

Weekly Parsha NOACH
Rabbi Wein's Weekly Blog

The Torah, in this week's reading, describes the rainbow as becoming the symbol of God's covenant with the humankind, that the world will not be destroyed by another flood. The appearance of the rainbow in the narrative of Noach and his emergence from the ark does not mean that the rainbow was created then. According to rabbinic tradition and the unchanging laws of nature, the rainbow existed from the time of original creation itself. What is significant is that the Torah points out to Noach that the rainbow now has a great significance to humanity and is not to be observed and thought of as being merely another of the great many phenomena that we call nature.

Rather, when human beings see a rainbow, they should be reminded of God's covenant with us and how we are all descended from one family that was the progenitor of humankind, as we know it today. One of the interesting things about the rainbow is that when Jews view it, they are bidden to recite a blessing. This is meant to teach us that the wonders of nature are constant reminders of our relationship to our Creator and our obligations that that entails. Because of this, Jewish tradition also teaches us that we are not to stare at length or directly at a rainbow because the rainbow represents God's presence in our world and should not be subject to prolonged stares.

This lesson is true in all areas of human life and in our relationship to nature. Pantheism promulgated the idea that nature itself is God. That is a misrepresentation of the true relationship between the Creator and what was created. Judaism teaches us that we are to see the wonders of the planet that we inhabit as part of God's scheme in creating the world and that we react to seeing those wonders through the prism of the Torah that the Lord has granted to Israel.

Viewing nature without Torah insight and background is again reverting to pantheism. That is the meaning of the Mishnah in Avot that one should not interrupt one's study of Torah in order to admire a beautiful phenomenon of nature. Nature is to be viewed through knowledge and understanding of Torah and not as something that is distinct and unrelated to Torah and its values.

Seeing nature devoid of any moral backdrop diminishes the wonders of nature and the grandeur of the world in which we live. A rainbow without the message of the Lord to Noach loses much of its beauty and a great deal of its meaning. In the Talmud we find that great and noble people were themselves compared to the rainbow, because in a noble person one can also link the nature of the Creator that fashions that person. Everything in life and in nature, as well as our judgment of human beings should always be viewed from the perspective of Torah and eternity.

Shabbat shalom
Rabbi Berel Wein

The Light in the Ark (Noach 5780)

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

Amid all the drama of the impending flood and the destruction of almost all of creation, we focus on Noah building the ark, and hear one detailed instruction:

Make a tzohar for the ark and terminate it within a cubit of the top. (Gen. 6:16)

There is a difficulty understanding what "tzohar" means, since the word does not appear anywhere else in Tanach. Everyone agrees that it is referring to a source of illumination. It will give light within the ark itself. But what exactly is it? Rashi quotes a Midrash in which two Rabbis disagree as to its meaning:

Some say this was a window; others say that it was a precious stone that gave light to them.[1]

The precious stone had the miraculous quality of being able to generate light within the darkness.

Bartenura suggests that what is at stake between the two interpretations is the etymology of the word tzohar itself. One relates it to the word tzahorayim, meaning "midday." In that case, the brightness was to come from the sun, the sky, the outside. Therefore tzohar means "a window, a skylight." The other view is that tzohar is related to zohar, "radiance," which suggests something that radiates its own light, hence the idea of a miraculous precious stone.

Chizkuni and others suggest Noah had both: a window (from which he later released the raven, Gen. 8:6) and some form of artificial lighting for the prolonged period of the flood itself when the sun was completely overcast by cloud and the world was shrouded in darkness.

It remains fascinating to ask why the Rabbis of the Midrash, and Rashi himself, would spend time on a question that has no practical relevance. There will be – God promised this in this week's parsha – no further flood. There will be no new Noah. In any future threat to the existence of the planet, an ark floating on the water will not be sufficient to save humankind. So why should it matter what source of illumination Noah had in the ark during those tempestuous days? What is the lesson for the generations?

I would like to offer a midrashic speculation. The answer, I suggest, lies in the history of the Hebrew language. Throughout the biblical era, the word tevah meant an ark – large in the case of Noah and the flood, small in the case of the papyrus basket coated with tar in which Yocheved placed the baby Moses, setting him afloat on the Nile (Ex. 2:3). More generally, it means "box." However, by the time of the Midrash, tevah had come also to mean "word."

It seems to me that the Rabbis of the Midrash were not so much commenting on Noah and the ark as they were reflecting on a fundamental question of Torah. Where and what is the tzohar, the brightness, the source of illumination, for the tevah, the Word? Does it come solely from within, or also from without? Does the Torah come with a window or a precious stone?

There were certainly those who believed that Torah was self-sufficient. If something is difficult in Torah it is because the words of Torah are sparse in one place but rich in another.[2] In other words, the answer to any question in Torah can be found elsewhere in Torah. Turn it over and turn it over for everything is within it.[3] This is probably the majority view, considered historically. There is nothing to be learned outside. The Torah is illuminated by a precious stone that generates its own light. This is even hinted at in the title of the greatest work of Jewish mysticism, the Zohar (see Bartenura above).

There were, however, other views. Most famously, Maimonides believed that a knowledge of science and philosophy – a window to the outside world – was essential to understanding God's word. He made the radical suggestion, in the Mishnah Torah (Hilchot Yesodei Ha-Torah 2:2), that it was precisely these forms of study that were the way to the love and fear of God. Through science – the knowledge of "He who spoke and called the universe into existence" – we gain a sense of the majesty and beauty, the almost infinite scope and intricate detail of creation and thus of the Creator. That is the source of love. Then, realising how small we are and how brief our lives in the total scheme of things: that is the source of fear.

The case Maimonides made in the 12th century, long before the rise of science, has been compounded a thousand times with our accelerated knowledge of the nature of the universe. Every new discovery of the vastness of the cosmos and the wonders of the micro-cosmos, fills the mind with awe. "Lift up your eyes and look to the heavens: Who created all these?" (Is. 40:26).

Maimonides did not think that science and philosophy were secular disciplines. He believed that they were ancient forms of Jewish wisdom, that the Greeks had acquired from the Jews and sustained at a time when the Jewish people, through exile and dispersion, had forgotten them. So they were not foreign borrowings. Maimonides was re-claiming a tradition that had been born in Israel itself. Nor were they source of independent illumination. They were simply a window through which

the light of God's created universe could help us decode the Torah itself. Understanding God's world helps us understand God's word.

This made a significant difference to the way Maimonides was able to convey the truth of Torah. So for example, his knowledge of ancient religious practices – albeit based on sources that were not always reliable – afforded him the deep insight (in *The Guide for the Perplexed*) that many of the Chukim, the statutes, the laws that seem to have no reason, were in fact directed against specific idolatrous practices.

His knowledge of Aristotelian philosophy enabled him to formulate an idea that exists throughout both Tanach and the rabbinic literature, but that had not been articulated so clearly before, namely that Judaism has a virtue ethic. It is interested not just in what we do but in what we are, in the kind of people we become. That is the basis of his pathbreaking *Hilchot De'ot*, "Laws of ethical character."

The more we understand the way the world is, the more we understand why the Torah is as it is. It is our roadmap through reality. It is as if secular and scientific knowledge were the map, and Torah the route.

This view, articulated by Maimonides, was developed in the modern age in a variety of forms. Devotees of Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch called it *Torah im derech erez*, "Torah with general culture." In Yeshiva University it came to be known as *Torah u-Madda*, "Torah and science." Together with the late Aaron Lichtenstein zt"l, I prefer the phrase *Torah ve-Chochmah*, "Torah and wisdom," because wisdom is a biblical category.

Recently, the science writer David Epstein published a fascinating book called *Range*, subtitled, *How Generalists Triumph in a Specialised World*.^[4] He makes the point that over-concentration on a single specialised topic is good for efficiency but bad for creativity. The real creatives, (people like the Nobel prize winners), are often those who had outside interests, who knew other disciplines, or had passions and hobbies outside their subject. Even in a field like sport, for every Tiger Woods, who had a feel for golf even before he could speak, there is a Roger Federer, who exercised his skills in many sports before, quite late in youth, choosing to focus on tennis.

Lehavdil, it was precisely Maimonides' breadth of knowledge of science, medicine, psychology, astronomy, philosophy, logic, and many other fields that allowed him to be so creative in everything he wrote, from his letters, to his Commentary to the Mishnah, to the Mishnah Torah itself, structured differently from any other code of Jewish law, all the way to *The Guide for the Perplexed*. Maimonides said things that many may have sensed before, but no one had expressed so cogently and powerfully. He showed that it is possible to be utterly devoted to Jewish faith and law and yet be creative, showing people spiritual and intellectual depths they had not seen before. That was his way making a *tzohar*, a window for the *tevah*, the Divine word.

On the other hand, the *Zohar* conceives of Torah as a precious stone that gives light of itself and needs none from the outside. Its world is a closed system, a very deep, passionate, moving, sustained search for intimacy with the Divine that dwells within the universe and within the human soul.

So we are not forced to choose either the one or the other. Recall that Chizkuni said that Noah had a precious stone for the dark days and a window for when the sun shone again. Something like that happened when it came to Torah also. During the dark days of persecution, Jewish mysticism flourished, and Torah was illuminated from within. During the benign days when the world was more open to Jews, they had a window to the outside, and so emerged figures like Maimonides in the Middle Ages, and Samson Raphael Hirsch in the 19th century.

