

Toras Aish

Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

RABBI AVI WEISS

Shabbat Forshpeis

The picture of Noah's ark in children's books with a giraffe neck up, hanging out of the ark, speaks to a fundamental question. How did all the animals, birds and creeping things fit into the ark? (Genesis 6:19)

Ibn Ezra characteristically offers a literal observation. The cubit mentioned in the Torah with respect to building the ark, was of tremendous length—longer than what the Torah would later consider to be the length of a cubit. The ark, for Ibn Ezra, was massive. Hence, it could contain everything.

Ramban disagrees. For him, it was, in fact, miraculous that the ark was able to take in an unlimited number of species that existed. To paraphrase Ramban, a miracle was performed and the small space was able to contain everything.

It is here that Ramban asks—if, in fact, that were the case, why didn't God ask Noah to build the ark even smaller?

Here Ramban introduces a basic concept concerning miracles. Even when a miracle occurs, humankind must do its share. In the words of Ramban, "this is the way of all miracles in the Torah....for humankind to do what it can and for the rest to be left in the hands of God."

Ramban's position on miracles becomes complete when taking into account his opinion that Avraham (Abraham), in next week's portion, sinned when he left the land of Israel without God's permission, because of the famine. Avraham had no right to leave the land without explicit permission from God. (Ramban, Genesis 12:10)

Yet, it could be argued that Avraham, by acting to improve his situation, did not sin. He did what he had to, and did not rely on miracles to save himself and his family.

Bearing in mind Ramban's passion for Zion as found in the Noah story, a possible solution to the

Avraham inconsistency comes to mind. Ramban argues that the olive branch brought by the dove after the deluge, came from the land of Israel, which was not destroyed during the flood. (Ramban, Genesis 8:11) For Ramban, Israel is in a unique category. When it comes to the land of Israel, we can rely on miracles. Avraham should therefore not have left, he should have kept hope that God would intervene—as the land of Israel escaped the deluge so would it survive the famine.

When considering the courage of many Israelis living on the border, who, despite bombardments from the enemy over the years, held their ground and refused to budge, Ramban's comments come to mind. We're not to rely on miracles. But relative to the State of Israel, God watches even more closely. © 2004 Hebrew Institute of Riverdale & CJC-AMCHA

RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

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

The name Canaan appears for the first time in the Bible in the context of this story of the degradation of Noah and the involvement of his sons. Indeed, Canaan was not one of his sons but rather his grandson, the son of Ham. The truth is that mentioning Canaan within the story seems totally out of place and superfluous. Noah became drunk, perhaps only because he did not realize the evil potential of drinking the fruit of the vine to excess. His son Ham does nothing to hide his father's shame; he serves as the tale-bearer, reporting his father's nakedness to his brothers outside. Shem and Yafet cover their father without looking at him in order to try to protect their father's honor. Ham is the villain; Shem and Yafet are the heroes. Why mention Canaan? And even more to the point, Canaan is a super charged name; after all, the Land of Canaan is the Land of Israel, which will ultimately be taken over by Abraham and his progeny, descendants of Shem. There must be a very special significance to the mention of Canaan specifically at this Biblical juncture, wherein the text will soon record the various descendants of Noah and the Land—nations which they generate.

**Win a TRIP TO ISRAEL with
FIVE-STAR accommodations
and support Toras Aish in the process!
Please email YitzW@aol.com
or call 973-472-0180
for more information**

**TORAS AISH IS A WEEKLY PARSHA NEWSLETTER
DISTRIBUTED VIA EMAIL AND THE WORLD WIDE WEB.
SUBSCRIPTIONS ARE AVAILABLE FOR MORE
INFORMATION**

EMAIL YITZ@AISHDAS.ORG

**COPIES OF TORAS AISH ARE AVAILABLE FROM THE
FOLLOWING ADDRESS ON THE WEB (WWW) :**

HTTP://AISHDAS.ORG

The material presented in this publication was collected from publicly available electronic mail, computer archives and the UseNet. It is being presented with the permission of the respective authors. Toras Aish is solely the work of the AishDas Society, and does not necessarily reflect the views of any given synagogue.

**TO DEDICATE THIS NEWSLETTER PLEASE CALL
973-472-0180 OR EMAIL YITZ@AISHDAS.ORG**

The majority of traditional commentators maintain that Canaan castrated his grandfather, rendering him impotent. This was what Ham really saw and reported to his brothers. This was the ultimate degradation.

