

הַדְּבָר
יִטְהַדָּר

פרשת נח Parshat Noach

אשרינו Ashreinu

ENHANCING YOUR STUDY OF THE WEEKLY TORAH PORTION

MORE THAN A MAMMAL

RABBI DOVID KIMCHE

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EVELYN GILL (23')

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DAVID BARROCAS (22')

One of the challenges of studying history is that one has to divest oneself of so many givens -- basic assumptions about life and reality which are the product

of the times and zeitgeist in which we live. This is all the more difficult when trying to understand pre-history. Understanding the world which Adam and Noach inhabited is nearly impossible, yet we must try as best we can.

R. Yosef Albo in his classic work *Sefer HaIkkarim* (Maamar 3, chapters 15-16) writes a fascinating essay in which he sheds light on the reality -- and changes to reality -- that occurred during the time of Noach. He works to explain one central curiosity: the newly issued allowance for man to eat animals.

Immediately after exiting the *teivah*, Hashem informs Noach:

כָּל רֶמֶשׂ אֲשֶׁר הוּא חַי לָכֶם יְהִי לְאֹכְלָהּ כִּי־רָק עֵשֶׂב
נָתַתִּי לָכֶם אֶת כָּל

“Any living creature is allowed to you to eat, just like plants and vegetation, I have allowed it all” (Bereishit 9:3).

Rashi explains that Adam HaRishon was allowed to only be a vegetarian, and now Hashem unlocks a new possibility for Noach and for all future generations: eating animal flesh. In order to understand this change and its significance, R. Albo takes us back in time and gives us the background.

Essentially, there were two stages.

Stage 1: Kayin and Hevel. This is the tragic story we read last week. Both these brothers brought gifts to Hashem: Kayin brought fruits and Hevel brought sheep from his flock. Why did Kayin not bring a gift from his flock too? Are animals not clearly more significant than fruit? The answer, says R. Albo, is that Kayin assumed that man was not allowed to kill animals. Surely both are living beings. Man and animal

have equal rights. Kayin was the first vegetarian, from an ideological viewpoint. Kayin then observed that Hashem accepted Hevel's offering of his flock over his fruits. Still locked into his viewpoint, Kayin thinks that if one is allowed to harm animals then perhaps one is allowed to harm human beings too. And we know how that story ended.

Stage 2: The *Dor Hamabul*, the Generation of the Flood. The people of that generation were the ideological inheritors of the philosophy of Kayin. They did not see the difference between man and animal. Man, they thought, is not elevated above animal. Man, they thought, is simply a complex animal. There is a short distance between that philosophy and man degenerating to the point of following his base animal instincts.

וַתִּשְׁחַת הָאָרֶץ לְפָנָי הָאֱ-לֹקִים וַתִּמְלֵא הָאָרֶץ חָמָס
“And man became debased and corrupted” (Bereishit 6:11).

The Flood came to correct this rotten philosophy and ideology. Humankind had to start again, with the understanding that man is a different being. Man is better, man is elevated, man contains a *Tzelem Elokim*. Man is not simply a complex animal.

With this understanding, the few pesukim after Noach exits the *teivah* become readily understood. They are all about creating a distance between man and animal. And crucially, this section of pesukim ends with a warning not to murder other human beings:

שִׁפְךָ דַם הָאָדָם בְּאָדָם דָּמוֹ יִשְׁפָּךְ כִּי בְצַלְמֵ אֱ-לֹקִים
עָשָׂה אֶת

“Whoever sheds the blood of man through man shall his blood be shed, for in the image of God He made man” (Bereishit 9:6).

All this is to underscore the difference between man and animal and to explain that humans are different. Only once human beings understand that they are qualitatively different than animals are they able to bring spirituality and purpose into the world. Only once Man behaves like Man is he able to fulfill his human purpose.

CLOSE QUARTERS

EVELYN GILL (23')

This week, while reading Parshat Noach, three words seemed to stand out:

וַיִּסְגַּר ה' בַּעֲדוֹ

“and God shut him in” (Bereishit 7:16).

