

שבת בשבתו



Parshat Noach

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Dear Friends,

I am very much looking forward to greeting those of you who will be attending this Sunday's RZA-Mizrachi National Conference. Being held just two days before the US election, this symposium will give us an opportunity to hear from distinguished presenters (see ad below) who will discuss the challenging times we live in and the need for increased support and advocacy for the State of Israel. There is no charge to attend the conference. If you haven't yet done so, please RSVP to office@rza.org.

We are pleased to introduce two *new* sections to our Weekly Shabbat B'Shabbat emails. Thankfully there are many rabbis around the country who are passionate religious Zionists. Each week we intend to share a Torah insight from a different *dati tzioni* Rabbi. Additionally, the RZA-Mizrachi is once again sponsoring a mission to Israel for fifty college students. The students will spend the upcoming winter-break returning to their Yeshivot and Seminaries in Israel where they will replenish themselves in intensive Torah study. The students will also be attending a day-long program devoted to Religious Zionist education and training. Upon their return to the US the students will serve as "Aryeh fellows" on behalf of the RZA-Mizrachi. Each week we will feature a different one of our "Aryeh Fellows" in the Shabbat B'Shabbat email.

This is truly an exciting time for the RZA-Mizrachi. I look forward to working with the new RZA board, our incoming Chairman Rabbi Solomon Rybak and Presidium members Mr. Martin Oliner, Rabbi Leonard Matanky and Dr. Ernest Agats tein.

With warm regards,

Rabbi Gideon Shloush
National Director, RZA

Parshat Noach

*Rabbi Mark Dratch, Executive Vice President of the Rabbinical Council of America
New York, NY*

"Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations" (Gen 6:9). As is well known, this description of Noah is subject to contradictory interpretations. Rashi explains that "there are those among our rabbis" who interpret "in his generations" sympathetically—despite his evil surroundings Noah succeeded in being righteous. "There are some others" who interpret the phrase disparagingly:

had Noah been born in a more righteous generation and been influenced by good people, he could have been even more righteous.

Pay careful attention to Rashi's language which refers to Noah's advocates (*yeshme-rabboteinu dorshim*) as "our rabbis," and to his detractors (*ve-yeshshe-dorshim*) as "some others." The difference is this: different people interpret and respond to the same set of circumstances differently. Our own experiences in interpersonal relationships, religious practice, and political discourse bear this out. The lesson is this: "*Rabboteinu*," religious personalities engage in elevated and respectful conversation and debate while "some others" react with cynicism and condescension. This is not to suggest that religious personalities cannot be critical and need to be naïve and Pollyannaish. On the contrary, they are to bring critical eyes informed by Torah-prescribed values and moral judgments to every situation. However, religious personalities make and express these judgments with generosity of spirit, empathy, and respect. In fact, both of the groups that Rashi cites are critical of Noah: he was not a perfect *tzaddik*. But Rashi teaches us that it was not in what was said, but in how it is said, that distinguishes *rabboteinu* from others.



However, what *rabboteinu* and the others do have in common is that both groups are *doresh* the same set of facts. In our post-truth world, one in which facts are ignored and data is manufactured at will—as we saw last week with UNESCO's resolution on Jerusalem which denies the historicity of the *Bet Hamikdash* and the Jewish connection to Jerusalem—there is no *yesh ve-yesh*, no two sides to the debate. And now each of us lovers of Zion must be a *Doresh Tziyyon*—one who advocates and speaks out for Jerusalem. In this "debate" there are only two camps: One group is composed of "Sheis Zion- and she has no *doresh* (advocate)" (Jeremiah 30:17), and one group is composed of those who for the sake of Jerusalem cannot be silent (Isaiah 62:1). In which group will you be counted?

Introducing the New RZA-Aryeh Fellowship!

The RZA-Aryeh Fellowship is a new initiative of the RZA-Mizrachi to strengthen the mission of Religious Zionism. Fifty college and graduate school students from around the country have been invited to spend their winter-break in Israel where they will be studying Torah and attending intensive seminars devoted to Religious Zionism education. Upon their return the Aryeh Fellows will focus on their year-long *Manhigut* (leadership) projects designed to bring the message of Religious Zionism back to communities across America. We are excited to profile a different "Aryeh Fellow" each week.