In order to attempt to understand the fundamental message of the Bible and its significance for us today, we must take another look at the next time the Land of Canaan appears in the Bible. It comes right at the end of our Torah portion: "And Terah took his son Abram and Lot the son of Haran his grandson and his daughter—in—law Sarai, the wife of Abram his son, and they departed with them from Ur Kasdim to set out for the Land of Canaan; they arrived at Haran and they settled there." (Genesis 11:31) It is quite curious that the Biblical text tells us that Abram's father had initially meant to go to the Land of Canaan but never really arrived; he only reached Haran, and forever the reason chose, or was forced (perhaps by illness or oncoming old age, or the lack of any further money to complete the journey) to remain there. Only one verse afterwards, and as the opening of the next Torah portion, G-d appears to Abram seemingly apropos of nothing and without any prior buildup, commanding him "to go away from your land, your relatives and your father's house (in Haran) to the land that I will show you (the Land of Canaan)." The commentaries as well as the midrash are hard pressed to discover why G-d is now electing Abram and why Abram is so willing to follow the Divine command. Maimonides suggests, on the basis of the Midrash that from the tender age of three Abram had already begun his quest to discover the Ruler of the Universe. He even cites the very famous midrash that Abram's father Terah was an idol maker, thereby positioning Abram as an iconoclast rebel against his father's idolatry. And the first penitent—purely self motivated and generated—in history. (Mishneh Torah, Laws of Idolatry, Chapter 1)

But I would argue that the simple reading of the text leads us to a very different conclusion. Abram's father Terah apparently wanted very much to bring his family to Canaan. Indeed, this very Torah reading will soon record how, when Abram successfully conquered the four terrorist kings of the region, Malki Zedek, king of Salam, priest of G-d, the Most High, brought him bread and wine and blessed G-d for having delivered Abram's enemies into his hand. (Genesis 14:18-20) Abram even gives Malki Zedek tithes, a gift which one usually would give to our Israelite priests of the Holy Temple. And Salam is the ancient name for Jeru-Salem, which really means the City of Peace. Apparently in the Land of Canaan of which Salem is the capital there was a tradition harking all the way back to Adam of ethical monotheism, a G-d of the universe who will ultimately destroy terrorists and reward the righteous lovers of peace. And the midrash identifies Malki Zedek as perhaps Terah had heard of the ethical monotheism being taught in Canaan and wanted his children to be brought up specifically in that type of environment. From this perspective, Abraham is not a rebel but a continuator of his father's geographical and spiritual journey. G-d is pretty certain that Abraham will accept the Divine Command because he has been primed to do so since he is the son of Terah.

In the story with which we began, the Bible is setting the stage for a Land of Canaan being a special location with very specific ethical requirements. Only those who truly aspire to ethical monotheism will be worthy of making Canaan Israel their eternal homeland. Canaan the grandson of Noah forfeited his right because, instead of following in his grandfather's paths of righteousness and wholeheartedness, he chose to castrate and destroy his grandfather's ability to pass these values on to succeeding generations. Abraham on the other hand continued the path of his father and endeavored to educate a household dedicated to righteousness and justice. The descendants of Abraham will be privileged to live in Israel only for as long as they likewise subscribe to such an ethical lifestyle. And even if Israel will eventually return to the land and be worthy of living in it, their return will always be dependant upon the ethical quality of the daily lives which they lead. As Rashi warns us in his very opening of the Book of Genesis, "... the entire land (Canaan -- Israel) belongs to the Holy One Blessed be He; He created it and He will give it to whomever is righteous in His eyes..." (Genesis 1:1, Rashi) © 2004 *Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin*

RABBI DOV KRAMER

Taking a Closer Look

“ In the middle of this day (the 17th day of the 2nd month) Noach came- and Shem, Cham and Yafes, Noach's sons, and Noach's wife and his three daughters-in-law with them- to the ark" (Beraishis

7:13). Rashi explains that the Torah used the term "middle of the day" to teach us that "the people of his (Noach's) generation were saying that if we see him entering the ark, we're going to break it and kill him. G-d said 'I will bring him in before all, and we'll see whose word will stand.'" Later (7:16), Rashi elaborates, adding that "G-d protected him, preventing their breaking it, [by] surrounding the ark with bears and lions." It would seem, then, that both before he entered ("if we see him entering") and after he was already in (and surrounded) the intent of those soon to be killed in the flood was to prevent Noach from being saved.

What purpose would breaking the ark and killing Noach serve, though? If the flood was going to wipe them out, even with Noach dead or without a means of escape they would still be wiped out; and if there was no flood coming, why destroy the work of (what would have turned out to be) a foolish old man? Did his stated purpose of saving himself and his family from the (claimed) coming deluge annoy them so much that they would have killed him? If so, there was no need to wait until he entered the ark- just do it now! Why was it specifically when they saw him enter that they would have wrecked the ark and murdered its builder?

