

B'S'D'

To: Parsha@YahooGroups.com
From: crshulman@aol.com

INTERNET PARSHA SHEET
ON NOACH - 5762

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From: RABBI YISSOCHER FRAND ryfrand@torah.org
"RavFrand" List - Rabbi Frand on Parshas Noach -
Free Time: A Challenge and A Responsibility

The name Noach was introduced and explained in last week's parsha [Bereshis 5:28-29]. "And (Lemech) called the name (of his son) Noach saying: This one will comfort us from our toil and from the anguish of our hands, from the soil that G-d has cursed." Adam had received the curse that the ground would itself be cursed because of him, and that Adam would only eat bread by the sweat of his brow. Lemech's prayer was that the birth of this son Noach should somehow be a consolation and should in some way lighten the burden of this curse.

The Medrash Tanchuma elaborates on this pasuk [verse]: When his son Noach was born, how did Lemech know that Noach would be a great consolation that would revolutionize society and would lighten the burden of the curse? The Medrash explains that when Adam was given the curse following his sin in the Garden of Eden, he asked G-d until when the curse would remain in effect. G-d answered that the curse would last until a person was born already circumcised. Noach was born already circumcised, alerting Lemech to the impending lightening of this 10-generation-old curse. Lemech could therefore immediately proclaim "this is the baby that we have been waiting for." Now history will change.

The Medrash explains further that until Noach was born, when people planted wheat they harvested thorns. However, with the birth of Noach, nature returned to its intended pattern. When they planted wheat, they harvested wheat; when they planted barley they harvested barley. Nature worked the way it was supposed to work. Furthermore, the Medrash states, Noach invented the plow and the hoe and all types of farming tools. Until his time, people did agricultural work with their hands. Imagine plowing a field with one's fingernails! It was Noach's brilliant idea that revolutionized the history of the world, and indeed saved his fellow man from "our toil and from the anguish of our hands."

Rav Avrohom Pam zt"l (1913-2001) observed that although this Medrash states that Noach made life much easier and made society far more economically productive, it was precisely in Noach's time that society became corrupt and debased. Apparently there is a correlation between hard work and the moral status of the world, between having it easy and moral deterioration.

Rav Pam remembered the "sweatshops" on the Lower East Side of Manhattan and in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. He certainly remembered pre-war Lithuania. People worked 12 hours a day, six or seven days a week! However, 50, 60, and 70 years ago in New York City, it was possible to walk outside at night. Now, with four days a week, flextime, shorter hours, and paid vacations -- all of a sudden -- we cannot walk the streets safely any more. It is sometimes not even safe to drive one's car down the street,

much less walk!

We are so advanced, we have all these conveniences, and look what is happening to the world! Apparently, there is something corrupting about having so much free time on one's hands that one does not know what to do with it. When that happens, the world deteriorates. This is what happened during the years prior to the Flood.

Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch (1808-1888) commented similarly. There was a striking change in the world after the Flood: "As long as the earth lasts, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, and day and night, shall never again cease to exist." [Bereshis 8:22]

This was a revolutionary change. Before the Flood, there was no such thing as a season. It was summer all year round.

Why are seasons necessary? Rav Hirsch explained that year-round summer is not good for society. When life is too easy and people have too much time on their hands, society deteriorates.

Life became easier during Noach's lifetime. Suddenly, people had too much free time on their hands. The world deteriorated. This is a great ethical lesson for all of us regarding the challenge and responsibility that free time presents to us.

The Generation of the Flood: Immorality Institutionalized

The Chavos Yair (Responsa Chapter 163) addressed the following question: A group of businessmen had a steady learning group with a certain rabbi for many years. Although they came together regularly for Torah study, outside of the learning sessions they were constantly at each other's throats over business dealings. There were frequent "Dinei Torah" [Monetary disputes requiring Court intervention] between them over matters of business encroachments (hasagos Gevul). They were always putting down each other in the eyes of customers.

Eventually, their legal fees from contesting all these "Dinei Torah" were adding up to substantial sums. Finally one of the businessmen devised a brilliant idea. "Let us make a deal amongst ourselves that as much as we steal and rob and cheat and infringe and slander amongst ourselves -- we will automatically forgive (be 'mochel') each other for these sins and we will forgo our rights to monetary compensation via "Dinei Torah".

They asked their teacher if they were in fact allowed to make such a deal amongst themselves. The rabbi responded that he could not answer their question because he was an 'interested party' (nogaah b'Davar) -- since he in fact was earning a livelihood from collecting fees for services rendered in adjudicating their "Dinei Torah". Therefore they sent the query to the Chavos Yair.

The Chavos Yair responded that their desire to enter into such an agreement is itself a worse sin than all the stealing and cheating and infringement that they had been engaging in prior to contemplating such an agreement. They were now proposing to institutionalize falsehood and deceit. This would be a Desecration of G-d's Name. The other way was dishonest, but at least it culminated with a seeking of truth and justice. As unethical as their previous behavior may have been, it was not nearly as bad as throwing all ethics to the wind and formally sanctioning institutionalized falsehood and cheating.

The Chavos Yair added that this was the difference between the Generation of the Flood and the people of Sodom. In Sodom there were no righteous people. The people there basically engaged in the same practices as were prevalent in the Generation of the Flood. But by Sodom we read that "their cries came before Him" [Bereshis 18:21]. At least there they still cried. They knew they were being cheated. In the Generation of the Flood, there were not even cries. People could do what they

want, say what they want. "Everything goes!"

A society that institutionalizes and sanctions sin is a society that is totally corrupt.

Transcribed by David Twersky; Seattle, WA

DavidATwersky@aol.com Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman; Baltimore, MD dhoffman@torah.org Tapes or a complete catalogue can be ordered from the Yad Yechiel Institute, PO Box 511, Owings Mills MD 21117-0511. Call (410) 358-0416 or e-mail tapes@yadyechiel.org or visit <http://www.yadyechiel.org/> for further information. These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape # 301, Teaching Torah To Non-Jews. Just in time for Bereishis: A new Artscroll publication - Rabbi Frand on the Parsha. If you enjoy reading Rabbi Frand's weekly email, you will certainly appreciate "Rabbi Frand on the Parsha". Available now from your local Hebrew bookstore or by calling 1-800-MESORAH or clicking here: <http://artscroll.com/linker/torahorg/link/Books/frph.html> RavFrand, Copyright 1 2001 by Rabbi Yissocher Frand and Torah.org. Torah.org depends upon your support. Please visit <http://torah.org/support/> or write to dedications@torah.org or donations@torah.org . Thank you! Torah.org: The Judaism Site <http://www.torah.org/> 17 Warren Road, Suite 2B Baltimore, MD 21208

http://www.torahweb.org/torah/2000/parsha/rros_noach2000.html

[From last year]

RABBI MICHAEL ROSENSWEIG

SHEVAH MIZVOT BENEI NOAH VS. BRIT MILAH

The Talmud (Sanhedrin 56-59) defines the universal obligations and prohibitions that devolve upon all men as "sheva mizvot benei Noah". Non-Jews, who must comply with these norms are designated simply as "benei Noah". An examination of the history of this basic code, however, reveals that only the seventh, ever min ha-chai (Bereshit 9:4), is actually associated with Noah; the first six commandments were addressed to Adam (Bereshit 2:16...Sanhedrin 56a). The Rambam finds it necessary to formulate this history of religious obligation in Hilkhos Melakhim (9:1).

