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ON **NOACH** - 5771

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The Significance of Noach's Offering

By: 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 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.

Home » Writings, Speeches, Broadcasts » Covenant & Conversation » 5769 Noach 5769 Noach - 1st November 2008 / 3rd Cheshvan 5769 **A Drama in Four Acts**

Chief Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks

Between the creation of the universe and the call to Abraham the Torah tells four stories: Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, Noah and the generation of the flood, and the tower of Babel. Is there any connection between these stories? Are they there merely because they happened? Or is there a deeper underlying logic? As we will see, there is. The first is about Adam and Eve and the forbidden fruit. Once they have eaten, and discovered shame, G-d asks them what they have done. This is the conversation that ensues: And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?" The man said, "The woman you put here with me - she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it." Then the Lord G-d said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate." The man blames the woman, the woman blames the serpent. Both deny personal responsibility: it wasn't me; it wasn't my fault. This is the birth of what today is called the victim culture. The second drama is about Cain and Abel. Both bring offerings. Abel's is accepted, Cain's not (why this is so is not relevant here). In his anger, Cain kills Abel. Again there is an exchange between a human being and G-d: Then the Lord said to Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?" "I don't know," he replied. "Am I my brother's keeper?" The Lord said, "What have you done? Listen! Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground. Once again the theme is responsibility, but in a different sense. Cain does not deny personal responsibility. He does not say, "It wasn't me." He denies moral responsibility. "I am not my brother's keeper." I am not responsible for his safety. Yes, I did it because I felt like it. Cain has not yet learned the difference between "I can" and "I may." The third is the story of Noah. Noah is a righteous man but not a hero. He is born to great expectations. "He will comfort us," says his father Lamech, giving

him his name. Yet Noah does not save humanity. He only saves himself, his family and the animals he takes with him in the ark. The Zohar contrasts him unfavorably with Moses: Moses prayed for his generation, Noah did not. In the last scene we see him drunk: in the words of the Midrash, "he profaned himself and became profaned." You cannot be a sole survivor and still survive. Sauve-qui-peut ("let everyone who can, save himself") is not a principle of Judaism. We have to do what we can to save others, not just ourselves. Noah failed the test of collective responsibility. The fourth is the story of the Tower of Babel. What was the sin of its builders? There are two key words in the text. It begins and ends with the phrase kol ha'aretz, "the whole earth." In between, there is a series of similar sounding words: sham (there), shem (name), and shamayim (heaven). The story of Babel is a drama about the two key words of the first sentence of the Torah: "In the beginning G-d created heaven and earth." Heaven is the domain of G-d; earth is the domain of man. By attempting to build a tower that would "reach heaven," the builders of Babel were men trying to be like gods. What does this have to do with responsibility? Not accidentally does the word responsibility suggest response-ability. The Hebrew equivalent, achrayut, comes from the word acher, meaning "an other." Responsibility is always a response to something or someone. In Judaism, it means response to the command of G-d. By attempting to reach heaven, the builders of Babel were in effect saying: we are going to take the place of G-d. We are not going to respond to His law or respect His boundaries. We are going to create an environment where we rule, not G-d. Babel is the failure of ontological responsibility - the idea that something beyond us makes a call on us. What we see in Bereishith 1-11 is an exceptionally tightly constructed four-act drama on the theme of responsibility and moral development. The first thing we learn as a child is that our acts are under our control (personal responsibility). The next is that not everything we can do may we do (moral responsibility). The next stage is the realization that we have a duty not just to ourselves but to those on whom we have an influence (collective responsibility). Ultimately we learn that morality is not a mere human convention, but is written into the structure of existence. There is an Author of being, therefore there is an Authority beyond mankind (ontological responsibility). This is developmental psychology as we have come to know it through the work of Jean Piaget, Eric Erikson, Lawrence Kohlberg and Abraham Maslow. Never underestimate the subtlety and depth of the Torah. It was the first, and is still the greatest, text on the human condition and our psychological growth from instinct to conscience, from "dust of the earth" to the morally responsible agent the Torah calls "the image of G-d."

What we can talk about we can cure (An excerpt from “The Politics of Hope” P.24-27) What we can talk about we can cure. What we cannot talk about eventually takes a heavy toll. In an age in which the most private emotions are paraded in public and the most intimate confessions broadcast to millions, things that used to be public knowledge have become unsayable. Words like virtue, vice, sin, evil, righteousness, modesty, grace, humility and repentance have become the ultimate solecisms . They have taken on the role that was once occupied in our culture by blasphemy and obscenity. Utter them out loud in a crowded room and there is a shocked silence and lingering disbelief. The barriers we have erected against moral debate are formidable. Judgement, a quality we once prized, has become judgementalism, “blaming the victim”. Moral statements are dismissed as moralising. Concern about the weakening of our social framework is described as moral panic. Morality has been exiled from polite conversation.

There is an air of unreality about this situation. For several months Britain was seized by a wave of panic about the infection of cattle with BSE, which had a possible, yet not proven, connection with the death of twelve people from the condition known as Creuzfeldt-Jakob Disease. For several years acute concerns had been expressed about and environmental phenomenon, global warming, whose existence is still being debated. These anxieties were justified. A risk, however remote, a possible connection, however speculative, is worth taking into consideration if we are to do all we can to ensure public safety. Yet the possibility that many of our social ills are related to the way we live and the principles we teach is resisted with a vehemence hard to understand, fateful in its consequences. The relationship between beef-eating and CJD is far more remote and speculative than that promiscuity and AIDS and divorce and depressive illness, or fragmented families and child dysfunction, but while we find it possible to debate the one, we find it difficult to talk about the other. Livy’s words about ancient Rome are uncomfortably close to us: “We have reached the point where we cannot bear either our vices or their cure.” If we are to talk openly about our shared future, moral principles cannot be excluded. They are central to our conversation about what kind of society we seek to create, what kinds of people we aspire to be, and what ideals we wish to hand on to our children. Such conversations have been at the heart of democratic civilisation. In the first half of the nineteenth century they were joined by such figures as Coleridge, Southey and Carlyle; in the second half by Dickens, Ruskin, Matthew Arnold and William Morris. In the early twentieth century R.H.Tawney, T.S.Eliot, George Orwell and Archbishop William Temple set out their very different visions of ethics, politics and culture. None of these was a sermonic exhortation to virtue, but they were expressions of moral conviction none the less. Their assumption was that society is, at least in part, constituted by its image of itself and that this must regularly be tested, probed and if need be, criticised. The idea that moral language is essentially private and that a nation is no more than an arena in which individuals do their own thing would have struck them as absurd. That, they would have said, is not a society but the abscence of society, not a culture but the destruction of the possibility of culture. Surely they were right. I need therefore to make one thing clear at the outset. As I understand it, moral judgement is about the future not the past, about the ideals we aspire to, not about condemnation or accusation. Our abortive moral conversations - like those in the wake of the murder of James Bulger (1993) or during the International year of the Family (1994) - fail because almost immediately they descend to the question of blame. Who is responsible? Politicians blame religious leaders. Religious leaders condemn the politicians. Parents accuse the teachers. Teachers reproach the parents. Thinkers on the right indict the liberalism of the 1960’s. Thinkers on the left point the finger to the free market philosophy of the 1980’s. In the dock stand the usual suspects: affluence, poverty, genetic programming,, original sin, footballers, pop singers, and the media. The air is thick with mutual recrimination and there are only two things on which we can agree. Someone is to blame and it isn’t me. I want to move away from the language of blame. It is not helpful. It produces defensiveness, self-justification and counter-accusation. It turns us into a finger-pointing society, which is not the place most of us would choose to live in. It does not meet the standards of generosity and charity demanded by our great religious traditions, almost all of which teach that judgement in the sense of blame belongs to G-d alone. It confuses righteousness with self-righteousness (a great Jewish teacher once said: “I would prefer a wicked man who knows he is wicked than a righteous man who knows he is righteous”). Above all, it is not true. Most politicians I know struggle seriously with the dilemmas of power. Most religious leaders think deeply about the conflict between condemnation and compassion. Parents wrestle with the pressures of work or unemployment and try to do their best. Teachers are the unsung heroes of our society, under-recognised, underpaid and often desperately unsupported. None of us is or should be immune to criticism, but we do not need to be told by those who neither know nor understand that we are not doing our job. It is de-motivating and undeserved. More importantly, it misconceives the nature of the moral enterprise.