One possibility could have been that they thought that by preventing Noach from being saved, they could prevent G-d from bringing the flood, as no one would be left to repopulate the world. However, Rashi says that they intended to do both things- destroy the ark AND kill Noach. If their purpose was to prevent Noach from being saved, only one would be necessary, not both. Besides, if they were taking G-d into consideration, they surely would have realized that G-d has other means of accomplishing His will.

It would seem, then, that this was just a reaction out of spite. If they can't survive, neither can he. Similar to the woman whose child had died (Melachim I 16-28) and preferred to see her acquaintance's child sliced in half than allowing her to have a living son. Even though either way her son wasn't coming back, if she couldn't have her son, the other can't have hers either. Sounds pretty wicked, but it was a pretty wicked generation.

Nevertheless, there might be more to the story. Rashi (6:13) implies that there were some righteous people that also perished in the flood. Why did Noach survive if they didn't? The Brisker Rav and the Nesivos (towards the end of the "Avos" section of his commentary on Aggados in Nachalas Ya'akov) explain that even though the righteous are included in general decrees (such as on a city, country or the whole world), this is only so if they have sins that were included in the accounting. For example, if a person has thousands of mitzvos to his credit, and only one aveira, since that one sin is included in those of his city (or country, or the world) when they outnumbered the public's positive deeds, he is included in their fate as well. However, one

who has absolutely no sins, and therefore was not incorporated into the general amount, is not included in the decree either. Noach, who was "completely righteous" (6:9), was therefore excluded from the decree of the deluge, and survived.

So here we have Noach, building an ark and claiming that the whole world will be destroyed if they don't repent- even those who are (on the whole) righteous. It is a bit more understandable why they would be upset that they- who also did not succumb to the sins of the generation (as they are only going to perish because of the general decree, not because of their own sins)- would be killed, while Noach survived. Even so, it would not justify the "if I can't have it neither can you" attitude that seems to be behind the threat of- and attempt at- destroying the ark and killing Noach.

We're familiar with the reference to "midas Sedom," the character flaw inherent in the inhabitants of Sodom whereby they wouldn't let another to benefit from something even if there were no adverse affects on them. Not allowing another to benefit from something because they couldn't share in the same benefit seems to be remarkably similar. But as any parent (or teacher) knows, this malady is not limited the wicked (or the not-so-wicked facing extinction).

Do we allow jealousy to get the better of us when we see others with something we don't have? Or do we recognize that our not having something shouldn't mean that another can't have it either? This idea is especially poignant shortly after the High Holidays, when many have made great strides in their spiritual growth. If a neighbor has made a commitment that we haven't been able to make (yet), we should support their development rather than discouraging it. Perhaps they have begun to study the Torah portion each week, or have decided to limit their talking during davening. Whatever step they may have taken, we should try to join them in their growth. But even if we haven't, let's not take up the "midas dor hamabul," the flaw of the generation of the flood. Instead, we should delight in the progress of others.

Have a good Shabbos, and a good Chodesh.

© 2004 Rabbi D. Kramer

RABBI YAAKOV HABER

Torah Web

Many commentators have contrasted Noach's introverted righteousness focusing on personal religious growth, not praying for the salvation of his generation, and not rebuking them for their wrongdoing with Avraham's extroverted righteousness convincing others of the truth of monotheism and of an ethical lifestyle, praying for the salvation of even the wicked S'dom and its sister cities, and rebuking Avimelech and others for their wrongdoing with the goal of changing them for the better (see "The Spiritual Legacy of Noah and Avraham"—TorahWeb.org, 1999 --

by Rav Michael Rosensweig for a fascinating exposition of the contrast between these two individuals.)

B'raishit Rabba (36:3) further contrasts Noach with Moshe. Noach enters history's stage being described as "Ish Tzaddik" (Noach 6:9), a righteous man, the appellation by which he is crowned as he is chosen to be the sole builder of a new, better world. He exits as an "Ish Ha'Adama" (9:20), a man of the earth, or an earthy man, the title by which he is called before he falls into a drunken stupor after planting a vineyard and producing wine. Moshe, on the other hand, toward the beginning of his life is referred to as "Ish Mitzri" (Sh'mos 2:19) and exits before granting his final blessing to K'lal Yisrael as an "Ish Elokim" (V'Zos HaBracha 33:1), a man of G-d.

