

**Weekly Parsha NOACH 5782**

**Rabbi Wein's Weekly Blog**

The ten generations described in the Torah, from Adam until Noach, produced only chaos and eventual destruction. There were a few individuals, such as Chanoch, who were moral and positive people. However, they had little, if any, influence on the general society in which they lived, and not even one person who would follow them and their moral behavior.

Our world, and all our societies are, to a great extent, copycat structures of those days. The general excuse for all immoral behavior from childhood is the expression "everyone is doing it". Somehow, this excuse, that everyone is doing it, removes responsibility from any individual who engages in any immoral activity. Thus, there develops a chain of almost never-ending failure, excuses, and willingness to accept bad behavior as a societal norm.

The ten generations that led up to the coming of the Great Flood sank into this morass of evil without realizing it. They were merely repeating the actions of the generations before them, and what they saw was everyone else behaving in a similar fashion. Evil and immoral behavior are very easily accepted in general and mass society. This notion explains Nazism in Germany and Stalinism in the Soviet Union. It also helps describe much of what is transpiring in Western society today.

The slow erosion of morality, good behavior and godly faith is a constant challenge to all societies, and if no one stands up against it, those societies are eventually doomed to their own self-destruction.

In the eyes of Jewish scholarship and tradition, Noach is found wanting, not so much for his own personal failings after the Flood, but, rather, for his inability to stand against the evil in his society. He builds an ark and warns against the impending disaster that is about to befall the human race. However, he is unable to identify evil for what it is, and to declare a viable alternative for human beings to adopt and follow. There is a feeling of hopelessness that seems to envelop him and his actions, and he fails in building a new world because of the belief that "everyone does it" is a sufficient excuse for bad behavior and human immorality.

It is because of this that Midrash and Jewish tradition generally view Noach and his righteousness with a

fair degree of skepticism. His planting of the vineyard as his first project after emerging from the ark is an example of the acceptance of the idea that if everyone does it, then, somehow, it can be justified and even lauded. It is almost painful to read in the Torah how Noach fails to remake the world after the Flood in a better image and a more positive vein.

The Torah illustrates for us that great people can have great failings, and that lost opportunities will always come back to haunt us and frustrate human progress. We are all the descendants of Noach, and his character traits exist within our personal DNA even millennia later. We will have to wait for the arrival of Abraham and Sarah to put us on a better and more upward trajectory of belief and behavior.

Shabbat shalom

Rabbi Berel Wein

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**Beyond Nature (Noach)**

**Rabbi Jonathan Sacks**

Are we naturally good or naturally bad? On this, great minds have argued for a very long time indeed. Hobbes believed that we have naturally "a perpetual and restless desire of power after power, that ceaseth only in Death." [1] We are bad, but governments and police can help limit the harm we do. Rousseau to the contrary believed that naturally we are good. It is society and its institutions that make us bad. [2]

The argument continues today among the neo-Darwinians. Some believe that natural selection and the struggle for survival make us, genetically, hawks rather than doves. As Michael T. Ghiselin puts it, "Scratch an 'altruist' and watch a 'hypocrite' bleed." [3] By contrast, naturalist Frans de Waal in a series of delightful books about primates, including his favourite, the bonobos, shows that they can be empathic, caring, even altruistic [4] and so, by nature, are we.

E. Hulme called this the fundamental divide between Romantics and Classicists throughout history. Romantics believed that "man was by nature good, that it was only bad laws and customs that had suppressed him. Remove all these and the infinite possibilities of man would have a chance." [5] Classicists believed the opposite, that "Man is an extraordinarily fixed and limited animal whose nature

is absolutely constant. It is only by tradition and organisation that anything decent can be got out of him.”[6]

In Judaism, according to the Sages, this was the argument between the angels when God consulted them as to whether or not He should create humans. The angels were the “us” in “Let us make mankind.” (Gen. 1:26) A Midrash tells us that the angels of chessed and tzedek said “Let him be created because humans do acts of kindness and righteousness.” The angels of shalom and emet said, “Let him not be created because he tells lies and fights wars.” What did God do? He created humans anyway and had faith that we would gradually become better and less destructive.[7] That, in secular terms, is what Harvard neuroscientist Steven Pinker argues too.[8] Taken as a whole and with obvious exceptions we have become less violent over time.

The Torah suggests we are both destructive and constructive, and evolutionary psychology tells us why. We are born to compete and co-operate. On the one hand, life is a competitive struggle for scarce resources – so we fight and kill. On the other hand, we survive only by forming groups. Without habits of co-operation, altruism and trust, we would have no groups and we would not survive. That is part of what the Torah means when it says, “It is not good for man to be alone.” (Gen. 2:18) So we are both aggressive and altruistic: aggressive to strangers, altruistic toward members of our group.

But the Torah is far too profound to leave it at the level of the old joke of the Rabbi who, hearing both sides of a domestic argument, tells the husband, “You are right,” and the wife “You are right,” and when his disciple says, “They can’t both be right,” replies, “You are also right.” The Torah states the problem, but it also supplies a non-obvious answer. This is the clue that helps us decode a very subtle argument running through last week’s parsha and this one.

The basic structure of the story that begins with Creation and ends with Noah is this: First God created a universe of order. He then created human beings who created a universe of chaos: “the land was filled with violence.” So God, as it were, deleted creation by bringing a Flood, returning the earth to as it was at the very beginning when “the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the spirit of God hovered over the waters.” (Gen. 1:2) He then began again with Noah and his family as the new Adam and Eve and their children.

Genesis 8-9 is thus a kind of second version of Genesis 1-3, with two significant distinctions. The first is that in both accounts a key word appears seven times, but it is a different word. In Genesis 1 the word is “good.” In Genesis 9 it is “covenant.” The second is that in both cases, reference is made to the fact that humans are in the image of God, but the two sentences have different implications. In Genesis 1 we are told that “God created humanity in His own image, in the image of God He created them, male and female He created them.” (Gen. 1:27) In Genesis 9 we read, “Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for in the image of God has God made humanity” (Gen. 9:6).

The difference is striking. Genesis 1 tells me that “I” am in the image of God. Genesis 9 tells me that “You,” my potential victim, are in the image of God. Genesis 1 tells us about human power. We are able, says the Torah, to “rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air.” Genesis 9 tells us about the moral limits of power. We can kill but we may not. We have the power, but not the permission.

Reading the story closely, it seems that God created humans in the faith that they would naturally choose the right and the good. They would not need to eat the fruit of “the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil,” because instinct would lead them to behave as they should. Calculation, reflection, decision – all the things we associate with knowledge – would not be necessary. They would act as God wanted them to act, because they had been created in His image.

It did not turn out that way. Adam and Eve sinned, Cain committed murder, and within a few generations the world was reduced to chaos. That is when we read that “The Lord saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time. The Lord regretted that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him to His heart.” (Gen. 6:6) Everything else in the universe was tov, “good.” But humans are not naturally good. That is the problem. The answer, according to the Torah, is covenant.

Covenant introduces the idea of a moral law. A moral law is not the same as a scientific law. Scientific laws are observed regularities in nature: drop an object and it will fall. A moral law is a rule of conduct: do not rob or steal or deceive. Scientific laws describe, whereas moral laws prescribe.

When a natural event does not accord with the current state of science, when it “breaks” the law, that is a sign that there is something wrong with the law. That is why Newton’s laws were replaced by those of Einstein. But when a human being breaks the law, when people rob or steal or deceive, the fault is not in the law but in the deed. So we must keep the law and condemn, and sometimes punish, the deed. Scientific laws allow us to predict. Moral laws help us to decide. Scientific laws apply to entities without freewill. Moral laws presuppose freewill. That is what makes humans qualitatively different from other forms of life.

So, according to the Torah, a new era began, centred not on the idea of natural goodness but on the concept of covenant, that is, moral law. Civilisation began in the move from what the Greeks called *physis*, nature, to *nomos*, law. That is what makes the concept of being “in the image of God” completely different in Genesis 1 and Genesis 9. Genesis 1 is about nature and biology. We are in the image of God in the sense that we can think, speak, plan, choose and dominate. Genesis 9 is about law. Other people are also in God’s image. Therefore we must respect them by banning murder and instituting justice. With this simple move, morality was born.

What is the Torah telling us about morality?

First, that it is universal. The Torah places God’s covenant with Noah and through him all humanity prior to His particular covenant with Abraham, and His later covenant with Abraham’s descendants at Mount Sinai. Our universal humanity precedes our religious differences. This is a truth we deeply need in the twenty-first century when so much violence has been given religious justification. Genesis tells us that our enemies are human too.

This may well be the single most important contribution of monotheism to civilisation. All societies, ancient and modern, have had some form of morality but usually they concern only relations within the group. Hostility to strangers is almost universal in both the animal and human kingdoms. Between strangers, power rules. As the Athenians said to the Melians, “The strong do what they want, while the weak do what they must.”[9]

The idea that even the people not like us have rights, and that we should “love the stranger” (Deut. 10:19), would have been considered utterly strange by most people at most times. It took the recognition that there is one God sovereign over all humanity (“Do we not

all have one father? Did not one God create us?”; Mal. 2:10) to create the momentous breakthrough to the idea that there are moral universals, among them the sanctity of life, the pursuit of justice, and the rule of law.

Second, God Himself recognises that we are not naturally good. After the Flood, He says: “I will never again curse the ground because of humankind, even though the inclination of their minds is evil from childhood on.” (Gen. 8:21) The antidote to the *yetzer*, the inclination to evil, is covenant.