If six/sevenths of the themes that constitute the foundation for universal conduct predate him, why is the total corpus identified with the personality of Noah? Does the fact that his contribution completes the list, or that his survival ensured the continuity of humankind sufficiently account for this phenomenon? Moreover, one could certainly argue that ever min ha-chai represents a narrower and less fundamental principle relative to the other components-idolatry, murder, theft, etc.- that were initially addressed to Adam. It seems ironic that specifically this norm would link the entire list to Noah.

Upon further reflection, however, it appears that ever min ha-chai and the personality of Noah uniquely characterize the nature of sheva mizvot benei Noah, particularly as contrasted with the ambitious program of Taryag mizvot. The prohibition of Ever min ha-chai emerges in the context of a major transition allowing for the consumption of meat in the aftermath of the mabul. While some mefarshim view this allowance as a natural outgrowth of the changed relationship between man and animal resulting from the tevah experience, others perceive it as a concession to a lower minimum standard of spirituality demanded from man, notwithstanding his continued capacity for occasional greatness. This harsh reassessment of man's spiritual profile reflected in his level of obligation came about not only because of the absolute spiritual breakdown that led to "keitz kol basar ba lefanai", but perhaps also because even the lone deserving survivor, Noah, proved only to be relatively righteous, a "zadik tamim bedorotav".

Elsewhere (TorahWeb.org, Parshat Noah, 5760), we have suggested that Noah was the quintessential survivor, who was able to achieve the transition to a new world, but was incapable of seizing the opportunity to spiritually refashion that world. Even after the remarkable experience of the tevah, Noah remained

"mi-ketanei emunah". It took some coaxing to lure him from the safe if uncomfortable environment of the tevah to the challenge of a new world. Finally, it was necessary to command him - "zeh min ha-tevah" (Bereshit 8:16), "hayzeh itakh" (8:17, and Rashi). Even as Hashem accepts his korban-"va-yarach Hashem et rei-ach ha-nichoach"- and resolves never again to destroy mankind, He affirms His reassessment of man's spiritual nature - "ki yezer lev ha-adam ra mi-neurav" (8:21)! It is precisely at this juncture that Hashem permits the eating of meat followed immediately by the prohibition of ever min ha-chai, which notably seems to be formulated as a caveat to the original concession - "akh basar be-nafsho damo lo tokhelu"(9:3,4). Within this framework, the Torah finds it necessary to reiterate the prohibition against murder. The Ramban (9:5) explains that the implications of this transition to a meat-eating society required a reaffirmation of man's centrality vis-a-vis the animal kingdom, as well as a clear statement about the sanctity of human life as it relates to human interaction. The Torah even feels compelled to reestablish the most basic principle articulated at Adam's creation - "ki be-zelem elokim asah et ha-adam"(9:6).

All seven of the "noahide" commandments are appropriately associated with Noah. In many respects, the mabul destroyed not only the world's population, but the prevailing world-order. The obligations addressed to Adam achieved continuity only because they were also binding upon Noah in the aftermath of the mabul, notwithstanding Hashem's reassessment and reformulation of the world's foundation. Moreover, ever min ha-chai, precisely because it emerges in the context of a clear and dramatic concession to man's propensity for spiritual mediocrity, conveys a basic truth about the scope and nature of "noahide" obligation that applies to all components of that code. The obligations of a ben noah are designed to promote basic spiritual survival and social continuity; they are not an effective prescription for spiritual excellence. Noah, who exemplified these very characteristics, is, indeed, the ideal exemplar of this system. The contrast to Taryag Mizvot, a system in which every aspect of life is suffused with religious meaning and opportunity, is manifest.

Hazal were intrigued about the relationship between Noah and Avraham. It is interesting that Avraham is also associated with a particular mizvah, milah. Rambam continues his history of religious observance in Hilkhos Melakhim (9:1) by noting this fact. Just as ever min ha-chai reflects Noah's contribution to religious life, milah typifies Avraham's and Yahadut's (Judaism's) unique perspective. This ambitious dialectical mizvah which highlights both man's aspiration to perfection, as well as his capacity and desire for self-sacrifice in order to attain spiritual goals (See Shabbat 106a; Sefer Hakhinukh; Moreh Nevukhim etc.), emerges as the appropriate symbol of kedushat yisrael. The midrash (Mishpatim Rabbah 30:9) records that when Akilas was considering converting to Yahadut, the king attempted to dissuade him, arguing that one could achieve the benefits of Yahadut without its burdens simply by studying Jewish texts and teachings. Akilas responded powerfully that one cannot effectively partake of the Jewish experience without a full commitment to the total system, particularly as represented by bris milah. Notwithstanding the critical role of Noah and the central importance of the system of sheva mizvot benei Noah, it is brit milah that is truly the foundation for the spiritual excellence epitomized by Avraham Avinu.

<http://www.enayim.org/archives/noah5761.html>

[Last year]

THE DISAPPOINTING AND THE DISAPPOINTED

RABBI NORMAN LAMM

There is a certain pathos in the fate of Noah. He has survived the cataclysmic deluge, and managed to save his family, but witnessed the vast destruction of the civilization that once flourished and now was no more. And now, at the end of his days, after a life of suffering and heroism, he is disgraced by his youngest son Ham, who owed his life to him in more ways than one. The Torah mentions Ham's leering comments when he finds his father exposed while in a drunken stupor. The Sages took this as a euphemism for a far more heinous act of filial betrayal. They were of two opinions in identifying the sin of Ham against his father-that it was homosexual rape or castration. But however one interprets the sin, it is a brutal case of humiliation of a father.

Did Noah deserve such a bitter end to his dramatic life? Was there any justice to the events that befell him? I believe the answer is yes, if we view it in context rather than as an isolated incident.

