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KBY.org: Torat Yavneh Noach

An Ark of Chesed

Rosh Hayeshiva **Harav Chaim Yaakov Goldvicht, zt"l**

(from **Asufat Maarachot**, Bereishit vol. I)

The midrash (Tehillim #37) relates a fascinating dialogue between Avraham and Shem (Noach's son): Avraham asked Malki-Zedek (=Shem): How did you leave the ark? He said to him: Through the [merit of] tzedaka that we did. Avraham asked him: Was there tzedaka for you to do? Were there poor people there? Only Noach and his children were there, so with whom did you do tzedaka? Shem responded: To the wild animals, the beasts and the birds. We did not sleep the entire night, but rather we were feeding this one and that one. One time we were late [feeding the lion], and my father left injured.

Avraham's question, "How did you LEAVE the ark?" requires explanation? Did they need a merit to leave the ark and go out to a ruined and desolate world? Once they were saved from the wrath of the flood, obviously they would leave the confines of the ark! Chazal were alluding here to a deep and fundamental concept. "Leaving the ark" signifies the first step in building a renewed world after the flood. This was the meaning of Avraham's question to Shem, with what merit did you leave TO ESTABLISH A NEW WORLD?

Moreover, whereas even Adam did not succeed in building an enduring world, Noach and his children merited to establish a world which was granted a covenant of permanence, "I will confirm my covenant with you ... never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth." (Bereishit 9:11) Certainly, to build a world requires great merit, all-the-more-so a world of enduring nature! What gave this world a covenant of enduring existence, unlike the previous world that was destroyed?

Malki-Zedek's answer, "We performed chesed with the animals and birds," gave Avraham a new insight into the degree of dedication to chesed which is necessary for the creation to endure. For a full year Noach stood on-call to the various needs and demands of his many "guests." This was a year of total giving and self-sacrifice, which required absolute diligence and perfection, "ONE TIME we were late ..."

Noach and his children learned from this that G-d does not desire their existence alone, but only when it serves as a means to uphold and to elevate the creation in its entirety.

In this way, the ark served as a "Beit Midrash" for the study of chesed. In it they learned to share their confined space with others. In it they were trained consistently to dedicate themselves, with all their might, to others. In it they learned and were brought to understand that their lives are dependent on complete dedication to the mission of an enduring world, chesed. This is what Chazal taught: "Planted in the house of Hashem" (Tehillim 92:14) ... This refers to Noach, who G-d planted in the ark. (Bereishit Rabbah 26:2) The ark was not merely a means of salvation alone,

but rather a "House of G-d," a Beit Midrash of chesed. This lesson of chesed is what served to save him.

R. Shmuel b. Nachmani said, "Fortunate are the righteous who turn the attribute of justice into the attribute of mercy. Wherever it says "Elokim," it refers to the attribute of justice ... [but here] it says, "Elokim remembered Noach" (Bereishit 8:1). What did he remember about him? That he fed and sustained the animals all twelve months in the ark. (Bereishit Rabbah 33:3)

The chesed that Noach performed with the animals in the ark is what turned the attribute of justice that was aimed towards him into an attribute of mercy and grace. It was this lesson of chesed that inspired Avraham to embrace this trait, as the Midrash Tehillim concludes:

Avraham said [to himself]: These [people], had they not done chesed with the beasts, wild animals and birds would not have left from there, and because he delayed himself a little he received his "reward" and was injured. I, if I do chesed with people who are in the image and likeness of angels, certainly will be saved from harm. Immediately, "He planted an eshel [in Beer-sheva]" (Bereishit 21:33) -- eating, sleeping and lodging. In the ark the spiritual character of Noach and his children was shaped and stamped with the seal of chesed, and in this way they became qualified to be the seed of a renewed world. Even Avraham's renown trait of chesed found its roots and sprung forth from this "Beit Midrash" of chesed!

From: ravfrand-owner@torah.org on behalf of **Rabbi Yissocher Frand** [ryfrand@torah.org] Sent: Thursday, October 26, 2006 8:52 PM To: ravfrand@torah.org Subject: Rabbi Frand on Parshas Noach

"RavFrاند" List - Rabbi Frand on Parshas Noach

Free Gifts for People Who Find Favor

I would like to begin with an interesting observation from the end of last week's parsha, Parshas Bereshis. The pasuk says, "And Hashem reconsidered having made Man on earth, and He had heartfelt sadness. And Hashem said, 'I will blot out Man whom I created from the face of the ground -- from man to animal to creeping things, and to birds of the sky; for I have reconsidered My having made them.'" [Bereshis 6:6-7]

Man had deteriorated to the extent that G-d, as it were, regretted having made them and He therefore decided to wipe out the world -- the subject of this week's parsha. Parshas Bereshis ends with the words "And Noach found chen [favor] in the eyes of Hashem." [Bereshis 6:8]

The Or HaChaim writes that Noach's "finding of favor" was not because of his deeds. The fact that he was a Tzadik would not have saved him by itself. G-d had full regret over the entire creation of the world. When G-d decides to destroy, He destroys the righteous along with the wicked. Noach was saved because of the attribute of 'chen' that Noach found in G-d's Eyes. The Or HaChaim interprets the word 'chen' as coming from the word 'chinam' [free]. This was a gift, so to speak, from G-d to Noach -- a "Get out of Destruction FREE Card".

The Or HaChaim points out that there are certain mitzvos whose function is to bring 'chen' upon man. Such mitzvos endear us to G-d. Of course, all mitzvos are important, but certain mitzvos have this special endearing quality. When a person performs such mitzvos, the Almighty grants him that which he may not deserve, simply because he has "pressed the right button", so to speak.

L'Hadvil, sometimes certain of our children misbehave. We might be angry with them, but they know how to press our right buttons. They somehow manage to do the right thing to "make it up". Therefore, we look the other way and don't mete out the punishment the child really deserves.

Sometimes we notice that certain people are very successful. We ask ourselves how that person merits such Divine beneficence. It does not seem to make sense. We know full well that there are greater Tzadikim out there who are not as successful. Sometimes the answer is that the person has found favor in the Eyes of Hashem. He may be performing those one or

two mitzvos that have this magical power of inspiring "Free Gifts" (Matnas Chinom) from the Master of the World.

Of course, we would all like to know, which these two or three mitzvos are. The Or HaChaim states that G-d has never revealed which these "special mitzvos" are. The reason is obvious. If the identity of these mitzvos were known, everyone would rush to do (just) these mitzvos! However, Noach — wittingly or unwittingly — did observe these mitzvos, and that was the "power" by which he merited salvation for himself and his family.

Noach did something that ingratiated himself to the Almighty. In spite of the fact that the Almighty was in a "mood" to wipe out the entire planet, Noach found favor in His Eyes. The Or HaChaim points out that the letters of Noach's name (reversed) even spell the word 'chen' [favor].

Unfortunately, we do not know which these two or three mitzvos are that grant us special favor. But if we perform all the mitzvos, we can obviously be guaranteed that we are including this select category of mitzvos as well!

One Cannot Sell That Which He Does Not Own

Noach was commanded: "Make for yourself an Ark of gopher wood; make the Ark with compartments, and cover it inside and out with pitch." [Bereshis 6:14]. Rashi comments: "G-d has many ways to bring about salvation. Why then did G-d trouble Noach with the tedious and complicated building of the Ark?"

We can imagine many other "easier" ways in which G-d could have saved Noach. Certainly the Almighty Himself could have figured out a simpler rescue scenario that the multi-year task of building a huge floating vessel.

The Ramba"n points out that despite the use of a floating vessel, the rescue was still miraculous. Neither the huge dimensions of the multi-story Ark, nor even the largest air-craft carrier in the world could hold two of every animal that exists in the world (and food to feed them). After all the sweat and toil, it was still a miraculous salvation. So what was the point of going through all the effort in the first place? Why wasn't the miracle performed with a small raft or something even smaller? The Ramba"n explains that it HaShem's way is to "minimize the super-natural", so that when we read of miraculous occurrences, they may sound — at first blush — naturally plausible. G-d does not wish for the miracle to appear as glaring as it really is.

Rashi explains that the reason why the Almighty required Noach to engage in construction of an Ark for 120 years prior to the flood was so that the people of the generation would see, and be given warning that their doom was imminent. This was an opportunity to warn the masses to repent. Noach had 120 years to try to influence his neighbors to mend their ways so that the Ark would not be necessary.

Noach's efforts in this regard were totally fruitless. Other than his immediate family, no one took heed of his warnings.

Let us consider: Noach was the first outreach professional in the history of the world. That was his job. He knew the truth. He knew what G-d wanted. The entire world was going down the wrong path, and he worked for 120 years to try to convince people of the error of their ways.

Now consider a modern day Kiruv organization. Like any organization, they have lay leadership and they have a Board of Directors. They raise money. They have a payroll. They need to pay for overhead, phone bills, fax machines, office space, and the whole works. Now imagine after 5 years, at a Board of Directors meeting, the Chairman of the Board asks the paid Kiruv worker, "Nu, over these past 5 years, how many people have you influenced to become religious? How many people started keeping kosher?"

The employee responds, "None!"

The lay leaders are incredulous. "After five years, with a budget of \$100,000 per year, you have nothing to show for it? Okay. We'll give you 5 more years..."

After five more years and another \$500,000 (and perhaps more, with salary increases), they ask the same question at another meeting. Again the

answer is, no one has been influenced to become more religious from all their outreach efforts.

Noach would not have lasted. He was an abysmal failure. He didn't help even one person turn towards G-d in 120 years!

All facetiousness aside, what is the meaning of all this? Noach was Tamim [pure]. He was a Tzadik [righteous]. He was a wonderful person. The nature of the world is that such people do have an influence and impact. Why was Noach so unsuccessful in his mission?