We now know the neuroscience behind this. Our brains contain a prefrontal cortex that evolved to allow humans to think and act reflectively, considering the consequences of their deeds. But this is slower and weaker than the amygdala (what Jewish mystics called the *nefesh habehamit*, the animal soul) which produces, even before we have had time to think, the fight-or-flight reactions without which humans before civilisation would simply not have survived.

The problem is that these rapid reactions can be deeply destructive. Often they lead to violence: not only the violence between species (predator and prey) that is part of nature, but also to the more gratuitous violence that is a feature of the life of most social animals. It is not that we only do evil. Empathy and compassion are as natural to us as are fear and aggression. The problem is that fear lies just beneath the surface of human interaction, and it can overwhelm all our other instincts.

Daniel Goleman calls this an amygdala hijack. “Emotions make us pay attention right now – this is urgent – and give us an immediate action plan without having to think twice. The emotional component evolved very early: Do I eat it, or does it eat me?”[10] Impulsive action is often destructive because it is undertaken without thought of consequences. That is why Maimonides argued that many of the laws of the Torah constitute a training in virtue by making us think before we act.[11]

So the Torah tells us that naturally we are neither good nor bad, but we have the capacity for both. We have a natural inclination to empathy and sympathy, but we have an even stronger instinct for fear which can lead to violence. That is why, in the move from Adam to Noah, the Torah shifts from nature to covenant, from *tov* to *brit*, from power to the moral limits of power. Genes are not enough. We also need the moral law.

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## **Shabbat Shalom: Parshat Noach (Genesis 6:9-11:32)**

### **Rabbi Shlomo Riskin**

Efrat, Israel – “Come, let us go down, and there confound their language, so that they shall not understand one another’s speech” (Gen. 11:7).

What is the connection between Adam’s existential state of aloneness and the tragic social isolation which results from the Tower of Babel, when one universal language is replaced by seventy languages, leading to bedlam, confusion and dispersion?

To answer our question, let us begin by returning to the story of creation and God’s declaration: “It is not good for man to be alone. I will make a help-opposite for him” (Gen.2:18). When Adam fails to find his ‘help-opposite’ among the animals, we are told: “The Lord God cast a deep sleep upon man and while he slept, He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh in its place, and of the rib, which the Lord God had taken from the man, He made a woman, and brought her to the man” (Gen. 2:21-22).

Why is the birth of Eve surrounded with this poetic quality? Why does her creation differ radically from all other creatures?

The answer is that had Eve been created from the earth like the rest of the animals, Adam would have related to her as a two-legged creature. Even if she walked and talked, she would end up as one of the animals to name and control. Her unique ‘birth’ marks her unique role.

In an earlier verse, we read that “God created the human being in His image; in the image of God He created him, male and female created He them” (Gen. 1:27). “Male and female” suggests androgynous qualities, and on that verse, Rashi quotes a midrashic interpretation that God originally created the human with two “faces,” Siamese twins as it were, so that when He put Adam into a deep sleep, it was not just to remove a rib but to separate the female side from the male side.

God divided the creature into two so that each half would seek completion in the other. Had Eve not emerged from Adam’s own flesh to begin with, they could never have become one flesh again.

Awakening, Adam said of Eve, “Bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh” (2:23). His search was over, and what was true for Adam is true for humankind. In the next verse, God announced the second basic principle

in life: “Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife, and they shall be one flesh” (2:24). “Leave” does not mean reject; but it does mean that one must be mature and independent in order to enter into a relationship of mutuality with one’s mate. (How many divorces can be traced to crippling parent-child relationships!)

One of the goals of a human being is to become one flesh with another human being, and this, the truest of partnerships, can only be achieved with someone who is really part of yourself, only with someone to whom you cleave intellectually and emotionally. If a relationship suffers from a lack of concern and commitment, then sexuality suffers as well. The Torah wants us to know that for humans, sexual relations are not merely a function of procreative needs, but rather an expression of mutuality on a profound level. Hence, in contrast to the animal kingdom, humans are not controlled by periods of heat; sexuality is ever-present. Thus, Nahmanides speaks of one flesh in allegoric terms: through a transcendent sexual act conceived in marriage, the two become one. Rashi interprets the verse, “You shall become one flesh” to mean that in the newborn child, mother and father literally become one flesh. In the child, part of us lives on even after we die.

The entire sequence ends with the startling statement, “And they were both naked, and they were not ashamed” (2:25). Given the Torah’s strict standards of modesty, how are we to understand a description which seems to contradict traditional Jewish values?

I would suggest a more symbolic explanation: Nakedness without shame means that two people must have the ability to face each other and reveal their souls without external pretense. Frequently, we play games, pretending to be what we’re not, putting on a front. The Hebrew word ‘beged’ (garment) comes from the same root as ‘bagod’ – to betray. With garments I can betray; wearing my role as I hide my true self. The Torah wants husband and wife to remove garments which conceal truth, so that they are free to express fears and frustrations, not afraid to cry and scream in each other’s presence without feeling the “shame of nakedness.” This is the ideal ‘ezer kenegdo.’

The first global catastrophe, the flood, struck when the world rejected the ideal relationship between man and woman. Rape, pillage, and unbridled lust became the norm. Only one family on earth – Noah’s – remained righteous. Now, with the Tower of Babel, whatever

values Noah attempted to transmit to future generations were forgotten.

What exactly happened when one language became seventy is difficult to understand. Yet, metaphorically, one language means people understand each other. With their ‘ezer-kenegdos,’ existential and social loneliness is kept at bay as they become one in love and in progeny.

The Tower of Babel represents a new stage of depravity, not sexual, but social. People wanted to create a great name by building great towers, not for the sake of Heaven, but for the sake of materialism; the new god became splendid achievements with mortar and brick. As they reached greater physical heights, they forgot the human, inter-personal value of a friend, a wife, a life’s partner. According to the Midrash, when a person fell off the Tower, work continued, but if a brick crashed to the ground, people mourned.

Thus the total breakdown of language fits the crime of people who may be physically alive, but whose tongues and hearts are locked – people who are no longer communicating with each other. It was no longer possible for two people to become one flesh and one bone, to stand naked without shame, to become ‘ezer-kenegdos.’ Existential loneliness engulfed the world and intercommunication was forgotten. The powerful idea of one language became a vague memory.

The Tower of Babel ended an era in the history of mankind, and the social destruction it left behind could only be fixed by Abraham. His message of a God of compassion who wishes to unite the world in love and morality is still waiting to be heard.

Shabbat Shalom!

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## **Parshas Noach**

### **Rabbi Yochanan Zweig**

This week’s Insights is dedicated in memory of Moshe ben Bentzion,

Throwing a Brick

Each man said to his friend, “Come, let us make bricks and burn them in the fire.” And the brick served for them as stone and the asphalt for mortar. And they said, “Come, let us build us a city and a tower with its top in the heavens...” (11:3-4).

At the end of this week’s parsha we find the well-known story of the Tower of Babel, which took place

at a time when many of the descendants of Noah migrated to a specific area so that they could all dwell together. They were united with a single language and a single purpose: To build a tower and commence an attack on Hashem.

Yet the Torah’s description of the events is atypical. First, the Torah goes out of its way to relate the discussion of the construction process (“let us make bricks and burn them in the fire”) and seems to needlessly elaborate on why they needed bricks in the first place (to serve in place of stone). The Torah relating these seemingly unimportant details is very curious.

Second, and even stranger, the discussion on the purpose of these bricks follows the description of making the bricks. Meaning, it is only after they start making bricks that they resolve to build a city and a tower to reach the heavens. Ordinarily, a story would begin with what is trying to be accomplished and then the process as to how the plan is implemented. However, here it seems that they only conceived of building a city and a tower after creating the construction process.

Lastly, the tower of Babel is quite well known, but one generally doesn’t hear much regarding the city of Babel, which seems to be an integral part of the story. In fact, when Hashem descends, as it were, to see what’s going on the Torah says that “Hashem descended to see the city and the tower.” What is this emphasis on the city?

This story, which occurred over 3,500 years ago, holds a remarkable lesson that is incredibly relevant to our times. This is the story of the onset of technology. Prior to this, man used to quarry stone or use wood to construct his home. This meant there was a constant reminder that we are living in a natural world with a Creator. The concept of being able to manufacture your own materials to construct a huge city and an accompanying tower meant that mankind had now seized power over his environment. It was this technological advance that spurred the rebellion against God. Not much has changed.

In the last hundred years, the world has seen significant advancements in almost every field of study and this has led to unprecedented technological innovations. From air travel to atomic bombs to vastly extending the human life expectancy, the world bears little resemblance to the thousands of years of history that were mostly technologically stagnant. Even the technological advances of the past two decades are

beyond what anyone living in the mid-20th century could have ever imagined.

Yet, as we as a society continue to advance technologically, there seems to be a parallel decline and deterioration in moral values and overall “life satisfaction.” What was once considered murder is now readily acceptable behavior and what was considered perverse is now deemed a life style choice. There is an ever growing population of individuals who turn to medicine, illegal drugs, or alcohol to make their lives more bearable. Even the outwardly “most successful” individuals are often in therapy for a variety of issues. Why would the greatest advances in life lead to a less fulfilling one?

The answer is that the world has become a monument to mankind. Society has gone from being theocentric to self-centered. Technology has given mankind a “God complex” making us believe that we are in control of our destiny and we are the very focus of our existence. We have decided that the sole purpose of the world is to serve us and give us pleasure; no wonder mankind’s wanton behavior has taken a terrible toll and the impact may lead to catastrophic consequences for our world.

Living in a theocentric world, a man has purpose and responsibilities outside of himself. Naturally, he will care about his family, his society, and the world at large. On the other hand, being focused on one’s own pleasures naturally leads to unhappiness.