Meet Binyamin Kaplan

Binyamin Kaplan is a native of Queens, New York, but has been known to look as though he is from a far off yishuv deep in the Shomron. Spending nearly every summer of his life in the yishuv of Ofra, Binyamin has assumed the look of an Israeli with his year round sandals, sandal tan, and short sleeves. Binyamin attended SAR High School and then spent a year studying at Yeshivat Har Etzion in Gush Etzion, and is now a freshman pursuing a degree in electrical engineering at the Cooper Union. Binyamin enjoys tinkering with electronics, and discussing new Israeli technological innovations. Binyamin has participated in several technology and robotics competitions throughout high school and college, including one hosted at the Technion



to build an autonomous model car.

Through his summers in Israel, Binyamin has gained a new appreciation for Religious Zionism. For many years he attended a summer camp in Ofra with other local Ofra residents. In later summers he conducted research in Applied Chemistry at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. In his most recent two summers, Binyamin worked in Camp Moshava in Indian Orchard as a video assistant and then as a counselor. Binyamin cannot wait to share his experience and passion Religious Zionism with many others through the Aryeh Fellowship program.

See some photos from our first Fellowship meeting!



Click here [HERE](#) view more photos

AS SHABBAT APPROACHES

“He will be a Slave of Slaves for his Brothers”

By Rabbi Mordechai Greenberg, Rosh Yeshiva, Kerem B'Yavne

It is interesting to note the approach of RavAvraham Yitzchak Kook about the institution of slavery, in view of our general attitude in modern times. He described his approach in a letter to his student, Dr. Moshe Zeidel (Igrot Harav Kook, Volume 1, Number 89).

Rav Kook writes that “natural slavery” continues to exist in the world. That is, in the world there are different classes of people, and the wealthy people are in control, while the poor people are forcefully enslaved to them as hired workers. In effect they are slaves, but without the rights of a slave. “For example, coal miners who hire themselves out willingly are in effect slaves to their masters... But if they were real slaves, paid for by being purchased, they would be better off.” This is so because in the current situation, when the miners are hired workers but do not belong to the owners of the mines, the heart of the wealthy people are blocked, and they mock any attempt to achieve justice and morality. They have no interest

in improving the work environment. If there is ever a lack of ventilation in the mines they will refuse to invest in order to improve the working conditions. In fact they will not be unduly upset if the mine collapses and many lives are lost.

All of this would not be true if the workers were considered formal property. In that case, taking care of the workers would be an act of preserving the owner's wealth, "For they are money belonging to the masters" (see Shemot 21:21). According to Torah law the masters must take care of their slaves, as is written, "Whoever buys a slave for himself can be compared to one who buys a master" [Kidushin 20a]. The situation today is that most countries have formally abolished the institution of slavery but not the institution of "natural slavery," which continues to exist with all of its faults and without the benefit of the laws of the Torah.

People who support the abolition of slavery base their claims on our holy books. "They can be compared to sorcerers, whose something but are not aware of what they see." As long as humanity does not fully accept the Jewish version of morality, there is no point in taking a single mitzva and an ideal out of the complete context. The Torah of G-d is complete and all-inclusive, and it is wrong to extract from it one or more specific "crumbs."

Abolishing slavery before the proper time has come leads to the result that "a slave becomes a ruler" [Mishlei 30:22] and that "princes go about like slaves" [Kohellet 10:7]. Rav Kook continues, "It is a mistake to think that if we take a person whose temperament is suitable for slavery and we teach him, he will no longer have the traits of a slave. This is simply not so. If such a slave will sit in a respected position, his decisions will continue to have the imprint of a slave mentality."

History has shown that the children of Cham are indeed by their very nature "a slave of slaves" [Bereishit 9:25]. They must go through a long process of education in order to raise them up to a higher level of morality. However, because of the evil actions of the slave masters it became necessary to abolish legal slavery before the proper time, but this does not necessarily imply that the situation corresponds to full justice. We wait for the time when ten people from the other nations "will take hold of the edge of a Jew's garments and will say, we will follow your lead, because we see that G-d is with you" [Zecharia 8:23]. And they will all say, "Let us rise up to the Mountain of G-d and He will teach us of His ways... for Torah will emanate from Zion, and the word of G-d from Jerusalem" [Micha 4:2].

