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Peninim on the Torah by **Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum** –

Parshas Noach

From Shema Yisrael Torah Network 9:22 PM (3 hours ago)

to Peninim PARASHAS NOACH These are the offspring of Noach - Noach was a righteous man, perfect in his generations. (6:9)

The phrase b'dorosav, "in his generations," has given rise to much commentary. One is either righteous, or he is not. What does "his generations" have to do with it? Rashi cites a dispute among Chazal as to the nature of this phrase: Is it an accolade, meant to praise Noach? Or a deficiency, considering Noach to be righteous only in contrast to his generation? Some see Noach as a very righteous person who was able to withstand the extreme evil of his generation. Indeed, had he lived in the era of Avraham Avinu, Noach would have been even greater. Others view his righteousness through the lens of contraposition. He was a tzaddik, righteous man, only in contrast to the people of his time. Reading this Rashi begs elucidation. The Torah attests to Noach's exemplary character, his ethical devoutness and unique moral compass. Why not leave well enough alone? He was a "good guy" - leave it at that. Why search for a way to paint his impeccable character in a deficient manner?

The Alter, zl, m'Novoradok explains that, indeed, both perspectives on Noach advanced by Chazal depict him as a tzaddik. The dispute is not concerning his level of tzidkus, but rather, concerning what motivated his righteousness. Some say that Noach wanted to grow spiritually, to grow closer to Hashem. He was self-motivated, because he understood the importance of a life of holiness and purity, a life of spiritual value in which morality is Heavenly-defined, not one based on human subjectivity.

The other position taken by our sages sees Noach choosing a life of piety because he was morally outraged by the behavior of his compatriots. When he saw how the members of his generation were steeped in licentiousness, moral corruption and avarice, he knew that he must distance himself from them as much as possible. Thus, both positions taken by Chazal applaud Noach as a tzaddik. Their opinions are contrasted only with regard to Noach's motivation: Was it positive growth? Or a reaction to society's revolting behavior?

The very fact that one who lives in a corrupt society, in an environment whose moral compass is maleficent, yet retains his distance from the common way of life, is in and of itself a commendable accolade. People are influenced by their environments. If one can fight against the negative pressure, he is deserving of praise and positive recognition. One's good deeds are measured by the barometer of the challenges and obstacles over which he must triumph in order to maintain his spiritual status quo. The nature of man is to follow, to succumb to the allure of the society in which he lives. To confront and rise above the evil is meritorious. To suggest that he would be even greater under more conducive circumstances does not negate his present righteous status. It merely reinforces his present distinction.

Horav Yaakov Yitzchak Ruderman, zl, augments this idea with a vignette cited from the Sifrei Kabbalah concerning a dialogue which ensued between Horav Chaim Vital, zl, and his Rebbe, the holy Arizal. Rav Chaim asked a compelling question: How does Heaven view the avodas hakodesh, the holy endeavor/service, of the righteous Jews of that generation (sixteenth century) in contrast to the service performed by the holy Tana'im and Amoraim, the Gaonim followed by the Rabbanan Svruri? Our avodah must pale by comparison to theirs. What value does our service have?

The Arizal replied with a story. The king of Egypt received a special gift from an admirer who was visiting his country: a parrot. This was at a time when it was absolutely unheard of to find anything that was not a member of the human species that spoke. People were amazed, as it was truly a unique gift. The Arizal questioned this phenomenon. What was so astonishing about a parrot speaking, more so than the ability of a human being to speak? The answer is simple: all humans speak. We take it for granted - despite the fact that it is a miracle. A bird, however, does not speak. To discover a bird that talks like a man is amazing!

The Arizal continued, "Herein lies the answer to your question. It is certainly true that our generation in no way compares to the previous generations. They were giants in a world inhabited with giants. Our generation is morally corrupt. The entire world has lost its spiritual and moral compass. Nonetheless, we go about our business serving Hashem, learning Torah as much as possible under the circumstances. True, our service and that of Noach are/were deficient in comparison to that of Avraham Avinu. The mere fact, however, that we are trying to make the effort to serve Hashem to the best of our abilities is every reason for praise.

Our generation has its challenges. Society from without has had a deleterious effect on society within, but we must overcome the challenges and obstacles. Hashem does not judge us in comparison to the generation of Tannaim, but according to our own individual potential, in our own unique environment, in our own particular circumstances. Indeed, every little bit that we do is as significant to - and valued by - Hashem, as if it were performed by the Tannaim.

In loving memory of our dear husband, Abba and Zeidy, on his yartzheit Mr. Zev Aryeh Solomon R' Zev Aryeh ben R' Yaakov Shmuel z"l niftar 8 Cheshvan 5774 t.n.tz.v.h. Peninim mailing list
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From: Rabbi Yissocher Frand <ryfrand@torah.org> reply-to: do-not-reply@torah.org to: ravfrand@torah.org date: Thu, Nov 3, 2016 at 12:51 PM subject: Rav Frand - Noach Was Righteous Because of His Generation / The Root Cause was 'Rabbah' - Insatiable Desires

Torah.org Rav Yissocher Frand Parshas Noach The Alter of Navaradok's Take On "Noach Was Righteous In His Generation" Over the years, we offered various interpretations for what is quite likely one of the most famous comments of Rashi in all of Chumash. On the phrase,

“...Noach was a perfectly righteous man in his generations” [Bereshis 6:9], Rashi remarks: “There are those among our Rabbis who expound this as praise – all the more so if he had been in a generation of righteous people, he would have been even more righteous. And there are those who expound it as deprecation of Noach – according to the standards of his generation, he was righteous, but if he had been in the generation of Avraham, he would not have been considered anything of significance.” The problem with this Rashi (which is based on Sanhedrin 108a) is — why would anyone try to find fault with Noach? Why expound the explicit praise of the Torah (“he was righteous in his generation”) in a derogatory fashion? I recently saw an observation in the name of the Alter of Navarodok. This insight is in not p’shat [the simple interpretation]. It does not fit smoothly into the words of Chazal. It is in the context of “ayn meshivin al ha’drush” [one should not question homiletic interpretation of Scripture]. Regardless, the message is certainly correct even though it does not fit precisely into the words. The Alter of Navarodok interprets as follows: The reason Noach was a righteous person (Tzadik) was because he saw what happened to the rest of his generations. Sometimes a person finds himself in a situation where the world around him is so corrupt and so immersed in immorality that the person is motivated to say, “I cannot be part of this generation because if I am going to be part of this society I will wind up like the rest of them!” The fact that the society around him was so depraved was his inspiration to rise above the entire society. He was afraid of becoming like everyone else; so he isolated himself from them. Those who expound the phrase “a perfectly righteous man in his generation” negatively are saying that had Noach lived in a generation like that of Avraham Avinu where society was not so corrupt, Noach would not have had sufficient motivation to separate himself from the average behavior of society. Noach would have said to himself, “What is so bad about the way everyone else is living? I am happy to be just like my neighbor – no better, no worse.” Sometimes we read stories about someone who was a successful Wall Street investment banker making 200 million dollars a year and purchasing a new car every six months. Suddenly the person says, “I don’t want this.” He goes off to Montana with his fishing pole or to Alaska with his hunting gun and is never heard from again.” He becomes fed up with the society he finds himself in and says, “I’m sick of the rat race; I’m sick of the competition; I’m sick of the one-ups-man-ship; I’m sick of it all!” He moves miles away from the nearest neighbor; he lives off the land; he hunts and he fishes; and he is happy as a clam. He might become a poet or an artist and make \$10,000 a year and barely exist; but he is now the happiest guy in the world because he hated the society that he was in. L’Havdil, this is what the Alter from Navarodok says about Noach. If he were living in Avraham’s generation, he would have been considered spiritually inferior – because he would not have had the motivation – of revulsion to the society around him – which inspired Noach to live a moral and righteous life. **The Root Cause of The Sickness Was ‘Rabbah’** The narration of the Flood begins with the words “In the six hundredth year of Noach’s life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on that day all the fountains of the great deep burst forth; and the windows of the heavens were opened.” [Bereshis 7:11]. Rashi quotes a Gemara [Sanhedrin 108a] that G-d is punishing measure for measure; their sin was “the wickedness of man was great (Rabbah)” [Bereshis 6:5] and they were stricken by “the great (Rabbah) deep” [Bereshis 7:11]. In other words, the use of the term Rabbah as an adjective to “the great deep” waters is a code word recalling the word Rabbah at the end of Parshas Bereshis, which describes G-d seeing that the wickedness of man was great (Rabbah) and deserving of punishment. What exactly is this sin called ‘Rabbah’? Chazal say that the decree of the generation of the flood was sealed for their crime of wanton theft (gezel). Chazal also say that the sin of the generation of the flood was of a sexual nature (arayos) – incest and so forth. However, it seems that Chazal here are alluding to another factor in sealing the fate of this evil generation – the factor of “Rabbah”. What is the nature of this factor? The Sefer Toldos Yitzchak (a Dayan in the City of