The physical world is obviously limited; likewise there is a limit to the pleasure one can achieve. The ever growing drive to derive more pleasure can be all consuming and trying to fill limitless desires with physically limited options leads inexorably to frustration. Additionally, the natural outgrowth of being primarily focused on one’s own desires is that it will clash with the needs and desires of others in one’s life (family, co-workers, friends, etc.).

The industrial revolution, which led to the creation of megacities that changed society from rural living to city living, directly contributed to this moral decline and self-centered attitude. Even today, middle America (which is still rural) has mostly remained religious and retained a moral compass. The coastal regions, where most of the largest US cities are located, have become much less so.

Living in a world driven by mankind’s technology, we must find a way to understand and internalize that technology is only a tool to do more for our purpose in

the world; to create an awareness and a palpable experience of living in a theocentric world.

Did You Know...

Some interesting facts (from Midrash Rabbah 31:10-32:11):

1. There’s a dispute regarding what light source was in the teivah. One opinion says that Noach made a window, while others say that there was a pearl that gave off light. According to the opinion that it was a pearl, they say that the sun and the moon’s light did not reach the Earth during the flood due to clouds (others say that they didn’t function at all). Interestingly, the pearl let them know when it was night and day by giving less light during the day.

2. According to one opinion the teivah had 900 rooms, each 12 by 12 feet (about the typical size of a room on a modern cruise ship).

3. According to Rashi, the bottom floor was for waste, the second floor had the animals, and Noach and his family were on the top floor. Some opinions in the Midrash switch the bottom and top floors, which must have involved a complicated waste disposal system.

4. Noach even took demons on to the teivah to save them.

5. The fish didn’t die because they never sinned and in the deep ocean they were safe.

This week’s parsha is about Hashem’s decree to flood the Earth, and what happened in the aftermath of this epic flood. Hashem commands Noach to build the teivah (ark) and fill it with his family and all the animals in order to save them from the flood. We thought it might interesting to contrast the teivah with one of the most famous ships in modern history: the RMS Titanic.

<u>Specs</u>	<u>Teivah</u>	<u>Titanic</u>
Time to Build	120 Years	3 Years
Construction	4	15,000
Crew	600 Feet	882 Feet
Length	100 Feet	92 Feet
Width	60 Feet	104 Feet
Height	22 Feet	34 Feet
Draught	3	9
Decks	35,741 Tons	46,328 Tons
Weight	378 Days	5 Days
Length of Service		

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*Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis*

***Dvar Torah Noah: How responsible was Noah for the flood?***

Is it possible that Noah bore some responsibility for the flood?

Such a seemingly preposterous suggestion arises out of the haftarah for Parshat Noach, Isaiah 54. There is a direct link between verse 9 of the haftarah and the parsha.

There, the prophet refers to the flood and reassuringly tells us that in the same way as Hashem has kept His word never again to destroy life on earth, so too He will keep His word not to be angry with us nor to rebuke us.

Now, both Abarbanel and Radak point out that this verse can be read in two different ways. In both ways there's a reference to the flood, but there's one significant difference between the two. The prophet says, "Ki mei noach, zot li."

If you read 'ki mei' as one word, it's "kiyme Noah," – "Like in the days of Noah." This is a reference to a particular period in time. Hashem is saying, "As for Me, this is like in the days of Noah."

Alternatively 'ki mei' can be two different words. "Ki mei Noah," – "Like the waters of Noah." Hashem is saying, "As for me, this is like the waters of Noah," as if to suggest that we can call the flood Noah's flood.

This possibility is preferred by us around the shabbat table, when in 'Yonah Matza' (one of the zemirot sung on Shabbat) we sing, "ka'asher nishba al mei Noah," – "Just as Hashem swore to us concerning the waters of Noah."

Referring to the flood in this way is an indication that Noah did bear some element of responsibility. And the reason is clear: he was charged by Hashem to build an ark over a long period of 120 years. What Hashem had in mind was the possibility that Noah would reshape the minds and the hearts of people, that he would

influence and inspire them to turn in teshuva, but he failed to do this with even a single person.

As a result, he did bear some element of responsibility for what ensued.

Let us therefore learn not to be like Noah in this respect. In the event that we are aware of a situation which is wrong and we are in a position to influence and to inspire others to change direction, let us never fail in our responsibility to change things for the better.

Shabbat shalom.

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***Drasha Parshas***

***Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky***

***Drasha Parshas Noah - Window to the World***

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

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

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

Noah is told to build a window. It seems practical enough; after all sitting for an entire year can get awfully stuffy. So Noah is commanded to build a window for breathing room. It is a little troubling. Does Noah need a command to add something so simple as a window? Does it make a difference

whether or not he had a window? Did that command have to be incorporated into the heavenly plans for an ark that would endure the ravaging flood?

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

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

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

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***Noach: Letters of Protection***

***Ben-Tzion Spitz***

*Action, looks, words, steps, form the alphabet by which you may spell character. - Johann Kaspar Lavater*

God is enraged with humanity. They prove to not only be corrupt but they also corrupt their environment.

Their evil and vileness scream to the heavens and God answers with a deluge to wipe out all of humanity, with the aim to start anew with Noah and his family.

God instructs Noah to build an ark, where his family and representatives from the animal kingdom will be spared to repopulate Earth. Noah dutifully builds the Ark. The animals arrive two-by-two, leaving a planet about to be destroyed, to then sail upon its destruction, and almost a year later land on a world wiped clean of any other living beings.

The Ark was their transport and protection for the duration of the Flood. The word "Ark" in Hebrew is "Tevah" which is also the same word in Hebrew for "letter". The Chidushei HaRim explains that these homonyms, these words with the same spelling and the same pronunciation, but different meanings, are not coincidental.

There is a deep, divine and powerful attribute to each of the Hebrew letters, specifically the Hebrew letters of the Torah and of prayer. Just as Noah's Ark can be a vessel of protection, somehow, each of us can escape a deluge of troubles by seeking refuge within the Hebrew "Tevah", the Hebrew letters that we learn and recite. Each letter of the Hebrew alphabet in some mystical way, and most powerfully, the letters of the Torah and of prayer, can provide a certain measure of protection from the elements of the world that seek to drown us.

When trouble comes our way, as it inevitably does, we don't need to spend years building an ark, we don't need to gather supplies to survive Armageddon, we can open the Torah, open a Siddur (the Prayer book) and read.

May we find shelter and sanctuary in something as simple as holy letters and words.

*Dedication - To the post-holiday season.*

*Shabbat Shalom*

*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.*

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***Rav Kook Torah***

***The Sabbath Influence***

***Rabbi Chanan Morrison***

It took an old man running with myrtle twigs to stop Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai from destroying the world. The Talmud in Shabbat 33b relates how Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai and his son secreted themselves in



a cave, hiding from the Romans. They spent twelve years secluded in Torah study and prayer, living off the fruit of a carob tree and fresh water from a spring. When at last they heard that the Roman decree had been rescinded, Rabbi Shimon and his son left the cave. But years of seclusion had transformed the two scholars. When they saw people everywhere occupied with mundane activities, plowing fields and sowing grains, they were filled with outrage. “They forsake eternal life and engage in temporal life!”

In their zeal, wherever they looked was immediately consumed by fire. Rabbi Shimon and his son were unable to reconcile themselves to the realities of everyday life, and a heavenly voice commanded them to return to their cave for an additional twelve months. When they left the cave the second time, they came across an old man holding two twigs of myrtle branches. It was twilight, moments before the approach of the Sabbath, and the old man was running.

“What are the myrtle twigs for?” inquired Rabbi Shimon.

“They are in honor of the Sabbath,” the old man replied.

“But why two twigs?”

“One is for Zachor [‘Remember the Sabbath’] and the other is for Shamor [‘Keep the Sabbath holy’].”

Rabbi Shimon turned to his son, “See how precious the mitzvot are to the people of Israel!” And their minds were put to ease.

What was it about the old man and his myrtle twigs that reconciled Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai and his son to the world and its mundane activities?

Shamor and Zachor

There are a number of differences in the text of the Ten Commandments as it appears in Exodus (in the reading of Yitro) and in Deuteronomy (in Va'etchanan). One difference is in the fourth command, the mitzvah of the Sabbath. In Yitro it reads Zachor — ‘Remember the Sabbath day’ (Ex. 20:8) — while in Va'etchanan it reads Shamor — ‘Keep the Sabbath day holy’ (Deut. 5:12).

According to the Sages, these two versions are two sides of the same coin. Both Shamor and Zachor were communicated in a single Divine utterance. “God spoke once, but I heard twice” (Psalms 62:12).

Shamor and Zachor correspond to two basic aspects of the Sabbath. Shamor, keeping the Sabbath holy, refers to the quality of the Sabbath itself as a time of holiness. It corresponds to the intrinsic sanctity of the

day, transcending all mundane activities, elevating us to a higher realm of holiness.

Zachor, to remember the Sabbath, on the other hand, refers to the Sabbath’s influence on the other days of the week. While we fulfill the mitzvah of Shamor by abstaining from all forms of Halachically defined work on the Sabbath, the mitzvah of Zachor is performed during the week. As the Sages explained in Mechilta Yitro, if one comes across an especially choice portion of food, one should “Remember the Sabbath” and set it aside to be enjoyed on Shabbat.

Zachor thus represents the power of the Sabbath to draw forth the energy of the days of worldly activity and elevate them with its special holiness. True, this is just a reminder of the Sabbath, and during the week we are primarily occupied with mundane pursuits. Yet the soul is naturally drawn to holiness, and the quest for a higher purpose in life is ingrained deep within us.

