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PARSHA WEEKLY

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WORLD MIZRACHI
Picture of the Week

Last Shabbat, senior Mizrachi representatives from 11 countries gathered in Prague, Czechia, for the European Mizrachi Conference, hosted by Mizrachi Czechia, headed by Rabbanit Elise Peter-Apelbaum. Mizrachi leadership from Israel also joined the gathering, including Co-President Rabbi Yechiel Wasserman, CEO Rabbi Danny Mirvis, Gael Grunewald, and Avichai Ayubi.

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World Mizrachi is the global Religious Zionist movement, spreading *Torat Eretz Yisrael* across the world and strengthening the bond between the State of Israel and Jewish communities around the world.

Based in Jerusalem and with branches across the globe, Mizrachi – an acronym for *merkaz ruchani* (spiritual center) – was founded in 1902 by Rabbi Yitzchak Yaakov Reines, and is led today by Rabbi Doron Perez. Mizrachi's role was then and remains with vigor today, to be a proactive partner and to take personal responsibility in contributing to the collective destiny of *Klal Yisrael* through a commitment to Torah, the Land of Israel and the People of Israel.

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Noah and Nechama

The Key to being Comforted

Rabbi Doron Perez
Executive Chairman, World Mizrachi

Noah is one of the most fascinating personalities in all of biblical literature.

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

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

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

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

The Curse of the Land

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

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

Great Expectations

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

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

Indeed, the verses say this explicitly regarding Adam that the land will be cursed "all the days of your life." This implies that since the sin was a result of Adam's actions and therefore the punishment of the cursed land as well, would cease upon the death of Adam. Noah therefore, as the first to be born after the death of Adam, was the great hope and promise of a new era of blessing (Chizkuni, Abarbanel).

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

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

What's in a Name?

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

His name is Noah and the reason given is because הוא ינחמינו – he will bring comfort to the world, comfort from the suffering of so many generations of curse. The Midrash and Rashi say though that if this is the case then his name should have been מנחם, Menachem, or נחום, Nachum, not נח, Noah. Rashi, therefore, says to match the reason given for the name and the name itself, the word Noah means "a rest," in other words in context "a rest from or alleviating the suffering."

The truth is that whether it means relieving, נח, or comforting, נחם, the meaning is essentially the same. The curse of the world would now be alleviated and lessened, people's predicaments would be better and there would be a measure of healing, blessing, and comfort. The world would now be a different place because of both the righteousness of Noah's personality and his great invention for the betterment of mankind.

The Meaning of Comfort

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

The challenge is that it is used in a context of meaning something totally different: regret and changing one's mind. The verse states: "And Hashem regretted (וַיִּנָּחֶם) that He had made man on the earth... (*Bereishit* 6:6).

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

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

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

Regret is part of a broader pattern at the heart of נחום, comfort – of shifting a mindset and altering one's thinking. Initially, this surprised me. How are comfort and mind-shifting related? After contemplation, I realized that this is exactly what happened to me.

Shifting the Darkness of October 7th

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

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

This blew my mind – how could a father in so much pain say this so soon after his son's tragic passing? It taught me that perhaps I could begin to step out of my black hole and shift my perspective. Perhaps I could find some light in the darkness. It was then that I all of a sudden realized that in the painful darkness, there is also light. When I realized that although Daniel was missing and we were riddled with anxiety and concern for his well-being, Hashem had also done a great miracle for us and saved Yonatan. Many of his brothers in arms in the closest proximity to him that day were killed or badly injured. His survival and only moderate injury seemed to me as clear as day to be a miracle from Above. This did not change the fate of Daniel at all, yet it allowed me somehow to see light alongside that darkness. I felt blessed and a measure of curse; appreciation and anguished worry; a sense of darkness and light.

From Noah's name and the circumstances of Hashem "changing His mind," so to speak, emerges a remarkable insight into the quest for alleviation of pain and seeking a measure of comfort. We cannot always change our circumstances – often we have no choice but to accept the vicissitudes of life. We can, though, always choose our perspectives and mental paradigms. The darkness and pain may always be part of our vision but need not blind us to the light and many other privileges we have.

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

TORAT MIZRACHI
EXECUTIVE CHAIRMAN

ESSENTIALS OF JUDAISM/PERSONAL GROWTH

Undesirable Desire

Scan here to join Rabbi Taragin's daily Divrei Torah WhatsApp group

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

As we have seen, *Avot*'s fourth *perek* identifies three drives that "take a person out of this world": jealousy, desire, and honor.[1]

Among these drives, desire is unique in that, in certain forms, it constitutes an explicit Torah prohibition. Although desire is a mere emotion, the *Aseret HaDibrot* prohibit it when misdirected.[2]

Physical desires are powerful, as Hashem instills them to motivate our essential behaviors such as eating and cohabitation. Although these self-supporting activities are necessary, we must ensure that their pursuit does not result in prohibition, excess, or obsession with physical pleasure.[3]

Sin

The first transgression in human history was motivated by desire. Conflicted between Hashem's commandment not to eat from the *Eitz Hada'at* and the serpent's persuasion, Chavah let the fruit's desirability determine her choice. She reasoned that, if the fruit was desirable, it must be appropriate to consume.[4]

This initial sin exemplifies the underlying motivation for many transgressions.[5] Desire compels us to seek prohibited objects or to pursue permitted pleasures through forbidden means. Addiction constitutes an extreme manifestation of this tendency wherein people develop an overwhelming compulsion for pleasure that leads them to violate any and every prohibition in order to satisfy their desires, even temporarily.

For this reason, the Torah prescribes the death penalty for the rebellious son.[6] Although his immediate transgression is the theft of his parents' money to purchase meat and wine, his addiction to physical pleasure will ultimately culminate in criminal behavior.[7] Even though he has not yet fully embarked on this path, the Torah regards this trajectory as inevitable, thereby warranting the severe measure of capital punishment at an early stage. This underscores the profound danger and addictive nature of unchecked desire.

The Need For The New

Desire also causes us to yearn for things that we don't actually need.[8] The Jews in the desert exemplified this tendency. Although they had constant access to the *mon*, which met all their nutritional needs, they nevertheless complained about it.

Their desire for variety led them to describe themselves as "dried out" by the *mon*.[9] Hashem instills in people a need for novelty, meant to inspire the pursuit of new forms of Torah, *mitzvot*, and personal growth. However, desire can misdirect this need toward new types of physical pleasure. Rather than renewing spiritual pursuits, we can become preoccupied with new forms of physical pleasure.

Consumed With Physicality

Desire can also cause us to become overly focused on the physical or even to overindulge in it.

Onkelos[10] hints at this in his formulation of the prohibition against adultery as "*Lo tigof*," which translates approximately as "Do not be bodily." Part of the problem with an adulterer is an obsession with the physical. Sexuality is intended to be part of the marital relationship; when expressed in a manner that undermines marriage, it represents physicality taken out of context.

A focus on physicality is problematic even when directed toward entirely permissible actions and pursuits. The Ramban[11] identified this concern as the essence of the mitzvah of "*Kedoshim Tihyu*." The Torah prohibits only those actions that are inherently problematic in all times, places, and circumstances. These prohibitions leave room to live a hedonistic lifestyle, characterized by overindulgence in eating, drinking, and sexuality, and by crude or inappropriate behavior.[12]

We are meant to achieve holiness by living lifestyles modeled after our Creator, Hashem.[13] Just as Hashem transcends the physical, we should focus on the spiritual by separating ourselves from the physical.

For this reason, the Rambam identifies the pursuit of food and money as negative traits from which individuals should distance themselves as part of the *teshuvah* process.[14] While sustenance and financial resources are necessary for survival, problems arise when these needs evolve into desires that prompt excessive pursuit or obsession, ultimately becoming the focus and perceived purpose of our existence.

In the introduction to his magnum opus, *Mesilat Yesharim*, the Ramchal identifies this challenge as the primary one we face in this world. True pleasure and ultimate meaning are found in the next world. This world is a mere corridor through which we pass, and in which we prepare to merit entry into the next world by focusing on the appropriate goals and pursuits. The principal tests and challenges arise from worldly pleasures, which can divert our attention from *Avodat Hashem* and spiritual growth.

The Thought Itself

The issue with desire extends beyond actions; it motivates our very thoughts as well. *Chazal* teach that contemplating sin is more problematic than the act itself.[15] The Rambam[16] explains that such thoughts contaminate our most Divine aspects: the thoughts and emotions residing in the sanctuary of our heart and soul.

Thoughts constitute the most intimate aspect of identity, reflecting our aspirations and essential character. They are intended to concentrate on the meaningful dimensions of our existence. When dominated by desire, however, our thoughts become preoccupied with sin and physicality.

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TORAT MIZRACHI
EDUCATIONAL DIRECTORS

DRAWING WISDOM FROM THE MESHECH CHOCHMAH

The Courage to Build the Future

Rabbanit Shani Taragin
Educational Director, World Mizrachi
Educational Director, Mizrachi Lapidot and Matan Eshkolot Programs for Educators
Rosh Beit Midrash of Mizrachi-Tzemach David Women's Learning Hub, Mizrachi Lapidot, and Yeshiva University in Israel Women's Torah Studies Program

A Strange Sequence

The first commandments given to humanity after the Flood arrive in a striking order. First, Hashem forbids the spilling of human blood: "שֹׁפֵךְ דַּם הָאָדָם בָּאָדָם דָּמוֹ יִשָּׁפֵךְ, כִּי בְּצֶלֶם אֱלֹקִים עָשָׂה אֶת הָאָדָם" (*Bereishit* 9:6). Then, immediately: "וְאַתֶּם פְּרוּ וּרְבוּ, שִׁרְצוּ בָאָרֶץ וּרְבוּ בָהּ" (9:7) Why does the command to bring life follow so closely upon the warning against taking it? And why the emphatic "וְאַתֶּם" – "and you"? The blessing of *peru u'revu* had already been given to Adam. Noach and his sons had just emerged from an ark into a world emptied of the people they had known. Why did they need to be told to rebuild?

In his Meshech Chochmah, Rav Meir Simcha HaKohen of Dvinsk hears in this sequence more than a list of laws. The Torah anticipates a painful question that may arise wherever blood is shed: when the world is so dangerous, why bring children into it at all?

The Logic of Despair

The question is not merely theoretical. At the end of *Bava Batra* (60b), the *Gemara* recounts that after the destruction of the *Beit HaMikdash*, amid the decrees of the ruling Roman powers, some *Chachamim* reasoned that the Jewish people should refrain from marrying and having children, allowing the seed of Avraham Avinu to come to an end on its own. Rashi sharpens the anguish: "מאליו, ולא על ידי עובדי כוכבים" – better to disappear of our own accord than be destroyed by our enemies.

The *Chachamim* did not enact such a decree; the community could not bear it. Yet the very fact that the argument was voiced reveals the depth of their despair. This was not indifference to the future, but anguish born of love: how could one willingly bring children into a world of persecution?

We recognize the question in our own time. In Israel, families have learned the vocabulary of sirens and safe rooms, funerals for young soldiers, and missiles exploding on school excursions. Elsewhere in the Jewish world, young couples may quietly ask whether this is a world into which one should bring a child. The Torah does not dismiss the pain behind the fears; it challenges the conclusion that fear should determine the future.

A Mandate Beyond Fear

Rav Meir Simcha reads "וְאַתֶּם פְּרוּ וּרְבוּ" as a response to precisely this reservation. Even when there is "חרב ושפיכת דם הרבה" – sword and widespread bloodshed, he writes, "אין לכם להביט על זה" – do not allow this reality to displace your mandate. The preceding *pasuk* declares that Hashem will demand an accounting for human blood: "וְאַךְ אֶת דִּמְכֶם לְנַפְשֹׁתֵיכֶם אֶדְרֹשׁ." The reckoning for innocent blood belongs to Hashem. Humanity's responsibility is to continue building life.

Yeshayahu promises of the redeemed future: "לֹא יִיגְעוּ לָרִיק וְלֹא יֵלְדוּ לַבֶּהָלָה" – "They shall not toil in vain, nor give birth for terror" (*Yeshayahu* 65:23). The fear that children may be born into turmoil is real; the prophetic vision is of a time when that fear will no longer define human life. The Meshech Chochmah asks us to live faithfully in the interval: not to deny the danger, but not to let it legislate our future.

