

SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE

NOAH

Haftarah: Yeshayahu 54:1-10

OCTOBER 17 2015 4 HESHVAN 5776

Minha & Arbit 5:55 PM -Candle Lighting 5:55 PM
Friends – We need assistance and a commitment for Friday evenings

Shabbat

Class with Rav Aharon 8:00 AM – Latest Shema 9:10AM
Shahrit 8:30 AM, Torah 9:45 and Musaf at 10:30

Kiddush this week is sponsored by the Lembergers
In memory of Tina's mother and Uri's father

Shabbat Morning Children's Program 10:30 - 11:30 with Jennifer
Ages 2-5 - in the Playroom/
Girls Ages 6-12 - In the Upstairs Library / Treats, Games, Stories, Prayers and Fun!

Children's program at Bach at 4:30PM –
Ladies Class at the Lembergers at 4:30

Class with Rav Aharon at 5:00PM
Minha 5:30 PM - Seudat Shelishit 6:00 PM
Birkat HaMazon 6:40 PM Arbit 6:45 PM – Shabbat Ends at 6:55

SUNDAY MORNING Shaharit at 8AM

DAILY MINYAN

Monday, Thursday 6:55, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday at 7:00AM

LOOKING FORWARD:

What Do Blind People Actually See?
Sunday, October 25th at 5:30 pm
@ the BACH - 210 Edwards Blvd. Long Beach
See Flyer

The Sisterhood will be having a Friday night dinner in the Synagogue on November 6.
Cost is \$26 ages 15 and up, \$15 ages 8-15, \$10 ages 3-8. Under 3 free.
Reservations must be made by email to hmizny@gmail.com –
include how many people and ages of everyone.
We must receive reservation by Monday November 2. No reservation will be counted without a check.

Sisterhood dinner Tuesday evening November 17
Honoring Baruch and Karen Kahn.

Please take the time to settle your outstanding pledges and obligations

To make a payment or donate on line
Please visit
<http://www.benaiasher.org/donate-online/>

The Jan Eisenstein Youth Speaker Series presents

What Do Blind People Actually See?



Getting Through the Tough Times with Vision and Without Vision

A touching story of a man, who explored his home town, visited Israel, journeyed towards Torah observance, received rabbinic ordination, and obtained a master's degree in social work from Columbia University all without the gift of sight.

Meet Rabbi Michael Levy as he shares his remarkable story of personal discovery and experience this life changing workshop of personal empowerment.

A must hear for all young aspiring adults! Bring a blindfold.

Sunday, October 25th at 5:30 pm

@ The BACH - 210 Edwards Blvd. Long Beach

Exciting Waffle Bar with all the trimmings. Raffle of Braille Starbucks gift card.

FREE of charge

This program is geared for teens, pre-teens and their parents. RSVP Requested.

Email: teens@bachyouth.com or call 516 .897 .2473.

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**Daily Minyan Mon – Thurs at 979 Third Avenue,
 17th Floor, Artistic Frame at 4PM – 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

Repair or Replace

When something breaks down, stops working, gets damaged or simply shows signs of use, we used to have a choice. We could repair it or replace it. We can all remember a time when the streets had watch repair stores, television repair shops, and mechanics in every gas station. There was a day when everyone seemed to have a tool box in the house and was taught the skills to fix things. Today that's not so. When it breaks, it's often difficult to find a repairman and even when we do, the cost of replacing the item is often less than the cost to even figure out what's wrong.

As a child I used to watch a TV show with my dad called Mission Impossible. In the opening scenes of each week's episode, Peter Phelps is given what appears to be an impossible task. The tape recorder which details the mission self-destructs moments later. He and his team have the choice of accepting the mission with all of its risks or not. They always accept. My dad was one of those guys who would always accept too. He would analyze a problem, determine the cause, lay out various courses of action, chose the most reasonable and get to work. Everything was possible.

At the end of last week's portion, we find that the world has fallen to a despicable level of depravity. Humanity has sunk to an unimaginable low with the rulers and judges, those who should know better, leading the way. But it's not just humanity that has fallen, the animals too are said to have lost their direction. And even angels in heaven who come down to show that people can and should be better find that once they find themselves within the pleasures of the world, they too succumb. Heaven is fed up with creation in general and mankind in particular. HaShem decides to hit the reset button. The responsibility for the future will be placed in the hands of one man and his family. That man is Noah and he is given a mission, but is that mission limited to simply starting anew? Aside from the amazing qualities attributed to Noah in the opening words of this week's portion, he must have been pretty handy to have built that ark. The rabbis teach us that Noah

was also an inventor. He developed the plough and changed farming forever. Noah means comfort and he is said to have brought comfort to the world through his inventions. Could he have brought comfort in some other way too?

