



Unlike the flowery depiction many of us were taught, commonly proliferated in children's books, Noah witnessed his generation annihilated - a very depressive experience. This explains why Noah planted a vineyard immediately upon his exit from the ark. Perhaps this offers insight into his sending the raven. See the article below for a theory.

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IN THIS ISSUE:

NOAH AND THE RAVEN	1, 6
NOAH/GENERATION OF FLOOD	1, 3
RITUAL PURITY	1, 4
FALSE CHRISTIAN BELIEFS	2
NOACH	4
THE DISPERSION	5
THE RAINBOW	6

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Noah and the Raven

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

I would like to demonstrate the method and beautiful style in which the Torah was written, along with expounding the following area. For one to have a full appreciation of the Torah, I feel it essential for one to see the depth and specific design of the written words of the Torah first hand. As King Solomon wrote in Proverbs, 2:6, "Ki Hashem yitane chochma, m'piv daas u'svuna".

(continued on page 6)

Noah And The Generation Of The Flood

RABBI ISRAEL CHAIT

Transcribed by Students

In order to appreciate the milieu of the generation of the flood and the events that led to the destruction of civilization we must analyze the verses in the Torah. Genesis chapter six verse eleven states "And the Earth was corrupted before G-d and the Earth was filled with violence." Rashi defines corruption as sexual immorality and idolatry. He defines violence as robbery. This verse is the prelude to G-d's determination that civilization must be destroyed because of the perpetuation of "chamas" throughout mankind. Thus chamas robbery, sealed man's fate.

However, this final adjudication by G-d of man's fate was actually preceded by two earlier observations and warnings. Chapter six verse two states, "That the sons of G-d saw the daughters of man that they were fair, and they took for themselves wives, whomsoever they chose." Man was promiscuous and sought all types of sexual gratification without any moral restrictions. G-d thereby gave man his first warning. Man was given 120 years to repent from his sexual corruption or G-d would destroy mankind.

In chapter six verse five, G-d makes his second observation, "And G-d saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every

(continued on page 3)



Ritual Purity-Woman's Rebirth

RIVKA OLENICK

"Sanctify yourselves and be holy." Leviticus 20:7 "Observe therefore and do them: For this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the people that, when they hear all these statutes, shall say, surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people!" Deuteronomy 4:6

Rabbi Akiva Said: "Happy are you, O Israel, before whom you cleanse yourselves and who cleanses you? Your Father that is in heaven, as it is said." Taharas hamishpacha, the laws of family purity is the mitzvah given solely to woman. In this commandment a woman makes a blessing and immerses herself into the mikvah. Only an immersion in a halachacly proper mikvah can a woman be purified. This must be done in a gathering of "living water" from a natural source i.e. a lake, a stream, rainwater. Through this activity she emerges in a state of purity and ritual cleanliness together with her potential to create new life. She does this after she has already given birth, as well.

(continued on page 4)

False Christian Beliefs II: Only One Religion Condoned by God

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

Reader: Why is there only one definition of procreation? Why is procreation or begetting limited to biological function. Could not a spiritual being beget a spiritual being by a non biological or nonphysical way? Isn't that like saying that man can do something that God cannot?

Mesora: Yes, that is exactly what I am saying. Your argument would also accept a "nonphysical " heart. But that is a contradiction. Not only are physical organs limited to physical beings, but physical acts, as procreation, are also limited to physical beings.

Reader: Why would a collection of Jews in Israel 2000 years ago desire to fabricate stories concerning Jesus of Nazareth? And then be willing to face excommunication from the synagogue and imprisonment by Roman authorities? What would be the motive?

Mesora: Their motive is inconsequential. I must add, such a question cannot make an irrational system as Christianity, into a sensible one, nor does it give credibility to it's claims of 'miraculous' events.

Reader: You are right to say that a man cannot perform miracles on his own. Jesus claimed to be "I AM" several times, once in front of the Sanhedrin. And it was partly for this reason that he was turned over for crucifixion.

Mesora: Claiming the impossible and the ridiculous often results in problems.

Reader: The miracles of Jesus were never done in secret but always before others, sometimes thousands, as in the feeding of 5,000 with a few barley loaves and a few fish.

Mesora: That is here say. People merely believe this story, but none claim to be descendants of any of these imagined 5000 witnesses.