It was precisely this quality of Zachor that enabled Rabbi Shimon and his son to look upon everyday life in a positive light. The very fact that the Sabbath is able to influence the days of work reveals the soul’s innate closeness to God.

Honoring the Sabbath

Now many of the details in the story may be understood. Why the emphasis on the twilight hour? Why was the old man running? What is the significance of the myrtle twigs?

Twilight (בין השמשות) is a bridge between one day and the next. Twilight between Friday and the Sabbath is the hour that connects the secular week with the holiness of Shabbat. The old man was running to honor the Sabbath at twilight on Friday eve; his action reflected the influence of the Sabbath on the rest of the week by way of its connection to Shabbat.

Why did the old man honor the Sabbath with fragrant myrtle twigs?

Superficially, the weekdays appear mundane and lowly. In truth, they contain an inner reserve of holiness, but this inner holiness can only be perceived with an acute spiritual sensitivity. The myrtle twigs reflect this heightened sensitivity, since we appreciate their fragrance through our sense of smell. The Sages wrote that of the five senses, the sense of smell is the most refined, giving pleasure to the soul (Berachot 43b).

The two twigs correspond to the two aspects of the Sabbath, one for Zachor, connecting the Sabbath with

the rest of the week, and one for Shamor, guarding the Sabbath's inherent sanctity.

And what is the significance of the old man running?

The elderly do not usually run. What gave him this youthful energy and vitality? As the old man held the fragrant myrtle twigs in his hands, he felt the holy influence of the Sabbath on the other days of the week. This unusual combination of an old man running is a metaphor for the synthesis of the Sabbath, with its innate holiness and wisdom, and the weekdays, with their energy and productivity.

Combining Temporal with Eternal

We must still clarify: how did this sight enable Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai and his son to accept the mundane activities of everyday life?

The key lies in Rabbi Shimon's statement, after witnessing how the old man honored the Sabbath: "See how precious the mitzvot are to the people of Israel!"

Rabbi Shimon was no longer troubled by the neglect of eternal values due to preoccupation with day-to-day activities. The striking image of an old man running to honor the Sabbath brought home the realization that the mitzvot are truly the inner life-force of our lives. The scholar saw that even in their everyday life, the Jewish people are tightly bound to eternal values. These binds give strength to the weak and weary, so that even the elderly are able to serve God with exuberance and vitality.

His profound disappointment with society was eased when he realized that the transformation of old age to youthful vitality is only possible when worldly activity transcends its ordinary boundaries and enters the realm of holiness. Not only was Rabbi Shimon able to accept the people's occupation with mundane pursuits, he now recognized the added value to be gained precisely through this wonderful combination of the temporal and the eternal.

*(Silver from the Land of Israel, pp. 37-40. Adapted from Ein Eyah vol. III on Shabbat 33b (2:278).)*

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**Shema Yisrael Torah Network**

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

**Parashas Noach**

**פרשת נח תשפ"ב**

**צא מן התיבה אתה ואשתך**

**Go forth from the Ark, you and your wife. (8:16)**

*Chazal* teach that when Noach emerged from the Ark to find a world destroyed, he complained to Hashem: "You should have shown mercy on Your children." Hashem replied, "Foolish shepherd, you should have spoken up before I destroyed the world." Clearly, *Chazal's* words are laden with profound wisdom and numerous lessons. One message that Hashem's words immediately impart addresses the need to care for others. Noach knew that a flood would occur. He seemed to be concerned for himself and his family. At the end of his journey, when he perceived the scope of the devastation, it hit home that the flood might have been averted. He immediately blamed Hashem, which is standard fare for anyone who refuses to accept any responsibility. Hashem rebutted that Noach woke up too late. He should have defended his generation before the fact. Now it was too late. Hashem implied that Noach's sole concern was for himself and his family. He neglected to express his distress concerning the rest of his generation.

We all have a moral obligation to care for others. *V'ahavta l'reiacha kamocho*; "Love your fellow as (you love) yourself" is the rule of life by which we should all live. If something is not right with my fellow, then, by extension, something is not right with me. My life may not/cannot go on with business as usual if my fellow is undergoing an experience which is taking its toll on him. We are all one collective being. We must feel the pain of others and act upon it, because their pain is our pain.

In a lecture to a large group of post-seminary students who had already entered into the matrimonial chapter of life, *Rav* Nochum Diamont posed the following question: "When you meet a prospective young man, what is the question that is uppermost in your mind?" They all answered, "Is he *matim*, suitable, for me?" He continued, "Clearly, all of you are concerned primarily for yourselves, since no one replied, 'Am I suitable for him?'" Having said this, he continued with the following hypothetical situation: "You marry, and shortly thereafter you discover that your husband has a condition that does not allow him to tolerate air conditioning. You, on the other hand, cannot breathe in a stuffy room. Now what?" The girls presented various responses: "He should sleep with a blanket over his head, so that he will not feel the draft." This selfish reply was followed by many others – all of which indicated that these young women were clueless concerning the harmony and caring for one

another that must permeate a marriage. Each was more focused on herself than her spouse. This, explained the *Rav*, was a recipe for disaster.

*Chazal* (*Sanhedrin* 20) teach that in the generation of Rabbi Yehudah bar Elai, the poverty among the students was so great that six students shared one *tallis*/blanket covering. *Horav Chaim Shmuelevitz, zl*, explains how six could possibly be covered by one blanket. Each one cared for his fellow; thus, he pushed the blanket toward the other student. Since each one of the six was pushing away from himself, his friend was covered. Had it been the other way around, with each one pulling toward himself, the blanket would have quickly been torn to shreds.

**וַיֵּצֵא נֹחַ**

### **So Noach went forth. (8:18)**

The flood waters receded, and Hashem instructed Noach to leave the Ark. *Chazal* (*Zohar* 1:256) teach that when Noach exited the *Teivah*, Ark, and beheld the devastating destruction of humanity, he began to weep uncontrollably. He said to Hashem: “*Ribono Shel Olam*, You are called *Rachum*, Merciful; thus, You should have been merciful on Your creations.” Hashem replied, “Now you come with complaints. Why did you not issue your defense for humanity when I told you My plans to send a flood that would destroy the world? You made an Ark to save yourself and your family. Why did it not enter your mind (then) to appeal on their behalf? Now, when the world was destroyed (and you were spared), you offer your protest.”

*Chacham einov b’rosho*, “A wise man – his eyes are in his head.” This means he thinks when he sees. His cognitive insight penetrates through whatever ambiguities might lie before him and guides him concerning the proper course of action. *Horav Dov Schwartzman, zl*, observes that one often sees his sin, but fails to consider the collateral damage that results from his indiscretion. Hashem intimated to Noach: “I informed you of My impending punishment. A world that has no moral compass cannot continue to exist. You accepted the decree and sought refuge for yourself. You should have prayed on their behalf. You did not. That is cruel!”

Veritably, we cry after the tragedy has occurred. Why do we wait until it is a *fait accompli* and the devastation has taken place – before we grieve and pray? We should pray when there is still opportunity to prevent the decree from achieving

fruition – when our prayer can, and will, make a difference.

In his commentary to the *parshah* (9:20), *Sforno* explains the error in Noach’s actions post-Flood. *Vayachel Noach ish ha’adamah*, “And Noach, the man of the earth, began.” He writes: Noach began with an unsuitable project: the planting of a vineyard, which resulted in his drinking of the wine, which under normal circumstances would appear innocuous; yet, a small fault at the beginning led to far more serious consequences. A similar occurrence took place in Shittim, where the people acted immorally with the Midyanite women. This led to full scale idolatry.

*Sforno* offers a similar approach toward understanding the words, *Vayeired Hashem liros*, “And Hashem came down to see” (11:5). He explains that the idiom, “descending to see,” is employed with regard to Hashem when the action of the sinner does not in and of itself merit punishment, but will inevitably lead to more serious deterioration, similar to the actions of the *ben sorer u’moreh*, wayward and rebellious son. Hashem sees the ultimate consequences of a present act or condition. In the case of the Tower of Bavel, He examined the act and determined the outcome. As a result of this Heavenly insight, Hashem dispersed the people, thereby preventing a greater sin from occurring.

Viewing a situation cognitively is imperative – both from its possible negative consequence and also from a positive perspective, which can be encouraging and motivate one to strive higher and work harder for a favorable outcome. First and foremost, however, one must know/realize that whatever success or failure he has is predicated on an objective self-view of his strengths and weaknesses. *Rav Schwartzman* interprets the opening words of our *parshah*: *Eileh toldos Noach – Noach (ish tzaddik)*. These are the offspring of Noach – Noach. Every person should be acutely aware that the first fruits of his endeavor is himself. The first creation, offspring, product of Noach, is Noach. Our goal is to create ourselves in such a manner that we act *b’tzalmo*, in His image, *kidmuso*, in His likeness. A visionary is one who visualizes a completed product when all he has before him is the rough materials. Prior to presenting a vision of the future, one must first perfect the present: himself. One can hardly plan for tomorrow if his “today” hangs in the balance.

**וַתִּשְׁחַת הָאָרֶץ לְפָנֵי הָאֱלֹקִים וַתִּמְלֵא הָאָרֶץ חָמָס**

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

**ויהי כל הארץ שפה אחת ודברים אחדים**

**The whole earth was of one language and of common purpose. (11:1)**

*Parashas Noach* presents two cultures, both evil: one was destroyed; and the other was dispersed – but allowed to live. The generation of the Flood was destroyed. Although the people’s sin was not so much directed Heavenward, their base immorality, lack of ethical character, and their licentious behavior earned them such ignominious repute that they had to be destroyed.

