

# THE NEW HEAVENS AND THE NEW EARTH...

*by Rabbi Yitzchak Etshalom*

*Dear Haverim,*

It is with great sadness and love that we dedicate this shiur to the memory of our friend Shimon Yosef (Shimmy) Grama, z"l, who was tragically taken from us this past week at the tender age of 21.. May the memory of his many acts of Hessed, his kindness and gentle demeanor be a source of inspiration to all of us who were privileged to know him and a source of consolation to his bereaved family. Yehi Zikhro Barukh.

*For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, says Hashem, so shall your seed and your name remain. (Yeshaya 66:22)*

I

WHAT WE'VE DONE IN PAST YEARS...

In previous years, we have discussed and analyzed the question attributed to R. Yitzhak, cited by Rashi in his opening comment on the Torah:

The Torah should have begun with "This month is unto you the first of the months" (Sh'mot 12:2) which is the first Mitzvah by which Yisra'el were commanded.

In providing an expansive approach to R. Yitzhak's answer, we raised, inter alia, the thorny issue of the timing of Sefer B'resheet. Three potential times were suggested for the original Divine presentation of Sefer B'resheet:

- A. Har Sinai (depending how we understand the reference to Sefer haB'rit in Sh'mot 24:7)
- B. Arvot Mo'av (as that is the first time that we encounter a [presumably] complete Sefer Torah)
- C. Pre-Sinai (in Egypt) - as we found in the Midrash (see also the comments of R. Bahya ibn Pakuda in Hovot haL'avot in this regard)

(to clarify one point from that shiur - regarding the Pre-Sinai "Revelation" of Sefer B'resheet: According to the simple reading of the cited Midrash - Sh'mot Rabbah 5:22 - the narratives found in B'resheet were accessible, in written form, to the slave-nation of the B'nei Yisra'el while in Egypt. That does not mean that the entire Sefer was not "re-revealed" to Mosheh [somewhere between Sinai and Arvot Mo'av]; as indicated last week, there is an explicit comment of Rashi in BT Hullin that gives Mosheh an editorial hand in the formation of Sefer B'resheet. Besides that, since all of the Torah is regarded - Halakhically as well as Hashkafically - as Torat Mosheh, reflecting that unequaled level of prophecy, it follows that Mosheh must have received it at some point during his career as a Navi. Nevertheless, it may very well be that the entire Sefer, including all of the critical narratives, was accessible in its "pre-Mosaic" form to his brothers and sisters in Egypt.)

In that shiur, we reviewed the ten major narratives of Parashat B'resheet from the putative perspective of the earliest potential audience of the Sefer (the slaves in Egypt) - with an eye towards responding to R. Yitzhak's challenge by finding a meaningful message in each of these narratives for that target readership.

## II

### ...AND WHAT WE'LL DO THIS WEEK

Although we will take a somewhat similar approach to Parashat Noach, the nature of the Parashah and its overwhelming emphasis on the flood and its aftermath dictates a slight variation on that earlier analysis.

[Although it would be intriguing to compare the "Generation of the Flood", their indictment and sentence with those of the "Generation of the 'Palagah' (dispersion)", we will have to leave that for another year]

We will analyze some significant features in the description of the flood and its eventual subsiding, then take note of how these features would have impacted on each of the three possible original target audiences of Sefer B'resheet.

As I pointed out in several earlier shiurim - and in the first chapter of Between The Lines of the Bible, Volume 1, understanding how the message was heard by the original audience is always helpful in learning how to "hear" the narrative in contemporary terms. This is a well-worn, tried and true path of the Hakh'mei haM'sorah, Rishonim and Aharonim alike - and we will not hesitate to tread, warily yet confidently, in their footsteps.

### III

## THE FLOOD - A SECOND CREATION

The world which God created, as presented in B'resheet 1:1-2:3, is markedly similar to the world which was redeemed after the flood. Even a cursory look at the description of the "new world" of Parashat Noach reveals numerous literary associations with the creation of Parashat B'resheet. [This comparison itself does not represent an innovative approach - see Rashi's comments at 7:11]

Here is a comparison of the major stages of Creation, as presented in the first chapter of B'resheet - and the significant stages of "re-creation" (or "restoration") of the post-flood world as outlined in Chapter 8 of B'resheet (I am indebted to R. Joshua Berman's illuminating and enlightening presentation in Megadim 9:9-14 - highly recommended):

Day 1: "...and a wind from God moved upon the face of the waters" (1:2)

After the Flood: "God made a wind to pass over the earth" (8:1)

Day 2: " 'Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters' " (1:6)