Building in Exile

The Meshech Chochmah finds a related principle in the *She'iltot* of Rav Achai Gaon, which derives the *mitzvah* of marriage and procreation from Yirmiyahu's words to the exiles in Bavel: "קְחוּ נָשִׁים וְהוֹלִידוּ בָנִים וּבָנוֹת" (*Yirmiyahu* 29:6). Why learn this from a prophet when the Torah already commands *peru u'revu*? Rav Meir Simcha explains that the source underscores a further point: even in a time of decree and exile, the *mitzvah* remains.

Yerushalayim lay in ruins, and false prophets were promising the exiles a swift return. Yirmiyahu instructed them instead to settle, build homes, plant gardens, marry, raise children, and arrange marriages for the next generation: "וּרְבוּ שָׁם וְאַל תִּמְעָטוּ" – increase there and do not diminish. Even when the future appeared uncertain, the people were commanded to sustain Jewish life. They could not control the course of history, but they could prepare for the future entrusted to them.

The Courage to Continue

Rav Meir Simcha did not write from a place of historical tranquility. As rabbi of Dvinsk, he lived through the upheavals of Czarist Russia and the First World War. His interpretation is no easy reassurance that suffering will disappear. It is a demanding affirmation that suffering must not be permitted to erase our commitment to life.

In Israel today, this commitment is visible in weddings held between *miluim*, in families who continue to celebrate a grandchild's *brit milah* after burying a son, and in the quiet determination to establish homes and raise the next generation amid uncertainty. These acts do not minimize loss or make fear disappear. They testify that Jewish life is not suspended until history becomes safe.

The Torah does not promise a future without danger; it commands us to build a future despite danger. The bloodshed of history is not ours to avenge or resolve on our own terms. Our responsibility is to remain faithful to the Divine work of life: to build homes, nurture families, strengthen communities, and transmit Torah. "וְאַתֶּם פְּרוּ וּרְבוּ" – and you, build the future. This is not a denial of the world's fragility. It is a refusal to surrender the future to fear.

Halachic Q&A

Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon
Nasi, World Mizrachi | Rabbi of the Gush Etzion Regional Council
Rosh Yeshivah, Jerusalem College of Technology | Founder and Chairman, Sulamot and La'Ofek

A patient came to us for rehabilitation after becoming seriously ill while in prison for terrorism charges, and now requires ongoing treatment, such as being given antibiotics and undergoing a rehabilitation process, after being released from prison due to his medical condition. How does halacha guide us in this scenario?

Is there room for emotions and avoidance?

Is there halachic legitimacy for a therapist to experience difficult emotions and even request to refrain from personally treating a terrorist or someone suspected of terrorist activity?

Is there a halachic difference in the manner of treatment and in the obligation to provide care between different types of involvement? For example, a minor who throws rocks versus a terrorist who actually carried out a stabbing attack or caused serious injury?

I will first answer without taking into account the "Doctor's Oath" or the international law.

Many years ago, I asked my Rebbe, Rav Aharon Lichtenstein, of blessed memory, whether we are supposed to treat terrorists (without considering international law). He said: "Unequivocally, no." This is based on the *Gemara* in *Avodah Zarah*,[1] which says that in similar cases,"we bring them down and do not raise them up," and so too in the *Rambam*[2] and *Shulchan Aruch*.[3] However, according to international law, they must be treated. Failure to provide treatment can lead to serious problems, and therefore we also treat terrorists.

But:

- A person who is not a physician who sees a wounded terrorist who carried out an attack should not provide him with medical assistance. For him, international law does not apply (and neither does the law of "not standing on your bretheren's blood"), and therefore the *halachic* rule stands.
- It is clear from a *halachic* perspective that if there is a wounded terrorist and another wounded person, the other person should be treated. However, the law in Israel is that the terrorist should be treated if his condition is worse. There is a major dispute in the world regarding this issue since it is possible that we will save a terrorist who is in greater danger, and as a result, a person who was injured by the terrorist will, for example, lose both of his legs. However, the law in Israel is to save the terrorist first.

In this case, I would only give the terrorist basic treatment (or send someone to him who has a more basic level of expertise), and save the injured person's legs (and send the specialist to him).

- There are different levels of treatment. It is clear that an innocent person who was injured should receive a higher level of treatment than a terrorist. We will treat both of them, because this is the law, however, it is clear that the level of treatment will be better and more invested in the victim rather than in the perpetrator.

At times, it serves us to treat the terrorist in order to obtain intel. However, these factors are not within the control of the individual, and generally speaking, a physician will treat him, whereas a person who is not part of the medical staff will not treat him.

How should one properly kasher and use induction stovetops?

Induction stovetops operate through electromagnetic coils located beneath the glass. When a certain type of pot is placed over this area, a magnetic field is created that heats the pot itself. The entire area surrounding the pot remains cold. If the pot is lifted, the area will not be hot. This has its advantages and disadvantages.

This is similar to an electric stovetop, but there are two differences relevant to our discussion:

A. Since only the area directly beneath the pot itself becomes hot, if one heats a small pot and it boils over, the heat will not burn the entire area that is not beneath the pot. On the other hand, if one places a larger pot there, it will be placed over an area onto which material from the other type spilled, but which was never *kashered*. However, if the second pot is dry, it is reasonable that during the first few minutes of heating, the stovetop will *kasher* itself.

B. It is impossible to heat the circular areas without a pot. On ceramic stovetops, one can *kasher* the stovetop through *libbun* by turning it on for several minutes. However, with induction, the stovetop will not operate without pots. One can place pots filled with water on them (or a dry pot) for several minutes, but the pot must be wide enough. This way, it is possible to turn on the stovetop for *kashering*.

When using these stovetops, we can rely only on the fact that glass does not absorb. Additionally, if stainless steel pots are used, one can combine the uncertainty that absorption into them itself is questionable. However, if one places a dry pot on the stovetop, then for several minutes at least the area beneath the pot becomes heated to the point of *libbun*. Therefore, even if there is a boil-over afterward, there will be no prohibition.

For Pesach: One can place a silicone mat

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צדיק בדורו

הרבנית שרון רימון
Tanach teacher and author

א לֶּה תּוֹלְדֹת נֹחַ נֹחַ אִישׁ צַדִּיק תָּמִים הָיָה בְּדֹרֹתָיו אֶת הָאֱלֹהִים הִתְהַלֶּךְ נֹחַ (ו',ט).

אל מול כל האנושות המשחיתה את דרכה, יש אדם אחד שמוצא חן בעיני ה', וה' מעיד עליו שהוא צדיק תמים - נח.

במה היתה צדקתו של נח?

"**צדיק**" - בשונה מרוב אנשי דורו, שהיו אנשי חמס, הוא התנהל בצדק (רד"ק), בהנהגה טובה בין בני אדם (מלבי"ם), ומשום כך גם יצא צדיק (-זכאי) בדינו של הקב"ה, וניצל מן המבול (רמב"ן).

"**תמים**" - לא רק שעשה מעשים טובים, אלא עשה אותם בשלמות, בלי שום דופי (רד"ק); לשם שמים ללא תועלת חיצונית (מלבי"ם); שלם במידותיו ולא רק במעשיו (רבנו בחיי).

"**את הא-לקים התהלך**" - מכיר בה', דבק בו והולך בדרכו, מתוך עיון מעמיק באלקות (רמב"ן, רבנו בחיי, מלבי"ם).

הפסוק מדגיש שנח היה תמים "**בדורותיו**" - לפי הפשט, נח חי במשך דורות רבים, ובכולם היה צדיק תמים באופן חריג לעומת אנשי דורו (א"ע, רד"ק, רמב"ן). להיות צדיק כאשר כל החברה מסביב מלאה חמס ועבודה זרה, זה לא פשוט בכלל, ומדגיש רש"ר הירש: "**...בדור זה היה צורך בגבורה עילאית כדי להינצל מהשחתת הדור ולשמור על טהרת הלב**".

צדקותו המיוחדת של נח הופכת אותו לאדם היחיד בדורו הראוי להינצל מן המבול, ולהתחיל את העולם מחדש, וה' מגלה לו את תכניתו:

"וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים לְנֹחַ קֵץ כָּל בָּשָׂר בָּא לְפָנַי כִּי מָלְאָה הָאָרֶץ חָמָס מִפְּנֵיהֶם וְהִנְנִי מַשְׁחִיתָם אֶת הָאָרֶץ: עֲשֵׂה לְךָ תֵּבַת עֲצֵי גֹפֶר... וַאֲנִי הִנְנִי מֵבִיא אֶת הַמַּבּוּל מַיִם עַל הָאָרֶץ לְשַׁחֵת כָּל בָּשָׂר אֲשֶׁר בּוֹ רוּחַ חַיִּים מִתַּחַת הַשָּׁמָיִם כֹּל אֲשֶׁר בָּאָרֶץ יִגְוָע: וַהֲקִמֹתִי אֶת בְּרִיתִי אִתָּךְ..." (ו', יג-יח).

לאור כל זאת, מפתיעים דברי רש"י (בעקבות המדרש), בהם מופיעה מחלוקת על דמותו ורמת צדקותו של נח:

"יש מרבותינו דורשים אותו לשבח, כל שכן שאלו היה בדור צדיקים היה צדיק יותר,

ויש שדורשים אותו לגנאי, לפי דורו היה צדיק, ואלו היה בדורו של אברהם לא היה נחשב לכלום.

את האלהים התהלך נח - ובאברהם הוא אומר (יז א) "התהלך לפני" - נח היה צריך סעד לתומכו, אבל אברהם היה מתחזק ומהלך בצדקו מאליו".

רש"י עוסק בהשוואה בין נח לאנשי דורו, ומחדד את ההתבוננות שלנו בסיטואציה המורכבת בה אדם אחד מתנהל באופן אחר מהסובבים אותו, מתוך עולם ערכים ברור ואמונה בה'.

היכולת לבחור בדרך אחרת אל מול החברה כולה, מעוררת השתאות והערכה רבה כלפי תעצומות הנפש הנדרשות לאדם כדי לסלול לעצמו דרך אחרת ולהתמודד עם היחס של החברה כלפי החריגות שלו.

יחד עם זאת, מעלה רש"י את האפשרות, שמעשיו של נח נמדדים בהשוואה לאנשי דורו, ולא באופן אבסולוטי. לעומת אנשי דורו המושחתים נח היה צדיק, אבל באופן אבסולוטי - הוא לא היה ברמה כל כך גבוהה. זהו שיפוט לחומרה, שבמבט ראשון נראה רחוק מפשט הכתובים.

נשים לב שהמעטת צדקותו של נח עולה מתוך ההשוואה לאברהם אבינו: "בדורו של אברהם לא היה נחשב לכלום... נח היה צריך סעד לתומכו, אבל אברהם היה מתחזק ומהלך בצדקו מאליו".

גם נח וגם אברהם עמדו "מן הָעֵבֶר האחד" אל מול מעשיהם המקולקלים של אנשי דורם, ושניהם נבחרו על ידי ה' להתחיל דרך חדשה. אם כן - מדוע להמעיט בערכו של נח?

נראה שינן שתי נקודות השוואה מרכזיות בין נח לאברהם:

האחת - מידת היוזמה לעומת מידת הצייתנות. בעוד נח מקיים את דבר ה' במדויק ובצייתנות, אברהם יוזם ופורץ דרך, על מנת להביא אל העולם את דרך ה'.

והשניה - היחס שלהם לאנשי דורם.

אברהם אבינו יוזם דיאלוג מתמיד עם אנשי דורו - הוא הולך ממקום למקום; קורא בשם ה'; מגייר אנשים ומכניסם תחת כנפי השכינה; עושה עמם חסד; ואפילו מתפלל על אנשי סדום הרשעים מתוך תקווה שיוכל להצילם ואולי אף להביא לתיקונם (אם יש ביניהם כמה צדיקים שיכולים להשפיע עליהם לטובה). כל ייעודו של אברהם הוא להביא ברכה לכל משפחות האדמה.

