

SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE**NOAH****Haftarah: Yeshayahu 66:1-24****OCTOBER 20-21, 2017****1 HESHVAN 5778****Rosh Hodesh Heshvan will be celebrated on Friday & Shabbat, October 20 & 21.****DEDICATION: Le Refuah Shelemah Elisheva Bat Esther**

For those in Manhattan, about a year ago, we started a class which was one on one with a friend on Wednesday afternoons at 6. We can call it a beginner's class where we look at the weekly portion through a kabalistic lens – definitely an oxymoron. Some neighbors and friends have joined us from time to time, and others have asked to join, so we decided to open it up. I am sure everyone will enjoy it.

If you would like to join, the class is at 6PM on Wednesday afternoon at 979 Third Avenue between 58th and 59th on the 17th floor. The class will be about 45 minutes long. Everything is translated into English and we do our best to keep the concepts as simple as possible although all sourced in the writing of the Arizal and later Hahamim. If you would like to join, come with a friend or send a friend, please let us know. We'll create an email list for when a week is cancelled or to send reminders and notes.

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Daily Minyan Mon – Thurs at 979 Third Avenue, 17th Floor, Artistic Frame at 4:00PM – Please join us! 212-289-2100 – Mincha– The most important tefilah of the day –Give us 11 minutes and we'll give you the World To Come!

EDITORS NOTES

When Hashem decrees death on Adam/man, it appears that part of the reasoning is that since man has now tasted and absorbed evil, he can embark on a never ending path of a sinful existence with no chance to correct himself or return. Some suggest that the existence of death forces a person to consider his end and when those thoughts enter his mind, man will be prompted to repent that which he did wrong. But how many of us rarely if ever consider death? How many believe in some way that they will live forever? With that in mind, others explain that death may be the end of life, but it provides the soul a chance through reincarnation to fix that which needs to be corrected and to complete that which remains undone. Reincarnation helps to complete the puzzle.

We read this week of the righteous Noah. He is the one Hashem calls Sadik. Yet the rabbis say that this can be interpreted for the good or the bad. Perhaps in comparison to this evil generation Noah might be called righteous, but in any other generation he would amount to nothing. I guess the title of Sadik is not fixed and must be relative. Once Noah becomes suspect, the rabbis seem to stand in line to heave criticism at the man who is the father of all mankind.

We read a special Haftara this week for Rosh Hodesh from Isaiah 64. The haftara we would

typically read this week is taken from ten chapters back in the same book, perek 54. Verse 9 refers to the great flood as 'The waters of Noah' (mei no'ach). Why is the flood attributed to Noah here? The Zohar answers that Noah was at fault for not praying to Hashem on behalf of his generation: perhaps the flood would have been averted had he prayed. We see that after the flood when Noah sees the destruction and brings a sacrifice and prays to Hashem, he receives the promise of Heaven to never bring a flood again which would wipe out mankind. One must wonder, if Hashem promises to never bring a flood again after the fact and no matter what, then could the flood have been averted in the first place with the same prayer? (And Noah after the flood seems to sink from failure to failure and in the end cannot even influence his own children to stop them from their idolatry and the building of the Tower of Bavel.)

In fact we see the scene where Hashem comes to Noah and tells him that the people will be destroyed and only he will survive to begin again repeated in the book of Exodus with somewhat different results. There Hashem comes to Moses after the incident of the Golden Calf. He tells Moses to separate himself from the people who will be destroyed. A new nation will be built from Moses. While Noah walks away and accepts the decree, Moses does not. In what is one of the greatest acts of self-sacrifice, Moses begs Hashem 'Please erase me from Your book' (mecheini na mi'sifrecha). Moses was willing to wipe himself from existence to gain forgiveness for Benei Yisrael.

The rabbis teach us that for a person to truly repent from his sin, he must be confronted with the same choice again and the second time around choose

correctly. Noah fails and Moses faces the same dilemma, acts differently and corrects Noah's failure. Why? What is the connection?

The mekubalim point out that the words "mecheini na" spelled backwards read 'I am Noah' (ani noah), for in fact Moses holds within him the soul of Noah. The same word "mecheini" can be rearranged to read the reason Moses had to come back for Noah. The word reads "mei noah" (the waters of Noah). Some may comment that perhaps Moses simply learned from the mistake of Noah and that a leader must assume full responsibility for others. But let's explore other connections between the two.