As my dad taught us, there is rarely a single way to complete a mission. There are typically options. It seems from the midrashim and rabbinical commentaries that Noah too had options. The world could have been repaired or re-created. In the haftara, the waters of the flood are called the waters of Noah. It seems that the prophet is in some way blaming Noah for the flood. The rabbis comment that Noah could have prayed for the people and could have tried to change them, yet he did not. Noah gave up on the world selecting the replacement option rather than even attempting the repair.

Noah and his family and the remnants of the animal world are locked away within what must have been some other dimension within the ark for a year while the world is completely destroyed and then recreated. An examination of the text and the terms used following the flood recall terms such as the spirit of HaShem, the separation of the waters above and below, a renewal of the seasons and of vegetation, and are hauntingly reminiscent of the wording found in the Torah describing the first six days of creation. When exiting the ark, it is not a repaired world that Noah encounters, it is a completely new world and he is in essence this new world's Adam.

See that everything that was, is now gone, he cries. But he is told that his tears come too late. How pained he must have been in realizing he could have done more. He could have stopped this.

As the new Adam, Noah, perhaps accepting his first mistake takes on a new mission. He will repair the sin of Adam himself. Adam ate from the tree which some say was the grape. Adam lacked self-control. Noah will plant the vine, but he will succeed where Adam failed. He will exercise self-control. He will right Adam's wrong and repair creation. But his first failure leads to a second and he succumbs to the wine leading to further tragedy with his son Ham and to a future where Noah becomes inconsequential and no longer matters.

The story of Noah is very sad. It is one of potential unrealized. And Noah's potential must have been unimaginable. The rabbis teach us that the soul which gave life to Noah was the soul which gave life to Moses. Perhaps we are told this to understand that Noah could have accomplished anything and everything.

And as the portion ends we meet the man who will step up and take responsibility and chose to repair and commit that task not only to himself, his son and his grandson, but to all his descendants after them. That man was Abraham.

My dad was a true descendant of Abraham. He always sought to fix. He always pondered how to repair. No mission was impossible. Whether it was an object of metal or wood, precious or utilitarian, he had the tools and mountains of boxes of parts set aside just in case. And his skills weren't limited to things. When one knows they can repair objects, they understand that organizations, families and people can also be repaired. He took on every task, even the impossible with the knowledge that with HaShem's help nothing could be described as impossible.

Today as society treats everything from clothing to shoes, from computers to phones and from furniture to cars as disposable that mindset dangerously effects how we look at organizations, families, people and the world itself. Perhaps we lack the tools. Perhaps we haven't learned the skills. And we certainly don't know how to set aside time to repair. Perhaps we are too lazy. Perhaps we just give up too easily. We, the children of a generation of Abrahams have become the generation of Noahs.

There is a bright side though. We can learn, seek to acquire the skills and tools and accept responsibility. And if not that, let us at least encourage our children, teach them, allow them to acquire the skills and at least pray to the Al-mighty that our children will right our wrongs. As Abraham followed Noah, perhaps our children will be the Abrahams to follow our generation of Noahs.

Shabbat Shalom,

David Bibi

SOD HAPARASHA – Victor Bibi

One of the methods of revealing the light of the Creator into the physical and spiritual worlds is to properly make use of the Divine Names which will act as vessels to receive this light. Misuse of these Names can be considered a form of idolatry.

The onset of the era of Enosh sees mankind involved in the unholy manipulation of the Divine Names to further their form of idol worship. As it is written (4:26) Then men began to profane the Name of the Lord.

This form of desecration continues until the time of the flood as it is written " the mighty of old, the men of the Name." (6:4)

Noah in contrast was given instructions to build a holy edifice - the Tevah, implementing certain Divine Names. Specifically the names of ADNY – alef, dalet, nun and yud & YHVH yud, heh and vav, heh which are reflected in the dimensional requirements for the construction of the ark. The Malbim explains: The top floor occupied by humans would be built by multiplying the value of the initial letters of each name (1 alef x 10 yud) equaling 10 Amot. The second and third floors by multiplying the second letters (4 dalet x 5 heh) are 20 Amot. The length was established by multiplying the third respective letters (50 nun x 6 vav) 300 Amot. The width relates to the multiplication of the final letters (10 yud x 5 heh) 50 Amot.