I saw an interesting observation from Rav Mordechai Kamenetsky. We learn: "Noach, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him, went into the Ark because of the waters of the Flood" [Bereshis 7:6]. Rashi comments on the words "because of the waters of the Flood" that Noach was a man of little faith. He believed but did not fully believe that the Flood would ever come. He therefore did not enter the Ark until the waters actually forced him in.

[This Rashi is not to be taken at face value. Noach was a great believer — certainly a far greater believer than most of us — and it does not behoove us to glibly quote the literal interpretation of Rashi's words that Noach was a man of little faith.]

According to Noach's spiritual level, he demonstrated some small aspect of lack of faith. At some level, he did not believe it was going to happen. Even after it started raining, he hesitated entering the Ark. Perhaps even as the water level rose, Noach maintained: "this is just a passing shower". Finally, when the water reached his ankles he told his family, "I think it's time to go into the boat."

Perhaps his doubt was out of noble reasons. Perhaps he believed that G-d's compassion would not allow Him to destroy the world. Perhaps he believed that the people would eventually repent. For whatever reason, in his heart of hearts, there was something lacking in Noach's belief. He simply was not completely convinced that it would actually happen.

This explains why, during 120 years, Noach was not able to influence anyone. The only way a person can be successful in outreach is to be totally convinced in the "product" that he is "selling". A person must believe to his core that Torah is the Truth, if he is to help others see the benefits of a Torah life style. Someone who has his own doubts will not be able to have an effect on other people. One cannot sell that which he does not own.

Someone who wants to "sell" Emunah [belief], Yiddishkeit [Judaism], Torah — in fact, someone who wants to sell anything — must fully believe in his product. Those who are successful in Kiruv are successful to a large extent because of how impressed people are with the outreach worker's dedication, self-sacrifice, and personal conviction.

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These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape # 521, The Ben Noach & the Nectarine. 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.

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**Rabbi Mayer Twersky -
The Waters of Apathy**

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Rabbi Mayer Twersky The Waters of Apathy

"Ki mei Noach zos li...For [like] the waters of Noach shall this be to me" (Isaiah 54:9).

The verse in Yeshaya refers to the Deluge as "mei Noach" (the waters of Noach). In light of the fact that the deluge erased all of mankind save Noach and his family, this is hardly a complimentary association. In fact, according to the Zohar Hakadosh, this verse issues a stunning indictment of Noach. When Hakadosh Baruch Hu informed Noach of the impending destruction of the world, Noach should have prayed. The verse in Yeshaya indicts Noach for his inaction and apathy by referring to the Deluge as mei Noach.

Concern for one's fellow man is a universal obligation. Noach, after all, was a ben Noach (Noachite).

The obligation for concern runs even deeper for Jews vis-à-vis each other.

The Torah mandates mutual responsibility and interdependence amongst Jews - kol Yisroel areivim ze bozeh; Jews exist symbiotically. We are not merely responsible for each other (arev in the sense of guarantor); we are "mixed up with each other", symbiotically intertwined (arev in the sense of mixture).

This obligation clearly extends beyond prayer. It entails teaching, reaching out, philanthropy, acts of kindness, etc. - anything which helps to foster Torah observance for every Jew.

We, as Jews, have always desperately needed each other. This existential truth is more relevant than ever today when we are ravaged by assimilation. The rate of intermarriage, rachmana litzlan, is, at least, fifty percent. An all-too small minority of Jewish children receive a Torah education. Even in Torah observant circles the need is great. "Inreach" ought to be a priority. Sadly, amidst unprecedented affluence, poverty - even dire poverty - persists. The list goes on and on.

There is no question that there are virtually countless causes which need our involvement and/or financial support. There is no question that there are virtually countless avenues (outreach, "inreach", education, strengthening our shuls, chessed, philanthropy...) for fulfilling the mandate of kol Yisroel areivim. The question is if every one of us, in accordance with his/her individual talents and resources, is fulfilling that mandate. To do less rachmana litzlan would invite the indictment of mei Noach.

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From: owner-weeklydt@torahweb2.org on behalf of torahweb@torahweb.org Sent: Thursday, October 26, 2006 12:55 PM To: weeklydt@torahweb2.org Subject: Rabbi Dr. Abraham J. Twerski - Shabbos - the Holiness of Time the HTML version of this dvar Torah can be viewed at: http://www.torahweb.org/torah/special/2006/dtwe_shabbos.html

The following is a chapter from the forthcoming book by Rabbi Dr. Twerski, "SIMCHAH-Not Just Happiness", to be published by Mesorah Publications

Rabbi Dr. Abraham J. Twerski
Shabbos - The Holiness of Time

We exist in time and in space. Our space is expandable. We can acquire more space by purchasing it or by seizing it. Our time is not expandable. If we have genes of longevity, we may live to a ripe old age, but we cannot acquire more time, either by money or by force, the way we can acquire more space. Logic tells us that time should be the more valuable of the two, yet people protect their space while they often waste time.

Yiddishkeit values time above space. The first instance of kedushah (holiness) in the Torah is not of space. At creation, Hashem's presence was the same everywhere. It was not until the Israelites erred with the worship of the Golden Calf that Hashem commanded the construction of the mishkan (tabernacle), and the immanent presence of Hashem was restricted to a circumscribed space. But at the very end of creation,

time was hallowed. "And Hashem blessed the seventh day and sanctified it" (Genesis 2:3).

The sanctity of time permeates Yiddishkeit. In addition to Shabbos, the festivals are holy: "He sanctifies Israel and the zemanim (festivals, lit. "times"). Our daily prayers are organized according to time: shacharis in the morning, minchah in the afternoon, maariv in the evening. Every four weeks we recite aah, prayer to inaugurate and bless the coming month. We celebrate the new month with hallel, singing the praises of Hashem in gratitude just as we do for His great wonders, to show our appreciation of time.

"They shall rejoice in Your kingship, those who observe Shabbos and call it a delight. The people that sanctify Shabbos-they will be satisfied and delighted from Your goodness (Shabbos prayers). Yiddishkeit values time and finds simchah in time. How different from the secular world that develops and uses time-saving devices, as if they valued time, and then squanders the saved time on inane pastimes. How paradoxical that people can seek happiness in "fun," by killing time! It is noteworthy that there is no word in Hebrew for fun, because the concept of fun-purposeless activity (e.g. Why? For the fun in it)-is alien to Yiddishkeit. One cannot attain happiness by destroying the most valuable commodity which a human being has: time.

"They shall rejoice in Your kingship, those who observe Shabbos and call it a delight." Shabbos is an appreciation of time and a key to simchah.

The secular world, too, has a day of rest. The Midrash states that when Moses was in the good graces of Pharaoh, he suggested that the Israelite slaves be given a day of rest so that they could work better for the next six days. This kind of rest day, to restore one's energies so that one can be more productive in the following days, makes the day of rest subordinate to the work week. This is not Shabbos. Hashem's "resting" on the seventh day was not because He was exhausted. It was because creation had come to a completion in six days, but was yet without a goal and purpose. The seventh day was "sanctified and blessed" by Hashem as being the goal of creation. The work week is subordinate to Shabbos.

The Torah states that man was the last of Hashem's creations, and as we have seen, man was created in an incomplete state and assigned the task of developing himself into the Divine concept of what man should be. He was given the charge to subdue and dominate the land. However, he was to do this as man, not like the wild beasts that dominate the jungle. Six days are to dominate the world, and the seventh day is for man to become master over himself. It is noteworthy that Adam was not given fire until after he had experienced Shabbos (which is why we recite the blessing for fire at havdalah on Shabbos night). Man could not be trusted with the potentially destructive power of fire until he was able to become spiritual and achieve control over himself.

That is the purpose of Shabbos, a blessed and holy day on which a person can elevate oneself spiritually and achieve self-fulfillment. Inasmuch as self-fulfillment is a requisite for simchah, Shabbos is a day of simchah.

Hashem said to Moses, "I have a unique gift in My treasury that I wish to give to the Children of Israel. Its name is Shabbos. Inform them of this". Shabbos is indeed a unique Divine gift.

It is of interest that the mitzvah of Shabbos was not given at Sinai, but a bit earlier at Marah. This is because Shabbos is a prerequisite to the acceptance of Torah.

The desire for comfort and pleasure is innate in humans. Yet we see that people overcome the desire to remain in the comfort of a warm bed and arise on a cold winter day, braving the elements to go to work or to school. They are motivated to do so by their goal to earn money or achieve an education, and it is the pursuit of a goal that causes them to defy the bodily desire for warmth and comfort. Without a goal in life, people would not undergo any discomfort.

Most of our daily activities are directed to intermediate goals. We drive the car to the gas station with the goal to obtain fuel, but this is obviously not an ultimate goal. If we had nowhere to go with the car, obtaining fuel would be meaningless. Our next goal is to drive to work or to school, but if work and school were not goal directed, they, too, would have little meaning. Intermediate goals have meaning only if the lead to an ultimate goal.

The secular world appears to operate on the premise that one's ultimate goal is attaining the maximum of pleasure available to man. If, however, experiencing pleasure is a legitimate ultimate goal, most of humanity is wasting a great deal of energy and subjecting itself to unnecessary distress, and society's dictates are misguided. This goal is more readily achieved by use of euphoriant chemicals, which indeed, is the goal of the drug addict. The universal disapproval of drug addiction indicates that society does not accept pleasure as a legitimate ultimate goal. Rather, society believes that accomplishing something worthwhile in the world is a legitimate ultimate goal.

Furthermore, if being content is the goal of human life, then the human brain is a gross mistake. Cows in the pasture are much more content than humans. As Solomon says in Ecclesiastes (1:18) "As one increases intelligence, one increases pain." (The colloquialism for this is, "Ignorance is bliss.") The offices of psychotherapists are

populated by people who suffer from anxiety and emotional disorders that are generated by their intellect. Clearly, the human mind was not intended for the pursuit of pleasure as an ultimate goal.

