THE FLOOD

by Shlomo Katz

Parshas Noach

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

Today's Learning:
Arachin 7:1-2
O.C. 217:2-4
Daf Yomi (Bavli): Kiddushin 24
Daf Yomi (Yerushalmi): Nazir 8

King Shlomo writes in Mishlei (10:25), "When the storm passes, a wicked one is no more, but a righteous one is the foundation of the world." R' Yehoshua ibn Shuiv z"l (Spain; early 14th century) writes: A wicked person is compared to a storm because he damages others before disappearing without a trace. In contrast, a righteous person is solid like a foundation; not only does he have permanence, but others can rely on him.

R' ibn Shuiv continues: Our Sages stated that this verse refers to the generation of the flood. "When the storm passes, a wicked one is no more." Like a storm, the generation of the flood did great damage and then met its end quickly. On the other hand, "a righteous one is the foundation of the world." From the righteous Noach, an entire new world was built.

In addition, writes R' ibn Shuiv, this parashah contains several foundations of our beliefs. In last week's parashah we learned that G-d created the world. In this week's parashah we learn that G-d continues to supervise His creation (hashgachah) and that He rewards and punishes those who do good and bad respectively (s'char va'onesh). As our Sages note, Noach himself had to learn these

lessons, for even he doubted that the flood would come until the rain started falling. It is for this reason that Noach brought olot sacrifices after the flood, for an olah atones for heretical thoughts. R' ibn Shuiv notes that the gematria of the word olot [Bereishit 8:20] equals 500, the number of years that Noach sinned. [Noach was 600 years old at the time of the flood. However, our Sages say that, at the time of Noach, the age before which sins did not count, was 100.] (Derashot R"y ibn Shuiv)

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"Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you; like the green herbage I have given you everything." (9:3)

Before the flood, mankind was not permitted to eat animals. After the flood, it was permitted. Why?

R' Shlomo Kluger z"l (1785-1869; rabbi of Brody, Galicia) explains: Before the flood, the produce of the earth was more spiritually lofty than animals were because produce was sustained directly from the earth [which was created directly by G-d], while animals were one step removed, being sustained from the plants that were sustained from the earth. This special quality of the plants, i.e., that their sustenance comes more directly from G-d, is alluded to in Yeshayah (55:10), "For just as the rain and snow descend from heaven and will not return there, unless it waters the earth and causes it to produce and sprout, and gives seed to the sower and food to the eater."

The flood changed this, however. First, the earth itself became corrupt in the years leading up to the flood, as we read (Bereishit 6:13), "For the earth is filled with robbery." Second, by feeding the animals in the Ark, Noach elevated their status, for the Gemara (Ketubot 5a) teaches that the actions of the righteous are considered greater than the acts of G-d Himself. (Chochmat Ha'Torah: Bereishit p.433)

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"However, your blood which belongs to your souls I will demand . . ." (9:5)

R' Yehuda He'chassid z"l (Germany; died 1217) writes: If one dies because of his own misbehavior -- for example, if he gets involved in fights -- he is destined to account for his soul. Likewise, those who endanger themselves -- for example one who walks on thin ice in the winter and falls through and drowns, or if he sleeps in an abandoned building and it collapses on him, or if he starts up with or speaks aggressively to a brute -- all of these people are destined to answer to the Heavenly court for bringing about their own deaths. This is learned from our verse.

In addition, we learn from our verse that, just as one may not cause injury to another person or damage the property of another, so one has no right to injure himself or to damage his own property. This prohibition includes pulling out one's hair from worry and tearing clothes or smashing dishes in anger. (Sefer Chassidim Nos. 675, 676)

R' Eliezer Papo z"l (1785-1826; rabbi of Selestria, Bulgaria) writes: One must take care to eat only to satiation, and not to overeat, for one who follows his belly ("gachon") builds a home ("machon") for

the yetzer hara. This is based on the teaching of the kabbalists that every pleasure in this world that is enjoyed for a mundane purpose strengthens the power of the yetzer hara. [Ed. note: This is not meant to prohibit the enjoyment of physical and material pleasures, since most pleasures can be elevated to a lofty purpose.]

From the perspective of mussar / proper behavior, one acts improperly by overeating for several reasons: (1) he is wasting food; (2) he is wasting the time that he spends overeating and the extra time that he later will spend in other physical needs; (3) he will make himself ill; and (4) if he causes his own death, he will be called to account for it.

