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Rabbi Mordechai Willig
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Learning from Noach

I "Noach was a righteous man (tzadik), he was perfect (tamim) in his generations" (Breishis 6:9). Noach's deeds are described here as "righteous", while his "ways", referring to his character, as the Ibn Ezra explains, "tamim b'libo", are described as "perfect" (Avodah Zara, 6a). The Meshech Chochma explains that Noach lived in two generations, one before the flood and one after the flood. Before the flood Noach was righteous since he did not steal like all the others (Rashi 6:11 and Avodah Zara ibid.), and did not engage in sexual immorality like all flesh (6:11, Rashi). After the flood, everyone refrained from sexual immorality (see Rashi 9:19) and theft, so Noach was not a unique tzadik in that generation. Tamim means one who is humble and of low spirit ("sh'fal ruach", Rashi Avodah Zara ibid.). Before the flood, when everyone ridiculed Noach, his humility was insignificant. After the flood, when he alone survived, Hashem spoke to him and saved him, and he fed the entire world (see Rashi 7:23), Noach still did not become haughty and then his humility was significant. Noach was therefore called a tzadik in the generation before the flood, since his righteous deeds were unique and noteworthy, while after the flood he was called tamim, since his ways, i.e. his humility despite his historic accomplishments, were unique and noteworthy. Moreover, his humility stood in stark contrast to the dor haflaga whose haughtiness led them to attempt to wage war with Hashem (Rashi 11:1, Rav Y. Cooperman footnote 12 to Meshech Chochma). "Vayisha'er ach Noach - only Noach survived" (7:23). Rashi interprets "ach" to indicate a minimization, specifically it minimizes Noach's health because he was injured by the animals he fed. An alternative explanation minimizes Noach himself, i.e. he remained "only Noach", the same humble person, despite his unique accomplishments. Hashem recalled Noach with words of salvation and mercy ("b'dvar yeshua v'rachamim" - Musaf Rosh Hashana, Zichronos). The same phrase is found in the tefillah of "Ya'ale v'yavo": "b'dvar yeshua v'rachamim...v'racheim aleinu v'hoshi'einu - in the matter of salvation and mercy, have mercy on us and save us." Noach, in his humility, did not ask to be saved by his merits, but pleaded for salvation based on mercy. We, too, beseech Hashem for salvation based on mercy, not on our merits, in Ya'ale v'yavo (R.Y.D. Schlesinger).

II Living in our generation presents a dual challenge. Sexual immorality is approaching pre-flood proportions. Promiscuity is the norm on university campuses, and tens of millions of Americans pursue adultery on the internet, as was recently discovered. Too many otherwise Orthodox Jews engage in these behaviors as well. And even worse, they do so openly and expect, and even receive, honor in their communities and shuls. Similar openness and official acceptance is granted to homosexual behavior as well. Noachides did not write marriage contacts for two males (Chulin 92b). Even though they had male partners, they did not treat the prohibition so lightly as to write marriage contracts (Rashi ibid). Today, gay marriage, which was unthinkable in both antiquity and the recent past, is the law of the land in America. Here, too, otherwise Orthodox Jews engage in these behaviors openly, and expect, and even receive, honor in their communities and shuls. We must try to be like Noach the tzadik and abstain from all types of sexual immorality. We must not honor those who practice such behaviors openly. As Orthodox Jews, we are required to avoid activities which can lead to immorality, i.e. abizrayhu d'gilui arayos. We therefore must be modest in dress and demeanor, and watch what we say and what we see (Shabbos 33a, Brachos 12b). Our generation has achieved great technological accomplishments and financial successes. The generation of the flood became haughty because of the bounty that Hashem gave them (Sanhedrin 108a). We dare not repeat their mistake. Rather, we must try to be like Noach the tamim, maintaining humility and a lowly spirit despite our accomplishments and successes. The generation of the flood was destroyed because of immorality and haughtiness. Our generation faces similar challenges. In the merit of our resisting sinful behavior, rejecting its acceptability, and maintaining humility in the spirit of Noach, may our tefilos, like his, be answered with salvation and mercy.

Postscript One who separates himself from the community...and does not personalize their troubles...has no share in the Word to Come - Rambam, Hilchos Teshuva 3:11 Unrelated to the discussion of sexual immorality above, the suffering experienced recently in Israel must be close to all of our hearts and demands that each of us engage in unrelenting introspection and teshuva. One month ago, on Rosh Hashana, in the Zichronos section of Musaf, we declared: "Regarding states it is declared; which to the sword and which to peace." Unfortunately the state and people of Israel have experienced a month of murders by cruel enemies. Any hubris of a perfect self-defense has been shattered. "If Hashem will not guard the city, the watchman guards in vain" (Tehillim 127:1). Of course all appropriate security measured must be taken. But we must also, like Noach, cry to Hashem to save us with mercy, on Rosh Hashana, in Ya'ale v'yavo on holidays and Rosh Chodesh, and every day. The heartfelt Tehillim recited worldwide on behalf of our beleaguered brothers and sisters in Eretz Yisrael reflects our utter dependence on Hashem's mercy and reinforces the humility that characterized Noach.

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Orthodox Union / www.ou.org
Britain's Former Chief **Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks**

The Courage to Live with Uncertainty

For each of us there are milestones on our spiritual journey that change the direction of our life and set us on a new path. For me one such moment came when I was a rabbinical student at Jews' College and thus had the privilege of studying with one of the great rabbinic scholars of our time, Rabbi Dr Nachum Rabinovitch.

He was, and is, a giant: one the most profound Maimonidean scholars of the modern age, equally at home with virtually every secular discipline as with the entire rabbinic literature, and one of the boldest and most independent of

poskim, as his several published volumes of Responsa show. He also showed what it was to have spiritual and intellectual courage, and that in our time has proved, sadly, all too rare.

The occasion was not special. He was merely giving us one of his regular divrei Torah. The week was parshat Noach. But the Midrash he quoted to us was extraordinary. In fact it is quite hard to find. It appears in the book known as Buber's Tanhuma, published in 1885 by Martin Buber's grandfather Shlomo from ancient manuscripts. It is a very early text – some say as early as the fifth century – and it has some overlap with an ancient Midrash of which we no longer have the full text, known as Midrash Yelamdenu.

The text is in two parts, and it is a commentary on God's words to Noah: " Then God said to Noah, 'Come out of the ark'" (Gen. 8:16). On this the Midrash says: "Noah said to himself, Since I only entered the ark with permission (from God), shall I leave without permission? The Holy One blessed be He said, to him: Are you looking for permission? In that case I give you permission, as it says, 'Then God said to Noah, Come out of the ark.'"

The Midrash then adds: "Said Rabbi Judah bar Ilai, If I had been there I would have smashed down [the doors of] the ark and taken myself out of it."[1]

The moral Rabbi Rabinovitch drew – indeed the only one possible – was that when it comes to rebuilding a shattered world, you do not wait for permission. God gives us permission. He expects us to go on ahead.

This was, of course, part of an ancient tradition, mentioned by Rashi in his commentary (to Gen. 6:9), and central to the sages' understanding of why God began the Jewish people not with Noah but with Abraham. Noah, says the Torah, "walked with God" (6:9). But God said to Abraham, "Walk on ahead of Me …" (Gen. 17:1). So the point was not new, but the drama and power of the Midrash were stunning.

Suddenly I understood that this is a significant part of what faith is in Judaism: to have the courage to pioneer, to do something new, to take the road less travelled, to venture out into the unknown. That is what Abraham and Sarah had done when they left their land, their home and their father's house. It is what the Israelites did in the days of Moses when they journeyed forth into the wilderness, guided only by a pillar of cloud by day and fire by night.