The Steipler Gaon says that if you see a child wearing a jacket whose sleeves extend far beyond his arms, trousers that drag behind him and a hat that comes down below his nose, you know that these are not his clothes. He has obviously put on his father's clothes. Similarly, when you see what the human mind is capable of, it is clearly not designed for the pursuit of pleasure or contentment. It is grossly oversized for that.

It is difficult to conceive of an ultimate goal and purpose to the life of an individual if the entire universe is purposeless. A universe that was created can have a purpose, having been brought into existence by a Creator. A universe that happened to accidentally come about as a result of a freak accident involving primordial energy and matter (whose origin was?) was not designed for any purpose is, therefore, purposeless.

There is a story of two vagrants who were arrested for loitering. The judge asked the first vagrant, "What were you doing when the officer arrested you?" "Nothing," the vagrant answered. The judge then turned to the second vagrant, "And what were you doing when you were arrested?" The man pointed toward his buddy. "I was helping him," he said. It is obvious that if one is helping someone who is doing nothing, one is doing nothing oneself.

Unless there is an ultimate purpose to the universe, all human activities, regardless of how praiseworthy they may be, are only a series of intermediate goals, reminiscent of "the bridge that goes nowhere." In a purposeless world, a Torah would be nothing more than a set of rules for social conduct, subject to change at the whim of society. There would be no absolute good and bad.

The giving of the Torah had to be preceded by Shabbos, which is a testimony to creation. "In six days, G-d created the heaven and the earth, and He rested on the seventh day." It is Shabbos that gives meaning to life.

Shabbos is referred to as me'ein olam haba, akin to the bliss of Paradise. Shabbos should be akin to the Shabbos on which Hashem rested from creation. The whole world was complete, and this is how our Shabbos should be

The mitzvah of Shabbos is bi-partite, consisting of a negative commandment, the prohibition of work, and a positive commandment, to sanctify the day. The Torah says that on the seventh day, shovas vayinafash. Shovas means that G-d abstained from creation, and vayinafash means that G-d instilled a nefesh into Shabbos. Just as a person has a body and a spirit, so does Shabbos have a "body"-the restriction of work, and a spirit-a nefesh and neshamah. Abstinence from work is only half of the mitzvah. The other half is making Shabbos into a day of neshamah.

Just as Shabbos cannot be sanctified if one works, neither can it be properly sanctified if one carries thoughts and concerns of the work week into Shabbos. While the latter is not considered a frank violation of the prohibition of work, it is an obstacle toward the sanctification of Shabbos. On the verse, "Six days shall you labor and do all your work" (Exodus 20:9), Rashi comments that at the end of the sixth day, one should consider all one's work as having been completed. There are to be no carryovers from the work week into Shabbos. With the advent of Shabbos, one does not owe any money nor is one owed any money. There are no delays in delivery of merchandise and no unfulfilled orders. One does not think about one's investments. All repairs on the house have been made. There is absolutely nothing which should distract a person from the spirituality of Shabbos. Everything pertaining to the work week has been completed, and the forgiveness of sins has removed another source of worry. With all the burdens of the past removed, one is free to contemplate spirituality and holiness.

A case in point.

At 45, Nathan had developed a very successful insurance firm, in which he had worked 12 to 14 hours a day. He then suffered a massive heart attack, and after two months, was told by his doctor to limit his presence at the office to two hours a day. After several weeks, Nathan was very dissatisfied with this restriction, but his wife, Leah, made him follow the doctors orders.

Nathan then received a handsome offer to buy out his firm. He jumped at the opportunity, sold the business, and convinced Leah that they should sell their spacious home and move to a condominium in Florida.

The dream of blissful retirement was short lived. Nathan was a type-A personality, accustomed to operating under pressure. He had never developed any way of using leisure time except as a brief respite from work, to recharge his batteries for the next work day. Most of the people in the condominium complex were older retirees, and Nathan did not feel he had much in common with them. Leah made herself a flower garden which she carefully cultivated, and joined the local congregation sisterhood. Nathan had no patience for the men's club. Leisure time weighed heavily on his hands and he became depressed.

Proper observance of Shabbos might have prevented Nathan's depression. He would have learned how to put leisure time to constructive use.

At the Friday night meal, my mother would serve ferfel, which is related to the Yiddish word ferfallen, bygone, over and done with. As she brought the ferfel to the table, she would say, "Whatever was until now is ferfallen." Shabbos eliminates the accumulated concerns of the past.

The proper observance of Shabbos requires that one's conduct should be different than that of the weekdays. We should walk leisurely, not with the haste and frenzy of the work week. And our speech on Shabbos should not be like that of the weekday.

Speech, even during the week, must follow halachah. Lashon hara (defamatory speech) must be scrupulously avoided. Rechilus (carrying tales) is forbidden. One may not use nivul peh (indecent language). Not only is frank lying forbidden (lo teshakru, Leviticus 19:11), but one must also avoid anything that could lead to an untruth (midevar shekker tirchak - Exodus 23:7). Devarim beteilim (idle talk) is also forbidden (Yoma 19b).

Given these guidelines, which are halachically mandatory and not merely optional piety, our speech during the weekdays should be spiritual in nature. The requirement that our speech on Shabbos be different than that of the week elevates it even further, essentially restricting speech on Shabbos to words of Torah teachings and praises of Hashem. Indeed, there are people who do not converse at all on Shabbos, verbalizing only Torah study and prayer. According to the halachos of speech as described by the Chafetz Chaim, our speech during the weekdays must be kodesh (sanctified). It follows that on Shabbos, our speech must be kodesh kadashim, of the highest sanctity and spiritual level.

Many people usher in Shabbos with the reading of Song of Songs, Solomon's parable depicting the passionate longing of Israel and Hashem to be in an intimate bond. In the services, Shabbos is welcomed as a Queen in the Lecha Dodi hymn, where Israel says to Hashem, "Come, my beloved, toward the bride. Let us greet the Shabbos."

On Friday night, the challah is covered during kiddush, the prayer testifying to the six days of creation and that Hashem rested on the seventh day. The reason for covering the challah is that according to halachah, the berachah (blessing) for bread takes precedence to the berachah for wine. Inasmuch as the kiddush is recited over wine, the challah is covered to prevent its being humiliated when the berachah for wine is recited first. Obviously, the inanimate challah cannot experience humiliation. The practice of covering the challah is symbolic, to impress upon us how exquisitely sensitive we must be to other people's feelings. This sensitivity should characterize our interpersonal relationships, especially on Shabbos.

Of all the activities that are forbidden on Shabbos that are derived by Talmudic exegesis, the Torah singles out one: "You shall not kindle a flame in all your dwellings" (Exodus 35:3). Rabbi Chaim of Czernovitz (Siduro shel Shabbos) explains that in addition to being a forbidden type of work, making a fire also refers to the flame of rage. Inasmuch as rage is forbidden at any time, the special precaution means that we must make extra effort to avoid anger on Shabbos.

Hagaon Harav Pam cites the Midrash that Adam sinned late on Friday, and that the day of Shabbos pleaded that he not be punished then. "You said that You blessed the seventh day and sanctified it. Is it a blessing and sanctity that man should be punished on my day?" (Yalkut Shimoni). Although it is forbidden to cause another person any anguish during the week, it is an even greater sin to do so on Shabbos. The day of Shabbos may complain, "Is this my sanctity and blessing?"

Shabbos, as a day blessed by Hashem, is propitious for blessings. It is customary that before kiddush on Friday night, the father blesses the children. How wonderful it would be if children would realize that their blessing comes from their parents, and for parents to realize that they should relate to the children in a way that they would be the conduit for Hashem's blessing to the children.

The attractiveness and sweetness of Shabbos is in the fulfillment of the halachos and customs that elevate Shabbos to the zenith of spirituality. This is indeed a state of ecstasy that is me'ein olam haba, akin to the bliss of Paradise. For some tzaddikim, Shabbos surpassed olam haba. Rabbi Boruch of Medziboz said, "I would exchange ten olam habas for one Shabbos." We may not be able to achieve a Shabbos experience like Rabbi Boruch, but we must learn to observe Shabbos in a manner that it is at least me'ein olam haba, just a taste of Paradise.

Celebrating Shabbos with three meals is of such great merit that the Talmud says, "Whoever observes the three meals of Shabbos is spared from three forms of punishment: from the anguish prior to the coming of Moshiach, from the judgment of Gehinnom, and from the battle of Gog-Magog. Furthermore, his prayers are answered" (Shabbos 118a). Of course, this refers to observing the three meals with the appropriate kavannah (intent), kedushah, and divrei Torah.

Shabbos afternoon, usually after minchah, there is the third meal, usually a token meal, consisting of challah and fish. (Of course, one may serve a full meal if one wishes).

Among chassidim, this third meal, seudah shelishis, is eaten in the dark. According to kabbalah, this time is the zenith of Shabbos, and is a specially propitious time. Sitting in the dark, there are no distractions, and it is conducive to meditation.

This meal is often referred to as shalosh seudos, which means "three meals." Divrei Emes explains that the first two meals of Shabbos, Friday night and Shabbos noon, are full meals that one eats when hungry. There is no indication that one is eating primarily to fulfill the mitzvah. However, the third meal, a token meal eaten when one is not hungry, is obviously to fulfill the mitzvah of three meals on Shabbos. This indicates that the first two meals were also in honor of Shabbos. Therefore, it is shalosh seudos, because it encompasses all three meals. Chassidic rebbes usually give a discourse on chassidus at shalosh seudos.

Tradition has transmitted to us many tasty foods for Shabbos and the Festivals. We indeed partake of them, but we should not lose sight of their purpose. Having appeased the body with these delicious foods, we should dedicate ourselves to the spiritual aspects of Shabbos and the Festivals.

When Shabbos comes to a close, the prospect of leaving this spiritual experience and returning to the work week with all its stresses and drudgery can be depressing. This transition is mitigated by the Shabbos night meal, the Melaveh Malkah.

