

THE COMMUNITY PARSHA SHEET



PARSHAT NOACH

London's Leading Young Professionals Platform and Jewish Communal Centre



RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL
TAL Founder & Director

UNITY

Late June 1976; passengers boarding Air France flight 139 discover it is now stopping in Athens en route to Paris. Some, like George and Rivka Karfunkel don't want to board; Athens airport was renowned for its terrible security; indeed it was from this very airport a plane was hijacked in 1970. But their luggage is already on board so they board as well...

In Athens, two Germans join the flight: Brigitte Kulma, and Willie Burs along with two Arabs who are connecting from Bahrain. There was no security inspection for transit passengers in Athens so they were able to board with the weapons they brought from Bahrain... The two Germans were members of Baader Meinhof and the two Arabs were members of the PFLP (Palestinian Front for the Liberation of Palestine), an organization founded by Wadi Hadad, who broke off from Yasser Arafat whom he did not consider radical enough ... he was the same individual who masterminded the Maalot massacre in 1972 when 22 children were murdered. Five minutes after takeoff they hijacked the plane, refuelling in Benghazi and eventually ending up in Kampala, Uganda, in the old airport terminal. (The new terminal continued to service flights throughout the affair...)

One hundred and ten Ugandan soldiers guarded the old terminal including the guard towers, to protect the terrorists. The terrorist gave a deadline: on July 1, if their

demands were not met they were going to start killing hostages. Almost immediately, while still in Benghazi, the terrorists began calling out names; it did not take a genius to quickly figure out what they were doing: not thirty years after the Holocaust, German terrorists were separating the Jews ... ninety three Jews and Israelis were separated and, along with the crew who refused to leave, were taken to Uganda.

Yitzchak Rabin who was Prime Minister, upheld Israel's policy of not negotiating with terrorists, and eventually approved the mission, led by Yoni Netanyahu to fly thousands of miles, through enemy territory, to rescue the hostages and bring them home.

There is a legend about Yoni Netanyahu; just before boarding the planes and beginning radio silence he gathered his men, Israel's most elite commandoes, and tried to put into words why they were doing what they were about to do, risking everything for people they did not even know, many of whom were not even Israelis. Simply put: '... we may not know who they are but they are our brothers and sisters, and we are going ... because if we don't go no-one will.'

A moment that recalls the well-known Jewish axiom: Kol Yisrael Areivim zeh ba'zeh: All Israel (i.e. every Jew) is responsible for (literally 'mixed in' with) every other Jew. Ultimately, we are all one. Achdut: Unity; a powerful idea, which cuts to the core of what the Jewish people are all about. And ultimately, it's not only about Jews; we are meant to be a model for the world of what brotherhood and

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unity is all about. What could be more beautiful than true unity, when we all put aside our differences in deference to something greater than ourselves? This week's portion, Noach, however, seems to suggest otherwise:

Everyone knows the story: the world created with such hope and light has sunken into idolatry and violence, to such a degree that there is no longer a point to its continued existence. After all, if G-d and G-dly ethics no longer matter, then we no longer matter. So G-d brings a great flood that destroys the world and pushes the 're-start' button with Noach; the world gets a second chance.

Yet, later in the portion it looks like humanity is about to make the same mistake. Deciding to build a city and a monstrous tower, our Chachamim tell us they were going to war with no less than G-d Himself! Only this time, despite the fact that all of mankind seems united against G-d, the world is not destroyed; why? Why this time does G-d spare the world?

Of course, one might suggest that G-d promises he will never bring another flood, but technically, G-d has no shortage of options; if you don't want to destroy them with a flood; explode them with fire!

The Midrash (Bereishit Rabbah)

suggests that what saved the builders of the Tower of Babel was that they were unified (Bereishit 11:1), and unity is a good thing which is beloved before G-d, so they were spared.

I had always imagined that the Torah was describing an idyllic society that had learnt from the mistakes of the generation of the flood. The generation of the flood had no respect for one another, they stole, they murdered, they were promiscuous – thus they were destroyed. The generation of Migdal Bavel learnt the lessons of the past, they were united, and they were together – so why were they punished, why were they dispersed?