When Noah was born, his father Lamech called him Noah because 'This son will comfort us (Yenahchameinu -- similar to the name Noah) for our work and the toil of our hands, because of the ground that the Lord has cursed' (5:29). He had great hopes for this boy, that he would restore the world to its pristine beauty and bounty. For ten generations-since the sin of Adam and Eve which resulted in the pain of childbirth and raising children and in the diminished capacity of the earth to bear fruit for man-human beings had labored under the curse, and suffering had been their common lot. Now, Lamech hoped, this son would reverse the fate of mankind and would bring man closer to its creator. He had great dreams for this youngster, dreams of consolation and solace for all the suffering that people had endured-and so he named him j because ubnjbh, he would comfort and redeem his fellow humans.

But Noah, despite his many virtues (ish tzaddik hayah), failed in this historic mission. He was supposed to bring succor and comfort to the world, but he neglected the world and tended to his own family. He was intended to be a redeemer and in the end was merely a survivor. He was passive, introverted, and even callous towards others. He offered no balm for their back-breaking labor, no cure for the earth's accursed refusal to yield its bounty. Instead of calling people to teshuva in a passion for universal love, he built his private ark, gathering in his family and samples of animal life, preferring the company of the beasts to those of his fellow humans. And so Noah, nestled in his floating menagerie, disappointed his father, frustrating his most cherished dream.

Noah's punishment was middah k'negged middah, measure for measure. The disappointing son was to become the disappointed father of his son. The Noah who rejected the dream of his father was now to experience the nightmare of a treacherous son who humiliated his father, mocked him, and in place of Noah's ambitions to flee from a world of corruption and venality, reintroduced these same evils in even greater intensity.

So filial disappointment leads to paternal disappointment. The wheel turns, and what Noah failed to do for Lamech, Ham now does a hundred-fold to Noah. Justice prevails.

From: National Council of Young
Israel[SMTP:YI_Torah@lb.central.com]

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Guest Rabbi: RABBI FABIAN SCHONFELD Young Israel of
Kew Gardens Hills, NY

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x115, Email: ncyi@youngisrael.org.

In most cases where we are told in the Torah of the birth of biblical personalities we are also told of the reasons for their names given to them by their parents. One of the exceptions to this practice is in the case of Noah. While the Portion of the Week is called Noach, his name has already been mentioned at the end of Breishit. In Chapter 5, Verse 29, we read And he called his name Noach saying, 'this one will bring us rest from our work and from the toil of our hands, from the ground which HaShem has cursed'.

Rashi comments as follows: This was said in reference to the invention of the plowshare which was attributed to Noah. Until his time in consequence of the curse decreed upon Adam, the earth produced thorns and thistles when one planted wheat. In Noah's day this ceased (ArtScroll translation). In other words, the word Noach which means to rest was meant to indicate that farmers would now be able to rest more easily from their hard work because of the plow which Noah invented.

What does a plow really accomplish? When plowing the soil the seeds may completely be dispersed by the wind, or it may produce weeds and thorns. Seeds are not able to penetrate beyond the top soil and the surface of the land. In order to allow the wheat to grow, the seeds must penetrate the hard crust of the land and begin to gestate and, eventually, find their way through the hard core of earth and grow towards heaven.

Symbolically, what is suggested here is that Noah removed superficiality from the life of the farmers; a concept that not only applies to the farming community but, in the view of the Torah, to all moments in the area of life. What Judaism rejects is superficiality in our thoughts and in our actions. If, for example, one is engaged in a prayer and merely recites the words then we are said to be mitpallel min hasafa ve'hachutz - which really means to be involved only in lip service. When we study a text of Torah we are not supposed to read it simply and to glance at the words, not to study it superficially but to go beyond the surface. When we perform a mitzvah of chesed, we should not simply convey our feelings towards our fellow human beings in a superficial manner and perform this mitzvah pro forma. It was this concept of going beyond the surface which the plowshare invented by Noah was to accomplish. This is why he was named Noah as Rashi explains as quoted above. He conveyed to the Jewish people the need not to do things purely mechanically but to probe beneath the surface. This is the meaning of Noah's name and this is why he was given this name by the Torah.

In our commitment in the study of Torah, we must not perform the mitzvot towards our fellow man with a superficial and indifferent attitude. Like Noah, we must use the plowshare to reach the inner depth of our soul and of our life.

<http://www.enayim.org/archives/noah5760.html>

[From 2 years ago]

PLEASANT COMMANDMENTS

MICKEY SIEV

The concept of deracheha darchei noam (Mishlei 3:17), 'her (Torah's) ways are ways of pleasantness,' is one which finds expression within the halacha. The gemara in Succah (32a), for example, concludes that we are to understand the commandment to take kapos temarim on the holiday of Succos as referring to a lulav and not to a palm shoot because a palm shoot is thorny. Because of deracheha darchei noam, the Torah must have intended the more comfortable of the two possible options. The gemara uses this concept in other instances as well (see Yevamos 15a and 87b), and there are several occasions in which the commentators have similarly explained certain mitzvos as being tailored around the particular nature of human beings (a

prominent example is the halacha of eishes yefas to'ar).

The idea that the Torah is concerned with the nature and comfort of human beings, and that this at times affects halacha, is very relevant to Parshas Noach. The Torah repeats (9:1 and 9:7) the mitzvah of p'ru ur'vu, the very first mitzvah in the Torah. The gemara (Yevamos 65b) explains that while men are obligated to perform this mitzvah, women are exempt. While the gemara quotes pesukim to show that this is the case, it is difficult to understand the reason behind this difference. The Meshech Chochmah accounts for this difference through the concept of deracheha darchei noam. Women, unlike men, have a tremendous amount of physical pain and even danger during childbirth. Because the Torah is sensitive to this, it does not demand that women undergo this experience.

This explanation, Meshech Chochma points out, can be seen in the textual proofs that the gemara uses to show that p'ru ur'vu is only obligatory for men. The gemara suggests that when Hashem blesses Yaakov and tells him to have children, He uses the phrase p'rei ur'vei, in the singular, to hint that the commandment applies only to men and not to women. However, this just begs the question; when Hashem originally told Adam and Chava p'ru ur'vu, he used the plural! Shouldn't this indicate that the mitzvah in fact applies to both men and women? The Meshech Chochma's explanation as to why only men are obligated in this mitzvah solves the problem. When Hashem originally used the term p'ru ur'vu, He was in fact addressing both Adam and Chava. That was before they sinned. The sin is the whole reason that women have pain and danger during childbirth. Because at that time this element of childbirth did not exist, women were in fact obligated. Later, Hashem used the singular form, when addressing Yaakov, because the elements of pain and danger at that time did exist for women in childbirth, and Hashem therefore gave them a dispensation from the mitzvah. (The fact that our parsha uses the plural form, p'ru ur'vu, and it is of course after the sin of Adam and Chava, does not ruin this solution. Hashem is addressing Noach and his sons (see 9:1), and the plural form is therefore in order.)