POINT OF VIEW

Oom Shmoom!

By Zevulun Orlev, Former Knesset Member

A Deteriorating Relationship

In the last decades the attitude of the United Nations has deteriorated, and hundreds of hallucinatory decisions against Israel were accepted in all the forums of the organization – based on the automatic Moslem-Arabic majority, with the help of followers from western countries and Europe, and the rest of the world. The record (for now, at least!) was recently reached, when UNESCO made two absolutely hallucinatory decisions with no link with reality at all denying the connection between the Jewish nation and the site of our holy Temple.

A well-known figure from among my friends, who participated in the peace effort in Camp David in 2000 led by US President Clinton, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak, and head of the PLO Arafat, told me that Clinton overheard an argument between my friend and Abu Mazan about the connection between the Jews and the Temple Mount. Clinton asked for and received dozens of relevant sources from the Bible, and as a result he strongly rebuked the Palestinians for denying this connection. My friend added that in 1929 the Moslem High Council, which was headed by the infamous Mufti of Jerusalem, published a flyer (which can be seen today) to encourage tourist visits to the Temple Mount, where it is explicitly written that this was the site of King Solomon's Temple.

The Palestinians know the truth very well (and they are familiar with the latest archeological

discoveries in Jerusalem). But nothing will change the situation. The well-known truths that the Christians know from the Bible did not even confuse the many Christian nations which joined the Moslem bloc to support the shameful UNESCO decisions.

History Repeating Itself

Nothing is new about our relationship to the United Nations. In 1955 a harsh dispute was revealed between the Prime Minister Moshe Sharet and his Defense Minister David Ben Gurion (that is how it was then!) about the proper attitude of the State of Israel towards the UN. A murderous wave of terrorism from the Gaza Strip threatened the Israeli settlements in the south, and the Suez Canal was closed to Israeli shipping. Ben Gurion as Defense Minister and Moshe Dayan as the IDF Chief of Staff made plans for an operation to capture the Gaza Strip. In a discussion of the leaders of the ruling party, Mapai, Prime Minister Sharet opposed the plan because he was afraid that the UN might decide to place military and economic sanctions on Israel. Ben Gurion, on the other hand, claimed that it was wrong to abandon Jewish blood. And with respect to the UN ("Ha'oom" in Hebrew), Ben Gurion coined the famous phrase – "Oom Shmoom!" In his order of the day to the IDF on the seventh Day of Independence, Ben Gurion reiterated this approach. He said, "Our future does not depend on what the Gentiles say but rather on what the Jews do!"

Sharet won the argument, and because of the fear of a reaction of the UN and the superpowers the government rejected Ben Gurion's plan to attack the Gaza Strip. A year later (1956) Ben Gurion was the Prime Minister and the IDF captured the area of Sinai in Operation Kadesh. Later on, because of pressure from the UN and threats by the United States and Russia, the IDF retreated from Sinai, to be replaced by UN forces. The end of this story is that the removal of the UN forces in 1967 was one of the elements that led to the Six Day War.

This year marks a hundred years since the publication of the Balfour Declaration, on November 2, 1917. "His Majesty's government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people..." It is now 69 years since the historic United Nations decision to establish a Jewish country (and an Arabic one, rejected by the Arabs), on November 29, 1947. Times have changed at the United Nations. The infamous declaration by the UN in 1975 that "Zionism is racism" will be remembered forever. It was only rescinded in 1991.

Fight against the United Nations!

What should we do in reaction to the UNESCO decisions? Should we just follow Ben Gurion's "Oom Shmoom," and say something like "UNESCO-SHMUNESCO?" Or should we take this matter more seriously?