Christianity has no event as Sinai essential for proving events as true. You should also ask yourself a very important question: God gave the system of the Torah to the Jews, this is accepted by Christianity as proof, as it forms part of your sacred texts. This Torah includes the laws for all

gentiles' observance, not just for Jews. Why then would God condone any other religion? Torah was God's plan for all mankind - no one was left out. The reality is, God does not condone any other religion, and He never will. God already "made up His mind", and His complete Torah outlines mankind's only directive. By definition, He created only one miraculous, mass event: He gave the Torah to about three million Jews at Mount Sinai. Amidst a mountain burning "unto the heart of the heavens", all witnesses heard intelligent speech emanating from those flames. So valued is this event to your people, and so significant is this fact, that your own Christian Bible repeats this fact at least 8 times in Deuteronomy. This event can only happen if the source of such speech is not biological in design, but supernatural, i.e. God Himself.

Suggesting that God condones any religion other than Judaism contains 3 intolerable contradictions in God: 1) If God desires any other religion, why would He not create it, as history proves it was man who created all other religions? 2) If God desires other religions, why would God not create an equally impressive event substantiating those other religions, just as He enacted in connection with Judaism? God's omission of such substantiation clearly shows God's preference has never changed from Judaism exclusively. 3) Proposing that God endorses other religions contradicts His original plan of Torah Judaism exclusively for all mankind. This proposition replaces the correct notion of our consistent, perfect God, with a corrupt view of an indecisive god.

Reader: How could so many honest, faithful Jews of that period believe Jesus was the promised Messiah, if he didn't have "credentials" to back it up (such as performing miracles)?

Mesora: The exact same way so many Muslims today follow Islam. You surely disagree with their claims, regardless of their numbers.

You see, your argument that "numbers of believers creates credibility" is a contradiction.

Reader: The apostles also were given the power to perform miracles. After St. Peter's first sermon on Pentecost, 3,000 Jews were converted at one time.

Mesora: That is no miracle, it does not counter any natural law.

Reader: Regarding the Divine selection of the Jewish nation. No Christian doubts that except a few racists. Does not the Messiah come from the Jewish nation? But the Scriptures also speak of time when all nations will come to believe in the Lord. So is the Messiah to be only for the Jews or for all nations?

Mesora: All nations. Even our Temple exists for all nations, as all gentiles may bring sacrifices. God created all humans. Reason should teach you that God favors all men and women. God did not create us to ignore us. He created mankind so that all mankind would follow God, but mankind created other religions, against God's will.

Reader: I am very thankful for the time you took to answer my questions. I know no observant Jews so I have long wondered about some matters of your faith. Thank you again for your time, Jill.

Mesora: God created everything. This includes the human mind. God knows each person's thoughts, whether he now exists, or whether he will not be born for 1000 years. Past and present are all before God's eye. God knew all religions man would invent. Not only is God's system more perfect than man's, but in spite of future generations' religions-to-be, God opted for Judaism as His choice lifestyle for all mankind.

It must be understood that Judaism was not given to Jews due to our merit, but due to Abraham's detection of monotheism as the only reality. Any Jew today who acts boastful as a recipient of Abraham's heritage, not only lives egotistically and without cause, but stains Judaism's pristine reputation. He turns gentiles off to the chance at

discovering and appreciating God's Torah system. Be mindful that our own messiah is a descendant of a gentile named Ruth. Jews were selected by God, but only to act as beacons for all mankind. In Eden, God created man and woman. The world was meant to be populated by these two, and follow in their divinely given ideals. Religions are only man's devices, deterring unsuspecting generations from God's initial plan. To help man back to the correct path, God gave one nation a system called Torah, so the world may once again, as in Eden, have a chance at learning God's truths.

As new religions auditioned for a role as Judaism's understudy, we discount their hopes for stardom, when in fact God's Judaism claims an eternal, exclusive engagement on the world's stage.

Deuteronomy. 5:19, God said in connection with the Revelation on Sinai, "...a great voice and no more..." One of the greatest Torah commentators, Ibn Ezra, explains this as God's oath of such an event never again occurring. God's plan clearly is Judaism - the only religion for all of mankind - be it 613 or 7 commands. There is one road leading to God. He marked it with a sign directing us to God's destination, "All this matter which I command to you, it shall you guard to keep, do not add to it, and do not subtract from it". (Deuteronomy, 13:1) □

Note from Author

I wish this article to act as a response to Rabbi Sack's new book "The Dignity of Difference," where he states that "God has spoken to mankind in many languages: through Judaism to Jews, Christianity to Christians, Islam to Muslims".

