

Lionel Stein's Shabbat Newsletter

Shabbat Noach

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This newsletter is dedicated to the memories of

דוד בן אפרים יונה הכהן איתא בת אריה לייב הכהן שמעון בן שאול

&

צבי הירש בן יוחנן הכהן אלישבע בת שבטי חנה בת מאיר יחינה מלכה בת צבי הירש הכהן

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Shabbat Shalom – Lionel Stein

"Am Yisrael Chai"

See www.nahartorah.com edited by Rabbi David Levy and Rabbi David Chiger for more Torah articles including this week's Parsha

Dear Friends and Talmidim of Rav Tanzer zt'l,
On his 5th Yahrtzeit the Kollel Yad Avraham completed **the 5th full cycle of Shas Bavli** and the **15th cycle of Shas Mishnayos** — all learned leiluy nishmas our beloved Avinu Moreinu, **Rav Avraham Chaim Tanzer zt'l**.
Nearly 40 Avreichem, mostly his talmodim have been learning daily. Their limud is his legacy. Their voices are his echo.
We invite you to partner financially in this living tribute to help carry forward the legacy.
Further details contact Rabbi Dov Tanzer at yadtanzer@gmail.com.

Editorial

Recently Chol articles have been focussed on the historic events currently taking place.

Starting with this issue, the Chol format will start moving back to the original format.

Most worrying are the uncontested statements starting within hours of the cease fire taking affect coming from various United Nations agencies and other international bodies intimating Israel's guilt of genocide and famine resulting in the death of babies.

Such statements without evidence is merely to set Israel up in the world of public opinion that this is Israel's crime.

Israel needs to squash all such statements and to immediately disseminate these rebuttals.

Our prayer is for Israel to win this psychological war.

Kodesh

RABBI AVRAHAM CHAIM TANZER TALKS HNOACH

By Rabbi Dov Tanzer

VOL 6/5786

A PERFECT TZADDIK?

גַּם אִישׁ צַדִּיק תָּמִיד הָיָה בְּדוֹרָתוֹ

Noach was a perfectly righteous man in his generations (5, 9)

The Sages and Commentary have long been troubled about the fact that Noah is described as a perfect Tzadik – ‘in his generations’. Some of our Sages understood this to mean, that only in comparison with the prevailing evil culture was *Noach* considered a Tzadik, but had he lived in the times of Avraham *Avinu*, he would not be considered great at all.

The Sages thus held for comparison the character of Avraham vs the character of *Noach*.

Avraham did not wait for a flood. He set up an inn, welcomed perfect strangers; fed them, and created a conversation with them. He went out to the people. He was ‘mekarev’ them. He loved the people, engaged with them, and turned them round, one person at a time.

Noach, on the other hand, set up his own *Beis Medrash*, and kept to himself – sure that this was the only way he could remain a perfect Tzadik in such evil times.

ב

“What does one do? To Seclude oneself and grow in righteousness? Or perhaps to go out and befriend the people who are different, and introduce them to Hashem, and His Torah.

This comparison meant a great deal to Abba z”l. who raised generations of his own family, *Talmidim* and *Mispallelim*, mindful of this contrast between the role of Noach and that of Avraham.

Abba felt the challenge of his times keenly; what does one do? To Seclude oneself and grow in righteousness? Or perhaps to go out and befriend the people who are different, and introduce them to Hashem, and His Torah.

By Abba’s temperament and his understanding, we see how he lived his life based on the paradigm of Avraham *Avinu*.

“Eliyahu Hanavi taught: A person must always say: when will my deeds be like the deeds of Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov.

A great part of Abba zt”l’s credo was based on this epic model: The deeds of Avraham.

In fact, for a time, growing up, Abba used to read to the family at the Shabbos table, the Stories of Avraham *Avinu* – it was delightful and memorable.

ב

A TZADIK IN ‘PELTZ’

In his ‘fire-side’ chats with the high school boys, Abba used to relate the Kotzker notion of a ‘Tzadik in *Peltz*’ – a title the Kotzker Rebbe once bestowed upon a certain Rav.

He explained that when a room is freezing, there are two ways of dealing with the cold; one is to go out and buy a heater, the other, to buy a ‘*Peltz*’ – the Yiddish word for a fur coat. The distinction between them is that the coat will warm only the wearer, but the heater will keep everyone warm.

Rav Menachem Mendel of Kotzk taught that also in *Ruchniyus*, there are two ways of dealing with challenges; one way takes care only of yourself, whilst the other ensures that the problem is solved for all.

The best way of taking care of a problem, is often to see who else is suffering, and seek to relieve their difficulties, and in doing so, you will usually find that your own problem became much lighter.

The Tzadik in *Peltz*, is horrified by the state of the generation, and seeks to surround himself and his family with high walls, that none can penetrate. The Avraham-type of Tzadik, the one with a heater, identifies the challenges of the Dor, and seeks to ameliorate them for himself and his community.

ב

THE FAILED SERMON

Yet we do find that Noah was instructed to build the Ark – he spent 120 years in constructing it! As Rashi states (pasuk 12):

עָשָׂה לָךְ תֵּבַת עֲצֵי גֹפֶר קִנִּים תַּעֲשֶׂה אֶת הַתֵּבָה וְכָפַרְתָּ אֹתָהּ מִבִּיַּת וּמִחוּץ בַּכָּפָר

Make for yourself an Ark of Gopher wood, with compartments, and cover it inside and outside with pitch (5, 14)

Rashi explains that truly Hashem could have saved Noah without the fanfare and publicity of having him build his own floating vessel. But Hashem wanted Noah to make a spectacle of the construction as a way to engage with the generation – to create a conversation. He would explain to the people why he was building an ark – he told them that Hashem would destroy the world in a flood.

ב

Abba used to comment, that despite the fact that eventually Noah himself did talk to the people – yet it's striking that in a sermon that continued for 120 years, he did not even make one convert!?

“The quality of the rabbi's Sermon is important; but his relationship with the people is truly paramount. ~ Rav AC Tanzer

This must indicate that a Rav's role is not to focus on his Drasha as the entire engagement with the people – it's merely an ice-breaker. There must be something beyond the sermon. That something is a relationship!

Avraham Avinu became deeply involved with the people around him; as friends and as students and even as neighbors. Noah, on the other hand, even when he began to preach his message was focused on his message, his Drasha; not the people.

Perhaps that's why Avraham changed his generation – one person at a time – till he left tens of thousands of converts and *talmidim*. Yet, Noah, could not influence even one person...

ב

THREE WORLDS ONE TORAH.

“אֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדוֹת נֹחַ, נֹחַ אִישׁ צַדִּיק תָּמִים הָיָה בְּדֹרֹתָיו, אֶת הָאֱלֹקִים הִתְהַלָּךְ נֹחַ”

“These are the generations of Noah — Noah was a righteous man, perfect in his generations; Noah walked with G-d.” (Bereishis 6:9)

The Medrash Tanchuma notes the triple mention of Noah's name and teaches that he saw three worlds: before the flood, during its destruction, and after — when the world was rebuilt. Noah didn't just survive history; he lived through collapse and helped restart it.

Rav Simcha Wasserman used this idea to describe his own life. He saw the Torah world of Europe before the war — the yeshivos, the kedusha, the rhythm. He saw it torn apart in the Holocaust, including the murder of his father, Rav Elchonon zt”l. And then he helped build again — in America, in Eretz Yisrael, planting Torah where there had been ash.

He once described a summer evening in Telshe: looking north, the sky was black and full of stars; southwest, the sun was still setting in red; east, the first rays of dawn were already breaking. All three moments — sunset, night, and sunrise — in one glance. That became his mashal for Jewish history. He saw the last light of pre-war Europe, the darkness of destruction, and the first light of rebuilding.

Rav Simcha visited South Africa several times, and once spent Shabbos in Rabbi Tanzer's home. At some point, he noticed a copy of *Kovetz Shiurim* — his own father's Torah, which Rav Simcha himself had published — sitting on the bookshelf. He spent much of that Shabbos immersed in it. That moment — a son revisiting his father's Torah in a faraway home, with Rav Tanzer's son watching him and taking in it — says something about the world the Rav built in South Africa: a home where Torah lives, where legacy is not just remembered but quietly encountered — as so often occurs, great moments transpire when you open your home and life to others who are on the road.

Rav Simcha himself brought his father's Torah to life on ‘foreign soil’; he transplanted his father's Torah on 2 continents and uplifted, held and inspired thousands. He must have been piqued to see his father's Sefer, with hand written notes on the South African bookshelf.

*

Later in the parsha, Noah plants a vineyard and gets drunk. Chazal say it wasn't evil; it might even be understandable - but it was small. “VaYachel Noah” — he made himself chullin, ordinary — he belittled himself. Rav Simcha said: it's understandable. Noah came out to a broken world. Depression is real. But Torah

doesn't let us stay there. If Hashem saved you, it's because you have work to do. You don't get to collapse. You get to rebuild.

That was Rav Simcha's life. He didn't just teach this — he lived it. And because he and others like him didn't stay in the sadness, we have Torah today. We have yeshivos, communities, rhythm again.

Not because the pain disappeared. But because they planted anyway.

