

NOURISHMENT FOR THE SOUL

by Shlomo Katz

**Hamaayan / The Torah Spring
Edited by Shlomo Katz**

Contributing Editor: Daniel Dadusc

Noach

**Volume XIV, Number 2
6 Cheshvan 5760
October 16, 1999**

Today's Learning:
Challah 2:5-6
Orach Chaim 177:1-3
Bavli: Mo'ed Kattan 9
Yerushalmi: Yevamot 74

Hamaayan extends heartfelt wishes of Mazal Tov to Daniel Dadusc and his wife Rachel on the birth of their daughter, Sarah

R' Joseph Breuer z"l (1882-1980) writes: "The common origin of the human race . . . explains the phenomenon that the memory of the Torah-recorded Noachidic flood continues to live on in Noach's descendants, albeit in frequently distorted form. According to a profound comment by our sages, the nagging fear of a possible recurrence of a like world-catastrophe was the cause for mankind's single-minded determination to meet this danger with joint force by mounting the heaven-conquering attack against G-d [i.e., building the Tower of Bavel]. The goal: to 'unseat' G-d and erect, in His place, the throne of human might."

R' Breuer continues, explaining that the same method that Hashem used to foil the plans of those first Tower-builders is what continues to foil man's attacks on G-d and G-dliness today, i.e., individuality and egotism. These traits stand in the way of unity, thus making coordinated efforts impossible; instead man has used his vast abilities to pursue war, and to bring himself to the brink of the very destruction which he so fears, through the mindless pursuit of the nuclear arms race.

As Jews, we know that the world's existence is threatened less by atom bombs than it is by an absence of men who are overwhelmed by G-d's wisdom, which is demonstrated in the tiny atom. Our testimony to that wisdom (part of the wisdom of creation in general) is our observance of Shabbat. This observance demonstrates as well our knowledge that the existence or destruction of the world is in Hashem's hands alone. (A Time to Build II, p.55)

Rabbi Chaninah said (regarding Iyov 24:16), "'In darkness burrowing into houses, by day they seal themselves shut, they do not know the daylight' - this is what the generation of the Flood did: They would mark the place and come at night to burgle it." After Rabbi Chaninah taught this in the town of Tzippori, 300 houses were burrowed into. (Talmud Yerushalmi: Ma'aser Sheni 28b)

R' Eliyahu Hakohen of Izmir z"l (author of Shevet Ha'mussar; died 1729) explains this gemara as follows: Before burglars would burrow into houses at night, they would make "seals" or marks by day to identify the houses that looked like good prospects. Thus, their primary evil was during the day; although they robbed houses at night, they conspired and planned during the daylight hours.

The question must be asked, however: The gemara (Sanhedrin 98a) teaches that the generation of the Flood was very wealthy. If so, why did they steal at all?

One possible answer is that they stole in order to test G-d - if He really exists and He really sees our deeds, why does He not punish us?! Alternatively, they were very stingy, and if they saw that someone else had a nice object, they preferred to steal it rather than to buy or make a similar object for themselves.

In any case, writes R' Eliyahu, we can learn several things from the above gemara. First, rabbis should not publicize the tricks that were used by sinners of earlier generations. After all, after Rabbi Chaninah lectured in Tzippori about the generation of the Flood, 300 houses in Tzippori were broken into in the very manner that he had described.

Also, we learn that even the sinners among the Jewish people are full of mitzvot "as pomegranates are full of seeds." We see this from the fact that even the town's burglars attended Rabbi Chaninah's lecture. (Aggadat Eliyahu: Ma'aser Sheni Ch. 5, No. 1)

"G-d blessed Noah and his sons, and He said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the land. The

fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth and upon every bird of the heavens, in everything that moves on the earth and in all the fish of the sea; in your hand they are given. Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you; like the green herbage I have given you everything'." (9:1-3)

R' Mordechai Breuer shlita observes that man has two conflicting natures. On the one hand, man is made in the image of G-d. Man, like G-d, is a ruler, a conqueror, a creator, and a builder. Man, like G-d, can harness creation for his own purposes. Man has free will. On the other hand, man is a slave to the world. He eats, drinks, and desires, and, in general, is influenced by the world.

These two aspects of man are reflected in Hashem's blessing to Adam (Bereishit 1:28-30):

G-d blessed them and G-d said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it, and rule over the fish of the sea, the bird of the sky, and every living thing that moves on the earth.'