Our relationship to the holy site of the Temple is the foundation on which we build up all of our connections and our rights in Eretz Yisrael. The Balfour Declaration and the November 29 United Nations decision about establishing a Jewish state (not a state for Jews!) are rooted in this connection. This is not a religious struggle, after all it is clear that the Moslems know that they will not be able to convince us that our religious beliefs are wrong. This is a sophisticated political attempt on their part to undermine the legitimacy of our existence as a national homeland for the Jews, based on our religious and historic rights. Removing this connection is a steep slope that can lead to eradication of our rights in Eretz Yisrael and to having a Jewish country. This is a war of existence, no less than any military conflict, and perhaps of an even more serious nature.

The key to winning this war depends on our ability to achieve a national consensus on both the left and the right, joining both the coalition and the opposition, religious and nonreligious alike, to agree that "the Tanach is our deed to Eretz Yisrael," to quote from Ben Gurion in his testimony to the Peel Commission in 1936. This struggle must be put at the forefront of our national priorities, and it must be a major subject in our educational system. **If the entire Jewish nation, in Israel and abroad, will volunteer to take part in this struggle without any compromise, we will have a good opportunity to cancel the UNESCO decision**, like the previous UN decision equating Zionism to racism. There is no room for surrender, but we must not despair. This matter is a major test for our leadership.

Introduction to the Series

In this column we will get to know the teachings of a humble Chassidic sect with which many people are not familiar. This is the remarkable Husiatyn Chassidic dynasty.

Rebbe Yaacov Freidman of Husiatyn was an established Chassidic Rebbe, a scion of the main branch of Chassidut stemming from the teachings of the Baal Shem Tov. He was a direct descendant, one son after another, of the Magid of Mezritch and of Rebbe Yisrael of Ruzhin. His teachings are unique in their positive attitude towards Zionism and the establishment of the State of Israel, as can be seen from his weekly Shabbat sermons to his community.

It is interesting to note that Rebbe Yaacov did not make use of (or was not familiar with) the classic religious Zionist sources, such as the writings of Rav Kook or Rav Soloveitchik. Rather, his entire "Zionist" approach was based on the Chassidic roots of his teachers.

Rebbe Yaacov set up his community in Tel Aviv before the Holocaust, and it continued to exist during the establishment of Israel (1937-1957). Husiatyn is a "Galitziani" sect (today in the Ukraine), but it is anchored in the approach of the Baal Shem Tov, through his disciples the Magid of Mezritch and Rebbe Yisrael of Ruzhin. Many Zionist Chassidim came out of the Ruzhin sect, including the founders of Rosh Pina, Kefar Chassidim, and many more.

The Husiatyn dynasty, like Rebbe Yaacov himself, was always modest and small. In a small Beit Midrash on Bialik Street in Tel Aviv (which exists to this day) the Rebbe gave Torah lectures mainly to Chassidim who came with him from Europe, and to people of Eretz Yisrael who were attracted by his approach. His ideas were collected in a book, "*Ohalei Yaacov*," by his Chassidim, as instructed by his son, Rebbe Yitzchak.

During many generations, the main teachings of Chassidic Rebbes were taught or organized according to the weekly Torah portions. Studying these sources in a systematic way can give a picture of the basic ideas of these Rebbes. Study of these writings also shows the differences and the unique approach of each dynasty. Each Rebbe emphasized and elucidated the topics which were most important to him. However, the lessons of Rabbi Yaacov of Husiatyn are presented differently than other typical Chassidic books. The style used is much closer to an "Israeli" way of speaking than the difficult Torah-style language in other books.

Rebbe Yaacov had one son who continued his path, but he passed away without any children. This was the end of the direct Husiatyn dynasty. Today the line has been continued by descendants of the sect, mainly Rebbe Yisrael Freidman (Ben Shalom), a cousin of Rebbe Yaacov. Rebbe Yisrael and his son Hoshaya set a "yartzeit" table to mark the date of Rebbe Yaacov's death, where they study and discuss the teachings of the Rebbe of Husiatyn.

I want to thank Rabbi Yehuda Brandes, the President of Herzog College and a Husiatyn Chassid, for introducing me to the remarkable approach of Husiatyn with his book "*Bemalchut Hakedosha*," about the Rebbe and his teachings. At the end of the book, Rabbi Brandes writes as follows:

"This book was not written with the approach of a historian who wants to document the past, and also not with the approach of a Chassid who wants to commemorate his rabbi, to praise him, and to immortalize his memory and honor him. This book is a call to bring the book *Ohalei Yaacov* back to our world as a current and living document – a guide and a teaching aid for building a living Torah for the nation of G-d in the Holy Land."