Judaism opposes Rabbi Sack's opinion as shown from the verses quoted.

Noah And The Generation Of The Flood

RABBI ISRAEL CHAIT

Transcribed by Students

(continued from page 1) □

imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." This observation of the quantitative increase in mans nefarious conduct led G-d to the conclusion that he will obliterate mankind from upon the face of the earth.

An analysis of these observations and warnings from G-d, indicates a logical progression and sequence from mans initial corruption until his ultimate degradation to total depravity unworthy of salvation.

The first breakdown of the morality of man, was his sexual promiscuity. Man's detachment from sexual illicit relationships is the source of mans sanctity.

Kedusha emanates from perisha me-arayos. Maimonides in his Mishna Torah in the laws of kedusha has two categories. The laws of forbidden sexual relationships and the laws of forbidden foods. Thus we see that the sanctity of man stems from his ability to subordinate his instinctual desires. Kedusha is the supremacy of the tzelem elokim, man's intellect over the nefesh ha-behami, man's instinctual desires, the appetitive and the sexual. Thus the first corruption of man was in allowing his emotions to rule his intellect.

The second step was the Quantitative increase in mans degradation. As man's libido and energies became attached to the instinctual pleasures they obviously became a greater source of satisfaction for man. Thus man's corruption became prevalent throughout society. The emotions of man totally dominated all aspects of his conduct. Hence G-d saw that the wickedness of man was great.

However, the final corruption which sealed mans fate, was when mans depravity progressed to robbery. Nachmanides states that mans fate was sealed with the sin of robbery because it is a violation of a mitzvah sichli. The prohibition against stealing logically makes sense. As the RAMBAN says it's a commandment which does not require a prophet to warn us against it evils. However, Nachmanides message must be understood. Simply because a commandment does not necessitate a prophet to warn us against its violation does not reflect upon the severity of the prohibition. It would seem that there are greater evils which result from violating a mitzva which is not sichli and requires a prophets warning. On the contrary, if our conduct warrants the rebuke of a prophet it must certainly be extremely grievous behavior. However, an analysis of Nachmanides interpretation leads us to a better understanding of the corruption of thievery and the reason it sealed mans

destruction.

Man is different than an animal. An animals existence is purely instinctual. His reality is subservient to his instinctual desires. An animals existence is totally contained within the realm of the physical. An animal does not contemplate how long it is going to live.

Man however, is a complex creature. Mans nature is perennially the source of conflict. The instinctual desires of man are constantly in conflict with the intellectual.

Instinctually man desires to live forever, but reality tells him that he is limited by the constraints of time. As a result there are essentially only two creations that are not in a constant state of conflict. The animal because it is totally dominated and guided by



the instinctual. Also the adam ha'shalem, the harmonious man, whose entire energies are directed to chachma. However an ordinary individuals' instinctual desires are in conflict with, and tempered by his intellectual faculties.

The original pratfall for man was sexual turpitude. The sexual instinct was overpowering but yet, man still had not abandoned the intellectual. In fact man utilized his chachma in the pursuit of his desires.

However, man was doomed to extinction when chamas prevailed. Robbery is reflective of a society that totally abandons the rules of common sense. Man was no longer functioning in the world of reality. He was no longer even using his mind in the

pursuit of his physical pleasures. He was involved in chamas, total self destructive behavior. This is what the RAMBAN meant when he said that chamas sealed mans fate because it was a violation of a mitzva sichli. Man was entirely in the grasp of his instinctual desires to the extent that his intellectual faculties were no longer functioning. Therefore, the warning of a prophet would not be heeded since man is functioning solely in the realm of the physical world. His self destructive behavior manifests the abandonment of the intellectual even as a means for the pursuit of physical pleasures. chamas epitomizes the state of the perfection of the nefesh ha-behami. Thus G-d determined that mans existence was equal to his non-existence and civilization was