To build, it is not necessary to blame. The leader of a team knows that after losing a match the best way to prepare for the next encounter is not to make accusations about whose fault the defeat was. It is to build the morale of the players, so that they can, honestly and together, face the fact of defeat, analyse why, and work out how to avoid repeating the same mistake a

second time. It is no dishonour to lose. To play a game means being willing to take that risk. What is fatal, however, is the inability to learn. This can happen for two quite different reasons: because we are convinced we can never win, or because we are sure that losing was someone else's fault. That is the difference between, and the common outcome of, being de-moralised and being over-moralised.

The moral tradition most familiar to us, that of the Judaeo-Christian ethic, suggests that our failures are forgiven as soon as they are acknowledged. It says that risk is of the essence of the moral life, as it is of learning generally, and that it is often less important to be right than to be open: to wisdom, experience, the voice of tradition and the insights of the present. The true moral leader is the captain of the team, the one who has faith in us even we have lost faith in ourselves, who is always there when we call on him but rarely when we do not; who never second-guesses us or steps in front of us when we are about to kick a ball; who allows us to make our own mistakes but who asks us to take time out for reflective moments in which we can recognise that they are mistakes. That is a religious vision, but you do not have to be religious to share its essential outlines.

The inability to talk about the public dimension of morality closes off to us one of our most important problem-solving resources. It separates the individual from society and suggests that whatever we do affects us alone, and therefore whatever can be done on a large scale is beyond our direct participation. This induces a potentially tragic and quite unfounded sense of helplessness. For many centuries, the moral view allowed people to feel connected to one another, joining their individual striving to a larger world of common purpose. That connectedness is part of the logical geography of hope. To reconnect we need recover confidence in a way of speaking which we have never forgotten but which has become systematically undermined.

That as Ludwig Wittgenstein said in a memorable line in Philosophical Investigations, is part of the task of thought and its greatest aspiration. "What is your aim in philosophy?" he asked. "To show the fly the way out of the bottle." The fly keeps banging its head against the glass in a vain attempt to find a way out. The one thing it forgets to do is look up.

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from **Rabbi Yissocher Frand** <ryfrand@torah.org> reply-to ryfrand@torah.org, genesis@torah.org to ravfrand@torah.org date Thu, Oct 7, 2010 at 11:08 AM
subject Rabbi Frand on Parshas Noach

Rabbi Frand on Parshas Noach

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape # 653, The Temple Mount in Halacha and Habayis. Good Shabbos! Never Underestimate the Power of Prayer They're here! ALL NEW Commuter's Chavrusa Bereishis 23 is available, on tape or CD, to enlighten, inspire and perhaps amuse you with such fascinating topics as: "The Case of the Missing Bathroom Tissue"; "Shinui Hashaim: Changing the Name of a Choleh", "The Obligation to Marry off the Children - How Far Must You Go?" and "My Chumrah Vs Your Hurt Feelings". SUBSCRIPTION SERVICE FOR RABBI FRAND'S CURRENT WEEKLY SHIUR ON MP3 IS NOW AVAILABLE. SEE OUR WEBSITE WWW.YADYECHIEL.ORG AND CLICK ON THE "NEVER MISS SUBSCRIPTION" BUTTON FOR DETAILS For complete listings of all the new offerings, log onto our secure site at http://www.yadyechiel.org and select the "Timely Offers" button, or send e-mail to tapes@yadyechiel.org , or call us at 410-358-0416. And while you're there, don't forget that the entire Yad Yechiel Tape Library, featuring the complete collection of Rav Frand's shiurim, is also available for viewing online. At http://www.yadyechiel.org, you can browse through a comprehensive listing of 23 years of weekly shiurim, view Parsha Perceptions, Halacha Tapes, Hashkafa Tapes and Theme Sets. Plus, you'll find order information on this easy-to-navigate site.

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The Haftorah for Parshas Noach is from Perek [Chapter] 54 of Isaiah. (This also happens to be the Haftorah of Parshas Ki Tseitzei.) The connection to Parshas Noach is related to a two-word reference in the Haftorah in pasukim [verses] 8-9: "For with a slight wrath have I concealed My countenance from you for a moment, but with eternal kindness shall I show you mercy, said your Redeemer, Hashem. For like the waters of Noach shall this be to Me: as I have sworn never again to pass the waters of Noach over the earth, so have I sworn not to be wrathful with you, or rebuke you."

Why is the flood in Parshas Noach considered to be "the waters of Noach"? Why is it not called the waters of the generation of Noach? In what sense is it Noach's flood? The Zohar chastises Noach for not asking for mercy for his generation. The Zohar says that the flood is called by Noach's name because he did not sufficiently pray for his contempor aries.

A case can be made that Noach should not be faulted for this. G-d came to Noach and announced that the people of the earth were wicked and that He was going to destroy them. Scripture elaborates on the perversion and the wickedness of that generation. G-d commanded Noach to build an ark to save his family and selected mates from each species. Why should Noach question G-d's Judgment and pray to Him to suspend His plans? There is no reason to suspect that such a prayer would have reversed the Divine determination to end the corruption that had gone on for years and years.

This is another example of the incredible power of prayer. This implicitly tells us that yes indeed, had Noach davened he could have prevented the flood. He did not have sufficient faith in the power of his own prayers and therefore the flood came and was even called by his name – Mei Noach.

The proof that Noach's prayers could have helped is the pasukim that we read after the end of the flood: "Then Noach built an altar to Hashem and took of every pure animal and of every pure bird, and offered burnt-offerings on the altar. Hashem smelled the pleasing aroma, and Hashem said in His heart: 'I will not continue to curse again the ground because of man... Nor will I again continue to smite every living being as I have done.'" [Bereshis 8:20-21]. Noach's prayers are accepted and G-d concedes that Noach is right. "Never again will I bring a flood!" We see that the prayer did work. Conceivably, had Noach built such an altar and offered such a prayer before the flood, it might never have happened.

The Talmud states [Rosh Hashana 18a]: Rabbi Meir used to say two people who took ill with the same illness or two criminals convicted of the same crime, it is possible for one to get better and the other one not to get better, one to be ultimately acquitted and one not be acquitted. One will live and one will die. Why is this so? One prayed and his prayers were answered, the other prayed and his prayers were not answered. The Gemara elaborates – the one who prayed a "complete prayer" was answered and the one who did not pray a "complete prayer" was not answered.

What is the definition of a "complete prayer" versus an "incomplete prayer"? It is unlikely that the difference is one of kavannah [intent]. It is unlikely for a person's mind to wander when he is on his deathbed. The Gemara does not mean that one of them "spaced out" while praying and the other one did not.