I hope and pray that this regular column will serve as a humble contribution to this worthy vision.

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Silencing the Conscience

It is written about the people of the generation of the Deluge: "For the land was filled with violence" [Bereishit 6:13]. Rashi explains, "Their fate was only sealed through the sin of robbery." Why is the sin of robbery so serious? After all, according to the Midrash, the people of that generation also transgressed the prohibitions of illicit sex and idol worship!

The Rebbe of Husiatyn replies to this question based on the Midrash which explains that the people employed a clever ruse so that they would not be formally accused of robbery:

"Here is what the people of the Deluge would do – Somebody would take out a chest full of lupine flowers. And then one would come by and take less than the value of one pruta, and another one would take less than a pruta worth, such that the owner could not demand by law that they return his money." [Bereishit Rabba 31].

This Midrash must be discussed further, because it is not reasonable to assume that the world was destroyed as a result of the robbery of lupine flowers. It comes to explain that robbery was seen by the people as a permitted act since they used a trick to silence their own conscience. Man is drawn to follow various forces within himself. His lust tells him: Eat and drink whatever is forbidden to you. But then his intellect, which resides in his conscience, puts a limit on the lust and tells the person: Since it does not belong to you, it is forbidden to take it – that would be robbery. Even if the surge of emotion begins to overcome the intellect, at some point the conscience will awaken and bring the person back to the right path through repentance. But when a device is found to transform robbery into a positive ideology, the conscience no longer does its job, since the person's intellect tells him that the action is permitted. In this case the person is lost because the way to repentance has been blocked.

Rebbe Yaacov did not come to this idea on his own. Rather, he saw examples of this kind of behavior during World War Two:

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When we look at the evil people of Germany, we see that robbery, murder, and cruelty have been formed into scientific methods, and the intelligent soul (logic and the conscience) becomes so confused that instead of issuing a warning it encourages acts of violence. Robbery and murder performed on Jews become good deeds in their eyes, based on the racial theories that they invented in their own minds. They are worse than animals of prey, for in truth the advantage of a human being over animals is not their intelligence but rather their conscience. Without a feeling of morality, mankind uses wisdom for evil pursuits. They are then more dangerous than wild animals since they are armed with intelligence that they use for evil purposes.

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The fate of the people of the Deluge was sealed for the sin of robbery, since to perform their acts they silenced their conscience. They robbed because they used their intelligence to conclude that it was permitted – and in this way the people became more dangerous than the animals.

If it had Found a Place to Rest It would not have Returned

Rebbe Yaacov ends his discussion with words of consolation connected to the return to our land in modern times, based on a Midrash which discusses the dove sent out by Noach which did not find a place to rest.

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Look at the amazing words of the Midrash for the portion of Noach. "And it did not find a place to rest the sole of its foot" [Bereishit 8:9]. If it had found a place, it would not have returned. Similarly, it is written, 'It (Yisrael) dwelt among the nations, it did not find a place to rest' [Eichah 1:3]. If it had found a place to rest it would not have returned."

We can bear witness to similar events. Dr. Ticha (), was among the leaders of the community in Vienna. In the last elections for the community leaders, they published a declaration that "Viennais our Jerusalem." But he is now in Jerusalem with other refugees from Vienna, happy that he was able to come to Eretz Yisrael. He admits that his earlier approach of opposition to settling the land was mistaken. Nobody can understand why the return to our land is linked to such great hardship and trouble, and for how long the evil ones will continue to succeed. That is all according to the plans of heaven. And we must strengthen our faith, with all our might in this long night of exile, until the morning of redemption comes. "And He will give retribution to His enemies and He will atone for the land of His nation" [Devarim 32:43].*

() As far as I can tell this is not the famous eye doctor Ticha, since he arrived in Jerusalem many years before the war. Perhaps it is a relative of his.*

THE ROOTS OF OUR FAITH - Basic Tenants of Jewish Philosophy

Is Judaism Racist?

