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Covenant & Conversation

**Thoughts on the Weekly Parsha from
Lord Jonathan Sacks**

Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the British Commonwealth

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Noach 5772 I once had the opportunity to ask the Catholic writer Paul Johnson what had struck him most about Judaism during the long period he spent researching it for his masterly *A History of the Jews*? He replied in roughly these words: "There have been, in the course of history, societies that emphasised the individual – like the secular West today. And there have been others that placed weight on the collective – communist Russia or China, for example."

Judaism, he continued, was the most successful example he knew of that managed the delicate balance between both – giving equal weight to individual and collective responsibility. Judaism was a religion of strong individuals and strong communities. This, he said, was very rare and difficult, and constituted one of our greatest achievements.

It was a wise and subtle observation. Without knowing it, he had in effect paraphrased Hillel's aphorism: "If I am not for myself, who will be (individual responsibility)? But if I am only for myself, what am I (collective responsibility)?" This insight allows us to see the argument of Parshat Noach in a way that might not have been obvious otherwise.

The parsha begins and ends with two great events, the Flood on the one hand, Babel and its tower on the other. On the face of it they have nothing in common. The failings of the generation of the Flood are explicit. "The world was corrupt before God, and the land was filled with violence. God saw the world, and it was corrupted. All flesh had perverted its way on the earth" (Gen. 6: 11-12). Wickedness, violence, corruption, perversion: this is the language of systemic moral failure.

Babel by contrast seems almost idyllic. "The entire earth had one language and a common speech" (11: 1). The builders are bent on construction, not destruction. It is far from clear what their sin was. Yet from the Torah's point of view Babel represents another serious wrong turn, because immediately thereafter God summons Abraham to begin an entirely new chapter in the religious story of humankind. There is no Flood – God had, in any case, sworn that He would never again punish humanity in such a way ("Never again will I curse the soil because of man, for the inclination of man's heart is evil from his youth. I will never again strike down all life as I have just done", 8: 21). But it is clear that after Babel God comes to the conclusion that there must be another and different way for humans to live.

Both the Flood and the Tower of Babel are rooted in actual historical events, even if the narrative is not couched in the language of descriptive history. Mesopotamia had many flood myths, all of which testify to the memory of disastrous inundations, especially on the flat lands of the Tigris-Euphrates valley (See Commentary of R. David Zvi Hoffman to Genesis 6 [Hebrew, 140] who suggests that the Flood may have been limited to centres of human habitation, rather than covering the whole earth). Excavations at Shuruppak, Kish, Uruk and Ur – Abraham's birthplace – reveal evidence of clay flood deposits. Likewise the Tower of Babel was a historical reality. Herodotus tells of the sacred enclosure of Babylon, at the centre of which was a ziqqurat or tower of seven stories, 300 feet high. The remains of more than thirty such towers have been discovered, mainly in lower Mesopotamia, and many references have been found in the literature of the time that speak of such towers "reaching heaven."

However, the stories of the Flood and Babel are not merely historical, because the Torah is not history but "teaching, instruction." They are there because they represent a profound moral-social-political-spiritual truth about the human situation as the Torah sees it. They represent, respectively, precisely the failures intimated by Paul Johnson. The Flood tells us what happens to civilization when individuals rule and there is no collective. Babel tells us what happens when the collective rules and individuals are sacrificed to it.

It was Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), the thinker who laid the foundations of modern politics in his classic *Leviathan* (1651), who – without referring to the Flood – gave it its best interpretation. Before there were political institutions, said Hobbes, human beings were in a "state of nature." They were individuals, packs, bands. Lacking a stable ruler, an effective government and enforceable laws, people would be in a state of permanent and violent chaos – "a war of every man against every man" – as they competed for scarce resources. There would be "continual fear, and danger of violent death; and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short." Such situations exist today in a whole series of failed or failing states. That is precisely the Torah's description of life before the Flood. When there is no rule of law to constrain individuals, the world is filled with violence.

Babel is the opposite, and we now have important historical evidence as to exactly what was meant by the sentence, "The entire land had one language and a common speech." This may not refer to primal humanity before the division of languages. In fact in the previous chapter the Torah has already stated, "From these the maritime peoples spread out into their lands in their clans within their nations, each with its own language" (Gen. 10: 5). The Talmud *Yerushalmi*, *Megillah* 1: 11, 71b, records a dispute between R. Eliezer and R. Johanan, one of whom holds that the division of humanity into seventy languages occurred before the Flood).

The reference seems to be to the imperial practice of the neo-Assyrians, of imposing their own language on the peoples they

conquered. One inscription of the time records that Ashurbanipal II “made the totality of all peoples speak one speech.” A cylinder inscription of Sargon II says, “Populations of the four quarters of the world with strange tongues and incompatible speech . . . whom I had taken as booty at the command of Ashur my lord by the might of my sceptre, I caused to accept a single voice.” The neo-Assyrians asserted their supremacy by insisting that their language was the only one to be used by the nations and populations they had defeated. On this reading, Babel is a critique of imperialism.

There is even a hint of this in the parallelism of language between the builders of Babel and the Egyptian Pharaoh who enslaved the Israelites. In Babel they said, “Come, [hava] let us build ourselves a city and a tower . . . lest [pen] we be scattered over the face of the earth” (Gen. 11: 4). In Egypt Pharaoh said, “Come, [hava] let us deal wisely with them, lest [pen] they increase so much . . .” (Ex. 1: 10). The repeated “Come, let us . . . lest” is too pronounced to be accidental. Babel, like Egypt, represents an empire that subjugates entire populations, riding roughshod over their identities and freedoms.

If this is so, we will have to re-read the entire Babel story in a way that makes it much more convincing. The sequence is this: Genesis 10 describes the division of humanity into seventy nations and seventy languages. Genesis 11 tells of how one imperial power conquered smaller nations and imposed their language and culture on them, thus directly contravening God’s wish that humans should respect the integrity of each nation and each individual. When at the end of the Babel story God “confuses the language” of the builders, He is not creating a new state of affairs but restoring the old.

Interpreted thus, the story of Babel is a critique of the power of the collective when it crushes individuality – the individuality of the seventy cultures described in Genesis 10. (A personal note: I had the privilege of addressing 2,000 leaders from all the world’s faiths at the Millennium Peace Summit in the United Nations in August 2000. It turned out that there were exactly 70 traditions – each with their subdivisions and sects – represented. So it seems there still are seventy basic cultures). When the rule of law is used to suppress individuals and their distinctive languages and traditions, this too is wrong. The miracle of monotheism is that Unity in Heaven creates diversity on earth, and God asks us (with obvious conditions) to respect that diversity.

So the Flood and the Tower of Babel, though polar opposites, are linked, and the entire parsha of Noah is a brilliant study in the human condition. There are individualistic cultures and there are collectivist ones, and both fail, the former because they lead to anarchy and violence, the latter because they lead to oppression and tyranny.

So Paul Johnson’s insight turns out to be both deep and true. After the two great failures of the Flood and Babel, Abraham was called on to create a new form of social order that would give equal honour to the individual and the collective, personal responsibility and the common good. That remains the special gift of Jews and Judaism to the world. Shabbat Shalom

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This shiur is sponsored by Larry and Maureen Eisenberg in memory of Devora Leah (Lillian) Grossman

SICHA OF HARAV YEHUDA AMITAL ZT”L

A Tzaddik in His Generation

Translated by Kaeren Fish

“These are the generations of Noah; Noah was a righteous man, he was perfect in his generation.” (Bereishit 6:9)

This parasha needs to be considered from two different perspectives. One perspective focuses on man’s actions, which corrupted the entire world, resulting in the terrible Flood. The other focuses on God’s actions, bringing the Flood to destroy the world, and thereby revealing His providence and control over all of creation.

From Chazal’s teachings it appears that the generation of the Flood had attained great achievements in the technological sphere. The Gemara in Massekhet Sanhedrin describes them sowing seeds only once every forty years, traveling from one end of the world to the other in a short time, and so on. Their success was what caused them to stumble. Having attained all of this, their desires were no longer satisfied by what they had. They sought out new excitement and stimulation, to the point where they engaged in bestiality. The people of that generation did not know how to use their achievements to further the development of the world.

Their punishment expresses an erasing of culture, of their advanced civilization. Even mankind’s most impressive achievements are of no use if they are not accompanied by Torah. According to the Zohar, that generation, with its great potential, should have received the Torah. The opening of the “windows of heaven” (arbot ha-shamayim) symbolized the opening of the gates of knowledge and wisdom, since these two gifts are interconnected. However, so long as there was no Torah, their enormous powers were directed and used in an improper direction, and this doomed all of existence. Without Torah there is no value to scientific development.

The same problem that plagued the generation of the Flood exists also today. Mankind has attained wondrous achievements, in all areas. Enormous efforts are invested in technological development. Man’s potential is huge. But without Torah accompanying his progress, man uses some of this potential for negative purposes. Wiping out the world is not the solution in our times – God promised that He would not bring another Flood to the world. The solution must lie in channeling our human potential in the proper direction and using it for good purposes. We can do this only on the basis of the outline provided by the Torah.

“Noah was a righteous man; he was perfect in his generation.” The test of a tzaddik, a righteous man, is not only within his own generation, in the realm of relations between him and the people around him. The question that must guide him is whether he is using all the potential that he possesses. Is he activating all his positive abilities at the same level of intensity and with the same motivation that his companions are using their energies for negative purposes? Only thus will the righteous ones of the generation tip the scales in the direction of the good.

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THE TANACH STUDY CENTER [<http://www.tanach.org>]
In Memory of Rabbi Abraham Leibtag
Shiurim in Chumash & Navi by Menachem Leibtag
PARSHAT NOACH

The Mabul (the Flood) and Migdal Bavel (the Tower of Babel) are undoubtedly the two primary stories in this week's Parsha. However, each of these two stories is preceded by a list of genealogies that appear to be rather irrelevant. Furthermore, at the conclusion of Parshat Noach (see 11:10-25) we find yet another set of genealogies (that introduces the story of Avraham Avinu). In this week's shiur, we explain how these 'sifrei toladot' (lists of genealogies) create a 'framework' for Sefer Breishit and can help us better understand how these stories (i.e. the Flood and Migdal Bavel) contribute to its overall theme.

INTRODUCTION In our introductory shiur on Sefer Breishit, we discussed the methodology that we employ to uncover the primary theme of each sefer. We begin our shiur with a quick review of those basic steps:

- 1) To identify the primary topic of each 'parshia'
- 2) To group the titles of these 'parshiot' into units that share a more common topic. [Each of these units could be considered as 'chapters' of the book.]
- 3) To group these 'chapter' divisions into larger units that share a common topic or theme [similar to 'sections' of a book].
- 4) To suggest an overall theme of the book, by analyzing the progression of theme from one section to the next.

In our shiur, we will show how the various sets of "toladot" in Sefer Breishit can help us apply this methodology, and can point us in a direction that may help us uncover its underlying theme.