Noah is told to build a tevah/ark while Moses is placed in a tevah into the waters of the Nile. Noah is saved from the great waters of the flood while Moses' name means to be drawn from the water: Of Noah it is written during the flood, "It would continue to rain on the earth for forty days and forty nights". Of Moses it is written, "Moses remained there with Hashem for 40 days and 40 nights". Following near destruction, Hashem enters into a covenant with both Noah and Moses. We have the law given through Noah of the seven commandments to the nations and through Moses we have the 613 commandments given to the Jewish people.

Even the unique choice of words shared in the two stories adds to the revelation. While "Hashem regretted (vayinachem) that he had made man" saying he would blot them out in the time of Noah, we see that "Hashem repented (vayinachem) of the evil which He said He would do to His people' by Moses.

The word Neshama translates as soul and is comprised of four letters; Nun, Shin, Mem and Heh. Perhaps these represent the ultimate soul which was first placed into Hevel (the Heh) who was killed by his brother Kayin and returned as Shet (Shin) who the verse explains was born to replace his dead brother. This great soul returns as Noah who is unable to complete his task and finally achieves his destiny in Moses. And yes, we can add many paragraphs relating the soul of Moses back to it's origin in Hevel.

I am no expert in reincarnation. I'm not even sure I can call myself a novice, but I wonder in a world of souls which is beyond the dimension of time, can one be saved by his future self. Think about it.

Hashem commands Noah to enter the ark just before the onset of the flood. He said, "Go into the ark...because I have seen you as a righteous person before Me in this generation". Why not leave it as righteous? Why add in this generation. I have heard it

explained by many including Rabbi Mansour in this newsletter, that the word "Ha'zeh" ("this") has the numerical value of 17. Is Hashem telling Noah that I see you in your 17th generation from now as righteous? Is Hashem alluding to Moses who would correct Noah's mistake? And is this prophecy at the back of Yocheved's mind when Moses is born and she sees that he is good - "Ki Tob Hu"? Is it merely a coincidence that the word Tob has the numerical value of 17? Does she know that her son is the Sadik of Dor HaZeh who would rectify the mistake of Noah? Is that in her mind as she takes the strangest of actions in trying to save him by placing her child in a mini tevah, sealing it with pitch and placing him on the river?.

How amazing this Torah that we have, this life that we have and this universe we were given.

Let me close with the words of Pirkei Avot: Ben Bag Bag (a convert who discovered the beauty of the Torah of the Jewish people) used to say, "Turn it, and turn it, for everything is in it. Reflect on it and grow old and gray with it. Don't turn from it, for nothing is better than it."

Shabbat Shalom

David Bibi

Dear Friends of Israel and the Jewish People,

Thanks to the indefatigable "watchdog" efforts of Richard Allen, who was the first to inform us that the U.J.A.'s Jewish Communal Fund was funneling and continues to funnel monies to the New Israel Fund, we now know that very quietly, and most shockingly, The Center for Jewish History installed David N. Myers as its new executive director. David Myers, a leader of the New Israel Fund and J Street who is an unabashed supporter of Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions against Israel, is now head of the CJH which is a partnership of five venerable organizations: the American Jewish Historical Society, the American Sephardi Federation the Leo Baeck Institute, the Yeshiva University Museum, and the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research. Although these five partners have separate governing bodies and finances, they each have members on the Central Board of the CJH and share equally in its functioning. (See the links at the bottom of this letter for more information about David Myers.)

(For those of you who are not familiar with the significance of the Center for Jewish History,

the collections of its five partner organizations constitute the largest repository documenting the Jewish experience outside of Israel. The partners' collections include more than 100 million documents, 500,000 books, thousands of art objects, textiles, ritual objects, music, films, and photographs. The Center also serves as a centralized place for events, exhibitions, and performances. The Center is an affiliate of the Smithsonian Institution.)

If you are wondering how an anti-Israel activist described by Daniel Greenfield as "unfit for any role in the Jewish community ended up heading the Center for Jewish History," read Greenfield's article (Sultanknish.blogspot.com, 10/17) the link to which is below. It is the "tip of the iceberg," he writes as radical activists continue to expropriate and hijack Jewish culture, thought, and history in order to pursue an anti-Israel agenda. Accepting David Myers as executive director gives credibility and a dangerous platform to those who are intent on demonizing, destabilizing, and delegitimizing Israel.