Faith is precisely the courage to take a risk, knowing that "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me" (Ps. 23:4). It took faith to challenge the religions of the ancient world, especially when they were embodied in the greatest empires of their time. It took faith to stay Jewish in the Hellenistic age, when Jews and Judaism must have seemed small and parochial when set against the cosmopolitan culture of ancient Greece and the Alexandrian empire.

It took the faith of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Gamla to build, already in the first century, the world's first ever system of universal, compulsory education (Baba Batra 21a), and the faith of Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai to realise that Judaism could survive the loss of independence, land and Temple, on the basis of an academy of scholars and a culture of scholarship.

In the modern age, even though many of Jewry's most distinguished minds either lost or abandoned their faith, nonetheless that ancient reflex survived. How else are we to understand the phenomenon that a tiny minority in Europe and the United States was able to produce so many shapers of the modern mind, each of them a pioneer in his or her own way: Einstein in physics, Durkheim in sociology, Levi-Strauss in anthropology, Mahler and Schoenberg in music, and a whole string of innovative economists from David Ricardo (the law of comparative advantage) to John von Neumann (Game Theory) to Milton Friedman (monetary theory), to Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky (behavioural economics).

They dominated the fields of psychiatry, psychotherapy and psychoanalysis, from Freud and his circle to Viktor Frankl (Logotherapy), Aaron T. Beck (Cognitive Behavioural Therapy) and Martin Seligman (Positive Psychology). The pioneers of Hollywood and film were almost all Jewish. Even in popular music the achievement is stunning, from Irving Berlin and George Gershwin, masters of the American musical, to Bob Dylan and Leonard Cohen, the two supreme poets of popular music in the twentieth century.

In many cases – such is the fate of innovators – the people concerned had to face a barrage of criticism, disdain, opposition or disregard. You have to be prepared to be lonely, at best misunderstood, at worst vilified and defamed. As Einstein said, "If my theory of relativity is proven successful, Germany will claim me as a German and France will declare me a citizen of the world. Should my theory prove untrue, France will say that I am a German, and Germany will declare that I am a Jew." To be a pioneer – as Jews know from our history – you have to be prepared to spend a long time in the wilderness.

That was the faith of the early Zionists. They knew early on, some from the 1860s, others after the pogroms of the 1880s, Herzl after the Dreyfus trial, that European Enlightenment and Emancipation had failed, that despite its immense scientific and political achievements, mainland Europe still had no place for the Jew. Some Zionists were religious, others were secular, but most importantly they all knew what the Midrash Tanhuma made so clear: when it comes to rebuilding a shattered world or a broken dream, you don't wait for permission from Heaven. Heaven is telling you to go ahead.

That is not carte blanche to do whatever we like. Not all innovation is constructive. Some can be very destructive indeed. But this principle of "Walk on ahead", the idea that the Creator wants us, His greatest creation, to be creative, is what makes Judaism unique in the high value it places on the human person and the human condition.

Faith is the courage to take a risk for the sake of God or the Jewish people; to begin a journey to a distant destination knowing that there will be hazards along the way, but knowing also that God is with us, giving us strength if we align our will with His. Faith is not certainty, but the courage to live with uncertainty.

[1] The Midrash seems to be based on the fact that this is the first verse in the Torah where the verb d-b-r (to speak) is used. The root a-m-r (to say) has a similar meaning but there is a slight difference between them. D-b-r usually implies speaking harshly, judgmentally. See also Ibn Ezra ad loc, who senses from the text that Noah was reluctant to leave the ark.

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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http://www.jewishpress.com/judaism/parsha/believing-and-not-believing/2015/10/15/0/

Believing And Not Believing

By: Rabbi Ben Tzion Shafier

Published: October 15th, 2015

"And Noach, his sons, and his wife came with him because of the waters of the flood." – Bereishis 7:7

Hashem told Noach that his entire generation was wicked and would be destroyed. Only he, his family, and certain select animals would be saved. When the flood actually began, the pasuk says Noach and his family went into the Ark "because of the waters of the flood." Rashi observes that these words imply that it was the water that caused Noach to go into the teiva, not Hashem's command. Therefore, Rashi says, Noach was "one who believed and didn't believe." On one hand, he believed Hashem would bring the flood, but on the other, he didn't believe it would happen. Therefore, he didn't actually go into the tayvah until the rains forced him in.

This Rashi becomes difficult to understand when we take into account some of the background of the event.

Noach is called a righteous man, so much so that Hashem chose him to be the single person to rebuild the human race. So how is it possible that when Hashem told him there would be a flood, he didn't believe it?

This question comes into sharper relief when we view the situation in its broader context. Many of the Rishonim ask, "Why did Hashem ask Noach to build the teivah? If Hashem wanted to destroy the generation and save Noach, there are many ways He could have done it. Why trouble this tzaddik to draw the plans, cut the wood, and fit together the pieces?

Rashi answers that Hashem wanted to give the generation one final opportunity to do teshuvah. When Noach was working on the teivah, people would see him and ask, "What are you building?"

"Hashem told me He is going to destroy the world," he would answer. "The only hope is to repent. Do teshuvah."

For 120 years, while he was building the teivah, Noach was on a mission to convince his neighbors that Hashem was going to bring a mabul and destroy the inhabited world – unless they changed their ways.

With this, the question becomes much stronger. Here we have a man whom the Torah calls a tzaddik, whom Hashem spoke to directly. He was told by Hashem Himself exactly what would happen. He then spent year after year preaching that very message to the people. How is it possible he didn't believe it himself?

The Nature of Man

The answer to this question is based on understanding the nature of man. When Hashem created the human, He joined together two divergent elements and fused them into one entity. Part of me only wants to do what is right and proper, only wishes for that which is good, and yearns to be close to Hashem. That part of me, the Nefesh Ha'Sichili or the spiritual soul, is untainted, pure intellect. It is the part of me that understands exactly why I was created.

However, there is another part of me, a Nefesh Ha'Bahami or a physical soul. This other part is also vibrant and has needs, but its aspirations, drives, and desires only relate to that which is physical. It only sees the here and now. In its world, if I can't hear it, feel it, or see it, it doesn't exist.

When I engage in any spiritual activity, these two components of me are in direct conflict. For instance, when I daven, part of me feels a deep, inner yearning to grow ever closer to Hashem, and part of me is bored. Part of me is aglow because I am connecting to my Creator, and part of me just doesn't care. The Nefesh Ha'Bahami doesn't see Hashem, can't relate to Hashem, and therefore doesn't have any connection to anything spiritual. As long as a person lives, there will be a part of his essence that denies the existence of Hashem, not because that part is rebellious or because it wants to do anything wrong, but because it is incapable of seeing anything that isn't physical. The more a person grows, the more clearly he relates to his spiritual side, and the less the Nefesh Ha'Bahami clouds his vision. However, as long as I am housed in a body, this darkness remains a part of me.

The answer to the question seems to be that Noach was a real believer. He had a powerful, unwavering belief that everything Hashem said would happen would indeed come true. But that was only half of him. There was another part of Noach that didn't see Hashem, couldn't relate to Him, and couldn't see anything beyond the here and now. That part denied that there would ever be a flood.

Even an ish tzaddik who spent 120 years engaged in teaching that Hashem was going to bring a flood, was still a human, and as such, he couldn't fully see it happening. It wasn't until the rain started that it became real to him, and then he went into the tayvah.

This concept is very relevant to us because no matter what level a person has reached, there will always be a part of him that denies anything spiritual. There will always be a part of me that feels alone in this world because it cannot see Hashem or even relate to anything that is not physical. However, there is another full dimension of me that intuitively knows Hashem is right here, running the world, involved in every detail of my life.

As long as a person lives, there will be a part of his essence that denies the existence of Hashem, not because that part is rebellious or because it wants to do anything wrong, but because it is incapable of seeing anything that isn't physical. The more a person grows, the more clearly he relates to his spiritual side, and the less the Nefesh Ha'Bahami clouds his vision. However, as long as I am housed in a body, this darkness remains a part of me.