ב

NOACH, NOACH

אלה תולדת נח נח איש צדיק תמים היה בדורתי

These are the generations of Noach, Noach was a complete Tzadik in his times (5, 9)

The question has long been asked: Since the Torah introduces Noach's generations, why not immediately list his progeny? Why interject Noach's own righteousness?

Rashi explains that really the *Maasim Tovim*, the good deeds and the positive effect of your actions on your generations, are truly your 'doing'. This is the goodness and uprightness that you have truly 'birthed', and created in the world. Thus, Noach's piety, was truly his first 'delivery'.

"Noach himself, was the first child. He raised himself up first, before he could be a father and mentor to his other children.

Actually, if you read the Posuk carefully, it could be saying: '*These are the children of Noach, Noach...*', implying that Noach himself, was the first child. He raised himself up first, before he could be a father and mentor to his other children.

Abba used to cite the comment of Rav Bunim of *Peshischa*, who noted that too many people claim that they would love to learn more Torah and spend more time in acts of Charity, but their whole life is working for the children, so that they will be able to be good Jews and Bnei Torah.

"I can't wait to meet the generation that all the generations have been working for, excusing themselves from basic obligations worrying about that generation. Whenever I think I see the children, they are doing the same thing..."

Rav Bunim lamented however, that when he met the same children, decades later, they too were busy chasing after a 'buck', also claiming that they would truly prefer to spend more time immersed in the *Beis Medrash*, but they are working for the *Kinderlach*...

That's why the Torah teaches us '*These are the children of Noach, Noach...*', Noach did not overlook his first responsibility – to raise himself up as a Tzadik and Ben Torah. He took responsibility for his own development. '*Toldoseihen shel Tzadikim Maasim Tovim* – the Tzadik recognizes that his first *Peiros*, fruit are his own character and deeds; then you can begin to influence others.

ב

WINDOW ON THE WORLD – FOR LIGHT OR FOR VISION

צַהַר תַּעֲשֶׂה לַתֵּבָה

A Window ('Tzohar') shall you make for the Ark (6, 16)

Rashi cites a disagreement amongst the Sages as to the type of window that Noach placed in the Ark. Some some it was truly a window, whilst others held that it was actually a precious stone; a type of stone that was able to produce light.

Abba used to query: What's truly the difference between what type of material Noach used, and what is the significance of the debate?

He answered that indeed, the Sages are debating the very character of Noach; thus, some say that he simply employed a luminescent stone for lighting, which means that he remained oblivious to the plight of the world being destroyed under his feet. Others, however, held that Noach whilst insulated, was very much aware of the pain of others, he felt the pain of the world under deluge.

"Our Sages were not truly comfortable with the captain who survived when his entire crew went down with the ship. This brought them to question Noach's essential character

Abba explained that the Sages were not truly comfortable with the captain who survived when his entire crew went down with the ship. This brought them to question Noach's basic focus, and hold him up to Avraham as a comparative model.

*

When Rav Tanzer and his Rebbetzin were contemplating their move to Africa, the family, particularly the elders were set against it. One of significant issues they raised was that South Africa was ‘sitting on a political powder keg’ because of the unrest which led to Sharpsville and ‘it cannot possibly last’. Rabbi Tanzer countered that then they could leave if they saw that it was worsening. “No”, said the wise uncle “A Captain can not leave the sinking ship – unless every person is out”. It was a comment and insight on leadership that stayed with the Rov.

Therefore, there were Sages who held, that since the Torah employs the word ‘*Tzohar*’ – literally implying ‘shine’, rather than ‘*Chalon*’ – window, the implication is that he was not capable of seeing the pain of the outside world, and thus, he simply needed a light source, not a true opening to the world.

This debate as to Noach’s character, was an extension of the the disagreement amongst the Sages that Rashi cites, at the beginning of the Parsha regarding Noach’s standing in history: In the times of Avraham would he have been considered a great man, or was he only righteous relative to the evil around him.

ב

NOACH – A MAN OF LITTLE FAITH?

וַיָּבֹא נֹחַ וּבָנָיו וְאִשְׁתּוֹ וְנִשְׁי בָנָיו אִתּוֹ אֶל הַתֵּבָה מִכְּנִי מִי הַמַּבּוּל

Noach and his children came into the Ark because of the waters of the flood (7, 7)

Rashi notes that they remained outside the Teivah till the last moment, till the floods began. Rashi comments incredibly, that ‘Noach too, was a man of small faith (*Miketanei Emunah*), ‘he believed but yet didn’t believe that the floods would come’, and wouldn’t enter the Ark until pressured by the waters. How unbelievable to say of Noach that he lacked faith?!

“Noach taught us to have faith in the inalienable goodness of people; in their ability to change and to become better people – regardless of how low they may have fallen.

Abba enjoyed the answer that Noach was truly a man of great faith, but he ultimately believed in the inherent goodness of people, and the unlimited kindness of Hashem. Thus, much as he believed, he also trusted that the people would repent, and be accepted by Hashem. The rains would become rains of Bracha.

Thus, the meaning of Rashi’s words, is as follows: Noach ‘believed in the people of little faith’, trusting that they would do Teshuva, thus, thus he was reluctant to enter the Teiva.

Rabbi Label Lam on this week’s Parsha “torah.org”

The Whole World Was Created

And HASHEM saw that the evil of man was great in the earth, and every imagination of his heart was only evil all the time. And HASHEM regretted that He had made man upon the earth, and He became grieved in His heart. And HASHEM said, “I will blot out man, whom I created, from upon the face of the earth, from man to cattle to creeping thing, to the fowl of the heavens, for I regret that I made them.” But Noach found favor in the eyes of HASHEM. (Breishis 6:5-8)

There were ten generations from Adam to Noach, in order to make known how patient is HASHEM; for all those generations kept on provoking HIM, until HE brought upon them the waters of the flood. There were ten generations from Noach to Avraham, in order to make known how patient is HASHEM; for all those generations kept on provoking HIM, until Avraham, came and received the reward of all of them. (Pirke Avos 5:20)

There is a very important and fundamental lesson to be learned from Noach. The entire world is worthy of being saved just because of one person.

The Mishne in Sanhedrin explains how they would frighten witnesses who are giving testimony that might spell death for the one being testified about, “Chayav Adam lomar, bishvili nivra haolam” “Every person has an obligation to say, “The whole world was created for me!” If one person is eliminated then it is considered as if a whole world has been destroyed. That is the value of an individual!

This is spelled out as an “obligation” for every person. When is one required to make this declaration? Isn’t this awfully risky for anybody to say. It sounds like it could be abused by haughty and self-centered individuals. It may even begin to promote narcissism if misunderstood. That can’t be and that can’t be tolerated. Shlomo HaMelech, the wisest of all men states in Mishlei, “To’eives HASHEM call gava lev” – “It is disgusting to HASHEM any haughtiness of the heart”. So, what does it mean and when is it applicable!?

It is fascinating that the Talmud Brochos 58A (If you want to remember where 58 is the numerical value NOACH) employs the term BISHVILI as in “FOR ME”. It asks, “What does a good guest say? “How much

effort did the host exert “FOR ME”. How much meat he brought before me!? How much wine he placed before me?! How many loaves of bread did he put before me?! And all that effort he only exerted FOR ME!” However, a bad guest, what does he say? What effort did this host make?! I only ate one slice of bread! I only drank one cup! All of the exertion that this host expended was for his wife and kids!

Is the Gemara telling us only about the mindset of a Shabbos guest? We cannot hear them actually saying these things. This is an internal memo, a thought that they “say” to themselves. So, what’s the point? Maybe the Talmud is coaching us on how to be good guests. That might work. Yet, not everybody has that regular opportunity to be a guest by someone else. Again, what’s the larger point? The Talmud is asking “What does a good guest in this world say? The one who declares that that whole world was created for me, is a much more grateful person than the one who suddenly hides in the crowd and says “I only ate a small amount, so what do I owe?!”

During Sukkos in Hallel we repeated the words of Dovid HaMelech, “MAH ASHIV L’HASHEM KOL TAGMELOHI ALAI” – “How can I repay HASHEM for ALL that HE has granted to me?!” The Alter from Kelm explained that if someone has internalized the notion that “the whole world was created for me”, then he owes endless gratitude not just for what he consumed and benefited from but also for “ALL”- The WHOLE WORLD, from the beginning until the end of history!

These two guests are having completely different experiences while walking on the same planet. One’s heart is brimming like a fountain with constant gratitude. The other is continuously complaining. It has been said that, “It is not that happy people are more grateful but rather that grateful people are happier.” So, our job is to be that person for whom **the whole world was created**.

Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky on this week’s Parsha “torah.org”

Home Alone

Noach just does not quite make it. In spite of the fact that he almost single-handedly saved the world, fed it, and cultivated a new lease on life for an otherwise obliterated planet, he hardly gets the fame and recognition that his antecedents, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob receive. In fact, Noach’s biography is summed up in this week’s reading, “And He blotted out the entire species from the earth, and Noach remained — alone.” (Genesis 7:23) Noach leads the lonely existence of the sole survivor, and his place in history, especially in Jewish history, is hardly monumental. What is the flaw that limits Noach to stature that is much less than patriarchal? Why isn’t the sole savior of humanity counted with the great acclamation that is bestowed upon our forefathers. Why isn’t Noach considered the first, if not foremost, of our forefathers?