The generation of the Dispersal, however, worked together to build a world community, sow the seeds of a single culture with themselves in the leadership role. They had no room for G-d in their lives. *Chazal* (*Sanhedrin* 109a) distinguish between the *dor ha’Mabul* and the *dor Haflagah*. *Eilu lo pashtu yad b’ikar, v’eilu pashtu yad b’ikar*, “The former did not plan a rebellion against Hashem, the latter did.” One may think that the sin which produced the *Migdal Bavel*, Tower of Bavel, was more egregious than the moral turpitude that prevailed during the generation of the Flood. Immorality trumps idol worship?

*Chazal* allude to this question and proclaim, *limdah*, this teaches, *she’sanui ha’machlokes v’gadol ha’shalom*. “How despicable is strife/controversy and how great is peace.” The generation of the Flood consisted of quarrelers who constantly contended with one another. They had no respect for one another. The *dor Haflagah* were unified – perhaps in the wrong thing and for the wrong purpose, but, at the very least, unity reigned among them. *Gadol ha’shalom*, if people can get along, then Hashem allows them to live. When their peaceful endeavors “infringe” upon Heaven; when their unity produces a tower upon which they hope to ascend to spar with G-d – they are dispersed, not destroyed. *Machlokes*, divisiveness, controversy, is anathema even if it does not reach the Heavens.

*Horav Yaakov Weinberg, zl* (quoted by *Horav Yissachar Frand*), asks how we can posit that love and harmony reigned during the generation of the dispersal, when *Chazal* relate that the builders were so obsessed with their tower that it took center stage in all their endeavors. To them, the loss of a brick was of greater concern than the loss of a human being. One who was carrying a brick up the tower slipped and fell, losing life and brick. The builders mourned the

loss of the brick – not the life. If this is what peace is all about – keep it! Where is the abiding love and friendship that supposedly reigned in that society? Their *shalom* was at best superficial and based on ulterior motives. Is this form of *shalom* worthy of protecting these idol worshippers? Apparently yes – but why?

The *Rosh Yeshivah* explains that even if people have their “differences,” they do not see “eye-to-eye,” or worse, their relationship has completely soured to the point that there exists a deep-rooted animus between them, the mere fact that they can work together to achieve a common goal is meritorious and considered *shalom*. It may be two-dimensional and shallow, but, for all intents and purposes, if they can maintain a semblance of unity in working together, it is *shalom*. In other words, if the *shalom* is only surface-deep and temporary, but, for the present, people are talking and working together, it is still *shalom*.

If I may add, this is by no means the ideal concept of peace. *Shalom* is derived from *shaleim*, perfect, whole. Something that is superficially whole, but internally broken, is incomplete. *Shaleim* denotes total harmony, maintaining a complete accord between the external and inner aspects of things. All perfection is the realization of this idea. True peace is not fashioned only in an exterior mold. It must emanate from within, in harmonious accord with what is presented externally. Thus, one who claims to be at peace with others – but within himself he is beset with internal strife, ambiguity, self-doubt and depression – has not achieved peace.

At times, it is necessary to “disturb the peace” in order to achieve true inner peace. Pinchas did that when he demonstrated passivity in the face of a *chillul Hashem*, profanation of Hashem’s Name. This act represented the antithesis of peace. One must sacrifice everything for peace – even peace itself. One may never sacrifice the rights of others, nor may he sacrifice that which Hashem has declared to be good and true, for the sake of peace. To paraphrase *Horav S. R. Hirsch, zl*, “There can be true peace among men only if they are all at peace with G-d.” Last, he who wishes to restore the peace which has been broken (through the seditious activities of those who live counter to G-d’s commandments) must himself be *shaleim*, whole, perfect, at peace with himself and with others.

The *kanai*, zealot, who disturbed the peace in order to create peace, the one whom Hashem attests was the paragon of peace, was Pinchas. As a result of his zealotry, he was blessed with *Brisi Shalom*, the Covenant of Peace.

In recent times (last century), *kanaus* of all forms has emerged as the mainstay and excuse for protesting the secular incursions that have undermined the sanctity of the soul of our Holy Land. This is not the forum for taking a position pro or con, but rather to characterize one of the premier *kannaim*, a holy man whose devotion to *Klal Yisrael*, Torah and *mitzvos* was unequivocal and without peer, *Horav Amram Blau*, *zl*. When *Rav Amram* saw *chillul Shabbos*, desecration of the holy *Shabbos*, he was in physical pain. He viewed this as a knife in the heart and soul of the Jewish People. Sadly, the secularists who offensively and publicly profaned *Shabbos* did not look at it this way. Having been, for the most part, raised on a diet of anti-Orthodox diatribe, they could not fathom how one of their own could be so connected to an ideal and culture; thus, as far as they were concerned, Orthodoxy was archaic at best, and extinct at worst.

Their attitude did not deter *Rav Amram* from standing on Kikar HaShabbos at the entrance to Meah She'arim and screaming, "*Shabbos! Shabbos!*" to protest the driver who was driving through this Orthodox enclave in open defiance of Torah law and in obvious disrespect of its inhabitants. This was not a new confrontation, and, every *Shabbos*, the protestors were violently beaten by the police, who would push and beat without mercy, making one wonder how brother could strike brother with such vicious animus. This went on week after week to the incredulous reaction of the *chareidim*, Orthodox Jews, who wondered why and what was gained by the constant provocation. The *chillul Shabbos* continued unabated; the protestors were beaten with impunity and without remorse. Was it really worth it?

The simple answer would be: "When it hurts – one cries out" and *chillul Shabbos* hurts! *Rav Amram*, when asked this question by a distinguished Orthodox journalist and personality, replied with a powerful insight (one which we should all consider in our daily endeavor), "Tomorrow, the reporters are going to write that Amram Blau screamed, *Shabbos* and the police beat him in response. This report will be read by Jews all over the Holy Land. They will look at the pictures of *chareidim* lying on the ground, mercilessly

being beaten by police – for what? For caring about *Shabbos*! Eventually, these pictures and reports will circulate to the news agencies and, ultimately, around the world. People will ask – what does this old man want? What is *Shabbos*? Why does it mean so much to them? Eventually (even) one Jew might decide to delve into *Shabbos*, its significance to the Jewish People, its sanctity and elevating effect on the entire Jewish mindset and psyche. Who knows – he might, as a result, become observant! This makes it all worth it."

We now have an idea of how true *kanaus* leads to *shalom*.

וימת הרן על פני תרה אביו... באור כשדים

**Haran died in the lifetime of his father... in Uhr Kasdim. (11:28)**

*Rashi* quotes the *Midrash* that interprets the word *al pnei* as *mipnei* to mean "because of" Terach. Terach produced idols. His son, Avraham, saw the folly of idol worship and decided to do something about it. So, he smashed Terach's wares. Fatherly love was trumped by both economics and fidelity to the evil king Nimrod. Terach felt that his son needed to be taught a lesson. Nimrod was only too happy to comply. Avraham *Avinu* was sentenced to be burned to death in the fiery caldron. Haran, Avraham's brother, was challenged to choose between Avraham and Nimrod. Not being a man who took chances, he hedged his response, thinking to himself, "If Avraham emerges unscathed, then I, too, will enter the flames. If, however, Avraham dies, there is no reason that both of us should die. I will capitulate to Nimrod. Avraham was sincere in his commitment and conviction; thus, he was spared. Haran's commitment was contingent on his safe passage through the flames, which was insufficient reason for being spared. While Haran's self-sacrifice was far from perfect, he did ultimately perish sanctifying Hashem's Name. We have a rule that Hashem never shortchanges a person's reward (*Bava Kamma* 38b). Anyone who expends effort to serve Hashem in any way will receive his due reward. How was Haran rewarded for his less-than-perfect act of self-sacrifice?

The *Rama m'Panu*, *zl* (*Gilgulei Neshamos*), writes that the *neshamah*, soul, of Haran was *nisgalgeil*, transmigrated, to the body of Yehoshua *Kohen Gadol*, who is referred to as *ud mutzal mei'eish*, "firebrand saved from the fire." Yehoshua survived *galus Bavel*, the Babylonian exile, to return to Yerushalayim. He was a holy man, which is

attested to by his survival and return to the Holy City. He, together with Zerubavel ben She'altiel, a group of *Neviim* in which Zecharyah *HaNavi* was included, proceeded to rebuild the *Bais Hamikdash*. Rebuilding the Temple does not ensure that the people living in the country are spiritually committed to its spiritual demands, its altered culture and the way of life it would promote. Assimilation had begun to make its way among the people, with a number of prominent Jews descending into the abyss of intermarriage with their non-Jewish neighbors. Even some of Yehoshua's sons were guilty of this calamitous infraction. This presents the backdrop for the confrontation between *Satan* and Yehoshua which is described in Zecharyah's prophecy.

The *Navi* describes Yehoshua *Kohen Gadol* standing before the Angel of Hashem, with *Satan* standing on his right to accuse him. The Angel of Hashem denounces the *Satan*, claiming that Yehoshua is a firebrand saved from a fire. Nonetheless, a "stain" on Yehoshua's family was evidenced by the *Navi's* reference to Yehoshua's "filthy" garments. This was an implication concerning Yehoshua's lack of excoriating his sons for their iniquitous marriages. The Angel commanded that Yehoshua's sons leave their forbidden wives in order to expunge the stain on Yehoshua's garments.