From: RABBI JONATHAN SCHWARTZ jschwartz@ymail.yu.edu
To: chabura613@hotmail.com

Internet Chaburah -- Parshas Noach

Prologue: Could any Mitzva make more sense?

Fundamental to our religion is the idea that murder is wrong. It is understood, recognized and unchallenged. In fact, if we travel around the world, the prevailing opinion among those cultures and religions in the world that are communal in nature wed meet would all agree that murder is wrong. It is common sense. If we are to live together we cannot merely allow the mighty to rule on the basis of murder or its threat. Yet, when offering the commandment that murder is wrong, Hashem offers a reason: Kee Btzelem Elokim Asa Es HaAdam Why?

Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky offered an interesting insight. Man, by his nature, is prone to weakness. The weaknesses of pride, of desire, of guilt and of greed are but a few reasons that can cloud mans ability to judge and argue a particular case. Should a need arise, man might be able to be Moreh Heter to himself in order to allow anything. Thus, Hashem explained the reasons for the most sensible Mitzvot, demonstrating the real reason for keeping it that it is the command and desire of Hashem and should be honored LKavod Hashem.

This weeks Chaburah examines another example of Kavod Shomayim, perhaps in one of the more interesting areas of leisure. It is entitled:

Peaceful Promises??: The Rainbow in the Waterfall

The Talmud (Chagigah 16a) notes that one who does not show proper deference to Kavod Hashem is in the category of those for whom it would have been better if they had not been created. Rav Abba explains that this text refers to one who gazes at rainbows. The Gemara later notes that one who gazes at three things causes his eyesight to go bad. The first is the gazer at rainbows (the other two are gazing at the Nasi and the Kohanim during Duchaning). But why is it so bad to gaze at rainbows?

The Gemara in Berachos (59a) notes that when one sees a rainbow he must bow on his hands and knees. The Gemara notes that when Rav Yehoshua Ben Levi did so in Bavel, they made fun of him and encouraged him to make a Beracha instead. How one is supposed to be able to make a Beracha today proves to be difficult in light of the earlier Gemara. If one is not allowed to gaze at the rainbow, how is he to see it and recite a Beracha?

The Tur and Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 229) specify that the reference to gazing at a rainbow is literally to gazing. Mere looking is ok. Tosfos Rid (to Chagigah 16a) explains th at the act of gazing (or staring) cheapens that which the gazer stares at. And in the same manner that the person who gazes at the rainbow becomes convinced that he understands and sees each color separately and distinctly but in reality does not, so too, does he think he understands the ways of Hashem and does not. Thus, gazing is a lack of respect for Kavod Hashem while reciting a Beracha, and the necessary looking associated with it, is clearly permissible (See Mogen Avraham 229:1).

This leads one to an interesting question regarding the viewing of a rainbow. If one sees a rainbow in the water of the falls at Niagra or in a puddle, a) is he allowed to gaze upon it and b) does he make a Beracha when looking? Since the actual rainbow is the one that one is not allowed to stare at for fear of disrespecting Kavod Hashem (see Aruch HaShulchan 229:1 -2), does that mean that a reflection in water is the same or different?

The Gemara in Nedarim (9b) tells the story of a young man who became a Nazir during the days of Shimon Hatzaddik because he saw his image in the water and realized that he had become haughty. Based upon this text, it would seem that even a reflection in water would make one susceptible to lack of Kavod Hashem and thus one should not gaze into reflected rainbows as well. In fact, Rav Chaim Palagi (Ruach Chaim, Orach Chaim, 229:2) utilized this text and was Misupak about the situation. Rav Betzalel Stern (Shut BTzel Hachochma II:18) felt that the Safek was unfounded in that the fear of the young Nazir was improper Hirhur associated with gazing. In matters of Kavod Shomayim, he felt that here would be improper respect only if one looked at the actual rainbow but not at the reflection. The Yalkut HaGershuni (Orach Chaim 229:1) adds that one cannot make a Beracha if one sees a rainbows reflection because by definition the seeing of refracted light, in his opinion, is a sign that the main rainbow is no longer in that location. Still he does not allow the staring at the refracted light in the waters. Rav Stern agrees with him on both fronts, He does not allow the recitation of the Beracha on such a rainbow but does not allow the gazer to gaze as well.

L'Halacha, Maran Harav Hershel Schachter Shlita took the position that rainbows reflected in the waters of Niagara Falls and other puddles did not have the status of Keshet both in terms of Beracha and for Histakloot (staring). He felt that the sight of light bouncing off water was clearly not the concept of Keshet referred to in the Parsha or the Gemara.

Battla news Mazal Tov to the Pearlman, Lowensteiner, Schwartz and Rabinowitz families upon the recent marriage of Zvi and Amy. Mazal Tov to Mr. and Mrs. Shai Stern and family upon the recent birth of a baby boy. Mazal Tov to Mr. and Mrs. Elisha Graff and family upon the recent birth of a baby girl.

From: RABBI MORDECHAI KAMENETZKY rmk@torah.org
To: drasha@torah.org

Parshas Noach -- Window to the World

Did you ever stop to imagine what life was like inside of Noah's ark? There were three floors; the middle floor was filled with a collection of the world's animals wild, domestic, and otherwise. Birds and critters of all shapes and sizes, vermin and an endless potpourri of creepy crawlers whose pesky descendants bear witness to their survival during that tempestuous period.

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

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

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

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

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

Sometimes when we are locked in our little boxes, we, too, need a window. When we think our world is crumbling and that we are doomed to a fate that is too difficult to bear, Hashem tells us to make a window. Sometimes, in our frustrations we have to look across the globe, or even across the river to know that despite our difficulties, others must endure a more difficult fate. And when we realize that they can endure, whether it is an Og holding on the back of the ark, or struggling with those lost amongst the ruins, we can remember that life inside the ark is not so bad after all. Good Shabbos 1 2001 Bentsh Press

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

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From: Ohr Somayach[SMTP:ohr@ohr.edu] To: weekly@ohr.edu Subject: Torah Weekly - Noach
A WINDOW ON THE WORLD

A window you shall make for the ark... (6:16)

As any real estate agent will tell you, the three fundamentals of real estate are: Location, location, location. One of the things you can't change about a property is the view. A room with a view is a precious jewel. When G-d instructed Noah to build the ark, He included specific instructions to include a tzohar. Tzohar has two possible meanings. It can mean either a precious stone or a window. A precious stone might fill the ark with a beautiful light as the sun's rays were refracted, bathing the inside of the ark with a multicolored glow. A precious stone is to let the light in. A window is to look out. But what were they supposed to look out at? An empty waterscape of gray in every direction?