FROM A LIST TO AN OUTLINE In the following table, we list all of the 'parshiot' in the first seventeen chapters of Sefer Breishit, joining together only the most obvious groups of parshiot by noting their specific and then more general topics. Study this list carefully, noting how the specific topics can easily group into more general topics:

PSUKIM	SPECIFIC TOPIC	GENERAL TOPIC
1:1-2:3	7 days of Creation	Creation of nature
2:4-3:15	the Gan Eden story	Gan Eden
3:16	Chava's punishment	Gan Eden
3:17-21	Man's punishment	Gan Eden
3:22-24	Expulsion from Gan Eden	Gan Eden
4:1-26	Cain's sin and punishment	Outside Gan Eden
5:1-31	[Toladot:] Adam->Noach	Dor Ha-mabul
5:32-6:4	Man's downfall	[pre-Mabul]
6:5-8	reason for Mabul / Hashem	[pre-Mabul]
6:9-12	reason for Mabul / Elokim	[pre-Mabul]
6:13-8:14	Punishment - the Flood	The Mabul
8:15-9:7	Leaving the Ark	[post-Mabul]
9:8-17	'Brit ha-keshet'	[post-Mabul]
9:18-29	Cham cursed/Shem blessed	[post-Mabul]
10:1-32	[Toladot:] sons of Noach	The 70 Nations
11:1-9	Builders of the Tower	Migdal Bavel
11:10-32	[Toladot:] Shem->Terach	Avraham Avinu
12:1-9	Avraham's aliya	Avraham Avinu
12:10-13:18	Lot leaves Avraham	Avraham Avinu
14:1-24	War of 4 & 5 kings	Avraham Avinu
15:1-21	Covenant bein ha'btarim	Avraham Avinu
Chapter 16	Yishmael's birth	Avraham Avinu
Chapter 17	Brit mila - covenant	Avraham Avinu
	etc.	

[To verify this, I recommend that you review this table (and its conclusions) using a Tanach Koren.]

As you review this chart, note how the first set of major topics all relate in one form or other to God's 'Hashgacha' [providence], i.e. His intervention in the history of mankind as He punishes man (or mankind) for wayward behavior. In fact, just about all of the stories in Chumash (prior to the arrival of Avraham Avinu) relate in some manner to the general topic of 'sin & punishment' ['sachar ve-onesh']. For example, after Creation we find the following stories: * Adam & Eve sin & hence are expelled from Gan Eden * Cain is punished for the murder of Hevel * Dor ha-mabul is punished for its corruption * 'Dor ha-plaga' is 'punished' for building the Tower

Afterward, the focus of Sefer Breishit shifts from stories of 'sin & punishment' to God's choice of Avraham Avinu - and the story of his offspring.

ENTER - 'TOLADOT' However, within this progression of topics, we find a very interesting phenomenon. Return to the table (above) and note how each of these general topics are first introduced by a set of toladot [genealogies]. For example: * The toladot from Adam to Noach (chapter 5) introduce the story of the Mabul (chapters 6->9). * The toladot of Noach's children (chapter 10) introduces the story of Migdal Bavel (11:1-9 / the Tower of Babel). * The toladot from Shem to Terach (chapter 11) introduce the story of Avraham Avinu (chapters 12-...)

In fact, as surprising as it may sound, even the story of Gan Eden (chapters 2-3) is first introduced by toladot! "These are the 'toladot' of the heavens & earth..." [See 2:4! / note the various English translations.]

Furthermore, later on in Sefer Breishit, we continue to find toladot. Note how we later find: toladot of Yishmael (see 25:12); toladot of Yitzchak (see 25:19); toladot of Esav (see 36:1); & toladot of Yaakov (see 37:2). The following table summarizes this pattern, and illustrates how [some sort of] "toladot" introduces each of the main topics in Sefer Breishit. As you review this table note how the first several topics all relate to 'chet ve-onesh', i.e. God's punishment of man (or mankind) for his sins, while the remaining topics relate to the story of our forefathers - the Avot!

CHAPTER TOPIC

2	Toldot shamayim va-aretz
2->4	-> Man in (and out of) Gan Eden
5	Toldot Adam to Noach
6->9	-> ha-Mabul - The story of the Flood
10	Toldot Bnei Noach - Shem, Cham & Yefet
11:1-9	-> Migdal Bavel - The Tower of Babel
11	Toldot Shem until Terach
12->25	-> God's choice of Avraham Avinu
25-35	Toldot Yitzchak - story of Yaakov & Esav
36	Toldot Esav - story of Esav's children
37-50	Toldot Yaakov - story of Yosef & his brothers

Although this pattern is rarely noticed, these sifrei toladot actually create a framework for the entire book of Breishit! In this manner, the toladot introduce each and every story in Sefer Breishit. To explain why, we must first take a minute to explain what the word toladot means:

WHAT IS A TOLADA? The word toladot stems from the Hebrew word 'vlad', a child or offspring. Therefore, 'eileh toldot' should be translated 'these are the children of...'. For example: 'eileh toldot Adam' (5:1) means - 'these are the children of Adam' - and thus introduces the story of Adam's children, i.e. Shet, Enosh, Keinan, etc. Similarly, 'eileh toldot Noach' introduces the story of Noach's children - Shem, Cham, and Yefet. [See Rashbam on Breishit 37:2 for a more complete explanation.] Some of these toladot in Sefer Breishit are very short; as they simply state that the person lived, married, had children and died (e.g. the generations from Adam to Noach). Other toladot are very detailed, e.g. those of Noach, Terach, Yitzchak, and Yaakov. Nonetheless, every story in Sefer Breishit could be understood as a detail in the progression of these "toladot".

This explanation raises a question concerning the first instance where we find toldot - i.e. toldot shamayim va-aretz (see 2:4). How do the heavens and earth have 'children'?! [Note how various English translations attempt to solve this problem when they translate this pasuk!]

The answer to this question may be quite meaningful. Recall that the first chapter of Breishit explains how God created shamayim va-aretz (heavens and earth) from 'nothing' (ex nihilo). Then, immediately afterward in the next chapter, we encounter the first use of toldot: "Eileh toldot ha-shamayim ve-ha'aretz be-hibar'am..." (2:4). So what does Chumash refer to as the toladot of shamayim va-aretz, i.e. what are the children of heaven and earth? If we follow the progressive pattern of Sefer Breishit (as illustrated by the above table) then 'toldot shamayim va-aretz' must refer to man himself [i.e. Adam ha-rishon], for it is the story of his creation that immediately follows this introductory pasuk! In other words, Adam ha'Rishon is considered the 'offspring' of shamayim va-aretz. This interpretation could help explain the significance of the pasuk that describes how God created man in perek bet (the first topic of this unit):

"And Hashem Elokim formed man from the dust of the earth and blew into his nostrils nishmat chayim - the breath of life" (see 2:7). This second ingredient may reflect the aspect of man which comes from (or at least returns to) heaven.

In contrast to the story of Creation in perek aleph, which features a clear division between shamayim [note the purpose of the 'rakiya' in 1:6], the special manner of God's creation of man in perek bet may reflect his unique ability to connect between heaven and earth. [See Rashi on 2:5, where he explains that God created man so that he could pray for rain - in order for vegetation to grow. See also last week's shiur on Parshat Breishit.]

Similarly, the next set of toladot - from Adam to Noah (see chapter 5) lead immediately into the story of the Flood. Note how 9:28-29 - the psukim that conclude the Noah story, are clearly part of the same literary unit that began with the toladot in chapter 5 (i.e. they follow the same 'template'). This pattern of "toladot" that introduce stories continues all the way until the very end of Sefer Breishit. Therefore, we conclude that these sifrei toladot do more than 'keep the sefer together'; they also help develop the theme of Sefer Breishit. We will now show how these toladot create not only a framework for Sefer Breishit; they can also help us identify its two distinct sections that create its primary theme. Let's explain:

THE TWO SECTIONS OF SEFER BREISHIT Despite this successive nature of the toladot in Sefer Breishit, they clearly divide into two distinct sections. 1) God's creation of mankind (chapters 1-11) w/ stories relating to 'sachar ve-onesh' 2) The story of the avot (chapters 12->50) God's choice of Avraham's offspring to become His nation.

Even though the majority of Sefer Breishit focuses on the family of Avraham Avinu (Section Two), in the first eleven chapters (Section One), the Torah's focus is on mankind as a whole. For example, even when Section One includes special details about Noah, it is not because he is designated to become a special nation - rather, it is because through Noah that mankind will be preserved. After the flood, the Torah tells us how Noah's offspring evolve into nations, and their dispersing (see chapter 10). Even though we find that Noah blesses Shem and Yefet (see 9:25-27), the concept of a special nation with a special covenant does not begin until the story of Avraham Avinu.

In contrast, Section Two (chapters 11-50) focuses on the story of Am Yisrael - God's special nation. In this section, Sefer Breishit is no longer universalistic, rather it becomes particularistic. Therefore, this section begins with toladot Shem till Terach (see 11:10-24) that introduce the story of Avraham Avinu, whom God chooses in chapter 12 to become the forefather of His special nation. The remainder of Sefer Breishit explains which of Avraham's offspring are chosen [= 'bechira'], e.g. Yitzchak and Yaakov, and which are rejected [= 'dechiya'], e.g. Yishmael and Esav. This explains why Sefer Breishit concludes precisely when this complicated bechira process reaches its completion - i.e. when all twelve sons of Yaakov have been chosen, and none of his offspring will ever again be rejected. [This may also explain the significance of Yaakov's name change to Yisrael [see TSC shiur on Parshat Vayishlach].

Our final table summarizes how the toladot help define these two sections of Sefer Breishit:

I. UNIVERSALISTIC (chapters 1->11) - Creation of mankind

PEREK TOLDOT the STORY OF...

1-4	'shamayim va-aretz'	Man in (and out of) Gan Eden
5-9	from Adam to Noah	'dor ha-mabul' - the Flood
10-11	benei Noah to 70 nations	'dor ha-plaga' - Migdal Bavel

II. PARTICULARISTIC (11->50) - God's choice of Am Yisrael

PEREK TOLDOT the STORY OF...

11	Shem to Terach	leads up to Avraham Avinu
11-25	Terach	God's choice of Avraham & Yitzchak
25	Yishmael	*his 'rejection' (dechiya)
25-35	Yitzchak	Yaakov and Esav (their rivalry)
36	Esav	* his 'rejection'
37-50	Yaakov	The 12 tribes/ Yosef and his brothers
		70 'nefesh' go down to Egypt

However, if our original assumption that each sefer in Chumash carries a unique prophetic theme is correct, then there should be a thematic reason for the progression of events from Section One to Section Two. Therefore, to

identify the overall theme of Sefer Breishit, one must take into consideration how these two sections relate to one another. To help uncover that theme, we must take a closer look at the structure created by these toladot.