The term *ud mutzal mei'eish* requires explanation. On the surface, it refers to Yehoshua's being flung into a fiery furnace by Nevuchadnetzar, king of Bavel. Apparently, two false prophets, Achav ben Kulyah and Tzidkiyahu ben Maasyah, prophesied to the king that they had been dispatched by Hashem. The king decided to test the veracity of their statements by throwing them into the same fiery furnace from which Chananya, Mishael and Azaryah emerged unscathed. If they were truly prophets, they, too, would enjoy being spared. The two false prophets countered that they were only two, while their predecessors in the fire were three. Nevuchadnezar instructed them to select a third person to join them. They selected Yehoshua *Kohen Gadol* with the hope that, in his merit, they would be spared. Yehoshua survived; thus the appellation: a firebrand saved from the fire; they did not. An inspiring story, but why should Yehoshua be absolved for not criticizing his sons? Being a survivor does not mitigate his refusal to censor his sons. [Veritably, when Yehoshua was flung into the furnace, he emerged, but his clothes were

burnt. This could have been considered a sufficient message to him.]

*Horav Pinchas Friedman, Shlita*, cites the *Rama mi'Panu* to explain Yehoshua's unique nomenclature: *ud mutzal mei'eish*. Being that Yehoshua was the *gilgul* of Haran, he had already been burned in his previous life. Therefore, Hashem spared him from Nevuchadnetzar's nefarious decree. At the end of the day, Haran acted appropriately by sacrificing his life for Hashem. His failing was that his intentions were faulty and not *lishmah*, purely for the sake of Heaven. Haran lacked pure thought, which was later repaired by Yehoshua who went into the flames with full conviction and complete commitment to Hashem. An *ud mutzal mei'eish* is a charred remnant of Haran! The Angel of Hashem confronted *Satan* with this message: Yehoshua is special, having already once been through the flames. True, he might require a reprimand for not castigating his sons, but he twice sustained the fires, which absolves him from any iniquity. As Haran's *gilgul*, Yehoshua repaired Haran's less-than-perfect act of self-sacrifice. We now know the "other side of the story."

***Va'ani Tefillah***

ולמקללי נפשי תדום ונפשי כעפר לכל תהיה – *V'limkallelai nafshi Sidom, vnafshi k'afar la'kol tiheyeh.*

**To those who curse me, let my soul be silent and let my soul be like dust to everyone.**

It would have been sufficient to just say – *edom* – to those who curse me I shall be silent. Why does the *nefesh*, soul, have to be included in the petition? Likewise, why not simply request that one be humble? Why is it necessary that his soul be like dust? The *Reishis Chochmah (Shaar Anavah 3)* explains that it may occur that one outwardly remains mute when he is cursed; or he acts in a manner which presents him as humble. For all intents and purposes, the person is self-efficacious – does not respond to curses and remains outwardly humble under all circumstances. What about his inner soul, his psyche, his essence? Does he really tolerate, ignore, forgive the curse? Is he truly humble, or does he sense within himself a feeling of arrogance, which allows him to think that he is better than others? Thus, the prayer petitions that the muteness which he presents be real, a reflection of his inner essence, and that his humility not be superficial, but emanating from his core self, his *nefesh*.

*Horav Shlomo Alkabetz, zl*, explains the metaphor of *afar*, dust, as representing something

which is stepped on – but does not react. Likewise, one's humility should tolerate the abuse and arrogance of others, but does not elicit a reaction from him. *Ohr HaYashar* explains the comparison to dirt/dust, which is indestructible. Likewise, we pray that our legacy continue forever.

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

*Mr. Zev Aryeh Solomon ב"ר יעקב שמואל ז"ל*

*נפטר ה' חשוון תשע"ד ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.*

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prepared and edited by Rabbi L. Scheinbaum*

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## **It's Not Good for a Couple to Agree (Always)**

### **The Majesty of Debate**

#### **Rabbi YY Jacobson**

"How is married life?" David asks his old buddy Abe.

"It's quite simple," Abe responds. "When we got engaged, I did most of the talking and she did most of the listening. Later, when we married, she began doing all of the talking and I began doing all of the listening. Now, ten years later, we both do all of the talking and the neighbors do all of the listening."

#### **The Woman's Role**

This week we begin the Torah afresh. The opening portion of the Torah, Bereishis, captures the first 1,600 years of human history. It is filled with enrapturing tales that encapsulate the most profound mysteries and challenges of the human condition, including gender relationships.

It all begins with one verse, describing the purpose of marriage. "And G-d said, 'It is not good for man to be alone; I will make him a helper against him (1).'"

(Until this point, Adam and Eve were fused into one body. Here they were divided into two distinct creatures, each one possessing his or her unique structure and personality (2)).

The choice of words the Torah employs to describe the role of the feminine spouse — "a helper against him" — seems contradictory. If a wife is supposed to serve as a helper to her husband, she is obviously not "against him?"

Much has been written to explain the meaning of this verse (3). Two of the commentators, Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi and Rabbi Naftali Tzvi Yehudah Berlin, the Netziv (4), interpret the sentence exactly the way it sounds (5): The woman becomes a "helper"

for her husband by sometimes being against him. For a husband to become the maximum he can be, he must profess the courage to welcome the ideas and feelings of his spouse which may be "against" his own.

#### **The Hollering Spouse**

Some men cannot tolerate their wives disagreeing with them, and conversely, some women cannot handle another opinion. They grow angry and frustrated, exploding or imploding. What often transpires, as a result, is that the woman, or the man, in order to maintain a peaceful atmosphere in the home, remain silent. Or, to avoid confrontation, they just drift away from each other emotionally. Or the arguments never cease.

The Torah is teaching us a different option. Each of us needs to be saved from our egos, insecurities, blind spots, and wounds. When a man and woman learn to genuinely embrace the otherness of his/her spouse, they can develop a true bond and reach their own core. This does not mean, of course, that it is a biblical injunction upon every woman to disagree with her husband 100 percent of the time. (A man once asked me: If he stated an opinion alone in a forest away from his wife, would he still be wrong? I told him: Your mistake is that you think you need to state your opinion for her to know what you think.) For a relationship to work, spouses must learn the art of compromise. She must learn to see things from his perspective, and conversely; and they must both be flexible, kind, and reasonable.

What it does mean, though, is that we must learn to understand and respect the distinctive personality, primal desires, and needs of our second half.

#### **Looking Out the Other Window**

Irving David Yalom is a 90-year-old Jewish American existential psychiatrist who is emeritus professor of psychiatry at Stanford University, and author of many books on psychology, including *When Nietzsche Wept*. In his book *The Gift of Therapy* (chapter 6) he shares this story: (5\*)

Decades ago I saw a patient with breast cancer, who had, throughout adolescence, been locked in a long, bitter struggle with her naysaying father. Yearning for some form of reconciliation, for a new, fresh beginning to their relationship, she looked forward to her father's driving her to college—a time when she would be alone with him for several hours. But the long-anticipated trip proved a disaster: her father behaved true to form by grousing at length about the ugly, garbage-littered creek by the side of the road.

She, on the other hand, saw no litter whatsoever in the beautiful, rustic, unspoiled stream. She could find no way to respond and eventually, lapsing into silence, they spent the remainder of the trip looking away from each other.

Many years later, she made the same trip alone and was astounded to note that there were two streams—one on each side of the road. “This time I was the driver,” she said sadly, “and the stream I saw through my window on the driver’s side was just as ugly and polluted as my father had described it.” But by the time she had learned to look out her father’s window, it was too late—her father was dead.

“Look out the other’s window. Try to see the world as your patient sees it,” Yalom says. “The woman who told me this story died a short time later of breast cancer, and I regret that I cannot tell her how useful her story has been over the years, to me, my students, and many patients.”

A happy life is one in which I can accept that I and my spouse look at the world from two distinct windows, and see two different things. I cannot hope or expect that my spouse will start seeing the world through my window. What we must strive for is to respect the fact that other people see the world through other windows, and try to listen, appreciate, and empathize with what they are seeing and experiencing, even if it is not what I am seeing and experiencing.

The blessings and depth of a relationship can only emerge when each side learns how to truly listen to and respect the point of view of the other. I may not see things the way you do, but I must be able to honor your truth. Marriages—and so many other close relationships—fall apart when one party feels he or she professes the exclusive “objective truth.” Truth in marriage is usually subjective.

#### Maintaining the Balance

But how do couples guarantee that the proper proportions are preserved? How do we ensure that the “against him” component of a spouse does not overwhelm and subdue the “helper” dimension of a spouse?

The Talmud (6) states that in the beginning, G-d planned to create man and woman as two distinct people. In the end, however, He created them as one (only afterward did He proceed to divide them into two, as stated above). Why did G-d “change His mind,” so to speak?

Perhaps He wished to teach us how a married couple ought to relate to one another. In marital relations,

there ought to be both an “in the beginning” and an “in the end.” In the beginning, husband and wife ought to be two; each party should express his or her opinion freely and uninhibitedly. Then, in the end, they ought to find a way to reconcile the different views into one unified pattern of behavior, making out of many—one, E Pluribus Unum.

This may be one of the symbols behind an interesting distinction between the tefillin (phylacteries) that Jewish men wrap on their heads vs. the tefillin wrapped on their arms. The tefillin we place upon our head is conspicuously divided into four sections, each chamber contains another fragment of parchment inscribed with one portion of the Torah. The tefillin we place on our arm, however, is conspicuously made of one chamber and all of the four portions are inscribed on a single piece of parchment placed in one container. Why?