Despite overt differences between Abraham and Noach there is one small incident that would seemingly link the two leaders — they both planted. In Genesis 9:21 the Torah tells us, “And Noach the man of the earth planted a vineyard. He drank of the wine and became drunk.” Abraham also planted. In Genesis 21:33 the Torah relates, “And Abraham planted an eshel in Beer-sheva.” Rashi comments that there are conflicting views as to the exact interpretation of eshel. Some explain that Abraham planted an orchard intending to feed hungry wayfarers. Others explain that an eshel is an inn. Abraham built an lodge for travelers to rest.

No matter which interpretation appeals to you, the stark contrast between Noach and Abraham is obvious. Abraham plants for others, Noach for himself. Abraham’s goal in life was to educate, nurture, and teach other people about Hashem. Noach, on the other hand, was predicting doom as he built an ark for more than a century, yet he was not able to recruit a single passenger. He leaves the ark and gets drunk — lost in his own world.

One of America’s largest kosher confectioners was a major supporter of Beth Medrash Govoah, the Yeshiva and Kollel founded by the late Rabbi Aaron Kotler and led for twenty years by his late son Rabbi Shneur Kotler. At one major national function this industrialist had the occasion to introduce Reb Shneur. He did so in a most unique manner.

“Actually,” he proclaimed, “both Reb Shneur and I have much in common. We both went to cheder in Europe, survived the war, and now we both run major institutions. We provide the public with an excellent product, one that is both sweet and enjoyable. Many people stand in line to speak to me, and many wait in line to speak to the Rabbi. We both are well known and try hard to help others.

“However there is one major difference between us.” The magnate paused and smiled. “I make lollipops and Rabbi Kotler makes men.”

We all produce. The question that we all must ask ourselves is “who are we producing for?” Are we generating fruit that will be used to benefit mankind, or are we providing ourselves with fruit for self-indulgence?

Noach had the opportunity to save many more lives. He could have been the father of mankind and perhaps, as a man who had direct contact with the Creator, could have replaced Abraham as the founder of Judaism.

Despite his personal greatness, and an ability to overcome the terrible tide of corruption and immorality that condemned his generation, Noah still did not take advantage of a momentous opportunity. He was not able to nurture and save his generation. “And Noah remained alone.” He became drunk. Abraham planted an orchard of generosity. He flourished. Abraham made men; Noah made wine.

The Parsha Quiz by Rabbi Jonathan Fox

Questions and answers are based on the simple translation of the Chumash.

NOACH

- Q. I walked with God and I was a righteous man in my generations. Who am I?
A. Noah [6:9]
- Q. What were the names of Noah’s three sons?
A. Shem, Ham and Japheth [6:10]
- Q. What were the dimensions of Noah’s ark?
A. 300 cubits length, 50 cubits width and 30 cubits height [6:15,22]
- Q. How old was Noah when the Flood began?
A. 600 years old [7:6]
- Q. After how many days of raining was the ark lifted above the earth?
A. Forty days [7:17]
- Q. Upon which mountains did the ark come to rest?
A. The mountains of Ararat [8:4]
- Q. What type of bird did Noah initially send from the ark?
A. A raven [8:7]
- Q. How many times did Noah send the dove from the ark?
A. Three times [8:8-12]
- Q. What type of leaf did the dove that Noah send pluck?
A. An olive leaf [8:11]
- Q. Fill in the missing word: “the inclination of a man’s heart is evil from his _____” (Bereishis 8:21)
A. ‘youth’ [8:21]
- Q. What did God say would be the sign of His covenant that a flood would never again destroy all beings?
A. His rainbow (in the cloud) [9:12-16]
- Q. Who was Canaan’s father?
A. Ham [9:18]
- Q. Which of Noah’s sons covered his nakedness?
A. Shem and Japheth [9:23]
- Q. Fill in the missing words: “May God extend _____, but he will dwell in the _____ of Shem; and let Canaan be a _____ to them.”
A. Japheth; tents; slave [9:27]
- Q. I am the son of Cush and I was the first to be a mighty man on earth. Who am I?
A. Nimrod [10:8]
- Q. In which land did the people who migrated from the east find a valley and settle therein?
A. Shinar [11:2]
- Q. Why was Babel so called?
A. Because Hashem confused (‘balal’) the languages there [11:9]
- Q. What were the names of Terah’s three sons?
A. Avram, Nahor and Haran [11:26]
- Q. True or false: Avram’s grandfather shared a name with Avram’s brother.
A. True [11:24-26]
- Q. Where did Terah die?
A. In Charan [11:32]

Shabbat Shalom Fax by Rabbi Yitzchak Zweig

Given some of the historic accomplishments achieved last week in Israel, and the fact that some version of international peace seems to be on the minds of many, I have decided to compare some of mankind’s historic peace talks with what the Torah tells us about true peace.

In last week’s column I offered Shabbat Shalom readers a free copy of Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan’s monumental work *The Living Torah*. Written over forty years ago, *The Living Torah* is still, in my opinion, the best English translation of the Torah (aka *The Five Books of Moses*) and with its vast footnotes it is unquestionably the most interesting and informed commentary on the text in English.

(Join the hundreds who have already taken me up on my offer by signing up for your free copy [here](#).)

Rabbi Kaplan very aptly named his work *The Living Torah*; for the Torah is a living document that, when carefully examined, has extraordinary lessons that are still incredibly relevant to our present-day lives. As we shall see, this week's Torah reading teaches us a remarkable lesson about how to create a lasting sense of *shalom* – peace.

Speaking of peace, the diplomat's playbook reads: "Never say no; say 'We will consider it carefully.' Never say yes; say 'We are open to further discussions.' And never say the truth – that ruins everything." By the end, everyone signs a "Memorandum of Mutual Understanding," which roughly translates to, "We agree to disagree, but politely, and only when cameras are rolling." What follows is a brief (and very select) history of famous peace summits:

- **Pax Romana (27 BCE):** For 200 years, Rome enjoyed "*Pax Romana*," meaning "Roman Peace." Historians note it was peaceful mainly because everyone who disagreed was crucified. It taught that peace without dissent is just very organized silence.
- **Peace of Westphalia (1648):** A series of treaties that ended two major European conflicts – the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648) in the Holy Roman Empire and the Eighty Years' War (1568-1648) between Spain and the Netherlands. It ushered in the era of peace talks and the onset of 400 years of paperwork. It established sovereignty, diplomacy, and the art of saying, "We deeply regret the misunderstanding," instead of "Oops, we invaded again."
- **Treaty of Versailles (1919):** After World War I, the victors met to both penalize and marginalize Germany and ensure "peace for all time." They achieved it by writing a treaty so complicated that even the lawyers surrendered. When asked why the document was 440 articles long, one diplomat said, "Peace should last at least as long as it takes to read this." Spoiler alert: it did not.
- **Yalta Summit (1945):** Churchill, Roosevelt, and Stalin divided Europe like some middle-aged men drafting their sports fantasy teams: "You get this one, I'll take those two." When Roosevelt said, "We must ensure peace," Stalin nodded, but he was already annexing the minutes – thus becoming the inspiration for Vladimir Putin.

In this week's Torah reading we find two major events that dramatically altered the course of world history: 1) The Flood and 2) The Dispersion.

But to fully understand these important events we need a brief introduction. According to the Talmud, one of God's names is Shalom (*Shabbos* 10b). The word *shalom* (peace) comes from the Hebrew word "*shalem* – whole." This implies that unification is what gives us peace. It is no coincidence that the Holy Temple, which was built to unify all of mankind in the service of the Almighty, was built by King Solomon – whose name (*Shlomo*) also refers to this element of wholeness and peace – in the city of *Jerusalem*, which also contains the root word *shalem*.

The Almighty cares deeply about all his creations – people and animals. We see this clearly in one of the most oft repeated Psalms in the liturgy (145:9), "*The Lord is good to all; and his mercies are on all his creations.*" The Psalm goes on to express how the Almighty provides for all His creations. Because God cares for all, He wants to see peace between all creatures.

This week's Torah portion opens with God's disappointment with the state of the world – mankind had become thoroughly corrupt, and the world was filled with crime. God informs Noah that He is planning on bringing a flood that will destroy all the living creatures on earth: "*The end of all flesh has come before me. The world is filled with (man's) crime; I will therefore destroy them with the earth*" (*Genesis* 6:13).

At the very end of this week's Torah portion (11:1), the Torah relates the story of *Migdal Bavel* – the Tower of Babel. In brief, the different nations of the world united to build a tower to enter the heavens in order to launch an attack on the Almighty. They were united in a brotherhood with a single purpose and spoke a single language.

The Torah relates that the Almighty, after descending to examine the situation, decided "*to confuse their languages and scatter them across the face of the earth*" (*Genesis* 11:9). This is known as "The Dispersion." According to our sages, it is from this event that the different nations of the world emerged – each with a unique language and culture.

The great Biblical commentator known as Rashi contrasts the sins of the generation that lived in the time of Noah (which resulted in their deaths in the ensuing flood), with the misdeeds of the generation of the Tower of Babel (which resulted in their dispersion).

Rashi explains that the generation of the flood was doomed to extermination because there was stealing and pettiness between the people. Even though the generation of the tower committed a seemingly much more heinous sin – choosing to wage a war on the Almighty – their punishment (being scattered) was a lot less severe.