לעומת זאת, איננו שומעים על שיח כלשהו בין נח לבין אנשי דורו. אמנם אביו קרא את שמו "נח" מתוך תקווה ש"זה ינחמנו מעצבון ידינו...", אך התורה איננה מתארת יחס כיצד הוא ניחם את אנשי דורו. הוא אמנם צדיק יותר מאנשי דורו, אך כאשר ה' מודיע לו על חורבן העולם - הוא שותק. אינו פועל למען חזרתם בתשובה, ואינו מתחנן לפני ה' בתפילה שירחם עליהם. נח מציית לדבר ה', בונה תיבה ונכנס אליה ומציל את עצמו ואת בני ביתו.

צדיקותו של נח אינה מוטלת בספק - זה נאמר במפורש ובזכות זה הוא ניצל וקיים את העולם כולו. גם צייתנותו של נח לדבר ה' ראויה להערכה. איננו שומעים תלונה של נח על הקושי האישי שלו בזמן המבול או לאחריו.

אולם, שתיקתו של נח מעלה תמיהה גדולה במיוחד על רקע תפילתו של אברהם אבינו על אנשי סדום ועלרקע תפילתו של משה רבנו על ישראל אחרי חטא העגל. מדוע קיבל נח בשתיקה את גזירת ההשמדה של כל העולם כולו?! כיצד יתכן שהוא לא קרע את השמים בתפילות ותחנונים? מדוע לא ניסה לתקן את אנשי דורו?

איננו יודעים מדוע שתק נח. אולי הוא הסכים עם הגזרה? אולי הוא חשב שאין סיכוי - שההשחתה כל כך עמוקה והם לא יכולים להשתנות ולתקן? אולי הוא חשב שאסור לו לאדם לערער על גזרתו של הקב"ה?

קשה לדעת מה חשב נח, מאחר וזה לא נאמר בכתוב. אך השאלות מהדהדות בליבנו, ואנו נותרים עם השאלה הנוקבת - מה נדרש מאיתנו כאנשים מאמינים?

מתי עלינו להזדהות ולהסכים עם רצון ה' ולקבל את הדין בהכנעה ובענווה?

ומתי עלינו להתווכח, לקרוע שמים בתפילה, לדרוש רחמים ולא לוותר?

נדמה שהתורה הניחה לפנינו שתי דמויות של צדיקים גדולים, נח ואברהם, מהם אנו יכולים ללמוד את שתי המידות החשובות הללו - **מידת ההכנעה והענווה אל מול מידת העזות והדרישה לרחמים ולתיקון.** לעתים עלינו להשתמש במידה זו, ולעתים במידה האחרת, ולאזן בין השתיים, כפי הבנתנו.

ויחד עם זאת, חז"ל (ורש"י בעקבותיהם) חידדו והדגישו את המסר של **אחריות הצדיק כלפי אנשי דורו וכלפי הנחלת דרך ה' בעולם.** לפי דבריהם, ה' מצפה מן הצדיק לקחת אחריות, ליזום, להוביל, ואף להתווכח עם ה'. מוטל עליו להיות ערב לאנשי דורו, לדאוג לתיקונם, לא לוותר עליהם, ולהתפלל עליהם לרחמי שמים ככל יכולתו.

Unfinished Business

Sivan Rahav Meir
World Mizrachi Scholar-in-Residence

HEADSHOT PHOTO: ARNON BUSANI

Liora Ben Tzur of Kibbutz Ein HaShlosha gave birth to her third daughter just 30 hours before the events of October 7, 2023. Her mother, Mrs. Marcelle Talia, came from her home in Kiryat Arba to the *kibbutz* to help Liora's husband with the children. On the morning of Simchat Torah, while Liora was still in the maternity ward, her mother was murdered as she walked along the paths of the *kibbutz*, carrying candy for the children.

This year, during Sukkot, as her mother's *yahrtzeit* approached, Liora remembered that her mother's bag must still be somewhere in her house. "It was the backpack she carried everywhere," she recalled. Sure enough, she found it and began rummaging through it.

"I don't know what I was looking for. Maybe a little letter she had left behind, something we hadn't discovered yet. I opened a document wallet and found 2,000 shekels inside. Attached to the banknotes with a paper clip was a small note on which Mom had written one word: *Tzedakah*. And underneath it, her last name: Talia.

"Wow. Two thousand shekels. Three years after Mom was murdered, she suddenly "pops in for a visit" and leaves us all with one more obligation: Give *tzedakah*.

"My siblings and I divided the money, and each of us chose a different cause. My husband and I decided to use our share to buy candy and little surprises for the grandchildren and the other children of Kibbutz Ein HaShlosha for Simchat Torah. I told the children that it was a holiday gift from Savta Marcelle.

"It was so typical of Mom, leaving us 2,000 shekels with a single-word instruction. She never talked about grand ideals. She never sat us down to explain her worldview. She simply gave. She would save bottles for people in need who collected them, and she wouldn't hesitate to hand a beggar a 200-shekel bill.

"So I wanted a part of her to return to the place where she had been when she was murdered. To the children she loved so much, to the grandchildren she never managed to reach that morning, and to all the children of the *kibbutz*.

"On that Simchat Torah morning, Mom had set out to bring treats to the children. And now, in her backpack, we had found a small way to finish what she had started.

"Three years later, on Simchat Torah 5787, some of the residents of Kibbutz Ein HaShlosha had already returned home. And the children of the *kibbutz* danced with Torah scrolls and enjoyed the candy that Savta Marcelle had wanted to give them."

▪ ▪ ▪

On Yom Kippur, we were at Kibbutz Gevim, near Sderot. Shlomi Davidovitch, a beloved member of the *kibbutz*, was murdered on October 7. In his memory, the *kibbutz* opened its first-ever *shul*, named in his honor.

After Musaf on Yom Kippur, Gil Schwartzman, another member of the *kibbutz*, told us an emotional story about one of the bullets fired by terrorists at the *kibbutz* gate during their unsuccessful attempt to break in. The bullet struck the gate and passed through to the other side, leaving a hole in the shape of a Magen David. The *kibbutz* members decided not to repair the hole, but instead placed a sign beside it.

At the end of Yom Kippur, as we were leaving, we stopped the car and got out to see it for ourselves. It was just minutes after a large and deeply moving Ne'ilah service, during which everyone had proclaimed "*Shema Yisrael*" and sung "Next year in a rebuilt Jerusalem."

Their voices were still echoing in my head as I stood before the *kibbutz* gate and saw a symbol that seemed to tell the entire story: The enemy had tried to hurt us, to destroy us. But instead, he had created a Magen David. He had strengthened our identity. Through the very damage he inflicted, he had reminded us who we are and what our story is.

May we find the strength, even amid such tremendous pain, to reconnect, grow stronger, and unite.

▪ ▪ ▪

This week's Torah portion is *Parashat Noach*. Humanity had become corrupt, and Hashem brought a flood to wash away and destroy the evil in the world. Only Noach and his family survived, taking refuge in the ark that Noach had built.

Rabbi Shalom Noach Berezovsky, in his book Netivot Shalom, explains that we, too, have a mission to build our own "Noach's ark."

"Even when a raging flood surrounds us and everything seems bleak, there is a Noach's ark that can save us. When a person feels low and discouraged, the solution is found in the words of this week's Torah portion: 'Make yourself an ark.' In our generation, there are three Noach's arks: Torah, Shabbat, and unity. These are powerful forces for good that enable us to overcome the evil around us.

"This Torah portion is not relevant only to Noach's generation. It contains a lesson for all generations to come: No matter what situation we find ourselves in, there is always a place of refuge. Even in the worst circumstances, we can still hold fast to what is good."

Rabbi Berezovsky identifies three "Noach's arks" that we can enter to draw strength and find inner peace: Torah study, Shabbat observance, and unity. Other commentators suggest additional "Noach's arks," encouraging us to find our own safe haven in a turbulent world. What is yours?

For the Shabbat Table

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

"And the entire earth was one language and one speech… And they said, 'Let us build a city and a tower for ourselves with its top in the sky, and we will make a name for ourselves, lest we become scattered across the whole earth'." (*Bereshit*, 11:1,4)

At first glance, when reading the story of *Migdal Bavel* in this week's *parsha*, there is not an obvious failing with the intended plan to build the city and tower. If there were an obvious sin, our commentators would not offer such varying explanations as to what they did wrong and why they were deserving of punishment.

From a simple reading of the verses, it seems like they sought unity, to all live together and maintain their singular identity. Are these not noble goals? Why did Hashem decide to disperse them?

The Kli Yakar explains that while their initial motivation was a positive one, Hashem understood that their plan would not succeed.

This is because of the key words: "And we will make a name for ourselves."

If they were truly interested in staying together with altruistic motivation, they could have succeeded. However, their stated ulterior motive – the desire for fame and renown – meant their project was destined for failure. The search for fame as a central driver if the project would have led to internal conflict, jealousy, jostling for position and tension.

Instead, Hashem guided them that the best way for them to achieve their original noble goal of unity was to scatter them and allow for numerous groups and nations, each with their own language, culture, territory, leaders and space.

The Kli Yakar was a regular critic of the wealthy elite of his time and such warnings about the dangers of prominence, affluence, and success can be found throughout his commentary on the Torah. Yet, each occasion brings with it nuanced and significant lessons to learn from.

Here, beyond teaching us about the nature of successful coexistence and unity, the Kli Yakar warns us that even when a project commences with honourable goals and pure motivation, the moment fame and prominence become factors, the entire project is at risk. The initial lofty goals can actually make things worse, as those who seek grandeur at the expense of others cling to the original noble concept and claim they are only motivated by principle.

If not for the words, "And we will make a name for ourselves," the project in Bavel could have been a great success story. We should learn from their mistakes and strive to do what is right in this world, simply because it is the right thing to do.

Shabbat Shalom!

Parsha Riddle

Reb Leor Broh
Mizrachi Melbourne

Who made a speech that no one heard?

Clue: The vowels under the first three letters are Sheva, Patach and Kamatz in that order.

See page 24 for the answer to the Parsha Riddle

A Story of Heaven and Earth

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks zt"l

Set between the pre-history of humanity as a whole and the particular covenant with Abraham, the story of the Tower of Babel is one of the turning points of the biblical narrative, central to its vision of what can go wrong in civilisations and societies.

The story itself - told in a mere *nine verses* - is a compact masterpiece of literary and philosophical virtuosity. The first thing to note is that its historical background is exceptionally precise. The tower - or ziggurat - was the great symbol of the ancient Mesopotamian city states of the lower Tigris-Euphrates valley, the cradle of civilisation. It was here that human beings first settled, established agriculture, and built cities.

As the Torah makes clear with unusual attention to what seems like a peripheral fact, one of the great discoveries of Mesopotamia (along with the wheel, the arch, and the calendar) was the ability to manufacture building materials, especially bricks, made by pouring clay into moulds, drying them in the sun, and eventually firing them in kilns. This made possible the construction of buildings on a larger scale, and reaching greater heights than hitherto. From this came the ziggurat, a stepped building of many stories, which came to have a profound religious significance.

Essentially these ancient towers - of which the remains of at least thirty have been discovered - were man-made "holy mountains," the mountain being the place where heaven and earth most visibly met. Inscriptions on several of these buildings, decoded by archeologists, refer, as does the Torah, to the idea that their top "reaches heaven." The largest - the great ziggurat of Babylon to which the Torah refers - was a structure of seven stories, 300 feet high, on a base of roughly the same dimensions (further details can be found in Nahum Sarna, *Understanding Genesis*).

Not only is the story of Babel historically precise, it is also shot through with literary devices: inversions, word plays, ironies, and puns. One of the most masterly is that the two key words, *l-v-n*, "brick," and *n-v-l*, "confuse", are precise inversions of one another. As so often in the Torah, literary technique is closely related to the moral or spiritual message the Torah wishes to convey. In this case it is the phenomenon of inversion itself. The results of human behaviour are often the opposite of what was intended. The builders wanted to concentrate humanity in one place ("Let us build a city . . . and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth"). The result was that they were dispersed ("from there the Lord scattered them over the face of the whole earth"). They wanted to "make a name" for themselves, and they did, but the name they made - Babel - became an eternal symbol of confusion.