SHEM & SHEM HASHEM Note once again from the above table how each general topic in the first section of Sefer Breishit was first introduced by a set of toladot. In a similar manner, each of these units concludes with an event which in some way relates to the concept of 'shem Hashem'. Let's explain how. Our first unit, the story of Adam ha-rishon, concludes at the end of chapter four with a very intriguing pasuk: "And also Shet gave birth to a son and called him Enosh, then he 'began' to call out in the Name of God ['az huchal likro be-shem Hashem'] (see 4:26). [Most commentators explain that 'huchal' implies that man began to 'defile' God's Name (shoresh 'chillul'), i.e. they didn't call in His Name properly - see also Rambam Hilchot Avoda Zara 1:1]

No matter how we explain the word huchal in this pasuk, all the commentators agree that God's intention was for man to 'call out in His Name'. Note, however, how this pasuk concludes the section that began in 2:4 with the story of Gan Eden. Even though man was banished from Gan Eden and Cain was punished for murder, God still has expectations from mankind - man is expected to search for God, to 'call out in His Name'. Despite this high expectation, the next unit of toladot, which leads into the story of the Mabul, shows that man's behavior fell far short of God's hopes. God became so enraged that He decides to destroy His creation and start over again with Noah. This unit which begins in 5:1 concludes in chapter 9 with a special set of mitzvot for Bnei Noah (9:1-7), a covenant ('brit ha-keshet' (9:8-17), and ends with the story of Noah becoming drunk (9:18-29). However, even in this final story (of this unit) we find once again a reference to 'shem Hashem': "After cursing Canaan for his actions, Noah then blesses his son Shem: "Blessed be God, the Lord of Shem..." (see 9:26-27).

Now it is not by chance that Noah named his son - Shem. Most likely, Noah's decision to name his son Shem was rooted in his hope that his son would fulfill God's expectation that man would learn to call out "be-shem Hashem", as explained in 4:26! [It is not by chance that Chazal consider Shem the founder of the first Yeshiva, the house of learning where Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov studied, i.e. 'Yeshivat Shem ve-Ever']

Noah blesses Shem in the hope that he and his descendants will indeed fulfill this goal. However, once again, we find that the next generation fails. In chapter 10, again we find a unit that begins with toladot - this time the development of the seventy nations from the children of Shem, Cham, and Yefet - and again, just like the two units that preceded it, this unit also concludes with a story where the word "shem" emerges as thematically significant, i.e. the story of Migdal Bavel. As we will now explain, in this story, once again mankind is not looking for God; rather they are interested solely in making a name ['shem'] for themselves!

MIGDAL BAVEL When reading the first four psukim of the story of Migdal Bavel, it is hard to pinpoint one specific sin: [Note, however, the significant usage of the first person plural.] "Everyone on earth had the same language and the same words. And as they traveled from the east, they came upon a valley in the land of Shin'ar and settled there. They said to one another: Come, let us make bricks and burn them hard... And they said, Come let us build us a city and a tower with its top in the sky, and we will make a name for ourselves - v'naaseh lanu shem - lest we shall be scattered all over the world. Then God came down to see..." (see 11:1-7).

From a cursory reading, it is not clear exactly what was so terrible about this generation. After all, is not achieving 'achdut' [unity] a positive goal? Likewise, the use of human ingenuity to initiate an industrial revolution, developing man-made building materials, i.e. bricks from clay etc., seems to be a positive advancement of society. Furthermore, there appears to be nothing wrong with simply building a city and a tower. Why was God so angered that He decided to stop this construction and disperse mankind? Chazal focus their criticism of this generation on their antagonistic attitude towards God (see Rashi 11:1). One key phrase in the Torah's explanation of the purpose for the tower reflects the egocentric nature of this generation: "ve-na'aseh lanu shem" [we shall make a name for ourselves] (11:4) [see Sanhedrin 109a].

Instead of devoting themselves to the name of God, this generation devotes all of their efforts for the sake of an unholy end. Their society and culture focused solely on man's dominion and strength, while totally neglecting any divine purpose for their existence. [See Ramban on 11:4!] Although this generation's moral behavior was probably much better than that of the generation of the Flood, God remained disappointed, for they

established an anthropocentric society (i.e. man in the center) instead of a theocentric one (i.e. God in the center). Their primary aim was to make a 'name for themselves', but not for God. As God's hope that this new generation would 'koreh be-shem Hashem' - to call out in His Name - never materialized - He instigates their dispersion. God must take action to assure that this misdirected unity will not achieve its stated goal (see 11:5-7). Therefore, God causes the 'mixing of languages' - so that each nation will follow its own direction, unable to unify - until they will find a common goal worthy of that unity.

AVRAHAM IS CHOSEN FOR A PURPOSE Our analysis thus far can help us identify the thematic significance this Migdal Bavel incident within the progression of events in Sefer Breishit - for the very next story is God's choice of Avraham Avinu to become His special nation! In a manner similar to the earlier stories in Chumash, the story of God choosing Avraham Avinu is first introduced, and not by chance, by tracing his genealogy back ten generations - so that it will begin with Shem - the son of Noah! The thematic connection to "shem" becomes obvious. From this perspective, the story of Migdal Bavel should not be viewed as just another event that took place - so that we know how and when the development of language began. Rather, this story 'sets the stage' for God's choice of Avraham Avinu, for it will become the destiny of Avraham, the primary descendent of toldot Shem, to bring God's Name back into the history of civilization; to 'fix' the error of civilization at Migdal Bavel! Therefore, it should come as no surprise to us that upon his arrival in Eretz Canaan, the Torah informs us of how Avraham Avinu ascends to Bet-El and builds a mizbeiach where he 'calls out in God's Name': "And Avraham came to the Land, to Shechem... and God spoke to him saying: 'To your offspring I have given this Land'... and Avraham traveled from there towards the mountain range to the east of Bet-el... and he built there an altar - and CALLED OUT IN THE NAME OF GOD"

[See 12:8 (and Ramban), compare 4:26). Similarly, it should not surprise us that when the prophet Isaiah describes the 'messianic age' (see Isaiah 2:1- 5) - he speaks of unity of mankind: - when all nations will gather together once again, but this time to climb the mountain of God (not a valley) - arriving at the city of Jerusalem - to its special tower - i.e. the Bet ha-Mikdash - 'the place that God has chosen for His Name to dwell there' [see Devarim 12:5-12] - thus rectifying the events that took place at Migdal Bavel. And when the prophet Tzefania describes ultimate redemption, we find once again an allusion to Migdal Bavel: 'ki az ehpoche el amim safa brura, likro chulam be-shem Hashem le-ovdo shchem echad'. (see 3:9)

In our shiur on Parshat Lech Lecha we will continue this discussion, as we will discuss in greater detail the purpose for God's choice of Avraham Avinu. Till then,
shabbat shalom
menachem

Thanks to hamelaket@gmail.com for collecting the following items:

**From Destiny Foundation/Rabbi Berel Wein
<info@jewishdestiny.com>
Subject Weekly Parsha from Rabbi Berel Wein**

**Jerusalem Post :: Friday, October 28, 2011
TOSSING A COIN**

Part of the Arab narrative about Israel is that somehow the Jews were never in the country until the nineteenth century. The anti-Semites all chant "Let them all go back to Europe." Arafat amazed Bill Clinton when he brazenly denied that there ever was a Jewish Temple on Mount Moriah in Jerusalem. The textbooks used in the Palestinian schools all deny Jewish existence in the Land of Israel prior to Herzl and the rise of political Zionism.

By repeating this patently false narrative over and over again the Arabs have convinced themselves that the Jews are Johnny-come-lately interlopers into the Land of Israel and that the Jews have no legitimate claim to their homeland and territories.

As long as this narrative is continued and reinforced it is difficult to see how any form of any peace process and settlement of the Israeli-Arab dispute can be achieved. Fantastic denials and distortions of historical facts only lead to further confrontation and eventual violence. As long as the accurate picture, not only of current events but of past happenings, is not recognized by the parties to the dispute it will defy logic and reality to expect any long lasting solutions to emerge from any types of conferences, meetings, plans and proposals, no matter how well-intentioned their promoters may be.

And the core of this correct understanding of past events and of history is that the Jews lived and settled in the Land of Israel millennia before Islam and the Arabs arrived on the scene. Our claim to the land is not based on the Holocaust (Obama's famous error in his Cairo speech) or on United Nations resolutions (Israel's continuing diplomatic error) but on the fact that the Jews settled the Land of Israel at the time of Joshua and have had a continuous association with the Land of Israel ever since.

Over Simchat Torah I spent some time studying the book of Ezra. I used the Daat Mikra edition published by Mosad Harav Kook to review and understand the text. One of the most fascinating things about that edition of the book is the wealth of seals, shards, and coins of First and Second Temple times that appear in that rather slim volume.

I was particularly struck (no pun intended) by the book's reproductions of the ancient coins of the Jewish state in those times. I realized again - or maybe it was the first time that I really realized it - that all of the coins in circulation in modern day Israel are replicas of ancient coins used by Jews in the Land of Israel thousands of years ago.

The harp on our half shekel coin is the same harp that appeared on coins and seals in First Temple times. The lulav and etrog that appear on the one shekel coin today appeared on the shekel in Temple times as well. The crown and capital on the five shekel coin also appeared on coins in Temple times as did the date palm tree that today is represented on our ten shekel coin.

Somehow my realization of this continuity of Jewish life in the Land of Israel as represented on our coins invigorated me and made me proud. It connected a lot of dots to me and reaffirmed again our narrative of the bond between the people of Israel and the Land of Israel.

These coins will do little to convince our enemies of the justice of Israel's cause. But they certainly are valuable in convincing us Jews of the justice of our cause. Ignorance and self-hatred abound in an assimilated Jewish world that worships the idols and ideals of current political correctness and faddish mores. If we do not know and believe our own story and of our right to live in the Land of Israel there is little reason to hope that others will somehow believe it. When I was a small child I noticed that my father would save the postage stamp from letters that he received from his family in British mandated Palestine. He explained to me, based on the stamps, what the Tower of David and the Temple Mount as represented on the stamps meant to Jews and what they should mean to me. I believe that this was the first history lesson that I then absorbed in my young life.

The power of those postage stamps helped shape my life and attitudes and eventually my future. The same thing is true of our Israeli monetary coins. They are not just legal tender in the market place. They are our story and the narrative of our rights and attachment to the Land of Israel.

Shabat Shalom

From Destiny Foundation/Rabbi Berel Wein <info@jewishdestiny.com>

Subject Weekly Parsha from Rabbi Berel Wein

Weekly Parsha :: NOACH :: Rabbi Berel Wein

One can only view the entire Torah narrative of parshat Noach as being one that describes lost opportunities, of roads not taken and chances missed. It begins with the generation of Noach himself. Noach warns his society of the looming disaster that will destroy them and their world and its civilization. Either he is not persuasive enough or the society is purposely and perversely oblivious to what is about to happen to their world.

Many times in history, both Jewish and general, we are witness to the consequences of not taking heed of warnings and ignoring evident signs of danger. No one likes to listen to prophets of gloom and doom. These contrarians disturb our daily lives and its sense of equilibrium and inertia. We say that we want positive change to occur but in our hearts we are more than satisfied to have the status quo of life remain.

