



Parshas Noach

For the week ending 1 Cheshvan 5758
31 October & 1 November 1997

Overview

It is now ten generations since the creation of the first man, Adam *HaRishon*. Adam's descendants have corrupted the world with immorality, idolatry and robbery, and Hashem resolves to bring a flood which will destroy all the earth's inhabitants except for Noach, the sole righteous man of his era, his family and sufficient animals to re-populate the earth. Hashem instructs Noach to build an Ark in which to escape the Flood. After forty days and nights, the flood covers the entire earth, even the tops of the highest mountains. After 150 days, the water begins to recede. On the 17th day of the 7th month, the Ark comes to rest on Mount Ararat. Noach sends forth first a raven and then a dove to ascertain if the waters have abated. The dove returns. A week later, Noach again sends out the dove, which returns the same evening with an olive branch in its beak. After seven more days, Noach once again sends forth the dove, which this time does not return. Hashem then tells Noach and his family to leave the Ark. Noach brings offerings to Hashem from the animals which were carried in the Ark for this purpose. Hashem vows never again to flood the entire world and gives the rainbow as a sign of this covenant. Noach and his descendants are now permitted to eat meat, unlike Adam. Hashem commands the Seven Universal Laws; the prohibition against idolatry, adultery, theft, blasphemy, murder, eating the meat of a living animal, and the institution of a legal system. The world's climate is established as we know it today. Noach plants a vineyard and becomes intoxicated from its produce. Ham, one of Noach's sons, delights in seeing his father drunk and uncovered. Shem and Yafes, however, manage to cover their father without looking at his nakedness, by walking backwards. For this incident, Ham is cursed to be a slave to slaves. The Torah lists the offspring of Noach's three sons from whom the seventy nations of the world are descended. The Torah records the incident of the Tower of Bavel, which results in Hashem fragmenting communication into many languages and the dispersal of the nations throughout the world. The Parsha concludes with the genealogy of Noach to Avram.

WORLD VIEW

"...let Canaan be a slave to them" (9:25)

Why did *Canaan*, offspring of *Cham*, have to be a slave to the descendants of **both** *Shem* and *Yafes*?

The name *Yafes* connotes beauty and aesthetic appreciation. Greek civilization and its emphasis on beauty is a product of *Yafes*.

Cham means 'hot.' It implies wild, unbridled animal energy. The civilizing effects of aesthetics (*Yafes*) can raise us above domination of our desires (*Cham*) to a level where we can make the leap from the world of the sensual — "*The world is what I can feel*" — to the level of aesthetics — "*The world is what I can think*."

Only then can we ascend to the level of "*The world is beyond what I can think*." That's the level of *Shem*.

The Jewish People are descended from *Shem*. It is our job to proclaim that faith is not contradictory to intellect and that Man can aspire to that which is beyond intellect. As Rabbi Shimshon Raphael Hirsch put it: "*An essential component of wisdom is the knowledge that man's failure to comprehend truth does not make it untrue*."

DOVE-KA

Even though Noach sent a dove to check whether it was possible to come out of the ark, he waited for Hashem's command before he actually emerged.

If Noach was going to wait for Hashem's command before leaving the ark, what was the purpose of sending the dove?

Many years before Hashem brought the flood to the world, Hashem told Noach about it. Noach had Hashem's word that the flood was coming, but his faith was meager: It was not until the water actually started to rise around him that he went into the ark.

By sending out the dove, even though he had no intention of going out of the ark until Hashem commanded him, Noach was doing *teshuva*. He was returning to Hashem, fixing his previous lack of faith. He was demonstrating that even though he knew it was safe to leave the ark, he would only act when Hashem told him to.

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Prepared by Ohr Somayach in Jerusalem, Israel
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Production Design: Lev Seltzer

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This is what our sages call "teshuva gamura" — complete repentance — being in the exact same circumstances as those of the initial sin (with full ability and desire to perform the forbidden action) and *not* repeating it.

By sending out the dove, Noah was demonstrating that even though he had the possibility to rely on natural indications, he would act only on the word of Hashem.

THE LION'S ROAR

The Midrash tells us that when Noah was late in bringing the lion's food one day, it turned around and bit him.

Nothing happens by coincidence. If it was the lion that bit Noah, it must be that Noah had transgressed and that the lion was the fitting agent of Noah's punishment. But what was Noah being punished for and why was the lion the agent of his chastisement?