G-d wanted Noah to have a window on the world to see the world's destruction and have a feeling of pity.

In life, it's easy to think if I'm okay - the world's okay. Life's biggest jewel is to look out of our own arks and take up the yoke and the heartaches of others.

Sources: Rashi, Rabbi Rafael Stephansky
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From: Jeffrey Gross[SMTP:jgross@torah.org] Subject: Weekly Halacha - Parshas Noach
Weekly-halacha for 5762

Selected Halachos Relating to Pars has Noach
By RABBI DONIEL NEUSTADT Rav of Young Israel of Cleveland Heights A discussion of Halachic topics. For final rulings, consult your Rav.

LIGHTING THE SHABBOS CANDLES: WHOSE OBLIGATION IS IT?

The obligation to light Shabbos candles rests equally on all members of a household. Nevertheless, our Sages established that it is the wife's responsibility to do the actual lighting. One of the reasons given(1) is that candle-lighting atones for Chavah's part in the sin of the eitz ha-da'as (Tree of Knowledge). Chavah caused Adam to eat of the forbidden fruit for which mankind was punished by losing its immortality. Since Chavah "extinguished the candle of the world,(2)" it is the woman who sets aright Chavah's misdeed by assuming the obligation of lighting candles for her household(3). Consequently:

Even if a husband demands that he lights the candles, the wife has the right to protest and prevent him from doing so(4). It is recommended, though, that the husband take part in the mitzvah by lighting and quickly extinguishing the candle wicks, which makes them easier to light(5). If candles are lit in other rooms in addition to the eating area(6), it is the husband who lights them(7).

If one has no wife, or if he sees that his wife is running late and will be unable to light on time, then he should light the candles with the blessing(8).

If one's wife is not home for Shabbos, it is preferable that the

husband himself light candles and not one of the daughters(9). If, however, a daughter who is over twelve years old lights for him, he fulfills the mitzvah through her lighting. One cannot, however, fulfill his obligation by having a daughter under twelve light candles for him(10).

In the event that a brother and sister are at home without their parents, it is preferable that the sister light the candles(11).

Years ago, it was customary for a woman who gave birth not to light candles on the first Friday night after giving birth. For that one Shabbos, candles were lit by the husband(12). Several reasons are offered in explanation of this custom, but apparently the main concern was that women were too weak after childbirth to get out of bed and light candles(13). In view of the improved health conditions prevalent nowadays, many poskim agree that the custom is no longer valid and the wife should light candles as she does every Friday night(14).

ELECTRIC SHABBOS CANDLES: ARE THEY PERMITTED?

QUESTION: How has electrical lighting affected the traditional way of lighting Shabbos candles?

DISCUSSION: The universal use of electric lights has had a twofold effect on the mitzvah of Shabbos candles. On the one hand, it has made it easier to perform. On the other hand, it has introduced several halachic questions. Let us explain:

At the time that electricity became commonplace, the poskim debated whether the mitzvah of lighting Shabbos candles could be fulfilled by turning on electric lights. There were three different opinions: 1) It is permissible to use electricity for Shabbos candles and the proper blessing may be recited(15); 2) It is not proper to use electric lights for this mitzvah(16); 3) It is permissible to use electrical lights, but the blessing should not be recited over them(17). Since there is no final and definitive ruling on this issue, we must look at the prevailing custom, which - upon reflection - is a compromise among the three views:

Although the blessing is recited over the traditional candles or oil-based lights that are lit in the area where the Friday night meal will be eaten, we nevertheless rely on electricity for the other part of the mitzvah of Shabbos candles. The halachah clearly states that one is obligated to have light in any room that will be used on Friday night(18). Our Sages instituted this so that household members would be able to safely navigate in the house without fear of injury that would disrupt the harmony of Shabbos. Today, most homes rely on some electrical source (night-light, bathroom-light, etc.) to illuminate the areas in which they will find themselves on Friday night. Thus, they fulfill this part of the mitzvah(19).

The appropriate procedure, then, is as follows. When the wife is ready to light candles in the dining room, all the electrical lights which will be used on Friday night should be shut off. The lights which are going to be used on Shabbos should then be turned on, with the intention that they are being turned on for the sake of the mitzvah of Shabbos candles. The candles should then be lit and the blessing recited over all the lights in the house, both electrical and otherwise. In this manner, one fulfills the mitzvah according to all views.

In a situation where using candles would be difficult or dangerous, such as in a hospital, the poskim agree that one should rely on the electric lights for Shabbos candles. They should be turned off and then turned on again for the sake of the mitzvah(20). Whether a blessing is recited depends on views 1 and 3 quoted above(21). No clear-cut custom exists and one should follow his rav's directives.

Students residing in a dormitory or guests staying at a hotel are obligated to light Shabbos candles. Even if they light candles in the dining hall, they are still required to light in the area where they sleep. Since it is considered unsafe, however, to allow

candles to burn in a dormitory or in a hotel room, we must rely on the electric lights to fulfill that part of the mitzvah. A small light should, therefore, be turned off and on in honor of Shabbos before the arrival of the Shabbos. A blessing, however, should not be made, since the blessing is recited over the candles which are lit in the main dining room.

Shabbos guests staying at another person's home can technically fulfill the mitzvah through the lighting of their hosts. Even though they do not need to light a special candle of their own, it has nevertheless become customary that everyone lights their own candles. Since the guests are required to have some light in their sleeping area, however, the proper procedure for them is as follows: Light an electric light in or near their sleeping quarters, proceed quickly to the dining room and light candles, and allow the blessing to apply to both acts of lighting(22).

An additional issue concerning electricity and Shabbos candles is the concern of some poskim(23) whether it is permitted to light candles with a blessing when the electric lights are on, since in reality one is not adding any light to the room. Although some poskim defend our practice(24), it is best to shut off the lights in the room before the candles are lit. They should then be turned on by the husband after the candles have been lit by the wife but before she recites the blessing(25). Alternatively, the wife can do both, but she must turn the lights on first and then light the candles(26).