Rav Elya Lopian explains that a "complete prayer" (tefillah shleimah) indicates that the person believed in the power of his prayer. He believed in the Power of the Almighty and the power of his own prayers and he was therefore answered. One person believed in the power of his prayer, however, the other person did not have confidence that his prayer would be answered.

The Kotzker Rebbe's sister was once sick and nothing helped her. She went to her brother, the Rebbe, and asked that he daven for her. He looked at her and said, "There is nothing I can do for you" and then slammed the door in her face. His sister then started crying, "Master of the Universe, my own brother won't help me. You must help me!" The Kotzker Rebbe then opened the door and said, "This is what I wanted to hear. It is not the Kotzker Rebbe who can help you or the doctors who can help you, it is only the Almighty that can help you. I just wanted to bring you to that realization. Once you have come to that realization, then you will be fine." This is the definition of a "complete prayer".

The Baal Shem Tov says that prayers are matters "that stand at the heights of the world," yet people treat them lightly. Many times, we pray and our prayers have cosmic impact, even though we do not recognize that fact and even though we may think that our prayers have gone unanswered. We do not see the results, becomes sometimes the effect is not felt u ntil generations later. We think that when we pray for OUR sick family member that the prayers have to help OUR sick family member. That is

understandable. But we do not know the power of prayer. Many times, even though the specific person in critical condition may pass on, our prayers for him or her may have impact to save many other lives.

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PARSHAS NOACH – Parshat Noach ***YUHSB Shma Koleinu***

Living in Our Time: By Rabbi Avraham Shulman

The opening pasuk of Parshah Noach immediately reveals to us the quality of Noach's righteousness. The Torah tells us that he was a tzaddik *Bidorosav*, a righteous man "in his generation." Rashi, commenting on "*Bidorosav*," quotes the well known machlokes chazal (Sanhedrin 108a): Reish Lakish understands this as praise, while according to R' Yochanan this is criticism of Noach's character, he was merely a tzaddik in an unworthy era. Throughout the *parsha*, many *mefarshim* point to instances where Noach's behavior did not reach the level of a pure tzadik tamim. Most striking is the midrash brought by Rashi that Noach entered the teivah only after the flood waters commenced, because he was also from the ketanei emunah, those lacking full belief in the power of *Hashem*. How do we understand that the man who was chosen to survive the *Mabul* was a person whose character was severely flawed?

An analysis of the dor hamabul, the generation of the flood, teaches us an incredible lesson in human behavior. Their evil was so extreme, the Torah informs us, that their actions corrupted the entire earth - including plant and animal life. Yet *Chazal* learn from the third *Pasuk* of the *Parsha* that the final verdict against this generation was sealed because of a particular sin, that of Chamas - violent robbery. The Ramban explains that this *aveirah* stood out because the need to avoid robbery is logical and obvious to all mankind. A society can not exist if private property is not secure. The dor hamabul sunk to such depths that they violated laws.

The *Rambam* in *Hilchos Melachim* (8:11), writes that the righteous gentiles of the world who observe the seven Noahide Laws will have a portion in the world to come. However this is only if they keep the seven mitzvos because they were commanded to do so by *Hashem*. One who observes the laws only for ethical reasons is considered a wise man, put not pious. *Mitzvos* can not be performed based on a personal subjective acceptance of their value and efficacy. When this is done, they become detached from their ultimate purpose: To guide us as loyal servants of *Hashem*. Man's selfish desires are so powerful that he can be blinded from behaving in a correct and objective manner.

The *Sefer Be'er Yosef* suggests that Noach erred in a similar vein. Hashem had delayed the flood to give people time to do Teshuva. Even at the last moment, Noach thought that there may be one more reprieve to save his generation. This was an example of Noach acting on his own theory of divine justice. *Hashem* had told him to enter the *teivah*, and he should have done so even before the flood began.

Noach struggled to understand the *Derech Hashem* in a difficult time. Yet he is the one from whom we learn. While the Midrash tells us that others such as Amram, Calev and Yishai died without sin, it is the imperfections in our Tzaddikim that we can learn from, to grow and correct our own mistakes.

Following the purity of the Aseres Yemei Teshuva, the simcha of Succos, and the renewal of Simchas Torah and Bereishis, we enter a time of the year when we return to the challenges of everyday life. We live in a world of "*Bedorosav*," an era that presents us with significant challenges in our mission as *Ovdei Hashem*. Let us use the lesson of Noach to inspire ourselves to fulfill the will of *Hashem* during this zman, and become true *Tzaddikim Bedorosainu*.

The Torah's Instructions to Non-Jews—The Laws of Bnei Noach by Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

Although it may seem strange for a non-Jew to ask a rav a shaylah, it should actually be commonplace. After all, there are tens of thousands of times more non-Jews than Jews in the world, and 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 Habah and had the nations not been deceived by spurious religions, many thousands more would observe the mitzvos that they are commanded. It is tragic that they have been misled into false beliefs and practices. An entire literature discusses the mitzvah responsibilities of non-Jews. Although it was Adam who was originally commanded to observe these mitzvos, they are usually referred to as the "Seven Mitzvos of the Bnei Noach," since all of mankind is descended from Noach. Furthermore, a Jew should be familiar with the halachos that apply to a non-Jew since it is forbidden to cause a non-Jew 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 case, this means do not cause someone to sin if he is blind about the seriousness of his violation (Gemara Avodah Zarah 6b). In actuality, a non-Jew must observe more than seven mitzvos. The "Seven Mitzvos" are really categories; furthermore, there are additional mitzvos that apply, as we will explain.

THE BASICS The seven cardinal prohibitions that apply to a non-Jew are:

1. AVODAH ZARAH. It is forbidden for a non-Jew to worship idols in any way. Most religions of the world are idolatrous, particularly the major religions of the East. Although Christianity constitutes idol worship for a Jew, there is a dispute whether it is idolatry for a ben Noach. Some poskim contend that its strange concepts of G-d do not violate the prohibition against Avodah Zarah that was commanded to Adam and Noach (Tosafos to Bechoros 2b s.v. shema; Rama, Orach Chayim 156). However, most later poskim contend that Christian belief does constitute Avodah Zarah even for a non-Jew (Shu"t Noda B'Yehudah, Tenina, Yoreh Deah #148; Chazon Ish, Likutim to Sanhedrin, 63b pg. 536). In this regard, there is a widespread misconception among Jews that only Catholicism is Avodah Zarah but not Protestantism. This is untrue. Every branch and type of Christianity includes idolatrous beliefs.
2. GILUY ARAYOS, which prohibits many illicit relationships.
3. MURDER, including abortion (Gemara Sanhedrin 57b), suicide, and mercy killing. It should be noted that capital punishment, when halachically authorized, does not violate this mitzvah because the Torah requires it to guarantee observance of the Seven Mitzvos of Bnei Noach.
4. EIVER MIN HACHAI, eating flesh taken from a live animal. This prohibition includes eating a limb or flesh removed from an animal that is still halachically considered alive even if the animal is now dead. In the context of this mitzvah, the Rishonim raise an interesting question. Adam