Their pride lay in their newfound technological ability to construct buildings of unprecedented grandeur. They did not realise (the message signalled in the opening verses of the Torah) that the greatest creative power is language ("And G-d said . . . and there was"). It was not a technical problem that caused them to abandon the project but the loss of the ability to communicate. What is holy for the Torah is not power but the use to which we put it, and this is intrinsically linked to language - the medium in which we frame our ideals, construct imaginative possibilities, and call others to join us in realising them. The word is prior to the work.

What, though, was the builders' sin? The narrative signals this, again, by a series of verbal cues. The first is the phrase with which the episode both begins and ends, *kol ha-aretz*, "the whole earth." It begins, "The whole world spoke the same language" (Gen. 11:1), and ends, "From there the Lord scattered them all across the face of the earth" (Gen. 11:9). The phrase *kol ha-aretz* appears five times in the nine verses: all three-, five- and especially seven-fold repetitions in a biblical passage signal the presence of a key theme. A framing device of this kind is highly significant.

The second is the phoneme (a basic unit of sound) *sh-m*, either as *sham*, "there", or *shem*, "name." This appears seven times in the passage. It is clearly linked to the word *shamayim*, "heaven" – the place the builders attempted to reach in building the tower. The thematic elements of the narrative are thus clear. This is a story about heaven and earth – but in what way? To understand the point at issue we must return to the opening chapter of Bereishit and its description of creation.

Two words in that account are decisive. The first is *tov*, "good," which appears seven times. G-d says, "Let there be," there is, and G-d sees "that it is good." Creation in Bereishit 1 is not primarily about the power of G-d but about the goodness of G-d and the universe He made. In historical context, this is an extraordinary statement. For the most part, the ancients saw the world as a dangerous and threatening place, full of dangers, disasters, famines and floods. There was no overarching meaning to any of this. It was the result of clashing powers, personified as conflicts between the G-ds. Religion was either an attempt to assert human power over the elements through magic and myth, or a mystical escape from the world into a private nirvana of the soul. Against this, Judaism made the astonishing assertion that the world is good. It is intelligible. It is the result not of blind collisions and random mutations but of a single creative will. This alone is enough to set Judaism apart as the most hopeful of the world's faiths.

There is however another key word, the root *b-d-l*, to "separate," "distinguish," "divide." This appears five times in Bereishit 1. The goodness of the universe is itself a matter of order, boundaries and distinctions. G-d separates the different domains (day 1, light and dark; day 2, upper and lower waters; day 3, land and sea) and fills each with its appropriate objects or life-forms (day 4, sun and moon; day 5, birds and fish; day 6, land animals and mankind). So important was this idea to Judaism that we have a special ceremony, *havdallah*, to mark the end of Shabbat and the beginning of each cycle of "the six days of creation." Like G-d, we begin creation by *havdallah*: making, noting and consecrating distinctions.

This, too, is fundamental to the Judaic world view. Goodness is order; evil is disorder, an act or person or entity in the wrong place. The word *chet*, sin, comes from a verb meaning "to miss the target." The word *averah*, like its English equivalent "transgression," means to stray across a border, to enter forbidden territory. Many of the *chukim* or "statutes" of Judaism are about inculcating respect for the inherent orderliness of the universe – and thus not mixing milk (life) and meat (death), wool (an animal product) and linen (a vegetable product) or sowing a field with "mixed kinds" of seed.

Creation itself is seen as the slow emergence of order from chaos. This, as the physicist Gerald Schroeder points out (in *Genesis and the Big Bang*) is implicit in the Hebrew words *erev* and *boker*, "And it was evening (*erev*) and it was morning (*boker*)." *Erev* in Hebrew means an undifferentiated mixture of elements. *Boker* comes from a root meaning "to reflect, contemplate, seek clarity." Much recent work in physics, biology and cosmology has converged on the discovery that the birth of stars, planets and life itself is a matter of the slow emergence of ever more complex systems of order swimming, as it were, against the tide of entropy.

An ordered universe is a peaceable universe in which every form of being, inanimate, animate and human, has its proper place. Violence, injustice and conflict are forms of disorder – a failure to respect the integrity of each life-form or (in the case of humanity, where "every life is like a universe") each person. That was the state of the universe before the Flood, when "all flesh had corrupted its way on earth."

This was not an abstract idea. The world of myth, against which Judaism is a sustained protest, was one in which boundaries were not observed. There were human beings who were like G-ds and G-ds who were like human beings. There were strange mythological hybrids – like the sphinx, half-human, half-animal. Religious ecstasy was often accompanied by a ceremonial breaking of boundaries in various ways. To the Judaic mind this is paganism, and it is never morally neutral. G-d creates order; man creates chaos; and the result is, inevitably, destructive.

The most fundamental boundary is stated in the Torah's first sentence – that between "heaven" and "earth." Never before or since (except among religions or cultures influenced by Judaism) has G-d been conceived in so radically transcendent a way. G-d is not to be identified with anything on earth. "The heavens are the heavens of the Lord," says the Psalmist, "but the earth He has given to man." This ontological divide is fundamental. G-d is G-d; humanity is humanity. There can be no blurring of the boundaries.

That was the sin of the builders of the tower. Their aspiration (to "reach heaven") was laughable, and indeed the Torah makes a joke of it. They think that their construction – three hundred feet high – has reached heaven, whereas G-d has to "come down" to look at it (in general, the one thing that makes G-d laugh in the Torah is the pretensions of human beings when they think of themselves as like the G-ds). However, it was worse than laughable. The Netziv (R. Naftali Zvi Yehudah Berlin, 1817-1893), writing in Czarist Russia and prophetically foreseeing the worst excesses of communism, sees Babel as the world's first totalitarianism, in which to preserve the masses as a single entity, all freedom of expression is suppressed (that, for him, is the meaning of "the whole world had one language and a unified speech"). Intoxicated by their technological prowess, the builders of Babel believe they had become like G-ds and could now construct their own cosmopolis, their man-made miniature universe. Not content with earth, they wanted to build an abode in heaven. It is a mistake many civilisations have made, and the result is catastrophe.

In modern times, the re-enactment of Babel is most clearly associated with the name of Nietzsche (1844-1890). For the last ten years of his life, he was clinically insane, but shortly before his final breakdown he had a nightmare vision which has become justly famous:

> Have you not heard of that madman who lit a lantern in the bright morning hours, ran to the marketplace, and cried incessantly, "I seek G-d! I seek G-d!" . . . Whither is G-d?" he cried. "I shall tell you. We have killed him - you and I. All of us are his murderers . . . G-d is dead. G-d remains dead. And we have killed him. How shall we, the murderers of all murderers, comfort ourselves? What was holiest and most powerful of all that the world has yet owned has bled to death under our knives. Who will wipe this blood off us? . . . Is not the greatness of this deed too great for us? Must we not ourselves become G-ds simply to seem worthy of it?"

As George Steiner pointed out (in his *In Bluebeard's Castle*) there was less than three-quarters of a century between Nietzsche and the Holocaust, between his vision of the murder of G-d and the deliberate, systematic attempt to murder the "people of G-d" (Hitler called conscience "a Jewish invention").

When human beings try to become more

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On Drinking, Sleeping, and Making Proper Use of Our Divine Gifts

Rabbi Hershel Schachter
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We are not sure what type of tree the *etz hada'as* was. The *Tanaim* had four different traditions on the matter: wheat (which at that time grew on a tree), *esrog*, fig, or grape. The practice of the Vilna Gaon was not to eat grapes on Rosh Hashana, following the opinion that: the *etz hada'as* was a grape vine, and that *Adam Ha'rishon* was created on Rosh Hashana (which that year was on a Friday; according to the calendar system we follow today, *lo ad"u rosh*, we see to it that Rosh Hashana never falls out on a Friday), and, according to the *medrash*, the same day he was commanded by *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* not to eat from the *etz hada'as* he violated that *mitzvah*. Therefore, because we don't want to repeat Adam's mistake, we avoid eating any grapes at all on Rosh Hashana, even though our grapes are clearly not from that *etz hada'as*.

The tradition that the *etz hada'as* was a grape vine additionally includes a comment that much tragedy, pain, and suffering have come about over the years because of the grape vine. People get drunk from wine, lose their senses, and act out in a most irresponsible fashion.

Some *mekubalim* suggest that perhaps the *takonas chachomim* to recite Kiddush on Friday night was instituted to serve as a *tikkun* for the sin of the *etz hada'as*. Since *Adam Ha'Rishon* sinned on erev Shabbos using grapes, we use the grape vine on *leil Shabbos* to show how one can act in a most responsible and most proper way by *b'dafka* using that wine which often has led men to sin or otherwise act improperly.

The *medrash* points out that in the beginning of the *parsha*, Noach starts out as an "*ish tzaddik tamim*," but later on turns into an "*ish ha'adama*," and he defiled himself ("*vayacheil Noach*," he made himself *chulin*) by getting drunk, losing his senses, and acting in a highly improper fashion.

We congratulate those *rabbonim* who have not permitted use of liquor in their shuls. It has recently become a new "*shtik*" that *yeshiva bochurim* drink liquor at weddings or at a *kiddush*. This is a most improper practice, and the parents or *rabbonim* of these young men should see to it that they discontinue this "*minhag shtus*."

In the beginning of *parshas Vayetze* we read about Yaakov Avinu running away from Esav and dreaming of a ladder extending from Earth to the heavens, and angels ascending and descending the ladder. The *midrash* has several interpretations of this dream. One interpretation, which appears in the *gemara Chulin* assumes that it is the same group of angels who ascended to heaven, saw the image of Yaakov Avinu engraved on the *kisei hakavod*, and later descended to see if, in real life, Yaakov Avinu actually lived up to the potential he had (according to the *demus dyukno* which they saw on the *kisei hakavod*.) When they came back down to Earth and found Yaakov fast asleep, *bikshu l'horgo* – they planned to put him to death. From the entire *beriah*, man is the only creature that was endowed with *sechel*, and therefore, the angels thought Yaakov was guilty of a serious sin – how can such a creature waste his time by sleeping? He ought to use all of his time to accomplish great things! The Torah continues to tell us, "*v'hinei Hashem nitzav alav*," that Hashem hovered over Yaakov to protect him from the angels. Hashem understood that while it is true that one who was endowed with tremendous potential ought not to waste his time by sleeping too much, every human being needs a certain amount of sleep to maintain his good health. Human beings have tremendous potential due to their unique *tzelem Elokim* and should not waste that potential of *chochmo* and *sechel* by drinking or by oversleeping. To preserve our *tzelem Elokim* we were commanded *v'holachto b'drachav*, to go in the ways of Hashem – *ma hu*, *afa ata*... Hashem is original, creative, artistic, etc.; we all possess this *tzelem Elokim* and therefore, ought to act in a creative, artistic fashion. Sitting around and aimlessly daydreaming, i.e., being guilty of *bitul zman*, is considered a serious *aveira*, since it is an outright violation of the *mitzvah* of *v'holachto b'drachav*.

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on the stovetop and place the pot on top of it.

Therefore, one should conduct themselves as follows:

- It is preferable to designate certain burners of an induction stovetop for meat and others for dairy. Pareve may be prepared on either.
- It is preferable not to use the stovetop simultaneously for meat and dairy when there is a concern that one of the pots may boil over and spill onto the entire surface.
- If the same burner is used, there is room to be lenient if it has been cleaned and twenty-four hours have passed. It is preferable to dry the pot before placing it on the stovetop. In that case, even if it boils over, during the first few minutes the stovetop will *kasher* itself.

● *Compiled and Translated by Elan Finkelstein.*

1. עבודה זרה כו
2. הלכות רוצח ה:י
3. חושן משפט תכה:ה

A Thought About Going Out of the Teivah

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As it says in 8:1, "וַיִּזְכֹּר אֱלֹקִים אֶת נֹחַ." Rashi says an interesting thing. Rashi asks why does it say "וַיִּזְכֹּר אֱלֹקִים אֶת נֹחַ"? He says, "זה מדת הדין של השם, ונהפכה למדת רחמים על ידי תפילת הצדיקים." *Elokim* is *Midas Hadin*, and it was switched to *rachamim* through the *tefillah* of *tzadikim*.