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Lessons Learned By**: Rabbi Joshua Rapps** Published: October 15th, 2015 **The articles in this column are transcriptions and adaptations of shiurim by Rav Joseph Ber Soloveitchik,** zt"l.

The Rav's unique perspective on Chumash permeated many of the shiurim and lectures he presented at various venues over a 40-plus-year period. His words add an important perspective that makes the Chumash in particular, and our tradition in general, vibrant and relevant to our generation.

L'zecher nishmot Eitam and Naama Henkin, Aharon Bennett, Nehemia Lavi Hy"d, who were murdered al kiddush Hashem.

* * * * *

Ramban refers to Sefer Breishit as Sefer Yetzirah whose purpose is to present the stories of the patriarchs as they foreshadow Jewish History based on Maasay Avot Siman L'Banim. The first three parshiot in Breishit present three unique stories of tragedy associated with Adam, Noah and Abraham. What lessons can we derive from them?

As mentioned in last week's article, Parshat Breishit instructs mankind in general and the Jew in particular that just as Hashem built, destroyed and rebuilt worlds before creating this world, we must be prepared to adapt failure into a stepping stone to build something better and more complete. Each of the main actors in the first three parshiot experienced major failure or disruption of their lives and world. Their responses to their challenges ranged from destructive to admirable and something we must strive to emulate by studying and learning from their experiences.

After his initial sin, Adam reacted with denial to his world being ripped away from him. He sought to reenter Eden after he was cast out but was blocked by the whirling blades of the Cherubim who guarded its entrance. At that moment Adam's world was destroyed. He alienated his wife by blaming her for the calamity that befell them and separated from her for an extended period. His already shattered world was further broken with the murder of Abel, the son of pure heart and dedication to God who he hoped would carry on his legacy. He is left with only Cain, the son that God condemned for the murder of his brother. The execution of that decree against Cain was delayed seven generations, but the destiny of Cain's offspring was sealed. All that Adam built was destined to be destroyed.

Chazal tell us of an encounter between Adam and his estranged son Cain. Adam inquired of Cain what punishment he received for his crime. Cain replied that he repented and was forgiven. Immediately Adam proclaimed Mizmor Shir L'Yom HaShabbat. What is the connection between Cain's admission and Adam's proclamation? Adam realized that even though his world was shattered he had the ability to admit his failure and rebuild his relationship with Hashem. The world that Abel represented was gone;

however he could rebuild its ruins and strive to create something even better. He subsequently reunites with Chava and they have another child, Seth. The choice of name is interesting as it represents the birth of a child to replace Abel who was murdered by Cain. They prayed the child should eclipse Abel and rebuild the worlds they lost with their exile and Abel's murder. The world Seth would build should come closer to the ideal that Hashem envisaged during creation. Adam learned the lesson of starting over after the destruction of his original world.

Unfortunately, the new world that Adam attempted to start through Seth became corrupted. At the end of Breishit, Hashem, kvayachol, expresses remorse for creating man. He decides this version of man must be erased, providing Noah with an opportunity to rebuild the world yet again. The impending destruction of the world was painful for Noah in many ways. He realized that everything he knew and loved, with the exception of his immediate family, would be destroyed. The approaching clouds of destruction, ignored by his generation, would consume everything. A dark period would commence as the world again was to be destroyed and rebuilt. Hashem gave Noah the ability to withstand his opposition, overcome his fears, build the ark and save his family so he could rebuild the world. Upon exiting the ark, Noah acts appropriately, offering sacrifices to Hashem Who commits to refrain from bringing another flood to destroy the world. However Noah soon fails and forfeits his close connection with Hashem. Ultimately he is remembered more for his incident with his son and grandson and the curse they received than for saving humanity from the flood. He fades from the scene unremarkably. His offspring, the generation of the Tower of Babel, rebel against Hashem and are punished through a different form of destruction. Instead of physical destruction, they are divided by language. Loved ones, friends and neighbors became estranged from each other; result and punishment for becoming enslaved to their technological prowess and quest while losing connection to the world around them. They sacrificed their existence on the altar of technological achievement, and failed terribly.

braham's arrival proclaimed a new vision of the world. His message was man's goal is not to accumulate power or seek maximum enjoyment but to seek Hashem everywhere and cling to Him. Man does not have to always be fully successful to accomplish this. Kedusha is a dialectical experience, it frightens man but at the same time it attracts him. He is driven to come close to Hashem even though Lo Yirani HaAdam VaChai, man must fail in fully realizing that goal. This was an astounding, unheard of message that slowly resonated with people of his generation. However Abraham endured great stress and personal sacrifice for propagating his beliefs. His own father denounced him to the authorities and he was thrown into an inferno. Abraham realized that he had to cut his ties with his family and set off on his own to continue his search and mission. His world crumbled around him and he had to rebuild his life elsewhere, together with his beloved wife Sara. Without parents, children or home, Abraham truly was in rebuilding mode. He was tested repeatedly with challenges, yet he persevered because his faith in the God he discovered and revealed was unshakable. Where Adam and Noah endured a physical rebuilding of their world, Abraham's was a spiritual odyssey that ultimately left him all alone. Chazal refer to Avraham HaIvri because he stood alone on one side of the river while the rest of the world stood on the other, opposing his attempt to spread the word of the One, True God. Abraham's mission was to rebuild a spiritual world out of a world void of spirituality.

The tenacity and dedication Abraham demonstrated for his mission to pursue Hashem and kedusha is alive and well in his descendants. I personally reconnected with that spirit over Sukkot as I listened with rapt attention, amazement, anger, admiration and love as my mother AMV'S told just a part of her heroic story of miraculous survival during the Holocaust from the depraved Nazis, yimach shmam, and the local Poles and Ukrainians that eagerly collaborated with them to exterminate our people. Her ordeal continued after the war as she navigated the cruelty of the Ukrainians and anti-Semitism of the Russians who occupied her town. I was spellbound as she related how she felt the hand of Hashem guide her at various low points during her terrible ordeal, giving her the hope and strength to persevere, survive and build a family of dedicated Torah observant Jews. Like Abraham leaving his homeland, she survived the hostile hordes dedicated to her destruction, overcoming them with the help and guiding hand of Hashem to leave her home and rebuild a new world out of the one torn away from her and reduced to blood soaked ashes.

My mother is a direct descendant of illustrious hassidic dynasties, including Rupshitz, Belz, Kretchnev, Narol. Her father, Hy"d, was a first cousin of the Satmar Rebbe, Rabbi Yoel Teitelbaum, ob"m. The Satmar Rebbetzin along with a veritable who's who of hassidic royalty walked her to her chupah, standing in for her parents who were murdered al kiddush Hashem during the Holocaust. She and those who survived to rebuild Judaism in America after the destruction of their world are the true heirs of Abraham's legacy. May Hashem grant my mother and all who survived to rebuild our Jewish world good health, long life and comfort from their anguish. May their rebuilt world finally herald the realization of Mizmor Shir L'Yom HaShabbat that Adam composed when he rebuilt his world, with the coming of Mashiach speedily in our days.

About the Author: Rabbi Joshua Rapps attended the Rav's shiur at RIETS from 1977 through 1981 and is a musmach of Yeshivas Rabbeinu Yitzchak Elchanan. He and his wife Tzipporah live in Edison, N.J. Rabbi Rapps can be contacted at ravtorah1@gmail.com.

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The Worst New York Times Story Ever?

Rabbi Natan Slifkin

October 12, 2015

The New York Times recently published an article that was so appallingly flawed and dangerous that it simply beggars belief. Its subsequent "clarification" only serves to highlight how bad it was.