In contrast to the delicacies of the Shabbos meals, the menu of the Melaveh Malkah meal Shabbos night is generally rather sparse. Melaveh Malkah means "escorting the queen," referring to parting with "Queen Shabbos." The regular menu may be herring, borscht and potatoes. The potatoes are cooked especially for the Melaveh Malkah to demonstrate that we refrained from cooking on Shabbos because the Torah forbade it, and that when Shabbos was over, we are permitted to cook again. Yet, this simple meal was actually the most enjoyable one for me, because it was customary to relate stories about our tzaddikim, stories that fascinated me, some of which I recorded in Not Just Stories.

Stories are a powerful method of communication. The chassidic master, R' Yisroel of Rhizin said, "When the Baal Shem Tov sought Divine intervention to save the Jews from misfortune, he would seclude himself in the forest, light a fire, and say a special prayer.

"When his successor, my great-grandfather, the Maggid of Mezeritch, wished to intercede for his people, he would go to the same place in the forest and say, 'Master of the Universe! I do not know how to light the fire, but I can still say the prayer,' and with that he evoked Divine mercy.

"Later, R' Moshe Leib of Sasov would go to the place in the forest and say, 'I do not know how to light the fire and I do not know the prayer. Master of the Universe! Have compassion upon us by the merits of the tzaddikim who prayed to You here' ".

R' Yisroel would put his head in his hands and say, 'Master of the Universe! I do not know how to light the fire, I do not know the prayer, and I do not even find the place in the forest. All I know is the story about how these tzaddikim interceded for their people, and this must be sufficient."

Stories are the vehicle that can move metaphor and images into experience. Stories can communicate what is generally invisible and inexpressible. Of all the devices available to us, stories are the surest way of touching the human spirit. And Melaveh Malkah was rich in stories. My personal opinion is that the sages instituted Melaveh Malkah to dispel the post-Shabbos blues.

The Gaon of Vilna was extremely diligent in observing Melaveh Malkah. It is related that the Gaon's wife fasted frequently, and that the Gaon said to her, "All your fasts do not add up to the merit of a single Melaveh Malkah. One Shabbos night the Gaon was ill and could not eat anything. He slept for a few hours and when awoke and saw that it was before dawn, he quickly ate a small piece of challah for Melaveh Malkah.

The Melaveh Malkah is referred to as the "feast of King David. The reason for this is based on the Midrash that David asked G-d to reveal to him when he would die. G-d said that this is never revealed to a person, but told him that he would die on Shabbos. Therefore, when Shabbos passed and David was alive, he made a feast to celebrate his reprieve for at least one more week of life"

In the zemiros (songs) of the Melaveh Malkah, we say "David, King of Israel, lives and exists," thereby expressing our belief in the return of the royal lineage of David with the Ultimate Redemption. We also say, Siman tov umazal tov, good omens and good fortune shall come to us and to all of Israel.

The zemiros also feature the prophet Elijah. The Talmud says that Elijah, who will herald the Ultimate Redemption, will not do so on Erev Shabbos or on Erev Yom Tov, so that the celebration of Shabbos and Yom Tov should not be disturbed. Therefore, when Shabbos passes, we sing about Elijah, inviting him to bring us the good tidings of the Redemption.

As we noted, David's life was one of uninterrupted suffering, yet, even in his moments of anguish, David could say, "Return to me the joy of Your salvation" (Psalms 51:14), never abandoning hope for happiness. We begin the new week with the inspiration of David, that simchah is always within reach. Elijah is not only the personification of immortality, but is also the harbinger of the Ultimate Redemption. Countless times in Jewish history, Elijah has appeared in human form to comfort the suffering.

King David, the prophet Elijah and stories of tzaddikim. Melaveh Malkah is indeed a potent antidepressant. The entire Shabbos is thus a lesson in achieving simchah.

I experienced the power of the simchah of Shabbos on my first visit to Israel. In keeping with halachah, I cried and tore my garment at the Western Wall just as one does on the loss of a loved one. On Friday night, I joined in a joyous dance at the Western Wall as we sang Lecha Dodi, A conflict? No, I wept in space and rejoiced in time.

* * * *

It is customary, when praying for a sick person on Shabbos, to say "Shabbos he melizok, urefuah kerovah lavo" (though Shabbos prohibits us from crying out, may a recover come speedily).

The tzaddik, R' Hillel of Paritsch, once visited a town where a number of Jews kept their shops open on Shabbos. R' Hillel called them together and impressed upon them the overriding importance of observing Shabbos. The shop-keepers agreed, on the condition that the rich man who owned the largest store would close his store on Shabbos, because otherwise they could not compete with him. R' Hillel sent for this wealthy man, but he refused to come. A second messenger was sent, but was also turned away.

Shabbos morning, the wealthy man began having severe abdominal pain, which grew worse from hour to hour. His wife concluded that this occurred because he had offended the tzaddik, and pleaded with R' Hillel that he should forgive her husband and pray for him, but R' Hillel remained silent. The Chassidim who were with him said, "Rebbe, can't you just say 'Shabbos he melizok, urefuah kerovah lavo?'" but R' Hillel remained silent.

Shabbos night, at melaveh malkah, the wife again came, pleading tearfully that R' Hillel pray for her husband. R' Hillel said, "Shabbos he melizok, urefuah kerovah lavo". This can be translated as 'If Shabbos will refrain from crying out, recovery will come speedily.' Shabbos has been crying out that this person is desecrating it. If he gives his solemn promise that he will close his store on Shabbos, he will recover."

The Chassidim hurried to the man's bedside and told him what the tzaddik said. The man promptly promised to observe Shabbos, and soon recovered.

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NOACH 5757 & 5762

I. Summary

A. Noah and the Ark. Noah was a righteous man in an evil generation. Hashem beheld the world's sad state and decided to bring a flood to destroy the entire population except Noah and his family. He told Noah of His decision and instructed him to build a three-story ark in which to dwell during the flood. Noah followed Hashem's instructions and completed the ark 120 years later. Noah, his wife and three sons (Shem, Chom and Yafes) and their respective wives entered the ark, along with seven pairs of each kosher animal and one pair of every other living creature (plus appropriate food for all of the inhabitants).

B. The Flood. On the Seventeenth day of the second month, rain began to fall; it fell with increasing intensity for forty days/nights, drowning virtually every living thing outside the ark. The deluge was so great that almost six months elapsed before the waters had subsided enough to allow the ark to come to rest on the mountaintop of Ararat.

C. The End of the Flood. After almost another three months, Noah released a raven from the ark to see if there was dry land; the raven, however, merely flew to and fro, waiting for the water to dissipate. Seven days later, Noah sent out a dove who, finding no resting place, quickly returned to the ark. Noah sent another dove seven days later; this time, the dove returned with an olive branch indicating that the waters were receding. Finally, seven days later, the dove didn't return signaling that the land had at last begun to dry up. Noah then removed the ark's covering and departed after a stay of 1 year and 11 days (i.e., a solar year). Noah offered sacrifices of gratitude to Hashem. Hashem was pleased with Noah's sacrifices and promised that He would never again destroy all of mankind

by flood. Hashem then placed a rainbow in the sky and told Noah that it would always be a symbol of this promise.

D. The Earth is Repopulated. The earth is repopulated through Noah's sons and the founders of numerous nations appeared. (See the Artscroll Chumash for a list of the seventy nations.) Yet, all of mankind spoke only one language, "Loshon Hakodesh" (the holy language). Unfortunately, mankind didn't learn from the flood and returned to its evil ways.

E. The Tower of Babel. The different nations convened and proposed to build a city with a tower reaching heaven. Chazal explain that these wicked people weren't satisfied with the earth alone for their dwelling place, asking "why Hashem should have the heaven all for Himself?" They decided to build a colossal tower, scale it and conquer the heavens. Hashem frustrated their plan by confusing the speech of the builders, so that they couldn't understand each other. The city was thus called Babel ("mixing"), since Hashem mixed the languages of the people of the earth.

F. From Noah to Avrom (later known as Abraham). There were ten generations between Noah and Avrom (see attached chart). Noah died at 950, at which time Avrom was 58. Avrom lived in Uhr Kasdim, where he realized Hashem's oneness and risked his life to follow Him and not to worship idols.

II. Divrei Torah

A. Lil'Mode U'ilamed (**Rabbi Mordechai Katz**)

1. Hashem waits patiently for repentance. There were ten generations between Adam and Noah, each progressively more immoral. Yet, Hashem waited before destroying mankind, hoping that it would use its free will to repent from their evil ways. Even after Hashem decided to bring the flood, he commanded Noah to build the ark, a process which took 120 years, again hoping that mankind would repent. Furthermore, the rain lasted forty days/nights, becoming progressively stronger. Once again, Hashem gave man the opportunity to repent. Hashem is patient in accepting repentance, and even goes to great lengths to encourage it.

2. The greatness of peace. The generation of the Flood had no fear of G-d, and engaged in all types of immoral and destructive activity ("the earth was filled with robbery"). But, the generation of the Tower of Babel was even worse -- they rebelled directly against Hashem's authority. Why, then, was the former destroyed and the latter merely dispersed? Chazal teach us that the generation of the Tower had one significant merit which led to Hashem's leniency -- shalom (peace). As wicked and defiant as they were against Hashem, there was peace and harmony among them. This serves as a powerful lesson to us of the importance of peace and brotherhood.

3. Noah vs. Abraham. The Torah states "Noah was a man righteous and wholehearted in his generation." Chazal interpret this to mean that he was only righteous when compared to others in his generation, but that his righteousness would have been outshone by Abraham had they lived at the same time. Why? While Noah was pious, his piety didn't carry over to others -- besides his family, there was no one else who was under his influence and worthy of joining them on the ark; Noah never prayed on behalf of the world prior to the flood. Abraham, however, was pious and his piety had a profound effect on those around him -- he fought against idolatry; was meritorious in the mitzvah of "Hachnosas Orchim" (hospitality), using it as a vehicle to bring others closer to Hashem; beseeched Hashem to spare the city of S'dome, etc. As Peninim on the Torah (Rabbi A.L. Scheinbaum) states, "one may succeed in amassing a great fortune, but if the world doesn't benefit from his/her wealth, what good has it brought?" A lesson to be derived from Noah's tragic yet glorious life is that one cannot create a better place to live and a Jewish home life only for him/herself. We must exercise our positive influence on our family and on the society in which we live.