I believe that the challenge for our time is to open a series of windows so that the world can illuminate our understanding of Torah, and so that the Torah may guide us as we seek to make our way through the world.

Shabbat Shalom

Shabbat Shalom: Noah (Genesis 6:9-11:32)
By Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

Efrat, Israel – "Noah, the man of the earth, drank of the wine, became drunk, and uncovered himself within his tent. Ham, the father of Canaan, saw his father's nakedness and told his two brothers outside." (Genesis 9:20-22)

The name Canaan appears for the first time in this story of the degradation of Noah.

Canaan was not one of his sons, but his grandson, a son of Ham. The truth is that mentioning Canaan here seems totally out of place and superfluous. Noah becomes drunk, perhaps only because he does not realize the evil potential of the fruit of the vine. His son Ham does nothing to hide his father's shame; much the opposite, he serves as talebearer, reporting his father's nakedness to his brothers outside. Shem and Japheth cover their father without looking at him in order to protect their father's honor. Ham is the villain; Shem and Japheth are the heroes. Why mention Canaan? Even more to the point, Canaan is a super-charged name; after all, the Land of Canaan is the Land of Israel, which will ultimately be taken over by Abraham and his progeny, descendants of Shem. There must be a special significance to the mention of Canaan precisely at this biblical juncture, just before the text records the descendants of Noah and the nations they generate.

The majority of traditional commentators explain the inclusion of Canaan by suggesting that Canaan castrated his grandfather. Apparently there was an oral tradition that reported this action. This was what Ham really saw and reported to his brothers – the ultimate degradation.

In order to further understand the biblical text and its significance today, we must take a look at the next time the Land of Canaan appears in the Bible, right at the end of our Torah portion: "And Terah took his son Abram, and Lot the son of Haran his grandson, and his daughter-in-law Sarai, wife of Abram his son, and they departed with them from Ur Kasdim to set out for the Land of Canaan; they arrived at Haran and settled there" (Gen. 11:31).

It is curious that the text tells us Abram's father meant to go to the Land of Canaan but never really arrived; he only reached Haran, where, for whatever reason, he chose or was forced (perhaps by illness or old age, or the lack of means to complete the journey) to remain. Only two verses later, and as the opening of the next Torah portion, God appears to Abram without any prior buildup, commanding him to "go away from your land, your relatives and your father's house [in Haran] to the land that I will show you [the Land of Canaan]" (Gen. 12:1). The commentators, as well as the Midrash, are hard pressed to discover why God is now electing Abram, and why Abram is so willing to obey the divine command.

Maimonides suggests, on the basis of the Midrash, that the renamed Abraham had actually discovered God by means of his own rational gifts of analysis and had begun his quest to discover the Ruler of the Universe at the tender age of three. He even cites the famous Midrash that Abraham's father, Terah, was an idol maker, thereby positioning Abraham as an iconoclast.

Abraham is the first purely self-motivated seeker of the Divine history (*Mishne Torah*, Laws of Idolatry, Chapter 1).

But I would argue that the simple reading of the text leads to a very different conclusion. Terah apparently wanted very much to bring his family to Canaan. Indeed, our Torah reading will soon record how, when Abraham successfully conquers the four terrorist kings of the region, Melchizedek, the king of Salem and priest of God the Most High, brings him bread and wine and blesses God for having delivered Abraham's enemies into his hand (Gen. 14:18-20). Abraham even gives Melchizedek tithes—a gift that one usually would give to the priests of the Holy Temple. And Salem is the ancient name for Jeru-Salem, which means City of Peace.

The Ramban therefore suggests (in his commentary *ad loc.*) that in the Land of Canaan, of which Salem is the capital, there was a tradition harking all the way back to Adam of ethical monotheism, of a God of the universe Who would ultimately destroy terrorists and reward righteous lovers of peace. Perhaps Terah, having heard of the ethical monotheism being taught in Canaan, wanted his children to be brought up in that environment. From this perspective, Abraham is not a rebel, but a continuator of his father's geographical and spiritual journey. That is why God is pretty certain that Abraham will accept the divine command; as the son of Terah, he has been primed to do so. Hence we may posit that in its mention of Canaan at this point, the Bible is setting the stage for an Abrahamic takeover of the Land of Canaan, soon to become the Land of Abraham—Israel.

Canaan is pictured as a special location, with specific ethical requirements. Only those who truly aspire to ethical monotheism will be worthy of making Canaan (Israel) their eternal homeland. Canaan, the grandson of Noah, forfeited his right because, instead of following in his grandfather's paths of righteousness and wholeheartedness, he chose to destroy his grandfather's ability to pass these values on to succeeding generations. Abraham, unlike Noah, succeeded in parenting a grandson—Jacob-Israel—dedicated to righteousness and justice.

And herein may well be a warning: The descendants of Abraham will be privileged to live in Israel only for as long as they subscribe to such an ethical lifestyle.

And even if B'nei Yisrael eventually return to the land and are worthy of living in it, their return will always be dependent on the ethical quality of the daily lives

they lead. As Rashi warns us in his opening of the Book of Genesis, "the entire world belongs to the Holy One, Blessed be He; He created it, and He will give it to whoever is righteous in His eyes" (Rashi on Gen. 1:1).
Shabbat Shalom!

Elisha, the Master of Wings

Rav Kook Torah

The Talmud tells the story of a student who deposited a sum of money with a man who was ostensibly religious. This was a man who was careful to wear tefillin every day. When the student came to collect his money, he was shocked to hear the man deny ever having received it.

"I did not deposit the money with you," the young man responded bitterly.

"I deposited it with the tefillin on your head!"

Was this merely an expression of the student's disgust that a supposedly religious person would act this way? Or is there a deeper connection between tefillin and moral integrity?

A Clean Body

The Sages taught that one should follow the example of Elisha Ba'al Kenafayim ("the Master of Wings"). Elisha was always careful to only wear tefillin with a *guf naki*, when his body was clean. Tefillin are holy objects; wearing them requires a strict standard of hygiene and control over one's bodily functions.

Who was this Elisha, the "Master of Wings"?

The Roman government once proclaimed a decree against Israel: anyone laying tefillin will be executed by having his brains pierced through. Despite the danger, Elisha put on tefillin and went out to the marketplace.

Unfortunately, a Roman official spotted Elisha in the market wearing tefillin. Elisha fled, and the official chased after him. When Elisha realized that he would soon be caught, he removed the tefillin from his head and hid them inside his hand.

The officer demanded, "What is that in your hand?"

Elisha replied, "The wings of a dove."

Elisha then opened up his hand – and inside were the wings of a dove. From then on, he was called Elisha, the Master of Wings.

What is the significance of these dove wings? And how does the story of Elisha corroborate the requirement that tefillin be worn with a clean body?

Two Levels of Morality

The Torah calls tefillin an *oht*, a sign. They are a sign of the unique covenant between God and Israel. By wearing tefillin, we testify to the Jewish people's mission as "a kingdom of kohanim and a holy nation." Due to this special mission, the moral path of Israel is beyond that which is expected of other peoples. "God did this for no other nation; they do not know His laws" (Psalms 147:20).

All of humanity is expected to comply with the Noahide Code,² the foundation of natural morality. All peoples should aspire to a basic integrity, a love of justice and a hatred of evil. This standard of conduct does not presuppose great spiritual aspirations. It is sufficient that one's character has not been corrupted by the rapacious cruelty of beasts of prey. This basic level of moral purity, when one's natural inclinations have not been soiled by greed and lust, may be called *guf naki*.

Those who wish to ascend God's mountain - those who aspire to a higher ethical level, as represented by the lofty holiness of tefillin - must first have a "clean body." They must acquire the fundamental level of moral rectitude, and not have lost their innate purity through ignoble traits and dark deeds.

Only after acquiring the level of natural morality may one ascend the ethical ideal that corresponds to the unique holiness of Israel. Then one may proudly wear tefillin, and "God's name will be called upon you" (Deut. 28:10).

This is the significance of the dove wings that appeared in Elisha's hand. Wings enable one to ascend, to scale the mountain of elevated morality, uplifting the soul that has already acquired the basic level of morality.

One cannot attain this higher level while one's heart is impure and drawn to injustice. One must first have a "clean body," a basic level of decency and integrity.

Wings to Soar

What does all this have to do with Elisha's extraordinary dedication to the mitzvah of tefillin?

The ability to remain firm in our beliefs, even in the face of hardship and danger, indicates that we have fully internalized the level of holiness to which our soul aspires. According to the degree by which we have assimilated this level, we will find within ourselves the inner strength to withstand the challenges of the turbulent sea that rages around us.

To be tightly bound to the holiness of tefillin, one must first acquire the preliminary level of natural morality, a *guf naki*. And yet one must feel that this level, with all of its innate purity, cannot satisfy the soul's aspirations to scale the lofty heights of the Torah's elevated morality.

One who is a Master of Tefillin will also be a Master of Wings. His physical nature will not be able to confine his spirit earthbound. He will find inner resources of strength and dedication, even in an hour of trial. Elisha, in his brave stand against a cruel and evil regime, was worthy of the title "Master of Wings." The dove wings that appeared in his hand testified to the purity of his body and the loftiness of his soul.