Noah however, did not fall prey to the corruption of the society. Although he was considered righteous, CHAZAL castigate him for not attempting to influence other people. Noah never tried to influence his fellow man to behave in a just fashion. This is bothersome, considering the fact that the Torah refers to Noah as a tzadik, a righteous and pure individual. Certainly, justice would dictate that he help the plight of his fellow man. Thus we must appreciate the appellation tzadik as utilized respecting Noah. There are two types of righteous individuals. Abraham typifies the higher level. This is the just individual who lives in a corrupt society and seems to function therein. However, he is in reality living the life of a hermit. Thus Abraham was a ger toshav. In terms of his personal ideals they were foreign to the values of the society. He was a ger in this respect. However, he was a toshav, a citizen of the world. He functioned externally as a productive member of society. In fact, he attempted to influence other members of society to adopt his values and ideals.

The other type of righteous individual can not tolerate the influences of a corrupt society. He retreats and lives the life of seclusion always insulating himself from external pressures. Noah was this type of personality. CHAZAL teach us that Noah was a ma-amin, he was a believer, but yet he did not believe. He possessed the intellectual conviction to reject society's values. However, he was cognizant of the temptations of the world around him and thus lived a sheltered life. Noah appreciated that he was in conflict and could not risk the dangerous exposure of facing the outside world. He lived an existence whereby he realized he was in conflict, but resolved the conflict in favor of the intellect. Therefore God did not blame him for not attempting to influence others. His state of perfection prevented him from helping others. Thus Noah was righteous and pure but yet the Torah adds b-dorosav, in his generation. His actions were not inherently corrupt and thus he was not deserving of extinction. However, his righteousness was commensurate to the times he lived in. He was indirectly culpable because his state of perfection prevented him from venturing into the outside world and aiding others. However, he still was righteous for one can not be held responsible for not helping others live the proper life if it would risk his own perfection. Thus Noah was a tzadik b-dorosav. □

destined to be obliterated.

It is significant to note that the state of chamas flourished and was fostered by mans initial domination by his sexual desires. It is when man abandons the intellectual repression of sexual promiscuity, will the instinctual appetites of man be cultivated and ultimately dominate him. Merely because the violations of the sexual mores are victimless infractions does not diminish the severity of the offense. It is the breeding ground whereby a corrupt individual's instinctual desires gain strength and overpower the intellectual and thus subjugates the tzelem elokim to the whims of the physical. Chamas is a natural outgrowth of such a behavioral progression and condemns mankind to a worthless existence.

Noach

RABBI BERNIE FOX

"These are the chronicles of Noach. Noach was a righteous man. He was faultless in his generation. Noach walked with Hashem." (Beresheit 6:9) The Torah describes the righteousness of Noach. The pasuk uses three terms to describe Noach. He was righteous. He was faultless in his behavior. He followed the Almighty completely. Noach is selected by Hashem to survive the Deluge and reestablish humanity. Hashem addresses Noach and explains the reasons he has been selected. He tells Noach he will be saved because of his righteousness. In speaking to Noach, Hashem mentions only one of the terms previously used to describe Noach's spiritual perfection. Our Sages attach an important lesson from the Almighty's brevity in speaking to Noach. When praising a person in the recipient's presence, we should be mentioning only a portion of the person's virtues. In contrast, outside of the recipient's presence, we should freely identify all of the person's strengths.

This is a difficult lesson to understand. We praise a person in order to communicate our appreciation of the individual's positive qualities. We are required to restrict the breadth of this commendation in the presence of the recipient. It seems that this restriction prevents us from fully expressing our appreciation. It would seem that our debt of appreciation would require the most full expression when the recipient is present! Furthermore, the Torah places great emphasis on honesty. When we limit our praise, we are less than fully truthful. These questions indicate that some overriding consideration is present. What is this consideration?

Torah Temimah suggests an answer to these questions. In order to fully appreciate his answer, we must begin by drawing from personal experience. Try to recall the last time you were present at a testimonial dinner. Often, the various speakers describe the honoree with countless superlatives. What goes through your mind? You may wonder whether the honoree – a mere mortal – can really embody these many forms of perfection. You may conclude that the

speakers are engaged in an elaborate process of flattery. The various accolades are not derived from an honest appraisal of the recipient. Instead, they are shamelessly designed to impress the honoree. An irony emerges. The overblown praises have had the opposite of the desired effect upon the audience. The audience begins to wonder where the border lies between reality and exaggeration. The speakers have compromised their credibility. Even the truthful elements of the praise are suspect. In a private conversation outside of the presence of the recipient, we would not be inclined to be as suspicious. The subject of the wonderful appraisal is not present. We conclude that this assessment cannot be designed to flatter. The recipient is not aware of the praise received. In this case, the person addressing us has more credibility. We are more inclined to judge the praise as sincere. Now, let us return to the testimonial.