was forbidden to eat meat (see Bereishis 1:29-30), but Noach was permitted to after the Flood (Bereishis 9:3; see Rashi in both places). So why was Adam prohibited from eating flesh of a living animal if he was prohibited from eating meat altogether? Two differing approaches are presented to answer this question. The Rambam explains that the prohibition to eat meat that was given to Adam was rescinded after the Flood, and it was then that the prohibition of Eiver Min HaChai was commanded to Noach for the first time (Rambam, Hilchos Melachim 9:1). According to this approach, six of the present day "Seven Mitzvos" were commanded to Adam, while the seventh was not commanded until the time of Noach. Other Rishonim contend that Adam was permitted to eat the meat of an animal that was already dead and only prohibited from killing animals for food. In addition, he was prohibited to eat meat that was removed from a living animal and this prohibition is one of the "Seven Mitzvos" (Rashi, Sanhedrin 57a s.v. limishri, and Bereishis 1:29; Tosafos, Sanhedrin 56b s.v. achal). The first prohibition was rescinded after the Flood, when mankind was permitted to slaughter animals for food. Thus according to the Rambam, Adam was prohibited both from killing animals and from eating any meat, while according to the other Rishonim, he was prohibited from killing animals but allowed to eat meat. ANIMAL BLOOD Although a non-Jew may not eat the flesh of a living animal, he may eat blood drawn from a living animal (Rambam, Hilchos Melachim 9:10; cf. Gemara Sanhedrin 56b and 59a, and Rashi, Breishis 9:3). Some African tribesmen extract blood from their livestock, mix it with milk, and drink it for a nutritious beverage. Although we may consider this practice very offensive, it does not violate the mitzvos of a non-Jew in any way.

5. BLASPHEMY. A non-Jew who curses Hashem is subject to capital punishment if his crime was witnessed. As with his other mitzvos, he may not claim that he was unaware it is forbidden.

6. STEALING. This prohibition includes taking even a very small item that does not belong to him, eating something of the owner's on the job without permission, or not paying employees or contractors (Rambam, Hilchos Melachim 9:9). According to some opinions, it includes not paying workers or contractors on time (Meiri, Sanhedrin).

7. DINIM, literally, laws. This mitzvah includes the application of civil law code, including the laws of damages, torts, loans, assault, cheating, and commerce (Ramban, Breishis 34:13; cf. Rambam, Hilchos Melachim 9:14). Furthermore, there is a requirement to establish courts in every city and region to guarantee that people observe their mitzvos (Gemara Sanhedrin 56b; Rambam, Hilchos Melachim 9:14).

ARE NON-JEWS REQUIRED TO OBSERVE THE COMMERCIAL LAW OF THE TORAH? Does the mitzvah of Dinim require non-Jews to establish their own system of law, or is the mitzvah to observe and enforce the Torah's mitzvos, what we would usually refer to as the halachos of Choshen Mishpat? In a long tshuvah, the Rama (Shu"t #10) contends that this question is disputed by Amorayim in the Gemara. He concludes that non-Jews are required to observe the laws of Choshen Mishpat just like Jews. Following this approach, a non-Jew may not sue in a civil court that uses any system of law other than that of the Torah. Instead, he must litigate in a beis din or in a court of non-Jewish judges who follow halachic guidelines (see Rambam, Hilchos Melachim 10:11). Therefore, a gentile who accepts money on the basis of civil litigation is considered stealing, just like a Jew. The Rama's opinion is accepted by many early poskim (e.g., Tumim 110:3; Shu"t Chasam Sofer, Choshen Mishpat #91). However, the Netziv disagrees with the Rama, contending that non-Jews are not obligated to observe the laws of Choshen Mishpat. In his opinion, the Torah requires non-Jews to create their own legal rules and procedures. Although a Jew is forbidden from using the non-Jewish court system and laws (see the article published in these pages on Parshas Shoftim), according to the Netziv a non-Jew may use secular courts to resolve his litigation and indeed fulfills a mitzvah when doing so (HaEmek Shaylah #2:3). Other poskim accept this approach (Even HaEzel; Chazon Ish, Bava Kamma 10:1). Several major poskim contend that the dispute between the Rama and Netziv is an earlier dispute between the Rambam and Ramban (Shu"t Maharam Schick, Orach Chayim #142; Shu"t Maharsham 4:86; Shu't Avnei Nezer, Choshen Mishpat #55). What is a non-Jew to do if he must sue someone? May he litigate in civil court or must he sue in beis din? Because this subject is disputed, we would have to decide whether the rule of "safek di'oraysa l'chumra" (we are strict regarding a doubt concerning a Torah law) applies to a gentile. (Although I have seen no literature on this shaylah, I believe that it is subject to dispute.) If the gentile asks how to proceed in the most mehadrin fashion, we would tell him to take his matter to beis din because this is permitted (and a mitzvah) according to all opinions. It should be noted that according to both opinions, a non-Jew must observe dina di'malchusa dina—laws established by civil authorities for the common good. Therefore, he must certainly observe tax codes, traffic laws, building or zoning codes, and regulations against smuggling.

AN INTERESTING SHAYLAH – BRIBING A DISHONEST JUDGE The Chasam Sofer (6:14) was asked the following shaylah: A gentile sued a Jew falsely in a dishonest court. The Jew knew that the gentile judge will rule against him, despite the absence of any evidence. However, bribing the judge may gain a ruling in the Jew's favor. May he bribe the dishonest judge to rule honestly? Chasam Sofer rules that it is permitted. The prohibition against bribing a non-Jew is because a gentile is responsible to have an honest court. However, one may bribe a dishonest judge to rule honestly. (Of course, the Jewish litigant must be absolutely certain that he is right.)

OTHER PROHIBITIONS In addition to the "Seven Mitzvos," there are other activities that are also prohibited to a non-Jew. According to some opinions, a non-Jew may not graft trees from different species or crossbreed animals (Sanhedrin 56b; Rambam Hilchos Melachim 10:6; Meiri ad loc.; cf. Shach Yoreh Deah 297:3 and Dagul Mei're'vavah ad loc.; Chazon Ish Kilayim 1:1). Some poskim even prohibit a non-Jew from owning a grafted fruit tree, and a Jew may not sell him such a tree because he is causing a non-Jew to violate his mitzvah (Shu't Mahar"i Asad, Yoreh Deah #350; Shu't Maharsham 1:179). Some poskim contend that non-Jews are prohibited from engaging in sorcery (see Kesef Mishneh, Hilchos Avodah Zarah, 11:4). According to this opinion, a non-Jew may not use any type of black magic, necromancy, or fortune telling. However, most opinions disagree (Radbaz to Hilchos Melachim 10:6).

MAY A NON-JEW OBSERVE MITZVOS? A gentile may not keep Shabbos or a day of rest (without doing melacha) on any day of the week (Gemara Sanhedrin 58b). The reason for this is subject to dispute. Rashi explains that a non-Jew is obligated to work everyday 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." The Rambam (Hilchos Melachim 10:9), however explains that a gentile is prohibited from making his own holiday, or religious observance because the Torah is opposed to the creation of man-made religions. 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 detracting." A third reason mentioned is that a Jew may mistakenly learn from a gentile who keeps a day of rest and the Jew may create his own mitzvos (Meiri). Because of this halacha, a non-Jew studying for conversion must perform a small act of Shabbos desecration every Shabbos. There is a dispute among poskim whether this applies to a non-Jew who has undergone bris milah and is awaiting immersion in a mikvah to complete his conversion (Shu"t Binyan Tzion #91).