B. Growth Through Torah

1. Seek the company of people from whom you can learn positive qualities. "Noah was a completely righteous person in his generation". In

addition to the interpretation noted above, Chazal also note that means that Noah was righteous even in an evil generation. The Chasam Sofer notes that both interpretations are correct and not necessarily inconsistent. If Noah would have stayed the way he was in his own generation, then he wouldn't have been special in Abraham's generation. But, had Noah been in Abraham's generation, he would have likely been influenced positively by Abraham, and would have been greater than he actually was. We are all influenced by our surroundings. When we are close to people who act in an elevated manner, we are positively influenced.

2. You become elevated when you help others improve. "Noah walked with the Almighty." Sforno explains that Noah walked in Hashem's ways, which means to do good to others. How? The people acted corruptly and Noah tried to teach them how to improve their actions. As Rambam teaches, the highest level of charity is to help a person earn a living on his/her own. When you help a person become self-sufficient financially, spiritually or otherwise, you help him/her not just once but for the rest of his/her life. Not only will he/she be able to do many more good deeds, but you will have a positive influence on his/her children and grandchildren.

3. Strive for harmony even with people who are different from you. The rainbow symbolizes peace and unity. A rainbow is made up of different colors which come together to make one entire whole. Similarly, people are different from each other. But if we look at ourselves as one unit, there can be peace and harmony despite our differences.

C. Majesty of Man (**Rabbi A. Henach Leibowitz**)

Noah and the Yonah (Dove). As noted above, when the rains ceased, the dove returned with a dove branch. The Gemara tells us that by bringing the bitter-tasting leaf (something a dove wouldn't ordinarily eat), the dove was in essence saying "I would rather eat food as bitter as olive leaves from the hand of Hashem, than something sweet as honey from the hand of flesh and blood." (Rashi comments that "flesh and blood" refers to Noah.) Why does Rashi point this out? Isn't it obvious? Rashi is pointing out that the dove preferred bitter leaves found on his own to relying even on Noah. Despite the fact that Noah was a kind and gentle man who went to great pains to ensure the comfort and nourishment of the animals on the ark, the dove still preferred to rely on himself. Rashi is giving us much greater insight into the nobility and greatness of man -- our soul feels pain at having to turn to another person for our needs instead of receiving them directing from Hashem (as we pray in the Birkas HaMazon, ". . . let us not be need of the gifts of human hands or their loans, but only of Your hand, which is full, open, holy and ample."). No matter how graciously help is offered, it still hurts to accept. Thus, the dove was telling Noah, and all of us, that we must be extremely sensitive to the feelings of others, and do a favor for another person both graciously and compassionately.

D. Kol Dodi (**Rabbi David Feinstein**)

Noah did as Hashem commanded him. "Noah did so; just as G-d commanded him, so he did." The last few words seem redundant. What do they teach us? The Torah is testifying that Noah acted correctly, even uprightly, in keeping the spirit of Hashem's command. Rashi notes that Noah spend 120 years building the ark so the people of his generation would ask him what he was doing, and he could warn them to repent before the flood was brought. He knew that if they repented and the flood was averted, he would look like a fool who toiled "in vain" for 120 years to build the ark. And yet, he continued his work for the entire time with the correct frame of mind. He understood the process of building was desirable in and of itself and that even if the ark was never used, he would still have done Hashem's will by performing the commandment he personally had been given. We must approach the performance of mitzvos with the correct attitude -- we must rejoice in the mitzvah for its own sake, because we know we are doing Hashem's will with the correct attitude.

E. In the Garden of the Torah (the **Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, z'tl**).

Genuine satisfaction; Noah's legacy.

1. Our Potential; Being Sensitive To G-d's Cues. The Maggid of Mezritch (a disciple of the Bal Shem Tov, and mentor of the Alter Rebbe, the first Lubavitcher Rebbe) interpreted our Sages' statement "know what is above you" as "know that everything above -- all that transpires in the spiritual realms -- is from you, dependent on your conduct." Each of us has the potential to influence the most elevated spiritual realms, which potential is alluded to in this week's Parsha. The word "Noach" means "rest" and refers to satisfaction and repose. Noah -- and by extension each of us -- can peace and tranquility in our fellow man and, in so doing, accentuate similar qualities in the worlds above. Yet, the Parsha, which deals in large part with the flood and the Tower of Babel, seems diametrically opposed to the satisfaction and repose personified by Noah. This opposition underscores the interrelation between the patterns with which Hashem imbued the world and man's response to them. Noah's birth was to bring about a period of repose and satisfaction; however, mankind failed to give up its evil ways and do teshuvah (repentance).

2. Rains of Blessing. Chazal teach that the rains initially descended with "mercy"; that is, if mankind had repented, they would have been rains of blessing; since they didn't, they became a flood. In a way, however, the rain water nonetheless remained waters of blessing. Just as immersion in a mikveh is associated with re-experiencing the act of creation, so too did the rains of the flood bring about the dawning of a new age: "Noach saw a new world". Thus, the waters of the flood are called the "waters of Noah" because the intent -- and the actual effect -- was to bring rest and pleasure to the world. Unfortunately, because man didn't respond positively, this constructive outcome was coupled with destruction.

3. The Rainbow. On the ark, various predators peacefully co-existed. This foreshadows the coming of the ultimate time of peace and satisfaction -- the Messianic Age, when "the wolf will dwell with the lamb, and the leopard will lie down with the young goat" and "there will be neither famine nor war, neither envy nor competition, for good things will flow in abundance." By vigorously following in Abraham's footsteps, spreading love and kindness, we can help bring about this Age of ultimate peace and satisfaction and, like Noah and his family, merit the shining of the rainbow.

<http://www.jlaw.com/Articles/suicide.html>

Physician - Assisted Suicide: A Halachic Approach
Rabbi Yitzchok Breitowitz

Question: In recent months, Dr. Jack Kevorkian has assisted a number of persons in ending their lives. These persons suffered from a wide range of ailments from chronic, debilitating pain to Alzheimer's Disease. Does Judaism ever sanction suicide and may a physician or any other third party facilitate this process?

Answer: Taking one's life is regarded as halachically and morally improper. While we cannot personally condemn those who in the midst of unbearable pain and suffering take their own lives, we cannot encourage, condone, or participate in the commission of such an act.¹

The preservation of life has always been regarded as a cardinal value in Judaism. The Torah was given to man so "that he may live." The paramount necessity to save life (pikuach nefesh) supersedes virtually all the commandments of the Torah (Shabbat, Yom Kippur, Kashrut) except for idolatry, sexual offenses, and murder. Because all human beings are formed in the image of the Divine, all life is regarded as being of infinite value regardless of its duration or quality. As all mathematicians realize, infinity cannot be halved. If and when some human life is deemed to be less valuable than others, then life as a whole has gone from being infinite to being relative and the lives of us have become cheapened and debased.

Contemporary rhetoric, however, has taken a decidedly different turn. In an time of rapid technological advance, aging populations, and limited resources, "death with dignity" is a slogan that carries considerable appeal justifying taking comatose patients off respirators, allowing patients to starve themselves to death, and most recently, encouraging "voluntary suicides" à la Derek Humphrey and Jack Kevorkian. This article will explore the halachic parameters of this issue.

Before proceeding to the sources, however, one preliminary observation may be in order. The watchword of the "death with dignity" movement is autonomy or self-determination. All well and good. What proponents of autonomy fail to realize, however, (or more ominously, what they realize and fail to express) is that as formerly-unthinkable options become widely available, there is a tremendous societal pressure to have them exercised. If and when assisted suicides become legalized and socially-acceptable, one could easily visualize scenarios where persons who truly would want to live given the chance and the encouragement will instead opt for death, viewing their lives as worthless, nonproductive, and a drain on their families. Subtly or explicitly, societal consensus will push people into directions which on their own would have remained off-limits.² What starts off as a "right to die" quickly turns into an obligation.³ Rather than enhancing autonomy and self-respect, the Derek Humphrey-Kevorkian approach does precisely the opposite, ultimately debasing the sanctity of the individual and the meaning of his existence. Judaism, which values and cherishes all life, inescapably proceeds from the opposite premise as the following halachic sources indicate.

Judaism regards the taking of one's life as abhorrent and tantamount to murder. "One who intentionally takes one's life has no share in the world to come." Even the mourning rituals of shiva are not observed and such persons are not buried in proximity to other Jews (though within a Jewish cemetery). In practice, we generally assume that most suicides are the result of unbearable stress, pain, or depression and do not fall within the category of a premeditated, volitional act that is subject to these sanctions. Nevertheless, the sympathetic recognition of a category akin to "temporary insanity" in no way lends normative sanction to the commission of the act. Life is regarded as a sacred trust given to us by G-d and only G-d can take it away. Indeed, contrary to much of the rhetoric in contemporary moral and political discourse which stresses autonomy and control over one's life, Judaism teaches us that our very bodies are not our own. They are a bailment. As a repository for the soul, the body must be cherished and protected. Activities involving reckless endangerment (e.g., bungee jumping and perhaps cigarette smoking) are proscribed. It is forbidden to engage in self-mutilation. In a fascinating essay, the late Rabbi Shlomo Zevin demonstrated that, under Jewish law, Antonio's agreement to give Shylock a "pound of flesh" would be null and void because Antonio's very body is not his own to give away. Granted that there may be occasions when aggressive, life-prolonging treatment need not be administered or may even be discontinued, the allowing of the natural process of death to occur by withdrawal of treatment is a far cry from actively terminating life. Even ignoring the fact that persons may change their mind at a point where the process is irreversible, the "patient"'s desire is simply irrelevant. Killing oneself is not regarded as being within the legitimate scope of personal autonomy. It stands to reason that it is immoral to assist, enable, or facilitate someone's committing an act which in itself is immoral for that person to commit.