There is a comment by Rashi that has always puzzled me. When the verse describes the reality in Bavel after Hashem changed the one accepted language into many differing languages.

Rashi describes a scenario where if two men were involved in a specific area of the building project, one would ask the other for a specific material, the other now not being able to decipher his fellows request, handed him the wrong material, as a frustrated reaction the one man killed the other (literally – smashed his head).

If we accept the premise that the people were totally united, that they had learnt their lessons from the

previous generations, then surely the fact that they could not understand each other temporarily, would not bring on such a violent response?

It is quite possible that Rashi in this comment is alluding to the fact that the unity as described at the beginning of the Chapter was superficial to say the least. There were public statements of unity, of caring, and of oneness, but when put to the test, when in times of trouble, the unity of the people disintegrated into the violence of the previous generation.

Hashem dispersed the people to teach them that real unity is not defined by superficial acts and popular clichés. Two people can be separated by hundreds of miles, yet have more care and love for each other than next-door neighbours.

It is for this reason that after the dispersion the Torah focuses on Avraham and eventually the building of Am Yisrael. We realise that external unity will only be true unity, if we follow the path of Avraham serving G-d, internalising the inherent values of Torah, and applying them to our everyday lives.

We are the "smallest amongst nations"; nevertheless we remain a strong united nation both internally and externally. No matter where we live in the world, we are all brothers and sisters.



RABBI DAVID BAADANI
Director - TAL Chazanut Program

PARSHAT NOACH

Noah was described as an "איש צדיק" (a righteous person). What made him deserving of this title? In the previous Parashah, it says, "ויקרא שמו נח לאמר, זה" – "he was named Noah, saying, 'This one will provide us relief from our work and the toil of our hands.'" Noah brought tremendous comfort to his generation, as Rashi explains: "עד שלא בא נח לא היה" – until Noah came, people had no agricultural tools, and he invented them for their benefit.

Because of this, Noah was also called מנחם, reflecting the comfort he brought to his generation.

We find a similar attitude in another צדיק (righteous man) of that time, חנוך (Enoch), about whom the Torah says, "ויתהלך חנוך את האלוקים ואיננו כי לקח" – "Enoch walked with G-d, then he was no more, for G-d took him." Hashem did not want חנוך to live in the corrupt generation of the Flood, so He took him before his time.

The Midrash tells us that חנוך was a shoemaker, and while he worked, he would have elevated spiritual thoughts. Rabbi Yisrael Salanter

explains that חנוך would think, "May these shoes be strong, and may the person who wears them enjoy them." While performing his everyday work, חנוך constantly thought about how to make G-d's people happy and improve their lives.

From these two צדיקים, we learn an important lesson. We should look around us, starting from our own home, extending to our daily occupation, and then to our community. How can we, in our own way, make the lives of G-d's people more comfortable and better? Through such acts of kindness and thoughtfulness, we walk in the path of true righteousness.



RABBI BENJI STONE, TAL Chavruta Program

לְמַנְצָה בְּנִינּוֹת מְזֻמּוֹר לְדוֹד: - Chapter 4 Tehillim for Our Times

REFOCUS

King David is under threat. He turns to his enemies and offers them guidance on how to withdraw from their sinful position and set themselves on the right path.

We too can find ourselves engaged in a harmful mode of behaviour or perhaps in a dispute with a colleague, friend or family member. We would do well to take note of the following three rules which King David sets out which might assist us in returning to a peaceful life.

1. Take Time Out and Reflect

"Tremble – do not sin. Review matters in your heart whilst you lie in bed and be quiet" (4;5).

He we are encouraged to take some "time out" – possibly just before we go to sleep. Write and reflect on what your true purpose in this world is and whether your current behaviour or mood sits comfortably with that purpose. Does Hashem (G-d) really want you to carry this on?

2. Take Action

"Offer up sacrifices of righteousness and trust in Hashem" (4;6).