Still, Rashi is bothered by the disparity of the punishments, and he comes to a rather extraordinary conclusion. He notes that the people of the generation of the flood were hostile to one another whereas during the period of the Tower of Babel there was unity and brotherhood.

That, explains Rashi, is the difference in the severity of the punishments. The Almighty does not tolerate a corrupt world that has open hostility and crime between its inhabitants, thus the generation of the flood deserved utter annihilation. The people of the Tower of Babel may have been waging a war on God – but they all got along, so He didn't destroy them. Rashi concludes, "one learns from here that conflict is hateful and peace is paramount."

But Rashi's conclusion needs further clarification: If the sole reason for sparing the generation of The Tower of Babel was because of their unity and brotherhood, then why did God remove their **one** redeeming quality (that of unity) by "*mixing their languages and scattering them across the face of the earth*"? After all, by dispersing them and forcing them to try and communicate in different languages their coalition would inevitably dissolve and lead to serious conflict and dissension. Why did God punish them by taking away their seemingly **one** redeeming quality?

In order to understand this, we must re-examine and perhaps even redefine what *shalom* – peace – truly means. We often talk about "*shalom bayit*" ("peaceful home" or marital harmony) or trying to create *shalom* between people who are feuding. Many, (like diplomats at "peace summits") believe that merely getting others to coexist peacefully is the key to creating a lasting *shalom*. But, as we see from history, this is an incomplete approach to achieving a true harmony.

The key component to creating *shalom* between individuals (or in a marriage) is having each individual recognize what is unique about himself, and what he alone contributes to the relationship. In other words, when a person feels good about himself and secure in the knowledge that he has something special to contribute, he will not feel threatened by other people (or a spouse) and/or their accomplishments. In this way, he will begin to appreciate the other person as well. But it begins with being happy with oneself.

This concept of *shalom* is precisely what the Almighty did for the generation of The Dispersion. Originally, their purpose was a unifying factor, but ultimately it would have likely dissolved into interpersonal conflict once the original purpose was either achieved or otherwise became irrelevant. By scattering the people across the world, the Almighty actually gave them a lasting chance at true *shalom* by giving all the different people of the generation their own space and language to create unique identities.

Ideally, once each nation is satisfied and comfortable with its identity, it becomes possible to appreciate others. In this way, the different nations can begin to see how they need one another. Those in a tropical environment will produce different products than those in the tundra. As some nations create tools, others mine gold and silver; some become expert ship builders, others harvest spices, etc. Each nation provides unique talents and products that can be traded without feeling threatened or superfluous.

However, in world politics achieving any sort of *shalom* is far more complicated because there has to at least be a desire to have a relationship on equal footing between the participants. Cultures that have no desire for this interrelationship alliance (e.g. communism) will never find a lasting peace because they want all the power – they have no interest in rapprochement other than self-preservation. This the same issue with the Arab attitude of "from the river to the sea [...]" It simply calls for the obliteration of Israel. There is no real desire for peace or cohabitation.

In Lee Smith's terrific 2010 book *The Strong Horse*, he explains that within the Arab clan culture only power is fully respected. President Trump was only able to accomplish what he did with the continued threat of overwhelming force – that is what eventually caused Hamas to cave. But this is not the Almighty's view of peace – He wants ALL His children to coexist peacefully with a real sense of *shalom*. But there must be a real desire for it. May we see His wish fulfilled speedily in our days.

Noah, Genesis 6:9 - 11:32

Noah is the story of one righteous man in an evil generation. The Almighty commands Noah to build the ark on a hill far from the water. He built it over a period of 120 years. People deride Noah and ask him, "Why are you building a boat on a hill?" Noah explains that there will be a flood if people do not correct their ways. We see

from this the patience of the Almighty for people to correct their ways and the genius of arousing people's curiosity so that they will ask a question and, hopefully, hear the answer./p>

The generation of does not do *teshuva* – returning from their evil ways – and God brings a flood for 40 days. They leave the ark 338 days later when the earth has once again become habitable. The Almighty makes a covenant and makes the rainbow the sign of the covenant that He will never destroy all of life again by water. When one sees a rainbow it is an omen to do *teshuva* – to recognize the mistakes you are making in life, regret them, correct them/make restitution, and ask for forgiveness from anyone you have wronged as well as from the Almighty./p>

Noah plants a vineyard, gets drunk, and then occurs the mysterious incident in the tent after which Noah curses his grandson Canaan. The Torah portion concludes with the story of the Tower of Babel and then a genealogy from Noah's son, Shem, to Abram (Abraham).

Summary of the weekly Torah Reading by Rabbi Aron Tendler "torah.org"

1st Aliya: Noach, a righteous man, is introduced in contrast to a generation that "has perverted its ways". Hashem instructs him to build, and outfit the Ark.

2nd Aliya: Noach is told to enter the Ark along with all the animals. On Cheshvan 17, 1656 - October 27, 2106 b.c.e the flood began.

3rd Aliya: For 40 days and nights the waters increased, destroying all living things. The water raged upon the surface of the earth for 150 days, and then diminished for the next 150. On Nissan 17, May 23, the Ark rested upon Mt.Ararat. Noach sends out the Raven and then the Dove, and on Cheshvan 27, October 27, exactly 1 solar year after it began, the earth was dry.

4th Aliya: Noach and his family exit the Tayvah, and offer sacrifices to Hashem. They are commanded to keep the 7 Noahide mitzvos.

5th Aliya: Hashem promises to never again destroy the world and designates the rainbow as the symbol of that covenant.

6th Aliya: The story of Noach, the vineyard, and the subsequent blessings and curses is related. The descendants of Cham, Yefes, and Canaan are listed.

7th Aliya: The story of the Tower of Babel in 1996 and Nimrod's world dominance is told. The 10 generations of Shem, culminating in the introduction of Avram and Sarai, are listed. The year is 2023. Note that Avram was 48 years old when the Tower of Babel took place and he was 56 years old when Noach died.

Summary of The Haftorah: Noach Isaiah 54:1 - 55:5

This Shabbos we read chapter 54 in Yishayahu that describes Israel in the aftermath of the destruction of the Bais Hamikdash as afflicted, barren, and inconsolable. The Navi assures the people that Hashem's kindness and love for them is ever present, protecting, and sustaining. This is the same Haftorah as Parshas Ki Tetzay. (the 4th Haftorah of Consolation)

Pasuk 54:9 refers to the destruction of Yerushalayim as "...this is like the waters of Noach to me..." The Navi lets us know that destruction occurs when Hashem's kindness and protection is removed from the world and from Israel. "For a brief moment I forsook you..." (54:7) "...for a moment I hid my face from you..." (54:8)

The Navi concludes with the reassurance that Hashem remembers His covenant with the world and the Chosen People. Consequences are the result of Hashem's presence being more or less manifest in society. The degree to which we reveal Hashem's influence in our lives is the degree to which His protection and supervision is realized. Our job is to reveal Hashem through doing His commandments and learning His Torah.

1 Minute on the Parsha with Rav Adin z"l

Parashat Noah

Fitting the Entire World in the Ark

The problem of the flood exists not just in the time of Noah. To be sure, God promised that there would never again be such a flood of water, but as any good lawyer would point out, He never promised to desist from other floods. God's promise is, in this respect, a carefully-termed legal clause, complete with limitations. In fact, there is a flood in almost every generation.

In some generations, the "flood" is physical; it may be a wildfire, a tsunami, an earthquake, or a volcanic eruption. In other generations, the flood is not physical but spiritual. Just as a physical flood may involve water falling down from heaven or surging up from the sea, in a spiritual flood the intellectuals inundate us with anti-

religious messages from above, and from below, the masses initiate a deluge of dissatisfaction with the religious experience. Hence, the need arises to build an ark.

For this reason, people gather together and safeguard themselves; they build for themselves walls so as not to drown in the ocean of water. On the other hand, the story of Noah should remind us that even someone who is saved from the flood can end up like a drunkard, leading an insular life even in spiritual matters; and then the world will have to wait another ten generations until someone comes along to save it.

Today, our modern “arks” are sometimes much larger than that of Noah. The ark may be the size of a neighborhood or even a whole city – containing within it countless tzaddikim, perhaps one Canaan, one Ham, and even one Shem with his house of study. Beyond that, as far as the ark’s inhabitants are concerned, no other world exists. This contemporary spiritual isolation is a problem that requires attention.

Noah’s narrative begins with “Noah found favor” and ends on a note of defeat – he is an old and lonely man, with nothing to show for his life’s achievements and struggles. Ultimately, the world’s “second draft” ends in failure, just as the “first draft” did. God finished creating the world and beheld that “it was very good” (Gen. 1:31), but shortly thereafter Parashat Bereshit concludes, “and He grieved in his heart” (6:6). Only later on comes the story of Abraham, the man who is capable of being entirely alone, and yet – in spite of everything – succeeds in his life’s goal of fitting the entire world into his ark.

