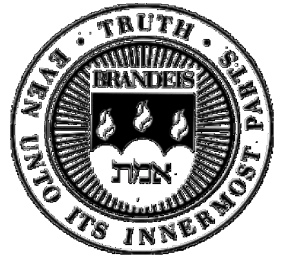




# תורת אמת



A Weekly Brandeis Orthodox Organization Publication

6 Cheshvan 5770 / 24 October 2009 Vol. XI Issue 9

## PARSHAT NOACH

Candle-lighting: 5:32 pm  
Shacharit: 9 am  
Sof Kriat Shema: 9:48 am  
Sof Zman Tefilla: 10:42 am  
Mincha 5:05 pm  
Shkia: 5:48 pm  
Motzei Shabbat: 6:32 pm

### Natural Morality

By Rabbi Kaplowitz

### Inside and Out

By Andrew Gluck '11

### Parsha in a Box

- Hashem does not like the way the people are acting in the world so....
- He tells Noah to build an Ark and tells him about the impending flood
- Hashem commands Noah to take 7 pairs of clean animals and a pair of unclean animals and his family and save them
- It rains for 40 days and 40 nights and everything that existed is destroyed
- Eventually Noah send out a dove and finds that the water was drying
- Noah leaves the *teva* at Hashem's command and offers sacrifices to Hashem
- Hashem makes a covenant with Noah and his offspring that He will never again bring a flood to destroy the world
- Every time you see a rainbow, think about how Hashem keeps His promises
- Noah's son, Cham, sins, and Noah curses his children
- The tower of Bavel is built
- Introduction to Avraham *Avinu*

The story of Noah and the flood is one that continues to capture our attention and our imagination year after year. To me it is unbelievable how many books, toys, and other paraphernalia our 2-year old son, Yisrael, has that relate directly to the story of Noah. Based on his collection, one might think he is a budding Bible genius.

Clearly, the story can be understood on many different levels. With this in mind, I would like to discuss an interesting question that is raised in connection the *mabul* (flood) that Hashem brought to destroy the world. At the very beginning of the *parshah*, the Torah tells us the reason for the flood: **The earth became corrupt before G-d; the earth was filled with lawlessness. When G-d saw how corrupt the earth was, for all flesh had corrupted its ways on earth, G-d said to Noah, "I have decided to put an end to all flesh, for the earth is filled with lawlessness because of them: I am about to destroy them with the earth"** (*Bereishit* 7:11-13). Humanity had become so corrupt and so immoral, that Hashem was left with no choice but to destroy everyone and everything. The Chizkuni (R. Chizkiya ben Manoach, France, 13<sup>th</sup> Century), one of the classical commentaries, asks a fascinating question: How could Hashem have punished the *dor ha-mabul* (generation of the flood) for their corruption? After all, they were never given the Torah or any other commandments, for that matter. How could they have known that their behavior was wrong? Chizkuni answers: "there are certain commandments that people are obligated to observe by force of reason, even if they were never commanded and therefore they were punished." In other words, even without an explicit legal code, society should have intu-

(Rabbi Kaplowitz continued on page 3)

In the first *pasuk* of this week's *parsha*, *Parshat Noach*, Noah is described as "*tamim hayah b'dorotav*," righteous in his generation, or blameless in his age. Shortly thereafter, G-d commands Noah to build a *tevah*, an ark for him, his wife, his sons, his daughters-in-law, and the animals. The directions that G-d gives to Noah include him covering it with pitch, a tar-like substance. Similarly, when Yocheved is building an ark in which to place Moshe, she caulks it with pitch.

However, there is one main distinction, Noah's ark is covered on both the inside and outside with pitch. The ark of Moshe is only covered on the outside with pitch. This physical dissimilarity is a telling sign of a spiritual difference between these two great men.

Both Moshe and Noah lived among people that needed their help. G-d expected them to engage and positively influence those around them. They lived among sinners who needed their guidance. However, Noah was not able to influence the others in his generation, whereas Moshe led Bnei Yisrael out of Egypt.

Noah's ark was a huge ark, yet it likely was unable to fit all the animals that had to come aboard. It begs the question, why did G-d have Noah build such a monstrous *tevah*, if it still would be insufficient, and G-d would still need to perform a miracle to enable everyone and everything to fit?

One answer, slightly parenthetically, is that it teaches us about *hishtadlut*, the personal effort needed to make things work. G-d did, is currently, and will perform *nissim*, miracles, on our behalf on a constant basis. However, we must do everything in our power and put in the effort on our end to ensure our own success, and then G-d will help us and push us over the top.