Which means to say something that is not usually mentioned, not usually stressed: Noach was saved from the *teivah* because of his *tefillos*, because of his *davening*.

What did he *daven*? We know that he *davened tehillim* 142:8: "הוֹצִיאָה מִמַּסְגֵּר נַפְשִׁי לְהוֹדוֹת אֶת שְׁמֶךָ" – take me out of this jail so that I can praise You.

He *davened*.

It is important to note that one of the *tainos* on Noach before he went into the *teivah* is that he didn't *daven* for his generation, and he got out because he *davened* for his generation.

With the understanding of this Rashi, it answers a *kasha* that I must have asked in previous years. It always disturbs me: Why, on Rosh Hashana, do we talk about "וַיִּזְכֹּר אֱ-לֹקִים אֶת נֹחַ"? We talk about whatever we talk about on Rosh Hashana, we talk about all of the *pesukim*, and we talk about what has to do with *Klal Yisrael*. Why are we talking about Noach in the *Zichronos* of Mussaf on Rosh Hashana *Shemoneh Esrei*?

But, if we understand "וַיִּזְכֹּר אֱלֹקִים אֶת נֹחַ" – that he was a person who had not adequately *davened* before, and now he picked himself up and he *davened* – such a person who picked himself up and *davened*, that is an extraordinary lesson going forward.

"וַיִּזְכֹּר אֱלֹקִים אֶת נֹחַ."

HKB"H, please remember us, think about us, and *B'ezras Hashem Yisborach*, *Ribbono Shel Olam*, please take us **Mitzarah L'harvacha**. Take us from **Choshech to Ohr**, *b'karov mamash*.

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than human, they quickly become less than human. As Lord Acton pointed out, even the great city-state of Athens which produced Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, self-destructed when "the possession of unlimited power, which corrodes the conscience, hardens the heart, and confounds the understanding of monarchs, exercised its demoralising influence." What went wrong in Athens, he writes, was the belief that "there is no law superior to that of the State – the lawgiver is above the law."

Only when G-d is G-d can man be man. That means keeping heaven and earth distinct, organising the latter only under the conscious sovereignty of the former. Without this there is little to prevent human beings from sacrificing the many for the sake of the few, or the few for the sake of the many. Only a respect for the integrity of creation stops human beings from destroying themselves. Humility in the presence of Divine order is our last – best – safeguard against humankind arrogating to itself power without restraint, might without right. Babel was the first civilisation, but sadly not the last, to begin with a dream of utopia and end in a nightmare of hell. A world of tov, good, is a world of havdallah, boundaries and limits. Those who cross those boundaries and transgress these limits make a name for themselves, but the name they make is Babel, meaning chaos, confusion and the loss of that order which is a precondition of both nature (the world G-d creates) and culture (the world we create).

AROUND THE SHABBAT TABLE:

- Is there a totalitarianism in your world, with groups of people trying to impose one way of thinking on everyone?
- How is this story an antidote to that totalitarianism?

The Words of our Sages Regarding the "Routine of the Tongue"

Chief Rabbi Ovadia Yosef zt"l
Former Sephardic Chief Rabbi of Israel

Our Sages in the Talmud Yerushalmi (beginning of *Masechet Ta'anit*) teach us that when one is unsure whether or not he has requested rain in his prayer, until thirty days have passed, we must assume that he has not prayed properly. This means that until thirty days elapse from the day the change is implemented in the *Amida* prayer (the 7th of Cheshvan in Israel or the 4th/5th of December outside of Israel), we must assume that one prayed based on the "routine of his tongue," i.e., the way he is accustomed to. Since one has not been accustomed to request rain in the prayer during the summer months, when in doubt, we must assume that he has indeed not done so and must repeat the Amida prayer again. The *poskim*, as well Maran Ha'Shulchan Aruch (Chapter 114), rule likewise.

Indeed, this law quoted from the Yerushalmi is primarily cited with regards to mentioning "*Mashiv Ha'Ruach*" in "*Ata Gibor*" and not with regards to requesting rain in the "Blessing of the Years." Nevertheless, the Poskim write that since there is no distinction between them, the same law applies to the requesting rain in the "Blessing of the Years."

Does this Law Depend on "Thirty Days" or "Ninety Prayers"?

There is a disagreement among the *Acharonim* regarding the meaning of this law. Does it mean that after thirty days, one's tongue becomes accustomed to the variation in the text of the prayer or does it mean that one becomes accustomed after ninety prayers (for there are three prayers a day). There is indeed a great *halachic* implication here, for the "Blessing of the Years" is not recited in the Amida prayer ninety times in thirty days, for rain is not mentioned on Shabbat at all. Based on this, we must discern the law of a person who is unsure whether or not he has requested rain in the *Amida* prayer at a time during which thirty days have elapsed from when the change was implemented but ninety prayers have not yet been recited. Must he repeat the *Amida* prayer or not? Similarly, if thirty days have elapsed since the change in the prayer has been implemented, but for whatever reason, the individual has not recited all of the prayers during the thirty days. Shall he repeat the *Amida* as a result of his doubt, for he has not recited all ninety prayers, or should he not repeat the prayer since thirty days have elapsed?

Halachically speaking, since this matter is subject to a disagreement among the *poskim*, if an individual is unsure whether or not he has requested rain in the *Amida* prayer close to the 7th of Cheshvan (or the 4th/5th of December outside of Israel), it is proper to repeat the *Amida* prayer. Nevertheless, before beginning to pray, one should stipulate and say as follows: "If I am obligated to repeat the *Amida*, I am hereby repeating it. If I am not obligated to do so, this prayer should be considered a voluntary prayer." By doing so, one avoids all concerns. The *Sefer Halacha Berura* (Chapter 114, Section 14) rules likewise.

Summary: If one is unsure whether or not one has requested rain in the *Amida* prayer, if this occurs within thirty days of the initial change in the prayer, one must repeat the *Amida* prayer, for we must assume that he did not request rain. If this occurs once thirty days have elapsed and one has already recited ninety prayers including a request for rain, one need not repeat the *Amida* prayer, for we can assume that he has already become accustomed to saying the change that has been implemented in the prayer. If this occurs once thirty days have elapsed but one has not yet recited ninety prayers including a request for rain, one must repeat the *Amida* prayer and make the aforementioned condition.

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What Others Have

Although many forms of desire are problematic, the *Aseret HaDibrot* specifically prohibit coveting what belongs to others. This particular form of desire is included within the first of the three drives identified by the *Mishnah* in *Avot*: jealousy.

A future piece will iy"H address this type of desire within our discussion of the broader context of jealousy.

● *In memory of my mother, Shulamit Bat HaRav Shmuel Tzvi Halevy Z"L.*

1. *Avot* 4:21.
2. *Shemot* 20:14, *Devarim* 5:18.
3. Rabbeinu Yonah understands the *Mishnah*'s reference to desire (*Avot* 4:21) as relating to all these types of desire.
4. *Bereishit* 3:1-6.
5. See, for example, the *Kli Yakar* (*Bereishit* 4:19), who explains how desire corrupted the first generations and led to the flood.
6. *Devarim* 21:18-21.
7. *Sanhedrin* 72a as explained by the Yad Ramah.
8. The Maharal (*Gur Aryeh*, *Devarim* 5:17) sees this type of desire as one of the forms the *Aseret Hadibrot* prohibits. Rav Moshe Feinstein (*Igrot Moshe*, Y.D. 3:35 and C.M. 2:76) mentions this problem as part of why one should avoid smoking marijuana or even regular cigarettes. See Ramban (*Devarim* 30:6), who explains that this aspect of desire was introduced by the original sin and will be repaired in the days of *Moshiach*.
9. *Bamidbar* 11:4-6.
10. *Shemot* 20:13, *Devarim* 5:17.
11. *Vayikra* 19:2.
12. Desire's ability to foster disgusting behavior may explain why the word for disgusting (*ta'ev*) is similar to the one for desire (*ta'av*). See Radak (*Amos* 6:8) and Rav Hirsch (ad loc.) who discuss this similarity.
13. *Vayikra* 19:2.
14. *Hilchot Teshuvah* 7:3.
15. *Yoma* 29a.
16. *Moreh Nevuchim* 3:8. See also *Bereishit* 6:5, *Devarim* 29:18, and *Yechezkel* 14:5.

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The Final Straw – The Sin of Chamas

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The Torah tells us that, before the flood, ותמלא הארץ חמס – "the earth was filled with *chamas*." Rashi (9:13) cites a *Gemara* that defines *chamas* as robbery – לא נָחְתַּם גְּזַר דִּינָם אֶלָּא עַל הַגֶּזֶל (סנהדרין ק"ח) – their sentence was sealed only on account of their sin of robbery. On the surface the word "*chamas*" is often translated simply as violence or robbery – but a closer reading reveals a deeper, more universal meaning.

Rav Yosef Zevin (*La'Torah V'LaMoadim*) inquires as to why the final straw was *gezel* – robbery? The people during the generation of Noach engaged in many transgressions. Why is *gezel* (robbery) what triggered the flood?

Oshek Yadeinu

It is interesting to note that we refer to *gezel* in another very significant context. In the Neila *tefilla* at the conclusion of Yom Kippur we no longer recite "*Al Chet*," but we do state: למען נחדל מעושק ידינו – which is translated as – ceasing to steal! At the culmination of Yom Kippur, rather than repeating the list of sins in which we may have engaged throughout the year, all we reference is robbery. Perhaps, Rav Zevin suggests, that this is all inclusive. Typically, when you have a closing statement (חתימה) it reflects the content of all that precedes it. (הכל הולך אחר החתום). How does *gezel* capture all transgressions, especially transgressions between man and G-d?

Essentially, each of us is gifted with certain capabilities and if we do not utilize our talents properly, in our *avodat Hashem*, we are guilty of misappropriating those gifts. When we waste time, don't act properly in *shul* or in our workplace, or engage in inappropriate behavior it is as if we are misusing valuables G-d entrusted to us, which is like stealing. That is why we reference – *oshek* – stealing as the all-encompassing phrase in Neila.

Chamas - Gezel

Similarly, with respect to the generation of the flood. *Chamas* – robbery – was the final sin that sealed the fate of the generation of Noach. It was not merely the acts of theft or cruelty between human beings; it was a comprehensive corruption of how people related to the world, to each other, and to G-d. In essence, it represents misappropriation: the taking or wasting of that which does not truly belong to us.

This misappropriation can take many forms. It includes the obvious wrongs done to others – robbery, deceit, oppression – but it also extends to the ways we fail to honor the gifts that G-d has entrusted to us. Talents left undeveloped, time wasted, opportunities ignored – these, too, are forms of chamas, theft from the Divine source of life itself. Just as in the final prayers of Yom Kippur, where all sins are summarized as *oshek*, a kind of spiritual misappropriation, the Torah teaches that the downfall of Noach's generation was ultimately rooted in this misuse.

Din V'Cheshbon

The Gra says that in the future we're going to have to give a *Din V'Cheshbon* (Judgment and accounting). Why the double language? *Din* – refers to what we did wrong. *Cheshbon* – refers to the good things we could have accomplished during the time we engaged in transgressions.

Noach – Midrash

Rav Pam asks how the people in the generation of Noach were able to fall so low? He cites a midrash that states that up until Noach, people were born with webbed fingers. Noach was the first individual to be born with separate fingers. That enabled him to create tools with which to work the land and it made it much easier to plow and plant. This innovation led to leisure hours. People became much more efficient and suddenly had a lot of free time on their hands. Free time in and of itself is not problematic. What is problematic is when that time is used in the wrong way.

Conclusion

The destruction of the generation of Noach reminds us that free time, natural talents, relationships, and sacred opportunities are all entrusted to us, not for personal indulgence or neglect, but for meaningful use. When we misuse them – by wasting time, ignoring responsibilities, or exploiting others – we engage in a subtle form of theft that disrupts the harmony of life and, ultimately, the society we inhabit. The final straw – *hamas* (theft), was a warning to all future generations: integrity is measured not only by what we take from others, but by how faithfully we steward the gifts we have been given.

Noach, Avraham and The Eternal Divine Promise

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Parshas Noach begins by recounting the good deeds of Noach, who was righteous and pure in his generation, and who walked with G-d. Noach and his family – his three sons: Shem, Cham and Yafes, his wife Na'ama, and his daughters-in-law – remained upstanding and moral, in a world gone awry.