Meshech Chochma provides an insightful exposition of this Midrash. One would have expected Noach's emphasis on religious self-growth to lead to sustained righteousness throughout his life. Instead, the opposite occurred. One would have expected Moshe's constant involvement with others—his seeking out the plight of his brethren in Egypt, his risking his life to save a fellow Jew, his saving the daughters of Yisro and their flock of sheep from the shepherds who chased them away from the well, his constant prayer for the salvation of K'lal Yisrael even to the point of his willingness to give up his own life rather than witness the destruction of his beloved nation—to hamper his religious growth. Instead, he develops as the highest level prophet possible soaring above those who preceded and succeeded him. Sustained religious growth is not solely due to one's effort at self-perfection. It is granted as a gift from Hashem largely in response to and in proportion with one's involvement with the needs of others, the level being reached far transcending that which would have been possible by the investment in time and effort of the individual himself. This remains a paradox of religious devotion. Taking away time from self contemplation, study and efforts at perfection to help others often leads to greater levels of piety than would have ordinarily been possible. Not surprisingly, Avraham Avinu establishes the paradigm of "G'dola hachnassas 'orchim mei'hakbalas p'nei ha'Sh'china," "Welcoming guests is greater than greeting the Divine Presence."

Chasam Sofer expresses a similar notion in his analysis of the passage introducing Hashem's telling Avraham about the imminent destruction of S'dom. "HaM'chase 'Ani mei'Avraham 'asher 'ani 'oseh. V'Avraham hoyo yihye l'goy gadol.... 'asher y'tzave es banav v'es beiso acharav... la'asos t'zdaka umishpat..." "Shall I hide from Avraham that which I am about to do. And Avraham will become a great nation... he will instruct his children and household concerning the ways of charity and justice" (VaYeira 18:17-18). The p'sukim imply that there would have been a reason to withhold this prophecy from Avraham, but Hashem did not since Avraham would inform his children of the ways of

charity and justice. The Chasam Sofer suggests that since Avraham Avinu was so involved in outreach to others, he did not have the time normally necessary to prepare himself spiritually for the reception of prophecy. Nonetheless, since he acted for the sake of Heaven in giving to others, Hashem granted him the prophecy as a gift.

It has been suggested that for a similar reason, Moshe is referred to as "Ish Elokim" precisely at the end of his life before he blessed the B'nei Yisrael. Moshe was denied entry into the Holy Land he desired to enter his whole life ultimately because of the complaints of the Jewish People at Mei M'riva which led to his transgression for which his punishment was to die in the desert. Yet, Moshe, rather than holding a grudge against his nation, and rebuking them severely at the end of his life, blaming them for his misery, blesses them! This supreme act of chessed, focusing on K'lal Yisrael's future happiness and not his own sorrow earns him the title of Ish Elokim.

On a cautionary note, engaging immediately in reaching out to others before significantly developing oneself spiritually can often lead to not having enough to give or even to spiritual disappointment and disillusionment. The balance between personal religious growth and helping others is a complex one and depends on myriad factors. Nevertheless, the emphasis on giving of our time, knowledge and sympathies to others at the right time and place, as demonstrated by our great leaders, should serve as an inspiring example for all of us to follow. © 2004 Rabbi Y. Haber & The TorahWeb Foundation

RABBI DOVID SIEGEL

Haftorah

This week's haftorah, read in conjunction with Shabbos Rosh Chodesh, reveals to us a secret dimension of this significant date. In fact, as we will discover, Rosh Chodesh possesses the potential of assuming a greater personality than ever seen before. Its heightened effect will be so powerful that it will be likened to the impact of one of our three Yomim Tovim.

The prophet opens the haftorah with a fiery message regarding the privilege of sacrifice in the Bais Hamikdash. Yeshaya declares in the name of Hashem, "The heavens are My throne and the earth is My footstool. What home can you build for Me and what is an appropriate site for My Divine Presence?" The Radak explains that Hashem was rejecting the notion of His requiring an earthly abode wherein to reside. Even the span of the universe barely serves as a throne whereupon Hashem rests, how much more so our small Bais Hamikdash. But the purpose of His earthly abode is in order for us to experience His Divine presence. And it is in this uplifting environment that we offer sacrifices to Hashem and commit ourselves to fulfilling His will.

Yeshaya continues and expresses Hashem's view of the Jewish people's sacrifices at that time. Hashem says, "One who slaughters the ox is likened to smiting a man; he who sacrifices the sheep is akin to slashing a dog's neck; a meal offering is like swine's blood.....(66:3) The Radak explains Hashem's disturbance and informs us of the attitude of those times. The people would heavily engage in sin and then appear in the Bais Hamikdash to offer their sacrificial atonement. However, this uplifting experience was short-lived and they would return home and revert to their sinful ways. Hashem responded and rejected their sacrifices because the main facet of the sacrifice was missing, the resolve to elevate oneself. From Hashem's perspective, a sacrifice without an accompanying commitment was nothing more than an act of slashing a useful animal.