FOOTNOTES:

1 Tur O.C. 263. 2 This is how the Midrash (Tanchumah, Metzora 9) refers to Adam. 3 Some families have the custom that all the women in the household light candles and recite a blessing over them --Aruch ha-Shulchan 263:7. This was also the custom in the home of the Brisker Rav, as reported by his son Harav D. Soloveitchik (quoted in Az Nidberu 6:68). 4 Aruch ha-Shulchan 263:7. 5 Mishnah Berurah 263:12; 264:28. 6 See follow-up discussion for explanation of why candles [or electric lights] need to be lit in other rooms. 7 Shulchan Aruch Harav 263:5; Ketzos ha-Shulchan 74 (Badei ha-Shulchan 11). See also Beur Halachah 263:6. 8 Mishnah Berurah 262:11. 9 Oral ruling by Harav M. Feinstein (quoted in The Radiance of Shabbos, pg. 7); Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 43 note 46. 10 Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 43:7. 11 Harav S.Z. Auerbach (quoted in Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 45 note 34). 12 Mishnah Berurah 263:11. 13 See Toras Shabbos 263:4; Tehilah l'David 88:3; Aruch ha-Shulchan 263:7; Hagahos Imrei Baruch 263:6. 14 Oral ruling by Harav M. Feinstein (quoted in The Radiance of Shabbos, pg. 7). 15 Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 43:9. 16 Teshuvos Beis Yitzchak Y.D. 120; Machaze Avraham 41; Melamed Leho'il 47; Harav Y.Y. Henkin (Eidus Yisrael, pg. 122). 17 Teshuvos Levushei Mordechai O.C. 3:59; Maharshag 2:107; Pekudas Elazer 22; Tchebener Rav (quoted in Shraga ha-Meir 5:11). 18 Harav Tzvi 2:114 quoting the Rogatchover Gaon; Mishpatei Uziel O.C. 1:7; Harav M. Feinstein (oral ruling quoted in The Radiance of Shabbos, 2, note 26); Harav S.Z. Auerbach (quoted in Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 43 note 22) maintains that a blessing could be made over a flashlight but not over other lights. 19 Mishnah Berurah 263:2,29,31. 20 Harav Y.Y. Weiss (Kol ha-Torah, vol. 42, pg. 14 and pg. 36). 21 Rama O.C. 263:4 concerning candles; Harav M. Feinstein (quoted in Teshuvos v'Hanhagos 2:157) concerning electricity. 22 Harav A. Kotler (quoted in Kochvei Yitzchak 1:2) ruled that a woman who gave birth in the hospital may light electric candles with a blessing. Harav M. Feinstein (ibid.) rules that no blessing should be recited. 23 Harav Y. Kamenetsky recommended this procedure for hotel guests as well--see Ko Somar l'Beis Yaakov pg. 50. 24 Igros Moshe O.C. 5:20-30; Harav S.Z. Auerbach (Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 43: note 166, 171); Az Nidberu 1:79; 3:12. 25 See responsum of Harav Y. Halberstam (Kloizenberger Rebbe) in Pnei Shabbos 263. 26 Custom at the home of Harav Y. Kamenetsky (Ko Somar l'Beis Yaakov pg. 50). Harav S.Z. Auerbach (after his wife's passing) turned off the lights, lit the candles and then turned on the lights, so that the blessing is said on both sources of energy (reported by his grandson in Kol ha-Torah vol. 40, pg. 16). 27 Custom at the home of Harav M. Feinstein (The Radiance of Shabbos pg. 20). THIS ISSUE IS SPONSORED IN HONOR of the wedding of YITZIE NEWMAN OF BROOKLYN, NEW YORK to SHOSHANA GROSS OF CLEVELAND, OHIO Oct. 17, 2001/1 Marcheshvan, 5762 by their parents DR. AND MRS. JEFFREY GROSS Weekly-Halacha, Copyright 1 2001 by Rabbi Neustadt, Dr. Jeffrey Gross and Torah.org. The author, Rabbi Neustadt, is the principal of Yavne Teachers' College in Cleveland, Ohio. He is also the Magid Shiur of a daily Mishna Berurah class at Congregation Shomre Shabbos. The Weekly-Halacha Series is distributed L'zchus Doniel Meir ben Hinda. Weekly sponsorships are available - please mail to jgross@torah.org . Torah.org depends upon your support. Please visit <http://torah.org/support/> or write to dedications@torah.org or donations@torah.org . Thank you! Torah.org: The Judaism Site www.torah.org/ 17 Warren Road, Suite 2B Baltimore, MD 21208

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Thursday October 18, 2001

SHABBAT SHALOM: A TOWERING HUMILITY

BY RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

(October 18) PARSHAT NOAH (Genesis 6:9 -11:32)

"And the whole earth was one of language and of uniform words." (Genesis 11:1)

What is the meaning of the Tower of Babel? What place does this tale of global dispersion have in the Bible of the Children of Israel? I would insist that our Bible opens with the creation of the world in order to establish our God as Lord of the entire universe, and that His ultimate concern is for the eventual perfection of all its creatures.

As Rav J.B. Soloveitchik often commented, the Almighty tried to give His Divine charge to all of humanity, first to Adam with the command to refrain from eating the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, and then to Noah - the second Adam - with the laws against bloodshed and immorality (Genesis 9:4-7).

Unfortunately, it was not until the advent of the remarkable Abraham 20 generations after Creation that God entered into a covenant with an individual and his descendants, the nation of Israel. But even then, the Almighty did not abandon the universal vision of human perfection. From the very beginning, God presents His mission to Abraham: "All the families of the earth shall be blessed through you." (Genesis 12:3)

Indeed, the biblical portions dealing with Adam and Noah foreshadow events in the life of Abraham, emphasizing the parallels between these three Divinely chosen leaders. Adam and Noah each have three sons from whom humanity sprung, just as the nation of Israel develops from Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. There were 70 Noahide heads-of-families from whom the world regenerated after the Flood (Genesis 10:32), paralleling the 70 Jacobite souls who went down to Egypt, and from whom the nation of Israel emerged.

And the fundamental blessings bestowed by God upon Adam, Noah and each of the patriarchs all feature fruitfulness and filling the land (Genesis 1:25, 9:1, 17:6-8). Hence, Israel serves as a microcosm for the world, having been chosen by God as the instrument through which the message of ethical monotheism will ultimately be accepted by the world.

This parallelism between Israel and the world finds a remarkable allusion in the story of Babel. Noah has died and Abraham has not yet been born; the verdict of utter hopelessness for the success of a post-Noah society has not yet been handed down.

"The entire earth had one language and uniform words" (Safah ahat, dvarim ahadim, Genesis 11:1) - a description resonating with our prophetic vision where "The Lord will be King over the entire earth, and on that day the Lord will be one, His Name will be one" (Zecharia 14:9).

However, this united humanity harbored a dreadful fear that it would again be scattered by flood.

In order to prevent this, they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower, whose tops shall reach the heavens." (Genesis 11:4) This is certainly reminiscent of our Jewish dream of the holy city Jerusalem, with its tower-sanctuary reaching to the heavens in order to ensure Israel's eternity and express Israel's mission; it even brings to mind Jacob's dream at Bet-El (lit. House of God), where he saw a ladder whose top reached heavenwards (Genesis 28:12).