After the Flood: "The fountains also of the deep and the windows of heaven were stopped, and the rain from heaven was restrained" (8:2)

Day 3: " '...let the waters under the heaven be gathered together to one place, and let the dry land appear...' " (1:9)

After the Flood: "...in the tenth month, on the first day of the month, were the tops of the mountains seen." (8:5)

Day 3: " 'Let the earth bring forth grass, herb yielding seed, and fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth...' " (1:11)

After the Flood: "And the dove came in to him in the evening; and, lo, in her mouth was an olive leaf plucked off; so Noach knew that the waters were abated from off the earth." (8:11)

Day 4: " 'Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years....' " (1:14)

After the Flood: " 'While the earth remains, seed time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.' " (8:22) - [note also that in 8:12, the dove comes to Noach "in the evening", the first mention of any distinct time of day after the flood; evidently, night and day were blurred during the entire cataclysm]

Day 5: " '...let the waters be filled with many kinds of living creatures, and birds that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven.' " (1:20)

After the Flood: "And he stayed yet other seven days; and sent forth the dove; which did not return back to him any more" (8:12 - i.e. the dove returned to its earlier station as a "bird that flies above the earth")

Day 6: " 'Let the earth bring forth all kinds of living creatures, cattle, and creeping things, and beasts of the earth after their kind; and it was so...let us make man in our image, after our likeness...'...and God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.' " (1:24,26,28)

After the Flood: " 'Go out from the ark, you, and your wife, and your sons, and your sons' wives with you. Bring out with you every living thing that is with you, of all flesh, both of bird, and of cattle, and of every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth; that they may breed abundantly in the earth, and be fruitful, and multiply upon the earth.' " (8:16-17)

(note that here, unlike the "first" creation in B'resheet, Mankind comes before the animals; we will address this below.)

Besides these fairly clear parallels, the denouement of the first Creation is, of course, the institution of Shabbat. Even though there is no explicit parallel in the Noach narrative, the final phrase of Chapter 8 - " 'While the earth remains, seed time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease' " - uses the same root - (Sh\*B\*T\*) as does the word used twice in the Shabbat narrative (2:1-3) to describe God's ceasing creative activity.

All in all, the Torah does seem to be telling us that the world which Noach re-entered was a re-creation of the first world, a world which became so polluted and corrupt that it was sentences to an

Orwellian "non-worldhood".

Here we pose two questions:

A) How was this world different from the first - what would guarantee its survival?

B) What possible import could this message contain for each - or any - of the three generations who first read Sefer B'resheet?

## IV

### VIOLATIONS AND LIBATIONS

Before addressing these two questions, I'd like to raise a [seemingly] irrelevant question as a challenge to two comments of Rabbenu Ovadiah S'forno in later Humashim.

The Torah refers to the daily Korban Tamid as "a continual burnt offering, which was performed at Mount Sinai for a sweet savor, a sacrifice made by fire to Hashem." (Bamidbar 28:6). In other words, the daily Tamid is a reminder/reexperience of the offerings brought at the foot of Sinai in the wake of the Revelation. S'forno notes that although there were no libations ("N'sakhim") or meal offerings ("M'nachot") brought with the original offerings, they were commanded as part of the Korban Tamid:

"And a tenth part of an ephah of flour for a meal offering, mixed with the fourth part of a hin of beaten oil....and the drink offering of it shall be the fourth part of a hin for one lamb..." (ibid. 5,7)

S'forno is also sensitive to the fact that the command regarding bringing N'sakhim and M'nachot to accompany personal offerings is presented in the Torah directly in the aftermath of the sin of the scouts (Bamidbar 15:1-16)

He sees these two introductions of the obligation of N'sakhim and M'nachot as more than coincidental: Until the sin of the Golden Calf, there was not Divine intent to have N'sakhim (nor M'nachot) brought with any offering; subsequent to that grievous transgression, we were commanded to bring N'sakhim and M'nachot to accompany communal offerings (such as the Korban Tamid).

As a consequence of the sin of the scouts (and the people's rejection of the Land), God commanded us to bring N'sakhim and M'nachot with personal offerings as well.

Our third question is one of cause and effect:

Why does the S'forno align these particular sins with the increased obligations regarding wine and meal offerings? In other words, what is the relationship between the sin of the golden calf and the obligation to bring N'sakhim and M'nachot with communal offerings - and what is the relationship between the sin of the scouts and the obligation to bring N'sakhim and M'nachot with personal offerings?

We will return to this question after addressing our first question - how was this world different from the recently destroyed "first" world?