Correct your ways. This is certainly not always easy. But if you succeed then it is as if you have offered a true sacrifice to Hashem (Rashi). More importantly - begin to trust in Hashem. People generally become embroiled in a dispute because they consider that another individual has

brought some kind of harm to them. If they truly believed that their Father in heaven was behind every event and challenge they face, they would take a very different perspective, understanding that any person who "harmed" them was no more than Hashem's messenger.

3. Don't Long for Material Success Enjoyed By Others

"Many say "Oh that (Hashem) would show us goodness – that he would shine His face upon us and lift us up". (4;7)

"I feel joy in my heart from the time their grain and wine begins to multiply". (4;8)

As Jews we might sometimes look at other nations and covet their elaborate material possessions, and possibly the fact that they can enjoy the physical world to its fullest without any restriction. King David states that when he sees the great material rewards which Hashem has granted other nations - he responds with glee, reasoning that the reward which has been set aside for ourselves - those who keep Hashem's Torah - must be unfathomably greater (Rashi). Alternatively King David's point is that all the material wealth in the world cannot match the internal joy which a Torah Jew can access at all times (N. Plancey).

This principle applies equally to our relationships with fellow Jews. Material success, contrary to popular belief, is not the marker for genuine success! If it was, then perhaps envy and dissatisfaction with one's lot could be understandable.

But if we can enjoy a moment of clarity in which we are able to reflect on what we really want to get out of life then all such negative feelings should quickly dissipate. If we are doing our best to grow in our avodat Hashem (service of Hashem) then great treasures await in the next world. These treasures have eternal value, unlike the transitory rewards available to us in this world. Furthermore, seeking to keep Torah and Mitzvot to the best of our ability brings with it a great feeling of pleasure and satisfaction, as one lives their life safely in the knowledge that they are making the best of their time on this planet.

This chapter was composed for the Leviim to sing as offerings were brought in the Beit Hamikdash (temple). Why was this chapter in particular chosen?

In light of the above we can explain as follows;

When an individual brings a sacrifice he is displaying his personal subordination to Hashem. He shows that the produce or cattle which he has obtained is not his, but a gift from Hashem.

This ceremony surely helped the owner of the sacrifice internalize the idea of his dependence on Hashem - which in turn would lead him to regain his focus on his true life – purpose.

This process re-focusing, as we have explained, is the theme of this very chapter.

With much appreciation to my chavruta R' Nussi Plancey for all his tremendous insights on sefer Tehillim.



HALACHOT BY RABBI ELI MANSOUR

Reciting Asher Yasar to Avoid Sickness

The Seder Hayom (Rabbi Moshe ben Machir, 16th Century, Tsfat) makes a remarkable statement regarding the Beracha of Asher Yasar. He first writes that one should recite the Beracha carefully, word by word, having full intent and concentration on the

meaning of the words, which are a praise to the perpetual kindness of Hashem who enables our bodies to function by expelling wastes. If not for this ability, no sum of money to pay the greatest doctors could help a person, and he would die. Hashem formed the various cavities and compartments in the body to retain the beneficial

nutrients and expel the harmful waste, so that we could live in health and stand before Him.

He continues and declares that one who is scrupulous in reciting Asher Yasar with this Kavana will never get sick his entire life and will not need the services of doctors or their treatments.



WEEKLY PARSHA OVERVIEW

Parshat Noach

It is now ten generations since the creation of the first man. Adam's descendants have corrupted the world with immorality, idolatry and robbery, and Hashem resolves to bring a flood which will destroy all the earth's inhabitants except for the righteous Noach, his family and sufficient animals to re-populate the world. Hashem instructs Noach to build an ark in which to escape the flood. After forty days and nights, the flood covers the entire earth, including the tops of the highest mountains. After 150 days the water begins to recede. On the 17th day of the 7th month, this ark comes to rest on Mount Ararat. Noach sends forth a raven and then a dove to ascertain if the waters have abated. The dove returns. A week later, Noach again sends the dove, which returns the same evening with an

olive leaf in its beak. After seven more days, Noach once again sends forth the dove, which this time does not return. Hashem tells Noach and his family to leave the ark. Noach brings offerings to Hashem from the animals which were carried in the ark for this purpose. Hashem vows never again to flood the entire world and gives the rainbow as a sign of this covenant.