The prophet continues and notes the stark contrast between the abovementioned and the humble and low spirited people. Hashem says, "But to this I gaze, to the humble and low spirited and to the one who trembles over My word." (66:2) These humble people do not need the experience of the Bais Hamikdash. They sense the Divine Presence wherever they are and respond with proper reverence and humility. Unlike the first group who limits Hashem's presence to the walls of the Bais Hamikdash, the second views the earth as Hashem's footstool and reacts accordingly. In fact we are told earlier by Yeshaya that they are actually an abode for His presence as is stated, "So says Hashem, "I rest in the exalted and sanctified spheres and amongst the downtrodden and low spirited ones." (57: 15)

In a certain sense we resemble the first group when relating to our Rosh Chodesh experience. Rosh Chodesh is a unique holiday because its entire festivity consists of a special Rosh Chodesh sacrifice. There are no specific acts of Mitzva related to Rosh Chodesh and there is no halachic restriction from productive activity. However, the first day of the month provides the opportunity for introspect. After our serious contemplation over the previous month's achievements we welcome the opportunity of a fresh start. We offer a sacrifice in atonement for the past and prepare ourselves for the challenges of the new month. Unfortunately this new opportunity is met with trepidation and is always accompanied by mixed feelings of joy and remorse. Because each Rosh Chodesh we realize how far we have strayed during the previous month and we look towards the next month to be an improvement over the past.

This is the limited status of our present Rosh Chodesh. However, as we will soon learn, a greater dimension of Rosh Chodesh was intended to be and will eventually become a reality. The Tur in Orach Chaim (417) quotes the Pirkei D'R'Eliezer which reveals that Rosh Chodesh was actually intended to be a full scale Yom Tov. The Tur quotes his brother R' Yehuda who

explains that the three Yomim Tovim correspond to our three patriarchs and that the twelve days of Rosh Chodesh were intended to correspond to the twelve tribes. This link reveals that each Rosh Chodesh truly has a unique aspect to itself and that one of the Biblical tribes' remarkable qualities is available to us each month. However, as the Tur explains, due to an unfortunate error of the Jewish people this opportunity has been, to a large degree, withheld from us.

But in the era of Mashiach this error will be rectified and the experience of Rosh Chodesh will actually reach its intended capacity. Yeshaya reflects upon this and says at the close of our haftarah, "And it will be that from month to month.... all will come and prostrate themselves before Hashem." (66:23) The Psikta Rabbsi (1:3) explains that in the days of Mashiach we will have the privilege of uniting with Hashem every Rosh Chodesh. All Jewish people will come to the Bais Hamikdash each month and experience His Divine Presence. During the illustrious era of Mashiach sin will no longer exist and Rosh Chodesh will be viewed exclusively as an opportunity for elevation. Each month will provide us its respective quality and opportunity which we will celebrate through the Rosh Chodesh festivities. The sacrifice of Rosh Chodesh will reflect our great joy over being with Hashem and will no longer contain any aspect of remorse or sin. In those days, the experience of His Divine Presence in the Bais Hamikdash will be perpetuated throughout the month and the entire period will become one uplifting experience.

This, according to the Maharit Algazi is the meaning of our Mussaf section wherein we state, "When they would offer sacrifices of favor and goats as sin offerings.... May you establish a new altar in Zion.... and we will offer goats with favor." With these words we are acknowledging the fact that the goats which had previously served as sin offerings will now become expressions of elevation. Without the need to reflect upon our shortcomings of the previous month, Rosh Chodesh will be greeted with total happiness, and we will welcome with great joy the uplifting spiritual opportunity of each respective month. © 2004 Rabbi D. Siegel & www.torah.org

RABBI ARON TENDLER

Rabbi's Notebook

Why did Noach deserve to be saved from the Mabel?

At the end of last week's Parsha and continuing into this week's Parsha the Torah states (6:7-9) "I will blot out Man whom I created? for reconsidered My having made them? Noach found grace in G-d's righteous man, perfect in his generation?"

Rashi focuses his comment on the statement of "in his generation," that qualifies Noach's "righteousness." Does the Verse mean that in contrast to the degenerative, perverted, murderous, and thieving generation of the prediluvian world Noach was "righteous;" however, had he lived in a more ethical and decent generation he would not have been considered so "righteous?" Or, does the qualifying clause "in his generation" suggest that had he lived in a more ethical and decent generation Noach would have been an even greater Tzadik?

