

Although God will never bring another Flood, the account is in the Torah, so it must relate to us. What lessons about God's justice can we learn from the Flood, and apply to ourselves today?

1997
2008
11
YEARS

JewishTimes

Dedicated to Scriptural and Rabbinic Verification
of Authentic Jewish Beliefs and Practices

Volume VIII, No. 2...Oct. 31, 2008

WWW.MESORA.ORG/JEWISHTIMES

Download and Print Free

IN THIS ISSUE

PARSHA: NOACH	I-5
THE ARK: 2 MISSIONS	I,7
LETTERS	6
NOACH & THE ANIMALS	8
GILGAMESH EPIC	9



JOIN IN THE MITZVAH
WWW.MESORA.ORG/DONATE

CANDLE LIGHTING 10/31

Boston	5:21	Moscow	4:34
Chicago	5:28	New York	5:35
Cleveland	6:05	Paris	5:13
Detroit	6:09	Philadelphia	5:41
Houston	6:18	Phoenix	5:19
Jerusalem	4:32	Pittsburgh	6:00
Johannesburg	6:05	Seattle	5:36
Los Angeles	5:43	Sydney	7:03
London	4:17	Tokyo	4:29
Miami	6:22	Toronto	5:53
Montreal	5:25	Washington DC	5:51

Weekly Parsha

Noach

RABBI BERNIE FOX

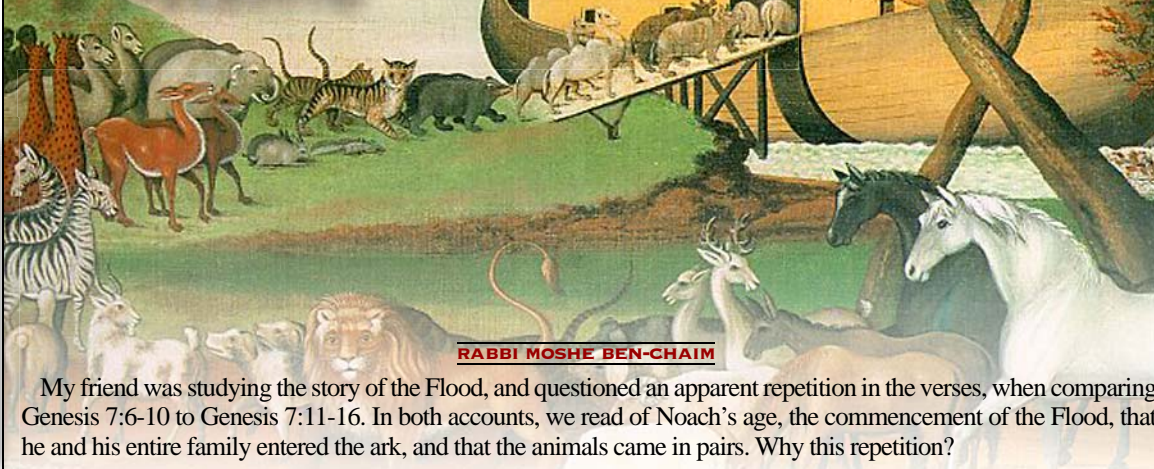
Recite Only a Portion of a
Person's Praise in His Presence

"These are the chronicles of Noach. Noach was a righteous man. He was faultless in his generation. Noach walked with Hashem." (Beresheit 6:9)

(continued on next page)

Weekly Parsha

the ARK 2 Missions



RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

My friend was studying the story of the Flood, and questioned an apparent repetition in the verses, when comparing Genesis 7:6-10 to Genesis 7:11-16. In both accounts, we read of Noach's age, the commencement of the Flood, that he and his entire family entered the ark, and that the animals came in pairs. Why this repetition?

However, as would be expected upon closer examination, we find many distinctions between these two accounts:

Genesis 7:6-10

7:6: "And Noach was 600 years old..."
7:7: "And Noach entered...due to the Flood"
7:8: "From the pure animals"
7:9: "Two of each came to Noach, male and female..."

Genesis 7:11-16

7:11: "In the 600th year of Noach's life..."
7:13: "On that very day, Noach entered..."
7:14: "And all animals according to their species..."
7:15: "Two of each came...all that possessed life..."

Why these distinctions? Not only in the description of the Flood event itself do we find discrepancies, but previously, in God's original command, there too we find two, distinct accounts.

In verses 6:18-22 we find God commanding Noach to enter two of each species - with no mention of "pure and impure" animals, but simply, to sustain their "species". God also commands Noach to take food for his sustenance.

(continued on page 7)

(Noach cont. from pg. 1)

Weekly Parsha

JewishTimes

Weekly Journal on Jewish Thought



The JewishTimes is published every Friday and delivered by email. Subscriptions are FREE. To subscribe, send any email message to: subscribe@mesora.org

Subscribers will also receive our advertisers' emails and our regular email announcements.