(The Splendor of Tefillin. Adapted from Ein Eyah vol. III sec. 1 on Shabbat 49a)

² The Noahide Code consists of seven basic laws given to all of humanity after the Flood. The code prohibits idolatry, murder, theft, forbidden relations, blasphemy, and eating the meat of living animals, and it mandates the establishment of a system of courts.

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Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair - www.seasonsofthemoon.com

Insights

Of Men and Mice

"Behold I am about to bring the flood waters upon the earth to destroy all flesh in which there is a breath of life under the heavens." (6:17)

The prophet Yeshayahu (Isaiah) refers to the flood as the "waters of Noach," implying that Noach bears at least partial responsibility for the flood. For, if Noach had taught his generation to know G-d by instructing them to emulate G-d's *midot* (character traits), they surely would have repented.

A story is told about a rabbi who had a dispute with a philosopher as to whether instinct or behavioral training governs the behavior of an animal. The philosopher held that an animal can be trained so completely that it can be made to do almost anything. To prove his point he painstakingly trained a number of cats to stand upright, balance trays on their paws and serve as waiters. He dressed them for the part in white shirts with little black ties, and conducted a banquet with the cats as the waiters. As these feline waiters were serving the soup, the rabbi, who had been invited to the banquet, released a mouse. The banquet room was turned to pandemonium as the cats, forgetting all their hours of training, let their trays crash to the ground, rushing about on all fours after the mouse.

Without training, a person's baser instincts and desires will drag him onto all fours. However, a human being is different from the animals because he can perfect his character so that it controls his baser instincts. One who has not yet worked on perfecting his character will, like the trained cat, be able to put on a show of discipline for a time, but only so long as no "mice" are released in his path.

Only after a person has anchored good character traits in himself will the Torah reside in him. Only the Torah can bring one's character to ultimate perfection, but where there is no foundation of proper *midot*, the acquisition of Torah is impossible.

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Noach: "Easy Spirituality"

Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb

The French poet Baudelaire once remarked that the devil's greatest success is his ability to convince us that he does not exist.

Whereas Judaism does not believe in the devil quite as Baudelaire does, it does believe that there is a "devilish" force called the yetzer ha-ra within each of us, and that that force works in very subtle ways. At the same time, with ambivalence, we definitely do tend to believe that this yetzer does not exist.

Jewish writings through the ages have debated the nature of this force. All these writings ultimately trace back to a verse in this week's Torah portion: "The devising of man's mind are evil from his youth." (Genesis 8:21)

And to a similar verse in last week's Torah portion: "The Lord saw how great was man's wickedness on earth, and how every plan devised by his mind was nothing but evil all the time." (Genesis 6:5)

Thus, there most assuredly is an inclination for evil in each of us. He or she who wishes to live the life of a good person is well advised to guard against this natural inclination. This yetzer-force rarely commands us directly to do what is wrong. Instead it tries to craftily delude us into thinking that what is wrong and evil is right and good.

A favorite strategy for the yetzer is to persuade us that it seeks the same ends and objectives as God does, but that alternate ways of achieving those ends are also legitimate. Take spirituality, for example. How does one achieve a sense of spirituality?

For Judaism, spirituality and the emotions which accompany it can only be achieved through hard work: prayer, study, sacrifice, and above all, charity and compassion. No easy "grace"! The yetzer, while not denying the value of spirituality, tempts us with short cuts, and cheap and ersatz methods to achieve the same results as the more arduous methods prescribed by the Torah.

A wonderful illustration of this dynamic is found in this week's Torah portion, just after the story of the great Flood. Noah and his family are beginning anew, rebuilding their lives, rebuilding the world. What is the first thing Noah does? He plants a vineyard. His grapes grow and ripen, he makes wine and drinks it, and gets drunk.

What prompted Noah to make wine his first priority? Let me suggest the following imaginary scenario to answer that question. Noah walked with God. He enjoyed the sense of spirituality for which many of us yearn. He experienced a spiritual "high". In the past he achieved that level of spirituality by virtue of hard work: obedience, construction of the Ark, gathering the animals of the world, tending to them, offering sacrifices. Along came Noah's yetzer-force, and said "Noah! There must be an easier way! You can achieve the same spiritual high, the same sense of wholeness and holiness without all that work. All it will take is a few drinks of one of God's own juices. Plant a vineyard, make some wine and drink it and you will feel all the good feelings you felt before, and then some."

For, you see, the yetzer, or if you wish the devil, knows of the connection between addiction and spirituality.

How well I remember the 1960's, and the many gifted spiritual seekers who resorted to alcohol and more potent substances to generate moods of spirituality.

Judaism cautions us not to be seduced by facile techniques, even in the service of achieving higher and holier states of conscientiousness. That is why the Torah shifts next week into the story of Abraham, whose spirituality was based on service, on the courageous search for social justice, and on compassionate concern for others in need. In short, Abraham was dedicated to the very arduous methods that Noah sought to circumvent by drink.

Join us next week as we examine the impressive personality of Abraham and learn from him how to achieve a sober sense of spirituality.

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Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis

Dvar Torah: Noah

What was the primary sin of the generation of the flood?

In Parshat Noach we are told 'Vatishachet HaAretz lifnei HaElokim' – 'the earth became corrupted before Hashem'. The Kotsker Rebbe brilliantly divides these words into two statements: 'Vatishachet' – the earth became 'corrupted', and why was that the case? 'HaAretz lifnei Haelokim' – the slogan of the people at that time was: 'Earth before God'. That generation prioritised the physical and invested all their efforts into materialism, which for them was far more important than any form of spirituality or any acknowledgment of the role of God in their lives.

The antidote for this can be found in the gemara in Masechet Brachot. There, our sages bring to our attention two verses, both of which are very familiar to us and which seem to contradict each other. In Psalm 24 we read 'Lahaschem ha'aretz u'meloa – the earth and everything in it, is the Lord's.' But then in Psalm 115 which we chant in Hallel, we say Hashamayim, shamayim laHashem vha'aretz natan lifnei adam' – 'the heavens are the heavens of the Lord and the earth he has given to people'. So this earth – is it God's or is it ours?

The gemara says both statements are correct. Hashem has given this earth to us so that through our actions, we will appreciate the presence of Hashem in it. The primary way we do this is through the brachot that we recite. When I take something which has grown out of the ground, before I eat it, I say a blessing over it and in that way, I transform a mere physical activity into an action that brings spiritual gratification. We find, for example, at the Shabbat table, we take an ordinary bottle of wine but by reciting Kiddush we sanctify it and all who hear the blessing. We place so much emphasis on what we eat over Shabbat and Yom Tov, not because there is something extra special in the food itself but rather through our eating our table becomes an altar. We elevate the physical and the material in order to appreciate the presence of Hashem in our lives on those special days.

Therefore, unlike that generation of the flood, our way of life is 'Elokim lifnei ha'aretz' – God comes before everything that is physical and material in this world and as a result, our lives are filled with so much happiness and meaning.

Shabbat Shalom

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Rabbi Yissocher Frand - Parshas Noach

Dedicated to the speedy recovery of Mordechai ben Chaya

Noach Invents Retirement

Retirement: A Concept Introduced by Noach for Noachides

The Medrash Shochar Tov in Tehillim says that three righteous individuals were the foundation of the earth. Adam, Noach, and Avraham. There is an expression that is used all too commonly. We refer to a person as a "Tzadik Yesod Olam" [A righteous person, foundation of the world]. There are plenty of righteous people, but the accolade "Tzadik Yesod Olam" is a very specific title referring to a very special type of righteous person: A Tzadik who is literally "the foundation of the world."

The world rests, so to speak, on the shoulders of such a Tzadik. Today there has been inflation in many areas. There is "grade inflation" in schools. Everything is inflated. Today, coming three times a day to daven with a minyan already seems to qualify a person as a "Tzadik Yesod Olam." This is an overstated exaggeration that cheapens a title that should be reserved for truly unique individuals. The Medrash says only the three aforementioned people deserve this title: Adam, Noach, and Avraham.

The Almighty created the world. He had envisioned that the world would come to perfection through the First Man. Adam was a "Tzadik Yesod Olam." Unfortunately, as we all know, within the first day of his creation, Adam sinned by eating from the Tree of Knowledge and the potential that was within him for the perfection of the universe went by the wayside

The Almighty waited ten generations. There is a connection between the "Ten Generations" and the "Ten Utterances" with which the world was created. He waited ten generations to come up with another individual

who had the potential to be the “Tzadik Yesod Olam”— the righteous individual upon whom the world would rest. That person was Noah. But unfortunately, in the interval of the ten generations that came into existence from Adam to Noah, the world had “gone down the tube.” The Almighty did find Noah to be a Tzadik, and despite the fact that He decided to destroy the entire world, “Noah found favor in the Eyes of the L-rd” and Noah became the next person upon whom the Almighty wished to base the world. The Ribono shel Olam, as it were, started over with Noah – a new world.

Noah was to be the Tzadik Yesod Olam. Noah was saved. He saved the world. He repopulated the world. Those who came after him are not called “Children of Adam,” they are called “Children of Noah”. We are direct descendants of Noah because all other descendants of Adam were destroyed. Noah, after saving the world, emerged from the Taiva and “And Noah, the man of the earth, debased himself (vaYachel Noah) by planting a vineyard.” [Bereshis 9:20]. Rashi quotes Chazal that the word vaYachel implies debasement. Rashi points out that out of all the things that someone could plant, Noah should not have planted a vineyard.