Vilna) explains as follows. When a disease is diagnosed, doctors often distinguish between the symptoms and the underlying cause of the disease. The symptoms of the generation of the flood – in other words how the ‘disease’ manifested itself – were theft and incest, monetary corruption and arayos. Those were the symptoms of the sickness. But the root cause of the sickness was ‘Rabbah’. The sin of Rabbah (meaning great or excessive) was that they could not satiate their desires. The problem was that they did too much. Their passions, their lusts, their desires overcame them to such an extent that they became a hedonistic society. They could not get enough of the pleasures of this world. The sin of Rabbah is one of going overboard, of not being satisfied, of wanting more and more and more. This is the underlying illness which manifested itself in looking for extraordinary ways to satisfy their desires. Someone who is not satisfied with his own wife, might go out looking for other women; someone who is not satisfied with normal pleasures, might look for perverted pleasures. They began to engage in immoral behavior – gezel and arayos. However the underlying sin was that of insatiable desire, ‘Rabbah’. The Toldos Yitzchak explains that this is why the appropriate punishment for them was that “the great depths (Tehom Rabbah) opened up.” Rain is a good thing. It is wonderful. The world cannot exist without rain. However, what happens when there is too much rain? That is not good either. That is destructive. Therefore, the “measure for measure punishment” was a flood. They sinned with Rabbah – a sin of excess. Yes, people need to have pleasures in this world. This is part of humanity, part of being a person. But it must be controlled, it must be within reason. Therefore, Hashem punished them with Tehom Rabbah. The Almighty is sending a message. Rain is a good thing, but too much rain can destroy the world. You sought too much of a good thing and you were therefore punished with too much of a good thing. Rav Avraham Hurwitz says that with this idea we can understand another Medrash. The pasuk says, “The dove came back to him in the evening – and behold! An olive leaf it had plucked with its mouth. And Noach knew that the waters had subsided from upon the earth.” [Bereshis 8:11] The Medrash asks, “From where did the dove bring this branch?” “Rav Bibi says the gates of the Garden of Eden open up and she brought it from there.” Why was that necessary? Any olive branch would have sufficed. The answer is that the Almighty is sending us a message. You are starting the world over again. You must know that the olive must have the taste of the Garden of Eden, the taste of spirituality – because spirituality can provide as much pleasure as a person needs. It needed to come from Gan Eden because it needed to have the taam ruchniyus [the flavor of spirituality]. Their problem was unbridled gashmiyus [physicality] – pleasure for pleasure’s sake. If someone infuses those pleasures with a spirit of ruchniyus, that is also a pleasure. That is a pleasure that can satiate the soul as well. The pleasures of ruchniyus are so much more satisfying than the pleasures of gashmiyus. The branch of the olive had to come from Gan Eden because it had to have the taste of Gan Eden – to introduce them to the pleasures of spirituality, which is the only way to prevent another flood from occurring. I read a story recently in Rav Matsiyahu Solomon’s sefer. He tells of a contemporary Rosh Yeshiva in Eretz Yisrael who is a big marbitz Torah [disseminator of Torah knowledge] and a successful Head of Yeshiva. He has hundreds of students who are themselves disseminators of Torah. However, this Rosh Yeshiva started out as a Baal Teshuvah [a repentant]. It is more accurate to say that he did not start out as a Baal Teshuvah, but as an Avaryan [a sinner]. In his early days, he made it his life’s goal to taste all the physical pleasures of the world, the pleasures of the body. One day, he was approaching a House of Ill Repute in Haifa, an institution with bold signs on the outside of the building advertising the nature of the activities that went on within. He was about to enter the building and he saw a Charedi Jew walking by the building. As the Charedi Jew walked by, he covered his eyes to shield himself from the risqué advertising on the outside of the structure. Suddenly this “Avaryan” asked himself, “What pleasure in the world does this man have that he is willing to give up the kind of pleasure I am about to

take advantage of? He is overtly shunning this pleasure, so obviously there must be something in his life that exceeds the pleasure offered here. I need to find out exactly what that pleasure is.” This, Rav Matisyahu Solomon says, was the beginning of this person’s odyssey that took him to a Yeshiva from which he developed into an Adam Gadol [great man] and a Rosh Yeshiva. He sensed that there was a ruchniyus-dik pleasure that he lacked and he was right! This is the interpretation of “an olive leaf it had plucked with its mouth” about which the Medrash says it had to come from Gan Eden. The world is beginning anew. Do not fall back into the trap of “the pleasures of this world”. There are other pleasures to be had. There are the pleasures of learning and the pleasures of being close to the Ribono shel Olam. These trump all the pleasures of this world. *Transcribed by David Twersky; Jerusalem DavidATwersky@gmail.com Technical Assistance by David Hoffman; Baltimore, MD dhoffman@torah.org*

From Daniel Kaminetsky danielkam@gmail.com
Rav Moshe Tzvi Weinberg MarCheshvan 5771
You’ve Planned Your Work, Now Work Your Plan

Many ppl don’t fully grasp what MarCheshvan is about. Bitter. No holidays. Not a lot written about it. No Sefer written about it. What should we be feeling after the Yamim Noraim and Succos? Try to put positive spin on this month that we typically associate with negativity.

Sefer Bnai Yisaschar, written by Rav Tzvi Elimelech Dinov, lived in late 1700s, discusses the months and holidays. Tries to spell out fundamentals of every month. Built on Sefer Yetzirah and other kabbalistic works. Generally speaking, every month has a body part, letter, action, horoscope/mazel (even though ain mazel l’Yisrael, months are guided by mazalos) and shevet that is uniquely connected with that month. So the Bnai Yisaschar, quotes the Sefer Yetzirah (which is attributed to Avraham Avinu) who says that Hashem appointed the letter nun for Marcheshvan, along with the sense of smell (action) and He attached a crown to them and combined them [these are concepts a bit beyond our understanding], the mazel for Marcheshvan is the scorpion, and the body part is the intestine (with a male and female component - whatever this means). We know that when Yosef named Menashe, he said "Ki nashani Elokim es kol amali". Hashem, You helped me forget all of my struggles. Caused me to move on, so to speak, from my family. Yosef was coming to terms with his existence in Mitzrayim. That is what Menashe means. When a person finishes a masechta, they say at the siyum, about the masechta that they just finished, "lo Nisneshai minach velo tisneshai minan maseches . . .". We don't want to forget about you, and we hope you don't forget about us. We just finished the masechta and already we are worried about forgetting? So we see that when someone engages in spirituality, there is a concern that shortly thereafter someone will forget. The negative idea of Menashe that is applicable to this time of year is that we just finished Tishrei, we felt so close to Hashem, so inspired, sat in Succah, had all of these mitzvos and all of this excitement, and all of a sudden MarCheshvan comes along and you stop and check yourself, and see how am I doing in my avodas Hashem, and you notice that the excitement you felt very recently, barely a couple of weeks ago, that we were at peak, and now all of a sudden starting to forget. Starting to question yourself. How did this happen? Why am I slipping up so soon? I had all these goals for the new year. But I see that I am slipping back into my old ways. This is feeling that we express when we say "mashiv haruach umorid hageshem". The ruchniyus is returning to its place and the gashmiyus is descending upon us. Going back into world of "reality". Obviously, Torah reality should be our reality. But reality that most of us live with is not living in a Succah, but living in the "real world". Responsibilities and real things to deal with.

Letter nun: what do we know about nun? No nun in Ashrai. Pasuk after malchuscha, the mem pasuk, where nun should have been, is somech Hashem lechol haNoflim, so there is a hint to nun. But it's not truly there. Obvious omission. Gemara is Brachos says nun not there because it's a remez to nefilah, to falling. Collapsing.

Falling apart. Similar to what we said before. MarCheshvan comes and we ask ourselves what happened to me? I thought this year was going to be different. I thought I was really going to pull it together for once. Get my act together. Stick to my commitments. And I feel that I am slipping. Not as strong as I was very recently. Not that long ago.

Scorpion is seen by Chazal as one of the most dangerous creatures. Epitome of dangerous animal. Mishna in Brachos says that if a person is davening shemoneh esrai and looks down and sees a snake wrapped around his leg, he can't be mafsik. (Yerushalmi qualifies this statement and says this does not apply if it is a dangerous snake which you can try and free yourself from to save your life. But the Gemara seems to be saying for a snake, we are not that concerned. Rav Sheishes says, this is only by a snake, but by a scorpion, stop shemoneh esrai and run for your life. Dangerous creature. So why does that help us paint this struggle in MarCheshvan? Seferim explain, one of the reasons we call this month MarCheshvan, is because Gemara in Chagiga has a term merachshin sefasai which means our lips are still moving. Goal is that we are still talking the same language we spoke of in the Succah, same language and thinking of Yom Kippur and RH. Goal is MarCheshvan is just a continuation. What is the one thing that stops our lips from moving? The scorpion, who when we see it, we can't daven shemoneh esrai. We have to stop everything. So we are living with that duality. Trying to be mamshich, trying to continue my avoda, to keep davening and having those feelings, but the nature of the times are telling me that it is not going in the same smooth kind of way it went in Tishrai. This block of time we feel empty handed. Even the weather. Sat in Succah and it was 80 degrees. Now we are plunged into this cold weather. Sefas Emes says in parshas Vaera that Akrav, scorpion, has the word Kar in it. Cold. Nachash represents hot, the hot yetzer hara, and scorpion, represents cold yetzer hara. We see that what happens in natural world is reflection of spiritual world. We are starting to get cold. That passion we had in Tishrai is starting to disappear. That is what Akrav represents. Has impact on us. R Tzadok Hakohain M'Lublin says it is almost impos to come into this time of year and not be affected by the coldness. Everything we were feeling up to this point seems to disappear.

Lastly we have the intestines. Shem Mishmuel writes intestines are cold. Maybe not physically, but they are white and look like there is no blood in them. Look cold. Lifeless. Part of this image of coldness and lack of life and closeness to hashem.

Gemara in Shabbos says Tzadikim often die because of intestinal problems. Most other sicknesses they are protected from. Ties into this theme. We came out of Tishrai saying this year I will be Tzadik. Will live like ideal Jew. Nothing will stop me. Ready to do it for real. Comes MarCheshvan, the month representing the intestines, and it says, you think you are such a Tzadik? Even a tzadik has something that can drag him down. Tzadikim are prone to suffering from their intestines. I can stop you. Not as strong as you think you are. Your weaknesses are still there for Yetzer Harah to exploit.

So this is where the picture of MarCheshvan being bitter month comes from. Our job is to flip it around. In Tishrai we plan the work. Said we are going to do this and that. MarCheshvan is time to work the plan. Made commitments. Said I will work on something, or committed to a changed attitude, and all of a sudden MarCheshvan rolls around and now it is time to get down to work. Was I real when I davened for my friend on RH and YK to get well? When I said I would dedicate a particular avoda to Hashem to be for a refuah shelaima, was that real? Am I prepared to go through with that? Hashem is saying, was that all talk? Mashiv Haruach – enough with the ruach, the idle chatter, umorid hageshem. Let's see some geshem, something tangible. Some results. Not interested in theoretical. Its nice. Hashem appreciates our longings. But He wants to see results.