Ten generations after creation, the world – and all of mankind – had become utterly corrupt, and Hashem brought the great flood waters to destroy all life forms from upon the face of the earth. The majority of *Parshas Noach* deals with the Torah narrative of the flood: the years leading up to it, when Noach built the Ark; the timeline of the flood itself; and its aftermath.

Other topics include the listing of the ten generations from Noach to Avraham (still called Avram at this point in the Torah), the generation of the Tower of Bavel and their plans to reach the heavens and rebel against G-d, *keviyachol*; and the family of Terach – including Avram and Sarai (called Yiskah) who began their journey from Ur Kasdim to Canaan, but get stuck in Charan.

At the end of the Flood narrative, once Noach and his family exited the ark, we learn of the covenant that Hashem made with Noach and his sons, and all of mankind.

And I will establish My covenant with you, and never again will all flesh be cut off by the flood waters, and there will never again be a flood to destroy the earth; And Elokim said: This is the sign of the covenant, which I am placing between Me and between you, and between every living soul that is with you, for everlasting generations; My bow I have placed in the cloud, and it will be for a sign of a covenant between Me and the earth (*Bereishis* 9:11-13).

Famously, the rainbow is the sign that Hashem showed Noach as a promise to never again wash away the world with flood waters of destruction.

Regarding the sign of the rainbow, Rabbi Samson Rafael Hirsch writes, "G-d is not content merely to pronounce His word, but establishes from His pronouncement a sign and a remembrance. So we find throughout the course of the Divine rule: G-d sets *osos* (signs) – e.g., *milah*, *Shabbos*, *tefillin* – to remind man ever anew of the momentous truths on which the welfare of humanity depends" (RSRH, *Commentary to Bereishis* 9:12).

Rav Hirsch points out that in proclaiming Hashem's covenant with the generations, the *pasuk* (v.12, quoted above) says: לְדֹרֹת עוֹלָם, with the *vavs* missing from the word *le'doros* (we would have expected the word to be written: לדורות, with two *vavs*, which is the maleh [full] spelling of the word. However, the word is written in its *chaser* form).

As every letter in Torah is of great significance, we must wonder: What does the *chaser* spelling come to teach us?

Rav Hirsch notes that, "The word לְדֹרֹת is written doubly *chaser*. The implication is that G-d's covenant will remain in effect at all times; it will shield even a deficient, wanting generation whose deficiency is apparent, whether inwardly or outwardly. In such times a person is likely to lose heart or to despair of Divine justice, but the sight of the rainbow in the clouds will remind him that G-d's covenant is established with mankind and with the earth. This covenant will remain in effect at all times and in every generation, and His providence will achieve its aims – even in a wanting [i.e., '*chaser*,' or 'lacking'] generation" (*Ibid.*).

This teaching contains an important message of *chizuk* and hope for us, in our times.

We live in a world that is sorely lacking, completely "*chaser*," in morality and ethics, in holiness and purity, in honesty and integrity, in faithfulness and compassion. As we witness events on the world stage that can only shock us with their depravity and instill trembling in every upright heart, we must remember Hashem's promise to Noach and his sons, and in fact, to the whole world.

Not only did Hashem promise not to destroy the entire world ever again with floodwaters, but this Divine promise remains always, even for a generation – and world – that is deficient. Rav Hirsch reminds us that the rainbow, representing Hashem's covenant, should strengthen us so that we never "*lose heart or to despair of Divine justice*."

While we look to G-d to do His part and uphold the covenant He enacted, He looks to us – *Am Yisrael* – to see if we are doing our part, through the covenant which we accepted upon ourselves.

As Torah Jews, watching our world – and societies around us – torn asunder, we must continue to cling to, live by, emulate and walk in the ways of our patriarch and founder of *Am Yisrael*: Avraham Avinu.

Born ten generations after Noach, through his son Shem, Avraham is introduced to us at the end of *Parshas Noach*. He too lived in a time of corruption and idolatry, in a world that had forgotten the Creator and His Providence (*Mishneh Torah*, *Hilchos Ovdei Kochavim*, 1:1-3). Yet Avraham remained steadfast in his faith, never wavering from his commitment to Hashem and never veering from the moral path of truth. As his children, it is our duty, responsibility, and privilege to continue the path that he forged. We must always remain faithful to HKB"H, to bettering the world around us, to being kind and compassionate to others, and to improving ourselves, as we sojourn through this world.

And as Hashem's covenant will be upheld forever, and *Am Yisrael* will fulfill its duty in this world – to our nation, our land and our Torah – we will merit to see the ultimate redemption, may it be immediate and in our days.

The "Peshat" of "Derash" on the word "Hu'chal"

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

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

Nonetheless, the classic commentators (as well as several *Midrashim*) interpret this *pasuk* in the opposite direction, understanding that the word "*HUCHAL*" implies the defilement of G-d's Name (*shoresh* "*chilul*" – see *Targum Unkelos*). For example:

Rashi – Man began IDOL WORSHIP by calling G-d's name on certain objects and/or people.

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

Ramban – Man NULLIFIED ["*bitul*"] G-d's Name.

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

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

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

1) "*az huchal*"
2) "*l'kro b'shem Hashem*"

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

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

BEFORE THE FLOOD

Immediately after the Torah introduces Noach, we find another interesting use of "*hu'chal:*" "*va'yhi ki HE'CHEL ha'adam...*" – And it came to pass as man began to multiply... and gave birth to daughters..."

This *pasuk* introduces the story of the MABUL with G-d's anger with man for his behavior (hence limiting his life span to 120 years).

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

AFTER THE FLOOD

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

Here again we find the BEGINNING of a "downward" process. Even though Rasag and Seforno explain "*va'yachal*" as "began," Rashi (quoting the Midrash) explains "*va'yachel*" as "*chulin*" – that he defiled himself.

BEFORE MIGDAL BAVEL

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

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

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

AT MIGDAL BAVEL

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

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

BACK TO ENOSH

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

"LIKRO B'SHEM HASHEM"

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

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The Dove and Repentance

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After the flood, the world remained uninhabitable for many months, as it was covered by water. The floodwaters gradually subsided, and eventually Noah decided it was time to determine whether or not the world was again ready for human habitation. He sent a dove from the ark, and the dove returned to him, having found no dry land on which to rest. A week later, Noah sent the dove again, and this time the dove returned in the evening with an olive branch which it had ripped off a tree. Noah then realized that the waters had receded enough for vegetation to be available.

The current Bobover Rebbe offers a beautiful insight into the deeper message of this story of Noah and the dove. In many sources, the Jewish Nation is compared to the dove. Our Sages teach us that a dove mates with only one fellow dove, unlike other birds and animals, and thus we, who remain steadfastly loyal to G-d, and refuse to worship or serve any other being, are likened to the dove. And the olive, the Rebbe suggests, is symbolic of repentance. Just as an olive initially tastes bitter but its taste gradually sweetens, similarly, the process of repentance is at first very difficult and grueling, but becomes easier with time and offers great rewards. Moreover, our Sages teach that just as an olive must be crushed to produce oil, G-d must similarly subject us at times to harsh conditions and difficulties in order for us to grow and improve. The process of Teshuba resembles that of producing oil, as we grow by overcoming difficult challenges and withstanding adversity.

Accordingly, the Rebbe explains, the dove's return to Noah with an olive branch in its mouth symbolizes our return to the Almighty with words of *teshuba* on our lips. Just as the dove arrived at the ark in the evening, we, too, must return to G-d in repentance each night. Our Rabbis teach that each night, just before we go to sleep, we are to recite *Vidui* (confession) and ask G-d for forgiveness. Just as marriage counselors advise married couples never to go to sleep after an argument without first resolving it, similarly, we should not go to sleep in a state of "conflict" with G-d, and must ask forgiveness each night before we retire.

The Torah says that when Noah saw the dove with the olive branch in its mouth, he knew that the floodwaters had subsided. Similarly, the Rebbe explains, if we return to G-d each night with words of *teshuba*, we can rest assured that any potential calamity will be averted. By repenting each night, rather than waiting and delaying the process, we help ensure our protection from the consequences of sin. Sins leave a stain on our beings much like a stain on a garment. When we stain our clothes, our best chance of completely removing it is to wash it off immediately. Likewise, if we want to permanently and completely remove the spiritual stain of sin, we are best advised to start "washing it" immediately, and for this reason it is customary to recite "*Vidui*" each night before we go to sleep.

This is a very relevant message for us specifically during this period, having just concluded the month of Tishri and the holidays. Many people mistakenly assume that we can now leave our thoughts of *teshuba* aside for a while, and "take it easy" until next Elul. This is incorrect. *Teshuba* is something we must do each day. Of course, the period of Elul and the High Holidays is a time for special focus and heightened awareness, but this does not mean that we can ignore repentance and self-improvement the rest of the year. Our best chance of keeping ourselves spiritually "clean" is to work regularly to remove the "stain" of our sins, each and every day of our lives.

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

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

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

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

Surviving This Year's Flood

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The *Zohar HaKadosh* comments that there is one specific *mitzvah* that appears to be a passing event in *Parshas Noach*, but, in reality, is a *mitzvah* for all generations. This *mitzvah* is found when Hashem told Noach, "Come into the *taiva* [ark], you and all of your household." (*Bereishis* 7:1)

According to one widely accepted opinion among the Kabbalists, the month of Mar Cheshvan is a time designated for flooding, and the most intense flooding in Noach's time occurred during this month.

Our Rabbis teach us that the mitzvah of "*teshuva* (repentance) preceded the creation of the world" (*Midrash Tehillim* Ch. 90). The Rashbah (*Siman* 9) and other commentaries have difficulty accepting this statement at face value. How can one discuss chronology before the creation of time itself which began with the word "*Bereishis*?"

A deeper explanation involves redefining the meaning of the word *teshuva*. While it is conventionally translated as repentance, this definition is just a small portion of the totality of *teshuva*. When the *Gemara* uses the term "preceded" to describe *teshuva*, it is not simply describing a chronological event, but refers to the purpose and goal of creation. In other words, *teshuva* is the objective and purpose of creation. How can we understand this more clearly?

When the world was created, there was a separation between Hashem and His creations. The soul was separated from its source and implanted into a body. The purpose of *teshuva* is to return the creations to Hashem and to a state of "closeness to G-d is my good" (*Tehillim* 73:28).

It is understood that a natural consequence of returning to Hashem involves removing obstructions that are in the way, including sin. If a husband was, G-d forbid, unfaithful to his wife and she is willing to give him a second chance, he must change his lifestyle and stop doing the destructive actions that were an obstruction to his relationship with his wife. The goal is to return to his wife and the means to this end is entering into a "clean" reality. Similarly, regarding *teshuva*, the inner meaning is to return. In the process of returning, we remove the obstructions of sin and enter a clean reality.

Let us return to the *taiva* of Noach. The Ramban points out that any boat maker knows that the dimensions and shape of the *taiva* do not describe a seaworthy vessel. The Torah delves into the details of its dimensions, in an unusual way, similar only to the descriptions of the dimensions of the *Mishkan* and *Bais Hamikdash*. Superficially, it seems that the purpose of the *taiva* was to rescue a family from a flood. But there are many other ways Hashem could have saved them. The *taiva* was certainly a means to save a family from a flood but this was not its main goal and purpose.

To understand the ultimate purpose of the *taiva*, we must know more about the flood in the time of Noach. The *Zohar HaKadosh* tells us that the flood that appeared as water, but was actually a flood of impurity. The *passuk* states, "And it [the Flood] blotted out all beings that were upon the face of the earth" (*Bereishis* 7:23), meaning, a torrential downpour of impurity was unleashed into the world and it destroyed all of creation, except for those who found refuge in the *taiva*.

Ramchal explains that Hashem revealed something Noach called "the *taiva* of Noach" that would serve as a barrier between the impurity that was destroying the world and Noach and his family. We do not understand how this physical structure served as a protection, just as we cannot understand all of the benefits the *Bais Hamikdash* brought to the world.

The taiva was a clean reality and "Hashem shut him in" (*Bereishis* 7:16). Hashem closed and locked Noach and his family inside the *taiva* so that they would remain untouched by impurity.

