



S. FLORIDA ZMANIM
CANDLE LIGHTING
6:24 PM
S''Z KRIAT SHEMA
10:15 PM
SUNSET:
6:40
MOTZEI SHABBOS:
7:16

"Written by a Multifaceted Student Body, Whose Ambition is to Enrich and Enhance Your Study of the Weekly Torah Portion"

PARSHAT NOACH

פרשת נח

~א' חשון תשע"ב~

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AVRAHAM— THE MISSING EPISODE

RABBI PERRY TIRSCHWELL

Next week we meet Avraham as a senior citizen. What was Avraham's childhood like? What was he like as a teenager? Young adult? Middle aged man? What was he like when he was your age and mine?

Most of us miss the last six psukim of this week's parsha, which describe Avraham's early years. Though they provide important insights into his relationship with his father, his wife, his brothers and his nephew, they tell us nothing about Avraham's religious journey.

Nechama Liebowitz points out that this is in contradistinction to the Torah's description of Noah and Moshe. The Torah tells us much about Moshe's early years, and famously describes Noah's religious commitment before G-d speaks to him. We understand why G-d chooses both Moshe and Noah. An every day school student learns the midrashim that describe Avraham breaking the idols and going through the fiery furnace. However, there is no mention of these incidents in the Chumash itself.

There are two well known opinions (Nedarim 32a) regarding as to what age Avraham recognized Hashem- age 3 or age 48. The Rambam (Avodah Zara 1:3) has an inspiring description of Avraham's spiritual awakening. He says that Avraham began to question who ran the world as soon as he was weaned, but did not "recognize his creator" until age 40. The commentary Hagahot Maimoniot explains that the Rambam understood that the two opinions in the Gemara are not in dispute. Both of them understand that Avraham does not wake up one day and "become religious." Avraham's religious journey spanned for about 40 years. This just begs the question- why does the Torah not tell us about Avraham's early years?

I suggest that the Torah purposely does not describe how Avraham came to monotheism, because the Torah does not want us to think that there is one way to find Hashem. Some of us see G-d's hand in our own lives, some are inspired by the wonder of science, some are seers of G-d in history, some just know it.

Avraham is the world's role model par excellence when it comes to how to interact with others, relate to wealth, deal with pain, prioritize family, and how to subjugate your will to G-d's will. However, there is not one way to believe in Hashem, and therefore the Torah remains silent. We all must search and identify the road that has the most meaning for each of us.

A GENERAL “MISCOMMUNICATION”

GABRIEL GRYNSTEIN (‘13)

There have been numerous stories throughout Jewish history where people dispute G-d’s commands. One of the many famous clashes occurred in this week’s parsha, *Parshat Noach*. After G-d flooded the world to exterminate all the evil that was in it, Noach and his family began to multiply and fill the Earth. They all spoke one language and understood each other very well.

The generations of people preceding the flood were only interested in themselves; they thought themselves to be supermen and each man simply lived to benefit himself. They used violence and force against their weaker neighbors, paying no attention to the laws. The new generation produced by Noach was the exact opposite. The individual did not count for himself; he counted only as part of the community and he had to dismiss his own interests for the sake of the whole.

Had they confined themselves to this kind of social life, everything would have worked out and been fine, but the post flood generation took their unity to an extreme. They overdid it. The tremendous strength that grew out of their organization and goodwill made them overly proud, and this pride caused them to turn against G-d. They decided to build a tower that reached heaven to make themselves equal to G-d. This symbol of their seemingly divine strength was to be built in the valley of the Land of Shinar.

However, this construction plan did not sit well with G-d. He decided to shatter their ego by destroying their ability to understand one another. He confused people by splitting everyone up into different nations and tribes, each with a different language, as seen in the Tower of Babel. After G-d split the people into 70 different groups, they were forced to abandon their plan to reach Him, and instead retreated to different sects of the world with those who shared a similar vernacular.

From this historic moment in Jewish history we can learn a very important lesson. At some point in time, we may feel the need to disobey and distrust G-d. We may sometimes believe that our intelligence and technology is all we need to survive and guarantee our safety. The lesson we can learn from the Tower of Babel is that the feeling of self-sufficiency based on our intelligence and technology is ultimately an illusion. History has shown us that nations and leaders have fallen to arrogance, and just like Babel, those nations and leaders were eventually destroyed. One must realize that we need G-d to help us and guide us in our everyday lives; without Him, we cannot survive.

TOGETHER WE STAND

SHIRA CLEMENTS (‘14)

In this week’s parsha, *Parshat Noach*, we read:

The whole Earth was of one language and of one common purpose. They said to one another, “Come, let us build a city, and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves” (11:1-4).

In citing the Talmud, Rabbi Yisroel of Kozhnitz suggests that “Jealousy, lust, and pursuit of glory remove a person from the world.” Jealousy, lust, and the pursuit of glory have all existed since the beginning of man. People of Noach’s time would steal, commit adultery, and even worship idols because they were envious of their neighbors. Therefore, people would blatantly take belongings from their fellow man even if the person from whom they stole was their best friend. Thus, Hashem needed to destroy all of these amoral souls by sending a flood.

However, we know that the generation of the Tower of Babel was not demolished, they were only scattered. The Midrash explains that because the people of the generation of the flood were thieves, and were not united, Hashem kills them. However, because the people during the time of the Tower of Babel “were of one mind” and came together as one for the purpose of building a Tower, they were simply dispersed into other lands and flourished as separate groups.