Noah did plant a vineyard, he drank the wine, he became drunk, and Noah also failed in his mission to be the Tzadik Yesod Olam. Once again, it was not destined that the whole world should come to perfection during the days of Noah.

The Ribono shel Olam waited another ten generations—the “Ten Generations from Noah until Avraham.” Finally, the Almighty found in the patriarch Avraham the Tzadik Yesod Olam for whom He had been waiting for twenty generations! Avraham Avinu had Yitzchak. Yitzchak had Yaakov. And Yaakov had the Tribes of G-d (Shivtei K-ah). We, Klal Yisrael, are the descendants of Yaakov and we are supposed to carry on this mission of bringing the world to perfection.

That which Noah failed to do, Avraham Avinu accomplished. The question is – this Noah, with which we begin the parsha – “Noah, was a completely righteous man in his generation” (This is not a paid announcement in a newspaper where you find all kinds of titles used; this is the Ribono shel Olam talking! He does not use such terminologies carelessly) – does appear to have the makings of a Tzadik Yesod Olam. And yet he went from being “Tzadik Tamim” [completely righteous] [Bereshis 6:9] to be coming an “Ish Adamah” [man of the earth] [Bereshis 9:20].

Chazal point out that Moshe began as a shepherd and he ended his life as an Ish haElokim [a man of G-d]. Noah, somehow, went in the other direction. How did this happen to Noah? How did this person who had such potential, and in whom the Almighty saw such potential – how did it happen to him that the first thing he did after leaving the Taiva was planting a vineyard and getting drunk?

There is a Sefer on Chumash called Chikrei Lev from a Rabbi Leibel Hyman Z”L (an old-time Baltimorean who was a Rosh Yeshiva in America, and who later moved to Eretz Yisrael where he was a Rav). He suggests a theory as to what happened to Noah:

During the whole period of the Flood, Noah had a horrible time. He was not enjoying life on a cruise ship. Besides the fact that the whole world was destroyed, and he was aware of that, Noah literally could not sleep. There are animals that eat during the day and there are nocturnal animals that eat during the night. Just feeding the animals – every single species that was in the world – by the time Noah came out of the Taiva, he was a broken man to say the least. He was, however, a man who felt that he accomplished his mission. He literally saved the world. From now on, everyone is going to be a Ben Noah – one of his descendants! What more can people accomplish in this world than what Noah accomplished? He saved the world and he saved it at great personal stress and pain. The experience was horrible!

When a person feels “I have done my job in this world” certain emotions go with that feeling: It is time for me to relax, to take off my shoes, put my feet up on the table, lean back, and enjoy myself. It is time for me to call it a career, call it a lifetime. The way Noah envisioned doing that was to plant a vineyard and drink the produce thereof and enjoy life. His

attitude was: I have it coming! I earned it! I did what I was supposed to do! What else do You want from me?

Herein lies Noah’s tragic mistake. There is no such thing as “I did my job. Now I can go and retire.” One can retire when he is in the grave. Until that time, we have a mission to complete. No matter how great the accomplishment that we have had in this world thus far, this world is “today to do it; and tomorrow to receive reward.” [Eruvin 22a]

The Chikrei Lev makes a very interesting sociological observation. There is a common—almost universal—opinion in the world that after a person completes his job he retires. That, he says, is a concept for Children of Noah. It started with Noah. This was Noah’s gift to the world—the idea of retirement. Therefore, his descendants—Bnei Noah—follow in his footsteps. If you are lucky, you can do it at 62, if you retire on full Social Security, you can do it at 66, if you become a millionaire you can do it at 54, and so forth. But at some point, you retire. And then what do you do? I don’t know. You can travel the country, you can read the paper, you can take up bridge.

That is not what the Ribono shel Olam expected from huan beings. Retirement is something a Jew should never think about. That does not mean that a person can never stop working a job. But no one should have the attitude “I am finished. I can sit back and relax now.”

I recently met someone who had a heart attack at a young age. I had lunch with him, I was sitting and talking with him and I asked, “How is your health?” He told me, “Baruch Hashem, I can take care of myself now.” Then he told me, “My doctor is retiring.” This can be a traumatic event. Someone may have been with a doctor for thirty, forty, or fifty years. Now that he knows my conditions and my medical history so well, he is retiring. Who am I going to start with now?

His doctor—who was a religious Jew—retired on August 31st. My friend, who had been this doctor’s patient, davens in a Kollel in a certain city. On September 1, who should walk into the Kollel? It was his former doctor, with an Art Scroll Gemara Brochos under his arm. He is retired. A person does not need to practice medicine—or accounting or law or computers or whatever it is—for his entire life. People should live and be well! But a person must do something. A person needs to do something worthwhile and fulfilling.

That was Noah’s mistake. “I already did what I was supposed to do. What else do You want from me? Now I am going to sit back and enjoy myself.” That is a Bnei Noah attitude—not a Bnei Yisrael type of attitude.

Avraham Avinu came. He was the third Tzadik Yesod Olam. That which Adam could not accomplish and Noah could not accomplish, Avraham was able to accomplish. Not only did he accomplish, but he fixed this false ideology of Noah. How is that?

The Ramban says that the tenth of the Ten Tests with which Avraham Avinu was tested was the burial of Sara. After the Akeida [Binding of Yitzchak], Avraham Avinu needed to go and bargain on the price of a plot for Sara, even though the Ribono shel Olam had already promised him all of Eretz Yisrael. This is the tenth test. Everyone asks the question: Okay, it was a hassle. It was unpleasant. He might be distressed. However, if test number nine was Akeidas Yitzchak and Avraham passed the test successfully, is test number ten not somewhat anticlimactic? It does not seem to be on the same scale at all! Why is that the ultimate test?

The answer is that this does not suggest that burying Sara was more difficult than the Akeida. The Akeida was the most difficult test—to be asked to slaughter one’s beloved son. Nothing surpasses the difficulty of that! But after the Akeida and eight prior tests, Avraham could well have thought “I reached the pinnacle.” I passed the ultimate test. He could have had the thought “I have been to the mountain! What more do You want from me? Enough already! What do You want from me, Master of the Universe?” No! That was not his attitude.

Avraham had no complaints. He had no questions. He went from the Akeida to dealing with the hassle of negotiation with Ephron and paying an exorbitant price for a burial plot for his wife, Sara. That is why it is the tenth test. It is the test of how a person deals with life after he figures

and feels that he is entitled to the easy life now. He rejects the tendency to claim, "I did what I had to do, now give me a break!"

By passing the tenth test, Avraham Avinu corrected the sin of Noah, beginning the legacy of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov – the legacy that no matter what we have done in our lives, it is not over until literally the Chevra Kadisha comes or until we are physically unable to continue. Again, this is not suggesting that we need to die in our offices. No one in the history of mankind ever said on his death bed in regret, "I wish I spent more time in the office." However, we must remain productive. When we reach the "Golden Years," while we can perhaps "sit back" and take it easy from our work, we must remember that the Jewish approach remains, "It is today when it must be done; and tomorrow when the reward will be received."

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Noach: The Flood Curriculum

Ben-Tzion Spitz

Education is not merely a means for earning a living or an instrument for the acquisition of wealth. It is an initiation into life of spirit, a training of the human soul in the pursuit of truth and the practice of virtue. - Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit

The biblical account of Noah's Flood is mirrored in the literature of a number of ancient civilizations. While there is much that is unique about the Torah's telling of the flood, one of the aspects which stands out in particular, is that the Torah relates the flood as a punishment for man's misdeeds. The earth, its human and animal denizens had become so corrupt that God had no other option but to literally wipe them all off the map and restart almost from scratch, using Noah, his family and all the animals that he saved on his ark as the starting material for rebuilding the world.

The Meshech Chochma wonders as to why Noah and the ark passengers needed to be on the ark for a year. The job of wiping the slate clean was accomplished after the first days of the deluge. In theory, the flood survivors could have gotten off the ark the next day and started the arduous and vital work of repopulating the earth without waiting a year. The Meshech Chochma answers that the year-long confinement to the ark wasn't because of what needed to happen to the planet outside the ark, but rather was needed by all those inside the ark. They needed a year-long curriculum to rectify themselves.

All of creation, not just humans, but even animals, had become so vile, so distorted and corrupt that God had no choice but to start over. Now even though those who made it onto the ark were the best of the best, they were still heavily influenced by their environment. They too had a measure of corruption and vileness. They needed their own cleansing, their own deprogramming, their own re-education.

That was the purpose of the twelve months on the ark. It was to educate the flood's survivors as to how to behave. It was to curb their sexual appetite; calm their gluttony and cravings. The animals needed to be fed by the hands of humans and learn to respect humans again and not attack wildly. After twelve months of such instruction and practice, after both humans and animals had learned to control themselves, then they were allowed out to the clean air of a new world, ready to lead more correct, virtuous lives, with a second chance to start over again.

May our educational efforts lead us and those we impact to more moral and honorable lives.

Shabbat Shalom

Dedication - To our children on the beginning of their new educational paths.

Ben-Tzion Spitz is a former Chief Rabbi of Uruguay. He is the author of three books of Biblical Fiction and over 600 articles and stories dealing with biblical themes.