By Rabbi Oury Cherki, Machon Meir, Rabbi of Beit Yehuda Congregation, Jerusalem

A few years ago I was invited to participate in a conference on the subject of Yisrael and the other nations of the world. As it happens, I sat on a panel between two eminent Torah scholars who were asked to define the attitude of Judaism towards non-Jews. One of them explained, with liberal use of sources to back him up, that Judaism is nothing more than a type of cosmo-political humanism which views all mankind as brothers who were created in the image of G-d. The second one explained, also giving a number of sources, that Judaism is based on a hatred of the other nations, and on hostility towards anything that is not founded in Judaism. I found myself asking in reaction to the two contrary speakers how both of them could belong to the same Jewish religion and study the same sources but still come to such diametrically opposite conclusions.

The answer to this dilemma lies in correctly defining the Jewish nation, as was noted by Rabbi Yehuda Halevi: "Yisrael among the nations is like the heart among all the other organs of the body" [Kuzari, Second section, 36]. That is, humanity as a whole is a single organic entity which includes all the people in a common fate, while Yisrael has been singled out as the "heart" of humanity. This means that Yisrael must be separated from the rest of the world in order to serve it best in its role of working towards "tikun," mending the state of the world. When this broad viewpoint is chopped into separate pieces, the result is the two contrasting approaches that I heard in the conference.

The conclusion is that the fact that the nation of Yisrael is separate from all the others gives them a special responsibility for tikun, as is suitable for a firstborn: "Yisrael is My firstborn son" [Shemot 4:22], who guides his younger brothers through the correct path.

We are still left with a need to define the essence of the unique trait of Judaism, the inherent advantage of Yisrael. To define this trait according to a genetic criterion means to become involved in a racist approach. But this is not the case, since the difference between Yisrael and the other nations, which gives Yisrael the skill of prophecy, depends not on physical nature but rather on the soul. Thus, there is no physical trait which will prevent anybody from converting and obtaining a Jewish soul, no matter what nation he or she comes from. Even though the first generation of converts will not be able to be prophets, their children from the second generation and beyond can indeed become prophets.

The halachic basis for this approach is the fact that having a Jewish soul is not a condition for joining our unique nation. Anybody who wants to join us can do so, and whoever fulfills the requirements of conversion will receive a new soul. This is the meaning of the statement by the sages that from the time of Mount Sinai there is a storehouse of souls waiting for converts to take them, and that the souls of future converts participated in the events at Mount Sinai (see Shabbat 146a).

NATURE AND THE TORAH POTION

He who in His Goodness Renews the Days of Creation Continuously Every Day

By Dr. Moshe Raanan, Herzog College and the Jerusalem College for Women

“For all the rest of the days of the earth, planting and harvesting, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night will not cease” [Bereishit 8:22].

From the dawn of human history, mankind has put much thought into the question of how the world was created and how life came to exist. In general there are two different approaches to this subject which at first glance seem to contradict each other. On one hand is the religious approach, which describes the creation of the world as the handiwork of the Creator. On the other hand there are scientific explanations which describe the creation as a natural process that stemmed from known laws of nature and which is not related to any metaphysical forces. These explanations are part of various scientific theories that have been proposed throughout the years (Darwin's theory of evolution is only one of many such proposals).

In my humble opinion there is no problem to reconcile between a belief in the Creator, as in the Jewish tradition, and the attempts of the scientific world to explain our experiences (such as the existence of fossils in ancient stones) as the result of a process of gradual development. For example, as people who have maintained our faith for many generations we ask of the Holy One, Blessed be He, to send rain down to the earth (“Give dew and rain as a blessing”). This does not stop us from describing rainfall in terms of physical processes. Does our description of the “mechanism” of rainfall contradict our belief that it is G-d who brings the rain? A man of faith is convinced that G-d created the scientific “mechanism” and continues to supervise its operation. In this way the two approaches do not conflict with each other.