There is, however, one major flaw in their goal, an improper mindset which turns the entire Tower project into an act of hubris:

their purpose in construction is to "make for ourselves a name" (Genesis 11:4) - to establish skyscraper symbolizing materialistic power.

Hence the Almighty decides to "confuse their speech, so that one person will not understand (shema) the language of the other" (Genesis 11:7), because such a punishment will fit the crime; a totalitarian state united in order to establish a collective name has neither the energy nor the motivation to empathize with or sensitively internalize anyone's individual needs. And such an inhuman and godless society must be stopped before it does even greater damage.

Hence, "from this place, God scattered them over the face of the entire earth and they stopped building the city." (Genesis 11:8)

Is this not strongly reminiscent of the punishment in store for an errant Israel, which forsook God and humanity with its causeless hatred and arrogant pride, as a consequence of which the Almighty destroyed our Holy Temple and scattered us throughout the world?

However, unlike the peoples of Babel, the Israelites remained united with one sacred language and universal ideal despite our far-flung diaspora; indeed, from the midst of our exile, and within each of our diverse host nations, we shall return to God and his ethical teachings: "You shall seek from there the Lord your God and you shall find Him. Even if you are scattered from the ends of the heavens, from there will the Lord your God gather you and from there will He take you up. And He will bring you to the land which your fathers have inherited, and you shall inherit it." (Deuteronomy 4:29, 30:4,5)

The Israelis will right the wrong of the Tower of Babel. When we return to Israel and rebuild our Tower/Sanctuary, it will be for the sake of God and not for the sake of materialistic self-aggrandizement; it will serve as a meeting place for all nations in humanistic unity and not totalitarian uniformity, "when nation will not lift up sword against nation and humanity will not learn war anymore, and when all the nations will walk, each in the name of his god, and we will walk in the name of the Lord our God forever." (Micah 4:3,5)

"The remnant of Israel will not act callously, and the language of deception will not be found in their mouths. For then I will change the nations toward speech of purity for everyone to call on the name of God and to serve him shoulder to shoulder." (Zephania 3:13)

Shabbat Shalom

From: Yated USA[SMTp:yated-usa@ttec.com]

Yated Neeman USA Columns

INNER SERENITY

BY RAV NOCHUM EISENSTEIN

The yonah [dove] brought a plucked olive leaf in its mouth (Breishis 8:11). Noah employed a yonah to signal that the waters of the mabul had sufficiently receded for him and the teva's other denizens to exit. Rashi quotes a Midrash: the yonah stated that he preferred that his parnassa come from the hand of Hashem even if it is bitter as an olive, and not from the hand of a human being even if it is sweet as honey. We know that everything comes from Hashem's hand and that nothing comes from any other source. So what did the yonah mean? Rav Yehudah Halevi (1075-1140) alludes to the yonah in his famous Shabbos zemirah Yonah Matzah: the yonah found rest in it; and there shall rest the exhausted ones. Two points require explanation. One, where did the yonah find rest? Second, how is it possible for the exhausted ones to find rest in the same place as the yonah? Sociologists claim that exhaustion most often comes from

boredom and anxiety rather than from physical activity. There are of course physical activities that are strenuous and exhausting, but statistics show that people who are not engaged in these activities nevertheless experience the fatigue similar to their laboring counterparts. The experts have concluded that people who enjoy their work tend to tire less than those who find no satisfaction in their jobs. Studies show that lunch breaks and coffee breaks (where a worker's production actually stops) ultimately increase work force productivity. Nervousness and anxiety are also known to cause exhaustion. Draining energy from a person, they can leave him tired and almost motionless. They further deprive him of sleep, a very important source of rest. Often they interfere with a person's ability to concentrate, allowing unfinished work to accumulate. This causes frustration resulting in exhaustion. Motivated people, it seems, do not tire easily. Joyful activity does not cause exhaustion. We live in a world of cause and effect. We therefore tend to believe that our input and striving are what produce results. The reality is otherwise. A person's parnassa is decreed on Rosh Hashanah regardless of his endeavors. Nevertheless, as a result of the chet of Odom Harishon, a person is required to engage in activities that appear to bring parnassa. A person with a sense of emunah, however, recognizes that all of his endeavors are merely ceremonial. If it was decreed that he earn a certain amount of money, then regardless of what he does he will not earn more. A person's health is as well not in his hands; it is subject to Hashem's will. A person can take all the precautions and still become ill if that is what Hashem prescribed for him on Rosh Hashanah. On the other hand, those who lack emunah attribute all of their achievements to themselves. There are of course many levels of emuna. Rav Zundel Salant zt"l lived in dire poverty. He satisfied the requirement to earn a living by buying a lottery ticket. He contended that because Hashem can have him win and thereby provide him with a sufficient parnassa, he was not required to engage in any other activity. Those who are not on that level of emuna need do more. An in depth discussion and clarification on this subject can be found in the first volume of Rav E. E. Dessler's Michtav MiEliyahu. Realizing the potential trap of the cause and effect system, the yonah davened to Hashem to assist him in recognizing that He is the provider of our sustenance. Even in difficult times [this is the intention of the Midrash's reference to bitter as an olive], if a person can recognize that it is not due to his failure but rather due to the hand of Hashem, he can accept and survive it. If we fail to discern that everything comes from Hashem then it seems as though we are in control. This was the yonah's concern. He therefore asked Hashem to assist him in never diverting his attention from this notion. Thus the Midrash's reference to not from the hand of a human being even if it is as sweet as honey. This was the yonah's concern. Rav Yehudah Halevi sensed the frustration of our People. He felt the pulse of the wandering Jew, chased from country to country. To uplift the spirit of the golus Jew, he alluded to the yonah in his zemirah. Where the yonah found consolation in his strong sense of emuna, so can every Jew find consolation on Shabbos. Shabbos represents the apex of emuna. Hashem created the world in six days and rested on Shabbos. He is in total control. When Shabbos comes you should not think about your business; you should consider all of your affairs as if they have been completed (Rashi, Shemos 20: 9). How could the Torah command us to conduct ourselves in such a manner that counters human feeling? For example, if your assets are invested in the stock market, how can you distract yourself and remain calm all day Shabbos? Every person in his particular situation can be faced by his own challenges. The answer is in the emuna that radiates from Shabbos. Shabbos teaches us that Hashem,

and not we, are in control. All of our endeavors are but ceremonial. Bearing this in mind, why should we be nervous about any deal? Whatever He decreed on Rosh Hashanah will prevail. It is not in our hands; therefore we can totally remove our attention from all of these matters, at least for Shabbos. Those who are exhausted (because they think they are in control), and those who have anxieties (because things are not going their way), can find consolation from the same source as the yonah: emuna. The exhausted can find peace of mind by focusing on the theme that everything comes from Hashem. It is all His will and decree, and nothing can interfere with His plan. Serenity, then, can be acquired by properly observing Shabbos and absorbing its premiere lesson, emunah.