Contacts:

We invite feedback or any questions at this address: office@mesora.org
Ph(516)569-8888 Fx(516)569-0404

Advertising:

<https://www.Mesora.org/Advertising>

Donations:

<https://www.Mesora.org/Donate>

Content at Mesora.org:**JewishTimes Archives:**

<http://www.Mesora.org/JewishTimes>

Philosophy Archives:

<http://www.Mesora.org/Philosophy>

Weekly Parsha Archives:

<http://www.Mesora.org/WeeklyParsha>

Audio Archives:

<http://www.Mesora.org/Audio>

Interactive, Live, Audible Sessions:

<http://www.Mesora.org/TalkLive>

Database Search:

<http://www.Mesora.org/Search>

Articles may be reprinted without consent of the JewishTimes or the authors, provided the content is not altered, and credits are given.

Parshat Noach opens with a description of 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.

Next, the Torah relates that 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.[1]

Our Sages derive an important lesson from Hashem's brevity in speaking to Noach. When praising a person in the recipient's presence, we should mention only a portion of the person's virtues. In contrast, outside of the recipient's presence we should we should freely identify all of the person's strengths.[2]

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 thorough 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 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 bestowed upon him. 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



extolling 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.[3]

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

(continued on next page)

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 our self-appraisal and the assessment of others? If our self-perception includes numerous positive aspects that others fail to recognize these virtues, how will we react? It is likely that this divergence in perceptions will result in frustration and anger. We will feel that we are not appreciated. We will ask why others do not see all of our virtues. It is also likely we will eventually become angry.

It follows that person will be happier if he is modest in his self-appraisal. 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 himself. The individual will feel appreciated and valued by others. Positive interpersonal relations are fostered.

Hashem's Selection of Noach

"These are the generations of Noach. Noach was a righteous and perfected man among the people of his generations. Noach went with Hashem." (Beresheit 6:9)

The pasuk specifies that Noach was righteous "among the people of his generations." The Sages agree upon the general intention of this phrase. It implies that Noach's righteousness must be evaluated relative to his times.

However, the Sages dispute the specific message intended by the phrase. Rebbe Shimon ben Lakish interprets the phrase as amplifying Noach's greatness. Noach achieved spiritual excellence despite living during the period during which human conduct reached its lowest



point. Had he lived during a more favorable era, he would have attained even greater perfection. Rebbe Yochanan understands the phrase as qualifying Noach's accomplishment. Noach should be viewed as righteous and perfected only in comparison to his society. Were he compared to Avraham, these accolades would be less appropriate.[4]

This dispute is difficult to understand. It would seem that there is no actual difference of opinion. The two evaluations represent complementary perspectives. Noach was certainly a very great person. He rose above the corruption of his generation. If he had lived in a more civilized world, there is no doubt he would have attained even greater heights. It is also true that he did not achieve the perfection of Avraham. These two assessments are not mutually exclusive. What is the dispute between the Sages?

It seems that the dispute does not concern Noach's character. Instead the dispute focuses on the intent and message of the pasuk. The passage must be understood in its context. The Chumash has just related Hashem's decision to destroy humanity. Noach and his family are to be saved from this decree. In our pasuk the Chumash explains the reason for Noach's salvation.

Our Sages are proposing two alternatives for explaining the rescue of Noach. Rebbe Shimon ben Lakish maintains that the pasuk is praising Noach. It stresses his resistance to the corrupt influence of his society. This interpretation assumes that that Noach was saved as a consequence of his own merit. Rebbe Yochanan understands Noach's salvation differently. Hashem had decreed that the Deluge that would

destroy humanity. Afterwards humanity would be reestablished. The reestablishment of humanity required that some people be spared. Hashem chose those who were the best people of the time. Noach and his family were chosen for this role. The pasuk explains that they were saved because they were the best of the generation. They would be the new progenitors of the human race. It was relative righteousness which saved Noach and his family.

The Seven Commandments Are a Revealed Law for All Humanity

"But flesh, when its soul, its blood, is still within it, you shall not eat." (Beresheit 9:4)

This passage prohibits all descendants of Noach from eating the flesh of an animal that is still alive. This is one of the seven commandments that G-d gave Noach's descendants. These commandments were binding on all humankind until the Revelation at Sinai.

At the Revelation, G-d gave the Jewish people 613 commandments. However, the seven commandments that G-d gave to Noach still apply to all those who are not members of the Jewish nation. Maimonides explains that the reward of eternal existence is not limited to the Jewish people. Non-Jews who adhere to the seven commandments G-d gave to Noach also merit eternity.

Maimonides specifies that mere observance of these seven commandments is inadequate. The non-Jew must recognize that the commandments are of Divine origin, and revealed by the Hashem. However, if the commandments are observed merely as a social contract, because of their rationality, the observance cannot be characterized as righteous.[5]

Why does Maimonides insist that recognition of the Divine origin of the commandments is critical, and that rational derivation insufficient? It seems that Maimonides maintains that it is not the mere behaviors described by these commandments that define righteousness. Instead, it is the act of intentionally conforming to the will of the Creator. A person who observes the commandments without recognition of their Divine origin does not demonstrate a desire to serve G-d. Only the individual who recognizes the Divine origin of the commandments demonstrates this devotion and commitment to Hashem.