So Noach's generation misses an opportunity to save itself and thereby to change all of later world history. They judge Noach and his ark building project as being odd if not entirely daft. So, even as the rains begin and the water begins to rise they continue to scoff at Noach and his message to them.

The unwanted savior is usually ignored in human events. He does not fit our preconceived matrix of help and salvation and thus, though he may be accurate and correct in his assessments, he is usually reviled, ridiculed and ignored. I need not give examples of this truism of human behavior to those of us who have lived in Israel over the past number of decades.

After the flood it is Noach himself who is found wanting in this very trait of missed opportunities. The reason that the commentators have always seemed to treat Noach negatively, even harshly, is because he missed out on creating a new world unsullied by past error and sin. An opportunity such is that, essentially the same one offered to Adam and Chava in the Garden of Eden, has never again been offered to anyone else in the long history of human civilization.

Not accepting that offer, not seizing that opportunity is the weakness that dooms Noach to criticism and bad reviews in Jewish rabbinic scholarship. The Torah itself advances clearly the necessity to make correct decisions and choices in life. The Torah tells us to choose life over death, good over evil, the eternal over the fleeting.

Many times the refusal to make any choice when the correct one was patently present is not viewed in Judaism as being cautious or neutral. Rather it is viewed as being a fatally wrong choice. An opportunity squandered is a sin and sins of omission are many times worse and more dangerous than sins of commission.

Our lives are defined by the choices that we have made and continue to make. Often times the necessity of making such choices is unavoidable for outside circumstances crowd in upon us. Hopefully the Lord will grant us enough wisdom to take advantage of opportunities presented and to make wise choices in our personal and national lives.

Shabat shalom.

From Ohr Somayach <ohr@ohr.edu>

To weekly@ohr.edu

Subject Torah Weekly

TORAH WEEKLY :: Parshat Noach

For the week ending 29 October 2011 / 30 Tishri 5772

from Ohr Somayach | www.ohr.edu

by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair - www.seasonsofthemoon.com

INSIGHTS

Strictly For The Birds

"From each bird according to its kind, and from each animal according to its kind"(6:2)

Recent world events have shown that anti-Semitism is alive and well and living in all those centers of civilization in which it was considered extinct half a century ago.

The existence of a Jewish state, the 19th century Jewish intelligentsias ultimate panacea against anti-Semitism, has failed to prevent the emergence of an anti-Semitism as potentially virulent as any strain to date with the ultimate irony that we are now dubbed the new "Nazis"!

What is all this supposed to teach us?

The existence of the Jewish People in an other-worldly phenomenon. The "unhistory" of the Jewish People has perplexed historians and left them either wanting to change their professions or fudging the facts. Logically, they say, we shouldn't be here at all. And in a sense, they're right. We don't belong here. We occupy this world as a piece of rented real estate. This is not our place. We are an other-worldly people.

The Jewish People is likened to a bird. In its natural element, the bird can soar to the heights, leaving its earth-bound cousins far below. However, when you enclose a bird in a cage, not only does it no longer soar, but its very advantages become its weaknesses. Its feet are not suited to walking around. Its wings atrophy. Its plumage wilts.

In this week's Torah portion, when the animals entered the ark, the Torah lists the birds before the land animals: "From each bird according to its kind, and from each animal according to its kind." However, after the entry to the ark it mentions the land animals before the birds: "And the animal that is not kosher, or the birds." And when about to leave the ark, the order reverts to the birds being mentioned before the land animals: "Every living thing that is with you of all flesh, of birds, of animals."

Why did the Torah change the order?

The ark was a microcosm of the world. Just as the world has three levels of holiness, so too the ark had three levels. Just as the world has a sun that radiates light to it, so too the ark had a precious jewel fixed in the ceiling that radiated light to it.

Outside the ark, the birds can fly. They are pre-eminent. However, when they are cooped up in an ark, they become the least of the animals.

We are a nation that has been designed to soar to the skies, but if we choose to lock ourselves into an ark of physicality we will find ourselves as sprightly as a Dodo.

Sources: Midrash, Maharal, Rabbi Chaim Zvi Senter, Ariel Hershkowitz

Written and compiled by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

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From Shema Yisrael Torah Network <shemalist@shemaisrael.com>

To Peninim <peninim@shemaisrael.com>

Subject Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum

Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum - Parshas Noach

Noach was a righteous man, perfect in his generations. And Noach, with his sons... went into the Ark because of the waters of the Flood. (6:9) (7:7)

Upon perusing the commentaries, we note contrasting opinions concerning the true nature of Noach's tzidkus, righteousness. The Torah begins by stating that Noach was righteous - in his generations. This leads to a debate among the commentators concerning Noach's status had he lived in a generation blessed with such a saint as Avraham Avinu. Was Noach a relative tzaddik, in relation to the wicked of his generation, or could he have passed the litmus test even in Avraham's generation? Next, the Torah tells us that Noach entered the Teivah, Ark, "because of the waters of the Flood." This implies that our hero waited until the last minute before entering the Ark. Indeed, Chazal say that Noach mi'ketanei emunah hayah, he was of the lesser believers. On the one hand, he believed that there would be a flood. On the other hand, he did not enter the Ark until the water was up to his mouth. How are we to understand Noach? Was he a reluctant tzaddik?

From the numerous explanations, I have chosen two that have positive connotations and simultaneously teach us important lessons about human nature. What I feel must be underscored is that after digesting these exegeses, we have an entirely new outlook on what has been a somewhat prejudicial perception of the individual whom the Torah refers to as the "first tzaddik." The Sabba, zl, m'Shpoli, popularly known as the Shpuler Zayde, explains that actually those who are dorshin l'gnai, take a dim view of Noach's righteousness, are doing Klal Yisrael a great service. These commentators saw b'Ruach HaKodesh, through Divine Inspiration, that just about every tzaddik throughout time will be plagued with detractors. Regardless of his piety, his saintliness notwithstanding, someone, somewhere, will have a jaundiced view of him. They will find something negative to comment about or, as is becoming increasingly common, they will fabricate something to discredit the tzaddik. After all, who is greater than Moshe Rabbeinu? Nonetheless, they suspected him of inappropriate behavior. As nonsensical as it sounds, this is human nature. It is fostered by envy and nurtured by insecurity, but it happens all of the time.

If the first tzaddik in the Torah would have had no detractors, he would have established the defining criteria for determining who is and who is not a tzaddik. Thus, these commentators went out of their way to be negative about Noah, in order to teach future generations of tzaddikim that those who belittle do not negate the righteousness of the individual. Even Noah had detractors. Yet, the Torah grants him Hashem's sign of approval with His personal confirmation: "And Noah found favor in the eyes of Hashem" (6:8). Can we ask for more?

Concerning Noah's seemingly diminished conviction, with Chazal referring to him as miktanei emunah, Horav Yitzchak zl, m'Vorke, explains that Noah, indeed, waited for the last second to board the Ark. He hoped beyond hope that the Flood would not come - not because he lacked faith, but because he believed in people. Noah cared about the ketanei emunah, the individuals of little faith, hoping that they would ultimately come around and repent, thus circumventing the need for punishment. Noah cared about these ketanei emunah. He thought they would rally. Regrettably, they did not, and he was compelled to enter the Ark.

I wonder, are we any different? There is an entire world of alienated Jews out there, who have been estranged for generations from the Torah and Yiddishkeit. Yet, we have kiruv organizations, outreach professionals and novices, who do not seem to give up hope of bringing back the ketanei emunah. Yes, reality indicates that these people are too far gone, but, every once in a while, we have a success story that is off the charts. Each story refreshes our hope for others, renews our passion to reach out to the unaffiliated, rejuvenates our own personal conviction.

I recently read an article in which the author questions her ability to go on praying for the miraculous recovery of a little seven-year-old girl, whom the doctors said had lost her battle with cystic fibrosis. The doctors had sadly issued a death sentence. Yet, no one stopped praying. Why? What about a miracle? Could it be that some of us have difficulty with miracles because we always give up before they occur? Could it be that when Hashem challenges our faith, it is precisely at that point of resignation that we blow it. If we would hold on for one more moment, we would experience the salvation. This is what Noah endured. He did not want to throw in the towel - on anyone. This is perhaps one of life's greatest struggles. The ability to cling fast, to hold on, long after reality tells us that it just cannot be. Trusting in Hashem when the odds are stacked against us: this is the meaning of enduring faith or faithful endurance - to learn the art of forbearance, to cling tenaciously with perseverance and resolution, regardless of the struggles, the odds, the reality. To do this is to understand the meaning of genuine faith.

Noah was a righteous man, perfect in his generations. (6:9)

Rashi cites a debate among the Sages concerning Noah's true spiritual plateau. Some maintain that Noah's ability to sustain his righteous achievement, despite being surrounded by a generation of corruption, is to his credit. Indeed, had he lived in Avraham Avinu's time, he would have achieved much more. Noah was great, despite his evil environment. Others maintain that Noah's righteousness was relative to a generation that was morally and ethically corrupt. Had he lived in Avraham Avinu's time, he would have paled in comparison. Veritably, a person should be judged in accordance with his environment, his challenges, his generation. Apples should be compared to apples.

There is one pressing question which should be addressed: Why Avraham? Since when do Chazal draw parallels between individuals? Is there a specific reason that our Patriarch is brought into the picture? Horav Pinchas Friedman, Shlita, quotes the Midrash Tanchuma which relates that at one time the people of an entire generation were held responsible for the sin of even a single individual. Indeed, Chazal say that the generation of the Flood contained many other righteous individuals like Noah, but, they, too, perished as a result of the sins of the generation. Noah was spared because of his unique z'chus, merit. What merit did he have?