Therapeutic Exceptions: The foregoing does not necessarily commit Judaism to a "life at all costs" position. There are a number of situations where, in the face of grave suffering, steps may be taken that would or could hasten death. First, pain-relief medication such as morphine may be administered in spite of the risk that it may induce cardiac arrest, provided that the dose is not definitely lethal and is not administered for the purpose of life termination. Second, a patient may undergo a life-threatening, hazardous procedure which holds out even a slight hope of cure, though there is no obligation to do so. Third, halacha permits the invocation of

prayer that G-d take the person out of their pain and misery. Fourth, under narrowly-defined circumstances, life-sustaining (or death prolonging) treatment such as chemotherapy, or antibiotics may be discontinued; DNR or "Do Not Resuscitate" orders may be entered.⁴ As noted, however, all of this falls far short of actively terminating life.

The Saul Precedent: The end of the Book of Samuel I recounts that King Saul, after falling in war, took his own life (fell upon his sword) when his arms bearer refused to slay him.⁵ (Interestingly, in the beginning of Samuel II, there is a conflicting account where an Amalekite convert claims credit for this act seeking to curry favor from David but David promptly has him executed). The exact interpretation of the Saul precedent is a matter of considerable controversy. Some halachic authorities simply posit that Saul's action was halachically improper and does not represent a normative or acceptable position. At the other extreme, there is the opinion of the Besamim Rosh [a collection of responsa originally attributed to the illustrious Rabbi Asher of 14th Century Germany and Spain but which has been shown to be the later work of a far less eminent authority] who adduces from Saul that if one is in a terminal condition, i.e., death is imminent, and one is suffering unbearable pain or anticipates such pain (Saul feared both being tortured and humiliated), one is allowed to take one's life. The Besamim Rosh's approach would indeed lend support to some of the Kevoorkian suicides though not all since many of the "victims" were not in terminal states and could have lived relatively pain-free. In any case, it must be emphasized that Besamim Rosh's position has unequivocally been rejected by the overwhelming majority of halachic literature and indeed, by the bitter crucible of Jewish history and experience.⁶

Even in the darkest moments of our existence - the Holocaust - suicide was rare and, among halachic Jews, virtually nonexistent. It was always the Jewish way to affirm life, to seek the glimmer of hope within the darkest gloom, and while none of us may dare stand in judgment and condemn personally those who could not withstand the awful vicissitudes of life, neither can we condone or encourage that which is regarded as a desecration and a profanation of the Divine. As the great Talmudic sage Rabbi Chananya Ben Teradyon was being burned at the stake by the Romans for the "crime" of teaching Torah and was suffering excruciating pain, his students urged him to open his mouth and let the flames enter so that he could die more quickly. He responded, "Let He who gave me life take it."

It is the task of all of us to attempt to fathom the redemptive potential of existence- to nurture, to love, to encourage, to strengthen, to provide hope. Ever cognizant of our limitations, however, let us not invade the exclusive province of the Divine.

"My G-d, the soul you have given me is pure. You have created it, you have formed it, You have breathed it into me, you preserve it within me and you will in the future remove it from me and will some day return it to me." (Daily Prayers, emphasis added)⁷

Footnotes

1. Note that although the sources in this article are grounded in halachic texts, Judaism regards its proscription, against suicide as being of universal application. These laws are part of the Noachide Code, applicable to Jews and non-Jews alike. All human beings are created in the image of G-d and all human life must be accorded reverence, respect, and sanctity.

2. Indeed, several years ago, former Governor Richard Lamm of Colorado openly expressed the view that when people reach a stage where they are a net drain to society and consume more than they produce, they should essentially just "walk into the sunset." How easy it is to move from a stance proclaiming "death with dignity" to a position that regards the value of human life as no greater than its contribution to the gross domestic product.

3. One striking example occurred recently in Minnesota where both the patient and her family wanted aggressive, life-prolonging measures to be applied and the physicians went to court to have those measures discontinued. This is hardly the deference to self-determination to which the proponents of the "right to die" supposedly adhere.

4. According to most, but not all, halachic authorities, this dispensation would not encompass the withholding of food, water, or oxygen, contrary to the current state of American law.

5. Two other recorded instances of suicide in the Old Testament should be briefly mentioned. In Judges _____, Samson declares, "Let my soul perish with the Philistines" as he pulls down the columns supporting the temple. His death occurs in the context of vanquishing the enemy and is analogous to a soldier who gives his life fighting for his country, clearly not a suicide as that term is normally understood. The second instance appears in Samuel II. Ahithofel, who sided with Absalom against David, discovers that the rebellion has failed and kills himself. Ahithofel is clearly assigned a villainous role in the Biblical narrative and his behavior can hardly be regarded as normative. Indeed, the Talmud Sanhedrin 90-b states that Ahithofel does not have a share in the world to come.

6. Other interpretations view the Saul narrative in a much more limited way. Some posit that Saul, as leader of the beleaguered Jewish forces, felt that were he captured alive by the Philistines, the anticipated torture and public humiliation would have a devastating impact on combat morale. He thus took his own life to protect the overall war effort. A second interpretation states that Saul was afraid that, as a result of Philistine torture, he would be coerced into idolatrous worship. Since a Jew must indeed be willing to give up his life before submitting to idolatry or renunciation of Judaism, it is argued that one may even actively commit suicide to avoid the greater evil of apostasy or conversion. Under either of these interpretations, pain and suffering alone, no matter how severe, do not furnish justification for suicide in the absence of "combat necessity" or "religious persecution."

7. Some other instances of recorded suicide:

The Babylonian Talmud in Gittin records that a number of young Jewish children captured by the Romans during the conquest of Jerusalem jumped off a ship and drowned. The Talmud praises their act as saintly. The context of the passage indicates, however, that the children would be subject to sexual abuse (including homosexual activity). Since sexual offenses are recognized as among those for which a Jew must give his life, this incident falls under the "religious persecution" rubric. Similar incidents, occurred with female Beth Yaakov students during the Holocaust.

During the crusades, a number of Jewish communities committed mass suicide rather than be captured by Christian troops. The most famous of these was the suicide of 500 Jews in York during the Third Crusade in 1189. Here too, the rationale was the avoidance of forcible conversion to Christianity due to inability to withstand torture. Indeed, some authorities not only condoned suicide but the murder of children. Others found this practice utterly abhorrent and sinful. See Daat Zekainim, Genesis 9:5. The famous story of Masada where a group of zealots led by Elazer Ben Yair, realizing that their situation was hopeless, took their own lives rather than surrender to the hands of the Romans. To the extent the suicide was "political", i.e., better to be dead than surrender, which is the way the story is commonly interpreted, it is generally regarded as halachically improper. To the extent the decision was taken to avoid torture and protracted pain, its permissibility would hinge on the acceptance of Besamim Rosh's position. If it was done to avoid forcible religious apostasy, the act would have halachic sanction based on the Saul precedent. Not being privy to either the halachic authorities, if any, who advised the zealots or the actual deliberations within the fortress, we can never know for sure.

From: peninim-bounces@shemayisrael.com on behalf of Shema Yisrael Torah Network [shemalist@shemayisrael.com] Sent: Thursday, October 26, 2006 6:45 AM To: Peninim Parsha
Peninim on the Torah
by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum -
Parshas Noach

Noach was a righteous man, perfect in his generation. (6:9) What is the meaning of the term tzaddik, righteous? The idea of righteousness has a number of connotations, all revolving around the concept of piety. Horav Tuvia Lisitzin, zl, suggests that the Torah intimates the characteristics which rendered Noach a tzaddik. Hashem told Noach to enter the Ark in order to be saved, "for it is you that I have seen to be righteous before Me in this generation" (Ibid 7:1). In other words, in comparison to the members of his generation and their activities, Noach appeared to be a tzaddik. The members of the generation of the flood were guilty of a number of improprieties, but it was gezel, robbery, that was the source of their downfall and destruction. Their lack of respect and caring for their fellow man sealed their fate. Thus, a tzaddik is one who stands out, who rises above his generation, who is sensitive to the needs and feelings of the members of his generation. A tzaddik is one who exemplifies positive commitment to bein adam l'chaveiro, relationship between man and his fellow. Noach was such an individual, and this is why he was selected to be the one to rebuild the world. He cared about people, and the essence of the world is people.

In the Midrash Tanchuma, Chazal comment that we find two people who earned the appellation of tzaddik: Noah and Yosef. They had one common trait: they both sustained a world. Noah rebuilt the world after society was destroyed by the flood. Yosef sustained an entire world during his generation's great famine. Furthermore, during the year that Noah spent on the Ark, he saw to it that each and every creature was fed in a timely fashion, despite the toll on his personal life and welfare. As a result of this devotion, the animals survived to see the light of another day, and they had the opportunity to rebuild the world that had been destroyed.

A tzaddik is one who cares about others, who does not live for himself but, rather, views himself as a conduit for helping others. He emulates the Almighty, Who sustains the world purely for altruistic reasons. Man is supposed to learn from Hashem: "As He is compassionate, so should you be compassionate; as He is gracious and kind, so should you be gracious and kind." Noah derived his tzidkus, righteousness, from Hashem. A tzaddik is one who follows Hashem's lead. This is the meaning of walking in Hashem's ways. This is the path that Noah chose to follow.

Now the earth had become corrupt before G-d; and the earth had become filled with robbery. (6:11)

Noah spent one hundred and twenty years building the Ark. It was no secret. During this entire time, he did everything possible to engage people in conversation so that he could convince them to do teshuvah, repent. They did not, however, listen. They ignored Noah for one hundred and twenty years. This tells us about Noah's perseverance. He was relentless in his commitment to bring the people back. It also says something about the people of that generation. In fact, it is a sad commentary on their obtuseness and rebellious nature. Nothing could sway them away from sin. Why? Were they really that evil?