" The end of all flesh has come before me. The earth is filled with Hamas נמו thievery." (6:13) It is puzzling why the Torah selects this transgression as the cause of the flood. Surely more heinous crimes were being committed. The RaMaK explains that the main nemesis in establishing a holy edifice at the time were the serpent Nachash נחש and the accompanying angel Sama-el סמאל who are built thru a combination of holy and unholy aspects as depicted in their respective names. Noah will need to extract their holy aspects as indicated by their holy letters to build the ark to provide life for those aboard. At the same time their unholy aspects as indicated in the remaining letters will need to be subdued to give him a possibility of success.

The external letters נ and ש of the נש along with the letters אל of the שאל being holy. The נ and ש have numerical values corresponding to the length (300) & width (50) of the ark, while the אל representing it's height (30) and a single (1) המא at the top. " This is how you shall construct it; the arks length shall be 300 cubits, it's width 50 cubits, and its height 30 cubits. " Make a skylight for the ark, make it slanted so that it is one Amah on top". (6:15)

The letters ש and the internal n of נש belong to the side of unholiness. This is the secret of the Talmudic statement (BK 23:) A snake's venom stands within it's fangs. Namely the venom of the serpent resides within its internal letter. These unholy letters n and ש combine to form the נש referenced in the Torah as their crime which must be obliterated.

The end of the parasha sees Nimrod and the people of Bavel reversing course and building an unholy edifice by making unauthorized use of holy names. "They said come let us build ourselves a city and a

tower whose top shall reach the sky. Let us make ourselves a Name, so that we will not be scattered all over the face of the earth". (11:4) To accomplish this they descend into a valley. "They found a valley in the land of Shinar."(11:2) In order to avert this profanity, Hashem is forced to mix their language circumventing their ability to access these holy names and dispersing them into 70 nations.

A thousand years later, The Bet Hamikdash, a holy edifice is built by Shelomo HaMekek. It represented for that era the ultimate in achievement for mankind. A physical expression of holiness, a place that the divine light was revealed embracing all that was enjoined by the Torah. It is important to note that immediately prior to its dedication, Shelomo found it necessary to bring peace offerings totaling 22000 cattle. No doubt to rectify transgressions and any prior misuse of the 22 holy Hebrew letters. In addition 120000 flocks are also offered which presumably parallel the 120 years to build the ark - the world's prototypical holy edifice.

500 years later Nimrod is transmigrated into the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar. The latter would once again attempt to establish a permanent unholy edifice in that same Babylonian valley as did the generation of the tower. As it says "King Nebuchadnezzar made a statue of gold...he stood it in the Valley of Dura, in the province of Babylon." (Daniel 3:1)

The Talmud (Sanhedrin 92:) teaches that its downfall would be countered on that same day by two heroic acts. The first was the refusal of Hananya, Mishael and Azarya to bow to the idol at the threat of being thrown into a fiery furnace. The second was the resurrection of the dry bones of the dead performed by Yehezqel the Prophet in that same Babylonian Valley of Dura.

It is written "David made a Name for himself". (Shemuel II 8:13) This appears to be a reference to David as the King Mashiah who will build the final holy edifice and rescue mankind completely from the negative effects of evil including the transgressions of the Tower of Babel. He will gather the dispersed of the 70 nations to serve the Creator.

For our part, we must be active in the rectification of evil. This can be accomplished by infusing the worlds with Holiness by embracing all that is required in keeping the Torah. For it is not only the biblical characters that affect the worlds, every activity of man including his Torah learning, prayer and his performance of misvot and good deeds significantly

contribute to preparing the world to reveal this ultimate oneness of the Creator.

This will actively usher in the time when "They will no longer teach - each man his fellow - ... saying, Know Hashem! For all of them will know me." (Yirmiyahu 31:33).

A message from Jerusalem

My Brother's, Am Yisrael, the precious one's, listen and awaken your soul's. We see how every day is becoming worse then its previous. The blood of Am Yisrael is being spilled like water. We call out in cry to Hashem, but our prayers do not get answered. How many of us have financial struggles? How many of us know people who have difficulties in finding their heavenly match or spouse? How many people do we know that are stricken by difficult illnesses? How many bad decrees do we see becoming reality; from car accidents to the passing of young children and teenagers.