The article, Historical Certainty Proves Elusive at Jerusalem's Holiest Place, was a masterpiece of obfuscation and falsehood. It took minor academic debate about the precise location of the Temple – was it a few hundred feet this way, or a few hundred feet that way – and presented that as lying at the heart of competing Israeli and Palestinian narratives about claims to the land, and even as raising questions about the very existence of the Temple.

The reality, however, is that the precise location of the Second Temple (and even the very existence of the First Temple) is entirely irrelevant to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. All that is relevant is the existence of the Second Temple in Jerusalem. And all that should be reported, and hammered home, is that outside the Arab world it is recognized as absolute historical fact that there was a Jewish Temple in Jerusalem. The Palestinians, on the other hand, deny this basic historical fact. And therein lies the reason why the Israeli-Palestinian conflict cannot be peacefully resolved. As long as Palestinians refuse to acknowledge the historical connection of the Jewish People to the Land of Israel, and falsely portray us as nothing more than European colonialists, there is no hope of their accepting our living in Israel.

Subsequent to the NYT article, there was an uproar. The NYT was forced to add the following clarification:

Correction: October 9, 2015 An earlier version of this article misstated the question that many books and scholarly treatises have never definitively answered concerning the two ancient Jewish temples. The question is where precisely on the 37-acre Temple Mount site the temples had once stood, not whether the temples had ever existed there.

As the archive of the article shows, the crucial sentence had originally read as follows:

The question, which many books and scholarly treatises have never definitively answered, is whether the 37-acre site, home to Islam's sacred

Dome of the Rock shrine and Al Aqsa Mosque, was also the precise location of two ancient Jewish temples, one built on the remains of the other, and both long since gone. (emphasis added)

After the correction, it read instead like this:

The question, which many books and scholarly treatises have never definitively answered, is where on the 37-acre site, home to Islam's sacred Dome of the Rock shrine and Al Aqsa Mosque, was also the precise location of two ancient Jewish temples, one built on the remains of the other, and both long since gone. (emphasis added)

A number of other modifications had to be made in order to make the article technically correct, though it was of course still entirely misleading.

Let's get things straight here. This is not a minor technical error, to be be clarified in a subsequent footnote. This is a fundamental perversion of the most prominent conflict in modern times. There are few things more central to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict than recognizing the historical connection of the Jewish People to the Land of Israel, and recognizing the Palestinian's refusal to acknowledge this historical fact. The New York Times managed to completely distort this.

Historical certainty about Jerusalem's holiest place does not prove elusive in the least. Journalistic accuracy in the New York Times about the most fundamental aspect of the world's most prominent conflict, on the other hand, proves very elusive indeed.

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http://5tjt.com/neutralized-stabbers/

Friday, October 16, 2015

Neutralized' Stabbers

Halachic Musings

By Rabbi Yair Hoffman

It is a topic under much discussion in Israel now. What should citizens do after they have neutralized, so to speak, someone who had stabbed and killed Israeli citizens just moments beforehand? Is it immoral to kill them? Are they not still a future threat?

It must be understood that anytime there is any doubt as to whether a threat remains, one must be stringent and ensure to eliminate it. The stabbing in Geulah is a case in point. After the terrorist was shot a few times, he continued to get up and remained a threat. Thus, if there is any doubt whatsoever, halachically, one must keep shooting. There is also the issue as to whether the stabber may be wearing explosives, in which case one should shoot to kill as well. The question this article deals with is in cases where it is certain that the immediate threat has been neutralized.

Legality

In most civilized societies, the law is that a person may use only as much force as necessary to neutralize a threat, and no more. If it takes five shots to do that, but six are fired, that sixth round is excessive force and is not viewed as self-defense. For the first five, you are safe. The sixth gets you a murder conviction.

Notwithstanding the illegality of it, that sixth shot does occasionally happen. In the United States, the sixth shot is to avoid lawsuits; In Israel, however, it is to avoid future murders by the stabber.

Rabbi David Stav's View

Rabbi David Stav, the chairman of the Tzohar association of national-religious rabbis, writes that killing the stabber who has been neutralized is a "moral breakdown." This past Tuesday, Rabbi Stav explained his opinion that despite the justified anger at Israeli Arabs targeting Jews, "People who are not involved in murderous activities and those who no longer pose a danger must not be harmed."

He writes, "These days, when the boiling blood is mixed with civilian willingness and resourcefulness, it's important to maintain our moral superiority: To avoid harming a person who is uninvolved in murderous activity, and to avoid harming those who have already been neutralized and no longer pose a danger. . . . They deserve to die, but that is not our way. Harming a terrorist who has been neutralized causes double damage: the collateral damage is when these images are distributed, and the main damage is harming our moral norms. We will not stoop down to our enemies' despicableness, and we will not contaminate ourselves with a moral breakdown."

Rav Moshe Feinstein's View

I would like to suggest that although illegal, it may not be considered a "moral breakdown." In 1982, I posed a similar question in writing to Rav Moshe Feinstein, zt'l.

The question was whether to be halachically branded a rodef, does the person have to be imminently in pursuit to kill someone? Or does a history of doing so combined with current statements also render him a rodef?

Rav Feinstein's written response to my question was that technically he would be considered a rodef but there are three caveats: (1) One may not violate dina d'malchusa dina, the law of the land. (2) No harm, or possibility of harm, can come to other citizens as a result of that course of action. And (3), Rav Feinstein concluded that since it was impossible to fulfill these caveats, it makes no practical difference whether they are officially branded a rodef or not.

I would suggest that based upon this letter, Rav Moshe is not in agreement with Rabbi Stav, ylct'v, that it is considered a moral breakdown. Rav Feinstein did, however, forbid it upon other grounds.

Talmudic Discussion

There is further indication that it is not a moral breakdown from the Talmudic dictum found in the Gemara in Sanhedrin (74a): "Haba lehorgecha hashkeim l'hargo—One who comes to kill you, arise earlier and kill him."

This passage in Sanhedrin, however, invites a number of questions:

- Is this dictum halachah? Or is it merely good advice?
- Is it obligatory or is it optional?
- Is there a difference between this concept and the concept of a rodef—a pursuer?
- What is the exact source for this dictum? Usually the Talmud cites a verse in relation to a dictum such as this one, and yet here there isn't one.

The Midrash Tanchumah (ParashasPinchas 3) indicates that source of Haba lehorgecha emanates from the verse in Bamidbar (25:17) regarding the Midianites, where it says, "Tzror es haMidyanim v'hikisem osam—Afflict the Midianites and strike them." It seems from the Midrash Tanchumah that this is obligatory and not voluntary, since it is a verse in the Torah.

Two Views

Rav Yitzchok Halperin in his Maaseh Choshev (Vol. III p. 141) writes that it is not obligatory but optional. He does not mention Tzror es HaMidyanim as a source, however.

The former Chief Rabbi of Tel-Aviv in his Asei Lecha Rav (Vol. IV p.35) follows the view that it is obligatory but qualifies the idea of it being obligatory as only when there is certainty that the enemy will attack. He distinguishes between the obligation of seeing a rodef in pursuit of his victim and the law of "one who comes to kill you."

His distinction is that the latter only applies when it is definite that he will try to kill you. In such an instance, there would be an obligation to kill him.

Shaul's Pursuit Of David

We do find, however, that in Shmuel I (Chapter 24), King Shaul was in pursuit of the future king David, and would have killed him. David, however, spared Shaul—only cutting his clothing. Certainly, Shaul would have killed him—why then did David spare him, according to the Tel-Aviv chief rabbi? He should have been obligated to kill him!

Rav Boruch Dov Povarsky, zt'l, in his shiurim on Sanhedrin cites the Gemara in Sanhedrin (74a) that the law in regard to a rodef is only if it is impossible to stop him in another manner. There is therefore an essential difference between the law of rodef and the law of ha'bal'horgecha. If someone is coming to kill you, then you may kill him without worry about stopping him in some other manner, and you are completely exempt. The law of rodef, however, limits a third-party observer of a pursuit. If he could have stopped him in some other way, then he might be liable.