Not long after Myers was appointed, the American Jewish Historical Society announced that they would host two events: one was a play written by a member of Jewish Voice for Peace, an organization which vehemently supports BDS against Israel and holds Israel responsible for the terror waged against it and a panel discussion co-sponsored by the afore-mentioned organization. The intense criticism of the A.J.H.S. (Algemeiner, 10/10/17; ZOA.org, 10/10/17) compelled its board to cancel the two events and issue this statement: "While the programs themselves may have merit, they do not align with the mission of the A.J.H.S." (NYT, 10/12/17) One might add, "nor does the appointment of David N. Myers." **We are sure that the founders of the Center for Jewish History never intended it to become a platform or venue for bashing Israel.**

As Daniel Greenfield has written, "Jews and friends of the Jewish people...need to be able to distinguish between Jewish organizations and organizations with Jewish names that have been hi-jacked for anti-Jewish agendas." We have an obligation to educate the public about the hi-jacking of the Center for Jewish History by individuals whose mission is antithetical to that of its founders.

Attached is a notice prepared by Americans for a Safe Israel (AFSI) which provides contact information for the five organizations who are

partners of the CJH. Please contact each one and tell them that while they were "sleeping," their CJH board members allowed a most inappropriate person to become leader of the CJH. They should remove him as soon as possible.

Today, Wed., October 18th, in front of the Center for Jewish History in Manhattan, there will be a protest from 5-8 p.m. at 15 West 16th St. between 5th and 6th Aves. (Union Square) organized by Richard Allen of JCCWatch.org and Helen Freedman and Judy Kadish of AFSI and supported by the Zionist Organization of America (ZOA). It is critical that we educate everyone we know and contact the five partner organizations of the CJH which are listed below and demand a replacement for David Myers.

Our silence is acquiescence,

Lynne Bursky-Tammam and Nessim Tammam

Yom Hashoah Mobilization Committee

American Jewish Historical Society (AJHS)

Home page: <http://www.ajhs.org/>

Contact info: <http://www.ajhs.org/contact>

American Sephardi Federation (ASF)

Home page: <http://sephardi.house/>

Contact: info@americansephardi.org

Leo Baeck Institute (LBI)

Home page: <https://www.lbi.org/>

Contact info: <https://www.lbi.org/about/contact-lbi/>

Yeshiva University Museum (YU Museum)

Home page: <http://www.yumuseum.org/>

Contact

info: <http://www.yumuseum.org/about/contact>

YIVO Institute for Jewish Research (YIVO)

Home Page: <https://www.yivo.org/>

Contact Info: <https://www.yivo.org/Contact-Us>

Leadership of CJH:

<http://www.cjh.org/about/leadership>

ARTICLES:

<https://www.algemeiner.com/2017/09/05/new-ceo-of-center-for-jewish-history-holds-radical-viewpoints/>

<http://www.israelnationalnews.com/Articles/Article.aspx/20971>

Summary of the Perasha Nathan Dweck

Noach - The flood

- 1- Hashem instructs Noach to build a tevah and advises him that he plans to bring a flood that will destroy all man and animals
- 2- Noach brings his family and animals in the tevah. The flood begins.
- 3- The period of the flood
- 4- Rebuilding the world. Hashem tells Noach and his family to have children and fill the world
- 5- Hashem makes a covenant to never bring another mabool
- 6- Noach gets drunk and becomes uncovered. Noach curses Ham. The parasha lists the descendants of Noach.
- 7- Dor hafaflaga and the tower of Babel. The parasha tells the 10 generations between Noach and Abraham.

Parashat Noach discusses the events of the mabool. Rashi points out that when Hashem told Noach to enter the teva the men and women are listed separately as Hashem says "enter the teva you and your sons and your wife and your son's wives". Then when Hashem tells Noach to leave the teva the men and women are listed together as Hashem says "leave the teva you and your wife and your sons and their wives". Then after leaving the teva Hashem tells Noach "shartsoo ba'aretz" to let the animals (and seemingly the people also) be prolific on the land and to be fruitful and multiply. The next pasook continues that Noach got off the teva listing the men and women separately again.