(continued on next page)

(Noach cont. from previous page)

Weekly Parsha

There Will Never Be another Deluge

"And the Lord smelled the sweet savour; and the Lord said in His heart: I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done." (Beresheit 8:21)

The above passage is one of the most enigmatic pesukim in the Torah. In order to appreciate the difficulty with this passage, we must understand its context. Adam's descendants developed into a society of complete depravity and corruption. Hashem decided to bring an end to the evil of humanity. He brought the Deluge upon the world. Noach and his family were spared destruction. Noach was commanded to build an ark. He was to find refuge for himself and his family in this ark. He was also commanded to bring into the ark representatives of each species of animal life. After the Deluge, these representative pairs of each species would repopulate the earth with animal life.

In our passage, Hashem makes a commitment to never again destroy the Earth. The reason that Hashem states for this commitment is that man's heart is evil from birth. This seems like an odd reason for not again destroying the Earth. Hashem is just and rewards our righteousness and punishes evil. It seems remarkable that our evil nature should serve as the reason for our salvation. Hashem seems to be saying that we will be spared future destruction because we are evil by nature.

Furthermore, if Hashem will now spare humanity from further destruction because of the frailty of human nature, why was the Deluge necessary? The generation destroyed by the Deluge was also evil by nature. If this failing is a basis for sparing humanity, why was the generation of the Deluge destroyed? In explaining the destruction of the generation of the Deluge, the Torah tells us that "And the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." [6] Hashem will destroy humanity because of its proclivity for evil. It seems that the very reason Hashem provides for destroying the generation of the Deluge emerges in our parasha as the reason for sparing humanity in the future!

The comments of the commentaries on this issue only add to the enigma. Nachmanides comments on our passage that Hashem is offering two reasons for not again destroying humanity. First, we are evil because Hashem

created us with an evil inclination. Second, as we mature and gain wisdom, we have the ability to overcome this handicap and achieve righteousness. [7] Apparently, Hashem commits Himself to spare future generations because He accepts responsibility for humanity's sinfulness. Wickedness is an inevitable outcome of the nature Hashem created in humankind. In addition, even though we have this tendency towards evil, we do have the ability to overcome our nature.

Nachmanides' comments only reinforce our questions. It seems that at least the first of these reasons for sparing future generations should also have been relevant to the generation destroyed by the Deluge. This generation was also created with a penchant for evil. If we deserve to be spared, why did the generation of the Deluge not deserve similar allowances?

In order to understand Nachmanides' comments, it is useful to consider two additional problems. First, according to Nachmanides, Hashem's second reason for not again destroying humanity is that although we are born with an inclination towards evil, as we mature and attain wisdom, we have the ability or potential to overcome our evil tendencies. Observation seems to confirm this contention. We do observe

that even children who are notably undisciplined and rowdy mature into responsible individuals. Yet, it seems that in deciding to destroy the generation of the Deluge, Hashem concluded that the established behavioral patterns would not be overcome or outgrown. The generation of the Deluge was judged to be lost beyond redemption. If this was possible – for a generation to become corrupt beyond rescue – why can this same development not occur after the Deluge?

Only flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall you not eat. (Beresheit 9:4)

There is a second problem that should be considered. Immediately, after noting His decision to spare future generations, Hashem addresses Noach. In this prophecy, He reveals to Noach a commandment. Hashem tells Noach that he and his descendants are forbidden from consuming the flesh of an animal that is still alive. The animal must first be put to death. Then, its flesh can be consumed. [8] This commandment is one the seven commandments that are given to all of humanity. According to the Talmud, the first six of these commandments were given to Adam. These six commandments prohibit idolatry, cursing Hashem, murder, sexual immorality, robbery, and require the establishment of courts. [9]

(continued on next page)

JewishTimes

The Weekly Journal on Jewish Thought

It's better to give and to receive!

Give: Email a FREE subscription of the JewishTimes to a friend or relative and they'll also receive 2 free gifts at right: our 60 pg book Retrospective and the 32 pg Passover Special edition with astonishing imagery.

Receive: As you help grow our readership, more advertisers place ads. We pass that on to you in the form of your continued, free JewishTimes subscription. Plus, we'll give you these 2 publications! *Invite others today!*

www.Mesora.org/Subscriptions



There is a notable difference between the six commandments that were given to Adam and the seventh that was revealed to Noach. The first six commandments provide a basic moral and ethical code of behavior. The rationale for each is self-evident. In contrast, the seventh commandment that was revealed to Noach has a different design. Sefer HaChinuch explains that cruelty is one of the most destructive character traits. The Torah forbids us to eat the flesh from an animal that is still alive because this behavior reflects and cultivates cruelty within the personality.[10] It is notable that Sefer HaChinuch does not suggest that the reason for the commandment is the innate immorality of cruelty towards animals. Instead, he asserts that the activity is prohibited because of the damage it does to the human personality.