Rashi interprets this as meaning that Hashem closed the door to the *teivah* to save Noach from the raging waters outside. The Radak says that Hashem protected Noach against the chance of even a small hole opening in the ark as a result of the powerful rains. Either way, we can see that Hashem was protecting Noach and was watching over him making sure he was safe. This is something extremely important for each of us to remember constantly.

Just as Hashem was protecting Noach from the *mabul*, the same is true for our own personal storms. Every day we are faced with challenges and we sometimes feel that we are being tossed around like a ship in a storm. We might feel like waves are crashing over us and we won't make it, but just like Hashem protected Noach in the flood, He is protecting us through our personal storms. He shows himself in many different ways: when a friend checks in on you, a teacher helps you, a guidance counselor advises you, Hashem's presence is always there. He is sending those people to help you and is always watching over you and protecting you.

We each constantly face our own storms, but remembering that we have a higher Being watching over us should serve as a comfort to us. Hashem is always here and at the end of the day, with His help, everything is going to be okay. If we all took a minute out of our day to recognize Hashem's presence, we would feel more protected and less alone. Be'ezrat Hashem we will all have the courage to face our storms head on and will remember that Hashem is protecting us just like He protected Noach. Shabbat Shalom everyone and don't forget, Hashem is here, Hashem is there, Hashem is truly everywhere!

COMPLETE FAITH

CHANA SCHANDELSON (22')

In this week's parsha, Parshat Noach, there is a difference of opinion on whether Noach rebuked the people for doing *Avodah Zarah* before the *mabul*. The Midrash Rabbah says that of course Noach rebuked the people around him because during the 120 years he was building the *teivah*, people would

ask what he was doing and he would tell them. That information could certainly be seen as some form of rebuke.

The Zohar takes a different approach and says Noach didn't rebuke the people surrounding him. Rabbi Shaul of Amsterdam combines these answers into one. He argues that Noach did rebuke them, but not for the same reason Hashem was punishing them with the *mabul*. Rabbi Shaul explains that the people also stole in addition to worshipping *avodah zara*, and Noach did not mention that in his rebuke.

יָבֵא נֹחַ וּבָנָיו וְאִשְׁתּוֹ וּנְשֵׁי בָנָיו אִתּוֹ אֶל הַתֵּבָה מִפְּנֵי מַי הַמְבּוּל

“Noah, with his sons, his wife, and his sons' wives, went into the Teivah because of the waters of the flood” (Bereishit 7:7).

Rashi finds it strange that the pasuk says, “because of the waters of the flood,” and he quotes the Midrash Rabbah to explain that Noach did not fulfill his words and only entered the *teivah* once the floodwaters literally forced him in. The midrash says that this was due to a slight flaw in his *emunah*. While building the *teivah* we see that Noach was very confident in his faith in HaKodesh Baruch Hu, yet it seems he had to be pushed into the *teivah* by the *mabul* water. What does this mean and what can we learn from this?

Rabbi Goldberg gave a beautiful Shabbat Shuva Drasha this year that really ties all three of these concepts together. He spoke about how during Elul we create many spiritual goals for ourselves and how we need to work on making them our reality. We can say we want to do more chesed, we want to daven more, etc. but when it comes down to actually achieving these goals we often find ourselves not doing them. Achieving these goals would ultimately enable us to become closer with Hashem and the people around us and yet there is often a little voice of doubt telling us that we can not achieve this goal or that we are not good enough. Noach was able to voice his *emunah* for HaKodesh Baruch Hu to the people around him, yet when it came down to actually entering the *teivah* he seemed hesitant.

This is the real reason Noach couldn't give the people of his time the proper rebuke. He wasn't complete in his *emunah* for Hashem, so he was not able to tell them what the real cause for the *mabul* was. Noach is a prime example of how difficult it can be to follow through with our goals and the impor-

tance of having complete *emunah* in Hashem. Just as it was difficult for Noach, it is difficult for us. But, if we work on strengthening our *emunah* and begin to really walk the walk and not just talk the talk, we will IY”H be *zoche* to always see Hashem in our daily lives and He will help us achieve our spiritual goals. Shabbat Shalom.