We know every word in the Torah is calculated and is coming to teach us something. Why does the Torah switch the wording back and forth? Rashi explains from the fact that when entering the teva the men and women are listed separately we learn that it was prohibited to have relations on the teva (as it was inappropriate to have relations because the rest of the world is in a state of pain. We saw this concept also by Yosef who didn't have children until after the years of famine were over). And that is why when leaving the teva the wording changes. Rashi explains Hashem was telling Noach it is now okay for you to have relations. In fact the next pasook continues ve'shartsoo "ba'aretz" oo'par'oo ve'raboo ahl ha'aretz. Rashi explains that from the seemingly extra word "ba'aretz" the text is teaching us that man and animal should be fruitful and multiply on the land (as opposed to on the teva where it was prohibited). And interestingly the pasook tells us Noach got off the teva "Noach and his sons" (separate from the women). Rashi explains that despite that it was now

permitted Noach was afraid to have relations and re-populate the world for fear that there would be another flood. And this fits well with the text as the parasha goes on to tell us that Hashem made a covenant with Noach that he would not bring another mabool. The purpose of the covenant we see was to reassure Noach that his efforts to re-populate the world would not be in vain. With this explanation of Rashi on the pesookim we can see how deep our Torah is and how every word is calculated and is coming to teach us something. How beautiful is our Torah!

Le'refua Shelema Elisheva bat Esther

FROM THE RABBIS OF THE JERSEY SHORE

"You shall tar it (the ark) on the inside and on the outside with pitch." (Beresheet 6:14)

The following story was quoted in Torah LaDaat:

Rav Shimshon Rafael Hirsch zt"l once chance to pass by a large Reform temple in Frankfurt, Germany. On the outside, the temple resembled a Gentile cathedral, and the inside was constructed in a manner contrary to halachah, with a large organ in the back.

One of the officers of the temple asked the Rav about his impression of their magnificent edifice. Rav Hirsch replied: Your house of worship resembles Noah's ark in one respect, while it differs from it in another manner. It is similar in that it, *תבם*, *תבם* (it is permeated with) *הריפכ* heresy) on the inside and the outside. On the other hand, the ark of Noah saved all of its inhabitants from the flood, while this temple will certainly not be able to protect its inhabitants from the ravaging waters of atheism and assimilation. Rabbi Reuven Semah

"In the middle of the day, Noah went into the Tebah." (Beresheet 7:13)

Rashi tells us that Hashem heard the people of the generation saying, "If we see Noah enter the ark we will harm him and break the ark." Therefore, Hashem allowed Noah to enter in the middle of the day as if to say, "Let's see what anyone will really do." And indeed, nothing was done to Noah.

The question is obvious: the people didn't believe that a flood would take place and they used to mock Noah while he was building the Tebah. If so, why would they care if he went into the Tebah right before the flood, if according to their understanding there would be no flood? Noah would have to come out of the ark in humiliation and they would be vindicated! The answer is, although they didn't think the flood would really come, deep down in their hearts they

thought perhaps they were wrong and maybe there would be a flood.

When a person does something wrong and rationalizes that it's OK, he doesn't want to believe that there will be retribution and he might even challenge those who say there will be punishment. But in his heart of hearts he will question himself and say maybe they're right and he is wrong, and so he may try to prevent those who warn him against his deeds, rather than accept their words. The human mind is very complex and there can be very contradictory feelings inside of us. Only through Torah and mussar can we unravel our emotions and feelings and get them where they are supposed to be. Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

RABBI ELI MANSOUR **Finding Grace in God's Eyes**

God had determined that the world was not worthy of continued existence, but one man –Noah – would be spared, together with his family. The final verse of Parashat Bereshit tells us that “Noah Masa Hen Be'eneh Hashem” – “Noah found grace in God's eyes.” One commentator explained that ordinarily, when a decree is issued against an entire society, it is applied even to the righteous minority. Hence, the decree of annihilation issued against the earth in Noah's time should have included even him, despite the fact that he was a Sadik. A collective decree is carried out against the entire society, and thus even Noah should have been drowned by the floodwaters. However, an exception was made because “Noah found grace in God's eyes.” Noah had a certain quality of “Hen,” grace. We all know people who have something about them, a certain charm, that draws people's favor and fondness, that attract affection and friendship. It seems that Noah possessed this quality in relation to God. He had a certain charm that earned him God's grace and favor, allowing him to survive the flood.

The question, then, arises, how does one achieve this “Hen”? How does one “find grace in God's eyes”? What is the secret to earning God's special favor that protects us from harm?