This indicates a fundamental difference between the first six commandments given to Adam and this seventh revealed to Noach. The first six are a description of a basic moral and ethical society. This seventh commandment is designed to encourage the development of a refined and balanced personality. This objective represents an advancement beyond the minimal function of the first six commandments.

This raises an interesting question. Why was Adam not given any commandments of the type revealed to Noah? Of course, this specific commandment could not have been given to Adam. He was not permitted to eat the flesh.[11] However, why was not some other commandment of this type given to Adam? Certainly, he too would have benefited from commandments designed to refine the human personality!

These two questions indicate that the commandment that Hashem revealed to Noach represents a new paradigm for the relationship between Hashem and humankind. Hashem revealed to Adam only the most basic commandments required to foster a functional society. The laws revealed to Adam did not provide any means for advancing the society or assuring the wholesomeness of its members. It was left to Adam and his descendants to define their mission and to develop the behaviors necessary to achieve this mission. The concept of commandments designed to refine and perfect the human personality is absent from this paradigm.

Humanity failed to meet this challenge. Left to find meaning and truth on its own, humanity gradually slipped towards perversion and depravity. Hashem destroyed this failed humanity with the Deluge.

The post-Deluge era represents a new paradigm

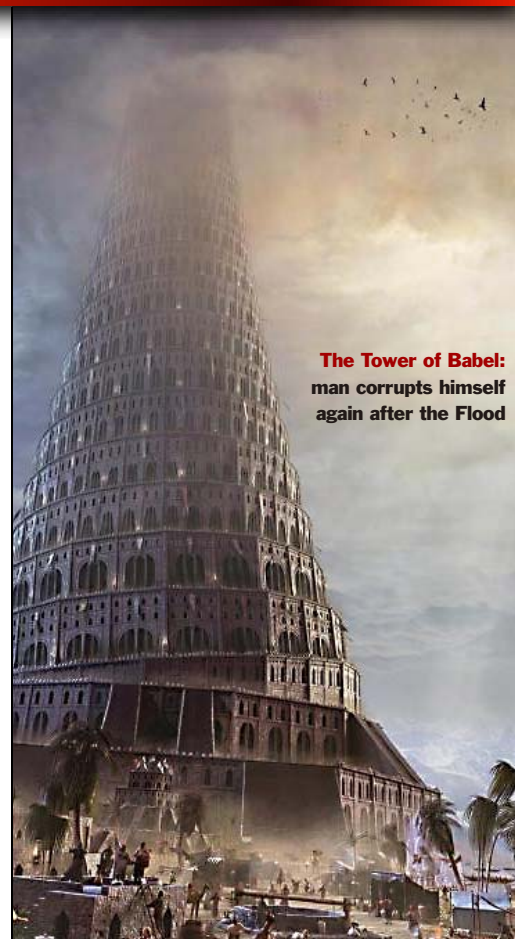
for the relationship between Hashem and humanity. Humanity was no longer left to find its own path. Now, Hashem revealed Himself to humanity as teacher and guide. He provided a new type of commandment to Noach. With this commandment, Hashem communicated the necessity of commandments that go beyond creating structure within society. Humanity needed and received the first commandment designed to refine the personality and insulate it from the perversity of the generation of the Deluge. This new paradigm eventually resulted in the revelation of the Torah to Bnai Yisrael. This revelation would not have been appropriate within the pre-Deluge paradigm. But once Hashem assumed the role of teacher, this revelation became inevitable.

We can now understand Nachmanides' comments. Man was created with an evil inclination and the ability – with the development of maturity and wisdom – to overcome this tendency. However, before the Deluge, man was required to achieve this advancement on his own. He was not given Hashem's guidance. He was charged with full responsibility for finding his path.

Although pre-Deluge humanity had the potential to achieve this advancement, it failed to meet the challenge. Rather than advancing towards meaning and truth, society degenerated. In the pre-Deluge paradigm there was no salvation for humanity. Humanity had demonstrated that despite its great potential it could not advance itself without more extensive guidance. This requisite level of guidance was not part of the pre-Deluge paradigm. The result of these failings of the generation of the Deluge was its destruction.

The post-Deluge era represents the establishment of a new paradigm. In this paradigm, it is assumed that man is dominated in youth by an evil inclination. He can overcome this proclivity. But humanity cannot achieve this end on its own. Humanity is no longer responsible to find its own path without Hashem's guidance. Humanity will never again be destroyed because in the new paradigm Hashem will become the faithful teacher of humanity. He will provide laws and direction. He will guide humanity down its path.

In other words, its proclivity for evil led the generation of the Deluge to its destruction. This was the only possible resolution within the pre-Deluge paradigm. However, this same tendency dictated the establishment of a new paradigm. This new relationship with Hashem – as humanity's teacher – is the salvation of humankind. ■



The Tower of Babel:
man corrupts himself
again after the Flood

[1] Sefer Beresheit 7:1.