COLORFUL CONTACT

ARIELLA GROSS (21')

“אֶת קִשְׁתִּי נָתַתִּי בְּעָנָן וְהָיְתָה לְאוֹת בְּרִית בֵּינִי וּבֵין הָאָרֶץ”

“I have set My bow in the clouds, and it shall serve as a sign of the covenant between Me and the earth” (Bereishit 9:13).

This week's parsha is laden with destruction and death. The entire world is flooded, and nearly its entire population is wiped out in just forty days. However, after the flood, Hashem sends a sign, a rainbow, as a promise that He will never destroy the world again. But what does the rainbow signify? And what can we learn from this?

Rabbeinu Bachye explains that Hashem gives Noach the rainbow to connote permanence. He compares it to Avraham's purchase of Ma'arat HaMachpela, which Hashem allowed Avraham to buy because He knew it would never be destroyed. Just like the rainbow, Ma'arat HaMachpela is a physical reminder of our past and signifies Hashem's unwavering promises to us.

But why did Hashem specifically send a rainbow? Why not a different gift? The Chizkuni explains that the colors of the rainbow signify different elements of the world. Blue signifies water and red connotes fire, and the presence of both in the rainbow signifies that both water and fire will always be present on this earth. This indicates Hashem's promise to always balance water and fire, never letting one outweigh the other and destroy the world.

When we feel distant from Hashem, we should try to see Him through all of His creations. Each one, after all, reveals insights regarding Hashem's admirable attributes. The rainbow is a reminder of Hashem's forgiveness because He gave humanity a second chance. It teaches us to appreciate His mercy and seek to emulate it, encouraging

us to be more forgiving of our fellow man and ultimately bringing us closer to Hashem.

COMMIT

DAVID BARROCAS (22')

In Parshat Noach, it says,

“The Earth became corrupt before Hashem, the Earth was filled with lawlessness” (Bereishit 6:11)

תִּשְׁחַת הָאָרֶץ לְפָנַי הָאֱלֹקִים וְתִמְלֵא הָאָרֶץ חֲמָס

The following pasuk says:

“Hashem saw how corrupt the Earth was, for all flesh had corrupted its ways on earth” (Bereishit 6:12).

These two pesukim raise the following question. Technically speaking, the second pasuk (6:12) should come first

וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹקִים אֶת הָאָרֶץ וְהִנֵּה נִשְׁחָתָה כִּי הִשְׁחִית כָּל בְּשָׂר אֶת דְּרָכָהּ עַל הָאָרֶץ

and, if it were to come first, the first pasuk (6:11) would be unnecessary. If the Torah started by telling us that Hashem saw how corrupt the world was, why does it need to include a second description of something we (and Hashem) are already aware of?

It's written in the Zohar that *teshuvah* was created before anything else. Therefore, even though Hashem saw what was happening in front of Him (6:12), pasuk יא alludes to the people of the generation of Noach, who had a chance do to *teshuva*, but they did the opposite. The use of the word חֲמָס, whose gematria is “Gehennom”, emphasizes the severity of the corruption taking place during the time of Noach, as well as how harsh the punishment for the corruption will be.

And finally, it came down to this last deed: idolatry, murder, incest, and the most severe: theft.

If we compare our generation to Noach's generation, we see clearly that many people are still falling prey to idolatry, murder, incest, and theft.

How are we letting this happen in front of us each and every day? We see today the lack of morality, the lack of mutual respect, and really the lack of humility above all. With this, we have to wonder, how we can take responsibility for our actions and become true to ourselves and Hashem? If lack of morality, respect, and humility is the problem, the solution is to reset our morality, work on our humility, strive for greater piety, and remind ourselves of our ultimate truth -- our commitment to Torah and to serving Hashem.

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