One more conversation with Rabbi Hauer z”l by Rabbi Efrem Goldberg Senior Rabbi Boca Raton Synagogue

Coming off a joyous Simchas Torah, the excitement of the Yom Tov heightened with gratitude for the return of the twenty living hostages, I turned on my phone after Havdalah, eager to see more pictures of reunions and read stories of courage and resilience. And then, like so many others, I was stunned: my dear friend and mentor, Rabbi Moshe Hauer z”l, had suddenly passed away. It didn’t make sense. I couldn’t process it.

In the days since he was so abruptly taken from us, one thought has played over and over in my mind. If I had known that he would no longer be here on Motzei Yom Tov, I would have called him on Erev Yom Tov. I would have finished our conversations, told him what he meant to me, thanked him for all I had learned from him, and sought his guidance on how to continue the work he began.

I first met Rabbi Hauer many years ago, at a gathering organized by a mutual friend who brought together people he felt should know one another. There was no particular agenda, it wasn’t hosted by any organization, and it was such a success that for years, our group met annually to share, be vulnerable, brainstorm, collaborate, and inspire one another.

At the first gathering, we were strangers: guarded, cautious, and formal with one another. Rabbi Hauer sensed a need to break the ice and I vividly remember when he said, “Let’s get comfortable, let’s be real. Enough with formalities. I am Moshe, not Rabbi Hauer,” and he proceeded to take his tie off, something I wasn’t under the impression he did often. At each gathering, his presence and participation contributed enormously. With great humility and impeccable middos, he didn’t speak the most, and certainly not the loudest, but when he spoke he was a fountain of wisdom, thoughtfulness, insight. He was sensitive, complimentary, authentic, genuine, and driven.

What impressed me most over the years was that Rabbi Hauer was a true Ben Torah in every sense. As he built his shul and guided his community, he never left the Beis Midrash, never closed the Gemara. He remained growth-oriented, always striving, always climbing higher, and always inviting us to climb alongside him. Every conversation he had, every initiative he supported, was framed by a deep care for Klal Yisrael, for the community at large, and for each individual within it.

He was rare: proud and unapologetic about his hashkafa, his rebbeim, his principles, and his values, yet effortlessly and seamlessly connected with people of all backgrounds. He found common ground and common cause with everyone, and saw the Godliness in each person, developing genuine bonds while always remaining true to himself.

It is telling that in the days since his passing, tributes have come from a staggering variety of sources, including politicians and “plain” people, organizations like the OU and Agudah, the ADL, yeshivas and rabbis across denominations, and even the Catholic Bishops of New York. Rabbi Hauer’s reach was profound because his relationships were real, never performative, transactional, or forced.

Professionally, he shaped my rabbinate in countless ways, in ideas and practices I emulate, in how I see myself and my responsibility, in how I dream for Klal Yisrael. He stood with me when I needed support, spoke honestly

when I needed feedback, and always did so with love. Personally, his loss is devastating. I find myself replaying voice notes he sent, each beginning with the affectionate, “Yedidi Rav Efrem.” In one, he said, “This message will have four points: Firstly, I haven’t spoken to you in ages, which I don’t like. Secondly, thank you for all you do,” before moving on to practical matters.

Here is the thing. I know I am far from the only one. Rabbi Hauer had this warm, affectionate, complimentary, close connection with countless shul members, talmidim, colleagues, friends, and community leaders. His love for us was real, it was genuine, and it nourished our souls and warmed our hearts.

When he became the Executive Vice President of the OU, a leader and spokesperson for Klal Yisrael, his title and sense of mission changed but his character and personal conduct remained the same.

When the Torah describes how Moshe and Aharon went to confront Pharaoh it says (Shemos 6:27):

הֵם הַמְדַּבְּרִים אֶל־פַּרְעֹה מִלֶּךְ־מִצְרַיִם לְהוֹצִיא אֶת־בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל מִמִּצְרָיִם הוּא מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן:

It was they who spoke to Pharaoh king of Egypt to free the Israelites from the Egyptians; these are the same Moshe and Aaron.

What does it mean these are the same Moshe and Aharon, as opposed to different ones? Rashi explains, it means despite their rise to greatness, their high profile, prominence, even power as spokespeople of Klal Yisrael, they were unchanged as people, they remained humble and mission driven.

The same can be said about Rabbi Hauer. הוא משה, he was the same person, as Rashi says, בשליחותם מתחלה ועד, with a sense of mission from beginning to end and with righteousness.

Rabbi Hauer set the bar for his colleagues and friends. We strived to be like him and now he is gone. Reflecting on our unfinished conversations, I am reminded of the Gemara (Shabbos 153a) which advises we should do teshuva one day before we die. How can anyone know that day? The answer is profound: live each day as if it could be your last, and strive to be your best. We can’t speak to everyone as if it’s our last chance, but we can ensure that the people who matter most know how much they mean to us.

One of Rabbi Hauer’s favorite insights, which he shared with me several times, is from the moment when Hashem visits Avraham after his bris, and three travelers appear at his doorstep. Avraham interrupts his conversation with Hashem to greet and host them. Rabbi Hauer would ask: how could he do such a thing? Wasn’t it disrespectful to Hashem? He explained that in that moment, Avraham had a choice: to continue speaking with Hashem or to act like Hashem by showing kindness. The greater tribute, Rabbi Hauer suggested, was the latter.

Rabbi Hauer has been taken from us. We can no longer speak to him directly, but we can strive to be more like him: genuine, compassionate, thoughtful, and concerned about Klal Yisrael. In doing so, we offer a tribute he would have considered even higher than words.

Rabbi Shlomo Katz on this week’s Parsha “torah.org”

When the Rain Stopped

In this week’s Parashah, we read about the Mabul / Flood, which started in Marcheshvan, the month that begins today. Midrash Tanchuma relates that, although Hashem swore that He would never bring another worldwide flood, heavy rains continued to fall every year on the days that corresponded to the 40 days of the Mabul—from the middle of Marcheshvan until late Kislev. This happened annually until the construction of the first Bet Hamikdash was completed thousands of years later, also in the month of Marcheshvan. The cessation of these rains is hinted to by the verse (Melachim I 6:38) stating that work on the Temple was completed in the month of “Bul”—the word “Mabul” without the letter “Mem,” because the 40 days of rain ceased at that time. [The Gematria of “Mem” is 40.]

R’ Tzaddok Hakohen Rabinowitz z”l (1823-1900; Chassidic Rebbe in Lublin, Poland) explains: Hashem created the world so that He could reside in it. The Generation of the Flood refused to further that goal; instead, Midrash Rabbah records that they denied G-d’s existence, saying, “There is no law and no Judge.” But when the Bet Hamikdash was completed, there finally was a place in our world where the Shechinah could reside. [Of course, Hashem does not have a need to be revealed, nor does He need a physical place to reside. But for reasons unknown and unknowable to us, that is His Will.]

R’ Tzaddok adds: The Bet Hamikdash was the place from which Yir’ah / reverence of G-d was disseminated to the world (see Devarim 14:23). For this reason, the special Avodah / Divine service of Marcheshvan is to increase one’s Yir’ah. (*Pri Tzaddik: Rosh Chodesh Marcheshvan 1*)

“And it came to pass after the seven-day period that the waters of the Flood were upon the earth.” (7:10)

The Gemara (Sanhedrin 108b) asks: What was the nature of these seven days? [R’ Shmuel Eliezer Eidels z”l (Maharsha; Poland; 1555-1631) explains: Since the Torah refers to them as “the seven-day period,” there must be something notable about them.] The Gemara offers four answers:

- (1) These were the days of mourning for Metushelach, who died just then. This teaches us that eulogizing a Tzaddik can delay the arrival of punishments.
- (2) For seven days, Hashem changed the course of nature so that the sun rose in the west and set in the east. [Presumably, this was meant to frighten the people so that they would repent.]
- (3) After He gave them a long time to repent, He gave them a short time to repent. [Maharsha explains: Hashem had warned the generation about the flood 120 years earlier (“a long time”), but those who had not yet been born did not hear that warning, so He gave them seven days (“a short time”).]
- (4) Hashem gave them a taste of the Olam Ha’ba / World-to-Come during this period so that they would know what they were losing out on. [Until here from the Gemara]

R’ Yaakov Moshe Charlap z”l (1882-1951; Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivat Mercaz Harav) comments on the last answer: It is a wondrous thing to be given a taste of Olam Ha’ba in this world. After all, the Sages tell us that all of the prophets prophesied only about the Days of Mashiach, but none could envision Olam Ha’ba, as we read (Yeshayah 64:3), “No eye has ever seen—except Yours, Elokim—what He will do for those who await Him.”

R’ Charlap continues: Surely, Hashem did not give the Generation of the Flood a taste of Olam Ha’ba out of vengeance or spite. Rather, the Gemara means that the generation had fallen so low, they were so corrupt, that there was no possibility of awakening them to repent except by giving them a taste of Olam Ha’ba so they would know what they were forfeiting because of their corruption. Of course, the fact that they could ignore such a warning was another strike against them.