In the Talmud Sanhedrin 108a, Chazal state that actually Noah was also slated to be included in the punishment for that generation. It was only because "Noah found favor in the eyes of Hashem" that he was spared. So what did Noah do wrong? What sin did he commit that had warranted his inclusion in the punishment? Chazal explain that Noah should have prayed for the members of his generation. He should have prayed for their repentance, for their pardon. In fact, the commentators teach that until Noah commenced the Ark's construction, he had not yet prayed for his generation. It was only after he began building, and his neighbors began inquiring about the big boat in his driveway, that he was compelled to tell them that Hashem was putting an end to their insidious behavior. There would be a Flood. This makes it more

difficult to understand why he found favor before Hashem and was, thus, spared from the punishment that the rest of his generation suffered. In the Midrash Rabba (Bereishis 29:5) Chazal make the following statement which sheds light on our dilemma. "We find Hashem acting kindly with the latter descendants in the merit of the earlier ones. From where do we see that Hashem does chesed with the earlier generations due to the merit of the later ones? "Noah found favor in the eyes of Hashem." This was b'zchus, in the merit of, his descendants." Simply, Chazal are referring to Noah's three sons, who apparently served as a protective agent on behalf of Noah. Rav Friedman says that upon perusal of the early commentators, we note that this applies to Avraham Avinu, who was a descendant of Shem ben Noah. Concerning the pasuk Va'yaaver Elokim, "And Hashem passed over" [on the land and the waters] (ibid. 8:1), which refers to the end of the Flood, the Chida cites in his sefer Chomas Anach, in the name of Rabbeinu Efraim, one of the Rishonim, that the last letters of these three words are: reish, mem, ches. The numerical equivalent of these three letters: r(e)m(a)ch is 248, which is the same as the numerical equivalent of Avraham's name. Hashem applied Avraham Avinu's merit to Noah, thus sparing Noah from the fate of his generation. The Chasam Sofer quotes the Seder Olam Rabbah that claims that Avraham was 48 years old during the haflagah, dispersal, following the building of the Tower of Babel. Noah lived for ten more years after that. This leads the Chasam Sofer to interpret the opening pasuk of our Parshah in the following manner: "These are the generations of Noah." Who were the primary toldos, progeny, of Noah? "Noah was a righteous man": the primary progeny of Noah was an individual who was a tzaddik, about whom it is written, Hi'shalech Lefanai v'heyi samim, "Walk before Me and be perfect" (Bereishis 17:1) That tzaddik was Avraham, who, was 58 years old (Noach = 58) during the generations of his ancestors Noah. When Noah, the grandfather (Noach = 58), saw his grandson, Avraham, who was 58 years old when Noah died, then Noah went calmly b'menuchah (Noach) to his rightful place in Olam Haba, the World to Come.

Rav Friedman adds that Avraham derived the concept of chesed from Noah, who dedicated his entire sojourn on the Ark to one long act of chesed. There was nary a moment when he was free, so devoted was he to caring for the myriad creatures accompanying him on the Ark. Avraham said, "If they survived the Flood only due to their total devotion to the animals, to the point that when Noah once came late to serve the lion, he was struck and badly injured, how much more so will I be spared from punishment in the merit of my acts of chesed on behalf of human beings."

This indicates that Avraham's acts of chesed were inspired by Noah. If so, what greater merit is there for Noah than the fact that he was the inspiration for Avraham Avinu becoming the amud ha'chesed, pillar of lovingkindness? This is the deeper meaning of Noah being saved because of Avraham.

Our inspiration can come to us through a number of media. The following story demonstrates how a young yeshivah student's life was positively influenced by someone who had lived some sixty years earlier. What makes the episode even more striking is that neither the benefactor or the beneficiary knew each other, nor was there any intention on the part of the benefactor to influence the young beneficiary.

The story, which is related by Rabbi Binyamin Pruzansky in "Stories That Warm the Heart," centers around a young Israeli yeshivah-high school student, who was not greatly enthused about learning. He attended yeshivah because it was the thing to do. During the summer bein hazmanim, intersession, his yeshivah took a trip to Poland. It was an inspirational journey to visit and pray at the burial sites of the great rabbanim and roshei yeshivah of pre-World War II Europe. The concentration camps were also included in the trip. In other words, this was not a trip for the carefree tourist. This was a serious, emotionally-charged journey of consciousness.

Our yeshivah student, whom we will call Shlomo, had no interest in being inspired. He went on the trip with much the same attitude that he had when he attended yeshivah: it was the thing to do. Everything changed when he passed through the intimidating gates of Auschwitz with its infamous sign Arbeit macht frei, "Labor makes (you) free." The trip had now taken on a serious - almost compelling - tone. Suddenly, all of the stories of the Holocaust came to life in stark reality. Shlomo felt himself transported to that tragic period in our history. He heard the screams, felt the despair, smelled the stench. He was there! He felt himself riding in the cattle car, stuffed with other broken, hapless Jews, waiting to arrive at their destination, thinking they knew what "arriving" meant.

They thought they were going to labor camps. They were grossly mistaken. By the time they discovered that there really was no labor, only deportation and

then death, it was too late. As Shlomo stood in the room, which they had just been informed was the last place the confused masses passed through prior to entering the gas chamber, his eyes began to well up with tears. As he was thinking these melancholy thoughts, he suddenly noticed a handprint pressed into the wooden beam where he stood. At first, it was hardly noticeable, but, after close inspection, he was sure that it was someone's handprint. Thoughts began to churn in Shlomo's mind. This was the handprint of a Jewish inmate who was waiting to be led to the gas chamber. The man was holding onto the beam with every fiber of his being, praying, begging Hashem, "Please, allow me to live!" He must have made promises, expressed his willingness to give up everything material/physical pleasure just so that he could live a little longer. Perhaps he dreamed of liberation, having a family and raising children in the Torah way. Alas, Hashem said, "No," and this man became another one of the Kedoshim, martyrs. Not, however, before he had pressed his handprint into the wood. His chance was over, but someone else might pick up the torch and carry on.

Shlomo broke down. The man whose handprint he was contemplating would have given anything to live even another few hours, and he, Shlomo, was squandering away his life on foolishness. He sensed that he owed something to that man and to the many others like him, who wanted so badly to live, but whose lives were snuffed out prematurely. Shlomo made a promise that, from that day on, he would change. Every minute would be valued; every minute would count. This moment was the turning point in Shlomo's life, as he applied the brakes, shifted gears, and put himself into overdrive. He never looked back - all because of the inspiration he had received from someone he did not know, who, in fact, had died many years earlier. Inspiration transcends time.

For the earth is filled with robbery through them. (6:13)

The generation of the Flood did it all. Their behavior deteriorated to the point that immorality and idolatry had become a way of life. Their immoral conduct extended even to animals, whereby they completely disregarded the parameters of human decency and the separation between species. Yet, Chazal note that it was neither idolatry nor sexual perversion that catalyzed the final decree for their total extinction. It was chamas, gezel, robbery, thievery, that brought them down. The commentators present a number of explanations concerning why robbery was the ultimate deterring factor in their punishment. Ramban comments that robbery is a common-sense transgression. One need not be a rocket scientist to see the evil in stealing; no one wants to have his possessions misappropriated. He worked for them; he earned them; they are his. Thus, a sin of such comprehensible proportions is considered by Hashem to be a toeivah, abomination. It is inexcusable and, thus, should be punished to the fullest extent.

Horav S.R. Hirsch, zl, views this from a practical approach. He cites the Midrash that teaches that the theft was in itself unique. They stole in such petty ways that it was not subject to the authority of the courts. While this may not be the gravest of sins, it bespeaks a society that is morally repugnant. Thievery within the letter of the law weakens one's perspective on right and wrong, destroying his sense of guilt and corrupting the entire social fabric of society. Last, we cite the Melo Ha'Omer who teaches us a significant, albeit frightening lesson. The Midrash Vayikra 17:4, teaches that Hashem does not harm human beings immediately. He first metes out His punishment on the individual's possessions as a signal to repent and correct his behavior. It is only after the subtle and, at times, not-so-subtle reminders have been ineffective that Hashem has no other recourse but to punish the person by inflicting pain and ultimately worse on him. This, explains the Melo Ha'Omer, can occur only if the money/material possessions which he owns are really his. This means that his claim to their ownership is legal. If he has appropriated them through illegal means, then his possessions are not really his. They belong to someone else. Thus, they cannot protect him. The generation of the Flood paid dearly for their sins, with their lives.

The following true story took place a number of years ago in Eretz Yisrael. Two yeshivah students decided to take a trip up north to visit a number of the kivrei tzaddikim, gravesites of the righteous, that are situated there. It was a nice day, and they were able to get hold of a decent car, so they decided to drive. Things were going along smoothly until they reached the highway leading out of Bnei Brak. They noticed that their thermostat was running a bit higher than it should. As the trip continued - and the heat of the day rose - so did the needle of the thermostat. Fearing that they would overheat, they pulled over on the side of the road to see what was wrong.

Neither one of these students was well-versed in auto-mechanics, so, after playing around for a while, they gave up. With no other recourse, they attempted to wave down anyone who could help them solve the problem. A

number of motorists pulled over and attempted to solve their problem, to no avail. Apparently, they would need the services of a qualified mechanic. To put it simply: they were stuck. Suddenly, a car pulled up and out came a man dressed in full chassidic garb. He asked, "What seems to be the problem?" "Our car is overheating, and we have no idea what is wrong," they replied. "Let me see what I can do," the man said. The fellow removed his long frock and lay down on the ground beneath the car, searching for the trouble spot. After a few minutes of fiddling around, he came out from down under and said, "I know the problem. Your fan belt tore and must be replaced."

"What should we do?" the bachurim asked. "Not to worry," the man answered, as he returned to his car and brought out a giant tool chest with car repair tools. He then opened his trunk and took out a brand new fan belt. After completing the repair, he packed up his car and was prepared to leave.

"How much do we owe you?" the bachurim asked. "Nothing," he replied.

"What I did is a chesed. I enjoy helping people out." "Well, we cannot force you to take money for the time that you wasted, but what about the part? That is an expensive part - why should you pay for it?"

"It is no problem. I must do this my way," he replied. "Why should you lose money because you are a nice guy?" they asked. "Let me tell you a story," he began. "I grew up in a totally secular environment, shunning the religious way of life. I was a highly successful car mechanic with a thriving business. Since I knew cars inside-out, I would diagnose a problem which the owner had no clue existed, or I would charge inflated prices for the repairs that I performed. One day, I decided to eschew my life of abandon and was chozeir b'teshuvah, prepared to live a life completely committed to Torah and mitzvah observance. "One thing kept gnawing at me: During my years as a mechanic, I had been running a lucrative business which was not very honest. I was ripping off my customers with exorbitant prices, often for work that was unnecessary. How was I to perform teshuvah for the petty and often not-so-petty theft? I went to my rebbe, who was guiding me on my journey of return to Torah and asked his advice. He told me that since there was no way of identifying my victims, my teshuvah would have to be of an all-encompassing nature: offering my expertise to whomever was in need - free of charge. This is what I do. Twice a week, I drive the highways looking for people in trouble. I carry with me a complete set of tools and many vital parts. Whenever I notice someone in need, I offer my services. This is my teshuvah. You have enabled me to draw one step closer to Hashem. Thank you!"

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

The Teivah which transported Noah, his family and the multitude of creations on board is the symbol of salvation. Noah's Ark personifies an island of calm in a sea of storm. The Chidushei HaRim, cited by his grandson, the Sefas Emes, translates teivah alternatively as "word." The Teivah of old refers to the words of the Torah and tefillah, prayer, which are contemporary man's salvation. The Talmud Makkos 10a compares the Torah to the Arei Miklat, Cities of Refuge, detailed at the end of Sefer Bamidbar (35:11). When we immerse ourselves in the words of the Torah, when we employ the holy words of prayer to entreat Hashem, we connect ourselves to the spiritual source of Creation and take refuge from the outside world. The words of the Torah serve as the medium which connects us to the spiritual lights within each Hebrew letter. Indeed, as the Shalah Hakadosh notes, the name Yisrael is an acronym which stands for the words, yeish shishim ribo osisyo laTorah. There are 600 thousand letters in the Torah, each letter corresponding to a soul. The words of the Torah are, indeed, our only true refuge from a morally bankrupt world which is drowning in a sea of iniquity.