[2] Mesechet Eruvin 18b.

[3] Rav Baruch HaLeyve Epstein, Torah Temimah on Sefer Beresheit 6:9.

[4] Mesechet Sanhedrin 108a.

[5] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam / Maimonides) Mishne Torah, Hilchot Melachim 9:11.

[6] Sefer Beresheit 6:5.

[7] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Nachman (Ramban / Nachmanides), Commentary on Sefer Beresheit 8:21.

[8] Rabbaynu Shlomo ben Yitzchak (Rashi), Commentary on Sefer Beresheit 9:4.

[9] Mesechet Sanhedrin 56b.

[10] Rav Aharon HaLeyve, Sefer HaChinuch, Mitzvah 452.

[11] Rabbaynu Shlomo ben Yitzchak (Rashi), Commentary on Sefer Beresheit 1:29.



Letters



Letters

from our

READERS



Man of Torah: II

Reader: Thank you, Rabbi.

Without question, any "idea" concerning God that contradicts human reason is false. So to the extent that a "religionist" is one who accepts such ideas, I would reject the religionist's approach as well.

What I am not clear about is the extent to which you might say that "faith" or "belief" is a critical part of Abraham's life, i.e. Is Abraham entirely dependent upon his own ability to understand based upon sheer observation, intellect, and reason - or can we say that he is able to break through the barriers imposed by his own limited ability to understand in order to achieve greater knowledge of God through faith?

For the sake of clarity, if I may, I would offer the following definition of faith as attributed to Saul of Tarsus:

Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

Mesora: Saul's definition is fine. But this must be based on an initial "sheer observation, intellect, and reason" as you put it. It follows thus: if on has faith in Jesus, who never provided proof of the abilities many claimed he possessed, this is foolish faith. But as Abraham first used reason to arrive at his concept of the true God, Abraham had basis to have subsequent faith in God's promises. Abraham's faith is based on proofs. Faith in Jesus is baseless.

The difference is that Abraham 'started' his acceptance of God with proof, while religionists start with faith.

Reader: Thanks again, Rabbi, and thanks in advance for your forbearance.

So if I am understanding you correctly, Abraham started his acceptance of God with proofs based on his ability to reason. These proofs - again, based on his ability to reason - further served as the basis for his faith in God's promises.

This raises some questions: What sort of proof did Abraham have that made leaving his country, his kindred and his father's house for an unnamed land reasonable?

Based upon your concept that understanding necessarily precedes faith, is God's trustworthiness in practice not then based exclusively upon the limits of human reasoning? i.e. What makes Abraham righteous; is it simply his keen ability to reason?

Mesora: You asked: 1) "What sort of proof did Abraham have that made leaving his country...etc". This was God's contact with him via prophecy. No greater proof exists. 2) "is God's trustworthiness in practice not then based exclusively upon the limits of human reasoning?" No. Once Abraham understood God as Creator, he accepted all without needing to know the hows and whys. 3) "What makes Abraham righteous; is it simply his keen ability to reason?"

Human righteousness is defined as "man following God's morality". Abraham followed God perfectly, so we define this as perfect morality and righteousness. In contrast, those who are ignorant of God's ways, and follow their own, subjective morality, cannot be moral. Morality can only be defined as what the Creator of morality defines as such.

Reader: You wrote "Saul's definition is fine. But this must be based on an initial "sheer observation, intellect, and reason" as you put it.

Once Abraham understood God as Creator, he accepted all without needing to know the hows and whys."

OK... Then it appears that you would say provided we start with the idea that initially it is God who reveals Himself to man, and man is then capable of knowing God with certainty through observation and application of the gift of reason thereby making it reasonable for man to trust God, there is indeed a place in man's quest to know God for faith to precede understanding. True?

Incidentally, I would agree entirely with this.

Thanks once again, Rabbi.

Mesora: Correct. But I would clarify that God need not reveal Himself - as in Revelation at Sinai - for men like Abraham to discover the truth of God. Abraham used his keen intellect to "know" God's existence even without Revelation. But the masses do require Torah...communication of God's Revelation. That was precisely the purpose of Sinai: to stand for all time as the undeniable proof of God's existence, His will for mankind, and to reject all impostor religions. ■

Noah's Righteousness

Reader: Shalom. I read Rashi's commentary about Noah. From one side he said Noah was considered by the Rabbis a righteous man. Others say if he lived in Avraham's time, he would not be so righteous. I have few questions about it.

First, if God Himself said Noah is "righteous", why question it?

Secondly, why question only the righteousness of Noah? Why is Abraham too not questioned? If it's because of Noah's one son Cham, we have his two others Shem, and Ever, who were Masters of the Patriarchs! And Avraham's lineage also produced some bad types, like Ishmael and Essav. Could Cham diminish Noah's righteousness?