The Minchas Asher (Sh'mos #39) in trying to resolve the question on King David suggests another caveat to the laws of ha'bal'horgecha, even according to the opinion that it is obligatory. He writes that it is only obligatory to kill him if it is during the actual time when he is trying to kill you. If it is not during this time, then this is optional. The suggestion is somewhat perplexing because all cases of "rising up early to kill him" perforce deal with a case when it is not during the actual time. The "obligatory" nature of it would thus never be practically relevant according to the Minchas Asher.

New Resolution

This author would like to propose an altogether different caveat. The laws of "rising up early to kill him" might be limited by another factor. That factor is the following question: What are the ultimate repercussions of killing this person? If David HaMelech killed Shaul, the repercussions would reverberate in Jewish history for thousands of years. That being the case, it would not be obligatory but would be optional.

Our question might be limited by this factor too. What are the ultimate repercussions of killing this stabber? If it may be too devastating, then the normally obligatory nature of "arise early and kill him" changes and becomes optional or, in our case, forbidden because of dina d'malchusa.

May Hashem remove the rotzchim and bring us yeshuos and nechamos.

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from: Destiny Foundation/**Rabbi Berel Wein** <info@jewishdestiny.com> reply-to: info@jewishdestiny.com subject: Weekly Parsha from Rabbi Berel Wein Weekly Parsha Blog:: **Rabbi Berel Wein** Noach

The events described in this week's parsha only serve to confirm the diagnosis of human behavior already recorded for us in last week's parsha – that the nature of human beings, if left alone, will invariably turn to evil behavior. Not only that but the recounting of the behavior of the family of Noach, even after experiencing the flood and the destruction of much of humankind, instructs us as to how difficult it is to really change human nature. The long history of the Jewish people particularly, and of civilization generally, indicates clearly that miracles, disasters, proven failures and generational events have little effect on individual or even communal human behavior. Since everyone believes that he or she is the exception to human mortality and to the effects of one's own behavior and actions, it is very difficult to convince one's own self that changes in lifestyle and attitudes are necessary. The evil nature within us is the part of our persona and mental makeup that is most resistant to allowing lessons of life to be learned and effective change to be generated. Rabbi Yisrael Lipkin of Salant stated that "the loudest noise made in the physical world is that of the breaking of a habit." Most evil that is perpetrated in this world is simply a product of habitually bad behavior. I think that habit alone is sufficient to help us understand how the world could believe in paganism for millennia on end, no matter what the consequences and results of such a pernicious belief were. Even the great flood would not prevent most of the descendants of Noach from sinking back into the quagmire of paganism. It was not so much a matter of belief as it was a matter of habit. From this introduction to the nature of humanity, as related in the first two portions of the Torah, the rest of the Torah becomes more understandable and we gain greater perspective into it. The main purpose of the Torah, in its simplest and most sublime sense, is to break us of our bad habits, ultimately to replace them with better ways of doing and behaving. That is why the commandments of the Torah are so insistently repetitive in our daily lives because only by repetition is habitual behavior established. All athletes are aware that only by constant and daily training will their muscular and physical abilities become enhanced and of second nature. It is this regimen of training that allows for excellence in competition. Leaving one's spiritual side to apathy and inaction will automatically guarantee that the habits of evil behavior will dominate. Thus, most of the Torah is simply counter intuitive. It speaks against the perpetuation of bad habits and demands of us the necessary changes in outlook and behavior that will make us better people. Naturally, the definition of good and evil is based upon God's judgment. But over the many millennia of human existence that definition of good and evil has stayed the test of time and remains the fulcrum of civilization. The righteousness of Noach lay with his ability to change for the better and rise above his society. That challenge remains for all of us as well. Shabat shalom

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from: Shema Yisrael Torah Network <shemalist@shemayisrael.com> to: **parshapotpourri**@shemayisrael.com date: Thu, Oct 15, 2015 at 7:53 PM subject: [Parshapotpourri] Parsha Potpourri by Ozer Alport - Parshas Noach

Parshas Noach - Vol. 11, Issue 2

Compiled by Oizer Alport

Vayomer Elokim zos os habris … es kashti nasati b'anan v'haysah l'os bris beini u'bein ha'aretz (9:12-13) The rainbow has become known as a symbol of peace and harmony. On a simple level, this is due to the fact that it represents world preservation, as Hashem told Noach after the flood that the rainbow would be the sign of His covenant to never again destroy the earth. However, this still raises the question: In what way does the rainbow uniquely connote the concept of peace? Further, the Gemora in Chagigah (16a) teaches that if a person gazes at a rainbow, it would have been better had he never been created. Why is staring at a rainbow viewed so harshly? Based on a verse in Yechezkel (1:28), the Gemora elucidates that Hashem's Divine Presence rests on the rainbow, and somebody who gazes at a rainbow is therefore considered to be disrespectfully staring at the Divine Presence. Nevertheless, this fascinating explanation begs the question: Of all of the myriad awe-inspiring creations in the world, why did Hashem specifically choose to associate Himself with the rainbow?

Rabbi Aba Wagensberg posits that the seven colors of the rainbow correspond to the seven holy Ushpizin whom we welcomed on the recent festival of Sukkos. Each of these seven national Patriarchs and leaders had a unique approach to serving Hashem, which is alluded to by the seven different colors of the rainbow. Nevertheless, although each of the colors is distinct, they are all united in their ascent toward Hashem, as a rainbow is formed in the shape of a mountain, arching upward toward the heavens. Further, each of the different colors lies adjacent to the next, as the beauty of the rainbow is created through the harmony and synergy of each of its component parts.

From this perspective, the rainbow teaches us the value of individuality in serving Hashem utilizing our own unique strengths and abilities, and of being not only tolerant of other halachic streams of Judaism, but to appreciate them for their distinct contributions to increasing Hashem's honor. The Gemora teaches us that these themes are so fundamental that Hashem elected to rest His Divine Presence on the rainbow. This also explains why Hashem specifically selected the rainbow as the sign of His promise not to destroy the world, as destruction results from our failure to respect and appreciate the differences that make us unique, while the rainbow's harmony reminds us of the importance of valuing individuality, and for this reason it is a most appropriate symbol of peace.

Rabbi Wagensberg adds several beautiful connections between Parshas Noach, the rainbow, and Chanuka. The Torah records that at the conclusion of the flood, Noach sent a dove - another symbol of peace - to ascertain whether the floodwaters had subsided, and the dove returned in the evening with an olive leaf in its mouth (8:8-11). Why does the Torah emphasize that this took place in the evening? The Kli Yakar explains that at night, the Ark needed light, and the olive branch brought by the dove had an olive on it, from which oil could be extracted to illuminate the Ark.

From where did Noach obtain light prior to this episode? Hashem instructed him to make a öåäø for the Ark (6:16), which Rashi interprets as a window. However, the Chizkuni disagrees and maintains that the word öåäø is derived from the word éöäø - oil. In other words, Hashem told Noach to gather olives to supply him with enough oil to provide light while he was in the Ark. As such, the Imrei Noam explains that Noach already had a sufficient supply of

olives in the Ark, so he took the olive brought back by the dove and squeezed its oil into a flask, which he sealed and gave to his son Shem, with instructions that it be passed on to the most righteous person in each generation. The Torah records (14:18-20) that Malki-tzedek, whom Chazal identify as Shem (Nedorim 32b), met with Avrohom, at which time he gave the flask to Avrohom, who subsequently passed it on to Yitzchok, who transferred it to Yaakov.