Rabbi Shmuel Rabinowitz

פרשת נח - תש"פ - Parashat Noah - 5780

The Good Person and Evil Inclination

This week's Torah portion, Noah, is the second portion of the Torah. Here, we transition from the universal story of creation to the historic story of the Jewish nation. The first part of the portion deals with the story of the flood. Humanity had deteriorated to norms of corruption and immorality so the Creator of the Universe decided to start the whole story anew. A flood washed over the world and erased all of civilization. Only one righteous person, Noah, survived along with his family and representatives of all different living creatures. They embarked on a new path, one that held renewed hope.

After the flood, G-d promised that there would never be another:

"...and the Lord said to Himself, "I will no longer curse the earth because of man, for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth, and I will no longer smite all living things as I have done."

(Genesis 8, 21)

The reason behind G-d's promise is surprising: "for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth". Is man's evil inclination, which accompanies him from the time of his youth, the reason for a forgiving attitude? Actually, some earlier commentators explain that this is a reservation, not an explanation: Despite the imagination of man's heart being evil from his youth – there will not be another total and severe punishment like the flood. Other commentators did see this as the explanation: Being that the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth, one must take his natural tendencies into consideration and not punish him so severely.

In any case, the image that rises from this verse is certainly not complimentary to man. Already from his youth, we infer from the verse, he tends to make bad choices and do bad deeds. As Jews of faith who see the Torah as G-d's words to man, we must honestly ask ourselves: Is this how we would describe the human race?

The question is made even more complicated when we recall another verse from this week's Torah portion: "...for in the image of G-d He made man". No matter how we choose to interpret this, we have to admit that this is a very positive description of the human race. Man is similar to G-d, and in some core aspect, is a reminder of His eternal and perfect goodness. So how can we negotiate these two contradictory descriptions? On the one hand, man was created in the image of G-d, but on the other hand, man's inclinations are evil from the time of his youth. Is man good or bad?

Actually, if we examine the verse precisely, it does not say that man is bad, but that he has an inclination which is bad. Man has desires, aspirations, hopes, and plans. He tries incessantly to bring these internal ideas to fruition. The implementation of man's desires and aspirations is the creative process he is constantly involved with. First man imagines the ideal situation, then he looks at reality and tries to change or advance it toward that ideal image. This is the process of fruitful creativity that motivates humanity toward many actions – some better and some worse. When the Torah teaches us that man is created in the image of G-d, it means that man is essentially good. His desires always stem from a vision of completeness and beauty. But there is an "inclination" that exists in the process of creativity that tends to the evil. Even when we want to realize a positive desire, we have an impulse to look for the easy and quick way out, one that doesn't necessarily take everything into consideration, and therefore fails.

Evil inclination is not the essence of man, but it is always there. If we don't acknowledge and recognize it, we will fall into the trap it sets. Even when we want to bring good and positive ideas to realization, like those that stem from our being created "in the image of G-d", we must remember that the creative process for goodness is complicated, and that we have the tendency to fall into the trap of comfort and ease rather than investing in quality that leads to a happy life.

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Shema Yisrael Torah Network

Peninim on the Torah - Parshas Noah

פרשת נח תש"פ

These are the offspring of Noah – Noah was a righteous man. (6:9)

There is a devout Jew in Bnei Brak who serves as an *Admor*, *Chassidic Rebbe*. He does not have a multitude of *chassidim*, but he has a *shul*, which, as a result of his being the *Rebbe*, is full and serves as a Torah center for Jews to gather, pray and study Torah. *Horav Yitzchak Hershkowitz, Shlita (Nitzotzos)*, explains how a man who was not born a *Rebbe* could become one (*Chassidic* leadership is transferred from father to son/son-in-law. In any event, it is a pedigree, family transference. One does not just put up a shingle on his door and proclaim himself as an *Admor*.) Apparently, the *Rebbe* had a *bais hamedrash* (real estate parcel which he used as a *shul*), and he decided that if he called himself *Rebbe*, he would increase his membership and fill the seats. Furthermore, he felt that he had something to offer people in terms of his erudition and character. So, why not?

The *Rebbe* approached the saintly *Chazon Ish, zl*, the primary rabbinic leader of Bnei Brak and, indeed, the *gadol hador*, preeminent leader of the generation, the leader of the Orthodox Jewish community and its spokesman, and asked, “*Rebbe*, I have a *bais hamedrash*, but who is to say that I have the right to call myself ‘*Rebbe*’. Perhaps, I might even be considered a thief for taking a title that is not inherently mine. This is a misrepresentation.”

The *Chazon Ish* replied, “Today (in contemporary times) the mere fact that a Jew has the ability to support/sustain another Jew – and he does – is sufficient reason for him to label himself as a *Rebbe*. Furthermore, even if the purpose was personal, but, since by assuming a title it resulted in your growing in Torah, then you may, and should, do it!”

At times, the title makes a considerable difference to a person. We are living in a time when there is such guilt, such depression, that anything that succeeds in elevating a person’s self-esteem, which results in positive consequences for the person, is well worth it. We see this from *Chazal (Bava Metzia 85a)*, who relate that Rabbi Yehudah *HaNasi*, the redactor of the *Mishnah*, the one who saved *Torah She’baal Peh*, the Oral Law, for all posterity, saved the son of Rabbi Elazar ben Rabbi Shimon (bar Yochai) from spiritual extinction. It happened that “*Rabbi*” (as he was called) visited the village where Rabbi Elazar had lived. He asked the people who lived there if Rabbi Elazar had left over a son. They replied that, indeed, he did, but alas he was distant from Torah observance. (These things happened even then.) *Rabbi* summoned the young man and, immediately upon meeting him, conferred *semichah*, ordination, on him. He was now a Rabbi – unschooled and unknowledgeable – but a Rabbi. *Rabbi* then sent the young man who was now ordained – but not yet observant – to Rabbi Shimon ben Issi ben Lekunia, to reach out to him and teach him Torah.

At first, it did not go easily. A number of times when the young man had difficulty with the learning process, he wanted to throw in the proverbial towel and return to his easy life of abandon. Each time, Rabbi Shimon ben Issi told him, “They have spread the cloak of *chacham* upon you. You are an ordained Rabbi, and you want to return to your old life? In other words, you are no longer the “loser” that you once were; today you are a candidate for spiritual leadership and distinction. Are you willing to eschew such a promising future randomly for a life of abandon?” The young man listened and eventually became a great *Tanna*, of the caliber of his exalted father.

We see that placing a person in a position of responsibility and distinction has a positive effect. It makes the difference between success and failure. Let us see how this plays out in Jewish life as expounded by *Chazal*. The *Mishnah* in *Pirkei Avos 5:2* teaches that ten generations ensued from Adam *HaRishon* until Noah (during which people either did not grow spiritually or regressed). They angered Hashem for ten generations until Hashem brought the *Mabul*, Flood, upon them. He has no use for a society that is both spiritually and morally corrupt. Once again, Hashem’s patience allowed for a waiting period of ten generations between Noah and Avraham *Avinu*. At the end of the day, Avraham took the reward of all the previous ten generations of mankind who were found to be unworthy of reward.

Amazingly, when Avraham *Avinu* came onto the world scene, the world was already 1948 years old. As Noah, who had lived ten generations before him, the world community had not achieved much more than angering Hashem. If so, what purpose was served by all of the ten generations – first from Adam until Noah, and then again, from Noah until Avraham? One person. It was all for the sake and merit of two people, Noah and Avraham, one in each generation. Twenty generations, millions of people who did absolutely nothing for the betterment of G-d’s world. They had descended to the nadir of spiritual and moral living. Not only had they destroyed their own destiny – they had destroyed all of the world, rendering its creatures also corrupt. Why maintain such a world for ten generations? For one person: Noah; and then again ten more generations for Avraham. These two men received the reward that should have gone to millions before them. The lesson is compelling – overwhelming – mind-boggling: the purpose of an entire world can be one person. *Tzaddik yesod olam*, a righteous person is/can be the foundation of the world. Noah and Avraham proved this verity. What the *Chazon Ish* teaches us is that the “one” person for whom the world could have been created can possibly be “you.” A Jew should bear this in mind. He has a noble calling, a sublime mission. This alone should serve as the impetus to inspire great things from us.

Rav Yaakov Yosef Herman, zl, was an Orthodox Jewish pioneer in the United States in the early twentieth century. His story is too vast for these pages, but his perspective on life as a Jew is one that every Jew should feel and adopt. He considered himself a “soldier of the Boss.” He would reiterate this maxim as he spoke out against flagrant desecration of *Shabbos*, and the morally flawed behavior to which Jews were succumbing. He had no qualms concerning printing on the invitation for his eldest daughter’s wedding invitation: “Ladies, please come dressed in accordance with Jewish law.” His home was open to anyone in need. He saw to it that such “traditions” as *cholov yisrael*, eighteen-minute *matzos*, kosher for *Pesach* products, *shatnez* testing – all things which we take for granted – were available to those Jews who wanted to adhere to the Torah and *mitzvos* and join the “Boss” army. He was a revolutionary, but his revolution was for Hashem. He sent promising young American boys to Europe to study in the great *yeshivos*. He influenced his own son-in-law, *Horav Chaim Pinchas Scheinberg, zl*, to advance his Torah studies. Approximately fifty boys benefitted from his European influence – boys who grew into men who changed the spiritual panorama of this country.

His mission did not end in America. It continued in *Eretz Yisrael* in 1939, as he and his wife set sail for the Holy Land on the last passenger ship to leave the United States before World War II started. He devoted himself to his newly-adopted community of Zichron Moshe, where his acts of Torah and *chesed* were legend. His life story is more than an inspiration. It is a *mechayeiv*, a requisite, that obliges us all to become soldiers for the “Boss.”