On the “head” level — the analytical level — diversity between couples is desirable. Let each party argue his or her point. Let each one listen to another point of view; let every husband and wife learn what the world looks like through the other’s “window.” However, on the “arm” level — the level of implementation and action — there must be one path, one verdict, one pattern of behavior. If not, chaos might reign and the home and family will suffer (7).

#### G-d's Yearning Not to be Alone

G-d and His people are often compared in the Tanach to a husband and wife (8). Thus, this verse — “It is not good for man to be alone; I will make him a helper against him” — may also be understood symbolically as a statement concerning the relationship between G-d and humanity.

Prior to the creation of the world, G-d, the ultimate “Man” was “alone.” Even after creating the world, G-d could have revealed His presence in our lives so that we would still experience cosmic oneness; we would perceive the universe as an extension of His infinite light and energy.

Yet G-d chose otherwise. He chose to create a world that would eclipse His reality. G-d chose to create a human being with the ability to deny Him, to ignore Him, to expel Him from his or her life. Why would G-d arrange such a situation?

The answer is, because “It is not good for Man to be alone; I will make Him a helper against Him.” What this represents symbolically is that G-d’s profound pleasure and help stems precisely from this opposition to Him. When a human being, who intuitively feels



himself detached from G-d, cracks the shell of his or her external layers, to discover the light of G-d within; when a person challenges the coarseness of his nature to find the tiny flame of idealism etched in the recesses of his heart — this allows for the blessing of a real relationship. This “grants” G-d the joy of engaging in a genuine relationship with the human person (10). We become co-partners in the work of repairing and healing the world.

So the next time your wife disagrees with you, or the next time you “disagree” with G-d, emotionally or psychologically — don't get frustrated. On the contrary, this is an opportunity for you to experience the ultimate *raison d'etre* of your marriage (11).

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1) Genesis 2:18.

2) This is clear from the biblical narrative. Cf. Talmud Berschos 61a; Eiruvim 18a; Midrash Rabah Bereishis 8:1; quoted in Rashi Genesis 1:27.

3) See Talmud Yevamos 63a; quoted in Rashi to this verse.

4) 1745-1812. Rabbi Schnuer Zalman, the author of the Tanya and Shulchan Aruch HaRav, was the founder of the Chabad school of Chassidism. A similar interpretation can be found in the commentary Haamek Davar and Harchev Davar by the Netziv (Rabbi Naftali Zvi Yehuda Berlin, 1816-1893. He was the dean of the Volozhin Yeshiva and one of the great rabbis of his day.)

5) Torah Or Bereshis pp. 4-5.

5\*) My thanks to Mr. Moshe Zeev Lamm. LCSW (Monsey, NY), for sharing this with me.

6) Talmud Berachos and Eiruvim *ibid*.

7) This idea was suggested by Rabbi Moshe Avigdor Amiel (1883-1946), a rabbi in Lithuania, then in Antwerp, and finally, from 1937 until his death, chief Rabbi of Tel Aviv, in his work *Hegyonos El Ami*, on Bereishis. (An English translation, entitled *Jews, Judaism & Genesis* was published in Jerusalem in the year 2000 by the Rabbi Amiel Library, under the auspices of the American Mizrahi movement).

8) The entire book of Song of Songs is based on this analogy. Cf. Rambam Laws of Teshuvah ch. 10

9) See Ezekiel 1:26; Torah Or *ibid*. p. 5a.

10) See Tanya chapter 26.

11) This essay is based on a discourse by Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi (Torah Or referenced in footnote #5), and on the commentary of Netziv (Rabbi Naftali Zvi Yehuda Berlin) on this verse in Genesis, see Haamak Davar and Harchav Davar.

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## ***Ohr Somayach :: Insights into Halacha***

***For the week ending 5 November 2011 / 7 Heshvan 5772***

### ***Fish with Legs?!***

***Rabbi Yehuda Spitz***

In Parshas Noach we read about how Hashem brought the Mabul (Great Flood / Deluge) and destroyed all living creatures, save for those inside Teivas Noach (Noach's Ark).[1] Additionally, we find that the fish in the oceans were spared as well.[2] It would be fascinating to find out on which side of the Ark a “fish with legs” would have been. Would it have been considered a fish, and therefore spared, or an animal and two might have been sheltered inside while the rest of the species were wiped out?

#### ***A Fishy Tale?***

Far from being a theoretical question, this issue was actually brought up almost 400 years ago, when a certain Rabbi Aharon Rofei (perhaps Rabbi Dr.?) [3] placed such a fish, known as a *Stincus Marinus* in front of the then Av Beis Din of Vienna, the famed Rabbi Gershon Shaul Yom Tov Lipman Heller, author of such essential works as the *Tosafos Yom Tov*, *Toras HaAsham* and *Maadanei Yom Tov*, and asked for his opinion as to the kashrus status of such a “fish”, unknowingly sparking a halachic controversy.

#### ***What is a (Kosher) Fish?***

This was no simple sheilah. It is well known that a kosher fish must have both fins and scales.[4] This so-called “fish” presented actually had scales, but legs instead of fins. Yet, technically speaking would that astonishing characteristic alone prove it as non-kosher?

Chazal set down a general rule that “Whatever has scales has fins as well”, [5] and should still be presumably kosher. This means that if one would find a piece of fish that has scales noticeably present, one may assume that since it has scales, it must therefore have fins as well, and is consequently considered kosher. This ruling is codified as halacha by the Rambam, as well as the Tur and Shulchan Aruch.[6]

As for our *Stincus Marinus*, which had scales but legs instead of fins, the *Tosafos Yom Tov* [7] averred that this “fish” cannot be considered kosher, as the above mentioned ruling was referring exclusively to actual fish and not sea creatures. Since the *Stincus Marinus*

has legs instead of fins, it could not be considered a true fish, and must therefore not be kosher.

Many authorities, including the Mahar"i Chagiz, the Knesses HaGedolah, Rav Yaakov Emden, the Malbim, and the Aruch Hashulchan, agreed to this ruling and considered the *Stincus Marinus* an aquatic creature and not a true fish and thus decidedly non-kosher.[8] This is similar to the words of the Rambam,[9] that "anything that doesn't look like a fish, such as the sea lion, the dolphin, the frog, and such - is not a fish, kosher or otherwise."

However, the Pri Chodosh[10] rejected the opinion of the Tosafos Yom Tov, maintaining that Chazal's rule that "whatever has scales also has fins, and is presumed kosher", equally applies to all sea creatures, not just fish, and actually ruled that the *Stincus Marinus* is indeed kosher, irregardless of whether or not it is considered a true fish.

The Bechor Shor[11]wrote that in his assessment, this whole disagreement was seemingly borne of a colossal misunderstanding, and all opinions would agree to an alternate interpretation. He opined that although it would be considered a sea creature, the *Stincus Marinus* should still indeed be considered kosher for a different reason. As although this "fish" has no true fins, still, its feet are the equivalent of fins, and accordingly, it still fits the halachic definition of a fish![12]

#### Rule of Thumb (or Fin)

The renowned Rav Yonason Eibeshutz, although agreeing in theory with the Pri Chodosh that Chazal's rule meant to include all aquatic life and not just fish, conjectured that possibly said rule was not meant to be absolute; rather it was meant as a generality. Generally, if a fish has scales one may assume it will also have fins; this does not exclude the possibility of ever finding one fish which does not. According to this understanding, apparently the *Stincus Marinus* would be considered an exclusion to the rule and therefore non-kosher. This is also the understanding of several other authorities including the Yeshuos Yaakov, the Shoel U'Meishiv, and HaKsav V'HaKabbalah.[13]

In strong contrast to this understanding of Chazal's statement, the Taz emphatically declared, "No fish in the world has scales but no fins", meaning that Chazal's rule was meant to be unconditional, and consequently, by definition there cannot be an exception. Most authorities agree to this understanding, with many of them, including the Pri

Chodosh, the Chida, and the Kaf Hachaim[14] ruling accordingly that the *Stincus Marinus* is indeed kosher based on this, since it did actually have scales[15].

#### Scientifically Speaking

A scientific study published in 1840 by Rabbi Avraham Zutra of Muenster identified the *Stincus Marinus* as a relative of the scorpion, or a type of poisonous toad.[16] Similarly, the Chasam Sofer[17] wrote that he accepted the findings of "expert scientists" who confirmed that the *Stincus Marinus* is not actually a sea creature at all. Rather, it lives on the shore and occasionally jumps into the water, as does the frog. According to both of these Gedolim, our "fish" was most definitely not a fish, rather a sheretz (non-kosher crawling land animal)! This would make the entire preceding halachic discussion irrelevant, as the *Stincus Marinus* would not fall under the category of Chazal's statement, and would thereby be 100% non-kosher. The Kozeglover Gaon[18] actually uses this "fish" as a testament to the Divinity of the Torah, as the only known exception to Chazal's rule turned out to be not a fish at all, but rather a type of lizard!

On the other hand, not only does the Darchei Teshuva[19] not accept Rabbi Avraham Zutra's scientific study, but even writes a scathing response that he does not understand how one can place these findings from non-Halachic sources between teshuvos HaGaonim without a clear proof from Chazal or Poskim "sherak mipeehem unu chayim". Accordingly, this opinion of the Darchei Teshuva would also unsubstantiate the conclusion of the Chasam Sofer, for although the Chasam Sofer agreed to the Tosafos Yom Tov's conclusion that the *Stincus Marinus* is not kosher, his claim that it is not a true sea creature is based on "scientific experts". Therefore, this scientific analysis that the *Stincus Marinus* be considered a lizard or scorpion, may not actually be acknowledged by all.