The *Zohar* says that the First *Beis Hamikdash* is compared to a lion, and the second to a dog: A lion will actively protect its progeny, it will attack and bite, but a dog will usually only bark. The first *Beis Hamikdash* actively protected the Jewish People, whereas the second *Beis Hamikdash* awakened people to repentance, but didn't actively protect them.

When the Jewish People were threatened either physically or spiritually, the *Avos* — Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov — would pray for us. They would actively protect us. They wouldn't just "bark," they would come out and "bite."

Noah, however, was criticized for not praying on behalf of his generation. He built the ark. When people asked him what he was doing, he replied that a flood was coming and that they should repent. But he didn't actually pray for them.

That's why of all the animals it was the lion that bit Noah. It was as if he was telling Noah: "Barking" — telling people to repent — is not enough. You have to "bite" as well. You have to actively protect them. You have to pray for them.

Haftorah Rosh Chodesh - Yishayahu 66 : 1-24

When Rosh Chodesh occurs on Shabbos, the regular Haftorah is replaced by a special Haftorah - the last chapter of the Book of Yishayahu (Isaiah). This chapter was chosen because of its penultimate verse which links Shabbos and Rosh Chodesh: "And it shall be that, from New Moon to New Moon, and from Shabbos to Shabbos, all flesh shall come and prostrate themselves before Me, said Hashem. (66:23) This verse is also repeated after concluding the reading of the Haftorah.

Every New Moon is a summons to Israel to renew and rejuvenate itself. Every Shabbos is a call to show practical proof of our homage to Hashem by ceasing from *melacha* (prohibited work). But there will come a time when not only Israel will be called to offer their willing service to Hashem...

"And I will establish a distinctive sign amongst them and send refugees from them to the nations to ... *Yavan*, to the most distant lands that have not heard My Fame, nor have seen My Glory, and they will inform the nations of My Glory." (66:19)

Yavan/Greece is the nation charged with the task of elevating the lowly and un-refined nations through culture. But culture is not an end in itself. It is only a preliminary stage. After *Yavan*/Greece, it is *Shem*/the Jews who will show mankind the path to elevate itself to an awareness of what is good and true; to pay homage to what is *morally* beautiful; to lead the nations to the height of Man's calling.

The 'uniformity' in thought that rules the actions and intellect of Greece is ultimately a fulfillment of Hashem's plan. For through this love of uniformity, the nations will be united and they will finally come to perceive the 'Oneness' of the Creator.

This unified mankind will become the encircling vessel that will contain the pure *mincha* offering that is the Jewish People. Then the nations will recognize Israel's role as the priests of mankind, just as the *Levi'im* are the priests of Israel.

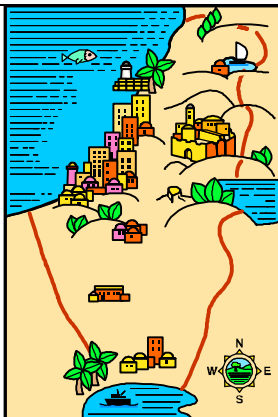
The realization of this goal is something absolutely certain. Then every New Moon and every Shabbos will not only bring to Israel a call for renewal of *kedusha* (holiness) of acknowledging Hashem in free-willed devotion, but all mankind will also hear and heed this call.

Sources:

World View - Rabbi Shimshon Raphael Hirsch, as heard from Rabbi Avraham Edelstein
Dove-Ka - Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, as heard from Rabbi C. Z. Senter in the name of Rabbi Ariel Feldhammer
The Lion's Roar - The Ostrovzer Gaon, as heard from Rabbi C. Z. Senter
Haftorah - Adapted from Rabbi S. R. Hirsch

LOVE OF THE LAND

Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and Eretz Yisrael



AWARE THROUGH THE AIR

Rabbi Zeira, one of the leading Sages in Babylon, disputed the opinion of a colleague, Rabbi Eila, in regard to a legal matter concerning inheritance. After Rabbi Zeira finally realized his dream of settling in *Eretz Yisrael* he reconsidered his position and concurred with that of Rabbi Eila.

"This is conclusive proof," exclaimed Rabbi Zeira, "that the very air of *Eretz Yisrael* makes one wiser."

(Bava Basra 158b)

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