How could the speakers preserve their integrity? After all, they are charged with the responsibility of complimenting the virtues of the honoree! How can they discharge this duty without being accused of flattery? This is the issue our Sages are addressing. The speakers must carefully remain within the boundaries of credibility. This requires avoiding exaggeration. This may even demand that the speakers show some reserve. Through limiting their praise, the speakers win the trust of the audience. Limited accolades make a greater impression than overblown praise. This is because the impression of flattery is avoided. In short, credibility dictates that the speakers resist identifying every positive quality of the honoree. This, then, is the lesson of our Sages. In the presence of the recipient, limited praise is more effective. Outside of the presence of the recipient, we are less suspect of flattery. We may be more liberal in our appraisal.

There is another possible explanation of our Sages' message. This explanation requires that we consider interpersonal relations. We know that some individuals feel appreciated. Others feel grossly unappreciated. What is the reason for these different perceptions? There are many possible explanations. Let us consider one of these. We all want to be appreciated. How do we determine if we are fully appreciated? This requires an act of personal appraisal. We compare our self-perception to the way in which

others see us. If we conclude that others perceive all of our fine qualities, we are pleased. We are satisfied with our friends. They recognize our positive aspects. However, what occurs if there is a divergence between the self-appraisal and the assessment of others? Assume this self-perception includes numerous positive aspects. Others fail to recognize these virtues. How will this individual react? It is likely that this divergence in perceptions will result in frustration and anger. The individual will feel that he or she is not appreciated. This person will ask why others do not see all his or her virtues. It is also likely this person will eventually become angry. It follows that the happier of these two individuals is the one whose self-appraisal is more modest. This person will also be more capable of living in peace with others. How can we encourage this type of relationship? In short, can we help assure that the individual's self-perception will not be inflated in relation to others' perception of the individual?

Perhaps, our Sages are addressing this issue. They are attempting to establish healthy interpersonal relations. Through praising an individual more fully in the person's absence, an important result occurs. Those hearing the full account of the person's virtues will be impressed. Hopefully, their estimation of the recipient of the praise will be greater than the recipient's own estimation of self-worth. The recipient has never heard the full measure of this praise. Others see in the individual greater virtue than the person perceives in him/her self. The individual will feel appreciated and valued by others. Positive interpersonal relations are fostered. □

Ritual Purity Woman's Rebirth

RIVKA OLENICK

(continued from page 1)

The great privilege of procreation or "giving life" within the framework of family purity was put in the hands of woman that she has safely guarded for centuries. In Genesis 3:20, it says: "But Adom called his wife's name Eve, because she had become the mother of all living." Chaya means "living" as in a living creature whereas Chava means "giving life," that also includes the intellectual and spiritual giving of life with reference to Eve. According to

Samson Raphael Hirsch: "It is through woman that man lives on in children." It is through the woman that an infant's religious status in Judaism is determined, whereas in Christianity and Islam it is through the man. No matter who she marries her children are Jewish. This does not mean that it is "ok" for a woman to marry a non-Jew but that the implication and consequences for a Jewish man marrying a gentile is quite severe. If he, God forbid should marry a non-Jew he has terminated himself. Unless he completely returns to God, ends the marriage and converts his children he has destroyed his contribution to the Klal. He has destroyed his ability to naturally live on through his future generations.

This is a very serious consideration, and should be taken more seriously with regard to non-observant Jewish men. These men need to be encouraged to marry Jewish women by understanding what they can actually contribute in terms of future generations.

Purity and cleanliness and impurity and uncleanness also apply to man in terms of his moral self and in relation to the system of family purity that woman keeps in place. So important is this system of cleanliness that the sixth section of the Mishna Torah is called Taharos, which includes the laws of purification, lustration (to make pure) and cleanliness. I believe that true purification includes "physical and mental hygiene."