Rashi informs us that the question was the subject of discussion and argument in the Medresh ending in the opposing opinions agreeing to disagree.

I would like to suggest that the Talmudic argument was intended to teach us a profoundly important lesson. In truth, what difference did the argument make? The simple fact is that the Torah called Noach a Tzadik and therefore he was a Tzadik! Whether or not Noach would have been a greater Tzadik or a lesser one if he had lived in a different generation is truly insignificant. We know that G-d always judges "B'asher Who Shum—as the person is"—not as he might be. G-d only judges us in the present. He ignores what He knows we will or won't do in the future and if we promise to change and do better, he willingly ignores (forgives) much of our past. If G-d did judge us on His knowledge of the future or on the transgressions of the past, "No living person would be faultless under the scrutiny of Divine justice (Key Low Yitzdak Lifanecha Kol Chai)." Instead, G-d lovingly accepts our best-intended resolutions for the future, and as regards the future, credits us with the benefit of the doubt. Therefore, whether or not Noach would have been something different "in the generation of Avraham (see Rashi) seems irrelevant. Why did the Talmud record the argument and why did Rashi reference it?

I believe that the argument regarding Noach's status as a Tzadik allows us to consider Noach's greatness from a more realistic perspective. The fact that one of the opinions is that his righteousness was "graded on a curve" makes Noach appear far more human and therefore accessible as a role model.

Assuming that Noach was not perfect, and if he was perfect it was only in contrast to "his generation," why did he deserve to be saved? Why didn't G-d just start over from scratch? Why start with faulty material when you have the power to begin again with pure and untainted materials?

I would like to suggest that with whatever his imperfections may have been, Noach represented an attitude and relationship that guaranteed survival and eventual redemption. Regardless of the imperfections, G-d knew that in Noach he had found a formula that would work for the future of humanity.

Had G-d started from scratch He would still have created a free willed creature capable of rebellion and failure. In fact, it is a given that the new human

would not have been any more improved. He may have had a second chance at not sinning but in time humanity would have sinned. It would only have been a question of where and when. Therefore, starting from scratch only meant that humankind would be back where they started and there would not be any guarantee that another Noach would emerge. Therefore, let's analyze Noach and ascertain what made him so special, even if he was not perfect— or maybe, specifically because he wasn't perfect.

In last week's Parsha, my Grandfather ZT'L explained in his book *Darash Moshe* a concept so fundamental yet novel that it alters the very nature of how we understand Divine justice and expectations.

"And Noach found grace in G-d's eyes." The Talmud in Sanhedrin (108a) states that strict justice found Noach also lacking; however, because "he found grace (Chain) in G-d's eyes," G-d did not dwell on Noach's shortcomings. Therefore, it is incumbent upon us to understand the characteristic of "grace" so that we understand why G-d dealt leniently with Noach?

The concept of grace is unique. It makes sense to say that the good deeds we perform should be done with grace, meaning, they should be done with great Simcha? joy with the knowledge that Torah and Mitzvos are your enti There are those who properly do Mitzvos from a technical point of view; however, they have obvious misgivings in doing the Mitzvos because of the sacrifices their performance demands of him. Whether their performance demands an outlay or loss of money or that they restrict him from pursuing his desires or pleasures. Such an attitude is the opposite of grace.

Later, when the individual demands his due reward for his good deeds (Mitzvos) the full scrutiny of justice will be brought to bear on evaluating his performance? However, if the Mitzvos he performs are done with grace joy, justice will not demand anything of him because G-d forgives him because of the grace that he found in G-d's eyes." (*Darash Moshe on Bereshis 6:8*)

Noach may not have been perfect; however, he served G-d with Simcha? joy. Noach understood that life was all about service to G-d. It does not suggest that he was the perfect Tzadik who never sinned etc. First of all there is no such thing as the perfect Tzadik. "There is no Tzadik in the world who only does good and never sins." Secondly, there is no value in assuming that he was perfect. In fact, the Torah always goes out of its way to identify the shortcomings of our great leaders and forefathers. To believe that Noach was perfect is to place him on a pedestal that denies us the possibility of learning from his mistakes. Instead, the Talmud records in the Medresh and in Sanhedrin that Noach was not perfect. Nevertheless, he was deemed worthy of being the father of all humanity! Why? because of his grace, because he embraced his humanness and the opportunities for serving G-d without reservations or

misgivings. "And Noach found grace in G-d's eyes." (to be continued?) © 2004 Rabbi A. Tendler & www.torah.org

MACHON ZOMET

Shabbat B'Shabbato

by Rabbi Amnon Bazak

When G-d commands Noach to build the ark, He gives exact specifications of length, width, and height. "This is how you should make it: The length of the ark will be three hundred Amot, its width will be fifty Amot, and its height thirty Amot" [Bereishit 6:15]. The only other structures described in such detail in the Torah are the Tabernacle and its utensils. For example, the dimensions of the Ark are, "Two and a half Amot in length, one Amma and a half in width, and one Amma and a half in height" [Shemot 25:10].