POSITIVE MITZVOS You probably noticed that there are few positive mitzvos among the non-Jew's commandments. They are required to believe that the mitzvos were commanded by Hashem through Moshe Rabbeinu (Rambam Hilchos Melachim 8:11). They are also obligated to establish courts. A non-Jew is permitted to observe the mitzvos of the Torah, except for those mentioned above (Rambam, Hilchos Melachim 10:10). He is even permitted to offer korbanos (Zevachim 116b).

STUDYING TORAH The Gemara states that a gentile is not permitted to study Torah (Sanhedrin 59a). One opinion of the Gemara explains that the Torah belongs to the Jewish people and by studying Torah the gentile is "stealing" Jewish property. However, there are many exceptions to this ruling. Firstly, a gentile may study all the halachos applicable to observing his mitzvos (Meiri). Rambam rules that it is a mitzvah to teach a non-Jew the halachos of offering korbanos if he intends to bring them (Rambam, Maasei HaKorbanos 19:16). According to the Rama's opinion that a non-Jew must observe the Torah's civil laws, the gentile may study all the intricate laws of Choshen Mishpat. Furthermore, since a non-Jew is permitted to observe other mitzvos of the Torah (other than those mentioned above), some opinions contend that he may learn the laws of those mitzvos in order to observe them correctly (Meiri, Sanhedrin 58b). There is a dispute among poskim whether one may teach a non-Jew Torah if the non-Jew is planning to convert. The Meiri (Sanhedrin 58b) and Maharsha (Shabbos 31a s.v. amar lei mikra) rule that it is permitted, whereas Rabbi Akiva Eiger forbids it (Shu"t #41). Others permit teaching Nevi'im and Kesuvim to non-Jews (Shiltei HaGibborim, Avodah Zarah 20a, quoting Ohr Zarua) and other poskim permit teaching a non-Jew about miracles that the Jews experienced (Shu"t Melamed Leho'il Yoreh Deah #77). Incidentally, Rav Moshe Feinstein rules that one is permitted to teach Torah to Jews while a non-Jew is listening (Igros Moshe, Yoreh Deah 2:132). For this reason, he permits conducting a seder with a gentile in attendance.

OLAM HABAH FOR A NON-JEW A gentile who observes his mitzvos because Hashem commanded them through Moshe Rabbeinu is called "Chassidei Umos HaOlam" and merits a place in Olam Habah. Observing these mitzvos carefully does not suffice to make a gentile into a Chassid. He must observe his mitzvos as a commandment of Hashem (Rambam Hilchos Melachim 8:11). When I was a congregational rabbi, I often met non-Jews who were interested in Judaism. I always presented the option of becoming an observant ben Noach. I vividly recall meeting a woman whose grandfather was Jewish, but who was halachically not Jewish. She was keeping kosher, no small feat in her town - where there was no Jewish community. Although she had come to speak about converting, since we do not encourage this I explained the halachos of Bnei Noach to her instead. An even more interesting experience occurred to me when I was once making a kashrus inspection at an ice cream plant. A worker there asked me where I was from, and then informed me that he used to attend a Reform Temple two blocks from my house! I was surprised, not expecting to find a Jew in the plant. However, it turned out that he was not Jewish at all, but had stopped attending church after rejecting its beliefs. Now he was concerned because he had stopped attending the Reform Temple that was far from his house. I discussed with him the religious beliefs and observances of Bnei Noach, explaining that they must be meticulously honest in all their business dealings, just like Jews. I told him that Hashem gave mitzvos both to the Jews and to the non-Jews, and that Judaism is the only major religion that does not claim a monopoly on heaven. Non-Jews too merit olam habah if they observe their mitzvos. Over the years I have noticed that many churchgoing gentiles in the United States have rejected the spurious and strange tenets of Christianity. What they have accepted is that Hashem appeared to Moshe and the Jewish people at Sinai and commanded us about His Mitzvos. This belief is vital for a non-Jew to qualify as Chasidei Umos HaOlam – he must accept that the commandments of bnei Noach were commanded to Moshe (Rambam, Hilchos Melachim 8:11). As Jews, we do not proselytize to gentiles, nor seek converts. However, when we meet sincere non-Jews, we should direct them correctly in their quest for truth through introducing them to the Seven Mitzvos of Bnei Noach (see Tosafos, Chagigah 13a).

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http://people.ucalgary.ca/~elsegal/TalmudMap/MG.html

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Torah Commentaries The Masorah Targum Onkelos "Targum Yonatan ben 'Uzziel" to the Torah The "Targum Yerushalmi" Rabbi Abraham Ibn Ezra's Commentary to the Torah Rashi's Commentary to the Torah Ramban's Commentary to the Torah Rashbam's Commentary to the Torah Rabbi Obadiah Sforno's Commentary to the Torah The Ba'al Ha-Turim's Commentary to the Torah

Targum "Onkelos" to the Torah:

Title A "Targum" is a translation, but the term is usually used specifically to designate Aramaic translations of the Bible. According to an ancient Jewish tradition, the public reading of the Bible in the synagogue must be accompanied by a translation into Aramaic, which was the spoken language of most Jews in Israel and Babylonia during the Talmudic era. The normal practice was that after each verse was read from the written scroll, an official known as the "Turgeman" or "Meturgeman" would then recite orally an Aramaic rendering of the previous verse. As the use of Aramaic declined, the practice of reciting the Targum in the synagogue fell into disuse in most Jewish communities.

Author The name "Onkelos" was attached to the present work in early medieval times on account of a mistaken identification with a translation by "Onkelos the Proselyte" that is mentioned in the Talmud. It is clear that the Talmudic reference is really to the Greek translation of the Torah by Aquila, portions of which are cited in the Palestinian Talmud and in Christian sources.

The current Aramaic translation has no known author, and was evidently the standard version that was in use in Babylonian synagogues during the Talmudic era. Several quotations of the Targum in the Babylonian Talmud agree with our "Targum Onkelos"; most of them are brought in the name of the third-century Babylonian scholar Rav Joseph, indicating perhaps that he took an active part in its compilation.

Dates The Aramaic dialect of Targum Onkelos seems to be that of second-century Israel, though many scholars believe that it underwent subsequent development in Babylonia during the Talmudic era.

Place Israel and Babylonia

Description Targum Onkelos is for the most part a literal, word-for-word translation of the Hebrew. There are however a number of conditions when it departs fromthe plain sense of the Biblical text. These include:
Poetic passages For Biblical sections such as the testaments of Jacob (end of Genesis) and Moses (end of Deuteronomy), Targum Onkelos renders these with expansive homiletical interpretations, analogous to the style of the Palestinian Targums.

Passages that present theological difficulties. Targum Onkelos was uncomfortable with Hebrew expressions that suggest direct interaction between God and his creatures. In some cases it gets around these difficulties through circumlocutions. Thus instead of speaking to God, Moses usually speaks before God.

Similarly, Onkelos introduces the "word" (memra) of God as an intermediary between God and the world, an approach which seems to echo the use of the "logos" in the writings of the Alexandrian Jewish philosopher Philo.

In order to conform to the accepted interpretations of the Jewish oral tradition.

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Rashi's Commentary to the Torah:

Author Rabbi Solomon ben Isaac (or: Shlomo Yitzhaki) is known by the acronym: RaSh"I.

Rashi has been accepted by the entire Jewish world as the exegete par exellence, and he succeeded in completing commentaries to Judaism's most sacred texts, the Bible and the Babylonian Talmud. Rashi's commentary to the Torah was perhaps the first Hebrew book to be printed, and it is included in almost any edition of the Torah that is designed for traditional and synagogue use.

Dates 1040-1105

Place Troyes, France.