Unfortunately, today we don't have prophets and people that can tell us why the wrath of Hashem is upon us. But, we do have the Torah Ha'Kedosh, which is true, and the words of Chazal, which are true, to guide us through these blinding times.

If we take a look at these particular casualties, through the hands of the wicked and malicious Yishma'elim, they are particularly committed with stabbing of the knife.

If we take a look at the words of Chazal there are two particular things that are comparable to a knife or sword. The First being the tongue, as the Gemara in Berachot say's, "One who recites Keriyat Shema before going to bed it is as if he is holding a double edge sword in his hands and destroys all the negative "Mazikin". As it say's in Tehilim "And let the high one's praise Hashem with their mouth, and in their hands a double edge sword (Tehilim 149)." And this teaches us that one's mouth is like a sword. At the same time the word mouth in Hebrew is Peh. If we take the numerical value of the word Peh, it equals the same numerical value as the name of Hashem which represents "Din – Judgment", which is Elokim.

The Gemara in Berachot tells us, "Even if there is a sharp sword on ones neck, one should not despair from Hashem's mercy." The reason for this is because one needs to use his mouth to awaken Hashem's mercy, through prayer. And this teaches us that the sword of the mouth, the tongue, has the ability to overpower the sword placed on one's neck.

The second idea, which we find in Chazal, is that the Holy Berit Millah is also compared to a sword. As it say's, "And I will bring upon you an army that avenges the avenging of the covenant (Va'Yikra 26:25)." You have weakened the Berit Millah, which is compared to a sword; I will bring upon you a sword Chas Ve'Shalom.

Another source for this idea is, that it say's in Tehilim, "Bind one's sword upon the thigh of the mighty one, the glory and the majesty (Tehilim 45:4)" This Passuk is in reference to the Berit Millah. What is the sword of the thigh? The Holy Berit Millah. And who is considered the mighty one? One who conquers his Yetzer Ha'ra. And what is the beauty and majesty of a Righteous person? Guarding one's Berit Millah. These two sources teach us how the sword is comparable to the tongue and the Berit Millah.

It is a possibility that the reasons why all these particular difficulties are happening because we are weak in these two area's. The first being the use of the mouth improperly for example, vulgarity, talking Lashon Ha'Ra, lying, flattery, or talking in Shull. The Gemara already teaches us in Masechet Shabbat 36 a, "Harsh decrees come onto the world because of vulgarity." And it is brought down," Even if one had a decree of blessing for seventy years, the use of vulgar language can reverse it into seventy years of non-blessing, as the Passuk say's "Vi'Od Yado Netuyah – that their hand is still stretched over us." This can also possibly refer to the hand of the Yishma'elim that are stretched over us.

And if it's the lack of holiness with the Berit Millah, How often do we stumble? How great is the spiritual damage? How much does it separate us from the Holy presence of Hashem? As it say's, "So that he does not see anything unseemly among you and would turn away from you (Devarim 23:15)." Kav'Yachol, one who is weak in this area, the Shechina runs away from this individual.

Please, lets strengthen ourselves in these area's as it say's, "Fear not, the worm of Ya'akov (Yeshayahu 41:14)" the same way a worm's strength is in its mouth, so too, Am Yisrael's power is in its mouth." "Ha'Kol Kol Ya'akov – The voice is the voice of Ya'akov" – refers to the study of Torah, which is done with the mouth. But it can also refer to the times that we use our mouth, not just to refrain from negativity, but also to give a nice word, to ask forgiveness from one another, and to speak words of Emunah and Bitachon.

We are guaranteed that Hashem rewards "Midah Ki'Neged Midah – measure for measure." And especially when it comes to goodness were Hashem pays back over a thousand times. And if we strengthen in the areas of guarding one's tongue and the holiness of the Berit Millah, Hashem will have mercy on us,"Uva L'etzion Go'El, and we will merit to see the salvation of Hashem with great mercy.

Summary of The Weekly Torah Reading 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 decedents of Noach.
- 7- Dor hahafloga and the tower of Babel. The parasha tells the 10 generations between Noach and Abraham.