Perhaps, the significance of "words" receives greater efficacy in Torah She'Baal Peh, the Oral Law. We have been in galus, exile, for over two thousand years. Yet, we have survived and, in many ways, even thrived. Am Yisrael, the nation of Yisrael, survives because of its adherence to Torah - especially Torah She'Baal Peh, which gives meaning to Torah She'bksav, the Written Law. The Romans developed the concept of nationalism, national autonomy and power. This is in direct contradistinction to the vision of Hashem, His Torah, His nation. We are not autonomous. We belong to Hashem, and only to Him we have fealty. Those of our brethren who refuse to capitulate to national and nationalistic values and culture are the enemies of the state, its successors and the church.

This is indicated by Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakai's reply to Vespasian. He did not ask for Yerushalayim's sovereignty. He asked for Yavne v'chachameha - Torah, its laws, and the chachamim, its teachers. The Torah does not stand as a religion while the nation submits to the demands of the host nation in which it finds itself. The Torah demands our total subservience to it. Our overriding attention is to be to the Torah. This is why we are called the Torah "nation."

We are called the "People of the Book." Actually, we are the People of the Speech, since this defines our essence. Through our clinging to Torah She'Baal Peh, we are able to bring Malchus Shomayim, Heavenly sovereignty, to the world. Torah is the lifeblood of our nation, and, through it, we retain autonomy to Hashem. The Torah - its laws, and Divine scope of life - is taught to the youngest children in elementary school. It is not an abstract set of laws which govern a nation. It is what makes up the core of the nation. It is our national identity.

Torah She'Baal Peh is alive and well in the bais ha'medrash. It is the dynamic force that binds and elevates us. It is the words of the Torah She'Baal Peh that have maintained us as a nation devoted to Hashem. It is our pathway to shleimus, perfection, and our refuge from the dangers of a godless society.

Va'ani Tefillah

Oseh shalom u'Borei es hakol.

He makes peace, and creates everything.

In addition to the countless physical phenomena which Hashem must cause to harmonize with one another, Horav Avigdor Miller, zl, notes, that are also many super-physical forces which must be directed in such a manner that they yield to - and cooperate with - one another. The Torah and Talmud are replete with many hanhagos, principles and ways of Hashem, all of which are true, but which seem, to the limits of our human perception, to be naturally incompatible with one another. According to our line of thinking, when one of these ways are being followed, it leaves no option for opposing principles. Yet, Hashem manages the execution of these opposing principles in the most incredible manner, allowing them to function with collaboration and without clashing. It was the understanding of this system that Moshe Rabbeinu sought from Hashem. He, too, wanted to know how it all worked out so well. He asked, Hodieini na derachecha, "Make Your ways known to me" (Shemos 33:13). He focused on one contradictory set of principles. In the Talmud Berachos 7a, Chazal interpret this as: "Why are there righteous who are happy, and righteous who are unfortunate?" Hashem has countless ways of harmonizing these and other principles. He makes "peace" among all of them. We just have difficulty understanding His ways.

Sponsored in loving memory of our father and grandfather Eliyahu ben Yaakov z"l niftar 3 Cheshvan 5757 by Dr. Jacob Massuda and Family

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Subject Rabbi Frand on Parsha

Rabbi Yissocher Frand - Parshas Noach

What Was Noach's Greatest Legacy?

The sequence of expression in the opening pasukim [verses] of our parsha [Bereshis 6:9-10] is noteworthy. The Torah begins "And these are the offspring of Noach" (Eleh toldos Noach), which would lead us to expect that we will be immediately told the names of Noach's children. However, the Torah first says, "Noach was a righteous man, perfect in his generations". Only after that does the Torah continue, "Noach had begotten three sons: Shem, Cham, and Yafes." It seems that the description of Noach's righteousness is out of place in the narrative. Rashi comments on this unusual sequence and says this teaches that the main offspring (i.e. creations) of righteous people are their good deeds. The true descendants of a Tzadik are not the physical children he leaves behind, but his acts of kindness.

This is truly an amazing statement. Each of us is here because of Noach. What is the greatest legacy that Noach left the world? I would say that the answer is simple: humanity! The fact that there are people in this world is the greatest legacy that Noach could leave. Yet Chazal explain that the pasuk is teaching us that this is not true. Noach's greatest legacy (as is the case with all Tzadikim) is his good deeds! We are commanded to have children but children are also human beings. They are not eternal. They will die and ultimately leave this world. However, there is something we can do in this world that is eternal and never ceases to exist, namely our good deeds! This is an amazing statement.

The Medrash says that the wife of Noach was Naamah, a descendant of Kayin. We are told about some of Cain's other descendants [Bereshis 4:20-22]. One was Yaval, who founded the cattle and shepherd industry, which has been around for thousands of years. Another was Yuval. He was the first musician. A third descendant, Tuval Kayin, was the first metalworker. He fashioned metal into swords. All of these individuals died. The flood wiped out their descendants and their legacies. Naamah, on the other hand, is the only descendant of Kayin to survive. Why did she survive? Chazal say that she was called Na'amah because her actions were "Naim u'neimim" -- they were pleasant and brought pleasure to others. The point is that accomplishments, even creating major industries, music, and so forth are all fine and good but they are not eternal. They do not last forever. The only thing in this world that is truly eternal is spirituality and good deeds. This is the point of the aforementioned teaching of our Sages: The major offspring of the righteous is their good deeds.

The Rainbow's Reminder Is For The Sake of Mankind

After the flood, the pasuk says, "I have set My rainbow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and the earth... And the bow shall be in the cloud, and I will look upon it to remember the everlasting covenant between G-d and every living being, among all flesh that is on earth." [Bereshis 9:13-16]. The Torah herein states that after the flood, G-d made a promise that He would never again destroy the world through a flood. Apparently, the Almighty needed a reminder that He made such a promise. Therefore, He created the phenomenon of a rainbow. Whenever He gets very angry at the world and is tempted to destroy it again with another flood, He has -- as it were -- this "string around His finger". He looks at the rainbow and reminds Himself of His promise.

This simple reading of the pasukim is both patently ridiculous and heretical. G-d does not need reminders or strings around His finger, as it were. What is the true meaning of these pasukim?

Rashi and the Seforno explain what this really means. The Almighty is doing the world a tremendous favor. He uses the rainbow to send a message to humanity that He is once again very angry at the world. The Almighty does not need a rainbow in the sky as a reminder. We need a reminder. We look at the rainbow and we are supposed to take note that it is a time of Anger before the Almighty. At such times, we should think that the Almighty is so angry at the world that were it not for His Promise, He would again destroy the world. Therefore, we should hasten to repent and do Teshuva.

The Seforno writes that when the righteous see the rainbow and are therefore motivated to pray and repent, they stand in the breach so that they may appease the Almighty's Anger and temptation to destroy humanity.

The Ramban cites a passage from Tractate Chagiga [16a] that one should not stare at a rainbow and one who does so, it is fitting that he not have come into this world. What is the meaning of this Gemara?

The rainbow is a beautiful thing. What is wrong with looking at it? In the "Confession of Rav Amram Gaon" one of the items for which we "confess our sins" on Yom Kippur is that "we stared at a rainbow". What is the problem with looking at a rainbow?

Rav Simcha Zissel - in his writings - says a very interesting thing. When we see a rainbow, our reaction is "beautiful". We admire the colors, the shape, the impact, and so forth. We admire the rainbow and are inspired by it.

Consider the audacity of this typical reaction. G-d is Angry. He is placing a rainbow in the sky as a message to us to get serious, to repent, and beseech His Mercy. What is our reaction? "Beautiful!" This is the great chutzpah of staring admiringly at a rainbow.

Rav Simcha Zissel compares the situation to a father who was terribly angry with his child and who raised his hand to strike him. The father

is livid and his expression manifests extreme dissatisfaction to his child. The kid looks up and is amused or entertained by his father's facial expression. Such a reaction will anger the father even more. That is the situation with our reaction of admiration and pleasure at the rainbow's beauty.

Rav Simcha Zissel takes issue with a comment of the Mishneh Berura who quotes in the name of Chayei Adam that one who sees a rainbow should not tell this to his friend. Rav Simcha Zissel says he does not understand the logic in this. If one sees a rainbow, he argues, that should inspire us to repent and to get others to repent as well. On the contrary, one should alert as many people as possible to the presence of the rainbow so that they too will be able to take proper spiritual action.

The Gemara [Brachos 59a] says that the purpose of thunder is to put the fear of G-d into people's hearts. When the Chofetz Chaim used to hear thunder, besides making the appropriate blessing, he used to say, "What does Father want?"

A rainbow should generate an even more dramatic action on our part. In our lifetime, we have seen many more dramatic "klaps" in terms of historical occurrences than both thunder and rainbows put together.

Under these circumstances, it is our responsibility to emulate the Chofetz Chaim and say: "What does Father want from us?"

Transcribed by David Twersky Seattle, WA; Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman, Baltimore, MD

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Parsha Parables By Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

Parsha Parables - Parshas Noach 5772

Stories & Anecdotes that Illuminate the Weekly Torah Portion and Holidays

Dedicated in honor of R' Moshe and Devora Smith

No(ah) Respect

I am a bit frightened to say this, and if this week I had not seen the same idea from the holy Rebbe, Rav Meir of Premishlan, I would hesitate to write it. But it has always bothered me, so I'm going ahead.

The parsha begins by telling us that Noach was an extremely righteous man. "These are the generations of Noah, Noah was a righteous man he was perfect in his generations;

Together with G-d, Noach walked" (Genesis 9:1)

Indeed Noach was righteous "in his generations." But what does it mean, "in his generations"? Of course he was righteous in his generations! When else? Rashi is struck by this expression and quotes a Midrash. "Some of our Sages interpret (the phrase) favorably: "How much more so had Noach lived in a generation of righteous people, for he would have even been more righteous. Others, however," continues Rashi, "interpret it derogatorily: In comparison with his generation he was righteous, but if he had been in Abraham's generation, he would not have been considered of any importance."

It always bothered me. Imagine! A man against the world. The only believer. Disparaged. Mocked. Abused. A man who toiled to build an ark. Alone. For 120 years. A man who gave his life to save the entire animal kingdom. You have nothing nice to say? The Torah says he was righteous and perfect, and you have to find fault? The Torah at the end of Breishis says, "And Noach found favor in the eyes of the L-rd" (Genesis 6:6). Can't he find favor in your eyes? I saw a number of commentators who grapple or even gripe with this Midrash. The Likutei Maharil, R. Yehudah Leib, Chief Justice of the Rabbinic Court of Zakikob and a disciple of R. Elimelech of Lizensk, asks, "How can anyone fill his heart to disparage the tzadik of whom the Torah testifies "found favor in the eyes of the Almighty"? He finds an innovative approach to mitigate those criticisms of Noach. I never dared challenge that view but I always questioned it in the back of my mind.