Perhaps the answers lie in the Abarbanel's commentary to the above pasuk. He explains that "the earth became corrupt before G-d." It was only before G-d that they were considered corrupt. Hashem saw their corruption. They did not. In their eyes, they were going about business as usual. They were doing no wrong. When a person does not concede to having sinned, when he does not recognize his guilt, for what should he repent? He is a saint!

No one wants to feel guilty, so we rationalize away our guilt, making excuses either to justify what we did or, at least, to ameliorate the guilt. It does not matter how one rationalizes away his sin, the bottom line is that he does not feel compelled to repent. Kayin committed the world's second sin by killing his brother, Hevel. The pasuk reads, "Kayin said to his brother Hevel. And they were in the field, and Kayin rose up against his brother Hevel and killed him" (Bereishis 4:8). There seems to be something missing from the text. First, the Torah says that Kayin spoke to Hevel. Then it relates the murder. What was their conversation about? What did Kayin say to Hevel? The Targum Yonasan cites the dialogue, but the Torah omits it. Why?

Horav Yissachar Frand, Shlita, cites Horav Yosef Harari-Rafal, Shlita, who gives a noteworthy answer to this question. The Torah omits Kayin's words because they lack relevance. Whatever Kayin spoke was only so that he could justify his act of murder. His excuse for murder was unimportant. His words comprised nothing more than a rationalization to appease his conscience. We do it all of the time. We blame the wife, the children, the boss, and life in general. These are all lame excuses for not accepting responsibility. Therefore, the Torah is in effect telling us that what he said is immaterial. It was only an excuse. If it would not have been one, it would have been another - so, why bother?

This is the atmosphere with which Noah had to contend. He dealt with a generation of sinners who validated their evil and justified their guilt. People such as these do not repent, because, in their own eyes, they have not sinned. This, in itself, is the biggest sin.

Make for yourself an Ark of gopher wood. (6:14)

One would be hard-pressed to suggest a connection between the episode of the flood and the miracle of Purim. The Midrash says otherwise. We have to investigate the reason. Chazal teach us that the beam/tree upon which the wicked Haman was hanged was taken from Noah's Teivah, Ark. Exactly how this transpired is not the issue. What remains to be identified is the area of commonality between these two incidents.

The Jews of Shushan merited the miracle of Purim for a number of reasons. The primary stimulus for this neis, miracle, was Mordechai HaTzaddik. His resolution in defying Haman, in refusing to bow down to him, made the difference. Everyone ate at Achashveiros' party - Mordechai did not. Everyone bowed down to Haman - Mordechai did not. Everyone feared Haman - Mordechai did not. His leadership catalyzed a return to commitment. His fortitude gave others the strength to believe and the courage to return.

Noah was also not afraid. The entire world had gone morally perverse. Robbing from each other had become a way of life. People were out of control. One person stood up to the world; one person had the strength of character to fight for what was true and moral. He succeeded in transplanting the survivors of the deluge, and

together they rebuilt the world. Noah saved the world. Mordechai saved Klal Yisrael. It is appropriate that the man who did not care about world opinion should provide the means to assist the individual who stood up to the evil Haman. Mordechai followed in Noah's footsteps. He was not afraid of doing what was right. The power of the truth, the ability to act according to one's beliefs - regardless of what "others" will say - to ignore the overwhelming influence of a world gone mad, to place one's commitment to Hashem above anything else, that is what Mordechai and Noah had in common. Thus, a beam from Noah's Ark was appropriately suited for its rightful place in the miracle of Purim.

We might suggest another link between the two episodes. The Ark represented the zenith in chesed, performance of acts of loving-kindness. This massive ship was home to the creatures that were to survive the flood. Noah worked around the clock, feeding and providing for the needs of each and every creature. This was all carried out without hope for any form of gratitude. After all, these were animals - not human beings. This ultimate act of kindness was as G-d-like as one could be. Everything that Hashem does for the world is purely altruistic.

Haman represented the antithesis of chesed. Had Shaul HaMelech carried out the command to kill every member of Amalek, Haman would not have been born. He existed due to Shaul's misplaced compassion. How did Haman repay this act of kindness of which he was a beneficiary? He sought to destroy every living member of Shaul's nation! Haman represented the total paradox, the complete opposite extreme of chesed. He did not simply ignore the kindness; he sought to destroy the benefactor. How appropriate it was that his execution should be held on the pole that represented consummate kindness, the virtue which he sought so hard to obliterate.

Noah, the man of the earth, debased himself and planted a vineyard. He drank of the wine and became drunk, and he uncovered himself within his tent. (9:21,22)

However one interprets this episode in Noah's life, it neither has a complimentary connotation nor does it speak well of Noah. It leaves a dark blemish, a deep scar on a life of righteousness and nobility. Horav Shabsai Yudelevitz, zl, cites a meaningful analogy from the Chafetz Chaim, zl, which should serve as a positive source of inspiration for us all.

There was once a great rav, a Torah scholar who was righteous, as well as brilliant and erudite. He lived a simple, austere lifestyle, devoting himself to the general needs of his community and to each individual on a personal level. He was admired, revered and loved. For what more could a person ask? He decided to make a small party in his home for his closest friends. As the end of the meal, they brought out a bottle of vintage wine, the gift of one of his close friends. The rav was not a drinker, but a gift is a gift and a friend is a friend. He felt he could not refuse one drink. He took that one drink and had no idea of the effect it would have on him. This wine was incredible. So, he had one more drink. To make a long story short, the rav had many drinks and soon was totally inebriated.

The rav became very happy, so happy that he felt the urge to dance. First, he danced on the floor; then, he became happier. This increased joy inspired him to dance on the table! To everyone's shock and revulsion, their beloved rav was making a total fool of himself. The great and distinguished rav, the man who was their friend and mentor, their guide and inspiration, was "losing it" in public. He was acting like a habitual drunk.

The rav quickly tired of his dancing and succumbed to his weariness and lay down to sleep - beneath the table. A few hours passed and he woke up, after having slept off the effects of his alcohol-induced behavior. He turned to his wife and asked, "What happened?" His wife, who had stood by his side throughout the years, replied, "You made a fool of yourself. The rav of the city, imbibed too much wine and became a typical drunk. He then acted in a manner consistent with such a distinction. You cannot imagine how you acted. It is something that, regrettably, will not be quickly forgotten."

"I did this?" he asked.

"Yes, you did this," she replied.

The rav immediately fainted.

The humiliation was too much for him to bear. He refused to leave his home for a month. "I danced on the table like a total fool in the presence of the most distinguished members of this community. How can I go outside and face the world? I am mortified," he said to himself.

After a month of self-imposed seclusion, the rav decided that he had to face the music and go outside. With his head bowed down, he built up the courage to take his first steps in public. As he was walking down the street, he passed a photo shop. There in full color was a blown-up picture of him in his inebriated state dancing on the table! He became all shook up and out of control. He could not run home quickly enough. "What will I do? How can I live? How will I ever walk out on the street? Everyone in this city recognized me. I can no longer function in this town," the rav cried. That night, under the cover of darkness, the rav and his family moved out of town. His peaceful seclusion lasted for two days, until he took a walk in his new community, only to discover his picture plastered all over the front show-window of

a large electronics store. He could no longer handle it. That night, the family once again packed their bags and set sail for America.

Two weeks after his arrival in the states, he visited a bookstore. One can only imagine the rav's shock, anger and anxiety when sitting prominently on top of the table of new releases, he saw a volume about the unfortunate effects of alcohol, and whose picture was on the cover of the book? Yes, it was the drunken rav in all of his stupored splendor. After all, a picture is worth a thousand words. This picture was certainly worth more!

America was no longer a safe haven from his humiliation. His next step was Geneva, Switzerland, a country well-known for its neutrality and non involvement. Here he would finally find peace from the demons that were haunting him. Little did he realize that Geneva was to be the epicenter of the International Conference of the Effects of Alcoholism, and guess who was to be the poster boy for their campaign? The "drunken rabbi," as he was now called. They decided to distribute this picture worldwide, in order to emphasize the ill effects of uncontrolled drinking. Let the world community see how a distinguished cleric allowed alcohol to destroy his life.

The rav began to weep uncontrollably. What could he do? He had nowhere to hide. The entire world was aware of his folly. His family attempted to console him, but it was to no avail. He was inconsolable.

"Morai v'rabosai, my friends and colleagues," the Chafetz Chaim began, "do you realize that this story is not novel? It was written four thousand years ago in Parashas Noach. Noach, the tzaddik, the man who saved the world, the distinguished world leader, drank some wine and debased himself. The wine caused him to lose control and uncover himself in his tent. It happened once, in the privacy of his own tent, and it is spoken about in every corner of the world until this very day! The youngest child who studies Chumash is aware of Noach's degradation. All of this humiliation because of one error. "See," exhorted the Chafetz Chaim, "one mistake, one foolish act, and it is remembered forever!"

This is a powerful lesson for all of us. How often do we hear about accomplished people who have devoted their lives to the betterment of so many, who are relegated to humiliation and shame, all because of a foolish mistake, an error that was, for the most part, the result of a compulsive reaction or a spontaneous lack of control? It takes so little to destroy so much. If we would only think of the consequences before we act.

Hashem descended to look at the city and tower which the sons of man built. (11:5)

Rashi notes the Torah's emphasis on the distinct lineage of the builders of the tower. Certainly they were not sons of donkeys or camels. Apparently, it was the very fact that they were sons/descendants of Adam HaRishon that brought their miscreancy to the forefront. Adam was the one who told Hashem, "The woman whom You gave me" (Ibid 3:12), indicating kefiyas tov, a lack of gratitude, on his part. Likewise, his descendants rejected the good that Hashem had performed for them, when He revived the remnants of the flood.