If you agree he was completely righteous, then how do we understand the position 'against' his righteousness? *Thank you very much.*

Mesora: You must notice: the Rabbis debate Noah's righteousness due to the extra word "bidor-sav", meaning, "in his generation". They don't debate over the word "righteous". The verse would have said about a totally righteous man, "he was righteous", omitting any extra word "bidorosav". But as this word is included, there is Torah license for speculation as to this unique word, not applied to any other person. Thus, no question arises concerning Abraham's righteousness, since this word "bidor-sav" is not found in connection with him, or any other Torah personality.

Regarding attribution of blame to any man for his son's wrongdoings, the Torah many times teaches "Each man dies for his OWN sins". God does not fault a father for his son's sins, nor a son for his father's sins. Each man is punished for his own wrongdoings. This is most fair, since each man and woman possesses his and her own freewill. Each person is the sole cause of their merits and sins.

Reader: Even then, the Rabbis use the word "Bidorotav" to argue on Noah's righteousness. That was my point: Why question it? If "bidorotav" suggests a lack of righteousness, then there should be complete agreement among Rabbis about Noah's lack of righteousness. Why the is there a view that contends that Noah was completely righteous?

Mesora: You are correct, I must answer differently.

This word "bidorosav" allows for speculation. Some speculate that it indicates a lack of righteousness, while some speculate that it is a praise. Therefore I must retract my first answer, and now answer as follows: the word "bidorosav" is neutral, and may indicate something negative, or positive, as Rashi teaches. Since it is not clear, the Rabbis argue on its intent. ■

Only later in verses 7:1-2, do we read, "And God said to Noah, 'come, you and your entire household to the ark, because you I have seen as righteous before Me in this generation. From all the pure animals take seven each, man and his wife, and from the animals that are not pure, two, man and his wife.'" There is a clear distinction between God's two commands. First, God addresses the issues of "species" and "Noah's sustenance". Later, in a separate address, God refers to the "pure and impure" animals, His appellation "man and wife" is seen (regarding animals), and also, we read of Noah's "righteousness." (The Rabbis teach us that the seven pure animals were required, as Noah was to offer sacrifices with them. What does this teach us?)

The alignment of Noah's fulfillment of God's word and the pure animals, is indicative. Similarly joined, (previously in God's command) is God's aligning of Noah's righteousness, and the mention of pure animals. In another other matter, we find a correlation between God's command that Noah take food, and the reference to animals as species, not as pure or impure. It appears there are two distinct goals in the Flood.

I would suggest that God had two plans; 1) the survival of human and animal life, and, 2) sustaining man as a servant of God.

I say this, as God addresses Noah two distinct times. His first address refers to animal life as a "species", and He urges Noah to take food for all. Here, God outlines the first goal in the plan of the flood, i.e. that human and animal life continue, "as an ends in itself". This is a subtle point, but quite interesting: God desired - for whatever reason - that life continue, aside from the second goal that man perfect himself. Why else would God address this aspect, separate from the second address? Only afterwards do we read that God noted Noah's righteousness, and referring to animals as pure and impure. What is this element of "purity" to teach us? This is what the Rabbis stated, that the animals have a future purpose of sacrifice, which is dependent upon animal purity. God aligns Noah's righteousness and animal purity to teach of a second goal in the ark, i.e., that man exist to serve God. Sacrifice is the service of God.

There are two distinct goals in the ark; 1) sustaining all life, 2) enabling man's perfection. The reason this is startling, is that we read (Psalms, 115:16) "The heavens, are heavens to God, but the Earth He gave to the sons of man." This indicates that the Earth is solely for the goal of man's perfection. If this is so, how can there be a separate goal in the ark of sustaining life, independent of man's perfection? How can there be two goals? There should be only one goal for the Earth: man's perfection!

On this verse in Psalms, Radak writes the following:

"And those lacking knowledge think, that man's dominion in the Earth, is akin to God's dominion in the heavens, but they do not speak properly. For the kingship of God, over all does He reign. Rather, the explanation of 'but the Earth He gave to the sons of man' (is) that man is like an appointee of God in the Earth, over all therein, and all is at the word of God."

It appears that Radak denounces the view that the Earth has a singular goal - that it exists solely for man. Yes, God did instruct man to "subdue" the Earth (Gen. 1:28), but neither this statement, nor the verse in Psalms, indicates a 'singular' purpose of the Earth. These two verses teach a purpose, not of the Earth, but of man, i.e., that this Earth be used by him in his pursuit of perfection. However,...the Earth may have another purpose (although including mankind) aside from man's goal of perfection. It sounds contradictory, but it is not.

Mankind may exist under two frameworks; 1) as a reflection of God's wisdom, and 2) for his own perfection. It appears to me that this explains the two accounts of God's command that the ark be built and life be spared. The first account teaches the objective that life be spared - for the sake of life itself. The second account teaches that due to Noah's righteousness, aside from the sustaining of life for itself, man will be spared for the "second" purpose, that he perfects himself. There are two goals in the existence of life; 1) that life exists as a reflection of God's wisdom, and 2) that man perfect himself. One goal is not dependent upon the other. Life, including man, may exist, even if man does not perfect himself, provided he does not corrupt his ways too far.