When the *Zohar* tells us that the *mitzvah* of "come into the *taiva*, you and all of your household" is a *mitzvah* for every generation, it does not mean physically entering a boat. Even with regard to Noach, his physical protection was simply a natural consequence of being sealed in the spiritual world of the *taiva*. This bears a great similarity to entering the world of teshuva. Once one enters this world and establishes a true and deep relationship with Hashem, sin naturally becomes irrelevant. So how does the *mitzvah* of "come into the *taiva*, you and all of your household" apply for all generations?

The Baal Shem Tov teaches that the word "ark – תיבה" can also be translated as "word," referring to a Jew's words of Torah and prayer. Based on the *passuk*, "In the six hundredth year in the life of Noach... all the wellsprings of the great deep burst open, and the windows of Heaven were opened" (*Bereishis* 7:11), the *Zohar* states "in the 600th year of the sixth millennium, the gates of supernal wisdom will be opened as will the springs of earthly wisdom" (*I Zohar* 117a). Indeed, the 56th century from creation corresponds with the period beginning in the mid-1700's in the secular calendar. During these years, a confusing flood of information, both pure and impure, entered the world. To counteract the flood of impurity, Hashem revealed more openly the wisdom of the inner world of Torah, as personified by the Baal Shem tov, the Vilna Gaon, and others.

We are living in a time of great flooding. If one disagrees with this, it is probably because he or she has already drowned. If one cares about holiness, he realizes how we must struggle to keep our heads above the water of impurities that surround us. A person who desires sanctity must enter into the *taiva*, the words of Torah and prayer, with every fiber of his being. This translates into coming to study Torah on time and putting one's soul into the learning. At the end of time, the only way that we can hope to achieve "closeness to G-d is my good" is by sealing our hearts, minds and souls into the *taiva*.

The Hero for the Simple People

Rabbi YY Jacobson
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These are the generations of Noach, Noach was a righteous man; he was perfect in his generations; Noach walked with God.

The *Midrash*, always sensitive to nuance, wonders why the single verse mentions Noach not once, nor even twice, but three times? The repetition of a name three times in a single sentence is obviously superfluous. The Torah could have stated: "*These are the generations of Noah, who was a righteous man, perfect in his generations. He walked with G-d*."

The *Midrash* offers the following extraordinary insight. The Torah is intimating that there was not one Noach; there were three Noachs. We are being introduced to three distinct Noachs. There is Noach before the flood, during the flood, and after the flood.

Noach, explains the *Midrash*, was one of the few individuals in history who lived three lives, in three completely different worlds. First, Noach saw a settled, safe, and predictable world. That was Noach #1. Then Noach saw his entire world destroyed by the flood – that was Noach #2. And then he saw the world rebuilt and civilized after the flood. That was Noach #3.

To survive and thrive in each of the three eras, you need a completely different set of skills and resources. The first Noach grew up and came of age in a world that he, his father, grandfather, and great-grandfather were accustomed to. There was routine, order, and comfort.

But then Noach encounters a new reality – one that reduced the entire planet to an ocean, without a single survivor, not among humans, or animals, birds, insects, or even trees or bushes. Just imagine what that does to a person. Everything you knew is suddenly gone. The "skills" required to cope and survive in such a world are of a different nature; it is about resilience and alertness.

But then Noach was forced to reinvent himself yet a third time, as he was summoned to leave the Ark and rebuild the world; to get back into normal life. How do you do that after living on the edge in a world gone mad? How do you integrate back into normal living after you faced the abyss and watched your boat submerged in a titanic flood, and your planet consumed in the waters? How do you return to civilization as a normal person?

Now you need a new set of skills – the ability to recover after such devastation; the power to smile again, not the innocent idyllic smile of youthful innocence; rather the joy that comes from conviction and resolve to still believe in the possibility of love, joy, and kindness.

It was far from simple. The only story we know of Noach after the flood is that he planted a vineyard and became inebriated. Did Noach suffer from PTSD? Did Noach need to numb his tremendous pain from the devastation?

We often lament that our parents and grandparents, who survived the Holocaust, often did not lead the most emotionally functional lives. Children of survivors have suffered from the silence, from the repressed pain, from the midnight screaming, from the PTSD. The pain is deep and real. What we sometimes fail to realize is that after the hell they had been through, that was expected. The miracle is that most of them fought courageously to lead normal lives – to find love once again, to raise families, to trust, to be happy, to celebrate life. And because they did it, we are here today.

From the ashes, they recreated life.

In a far different way, this remains a challenge for many of us, even if in a far more benign way.

Many of us, in our own little or big way, experience three worlds, demanding of us to reinvent ourselves again, and again, and yet again. We live not one life, but at least three lives.

We begin our youth often in a "civilized, settled world." We enjoy the innocence, calmness, stability, and security of youthfulness. We expect things to be a certain way; we rely on routine, and we are sheltered by the feeling that life is good, beautiful, and fragrant.

If you can stay in this world forever – by all means! Do not leave!

But not all of us get this privilege. Sooner or later, spaghetti hits the fan. Some of us encounter a new reality, where our old world is devastated. Our sheltered cocoons blow up, and we become vulnerable to sadness, madness, suffering, and loss. The loss of a loved one; the divorce of our parents and the breakdown of our family; mental or emotional challenges; financial crisis; broken relationships; trauma and anxiety – all leaving our hearts shattered into one thousand pieces. Some of us have known the pain of abuse and molestation, physical, verbal, or emotional. Some of us have known the pain of addiction and self-destruction, following or preceding the experience of our world inundated by a massive "flood." All we search for is an Ark, where we can run and hide.

But then we must have the courage to reinvent ourselves yet a third time – to become yet a new "Noach," one who can create a new world – a world of laughter, love, light, hope, and promise; a life of healthy attachments, faith, and joy; a life filled with the conviction that goodness is more powerful than evil, and light can dispel darkness.

Yes, this new world lacks that idyllic innocence and ignorance of childhood, but it contains a depth, maturity, and profundity that allows it to become a real foundation that can't crumble.

G-d says to Noach, "Go out of the ark," and build a new world. Even when it's raining outside, look up, and you might see a rainbow, knowing that above the clouds, the sun is always shining. At every moment, you are a manifestation of the infinite light and love of the Divine. The clouds will pass, and your sunlight and sunshine will emerge.

Noach: Sweet Talk

Rabbi Judah Mischel
Executive Director, Camp HASC; Founder, Tzama Nafshi
Author of the *Baderech* series

Rebbe Yitzchak Luria, *zy'a*, was undoubtedly the greatest expositor of the secrets of Torah since Rebbe Shimon bar Yochai, author of the *Zohar*. Known by the acronym "Arizal" or "the Ari HaKadosh," the prefix *alef* stands for *Eloki*, "the G-dly Rebbe Yitzchak." No other sage in Jewish history has been granted this honorific. The Arizal evolutionized the way we understand and live with *pnimiyus haTorah*, revealed an interpretive system of *Kavanos*, spiritual intentionality toward the direction and application of the Kabbalah in prayer and *mitzvah* observance.

Who could begin to imagine the awesome *Yamim Nora'im tefillos* of the holy Arizal? A familiar yet invaluable ancient tale, perhaps, holds a tiny glimpse:

One year, following the busy holiday period, the Arizal sensed that while the prayers he had led in the company of the scholars and kabbalists of Tzfas were impactful, there was something missing in them. In an effort to seek out a *tikun* and gain clarity on this intuition, the Arizal entered a deep meditative state and ascended to the upper worlds. There, in his state of expanded consciousness, a dream-like vision was shown to him of a Yid whose *tefillos* were remarkably favored on high.

Summoning his devoted disciple, Rav Chaim Vital, the Arizal insisted they embark on a journey to find out who this fellow was and how he had achieved so much in his prayers. After a day of mystical travels, they arrived at a small hut in a far flung Galilean town, and were taken aback by the luminous visage of the holy man when he came to the door. The sage greeted him and asked, "Please tell me dear brother, have you learned the depths of the Zohar's comments on *tefillah*?"

"Rebbe," the man swallowed shyly, "I am sorry to say, I'm unfamiliar with that.... And, well, honestly, I've never studied much Torah."

"But you do *daven* with *kavanos*, with lofty intentions, do you not?"

"Rebbe! ...I don't even know what that means!?"

The Ari and Rav Chaim looked at each other in wonder. "My friend, tell me please of your *avodah* during the High Holy Days, I must know!"

"Alright, if the Rebbe really wants. To be honest, I grew up in poverty, I never had the opportunity to learn even the basics of Torah and *tefillah*. In fact, I barely know half of the letters of the *alef-beis*. I'm not so comfortable in the *shul*, but of course I went anyway. Rebbe," he grinned with embarrassment, "I confess, I wanted desperately to fit in and daven with the congregation; everyone was *davenning* so eloquently in Hebrew.... My heart was so broken, I didn't know what to do, so finally I just shouted out the handful of letters I know: '*Aleph*, *beis*, *gimmel*, *daled*, *hei*, *vav*, *zayin*, *ches*...!' And then I said, 'Master of the World! All I can do is give You what I know. That's all I have, just a handful of 'A-B-C's'. Please help me – please string these letters together into words in a way that will bring You *nachas*...!"

Deeply moved by the sincerity of this Jew, the Ari haKadosh bowed his head and praised him, "*Ashrecha*, fortunate are you! ...My friend, you'll never know what a great gift you have given me today. Thank you!" Smiles remained on the lips of the two great teachers of *Am Israel* until they had returned to their holy *beis medrash* in Tzfas.

...Needless to say, the following year their prayers rose to an even greater level.

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"These are the generations of Noach: Noach was an *ish tzadik tamim b'dorosav*, righteous and wholehearted, perfect, in his generations. Noach walked with G-d" (*Bereishis*, 6:9).

Hashem praises Noach as an *ish tzadik tamim*. The Hebrew word *tam*, sometimes translated as "perfect," is more accurately "innocent" – while implying simplicity, purity, wholeheartedness, sincerity, and completeness.

A lack of *temimus* takes a devastating toll on our inner world. Consider the core of our daily religious practice, Torah and *tefillah*. While we may be able to intellectually explain numerous *p'shatim* and *peirushim* with fancy, highbrow language, engaging modern and ancient literary devices and analytical tools, it is the *midah* of *temimus* that connects us to what we are learning, saying and doing. Rather than merely articulating a mass of eloquent theoretical information, davening with temimus brings alive a simple truth: we are speaking with the Creator, Sustainer and Master of the World.

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This past week marked Rosh Chodesh Mar-Cheshvan. A number of explanations are suggested regarding the root of the name and essence of this month. The prefix *Mar* means 'bitter,' a reference to this month being broken-hearted over its lack of any festivals. *Mar* also means 'drop,' referring here to the first rains (the *Yoreh*), which fall in Cheshvan. *Sefer haAruch* suggests a word play: this month is *Merachesh-van*; *merachesh* (flowing) *vahn* (with water), as this is the month when we begin to pray for winter rains.

The *Gemara* (*Taanis*, 25b) recounts how, during a severe drought, the great Rebbe Eliezer rose before the community and prayed for rain, reciting the six extra blessings for rain ordained by the Sages to be added into the *Amidah*. Despite his twenty-four blessings, rain did not fall. Rebbi Akiva then went before the ark and cried out:

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Pinpointing Priorities

Mrs. Shira Smiles
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After the Great Flood that destroyed the world, it was time to begin anew and rebuild. The Torah tells us, "*Vayachel Noach ish ha'adamah vayita karem* – And Noach began to be a master of the soil and he planted a vineyard." (*Bereisheet* 9:20) Rashi notes the curious use of the word "*vayachel* – and he began," and comments that not only does the word mean "and he began" but is also connotes "*chullin*," an element of the mundane and irreverent. "This [can be understood as] he made himself profane," for he should have first engaged in planting something different. — [Gen. Rabbah 36:3. i.e., he should not have planted a vineyard, from which wine is produced, but other trees.] (Rashi)

What was so terrible about what Noach did? After all, the *Midrash* teaches us that he was instructed to take every species of plant and animal into the ark so it could be used after the flood. Further, after witnessing such overwhelming devastation, did Noach not deserve to relax and find comfort in wine to recover from his ordeal? It seems overly critical to say that by planting a vineyard he desecrated himself.