Description Rashi's commentary to the Torah is based on an intriguing combination of traditional and critical methods. In many instances he faithfully quotes the Talmudic interpretations of a particular verse,whereas in others he ignores them or explicitly rejects them in favour of more literal explanations. This apparent inconsistency has challenged subsequent students to seek an underlying system. Thus, it is widely argued that Rashi's main allegiance was to the plain meaning of the Bible, and utilized homiletical interpretations only in those cases where they provide a solution to a serious difficulty in the meaning of the text.

In citing traditional interpretations, he makes use of an impressive array of classical rabbinic literature, including the Targums (which provides him with an important instrument for translating obscure Hebrew words), homiletical and halakhic midrash, in addition to the Babylonian Talmud.

In some instances he translates Hebrew words into their French equivalents (which he calls "La'az"), providing posterity with some of the earliest records of medieval French dialects.

He frequently cites the lexicographic and grammatical works of the Spanish Jewish scholars Menahem ben Saruk and Dunash ben Labrat.

In general, Rashi demonstrates the kind of qualities that exemplify a master teacher. He is able to anticipate where students are likely to find difficulties, and provide explanations that are satisfying to both the beginner and the advanced scholar.

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Ramban's Commentary to the Torah:

Author Rabbi Moses ben Nahman, also known by the Hebrew acronym "Ramban" and the Latin designation "Nahmanides."

He was a prolific author, producing important Talmudic commentaries and other works on Jewish religious law. He also had a broad education in science, philosophy and languges.

Ramban was chosen by the king of Aragon to defend Judaism at the famous religious disputation against the apostate Pablo Christiani. In the wake of his success, he was impelled to fulfil his dream of moving to the Holy Land, where he spent the latter years of his life.

Dates 1194-1270

Place Gerona, Spain. He died in Acre, Israel

Description Nahmanides' Torah commentary is the mature work of an accomplished scholar, in which he deals in profound detail with each aspect of the Biblical text. He was familiar with the commentaries of Rashi and Ibn Ezra, and he discusses their explanations carefully, often expressing his disagreement. In many of his works he displays a strong conservative leaning, and this is evident in his Torah commentary as well: He makes use of his formidable erudition and ingenuity in order to support the traditional teachings of the accepted religious sources, and severely attacks scholars (including Ibn Ezra) who do not display proper respect for the traditional explanations.

Ramban's commentary was one of the earliest documents to include references to the teachings of the Kabbalah. This system of esoteric mysticism, based on a theory of ten divine powers whose workings may be discerned in the words of the Biblicla text, had evolved over the previous generations among the Jewish mystics of Provence, but it was carefull preserved as a secret doctrine that could not be taught publicly. Nahmanides included several Kabbalistic interpretations in his commentary, which he inroduced as "according to the way of truth." He tried to sidestep the restrictions against public teaching of the doctrine by formulating in such a brief and cryptic way that they could not be understood by anyone who was not already familiar with Kabbalistic symbolism.

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Rashbam's Commentary to the Torah:

Author Rabbi Samuel ben Meir ("Rashbam" is an acronym of that name) belonged to the school of the "Tosafot" commentators to the Talmud. He was a grandson of Rashi's and the brother of Rabbenu Tam. . He also composed the commentaries to some of the Talmud sections that his grandfather had left uncompleted.

Dates c. 1085 - c. 1174.

Place Troyes, France

Description Rashbam's commentary to the Torah is distinguished by its scholarly objectivity in restricting itself to the plain, contextual meaning of the text without imposing the traditional Rabbinic interpretations. These often lead to interpretations that contradict the normative readings according to established Jewish law.

Rashbam was sensitive to issues of grammar (relying on the pioneering works of the Spanish grammarians Menahem ben Saruk and Dunash ben Labrat) and to the literary and rhetorical qualities of Biblical Hebrew. He was aware that his grandfather, Rashi, had followed a different approach, making extensive use of the Talmudic and midrashic interpretations. Rashbam claimed (in his explanation of Genesis 37:1) that Rashi had conceded to him his own wish to compose a commentary based on the plain sense of the Bible.

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Rabbi Obadiah Sforno's Commentary to the Torah:

Author Rabbi Obadiah Sforno. In addition to his Biblical exegesis, he worked a physician and was a student of philosophy.

Dates c. 1470 - 1550.

Place Bologna, Italy

Description For the most part, Rabbi Sforno attempts to provide a straightforward explanatory commentary. He was however a typical product of the Italian Renaissance, and his variegated interests find much room for expression in this work, particularly in scientific matters related to his medical training, such as biology. He took much interest in the literary features of the Biblical narrative and the psychological motivations of its protagonists.

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Ba'al Ha-Turim to the Torah:

Title This title identifies its author by his best-known work, the 'Arba'ah Turim ("four columns"), a well-respected code of Jewish law. In its first printed version it was entitled "Rimzei [the allusions of] Ba'al ha-Turim," which gives a clearer idea of the work's character, designed to present hints and allusions to themes cleverly hidden in word-plays, numerology, masoretic rules, etc.

Author Rabbi Jacob ben Asher was the son of Rabbi Asher ben Jehiel (the "Rosh"), a prominent German rabbi and member of the Tosafot school who moved late in life to Spain, where he adopted many of the Spanish approaches to Jewish tradition, especially the tendency towards systematic codification.

Dates c. 1270 - c. 1343

Place Toledo, Spain

Description These snippets about the words of the Torah do not really add up to an exegetical interpretation of the meaning of the text, but rather are playful homiletical tricks designed to show how religious themes were, as it were, hidden in the Biblical text. Towards this end, Rabbi Jacob makes use of several popular hermeneutical methods, particularly that of numerology (gimatria), the drawing of associations between words whose numerical values are equivalent (based on the premise that every Hebrew letter has a numerical value). Rabbi Jacob also derives thematic lessons from the lists compiled in the Masorah of instances where certain words or grammatical forms appear in the Bible. Although the work described above is the one that is standardly published as the "Ba'al ha-Turim's commentary on the Torah," in its original form it was only intended to serve as a playful introduction to a more conventional exegetical commentary (referred to as "the Long Commentarty").

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Rabbi Abraham Ibn Ezra's Commentary to the Torah:

Title This original title for Ibn Ezra's commentary on the Torah is rarely used. It is taken to mean "the book of the upright" and is the title of a work that is cited in the Bible.(e.g., Joshua 10:13). Author

Rabbi Abraham ben Meir Ibn Ezra was born and educated in the "Golden Age" of Muslim Spain. He excelled as a poet, philosopher, grammarian and Biblical commentator.

Dates c. 1089 - c. 1164.

Place Originally from Tudela, Spain.

The latter part of his life (after 1140) was spent wandering in poverty through Italy, Provence, France, England, Egypt and Israel. It was during his wanderings that he composed most of his many influential literary works.

Description Ibn Ezra's works of Biblical interpretation were based primarily on a meticulous foundation of Hebrew grammar and philology, and attention to the realia of Biblical life. His critical sense leads him to raise questions regarding the traditional ascriptions of authorship to Biblical books, anticipating some of the conclusions of modern scholarship. Ibn Ezra was aware of his departures from Rashi's approach; though fact he was not entirely above applying homiletical or allegorical interpretations, as in his commentaries to Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs.

His Biblical commentaries employ a style that is brief to the point of being cryptic, and have therefore generated their own subsidiary literature of supercommentaries.