Radak says man is merely "appointed" over the Earth. What is the status of an "appointee", an overseer? This means that God created the Earth, and He then appoints man over this creation, perhaps indicating that the Earth was created for one purpose, even without man, and only afterwards was man given subsequent rule. And if man may lose his position, the Earth appears to still serve some purpose. I do not know to which other goal Earth ascribes, but we do read that the angels' praises of God include their praises of God's Earth. This means that the angels - what ever they may be - give purpose to the Earth, as the Earth is a means through which they laud the Creator. Without man, the Earth still serves this purpose.

There is another account which I feel may be related. In the Musaf prayer of Yom Kippur, the angels question the death of the Ten Martyrs as

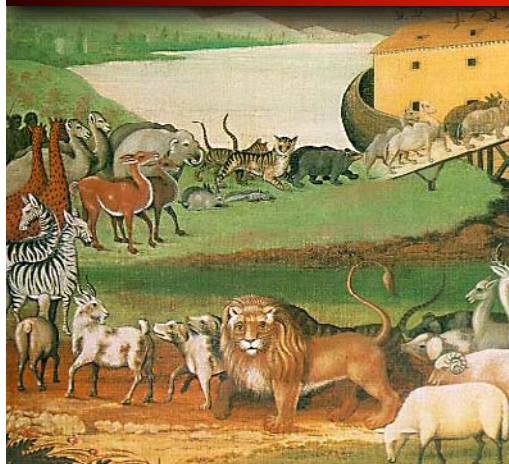
follows, "This is the Torah, and this is its reward?" To this, God replies, "If I hear another sound, I will turn the universe into water." God says that He will destroy the universe if the angels do not accept the death sentence of the Ten Martyrs. How do we understand this dialogue? Perhaps, this teaches that if the angels do not accept God's unfathomable wisdom, as expressed in this case, then the universe forfeits its purpose. God's destruction will ensue, as the universe serves no purpose. This is in line with our answer, that aside from man's purpose of perfection, the universe serves to attest to God's wisdom. Man's existence, as part of the universe, may serve a purpose, other than his own. God said that the universe would be destroyed if the angels are not silent. This means that if there is not some being which accepts God's unfathomable wisdom, only then does the universe serve no purpose. But provided the angels accept God's rule, the universe serves some purpose.

In the verses quoted above, we read of the second account recording the Flood, but divorced from 'mankind' as the goal. Although he is included in the description of the events surrounding of the Flood, Noah is not referred to as a 'subject' of the Flood, but merely as a reference for the time line. Animals are not referred to as "pure" - a term applicable only in relation to man - but as "species", something divorced from man.

We see two accounts of the Flood, both, in God's command, and in the description of the Flood as it occurred: In God's first command, animals are only referred to as "species", and Noah is simply told to take food for survival - as if to underline one goal: the survival of life. In God's second address, (7:1 states again, "And God said...") Noah's righteousness is first mentioned, and so is the "purity" element of the animals. It appears as though there is a second goal: man's perfection. When describing the Flood itself, in its first account, (Genesis 7:6-10) animals are referred to as "pure and impure", pointing to man's future sacrifices, man's perfection. In the second account, (Genesis 7:11-16) animals are referred to as "species", and in this account, Noah's righteousness is omitted.

Could it be that the Earth - including man - also exists for some goal, other than mankind's own perfection? Can both man and the universe exist, not just for man, but for another goal, that God's wisdom be reflected not only through the cosmos, but through all Earthly, plant life, minerals, animals...and man? I do not know for certain, but the aforementioned distinctions incline me to consider that human existence - besides offering man an opportunity for perfection, might also offer the angels another display of God's wisdom through which they extol the Creator. ■

Weekly Parsha



NOACH *and the* ANIMALS

YAAKOV TRACHTMAN

One prominent element in the story of Noah is the idea of gathering the animals. The command to gather them takes two different forms. First in chapter 6 verses 13-26 Noah is informed of the forthcoming destruction of the world and is commanded to build an ark and to gather two of every species in order maintain a secure habitat from the flood which would allow the creation to be maintained. Then in Chapter 7 verses 1-5 he is commanded to gather the animals together and to board the ark.

If we contrast these two stories a number of differences stand out.

1. In the first command there is no distinction between the "pure" and "impure" animals; all animals are to be brought in pairs. In the second command he is commanded to bring 7 of each "pure" species but only one pair of the 'impure'.

2. The reason given for the command: In the first command the reason is because the world deserves destruction so Noah will insure that the natural order will be maintained. In the second command Noah's righteousness is given as the reason for his being saved.

3. The name of God that is used: In the first command the name "Elokim" is used. In the second command the name "YKVVH" is used.