G-d said, 'Behold I have given to you all the herbage yielding seed that is on the surface of the entire earth, and every tree that has seed-yielding fruit; it shall be yours for food. And to every beast of the earth, to every bird of the sky, and to everything that moves on the earth, within which there is a living soul, every green herb is for food.

G-d's first statement addresses the "higher man," while His second statement addresses the "lower man." (To draw attention to this distinction, the Torah separates verses 28 and 29 by repeating the phrase, "G-d said.")

In contrast, when Hashem speaks to Noach after the flood, these two blessings are combined into one, as quoted above. The gulf between man's two natures had become blurred. This is why, in verse 3, Noach is permitted to eat meat, something that had been prohibited to previous generations. Adam and the early generations recognized the tension between man's two natures and man's obligation to rise to the higher level of one who is created in the Divine image. Man did not have to eat meat in order to recognize that he was not just another animal.

Not so after the flood; man had lost sight of the fact that he was created in the Divine image. Man must eat meat in order to remind himself that he is supposed to rule over the animals and lead a loftier existence than they do. (Pirkei Mo'adot p.25-29)

"Shalom Aleichem"

Many have the custom to recite the poem Shalom Aleichem upon returning from shul on Friday night. The reason most commonly given for this custom is the teaching of the gemara (Shabbat 119b) that two angels accompany man home from shul. However, R' Tzaddok Hakohen z"l (1823-1900) questions this reason - since the gemara says that one of those two angels is "good" and one is "bad," how can we call them "malachei ha'shalom"/"angels of peace"?

Instead, R' Tzaddok offers the following explanation for our custom: The gemara (Chagigah 14b) states that when the Sages studied the deep secrets of the kabbalah, the angels gathered around to listen "as people gather to watch dancing at a wedding." Every Shabbat, explains R' Tzaddok, there is a revelation of the Shechinah similar to that which the Sages of the Talmud experienced. Since the angels come to watch, we greet them.

The Friday night meal, continues R' Tzaddok, it is a time of yichud/seclusion between Hashem and the Jewish people. The angels must leave before the meal begins. This is why we conclude Shalom Aleichem with the words "Tzeitchem le'shalom"/"Depart in peace . . ." (Pri Tzaddik: Noach p.14d)

Letters from Our Sages

This week's letter was written by R' Reuven Dov Dessler z"l to his son R' Eliyahu Eliezer z"l (1892-1953; author of Michtav M'Eliyahu). The writer was a successful businessman and, with his brother, was the primary supporter of the "Talmud Torah" of Kelm, the yeshiva founded by R' Simcha Zissel of Kelm z"l for the study of mussar.

This letter is printed in Kitvei Ha'Sabba Ve'talmidav Mi'Kelm, p.546 (No. 41).

We say in Birkat Hamazon, "And through His great goodness, we have never lacked, and may we never lack, nourishment, for all eternity." This is wondrous! Mortals do not need nourishment after they die. "All eternity" is after death; what good is a candle in the sunlight? [In other words, what good does nourishment do in a place where no one eats?]

Apparently, nourishment for the soul is needed - even for the dead, even for all eternity - so that one can "live." If one does not toil on Erev Shabbat, what will he eat on Shabbat? [If one does not prepare nourishment for his soul in This World, on what will he "live" in the World-to-Come?]

The verse (Yishayah 65:13) has already warned: "[Therefore, thus said My Lord, Hashem Elokim,] 'Behold, My servants will eat and you will starve; behold, My servants will drink and you will thirst . . .'" This [realization] is one of the key things that mussar [study] calls upon a person to picture.

May we merit to make the necessary preparations successfully, and may it go well with us.
Your father, who loves you with his soul
Reuven Dov

Sponsored by Mrs. Esther Liberman and family in memory of husband and father Yaakov Azriel ben Aharon David a"h

The Rozen and Donowitz families in memory of grandfather and great-grandfather, Irving Peskowitz a"h

Copyright © 1998 by [Shlomo Katz](#) and Project Genesis, Inc.

The editors hope these brief 'snippets' will engender further study and discussion of Torah topics ('lehagdil Torah u'leha'adirah'), and your letters are appreciated. Web archives at [Project Genesis](#) start with 5758 (1997) and may be retrieved from the [Hamaayan](#) page. Text archives from 1990 through the present may be retrieved from <http://www.acoast.com/~sehc/hamaayan/>. Donations to HaMaayan are tax-deductible.