In spite of his commitment to the plain meaning of the Bibilcal text, Ibn Ezra used his commentaries to defend the rabbinic oral tradition against its detractors from the Karaite movement (the Jewish "fundamentalist" group that rejected Talmudic tradition in favour of exclusive reliance on the Bible), making extensive use of the teachings of Rabbi Sa'adia Ga'on, the tenth-century scholar and exegete who had conducted his own war against Karaism.

Ibn Ezra also finds many opportunities to indulge his love of astrology, a science which he believed held the key to understanding several Bibical laws and narratives.

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Masorah to the Torah:

Title Although not entirely certain, it is generally assumed that the Hebrew word "Masorah" should be translated as "tradition," indicating the traditional text and manner of reading for the Bible. Author

The study of Masorah has been pursued for as long as the Biblical text has existed, and it would not be correct to speak of particular "authors."

However, the selection of Masoretic notes attached to the Mikra'ot Gedolot was compiled by Jacob ben Hayyim ibn Adoniyahu, a Spanish Jew who fled to Venice via Tunisia and was employed by the printer Daniel Bomberg. For the purposes of his research, Jacob ben Hayyim travelled in search of accurate manuscripts, and had to use his critical discretion in dealing with conflicting readings.

Shortly after the completion of his work, Jacob ben Hayyim converted to Christianity.

Dates Ibn Adoniyahu's edition of the Masorah first appeared in the second Venice edition ofd the Mikra'ot Gedolot, published in 1524-25.

Place Toledo, Spain

Description Because of its belief that the Bible constitutes the literal word of God and the foundation of the divine law, Judaism has taken special care to maintain the accuracy of every word and letter. This task was made more difficult by the fact that in ancient times Hebrew had no written system for indicating vowels or punctuation. In ancient times, the chief part of a child's elementary education was devoted to the memorization of the correct reading and chanting of the Bible, without which it could not be transmitted accurately over the generations. Masorah, the science of preserving an accurate Biblical text, focuses on two main areas:

The fixing of the correct written text: Like all written traditions, the Bible absorbed variant readings in different manuscripts, as we can observe from ancient versions such as the Septuagint and Qumran scrolls. More specific to the Hebrew Bible are the instances where the traditional manner of reading differs from the written text. As well, there are certain letters that are supposed to be written in special graphic forms; e.g., with dots over them, bent over etc. All this had to be carefully remembered.

The correct oral rendering of the text: As noted above, most vowels could not be written, and therefore had to be meticulously memorized. This was true as well of the traditional way of chanting Biblical sections, which was precisely defined in the tradition, and which often determined the proper syntax of a difficult passage.

In ancient times these traditions were studied and transmitted as part of the oral traditions. Early in the middle ages, perhaps following models established by Muslims in connection with the Qur'an, Jewish scholars began to establish written notations in order to preserve the accuracy of the text, an endeavour that was closely tied to the emergence of systematic Hebrew grammar. Different schools of Masoretic studies arose, including the Babylonian, Palestinian and Tiberian. It was the latter system that eventually achieved universal acceptance among the Jewish communities of the world, though even within the Tiberian school there were a number of different approaches.

In their determination to maintain an exact text of the sacred scriptures, the Masoretes compiled exhaustive concordance-like lists of all the occurrences of each word, grammatical form or spelling peculiarities throughout the Bible, different formats for paragraph breaks, etc,.

The masoretic notes accompanying the Biblical texts appear in several different formats:

Marginal notes are placed either in the outer margins or in the narrow spaces between columns. Summary notes at the ends of books. As another way of assuring the accuracy of the text, the Masoretes also counted each letter, word and verse in the Bible, and in its separate books and of subsections. Summary comments are appended to the ends of each unit listing the total numbers of letters, words and verses, as well as identifying which letter, word and verse stands at the exact middle of the section. Masoretic discourse developed its own technical vocabulary, most of it in Aramaic. It also makes extensive use of mnemonics designed to facilitate the memorization of the long lists.

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Toledot Aharon

Author Rabbi Aaron of Pesaro

Dates Mid-sixteenth century (he was deceased prior to the date of the first printing of the Toledot Aharon in 1583)

Title The name means "the generations of Aaron" (Numbers 3:1) and, following the wisespread practice of Hebrew writers, was chosen because of its allusions to the author's name.

Place Pesaro, Italy Description

The Toledot Aharon consists of brief cross-references to the places where each word or phrase in the Biblical text is cited in standard works of Jewish literature. Almost all the references are to the Babylonian Talmud (cited by Tractate name and leaf number), though other works are mentioned as well, including medieval collections like the Zohar and Rabbi Isaac Arama's philosophical commentary the 'Akedat Yitzhak. The original Toledot Aharon was printed in one of the Venice editions of the Mikra'ot Gedolot, and subsequent printers have introduced various expansions and corrections. In particular, Rabbi Jacob Sasportas in the eighteenth century added references to the Palestinian Talmud.

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Targum "Yonatan ben 'Uzziel" to the Torah:

Title A "Targum" is a translation, but the term is usually used specifically to designate Aramaic translations of the Bible. According to an ancient Jewish tradition, the public reading of the Bible in the synagogue must be accompanied by a translation into Aramaic, which was the spoken language of most Jews in Israel and Babylonia during the Talmudic era. The normal practice was that after each verse was read from the written

scroll, an official known as the "Turgeman" or "Meturgeman" would then recite orally an Aramaic rendering of the previous verse.

As the use of Aramaic declined, the practice of reciting the Targum in the synagogue fell into disuse in most Jewish communities.

The title of "Targum Yonatan ben 'Uzziel" is based on an erroneous attribution. Rabbi Jonathan ben 'Uzziel was a first-century rabbi who is credited in the Talmud with the composition of an Aramaic translation of the Prophetic books of the Bible, and such a translation does exist. Based on literary and linguistic analysis, it is clear that the present work is a much later compilation.

It is widely believed that the mistaken ascription to Jonathan ben 'Uzziel resulted from a mistaken deciphering of an abbreviation in a manuscript, where the intended designation was to "Targum Yerushalmi"; i.e., the Jerusalem [Palestinian] translation.

Dates The final editing of this Targum may have taken place around the eigth century, though it includes materials from much earlier times.

Place Israel

Description This expanded Aramaic translation of the Torah was first printed in an edition of the Pentateuch published in Venice in 1591 by Asher Parenzo, and all subsequent versions can be traced back to that edition. The textual tradition contained in this version was first attested prior to the sixteenth century in Italy, and no similar text has yet been discovered in manuscript, not even among the many examples of Palestinian Targum contained in the Cairo Genizah.

The Targum Yonatan is a typical example of a Palestinian-style Targum, in that it does not confine itself to a literal rendering of the Hebrew, but rather incorporates many additions based on rabbinic traditions. This reflects the manner in which the Bible was read in ancient Palestinian synagogues: After each verse was read from the Hebrew scroll, a special official (Turgeman) would recite an elaborate and expanded Aramaic version of that text, usually including a significant element of creative improvisation.

Since the Hanau 1614 printing of the Rabbinic Bible, many versions have included a brief explanatory commentary to the Targum Yonatan composed by Hayyim Feivel ben David Zechariah Mendel.