And though, I mean not compare it as a perfect parable to the question at hand, something I read from the holy Reb Meir'l, spurred me to offer an idea to you, my dear reader. But first this news item:

The Parable

The exchange before Sukkos of Gilad Shalit for more than 1000 murderous terrorists was an event that caught the attention of the entire world. Whether it was politically or a militarily prudent move is not the focus of these lines. However, to everyone, it showed the commitment, devotion and value that the Jewish nation places on even one soul, and the responsibility it bears to do all in its power to protect it. And that commitment, I thought, would be seen by most of the world an altruistic move.

However, I forgot. There will always be those who will take what seems as a noble effort and skew it adversely.

Yesterday, I received an e-mail from my dear friend, Reb Moshe (Morris) Smith, (among authors) that was perhaps more bizarre than brutal.

It quoted Deborah Orr, a British social and political commentator writer for the British newspaper, The Guardian. In her column she writes:

"All this, I fear, is simply an indication of how injured the world has become to the obscene idea that Israeli lives are more important than Palestinian lives.

Netanyahu argues that he acted because he values Shalit's life so greatly. Yet who is surprised really, to learn that Netanyahu sees one Israeli's freedom as a fair exchange for the freedom of so many Palestinians? Likewise, Hamas wished to use their human bargaining chip to gain release for as many Palestinians as they could. They don't have much to bargain with.

At the same time, however, there is something abject in their eagerness to accept a transfer that tacitly acknowledges what so many Zionists believe - that the lives of the chosen are of hugely greater consequence than those of their unfortunate neighbours."

Imagine! The efforts of a government to free 1000 murderers who are openly ready and poised to renew their commitment to terror—to save the life of one Jewish soul! These efforts were not recognized in terms of the value that they have for one life, but rather considered a commentary on the Israeli government's diminution of Palestinian ones. There are no words.

The Message

Heaven forbid that I equate that scenario to Rashi's comments, however, Reb Meir'l points out a powerful homiletic and moral lesson to us: When someone is out to denigrate you, there will be no method, statement or action that will meet their satisfaction. One can be called a "righteous tzadik" even by the Torah, and "others" will see it as a condemnation. In fact, the great Rav Yisrael of Tchoortkov adds, "Rashi refers to those who see the verse as a tribute to Noach, as 'Raboseinu—'Our mentors and Sages. However, when he quotes the negativists he calls them "The others."

Years back my dear friend Rabbi Shimshon Sherrer would repeat a saying that I believed he heard from his revered father, Rav Moshe, of blessed memory:

Rashi is very telling:

The sign of one who is truly a tzadik is if indeed there will be those who, not only look at you with respect and praise, but others who look at you in contempt. Yes, indeed.

In honor of Ronald and Sonya Krigsmanshetichyu Saadia and Sorala Krigsman and family Chaim and Ann Krigsman and family Tzvi and Hudi Krigsman and family Meyer and Sharon Weissman and family

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By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

The Twilight Zone

By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

When Noach offered his korbanos after the Mabul, Hashem promised that the days of the earth will never again be changed, and that day and night will never cease. But exactly when does day end and night begin?

Quiz Question #1:

Mrs. Yunger* gave birth to two healthy twin boys, each of whom had his bris on the first day that halacha mandates, yet the younger

Yunger had his bris several days earlier than his older brother. How can this happen?

Question #2:

Moshe Litvag* asks me: "I have often wondered why my chassidische brother-in-law davens mincha after sunset, when the Mishnah Berurah rules that one should not daven this late!"

Question #3:

"My sister and I live in the same yishuv (community), and the nearest hospital is Laniado in Netanya. She went into labor on Shabbos and left for the hospital. Immediately after Shabbos I phoned the hospital to find out how she was and whether she had a boy or a girl, and was told by the gentile receptionist that she could not put the call through until after 'Rabbeinu Tam' time arrives, which would not be for another half an hour. Why was the gentile receptionist so frum?"

Why Did the Younger Yunger have an Earlier Bris?

Although a bris that transpires on the eighth day of the child's life supersedes Shabbos, when a baby is born during bein hashemashos, a halachic "twilight zone" which is uncertain whether it is part of the previous day or the next one, his bris cannot transpire on Shabbos. If the older Yunger was born during bein hashemashos on Friday evening – then we cannot perform his bris on either Friday or Shabbos, and his bris is postponed to Sunday. Moreover, if Yom Tov follows Shabbos, then his bris will be delayed even more. However, his younger brother was born at a time that was certainly Shabbos, and therefore, his bris took place on Shabbos. Thus, younger Yunger had his bris before older Yunger.

When is Twilight?

When is bein hashemashos?

We all are aware that the Jewish date begins at night. But at what exact moment does one day end and another begin? Do we know the precise instant when one day marches off into history, and its successor arrives with its banner unfurled?

A verse in the book of Nechemiah might help resolve this question. There it describes the unenviable circumstances in which the Jews were rebuilding the Second Beis Hamikdash while protecting themselves from the enemies who were determined to thwart its erection: And we were continuing the construction work from daybreak until the stars come out [tzeis hakochavim] while half our men were holding spears... and at night we were on guard, while in the day we could proceed with the work (Nechemiah 4: 15- 16). Nechemiah implies that "night" begins from when the stars emerge, and the time of dusk until they materialize is still considered the previous day (see Berachos 2b; Megillah 20b).

However, we still require more definition. Which stars? Can we pinpoint the moment that the stars come out, since the stars of the firmament do not all become visible at the same time?

Additional confusion is caused by a different verse that implies that the day ends when the sun sets, as the Torah (Vayikra 22:7) proclaims: And when the sun sets, he shall become pure, stating that the final stage of purification from some types of tumah is the sunset after immersion in a mikveh. However, at sunset no stars are yet visible. Thus, this verse implies that the changing of the day transpires at sunset, not when the stars appear (see Berachos 2b).

What a Phenomenal Dusk!

Is there any discussion in the Gemara that can "shed light" on our question? Indeed, there are several passages, and much literature is devoted to understanding them. One passage (Shabbos 34b) describes certain celestial phenomena that define when bein hashemashos begins and when it ends. The commentaries debate exactly what occurrences are being described, and, unfortunately, we derive little usable information from this passage.

When Three Stars Appear

Another passage indicates that the end of the day is determined by the appearance of stars. When one star appears, it is still day. When two appear, it is bein hashemashos, and when three appear, it is night. Not large stars that appear even in the day, and not small stars that first appear at night, but middle-sized stars (Shabbos 35b). Now the job appears easy. Let us look at the darkening firmament this coming evening and count stars!

I am sure at times you have tried. Ever spent Shabbos on a camping trip and attempted to determine the end of Shabbos by stargazing? How did you decide which stars are considered "small," "large" and "middle-sized"? And this is assuming that one does not need to deal with light pollution!

Perhaps, locating a Gemara discussion that indicates more objective criteria, such as units of time, may be more helpful in our search to determine the end of day. Does such a discussion exist in the Gemara?

Yes it does -- and not only one passage, but two. However, the two passages appear contradictory!

Conflicting Gemara Passages

The Gemara in Pesachim (94a) states that the time between shekiyah, a word usually translated as sunset, and tzeis hakochavim equals four mil, which, we will assume, is 72 minutes. (This concurs with the more obvious way of explaining the opinion of the Terumas Hadeshen [#123] and the Shulchan Aruch [Orach Chayim 459:2; Yoreh Deah 69:6 with Shach] that a mil used as a unit of time equals 18 minutes.) However, a different passage of Gemara, in Mesechta Shabbos (34b), quotes a dispute in which Rabbah states that nightfall occurs three-quarters of a mil, or 13 1/2 minutes, after shekiyah, and Rabbi Yosef rules that it transpires a bit earlier, two-thirds of a mil, or 12 minutes, after shekiyah. Obviously, we need to explain why one Gemara states that nightfall occurs 72 minutes after shekiyah, and another states that it occurs only 12 or 13 1/2 minutes after shekiyah!

Rabbeinu Tam's Explanation

Among the many resolutions to this conundrum, the two most commonly quoted are those of Rabbeinu Tam and that of the Gr"a. Rabbeinu Tam contends that these two passages of Gemara are using the word "shekiyah" to refer to two different phenomena which occur about an hour apart. The Gemara in Pesachim uses the term shekiyah to mean sunset -- when the sun vanishes beyond the western horizon. Rabbeinu Tam refers to sunset as techilas shekiyah, literally the beginning of shekiyah. However, when the Gemara in Shabbos refers to "shekiyah," it does not mean sunset, but a point in time about an hour later when virtually all light of the sun's rays is dissipated from earth. Rabbeinu Tam refers to this later time as sof shekiyah, literally the end of shekiyah, and in his opinion, until sof shekiyah occurs, it is still halachically day, notwithstanding the setting of the sun and the appearance of hundreds of stars in the firmament. All these stars are considered "small stars" whose appearance does not demonstrate that the day has ended. Only at sof shekiyah does it become bein hashemashos, the time when we are uncertain whether it is day or night. At sof shekiyah, bein hashemashos has begun, meaning that now there are two, but not three, visible "middle-sized" stars, and we await the appearance of the third "middle-sized" star to know that it is now definitely night. (However, cf. Minchas Kohen for a variant understanding of Rabbeinu Tam's position.)

Since according to Rabbeinu Tam it is definitely still day until about an hour after sunset, there is no problem with davening mincha considerably after sunset. Thus, there are communities who base themselves on Rabbeinu Tam's opinion and daven mincha well after sunset.

Rabbeinu Tam and a Friday Night Birth

According to Rabbeinu Tam, a baby born 58 minutes after sunset on Friday evening, and certainly any time earlier, was born halachically

on Friday and not on Shabbos. In Rabbeinu Tam's opinion, this baby's bris takes place the following Friday. A baby making his appearance a bit later is considered to be born during *bein hashemashos* and cannot have his bris on Shabbos because maybe *bein hashemashos* is still Friday -- which makes Shabbos his ninth day of life. This bris will be postponed to Sunday. However, if he is born a bit later on Friday evening, at a time when it is definitely Shabbos, then the bris is performed on Shabbos. It goes without saying that according to Rabbeinu Tam, one may not perform any *melacha* on Saturday night until a considerable time has passed after sunset. There are various opinions exactly when Shabbos is definitely over according to Rabbeinu Tam, but most people assume that Shabbos is over by 72 minutes after sunset (*Biur Halacha*).

By the way, at this point we can answer our third question above: why the telephone lines at Laniado hospital are not open to non-pikuach nefesh related calls until more than a half hour later than the time Shabbos ends according to most calendars. The founder of the hospital, the Klausenberger Rebbe, insisted that Shabbos be observed at the hospital until it is over according to Rabbeinu Tam.