One answer may be found in a verse in Mishleh (3:34): “La'anavim Yiten Hen” – “He grants grace to the humble.” A person earns God's grace through humility, by conducting himself modestly, rather than showing off, boasting and calling attention to himself. We know this is true when it comes to earning the grace and favor of other people. People are naturally drawn to show kindness and favor to those who are humble and are not looking to promote themselves, whereas we are naturally repulsed by people who

boast and show off. The Pasuk in Mishleh teaches that this is how it is with God, as well. We earn the Almighty's favor through humility, by avoiding boasting and self-promotion.

There is, however, an additional element to this quality of “Hen,” and that is Torah study. The Gemara teaches that when one studies Torah at night, he is endowed with a certain charm the following day. Torah learning has an impact upon our personalities and characters, bestowing upon us a special quality of charm. Elsewhere, the Gemara relates that when Rabbi Zera received his ordination, his colleagues sang a song in his honor, saying that he does not need cosmetics to beautify himself. Rashi explains that the Torah he had studied had a “cosmetic” effect and made him charming. The Torah we study has the unique power to grant us “Hen” and enable us to earn God's favor.

These are two ways in which we can be worthy of God's special grace – humility, and Torah learning. By conducting ourselves in a humble, unassuming manner, and by setting aside time for Torah, we earn Hashem's special favor and help ensure that we, like Noah, will be spared harsh decrees.

VICTOR BIBI **SOD HAPARASHA**

**Will be distributed under a separate list
If you want to receive this article every week,
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Rabbi Wein **The Trace of God**

The greater a person is or believes he or she is, the smaller the room for error in one's life decisions. Had Noach been merely Mister Noach, his choice of beginning the world again with a vineyard and wine would have been acceptable and even understandable. After all, the trauma of the destruction of so many human beings in the waters of the great flood required some sort of release of tension and an escape mechanism. But he was not just plain Noach when the Lord commanded him to build his ark and restart humanity.

He was Noach the righteous man of his generations, the person who represented goodness and service to God and humanity. He was special, an exalted person who overcame the influences of a wicked and dissolute society and withstood its ridicule and insults. A person of such noble character and pious nature should not begin the rebuilding of human society with vineyards and wine.

It sent the wrong message to his progeny and through them to all later generations as well. Holy people are to be held to holy standards of behavior and endeavor. There is no one size fits all in ethical and moral behavior standards. The rabbis of Midrash taught us that the greater the human capacity for holiness brings with it a commensurate capacity for dissolute behavior as well.

The Talmud stated that it was the scholarly righteous who had the strongest evil inclination within them. The responsibility for spiritual greatness is commensurate with the capacity for holy greatness of each individual person. This is why Noach found himself criticized by Midrash and later Jewish biblical commentators in spite of the Torah's glowing compliments paid to him in its initial description.

A person of the stature of Noach should not be found drunk and disheveled in his tent, an inviting figure for the debauchery of his own offspring. The failure of greatness is depressing. As King Solomon put it: "If the flame has consumed the great cedars, then what else can be the fate of the hyssop of the wall?"

Greatness carries with it enormous burdens and fateful consequences. As we pride ourselves on being the "chosen people" we are held by Heaven to behave and live our lives as being a chosen people. Wine and drunkenness will not suffice for a nation that is destined to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation, a special people.

Burdened by this greatness the Jewish people have fallen short of the mark numerous times in our history. But we have always risen again to attempt to fulfill our destiny and realize our potential. It is this characteristic of resilience, inherited from our father Abraham, that has been the key to our survival. We have constantly dealt with great ideas and issues. Drunkenness, whether physical or spiritual, has never been a trait of Jewish society. We are aware of the story and fate of Noach and therefore we pursue the greatness of Abraham as our goal in life.

Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks

The story of the first eight chapters of Bereishit is tragic but simple: creation, followed by de-creation, followed by re-creation. God creates order. Humans then destroy that order, to the point where "the world was filled with violence," and "all flesh had corrupted its way on earth." God brings a flood that wipes away all life, until – with the exception of Noach, his family and other animals – the earth has returned to the state it was in at the beginning of Torah, when "the earth was waste and void, darkness was over the

surface of the deep, and the spirit of God was hovering over the waters."