Noach and his descendants are now permitted to eat meat, unlike Adam. Hashem commands the Seven Universal Laws: The prohibitions against idolatry, adultery, theft, blasphemy, murder and eating the meat of a living animal, and the obligation to set up a legal system. The world's climate is established as we know it today. Noach plants a vineyard and becomes

intoxicated from its produce. Ham, one of Noach's sons, delights in seeing his father drunk and uncovered. Shem and Yefet, however, manage to cover their father without looking at his nakedness, by walking backwards. For this incident, Canaan is cursed to be a slave. The Torah lists the offspring of Noach's three sons from whom the seventy nations of the world are descended.

The Torah records the incident of the Tower of Bavel, which results in Hashem fragmenting communication into many languages and the dispersal of the nations throughout the world. The Torah portion concludes with the genealogy from Noach to Avram.

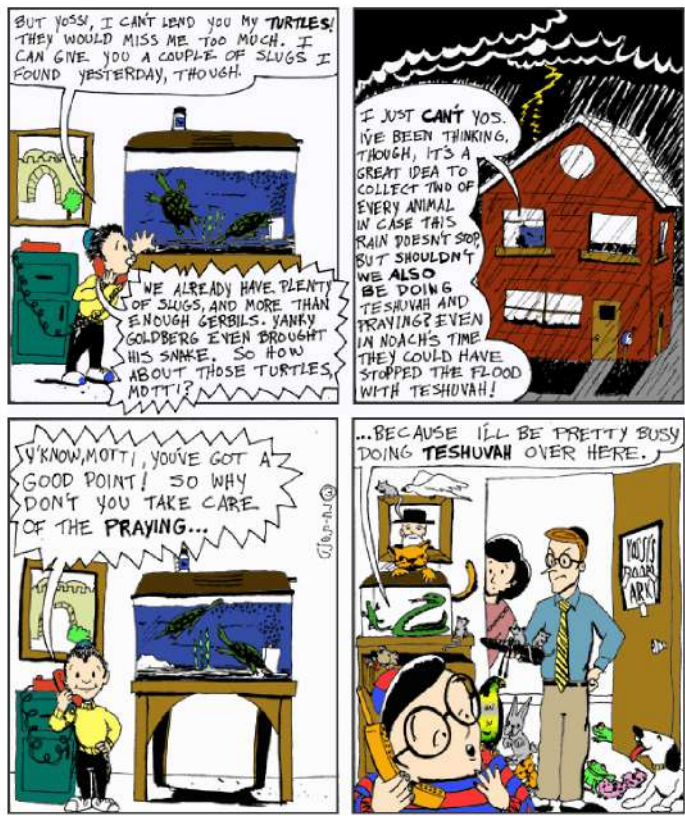
Rabbi Sinclair,
Seasonsofthemoon.com

Q

1. Which particular sin sealed the fate of the flood generation?
2. Why did Hashem tell Noach to build an ark, as opposed to saving him via some other method?
3. The ark had three levels. What function did each level serve?
4. What indication do we have that Noach was familiar with the Torah?
5. Why did Hashem postpone bringing the flood for seven days?

A

1. 6:13 - Robbery.
2. 6:14 - So that people would see Noach building the ark and ask him what he was doing. When Noach would answer, "Hashem is bringing a flood," it might encourage some people to repent.
3. 6:16 - The top level housed the people, the middle level housed the animals, and the bottom level, the refuse.
4. 7:2 - Hashem told him to take into the ark seven of each kosher-type animal, and two of each non-kosher type. "Kosher" and "non-kosher" are Torah concepts.
5. 7:4 - To allow seven days to mourn the death of Metushelach.



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