

OUT OF THE DARKNESS

by Shlomo Katz

Parshas Noach

Out of the Darkness

Volume 27, No. 2

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

The Vogel family on the yahrzeit of father and grandfather Aharon Shimon ben Shemayah a"h (Arthur Kalkstein)

The Gemara (Berachot 29a) asks: "Why are there seven aliyot in the Shabbat Torah reading?" It answers: "They parallel the seven times that King David referred to a 'kol' / 'voice' in connection with water [in Tehilim ch.29]."

R' Avraham Yitzchak Hakohen Kook z"l (1865-1935; Ashkenazic Chief Rabbi of Eretz Yisrael) explains: At first glance, attaining shleimut (roughly translated, "perfection" or "completeness") seems to be the result of work and action, whereas rest seems to be unproductive and lacking value. In reality, though, the shleimut that is attained through action is made possible by the rest that preceded the action. Being at ease mentally enables the actions that one takes to be focused.

R' Kook continues: Similarly, in the world in general, shleimut seems to result from actions such as building, while there seems to be no wisdom or value in destruction. However, when we observe the shleimut that results from destruction, we recognize that everything is guided by the wisdom and counsel of the Great Counselor (paraphrasing Yirmiyahu 33:19). Regarding this, King David said (Tehilim 46:9), "Go and see the works of Hashem, Who has wrought devastation in the land."

In this vein King David referred to seven 'kolot' / 'voices' in connection with water. Water is the opposite of an inhabited settlement, which is a manifestation of man's intelligence and represents the pinnacle of creation. Nevertheless, in the seas we see the Hand of Hashem and hear the Voice of Hashem [Tehilim 29:3--"The Voice of Hashem is upon the water"], just as we see His Hand and Voice in destruction, as in (Tehilim 29:5), "The Voice of Hashem shatters the cedars of Lebanon"--a

reference to the Bet Hamikdash, which was constructed of that wood. Even so, that chapter continues (29:10), "Hashem sat enthroned at the Flood; Hashem sits enthroned as King forever." This is because, through the destruction of the Flood, the world was cleansed of evildoers who were not fit to accomplish the purpose of creation--bringing about the revelation of Hashem. (Ein Ayah: Berachot, Ch.4 No.43)

"And as for you, take yourself of every food that is eaten and gather it in to yourself, that it shall be as food for you and for them." (6:21)

The Gemara states, as if quoting Hashem, "The entire world is sustained in the merit of My son, Chaninah [one of the sages of the Mishnah]." This means, explains R' Elazar Shapira z"l (1808-1865; Rebbe of Lancut, Galicia; son of the author of Bnei Yissaschar), that the tzaddik of the generation is the conduit through which blessings and sustenance flow to the entire world. Ironically, that tzaddik does not need to work hard to support himself. Even if he performs only a token act of hishtadlut / physical effort, he finds his sustenance.

R' Shapira continues: This lesson is learned from our verse. How so? Because Hashem told Noach to take food for all of the creatures that would be on the Ark, but Hashem never told Noach how long their stay on the Ark would be. It seems that it did not matter. As long as Noach performed some modest hishtadlut, the sustenance of all the creatures on the Ark would be guaranteed in his merit. (Yod'ai Binah)

"Then Hashem said to Noach, 'Come to the Ark, you and all your household, for it is you that I have seen to be righteous before Me in this generation'." (Bereishit 7:1)

R' Yaakov Yosef z"l (maggid / preacher in Vilna and Chief Rabbi of New York; died 1902) asks: This verse explains why Noach was saved, but why were his sons--especially Cham--saved? He answers:

We see here an example of a son benefitting from the good deeds of his father. Indeed, the Gemara (Berachot 7a) says that if you see a wicked person living a life full of good things ("rasha v'tov lo"), it is very likely that his father was righteous. This is why we repeatedly invoke the merit of the Patriarchs in our prayers.

Nevertheless, we should not expect the merit of our ancestors to outweigh our own deeds. Thus, for example, the Torah says about Yishmael (Bereishit 21:17), "G-d has heeded the cry of the youth in his present state." Our Sages explain that Yishmael was righteous at that moment and was judged accordingly. However, the implication is that had Yishmael been unworthy, even the merit of his father Avraham could not have helped him.

Where, then, is the line drawn? After all, Noach's merits did save his wicked son Cham! R' Yosef explains that the merit of a person's forefathers can protect him so long as he does not reject that for which his forefathers stood. Noach possessed fear of G-d, says R' Yosef, but he did not serve Hashem in a way that allowed his children to inherit his beliefs. It follows that Cham did not reject Noach's beliefs, which were never really offered to him. Thus, he was able to enjoy the fruits of Noach's good deeds. (L'bet Yaakov: Drush 11)

"And as for Me, behold, I establish My covenant with you and with your offspring after you . . ." (9:9)

In this and the following verses, the word brit / covenant is used seven times. We also find that Hashem established 13 covenants with Avraham Avinu (see ch.17). How was Hashem's covenant with Noach different from Hashem's covenant with Avraham?

R' Yitzchak Isaac Chaver z"l (1789-1852; rabbi of Suvalk, Lithuania) explains: The covenant with Noach was a covenant to preserve the laws of nature, as we read (8:22), "Continuously, all the days of the earth, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease," unlike during the Flood, when those laws were suspended. Thus, there were seven covenants, paralleling the seven days of creation.

In contrast, the covenant with Avraham was a promise to establish a personal relationship with his descendants, to be their G-d, and to allow them to attach themselves to Him through the study of Torah and the performance of mitzvot. Thus, there were thirteen covenants, paralleling the 13 principles by which the Torah is expounded and the 13 attributes of mercy through which Hashem relates to the Jewish People. (Haggadah Shel Pesach Yad Mitzrayim: Potei'ach Yad)

"Noach, the man of the earth, debased himself and planted a vineyard." (9:20)

Rashi z"l explains: He debased himself in that he should have planted a different plant first.

R' Ovadiah Sforno z"l (Italy; died 1550) writes: He began with something unseemly; therefore, things that should not be done resulted [i.e., he got drunk and was humiliated by his son Cham]. This is because a small error in the beginning leads to a large error in the end, as is the case in matters of science.

R' Alter Chanoch Henach Hakohen Leibowitz z"l (1908-2008; rosh yeshiva of the Chafetz Chaim Yeshiva in New York) asks: Did Hashem ever tell Noach not to plant a vineyard? Moreover, Noach's intention surely was for the sake of Heaven--for example, to have wine for libations to accompany his sacrificial offerings! Why, then, is he deserving of criticism?

R' Leibowitz answers: This is what R' Ovadiah Sforno is teaching--that notwithstanding the absence

of a prohibition, and notwithstanding Noach's good intentions, Noach should have asked himself if his deeds were appropriate for the situation. Noach failed to ask himself whether planting a vineyard at this time was seemly, and therefore he stumbled.

R' Leibowitz continues: This is not some chumrah / stringency; it is a Torah obligation, as is written (Devarim 6:18), "You shall do what is fair and good in the eyes of Hashem." [See Maggid Mishneh, end of Hil. Shecheinim]. (Chiddushei Halev)

Letters from Our Sages

This 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 needs it?]

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

The editors hope these brief 'snippets' will engender further study and discussion of Torah topics ('lehagdil Torah u'leha'adira'), and your letters are appreciated. Web archives at **Torah.org** start with 5758 (1997) and may be retrieved from the [Hamaayan](#) page.

Hamaayan needs your support! Please consider sponsoring Hamaayan in honor of a happy occasion or in memory of a loved one. The low cost of sponsorship is \$36. Donations to HaMaayan are tax-deductible.