Another, more topically related answer is that G-d wanted it to take Noah a long time to

(Andrew Gluck continued on page 3)

### Shabbat Shalom and Happy Fall Fest!

# ***“The earth had become corrupt before G-d; and the earth was filled with lawlessness”***

By Jacob Agi ‘12

One of the most famous stories in the Torah is the story of the flood. We are all taught in grade school that the generation of the flood was so evil and immoral that Hashem decided to wipe the whole generation off the face of the earth. What exactly did they do to deserve this fate?

Chapter 6 verse 11 states, “The earth had become corrupt before G-d; and the earth was filled with lawlessness” (JPS translation). Rashi says that when the *passuk* says the earth was corrupt, it refers to sexual immorality and idol worship. He further explains that lawlessness refers to *gezel*; everyone stole from each other. The Midrash in *Bereishit Rabbah* (quoted by Rashi to 4:19) tells us that the men of this generation had two different wives. One was for bearing children while the other one was strictly for sexual relations. The child-bearer lived in seclusion, while the other one was made up and was given medicine to stay barren. Is having two wives really so corrupt to have the world destroyed? After all, did not Yaakov our forefather have four?

Rabbi Frand answers this question by saying this was the lowest level that mankind could reach. This lifestyle shows that people centered their lives around the pursuit of pleasure. Once the pursuit of pleasure is the center of life, there is no stopping. It can be suggested that this is what Rashi means by idol worship; the people worshipped the pursuit for pleasure more than anything else. One day they had two wives, but what would stop someone from even killing another man for his wife in order to satisfy his lust?

Now that we understand what the first part of the *passuk* is saying, what is the reason for the second half? Is it not obvious that since the world was corrupt, there was a state of “lawlessness?” Going back to Rashi saying that lawlessness refers to stealing, let us understand better what kind of stealing was taking place. The Midrash (*Bereishit Rabbah* 35:1) explains that the people would steal less than the amount of a *peruta*. The Or Ha-Chayim elaborates on this point, explaining that the people would make sure to take possession of these small amounts legally, by asking for a line of credit, taking less than a *peruta*, and then not paying it back. They would never be penalized because there did not exist legal proceedings for loans that were less than the amount of a *peruta*. After all, who wants to pursue litigation against someone who borrows a quarter and fails to repay it?

How does this explain why the *passuk* needed these two reasons for the destruction of this generation? I have an answer to suggest. By saying the world was corrupt, the Torah indicates that everyone was running wild doing whatever

they pleased at whatever cost. The lawlessness tells us that the people were smart enough to figure out all the different loopholes in the system so that they couldn’t be punished. The people of this generation were mocking G-d. They thought they could do whatever they wanted, but that because of their loopholes, G-d could not and would not punish them. Because of this thought process, G-d decided to destroy the world.

Now, imagine if we act the exact opposite way of the generation of the flood. Instead of finding loopholes to do bad, we can find all these different ways of how to act in a positive manner. That is how we will bring ourselves closer to the redemption. With the start of the new year, I hope we can all find new opportunities to improve ourselves and serve G-d, and may we bring *mashiach* speedily in our days.

*Jacob has put in the request that you not only do you read this byline; please read the actual article as well. Also, can Alex Marder please give the opening of the ark for Anim Zemiroto to someone else? Thanks.*

## ***Sacrificing the One He Saved***

By Aviva Zadoff ‘10

After the flood has come and gone and Noach leaves the ark, the first thing he does is bring a sacrifice, a *korban*. It is noted by several *mipharshim* that this is an odd thing for Noach to do. Hashem had just had Noach save these animals from the flood and then he sacrifices them. Rav Shimshon Raphael Hirsch notes here that when referring to *korbanot* the Torah always uses the name Hashem when referring to G-d. The name Hashem is the name of G-d that references the attribute of Mercy, as opposed to, say, the name Elokim which would refer to G-d’s attribute of Judgment.

Rav Hirsch explains that the reason for the use of the name Hashem when talking about *korbanot* is to make sure that we understand the reason we are giving these sacrifices. Other nations who gave sacrifices were doing so out of fear that the gods would be vengeful or punish them. The sacrifices were done to appease the gods who wanted these sacrifices. We, on the other hand, are meant to understand that we are sacrificing to a G-d who is merciful, One who values life. The point of the sacrifice is not to kill for Hashem; it is meant as a way to bring about mercy. By giving this animal to G-d we are bringing about Hashem’s merciful side in hope that He spares our lives. *Korbanot* are actually a way for us to fully devote ourselves to Hashem and to bring about a new level of closeness to Hashem.