Period of Tishrai ends with Simchas Torah and hakafos. This is telling us where we are supposed to be going as we head into MarCheshvan. Hakafos are beautiful and exciting. Simcha of Torah. Celebrating with the Torah. What is idea of Hakafos? Chidushai Harim, first Gerrer Rebbe said the word makif, which literally means circle, is used in mishna in pirkei avos in the phrase hachenvani makif. The storeowner lends on credit. Makif means to give on credit. Chidushai Harim explains that everything we have been experiencing until now has been a loan. We have all been taking loans. Hashem, I want a loan for inspiration in Elul. A loan for an inspiring RH. An Aseres Yemai Teshuva. A meaningful YK. Succos, Hoshanah Rabba. Shemini Atrzeres. Come Simchas Torah and we remind ourselves about the loans. hachenvani makif. Storekeeper gives out loans. Now we have to pay them back. Mashiv Haruach. Stop talking about it, Hashem, I promise I will pay you back at some point, and morid Hageshem, Hashem says let's see something tangible. Are you prepared to pay back your loans. The Shamash of the Chidushai Harim told the following story. There was once a certain Avrech that did not get a hakafa on Simchas Torah. Came to complain to Gabbai of Chidushai Harim. Everyone else got. I'm a good guy. Chidushai Harim overheard and said, you're upset you did not get a hakafa? Do you know what a hakafa is? Do you understand what is happening when you take sefer Torah in your hand? It is

like a person who is swearing on a Torah. Until that point you took loans baal peh. Hashem says I want to make sure I get my money back so take a Torah and take a shevuah. Don't be so upset you did not get Hakafa. Not so pashut to have that responsibility. To take the Torah and swear to Hashem, I will not let you down. I am confident, while smiling and dancing, that I will be able to pay you back. This is a responsibility. This is whole idea of hakafos and this is challenge MarCheshvan presents to us. Comedian one said "Be careful not to stand around doing nothing otherwise you'll be accused of being a construction worker." We often see construction workers on the side of the road wearing their hardhats doing nothing. That is what Hashem says to us. He says, you claim that you're ready to work. So let's see. Let's see if you're really ready to get down to work. We see this lesson by Avraham Avinu. When Torah describes how Avraham and Terach and their party were traveling back to Canaan, it says that Terach left to go to Canaan and he made it to Charan. Why couldn't he finish the job and leave Charan? Radak says he was too attached to his homeland. So he went to Charan which is close to border of Canaan. Knew Avraham would make it. So he figured he was close to Avraham and to his other family. But too attached to let go of his home. Avraham, in contrast, when he sets his mind to go to Canaan, he goes. Chofetz Chaim points out this contrast. Seforno also points this out. Terach sets out to go to Canaan but doesn't make it and settled for staying in Charan. Close enough. Avraham goes all the way. Teaching us that we need to be like him. If we make a commitment, to go to Canaan, to stop talking lashon hara, to learn more, more careful about Brachos, etc. have to finish the job. And don't change in the middle and decide that is not for me. Or only do it half heartedly or half way. Have to honor our commitments. Later in parshas Lech Lecha, Torah says that when Avraham was returning from Mitzrayim, vayelech Imasaav. He stopped and stayed at same hotels as on the way down to Mitzrayim. Rashi gives a few explanations as to why. It's derech erez. Didn't want hotel manager to think services was not good enough. Had to go somewhere else? Another opinion: bchazaraso para hakafosav. Exactly what we have been saying. He had debts to pay back. Avraham is the person who teaches us that if you say you are going to Canaan, you go to Canaan. If you borrow, and you make a commitment to pay back, you pay back. Exactly like the Chidushai Harim was saying.

How do we define greatness? What's a Talmud Chacham? This is something Rav Freifeld used to always talk about. Not only someone with book knowledge. Who can quote a lot of Gemara and seforim. In Maseches Yona, the Gemara is commenting on the pasuk that described the Aron. Pasuk reads mibayis umichutz tezapenu. The Aron was plated inside and outside with gold. Rava says, any Talmud Chacham whose inside is not like his outside, Aino tocho Kbaro, is not a Talmid Chacham. If you are not a Jew through and through, then you're not a Talmud Chacham. If you are a wishy washy Jew, if you're insides don't line up with your outsides, you're not a Talmud Chacham. The problem with this is that the Aron was three boxes. A gold box, wooden box and then another gold box. The Gemara actually says this three lines earlier. So what is Rava talking about? Through and through? Why are we then using the Aron as an example? Aron was not seemingly tocho kbaro. It's gold then wood then gold. Wouldn't you need pure gold for the example to work? The Telshe Rosh Hayeshiva, Rav Avraham Yitzchok Bloch, in his shiurai hadas, asks this question in the name of his Father. So he says, let's say a person decides to take something on. I am going to start a Chavrusa. I will call my friend and we will learn for 5 min every night. Great. Then the Yetzer Hara sneaks in. Takes this great idea and starts to mess with you. Every night is a lot. Maybe 2 nights. Want to make sure that it lasts. Maybe once a week or once a month. Before you know it that golden idea is not so shiny anymore. To combat this have to use a technique. Have to use wood to get back to gold. Use the Yetzer Hara against him. Yetzer Hara says, you think you are so frum? If you start learning, you will think u are better than everyone else. Yetzer Hara comes up with ways to convince you not to do what you decided to do. So you say back to Yetzer Hara, you are the wood. I will cut a deal with you. If I start learning ppl will give me kavod. Yetzer Hara likes kavod. So u give the Yetzer Hara something so that he gets off your back. Almost like the sair lazazel of Yom Kippur. And then find a way to get back to the gold. To finish the job. a true Talmud Chacham is someone who when he encounters that hard period of the wood, fights his way through the wood, whether it is using Yetzer Hara's techniques against him or just putting up fight when it's hard. And get back to gold. Finish the job. That's the Talmud Chacham. Not just the person who wants to work when everything is falling into place. Who is only interested in a Tishrei or Kislev. Those are the bookends. The shining gold at the end. What about the Cheshvan in the middle? Talmud Chacham is the person who fights through it. That is how we define a Talmud Chacham. This is not just a MarCheshvan vort. This is a klal in life. Second chapter of R Akiva Tatz' Living Inspired is this yesod. He says everything in life we encounter is falling into gold wood gold. Jewish history is gold wood gold. We leave Mitzrayim. Great. It's gold. Inspiration. Excitement. Then we are immediately dropped off into a midbar, a place devoid spiritually. No water. Ain mayim elah Torah. Demons hang out there. It's empty. Desolate. Negative. Not

spiritually uplifting. Gold to wood. But Jews say we will not back down. We will work on ourselves. Even in a place of nachash vakrav. A cold, spiritually empty place. They fight through and get to the gold: Kabbalas Hatorah. Har Sinai. r Tatz says everything in life is like this. Relationships. Start going out with someone. Gold. Then things get a little tricky. But have to work through. And if you are willing to work through and compromise after that initial excitement wears off, you can get back to the gold. This is everything. Whole calendar year is set up this way, says R Tatz. Look at first 3 months. Nissan Iyar Sivan. The Mazel for Nissan is the sheep. Iyar is the ox. Sivan is the teumim, the twins. The Gemini. If I want to sheep to follow me, all I need to do is attach a string and pull it. And it follows along happily. It is very easily inspired. Ox is a stubborn animal. Strong-willed. It's a work animal. Representing that second stage. Where it's a struggle. It requires more work. But if you're willing to get through stage 2 you get to Sivan. What is Sivan? The teumim. The twins. The theoretical becoming the actual. The thing that was just a dream is now reality. Stage 1 and stage 3 are the same. It's just that 1 is a theoretical. Stage 1 is I have this brilliant plan how I'm gonna make \$1 million. Stage 2 is how am I going to put it into practice? Stage 3 is now I have \$1 million. I already felt the excitement of the million dollars in stage 1. My plan can work. but am I prepared to work through it? Exact same thing when we talk about the other Rosh of the year. Tishrei Cheshvan and Kislev. Tishrei- excitement. Kislev - you get there. But what about MarCheshvan? Are you prepared to work through the wood? In the time period where it's not so simple. Where there are many impediments. Are you prepared to fight your way through? And that is what it means to be a Jew who is tocho kbaro. The essence of what it means to be a Jew. It's the MarCheshvans that define us. Kislev is easy to get into. MarCheshvan is the time that defines a Jew. Am I able to merachshem sefasai? Can I continue the avoda that I've begun.

The Luchos were described as "kesuvim mishnai evraihem mizeh umizeh hem kesuvim." Hashem's words penetrated the Luchos all the way through. Rav Shimshon Raphael Hirsch explains, and bear in mind he was speaking primarily to a nation of Jews struggling with their identity, ppl who were asking, am I a Jew or am I a German? How do I reconcile the two? Rav Hirsch says message of Luchos being etched through and through: The words of Sina must grip us not only superficially and one sidedly. Must penetrate us through and through. Must set its stamp indelibly on every side of our being. Whether it's a Tishrei, a Cheshvan a Kislev. Every side of our being. Which ever way we are turned, writing of Hashem must be visible clearly and legibly. Be a Jew through and through. Whichever way you are turned, be a Jew. Message of Luchos is to be a complete Jew. Easy to live in the theoretical. Can spend whole life living in clouds of Tishrei, the ananei hakavod of Succos. Its like a dream. Have to actualize that dream. "Any powerful idea is absolutely fascinating and absolutely useless until we try and do it." We can have all of these beautifully theoretical ideas. We can be ppl who try and stay forever in level 1. But level one leaves you empty at end of day. Level 1 is that initial excitement but goal is to carry it through. To fight through level 2. To work through MarCheshvan and complete the job. That is job of a Jew. My speech is significant. If I said it I am going to do it. Yitzchok says to Yaakov, Hakol kol Yaakov. A Jew is defined by his kol. what is double lashon? Why the repetition? A Jew's voice has to be true on inside and outside. Inner voice and outer voice parallel each other. Teumim. Gemini. Alignment between inner Ratzon and actualization. 4 ppl in Tanach who were called by their name twice in a row. Avraham Avraham and Moshe Moshe are two of them. Medrash says, their lower self paralleled their upper selves. Image Hashem had for them in shamayim, they actualized. Lived it. Were able to achieve it. Moznitzer Rebbe, Divrai Yisrael, says in Parshas Toldos, if you look at word kol, it is Gematriya 136. When you spell out the letters of kol, kuf vuv lamed, inner aspect of each letter also equal 136. Inner voice always represents my outer voice. No contradiction between what I claim to be and what I actually become. This is what Rav Hirsch was saying when he was telling us to be a full Jew. Talk is cheap.

Ppl talk about sports teams as being their team. My team won last night. Are you a player on team? In 1950's a young man, about to become Bar Mitzvah visited with Lubavitcher Rebbe. Rebbe spoke to him about significance of becoming Bar Mitzvah. Very exciting. You are becoming a man. Part of Klal Yisrael. Count in more sig way. Gave bracha. As child was leaving called him back. Do you like baseball? Of course! Love baseball! Rebbe knows what baseball is? Rebbe says, are you a Yankees fan or Dodgers fan. Dodgers fan. Ever go to a game? Just last week. Nu, how was it? Dodgers were losing 9 to 2 so we left after 6th inning. So the Rebbe says, I guess some of the players left also. Kid was rolling his eyes in his head. No. That is not how it works. Players have to stay until game is over. Can't decide I am not interested in finishing game. Rebbe says but they were going to lose. Game was basically over. Child responded, but that is how it goes. Win some and lose some but you have to play every game. Rebbe said, exactly. You are becoming a Bar Mitzva. You can choose to be a fan or a player. Be a player. Be someone who makes a difference. Who believes his avoda is substantial. Not someone who is a casual fan watching on the side. And

can leave the game. Where Luchos are penetrated halfway. I am halfway committed to my Judaism. To where my inner kol and outer kol should align. Be a player. Someone who is committed to finishing the game. Playing games that are not so exciting and even when it is challenging, to step up and get out there.