נח איש צדיק תמים היה בדרתיו

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

כי אתך ראיתי צדיק לפני בדר הזה

For it is you that I have seen to be righteous before Me in this generation. (7:1)

The *Ksav Sofer* notes the description of Noah, *tzaddik tamim*, righteous and perfect – which is found in the opening *pasuk* of the *parsha*, as opposed to the later reference to him only as a *tzaddik* – as he and his family are summoned to enter the *Teivah*, Ark. What changed from the earlier Noah to the later Noah? He explains that the transformation came as a result of his fathering three sons, one of whom was a morally reprehensible, pernicious individual, who refused to bow to authority. Apparently, a flaw had resided in the *tzaddik tamim* if he had produced such a son. Now, Noah was considered to be only a *tzaddik sans tamim*.

In his commentary to *Parashas Bereishis*, *Horav Moshe Feinstein, zl*, explains that children learn how to act from their parents, who are their first and primary mentors. (*Rebbeim* and *moros* can augment, and, at times, are compelled to “steer” their young charges toward better and more refined character traits and social/ethical

demeanor, but primary education begins at home.) This does not mean that Cham's reprehensible behavior was due to Noah; it only stands to reason, however, that after producing such a son, on some spiritually elevated plane there was some form of minute flaw in Noah – enough to remove his "tamin" status.

Horav Simcha Wasserman, zl, was not only a Torah giant in his vast erudition, but also an extraordinary *mechanech*, Torah educator. He cautioned parents concerning the extreme care they should take with regard to leaving a negative imprint on the minds of their children: "A child is like an immigrant who comes to a new country. He makes observations and adopts the customs of his new home. If one's parents are happy, smile often and help and cooperate with one another, the child learns that, in that particular country, this is the way people act. So, he also becomes like this." When children get along, the older ones caring for their younger brothers and sisters, helping each one in whatever area that he/she is deficient, it shows that the parents live in harmony. If parents are contentious with one another, if their home is one of bickering and open animosity and fighting, their children will develop their parents' mindset and apply it in their own lives.

Rav Simcha and his *Rebbeztin* never had biological children of their own. A *talmid* once asked him how it was that he had become such a particular outstanding authority on child-rearing. After all, an expert is one who usually develops in a field of his expertise. *Rav Simcha* replied, "I do have personal experience. I have the experience of how my parents raised me."

Rav Simcha would say, "In life, we have our functions and, when we live up to them, it brings us happiness. One of the greatest of our functions is that of raising children, of raising generations. The most important concept to remember is that we have in our hands something which Hashem gave us to develop, to make into a worthy human being. The Torah does not want us to raise institutions. It wants us to raise people. The secret of raising people – not institutions – is selflessness."

Parents who do not care how they act, especially in front of their children – whose demeanor in public and private leaves much to be desired – are extremely selfish. They care only about themselves, their own self-gratification, while ignoring the needs of and the negative impact on their children. These are the same obtuse individuals who, later on in life when their children have emulated their offensive, callous behavior, wonder, "Where did we go wrong?"

We teach by the way we act. A parent's actions speak much louder and stronger than anything he or she says. Our child defines who we are by how we are. Someone once came to the *Steipler Gaon, zl*, complaining about his son, "I do not know what to do any more. I try to discipline him, but it does not work. I keep on beating him, and I am unable to make him change his ways." The *Steipler* responded to this (poor excuse of a father), "What I can guarantee you is that your son will grow up to be a beater!" When a parent maintains self-control, the child learns the importance of self-control. When a child sees an angry, intractable, violent parent, he/she does not stop to think and ask, "why?" (What is bothering my parent? What is provoking him/her to act so contemptibly?) Rather, they (after seeing such behavior too many times) begin to think that this manner of behavior is acceptable. In turn, they will follow suit. They have adopted to the "customs and lifestyle" of their "host country": their parents.

וישלח את הערב ויצא יצוא ושוב עד יבשת המים מעל הארץ

He sent out the raven, and it kept going and returning until the waters dried from upon the earth. (8:7)

The dove kept on returning with nothing in its mouth, an indication that the vegetation had not begun to grow. Noah also sent out the dove (seven days later) to see whether the waters had subsided. At first, the dove found no place that was dry. The dove returned. Seven days later, it was sent out again; this time it returned with a bitter olive in its mouth. The dove was symbolically implying, "Better that my food be bitter, but from G-d's Hand, than sweet as honey, but dependent upon mortal man." *Chazal* are teaching us an important lesson: better even the most bitter food eaten in freedom, than the sweetest food given in

servitude. If one would only heed this lesson, life would be so much simpler.

In any event, the *Chasan Sofer* (quoted by his son, *Horav Shimon Sofer, zl*, in his *Michtav Sofer*) distinguishes between the mission of the raven and the mission of the dove. The raven was sent out to see whether there was any dry land, whether there was any vegetation on the ground. The dove was sent out to see whether the waters had subsided. We find two types of people. The first is the *nediv*, generous, kind-hearted, magnanimous person who supports and sustains those in need – and does so joyfully. He despises taking from others, because he is a giver by nature. His counterpart is the cruel scoundrel who believes that life is all about taking and hoarding – never sharing, never giving away anything of his own, regardless of the supplicant's need or circumstance.

The two birds that were Noah's messengers represent these two very dissimilar individuals. The *yonah*, dove, represents *Klal Yisrael*, who is referred to in *Shir HaShirim* (7:2) as *bas nediv*, daughter of nobles (*nediv* alludes to Avraham Avinu). A *nediv lev/nedivus halev*, generosity of heart and a *nediv*, nobleman, both have in common that they sustain others; they do not seek for themselves. The *oraiv*, raven, is a cruel, selfish bird that preys on anything it can. Noah was well aware of the incongruent natures of these two birds. Noah knew that if the dove saw that the water had subsided, it would not return to the Ark. It did not want to be sustained by others. As long as an opportunity for food availed itself, it would seek it out. Hashem would see to its sustenance – not man. The raven, on the other hand, required a full meal, ready and waiting. If there were no vegetation in place for it, the raven would come back to the Ark. When the dove did not return, Noah understood that the waters had subsided. When the raven did not return, Noah saw this as a sign that the vegetation had begun to sprout. He knew his birds.

והם הוא אבי כנען

Cham, being the father of Canaan. (9:18)

וירא חם אבי כנען את ערות אביו ויגיד לשני אחיו בחוץ

Cham, the father of Canaan, saw his father's nakedness and told his two brothers outside. (9:22)

Why does the Torah find it necessary to inform us twice that Cham was the father of Canaan? *Horav Sholom Schwadron, zl*, explains that the Torah is teaching us the reason that Canaan was such a morally-depraved person: his father, Cham. When one has a Cham for a father, he is hard-pressed to expunge the nefarious character traits that have likely become part of his DNA. Children inherit the nature of their parents. Does that mean that a child whose parents leave much to be desired in the areas of morality, ethicality, human decency is challenged with also being a miserable person? Hopefully not. With the proper guidance, he could learn to expunge the repulsive attributes or apply them positively. For instance, arrogance could be used for Torah, by demanding of himself that he act in a manner that compliments his Torah erudition. Anger can be used for protesting, or righteous indignation on behalf of Torah. While a negative character trait is a great challenge to overcome, at times it can be used to one's advantage by manipulating it properly.

Canaan did neither. His father was an outstanding mentor, who taught his son by example that miscreancy and immorality can be a way of life. Canaan made his father proud, imbuing an entire nation with the Chamite, Canaanite culture of moral profligacy and hedonism.

When one sees his son deviating from the prescribed Torah way of life, he should delay his reaction. Anger at the son should not be the first course of action. He should introspect and ruminate over the fact that this son has a father. Do not pass judgment on your son until you have asked yourself, "Is he really any different than I am?" One who seeks to educate and guide his children properly should first begin by educating himself. Before he lays blame at the feet of the school, the *rebbe*, the *morah*, let him look at himself in the mirror and ask: "Is he not like me?"

Rav Shalom cites the *pasuk* at the end of *Parashas Bereishis*, *Zeh sefer Toldos Adam* (ibid 5:1), which he interprets as a guide for

child-rearing: “The descendants of an *adam*/person and their education is a *sefer*, book; all are bound together (as a book), inseparable between the two covers: The father/mother are the front cover; the child is the back cover. The two covers always match! If the front cover is blue, the back cover will also be blue, because they are one cloth. Parents should never forget the enduring influence they have on their offspring.

When the Torah lists those who left the Ark, it begins, *Va'yiheyu bnei Noach ha'yotzim min ha'teivah, Shem, Cham, vaYafes, v'Cham hu avi Canaan*, “The sons of Noach who came out of the Ark were Shem, Cham and Yafes – Cham being the father of Canaan” (ibid 18). After mentioning the names of Noach’s sons who left the Ark, it continues on to describe/narrate Cham’s debasement of his father. It appears as if the fact that Cham was on the Ark is a preface that segues into his disgrace of Noach. What does Cham’s presence on the Ark have to do with his immoral activity following Noach’s inebriation? Rav Sholom explains that despite being on the Ark for a year, witnessing the demise of an entire evil world and the reward that was set aside for the righteous, they all continued to be “*bnei Noach*,” the same sons of Noach. They exited the Ark in the same manner on the same level as when they entered it. No change whatsoever occurred.