Noach’s first action after leaving the ark is to teach us an important lesson about the real reason that we do *korbanot* and to show his continuing efforts to work on his relationship with Hashem.

*Aviva loves calling people’s names in high pitched voices.  
“Raaaafiiiiiii”...*

# M O D A O T

- **Mazel Tov to Ariel Marks '10 and Judith Simons '10 on their recent engagement! May they be *zoche* to build a *bayit ne'eman b'yisrael!***
- **Welcome to all the parents and guests who came to visit for Fall Fest!**
- **Hot Topics: Negotiating Family Differences in Religious Observance**, Shabbat day 4:05pm, Sherman Function Hall  
Join Rabbi Kaplowitz for an expanded, one hour session of his Hot Topics class.
- **BOO First-Year/Upperclassmen Dinners Deadline to signup is Wednesday October 28<sup>th</sup>** The time is finally here for the fabulous, delicious and entertaining semesterly First-Year/Upperclassmen Dinners! This event is a terrific way for first-years and upperclassmen to get together in a fun and intimate setting. First-Years will enjoy a delicious home cooked meal and the company of upperclassmen. Upperclassmen, get the privilege of hosting first-years and meeting the next generation. The dinners will take place Friday Night, Oct 31st (next Shabbat). TO RSVP: Upperclassmen speak to Michelle, first-years speak to Dafna Fine or Shira Moskowitz.
- **Want to write for Torat Emet?** Do you love your *Bar/Bat Mizvah parsha*? Do you love Torah? Do you love writing? If you're interested in writing for Torat Emet and sharing your words of Torah please contact Lauren or Ronit! Long and short articles are both appreciated. We are still looking for writers for the rest of the semester.

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*(Rabbi Kaplowitz continued from page 1)*

ited that its behavior was wrong. Humanity has a responsibility to act ethically and morally in all circumstances. There is a natural morality that exists in the world.

The Chizkuni's comment may seem obvious to many of us. It is interesting in that it points us to a fascinating philosophical debate – does Judaism and Halachah recognize natural morality? Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein has a great article addressing this very topic, titled "Does Judaism Recognize an Ethic Independent of *Halakhah*?" (**Leaves of Faith: The World of Jewish Living vol. 2**). As he frames the issue, "Essentially, then, the question is whether *halachah* is self-sufficient." If *halachah* is self-sufficient, then there is no need or room for natural morality. Torah would be the one and only source for morality and ethics. The existence of a natural morality may imply that *halachah* is not self-sufficient. This is the same question that many parents confront when raising their children: **Should I teach my child to visit the sick because it is a mitzvah, or because that is what you would want someone to do for you?**

Of course there are many permutations of this question, and much that Judaism has to say. As can be imagined, there are some thinkers who deny the existence of a natural morality and some who are great proponents of it. Others split the difference and claim that for non-Jews, who are not bound to the Torah, there is a natural morality but not for Jews.

As we read *Parshat Noach* this year, it is a question worth thinking about – what is the source of our ethics and morality? Do we turn to a universalist, humanist natural morality or do we turn to the Torah alone to guide us in such matters?

*Rabbi Kaplowitz Fun Fact: Rabbi Kaplowitz loves Hot Wheels and Power Rangers—Kimberly was his favorite.*

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*(Andrew Gluck continued from page 1)*

build the ark. Commentators vary on how long it took Noach to change, but the text seems to suggest that it was around 100 years. The reason G-d asked Noach to build a huge, yet not big enough, ark, was that those in his generation would see him building it. They would be prompted to ask why he was building an ark. When he responded that G-d was bringing a flood, they would be compelled to repent.

At least that was the plan. Noach, unfortunately, was unable to, or seemingly did not want to, inspire others to change. It's ironic that Noach is considered great "*b'dorotov*," in his generation, since he was unable to save his generation.

That is the lesson of the pitch. Noach's ark was covered both on the inside and on the outside. He was not influenced by the wicked people surrounding him. However, he was covered on the inside too. He did not allow himself to effect others.

Moshe was the exact opposite. He, like his ark, was covered on the outside. He did not allow the evil that surrounded him to affect him. Instead, Moshe was able and willing to influence others. He reached out to those that needed help.

In *Bereishit Rabba*, a collection of commentaries on *Bereishit* it states, "Rav Berekhya said: Moshe is more beloved than Noach. Noach, after having been called 'a righteous man' is called 'a man of the ground.' But Moshe Rabbenu, after having been called 'an Egyptian man' is called 'a man of God.'"