Piazetzna Rebbe once explained idea of being makir es mekomo. To know your place. it means to make your place known. Avraham Avinu, everyone has a sense of who he was. We could not name 10 other ppl from Avraham's time. They didn't leave their mark on the world. Makir es Mekomo means make your place known. Can we imagine what world would look like without Rambam, Besht, Chazon Ish. Would be a different world. This is what it means to be a Jew through and through. Not to stand like a fan watching on the sideline. To be someone committed to playing in the game.

So now let us go back to the intestines. Talmud Yerushalkmi in maseches Shekalim: a person who says that Hashem is a vatran, someone who lets things slide, who is not so uptight about us keeping his Torah, about halcha, who thinks that only Shabbos and kashrus are big deals but doesn't think putting right shoe on before left shoe is important, such a person we say let Hashem be mevater on his intestines. Let Hashem stop watching over your intestines and see what happens. Why does the Gemara choose davka the intestines for this mashal. Dubno maagid gives a mashal. Two ppl in one town making weddings. One was rich and one was not. Rich man set up huge tent in town square. Hired best caterers. Poor man set up wedding in his backyard and was scraping just to put together the basics. Barely had enough dishes. Friend comes to poor man and says I was just by the rich man's tent and there was so much extra things there. Maybe you can go to him and take some of his extra things? Maybe he could lend you some extra dishes. He is excited and he runs to the tent. Sees that by every setting there are 3 forks and two knives and several plates. 4 different cups. Goes over to rich guy and says I see you have so many extra items by your place settings. Maybe you can lend me some? The rich man laugh and explains the little fork is for the fish, the medium sized fork is for the salad. The big fork is for the meat. And this knife is for this and there is a steak knife and one spoon for soup and another for the sorbet to clean your palate. Cup for red wine and white and soda. It's a set. Nothing extra. All one set. Says the Fubno Maagid, Torah is same way. All of halacha goes together. Not like Shabbos is important but putting on shoes in correct way is not. We pick and choose. But it is a set. Imagine someone comes over to you with a knife and he says I went to the doctor today. He told me something is wrong with my intestine. Your intestine is fine, no? The intestine is 16 feet long. Can I cut out a few feet of your intestine and use it to help fix my own? After all you have so much extra. If something like that

happened you would think the guy was crazy and you would run for your life. It's a set. The intestine is a set. So that is what the Dubno Maggid says. Can't say Hashem let's this one slide. This is secondary. If you say that Hashem says good. Let's talk about your intestines. There's a lot there. So maybe we should stop paying attention to one little bit of it. And everything else will probably be ok. Obviously, He does not say this. Why does MarCheshvan correspond to the intestines? Because the Jewish calendar year is also a set. You can't say I am going to show up in Tishrei and really give it my all and then by Chanukah, when I'm lighting my Menorah, I'll rekindle my soul. The goal is to live throughout the entire calendar year, whether it's gold, wood or gold. Have to view it as one set. And MarCheshvan is equally significant. Have to fight our way through it.

What about letter nun. We said it's a nefilah. You're falling. You're stumbling. Your collapsing under all of the new commitments that you've taken upon yourself. All of the hakafos, the debts that you have to pay back. The pasuk in Michah reads: Al tismichi oyvaysi li ki nafalti kamti. What does it mean ki nafalti kamti? I'm falling but I'll get back up. Sometimes we fall but then we get back up. Explains the Shem Mishmuel, Parshas Noah, that is not what pasuk is saying. It does not say I get back up after I fall. It says ki nafalti kamti. Sometimes the fall itself is the way to pick you up. We think Cheshvan is bitter and empty. Reb Shlomo Carlebach used to call Cheshvan RamCheshvan. Elevated Cheshvan. If you understand what it is, it's a very elevated month. You look like you're falling, but if a person wants to jump up the best way to reach your heights is to bend your knees first. To lower yourself and then to spring forward. ki nafalti kamti. It doesn't say ki acharai nafalti kamti. The getting up is not separated from the fall. Hidden and concealed within the fall itself is a way to pick yourself up. That is what MarCheshvan is.

Finally, the scorpion. What is the scorpion telling us? Akrav has the word kar in it, cold, but also have the word karov in it. Close. Akrav means the ayin in still close. What is the ayin? Chodesh Tishrai according to some of the seforim. Tishrai not as far away as we think. We think of it as being in the past. We've moved on. In the cold season now. Warm avoda of Tishrai slipping away. But no. ayin is still karov. Looks like a nefilah but it is a kimah hidden in disguise. Goal for us in Cheshvan is to wrok our way through and use it as a springboard to Chanukah. Not as a time to let myself fall and collapse.

Reb Shmuel Brazil once visiting talmid in Montreal. This talmid's grandfather was also Gabbai in shul. Starts talking with this Gabbai. Gabbai pulls out list. Says I always keep a list of everything I have to do. So on the list they are various tasks. Buy groceries. Roll the sifrai torah. Finish the daf. At bottom of list it says compose a song. So Reb Brazil says, are you a composer? Do you have a cd? No. never wrote a song. So why is this on your list? Hard to explain but I have felt for a long time that I have this ability to write a song. I just have this feeling. So Reb Shmuel says, so you put that on your list every day? Yes. Whenever I make any list I put that down. Reb Shmuel: For how long? 30 years. Can we imagine? Hafla vafeleh. A person feels that hisorerus, initial ratzon to do something and they fight for it for 30 years, that wherever he goes, that piece of his avoda is so choshuv and significant that he thinks about it for 30 years and he writes it down on every list he prepares? Unbelievable. That is what Cheshvan is. I take all my little stubs, the things that I owe, everything that I have been jotting down, all of the papers I have been signing to pay back my debts, like Avraham who stopped at the inns and paid back his debts, Cheshvan if the opp to pay back those hakafos. To finish and actualize our potential and to get back to the gold of Chanukah.

Seforim point out Cheshvan is the month called "bul", bet vav lamed. One of the names we find in tanach for Chshvan. The Munkatcher Rebbe, the Shaar Yisaschar writes that bul is roshai taitvos veshavu bonim legvulam. A month where we hopefully make our way back to Eretz Yisrael. Medrash says 3rd Bais Hamikdash will be inaugurated in Cheshvan.

So IYH as we work to complete our avoda, to work our way through, to be Jews who fight all the way through, like Rav Hirsch told us, we should be zocheh that through our building of ourselves through the wood, we should be zocheh to the rebuilding of the Bais Hamikdash bimhaira beyamainu amen.

<http://5tjt.com/is-your-fridge-kosher/>

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Is Your Fridge Kosher?

The Zman Technologies device

Halachic Musings

By Rabbi Yair Hoffman

In the past 30 years or so, refrigerators have undergone numerous changes and upgrades in technology. These are wonderful in terms of increasing energy efficiency and reducing the costs of electricity, but they are not necessarily so good in terms of hilchos Shabbos. The heterim, leniencies, that we once had in terms of using refrigerators are no longer as valid on account of the newer technologies that have been adopted by the refrigerator manufacturers.

The Good Cold Days

With the original refrigerators, the halachic concern was as follows. When the refrigerator or freezer door is kept open, warmer air comes in. This could cause the compressor, which cools the air, to be turned on. Is doing this on Shabbos a Torah prohibition or a rabbinic prohibition? Is opening the door considered a direct action, or a grama, a secondary result of a primary action, which under certain circumstances would be permitted?

The Four Early Answers. There were four different approaches to the refrigerator question in the late 1940s, '50s, and '60s:

Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, zt'l, ruled that one can open the refrigerator door without a problem, whether the compressor is on or off. (Minchas Shlomo Vol. I #10) Rav Moshe Feinstein, zt'l, ruled that one can technically open the refrigerator even when the compressor is off, but it is preferable to wait and only do it when the compressor is on. (Igras Moshe, OC Vol. II #68) Rav Eliyahu Henkin, zt'l, ruled that one can only open the refrigerator when the compressor is on and it is forbidden to do so when the compressor is off. This was also the view of Rav Elyashiv, zt'l, as cited in Mitbach K'halacha, page 303. The Chazon Ish ruled that it is forbidden to open the refrigerator at all, whether the compressor is on or off. (Cited in HaPardes, Cheshvan 5719/1958) In the United States, some followed Rav Henkin, some followed Rav Moshe, but the vast majority eventually followed the view of Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, zt'l. His three-fold rationale was:

causing the compressor to go on involves only a rabbinic violation; the opening of the door that allowed the surrounding air to enter was a grama on a psik reisha; and in fact, it did not always happen. On account of avoiding the negation of oneg Shabbos, taking delight in Shabbos, he allowed opening the door even when the compressor was off.

(Note: All the early poskim agreed it is prohibited to open the door if it will cause the inside light to go on, so the common practice is to loosen the light bulb, either permanently or before each Shabbos and yom tov, or to keep the switch covered so that it can't be automatically released when the door is opened.)

Modern Technology

But that was then, when the only question (aside from the light bulb) was causing the compressor to turn on. Now, on account of the new technology, there are numerous other issues.

The issues are as follows.

Modern refrigerators have door sensors that detect every time the door is opened and report back to the computer.

The modern refrigerators also have instantly reactive digital thermostats. The early thermostats in refrigerators were based upon mercury thermometers with electrodes inserted directly through the glass, so that when a fixed temperature was reached, the contacts would be closed by the mercury and the compressor would turn on. These were accurate to within one degree.

Modern thermostats use a number of sensor technologies such as bimetallic mechanical or electrical sensors, electronic thermistors and semiconductor devices, and electrical thermocouples. These can and often do control the defrosting and cooling apparatuses instantly.

Manufacturers have now started using adaptive defrost controls where the heating coil of the defrost mechanism is directly connected to the temperature settings and thermostats. These controls measure compressor runtime and/or number of door openings and then automatically run the defrost cycle. For example, Maytag and Whirlpool models automatically run the defrost after four hours of compressor time.

The newer electronic damper controls are now controlled by heat sensors attached to computer chips. The controls of the damper, like the defrost cycle, are no longer mechanical and occur with immediate repercussions when the refrigerator is opened.

In Israel, rabbanim and engineers have been trying to create technological solutions to address these problems. The Shabbos-mode settings in Israel take all of these issues into account. Visit your Israeli cousin in Har Nof, Ramat Bet Shemesh, or Rechavia and see this for yourself. In America, by and large, the rabbanim and poskim have not addressed the halachic problems—until a technological solution has been developed.

To address the issue, the Star-K worked with manufacturers to develop models with a “Shabbos mode.” These models addressed the issue of the defrost cycle, but they did not address a number of the other issues. The computer is constantly taking readings and electronic information. It seems that the Shabbos mode is relying on a leniency that a computer may be utilized as long as the digital display is not seen. Many poskim have questioned this ruling, some even stating that the use of a computer is either a biblical prohibition—of writing or of makeh b’patish.