As Yaakov was traveling with his family to meet Eisav, the Torah records (32:25) that he was ìáãå - all alone. The Gemora (Chullin 91a) explains that he forgot some small flasks and went back by himself to retrieve them. Why was Yaakov so concerned about such seemingly trivial objects? The Daas Z'keinim writes that they contained olive oil, which we can understand as a reference to the precious flask containing Noach's oil that he inherited from his father. Yaakov passed the flask on to Yosef, and it later made its way into the possession of Moshe and Aharon, and was eventually given to Dovid. When Dovid dug the foundations of the Temple, he saw prophetically that it would one day be defiled and a pure flask of oil would be needed, so he hid it away, and it was this flask that was discovered by the Chashmonaim and used to miraculously light the Menorah for eight days.

Rabbi Wagensberg suggests that because this flask of oil passed through the hands of each of the seven Ushpizin and absorbed each of their distinct approaches to serving Hashem, it was uniquely suited to rekindle the seven-branched Menorah in the Temple. Further, the Torah stipulates (Shemos 25:31) that although the Menorah contained seven branches, it had to be crafted from one single block of gold, symbolizing that it was inherently one. This is analogous to the Ushpizin, who had seven different approaches to serving Hashem, but were ultimately united in their overall mission. It is therefore quite appropriate to note that the Menorah itself is formed in the shape of a rainbow, and when all of the seven branches unite harmoniously, it creates a light that illuminates the world.

The name of the Jewish Zodiac sign for the month of Kislev, when Chanuka begins, is ÷ùú - bow - which also means rainbow. In contrast to most other Jewish holidays which begin in the middle of the month when the moon is full, Chanuka starts at the end of Kislev, when the waning moon is in the shape of a rainbow. The Sefer HaToda'ah writes that the first time Noach observed the rainbow was in Kislev. The letters in Noach's name (ðç) can be read as an abbreviation for ðø çðåëä, and the mitzvos that are incumbent upon non-Jews are referred to as Noahide laws, and they number seven, the number of colors in the rainbow and branches in the Menorah in the Temple.

The Jewish calendar has two beginnings. Rosh Hashana, the start of a new year, is in Tishrei, while Nissan is considered the first of the Jewish months (Shemos 12:2), and according to Tosefos (Rosh Hashana 27a) is when the world was actually created. The Kedushas Levi points out that Sivan, which is the third month when counting from Nissan, is when the Torah was given at Har Sinai. Similarly, Chanuka is associated with the acceptance of the Oral Torah, and it therefore begins in the month of Kislev, which is the third month when counting from Tishrei.

Rashi writes (Shemos 19:2) that when the Jewish people came to encamp at Har Sinai, they did so united as one, as unity is a necessary prerequisite for the giving of the Torah. They were further unified through the sound of the shofar (19:19), which not surprisingly has the shape of a rainbow. Chanuka also represents the acceptance of the Torah, and it is therefore celebrated with the menorah, which is also shaped like a rainbow. Further, the order of the shofar blasts that we blow today is tekiah, shevarim, teruah, tekiah, which is commonly expressed with the acronym ú-ù-ø-ú. However, the Be'er Mayim Chaim suggests that if we use the letter ÷ to represent a tekiah and ú to connote a teruah, the acronym for the shofar blasts spells ÷-ù-ú (-÷).

Hashem should help each of us discover our own unique paths to serve Him with our individual strengths and abilities, while at the same time respecting and valuing the approaches selected by others, and in the merit of our heightened achdus inspired by the rainbow, Hashem should once again rest His Divine Presence upon us, may it be speedily in our days.

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http://5tjt.com/from-the-chassidic-masters-noachs-legacy/
Friday, October 16, 2015

From The Chassidic Masters: Noach's Legacy
By Rabbi Eli Touger

These are the chronicles of Noach: Noach was a righteous man.
Bereishis 10:9

Our Potential

The Maggid of Mezritch interpreted our Sages' statement "Know what is above you" (Avos 2:1) as "Know that everything 'above' all that transpires in the spiritual realms is 'from you,' dependent on your conduct. Each of us has the potential to influence even the most elevated spiritual realms."1

The Torah alludes to this potential in the opening verse of our reading (Bereishis 10:9): "These are the chronicles of Noach: Noach was a righteous man."

The word noach refers to satisfaction and repose.2 By repeating the word, the Torah implies that Noach—and by extension, every one of his descendants—can sow these qualities in two different fields: both among his fellow men and in the spiritual worlds above.

Every person affects his environment. Our thoughts, words, and deeds can inspire peace and tranquillity in our fellow men, helping create meaningful pleasure. And by establishing such conditions in our world, we accentuate similar qualities in the worlds above. To highlight our obligation to spread these virtues, this week's Torah portion is called Noach.3

Being Sensitive To G-d's Cues

The name Noach is, however, problematic, for the portion as a whole does not deal with these qualities. On the contrary, the majority of the portion describes the Flood, and its conclusion relates the story of the Tower of Bavel. These events, and the conduct of mankind which led to them, are diametrically opposed to the satisfaction and repose personified by Noach.

The resolution of this difficulty underscores the interrelation between the patterns with which G-d imbued our world and man's response to them. Noach's birth was to begin a period of repose and satisfaction that would encompass the globe. Mankind had the option of taking an active part in this undertaking. Instead, each person continued to live with a narrow focus, concerned only with himself. What another person felt, or questions of right and wrong, did not matter. And as a result, "The world was corrupt . . . the land was filled with crime" (Bereishis 10:11).

Waters Of Blessing

Then it started to rain. On the verse "And it rained for 40 days and 40 nights" (Bereishis 7:10), our Sages commented, "At the outset, the water descended with mercy, so that if the people had repented, the rains would have been rains of blessing. Since they did not repent, the rains became a flood" (Zohar Chadash 22a, quoted in Rashi's commentary on the verse).

The floodwaters, then, were intended to be waters of blessing. For the blessing to be manifest, however, mankind had to make itself fit to receive G-d's influence, and therefore teshuvah—a return to G-d—was necessary. As the rain began to fall, humanity continued to ignore this opportunity, refusing to make such efforts.

But even though mankind did not turn to G-d in teshuvah, the rains remained waters of blessing.4 The 40 days of rain resemble the 40 se'ah of a mikveh (Torah Or, Noach 8c). Just as immersion in a mikveh is associated with re-experiencing the act of creation,5 so too the 40 days and 40 nights of rain brought about the dawning of a new age: "Noach saw a new world" (Bereishis Rabbah 30:8).

Therefore, the waters of the Flood are called "the waters of Noach,"6 because the intent and the actual effect was to bring rest and pleasure to the world. Unfortunately, however, because man did not respond positively, this constructive outcome was coupled with destruction—the Flood obliterated every living creature on the face of the Earth (Bereishis 7:23).

Kindness With Purpose

A similar motif applies with regard to the Tower of Bavel, as reflected in our Sages' teaching in Avos 5:2: "There were ten generations from Noach to Avraham . . . All those generations repeatedly angered Him, until Avraham our father came and received the reward of them all."7

The generations that preceded Avraham treated each other with love (Sanhedrin 109a). Nevertheless, since they "repeatedly angered G-d," their conduct did not reflect the repose and satisfaction that G-d intended for mankind. Therefore He punished them, scattering them throughout the earth.

Avraham performed deeds of kindness and hospitality with a single purpose—to make all mankind conscious of G-d (Sotah 10a ff.). Through his actions, he displayed the desired form of repose and satisfaction, and therefore received the reward generated by all the comradely deeds of the generations that preceded him.8

When The Rainbow Shines

On the Ark were lions, tigers, and other predators, and yet they dwelt in peace with the other animals, anticipating the fulfillment of the prophecy "The wolf will dwell with the lamb, and the leopard will lie down with the young goat" (Yeshayah 11:6). Thus our Torah portion foreshadows the ultimate repose and satisfaction that mankind will be granted in the era when "there will be neither famine nor war, neither envy nor competition, for good things will flow in abundance."9

By vigorously following in the footsteps of Avraham, spreading kindness and love, we can help precipitate the coming of that age. And then, like Noach and his family, we will merit the shining of the rainbow. As the Zohar (Vol. I, p. 72b) states: "The rainbow reflects spiritual secrets. . . . When you see the rainbow shining with bright colors, wait for Mashiach's coming." v

Based on the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, zt'l. Adapted from Likkutei Sichos, Vol. XX, pp. 285ff. and Vol. XXV, pp. 23ff. by Rabbi Eli Touger. Courtesy of Chabad.org. Find more Torah articles for the whole family at www.chabad.org/parshah.