Once Noach's *dor* disappears, he is no longer a righteous man, but just a plain simple man. Moshe is the opposite—he is a leader. Once "returned" to his rightful place, among Bnei Yisrael, he is elevated to become a man of G-d.

*Andrew Gluck loves learning about exploding women.*

# SHORT VORTS

## *The Importance of Being Noah*

By Noah Fields '12

Truthfully, when speaking about Noah, I can't help but have some bias. After all, I do share a name with him. So, when a lot of commentators attack my idealized image of this man, I feel offended in some way. Even so, I can't help but agree with them at many times. After all, why didn't he stand up for his fellow people? Or why didn't he offer his son up as an appeasement sacrifice (who needs that Ham)? What am I supposed to make of this character? In turning to the commentaries of Sforno and Rabbi Twerski, I found a more relatable character. I found a character – Noah – who, like many of us, understands his world, knows G-d exists, but doesn't have true *emunah*.

The main verse used to attack Noah is when G-d says "The destruction of Mankind has come before me..."(Genesis 6:13). G-d directly addresses this comment to Noah, and yet Noah makes no response. Many commentators berate Noah for not arguing with G-d. Sforno, on the other hand, suggests that the awkward phrasing means that G-d already gave the people a chance to repent, but they chose destruction. According to this view, Noah would have no responsibility to stand up against G-d. Furthermore, Noah was a "tzaddik b'dorotav", a righteous man among his generation – one who addressed the needs of the community – he understood the nature of the people around him. So, G-d's announcement of their foreboding doom was about as obvious and eventual as the recent engagement between Ariel Marks and Judith Simons! (*Mazel Tov*, by the way!)

At the same time, Noah is still human. Rabbi Twerski emphasizes this through the verse, "Noach...went into the ark because of the waters of the flood"(Genesis 7:7). Twerski cites a Rashi that says that Noah did not enter the ark **until** the flood made him enter the ark! Twerski, in citing other sources, says that Noah only entered the ark at this point, because he did not have true *emunah*. What Twerski realizes is that Noah fully understood that G-d existed, he truly **knew**. But he lacked an emotional recognition of this fact. This, in my mind, is a very common problem in our times. Many of us know G-d exists. We know what he has commanded us to do. But we, like Noah, lack a full emotional recognition of this fact. We lack full *emunah*!

So while we are still in the process of renewal, we need to realize that having intellectual *emunah* is half the battle. To have a full sense of *emunah*, one that will drive us to fulfill G-d's commandments, we need to connect on an emotional level. In truth, this level is not easy to reach. I have faith though, that each and every one of us has the potential (not to mention the plethora of resources at Brandeis) to reach this level. In the end, it all goes to show the Importance of Being Earnest (ugh!).

*Noah HAD to write this week because the parsha is named after him.*

## *Nimrod's Sin*

By Debra Friedmann '13

Following the flood, the new generation found that they had a profound opportunity. At this point, there was no stratified class structure, and everybody was equal amongst their peers and was therefore able to establish for himself or herself a new political economic and social society based on their individual ideas. This opportunity soon dissolved however, when the infamous Nimrod rose to power and established himself as a ruler in society. According to the Abarbanel, when the Torah describes Nimrod as being a hunter, there are two possible definitions of this word. The first is that he was literally a hunter by profession, but used this skill to establish himself a name as a leader, one that should be feared. A second definition presents Nimrod as a monarchical figure that establishes himself as such through fortification of buildings and developing a more oppressive society.

The Abarbanel continues his explanation by stating that the great sin here was that the people developed the civilization and created a political system, rather than leaving G-d's creations in its most perfect natural state. This idea completely conflicts with one of our most basic beliefs as stated by the *Bereshit Rabbah*, explaining that whatever was created throughout the six days of creation needs to be worked on in order to reach its full potential. How could it be that in the undeveloped world as it was after the flood was supposed to be left in its natural state forever, especially when it seems to be an obligation for us to build and develop the world? The Akedat Yitzchak reconciles this issue by explaining that the natural world was left for mankind to develop, but this should not be the ultimate goal of society. Man must focus his attention on ways to serve G-d, and use the advancement of nature in order to help him in this endeavor. Here, Nimrod used governmental political systems in order to further his own advancement rather than serving G-d, and this is considered to be his great sin.

This Dvar Torah was adapted from the writings of Nechama Leibowitz

*"Debra's from the coolest place on Earth. Oceanside is AWE-SOME. OCEANSIDE PRIDE!" ~ Ayelet*

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