EXCERPTS FROM THE JERSEY SHORE TORAH BULLETIN

**"Make it with bottom, second, and third decks."
(Bereshheet 6:16)**

As we study the perashah of Noah, we get a feeling that the main problem was that mankind could not get along. Hashem commands Noah to build an ark and he will be saved from the flood that is coming. The ark had three floors to it. Ultimately, the ark weathered the storm and Noah and his family survived. Maybe now man will be able to get along.

Let's fast-forward thousands of years. In Jerusalem lived two great Rabbis. Like the ark there were three floors. In the shelter which was in the basement there was a shul. On top of the shul on the first floor lived Harav Ovadiah Yosef zt"l. On top of him on the second floor lived Harav Ben Sion Abba-Shaul zt"l, Rosh Yeshivah of Porat Yosef. One day a close friend of Rabbi Abba-Shaul asked him if it bothered him that he lives above a shul (for there are some limitations of what one may do living on top of a sefer Torah)? Rabbi Abba-Shaul answered that it bothers him more to live on top of Harav Ovadiah who is a living sefer Torah.

One day the wife of Rabbi Abba-Shaul was watering her flower pots that were on her porch. It just so happened that at that same time Harav

Ovadiah was on his porch studying a sefer on the floor below, and some water was dripping on him from the porch above. Harav Ovadiah said nothing, not even a hint. (His son Rabbi Yitzchak happened to see, to tell the story.) He just went inside and continued studying.

Apparently some people learned to get along. Rabbi Reuven Semah

When Noah left the Ark after the flood and saw the devastation to the world, he began to cry to Hashem and asked, "How can a G-d so compassionate cause such destruction?" To which Hashem answered, "Now you think of this? Why didn't you cry when I first told you about the decree? I waited many years for your prayers on behalf of the rest of the world and only now you realize to pray for them?"

We see from here an important lesson. Noah was a righteous man and therefore deserved to be saved together with his family. But he did not express enough concern for others until it was too late. Had he prayed or cried out for the world before the flood, there may not have been a flood! Often we see difficult situations unfolding before us and we don't think it's our place to get involved. When the tragedy is a reality, we exclaim, "What a shame! I wish I could do something!" Had we exclaimed so a little earlier, we may have found a way to help prevent this tragedy. At the very least, we could always pray to Hashem that it should be prevented. A little more prayer and a little more concern could spell the difference between tragedy and salvation. Let us look around us and see what we could do, and let us pray for others! Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

INTENTIONS

"Haran died in the lifetime of Terah, his father, in his native land, in Uhr Kasdim" (Beresheet 11:28)

Sefer Beresheet is referred to as Sefer Hayashar, the Book of (the) Just, because it recounts the lives and experiences of the Abot Hakedoshim, Holy Patriarchs, who exemplified yashrut, justness, and perfection in their commitment to Hashem. Thus, the Torah relates their stories so that we, their descendants, will learn from their example and follow suit. The Torah also writes about individuals who did not attain the status of saddik, righteous person. Nonetheless, their stories, which are filled with both failures and triumphs, impart important lessons for us.

The above pasuk tells us about Abraham Abinu's brother, Haran, a decent - but weak - individual, who died during the lifetime of his father, Terah. A seemingly innocuous pasuk, it alludes to a powerful story which serves as the background for Haran's premature death. Apparently, when Abraham

took it upon himself to shatter all of his father's idols, word got back to Nimrod, the king and chief pagan, who took this act of "treachery" as a personal affront. He immediately sentenced Abraham to be consumed in a fiery cauldron. Haran witnessed the entire debacle and was determined to make a decision concerning his own level of commitment. Being a simple person who was not willing to gamble and make a major commitment to something which was unknown, he decided to be "flexible" in his decision. He said, "If Nimrod succeeds in killing my brother, then I am putting my money on Nimrod. If, however, my brother emerges unscathed, then I will commit to Hashem." Hashem miraculously spared Abraham, after which Haran came forward, defied Nimrod, and committed himself to Hashem. He was flung into the fire and died. Apparently, he was not worthy of the miracle that spared Abraham. So seems to end the story of Haran, brother of Abraham.