On the other hand, earlier sages have stated that if one restrains himself from consuming an enticing food, it is as if he fasted and brought a sacrifice on the altar. (Pele Yoetz: Erech "Achilah")

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"And Cush fathered Nimrod; he was the first to be a mighty man on earth. He was a mighty hunter before Hashem; therefore it is said, `Like Nimrod, a mighty hunter before Hashem'." (10:8-9)

R' Zvi Hirsch Eichenstein z"l (1763-1831; Zidachover Rebbe) writes: The Torah is eternal; therefore, there must some message for us in the fact that the Torah tells us so much about Nimrod, including what is said about him. Indeed, asks R' Eichenstein, who is it who says, "Like Nimrod, a mighty hunter before Hashem"?

He answers: We read in Shmuel I (10:11) about the newly-anointed King Shaul: "All those who had known him from yesterday and before then saw that, behold! - he was prophesying along with the prophets, and they said to one another, `What is this that has happened to the son of Kish? Is Shaul also among the prophets?' . . . It thus became an aphorism, `Is Shaul also among the prophets?'" R' Eichenstein explains that upon seeing Shaul, who no one imagined had it within him to be a prophet, other people became motivated to aspire to prophecy.

Likewise - and despite the fact that Nimrod was wicked - Nimrod's strength can be an inspiration. Thus, who is it who says, "Like Nimrod, a mighty hunter before Hashem"? It is the person who wants to be inspired to harness his own strength to serve Hashem. We read, for example (10:10), "The beginning of his kingdom was Bavel, Erech . . ." "Bavel" can allude to the Babylonian Talmud. "Erech" can allude to the trait of patience (erech apayim). Each trait of or detail about Nimrod can be applied "before Hashem." (Bet Yisrael)

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This Week in History, Halachah, and Minhag

Friday, 2 Marcheshvan: Most communities that have the custom not to recite Tachanun during the final week of Tishrei resume reciting Tachanun today. [Wednesday and Thursday of this week were Rosh Chodesh, when no community recites Tachanun.] However, some have the custom not to

recite Tachanun today, for two reasons: First, in most years [i.e., when the day does not fall in Friday], the second day of Marcheshvan is the first full day of yeshiva studies after the Sukkot vacation; thus, it is a joyous day. Second, when the second of Marcheshvan does fall on Friday (as it does this year), it would be the only day of the week on which Tachanun is recited, which is deemed inappropriate. Note that some have the custom not to recite Tachanun on any Friday. (Luach Davar B'ito p.279).

Friday night, 3 Marcheshvan: [Because it alludes to the parashah,] one should concentrate extra carefully on the verse in Kabbalat Shabbat which begins, "Hashem la'mabul yashav / G-d sat enthroned at the Flood . . . ." (Luach Davar B'ito p.281).

Monday, 5 Marcheshvan: Some have the custom to fast today, next Thursday and the following Monday to atone for any sins that may have resulted from excessive eating and drinking on the holiday of Sukkot that ended recently. Some congregations recite selichot prayers on these days.

6 Marcheshvan 3427 (334 B.C.E.): Invading Greek armies massacred the Jews of Bet She'an. On this day, in the year 4926 (1165), Rambam z"l arrived in Yerushalayim. He would later settle in Egypt. (Luach Davar B'ito p.292).

7 Marcheshvan: Jews in Eretz Yisrael begin reciting the prayer for rain, "V'ten tal u'matar," in Shemoneh Esrei. This event is timed so that we do not pray for rain until Jews from Babylon (Iraq) who had visited the Bet Hamikdash for Sukkot would have had sufficient time to walk to the Euphrates River in northern Syria, which is the border of Eretz Yisrael. (Mishnah, Ta'anit 10a). Outside of Eretz Yisrael, recitation of "V'ten tal u'matar" will begin on Dec. 4.

8 Marcheshvan 5481 (1720): The shul of R' Yehuda He'chasid z'l (not to be confused with the medieval sage of the same name quoted inside this issue) in Yerushalayim is burnt together with 40 Torah scrolls. The aliyah movement of R' Yehuda He'chasid ends in disappointment. (Luach Davar B'ito p.298). The Churvah Shul, as the shul became known, was rebuilt in 1837 and destroyed by Arabs again in 1948. Today, the Churvah Shul is being built for the third time.

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 **Torah.org** start with 5758 (1997) and may be retrieved from the Hamaayan page.

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