To answer these questions we have to understand what is the difference between the two types of animals. Based on Breishis 8:20; the commentators all explain that the purpose of the 7 "pure" animals

were to be brought as korbanos upon Noah's exit from the ark. In other words the bringing of animal pairs was for their sake, while bringing the extra 'pure' animals was for Noah's sake.

How did having animals for korbanos help Noah? The year on the ark was not exclusively meant as a practical removal from destruction, but rather as an educational experience for Noah. The world he would rebuild would have to be removed from the mistakes that necessitated the Flood in the first place. In order to do so, Noah had to gain knowledge to further distance himself from his generation.

What is the significance of 'pure and 'impure' animals? The distinction between them is not a natural one. Unlike Adam who was educated in Gan Eden through naming the animals[i], based on natural categories, Noah was not at a level to involve himself primarily in that study[ii]. Such study necessitates bringing the self into a completely natural identity; such that he could view his existence in contrast to the animals. 'Pure' and 'impure' are identities that categorize animals based on their suitability to be used by people to approach God, specifically through 'korban'.

Noah was an 'Ish Adama[iii]', a farmer. Chazal identify him as the inventor of the plow[iv]. For a farmer, even a creative and inventive one, the categorization of animals will be in terms of their utility in farming. He would distinguish between strong and weak animals or domestic and wild animals. The Mitzvah forced him to consider animals in terms of bringing man closer to God: distinguishing between animals that are 'pure', i.e. appropriate for divine service, and those, which are not. Instead of bringing extra plow animals for his own use he brought extra animals for korbanos[v].

However, even though Noah's primary study was in the framework of 'pure' and 'impure', changing his concept of man from being self important, where animals are a tool exclusively for his own material achievement; to being a creation of God, where animals assist him in that quest; he needed to keep in mind the greater framework of which Halacha is a subset of; the complete natural system. Only by keeping in mind the saving of all species, even the impure ones, and subjecting himself to that system, would he benefit from the in depth study of animals as a means towards serving God. He had to know that the animals' existence is 'good' even without a benefit to man and that ultimately he was moving towards recognizing God through the complete natural system[vi] instead of a limited homo-centric viewpoint.

This also explains the distinction between the two divine names. The idea of 'Elokim', which reflects divine justice, is used to reference God as the all-powerful cause of the natural order[vii]. In this framework man is but a small part whose role is at

most facilitator and recognizer of the order. 'YKVVH', which reflects divine mercy, is used to reference God as the one who actively directs man in developing towards perfection[viii].

The two commands were referencing these two causes of his rescue. The first reason he was saved was because God's will was that the world should exist. He was appointed as the caretaker of the miniature ecosystem of the Ark. However, he was also saved because he was righteous, a person who would be able to benefit from a divine education.

The commentators also explain that the animals, which were being saved, came on their own, while the ones which were for korban had to be actively gathered. Those that were being saved were acting in line with their nature which was to act in the interest of self preservation therefore it was appropriate for God to cause them to come on their own. However the korbanos only could come because of Noah's active involvement with them to redirect them towards being vehicles of divine service.

These ideas are significant for us also. We essentially relate to God through the gift of the Halachah but we must keep in mind that it is "only" a 'small thing'[ix], and ultimately we hope to relate to God through the 'great thing' of recognizing Him through the creation.

Additionally the Mitzvah[x] of distinguishing between the 'pure' and 'impure animals' becomes clear. It is insufficient just to abstain from non-kosher animals; we must actively categorize the animals that we are eating. This categorization cannot be based on taste or other subjective measures. We must categorize them based on an objective study of how animals are instrumental to approaching God. ■

[i] Breishis 2:19

[ii] This should not be viewed as a denigration of Noah, Noah was a prophet and is considered righteous by God. If we could reach his level we would be in great shape.

[iii] Breishis 9:20

[iv] Rashi Breishis 5:29

[v] The Korbanos reflect the idea that man is fundamentally different from the animals, at least in potential. They force him to consider what the difference is and whether he lives life like an animal or a true human being. Each step in the korban forces him to realize that in terms of his physical makeup he also could be on that altar. He realizes that the good for man is in serving God with his mind and that all of his practical pursuits must be directed towards that goal. He will still be involved in drawing sustenance from the earth, but satisfaction and leisure will not be ends in themselves but means towards developing his mind.

[vi] Of which he is but a small part

[vii] Also known as Hashgacha Klalis

[viii] Also known as Hashgacha Pratis

[ix] Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah 4:21

[x] Sefer Hamitzvos Positive command 149 and 150

Fact or

The story of a great Flood is not only recorded in the Bible. The Babylonian flood account is recorded on a 4,000 year-old clay tablet. It is very similar to Noah's story. It is often referred to as the Gilgamesh Epic. Together with other ancient records of a great flood from other civilizations, the story of this ancient event may have been passed down orally from generation to generation in several different civilizations.



The Gilgamesh Epic was found in an ancient Assyrian library, and is now located in the British Museum.

Fiction