(continued on next page)

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THE DISPERSION

RABBI BERNIE FOX

"And the entire earth had one language with uniform words." (Beresheit 11:1)

This pasuk introduces the discussion of the Dispersion. After the Deluge, humankind reestablishes itself. Population increases. However, society is very homogenous. All people share common ancestors, language, and customs. It is not surprising that Noah's offspring chose to live together and settle in a valley in Shinaar. Humanity joins together in constructing a magnificent city with a tower reaching into the heavens. They feel that this project will create social cohesion. The various members of the community will live together in this impressive city. They will not establish individual settlements. The Almighty objects to this plan. He brings about the development of a variety of languages among the families. The people no longer share a common language. Without this unifying influence, the various families drift apart and establish individual communities. Every incident included in the Torah serves a purpose. Some important lesson is taught. What is the message of this episode?

Our Sages offer a number of responses. Maimonides provides one of the most interesting explanations. Maimonides explains that the Torah asserts that the Almighty created the universe. The Torah recognizes that an obvious objection can be raised. It teaches us

that we are descendants from common ancestors. If we are descendants from a single set of ancestors, how can we account for diversity? Humanity is composed of radically diverse societies. There are many different languages and cultures. How can this be reconciled with the proposition that we all descend from Noah? Maimonides explains that the episode of the Dispersion is included in the Torah as a response to this question. The Dispersion established the beginnings of human diversity. This incident is included in the Torah to account for this diversity.

"And Hashem dispersed them from there over the face of the earth. And they desisted from building the city." (Beresheit 11:8) What was the objective of Noah's descendants in building their tower? It seems from the Chumash that the objective of this project was to create a home for all of humanity. The builders hoped that, through creating this home, a single cohesive society could be nurtured. Hashem intervened and disrupted the builders' plans. He instigated conflicts and division among the builders. The cohesiveness of the group dissolved. Sub-groups developed. Each group sought to differentiate itself. This led to the creation of diverse cultures and languages. Why did the Almighty disrupt the work of these social planners? It seems that their objective was

admirable. Much of the conflict and hatred throughout history is a result of the perceived differences between nations and peoples. These early social engineers had the foresight to work towards preventing this tragedy. It seems that the history of humanity would be far more civilized had these builders succeeded! The Chumash does not clearly indicate the reason for the Almighty's intervention. Therefore, the commentaries differ widely in their interpretation of this incident.

Sforno suggests that the incident must be understood in its context. The Chumash relates this incident immediately prior to the introduction of Avraham. This alludes to some connection between this incident and the development of Avraham. What is this relationship? These social planners existed at a time in which idolatry was widely practiced. The shared culture of humanity included this religious perspective. If the builders had succeeded, they would have created overwhelming religious uniformity. This uniformity would have encouraged absolute conformity. It would have been very difficult for any individual to question the religious perspective of all humanity. In addition, it would very easy to suppress any would-be critic. The fragmenting of society eliminated this problem. Religious diversity was initiated. This made it possible for a thinker, such as Avraham, to question the theologies of his era. Sforno concludes that the Dispersion was essential to the development of Avraham's monotheistic religion. Gershonides suggests another explanation of the incident. He begins with the assumption that the Almighty created a universe governed by natural laws. In such a universe, there is potential for natural disasters. Hurricanes, earthquakes, floods are all part of the pattern of nature. These disasters can destroy communities and wipe out entire populations. However, humanity survives. This is because, generally, these tragedies are localized. A volcano may erupt destroying an entire island. However, a community five hundred miles away will be relatively unaffected. It is obvious that the survival of humanity depends upon its dispersion. If all humanity were to concentrate in a specific geographic area, survival would be endangered. A single catastrophe could destroy all humankind. In order to prevent such a tragedy, Hashem dispersed humanity over the face of the globe. This assured that natural disaster would not jeopardize all of humankind.