## V

### THE "TEIVAH" EFFECT

As several commentators have pointed out, the timing scheme in the flood narrative is arranged in a chiasmus, as follows:

A (7 days): " 'Come you and all your house into the ark; for you have I seen righteous before me in this generation. Of every clean beast you shall take to you seven pairs, the male and his female; and of beasts that are not clean one pair, the male and his female. Of birds also of the air by seven pairs, the male and the female; to keep seed alive upon the face of all the earth. For in another seven days I will cause it to rain upon the earth.' " (7:1-4,10)

B (40 days): "And the rain was upon the earth forty days and forty nights." (7:12)

C (150 days): "And the waters prevailed upon the earth a hundred and fifty days." (7:24)

C' (150 days): "And the waters returned from off the earth continually; and after the end of the hundred and fifty days the waters were abated." (8:3)

B' (40 days): "And it came to pass at the end of forty days, that Noach opened the window of the ark which he had made" (8:6)

A' (7 days): "And he stayed yet other seven days; and sent forth the dove; which did not return back to him any more. And it came to pass in the six hundredth and first year, in the first month, the first day of the month, the waters were dried up from off the earth; and Noach removed the covering of the ark, and looked, and, behold, the face of the ground was dry. And in the second month, on the

twenty seventh day of the month, was the earth dried. And God spoke to Noach, saying, 'Go out from the ark, you, and your wife, and your sons, and your sons' wives with you.' " (8:12-16)

When the Torah presents a chiastic structure, whether in narrative or legalistic text, it does so in order to highlight the "center" (see our discussion at <http://www.torah.org/advanced/mikra/5757/sh/dt.57.2.04.html>). What sits at the center of this "reversed chiasmus" ("reversed" because the movements described in the first set of verses - entrance into the ark and the onset of the flood - are reversed in the second)? In other words, what changed to allow Noach to come out and to allow the world to be restored?

One of the significant differences between the "old world" and the post-flood world is the introduction of a covenant - Adam had no covenantal relationship with his Creator. God blessed Man, provided him with all of his needs, commanded, chastised, punished and exiled him - but, at no point, was Adam a "covenantal partner" with God. Indeed, there is very little (aside from naming animals and siring the next generation) that Adam "does" which is productive. Adam is presented in the Torah chiefly as the passive recipient of Divine favor.

No member of humanity is any different - including Noach. (The one exception may be the offerings brought by Kayyin and Hevel). This is true only up until the time of the flood (I am following S'forno's interpretation at 6:18).. Note what has changed between the first set of verses, where Noach enters the Ark, and the second set, announcing his impending exit:

Whereas, in the first set, we are told that "...Hashem closed him in" (7:16), in the aftermath of the flood we read: "...and Noach removed the covering of the ark..." (8:13). Noach, who had entered the Ark not of his own volition (see Rashi at 7:8) and who was sealed in by God, suddenly becomes an active participant in his own rescue, opening the cover of the Ark. Note that the Hebrew word used to describe God's sealing him in - S\*G\*R - is a direct antonym of the word used for Noach's opening of the cover - P\*T\*Ch.

## VI

"AND IT WAS VERY GOOD..."

At this point, it is prudent to note one more similarity between Creation (Chapter 1) and re-Creation (Chapter 8). Both narratives end with a description of God's pleasure:

Day 6: "And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day." (1:31)

After the Flood: "And the Lord smelled the pleasing odor; 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; nor will I again destroy every living thing, as I have done." (8:21)

Note, however, a significant difference between these two:

In the first narrative, the Divine affirmation of Creation comes after His blessing to Mankind (1:28); after the flood, God takes pleasure and "removes the curse" from the earth - and only after that blesses Mankind: "And God blessed Noach and his sons, and said to them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth." (9:1) (note the strong similarity between this blessing and that given to Adam in 1:28).

Again, we see that it is Man's role in the creation - which comes along with the first covenant (9:9-17) - which is cause for his blessing. Unlike the first creation, where blessings were part and parcel of the Divine mandate and were, perforce, unearned by the recipient of that blessing, the antediluvian world is built on a covenanted relationship where Man "earns" God's favor and blessing.

How was that accomplished? What did Noach do - besides taking his own steps to leave the Ark - to gain Divine favor?

## VII

### KORBAN - THE SYMBOL OF MAN'S ROLE IN THE COVENANT

"And Noach built an altar to Hashem; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean bird, and offered burnt offerings on the altar." (8:20)

Noach's response to salvation was bringing offerings to God. Although Kayyin and Hevel already offered up sacrifices, this is the first instance where an offering is presented as emblematic of a relationship that the Makriv (one bringing the offering) has with God. Noach's reaction to being saved, to weathering the ordeal of the flood and to being given a second chance was to offer up some of his bounty to God.