The famed *mashgiach* of Yeshivat Mir, Rav Yerucham Levovitz, *zt"l*, finds two fundamental ideas embedded in Rashi's comment. The first is that "everything follows the beginning," meaning that a thoughtful and deliberate start guides the subsequent path. Noach was charged with the responsibility to rebuild; thus his first action was foundational.

Rav Scheinerman in *Ohel Moshe* adds, had Noach had a true understanding of the significance and magnitude of laying the groundwork for the future of civilization, he would not have planted grapes, as they carry the potential to cause destruction. Noach's *chillul*, his debasement, was his failure to grasp the scope and purpose of his obligation to rebuild the world.

The second idea that Rav Yerucham, *zt"l*, offers is that one's choices, however subconsciously driven, indicate a facet of his core character. Noach's first choice, a vineyard, suggests a leaning toward capricious or lax behavior. We can extend this perspective to ourselves; How do we choose our primary activities? What motivates our decisions and preferences?

Rav Simcha Wasserman, *zt"l*, offers an additional and fascinating perspective. Noach witnessed sweeping destruction. One could think that he deserved time to mourn the loss and allow himself the distraction of wine to help ease his transition back into a cultivated world. Here, says Rav Wasserman, lay his mistake. In the aftermath of such devastation, one cannot yield or succumb to nursing wounds and mourning. Rather, one must immediately put his efforts into reconstruction and rehabilitation. Rav Wasserman was known for speaking out against the millions of dollars invested into memorials for the Holocaust instead of dedicating the money to scholarship, education and training the new generation with Jewish values and pride.

During the month of Elul and the *Yamim Nora'im*, we involve ourselves in efforts to realign our mindset and our goals for the new year. As we read *Parashat Noach* we are reminded that the choices and decisions we make lay the foundations for the year ahead. Let us choose wisely, ensuring that the foundations are strong and focused on the correct priorities.

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Our Father, our King, we have no king other than You. Our Father, our King, for Your sake, have mercy on us!"

His prayers were answered immediately. The *Gemara* then points to Rebbe Akiva's forgiving nature as the reason his prayers were more effective than those of his teacher Rebbe Eliezer. The Arizal (*Sefer haKavanos*), however, asserts that Rebbe Akiva opened his heart and cried out to Hashem with unscripted words and with complete humility and self-effacement, *davening* with *temimus*.

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The *Gemara* (*Megillah*, 27b) considers the length of time that one prayed as the time it is סְדוּרָה בְּפִיו, "arranged in his mouth," meaning the period it continues to linger after one has completed his formal davening. If we have prayed with temimus, our lips may still be subtly and even subconsciously articulating those prayers for quite some time.

Arugas haBosem relates that in the month of Marcheshvan, *marchushei merachshin*, "our lips are still moving," with the holy songs and prayers of the past month of Tishrei. Whispers of the elevated *nigunim*, songs and *tefillos* of *Selichos*, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur and Sukkos still echo in our ears.

Before our memories of the High Holy Days and our *kabbalos*, our holy resolutions for the new year, begin to fade, let us take up the opportunity of Cheshvan. Let us take this time to process and reflect on our Tishrei prayers, and the lingering taste of their words and letters. In this way, may Mar-Cheshvan be sweetened with the after-glow of those festivals.

And may the *Ribbono Shel Olam* always hear our sincere prayers, accept our service of *temimus*, and "make it rain" with floods of blessing!

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Excerpt from newly released Baderech: Along the Path of the Torah, (Mosaica Press, Elul 5786)

How Is It That One Lone Hero Dares?

Rabbanit Yemima Mizrachi
Popular Torah teacher and author

This week, our jaws dropped in amazement: all alone, without anyone's support, surrounded by enemies, and without a single tool, he managed to use phenomenal engineering and mathematical calculations to carve out a path to freedom. And I'm talking about Noach!

"Rabbi Yehuda says: He dug 360 *kilin* (small niches) into it [the Ark], each ten cubits by ten cubits… Throughout the twelve months that Noach spent in the Ark, he had a pearl. When it shone brightly, he knew it was night, and when it grew dim, he knew it was day… The people of his generation would say: 'If we see him building an Ark and entering it, we will smash it and kill him'!" (*Midrash Rabbah*)

The astonishing calculations that allowed him to distinguish between day and night in the tunnel, the precise architecture, the threat of death – and yet Avinatan tells himself: I have a chance of surviving. I know I do.

So much terror! So much uncertainty! And so much wisdom!

What are superheroes made of? It turns out that the most important quality a hero can possess is… **peace of mind**. An inner strength that cannot be shaken, even when a flood rages outside.

Our Sages describe Noach as follows: "Noach was pleasing to people, pleasing to those above, and pleasing to those below…"

How does one attain such peace of mind? Only through *Mother Earth*.

This week, when Ditza, our superheroine, was asked what she thought had sustained Avinatan throughout all that time alone, she answered without hesitation: **the soil of this land**.

"Avinatan grew up in Shiloh, the place where the teachings of Chassidut were born. According to tradition, the prophet Achiyah HaShiloni, who came from Shiloh, taught the Baal Shem Tov the entire Torah of Chassidut. Chassidut speaks about the power of the spirit in a physical world, about the ability of our inner strength to overcome all the fear that comes from outside ourselves.

"And besides," she added, "he was born on Tu BiShvat, and he possesses the strength of the trees of this land: to drive their roots deep beneath the earth and then break through toward the sun."

Avinatan himself also shared that the first moment he felt something resembling freedom was when, while digging, he came across the roots of a tree.

"That smell – the scent of damp earth, of growing things – suddenly gave me a hope that no one could take away from me. I inhaled the scent of a tree…"

We have no idea just how powerful this extraordinary earth really is.

Noach did. He was the first person to develop technology for digging efficiently into the ground:

"This will comfort us (*yenachamenu*). Until Noach came along, people had no plow, and he made one for them. The earth had been producing thorns and thistles as a result of the curse placed upon Adam, but in the days of Noach, it came to rest. This is the meaning of *yenachamenu*." (Rashi)

This month, Cheshvan, is the time to draw on our inner strength and find peace of mind simply through the scent of the earth as the seasons change, simply through the smell of the first rain.

The *Bnei Yissaschar* writes that the name MarCheshvan is connected to the word *merichin* – "smelling." He brings the story of Yosef, who was kidnapped and taken to captivity in Egypt in a caravan of Ishmaelites. Along that terrible journey, he suddenly smelled a fragrant perfume:

"This teaches us the reward reserved for the righteous. Arabs ordinarily carried only petroleum and tar, which have an unpleasant smell. But Heaven arranged otherwise, so that he would not suffer harm."

Here, the *Bnei Yissaschar* poses a wonderful question: "He was sold as a slave, and the Arabs wounded him – where was the protection he was promised?! Was he truly protected simply because he did not have to smell something unpleasant?!"

All right, so he suddenly smelled perfume – but he was still a captive, wasn't he?

"We see that all the decrees begin in Cheshvan, and yet it is the month of fragrance. This hints at the redemption that will come with the Third Temple in this month. Therefore, regarding Noach, it is written: 'And Hashem smelled the pleasing fragrance' (*rei'ach hanicho'ach*). And regarding *Mashiach*, it says: 'He will be inspired by the fear of Hashem' (*vahari'cho beyir'at Hashem*). This is something from which the soul derives pleasure, rather than the body." (*Bnei Yissaschar*, Month of Cheshvan)

Jewish heroism is peace of mind. A tranquility that can be sensed from afar, even when the body is imprisoned.

Go out into the fields and breathe in the scent of the first rain.

The smell of the earth in Cheshvan is a chance to be saved. It is the hope of *Mashiach*.

Hebrew Language in the Parsha

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Among the many names listed in the genealogy of the nations in *Parashat Noach* is דִּקְלָה:

וְאֶת־הֲדוֹרָם וְאֶת־אוּזָל וְאֶת־דִּקְלָה

"And Hadoram, and Uzal, and Diklah" (*Bereshit* 10:27).

The name דקלה is generally understood as being related to דֶּקֶל, "date palm." *Daat Mikra* notes that Arab geographers mention a place called Dikla in Yemen, a region well known for date palms.

The Hebrew word דֶּקֶל itself does not appear in the Bible as the word for a date palm. Biblical Hebrew uses תָּמָר instead. The word דקל became common in later Hebrew, probably under the influence of Aramaic דיקלא, where it referred to the date palm. In Modern Hebrew the distinction is דֶּקֶל is the tree, while תמר is the fruit.

The word דֶּקֶל may also have left its mark beyond Hebrew. According to one etymology, the English word "date" ultimately comes from Greek *dactylos*. Greek *dactylos* means "finger," and the usual explanation is that the date fruit was associated with a finger because of its elongated shape. Others however, suggest that the Greek word for the fruit may actually have originated in a Semitic word related to דֶּקֶל, and was then influenced by the native Greek word *dactylos*.

If so, the English word "date" may ultimately preserve a distant relative of the name דקלה found in our *parasha*.

The other Biblical word for the date palm, תָּמָר, has its own interesting history. Linguists connect it with a root תמר meaning "to be high" or "to stand erect," an appropriate description of the tall, upright palm tree.

One familiar word that may belong to the same family as תמר is תַּמְרוּר, the Modern Hebrew word for a road sign. The word appears once in the Bible, in *Yirmiyahu* 31:21:

הַצִּיבִי לָךְ צִיֻּנִים שִׂמִי לָךְ תַּמְרוּרִים

"Set up markers for yourself; place signposts for yourself."

One explanation connects תַּמְרוּר with the root תמר, "to be high," perhaps because a signpost is raised up so that it can be seen.

There may also be another connection between the date palm and the human hand. The Torah calls the *lulav* כַּפֹּת תְּמָרִים (*Vayikra* 23:40). R. Shlomo Pappenheim explains that the basic sense of כַּף is something with a hollow or receptacle-like shape. Each *lulav* leaf, folded lengthwise, forms such a shape. As he writes, "Anything that has a receptacle is called כף, as in כף היד, the palm of the hand, and כפות זהב, golden spoons."

R. Naphtali Hirz Wessely similarly explains that the leaves of the date palm are called כפות because they resemble the palms of the hands.

This has a parallel in English. The word "palm," for the tree, comes from Latin *palma*, originally "palm of the hand." According to scholars, the tree received that name because its leaves resemble the fingers of a hand. Across Hebrew, Latin, and Greek, then, the date palm and its fruit repeatedly invited comparison with the human hand.

Answer to the Parsha Riddle (from page 9)

Hashem

In the following verse, Hashem speaks, as it were, in His Heart:

וַיָּרַח ה' אֶת־רֵיחַ הַנִּיחֹחַ וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל־לִבּוֹ לֹא־אֹסִף לְקַלֵּל עוֹד אֶת־הָאֲדָמָה בַּעֲבוּר הָאָדָם כִּי יֵצֶר לֵב הָאָדָם רַע מִנְּעֻרָיו וְלֹא־אֹסִף עוֹד לְהַכּוֹת אֶת־כָּל־חַי כַּאֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתִי (ח:כא)

And Hashem smelt the pleasing fragrance; and Hashem said in His Heart, "I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the impulse of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more everything living, as I have done."

Ramban explains the term "**in His Heart**" to mean that Hashem did not reveal the matter to a prophet at that time, but on the day He commanded Moshe concerning the writing of the Torah He revealed to him that as Noach brought his sacrifice it was pleasing to Him, and He decreed that He will no more smite every living thing.

Seforno however, learns that Hashem did not reveal this resolution to Noach and his sons until after they had accepted His commandments and He established His covenant with them.

Chizkuni points out that prior to the *Mabbul*, Hashem had seen fit to feel saddened **in His Heart** as it says:

וַיִּנָּחֶם ה' כִּי־עָשָׂה אֶת־הָאָדָם בָּאָרֶץ וַיִּתְעַצֵּב אֶל־לִבּוֹ (ו:ו)

Now, in contrast, the Torah tells us how He felt greatly encouraged about the human species He had created, and so the words "**in His Heart**" are used again but in a positive vein.

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