The similarity between Noach's ark and the construction of the Tabernacle, especially the Ark, can be seen in other things. For example, these are the only two places in the Torah where the phrase "inside and out" appears. With respect to Noach, "cover it inside and out with pitch" [Bereishit 6:14]. And for the Ark in the Tabernacle, "cover it with pure gold, inside and out it should be covered" [Shemot 25:11]. The phrase "cover it" reminds us of the "Kaporet," the cover of the Ark. Both Noach's ark and the holy Ark have special constructions at the top. In Noach's case, "At the top, let it be one Amma" [Bereishit 6:16], while in the holy Ark, "Place the Kaporet at the top of the Ark" [Shemot 25:21]. Both of the items are made of wood. Noach's ark is made from gopher trees, while in the Tabernacle the Ark is made of acacia wood (these are the only types of wood described in the Torah by the word "etz"—tree). Finally, the same length of time appears in relation to both phenomena. With respect to the flood, "It rained on the earth for forty days and forty nights" [Bereishit 7:12], the same as we are told in the introduction to the labors of the Tabernacle, "And Moshe stayed on the mountain forty days and forty nights" [Shemot 24:18]. What can we learn from these similarities?

Evidently what the two arks have in common is the unique contact in both cases between the Almighty and His creations. The Ark in the Tabernacle is the basis of G-d's revelation in the world. "Let them make for me a Tabernacle, and I will dwell among them" [Shemot 25:8]... Let them make an Ark" [25:10]. (Note that for all the other utensils, what is written in the verse is "you shall make...")

As it were, the Almighty restricts His holy presence to a small site, as was noted by King Shlomo. "Can it be that G-d will dwell on the earth? All the heavens and the higher levels cannot contain you, how can this small house which I built be sufficient?" [Melachim 8:27]. This was also true of the ark in Noach's time, although in that case the conditions of the meeting between the Almighty and humanity were the opposite.

In this case, it was mankind that was restricted, with all of the people on earth inside a single vessel, a unique example of private Divine supervision. In both cases, the restrictions made it possible for a unique link between the Almighty and His creatures.

And this leads us to note the main difference between the two structures. The ideal of mankind is to be distributed all over the world, not to be confined inside a small space. The ark is a temporary construction, and that is why Noach was told to "place the entrance of the ark in its side" [Bereishit 6:16]. After the end of the flood, those who were in the ark would leave and renew the world, in response to the renewed command, "be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth" [Bereishit 9:1]. In the Ark of the Tabernacle, on the other hand, there is no opening on the side, and the Tablets that have been placed inside will remain there forever. The Divine presence among the nation of Yisrael is the ideal and permanent status.

Let us pray that we will soon experience the return of G-d to Zion, with mercy.

Peace, the Dove, and the Olive Branch

by Rabbi Shmuel Shapira, Kochav Yair and Tzur Yigal

There are two well known and accepted symbols of peace in the world, a dove and an olive tree. The source for this symbolism appears in this week's Torah portion. "And the dove came to him in the evening, and it had an olive leaf in its mouth. And Noach knew that the water had receded from on the earth." [Bereishit 8:11]. The dove and the olive branch provided the sign that the flood had ended. This was the end of war, and it meant a message of peace.

A dove is not only a symbol of peace between nations, it also symbolizes peace between man and his friend, and between man and wife. The way to describe a couple living in harmony and peace is to compare them to "a pair of doves." The State of Israel included an olive branch in its official seal, as a sign of its yearning for peace.

By analyzing these symbols in light of the commentaries of the sages on this week's Torah portion, it is possible to broaden our understanding of the concept of peace.

When the storm ended, Noach wanted to know if it was possible to leave the ark. He therefore sent the raven out to see if the water had receded. "And he sent the raven, who went back and forth" [Bereishit 8:7]. The raven came and went, remained close to the ark, and refused to leave and perform the task that Noach wanted it to do. On the other hand, the dove was sent out three times. The first time, it returned because it "did not find a place to rest its foot" [8:9]. The second time the dove returned with the famous olive branch in its mouth.