The Poskim Answer

This author reached out to Rabbi Avrohom Mushel from the Star-K. He explained that Rav Heinemann, shlita, spoke to Rav Elyashiv, zt”l, who said that as long as the refrigerator does not take any action that is no more than a grama when it takes in any information, then there is no violation being performed. Rav Heinemann is of the opinion that these are still considered a grama and are therefore not forbidden.

When Rav Elyashiv, zt”l, was consulted by poskim in Eretz Yisrael, however, he indicated that a computer collecting information would be considered a serious problem, as the letter he had signed indicates.

The fact of the matter is that it was not uncommon for Rav Elyashiv to at times be quoted in a contradictory manner.

This author spoke to Rav Hershel Schachter, shlita, who held that recording the information on a computer would under many circumstances at least be considered ksiva miderabanan. He also felt that there may be issues of davar shemiskaven—the person intends for it to happen since it is beneficial for him—even on a rabbinic violation.

This author also spoke to Rabbi Eli Gersten of the OU, who stated that Rav Yisroel Belsky, zt”l, pushed to have timers on refrigerators. He told Rabbi Gersten that his grandfather, Rav Wilhelm, used to sell timers in his hardware store—they called it “the Rav Henkin switch.” Rabbi Gersten also stated that Rav Belsky, zt”l, used the language of “chashashos,” concerns, of a Torah prohibition.

Rabbi Gersten further stated that when one student from Yeshiva Torah Vodaath (who accompanied Rav Belsky at the OU on Thursdays when he came to rule on questions) expressed grave concerns after purchasing a new refrigerator, he said, “Look, until a timer comes out, just open it with a shinui. When the timer comes out, purchase it.”

Regardless, in Israel, most of the manufacturers have made devices that circumvent the computer entirely. This has not happened here in the United States yet.

There is, however, another semi-solution for all American refrigerators and freezers, which will be addressed at the end of this article.

How Refrigerators Work

What follows is a short explanation of how refrigerators are different, and the halachic problems that technology has brought.

In order for a refrigerator to work, the cooling of air must take place in a closed, sealed system. When the gas expands, it absorbs heat calories and cools down the surrounding air.

There are essentially four items in the sealed system: (1) the compressor, (2) the condenser, (3) the metering device evaporator, and (4) the suction tube.

What happens first is the refrigerant (such as R-134 or R-12) enters into the compressor in its gaseous form. The compressor then raises both the pressure and the temperature of the gas. The gas then enters the condenser (normally located under or behind the refrigerator) still in gas form, and it exits as a liquid. The now high-pressure/high-temperature liquid refrigerant enters a metering device or capillary tube and exits as a low-pressure/low-temperature liquid. The low-pressure/low-temperature liquid refrigerant enters the evaporator located inside the freezer; it exits as a low-pressure/low-temperature gas. Finally, it enters the suction tube and exits into the compressor in gas form. Electronic Damper Control. To function properly, the refrigerator freezer needs good airflow. The evaporator, located within the freezer, provides the cold air that the fresh-food section and the freezer sections need. A fan above the evaporator blows air into these sections. The damper controls the rate of the airflow.

It used to be that the dampers were manually controlled by hand. Now most are electronically controlled and use an electric motor. A fan is also controlled electronically that provides airflow through the condenser to cool it off. If there is a block of any of these airflows, the refrigerators do not function well.

The Defrost Cycle. After the compressor runs for a while, a level of frost develops on top of the evaporator. A defroster mechanism is used to remove this ice, because it will eventually block the airflow. During the defrost cycle, the refrigeration is cut off and the defrost heater comes on to melt the ice off the evaporator. Once the temperature reaches 47–50°F, depending on the model, the defrost thermostat stops the defrost cycle.

Refrigerators go through a defrost cycle anywhere from once every 4 hours to once every 48 hours. There are two types of defrost controls: adaptive defrost controls and the old mechanical defrost timers.

Adaptive Defrost Controls. More electricity is used in refrigerators during the defrost than any other function or cycle in the unit. Manufacturers, therefore, developed adaptive defrost control technology. The adaptive defrost control adapts the defrost cycle to each individual unit’s use. Some adaptive defrost systems utilize door sensors. The greater number of times the door is opened, the greater the need for the defrost cycle. On GE refrigerators with adaptive defrost, a defrost cycle occurs once every 48 hours if the doors are not opened at all during that time. The longer the door stays open in between defrost cycles, the more often it goes into a defrost cycle. Other adaptive defrost systems measure the compressor time and defrost after a certain number of hours of use. Both types may be game-changers in terms of psik reisha and safek psik reisha.

Mechanical Defrost Controls. The old method used a mechanical defrost timer which would vary depending upon each particular model. Some would defrost every 6 hours for 30 minutes and some would defrost every 12 hours for 35 minutes.

Temperature Controls. Generally, refrigerators have two controls—one for the freezer and one for the fresh food. The fresh-food control is a thermostat that cuts off the refrigerator when the fresh-food section reaches a certain desired temperature. This is called the “cold control,” and the cutoff temperature is between 33° and 42°F.

On both older refrigerators and some new refrigerators, the freezer control controls a damper that either slows down or speeds up the rate at which the air enters the fresh-food section. On newer models of refrigerators that have an electric damper control, the damper automatically opens and closes. This is done by the computer using the data from the electronic sensors.

Now Is The Zman

There is a new timer that is now being marketed by Zman Technologies which essentially shuts off the refrigerator for four 6-minute periods every hour. There is a green light which indicates when you can open the refrigerator or freezer. A red light indicates when you cannot.

The timer contains a 40-year calendar for Shabbos and yom tov and need not be reset for the life of the refrigerator once it is installed. The device has three different modes to adapt to the needs of each particular refrigerator model.

The device has OU certification. Rabbi Hershel Schachter as well as lhbc”l Rav Yisroel Belsky, zt”l, were behind the product.

It is this author’s view that most rabbanim and poskim who research the issue in depth will conclude that the new issues need to be addressed in a halachically acceptable fashion.

The pictures near this article show that virtually all poskim in Eretz Yisrael have signed letters indicating the serious implications of this technology.

This is an issue that is currently being examined by leading poskim and kashrus and rabbinic organizations. Many of them will be issuing rulings about how best to address the issues in the coming weeks or months.

The device is available at Five Towns Judaica on Central Avenue here in the Five Towns, and in Boro Park, Flatbush, Williamsburg, Monsey, and Lakewood. v

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reply-to: info@jewishdestiny.com subject: Weekly Parsha from Rabbi Berel Wein

NOACH

It is understandably easy to become disgusted with human beings, with society and with the behavior of individuals. Over the many millennia, from the days of Noach until today, human history is a litany of violence, war, massacres of innocents, corruption, false idols, bankrupt ideals and constant strife. Europe has not known a war-free time for many centuries. The very agencies created by human efforts to right wrongs, adjudicate disputes and promote harmony among peoples have themselves proven to be as corrupt and biased as to have become practically irrelevant in the practical world where we all reside. Apparently such was the state of the world at the time of Noach as well. And then and there, somehow G-d despaired of the human race almost completely. The Torah speaks to us in a metaphoric fashion of G-d's "regrets," so to speak, in having created humankind and investing it with free will, because of the evil it perpetrated. And yet, in the narrative regarding the covenant of the rainbow, G-d somehow "regrets" having destroyed the world and commits Himself, so to speak, to never doing so again. The lesson here is that disgust and despair, no matter how seemingly justified, are not godly traits. Giving in to the weaknesses of human nature that surround us and that we are constantly made aware of by the media and other story mongers, is a sign of human foolishness and not wisdom. King Solomon, in Kohelet which we have just recently heard read in our synagogues, points out all of the negativities of human life. He also is tempted to despair of human life. But at the last instant he catches himself and ends on a note of quiet faith. Noach rebuilds the world after its destruction. The world is not rebuilt in a perfect fashion. Almost all of the evils of human society that existed before the great flood reappear once again in human society. But the Torah now concentrates its narrative on certain individuals who will influence all later human life for good and benefit. Abraham could not apparently save or even influence Sodom but the story of humanity will now focus on the good people, even if they be few in number and apparently weak in power. This shift of emphasis in the biblical narrative is itself the key to understanding the message of Judaism and Jewish history throughout the ages. We should never despair because of the presence of so much negative evil in the world. If the great and righteous Noach gave in to despair about the human condition, which is the source of all of the negative commentary about him that appears in rabbinic literature, we are not to emulate him in this regard. The world is rebuilt through goodness and beneficence not through carping and cynicism. In a dangerous world such as the one we live in, realism and practicality are essential for survival. However, despair and disappointment are not. Shabbat shalom Rabbi Berel Wein

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Eating before Feeding your Animals By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

Question #1: Coffee and the concierge "Was Noach permitted to have his morning coffee before he brought all the animals breakfast?"

Question #2: Dog's best friend "I would like to eat an apple. Must I first feed Fido?"

Question #3: Fish on Shabbos "On Shabbos, may I make kiddush before I feed the fish?"

Introduction Taking care of all the animals in the teivah was not easy, and was even harder for an inexperienced zookeeper like Noach. Understanding Noach's travails provides ample opportunity to discuss the ruling of the Gemara (Brachos 40a; Gittin 62a) that one may not eat without first feeding his animals, as the Torah says, in the second paragraph of Shema, And I will provide grass in your field for your animals, and only subsequently does the Torah say, and you will eat and be satisfied (Devorim 11:15).

Analyzing the mitzvah There are numerous questions about this mitzvah: Is this required min hatarah or miderabbanan? Are we forbidden to eat only a full meal, or even just a snack? =May I quench my thirst before I provide water or feed my animal? In other words, does the prohibition apply only to eating or also to drinking? Does this mitzvah apply on Shabbos and Yom Tov? These and other questions will be addressed in the course of this article.

Torah or rabbinic? Let us start with a basic question: Is the obligation to feed my animals before I eat min hatarah or miderabbanan? A prominent, early acharon, Rav Yaakov Reischer (Shu"t Shevus Yaakov 3:13), rules that, although the Gemara cites a pasuk as the source for this halachah, it is required only as a rabbinic mitzvah, and the pasuk is an allusion, what Chazal call asmachta. Although I have seen authorities quoted as holding that the requirement is min hatarah (see, for example, Sedei Chemed Volume I, page 40), I have not yet found anyone who rules this way clearly. Quite the contrary, the Rambam (Hilchos Avodim 9:8) states that feeding your animals before you eat is an exemplary way to act, but is not required.

Of course, this leads to another question: How can the Rambam rule that feeding your animals before you eat is merely an exemplary act, when the Gemara prohibits eating before you feed your animals? The Nishmas Odom (5:11) raises this question, answering that the Rambam, presumably, had a variant text of the Gemara, and even suggesting what he thinks that text was.