R’ Charlap concludes: Similarly, whenever a person is given a moment of inspiration—a “taste” from above—and he ignores that inspiration, that fact weighs against him. Accordingly, one must seize the moment to take advantage of the inspiration that he is given and use it to sanctify himself further. [In context, R’ Charlap is referring to the Pesach Seder, but, presumably, the idea has general applicability as well.] (*Haggadah Shel Pesach Mei Marom* p. 129)

“Shem and Yefet, he took a garment . . .” (9:23)

“May Elokim give beauty to Yefet, but He will dwell in the tents of Shem.” (9:27)

Rashi z”l notes: It does not say, “They took,” but rather, “He took,” teaching that Shem took more initiative regarding this Mitzvah than Yefet did. Therefore, Shem’s descendants received the privilege of wearing Tzitzit, while Yefet’s descendants will merit to receive an honorable burial, as it is written (Yechezkel 39:11), “I will give Gog [a descendant of Yefet] a place fit for burial.”

Rashi then comments on Noach’s blessing to his two sons: Elokim endowed Yefet with beauty inasmuch as the Persian Emperor Cyrus, a descendant of Yefet, built the edifice of the Second Temple. However, the Shechinah did not dwell in the Second Temple. Where did it dwell? Only in the First Temple, which King Shlomo, a descendant of Shem, built. [Until here from Rashi]

R’ Joseph B. Soloveitchik z”l (1903-1993) explains: Shem and Yefet embody two separate concepts: ethics and etiquette, respectively. Ethics obligates a person to behave well and justly even when he is alone, when there is no one present to praise him. Indeed, an ethical person will behave properly even if people will criticize him for it. In contrast, etiquette is related to beauty, which is in the eye of the beholder and may change over time and from country to country. Etiquette exists solely to facilitate relations between people.

Shem was motivated by ethics to cover his father’s shame. No one needed to encourage Shem to take that step. Therefore he was rewarded with Tzitzit, the garment of which is meant to be worn under one’s clothes—i.e., as a private matter—with only the strings sticking out.

Yefet, in contrast, did not help to cover his father until he saw Shem taking the lead. He wanted Shem to think well of him, so he joined in the Mitzvah of honoring their father. Therefore, he merited that his descendants would be buried, for burial is meant to show respect to another person.

R' Soloveitchik concludes: This explains, also, Noah's blessing to his two sons. Yefet would have a share in building the beautiful structure of the Bet Hamikdash. However, the Shechinah rests only in the tents of Shem—where there is ethics, not where there is etiquette. (*Nefesh Ha'Rav* p.272)

R' Moshe Avigdor Amiel z"l (1883-1946; rabbi in Lithuania and Chief Rabbi of Antwerp and Tel Aviv) writes: Of course, Jews may observe etiquette and non-Jews may have ethics. The distinction between the descendants of Shem and Yefet lies in which idea drives the other.

For example: The Mishnah (Shabbat 63a) records a dispute whether one may wear a sword outdoors on Shabbat where there is no Eruv. The Sages prohibit it, and they cite the prophecy of Yeshayah (2:4), "They will beat their swords into plowshares." But Rabbi Eliezer permits going out on Shabbat wearing a sword, because it is an ornament. [Until here from the Mishnah]

Why do they argue? R' Amiel explains: The Sages and Rabbi Eliezer agree that one may wear an ornament outdoors on Shabbat. But what constitutes an ornament?

Rabbi Eliezer holds that whatever people view as an ornament at a particular time and place is an ornament—an etiquette-like consideration. The Sages, though, hold that the fact that there will not be swords in the days of Mashiach indicates that such ornaments have no place in an ethical world. And the Halachah accords with their view—an example of ethics driving etiquette.

In contrast, writes R' Amiel, Greek philosophers such as Socrates and Plato commended knowledge and political order as means to achieve happiness, not as values in themselves—an example of higher communal ideals being driven by personal considerations. (*Le'novochai Ha'tekufah* II ch.1)

Shabbat

"They shall rejoice in Your kingship—Shomrei Shabbat / those who observe the Sabbath and call it a delight. Am Mekadeshei Shevi'i / the People that sanctifies the Seventh—they will all be satiated and delighted from Your goodness." (*From Shabbat Mussaf*)

R' Matisyahu Salomon z"l (1937-2024; Mashgiach Ruchani of the Gateshead Talmudical College-Etz Yosef in England and Beth Medrash Govoha in Lakewood, N.J.) notes that the two phrases here are discussing two different levels of Shabbat observance.

The first group, the lower level, consists of "Shomrei Shabbat." This group calls Shabbat "a delight," i.e., those in this group enjoy Shabbat's pleasures. However, that enjoyment must be a vehicle for recognizing Hashem's kindness to us, i.e., rejoicing in His kingship. If one eats and drinks on Shabbat solely for his own pleasure, he is not properly fulfilling the Mitzvah of Oneg Shabbat / enjoying Shabbat's delights.

The second group, the higher level, looks deeper, seeking to understand why Hashem created the pleasures of this world. It is not possible that they exist for themselves; G-d must have had a deeper reason for creating them. After reflecting upon this, they will conclude that the reason these pleasures exist is so that we could use them to serve Hashem, learning Torah and performing Mitzvot with peace of mind and a healthy body. This is the meaning of the second phrase above: Am Mekadeshei Shevi'i / the People that sanctifies the Seventh—because they sanctify the physical pleasures they enjoy on Shabbat, they are able to be satiated and delighted from Your true goodness—Torah and Mitzvot. (*Matnat Chaim: Shabbat* p.183)

Rabbi Yaakov Menken on this week's Parsha "torah.org"

The Truly Good, the Mediocre... and the Evil

"These are the products [children] of *Noach*; Noach was a righteous man, pure in his generation, and Noach walked with G-d... And G-d said to Noach, the end of all flesh comes before me, for all the earth is filled with *Hamas* because of them, and behold, I will destroy them with the earth." [6:9,13]

In the Torah *Hamas* means theft and other wrongdoing, but the shoe certainly fits. We have arrived at a moment where simple decency demands a particular stance and attitude, yet all too many people, including not a few Jews, are failing that test.

Rashi, Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki, quotes Talmudic sources that offer two ways to understand what the Torah is telling us, when it describes Noach as pure "in his generation." Some say that this praises him as pure and righteous even in such a terrible era, for had he lived in a generation of righteous people, he would have been still greater. Others, however, view this as a harsh criticism: compared to his generation, he was deemed righteous – but "had he lived in the era of *Avraham*, he would have been considered a nothing."

Rabbi Dovid Mayer notes that this is not just harsh, but extraordinary. Let us accept that Noach would not have measured up to *Avraham*. Fine – but even so, how could he be considered nothing?

The answer, he said, is found in *Rashi's* next comment, on the words “and Noach walked with G-d.” Concerning *Avraham*, Abraham, G-d says that “he walked before Me” [24:40] – and that is the difference. *Rashi* explains that Noach needed support, whereas Avraham strengthened himself and maintained his righteousness by himself. Noach could not have been who he was without help.

Imagine, said Rabbi Mayer, a champion marathon runner who finishes a race in just over two hours. Another, much less experienced runner, takes nearly four hours – but that allows us to make a comparison between the faster and slower runner. The slower runner is not as good, but we can credit him with finishing the race.

But, by contrast, imaging the guy who wants to finish quickly, so he goes through the race riding a bike. He threads his way through the runners (ringing that little bell on the handlebars), and finishes in no time at all. Do we give him a prize? Obviously, there's simply no way to compare the champion runner with the cyclist on his Schwinn.

That, said the Rabbi, is the difference between Avraham and Noach. Noach would be considered “nothing” because he's simply not in the same league. Avraham was who he was despite a series of trials that would have broken any lesser person – including Noach. And yet he “walked” on his own.

But although it may be true that Noach did not compare to Avraham, he was still sufficient to be saved from the flood. He exemplified decency in his generation. Those who supported, backed, or justified *Hamas*, however, were totally lost. They were less than humanity demands... and that has not changed.

Rabbi Yochanan Zweig on this week's Parsha “torah.org”

People In Stone Houses Shouldn't Cast Bricks

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

The Torah introduces the episode of the building of the Tower of Babel with a description of the building materials which were used. *Rashi* comments that since Babel was a plain, having no mountains and rocks, the inhabitants of the area were forced to manufacture their own bricks{1}. Of what significance is this information to the overall understanding of the entire episode?

Prior to the advent of bricks and building materials, buildings were constructed using stone hewn from a quarry. There is a crucial difference between living in a home constructed of bricks and one constructed of stone; when inhabiting a stone building, a person senses that he is living in Hashem's world, for he is surrounded by materials which come directly from nature and are relatively untouched by man. When a person bakes bricks, using them to construct his home, he may have the feeling that his abode is separate from Hashem, for he himself has processed the materials used to construct it.

Rashi comments on the verse “u'devarim achadim” – “of common purpose” that the inhabitants of Babel conspired against the “yichudo shel olam”, the notion that Hashem is the sole power over the entire universe{2}. It was their perception that the world was theirs, devoid of Divine authority, and they conspired to attack the authority that resided in the heavens.

The reason for the emphasis on the brick being used as a building material is succinctly captured by the Ibn Ezra who comments on the verse “vatehi lahem haleveina le'even” – “and the brick served them as stone”, saying that they used bricks instead of stone{3}. Their preference for bricks reflected their perception that they were living in a world which they themselves created. They deluded themselves into believing that Hashem no longer exercised His authority over this world.

All too often, we ourselves become blinded by mankind's technological advancements. As man progresses in his technological pursuits, he becomes more prone to losing sight of the fact that Hashem is the ultimate authority in this world.