Furthermore, one may wonder how Cham could have acted so outrageously following a year in the Ark, how he did not derive a lesson in how a human being should act. The answer is: They were all “*bnei Noach*”; no change. Cham had been morally flawed prior to the flood, and he continued his indecent behavior once he left the Ark. Seeing a world destroyed will not impact a person unless he applies what he sees to his mind and heart. Otherwise, it is a purely wasted experience.

על כן יאמר כנמרד גבור ציד לפני ד'

Therefore, it is said, “Like Nimrod a mighty hunter before Hashem.” (10:9)

Under such circumstances that there is no clearly-defined *halachah* that prohibits a certain activity, we will find a remonstrance such as: “It is not a Jewish thing,” or “Jewish people do not act in such a manner.” A point in question is the well-known *psak*, ruling, of the *Noda B'Yehudah* concerning hunting for sport. A wealthy Jew had just come into a sizeable estate, which included a large forest stocked with a variety of wild animals. The man asked the *Noda B'Yehudah* if he were permitted to hunt these animals on his newly-acquired forest.

The *Noda B'Yehudah* replied that exclusive of the issues concerning *tzaar baalei chaim*, which prohibits causing pain to living creatures, hunting is not a Jewish activity. Indeed, the only two individuals whom the Torah characterizes as hunters are Nimrod and Eisav. Certainly, no Jewish person would want to be included in their milieu. Therefore, no Jew should act in such a manner. Some areas of human endeavor, although not necessarily prohibited, remain out of the Torah Jew’s domain. There are ways in which a *ben Avraham*, *Yitzchak* and *Yaakov*, descendants of the Patriarchs, acts, and activities from which he should distance himself. We neither celebrate cruelty, nor do we encourage any form of brutality. It is just not Jewish.

Va'ani Tefillah

שמע קולנו ד' אלקנו – **Shema Koleinu Hashem Elokeinu. Hear our voices, Hashem, Our G-d.**

Koleinu, our voices, is a reference to the sound that emanates from within us. Sounds do not express an adequate plea, because sounds do not necessarily say anything. Hashem hears the sound, and He understands what we mean – not only what we say. People ask for the wrong things; others do not articulate clearly what it is they really want, while yet others do not know how to ask. We ask Hashem to hear our inner voices, to put sense into what we want, to give clarity to our plea, so that we receive what we need – not necessarily what we want.

When the parents of the *ben sorer u'moreh*, wayward and rebellious son, bring their son to *bais din*, Jewish court, they declare *einenu shomeia b'koleinu*, “He (our son) does not listen to our voices.” *Horav Mordechai Gifter, zl*, distinguishes between *koleinu*, our voices, and *tzivui*, command. The *mitzvah* of *Kibbud Av v'Eim*, honoring one’s parents, enjoins us to listen to our parents. We are to listen to their voices – not to wait for a direct command. The mere sound/voice of a

father expressing his thirst, “I am thirsty,” should motivate the son to make a bee-line for a glass of beverage to quench his father’s thirst. He should not wait for a command to “get me a class of water.” The mere *kol*, voice, should set him in motion to fulfill the *mitzvah* of honoring his parents.

In loving memory of our dear Abba and Zeidy, on his yartzheit

Mr. Zev Aryeh Solomon ר' זאב ארי' ז"ר יעקב שמואל'ל ז"ל

נפטר ד' חשון תשע"ד ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

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The Torah’s Instructions to Non-Jews—The Laws of Bnei Noach By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

This article is dedicated to the memory of my much beloved and missed brother-in-law, Rabbi Yosef Azar, a very exceptional and popular teacher at various seminaries, who lost his protracted battle with cancer this past week. Rav Yosef leaves behind a widow, my sister Yocheved, and ten children, eight of whom are still living at home; the youngest is only five years old.

Although it may seem strange for a non-Jew to ask a rav a shaylah, it should actually be commonplace. After all, there are hundreds of times more non-Jews than Jews in the world, and each one of them should be concerned about his or her halachic responsibility. Many non-Jews are indeed concerned about their future place in Olam Haba, and had the nations not been deceived by spurious religions, many thousands more would observe the mitzvos that they are commanded. It is tragic that they have been misled into false beliefs and practices.

An entire body of literature discusses the mitzvah responsibilities of non-Jews. Although it was Adam who was originally commanded to observe these mitzvos, they are usually referred to as the “Seven Mitzvos of Bnei Noach,” since all of mankind is descended from Noach. Furthermore, a Jew should be familiar with the halachos that apply to a non-Jew, since it is forbidden to cause a non-Jew to transgress his mitzvos. This is included under the Torah’s violation of *lifnei iver lo sitein michshol*, “Do not place a stumbling block before a blind person.” In this case, this means do not cause someone to sin, if he is blind to the severity of his violation (*Avodah Zarah* 6b).

In actuality, a non-Jew must observe more than seven mitzvos. The “Seven Mitzvos” are really categories; furthermore, there are additional mitzvos that apply, as we will explain.

THE BASICS

The seven cardinal prohibitions that apply to a non-Jew are:

1. AVODAH ZARAH

It is forbidden for a non-Jew to worship idols in any way. Most religions of the world are idolatrous, particularly the major religions of the East.

Although Christianity constitutes idol worship for a Jew, there is a dispute whether it is idolatry for a ben Noach. Some poskim contend that its concepts of G-d do not violate the prohibition against *Avodah Zarah* that was commanded to Adam and Noach (*Tosafos*, *Bechoros* 2b s.v. *Shema*; *Rama*, *Orach Chayim* 156). However, most later poskim contend that Christian belief does constitute *Avodah Zarah*, even for a non-Jew (*Shu't Noda BiYehudah*, *Tenina*, *Yoreh Deah* #148; *Chazon Ish*, *Likutim*, *Sanhedrin* 63b p. 536). In this regard, there is a widespread misconception among Jews that only Catholicism is *Avodah Zarah*, but not Protestantism. This is untrue. Every branch and type of Christianity includes idolatrous beliefs.

2. **GILUY ARAYOS**, which prohibits many illicit relationships.

3. **MURDER**, including abortion (*Sanhedrin* 57b), suicide, and mercy killing.

4. **EIVER MIN HACHAI**, eating flesh taken from a live animal.

This prohibition includes eating a limb or flesh removed from an animal while it was alive, even if the animal is now dead.

In the context of this mitzvah, the *Rishonim* raise an interesting question. Adam was forbidden to eat meat (see *Bereishis* 1:29-30), but, after the Flood, Noach was permitted to do so (*Bereishis* 9:3; see *Rashi* in both places). So, why was Adam prohibited from eating flesh of a living animal, if he was prohibited from eating meat altogether?

Two differing approaches are presented to answer this question. The Rambam explains that the prohibition to eat meat that was given to Adam was rescinded after the Flood, and it was then that the prohibition of Eiver Min HaChai was commanded to Noach for the first time (Rambam, Hilchos Melachim 9:1). According to this approach, six of the present day “Seven Mitzvos” were commanded to Adam, while the seventh was commanded only at the time of Noach.

Other Rishonim contend that Adam was permitted to eat the meat of an animal that was already dead, and was prohibited only from killing animals for food. In addition, he was prohibited to eat meat that was removed from a living animal, and this prohibition is one of the “Seven Mitzvos” (Rashi, Sanhedrin 57a s.v. Lemishri and Bereishis 1:29; Tosafos, Sanhedrin 56b s.v. Achal). The first prohibition was rescinded after the Flood, when mankind was permitted to slaughter animals for food. Thus, according to the Rambam, Adam was prohibited both from killing animals and from eating any meat, while according to the other Rishonim, he was prohibited from killing animals but allowed to eat meat.

ANIMAL BLOOD

Although a non-Jew may not eat the flesh of a living animal, he may eat blood drawn from a living animal (Rambam, Hilchos Melachim 9:10; cf. Sanhedrin 56b and 59a, and Rashi, Bereishis 9:3). Some African tribesmen extract blood from their livestock, mix it with milk, and drink it for a nutritious beverage. Although we may consider this practice very offensive, it does not in any way violate the mitzvos for a non-Jew.

5. BLASPHEMY.

Cursing Hashem. As with his other mitzvos, a non-Jew may not claim that he was unaware it is forbidden.

6. STEALING.

This prohibition includes taking even a very small item that does not belong to him, eating something of the owner’s food on the job without permission, or not paying his employees or contractors (Rambam, Hilchos Melachim 9:9). According to some opinions, it includes not paying his workers or contractors on time (Meiri, Sanhedrin).

7. DINIM, literally, laws.

This mitzvah includes the application of a code of civil law, including laws of damages, torts, loans, assault, cheating, and commerce (Rambam, Breishis 34:13; cf. Rambam, Hilchos Melachim 9:14). Furthermore, there is a requirement to establish courts in every city and region, to guarantee that people observe their mitzvos (Sanhedrin 56b; Rambam, Hilchos Melachim 9:14).

ARE NON-JEWS REQUIRED TO OBSERVE THE COMMERCIAL LAW OF THE TORAH?