NOTES

1. Cited in Or Torah al Aggados Chazal, p. 112b, explained in Likkutei Sichos, Vol. XX, p. 331. See also In the Paths of Our Fathers (Kehot, N.Y., 1994).

2. The name Noach (??) means "rest" in Hebrew, and is associated with the word "nachas" (???), which means "pleasure." See Bereishis Rabbah 30:5. Zohar Vol. I, p. 58b.

3. Were the name to have been given merely because "Noach" is one of the first words of the portion, this reading should have been called "Toldos," for this word appears before Noach, and the subsequent portion, which is called "Toldos," should have been named "Yitzchak."

4. This is implied by the wording of the verse, "And it rained for 40 days," i.e., the entire 40-day period was intended to be one of "rains of blessing."

5. Sefer HaChinuch, Mitzvah 174, explains that just as initially all creation emerged from a watery mass, so too, after immersion in a mikveh, a person becomes a new entity, charged with new spiritual vitality.

6. Yeshayah 54:9, included in the haftarah of Parashas Noach. The haftarah expresses the fundamental intent of the Torah reading. It is often explained that the floodwaters are called "the waters of Noach" to indicate that Noach bears a certain responsibility for the Flood, for he did not try hard enough to reach out to the people of his generation and motivate them to do teshuvah.

7. See the explanation in Likkutei Sichos, Vol. III, p. 753.

8. In contrast, as mentioned in the mishnah from Avos cited previously, Noach did not receive the reward for the generations preceding his own. There are two reasons for this: (a) the conduct of these people did not generate reward, for they did not show love to their fellow men; and (b) as mentioned in note 6, Noach did not reach out to his contemporaries, nor did he endeavor to teach them, as Avraham did.

9. Sefer HaMaamarim, Eshaleich Liozna, p. 57; Likkutei Sichos, Vol. XXV, Parashas Noach, et al.; Mishneh Torah, Hilchos Melachim 12:5.

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Rav Kook List

Rav Kook on the Torah Portion

Noah: Balancing the Universe

The Torah's revelation at Mount Sinai was such a momentous, electrifying event, its repercussions could be heard around the world: "When the Torah was given to Israel, the sound reverberated from one end of the world to the other. In their palaces, the kings of all the nations were seized with fear. They gathered around the wicked prophet Balaam and asked, 'What is this tremendous sound that we hear? Perhaps a flood is coming to the world!' Balaam replied, 'No, God has already sworn not to bring another flood.' 'Maybe not a deluge of water, but destruction by fire?' 'No, He already promised never to destroy all flesh.' 'Then what is this tremendous sound that we hear?' 'God has a precious gift [the Torah] safeguarded in His treasury... which He now wishes to bestow to His children."' (Zevachim 116b) How can the Midrash compare that extreme act of mass destruction - the Great Flood - to the most significant event in the history of humanity, the Revelation of the Torah? Why did the majestic sounds from Mount Sinai bring back fearful memories of the Flood?

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

The Sages were not concerned with Adam's physical height. This description of Adam was meant to express the careful equilibrium that existed between his physical and spiritual components. Adam stood between the earth and the heavens, reaching both in equal measure. After the sin of the Tree of Knowledge, however, Adam disrupted this delicate balance. His transgression of God's command diminished his spiritual stature. Yet his physical qualities remained as powerful as before.

The Great Flood Adam's descendants inherited his physical powers. They too lived remarkably long lives. And, like Adam, their spiritual strength was diluted. This imbalance between the physical and the spiritual led to a situation in which their powerful physical desires simply overwhelmed their sense of morality and justice. "All flesh had perverted its way on the earth" (Gen. 6:12). To correct this situation, God brought the Flood in the time of Noah. This catastrophic event greatly weakened the universe's material side. The flood waters washed away the top three handbreadths of soil (Rashi on Gen. 6:13). Humanity's physical strength was also greatly reduced, and people began living shorter lives.

The Rainbow This insight also explains the covenant of the rainbow. Were there not rainbows before the Flood? How did the rainbow suddenly become a symbol of protection from Divine punishment? In truth, the rainbow was created immediately before the Sabbath of creation (Avot 5:6). Before the Flood, however, the rainbow could not be seen. It was a Keshet Be'Anan, a rainbow in the clouds. The thickness and opacity of the clouds, a metaphor for the world's dense physicality, obscured the rainbow. Only after the Flood, in a world of diluted physical strength, did the rainbow finally become visible. The rainbow is a symbol of weakness. Physical weakness, since the clouds no longer conceal it. And also spiritual weakness, in that only a Divine promise prevents the world's destruction as punishment for its sins. The Sages taught in Ketubot 77b that rare were the generations that merited tzaddikim so pure that no rainbow appeared in their days.1 The Flood and its aftermath restored the world's fundamental balance. In addition to weakening the material universe, God bolstered humanity's spiritual side with the Noahide Laws, a code of seven laws enforcing basic morality. The Flood annulled all previous obligations, and initiated a new era of repairing the world via the seven mitzvot of Bnei-Noah.

A Higher Path to Realign the Universe At Sinai, the world gained a second, superior path to maintain its delicate balance. The Torah and its code of 613 mitzvot paved a new way to repair and purify the world. It is for this reason that the Midrash compares the Flood to the Revelation at Sinai. Both events served to maintain the universe's equilibrium between the material and the spiritual. The Midrash says that Balaam responded to the kings by quoting from the Book of Psalms, "God sat enthroned at the Flood... God will give strength [Torah] to His people" (Psalms 29:10-11). This verse compares the effect of the Flood to that of the Torah. The path of Torah, however, is a superior one. Instead of destroying and weakening the physical world, the Torah builds and strengthens the spiritual. Thus the psalmist refers to Torah as 'strength.' The Torah is the true path of universal balance and harmony, as the psalm concludes, "God will bless his people with peace." (Adapted from Shemu'ot HaRe'iyah 8, Noah 5690 (1929)) 1 The rainbow is a sign of God's covenant that "there will never again be a flood to destroy the earth" (Gen. 9:11). Occasionally the world benefits from the presence of a tzaddik whose merits are so great that the world does not need to resort to the Covenant of the Rainbow. Comments and inquiries may be sent to: mailto:RavKookList@gmail.com

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from: Shema Yisrael Torah Network <shemalist@shemayisrael.com> to: peninim@shemayisrael.com date: Thu, Oct 15, 2015 at 7:56 PM subject: **Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum - Parshas Noach**

PARASHAS NOACH

"Go forth from the Ark: you and your wife, your sons, and your sons' wives with you." (8:16)

Noach had been living in a sealed ark, together with thousands of animals for over a year. One would think that when the first opportunity to leave would present itself, he would run as fast as he could. Apparently, this is not what happened. After being in the Ark, slaving all day and night ceaselessly for a year, Noach was not ready to leave. It required Hashem's command to enable Noach to set foot outside of the Ark. Why? It is not as if he were living comfortably amid luxury. What was holding him back? Perhaps he did not know that the ground was dry! When he pulled off the cover of the Ark, he saw that it was dry outside. In any event, all Hashem had to do was to inform Noach that all was well; the Flood was over; the ground was dry. Why did he require a command in order to leave?