The opinion of the Gr"a
Since we know that many highly observant Jews do not wait this long for Shabbos to end, there must be another way of interpreting the two passages of Gemara that reaches a different halachic conclusion. Indeed, one such approach is presented by the Gr"a, who follows a completely different approach as to why the Gemara in Pesachim states that *tzeis hakochavim* does not occur until 72 minutes after sunset, whereas the Gemara in Shabbos has *tzeis hakochavim* occurring much earlier. The Gr"a contends that both passages use *shekiyah* to mean sunset, and this is the same sunset to which we customarily refer -- however, they are not referring to the same *tzeis hakochavim*. The Gemara passage in Pesachim that refers to *tzeis hakochavim* being 72 minutes after sunset means that all visible stars of the firmament can now be seen, a time that the Gr"a calls *tzeis kol hakochavim*, literally, when all the stars have appeared, whereas the Gemara in Shabbos refers to the time at which three "middle-sized" stars are visible. The Gr"a concludes that sunset begins the time of *bein hashemashos*, the time when we are uncertain whether it is day or night, with *tzeis hakochavim* occurring when three "middle-sized" stars are visible. The Gemara in Pesachim that requires 72 minutes until the stars appear is not discussing when the day ends -- the day ended much earlier -- but is concerned about when all remnants of sunlight vanish.

According to the Gr"a's opinion, once sunset arrives on Friday, it may already be Shabbos, and we therefore refrain from performing any *melacha* from this time, and consider this time to be already *bein hashemashos*. In the Gr"a's opinion, a baby born after sunset Friday will have his bris performed on Sunday a week later unless he is born after three "middle-sized" stars appear, in which case (assuming that the baby is healthy) his bris will be performed on Shabbos. (In practice, since we are uncertain exactly which stars are called "middle-sized," we wait a bit longer, see *Biur Halacha* to 393.) According to Rabbeinu Tam, this same baby would have his bris performed on Friday unless he is born at least 58 1/2 minutes after sunset. If he is born between 58 1/2 minutes and 72 minutes after sunset Friday evening, according to the Gr"a his bris is on Shabbos, whereas according to Rabbeinu Tam his bris will be on Sunday. Both agree that a baby born later than this on Friday evening will have his bris performed on Shabbos.

The Gr"a rules that one should not daven *mincha* after sunset, since this is already a time at which the previous day may have already passed. Thus, it is already time to daven *maariv*.

How do we rule?

Although in the past there were Torah communities which did not follow the Gr"a at all, even regarding the onset of Shabbos, today, it is universally accepted to consider it Shabbos from sunset on Friday. Many communities follow the Gr"a's opinion fully, and do not wait until 72 minutes after sunset on Saturday to end Shabbos. In a responsum on the subject, Rav Moshe Feinstein took great umbrage to this approach, contending that since a large number of Rishonim followed Rabbeinu Tam's approach, one should act stringently and not end Shabbos until after "Rabbeinu Tam time" is over (*Igros Moshe*, *Yoreh Deah* 4:17:26).

*all names have been changed to protect privacy

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Subject [Rav Kook List]

Rav Kook List Rav Kook on the Torah Portion Psalm 63 : Two Songs for Two Worlds

What motivates one to live a life of Torah?
Some people are drawn to Torah for pragmatic reasons. They seek a more balanced lifestyle, stronger family ties, a warmer community, a kinder society. Others are motivated by spiritual aspirations. They seek a life of holiness and meaning; they strive for greater closeness to God. Which path is preferable?

Shema and Prayer

According to Rabbi Elazar, both paths are alluded to in the verse, ("תהילים ס"ג:ה") "בן אברהם בן יצחק בן יעקב אלהים ברוך הוא"

"So I will bless You in my life. In Your Name, I will lift up my hands" (Ps. 63:5)

"What does this mean? "I will bless You in my life" - this refers to the Shema. "In Your name I will lift up my hands" - this refers to *tefillah* [prayer].

"And those who do this will merit [what it says in the following verse], "My soul will be sated, as with the richest foods." Furthermore, they will inherit two worlds, this world and the next, as it says, "My mouth will give praise with songs of joy." Two songs - one in this world and one in the next." (*Berachot* 16b).

In what way is this verse connected to Shema and prayer? And what does it mean to 'inherit two worlds'?

A Life that Blesses God

The verses of Shema speak of improving life in this world. They teach that if we follow the Torah's teachings, we will merit a good life - rains of blessing and plentiful crops. And if not, we will suffer hardship and exile.

Rabbi Elazar taught that the Shema corresponds to the phrase, "I will bless You in my life." When our lives are guided by a higher goal, then our presence in this world 'blesses God,' as our lives reflect the Torah's demands for ethical living. 'In my life, I will bless God.' This is the fundamental message of Shema: accepting the Torah's authority and living our lives according to its ethical teachings. However, we should also live in a higher realm, a realm beyond repairing the physical world, a realm of spiritual goals and aspirations. That is the world of *tefillah*.

Higher Aspirations

In prayer, we aspire to goals that go beyond repairing this world. We pray, standing straight like the angels, beseeching God for spiritual

gifts: enlightenment and redemption, the return of the Shechinah, and the means to discover our spiritual path.

We gain awareness of the priceless nature of life when it matches ratzon Hashem, God's Divine Will that supersedes all other goals and aspirations. Our actions acquire a deeper significance, as we recognize the greatness of their purpose.

This is how Rabbi Elazar understood the verse. "In Your name" - when I internalize a deeper awareness of God's Name and Will - "I will lift up my hands." My hands, my strength and power, are uplifted. This outlook awakens a greater appreciation for life, as our lives are elevated beyond the concerns of the physical world.

Inheriting Two Worlds

If we can absorb the inner content of both Shema and prayer, so that ratzon Hashem is the basis for both our material lives and our higher aspirations, then our service of God will be transformed into one of joy and meaning. It will no longer be necessary to subdue our physical inclinations. "As with the richest foods, my soul will be sated." We will feel tremendous joy and satisfaction in our service of God.

The ultimate reward is to 'inherit two worlds,' to live an elevated existence in both the physical and the spiritual realms. "I will bless You in my life" - we live a life of blessing in this world when we accept God's Will. And "In Your name I will lift up my hands," when we elevate ourselves beyond our material existence, preparing ourselves for the next world. Then we will "give praise with songs of joy" - two songs, the song of this world and the song of the next. (Adapted from Ein Eyah vol. I, II:19)

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Weekly Halacha by Rabbi Doniel Neustadt

Rosh Chodesh

Question: If, after davening Mussaf on Rosh Chodesh, one realized that he forgot to recite Ya'aleh v'Yavo during Shacharis, is he required to repeat the Shacharis Shemoneh Esreh?

Discussion: The poskim are divided in their opinions as to whether or not one needs to repeat Shacharis in this case. The proper procedure, therefore, is to repeat the Shemoneh Esreh while stipulating (in advance) that in case this Shemoneh Esreh is not obligatory, then it should be considered a tefillas nedavah, a voluntary prayer.¹ [Although generally we avoid davening a tefillas nedavah due to our deficient kavanah,² in this case, where many authorities require the Shemoneh Esreh to be repeated, we may make the above stipulation.³]

Question: If one forgot to daven Mussaf (on Shabbos, Rosh Chodesh or Yom Tov) and only remembered to do so in the afternoon, which should he daven first — Mussaf or Minchah?

Discussion: In most cases, Mussaf should be davened first, followed by Minchah. This is because the correct order of the prayers follows the order of the sacrifices that were brought in the Beis ha-Mikdash,

and the Mussaf Sacrifice was always brought before the afternoon Korban Tamid, which was the last offering of the day.⁴

[The only exception to this halachah is the case of a person who is required to daven Minchah at that particular time, e.g., before partaking in a wedding or a Sheva Berachos meal. In such a case, since one is not allowed to partake of such a meal before davening Minchah, it is considered as if the time of Minchah has arrived and one should not daven Mussaf first.⁵]

The halachah remains the same even if a man remembered to daven Mussaf so late in the day that he would not have time to daven Minchah any longer. He should daven Mussaf, and then daven Ma'ariv twice, first as Ma'ariv and the second as a tashlumin ("makeup") for Minchah.⁶ If this happened to a woman, however, she should daven Minchah and omit Mussaf, since she is obligated (according to most poskim) to daven Minchah and it is questionable whether she is obligated in Mussaf altogether.⁷

Question: Are women obligated to observe the custom of refraining from "working" on Rosh Chodesh?

Discussion: The custom that women refrain from doing certain types of work on Rosh Chodesh — both by day and by night⁸ — is an age-old custom, dating back to the days of Moshe Rabbeinu, which is recorded in the Rishonim and Shulchan Aruch and should be upheld by all girls and women.⁹ Whenever possible, women should not do "work" on both days of Rosh Chodesh, but if one cannot refrain from doing work on both days, she should do her "work" on the first day and refrain from working on the second.¹⁰ See follow up Discussion for the definition of "work."

Question: Regarding the custom for women to refrain from "working" on Rosh Chodesh, what is considered "work"?

Discussion: Over the centuries, various customs evolved as to exactly what is considered "work" vis-à-vis Rosh Chodesh.¹¹ Nowadays, women generally refrain from sewing, crocheting and doing laundry on Rosh Chodesh. Ironing, however, is permitted.

Some poskim hold that using a washing machine is permitted, and only washing by hand is prohibited.¹² Others are more stringent and prohibit laundering in washing machines as well.¹³

1 Mishnah Berurah 422:4. 2 Chayei Adam 27:17; Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 21:10. 3 Beir Halachah 107:1, s.v. im. See Yechaveh Da'as 6:6. 4 Based on Mishnah Berurah 286:12; Aruch ha-Shulchan 286:17 and Kaf ha-Chayim 286:35-36. 5 O.C. 286:4. 6 See Mishnah Berurah 286:13; Aruch ha-Shulchan 286:17; Da'as Torah 286:4 and Kaf ha-Chayim 286:36. 7 See Mishnah Berurah 106:4. 8 Harav S.Z. Auerbach (Shalmei Moed, pg. 11). 9 Beir Halachah 417:1, s.v. v'ha-nashim. 10 Mishnah Berurah 417:4. 11 Rama, O.C. 417:1; Mekor Chayim, O.C. 417:1 See Da'as Torah, O.C. 417:1. 12 Harav S.Z. Auerbach (Shalmei Moed, pg. 11). See also Orchos Rabbeinu, vol. 1, pg. 177, which indicates that in the home of Harav Y.Y. Kanievsky, the women did laundry on Rosh Chodesh but refrained from sewing and crocheting. 13 Harav Y. Kamenetsky (oral ruling, Emes l'Yaakov, O.C. 417:1); Debreciner Rav (Ko Somar l'Beis Yaakov, pg. 70); Harav Y.S. Elyashiv and Harav C. Kanievsky (Mevakshei Torah, vol. 41, pg. 32). Weekly-Halacha, Weekly Halacha, Copyright © 2010 by Rabbi Neustadt, Dr. Jeffrey Gross and Torah.org. Rabbi Neustadt is the Yoshev Rosh of the Vaad Harabbonim of Detroit and the Av Beis Din of the Beis Din Tzedek of Detroit. He could be reached at dneustadt@cordetroit.com
