melachah) on any day of the week (Sanhedrin 58b). This is considered a grievous violation of the Torah. I am aware of three approaches provided by the Rishonim to explain this law.

Rashi's Reason

Rashi explains that a non-Jew is obligated to work every day, because the Torah writes, "Yom valayla lo yishbosu," which can be interpreted to mean, "Day and night they (i.e., the non-Jews) may not rest." According to his understanding, this prohibition has nothing to do with any ban against a gentile performing religious practices to Hashem. There is a specific requirement for gentiles to work every day – or at least to perform melachah.

Meiri's Reason

The Meiri presents a different reason why a gentile may not observe a day of rest – that a Jew may mistakenly learn from him that it is acceptable to create his own mitzvos. Of course, creating one's own mitzvos, which is a very popular idea among contemporary religions, defeats the entire reason of observing the Torah and keeping mitzvos. The purpose of the Torah is for us to become close to Hashem by following what He instructs us to do. Creating one's own mitzvos implies that I can somehow bribe G-d to do what I want. Although we realize the foolishness of this approach, this idea underlies all of idolatry and greatly influences the way most of mankind views religion.

Rambam's Reason

The Rambam's approach is similar to the Meiri's, in that he explains that a gentile is prohibited from making his own holiday or any other religious observance because the Torah is opposed to the creation of man-made religions (Hilchos Melachim 10:9). In the words of the Rambam, "A non-Jew is not permitted to create his own religion or mitzvah. Either he becomes a righteous convert (a ger tzedek) and accepts the observance of all the mitzvos or he remains with the laws that he has without adding or subtracting." Any attempt to create a mitzvah other than that of the Torah runs counter to Hashem's goals for mankind, as I will soon explain.

Contradiction in Rambam

However, many authorities ask if the Rambam seems to be contradicting himself. The Mishnah states that the terumah or maaser separated by a gentile from his own crops is halachically valid, and a gentile's donation of his property to the Beis Hamikdash (hekdesh) is similarly valid (Terumos 3:9). In his Commentary to the Mishnah, the Rambam states that even though a gentile is not obligated to keep mitzvos, observing them allows him a small degree of reward. This statement implies that a gentile can receive reward for fulfilling mitzvos of the Torah.

There are several differing approaches to answer this seeming contradiction.

According to Rav Moshe Feinstein, there are a few very specific mitzvos that a gentile is permitted to observe, and only in these instances will he reap any reward for observing them. Those are mitzvos where we find that a gentile was specifically included, such as tzedakah, prayer, offering korbanos and separating terumos and maasros (Shu"t Igros Moshe, Yoreh Deah 2:7). In Rav Moshe's opinion, a gentile who observes any other mitzvah receives no reward. However, should he perform these mitzvos knowing that he is not commanded to do so, we do not stop him. On the other hand, if he performs these activities because he wants to consider himself obligated to keep them, we should prevent him from doing so if we can, and we should certainly discourage his observing them.

Others contend that a gentile may accept upon himself observance of Torah mitzvos (Biur Halachah, end of 304, in explanation of the Magen Avraham), and there are others who feel that a gentile who observes mitzvos, knowing that he is not required to do so, receives reward for his endeavor (see Sefer Hamafteiach, Melachim 10:10). Among those authorities who follow the last approach, some exclude a gentile from observing certain mitzvos. For example, the Radbaz (Hilchos Melachim 10:10) prohibits a gentile from wearing tefillin or placing a mezuzah on his door, and the Taz (Yoreh Deah 263:3) and the Levush prohibit him from performing bris milah (but see the Shulchan Aruch 268:9; Nekudos Hakesef ad locum and the Shach, Yoreh Deah 263:8 and 268:19 who disagree).

Answering our Questions

At this point, we are equipped to examine the opening questions. The first question was:

"My neighbor is not Jewish and believes in G-d, but she has rejected any of the existent organized religions. She often burns incense, which she learned about in Eastern religions, and she says that she does this to feel G-d's presence in her life. May I enter her house while the incense is burning?"

Is the neighbor doing something idolatrous? It may be, depending on what her understanding is of G-d. If, indeed, her acts comprise avodah zarah, then one should not be in her house when the incense is kindled because smelling it constitutes benefiting from idol worship.

On the other hand, if she understands G-d similar to the way a Jew does, there is no idolatry in her act. Assuming this to be true, there is nothing wrong with enjoying the fragrance of her incense.

Joining the Sprinklers

The second question was: "While camping, I met a group of sincere non-Jews who believe in one G-d and meet to discuss how they can live more in His image. While I was with them, they sprinkled some wine and oil on a campfire in commemoration of the Biblical sacrifices. Could I have sprinkled with them?"

It is good that you did not join them. For a Jew to effect any type of korban outside the Beis Hamikdash is prohibited, although, because of certain halachic details, this situation would not have involved the severe violation of ha'ala'ah bachutz.

Similarly, these individuals did not fulfill a gentile's mitzvah of offering korbanos, because their fireplace did not meet the halachic requirements of an altar.

The Doubting Moslem

"My coworker, who still considers herself a Moslem, confides in me a lot of her doubts about her religion. Should I be encouraging her away from Islam, or is it not necessary to do so, since they do not worship idols?"

Without question, observing Islam is a grievous sin, even for a gentile, despite the fact that there is no idolatry involved. Hashem gave very specific instructions of how He wants mankind to worship Him, and any other attempt is prohibited.

Therefore, if your coworker is asking you for direction in her life, you should explain to her the fallacies of Islam and how she could indeed fulfill Hashem's wishes by becoming a proper bas Noach.

Conclusion

We are meant to be "a light onto the nations" which charges us with the responsibility to act in a manner that we create a kiddush Hashem. If we have the opportunity to educate non-Jews how to live their lives as proper G-d-fearing Bnei Noach, that is surely within the scope of our directives.