Does the mitzvah of Dinim require non-Jews to establish their own system of law, or is the mitzvah to observe and enforce the Torah’s mitzvos, which we usually refer to as the halachos of Choshen Mishpat? In a long teshuvah, the Rama (Shu’t #10) contends that this question is disputed by Amora’im in the Gemara. He concludes that non-Jews are required to observe the laws of Choshen Mishpat, just like Jews. Following this approach, a non-Jew may not sue in a civil court that uses any system of law other than that of the Torah. Instead, he must litigate in a beis din or in a court of non-Jewish judges who follow halachic guidelines (see Rambam, Hilchos Melachim 10:11). Therefore, a non-Jew who accepts money on the basis of civil litigation is considered stealing, just like a Jew. The Rama’s opinion is accepted by many early poskim (e.g., Tumim 110:3; Shu’t Chasam Sofer, Choshen Mishpat #91).

However, the Netziv disagrees with the Rama, contending that non-Jews are not obligated to observe the laws of Choshen Mishpat. In his opinion, the Torah requires non-Jews to create their own legal rules and procedures. Although a Jew is forbidden from using the non-Jewish court system and laws, according to the Netziv a non-Jew may use secular courts to resolve his litigation and indeed fulfills a mitzvah when doing so (HaEmek Shaylah #2:3). Other poskim accept the Netziv’s position (Chazon Ish, Bava Kama 10:1). Several major poskim contend that the dispute between the Rama and Netziv is an earlier dispute between the Rambam and Ramban (Shu’t Maharam Schick, Orach

Chayim #142; Shu’t Maharsham 4:86; Shu’t Avnei Nezer, Choshen Mishpat #55).

What is a non-Jew to do if he wishes to sue someone? May he litigate in civil court or must he sue in beis din? Because this subject is disputed, we would have to decide whether the rule of safek de’oraysa lechumra (we are strict regarding a doubt concerning a Torah law) applies to a non-Jew. If the non-Jew asks how to proceed in the most mehadrin fashion, we would tell him to take his matter to beis din, because this is permitted (and a mitzvah) according to all opinions.

It should be noted that, according to both opinions, a non-Jew must observe dina demalchusa dina – laws established by civil authorities for the common good. Therefore, he must certainly observe tax codes, traffic laws, building and zoning codes, and regulations against smuggling.

AN INTERESTING SHAYLAH – BRIBING A DISHONEST JUDGE

The Chasam Sofer (6:14) was asked the following shaylah: A non-Jew sued a Jew falsely in a dishonest court. The Jew knew that the non-Jewish judge would rule against him, despite the absence of any evidence. However, bribing the judge may gain a ruling in the Jew’s favor. May he bribe the dishonest judge to rule honestly?

Chasam Sofer rules that it is permitted. The prohibition against bribing a non-Jew is because he is responsible to have an honest court. However, if the result of the bribe will be a legitimate ruling, it is permitted. (Of course, the Jewish litigant must be absolutely certain that he is right.)

OTHER PROHIBITIONS

In addition to the “Seven Mitzvos,” there are other activities that are also prohibited to a non-Jew. According to many opinions, a non-Jew may not graft trees from different species or crossbreed animals (Sanhedrin 56b; Rambam, Hilchos Melachim 10:6; Meiri ad loc.; cf. Shach Yoreh Deah 297:3 and Dagul Mei’re’vavah ad loc.; Chazon Ish, Kelayim 1:1). According to many poskim, a non-Jew may not even own a grafted fruit tree, and a Jew may not sell him such a tree, because that would cause a non-Jew to violate his mitzvah (Shu’t Mahari Asad, Yoreh Deah #350; Shu’t Maharsham 1:179).

Some poskim contend that non-Jews are prohibited from engaging in sorcery (see Kesef Mishneh, Hilchos Avodah Zarah 11:4). According to this opinion, a non-Jew may not use any type of black magic, necromancy or fortune telling. However, most opinions disagree (Radbaz, Hilchos Melachim 10:6).

MAY A NON-JEW OBSERVE MITZVOS?

A non-Jew may not keep Shabbos or a day of rest (without doing melacha) on any day of the week (Sanhedrin 58b). The reason for this is subject to dispute. Rashi explains that a non-Jew is obligated to work every day, because the Torah writes, “Yom Valayla Lo Yishbosu,” which can be interpreted to mean, “Day and night they (i.e., the non-Jews) may not rest.” The Rambam (Hilchos Melachim 10:9), however, explains that a gentile is prohibited from making his own holiday or religious observance, because the Torah is opposed to the creation of man-made religions. In the words of the Rambam, “A non-Jew is not permitted to create his own religion or mitzvah. Either he becomes a righteous convert (a ger tzedek) and accepts the observance of all the mitzvos, or he remains with the laws that he has, without adding or detracting.” A third reason mentioned is that a Jew may mistakenly learn from a gentile who keeps a day of rest, and the Jew may create his own mitzvos (Meiri).

Because of this halacha, a non-Jew studying for conversion must perform a small act of Shabbos desecration every Shabbos. There is a dispute among poskim whether this applies to a non-Jew who has undergone bris milah and is awaiting immersion in a mikvah to complete his conversion (Shu’t Binyan Tzion #91).

POSITIVE MITZVOS

You probably noticed that there are few positive mitzvos among the non-Jew’s commandments. They are required to believe that the mitzvos were commanded by Hashem through Moshe Rabbeinu (Rambam, Hilchos Melachim 8:11). They are also obligated to establish courts. A non-Jew is permitted to observe the mitzvos of the Torah, with a few

exceptions (for example, see Rambam, Hilchos Melachim 10:10). He is even permitted to offer korbanos (Zevachim 116b).

STUDYING TORAH

The Gemara states that a non-Jew is not permitted to study Torah (Sanhedrin 59a). One opinion of the Gemara explains that the Torah belongs to the Jewish people, and by studying Torah the gentile is “stealing” Jewish property. However, there are many exceptions to this ruling. First, a gentile may study all the halachos applicable to observing his mitzvos (Meiri). Rambam rules that it is a mitzvah to teach a non-Jew the halachos of offering korbanos, if he intends to bring them (Rambam, Maasei Hakorbanos 19:16). According to the Rama’s opinion that a non-Jew must observe the Torah’s civil laws, the non-Jew may study all the intricate laws of Choshen Mishpat. Furthermore, since a non-Jew is permitted to observe most mitzvos of the Torah, some opinions contend that he may learn the laws of those mitzvos in order to observe them correctly (Meiri, Sanhedrin 58b).

There is a dispute among poskim whether one may teach a non-Jew Torah if the non-Jew is planning to convert. The Meiri (Sanhedrin 58b) and Maharsha (Shabbos 31a s.v. Amar lei mikra) rule that it is permitted, whereas Rabbi Akiva Eiger forbids it (Shu’t #41). Others permit teaching Nevi’im and Kesuvim to non-Jews (Shiltei HaGibborim, Avodah Zarah 20a, quoting Or Zarua), and other poskim permit teaching a non-Jew about miracles that the Jews experienced (Shu’t Melamed Leho’il Yoreh Deah #77).

Incidentally, Rav Moshe Feinstein rules that one is permitted to teach Torah to Jews while a non-Jew is listening (Shu’t Igros Moshe, Yoreh Deah 2:132). For this reason, he permits conducting a Seder with a non-Jew in attendance.

OLAM HABA FOR A NON-JEW

A gentile who observes his mitzvos because Hashem commanded them through Moshe Rabbeinu is called one of the Chassidei Umos HaOlam and merits a place in Olam Haba. Observing these mitzvos carefully does not suffice to make a non-Jew into a Chassid. He must observe his mitzvos as a commandment of Hashem (Rambam, Hilchos Melachim 8:11).

When I was a congregational rabbi, I often met non-Jews who were interested in Judaism. I always presented the option of becoming an observant ben Noach. I vividly recall meeting a woman whose

grandfather was Jewish, but who herself was halachically not Jewish. She was keeping kosher – no small feat in her town, where there was no Jewish community. Although she had come to speak about converting, since we do not encourage conversion I explained the halachos of Bnei Noach to her instead.

An even more interesting experience occurred when I was once making a kashrus inspection at an ice cream plant. A worker there asked me where I was from, and then informed me that he used to attend a Reform Temple two blocks from my house! I was surprised, not expecting to find a Jew in the plant. However, it turned out that he was not Jewish at all, but had stopped attending church after rejecting its beliefs. Now, he was concerned, because he had stopped attending the Reform Temple that was far from his house. I discussed with him the religious beliefs and observances of Bnei Noach, explaining that they must be meticulously honest in all their business dealings, just like Jews. I told him that Hashem gave mitzvos to both Jews and non-Jews, and that Judaism is the only major religion that does not claim a monopoly on heaven. Non-Jews, too, merit olam haba if they observe their mitzvos.

Over the years, I have noticed that many churchgoing non-Jews in the United States have rejected the tenets of Christianity. What they have accepted is that Hashem appeared to Moshe and the Jewish people at Sinai and commanded us about His mitzvos. This belief is vital for non-Jews to qualify as Chassidei Umos HaOlam – they must accept that the commandments of Bnei Noach were commanded to Moshe (Rambam, Hilchos Melachim 8:11).

CONCLUSION

As Jews, we do not proselytize to gentiles, nor seek converts. However, when we meet sincere non-Jews, we should direct them correctly in their quest for truth by introducing them to the Seven Mitzvos of Bnei Noach.

לע"נ

שרה משא בת ר' יעקב אליעזר ע"ה
ביילא בת (אריה) לייב ע"ה