Vowing never again to destroy all life – though not guaranteeing that humanity might not do so of its own accord – God begins again, this time with Noach in place of Adam, father of a new start to the human story. Genesis 9 is therefore parallel to Genesis 1. But there are two significant differences.

In both there is a keyword, repeated seven times, but it is a different word. In Genesis 1 the word is tov, "good." In Genesis 9, the word is brit, "covenant." That is the first difference.

The second is that they both state that God made the human person in His image, but they do so in markedly different ways. In Genesis 1 we read:

And God said, "Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of heaven, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every moving thing that moves upon the earth."

So God created man in His image,
In the image of God He created him,
Male and female He created them. (Gen. 1:26-27)
And this is how it is stated in Genesis 9:
Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed;
for in the image of God, He made man. (Gen. 9:6)

The difference here is fundamental. Genesis 1 tells me that I am in the image of God. Genesis 9 tells me that the other person is in the image of God. Genesis 1 speaks about the dominance of Homo sapiens over the rest of creation. Genesis 9 speaks about the sanctity of life and the prohibition of murder. The first chapter tells us about the potential power of human beings, while the ninth chapter tells us about the moral limits of that power. We may not use it to deprive another person of life.

This also explains why the keyword, repeated seven times, changes from "good" to "covenant." When we call something good, we are speaking about how it is in itself. But when we speak of covenant, we are talking about relationships. A covenant is a moral bond between persons.

What differentiates the world after the Flood from the world before is that the terms of the human condition have changed. God no longer expects people to be good because it is in their nature to be so. To the contrary, God now knows that "every inclination of the human heart is evil from childhood" (Gen. 8: 21) –

and this despite the fact that we were created in God's image.

The difference is that there is only one God. If there were only one human being, he or she might live at peace with the world. But we know that this could not be the case because "It is not good for man to be alone." We are social animals. And when one human being thinks he or she has godlike powers vis-à-vis another human being, the result is violence. Therefore, thinking yourself godlike, if you are human, all-too-human, is very dangerous indeed.

That is why, with one simple move, God transformed the terms of the equation. After the Flood, He taught Noah and through him all humanity, that we should think, not of ourselves but of the human other as in the image of God. That is the only way to save ourselves from violence and self-destruction.

This really is a life-changing idea. It means that the greatest religious challenge is: Can I see God's image in one who is not in my image – whose colour, class, culture or creed is different from mine?

People fear people not like them. That has been a source of violence for as long as there has been human life on earth. The stranger, the foreigner, the outsider, is almost always seen as a threat. But what if the opposite is the case? What if the people not like us enlarge rather than endanger our world?

There is a strange blessing we say after eating or drinking something over which we make the blessing shehakol. It goes: borei nefashot rabbot vechesronam. God "creates many souls and their deficiencies." Understood literally, it is almost incomprehensible. Why should we praise God who creates deficiencies?

One beautiful answer[1] is that if we had no deficiencies, then lacking nothing, we would never need anyone else. We would be solitary rather than social. The fact that we are all different, and all have deficiencies, means that we need one another. What you lack, I may have, and what I lack, you may have. It is by coming together that we can each give the other something he or she lacks. It is our deficiencies and differences that brings us together in mutual gain, in a win-win scenario.[2] It is our diversity that makes us social animals.

This is the insight expressed in the famous rabbinic statement: "When a human being makes many coins in the same mint, they all come out the same. God makes us all in the same mint, the same image, His image, and we all come out different." [3] This is the

basis of what I call – it was the title of one of my books – the dignity of difference.

This is a life-changing idea. Next time we meet someone radically unlike us, we should try seeing difference not as a threat but as an enlarging, possibility-creating gift. After the Flood, and to avoid a world "filled with violence" that led to the Flood in the first place, God asks us to see His image in one who is not in my image. Adam knew that he was in the image of God. Noah and his descendants are commanded to remember that the other person is in the image of God.

The great religious challenge is: Can I see a trace of God in the face of a stranger?

[1] I thank Mr Joshua Rowe of Manchester from whom I first heard this lovely idea.

[2] This is what led thinkers like Montesquieu in the eighteenth century to conceptualise trade as an alternative to war. When two different tribes meet, they can either trade or fight. If they fight, one at least will lose and the other, too, will suffer losses. If they trade, both will gain. This is one of the most important contributions of the market economy to peace, tolerance and the ability to see difference as a blessing, not a curse. See Albert O. Hirschman, *The passions and the interests: political arguments for capitalism before its triumph*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013.