#### Practical Impracticality

The Gemara questions Chazal's rule that scales suffice to render a fish kosher, "Why then does the Torah mention fins altogether? The Gemara answers in an extremely rare fashion: "l'hagdil Torah ulha'adirah", "to magnify and enhance the Torah[20]. The Magen Avraham in his peirush on the Yalkut Shimoni[21] takes this a step further. He writes that l'hagdil Torah ulha'adirah was not limited to the topic of fins and scales. Rather, it was also referring to our *Stincus Marinus*. Similar to Rashi's explanation to the famous last Mishna in Makkos[22], that Hashem wishes to

grant Klal Yisrael extra reward and He therefore added effortless Torah and Mitzvos, such as refraining from eating repulsive creatures that one wouldn't want to eat anyway. So too, by our "fish", since it is poisonous, one wouldn't have any sort of desire to eat it, thus possibly taking it out of the realm of practical halacha. Nevertheless, this whole issue of finding out its kashrus status was meant for us to delve into exclusively to get rewarded in the Next World, an infinitely more appealing approach.

So was the strange looking sea creature swimming in the ocean outside the Teivah or was it found within? It seems like we probably will never fully know the answer, although it certainly is fascinating that it seemingly would depend on how the *Stincus Marinus* is classified halachically!

Postscript:

Scientifically, it appears that the classification *Stincus Marinus* is a misnomer, as it is categorized as a lizard from the skink family, known as a *Scincus Scincus*, or a Sandfish Lizard. See

<http://runeberg.org/nfcd/0703.html>. Although non-aquatic, it has been proven in the prestigious Science journal (vol. 325, July 17, 2009, in a published study by Daniel I. Goldman, "Undulatory Swimming in Sand: Subsurface Locomotion of the Sandfish Lizard") via high speed X-ray imaging that below the surface, it no longer uses limbs for propulsion but "generates thrust to overcome drag by propagating an undulatory traveling wave down the body". In other words, although deemed a lizard, it does possess fish-like characteristics, as it "swims" through the sand beneath the surface.[23]

Scientists are even trying to understand and mimic its unique abilities to help search-and-rescue missions.[24] So it is quite understandable how many of the above-mentioned Gedolim felt that the *Stincus Marinus* was a fish or aquatic creature, even according to those who side with the Chasam Sofer's conclusion that it is truly a *sheretz ha'aretz*.

[1] Parshas Noach (Ch. 7, verses 21 - 23).

[2] Midrash Rabbah (Bereishis 32, 9), cited by Rashi (Noach Ch. 7: 22, s.v. asher).

[3] The Lev Aryeh (Chullin 66b, end s.v. b'gm') seems to understand that the questioner was indeed a doctor and the moniker given was not actually referring to his name.

[4] Parshas Shmini (Vayikra Ch.11, verses 9 - 13) and Parshas Re'eh (Devarim Ch. 14, verses 9 - 10).

[5] Mishna Nida (51b) and Gemara (Chullin 66b).

[6] Rambam (Hilchos Maachalos Asuros Ch. 1, 24); Tur and Shulchan Aruch (Yoreh Deah 83, 3).

[7] Maadanei Yom Tov (Chullin 66b, 5).

[8] Mahar"i Chagiz (Shu"t Halachos Ketanos vol. 1, 255, and vol. 2, 5; cited by the Chida in Shiyurei Bracha, Yoreh Deah 83, 1), Knesses HaGedolah (Yoreh Deah 83, Haghos on Tur 6), Rav Yaakov Emden (Siddur Yaavetz, Migdal Oz, Dinei Dagim 8 & 9; quoted in the Darchei Teshuva 83, 27 - 28), Malbim (Parshas Shemini, 80; he writes that a sea creature with four legs is not considered a fish, rather a non-kosher "Chai HaYam"), and Aruch Hashulchan (Yoreh Deah 83, 10).

[9] Rambam (Hilchos Maachalos Assuros Ch. 1, 24).

[10] Pri Chodosh (Yoreh Deah 83, 4).

[11] Bechor Shor (in his commentary to Chulin 66b, cited by the Darchei Teshuva ibid). He actually wrote that the whole disagreement was a colossal misunderstanding, and all opinions would agree to his understanding.

[12] There seemingly is precedent for such a theory based on the words of several Rishonim describing the Pelishti Avodah Zarah 'Dagon' (Shmuel I Ch. 5: 2 - 7), which many, including Rashi (ad loc. 2 s.v. eitzel), the Raavad (in his commentary to Avodah Zarah 41a), and R' Menachem Ibn Saruk (Machaberes Menachem; London, 1854 edition, pgs. 61 - 62) describe as a 'fish-god', meaning an idol in the shape of a fish. Yet, the Navi explicitly writes that the idol had "hands" (that were cut off). This implies that a fish's flippers or fins can indeed justifiably be called a "yad" in the Torah. See also Radak (Shmuel I Ch. 5:4) and Teshuvos Donash al Machberes Menachem (London, 1855 edition, pg. 58), as well as Hachraos Rabbeinu Tam (ad loc.) for alternate interpretations, including that of a hybrid half-man half-fish idol, in which case, as the top half was in human form, would have had human hands. According to this interpretation, this passage would not yield any proof to the Bechor Shor's assessment. Thanks are due to Rabbi Reuven Chaim Klein for pointing out this interesting tangent.

[13] Kreisi U'Pleisi (Yoreh Deah 83, 3), Yeshuos Yaakov (ad loc. 2), Shu"t Shoel U'Meishiv (Mahadura Kamma, vol. 3, 54), and HaKsav V'HaKabbalah (in his commentary to Vayikra Ch. 11, 9).

[14] Taz (Yoreh Deah 83, 3), Pri Chodosh (ibid.), Chida (Machazik Bracha, Yoreh Deah 83, 7 and Shiyurei Bracha, Yoreh Deah 83, 1; also mentioned in his Shu"t Chaim Sha'al vol. 2, 19), and Kaf Hachaim (Yoreh Deah 83, 6 and 15).

[15] The Pri Megadim (Yoreh Deah 83, Mishbetzos Zahav 2; also writing that this seems to be the Prisha's shittah (ad loc. 7) as well; see however Mishmeres Shalom, Be'd3, who attempts to answer the Pri Megadim) and the Maharam Shick (in his commentary on the Mitzvos, Mitzva 157, cited by the Darchei Teshuva ibid.) maintain this way as well; however they do not definitively rule on the kashrus status of this "fish". The Aruch Hashulchan (Yoreh Deah 83, 5) as well as his son, the Torah Temima (Shemini Ch. 11: 9, 32), also held this way, that this rule is Halacha from Sinai, yet, the Aruch Hashulchan himself, still ruled that this specific "fish" non-kosher, as he considered the *Stincus Marinus* a sea creature, not a fish, like the Rambam. The Eretz Tzvi (see footnote 16) as well, although maintaining that it is not kosher for a different reason, writes emphatically that this rule of Chazal is absolute, and is even testimony to the Divinity of the Torah.

[16] Shomer Tzion HaNe'eman (vol. 91, pg 182), cited by the Darchei Teshuva (ibid.) without quoting the author, as well as cited in Kolmus (Pesach 5769 - Fish Story by R' Eliezer Eisikovits) without citing the source.

[17] Chasam Sofer, (commentary to Chulin daf 66b s.v. shuv).

[18] Eretz Tzvi on Moadim (Yalkut HaEmuna, Maamar Sheini, Inyan Sheini ppg. 251 - 252).

[19] Darchei Teshuva (Yoreh Deah 83, 28).

[20] Nida (51b) and Chullin (66b). For an interesting explanation of this dictum, see Lev Aryeh (Chullin 66b s.v. v'ulam).

[21] Zavis Raanan (Parshas Shemini, commentary on the Yalkut Shimoni; explanation on pg 146a). The Lev Aryeh (Chullin 66b, end s.v. b'gm') explains that it seems from the Magen Avraham's elucidation that he seems to agree with the opinion of Rav Yonason Eibenschutz that Chazal's fish rule was not meant to be absolute. For, if it was, why would the Gemara conclude that extra reward is given for staying away from a poisonous *Stincus Marinus* that would technically have been kosher? L'hagdil! Torah ulha'adirah would only have been applicable if this "fish" turned out to be the exception to the rule, and even though it had scales was still not kosher. Accordingly, although we would avoid this "fish" because it was poisonous, we would nonetheless still attain sechar for doing so, as it would not have been deemed kosher.

[22] Gemara Makkos (23b) and Rashi (ad loc. s.v. l'zakos).

[23] A clip showcasing the sandfish lizard's amazing ability is available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P4bxRj-BjFg>, as well as a picture of several of them preserved in a German Museum: <http://i0.wp.com/themuseumtimes.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/IMAG1193.jpg>.

Thanks are due to R' David Hoda for providing these fascinating links.

[24] See here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XztIjBwNXE&spfreload=10>.

Disclaimer: This is not a comprehensive guide, rather a brief summary to raise awareness of the issues. In any real case one should ask a competent Halachic authority.

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For any questions, comments or for the full Mareh Mekomos / sources, please email the author: [yspitz@ohr.edu](mailto:yspitz@ohr.edu).

L'iltuy Nishmas the Rosh HaYeshiva - Rav Chonoh Menachem Mendel ben R' Yechezkel Shraga, Rav Yaakov Yeshaya ben R' Boruch Yehuda, and L'iltuy Nishmas R' Chaim Baruch Yehuda ben Dovid Tzvi, L'Refuah Sheleimah for R' Shlomo Yoel ben Chaya Leah, and L'Zechus for Shira Yaffa bas Rochel Miriam v'chol yotzei chalatzeha for a yeshua sheleimah teikif u'miyad!

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