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 Bava Kama 79-85 Issue #12 Week of 27 Tishrei-3 Cheshvan 5762 /
 October 14-20, 2001 By Rabbi Mendel Weinbach, Dean, Ohr Somayach
 Institutions

CELEBRATION OR CONDOLENCE?

When the Prophet Yeshayahu foresaw the miraculous manner in which Jews would all eventually return to Eretz Yisrael, he compared it to the situation of a woman in childbirth: "Before the pains of birth come, she will release a male child" (66:7). This is an analogy to the return of Jews to their land, barren of them for so many years, now virtually giving birth to them without pain because the nations of the world will bring them back to her.

What does this passage have to do with the custom of Jews of Ashkenazi origin to make a shalom zachar party the Shabbat eve preceding the brit milah (circumcision) of a boy?

The answer lies in our gemara's account of an event involving the Sages Rav, Shmuel and Rabbi Asi who came together to a celebration called "Yeshua haben". Rashi explains this as a feast celebrating the redemption (yeshua) of the first born son (haben). Tosefot, however, cites Rabbeinu Tam who understands this term as a reference to the celebration made upon the birth of a son. He translates "Yeshua" not as redemption but as release, a reference to the release mentioned in the above prophecy of Yeshaya - a release of the child from the womb of his mother.

Exactly when this celebration takes place is not mentioned in Tosefot. Rabbi Moshe Isserlis (Rema) in Shulchan Aruch, Yore Deah (265:12), cites the opinion of the Terumat Hadeshen (269) that the celebration takes place "on the Shabbat eve after the birth of a son, when people come to visit the home of the newborn." This is what is called a "shalom zachar."

Several reasons are offered for the choice of this particular evening. The Terumat Hadeshen writes that this is the evening when all people are home and capable of making the visit. In the midrash there is an approach that circumcision is comparable to offering a sacrifice, and no sacrifice, an actual animal one or a virtual human one, can be considered fit as an offering to Hashem before experiencing the sanctity of one Shabbat. Then, too, there is the explanation of the Drisha that the visit to the home of the newborn is actually a condolence call to console the baby who mourns for the Torah knowledge he forgot.

This last explanation, based on a gemara (Mesechta Niddah 30b) which states that while yet in his mother's womb the baby is taught the entire Torah, and just as he enters the world an angel touches his mouth and causes him to forget it all, may serve as a response to the challenge presented to this entire concept of shalom zachar. Rabbi Yechezkel Landau, the rabbi of Prague and author of Responsa Noda Biyehuda, argues that this cannot be a celebration of the safe birth of the child as understood by Terumat Hadeshen, because we should then make a similar celebration for the birth of a girl. He therefore leans towards explaining the "Yeshua haben" in our gemara as the celebration (known in Sephardic circles as "brit Yitzchak") on the night before the brit milah.

But if we accept the aforementioned explanation regarding the condolences for loss of Torah, we can easily distinguish between the son who is obligated to study Torah and the daughter who is not.

Bava Kama 80a

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From: Zomet Institute[SMTP:zomet@netvision.net.il] Subject:
Shabbat-B'Shabbato: Noach 5762
Shabbat-B'Shabbato - Parshat Noach No 879: 3 Cheshvan 5762
(20 October 2001)

NOTES ON THE DAILY "DAF": A Physician's Permission to Heal
by RABBI YEHUDA SHAVIV

"From the House of Rabbi Yishmael, it is said: 'Let him provide the healing' [Shemot 21:19] - this shows that a physician has permission to heal" [Bava Kamma 85a]. Why is permission needed? Rashi explains, "We should not say, the Almighty struck him, and this physician is healing," as if the doctor is interfering with the will of the Almighty. It is interesting to note that this is derived from a verse which refers to one who struck a colleague, and this also includes the concept that "the Almighty struck him."

It is also interesting that the Rambam, who was a skilled doctor himself, does not mention this reference. This was noted by the Maharitz Chayot. The Torah Temima feels that according to the Rambam not only does a physician have permission to heal, it is a great mitzva to do so. This appears in his commentary on the Mishna, "A physician is required by law to heal a sick person from Bnei Yisrael. This is included in the verse, 'Return it to him' [Devarim 22:2]. His body is also included, in that if one sees another losing something and he can help, he must do so whether it costs him money or is based on his own knowledge." [Nedarim 4:4].

In his commentary on the Torah, the Tur explains that the rule "a physician has permission to heal" means that "he should not be afraid that he will kill the patient with a drink or a drug that he gives him." That is, the permission is meant to give the doctor confidence in his own actions. One might wonder if this also gives a physician immunity for any mistakes that he might make.

ABOUT AND BY THE COMMENTATORS: Rabbi Meir Halevi Abulafia -
The RAMA

by RABBI AMNON BAZAK

The first Mishna in Bava Batra discusses the proper thickness of a wall in a courtyard belonging to two partners. The answer depends on the material used to construct the wall. Using rough stone the required thickness is six tephachim, with carved stone it is five tephachim, and with bricks three is enough. The RAMA gives a source for this in this week's Torah portion. "Why should bricks be considered stronger than rough or carved stone? This can be seen from the generation of the Tower of Babel, who did not use stone but bricks. As is written, 'let us make bricks' [Bereishit 11:3], and it continues, 'The bricks were used for stone.' Thus we see that bricks are to be preferred." If the Tower of Babel was made of bricks, evidently this is the best material for construction.

The RAMA (1170-1244) lived in Toledano, Spain, and he was involved in many different kinds of creativity. The Ramban, who was younger than him, calls him "the chief of the leaders of Levi." He quotes a response of the RAMA, and then adds, "This reply was given by the great leader, who should be kissed, who gives true answers" [Bava Batra 33b]. His famous works include "Yad Rama" on Bava Batra and Sanhedrin, with novel and unique commentaries, and many interesting commentaries on the Talmud which are widely quoted by others.

The RAMA was also famous as the first one in Europe to argue against the Rambam's approach about revival of the dead and the next world. In a letter to the Ramban, he wrote: "When the book 'Mishna Torah' reached this land and I read the 'Sefer Hamada,' which discusses the disembodied status of the coming world, I found that I must defend the faith of Yisrael and the foundations of righteousness" [Igeret Kenaot, page 7]. In spite of this, the RAMA appreciated the Rambam very much, and even called him "the greatest sage of the generation." (To learn more about this, see the introduction by Rabbi Avraham Shoshana in "Innovations of the RAMA and the Techniques of the Early Sages," on the book of Gitin.)