To the reader it is a story of two brothers - one deeply committed to Hashem, the other who vacillates - one miraculously escaped harm due to his total devotion, the other died in a fiery death. Harav Shimshon Pincus, zl, feels that there is more to the Haran story which, from a superficial reading, we fail to take into account. Haran did allow himself to be thrown into the fire. He did acknowledge monotheism, and he emphatically rejected idolatry. His willingness to die for what he believed was the true religion is evident. Perhaps, his intentions were not pure - or not as pure as those of Abraham, but he did give up his life for Hashem. He could have just as easily committed to Nimrod and his pack of idols - but, he did not. Is it possible that Hashem ignored this act of self-sacrifice and withheld the opportunity for him to receive reward for his actions? It just does not seem right.

Regrettably, this is how one who studies the Torah perfunctorily can err. It may appear that Hashem ignored Haran in terms of receiving a reward, but if we just look a few pesukim further and take note of his offspring and descendants, we realize that Hashem certainly did not spare him any reward.

In fact, he was handsomely compensated with a very special distinction: Sarah Imenu was his daughter, and Lot, from whom descended Ruth and Naamah, was his grandson. This is all because he acted faithfully and willingly risked his life. While it is true that his intentions were indecorous, he was rewarded for his actions. Hashem remunerates everyone for his positive actions - even if his intentions are inconsonant with his actions.

Hazal teach us in the Talmud Sanhedrin 105b, "One should occupy himself in Torah (study) and misvah (observance), even if he is doing so shelo lishmah, not for the sake of the misvah,

because good work, although misapplied in purpose, will lead to lishmah (for the sake of the misvah)." For as reward for offering forty-two sacrifices to Hashem, Balak merited that Ruth was his descendant. His intentions were not only wrong; they were outright evil. Yet, he did achieve some merit. Thus, he was privileged with being the ancestor of the progenitor of the Kingdom of the House of David.

This teaches us a valuable lesson in self-motivation for misvah observance. It happens that one is reluctant in undertaking to perform a specific misvah, spiritual endeavor, or act of loving-kindness, because he lacks the proper motivation. He feels that he is not on the lofty spiritual plane required for such a venture. Nonetheless, he should go forward and act assertively, because eventually his mind will be clarified and sublimated to a higher cause and his intentions refined. (Peninim on the Torah)

Rabbi Wein FIRST RAINS

Right on schedule, immediately after the holiday of Succot and the annual prayer for rain, the Land of Israel experienced its first inclement weather of the season. One of the many wonders of the natural beauty and climate of Israel is the fact that for seven months of the year there is practically no rain that falls in our country. Everyone knows that an outdoor summer wedding can be planned with the surety that the joyous occasion will not be washed out by rain.

The flora and fauna of our country is exquisitely adjusted to being able to thrive in a climate of relatively sparse rainfall and again over a long period of the year when there is no rain at all. There are all sorts of scientific explanations as to how this arrangement works but to me it is simply another example of the complexity of God's creation and of the wonders that surround us on a daily basis.

There are other places in the world that have a somewhat similar climate and rainfall pattern, however this situation of nature here in Israel is of biblical prediction and weight. The early rains – yoreh – and the late rains –malkosh – are vividly described for us in the Torah. Rain is portrayed in the Bible as being part of the relationship between God and the land and people of Israel. Even though it is a natural phenomenon, rain represents the bond of eternity that exists between the Jewish people, the Land of Israel and the Creator of our universe. As such, when and where and in what amounts rain falls is not only of physical and natural consequence but it is of spiritual value as well.

I am not a particular fan of getting wet or of being soaked in a driving rainstorm. However, perhaps in a

very perverse way, I look forward to the coming of the rainy season here in Israel. There usually is only a limited amount of periods of time during our winter season when rain actually falls. The rains bring a freshness of air and a perspective of renewal to our otherwise hot and seemingly parched land.

The rains point out to us the constantly renewed cycle of life, which is the basis for all of our activities, hopes and plans. In springtime, before the arrival of the great holiday of Pesach, we celebrate the departure of the rainy season and the coming of seven months of sun. But I also celebrate the coming of the rainy season immediately after the holiday of Succot.

Its arrival confirms to me the unfailing goodness and greatness of the natural world that the Lord has so artfully constructed for our pleasure and survival. However, in our prayers for rain we ask that this blessing be granted to us in moderation. For example, the terrible rainstorms that have flooded the state of South Carolina in the United States recently are a stark reminder of how too much of a good thing can bring disaster and even death. This is also one of the moral lessons that rainfall can teach us.