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http://www.rabbiwein.com/Jerusalem-Post/2010/10/550.html

Jerusalem Post

RABBI BEREL WEIN

FLOODS AND ARKS

The Torah's recitation of the events of the great flood and of Noach's ark is well known to all of us, no matter our position on the religious spectrum of Jewish life. In reviewing human history since that time, it seems pretty accurate that we are always somehow perched on the precipice of a great cataclysmic event of horrendous consequences, whether man made, natural, or of climatic making. In our time we are faced with recurring natural disasters that have taken hundreds of thousands of lives. We are faced with the threat of nuclear wars and untold destruction and with economic crises that sap the vitality of societies, nations and individuals. The motto of King Louis of France après moi deluge – after me comes the flood – is an apt assessment of how the majority of humankind thinks today. There is very little optimism to go around. The messengers of hope and change are not very convincing in their words and certainly not in their deeds and policies. So, there is an overall malaise that besets us. There are no big dreams or bold policies broadcast, little acceptance of risk and few visions of what can and should be accomplished. The great ideals and movements that marked the beginning of the twentieth century are now all shattered idols. Political rhetoric has lost all believability and the "kabbalist" soothsayers and human rights activists are, in the main, imposters. We pray for rain but are fearful of the flood. Enter the ark. The ark symbolizes not only the salvation of one person and his family from the ravages of the flood but, more importantly, it symbolizes the ability to rise above our fears and innate pessimism and to salvage the purpose of our lives from negativism and nihilism. As a reinforcement of this idea of an ark of salvation, there is also the natural phenomenon of the rainbow which represents an eternal covenant between humankind and the Creator that the flood will not recur. This rainbow is not to be misinterpreted or its impact to be exaggerated. We have no guarantees against recurring disasters, natural and man made, of wars and strife, but we do have a promise that somehow human life will continue. It is incumbent upon us to make that life productive, meaningful and, in a true sense, eternal as well. The ark was and is the will of humankind to not only survive the omnipresent threat of the flood, but to somehow overcome its dangers. It is an attempt to reinforce the rainbow and not be distracted by the false messages of unrealistic hopes and, conversely, the prophets of impending doom. Every generation is charged with the task of building an ark for itself. It is also instructed to teach the message of the rainbow to the next generation and to implant belief, tradition, values and a concern for others into the lives of those that will follow us here on earth. All of this is true for humankind generally. And, it certainly is true for the Jewish people particularly. Israel, world Jewry generally, finds itself hemmed in by enemies and beset by great problems. We are the only people targeted openly by others and constantly threatened with 'the great flood'. The world apparently is unaware that the fate of all is tied inextricably to the fate of the Jews. One would have thought that the story of the twentieth century and its horrendous events would have made this lesson crystal clear. Obviously this is not the case. But we Jews have to continue building our ark. This little, seemingly flimsy ark has withstood all of the floods that time has thrown against us. We should revitalize ourselves, dream great dreams again, and see the great picture. We must not concentrate so much on the picayune details which so blind us to our accomplishments and goals. We have to rebuild ourselves anew without discarding the treasures of our past. God promised the Jewish people a new heart and the ability to rise to all challenges. And, above all, we must educate our generation and future generations to observe the rainbow reflected in the Torah, and to pass on our teachings and our traditions. Jewish ignorance, hedonism and the worshipping of false idols, all of which mask themselves as being the greater good, are the real floods that threaten our future existence and success. The rainbow teaches us that our ark is waterproof - and those generations and individuals wise enough to enter that ark will surely succeed in avoiding all future disasters. Shabat shalom. Berel Wein

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from Yeshivat Har Etzion <office@etzion.org.il> reply-to Yeshivat Har Etzion <office@etzion.org.il> to yhe-sichot@etzion.org.il date Wed, Oct 6, 2010 at 7:54 AM subject VBM-SICHOT71 -02: Parashat Noach Welcome to the new year of YHE-SICHOT.

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PARASHAT NOACH

GUEST SICHA OF RAV BINYAMIN TABORY

"Be Fruitful and Multiply" Adapted by Shaul Barth Translated by Kaeren Fish

One of the questions that arises from our parasha is why God repeats the command to "be fruitful and multiply" to Noach, after the same command had already been given to Adam.

The Meshekh Chokhma writes that the mitzva of procreation does not obligate women, since pregnancy and childbirth are difficult – sometimes (especially in former times) even life-threatening. In addition, we know that women generally feel an instinctive inner desire to bear children; the Torah need not command her to be a mother. However, in the creation of mankind we read, "God blessed them (!): Be fruitful and multiply," suggesting that the command was given to both Adam and Chava.

The Meshekh Chokhma goes on to explain that at the time of Creation, "Be fruitful and multiply" was indeed addressed to both Adam and Chava, but after the Flood the command was given only to Noach (and his sons) but not to his wife. Why, when the world was "created anew" after the Flood, was woman not commanded to bear children, while in the original Creation she had been so commanded?

In the Garden of Eden, the Meshekh Chokhma explains, childbirth involved no pain and no travail, and for this reason woman was also party to the obligation to bear children. After the sin, the woman was punished with the burden, "In sorrow shall you give birth to children," and therefore only man is commanded and not his wife, because it is impossible to obligate a woman to endanger herself in order to give birth.

The Meshekh Chokhma brings a further reason for why woman is not commanded to bear children. According to Torah law, a man may be married to more than one wife, but a woman may be married to only one man. If the woman were obligated to bear children, it would lead to anguish and heartbreak. Why so?

In our times, when a couple is not able to bear children, there are all sorts of fertility treatments that are available, or the couple may decide to adopt a child – in any event, the couple does not usually resort to divorce. Until about a century ago, however, the couple would often divorce: not because they no longer loved each other, but in order to be able to bear children through marriage to someone else. The Meshekh Chokhma explains that if a woman was obligated to bear children, and her husband was infertile, then since she could not take another husband, she would be forced to divorce him, and the Torah does not seek to destroy families. For a husband whose wife is barren, the option (according to Torah law, before the enactment of Rabbeinu Gershom) exists for him to take another wife, and thus his obligation to bear children does not lead to a situation whereby the couple is forced to divorce. The man may remain married to his barren wife, while bearing children from another wife.

This explains why an additional command to "be fruitful and multiply," addressed to Noach but not to his wife, was needed after the Flood. (However, in the Garden of Eden, none of the above reasoning applied, because God gave them a blessing and not a command of fruitfulness, and because Adam and Eve couldn't marry anyone else in any case.)

We may perhaps suggest another answer. Our question is based on the assumption that God commanded Adam and Chava to bear children, and that this command remained valid and needed no reiteration. However, the two commands may be understood as two completely different obligations.

The command to Adam was given in Gan Eden, an ideal physical and spiritual environment, and hence an altogether suitable background to a command that the world should continue to exist and that procreation is necessary. In the generation of the Flood, in view of the complete corruption of man and the world, and the destruction which this had caused, the question could well arise whether children should be brought into a world that had reached such a state. Perhaps the command originally given in the primeval, ideal Garden of Eden was no longer valid. Yet the answer is clear: even in our grey, mixed-up world there must be procreation, because that is how our world is structured. Our world is not the Garden of Eden, but despite all the difficulties God commands us to survive and to maintain ourselves and the world.

According to Rashi, marital relations were prohibited throughout the period of imprisonment in the Ark. Hence, we may also explain that God commanded Noach to "be fruitful and multiply" after emerging from the Ark because marital relations had been prohibited and were now permitted. At the same time, in light of the above, we may explain that in the Ark it was not at all clear that childbirth was necessary or desirable. Immediately upon emerging, however, God's command once again made it clear that man is obligated to maintain and perpetuate life, despite the darker aspects of the world that we inhabit. (This sicha was delivered on Shabbat parashat Noach 5763 [2003].)