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Sefer Beresheit 7:1. Mesechet Eruvin 18b. Rav Baruch HaLeyve Epstein, Torah Temimah on Sefer Beresheit 6:9. Rabbaynu Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam / Maimonides) Moreh Nevuchim, volume 3, chapter 50. Rabbaynu Ovadia Sforno, Commentary on Sefer Beresheit, 11:6. Rabbaynu Levi ben Gershon (Ralbag / Gershonides), Commentary on Sefer Beresheit, (Mosad HaRav Kook, 1994), p 98. □

Ritual Purity Woman's Rebirth

RIVKA OLENICK

(continued from page 4)

"Sanctify yourselves and be holy." Which means we do this not only in our physical life but in our moral and psychological life as well, this is the ideal. This is how to be holy. Listen to the following statement of the Rambam: "Physical cleanliness leads to the sanctification of the soul from reprehensible opinions, for He who is physically unclean has no soul." The Rambam is making a connection here with regard to how we are to approach cleanliness and holiness through our physical self and our intellectual/philosophical self. There are those who think that going to a mikvah to cleanse oneself is degrading and that the laws of family purity discriminate against women; that women live with a negative sense of self due to the idea of being impure or unclean. Impurity or uncleanness doesn't mean dirt or filth. These same people distort and misconstrue the concept and purpose of family purity laws. They are ignorant of the significance of a woman protecting and guarding these laws and that these laws were given to her specifically because of her great ability to adhere to and uphold family purity.

In observing this ritual purity she prepares herself physically and emotionally for this "rebirth." The given laws of immersion in the mikvah have tremendous symbolic significance and through all this a woman preserves the laws of family purity, given to her by God. In Judaism, marriage and family purity are based on holiness and the sanctity of God's name. These laws strengthen the bond between man and woman and sanctify their relationship before God. Christianity and Islam have no such laws as marriage and procreation have no inherent holiness in their religion. In Judaism, man and woman anticipate with joy the time when they can resume their relations and rejuvenate their relationship. Man recognizes the worth of his wife, she is dear to his heart and he understands his need for her friendship and trust. "She is his home." He realizes each time the tremendous importance of these laws that are placed in her care. He has a renewed appreciation for his Creator, Who in His laws brings happiness to husband and wife. This joy adds to a peaceful, calm home, the place where husband and wife can thrive together and individually in love and harmony. Where their children can benefit from this harmony and love and grow in morality as well. Together as a family they contribute to their community each with their skill and talent, helping others to come closer to Torah knowledge and mitzvos. "Sanctify yourselves and be holy." □

Noah and the Raven

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

Continued from page 1

"For G-d gives wisdom, from His mouth (comes) knowledge and understanding." The first part of this passage teaches that G-d is the Source of wisdom, and the latter part "from His mouth", teaches that the written words are vehicles through which this knowledge is demonstrated. We therefore must be careful to sense the apparent inconsistencies and nuances which are purposefully built in to the Torah so as to direct us to derive additional concepts. This appreciation will generate a respect in the Author's intelligence. Through an understanding of the cryptic style of the Torah, we learn new insights, and also develop learning proficiency which later assists our new searches for ideas.

There is an interesting series of passages in the story of Noah.

Upon the cessation of the rain, the Torah states (Genesis, 8:6-8): (6) "Noah opened up the window of the Ark which he made. (7) And he sent the raven, and it went out to and from until the waters dried from upon the Earth. (8) And he sent the dove from himself to see if the waters had ended from the face of the Earth."

A few questions present themselves:

1) When did G-d instruct Noah to make a "chalon", a window? Earlier (Gen. 6:16), G-d instructed Noah to make a "tzohar". Even if one follows the opinion that tzohar means window, we still need to ask why the Torah changed the word from "tzohar" to "chalon".

2) We also notice that the passage states "...the window which Noah made." Who else could have made it?! This seems superfluous. When we see something as apparently repetitive as this, we know there must be a lesson here.

3) What was the purpose of sending the raven? Why is it not disclosed, as is done regarding the purpose of the dove in passage 8?

I believe a few proper questions will lead one to the answer.

What is a window for? For when was the window to be used? Prior to the flood, or subsequent? What are the differences between a raven and a dove?

A window is clearly used to see what is outside. We can determine that Noah knew what was on the outside as the flood waters began, as he was told by G-

d that all life would be destroyed. (Gen. 6:17). Perhaps then, the window would be used subsequent to the flood. But for what? Sending out birds alone?

I think from the statements in the passages mentioned above, we can determine a concern of Noah's, which is not openly stated.

The Torah goes out of the way to tell us that Noah made the window. This is telling us what? Again, he made the entire ark, which includes the window. Shift the emphasis of the passage to detect a nuance: Do not read, "that Noah made", but rather, "that Noah made" - as opposed to G-d telling Noah to make it. Noah made this without G-d's instruction. The Torah is pointing out that Noah desired a window for some reason. If he knows what's happening prior to the flood, and also as the flood waters ran wild, then I suggest that he was concerned with the period subsequent to the flood. Meaning, Noah worried about what he would find after the flood was over.