A full meal or a snack? Are we forbidden to eat only a full meal before feeding our animals, or are we prohibited to eat even a snack?

This question is subject to a dispute among early authorities, which appears to be based on how one reads and understands the pertinent passage of Gemara. The two times the Gemara cites this mitzvah in our published editions, it quotes varying and conflicting passages. In Brachos, the Gemara reads, It is prohibited to eat before you provide food for your animals, whereas in Gittin the passage reads, It is prohibited to taste [food] before you provide food for your animals. In Chazal's lexicon, eating usually implies eating a full meal, whereas te'imah, tasting, implies eating a snack. Thus, the text in Brachos (eat) implies that the prohibition is limited to eating a full meal, but that one may eat a snack even though he has not yet fed his animals. On the other hand, the version in Gittin (taste) implies that a snack is prohibited.= However, I found variations on the Gemara texts, including versions in both places that prohibit tasting, and versions in both places that only prohibit eating. Most significantly, both the Rif and the Rosh, two of the most preeminent authorities, state in their comments to the passage in Brachos that tasting is prohibited. It seems that they prohibit even snacking prior to feeding one's animals, which is also implied by the Beis Yosef (Orach Chayim 167).

The two major commentaries on the Shulchan Aruch seem to dispute whether one may snack prior to feeding one's animals -- the Taz (167:7) expressly permits snacking before feeding your animal, whereas the Magen Avraham (167:18) implies that it is prohibited.

An in-between meals snack Some authorities endeavor to resolve the inconsistency between the two Talmudic versions of the text. The Nishmas Odom suggests that the two versions are not contradictory. It is prohibited to eat a meal without feeding your animal first, and that one who is planning to sit down to a meal may not taste anything of the meal without first feeding his animals. However, it is permitted to eat only a small snack prior to feeding your animals, when that is all one intends to eat. This approach is how the Nishmas Odom concludes in his magnum opus, the Chayei Odom (5:11), where he implies that one may eat a snack before feeding one's animals.

The Nahar Shalom (167:4) answers the contradiction in the two texts in a similar fashion, ruling that when it is meal time, one may not eat even a snack, out of concern that he'll forget to feed his animals, but between meals, one may eat a snack without feeding his animals first. This approach is also quoted by the Kaf Hachayim (167:52) as definitive halachah. However, the Shevus Yaakov, the Kesav Sofer (Shu"t Orach Chayim #32) and the Mishnah Berurah (167:40) all prohibit eating even a snack before feeding one's animals.

At this point, we can address one of our opening questions: "I would like to eat an apple. Must I first feed Fido?" According to the Taz, the Chayei Odom, the Nahar Shalom and the Kaf Hachayim, one may eat an apple or some other snack before feeding his dog, although the Nahar Shalom and the Kaf Hachayim permit this only

when it is not meal time. On the other hand, many other authorities prohibit eating even a snack without first feeding one's animals.

Is instructing enough? The Nahar Shalom and the Kaf Hachayim also permit the following. They contend that if the owner commanded his servants to feed the animals, he may begin his meal. Since his instructions will be obeyed, he does not need to worry that his animals will go hungry. However, other authorities do not record this lenient ruling (see Mishnah Berurah).

Drinking before feeding Is it permitted to drink before one feeds the animals, or is the prohibition limited to eating?

Based on the Torah's description of how Rivkah greeted Eliezer, the Sefer Chassidim (#531), makes a distinction between eating and drinking. The Torah teaches that Eliezer asked her for a little bit of water, and she answered him, I will serve you water and also your camels. The Sefer Chassidim asks how Eliezer could drink without first providing the camels with water. He concludes that although one may not eat without first feeding one's animals, it is permitted to drink. This conclusion is quoted by many later authorities (for example, Magen Avraham 167:18; Birkei Yosef 167:6; Mishnah Berurah 167:40; Shu"t Har Tzvi 1:90), although several others (Pri Megadim, Mishbetzos Zahav 167:7; Shu"t Kesav Sofer, Orach Chayim #32) dispute it. For example, the Pri Megadim rules that when the animals are thirsty, one is required to water them before one may drink. He contends that Rivkah offered the men to drink first, because the camels were not as thirsty. This was because the camels had been drinking roadside water that people would consider too dirty to drink.

Another approach is that of the Chasam Sofer, who contends that when someone is offered food by a host, he may eat without first feeding his animals, since the host has no obligation to feed the guest's animals. This explains why Eliezer drank before watering his camels.

Yet another approach to explain Rivkah's actions is that she assessed that it was dangerous for Eliezer and his men not to hydrate themselves immediately, and that pikuach nefesh certainly supersedes the requirement to feed or water the animals first (Or Hachayim, quoted by Yad Efrayim on Magen Avraham 167:18).

A drinking problem Why should drinking be permitted before one feeds one's animals when it is forbidden to eat, and, according to many authorities, even to have a small snack? Rav Tzvi Pesach Frank (Shu"t Har Tzvi, Orach Chayim 1:90) provides two reasons for this distinction. First, suffering from thirst is far more uncomfortable than suffering from hunger, so the Torah did not require one to remain thirsty in order to make sure that the animals are fed. Second, the Torah forbade eating before feeding one's animals out of concern that once one gets involved in eating, he may forget to feed his animals. Drinking does not create this concern, since it takes less time and does not involve as much procedure.

Is Shabbos different? May one eat on Shabbos and Yom Tov before feeding one's animals? The Kesav Sofer rules that the prohibition of eating before one feeds one's animals applies only to eating a meal that does not fulfill a mitzvah, but that one may eat on Shabbos and Yom Tov before one has fed one's animals, since this eating fulfills a mitzvah. Not all authorities appear to accept this ruling.

Dog's best friend Let us return to one of the questions we raised above: "I would like to eat an apple. Must I first feed Fido?"

An anonymous questioner asked the great eighteenth-century halachic authority, Rav Yaakov Emden, whether one may eat before feeding his dog or cat. The Yaavetz (She'eilas Yaavetz #17), an acronym by which Rav Emden was often called, responded that he is uncertain as to why the questioner thought that dogs and cats should be treated differently from any other of G-d's creatures. He then suggests two reasons that might explain why the questioner thought that one may eat before feeding one's dog or cat. Each of these reasons requires an introduction.

Beheimah versus chayah For certain laws, the Torah divides animals into two categories, beheimos and chayos. These two categories defy a clear translation in English, although often beheimos are called domesticated animal species and chayos are called wild species. Rav Yaakov Emden suggested that perhaps the questioner thought that the requirement to feed your animals before you eat applies only to species of animal that qualify as beheimah and not to those that are chayah, and that the questioner thought that both dogs and cats are categorized as chayos, thereby exempting the owner from the obligation of feeding his animals before eating. The Yaavetz does agree that both dogs and cats are categorized as chayos -- the Mishnah (Kelayim 8:6) quotes a dispute between Rabbi Meir and the Sages as to whether a dog is considered a chayah or a beheimah. According to the Sages, whose ruling is the halachic conclusion, dogs qualify as chayos, and the Yaavetz endeavors to demonstrate that cats also qualify as chayos.

However, the Yaavetz notes that the prohibition to eat before feeding your animals applies equally to beheimos and chayos. Although there are several areas of halachah in which there is a difference between kosher beheimos and kosher chayos, there is only one Talmudic source that discusses what halachic difference it makes whether a non-

kosher animal is categorized as a chayah or as a beheimah. This source is a Tosefta (Kelayim 5:5) that discusses the above-mentioned dispute between Rabbi Meir and the Sages whether a dog qualifies as a chayah or as a beheimah. The Tosefta's question is, what difference does it make whether a dog is a chayah or a beheimah. The Tosefta explains that the difference in halachah is germane to someone who gives all his chayos to his son, whether his dogs are included in the gift. According to the Sages, the dogs have now been given to the son, whereas according to Rabbi Meir, they remain property of the father.

The Rash, one of the early Baalei Tosafos, adds another similar halachic difference that will result from the question as to whether a creature is a beheimah or a chayah: The case where someone declared all his chayos to be kodesh, which means that they have all become property of the Beis Hamikdash. According to Rabbi Meir, since dogs are beheimos, in this situation his dogs will remain his property, whereas, according to the Sages, Fido and his buddies have now become property of the Beis Hamikdash and require redemption.

Both the Tosefta and the Rash imply that the mitzvah of feeding your animals before you eat applies equally to beheimos and to chayos.

This Tosefta answers another question, which arises from a mishnah that states that a pig qualifies as a beheimah, whereas the elephant, the monkey and the arod, a type of wildass (probably an onager) are chayos. Since these are all non-kosher species, what difference does it make in halachah whether these species qualify as beheimah or as chayah? The answer is that after Mr. Goldberg gave all the chayos in his personal zoo and petting farm to his son as a gift, who owns the pigs, the elephants, the monkeys and the onagers? The halachah is that Mr. Goldberg still owns the pigs but he has given the elephants, the monkeys and the onagers to his son. (I will not delve into the question why Mr. Goldberg owned a pig.)

Feed your workers! Having rejected this attempt to explain why his questioner thought one may eat before he feeds his dogs and cats, the Yaavetz suggests another possibility why dogs and cats would be excluded from the requirements of this mitzvah. Perhaps the requirement to feed your animal before you eat is because it is working for you, and the questioner thought that dogs and cats are not considered workers. According to this approach, one would be permitted to eat before feeding the fish or the canaries, since they are basically pension receivers, whereas one would be required to feed his carrier pigeons, cattle, sheep, goats, horses, donkeys and gaming falcons before eating.

However, the Yaavetz rejects both suppositions of this approach.

First, he contends that both dogs and cats qualify as workers, dogs because they serve as loyal watchmen and cats because they clear the house of mice.

Second, the requirement to feed your animal has nothing to do with whether the animal works for you; once you are responsible for the animal, the rules of tzaar baalei chayim, not to cause an animal to suffer, require you to provide it with food. Thus, even pension-receiving animals are entitled to be fed, and the owner must attend to them before he is permitted to eat.

Man's best friend So, is there any reason to treat dogs and cats differently from other animals?

Notwithstanding the Yaavetz's rejection of both of his suggestions why dogs and cats should be treated differently from other animals, he concludes that, although one is required to make sure that one's dogs and cats are fed, one is not required to feed them prior to his own eating. He presents the following novel suggestion: Since both of these species do not have difficulty finding food on their own, the responsibility to feed them does not lie so heavily on the owner to feed them before eating. The prohibition to eat before feeding your animals is restricted to animals that, once domesticated, would not be able to find food without the owner feeding them. The Yaavetz contends that only animals that may have difficulty finding food on their own create an onus on the owner to the extent that he may have to go hungry until he provides them with victuals.