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Further, “Rebbe says, ‘This teaches us the importance of peace and unity: Even if the Israelites were idolatrous but united, God says, ‘I cannot punish them because they lived in peace and unity’” (Bereisheit Rabbah 38:6).

Throughout Jewish history we have endured severe persecutions and situations. We must take these experiences as a lesson: that the future of the Jewish people rests solely on our will to unite together as one nation.

Each of us in WYHS can help the Jews around the world unite by just reaching out to someone you barely talk to, in order to foster a unity within our people.

THE ABSURDITY OF PARANOIA

ARIEL HAAR (‘13)

“He sent out the raven, and it kept going and returning until the drying of the waters from upon the earth” (8:7).

The raven was a reluctant messenger to say the least. After being confined in the ark for many months, Noah looked out onto the water-covered earth. Was this the end of the flood? Were the waters finally receding? Was life going return to a semblance of normality? In order to find out, Noah decided to send out the raven to investigate. But the raven refused to go. All he did was keep “going and returning,” lingering above the ark and refusing to let it out of his sight. What is the reason for this strange behavior?

Rashi, who quotes the Talmud in *Sanhedrin*, explains that the raven “was suspicious of Noah with regard to its mate.” Somehow, the raven believed that Noah was sending him away from the ark for this special mission because he wanted to be alone with the female raven. And he therefore circled endlessly over the ark, keeping a keen watch over Noah.

This is certainly an odd *agadah*, explanation, especially for someone unfamiliar with the style of the Sages. A new student of Ohr Somayach in Israel in the process of returning to Torah had just been taught this Rashi when he met a member of the faculty. “So how is it going?” asked the rebbi. “Pretty good,” the young fellow replied. “And what are you learning?” “I’m learning Chumash,” he replied, “Noah, specifically”. “And is it going well?” asked the rebbi. “Just great. But there’s one problem. I’ve just learned a Rashi today that is ridiculous, pardon the expression.” “Really? And which Rashi is that?” asked the rebbi. “The one about the raven that is worried about Noah starting up with his mate. What is with the raven? C’mom. Give me a break.”

The Rebbi smiled and placed his arm around the young man’s shoulders. “You need to become more familiar with the style of *agadah*, my young friend. You need to find the keys to the code. Our Sages did not come to teach us here about the ravens. They are teaching us about human beings. The fears of the raven were, of course, ridiculous as you correctly pointed out. That’s the whole point. Our sages are teaching us about paranoia!” Paranoia makes no sense. It is ridiculous. When a general sends a soldier on a mission, should he assume he is chosen because he is qualified and can be expected to succeed? Or should he suspect that the general has it in for him and wants to get rid of him by placing him in a precarious situation? Sanity chooses the first, paranoia the second.

Has you ever seen two people talking and their conversation comes to an abrupt end as soon as you approach? Do you wonder what you ever did to those people and why they would bear a grudge against you? These are paranoid thoughts. Most likely, they were gossiping about some insignificant topic, and they were embarrassed to have you hear what nonsense occupies their minds. This is certainly a more logical explanation for what usually happens. But for some reason, it is not the one that comes to your mind. Why is this so?

Because we all suffer from a little paranoia. At the root of this type of paranoia lies egocentrism. We tend to view everything around us in terms of how it affects us, because in our own eyes, we are the center of the universe. We do not easily interpret anything we experience as being unrelated to ourselves, and so we suffer from paranoia.

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I once heard that until the age of 20 we are completely obsessed with what others are thinking about us. From 20- 40 we develop enough self-confidence to disregard what others are thinking about us. And after the age of 40 we develop the wisdom to see that others are not thinking about us – they are thinking about themselves. Noach had plenty to think about besides the raven's mate. Had the raven had the wisdom to understand this, he would have spared himself the endless circles above the ark.

ITS ALL ABOUT RESPECT

JERI VEINGRAD ('13)

Everyone knows the famous story of Noach's ark, and within every culture there is a variation of the story. Most people treat it as a legend and consider it a nice way to teach children the names of different animals. However, one who is a Torah student knows that there is more to the story of Noach's Ark than just a tale about animals and their names.

In *Parshat Noach* we are told that Noach exits the ark after the flood and immediately brings sacrifices to Hashem. After this, Noach plants a vineyard; he makes wine from the grapes, drinks the wine and becomes drunk. His son Cham finds him intoxicated in his tent, undressed, in an embarrassing state. Instead of helping Noach, Cham leaves his father in his shame and reports the incident to his brothers Shem and Yafet.

Shem and Yafet immediately set out to cover their father and minimize his embarrassment. They take a blanket and drape it over their father without staring at him. When Noach awakens and finds out what happened, he blesses Shem and Yafet and curses the descendants of Cham (See Breisheit 9:18-29).

The focus of this story is the honor that Shem and Yafet had for their father as opposed to the blatant disrespect displayed by Cham. Shem and Yafet tried to hide his embarrassment, while Cham sought to publicize it. They showed their father respect and attempted to restore his dignity.

There is an important lesson that we should take from this story. We must always try to understand others; not to seek their flaws, but to try to bring out the good in everyone. When the opportunity presents itself, we should even try to prevent others from becoming aware of the mistakes and personality flaws of a given individual. In the merit of taking this lesson to heart, may Hashem always emphasize the good in us and ignore our faults and shortcomings.

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