This offering motivated God's blessing for Noach, his descendants and his new world:

"And Hashem smelled the pleasing odor; and Hashem 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; nor will I again destroy every living thing, as I have done." (8:21)



Since Noach has assumed a measure of responsibility for his relationship with God, there is now room for a covenant - which "obligates" God to maintain the world, its seasons and its inhabitants.

## VIII

### BACK TO THE S'FORNO

We can now understand the S'forno's cryptic comments regarding the introduction of libations and meal-offerings as accompanying offerings. When the people sinned by constructing and worshipping the golden calf, they were blemished as a nation and sentenced to die (see Sh'mot 32:10). After Mosheh begged, negotiated and demanded God's forgiveness, it was necessary for the people to demonstrate a greater level of involvement in their own side of the covenant. A symptom of that greater involvement was the innovation of the "Second Tablets". Unlike the "First Tablets", given at the end of the first set of forty days at Sinai, this set was carved by Mosheh. The human engraving of these second tablets, so much inferior to the Divine inscription on the first set, has its own glory. Man's greater role in maintaining his own "side" of the covenant insures an adherence to that covenant commensurate to the greater investment on the part of the people.

The added offerings of N'sakhim and M'nachot, just like Noach's offering at the genesis of the new world, are a reflection of a greater level of commitment and investment in the covenant on the part of the B'nei Yisra'el.

However we understand the sin of the golden calf, it is abundantly clear that the sin of the scouts (Bamidbar 13-14) is deliberately portrayed as a "sister sin" to it. Note, for example, how Mosheh utilizes the Divine attributes of compassion - first revealed in the aftermath of the calf episode - in his plea for Divine forgiveness of the sin of the scouts (compare Sh'mot 34:6-7 with Bamidbar 14:17-18).

If the nation sinned as a whole at Sinai, worshipping the golden calf, their crime was much more personal and private when they wept "on that night" after hearing the report of the scouts. Although the nation congregated, the Torah portrays their fears and weeping as private and individualistic, in contradistinction to the communal "celebration" around the newly constructed calf.

It stands to reason that if the Torah's antidote to the communal sin of the golden calf was the addition of the N'sakhim and M'nachot to accompany communal offerings, that the appropriate response to the (mass) private sin of the scouts was to add the obligation of N'sakhim and M'nachot to private offerings.

(We will address these comments of S'forno again, taking a more detailed approach to the relationship between these particular sins and the wine and meal offerings. Look for it later in the year.)

Now that we understand the S'forno's explanation of the relationship between Korbanot and increased responsibility on the part of the Makriv, we can explain the difference between the world which Noach left when he entered the Ark and the one he rebuilt when he exited.

In the antediluvian world, Man was the beneficiary of God's bounty and blessing (which is why Mankind is introduced after the animals - he is the ultimate creature, but no more than a creature).

On the other hand, the postdiluvian world presents Mankind as invested in the survival and success of this venture. This is the essential difference, first alluded to in Noach's behavior inside the Ark. Note that when Noach opened the cover, the Torah tells us that he "looked" - Hebrew \*Vayar\* - the exact word used to describe God's observations of the antediluvian world. (compare with B'resheet 1:4,12,18,21,31 and, most significantly, 6:5 and 6:12.)

## IX

### THE "MESSAGE"

We are now in position to properly address the second question above:

What possible import could this message contain for each - or any - of the three generations who first read Sefer B'resheet?

For the generation of slaves in Egypt: Their oppressed existence, suffering under the heel of a foreign power, will ultimate end, as did the unjust world before the flood. They must understand, however, that the "new world" awaiting them beyond the Reed Sea, will be one which obligates them to play a more active role in their covenantal relationship.

For the generation at Sinai: The "fall" in the shadow of Sinai, that terrible crime which sullied the pristine purity generated by the Revelation (see BT Shabbat 146a), impacted on the rest of their existence, as well as the rest of Jewish history (see Sh'mot 32:34). For this generation, the message of the flood and the "new world" is that they would have another chance, but that they would have to bear an increased share of the responsibility for the covenant with God (note how closely the "post-Egel" covenant is linked to scrupulous observance of God's command - cf. Sh'mot 34:10-11).

For the generation at Arvot Mo'av: The message of the flood and its aftermath would have the most significant impact. Subsequent to the many failures during their sojourn in the desert, the story promises the possibility of building a new world once they enter the Land - but concomitantly commits them to assuming a greater sense of responsibility for the success of their national endeavor, to build a "kingdom of Kohanim and a holy nation".

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