1.11:3 2.11:1, According to *Rashi's* first interpretation, they wanted to wage war with Hashem, who resides in the heavens.
3.11:3

The Covering Of Shame

“And Shem and Yefes took a garment, laid it upon both their shoulders”(9:23)

The Talmud relates that Cham, upon finding his father inebriated, emasculated him in order to prevent Noach from fathering more children, who would diminish his share in the world{1}. When they saw their father's

condition, Shem and Yefes covered his nakedness with a garment. Rashi records that as a reward for Shem's added alacrity, his descendants would wear Tzitzis, tassels which hang from four-cornered garments. Yefes merited that his descendants lying slaughtered on the battlefield would receive the dignity of burial^{2}. What must be understood is how their rewards are commensurate with their actions. Why is there such a great disparity between the rewards of the two brothers? Why does Shem's quicker reaction merit that his descendants should wear Hashem's insignia upon their clothing^{3}?

Clearly, Chazal understand that while physically there is no great disparity between Shem's and Yefes' actions, the small lapse in time reflects the fact that their motivations for covering their father were worlds apart.

Yefes' fourth son was Yavan, the father of Greece^{4}. Therefore, Chazal identify Yefes as being the predecessor of Greek culture and philosophy. The name Yefes is derived from the Hebrew word "yafeh" – "beautiful" ^{5}. One of the most prominent aspects of Greek culture was the glorification of the perfect human physique in its naked state. The earliest accounts of the Olympic games record athletes performing unclothed. No collection of Greek sculpture can be found without evidence of their tremendous fixation with the perfect body in a state of undress. This is a reflection of the Greek hedonistic attitude of serving the body. The Greeks viewed the naked body as the ultimate symbol of perfection, and clothing only as a means for hiding any imperfection. In contradistinction, the Jews, descendants of Shem (from which the term "Semite" is derived) who are constantly aware of being in Hashem's presence, behave with a sense of Tznius – modesty and dignity. Tznius requires that the body be clothed.

When Shem discovered his father, his immediate reaction was to cover Noah's nakedness, for he viewed nakedness as undignified. Yefes did not react to Noah's nakedness until he realized that his father's body had been mutilated. When Yefes saw this, he sprang into action, for according to his point of view, only a perfect body should be exposed; once mutilated, the body should be covered.

Shem's and Yefes' rewards reflect the motivations for their actions. Since Shem viewed clothing as the means by which to bring dignity to the body, he was rewarded with the most dignified form of clothing, the Tzitzis, which bear Hashem's insignia. Since Yefes viewed the mutilated body as being in a state of degradation, and did not want it to be exposed for this reason, he merited that his descendants' corpses would not lie in shame on the battlefield, but would be dignified with burial.

1.Sanhedrin 70a 2.9:23, see also Tanchuma 15 3.Tosafos Menachos 43b 4.10:2 5.Megillah 9b

Rabbi Yissocher Frand on this week's Parsha "torah.org"

A New Twist to the Story of the Flood: The Animals Saved Noah!

The *pasuk* in Parshas Noach says, "For in another seven days' time I will send rain upon the earth, forty days and forty nights, and I will blot out all existence that I have made, from upon the face of the ground. And Noah did according to everything that Hashem had commanded him." (Bereshis 7:4-5) All things being equal, our first impression would be to think that the words "And Noah did all that Hashem commanded him" means that he built the *Teivah* (Ark). However, that is not how Rashi explains it. Rashi interprets "And Noah did what he was commanded" to refer to the fact that Noah **came** to the *Teivah*. This is certainly not the simple way of understanding *pasuk* 5.

The question raised by the Ohr HaChaim is more difficult. The Ohr HaChaim asks on Rashi: We don't need a *pasuk* to ambiguously allude to the fact that Noah entered the *Teivah*. The Torah states explicitly that Noah went into the *Teivah* – first in Bereshis 7:7 "And Noah came with his sons and wife and daughters-in-law with him into the *Teivah* because of the flood waters" and again a few *pesukim* later in Bereshis 7:13 "On that very day Noah came with his sons Shem, Cham, and Yefes, and his wife and his three daughters-in-law with them into the *Teivah*."

Those who comment on Rashi explain that *pasuk* 7:5 is not teaching us that Noah went **into** the *Teivah*. That we learn from *pesukim* 7 and 13. Rashi is explaining that "And Noah did that which he was commanded" means he **came up to** the *Teivah*. So the question becomes, what is the big deal here? It does not seem significant that Noah came up to the door of the *Teivah*!

The Tolner Rebbe cites a very interesting observation from the Tiferes Shlomo, the Radomsker Rebbe. The Medrash says in two places that Avraham asked Noah's son Shem, "How were you able to save yourself from the waters of the flood, from the great wrath that was present in the world at that time?" He paraphrases the Medrash's recording of Shem's response to Avraham. Shem said, "I don't know why we were saved. All I know is that the entire year of the flood, all we did was take care of the animals, night and day."

The Medrash Tanchuma is a little more explicit: “Eliezer, the servant of Avraham, asked Shem: ‘What did you do in the *Teivah*?’ Shem responded, ‘Those animals that ate at night we were busy feeding at night; those animals that ate during the day, we were busy feeding during the day.’ The entire twelve months, neither Noah nor his sons tasted sleep.”

The reason Noah was saved was that he had *rachmanus* (mercy) on the animals. In this merit, he survived the flood. *Rachmanus* begets *rachmanus*. This also answers another question. The Talmud teaches (Bava Kama 60a) that when permission is granted to the Angel of Destruction (to destroy), there is no distinction between the righteous and the wicked. So why was Noah and his family saved? The answer is what Shem the son of Noah told Avraham and Eliezer: We were saved for one reason, and one reason only—because we had mercy on the animals.

Based on this, the Tiferes Shlomo answers another question. The Medrash says (as Rashi brings) that in the final analysis the decree was only pronounced upon the *Dor Hamabul* (Generation of the Flood) for the sin of theft. Certainly, the *Dor Hamabul* did far worse things than stealing from one another. They engaged in all sorts of sexual perversions. (I can still tell it like it is and call it perversion—even though such labeling is no longer allowed in other segments of society!)

True, theft is not a nice thing. But “and the entire earth was corrupted (by sexual perversions)” (Bereshis 6:11) to the extent that it had a corrupting influence even on the animals—that seems far worse. So when there was promiscuity, adultery, homosexuality, and all types of other sexual perversions throughout society, how is it that the final decree came down because of theft? Why is that the “straw that broke the camel’s back?”

The answer is that had they engaged in all this other terrible activity but they would have been nice to each other and have had mercy on one another, that merit of *rachmanus* would have saved them. Maybe it would not have saved them entirely, but the *Ribono shel Olam* would have meted out the punishment slowly, over a long period of time. He would not have wiped out the entire world in a matter of a year. People can do a lot of bad things, but if they behave properly with their fellow men, that goes a long way in protecting them from punishment.

The upshot of all of this is an amazing way of looking at the story in our *parsha*. Who saved whom in the story of Noah and the *Teivah*? We thought Noah saved the animals! Noah took the animals with him and saved all living things. However, based on this Medrash, the Tiferes Shlomo says that it was just the opposite! The animals saved Noah! Because he had mercy upon them and mercy begets mercy, therefore Noah was not subject to the rule that “Once the Destroyer is permitted to destroy, he does not distinguish between the righteous and the wicked.”

Based on all of this, the Tolner Rebbe says that this is what Rashi is teaching by interpreting “And Noah did that which Hashem commanded” to mean that Noah came **up to** (rather than **into**) the *Teivah*. Why is that significant? It is because the simple act of going up to the *Teivah* separated Noah from his entire generation. When he walked to the *Teivah* he was telling the rest of society “I don’t want to have anything to do with you.” By separating himself and preparing the *Teivah*, Noah accepted the task of preparing to save the world. According to Rashi, the praise that the *pasuk* gives Noah is: He went up to the *Teivah* – demonstrating his *rachmanus* for the future of all birds and wildlife on the planet!

Rabbi Yossy Goldman’s Sermonette

After the Flood

What was Noah’s response?

This week we read the story of the Great Flood. The world had become corrupt, immoral, and incorrigible. Even G-d’s infinite patience could not handle that generation. Noah had been building his Ark for 120 years and telling people that they were heading for doomsday if they wouldn’t change their ways. But it was to no avail. In the end, only Noah and his immediate family survived in their floating Ark. Everything else was wiped away by the devastating floodwaters.

After a full solar calendar year on board, Noah was told by G-d to leave the Ark. He could have been forgiven for not wanting to emerge from that safe space, a shelter and *miklat* of note. The Ark was the only safe place on earth. What would he find upon leaving it amidst the total obliteration of the entire world?

But G-d told him to leave the Ark and so he did. Indeed, he witnessed the absolute desolation of what was once a bustling world. What did he do? Did he sit down and cry? Perhaps, but certainly not for long. Did he put up a memorial plaque, “Here lies the world and all humanity?” Not at all. He set out to do exactly as G-d had told him to. Rebuild the world!

The rabbis famously debate how great a saint was Noah. The Torah itself calls him a *tzaddik*. But was he only righteous compared to his corrupt generation, or was he an objective *tzaddik* who would have held his own in any generation?