The Torah portrays the lack of rainfall and the conditions of drought as being an exhibit of heavenly displeasure with us. Most commentators to the Torah limit this idea to the conditions of rainfall in the Land of Israel, which by Jewish tradition is judged and handled by Heaven in a manner separate and apart from that of the rest of the world.

This would allow us to deal with the decade-long drought in parts of the United States, such as California, as a purely natural phenomenon without any particular moral or spiritual message attached. However, it is obvious that somehow natural phenomena such as floods, droughts, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, tsunamis, hurricanes, tornadoes and other severe weather events are somehow meant to impart a moral lesson to all of us.

The Talmud points out that the clap of thunder, which so startles us, is meant to "straighten out the crookedness of our hearts." By this the rabbis meant to inform us that even chance events that occur in the natural world are never to be considered as being completely at random. Instead, they are to be viewed as a method and medium of communication between the Creator and the created.

Certainly this is to be the view of how to judge the rainy season here in Israel, which is now beginning. Let us hope that the rain will be plentiful but not

overdone, timely but not burdensome and again, in the words of our eternal prayers, that it will be for a blessing and life and not for a curse and destruction.

Chief Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks The Courage to Live with Uncertainty

For each of us there are milestones on our spiritual journey that change the direction of our life and set us on a new path. For me one such moment came when I was a rabbinical student at Jews' College and thus had the privilege of studying with one of the great rabbinic scholars of our time, Rabbi Dr Nachum Rabinovitch.

He was, and is, a giant: one the most profound Maimonidean scholars of the modern age, equally at home with virtually every secular discipline as with the entire rabbinic literature, and one of the boldest and most independent of poskim, as his several published volumes of Responsa show. He also showed what it was to have spiritual and intellectual courage, and that in our time has proved, sadly, all too rare.

The occasion was not special. He was merely giving us one of his regular divrei Torah. The week was parshat Noach. But the Midrash he quoted to us was extraordinary. In fact it is quite hard to find. It appears in the book known as Buber's Tanhuma, published in 1885 by Martin Buber's grandfather Shlomo from ancient manuscripts. It is a very early text – some say as early as the fifth century – and it has some overlap with an ancient Midrash of which we no longer have the full text, known as Midrash Yelamdenu.

The text is in two parts, and it is a commentary on God's words to Noah: "Then God said to Noah, 'Come out of the ark'" (Gen. 8:16). On this the Midrash says: "Noah said to himself, Since I only entered the ark with permission (from God), shall I leave without permission? The Holy One blessed be He said, to him: Are you looking for permission? In that case I give you permission, as it says, 'Then God said to Noah, Come out of the ark.'"

The Midrash then adds: "Said Rabbi Judah bar Ilai, If I had been there I would have smashed down [the doors of] the ark and taken myself out of it." [1] The moral Rabbi Rabinovitch drew – indeed the only one possible – was that when it comes to rebuilding a shattered world, you do not wait for permission. God gives us permission. He expects us to go on ahead. This was, of course, part of an ancient tradition, mentioned by Rashi in his commentary (to Gen. 6:9), and central to the sages' understanding of why God began the Jewish people not with Noah but with Abraham. Noah, says the Torah, "walked with God" (6:9). But God said to Abraham, "Walk on ahead of Me ..." (Gen. 17:1). So the point was not new, but the drama and power of the Midrash were stunning.

Suddenly I understood that this is a significant part of what faith is in Judaism: to have the courage to pioneer, to do something new, to take the road less travelled, to venture out into the unknown. That is what Abraham and Sarah had done when they left their land, their home and their father's house. It is what the Israelites did in the days of Moses when they journeyed forth into the wilderness, guided only by a pillar of cloud by day and fire by night.

Faith is precisely the courage to take a risk, knowing that "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me" (Ps. 23:4). It took faith to challenge the religions of the ancient world, especially when they were embodied in the greatest empires of their time. It took faith to stay Jewish in the Hellenistic age, when Jews and Judaism must have seemed small and parochial when set against the cosmopolitan culture of ancient Greece and the Alexandrian empire.