[3] Mishnah, Sanhedrin 4:5.

Rabbi Meyer Laniado

The Tower of Babel and 'Confused Speech'
Rabbi Meyer Laniado

Reading the story of The Tower of Babel it is hard to identify precisely what went wrong and how God's response addressed the issue. This account is a fascinating one with profound social commentary contained in its only nine verses (11:1-9). The text does not explicitly state a transgression or punishment; rather lets us know that man was on a path that God could not let continue[1]. What had begun to take place that God wanted to stop from progressing? Furthermore, how would confusing their speech achieve the goal?

Nimrod was the mastermind behind the plan to build this city with its tower. His goal was to create for himself a name (na'ase lanu shem)[2]. He sought power for himself. His first goal was to shift the people's reliance on God to reliance on Him.

Josephus as well as the Midrash makes this point: "He [Nimrod] also gradually changed the government into tyranny, seeing no other way of turning men from the fear of God, but to bring them into a constant dependence on his power[3]." This is a strategy used by tyrannical regimes to control the masses[4].

The psychologist Carl Jung describes this stratagem of dictators in his book *The Undiscovered Self*. There he dedicates a full chapter to this subject, but here I will quote only a few lines:

...all socio-political movements tending in this direction invariably try to cut the ground from under religion...

The policy of the State is exalted to a creed, the leader or party boss becomes a demigod beyond good and evil, and his votaries are honored as heroes...There is only one truth and besides it no other. It is sacrosanct and above criticism. Anyone who thinks differently is a heretic, who, as we know from history, is threatened with all manner of unpleasant things. Only the party boss, who holds the political power in his hands, can interpret the State doctrine authentically, and he does so just as suits him.

Nimrod orchestrated a rebellion against God[5]. He convinced the people that they must unite and build this city and tower to protect themselves[6]. This was a step towards creating himself into the 'god.' To establish himself as the ultimate power he presented a compelling ideology riling up the emotions of the people. He played into their fears of another flood and presented himself as the solution. He promised to 'vanquish the enemies,' offering the prospect of a better life.

Alongside his 'benevolent' proposal was the creation of monolithic thinking through slogans and group think. Nimrod was a master rhetorician, able to sway the people in whichever way he desired. The short description we have of him describes him as a master hunter, gibor sayid, before God, lifnei Hashem[7]. This allowed him to rise to power, becoming the first powerful king[8], ruler of Babylonia[9]. The opening of the Tower of Babel tells us that the people under Nimrod had 'one language and one speech[10].' They were controlled by slogans and catch phrases. The language of citizens, if controlled, can limit analysis and freedom of thought, thus increasing a leader's power of his people. This was described in George Orwell's *Animal Farm* but developed further in his book *1984*. In the Appendix to *1984* George Orwell writes about the language created, Newspeak, to control the

public:

The purpose of Newspeak was not only to provide a medium of expression for the world-view and mental habits proper to the devotees of Ingsoc [the society], but to make all other modes of thought impossible. It was intended that when Newspeak had been adopted once and for all...a heretical thought - that is, a thought diverging from the principles of Ingsoc - should be literally unthinkable

Nimrod utilized the 'language of deception.' The Nazis as well would use language to manipulate for example at the entrance to Auschwitz it reads "work liberates." Imprisonment was termed "protective custody," and deportation to a death camp was referred to as "resettlement." These phrases are only meant to manipulate, not clarify.

Abraham grew up under Nimrod's rule, a society that was entirely engrossed in monolithic thinking. He was subjected to a society in which challenging the norms of thought was heretical and punishable by death. Abraham, as a curious young man, began to question the conventions he was surrounded by, and in doing so put his life at risk. He did what was heretical and thought differently, he challenged, and did not just accept their slogans and catch phrases. In doing so, he was put to fire. Miraculously he was saved [11].

The response by God of dispersing the people through changing their language allowed for diversity of thought. The danger was in a world dominated by a tyrant who would oppress the people, abusing them for his own grandeur. The spread of humanity throughout the land and the variations in language broke the people free from group think, created a multitude of cultures, and ideas.