But for me, the bottom line is that Noah got the job done. We are all here today thanks to Noah. He rebuilt the world. I’m not so concerned about the degree of his righteousness. More important is that he fulfilled G-d’s mission and restored the world to its numbers and its purpose. Thanks to Noah we were given another opportunity to partner with G-d in His creation and make the world a better, more divine place.

What a powerful message for all of us. At one time or another in our lives we may experience tragedy and loss. Do we say we're "down and out?" or do we say, "I may be down, but I'm not out." Noah teaches us never to throw in the towel, no matter how bleak the world may appear.

We've seen too many suicides among the Oct 7 survivors and members of Tzahal. Clearly, the trauma of what they experienced besieged their rational minds and led them to do what they did. We cannot judge them. Who knows how we would have reacted? But we need to know that there are always solutions. There is always help for people in these desperate situations. In our community in Johannesburg, Jewish Social Services operates an Emergency Helpline 24/7. I'm sure similar support systems are available in every community.

I can think of individuals who lost their businesses. At the time it was nothing less than tragic for them and their families. But I also know some of them who began new businesses and are doing better than ever today.

Noah reminds us that we can rebuild our shattered worlds. Even after total devastation.

Look at our nation. We suffered the most horrific Holocaust 80 years ago. Hitler's floodwaters swamped most of European Jewry and a third of our nation. We lost the proudest Jewish communities, the most glorious Jewish academies of learning, Rabbis, Roshei Yeshivah, Rebbes, Chassidim, synagogues and schools were wiped off the face of the earth.

So, what was the response of those who survived? Memorials? Museums? Yes, we have Yad Vashem and many Holocaust Museums around the world. But the most important thing the survivors did was rebuild their own families. My own father of blessed memory, whose Yahrzeit is tonight, was the sole survivor of his entire family in Poland. But when he died, he left over 100 great grandchildren! And how proud he was that Hitler did not have the last word.

And the spiritual leaders rebuilt their schools and Yeshivas. The Mir Yeshivah is no longer in Lithuania, but it boasts the largest number of students of any Yeshivah in its Jerusalem campus. No less than 9,000! The second largest is in Lakewood, New Jersey with also some 9,000 students. Telshe is no longer in Lithuania, but it has established a thriving Yeshivah in Cleveland and in Telshe Stone near Jerusalem. The Gerer Chassidim were dominant in Poland before World War 2. Today they have a flourishing center and Yeshivah in Jerusalem. Eli Weisel once pointed out that Lubavitch was a tiny village in Belarus. But today Chabad is present in virtually every Jewish community the world over, including Ukraine, Siberia, Congo, Rwanda and Uganda.

Is Yad Vashem important? Of course. Are Holocaust Museums necessary to educate the wider world? Undoubtedly. Was Shindler's List a good idea? For sure. But at the end of the day, no museum and no movie rebuilt our shattered Jewish world. It was individuals and leaders who refused to give up and were determined to rebuild from the ashes.

Indeed, the whole of Israel is one gigantic, positive response of the restoration of our people in our ancient homeland and stubbornly refusing to roll over and die.

So, whether Noah was a perfect *tzaddik* or a flawed saint, is really not my major concern. His most important legacy to us is that when disaster strikes, we should not despair and surrender to hopelessness, but we should rebuild our world and our situation, step by positive step.

I hope we can all take courage and inspiration from Noah in our own lives.

The Rabbi Sacks Legacy Trust

True Morality

Noach • 5770,

Is there such a thing as an objective basis of morality? For some time, in secular circles, the idea has seemed absurd. Morality is what we choose it to be. We are free to do what we like so long as we don't harm others.

Moral judgments are not truths but choices. There is no way of getting from "is" to "ought", from description to prescription, from facts to values, from science to ethics. This was the received wisdom in philosophy for a century after Nietzsche had argued for the abandonment of morality – which he saw as the product of Judaism – in favour of the "will to power".

Recently, however, an entirely new scientific basis has been given to morality from two surprising directions: neo-Darwinism and the branch of mathematics known as Games Theory. As we will see, the discovery is intimately related to the story of Noach and the covenant made between God and humanity after the Flood.

Games theory was invented by one of the most brilliant minds of the 20th century, John von Neumann (1903-1957). He realised that the mathematical models used in economics were unrealistic and did not mirror the way decisions are made in the real world. Rational choice is not simply a matter of weighing alternatives and deciding between them. The reason is that the outcome of our decision often depends on how other people react to it, and usually we cannot know this in advance. Games theory, von Neumann's invention in 1944, was an attempt to produce a mathematical representation of choice under conditions of uncertainty. Six years later, it yielded its most famous paradox, known as the Prisoner's Dilemma.

Imagine two people, arrested by the police under suspicion of committing a crime. There is insufficient evidence to convict them on a serious charge; there is only enough to convict them of a lesser offence. The police decide to encourage each to inform against the other. They separate them and make each the following proposal: if you testify

against the other suspect, you will go free, and he will be imprisoned for ten years. If he testifies against you, and you stay silent, you will be sentenced to ten years in prison, and he will go free. If you both testify against one another, you will each receive a five-year sentence. If both of you stay silent, you will each be convicted of the lesser charge and face a one-year sentence.

It doesn't take long to work out that the optimal strategy for each is to inform against the other. The result is that each will be imprisoned for five years. The paradox is that the best outcome would be for both to remain silent. They would then only face one year in prison. The reason that neither will opt for this strategy is that it depends on collaboration. However, since each is unable to know what the other is doing – there is no communication between them – they cannot take the risk of staying silent. The Prisoner's Dilemma is remarkable because it shows that two people, both acting rationally, will produce a result that is bad for both of them. Eventually, a solution was discovered. The reason for the paradox is that the two prisoners find themselves in this situation only once. If it happened repeatedly, they would eventually discover that the best thing to do is to trust one another and co-operate.

In the meantime, biologists were wrestling with a phenomenon that puzzled Darwin. The theory of natural selection – popularly known as the survival of the fittest – suggests that the most ruthless individuals in any population will survive and hand their genes on to the next generation. Yet almost every society ever observed values individuals who are altruistic: who sacrifice their own advantage to help others. There seems to be a direct contradiction between these two facts.

The Prisoner's Dilemma suggested an answer. Individual self-interest often produces bad results. Any group which learns to cooperate, instead of compete, will be at an advantage relative to others. But, as the Prisoner's Dilemma showed, this needs repeated encounters – the so-called "Iterated (= repeated) Prisoner's dilemma". In the late 1970s, a competition was announced to find the computer program that did best at playing the Iterated Prisoner's Dilemma against itself and other opponents.

The winning programme was devised by a Canadian, Anatole Rapoport, and was called Tit-for-Tat. It was dazzlingly simple: it began by co-operating, and then repeated the last move of its opponent. It worked on the rule of "What you did to me, I will do to you", or "measure for measure". This was the first time scientific proof had been given for any moral principle.

What is fascinating about this chain of discoveries is that it precisely mirrors the central principle of the covenant God made with Noah:

Whoever sheds the blood of man,
By man shall his blood be shed;
For in the image of God has God made man.

This is measure for measure [in Hebrew, *middah keneged middah*], or retributive justice: As you do, so shall you be done to. In fact, at this point the Torah does something very subtle. The six words in which the principle is stated are a mirror image of one another: [1] Who sheds [2] the blood [3] of man, [3a] by man [2a] shall his blood [1a] be shed. This is a perfect example of style reflecting substance: what is done to us is a mirror image of what we do. The extraordinary fact is that the first moral principle set out in the Torah is also the first moral principle ever to be scientifically demonstrated. Tit-for-Tat is the computer equivalent of (retributive) justice:

Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed.

The story has a sequel. In 1989, the Polish mathematician Martin Nowak produced a programme that beats Tit-for-Tat. He called it Generous. It overcame one weakness of Tit-for-Tat, namely that when you meet a particularly nasty opponent, you get drawn into a potentially endless and destructive cycle of retaliation, which is bad for both sides. Generous avoided this by randomly but periodically forgetting the last move of its opponent, thus allowing the relationship to begin again. What Nowak had produced, in fact, was a computer simulation of forgiveness.

Once again, the connection with the story of Noah and the Flood is direct. After the Flood, God vowed: "I will never again curse the ground for man's sake, although the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; nor will I again destroy every living thing as I have done." This is the principle of Divine forgiveness.

Thus the two great principles of the Noachide covenant are also the first two principles to have been established by computer simulation. There is an objective basis for morality after all. It rests on two key ideas: justice and forgiveness, or what the Sages called *middat ha-din* and *middat rachamim*. Without these, no group can survive in the long run.

In one of the first great works of Jewish philosophy – *Sefer Emunot ve-Deot (The Book of Beliefs and Opinions)* – R. Saadia Gaon (882-942) explained that the truths of the Torah could be established by reason. Why then was revelation necessary? Because it takes humanity time to arrive at truth, and there are many slips and pitfalls along the way.

It took more than a thousand years after R. Saadia Gaon for humanity to demonstrate the fundamental moral truths that lie at the basis of God's covenant with humankind: that co-operation is as necessary as competition, that co-operation depends on trust, that trust requires justice, and that justice itself is incomplete without forgiveness. Morality is not simply what we choose it to be. It is part of the basic fabric of the universe, revealed to us by the universe's Creator, long ago.