It took the faith of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Gamla to build, already in the first century, the world's first ever system of universal, compulsory education (Baba Batra 21a), and the faith of Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai to realise that Judaism could survive the loss of independence, land and Temple, on the basis of an academy of scholars and a culture of scholarship. In the modern age, even though many of Jewry's most distinguished minds either lost or abandoned their faith, nonetheless that ancient reflex survived. How else are we to understand the phenomenon that a tiny minority in Europe and the United States was able to produce so many shapers of the modern mind, each of them a pioneer in his or her own way: Einstein in physics, Durkheim in sociology, Levi-Strauss in anthropology, Mahler and Schoenberg in music, and a whole string of innovative economists from David Ricardo (the law of comparative advantage) to John von Neumann (Game Theory) to Milton Friedman (monetary theory), to Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky (behavioural economics).

They dominated the fields of psychiatry, psychotherapy and psychoanalysis, from Freud and his circle to Viktor Frankl (Logotherapy), Aaron T. Beck (Cognitive Behavioural Therapy) and Martin Seligman (Positive Psychology). The pioneers of Hollywood and film were almost all Jewish. Even in popular music the achievement is stunning, from Irving Berlin and George Gershwin, masters of the American musical, to Bob Dylan and Leonard Cohen, the two supreme poets of popular music in the twentieth century.

In many cases – such is the fate of innovators – the people concerned had to face a barrage of criticism, disdain, opposition or disregard. You have to be prepared to be lonely, at best misunderstood, at worst vilified and defamed. As Einstein said, "If my

theory of relativity is proven successful, Germany will claim me as a German and France will declare me a citizen of the world. Should my theory prove untrue, France will say that I am a German, and Germany will declare that I am a Jew." To be a pioneer – as Jews know from our history - you have to be prepared to spend a long time in the wilderness. That was the faith of the early Zionists. They knew early on, some from the 1860s, others after the pogroms of the 1880s, Herzl after the Dreyfus trial, that European Enlightenment and Emancipation had failed, that despite its immense scientific and political achievements, mainland Europe still had no place for the Jew. Some Zionists were religious, others were secular, but most importantly they all knew what the Midrash Tanhuma made so clear: when it comes to rebuilding a shattered world or a broken dream, you don't wait for permission from Heaven. Heaven is telling you to go ahead.

That is not *carte blanche* to do whatever we like. Not all innovation is constructive. Some can be very destructive indeed. But this principle of "Walk on ahead", the idea that the Creator wants us, His greatest creation, to be creative, is what makes Judaism unique in the high value it places on the human person and the human condition.

Faith is the courage to take a risk for the sake of God or the Jewish people; to begin a journey to a distant destination knowing that there will be hazards along the way, but knowing also that God is with us, giving us strength if we align our will with His. Faith is not certainty, but the courage to live with uncertainty.

[1] The Midrash seems to be based on the fact that this is the first verse in the Torah where the verb *d-b-r* (to speak) is used. The root *a-m-r* (to say) has a similar meaning but there is a slight difference between them. *D-b-r* usually implies speaking harshly, judgmentally. See also Ibn Ezra *ad loc*, who senses from the text that Noah was reluctant to leave the ark.

AS HEARD FROM RABBI AVIGDOR MILLER Z"TL "And Noach walked with Elokim" (6:9)

The word "Hit'halech" (walked) is reflexive, meaning that Noach exerted effort and caused himself to walk with G-d. The Torah is relating that Noach became very great by "walking with G-d". The Torah is our instruction Book to perfecting ourselves. We can achieve greatness through observance of Mitzvot

and by studying the ways of Hashem as portrayed in Torah and Nature.

We are studying the great model of Noach who "Walked with G-d" and thereby became great. What was Noach doing during these walks which brought him to this exalted level of Yirat hamayim/Awareness of Hashem that brought G-d to speak to him?

"And walk secretly/humbly with Hashem" (Micha 6:8). One way that we can accomplish this high ideal is to Think about Hashem. When you practice this, no one is aware of what you have on your mind therefore it is a secret. Noach was constantly thinking about Hashem which was his system to greatness as revealed to us by the Torah.

We can utilize Noach's system and become elevated by Thinking about Hashem in the following ways:

1. Contemplate all the good things that we are grateful to Hashem for. Including the many times we were saved from all types of situations; or led to successful circumstances.
2. Notice the wisdom of Hashem in Nature and in the world all around us. Consider the endless Wisdom and Kindliness which demonstrate "plan & purpose" throughout the Universe thereby causing us to have Awareness of Hashem.

3. Think about the wonders and miracles that Hashem did for the Jewish Nation throughout history. For example: Splitting Yam Suf; Holding up the Sun for Joshua; Being fed by Mann from Heaven...

Now we know a way to become great!

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