By the way, I found very few later authorities who quote this position of the Yaavetz authoritatively.

Returning to Noach The Gemara (Sanhedrin 108b) records that Shem, the son of Noach, was once telling Eliezer, Avraham's servant, how difficult life was in the teivah. Shem recounted: "It was quite difficult. A creature that usually eats in the daytime, we fed by day. One that eats at night, we fed by night. My father did not know what to feed the zekisa. One day, he was sitting and slicing a pomegranate, and a worm fell out, and the zekisa ate it. From that day on, we made a mix of bran and allowed it to turn wormy, after which time the zekisa ate it."

Conclusion Why are we required to feed one's animals before we eat? The Yad Efrayim (on Orach Chayim, Magen Avraham 167:18) suggests the following: One should always look at himself as unworthy to receive Hashem's bounty. Perhaps one's only merit to be fed is that we feed the animals that are dependent upon us. Thus, this mitzvah has a secondary goal -- not only to teach us to be concerned about Hashem's creatures, but also to teach us humility.

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Individual and Collective Responsibility Noach - Covenant & Conversation 5777 / 2016

Lord Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

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 G-d, and the land was filled with violence. G-d 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 G-d summons Abraham to begin an entirely new chapter in the religious story of humankind. There is no Flood – G-d 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, G-d 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 Shurruk, 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 ziqurat 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 civilisation 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 its language and culture on them, thus directly contravening G-d’s wish that humans should respect the integrity of each nation and each individual. When at the end of the Babel story G-d “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 G-d 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 Noach 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.

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Rav Yochanan Zweig CLOTHES CALL

"He (Noach) drank from the wine and became drunk and he uncovered himself in his tent. Ham, the father of Canaan, saw his father's nakedness and told his two brothers... Shem and Yefes took a garment and placed it upon both of their shoulders, and they walked backward and covered their father's nakedness..." (9:22-23) Rashi (9:22) explains the circumstances of these events: Noach's son Cham (upon seeing his father naked and passed out drunk) emasculated his father and joyfully reported his actions to his brothers. Rashi (9:25) further explains that Cham was driven by the desire to eliminate competition for their inheritance: As long as there were three brothers, the world would be divided only among them, but if Noach were to have additional children, they would have to share it with more heirs. In Cham's view, he had done the family a service by mutilating his father. Upon hearing this, Shem and Yefes quickly went to their father, and very respectfully covered him up. Both Shem and Yefes were rewarded for their action. Yet there is an enormous disparity in the way Noach's two sons were rewarded. Shem's reward was that his descendants received the mitzvah of tzitzis - a precept that would be observed by every Jewish male, in every generation, on every day of his life. For Yefes, though, the reward was confined to a one-time event later in history: his descendants would be given a proper burial, rather than their dead bodies being left strewn across a battlefield. Rashi explains that this disparity is because Shem's merit was greater since he acted with greater alacrity than Yefes in the performance of this mitzvah. Nevertheless, it is difficult to believe that a modicum of extra effort - a mere technical difference between the actions of the two - led to such a colossal difference between the two brothers' rewards. To properly understand why each one received the reward that he did, one must examine the mindsets and motivations behind their actions. As it turns out, Shem and Yefes had very different reasons for wanting to cover their father. Shem, who would later lead the Yeshiva of Shem and Ever (where Yaakov Avinu studied for fourteen years) had an innate sensitivity that the human body needs to be covered for its own dignity. After hearing that his father was exposed in his tent, Shem quickly went to remedy the situation. On the other hand, Yefes, who is identified as the father of the Greeks, was the precursor of the well-known Greek philosophy extolling the virtues and beauty of the naked human form. In fact, the name Yefes come from the Hebrew word "yafeh - beautiful." In his mind, the body doesn't need to be covered; however, once he heard that Cham had mutilated the body, he felt compelled to cover it because it was no longer an object of beauty. Shem, whose instinct was to add dignity to human body by covering it, was rewarded with a dignified article of clothing proclaiming that the wearer is in the service of G-d - a high honor indeed. Yefes' reward was that the mutilated bodies of his decedents on the battlefield would merit burial - because that was his instinct; to cover a mutilated body.

PEACE OR PIECE? At the end of the parsha (11:1), the Torah relates the story of Migdal Bavel. Essentially, the different nations of the world became united with a single language and purpose; to build a tower to enter the heavens in order to launch an attack on Hashem. After descending

to examine the situation, Hashem decided (11:9) to confuse their languages and scatter them across the face of the earth. This becomes known as "the dispersion." Rashi (ad loc) contrasts the sins of the generation of the flood with that of the generation of the dispersion: The generation of the flood deserved extermination because there was stealing and hostility between them. Even though the generation of the tower committed a seemingly much more heinous sin - by choosing to wage a war on Hashem - their punishment (being scattered) was a lot less severe. As Rashi explains, this is because there was unity and peace between them. In other words, they had united for a common cause (waging a war on Hashem). Rashi concludes "one can learn from here that conflict is hateful and peace is paramount." However, if the sole reason for sparing the generation of the dispersion was because of the unity amongst them, then why remove their one redeeming quality by "mixing their languages and scattering them across the face of the earth?" In fact, by dispersing them and forcing them to try and communicate in different languages, their coalition would inevitably dissolve, and it seems almost guaranteed that they would eventually come to the strife and discord of the generation of the flood! Wouldn't this eventually lead to their destruction as well? In order to understand this we must reexamine our understanding of what shalom truly means. We often talk about "shalom bayis" or "making shalom" between people who are feuding. Most people believe that merely getting others to coexist peacefully is the key to creating shalom; but this is, at best, an incomplete approach to shalom. In this parsha, the Torah is teaching us a remarkable lesson about how to create a lasting shalom. The key component to creating shalom is having an individual recognize what is unique about himself, and what he alone contributes. In other words, when a person feels good about himself and secure in the knowledge that he has something special to contribute, he won't feel threatened by other people and/or their accomplishments. In fact, once he is secure, he can begin to appreciate what another person might add to a given situation. This is precisely what Hashem did for the generation of the dispersion. Originally, their unity in purpose was a unifying factor, but ultimately it would have likely dissolved into interpersonal conflict once the original purpose was either achieved or otherwise became irrelevant. Hashem actually gave them a lasting chance at shalom by giving each component of the generation their own space and language. These two aspects are the keys to giving a nation its own definition; a particular type of geography develops a certain defined skill set, and different languages to express the individual uniqueness of those nationalities. Once each nation is satisfied and comfortable with its identity, it becomes possible to appreciate other nations and nationalities. Thus, the nations can begin to see how they need each other. When there is a level of personal satisfaction among the people of a nation, the other nations are no longer viewed as a threat; in fact, they are recognized as necessary allies in order to achieve goals for the greater good. This is the very definition of shalom; completing each other to create a greater whole. This is true in our world, in our community, and in our homes.

from: Ohr Somayach <ohr@ohr.edu> to: weekly@ohr.edu subject: Torah Weekly *Ohr Somayach :: Torah Weekly :: Parshat Noach For the week ending 5 November 2016 / 4 Heshvan 5777 by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair - www.seasonsofthemoon.com Insights Saved From the Flood "A window you will make for the Ark..." (6:16)*

The Mishna says the word in Hebrew for "ark" — teva — can also mean "a word." The word for "window" — tzohar — can also mean "to shine."

In other words, you can read this verse as follows: "Make your word shine!"

Each one of us has the power and responsibility to illuminate our words, to make them words of positive force, of prayer, of encouragement, and of Torah. When we do this we raise the world around us above the deluge of physicality and selfishness that looms.

Even one word of prayer or Torah can save us from the "flood." *Source: based on the Sefat Emet © 2016 Ohr Somayach International*

from: torahweb@torahweb.org to: weeklydt@torahweb.org date: Wed, Nov 2, 2016 at 10:02 PM subject: Rabbi Benjamin Yudin - The Animals Within and Without

Rabbi Benjamin Yudin The Animals Within and Without

Reb Chaim Volozhiner in his Nefesh Hachaim (chapter 5) extols the potential of man. He cites the verse (Devarim 32:9) "for Hashem's portion is His people, Jacob is the measure of His inheritance". The noun in the verse is chevel which literally means a rope. Rashi understands the rope to consist of three strands, namely the merits of the three patriarchs. Nefesh Hachaim understands the rope to be suspended from heaven to Earth. When man tugs and pulls the rope in this world, it has consequences in the upper realms.

This is demonstrated in where Reb Chanina bar Pada's teaching (Brachos 35b) that if one eats without reciting the proper bracha he is stealing from Hashem and from the Jewish people. That he is stealing from Hashem is understood, as he is failing to proclaim His sovereignty over the world. In addition, he is stealing from the people of Israel because, Rashi explains, when man sins (as in the case of eating without a blessing) the fruit, its taste, and nutritional value become diminished. Such is the powerful impact of man on his natural environment.

It is most fascinating to note the relationship between man and his natural world. Interestingly, when man eats from the forbidden fruit, and then realizes he is naked, he covers himself with fig leaves. Rashi (Breishis 3:7 citing Brachos 40a) teaches that the fig tree is the tree from which he ate and from the very object of his sin came the remedy, i.e. his clothing. However, the other trees refused to allow him to take their leaves. Prior to his sin all of nature, man and the natural world around him, were in perfect sync and harmony, proudly unified in bringing honor and glory to Hashem. When man sinned it was an affront to all of nature, not just to man. His sinning brought about a negative change in the environment.

When Cain killed Hevel and was punished to be a wanderer, Cain protests to Hashem and cries out, (Breishis 4:14) "whoever meets me will kill me". Who is Cain afraid of being killed by? The only other humans around are his parents, and although they will be angry at him it is most unlikely that they will kill him! The Ramban therefore answers that Cain feared being killed by the animals, since he broke the peaceful nature of the natural world, he understood that now the animals would also turn violent and kill him. There is an ideal balance in the natural world with man.

One may suggest it all started when Hashem declared on the sixth day of creation (Breishis 1:28), "na'aseh adam - let us make man." Rashi explains the challenging "us" as referring to the angels with whom Hashem consulted prior to making man. The Zohar (Pinchas 219) understands this to mean that Hashem was addressing all of creation and said, "I will take something from everything, from all the animals, all the different characteristics and together form man as a composite of all of nature."

I believe this can help us understand Yehuda ben Teima's statement (Avos 5:23), "be bold as a leopard, light as an eagle, swift as a deer, and brave as a lion, to perform the will of your Father in Heaven". Why does he need to associate each trait with an animal? Why not simply say be swift, bold, and strong? Perhaps he is reminding us that we can do it, since part of the strength of the animals is in each of us.