Horav Ben Tzion Firer, zl, responds with a powerful insight. Noach survived, while everyone else in the world perished. The world as he knew it was one large graveyard, with millions of bodies strewn throughout. These were his compatriots, people whom he knew, whom he had seen. He was alive - they were not. This could have catalyzed an overpowering emotion with which Noach had to grapple. Furthermore, to have survived when everyone else died, can leave one with an overwhelming sense of guilt. It is so much easier to hide, to shelter oneself from reality, and not have to confront a destroyed world devoid of life.

Noach knew that he was not guilty of their deaths. He had tried to tell people that a flood was coming, but they did not listen. Furthermore, his survival was not linked to their deaths. He did not live because they died. Nonetheless, he did not feel good about his survival, when he was the only one to have survived. The emotional turmoil within him was palpable. Was it any different in 1945 when pockets of survivors from the Nazi Holocaust looked around the death camps, and saw bodies of their friends strewn about, death everywhere? One was almost ashamed to have survived when others were not as fortunate. Noach went through the motions of sending out the raven and the dove to ascertain that the Flood was over and the ground was dry, but he was personally not ready to leave. Only after Hashem commanded him to leave the Ark did Noach leave the "comfort" of his past year's "home."

Perhaps another emotion enveloped Noach, limiting his ability to leave the protected shelter of the Ark. He might have been submerged in a feeling of hopelessness. The entire world had been destroyed. No one, except literally a handful of human beings, was left. The world that had been was no more. He did not want to go on. Indeed, Hashem commanded him to be fruitful and multiply - propagate the world once again. Why did Noach need a reminder from Hashem? Had not Hashem given Adam HaRishon a long-standing command to procreate? Noach was concerned that another flood or some other punishment would once again wipe out the world. He needed assurances. Noach was a troubled man. Whatever the reason-- survivor guilt, survivor shame, survivor despair-- Noach was a survivor and he required special treatment.

There is one more major reason that Noach might have hesitated. In an earlier Peninim, I quoted an inspirational insight from Horav Matisyahu Solomon, Shlita, which I feel is appropriate to reiterate. Shortly after the tragic, untimely deaths of Nadav and Avihu, the two older sons of Aharon HaKohen, the Torah writes: "Moshe spoke to Aharon and to Elazar and Isamar, his remaining sons" (Vayikra 10:12). The words "Banav ha'nosarim", remaining sons, seem superfluous. Obviously, if Aharon had four sons, of which two had died, the two who remained were the surviving two sons. Why is their survival underscored? The Mashgiach explains that Moshe wanted to emphasize the fact that they were survivors. They were no ordinary people. Having survived a trauma which took the lives of their brothers means that they now had the obligation to carry on. They had an added responsibility: theirs and their brothers'. Indeed, as the Mashgiach points out, we are a nation of survivors, having seen six million of our brothers and sisters brutally wiped out in the Holocaust. We have a dual responsibility which weighs heavy upon our shoulders.

Perhaps Noach could not handle the added burden. The world had perished. He alone had to carry on for them. This, he felt, was simply too much, too difficult a role for him to bear. Hashem told him, "Noach, you must go out, pick up the pieces and rebuild the world. This is what survivors do. Veritably, it is done with great sadness and extreme difficulty, but it must be done. This is why you were saved."

Following World War II, there were survivors, both in America and Eretz Yisrael, who reestablished Torah and laid the foundation for thriving Torah communities. It was not easy for them. Many had lost their entire families, friends, yeshivos; everything was destroyed in the flames of the Holocaust. They could have easily locked themselves in their homes and be consumed by remorse. The list of survivors who achieved the elite status of builders of Torah is not large. It is comprised of indefatigable warriors who fought for Torah because it was who they were and was all they had left. Many of them had lost families and institutions that had constituted their life's work. Yet, they persevered and rebuilt, taking all of us with them.

The one person who stands out as the primary architect of Torah in Eretz Yisrael, the individual who taught others the meaning of building for Torah, was the Ponovezer Rav, Horav Yosef Shlomo Kahaneman, zl. Horav Shlomo Lorencz, zl, once asked him how a person in his position-- having lost all of his family, his community and his Torah institutions-- could evince such an extraordinary degree of ingenuity and creativity, to an extent that he overshadowed men much younger and healthier than himself. From where did he derive his energy and enthusiasm?

"Your question is a valid one," he began. "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 build without stopping!"

The Ponovezer Rav found that working to reestablish Europe's devastated yeshivos calmed his tormented spirit after the losses he had sustained. He did not permit the emptiness within him to fester and lead him deeper into despair. Rather, he harnessed his pain and employed it as a vehicle for unparalleled creativity.

In his hesped, eulogy, for the Ponovezer Rav, the Rosh Yeshivah, Horav Shmuel Rosovsky, zl, offered a similar idea that further illuminates the Rav's remarks. Rav Shmuel related that he had once asked the Rav how he maintained such extreme focus on constant achievement without allowing for a moment's rest or relaxation. The Rav told Rav Shmuel that essentially he considered himself to have been incinerated together with the six million kedoshim, martyrs, of the Holocaust: "If despite that, there is still life within me, it is only for the purpose of rebuilding and restoring the glory of our People." It was with this thought constantly in mind that he never wavered, never slowed down, until he breathed his last breath. It is what motivated him and imbued him with the energy to continue his noble and holy work on behalf of Klal Yisrael.

When Noach awoke from his wine, he learned what his youngest son did to him. And he said, "Cursed be Canaan." (9:24,25)

Three sons - two acted appropriately - one did not. Noach acted in a manner unbecoming an individual of his sublime stature. It was a temporary lapse, an error in judgment, after having observed the destruction of the entire world. He did not commit an outrageous sin, but he should have acted in a more exalted manner. Vayachel Noach, "Noach debased himself" (Ibid 9:20). We see that even great people can lose control of themselves and act foolishly. The reaction of Noach's sons defines their characters. Crisis brings out a person's true essence. Some children are wonderful, as long as everything acquiesces with their comfort zone. If a parent acts in a manner that leaves children wondering, how/ why? their reaction will reflect their true character and also show the way in which they were raised. Parents are people, and people are not perfect. Children are not here to judge their parents; but rather, to give support and comfort.

In his commentary to the Chumash, Horav S.R. Hirsch, zl, teaches us how children should act. Indeed, he posits that the way children act towards their parents will be reciprocated in the manner in which their own children will deal with them. The younger generation must stand reverently at the grave of their predecessors. They must take a garment (as did Shem and Yafes) and cover the 'nakedness', the weakness of their forebears, while simultaneously emulating all that was noble, great and true. They should adopt these good qualities as a precious heritage upon which to build their own lives and a future legacy to be imparted to the next generation.

If, however, the new generation is like Cham, who gloated over his father's nakedness, and broadcasted his father's shame, he will have the same end as Cham - a son like Canaan to follow in his nefarious footsteps. Those descendants who exult in the shortcomings of their ancestors- often as a reason to justify their own miscreant behavior, or as license to deride their spiritual traditions- will be repaid in kind. When the future generation scorns the past, and contemptuously break their bond with it, then their future plans will be but a dream, or a nightmare. As they jeered at the memory of their forebears, so, too, will their descendants mock them.

Rav Hirsch had strong reason to take umbrage with the attitude of members of his generation. It was during his tenure as Rav that the miscreant secular movements reared their ugly heads to break with the past, to usurp the holy Torah which had been our undisputed cannon of Jewish Law and blueprint for life for thousands of years. He was a wise man who saw the tragic consequences of their actions. They broke with the past which they labeled as archaic, out of touch, restrictive and undermining the future assimilation of the Jewish people with the rest of the world community. Ashamed of their past, their descendants severed their relationship with completely Judaism by marrying out of the faith, thus ensuring that their own biological children would not be considered Jewish. Cham was Canaan's father, and his moral turpitude seems to have been guiding the "Canaans" of future generations - until this very day.