Why did the dove specifically bring an olive branch? Rashi quotes the sages as explaining what the dove wanted to signal: "Let my food be as bitter as an

olive but in the hands of the Almighty, rather than sweet as honey by the hands of a human being." That is, it is better to be independent with bitter food, such as an olive branch, than to depend on another, even if this means having something as sweet as honey. Thus, the news of peace after the flood appears as a phenomenon which is as bitter as an olive.

The third time it was sent away, the dove did not return at all. It found a way to exist independently, and it preferred not to depend on "a rich uncle" who would provide it with food.

This approach by the sages gives us insight into the concept of peace. It does not mean a mutual dependence of the two sides on each other or on a third party who takes precedence over them. True peace can exist only when each nation—and every individual—has its own strength and independence, even if this means that it must eat only bitter food.

Being full of courage and strength is not the opposite of peace. Rather, when "G-d gives His nation strength," then and only then, "G-d will bless His nation with peace" [Tehillim 29:11].

RABBI NOSSON CHAYIM LEFF

Sfas Emes

The parsha begins (Bereishis, 6:9): "... Noach ish tzadik...; es HaElokim hishalech Noach." ("Noach was a righteous man...; Noach walked with God."). Chazal—and Rashi—note the contrast with Avraham, of whom the Torah says (Bereishis, 17:1): "... walk before me... ". Chazal and (Rashi) comment that, to conduct himself as a righteous person, Noach needed heavenly support. That is, he needed HaShem to hold his hand. By contrast, Avraham was able to attain and handle the role of tzadik on his own.

The Sfas Emes begins this maamar by telling us that, certainly ("be'vdai!"), in contrasting Noach with Avraham, it never entered Chazal's mind to diminish Noach's stature. (Parenthetically, note the Sfas Emes's koach hachiddush— his unhesitating, sheer innovative power to view received texts through his own discerning eyes.) Rather, the Sfas Emes tells us, the world had to progress with a certain unavoidable order. Thus, first there had to appear on the scene a tzadik who needed HaShem's support. Only thereafter could someone come who could fill the role of tzadik without needing HaShem to hold his hand.

Why so? The Sfas Emes tells us that the cosmos simply could not function with a tzadik like Avraham unless it had first experienced a tzadik on the level of Noach. Note: This explanation does not really answer the question of "why so?". But we may find it comforting to know that the world functions with a fixed order. From that perspective, the question of "why so?" in this context is as meaningless as asking "why so?" regarding the law of gravity.

The seforim speak of three fundamental domains in the world "Olam, Shanna, vNefesh" (space, time, and soul). And the seforim tell us to expect similar patterns in each of these three domains. Hence, we should not be surprised to see the Sfas Emes applying this perspective in the present context. Thus, he tells us that the nefesh (soul) of a Jewish person also goes through a pattern of growth in stages. The first stage is that of a child. The Sfas Emes describes a child as "tohu"—as in Bereishis, 1:2: "tohu vavohu." (ArtScroll: "astonishingly empty". A more colloquial translation: "a complete mess.") Parents and teachers may find consolation in the Sfas Emes's certification of their charges as "tohu".

But just as HaShem intervened to save Noach and his family from the disaster that awaited the rest of humankind, so too does HaShem protect a particle of kedusha (sanctity) within a child. And that bit of kedusha can subsequently expand within the child as he/she grows, and enables him to develop midos tovos (proper behavior).

Continuing with this perspective, the Sfas Emes now refers us to the maxim "Derech erez kadma laTorah." That is, proper behavior must precede and is therefore a prerequisite to the proper observance of Torah and mitzvos. In support of this sequence, the Sfas Emes cites the lives of Avraham, Yitzchok and Yaakov. It was necessary for the lives of the Avos, with their exemplary personal conduct, to precede our people's receiving the Torah. The necessity of this sequence is neither self-evident nor easily grasped. For this reason, the Sfas Emes concludes with a phrase of advice and admonition that he rarely utters: "Vedok vehavein" That is: "think it through, and you will understand!"

Note that the Sfas Emes has taught us a two-fold mussar haskeil in an area in which he, as Gerrer Rebbe, had special knowledge: First, he has told us that, in fact, people can grow in their avoda. And second, he advises us that growth comes not in a linear fashion, but rather unevenly, and in stages. We should therefore not become discouraged if we see that, despite serious effort to make progress, we are at any given time only treading water in ruchniyus (spiritual matters). The Rebbe is telling us: Persist! © 2004 Rabbi N.C. Leff & www.torah.org



<http://www.childrens-art-prints.com>