Horav Aizik Ausband, Shlita, notes the powerful lesson to be derived from this thought. We have always been aware of the despicable nature of one who is a kafui tov. To be unappreciative of those who help us, to manifest a lack of gratitude to those who have made a difference in our lives - regardless of the size or value of the assistance - is abominable. Now we learn that this ignoble character deficiency has a far-reaching effect on future generations! Adam did not demonstrate proper recognition of Hashem's gift to him of a wife; his descendants did not recognize Hashem's salvation and mutinied against Him. After all, children often seek to outdo their parents!

I think, however, that there is one consolation - the flipside. One who is a makir tov, recognizes and appreciates the good that he has benefited from others, imbues this wonderful character trait into his family's DNA. His descendants will follow suit and demonstrate their appreciation to others. We pay gratitude when we appreciate something that we have received. A lack of gratitude indicates either a base character or a misperception on the part of the beneficiary. When parents appreciate something, they not only pay gratitude for receiving it, they also teach their children that this is something of value. This applies to all areas of life. We take many things for granted, thus neglecting to show our appreciation for it. Often, we feel that since we are paying for a commodity, our payment is sufficient gratitude. This is often the case in Jewish education when we fail to show simple appreciation to those who deserve it most. After all, "they work for us," or, "I am paying for it." Teaching goes beyond the act of imparting the material. It is a total absorption in one's work, so that the material becomes imbued into the students mind and character. It is the establishment of another link in the chain of Torah from Har Sinai. Money does not buy this, but appreciation does pay for it. When the parents appreciate what they receive, the child will, likewise, grow up with a healthy respect and appreciation for the material and its dissemination.

A simple, unpretentious admirer of fine art derived much pleasure from visiting the great art galleries. One day, he was admiring a priceless painting in a New York gallery, when a friend jokingly remarked, "Why do you permit yourself to become so enthused over things that you could never afford to own?" The man replied, "I would

rather appreciate things that I cannot have, than have things that I cannot appreciate." Appreciation is an art that has to be learned.

Nehallelecha Hashem Elokeinu...u'negadelcha, u'neshebeichacha u'nefaercha, v'nazkir Shimcha Malkeinu.

We will extol You Hashem, our G-d... we will declare Your greatness, we will praise You, we will glorify You, we will remember Your Name and declare You our King, our only G-d.

Horav Avigdor Miller, zl, explains this litany of praises as meaning: we will reflect and study Your greatness, praise, glory etc. and see to it that it is made known to others. Not only will we increase our awareness of Your eminence, but we will also convey this praise to others, so that Your praise will be spread throughout the world. Veritably, the translation of u'negadelcha is, "we shall magnify You." How can a mere mortal magnify Hashem, Who is infinite? Horav Shimon Schwab, zl, explains that by increasing people's knowledge of Hashem and by emphasizing certain aspects of His preeminence, we magnify Him, so to speak.

Alternatively, he explains that u'negadelcha may be related to gadol, which also means intertwined. Tzitzis are referred to as gedillim. They are comprised of four strands each of which are pulled through a hole and twisted together into knots. This part of the Tzitzis with its knots is called gedillim. We also find gidul saar, as meaning "braiding hair." Thus, u'negadelcha is the technique used in Pesukei D'Zimra whereby various pesukim describing Hashem's praise create a harmony of thought, much like a florist will assemble various flowers to make a beautiful bouquet. In this way, we praise Hashem by combining various aspects of our perception of His greatness.

In loving memory of our dear Mother and Grandmother Mrs. Leah Handler l'zchar nishams haisha hachashuva maras Leah bas Dovid Chaim HaKohen a"h niftara 7 Cheshvan 5754 t.n.tz.v.h. Mr. Moshe Handler Rabbi Mechel Handler & Family Mrs. Mimi Samuels & Family Mrs. Debra Bassan & Family

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From: ListModerator@kby.org on behalf of Kerem B'Yavneh Online [feedback@kby.org] Sent: Thursday, October 26, 2006 10:14 AM To: KBY Parsha Subject: Parshat Noach

We would like to remind our alumni learning at YU that a list of recommended Tosfot for bekiut on Bava Kamma is available online at: <http://www.kby.org/torah/tosfot/index.cfm>. (Also available are lists on: Succah, Ketuvot, Gittin, B. Batra, and Makkot.)

Parshat Noach Ethics and Etiquette **Rosh Hayeshiva Rav Mordechai Greenberg shlita** (Translated by Rav Meir Orlian)

"Shem and Yefet took the garment ... and they covered their father's nakedness." (Bereishit 9:23) Rashi explains: "It does not say 'they took' (vayikchu), but rather 'he took' (vayikach). This teaches that Shem made a greater effort in the mitzvah than Yefet. Therefore, his children merited the talit of tzitzit, and Yefet earned burial for his children, as it says, 'I will give Gog there a burial place.'"

Rav Soloveitchik z"l explains that there are two kinds of behavior, which he calls ethics and etiquette. The difference between them is that ethics require a person to do what is right even when in private, and nobody sees him. In contrast, etiquette is a matter of beauty and manners, which is dependent on people's opinion. It does not apply when no one is there, since the basis of etiquette is human honor, which requires sensitivity for others, and when no one is there, clearly there is no need for caution.

This was the difference between Shem and Yefet. Shem's initiative to cover his father flowed from his recognition that ethics require to act this way, in order to save his father from embarrassment. Therefore, he merited a talit of mitzvah. We can understand this based on the Magen Avraham (O.C. 8:13), who cites the AR"l that it is proper to wear the tzitzit under one's clothes, and only the strings of the tzitzit should be seen outside. The tzitzit under the clothes indicate that one should act ethically even when in private and no one sees him.

Yefet did not understand that there is an issue of ethics. Therefore, he did not act until he saw Shem, and understood that Shem will value him if he would help, and hence joined, because etiquette requires so. Therefore, his children earned burial in the war of Gog and Magog, as burial is based on human honor. Since his action was motivated by human honor, he earned burial, which is also based on respect. This is what Noach blessed him, "May G-d extend Yefet, but he will dwell in the tents of Shem." (Bereishit 9:27) Yefet will have an aesthetic sense, etiquette, but this does not

bring to Divine Presence. Shechina requires ethics - "He will dwell in the tents of Shem."

It is possible to add, that on Avraham's statement "If as much as a string to a shoestraps" (Bereishit 14:23), Chazal say that in merit of this Avraham's children earned the string of tzitzit. This requires explanation, since Shem already earned the talit of mitzvah! We should note, however, that Shem earned a talit of tzitzit, whereas Avraham the string of tzitzit. Perhaps it means as the following.

One who focuses on ethics is liable to forget about etiquette. He is liable to act like a robot to uphold ethics, without consideration of human honor. Chasidic literature talks of that foolish chasid who saw a midget, went over to him, and enthusiastically blessed in a loud voice, "Baruch meshaneh habriyot." Everybody becomes an "object of mitzvah" for him. He cares about fulfilling his mitzvot, but not about human honor. Avraham dealt a lot with human honor. He taught us that just like ethics is done even in private, so, too, it is done with consideration of human honor, and ethics must also be fine in the eyes of others.

The tzitzit is, in fact, worn under other clothes, according to the AR"i, but the strings are seen out. Shem earned a talit of tzitzit, which is under the clothes, because he upholds ethics also in private. However, Avraham earned string of tzitzit that are seen, because he dealt not only with ethics, but also with etiquette, and Avraham's etiquette is greater than the etiquette of non-Jews, because it is linked to ethics.

The Malbim addresses the connection between etiquette and ethics. His words are shocking, since the Malbim wrote this in the period before the Holocaust, as if he foresaw what was about to erupt. He writes on the pasuk, "Avraham said: Because I said that there is no fear of G-d in this place." (Bereishit 20:11):

[Avraham] said to [Avimelech] that even if we see a person, or nation, that is a great philosopher, who trained himself in good character based on his understanding, and he does justice, righteousness, all based on his own understanding - even so, we cannot trust that person or that nation, that when his desire will push him to do bad, his mind will overcome his desire. For when his desire burns for a beautiful woman or his friend's wealth with no one watching, then his mind will also be misled to murder, commit adultery and do all evil. There is only one force in a person that we can rely upon that he will not sin, and that is the trait of fear that is implanted in the soul, from which comes out one branch - and that is, fear of G-d. When the soul is full of fear of G-d, Who sees his revealed and hidden [acts] and sees all his actions, then also when his inclination overcomes him, he will fear and be embarrassed from the great King who sees all his actions and he will refrain from evil ...

About this [Avraham] said: "For I said..." - even though I saw your nation that they have good traits, do justice and righteousness, and I did not see any wrong, only one lack, that there is no fear of G-d in this place - "they will kill me over the issue of my wife." I cannot rely on them, for when they see a beautiful woman, and the fire of desire burns in them, they will not be able to control their desire and they will kill me, since they do not fear G-d. The mind alone and man-ordained etiquette will not stand up to the [strong] arms of desire.

Chazal comment on this in Masechet Yoma (86a):

"Love Hashem, your G-d" - G-d's Name should be beloved through you. One should read and learn, and serve talmidei chachamim, and his dealings should be honest and his talk with people should be polite. What do people say about him? Fortunate is his father who taught him Torah, fortunate is his teacher who taught him Torah; woe to people who did not learn Torah. So-and-so who learned Torah - see how pleasant his ways are, how proper his actions are. About him the pasuk says, "He said to me, you are My servant, Yisrael in whom I am glorified." However, one who reads and learns and serves talmidei chachamim, and his dealings are not with integrity, what do people say about him? Woe to so-and-so who learned Torah, woe to his father who taught him Torah, woe to his teacher who taught him Torah. So-and-so who learned Torah, see how improper his deeds are and how disgusting are his ways. About him Scripture states: "It was said of them, These are the people of Hashem, but they departed His land."

May we merit to act ethically and with etiquette, and thereby glorify Hashem's Name!