Perhaps this concept is the basis of the words of the Tanya, the first Rebbe of Chabad, in his discussion of the uniqueness of G-d and our faith: “And even with respect to this physical world which is completely mineral (without any life) – if the relevant letters would be removed from the ten ‘declarations’ by which the world was created for even a moment, heaven forbid, everything would return immediately to complete nothingness, just as it was before the six days of creation.” In our morning prayers, we say that G-d “renews the acts of Creation in His good.” Every day the world is created once again, just as at the time of the Creation. The will of G-d is repeatedly expressed, one moment after another, in the natural processes which we see, just as the original will that brought about the Creation.

A Force of Renewal

Similarly, we can describe the creation of the world from two approaches: On one hand, we believe in a Creator, while on the other hand we can describe the “mechanism” of the creation in scientific terms. It is obvious that such a synthesis is possible only if we reject the philosophical motifs that are part of the evolutionary approach, such as the principle of random events. We note in passing that there is no way to prove the principle of randomness using the tools of science, and therefore it is merely a belief that is held by a number of scientists who are active in this area.

Many examples of this dual approach can be found in the words of the commentators. For example, see the Ramban:

“The Holy One, Blessed be He, created all the creatures from a previous state when they did not exist... From complete nothingness He created a very thin element that has no reality but which served as the initial force, able to take on a shape and to realize its potential. This was the first physical material recognized by the Greeks as *‘hiyuli’* (formless matter)...”

This is a clear statement that after the initial creation of “something out of nothing” the process continued to form and shape the stages that followed. This approach is contrary to the opinion by Christian “Creationists” who do not accept the Jewish interpretation of the Bible in terms of simple meaning, hints, Midrash, and mystic secrets (“*pardes*”) and therefore view the first passage of Bereishit as a detailed and accurate scientific record of the

creation.

Intermediate Stages

This idea appears more explicitly in the words of Malbim in the Torah portion of Bereishit.

“And G-d said, let the waters give forth’[Bereishit 1:20]. – Creation went from one stage to another – mineral, vegetable, animal, and speaking creature – where every early step was in preparation of what came later... And as higher life forms came it is known that there were no sharp jumps from one stage to another, but rather intermediate stages that bridged from one level to another. Thus, the coral is a middle stage between mineral and vegetable, and a ‘polyp’ is in the middle between the vegetable and the animal, and the monkey is an intermediate between the animal and mankind...”

Malbim, who lived at the same time as Darwin, uses typical evolutionary terms to describe the creation by the Holy One, Blessed be He, such as the existence of intermediate stages of development. The most surprising phrase in his description is related to the development of man: “The monkey is an intermediate between the animal and mankind.”

Mystic Secrets of the Torah

We will end by quoting from Letter 91 of Rav Kook’s collected letters.

“The truth is that we have no need for all of this. Even if it became clear to us that creation took place by a sequence of development of the various species there would be no contradiction, since we count the years according to the simple reading of the Torah, which is more important to us than any other preconceptions which do not have much value for us. It is clear that the Torah wrote in a roundabout way about the creation, making use of hints and allegory. After all, it is well known that the creation is part of the mystical secrets of the Torah, but if it consisted merely of the simple reading of the Torah there would be nothing mystical about it... And that is why the Torah writes in a general way, ‘In the beginning of G-d’s creation.’ The main point from this is the knowledge of G-d and how to live a truly moral life.”

Rav Kook is saying that the Torah is not a scientific book, and what seem to be scientific descriptions in the Torah are really meant for the purpose of teaching us spiritual lessons.

For more information in Hebrew and for pictures, and to regularly receive articles about plants and animals linked to the Daf Yomi, write e-mail to: raananmoshe1@gmail.com

STRAIGHT TALK

What Should We Do When A Deluge Is Coming?

By Rabbi Yoni Lavie, Manager, "Chaverim Makshivim" Website

One of the classic mistakes that people make when they learn the stories in the Torah is to think that they teach us about **events that happened in the past**. They see the stories as a historical description of events that took place thousands of years ago.

This is a serious error, because this point of view in essence lowers the Divine Torah to the status of Wikipedia or a high school history textbook. It almost transforms the Torah into a secular book, and it misses its real purpose – to teach mankind how to rise up to the heavens.