In the beginning of Parshas Noach (Breishis 6:12) mankind is given a humiliating blow by being referred to as "meat" when Hashem announces, "for all flesh has corrupted its way upon the earth". This most demeaning referral is repeated again in (6:17). Rashi, citing (Sanhedrin 108a) teaches that even the beasts, animals and birds were acting in an immoral way, mating outside their own species. How can this be? After all, the animals have their own natural order and do not have a yetzer harah - evil inclination!

The Beis Halevi in his opening discourse on Parshas Noach teaches that man's actions have global consequences. His actions not only effect himself, his neighbors, and his immediate environment, but have a ripple effect upon the entire world. This is further substantiated by the Nefesh Hachaim (chapter 3) who cites several teachings of our Rabbis including the Talmud's (Brachos 64a) famous comment, "and all your children will be students of Hashem, and your children will have peace (Isaiah 54:13) Do not understand only 'your children', but as 'your builders'". Reb Chaim understands this to mean that man's actions either build or destroy the world. Since all of creation is centered within man, when man degrades himself it is reflected by, and has reverberations in, the natural world.

As we said earlier, in Parshas Noach man is referred to as basar-meat. The greatness of Avraham is the, "nefesh Asher asu B'Charan - the souls they made in Charan" (Bereshis 12:5.) Rashi (citing Sanhedrin 99b) explains that Avraham converted the men and Sarah the women. We don't find anywhere, however, these "converts" acceptance of Torah and mitzvos, so what type of conversion was this? Perhaps, as Rav Amiel z"li in his Hegyonos el Ami suggests, Avraham and Sarah taught mankind that man is not to be viewed as basar-meat, but as nefesh - a spiritual being. He has the ability, by uniting his body and soul, to bring about harmony in nature. Marriage is, as Avraham said to Sarah, "and that my soul may live on account of you" (Bereishis 12:13), i.e. the uniting of two individuals in sanctity, bringing harmony in the home and thus by extension to the rest of creation.

Much of our woes are attributed to global warming. I believe if man would only look inward and take responsibility for the immorality of our society, for the breakdown of the sacred family structure, it would do more to restore the balance of nature and man. We all yearn for the days of (Isaiah 11:6), "a wolf will dwell with a sheep". The Torah provides us with a path to reach that state: restore the harmony and balance in nature, and be moral.

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from: Rabbi Chanan Morrison <chanan@ravkooktorah.org> to: rav-kook-list@googlegroups.com subject: [Rav Kook Torah]

ravkooktorah.org Rav Kook Torah Noah: Gathering Within the Ark Why an Ark?

Why was it necessary for Noah to build an ark to save his family from the Flood's destruction? Could G-d not have arranged an easier way to rescue him?

The Midrash raises this question, explaining that the 120 years that Noah worked constructing the enormous boat were meant to provide the people of his generation with an opportunity to repent.

Rebuilding the World

Eighteenth-century scholar Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzatto offered an alternative explanation to that of the Midrash. He wrote that Noah needed to spend a year living inside the ark in order to prepare the foundations of a new world. Outside the ark, where flood waters swept away the world's evil, nothing could survive. Inside the ark, the inner integrity of the world was reestablished under Noah's direction. The soul of this great tzaddik encompassed all the souls of the world. As Noah fed and looked after the animals in his care, he renewed the world on the basis of goodness and kindness.

A similar preparatory stage of spiritual renewal took place many generations later. Before the revelation of the Zohar, Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai spent thirteen years hiding in a cave. He needed this period of seclusion to purify and prepare himself for the Zohar's inner light (Adir BaMarom 7).

The Path of Personal Growth

This same method, Rav Kook wrote, is necessary for our own moral and spiritual growth. Change is difficult. It is not easy to correct old habits and patterns of thought. As human beings, we become accustomed to looking at

life in terms of fulfilling our material needs, which can lead us to drift unthinkingly into self-centered pursuit of honor and physical pleasures.

The path to repairing one's deeds and refining one's character has two aspects. The first step is cognitive. We must fully understand each trait and its characteristics, and we must learn the proper time and place for their expression. Therefore our first request in the daily Amidah prayer is that G-d "grant us knowledge, understanding, and insight."

Theoretical knowledge, however, is not enough. After acquiring this wisdom, we must accustom our will to whole-heartedly conform to this new path. We must strive to quiet our heart's desires and distance ourselves from all that leads to a confused state of mind — a state that undermines the very foundations of character-building. We need to acquire a resolute and steadfast outlook and fortify our traits so that we will be able to retain our purity and holiness even when occupied in worldly matters.

A Private Ark

Those who succeed in directing their mind and inner will in this fashion will gain control of all aspects of their lives. Those who have not carefully thought out their path, however, will lack control of their actions and desires. Such individuals need to withdraw the powers of the soul, their strengths and talents, and gather them in, like lines radiating outward that are pulled back to their focal point.

This undertaking is similar to Noah's confinement within the ark. It can be a bitter and heavy burden to constrain the soul's powers in such a way, since the soul naturally seeks independence and freedom. Even confinement in the body is a terrible prison for the soul; all the more so to be constrained in such a fashion.

Converging toward the nucleus of one's mind and inner will is not a pleasant task. One may feel pained and even depressed from the constraints of this path of repair. But after the soul's forces have become accustomed to conducting themselves properly, they may be allowed to return to their natural state. Then all aspects of one's personality will be proper vessels for fulfilling G-d's will, and one's powers may be released to rule over the body once more, now following the dictates of the intellect.

This path of personal renewal parallels the world's renewal in the time of Noah. The months spent in the ark were a preparatory period of converging and gathering powers under the direction of the tzaddik. But when the punishing waters receded and the inhabitable dry land appeared, the ark's inhabitants could be freed from their confinement. So too, as character traits are repaired and perfected, they may be released once again.

Testing the Waters

During the period of confinement, one needs to "test the waters" — to measure whether one's powers are ready to be set free. This stage corresponds to Noah's sending out the raven and the dove. One tests one's traits in matters that do not involve danger, just as Noah utilized birds — creatures that can fly and thus were not endangered by the flood waters. When Noah realized that the world's repair was not yet complete, he drew them back into the ark.

The Divine command, "Leave the ark!" came only when the land was completely dry. Then it was time to serve G-d in an unhindered manner, for the active dissemination of Torah and acts of kindness requires an unfettered soul, full of strength and courage. (*Sapphire from the Land of Israel. Adapted from Mussar Avicha, pp. 33-39*) Copyright © 2013 by Chanan Morrison

<http://blogs.timesofisrael.com/the-challenge-of-an-agnostic-to-live-like-a-believer/> *The Times Of Israel The Challenge Of An Agnostic: To Live Like A Believer Parshat Noah Rabbi Shlomo Riskin Thursday, November 3, 2016/ Heshvan 2, 5777/ Efrat, Israel* — "And Haran died before his father, in the land of his birth, in Ur Kasdim." (Gen. 11:28)

When it comes to questions of belief, the agnostic is the loneliest of all. On one side of the fence stands the atheist, confident in his rejection of G-d and often dedicated to the debunking of religion, which he considers to be "the opiate of the masses" (per Karl

Marx). On the other side stands the believer, who glories in his faith that the universe is the handiwork of G-d. The agnostic stands in the middle, not knowing (a-ghost) whether or not G-d exists, usually despairing of the possibility of acquiring certitude about anything transcending observable material phenomena.

Our Biblical portion makes reference to two very different agnostics, Haran and Noah. The contrast between them contains an important lesson for agnostics, believers and atheists, alike.

The Bible states that Noah, along with his sons, his wife, and sons' wives, went into the ark "because of the waters of the Flood" (Gen. 7:7). From this verse, Rashi derives that "Noah had little faith; he believed and he didn't believe that the Flood would arrive."

Noah didn't enter the ark until the water literally pushed him in. Rashi's phrase that "he believed and he didn't believe" is really another way of describing an agnostic who remains in the state of his uncertainty; he believes and doesn't believe. Noah is therefore described by Rashi as the first agnostic.

The second Biblical agnostic appears in the guise of Haran. "These are the generations of Terah. Terah begat Abram, Nahor, and Haran" (Gen. 11:27).

Why does the text specify "and Haran died before his father in the land of his birth, in Ur Kasdim" (Ibid. v. 28)? What is the significance of citing the exact place of Haran's death?

Rashi explains by citing a fascinating midrashic tradition, and at the same time extracts Haran from relative anonymity, setting him up as a counterfoil agnostic to Noah. This midrash details how Terah, the father of the clan and a famous idol manufacturer, brings charges in the court of King Nimrod against his own son. He accuses Abram of being an iconoclast who destroyed his father's idols while preaching heretical monotheism. As punishment, Abram is to be cast into the fiery furnace.

Haran is present at the trial and takes the position of having no position. He remains on the sidelines thinking that if Nimrod's furnace will prove hotter than Abram's flesh, he will side with the king; but if Abram survives the fire, then it would be clear that Abram's G-d is more powerful than Nimrod's gods, and he will throw in his lot with his brother.

Only after Abram emerges unscathed, is Haran ready to rally behind his brother. He confidently enters the fiery furnace (literally: Ur Kasdim), but no miracles await him. Haran burns to death.

Is it not strange that the fate of the two agnostics should be so different? We read how Noah was a man of little faith, and yet not only does he survive the Flood, he turns into one of the central figures of human history. He is even termed "righteous" in the Bible.

In contrast, Haran, father of Lot, brother to Abraham, hovers on the edge of obscurity, and is even punished with death for his lack of faith. Why is Haran's agnosticism considered so much worse than Noah's?

Rabbi Moshe Besdin, z"l, explained that while Noah and Haran shared uncertainty about G-d, there was a vast difference between them. Noah, despite his doubts, nevertheless build the ark, pounding away for 120 years, even suffering abuse from a world ridiculing his eccentric persistence. Noah may not have entered the ark until the rains began—but he did not wait for the Flood before obeying the divine command to build an ark!

Noah may think like an agnostic, but he acts like a believer. Haran, on the other hand, dies because he waits for someone else to test the fires. In refusing to act for G-d during Abram's trial, he acted against G-d. In effect, his indecision is very much a decision. He is an agnostic who acts like an atheist.

Indecision is also a decision. A person who is indecisive about protesting an evil action or a malicious statement is aiding and abetting that malevolence by his very indecisive silence. After all, our sages teach that "silence is akin to assent."

Noah reached his spiritual level because he acted, not so much out of faith, but despite his lack of it. Our Sages understood very well the difficulty of faith and the phenomenon of agnosticism. What they attempt to teach the agnostic is: If you are unsure, why do you act as if you are an atheist? Would it not be wiser to act as if you were a believer?

We learn from Noah's life and Haran's death that perfect faith is not necessary in order to conduct one's life. Belief is less important than action. In the World to Come, there is room for all kinds of agnostics. It depends primarily on how they acted on earth.

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