In my opinion, Noah did not want to be faced with seeing the corpses of his society once the ark landed. This is why, according to a Rabbi, Noah planted wine grapes upon his exit from the ark. He was experiencing depression from solitude as the only members left on Earth, and used drunkenness to escape the depression. This very same worry is what prompted him to create a window, on his own accord. But prior to seeing what was out there, he sent the raven. Again, the Torah is concealing something, as it did not tell us why he sent the raven, but it did tell us why he sent the dove.

What is the difference between the two birds? The raven is flesh eating. I believe that Noah was not yet interested in seeing if the land dried up, as he didn't send the dove, for whose purpose this served. But he first sent a flesh eating bird - with a Torah-concealed purpose. I believe that purpose was to discern whether there were bodies near the ark, something Noah did not want to face. If the raven did not return, Noah would then know the raven found food - corpses - and he would be prepared to face the tragic site outside of the ark.

We see from this story that the Torah teaches us new insights by causing us to ask on a changed word, on an apparent repetition, and through an omitted explanation. The Torah is also discrete and thus conceals more distasteful information. □

The Rainbow

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

If Noah was promised by God that He wouldn't again engage floods to destroy the world and all flesh, what purpose was there for the rainbow to act as a sign? God's word to Noah should have been sufficient.

Upon examination of the passages, we notice that there are a few more questions.

1) If God already addressed Noah, Gen. 9:8. "And God said to Noah and to his sons with him saying", who then is God addressing in 9:12, "and God said this the sign of the treaty....."? If God is already speaking to Noah, He need not repeat in the middle of His conversation, "And God said to Noah". It's superfluous.

2) During God's first address, He mentions nothing about the rainbow, nor the later on mentioned "(future) generations of the world", (Gen. 9:12)

3) In His first address, why does God keep repeating "your sons with you" (9:8), "I establish my treaty with you" (9:9), "and all the beasts of the land with you" (9:10)

4) Why does God only introduce the rainbow and "future generations" in His second address?

I believe the answer to be as follows: The first address repeatedly mentions "with you" to indicate that the first address was directed solely towards Noah and his sons. This being the case, they did not need anything but God's word. That was in fact sufficient for them. This is why there is no mention of the rainbow or "future generations" in that first address to Noah and his sons. They were completely reassured by God's word alone and needed no additional sign. "Future" generations is omitted as this first address was only to Noah and his sons with him.

The reason why we find God addressing a second time is to indicate there is a new party to whom He is addressing. God was now addressing the "future generations", those of us after Noah who are in desperate need of assurance that God's oath remains in effect. This is alluded to by God saying a second time in 9:12, "and God said". Here, God is redirecting His speech to us. Not Noah. Therefore, God only commences mention of "future generations" and the rainbow in this second address, directed to those of us

who need the assurance that the original oath is firm.

The concept of an "os", a sign, means that the very rainbow which served to signify the commencement of the oath immediately subsequent to the flood, is still visible to us. The fact that it is still an intact heavenly phenomena, serves to prove to us that God's oath to never again destroy all flesh or the Earth is as real now, as when He declared it. This aberration in nature remains, teaching that God's oath remains.

We also notice that when God says in 9:15 that He will remember His oath, no mention of "seeing it" is necessary, as God needs no visual cues to keep a promise. Man however needs a security blanket, therefore in 9:16, it makes mention that it will be seen, as this passage refers to man's need.

Why was the oath signified by a rainbow in particular? I believe the Radak alludes to the answer when he recalls that during the flood itself there were no rainbows as there was complete cloud cover. No sun shone through. Perhaps what the Radak teaches is when we see a rainbow today, we realize that this is only possible if the cloud cover is incomplete, and allows the sun to shine through on the clouds, the moisture thereby refracting the peeking sunlight into its seven component hues - forming the rainbow. We are thereby assured that although based on our level, complete cloud cover and destruction should take place, but God doesn't allow it to, as proved to us by the rainbow's evidence of sunlight.

We are given a sign of God's mercy, that complete cloud cover and ultimate flooding will never again occur. □

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