It is true that the Torah **utilizes stories** about events that happened in the past, but what really interests it is not “what happened” but rather “**what exists now**.” What are the essential elements of existence, referring to the world and to mankind, that we can use to guide us on how to live our lives?

Whoever looks at the stories in the Torah from this viewpoint will be able to go into them in depth and identify their basic important elements.

When such a person reads the story of the creation of Adam and Chava, he will understand that the point is not a story about a specific couple who lived in the ancient past but rather a description of **couplehood in general**, painting an exact picture of the essence of a man and his unique traits as compared to that of a woman (and vice versa), and how these two creatures interact.

When such a person reads the story of the primordial sin, he will understand that this is in essence the story of **all subsequent sins, from that day to this one**, and that what happened between the man, the woman, and the serpent is a precise description of the spiritual mechanism that operates within each and every one of us who faces temptation.

Such a way of studying Torah transforms it from mere letters and words on an old piece of parchment into a living and dynamic creation, here and now. Such an approach can deeply affect the student and give him or her tools that will completely change his or her life.

Getting into Noach's Shoes

This Shabbat we read the story of Noach, the man who built an ark in order to be saved from the Deluge. If we approach this story in the way suggested above, we will first try to see in the description of the events of his life not a mere historical record from 4,500 years ago, but rather we will search for current guidance from the Torah **about how to cope with a situation of an approaching "deluge."** This is not necessarily a flood of water, but rather every great storm which comes to shake us up, or which confuses us and leads to instability and a loss of control. It might be an internal spiritual storm of emotions and lust, or an external storm of foreign opinions, temptation, or social pressures that threaten to engulf us and drown us.

How can one cope with such a "deluge?"

The Torah teaches us that the first step is to temporarily enter into an "**ark**." This is needed first of all to make sure that you do not drown. But in addition it is needed in order to fill yourself with additional forces and energies, to be able to continue to develop. In this way, you will be able to fix and have an influence on the external "deluge."

How do we Build an Ark?

The Torah tells us that in order to save himself from the water of the deluge, Noach built a special ark made of wood. In our lives **there are many different types of arks** which can help protect us and give us the strength to cope with the storms of life. Here are some examples:

* **Shabbat** – The wonderful poem "*Ya Echosof*" defines this very well: "Holy Shabbat, the souls of Yisrael come under the protection of your wings." It seems that there is no need to add many words to explain its power. Anybody who has experienced Shabbat in the proper way is aware of the power that it has to free a person from the grasp of the secular world, from day-to-day routines and involvement, from struggles and competition, and to provide a small island of stability in stormy waters. It provides twenty-four hours of rest, prayer, quiet for the soul, and spiritual fulfillment. When afterwards the person dives back into the six days of activity, he or she starts out from a higher and stronger position than before.

* **Home and family** – A person returns home every day from studies/work, and it provides security and support. He or she is welcomed in any situation and without any conditions, and the home and the family provide a source of solid ground for new development and growth.

* **Prayer** – This is a time of day when a person stops the high pace of life and stands up straight before his Creator, and he is able to "calculate a new route" for his actions.

* **Other "arks" in our lives** – Couplehood, a yeshiva or a midrasha, set daily or weekly times for Torah study, the community, daily time set aside for introspection, the Shemitta year, holidays, and so on.

Know How to Leave the Ark

It took Noach 120 years to build his ark. This is symbolic of the standard lifetime of mankind (as in the Hebrew birthday greeting, "may you live to 120"). Perhaps this is a hint that a

person's entire life should be spent building personal arks. For Noach one ark was enough, but it is reasonable to suggest that we need **many more than one**.

There is no doubt that every ark **must be properly built** so that it will give protection and be effective. (This brings up the obvious question of how companionship of a couple can be developed. How can Shabbat/prayers/holidays be made significant and formative?)

Noach's story also teaches us that we must determine the precise time when we should **come out of the ark**, and this must be done with proper caution, **in order to avoid crashing when returning to reality**. (See what happened to Noach when he left – he became intoxicated and so on...)

What do you think? What other important elements can be learned from the story of Noach that will help us cope with the storms that threaten to drown us all around? Are there other stories in the Torah which we can view beyond the historical account as an indication of how we should live our lives?

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