Critical thinking and analysis of ideas are values we promote. We encourage our students to challenge, and ask questions. We are successful because we do not blindly accept the conventions of society; we see beyond rhetoric and shallow phrases. We want to know the details of the plan, the possible outcomes, and seek a more effective method. We appreciate a multitude of opinions and angles. We say there are even seventy facets of the Torah. We should strive to live the model of Abraham, the inquisitive, independent mind, the one who was able to escape the tyrannical regime of Nimrod.

[1] Beresheit 11:6

[2] Ibid 11:4

[3] Also see Ran

[4] "The Soviet Union was the first state to have as an ideological objective the elimination of religion. Toward that end, the Communist regime confiscated church property, ridiculed religion,

harassed believers, and propagated atheism in the schools. Actions toward particular religions, however, were determined by State interests, and most organized religions were never outlawed. The main target of the anti-religious campaign in the 1920s and 1930s was the Russian Orthodox Church, which had the largest number of faithful. Nearly all of its clergy, and many of its believers, were shot or sent to labor camps. Theological schools were closed, and church publications were prohibited. By 1939 only about 500 of over 50,000 churches remained open."

<https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/archives/anti.html>

[5] tBavli Sanhedrein 109a and Rashi

[6] Ibid.

[7] Beresheit 10:9

[8] Ramban ibid

[9] Beresheit 10:10

[10] Beresheit 11:1

[11] Rambam Hilkhos Aboda Zara 1 and Beresheit Rabah 38:13

Rav Kook on the Perasha

After the Flood, God informed Noah:

"I will make My covenant with you, and all flesh will never again be cut off by the waters of a flood."

"This is the sign of the covenant that I am placing between Me, you, and every living creature that is with you, for all generations: I have set My rainbow in the clouds... The rainbow will be in the clouds, and I will see it to recall the eternal covenant." (Gen. 9:11-16)

In what way does the rainbow symbolize God's covenant, never again to destroy the world by a flood? Why does the Torah emphasize that this rainbow is "in the clouds"? And most importantly, what is the significance of this Divine promise never again to flood the world? Does this imply that the Flood was unjust? Or did God change His expectations for the world?

The rainbow is not just a natural phenomenon caused by the refraction of light. The "rainbow in the clouds" represents a paradigm shift in humanity's spiritual development.

Pre-Flood Morality

Before the devastation of the Flood, the world was different than the world we know; it was younger and more vibrant. Its physical aspects were much stronger, and people lived longer lives. Just as the body was more robust, the intellect was also very powerful. People were expected to utilize their intellectual powers as a guide for living in a sensible, moral fashion. The truth alone should have been a sufficient guide for a strong-willed individual. Ideally, awareness of God's presence should be enough to

enlighten and direct one's actions. This was the potential of the pristine world of the Garden of Eden.

Rampant violence and immorality in Noah's generation, however, demonstrated that humanity fell abysmally short of its moral and spiritual potential. After the Flood, God fundamentally changed the nature of ethical guidance for the human soul. The sign that God showed Noah, the "rainbow in the clouds," is a metaphor for this change.

Greater Moral Guidance

The rainbow represents divine enlightenment, a refraction of God's light, as it penetrates into our physical world. Why does the Torah emphasize that the rainbow is "in the clouds"? Clouds represent our emotional and physical aspects, just as clouds are heavy and dark (the Hebrew word *geshem* means both 'rain' and 'physical matter'). The covenant of the "rainbow in the clouds" indicates that the Divine enlightenment (the rainbow) now extended from the realm of the intellect, where it existed before the Flood, to the emotional and physical spheres (the clouds). God's rainbow of light now also penetrated the thick clouds of the material world.

How was this accomplished? The Divine light became 'clothed' in a more physical form – concrete mitzvot. God gave to Noah the first and most basic moral code: the seven laws of the Noahide code. These commandments served to bridge the divide between intellect and deed, between the metaphysical and the physical.

We can now understand God's promise never again to flood the world. After the Flood, a total destruction of mankind became unnecessary, as the very nature of human ethical conduct was altered. Our inner spiritual life became more tightly connected to our external physical actions. As a result, the need for such a vast destruction of life, as occurred in the Flood, would not be repeated. Of course, individuals — and even nations — may still choose to sink to the level of savages and barbarians. But the degree of immorality will never again reach the scope of Noah's generation, where only a single family deserved to be saved.

(Gold from the Land of Israel pp. 34-36. Adapted from Ein Eyah vol. II, pp. 318-319)